

THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT

Hampton Court Palace



OLIVER LEWIS CLAIMS LATHOM BROWNE CUP

REPORT: PAGE 8

The Autumn Newsletter 2008
Number eighty-five

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chairman's chat

I am pleased to be able to report that the court continues to be heavily booked despite it being the "off" season and the tennis diary is enabling players to get extra games.

The summer barbecue, held on 28 June, was a great success, with nearly 120 members attending. David Seelig did a grand job organising the event, the lamb was beautifully cooked by Graham Aston, and Roger Todd and his jazz funk band kept us musically entertained all evening. We are lucky to have so many members who give so generously of their time and expertise.

The next major event was the summer handicap doubles, which took place over the weekend of 4-6 July. There was a very strong entry of 25 pairs and the club buzzed over the three days, with the dedans pretty well packed for all the matches. The pros did a magnificent job in organising the tournament, which ran like clockwork. I hope the entry next year will be even greater. We all have a chance and I would just like to assure you that the result was not rigged, although the winning pair in Division 1 were totally bemused by the outcome...

I am sorry to have to report to you that Martin Bronstein has expressed his wish to be relieved of his role as editor of this newsletter. Martin has done work of exceptionally high quality over many years and has been an outstanding editor. On your behalf I would like to thank him for all his unstinting devotion to our club. I have always enjoyed enormously the editor's barbed little postscripts.

However, I am delighted to be able to tell you that Simon Edmond will be stepping into Martin's shoes as our new editor. Simon is an experienced journalist and editor and I am most

grateful for his willingness to take on the role.

I still don't have dates for the presentations to be made by the T&RA in the autumn. We feel you will be better able to judge our governing body's financial plight and your response when they have published their accounts for the year to 31 July 2008 and have finalised their budget for the current year. I would very much hope that the presentation(s) can be made before the calendar year end.

Unfortunately there will be some disruption to the court over the coming months due to building works by HRP. We will do our level best to restrict the disruption as much as we can.

As some of you will know I spent many years as a milkman, and I was amused to hear the brief story which I retell below, from a former colleague.

On his final day before his retirement he called on an old customer and was surprised to be invited into her house. She proceeded to serve him a delicious beef bourguignon and then invited him upstairs. He had a terrific time and afterwards she gave him a pound. "Why did you do that?" he asked. She replied that before he went to work she had told her husband of his impending retirement and her husband had responded: "Screw the milkman. Give him a pound."

She added that the beef bourguignon had been her own idea.



Carol service

The annual RTC carol service is likely to take place on Tuesday 16 December in the Chapel Royal, although the precise details are still being finalised. Keep an eye out at the club for ticket details, or contact David Seelig nearer the time. The winter newsletter will also have more information.



French boast?

This statue (left) was spotted in La Rochelle, France, adorning the original hôtel de ville. Is that an early tennis racket or, as one sexist observer suggested, a handmirror? As ping pong was not invented when this statue was sculpted, the claims for real tennis are substantial.

We suggest we call her St Vaulli of the Door. Any better suggestion could win a bottle of RTC wine. Entries by email to the editor. Deadline: 1 November .

News from the pros

New balls in action

Your professionals are working hard to satisfy all the members' needs. By the time you read this newsletter, three sets of brand-new balls will be available for use. It has been a long summer of ball making and our hands are in need of intense moisturising...

We will now be able to sort

through the existing stock of balls, which are now more than four years old, to wheedle out the illegal size/weighted balls. Please be aware, however, that these balls will be smaller than the new balls.

We thank everyone for being patient while we have gone through this arduous process.

New look for pro's office

The pro's office is gradually smartening up, with new paint-work, new noticeboards and the removal of cupboards. We hope to have some nice comfy chairs for you to relax in after your strenuous game of tennis.

We have sourced some good clothing for sale in the shop which will hopefully in stock early in the season. We are looking for an appropriate cabinet in which to display the items.

Lost property

The drawers in the men's changing room are brimming with lost property. These drawers will be cleared out on 30 September, so if you would like redeem any items, please do so by then. After that the contents will be given to charity.

Competition news

The final of the **Lathom Browne** was contested on 13 August and congratulations go to Oliver Lewis – see page 8 for a full report.

The **Night Pennant** was won by David Blizzard, Michael Day and Anthony Wolfe, who beat the passionately led team of Ben Shore, Adrian Larkin and Owen Saunders.

The **Seal Salver** has reached the quarter-final stages and will be completed soon, just in time to start over again!

Now it's your turn – entries for 2009

Along with this newsletter you will have received an entry form for the RTC tournaments for the upcoming season. Please complete and return it as soon as possible – the deadline for all entries in 30 September.

Your pros on court...

Watch Nick and Ben take on Rob Fahey

Put Wednesday 1 October in your diary, as RTC host Cambridge in a National League Premier Division match. Nick and Ben play world champion Rob Fahey and Mark Hobbs. Tickets are on sale now, but there are not many left, so don't delay! The full price list is on page 8.



French Open

Before the world champion comes to RTC, however, there's the French Open at Bordeaux, which begins on 15 September with Nick and Ben in the draw.

Paddling for points

Not to be outdone, Stefan King is over in Calgary playing in the world paddle tennis championships. The competition is sure to be tough, as the game is very popular in South America and continental Europe.

A note from one editor...

AFTER 12 years of producing the newsletter, I feel it is time for a fresher, younger brain to take over and bring in some new ideas. We are fortunate in having the ideal man in Simon Edmond, a professional journalist and editor who works for such diverse publications as *The Daily Telegraph* and *Private Eye*.

Simon, 37 years old and a 2 handicap golfer, was introduced to reallers two years ago by Owen Saunders. Golf seems to have been forgotten since then, as Simon took to the crooked racket with zeal and has already brought his tennis handicap down to the low forties.

I hope all members will support him as they have supported me so well and will contribute to the newsletter whenever an idea pops up.

Martin Bronstein

...And from another

I MUST begin by thanking Martin for his kind words, and by congratulating him on a successful transformation of the newsletter over the past 12 years.

Having designed it for five years and edited it for seven, he has fought for quarterly publication, better-quality paper and colour printing when suitable. His personality and sense of humour have shone through on every page and I'm sure all members are grateful for his immense contribution. The time he has devoted is enough to fill me with dread as I step into his shoes.

This is your newsletter, though, not mine, so please feel free to contact me if you have any ideas for fascinating articles (or, indeed, if you think you can sort out my iffy service returns).

Simon Edmond

Chairman exerts his authority in RTC summer doubles

Bribery inquiry launched after Ohlson and Yarnall take weekend honours

THE massively expanded first ever RTC summer handicap doubles, involving 50 members in two divisions, fought over a gruelling three-day period from 4-6 July under a broiling sun, resulted in the predictable cries of outrage at defeat and joy in victory (or even at a favourable marker's call, if that meant the same thing).

The 25 pairs started beating each other to death by cudgels in a round-robin format lasting from Friday morning to Saturday evening. The weary survivors regrouped for the knockout stages on the Sunday morning, where more cudgels were applied and the totally unpredictable emerged. The unfancied (see betting exchanges, right) establishment pair - viz chairman Peter Ohlson and his committee sidekick John Yarnall - triumphed in the superior grade by bribing the markers more than David Blizzard and Adrian Hughes (who, as a pair, had previously looked invincible) could afford; and in the minor grade that unputdownable hussy

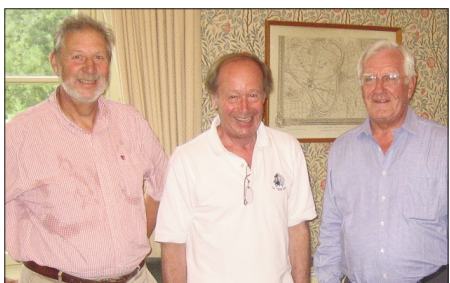
Susie Falkner drove her partner Paddy Sweetnam to deliver the performance of his life in destroying Paul Heaver and Robert Butler at the death.

All credit to Nick Wood, Ben Matthews, Stefan King and Lesley for keeping this roller-coaster of a tournament on track for the three days, and for bringing home the results for the crowd's favourites.

Now the also-rans must work out how to thrust themselves into the limelight next time, which will be next summer again, we all hope. A tally of 50 participants says a lot about the demand for such socials at RTC. May we start to spread our wings wider soon.

Also, a big thank you to Peter Flood and Gitte Dunkley for a constant flow of food to suit the needs of contestants at all times of day, for a very modest fee; and to all contestants for turning up more or less on time for a tournament run by clockwork on the buzzer. May there be many more such.

Richard East and Peter Ohlson



Double acts: winners John Yarnall and Peter Ohlson with John Clark; and Susie Falkner and Paddy Sweetnam with the chairman

Betting exchanges

BEFORE play started there were some brisk exchanges on the outcome of the 10-runner Division 1. Joint favourites at 4/1 were the "Dream Team" of Richard East (the dreamer) and Sue Haswell, the "Class Pair" of Simon Barker and Alan Clarke, and the "Invincibles", David Blizzard and Adrian Hughes; the "Young Turks", Robert Frost and Nicola Cavill, were offered at 6/1, with the others offered at 8/1 and 10/1, leaving "The Donkeys", John Yarnall & Peter Ohlson friendless at 33/1 with no takers.

After some surprising results in the round robin section, the Donkeys topped the table but the punters still looked elsewhere.

Immediately prior to the final there were some suspicious betting patterns, when it became known that a professional backer, closely associated with Peter Ohlson, was more interested in the Wimbledon final and would not be hastening to the court. Punters concluded this amounted to inside information and there was a further flood of money for the Invincibles.

The result proved a total surprise and a spokesman for Kew Bookmakers stated the event had proved a "skinner" for the layers, who had scooped the entire pool.

Anon

RTC & the jazz connection

MOST of you by now will have heard of the death of Humphrey Lyttelton, great British trumpet player, and presenter and much more of Radio 4's *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue*.

There is, however, a very real connection between him and a famous Victorian sporting family. Most of us when entering the club rooms pay passing attention to those pictures on the walls of greats from the 19th century. One of them is the Honourable Alfred

Lyttelton, a former member of the club and winner of the Gold MCC Racquet a record 12 times, a Cambridge blue in five different sports and a relative of Humphrey.

Alas, it is not to be in this world, but what fun had Humph beaten the grim reaper and been invited as guest speaker to our annual RTC dinner.

I am not aware that he ever played real tennis, though he was an old Etonian so could have hit a rackets ball or two. Real tennis, with its idiosyncrasies, would have been just the game for him.

John Edwards

Sleightholme emerges as top of the tyros

Close shaves galore in Wollaston Cup. Kids today...

THE Junior Handicap Singles Championship was played at RTC on 17 August for the Wollaston Cup. A very entertaining day threw up plenty of close matches.

The quarter-finals featured three Watsons, so percentages were on their side. Unfortunately Clare, playing off a handicap of 32, came up against George Sleightholme (42), who had already had a match that day and was in 'fluke' form, finding edges and racket frames.

The two strongest players in the tournament, Karen Hird (22) and James Watson (20), met in the quarter-finals in a very tight match. Karen led for the majority, though, and closed it out 10-7.

Ollie Watson (38) and Charlotte Barker (57) provided evidence that the handicap system works. Charlotte played extremely well and would have won a shorter match, but Ollie sneaked it 10-8.

The semi-finals were the highlight of the day. Karen Hird had to give an improving Ollie Watson owe 30, rec half 30, but it was as tight all the way, and

almost inevitably it went to 9-9 before Karen, consistent and not too aggressive, won the decider.

The second semi-final was also an epic. George led Matthew Webb (43) early on but Matthew fought back. The inevitable happened when we got to 9-9 and even 40-all, when Matthew found the net to send George into the final.

With a handicap difference of rec 30/owe half 30 in George's favour, Karen was up against it in the final. George played very well indeed, being very aggressive, and for poor Karen the handicap difference was too great.

From 9-0 down, Karen took four games in a row. But George claimed the next game to win the championship in style.

Ben Matthews

Preliminary round: George Sleightholme bt James Pain 10-6.

Quarter-finals: Ollie Watson bt Charlotte Barker 10-8; Karen Hird bt James Watson 10-7; Sleightholme bt Clare Watson 10-4; Matthew Webb bt Sam Halliday (w/o).

Semi-finals: Hird bt Ollie Watson 10-9; Sleightholme bt Webb 10-9.

Final: Sleightholme bt Hird 10-4.

Wood's Words

Head professional Nick Wood's tips for us mere mortals...

Q Why is it that the pros always seem to be in the right place to hit the ball?

A Through plenty of practice of trial and error, our ability to read a situation improves, but basically we end up making calculated guesses.

Q What do we look out for in order to improve our positioning?

A First, know your opponent – are they hard hitters or fast around the court, for instance? Second, look for racket preparation – if your opponent prepares late they will often slice the ball, much like a slice in golf. Third, look at their stance in relation to the ball, as this is a big clue as to where they are about to hit the ball.

When there is precious little time it is important to be prepared and to know where to move. The more you try to pre-read the shot the better you'll get at it and therefore be able to position yourself in such a way as to execute a good shot.

DEREK STEEL

30 MARCH 1926-31 MARCH 2008

Chairman, Royal Tennis Court 1988-95

DEREK STEEL was a man of determination. Born into modest circumstances, he had an objective to succeed but in a manner that followed a very strict code. A code that was not always easy to follow.

Typically he chose to serve in the Royal Marines and won the Sword of Honour and a commission. He refused both. Afterwards, Derek went to the Sorbonne before graduating from Trinity College, Oxford. Later, his City career culminated in his becoming chairman of a successful re-insurance company which, with his partners, they had built from scratch. His efforts were rewarded by the City fathers, who appointed him High Sheriff. He had achieved his objective through hard work and foresight.

It was around this time that Geoffrey Welch introduced him to the RTC and, with the encouragement of Chris Ronaldson, Derek became a member and planned to spend

much of his retirement on court. Although awarded the Hamster sweater, his real tennis ambitions were cut cruelly short by a hip operation that went wrong. This in no way discouraged him from presenting the club with the Steel Bowl, a trophy recently won back from Bordeaux by the Hamsters with Derek present.

However, his other talents were recognised and he became chairman of the club. It was during this period that the possibility of a second court emerged, a project that received his enthusiastic support. Unfortunately his term finished before all the planning permissions had been obtained. He considered the ultimate decision not to proceed a tragic lost opportunity.

However, the project served to secure the Club Rooms and he ensured that both members and professionals were provided with decorations and furnishings worthy of a club of such standing.

For those who knew him well, his generosity and individual spirit will be long remembered.

Michael Banks

Head down and aim for the grill

More than 100 hungry revellers defy winds at the RTC summer barbecue

THIS regular event was held this year on Saturday 28 June. Care was taken in choosing the date to avoid clashing with the music festival and the flower show – and the congestion that has caused previously – and thus the BBQ took place earlier than usual and benefited from longer daylight.

Considerable activity occurred the day before, with marquees and gazebos being erected in the face of strong winds determined to dismantle that which had just been put up!

The event itself seems to have met with approval all round; well in excess of 100 people attended and polished off – in fairly short order – 65kg of lamb. Salads were provided with the meat and puddings followed. Eating was enhanced (as before) by the strains of Roger Todd's jazz band and entertainment in the form of the horseshoe-throwing contest (compèred by the one and only Martin Bronstein) added to the

scene. The weather treated us kindly.

Catering was provided as before by Patsy Belmonte and her staff. As always they did an excellent job and coped superbly with the last-minute swell in attendance, ensuring that all were well fed. Once again Brian and Viola Mason and daughters ran the cash bar.

In addition to thanking all those mentioned above, my special thanks go to Graham Aston, whose heroic work at the hot end enabled us to relish our lamb. He spent hours in preparation of his large-scale barbecue and then slaved away for ages in intense heat, roasting the massive pieces of meat. His dehydration was only prevented by administration of large volumes of (non-alcoholic!) liquid. He then spent much time the following morning clearing up. Many thanks indeed are due to him for his expertise and sheer hard work.

Julian Sheraton-Davis and Adam

Stebbins came armed with razor-sharp knives and did a long stint expertly carving the roasted lamb. Thanks as well to David Best, who provided artificial lighting as darkness approached, thus preventing people tripping over things.

I wish to thank my helpers with the assembly of marquees and gazebos the day before the event – particularly Robert Frost, who spent the best part of nine hours helping to put things up (and managing to go on court three times that day!). John Clark and his son Tom gave a hand and we benefited from the wise counsel of David Glover at one stage.

Saturday/Sunday morning help came from Lindsay Hatchett, Tony Whitfield, John and Sam Halliday, David Rowley and Adam Stebbings. Merci à tous.

All in all a well-received evening; sincere apologies if I have failed to mention anyone who also helped.

David Seelig



Clockwise from above: Martin Bronstein and David Best; John Yarnall and Peter Ohlson (presumably plotting their doubles win); Rhona Russell and Julian Sheraton-Davis; Richard East and Adam Stebbings; Linda Sheraton-Davis





Left: Graham Aston gets to grip with the meat.
Above: Roger Todd and his jazz funk band

COMMANDER DOUGLAS HUNT MBE, DSC*

14 JULY 1916–8 JULY 2008

On 12 July 2007, Duggie invited his family and friends – over 100 of them! – to celebrate his 91st birthday at a ‘hog roast’ at the Tithe Barn at Loseley Park. His actual birthday was two days later, but because this was a Saturday the Barn was unavailable on that day. This year 14 July fell on a Monday, so Duggie was able to plan his hog roast on the day of his 92nd birthday. But it was not to be, and he died on the 8th. His family decided to organise his funeral on the 14th and to go ahead with ‘refreshments’ at Loseley, as Duggie would have wished. This was a sad but joyous occasion, and memories and reminiscences of a wonderful character flowed.

The excellent obituary in *The Daily Telegraph* on 26 August [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/2621121/Commander-Douglas-Hunt.html] told us much that we might have suspected but did not know about his distinguished service record. Captain Trevor Robotham RN recalled that, in July 1944, MTB 245, under Duggie’s command, attacked a much superior force of armed trawlers. After a furious action, his boat was heavily damaged and taking in water but was eventually towed back to Felixstowe by an ocean-going tug, after 16 hours of towing. Duggie took immense pride in the fact that a cruiser – a much larger boat – piped the side and saluted his much smaller and junior boat as they entered harbour with only the super-structure and an additional four inches of the boat still visible above water – a notable mark of respect from a very senior to a very junior command!

The Daily Telegraph refers to his many and wide interests, which included dogs, horses, hunting, fishing, the ‘Horners’ – and of course squash rackets and real tennis. Duggie told me of the occasion when, in January 1949, he was drawn against his great friend Melvill Boustead (the eventual semi-finalist) in the first round of the Amateur Squash Rackets Championship at the Lansdowne Club. The only person in the gallery was the

appointed professional marker, former Open champion Donald Butcher. There was a small clash in the middle of the court whereupon Boustead immediately offered a let. Duggie had never encountered a let before. Despite Boustead’s protestations, Butcher cried ‘No let!’ and the game continued (3-0 to Boustead). After that experience Duggie never asked for a let during the rest of his squash career.

Duggie’s nephew Geoff Pullen recalled that as Duggie grew older he had to give up some of his pastimes (“When you are young you just fall off a horse – when you are older you just splatter!”).

Duggie’s vicar at Compton said that many of Duggie’s friends would have special memories of him. Some might think that he was the funniest person that they had ever met. What an epitaph!

John Partridge

IN 1973 I was invited to play in a regular Saturday morning doubles – and continued to do so for the next 13 years. The existing regulars at that time were Duggie, Austen Kark (who died in the Potters Bar accident), Geoff Welch and Ray Wigger (both of whom have died fairly recently) so for a while there were five of us – until Austen moved away.

Duggie was invariably the life and soul of the group – entertaining us with various stories and (at times) not-so-subtle jokes. As readers of *The Daily Telegraph* will have seen in his obituary, he had a highly distinguished war record in the RNVR. On no occasion can I recall him referring to his war years. At the time of writing this (27 August), *The Times* has informed me that an obituary will be published shortly.

His warm personality and easy-going manner will long be remembered by the many members who knew him.

David Seelig

NATIONAL LEAGUE MATCH, 1 OCTOBER

A MAJOR Premier League match will be played at Hampton Court on Wednesday 1 October. RTC will face Cambridge, the visitors being led by the "unbeatable" world champion Rob Fahey.

Nick Wood and Ben Matthews have been putting in excellent training over the past three months (as any member who has witnessed their sessions on court will attest) and hope to repeat RTC's victory of last season.

To help defray the cost of these matches, they are now ticketed, with prices as shown below.

To book your seat at this important event, please contact the pros – and tickets are already running out, so don't delay...

NATIONAL LEAGUE TICKETS

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Dedans (front row) | £12 |
| Dedans (back row) | £10 |
| Hazard upper gallery | £5 |
| Food | £5 |

RESULTS

Seal Salver

Last 16:

Graham Prain bt Alan Dallamore 9-2
Sue Haswell won w/o
Tom Kendall bt Richard Stocks 9-8
Peter Ohlson by Patrick Jenkins 9-4
Richard East won w/o

Quarter-final line-up:

Brian Rich v Graham Prain
Sue Haswell v Tom Kendall
Mike Seymour or Ian Hird v Peter Ohlson
Richard East v Bernard Weatherall

RTC Top Ten

Leading handicaps
August 2008

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| 1. Dave Harms | 5.9 |
| 2. David Watson | 11.9 |
| 3. Simon Barker | 12.1 |
| 4. Robert Hird | 12.5 |
| 5. James Sohl | 16.0 |
| 6. John Ward | 16.9 |
| 7. Buster Mottram | 17.2 |
| 8. Mark McMurrugh | 18.5 |
| 9. Michael Bray | 18.8 |
| 10. Fred Satow | 20.2 |

Oliver Lewis storms to Lathom Browne success

Handicap difference proves too much of an obstacle for Owen Saunders in final

PLAYING carefully and taking full advantage of the difference in handicap, Oliver Lewis (57 handicap) beat Owen Saunders (38) to win the final of the Lathom Browne Cup 9-4.

Saunders could not overcome the 30-owe 15 difference. Some games were decided in less than a minute – an error from Saunders and a winner from Lewis and it was all over. Under these circumstances, Saunders had to play error-free tennis and this he failed to do, probably because Lewis was playing above the standard one would expect from a 57 handicap. ("I've been on 57 for ever," the winner said later).

Saunders seemed to have got the measure of Lewis at 2-2 but then lost the next four games in short order. He rallied to get back to 4-6 but too many errors allowed Lewis to cruise through the next three games, finishing with a flourish from the Hazard end with a fine force into the dedans.

"I didn't want to hit the ball low over the net because I usually put the ball in it," Saunders said. The result was that he played too carefully, allowing Lewis plenty of time on the ball, which then put Saunders under pressure.

The 2007 champion, Nicola Cavill, was there to pass the Lathom Browne trophy on to Lewis and also to try to explain (sheepishly) why the trophy was in three parts, having been a one-piece trophy when presented to her last year.

Congratulations to Oliver – but he should know that his days at 57 are numbered...

Martin Bronstein

Quarter-finals:

Fred Satow bt Scot Levy 9-2
Owen Saunders bt Dan Cundy 9-7
Sarah Parsons bt Martin Daly 9-3
Oliver Lewis bt Ralph Cake 9-6

Semi-finals: Owen Saunders bt Fred Satow 9-8

Oliver Lewis bt Sarah Parsons 9-4

FINAL: Oliver Lewis bt Owen Saunders 9-4



Owen Saunders (left) and Oliver Lewis conceal their pre-match nerves well

The Royal Tennis Court Newsletter

is published four times a year and welcomes contributions from members

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