

ESC History interview

Audrey Cumberford

(former player no longer a member)

1. What brought you to squash rackets, and when did you first play?

My Dad, previously an international swimmer, took up Squash as a way of staying fit. He joined Hamilton Squash Club and introduced me to the game when I was 14 years old. I quickly got involved with the league and playing for the club's women team – competing in county squash fixtures. At that time, I was a school pupil at Uddingston Grammar and so also played at the courts which were part of the Uddingston Cricket Club – and was able to play and practice before the school day started.

2. When did you join ESC?

I played at ESC before I formally joined as a Member. From around the age of 16 I travelled through to Edinburgh from the west every week to be coached by Dorothy Sharp who was a key influence on my game and most of my international career. I joined the Club when I became a student studying in Edinburgh at the age of 18 (1983).

3. When did you first and last play at ESC?

When I graduated from Edinburgh, I went on to study a post grad at Bristol University and managed/coached the University ladies Squash team who competed in the University leagues.

4. Were you a member of other club(s)?

When I was a student, I was playing most of my International squash at that time, including world championships, 4 Nations etc Angela Smith became the Scottish Women's team coach/manager and at that time became my personal coach. In the run up to any tournaments we had an arrangement with the Carlton Hotel on the Bridges where I moved out of student accommodation and stayed at the hotel and used the courts there for tournament preparations.

5. Who were among your most regular opponents?

In Scotland – the other international players e.g. Alison Cruickshank (Bowie), Shirley Brown, Joan Sutherland, Rosie Fraser

Also players at that time across the 4 nations e.g. Lisa Opie, Lucy Souter

Best sporting achievement

Playing at International level from the age of 14 – through under 16s, u19s, ladies and playing in world Championships and British Championships. Memorable successes included playing the World champion Susan Devoy on the courts at ESC and reaching the semis in the British Championships.

6. What did ESC bring to your life?

I reckon I spent as much of my time at the Club as I did on my studies. Being the member of a club did feel at the time as being part of a wider squash family – so provided a real sense of belonging and pride – being able to contribute to the reputation of the club as being a key part of developing the talent of players and having so many players at county and international levels. Scotland/and Edinburgh are

small enough the squash family felt very real. Wider families of players got involved and new each other well.

7. **Who were your best friends at the Club?** Other players in the international scene e.g. I remain very good friends with Shirley Brown and a group of us stay in touch and regularly meet e.g. Shirley, Alison, Joan

8. **What was your career?**

My early career, post graduating, was to move to Bristol University PE Department. From there I worked in industry for the first half of my career (pharmaceutical industry and then product design and manufacturing sector where I specialised in marketing). My first position in the College sector was moving from the private sector when appointed as a Senior Lecturer in the Business School at what was Edinburgh's Telford College. This was followed by a number of promotions to take on a senior management role in Reid Kerr College in Paisley where I eventually became Scotland's youngest Principal in 2005. The College sector in Scotland then went through a major reform in 2011 of college mergers. 46 colleges merged to create 26 and I led the merger of 3 colleges in the West to create West College Scotland – where I became Principal and remained there until 2018 before being appointed as the Principal & CEO of Edinburgh College – Scotland's largest regional college and of course, our Capital City College. Turnover is c£70m, 30,000 students, 1500 staff, 4 main campuses.

9. **Have you been back to the Club recently, and are you happy with the progress the club is making, e.g. Padel, Table Tennis installations, and refurbishment in general?**

I have not, although have driven by many times since working again in Edinburgh – I would love to visit 😊

10. **Do you have any photographs, memorabilia or other records from ESC?**

I will have e.g., a video of my match with Susan Devoy at ESC– would need to dig it out and look to get it converted to an electronic file – which I would be happy to try and do, providing the video still works.

11. **Have you any other questions, or suggested topics?**

I would be up for attending any reunions and also looking at how I can support and/or promote the work of the club.

Photographs to be included

