



Oxford University Prize Racquets Racket 1857 Silver Mounted And Engraved.

Sold



REF: 27553

Height: 76 cm (29.9")

Width: 16 cm (6.3")

Depth: 4 cm (1.6")

## Description

A Rare Oxford University Prize Racquet Rackets.

Two rare Racquets Racquets, one being a presentation prize racket the other a Racquets Racquet, both belonging to George Langton Hodgkinson, Pembroke College. The "Oxford University Prize Racquet 1857" with silver braided wire-work to the top of the blue crushed velvet grip and a heavily decorated butt cap. The butt cap engraved 'Oxford University Prize Racquet 1857' on the end and on the edge 'G. L. Hodgkinson, Pem: Coll.'. The concave throat of the racquet has a decorated engraved silver inlay on both sides. One with the coat of arms of the University of Oxford which depicts an open book with the inscription Dominus Illuminatio Mea ('The Lord is my light'), surrounded by three crowns. The other engraved with 'G L H & WHD'. The racket with original unusual gut stringing, all the vertical strings being thick gut, the horizontal strings being a combination of single thick gut and double thin gut. The racquet was presented to George Langton Hodgkinson as winner of the Oxford Senior Doubles Racquets together with William Hart Dyke. In an excerpt from records written by Hodgkinson's in 1895 for his children, he attributes the win primarily to William Hart Dyke.

The second Racquets racket we have been led to believe was the racket used by George Hodgkinson to win both the Junior and Senior Doubles in 1857. This racket show signs of use and has "G L Hodgkinson" written in ink on the handle. The throat has a silver shield on both sides, one inscribed "JUNIOR RACQUET 1857" and the other with the initials "GLH & WHD". It is still strung with the original period thick gut stringing although damaged it is very acceptable for a racket of this age.

The giving of a prize-racket at Oxford in the annual Tennis (Real Tennis) matches amongst the undergraduates was started in 1850, and has been regular every year since. Originally the prize was a small gold racket for the first six years, being replaced by a silver-mounted racket of ordinary size there after. We believe this may have been the case for Racquets also.

William Hart Dyke went on to win the rackets championship from a professional player (Francis Erwood) at the Prince's Club, which was the former headquarters of rackets. In 1873 Dyke played lawn tennis in a significant early match with John Moyer Heathcote and Julian Marshall at his home of Lullingstone Castle. In 1875 with Heathcote he was a member of the Marylebone Cricket Club committee that framed the original set of rules of tennis.

We contacted Pembroke College and Amanda Ingram, Archivist of Pembroke College, sent us a couple of copies of photos of George that they have in an album in their procession. The album belonged to George and one photo is of the 1859 Torpids (rowing) crew featuring him (back right) and one of him in his military uniform. There is also a copy of a note that came with the album which gives biographical information about George.

George was the 2nd son of George Hodgkinson of Kentish Town, Middlesex and matriculated at Pembroke on 15th May 1856.

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