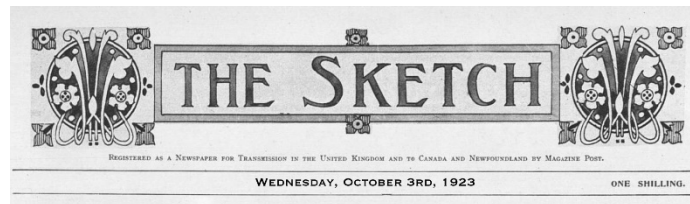


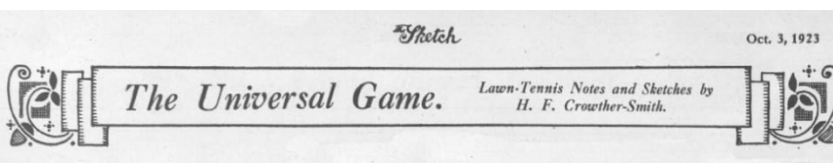
## From the Archives – 5th October Reflections on Lawn Tennis and Roehampton Club 100 Years Ago

In October 1923, *The Sketch* newspaper featured an article written by HF Crowther-Smith reflecting on the state of lawn tennis. Extracts from the report make up the body of this contribution to the *Recorder*.



It refers to the official fixtures for 1923 and the noticeable change in the game playing on surfaces other than grass as early as the end of August. The two little letters of (H.C.) signifying hard court events began to appear on the list of tournaments. Though there were many important grass court meetings in September such as Folkestone, Eastbourne and Hythe, the H.C. initials appeared to increase as the month went on.

The weather in October would not permit any outdoor tournaments at all and the lawn tennis players were even driven off the hard courts to the wood surfaces under cover. As far as this country was concerned following the covered court tournaments at Craigside and Queens Club, there were no more official figures, and the majority of players – those who cannot get away to the Riviera – have to put away their rackets particularly carefully until March.



While the newspaper article was written at the end of the season knowing that the days of lawn tennis on any of the possible surfaces would be numbered,

the journalist stated that the game would attract both competitors and spectators alike right up to the last.

At this point the article makes reference to the preparations two or three days before the hard court tournament at Roehampton Club and the abundant evidence of the colossal task which this meeting would present to the manager and the committee. Golfers returning from their days labour in the bunkers could scarcely get to their lockers for the enormous pile of brown papered packages stacked just inside the entrance. These packages were found on examination to represent about a hundred dozen of the best Slazenger tennis balls designed for hard court surfaces.

Members of the committee were closeted for hours in the Games Manager's Room dealing with a tremendous entry both in quality and quantity. On the opening day of the event on Monday, 24th September, the courts and their surroundings represented such a scene of animation as to suggest that it was the opening of the season and not the end of it.





The article goes on to consider the four or five months of the year when there are no lawn tennis tournaments when the receipts of the various laundry companies would tail off considerably. The journalist goes on to say that he never had the courage to ask one of the regular first-class players – who not only appear at nearly every fixture during the season but is on the court every day of the week clad from top to toe in pristine whites – what his annual lawn-tennis laundry bill actually amounts to.

He goes on to ponder the delicate nature of asking the question regarding one of the few items of personal expenditure where economy could scarcely be commended. Recognising that white is the approved colour of the uniform, he notices that most players take the greatest pains to appear in garments as white as white garments can be.

Knowing that so many well-known players go into business closely aligned to the game, the journalist ponders the possibility of setting up a special lawn tennis laundry service with a lady partner. This would allow his idea of the delivery vans operating the service with the inscription of 'The Laundress for your Lawn Dress'.

He goes on to imagine a possible nightmare scenario when a holder, two years running of a valuable Challenge Cup at Scarborough for example, who had hoped to make it his property that week was forced to scratch from the event as his laundry had been sent to Folkestone in the belief that he was playing there.

The writer concludes his article by saying that this would be his last report for the season but felt that it was incumbent on him to take a retrospective view of the game and the players. He then refers to the regular followers of his work who will know of his despairing opinion about those who represent the lawn tennis of this country.

His final words emphasise the importance of our players being somewhere in the running when the major competitions are being contested. The author of the newspaper article, HF Crowther-Smith has been featured in a previous edition of the *Recorder*. He is also a talented caricaturist, and a selection of his images are also included.

**Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist**