

**February  
2021**

**Radley College  
Tennis Court**

**'Better Than the Last' - The Club Newsletter**

### **(Still in) Lockdown III**

Welcome to the second RCTC newsletter of 2021, appropriately entitled, 'Better Than The Last'.

Let us hope that the shift into February marks the midpoint of this Lockdown as well as the promise of Spring. We know everyone is looking forward to the resumption of all sorts of life-enhancing activities, not least of which is real tennis.

Our morale is greatly improved by the rapid roll-out of the national vaccination programme and we have heard that a number of our members have received their first dose. What encouraging news.

### **Real January Snow**

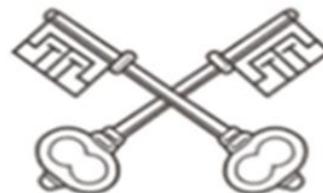


Staying at home and playing 'lawn' tennis  
24 Jan 2021

### **Tennis in 2021**

There is currently no tennis being played on the courts of France or the UK. However, the courts are open in the USA and in Australia (more on that later).

According to the latest indication from No.10, UK schools may re-open in early March, but we expect that no tennis will be possible, except perhaps for the College boys.



**RADLEY**  
REAL TENNIS

**Relentlessly Positive  
Positively Relentless**

When the tier level of the Vale of White Horse is reduced to 3 (or whatever new system might be put in place), we will again be able to welcome back all players from the College and club.

Re-entering Tier 3, according to the current definitions, will mean that lessons, individual practice or same-household play will, once more, be possible, and indoor sport can go ahead as part of education and for U18s. Only when we return to Tier 2, will singles play be able to start again.

## Club News

As all members have been notified, Radley College will not be taking membership fees for the first Quarter of this year. The College took the same action in the first Lockdown and their generosity is greatly appreciated by the club and its members.

Apart from this notable announcement, there is not a lot to report. We are not allowed access to the court, and so we are not able to do the little bits of painting and decorating and other minor repairs that are (always) on our list.

### **Thank you to.... The Dedanists**



**THE DEDANISTS' FOUNDATION**  
**RE-GENERATING REAL TENNIS**

In the January edition of this newsletter, we reported that, in addition to the support they are offering to several junior members of the Radley club, the Dedanists will be giving some help to our Radley protégé, Florent Brethon, to further his tennis ambitions.

Travel restrictions permitting, Florent will be coming to Radley this summer to RCTC, to receive intensive coaching and to help the pros on court and off it. Florent needs a period of work experience as well as tennis practice this summer, as a requirement of his Engineering degree at the University of Rouen.

### **Thank you to.... Hugo Axel-Berg**

We put out a call to our club members, to ask whether anyone could help find some appropriate work experience for Florent. Hugo Axel-Berg immediately responded and offered help, so a big 'thank you' is due to HA-B.

Through Hugo's contacts and an introduction made just before Christmas, we can report that Florent has just been offered a four-week placement with Polar Technologies in Eynsham.

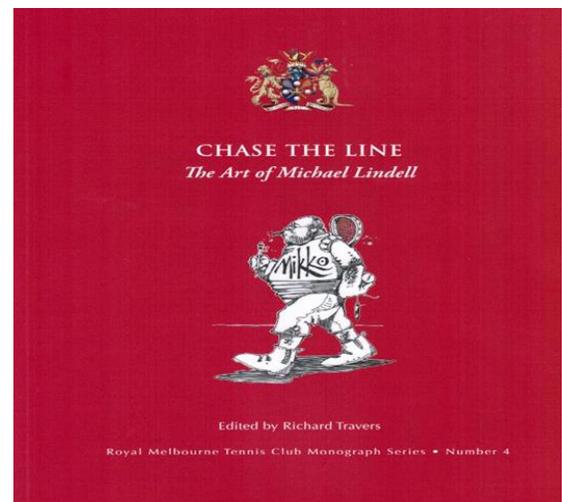
Polar is a successful, well-established specialist engineering business, employing nearly 200 people, which provides design and manufacturing of components for a customer list that includes Formula One teams and Airbus. It sounds most exciting and Florent is delighted.

As a 'thank you' to Polar, we have offered the senior management team an introductory tennis session, and they have responded enthusiastically. We will arrange this as soon as such things are again possible and look forward to welcoming these Polar explorers to Radley.

### **Thank you to...Richard Travers and Michael Lindell a.k.a. 'Mikko'**

Richard Travers wrote to us from Melbourne recently about the Boomerang Cup, last held in January 2020, and sent pictures that are far too good not to be shared.

'Mikko', whose caricatures of players, times and places in real tennis are admired and loved throughout the real tennis world, produced a design for each of the teams participating. If you would like to see more of Mikko's inimitable style, ask Maggie, as the Melbourne club has printed a selection of his tennis-related work in its monograph series.



Three teams have represented Radley over the last few years, and they were *The Arrivistes* in 2011, *The Rascals* in 2013 and *The Paumes* in 2016.

Firstly, *The Radley Arrivistes* in 2011 showed the way for Radley sides at The Boomerang Cup, and comprised the following players: Nick Manby-Brown, David Baldry, Roger Henderson, Alfred Levy and Euhana Varigos (a fill-in player from RMTTC)

RADLEY  
ARRIVISTS ☆



Hot on their heels, *The Radley Rascals* charged into town in 2013 and was made up of these notables: Nick Manby-Brown, Tim Manby-Brown, James McNicoll, Kathryn McNicoll and Bob Wilson.



RADLEY RASCALS

Most recently, in 2016, *The Radley Paumes*, being Graham Hopes, Bob Wilson, Roger Henderson, John Aldersley and Nigel Shaw, have flown the RCTC club flag in Melbourne.



RADLEY ☆ PAUMES

## International Tennis

...and while on the subject of Australia, here is a photo of the pool at the Royal Melbourne Tennis Club, in some Southern Hemisphere sunshine.



The four Aussie courts in play are to be found in Melbourne (2), Ballarat and Hobart, while the Cope-Williams court in Romsey remains closed and is currently for sale.

If the idea of a splendid tennis court, cricket oval and pavilion, arts centre, 23 en-suite bedrooms and conference centre, less than an hour's drive from Melbourne and next door to an award-winning winery, appeals to you (and why wouldn't it?), and you have around A\$2m in spare cash, please, please buy it, and save the court for the tennis community. We all promise to come and visit as often as we can!

Here is a link to the estate agent's appealing video, complete with internal views of the tennis court: <https://www.realestate.com.au/property-house-vic-romsey-132394206>.

## New Courts – Latest updates

There is not a great deal to report since our last edition, but there are just a few items of news. Firstly, here is an update on two projects on the other side of *La Manche*.

**Chinon** – Petworth member and part-time French resident, Simon Berry, has bought the building and

is spear-heading the ambitious project to restore the 16C court at 10, *Rue Jeu de Paume*, in the beautiful Medieval centre of Chinon.

After significant internal re-construction and the creation of auxiliary facilities, it is hoped that the Chinon court will be in playable condition in 2023/24. Below, is an artist's impression of what two players (who appear to be engaged in lawn tennis!) might look like on court.



The following link takes you to the image and link to an article about the restoration in *La Nouvelle Republic*:

<https://www.pinterest.at/pin/330944272614538770/>.

**Pau** - As Simon Berry is also driving the Pau restoration, it and the Chinon project will be sequential. We have reported before about the planned renovations of the fine 1887 *jeu de paume* in Pau, near the Pyrenees, and have suggested that this process might be complete by the early summer of 2021. Given the *force majeure* of coronavirus, it is not very surprising that this timetable has needed adjustment. We understand that the hope and expectation is that the court will be ready for the new season of 2022/23.

The photo below is a view from the Service End, showing how the main wall has been built out to be level with the original tambour, and that a new, smaller tambour. This shows the view from the Service End, showing how the main wall has been built out to be level with the original tambour, and that a new, smaller tambour, for the game of trinquet, has been added.



You can see the much smaller corner-tambour, painted white, where the main wall meets the Hazard Side, will note that the penthouse has been removed from that end of the court and that the service penthouse is lower and flatter than it would be on a conventional tennis court.

#### Holland – erratum et apologia

The Dutch Real Tennis Association has asked us to correct the false impression we gave in our last edition. In it, we wrote with great enthusiasm about the plans for 'The Strip', the municipal sports centre in The Hague that will include a real tennis court. We admit, however, that we got a little carried away in describing the facilities.

We mentioned the terrace and cafeteria and stated, with great certainty but no great exactitude, that: 'From that terrace there will be a view of the sand dunes and the beach. How delightful!'



Well, it is true that it would be delightful, but, sadly, it is not true that you will be able to see the dunes and beach from the terrace. It was a case of poetic license, as these charming seaside features will, sadly, be on the other side of the building.

We are sorry and hasten to correct this mistake. But we are safe in the knowledge that few will care about the view outside if there is a real tennis court inside the building!

#### From the archives

These images below, from the website of The Museum of London, shows one of the 1,000,000 items that are not on view but in storage there. This ball is 40mm in diameter and weighs 45 grammes.

The online museum catalogue entry reads: 'A ball for 'real' or 'royal' tennis, fashioned from leather with a stuffing of compacted dog's hair. The leather has been cut into quarters and the segments are stitched together along the seams. Most of the stitching has come apart and there are several holes in the leather.'



*This ball was discovered in the rafters of Westminster Hall in the 1920s. There is no evidence that real tennis was played at Westminster after c.1520 and so this ball almost certainly dates to the late 15th or very early 16th century. The earliest tennis balls were made of soft materials because the ball was struck by hand.*

*English players preferred French made balls which were crafted by specialist paumiers who used wool wadding and good hide.*

*Some £1699 worth of 'Balls for tennis' are listed in 'The Particular Value of certain necessary and unnecessary Wares brought into the Port of London' in 1559.*

*The game of tennis underwent a number of significant changes during the course of the 16th century, and by the late 1500s rackets were commonplace. In consequence, tennis balls were constructed with a tougher core made from tightly wound cloth.'*

## **Keeping Entertained**

The three tennis-related ideas that follow have been updated from the previous newsletter and should fill a few hours, if you have them to fill.

### **1. Reading about Tennis**

As you may know, Ronaldson Publications (a.k.a. 'RonPubs'), was set up by CJR and his father, Bruce, to publish *A Cut Above the Rest* in 1985, when it proved difficult to find a publishing house prepared to take it on.

Spotting a gap in the market for reprints of classic tennis titles and for new books on the game, RonPubs has been busy over the past 36 years and has now published about 30 titles. The business has been most ably run for the past decade by Kathryn McNicoll.

To help members start or augment a real tennis library, we offered a book bundle of seven titles at a bargain price throughout January.

A special feature of this time-limited offer was that it included a delivery service, as long as the buyer lived within 25 miles of the court. CJR and MH-T committed to delivering the orders by bike or on foot (weather and injuries permitting), to give their daily exercise a greater sense of purpose.



CJR delivering books to James Williams in Aston Rowant

The delivery team has been somewhat daunted by the fact that the remaining orders are 27 and 29 miles away respectively, which makes both of those journeys a challenging round trip, given the time of year.

Those deliveries may have to wait a while.

### **2. Watching Tennis**

World Number One, Camden Riviere, continues to produce excellent and regular YouTube videos, in his series, 'Cam's Corner'.

We recommend all of them but have selected three, beginning with the tactics of playing off a Hazard Chase:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v64J31BNDyI&i&st=PLzAa4D2Mp3qDyJrPnFQq\\_mOzi63ATOebT&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v64J31BNDyI&i&st=PLzAa4D2Mp3qDyJrPnFQq_mOzi63ATOebT&index=3).

The next clip is helpful if you want to develop the 'dark side' of your game by cultivating deceptive shots:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNzto50MVTc&list=PLzAa4D2Mp3qDyJrPnFQq\\_mOZi63ATOebT&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNzto50MVTc&list=PLzAa4D2Mp3qDyJrPnFQq_mOZi63ATOebT&index=2)

The final one video clip is for left-handed players and focuses on delivering a railroad serve. It is also of value, of course, to any right-handers who might ever need to return a leftie's railroad.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmq8mNpL30A&list=PLzAa4D2Mp3qDyJrPnFQq\\_mOZi63ATOebT&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmq8mNpL30A&list=PLzAa4D2Mp3qDyJrPnFQq_mOZi63ATOebT&index=1)



Camden in Action  
Photo credit: Michael Do

### 3. Quizzes about tennis

Tim Harper's limerick competition for the T&RA, requiring entries to be themed on Real Tennis clubs, Real Tennis terms or Real Tennis pros and personalities, has proved popular with our members.

We will not be surprised to read, in due course, of the garland of laurels descending upon a RCTC head, but, whatever the outcome, we look forward to printing the winning entry after the result is announced on 26 February.

Good luck to all!

### Last, but not least...

'Better Than The Last' would not be the same without a photo competition, would it?

In the last issue, we asked the identity of the player who appears in the photo below.



The answer, obviously, is CJR, wearing as many sweaters as humanly possible, on court at Troon, at about this time of year in 1979.

This week, there are a larger than usual number of images to identify.

We are featuring a series of stunning images of tennis courts, taken by Elliott Wilcox, and printed in *The Guardian* in 2013. As far as we know, the photographer does not play the game, but was attracted to the courts for their photogenic allure alone. A case of aesthetics over athletics, perhaps?

These tennis photos reproduced below formed part of the newspaper's series, 'Beautiful Games'. Here is a link to the article in *The Guardian*:

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/gallery/2013/feb/06/beautiful-games-courts-walls-gallery>.

The question is, which courts are these?

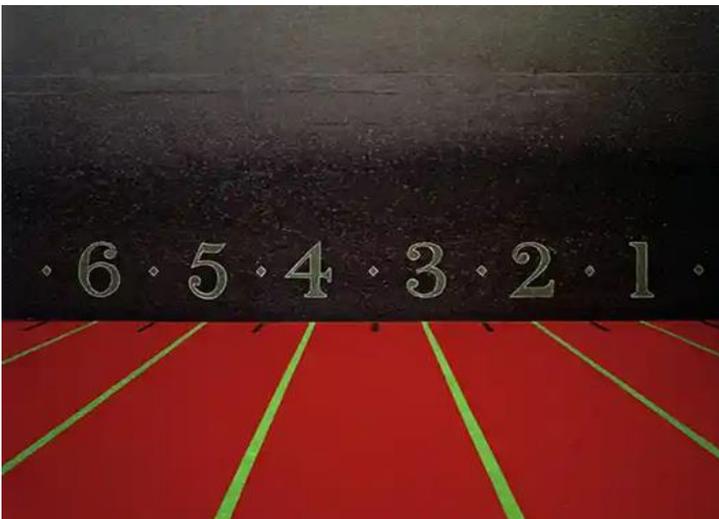
a.



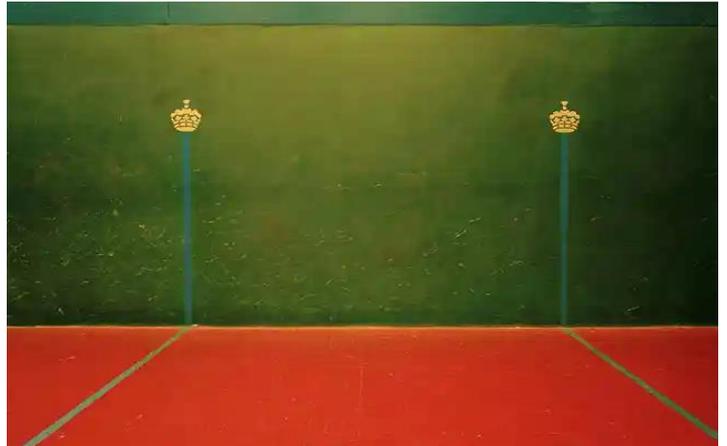
b.



c.



d.



e.



f.



Stay safe, stay fit and stay well.

*This Newsletter, the second of 2021,  
was compiled by Maggie Henderson-Tew.*