

Radley College Tennis Court

1 Aug 2020

'A Yard and a Half' - The Newsletter

The First Newsletter After Shutdown

Welcome back!

We are thrilled that Radley real tennis court has been able to reopen, as have the other UK clubs. We believe that all domestic courts are now open, with the sole exception of the Oratory.

Thank you to all our members for your loyalty, support and patience during the Shutdown that began way back on 21 March. Nino and Levi are back at work, delighted to see the court filling up again and very happy to be back on court themselves.

Maggie and CJR remain in Bordeaux *pro tem* and a report on activity at that new court follows later in this newsletter.

Ready for Re-opening

Our governing body, the Tennis and Rackets Association, consulted extensively with clubs, professionals, other sporting bodies and Government about what changes need to be made to ensure that participation will be as safe as possible for all players of the game.

The T&RA recommendations have been adapted by each tennis club for their own needs. As a result, practices and protocols vary considerably, with some quite elaborate and cautious interpretations.

We know that Radley is at the pragmatic end of the spectrum and we realise that what we have come up with as a *modus operandi* that 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 and re-commencing tennis in as familiar a form as possible.

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

Starting Again

There will be a good deal of rust for everyone to rub off after such a lengthy time away from the game.

The T&RA has acknowledged this by suspending the Real Tennis Online handicapping system until further notice, to enable players to get back into the swing of things without needing to concern themselves about their handicap being inaccurate or vulnerable.

We have not been told when RTO will start-up again but expect it will be around the start of the new season in September. We will keep you posted.



Radley College Tennis Club – in action again!



This photo, taken on Sunday 26 July, shows tennis is being played again at Radley, and provides the evidence of it being a splendid example of social-distanced sport.

Tennis has been played for a week at Radley, but as we have already had a month of play on the new court in Bordeaux, we are featuring that court in this newsletter.

Bordeaux

As explained in the most recent *Yard and a Half*, CJR is still furloughed by Radley College, but the school has, with typical generosity, allowed him to work for another club, on a *pro bono* basis.



JEU DE PAUME DE BORDEAUX

CJR, Maggie and a talented international team are delighted by the way that momentum is building.

We even recorded 12.5 hours play on court one day last week, which was very pleasing.

It was never going to be easy to attract new players to the game in high summer, as many locals are away and playing indoors is not everyone's first choice, given that temperatures have been, and remain, high. It was an oven-like 41C on Thursday 30 July and there is no a/c at the court.

The few remaining members of the previous Bordeaux club need lessons, court time, opponents, racquets and re-strings but many of them are away for much or all of the summer. This means that the court is being used mainly by visitors, from elsewhere in France and from overseas.

The team ('Radley +') that is running the Bordeaux court comprises a splendid cross-section of the various constituencies that make up the playing population of real tennis; pros and amateurs, men and women, seniors and juniors, locals and visitors and ranging from very experienced players to absolute beginners.

CJR is tackling the setting up of the new court in typical style, working long hours and on a seven day a week basis. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

Who is in the 'Radley +' team? Well, Mike and Henry Henman are being aided and abetted by Florent Brethon and Benedict Yorston. Lea Van Der Zwalm recently joined the team for a week and will be replaced by Levi, who arrives on 2 August and will spend seven days here. What a constellation of talent!

A big thank you to Nino, for holding the fort at Radley in Levi's absence, from 2-9 August. There will be a good deal of coming and going this summer and, when Levi returns to Radley, he will swap with Nino, who will take his turn to travel to Bordeaux. They are both very keen to come out and have time on the newest court in the world.

All the members of the 'Radley +' team are giving generously of their time and enthusiasm, working without payment and giving court fees to the club.

Maggie will come back to England on 7 August and will be back helping out at the Radley court thereafter. She looks forward very much to seeing everyone at the club again.

The core 'Radley +' team in Bordeaux is made up of the following players, in summary, and in no particular order, we have the reigning British Fathers and Sons champions (Mike and Henry); the U13 French Champion (Henry); the new French U18 number one (this is Florent, who had not even seen the game played until he came to Bordeaux less than four weeks ago but is improving at a startling rate, now being about H38, but heading for 35 at great pace); the British reigning U20 champion (Benedict, who was Captain of Real Tennis at Radley in 2018 and is now playing Varsity tennis at Oxford); and the French female Number One and World Number Two (Lea).

The benefit of having players from their teens and their 20s through to their 70s as part of the 'Radley +' team in Bordeaux is that it demonstrates how the game can be played and enjoyed by people of almost any age. The presence of younger players is already proving effective in attracting other juniors to try real tennis and the younger members of the team are doing great work with groups of new youngsters and individuals.

Court housekeeping

We now have furniture and curtains (necessary to block the light from the windows at the front of the building that otherwise is a problem on court) and it is all coming together quite nicely. The sizeable collection of honours boards, pictures and other memorabilia, which have been stored by various members since the old court closed, is being re-assembled.

The court is playing really well and the 'Radley +' team has quickly grown to love it. The light on court is good and even and the high roof makes a variety of serves possible that do not work at Radley and it has been fun trying out a lot of new things.

The construction dust has mostly settled by now and been removed, although the court floor is still needing to be wet-cleaned every morning. In truth, though, the wet cleaning has been needed for more than removing dust.

A family of birds has nested, produced eggs and then flightless fledglings in the court. These babies sometimes appeared, rather alarmingly, on the penthouse roofs and had to be carefully restored to anxious parents.

The family has now left the building (de-camping, presumably, to some less noisy and dangerous location). We miss them, but actually not that much, because they made quite a lot of mess during their residency, and the clean-up continues.



The fitting-out of the ground, first and second floor clubrooms and viewing galleries is on-going, but the absence in the architect's planning of any drains, a sink, running water, cooking facilities, loo or changing rooms from the court building itself means that there is a certain amount of improvising and borrowing of facilities from other sports co-located on the Girondins Omnisport park. On-court is working very well but off-court is leaving a bit to be desired.

Visiting players

We have had visits from some English and increasing numbers of French players and on 28 July we hosted the first visiting team from overseas.

Representatives of the Manchester club played at the Bordeaux and Paris courts on their brief tour and were proud to be the first team to visit the new court in Bordeaux, as it was members of MRTRC made up the last team to play the previous court in Merignac when it closed in 2013.



Members of the Jeu de Paume de Navarre travelled down to play on the Bordeaux court on the last Sunday of July and for the second month running. These players come from a wide area, stretching from Biarritz/St Jean-de-Luze on the West coast to Pau close to the Pyrenees, which takes about 1.5 hours to drive from side to side.

JdePdeN have to play on a mixture of tennis courts converted to *trinquet* for the playing of a variety of Basque ball games and on courts designed specifically for those games that are played with the bare hand, with different designs of *pala* or flat wooden bat, or with *chistera*, the baskets that fit onto wrist and hand and are used for catching and throwing a rubber ball at great speed.

The Navarois told us some exciting news; it seems, at long last, that the real tennis court in Pau (currently used occasionally for tennis but converted to regular play of *pelote*) will be restored to use for tennis by May 2021. There have been encouraging noises before from the Mayor's office in Pau about the re-opening of the tennis court, given that this renovation has been under discussion for the past ten years. However, a breakthrough feels imminent, the Navarois players report.

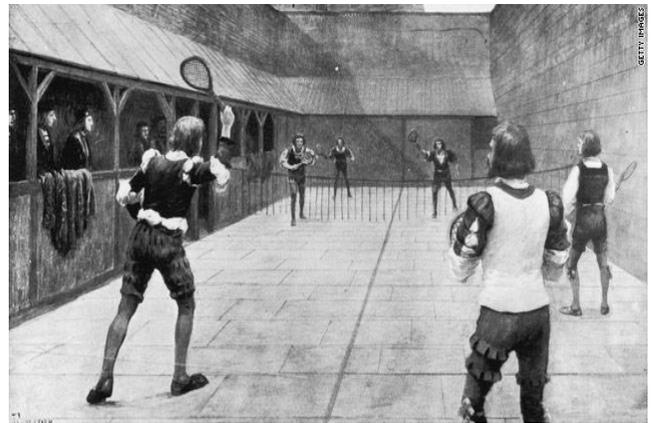
The dedans, penthouses and tambour need to be re-instated in Pau to make it playable once again. It is a fine court and an exact copy of the second

court at the Louvre, the one in Pau being constructed in 1887.

Tennis on the Internet

The 'Radley +' team has set up an Instagram account for the Bordeaux court, under the tag 'bordeauxjdp'. Do have a look, particularly at a couple of lighthearted videos; one of different ways to hit a winning gallery and another of CJR trying to teach a very (very) young beginner how to force for the dedans. Hilarious!

Tennis – but not as we know it



The serious business of setting up and running the new court has been supplemented by a lot of fun (see previous para about the Instagram account). In that spirit, the team decided that it would try to recreate a different configuration of court play, as evidenced above by the picture of sixteenth century players of 'triples'.



'Radley +' played three a-side for a set and discovered that it is not easy to maintain 1.5m distance between players and to work out some effective tactics, but they had great fun trying. The players were Benedict with Mike and Henry Henman, who represented England, pitted against CJR, Florent and Lea, playing for France.

Appropriately, in the circumstances, France won.

Competition Corner

Sports Trivia Quiz -

This is the last appearance, I promise, of anything about the 1908 London Olympics. I thought that, by now, there is virtually nothing that we don't know about the event. But NO, there is more!

Firstly, four more delicious factoids and then the answers to questions posed in the last newsletter.

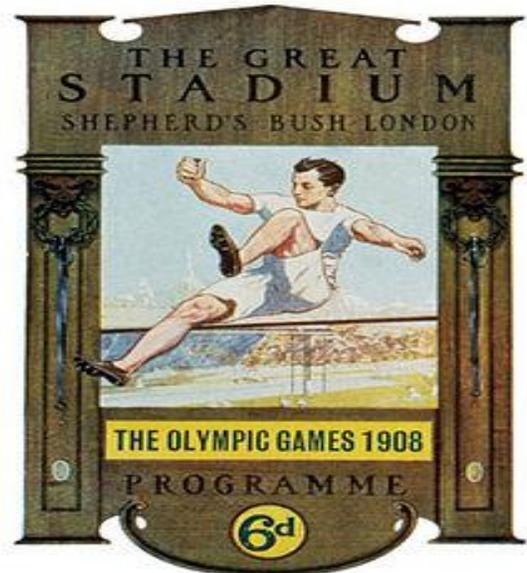
- A. In the 1908 Games it was the first time that gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded.
- B. It was the first time that all competitors had to represent a nation rather than participating as individuals.
- C. Women competed for the first time.
- D. The Tug-of-War appeared for the first and last time, with the City of London Police teams taking the Gold, Silver and Bronze medals for the United Kingdom.

The answers (in RED) are given below to the questions posed in the most recent Newsletter.

Are these statements true or false?

1. The Jeu de Paume competition was held at the court at Lord's Cricket Ground. **False. It was held at Queen's Club.**
2. The United Kingdom, with a team of 676 competitors, finished first in the medal table for the first and only time in Olympic history and won over 150 medals. **False. The rest is true but the team won exactly 143 medals. Quite an improvement on the two medals the team had won in the Olympics in St Louis in 1904.**

3. Lasting a total of 187 days, or 6 months and 4 days, these games were the longest in modern history. **True, they lasted from 27 April to 31 October.**
4. The middleweight Greco-Roman wrestling final between Swedes Frithiof Martensson and Mauritz Andersson was postponed by one day to allow Martensson to recover from a minor injury. Martensson duly recovered and won the Gold Medal. **True.**
5. The London Games contained some winter sports, including four figure-skating events. **True.**
6. The Swedish swimming team contained a lemming. **False. It was actually the Swedish Athletics team that contained a Lemming. Eric Lemming won Gold in the Freestyle Javelin competition.**
7. Women participated in two events only; lawn tennis and archery. **False. Women also participated in ice-skating.**
8. The diving events included one entitled 'Fancy Diving'. **True.**



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