

**Spring  
2023**

# Radley College Tennis Court

**Better Than The Last  
Radley Club Newsletter!**

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## **Club News**

### **RCTC Professional News**

Nino spent five weeks in Australia at the start of the year, including playing in the Australian Open, with firm resolve to do his best-ever. The draw was cruel to the man who had travelled round the world to get there.

His first-round draw was against Chris Chapman, the number one seed and eventual winner of the title, who beat Nick Howell 2-6, 2-6, 6-0, 6-1, 6-4.

Poor Nino was not much luckier in his draw for the Doubles, and he and partner Lewis Williams (Head Pro at Leamington) lost in straight sets to Levi Gale and the top Australian amateur, Kieran Booth, in the first round.

After a short stint back at Radley, Nino dashed off to play at the US Open Championships in Boston. Alas, he went out of the Singles in the first round, losing to Melbourne Pro John Woods-Casey.

He and partner Lewis Williams were going along nicely in the Doubles, until they came up against ex-Radley Pro, John Lumley, now world number 3 (and eventual runner-up to Camden Riviere in the US Open Singles). John was playing with Chicago's seasoned Head Pro Steve Virgona, and they proved tough opposition, winning the match 6-2, 6-2, 6-1 on their way to the final.

Alex Machin has enjoyed the experience of holding the fort in the absence of Chris and Nino, but early March saw the full team back at Radley.

This is just as well, as the court is VERY full. Book early to avoid disappointment.

## Message to Members

Most active players at Radley are also members of the Tennis and Rackets Association, the game's governing body and a charity dedicated to promotion, growth and governance of the sport.

Please join the T&RA, if you have not already done so. In addition to supporting the wider game in Britain, particularly at junior level, it gives you online access to the booking sheet at Radley, and the benefit of no longer having to appear on that sheet as a 'guest', without a handicap. Having handicaps visible when looking for a game makes signing up easier for you and fellow members.

For further details, just follow this link:

<https://www.tennisandrackets.com/become-a-member>.



There are a number of options, but we would recommend full membership, which confers the widest range of benefits. However, all you need to access the booking sheet is to become an 'Associate'.

## National League

Both Nino and Alex Machin are playing in this season's National League, although neither is playing for Radley, for whom Mike and Henry Henman have been appearing.

In the super-connected world of real tennis, it is quite normal for players to belong to and play for different clubs and this is also the case in the National League.

Nino is playing in Division 1 for the Leamington team, and they have won all their matches thus far. Alex is representing his old club, Wellington, this season, is captaining their Division 6 side and playing at the number 1 position, and with a clean sheet so far.

Radley has its own team in Division 5, comprising father and son duo, Mike and Henry Henman. Henry's rapid drop in handicap now makes playing in the division for H20-25 inappropriate and so Alex is doubling up his NL appearances and playing in the higher division with Mike.

This season's National League sponsor is once again FLM Wealth Management (an appointed representative of St James Place Wealth Management, advising on the Group's products and services). The tennis community is fortunate to have found a committed sponsor in FLM and is most grateful for its support.

To find out more about their products and services, please click on this link to their website:

<https://www.flmltd.com/>.



## Radley Club Tournaments

Just before Christmas, the club's singles and doubles level championships were held, featuring the best amateur players in the club.

Hamish Miller, last year's winner, has not been able to play enough since then and went out to Ashley Deakin. Henry Henman, who was runner-up last year, faced Dave Harms (a former winner of the British Amateur Singles title, no less) in an impressive Final, which was a showcase of powerful forcing and swift retrieving. Henry claimed the Chris Ronaldson Trophy, winning the match 6-4, 6-4, and became Radley Club Champion for the first time, in addition to his Oxford club title.

This result led the Editor of this newsletter to muse that the only thing she has in common with Henry as a Real Tennis player is that, like his, her handicap is a lower number than her age. However, he is 16 years old, and she is not. Henry ended 2022 having reached his best handicap (so far), an impressive 14.7.

In the Doubles' Final, playing for the Mick Dean Trophy, the well-established pairing of Charles Human and Tony Munsey took on Henry Henman and Mick Dean, who were a mere 56 years apart in age as a pair. Charles and Tony had lost to Henry and Mick the previous day and lost the first set of the Final but took the second 6-5 to shift the momentum, winning the third and final set, 6-2.

This Club Championship win followed up on their triumph in the National Over 60s Doubles about three months earlier, which means that Charles and Tony have had a terrific recent run as a pair.

### Hangover Doubles

The annual Hangover Doubles is altogether different in atmosphere from the steely-eyed competitiveness of the club champs.

This event was named in loving memory of one of our dear members, the wildly enthusiastic real tennis aficionado, Charlie Hodgson, who died suddenly a few years ago and is much missed.



This competition celebrates the eccentricity and camaraderie of the game through rule changes, silly hats, as much dressing-up as possible and the consuming of copious amounts of Christmas and New Year left-overs.

Radley Club friends of his donated 'The Charlie Hodgson Trophy' to the club, which CJR is holding in the photo below. He presented it to a man with a reindeer on his head and a leprechaun, to the chagrin of Father Christmas and the Court Jester.



Runners-up Hugo Axel Berg and Mary Joyner, CJR, and the winners, Jonathan Crowe and Michael Magnay.

However, in the finest tradition of *Alice In Wonderland*, at the end of this particular Caucus Race, all (well, nearly all) had prizes, which were given for achievements on court and off it, with prizes for hats, the shot of the day, socks, and random acts of stupidity and kindness.





This year's special rule was that the server's partner had to remain in front of the last gallery line. If they stepped back over it, even by a hair's breadth, the point was automatically lost. It sounds easier than it is to stick to this rule when playing for pride and glory and the red mist descends...

### Changes on Court



There is high-tech and there is low-tech, but we have favoured an entirely manual, no-tech solution in response to some members' request for a scoring aid. Mark 1 may be simple and not aesthetically very pleasing, but it seems to do the job.

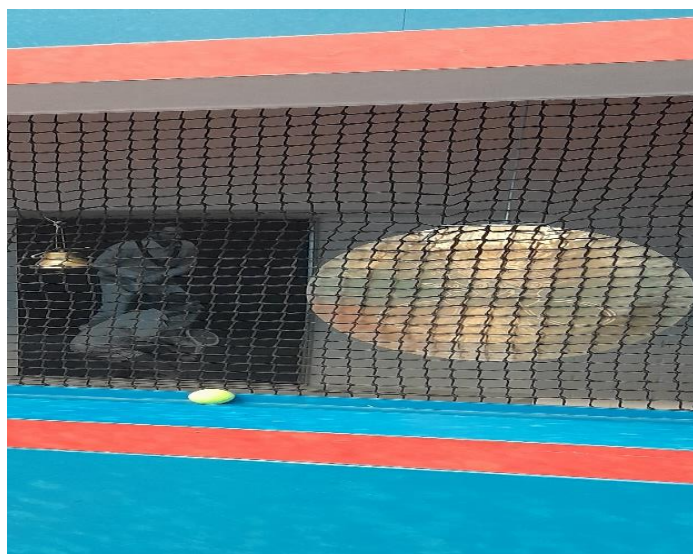
Game Board Mark 2 (not shown) has additional, coloured magnets to count sets. An abacus would be better, probably.

There is no telling what heights of sophistication and ingenuity will be reached by Game Board Mark 3, which is still at the early design stage.

An altogether more beautiful addition to the fittings of the court is a gong in the Winning Gallery. This is a gift from our friends at the Westwood Court in Virginia. As they gained a fine new one, they kindly gave us the gong from the now-closed McLean court. This was a 'thank-you' to CJR and MH-T for helping with their court opening last year.



If you haven't noticed it yet, you need to work on your aim, as the sound is extremely satisfying. As you can see from the photo below, the decidedly 'old school', old school bell remains in place.



### Changes off Court

It has been decided that the second water fountain, down by the court, really should not be there at all. It has been well used and we know it will be missed by some.

Rather than using bottled water and paper cups, and the van, fuel and man hours needed to supply them, we feel we ought to revert to using only the water fountain in the club room. It filters and chills tap water perfectly well, and so, when the current bottles of Blenheim Water run out, they won't be replaced.

Members and guests are reminded to bring their own water bottle and to fill it before going on court.

## Old Radleians Real Tennis Club

There are OR clubs and teams for every other sport you can imagine, but, as yet, no club for real tennis.

Why this omission, when the Old Harrovians and Old Etonians, amongst many others, put out sides?

The Radley Society (the alumni association) has responded to an enquiry with the following:

'We can certainly support the creation of a club with RadSoc resources – but we would need an OR who is interested in driving it forwards, pulling people together for matches etc – i.e. a Club Captain.'

If you are an OR and either: 1. Would like to volunteer to set up and run the ORTC; or 2. Would love to play for the side but don't have the time to run it, please contact Maggie [maggie.ht@btinternet.com](mailto:maggie.ht@btinternet.com) to discuss further.

There is a constellation of talent and great enthusiasm amongst OR players, so let's get this started!

## The Fifth Celtic Challenge

On Sunday 5 March, the Final of the Brodie Cup (the lowest level of the inter-club tournaments) was being played at The Hyde, but occupying our minds, and the court at Radley on that day, was the fifth iteration of The Celtic Challenge. This annual event, now in its glorious fifth year, pits Ireland against Scotland, in a team competition with a unique scoring system.

The Irish team, led by perpetual captain and OR, Roland Budd, sought to repeat its win of 2022, and retain the Tunnock's Trophy. The Scottish side, endlessly captained by Maggie H-T, was still smarting from last year's loss.

The Scots started like a train, winning the first three singles rubbers and they started to feel rather positive about the likely outcome of the day.

As those who have studied Greek drama know, *hubris* leads inevitably to *nemesis*. With the nine players on each side having one set of singles and two of doubles, there were plenty of rubbers to get through.

Inexorably, the Irish side pulled ahead, increasing its lead by 50, 80 and then by over 100 points. In the

end, the Irish amassed the highest-ever total in The Celtic Challenge, of 1001, while the Scots finished on 864.



Discernible tension in the Scottish camp, while Jack Woods, representing Ireland, looks pretty relaxed, beside captain Roland Budd.

It is possible to rack up so many points because of the cunning scoring system, specially devised to ensure that, win or lose, everyone contributes to their team tally and that losing a rubber does not necessarily mean you score fewer point than the victor.

Well played, the Irish team, and especially well played Ambrose Garson, who not only registered the highest individual score for Ireland, of 157 points, but outscored everyone on either side. Nick Gordon topped the Scottish rankings, with 128 points out of the Scottish total.



Nick Gordon, stretching for more Tunnock's goodies, emerged as the top-scoring Scottish player. Rocket fuel! Tony Penny joins in.



Richard Ramjane was unanimously awarded the Shot of the Day for his audacious, behind the back, main wall boasted shot into the dedans; once seen, never to be forgotten.

Mark Heffernan accepted the trophy on behalf of the Irish, as captain Roland Budd had to dash to Birmingham to catch his flight home to Dublin. Mark was kind enough to say that the Celtic Challenge is the day of real tennis he enjoys most in the year. We missed Mary and the Real Tennis Dogs (these canine influencers are all over Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc) this year and hope that the full Heffernan quartet will be back for the sixth Celtic Challenge in 2024.

The general agreement was that this was the best-ever iteration of the Celtic Challenge. The two teams fought it out in the friendliest of rivalries, there were fine performances from debutantes and returning players alike, and there was very little food and drink left over at the end of the day.

The continuing support of our splendid and generous sponsors is a considerable bonus and enticement, and all three have supported this match since its inception.



The Tunnock's Trophy in the centre, surrounded by prizes from two of our sponsors, Tunnock's and Coole Swan.

Tunnock's, the iconic Scottish confectioners, gifts the participants more Caramel Wafers, Snowballs and Tea Cakes than you can shake a stick at, together with team shirts for the Scots, and an array of their merchandise as prizes.

Coole Swan, the makers of the world's very finest liqueur (as attested by the plethora of Gold Awards and Finest in Show commendations in global competitive tastings, and by the players in the Celtic Challenge) provide their delicious drink for players at the award ceremony and as prizes, and Pol Roger graciously provided still wines with lunch.

What a great day! Thank you to everyone who took part, to our tireless marking team of CJR, Nino and Alex, and thank you for all the 'thank you' messages. While it may not be strictly necessary to return thanks, in this case I shall!

The Celtic Challenge will run again in a year's time, but before that, both Scotland and Ireland will take on a team from Wales, using the same format. If you feel you qualify for any of these sides and would like to get involved, please let Maggie know, by emailing [maggie.ht@btinternet.com](mailto:maggie.ht@btinternet.com).



The imbalance of the bowl of Tunnock's confectionery and the fruit and the empty glass tells you a good deal about the Celtic Challenge.

## **Other UK Club News**

### **Bristol**

Having been made Honorary Life Members of Bristol Real Tennis Club last March, after spending six enjoyable months working at the club, CJR and MH-T were delighted to be invited to take part in some of the extensive 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations from 9-12 February 2023.

A bit of history, to start. The court was officially opened by HRH Prince Edward on St Valentine's Day 1998, as the home for a club that had been formed twelve years earlier and was still known as 'The Bristol & Bath Real Tennis Club'. The '...and Bath' was dropped some years later, when all hope of the Bath court being returned to play had faded. The initial plan had been to acquire and restore for play the unused and neglected 1777 court in Julian Street in Bath, but negotiations with the Council proved fruitless and frustrating, and building a brand-new court on Clifton College land became the only alternative.

MH-T was able to take along to the Bristol festivities a copy of the T&RA Annual Report for 1997-8, which, on pages 60-61 had reports on the genesis of the court and its opening. It is recorded that the National Lottery, from which the club obtained significant project funding, presented a cheque for the somewhat puzzling sum of £352,887.

The Annual Report also records that four of the world's top female players played an exhibition match as guests were arriving. Between them, Alex Garside, Sally Grant, Sue Haswell and Charlotte Cornwallis had won eight World titles and 18 British ones, and Charlotte subsequently had a stint at Bristol as an assistant professional.



To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Bristol Real Tennis Club being opened, the club hosted a Handicap Doubles team event, which was open to amateur players of any handicap. 16 spaces were reserved for Bristol pairs, and 16 spaces for visiting pairs. Home and away players were then put together at random to create teams of four.

The champagne reception on Friday night was generously hosted by Cherry Bretten, who lived with the planning and eventually reality of the club for at least 35 years, and probably more, being the widow of John Bretten, one of the prime movers of the project.

The celebratory dinner at The Clifton Club on Saturday night was a sell-out, and the 100 guests were able to bid in the live auction of donated gifts and experiences in the sure knowledge that they were contributing to the most worthwhile cause of supporting Junior tennis at the Bristol club.

Over £9000 was raised and will be ploughed back into the blossoming Youth Development side of the club, in the form of junior recruitment initiatives, lessons, workshops and tournaments.

Congratulations to Bristol on its first quarter century and to all who worked so hard to ensure a happy, successful event. The pros, Ben Coleman and Ben Taylor-Matthews, marked the entire tournament and BRTC President, John Newman, Jan Fuller, Janine Mendham, Charlotte Wilsher and their many helpers made the celebrations a huge success.

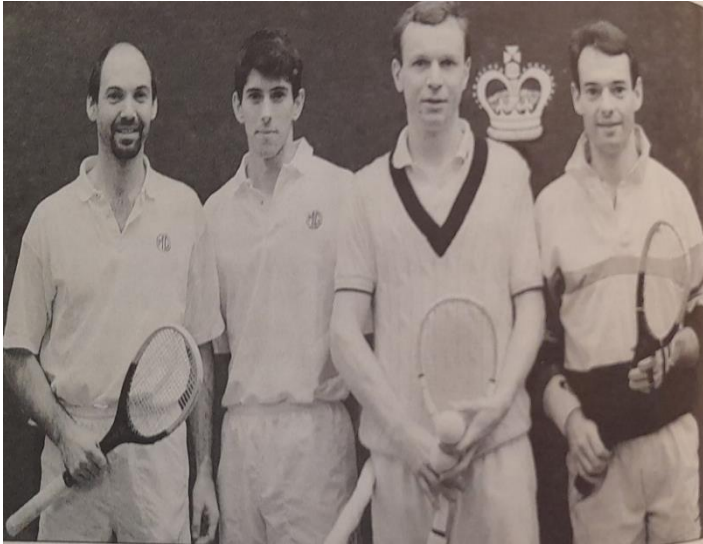
It is worthy of note that the 1997/8 T&RA Annual Report carries a report of the re-opening of The Hyde Tennis Club on 13 June 1998, which also began with a ladies' exhibition match in which Alex Garside, Charlotte Cornwallis and Sue Haswell (who were clearly making a habit of such events that year), were joined by Katrina Allen. The report continues:

*'This was followed by a ferocious singles match between Chris Ronaldson and Jonathan Howell who was heard, after a particularly good rest, to complain to the dedans that he wished Chris would act his age.'*

As if all this excitement were not enough, this edition of the T&RA Annual Report goes on to document the re-opening of the court in November 1997 at Jesmond Dene



for tennis, after the lease was taken over by the tennis club from the Northumberland Badminton Association and the floor restored. A celebratory match was played between Nick Wood (who had been brought up virtually next door) and Mike Gooding (who so sadly died last year) versus the stellar pair of Old Radleians, Julian Snow and James Male.



The photograph above of the youthful quartet of Mike Gooding, Nick Wood, Julian Snow and James Male was carried in *The Newcastle Herald*. Was this the last time that paper featured real tennis? We hope not!

There are further reminders of times past and the exceptional level of court and club activity that season, with excited comments about the 'new clubhouse' at the Oxford club, the noting of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Seacourt Silver Racquet (which has just celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, see p5), and a comment that 'Bryn Sayers has been invited to attend the school of excellence run by Chris Ronaldson for talented youngsters.' It seems timely to congratulate Bryn, now all grown up and one of Ben Ronaldson's team of Pros at Queen's Club, on the birth of his third child in Feb 2023.

There is a gleeful celebration, in the report from the Royal Tennis Court, of the 'breakthrough' in discussions with the Historic Royal Palaces, now that 'Ministers have given their consent for us to go ahead

with a second court', as the necessary prelude to a formal planning application to the local authority.

For those of you who never knew there ever had been a plan to construct a second court at Hampton Court Palace, please be compassionate and DON'T ask CJR about the emotionally exhausting and time-consuming saga. You will guess that it did not end triumphantly.

While hating to end such a list of positive events in 1998 on a second down note, it should be noted that the club reports include one from Lachie Deuchar, who was then Head Pro at the court at The Harbour Club in Fulham. What and where, you may ask?



The photo above is perhaps a little unfair, being a bit squashed, but it highlights the biggest problem, the fact that playing there was like being on a tube station platform; echoing, underground and with a low ceiling. What the photo does not show is the fly-netting that was introduced at both ends to deflect balls that bounced on the dedans and grille penthouses back into the court, rather than every one of them going out of play when the ball hit the roof.

This court had been built in 1993, was closed by the management of the club and turned into a spa in 2007 and is generally regarded to have been one of the least-successful designs for a new court.

It is always sad when a court goes out of play, but if one had to be lost, this one would have been top of the list.



## National Tournaments

We begin with a round-up of selected results from major tournaments with the juniors, moving on to those featuring the most experienced and best players of the game.

### The Juniors

There was a plethora of tournaments before Christmas for players up to the age of 24, and the pace has continued into Q1 of 2023. A number of Radley Club and College players have taken or will be taking part in various events, with considerable success. We are very pleased, in this edition of *Better Than The Last*, to record some notable successes.

### **The National Inter-Schools Doubles Championships 2023**

These championships are played in groups according to age and standard, with the A and B Grade U18s, U16s and the U15s all played on 5 February at Queens, the Oratory and Radley respectively, with the U14s' event being played at Radley on 26 February. Finalists of the U18 category were Henry Henman and George Lythgoe (representing Magdalen College School) and Radley's Ambrose Garson and Hugo Acheson-Gray, who were one of the five Radley College pairs taking part; more than fielded by any other school.



Radley (L) finished Runners-up to Magdalen College School (R) but all four play at the Radley court.

The U13s was played at The Oratory, with teams from Westbourne House, Summer Fields, the Oratory and OPS taking part. It was won by the Summer Fields pair, which included Radley club's Laszlo Garson, who will join Radley College in September, on a Sports' Scholarship.



The Radley players, Mikolaj and Theo, on the right, were Runners-up to the pair from Wellington, Seb and Algie.

Well done to everyone who took part and congratulations to those who made it to the Finals, including, in the U16 category (played at Radley), the Radley College pair of Mikolaj Rutka and Theo Henman, appearing in their first Final. They battled hard but were beaten by the experienced duo from Wellington, Seb Edwards and Algie Nottingham.

### **The Varsity Match**

The weekend of 4 and 5 March is a very busy one in the tennis calendar. The Varsity Match was held at Queen's Club, concluding with a black-tie dinner in The Long Room on Saturday 4, which was the same day as the Finals of those prestigious senior inter-club tournaments, the Pol Roger and the Field Trophy. The National Schoolgirls Level Singles and Doubles Championships (U15) also took place over both these days, at Wellington.

The Real Tennis Varsity Match is the third oldest of the sporting contests between the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, starting in 1859. This year's competition, which blends the men's and women's singles and doubles rubbers over two days at Lord's, was billed as the 152<sup>nd</sup>

running of the match, which takes into account some wartime and other gaps.



Benedict Yorston, ending his final Varsity match as an undergraduate at Oxford with a win in the first-string singles over Patrick Smart.

Oxford won both matches. The women's match was a thriller; with the scores level at 3-3, a deciding rubber was played, which Oxford won to take the trophy 4-3.

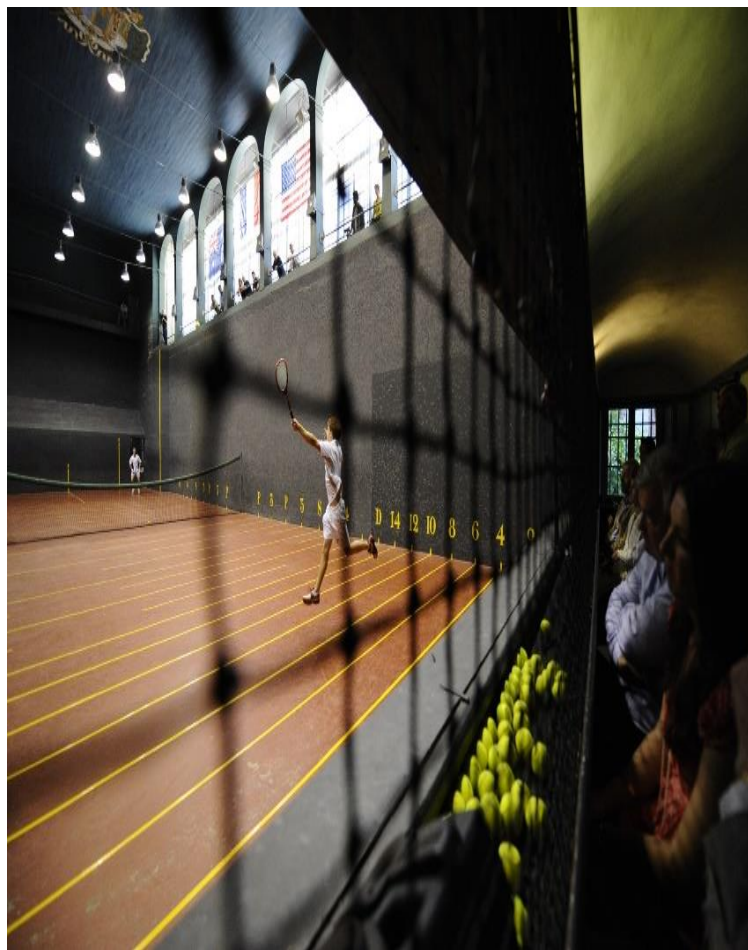
Radley members Alfred Backhouse, Louis Manson (Captain) and Benedict Yorston played for Oxford and were part of the four-man team that beat Cambridge 4-2.

### **Junior Tennis in France**

The Open de France Junior to be held in Fontainebleau from the 31st of March to the 2nd of April 2023. Juniors will enjoy the on-court action, while their supporters will appreciate the excellence of the off-court hospitality and the surroundings of the Palace and area.

The tennis court is located in the main courtyard of the Chateau and was built in 1601, then rebuilt in 1732, after a fire.

The Head Pro is Guillaume Dortu, who can be contacted on [info@paume-fontainebleau.com](mailto:info@paume-fontainebleau.com), or by ringing +33 164224767 for further details.



Fontainebleau has the world's largest court.

### **The U19 Girls' World Championship**

The LRTA is delighted to make the following announcement;

'To match the Junior World Championship for the 16 best players, who are all male, a similar event has been inaugurated to encourage the best dozen girls under 19 years old and give them the opportunity of a tilt at a world title. This event will overlap with the Ladies World Championship and entry will be by invitation only.'

LADIES  
REAL TENNIS  
ASSOCIATION







## Senior Tournaments

The following piece is taken from the T&RA website:

'Seacourt's most prestigious Real Tennis tournament, The Silver Racquet, took place from 1-5 February 2023. The tournament was bigger and better than ever, and this year celebrated its 50th anniversary!

The T&RA proudly presented live coverage of the 50th Anniversary tournament on behalf of the Seacourt Tennis Club, Hayling Island. To watch matches from this event, visit [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCTazp\\_qYd-Niu6Fqr1V8kQnZ90V1sZa5](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCTazp_qYd-Niu6Fqr1V8kQnZ90V1sZa5).

The Seacourt Silver Racquet is the premier Real Tennis handicap tournament for professionals and amateurs. Qualifying matches are played level, with no deuces. Main draw matches are played off modified handicaps.

This year, the event was sponsored by Peter Luck Hille, to whom great thanks are given for his support of yet another important event in the real tennis calendar.

The list of previous winners reads like a *Who's Who* of the game, and all past tournament winners, including CJR, were invited to travel to Seacourt for the celebratory dinner on Friday 3 February, and to watch the action.

The Ladies' World Champion for the past decade, Claire Fahey (H5.4), lost in the Semi-Final to the tournament winner, Max Trueman (H10.1), who beat Louis Gordon (H6.9) in the thrilling Final, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4. Max, who is the reigning Junior World Champion, has improved his handicap by over 5 points in the past 90 days, courtesy of his excellent match play. He has had a superb season and is going from strength to strength as a player.



Max Trueman, 2023 winner of The Seacourt Silver Racquet

'In the final, Junior World Champion, Max Trueman, after beating Claire Fahey in three long sets an hour previously, won through another lengthy three-setter against Petworth professional, Louis Gordon. After Max had taken the first set 6/4, Louis fought back to level the match, 6/3 in the second, and then was ahead 4-1 in the final set. But then Max dug deep and produced sublime Tennis to recover and take the final set 6/4', reports the event page on the T&RA website.

Radley member, Lea Van Der Zwalmen, came through the qualifying rounds to play Lewis Williams (H3.3) in the round of 16 and lost 5-6, 6-4, 3-6. This was a strong result for Lea and the tournament gave her excellent preparation for her next major event, the Ladies' World Championships in April (see below).

## **British Amateur Singles and Doubles**



The British Amateur, which started in 1888, has historically been one of the most hotly contested titles and prestigious titles in British tennis.

Sir Edward Grey appeared in all the finals bar one from 1888-1898, while still balancing his tennis and political life. On 3 August 1914, he famously commented, when looking down on the lamps being lit outside the Foreign Office: 'The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime...' and by June of 1916 he had become as the longest continuously serving British foreign Secretary, but the strain caused a breakdown of his mental and physical health.

Howard Angus exceeded Grey's record considerably, winning the British Amateur title 16 times and playing in all except two finals between 1966 and 1987, when he lost to Julian Snow.

Old Radleian Julian Snow's record haul of 20 Singles titles stands as an extraordinary example of the sustained quality of his match play over decades. It seems incredible that he was the runner-up as little as 10 years ago, having first achieved this feat in 1986.

The tournament ran from 11-19 of February and archive footage can be found on the T&RA's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ta6qS7A7lo4>.

There was a notable achievement by the Radley junior and club champion, Henry Henman, who took a set from the veteran Peter Wright, that most redoubtable of competitors and the Runner-up in 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2018.

This year's British Amateur was won by Robert Shenkman, who beat Jamie Giddins 6-5, 6-1 to take the title for the first time.

Howard Angus, the illustrious past winner, presented the magnificent Amateur Bowl and praised both players for a wonderful display of tennis.



Above, Rob proudly accepted the trophy and noted that he was the first player from Manchester to appear in the final since the great Peter Kershaw, who did so four times between 1948 and 1955.

The footage, billed as a defensive masterclass, can be watched using this link: <https://www.tennisandrackets.com/real-tennis/tournaments-fixtures/amateur-singles-and-doubles-championships>.



In the British Amateur Doubles, the T&RA website recounts that 'the final saw four clubs represented. Jamie Giddins (Queen's) and Ed Kay (Cambridge) vs Will Flynn (Seacourt) and Rob Shenkman (Manchester). The old guard looking for their fourth consecutive doubles championship or first-time winners - a great match lay in wait.

Will and Rob started the stronger and looked comfortable as they surged ahead in the first set. Game followed game as soon they were playing for the set, which they duly won in style, 6/1. The scene was set for Rob to emulate yesterday's success in the singles. However, Ed and Jamie have pedigree and soon reversed the tables in the second set, as they started to work themselves back into the match. Serving tighter, they won the key points and set about reversing their woes of the first set, which they did, winning 6/2 to level the match.



Jamie Giddins (L) and Ed Kay (R), winners of the British Amateur Doubles.

The third set was the closest, as the pretenders won a couple of games, and then the champions levelled. This was the pattern of the third, which eventually reached 4-4 and lay in the balance. Ed and Jamie nailed the vital ninth game and then secured their second set point in the next game. Great play by four terrific players, playing the highest standard of doubles. The fourth, and what was to be the final set,

was one-way traffic. Ed and Jamie were now in full flow, hitting winners with ease, despite a valiant defence by Rob and Will. The games slipped by and the set was won comfortably, 6/0, with Ed and Jamie crowned the amateur champions again, their fourth successive title. Commiserations to Will and Rob, who had started so strongly.

T&RA Chairman, Fred Satow, presented the famous Bailey Cup, along with Pol Roger champagne. Special mention to Ben Geytenbeek for streaming so brilliantly once again, as the T&RA Media channel soared past 1,000 subscribers.'

### **The National Handicap Category Tournaments**

The National Handicap Category A-G Tournaments, played in handicap bands from H0s-H60s, are a popular feature of every tennis season. The matches are played at different clubs, which gives an opportunity for players to experience match play on different courts, with Hatfield, Moreton Morrell, Manchester, Oratory, Prested, Queen's and others, all hosting tournaments during March and April.

Good luck to all Radley members taking part, including John Matthews, who has pushed on into the 40s, and so is not eligible to defend his title in the Category F (H50-59) at Prested last year, while Chris Manson has won the over 40-49 Category E title an impressive three times.

### **International Tournaments**

#### **British Ladies Open Singles, Doubles & Handicap Doubles Championships 2023**

The British Ladies Open 2023 will be held, as usual, at Seacourt, and will run from 29 March to 2 April.



It will be followed by the Ladies World Championship, which will be held from 10-16 April at The Oratory. Once again, the ladies have cause to thank Peter Luck-Hille, who has given unwavering support to this special event, and to women's tennis, over decades.

Alongside the contests for the British Singles and Doubles titles, there will be a Plate competition for first round losers and a Handicap Doubles events.

Simultaneous with the Singles and Doubles events at the Ladies' World Championships, kindly sponsored by the Moore Family Office, at Oratory and Hardwick, there will be an Open Handicap Doubles for any combination of players (male, female and mixed pairs), as well as the inaugural Girls' World Championships, from 13-16 April, for the best dozen girls under 19 years of age. Entry to the latter will be by invitation.



### **The Ladies' World Championships**

The Oratory School will host the 2023 Ladies World Championships from 10-16 April. The promo video can be watched by clicking on this link:  
<https://youtu.be/aZLgSu9BmY0>.

As well as the main events, the Singles and Doubles World Championship competitions, there will be a plate for first round losers and a handicap doubles competition. There will be a Pol Roger cocktail party on Wed 12<sup>th</sup> (at which Haven Pell will talk about his book *Round the World in 50 Courts* and will sell and sign copies, see p22) and a tournament dinner on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> April at a local gastro-pub, The Highwayman.

Clare Fahey defends her Singles title once again and she and her sister, Sarah, defend their Doubles title, both of which were first won by them in 2011.



### **The Men's World Championships 2023**

The International World Challenge Committee (IWCC) has finalised the details and has announced that John Lumley will compete against Chris Chapman at The Racquet Club of Philadelphia on 22 and 24 March, 2023.

This will be followed by a competition between Ben Taylor-Matthews and Nick Howell at the Aiken Tennis Club in South Carolina on 29 and 31 March, 2023.

The brand-new Westwood Real Tennis court near Washington D.C. has won the bidding to host the Challenge Match and more detail appears on p18.

One thing is certain, that for the first time since 1994, Rob Fahey will not be playing in the Challenge Match for the World Championship.





This is the end of an extraordinary era. Fittingly, the T&RA issued this tribute to the man generally acknowledged as the greatest player of real tennis of all time:

<https://www.tennisandrackets.com/news/a-tribute-to-rob-fahey> and

"Rob Fahey, on behalf of its Members, the T&RA applauds your distinguished contribution across the years. So many tributes have been made and many more to come and congratulations on reaching your yet another (four nineteenth) British Open Singles Final in your retirement year.

The world of Tennis owes you a huge debt of gratitude. As a player, you have been peerless. As a coach, you have nurtured your enthusiasm for the game across multiple generations. As a Club Professional, in more recent times, your personality draws in more members.

Finally, your support for the Investing in Professionals programme has encouraged your fellow professionals to join the mission to support the future of Real Tennis. Whilst many people demonstrate triskaidekaphobia, you have embraced the number thirteen as the key to your accomplishments. You have won 13 World Championships (two successful challenges and eleven successful defences). You have won the British Open Singles Championships on thirteen occasions, six times a finalist, your first in 1991. You have thirteen British Open Doubles Championships to your name, seven times a finalist, your first in 1990. So, in total that is thirteen times as an unsuccessful finalist, not that you measure these metrics, but 39 British Finals in total throughout your illustrious career.

Robert Fahey MBE OAM, you are a legend!" - **Chris Davies, CEO T&RA**

Forcing for the winning openings has been a hallmark of Rob's game, adding considerable excitement for spectators, and not a little danger for those in the Dedans! Watch the following video of every shot Rob Fahey hit into the dedans during the British Open 2022, to see that power and precision during match play: <https://www.tennisandrackets.com/news/a-tribute-to-rob-fahey>.



### **The Court Circular**

#### **a.k.a. International Club News**

There is much to report about actual and potential court projects in every country in which the game is played currently, and a couple where it is not. These are heady days, with positive news on the Charleston project (same city, but in a different location than the now-defunct Daniel Island proposal), Chinon and Pau in France and, in England, the restoration of the court at Hewell Grange, the creation of one in a listed gym at Repton School, advanced discussions about a court at the Hurlingham Club in England, and who knows where else that courts may be possibilities in the near future.

#### **Australia**

A buyer has, at last, been found for the Cope-Williams Real Tennis Club, Glenfern Road, Romsey, Victoria, 3434, which is 60km north of Melbourne.



The court was built in 1997 and open until 2007, but since then only on request, as it has been used primarily as an exhibition space for the Cope-Williams Arts Foundation.

The dimensions of the court are 112' long x 38' wide and 32' high. It has a glass grille wall and a twisting timber tambour (visible in the photo above), which produces the sound that led to this feature of tennis courts becoming known as the 'tambour' (French for 'drum'). Unusually, the hazard end is longer than the service end of the court. Whether by design or error, we don't know.

The architect and owner of the court, Gordon Cope-Williams, died in 2019 since when the estate was put up for sale, split up in separate lots, and his widow, Judy, died in August 2022, What the new owner's intentions may be for the court, we do not know.

### **Sydney -**

Exciting news comes from Sydney. The Sydney Real Tennis Club received a A\$700,000 tranche of its A\$1.399m grant from the NSW State Government on Wed 8 March, with the rest to follow.



Chris Cooper, the Hon Sec of SRTC, writes: *'There is a lot to do, so please let us know if you are able to help in any way - we have an action list as long as your arm!'*

*We are now requesting everyone who has generously pledged financial support to please send us the money as soon as possible.*

*Anyone else who is interested in helping - please come forward now or follow this link: <https://www.sydneyrealtennis.com.au/donation>. It is not too late to add your name to the honour board!*

*If you are able to contribute any more to the building fund it would be greatly appreciated as there are bound to be extra costs along the way and we are still raising the final money to ensure the court is built to specification.*

*Please do not hesitate to come back to me with any thoughts, comments or suggestions. We would love to hear from you!*

*All the best,  
Chris Cooper'*



These smiles reflect the excitement of the project leaders in Sydney.

Construction on the court at the Cheltenham Recreation Club will begin in June 2023 and the target date for opening is September 2024, marking the return to Sydney of real tennis after a hiatus of 17 years. This will mean three successive new court openings: in Westwood in September 2022; Sand Valley in September 2023; and then Sydney. What a trio!

Alongside these projected opening, there will be dates in due course for the completion of the two courts in France (see below) and a plethora of other projects.

Congratulations to all involved! There will be an enormous amount of work to be done before the court



can open, not least in raising the final funds needed to complete the project to return real tennis to Sydney, after a hiatus of about 18 years.

A dedicated fundraising website has been established, which has regular updates on progress, <https://www.sydneypadel.com.au>, and a further document has been updated with information of donor categories: [Donor\\_categories.pdf \(mcusercontent.com\)](https://www.sydneypadel.com.au/Donor_categories.pdf).

This link takes you straight to the photomontage of the court as it will look *in situ*: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fa1e8450653912714e0f8c0/t/6048853931390f164858f928/1615365452717/Photomontage.PDF>.

## **France**

### **Bordeaux -**

Congratulations to Lea van der Zwalmen, who has just been elected President of the club, thus becoming simultaneously the youngest-ever person and the only woman to have held that office at a French club. We wish her great success in building the club's membership, court usage and profitability.

Lea has sent us a copy of the latest Bordeaux club Newsletter (see below) and has issued an invitation to players from Radley to visit Bordeaux for a match.

To celebrate the strong links between Radley and Bordeaux, we are keen to send a large Radley team over to Claret-country for a match over a long weekend, to enjoy the hospitality and camaraderie of the real tennis community in Bordeaux, to play on the new court there and to make the most of opportunities for city rambling, local touring, wine tasting and other gastronomic adventures.

If you are interested in joining the party, with dates to be confirmed, please let Maggie know by emailing her at: [maggie.ht@btinternet.com](mailto:maggie.ht@btinternet.com).

Lea will be back in England next month for the Ladies' World Championship, seeded number 2. We also congratulate Lea, Madame la Presidente of the Jeu de Paume de Bordeaux, on her industry, as well as

her appointment. She aims to issue a club newsletter twice a month, so we wish her good luck with that!

To give you a taste of what is going on in Bordeaux, here is a transcript of the most recent edition:

*'Newsletter - Fin Février 2023*

*Chers supporters de la communauté Jeu de Paume en France, toutes les actualités du club de Bordeaux pour la fin du mois de FEVRIER c'est ici :*

*Ce dimanche 26 février, Bordeaux a eu le plaisir d'accueillir Pau dans le cadre des rencontres interclubs.*

*Famille, amis, chiens...tous ont soutenu et encouragé les matches de double handicap qui se sont enchaînés toute la journée. Pour palier l'attente entre chaque rencontre, 2 possibilités : profiter du buffet très garni et/ou se défouler sur les 3 terrains de padel mis à notre disposition exclusivement par les Girondins à l'occasion afin de découvrir ou parfaire sa pratique.*

*En fin d'après-midi, malgré une égalité parfaite en terme de nombre de matchs gagnés, c'est finalement Pau qui remportera cette première rencontre interclub au nombre de jeux gagnés. Bravo à eux et merci pour cette super ambiance ! Mention spéciale à tous ceux qui ont participé à cette super journée paume (chouette de voir de nouvelles têtes!) et à notre Remi Fabre qui gagne ses 3 matchs.*

*Skillz Night : les défis qui défoulent*

*La première édition de la « Skillz Night » a réuni, ce lundi 20 février, 2 équipes de 3 personnes qui se sont affrontés sur le carreau pour une série de défis tout en technique : maximum de tambours, de grilles, de dedans, faire mieux que chasse 6 etc...sans oublier les 2 jokers à choisir stratégiquement.*

*Si les « Chers Leaders » l'ont remporté de peu sur les « Etoiles Montantes », tout le monde a gagné le droit de déguster un délicieux plat, tout en exotisme, concocté par le Chef Baudouin : un régal !*

*Encore un moment convivial au Club, qui sera suivi par de nombreux autres...!*

*Une nouvelle recrue pas comme les autres...*

*Grâce à Jean-Michel Bazin notamment, le club est maintenant équipé d'un lanceur de balle de 1ère génération qui fonctionne*

*par percussion et non par compression. Petite Bertha propulse les balles de paume d'un bout à l'autre du cours, avec plusieurs angles et plusieurs vitesses possibles. Pour ceux curieux d'essayer, merci de vous rapprocher de Jean-Michel ou Baudouin directement.*

### *Soirée spéciale découverte Paume*

*A l'occasion des premiers tours de la prestigieuse Coupe de Bordeaux, le Club vous incite à inviter vos proches et votre réseau à venir découvrir ce sport ancestral au plus haut niveau international amateur. Nicolas Victoir (hdcp 9), Will Flynn (hdcp 9), Luke Danby (hdcp 12) & Bertie Vallat (hdcp 13) sont déjà inscrits. Du beau jeu, de quoi boire et grignoter...what else? On compte sur vous pour partager cette invitation à tous ceux susceptibles d'être intéressés.*

### *Partager l'évènement*

*Quand les bonnes actions sont récompensées*

*Envie de soutenir le Jeu de Paume sans te ruiner ?*

*Facile : FAIS UN DON !*

*Le Club ayant un statut particulier, tu pourras même le défiscaliser à hauteur de 60% et le déduire de tes impôts. Alors, n'hésite plus, devient MECENE ( ça en jette !) et surtout, parles-en autour de toi...*

*Musique please!*

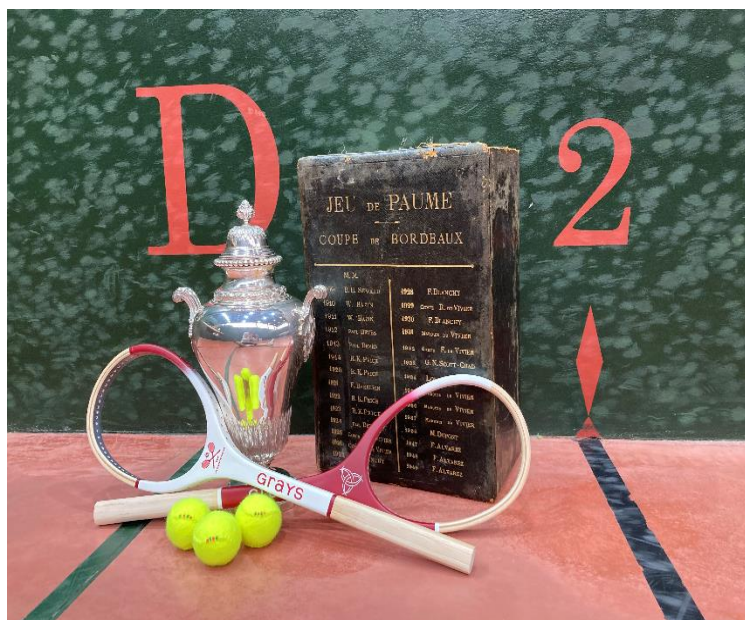
*La première playlist collaborative spéciale jeu de paume est ici...merci à supergirl Typhanie Guerin pour l'initiative. Accédez à la playlist et rajoutez vos sons sans modération. La création d'un compte Deezer est complètement gratuite et prend 1 petite minute.*

*Ecouter la playlist*

*Les évènements à venir en Mars*

*Mercredi 8 Mars : Paume Paume girls! Doubles 18h30-20h30 suivi d'une bonne bouffe entre filles.*

*Jeudi 9 Mars à partir de 18h : Vernissage à la Galerie Sweeney en présence de l'artiste Jean-Christophe De Clercq. Verre de champagne offert avec code promo ICICESTBORDEAUX.*



*Vendredi 17 mars à partir de 18h : Soirée au club à l'occasion de la prestigieuse Coupe de Bordeaux - du beau jeu, du bon vin et de quoi grignoter, super soirée en perspective. L'occasion en or de faire découvrir la paume à votre entourage!*

*Lundi 20 Mars : 2ème édition de notre Skillz night ! Venez relever des défis en équipe au cours de cette soirée mêlant compétitivité et convivialité. Une invitée spéciale en guest-star ;- ) Ouvert à tous les niveaux. Participation de 20€ (inclus un repas chaud). Inscription auprès de Baudouin ou ICI.*

*Lundi 27 Mars 18h30 : Réunion de comité suivi d'un apéro au club Ordre du jour : Revue des actions réalisées / en cours, organisation de la logistique pour le Trophée Edouard Kressmann du 18 au 23 avril,...*

*Une idée? Suggestion d'évènement? Proposition de partenariat? Suggestion de contenu pour la prochaine Newsletter? N'hésitez pas à nous contacter directement via notre nouvelle adresse mail : [club@jeudepaumebordeaux.fr](mailto:club@jeudepaumebordeaux.fr)*

### **Chinon -**

Simon Berry, the English owner of the court in the Rue Jeu de Paume in the medieval town centre of Chinon, tells us that the next phase of the ambitious restoration of this small (yes, smaller than Oxford) and very old court (1580s) will commence in October this year.

More on that in the Autumn edition of *Better Than The Last*.



## Pau -



Simon, who is also the President of the Jeu de Paume de Navarre, is delighted that, after years of waiting, cajoling, negotiating and hoping, the owners of the real tennis court in Pau, who are the local council, have approved the first stage of restoration of the court.

It needs to be transformed from its current state as a knocked-about *trinquet* to its original incarnation as a full size *cour de dedans* of the classic style.

This project will start in June, after which no other games but real tennis will be played on the court (hurrah!), and the hazard-end penthouse and grille will be reinstated.



Subsequent works will include the not-insignificant tasks of removing the masonry that was added to the main wall to cover the tambour (see above); replacing the side penthouse and grille; reinstating the dedans gallery and penthouse; and improving the floor.

However, work has (nearly) begun! Congratulations to all who have played their part in achieving this degree of progress, that should lead to full restoration of the court in time. How long it will take will no doubt depends as much on local politics and rounds of elections as it will the enthusiasm and activity of the *jeu de paume* players and community.

The 5\* *Parc Beaumont* hotel, with its Michelin-starred restaurant, the *Jeu de Paume*, is next door, perfectly placed for a post-tournament dinner or bar snacks on the terrace that looks onto the court.

## Holland

Cees de Bondt, that noted historian of the game in the Netherlands, Italy and elsewhere, and the first Secretary of the *Nederlandse Real Tennis Bond* on its foundation in 1986, contacted us recently with fascinating news. We are so grateful for Cees's regular updates on the progress of the NRTB to achieve its purpose; the return of real tennis to Holland.

There were at least 200 tennis courts in the country between 1500-1800 and so the history of the sport in the region is extensive. You can read more about the game on the Continent on Cees's excellent English language website: <https://www.real-tennis.nl/>.

Cees writes:

'After our attempts for a court on the coast at Scheveningen and then at the Leiden University sports centre came to nothing, our pledge for the Marlot indoor tennis hall (of 1928) with its two courts also failed, as 3 or 4 padel courts will be accommodated in it by the new owner. A dark tunnel arose in front of us, but then suddenly, a bundle of light.

The Real Tennis Committee was hopeful that we can join a heritage project of the municipality of Teylingen (near Sassenheim)... Action had to be taken immediately. Thanks to our keen committee member Kevin Snel, who visited potentially interested parties in the project, we know what to focus on if we want to be part of it.

Central to this are the ruins Teylingen, once a 'pleasure garden' of the Counts of Holland. Is there a possibility to include a real tennis court in this project for which partners are currently being sought, we wondered?

We thought that we had a chance because we are probably dealing with the **first tennis court ever built**. It originated at this castle, around 1375.

Our initiative is the only one, as far as we now know, that is directly related to the history of the castle. It makes it unique and puts it on the (world) map. King Charles II of England spent time at Teylingen castle, by the way, when he lived in exile in the Netherlands in the 1650s. His sister Mary already resided there after her husband, Prince of Orange William II (father of William III), died in 1650.

The reason for our initiative is a specific archival account from the time of Albert of Bavaria, Count of Holland, in which in 1388 a 'caetspul' (tennis court) on the forecourt of this castle is mentioned that in 1388 was (re)covered with a thatched roof. It means that it was already thatched before. I pay attention to it in my forthcoming book, *Tennis in the Burgundian-Habsburg Netherlands*.



The creation of a real tennis court was an important part of a development tender, put together rapidly and submitted by the deadline of 7 February 2023. The proposition centred on the adaptation and re-use of a tulip bulb barn that was built in 1930. It is no longer used for its original purpose, in need of a new incarnation and is conveniently close to the ruined castle.

It was hoped that creation of a centre that highlights sports that were contemporary with the castle would be novel and appealing to those who made the judgements on feasibility. The municipality made its favoured candidate for the development known on 24 February, so there was not an agonisingly long wait for further news. However, very sadly, for the Dutch real tennis community, the decision went against the real tennis court proposal.

The hunt of a suitable site for the return of real tennis to Holland goes on...



Notwithstanding this disappointing result, for those interested in seeing the site of the earliest documented court, there follows some more detail.

Teylingen is in the province of South Holland, in the Bulb Region, and there is information about the moated, four-storey brick castle ruins on the following website: <https://www.castles.nl/teylingen-castle>. The town is just to the north of Leiden and only about 30 mins drive from The Hague, slightly closer to Haarlem and less than 30 miles from the Hook of Holland and its ferry terminal. Perfect for a day or weekend trip from the UK.

## Ireland

### **Dublin -**

Jack Woods, a member of the Irish Real Tennis Association, has shared some splendid photos, taken inside of the interior of the court on Earlsfort Terrace in Dublin last October.

Preliminary work is being done on the transformation of the court into a children's museum of science.



The proposed museum will be created on a large site that would include the former Guinness family tennis court, close to St Stephen's Green in the centre of the city.

Initial planning permission lapsed, but has been re-granted, still making it a condition that the tennis court is able to be used occasionally for the playing of the game. It remains unclear how this could possibly be achieved but it is an objective to be applauded and that was only achieved through the lobbying of the real tennis community.



In preparation for change, the interior of the court has been cleared of structures built during the past 60 years or so, including a mezzanine floor. In the photo above, the magnificent space can be seen again in its entirety; the court floor is visible, the tambour remains intact (right hand side of the photo above) and there remain some handsome chase lines and numbers on the floor and walls.



The crowns on the gallery lines would probably not be favoured images on a court in the Republic of Ireland, but we hope they would be preserved, for reasons of history and authenticity.



There are spaces within the court building that have been covered over when partitioning was inserted, which have now been revealed. All very atmospheric.



This staircase looks rather like Miss Havisham's... and we have *Great Expectations* of what might ensue.

## USA

### **Washington:**

The new court at the Westwood Country Club is not only open but packed with enthusiastic players; some new to the game and others who have transferred from the previous court at Prince's Club in McLean, just a few miles away. The opening was a wonderful celebration of tennis, in the fine and hospitable setting of Westwood, with its world class facilities.



The club has recently made two significant announcements. The first that its bid to host the 2023 Men's World Championship has been successful and the Challenge Match will take place from 17-21 September.

There will be social events and sporting activities for the spectators during these Challenge days, including real tennis and lawn tennis tournaments. More about this programme will follow in due course, and attendees will be guaranteed the warmest of welcomes and the best hospitality available. The bid is subject to the completion of adjustments to the tambour and the penthouses.

The second piece of news is as follows:

*'Westwood members,*

*We are excited to announce that the Court Tennis World Champion, Camden Riviere [pictured below with the Cutty Sark salver, the Men's World*

*Championship trophy], is now Westwood Country Club's official touring professional.*

*Cam will visit us every month or so to teach and train in his new role, so look out for more news.*

*If you haven't tried Court Tennis yet, and you'd like your first introduction to the sport to be from the World #1, then please drop in for a free intro clinic. Immediately following each intro session, Camden will train with Westwood #1 (USA's #2 amateur), Noah Motz, for a couple of hours.*



*If you can make it to the 6pm Wednesday evening intro, when you come off the court, the Director of Racquet Sports, Dai Edwardes-Evans, will buy your first drink at the Tambar on the mezzanine level overlooking the Court Tennis. From there, you can compare your technique with Camden's!*

*It is rare to have the opportunity to play with the World Champion in any sport, let alone have them teach and mentor you. Don't miss this chance to learn from a true master of the game and to try a new and exciting sport.*



*If you'd like more information on Court Tennis or these introductory sessions with the world champion, please email our head court tennis professional, Ivan Ronaldson: [ivan@westwoodcc.com](mailto:ivan@westwoodcc.com).*

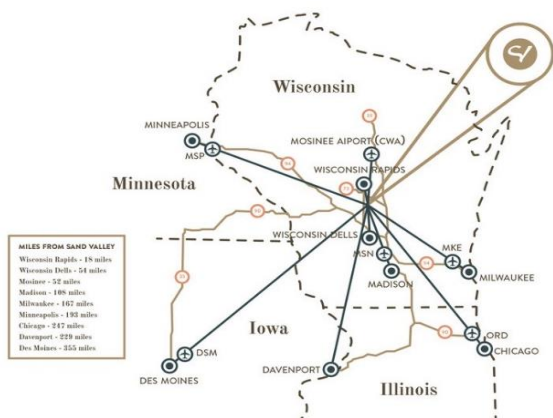
It is thanks to the considerable generosity of the Motz family that this arrangement between Camden and the Westwood Country Club has been possible.

## Wisconsin

Michael Keiser is a Chicago club member, and the originator and financier of the idea to build a real tennis court in Nekoosa, in the vastness of rural Wisconsin, on his hugely successful golf and tennis destination resort, Sand Valley. The Central Wisconsin airport at Mosinee is less than 50 miles away.



The following link takes you to the website for the thriving, multiactivity, 12,000-acre Sand Valley Resort, and shows the public golf courses, 15 grass and hard surface lawn tennis courts, trails for mountain biking and hiking and well-stocked lakes and rivers for fishing, with facilities for skiing, snowshoeing and outdoor ice hockey in winter.



The 2023 arrival of real tennis is mentioned, and photos of the progress being made with the project can be found here: <https://sandvalley.com/?NCK=8772611141>.

Construction of the court is well underway and proceeding to plan. Mike Keiser comments: *'We are not planning any tennis events in 2023 as we have no place to house our guests. The resort is full! I do know that there are some tennis groups who have made reservations for the fall.*

*I do not have any news to report at this time. I can say that construction is progressing as planned. I will have much more to share over the coming months. At the moment we're working on our plans for some exciting events in the future and I'd love to share those plans with your readers.'*

Thank you, Mike, and we are delighted that the opening remains on schedule for September 2023, at the start of the next season. Watch this space and be prepared to book well ahead to get accommodation at the resort.



There are external images of what the new tennis centre will look like (above) and an artist's impression of the court interior (see below), which looks remarkably like Westwood, which can be no bad thing!

The following text is taken from the 'Tennis Center' (sic) tab on: <https://sandvalley.com/real-estate>: *'Since introducing its grass tennis courts in 2018, Sand Valley has become a mecca for racquet sport enthusiasts. Beginning in 2023, those tennis players will have a place to call home: the 13,000-square-foot Sand Valley Tennis Center.*



*Opening in 2023, the Tennis Center, adjacent to the resort's 15 grass tennis courts, features outdoor seating overlooking the grass courts and the 18th hole on Sedge Valley. Inside, guests can relax and recover with food and drink at a bistro-style restaurant with a brick wood-fired oven overlooking an unexpected example of the rich history of tennis: just the eleventh Court Tennis court in the United States. The Tennis Center also features a fully stocked pro shop.*

*The history of Court Tennis (known as "Real" or "Royal" Tennis in other parts of the world) stretches back to the 13th century. King Henry VIII of England played the game. Guests will have the chance to learn the game and enjoy competitions and exhibitions throughout the year to get to know the true origins of the modern game of tennis.'*

### **End Notes**

#### **Tennis on a Boat?**

Wayne McLennan from OUTC has been in touch about an idea that combines friendship, tennis and boats – and you are invited.

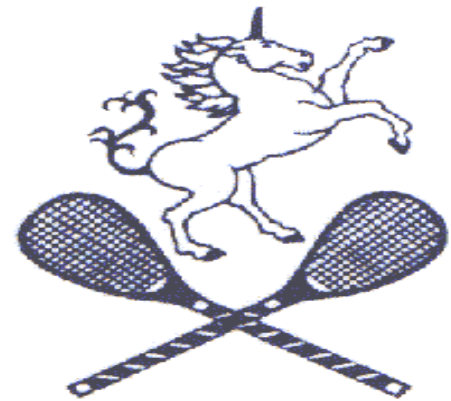
#### **'THE SURGE OF THE UNICORNS**

*Plans are afoot to combine our love of real tennis with an aquatic experience the like of which our tennis world has never seen before!*

*It is entirely possible to jump into a narrowboat in Oxford and sail the Thames to Hampton Court Palace*

*and then sail back to Oxford in a leisurely 2 weeks. This was proven by our late club president Simon Stubbings, his family and neighbours in September 2021. There are no less than 6 real tennis courts readily accessible from this stretch of the Thames and before he sadly passed away in 2022, Simon and I discussed the viability of not only repeating his voyage but to do it with a real tennis focus.*

*We referred to the idea as 'the Surge of the Unicorns', and envisioned involving all of the clubs on the stretch to celebrate jointly our beloved game in a unique way. Nowhere else in the world is this sort of jaunt possible.*



*The idea is to book a large narrowboat in the second half of June this year and fill it with fellow tennis players from each of the clubs who would book their berths for 2 nights at a time between the tennis courts. Bookings will be all-inclusive and will include the challenge of a 'Head of the River' tennis competition between the participating clubs.*

*All on-board sustenance & liquid refreshment and tennis fees would be included in the £125/night that would be asked, and there will be a camping option of £75/night. Though why anyone would rather sleep on the cold, hard ground than in a cosy boat is a mystery...*

*The very nature of the voyage means everyone on board would need to be prepared to muck-in with boat handling and routine chores of life on board to make the most of it, but the underlying point of the exercise is to have some FUN, and in so doing, to broaden our enjoyment of Real Tennis; build new inter-club friendships; to develop a closer affinity with our stretch of the Thames and learn more about its rich history (with some help from the historians amongst us!); to promote our wonderful game, and, of course, to play for the 'Head of the River' trophy.*



*Simon's (very experienced) skipper, Mark Appelby, has committed to the whole voyage, and a total of 77 x 2-night bookings would be available - 63 for those wishing to sleep on-board, and 14 for those preferring to camp. With an average of just 13 bookings per club, the boat could be kept at full capacity for the whole voyage, and subject to booking patterns, arranging for some of the stages to be themed should be possible.*

*All aboard!*

*If this sounds of interest to you, please let me know by emailing [wayne@m-a-l.co.uk](mailto:wayne@m-a-l.co.uk).*

### **Tennis on a Bike?**

Earlier in this edition of *Better Than The Last* there has been mention made of the T&RA's Annual Report for the 1997/98 season.

That Report includes a mention of Kate Leeming, the Australian expedition cyclist, explorer, educator, film producer, author and real tennis pro.



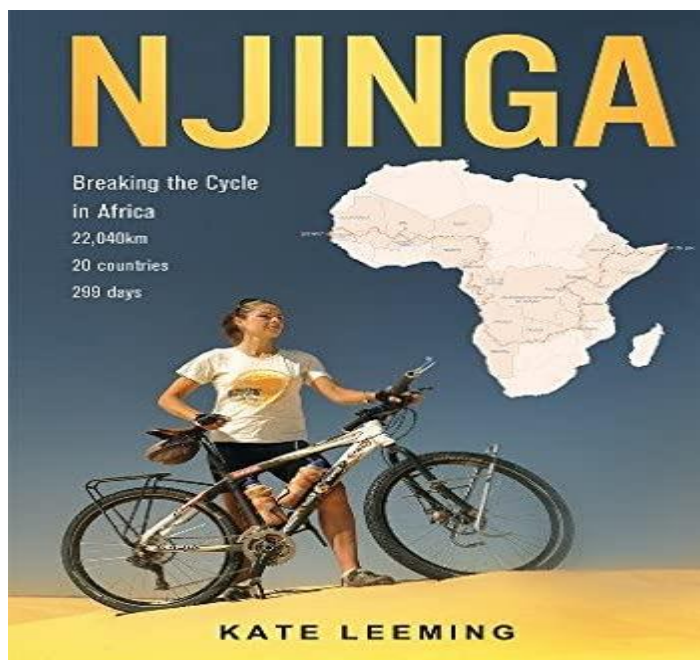
In the Oratory's report in the T&RA Annual Report of 1997/98, it finishes with: 'On a sad note, Kate Leeming, whose game was improving fast, had to undergo two major knee operations. She is at present convalescing in Australia and we hope that she will be able to continue her success on court in the forthcoming season.'

Well, operations she may have had, but they did not stop her relentless pursuit of adventure, achieving world ranking number 2 at real tennis, winning the Australian Ladies' Singles title five times and a national honour.

David Lloyd Jones, President of Royal Melbourne Tennis Club writes:

*'On behalf of the club, I would like to congratulate Kate on her Australia Day award. Kate has been awarded an OAM for her outstanding contribution to adventure sports.*

*Kate's achievements are many. Of note is cycling 22,040 km over ten months through Africa in 2010. An expedition that was not only a physical quest but also a platform to highlight the development needs and activities of war-torn and poverty-stricken nations.*



*Kate also has two earlier world firsts under her belt – the Trans-Siberian Cycle Expedition (1993) when she became the first woman to cycle across the new Russia unsupported (in aid of the children of Chernobyl), and the 25,000km Great Australian Cycle Expedition (2004/05) which included the first bicycle crossing of the Canning Stock Route by a woman.*

*The University of Western Australia has also awarded Kate an Honorary Doctor of Education degree for services to education and community. She is a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society (UK), a member of The Explorers Club (New York), an Honorary Advisor for the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award and a Scout Ambassador.*

*If you would like to congratulate her personally you can contact her via email; [kate@kateleeming.com](mailto:kate@kateleeming.com).*



Kate started her real tennis career in England and was a Professional at Fontainebleau for a while. She has been an Assistant Pro at RMTTC for years but skips off every now and then to do some amazing, adventurous things.



Congratulations to Dr Kate Leeming, Real Tennis Professional in England, France and Australia for several decades, adventurer and pusher of boundaries, and who has cycled the equivalent of twice round the world at the Equator.



To share the experience of one of her epic journeys, when she cycled the Skeleton Coastline of Namibia in 2019, click on this link:

<https://www.outsideonline.com/video/diamonds-sand-tv-series/>.

### **(Almost) The Last Word**

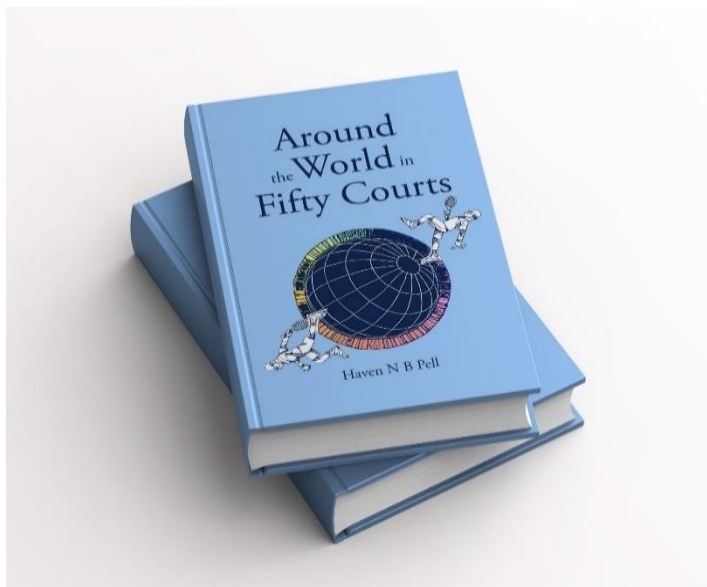
Haven Pell, leading light of the US Court Tennis Foundation, who was the main driver of the triumphant new court project at Westwood Country Club in Virginia, satisfied his ambition of playing on all the 'live' courts of the world by completing the tour in 2022. Reminiscences of his travels, *Round the World in Fifty Courts*, is a splendidly entertaining read.

At the drinks party at The Oratory on the evening of Wed 12 April, during the 2023 Ladies' World Championships, Haven will sign sell and copies of the second edition of his book. What follows is the flyer...

*'Haven Pell first stepped on a real tennis court as a small child in Tuxedo Park, New York, where he was taken for Gold Racquets weekend to watch his father play.*



*He learned to play (never notably well) at Greentree in the 1950s and 1960s and, with a quarter century gap, has continued for nearly seven decades.*



Around the World in Fifty Courts

Haven Pell

*He has played in all the real tennis courts in the world, some of which no longer exist, and on one built temporarily as a movie set.*

*Along the way, he has served on the board of the United States Court Tennis Association and as Chairman of the United States Court Tennis Preservation Foundation, where he learned a good deal about how the game is run throughout the world.*

*He has had a guiding hand in the building of two real tennis courts, Prince's Court in 1997 and its replacement at Westwood Country Club in 2022.*

*Around the World in Fifty Courts is both a travel story and a series of thoughtful observations about the future. Now in its second printing, Around the World in Fifty Courts was first published in November 2022.*

*The first print run sold out rapidly, but you can order a copy of this and other real tennis titles here: <https://ronpubs.com/>. Hardback edition @ £35 plus postage.'*

We are delighted that Haven will be visiting Radley on Friday 14 April, talking about his book, signing copies, and then having a conversation with CJR about what makes the perfect court. We hope that many members and guests from Radley, Oxford and nearby courts will come along to meet Haven, listen to him and Chris sharing their knowledge and wisdom about court design and asking questions.

More about this event will follow shortly.

### **Words, words, words...**

Clare Bucknell, whose credentials as an academic, literary critic and real tennis enthusiast are impeccable, is the latest Radley member to write and publish a book. It is her first, and although it has nothing whatever to do with real tennis, that does not stop it being a splendid work, which has already attracted lavish praise.

The launch party of *The Treasuries - Poetry Anthologies and the Making of British Culture* took place in London in early February and there was a significant tennis presence, with members of the fraternity from Holland and Britain. In his welcoming remarks, her publisher commented that he had never before been in a room with so many players of the game.



Clare (in the centre) is engaged to be married to Paul Bollerman (the current Dutch Singles Champion and the tallest in the photo above).

Paul's parents, Theo and Lucie (on his left and right), who are seen so regularly at events around the real tennis world and are two of the founders of the *Nederlandse Real Tennis Bond*, came over for this special evening.

You would have also glimpsed players from Radley, Oxford, Queen's, Hampton Court, Seacourt and Hatfield

### **(Absolutely) The Last Word**

Do have a browse through the pages of the ultimate real tennis repository at this address: <https://rt42.org/>. It contains much, but, as yet, it does not contain the answer to the question below...

### **Quiz Question**

Which public museum in England has the wifi password 'Real Tennis', and why? More on this in the next issue of *Better Than The Last* and thank you for reading all the way to the last page!

### **The Last Gallery**



This post-box recently caught the eye of the Editor. The Gruffalo and The Mouse have been crocheted with great care and are displayed on top of a post box in Abingdon, with the 'exceedingly handsome' (and it is impossible to disagree with John Betjeman) Baroque County Hall of around 1680 in the background.

The needlewoman is a local lady who continuously re-dresses this post box and asks passers-by who enjoy her work to make a donation to 'Age UK'.

This seems emblematic of a very positive kind of British life, with its appreciation of history, respect for tradition, harmless eccentricity, passion for volunteering, unusual skills and a sense of fun.

Rather like Real Tennis...

*This first Newsletter of 2023*

*was compiled by*

*Maggie Henderson-Tew*