

# Radley College Tennis Court

## Summer 2023

*Better Than The Last  
Radley Club Newsletter!*

### Summer Edition

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### CORONATION EDITION – CELEBRATING THE CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III ON 6 MAY 2023

#### RCTC Club News

##### Professionals' News

When reporting newsworthy events, very little can rival the excitement and significance of the arrival of a baby. We are absolutely delighted to report the birth of Giuseppe Pompeo Toates Merola, known as 'Seppi'. Congratulations to his delighted parents!

Seppi can be seen regularly at the club, and he worked his first shift, pictured right, when he was just three days old. He may be getting rather more sleep than Nino and Tori, but they would not have it any other way. From Radley to Sydney and on to Wisconsin, and in celebration of the accession to the throne of King Charles III, it seems appropriate that this newsletter's theme is new beginnings, as well as the extension of the real tennis family of players and courts.



## Members' News

CJR writes:

The T&RA makes a number of awards each year, marking contributions and achievements on and off the court. This year, a new award was created,



The T&RA website stated:

'The Members' Choice Award will honour inspiring individuals involved in the Real Tennis or Rackets world. Whether a player, a professional, a volunteer or otherwise, they will have contributed to our games in a noteworthy way over the past season, as decided by our members via a poll sent by email.

We were overwhelmed by the number of nominations for the Members' Choice Award and will feature nominations on the website. '

The Radley club is honoured and delighted that three of the five nominees featured on the T&RA website are Radley members. It is splendid that Maggie received the inaugural award and that Ben Geytenbeek and I were two of the other nominees. What follows are the words and pictures that appeared on the T&RA website, following the announcement about Ben and Maggie.



'Maggie is the Radley Club Captain. Her 2023 spring newsletter is 28 pages, and this sums up just what she does for Radley and the wider Real Tennis community. Without Maggie the club would not be what it is today - thriving.

She leads, organises, fundraises, cajoles, washes, cooks and plays every day of the week with huge enthusiasm and energy - you never see a down Maggie. She takes an interest in every single club member's welfare and is a huge supporter of the professional team.

Her wider Real Tennis interests are global, finding opportunities for new courts to be built and encouraging and supporting these to fruition. Her Real Tennis network is second to none and anyone walking through the door is given the best of welcomes.

She is just the best Captain that we, at Radley, could wish for - we, and the wider Tennis community, are very fortunate to have her.'

Nominee Ben Geytenbeek:



'Singlehandedly (with perhaps a little help from Jacqui!), Ben has transformed the streaming of Real Tennis at not one but multiple courts across the country. 'Ben's Den' is now a feature at major tournaments allowing top quality real tennis to be enjoyed on your devices of choice in the comfort of your own home/workplace. Multiple cameras, integrated scoring, audio, amazing in-game statistics all appear seamlessly on your screen.

Furthermore, Ben has generously shared his knowledge and time to assist individual clubs and the T&RA in setting up their own systems.'

Editor's note – A huge thank you to everyone who voted for me! To win the inaugural award is a great honour and the bottle of every real tennis player's favourite champagne (thank you, Pol Roger!) a splendid bonus.

### Club Subscription & Court fees

RCTC is now reaching its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary and, apart from modest increases in court fees, we have been able to maintain the subscription rate at £62.50 per quarter for all that time. It is hard to think of any other essential item that has been so inflation proof over this lengthy period of time.

However, given the level of inflation, the decision has been taken to increase this quarterly rate to £75 for seniors, with corresponding increases for other membership categories, starting in the Autumn. We are confident that this continues to represent outstanding value and that our wish to increase the sum total of human happiness is still being fulfilled.

This increase is particularly important if we are to continue to support our team of professionals in the future, who are an outstanding unit and the envy of many clubs.

Court fees will also increase; from £12 to £14/hr (per person for singles) and from £7 to £8/hr for doubles and for Juniors.



**RADLEY**  
REAL TENNIS

**RELENTLESSLY POSITIVE**- POSITIVELY RELENTLESS

### Club Audio-Visual System update

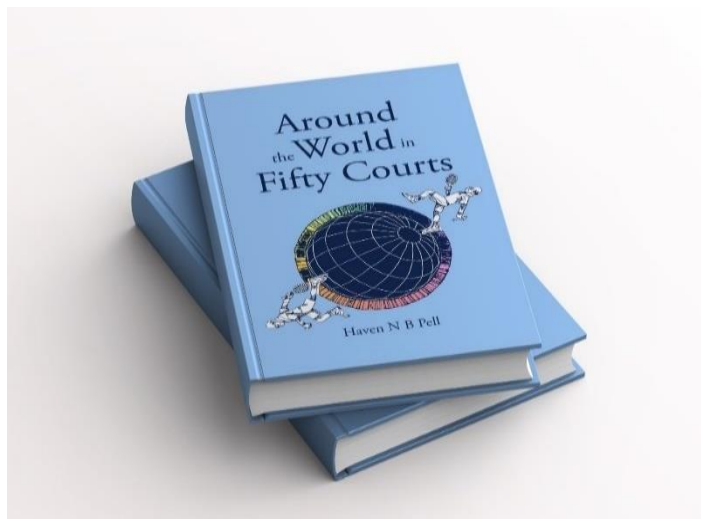
Maggie is taking advantage of the expertise on hand to ask Ben to advise on what we need to complete the installation of up-to-the-minute audio-visual equipment at Radley. Finishing off the project and activating sound and vision has been harder than envisaged, but we know Ben will sort it out in a trice!

The hardware has arrived, and Ben will be turning his attention to our system as soon as time allows. He has had a series of time-consuming tennis events to cover in recent months and cannot be expected to dedicate every waking moment to tennis, although sometimes it seems as if he does!

Once he has worked his magic, we should be able, at last, to offer sound and vision for members and guests, with live streaming and archive footage, all via YouTube channel. More details to follow. We can only apologise that it has taken so long.

### Club Events

We were delighted that Haven Pell, leading light of the US Court Tennis Foundation and main driver of the triumphant new court project at Westwood Country Club in Virginia, was able to come to Radley, to play and the speak, as part of his book tour of the UK courts and clubs.



In front of an audience of club members on Friday 14 April, Haven and CJR talked about court design, fund-raising, the occasional trials and tribulations of court building and answered questions from the assembly on a variety of tennis-related topics.

With over 100 years of playing experience in aggregate, each has a huge fund of wisdom, observations and anecdotes to share.

Haven satisfied his ambition of playing on all the 'live' courts of the world by completing the tour in 2022, at which point he started to write a splendidly entertaining reminiscence of his travels, *Round the World in Fifty Courts*, published last year. A second edition was rapidly required, providing the perfect excuse for Haven to revisit a number of UK courts, including The Oratory, where he spent time during the 2023 Ladies' World Championships (of which more on P10), speaking about his travels and signing copies of the book.

Haven is already anticipating the appendix that will need follow his visits to the forthcoming courts in Sydney and Wisconsin (featured later in this newsletter, see pages 13 and 18 respectively), and no doubt he is already forming travel plans.

### **National League**

The annual National League competition sees teams of Pros and amateurs with handicaps better than 45 representing clubs at various handicap bands, in divisions from Premier to 9.

All those involved in this extended series of competitive matches, players, organisers and spectators, are very grateful to this season's National League sponsor, FLM Wealth Management (an appointed representative of St James Place Wealth Management, advising on the Group's products and services).

To find out more about its products and services, please click on this link to the FLM website:

<https://www.flmltd.com/>.



This season's divisions all reached their conclusions in May after a lengthy season of multiple rounds, home and away ties and complex scheduling. Lesley Ronaldson has organised the tournament for years and was responsible for bringing in the current tournament sponsor, while CJR annually takes on the not-inconsiderable challenge of working out the draw.

In this, as in so many other areas of tennis over the decades, Lesley's contribution has been immense. It is a matter of considerable regret that she felt it necessary to resign from her position as Organiser of the event on behalf of the IRTPA National League. She has earned grateful thanks for all she has done to make this event such an enduring success and significant feature of the annual tennis calendar.

In Division 1&2 (combined), Leamington 1 (Nino Merola and Lewis Williams) were Runners-up to Oratory 2 (Claire Fahey and Levi Gale), and Nino finished third behind Claire and Levi in the Most Valuable Player table.

Congratulations also to ex-Radley Pro, Josh King, who won the MVP award for Division 5 and whose wins propelled the RTC/ Holyport team to the top of the only division in which Radley fielded a side. RCTC were represented by the father and son duo of Mike and Henry Henman, who finished in third position out of twelve sides.



Alex Machin captained the Wellington team in Division 6 to the top of their league and, by amassing the greatest number of points, won the individual MVP award. Radley member, Matthew Alden, playing for Oxford, finished third in that divisional MVP table.

Oratory 4, playing in Division 9, won it by a mile, and Radley member, Martin McNair, shared the three-way MVP position.

Congratulations to all, and good luck to Alex Machin, who has taken over as Organiser of the National League, and to CJR, as it looks as if he will continue to be the one tasked with wrestling the complex draw into a workable schedule.

### **Radley Club Tournaments**

The annual Radley Singles Handicap tournament, into which all members are entered (unless they prefer not to take part), is well underway. Group matches are starting to be completed, and when all have concluded, the winners will play-off until a single champion remains. Both finalists will be invited to play in the National Club Singles Champions event, the Chetwood Trophy, early in 2024.

### **Old Radleians Real Tennis Club**

In the most recent edition of this newsletter, we put out a call for support for the creation of an Old Radleians Real Tennis Club, but the clarion call is still to be answered. There is a constellation of talent and great enthusiasm for playing amongst OR players, so let's get this started!

We are still hoping that an OR will step forward, to drive ORRTC forwards, pull people together for matches and liaise with the Radley Society, which has kindly offered its support to the endeavour.

## **THE RADLEY SOCIETY**

If you are an OR and would like to volunteer to set up and run the ORRTC, please contact Maggie at [maggie.ht@btinternet.com](mailto:maggie.ht@btinternet.com) to discuss the matter further.

In the event that this does not happen, MHT may quite spuriously declare herself to be an Old Radleian, for these purposes only, and get things moving. You have been warned!

### **The Celtic Challenge I and II**

On Sunday 5 March, the fifth iteration of the Celtic Challenge was staged at Radley. In this nine-per-team competition, Ireland took on Scotland, in a one-day match with a unique scoring system.

The Irish team repeated its win of 2022 and retained the Tunnock's Trophy. The Scottish captain, Maggie Henderson-Tew, smarting from two losses in succession against Ireland, accepted a challenge from the Welsh, captained by David Phillips, to a separate nine-per-side international match, to be known hereafter as the Celtic Challenge II.



The Scots calculated that the excitement of being part of the first-ever team representing Wales and their lack of familiarity with the unusual competition rules might be enough to give the Scots an edge, and so it proved. The Scots started like a train, winning the first rubber, and they steamed on from there. Inexorably, the Scottish side pulled ahead, increasing its lead by 50, 80 and then by over 100 points, to take a commanding position by the half-way mark.

At this point, play was paused for all the players to assemble on courts for photos and for the singing of the respective national anthems. It had all been going so well for the Scotland until this break in momentum, when they were confronted by massed ranks of Welsh players and supporters, backed by a recording of the combined voices of tens of thousands gathered at the Principality Stadium for a home rugby international.



David Phillips, Welsh captain, leads the singing.

The singing, recorded and live, was at max volume, rather like this:

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

If you are unfamiliar with the Welsh, you can follow along with the lyrics below:

'Mae hen wlad fy nhadau yn annwyl i mi  
Gwlad beirdd a chantorion, enwogion o fri  
Ei gwrol ryfelwyr, gwladgarwyr tra mât  
Tros ryddid gollasant eu gwaed

Gwlad, Gwlad, pleidiol wyf i'm gwlad  
Tra môr yn fur i'r bur hoff bau  
O bydded i'r heniaith barhau.'

The Scots did their best, but would have needed something like this to rival the volume and the quality:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEbGC1UWaLQ>.

Alas, Alba fell short, and there was no question that the Welsh won the singing. The Scots might have been able to manage their disappointment with pride alone being bruised, but things were about to get much worse for them. The presiding Professional, in an unprecedented act, made a discretionary award of 100 bonus points to the Welsh side for their eisteddfod-worthy chorus.

This changed everything and, although still ahead, Scotland now led by an altogether slimmer margin. Excitement grew, amidst endless recalculation of how many wins, losses, and winning openings were needed to accumulate sufficient points to seal the match. In the end, the margin of victory for Scotland in the first Celtic Challenge II was a modest 10 points (which was the same as the number awarded for a single winning gallery).



When one flag is simply not enough...

The cunning scoring system has been specially devised to ensure that, win or lose, everyone contributes to their team tally and that losing a rubber does not necessarily mean you score fewer points than the victor. This certainly helps to reduce the pain of defeat and mitigate any feeling of letting down one's side if a rubber is lost.

The Reds and the Blues agreed that the day had been a great success and prizes were awarded to the winning team, to the players of the most memorable shot (Geraint Thomas and MH-T, respectively) and who had amassed the greatest number of points for their team (Owen Darbishire and Bob Compton, respectively).

Those generous sponsors of Scottish real tennis, Tunnock's, provided both confectionary and merchandise to fuel and reward the players and their support and products were hugely appreciated by all. Owen Darbishire, who played so strongly for the Welsh side, kindly supported the event as a patron, and his generosity enabled us, amongst other things, to raise our fizz-filled glasses to 'CCII' and agree to do it all again next year, only bigger and better.

In addition to the 2024 Celtic Challenge competition, to be held next March between Ireland and Scotland, there will be created a 'Celtic Challenge III'. This match will give Wales the opportunity for to play Ireland, and the next day, once again, Scotland will take on Ireland in Celtic Challenge I. The Scots are hoping that the Welsh will wear out the Irish rather than get them match-ready!

## The Scottish National Championships 2023

The format of the SNC was a little different this year, as several late withdrawals made us decide to run the Singles event on the first day and the Doubles on second day of our weekend tournament in early June.



We had three first time champions this year, so congratulations to Ian Falconer (pictured above left), who defeated James Eadie in the Singles final, and Rebecca Kashti and Nick Gordon (pictured below right), who beat Matthew Anderson and Maggie Henderson-Tew in the final of the Doubles.



Tunnock's, beloved sponsor of our Scottish events, not only provided more-than-ample amounts of confectionery but also an array of their fine merchandise. James Eadie, James Dron, Dan Worboys, Chris Marks, Matthew Anderson, Rebecca Kashti and Ian Falconer show their appreciation above, and Miles Buckinghamshire and Calum Maclean celebrate Tunnock's below.



The winners were thrilled to collect the fine Pol Roger trophies and liquid prizes, so a big 'thank you' to both our Nat Champs sponsors.



Finalists in the Singles and Doubles of the SNC

## The Irish Open 2023

Radley was delighted to host the twentieth iteration of the 2023 Irish Open Singles and Doubles Championships on 10 and 11 June. Old Radleian Roland Budd has won the level Singles event of the closed Irish Championships an impressive twelve times since 2005, but this year picked up his first Irish Open handicap title, with victory over Jack Woods.

Year after year, Roland does a terrific job of organising the Irish Open tournament, and so it is entirely fitting that he won it at last. Well done to the victorious Roland and to Richard Ramjane and Laura Neill, who won the closely fought Doubles final, 8-7.



Participants in the Irish Open 2023

## Radley College Juniors

Radley Don, Andrew Wood, saw his first tennis court in September 2022 and was rapidly hooked. His racquet sport background is squash, having been a junior international, and his talent with bat and ball was immediately evident. He was the perfect candidate to take up the position of Master In Charge of Real Tennis and has brought his considerable enthusiasm, organisational and motivational skills to bear with excellent results.

It was Andrew's initiative to set up competitions for College players within different handicap bands and the battles for the Dean, Henman and Wood Cups (with each named after one of this year's coaches of

the College boys) have now concluded. The Wood Cup final was a high-quality affair between Hugo Acheson-Grey and Ambrose Garson in front of a backed dedans and upper gallery. Hugo edged the match, having let a 4-0 lead in the deciding set slip to 4-all, before redoubling his efforts to take the set. The match score was 4-6, 6-4, 6-4.

The Henman Cup was won (appropriately) by Theo Henman (nephew of coach, Mike) and the Wood Cup (again, how appropriately) by Osca Wood (son of Master-in-Charge, Andrew).

## International Tennis Day

20 June is the day each year when we celebrate the history, community and fun of real tennis. In the past, we have staged marathons of tennis, playing in and out of fancy dress, and other events. This year, given holidays and babies, the Pro team were not in a position to organise ITD on the day itself.

Instead, we are thinking about marking the start of the 2023/4 season with an event in which we will celebrate some of the courts that once existed in the cities, towns and countries of Europe. If a player has a connection, however tenuous with a place that used to have a court, they can choose to represent it that day.

We would have to have a minimum 26- hour programme, in order to get through all the letters of the alphabet, so it could run something like this: midnight until 1am could be, perhaps, Antwerp v Amsterdam; 1-2am Berlin v Brussels, 2-3am; Cologne v Copenhagen, and so on.





The list of court locations is being considered and members and guests could sign up to represent a 'dark' court. So, if you love Edinburgh, Florence (and who doesn't?), Lyon, Madrid, Padua, Rome, Salzburg, St Petersburg, Sienna, Stockholm, Toledo, Troon or Turin, among many, many others, you might like to consider playing at a sensible/silly time of the day or night for your adopted club.

However, names beginning with X, Y and Z could be a problem, so we might need to forget about them or come up with a creative solution. Let us know whether this idea appeals to you, and we can develop it, or an alternative, over the next month.

### Other UK Club News

#### **Bridport**

Following the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building of the court in Bristol earlier this year, it has been Bridport's turn. The club has just celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the renovation and reopening of the court. From left to right in the photo below are Ben Ronaldson, who was the Head Pro at Bridport for nine years before moving to Queen's Club, Jez Brodie, the current Head Pro, Levi Gale, lately at the Oratory (see more news about him below) and Ben Taylor-Matthews, the Head Pro at Bristol.

Jez, Levi and BTM all grew up locally and started playing tennis at Bridport. The quartet gathered to delight the crowd of members and spectators with top quality singles and doubles and an al-fresco lunch was enjoyed outside.



#### **Prested**

The link between the clubs of Bridport and Prested is Levi Gale. Prested has been seeking new Professionals and is fortunate enough to have secured the services of one of the best young pros in the country. Levi started on 1 July.



Levi started his professional career with the Radley team and played an important role in the re-booting of the Oratory Club in 2020 by Team Radley. Levi stayed on when the Faheys moved to the Oratory and his regular court time with Claire has helped Levi to improve his game rapidly, while also building his experience and reputation.

Levi, currently in the world top 20 players, started working at Prested Hall as Head Professional on 1 July and will be joined in September by Vaughan Hamilton from Canford, creating a vacancy to be filled in Dorset.



Vaughan, like Levi, wishes to combine excellence as a club pro with a successful career as a player. They will no doubt help each other to progress further from Levi's current handicap of 3.3 and Vaughan's of 13.6. Good luck to them both on the next stage of their evolution as club Pros and players!

## International Tournaments

We begin with a round-up of selected results from major tournaments with the juniors, moving on to those featuring the most experienced and best players of the game.

### The U19 Girls' World Championship

LADIES  
REAL TENNIS  
ASSOCIATION



The LRTA made this announcement back in March; 'To match the Junior World Championship for the 16 best players, who are all male, a similar event has been inaugurated to encourage the best dozen girls under 19 years old and give them the opportunity of a tilt at a world title. This event will overlap with the Ladies World Championship and entry will be by invitation only.'

An invitation poster for the 'Inaugural Girls' World 2023 Real Tennis Championships'. The background is teal with orange and white abstract circular patterns. The text is white and black. At the bottom, there are logos for LRTA, Moore Family Office, and the U19 Girls World Championships.

**INVITATION**  
Inaugural  
Girls' World **2023**  
Championships  
Real Tennis

Date: 13th - 16th April  
Venue: The Oratory School, UK

- . 1st prize: Latest Grays racquet
- . Souvenir T-shirts
- . No entry fee

This is your opportunity to compete amongst the top 12 junior girls in the World. You will be playing for the prestigious trophy and title of 'World Junior Girls' Champion'

LRTA

MOORE Family Office

LADIES REAL TENNIS ASSOCIATION  
U19 GIRLS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Of the 12 girls invited to the tournament, several will be too old to be eligible for the second Girl's World Championship, including the number one seed and impressive winner of the first-ever title, Cesca Sweet, who beat Katherine Carney in the final.



Both girls came through exciting three set semi-finals to face each other, but the difference of over 13 points on paper proved too much for Katherine, and Cesca romped away, to win 6-2, 6-0: [youtube.com/watch/U19girlsfinal](https://www.youtube.com/watch/U19girlsfinal).

It has been a fine few weeks for Cesca, shown above with her World Junior salver, who, though a recent school leaver, has just picked up her second World title, winning the Ladies' Rackets World Doubles with LVDZ (below).



In early May, Cesca won the Ladies' Rackets' World Double title with Radley member, Lea van der Zwalmen, at Queen's Club, defeating Claire Fahey and Tara Lumley 15/11, 15/10, 15/9, in a match judged to have been the finest female rackets doubles match played anywhere. If you haven't yet watched ladies' rackets, or even if you have, this link will take you to some fine action:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tq43R3WiJ4g>.

### British Junior Open

A major competition for our juniors will conclude this season, taking place in the latter part of August. It is the British Open at Queen's Club (split into categories for the U12s, U14s, U16s and U18s, and open to players of all handicaps).

Our own Henry Henman will not be competing in the Junior Open this year, as he will be concluding his summer at the Westwood Club in Washington with a tournament, in which he will partner Westwood Head Pro, Ivan Ronaldson. It is many a long year since Ivan played competitively and so we await a report and photos with interest.



The event poster features Bertie Vallat, seeded number 1.

### International U26 Events

The magazine of the United States Court Tennis Association, the USCTA, announces that the US will host the Van Alen, Clothier, and Limb Cups (VAACL) from July 11 -16. These biennial tournaments are for players under 26 years of age from the U.K, USA, and Australia and rotate between countries.

The Westwood Country Club will hold the premier international junior tennis team event and each country's team will comprise 4-6 players. Read more at: <https://uscourttennis.org/2023/van-alen-clothier-and-limb-cups>.



The U.S. team includes Freddie Bristowe, Erik Barker, Henry Smith, Noah Motz, and Chase Motz. All have played in previous team matches and have been preparing with the help of Tim Chisholm and Camden Riviere. Before Tim and Camden got involved, Ivan Ronaldson played a key role in developing the current team.

The match schedule is as follows:

July 11 & 12 – Limb Cup – Australia v UK  
July 13 & 14 – Clothier Cup – USA v Australia  
July 15 & 16 – Van Alen Cup – USA v UK

Four singles will be played on the first day of each encounter, followed by four doubles the following day. In the event of a tie, a fifth doubles match will be played. Before the team competitions, all players will compete for individual honours in the U26 singles and doubles, which will be played at Westwood from July 7-9.

## Senior Tournaments

### **British Ladies' Open Singles, Doubles & Handicap Doubles Championships 2023**



The British Ladies' Open 2023 was held, as it always is, at Seacourt, and ran from 29 March to 2 April.

Once again, Claire Fahey successfully defended her Singles title, beating Tara Lumley 6-1, 6-0 in the final, which can be seen here:

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

The Singles finalists teamed up to win the Doubles, beating Radley member Saskia Bollerman and Jess Garside 6-0, 6-1; Araminta Oldham, also a Radley member, won the Singles Plate and secured the Doubles Plate with Sophie Dannreuther.

Once again, the ladies have cause to thank Peter Luck-Hille, who has given unwavering support to this special event, and to women's tennis, over decades.

### **The Ladies' World Championships**



The British Open was followed by the Ladies' World Championship, held from 10-16 April at The Oratory School and sponsored by the Moore Family Office. Simultaneous with the Singles and Doubles events at the Ladies' World Championships, kindly sponsored

by the Moore Family Office, at Oratory and Hardwick, was a Plate competition for first round losers.

It was won by Rachel Hollington, 6-4, 5-6, 6-3, after a tough battle in the final against Trudi Machin (the mother of Radley Pro, Alex).

The fourth event of the packed week of competition and qualifying was the Handicap Doubles for any combination of players (male, female and mixed pairs), which took place at Hardwick House.

It is something of a mystery why the T&RA felt it was an appropriate time to have its Annual Dinner at Queen's that week, with all the events going on and off court at the Oratory and Hardwick.



At the Pol Roger mid-tournament cocktail party on Wed 12<sup>th</sup>, Haven Pell talked about his book *Round the World in 50 Courts* and sold and signed many copies.

### **Ladies World Championship Singles**

Claire Fahey successfully defended her Singles title once again. In so doing, she established a new record of seven titles, exceeding Penny Lumley's impressive haul of six, but Claire has set a doubly impressive record, by winning her titles consecutively.

Claire Fahey defeated Lea Van Der Zwalm 6/1 6/1 and it can be watched at: [youtube.com/watch/singlesfinal](https://youtube.com/watch/singlesfinal).

Claire and Lea van der Zwalmen played a final that treated spectators to a fine display of top-quality tennis, and their court craft, behaviour, fitness and athleticism were exemplary models for lesser mortals, both women and men.

Radley's Chris Lintott and CJR provided the excellent and authoritative commentary and Ben Geytenbeek's coverage of this match, as of ALL the others at this tournament, was masterly, and can be accessed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRFUVHk8ep4>.



As you can see (below left), the commentators could not view the court itself from their position in the Royal Dedans but were reliant on the first-class streaming for the action, provided by the team of Ben Geytenbeek and his partner, technical assistant and fellow real tennis enthusiast, Jacqueline Siu (below right).



Ben has been rightly thanked, praised and recognised for his immense contribution to the game, through his improvement of the quality and quantity of streaming of this and many, many other tournaments in the UK. As a volunteer, he gives up huge amounts of his time applying knowledge and expertise to the challenge of broadcasting real tennis matches.

Claire and her sister, Sarah, were not able to defend their Doubles title, as Sarah is expecting her first baby shortly. Instead, Claire teamed up with Tara Lumley, whom she had beaten in their semi-final of the Singles. The partnership worked well and Tara's strength at the net did much to fill the gap of 17 points between the partners.

Radley members Lea van der Zwalmen and Saskia Bollerman met the Fahey/Lumley pairing in the final of the Doubles and the match was absorbing, exciting and close. Like Tara, Saskia has a handicap more than ten points higher than her partner, but her excellence defending the galleries and volleying with power and precision made the partnership appear well balanced.



The scoreline of 6-5, 6-4 tells the story of how hard Claire and Tara (above) were pushed by Lea and Saskia and here is the link to the coverage:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4izru7SeKo&t=194s>.

## US Ladies' Open

The particular story of this mid-May championship is the Singles final between Claire Fahey and Lea van der Zwalmen.

The World Champion looked uncharacteristically uncomfortable in the first set, which ended 6-3 to her, after Lea had pushed her very hard for an hour, forcing more errors than we are used to seeing from the Champ. The second set felt different, with Claire's body language being more positive. At 5-1 up after about 20 minutes, she looked set to win but with three match points against her, Lea mis-footed Claire, and took that game from love down. And the following game.



Claire capitalised on a netted return of serve in the first point of the next game, to take it and win the match 6-3,6-3, in just over 1.5 hours.

In case you were wondering, the last time Claire lost a level set to a woman was in the final of the French Ladies Open in 2009 (thank you, Ben Geytenbeek), but there seemed strong evidence that Lea is continuing to improve and is closing the gap between herself and the number 1 in the world.

Watch the action, streamed by Ryan Carey, on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lj0AWLJcwyo>.

It was splendid to see Penny Lumley still playing with impressive style and fine match temperament. Her match against Claire in the Singles was a reminder of the spectacle it would have been to see these two fleet-footed women play each other in different circumstances - perhaps twenty years ago for Penny, but she is still a Champ!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0IBGv9kkURM>.

The Doubles final pitted Claire Fahey and Penny (rather than usual partner, daughter Tara) Lumley against Lea van der Zwalmen and Saskia Bollerman, but notwithstanding the change of generation, the Fahey/Lumley partnership triumphed again, 6-3, 6-5, to Penny's obvious delight:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OM1iRTjgPn4>.



Claire Fahey, Penny Lumley, Mary Livingstone the USCTA President, Saskia Bollerman and Lea van der Zwalmen on court at Westwood CC.

It is worth noting that it is not only the men who can produce a winner of a major title when in their 50s, but then the Faheys and the Lumley family are pretty astonishing people!

Lea is based in Bordeaux, without many practice partners, and Saskia is based in the Hague, without a tennis court in the entire country. This is less than ideal for them, and it would be a wonderful thing for the women's game if all four of the top players had similar opportunities for competitive play and practice.

## The Men's World Championships 2023

As reported previously, the International World Challenge Committee (IWCC) announced the Eliminators to determine the Challenger to take on Camden Riviere in the World Championship from 17-21 September at the Westwood Country Club, near Washington, VA.

The Final Eliminator took place at the Racquet Club of Philadelphia, with streaming provided by Ryan Carey and commentary being provided throughout by local Pro Barney Tanfield, with guest commentators joining him throughout the best-of-thirteen sets played.

This format was new territory for both players, the world number 3, John Lumley and number 6, Nick Howell, as neither had contested a final eliminator before. The result was an overwhelming win for ex-Radley Pro, John Lumley, who had the partisan crowd with him, as well as the home court advantage, and took the match 7-1.



Another way in which Radley had some involvement in the match was that the balls were all made at our club and taken out for the Eliminator by Colin, John's father. Now that Steve Ronaldson has retired after 39 years at Canford School as the Head Professional, he no longer makes the balls for the World Championship's elimination and challenge rounds, as he did for many years. That mantle has passed to his elder brother and team.

The elimination rounds are now complete, and we are delighted to say that the Challenger will be John Lumley, who will have his first tilt at the world title. Congratulation to John, who will be the first Brit to contend the world title since Julian Snow in 1998, a mere twenty-five years ago, and it is the first year since then that there will not be an Australian in the Challenge match.

The fine and hospitable setting of Westwood, with its world class facilities, will be a fitting setting for 2023 Men's World Championship. There will be social events and sporting activities for the spectators throughout the Challenge week, including real tennis and lawn tennis tournaments. More about this programme is set out below, and attendees will be guaranteed the warmest of welcomes and the best hospitality available. The bid was subject to the completion of adjustments to the tambour, and now this improvement having been made successfully, the other preparations can get underway.

Westwood proved to be an ideal venue for the recent US Ladies Open Championships, and we have no doubt it will rise to the occasion of the Men's World Championship. What follows is the invitation to all:

*'Hello Court Tennis Enthusiast,*

*We are writing to formally invite you to attend the 2023 World Championship of Court Tennis, to be held at Westwood Country Club on September 17, 19, and 21, 2023. We look forward to the competition between World Champion Camden Riviere and Challenger John Lumley. Both Camden (Westwood Country Club touring pro) and John (Racquet Club of Philadelphia pro) are playing amazing tennis, and this will be an outstanding showcase of the best court tennis players in the world.*



Westwood opened the doors to our fantastic new facility in October of 2022 and we've enjoyed a fully booked court since then. We've recently held several events at Westwood, including the U.S. Ladies Open, U.S. Amateur, and the 2023 Cherry Blossom. We are pleased to announce that the court has received high praise from all who have played here, including Rob Fahey and Camden Riviere.

The week of the World Championship promises to be a terrific time, with activities and events taking place before and during the week of the competition. We are thrilled to announce the first-ever Grassi Cup, held in honor of "The Ambassador," Temple Grassi. The Grassi Cup consists of a pentathlon of Temple's favorite competitive events: court tennis, golf, tennis, pickleball, and backgammon. The competition is open to all and will begin on Friday the 15th and run through the 21st. It will be a team event; you need not participate in all events to enter. It promises to be a great time!

As Westwood Country Club is located just 10 miles from Washington D.C., there will be many opportunities for sightseeing and other activities, should you wish to incorporate a bit of tourism with your visit.

At the facility of Westwood, you will have access to dining at the club while attending the tournament. During the sign-in process, attendees will be assigned a temporary number to utilize the dining facilities during the event. Other dining options are also available within just a few miles of the club entrance.

We have partnered with Hilton McLean Tysons Corner and arranged for a reduced room rate during the event. A link is available on the website to book your stay during the event.

Please visit the website: [2023worldchampionship.com](https://2023worldchampionship.com)

for additional information about the event. If you have any questions, please contact us at: [wc@westwoodcc.com](mailto:wc@westwoodcc.com)

We look forward to seeing you at the 2023 WC!

The 2023 World Championship Committee.



## **The Court Circular a.k.a. International Club News**

What follows is a by-country report on the actual and potential court projects in every country in which the game is played currently, and a couple where it is not.

Good progress being reported in the US Mid-West, from the Sand Valley court in Wisconsin. Plans for the court restorations in Chinon and Pau in France move forward. In England, the restoration of the court at Hewell Grange in Worcestershire, the creation of one in a listed gym at Repton School in Derbyshire and advanced discussions about a new court at the Hurlingham Club in London, are the hottest British projects under current discussion.

### **Australia**

#### **Romsey**

We were excited to hear that a buyer had, at last, been found for the Cope-Williams Real Tennis Club, Glenfern Road, Romsey, in Victoria, about 60km Melbourne. Sadly, it is not as happy an outcome as one might have hoped. Mike Garnett, tennis scholar, player and passionate enthusiast, in addition to being a concerned Romsey resident, has kindly brought the Editor up to date, as follows.

The court was the vision and was constructed by the British-born architect-turned-winemaker and owner of the court, Gordon Cope-Williams, and was opened in May 1999, with a members' club. Alas, Gordon's relationship with the Committee, members, and professionals, was not an easy one, and the club declined rapidly from 2002 (when that fine Pro, Rob Bartlett, resigned), and the last members' game was played about 2004.



The same reasons that led to the closure of the court caused problems in other parts of the C-W business ancillary to wine production. The facilities included a cricket oval outside the tennis court, a wedding venue, and a conference centre with accommodation. The multi-purpose enterprise exemplified the splendid vision but flawed management style of the owner, and eventually everything stuttered to a standstill.



During the years following the closure of the court, GC-W re-purposed it as an art gallery for the Cope-Williams Arts Foundation, as can be seen above, but re-opened it for tennis on special occasions, such as the very successful visit by HRH Prince Edward in 2018. It has always been well maintained, and Mike Garnett comments that he could probably 'go there tomorrow and have an enjoyable hit'.

The dimensions of the court are 112' long x 38' wide and 32' high. It has a glass grille wall and a twisting timber tambour (visible in the photo above), which produces the sound that led to this feature of tennis courts becoming known as the 'tambour' (French for 'drum'). Unusually, the hazard end is longer than the service end of the court, but whether by design or error, we don't know.

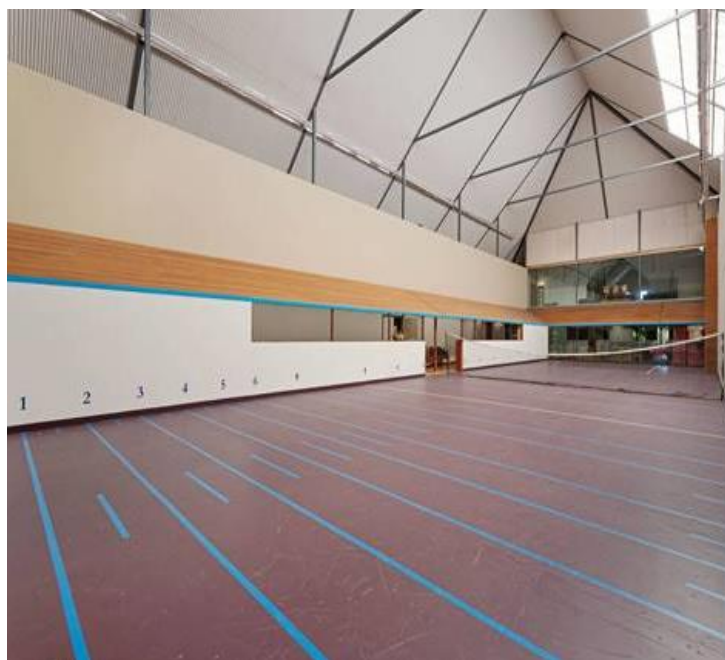
Gordon C-W died in 2019 and his widow put the whole complex on the market for 'a bargain price', given its constituent parts. An economic downturn and then Covid did not help the sale process, which was hampered, in any case, by the lack of paperwork relating to the costs and income of the business.

After nearly two years, David and Tara Cowburn, the owners of an adjoining property, made a low offer, which was accepted by Gordon C-W's widow.

Since then, little has happened to the former Cope-Williams property, as the Cowburns are very busy wine makers, producing well-respected boutique wines for the many small vineyards in the area. They have the on-going task of maintaining this sizable complex without reaping any returns, unless they spend a good deal of time and money on re-launching the resort, but it does not seem that they have the will to do so.

Discussions have been held between representatives of the tennis community and the new owners without progress being made, not least because they (and like their predecessor) do not understand the vital need for a tennis professional whose industry, skills and presence will be critical to the venture.

It seems quite likely that the owners may decide the problem is too difficult and so will seek to sell or let the whole complex, or even try to sell the grounds for residential housing. Without the cooperation and enthusiasm of the owners, past and present, there has been little that local and national tennis players and supporters have been able to do to bring this beautifully lit and strikingly designed court back into active use.



The Romsey court – a recent photo

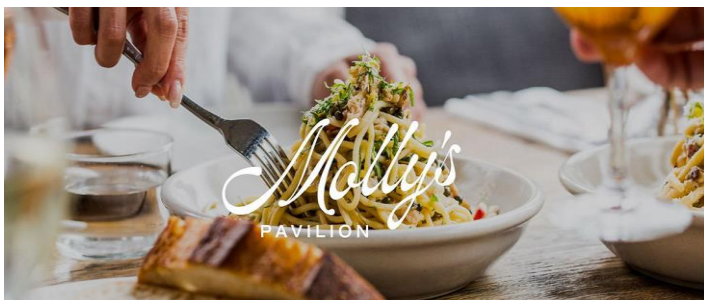
## Sydney –

In happy contrast to the lack of good news from Romsey, thrilling news just keeps on coming from Sydney. The first half of a grant of A\$1.4m from the NSW State Government was received in March by the Sydney Real Tennis Club, with the rest to follow when targets have been met. This, and the concluding of the planning and design phases, has triggered the start of construction. It is anticipated that the court will be ready for play from September 2024.

A hundred or so guests assembled at the Cheltenham Recreation Club, a tennis, bowls, croquet and bridge not-for-profit club in a leafy suburb of Sydney on 18 June 2023. They met to celebrate the Breaking of the Ground for the world's newest real tennis court.



The Directors of the Sydney Real Tennis and Cheltenham Recreation Clubs were joined by VIP guests, including Mayor Philip Ruddock, ARTA Chairman Alistair Curley and Norths Collective CEO, Luke Simmons, (seen right with their hands on the ceremonial spade). Norths run *Molly's*, the excellent café and restaurant at the CRC.



There was an appropriate level of razzmatazz and palpable excitement during the afternoon.

SRTC Secretary, Chris Cooper, writes:

'After so much time and effort in preparation, it is a real thrill to be kicking off the project in earnest. This week, we selected a builder, and we are now in the process of engaging with them to undertake the detailed structural design, which we hope will take two or three months to complete. This will be an intense period of work which is critical to achieving the functional design and best possible performance of the court.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have donated so generously to this project, which has made all this possible.

**For anyone who has yet to contribute, it is not too late!** We still haven't quite reached our fundraising target to allow us to realise all aspects of the current design. Please feel free to reach out to me or anyone on the Committee if you have any particular questions or suggestions or would like to donate.

For and on behalf of the SRTC Committee.

Anyone able to help financially should follow this link: <https://www.sydneyrealtennis.com.au/donation> and a further document has been updated with information of donor categories:

[Donor categories.pdf \(mcusercontent.com\)](#).

This link takes you straight to the photomontage of the court as it will look *in situ*:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fa1e8450653912714e0f8c0/t/6048853931390f164858f928/1615365452717/Photomontage.PDF>.

## **France**

If you are one of those who thinks there is NOTHING more boring than someone else's holiday photos, then you may be appalled by what follows. Before you skip the next few pages, bear in mind that these are photos of tennis-y things in France, taken during CJR's and MHT's recent cycle tour, and therefore utterly riveting, if not technically very proficient.

### **Chinon –**

Simon Berry, the English owner of the court in the Rue Jeu de Paume in the medieval town centre of Chinon, tells us that the next phase of the ambitious restoration of this small (yes, smaller even than Oxford) court is due to commence in November this year.

Dendrochronology has confirmed that the impressive roof timbers date from 1587 and we hear that the original terracotta tiled floor has been revealed under the detritus of centuries but will probably not be strong enough to withstand play.



Where the tambour is not (yet)



Beautiful stone for the court

An information board on the front door details the courts successive uses as stabling for horses in the 18C and 19C, and then, appropriately for the 20C, for cars, and then, more strangely, for chickens.

This board confidently asserts that the duration of the necessary restoration work will be '2 mois', which seems more than a little optimistic, given what we saw.

The court is now empty, save for a pile of building materials. The project has a long way to go but remains a fascinating historical project, which, all being well, will produce a playable court, although it will be in size more like the *tripot* courts in the SW of France.



The court is on a plot that will allow a café and garden to be created, but using any of this space to expand the building to become a more regular court size will be impossible, given the permitted terms of the restoration. The immediate area of medieval Tours where the court is situated is *charmant*, and while mostly residential, there are a number of good restaurants only a street away.



The long, dark, corrugated iron roof and blue tarpaulin to the right of the tree in the middle-distance of the photo above show where the court sits at 10 Rue Jeu de Paume, waiting for the restoration to recommence after the summer.

### Fontainebleau

One of the oldest jokes, you will recall with a groan, is ‘When is a door not a door?’

In the world of tennis, we have to explain to newcomers to our game that the door is not a door because it is a *gallery*.



At Fontainebleau, the enduring nomenclature makes much more sense...



The entrance to the court is in the corner of the front forecourt of the magnificent Palace of Fontainebleau.

Can you see the kink in the right-hand photo (below right) of the exterior wall of the court? This is the tambour of the second, adjoining court at Fontainebleau, now demolished, and replaced by a garden that provides an almost-perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes.

### Tours

Imagine our surprise when cycling past the castle in Tours to see a massive banner with ‘Jeu de Paume’ written all over it. Excitedly, we rushed to see what it advertised and where we could find it.



It turned out to be the announcement of an exhibition of photographs unrelated to tennis, displayed in a place that had nothing to do with tennis. It seems the exhibition had some tenuous connection with the Jeu de Paume gallery in Paris, but that’s all. Talk about trading on a name!

However, disappointment changed to satisfaction when, with the help and advice of that fine historian of the game, President of the real tennis club in Fontainebleau and our kind court guide in Chinon, Thierry Bernard-Tambour, we found a court in the town.

Tours had several courts, but only one survives and it has been gutted and remodelled inside. The outside, we were pleased to see, is still very recognisably a court (see photo below). The building, most conveniently, stood only 100 metres from where we were staying in the centre of town, and is in Rue de la Moquerie.

The street was so named after the tennis court was turned into a theatre, where scathing satires by playwright/poet/actor Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, better-known by his stage name of ‘Moliere’, were staged.



## Versailles

When visiting Versailles and having survived the crush of the crowds at the Palace, a retreat into the town brings welcome respite. Peaceful, attractive, with very few visitors, and none at all where we headed.



The *jeu de paume* is on the right of the picture, on the Rue de Jeu de Paume, with the Hotel de Jeu de Paume facing the end of the street. No confusion here!

Sadly for us, the court was closed, but then it is rarely open. Apparently, it is used for no other purpose than to house a museum about the French Revolution and the part played in the start of that insurrection by the tennis court. This museum attracts few visitors and, while access to the Palace and Estate of Versailles costs E28.50, entry to the tennis court is free.



You must get your timing right in order to be able to get inside the *Salle de Jeu de Paume*, which is location number 11 on the walking tour of the town, between the *Hotel du Grand Controle* and the *Potager du roi*. The court is only open at weekends in the months of May to October, and then only from 14.30-18.00.



The winds of change blow strongly through the Versailles tennis court in 1798

Some luck is involved when visiting, we understand. Even during the summer season, the court is not open every weekend, which was a problem for some recent visitors for the US. Likewise, the door was firmly locked when we got there, which had a certain historical irony.

Nevertheless, we were able to read various pieces of information outside, including the inscription over the door (above, left) that memorialises the 1688 court as the place where the famous *Serment du Jeu de Paume*, the 'Tennis Court Oath', was sworn on 20 June 1789.

On that day, 462 delegates of the Estates-General, finding themselves locked out of the meeting of the National Assembly in its usual meeting place in Versailles, rushed along to the convenient-placed and sized tennis court nearby.

There, in defiance of the absolutism of the *ancien regime* and their lack of political representation, all (but one) of those present committed to continue meeting until France had a constitution.

The event marks the starting point of the French Revolution, but it was over 100 years until the museum was created in the building, in 1882.



We believe, but cannot be certain, that it still looks like this inside, with Jacques Louis David's commemorative painting (below and left) above the penthouse at the Hazard End.

Tantalisingly, it looks as if, with the minimum of effort, play could recommence. HRH Prince Edward, while on his world tour of all the playable tennis courts, was allowed to strike one ball, and one ball only, on the occasion of his visit, local dignitaries looked on, nervously.

### **Holland**

Cees de Bondt, our perpetually optimistic correspondent, keeps us updated on the search for a suitable location for a tennis court near The Hague, He has no major news for this edition, but tells us there are two or two historic venues under active consideration.

We are grateful for Cees's regular updates on the progress of the NRTB to achieve its purpose; the return of real tennis to Holland. There were at least 200 tennis courts in the country between 1500-1800 and the history of the sport in the region is extensive.

The return of the game to a country with such a lengthy and rich history of play would be an outstanding addition to the global community of tennis, and would give heart to those seeking to revive the game in other European countries. You can read more about the game on the Continent on Cees's excellent English language website: <https://www.real-tennis.nl/>.

Last time, we reported the outcome to the tender for restoration proposals for repurposing the disused tulip barn close to the ruins of Teylingen Castle, once a 'pleasure garden' of the Counts of Holland. The possibility of including a real tennis court in this project seemed particularly appropriate, as it seems that the first tennis court ever documented was at this castle, around 1375. Before this, the game had been played for several hundred years, but always in open spaces and not in purpose-built structures.

Cees writes:

'After our attempts for a court on the coast at Scheveningen and then at the Leiden University sports centre came to nothing, our pledge for the Marlot indoor tennis hall (of 1928) with its two courts also failed, as 3 or 4 padel courts will be accommodated in it by the new owner. The Real Tennis Committee was hopeful that we can join a heritage project of the municipality of Teylingen (near Sassenheim)... central to this are the ruins Teylingen.

Our initiative is the only one, as far as we now know, that is directly related to the history of the castle. It makes it unique and puts it on the (world) map.

King Charles II of England spent time at Teylingen castle, by the way, when he lived in exile in the Netherlands in the 1650s. His sister Mary already resided there after her husband, Prince of Orange William II (father of William III), died in 1650.'

However, very sadly, for the Dutch real tennis community, the decision went against the real tennis court proposal.



Notwithstanding this disappointing result, the hunt for a suitable site for the return of real tennis to Holland goes on.

We hear from Cees that there has been a positive and warm meeting with the General Manager and key people within the Dutch Lawn Tennis Association, the KNLTB. The Dutch Real Tennis Association (NRTB) recognises that affiliation with a larger sports association would enhance the status of real tennis.

Kiki Bertens, the former LTA world number 4, who retired after the Tokyo Olympics, works part-time as a coach at the sport's HQ, was apparently fascinated by the real tennis equipment and description of the game, having had no knowledge of it previously.

## **Ireland**

### **Dublin -**

There have been numerous positive comments about the splendid photos taken inside of the interior of the court on Earlsfort Terrace in Dublin by Jack Woods, a member of the Irish Real Tennis Association. So much so, we feel justified in reproducing them again below.

It shows the court cleared for the preliminary work being done to transform the court. The website of the Irish Real Tennis Association features the latest news on its future, giving a helpful recap of the situation.

'In 2016, Ireland's Office of Public Works submitted a planning application for a Science Museum to include use of Dublin's historic Real Tennis Court for temporary exhibitions. As a result of the IRTA's engagement with the planning process, and that of the international real tennis community, built heritage conservation organisations, and others, a condition was attached to the resulting permission which provided that "The developer shall submit a detailed proposal to the planning authority for the temporary reinstatement of the penthouse galleries and any other essential features required for playing Real Tennis matches." For various reasons, work did not start on the project, and permission lapsed in late 2021.

In September 2022, the Office of Public Works submitted a fresh application for essentially the same project; to create a Children's Science Centre. This application is largely a re-submission of the 2016 application, updated (among other differences) to incorporate the condition imposed by An Bord Pleanála in 2016 that "*The developer shall submit a detailed proposal to the planning authority for the temporary reinstatement of the penthouse galleries and any other essential features required for playing Real Tennis matches.*" Indeed, the new application states "*The An Bord Pleanála conditions of the 2016 grant of permission relating to the Real Tennis Court have been fully incorporated into this new application*", and "*The Real Tennis Court building will be refurbished including the restoration of the tennis court (to a playable condition), and to facilitate space for temporary displays and exhibitions.*"

### **Decision**

In a decision dated 23 Nov 2022, Dublin City Council granted permission subject to a number of conditions, including in relation to the Real Tennis Court.

The IRTA engaged Cunnane Stratton Reynolds to submit an appeal relating to this decision. A decision from An Bord Pleanála was expected by 28th April 2023. However, on that date, we received a notice from An Bord Pleanála informing us that, "due to a backlog of cases", the Board was not able to determine the case by that date. It now states that it will endeavour to determine the case by 20th July 2023.'





In preparation for whatever the changes will be, the interior of the court has been cleared of structures accumulated within it over the past 60 years or so, including a mezzanine floor. In the photo above, the magnificent space can be seen again in its entirety; the court floor is visible, the tambour remains intact (right hand side of the photo above) and there remain some handsome chase lines and numbers on the floor and walls.

The crowns on the gallery lines would probably not be favoured images on a court in the Republic of Ireland, but we hope they would be preserved, for reasons of history and authenticity.



A party of Australian players, led by Rob Jolly from Melbourne, visited the court in the past few days. A man who is in maintenance management for the Department of Works was most helpful in opening up and showing them round.

Inside the court were two young people measuring the court for restoration purposes. They knew nothing about the game, what the markings were and what it all meant. The visitors were able to explain what the chase markings were, where the net should be, the significance of the kink in the wall and of the absent grille, dedans, penthouses and side galleries.



It is a concerning that those charged with restoration have no idea of what the game looks like nor had seen it played live or on YouTube. The IRTA, T&RA and others are doing their very best to educate and enthuse those responsible for the refurbishment, but it is not an easy task to reach everyone involved in the project.

There are spaces within the court building that were covered over when partitioning was inserted decades ago and that have now been revealed. It is very atmospheric.



This staircase looks rather like Miss Havisham's... and we have *Great Expectations* of what might ensue.



## End Notes

It is renewal season, so please join our sport's national body, the T&RA, if you have not already done so.



In addition to supporting the wider game in Britain, particularly at junior level, membership will give you online access to the booking sheet at Radley, and the benefit of no longer having to appear on that sheet as a 'guest', without a handicap. Having handicaps visible when looking for a game makes signing up easier for you, fellow members and our Pro team.

For further details, just follow this link:

<https://www.tennisandrackets.com/become-a-member>.

There are a number of options, but we would recommend full membership, which confers the widest range of benefits. However, all you need to access the booking sheet is to become an 'Associate'.

### **Mentioned in Dispatches**

Melbourne resident, Bob Cowper, has been awarded the Order of Australia medal, OAM, in the King's Birthday Honours List. Bob has been a club member of RMTC for nearly 50 years and now (in his eighties) has received this honour from the Government for all that he has achieved for himself, his family and his country. Congratulations, Bob Cowper!

The T&RA website reports:

'He is a highly respected member of the Royal Melbourne Tennis Club and is known to many there and in England, where he lived for years. His achievements on the cricket field are well documented and appreciated by cricket aficionados around the world.'

He made his first-class domestic debut at the age of 18, but it is perhaps an appropriate time to remind readers that Bob was the first Australian to score a triple century against England - in the 1966 Ashes Test, surpassing a couple of Don Bradman's records in the process. There are very few who can claim that distinction!



Bob Cowper pictured playing for the Australia team from 1964-8. The all-rounder retired at the age of 27, with an average in Australia of 78.76.

Bob had a wonderful Test career and was touted as a future Australian captain. The paltry match fees and conditions on tour contributed to Bob's decision to retire early from playing to pursue what became an extremely successful career in financial services.

Nevertheless, he did not abandon cricket entirely and his qualities were acknowledged by the establishment, as he served a long stint on the International Cricket Council, playing a significant role in the negotiations with Kerry Packer that led to seismic changes in pay and conditions for players. He was appointed a match referee for several Test matches after his playing days ended.

Bob had a distinguished record as a fine player of real tennis, to which he was introduced by CJR in Melbourne in 1975, and they also played on the same squash team at RMTC for several seasons. He was one of the best amateurs at the club and played a major role in securing Australia's first ever win in the Bathurst Cup Championship over England, held at RMTC in 1982.

Bob spent most of his career outside Australia, with homes in Monaco and London, which enabled him to play tennis at Lord's and Queen's. He and his wife Dale returned to Melbourne after his retirement and, although he no longer plays any sport, they are seen regularly for lunch and social events at RMTc.

### The Last Word

Do have a browse through the pages of the ultimate real tennis repository at this address: <https://rt42.org/>.

# RT<sub>42</sub>

The pages contain so much good stuff already but will remain for ever a work in progress, being a journey rather than a destination. While it is theoretically possible to put together all the information about tennis, its courts, players, rules, equipment, history and associated literature, art, and architecture, it is unlikely that this could ever be achieved without a sizeable research team and years of effort.

Huge credit to those involved in RT42 for embarking on such an ambitious endeavour and for accumulating so much data already. As an example of what is on the website, here is a link to the page on court building and renovation, which will be useful for the plan you have in mind. Admit it, you have thought about having your own court, haven't you?

It seems that most players hanker after the opportunity to extend the number of courts in play by constructing a new one or bringing an old and abandoned one back to life. I know I do!

<https://rt42.org/building-or-renovating-a-court/>



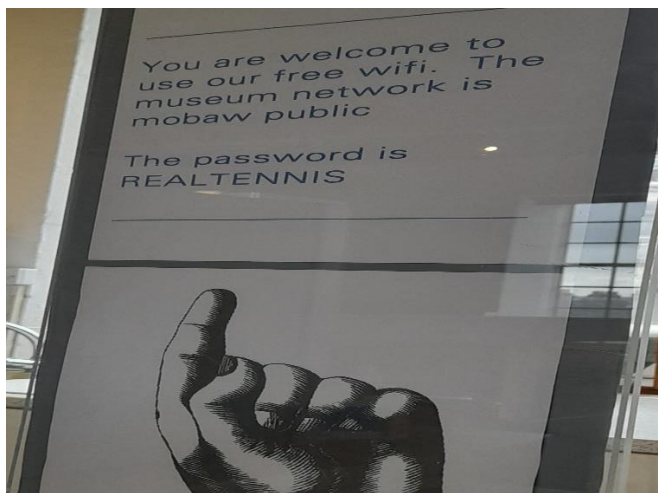
However, this splendid photo of the interior of the Seacourt during construction underlines just how much is needed in terms of materials (not to mention money...).

The dream of renovating a court leads neatly on to the next item.

### Quiz Question

In the preceding edition of *Better Than The Last*, the following question was posed: 'Which public museum in England has the Wi-Fi password "Real Tennis"', and why?

The answer is The Museum of Bath at Work, which occupies the court built in 1777 by entrepreneur Richard Scrace between Julian Road and Morford Street in central Bath, and is run by the Bath Industrial Heritage Trust Limited, a charity.

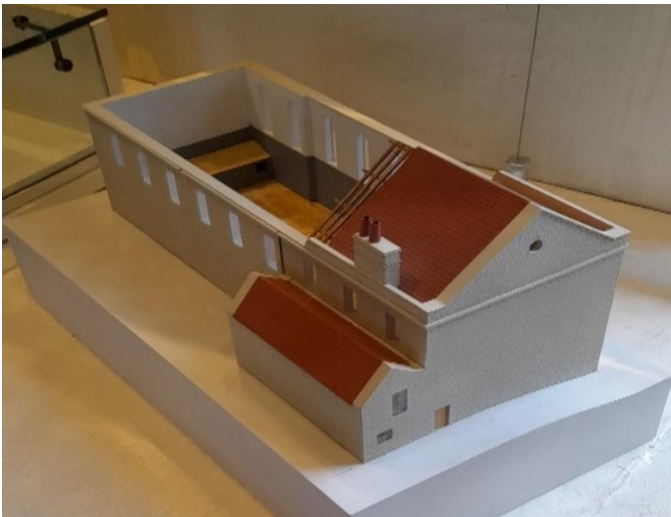


There is no special reason why the museum began its life in the court, except that the building was disused, available, as it was owned by the council, and was of appropriate size for the collection to be housed when the museum was created in 1978.



There was relatively little adaptation of the building carried out, although the interior of the two-storey adjunct building outside the court (on the left in the photo above), at the Service End, was changed.

Originally, it had been the players' entrance and professional's workshop on the ground floor, with a staircase up to a changing room with fireplace above it. A scale model (below) shows the original court structure.



An internal floor was added in the late 19C, with cast iron supports (the blue columns below) and as this structure is part of the listing description, it might prove hard-to-impossible for them to be removed, were the court available to be restored. This area is quite cramped in terms of height and is currently packed with the museum's archive.



The original flagstone floor in Bath stone, (naturally enough), is mostly in place and although it would need some work to make it playable, could be a fine playing surface again.

A mezzanine was added to half of the building, creating an upper gallery. The photo below shows the view from this gallery along the main wall, including the tambour beyond the second window, towards the Hazard End of the court. All penthouses have been removed.



As an aside, the building is not an ideal home for a 21C museum, given its physical limitations. It has no insulation or damp course, and the considerable expense of heating means that it is closed for five months of the year, opening only from April to October, inclusive.

After nearly 45 years, the museum, though worthy in conception, imaginatively run and containing much of interest and value in social and historical terms, has only paid employee, the Director, Stuart Burroughs, and runs on a shoestring, relying on grants from charitable foundations. It is dependent upon a mostly elderly team of volunteers and is in significant need of an increase in visitor numbers, membership, volunteers and financial support.



The windows on the eastern main wall side have all been shortened and the external woodwork that held sliding sun/light screens has been removed.

Discussions with the Director have confirmed that if another and much more appropriate home could be found in the city for the museum's collection, there is no objection to moving out, so that the real tennis court could be restored to playable condition.

The limitations placed on MoBaW's development potential as a consequence of being resident in an inappropriate building could be removed to positive effect. It could be massive win-win for all involved, as one feels that a real tennis court and club should thrive in Bath. It not, those in charge would simply not be trying hard enough, one feels!

The problem is finding an appropriate alternative venue for MoBaW. Any ideas, please contact MH-T.



### The Last Gallery

If you have ever wondered what CJR does during his few hours away from the court each week, here is a possible answer. A van bearing his initials is to be seen parked on Church Road in Radley.



Happy holidays!

*This Summer 2023 Newsletter*

*was compiled by*

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