

# August Bank Holiday Weekend 2020

# Radley College Tennis Court

'A Yard and a Half' - The Newsletter

## The Last Newsletter of the 2019 Season

### Hello and Goodbye...

#### Hello and welcome back!

It has been a splendid five weeks of tennis. How good that sounds after the four tennis-starved months we have all endured. Of course, there have been far more important concerns and happenings than the absence of tennis, but the return of play has signaled the welcome return to some sort of normality.

'Some sort of normality', of course, because we have not been able to play in exactly the same way as we used to, and we doubt that we will do so for a good while yet. We have needed to think hard about the health and safety of everyone involved in the game and are pleased that so many of our members have felt confident enough about the measures we have taken to book and play as soon as the court re-opened.

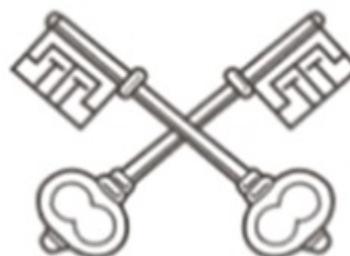
In fact, so many players have returned that Radley has recorded the highest number of hours on court we have ever had in August and we are running at, or near to, capacity every day, during our currently-reduced hours of 8am-8pm each day.

In the week of beginning Monday 17 August, for example, there was only one hour that was not filled, which meant Radley filled 93 out of a possible 94 hours of play. Pretty incredible court usage.

It is worth noting that this level of utilisation was more than any other club in the UK, even those with two courts. This reflects the strong desire of Radley members to get back onto court and the work Nino and Levi have put in to contacting club members and finding opponents for every booking.

#### Radley College Tennis Club

Thank you for the tremendous support you have given to our club and our Professionals during the Shutdown and for flooding back to play as soon as restrictions were eased enough for indoor sports to be played again.



**RADLEY**  
REAL TENNIS

#### Goodbye

Shortly, on 31 August, we will bid goodbye to the season of 2019/20, which has been the strangest and most disrupted that any of us can remember and, we fervently hope, that we will ever experience.

It makes the occasional necessity of some courts needing to close for a day because of bad weather or for such things as 'sweating' walls and floors seem very minor irritations by comparison.

## The New Normal

Three significant changes will come into effect at Radley with the start of the new season on 1 September.

Firstly, the hours of play each day will increase. The court will be back into full swing and available from **8am to 10pm** on its normal basis of play happening seven days a week and 364 days a year.

Secondly, the Real Tennis Online handicapping system will be re-activated. The accurate and timely recording of results is vital to the reliability and inter-club parity of the handicapping system, which has proved its worth over several decades.

You should expect to be asked for the score after every game from 1 September, unless you and your opponent have agreed not to do so in advance.

Thirdly, we will be increasing the court fees, which will now include a levy for every singles booking of 25p and, for an hour of doubles, the levy will be 15p per player. The rate for singles will be £12pp an hour and £7pp for doubles/juniors/staff. All clubs and the UK tennis community at large have been asked to contribute to the Investing in Professionals initiative and Radley is responding immediately.

## Covid-19 Prevention

We know that Radley's Covid containment rules are at the pragmatic end of the spectrum and we realise that what we have produced as a *modus operandi* will not match the expectations, requirements and level of concern of every one of our members. We regret if this is the case, but it would be impossible to produce a policy that did so.

What we have aimed to do to strike a balance between protecting the health and safety of our members and Professionals, putting in procedures that are simple and easy to follow, and re-commencing tennis in as familiar a form as possible.

A copy of the most up to date protocol being employed at Radley will be sent with every email reminder of a court booking. Another copy is displayed on the door to the court. Please make

yourself familiar with the policy, as it is for your protection and for that of your fellow club members and the teams of Professionals.

We are sorry if you do not feel able to return to playing tennis at Radley, but we look forward very much to seeing you when you are ready to do so.

## The Professional Team

CJR is still out in Bordeaux but the imposition of quarantine from France to the UK has caused the 'Radley +' team to disperse. The result of this is that he is now running the court on his own, in his inimitable style. Maggie will be returning to Bordeaux in early September, to assist Chris in guiding and encouraging the revival of tennis in the area.

Talking about CJR's inimitable style, anyone who has not yet seen the video clip of him giving a lesson on forcing to his youngest-ever pupil (almost exactly 70 years younger than him) has missed a treat. You can see it, and other photos and videos of activities on the court in Merignac, on the club's Instagram account: 'bordeauxjdp'.



## JEU DE PAUME DE BORDEAUX

CJR and Maggie will remain in Bordeaux until the arrival of the newly appointed Head Professional, Nick Howell, of whom more below. He is due to arrive in mid-September.

## News of Radley Members

We are delighted to report that Radley member and former Radley College parent, Tim Robinson, is now 'Tim Robinson CBE', in recognition of the *pro bono* advisory work he has done for the Government. Congratulations to him on this considerable accolade.

## News of Other Clubs

### Bordeaux

In mid-September, Nick Howell is due to arrive in Bordeaux to start his first appointment as a Head Professional. He is currently ranked Number 5 in the world and has been working most recently at The National Tennis Club, Newport, Rhode Island. The move to France means that he will have worked on every continent where tennis is played.

Nick has an emotional connection with Bordeaux, as he was born there (exactly 34 years ago on 10 September), when his father Jonathon, known to the tennis world as 'Jonners', was the Head Pro for seven years. This is still a time regarded as a 'Golden Age' of the club in Bordeaux.

Nick was only three years old when his family left Bordeaux and his father took the position of Head Professional at the brand new tennis court at The Oratory School, where Nick and his brother were educated and where the family lived for 17 years.

Cricket and rugby were Nick's early passions at school, where he also played real tennis, but all these sports were soon eclipsed by golf and he left school to turn Pro, playing for about eight years on the European golf circuit.

By 2012, he had stopped enjoying tournament golf and returned to the family home, which was now in Australia, as Jonners had taken a job at the Royal Melbourne Tennis Club. Nick joined the team of Professionals in Melbourne that year and made rapid progress as a player.

Some Radley members may have seen Nick in action earlier this year when he played in the biggest match of his life at his *alma mater*. At the end of January, he took on the World Number One

and former World Champion (2016-2018), Camden Riviere, in the World Championship Eliminator First Round, which was held at the Oratory.

Although Camden came through as the predictable winner (the score was 6-3, 6-1, 6-1, 6-4, 6-2) all present agreed that Nick acquitted himself very well on court. His handicap then was +2.2 (and now is +3.7) and Camden's was +17, so, if the match had been played off handicap, the difference of 14.8 handicap points between the players would have meant Camden should have given Nick receive half 30, owe 15.

You can watch Nick playing Rob Fahey in the first round of the Singles competition of The Champions Trophy at The Royal Tennis Court, Hampton Court Palace, in 2019, on the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAeBTvn828A>



Rob Fahey (foreground) teamed up with frequent Doubles partner, Nick Howell, in the Champions Trophy at RTC in 2019

### Moreton Morrell Real Tennis Club

MMRTC has taken the opportunity of the shutting down of tennis to embark on ambitious improvement works; principally, the replacement of the floor. To see some fascinating time-lapse footage of the process of destruction, reconstruction and decoration, please click on this link: <https://www.mmtcc.org/floor-progress.html>.

## Oratory Real Tennis Club

Rob and Claire Fahey have left Prested Hall and both are now working at The Oratory School. Claire, the current Ladies World Champion, has been appointed to the new position of Head of Racquet Sports for the school, which will have its first-ever intake of girls in September 2020.

Rob Fahey, the current Men's World Champion (who will be defending in May 2021 the title that he reclaimed in such dramatic fashion in 2018), has been appointed Head Professional of the Oratory Real Tennis Club, which re-opened on Monday 25 August, closes for the Bank Holiday weekend, and opens again on 1 September.

We wish the Faheys good luck and hope they enjoy many happy and successful years at the school. The re-opening of the Oratory means that all courts in the UK are now open, with the sole exception of Lord's, where tennis re-commence allowed shortly.

## News of Other Professionals

The previous paragraphs have dwelt on named Professionals, who are so vital to the health and vigor of the game for us amateurs, at whatever level we play.

The scarcity of high-quality young Pros has been a matter of concern for at least a decade and the Tennis and Rackets Association has recently launched another initiative to improve the recruitment and retention of talented individuals, as Club and Tournament Professionals. This new scheme is called Investing in Professionals, or liP, which you can read more about on its website: <https://www.realtennisiiip.com/>

An announcement was sent recently to all members of the Tennis and Rackets Association, which read:

### liP

*liP is designed to provide a development platform for our existing Professionals and an Apprenticeship programme for new Professionals. We are very aware that Real Tennis needs a pipeline of Professionals and we are reaching out to you, as active members in the sporting community, to assist*

*us in finding them.*

*The liP programme will appeal to sports enthusiasts who are considering a career in the sports industry and have transferable skills from another sport such as tennis, cricket, hockey or golf, for example. As you may be active in more than one sport, we would like you to consider whether you know of young sports people who may wish to play our game and potentially pursue a career through our apprenticeship programme.*

*Many talented sports people would like to be employed as a Sports Professional but may not be given that opportunity in their chosen sports. The question we are asking is do you have talented friends, family or contacts within sport that may wish to investigate this fantastic opportunity?*

*Real tennis presents global opportunities for elite level competition and professional positions at highly regarded clubs.*

*The liP Recruitment Team is keen to talk with potential candidates and promote the benefits of joining as an apprentice. Please feel free to pass this information onto your other sporting clubs and distribute it to any sports players you think may be interested. Below is a link to the new website which describes the apprenticeship scheme and how to apply. All applications will be managed quickly and efficiently.*

[www.realtennisiiip.com](http://www.realtennisiiip.com)

*We thank you for your time and are happy to field any additional questions you may have.*

*On behalf of the OCIP - Operation & Continual Improvement Panel (liP)*



## Tournament News

The Fixtures programme of the 2019 Season has been hugely disrupted and this state of affairs seems set to continue for a while. If you are one of those people who likes to play in tournaments and you want to know the current status of your favourite event, please check the T&RA website for the most up to date news on the new season's fixtures: <https://www.tennisandrackets.com/real-tennis/tournaments>.

Amongst other announcements are the following, with the good news coming first:

### 'Not the Varsity Match', 2020

The 2020 iteration of the hugely enjoyable and Pol Roger-sponsored (bless them!) tournament, 'Not the Varsity Match', will take place. All who can claim a link, however tenuous, with either Oxford or Cambridge University, and who can prove beyond doubt that they never played in the Real Tennis Varsity Match, will have the opportunity to represent one or other of these venerable institutions.

The trophy is even more diminutive than the urn that contains The Ashes and is made from the foil top of a bottle of Pol Roger, cunningly fashioned into something resembling a cup/trophy/thingy. Magnificent!

Radley members have been numerous and enthusiastic players in this event in recent years. For those who have not yet taken part, make this the year that you do.

The 2020 'Not the Varsity Match' will be played as soon as the new season begins - but it has gone 'various' rather than 'virtual'. The format will be as follows:

Alumni (or those claiming some sort of link) of Oxford and Cambridge should identify an alumnus/a (or someone claiming some sort of link) of the other place and challenge them to a match. Each match may be played in any format the players agree (such as the best of three 6-game sets, an eight-game set, or whatever), and should be played off their most recent RTO handicaps. These matches may be played at any court during the two weeks up to Sunday 20 September.

Following their match, the players should contact Chris Lintott, the presiding genius (in so many ways) of this event and give him the score. Results, and any questions, should be emailed to him at [cjl@astro.ox.ac.uk](mailto:cjl@astro.ox.ac.uk).

When the deadline of 20 Sept has been reached, Chris will employ an algorithm that is entirely unrelated to last year's NtVM result and the winning team of the 2020 'Not the Varsity Match' will be announced.

A presentation ceremony will take place on Zoom on Sunday 20 Sept at 6pm, to which all participants will be invited. Virtual Pol Roger will be liberally available.

### The Great North Doubles

The tournament is one of the major events of each season at Jesmond Dene and the 2020 event was due to take place from 30th October - 1st November. Regrettably, it has been cancelled.

### The Over 50's Amateur Doubles

This popular event had been due to take place at Prested Hall on 3rd-4th October 2020 but has been rescheduled for the 15th -17th January 2021.

### The World Championships

The date of the Men's 2020 World Championship has been changed again, this time to 4-8 May 2021.



The Ladies' 2021 World Championship had been due to take place in Bordeaux but the venue has been changed to Fontainebleau. It will take place in mid-April next year and details will be confirmed in due course.

### Quiz Corner

Did you know that five real tennis challenges that are recognised by The Guinness Book of Records? You can have a browse at

<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/records/>

#### Record 1: Most Consecutive Opponents: Real Tennis Singles

On 1 December 2016, Guinness ratified the attempt, making Matthew Alden the new Guinness World Record holder, having played 28 consecutive opponents at the Oxford University Tennis Club on 25-26 June 2016. Derek Williams organised the attempt and what follows is adapted from his own account:

*All the matches were to be the best of three 6-game sets, played off handicap. The instructions from Guinness World Records were strict regarding the definition of continuous play, but thankfully allowed for rest to be accrued at 5 minutes per completed hour of play. Matthew had learnt a lot during the build-up about nutrition and rest breaks and it gave him the information he needed to plan the attempt.*

*Behind the scenes, the enormity of the task of organising the event was starting to hit home. I needed at least 27 players plus a couple of reserves, sufficient markers, and independent witnesses, of whom two needed on duty at all times but were not allowed to witness more than four consecutive hours.*

*Getting players was relatively simple as I had enough volunteers from the outset. Similarly, I had plenty of offers of help for marking. The greater challenge was finding independent witnesses who would be happy to watch a game of which they had no understanding at some anti-social hours.*

*Thankfully, through membership of Rotary and Round Table, enough volunteers were found and my spreadsheet was complete about a week ahead of the attempt. I'd also managed to persuade Adam*

*Jeffrey to be my deputy, Jonathan Clark to take charge of technology, and Freddy Adam to run back-up video and take photographs. The Oxford Pros, Andrew and Craig, had also offered their time and help gratis.*

*One of the highlights of the event was when former World Champion, Chris Ronaldson, stepped on court to face Matthew at 23:20—a time that even Chris will admit is not entirely usual for him. It had been quite some time since our court had been graced by this former World Champion, who started his professional career at Oxford in 1971.*

*28 matches in 21 hours and 35 minutes with 7 wins and 21 losses, but that really does not tell the complete story. Every game Matthew played was approached in an incredible sporting spirit, with a smile and a handshake at the start and the finish regardless of how the match went. He had kind words for all, even to his torturer (me!), at the end. Remarkably, he also looked little the worse for the experience and enjoyed a glass of champagne afterwards, brought in by his father, Richard.*

*It took quite a while to check all the paperwork and to compile the video evidence and it took several attempts to give it to Guinness in a form they found acceptable. I always knew that he'd done it, but at no time was I certain that my evidence was sufficiently robust to convince Guinness. This was a bit frustrating at the time but reassuring on reflection; preparation of evidence for this sort of thing should not be easy.*

*I'm not sure that "well done" entirely covers it, but "Well done, Matthew, an epic performance". You really are, in the words of Guinness World Records, "Officially amazing".*

#### Record 2: Most Consecutive Opponents: Real Tennis Doubles

The following account is the entry on the Guinness World Record website:

<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/most-consecutive-opponents-real-tennis-doubles>

*'The most consecutive opponents faced playing real tennis doubles is 25 and was achieved by William*

*Stephens and Richard Ramjane (both UK) in Feering, Essex, UK, from 10 to 11 May 2013. The pair won 11 of the matches they played, losing 14 best of 3-set matches to a variety of opponents. The attempt lasted a little over 24 hours.'*

### 3. The Most Consecutive Wins of the Real Tennis Ladies' World Championship

'The most consecutive wins of the real tennis Ladies' World Championship is 5, achieved by Claire Fahey (UK, née Vigrass) in 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019.

Fahey secured her fifth consecutive title with a 6–0, 6–0 victory over Isabel Candy on 26 January 2019 at Ballarat Tennis Club in Ballarat, Victoria, Australia. She is also a five-time ladies' doubles champion.'

### 4. The Most Consecutive Wins of the Real Tennis Men's World Championship

'The most wins of the real tennis Men's World Championship is 13, achieved by Robert Fahey (Australia) in 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2018.

The Men's Singles Championship was originally played on a challenge basis and is currently played every even year.

The first winner was Clergé (France) in c.1740 – thought to be the first sporting world champion in history.

Jacques Edmond Barre (France, 1802-73) held the title for a record 33 years from 1829 to 1862.'

### 5. The Most Consecutive Wins of the Real Tennis Women's Doubles World Championship by a Pair

'On 21 May 2017, sisters Claire Fahey and Sarah Vigrass (both UK) won their fourth consecutive doubles title at the real tennis Ladies World Championship in Tuxedo Park, New York, USA. They triumphed 6–3, 6–0 over Amanda Avedissian (USA) and Saskia Bollerman (Netherlands) in the final. Fahey is also the reigning women's real tennis world champion.'

### HELP!

Levi will be looking for somewhere to live next season (i.e. in just a few weeks' time) and would be most grateful for any suggestions or help. Ideally, it will be somewhere self-contained, but a house or flat-share or a house-sitting possibility would be great too, he says.

Please call Levi at the club with any helpful ideas.

### And lastly...



A tongue-teasing rack of Radley racquets



Balls are currently being made for Bordeaux, Holyport (holy balls?), Oratory and Radley



*This Newsletter, the ninth of 2020, was compiled by Maggie Henderson-Tew, who is extremely grateful to all those Radley members who have told her that they have enjoyed this year's Half a Yard newsletters.*

THANK YOU!!