

Radley College Tennis Court

22 June 2020

'Half a Yard' - The Club Newsletter

The Fourteenth Week of Shutdown

The Shutdown

On it goes...the Shutdown still holds for indoor sports, unless you happen to live on the Isle of Man, where indoor sports and gyms returned 'to normal' on 18 June. In the meantime, we hope you have been able to make the most of the increasing opportunities to meet up with friends and family, albeit with some continuing restrictions.

The National Tennis Club in Newport, Rhode Island, re-opened on 1 June, and Prince's Club in Washington followed suit on 15 June. We are still not aware of the imminent opening of any UK club, but the Government announcement on 19 June of the reduction in the UK Covid-19 alert level from four to three has made early action more likely.

This policy shift means that there will be gradual relaxation of restrictions, starting "no earlier than 4 July", including the opening further non-essential services including, and most importantly for real tennis, leisure facilities. It will remain up to individual clubs to decide when and how they will recommence activity, once the Govt decision has been made and policy is clear.

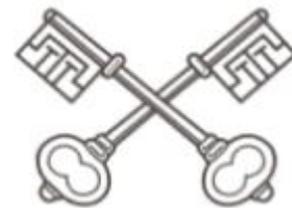
Getting Ready for Re-opening

Our governing body, the Tennis and Rackets Association, has been consulting with clubs and professionals about what changes will need to be made to ensure that participation is as safe as possible for all players of the game. It will issue a set of recommendations and each club will adapt these for their own needs.

In consultation with the College, we have been developing our response to the changed environment to ensure we have a clear set of procedures to follow as soon as the court is able to open. The health, safety and protection of all players and staff is of paramount importance.

Radley College Tennis Club

We have not received a new directive from Radley College and so our court remains closed until further notice. We will let everyone in the club know as soon as the College will allow us to welcome you back.



RADLEY
REAL TENNIS

When a re-opening date has been announced, we will be ready to tell about the necessary procedures that will be in place to protect the health of all users of the club, be they members, school users or the professionals.



Taking advantage of the uncharacteristically empty car park, the surfaces have been cleared and renewed in preparation for the rush when Real Tennis and the Sports Centre re-open. Very smart!

Thank you for your many messages of support for the club. We know how keen you are to start playing tennis again and we will be THRILLED to see you at RCTC again, as soon as it is possible.



Until play recommences and life can return to some semblance of normality, we will continue to bring bits and pieces of news from the game wherever it is played, and some tennis-related entertainment.

Junior Tennis

One of the sad consequences of the current restrictions on tennis play have been the need to stop all junior tennis activity, which is so vital to the future of our game. As we mentioned in the last Newsletter, Radley has put in a bid to be the host club for the Junior World Championship, to be held at a club in the UK in December 2020.

Recently, CJR heard Paul Weaver, Head of Junior Development, speak about the visit he makes, year after year, to the secondary school on Hayling Island. Chris asked him for a bit more background on how a flow of juniors has been so effectively created at a club like Seacourt that does not have the advantage, like Radley, Wellington, Canford and Clifton, of being within a school.



Paul's efforts, combined with the 12 free junior memberships a year offered by Seacourt, generates about 20 young players each year, has brought dozens of long-term players into the game and created a group of nine, so far, who have joined the ranks of the Professionals.

If only every club in the country could adapt and follow his example, there would be no shortage of Professionals. The lack of young Pros is a serious concern and during the Shutdown CJR has been actively involved in a new T&RA initiative to tackle the problem.

Paul mentioned that, as part of his presentation to the Hayling College (pictured above), he plays a four-minute-long promotional video, made by The Dedanists. We thought you might like to see it and so here is the link: <https://youtu.be/LH9r2z78Sml>.

Once a Junior



Can you spot the Radley Don, on court at Lord's, after the 2011 Varsity Match? MH-T found this photo while doing some Shutdown sorting at home.

Of course, it is Ali Hakimi, Housemaster of brand new L Social at Radley, and our club Singles Champion in 2019 and Finalist in 2020, who preferred the casually elegant pose without the sponsor's Pol Roger, while enjoying the moment with his Cambridge teammates.

Champions Past and Present

Penny Lumley

In this Newsletter, we want to balance the running feature about male World Champions with a piece about an exceptional female champion.

Penny Lumley, has had an extraordinary career in tennis. She is the wife of former Professional Colin Lumley and mother of John and Tara, who are both fine players of the game with a clutch of titles to their respective names, but Penny has exceeded all their combined achievements.

Penny took up the game in 1985 and within five years had won her first World Championship. She dominated the women's game for the next fifteen years, winning the World Championship Singles title six times and the Doubles title seven times.

As for the National Opens Singles, her record has also been extremely strong. She has won four Australian Open titles, twenty-three British Open titles, twenty one French Open titles, one Scottish Open crown and fourteen US Open titles.

Penny completed a Grand Slams of all four Opens in 1996-7, as well as taking the World Singles and Doubles titles that year.

She is rightly regarded as one of the best female players there has ever been and her game has been characterised by incredible footwork, skill of retrieval, fine line and length and a calm and focused demeanor on court.

In 2019, Penny had to play her daughter in the Semi Final of the French Ladies' Open, which was marked by her son; an unprecedented combination. You can see the match by using this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XbIYrTgNzM>



Winners Claire Fahey and Kim Kilgore, with John Lumley and Runners-up Penny and Tara Lumley, after the Final of the 2016 US Open Doubles Championships, held at The Racquet Club of Philadelphia, where John is the Assistant Professional.

Penny has been, and remains, a tremendous ambassador for the game and is still contesting Singles and Doubles at the highest level in the women's game, winning the US Open Singles and Doubles titles in 2014, the French Open in 2015, and is, unsurprisingly, the current British Ladies' Masters Champion. She is still well ranked in the ladies' world top ten and remains, as she has always been, an amateur.

Penny was kind enough to write a reflective piece for this newsletter:

'I was asked recently what I thought was my most satisfying win, or a match which held particular significance for me. I had to think for a short time

but really it had to be the World Championship singles defence against Sue Haswell at the Royal Tennis Court in April 1999.

Hampton Court was (and still is) Sue's home court and I knew that not only had she been coached by the most knowledgeable and technically/tactically astute Professional in the game [CJR], but also that the Dedans would be rooting for a home win. Prince Edward and his new fiancée, Sophie, were in the Dedans and the side and upper galleries were packed.

This was our third successive encounter for the Championship title. At one set apiece, I found myself 3-0 and then 4-2 down in the third and looking down the barrel of a gun. Sue was crunching down those lethal leftie railroads and volleying supremely well and I had to do everything I could to stop her steamrolling over me. I told myself: try to keep it short, make her run, don't give her a volley, attack her backhand and get up the service end. Sounds easy, but believe me...

I dug deep and somehow managed to clinch the match. To this day, I'm not sure how I managed to turn it all around and, oh, what I wouldn't give to have today's technology, so that I could watch the match back.

Of one thing I am certain and that is that I have never been more physically and mentally drained at the end of a singles match.'



Penny holding the 2003 World Championship Trophy, after her win at the Royal Melbourne Club

Another Great Champion of the Game -

CJR ends his series of five player profiles:

My final contender for the hypothetical title of greatest player of all-time is the current Men's World Champion, Robert Fahey.



An outstanding teenage player of lawn tennis in his native Tasmania, Rob became the assistant professional at Hobart in 1987. Powerful and athletic with a wonderful railroad service, he rose quickly through the ranks and began to travel the world for experience, taking jobs at Queens, Bordeaux and New York.

In 1993 he won his first major title, the US Open, and followed this up with victories in the French and Australian Opens, which gave him his first challenge for the World Championship. After defeating the top amateur Julian Snow in the final eliminator, he deposed Wayne Davies in the challenge round, played at Hobart and New York, by 9 sets to 5, and became the youngest champion since Jay Gould, eighty years earlier.

For the rest of that decade, Rob remained the best player in the world. He would build up his fitness for World Championships, which came round every two years, but in between these challenges he often turned up for events overweight and played rather poorly.

This all changed when he moved from studying in Canberra to being a professional based in Melbourne. With regular play, he added control and consistency to his formidable power and his ability to hurl himself into corners.

He became a colossus, and won back-to-back Grand Slams, winning all four 'majors' in 2000 and 2001. It became almost impossible to serve to Rob, because deep serves were forced into the dedans off the main wall with extraordinary accuracy, while shorter serves were crushed by his cut volleys.



Since then, Rob has eclipsed all records for Championship defenses, beating Tim Chisholm in '02, '04 and '06, Camden Riviere in '08, Steve Virgona in '10 and '12 and Camden again in '14.

To compensate for the inevitable decline in athleticism, he has added even more forcing power, greater racquet head control and a steely match temperament. He has also benefited from the considerable advances in athletic training theory and practice in the past twenty years, with the sort of high level, personalized, strength and conditioning training and nutritional advice that players in previous decades lacked entirely.



If particular evidence were needed of his extraordinary match play, I would point to the Second Day of the 2018 World Championship Challenge: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JY-Z1pXwKBw>. Rob started the day 1-3 sets down, and steamrolled his way through all four sets, to put himself 5-3 sets up, with just two needed on the Final Day to win back the World Championship; a huge psychological blow to his opponent.



Rating champions from different eras is an amusing but ultimately futile task. The changes in racquet manufacture and the development of synthetic strings, both of which have increased the pace of play enormously, make true comparisons impossible. Notwithstanding this, while I have enormous respect for the claims of Messrs Barre, Latham, Gould and Etchebaster, I don't believe that, at the pinnacles of their games, they would have been able to approach the Robert Fahey who was plying his trade in the years 2000 to 2004.



Take a bow, Rob Fahey, the greatest player of all time.'

Chris is indebted to Kathryn McNicoll for her authoritative work on the World Champions, *The First and the Foremost* (Ronaldson, 2010).

Tennis on the Internet

Camden Riviere

We have featured several YouTube videos from former World Champion Camden Riviere's in previous newsletters. Here is another one, about 'the drop-step', which is the piece of footwork that puts you in a great position for playing forehand and backhand groundstrokes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7re8HReivc>

All that is lacking is a court on which to practice, of course.

Secondly, there is an interesting piece of archive footage of tennis being played at Seacourt in the late 1970s, with Howard Angus, then Men's World Champion, on court with Professional David Cull:

<https://www.facebook.com/SeacourtTennisClub/videos/271915333968571/>

Tennis on TV

Vern Cassin brought to our attention some real tennis on TV recently. The American TV drama 'Billions' stars Damien Lewis as dastardly hedge fund manager Bobby 'Axe' Axelrod, one of the main protagonists.

Recently, this show contained a passage of real tennis play, in which 'Axe', showing slightly dodgy form, played tennis on court at Tuxedo Park.



'Axe' is the baddie, apparently, and, guess what, he is English. What a surprise! How very Disney...

About 20 minutes into Season 5, Episode 4, "Opportunity Zone", Bobby Axelrod wins the match with a Tim Chisholm-esque dedans force to setup a post-match deal negotiation in the marker's box.



It is rumoured that Damien Lewis has also been on court at Lord's. I wonder if any of our readers know more about this?

Tennis events

The USCTA sent us the following announcement:

'June 20, 2020, marks the seventh year of International Tennis Day. At the moment, most of the Clubs are closed but we hope that the ones that are open on June 20 will celebrate with plenty of on court activity.'

The USCTA will be active digitally on June 20 with a Zoom/YouTube production. It will be in the early morning for America; midday for England and France; and late evening for Australia. The call will last about forty-five minutes. Every club will nominate one person to join the call.

Saturday 20 June

6:30am Chicago; 7:30am New York; 12:30pm London; 1:30pm Paris; 9:30pm Melbourne

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82101590003?pwd=OU8rak5VRDhsbGZvOVBtSmJWRnAyQT09>

Meeting ID: 821 0159 0003

Password: 208014



On and around June 20, the best way to share your photos and stories, advises the USCTA, is on Instagram. Tag them by typing @iTennisDay and use the hashtag #iTennisDay on all your posts. They promise to repost, retweet, and share, or you can send an email on any tennis-related matter that moves/amuses/frustrates you, to info@internationaltennisday.com.

The USCTA looks forward to receiving your photos and stories.

Tennis Overseas

Holland

We have recently heard that, most unfortunately, the construction of a real tennis court is unlikely to go ahead at the Houtrust Tennis Club in The Hague.

Once again, our determined, patient, and tireless campaigners (Theo, Huub, Caes, Niek and your compatriots in the *Nederlandse Real Tennis Bond*, we salute you) need to research new possibilities and we wish them every success.

Cees de Bondt, that most knowledgeable historian of the game inside and outside Holland, has pointed out that in 2022, The Hague will become the European Sports City of the Year. How splendid it would be, he rightly suggests, if this could be a target date for the revival of what is probably the city's oldest sport.

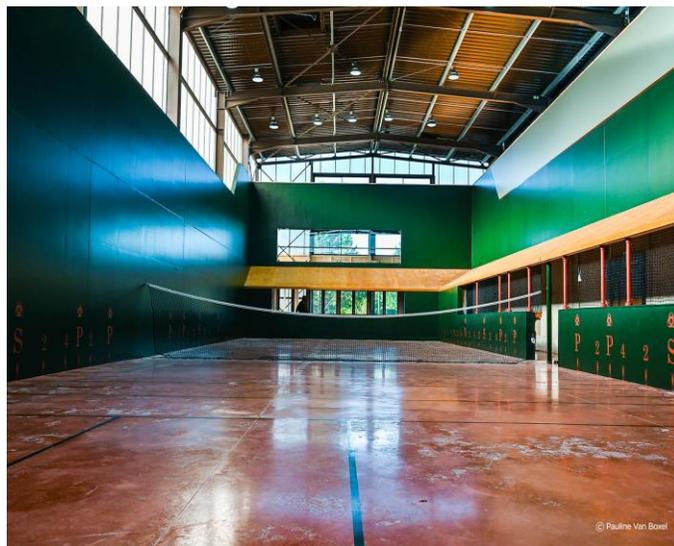
He points out that the hall at the *Binnenhof* is known to have been used for tennis in 1388 by Duke Albert of Bavaria, and so tennis in the city dates back at least to that date.

The *Binnenhof*, a moated Gothic castle, originally functioned as the residence of the Dukes of Holland and became the political centre of the Dutch Republic in 1584. It is now one of the oldest parliament buildings in the world that remains in use.

Bordeaux

There is still no confirmed date for the opening of the new court in Bordeaux. We reported in the last newsletter that the President of the club had told us that he hoped they would open in 'mid-June', as the country relaxes many of its Covid-19 restrictions.

Clearly, this has not been able to happen, although the Girondins Omnisports Sports Park, where the court is located in Merignac, opened its doors again on 15 June. The gym will be open for restricted numbers of people who must maintain the WHO-recommended one metre distancing. The changing rooms remain closed and no indoor racquet sports are yet being played. We await further news.



Meanwhile, in the past week, things have moved backwards a little, as the French authorities have, as expected, imposed a reciprocal 14-day quarantine period on anyone arriving from the UK. In any case, non-essential travel is still banned by

the British Government, so even when the court opens in Bordeaux, nipping over for a quick game will not be a practical undertaking until quarantine restrictions are relaxed or removed. Who knows whether travel during July and August will be either practical and possible.

The plan remains for CJR, Maggie and a small international team to go over, on a *pro bono* basis, to open the court and generate some momentum during what is left of this season.

CJR has made a handsome gift to Le Jeu de Paume de Bordeaux of a set of balls that he has made during the Shutdown and we heard on 18 June that they have arrived there safely.

Sports Trivia Quiz **The answers and some more questions**

The following questions are all about the 1908 London Olympics, which was the first and last in which Jeu de Paume and Rackets were played, as two of the 22 sports included, an increase from the 16 in the preceding Games.

Are these statements true or false?

1. The Gold Medal for Jeu de Paume was won by Jay Gould of the USA, the Silver Medal by Eustace Miles of the United Kingdom and no Bronze was awarded.

FALSE. The Bronze Medal was awarded to Neville Bulwer-Lytton, 3rd Earl of Lytton (United Kingdom), who had a bye into the Quarter Final, defeating Edwin Biedermann, then losing to Eustace Miles in the Semi Final but winning the Bronze Medal play-off match, beating Sir Arthur Page QC 6-2, 6-4, 6-4.

For the record:

Jay Gould beat Eustace Miles 6-5, 6-4, 6-4 in the Final, and was the only player of the nine in the competition not representing the United Kingdom.

The Rackets competition was contested by six players, of whom all represented the host nation and the famous names of Browning, Leaf and Noel were among them.

EB Noel won the Gold Medal, with a Walkover against Silver Medal winner Henry Leaf and no Bronze was awarded.

2. The 1908 Olympic Games were originally awarded to Rome and were only reassigned to London when it became apparent that the Italians would not be ready in time.

TRUE

3. For the first time, a stadium was specially prepared for the Games.

TRUE

4. The Russian Olympic team arrived twelve days late because Russia had not yet started to use the Gregorian Calendar.

TRUE

5. The Organising Committee fixed the distance of the marathon at 42km and 195m, the last 195 metres being added on to ensure the race finished below the royal box in the London stadium.

TRUE

6. This 'London marathon' distance became the official length of the marathon from the 1924 Games onwards.

TRUE

7. Dorando Pietri of Italy entered the stadium first at the end of the marathon. Suffering from extreme exhaustion and dehydration, he ran in the wrong direction on the track and collapsed. Officials helped him to reach the finish line. He was not disqualified for receiving outside aid, as his efforts were considered 'heroic' and he still received the Gold Medal.

FALSE. Pietri was disqualified for receiving outside assistance.

8. It was the first time that swimming events did not take place in open water.

TRUE

Two bonus questions about 1908; true or false?

9. The United Kingdom, with a team of 676 competitors, finished first in the medal table for the first and only time in Olympic history.
10. In solidarity with the Irish republican cause, and in reaction to the refusal of the British Government to grant Home Rule, the Americans refused to lower their flag as they filed past the Royal Box at the Opening Ceremony. This insult to the Crown was never repeated.

Picture quiz:

Without the gentleman in the photo below, real tennis in Great Britain would have been considerably poorer.

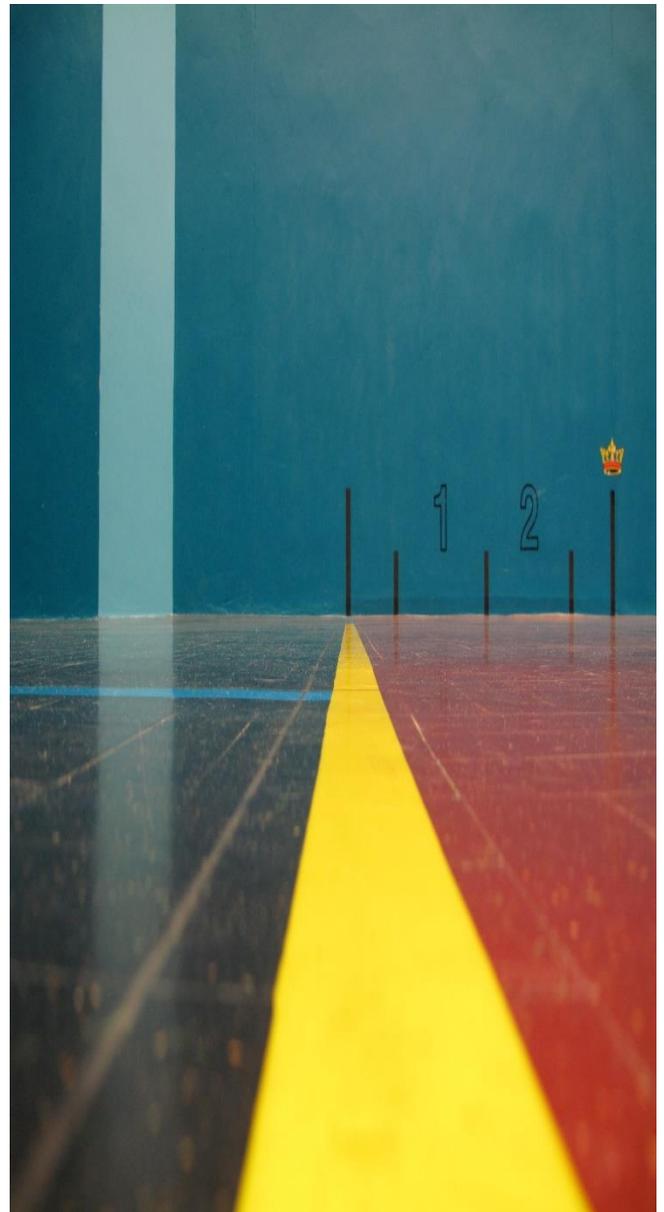
TRUE

He is:

- a. NOT Sir Charles Rose (builder of two courts at Hardwick, one at Newmarket and the model of 'Toad' in *The Wind in the Willows*).
- b. NOT Julian Marshall (codifier of the rules of tennis in 1872, co-codifier of the rules of lawn tennis in time for the first All-England Championship at Wimbledon in 1877 and author of the seminal work, *The Annals of Tennis*, 1878).
- c. **Joseph Bickley (constructor of courts and inventor of an unique recipe for plastering the walls that he took to his grave)?**



Answers to all these questions, and perhaps a few more for you, will appear in the next edition of the Shutdown Newsletter (if there is one) or in the periodic 'Yard and a Half' club newsletter.



The Tambour and Service Line at Radley, as photographed by Freddy Adam.

Stay Fit and Stay Safe!

This Newsletter, the seventh of 2020, was compiled by Maggie Henderson-Tew