

Go West, Young Man

Peter Dunscombe on 36 years at the West of England

I thought my first involvement with the West of England Championships (WoE) was in 1966 when I played while at Clifton. However the RFA has no records of my participation!

The sixties was a golden era for Clifton Fives, with great players such as John Bretten, David Spence and Chris Bascombe followed by two of my contemporaries, Tony Dixon and Alan Brown, who won the schools' doubles.

At the RFA AGM in 1975 Dave Hebden asked me if I would take on the event as I was moving back to Bristol. I accepted and the rest is history.

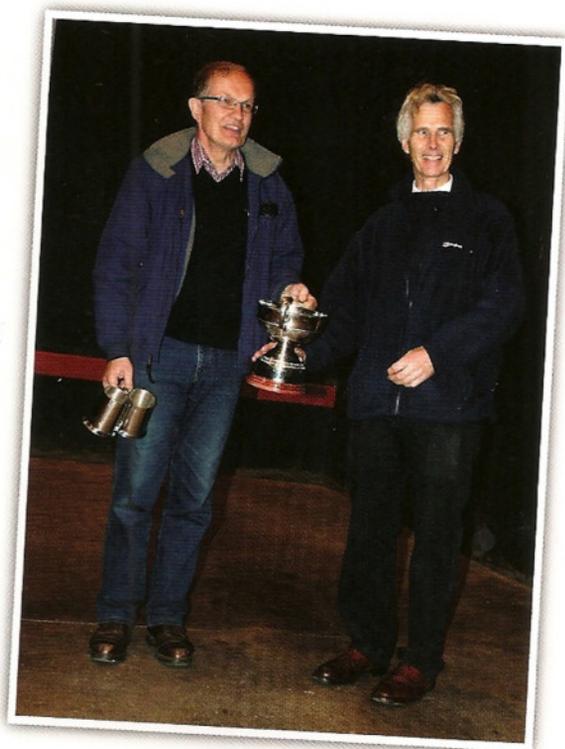
Bristol was well endowed with courts at that time – 13 in all – so it is sad that there are now only four at Clifton. However, it was fortunate that these courts were available as the tournament grew and grew. By the mid-eighties, we often had over 70 competitors in the singles and almost 40 pairs in the doubles.

To complete the event, we used the courts at both Bristol Grammar School and Colstons so I had to rely on help from the likes of Peter de Winton. As

I always played in both the singles and doubles, it left me exhausted!

As the courts were withdrawn so the size of the tournament declined. However, almost 10 years ago when Clifton pulled down their 'new' courts and Bristol could no longer accommodate us, Mike Cleaver came to our rescue and offered us the facilities at Sherborne. Happily, we were able to return to Clifton when, with a grant from the RFA Charitable Trust, two of the 'old' courts were refurbished.

Over my 36 tournaments, Wayne Enstone has to be the greatest singles champion, winning 13 times, while Fuller and Hebden won the doubles 11 times. The longest tournament was in 1978 when David Barnes and Jeremy Schroeter beat Steve Ashton and Tony Wynn – at 10.15pm on the Sunday evening. The worst moment was when David slipped, was concussed and ended up in hospital, and the most exciting final was the 2010 singles match between James Toop and Will Ellison.



Peter Dunscombe (left) at the end of his final West of England Championships in 2010

I am delighted that Simon Werkshagen has agreed to take on running the WoE, and I know he'll do a good job, but I look forward to being around and maintaining contact with the Fives world at future events.