

History of Tennis in Yorkshire

While there have been some books and articles relating various aspects of Yorkshire tennis history, there has never been an attempt to encompass the multitude of activities and developments since the origins of lawn tennis in the 1870s. The best format of such a work can still be decided but, as I am working towards a national tennis history website providing information on all aspects of local tennis in an encyclopaedic format, I suggest that the book could tie in with this site.

The website will feature:

- County-wide associations: YLTA, Yorkshire Parks LTA, Yorkshire Industrial LTA.

- Inter-county competitions, including lists of winners.

- Tournaments, including some lists of winners.

- Clubs (and other venues): grouped by district or locality, with individual pages for the larger clubs and others for which significant information is available.

- Local and district associations.

- Inter-club competitions, including lists of winners.

- People: biographies of players and organisers, concentrating on their tennis career.

- Potentially, any other aspects of British tennis, some of which are likely to be relevant to Yorkshire.

The book will include topics such as:

Early country house adopters of tennis. Early tournaments.

Clubs: First known clubs in the mid-1870s. Start of inter-club matches (the first recorded inter-club match was between Ripon and Harrogate in 1876). Growth of clubs from mid-1880s, late 19th century decline, followed by revival leading up to WW1 but particularly after the war. One club, Hull YPI, advertised itself as the largest in Europe with 60 courts, when based at the Ferens Recreation Ground. At least 2,000 clubs of various sizes and types (e.g. parks, works, church) have existed in the county.

Yorkshire LTA: formation in 1884 and early developments: county tournament including championship events. County club at Scarborough. Inter-county matches. Noteworthy players. Yorkshire inter-club league (1921). Annual southern tour. Success in County Championships.

Local and district associations/leagues: Sheffield LTA (1891, the oldest local association in the country, probably the world), followed after WW1 by Mexborough, Doncaster, Halifax, Hebden Bridge, Elsecar, Rotherham, Barnsley, Hull, Harrogate, and others. Organised parks tennis: Sheffield, Leeds, Bradford. Workplace clubs. Church tennis. New leagues after WW2: e.g. Huddersfield, Scarborough, Wakefield, Beverley; later: Leeds, York.

Rise of coaching and junior tennis from the 1920s. Resistance to Sunday tennis. Gradual decline of works, parks and church clubs. Sponsorship and the effect of professional tennis on tournaments. Leisure centres and commercial clubs (e.g. David Lloyd). Mini tennis. Lottery grants.

All this against a changing social and industrial background.