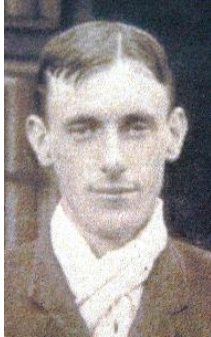


“The best £6 I have ever spent in my life!”

Just six months ago at the second “Hard Bat” competition on Saturday 17 January 2009, the first copies of the B&DTTA History Book were made available, and one of the first purchasers was **Andy Boucher** of the Civil Service Club participating in his first Hard Bat tournament. Little did he know that within a few weeks, he would be saying that this was the best £6 he had ever spent in his life.



In the opening pages of that book there was mention of the very first county ping pong championships being played at Clifton in March 1902, and the very first winner of the men’s singles event was **John Mycroft Boucher** (*see left*). JMB won many other competitions in the local area too at that time, and also travelled with his brother and sister as far away as the Alexandra Palace in north London to partake in just one of many table tennis competitions that were being staged around the country in that “fever-pitch” era.

When our book’s author had initially discovered these items of interest, he had been intrigued to know whether or not there was a genealogical tie, but **Andy Boucher** was completely unaware that there was. Anyway, after some preliminary investigations by Andy, and as each day’s research slowly unfolded, it transpired that although JMB is a common ancestor by name and interest, there is no directly-known link to him at this current stage of events. However, Andy’s fascination in this has found him embarking on a quest that is currently taking over his life, and since January he has travelled many miles around Bristol and as far afield as the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon in order to delve into their archives.

JMB’s sister, **Edith Hannam (Boucher)**, who too played ping pong to a high level and does feature in our book, also reached the All England Ladies’ Lawn Tennis singles final in 1911 and doubles in 1914, as well as winning two gold medals for Great Britain in the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, along with ten Welsh tennis titles. (*A photograph of Edith is shown right*).



JMB himself also played lawn tennis and represented England at that sport, although unfortunately he had to turn down the opportunity of playing in the England Davis Cup team due to work commitments. He did, however, win four Welsh tennis titles between 1911 and 1914, beating the then current four times’ Wimbledon champion, **A F Wilding**, at Newport in 1914, and also went on to win the Clifton Lawn Tennis Open title in 1923 at the age of 52.



Andy next received a surprise phone call from some of JMB's cousins, and has since met up with them to share all the interesting facts that he has researched - many of which the family had little knowledge. This ongoing journey of the family is becoming more intriguing by the week, and Andy has recently returned from spending a very interesting day in Cornwall visiting the home of **Anne Mycroft Barks** (the 75-year old grand-daughter of JMB – *seen left with Andy*). One of the highlights of Andy's trip was discovering a document dating back to 1902 in which JMB was mentioned as being a member of the national Ping Pong Association Executive Committee, and also details an acknowledgement of JMB's special help in starting up the West of England Association, and which, more importantly, may yet prove that our own Association is indeed the oldest in the country. When the B&DTTA History Book is next updated (probably Spring 2010), this additional and fascinating information will have hopefully been verified, and expanded in more detail.

The last piece of news that Andy has reported is that he has frantically been searching for the final resting place of JMB, and was absolutely astounded to discover only a week or so ago that this was none other than in the church cemetery directly opposite the venue of Failand Table Tennis Club where Andy himself has played the game on many occasions in the last twenty years or so.

We can also report that as a result of these remarkable findings, together with the annual fixture of the Hard Bat competition now firmly set on our calendar, the Executive Committee have decided to have the recently-purchased Hard Bat perpetual trophy engraved, and hence this will now be called the **John Mycroft Boucher Hard Bat Trophy** in recognition of his early achievements in our sport.

If anybody else happens to have any similar stories or items of interest, even if it has affected their life just half as much as Andy's, please contact our Publicity Officer, **Phil Turner**, on philtturn@hotmail.com, who will be really glad to hear from you. Thank you.

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