



EDINBURGH
SPORTS CLUB

Discovering Edinburgh's best kept Secret



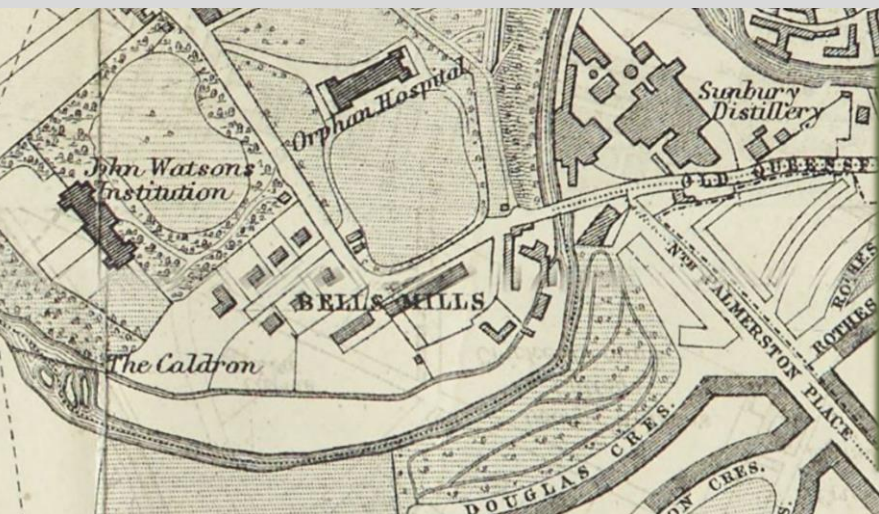
Edinburgh Sports Club 1936-2025



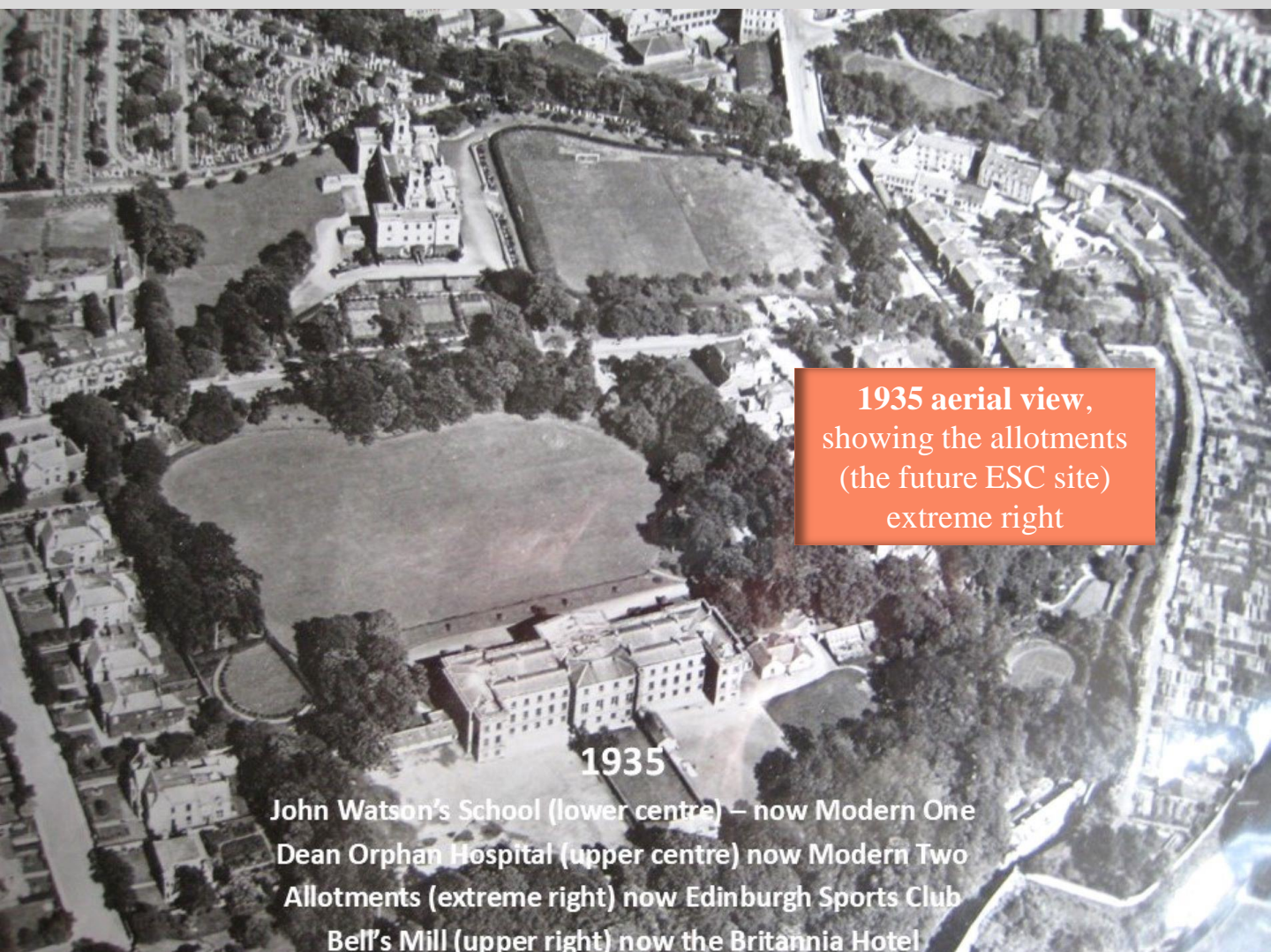
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The evolution of the site

Early mapping, and an aerial view



1893 Bartholomew Map, Belford Bridge 1887, Bells Mills, The John Watson's Institution 1828 (Now Modern Gallery 1), The Orphan Hospital 1833 (now Modern Gallery 2), and the future ESC site at the foot of the map – below 'The Caldron'



1935 aerial view, showing the allotments (the future ESC site) extreme right

1935

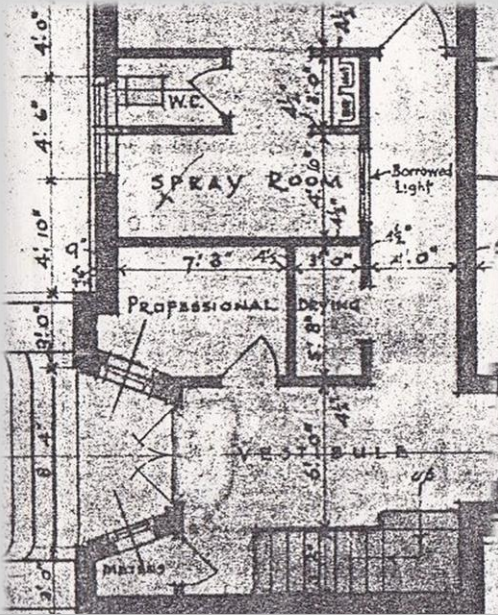
John Watson's School (lower centre) – now Modern One
Dean Orphan Hospital (upper centre) now Modern Two
Allotments (extreme right) now Edinburgh Sports Club
Bell's Mill (upper right) now the Britannia Hotel



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The evolution of the site

Planning, building and opening



The 1936 ground floor plan, showing the cubby hole for the professional, and the men's changing room



The Evening News reported that new squash courts were opening on October 9th, 1936



The official opening by the first shareholders - The Hon. David Balfour (later Lord Kinross), Captain G. E. Carter, Ian McKinlay and A. G. Weir.



Three extra courts ! – Then WAR

Bethia and Paul Harding-Edgar were key members of the club from the 1930's to the 1960's

February 1937 –
squash balls were
one shilling and six
pence each

1937 - The Club was so successful in its first year that three extra courts were commissioned immediately – Courts 4, 5 and the doubles – and a grand opening!

Gerry Barnes
– the Club's
first
manager

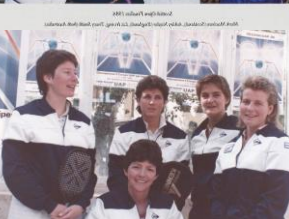


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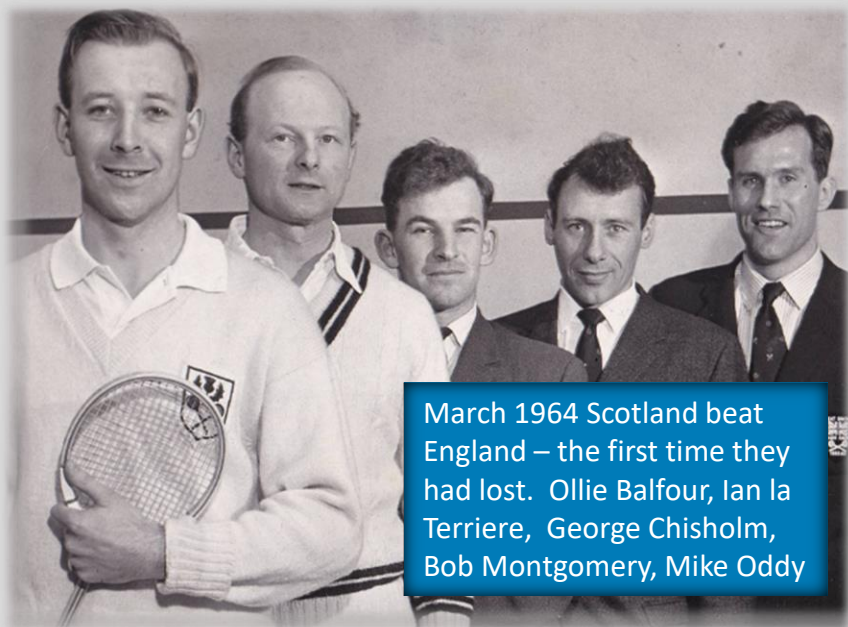
1968 – the 50th Anniversary

A history created in photos

The Club's principal personalities – one manager (Hadyn Davies), one Welshman and seven famous squash players



The 50th history included an introduction from the Chair, articles about Juniors, club, district, Scottish and international matches, and provided lists of club championship winners from 1937 onwards. It also listed details of international appearances.



March 1964 Scotland beat England – the first time they had lost. Ollie Balfour, Ian la Terriere, George Chisholm, Bob Montgomery, Mike Oddy



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Tournaments through the Ages

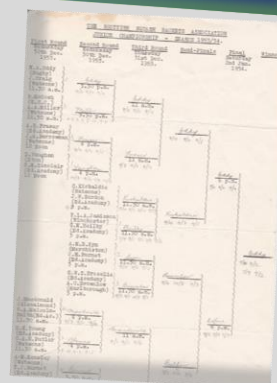
1947-2024



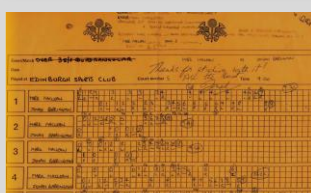
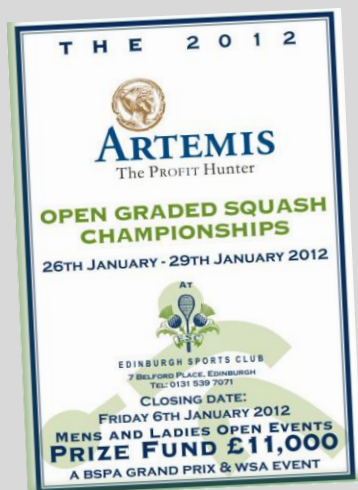
1977 – Scottish team for Home Internationals in Cork



1989 TeleSquash semi-finals:
Jansher and Chris Dittmar win



1953-54 SSRA Junior Championships



1986 – Jonah Barrington competes in the ESC 50th Anniversary event



2019 European Club at ESC - Men's bronze medallists and court cleaner



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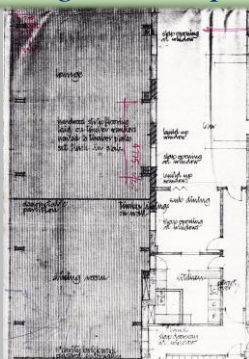
Developments through the Ages

Some developments happened...

The 1937-38 Art Deco extension with feature windows



1968 – Lounge, dining and reception



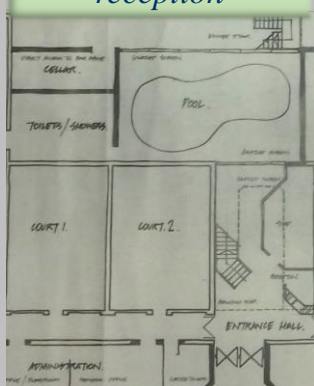
*2014-2022
Padel development*



The Club's development has largely been gradual and functional rather than sudden and controversial, at least partly due to the somewhat constrained nature of the site. The first three courts in 1936 were quickly augmented by a further three, social space was more than doubled in 1968 (along with two extra glass-backed courts), the 1990's saw the addition of a fitness room, and Padel has dominated development in the 2010's and 2020's. Proposed developments which didn't happen included a swimming pool (twice – in the 1980's and 1990's), indoor tennis in the 1990's, a newbuild and blocks of flats in the 2000's and Real Tennis in 2010.

...and some didn't...

1986 – a swimming pool and court 3 repurposed as reception



The 2005 proposal for a new club, and three multi-storey residential blocks



The 2010 proposal for a Real Tennis court





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Interior changes through the Ages

The first major change to the Club's interior was the addition of the four extra courts in 1937, including Court 5 with its extensive viewing capacity. Images of court 5 below show the Duke of Edinburgh visiting in 1960, and the 2020 ESC Open on the same court, with winners former World #1 Karim Abdel Gawad, and Donna Lobban.



The first bar to be constructed was a quarter-circular affair in the corner of what was then described as the 'Committee Room in 1957. This was upgraded to the bar as we know it today, which was created in 1970. The lounge is adaptable as is shown below.



1957 – A Bar in Miniature



1970 – A proper Bar



The 1995 lounge – The 'Retro' style of the time...



The 2021 lounge – A 'Big' Birthday party conversion

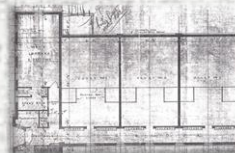


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Timeline

1936-2025

1936 Three singles squash courts, Male + Female changing, Lounge



1937 Two more singles squash courts, doubles squash court



1939-1945 Club closes during WW2

1955 Two Tennis courts and cocktail bar



1968 Lounge, dining, offices, courts 6 and 7



1995 Fitness room, Men's sauna, Ladies steam



2014 First Padel court turf cut



2020 Third covered padel court completed



2026 ESC 90th Anniversary



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New Developments

2014-2022 Padel comes to ESC

In 2014, ESC became the first facility in Scotland to install a padel court, and has led the charge ever since. Funded principally from our own reserves, but with assistance from the Lawn Tennis Association, this facility has proven to be key to the club's success going forward, with regular 100% daily court occupancy

Future Developments

Our Crystal ball doesn't enable us to see all our directions of travel, but we will aim to keep the Club at the forefront of racket sport development. National Padel leagues for Men and Ladies were announced early in 2025, and Club intends to take part in those events





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The Future?

We look into the crystal ball

You can be sure that the club, led by the board (which is appointed by the members), will aim to keep the business financially solvent in member ownership, and at the forefront of rackets development.

We may not be able to envisage the expanding Edinburgh tram network making its way past the Club as the Water of Leith branch line 😊 but we will continue to offer the best possible experience to our members and visitors. We regularly host private parties, one example of which is the BBQ shown at the foot of this page. As we approach our 90th anniversary in 2026, **Gemma Celata** (our hidden gem), will, we believe, continue to be one of Edinburgh's best kept secrets for many years to come.



*2024 Padel finals day and
BBQ – the first of many?*





Acknowledgements

Many thanks to many...

- The founders in 1936, for their vision
- The organisers of the 50th anniversary booklet
 - Successive Boards, for their patience
- The organisers of events, sporting and social
- The photographers who recorded the events
- The author and contributors to the Club History website
 - Others we have unintentionally omitted

*This brochure was created using PowerPoint
by the Edinburgh Sports Club historian*

