

**WH Powell
(1904-1970)**



William Powell was a member of the pair that won the first Cyriax Cup competition for Rugby Fives Doubles in 1926. He and his partner Jock Scott¹ entered from Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge. Powell was a student and Scott was a Fellow and Lecturer in Classics at the College.

In the final of the Cyriax Cup competition, Powell and Scott played a pair from the Old Gowers (former pupils of University College School) which contained the great Dr Cyriax², the donor of the Cup and the most famous Fives player of the time. The players were to play two games of singles against their opposite number followed by two games of doubles. This meant that Powell was to play the Doctor.

An eyewitness wrote: 'The singles were played first, and the two games between Powell and Cyriax were as fine an exhibition of Rugby Fives as the writer has ever seen. Cyriax won them both (by 15—9 and 15—10 respectively), but he had to fight his hardest against a very fine and active player of less than half his age. In each game he obtained a useful lead at the start, but as the game progressed was visibly tiring and was being overhauled by his opponent, though by a great effort he managed to keep in front to the end.'

The rest of the match went Cambridge's way: Scott² easily beat his singles opponent, C Barrett, who had a damaged right hand, and the doubles went to Cambridge by 15-9, 15-7, resulting in a light-blue win overall by 79-53.

William Powell played Fives for Cambridge in the first three Varsity Matches (1925-27), but we have no further record of him as a Fives player. He was busy on a different court...

Powell had attended Oundle School and had excelled at Lawn Tennis. At Cambridge he captained the University team, partnering HW 'Bunny' Austin³, who went on to partner Fred Perry in the Davis Cup in the 1930s.

Powell played in the men's singles at Wimbledon each year between 1926 and 1933 but never reached the final stages. He also played for Great Britain in an international exhibition series against the USA in 1929.

He served as a Captain in the Royal Artillery in World War II and died in Kent in 1970.

David Barnes (RFA Archivist) 01.06.2026

¹ Scott was a pupil at Clifton College and an undergraduate at Emmanuel College. He was the first President of the Cambridge University Rugby Fives Club 1920-1929.

² Dr Edgar Cyriax (1874-1955), a distinguished physician in his own right, but regarded in the world of Rugby Fives as the Grand Old Man of Fives for his prominent role in the setting up of the Rugby Fives Association in 1927. He was Chairman of the RFA Committee from 1927 and his early election as a Vice President was a mark of his status as the founder of the Association and Chairman of Committee. An Old Boy of University College School (UCS), Cyriax claimed to have never been beaten in a game of Singles for 37 years.

³ Henry Wilfred 'Bunny' Austin (1906-2000) was for 74 years the last British player to reach the final of the Men's Singles at Wimbledon until Andy Murray did so in 2012. Austin lost twice in the final: in 1932 and 1938. He was part of the British team, along with Fred Perry, that won the Davis Cup in three consecutive years (1933-1935). He was an undergraduate at Pembroke College, Cambridge when he partnered William Powell in the Varsity Match.

William Powell's Tennis Record

From TENNIS.COM <https://tennisarchives.com/player/?pl=4526>

William Henry Powell

Date of birth 1904-09-13

Place of birth: Penarth, Wales

Statistics

Career 1925 - 1933

Tournament wins 18

Matches 65

Match wins 39

Tournament wins (18)

1933 - Hull (Amateur)

1932 - New Malden (Amateur)

1932 - Henley Hard courts Autumn Meeting (Amateur)

1931 - Harrogate Hard Courts (Amateur)

1931 - Henley Hard courts Autumn Meeting (Amateur)

1931 - New Malden (Amateur)

1930 - Ealing LTC (Amateur)

1930 - Ealing West Side Country Club (Amateur)

1929 - Midland Counties Championships (Amateur)

1929 - Middlesex Championships (Amateur)

1929 - Harrogate Hard Courts (Amateur)

1928 - Surrey Hard Court Championships (Open)

1927 - Cumberland Hard Courts (Amateur)

1927 - Henley Hard courts Autumn Meeting (Amateur)

1927 - New Malden (Amateur)

1927 - Sutton Hard Courts (Open)

1926 - Sutton Hard Courts (Open)

1925 - Margate (Amateur)

Tournaments

1933 - Wimbledon

1933 - British Covered Court Championships

1933 - Hull - winner
1932 - Wimbledon
1932 - Welsh Championships
1932 - New Malden - winner
1932 - Harrogate Hard Courts
1932 - Henley Hard courts Autumn Meeting - winner
1931 - Wimbledon
1931 - British Hard Court Championships
1931 - Middlesex Championships
1931 - New Malden - winner
1931 - Harrogate Hard Courts - winner
1931 - Henley Hard courts Autumn Meeting - winner
1930 - Wimbledon
1930 - Ealing LTC - winner
1930 - Ealing West Side Country Club - winner
1929 - Wimbledon
1929 - Dulwich Gallery
1929 - Welsh Championships
1929 - Midland Counties Championships - winner
1929 - Wimbledon Plate (Consolation)
1929 - London Covered Court Championships
1929 - Middlesex Championships - winner
1929 - Surrey Hard Court Championships
1929 - Harrogate Hard Courts - winner
1929 - Henley Hard Courts Spring Meeting
1928 - Wimbledon
1928 - Irish Championships
1928 - Queen's Club Tournament
1928 - Surrey Hard Court Championships - winner
1927 - Wimbledon
1927 - Queen's Club Tournament
1927 - South of England Championships
1927 - Cumberland Hard Courts - winner
1927 - New Malden - winner
1927 - Sutton Hard Courts - winner
1927 - Henley Hard courts Autumn Meeting - winner
1927 - Ealing West Side Country Club
1927 - Hindenburg and Black Forest Cup
1926 - Wimbledon
1926 - Sutton Hard Courts - winner
1925 - Margate - winner

From Oundle Archives 1st June 2026

[Highlighted additional material from Wikipedia]

Thank you for your email. Unfortunately, we don't seem to have a lot of information about him after he left School. He was as you said a very good sportsman, tennis seemed to have been his primary sport fix and there are a few mentions of him in the School magazine. Apparently in Cambridge as Captain of the Varsity Lawn tennis he had a most successful season. In the doubles he played with HW Austin [Henry Wilfred 'Bunny' Austin (Repton & Pembroke,) who reached the semi-finals of the Wimbledon Doubles in 1926 while still an undergraduate, was runner-up in the Singles in 1932 and 1938, last British man to reach the final till Andy Murray in 2012].

According to a report in the 1929 School Magazine, when an Old Oundelian was at Wimbledon he spoke to WH Powell, "who surely must be the first Wimbledon player that the Oundle Courts have produced".

1929 June Powell represented Great Britain in a Davis-Cup-style team event against America (see below for report in the NYT)

1930/31 played for London in the [16th Annual] Hard Court Tennis Match against Paris [March 1931]

1931 - engaged to be married [to Enid Ackernley]

At the time of his marriage in 1933 he was listed as an insurance broker.

During World War Two he was a Captain in the Royal Artillery.

We have noted that he died in Kent in 1970 but there was no obituary in the Old Oundelian magazine.

From The New York Times 16th June 1929

U.S.Tennis Players Win Two-Day Series with British

EASTBOURNE, England, June 15 (AP) — America made a clean sweep of its two-day international tennis series with a team of British players, winning all five events.

After the United States players had won all four singles matches against H. K. Lester and W. H. Powell, John Van Ryn and John Hennessey captured the concluding doubles match, beating Gordon Crole-Rees and Cyril Eames, 5-7, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

In the singles matches today Van Ryn defeated Powell, 6-0, 6-3, 6-3, and Wilmer Allison downed Lester, 6-4, 6-3, 8-6.
