

ESC History interview – Olly Balfour

1. What brought you to squash rackets, and when did you first play?
 - a. Aged 15 at Watsons, I was walking from the school to the nearby rugby pitches, only to find that the ground was frozen, but my team mate C. A. R. (Alastair) Cowan was off to play squash in the adjacent pavilion and suggested I watch. Later that year I was playing at no 3 in the Watsons team. Some of my skill may have come from tennis which I played from age 11 (coached by my Auntie)
2. When did you join ESC?
 - a. 1954 aged 18
3. When did you first and last play at ESC?
 - a. First time 1954, last played some time before lost the discs in my 3rd 4th and 5th vertebrae around 1973.
4. Would you like to provide a timeline of your early life?
 - a. Watsons from age 5 (1941) for 11 years until 1952
 - b. Father died in 1952
 - c. I had gone to Heriot Watt to study engineering, but when my father died, someone suggested that the family business would require someone with accounting skills to run it, so I left after one year, and (aided by Hugh Forbes Cameron) joined Graham, Smart and Annan in Charlotte Square, and apprenticed for 5 years, qualifying CA in 1960
 - d. Married in 1960, then had 3 boys (Kenneth (1962), Bruce (1963) and Andrew (1966)), and a girl (Sarah (1968)). Boys went to Edinburgh Academy, girl to St Georges
 - e. Lived in Easter Belmont for many years (1967 to 1996), now live in Ravelston Dykes.
5. Were you a member of other club(s)? Did you play other sports?
 - a. Westhall Tennis Club, from where I played and captained East of Scotland tennis
 - b. Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society and The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers
6. Who were among your most regular opponents?
 - a. George Chisholm, Bill Shaw, Hugh Allan, Mike Oddy (and others)
7. Best sporting achievement
 - a. Being a member of the 1964 Scottish squash team which beat England in March 1964. Mike Oddy asked me to play first, and I beat Jeremy Lyon (for the first time ever) in a close 5 set match.
 - b. The 50th Anniversary booklet says that Olly was 'arguably the best player at the time never to have represented GB'.
8. Other sporting achievements
 - a. I played 45 times for Scotland between 1954 and 1968 (first time aged 18), a Guinness book of records mark at the time
 - b. I was beaten 6 times in succession in the ESC final (by Reid, Shaw and Oddy) before winning 12 of the next 15, being beaten only by George Chisholm, Kim Bruce-Lockhart, and H J L Allan. My last win was in 1972, my back problem (q.v.) contributing to my absence thereafter, and I had to make do with swimming in Glenogle baths to keep fit.
 - c. Beat Jonah Barrington when he was on his way to becoming World Number 1 (Jonah Barrington was No 1 for Ireland at the time).
 - d. Olly and his female partner won the Scottish Grass Court tennis title; strictly automatic qualifying for Wimbledon except frustratingly Wimbledon did not recognise Scotland as a separate country!
9. What did ESC bring to your life?
 - a. High quality coaching and playing
 - b. I could say social life, but I got married in 1960 and had four children!
 - c. I was a Director of the club from 1961 to 1963
 - d. I was made an Honorary Member in 1982

10. Who were your best friends at the Club?
- George Chisholm, Bill Shaw (and others)
 - I enjoyed playing with coaches Jamal Din and Hadyn Davies
 - In the early 2000's, I went on a few European river cruises with Bim and Julia Bertram, and Philip and Mary Mackenzie Ross
11. What was your career?
- After leaving Charlotte square accountants, I joined the family (my Mother's Father's) business – Westfield Autocar, where I eventually became MD
 - Westfield started in 1904 selling Stanley Steamers
 - In 1913 they became distributors for Morris, one of only 12 in the UK
 - They later became distributors for Morris, MG, Riley and Wolseley, then additionally Jaguar. The business eventually also operated in the Lothians, Stirlingshire and Aberdeen
 - My first car was a circa 1960 Morris Minor, brown/ yellow colour, reg. no. GSF 242
 - Around 1984 became Insolvency Partner with Deloitte Haskins & Sells, which later became Coopers & Lybrand and ultimately PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) and retired in 1994
12. Are you happy with the progress the club is making, e.g. Padel, Table Tennis installations, and refurbishment in general?
- I only get to the club occasionally now for lunch, but what I saw at the 75th anniversary in 2011 made me feel that the club was in good health
13. Do you have any photographs, memorabilia or other records from ESC?
- I have the 1973 Guinness Book of Records entry showing me as having most international squash caps (45 between 1954 and 1968) at that time.
14. Have you any other questions, or suggested topics?
- I'll keep you posted!

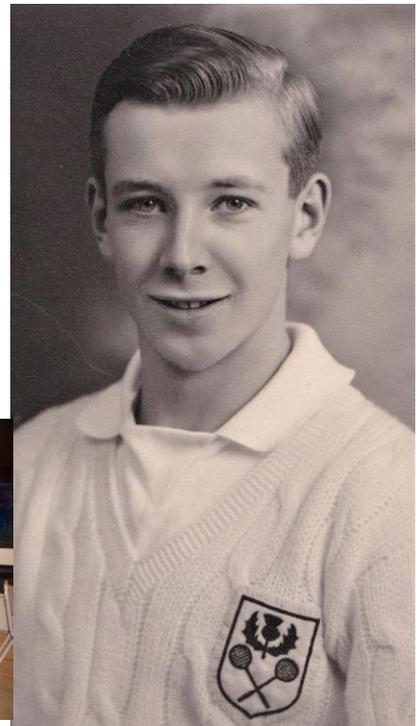
Photographs



Westfield Autocar's first vehicle - Stanley Steamer, 1904-1906



Olly's first car - 1960 Morris Minor in brown/yellow



Olly aged 20 proudly wearing his first Scottish International jersey



The 1964 victorious team versus England



2011 – ESC 75th Anniversary – Olly among the ESC 'Star' players