

Late November 2020

Radley College Tennis Court

'A Yard and a Half' - The Newsletter

The Second Newsletter of the Second Lockdown 2020

Thought for the day:
They also serve who only stand and wait....



Greetings to all our members, whether frustrated by their current inability to play or delighted to be in the narrow category of those still permitted to play. From Thursday 5 November, the only people who have been allowed on the Radley Court have been College boys and those supervising them.

Although the club is, with great regret, closed to all its other members until further notice, news from the international tennis community continues to flow and there is exciting information to share.

The Radley Warden, John Moule, has exhorted everyone in the College community to be 'relentlessly positive' during the Covid-19 crisis.

This seems so apposite that we are considering adopting it as the tennis club's motto.



Relentlessly Positive

Well. What do you think?

The Professional Team

Nino, together with Mike Henman and Mick Dean, continues to coach and supervise the College boys and to ensure that the court and your equipment will be in good repair when play can re-commence.

CJR has been kept busy in his capacity as the 'go-to' person in the game for advice and information on new court projects. This newsletter has provided updates on various projects in the past year and we are delighted, thrilled and excited to be able to bring good news, about which later in this issue of 'A Yard and a Half'.

Competition Play

There are addenda to the Newsletter of 3 November 2020:

1. French Champion –



We can add footage to the photo above of the 'Team Radley +' (those who worked in Bordeaux over the summer) player, Florent Brethon, playing in the 2020 Final of the Raquette de Bronze de France, which took place at Fontainebleau in September:

<https://www.tennisandrackets.com/news/raquette-de-bronze-2020-finale>.

2. National League -

In the most recent edition of this Newsletter, readers were invited to 'read below' for further details of the team representing Radley in the National League division for players in the handicap range of 10-15.

Readers will have searched in vain, as the editor wickedly withheld this nugget of news. To correct this glaring omission, she reports as follows...

Although there are no competitive tennis events being played currently, we can bring you belated news of the team **WIN** that Levi and Nino chalked up at Leamington in their first round of this season's National League.

Nino beat Leamington's Assistant Professional, Chris Aley, 6-5, 6-4 (having been 2-5, love-40 down

and needing to dig deep to win that first set) and Levi beat local amateur, Tom Bomford, 6-2, 6-0. The latter score line does not tell the full story, as the first two games took 23 minutes and Nino was pretty sure that he and Chris Aley might still be watching their colleagues play into the small hours of the following morning. Then Levi's breakthrough came, and they all made it home before midnight.

National League players represent a club and may be pros or amateurs. Each plays a singles and a doubles, although if the doubles will be a 'dead' rubber, the players can agree not to play it out.

For those unfamiliar with the National League structure and format, it is a season-long competition for teams of two or three players and there are currently nine Divisions, covering handicap categories from better-than-scratch (the 'Premier League') to more ordinary mortals, but all in the sub-H45 range. Teams play four 'home' and 'away' match against clubs in their division.

The National League is coordinated by Lesley Ronaldson, on behalf of the IRTPA, and congratulations to her for bringing in this season's new tournament sponsor. CJR continues to handle the rather vexed task of working out the draw, which has been, and will continue to be, affected by the Covid-19 restrictions in play. The League must conclude by 19 July 2021, whether or not all matches have been played.

Historical note: The National League began at Holyport in 1987, when CJR and Colin Lumley owned that court. For the first few years all the matches were played there and CJR won the event in its four years. Back then, the overall winner was decided on matches won and then on the total number of games.



Real Tennis in the News

We were delighted to read the confident riposte by two frequent players at Radley to a recent article in the *London Review of Books* (5 Nov). It appeared in that publication's *Letters* page.

Occupying the court

In his piece on the history of tennis, Jon Day quotes David Berry's assertion that the real tennis court at Versailles was 'occupied in the revolution of 1789 by the Third Estate as a symbolic protest against the elitist nature of this sport' (LRB, 8 October 2020). This is inaccurate. The members of the Third Estate did not 'occupy' the court in a 'symbolic' fashion in order to take their oath to diminish the power of the king: the space was chosen because it was nearby and large enough to accommodate their numbers.

Day also suggests that sphairistike (the precursor to modern lawn tennis) was played 'until the turn of the century'. In fact, it fell by the wayside before the All England Club held its first lawn tennis championships in 1877.

Today, real tennis is hardly an 'extreme minority pursuit': it's a growing international sport with ten thousand players and more than one hundred career professionals, and is one of the few games in which women and men compete against one another on an equal footing.

There's more to say, of course, but on Day's advice we're off to brush up our frisbee and whatever cosplay is.

The Hague

*Theo Bollerman
Clare Bucknell*

Whilst on the subject of the printed word, we need to tell you about one of the latest titles to have been added to the real tennis oeuvre. *Tennis; Histories and Mysteries*, by Mike Garnett, has been published by Historical Publications Pty, in Australia.

Amongst its fascinating content, this book includes such matters as:

1. The recent discovery of a 17th century court in Brittany, France. Built in 1605 - can it be saved? Some nostalgic history and photos.
2. Comprehensive study by a respected UK tennis historian on the history of Irish courts. This is a subject that has never been fully explored. More than seventy courts have been identified – many illustrations.
3. The amazing win by Rob Fahey over Camden Riviere at Queens Club in May 2018 is brilliantly described by *The Age* journalist and real tennis player Richard Allen.
4. Four tennis rackets discovered in the attic of an English country house are now housed in Australia. The new owner traces their fascinating history from the date they were made in France in 1788. These rackets are the earliest known to exist.



Racquet made by the French maker, Brouaye.

5. The welcome return to Australia by HRH Prince Edward in April 2018 is fully described, with photos and descriptions of his visits to Melbourne, Romsey, Ballarat, and Hobart.
6. Following the French Revolution, many *jeu de paume* were converted to the simpler game of *trinquet* – numerous courts are traced and illustrated.
7. Courts in such diverse places as Montevideo, Uruguay; Valencia, Spain; Biarritz, France; and on an island near Newfoundland, Canada, are illustrated. How and who established the prestigious sporting club, The Hurlingham Club, Buenos Aires.

- Research by an English historian detailing the many tennis courts converted to theatres, accompanied by 17th century illustrations of theatrical performances in France within *jeu de paume* courts.

This 300-page book, priced at Australian \$100, is fully illustrated and the front cover features a medieval tennis scene. If you are interested in buying a copy, please contact the author of this and many other titles on real tennis, Mike Garnett, tennis stalwart and a member of the Ballarat Tennis Club, at: garnettm@bigpond.net.au.

Real Tennis History

Enthusiastic students of the game, with a little more time on their hands than usual during lockdown 2, might like to look at two websites.

Firstly, there is the one created by Cees de Bondt (who is playing a leading role in the current new court project in The Hague – see below): <https://www.real-tennis.nl/>.



You can read the extensive research done by Cees into the imagery and meaning of the painting above, *The Death of Hyacinth*, by Michelangelo Caravaggio.

The artist fled Rome for Naples after stabbing to death his opponent, Ranuccio Tomassoni, after a game of tennis.

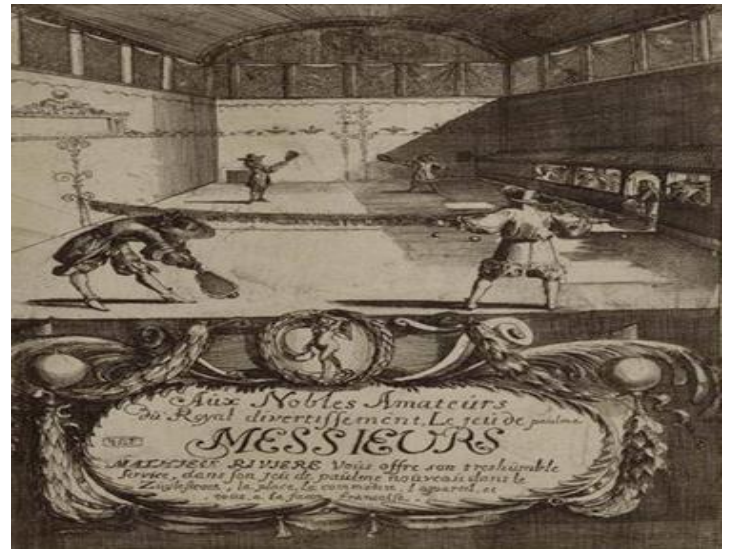
Cees's research is also covered by The Real Tennis Society, which was masterminded by Freddy Adam. Although its pages are no longer quite up to date, it contains a mass of very interesting material: <https://realtennissociety.org/>.

Old Courts and Tennis

During his considerable research efforts, over several decades, Cees de Bondt has found many fascinating pieces of evidence of the game in continental Europe. Below is an engraving, which we hope you can see reasonably clearly, that is the first depiction he has been able to find of tennis being played in Holland, although courts existed significantly before the one portrayed in this image.

Of particular interest is the name of the French *Maitre Paumier*, who, in 1675, was advertising his court in Utrecht, his skills and the clothing that could be lent for playing, all of which were 'in the French fashion'. The name on the trade card illustrated below is Matthieu RIVIERE.

The current World Number One, Camden, is not the first Riviere to be a professional player, it seems.



This trade card is from the Waddesdon Collection

The wording on the advertisement (with original typography) reads:

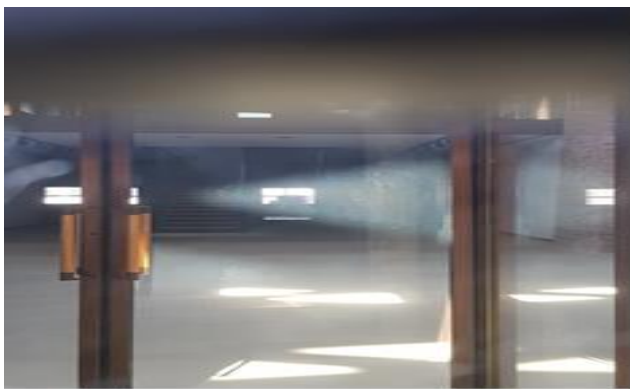
*'Aux Nobles Amateurs
du Royal divertissement, Le jeu de paume
MESSIEURS
Mathieu Riviere Vous offre son treshumble
Service, dans son jeu de paume Nouveau dans la
Zuylesteaet, la place, la commodite, l'apparel, et
, tout a la facon francoise.'*

Venice –

Cees is also well known for his discovery of surviving court buildings in Venice, identifying two, almost side by side, on the *Fondamente Nuovo* in Venice. During a recent trip there, MHT took some photos of the area, which is easily accessible by foot or by water:



of what is visible (not a lot) through a tiny aperture in the too, too solid wooden door;



and signs of other nearby tennis courts;



SOTOPORTEGO DE LA RACHETA



*PONTE
MOLIN DE LA
RACHETA*

New Court Updates

You might, quite reasonably, have expected that court building projects about which this newsletter has been reporting over the past year would grind to a total halt during the global pandemic. Indeed, there we some amongst us who feared that Covid-19 could represent an existential threat to the game.

What is clear, with evidence gathered from Australia, France, Holland and the US, is that this is, emphatically, not the case. This counter-intuitive news is extremely welcome,.

Some of the most recent developemnt are detailed in the paragraphs below, by country.

Australia

Michael Fitzgerald, President of the Sydney Real Tennis Club, wrote last week that:

'We are delighted to announce that the Development Application for our Real Tennis court at Cheltenham has been submitted to Hornsby Council, and a decision is expected within the next couple of months.

We're sure you've been much anticipating this milestone and will be excited at the prospect of the coming fund-raising effort for our own new court.'



You can find out more at the club's website:

<http://sydneyrealtennis.com.au/about-cheltenham/>

To remind you of the background: The Cheltenham Club was established in 1912 through a bequest of freehold land, which can only be used for sporting activities. The club has tennis, croquet, and lawn bowls sections. There is also a two-storey club house with a bar and restaurant.

In October 2018, over 95% of CRC members voted in favour of establishing a real tennis section of the club and to partner with Sydney Real Tennis to build a new court adjoining the existing clubhouse.

Cheltenham is an historic and charming suburb of Sydney, taking its name from a house built by William Chorley, a tailor and gentlemen's outfitter, who had been born in England but flourished in his new homeland. He acquired the land when it was released from the Field of Mars Reserve and he named the extensive house and garden after his birthplace in Gloucestershire.



Chorley clearly had some considerable standing and influence in the local and regional community, as he asked the government to build a railway station here and they did. Not only that, but the stop was named after his property when it opened in 1898.

The Cheltenham Recreation Club is located directly opposite the station, is also served by the M2 and is just 15 minutes from the Harbour Bridge or 35 minutes from the airport.

France

On the website of the French association, <https://paumefrance.com/>, the Comite Francais de la Jeu de Paume lists six real tennis clubs in the country. This may surprise those readers who were aware of the three courts currently in play; Paris, Fontainebleau and Bordeaux. The Comite's listing includes the small *tripots*, on which an adapted game of real tennis can be played, in the towns of Bayonne, La Bastide Clairence and Urrugne in the Basque region, as well as the renovation projects of the full-size court currently *sans dedans ou tambour* in Pau and the smaller structure dating from 1590 in Chinon.

This newsletter has carried reports in earlier issues of the projects in Pau and Chinon, both of which are being propelled forward principally by Petworth member who splits his year between England and France, Simon Berry, who also organises the popular tournament in which a number of Radley members have participated, *Les Trois Tripots*.



The delapidated court at 10, rue de Jeu de Paume, Chinon

Although the new Merignac court is closed to its members currently, elite players are allowed to practise in indoor sports facilities, which means that Nicky Howell, the Head Professional, and Lea Van Der Zwalmen, member of Radley and the Team Radley + cohort, are able to play together.

This is particularly helpful to Lea, currently the Ladies World Number 2, who has her sights set on making a serious challenge for the 2021 Ladies World Championship, which is due to take place at the Fontainebleau court in the early summer.

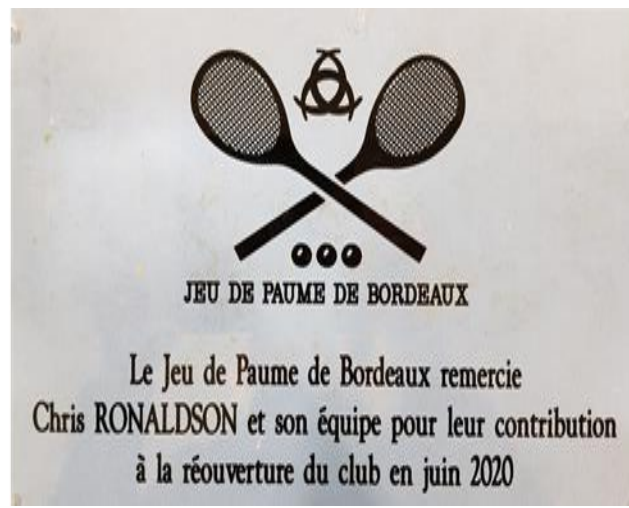
Holland

Bordeaux –

At the leaving party arranged for CJR and MHT, who were the last remaining representatives of 'Team Radley +' left in Bordeaux in mid September, Paul Van Der Linden, the President of Le Jeu de Paume de Bordeaux, presented Chris with a fine plaque. A place will be found for it in the Radley clubroom in due course.

We recently reported that discussions have suddenly, and very positively, accelerated between The *Nederlandse Real Tennis Bond* (the Dutch Real Tennis Association) and the designers of a new municipal sports park, which will provide a variety of racquet and other games, like handball.

It seems that the prospect of including a real tennis court, which would be the first to be built in Holland for at least 400 years, has excited a number of key people involved in the project, who were completely unaware of the game until just a month or so ago.



Although real tennis is quite a late inclusion, it seems to be moving to centre stage in the plans for 'The Strip' Sports Centre. Re-introducing the game into Holland is now looking more likely than it has been since the NRTB was formed in 1986. The latest news is that members of 'The Strip' design committee will be discussing their plans with the municipal authorities in late November. If the city approves the plan, there is still the matter of planning permission to be negotiated.

The granting of planning permission can never be regarded as a forgone conclusion. In this case, there is a residential area within a reasonable distance of the proposed site.

This was an expression of thanks to CJR and his team, for restarting the club over the summer of 2020, *pro bono*. *Déjà vu*, though, as CJR had done the same in 1982 when the club at the previous court in Merignac had gone bankrupt under Wayne Davies's incumbency as Head Professional.

However, the fact that these new buildings will be over 200 metres from the nearest houses and that

high trees partially screen the site, should go a long way to mitigating objections.

Cees de Bondt and Niek van Wijk are leading the discussions about real tennis with 'The Strip' design committee. They have recently been joined by ex-Assistant Pro at Radley and member our club, Saskia Bollerman, who is adding her perspective, enthusiasm, and youth to the team effort.

CJR will provide whatever advice is needed on court planning and design.



The sports park that may include a real tennis court will be built on a road called *Laan Van Poot*, which is set back from the beach, behind the West Dunes in the resort suburb of Scheveningen, close to The Hague. This was a very fashionable seaside spot in the 19C and remains an area with considerable charm, historic buildings, and a sizeable all-year round local community.

Washington

As well as providing court dimensions and other structural information to the plans in The Hague, CJR has been busy supporting the rapidly evolving court project in Washington.

Plans to build a real tennis court at the Westwood Country Club, in Vienna, VA, as part of the reconstruction of that club's indoor lawn-tennis facility, are proceeding apace. Up to date reports suggest that there is only a relatively small sum is still required to be raised of the total US\$3.2m for the complete project, and that the court opening is anticipated to take place before Christmas 2021.

The high cost is a result of two factors specific to this project and does not represent the actual cost of building the real tennis court itself. The first factor is that the Westwood CC has asked for a sizeable 'contribution' to its funds in exchange for the land and opportunity to link up with its club and membership.

The second factor affecting the overall cost is that the plan for the ancillary space around the court includes luxurious locker rooms and leisure areas that need to be consistent in style and quality of the rest of the Westwood CC facilities.



The logo of the current Prince's Club, Washington

The Westwood CC was founded in 1954 and is an impressive place, having nearly 160 acres of grounds containing an immaculate 18-hole Alfred Tull/Gene Bates parkland golf course, an Olympic size outdoor swimming pool, indoor and outdoor lawn tennis, fitness centre and other leisure facilities. If you want to find out more about this well-appointed and equipped club, you can look at the website <https://www.westwoodcc.com/>.

It is a thriving private club, owned by its members, and prides itself on being family orientated. This means that there should be a large pool of potential players, men, women and children, to attract to 'Court Tennis', as the real game is generally known in the US.

There have been Zoom calls a-plenty including the steering committee, the architect and relevant advisors, including CJR. He is playing an important role in the Design Group, helping with input on each of the 36 different dimensions (for such things as tambour and penthouse angles as well as length,

width and height of every part of the court) and a plethora of arcane details upon which decisions need to be made, including floor and wall materials, their respective finishes, the type of lighting and lux levels in various parts of the court.

With no perfect or single template to follow (but certainly some design decisions to avoid), building a court involves making an enormous number of separate but interlocking choices.

Two things are certain. Firstly, the designers want this to be a high specification court, capable of staging the biggest tournaments. Secondly, there will be no glass main wall in the new Washington court.



The view into the Service End of the court at Prince's Court at McLean, Virginia

Quiz Corner



This photo of soldiers exercising on a tennis court has led to a certain amount of head-scratching. They are shown on which court? The fact that they seem to be practising rather balletic-looking positions was also something of a puzzle - unless this is a parachuting landing position! We are confident that amongst our members we will find all the answers.

We look forward very much to welcoming you back to Radley as soon as possible. Until then, we recommend following John Moule's advice and being 'relentlessly positive over the coming weeks.' Not long to go, we hope, until the end of Lockdown 2 and the resumption of tennis.

In the meantime

Stay safe, stay fit and stay well.

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