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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
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Women's Sporting Lives: A biographical study of elite amateur tennis  
players at Wimbledon

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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# ABSTRACT

The history of amateur tennis pre and post the Second World War is dominated by the sporting biographies of male players with women's stories largely ignored. This research addressed the issue of women tennis players' marginalisation through a biographical analysis of the women's amateur circuit with particular emphasis on the previously untold story of four British tennis players: Mrs. Phyllis King (née Mudford, who competed at the Wimbledon Championships 1928-1953), Mrs. Joan Hughesman (née Curry, Wimbledon 1939-1960), Mrs. Joy Michelle (née Hibbert, Wimbledon 1947-1957), Mrs. Christine Janes (née Truman, Wimbledon 1957-1974). The lives of the women were investigated utilising biographical methods of life story interviews and analysis of life documents including published biographies and archival and media sources.

Gender and social class emerged as key themes which were explored through the microcosm of women's tennis shedding new light on a wide range of issues from the influence of family, gender role expectations and life on the amateur tennis circuit. The findings reveal the significance of fashion in British tennis whereby it is argued that choice of clothing was a form of gender compliance. Further to this the contributions of fashion designer Teddy Tinling is recognised as a key factor in changing the shape of women's tennis post the Second World War. The research reveals the key role sport played in shaping the women's identity from the onset of their playing careers through to their retirement from sport.



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# DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Janine van Someren

declare that the thesis entitled

Women's Sporting Lives: A biographical study of elite amateur tennis players at Wimbledon

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

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# Chapter 1: Sporting Lives

## Introduction

Women's sporting lives have traditionally been under-represented within the subjects of sport sociology, sport history and sporting biographies. Their participation has received scant analysis and it has been widely acknowledged that within the history of women's sport in Britain, relatively little is known about what sportswomen actually did. Moreover, women's sporting lives from the turn of the twentieth century have been largely ignored (Parratt, 1989). This research seeks to redress this gap within tennis and in so doing examines the sporting lives of a small group of British women pre and post World War II who competed at the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) Wimbledon and thereby offers important new insights into the world of women's tennis.

In the past sporting texts focussed primarily on men's sporting lives with the result that women's sporting lives were marginalised. It is important to move beyond these restrictive texts to gain a better understanding of how women felt about themselves and their experiences within and beyond the sporting world. Biographical research presents an opportunity to do so and provides a much needed depth of understanding through its consideration of the individual and appreciation of the value of personal experience. Parratt (1989) recognises the usefulness of autobiographies in particular for gaining an understanding of how sport contributed to the reshaping of women's lives in Victorian and Edwardian England. Indeed, when examining women's sporting lives it is essential to understand the impact of the wider social, historical and geographical contexts.

At the turn of the twentieth century women were constrained by images of themselves as physically limited and sport reflected these societal ideals (Hargreaves, 1990a). While men competed at the Wimbledon Championships from 1877, women were denied entry due to the perceived physical demands of the game conflicting with prevailing views of females as frail and weak. It was not until 1884 that the first ladies' singles event took place with social commentators describing the game as:

A leisurely affair, the more so as the distinguished charmers participating were weighed down by heavy dresses over multi-petticoats, and were permitted to simper, or take a rest if their service broke down - in a final which provided more titters than jitters (cited in Hargreaves, 1990a, p.17).

Parratt (1989) views this historical view of females as inaccurate since it is shaped by late nineteenth century conceptions of both women and sport. Her detailed examination of sport highlights that whilst passivity and restraint may have been the preferred view of women in sport, they were not its sole characteristics. While beliefs about the role of women in sport were restrictive, political developments have also impacted on women's sporting lives.

The Second World War was undoubtedly a major turning point in British society (Smith, 1996). Sport in post war Britain was seen as a time to re-organise and re-structure. Tennis championships which had been postponed during the Second World War were re-established in 1945. Titmuss (1950, cited in Smith, 1996, p.1) claims that the events of Second World War led to:

Changes in people's attitudes and in social policy: the mood of the people changed and, in sympathetic response, values changed as well.

Yet there are very few works of social and cultural history on post-war British sport (Holt and Mason, 2000), and even less research on the inter-war years of British sport. My research seeks to provide a greater understanding of how these developments in attitudes and values impacted on the sporting lives of women tennis players and in doing so to shed light on a largely un-researched sporting period.

While there is minimal information regarding the women champions of the amateur era there is little, if any research on the women who competed alongside them but never won a major championship, although they competed for Britain in international events. Schoenfeld's (2004) biographical study of two American tennis players from the post war amateur era, Althea Gibson (1927-2003) and Angela Buxton, highlights an interest in the lives of female tennis players beyond simply the major Championship winners. He recognised the need to acknowledge the lives of the players who were the underpinning of every tournament even though they may have lost in the early rounds and were rarely winners of tournaments.

Their careers are usually forgotten as soon as their names cease to appear in the agate type in the world's newspapers. Yet the story of how each of them happened to emerge from whichever village or country club or urban center spawned them is often a compelling one, lacking only the sanction of a championship to make it resonate (Schoenfeld, 2004, p.152).

An examination of the lives of these sporting females, both winners and losers, allows us to gain a more complete understanding of the amateur tennis circuit pre

and post the Second World War, while additionally offering insights into the role of sport in shaping female identity. The notion that sport participation is related to the process of identity development has been recognised in socialisation research (Stevenson, 1990). Central to the examination of identity development is an understanding of athletes' experiences from their first involvement through to their transition beyond sport (Coakley and Donnelly, 1999).

The foundations of the current study are biographical with a focus on the women tennis players and their experiences on the amateur tennis circuit. Biographical methods are used to develop an understanding of the individual players throughout the various stages of their life, from their first introduction into sport through to life beyond sport. This study recognises the importance of social and historical contexts in its examination of the lives of the female tennis players who were part of tennis's development, growth and maturity from amateur days until the move to open, professional, tennis in 1967. The aim is to redress a gap in knowledge and thereby provide important insights into the world of tennis during this Golden Era (International Tennis Federation, 2003).

## My Sporting Life

This study has been influenced by many factors. A principal influence is my connection with sport and specifically tennis. Tennis had been at the forefront of my life; since learning to play tennis as a child with my mum, to representing Ireland as a teenager and through to living in south west London, a short train ride from the All England Lawn Tennis Club Wimbledon. Throughout my childhood, until my move to an English university, playing tennis had shaped who I was, how I was seen by others, and how I interacted with other people. Tennis had shaped my personality, it had given me a social confidence and love of travel, and decisions were made regarding friendships and education based on my position as a tennis player. I had played tennis consistently, regularly and enthusiastically from the age of four. Tennis was my sport. I trained up to four times mid-week, followed by weekends of coaching and competition. School holidays were dominated by tennis tournaments, tennis camps and tennis coaching. Tennis was my life.

The move to England led to a change of context, socially, culturally and geographically, which led to a major turning point in my life. Tennis was no longer my life. There was a new student world, a university cocoon with new friends, challenges, learning opportunities (academically and socially), tennis was simply a distraction, and I no longer had the desire to invest my time in tennis: I retired. I now had to build my identity and a new life based around me as an individual without the



constraints of labels such as 'student athlete' or 'tennis player'. My involvement in tennis slowly dwindled to occasional matches for the university team, a weekend job coaching junior tennis players and hits in the summer with enthusiastic friends.

Towards the end of my second year at university, attracted by the prospect of a summer job, I had the opportunity to visit the place which had been the focus of my childhood dreams the All England Lawn Tennis Club Wimbledon. My first glimpse of the clubhouse with its ivy clad façade was enough to make my heart skip a beat. The sight of players from all corners of the world congregating at Wimbledon made me think back to the life I had once lived, a life I had once loved. I realized that Wimbledon was still there for others and I could share in their passion by simply being there. Tennis was no longer my life but it evidently still had a hold over me. The lure of SW19 (Wimbledon) remained and I was to return annually to the All England Club with a renewed love of tennis.

When I finished university I applied to join a sport sociology teaching team and started as a graduate teaching assistant which led to a career in lecturing sport sociology. Working in south west London meant that I could continue my annual homage to Wimbledon and the teaching led to an interest in the impact of sport on people's lives throughout their lifetimes and particularly female athletes as I was lecturing about gender issues and sport for the sport science degree. I became aware of how being a female and playing international tennis had shaped who I had become. My relatively brief, but committed, exposure to tennis had a major impact on the direction my life had taken and led me to ask: what if I had continued competing, taking up the offered sports scholarship to America? What happens when your life revolves around sport? I was keen to understand further the lives of women who had significant careers within tennis. How had their participation shaped their lives across their life span? Perhaps an understanding of their sporting lives would help to give me a glimpse of how my brief career in tennis would go on to impact on me throughout my life.

## Outline of the Thesis

The literature review (chapters 2 and 3) seeks to demonstrate the significance of the social, cultural and historical context regarding women's place in sport and society in pre and post Second World War Britain. The review comprises of two chapters which are the building blocks for a socio-cultural and historical discussion of an athlete's participation in sport throughout their life cycle, with particular emphasis on female athletes.

The first part of the literature review (chapter 2) is devoted to a discussion of females' experiences of getting involved in sport. An overview of the place of women's sport in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Victorian and Edwardian Britain is provided as a context to understanding the lives of the first female tennis players at Wimbledon. Also discussed is the social context of women's participation in tennis when sport was considered a male bastion and women's participation was viewed as relatively inferior (Hargreaves, 1987).

Chapter 2 also draws attention to the process of becoming an athlete. The historical background to the development of tennis and tennis coaching within Britain is examined with particular reference to women tennis players. Women's initial contact with tennis is analysed taking into account the inherent links with issues of gender and social class. The influence of significant others and specifically the role of the family in the lives of female athletes is explored. These significant others play a key role in the turning points of a young person's life as they help shape the choices of female athletes as they become an athlete.

An examination of the experiences of female athletes is explored within chapter 3. The focus is on understanding the context of amateur tennis in Britain prior to the professionalisation of tennis at The Championships Wimbledon, in 1968. In doing so light is shed on the lives of female tennis players during the amateur era. These elite players competed during a period of conflict between the world of amateur tennis and the growing professionalisation of tennis. The experiences of female athletes within the male dominated world of elite sport are analysed taking into account the conflict of Western society's expectations regarding women and feminine appearance versus sporting expectation and the athleticism of female athletes. The role of fashion in women's tennis is discussed alongside key issues such as compulsory heterosexuality in women's sport and the sexualisation of female athletes.

The chapter also considers the transition experiences of female athletes as they retire from sport. In particular the impact of a sports career on the individual's life upon retirement is investigated. The issues surrounding this turning point in an athlete's life are examined while also acknowledging the impact of socio-historical context. Analysing these transition experiences allows researchers to enhance their understanding of the impact of sport on an athlete throughout the life span and in particular female athletes.

Biographical research is the cornerstone of the study and an examination of its value in researching women's sporting lives is provided in chapter 4. Chapter 4 introduces

the data collection procedures which included undertaking four life story interviews and analysis of life documents. Particular attention is drawn to the issue of trustworthiness and memory due to the age of the participants (average age 83 years) and the length of time since they last competed at Wimbledon (on average the women had last played at Wimbledon 43 years prior to the life story interview). Pen portraits of the four women participants are presented in chapter 5. These are based on the findings from the life story interviews together with analysis of published biographies and media resources. This form of re-presentation affords a detailed overview of the women's lives while leaving scope for discussion of the similarities and differences between their stories in the chapters that follow.

Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the women's stories by drawing upon additional research findings from archival documents and media sources from the AELTC, and published biographical accounts of women tennis players from the amateur era. The women's development from junior club members to senior players on the amateur circuit is analysed in chapter 6. The chapter highlights key aspects of the women's early socialisation and in doing so illustrates the turning points of their early careers and the importance of significant others in shaping their sporting lives. Central to the women's early involvement was the influence of traditional gender role expectations and in examining these, chapter 6 offers a rare insight into the perceptions of four women players as their early sporting lives are dissected drawing upon the most important features, of which family ranked highly.

The women's lives on the amateur tennis circuit are examined in chapter 7. A key feature of the women's stories is the influence of gender. In telling their stories they drew comparisons with the lives of male players on the tennis circuit. Also emerging from the players' life story interviews was the role of fashion and women's choice of clothing as a form of gender compliance. As such the study provides a unique examination into the dual identity of women players as they displayed physicality and athleticism whilst conforming to traditional gender role expectations. Subsequently the study highlights the dichotomy of the female-athlete as experienced by four women from the inter-war years through to the professionalization of tennis.

Chapter 8 summarises the key findings of the study and reflects on the research process. Accordingly it draws attention to specific aspects of the study including ethical issues, trustworthiness and acknowledgement of the position of the researcher. This involved reflecting on the women's narrated stories as distinct from their lives lived. A primary concern was providing the reader with an authentic

account of the women's lives; a concern which this study has endeavoured to achieve through respecting their life stories and by positioning the women's stories at the centre of the analysis.

# Chapter 2: Getting Involved in Women's Tennis

## Introduction

This chapter examines the development of women's involvement in sport and in particular focuses on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This era has been recognised as a period of significant social change which gave rise to modern sport. Mangan and Park (2004, p.3) recognised this when they stated,

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century sport served as a major vehicle for defining and reinforcing gender difference, at least among the middle and upper classes; but specifically how this operated in various contexts is unclear.

This chapter seeks to clarify the influence of gender differences on women's sports participation while examining their socialisation into tennis. Further to this, the progress from a social player to club competitor is analysed with an emphasis on the historical context. The players discussed in this chapter were the pioneers of women's tennis and their biographical information provides an important backdrop to the later analysis of published women's tennis biographies of pre and post war Britain.

Women's involvement in tennis commenced in the late nineteenth century, during a time of significant social change regarding western society's views of females. The Victorian perspective on women in sport as passive spectators was being challenged by their burgeoning involvement in active and competitive sport, the suffragette movement was gaining political momentum and society was beginning to acknowledge the change in women's social and economic standing. This chapter will discuss women's involvement in tennis within the context of these political and social advances.

Social institutions such as sports clubs and sporting governing bodies are key factors to account for when researching sports involvement. As a consequence this chapter outlines the emergence of tennis clubs in the 1870s and the subsequent founding of the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) in 1888 with reference to gender. Of particular interest are attitudes towards women tennis players and the impact this had on women's experiences within the sport. The chapter also discusses the influence of gender within tennis coaching. In doing so, tennis coaching books are analysed to

provide an insight into the gendered nature of tennis coaching during its formative years.

The chapter continues with an examination of players introduction to tennis. Sport socialisation does not occur in isolation and within this chapter a player's introduction to tennis is discussed with respect to the role of education and school sport. Additionally the various ways in which a family can influence sport participation are analysed. Moreover when examining tennis, a family's social class is of particular importance since tennis has traditionally been largely associated with the middle and upper classes.

The development of women's sport took place alongside women's emancipation within wider society. Thus additionally this chapter considers the influence of women's emancipation on women's sports participation based on one particular women's movement, namely the influential Women's League of Health and Beauty (WLHB) since its objectives helped change perceptions of women's role in society as it brought the benefits of exercise to a wider group of women (Turner, 2006).

## Perceptions of Female Tennis Players

The ability of female tennis players to compete successfully while challenging the conflicting messages surrounding gender expectations provided the foundations for subsequent female involvement in tennis and helped establish women's tennis in the twentieth century. This section provides an overview of women's involvement in tennis from the late nineteenth century and discusses perceptions of female tennis players. In doing so it highlights the ideological barriers to participation which female tennis players had to contend with.

Women's sporting lives have a relatively short documented history. Their biographical stories have been largely ignored by the male dominated world of sport history and sociology (Hargreaves, 2007) and it is notable that women's sport has developed within an environment of compliance and contradictions. The "silencing" of female athletes has much to do with wider society's perceptions of gender expectations and what was deemed to be appropriate (or not) for the female form. The lives of the women who competed in the early years of tennis' development helped shape views of both the female body and the female athlete.

When women began competing in tennis tournaments during the 1880s, competitive sport for women was not generally accepted and as a consequence the expansion of women's sport participation took place in a climate of much concerned debate.

Women's involvement in sport was thought to involve physical and mental effort which was beyond the capabilities of the female body (Mewett, 2003). Doctors advised against strenuous forms of exercise for women on the grounds that exercise would place excess physiological pressure on the female body. Moreover participation for women was regarded as conflicting with expectations of how women should behave. Dorothea Lambert Chambers (1878-1960), the seven times winner of Wimbledon between 1903 and 1914, was the first female player to publish an instruction book for "ladies". She summarised the objections to women's sport in her instruction book on tennis as follows:

What are the objections to games for girls? It seems to me the current arguments against them are (1) that they are injurious to health (2) that they impair the womanliness of women; (3) that they mar her appearance (Lambert Chambers, 1910, p.1).

As Lambert Chambers (1910) stated, participation in sport was viewed not only as ideologically unacceptable for a woman but there was also a prevailing belief that women would not be able to physically exert themselves in playing sport. Early twentieth century attitudes towards women and exercise were based on Victorian notions of femininity and a major concern was the damaging effect of physical activity on a woman's femininity (Parratt, 1989). Hargreaves (1994, p.53) described the influence of the Victorian ideal of femininity on women's sports at the turn of the twentieth century:

In America and Britain many middle-class women remained expensive, unhealthy and immobile showpieces, and all forms of female 'sports' or 'physical recreation' complemented the middle-class conception of ladylike behaviour.

This "ladylike behaviour" was achieved by women tennis players as they were able to compete while dressed in clothing which conformed to gender role expectations, thus combining competitiveness and femininity in a socially acceptable manner. In addition playing games such as tennis was perceived as acceptable to middle class women as it fell into the category of 'conspicuous activity', which were games that reflected passivity rather than activity (Hargreaves, 2004).

Parratt's (1989) review of the monthly magazine *Womanhood* which was published between 1898-1907 provides evidence that some middle class females who were involved in sport challenged the concept of the Victorian female as passive and subordinate. *Womanhood* presented the Victorian and Edwardian sportswoman as being actively involved in physically demanding sport and activities. Lawn tennis, alongside horse-riding, skating and dance were recognised as appropriate sports for

a young Victorian or Edwardian girl. Womanhood provides an insight into the social practices of the educated middle and upper class women who subscribed to this magazine. Emerging research on the development of modern sport in the Victorian period supports Parratt's research that women were involved in a wider range of activities (Mangan and Park, 2004).

In the past leisure activities in England consisted predominantly of masculine games and according to Heathcote et al., (1890) it had never been the custom for women to be involved until tennis developed as a sport for both sexes. From a gender point of view tennis was a national game (McKane, 1925; Holt, 1989). While other sports reported that female participants were unable to withstand the pressure of competing, tennis was seen as a sport that women could compete in without putting unnecessary mental or physical strain on their bodies (Doherty and Doherty, 1903). Lambert Chambers (1910) shared the opinion of brothers Reggie Doherty (1872-1910) and Laurie Doherty (1875-1919), men's Wimbledon champions between 1897 and 1906, as she explained how women's sport had led to the disappearance of "the hysterical female" (p.2). She said:

I hope and believe there are comparatively few people who deny that athletics have done much for the health and mind of the modern girl (p.1).

Women received mixed messages regarding the appropriateness of sport, although these were later challenged by both male and female tennis players in the early twentieth century. Lambert Chambers encouraged female participation, and was confident about their abilities in sport. She wrote:

Is the essential feature of a woman her weakness, just as the essential feature of a man is his strength, not merely physical, but mental and moral strength? I do not think so (Lambert Chambers, 1910, p.1).

Male tennis players had also advocated the benefits of tennis for women within their publications. The British player, Wilfred Baddeley (1872-1929), winner of the men's singles championship in 1891, 1892 and 1895 includes a 'Ladies Chapter' written 'by a Lady Player' in his instruction manual *Lawn Tennis: The Oval Series* (1895). He outlines the benefits of lawn tennis for women:

Not only does the style of the game give her a free and graceful carriage but the physical exercise is splendid, and the mental should satisfy anyone but the veriest blue stocking (p.82).

Tennis provided women with a relatively safe environment to engage in physical activity and a space to potentially challenge patriarchal ideology since it was widely acknowledged as a pastime suitable for both sexes.



A turning point in the perception of women's tennis was reached in 1919 when the French player Suzanne Lenglen (1899-1938) made her debut at Wimbledon and won the first of six women's singles finals. Her display of both physical and psychological strength demonstrated that women's tennis could compete alongside men's tennis. As Engelmann (1988, p.23) pointed out:

There was a tennis revolution on the horizon. A revolution for women in sport was under way. In the past there had been toleration of the women on the Centre Court. No longer. Now they were welcome.

While leading women tennis players, such as Lenglen, helped in the development of tennis as a game which would benefit the female player, there remained considerable criticism and scepticism about women's playing abilities.

Initial discussions concerning female tennis players were largely derogatory since playing competitive tennis was perceived to be beyond the physical ability of women. The practical requirements and mental scoring within tennis tournaments were perceived by some as being beyond the capabilities of women. Charlotte "Lottie" Dodd (1871-1960), an accomplished British tennis player, winning the Wimbledon Championships five times between 1887 and 1893, was critical of the early attitudes towards ladies tennis. She recalled how:

There were piteous moans about the weight of the balls, and appeals not to spoil it as croquet had been spoilt, by making it too scientific. It was represented, not it may be hoped by ladies, but on their behalf, that no lady would understand tennis scoring (quoted in Wade and Rafferty, 1984, p.23).

The unnamed female author of 'A Lady Player' in Baddeley's (1895) *Lawn Tennis* outlines the aesthetic, physical and psychological benefits of tennis for female players while also critical of other female players as "far too lazy" (Anon, cited in Baddeley, 1895, p.82). This description of the lazy female tennis player is also noted by Lambert Chambers (1910). She described a match which she won by consistently using drop shots which forced her opponent to run to the net. This was criticised by the losing opponent when she stated she did not think it "fair to play sneaks" (Lambert Chambers, 1910, p.13). The description of female tennis players as lazy suggests that some women players were conforming to expectations surrounding the female athlete's physical ability: conscious of the public gaze they chose to not put their bodies through excessive physical strain therefore maintaining their femininity while competing in sport.

The first ladies championships were held in Ireland at the Fitzwilliam Club Dublin in 1876, one year prior to Wimbledon's inaugural tournament for men. This historic women's tournament was played alongside the Irish Championships for men with a draw of just two players. The Irish middle classes of the 1870s were heavily influenced by Victorian principles and although they allowed women to compete, the match was not played on the courts at Fitzwilliam Square as this was deemed too public for women. Instead the women's match was played on private grounds away from the club and disapproving sponsors of the tournament. Entry to the women's matches was by member's vouchers only and this exclusivity led to a high demand for tickets. A journalist writing for *The Field* (1880, cited in Higgins, 2006, p.87) commented: "Of course the ladies' competitions suffer very much from the unwillingness of the fair sex to play in public". Women tennis players were under scrutiny from the general public, the media and the governing body of tennis.

Within the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) there were misgivings regarding the development of the female tennis player. Herbert Chipp, the first secretary of the LTA, while recognising the growing participation of women in sport was wary of the repercussions of their involvement and commented:

Although the present movement may be (and undoubtedly is) carried to excess, and the athleticism of the fin de siècle woman appears too pronounced, still it can't be denied that the change will ultimately benefit the race at large...at all events physically. Whether the benefit is great morally...only time can settle (Chipp, 1898, quoted in Holt, 1989, p.128).

The LTA played a key role in developing tennis and the attitudes of its founders towards women players offers insights into perceptions of women in sport. The following section discusses the origins of tennis clubs in late nineteenth century Britain and the influence of gender expectations on women tennis players. The role of social class is also discussed as a key element in the development of tennis clubs.

## The Emergence of Lawn Tennis Clubs

Tennis clubs were largely characterised in terms of social class, with members predominantly coming from the middle classes due to the practical requirements of a large lawn to host tennis parties (Mason, 1988). As tennis developed in popularity, clubs were established as a venue for enthusiasts to play and these clubs also had a role to play in promoting the sport through club membership and competition. High subscription fees meant that in the early days lawn tennis remained elitist, although by 1910 there were clubs in some of the public parks (Lambert Chambers, 1910). As a result, getting involved in tennis through the club structure would have been easier

for young people from the middle and upper classes. By the 1930s there were 75,000 playing members of tennis clubs (Mason, 1988).

The tennis club structure in Britain was founded in the grounds of the Manor House Hotel, Leamington in 1872. Major Thomas Henry "Harry" Gem and Augurio Perera had been experimenting with a new ball game; both were keen rackets players and had been playing on the croquet lawn behind Perera's house in Edgbaston in Warwickshire. They first called their new game pelota (the Spanish word for ball) to acknowledge Perera's contribution but later changed the name to lawn rackets presumably in recognition of the croquet lawn on which they were playing and their interest in rackets, from which they borrowed the scoring system where 15 points up completed the game. Their equipment was adapted from real tennis curved headed rackets and a sagging net suspended on high poles. Gem and Perera wanted to develop a game for both men and women and experimented with the dimensions of the playing area to ensure the game would provide exercise for both sexes. Their experimentation meant that the size of the court, the weight of the balls and the construction of the racket could be modified for ladies (Aberdare, 1959).

The adaptation of a new sport for women is of significance. There was a growing need for a simple and lively pastime that would replace croquet as a sport that was open to both sexes. Croquet already had an enthusiastic following as it was one of the few competitive sports where men and women could compete on even terms. Sports writer and journalist for the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Mail, Wallis Myers' (1930) overview of the early days of lawn tennis highlights the confluence of gender and class. He stated:

Lawn tennis was first pursued on private English lawns by middle-aged people. Its original disciples... were men of part or whole leisure, and their womenfolk, praising Providence for providing an outdoor exercise more violent than croquet, found an athletic status equal to that of their lords. Small wonder they embraced it, first with curiosity and then with devotion. Croquet mallets were flung down and domestic lawns were bisected with nets; in some cases, where Nature interfered, noble oaks and elms were sacrificed (p.25).

By the summer of 1875 there was widespread popularity for tennis although the rules remained disjointed. A sub-committee of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) were appointed to form a code. The committee consisted of three prominent players Mr CG Heathcote, Mr Henry Jones and Mr Julian Marshall, the runner-up in the first men's singles championships of 1877. They drew up a provisional set of rules that

were confirmed and adopted by the MCC on 24 June 1875. At the same time the All England Croquet Club (AECC) was experiencing a decline in membership and because of the popularity of the new sport lawn tennis they felt they could increase their revenue by converting one of the croquet lawns into a tennis court. In 1877 the All England Croquet Club changed its name to the All England Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club (AECLTC) and held the first tennis championships. The tournament was an all-male, all-British affair. By this time the leadership and management of lawn tennis had been handed over to the All England Club who maintained leadership until 1888 (Barrett, 2001). In 1888 the All England Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club had handed over the leadership and management of tennis to the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) and the Lawn Tennis Association was formed (LTA).

Meanwhile women players were competing in club competitions across Britain in towns such as Edgbaston, Cheltenham, Bath, Exmouth (King and Starr, 1988). The proliferation of tennis tournaments throughout Britain meant that women players were becoming seasoned competitors and the numbers of women competing increased. In 1884, seven years after the first tennis tournament at the All England Club, in Wimbledon, the women's singles event was launched. In the first year of women's competition, an all-British field of 13 competed for a silver flower basket valued at twenty guineas that was won by the already accomplished tournament player, nineteen year old Maud Watson (1864-1946) (Wade and Rafferty, 1984). Watson was the tournament favourite, having an unbeaten record of tournament play for three years and having recently won the Irish Championships.

From the onset of the Wimbledon Championships women players were treated less favourably than the men. While the defending champion of the men's title only had to compete in a final "challenge round", Maud Watson, the women's defending champion of 1885 had to compete in each round of the competition before proceeding to, and ultimately winning, the final. It was not until 1886 that the defending women's champion, Watson, was allowed to "sit out" of the preliminary rounds of competition and defend her title in the "challenge round", against the challenger Blanche Bingley (1863-1946). 1886 was also notable as the year in which the women's champion at Wimbledon was presented with a challenge trophy, owned by the club and passed annually from winner to winner. An indication that the All England Committee was beginning to take women's tennis seriously.

Alongside competitive club play, lawn tennis occupied a central place in the social calendar of the late nineteenth century (Hargreaves, 2004). Garden parties were based around games of lawn tennis and these social gatherings for the purpose of

play became a part of upper class English life. By 1895 it was acknowledged by Baddeley (1895) that the popularity of lawn tennis at garden parties was beginning to wane. Markings of the lawn tennis court continued to exist on every lawn of sufficient size but the dedicated players now had numerous club courts on which they could practice. The tennis club was replacing the garden party as a venue for playing tennis.

Playing tennis in the first decade of the twentieth century was still viewed as primarily a social activity. Lambert Chambers (1910) described some tennis clubs as using the game as an excuse for a garden party, "where long trailing skirts, sunshades and basketchairs predominate" (p.41). Dorothy Round (1909-1982), the Wimbledon ladies singles champion of 1934 and 1937, divided tennis clubs into two broad categories. The first type of club plays only mediocre tennis and was seen more as a social centre. The second type has members who "sacrifice everything to brilliant play" (Round, 1934, p.11). Round (1934, p.13) writing in *Modern Lawn Tennis* advises anyone who puts "tennis above afternoon tea and chatter to join the latter". With the growing popularity of tennis clubs and club competition there was a growing demand for specialist tennis coaching.

Tennis coaching and coaching books have been part of the development of the sport since the first tennis books were published in 1875. The following section traces the evolution of women's tennis coaching through an analysis of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century tennis coaching books. Additionally, the development of playing styles and coaching methods is examined through scrutiny of these books.

## Tennis Coaching and the "Ladies" Game

Tennis coaching books provide a particularly valuable insight into women's tennis and the perceived differences between male and female players. The history of modern sports has been based on gender division, focussing on the perceived differences between men and women, rather than on the less obvious relations of power between them (Hargreaves, 2007). Understanding these perceived gender differences within tennis, as seen through tennis coaching books, allows the biographical researcher to gain a closer and more nuanced understanding of the social evolution which occurred in tennis and the impact of these developments on female players.

Early tennis instruction books included details of the rules of play, information on the required playing equipment, court dimensions and technical guidelines on how to play the game (Marshall, 1878). Many of the early tennis coaching books focussed

on the male player and of the 116 tennis books printed between 1874-1920 (Wimbledon Library Catalogue, 2001) only two were written by women; Dorothea Lambert Chamber's *Lawn Tennis for Ladies* (1910) and Suzanne Lenglen's *Lawn Tennis for Girls* (1920). Within the majority of the earliest tennis coaching books the female player is separated from the male player by comments placed in a specific chapter. Indeed, many of the early coaching books had chapters devoted specifically to the 'Ladies' Game'. Peile (1885, p.63) dedicates a large section of his book to "Ladies (and there are many such, I know) who love lawn tennis as a 'game of skill' and who do not play merely to kill time".

Placing comment on women's tennis into separate chapters was a common format adopted by male authors. Baddeley (1895) commissioned 'A Lady Player' to write a chapter on ladies tennis and the Doherty brothers also followed this template when they included a chapter on "Ladies Play" written by the 1903 semi-finalist Miss Toupee Lowther (Doherty and Doherty, 1903).

Within the text of tennis coaching books men were portrayed as the dominant force. Crawley's (1921) tennis coaching book provides an indicative example of the disproportionate use of the term "he" when discussing a tennis player's technique. Instructions are written with a focus on the male player as illustrated below in his instructions for beginners and doubles positioning:

The first aim of the beginner should be to hit the ball; it does not matter how he hits it, or at what point of its flight (Crawley, 1921, p.7).

In the first place each pair should regard themselves as one man, a wide man (Crawley, 1921, p.99).

The sole reference to women playing tennis is contained in his chapter on the backhand where the inadequacies of female players are outlined as follows:

Women, in particular, fail in natural aptitude for throwing, half-volleying and the backhand hit (Crawley, 1921, p44).

Coaching books reflected patriarchal ideology as reproduced in the insular world of tennis. The male tennis player was perceived as the voice of authority, while the female player was separated from men's tennis by both language and structure. The language of difference can usefully be examined through a review of the coaching instruction books, with specific reference to the advice regarding the tennis serve and the volley.

The technical requirement of the tennis serve has played a significant role in separating the sexes. Historically the tennis serve is played at the start of every point

in a match, with players alternating server after each game. Female players were encouraged to avoid strenuous movement while playing tennis and as a result they were taught to serve underarm and volleying was considered improper (Wimbledon Museum, 2005). By suggesting a different serve for male and female players it meant that spectators viewed different formats of the same game, demonstrating how women's and men's tennis were differently defined. Heathcote et al.'s, (1890) description of the serve in women's tennis highlights the importance of aesthetic qualities in the women's game:

Slowly underhand and it cannot be said that any other type of serve is particularly graceful or particularly effective (p.269).

Heathcote et al. (1890) imply that it would not have been considered feminine for women to serve overarm in a comparable way to men.

The difference between the physical abilities of male and female players is also highlighted by the Doherty brothers. They suggest that technical adaptations should be made by female players when serving due to their limited physical strength (Doherty and Doherty, 1903). As one of the brothers commented:

I do not believe in the overhead service [for women] and for this reason, unless an overhead service is distinctly severe it is ineffective and if a lady attains this necessary severity it is generally at the cost of her vital energy (Doherty and Doherty, 1903, pp.71-72).

The tennis coaching books reflected society's view of females having a finite amount of energy (McCrone, 2006). This belief in the female's lack of physicality meant that female tennis players were receiving tennis instruction as separate and in some respects as a different entity to men.

The perception of females as weak and frail was internalised by the female tennis players as even the most successful female players of the early twentieth century were self-critical regarding their ability to serve. Lambert Chambers was regarded as "probably the greatest women player before the First World War" (Barrett, 2001, p.49), she discussed the limitations of a women's physique observing:

I have tried the American service but I think the strain is too severe for the average girl, and the advantage gained would be very slight, for the rest of your game would deteriorate, owing to fatigue (Lambert Chambers, 1910, p.47).

Heathcote et al. (1890) also suggested that a female tennis player serving in any way other than underarm would be ineffective due to the limited physical ability of the female player. Betty Nuthall (1911-1983), the most successful British player to play in

the United States Championships, served underarm when she played Helen Wills Moody (1905-1998) in the 1927 United States Championships final (Huntington-Whiteley, 1998). Further, Dorothy Round encouraged the use of the underarm serve when girls lacked the ability to serve overhand. She believed a good underhand serve should always be used until the girl has developed her overhead serve (Round, 1934). The female tennis players' style of play was presented as different to men and therefore not comparable. This view of women's sport as separate to men's sport reflected the view of women being inherently different to men.

While the overhead serve was portrayed as a technique that divided the abilities of the sexes, the volley was also discussed within coaching books as a shot which women would physically struggle to make. This perceived weakness is highlighted by Lambert Chambers and Round in their coaching books. Lambert Chambers (1910) felt that volleying was too physically demanding for women and should only be used when playing doubles. In 1908 Lambert Chambers' friend and doubles partner, Miss V. Pinckney, organised a ladies' volleying league, whereby all players who entered a ladies doubles event were 'obliged' to volley (Lambert Chambers, 1910). The obligation to volley encouraged more women to play an attacking doubles formation based on net play and while the experiment was successful at the Beckenham tournament, it diminished in 1909 when its pioneer Miss Pinckney was no longer playing. Round (1934, p.59) states that,

Volleying used to be considered primarily a man's game; the pace is liable to be too strenuous for any except the fittest of women players. But women as well as men, once they have mastered the elementals of tennis, should acquire a few advanced shots of this kind.

Round (1934) explains the quandary surrounding the volley since it was perceived to be a physical shot yet it was required for successful competitive female tennis players. Round's subsequent publication, *Tennis for Girls* (1938), was specifically aimed at women's tennis and in it she described how more women were volleying in 1938 compared to the previous year thus quashing the myth of the female as a baseline player. Perceptions of women in sport were challenged by pioneering female tennis players, such as Round, who experimented with these so called "masculine" playing styles, both technically and tactically.

The perceived differences between the sexes are also found in discussions of mixed doubles. Public opinion regarding men and women competing together has been subject to criticism throughout the development of sport. Holt (1989, p.8) states:



Give or take hunting with its gentry ladies and leaving aside mixed doubles in tennis as a ritual of polite courtship, mixed sport has frankly been considered unnatural; moreover segregated female sport itself has been a frail and pallid growth in the shade of men's sport.

Mixed doubles tactical advice revolved around targeting the female player "in which she is inferior, from a lawn tennis point of view to a man" (Heathcote et al., 1890, p.269) due to a belief that the female player was physically less able than her male partner. When men played tennis against women they were expected to adapt their own playing style based on the perceived physiological weakness of female players for "only a cad would hit the ball away from a lady instead of at her" (Wimbledon Museum, 2005).

Comments by Lambert Chambers (1910) suggest that the female tennis players' perceptions of mixed doubles were considerably higher than male players. She argued that the women are able to compete against men without spoiling the game:

There is no other game at the present time in which the combination of the sexes does not tend to minimise the enjoyment of the player and the interest of the spectator (p.11).

While men and women competed together in mixed doubles the differences between the sexes was still highlighted by the authors of tennis coaching books. Indeed when discussing mixed doubles the female player was presented as the weaker player as demonstrated by Crawley (1921, p.103) who stated "Most ladies, again, have the defect of only being able to drive from forehand corner to forehand corner." As a reaction to the perceived weakness of women players, tennis writers began to focus their attention on the role of schools in developing tennis technique for girls. Wallis Myers' (1930) book *Lawn Tennis: Its Principles and Practice* suggests that social institutions such as schools were playing a role in coaching tennis to females at a time when many of the high profile players within tennis were still advising against particular forms of play based on the physiological myth of the weaker sex.

## School Sport and Women's Tennis

Schools had the potential to influence young women to further commit to the sport especially as the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) became increasingly involved with school tennis in 1941. This section focuses on the role of school sport and the influence of physical education (PE) teachers as they introduced young women to sport. PE teachers have the potential to shape a woman's perception of sport and her own physicality, as such an understanding of women's education and the role of physical education in the curriculum offers valuable insights into Western society's view of women and female athletes.

In examining the role of education in socialising individuals into sport and particularly British females, the section concentrates on the emergence of sport in the public schools of Victorian and Edwardian Britain. This period of time is chosen because,

Female sport is part of a continuous historic process and though in different forms, we recognise today images of 'natural' physicality, muscular athleticism and commodified versions of the female 'body beautiful' which had its origins in the nineteenth and earlier years of the twentieth century (Hargreaves, 1990b, p.34).

Within Victorian girls' public schools, games and physical training were employed to provide physical and moral benefits to young women (McCrone, 2004).

The expansion of physical education and games in girls' public schools and at universities helped to improve women's physical condition and this was believed to enable greater intellectual achievement (Mason, 1988). The pioneers of the physical education profession based their ethos on the role of physical exercise in the moral regulation of females (Hargreaves, 2004). There was an organised system of physical education in girls' public schools and by the late 1880s they had also embraced competitive sport. Madame Bergman-Osterberg (1849-1915), one of these pioneers of women's physical education, based her work on the drill system developed by the Swede, Per Henrik Ling (1776-1839) (Mason, 1988). This philosophy of exercise aimed to develop the mind, body and morals simultaneously; it was based on a belief that a sound and healthy body would lead to a successful moral and intellectual education (Parratt, 1989).

British society became increasingly tolerant of physical activity for young women and as Britain aimed to increase their success in international sport, schools were targeted in the hope that improved levels of physical education would lead to a fitter, healthier and more successful sporting nation. Tennis had been part of the school physical education curriculum since its development as a sport yet the range of involvement varied greatly between schools. Lambert Chambers and Kathleen (Kitty) McKane (1896-1992), winner of the ladies singles at Wimbledon in 1924 and 1926 were critical of the lack of serious tennis being played at schools in Britain (Lambert Chambers, 1910; McKane, 1925). Lambert Chambers (1910, p.44) stated that:

There was not much chance of improving at school, because nobody took the trouble to have the court or net of the right dimensions. The rules of the game were not even known.

The LTA was aware that to improve the standard of tennis in Britain they would have to improve the standards of tennis coaching within schools.

In January 1937 the Public Schools Lawn Tennis Association (PSLTA) was formed. This was affiliated to the LTA and the objective was to promote lawn tennis in public schools. Lawn tennis in public schools would have been significantly easier for games mistresses to teach since upper and middle class women became increasingly involved in lawn tennis in the 1870s and 1880s (Parratt, 1989) and tennis would have played a role in the social activities of these school children.

The LTA helped further the development of tennis in school when the Junior Lawn Tennis Club (JLTC) was formed by R.L. Quartier, a member of the LTA council, in 1941. The objective of the JLTC was to provide competitive play for young players. This was achieved by the establishment of the Aberdare Cup competition for girls in 1942. The LTA demonstrated their support of school tennis by providing a grant for the host schools to provide hospitality. The host school was also responsible for the administrative expenses and provided balls in the area finals. The competition was given additional prestige as the girls' cup final was played at the All England Club, Wimbledon (LTA, 1974).

The Girls' Schools' LTA (GSLTA) was formed in 1942 which was open to all comprehensive, grammar, independent and secondary schools. Their role was organising 40 coaching courses around the country during the Easter holidays, of these one was held in conjunction with the Boys' Schools' LTA. The GSLTA was supported by LTA grants and the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR). Both the LTA and the CCPR recognised the role schools could play in developing grass root talent. The successful school players were selected to attend coaching courses which provided the LTA with a broad base for talent identification and ensured a coaching pathway for future champions.

Although tennis was advocated as a suitable sport for girls at school the ability of PE teachers to coach tennis to an acceptable standard was questioned within the tennis magazine *Lawn, Tennis and Badminton* (1950) where games mistresses' ability to observe and correct tennis technique were criticised. By 1951 the LTA Teacher's Course held at Loughborough was drawing their students from the ranks of school teachers and improvements were being made in coaching standards (*Lawn, Tennis and Badminton*, 1951a).

While the LTA were making advances with tennis in schools and the training of PE teachers, tennis officials were also aware that a player's family could influence their progression within the sport. Families played a significant role in introducing young girls to tennis and nurturing their sporting talent since playing games and socialising

through sport were a particular characteristic of the middle classes in early twentieth century Britain. The following section examines the role of the family based on the development of women's tennis as a pastime of middle class society.

## Tennis in the Family

Involvement in tennis has traditionally been associated with families from the middle to upper classes and early lawn tennis was predominantly based around social gatherings in private houses. Tennis was central to middle class communities not just as spectator sport but also as a sign of social standing. "[Tennis] underpinned acceptance in local society and acted as a catalyst for social interplay" (Horwood, 2000, p.2). Lawn tennis played a large role in the social calendar of the late 1800s and since it was played by both sexes it had a degree of social importance attached to it. It was a new experience for men and women to compete on equal terms and this was also recognised as one of the main reasons for the popularity of tennis (Heathcote, et al., 1890).

Marshall (1884, p.37) described tennis as "Open without the paraphernalia of a costly court, to everyone at least who possessed a moderate sized and level lawn." Since nearly every middle class family had a croquet lawn it meant that there was room for a tennis court in the garden without too much disruption (Heathcote, et al., 1890). Garden parties were based around the game of lawn tennis and these social gatherings became a necessary part of English family life. Thomas Hardy describes a garden party in 1887 as:

Young people... so madly devoted to lawn tennis that they set about it like day labourers at the moment of their arrival (Wimbledon Museum, 2005).

By the end of the nineteenth century there was a growth in the number of middle and upper class families. As these families moved to the suburbs they became more spatially isolated and the more traditional forms of courtship were no longer sufficient. Tennis played a role in allowing young people of the opposite sex to socialise in the privacy of a garden under the supervision of family (Holt, 1989). The ability of a middle class family to indulge in leisure was symbolic of the material success of the main breadwinner, that is, the husband or father. Women adopted bourgeois values of femininity within their tennis playing by wearing long corseted dresses which hindered excessive physical movement yet allowed them to maintain acceptable levels of social decorum. Women, while physically incapacitated, were nonetheless viewed as a symbol of beauty (Hargreaves, 2004). As such they

conformed to the idealized model of femininity and were deemed acceptable to fathers and appealed to the opposite sex as suitable wives.

Historically women's progress in tennis has been strongly associated with family involvement. The early female players had to rely on family support to allow them access to coaching. Lambert Chambers (1910) recommended repetition of shots in tennis training and "If no friend were available for the purpose the butler had to devote an hour a day to throwing the ball in the given direction" (p.13). Lambert Chambers' recommendations highlight the particular type of player that was common during her playing career from 1903-1914 as being distinctly middle-upper class, living in a home with domestic servants.

Charlotte Sterry (1870-1966), is described by Barrett (2001) as one of the best British tennis players at the turn of the twentieth century; Sterry attributed her success as a tennis player largely to the outdoor pursuits of her early childhood, when she participated with her brothers in whatever games they played (Wallis Myers, 1903). However Betty Nuthall, a British player at Wimbledon from 1926-1946, attributes her success to her parents love of the game (Nuthall, 1928). Hazel Wightman (1886-1974), a key exponent of women's tennis, was vocal in her opinion of the importance of family: "Parents are the most important factor in getting a child interested in lawn tennis" (Lawn Tennis and Badminton, 1955, p.177).

Accordingly, middle-class families were receptive to women's involvement in tennis due to a combination of factors. Women could compete while maintaining a feminine appearance through their choice of clothing, the sport was equated with middle class values and participation in tennis was a form of leisure activity which defined a husband's or father's middle class social standing (Hargreaves, 1994; Turner, 2003). Tennis represented a social institution that was receptive to the involvement of women. In so doing, women tennis players were inconspicuously advancing the feminist cause through the support of their families and a belief in the benefits of physical activity (Parratt, 1989).

## Women's Changing Role

Increased awareness and growing tolerance of women's sporting lives in the early twentieth century was a reflection of women's standing in society. As women strived to achieve equality both their profile and social awareness increased. This section examines the role of the women's organisation, the Women's League for Health and Beauty (WLHB) in changing attitudes towards the abilities of women and the female body, which liberated women to enjoy physical movement and sport.

By the end of the First World War the lives of women in Britain had changed. They had shown in wartime that they could handle the demands of industry and the military by working in roles previously held by men. The role of women within society developed, and in 1928 they were allowed to vote on equal terms with men. However, while women were permitted to get involved in the war effort, they were not recognised as equal to men. Despite the fact that they had been actively involved in the war effort, their value was deemed less than men and the demand for fair pay remained a major issue (Turner, 2006).

While attitudes were slow to change for women in employment there was a change in perception of women in the 1920s which was reflected in an increase in the activity levels of women across the social classes. Lower social class women were now more involved in industry while upper class women were described as 'flappers'. Turner (2006) describes a 'flapper' as:

A freedom-loving, social butterfly for whom life in the 'roaring twenties' was a social whirl of never-ending parties, tennis and fun (p.50).

While the 'flapper' image only represented a small minority of the population it highlights the increased freedom of women. Sport, and specifically women's participation in tennis, illustrated the increased influence of women in society.

An increase in awareness of women's sport was largely due to the women's rights movements of the early twentieth century. Women's political movements pursuit of gender equality and the progress made opened doors to the women's health and fitness movement. Alongside the development of women's physical education in school, women were introduced to the benefits of physical activity by movements such as The Women's League for Health and Beauty (WLHB). Mason (1988) has noted that the WLHB played a key role in the development of women's sport alongside the wider movement for the emancipation of women in British society.

The WLHB was founded in 1930 by Mary Bagot Stack (1883-1935). Her aim was to bring the benefits of exercise to women across the social class spectrum. She organised classes for women in industry by targeting women workers from cities and towns who were employed in shops, factories and offices. Her classes involved exercises which were influenced by yoga and these included expressive dance to music, education on improving posture and discreet training in personal hygiene (Stack, 1988). Stack established the Bagot Stack Health School in London and trained women to teach her form of exercise. Classes were held nationwide and an annual

exhibition was held culminating in 1936 with 5,000 women taking part in the Albert Hall, London (Stack, 1988). The League represented a new outlet for women to be independent and healthy through exercise. Bagot Stack described her vision for the movement as:

A League of Women who will renew their energy in themselves and for themselves day by day. A League of Women pledged (so as to keep us lazy things at it) to breath, to leap – and, above all, to think... (Letter from Mary Bagot Stack quoted in Stack, 1988, p.115).

Bagot Stack's success in spreading the issue of empowerment for women through physical activity was yet another message to society, and men in particular, that there was a new form of feminine identity emerging from the war. It should also be noted that even though Bagot Stack had a clear vision of what the League should represent, it is evident from the above quotation that in her private thoughts, she re-affirmed the common held belief that females were inherently lazy. The WLHB is evidence of a change in the role that women could play in improving their health through exercise. Alongside this liberation of the female body, the increasing profile of women's sport and their achievements therein enhanced the appeal of women's sport to the nation. The international appeal of women's tennis became a sign of the emancipation of British women on the sporting field.

## Concluding Remarks

Sportswomen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were competing at a time of conflict between gender expectations and increased athleticism for females. As a result the sporting lives of these pioneering women were largely ignored. Mason (1988, p.7) surmises commonly held notions of the time:

Women had shared the opinion that their role was primarily domestic, their natures inherently unsuitable for 'manly' physical activity.

However, Mangan and Park (2004) argue that there were far more women involved in sport than had previously been assumed. Indeed this chapter confirms that women were playing tennis at a time when considerable restrictions were placed on women's participation in sport. Female tennis players competing at Wimbledon were willing to ignore those restrictions and by doing so, they challenged dominant attitudes and beliefs.

Elite amateur women players at the turn of the twentieth century were unapologetic in their physicality. When explaining the essential requirements of an individual to play tennis Lambert Chambers (1910, p.9) was confident in the ability of women to compete. She stated:

It is not physical and brute strength that is wanted as much as scientific application – finesse, skill and delicacy of touch, all of which women are just as capable of exercising as men.

The female tennis players discussed within the chapter were not simply reflecting social and cultural change, rather as Parratt (1989, p.156) states, women's sport in Victorian and Edwardian England was "a constitutive element of such change".

The role of tennis coaching manuals in providing women with advice on developing tennis techniques and dressing appropriately for competition has also been highlighted in the chapter. The advice was focussed on ensuring that women players adhered to gender role expectations while playing tennis. The chapter also outlined the role of families and schools in facilitating the progress of women players. Of particular importance were parental support and the social standing of the family. By providing details about attitudes towards women's participation in tennis a greater understanding of the context of the lives of women tennis players who competed at The All England Club Wimbledon both before and after the Second World War is gleaned.

The following chapter seeks to advance understanding of the progress of women tennis players from social club players to competitors on the amateur circuit. Gender issues are examined including differences between the experiences of male and female players on the tennis circuit regarding travel and funding. The issue of tennis fashion is discussed in detail as it played a significant role in shaping the identity of female players and clothing was used as a vehicle for promoting femininity within tennis. These insights provide a more comprehensive picture than hitherto of the sporting lives of elite female tennis players in the amateur era.



## Chapter 3: The Amateur Tennis Circuit

### Introduction

On 16 July 1884, the All England Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club at Wimbledon opened its doors to women to participate in the inaugural Ladies' Championships. Only thirteen women competed in the Championships, and these first female players competing at Wimbledon played an important role in establishing women's tennis and raising the profile of women's sporting lives. Yet, women had been competing at tennis tournaments for ten years before the all-male establishment at Wimbledon was "goaded" into opening the Championships to women (Barrett, 2001). The decision to open the Championships had both social and political significance during a period of women's suffrage. Moreover, the women were playing at a time when Queen Victoria was on the throne and a woman's "fate" was decided by her family's social standing (Turner, 2006).

The women who competed at Wimbledon were from the privileged middle classes where they would have been encouraged to play a sport such as tennis since it allowed for moderate exercise and social interaction with the opposite sex, whilst conforming to strict social etiquette surrounding such meetings. Although these women's lives were segregated by the stratified social system in Britain, their public profile allowed the wider population to witness the progress of women's sport. Through an understanding of the lives of these privileged few, it is possible to build up a clearer picture of women's tennis and appreciate how their lives have become embedded into the fabric of women's tennis.

This chapter provides an overview of the world of women's tennis from the turn of the twentieth century through to the professionalisation of the game in 1968. Further, the growth of tennis from a garden party pursuit to an international circuit is described since it provides a framework for understanding the development of women's tennis and the context of the amateur tennis circuit. The amateur era coincided with two World Wars, and the chapter investigates the impact of war on the lives of the tennis players, with particular reference to the impact of the Second World War.

To understand the lives of future women tennis players it is important to understand the people who influenced them as tennis players. Accordingly, this chapter focuses in part on Suzanne Lenglen, the six times Wimbledon champion between 1919 and 1925. Through her international success she helped to broaden the appeal of

women's tennis. She became a role model for many of the future players as she changed the face of tennis and in doing so contributed to the emancipation of women on the tennis court (Hargreaves, 1990b; Horwood, 2000).

The women who competed on the amateur tennis circuit were under constant scrutiny. Media commentators and spectators were mostly critical in their discussion of women players, from their playing style to their personal appearance and in particular their choice of clothing. A study of women's tennis would be incomplete without an acknowledgement of the importance of tennis fashion in shaping the identity and public persona of the elite amateur player. Key to the evolution of tennis fashion was the British designer, Teddy Tinling (1910-1990). Between 1952-1961 he designed for every female champion at Wimbledon and wrote extensively about the women's circuit, from Lenglen's era through to the professionalisation of tennis (Tinling and Oxby, 1963; Tinling and Humphries, 1979; Tinling, 1983). This chapter will discuss how women tennis players were re-modelled through the increased importance of fashion and review the influence of Tinling in re-designing women's tennis from the utilitarian fashions of the 1930s to the flamboyance of the 1950s.

The chapter concludes with reflections on the evolution of the amateur circuit from the Edwardian ethos of amateurism, to the shamateurism of tennis as it became more commercialised. The move of tennis into the open era of professionalism is described so as to illustrate the transitions that the amateur women players went through in the late 1960s, and the effect of professionalisation on the world of tennis at the end of the amateur era. The context of these women's sporting lives provides the foundation to understanding the world of amateur tennis and appreciating the role these women played in the development of the game.

## Amateur Tennis

The dominant sporting ideology of the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods was of fair play, with an emphasis on the joy of taking part (Mason, 1988). This was achieved through a categorisation of sport as either amateur or professional. When defining the term amateur it is important to recognise its different meanings across various historical contexts. Amateurism has been defined as a "product of society" (Allison, 2001, p.3) and for the purpose of this study it is associated with the Edwardian sport ethic, since this reflects the socio-historical context of tennis development.

An amateur player was defined as behaving in a gentlemanly fashion and amateur sport was associated with gentlemen (Allison, 2001). Within the game of tennis, it

was believed that the professional player would outplay the amateur, making the game itself unfair and therefore ungentlemanly. This was not allowed. Shrenk's (1988) definition of amateurism from an Olympic perspective is worth examining as the Olympic concept of amateurism was developed in the same historical period as tennis.

The term [amateurism] embraces ideas of fair play, good sportsmanship, honesty, adherence to the technical rules of the sport, a lack of commercialization, a certain ambivalence in the relation to victory or defeat, and the acceptance of a code of moral behaviour (Strenk, 1988, p.306).

These amateur ideals were reflected in the original rules of lawn tennis. The founders of the game introduced rules that ensured fair play and sportsmanship. For example, until 1890, if there was a strong wind blowing during a match the players would change ends after every serve to ensure there was no advantage for either player when serving (Barrett, 2001). The amended rule of changing sides after every odd game also ensures a fair test of serving ability for both ends and is in keeping with the original amateur ethos of the game.

Many sport historians perceive the Edwardian era of amateur sport as a golden age (Green, 1987; Engelmann, 1988). The term is based on the historical context of Britain as it broke from Victorian convention at the turn of the twentieth century. Edwardian Britain was a wealthy and class-conscious society which was reflected both on and off the court throughout the amateur tennis circuit of Europe, in Rome, Paris and Vienna (Green, 1987). The golden age of tennis describes a period from the 1880s to the decade following the Second World War when new standards of professionalism, competitiveness and technical competence were achieved (Barrett, 2001). Indeed former players in their biographies use the term to describe this period of play (Tinling and Humphries, 1979; Green, 1987; Marble and Leatherman, 1991; Beardsley, 2002).

Following the Second World War classification of amateurs based on class-consciousness and the status of a gentleman became controversial. By 1949, the LTA agreed to allow events for both sexes to be divided into sections based on occupational demands. This consisted of groups who could play before a certain time and those who could compete after that time (Lawn Tennis and Badminton, 1949b). This afforded the working player a greater opportunity to play. This was a momentous occasion as tennis made the step away from the middle class ideologies of its founders and began to move towards a more inclusive rather than exclusive following of players.

The players on the amateur circuit had to abide by a strict code of ethics and regulations surrounding tournament prizes based on the rules of amateurism. A key component of amateurism was the ruling that no player could earn a salary from playing amateur tennis. The prizes for winning amateur tournaments took the form of luxury goods or vouchers and the Championships at Wimbledon embraced this concept. From a monetary point of view, Maud Watson won significantly more in 1884 than her successor Maria Bueno in 1960 who was presented with a voucher for £15 (Wade and Rafferty, 1984). Players won vouchers to spend in luxury department stores, and this encouraged players to comply with an amateur ethos and compete for the love of the game rather than using the game as a source of income. For some of the players who gained financially from amateur tennis, the guilt lasted beyond their playing careers. In 1924 when British player Kathleen "Kitty" Godfree (1896-1992) exchanged her winnings of a Mappin & Webb jewellery voucher for a car, she was so concerned about the repercussions of breaking amateur rules that she never told anyone of her actions until sixty years after the event (Green, 1987).

Players were able to compete on the amateur circuit through financial support from their national tennis associations. In America and Great Britain, there were particular rulings for players who were funded by the national associations. The eight-week rule stated that no amateur player could receive expenses for more than eight weeks of tournaments throughout the year unless they were playing for their country (London Post, 1972). In the magazine *Lawn Tennis and Badminton* (1950), there was much debate surrounding the eight-week rule and whether it should be rescinded and from 1 January 1959, British players were not allowed to travel abroad and receive expenses for more than 150 days (World Tennis, 1958). This did not adversely affect British players' applications for Wimbledon but for overseas players, such as those from America, it meant that only the very wealthy players or those who were funded by the United States Lawn Tennis Association (USLTA) to represent their country could afford to make the annual trip to Wimbledon.

The All England Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club, Wimbledon, was at the centre of amateur tennis. The annual tournament was called the "World's Championships on Grass" from 1913 until 1923 (Little, 2006) and players continued to perceive it as the World Championships long after 1923 (Betz, 1949; Jacobs, 1951). Wallis Myers (1972) suggested that with the growth of tennis, Wimbledon's prestige had heightened. Indeed,

Wimbledon became the clearing-house of the world's skill, the final assessor of form, the standard by which championship mettle was measured (Wallis Myers, 1972, p.490).

Playing tennis on Wimbledon's centre court became the pinnacle of a player's career. Playing at the Championships meant they were part of a select group of international players competing at the home of lawn tennis. Helen Jacobs, (1908-1997) the Wimbledon champion of 1936, describes the significance of playing on centre court at Wimbledon:

In those days [1934] a tennis match, played upon the Center Court at Wimbledon... was a test of endurance, skill and courage of more value in the ideological sense than the later battle which rent the Wimbledon Center Court with bombs. On the court there was a conclusive finish to the struggle; and the conclusion was universally conceded to be fair and well earned (Jacobs, 1951, p.149).

While the American player Pauline Betz (1949, p.60) makes the rare admission that playing at Wimbledon "is even more awe-inspiring than Forest Hills [home of the American National Championships]".

The status and prestige associated with the Championships at Wimbledon meant that it continued successfully after both World Wars. During the First World War, play was suspended between 1915-18 with the club surviving through donations from members and well-wishers (Little, 2006). During the Second World War, the Championships were suspended from 1940-45 and the club was used for a variety of civil defence and military functions (Little, 2006). The British player Ted Avory recalls that the courts were still playable but there were not many players around (Mass-Observation Archive, TC 2/1/A). The Championships resumed in 1946, and although bomb damage led to the loss of approximately 1,200 centre court seats (Little, 2006), the goal of winning Wimbledon continued for the returning amateur players.

## The Tennis Circuit for Women

In order to appreciate the importance of Wimbledon it is necessary to outline the path players travelled in pursuit of the Wimbledon dream. For a female player to progress from garden party tennis, to playing as an amateur at the Wimbledon Championships, the turning point usually came when they joined a local tennis club and started competing in club matches. Kitty Godfree had her 1919 entry accepted for Wimbledon after reaching two quarter-finals, one semi-final and one doubles win in four tournaments before the Championships (Green, 1987). When a player competed successfully in tournaments, there was a chance that scouts for the LTA would recognise their abilities. If a junior player had potential, they could be invited to join the LTA junior development team.

In 1950, a selection of the best players in the under sixteen age category was picked by the LTA junior development team to attend a fortnight of tennis coaching at the inaugural winter training school for junior players (Dorey, 1950). The fortnight was organised by a committee from the LTA, who monitored junior player development and selected the most promising players for further coaching and training. One of the objects of the coaching scheme was to allocate grants to the regions to allow promising young players to receive coaching locally (Dorey, 1950). At this first training school, the predominance of boys over girls, (17 to 3) was a matter of some concern. Dorey (1950) suggests that the increasing facilities and encouragement of juniors at club level resulted in a larger number of skilled players. This expansion of the game was accepted as being responsible for the quicker development of post-war boys, compared to girls (Dorey, 1950). The boys' game may have been developing quickly but findings from the 1948 Mass Observation 'Report on British Sport' revealed that tennis was the most popular sport for women to play (Mass-Observation Archive: FR 3045). The findings suggest that although both sexes were getting involved in the sport, boys were still overshadowing the younger female players and this difference between the sexes was noticed at Junior Wimbledon in 1950 when the girls were described as being "relatively less advanced [than the boys]" (Lawn Tennis and Badminton, 1950, p.610).

The junior winter training school was followed by a summer training school and by 1954, a fund was developed called the Nominated Young Players' Fund which ensured future training and match play for the best sixteen year olds (Dorey, 1954). Young players often received coaching from tennis professionals and funding for entry fees and travel between tournaments. This pathway of playing in club tournaments, being identified by the LTA and joining the junior LTA coaching programme was the route junior players took before stepping up to senior level tournaments and competing on the amateur tennis circuit in Britain.

The amateur circuit was a highly organised and structured network of national and international tournaments. By 1913, the international amateur tennis community was formalised with the establishment of the International Lawn Tennis Federation (ILTF). The ILTF included representatives from thirteen countries who took responsibility for the laws of the game (Barrett, 2001). Since the First World War British tennis players competed from April-September in a circuit of tournaments throughout the country, ranging from Scarborough to the Isle of Wight. Winter tournaments for British players were confined to indoor facilities such as the World's Covered Court Championships (Green, 1987) and in spring, players travelled around Europe to Germany, Italy and

the south of France where they competed at international level and club tournaments.

Tennis tournaments were mixed, with men and women competing alongside each other for the week then travelling on to the next tournament on the circuit. Until the late 1970s the circuit was small enough that players and journalists would know each other well enough to drink and dine together (Bellamy, 1986). The players' schedules were determined by their national ranking and their subsequent selection to compete for Great Britain. When women's teams toured abroad, they were chaperoned so as to ensure that they arrived safely, and their arrangements were taken care of, but essentially a chaperone preserved the moral integrity of the team.

The European tennis circuit was very popular with both players and spectators. Tennis has had a long tradition of royal followers and on the international circuit the players were used to the presence of royalty both on and off the court. Tinling and Humphries (1979, p.31) describe the amateur tennis circuit as a world of:

Kings, princes, the most influential names of the British peerage,  
butlers, footmen, painted ceilings, champagne and roses every day.

The French Riviera was a popular winter holiday destination for the aristocracy, many of whom frequented the tennis clubs along the coast. The most prominent royal tennis supporter and player of the golden era was King Gustav V of Sweden (1858-1950) who played in many of the Riviera tournaments (Betz, 1949). For players, the presence of royalty was not without complications. Helen Wills (1928) recalled competitor's quandary regarding playing against royalty; they debated tactics on whether they should lose gracefully or go for every point. Her advice was to play every point.

On February 16, 1926, when the European tennis star Suzanne Lenglen was scheduled to play the American champion Helen Wills in the final of the Carlton Club in Cannes there were members of the royal families in the crowd. Tinling and Humphries (1979, p.45) provide a record of the front row spectators.

There were the former King Manoel of Portugal, Grand Duke Michael of Russia, Prince George of Greece, the Rajah and Ranee of Pudukota, and among many other celebrities, the Duke of Westminster, whose family still owns half of London.

Engelmann (1988) also cites King Gustav of Sweden, the Duke of Sutherland, the Count de Bourbel and Baron de Graffenried as spectators; culminating in half the Russian and English nobility. The influence of royalty was not confined to Europe. When Elizabeth Ryan (1892-1979), a doubles finalist at Wimbledon from 1914-1934, was competing in St Petersburg, Russia in 1914, the ball boys were liveried footmen

who presented the balls to them on silver salvers (Tinling and Humphries, 1979). This playing environment was a world away from the local tournaments young female players were competing in across England.

The women's tennis circuit was primarily limited to British and European competition until 1923, when the Wightman Cup was established as part of women's tennis calendar. Julian Myrick, the president of the USLTA from 1920-1922, suggested to Hazel Hotchkiss Wightman, an American national tennis champion in singles and doubles from 1909-1928, that women's tennis needed stimulation and added interest like the men's Davis Cup matches (Kaufmann, 1960). Wightman also felt that international competition would give female players a clear objective and she believed that players from different countries should get to know one another both on and off the court (Hotchkiss Wightman, 1931). She offered a trophy to the USLTA in 1920, but due to a lack of interest from the LTA and a belief that spectators would not support women's matches the competition did not take place until 1923 when attitudes changed (Hotchkiss Wightman, 1931). Initially Wightman wanted players from England, the United States and France to compete but the original idea of including France never materialised.

In 1923, the inaugural Wightman Cup match was also the first match to be played at the newly constructed stadium at Forest Hills, New York; the American equivalent of the AELTC Wimbledon and home of the American National Championships (Kaufmann, 1960). For the British team, travelling to America in 1923 was a great honour and a momentous occasion as the LTA became the first sporting governing body to send a women's team overseas officially (Green, 1987). Alongside the Wightman Cup matches, the team were given the opportunity to compete in an American tournament at New Jersey and the American National Championships, followed by matches and exhibitions across Canada in Toronto, Quebec, Montreal and Ottawa (Green, 1987). Their trip, which included a week sailing the Atlantic at either end, lasted two months, and its success sparked a growth in international women's competition and a new chapter in tennis history. Wightman captained the victorious American team in 1923 and international women's competition between America and Britain commenced.

With the arrival of additional American players funded by the USLTA for Wightman Cup matches in England, it meant that the overwhelming dominance and success of British women in reaching the quarter-finals was halted. Following the Second World War, American women dominated the tennis scene. From 1946 to 1955, five American women won all the singles titles and only one non-American, the South



African Sheila Stammers in 1947, reached the semi-finals. During this decade, American dominance in women's tennis was unquestionable; the success of Angela Mortimer and Anne Shilcock in the 1955 women's doubles was the first British win since Dorothy Round's singles title in 1937.

The lack of British international sporting success was examined in the 1948 Mass Observation report where respondents felt that sporting failure was due to nutritional causes combined with a lack of coaching and sports facilities (Mass-Observation Archive: FR 3045). A further 'Report on Sport' in 1949 concluded that the diet of British sportsmen put them at a disadvantage in international competition (Mass-Observation Archive: FR 3141). Rationing lasted for seven years after the war, until 1952, when tea and sugar were no longer restricted (Montgomery, 1965). This impacted on the British players but it cannot account for the complete dominance of the Americans. Another reason for the British players being overwhelmed by the strength of the Americans was the lack of opportunity to play competitively in Britain during the war. The LTA banned tournaments during the war and even private tennis suffered (Mass-Observation Archive: TC 82/1/A). The only way women could compete was through exhibition matches. Indeed, players, such as Kay Stammers, the 1939 Wimbledon finalist, were playing in exhibition matches for war charities (Mass-Observation Archive: TC 82/2/A). American women also contributed to the war effort by playing exhibition matches. For example, the American player Alice Marble (1913-1990), who had defeated Stammers in the Wimbledon singles final of 1939, played exhibition matches throughout the war years with the British player Mary Hardwick, their campaign contributing to both the British Red Cross and War Bonds (Tinling and Humphries, 1979).

While it is clear that the war had an impact on the senior players of the period it is less well known what influence it had on the junior players. The players who had left England during the war returned with well developed skills but they lacked opportunities to continue their training. A notable example of how the war influenced junior progress can be found in the biography of Wimbledon finalist Angela Buxton, a young enthusiast of the game who returned to England from Johannesburg in 1946 (Schoenfeld, 2004). She had received tennis coaching from the South African correspondent for the American Lawn Tennis magazine and by the time she returned to England she had reached a standard far better than her peers. However, the war had badly affected British tennis facilities; many indoor facilities had been bombed or requisitioned, outdoor courts were in a state of disrepair and a halt in the manufacturing of equipment, such as tennis balls, meant that practise was very difficult (Schoenfeld, 2004).

It is evident that a combination of factors, from the banning of British tournaments during the war to poor facilities after the war, resulted in the American women's post war dominance. In America, the players had the opportunity to compete in tournaments and even the National Championships at Forest Hills continued throughout the war. In response to the British situation, Wightman demonstrated her amateur sporting ethic, by dispatching a series of instruction films to England, followed up by a series of talks and tennis demonstrations to encourage girls to take up tennis (Kaufmann, 1960). A woman of the Edwardian era, she placed emphasis on social bearing and upstanding behaviour. Her belief in playing tennis for fun above anything else meant that she was not in favour of the commercialisation of the sport and she endorsed amateurism at every opportunity (Hotchkiss Wightman, 1931).

While the tennis circuit was perceived as a special place where players had the opportunity to travel and socialise alongside royalty, it should also be acknowledged that women were competing in a sport where male and female players were treated differently. At tournaments, the facilities for male and female competitors varied greatly. Kitty Godfree recalls the women's changing rooms as being considerably worse than the men's facilities at the original site of the Wimbledon Championships, in Worple Road. The women's changing rooms were in a house adjacent to the club and they had to walk out the back door and through the garden before emerging into the club (Green, 1987). Lambert Chambers (1910) also discussed the poor changing facilities for women when compared with men's facilities. She maintained that the Queens Club in London and the AELTC at Wimbledon were the only tournaments where the women got a bathroom while at other tournaments players shared the dressing-room with spectators who "often crowd around the one looking-glass, staring at the players as if they were animals on show" (Lambert Chambers, 1910, p.39). In 1910 many of the players would return to their accommodation between matches rather than use the limited facilities provided by tournament organisers. Lambert Chambers (1910) also suggests that if the men were treated as badly as the women at tournaments there would be fewer men competing.

At many tournaments the organising committee did not provide an order of play for matches. It was noted by Lambert Chambers (1910) that the committee were known to change the timing of men's matches to accommodate businessmen who could not get away from the office in the early afternoon. Her despondency at the situation is clear: "[they] have their matches timed and arranged for them. Why are not all competitors treated alike?" (Lambert Chambers, 1910, p.80). The situation had not improved by the 1950s as men's matches were given priority. Angela Mortimer describes how she played her games on outside courts at the Belgian Championships

and when she played at the Australian Championships she recalled that the tournament organisers were surprised that there was so much interest in women's tennis (Mortimer, 1962).

At tournaments the only opportunity for women to compete against men was through playing mixed doubles but when men and women did compete against each other outside of tournament regulations there was always a great deal of interest in the outcome. Both players and spectators were interested in the comparative abilities of male and female players. As early as 1888, Lottie Dodd competed in an exhibition match against Ernest Renshaw (Wade and Rafferty, 1984). The match was a handicap one with Dodd given a score of 30 (2 shots) in each game. Renshaw beat Dodd in their first match but she won in a re-match later that year. This match took place 85 years before the highly publicised 'Battle of the Sexes' in 1973 at the Houston Astrodome between Bobby Riggs (1918-1995), the 1939 Wimbledon champion, and Billie Jean King, the six time Wimbledon champion from 1966-1975, when Billie Jean King "slew the beast of male chauvinism" (King and Deford, 1982, p.44). Dodd and Renshaw's match in 1888, demonstrates that women were confirming their tennis abilities and validating their position in the world of tennis long before public and commercial interest provoked issues about gender on the court.

Even in less public surroundings, women playing against men could cause controversy and embarrassment. In 1936, when Alice Marble was returning to competition after an extended period off the court recovering from tuberculosis, she was required to play singles against three men in one day to prove her fitness to the committee members at Forest Hills. Marble beat all three and after a committee vote of 3-2 in her favour, was allowed entry to the National Championships and proceeded to win the tournament (Tinling and Humphries, 1979). The 1946 Wimbledon champion, Pauline Betz, was 'warned' by her mother against challenging men on the tennis court, and her biography offers insights into her competitive attitude which challenged gender role expectations. She explained:

Mother used to warn me that it was a bad strategy to carry the battle of the sexes onto the court. But the male superiority and the lofty masculine generality that "no man can beat me at tennis" always acted as a challenge, and I invariably followed a script: "Girl meets boy; girl beats boy; girl loses boy" (Betz, 1949, p.171).

Betz' experience provides evidence of the conflict between femininity and athleticism when her mother suggested she should remain feminine by rejecting the chance to compete against men. Betz was undeterred and was willing to sacrifice her

relationship with men for the chance to compete. When female players developed their tennis to incorporate aggressive hitting they were seen as playing with the aim of emulating men (Lawn Tennis and Badminton, 1946b). Betz's and Marble's display of aggression and will to win conflicted with the class-conscious tennis administrators' views. Marble's playing style outraged Hazel Wightman so much that she left the stands during Marble's match at Wimbledon (Tinling and Humphrey, 1979).

## The 'Shamateur' Amateur

As the golden age of tennis continued, the characteristics that were changing the sport such as professionalism, competitiveness and technical competence led to increased public interest. Tournament organisers were also attracted by the women players' ability to draw crowds to watch matches, and in turn, earn money for the club. For the first tennis match at Wimbledon in 1877, spectators paid to attend and the proceeds from the gate receipts were used to purchase a new mower (Barrett, 2001). The tournament organisers were making a profit, yet the amateur players were not allowed to receive any additional money other than allocated expenses from their tennis association. When Pauline Betz won Wimbledon in 1946 she was receiving \$12 per day for room, board and incidental expenses (Betz, 1949). Since the allowance from the players' governing body was no more than a basic sum to cover living expenses and travel to tournaments, many of the players realised that since the tournament organisers were gaining by their participation in the tournament, they were in a position to receive money as an incentive to play in certain tournaments. This option was illegal for amateur players, yet for those who required the money they chose to accept it in an illicit way, 'under the table' in the form of 'backhanders'. Gonzales and Rice (1959, p.34) explained 'under the table' negotiations in tennis:

The difference between an amateur and a professional is related to a phantom table. The amateur receives money under it, the professional over it.

There has always been a certain amount of subjectivity and ambiguity surrounding amateur classification in tennis. In 1926 the USLTA published the annual player rankings based on the player's results from American tournaments and the player's "meritorious conduct" (Engelmann, 1988, p.284). This meant that any players that turned professional at the end of the 1926 season were omitted from classification even though many amateur players were illegitimately gaining financially from their amateur status. The drama surrounding the rankings led tennis associations to ask

for guidelines that were more stringent for amateur players since the clubs had evidence of the financial debacle.

Expense accounts at many tournaments have grown to such proportions that many players are making a living off the game and are still classed as amateurs. We feel that tournament expense accounts should be held to legitimate expense and private expense accounts forbidden (President of the Western [America] Lawn Tennis Association, cited in Engelmann, 1988, p.286).

Alongside funding from the governing body, players and others involved in the sport had devised ways in which both players and interested parties would gain from working together. Ann Jones, the British Wimbledon Champion of 1969, states in her autobiography, *A Game to Love*, that since she was using Dunlop equipment Mr. Dicken, known as 'Dickie Dunlop,' helped to arrange her tournament schedule, writing letters asking for accommodation and paying her travel expenses (Jones, 1971). There is little doubt that this was a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Mortimer (1962) discusses the difficulties of having no money in between tournaments. The LTA paid for travel and accommodation during tennis tours yet maintaining her top ranking meant she did could not spare practise time for part-time employment. Teddy Tinling solved the problem when he asked if he could design for her and invited her to join his staff on a part-time basis. It is unclear from her autobiography what type of work she would have done for him but it is evident that this arrangement left her with sufficient time to practise on the courts around London (Mortimer, 1962). In her autobiography, *My Waiting Game*, Mortimer's response to Tinling's job offer bears no association to the question.

"O.K., Teddy, you copy a pair of these exactly – and I'll wear them"  
(Mortimer, 1962, p.131).

Her autobiography highlights the secrecy surrounding money and the amateur players, many of whom would have received money from companies in return for the companies associating their business with the successful players.

Department stores employed several of the female players. In 1956, the Wimbledon finalist, Angela Buxton, was earning five pounds a week at 'Lillywhites' sports store in London. Newspapers were prohibited from mentioning the name of the store but their comments gave readers enough information to know where she worked. When Buxton asked for a raise in salary based on her tennis achievements, the company refused, even though her high profile had helped publicise the store to a wider audience (Schoenfeld, 2004). Shirley Brasher (née Bloomer) was able to reach the

quarter finals of Wimbledon in 1958 while holding down a job as a trainee at 'Simpson's' department store in Piccadilly (World Tennis, 1958). The ability of these women to maintain their high national and international ranking while committing to a job suggests that their work commitments may not have been as demanding as those of fellow employees.

Gonzales and Rice (1959) discussed two reasons why such arrangements were kept quiet between players and the public and between the players themselves. Firstly, players had a sense of guilt since they realised they were doing something prohibited and secondly, the promoter led each player to believe that they were getting a special deal, better than the next player and therefore it would be in their interest to keep quiet. This silencing meant that the underhanded nature of amateur tennis was allowed to continue as long as spectators would pay to watch them compete.

It is difficult to assess the difference between the money given to male and female 'shamateurs' due to the silencing of amateur athletes regarding their playing expenses. Gibson (1958, p.161) however described playing in tennis tournaments as:

The amateur player's way of working at his trade (I know I shouldn't call it that because we don't make any money out of it).

In Australia top ranked amateur players were often employed by racket or ball manufacturers and received a salary and playing expenses in return for playing in local tournaments during the tennis off-season. The tournaments were known as Sales Tournaments as they allowed the company to promote their products through the players. Although the players gained a monetary award, the relationship was disastrous as it forced players to compete for twelve months of the year and they were no longer rested and prepared for the major world championships (Aberdare, 1959).

During the era of amateur tennis, many of the top players chose to make the move from amateur tennis into the professional arena. There were many reasons for doing so, but the most prevalent was financial. Players travelling with a group of professionals were also able to make money from their sport legitimately. The LTA and USLTA regarded the move from amateurism to professionalism as being irreversible and the professional sporting status was applied across different sports. When Mary K. Brown (1891-1971) joined the professional tennis tour she was subsequently barred from competing as an amateur in golf because it was believed her actions were detrimental to the game of golf (Engelmann, 1988).

Professional tennis players were banned from competing against amateurs, and were kept away from Wimbledon and major championships by the governing bodies of tennis such as the Lawn Tennis Association, the French Tennis Association and the United States Lawn Tennis Association. The professional tour consisted of a small group of travelling professionals which primarily included ex-Wimbledon Champions who realised they could make a better living by playing for money. There was a high turn over of these players since the promoters could not afford to increase the wages of the touring professionals alongside recruiting further players (Engelmann, 1988).

The tennis community frowned upon players who turned professional. Pauline Betz's reflections on turning professional in 1947 highlight the attitude of the amateur tennis association towards professional players.

I was guilty of the blackest, foulest deed in the United States Lawn Tennis Association history. I was a criminal, a leper, a pariah (Betz, 1949, p.145).

Within Britain the amateur establishments held similar views about the professional player. When Fred Perry, the men's champion from 1934-1936, moved to professional tennis, the committee at Wimbledon stopped his honorary membership and requested he return the tie that went with it (Perry, 1984; Henderson, 2009). Thereby sending a message to tennis players that turning professional was against the established rules of the game and would not be tolerated.

Lord Aberdare (1919-2005) the politician and sportsman, who documented the history of lawn tennis discussed the early days of professional tennis and suggested that the women's tour was never successful (Aberdare, 1959). This belief is supported by Schoenfeld's biography of Althea Gibson and Angela Buxton. When Althea Gibson, the 1956 and 1958 Wimbledon champion, turned professional, she received \$75 a month from a sporting goods company but it was barely enough to pay her rent (Schoenfeld, 2004). Shirley Fry, the Wimbledon champion of 1956 reflects on Gibson's professional career as being unsuccessful.

The poor girl was trying to make a career out of tennis when there was really no money in it (Shirley Fry, quoted in Schoenfeld, 2004, p.250).

Therefore for a female tennis player turning professional was regarded as a financial gamble (Aberdare, 1959). In 1926, Suzanne Lenglen, became the first female player to turn professional after a successful amateur career where she proved her ability to attract spectators on both sides of the Atlantic. Lenglen made her debut at Wimbledon in 1919 following a four year break in tennis due to the First World War. Her reputation preceded her as 5,000 people applied for the 500 bookable seats and

her final against Dorothea Lambert Chambers was played in front of 8,000 spectators including King George V and Queen Mary (Tinling, 1983). Indeed her ability to attract crowds to Wimbledon was one of the driving forces behind the expansion of Wimbledon from its original site on Worple Road to the larger site of Church Road (Engelmann, 1988). The success of Lenglen at Wimbledon led commentators to view 1919 as a turning point in women's tennis. Her achievements showed the amateur women who were playing at Wimbledon in the 1920s, that sport could be an economically viable pastime, a notion that was previously unheard of.

During her career as an amateur Lenglen brought millions in cash to the world of tennis and raised its profile to a level of importance never before attached to tennis (Tinling and Humphries, 1979). Lenglen was not only successful as a promoter of women's tennis through her successes on the court, but she also wooed the crowds at Wimbledon through her choice of clothing which was perceived as radical for that time. Clothing played an important role in the growth of women's tennis as discussed in the following section wherein the history of women's tennis fashion and highlights the progress of tennis fashion from the Victorian corset towards the all white rule first enacted at Wimbledon in 1963 is traced.

## Women's Tennis Fashion

The female athlete has long been associated with a form of compulsory heterosexuality that has been both ideologically and physically restrictive. The use of clothing as the guise or the disguise of the female athlete has had limited academic analysis yet the notion of clothing as a form of gender compliance is not new (Hargreaves, 1990a; Horwood, 2000; Lenskyj, 2004). Female athletes have a long history of conformity within sport. The ability of women to conform is associated with their choice of clothing. The importance given to tennis fashion is demonstrated by the amount of detail writers have given to describe players' outfits. Since the late nineteenth century, writers have commented at length on the intricacies of women's tennis fashions and the tennis magazine *Lawn Tennis and Badminton* had a regular fashion column from as early as 1921. An understanding of the clothing choices of female tennis players highlights the conflict between women's role as athletes on the tennis circuit and gender role expectations as prescribed by male hegemonic society.

In the early years of lawn tennis, the game as previously mentioned was associated with middle class garden parties and the emphasis was on the appropriateness of clothing for women. The choice of clothing was based on both fashionability and social decorum (Horwood, 2000). The female players chose clothing that allowed them to participate without compromising their social status or femininity. The



socially sanctioned presentation of women athletes was important, as it ensured their integrity, highlighted their feminine identity and helped maintain their moral and social standing.

The first female participants wore clothing that reflected their everyday activity and was as such highly restrictive. Photographs of female tennis players from the Edwardian era depict fashionable women playing sport while remaining true to gender role expectations. Gillmeister (1998, pp.202-203) describes the clothing of female players as being within the conventions of their everyday routine.

Long skirts which reached the ground; several starched petticoats underneath and the obligatory corset tightly laced. All this was given additional support by a girdle adorned with a silver clasp; it terminated in a stiff whalebone collar which a necktie or scarf was slung. No dress was without long sleeves. An extravagant broad brimmed hat dominated the lady's head and a sturdy heeled, elegant boot was considered a must.

The long dresses described by Gillmeister (1998) highlighted women players' frailty which was viewed as normal for middle class women.

Female athletes' participation involved de-emphasising their sensuous nature, a view that had its roots in seventeenth century Puritanism (Hargreaves, 1990a). Women's sport in the late Victorian and early Edwardian era achieved this conformity by ensuring female athletes wore tight fitting bodices and long skirts which covered their ankles. In the 1880s the only concession to sport was wearing an apron to hold tennis balls during play. The apron had the dual purpose of protecting dresses from being soiled and reducing the difficult task of picking up the balls (Wimbledon Museum, 2005). The length of the skirts and arms of the dresses was of great importance since exposure of the ankles or wrists was viewed as scandalous, especially since it was considered improper for a lady to play in public (Wimbledon Museum, 2005).

In 1884, the first women tennis players at Wimbledon were playing when women were expected to conform to patriarchal ideology. Maud Watson, the winner of the first Wimbledon Championships for women, was triumphant over her sister Lilian, whilst wearing a busted two-piece dress with a sporty straw hat (Horwood, 2000). Wade and Rafferty (1984) suggest that the separates worn by the Watson sisters revolutionised the women's game yet comments from Lottie Dodd, the five-time Wimbledon champion between 1887 and 1893, suggest that the two-piece outfit continued to hinder the female player. This is of particular interest as Dodd was

allowed to wear a shorter skirt because she was younger than her opponents and the skirt was part of her school uniform (Wade and Rafferty, 1984). Dodd's opinions are quoted in Huntington-Whiteley (1998, p.88):

The blessings of our sex would be heaped upon anyone who could invent a practical, comfortable and withal becoming costume, and she admitted with regret that if the skirt must be endured, it is important to have it somewhat short, reaching to the ankles.

Early instruction manuals also record the concerns of the tennis community regarding the cumbersome nature of women's tennis clothing. Baddeley (1895) and the men's doubles champions from 1897-1905, brothers Reginald (1872-1910) and Laurence Doherty (1875-1919), provide tennis instruction for female players consisting of recommendations regarding choice of clothing, such as dress, hat and shoes. These guidelines were treated seriously as "ladies dress is seen as a handicap" (Lowther, quoted in Doherty and Doherty, 1903, p.66). Piele (1885, p.63) implores female players to be aware of the hazard of long dresses; "The long dresses will spoil your play and the play will spoil your long dresses". With regard to women's fashion, the authors of early instruction manuals are in favour of the development of tennis attire for women. Lowther (cited in Doherty and Doherty, 1903) goes so far as to suggest the regulation of tennis costumes.

There is no reason why they should not wear short skirts, well above the ankles unless the ankles of some of them happen to be unusually large; which special cases might be brought before the committee with a view to special permission to keep to the 'trailing garments!' (p.67).

One of the most restrictive articles of clothing was the corset. The corset was a tight fitting garment worn by middle class women at the turn of the century allowing them to achieve the fashionable 'S' shaped body. It restricted movement and the physiological ability to respire efficiently or effectively thus influencing and reducing performance. Following the First World War, at Wimbledon Elizabeth Ryan interrupted a match to remove her corset as it was a hot day and the corset was becoming uncomfortable. Kitty Godfree recalled the event causing shock, but also respect from the spectators who admired Ryan for her honesty (Green, 1987). Ryan spoke with Tinling about the use of corsets in women's tennis as mandatory and she remembered a rail above a fire in the women's locker room that dried the steel-boned corsets.

It was never a pretty sight, says Miss Ryan, for most of them were blood stained (Tinling and Humphries, 1979, p.19).

The fact that Wimbledon had a facility in the women's changing room to dry corsets is testament to the permanence of this clothing, as part of the fixtures and fittings in the club. For the players at Wimbledon the corset had represented the suppression of women as athletes as the pace of the game was dictated by fashion. When Elizabeth Ryan discarded her corset at Wimbledon following the First World War I, she demonstrated a renewed confidence which symbolised the liberation of players from the confines of the corset.

During the First World War, due to the increased physical activity of women, clothing was less restrictive and more functional, therefore allowing women to perform their jobs in comfort (Turner, 2006, p.49). Prior to the war women's skirts would trail the ground, while the regulation length of skirts in the services was 8½" off the ground. By the 1920s, the majority of women wore dresses and skirts that were calf length, and there was an emphasis on straight lines that played down a woman's curves (Turner, 2006). The impact of the First World War on women's fashions was overshadowed by the player Suzanne Lenglen as discussed by Norah Gordon Cleather (1947), a female employee of the All England Club and custodian of the club during the Great War. She commented:

Since the inception of the game, the lady-champions had always been content to compete for their titles with traditionally corseted waists and with long-sleeved shirts and frilly petticoats included in their attire. Amazingly, Suzanne [Lenglen] danced about the court in a loose one-piece garment with arms and legs daringly revealed. The Great War changed many things in women's dress, but none so much in four whole years as did the "incomparable Lenglen" in her two weeks' rise to fame in England (Gordon Cleather, 1947, p.6).

Lenglen showed that the loose fitting, flowing garments of silk were acceptable to both spectators and officials at Wimbledon. Her choice of dress represented women's ability to assert themselves and challenge traditional notions of femininity (Hargreaves, 1990b). In 1919, Lenglen wore short-sleeved, calf length dresses without a corset or petticoats just seven years after the female players at the 1912 Olympics wore elbow length sleeves, skirts to just above the ankle, hats with coloured taffeta bows and white stockings (Poirier, 2003). Her choice of clothing represented a dramatic shift in the representation of women as athletes. Her opponent in the 1919 final was Dorothea Lambert Chambers, Wimbledon's champion seven times between 1903 and 1914. During Lambert Chambers playing career the hats and bustles of the early years had disappeared but she wore two or three stiff petticoats, as well as corsets. Her playing style and clothing reflected the British

perception of the new twentieth century sportswoman, while Lenglen was redefining what could be achieved by women (Hargreaves, 1990b).

There are conflicting views regarding the fashions adopted by Lenglen. Her dress had at first scandalised the tennis community but by the 1920s players were replicating her style and adding more elaborate finishes to their outfits. Mason (1988, p.8) suggests that in 1919, "her masculine style of play and her radical style of dress, astonished Wimbledon", while Lenglen's biographer states that she "was attired like most of the other women on the courts for the 1919 Lawn Tennis Championships" (Engelmann, 1988, p.18). There is no doubt that Lenglen's fashion was perceived as provocative, and the combination of her tennis attire coupled with her theatrical playing style made her a tennis star. Poirier (2003) suggests that Lenglen embodied the attitude of a generation, becoming a symbol for women's emancipation.

Observations of Lenglen's physical appearance highlight the changing notions of femininity within women's sport. Mason (1988, p.8) describes the physical appearance of Lenglen thus "she would have raised even more eyebrows if her body had been made for display and not action". This comment contradicts many of Lenglen's contemporaries; fans referred to her as 'The Goddess' and her movements on the tennis court were "described as like those of a dancer" (Engelmann, 1988, p.8). In the early 1920s, Lenglen was a huge attraction to the tennis fans at Wimbledon and her presence was described as glamorous.

Glamour does not mean only chic and beauty, it means the power to create an impression of radiance, of unusual luxury, and Suzanne had the power to a high degree (Gordon Cleather, 1947, p.18).

Lenglen represented a new form of femininity through her liberal dress and tenacious playing style that challenged stereotypical notions of women players.

The fashion of women's tennis post the First World War was undoubtedly different from the players of the early 1900s. Women's sports clothing was less restrictive when compared with outfits worn prior to the war. This change in women's tennis fashions meant that female players were no longer restricted in their arm and leg motion thus allowing greater technical ability and speed of motion. By the 1920s, tennis dress design allowed sufficient movement for players and women were able to show their athleticism without the hindrance of long skirts or restrictive bodices. Since their athleticism was becoming more obvious, they chose to use other mechanisms to highlight their feminine identity. Women wore carefully applied make up while playing and their dresses were embroidered in delicate designs (Poirier,

2003). The Spanish player Lili de Alvarez (1905-1998), ladies singles finalist from 1926-1928, wore tunics embroidered by Hermès and a jewel encrusted red and gold dress at the Wimbledon and French Championships (Poirier, 2003). The use of colour was acceptable across the tennis community, from the flamboyant dress of de Alvarez on the international circuit to the brightly coloured blazers, yellow silk jumpers and Indian robes described by a female journalist 'Marjorie' in her fashion column in *Lawn Tennis and Badminton* (1921).

In 1929, the LTA and All England Lawn Tennis Club were trying to rein in another dramatic change in women's tennis fashion. When Ruth Tapscott discarded her stockings in 1927, she caused such a scandal that both establishments considered a veto on bare legs (*Lawn Tennis and Badminton*, 1960). Ultimately, the LTA and the AELTC were unsuccessful in attempting to quell a new style for women that was acceptable when playing in France and America although some women continued to choose stockings over socks. Helen Jacobs (1908-1997) a member of the American Wightman Cup team from 1927-1937, 1939 and Dorothy Round advised women that they could wear socks without feeling conspicuous and Round felt it necessary to advise women who chose to play in stockings that they should wear a very light suspender belt so it would not interfere with movement (Jacobs Hull, 1933; Round, 1938).

The economic depression of the 1930s heralded a period when women's fashions again reflected gender-role expectations. Women wore clothes that reflected restraint, with skirts lengthened to ensure modesty, long hair was fashionable and the popularity of Hollywood films meant wearing make-up was more acceptable (Mansfield and Cunnington, 1973). These changes were also evident in the world of sport and the fashions of the female athletes. By the 1930s, tennis fashion trends moved towards a modest, masculine, utilitarian look. While high street fashion was returning to more stereotypical images of femininity, tennis players were wearing divided skirts and in 1931 a white trousered dress was worn for the first time at Wimbledon by Lili de Alvarez (Horwood, 2002).

Players such as Betty Nuthall and Mary Healey rejected this functional design by wearing low backed dresses at Wimbledon in 1934 (*Lawn Tennis and Badminton*, 1960). The tennis fashions of Alice Marble, who wore a jockey cap, crew neck t-shirt and brief shorts (6" above the knee), reflected the style of pre Second World War tennis players (Tinling and Oxby, 1963). Shorts for women were highly controversial in the early 1930s; Helen Jacobs was forbidden to wear shorts in the Wightman Cup match of 1933 by non-playing captain, Wightman. By 1934 wearing shorts at the

Wightman Cup was seen as a “battle of British modesty versus American masculinity” (Horwood, 2000, p.12). Wightman had strong beliefs surrounding the clothing of players and she was embarrassed by her own clothing at the 1909 National Championships, when she wore a sleeveless blouse in the final; the outfit was considered radical for the time (Kaufmann, 1960).

During the Second World War young, single women were required to work in occupations as designated by the government. Many took on roles previously assigned to men yet their service was not aligned in equal terms with men (Summerfield, 1998). Higonet and Higonet (1987) characterise this as a ‘double helix’ whereby during war women and femininity shift into domains traditionally held by men yet their position remains subordinate. Men returning from the war were keen for life to return to the way it had been prior to their departure. Patriarchal ideological standards ensured that these requirements were adopted by women and translated to many aspects of their life including fashion. Women’s fashion once more reflected the Victorian period as women wore long and full skirts with pinched in waists (Turner, 2006, p.101).

Following the Second World War tennis fashion was limited to homemade dresses, and divided skirts which meant that the female players, according to Teddy Tinling, had a manly look (Tinling and Oxby, 1963). Tinling had been involved with tennis since he was asked to umpire a match in the Riviera for Suzanne Lenglen in the 1920s. He continued by working at Wimbledon every summer since 1927 as an official of the tournament committee. His role initially as a “call boy” at Wimbledon ensured that players were ready for their matches. Yet his main business remained as a fashion designer. In 1931, he began designing wedding gowns and evening dresses from South Kensington and by 1939, he had a staff of 100 working with him in Mayfair. After serving in the Second World War as lieutenant colonel in intelligence for the British army, he returned to London to resume dressmaking. Post war rationing of fabric meant that Tinling turned to the new phenomenon of sportswear, and in particular women’s tennis.

During this period fashion designers would either be asked by players to design their dresses or the designers would approach the players. The relationship was viewed as mutually beneficial, and in keeping with amateur rules, since the players had no need to buy their clothing and the designer had a platform to display their designs. Traditionally players wore white at Wimbledon. Lambert Chambers (1910) suggested that white was suitable because it washed well and did not fade. Tinling’s first tennis design for British player Joy Gannon in 1946 was a white dress with sky-blue and

sugar-pink hems since he did not want to offend the tradition (Tinling and Oxby, 1963). In 1948, Tinling clashed with Wimbledon when the sky-blue and sugar-pink hems worn by the Wightman Cup captain Betty Hilton were blamed for her defeat as it was believed to have distracted her from the game. This led to Hazel Wightman requesting that the dresses not be worn for the rest of the Wightman Cup matches. Wightman was adamant that it was nothing personal against Tinling but it was her wish that the tradition of all white tennis should be maintained (Tinling and Oxby, 1963).

Tinling's career as a tennis fashion designer continued unscathed and in 1949 he was asked by Gertrude Augusta 'Gussy' Moran to design her clothes for Wimbledon. When Moran first met Tinling she immediately requested that he look after her clothes. Her announcement, "I'm strictly feminine and colour is the essence of my life," placed him in a predicament between adhering to the tradition of all-white at Wimbledon and Moran's passion for colour (Tinling and Oxby, 1963, p.40). Tinling was anxious to avoid offending the Wimbledon committee and initially designed a dress of soft rayon jersey, trimmed with white satin and in seeking to fulfil Moran's requirements he added an edging of fine lace to her underwear which caused a great scandal. In 1949, the players at Wimbledon were given a specific edict that stated that they were expected to wear white clothing and although Moran's outfit was all white, the lace trimming was perceived as too sensational for Wimbledon. Tinling and Oxby (1963, p.43) described the underwear as "tantalising" and "compellingly seductive" and the media sexualisation of the tennis player was born. Tinling severed his working links with the Wimbledon committee in 1950 due to irreconcilable differences surrounding his involvement as an employee of the AELTC and his fashion designs and devoted himself to sports fashion. He designed an outfit specifically for Moran, which elevated both the player and designer to star status. It was Tinling's first pair of tennis shorts, and the shorts and shirt were made from broderie anglaise. The outfit became known as the 'Peek-a-Boo Suit' because the fabric design allowed the spectator to catch small glimpses of the player's flesh, which tantalised the media (Tinling and Oxby, 1963). The media's role in catapulting a player's career into the public arena is characterised by Moran's playing career. Many of the future players would use the media to the same degree of self-promotion, achieved through their feminine identity on the tennis court and the sexualisation of their tennis clothing.

Throughout the 1950s, Tinling continued to break boundaries with his designs. Karol Fageros was a key player in this. In 1957 she had been given the nickname of the "Greek Goddess" after the media saw her wearing a gold embroidered dress with a

Greek design by Tinling. Fageros decided that since she was not Greek she should be called the "Golden Goddess" which prompted Tinling's next design of gold underwear. By 1958, Fageros' trademark gold undershorts were designed using "eighteen-carat, cloth of gold undershorts" (Tinling and Oxby, 1963, p.135). She wore these undershorts edged with black lace for the French Championship (World Tennis, 1959a) and overlaid with white lace at Wimbledon in deference of an alleged ban (Tinling and Oxby, 1963).

Many of Tinling's designs included wearing a slip (or petticoat) under the tennis dress. These were cumbersome and hazardous to the athleticism of the player. Shirley Bloomer had to deal with the problems of wearing a slip while competing, when her 'light blue frilly' slip fell down while playing a Wightman Cup match at Wimbledon in 1958. Wilson (1958) composed a fictional poem based on Fageros' thoughts surrounding Bloomer's slipped slip.

Something frilly, something blue,  
Happy Birthday, dear, to you,  
But if you wear your slip so bold,  
Whatever's wrong with pants of gold? (Wilson, 1958, p.12).

Wilson (1958) highlights the conflicting messages players received from Wimbledon regarding their clothing regulations. Fageros' gold undershorts worn under a skirt and only rarely glimpsed during play were unacceptable while a slip under a tennis dress that occasionally put the player into a state of undress on court was acceptable.

Another item of fashion introduced to tennis was the "Sportsgirl" wig, designed by French of London with detachable towelling bandeau. Launched in 1958 it was promoted by Shirley Bloomer, Karol Fageros and Pat Ward. The wig was designed to ensure the female player always had a perfectly groomed hairstyle (Hardwick, 1959). Commentators such as Hardwick (1959) felt that it was launched to raise the profile of the amateur female player:

Now that the top men players have turned professional, the elegantly dressed women will be the No. 1 attraction in amateur tennis during 1959 (Hardwick, 1959, p.20).

Not all players viewed the wig positively. The Russian player Anna Dimitrievna commented: "I'll never wear them [wigs]. I'll never wear shorts. We take tennis seriously in the Soviet Union" (World Tennis, 1959b, p.58). These developments in fashion signalled a dramatic shift in women's tennis that was too extreme for the Wimbledon establishment.



In 1959, the British Women's Athletic Association ruled that sports clothing worn by female athletes must be,

Clean and designed not to be too objectionable. Shorts are permissible if they are not too brief, but nylon track outfits are discouraged (World Tennis, 1959b, p.55).

There is no direct statement linking their ruling to the outfits designed by Teddy Tinling but there is little doubt that the designs worn by Gussy Moran and Karol Fageros would have been highly objectionable to the British Women's Athletic Association. Hargreaves (1990c) suggests that women's sportswear after the Second World War promoted awareness of the relationship between the dressed and the undressed. This was evident in Tinling's designs for Moran and Fageros. Their clothing was designed to enhance their sexuality, hence the outrage felt by the Wimbledon committee. By the end of the 1950s, an increase in consumerism coupled with more women in employment (including married women) meant that there were changes in women's high street fashions, from knee length pencil skirts that accentuated a woman's curves to teenage girls wearing jeans and shapeless jumpers which hid a woman's curves (Turner, 2006). Within sport, female athletes were encouraged to maintain their femininity even at the cost of comfort.

The 1960s was a period when tennis was viewed as the "in" thing (Poirier, 2003). While some young people were being educated in single sex schools, the tennis club became a place where both sexes could socialise together while wearing versions of the latest high street fashions. Social observers contend that the imagery associated with the swinging sixties is largely misleading, as they argue that this phenomenon was mainly confined to London and although it spread in the second half of the decade its impact was limited (Turner, 2006). Fashion on the tennis courts was a reflection of London's vibrancy during the sixties. Images of women portrayed a type of femininity which gave the impression of sexual availability; skirts were short and hipster trousers were fashionable (Donnelly, 2005). Tennis fashion was keeping abreast of changing trends when Angela Mortimer, defended her Wimbledon title in 1962, wearing hipster shorts (Tinling and Oxby, 1963). The South American player Maria Bueno also added to the glamour of tennis with her Tinling designed tennis dress with "shocking pink" lining (Warren, 1993; Poirier, 2003). Wimbledon suppressed the notion of the swinging sixties with the passing of an all-white rule in 1962, which came into effect at the Championships in 1963. As a result, designers had to find more innovative ways to raise the profile of their players. By 1964 the British player and ex-Wimbledon champion Fred Perry was using his name as a brand to sell women's tennis wear. His fashions adhered to Wimbledon's all-white rule and his off the rack designs of long-haired fibre (Courtelle), were a humorous addition to

the tennis wardrobe (Poirier, 2003). The all-white rule of 1962 changed the landscape of Wimbledon; the Championships were no longer the stage for colourful, dramatic and flamboyant fashion.

The history of tennis fashion highlights the contradictory nature of women's participation in sport. While it is evident that female tennis players were acknowledged as serious competitors and worthy of specific instruction to improve their tactical and technical game, the instruction manuals continued to emphasise the importance of acceptable women's tennis attire. Tennis instruction manuals encouraged women to gain the most they could from the sport whilst competing within the confines of acceptable fashion trends. Athletic development was facilitated by the design of tennis clothing insofar as it allowed women greater range of movement and physical activity while conforming to dominant and restrictive gender ideologies.

Female players were required to balance modesty and freedom of movement throughout their involvement in tennis. The presentation of female tennis players from the 1940s to the 1970s is largely based on the vision of Teddy Tinling and his designs. His importance as a promoter of the women's game was recognised when he was appointed couturier for the newly formed Virginia Slims professional women's circuit in 1971. Tinling bridged the gap between the world of amateur tennis and the new professional era of the late sixties as he remained involved with the professional women's tour and the All England Club until his death in 1990.

## Amateur Tennis to 'Open' Tennis

Playing tennis at Wimbledon remained exclusive to amateurs until 1968 when the AELTC and the LTA came under increased pressure to allow professional players to compete alongside amateurs in open tennis tournaments. The continued defection of players to the professional circuit put pressure on the amateur players' tennis governing body, the ILTF, to allow professional players to compete against amateurs. By 1968, the concept of a truly amateur player competing at Wimbledon was unheard of since the standard of play had reached such a degree that no player could enter the tournament without a substantial commitment of time, energy and economic resources to allow them to progress.

Wimbledon played a role in making the transition from amateur to professional possible. The turning point came in 1967, when the BBC sponsored an open invitational tournament at Wimbledon to celebrate its move into colour television. A number of former Wimbledon champions who had turned professional took part in

the tournament, and the event was so successful that the Lawn Tennis Association decided to open the Championships in 1968, with the approval of the ILTF. On 30 March 1968, delegates from the ILTF met at the Automobile Club in the Place de la Concorde in Paris and voted unanimously for open tennis (Tupper, 1972).

The AELTC Wimbledon announced in 1967 that the Championships Wimbledon, in 1968, would be an open tournament. Competitors were classified as 'players' rather than amateur or professional. The LTA proposed that instead of opening up all their tournaments immediately, only four would be classified as 'open'; Wimbledon, the Hard Court Championships at Bournemouth, the London Championships at Queen's Club and one independent tournament at Beckenham in Kent (Tingay, 1972).

Approval for open tennis was based on agreement to a range of regulations. The ILTF allowed nations the right of self-determination in their definition of 'amateur' with a common policy established by the ILTF. There would be retention of the notion of amateurism as its removal would weaken the premise on which the ILTF had developed tennis, specific amateur championships would be developed, open tournaments would be strictly limited in number and sanctioned by the ILTF and players would be classified into categories of players (Timms, 1972; Tingay, 1972; Tupper, 1972). Tupper (1972, p.853) described the categories as follows:

The "amateur" who is not paid, the "registered" player, who can profit from the game while not making tennis his profession, and the "professional," who makes his money from teaching or playing in events not organised by the national associations.

Timms (1972) was highly critical of the developments. She was concerned that the classification of registered players and professionals would allow the issue of shamateurism to continue and professional players could still be banned from playing in tournaments organised by a national association. The adoption of these new categories was perceived as the LTA pandering to the ILTF, since it was presumed that the various classifications of players would be unworkable and it was inevitable that the words 'amateur' and 'professional' would be deleted from tennis vocabulary (Timms, 1972).

When Wimbledon opened competition to professionals in 1968, players could compete as amateurs (and receive no prize money) or they could compete as professionals (and receive prize money). The professional women were competing for the champion's prize of £750 while the men were competing for £2,000 (Little, 2006). Male dominance in tennis remained and it would be another 39 years before the achievements of women were validated through equal prize money. Nonetheless,

1968 marked the end of the amateur era for tennis and from 1970 Wimbledon was open to all challengers.

## Concluding Remarks and Clarification of the Research Questions

Women competing during the amateur era of tennis were doing so during a period of great social and political upheaval. This chapter has highlighted the two conflicting characteristics of this golden era. On the one hand, players were treated with considerable respect and admiration and British players competing on the French Riviera played alongside members of the aristocracy and in America they socialised with the Hollywood stars. On the other hand, in maintaining their amateur status, they were not allowed to earn money from the sport. This meant that their livelihood was in the hands of their governing bodies and in the off-season, many struggled to support themselves and had to rely on the generosity of sponsors. Analyses of players' biographies from the amateur era are replete with multiple layers of meaning and implied stories of financial struggles. Indeed, the secrecy surrounding the financial support for amateur players due to the regulations of the amateur era and the far-reaching power of the LTA means that many of the financial details are glossed over by the players. Tinling's books are among the few that include details about the financial rewards offered to both amateur and professional players.

Women playing tennis at Wimbledon pre and post the Second World War were part of a sporting world which allowed athletes to display their personalities on the court, albeit within socially sanctioned and acceptable ways of being. Teddy Tinling gave women the opportunity and the platform to promote women's tennis. By raising the profile of players through provocative clothing, he helped to increase the popularity of the women's game and improve the media's awareness of women tennis players. Yet, this promotion of women came at a cost. Photographs of female players that highlighted their sexuality ultimately trivialised their athletic achievements. The players' athleticism was ignored while the media focussed attention on the women's physical appearance. This trivialisation enforced male athletic dominance and placed the female player in a secondary role as sex objects for the male sports enthusiast. Elite women tennis players were dealing with and receiving conflicting messages surrounding femininity and athleticism and how these conflicts were resolved are a key focus of this study.

Following the Second World War, American players dominated the Wimbledon Championships, and as a consequence little is known about those British women participants whose sporting lives were overshadowed during this period. British

tennis slowly countered this dominance and national pride was restored through the successes of Angela Barrett (née Mortimer) and Ann Jones (née Haydon) respectively in 1961 and 1969. Both published autobiographies in the immediate aftermath of their victories and while these shed light on their particular sporting lives, there is a lack of information regarding their British playing compatriots. While the biographies of a handful of players have been recorded, the lives of the majority of players on the amateur circuit have been largely forgotten and of the extant accounts these provide little insight into the actual experiences of the women competitors themselves.

The tennis circuit and the women that were part of this world provide a platform to understand the lives of elite female tennis players in the amateur era. The aim of this study is to analyse the lives of a small number of British women who competed on the amateur tennis circuit pre and post World War II. In doing so, life story interviews were undertaken together with a detailed interrogation of published biographies of women tennis players from this era and it investigates, for the first time, the sporting lives of those women whose achievements to date have been ignored. The study adopts a biographical approach and investigates the role of tennis throughout the lives of the women, by studying key moments, epiphanies and turning points in their sporting lives. The following research questions are addressed in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of elite female tennis players who played at the AELTC Wimbledon pre and post World War II:

Who were the key influences on their sporting lives?

How did they gain access to the tennis circuit?

How did gender role expectations influence their experiences as elite female tennis players in the amateur era?

How did their experiences as an elite tennis player influence their lives upon retirement from the amateur circuit?

# Chapter 4: Researching Women's Sporting Lives

## Introduction

This chapter outlines how biographical research techniques were employed to gain an understanding of the lives of four women tennis players who competed at the Wimbledon Championships in pre and post war Britain. Their life stories are notable in their own right since they provide previously undocumented details of women's sporting lives, and as a collection of life stories they allow an interpretation of the life history of women players in the amateur era of tennis. In using biographical research I am seeking to understand the experiences of an individual or group of individuals' lives, and how they interact with and interpret the world around them. Prior to the study commencing ethical approval was granted from the University of Southampton, School of Education Research Ethics Committee following the completion of an Ethics Review Checklist. Throughout the study appropriate action was taken to maintain ethical standards and these are discussed within the chapter.

The section 'Discovery of the Players' describes how the four players were recruited. Denzin (1989) suggests that the researcher must begin by gaining an understanding of a set of experiences in the participant's life. He explains that these are written chronologically and key life stages and experiences are noted. The researcher, he explains, then focuses on gathering the life story of the participants through interviews. I have sought to follow this guidance and the data collection procedures used are outlined in the section 'Meeting the Players: The Interview Process'. The main source of data for this study was gathered from life story interviews. The life story interview is a form of interviewing which emphasises the importance of gaining a complete overview of an individual's life. The interviews I conducted were organised around key stages in the participants' life, with particular emphasis placed on gaining an understanding of turning points in the players' lives. All were transcribed verbatim and the meanings of the stories were explored from the perspective of the individual. Data analysis procedures are outlined in the section, 'Analysing Life Story Interviews' whereby inductive data analysis techniques were utilised within the context of biographical research.

This is followed by a section on 'Life Documents and Women's Sporting Lives' which outlines how additional research sources were used to ensure each life story was understood through a range of interpretations. Plummer (2001, p.19) points out that

life documents can arise from a range of sources: "biographies, autobiographies, letters, journals, interviews and obituaries". These sources demonstrate the range and depth of material available to the researcher. While this research included a wide range of additional sources and life documents, it achieves its research aims, by ensuring there is a relationship between the methods and the research purpose (Erben, 1998). As such the research sources were specifically selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the lives of the elite women tennis players of the amateur era.

The chapter also includes a review of the concept of trustworthiness in biographical research with particular emphasis on memory. The sections 'Trustworthiness of Findings' and 'Trustworthiness and Memory' highlight concerns regarding the multiple layers of truth within life stories. Within these I explain what I see as my moral responsibilities to ensure the life stories which are presented are told with respect for the participants and their sporting memories.

## Biographical Research

Researchers undertaking a biographical study are bombarded with a plethora of terms all of which seek to describe life experiences in various forms. This study used Denzin's (1989) text *Interpretive Biography* as a guide to understanding the terms of biographical research. He provides a list of words which illustrate the scope of biography. This list includes life history, personal history, oral history, and case history. The importance of history in the biographical process is apparent in all of these.

While life story refers to the story the individual chooses to tell (Atkinson, 1998), life history refers to the collection, interpretation and report writing of the life in terms of the story told (Roberts, 2002) or as the construction of the past experiences of the individual to relate to the story (Denzin, 1970). "Therefore the life story is the narrated story by the author while life history infers the interpretive, presentational work of the researcher" (Roberts, 2002, p.3). The life story as defined by Atkinson has been used by a range of researchers including Plummer (2001) and Sparkes et al. (2005) and it reflects the approach to life stories as developed in this study.

A life story is the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and as honestly as possible, what the person remembers of it and what he or she wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another. The resulting life story is the narrative essence of what has happened to the person... It includes the important events, experiences and feelings of a lifetime...

whatever form it takes, a life story always brings order and meaning to the life being told, for both the teller and the listener. It is a way of understanding the past and the present more fully (Atkinson, 2002, quoted in Sparkes, et al., 2005).

Within this study the term life story is used to explain the data collection process.

Denzin (1989) discusses the concept that people's life stories are shaped by significant events which he terms an epiphany. In this study epiphanies are recognised as specific turning points in an individual's life story which may not necessarily be problematic but are recognised as having a significant impact on the women's life course. When conducting a biographical study the researcher makes use of life documents to explain the epiphanies of an individual's life (Denzin, 1989; Plummer, 2001). Indeed Parratt (1989) welcomes the use of autobiographies and the periodical press as a source of data which establishes a better understanding of what women's sport actually encompassed.

## Discovery of the Players

The key to attaining the study's research aims was the recruitment of female players who had played tennis competitively during the amateur era. Selection criteria were based on identifying British women who had competed at the Wimbledon Championships as amateurs in the pre and post war period. It was deemed important to identify women players whose careers were predominantly within this time period, thus ensuring their sporting lives were a reflection of the particular sporting period under investigation.

Reinhartz (1994) states that a distinctive feature of feminist biography is the story of how the researcher discovered her participants. While this biographical study is not analysed from a feminist perspective it holds many similarities to feminist research in that it endeavours to treat a woman's life story as significant in itself. The discovery of the women players was centred on the Kenneth Ritchie Wimbledon Library at the All England Lawn Tennis Club, Wimbledon (AELTC). The library was pivotal as a place of background research and networking. Competitor listings from every Championship are archived alongside a collection of British and international lawn tennis journals, books, annuals, newspaper match reports, lawn tennis magazines, published biographies, autobiographies and a photographic archive. This extensive library brings together researchers from the world of tennis and subsequently provides the opportunity to make contacts with the gatekeepers of women's tennis. The museum has communal reading areas and the sense of shared purpose prompts communication between researchers. Informal conversations with a



fellow researcher led to the identification of a gatekeeper to women players of the amateur era.

The use of the term gatekeeper has typically been used in research to define the process of gaining access to a research setting through a member or insider of the research group. The British Sociological Association (BSA) provides ethical guidance on relationships between researchers and participants recruited via gatekeepers.

In some situations access to a research setting is gained via a 'gatekeeper'. In these situations members should adhere to the principle of obtaining informed consent directly from the research participants to whom access is required, while at the same time taking account of the gatekeepers' interest. Since the relationship between the research participant and the gatekeeper will continue long after the sociologist has left the research setting, care should be taken not to inadvertently disturb that relationship unduly ([www.socresonline.org.uk/info/ethguide.html](http://www.socresonline.org.uk/info/ethguide.html)).

In this case the gatekeeper was John (pseudonym), whose connection with women's tennis was based on personal and business interests. John's desire to extend knowledge of women's tennis history led him to introduce an acquaintance, and the first participant, Joan Hughesman.

Joan was born in 1919 and played tennis at the Wimbledon Championships from 1939-1960. She was also a member of the Great Britain Wightman Cup team in 1946. John provided her contact details and his support also extended to a personal commendation of the research study which was invaluable. Therefore through initial sampling of data in the library and discussions with John a 'point of departure' was reached (Charmaz, 2001). The recruitment of participants that started with Joan evolved as further participants were identified based on their ability to match the research criteria. For example Joan Hughesman discussed other players during the interview and recommended several as potential participants. She specifically recommended that I contact Joy Michele, a player at Wimbledon from 1947-1951. Subsequently, following my interview with Joy Michele, she recommended I contact Phyllis King, who born in 1905, had played at the Wimbledon Championships between 1928-1953.

This form of snowball sampling leads to the recruitment of participants with shared experiences and allows the overall meaning of the life stories to be compared as they reflect the same historical period and social context (Corradi, 1991). Geiger's (1986) review of women's life histories suggests that when studies include narratives of

more than one woman from a particular group, it allows the researcher to make internal comparisons. Since each interview led to the recruitment of additional participants, it also gave assurances that the participants were engaged with the process and were committed to enhancing knowledge of women's sporting lives.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of amateur women's tennis across the historical period, it was necessary to find a second point of departure that would facilitate the recruitment of participants who had competed at the end of the amateur era. The initial selection of players covered a playing span from 1928-1960, yet the amateur era continued until 1968. Through background research of media sources and auto/biographies, potential participants from the end of the amateur period were identified. The key players from the post war era included British players Christine Truman, Ann Jones, Angela Mortimer, and Shirley Brasher. Members of the Kenneth Ritchie Wimbledon Library were supportive of the project and passed on introductory letters to these players. This support was essential in facilitating not only reaching the players but the librarians also provided personal recommendations about the integrity of the research. Subsequently, I had the opportunity to interview Christine Truman, a Wimbledon competitor 1956-1974 and finalist in the all British women's singles final in 1961.

Erben (1998) suggests that the size of an interview sample is dictated by the purpose of the research. The total number of participants for this study was limited by the specific aims as stated in the research questions at the end of chapter 3. The number of participants was also limited as selection was based on women whose tennis career predominantly fell within the era of amateur tennis. Based on these parameters data has been gathered from interviews with four players: Joan Hughesman, Phyllis King, Joy Michelle, and Christine Truman.

Upon receiving participant contact details the communication process adhered to the BSA guidelines of ethical practice in research. After some initial background research had been undertaken to ascertain the context of their participation in women's tennis formal contact was made through a letter. This allowed me to introduce myself to the prospective participants in such a way as to highlight the research topic and requirements of the study (see Appendix 1, p.194).

An introductory letter was sent to all participants and they responded with letters of acceptance. I followed up their responses with both written and telephone conversations. The women were sent a letter thanking them for their willingness to get involved in the study and supplying them with an information sheet and consent

form (Appendix 2, pp.196-197). It was important to reassure and remind the women that their contact details were supplied by a trusted informant and participation in the study would be voluntary, with any research findings treated with the utmost respect.

A telephone call was an additional aspect of the communication process which helped to build a relationship with the women. Each telephone call involved both formal and informal conversation. The formal conversation involved a personal introduction and supplied further background information, while the informal conversation helped to develop a rapport prior to the interview. Each telephone call concluded with a confirmation of the date, time and location of the interview. Communication with the women began with a telephone call to Joan Hughesman in May 2004, through to the final life story interview with Phyllis King in November 2005.

## Meeting the Players: The Interview Process

Life story interviews have a strong life review aspect (Bornat, 2004). The participant is encouraged to use the interview as an opportunity to reflect and describe new meanings of themselves. This study recognises life review as an important intervention in life history research as it allows the participant to reflect on their life as a whole rather than interviewing about particular facets of their sporting lives. For the researcher and the participant, life story interviews provide the opportunity to assess the whole life story. While personal experience narratives (Denzin, 1989; Plummer, 1995) seek to explore the narrative of an individual's life along a chronological continuum of life stages, life story interviews report on an individual's life and how it reflects institutional and cultural themes of society (Creswell, 1998).

Rosenthal (2004) outlines the benefits of life story interviews based on the following theoretical assumptions. To understand and explain social and psychological phenomenon we must understand how they are created, produced and transformed. To understand and explain people's actions we must understand what they have experienced and what meanings they give to their actions then and today. Finally, Rosenthal suggests that to understand and explain statements of an individual about a particular topic we must interpret them as part of the overall context of their current life and the resulting present and future perspective. The current study follows Rosenthal's rationale as it enabled the development of a greater understanding of the women's experiences in amateur tennis through a reconstruction of their sporting lives and the process of them becoming tennis players.

Denzin's (1970) review of life history research states that the researcher should be aware that the participant will present a distinctive identity or perspective whereby they challenge previously constructed autobiographies. This stance results in the participant presenting their stories in conveniently packaged, socially acceptable pictures of their lives. Denzin (1970, p.245) reminds us that as researchers we are presented with "some variation on the success story" and as such the participant must be encouraged to give an account of their life which encompasses the good and the bad.

In order to encourage openness in the interview process it was important to develop a rapport with the participants whereby the relationship between teller and listener develops into a social relationship (Bornat, 2004). It is through this social relationship that Bornat believes the researcher is able to hear the individual's unique story. A key aim for this study was that the women would be sufficiently relaxed to feel like they were having a conversation about their sporting life; my role was to engage the women in a conversation with a purpose. Plummer (2001) suggests that the more interpretive the interview, the better it may be to see the participant on their own 'turf' as it increases their ease and provides an insight into their social world.

Each interview was conducted in the participant's home, and followed the same pattern. Upon arrival at the women's homes I was welcomed in and offered a drink. This process facilitated informal conversation with the women based on a wide range of topics, from the weather and my journey to their home, to events in their life at the time of interview. These initial discussions were followed by questions from the women about the details of the study and my progress to date. The conversation progressed naturally to a point when the women were asked to re-read the information sheet and sign a consent form. At this point the Dictaphone was turned on and with the women's consent the interview progressed. Each interview was conducted on a one to one basis in the privacy of the living room thus encouraging an atmosphere of trust and candour (Thompson, 2000). The recorded interviews varied in length from 1½ -2 hours, while the length of time spent with the women was a full morning or afternoon (3-4 hours).

A semi-structured interview schedule was adopted based on both the research questions and background archival research from tennis publications such as *Lawn, Tennis & Badminton* and published biographies from the amateur era. Sampling of documents was based on an awareness of the women's timeframe of competing at the Wimbledon Championships and reviewing corresponding newspaper articles,

match reports and tournament reviews. Alongside these documents, biographies and autobiographies of women players from the corresponding years were read, re-read and analysed with the specific purpose of gaining a greater understanding of their tennis careers during the amateur era. Through the analysis of these sources, themes and issues were identified as being influential in and to the women's sporting lives. These research themes and issues were then integrated into the interview schedule and discussed within the interview. The use of a range of life documents in the planning and conducting of the life story interview allowed the analyses of varying definitions as they relate to the same situation (Denzin, 1970).

The interview schedule was used as a prompt for questions within the life story interview. It was chronologically structured and incorporated notes from archival research of newspapers and biographies. These research notes were useful in allowing the women to clarify events in their sporting careers and provided retrieval strategies for their life stories. Since the players' introductory letters included information on the scope of the interview it was not necessary to provide them with a copy of the interview schedule. The schedule that was used for Christine Truman's interview is included in Appendix 3 (pp.198-201). It illustrates the scope of background research undertaken prior to the interview which was useful in focussing questions on particular events and allowed greater comparison with other data sources.

The interview process was enhanced by the use of photographs and newspaper articles from the women's playing days as these provided stimuli to the discussion. Wagner (1979, cited in Plummer, 2001, p.61) recognised the use of photographs as interview stimuli, while Collier and Collier (1986, cited in Plummer, p.64) termed the technique photo elicitation. I used photographs to clarify themes and issues, in particular the themes surrounding tennis fashion and the issue of foreign travel. Taking into account the age of the study's participants (63-100 years old), these were useful as a technique to prompt memory and provide a focus for the story (Rosenthal, 2004). After each interview, the women commented favourably on the additional sources brought to the interview as verification that I cared about their story and respected their sporting lives. These issues of respect and care highlight the importance of background research prior to the interview as factors in building a rapport with participants.

Having gained a certificate in 'Person Centred Counselling' I used the techniques learnt, practised and assessed through the course during the interviews. An empathetic approach to interviewing was adopted that adheres to the philosophy of

person-centred counselling, this is described as a deep respect for the significance and worth of the individual (McLeod, 2000). Empathy within the interview process is characterised by the researcher actively engaging and communicating awareness of the participants' experiences. This is defined by Wolcott (1994) as active listening whereby the listener takes a more interactive role within the interview process.

The interviews were based on an appreciation of life review as part of life story interviewing and the chronology of discussion began with their earliest memories of sport and led to their current reflections on their sporting careers. Each interview came to an end with the completion of the planned interview schedule and the women articulating that they did not have anything else to add to their story. Erben (1998) recognizes that it is a combination of both the participant's sense that they have told a complete story and the researcher's awareness that no additional themes are emerging. This leads to a natural ending of the interview and an appropriate amount of data being gained from the process.

After the interview informal conversation continued with the offer of tea or coffee and in some cases sherry, this provided the chance to show warmth and appreciation in return for the women's openness in the interview. All the interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed verbatim, and the use of a reflective diary immediately post interview meant that unrecorded conversations could be noted in detail and then re-addressed as raw data in the form of field notes. The informal discussions pre and post interviewing were enlightening in their ability to provide valuable data and proved vital in encouraging relaxed conversation.

The use of a reflective diary also reduced my dilemma regarding when the Dictaphone is turned on as I was conscious from my counselling training that recording devices may impact on the degree of openness and cause an imbalance in the relationship. This imbalance of power was reduced by my assuring the women that the transcripts would be analysed with sensitivity and I would treat the transcript as a precious document for both the women and myself. A sample of an interview summary sheet plus reflections and field notes is included in Appendix 4 (p.202).

The process of reflection is an essential component of research and it was utilised to good effect throughout the data collection process. Thoughts, reflections and emerging questions were noted in a reflective diary. In some instances these were a reflection on my perceptions of the women as perceived through their telephone manner and in other cases it related to issues of concern surrounding memory and cognition of participants. These allowed me to prepare for the interview with greater

depth and self-awareness, indeed Reinhartz (1994) suggests that self-reflection can become a guide to responsible inquiry. Thus any concerns or questions can be addressed through additional research of the participant and discussions with the research supervisor.

## Analysing Life Story Interviews

Biographical analysis involves the identification of life stories, the analysis of epiphanies and the recognition of the contextual materials of life (Creswell, 1998). The women's life stories were identified and analysed through numerous re-readings of the transcript to gain an understanding of the women's stories as told to the researcher. Through this process the women's lives could be understood as a chronology of events, and key moments and epiphanies identified.

Epiphanies are an essential element of biographical research. Plummer (2001) defines life stories as being organised along a linear line which includes major tensions or crises termed epiphanies. They are moments of revelation which leave a permanent mark on a person's life (Denzin, 1989). Erben (1998) uses the term 'specific events' in relation to Denzin's description of epiphanies and suggests that they do not have to be momentous. Indeed, Denzin (1989, p.71) defined four forms of epiphany:

- (1) The major event, which touches every fabric of a person's life;
- (2) the cumulative or representative event, which signifies eruptions or reactions to experiences which have been going on for a long period of time;
- (3) the minor epiphany, which symbolically represents a major, problematic moment in a relationship or a person's life; and
- (4) those episodes whose meanings are given in the reliving of the experience.

In this study epiphanies were identified within the women's life stories as pivotal moments that influenced their sporting lives in particular how they were introduced to tennis, key social agents who helped shape their tennis careers and moments which marked their retirement from the tennis circuit.

The interview findings were initially analysed based on subjective perceptions of the data (Wengraf, 2001). A summary of each interview was written based on a chronological overview of the women's lives and an acknowledgement of epiphanies. Appendix 5 (p.203) provides the reader with a sample interview summary based on the interview with Joy Michele. This process is recognised as heightening selectivity and sensitivity as additional data is gathered. The interview findings were additionally analysed based on a process of inductive analysis whereby the transcript was coded word by word, line by line. This form of data analysis allows themes to

emerge from the data and provides the researcher with a systematic process that seeks to interpret the meaning and values that the participant assigns to their sporting lives (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Key words and phrases that the participants used to explain their experiences were identified. These words and phrases were coded and termed raw data themes. Each interview was analysed until all the relevant raw data had been categorised into distinctive raw data themes. A sample of the initial coding of raw data is included in Appendix 6 (p.204) which includes a list of raw data themes from pages 1-4 of Christine Truman's interview transcript.

Once the transcript was analysed and coded I had a list of raw data themes distinctive to that participant's interview. Raw data themes from the inductive analysis of Christine Truman's interview included: parental influence, parental commitment, sport at home, early enthusiasm, attitude towards sport and sibling involvement. The next stage of the analysis was to group together raw data themes that had similar meaning. These new categories were labelled first order categories. This form of reduction, grouping and re-grouping of data continued through to the second order categories until no further grouping could be done. This led to a final group of themes which were labelled general dimensions. Appendix 7 (p.205) outlines the progression from raw data themes to general dimensions within a section of Christine Truman's interview transcript. These allowed me to understand the complete interview through the subtraction of key issues identified by the participant and categorised by the researcher. The issues were then used as points of comparison between the women's life stories and the additional life documents of media sources and published biographies.

This method of inductive analysis through grouping and re-grouping of raw data shares similarities with grounded theory analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 1998; Charmaz, 2001). But the analytical approach used in this study differs from grounded theory, as it attempts to generate understanding by entering the world of the participants through hearing their unique life story and the findings can be assumed as becoming increasingly close to explaining the women's sporting lives (Wengraf, 2001).

The value of memo-writing or note taking has been well documented in qualitative research generally and grounded theory research in particular, as a useful method of writing up ideas and looking at relationships between research findings (Corbin and Strauss, 1998; Charmaz, 2001). The process of note taking has been defined by Wengraf (2001) as the building blocks of interpretation. Throughout the reading and analysis of transcripts notes were made. These varied from single words, to



sentences, to paragraphs and were referred back to as coded data or formulated ideas. These notes capture the inner mind of the researcher and allow theory and ideas to emerge as the researcher is stimulated by the findings (Charmaz, 2006).

This study also uses the notion of sensitising concepts as a useful technique when taking notes and analysing data. Sensitising concepts give the researcher a particular concept or idea to pursue (Blumer, 1969, cited in Charmaz, 2006, p.16). Within the current study sensitising concepts include issues such as gender and identity, these provided me with another point of departure in analysing the data leading to greater depth and development of ideas. One particular concept addressed was the issue of silence. I made note of the issues which the women were not keen to discuss or areas where their avoidance of a particular issue was significant. Bornat (2004) encourages researchers to acknowledge the significance of these silences and these were reflected on in the process of note taking during the transcribing of the interview and the line by line coding (as outlined in Appendix 4, p.202). Once an area of contention has been recognised by the biographical researcher they can investigate the issue further through the analysis of additional archival resources. Within this study additional sources of information are categorised as 'Life Documents'.

## Life Documents and Women's Sporting Lives

Since there is relatively little known about the lives of women tennis players in the amateur era and due to the limited recruitment of participants as a result of the low number of surviving players from this era, it was necessary to push the boundaries of data collection to seek out fresh material. Additional sources for the current study were media articles from broadsheet newspapers and tennis publications from the amateur era. These sources provided vital information on the player's performances in tournaments, results, and personal stories about the players. Erben (1998) reminds us that the biographical method may include documents that are not directly related to the subject. While these newspapers and tennis publications may not discuss the players' lives directly they provide an insight into the representation of tennis as disclosed to the public, thus their importance as socio-cultural documents are invaluable.

Garraty and Allport (1981) acknowledge that self-written documents, such as biographies, may or may not be taken as fact but they argue that they should be recognised as valuable sources of personal expression. This issue is highlighted by Bjorklund (1998) when she commends their value as sources of information about self-understanding. The stories presented either through the media sources or the

published auto/biographies are re-presented to the reader and this issue of re-presentation and the construction of a story were taken into account in the analysis of each text.

The majority of the life documents used in the study were accessed through the Kenneth Ritchie Wimbledon Library. The main tennis publications that were analysed were the weekly magazine *Lawn Tennis and Badminton* (published 1908-1940 and 1947-1967) and the monthly American magazine *World Tennis* (published 1953-1991). These magazines provide readers with club and tournament information while also reporting on the international tennis circuit. Published autobiographies and biographies of female tennis players who competed in the amateur era were analysed to gain insights into the life of female tennis players during the amateur era. The analysed biographies included players who had competed against the interviewees but had since died or were not available for recruitment. Appendix 8 (pp.206-208) provides a list of the analysed biographies and autobiographies.

The biographies and media sources were analysed using the same principle as the interviews. They were read and re-read before sections of the text were coded as raw data themes alongside researcher's notes. Appendix 9 (p.209) includes an indicative list of raw data themes from Schoenfeld's (2004) biography of American player Althea Gibson and Britain's Angela Buxton. These themes and notes helped to give greater insights into the world of women's tennis, adding further depth and authenticity to the study.

Mindjet MindManager ([www.mindjet.com](http://www.mindjet.com)) was used as a research tool to aid the biographical data analysis. Using Mindjet MindManager stages in the players' lives were categorised chronologically combining research findings from the interview transcripts and the life documents related to their story. Figure 1 overleaf is a sample of Christine Truman's biography as catalogued using Mindjet MindManager. The use of Mindjet MindManager as a research tool has been useful in cataloguing a wide range of life documents into more meaningful categories of analysis. Alongside its use in documenting the players' biographies it was also used to track developments in particular research topics; for example I used it to catalogue developments in women's tennis fashions (Figure 2, overleaf). It allows meaningful relationships to be drawn between various stages of the women's lives and corresponding research themes while also providing the researcher with a tool to visually represent their data to the reader.

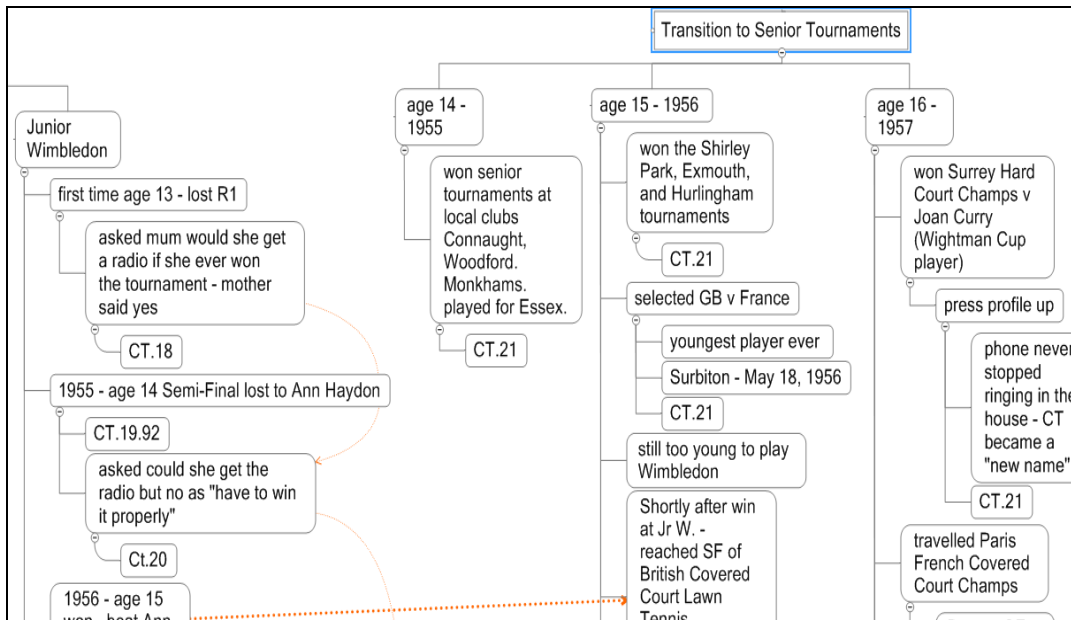


Fig. 1 Sample of Christine Truman's biography catalogued using Mindjet MindManager

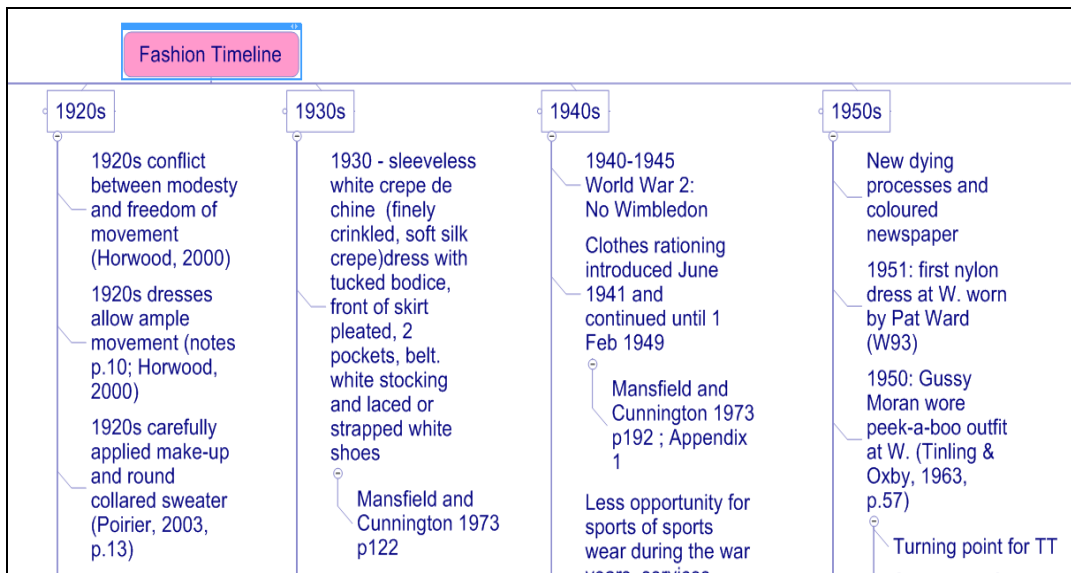


Fig. 2 Sample of Mindjet MindManager used to track developments in women's tennis fashions

### Trustworthiness of Findings

When conducting biographical studies the researcher is aware that they are hearing an account of a person's life which is told to them based on how the person wants their story to be heard, the story is an interpretive account (Denzin, 1989). While

Lincoln and Guba (1985) provided researchers with a number of criteria for establishing trustworthiness which included credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, it should be noted that these were based on assumptions that link positivist philosophy and positivist approaches to methodology. By limiting assessment of trustworthiness to these criteria the biographical researcher is not able to illustrate sufficiently to the reader the depth and breadth of their methodology.

This study seeks to present an authentic account of the women's lives through positioning their stories at the centre of the analysis. The aim was to provide the reader with a credible, plausible and trustworthy story. Denzin (1989, p.77) has established a list of issues that challenge the biographer's quest for trustworthiness.

- (1) Stories always come in multiple versions, and they never have clear endings or beginnings;
- (2) stories are grounded in a group's culture where criteria of truthfulness are established;
- (3) the stories told are never the same as the stories heard;
- (4) stories are shaped by larger ideological forces which put pressures on persons to establish their individuality (and self control) in the stories they construct.

Once the researcher is aware of the multiple layers of truth within stories they can use Riessman's (1993) criteria to assess the trustworthiness of the women's stories (cited in Plummer, 2001, pp.239-240). First, the stories must be persuasive, being both reasonable and convincing to the reader; this relies on both the researcher and the reader's sensitivity to the story. Secondly, the story should be coherent with other people's stories; this can be achieved by gaining detailed descriptions of the event and checking the consistency of the story with memories from the same historical and social context. The memory can also be assessed for correspondence, how similar is the memory to the facts and finally pragmatism. Pragmatism allows the researcher to assess the impact of the story on the teller's life and also review the value of the story from the perspective of the teller, the listener and Western society.

The ability to explore the subjective reality of the participants' lives is recognised as a major strength of biographical research (Sparkes, 1992). Within the study the subjective realities of the women's stories are situated within the wider socio-economic and historical contexts that structure their lives. Through illuminating these and by respecting the uniqueness of the women's lives the researcher is able to identify the commonalities between the players and how these are linked with broader socio-political processes (Sparkes, 1992). In doing so the research findings

are contextualised to ensure that the reader is provided with a coherent and multi-layered perspective of women's sporting lives.

Throughout the research process the following data analysis procedures were adopted to establish the trustworthiness of the research findings: triangulation, negative case analysis, respondent verification. Triangulation in this study involved the use of different data sources to study the women's lives. In some cases these different data sources allow an analysis of a particular event from a range of sources. For example, to gain a greater understanding of the social and historical context of Christine Truman's Wimbledon final in 1961 the following sources were analysed: her published autobiography (Truman, 1961); the autobiography of her opponent in the final Angela Mortimer (Mortimer, 1962), Teddy Tinling's chapter on women's tennis dedicated to Christine Truman (Tinling and Oxby, 1963) and match reports of the final. Denzin (1970) defines this form of triangulation as data triangulation which is close to the strategy of theoretical sampling used in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). This form of clarification allows relationships between emerging themes to be checked and verified, and it encourages sampling across substantive areas.

Negative case analysis involved re-checking the interview transcripts and life documents as the study advanced. The raw data was constantly re-read and analysed against emerging findings. This ensures that research findings across interviews are continually compared, looking for variations and contrasts in the data (Emerson, 2004). In this study negative cases are included as they represent the authenticity of each woman's story. Triangulation and negative case analysis gives the researcher the confidence to provide the reader with rich descriptive accounts of the women's sporting lives.

Following the interviews the women were sent a transcript of the interview alongside a letter thanking them for their time. The letter included a stamped addressed envelope and participants were invited to read the transcript and respond to the researcher if they had anything they wished to add, omit or clarify. None of the participants requested any aspects of their stories be removed and none made any additional comments. Indeed the four women were adamant that they had no desire to read any interpretation of the interview. While this reassured me that the transcribed interviews encompassed the women's chosen stories it also enhanced the moral responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the women's stories were presented as they had requested within the interview and in doing so, provide the reader with an authentic account of their sporting lives. It should also be recognized that the age of the participants may have influenced their decision to not wish to

read the final interpretation. They were no longer concerned about a critical reading of their experiences and their version of events.

Life story interviews involve the collection of living memories. Since the memories are the story of a person's life it is important to establish the reliability of those memories. The researcher must be confident that the told stories and the storyteller are trustworthy and that the recalled story is a sincere representation of the individual's life. When recording and analysing the memories of older adults questions may be raised concerning the teller's ability to recall accurately elements of their life from across the life span. The interviews were conducted between 2004 and 2005 and relied on the women remembering experiences and stories from as long as 50 years ago (Phyllis King last played at Wimbledon in 1953 while Christine Truman had continued playing until 1974).

The following section discusses the complex issue of memory in biographical research. This issue must be addressed when conducting life story research with older adults. The age of the women at the time of interview ranged from Christine Truman, aged 63, to Phyllis King, aged 100. It is the role of the researcher to ensure that their interpretation of the story is a true reflection of the teller's life. Analysing the story using research surrounding the topic of memory allows greater depth of meaning to be gained from the research process.

## Trustworthiness and Memory

Memory plays a key role in biographical research as the teller recalls their life based on how they remember events throughout their life span. It is at the point of telling the story that the researcher must be aware that the story is a recollection of memories from the person's past. This recollection is remembered and re-presented to the researcher and the researcher evaluates and presents the life story as research evidence to support their set research goals. The researcher must recognise the different types of memory pertinent to the life story, the influences of emotion, social context, and age on memory, and the analytical role that they play as a listener interpreting the life story. All of these elements play a part in how the life story is presented, interpreted, re-presented and re-interpreted. Through recognition and sensitive analysis of these elements the reader can be assured of a trustworthy story.

Autobiographical memories are the memories that form a person's life story (Nelson, 2000). They become the stories that embody a person's life. "Autobiographical memories are the memories built around a life" (Plummer, 2001, p.236). They have their onset in early childhood from the age of five (before the age of five there is a

phenomenon known as childhood amnesia) and it develops slowly throughout the person's life, in verbal and social interactions with people (Nelson, 2000 cited in Neisser and Hymen, 2000). This is one of the key features of autobiographical memory, where the process of remembering occurs in a social context (Roberts, 2002). A second feature of autobiographical memory is the role of memory in the formation of the self.

A life is created or constructed by the act of autobiography. It is a way of construing experience and of reconstruing and reconstructing (Bruner, 1993, cited in Plummer, 2001, p.238).

And since the women's lives are reconstructed within the interview it was my role to evaluate the story to ensure meaning was gained from what was being reconstructed.

Personal event memories are defined as an individual's memory of a specific, once in a moment event (Pillemer, 2000, cited in Neisser and Hyman, 2000). Personal event memories may be characterised as moments that have profoundly influenced the life course and are therefore recalled in the immediate moments following the events, leading them to being told habitually. These memories become the most habitually told stories (Plummer, 2001). When the individual is recalling a personal event memory their narrative includes sensory images and there is a real sense that the rememberer is reliving or re-experiencing the actual event. What is important to the researcher is that personal event memories are characterised by the rememberer believing the memory to be true (Pillemer, 2000). The sincerity of the teller relates to Denzin's (1989, p.23) standard of truth since "The sincere autobiographer is assumed to be willing to tell the subjective truth about his or her life". I was aware that the women had told these stories before and as a result many aspects of the interview included these personal event memories.

The analysis of the women's tennis career and in particular their experience of playing at Wimbledon involve an interpretation of events that were highly emotional for the individual. Reisberg and Hertel (2004) outline how strong emotion is reliably associated with a high degree of memory accuracy, completeness and longevity. Playing at the Wimbledon Championships involved a high degree of emotion for players as the tournament was known as the 'World's Championships on Grass' (Little, 1986, p.10). The players were more likely to think about the event in the minutes and hours after competing because it was a significant tournament and event in their sporting lives. This element is integral to memory rehearsal. Also tantamount to memory rehearsal is the fact that the individual cares about the memory and they will have thought about it in many different contexts (Reisberg and

Hertel, 2004). These highly emotional and significant personal memories will have been recalled periodically thus promoting memory retention.

Emotion and the arousal of individuals influence memory with regard to which elements of the event are remembered. Reisberg and Hertel (2004) remind readers that emotional events are remembered accurately but not completely. This is explained in research by Easterbrook (1959) on the role of arousal in the narrowing of attention (cited in Reisberg and Hertel, 2004, p.7). Easterbrook's research, involving depriving animals of food and assessing memory patterns, found that increased arousal led to attention narrowing, resulting in less attention to information from the periphery. This suggests that an athlete in a high state of arousal will be more likely to remember central elements of the event while having impaired memory for the event's periphery. For the female athletes, this means that they are more likely to remember the events that stand out as significant within their playing careers while the events that occurred most frequently become less distinguishable.

Another variable in the distortion of memory occurs when the individual attempts to reconstruct the finer details of an event. Systematic distortion occurs in the way in which the memory summarises details of the event resulting in the loss of specific memories (Searleman and Herrmann, 1994). The memory is recalled based on frameworks of knowledge called schemas (Bartlett, 1932 cited in Lynn and McConkey, 1998, p.41). Remembering involves reconstructing past events based on pre-existing schemas (Nelson, 2000). Therefore the female player's memory for events that are repeated regularly may be summarised to the extent that they remember the event so that it is consistent with their own self-concept (Searleman and Herrmann, 1994). While this may mean that the specific memories of the event have been re-constructed, the player believes the memory to be true since it is an honest reflection of how they believe the event had taken place.

As the story is reconstructed it is important to be aware of the position of the teller and the context of the interview in how the story is re-shaped. Roberts (2002) explains that an understanding of memory should include situating memory within the reshaping of a story as the teller may develop or replace plots to meet their current position. Linton (2000) suggests that to understand a story the researcher should be aware that the role of a story can be interpreted in many different contexts and from different historical perspectives. When conducting the interviews I was aware that I was hearing a story that may have been told many times, in different contexts and from different perspectives. Further, I recognised that it was important



to allow the women to tell their story based on their social and historical context. This encourages interpretation to be conducted by the researcher rather than the storyteller and allows for a more truthful representation of the story since the storyteller is presenting their memories in a natural context. Here the interview becomes 'a conversation with a purpose' (Gerard Sister, 1959) rather than a scripted, structured and restricted documentation of life.

## Concluding Remarks

The range and depth of primary source data collection allows the researcher to reach a saturation point where no additional research themes are gathered from the data and the findings are sufficiently comprehensive to provide the reader with an insight into the lives of elite amateur female players alongside an appreciation of the historical context of their lives. Saturation point was reached when I had gathered sufficient evidence to provide me with a comprehensive understanding of the sporting lives of women tennis players at the Wimbledon Championships in pre and post war Britain. The women's life stories are valued as they illustrate the uniqueness of life story research whilst also providing an opportunity to investigate the shared meanings of the sporting lives of amateur women tennis players.

This study gathered data from a combination of sources with the purpose of achieving maximum fidelity to the life stories of women tennis players. This aim of maximum fidelity was included in Garraty and Allport's (1981) rules for the preparation of life histories. They recommend that fidelity can be achieved through a sympathetic understanding and a critical and orderly analysis of research sources. Through the analysis of many parts the researcher gains a conception of the whole which then allows re-interpretation and analysis of the participant's life story.

The process of data collection and analysis undertaken in this study was based on the five ethical principles outlined by Plummer (2001, p.228),

- (1) The principle of respect, recognition and tolerance for persons and their differences.
- (2) The principle of promoting the caring of others, what has been called, following many feminists, 'an ethic of care'.
- (3) The principle of expanding equalities, fairness and justice.
- (4) The principle of enlarging spheres of autonomy, freedoms and choice.
- (5) The principle of minimizing harm.

Throughout each step of the research process every effort has been made to ensure that in the gathering, analysis and discussion of the women's lives their stories have been treated with respect by adhering to university ethical guidelines and the research guidelines of the BSA.

Within the following chapter, the life stories of Phyllis King, Joan Hughesman, Joy Michele and Christine Truman are presented through pen portraits based on findings from their life story interviews combined with analyses of published biographies and media resources. My position as keeper of their stories results in a level of reflexivity that encourages honesty and respect for the women alongside knowledge that their stories provide a significant contribution to better understanding women's sporting lives pre and post the Second World War.

## Chapter 5: Pen Portraits

### Introduction

Amateur tennis in pre war Britain encompassed a world of carefree privilege for a small group of players who were selected by the LTA to compete for Great Britain on the national and international amateur circuit. Players would enjoy a week of fierce on court competition combined with developing lifelong friendships with the opposition. Weekly dances were held by the host tennis club and players valued the social side of each tournament as an opportunity to thank their hosts for their hospitality.

This chapter presents the life stories of four women who competed on the amateur tennis circuit from pre World War II in 1928, through to the beginning of the professional era in 1974. The players are: Mrs. Phyllis King (née Mudford, who competed at the Wimbledon Championships 1928-1953), Mrs. Joan Hughesman (née Curry, Wimbledon 1939-1960), Mrs. Joy Michelle (née Hibbert, Wimbledon 1947-1957), Mrs. Christine Janes (née Truman, Wimbledon 1957-1974).

Their sporting lives are presented in a biographical format and include information regarding their family background, their early socialisation into tennis and their experiences on the amateur tennis circuit through to their lives after retiring from competitive tennis. In (re)presenting their tennis careers, there is an emphasis on significant people in their lives, their most memorable matches and key turning points within their tennis careers and life as a retired player.

The life stories are based on interviews with each player together with analysis of published biographies and media resources. Christine Truman was the only player to have published an autobiography, *Tennis Today* (Truman, 1961) and this was used as a source of additional information while other players' biographies were used to clarify information on matches and give an additional perspective of life on the tennis circuit. These biographies included Althea Gibson's (1958) *I always wanted to be Somebody*, and Helen Jacobs' (1951) *Gallery of Champions*. Additional sources on women's tennis history were also used to gain further insights, including Billy Jean King's history of women's tennis *We Have Come a Long Way: The Story of Women's Tennis* (Jean King and Starr, 1988), Teddy Tinling's *White Ladies* (Tinling and Oxby 1963) and John Barrett's (2001) *Wimbledon: The Official History of the Championships*. Media sources were primarily based on articles from the British tennis magazine *Lawn, Tennis and Badminton* which specifically related to events

pertinent to the women's pen portraits. The information available on each player varied based on their success on the amateur circuit and this is reflected in the length and breadth of the life stories presented in the chapter.

The findings from the study provide the reader with previously undocumented accounts of life on the amateur tennis circuit from the perspective of four women who competed between 1928 and 1974. Sports history texts and sporting biographies are largely dominated by male experiences. The stories of women athletes are situated on the margins of these stories and it is only the exceptional cases of female athletic success that leads to their story being presented. These four women's biographies provide much needed insights into the world of amateur tennis from a female perspective while also illustrating the influence of a tennis career on the lives of the players when they retired from the tennis circuit.

## Phyllis King née Mudford (1905 – 2006)

### “A Player of the ‘Golden Age’”

Phyllis King was born on 23 August, 1905, a decade before the outbreak of the Great War. When I met her in November 2005 she was still living in the family home in Horley, Surrey and was happy to gaze upon her garden and recollect their tennis garden parties and how “it was all so leisurely in those days.” Phyllis always enjoyed sports. She played hockey, netball and tennis at school and was captain of Sutton High School tennis team. A friend recommended she play at the local tennis tournament in Reigate and this tournament was for her a stepping stone into the world of amateur tennis. Phyllis loved the game and her parents encouraged her, she said:

I was lucky enough to do quite well in it and then my parents said you know that I ought to have some coaching and I went up to Barnes and had some coaching there.

With the support of her father, a marine underwriter for the Commercial Union Insurance Company and a keen tennis player, Phyllis continued going for coaching at Barnes and joined the local tennis club at Horley when she was a teenager, before moving to Reigate Tennis Club where the standard was higher.

Tennis had always been part of Phyllis’ social life. She attended garden parties, many of which were held at her family home, where the women would play tennis in the afternoon and gentlemen would join them in the evening for mixed doubles. It was:

A completely different world, I mean the girls didn’t immediately take up a career or anything like that; you really had a very lovely social leisurely life in my day.

Although for Phyllis, tennis was not simply a leisure activity. She enjoyed competing and was not concerned with playing aggressively, in contrast she remembers friends who were very worried with how they looked while competing.

I remember one of my partners saying that she’d far rather lose the point than not to make a graceful move, well I never felt that you know.

When Phyllis left school in 1923 aged 18, she continued to play in the Surrey County tournaments and when she travelled further afield she had the support of her mother, “when I first started my mother always came with me and that was very nice.” It was not until 1928, aged 22, that she qualified for the All England Lawn Tennis Championships at Wimbledon based on her success in tournaments. Women

playing at the Championships in 1928 were still expected to wear stockings when the Queen was present. Phyllis found this amusing,

...only when I first started if the Queen was present you had to wear stockings yes. [Laughter]. Things are so different now... Because if you wear stockings you have to wear something to keep them up.

[Laughter]. Extraordinary and then of course just ankle socks.

Phyllis was very aware that “you dress for the time you are living in” and for her Wimbledon debut she wore a pleated white skirt that fell to her knee, with a white shirt and coloured bandeau as influenced by the French player Suzanne Lenglen who had retired from amateur tennis two years previously.

Playing at the All England Club in 1928 was the start of Phyllis’ tennis career, and her success in qualifying for Wimbledon strengthened her commitment to tennis as she played in more tournaments along the south coast. In 1930 Phyllis reached the quarter-finals at Wimbledon, only to be beaten (6-1, 6-2) by the soon to be crowned champion, the American player Helen Wills Moody, who had already won the American Championships six times and Wimbledon three times. Following Wimbledon, Phyllis won the London Covered Court Championships in 1930 and this high profile win led to her being invited to attend the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) coaching with Dan Maskell (1908-1992). She was 25 years old and recognition by the LTA was the turning point in her tennis career as she progressed from club player to a nationally recognised competitor. Phyllis received lessons from Maskell several times a week at the All England Club developing specific tactical skills such as accuracy.

He used to put a ball box on the court an empty ball box; we had six balls in a box. And he put the box in different places on the court and would go on hitting us the ball until we hit it and then he would move it you see. Accuracy.

Dan Maskell’s coaching and the LTA’s financial support with travelling expenses, combined with her family’s support and enthusiasm for the game, allowed Phyllis to achieve international success and recognition for her tennis. Financial assistance from her family was essential as the LTA’s support only extended to travelling expenses when playing for Great Britain, including hotel bills for trips abroad. Players had to pay for all their personal expenses “your clothes, your hairdressing and all those personal things.”

1931 was the most significant year in Phyllis’ career. The Kent All-Comers’ Championships at Beckenham was played two or three weeks before the Wimbledon

Championships and was viewed by the players as a dress rehearsal for Wimbledon. In 1931, Phyllis won the final at Beckenham when she beat the highly favoured British player and the future Wimbledon champion, Dorothy Round. During the final The Observer newspaper correspondent described Phyllis' forehand strokes as "hurricane drives" and by beating Dorothy Round she was ranked in the top ten at Wimbledon. The win at Beckenham was followed up with success at Wimbledon just a few weeks later when Phyllis played at the Wimbledon Championships for the third time. She was seeded seventh in the singles but was beaten in the third round by another British player, the unseeded Joan Ridley in a hard fought three set match (10-8, 1-6, 6-4). However, it was her performance in the ladies' doubles at Wimbledon which established her tennis career.

Phyllis and her partner, Mrs. Dorothy Shepherd-Barron (1897-1953), were unseeded in the doubles yet they advanced to the final with relative ease. In 1931 the Wightman Cup matches were held in America which meant there were only three American women playing at Wimbledon and the draw was primarily European. Their opponents in the doubles final were the fourth seeds, Doris Metaxa from France and Josane Sigart from Belgium. Metaxa and Sigart had an arduous finals day, as they played a long semi-final match that morning which included a 14 game middle set, and only had a chance to rest during the men's doubles final which was played before the ladies' final. After losing the first set (3-6), Phyllis and Dorothy proceeded to take the second set (6-3) and the third set (6-4). The Daily Telegraph report of the 1931 final reflects the nationalistic fervour of the match.

Had Miss Mudford broken down, had she not proved a Gibraltar in siege, Belgium and France between them must have gained another triumph.

The victory was the peak of Phyllis' career and established her name in the history of the Wimbledon Championships. The match was described by H.S. Scrivener in Lawn, Tennis and Badminton as "one of the best ladies' doubles finals, in fact, ever seen on the centre court." The British player H. W. 'Bunny' Austin (1906-2000) praised Phyllis in an article entitled "Great Britain's Greatest Lawn tennis Player" in the Evening News;

Miss Mudford has a forehand drive of rare attacking quality and a sound, if somewhat defensive backhand. And she attacks from beginning to end. I am sure Miss Mudford will go on improving and one day be a match for any player.

Phyllis' prize for winning the Wimbledon ladies' doubles was a gold medal and a £10 shopping voucher which came with strict rules that stipulated that it could only be

spent on luxury items “not domestic appliances.” The LTA gave these vouchers as regular prizes at tournaments and when Phyllis’ combined winnings reached £130 worth of vouchers she bought her first car, a Morris Minor, through the luxury department store Harrods and subsequent vouchers were used to buy a wooden garage for her new car. The night of the final the All England Lawn Tennis Club held the Champions Ball at the Savoy Hotel in London. Phyllis had not been expected to win the final and this meant that she had to drive home with her fiancé Maurice and get changed into an evening dress before returning to London where they were given seats of honour at the top table. For Phyllis it was a “very special” evening.

The Wightman Cup was remembered fondly by Phyllis and many of her career highlights were based around Wightman Cup matches. She played in her first Wightman Cup match in 1930, aged 25. The British team were playing at home and were victorious over the Americans. Phyllis’ match against the American Sarah Palfrey Cooke (1912-1996) was particularly well remembered as Palfrey Cooke went on to win the Wimbledon doubles finals in 1930 and 1938, the American Championship singles twice and the ladies’ doubles nine times between 1930 and 1941. In 1930 Palfrey Cooke was just 17 years old and playing in her first overseas event. Helen Jacobs, recalled the match between Phyllis and Sarah Palfrey Cooke.

Lack of experience in international competition, of infinitely more importance than ‘home’ play, was largely responsible for Sarah’s defeat at the hand of Phyllis Mudford in the third singles of the cup matches. Phyllis hit her forehand with the speed of an express train, pivoting almost in a semi-circle to throw her body weight into the shot. Without a net game herself she played studiously to keep the net players on the baseline and here the American was no match for her English opponent (Jacobs, 1951, p.144).

Phyllis’ first major trip abroad was when she travelled to America in 1931 as part of the Great Britain Wightman Cup team. She was 26 years old when she sailed to America aboard the ocean liner The Aquitania with other team members Dorothy Shepherd-Barron, Betty Nuthall (1911-1983), Eileen Bennett Whittingstall (1907-1979), and Dorothy Round. The journey took five days and the players travelled first class. Phyllis remembered the journey clearly:

We had all the usual deck games and we kept, the ship’s PT [physical trainer] instructor busy and he would try to keep us fit, we had exercise and things, which was great fun.



After dinner in the evenings there was entertainment and dancing and the teams' activities were monitored by appointed chaperones for the trip who accompanied women's teams when they travelled abroad. Phyllis explained their role,

They [the chaperone] saw that we were safe and well I think. [Laughter]  
And of course when you were being entertained, if you were taken to a night club or something like that the married lady would be with the team.

Phyllis and her teammates were accompanied by Mr. Shepherd-Barron who was both coach and chaperone to the team while his wife, Dorothy was the team captain.

Throughout their stay in America the British team were looked after by the United States Lawn Tennis Association. Players were given accommodation in apartments at Forest Hills, New York (the location of the Wightman Cup matches and home of the American Championships). Although the British team were defeated in the Wightman Cup match, the trip gave the women an opportunity to play in American tournaments including the United States National Championships at Forest Hills. Phyllis reached the semi-finals beating her American rival Cooke along the way. The British women demonstrated their dominance in doubles play as three of Phyllis' teammates competed in the ladies' doubles final in 1931, with Whittingstall and Nuthall beating Round and Jacobs. Following the U.S. National Championships the British team travelled to Canada, playing in tournaments in Ottawa and Toronto and were given the opportunity to see Niagara Falls. Phyllis recognised that visiting tourist destinations was a bonus of her trips abroad and she appreciated that she was fortunate to be travelling abroad with all travel expenses paid for by the LTA. While travelling across America and Canada Phyllis' friends and family were able to keep track of her progress on the news and she recalled that her father was particularly proud, she commented "Oh well they were very interested and of course my father in London at the office."

Two years later in 1933, Phyllis married Maurice Richard King. They became engaged while Phyllis was still at school, and when they married she was 27 years old, ranked number three in Britain and was a "well known international tennis player." Family life had always been important to Phyllis and when she married Maurice, marriage became her priority. Her choice of tournaments and even choice of events at tournaments were selected based on her ability to be able to return home to her husband. She chose only to play in the singles events which meant she could leave early while other players competed in the singles, ladies' doubles and mixed doubles events.

Naturally I played my tennis so it didn't interfere with him too much. I played singles only at the Sutton tournament and got home you see. Maurice was very supportive of her tennis and following her marriage she continued to play at Wimbledon and travelled abroad with teams. An exception was when she travelled to America in 1935 with the Great Britain team; she just played her Wightman Cup matches and the American Championships at Forest Hills before returning to England rather than continuing the trip with the rest of the team.

Phyllis' playing career encompassed a period of competing within a strict amateur code and if players did not maintain their amateur status they would be rejected from all LTA approved tournaments and their careers as amateur players would be finished. When Phyllis was captain of the Wightman Cup team in 1938 she was offered free clothing from a commercial company but this was against the LTA's guidelines on amateurism. She recalled,

I was offered the most lovely lot of coats when I was captaining England the team I was offered these lovely Jaeger coats but the LTA wouldn't allow it, I phoned them and asked.

Her international playing career was halted in June 1938. It was the last time for six years that the British public could watch Wightman Cup tennis since all international tennis was cancelled during the Second World War.

It is difficult to estimate the impact of the Second World War on Phyllis' sporting life. Her husband Maurice joined the army and she had a job driving an ambulance. She refers to the war as "a very big gap" in her tennis career as all tennis tournaments in England were cancelled. Throughout the war she continued to play tennis as there were still private courts and players were keen to keep playing, her opposition included men from locally based regiments from the Derbyshire armoury who were based in Surrey. Phyllis was also involved in exhibition tennis whereby players would organise games and the proceeds from spectators were donated to the Red Cross. Finding courts that were suitable was difficult since they were not well maintained during the war and many had been requisitioned for civil defence and military functions. At one stage an exhibition match was scheduled for Horley Tennis Club but the courts were in such bad condition that they had to be transferred to Horley Bowls Club.

After the war Phyllis pithily commented, "England gradually got back into its stride again." Phyllis continued to play at the Wimbledon Championships until 1953, just a few weeks before her 48<sup>th</sup> birthday. By now tennis was just another aspect of Phyllis' life, she explained:

I mean tennis was a side line in a way because one had one's ordinary home life just as one had one's normal social life and home life with the family.

Her retirement from the national and international scene was gradual and as her tennis success decreased she continued playing for the enjoyment of the game well into her early nineties. When her husband, Maurice, died from emphysema in 1959 Phyllis kept busy with her involvement in tennis. She was involved in Surrey County tennis and at the age of 100 she still felt involved. She explained,

You see I have my local club here and I'm, I think I'm sort of vice president and things. My interest was all in Surrey and that continued yes. It still does of course.

Phyllis had competed in the Golden Era of English tennis (Phillips, 1999). She believed that "life was so much simpler then" with regards to all aspects of society and this was reflected in the players' approach to tennis training, competing and travelling. Tennis was very much a 'sport' in her day with players chatting as they walked both on and off the court. There was a sense of camaraderie between the players and her competitors at home and abroad were seen as friends. Wimbledon in particular was remembered as "a very special tournament" and the "wonderful organisation" made it the player's favourite.

Sitting in her home of 62 years, reminiscing on her life and the central role of tennis, Phyllis' over-riding memory is that "right the way through it has all been a very great happiness." The world of tennis enjoyed by Phyllis is part of a lifestyle unique to the amateur era, which makes the death of Phyllis such a poignant moment in the history of the Golden Era of tennis.

Phyllis King died on 27 January, 2006 aged 100, two months after I interviewed her.

## Joan Hughesman née Curry

### “Tennis by the Sea: From the English Riviera to the French Riviera”

Joan Hughesman, Wightman Cup player and competitor at the All England Lawn Tennis Championship at Wimbledon from 1939 until 1960, described how her life is divided into two halves, “the tennis half, up to 40, and then getting married and having the children.” The tennis half of her life included 27 years of involvement in competitive tennis from the age of fourteen in 1933, through to her last appearance at Wimbledon in 1960, aged 41, and in the second half of her life she married and had two sons. It is clear that while she divided her life in half the sport of tennis impacts all aspects of her life story in different ways.

The tennis half of Joan’s life began in Torquay where she grew up as an only child. She attended a private boarding school in Torquay and was introduced to a range of sports including cricket, hockey, netball and tennis. Joan’s games mistress recognised her talent and played tennis with her every lunch break. “And once I found tennis, I won a racket by being the best in my age, at about 14.” During the school holidays Joan spent her days playing tennis at the Palace Hotel in Torquay. She learnt to play the game on the indoor wooden courts under the tuition of Arthur Roberts MBE the resident coach. Roberts was well respected as he had coached many of Britain’s best players although Joan felt that he never received the recognition he deserved. She explained,

He had [coached] the Wimbledon – Angela [Mortimer] won Wimbledon and things and Sue Barker got to the semi-final, Mike Sangster, I got to the quarterfinals of Wimbledon. What else? All Wightman Cup or Davis Cup... I mean he had a fantastic record.

At sixteen Joan left school and devoted her time to sport.

My mother, luckily my mother wasn’t mad keen on me passing exams and she would say “you don’t need maths.” [Laughter] So I didn’t have to take a lot, I didn’t have to take any exams and then when I left [school] I played cricket and hockey for Torquay.

Joan lived on the other side of Torquay from the Palace Hotel and she would jog to the courts to keep fit. She played tennis as often as three times a day and during the winter played squash, although her mother would have preferred she was a dancer. This was never an option for Joan;

I would rather have been a tennis player than a dancer. Gosh a ballet dancer, you can keep that, terrible life isn't it. It would be awful, no, tennis was a wonderful game, you could travel, you lived well if you liked playing which I did, but I preferred playing squash actually funnily enough.

Squash was a sport which Joan also excelled at, winning four out of six British Squash Championships and the Belgium Squash Championships. Playing squash kept her fit for tennis, and when she won the tennis championships at the Cumberland Club in 1946 the magazine, Lawn Tennis and Badminton, suggested that her "speed of footwork" gained through playing squash was the principal factor in her victory. Joan enjoyed playing squash and would have focussed on it further except that she found the tournaments very boring, with few spectators and no atmosphere. Squash was played as "a fill in for the tennis that was all" particularly as there were no tournaments in the winter when she began her tennis career.

Joan's tennis career started slowly. She began by playing junior tournaments in Devon. And although not the best, she was a committed player and while other juniors dropped out of the sport, Joan continued. Aged 20 she played in the West of England Championships at Bristol and beat nationally recognised Wimbledon players in her advancement to the final. Through her success at Bristol she was invited to enter the qualifying tournament for Wimbledon and after successfully winning her qualifying matches she progressed to her first Wimbledon Championships in 1939. Joan was beaten in the third round by the American player Helen Jacobs who had won the American Championships from 1932-1935 and had been Wimbledon Champion in 1936. Joan's first Wimbledon Championships marked the start of her tennis career yet it was abruptly halted when the Second World War was declared two months later. The Wimbledon Championships of 1939 was the last time the event was played for six years.

Joan was not conscripted into any of the forces as her mother was sick and was thus able to stay in Torquay to look after her. The nanny living with them and enabled Joan to have spare free time to volunteer for the Red Cross and to play tennis. She played exhibition matches with "Jean Nicholl and Jean Barstock and Stan Woods and another girl from Torquay who was very promising." But there were no tournaments in Britain during the war and even gaining access to tennis courts was difficult. Fortunately for Joan there were hotels in Torquay with tennis courts.

Palace Hotel was taken over by the RAF hospital. So the courts were no longer there, I had to play at another hotel, the Imperial Hotel, which

was bombed incidentally. But that was how I got through the war; I was lucky to get through the war.

It was also difficult to find opposition to play against but being based at the hotel meant that she had male players to practise against who were in Torquay on military duty. Joan explained the influence of her coach on setting her up with practise partners,

I played a lot against men obviously because for practise that was the big problem, but people like Tony Mottram were down in Torquay because he was in the air force training, I played against him. And anyone who came down and stayed at the hotel he [Roberts] would commandeer them.

When the war ended Joan was 27 years old and renewed her tennis career, playing in national and international tournaments throughout Europe. Her most successful year on the tennis circuit was 1946 when she won four women's singles events at the Cumberland Club, Edgbaston, Torquay and Exmouth. At the Cumberland Club tournament in spring of 1946 Joan's capacity to play during the war was rewarded when she beat the British player Betty Hilton. Hilton was the "blue eyed girl" and highly favoured by the British selectors. Following Joan's success she was invited to trials for the Wightman Cup at Surbiton Tennis Club in May. Once again Joan beat her adversary Betty Hilton, dropping only four games in their two set match. Joan recalled the comments made by sports journalists following the match which Betty Hilton was expected to win:

And the funny thing was in the bar afterwards I knew one or two of the press guys and these two selectors were [saying] 'we won't have any trials again the wrong people always win' (Laughter).

Following her success at the trials Joan was selected to play for the Great Britain Wightman Cup team in June 1946 but she never forgot the lesson learnt from journalists and selectors regarding the subjective nature of team selection. Joan explained how blue eyes and a player's "potential" were used as criteria for team selection,

That's the way it is. But blue eyes are very important, blue eyes are important when it comes to selection. Potential that's the word yea. Potential is always the big one they use always to put people into teams without the results; boy did I see a lot of that.

When the American women arrived in England to compete in the Wightman Cup of 1946 Joan recalled how shocked they were at the impact of the Second World War on the country.

Well they were shattered when they came over here and found what we hadn't got, they had to bring their things over, they had to bring a lot of food over with them and things. And I remember the captain, of the, one of the English, Mary Hardwick who went to America during the war and stayed there, she offered a prize of a pair of nylon stockings for anyone who got a set off the [American] Wightman Cup team after the war.

None of the English team was strong enough to take a set off the American Wightman Cup team although Joan got within four points of winning those nylon stockings. The war had a major impact on the competitiveness of the tennis circuit. Joan talked at length about the change in dominance in post war tennis;

From 1946 the Americans dominated tennis tournaments. Well they had been playing all through the war, well they played right through and they were probably quite good, most of them came from California I think. They were eating well too. [Laughter]. Well God I remember the food.

Following the Wightman Cup match in 1946, Joan reached the quarter finals at Wimbledon only to be beaten by the number 1 seed and soon to be crowned Wimbledon champion, the American Pauline Betz (6-0, 6-3).

1946 was also the first year that Joan travelled abroad playing tennis. Aged 27 she arrived in Paris with a team supported by the LTA and represented Great Britain at the French Championships. Joan's tennis career was assisted by the support of the LTA and financial assistance from her parents. She outlined how fortunate she was in comparison to other players,

I got free- everything free which of course if you didn't have any money, if you didn't have success...well not everyone would get it free, I mean it caused problems for a lot of people, you had to pay for courts, and I got all my rackets free from Dunlops.

The guidelines for amateur players were set by the LTA and these were meant to restrict the amount of financial assistance the top players received. Joan explained how it worked:

At Wimbledon they [the LTA] also paid if you were on their, what they call their top 6 and things, they put you up in a hotel and they paid you so much and you had your meals and I expect a bit of other things, there is always something extra... You were only supposed to have expenses for, expenses meant hotel, 8 tournaments a year and we were supposed to keep up with the Americans and the others who

could play all the time but that was the way, pretty amateur, well we were then. So you had to fiddle, and everyone did of course, all the players, Drobny [1921-2001] and that sort, the men.

Joan also highlighted how the men were more astute at 'fiddling' the amateur circuit than the women.

So we lived well and if we were lucky we scraped by, mind you the men were making money because they knew how to play the system, but not many women, we didn't know enough about it, they [the men] knew how to play the system.

Joan enjoyed competing across Europe; she played in Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Switzerland, France and Italy. On the continent the amateur rules were relaxed in comparison to Britain. Joan described how the prizes, specifically in France, contradicted the amateur code,

I remember winning, in France they gave mostly perfume for prizes, and quite openly they gave you money too. They [the French association] didn't quibble about it, they gave you the money. In Germany it was all cameras, velvet goods and very nice things...

The Europeans' relaxed attitude towards amateurism and the excellent hospitality which they offered travelling players meant competing abroad was possible even without the LTA's support. Competing at weekly tournaments on the continent was physically hard work. Each tournament was mixed, which meant that players competed in three events per week: singles, ladies' doubles and mixed doubles. Joan's coach Arthur Roberts was against her playing in the mixed events as they were played at the end of the day and often went on late into the evening which "wasn't clever" if you had an important singles match the next day.

Joan perceived tennis on the Riviera before the War as primarily social, "I think it was one big party, with tea dances and socialising and the King of Sweden used to be there". Yet when she competed in the south of France after the war there were still tennis dances and royalty present. She remembered her time competing on the Riviera as "a good life" with "a cocktail party or something during the week". Joan became friendly with King Gustav V of Sweden who was a regular competitor on the Riviera. When Joan played at the Swedish Championships he left a note in her bag saying, "Don't be so nervous, Gustav". Joan's most successful year on the continent was in 1954 when she won three out of four finals along the Riviera in March and April and won the German ladies' doubles championship in March with the German player, Inge Pohmann against Maureen Connolly and Nell Hopman. Joan loved



playing on the continent so much so that she turned down a tennis trip to Egypt in favour of the Riviera and has regretted not seeing Cairo ever since.

Joan continued to compete on the tennis circuit until she met her husband when she was 39 years old. She played her last singles match at Wimbledon in 1958 as Miss Joan Curry and her last doubles match in 1960, aged 41, as Mrs Joan Hughesman. By then her career as a tennis player had come to an end and she had entered the self-defined "second half" of her life. In this second stage of Joan's life she was a wife and mother of two sons. Her love of tennis was passed on to her sons as her eldest son is a tennis coach, and her younger son works for the LTA, organising national and international tennis tournaments. The first half of Joan's life in tennis had helped to shape her character as she changed from being a shy teenager to a confident adult;

I was very shy, I was desperately shy. If I came into a room with a lot of people I was so shy. But when you start playing tennis and you start to win it gives you a feeling of confidence, of being better than the rest.

Joan was very aware that her life represented a unique time in the world of tennis as it spanned pre and post the Second World War. She recollected how,

It was a different life before the war and it was a different life in my time and now it's a whole new ball game.

It was a time of dramatic social, cultural and political change and these developments were also reflected in the amateur tennis circuit. Joan's reflection on her life as a tennis player highlight her sense of humour as she recalled her enjoyment of the tennis circuit even if there were few financial rewards; "It was a good life; I didn't end up with a Rolls Royce though."

## Joy Michelle née Hibbert 'The Unofficial Player'

From the excitement of driving for the Mechanised Transport Corps in the Blitz (1940-41) during the Second World War, to the glamour of playing tennis on the Riviera, to life as a diplomat's wife in Malay and Kenya, Joy Michelle's life criss-crossed many continents but her favourite sport, tennis, was a constant. Joy grew up as part of a sporting family. Both parents were "great sporting people", her father played golf, football and billiards for Oxfordshire, and her mother was Midlands Junior Champion for swimming. Her brother was a rugby player whose involvement in tennis was as an official rather than as a player, "he used to come and umpire at [AELTC] Wimbledon and he used to come to [The French Championships] Paris." Joy was also keen on golf, which she played competitively throughout her life but her favourite sport was tennis. She started playing tennis in 1929, aged 9, and was soon entering tournaments throughout Hampshire. Joy found these exciting as they were handicapped competitions and she got to play against older boys and girls, of whom she recalled buying gin and tonics by the time she was 11 years old.

Joy grew up in Oxfordshire and reflected on how her upbringing was influenced by her family's social class;

We lived in the country I had no friends really because my father was rather, he was a blanket manufacturer and you know, very well off, and of course there was nobody to meet and know very much. Because being in business, you didn't know the top set because they didn't have anything to do with business people. And the lower people my father wouldn't entertain you know so it was a curious existence really in those days, there were all these levels of society you know.

When Joy was nine years old she was attacked by a man on the street, who murdered a girl two days later and her mother decided to send her to boarding school at Morden. She enjoyed Morden as she made lots of friends but when she was 12 years old, she became ill and her mother thought an English school in Switzerland would be good for her. Joy's cousins were also pupils at the school and she remembered it as a very happy experience;

It was my best three years of my life. Because it was skiing, tennis, riding, all sports you know because I loved all sport and I was not academic.

After Switzerland Joy's mother sent her to finishing school in Marlow for a year and then she was offered the choice of being presented at court or studying at the

Sorbonne in Paris. She chose Paris but not for the education; "I didn't study very hard, and I played tennis, and met Suzanne Lenglen". For Joy meeting Suzanne Lenglen was memorable as Lenglen was "very famous" having won Wimbledon six times between 1919 and 1925.

Joy returned to Bournemouth to her parent's house by the coast and continued playing tennis. In 1935, aged 15, she went for lessons with Major Cooper-Hunt, who had been Dorothy Round's coach when she won the Wimbledon Championships in 1934 and 1937. He would mark the court out and Joy would hit tennis balls at targets but it was not a happy coaching lesson; since Joy would "finish in tears, he used to scream at me."

When Joy was 17 years old her father bought her a car which gave her freedom as she was able to travel around the country playing tennis tournaments. She became Hampshire junior champion and before the outbreak of the War was playing county tennis for Oxfordshire. "It was such a wonderful time." However, in March 1939 her father died, she recalled it was "the first winter he couldn't go to South Africa and get away from business, he had a heart attack." It was a difficult time and Joy escaped by playing tennis.

With the declaration of War Joy's life changed from being a shy, sheltered girl who used to "hide behind sofas" to being fully involved in the war effort. Initially Joy joined the Women's Land Army but that only lasted two months; "that was hopeless because I was no good at killing chickens and I couldn't milk so I gave that up." She had her car and was recruited by the British Council as a driver before she joined the Mechanised Transport Corps, a women's organisation which provided drivers for government departments and agencies during the war. Joy recalled driving in the Blitz as an "exciting time."

I met so many interesting people; when I drove for the Dutch navy I met Queen Wilhelmina and Prince Bernhard, the Duke of Leeds... Hans Larive and Francis Steinmetz, the first escapees from Colditz. Lots of interesting people but you had to work very hard, I mean there wasn't days off or anything like that, you worked every day.

Joy met her husband in 1940 while working in London and soon after they married she became pregnant. She recalled that after six months she was unable to fit into her uniform and she moved into a flat close to her mother in Bournemouth and she gave birth to a baby girl. Soon afterwards her husband, a parachutist who was based in Italy, met somebody else and they divorced. Joy was left to bring up her daughter

but she had the help of her mother and she continued working. She got a job managing the bureau for American officers, where she met and fell in love with an American navy pilot, Ralph. Tragically Ralph was shot down on his flight to America to accept the Navy Cross from the President. Joy was devastated.

Joy was 26 years old when the war ended and she felt like she had "lost 5 years" of her life. After the war the chance to re-build her life was helped when the tennis circuit in Britain was re-established in 1945. Joy had not held a racket during the war and suddenly she was playing county tennis for Hampshire. From 1945 until 1952 she had "a wonderful seven years playing tennis." None of it would have been possible without the support of her mother. She supported Joy throughout that time, looking after her baby daughter and financing her tennis trips. "She pushed, she pushed me, I don't think I'd have ever gone on." Joy's mother pushed her more towards tennis than golf as she thought that tennis was a more social game, men and women playing and travelling together. She even took Joy to a tennis tournament in Switzerland and bought her a gold ring when they were there to congratulate Joy on reaching the semi-finals. She still wears it today, 58 years later.

In the summer of 1946, Joy won the West of England Championships in Bristol but was too late in qualifying for Wimbledon. Joy finally succeeded in qualifying in 1947, when she was 27 years old. Joy's most successful year at Wimbledon was 1951 when she reached the last 16 of the mixed doubles with an American partner. She particularly enjoyed the social side of tennis tournaments and every year hosted a cocktail party at her flat in Putney on the last Friday during the Championships. All the top players would come including many players who were competing the following day.

Recollecting on her years playing tennis made Joy smile. "It was a lovely time." Her mother came with her to the Riviera once but the players generally travelled as a group between tournaments. During one of her first matches on the Continent Joy's lack of experience was evident. In Europe, players had a 10 minute break in the match at one set all and when this happened in one of Joy's matches she recalled how her naivety cost her the match,

Mummy and I didn't know what to do, we just sat on the edge of the court while this Hungarian girl, I can't remember her name, who beat me, went off and had a shower and changed her socks and of course beat me.

Joy was aware that players competing in Europe did not have much money "but they got by." While other players were funded by the Lawn Tennis Association, Joy

travelled as an “unofficial player” with funding from her mother and relying on the generosity of the host club to provide accommodation. The majority of funded and unfunded players were accommodated in private houses during tournaments both in England and abroad.

Travelling and playing in Europe was special. Joy remembered “travelling around in an open car, eating lovely food, there was no food in England and here we were, having a marvellous time.” She was selected to play with an official team of four players at a Spanish tournament in Barcelona. Joy played doubles with the future Wightman Cup captain, Mary Halford, and won. She explained her attitude towards playing tennis abroad,

When you play abroad you do play extra hard because you are playing for your country even if you are not official, even if you are unofficial because mostly I was unofficial.

Joy was also invited to play in Belgium for two years running and she won the ladies doubles at Oostende with Joan Hughesman (née Curry), “it was marvellous.” Her most successful tennis was played in doubles. When Joy played in Switzerland for a month in 1949 she won the ladies’ doubles and mixed events. The prizes were not enough for the players to gain financially as they were competing as amateurs; Joy won vouchers that were meant to be used for luxury goods and fortunately she did not have to rely on them.

Players competing on the European circuit were “treated like prince and princesses.” At the French and Italian Championships parties were hosted by the mayor and Joy went out every night. While competing in Paris, Joy would attend the fashion shows, and when she competed in Monte Carlo she stayed at the exclusive hotel The Metropole. She had a wonderful time, and played with the American Budge Patty, who won Wimbledon and the French Championships in 1950 and they have remained friends ever since. When Joy travelled abroad the men were looked after better than the women at tournaments and they received higher expenses. Although no one knew what anyone else was getting Joy recalled, “The women had to scrounge around a bit more but we wouldn’t complain because we loved to play!”

Between playing in England and travelling around Europe Joy never stopped. She played squash in the winter to keep fit and when there were no tournaments in November and December she worked in Harrods as a trained beauty specialist. In 1952, aged 32, a friend suggested that she had “played enough tennis” and took her on a skiing holiday to Kitzbuhel. Joy had “a lovely time skiing, partying” and on one particular night met her future husband. They had a whirlwind romance and were

married within a month. Their honeymoon in Cannes is significant for the fact that Joy was on the French Riviera yet she did not hit one tennis ball.

In 1953 her husband was posted to Malay. It was a difficult year. Joy suffered with a bad back and was quite ill. She gave birth to a baby girl who had brain damage and then her husband was transferred to Kenya. Tennis became a key part of re-gaining her life as she joined a tennis club and played regularly. Joy reached the final of one of their tournaments and also represented Kenya in matches against South Africa. A year later Joy gave birth to a son who was born prematurely, but she was determined to keep working. She had always worked and in Kenya Joy was not happy "sitting around playing bridge and mahjong with the other wives, that wasn't my life". Joy got a job working in the "ops room" for the police. It was the height of the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya and she found the work very challenging but when her boss left to work with Prince Philip she decided to change jobs and ended up sorting out all the diplomatic mail for Kenya. She stayed in Kenya for three years before her son became so ill that they had to return to England, in 1957. In June of that year Joy played tennis at the Wimbledon Championships, competing unsuccessfully, in both the ladies' doubles and the mixed doubles. She decided it would be her last Wimbledon.

When Joy reflected on the major influences of her life, on who and what shaped her as a person, she paid particular attention to her mother whom she recalled fondly as being a "remarkable woman" and without her support Joy believed she would not have had such a full and happy life. Throughout Joy's life tennis has been a huge influence. She was aware of how privileged she was to have played but also aware of the negative impact of tennis on her identity; "tennis spoilt me, encompassed me and shaped the many chapters of my life". Ultimately though Joy regarded tennis as being a crucial element of her life story as she posed the question,

What would I have done otherwise?" And I don't know. I just don't know what I would have done without it.

## Christine Janes née Truman "The Schoolgirls' Favourite"

Christine was a Blitz baby, born January 16, 1941. She grew up in Essex, in the east of England, and until the age of eight lived in the suburb of Loughton. Sport was central to the life of her family. Her parents met each other at a tennis club and while her mother gave up tennis when she had children, Christine's father continued to play and was a member of the local tennis club. She had four older brothers and sisters to inspire her and they always had a game on the go, with the choice of tennis, table tennis and snooker at home. Christine recalled how her mother never had to teach any of them to catch a ball as they all had good hand eye co-ordination.

Christine's remembers her early childhood fondly as her family were keen tennis players. The family home had a garden large enough to accommodate a make-shift tennis court, complete with a borrowed net and marked out lines across its sloping surface. Her older brothers and sisters, Elizabeth, Philip, Humphrey and Isabel played as a foursome and Christine remembered how being excluded from their game spurred her on more;

Nothing inspires you more or makes you more determined than to have older brothers and sisters telling you, 'you can't do it', and you know you are not good enough, so really those are my first memories of trying to, wanting to play tennis.

When Christine was eight years old, her sister Nell was born and the family moved to an older, larger house in Woodford, Essex. Christine felt very fortunate as the house had a brick wall which allowed invaluable practice for the keen young tennis player. She was so determined to practice against the wall that she would play around a tree which stood in her way until the family got together and uprooted it. Spurred on by the family's enthusiasm for tennis, Christine's father laid a lawn for a tennis court at their new home and wire netting was used to protect the windows as the children broke so many. Even with the new tennis court Christine continued to use the wall for volleying practice as she was still trying to catch up with her older brothers and sisters.

The enthusiasm of her family for the game meant that they joined the local tennis club, Woodford Wells Tennis Club, known locally as 'Monkhams'. Her older brothers and sisters received tennis coaching from the well known and respected, Essex County Coach, Mr. Herbert Brown. Christine was envious of her siblings coaching and finally at the age of ten, after years of playing ball girl and practicing alone against a

brick wall, she had her first tennis lesson. The monthly lessons with Brown were only half an hour long, but she was able to practice between lessons with her siblings and the practice wall. Christine's seriousness for the game was evident from the onset:

I seemed to have that focus and desire and went from it from that age too [aged 10], I mean my older sister remembers me being terribly annoying, getting up and skipping at seven thirty in the morning to improve my footwork you know waking everybody up.

She was annoyed when her practice partners wanted to chat with friends' court side and was bemused when her sister Isabel threw in a few double faults just to end a game quickly and meet her "date". These actions were incomprehensible to Christine. When she was ten years old, having just started tennis lessons her commitment to the sport was verbalised when she was at the speech day of the physical training college that her sister Elizabeth was attending. She was asked by the Principal if she would attend the college and after careful consideration Christine responded that she would only be able to attend if she was not playing in the Wightman Cup.

Christine's enthusiasm for the sport never waned and when she moved from Essex House Preparatory School and passed her eleven-plus examination at Braeside Private School at Buckhurst Hill, she was rewarded with her first new, adult-sized tennis racket. The racket represented her parent's recognition of her devotion to tennis and her school also recognised the importance of tennis to her life by allowing her to play tennis when other pupils had a games or swimming afternoon. Christine chose to continue playing school sports as she loved all kinds of games and particularly rounders and netball. Being tall, like all her family, meant she was an effective defensive player in netball and proved to be a valuable member of the school team.

Alongside school sports Christine also enjoyed dancing. While at Preparatory school she followed the lead of her older brothers and sisters by attending Greek dancing and ballet classes every Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday which no doubt helped her tennis career for flexibility, balance and poise. By the age of ten, school sports and dancing were secondary to tennis. She was fully committed to improving her game and lived for her monthly half hour lesson with Brown. Christine had found something that she enjoyed more than anything else, and her focus and desire, combined with her parent's support, allowed her to pursue her ambition of playing tennis for Great Britain.

Every August, for thirteen years, the Truman family rented a house in Thorpeness, Suffolk. They were members of a country club whose facilities included tennis courts and a golf course. The country club had only one court available for junior tennis and



it was always in heavy demand. Christine would get up at 7 o'clock to practice with friends, later in the day she had a lesson with the resident coach Mr. Ernest Law and then she would spend the rest of her time swimming or going for a trip on a punt. Christine was thrilled to be able to receive a tennis lesson and compete in tennis tournaments. The tournaments were handicapped based on the rules that if a player won the first game they gave their opponent a fifteen-love advantage in the second game and if they won the second game they gave a thirty-love advantage in the next game and so on. While on holiday at Thorpeness Christine won her first tennis tournament and her prize was a book token.

By the age of twelve Christine had begun to enter junior club tournaments and she continued her winning streak. In 1953, she won the Evening News tennis tournament and the under 16 Essex County Open Junior title while also reaching the semi-final of the under 18 championship at the Essex County Open. Brown had encouraged her to enter the Evening News tournament which was to be the first stepping stone in her tennis career. Christine entered the age group for 12-15 year olds and progressed through the first five rounds with relative ease, even though she had to play one match with her left (non-playing) arm in plaster, thereby serving underarm. After winning the five qualifying rounds Christine was a semi-finalist at Queens Club, London and progressed into the finals. Her final match was played on the same day as the under 16 Essex County Open Junior final. While her morning success at the Essex Open was a significant achievement in itself, it is worth noting that the Evening News final which she also won that afternoon was played on the centre court at Queens Club, in front of an invited crowd of V.I.P.s from the LTA.

Her successes had not gone unnoticed. After her triumph at the Essex County Championships, Herbert Brown wrote to the local paper proclaiming that Truman was 'the best girl he had ever taught' and a star of 'the future'. The media's interest in her win at the Evening News final led to her first ever post match interview which she never got to see as there was no television in their rented house at Thorpeness. The Evening News tournament had even greater significance as it brought Christine to the attention of the LTA Training Committee which was chiefly interested in potential international players. They selected 12 year old Christine as part of a group of junior players to attend the LTA's winter school during the Christmas holidays at Huntercombe Golf Club, Oxfordshire.

In December, 1954, Christine attended the first week of the LTA winter school which comprised of the most promising junior players under the age of sixteen from across the country, six boys and five girls. The girls shared a large bedroom and were

woken each morning at 7.30am for physical training before breakfast. After breakfast they went straight to the tennis courts for a days coaching, only stopping for a brief lunch break. They received instruction under the watchful eye of Dan Maskell, a professional tennis coach who had led the British men's Davis Cup team to success in 1933. After dinner the players devoted their evenings to lectures and viewing instructional films about tennis, until lights out at 9.30pm. Her potential was further acknowledged by the committee, when alongside two of the boys and one other girl, she was invited to spend an additional week at the school for intensive small group instruction from Maskell. For Christine the training school was perfect. Her tennis improved considerably and after the training school Maskell maintained contact with her by inviting her to join him for tennis lessons at Queens Club and The All England Lawn Tennis Club Wimbledon. Christine realised she was getting closer to achieving her dream, "I had dreamt about [Wimbledon], always waiting and hoping I could get there myself." Practicing her game on the courts at the All England Club was her dream come true and allowed her to imagine what it would be like to play at the Wimbledon Championships.

Christine was now thirteen and with the additional tennis instruction her tennis strokes were changing. She decided to focus on developing her tennis technique and only entered local tournaments. Alongside her brothers and sisters they dominated the Essex County Open in 1954, appearing in six of the seven finals and as their tennis abilities improved they joined more competitive clubs including St. Patrick's and their local club, the Connaught Club. Christine's brother Humphrey, and her sister Isabel, were invaluable practice partners as it was becoming more and more difficult for Christine to find peers to play with. Her playing ability and dedication to the game intimidated other juniors, many girls protested they were too tired to play or simply did not relish being beaten by a younger player. The day before she was invited to the LTA winter training school Christine had been thinking of turning her attention to golf as a sport since with typical Truman sporting talent she had proved to be naturally talented at golf. Her golfing potential was never realised as her invitation to the training school arrived the next day and golf was quickly forgotten.

By the age of 14, after focussing on her tennis strokes and finally finding a regular practice partner, her history teacher Mrs. Margaret Dutchman, Christine was determined to succeed at tennis. At a county level she was successful in winning the triple crown at the Essex Junior Open, in the under 14, 16 and 18 age groups. She competed at Junior Wimbledon for the second time in 1955 and after losing in the first round in 1954, she now proceeded to the semi-finals, losing narrowly to Ann Haydon in the final set. It was both a terrific achievement and a big disappointment

for her. After losing the first set, she started the second set as the stronger player winning five games in a row, before the match was stopped for a seventy minute rain delay, she returned to the courts but her game had lost momentum and she lost the match. Christine was consoled with the knowledge that she had three more chances to win the title before she was too old to compete.

In 1956, when Christine was aged fifteen she played in her third Junior Wimbledon and proceeded to beat Ann Haydon in the girls' singles final. Their final was recognised at the time as being the best girls' final in the Junior Wimbledon tournament. Both girls were playing at their peak and the match reports describe Christine as being "the more promising of the two players". This was high praise for her as she was the younger of the two players and had also been described as "gangling" yet "co-ordinated." Christine was seen as "one of the brightest prospects" Great Britain had for a long time. After the win and throughout her career Christine's family kept her "grounded" and never let any of her wins go to her head. Her mother was keen to reiterate that just because a player has a couple of successes it would not be so easy all of the time. Christine was reminded that she had not achieved everything just yet.

Shortly after her win at Junior Wimbledon, Christine had senior success at the British Covered Court Lawn Tennis Championships at Queens Club, beating the Wimbledon semi-finalist and United States Championships finalist Pat Ward in the quarter-final before losing to Angela Buxton in the semi-final. By then she had achieved her senior debut in international tennis when she was selected for Great Britain to compete against France at Surbiton LTC in May 1956. Her selection made her the youngest player ever, at 15 years of age, to achieve the distinction and she proved herself capable of international competition as she won both her singles and doubles match. Her attentions were fully focussed on tennis as she had finished school having passed her O levels and with her parents' support she was playing and training full time. Everything was looked after; her tennis dresses were made by Teddy Tinling, her equipment, shoes and balls were provided by Slazenger and as a nominated player of the LTA she received travel expenses, tournament fees and a daily allowance. By the end of 1956 the LTA's official ranking placed Christine at number 7. This feat had not been repeated in Britain since Betty Nuthall's junior days. Yet Christine was still ineligible to play in the Wimbledon Championships as she was under 16 years of age.

In 1957, when Christine turned 16 she had an unforgettable year of tennis, as she recalled "I earned my status." It began with her win at the Surrey Hard Court

Championships where she beat the Wightman Cup player Joan Hughesman (née Curry) and she followed this with success at the Cumberland Club Tournament beating Sheila Armstrong. Christine was then invited to compete in her first tournament overseas and she travelled to Paris for the French Covered Court Championships where she reached the quarter finals only to be beaten by the Australian international, Thelma Long. Later in the year she reached the semi-finals of the Beckenham Tournament where she was beaten by the soon to be crowned Wimbledon Champion of 1957 and 1958, the American Althea Gibson. The press had been critical of Christine's playing style and when she was beaten in the semi-finals of the Hard Court Championships of Great Britain in Bournemouth they were also critical of her limited game. Yet with every tournament Christine was gaining valuable match play experience and she was now eligible to compete at the Championships Wimbledon.

Christine had been visiting it as a spectator since she was eleven and as a junior player to receive coaching from Dan Maskell; "always waiting and hoping I could get there myself." In 1957 she was there for real, 16 years old and a fully fledged senior competitor. This first Wimbledon was undoubtedly "the most exciting" for Christine. No one ever thought she had a chance, yet she felt quietly confident. She described this as "the ignorance of youth or something and I thought I had a chance and I just, everything just came together." Although Christine started poorly she was fortunate to be placed in a fairly easy section of the draw and she progressed to the fourth round where she was drawn against the third seed, Shirley Brasher. The match was played on an extremely hot Saturday afternoon on court 1. Christine was so excited that the heat barely registered with her as she threw herself into the match, winning the first set and composing herself in the second to win in straight sets. This was a huge upset to the draw and for her next match, the quarter-final, she was drawn against the American Betty Pratt, a player who she had beaten a fortnight earlier at Beckenham. This was to be her first appearance on centre court.

While other players may have been nervous about playing on centre court, Christine was looking forward to the opportunity. She acknowledged that the huge stadium made her feel "quite tiny", but she also felt that the 14,000 spectators were on her side and the court lived up to her expectations as being every bit as perfect as people said. Superstitiously Christine wore the same tailored white dress by Teddy Tinling which she had worn for each winning match of the tournament, and at first it proved lucky. She stormed to a lead of one set and 4-1 in the second before her game went to pieces. She double-faulted, hit the frame of her racket and floated shots wide of the baseline. Losing the second set 7-5, she had to regain her

composure and finally her form returned to allow her to win a closely fought third set. In front of HRH the Duchess of Kent, and more importantly for Christine, a family contingent comprising of her parents, Philip, Humphrey, Elizabeth and Nell, she progressed to the semi-final of the Wimbledon Championships.

Reaching the semi-final was a huge achievement for Christine. She scratched from the junior tournament as she needed to conserve all her energy for the match and whilst receiving advice and press attention from every quarter, she learnt that she had been selected in the team of six to play for Great Britain in the Wightman Cup against (and in) America that August. The selection gave her confidence for the semi-final and raised her profile. She described the aftermath of the match,

I met the Duchess of Kent and I was invited to tea in the Royal box and people recognised me and sent letters and telegrams.

She was no longer simply a promising junior player; she was an accomplished member of British tennis hierarchy.

Unfortunately for Christine, Althea Gibson's ruthless efficiency in their semi-final match was too much for her. Christine was left flustering and floundering as her game was overpowered by Gibson's powerful service and dominant ground strokes. She was beaten 6-1, 6-1 by the soon to be crowned Wimbledon Champion who proved herself to be a sporting opponent as Gibson assured the young player that she would be champion one day. Christine had been the youngest semi-finalist since the days of Lottie Dodd who had won the Wimbledon Championships in 1887 aged fifteen.

Following her success at Wimbledon she made her first trip to America as part of the Great Britain Wightman Cup team in 1957. Christine described the trip as "a tremendous experience"; she was the youngest team member since Betty Nuthall, her game was improving and she had not been beaten as thoroughly by Gibson in their last match. Yet the British team were unsuccessful and would have to wait another 12 months before breaking the 28 year cycle of American wins in the Wightman Cup. The All England Lawn Tennis Club was the location of the historic victory on June 13 and 14 1958, and Christine was a member of the winning team.

Christine had fulfilled her dream of playing Wightman Cup tennis one year previously but in 1958 she put her mark on international women's competition. As part of the Great Britain team, Christine won both her singles and doubles match with Shirley Bloomer. Significantly she beat the reigning Wimbledon and United States Champion Althea Gibson. Christine had never won a set against Gibson in their three previous

encounters and after losing the first set 2-6, she attacked Althea Gibson's game, and won the next two sets. She received extensive media attention following the win, with World Tennis describing her as the "snow maiden" and the "feline mistress of the volley". Christine attributed much of her win to the circuit training she had been doing with athletics coach, Geoff Dyson. She had never felt stronger or more mobile and her tireless commitment to her training and intensive practice had paid off. Telegrams and letters came flooding in and one in particular stood out as special, a personal telegram from Sir Winston and Lady Churchill. No victory had ever given her a greater thrill.

1958 continued to be a successful year for Christine as the Wightman Cup victory was followed by her first major success abroad when she won the Pacific Coast singles title in California. Her path to the final brought her up against the Brazilian Maria Bueno in the semi-final and when Christine won the final against the American tennis star Darlene Hard in front of Hard's home crowd, she felt like she was "walking on air". Alongside the chance to travel Christine was also invited to tour the film studios in Los Angeles and she met her favourite film star, Frank Sinatra. She remembered the meeting as "a thrill of a lifetime". Another favourite trip took place the following winter in 1959 when she was part of a tour of the Caribbean. She spent a total of six weeks flying between the islands and competing in five tournaments of which she won three titles. Christine briefly outlined the highlights of her Caribbean trip,

There were some lovely, lovely times. I mean the Caribbean circuit was very special. To go off in January to Montego Bay, Kingston, San Juan, you know to play, it was attractive really, very unusual. To go off and do that it was amazing. Caracas was one of my highlights. I mean to be honest I think back and I sort of pinch myself, did I do that? I just went off.

As a result of her success across the international circuit, from the Caribbean to Europe including the Italian, Swiss and French Championships, Christine was seeded number 1 at the 1959 Wimbledon Championships. There was a considerable amount of pressure on her as she had been the youngest female winner of the French Championships earlier in the year and expectations were high for her home tournament, Wimbledon. But it was not to be, Christine's tennis "flopped" when she met the Mexican Yola Ramirez in the fourth round. She had beaten Ramirez three times that season but Christine was not playing at her best. She recalled how members of the media speculated on the unexpected loss of form. "It was suggested in the Press that the No 1 seeding had worried me; that it was too much strain. But it

was not so." Christine's ability to focus on her own game meant that external pressures did not impact on her. The loss to Ramirez was part of a "bad patch" which had not impacted on her doubles play as Christine and her partner Beverley Fleitz beat Ramirez and Rosa Marie Reyes in the semi-final. Their final match was against the number one seeds Darlene Hard and Jeanne Arth who proved too strong on the day and beat Truman and Fleitz.

The "bad patch" in Christine's singles play also coincided with Great Britain's loss to the United States in the Wightman Cup. As the winter of 1959 approached Christine looked forward to her trip to Australia. She recalled that in Australia she "played so much tennis that I could not help but learn and hope to improve". The warm climate suited her game and she was able to re-establish her tennis and return to Europe focussed and confident. Christine was 19 years old and continuing to thrive in her tennis career.

1960 was once more a successful year for the British Wightman Cup team as they won at home. However, it was beginning to look like the British team could only win the Wightman Cup when playing at home. The tie was closely fought and chances were even that they could regain the Cup. All rested on the final match when Christine and Shirley Brasher won their doubles match and the 1960 Wightman Cup for Great Britain. With her game in good shape she was looking forward to competing at the Wimbledon championships but once more it was not to be her year. She reached the semi-final but was beaten by the number 1 seed, and soon to be crowned Wimbledon Champion, Maria Bueno.

Christine escaped the cold British climate in the winter of 1960 when she joined an international group of women players who were invited to Brazil as part of a showcase tour for the Wimbledon Champion Maria Bueno. This was remembered by Christine as her most unusual trip;

She was Brazilian and it was most unusual to have a South American sports girl, it was all football, football, football and here was this queen, queen bee she was and they just adored her and they wanted to see her play and the only way that they could get to see her play was to invite some people out to play with her and that really was what the whole trip was about. You know she was driving around in this motor, her picture was on the stamps, she had statues and it was quite something really. She was quite a star. They [the Brazilians] just were so generous and kind they used to give her jewellery and us jewellery and it was just quite an unusual trip.

Christine was seeing at first hand the effect a Wimbledon title could have on a player's life and was looking towards 1961 as her next opportunity to win. Indeed 1961 was a turning point in Christine's tennis career. Although she had a problem with her ankle in February, she had won the Italian Championships and French Championships and had entered the Wimbledon Championships in top form. The women's draw was wide open as the Brazilian, Maria Bueno, the winner of the previous two years was ill in Paris and the top ranked American, Darlene Hard had stayed in Paris to look after her.

The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their Championships in 1961. To mark the occasion they welcomed back 38 former champions, men and women and alongside the anniversary celebrations there was an air of excitement as the women's singles event culminated in the first all British final since 1914. The two British players competing in the final were Angela Mortimer (number 7 seed) and Christine Truman (number 6 seed). Twenty-seven years previously, at the original site of the club on Worple Road, Dorothea Lambert Chambers won her seventh Wimbledon Championship when she beat Ethel Larcombe (1879-1965) in the Challenge Road of the 1914 Championships.

Christine was 20 years old and the media described her as the "schoolgirls' favourite". She was the favoured player by both the press and the public. Christine won the first three rounds in straight sets, dropping only 17 games before meeting world number 1 Margaret Smith in the quarter-final. This match was remembered as one of "my best matches at Wimbledon." She was playing against the best player in the world and was "playing better than ever"; she saved match points in the final set to win the third set, 9-7.

Her success against the world number 1 in the quarter-final established her credentials as a contender for the Wimbledon title. Her opponent in the final Angela Mortimer was nine years older and playing in her eleventh Wimbledon. Christine felt that it was for her the first of many chances to win at Wimbledon, yet for Angela it was seen as her last chance. She reflected on the context of the match,

I was only 20, Angela was 29 so chances of her coming back... but all those years 16, 17, 18, 19, I had been in semi-finals at Wimbledon.

In the days preceding the final the media attention was relentless. They had won and lost against each other throughout their careers leaving it far from clear who would be the Wimbledon champion. The Press were offering free centre court tickets to anyone who could say where the finalists' were staying the night before the match and with an air of expectancy the final began.



Christine won the first set (6-4) and as the second set started the rain began to fall and the umpire called a break. When the players returned to centre court Angela was wearing fresh dry clothes yet superstitions surrounding lucky clothing meant that changing into dry clothes was not an option for Christine. The match resumed but once more rain delayed play and they were forced to take a 40 minute rain break. The match continued in the same pattern as the first set and Christine was within five points of being crowned Wimbledon Champion when disaster struck. As she ran to retrieve a shot off the net cord, she slipped on a patch of grass dampened from the rain. She remembered the incident clearly,

I fell over as you know at 4-3, 40-30, a set up and I'd had a problem with my ankle earlier in the year in February and I thought I, I felt, I thought 'oh my goodness have I done something' and momentarily I lost concentration...

Christine grabbed her right thigh, stood up and returned to the baseline. The match continued with Mortimer winning the second set 6-4, Christine never regained her form, and Mortimer went on to win the third set 7-5.

Christine's slip at that crucial moment in the second set of the final and her momentary loss of concentration represented a dramatic shift in the course of her life. When Christine reflected on the match she was amazed that Mortimer failed to acknowledge how close she had been to winning the title or how lucky Mortimer was to have won.

That's what has always been extraordinary to me is that Angela to this day doesn't ever see that, she sees it as a... as a win. And that she had beaten me before but I had also beaten her before. But if you win any match from a set down and 4-3 down and 40-30 down, you are going to think 'lucky to get out of that one' it may not be somebody's fall but you are going to think 'lucky to get out of that....' Like 'lucky to get out of that one' and you know you never know how people see things.

In retrospect the importance of the match to her future career was recognised by Christine,

I think that was a turning point then that I think I never quite got back the same sort of dedication or intent that I had.

Following 1961 Wimbledon, Christine realised that the choices she was making were leading her to spend less time on the tennis court. She got engaged, spent time going out with friends and it became clear that she had lost the intensity of commitment that she had previously given to her career. She was still playing Wightman Cup tennis and competing internationally but after a third round loss at

the Wimbledon Championships and harsh criticism from the press following the Wightman Cup loss to America, Christine decided to take a break from tennis. The 1961 final was a key moment in her tennis career which she believed should have been her last competitive match. She explained;

Yes in a way I wish I had stopped then but I suppose when you have been in sport when you can play to a high level you can keep going but it's reaching those highlights.

Although she competed at Wimbledon from 1962-64 her results had dropped and the furthest she reached was the fourth round in 1963. By 1965 her tennis was improving although her focus was gone. She played against the number 2 seed Margaret Smith and was beaten 6-4, 6-0. Christine recalled this stage of her career in some detail,

Possibly I was coming back again yeah in 1965... but I think being brought up in a traditional family where my parents had given me every opportunity and encouragement to face things I think they were also from the very traditional mould of where you get married, you have children... I was always thinking yes well I've had a good career but I was always looking around thinking I must follow the trend.

The "trend" that Christine chose to follow led to her getting married in 1967, aged 26, to a rugby player, Gerry Janes. When she competed at her last Wimbledon Championships in 1974 she had two children and, "other things took priority." She was beaten in the third round of the singles by British player, Lesley Charles and was knocked out in both the ladies' doubles and mixed doubles in the first round. Her competitive tennis career had come to an end.

Christine's choices beyond the tennis court were limited as she explained the influence of having a family on her career opportunities,

I sometimes think should I have branched out more and done more you know there were lots of opportunities but when you've got a family you have to again make choices and there wasn't anything like the possibilities to have nannies.

Two years after her retirement from tennis, Christine returned to The All England Club in her new role as a BBC radio broadcaster and apart from a month commentating at Wimbledon every year she was a full time mother.

When reflecting on her life as a tennis player and mother she believes that her time as a tennis player was "a lot easier than bringing up children." The transition from

full time tennis player to full time mother of four children was difficult for Christine. She described the change in her life,

Slowly my life filled with all things that go with bringing up children and I didn't have so much time to think about it but I did find at the beginning you know there just seemed to be no light and shade just a constant... I could always put my rackets away for a weekend but I couldn't put the children away. I learnt that pretty quickly and also what I missed when I wasn't playing was the excitement of having a goal to aim at and I think that also keeps people in the sport because you are aiming at something that is going to happen next month, next week and you have something to work at.

Throughout her career in tennis she had focussed on winning tournaments; training, travelling and competing which were part of her daily routine and in retirement there was the regular daily routine of life with children. The skills that she had learnt throughout her tennis career were being transferred into her new role as a mother.

Christine recounts her philosophy,

I always say 'keep on keeping on' that's one of my favourite sayings and I think that in tennis it's so important and in life.

## Concluding Comments

These pen portraits represent the four women's lives as disclosed through life story interviews, hence they represent the women's life stories as they wish them to be recounted. Corradi (1991) explains that biographies become more meaningful when compared with the social structure and the individual's social background.

Accordingly, the following chapters analyse the women's stories in light of their socio-historical context thus the reader is presented with a biography with multiple layers of interpretation. As such these chapters offer the reader a more comprehensive and in-depth perspective on the players' lives and offer insights into the amateur era of women's tennis.

## Chapter 6: The Road to Wimbledon

### Introduction

Women tennis players of the amateur era competed during a period of great change. Two World Wars and the burgeoning women's rights movements meant that their participation in the early and mid twentieth century spanned a period when the ability to trace societal change can be reflected in the changing roles of women players on the amateur tennis circuit. Women players began their careers on the sidelines of tennis, asking permission to play and competing under strict conditions which encouraged compliance to notions of male superiority. The players' lives which are documented in the previous chapter and explored in the following chapters represent a unique view into the experiences and events in the lives of a group of British women who competed in tennis during a period of change both at a societal and sporting level. Their experiences are set against the foundations of a sport which held its first Wimbledon Championship for women in 1888 and sought to include female players from the outset.

An understanding of the players' socialisation into sport through an analysis of their life histories highlights the complex nature of athletic progression into elite sport and the influence of families, coaches and governing bodies on sporting experiences and athletic development. The narratives of the women draw attention to the key moments in their athletic progress from school tennis players to promising international competitors. These turning points are examined with specific reference to the influence of gender and gender role expectations on the women's sporting choices in the early stages of their careers.

Integral to the players' introduction to the sport is an appreciation of the influence of family on early sport socialisation and the role of parents in supporting the progress of young athletes. Participation in tennis has long been associated with issues of social class since the founders of the sport were exclusively the middle classes in pursuit of recreation that would allow the mixing of the sexes in the privacy of their gardens. Accordingly, this chapter will also examine the influence of family and social class background on the female players' life stories. Alongside the family, female players were often introduced to tennis during their schooling and this chapter will discuss the influence of the player's education and school sports as an introduction to sport and promotion of tennis. The chapter culminates in a discussion of the role of the LTA in the players' transition from junior tennis competitions to the senior tennis circuit of the amateur era.

## Early Sporting Lives

Childhood is a stage in a young person's life when they spend a significant proportion of time in the company of their parents. When studying sport it is important to understand the role of the family in introducing children to sport since they are recognised as being the primary socialising agent (Bandura, 1977; Shakib and Dunbar, 2004). For all the players interviewed, family members were crucial to their initial introduction and continued involvement in tennis. All were part of families which were heavily involved in sport. Christine describes her family as "sporting" with particular links to tennis especially as her parents met whilst at their local tennis club. Joy also used the term "sporting" to describe her family;

Well I started playing I suppose at about 9 years old, and I played golf as well, because my mother and father were great sporting people. He played for Oxfordshire, golf and football and billiards and my mother was a great swimmer, she was junior champion in the Midlands. So I was brought up in a sporting family.

Both parents are acknowledged as important in encouraging the women's early sporting involvement. Phyllis's father was particularly supportive of her tennis career. She recalled:

My father was very keen, he was a member of Surrey Cricket Club, he went to the Oval a lot but oh yes my parents were keen they encouraged me.

Betty Nuthall dedicated her book *Learning Lawn Tennis* (1928) to her mother and acknowledges the role of her parents in teaching her to regard the game as "the most important game as well as the jolliest in the world." Contemporary researchers have also found that adolescent girls recognise family members as being their role models, with the majority citing their mother as the key role model within the family (Vescio et al., 2005).

The family has an influence on sport socialisation in a range of ways, from providing financial and emotional support to providing transport to sporting events and watching their children's sport (Kay, 2000). Mortimer (1962, pp.11-12) recalled playing on Dartmoor Heath as an eight year old; "I remember the vast heaths... and the wild games of cowboys and Indians with the village children." Boniface's (2003) biographical study of the lives of women involved in outdoor adventure surmised that an active childhood and the positive influence of significant others in the form of parents and coaches were significant factors in ongoing and continuing participation in outdoor adventure. The same can be said for continuing sports participation (Coakley and Donnelly, 1999).

The women were all from middle class families and it was assumed by their families, that they would complete their education and progress to marriage with introductions gained in social situations such as sport. Joan, Joy and Phyllis were encouraged by their parents to get involved in tennis with the specific purpose of introducing them to eligible men of appropriate social standing. Tennis clubs were viewed as an acceptable environment to meet potential husbands. As a result the tennis club and playing in mixed tournaments was a venue for mixed socialising. Joy's mother was particularly keen that she focussed on tennis instead of golf since she believed that the benefits of playing in tennis tournaments were beneficial for women as it afforded the opportunity to play in mixed events, while golf clubs were still gender segregated, with women's competitions occurring on separate days and the clubhouse having designated bars for men. This preference for tennis was engrained in Joy, she stated, "golf isn't a social game for a girl."

Social acceptance was important for the players continued participation in tennis. Since sports participation remains largely contradictory to sex role expectations for women, female athletes require a strong and supportive family to encourage their socialisation into sport (Colley, et al., 1992). It is clear from the women's life stories that their mothers were most vocal regarding their sports participation. Their mothers were brought up in Edwardian England and social status and the virtues of women were still based around Victorian ideals of modesty and decorum which were in opposition to those required for success in competitive sport. Joan's mother, while very supportive of her playing career had particular ideas of which sports would be acceptable. As Joan revealed; "My mother wanted me to be a dancer but it wasn't my cup of tea." Although Joan insisted on playing tennis it was only deemed appropriate by her mother once she was aware that it was a socially acceptable sport for a female to compete in. Joan stated:

Oh yes, my Mum, my Mother was tickled pink with it [her tennis career]. She didn't like it when I went away terribly.

Angela Mortimer's mother was also more interested in her attending local dances and parties with her friends rather than spending her time playing tennis. Angela explained how her relationship with her mother changed:

I had just outgrown my mother and her chestnut hair was becoming streaked with grey. I left her reminiscing over her youth. My mother's teens were very gay years, and her constant worry was that I wasn't having such a good time as she enjoyed. I couldn't explain to her the difference in our concepts of tennis (Mortimer, 1962, p.15).

Angela Buxton's family were also initially sceptical about her new sporting hobby. Yet once her parents were made aware of the social status associated with club membership and the potential to mix with the upper classes they relented; indeed their change of attitude had a direct impact on the direction of her tennis career as her father paid for a trip to America so that she could receive coaching at the prestigious Los Angeles Tennis Club (Schoenfeld, 2004). Her father's motives for supporting her tennis career were tied to his personal ambition to be recognised as a member of the upper classes. Having started his professional life as a salesman from a working class family of Orthodox Jews in Leeds Harry Buxton won "a small fortune" on a casino win in Nice on the South of France and achieved financial status (Schoenfeld, 2004). Following this his life changed and he became a well known business man and entrepreneur. Angela's passion for tennis was supported by her father who recognised it as a way to gain increased social standing through the affluent members of tennis clubs and the famous people that Angela (and he) could meet as she acknowledged; "he had stars in his eyes" (Schoenfeld, 2004, p.36). In the case of the Buxton's, tennis was used as a vehicle to gain social mobility. Indeed, tennis clubs were recognised for their 'middle-class sociability' (McKibbin, 1998) where even elocution lessons were known to be part of the social life of the club (Holt, 1989).

## Participation in Other Sports

In order to become an international tennis player during the amateur era it was not necessary to focus primarily on tennis from a young age since social class remained a boundary to the accessibility of sports clubs and few people had the luxury of dedicating their time to an amateur sport. For players to qualify for Wimbledon they required success on the British tennis circuit rather than the required world rankings of the professional era. Hazel Wightman, the pioneer of international women's competition, was an advocate of players having a diverse sporting history (Wightman, 1933). Indeed, she felt tennis was easier for girls who had a history of activity in other sports. Through their schools and families the women players of the amateur era had the opportunity to get involved in a wide choice of pastimes, from Greek dancing to swimming, before specialising in tennis and they demonstrated athletic ability in a range of sports, including squash, golf and table tennis.

Table tennis was a sport which many players competed in during the winter months since the table tennis season did not clash with the British tennis circuit and further it involved hand eye co-ordination which many believed was advantageous to their tennis. Ann Jones had a long and successful table tennis career as a precursor to her tennis career competing in five world championships finals in the 1950s and for

many years she managed to combine the two before focussing exclusively on tennis. She believed that her national and international success at table tennis benefitted her tennis career (Jones, 1971). Ann felt that playing both sports until the age of 15 still left her with plenty of time to make the decision to specialise. Yet Fred Perry the Wimbledon champion from 1934-1936, who was world table tennis champion in 1929 gave up the sport because it was detrimental to his tennis game. Bobby Wilson, a British Davis Cup player from 1955-1968, explained how he found it necessary to give up table tennis:

Because as I have found myself, you use the wrist a lot in table tennis while in tennis you must hit the ball from the elbow, keeping the wrist locked. I don't think that one game helps the other. In fact, I think that when I play table tennis it causes me to start flicking the tennis ball, and that is very bad (cited in Truman, 1961, p.115).

When Joan Hughesman started playing tennis in 1933, at the age of 14, she had already gained experience at competition in a wide range of sports. She recalled playing fields 300 yards from her home where every afternoon she played cricket, hockey, netball or tennis. Joan demonstrated a particular aptitude for squash. She competed in the British Squash Championships six times, winning it four times, and she travelled to Europe to compete, winning the Belgium Championships. Joan gained immense enjoyment from playing squash, she exclaimed: "I loved playing it; I loved playing it because I loved running but it was a fill in for the tennis that was all." Her decision to focus on tennis was based on her dislike of the squash tournaments. She described the "lack of atmosphere at [squash] tournaments" which she found particularly boring. Both Joan and Joy played squash in the winter off-season as a form of keep fit and it was recognised as a compatible sport to tennis. Christine Truman (1961, p.115) discussed the benefits of squash with Wilson as follows;

Bobby favours squash as a more helpful second sport (and I agree with him) because you can play tennis shots on a squash court and at the same time build up the reflexes and build up stamina.

Christine also showed exceptional ability in a wide range of sports. At school she played netball and rounders and at the age of 12 she considered taking up golf after showing great promise on her first attempt at the game. Moreover, she would have given up tennis if the LTA had not invited her to the training school in 1954 as she was having considerable problems finding practice partners (Truman, 1961). While Joy played golf, her love of tennis and the camaraderie of tennis tournaments was what appealed to her and led her to focus solely on tennis. These women's experiences, alongside Parratt's (1989) analysis of the magazine *Womanhood*,



provide further insight into the sporting choices of British upper and middle class families, highlighting the fact that for some families Victorian beliefs of the languid passive female were no longer barriers to participation.

Research into commitment among elite female athletes has shown that athletes who take up a sport are more likely to continue their involvement when enjoyment is expressed as a key element of their sporting experiences (Weiss and Weiss, 2003). Indeed, all of the tennis players confirmed their enjoyment of playing from an early age as key to their specialism in tennis. Christine remarked: "you know it was all very enjoyable"; Joan and Joy both described playing tennis as "fun" and Phyllis reflected on her sporting life, saying: "I always enjoyed all the tennis."

For these players an introduction to the sport was the start of a long term commitment and focus on the game of tennis. Virginia Wade and Cynthia Starr (1988, p.9) list five reasons why players are stimulated to become champions:

Talent for hitting tennis balls, love exercise, mentally fascinated with competition, enjoy the challenge of overcoming an opponent and showmanship.

The findings from the interviews are similar in that all the players highlight one or more of the listed aspects as reasons for succeeding in tennis. Phyllis enjoyed the feel of hitting the tennis ball and continually emphasised the fun she got from playing. From the onset Christine was highly competitive and very serious about tennis (Truman, 1961). She admitted in her biography that while on holidays in Thorpeness she became fanatical about tennis. "There was only one club at Thorpeness set aside specially for juniors, so as you might imagine it was busy all the time. I often spent hours queuing up for a game" (Truman, 1961, p.12). By the time she was 10 years old she had predicted her selection for the British Wightman Cup team and had ambitions to play at Wimbledon (Truman, 1961). Christine described her love of tennis to the fashion designer Teddy Tinling when she said winning the pools "wouldn't give me any more happiness than I have at present" (Tinling and Oxby, 1963, p.168).

By the time the players were involved in tennis they had an appreciation of the requirements of sport. While Christine and Joy began playing tennis before the age of 10, Phyllis and Joan did not play tennis until secondary school when they were introduced to the sport by friends. Many women players in the amateur era did not specialise in tennis until their late teens, indeed Billie Jean King, the six time Wimbledon champion, only committed to tennis when she was 21 years old (King and Starr, 1988). For Wimbledon champion Althea Gibson, an introduction to the

sport of tennis was to change her life. In 1941, at the age of 14 she was living on welfare money, playing on the streets and going to the movies. She was introduced initially to a form of street tennis called paddle tennis and her success brought introductions to the world of tennis in Harlem, New York. Althea recalled the influence of tennis on her life in her aptly titled autobiography *I Always Wanted to be Somebody*: "My whole life was changed, just like that, and I never even knew it was happening" (Gibson, 1958, p.25).

Commitment to the sport was required for juniors wishing to excel at tennis. However many would have to wait hours to gain access to the tennis courts as senior members had priority over junior members. This marginalisation of junior club members while recognised across sports remains an under-researched aspect of sports participation. For Christine it meant she had reduced time for tennis coaching and practice. When Althea Gibson struggled to gain court time in New York she spent her time as ball-girl and fetching towels for club members in the hope of catching time on the court in between matches.

Ann Jones and Angela Mortimer were equally ambitious from an early age. The former inherited a pride in performance from her father. She described her focus as, "the ability and desire to try one's best, whether Wimbledon final or first round of a minor tournament" (Jones, 1971, p.15). While Mortimer (1962, p.17) felt "a strange and compelling determination" to succeed. It is this common held determination and single mindedness which binds the successful women players of the study. Their self-confidence was translated into a focus on achieving the highest accolades in their sport with the help of their tennis coach and support from their schools.

## Tennis Coaching

Phyllis, Joan, Joy and Christine were fortunate to have received coaching from the start of their tennis careers. Phyllis was introduced to tennis by a school friend and her early success at school competition led to her first coaching session. She explained:

My parents said that I ought to have some coaching and I went up to Barnes and had some coaching there. A man named von Braun I think was his name.

Family support is crucial for a players' development. The interviewed players all had the full support of their parents which meant that their coaching was paid for and their chances of progressing within the game were enhanced. Nonetheless the amount of time the players received for tennis lessons was relatively brief.

When Christine was on holiday in Thorpeness she would have a lesson with Ernest Low nearly every day but at home lessons were scarce. At her local club, 'Monkhams', Christine was fortunate to receive coaching from the Essex County Coach, Herbert Brown, yet her allocated coaching time was initially just a 30 minute lesson every month (Truman, 1961). Christine's discussions of Brown in our interview demonstrate her respect and fondness for him as a coach:

There was a very well known coach in Essex that is still well known to this day, called Herbert Brown and my older brothers and sisters had had lessons with him and I was dying waiting for my turn, dying to have my go which I finally did aged 10... He had a wonderful reputation for enthusiasm and making youngsters enthusiastic to play. One of his favourite ploys, you could call it, was to promise you a new box of balls or new racket if you won a certain number of games or hitting at a target in a lesson, it might be winning a set or getting four games and he could let you get within reach of your target but he was good enough that he could step up the pace and you never did get the new racket or box of balls. Yes it makes you think 'well next time,' 'I'll really go away and practice for next time'.

The players' coaches were significant individuals in their stories. For Christine, Joan and Phyllis, their relationship with their coach shaped who they were, not only technically as players but in shaping their lives beyond the tennis court as having the ability to set goals and strive for perfection.

In assembling the story of a life it is important for the biographer to identify the people who helped shape that life. These significant others – parents, teachers, coaches – helped shape the players' lives, influencing their life choices and changing their life course. In 1957, at a Wightman Cup match in Pittsburgh, America, Ann Jones met the retired Wimbledon champion Maureen Connolly. Jones had great respect for Connolly's achievements and when she praised her temperament and tactical awareness while criticising her backhand, Jones listened. In her autobiography Jones (1971, pp. 64 and 129) explained the significance of Connolly to her sporting and private life:

She was later to become a very important influence on my life... Just being with Maureen was a great mental boost. She was so interested in life in general. She took me outside tennis so much. She wanted to live life to the full herself and this helped me lead a more varied existence. When I played tennis with her I enjoyed it but after we had played there was something else to do. I wasn't wrapped up in the self-destructive

way that creeps up on players who sit around tennis clubs, do very little and gradually go stale.

When the women progressed onto the international tennis circuit they were coached by players from their international federations however it was the coaches who touched their lives at the beginning of their careers who most inspired them to become the players they were. Joan for example was aware of the influence of her coach Arthur Roberts, stating "Roberts, obviously I give him credit for it [her career], I mean for all, I mean he was fantastic in that way." Joan provides an insight into player-coach relationships. She was very critical of the American player, Maureen Connolly, regarding her treatment of and relationship with her coach Teach Tennant. She recalled:

I always remember about Connolly that one of the reasons I didn't like Teach Tennant person who coached her all the way and got her where she was and then she said "I don't want you anymore". I was reading a book about her and apparently when Connolly came over and all the press were there and she was being given lots of presents and all sorts of freebies and lots of things and I think she treated Teach Tennant quite badly, she should have, she didn't give [Teach] anything.

Inevitably not all relationships between players' and coaches' end amicably. With such an intense relationship there can be difficulties with maintaining cohesion. Christine Truman discussed the issue of coaching with Bobby Wilson and Ken Wheeler in her autobiography. She recommended that coaches should allow players the freedom to develop their playing style without being restricted by "the textbook" (Truman, 1961, p.115). However the player and coach negotiate their relationship it is clear from the life story interviews that the coaches were key individuals in the players' lives.

Both Joan Hughesman and Angela Mortimer grew up in Devon and they attribute their success to their coach Arthur Roberts. Roberts was the resident tennis coach at The Palace Hotel in Torquay which was close to where Joan lived and although their introductions to Roberts were over 25 years apart he had a significant impact on both their careers. Angela Mortimer's introduction to Roberts has similarities with Sparkes' (2004) discussion of the interpellation experienced by the cyclist Lance Armstrong when Armstrong read a flyer advertising a junior triathlon competition which led to him towards a particular identity where he imagined himself being successful. Similarly, one Friday morning in 1948 Angela spotted an advertisement in her local paper. Roberts was offering free coaching to any promising players under

the age of 12 in the Torquay area. The fact that Angela lived thirty miles away in Plymouth and was already 15 years old was she wrote, "not going to stop her pursuing the offer". She saved her pocket money and travelled two hours by bus from Plymouth to the Palace Hotel where Roberts was based (Mortimer, 1962). This journey had a profound effect on her future tennis career as her relationship with Roberts became a stepping stone onto the amateur tennis circuit. The moment which Mortimer read the advertisement for tennis coaching in the newspaper is also similar to Denzin's (1989) definition of epiphanies. These are moments of revelation in an individual's life which lead them towards a specific identity. In Angela's case she is drawn to the identity of a tennis player, a role which later transformed her life course.

Yet Angela's first meeting with Roberts at the Palace Hotel was disastrous. While Roberts recognised her potential and said that Angela moved well on the court, she was dismissed for being too old and not from the local area. Roberts sent her home. Instead of feeling despondent she left feeling even more determined to succeed and two years later after finishing her studies at school she returned to the Palace Hotel and pursued Roberts. She described his dismissal,

[Roberts] was not pleased to see me. He didn't particularly want me to begin. "You can play against the wall" he called tersely... Each day I practised alone in the vast building. All alone, down one end I was trying to get control of the tennis ability I felt sure I had in me.... Inevitably, Mr Roberts had to remember me (Mortimer, 1962, pp18-19).

The determination shown by Mortimer was essential for her to gain Roberts's approval and receive tennis lessons. It is this stubborn attitude which is evident in many of the players and which ensured Mortimer's commitment to tennis. As with most of the British players, Mortimer's education was a priority to her family and it was only upon completion of her exams that she was able to focus on tennis. The education system was supportive of these young and promising tennis players as seen in the following section.

## School Sport

At the turn of the twentieth century, girls' secondary schools were created in line with boys' schools with one key difference; state policy promoted the view that the education of girls was primarily for citizenship rather than work and by this they meant parenthood (Bruley, 1999). However, with reference to sports development, Hargreaves (1994, p.55) suggests that:

Developments in female education during the last third of the nineteenth century probably did more to legitimate more active forms of sport and exercise for women than any other factor.

While team sports were gradually introduced to girls' schools at the end of the nineteenth century there was a new form of movement being introduced to girls' schools (Fletcher, 2004). The role of Madame Bergman-Osterberg (1849-1915) was central in launching physical education for women in Britain. She started a sports college in Dartford for educating female gymnastics teachers for the new high schools of middle class girls (Fletcher, 1984). The fundamental principles of these early sports colleges were based around the teaching of Per Henrik Ling. This incorporated a system of Swedish gymnastics which was grounded in anatomy and physiology which also combined with English team sports such as cricket, hockey and lacrosse, as part of the curriculum within girls' schools. The women tennis players interviewed were from middle class families and attended local grammar schools and public schools and their games mistresses were likely to have been educated at these specialist sports colleges for women.

By the turn of the twentieth century individual sports for women were widely recognised by even the most traditional minded headmistresses. Parratt (1989, pp.151-152) quotes the Cambridge-educated mathematician and headmistress Sara Burstall (1859-1939) as saying:

We want a sound healthy animal, trained in good bodily habits, if we are successfully to achieve intellectual and moral education.

Indeed all the women interviewed were given the opportunity to play a variety of sports at school. Joan described the range of sports available at her school;

I was very lucky I went to a private school in Torquay and they had playing fields about 300 yards away so I would go up, every afternoon and play either cricket, hockey, netball or tennis.

Joy Michele attended a public school in Morden from the age of 9 and was sent to school in Switzerland aged 12 where she had a choice of a wide selection of sporting activities including, skiing, horse riding and tennis. Christine attended Essex House Preparatory School and played a number of sports including netball and rounders. Having passed her 11 plus at Braeside, a private school she was rewarded with a tennis racket from her parents and continued her education until she passed her O levels. This pattern of education until the age of 16 is comparable with other British players. Both Ann Jones and Angela Mortimer stayed at school until completion of their O levels.

Tennis was very much part of the curriculum within the private schools attended by the women. The LTA recognised the importance of tennis lessons and by the 1950s games mistresses would have been invited to attend specific tennis training organised by the LTA at Loughborough (Lawn, Tennis and Badminton, 1951a). Although coaching at public schools was seen as a small part of the official coaching scheme, it was recognised by the LTA as an important element in the chain of coaching as discussed in Lawn Tennis and Badminton (1946a, p.472):

The primary object of school coaching is to give a short course of instruction to boys who show promise – irrespective of what games they play at school, and the names of the six most promising boys from each school are forwarded to the secretaries of their county associations. In turn this frequently leads to further coaching of the school boys during the holidays as well as invitations to participate in County Junior Tournaments.

This format of selection was also evident in girls' schools and for many of the players tennis at school was their first taste of competition and it was these early experiences that inspired them to pursue the sport. All of the women felt their talent for tennis was recognised by their schools and all went on to captain their school tennis teams. Inter-school competition for girls was actively promoted by the LTA through the Aberdare Cup. Both public and state girls' schools entries for the Aberdare Cup rose from 90 schools in 1947 to a peak in 1968 of 384 schools (Lawn Tennis Association, 1974).

The ability of the women to commit fully to tennis can be attributed to the support of their schools during the formative years of their playing careers. Joan Hughesman was fortunate that her games mistress was a keen player and would play tennis with her during lunch breaks. Christine's school gave her time off to travel to tournaments, further during swimming or games lessons she was allowed to play tennis and her history mistress who had played a lot of tennis at university volunteered to be a practice partner. Ann Jones' school were also supportive of her tennis. Her headmistress allowed her to miss school on Friday to travel to Queen's Club in London.

Time spent away travelling to coaching, combined with week nights of competition was exhausting for the young women. Ann Jones (1971, p.41) describes an average Friday in 1955, when she was 13 years old:

I would get up at 6.45 every Friday morning to catch the 7.30 train from Birmingham to London. In those days it took two and a half hours, followed by a 45-minute journey across London to Queen's

Club. I would play about three hours' tennis and have half an hour in the gym doing exercise. Then came the rush for the train home and I would arrive at about 8.30pm exhausted. I'd take my school books with me to study in the train but more often than not I was so tired that I just fell asleep. Luckily I never slept through Birmingham!

The schedule of coaching and competition was intense for young players and on occasion school work was compromised. There were times when Ann Jones had to rely on school friends allowing her to copy their home work and even her mother was implicated when a history report was left unwritten she admitted that her mother wrote the assignment "she got nine out of ten for it, which made her quite pleased with herself" (Jones, 1971, p.47).

For many players the growing commitment to the tennis circuit clashed with the requirements of their education. Christine Truman left school as soon as she had passed her O levels and Ann Jones gave up her place in a junior invitation event at Wimbledon to take her O level exams. When she returned to school for her A levels, her headmistress outlined how much school work was needed to make up for missing days due to tournaments. She was pressed into deciding between education and tennis. Ann chose tennis.

The early sporting lives of the women players of the amateur era reflect the dedication shown above by Ann Jones. Angela Buxton attended the Welsh boarding school Gloddaeth Hall, near the English border and travelled one hour to Liverpool every week for a 30 minute lesson with another girl (Schoenfeld, 2004). The importance of schools in supporting elite players was recognised by Dorothy Round (1934) in *Modern Lawn Tennis*, who explained the success of the American players based on their ability to recognise junior players at school and these players were then sent to the coaches of the American Wightman Cup team. She felt that British players were at a disadvantage since they were taking up the sport when foreign players were already in the "championship class" (Round, 1934, p.98).

## Junior Tennis Tournaments

For many players the transition from playing at school to entering junior tournaments was straightforward as they had access to local tennis clubs and were able to enter local tournaments. Early success in these led to county tennis tournaments and growing recognition from their tennis association. There is little doubt that social class played a factor in this progress as players had to become members of tennis clubs, pay annual membership fees, adhere to a strict dress code



of tennis and required financial assistance to pay for tennis coaching and travel between tournaments.

The topic of social class was raised in each interview yet the women were reticent in disclosing their social class status. When Phyllis King was asked to discuss the influence of social class within tennis she laughed and said: "Well I'm not going to answer that [more laughter]". Christine Truman was aware of class prejudice surrounding tennis when she explained how she travelled between home and coaching at Wimbledon:

I had a season ticket from Woodford to Southfields and my parents would have paid that, I mean this is when it all comes down to 'is it an expensive game or not' I mean people seem to think 'yes it is' but my parents didn't have a lot of spare money around with six children.

Joy Michele was also grateful for financial assistance from her family: "You know my family always supported me so I always had money to go". Alongside golf, fox-hunting and croquet, tennis has long been associated with the middle classes with little 'cross-class association' apart from bridging the upper and middle classes (Holt, 1989; Huggins, 2006). In comparison to the listed sports, tennis has been recognised as being a more broadly based middle class sport since its costs were affordable enough to accommodate middle class families but high enough to exclude most working class incomes (McKibbin, 1998). McKibbin also highlighted the significance of sports such as tennis, cricket and athletics in remaining self-governing and therefore maintaining their social exclusivity which was legitimised by the strict amateur code. The social exclusion afforded to tennis clubs influenced its participants to the point where discussions of money or social class in the interviews were likely to have been considered crude by the women and dismissed through humour.

For many players the transition from playing in their local club to venturing further afield opened their eyes to class prejudices which hitherto they had been unaware. Ann Jones' experiences in tennis clubs around Birmingham highlight class snobbery and the influence of family status within tennis clubs. She described the differences between the various tennis clubs:

At King's Heath where my mother and father played in the respective first teams, where I knew everybody and where I also soon started to play league matches [the atmosphere was completely different]. The atmosphere at Tally Ho! [tennis club] seemed more congenial than at Priory and Edgbaston, where other girls of my age seemed to have far more money to spend. During the tournament I would take sandwiches

to the club, not because I couldn't afford to buy them but because my parents preferred to use the money saved for buying, say, new balls, which in their minds was more important. I was often conscious when I walked in, of everyone in the bar turning around and then, when they saw that it was no one they wanted to talk to, putting their noses back in their beer (Jones, 1971, pp.28-29).

Undoubtedly, social class issues permeate tennis clubs where social, cultural and economic capital are all taken into account in the appraisal of new members. For the players these invisible class rules were negotiated successfully as their tennis progressed and their skills were acknowledged as valuable assets to their respective tennis clubs. The next section follows the women's progression from club events to county tournaments and for the lucky few, recognition from the governing body, the LTA.

## Recognition from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)

The LTA had a large part to play in the development of junior talent and supporting progress from junior to senior competition. One way in which talent was selected for specialist coaching from the LTA was based on success at junior tournaments. Phyllis was 25 years old before her talent was recognised when she reached the quarter-finals at Wimbledon and went on to win the London Covered Court Championships. She credited the LTA for her progress in tennis:

The LTA have been awfully good. They gave me coaching, first of all my parents arranged for me to have coaching and then the LTA arranged for me to have coaching with Dan Maskell at Wimbledon.

Maskell continued in his role as coach for the Lawn Tennis Association Training Committee and 23 years later he played a key role in the career of Christine Truman.

In Christine's case, she was recognised by the LTA in 1953, aged 12, following her win at the Evening News tournament at Queens Club in London. She recalled:

That's where Dan Maskell saw me and that is where he approached me to have training so I had to sort of show myself in competition.

Alongside a group of selected juniors, Christine attended the LTA winter training school at Huntercombe, in Oxfordshire. She described the training in detail within both the interview and her autobiography;

We had our strokes remodelled and were able to learn from each other in a competitive atmosphere. I loved this, every minute of it (Truman, 1961, p.15).

Within our interview Christine spoke positively about the LTA's role in her progress:

Do you know you can't do it on your own you have to have someone there to help you to the next stage I had had Herbert Brown and then Dan Maskell took over.

However, Tinling and Oxby (1963) in their book *White Ladies*, discuss at length the rift between the Truman family and the LTA. Following the winter training school of 1954, Christine was invited to Queens to receive coaching from Maskell and was selected for a squad of Nominated Young Player's who received benefits from the LTA including subsidies for tournament expenses, meals, entry fees and training arrangements. But as Tinling and Oxby (1964) explain, without informing her, the LTA had expelled her from the favoured squad leading to an embarrassing situation at the Hard-Court Championships in Bournemouth. Christine was asked to pay her entry fees and was taken aback as the LTA should have paid them for her. Teddy Tinling was with her and informed the committee that as Nominated Young Player, Christine was exempt from tournament fees. Christine was told by the tournament committee that this was no longer the case. Tinling recognised this incident as the main cause of the feud between the LTA and the Trumans:

Fortunately, the Trumans are not only a close knit family, but Mr. Truman is a successful business man. Inevitably they quickly insured Christine against the possibility of any further embarrassment and denigration to her public image. Mrs Truman promptly went on record dissociating herself from all LTA privileges (Tinling and Oxby, 1964, p.158).

There are many possible explanations for Christine's positive reflections on the LTA during our interview. One explanation could be based on memory and the way in which people reminisce and in their recollecting there is an emphasis on portraying the positive side of a life story (Rubin, et al., 1989; Mather, 2004). Another reason could be based on her current situation. In so far as Josselson (1995) and Roberts (2002) remind us that the life story may be re-shaped to meet the current position of the teller. At the time of our interview Christine's daughter was one of the best British players and received funding from the LTA. While Christine was aware that the interview was for academic purposes, she would have been sensitive to her daughter's position with the LTA and may have been cautious in discussing the issue of funding. A final reason for her positive recall of the LTA is more likely to be based on the fact that in the years following Tinling and Oxby's (1964) claim, Christine was the recipient of extensive financial and organisational support from the LTA without which her career would have been a non-starter. She explained in our interview one of the ways in which she benefited from LTA support:

The LTA sent a team to the America which included a tour of the tournaments leading up to the main, all paid for which I went on when I was 16 and every year after that basically and then a team was also sent to the French Championships and that's really how and that was all paid for.

The LTA were not always able to identify junior talent from national tournaments. Following the Second World War the numbers of juniors competing had dropped substantially and since England had not fielded an international team for seven years there were no role models for potential junior tennis players. Christine Truman a player of the post war era exemplifies this issue when she stated:

I never had a schoolgirl 'idol', neither can I decide who amongst the many great men and women players I have seen, is actually the best of all (Truman, 1961, p. 37).

The LTA were aware of the importance of having an international team not only for gaining international prestige in the tennis world but also in recruiting a younger generation of players through role models. Research has shown that young people from "the pre-television generation" such as Christine were more likely to be influenced by parents, teachers and known people when compared with athletes and celebrities (Payne et al., 2002). Therefore for the LTA to promote players as role models it was important for the juniors to have actual contact with the top players. This was achieved by the LTA paying high profile professionals to conduct a nationwide tour of tennis clubs in the search for prospective international players amongst the junior ranks. Schoenfeld (2004, p.35) describes the LTA plan to find juniors who had the potential to play at international level:

Dan Maskell, the national coach was dispatched around the country with former Wimbledon champion, Fred Perry, an English icon. They travelled by train throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, looking for future standouts.

The trials attracted the attention of a large number of junior tennis club members but one future champion slipped through the system. In 1946, Angela Buxton was invited to a trial at Colwyn Bay in Wales and progressed to the next stage of selections at Wimbledon but went no further.

The vast majority of the successful junior players would have been selected for international teams and national funding through their tennis association as seen by the British players and their support from the LTA. One player's life story is significant in that her path to the amateur circuit was in parallel to all other players

from the amateur era. For the African-American player, Althea Gibson, the process of gaining national recognition and access to the amateur circuit was very different. Racial discrimination in American throughout the amateur era meant that Black tennis players were restricted to playing in competitions affiliated with the American Tennis Association (ATA) which co-ordinated tournaments in non-white tennis clubs. Although Black players could compete in tournaments sanctioned by the USLTA they had to have qualified by competing in USLTA tournaments of which the majority were played in private country clubs where access was denied for Black players.

In 1946, when Althea Gibson was 18 years old she played the American Tennis Association national championships and although she lost in the finals she attracted the attention of two tennis playing doctors Dr. Fred Johnson and Dr. Hubert Eaton. Her reflections on Johnson and Eaton are augmented with vignettes demonstrating their role in shaping her character and moulding her playing style (Gibson, 1958). They proposed that she leave New York City and live with Dr Eaton in Lynchburg, Virginia, during the school year, attending high school and receiving coaching, and in the summer she would travel the tennis circuit with Dr Johnson.

It was an amazingly generous thing for them to do, and I know I can never repay them for what they did for me (Gibson, 1958, p.38).

For Johnson and Eaton there was an ulterior motive to promoting Althea since her potential success on the tennis circuit could lead to African-Americans breaking into the all white tournaments sanctioned by the USLTA. These motives worked to Althea's advantage, as Johnson and Eaton campaigned to get her into the American National Championships at Forest Hills and she became part of the international amateur tennis circuit culminating in her first appearance at the All England Club, Wimbledon in 1951. The transition onto the senior circuit was gradual for Phyllis, Joan and Joy as leaving school signalled the onset of their tennis career. The following section outlines the path taken by players as they made the transition from junior to senior tennis.

## Transition to Senior Tennis

Due to the younger age of marriage and the raising of the school leaving age, many women viewed work as something to do for a few years between school and marriage (Bruley, 1999). Phyllis, Joan and Joy were under no financial pressure to gain employment following school and playing on the amateur circuit became a substitute to work which was seen by their families as an ideal pastime. Angela Mortimer also followed the same route. When she left school in 1948, aged 16, she had to wait two years before being eligible to enrol at Physical Education (PE)

College. During those two years she focussed on tennis and enrolled on a preliminary shorthand and typing course to keep her mother happy. Angela never progressed beyond the basics of the typing course and never attended the PE College. She stated: "I lived only for tennis. I had my own plan for the future" (Mortimer, 1962, p.35). Angela Buxton's career followed a similar path to Mortimer. She finished school in 1950, aged 16, and moved to London with her mother to attend a small private academy in Hampstead where the headmistress focussed on the sporting and artistic talents of her pupils. Upon recognising Angela's passion for tennis the headmistress arranged for Angela to have lessons from the professional at the Cumberland Club in North London three times a week (Schoenfeld, 2004).

Players' transition from junior to senior tennis is not always as smooth an experience as found by Phyllis, Joan, Joy and Angela. They were fortunate in that their choices were made independently and without any pressure from family, coaches or governing bodies. Christine Truman discussed her transition onto the senior circuit during our interview;

The cross over from junior to senior tennis was sort of instant. I think that was a great help for me because I think it is a very difficult stage for so many, making that change.

The difficulties experienced by some players are described by a promising junior British tennis player in a personal letter to Angela Buxton in 1989 (cited in Grisogono, 1994, p.9):

The problem was that everything was so easy and I think I took a lot for granted – the LTA paid for trips and arranged things for me... I think that where the system breaks down is when you reach 18 as it is then up to you and it really hits you hard. The LTA don't really want to know you as you are not a junior anymore.

For Angela Mortimer the transition was largely circumstantial. Her coach, Arthur Roberts felt she would be a good travelling companion for his more successful protégée, Rosemary Bullied, and in competing in national and international events with Rosemary, Angela developed into a stronger player. Although Angela's first appearance at senior Wimbledon was a disaster, as she lost in the qualifying rounds of the singles and also lost the doubles with Rosemary in the first round, being at Wimbledon inspired Angela. She captures her excitement within her autobiography:

During those two days I learnt what star tennis meant. I saw Doris Hart and Louise Brough, and I watched play which I had never realised existed. I didn't try to speak to any of these mythical players. I just sat and watched. I was never depressed – I felt exhilarated by the thought

that one day I was going to play as well as these people. I was ready to work harder than I had ever worked before (Mortimer, 1962, p.33).

Christine's transition into playing The All England Championships at Wimbledon was based on her success in national tournaments and in beating a Wightman Cup player. The Wightman Cup player whom she beat was 39 year old Miss Joan Curry, soon to be Mrs. Joan Hughesman. Once Christine turned sixteen years, in 1957, she was eligible to compete at Wimbledon based on the criteria of age and standard. At this her first Wimbledon she reached the semi-finals and was beaten by the soon to be crowned champion, Althea Gibson. While the significance of the occasion is dismissed in her 1961 autobiography through a half page overview, there is no doubt that playing on centre court was a momentous occasion for the youngest semi-finalist since Lottie Dodd. She described the impact of that first Wimbledon in our interview:

Undoubtedly it was probably one of my most exciting Wimbledon's the first one because no one ever thought I had a chance. But I had that sort of you know what do you call it, the ignorance of youth or something and I thought I had a chance and I just, everything just came together and that sort of really made my name in many ways.

Once this transition into senior tennis had been made she was confident that it was the right decision. She explained in her autobiography: "I was now determined that nothing would stop me from reaching the top of the tree in world tennis" (Truman, 1961, p.24).

## Tennis and Gender Role Expectations

As discussed in previous chapters, tennis developed as an activity that would allow men and women to compete together, yet there is evidence to suggest that gender ideologies influenced women's participation from the outset. Throughout the player's early socialisation into tennis and through to their playing careers, the influence of gender and gender role expectations were evident in terms of the sports choices they made and how they were perceived by others. The experiences of the women throughout their early socialisation into sport were set within the context of a British society bound up in patriarchal ideology. Objections to games for women were based on the belief that women were expected to conform to dominant beliefs and values surrounding gender and in particular femininity. As a result women were believed to be best suited to sports which portrayed them as passive, dependent, emotional and frail (Choi, 2000). Such narrow stereotyped beliefs resulted in many women being discouraged from participating in strenuous physical activity. Indeed Wade and Rafferty (1984, p.27) found that,

In Britain the idea of women competing in sport was regarded as at best a joke and more commonly as unnatural and defeminising.

Female tennis players of the late 1880s competed at a time of much debate surrounding the physiological abilities of female athletes. Their abilities on the tennis court did much to silence the critics who were against women's participation in strenuous activities and helped to break down barriers for future participants in the sport. Dorothea Lambert Chambers, a seven times Wimbledon champion, was one of the first women to publish a tennis instruction book aimed specifically at women players. She was aware of the objections being voiced about games for women yet she was an advocate of tennis for women and commented "of all the games tennis is one most suited for girls" (Lambert Chambers, 1910, p.8). Her book (Lambert Chambers, 1910, p.5) highlights the demands of tennis as a positive aspect of the sport:

There is more energy of physical frame, more brain-tax and will-discipline demanded in one hard contested match than would suffice for a whole day's devotion to many other games. These requirements must help a woman.

Christine's experiences as a junior highlight the perceived physical weakness of female players. She had difficulty getting practice partners at her local club:

I would always go round to Monkham's Club on Saturday mornings and play with whoever was there. But my diary says 'Betty got tired so we stopped.' That sort of thing was always happening (Truman, 1961, p.13).

It is likely that her opponents had not received the physical training required to play competitive tennis and could not keep up with Christine who had developed considerable physical stamina from playing tennis with her family and the range of sports played at school.

These gender ideologies have been used to legitimise dominant male power relations and give cultural stability; as a result traditional notions of gender ideology became embedded within society's consciousness (Bryson, 1994). When Christine Truman wrote her autobiography at the age of 21 she was aware of these gender ideologies and had internalised male dominance to the extent that it shaped her judgement of the potential for women tennis players to compete as professionals. She stated:

The wind of change is blowing through tennis today bringing the professional players into increasing prominence. I do not know what the ultimate outcome will be and whether the 'show' aspect will pass



from the amateur game to professionalism, but I cannot imagine that there will be any future for a women in the type of professional entertainment presented by Mr. Kramer and his colleagues. We have just not got the stamina for such exhausting work, neither have most of us [women] the sort of mentality to accept sport as a full-time paid occupation (Truman, 1961, p.26).

Christine also provides an example of the taken for granted assumption that men are superior to women at tennis based on power. She declared;

I felt bound to point out at that point that while it was very good practise for a girl to play against a man, she could never expect to become as good a player as he was because of his greater physical strength (Truman, 1961, p.113).

Her beliefs as to the limitations of the female player were supported by Pauline Betz who on the subject of males versus females in tennis stated:

It's ridiculous to compare them. Her reasons: a man anticipates the play better, runs faster, hits harder, lasts longer (Time, 1946).

However, there was support for women's tennis from the LTA and male competitors. The LTA Junior Training Committee found that the boys were overshadowed by the girls at the Winter Training School in 1953. Indeed it was suggested by Dorey (1954, p.28) that:

The girls were so far in advance of their [male] counterparts of two or three years ago as to encourage the hope that in due time the LTA will develop a girls squad worthy of comparison with the LTA boys' squad who won so many titles last year.

This prediction was later confirmed by the British Davis Cup player Bobby Wilson's appraisal of women's tennis in 1961, which encompassed the players from the 1954 training school. He found that "within their limitations, the women's standard of today [1961] was higher than the men's" and the tennis journalist, Ben Wheeler went further, commenting:

Two girls got much nearer to the true beauty of the game, with their placements and long rallies, than two men do when they simply bash the ball down the middle of the court at one another" (Truman, 1961, p.113).

These differing opinions highlight the mixed messages being received by the women in their progress onto the senior circuit. Wheeler's description of the women's game as having different characteristics to the men's game was one way in which women's tennis was separated from men's. This largely stopped gender comparisons and

allowed success to be defined through a uniquely defined game based on tactical and technical ability rather than brute strength. The issue of gender difference is a prominent theme throughout the women's life stories and in particular their experiences on the amateur circuit as discussed in the following chapter.

## Concluding remarks

Detailed analysis of the players' life story interviews and published auto/biographies highlights the importance of family support during their socialisation into tennis. A common feature has been family support, early recognition of sporting talent in a range of sport from a young age and their subsequent single-minded focus on developing their tennis. Socio-historical factors influenced the women's sporting lives and in particular their progress on the tennis circuit. Phyllis, Joan and Joy, started their playing careers prior to the Second World War, and their commitment to tennis was initially taken as a precursor to marriage and having a family. For the post War player, Christine, her decision to focus on tennis was based on early successes at senior competition which persuaded her to leave formal education to become a full time player while still within the junior age group. As the players achieved success on the British amateur circuit, they committed further to tennis and started their international playing careers.

Chapter 7 that follows examines further the women's lives as they progressed onto the amateur tennis circuit. In doing so the experiences of women players at national and international level are discussed while continuing to take into account the complex issues of gender and social class which influenced their experiences. The development of their identity as both women and athlete will be traced throughout their playing career and retirement from sport. Whilst the focus continues to be on the experiences of British players, comparisons also will be made with the other nationalities on the amateur circuit and in particular the American women who dominated the tennis world following the Second World War.

# Chapter 7: From Amateurism to Shamateurism

## Introduction

Since the formative years of women's sports expectations for middle class women were based on their subordinate position to men and their role as a dependent wife (Hargreaves, 1985). Indeed the title of Hargreaves' (1985) article *Playing Like Gentlemen While Behaving Like Women* aptly reflects gender role expectations for women athletes at the turn of the century. Moreover it has become evident from analysis of the women's early sport socialisation experiences in the previous chapter that gender role expectations remained largely unchanged for women who were growing up in pre and post war Britain.

This chapter sheds further light on the contradictory nature of women's sports participation as it investigates in greater depth the varying issues which shaped the lives of women tennis players on the amateur circuit. A key theme emerging from the research is the influence of a male presence on the international tennis circuit. While researchers have investigated the role of men in the development of women's sport, (see Lynn Duval's 2001 analysis of women's athletics), little is known about how they impacted on the actual lives of women competitors.

Throughout their tennis careers the women were seen as role models to young players and as a consequence all aspects of their behaviour and experience were subject to scrutiny by the media. Given the significance of this scrutiny their tennis clothing and developments within sporting fashion designs as influenced by the Second World War are examined in this chapter. Particular attention is paid to the role of clothing in merging the player's athletic identity with their feminine identity.

The chapter will also investigate the role of sport in shaping a person's life course. Accordingly, the players' lives are analysed based upon their reflections about how their tennis career influenced their lives upon retirement from competitive sport. The changing roles of the women are analysed and in doing so a unique insight into the influence of sport in shaping a woman's identity is offered, not only during her time as an athlete but also on retirement from sport. Central to the women's stories was their recollections of playing tennis at Wimbledon.

## Memories of Wimbledon

For the women players' qualification for the Wimbledon Championships at the All England Lawn Tennis Club was a rite of passage onto the amateur circuit and their first major sporting accomplishment. Its status was recognised by all the interviewed players and within the analysed biographies and tennis texts. Wade and Rafferty (1984, p.10) discuss the "unique atmosphere" of Wimbledon while Schoenfeld (2004, p.80) states that it is recognised as the "premier tournament in the world". Christine Truman (1961, p.55) explained why she believes Wimbledon has a "special magic" when she described a scene at the Championships:

Everybody is so well dressed. Newsreel and press photographers are everywhere taking pictures of the fashions. You see the big glossy cars bringing important people – perhaps Royalty – to the doors of the centre court.

For many commentators the importance ascribed to Wimbledon is based on the prestige associated with its history as one of the oldest tennis tournaments in the world. Wade and Rafferty (1984, p.10) suggest that the tournament "retains enough tradition to restore the familiarity of perpetual principles" while Schoenfeld (2004, p.80) describes Wimbledon as the "height of history and ambience" that is part of "England's cultural heritage". It is a culmination of all these variables that makes the experience of playing at Wimbledon significant for the competitors.

The interviewed players all remembered their first Wimbledon. Phyllis first played at Wimbledon in 1928. Her memories of that Wimbledon highlight her lack of playing experience:

I got in through the qualifying rounds and when I went to play my first Wimbledon I had never even practised on the courts, I didn't know you could have a game you know the week beforehand or anything and I did manage to win my first round which was nice.

Joan's memories of her first Wimbledon in 1939 highlight the influence of the Second World War on her career, since Wimbledon was halted from 1940-46. She recalled:

1939 as long ago as that, oh my gosh! That was the last year before war. [Alice] Marble won, I lost to Helen Jacobs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> round. Well she won it the year before that. So that was the end of that and then the [Second World] War came.

For Joy, qualification for Wimbledon in 1947 came after a successful run on the British circuit in 1946. She explained:

Well after the hard courts I went up to Bristol and beat a Dutch girl in the final and won the west of England Championship. And that was in

1946 and I was just too late get into Wimbledon that year because it was just two weeks and you know I didn't have the [results] behind me.

Phyllis, Joan and Joy all reached the third round of Wimbledon in their first Championships while Christine's first trip to senior Wimbledon was more than she or anyone else expected as she explained: "No one ever thought I had a chance". She qualified for her first Wimbledon in 1957. Even though she had played and had success in national tournaments she was unseeded for the tournament and her memory of that first Wimbledon highlights her modesty. Christine attributed luck as the deciding factor in her progression to the semi-finals as she pointed out: "I was lucky enough to be placed in a fairly easy section of the draw" (Truman, 1961, p.95). The status associated with playing on the courts at Wimbledon was recognised by each player as a significant moment in their sporting lives regardless of their final position in the tournament.

When discussing their experiences at Wimbledon there is clear evidence from the interviews that the women's memories of playing specific matches at Wimbledon varied depending on the significance of the game. For Christine Truman her defeat in the 1961 final to Angela Mortimer was recounted in great depth within the interview including her feelings as specific points were played in the final. She described her reaction to her fall in the second set and vividly recalled the emotional turmoil associated with the subsequent loss. In particular she spoke powerfully about Angela's role in the match. Indeed her discussion of the final is punctuated with commentary reflecting on how Angela must have been feeling within the match. The following extract typifies Christinen's reflections on Angela's position; she explained:

What has always been extraordinary to me is that Angela to this day doesn't ever see that, she sees it as a win. And that she had beaten me before but I had also beaten her before. But if you win any match from a set down and 4-3 down and 40-30 down... You are going to think 'lucky to get out of that one' it may not be somebody's fall but you are going to think lucky to get out of that.

Over forty years after the match there remains a noticeable depth to the emotions expressed by Christine. She had won the first set of the final and following her fall in the second set never re-gained her grip on the game and lost the match in three sets. The unexpected loss left a deep and long lasting impression on her and she still feels aggrieved that Angela has never acknowledged the impact of her fall on the match outcome.

In Angela Mortimer's (1962) autobiography it is pertinent to note that she does attempt to explain the situation from both players' point of view as well as that of the perspective of the spectators. She described how:

[Christine] hadn't hurt herself badly; the pain was the sudden and intense pull of muscular cramp caused by the weight of her fall. But she didn't recognize the cause. She had been afraid of something much more serious...We were both upset. Christine was upset with the shock and fright of hurting herself, and I was upset because I hate playing anyone with an injury... It was a hard set for both of us. Whenever Christine played a good shot the spectators roared their approval. Perhaps they thought I should lay down and let the ball pass by me, or perhaps they didn't realise that Chris must have recovered in order to continue playing instead of asking for a break... I knew that however well Christine played I could keep on top of her...I was right. Christine did not play well. I played no spectacular shot to win my match-point. The match had begun quietly, and it had ended as quietly (Mortimer, 1962, pp.183-184).

The narratives of both players evince a highly charged event in their sporting lives unsurprisingly replete with emotional detail as it was a turning point in both their careers. The topic of memory and emotion has been extensively researched by Reisberg and Hertel in their book *Memory and Emotion* (2004). They explain how personal event memories are more vividly recalled and more emotional than public events. Personal event memories such as the Wimbledon final are significant milestones and turning points (Pillemer, 2000; Reisberg and Hertel, 2004). In this case the strong emotion associated with playing in the Wimbledon final and emerging as either singles champion or runner-up, involved strong emotion which has been associated with a high degree of memory vividness, accuracy, completeness and longevity (Reisberg and Hertel, 2004). These personal event memories are also accompanied by sensory images whereby the narrator has the sensation of re-experiencing or re-living the memory (Pillemer, 2000). It was clear throughout the analysis of the women's stories that the nature of their experiences at Wimbledon had a powerful influence over the women's life course and meant that they were recalled in rich detail.

Christine's detailed recollection of the final against Angela Mortimer can be compared with the marked lack of detail contained in both her autobiography or within the interview regarding her first Wimbledon in 1957 when she beat Wightman Cup players Shirley Bloomer and the American Betty Pratt before reaching the semi-

final against Althea Gibson. Yet her first appearance at Wimbledon received significant press attention. A reporter in *World Tennis* (1958a, p.35) described the situation in her semi-final match as played against a “background of press build up and the near hysteria over the talents of an unspoilt and simple English schoolgirl”. Within our interview she reflected on the match from the position of the general public rather than personalising the experience. She explained the situation thus:

I think people do remember my first Wimbledon at 16 because I was very young to reach the semi-finals and obviously winning the Wightman Cup against Althea Gibson that was another highlight.

Interestingly she does not discuss these accomplishments further suggesting that her achievement in reaching the semi-finals of Wimbledon aged 16, or beating Althea Gibson the following year in the Wightman Cup and ending Britain’s run of 21 consecutive defeats to the Americans in 1958, were not regarded as important in shaping her identity as a tennis player. By way of contrast, Phyllis’s ability to remember her participation in the ladies’ doubles final in 1931, some 74 years previously, was very sharp as she provided details of the evening following the win:

In Wimbledon when we had won the doubles we had to come all the way back here [to Reigate] and then up again to London to the Savoy... as we happened to win, we were given marvellous seats of honour on the top table which were ready for us by the time we managed to get there.

This event was to have a major influence on Phyllis’s life and her ability to provide vivid detail after such a long time highlights the importance of the event in that it has clearly been re-called many times before.

## Life as an Amateur Player

There are many features of the amateur circuit which make for interesting analysis. Factors such as social class and gender undoubtedly influenced the players’ experiences while the period of pre and post Second World War competition has been recognised as a golden age for tennis. The amateur tennis circuit as discussed by the interviewed players comprised of a combination of tournaments in Britain during the spring and summer, followed by a period of competition abroad. If successful in national competitions and in particular at Wimbledon, they were picked to play Wightman Cup matches which were held alternately in America and England. When in America the players would combine Cup matches with the American National Championships at Forest Hills in the autumn. Most spent the winter in England training for tennis or working and would return to the circuit with competition in Europe in the New Year.

Key to a player's progression on the international circuit was recognition by the LTA. As each player began to play in more national tournaments, their successes were noted and the LTA recognised their ability to play on the international circuit. Throughout the amateur era the LTA provided financial support to small teams of players (both men and women) to travel abroad and compete for Great Britain. Phyllis recalled that when she travelled "you paid your own expenses and very often you were offered hospitality and you stayed in a private house and stayed with people who entertained you in a normal way". Such hospitality was recognised on the amateur circuit. Joan discussed the necessity of club hospitality for her trips abroad "well I didn't have any money; I mean I didn't come from a wealthy family." She explained the process of LTA funding:

At Wimbledon they paid if you were on their, what they call their top 6 and things, they put you up in a hotel and they paid you so much and you had your meals and I expect a bit of other things there is always something extra. In France, in Germany particularly they were extremely good. They did everything the laundry, everything you know all paid for which was nice because you were not supposed to... You were only supposed to have expenses for, expenses meant hotel, 8 tournaments a year and we were supposed to keep up with the Americans and the others who could play all the time but that was the way, pretty amateur, well we were then. So you had to fiddle, and everyone did of course, all the players, Drobny [1954 Wimbledon champion] and that sort, the men.

Joan highlighted two significant features of amateur tennis in Britain, one was the belief that the Americans had a more flexible approach to amateur rules and secondly a belief that the men were "fiddling" expenses more than the women.

Lord Aberdare (1959) discussed national differences in amateur rules within *The Story of Lawn Tennis*. His findings offer little insight into women's stories yet his analysis of men's tennis provides details on the growth of professionalism in the amateur game. As discussed in chapter 3 he explained that in Australia the usual system was to have a first class amateur working for a firm of racket or ball manufacturers and they played in local tournaments known as sales tournaments which promoted the company during the off season. The Australian Tennis Association (ATA) also used 'alternative' methods to keep their top amateur players from turning professional. When Frank Sedgman, the Australian Champion of 1949 and 1950, threatened to turn professional in 1951 the ATA raised £5,473 as a wedding present to induce him to remain as an amateur as they felt they needed him for their Davis Cup team (Aberdare, 1959). Although they successfully encouraged



him to play Davis Cup tennis in 1951 he turned professional at the end of 1952 having won both Wimbledon and the American Championships. Aberdare suggested that the American rules of amateurism were strict on paper, yet leading amateur players could make a living out of the game by receiving expenses that covered costs plus some profit. Aberdare points out that the American player Bobby Riggs usually received £250 for a weeks tournament and all expenses paid. There was similar system in Europe but if players did not reach the final round of tournaments their expenses were reduced.

A culture of silence clearly surrounded the expenses received by players, and even within the interviews it was a topic the women were loath to discuss in any depth. For example the differences between funding for male and female players was mentioned by Christine during the interview. She said:

The men I would guess were getting more. It was all very much swept under the carpet, it was whispered about, it definitely existed.

Ann Jones in her autobiography also discussed how male players in particular received most of the money while the 'mediocre' players received a small sum and the rest of the players were lucky to get bed and breakfast provided (Jones, 1971). Christine insisted that even when she was ranked within the top ten players in the world, the expenses provided by tournament committees was barely sufficient to cover daily living expenses. She explained: "You didn't actually have any money over but you weren't spending money."

Joan Hughesman had no specific recollection of the daily expenses she received and for Joy Michelle money was not an issue. For although Joy was not a top ranked player the tournaments she participated in looked after travelling players through accommodation and hospitality and more significantly for her she had the financial support of her parents. She outlined how:

Hotels put us up in the South of France, they gave us bed and breakfast and we had to scrounge the rest you know. I mean you couldn't take any money out of England in those days, only £50. But we used to be able to get around that one way or another, you know my family always supported me so I always had money to go.

This format of visiting players being hosted by club members was also adopted in other sports such as athletics (Duval, 2001).

Ann Jones also explained the difference in funding between the women players which she felt led to a sense of bitterness between players. She explained how:

One or two [women] players had themselves better organised... particularly Maria [Bueno] and Darlene [Hard]. In fact, wherever I went they negotiated such high expenses that there was little left for anyone else. At the time they were better players, had bigger names and consequently were better drawing cards for the tournaments concerned. Everyone did their own negotiations and this was a responsibility I could have done without... For the same tournaments I would receive considerably less yet often beat either Maria or Darlene or both (Jones, 1971, p.98).

This example provided by Ann Jones highlights one of the many inequalities within the system of amateur tennis. These experiences led to her becoming a vocal advocate of tennis turning 'open'.

In contrast, Angela Mortimer (1962, p.167) extolled the virtues of amateurism in her autobiography when she declared:

To be an amateur meant a lot to me. It meant that I could spend entire days playing the game I wanted to play. It meant that I could go to countries I could not have afforded to see. It meant that I had enough pocket-money to live on while I was abroad. Some people hit amateurism. They hit it because they want more out of it, and because, when it is behind them, they can afford to hit their heels at it. I hate people who are unfair.

The comments of Jones and Mortimer originate from two different perspectives. Jones had already turned professional when she reflected critically on the flaws of amateurism within women's tennis while Mortimer's book was written on the eve of her Wimbledon final win in 1962 against Christine. Jones confirms Mortimer's view that amateurism was criticised by players with amateurism "behind them".

Competing as an amateur player entailed commitment to a rigorous schedule of tournaments which could only be successfully achieved once the women had embarked on a training programme. For players such as Joy, who competed on her own terms and travelled independently of the LTA training was not a large part of her tennis life. But as LTA funded players and members of the British team in competitions across the continent and America, Joan, Phyllis and Christine were expected to be physically fit to compete at an international standard. The following section traces the attitudes of the women towards physical training on the tennis circuit.

## Tennis Training on the Women's Tour

Compared with the training of professional players today the women were competing at a time when physical training for competitive sport was in its infancy. The theory of constitutional overstrain was used as a specific barrier to the development of training techniques. This suggested that women had a fixed and limited degree of energy for all physical, social and mental actions (Dryhouse, 1976, cited in Hargreaves, 1994). These beliefs about physiological abilities continued to constrain women athletes' participation. In particular doctors urged caution for young girls between the ages of 13-18 claiming, "It is then that their bodies need a tremendous amount of care and attention" (Hargreaves, 1990b, p.34). The theory of constitutional overstrain continued to impact negatively on women's participation at the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century. Indeed when the women player's travelled abroad they were advised to avoid carrying heavy bags when touring for fear of injury.

Pauline Betz (1949, pp.123-124) explained how frailty in a woman was a characteristic that she had hoped to achieve:

In the past I had always longed to be thin, rather emaciated, glamorous and weak-looking female, for whom people would open doors, carry packages inquire solicitously if I weren't too tiny to play tennis.

In the 1920s, the American national champion Mary K. Browne (1891-1970) felt a tennis player would be foolish to take up weight training, instead she recommended dancing the Charleston as the best form of training (King and Starr, 1988). Greek dancing and ballet were part of the curriculum at Christine's school and supported within her family as an ideal form of keeping fit. Christine (1961, p.11) recognised the value of dance and stated: "the things I learned about balance and poise must have helped me in tennis a good deal".

Phyllis, Joan and Joy had no re-collection of specific training for tennis other than general physical training which included running and stretching. Angela Mortimer (1962, p.160) had strong opinions regarding the disadvantages of training:

I have never believed in training. I have been in the centre of many violent controversies because I refuse to train seriously. I don't believe in dieting and I don't believe in practising a lot of physical jerks to develop my muscles. The tennis I play is sufficient. Over-developed muscles are more prone to the dangers of cramp and tensions than mine will ever be.

However, there are examples of developments within women's training in the biographies of players who competed during the transition between the amateur circuit and the growing professionalisation of the tennis tour in the 1950s.

King and Starr (1988) suggest that Margaret Smith, who won her first Australian championships in 1960, was the first woman to have a rigorous fitness regime. Indeed Darlene Hard proclaimed that no one did any training "we didn't know what strengthening a muscle was" (Hard, cited in King and Starr, 1988, p.103). Nonetheless there is evidence from the biographies analysed that physical training for women was adopted prior to 1960. Christine Truman attributed her success in the 1958 Wightman Cup match to Geoffrey Dyson, her fitness coach, who had devised a fitness plan which included circuits and weight lifting. Yet recommendations for training were restricted. Bobby Wilson recommended just 20 minutes of practice on the morning of an important match followed by another five minutes before the game and the three minute knock-up on court (Truman, 1971).

These developments within women's physical training on the circuit reflect changes in wider society regarding expectations of women in sport. As the women's movement gained momentum in the 1960s the stereotypes of frail women athletes were challenged by the increased physicality of the players and what Krane (2003) described as the 'unapologetic stance' of female athletes. This unapologetic stance was demonstrated in Billy Jean King's defeat of Bobby Riggs in the battle of the sexes at the Houston Astrodome in 1973 when she "slew the beast of male chauvinism" (King and Deford, 1982, p.44). This victory became a symbol of change in women's sport and women's tennis in particular.

## Gender Differences on the Tennis Circuit

The issue of gender difference on the tennis tour was much in evidence throughout the analysis of the women's biographies and reflects the gendered nature of sports participation. Comments from women players regarding the positive side of the amateur circuit are in contrast to their discussions of the treatment of women on the tennis tour insofar as they discuss a range of examples when the men at tournaments are treated more favourably than the women.

When Angela Mortimer played in the Belgium Championships, centre courts were saved for the top Belgian players "and more often than not for the men among them" (Mortimer 1962, p.41). Ann Jones also experienced second best court allocations when playing on the Continent in comparison to the men. In the week following her

win at Wimbledon when her profile was at its highest, she was consigned to play a final in Aix-en-Provence, France on a back court. She described the setting:

With no linemen, no ballboys, no spectators and not even a glass of water to drink. No wonder Pip [her husband] told the tournament director after we finished that he obviously could not have wanted the girls and it was difficult to understand why there had been such a fuss to get them there! (Jones, 1971, p.165).

Jones found further evidence to suggest that the tennis authorities were less interested in women's tennis than men's when she played in the final of the French championships in 1961. Here she found that it was the British authorities from the LTA who were dismissive of women's tennis. She described how senior officials would travel over from England for the finals in Paris yet she recalled disappointingly that "they were far more concerned with their lunch as none of them watched my match. At about 4.30pm one or two did enquire how I got on!" (Jones, 1971, p.84).

When Angela Mortimer travelled to Australia in 1958 she was also aware that the tournament officials had little interest in the women's game as she stated: "in Australia it was unheard of for a women's match to be played on Centre Court" (Mortimer, 1962, p.112). When her final in Brisbane against the Australian player Lorraine Coghlan was allocated to court 6 she declared that she would not play until she was moved to the centre court which they finally did. Christine Truman discussed Mortimer's experiences in Australia during the interview. She declared "although I wouldn't say this to Angela, it was more of a lack of interest and perhaps I wouldn't have felt it as much as she may have felt it". While Christine is unsympathetic towards Angela's experiences she highlights her awareness of gender issues on the tennis tour as she acknowledged that the lack of interest in Angela's match was not unusual:

Sometimes on the continent the men would definitely be number one and the women second or third, yes that's true... men were always kingpins and I don't think it's changed but they still get the number one spot.

Such a situation was not unusual in women's sport. Duval (2001) found that the predominance of men in leadership positions within athletics denied women opportunities at an international level, while Holt's (1989, p.8) research confirms that sport has always been a male preserve when he stated "women [in sport] have been banished to the sidelines both literally and metaphorically".

There was also a gender divide on the professional tennis circuit. The only women players who were in a position to contemplate turning professional were the winners

of high profile amateur tournaments, such as Wimbledon or the American Championships at Forest Hills. Yet there was a difference in the attitude of the public and the tennis associations towards men and women players turning professional. The 1946 Wimbledon champion, Pauline Betz, explained the differing attitude of the USLTA towards male and female players who were thinking about turning professional in her autobiography *Wings On My Tennis Shoes* (1949, pp.150-151):

It started out innocuously enough. It was merely a cablegram from the USLTA asking mildly if I had authorised Elwood Cooke to send out various letters of enquiry to various country clubs suggesting that Sarah Cooke and I had turned professional... Elwood offered to get a general idea of the clubs' reaction to a women's tour... There was nothing underhanded about it... All of the men player's who had turned professional had done so after a complete tour had been set up... The men had always been given plenty of publicity on their professional plans even when they were playing as amateurs. But it remained for Pauline Betz and Sarah Cooke to irk the USLTA.

The following morning Betz received a cablegram from the USLTA informing her that she would no longer receive expenses for European tournaments and she had been suspended from amateur competition until a hearing was arranged. Her treatment from the USLTA in 1947 was in sharp contrast to treatment received by the top amateur men. The USLTA valued male players more highly because they generated more money through gate receipts. Therefore they were not going to jeopardise this by questioning the men's professional tennis negotiations.

Restricted gender ideologies also influenced the treatment of women players when they travelled overseas as part of the Great Britain team. To ensure the moral fibre and integrity of the players, chaperones escorted teams of women when they competed abroad. Phyllis explained how they accompanied her when she travelled to America with the Wightman Cup team in 1931, 1933 and 1935:

In my day there was always a manager or a chaperone with the team. They didn't let ladies go on a mixed team without a chaperone. The girls were all looked after in my day. There was one married women usually in the team. And of course when you were being entertained, if you were taken to a nite club or something like that the married lady would be with the team. It's so different to now.

In 1957 when Ann Jones and Christine Truman travelled as part of a LTA nominated team to the French championships, they too were chaperoned (Jones, 1971).

However, it is clear from Jones's account of the trip to France that the chaperone may not have always fulfilled their task. She explained how:

There were countless tales of how he would go back to the hotel to make sure everyone as in bed only for everyone to climb out the windows afterwards.

Yet when the players competed in Britain they travelled unescorted from tournament to tournament and were somehow deemed less vulnerable. This may be due to the fact that in travelling abroad they were fully funded by the LTA who were responsible for the players yet while they were in Great Britain they competed on their own terms as amateur players and travelled without chaperones.

## Travelling on the Amateur Circuit

The opportunities to travel afforded to the women on the amateur circuit was viewed as a real privilege and each player took advantage of these otherwise unattainable experiences. Betz (1949) went so far as to proclaim that the life of an amateur tennis player was a perennial vacation. Four years into her career as an amateur player Christine declared in the opening paragraph of her autobiography that:

During the last four years my tennis racket has taken me to the four corners of the world, to meet and compete against all the leading stars in front of friendly and enthusiastic crowds, and that is the rich thrill that has made all the hard training, tears and tribulation, so infinitely worthwhile (Truman, 1961, p.7).

Both Ann Jones and Angela Mortimer discussed the benefits of travelling in their autobiographies. Jones (1971) felt that travelling taught a person to accept different types of conduct that may seem strange in England. She suggests that while she started playing tennis because her parents wanted her to she continued because she wanted to travel. In addition Mortimer (1962) felt that travelling on the tennis tour gave her freedom and independence and in particular her extended trips to Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Iran are remembered fondly.

When Phyllis travelled to America with the Wightman Cup in 1931 her family were "rather alarmed" when they heard about her sightseeing trips. Indeed Phyllis, Joan and Christine all spoke fondly of their trips to America for the Wightman Cup. The opportunity to combine travelling with the most prestigious women's team event in the world was a combination which appealed to them. Their participation for Britain in the Wightman Cup spanned 41 years. Phyllis was a player on the 1930 British Wightman Cup team which won at home and 28 years later, after 21 consecutive defeats to the Americans, Christine Truman was a member of the 1958 team which won the Cup for Britain. She continued playing Wightman Cup matches until 1971.

During their span of competing within the Wightman Cup matches the travelling arrangements of the teams reflect developments in transport during that period. When Phyllis travelled to America in 1931 she did so aboard the ocean liner *The Aquitania* where they were entertained every evening and spent the five days relaxing and receiving personal training from the ship's instructor. The players of the post war era were also passengers onboard historical flights and as such experienced ground breaking developments in air travel. In the first Wightman Cup of the post war era in 1946 the American women travelled to England for the Cup matches by plane. Pauline Betz remembered the long 18 hour flight onboard the first plane to land at the new airport of Heathrow in London (Betz, 1949). The first commercial jet plane was not in operation until 1952 when the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) operated their first jet service from London to Johannesburg. By 1957 when British players travelled to America the flight took 15 hours to reach New York before they changed planes for a flight to Pittsburgh (Jones, 1971). These long haul flights took their toll on the players, in particular Christine had to get used to doing all her travelling by plane even though she was never keen on flying (Truman, 1961). In the 1960s the flight to Australia for their national championships took 36 hours with players stopping for three days in Delhi and three days in Bangkok to break up the journey and do some sightseeing (Jones, 1971). Interestingly even in their travelling there are examples of gender inequality as evidenced by the actions of the tennis associations. *The Daily Express* (February 16, 1949) noted that when the Australian men travelled to South Africa in 1949 they were insured for \$2,000 while the women were considered to be worth only \$1,000 (cited in *Lawn Tennis and Badminton*, 1949a).

Within the interviews and published biographies the players' reflections of travelling are portrayed as adventures rather than simply the journey to a particular tournament. For example within her autobiography Christine referred to the "sunshine, glamour and excitement" of travel (Truman, 1961, p.7). Yet nearly five decades after its publication she was more contemplative within the interview insofar as she recalled missed opportunities to travel. Her memories of the tennis tour are centred on the tennis clubs as she stated:

Travelling that far then was quite unusual... I was so focussed on the tennis I didn't make the most of it. I didn't go sightseeing, I didn't see much more than the club and the courts I am ashamed to say. I'd love to go back and see all the places I went to properly. But it was sort of what was expected and how the tour ran.

Evidently Christine's travel was much more restrained as she was the most successful of the interviewed players. Her trips were confined to locations of tennis



tournaments and in progressing successfully through a tournament her movements would have been restricted to staying in the tennis club itself. Regardless of the women's breadth of travel they all reflect favourably on the friendships that were made while competing on the tour as discussed in the following section.

## Camaraderie on the Tour

Throughout the women's biographies there lies a clear message that their time on the tennis circuit was a shared experience. Relationships between the touring players were very strong and these would have been further developed through the amount of travelling they did as a team and the engrained amateur ethos of the competitions which encouraged attendance at evening events, such as cocktail parties and balls. From as early as 1903 tournaments held dances in the middle of the weeks play, the author of *Lawn Tennis at Home and Abroad* (Wallis Myers, 1903, p.123) warned players against these mid-week socials. He stated:

If one stays dancing till all hours of the morning it is well-nigh impossible to play a good game of tennis the next day.

Yet players took little heed of the warnings. Schoenfeld (2004, p.68) described the tennis circuit of the 1940s and 1950s as "a moveable slumber party" whereby the women players lived like sorority girls spending their days playing poker, bridge and gin rummy.

One particular scenario recounted by Mortimer (1962) encapsulates the camaraderie between players on the amateur circuit. When she and her friend Rosemary Bulleid were playing at a tournament in Sutton, Angela was playing well and had a good opportunity to compete against and beat the Wightman Cup player Pat Ward and in an effort to give her the best possible opportunity in the match, Rosemary, her friend and doubles partner, pulled out of their scheduled semi-final singles match to give Angela's blistered feet a break. This meant Angela would be fresh for the doubles with Rosemary and was given a rest before her singles match. Mortimer (1962, p38) recalled how the incident created a stir:

We were under fire from everyone. Some said that [Rosemary] wasn't playing in the right spirit. Others complained that I shouldn't have accepted the walk-over. Everyone was angry... but we had done the right thing. We had satisfied each other, and that was all we cared about.

On the amateur circuit men's and women's events were competed in the same week and practising against men was common. In 1921 Kitty McKane practised for Wimbledon and Wightman Cup by playing tennis with men and she felt it improved

her speed (Truman, 1961). Christine Truman nonetheless cautioned women players who trained against men as she declared in her biography (1961, p.113):

I felt bound to point out at that point out that while it was very good practise for a girl to play against a man, she could never expect to become as good a player as he was because of his greater physical strength.

Christine's warnings did not stop women from training with men. Angela Mortimer practiced with Eric Filby ex-international at Wimbledon player in 1961 and was surprised to beat him as she was recovering from tennis elbow (Mortimer, 1962). When Althea Gibson was at university in America there was no women's team so she practised with the men's team. Schoenfeld (2004) states that that with her muscular frame and short hair, Althea was mistaken for a man. Practising with the men was also commonplace within the professional touring groups. Ann Jones found that the opportunity to practise with the Mexican-American Pancho Gonzales (1928-1995) while touring as a professional helped as she had to try her hardest to give him any sort of workout (Jones, 1971). These examples demonstrate that while there may have been differing attitudes toward men and women players by the male dominated governing body, men on the circuit were largely supportive of women's tennis and engaged with the women players both in training and socially.

Social engagements on the tour were viewed by the players as a key characteristic of the amateur tennis circuit. Joan described the atmosphere at the tournaments:

You see in those days it wasn't all the women playing in a separate circuit and the men in another. It was mixed yes so it was a bit more sociable they nearly always had a cocktail party or something during the week

Angela Mortimer (1962, p.40) suggested that the parties and dances "formed the climax of every tournament". These socials were discussed both positively and negatively by the players.

For Joy the social side of tennis was a highlight and she was part of the group of players who would attend parties during tournaments. Even competing in the final of a tournament was not going to stop Joy from partying during a tournament. While competing in Switzerland in 1949 she reached the final of the ladies doubles and to celebrate the engagement of her doubles partner Joy Gannon to the British tennis player Tony Mottram she described how "we had this big champagne party in the morning and won the ladies doubles in the afternoon". Ann Jones recalled playing in Johannesburg, when tennis would start early and finish early resulting in players

spending the evening in the bar drinking brandy and ginger ales and playing with a hangover the next day (Jones, 1971).

Christine viewed attendance at cocktail parties during tournaments negatively. She stated:

I didn't [enjoy the parties], not really, because I was so... I didn't like to be late to bed because of being up the next day to practise and play, after the Wightman Cup we had a special dinner and dance at the Savoy or one of the big London hotels. The Wimbledon Ball was always a function that I wanted to be part of but the actual cocktail party bit of being at a tournament and then the people inviting you could be dull.

Angela Mortimer also regarded the social side of tennis negatively and even after winning the Wimbledon final she could not bring herself to enjoy the Champions Ball at the Savoy Hotel. She explained: "I couldn't find the right words to describe my sense of fright and distaste at all this glamour and excitement" (Mortimer, 1962, pp.190-191) and with that she left early to celebrate at a small club in Chelsea with her friend from the tennis circuit Shirley Brasher and husband Chris.

There is clearly a divide amongst the players regarding the value of the social side of the tennis circuit. Those who were the most successful on the circuit in the main viewed the parties as a chore. For these players attendance at social functions was viewed as perfunctory activities which served to thank the hosts for their hospitality. Christine summarises the compromise by stating "It was one of the things you had to".

## Hollywood Stars and Tennis Players

There were some aspects of the social side of tennis which Christine enjoyed tremendously and the opportunity to meet Hollywood actors was one of these: this she acknowledged was "the thrill of a lifetime" (Truman, 1961, p.26). All the women mentioned the presence of famous people on the tennis circuit as part of their special memories of life on the circuit. When Christine travelled to America in 1958 aged 17 she won her first major tournament the Pacific Southwest tournament in California, yet the event she recalls more vividly than the tennis was meeting Frank Sinatra. The Pacific Southwest tournament had a long association with Hollywood. Pauline Betz (1949, p.173) described the tournament as:

Star-studded with celebrities and high-ranking players. You could keep in condition just chasing the stars around for their autographs. The movie-stars are wondering when the next match will begin, while the

players spend most of their time peering into the crowd to see if Clarke Gable or Herbert Marshall is in his box or if Gary Cooper has arrived.

Christine's win at the Pacific Coast tournament involved her beating Maria Bueno in the semi-final and Darleen Hard, the singles finalist from Forest Hills in the final. It is notable that she focussed on the famous people she met rather than the tennis accomplishment which pushed her LTA ranking to number 1 for the first time (Lawn Tennis and Badminton, 1958b; Truman, 1961).

For Angela Buxton the presence of Hollywood stars was seen by her father as a reason to play. His support of her trip to America and pursuit of membership to Los Angeles Tennis Club was due largely to the gatherings of Hollywood stars at the club including Charlie Chaplin and Katherine Hepburn (Schoenfeld, 2004). Yet Angela Mortimer's recollections of the parties with Hollywood stars and tennis players suggests that while each had a mutual respect for the other, socialising between the British players and the American movie-stars was limited. She explained:

The film stars couldn't talk intelligently about tennis, and the tennis stars knew nothing about films... We retracted to opposite sides of the room, like children playing a party game, and there we stayed until the end of the evening, happily unsociable except with our own kind (Mortimer, 1962, p.78).

There is a clear distinction within the published biographies between the relationships of the American and British players with movie stars. The American biographies include multiple references to close relationships with Hollywood actors while the British players discuss these encounters as largely segregated and based on formal introductions. Many of the elite tennis players and Hollywood movie stars were members of the same tennis clubs in California and socialised together regularly. Alice Marble discussed in depth her close friendship with the actress Carole Lombard throughout her autobiography *Courting Danger: My Adventures in World-Class Tennis, Golden-Age Hollywood, and High-Stakes Spying* (Marble and Leatherman, 1991). Marble's coach, Teach Tennant, listed actors Marlene Dietrich, Jeanette MacDonald, Robert Taylor and Clifton Webb as her clients and friends (Truman, 1961; Marble and Leatherman, 1991). Pauline Betz (1949, p.168) explained why the players had such close relationships with actors:

Most of the actors are either avid tennis or golf enthusiasts, since they work very hard making a picture and then often have one or two months vacation and need something to occupy their sudden leisure.

The focus in this chapter thus far has been on the women's experiences on the amateur circuit from Phyllis's first match on the amateur circuit in 1924 through to Christine's career into the professional era. What must be acknowledged is that within this time frame the world was brought to a standstill with the declaration of war on September 3, 1939. The War left a significant mark on the tennis world, from the shutdown of international tennis to the enlisting of players within the services. Phyllis, Joan, Joy and Christine's experiences at Wimbledon covered a 46 year period, from 1928-1974, which spanned World War II and its impact on the women cannot be under-estimated. While the war has been discussed in previous chapters, specifically chapter 3 and the women's pen portraits in chapter 5, its impact is analysed in further detail within the following section.

### Influence of the Second World War on Amateur Tennis

Many of the women players contributed to the war effort. Phyllis and Joy both drove ambulances during the war and Joan joined the Red Cross while she was in Devon. Players from all parts of the world were involved in various roles. In May 1941, the Australian tennis champion and competitor at Wimbledon from 1938-1958, Thelma Long joined the Red Cross as a transport driver and in February 1942, she joined the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) and rose to the rank of captain in April 1944. For her service in the AWAS, she was awarded the War Medal 1939/45 and Australian Service Medal 1939/45. Helen Jacobs was an officer in the women's division of the American Navy, the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) an American version of the British WRNS (Women's Royal Naval Service) (Truman, 1961). Alice Marble toured camps singing for the troops and many players organised exhibition tennis matches to raise money for the Red Cross.

The war had an effect on all sport in Britain as reflected in the sports output of Sunday papers between 1937 and 1947 which was cut by 68% (Mass Observation TC 82/1/A). Ted Avory, the British international, noted that tennis at Wimbledon in the week immediately following the outbreak of war was stopped and the LTA took all records to the country for safety. Private tennis continued at Queens Club in London even though there was a balloon station located there and people quartered in the buildings (Mass Observation TC 82/1/A). When Avory was asked about the leading players he explained that:

Very few can afford the time to carry on tennis as a full time job... only the youngsters at school and I'm afraid there is very little opportunity for them to get their training or coaching there... last war the young one's hadn't taken up tennis and the old one's were either too old or

dead. That's why the Americans got the beat of us every time (Mass Observation TC 82/1/A).

However as Truman (1961, p.82) states the Americans continued playing tennis during the Second World War "more or less normally" with the American Championships continuing and only minor adjustments to the tennis circuit. For example it was publicised in Time magazine (June 24, 1940) that the tennis tournament at Longwood Cricket Club in Boston, which was seen as a preliminary to the National Championships, was cancelled as the club could no longer afford to pay America's top-ranking amateurs the expenses they demanded for appearing in tournaments. Another transgression occurred when Sarah Palfrey Cooke and her husband were allowed to enter the men's doubles at the Tri-State championships in Cincinnati because of the wartime manpower crisis. Their defeat in the men's doubles final against Hal Surface and Bill Talbert is noted in the International Tennis Hall of Fame ([www.tennisfame.com](http://www.tennisfame.com)).

Two of the interviewed women, Phyllis and Joan, played at Wimbledon both before and after the war and were able to give detailed and vivid personal accounts of the impact of the war on the tennis circuit. During the war Phyllis continued playing tennis through exhibition games for the British Red Cross, she recalled:

England gradually got back into its stride again after the war. And like I say I did play during the war even because you know there was still private courts about and some of the army people were billeted around [Surrey].

As the tennis circuit resumed the Americans travelled to Wimbledon in 1946 for the first time since 1939. Joan discussed how the American players were "shattered" when they returned to Wimbledon and realised how much the war had impacted on the player's lives.

The war had a profound effect on Joy as she recalled:

I had had a very sheltered life really, boarding school and everything, but then when the war started I went to London and my whole life changed really, from being the very sheltered little girl who used to hide behind sofas when people came in, you know I am a very outward person now.

She did not play any tennis during the war as she was a driver for the Mechanised Transport Corps in London. Joy stated "I wanted to do my bit that was all I thought about really." Following the war she returned to tennis by playing on the British circuit and her success on the 1946-1947 circuit could be attributed to the lack of

tennis being played in Britain during and immediately following the end of the Second World War when facilities and equipment were in short supply. Joy recalled that while playing in the hard court championships at Bournemouth following the war "people didn't have much money so everybody put [the players] up".

The Second World War had a considerable influence on the circuit and its participants as they returned to the sport in 1946. King and Starr (1988) explain how for a short period following the War women players drew more attention than men at tournaments. For the first time they were put on show courts. This was due to men being enlisted and as a result they had not played during the war. Doris Hart recalled that she was happy not to be "relegated to the pasture" (King and Starr, 1988, p.55). While the women may have been getting more attention at tournaments, it was the American women in particular who stole the limelight as they had an unbroken winning run at Wimbledon from 1938-1959. Teddy Tinning (Tinning and Humphries, (1979, p.179) described these post War players as the "first exponents of masculine efficiency" who were not influenced by the war as much as the British counterparts. The use of masculine characteristics to describe the playing styles of women on the circuit is prevalent throughout the analysis of the women's biographies and is considered further in the section that follows.

## Feminine versus Athletic identity and Women Tennis Players

All the women brought up the subject of appearance within their interviews as they were aware that their feminine identity was judged while they competed on tour. For some their appearance was noted as having a direct influence on their progress within tennis. Joan in particular mentioned how the appearance of other players was rated by journalists and the LTA selectors as more important than tennis ability within national team selection. Joan described her opponent, Betty Hilton, during the Wightman Cup trials of 1946:

She was lovely looking, she was a bit like, oh I don't know, but she had lovely strokes, she looked like a player, it's very important... Well it is important, you know it's nice to look pretty I would love to be able to and a good stroke player but it wasn't me.

Joan's description of Betty Hilton suggests that she recognised the value of Betty's femininity. Her wish to look the same way is shattered with the self-deprecating statement "it wasn't me". Instead Joan relied on her tennis ability which proved infallible and the selectors were given no option but to select her for the Wightman Cup team. This belief that selectors could discriminate against players based on subjective criteria has been recognised in gender and race research in sport, whereby

subjective criteria are used to marginalise and in some cases to de-select the best players. This is explained as Uncertainty Theory (Blablock, 1962 cited in Wilkerson, 1996) whereby discrimination is accomplished when the importance of quantifiable criteria is denied and subjective credentials are relied on. In Joan's experience the selectors' comments indicate that they included the criteria of feminine appearance in their selection processes.

Gender has long been recognised as an organising principle within sport (Kolnes, 1995). Evidence of women players being compared to men was found in the media analysis of the 1946 American Wightman Cup team when they were described as playing the game "like men" (King and Starr, 1988, p.60). Indeed there are many contradictory accounts of appearance within the biographies as players are both penalised and applauded for their athleticism which is described using highly gendered terminology whereby the male characteristics of a tennis player are presented as the most valued. Christine Truman praises Louise Brough's game when she described her as "tall and powerful", and played what became known as a "man's game", especially attack at the net (Truman, 1971, p.84). Likewise, Althea Gibson's playing style was compared with men. World Tennis (August, 1958a) suggested that Gibson "served with "masculine severity"; Christine Truman (1961, p.97) described what it was like to play against Gibson: "serving and smashing with the power of a man player had me flustered and fumbling." Schoenfeld (2004, p.10) provides evidence of the need for Althea to present both an athletic identity on-court and feminine identity off-court when he stated that;

In her Fred Perry polo shirts on court, [Althea] was often mistaken for a man, yet when crooning ballads at Wimbledon ball in make-up and evening dress; she was a portrait of femininity.

Schoenfeld also draws comparisons between Gibson and Alice Marble. He declared that: "their body language was masculine since they played tennis like men...yet they would wear silk dresses when warranted" (Schoenfeld 2004, p.57). Marble is described as:

Blonde and trim, the picture of femininity but she played the game like a man. She socialized like a man too, drinking and smoking with impunity (Schoenfeld 2004, p.22)

Within the interviews the women's descriptions of themselves as players reflected a highly feminised version of the female athlete. Christine's discussion of appearance was based primarily around wearing make-up. Her attitude towards wearing make-up on-court or off-court were for her straightforward since she believed playing tennis was her job in the same way that women in offices wore make-up to work, she would



wear make-up while playing tennis. Within the interview she explained that she first started wearing lip-stick when she was 16 years old. Indeed this period of Christine's life when she first chose to wear make-up on court is captured by Tinling and Oxby (1963, p.155) where Christine's mother's reaction to her wearing make-up is outlined:

When Christine first used lipstick Mrs. Truman went around telling us all in a stage whisper not to mention the fact when the girl appeared. 'She's terribly self-conscious about it,' she added. Actually, Christine was not in the least embarrassed and immediately asked if I liked it. 'I most certainly do,' I replied, and she has often said how proud she was of my favourable reaction.

In asking Tinling for his opinion Christine was hoping for confirmation that her changing identity was acceptable. Tinling's role as a stylist for women's tennis meant that his approval had more value to her than her mother's. Donnelly and Young's (1988) research on identity confirmation in sport suggests that athlete's will turn to senior members of the sport for confirmation of their changing identity as Christine did with Tinling. Angela Mortimer also wore make-up when she was competing but in her biography she declared that it was worn for the particular purpose of protecting her skin as she felt the powder and cream protected her from most weathers (Mortimer, 1972).

Phyllis associated feminine identity with wearing jewellery. She stated:

[In those days] you didn't worry quite so much about your appearance. You certainly didn't wear necklaces and ear-rings and the lot.

The notion of hyper-femininity was reflected in Joan and Joy's discussions of the professional era and Christine's comments share a similar understanding of what was expected for professional players as she stated:

Obviously now [wearing make-up] it is very different, because presentation is so... if you want sponsors it becomes a different story you know, what you're dictated to do. But certainly it was a personal choice then.

The women associate a change in player's appearance on the court with the requirement to appeal to the audience, sponsors, and consumers of the modern era.

Markula (1995) suggests that the sexualisation of female athletes serves to reinforce patriarchal ideology as it overshadows images of strong, independent athletes. While Christine and Joan provide evidence that appearance was not a high priority for them it is clear that the presentation of female players was important both on and off the

courts during the amateur circuit. The players were expected to have both a feminine and athletic identity yet for some changing their athletic appearance to present a feminised version of themselves for attendance at tennis socials was not something they would do out of choice. Angela Mortimer was delighted to be picked to play an international match for Britain in France but she recalled:

All the time at the back of my mind was the ordeal of the final dinner and dance. Slowly I dressed in my blue satin, and, trying to appear as natural as possible, strolled into the dining-hall... I had never felt so awkward in my life. I had become so used to a tennis shirt and shorts, that I felt I might fall on my nose at any minute, with the stiff satin rustling round my ankles (Mortimer, 1962, p.40).

Her anguish at trying to appear "natural" highlights the contradictory nature of women's participation on the tennis circuit. During the day they played competitive tennis, displaying their athleticism and fighting spirit, while at night they were expected to present themselves as women conforming to stereotypical ideals of patriarchal ideology. The important role of clothing in the women's transition from athlete to female is a relatively under-researched topic which is examined in detail within the following section.

## Changing Tennis Fashions

The women were competing at Wimbledon during a period of change within the fashion industry. When they started their tennis careers the leisure wear industry was in its infancy and it was not until the professionalization of tennis that sports clothing manufacturers began to exploit the sport and player's were provided with sports clothing to wear in training, competing and during their leisure time. Christine reflected on tennis fashions when she began her Wimbledon career in 1957. She recalled:

Everything was much slower, much slower and mother still made my dresses and you still wore a dress to go to the tournaments in and a coat and then you changed, there was no such thing as tracksuits. That hadn't been even thought about.

As a player of the pre and post war period Phyllis was witness to dramatic changes within women's tennis fashions. When she competed at Wimbledon, prior to the Second World War, there was an unwritten rule that stockings had to be worn when the Queen was present. Phyllis described her attitudes towards appearance on the tennis court when I interviewed her at the age of 100, 2 months prior to her death: 'You didn't care what you looked like'. Her comments reflect the functional approach to clothing which was apparent in British society in the late 1930s. When Phyllis

competed in the 1935 Wightman Cup match in Forest Hills, New York she wore a white cotton sleeveless shirt and white skirt which hung below the knee, with plimsolls and ankle socks (The Times, 2 February 2006).

Although Phyllis wore a skirt while competing, other players were more daring in their sporting attire through wearing shorts. Tinling and Oxby (1963) suggest that the clothing of American player Alice Marble, who wore a jockey cap, crew neck t-shirt and brief shorts (6" above the knee), reflected the style of pre War tennis players. Warren (1993) describes Marble's choice of clothing as in keeping with her more aggressive, serve and volley game. Women playing tennis in shorts were perceived as more masculine when compared with players competing in skirts or dresses. Shorts for women were highly controversial in the early 1930s; indeed shorts for men were not commonly worn until after the Second World War (Horwood, 2006). When the British player Henry Wilfred "Bunny" Austin (1906-2000) wore the first pair of men's shorts on the centre court at Wimbledon in 1933 his choice of clothing was considered outrageous (Warren, 1993). Accordingly it is unsurprising that Helen Jacobs was forbidden from wearing shorts in the Wightman Cup match of 1933 by non-playing captain, and founder of the event Hazel Hotchkiss Wightman; while "the British Wightman Cup team turned up in dashing shorts instead of skirts and were criticized by all sorts of people as a result" (Truman, 1961, p.78).

By 1934 wearing shorts at the Wightman Cup was depicted in some newspapers such as the tabloid Daily Sketch, as a 'battle of British modesty versus American masculinity' whereby the British players competed in 'modest skirts' and the Americans played in 'brief shorts' (Horwood, 2000, p.12). Indeed, French women at the turn of the century who cut their hair and wore shorter skirts were described as 'American women' (Perrot, 1987, p.52). The divided skirts worn by some players increasingly resembled shorts and their growing acceptance on the tennis court was reflected in their appearance in fashion magazines (Horwood, 2006).

## Tennis Fashions following the Second World War

The 1940s were seen as the battle of 'Designers and Desire against Austerity and Actuality: Choice versus Coupons and Controls' (Mansfield and Cunnington, 1973, p.192). Clothing was subject to control and people were restricted in the amount that they could buy and manufacturers and designers were limited in the quantity and type of material that could be produced. For example the production of the new synthetic nylon was limited to military usage during the war years and it was not until 1949 that the British Nylon Spinners made stockings for national distribution (Mansfield and Cunnington, 1973).

Following the Second World War the availability of tennis clothing was limited. Ten years of rationing from 1941 had kept the demand for sportswear down and many players competed in home made dresses and knitted jumpers. Polley (2009) describes knitting and exchange of knitted clothing as a source of pride which enhances family bonds. On the tennis circuit knitted clothing bonded the players and became a symbol of friendship. Angela Mortimer's doubles partner Ross Bullied knitted matching jumpers and these became a mark of their partnership. Mortimer (1961, p.29) described how the jumpers were a bond between the two friends:

I laboriously sewed buttons up the side of two pale green pullovers which Ross knitted for us to wear on court. We felt it was time we found ourselves a trade-mark. "Two attractive pale green pullovers – a danger sign to all opponents," we read in the newspapers one day, and Ross crowed with delight at having forced me to finish the buttons.

For the elite amateur players in Britain the arrival of fashion designer Teddy Tinling onto the tennis scene in the late 1940s was to dramatically change the look of women players. Joan laughed as she reflected on the fashions before Tinling became involved in tennis when she stated:

We had to make our own clothes until Teddy Tinling came along. I forgot what I wore I think I made all my own tennis clothes before then, you can just imagine what they looked like.

## Influence of Teddy Tinling

The women all spoke fondly about Teddy Tinling and his role in changing both the appearance of women tennis players and the public perception of women's tennis. Christine Truman had her dresses designed by Tinling and within her autobiography *Tennis Today* (Truman, 1961, p.95) she described her choice of clothing: 'I favoured the plain, tailored style of white dress that suits me, because I am a big person'.

Within the interview she discussed Tinling's influence on women's tennis:

He was a huge influence on the presentation of women's tennis, he designed dresses individually, he was an eccentric character himself, and he had that sort of star quality, which he sort of managed to dress us in as well. Everything was, the dresses were lovely... We were very lucky.

It was not only the elite amateur players who were influenced by Tinling. His designs were sold in large department stores such as Simpsons of Piccadilly and the unnamed fashion correspondent for *Lawn Tennis and Badminton* (1958a, p.182) suggested that "the thousands of women club players throughout the country are indebted to him putting tennis on the map of fashion".

The acknowledgements section of Tinling's book *White ladies* (Tinling and Oxby, 1963) reflect his approach when designing for the women players:

'Say! You're the guy who makes girls look the way guys want 'em to look!' with these words Tex McCrary, the famous American television commentator welcomed me to New York. Thank you, Tex! For a decade I have made it my constant aim to live up to your assessment.

Eight years later Tinling was still heavily involved in women's tennis and he described his predicament when designing for players in the foreword to Ann Jones' biography;

With Ann's dresses I always began by concentrating on the tailored, sporty side of her image then, invariably, I found myself wanting to add some classic gold edging or soft pastel trimmings to satisfy my own picture of her. There is so much paradox in her nature; so much 'bloody-minded obstinacy' she more often demonstrates in matches, that I often had to grapple with my thoughts and a strong feeling of not having done as well as I might before convincing myself that the complexities of her make-up had been properly represented in my designs for her (Jones, 1971, p.x).

Tinling had a unique insight into the players' lives during the amateur era. He spent time with each player to ensure that his designs reflected their personality (Jones, 1971). Tinling placed a great deal of importance on superstition. Each player would be asked what they thought had been the lucky features of their dresses and then he would design their dress for the final based on this. In many cases his designs for women's matches were completed in the early hours of the morning prior to competition.

This personalization of tennis dresses is unique to the amateur era when the players' dresses were tailor made. Since the leisure wear industry was in its infancy there was no mass reproduction of the player's fashion designs and their clothing became recognised by the public as a reflection of the player's personalities. Tinling's superstitions were shared by many of the players he designed for including Ann Jones, Shirley Bloomer, Angela Mortimer and Christine. When he designed Christine's dresses for her trip to Australia in 1960 he explained the philosophy behind his designs:

One of the happiest ideas I had for Christine came when she was about to leave for Australia a few years ago. I was thinking about wishing her luck and evolved the idea of embroidering her zodiac sign on her dresses. It was personalization [the players] appreciated, especially Christine, who is a great believer in fate.

Christine had such a strong belief in Tinling's dresses as good luck charms that they had to be washed as often as three times per day (Tinling and Oxby, 1963). Tinling's belief in superstition went so far as to explain Shirley Bloomer's problems with the dress he designed for her at Wimbledon in 1958 when her slip dropped during a match. He explained to *World Tennis* (1958b, p.60): "It was her own fault. It was retribution for wearing last year's dress. I warned her something dreadful would happen."

Analysis of these women's sporting lives provides insights into the importance of appearance while competing and the role of tennis fashion in facilitating players' compliance within the expectations of the tennis world, other players, spectators and the sports media. The players' stories highlight their anxieties as they strove to achieve conformity to societal norms of womanhood and femininity and the importance they placed on their appearance. As has been shown female players were required to balance modesty and freedom of movement throughout their involvement in tennis.

Indeed for the women their ability to play tennis and maintain their feminine identity was key to their acceptance. As the women players' appearance became more risqué there was a parallel increase in the amount of media attention which they received. Traditionally the women players had been largely marginalised by the media yet the increased interest generated by Teddy Tinling's designs meant they were no longer in the shadow of the men. Spencer's (1997) analysis of Tinling's designs on the professional women's tennis Virginia Slims tour shows that the meanings encompassed in his designs continued to embody the notion of glamour and entertainment which served to link women's tennis with the professional era. The considerable attention devoted to players such as Gussy Moran and Karol Fageros, reveal the impact that Tinling's designs had an impact on both the amateur and professional era of women's tennis. Griffin (1992) suggested that the promotion of the 'heterosexy image' is a new manifestation in women's sport yet research presented here demonstrates that the promotion of a feminine image in women's tennis was an established element of the sports development since the Second World War. The following section analyses the media portrayal of the female players in light of these gender issues.

## Media Coverage on the Women's Tour

The media has been recognised as one of the most dominant institutions in society that transmits messages which contain dominant ideologies surrounding a range of issues including race, gender and class. The gendered nature of media coverage has

the potential to shape public opinion about women's tennis and in particular the abilities of the players. The media have in the past marginalised the female athlete through denigrating descriptors which trivialise their athleticism and in many cases sexualise the female athlete thus undermining their position as an athlete (Markula, 1995; Eastman and Billings, 2000).

The media in its various forms has always had a strong presence at the Wimbledon championships. Newspaper coverage of the tournament was provided from the outset in 1877 and television coverage has been in place since 1937 when there was daily coverage of matches from centre court for up to half an hour ([www.aeltc.wimbledon.org/en\\_GB/about/infosheets/television.html](http://www.aeltc.wimbledon.org/en_GB/about/infosheets/television.html)). Phyllis recalled the importance of the media during her playing days:

There was tremendous newspaper coverage in my day... every day in The Telegraph, The Express, The Mail, there was quite a lot about tennis in those days.

With the exception of major tennis tournaments such as Wimbledon or international events such as the Olympic Games, women's sports are not prioritised by the media. When women's sport is covered, the media's selection of images and language used has frequently resulted in the trivialisation of women athletes and the marginalisation of their sport. A common tactic utilised by the sports media is to compare women's performances with men's. In doing so a situation is created whereby men's sports are the benchmark against which women performers are judged (Vincent, 2004). In 1946 Time magazine (September 2) published an article titled 'Men Are Better' which summarised women's progress (or lack of) in tennis and suggested that women were far behind men when it declared:

Against topflight men's tennis, Pauline [Betz], like all women players, is far behind. The 700-year-old French game of tennis, traditionally as much a lady's as a man's game, was introduced to the U.S. in 1874 by a woman, Mary E. Outerbridge. For 62 years women have played championship tennis at Wimbledon, at first in ankle-length gowns and long sleeves, yet no woman has ever done better than to beat the best men juniors.

Pauline Betz (1949, p.185) aptly explained the quandary for women tennis players when she stated that in the eyes of the tennis journalist: "women athletes start out under the terrific handicap of being women athletes". Her discussions with a male sports journalist highlight the disinterest with which the male writers approached women's tennis in the 1940s:

[The journalist] said he had covered the [American] championships of 1942 [which Betz won]. But no, he admitted honestly, he didn't see me play.

Helen Jacobs' playing career provides further evidence of the gendered nature of the media portrayal of women tennis players. Within *Gallery of Champions* she explained how women players are described as "babies" (Jacobs, 1951, p.200) which she felt was justified in tennis "when one is a veteran at twenty-two, there is no growing up stage." More recently research by Duncan et al. (1990) found that women are more likely to be described in childlike terms within televised sports and in a follow-up study in 1994, Duncan and Messner found that the practice of referring to women athletes as girls had virtually ended as women were portrayed in more positive terms.

The emotions of women athletes are frequently discussed within media reports of sporting events. Again as early as 1951 Jacobs discussed how journalists utilised a form of gendered reporting when describing women tennis players. She found their use of the phrase "tears of a woman" (p.36) particularly distasteful. She stated:

It has been my experience during eighteen years of tournament tennis that women are no more given to tears in defeat than men; nor is their enthusiasm in victory more excessive. To claim, even facetiously, that it is, is to lessen public regard for the important place that women have achieved, against innumerable disadvantages, in all the games that Americans, Europeans and Asiatics love to play (Jacobs, 1951, pp.36-37).

Newspaper analysis of the reporting of Wimbledon 2000 continued to find that female players were portrayed as being psychologically frail (Vincent, 2004). This form of journalism serves to devalue the athletic achievement of female players and reinforce a hierarchal gender order.

There was evidence in the biographies that the players were aware of the media's negative portrayal of them. Following Angela Mortimer's loss in the semi-final of Junior Wimbledon she received harsh media criticism. She describes the report and her reaction in her autobiography:

"This is a Joan Curry player," was their verdict, and I seethed with fury. I was Angela Mortimer, not a Joan Curry disciple. I had her quickness and fighting spirit but I was not content to remain at the middle of the scale (Mortimer, 1962, p.26).

Comparisons to Joan are not altogether disparaging since the media were supportive of her when she was a player. The tennis publication *Lawn Tennis and Badminton*



provides ample evidence of Joan's abilities as a tennis player. Following her success at the Cumberland Club in 1946 they described her as having "unusual speed of foot ... combined with tenacity of purpose and astute tactics. None of her adversaries could match her good length driving and consistency of return" (May 1, 1946, p.22). Her performance in the 1946 Wightman Cup matches was reported in, *Lawn Tennis and Badminton* wherein they provided an overview of her performance when they stated:

After she had accustomed herself to the man-like game to which she was opposed, Miss Curry offered a spirited resistance (July 1, 1946, p.166).

While Joan was pleased with her media portrayal, Angela Mortimer felt that the press were unnecessarily harsh in their representation of her. When she won the Belgium Championships she recalled that they wrote "Miss Mortimer will never be a great player but she will always be good enough to worry the best players when they are off form" (Mortimer, 1962, p.43) and two years before she won Wimbledon they had written off her poor season by suggesting it was the end of her tennis career. Ann Jones was also criticised by the media. When she won Junior Wimbledon in 1955 the media suggested to her that having a happy smiling face was more important for the player than to show their determination. Ann quoted them in her autobiography *A Game to Love* (Jones, 1971, p.40):

Frank Rostron of the Daily Express also gave some advice to the "grim-faced girl champion. This week was an ordeal Ann – but learn to smile. The path of a popular champion is much smoother."

Christine's media coverage was largely positively and in some cases excessively so. From her period as a player at Junior Wimbledon the sports journalists were complimentary of her playing style. *Lawn, Tennis and Badminton* (October 1, 1956, p.483) commented that Christine was:

Tall, somewhat gangling and unco-ordinated as yet, but with an obvious genius for the game and a match playing temperament which burns like a flame in moments of stress.

The journalist felt that compared to her opponent Ann Haydon (née Jones) she was the more promising player as she was so much younger yet had a more attacking game.

Ann Jones believed that the press attention on Christine in the aftermath of her win over Althea Gibson in the Wightman Cup match of 1958 had placed a huge amount of unnecessary pressure on her (Jones, 1971, p.68). An unnamed reporter in *World*

Tennis (August, 1958a, p.35) summarised the excessive media coverage surrounding Christine as follows:

The background of press build up and the near hysteria over the talents of an unspoilt and simple English schoolgirl [was merely] sentimental trash perpetrated by the newspaper.

Indeed by the time Christine played her final at Wimbledon against Angela Mortimer in 1961 she recalled how she was presented in the newspapers as “the schoolgirls’ favourite”. She felt this was an accurate statement as she explained:

I was a schoolgirl really in many ways because I was still almost in sandals and ankle socks as girls were up to the age of 15.

Researchers suggest that this media strategy of infantilisation of women athletes serves to demean their position as serious athletes and decrease women’s threat to men’s position of authority in sport (Duncan and Messner, 1998). Spencer’s (2003) media analysis of the tennis players’ Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova’s rivalry provides further support to the argument that women tennis players continued to be demeaned by the media through the use of descriptors which portrayed the players as childlike. For example ESPN’s Sportscentury described Evert as the “original tennis baby” (Spencer, 2003, p.20).

While the biographies and media coverage provide a glimpse into life on the amateur circuit, very little is known about the experiences of women tennis players upon their retirement from the sport. The following section seeks to shed new light onto the women’s lives in their transition from playing on the amateur circuit through to their retirement. In doing so the section opens by addressing the turning points at the end of the women’s playing careers.

## Turning Points in the Player’s Careers

The women were each able to identify the turning points which signalled the end of their playing careers. Within the interview Christine acknowledged that for her it was the Wimbledon final in 1961. She compared her experiences to the American players Serena and Venus Williams who have dominated women’s tennis at the turn of the twenty-first century. Christine stated:

That [1961] final was a turning point in that I became, not that I’m comparing myself in the same light as the Williams but since they’ve eased up... They’ve become more ordinary and I think that happens very quickly, you know like you know I was absolutely going like that and once you don’t, there’s not very much in the top ones and the ones below and once you lose that 110%, you become just 95, lots of people who can cope at 95 and not at the 110, and I think that was a

turning point then that I think I never quite got back the same sort of dedication or intent that I had.

By 1962, Christine was still competing on the amateur circuit but she admitted that she was allowing other distractions into her life. At around this time she became engaged, interestingly her fiancé proclaimed to have never seen her play tennis, on television or in real life (Tinling and Oxby, 1963). When their engagement was broken she reversed an earlier decision to retire and carried on playing tennis until 1974 although her dedication to the sport never returned to its peak. She reflected on the issue of continuing competing with a diminished commitment to the sport: "you think 'ok well it might come back you know' but it doesn't".

Like many other women players, for Phyllis, Joan and Joy the turning points in their playing careers related to marriage. All on marriage felt that their commitment to tennis decreased. Joan who was in her 40s when she met her husband recalled:

I wasn't playing... I was playing that year but not really playing then, I must have played a dozen tournaments then I suppose and then I stopped because I had the two children immediately after.

While they continued playing they all pointed out that they no longer wanted to travel for extended periods of time, and subsequently when Joan and Joy had children tennis took a further back seat. They explained that over time they could no longer compete on the amateur circuit and they retired to play tennis at a club and county level. Getting married was the defining point of their retirement. It marked the end of their playing days. Joan stated: "That was more or less the end of the tennis. I had had quite enough".

Teddy Tinling (Tinling and Oxby, 1963, p.167) discussed the question of a player's retirement and commented:

For any player the question of retirement is inevitably bound up with an alternative. So many people point to a girl and say: 'She's giving up next year,' without any notion of what she is going to do instead. Unless I see an alternative way of life I never believe them. It is impossible to satisfy the demands of big-time tennis and then suddenly go home and do nothing. At best the players must have the fascination of a new career or dedication to a husband to replace it.

For the interviewed players retirement from the amateur circuit signalled a change in their life course. The notion that their life was divided into two halves was discussed by the women.

Phyllis described how:

Tennis was a side line in a way because one had one's ordinary home life just as one had one's normal social life and home life with the family.

Joan explicitly stated that her life was divided in half:

I was playing up until the age of 39 and then I got married so my life is in two halves, the tennis half, up to 40, and then getting married and having the children.

Christine explains how she felt at the time of her marriage:

I was always looking around thinking I must follow the trend... I felt that I wanted to follow the norm. I didn't feel pressure... I didn't see myself not having a family and getting married.

The 'trend' mentioned by Christine can be explained by the post war movement which believed that stable families would play a crucial role in the re-construction of British society (Bruley, 1999). The Beveridge Report which formulated plans for post-war welfare argued that married women should be regarded as "mothers and service providers for the male breadwinners" (Bruley, 1999, p.130). This belief of 'equal but different' shaped the changing role of the women as their identity was linked with their position as wife and/or mother.

## Influence of Tennis on Identity upon Retirement

Throughout the interviews the women recalled events in their lives which helped shape their identity. Joan believed her tennis career had given her confidence that stayed with her throughout her life. Indeed for both Christine and Joan, tennis was recognised as playing a key role in their ability to take on the role of wife-mother and succeed. Christine explained at length her concerns surrounding her changing role as a mother:

What I missed when I wasn't playing was the excitement of having a goal to aim at and I think that also keeps people in the sport because you are aiming at something that is going to happen next month, next week and you have something to work at... Suddenly here I am at home with the children and I am thinking you know there is not that excitement of ups and downs and even if you lose it is something of an excitement of a sort... I remember someone saying to me 'well you know you have a life time to aim at' and I thought 'oh gosh, you know, what a way to look at things'. But slowly my life filled with all things that go with bringing up children and I didn't have so much time to think about it but I did find at the beginning you know there just seemed to be no light and shade just a constant.

Research has shown that women can be empowered through sports participation (Theberge, 1987; Blinde, et al., 1993). Whitson (1994, p.354) defined empowerment as "the confident self that comes from being skilled in the use of one's body." Little is known about the long term benefits of this within sport. Joan discussed how tennis had influenced her life and given her confidence and the feeling that "I've done something, I'm not a nobody... it's an achievement". Hargreaves (2000) recognised that greater attention should be paid to the role of sport in contributing to women's empowerment and the findings from this study suggest that sport plays a role not only by empowering women as athletes but also in their lives upon retirement from sport.

All of the women recognised the significant role participation in tennis had on their subsequent identities following retirement from the circuit. Each aspect of their sporting life, from school sport through to international travel had developed their confidence and empowered them to deal with the challenges they faced as wives and mothers. Both Christine and Joan discussed how competing had influenced them in terms of their ability to cope with life changes. Christine explained:

I do think that it makes you able to cope with a lot having been through the mill of sport, where you are knocked back and disappointments and you have to sort of be tough enough to come back again and coping. It's almost like a lesson in life coping... Being able to lose, and not sort of losing hope and keeping going really. I do think... I always say 'keep on keeping on' that's one of my favourite sayings and I think that in tennis it's so important and in life.

## Concluding Comments

All the women under-played the significance of tennis in their life stories and struggled to come to terms with the belief that anyone would be interested in their story and their playing experiences. Indeed, in telling her story Phyllis, aged 100, demonstrated her humble personality as she believed that her life would be of little interest to the listener. She explained: "I feel it can't be very interesting to people nowadays because it was so long ago." This belief was evident in each interview and confirmed that the value of their life experiences and others had not been fully appreciated by the women.

The women players of the amateur era were competing during a period of marked political and social change surrounding the Second World War. Indeed the greatest impact on Joy's life story was the advent of war. She saw her role as a driver in the Blitz as a position of importance which gave her more confidence than tennis. The

circumstances of war and her ability to face adversity became markers of her as a person. As a result a large part of the interview was spent discussing her experiences of the war and how it shaped her identity.

The analysis of their lives provides evidence of their abilities to overcome gender barriers within the competitive domain of sport while using their social class status as a platform to excel within tennis as they travelled across Europe and America as amateur players. Each player acknowledged the importance of tennis in their lives and of particular interest was the impact of their experiences on the tennis circuit on their lives upon retirement from sport. Since sporting biographies are generally published on the eve of a player's retirement there are opportunities for further research into the role of sports based empowerment on a woman's life course. The use of life story interviews is an ideal platform for such research.

The role of the listener as keeper of these life stories is explored further in the following chapter. The importance of this aspect of the research process has grown throughout the writing of chapters 5, 6 and 7 as the interviews and biographies were analysed and the significance of the women's narratives brought to light. Chapter 8 provides a summary of the key findings of the study and in doing so provides an account of my reflections on the research process and the importance of recognising the value of women's stories and providing an authentic account of their lives.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion – Aces, Places and Faults

### Overview

Analysis of women's sporting lives has traditionally been rendered marginal within the research of sport biography and sport history. As a consequence the experiences of women athletes are largely unknown as those of men continue to dominate the sporting world, indeed only a small group of the most successful women are recognised as worthy of research. Moreover when recently accessing the list of sports autobiographies available from the online bookseller Amazon ([www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)) only one from their top 100 was based on the life of a female athlete; Kelly Holmes. Holmes a double Olympic gold medallist at 800m and 1500m in Athens in 2004 was listed at 21, demonstrating further evidence of the lack of interest and recognition of women athletes even at the highest levels of sporting success. Interestingly, Ann Jones (1971, p.14) drew attention to a lack of public interest in women players in the introduction to her autobiography nearly forty years ago. She commented:

Public interest understandably centres on peaks of achievement and often ignores or glosses over the factors which lie behind them.

Unsurprisingly the sporting lives of the players who were competing on a weekly basis on the amateur circuit, yet not necessarily winning the tournaments, were frequently over-looked and subsequently forgotten. A factor this research has sought to redress through interviewing and analysing the women's tennis circuit of pre and post-war Britain. In doing so, this study has provided important and original insights into the lives of a small group of elite women tennis players in the amateur era.

Many of the autobiographies of the players were published in the immediate aftermath of a successful tournament or on the eve of their retirement from tennis. For example Christine Truman's (1961) was published following her defeat in the final of Wimbledon to Angela Mortimer; Althea Gibson's (1958) biography was published following her second Wimbledon win prior to her retirement from tennis. Accordingly there is limited information regarding the lives of the women players upon retirement from tennis. It is significant therefore that this study traced the lives of the players upon retirement from tennis and provided an important glimpse into the potential for sport to shape a player's life on and beyond the tennis court. Indeed for all the women, playing tennis had positively influenced their experiences as wives and mothers.

The study drew attention to turning points in the player's life stories as moments whereby their life course changed as a direct result of a particular situation arising, such as the influence of a certain person or the winning of a particular tournament. For example when Christine's coach Herbert Brown entered her into a national tournament this led to early recognition from the LTA and subsequent enrolment on the LTA's talented player's scheme. The study also emphasised the unique aspects of the players' lives while highlighting the common experiences of Joy, Phyllis and Joan who all played on the circuit before and after the Second World War.

## Key features of the study

Central to the players' life stories was participation in the annual championships at the All England Lawn Tennis Club, Wimbledon. Their progress on the amateur circuit was based on their success at the championships as was subsequent selection for the national team. The women struggled to articulate the importance of Wimbledon to them such that this description of Wimbledon by Wade and Rafferty (1984, p.10) is used to encapsulate the players' perspectives:

Wimbledon has grown in the way of a benign patriarch. It is aware of young lifestyles and is part of modern life, but at the same time retains enough tradition to restore the familiarity of perpetual principles. It is vibrantly alive because it keeps abreast of tennis, but in addition it has that incalculable advantage of its own unique atmosphere that emanates from every blade of grass.

The significance of the AELTC Wimbledon was evident within each of the player's stories as their recollections of playing on the tennis circuit started and ended with reference to Wimbledon.

Gender role expectations and appearance emerged as the dominant research themes from analysis of the women's sporting lives. Gender clearly influenced the player's experiences throughout their life since being a female had a marked impact on their experiences while travelling, competing and training on the amateur circuit. Western based gender ideologies which perceived the female body as frail initially worked to constrain women's participation in tennis but these women challenged these ideals through their training routines and their physical displays of athleticism while competing.

Since this study focussed on the amateur era, questions remain regarding the paradox of female athletes which has been found in the professional era where femininity is emphasised to the point of commodification (Clasen, 2001). For example, there is a need to better understand the consequences of these gender role



expectations in terms of recruiting future tennis players. Billie Jean King, the six times Wimbledon champion from 1966-75, writing nearly 30 years ago gets to the essence of the issue;

In the WTA [Women's Tennis Association], we try to encourage our players to be as attractive as possible. We urge all our members to wear tennis dresses or skirts, but if somebody like Nancy Gunter or Anne Smith can't feel comfortable on the court that way, then shorts are fine. The point is that appearance counts for a lot in any sport, but is perhaps even more important in tennis where the fans are so close to the players (King and Deford, 1982, p.137).

Based on data from the interviews and analysis of published biographies there is evidence to show that the players of the amateur era played an important role in contributing to the wider recognition of tennis as a sport for women with much public appeal. Closely tied to this public appeal was the appearance of the women players and their choice of clothing. Indeed the appearance of elite amateur women players at Wimbledon and their ability to conform to gender role expectations led to the increasing acceptance of women as tennis players and the consequential growth of tennis as a sport for women in the twentieth century.

## Reflection on the data collection of the women's sporting lives

The study has drawn on a wide range of sources in its investigation of women's sporting lives. It covered a time frame where there are relatively few surviving players who are in a position to tell their story. Through the original use of published biographies and extensive archival research a unique analysis was achieved whereby the data collection process enabled a holistic and authentic picture of the women's sporting lives to be portrayed.

The detailing of the research process and challenges which have been addressed should benefit future researchers. For example, researchers within a wide range of academic disciplines will have a new source of data for investigating women's sporting lives pre and post Second World War. The use of biography as a research tool has allowed a depth of understanding not hitherto seen in other texts. Of particular interest to future researchers are some of the methodological issues confronted in the study. The life documents were analysed using a systematic coding process which ensured the transferability of research findings and enhanced the trustworthiness of data analysis. In doing so there was extensive coding and general dimensions which were catalogued using the computer programme Mindjet

MindManager ([www.mindjet.com](http://www.mindjet.com)). This approach enabled the synthesis of data based on chronology and specific research themes, allowing clarity of findings and the ability to draw comparisons across a wide range of data sources.

## Reflection on the analysis of the women's sporting lives

In the analysis of the women's early sporting lives it was important to acknowledge that they were reflecting on their past and processing autobiographical memories in a contemporary space. For example Christine Truman's autobiography, which is referred to was written in 1961, when she was 20 years old and starting out on a career at Wimbledon which was to last until 1974, while the interview took place in 2004, thirty years after her last match at Wimbledon. Additionally when analysing the experiences of the American player, Althea Gibson, it was important to recognise that her autobiography which was published following her second Wimbledon win in 1958, was analysed within the context of Schoenfeld's comprehensive analysis of her career, in his biography published in 2004.

The narrative presented here is thus a record of the women's interpretation of events from a different historical and social period. As Tierney (2003, p.302) suggests, through an understanding of the situation of the narrator, the researcher is able to understand the contested meanings of their identity as we "come to terms with the positions in which authors [and I would add speakers] locate themselves". When Christine lost the 1961 final to Mortimer once again her thoughts reflect her identity as a young player in comparison to Angela:

One has to remember that I was only 20, Angela was 29 so chances of her coming back... but all those years 16, 17, 18, 19, I had been in semi-finals at Wimbledon 19 as well and I was disappointed but I didn't sort of, I thought okay you know I've won the French...

Christine's reflections on her first Wimbledon highlight her awareness of the significance of the occasion as related in particular to her young age.

No one ever thought I had a chance. But I had that sort of you know what do you call it, the ignorance of youth or something and I thought I had a chance and I just, everything just came together and that sort of really made my name in many ways

Her acknowledgement of "youth" suggests that she was unaware of the issue of age at the time and it is only on reflection that she can appreciate how her young age helped her deal with the significance of the occasion. She also believed that age was a factor in how people remembered her semi-final against Althea Gibson. She stated:

“I think people do remember my first Wimbledon at 16 because it was very young to reach the semi-finals”.

## Reshaping the story

Josselson (1995) suggests that a person’s narrative may be re-shaped, developed or even replaced to meet the current position of the teller. Therefore the importance of an event may be interpreted from different historical perspectives and re-shaped repeatedly in different contexts (Linton, 2000). Josselson (1995) also reminds us that in doing so the teller selects elements of the story to give meaning to prior events that may not have had such meaning at the time. In recalling their experiences on the amateur tennis circuit the women were discussing events from a different social and historical perspective. For example when Phyllis was outlining her memories of winning the doubles event in 1931 she drew particular attention to the prize. She explained to Gilbert (2005):

We went for dinner in the Savoy afterwards. I won a nice gold medal and a £10 shopping voucher. You had to buy something that was a luxury item, not a domestic appliance because of the amateur rules.

When Phyllis won the final she would have been unaware of the significance of the moment to researchers of amateur sport. Indeed Josselson (1995, p.35) refers to the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard when he states that;

We live life forwards but understand it backwards. In understanding ourselves we choose those facets of our experience that lead to the present and render our story coherent.

As Phyllis reflected on her winnings in 1931 she is doing so within the context of the earnings of professional players in 2006. Her prize of £10 grows in significance when reflected upon and compared with the players’ winnings of £205,280 per pair in 2006. Linton (2000) explains that the importance of a singular event may be interpreted from differing historical perspectives and may be re-interpreted repeatedly as its role in different contexts emerges.

## Reflection on the trustworthiness of the women’s stories

While the issue of memory was discussed in depth within chapter 5 it is clear that the women’s stories were valuable in their own right and sufficiently detailed to allow critical analysis of their days on the amateur circuit. Of particular concern initially was the ability of Phyllis King at the age of 100 to recall aspects of her life which occurred some 70 years previously. However these concerns proved unfounded upon meeting with Phyllis and hearing the details of her story. My concerns were nonetheless shared by sports journalists who interviewed Phyllis on the occasion of

her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in August 2005. The issue of memory and an ability to recall is acknowledged throughout her story. Indeed in response to my initial request to meet she wrote:

Thank you for your letter. I would be happy to see you here by appointment one morning, to chat about tennis in the old days. Happy memories! (Personal Communication: Phyllis King, Nov 6, 2005).

Helen Gilbert (2005, p.78) in *Ace Magazine* described how:

Mrs. Phyllis King née Mudford still vividly remembers her time as an amateur player in the 1930s, in particular the day she was crowned champion. She owns a razor-sharp memory... and easily passes for someone 25 years younger.

Paul Majendie (2005) noted that "King speaks in a voice as strong as anyone half her age". While John Geoghegan, (2005) writing for *Surrey Online* stated that: "Still sprightly. Mrs King was a delight to interview – with her excellent memory and self-deprecating line of humour". Jon Henderson (2004, p.9) writing in *The Observer* described how Phyllis' "Voice sounds as if the phone rang just as she happened to be walking past on her way outside for a set or two". "She is of course frailer than she sounds, but she has an extraordinarily robust constitution".

As the women told their stories it was evident that they were narrating aspects of their lives which they had recounted many times before. Freeman (1993) suggests that instead of the notion of 'rehearsal' are ideas of construction or 'rewriting' of the life story at the moment of it being re-told. The issue of rehearsal was evident within the interview with Phyllis and her discussions with journalists. In discussing her memories of tennis she described to Henderson (2004, p.9) how:

They were happy days. Tennis wasn't so important and serious as it is today.... It was a sport in my day.

The repetition of phrases within interviews with journalists and our interview show that Phyllis had thought about her experiences on the tennis circuit in different contexts which meant she was more likely to have a well rehearsed memory of the event. There was evidence of this throughout the data. In the interview with Geoghegan (2005) she stated: "It's very serious now because of the money. It was a sport in my day" and these phrases were repeated in our interview when she said she played "when tennis was fun you know without all the money making".

## The Keeper of Stories: Reflections on the role of the researcher

Throughout the study I was aware of how my developing relationship with the women and subsequent analysis of their life stories was underlined by a strong sense of anxiety. This anxiety was due to my awareness of the responsibilities placed on me to understand and tell their stories with respect and compassion. Lincoln (2001, p.59) recognises that this act of knowing and understanding people's stories is also an issue of validity closely tied with ethics and argues that;

The act of knowing can be judged not only for the knowledge it discovers or creates, but also by a measure of the caring, respect, dignity and social justice of relationships within which the knowing came to be.

Lincoln discusses how validity in this context is a form of fidelity between the researcher and their participants. Achieving this fidelity requires a depth of reflexivity that eases researcher's anxieties, as each issue is reflected upon with compassion and respect for the participant.

Phyllis was apprehensive as to how I would perceive and represent her story when discussing other people from her life. At various stages during the interview she stated "Yes I know you'll be careful I know you'll cut, you'll be very careful please" and "Please cut it [the interview] right down...cut out anything that's ridiculous". This plea and responsibility instilled in me the importance of the researcher's role in editing and representing the life stories of participants. Phyllis was relying on me to edit her life and this moral responsibility was enacted and firmly embedded in the research process as aspects of the women's lives were edited not only by themselves in the process of their narration but also in the process of my writing their stories. Within each interview there were issues discussed that the women were anxious about and asked not to be included in the research study and I have respected their wishes. Following the death of Phyllis in January 2006 I have felt a greater responsibility since I feel that I owe it to her memory to abide by her wishes.

Each step of this research was taken with the knowledge that as a researcher I have been placed in a position of trust. Indeed, Knowles (2006) has spoken of biographers as "the keeper of stories" and like her I see it as our duty to respect these stories in the analysis and presentation of findings. Josselson (1995, p.32) explains this well:

Meaning is not inherent in an act or experience, but is constructed through social discourse. Meaning is generated by the linkages the participant makes between aspects of his or her life as lived and by the explicit linkages the researcher makes between this understanding and

interpretation which is meaning constructed at another level of analysis.

The data collection and analysis conducted for this study, has enabled the reconstruction of the life stories of women tennis players from the amateur era. Their stories highlight the processes involved in their sporting lives, from their introductions to tennis, through to their lives beyond the tennis circuit. By way of conclusion, it is worth emphasising that:

While sub elements of an experience may be forgotten the totality of the memories may create a durable richness that is never forgotten (Linton, 2000, p.118).

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- World Tennis (1959a). Golden Goddess Karol Fageros (caption with photo). July, p.52.
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Archival Resources:

- Mass-Observation Archive: Box group title: Sport 1937-1947. Box no. TC 82/1/A.
- Mass-Observation Archive: Evening News November 3, 1939. Box group title: Sport 1937-1047. Box no 2. TC 82/2/A.
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Internet Resources:

- The British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice:  
[www.socresonline.org.uk/info/ethguide.html](http://www.socresonline.org.uk/info/ethguide.html). Date accessed 11/07/08.
- The Official Website of the Wimbledon Championships:  
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## Appendix 1: Sample letter to players

September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005

Dear,

I am a Senior Lecturer in Sport Sociology at St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham within the School of Human Sciences and I have been lecturing on gender issues in sport to undergraduate students for the last 5 years. I am in the early stages of a doctoral research project, which is exploring the lives of female tennis players who played at The Championships Wimbledon prior to it turning professional. In this project I have interviewed players about all aspects of their lives in tennis from their introduction to tennis, through to the influence of tennis in their lives since retiring from competition.

I recently read and much enjoyed the article Jon Henderson from The Observer wrote about you in 2004 and I would be most interested in chatting with you about your tennis career. Female players that I have already interviewed include Mrs. Joan Hughesman (née Curry), Mrs. Joy Michelle (née Hibbert) and Mrs. Christine Janes (née Truman).

If you agree to an interview I would be willing to meet with you at a time and location of your convenience. All research findings will be used on a purely academic basis and the transcribed interviews will be sent back to you for any comments, suggestions or amendments to ensure research accuracy and confidentiality.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and I look forward to hearing from you soon either via phone or by the enclosed SAE.

Many thanks,

---

Janine Walsh, BSc (Hons), MSc  
Sport Science Programme

Tel:  
E-mail:

November 16, 2005

Dear Mrs. King

Thank you very much for agreeing to meet me on Wednesday November 23<sup>rd</sup> at 11am. I have enclosed a copy of an information sheet which gives details / background information regarding my study of women tennis players in pre and post war Britain.

I look forward to chatting with you about your initial involvement in tennis, your experiences on the tennis circuit and perhaps what influence tennis has had on your life since retiring from competition.

Can I also assure you that the material used from our meeting will be used primarily for my research project but it may also be used for academic conference presentations and publications.

I hope this information clarifies some of the issues I mentioned earlier. I look forward to meeting you next week.

With best wishes,

---

Janine Walsh, BSc (Hons), MSc  
Sport Science Programme

Tel:

E-mail:



## Appendix 2: Information Sheet & Consent Form

### Information Sheet

PhD Title:

Women's Sporting Lives: A biographical study of elite amateur tennis players at Wimbledon

Researcher:

Janine Walsh, BSc (Hons.), MSc, St. Mary's College.

Under the supervision of Dr. Gill Clarke, MBE, Centre for Biography and Education, University of Southampton.

---

Who am I?

I am a Lecturer in Sport Sociology at St. Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham within the School of Human Sciences and I have been lecturing gender issues in sport to undergraduate students for the last 7 years. I am conducting a doctorate research project which will explore the lives of elite female tennis players.

Background to the study?

This biographical study will provide an insight into the lives of female tennis players who competed at Wimbledon during the 1950s and 1960s, from their introduction into sport through to the influence of tennis in their lives since retiring from competition. To date there has been no in-depth study of female tennis players from this era, yet numerous biographies and autobiographies have been written. The published biographies provide invaluable insights into the world of tennis and a biographical study will add to this mainstream research base.

Can you help?

If you competed in Wimbledon during the 1950s/1960s or if you have any information which you believe would be useful I would be delighted to hear from you. Any advice and guidance you might be able to offer would be greatly appreciated. All research findings will be used on a purely academic basis and the transcribed interviews will be sent to all interviewees for any comments or amendments to ensure research accuracy and confidentiality.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you may contact me at work on ----- (direct/answer phone), alternatively you can e-mail -----@.ac.uk

Many thanks,

---

Janine Walsh BSc (Hons), MSc

## Consent Form

PhD Title:

Women's Sporting Lives: A biographical study of elite amateur tennis players at Wimbledon

Researcher:

Janine Walsh, BSc (Hons.), MSc, St. Mary's College.

Under the supervision of Dr. Gill Clarke, MBE, Centre for Biography and Education, University of Southampton.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you a basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. You may contact Janine at home (020 -----) or at work (020 -- ----) if you wish to discuss the research further.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that Janine Walsh is conducting a doctorate research project exploring the lives of elite female tennis players from their introduction to tennis, through to the influence of tennis in their lives since retiring from competition.

I understand that I will participate in an interview that is likely to take about 90 minutes. I understand that with my permission the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. I do not have to answer any questions I don't want to, and at any time I can stop the interview and speak off the record and still be able to continue with the interview if I want to. I am aware that the audio tapes and transcripts will be transcribed and I will be sent a copy for my records/comments/deletions/additions etc.

I understand that the material from the interview will be used primarily for the PhD thesis, but it may also be used for conference presentations and/or written publications.

I hereby consent to participate in this study.

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3: Interview Schedule for Christine for Christine Janes n e Truman

### Interview Schedule

---

#### Introduction

Current involvement/interest in tennis?

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#### Getting involved

Family involvement: Parents. Brothers or sisters?

(Part of family of eight – sporty family – parents involvement.

Huge time commitment of mother)

School: Sports at school? Tennis, coaching

Leave school – age?

Friends in and out of sport? Perceptions?

Can you remember a moment when you thought ‘yes this is what I want to be’?

Any particular person that encouraged your participation?

Friends’ view of your involvement...

#### Staying involved

Training commitment - time, money, funding?

Conflict with other parts of life

Perceptions of others? Family? Friends? Boyfriends?

#### Amateur

Explain, how did it work for you? Money, travel, teams of players, back-handers!

Shamateurism.....

Life of an amateur athlete

As an amateur - hours working? Time off work?

Amateur allowed to stay in private houses

Air fare paid

Tournaments/Matches

Domestic:

Wimbledon

Won Junior 1956 – v Ann Haydon

Reaching Semi-Final aged 16 - 1957

Impact on daily life? Recognition from general public. Reaction of family and friends...

Atmosphere at Wimbledon difference between then and final 1961

Preparation?

Huge amount of pressure – press offering free tickets to public who could locate where they were staying

Arriving at Wimbledon – sense of occasion

Actual final- key memories

Changed identity?

Influences on self?

Riviera:

Travel between? Expenses? Partying?

French Championships at Roland Garros: Memories of.....

Won French and Italian aged 18 – 1959

Press attention

World number 2 seed for short period

Wightman Cup

1958 member of winning team – beat Gibson

1960 - Brazil:

Flying to Brazil San Paulo – Mortimer discusses how it affected Christine – in a perpetual daze, suffering from lack of sleep, going to parties and luncheons, Bueno's horse racing!

Rio – artificial light

Australia played 1960 won Ladies Doubles with Bueno

Note:

1957 to 1961 and 1965 ranked world top 10.

=> Issues

At tournaments

Comparisons with men – facilities, scheduling of matches.

Parties 1957 World Tennis comment on incidental activities – “an excursion to St. Germain, a hilarious soiree in Montmartre, Jean Borotra’s annual cocktail party, an expedition to Christian Dior’s.” “The tournament was run with the usual casual approach.”

Garden Parties Role of tennis on social scene in England?

Travelling to tournaments – camaraderie with other women.....

Difficulties in travelling abroad in the 1950s and 1960s

LTA

Support as a junior then privileges rebuked – clarification?

Outlined briefly by Tinling

Treated unfairly?

Impact on sister?

Sister Nell: playing competitively and travelling: experiences, influences

Fashion

Influence of Tinling – what was the relationship like with him?

White Ladies...

Influence of dress choice on identity on court and public perceptions of you

Cross over between current high street/couture fashions on the tennis court?

Very similar styles on and off court? Why?

Could the athlete be aggressive and competitive whilst also feminine and lady like?

Use of the fashion accessories to soften the difference and therefore make it more acceptable to be an athlete?

Wearing of make-up while playing – why?

Media

Media attention – attention in LTA – opinion from range of sources

How were female athletes portrayed by media?

1957 – Semi-Final v Gibson.

Brigadier Sir John Smyth in Lawn Tennis & Badminton– recommended skipping and ballet lessons to improve footwork

Importance of destiny – Tinling discusses problem of superstition in getting dresses washed

\*Identity

Focus on:

How did being a tennis player influence you identity?

How did your persona as a tennis player correspond with women's role in society of the 1950s and 1960s?

---

Transition Experiences

What stage did you retire from competitive sport?

Any particular event or time that made you think twice about what you were doing?

Influences on retirement?

How did that affect your identity?

How did it affect family life?

Development of a new identity?

Influence of playing tennis on your life today....

Has it shaped your attitudes towards life?

Influence on your children?

Continued involvement in tennis through family? Daughter....

Advice to daughter

Involvement in other sports....

---

\*Reflection:

When you reflect on your time playing tennis what is the most striking memory of that period?

Do people still ask about Wimbledon and your tennis career?

## Appendix 4: Sample of interview summary with reflections and field notes

Interview Transcript with Christine Truman p1

1<sup>st</sup> involvement in tennis age 8/9

Parents made court in garden Loughton, Essex

Social class of parents as they could afford house with a large garden

Similarities with own family

Skills of parents in making court

Keen to learn tennis

Determined to get better so could play with siblings

Family play

Older bros and sis say she couldn't play

Attitude of older brothers and sister towards skill

Exclusion – need to be involved led to learning skill of tennis – perseverance

Knowing she was not good enough

Move house – no court but brick wall

House move did not influence her tennis negatively

Invaluable practise on wall

Champions develop playing on wall

1<sup>st</sup> coach Herbert Brown well known today

Brothers and sisters had lessons with him

Really keen to go to lesson

First lesson aged 10

Reflect on how start late in comparison with players today

Teaching techniques, hitting targets for prizes

Targets and coaching encouraged practice

Early coaching techniques

Comparisons with today

Picture in cloak room in her home of father coaching her yet not mentioned in interview

Interview Transcript with Christine Truman p2

Siblings initially unkind – not want to play with her

Segregation in family due to size of family?

Family divided in 2 of ages of kids

Exclusion – wanting to be part of older group of siblings

Aware of same situation in my introduction to tennis

Siblings become practise partners

Joining a club

Club background – social at one Monkham's -> St Pat's -> the Connaught and gradually better standard

Cost of joining these clubs?

What was father's occupation?

## Appendix 5: Sample interview summary based on the interview with Joy Michele.

1920 – born

- Mother: artistic, athletic, Midlands Junior Champion at Swimming, bank manager during World War 1
- Father: sporting, golf, football, billiards, represented Oxfordshire
- Brother: “Rugger chap”, tennis umpire at Wimbledon and in Paris

1929 – started playing tennis

- played various tournaments in Hampshire
- attacked my man in Boscombe, nr. Bournemouth
- Sent to Morden Girls College, boarding school

1932 –sent to Switzerland boarding school (as ill, cousins were there)

- finishing school in Marlow: one year
- Sorbonne, Paris: 9 months; studying, playing tennis, met Suzanne Lenglen

1935 - tennis coaching from Major Cooper-Hunt in Bournemouth

1937 - Junior Champion Hampshire

- given car as present from father
- played tennis for Oxfordshire

1939 - based at Whitney, Oxfordshire

- March, father died
- playing Westgate on Sea – war declared on that Sunday

Land Army: 2 months

Drove for British Council: Whitney to London every day: 3 months

Mechanised transport corp: voluntary car service based at Knightsbridge

Drove an admiral of the Fleet: 6 months

Drove for Dutch Navy: 6 months = 1942

Drove for Americans based at Cheltenham: £10 per week

1942 - married parachutist in regular army

Pregnant: moved to Bournemouth same road as mother

1943 - August had baby girl

- ran the information bureau for American Officers
- husband left her for someone in Italy
- met Navy pilot (Ralph): shot down in Casablanca (stayed few months with his family after the war)

1944-1952: “a wonderful seven years playing tennis”

- played county tennis for Hampshire



## Appendix 6: Sample of raw data themes from pages 1-4 of the interview transcript of Christine Truman (CT)

P1

1<sup>st</sup> involvement in tennis age 8/9  
Parents made court in garden  
Loughton, Essex  
Keen to learn tennis  
Determined to get better so could play  
with siblings  
Family play  
Older bros and sis say she couldn't  
play  
Knowing she was not good enough  
Move house – no court but brick wall  
Invaluable practice on wall  
Champions develop playing on wall  
1<sup>st</sup> coach Herbert Brown  
Teaching techniques

P2

Siblings initially unkind – not want to  
play with her  
Siblings become practise partners  
Joining a club  
Club background  
Lots of practise at clubs  
Father member of club  
Parents met at tennis club  
Brother played at Wimbledon  
Played mixed with bro  
Younger sister played at Wimbledon  
Doubles with sister  
School  
School sport  
Games at home

P3

Family skill  
PE teacher  
CT height  
CT attitude  
Early expectations

Early dedication  
Early predictions  
Lack of sporting opportunity  
Dancing classes  
Comparisons of sport choices for kids  
today  
Lack of opportunity  
Focus on tennis  
Tennis books as presents

P4

Loved tennis  
Wanted to get better  
Self-driven  
Holidays near tennis courts  
Played tournaments on holidays  
Enjoyed tennis tournaments  
Comparisons with year round circuit  
today  
Played summer, school holiday  
Friends accept her focus  
Allowed time off school to play  
Practise with D Maskell at Wimbledon  
age 11  
Missed out on progressing with  
education due to tennis  
Head mistress (HM) saw tennis  
opportunities  
Lucky for HM support  
Life different if HM said no  
Restrictions on children today  
Little flexibility today  
Talent seen as precious commodity by  
CT  
- Attitude towards kids dedicating  
time to sport  
- Believe in combining sport with  
education

Appendix 7: Sample of raw data themes to general dimensions within a section of Christine Truman's interview transcript

CT coding – raw data themes			General dimensions
1) Age	Background info personal	Background info	Background info
2) Initial involve't	Background info personal	Background info	Background info
3) Environ't	Background info Environment	Background info	Background info
4) Family a) Father b) Mother c) Brother d) Sister e) Siblings	Family  Influence of mother	Family information  Influences	Background info  Influences
5) Attitude	CT mind frame	CT the individual	The individual
6) Personality	CT personality	CT the individual	The individual
7) Self-reflections	CT reflecting	Reflections	Reflections
8) Coach a) Herbert Brown b) Dan Maskell	Background info personal  Influence of coaches	Background info  Influences	Background info  Influences
9) Compare with today a) Players b) Kids c) Circuit	Compare with today	Compare with today	Compare with today
10) Wimbledon	Experiences at Wimbledon	At Wimbledon	At Wimbledon
11) School a) Sport b) Headmistress	Background info  Early influences	Background info  Early influences	Background info  Influences
12) Self-awareness	CT awareness	CT the individual	The individual
13) Expectations	CTs personal expectations	CT the individual	The individual
14) Wightman Cup	Circuit then	Circuit for CT	Circuit for CT
15) Opportunity	Opinion on opportunity	CT opinions	Opinions
16) Choice	Opinion on choice	CT opinions	Opinion s
17) Luck	CTs belief	CT the individual	The individual
18) Enjoyment	Ct and tennis	CT the individual	The individual
19) Tourn't	Circuit then	Circuit for CT	Circuit for CT
20) Friends	Background info personal	Background info	Background info
21) Education	CT opinions on educ	CT opinions	Opinions
22) Talented children	CT opinions on children	CT opinions	Opinions
23) Diff betw countries	CT opinion on tennis	CT opinions	Opinions
24) LTA	Background in tennis	Career of CT	Career

## Appendix 8: List of biographies and autobiographies analysed

Betz, P. (1949). *Wings on My Tennis Shoes*. London: Sampson Low.

Engelmann, L. (1988). *The Goddess and The American Girl: The Story of Suzanne Lenglen and Helen Wills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gibson, A. (1958). *I always wanted to be Somebody*. London: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Gordon Cleather, N. (1947). *Wimbledon Story*. London: Sporting Handbooks Ltd.

Green, G. (1987). *Kitty Godfree: Lady of a Golden Age*. London: The Kingswood Press.

Jacobs Hull, H. (1933). *Modern Tennis*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Jacobs, H. (1951). *Gallery of Champions*. London: Alvin Redman Limited.

Jones, A. (1971). *A Game to Love*. London: Stanley Paul.

King, B.J. and Deford, F. (1982). *Billie Jean King: The Autobiography*. Granada Publishing: London.

Lambert Chambers, D. (1910). *Lawn Tennis for Ladies*. London: Methuen.

Marble, A. and Leatherman, D. (1991). *Courting Danger: My Adventures in World-Class Tennis, Golden-Age Hollywood, and High-Stakes Spying*. New York: St Martins Press.

Mortimer, A. (1962). *My Waiting Game*. London: Frederick Muller Ltd.

Round, D. (1938). *Tennis for Girls*. London: James Nisbet.

Schoenfeld, B. (2004). *The Match: Althea Gibson and Angela Buxton*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Tinling, T. and Oxby, R. (1963). *White Ladies*. London: Stanley Paul.

Tinling, T. and Humphries, R. (1979). *Love and Faults –Personalities Who Have Changed the History of Tennis in my Lifetime*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Truman, C. (1961). *Tennis Today*. London: C. Tinling & Co Ltd

Wade, V. and Rafferty, J. (1984). *Ladies of the Court: A Century of Women at Wimbledon*. London: Pavilion Books Limited.

Wills, H. (1928). *Tennis*. London: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Wilson, P. (1958). England Regains Wightman Cup. *World Tennis*, August, pp.10-13.

#### Sample of media sources analysed

Dorey, L.H.J. (1950). The L.T.A. and the Training of Juniors: a Landmark in Lawn Tennis History. *Lawn Tennis and Badminton*, January 15, 35-36.

Dorey, L.H.J. (1954). L.T.A. Winter Training School: Promise of the Younger Girls – Cine Strip Films used for Instruction. *Lawn Tennis and Badminton*, January 15, 28-30.

Hardwick, M. (1959). The Fashion Parade. *World Tennis*, March, p.20.

Kaufmann, A. (1960). Hazel Wightman, Woman of the Century, Wins Marlboro Award. *World Tennis*, April, pp.22-26.

*Lawn Tennis and Badminton* (1921). Marjorie: Fashions at Norwood. July 31, p.308.

*Lawn Tennis and Badminton* (1946). Wightman cup: USA Win by 7-0. July 1, p.162.

*Lawn Tennis and Badminton* (1949a). Quote from the Daily Express, February 16, 1949. March 1, p.110.

*Lawn Tennis and Badminton* (1949b). Notes from the LTA general meeting. August 1, p.724.

*Lawn Tennis and Badminton* (1950). Our Juniors - Junior Wimbledon. October 1, p.610.

*Lawn Tennis and Badminton* (1951). The Amateur Defined. June 15, p.330.

Lawn Tennis and Badminton (1960). The Changing Styles. March 1, pp.94-95.

World Tennis (1958). Review of tennis. September, pp.60-61.

World Tennis (1959). Golden Goddess Karol Fageros (caption with photo). July, p.52.

World Tennis (1959). August, p.58

## Appendix 9: Raw data themes from Schoenfeld's (2004) biography of Althea Gibson (AG) and Angela Buxton (AB)

Page	Research Issue	Author
4	Angela lived in London until partner and son died move to Florida	Schoenfeld
4	age 61 still coaching and writing for tennis magazines and British papers	Schoenfeld
7	Louise Brough – reigning W. champ	Schoenfeld
7	Gibson in film 1999?	Schoenfeld
8	Angela lived in South Africa as child. Played with Black children	Schoenfeld
9	definition of Wimbledon	Schoenfeld
10	Identity on court and off. Athletic versus. femininity	Schoenfeld
18	Gibson aged 18 still not focussed on tennis	Schoenfeld
19	governing body for black players = American Tennis Association	Schoenfeld
22	Alice Marble look feminine play like a man	Schoenfeld
24	amateur tennis and behaviour	Schoenfeld
27-30.	AB living in south Africa	Schoenfeld
30-33.	discussion of Mr Buxton father	Schoenfeld
32	Queen Wilhelmina. Old to marry age 24	Schoenfeld
33	Angela played tennis during war. Then return to GB post WW2 + better than peers	Schoenfeld
34	Play against wall. During war tennis production stopped – nets, balls, rackets	Schoenfeld
34	Boarding school. 30 min per week coaching	Schoenfeld
35	Encouraged to play tennis in summer. AB no role models was the influence of war. Dan Maskell and Fred Perry talent spotting at junior tournaments called "siftings" AB seen in Wales	Schoenfeld
36	Siftings. Players hit with Dan Maskell. Fred Perry observed. AB chosen to go to W to hit. Did not progress further. Father wanted her to play tennis to meet nice people. Tennis played by Charlie Chaplin and Katherine Hepburn.	Schoenfeld
37	AB move to London 1950 aged 15. 16 in August. Private academy. Court	Schoenfeld
38	head mistress sorted for AB to play at Cumberland club	Schoenfeld
	3 times per week for 1 hour. Coach Bill Blake. Not allowed join as Jewish	Schoenfeld
	Abs son Joseph Silk became umpire.	Schoenfeld
39	AG considered a novelty. Playing Queens 1951. funded by members of cosmopolitan club	Schoenfeld
40	AG's character and junior success	Schoenfeld
41	AG and Ray Robinson	Schoenfeld