

Radley College Tennis Court

**WINTER
2024**

**Better Than The Last
Radley Club Newsletter!**

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**ALL GOOD WISHES FOR
THE NEW YEAR 2024!**

RCTC Club News

Professionals' News

The Radley Professionals are flying! Nino played extremely well to qualify for the British Open and went on to deliver two 'breakthrough' performances in the Main Draw, one in each of the Singles and the Doubles. More information on those matches can be found on p16, under 'International Tournament' news.

This experience at the British Open set Nino up nicely for the next major event on his tournament calendar, the Australian Open. He played in the Singles and Doubles, but has, for the second year running, been more than a little unlucky in the draw. This time, Nino came up against Nicky Howell, the number four seed, in the first round of the singles and doubles, and Nino's tournament was, sadly, over almost as soon as it began.

John Lumley survived a semi-final scare against Steve Virgona, which went to two sets all and 5-1 up for Steve, with repeated chances to seal it. John played Nicky in the Final, which he won by 3 sets to 1.



RADLEY
REAL TENNIS

Kit and Equipment

Our members seem to be rather more interested in the coloured string produced by Tambour, in red, yellow, blue or black, than in the Wayward racquet (see below) that the pro shop has available for loan or trial. It is generally felt to be 'heavy' in the head and does not have a feel that appeals to everyone. Nino is not intending to stock any, but if you want to try it for yourself, please ask to borrow the test racquet from the Pro Shop.



Above: a US Wayward racquet frame, with the Radley logo on the throat.

You may prefer to wait for the new Radley club racquet, which is being made by Grays.

Club Audio-Visual System update

Ben Geytenbeek promises to complete the work on the club's audio-visual system, once he recovers from his excessive hours and splendid work for the British Open at Queen's, the Tambour Tour weekends and all the rest of his streaming commitments. We can't wait to be able to offer sound and vision for Radley's members and guests, with live streaming and archive footage, all via a dedicated YouTube channel. More details to follow, as Ben swings into action. We can only apologise that it is taking so long to complete the project. Nearly there!

National League

The annual National League competition sees teams of pros and amateurs with handicaps better than 50 representing clubs in various handicap bands, in divisions from Premier to 10.

Flying the Radley flag in different divisions are the following pairs:

Division 3 - Alex Machin and Benedict Yorston
Division 5 - Mike Henman and Paul Bollerman.



Mike Henman & Paul Bollerman and Tom Lewis & Ben Coleman, with a slightly battered grille insert after the Radley v Bristol match

Spectators are keenly encouraged to come along for the home matches, which will be advertised ahead of time. They will generally take place on Friday evenings, when two singles and one doubles will be played.

In their last match of 2023, the Radley team of Mike Henman and Paul Bollerman were able to raise their glasses to victory, having had a clean sweep in the singles and the doubles against the Cambridge duo of Jim Ludekens and Jules Camp. This win took them to the top of their division.

Alex Machin and Benedict Yorston also finished the year on a high note....

Both Radley teams will be back in action at the end of January, and we wish them continued success.



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). They have been generous sponsors for the past few years, and we thank them sincerely for continuing their support. To find out more about its products and services, please click on this link: <https://www.flmltd.com/>.

Radley Club Tournaments

The 2023 Radley Singles Handicap tournament, into which all members are entered (unless they prefer not to take part), has still not quite been concluded, although it has reached the penultimate round. The three winners of the group stages, Simon Benney, Jake Kingsbury and Mark Crowley, will play a round-robin, off full handicap, to determine the champion. The winner and runner-up will be invited to play in the National Club Singles Champions

event, the Chetwood Trophy, at the Hyde Club, near Bridport, in early 2024.

The Charlie Hodgson Trophy for the Hangover Doubles, New Year's Day 2024

Each year, silliness prevails on the court, as hats (but not yet a top hat) and tails, are *de rigueur*. Sartorial inelegance is all part of the fun, as you can see from the photo below of the winners of the first club event in 2024, Tim Ault (left) and John Lubbock (in pink).



Every iteration sees a different and entirely unnecessary alteration to the arcane rules of our already-complex game and this time, CJR pronounced that the non-server and non-receiver should carry an open umbrella.



In the photo above, Christopher Mackarness shows how it should be done, with full seriousness and like a panther about to pounce. Look at that tail!

The Radley Club Championships

The Chris Ronaldson Trophy

It was splendid to welcome so many members and supporters to the club to enjoy the matches that were part of the club's level Singles Championship, playing for The Chris Ronaldson Trophy. Spectators on Sunday were able to enjoy an outstanding final between the two youngest players in the event, 17-year-old Henry Henman and 23-year-old Benedict Yorston. Both players' athleticism, speed of reaction and coverage of the court were most impressive. They produced their best in front of a packed Dedans and full Gallery Café, who were enthralled by the ebbs and flows of the match, the spectacular retrieving and the tenacity of both players.



Benedict came back from being 2-5 down in the second set to win it and take the match to a thrilling deciding set, which Henry won, but the 6-4, 5-6, 6-4 scoreline tells you just how close the encounter was and how hard both players had to work.

The pro teams' Christmas gift to the members, with thanks for being the greatest set of members any club could wish for, was lunch on both days to accompany the knockout rounds and the final. Maggie is 'never knowingly under-catered', and no one left hungry or thirsty.

This format for the weekend was judged a great success and we look forward to repeating the 'open house' weekend at the end of 2024.

The Mick Dean Trophy

The Mick Dean Trophy is awarded to the club's top doubles partnership each year. This year's level Doubles Championship comprised a round robin and preliminary matches on Saturday 13 January and the semi-finals and final on Sunday 14 January. Again, a complimentary lunch was provided for players and spectators, who were able to enjoy an exciting contest between the top seeds, David Harms and Roman Krznaric and the number two seeds, Alfred Backhouse and Benedict Yorston. The younger players belied the handicap difference between them and the more experienced pair and overcame the loss of the first set to claim victory 2-6, 6-2, 6-2.

Playing Away

What follows is a sample of some of the tennis in which players from Radley have been involved at other clubs over the past few months, and in which much glory was achieved.

Inter-Livery Tournament

Several Radley members are Liverymen (who may be female) or Aldermen (ditto) of City of London Livered Companies.



The 2023 Inter-Livery real tennis tournament was won by the Fishmonger's team, led by Radley's William Donger (an Alderman), seen above receiving the trophy:

Each year, and sponsored by Pol Roger (Vintners, needless to say), real tennis teams from a surprisingly large number of Companies work up a considerable hunger and thirst in preparation for the sumptuous post-tournament dinner at Queen's Club.

A bit of history: the Livery Companies and the City of London have a long, long association. The 111 current Worshipful Companies comprise trades ancient and modern. 'The Great Twelve' medieval trade guilds (the Weavers' Company charter dates from 1155, though its origins probably pre-date The Norman Conquest) have the greatest precedence, but companies continue to be formed, and include the most arriviste of professions, trades and industries.

Different in size, structure and interests they may be, but they share the same essential ethos: supporting trade, education, charity and fellowship and working in the best interests of the communities in which they operate. The charitable dimension of their work now amounts to grant-making of over £75m each year.



David Harris, in the middle, received the 'Best Shot' award from John Prens, on the right

Radley member David Harris was delighted to be presented with the Shot of the Tournament award and sent a photo and some words about the play that sealed the nomination. He is not a fishmonger by profession (and neither is William Donger for that matter), as acceptance into a particular Guild these days is based on more flexible criteria than five hundred years ago.

David writes:

'Apparently there were said to be five shots, not just one, which Howard Angus said John Prens would have been proud of!! ... I remember one which drew gasps. I was at the service end and a 30-handicap player slammed a ball to land on the 2 yd line. I had no time to think, so just bent down, got my racket to the ball and it flew back past him into the grille! Basically pure reaction and zero skill (my game entirely!!).'

National Inter-Club Tournament



The clubs of Moreton Morrell and Leamington jointly host the National Inter-Club tournament, which gets bigger and more inclusive every year.

As well as club, profession, branches of the Armed Forces, school and university alumni, this year saw the arrival of national sides, with representative teams from Wales, Scotland and Sealand (you may have heard of the Principality of Sealand, the tiny, self-proclaimed republic located outside British territorial waters, but if you have not, you can click on this link to learn more: <https://sealandgov.org/pages/the-story>).

The format is that a singles player and a doubles pair play in groups, off handicap, and prizes are awarded to the winning singles player, top pair and the best team.



Dan Worboys, Ian Falconer and Nick Gordon,

a.k.a. *The Sporting Thistles*, sporting thistles on the opening day

Radley had a double interest in the draw, in the form of a Radley club team and a team of Scots. David Harris, Andrew Leslau and Tim Roberts represented Radley and the Scottish team was stirred into action by Maggie, whose enthusiasm for organising Scottish events knows few bounds. Three stalwarts of the Radley-based Scottish National Championships, amongst other Celtic contests, made up the Scottish side. The team comprised Radley member, Nick Gordon, Ian Falconer (they are, respectively, the winners of the most recent Scottish National Championship Singles and Doubles titles) and Dan Worboys, who has played in every Scottish event we have held at Radley over the past ten years.

The format is that a singles player and a doubles pair play in groups, off handicap, and prizes are awarded to the winning singles player, top pair and the best team. Dan captained the side with great success in the Inter-Club Tournament, as the Scots lifted the overall team title and the doubles pairing of Nick and Ian won the Doubles competition.

The Scots are hoping that this success bodes well for the seventh iteration of The Celtic Challenge, which is the annual match between the Irish and the Scots, and is held

at Radley, as the Irish are the defending champions in 2024.



Scotland The Brave!

Ian Falconer and Nick Gordon, holding the doubles pair shield, team trophy and apparently as much champagne as possible and clad in shirts kindly provided by the Scottish team sponsor, Tunnock's

The icing on the cake was that David Harris won the singles event for the Radley team, so it was all a rather splendid success. Below, David proudly holds the trophy and more champagne.



Congratulations to all our players.

National Inter-Club Competitions

Our teams progressed well in two of this season's national inter-club tournaments, the Brodie Cup (for players with handicaps 30-50) and the more senior Field Trophy (for players with handicaps roughly from 10 to 30). Radley had teams through to the Semi-Final of both events.

The Field Trophy side lost by the slimmest of margins on 20 January at home, but the Brodie Cup team triumphed the following day and stride on to the Final, which will be played on 3 March at The Hyde, Bridport, against Bristol.

The Brodie Cup

The way the draw worked this year in the Brodie Cup, we had away matches at every stage. Our first round was on Sunday 12 November at Wellington, and it did not start well for us. The loss of the first and then the second rubbers created a good deal of tension among the Radley players yet to step on court. As if it had been planned, merely to lull the Wellies into a sense of false security, the next three rubbers, and therefore the match, went our way.

The tide was turned by Giles Fitzgerald and Rory Acheson-Gray winning the vital third rubber, followed by Mark Crowley in the second singles, with another straight sets win, levelling the match. It is never easy to play a deciding rubber, but Radley was very well represented by Trudi Machin. She had not been asked to play for her primary club, Wellington, and we were delighted to invite her to represent Radley. She did so with aplomb, and took the team to a famous win, 3-2.



Radley and host Brodie Cup players in the RTC Dining Room

On, then, to face The Royal Tennis Court at Hampton Court Palace in the quarter-final in early December. Radley came through victorious with a confidence-boosting 4-1 win and enjoyed the excellent hospitality always offered by RTC (see above)

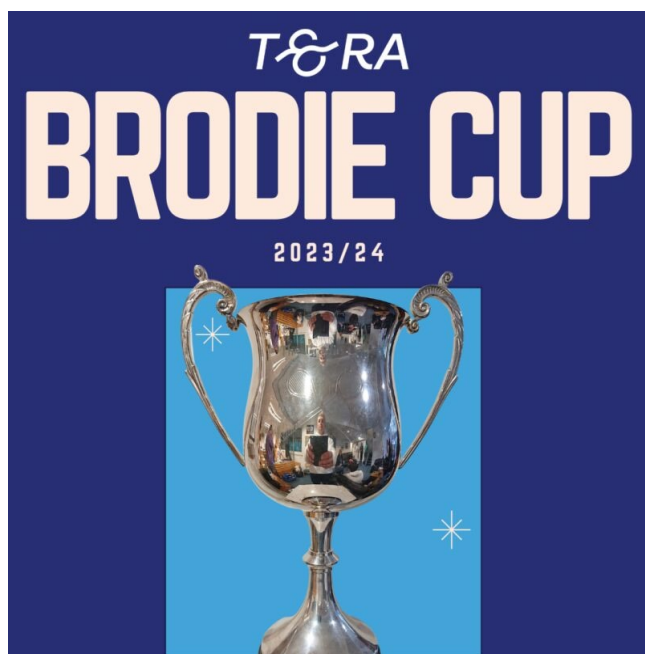
The semi-final tie was played against the MCC at Lord's on Sunday 21 January. The MCC came through a very tough and close match against Oxford in their quarter-final, winning the match in the final set of the day.

The Radley team excelled themselves at Lord's and, by winning the first three rubbers, took an unassailable lead, rendering the final two rubbers 'dead'. Both Tony Munsey in the H30 Singles and Mark Crowley in the H40 Singles lost the first set of their rubbers but rallied splendidly to take the next two sets. Trudi Machin kept her unbeaten record in the H50 Singles spot with a straight sets win, and the match concluded with a consolation win for the MCC in the final contest of the day, the H35 Doubles.

You can relive the excitement via the MCC YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5q6tHEGP0UY>.

We look forward very much to the Final on Sunday 3 March, which will be played, as always, at The Hyde, Bridport.



The Field Trophy

Contrastingly, our draws were all at home in the Field trophy. We kicked off with our first round against Bristol on 2 December. This went well, with Radley winning 5-0, and we keenly anticipated the semi-final at Radley on Saturday 20 January 2024.

Our opponents were Petworth, who sent a strong team, even with the loss the previous day of their best player, Freddie Bristowe. Freddie won through on Friday 19 Jan to the final of the British Rackets Open and so withdrew from the Field Trophy team. Radley stormed to a 2-0 lead after Dave Harms and Mike Henman won their singles. Stewart Licudi had to take on a player almost ten points better than him, playing level, which was a tough ask and the result went with handicap. We needed one rubber out of the remaining two to win, while Petworth needed to take both.

The first doubles on court drew Radley's Charles Human and Tony Munsey against players ten handicap points better than each of them. Playing level against this quality of opposition brought out the best in Tony and Charles, who turned it into the closest of encounters. Regrettably, chances to win came and went for the Radley duo and they lost 5-6, 5-6. The match score was levelled at 2-all.

The final rubber was not as tight, with Paul Kettle and Tim Robinson (pictured with racquets below and standing with the Petworth team at the end of the match) finding the pace and power of the Petworth duo too much for them. Like the previous doubles result, it was 'null' for handicap purposes, as the Petworth pairing were considerably stronger on paper.



Disappointment for Radley, but no shame in the result, and we can take comfort from the fact that we will not be facing Petworth next year in the Field Trophy, as their side is automatically promoted to the Pol Roger for getting to the final of the Field.

British Over 80s Championships

The T&RA has inaugurated a British Over 80s Championship to complement the World equivalent tournaments, and it was held at Holyport in early December.



The new trophy and presentation racquets for the inaugural British Over 80s Championships

We are delighted that Radley member Willie Wilks has repeated his success of last year's World Over 80's. Willie contested the final against the current World Over 80's Champion, John Ward, and commented that he: *'...was going quite well at 3-4, but then fell away.'*

In the Doubles, Willie and John teamed up to win the new trophy to add to their title of World Champions. Congratulations to them both.



Willie Wilks with the trophy racquet and John Ward with the silverware

We regard John as a honorary member of Radley, given his generous donation of some of his large collection of real tennis prints and pictures to our club when it opened, and thus feel justified in claiming double glory for the club!

The Tabley Vase

Congratulations to Radley's Rebecca Kashti, who won The Tabley Vase, a Holyport-based handicap doubles competition held in December, which was established to encourage competitive women's tennis. Paul Tabley was the Head Pro at Holyport in the 1990s and is now back in his native Australia and running the court in Ballarat, near Melbourne.

The competition was held at a suitably festive Holyport, and we hear that Rebecca manufactured a spectacular trick shot on the final point. She teamed up with fellow Hardwick member, Candida Nicholls, for their win.



Rebecca Kashti, holding the Tabley Vase

Radley College and Club Juniors

For fine performances by our College and club juniors in national and club events, see below.

British Schools' Championship

Radley was delighted to be asked to host the British National Schools' Singles Tournament on Sunday 28 November. The entry was split into groups and the winners of these went through to the later rounds. The day culminated in the Final, which pitted British Open Qualifier, Henry Henman, against the U14 and U16 British Champion, Laszlo Garson: a Radley Club member (representing Magdalen College School) against a Radley College boy, on the Radley court. What could be better?

The boys, who are lifelong friends, hugely enjoyed the opportunity to meet in such competitive circumstances: Henry, who was then H13.9, against Laszlo, playing off H35.8. The match, played in a

spirit of intense and friendly rivalry, went with handicap, and Henry emerged the victor, 6-1, 6-0.

Laszlo confided that he has not yet had the racquet strung up with which he was presented in November at the British Open Championships for the 'Best Performance by a Junior in 2023', so watch out world, when this is pressed into service...return...and volley.



Radley players swept the board at the National Schools' Singles Championship.

Henry Henman, left, holds the trophy and Laszlo his runner-up prize

Under 24/Under 21 British Open 2023

Sponsored by the Dedanists and held at Queen's Club.





Finalists in the British U21 Singles: Henry Henman and Oli Pridmore

Congratulations to Henry Henman for making it to two out of three possible finals. As one of the youngest in the draw this year, he has considerable time on his side in future runs of these annual competitions.

Mentioned in dispatches...

In the equivalent Rackets events, Magnus Garson made it to the finals of the U21 Singles and, with fellow Old Radleian, Jonty Duncan, to the final of the Doubles. Congratulations and commiserations to them in equal measures, as this proved not to be their year.

National Tournaments

The Sir John Ritblat British Open 2023

If you missed the daily updates during the British Open on the progress of Radley players, including our top ranked Junior, Henry Henman, and our Senior Pro, Nino Merola, through Qualifying and into the Main Draw of the Open in late November, you can read them below. If you don't want to relive the drama, just skip to p14.

9.11.23

Dear members,

It was quite an afternoon yesterday for Radley at the British Open Qualifying event at Queen's. **Nino Merola** won his match against Max Trueman 5-6, 6-4, 6-2; **Benedict Yorston** beat Professional Mark Hobbs, 6-5, 6-4 (having beaten Leamington Pro, Chris Aley, yesterday) and **Henry Henman** lost to an in-form Bertie Vallat, 5-6, 3-6. It was very good to see and hear the RCTC players, and their supporters, encouraging each other in these consecutive matches on the East Court.

Doubles qualifying takes place today, Friday, and at 14.30, Nino and Henry team up to face Adam Dolman and Neil Mackenzie, seeded 2. Please watch if you can and support your Radley compatriots.

As a result of their wins, Nino Merola and Benedict Yorston qualify for the main Singles draw of the British Open, which will be played at Queen's next week. Nino will play Louis Gordon at 17.00 on Mon 13 Nov, while Benedict will have to be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed at 09.00 that morning, when he takes on the formidable young amateur, Robert Shenkman. A win for Nino will see him face the considerable challenge (and thrill) of playing three times World Champion, Camden Riviere, at 18.00 on Tuesday 14 Nov, while Benedict's second round match would be against the 7th Seed, Leon Smart at 10am that day.

Congratulations to the winners and commiserations to the losers from yesterday's action. The streaming of all matches can be watched live and from the archive by using this

link: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCTazp_qYd-NWThF_pc9-d7_-Vp1D76Jl.

Enjoy the tennis!

Maggie

11.11.23

...One of the major events in the British tennis year, The Sir John Ritblat 2023 British Open, starts today at Queen's Club, and it is exciting that Radley has three players in the draw this year. The Singles Final, which will be played at 18.00 on Mon 20 November, has the additional attraction of **CJR** doing the commentary.

Will he again be dissecting the play of Camden Riviere and John Lumley, as he did in the World Championship from Westwood in September or is there a chance of an upset and the World numbers 1 and 2 not facing each other in this final? Whatever the outcome, we guarantee that at least one Radley player will be called forward at the award ceremony on Tues 21 November (see below for more on this).

Radley Players: **Nino Merola** and **Benedict Yorston** came through Qualifying to fly the Radley flag in the main Singles draw. Benedict (H13.7) had two excellent wins against Professionals in Qualifying to earn the right to play the formidable young amateur, Robert Shenkman (now H+1.1), in the first round, at 09.00 on Monday morning. At 17.00 that afternoon, Nino (H7.2) will play Louis Gordon (H6.6), and a win will see Nino face the challenge and thrill of playing three times World Champion and number one seed, Camden Riviere (currently H+16), at 18.00 on Tuesday 14th. If Benedict can see off Robert, the world number eleven, his second-round match at 10am the following day will be against the 7th Seed and world number 9, Leon Smart (H0.2).

In the Doubles Qualifying event on Friday, **Nino Merola** and **Henry Henman** beat the Queen's pair of Neil Mackenzie and Adam Dolman, 6-2, 6-2. On Wed 15th at 16.00, Nino and Henry will play Adam Player and John Woods-Casey in the first round of the Doubles. If they win that match, against Pros from Wellington and Melbourne respectively, they will have to play the number 1 seeds and title holders, Camden Riviere and Tim Chisholm in the second round. Rob Fahey, who has retired from singles tournament play, is seeded two in the Doubles with Nicky Howell. The Doubles Final will be on Tuesday 21 November and the tournament will conclude with the award ceremony.

We are delighted to reveal that the Radley Club and College player, **Laszlo Garson**, has been presented with a T&RA award for 'The Year's Best Performance by a Junior' in recognition of his outstanding wins of the U14 and U16 trophies at the British Junior Championships, held in August at Queen's.

The streaming can be watched live and from the archive, using this link:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCTazp_qYd-NWThF_pc9-d7_-Vp1D76Jl.

Ben Geytenbeek continues to add more stats and player information to his coverage, providing fascinating data. Our huge thanks to him and the T&RA for the free streaming, which Ben does on an expenses-only basis, like the commentary team, the stewards and so many generous volunteers who do so much for our game.

Enjoy the tennis, cheer on your Radley teammates and look out for the updates during the coming week!

14.11.23

...It was a long, long day of play at Queen's on Monday. There was an early pause in play in the morning, as first the East and then the West court started sweating. Then several five set matches stretched the day past midnight, with **Nino** emerging victorious against Louis Gordon, after a match in which his considerable momentum was interrupted at 3-0 up in the third set when the lights went out for about 15 minutes. After driving home for a refreshing but too, too short sleep, Nino will be back on the road to Queen's this afternoon for his match against one Camden Riviere. Good luck, Nino, at 5pm and beyond.

Valiant **Benedict Yorston** gave Robert Shenkman much to think about in their match, interrupted by the sweating courts, losing the tight second set 5-6, but went down in three sets.

If you have any spare time today, you can catch up on some of the long and hard-fought matches yesterday, notably the fine performance by **Levi Gale**, who so very nearly pulled off a career-best victory against Ben Taylor-Matthews. Heart-breaking for Levi to lose this epic five setter, which was on a knife-edge to the end, but BTM managed to close it out.

More news from Queen's later, with a report on Nino's match and a reminder about his doubles with Henry Henman on Wednesday.

We hope **Ben Geytenbeek** got a few hours' sleep, having done fantastic work during the day with the streaming and coping with all the excitements and delays, as well as commentating solo the final match. An epic performance of his own!

15.11.23

... There are very few players who can say that they have taken a set off Camden Riviere, but now **Nino Merola** is one of them! Radley hearts were racing last night, as Nino led the first set 5-3, 5-4 and then it was 5-all...and Nino took the set 6-5. This was thrilling stuff to watch and huge credit to Nino for not being overawed by being on court against the World and defending Champion but taking the match to him.

The next three sets went to Cam, 6-2, 6-1, 6-2, ending Nino's Singles campaign, but not his British Open (see below). It was the first time since 2007 that Camden has lost a set to a player with a handicap higher than zero!

Cam moves on to the Quarter Final stage in which he will play Steve Virgona. Two amateurs are left in the last eight of the Singles; Matthieu Sarlangue and Robert Shenkman and the other players at this stage are the Professionals, with the former Radley Pro, **John Lumley**, Nicky Howell, Ben Taylor-Matthews and Bryn Sayers in action. Good to see all four nations with real tennis courts 'in play' represented at this stage of the tournament in the matches to be played tomorrow.

The British Open Doubles begins today, Wed 15 November. At 2pm, **Nino** is due to be back on court at Queen's, partnering **Henry Henman** against John Woods-Casey (Melbourne) and Adam Player (Wellington) for the right to face Camden Riviere and Tim Chisholm in the QF on Friday at 6pm. The match before theirs, on court today at 12.00, features former Team Radley Pro **Levi Gale** (Prested), who's extraordinary five set match against Ben Taylor-Matthews will live long in the memory, partnering Lewis Williams (Leamington) against amateurs Will Flynn and Oli Pridmore.

16.11.23

... The morning after the night before, **Nino** was still buzzing from his Singles match against Camden Riviere and taking the first set from the great champion. If you must exit a tournament, this was the way to do it, and Nino will gain great confidence from his experience on court in the past seven day of Qualifying and the British Open itself.

Today, the Doubles tournament began, and **Levi Gale & Lewis Williams** beat Will Flynn & Oli Pridmore 6-2, 2-6, 6-2, 6-4 and move into the Quarter Final to play the second seeds, Rob Fahey & Nicky Howell, at midday on Friday. Levi and Lewis were followed on court by **Nino Merola & Henry Henman** who started well and finished even more strongly, dominating their match against the duo of Professionals, Adam Player & John Woods Casey to win 6-4, 6-0, 6-2.

Nino and Henry have the prospect of playing the number one seeds, Camden Riviere & Tim Chisholm at 6pm on Friday, who have playing careers about four times longer in aggregate than the Radley pair; about 65 years v 16 years, or thereabout. Will we see the same sort of drama as we witnessed in Nino's Singles, or perhaps, even more? What we expect is that Nino will fire tornado shots aplenty and Henry will be sharp and fearless up by the galleries, and we can't wait to see the action!

Another match of note wrapped up the day's play, when Louis Gordon & Claire Fahey took on and beat Zak Eadle & Leon Smart (seeded 5) 5-6, 6-2, 6-3, 5-6, 6-1, which puts the mixed doubles pair into a QF against the third seeds, John Lumley & Steve Virgona. This is the first appearance in a QF by a woman in the long history of the British Open. The fourth pair in the QFs will be Robert Shenkman & Darren Long (seeded six) who had a walkover against Peter Wright & Jamie Douglas.

The Singles moves on tomorrow into its Quarter Final stage, in which Australia, France, the UK and the USA are represented:

12.00 Lumley v Sarlangue

14.00 Howell v Shenkman

16.00 Sayers v Taylor-Matthews

18.00 Virgona v Riviere

Enjoy the tennis, via the T&RA channel on YouTube:

<https://www.tennisandrackets.com/real-tennis/tournaments-fixtures/british-open-singles-and-doubles-championships-3#video>.

17.11.23

...The quarter-finals of the Singles took place today, with Former Radley Pro, **John Lumley** (Philadelphia), progressing to the next stage by beating the number one

French player, **Matthieu Sarlangue** 6-0, 6-1, 6-2, and will play **Bryn Sayers**, the number six seed and Queen's Professional. **Bryn** made the most of his home court knowledge to beat the number three seed, **Ben Taylor-Matthews** (Bristol) 6-2, 6-5, 6-2.

The **Aiken Pro**, **Nicky Howell**, dropped a set in his match against top British amateur **Robert Shenkman**, but came through to win 6-2, 3-6, 6-0, 6-2 and will play **Camden Riviere** in the other semi-final. **Camden** took on **Chicago Pro**, **Steve Virgona**, today, in an all left-handed match, defeating the fifth seed 6-4, 6-4, 6-0.

More doubles action tomorrow, Friday, with the quarter-finals. The matches start at 12.00 and the last one is due to start at 18.00 and both these contests have particular interest for Radley members.

12.00 - Former Team Radley Pro, **Levi Gale** (Prested) & **Lewis Williams** (Leamington) have the considerable task of playing the second seeds, **Rob Fahey** (Oratory) & **Nicky Howell** (Aiken).

14.00 - **Claire Fahey** & **Louis Gordon** v **John Lumley** & **Steve Virgona** (seeded 3).

16.00 - **Bryn Sayers** & **Ben Taylor-Matthews** (seeded 4) v **Darren Long** & **Robert Shenkman** (seeded 6).

18.00 - You can settle down to watch the number one seeds, **Camden Riviere** and **Tim Chisholm** (Tuxedo) play the Radley duo of **Nino Merola** and **Henry Henman**.

Click on <https://www.tennisandrackets.com/real-tennis/tournaments-fixtures/british-open-singles-and-doubles-championships-3#video> to see all the action, past and present. There will be much to enjoy tomorrow, and we send best wishes to **Levi**, **Nino** and **Henry**, whom we know will do us proud, once again!

18.11.23

...I hope you were able to watch some, if not all, of the quarter final matches of the British Open Doubles from Queen's Club. There has been some terrific and most enjoyable tennis, but I can say with little fear of contradiction that the most exciting was the final match of the day, in which **Nino Merola** and **Henry**

Henman played fantastically well and to great acclaim, including their opponents, **Camden** and **Tim Chisholm**, and the commentators, **Rob Fahey** and **Lewis Williams**.

This was the only match of the day that was not a straight sets' win for the victors, for, with a thrilling display of guts and skill, **Nino** and **Henry** won the first set 6-5. This was marvellous to watch and must have rocked **Camden** and **Tim**, who are not only the number one seeds in the tournament but also the current World Doubles Champions. It would be a mistake to think that **Camden** and **Tim** would have been happy to drop a set and they raised their game one or two gears from that point. The final score was 6-5, 0-6, 2-6, 1-6 to the American duo.

A few days ago, I wrote that few people could boast of taking a set from **Camden Riviere** and that **Nino's** name could be added to that short list. After the quite astonishing display of doubles this evening, we must add **Henry's** name to that list, and **Nino's** to the considerably shorter list of players who have taken two sets from **Camden**. Please raise your glasses to them, and to former Team Radley Pro, **Levi Gale**, who also made his final appearance at this year's Open! We can be very proud of our Radley players, current and former, and **John Lumley** moves on in the Singles and Doubles as the remaining flag-bearer.

Worthy of note is the fact that today was the first time in the history of our sport that a husband and wife have played in quarter final of any Open, not just the British. It is fitting that this great feat should have been achieved by **Claire** and **Rob Fahey**. **Rob** & **Nicky Howell** beat **Levi** & **Lewis Williams**, **John** & **Steve Virgona** beat **Claire** & **Louis Gordon** and **Ben Taylor-Matthews** & **Bryn Sayers** beat **Darren Long** & **Robert Shenkman**. These four pairs will contest the semi-finals on Sunday afternoon.

Saturday sees the focus switch back to Singles, with the semi-finals between **John Lumley** & **Bryn Sayers** at 2pm and **Camden Riviere** playing **Nicky Howell** at 4pm. The streaming continues to be excellent and the opportunity to hear a lot of different, young commentators has been an innovation this year. No doubt they will find a lot to talk about while watching the semi-finals. The most likely results should produce a(nother) final between **Camden** and **John**, currently the world number one and two, but you never know...

Enjoy the weekend of fine tennis,

19.11.23

...My apologies for the poor service this morning. I am still reeling from the excitement of Friday evening's Doubles! I can take this opportunity to pass on grateful thanks from Nino and Henry for the many messages of support and congratulation they received in the 24 hours after their match.

At Queen's, we have reached the sharp end of the Singles and Doubles Championships. The semi-finals of the Singles followed seeding yesterday, with Camden Riviere, number one, and **John Lumley**, number two, coming through to face each other in Monday night's final. Tune in at 6pm tomorrow for what should be a terrific match, if what happened at the World Championship in September is anything to go by. The commentary from Queen's will be by **CJR** and Ben Ronaldson, who will be able to draw comparisons with the other finals played between Cam and John over the past year or so.

The story of the semi-final for Camden was a straight sets wins against Nicky Howell, 6-4, 6-3, 6-2. Nicky fought like a tiger, but Cam's pace, incredible retrieving and accuracy was just too much for him.

In the other semi, there was drama of a different kind. John might have been expected to have a similar sort of hard-fought but straight sets win against Bryn Sayers, but the former British Open Champion pushed John very hard. The match started with Bryn taking the first set 6-5 and John won the next two sets, dropping only three games, but was stopped from cruising to victory by gritty play from Bryn, who won the fourth set by the fine margin of one game. John changed gears again and took the final set 6-1. The final, rather lumpy, score was a win for John 5-6, 6-1, 6-2, 5-6, 6-1.

Rob Fahey's world ranking is drifting down, now he has retired from tournament singles play, but he remains a considerable force in doubles. Today, at 2pm, he and Nicky Howell, seeded two, play the British duo of Ben Taylor Matthews and Bryn Sayers. One can imagine than Nicky and Bryn will be especially fired up after their disappointments yesterday, though they are probably feeling physically fairly sore as well.

At 4pm, the number one seeds, Camden Riviere and Tim Chisholm, will play John Lumley and Steve Virgona. A word about Tim Chisholm, who still can hit the ball better than almost anyone and who's volley has been one of the most potent strokes in tennis over the past thirty years. Time and tennis have taken their toll and after two recent knee replacements, Tim is heading for a double hernia operation before the end of this month. Understandably, he withdrew from the Singles tournament, but to see him teaming up with Camden is a treat for doubles aficionados.

20.11.23

...more fun and frolics at Queen's as the British Open, sponsored generously by Sir John Ritblat, heads towards its conclusion. Sunday morning was a free tennis clinic for junior players, which was well-attended and huge fun for all involved. After lunch, the attendees were invited to stay and watch the two semi-finals of the Doubles, and to leave inspired.

At 2pm, the second seeds, Rob Fahey (Oratory) and Nicky Howell (Aiken) took on Bryn Sayers (Queen's) and Ben Taylor Matthews (Bristol). Rob and Nicky came out on top, easing through in straight sets 6-3, 6-4, 6-1. Business as usual for Fahey & Howell, who have been a regular combination for about five years. Radley's **Benedict Yorston** was one of the commentators and did a fine job (as he and former Radley Pro, **Josh King**, did yesterday). The marker was Andrew Lyons (Seacourt).

At 4pm, the top seeds, Camden Riviere (Boston) and Tim Chisholm (Tuxedo), played the third seeds, **John Lumley** (Philadelphia) and Steve Virgona (Chicago), and won in straight sets, but less easily than Rob and Nicky. John and Steve pushed them all the way and the match was a display of fine doubles play, superb reaction shots and outstanding volleying.

The score was 6-5, 6-3, 6-4 and John and Steve had their chances but were not able to capitalise. Rob Fahey commentated on this match and made many interesting observations about technique, shot-making and tactics – and expressed surprise that Tim took his trousers off to play in shorts for the first time 'in 17 years' as the second set proved hotter work than perhaps Tim expected.

Both Tim and Cam, having such strong volleys, stayed back, a formation that Rob termed the 'Chisiere formation' and it was noticeable that Tim let his partner, as befitting his relative youth, do most of the running. The marker was Jack Josephs, the assistant pro at Hampton Court, and it was the first time he has had responsibility for such a high-level encounter.

21.11.23

*The final of the Singles started at 6pm, although coverage will start at 5.30pm. I am not quite sure what further innovations Ben Geytenbeek has in store for us, but his enhanced coverage, statistics, bios and replays have been excellent and have done much to maximise the excitement of the tournament this year. The number one seed, World Champion, World Number One and Defending Champion, Camden Riviere, will face the 2021 British Open Champion, World Number Two, tournament second seed and our former Professional at Radley, **John Lumley**. The commentators will be CJR and his son, Ben, the Head Pro at Queen's.*

This match-up is a repeat of the World Championship Challenge match in September, but the five-set format is very different to the best-of-thirteen sets played in that gruelling event. Only Rob Fahey, has defeated Camden in a major tournament for the last fifteen years: an incredible record. However, I have it on good authority that soon after leaving Radley in 2014, John played Camden in a National League match, in which they started the third and final set at 3-3, and John won it. John will have his family leading the home crowd supporters aiming to cheer him to victory, while Cam has all the stats and the form book on his side.

It is sure to be a compelling duel.

22.11.23

After the fabulous Singles final on Monday, it seemed too much to hope that the Doubles final could rival the excitement of the previous evening. Sadly, so it proved. The match between Camden Riviere & Tim Chisholm and Rob Fahey & Nicky Howell proved to be a rather disappointing affair. There were some spectacular restes, outrageous shots, superb volleys, great boasts and thunderous forces. However, overall

it was a rather one-sided contest, with Rob and Nicky not able to build enough momentum to mount a serious challenge to the current World Doubles Champions and now holders of the British Open Doubles title, winning 6-3, 6-1, 6-2.

It was splendid to see Rob and Tim still playing such admirable shots and display tremendous skills 21 years after their famous World Championship Singles match, which Rob just won by 7 sets to 6. They are masters of their craft.

Camden pairs so well with Tim, who still volleys like a god, and whose his speed of reaction is the only thing that saves him from certain death when he stands so close to the net on the service side. Cam does the running and covers a huge amount of ground in circling Tim. It is amazing that these players, who are both carrying serious injuries on top of lot of general wear and tear, are still able to perform at this level.

The relatively low number of winning openings hit was testament to the defensive abilities of all the players on court.

The proceedings ended with the Chairman of the Tennis Committee of the T&RA, Ronald Paterson, thanking the many people involved in making this such a successful tournament; the T&RA staff, the Queen's team of professionals, the tournament organisers and helpers and, of course, the players.

*There has been particular excitement about 'breakthrough' performances from several younger players including Radley's **Nino Merola**, **Henry Henman** and **Benedict Yorston**, who has done exceptionally well to qualify for this Open two years running. What with these performances, **Laszlo Garson's** Best British Junior award (presented by Camden) and his generous words of thanks to the Radley pro team, **John Lumley's** fine showing, **Levi Gale's** impressive performance, **Ben Geytenbeek's** superb streaming and the excellent commentating by Ben, **CJR**, **Benedict** and **Josh King**, I would say that Radley has has an outstanding British Open. In fact, our best ever.*

It would be churlish, though, not to recognise that the best of all the breakout performances arguably came from Queen's Club own Bertie Vallat, who beat Melbourne Pro, John Woods Casey, in the First Round in four sets.

Congratulations and thanks to everyone involved. We hope you are suitably inspired, and we look forward to seeing you on court very soon,

Maggie'



Henry Henman and Nino Merola discuss tactics during their thrilling match against Camden Riviere and Tim Chisholm

As you have read above, in the recent British Open, Henry Henman and partner Nino Merola of Radley took on Camden Riviere and Tim Chisholm, who have been World Doubles Champions continuously since 2013. What follows is a piece Henry wrote about the experience for the OUTC newsletter, reprinted here with his permission:

'Taking On Camden

Ever since the British Open Doubles draw was published, my partner and coach, Nino Merola, and I could see that there was the possibility of facing not only the best player in the world, but also a huge idol of mine, Camden Riviere, and his partner, Tim Chisholm.

There was a bit to do before earning a place to compete in the quarter-final match against the World Doubles champions, but as we progressed through the stages, the opportunity to play Cam started looking like more of a reality, and my overwhelming excitement grew.

Just a couple of weeks after starting our campaign, Nino and I found ourselves on court at The Queen's Club, knocking up against Camden Riviere. The grace and effortlessness that both Camden and Tim possess on court, just shows how formidable a duo they are. Both Nino and I felt like we had to hit several 'winners' to actually get a point on the scoreboard, since they were just so comfortable and solid as a pair.

It was incredibly surreal to be on court with legends of the game, and they could not have been more supportive and humble, both on and off the court. It was a real pleasure to have been able to share the stage with the American duo, and certainly my most memorable game of tennis to date.'



It seems only five minutes ago that this photo was taken of Henry on court at Radley with Camden

International Tournaments

Report from the website of the Comité Français:

'The French Ladies' Open at Jeu de Paume [Fontainebleau] has come to an end, leaving behind unforgettable moments and exceptional performances. The talented Lea Van Der Zwalm, French number 1 and world number 2 – licensed at the Jeu de Paume club in Bordeaux, once again dazzled the

public by reaching not only the singles final, but also the doubles final, thus scoring a remarkable step in his [we have Google translate to thank for this rather surprising gender switch] career.

In the singles final, she faced the legendary Claire Fahey, the Serena Williams of tennis, undefeated since 2009. The match was a fierce battle, with Lea showing exceptional determination. She even had set points, upsetting the title holder and demonstrating the quality of her game. Although victory eluded this time, this promising performance hints at an exciting season to come for the talented French player.'

Lea partnered Saskia Bollerman successfully in the Ladies' World Championship and British Ladies' Open in September and continued that run of form into the French Championship, but the mighty duo of Claire Fahey and partner Penny or Tara Lumley continues to scoop up title after title. Claire, Tara, Saskia and Lea are pictured below:



Theleme

The 2024 Theleme tournament was played at the Rue Lauriston court in Paris over the weekend of 13/14 January. Mike and Henry Henman flew the Radley flag there – and Henry went all the way. The tournament was established for 10-20 handicap players by Charlie Hurstel and named after the *Abbaye de Thélème*, which appears in Rabelais' *The Five Books of the Lives of Gargantua and Pantagruel* and is described as a sort of "anti-monastery" where the lives of the inhabitants were "spent not in laws, statutes, or rules,

but according to their own free will and pleasure, and it contained a *jeu de paume*.

In the course of his progression to the title, Henry played eight matches and has emerged with his lowest-ever handicap of 10.5. In the final, he had a very good win against Nicolas Victoir, who came into the tournament with a handicap of 9.8, but whose lowest-ever handicap was a superb +2.2 in 2006.

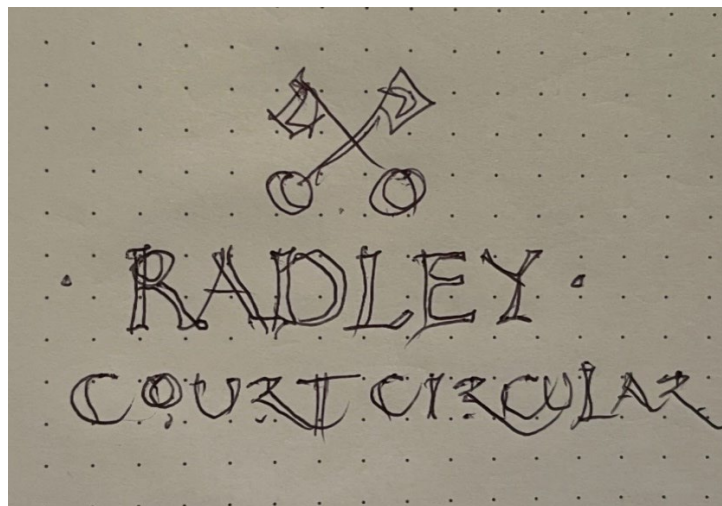
The 2025 World Championship

Bidding by clubs hoping to stage the 2025 World Championship Challenge Match and the Final Eliminator has opened and the process is run by the WC Tournament Committee and the International Real Tennis Professionals' Association, the IRTPA.



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

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



With grateful thanks to the inimitable 'Mikko' for his penmanship

In England; the restoration of the court at Hewell Grange in Worcestershire; the creation of one inside a perfectly-sized listed Victorian gym at Repton School in Derbyshire; and advanced discussions about a court at the Hurlingham Club in London, are the hottest British projects at present. All three are progressing well.

The news from Australia has just got even better and it seems that we may be able to look forward to two new courts rather than one, as another Melbourne location is under serious discussion, in addition to the Sydney court that is now reaching a significant stage in its creation.

Australia

Melbourne

Exciting news comes from Melbourne. The Australian Real Tennis Association, ARTA, website lists the current courts in play in Australia, which includes an entry for a club that is currently without a court. No, not Sydney, but in Melbourne. The vote, previewed in the most recent *Better Than The Last*, on a proposal to build a real tennis court as part of a major re-development programme, at a well-established multi-sports club in Melbourne, has taken place and been approved.

Allow me to explain further and point you to the following webpage for greater detail:

<https://www.mccrts.com.au/>

'MCC Real Tennis Section –

The Melbourne Cricket Club have (sic) a long-running connection with the game of real tennis and have their own vibrant tennis-specific section', which has been running since 2007.

In response to the current and sustained enthusiasm for the game in Melbourne and to allow further expansion, we are thrilled that a plan is advancing for a real tennis court to be built at the MCC Glen Iris Valley Lawn Tennis Club, located on the Riversdale Golf Course, Mount Waverley, Victoria [about 25 minutes' drive SE of the RMTTC in Richmond]. The proposal has now been approved by the existing lawn

tennis club members, and the project will seek local planning approval in 2024.

The Royal Melbourne TC is supportive of the plan, and the prospect of another club in the city is a most exciting one. Real Tennis in Melbourne has had a successful, continuous 140-year history including the move from the city centre club over 50 years ago to its current base in Richmond.



The city, which is still growing fast, is now the largest in Australia and is confident, vibrant with high levels of participation in sports of all kinds.

We understand that the entire project redevelopment programme at Glen Iris will cost in excess of A\$25m, a startlingly-large figure, but one which is apparently not a problem for the cash rich MCC. This huge price tag reflects the considerable ambition of the plan, which includes squash courts, pickleball, upgraded lawn tennis courts, new social facilities, and a real tennis court. Hopes are high that this third court in Melbourne should be built sometime in 2026/27, reports Alistair Curley, Chairman of ARTA.

Romsey

Alistair adds that, sadly, there is no change at Romsey, and he does not anticipate any renewal of real tennis use for the court on the former Cope-Williams winery in the foreseeable future, as the new owners have no desire for it to return to active play at all.

Sydney

On a brighter note, from Sydney there is more good news about the new court at the Cheltenham Recreation Club.

The Sydney Real Tennis Club held its AGM in early December and reported 'no surprises'.

'The Sydney Real Tennis club is delighted to report that significant progress has been made during the past 12 months:

- *fund-raising has now reached A\$2.6 million, comprising private donations from around 280 individuals and a grant from the NSW Government*
- *The breaking of the Ground Ceremony was held in June 2023, coinciding with International Tennis Day*
- *final revisions to the 2021 planning approval were expected to be approved by Hornsby Council in September 2023 (this includes relocating rather than demolishing the croquet pavilion and a repositioning of the lift so that it can service the upper floor of the club)*
- *a builder has been appointed, and work is underway to obtain a Construction Certificate and to firm up the cost of the project*
- *construction is expected to start early next year, 2024*
- *if all goes to plan the court will be ready for play in the last quarter of 2024*
- *regular progress updates are available at <https://www.sydneyrealtennis.com.au>'.*



Alastair Curley comments: *'The latest update from Sydney I have was from the ARTA meeting just before Xmas. The plan is for construction to commence in late January, with the total build time expected to be 6-9 months, so a late October opening is hoped for, and an opening tournament has tentatively been scheduled there from 15-17 November.'*

Although it might be a little premature to book flights and accommodation, it might be worth keeping an eye out for any special deals to Sydney in Q4 of 2024 or Q1 of 2025 and to start thinking early about some Southern Hemisphere sun and tennis.

France

Bordeaux



The Bordeaux club goes from strength to strength and the Comité Français website reports that:

'...the spirit of Christmas invaded the court of the Jeu de Paume de Bordeaux on the occasion of the now legendary Christmas Tournament, a spectacle full of colors and rich in emotions. Twelve pairs of doubles, or 24 participants, engaged in fierce competition, brightened up by disguises, each more extravagant than the last. From British pink flamingos to local Santa Clauses, originality was there, including a chicken Henri, a clownish Jacques or a brilliant Rémi, to name but a few! Congratulations to everyone for playing the game!

The highlight of the show was the final between Hampton Court members Sarah Lambie & Daniel-Konrad Cooper and Nicolas Planty & Pierre Marchand, who won 7/6 in a series of breathtaking twists and turns, saving five match points before triumph; all in a crazy atmosphere. The clever use of the "Christmas Ball" by our English guests added a touch of magic to this already thrilling encounter.

And congratulations also to the Teetsov couple for their deserved victory in the field!

A huge thank you to everyone for your enthusiasm and your contribution to the success of this event. Special mention to those who made the trip: the people of Pau (accompanied by their contagious good humor) and our English from Hampton Court! Each exchange, each burst of laughter strengthened the unique bond that unites our community.'



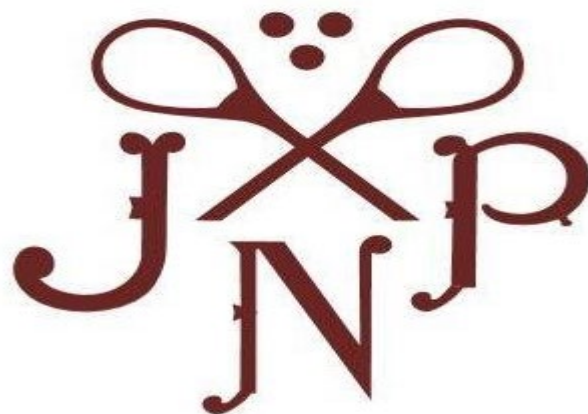
Pau Navarre

Wayne Davies, the former World Champion (1987-94), who retired from real tennis decades ago, has returned, temporarily, to life as a club pro. He started at the court in Pau in the late summer and will continue there for 'a few more months' after a break in New England over Christmas. He has been coaching, introducing people to the game and is training one of the members, Alexandre Boy, in the skills of the tennis professional. Will we see more 50-somethings choosing to switch to life as a Real Tennis Club Professional? We hope so.

Wayne reports that the potential to improve the court and build the club is excellent, but a great deal rests on the commitment and enthusiasm of the Mayoral office, being the court's owner, in granting further fund to restore the court as full 'cours de dedans'.

To see the interview filmed by Ben Geytenbeek with Wayne and Jeu de Paume de Navarre Club President, Simon Berry, during the weekend of 16/17 Sept, click here:

https://youtu.be/NJmrRwR_OI4.



The Parc Beaumont tennis court was built in 1887 based on the model of the Tuileries tennis court in Paris by the same architect, Melchior Viraut. First a mecca for the sport of *jeu de paume* in Pau, the interior of the building was then adapted to the practice of Basque pelota in 1952.

Since the court has been returned exclusively for the playing of real tennis last year, there have been some cosmetic improvements made. The interior has been completely repainted, the floor now being oxblood red and the walls dark grey, but the major work to reinstate the missing woodwork (penthouses and dedans) and to remove masonry to reveal the tambour in all its glory has yet to start.



Ireland



Dublin -

Over the past few editions, we have repeated hopes for a decision about the conditional planning permission granted to convert the Real Tennis court in Earlsfort Terrace into part of a science centre for children. Alas, the wheels of Irish governmental bureaucracy grinds as slowly as anywhere else and still no decision has been given, more than 6 months since it should have been, on the project.

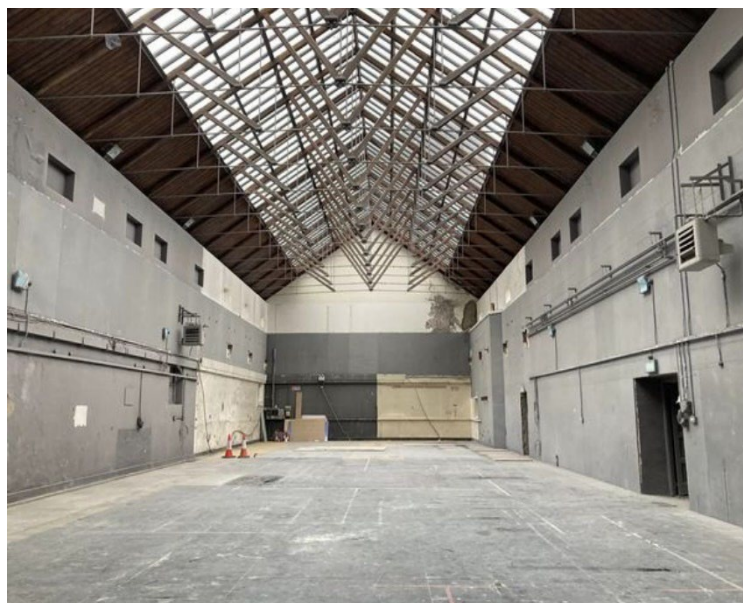
The website of the Irish Real Tennis Association gives a helpful recap of the situation.

'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, including Covid, 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.*"



Tim Edwards, photographer to the T&RA, took this splendid photo in mid-2023 of the court, cleaned out and tantalisingly tambour-ready for its next use.

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 on this appeal 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.'

UPDATE: by the end of August, no decision has yet been made, nor any update given to the statement above.

The IRTA will be informed when the status changes and a decision has been made, and we will report it in due course.

FURTHER UPDATE: by the end of September, still no decision had been announced.

EVEN LATER UPDATE: by the end of December 2023, no decision had been announced, no reason given for the continued delays.

The IRTA continues to wait...

However slow the political process, work has begun, in preparation for whatever decision will be made. The interior of the court has been cleared of structures accumulated within it over the past 60 years of so, including a mezzanine floor at one end.

The photo above is from the Service End and the tambour is clearly visible. The doorway in the Main Wall will need to be closed up but, happily, the quarry from which the original stone came nearly 120 years ago is still open.

The magnificent, naturally lit space can be seen again in its entirety; the court floor is visible and there remain some handsome chase lines and numbers on the floor and walls.

USA

All sorts of news comes to us from the USCTA, courtesy of its monthly magazine *Chase The First*, which are quoted with grateful thanks:

Charleston

'Negotiations are now underway with Buddy Darby and the Charleston Squash Club to contribute toward building a new facility in Charleston that includes squash and court tennis. Leveraging the unwavering interest in building a court in Charleston, the donor cash on hand, and our board's full support, we are now in an excellent position to produce a favorable outcome for the long CCT campaign to build a court in the area.'

Newport –

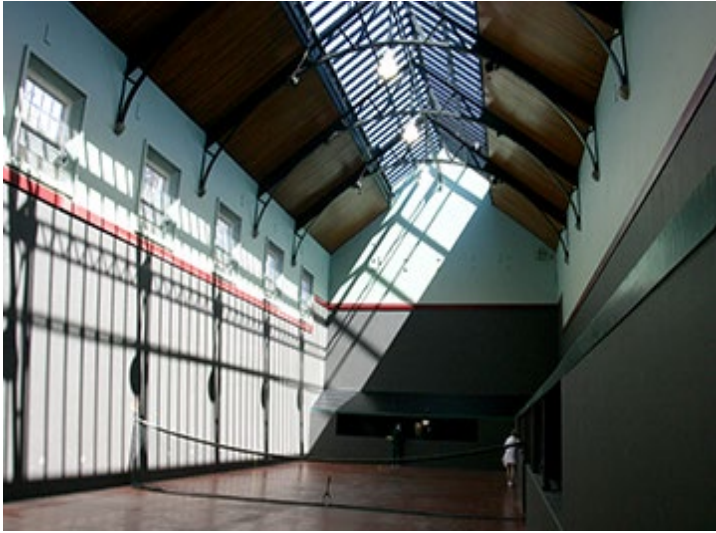


With Tony Hollins as the new head professional at The National Tennis Club, the new assistant pro Emily Young, and Jake Faulise, there is now a fully staffed and energized pro shop. The court is regarded as the official home court of the USCTA and warmly welcomes players from other clubs and nations.



Georgian Court –

There is continued play at the Georgian Court, perhaps more than most of us are aware. Located at Lakewood, the summer estate was created by nineteenth century 'Robber Baron', Jay Gould senior. He built a mansion house, Georgian Court, with extensive sporting facilities in The Casino, including a fine real tennis court and adjacent indoor polo ground. Since 1924, it has been the property of the Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy, who have made it the home of Georgian Court University.



The court where Jay Gould junior, World Champion and Olympic Gold Medallist, learned the game

Ross Bolling – an assistant pro at the Racquet Club of Philadelphia, has held a series of clinics and mini tournaments there over the summer. Last year, Georgian Court University held two sanctioned USCTA events. The students are getting on the court several times a month. Rich Moroscak has ably led our efforts there, and our good relations with the school have laid a foundation for the game's continued access.



The USCTPF has had a thirty-year-long supportive relationship with the school, which has resulted in GCU committing to the perseveration of the court and its continued use for court tennis, albeit on a limited basis.



Wisconsin

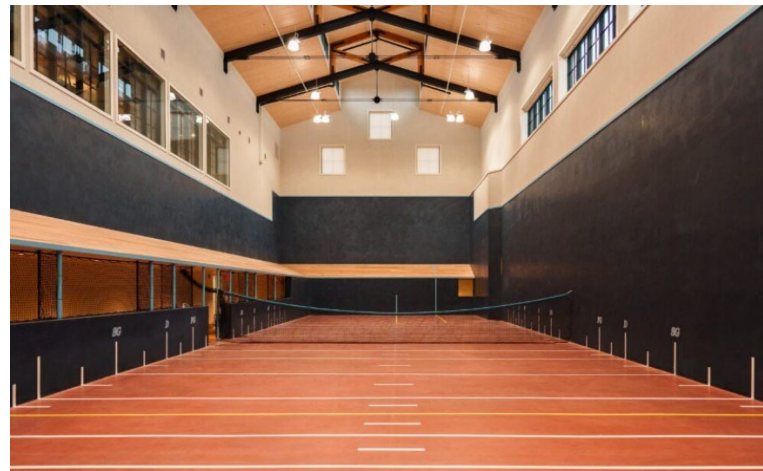
It is thrilling to have the official opening date of the Sand Valley court announced, although it is somewhat unfortunate that it coincides exactly with Camden Riviere's Hungarian (and second) wedding ceremony. What a pity that the World Champion and long-standing World Number One cannot be present at the formal opening of the world's newest, and the USA's eleventh, court. We are sure that the celebrations in Wisconsin will be outstanding, regardless.

The full details of the programme of events and the accommodation options and package prices will be published in the next few months.

Sand Valley Court Tennis GRAND OPENING July 18-21, 2024

Save the Date

Congratulations to brothers Chris and Mike Keiser on the building of their handsome court in surely what must be record time from the idea to the reality.



The interior of the Sand Valley Court Tennis court

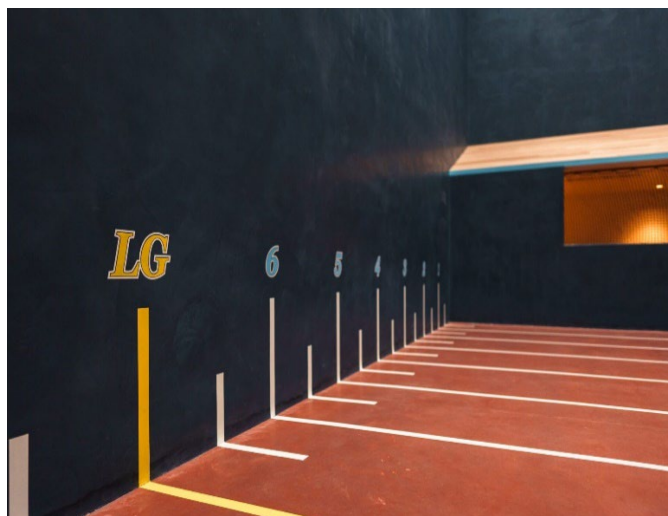
'*Chase The First*, the newsletter of the USCTA trumpets:

'The most recent addition to American Real Tennis can be found at a resort, typically renowned for a different ancient royal game; Golf.

The Keiser brothers, Michael and Chris, have unveiled the country's 11th court, which serves as the focal point of a brand-new Tennis Centre, which includes 15 outdoor lawn tennis grass courts and facilities including a Pro shop, locker rooms and dining facilities.

"We are so excited to introduce our guests – and fans of golf and racquets in general – to the game and this new court," Michael Keiser said. "It's such a wonderful pairing with the traditions and history of golf. My brother and I grew up playing all racquet sports, and it's an honour to promote the one that started it all."

Commencing next [i.e. 2024] spring, Sand Valley will offer Real Tennis, complete with lessons and equipment.



Wisconsin's Sand Valley Resort (www.sandvalley.com), owned and operated by golf and court tennis enthusiasts Michael and Chris Keiser, is preparing a very special Grand Opening event for USCTA members and friends. Expect Court Tennis on the resort's new facility – the eleventh in the U.S. – along with lawn tennis, golf, dining and other activities. Sand Valley is looking forward to welcoming you to experience court tennis and an incredible summer escape.'

Sand Valley occupies more than 12,000 acres of wilderness in the Central Sands of Wisconsin, with dramatic dunes, sand barrens,

native pine forest, and restored timberland. The resort is located 100 miles north of Madison, 170 miles from Milwaukee, and 220 miles from O'Hare International Airport in Chicago.



We love this tennis court homage to filmmaker Wes Anderson

The Last Gallery

There are two visual items that we want to draw to your attention.

Firstly, click on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/CamdenRiviere>

to see a five-minute clip of World Champion, Camden Riviere, visiting the Philadelphia workshop of Wayward Tennis Racquets. Camden plays with a Wayward and in return for his racquets, promotes the brand whenever he can.

Indeed, the size of the big black bear logo on his shirt at the British Open had some diehards rushing to the T&RA Rulebook to check whether or not it contravened legislation on shirt advertising. It got some spectators just as excited as the incidence of some of the commentators referring occasionally to 'rallies' rather than 'restes'. On the latter point, we feel there are much more important things to worry about, and making our game and its unique lexicon more accessible should surely be encouraged.

Secondly, Mike Garnett, based in Melbourne and a loyal reader of *Better Than The Last* and extensive writer about the game, drew our attention to the photo below, taken at Radley, which appeared in *Tatler* magazine in 2012.

I am alone in wondering when (what appear to be) a pair of size 0 robots were programmed to play this game? I hope the programmer was aware that 'it is customary not to force for the dedans when standing in front of the service line on the hazard side'.

It would appear that nothing gets past their backhand volleys, as least if the sight of the impeccably dressed, nonchalant, hands-in-pocket and floppy-haired young man at the back of the court is anything to go by. What he is doing there is a complete mystery.



The musings about Real Tennis in South America in the Summer edition of *Better than the Last* failed to elicit a stream of documentary and photographic evidence of a purpose-built indoor Real Tennis court in Argentina. In fact, none at all. If you do have any scraps, nuggets or even gems of knowledge about tennis in lesser-known territories, please share it with us.

Real Tennis in Print

Alvaro Enrique is a Mexican-born novelist, short story writer and essayist, who currently lives and teaches in New York. He wrote *Sudden Death*, which was the first of his books to be translated into English and was published by Riverhead Books in 2017.

The publisher's blurb describes it as: 'A daring, kaleidoscopic novel about the clash of empires and ideas, told through a tennis match in the sixteenth century between the radical Italian artist Caravaggio and the Spanish poet Francisco de Quevedo, played with a ball made from the hair of the beheaded Anne Boleyn'. The novel is praised as: "Splendid" by the *New York Times*; "Mind-bending" in the *Wall Street Journal*; and "Brilliantly original. The best new novel I've read this year" by Salman Rushdie. Praise indeed!

However, we commend all those embarking on reading this book, which also won a number of literary awards, to exercise his or her own judgement. A leading member of our real tennis community described it rather differently, as: 'Naughty in unusual and coarse ways, plus it is entirely incomprehensible in a macro way'. You have been warned!

Intrigued by the central place of tennis in the narrative, your Editor wondered whether the author had ever played the game or, indeed, seen it played. He is not listed on the database of players, Real Tennis Online, and has not responded to an email, so we may never know. Do you?

We wish you a most enjoyable,
successful and injury-free

2024

This first Newsletter of 2024

was compiled by

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