



Before leaving for their tour of Canada the Squashers met the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Mr. Kenneth Borthwick.

Standard Life Squashers' Canadian Tour, 1980

The following report of the Canadian Tour was written by Irene Cowper, one of the team members.

After our departure on Saturday, 19th January, 1980, our travel arrangements went smoothly only arriving a little late in Toronto where we were met by Mr. Mahony and his wife and Gerry Guilfoyle. The team was rather tired and conversation seemed a little strained. Mr. Mahony is manager of the office in Toronto and Gerry his assistant.

We were driven back in the minibus, which was to take us everywhere over the next two weeks, with Gerry at the wheel, to the Chelsea Inn which is just off Yonge Street, downtown Toronto. Tony Swift and some of the Bridlewood girls plus the P.R. girl were there to meet us. After checking in, a brief discussion was held over drinks as to our programme for the next two weeks.

On Sunday it had been organised for us to visit Niagara Falls, which we could have done without on that particular day, having just spent the previous day travelling. However, it was a worthwhile visit and a superb day though we didn't wholly appreciate it. On our arrival back we decided to explore the hotel facilities. We were already delighted with our rooms, the food and amenities available to us. The recreational facilities were also good and we had a training session in the gym, then pool, then whirlpool (a great Canadian gimmick) and collapsed into the sauna!

Monday was a get on court day — a big effort but very necessary. Standard Life had organised for us to have use of courts at the Squash Academy at any off-peak times. It

was within walking distance of the hotel but Gerry took us round in the minibus, and we made our own way back. Gerry had been given two weeks off to take care of us, which he did admirably — and he managed to get into the office from time to time plus say hello to his wife and newly born son. He drove us everywhere, got us there on time, played squash with us, entertained us and gave us great support, and is now very enthusiastic about continued involvement in squash. At night we went out to Bridlewood Club as Tony Swift had invited us to watch a Brian Patterson clinic; it was very interesting and amusing. We never have such high calibre coaches visiting us up here in Scotland.

Tuesday our travels started. We drove to Ottawa with it snowing all the way. Arrived in time to have a hit on warm courts. The team we played was a mixed team of 4 women and 2 men. We won 5-1 with only Ann S. being outclassed by an opponent who walked on court with a kilt on! We were entertained at the home of one of the players who knew Brenda and put up by several people who wanted us to stay longer so that we could see something of Ottawa and play at the new club there — however, maybe next year!

It was up early and drive back to Toronto to change our gear and drive to Oakville for our next match at The Club, which is a very luxurious club in a wealthy area. We lost 4-2 to a men's team, but the 4 losses were all close 3-2 matches. We were entertained at The Club owner's house, Frank Baillie — that is some house, he has his own squash court plus everything else.

Thursday we went by public bus to London (Ontario) it only took two hours which was bliss after our six hour journeys to and from Ottawa. We were met by Dr. Sue Pexman who had been responsible for organising our squash venues and programme for us. Sue did a great job for us, as she is doing for squash in Canada, and our heartiest of thanks went to her. We played at the Highbury Club which only had two courts and they were unbelievably hot. We played a mixed team, 3 men and 3

women and drew the match, as we really were feeling rather jaded from travelling and overwhelmed with the heat. Sue entertained the players and again we were put up by various people.

We travelled back early afternoon on Friday to Oakville by train to start playing in the N. American Open at The Club. We all won our first rounds. On the whole we did ourselves justice over the week-end and A. Smith won the championship 3-1, so we were delighted.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of the second week we played the select matches at The Mayfair Club. This is what the tour was really all about and we did well to win our matches against Canada East, Canada West, and Toronto Niagara 16-0 with a total of 12 games only being dropped. Perhaps here I should mention that the standard of the Canadian girls' squash was higher than we had expected overall. We were always pushed at 1, 2 and 3 but seldom at 4, 5 and 6. The Canadians were really appreciative of our team being out there and a lot of friends were made. A lot of the Canadian girls' squash came on noticeably over the nine days we were playing with them, and we gained a lot of match experience.

Standard Life gave a reception for the teams on the Wednesday night when Mr. Murray (Regional Manager) made a speech expressing his thanks to such delightful ladies showing him the skills of the international game of squash, and that Standard Life, Canada, were delighted to be associated with such a sport. We were each given trophies and diaries — *i.e.*, the winning team only. We met all the people that were there from Standard Life who were all from the Toronto Office.

Thursday was a day off when we shopped and basically just pleased ourselves. Rosie played her first round in the Ontario championship, then we all went out for a meal with girls from the other teams. The rest of us started playing on Friday night, each playing and winning two rounds. Earlier on the Friday we went to visit and meet the Standard Life staff in the Toronto Office which was really nice. They took some photos and presented us with enamelled maple leaves which are lovely.

Saturday, we were all rather tired having eaten, even later than most nights, at a barbecue the night before. Five of us reached the quarter-finals, with Brenda reaching the final of the Vets tournament and unfortunately losing to Sue Pexman whom she had beaten the previous week-end. Two reached the semi-finals and Ann the final, but unfortunately the toll of 15 matches in 13 days was too much and a very tired Ann lost 3-1. However, no glory was detracted from her as she had beaten Elaine Hinnigan, Canada's No. 1 player twice out of the three times they played.

On Saturday night we had supper at the Mahony's (by the way, by this time he appeared rather enthusiastic about Standard Life squashers). The Murrays and Guilfoyles were there too and then we were taken to an ice hockey match with the Toronto Maple Leafs playing Chicago — very exciting especially when there were fights — it's pretty hard to punch somebody whilst on skates!

After the match we returned to the hotel for farewell drinks with Standard Life friends and squash friends — a few songs were sung in the bar that night, with Rosie playing the mouth organ we had half the bar joining in — it's amazing how many Scots are now living in Canada. Rather a late night especially with packing to be done.

After the Ontario final, we were seen off to the airport by EHM, Gerry, and two of the Ontario squash girls — really rather sad as we all had enjoyed our tour so much. We all liked the country, the people, the way of life, the standard of living and the squash. It's a fast growing game out there and we think we have helped a great deal in making it better known especially under the auspices of Standard Life — squash has been given a name in Canada.