



# Radley College Tennis Court

## December 2019

'Half a Yard' - The Club Newsletter

This Newsletter will bring you up to date with the expansion of the professional team at Radley; give some details about the revival of tennis at the Oratory; summarise recent tournament results; present an update of the state of the new court in Bordeaux; and, lastly, and most importantly, gives us the opportunity to wish all Radley members

**A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS  
AND NEW YEAR!**

### Club News

#### **New Assistant Professional -**

We are delighted to welcome Levi Gale as the latest addition to the professional team at Radley. He has been able to start work straight away, has already started helping with on and off-court activities and is quickly marking his mark.



Levi was born and bred in Dorset, being brought up in the village of Walditch, near Bridport, where his family lived close to the Hyde Real Tennis Court.

He started playing as a young teenager, switching from county-level lawn tennis to real tennis and improving rapidly under the expert tutelage of Ben Ronaldson, then Head Pro at the Hyde. Levi joined the national Junior Development Squad and became one of the best juniors in the country.

After school, Levi studied Psychology at Birmingham University. He did not play real tennis during this time but reverted to lawn tennis and played for Birmingham Uni for three years. Since graduating, he has spent the past couple of years travelling, trying different jobs and working out what he really, really wants to do. He has concluded that it is to make real tennis his career.

Nino and Levi have the same handicap at present and they should be able to help each other improve, being ideal practice partners for each other.



We are delighted to give Levi the opportunity of starting his professional career at Radley and wish him every success as a club and tournament pro.

Levi's first tournament as a professional will be the U24 British Open Singles and Doubles Championships, which will be played at Middlesex University Real Tennis Club from 2-5 January 2020.

Very good luck, Levi, in your tennis career and we know our members will make you very welcome.

### **Club Tournaments**

Congratulations to the winners of the Men's and Women's Club Championships, which have all been contested over the past week.

#### **The Radley Men's Championships –**

All male club members with handicaps under 30 were invited to take part and the competition included all those who were available.

The Singles Final should have seen defending Champion and holder of The Chris Ronaldson Trophy, Ali Hakimi, play Ned Batstone. Most unfortunately, family illness meant that Ali had to withdraw immediately before the Final and so the Trophy passed to Ned Batstone.



Ned Batstone, being presented with the Chris Ronaldson Trophy by Maggie Henderson-Tew, Club Captain

Ned's ability and playing successes have been frequently featured in previous Newsletters and he is a most worthy holder of the Club Singles title. Sunday 15 December turned out to be Ned's day. as he and his partner, Charles Human, won through to the Final of the Club Doubles Championship.

In the Final, Ned and Charles beat Paul Kettle and Stewart Licudi, who are both previous holders of the Radley Singles and Doubles titles.

The quality and speed of play delighted the spectators who packed the dedans and who were fortunate to see such an exhilarating contest.



Mick Dean presenting The Mick Dean Trophy, for the first time, to the Radley Doubles Championship winners, Ned Batstone and Charles Human

The Radley Doubles Championship is now played for The Mick Dean Trophy, with grateful thanks to the generosity of Stewart Licudi who had the idea and sponsored the new trophy.

Not only is this a wholly appropriate way of acknowledging Mick's importance as the instigator of the project to build the court several decades ago but also of his considerable expertise as a player of doubles.

CJR says that there are very few people whom he would rather watch and that we all have a lot to learn from studying Mick's unhurried stroke-making and elegance on the doubles court.

### **The Radley Ladies Championship -**

Illness and absence restricted the entry to this year's competition, which was a pity, but 2018 winner, Sarah Backhouse, defended her Singles title strongly and beat Maggie Henderson-Tew in a closely-fought Final that was marked with great precision by Levi.



Sarah Backhouse holding the Ladies Club Championship Trophy, with marker Levi Gale, and Maggie Henderson-Tew, the losing Finalist

### **The Radley Handicap Championship 2019 –**

Almost everyone in the club participated in this year's Handicap Championship, which concluded on Friday 20 December with the Final between Martin McNair (46.7) and Boris Salle (69.4).

It was nip and tuck all the way, with 40-all game points playing their part in the drama of the 9-game set. When the score stood at 7-7, things started to get pretty tense. In the end, the handicap of 30/owe-30, proved too great for Martin and Boris triumphed, 9-7. What a Final! They both get their just reward; an invitation to Bridport to participate in the Chetwood Cup for all the finalists of the UK clubs' handicap competitions. Congratulations to both players on their success - and good luck!

### **Intra-Club Events**

The next club competition will be our annual feast of festive fun, the Hangover Doubles, competing for the Charlie Hodgson Trophy. It is being held on Sunday 29 December and there will be prizes for various on and off-court antics, fancy dress will be encouraged and normal tennis rules will not prevail.

### **Inter-Club Matches**

#### **The Franklin Solicitors Thames Valley League –**

Our most recent fixture was on Saturday 7 December, when we played Oxford at home. That match was a draw and we are now looking forward to playing the Oratory team, at their court, on Saturday 4 January. This encounter is particularly timely, given other developments. See page 6.

Maggie has already been in touch with potential players about that away match but please let her know if you have not yet had a 'run-out' for Radley in this doubles competition and would like to do so. Pairs represent the 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s handicap bands and each play the best of three 6-game sets matches, marked, and off doubles handicaps.

#### **The Brodie Cup –**



The Brodie Cup is Radley's main event in the national inter-club tournament calendar and is a team competition for players in the H 30-50 range.



With huge thanks to all team members for their heroic efforts so far, we are very pleased to report that Radley has progressed to the Semi-Final stage, which will be played at The Royal Tennis Court, Hampton Court Palace, on Sunday 26 January.

The Final will be played in Bridport on March 8, so fingers crossed that we will be playing there again and against either Wellington or Seacourt (last year's Runners-up to Oxford) this coming year.

### **Major International Tournaments**

#### **The 2020 Men's World Championship -**

A fundamental principle of the Men's World Championship is that the Champion always has the right to defend his title. Possible opponents play each other in a series of 'Eliminators' and the triumphant player can then challenge the current World Champion to a long match that is an extraordinary test of physical and mental strength and stamina.

The Men's World Championship takes place over three days, during which up to 13 sets will be played. Four sets are played on each of the first two days, with up to five sets being played on the third day, until one of the players has won seven sets and is crowned World Champion.

Tickets are now on sale for the Men's World Championship Challenge, which will be played at Prested Hall on 22, 24 and 26 April 2020. Details can be found by following this link:

<https://www.irtpa.com/news/irtpa-news/wc-2020-tickets-and-information/>.

#### **Recent History -**

Those who watched the unfolding of the drama of the most recent Men's World Championship, staged at Queen's Club in April 2018, won't forget it quickly.

Defending Champion, Camden Riviere, took on the Challenger, Rob Fahey, World Champion from 1994-2016, winner of 50 major singles titles and widely acknowledged as the greatest player of the game there has ever been.

The match was due to end a couple of days before Rob's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and it was widely expected that this could turn out to be his final match and might mark the end of an amazing career.

What happened was extraordinary. After 10 hours of thrilling tennis, high tension and partisan support, the score stood at five sets all. A brace of sets was needed by either player to secure the ultimate title of World Champion for the next two years.

Fully 24 years after first gaining the title, Rob became the first player in nearly a century to regain the World Championship; a title he has now won 13 times. On this occasion in 2018, Rob won by seven sets to five: 6-4, 3-6, 5-6, 0-6, 6-5, 6-4, 6-3, 6-1, 5-6, 0-6, 6-3, 6-3. It was the stuff of legend.



#### **Current Events -**

Dates of the World Championship Eliminator matches have recently been confirmed. These events take place at one venue and comprise the best of nine sets. Four sets are played on the first day, followed by a day's rest, with the remaining sets being played on the next day until one player has won five sets. If one of the players has won all four sets on the first day of play, that player has the option to demand to play a fifth set that day.

Former World Champion, Camden Riviere (US), will play Nick Howell (Aus) and their match will be played at The Oratory School, near Reading, on the evenings of Monday 27 and Wednesday 29 January 2020. Nick elected to play at the Oratory, where he went to school and where he lived for many years when his father, Jonathan, was Head Professional there. It is his 'home' court in every way!

Details about how to obtain tickets and watch the live-streaming links will be available shortly. This match will provide a splendid opportunity to relaunch real tennis at the Oratory with a match of the finest quality. Read more about real tennis at the Oratory on page 6 of this Newsletter



**STOP PRESS:** Camden (pictured above on the right of Nick Howell) has just confirmed that he will be able to squeeze in a trip to Radley on Thursday 30 January to play an evening Exhibition match, and we are so pleased that we will see him once again on court here.

**As soon as details of that evening's programme are confirmed, we will immediately circulate them to our members, but please mark it in your diary now.**

The other First-Round World Championship Eliminator will be between Chris Chapman (Aus) against Ben Taylor-Matthews (Eng) and their match will be played at the Royal Melbourne Tennis Club on Tuesday 28 and Thursday 30 January 2020. Details of the live-streaming will be circulated in due course.

## **The Tennis and Rackets Association –**

The AGM of the T&RA took place at Queens Club on 17 December and various awards were made for outstanding performances during the previous year in both games, including two to Radley members.

We are thrilled to report that Ned Batstone and Lea Van Der Zwalmen were amongst the strong field of nominees for the prestigious award for the Best Improver in Real Tennis, either amateur or professional. After intense discussions and much debate, the Greenwood Trophy was awarded to Lea.



In addition, The Lillibet Bowl, for the Outstanding Performance by a Female Rackets Player, was presented to Lea, in recognition of the retention of her World Challenge and Open titles. What splendid achievements in a wonderful year for LVDZ!

Congratulations also go to ex-Radley Assistant Pro John Lumley, who was awarded the Warburg Salver for an Outstanding Performance by a Real Tennis Professional in winning the IRTPA Singles title.

John defeated Rob Fahey in the Final, and, with partner Camden Riviere, John beat Rob Fahey and Nick Howell to win the IRTPA Doubles as well.

This performance took John's handicap to an all-time low of +10.6. For reference, Camden's handicap is currently at its best-ever of +17, while Rob's stands at +12.9, down from his best of +18.4 in Jan 2003.

These numbers are incredible to us mere mortals... N.B. Handicaps with a '+' are better than Scratch.

### The Oratory



You may be aware that the real tennis court at The Oratory School, Woodcote, near Reading has been limping along for some time. This court was built in 1989 and has had periods of great success and times when things have not gone so well.

Currently, the court is little used by the school or by club members and needs to be re-invigorated. The court is part of a fine Sports Centre, has excellent viewing and entertainment facilities and is in excellent playing condition.

There is a group of committed, energetic and enthusiastic members who desperately want the court and club to thrive. They have worked very hard over the past year to create a new structure and vision for the club, which is now separate from the school, leased by the club and will be run by a Pro team on behalf of the members.

This is where Team Radley comes in. The plan is for us to get the Oratory Real Tennis Club back on its feet until it is ready to have its own dedicated professional. Under the leadership of CJR, the team will be running the Oratory on the same basis as Radley, with the aim of achieving far-greater levels of activity and membership than exist now and restoring the 'buzz' to the club.



From 6th January, Nino, Levi & Maggie will be providing seven day a week professional cover at the Oratory court. Chris will remain based at Radley (until human-cloning is at a more advanced stage of development) and will be leading and co-ordinating the professional teams at Radley, Oratory and Bordeaux. Tomorrow, the world!

We will be doing everything we can to get Oratory real tennis back to its best by using 'The Radley Method'. We want to take it on to a new level and to respond to the specific needs and demands of each school and club.

It is extremely timely that two events will be taking place in January, though they are of very different orders of magnitude, that will help bring the two clubs together and greatly assist the re-launch of the Oratory.

The first event is the FSTVL match on Saturday 4 January, when a Radley team will play Oratory members at their court. This will get the New Year (and inevitable 'lose weight and get fit' resolutions; mine for at least the last 30 years..) off to an excellent start and provide an opportunity for members of both clubs to mix and exchange ideas, as well as enjoy a hotly-contested and hugely-enjoyable match.

The second event in January is the Men's World Championship Challenge Eliminator between World Number One, Camden Riviere and Nick Howell,



who is ranked World Number Five, to be held on 26 and 28 January at the Oratory.

The opportunity to see players of this calibre in action should be a terrific catalyst for lapsed Oratory members to return and for prospective members from the school community and beyond to be attracted to the game.

We will do our best to keep members of Radley and the Oratory updated on developments at both clubs and elsewhere and look forward to a very exciting and active 2020 in both locations.

### **Overseas Club News**

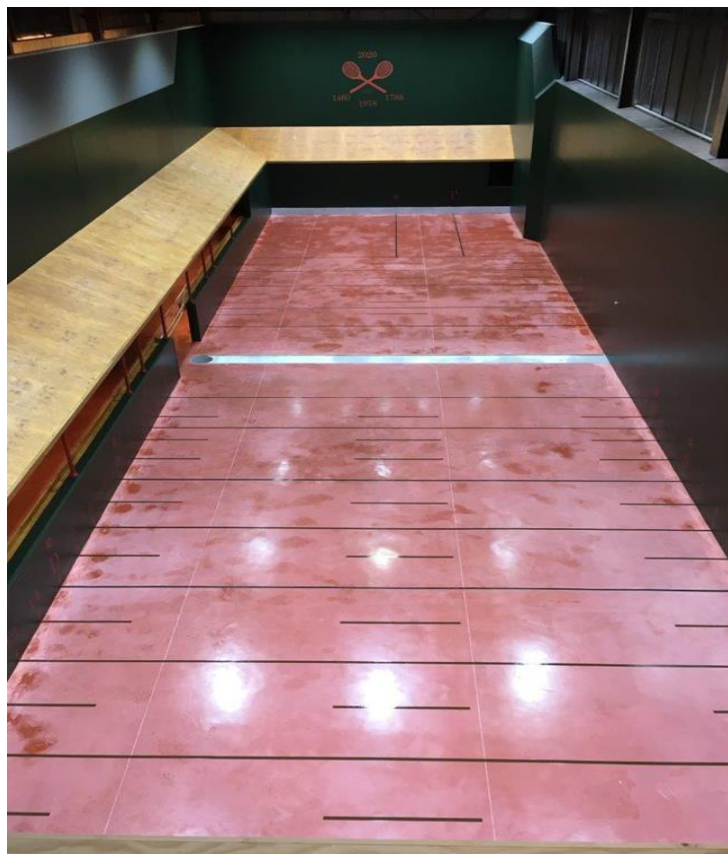
#### **Bordeaux**

The new court is nearing completion and may be ready for play in February or soon thereafter. After that starts a bureaucratic process that must be completed before the Jeu de Paume de Bordeaux can take formal ownership of the court, which means that the actual opening date of the court remains unclear.

As I am sure that you know by now, 'Team Radley' (comprising CJR, MHT, Nino and numerous *stagiaires*), will not now be taking over the running of the court for the first 18 months of its life, as had been agreed.

Nevertheless, we are desperately keen for the project to succeed, for the good of the global game. To this end, CJR and MHT will spend irregular periods of time in Bordeaux from the court's opening until a permanent Pro is appointed for the new season that will start in September 2020.

Here are three up-to-date photos of the interior of the court, which is already looking terrific.



## Sydney

We are delighted to say that the Sydney Real Tennis Club has full written agreement in place with the Cheltenham Recreation Club.



SRTC will build and operate a new real tennis court on CRC land in this leafy suburb of Sydney, which is about 35 mins drive from the airport and 15 mins to the Harbour Bridge.

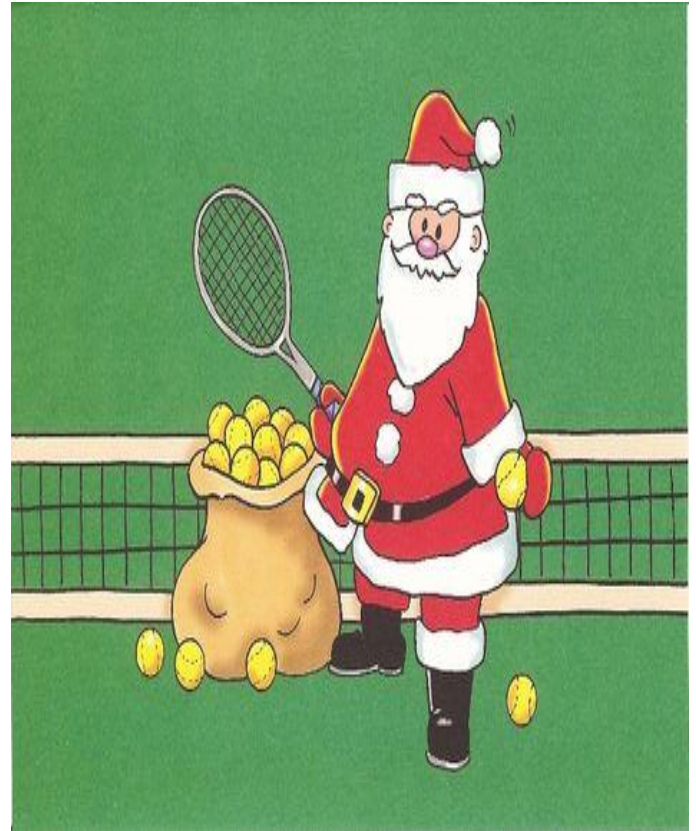
This undertaking gives the club security of tenure and means that the planning application process can begin in earnest. When planning approval is close, a construction timetable can be established, and a detailed budget put in place. The working figure for the project is, at this stage, A\$2m.

CRC has already established Real Tennis as one of the subsections of the club and the link below will take you to pages that include details of Foundation Memberships, fund-raising and how to support the project, to which, you will not be surprised to read, CJR has acted as an unpaid Advisor:  
<https://www.cheltenhamrc.com.au/>

Let's all get behind this fantastic-looking project.



## And lastly...



Here is a Christmas card from Chris, Maggie, Nino and Levi, with grateful thanks to all our fantastic members for your enthusiasm, time, commitment and support during the past year.

We wish you good health and happiness, another wonderful year of tennis and more of the moments of the magic, skill, inevitable frustration, hilarity and sheer joy that keep us all coming back for more.

Please make sure that playing more real tennis at Radley is high on your list of New Year's Resolutions - and include visits to the courts at the Oratory and in Bordeaux in 2020.

*See you on court!*

*This Newsletter, the final one of 2019, was compiled by  
Maggie Henderson-Tew*