

EALING LAWN TENNIS CLUB
Dorothea Lambert Chambers (née Douglass)

It is a proud day for Ealing.

We are here to honour the last, and perhaps the greatest, of the great trio of Tennis Champions bred in the Borough.

Blanche Bingley from the Greenford end of the Borough was the first – born in 1864. Tennis was not invented until well after she was born, so she was already 20 when she competed in the very first Ladies Wimbledon Singles in 1884. She won it two years later, and then another five times over the next 15 years. She went on competing until 1913.

She saw the emergence of our second hero – Charlotte Cooper. She won our Club singles title at the age of 14 in 1885 (our second, while Blanche was competing at the second Wimbledon), and won it regularly, seven times in nine years. What a Youth Development Programme we must have had in those days. She then moved away, and started winning Wimbledon which she won five times in all, as well as being the first-ever Olympic Ladies Tennis Champion in 1900.

This was the Ealing background from which Dorothea Douglass emerged. Seven years younger than “Chattie” Cooper, she must have watched and been inspired by her performances and success. She was less precocious than Chattie, but had the amazing staying power of Blanche. She left it until she was 20 before winning our Club’s Championship in 1899. That same year, Blanche beat Chattie Cooper in the Wimbledon Final. A clean sweep for Ealing. And for the next two years it was the same, with Dorothea winning Club Singles, while Blanche and Chattie again fought it out in the Wimbledon Final.

So Dorothea then turned her sights to Wimbledon and won it in 1903; from then on she was a regular finalist, winning seven times, and a finalist another four. This left the field clear back here in Ealing for her little sister to win our Club’s Championship six times. 1908 was a barren year at Wimbledon for Dorothea, so she won the Olympic Gold Medal instead. Her last Wimbledon Final appearance was in 1920, when she was 42; so did she retire? Of course not; she not only captained the British Wightman cup team, but played in it and won the deciding rubber in 1925 aged 46 in the 4-3 victory. America may have claimed her as a US citizen because of her marriage, but she was playing for Great Britain.

An amazing story of success over a long and illustrious career. And it all started here, where she was born; and was nurtured at Ealing LTC where her talent first flowered. We are grateful to English Heritage for their recognition of this great Ealing story. Maybe they will recognise Chattie Cooper too in due course – the first Olympic Champion and five-time Wimbledon winner. We are grateful to the Reverend Peter Watkins, whose house it is upon which the plaque is put. And we are grateful to everyone who made time to come here and honour one of Ealing’s heroes. May we invite you all back to the Club, which is just a short step across the Common, where we can all have a bite and a drink in our Pavilion in the shadow of our Honours Board which proudly bears the name of Miss D K Douglass.