



Vintage Real Tennis Racket  
Gray-Nicolls

Sold



REF: 29918

Height: 68 cm (26.8")

Width: 18 cm (7.1")

Depth: 2.7 cm (1.1")

## Description

Vintage Gray's Real Tennis Racket.

A good real tennis racket with original black stringing made by Grays of Cambridge. The ash frame in good condition with taped head and the characteristic offset or tilt-top shape. Written on the front of the square handle "Strung by H. D. Johns, LORDS" and the remains of Grays of Cambridge trade logo (Johns was the Professional at the M.C.C.).

Two of the twentieth century's greatest professionals, Jack Groom and Henry Johns, successively presided over the Lord's second court for more than fifty years. The court opened on 1st January 1900. Henry Johns took over in 1954 and remained in charge until 1975 (although he continued to work for the Club part-time thereafter). He had first come to Lord's in 1936 after training at Prince's and at the Cazalet family's court at Fairlawne. He was a masterly player on the Lord's court (champion of the world there, Jim Dear used to say), an excellent coach and a delightful personality. Henry was an outstanding marker, handling many of the most important matches of his time, and had a hand in training many young professionals - including his successor at Lord's, David Cull, and his two assistants, Mark Ryan and Chris Swallow. The outstanding M.C.C. amateur from the era of Henry Johns and David Cull was Howard Angus who won the Gold Racquet 16 times and was World Champion from 1976 to 1981. When David Cull retired in 2002, he was succeeded by Adam Phillips.

Taken from History of tennis at Lord's booklet.

H.J. Gray and Sons was founded in Cambridge by world rackets champion H.J. Gray in 1855 and soon built a reputation supplying rackets to University players such as Ranjitsinjhi and the future King Edward VII. Initially they were manufactures of Rackets for racquets, real tennis and lawn tennis. In 1929 they were listed as manufacturers of Lawn Tennis Rackets, Badminton Rackets, Racquet Rackets, Squash Rackets, and all Goods connected with Sports and Games. They were also distributors of the Hazell's 'Streamline' racket and later bought them out, they also merged with the world-renowned cricket bat business of L.J. Nicolls to create Gray-Nicolls.

'Real Tennis' is the original and oldest of all the racket sports and dates back many hundreds of years, and is sometimes called "the sport of kings" or Royal Tennis. The game has evolved from its early years and by the early part of the 19th Century its popularity was so that there were many hundreds of courts throughout Europe, but by the end of the 19th century with the introduction of 'Lawn Tennis' its popularity waned and many of the courts fell into disuse.

The real tennis racket is designed with a lop-sided head to help strike the ball when it is close to the corners of the court or the floor. The handles are longer in 'Real Tennis' than in 'Lawn Tennis' and have very tight strings to cope with the heavy cloth balls. Grays of Cambridge (UK) and Harrow Sports (USA) are the only two companies in the world still hand-crafting these racquets. The 'Real Tennis' court is asymmetrical with high walls and a ceiling. It is enclosed by walls on all four sides, three of which have sloping roofs, known as 'penthouses', various openings in the walls 'galleries' (from which s...