

December  
2021

# Radley College & Bristol Real Tennis Courts

## ***Better Than The Last:***

**Being the first combined Radley  
& Bristol Club Newsletter**

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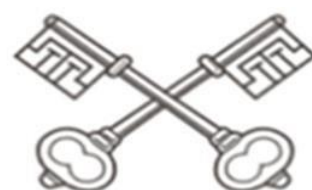
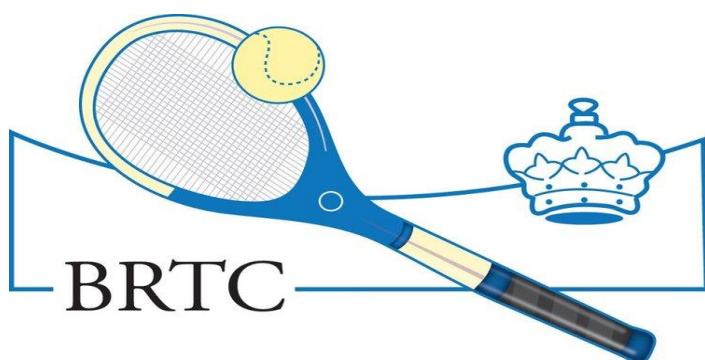
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### **December Edition:**

This is the third newsletter of the 2021/22 season and this *Better Than The Last* features an update on the Radley Refurbishment Appeal, match reports, results, tournament previews and a selection of news from Radley, Bristol and others clubs, nationally and internationally.

We feel that the Radley team presence in Bristol, albeit temporary, leads naturally to the twinning of the two clubs and the combining of BRTC and RCTC news in one place. This way, we can keep members of both clubs informed of what is happening at either end of the 90 mins journey.



**RADLEY**  
REAL TENNIS

**Relentlessly Positive**

**Positively Relentless**

We hope readers will find much of interest in these pages, which carry significant news for Radley and Bristol members, as well as for, and from, the wider community of Real Tennis.

### **Radley College Tennis Court**

#### **Club News**



Shaken, but not stirred;  
November wind resulted in a near  
miss, as a tree grazed the court

## Welcome to New Members:

Since our last edition, the following players have joined Radley and we extend a very warm welcome to you all: Natalie Barber, Clive Boucher, Steve Cianti, Matthew Clarke, Mike Ginger, Max Habsburg, Lucy Ings Chambers, Hamish Miller, Richard Liwicki, Emma Lovell and Tom Monk.

We hope that these members who recently joined are thoroughly enjoying their tennis: Stephen Dance, James Dickens, Miles Donnelly, Belinda Nicholson and Peter Yearling.

## Refurbishment Appeal:

(We) YOU have done it!

With the help and generosity of many of our members and friends in the tennis community, we have succeeded in achieving our goal of raising £50,000.

What an achievement – and all done within three months. Fantastic work!

Thank you, kind donors, for helping us achieve our objective of presenting members and visitors alike with a smarter, more comfortable, stylish and better equipped club.

Thank you all for your patience in living, and playing, though the works being carried out so cheerfully and efficiently by the splendid team of Roger and Rufus. The worst of the drilling is over, the smell of new paint will fade over the next week or so and the heady aroma of carpet adhesive will soon be but a memory.

What will take a great deal longer to forget is the 'Radley Red' paint that was delivered and applied to walls in good faith by Roger and Rufus. Much excitement and discussion resulted....

Was it really Maggie's plan to turn the clubroom walls into effective camouflage for any flock of flamingos that happened to be flying through Oxfordshire?



The truth was much more prosaic. Somehow, the wrong paint recipe had found its way into the cans marked 'Radley Red'. No pink walls in our club, thank you very much!

*What next?* Well, the signage and wall vinyls, being printed and delivered by Mayfield Printing (for which most grateful thanks to Derek Williams), is due to be installed during the week of 13 December, as one of the last items of the refurbishment list. We are confident that this will give the club a striking and enhanced appearance.

Pews from the newly extended Radley College Chapel will be coming out of the cold of barn storage and into the warmth of the clubroom shortly and will provide physical reality to the new T&RA strapline: 'A Future Built on History'. We are so pleased to be able to offer these venerable and much-loved seats a new home, after a bit of necessary TLC.



The audio-visual component of the refurb should be completed over the Christmas and New Year period, and so, perhaps within the next month, a we be able to stream world class matches and play back footage of your latest lesson, if that is something that appeals.

### Donor events

As already announced, there will be events organised to thank our donors (the costs of which will be paid for by MHT and will not come out of raised funds).

All donors who have given more than £125 (the amount the College did not collect during Covid in membership fees) will be invited to an evening event at the court on Friday 14 January 2022. The evening will comprise a feast of exhibition tennis from the British number 1 and 2 players, Ben Taylor-Matthews and Bryn Sayers, with supper, in our refurbished clubroom. Invitations will be sent out in due course.

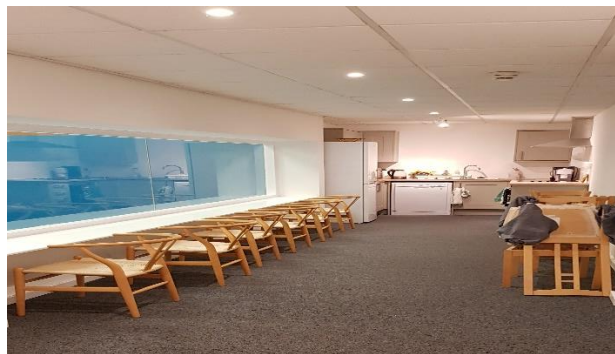
Significant donors will be invited to an additional event; 'A Vintage Evening' at which they will be able to toast the completion of the refurbishment with Vintage Pol Roger Champagne 2008 (from the year of the court's opening), and to hear some of CJR's reminiscences and reflections on his 50 years as a professional (including some that did not make it into his recent book 'Marking Fifty Years'). The date and other details are still to be confirmed.

### *What has been completed:*

The Pros' workspace has been improved, with, amongst other things, a new workbench and kitchenette.



Upstairs, we have gone from this ....



... to this view of the partially-completed Gallery Café

Now, the upstairs viewing gallery has a new kitchen, and The Gallery Café is open for our members and guests, who will be able to make themselves tea and coffee and use this space to work and socialise before and after playing.

The lighting has been improved and, in the fullness of time, there will be a scoreboard and audio link to the Dedans.



The impressive coffee machine was extensively trialed for The Gallery Café and nearly didn't make it out of MHT's kitchen as she liked it so much.

We hope you will enjoy sampling some of the 21 of different ways of making a hot drink from a bean, water and milk, and will find this top-of-the-range, fully automatic, bean-to-cup machine easy to operate. The on-screen instructions are pretty straightforward and, just in case, there is a pair of reading glasses on top, along with the instruction sheet.

### *What is in progress:*

The area of the clubroom leading to the court door is being considerably improved. Kit bag and shoe storage will be installed and bench seating provided to make the changing of shoes, stowage of belongings and preparation for play much easier. Power points and chargers will be provided for phones and laptops. Re-carpeting will be completed.

### *What is still to do:*

- The clubroom will have a change of furniture and function, with flexible seating to face the court or the wall-mounted TV screen on which play can be streamed or archived footage screened. In addition, upstairs, a monitor will be installed on which action from our court and elsewhere can be streamed and on which scores can be displayed.
- Also in the main clubroom, an area for stretching will be created, making it easier to warm-up and cool-down before and after playing. Just a few minutes' work here will make a huge difference to the likelihood of injuries, soreness and stiff muscles. You know it makes sense!
- Court repairs: The court will be closed for repairs from 13-25 December, but if we are able to re-open earlier than this, we shall do so. The various renovations include the replastering around the Grille and Viewing Gallery and the re-painting of Chase 2 on the Main Wall.

### **RCTC Professional News**

As you are aware, during the period of CJR's secondment to Bristol, Josh King and Victor Till are working at RCTC, supporting Nino. Both are enjoying getting to know members, helping them develop their tennis and working on their own games.

### **Tournament News -**

#### **National League**

The National League is split into different divisions, from Premier to 9, and matches go on throughout the

season. Each match in every division has the same format; the team of two players contest a Singles rubber each and a Doubles.

Nino has teamed up in Division 3 with Bridport Professional, Jez Brodie, and they played at Radley on 15 October against Leamington. Jez lost 6-1, 6-1 to Chris Aley, Nino beat Tom Bomford 6-1, 6-1 and Nino and Jez beat Tom and Chris 8-1, thus resulting in a win for Radley.

The team will play their next match on 3 Dec, at home, against Wellington. Please come and support Nino and Jez from 6pm.

In the super-connected world of real tennis, it is quite normal for players to belong to and play for different clubs. In fact, the Radley trio of Josh King, Ashley Deakin and Matthew Alden are representing Oxford in another division of the National League.

### **Junior Tennis**

#### **Hot off the Press!**

Radley hosted the National Schools Invitational Singles on Sunday 28 November, with considerable local success. Henry Henman (MCS) and Magnus Garson (Radley) both contested Semi Finals, though not against each other. Henry lost to Bertie Vallat (Winchester) and Magnus beat David Offer (Canford). Magnus won the Final, 6-4, and our heartiest congratulations to him and commiserations to Henry and Bertie.

Radley hosted another junior event recently; the LRTA's British U21 Girls' Handicap Tournament over the weekend of 20/21 November. The emphasis of this tournament is on participation and enjoyment, and it was good to see nearly 20 young players in action, some in their first tournament.

Reflecting the new twinning of the Bristol and Radley clubs, we are delighted to report that each club had an entrant, and both did well; Malati Rice from Bristol made it to a Quarter Final and Clemmie Batstone from Radley went all the way to a Semi Final.

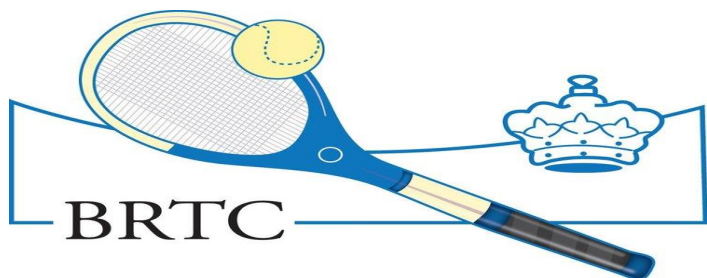
Malati only picked up a racquet for the first time a month ago but has now played in her first tournament and has already booked her place in her second, the British U18 Handicap, to be played on 18 December at Wellington.

Jill Newby, one of the tournament organisers, writes:

*With so many false starts at trying to hold a Junior Girls tournament, after 2 years absence we have finally made it. Players started off in groups of 4 playing each other before proceeding to the knockout stages and with two players going through from each group.*

*The first of our 1/4 finals saw Malati Rice (Bristol) v Marina Hammond (Wellington). Marina had to give Malati 8 points but served very tightly to take a 4 – 1 lead, then eased off the pressure allowing Malati to start returning the serves and suddenly it was 4 – 4.*

*Malati has only been playing for 3 weeks; she moves well around the court and clearly understands the tactics of the game and can hit the ball well into the corners of the court. Marina sensed the danger and started attacking again and produced some more accurate serves to win the set 6 – 4. [Marina went on to win the tournament].*



### **Bristol Real Tennis Club**

#### **BRTC News**

The Bristol club is buzzing, with new members joining in numbers and matches, events and competitions being planned and taking place. Resident Professional and Club Manager, Ben Coleman, and his temporary team-mates CJR and MHT (working at BRTC for six months from 1 Oct 2021), will be delighted to see members of Radley (or any other tennis club) who want to play in the West Country.

#### **The Professionals -**

Various items of news this month, chief of which is the decision of the long-time Head Professional,

Kevin King, to retire.

Kevin wrote recently to all club members:

*'Dear Bristol Real Tennis Club members,*

*I write to let you know that I have decided to bring forward my retirement from next May to now.*

*With the club getting very busy, I have come to accept that it is no longer possible to bring "Penny" to the club. She is very protective of me and vocal with every door opening-Woof Woof!*

*The club has agreed that I can retire early.*

*Yes – I am 64 and a half!*

*I cannot tell you how much I have enjoyed my 20 odd years at the club. I have been so, so lucky to have been given the post all those years ago. The club has a fantastic group of members, and it has been an honour to have looked after the club and your tennis.*

*You are in great hands at the moment with Ben, Chris and Maggie, and a wonderful, hard-working committee. I hope that if ever you are passing through the stunning Brecon Beacons National Park or visiting the Crickhowell area you will call in for tea as the kettle will always be on, or even better, the pub at the end of my street will be reopening soon!*

*Wishing all the best for the future of the club and your tennis.*

*Kevin'*



It is the end of an era, as Kevin has worked at the Bristol club since it opened in 1997. He decided to cut down to two days a week a few years ago but feels that this is the right time to stop entirely.

The club is enormously grateful for the great contribution KK has made over many, many years and will find an appropriate way of thanking him. We look forward to seeing him back at BRTC whenever he is passing by.

A big farewell party is not KK's style, but his many friends in Bristol and throughout the tennis world will want the opportunity to wish him well in his retirement.

The next phase of the club's development is now underway and the club will be advertising shortly for an additional professional.

In the meantime, we are very pleased that Tom Panto will be working part-time at the club. He is a second year Law student at Bristol University and an accomplished player of rackets and a fast-improving real tennis player. He worked with the Pros at Queens club for six months during his gap year and spent a lot of time on the rackets and real tennis courts there, coaching and playing.



CJR has retied the remaining balls at the club and made new ones, so that there are now 160 tightly-made projectiles, which is the minimum number needed to be able to rotate and

maintain two sets to optimal standard.

The court floor needs a deep clean, using machinery rather than muscle power, and this job is being planned as early as can be arranged in the New Year. It will mean that the court will be closed for a day, but we are certain that the sacrifice of 24 hour's play will be worth-while and the renovated floor will provide a much-improved playing surface.

It is hoped that the floor can be restored to the fine appearance it had when the court opened in 1997.

## **The Amateurs -**

### **New Members:**

Since 1 October, BRTC has welcomed a (world?) record number of new members.

Take a deep breath and welcome the following 63 players to the club and many of them to the world of tennis for the first time:

Sophie Archer, Bella Archer, Cameron Arthur, Jaideep Barot, Sarah Beale, Josh Boniface, Richard Bretton, Miles Buckinghamshire, Alex Burgh, Emma Burgh, Seb Burn, James Clark, Lucy Clark, Charlie Cloutter, Jack Collingwood, Nick Collins, Nathan Cubitt, Simon Eastman, John Elford, Mick Escott, Archie Finch, Hal Finch, Matthew Galvin, James Galvin, Chris Harris, Charles Hattersley, Adrian Jarvis, James Johnson, Adam Kula-Przezawski, Henry Lidington, Will Midgley, Hereward Mills, Matthew Moares, John Ogle, Tom Panto, James Parsons, Kirsti Powell, Tom Rattner, Gareth Rees, David Rice, Malati Rice, Oliver Rigby, Caspian Rugg, Fiona Rugg, Luke Smolinski, Jon Speirs, Alan Thomas, Meg Thomas, Henry Thornhill, Theo Todd, James Trafford, Rafael Trujillo, Nick Turk, Peter Vicks, Dave Waterbridge, Rob Westcott, Sophy Gretton, Benedict Westcott, Edward Westcott, Felix Wigzell, Humphrey Wilsher, Alex Wilks and William Wilks,

We hope that you will enjoy your membership of the Bristol club and your real tennis enormously.

## **World Record Attempt**

On 6 November, the Bristol club hosted a Guinness World Record attempt by Giles Gunning. His goal: to complete the greatest number of 'good' serves in one hour.

The court was booked for two hours, so that the family team of Giles, Henry, Jemima and father, Hugh, could set up and have a bit of practice for the attempt.



Gunning for it...  
(apologies for the horrible tabloid pun, but I couldn't resist!)

When the camera was working properly and the balls, basket and player were correctly positioned, the clock started to tick. At the end of 60 minutes, the total of 'good' serves stood at 1385. The film of it all has been sent to the Guinness Book of Records for certification. That process will take several months, and we look forward to reporting on the decision in due course.



The least that we could do was provide a jolly good cream tea for the server and his support team - and it seemed to hit the right spot.

## Juniors

The October half-term break gave an opportunity to introduce many new young players in Bristol to real tennis. We were delighted at the level of interest in our programme of coaching sessions. 42 juniors, between the ages of 6-14, clocked up a total of 126 individual hours of tennis, with a good deal of this being in group classes.

Huge thanks go to Mike and Henry Henman, who spent four days during each of the two half-term weeks in Bristol, working with Ben Coleman and CJR to inspire the local novices.

The results were enormously pleasing and feedback extremely positive. As a result, a programme of junior coaching sessions has been set up through to Christmas and will culminate in the revived Bristol club junior handicap tournament, which will be played on 17 December. We hope participation will be high and that many participants will use this event as a warm-up for the British U18 Handicap Championships, which will be played at Wellington over that weekend.



Henry (left) and Mike Henman and Ben Coleman (right) with some of the 42 juniors they introduced to the game over the October half-term holiday.

## Student Tennis

We are very pleased to announce that Bristol University again has an active Real Tennis Society. We see players once a week for a group coaching session on Sunday night and a number of them during the week, playing individual games or having lessons.



On 9 November, we were able to host a challenge match between Bristol and Exeter RTC. Players from Exeter travel up to Bristol once a week to play, which shows considerable dedication. This time, the visitors pulled off a victory, as the Devonshire quartet of Toby Calder (C), Harry Thistlethwayte, Will Miles and Matthew Perry won the match by four rubbers to two.

Each player had a Singles and a Doubles match against the Bristol team of Tom Panto, Jack Collingwood, Felix Wigzell and Tom Rattner. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening, and the match was played in a spirit of friendly rivalry. The consensus was that it should definitely be the first of a series.



Students from Exeter and Bristol Univ after their match on 9 November

The teams are planning other matches in the run-up to the Inter-Universities Tournament in Cambridge in March. The first of these should be in mid-February, when the Middlesex University squad will visit Bristol.

It is very good to have two groups of university students playing at Bristol. The next objective will to stir up some interest at the University of the West of England, which is based not very far away from the court in Bristol. The prospect of regular local derby matches is an appealing one....

We send a heartfelt 'THANK YOU' to the Dedanists Foundation and to the Jesters, who have combined to give such generous support to the development of more junior and student tennis at the Bristol Club, and who have kindly pledged additional funding for the rest of the season.

We are enormously grateful; without this help, only a fraction of the activity mentioned above could have been achieved.

## Events

On Thursday 18 November, Bristol members and guests were treated to an Exhibition Match between two Radley players: World Number Two female player, Lea Van Der Zwalmen, and Nino Merola. They played level and contested a best of three 6-game set match, which was preceded by drinks and supper and a splendid evening was had by all.



The 60 or so spectators were treated to a fine display of flowing and athletic tennis, to a standard of which all of us can applaud but very few of us can aspire.

A clip of their play can be seen here:

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CWfnFUxMr5N/?utm\\_medium=share\\_sheet](https://www.instagram.com/p/CWfnFUxMr5N/?utm_medium=share_sheet).



New Bristol member, Chris Harris, beside Committee member and old school mate, George Bretten

The first REAL Cream Tea (an appealing combination of an introductory session to real tennis followed by lashings of tea, plates of scones, clotted cream, jam, cake and the promise of bubbles (with or without alcohol) took place in November.

Who could resist? These ladies, who all have family members who play, thoroughly enjoyed their introduction to the game and are keen to continue. More similar events will follow.



First, the tennis, then the CREAM TEA

Less than 24 hours later, the club hosted a sell-out Portuguese Evening in the Bretten Room, at which members enjoyed a themed evening of excellent food and matched wines. The sumptuous food was prepared by Social Secretary, Jan Fuller, and the Portuguese wines were selected and assembled by wine enthusiasts, Bob and Claire Stacey. Many thanks to all involved.

Jan's next event at the club is another sell-out; this time, a Christmas wreath-making workshop, on Saturday 11 December.

### **National Tournament News**

Of the three major national inter-club team competitions, the premier is the Pol Roger Trophy, to which entry must be gained via promotion from The Field Trophy. Like the Pol Roger, The Field Trophy has no handicap limits and is played level, and the third competition is the Brodie Cup.

The format of all three competitions is identical, with three singles and two doubles rubbers and a team of seven on either side.

### **The Field Trophy:**

Radley has never before entered a team for the Field Trophy, but on Sat 4 Dec at Radley, the finest players we can assemble (containing several former and current club champions) will be on court and doing battle against Holyport.



The Field Trophy

### **The Brodie Cup:**

The three singles rubbers are played by H30, H40 and H50 players and the two doubles rubbers are for H35 and H45 pairs. Handicaps are taken on 1 Sept and some movement is allowed during the life of the competition. Ensuring conformity always adds to the challenge of assembling the team for this event.



The Brodie Cup, flanked by the prizes, provided by sponsors Pol Roger

The Radley Brodie Cup team faced the MCC at Radley on Sunday 14 November and won the exciting and hotly-contested match by three rubbers to two.

The MCC brought along a strong side, but Radley managed to win, thanks to our Singles players, who secured us the match before the doubles rubbers were played. It is worth mentioning that, yet again, the Radley College boys turned it on for the team, winning both their matches, so particular thanks to them for continuing the fine tradition.

Radley advances to the Quarter Final stage of the competition, in which they will face a seasoned team from Jesmond, who will be travelling down to play at Radley on Sunday 5 December.

All Radley club members will be most welcome to come along and support their representative teams in the Field Trophy and Brodie Cup on Sat 4 and 5 December respectively. Your support will be thoroughly appreciated by all involved.

Bristol hosted a team from Prested for their Preliminary Round of the Brodie Cup and matched Radley, recording a 3-2 victory. In the First Round they went on to record an emphatic 5-0 victory over Petworth.



Dan Worboys (Prested) and Chris Hanford (Bristol) were both in good spirits after a terrific tussle (H50 Singles), just edged by Dan

Bristol's opponents in the next round will be Canford, away, on Sun 5 Dec. While travelling supporters may be few, our thoughts and good wishes go with them.

### **Franklin Solicitors Thames Valley League:**

As if the Field Trophy and The Brodie Cup were not enough action over the first weekend in December, Radley will be sending a side to play at Oxford on Sat 4 Dec in the second round of the Franklin Solicitors Thames Valley League doubles competition.

Pairs representing the 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s handicap bands will play three best of 6-games marked sets, off handicap, with the emphasis rather more on friendly rivalry and enjoyment of the social side of tennis than on the tooth-and-nail competition of the Field and Brodie national ones.

### **Elite Tennis**

### **America**

In the Final of the US Open, played at the end of October, Camden Riviere, who was seeded one, beat former Radley Professional John Lumley, on the latter's home court of Philadelphia. The score was 6-3, 6-3, 6-2.

Riviere and Lumley both played in the Doubles Final, on opposing sides again. The win went to Riviere and Tim Chisholm, who defeated Lumley and Steve Virgona 6-4, 5-6, 6-0, 6-2.

Here is link to the USCTA YouTube channel, on which you can watch this and other archived action: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3aFIQDFAs\\_jo3y0Fg-pvCeAMMI3Fd-nj](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3aFIQDFAs_jo3y0Fg-pvCeAMMI3Fd-nj).



## France

The French Amateur Championship is the Raquette d'Or and this year it was played in Bordeaux, with the Singles and Doubles Finals taking place on Sunday 7 November.

This is only the second occasion on which women have been permitted to enter the tournament and, after a most impressive win against Nicolas Victoir (H10.5) 6-3, 6-1, 6-5, Radley member, Lea Van Der Zwalmen, advanced to the Final. She played Matthieu Sarlangue, Defending Champion and ten times winner of the title, who was playing off H1.4, while Lea's handicap was 15.0.

This match-up may have looked one-sided on paper, but Lea did brilliantly and pushed Matthieu hard. The final score was 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 to Matthieu and both players had a short break before contesting the Doubles title.

Matthieu teamed up with Nicolas and Lea played with fellow-Radley member, Florent Brethon, who has only been playing the game, and intermittently at that, for just over a year.

The experience of the match was an extremely positive one for Florent, even if he and Lea had hoped they might win more games.



Sarlangue & Victoir versus Brethon & Van Der Zwalmen

The winning score line of 0-6, 2-6 was testament to their much more experienced opponents. Bear in mind that Matthieu and Nicolas have doubles handicaps of 2.9 and 7.8 respectively, while those of Lea and Florent are 15 and 20.



Their smiles say it all, and congratulations to Florent and Lea on a fantastically successful tournament for them both. BTW, they are wearing the smart shirts of the recently formed Jeu de Paume de Chinon (see p14).

Radley-en-France member, Florent Brethon, was playing in the Racquette d'Argent de France for those with handicaps in the range of 20-30, in Bordeaux. Having won the Racquette Bronze (H30-40) last year, being his first tournament, Florent did fantastically well again, winning the Racquette d'Argent at his first attempt, on 28 November 2021. The score line was 6-2, 6-2, 6-2.

Huge congratulations to Florent on his win and continuing progress in the game. The opportunities he has had to go on court with Lea Van Der Zwalmen in the past year, despite extended French lockdowns, have clearly paid off.



## **Britain**

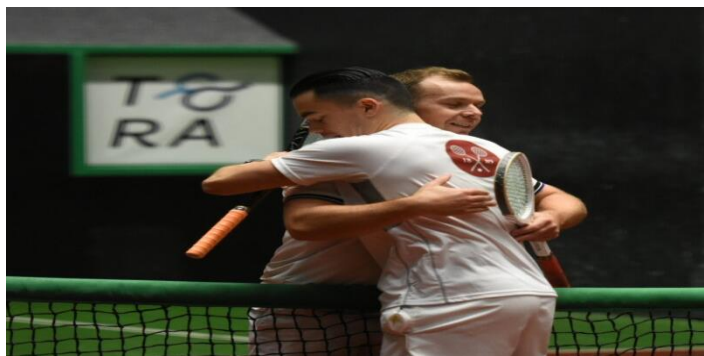
The British Open has just finished at Queens, culminating in the Final of the Singles on Monday 22 and of the Doubles on Tuesday 23 November.

Commiserations to Nino, who lost in the first round of the Singles, in which World Champion Rob Fahey was seeded number one. This event marked Rob's return to tournament play after having a hip replaced in the Spring. His recovery is going well, but he is, inevitably, short of tournament play. Rob won his first match with the loss of only three games, but John Lumley's experience in the recent US Open was undoubtedly of benefit in their Semi Final, which John won in straight sets.

The British numbers 1, Ben Taylor-Matthew (Leamington) and 2, Bryn Sayers (Queens), contested the other Semi, which was won in four sets by BTM, setting up the first all-British Open Final since 1999 (James Male v Mike Gooding).

CJR and MH-T were kindly invited to the Final by retiring Chairman of the T&RA, David Watson, and Chris was asked to present the trophy (which he won seven times himself) to the winner. The match, and all the others in the tournament, can be watched on the following dedicated Queens YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9qrG5vz4Bs&list=UUz4vpvhBrBB-ZLFRzCwBCA>.

The first and second sets each took about 45 mins and John Lumley's speed around the court and the retrieving of both players was extremely impressive. Ben Taylor-Matthews started strongly, took the first set and led 4-2 in the second. We were not to know it, but this was the turning point in the match, for he only won another two games from that point.



John Lumley, on the right, embracing his opponent, Ben Taylor-Matthews

It is John's first Open triumph, and one hopes it will be the first of many. In the eight years since John left Radley and moved to Philadelphia, he has matured from a good player into a champion. It was fitting that CJR, with whom John spent the first three years of his career as a Professional, was there to see his victory.

Interesting to note, John is the only one of the Top 10 players in the world who is less than 30 years old, and he is over 29.



There was lively discussion in the Dedans between CJR and Lachie Deuchar (who between them won 13 British Open titles), on the style of play in this final. They felt that the rhythm of the exchanges harked back to their day, with fewer forces and more chipping into the backhand corners at the Service End.

The British Open Doubles Final took place on Tuesday 23 November and saw Rob Fahey return to his winning ways, claiming yet another Open title, this time with Nicky Howell, as they beat the British pair, Bryn Sayers & Ben Taylor-Matthews, 6-5, 6-4, 6-4 in a closely-fought contest.



Taylor-Matthews & Sayers and Howell & Fahey

After the Singles Final, David Watson made a speech in which he thanked all those responsible for making the tournament such a success. The trophies were presented to the winner and runner up, and he then made two other announcements. More information can be found by clicking on this link: <https://www.tennisandrackets.com/news/t-ra-real-tennis-awards-2021>.

The first was to present the award for the Volunteer of the Year to Paul Weaver, in recognition of his extraordinary and tireless work for the British Junior Academy over so many years.



David then made a final announcement:

'I have one further award which it is my pleasure to present this evening. I believe it is the first such - a Lifetime Achievement Award - is being presented to an individual who, in my view, has done more to shape and enhance the future of Real Tennis in this country, and internationally, than any other individual.

Chris Ronaldson was a great world champion between 1981 and 1987 - a proud and impressive achievement - but it is not primarily for this that I bestow this award. Earlier this year Chris completed 50 years as a club professional. I can state with complete confidence that he has transformed and revolutionised every club he has worked at.

His drive, work ethic and commitment are unparalleled, and he has built thriving new clubs from scratch just as he has re-energised those suffering troubled times.

From the start of his career when he was drawn from Oxford to launch the new two-court Melbourne facility,

returning to the U.K. to Troon where he and Les generated almost 90 hours of play a week. Then to Hampton Court, where there were only eight or nine hours of play a week, which became over 100 hours. He and Les brought life and energy to a club covered in dust and cobwebs and I vividly remember the procession of future stars who came to work and learn their craft at the feet of the master.

More recently on to Radley to build a whole new membership and activity from zero-base to it becoming one of the most active courts in the country. And most recently, Bristol where he and Maggie are doing an amazing job to renew and revitalise this great facility.

Chris has always been ready to offer his advice and expertise to all who have sought it, but he has never courted recognition or reward for all that he has done. He and Les ran the British junior tournaments for many years; he was a driving force behind the RTO handicap system; and has led many other programmes that could easily have earned him the Volunteer of the Year award. His achievements are too numerous to mention!

This trophy takes the form of a handcrafted racket, made by his friend Graham Hyland and I know Chris will treasure it and the grateful recognition that goes alongside it.



The inscription on the plaque says: "Presented by the T&RA to Chris Ronaldson in appreciation of a lifetime of selfless dedication to Real Tennis".



Chris Ronaldson,

It is my great pleasure to present you with this Lifetime Achievement Award.'



## **International Club News**

### **Australia –**

#### **Sydney:**

The latest news on the court building project at the Cheltenham Recreation Club is as follows:

‘As at August 2021, we have incurred costs of circa A\$380k to date (financed through pro bono professional services and donations), and we are in the process of calling on pledges of a further A\$380k to pay for the next round of pre-construction expenditure.

We are also actively pursuing government grants and other fundraising activities. Our total funding target is \$2.7m, which therefore means further funding of just over \$1.9m is required.’

### **France**

#### **Chinon –**

The renovation of the court at 10, Rue de Jeu de Paume, gathers pace. Our thanks to Thierry Bernard-Tambour, President of the Fontainebleau

club, who is deeply involved in the Chinon project, for sending us these photos, showing that the restoration is well under way.

It will be a lengthy project, but the hope and intention is that this court built in the 1580s will be open for play again after about 444 years, in 2024. Perhaps on the 4 April?



An enchanting shot of the interior of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Chinon court

### **Tournament News –**

The Comite Francais du Jeu de Court Paume recently released the schedule for the 2022 World Masters amateur championships. These team and individual events will last from 14 to 29 May and will be held in Paris, Fontainebleau and Bordeaux.

### **USA**

**Newport:** In October in Newport RI., the US Pro Singles welcomed an entirely domestic field playing for the Schochet Cup due to the prevailing Covid travel restrictions.

Neither John Lumley nor defending champion Camden Riviere dropped a set on their way to the Final in Newport. Camden won the title yet again, winning 6-0, 2-6, 6-2, 6-0.

#### **Philadelphia:**

Camden added his tenth US Open Singles title in Philadelphia and set new records in both competitions, surpassing the previous highest tally of

nine wins set by Wayne Davies in the 1980s and 1990s. With his long-term doubles partner, Tim Chisholm, now well recovered from double knee and hip replacements, Cam added a ninth US Open Doubles title.

You can access the USCTA archive of matches by clicking on this link: <https://uscourttennis.org/2021usopen/>.



Congratulations, Gentlemen!

John Lumley with his Runner-up trophy and Camden Riviere with the US Open Singles and Doubles Trophies

### **Washington:**

Construction of the indoor tennis centre, including the real tennis court, is well underway at the Westwood Country Club, with the target for completion of May/June 2022.

### **Charleston:**

We hear positive news from one of the main movers in the tennis court project at the Daniel Island Club just outside Charleston. There is optimism that this slow-burning plan will ignite next year, and the building of a court will begin before the end of 2022.

## **The Last Gallery**

### **Happy Christmas**



A Christmas greeting from 'Mikko'

The inimitable Mikko has sent a seasonal greeting to all Real Tennis players – and ours in return to you, Mikko!

Thank you, as always, for your wit and penmanship.

## **The Last Word**

There has been a lot to cover in this edition of *Better Than The Last*, so thank you for battling through to the end notes.

Enjoy the final month of tennis of 2021 and let us look forward to an uninterrupted year of play ahead.

*This final Newsletter of 2021*

*was compiled by Maggie Henderson-Tew*

*and is sent with all seasonal good wishes*

*from the Radley and Bristol Real Tennis Clubs*