



THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT



Peter the great!

RTC's finest takes his final bow from top-level tennis

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Darcie rules OK!

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Come and support the Cockram Cup

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The Spring Newsletter 2024

Number 137

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CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

In the world of (health and) safety, we teach something called the "Swiss Cheese model", the concept being that in any disaster there are often three or more "failsafes" that actually failed. In our case - a player's cardiac arrest in the Dedans after a Night Pennant match on 2nd March - it was the opposite.

Nick Wood had led a discussion about the defibrillator just four days prior; a Professional was on duty; there was no delay in getting to the victim - David Peregrine-Jones - and no delay in getting the machine. The machine had been maintained and was ready. The playing members present did their part, calling 999 and assisting wherever possible; the operator (Nick Wood himself) was trained, working quickly and calmly; the Palace team were immediately active to support CPR and to direct the ambulance, leading to a successful resuscitation.

According to NICE, fewer than one in 10 people survive an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. Both RTC and the Palace have already conducted a review to assist us in making use of the experience ready for the next occurrence, whatever and whenever that may be. The Ambulance Service are preparing a press release citing this case as an exemplar. Most importantly, at time of writing, David P-J is recovering well and has kept us up to date through regular contact. He sends his thanks for your concerns and recovery wishes.

Confession time: over the past 10 years when I walk out of the locker room, past the notices, down the corridor to the dedans, past the notices, or to the Pro shop, past the notices, I rarely notice the notices. One of them is entitled "Emergency procedures". Just saying...

By the time you read this our members' survey will have been completed. I hope your voice is represented. On the one hand, we are all deluged with opportunities to give feedback, star ratings or opinions to the point that many of us are highly selective in what we respond to. Thank you to all who found time to respond to this particular survey. The outcome will be analysed and I commit that it will receive a great deal of attention in the near term!

Thanks to Giles Doy who executed the survey to a tight deadline, to our Comms team and to Nick and the Professionals for shepherding more than 150 of us through the exercise.

It's an appropriate time to single out Giles for making our game a bit more fun! Not content with inventing *Reste*, a card game that simulates Real Tennis, he has created the Winning Gallery website and Instagram presence full of facts and stats, invented Chase Bingo, and is now working on a

Fantasy Real Tennis competition. Oh, and as mentioned above, he managed to find time to put together our members' survey.

Please note Nick's paean to Peter Wright, our erstwhile best amateur. He will be missed, particularly at Pol Roger time. For those who want to keep up with him, look up "The Racketeer" on Instagram.

While we are thanking people who make a real difference, let's take a moment to single out Paul Newton, our Honorary Secretary for the last nine years. In RTC terms, this is the end of an era. He has been far more than simply Honorary Secretary. To use a football analogy, he's been an all-star sweeper. To extend the analogy, he's not been hanging around the goal for a tap-in. It's been nine years of high work rate, watching the near post and setting his team-mates up with pin-point passes.

No-one cares more about the Royal Tennis Club than he does and few care less about recognition and accolades. Please take the opportunity to thank him quietly for nine years of selfless service to the club!



Dates for your Diary

If you will enjoy any of the following events and dates, please support them in the way that you prefer:

5th-8th May – the Cockram Trophy – The four nations of Real Tennis (Jeu de Paume and Court Tennis) in an over 50 team competition. We would love to see full dedans for this event, hosted in Great Britain every eight years and for the first time at RTC.

28 July through 4th August – our [6th] Champion's Trophy, presented by Mitsubishi Electric Europe. There will be many opportunities to volunteer, spectate or billet our visiting Professionals.

23-25 August – Field of the Cloth of Gold return match. You can see a write up of the 2022 contest in our club room, next to the Cloth of Gold itself. Please look for an opportunity to participate and to welcome our visitors from Fontainebleau.

Doug Sheperdigian

The Wright stuff - a tribute

As the curtain of Peter Wright's inspirational Real Tennis career draws to a close, a new journey beckons with padel - and a chance to become the new kid on the block again!

Recent advice from knee specialists urged him to bid farewell to competitive Real Tennis - and Peter is not one to play at half speed. However, his indomitable spirit remains undeterred and with his characteristic determination and zeal he embraces this fresh challenge with open arms.

His sporting journey began in South Devon. Inspired by his mother, a PE teacher, young Peter excelled in a myriad of sports, including rugby, cricket and football. However, it was his prowess on the lawn tennis court that truly set him apart, as he quickly ascended through the ranks of area, county and regional standards with relative ease.

After a stint at Warwick University, where he was runner-up in the British Universities Lawn Tennis Championships, he made the leap into professional lawn tennis. His talent and hard work brought him a commendable world ranking of 970, and a UK ranking of 21. Following his tenure in professional lawn tennis, and a return to rugby - which ended with a broken rib and punctured lung - he was prompted to reassess his sporting pursuits. Remembering glimpses of Real Tennis from his junior days at Queen's Club, he felt drawn to the mystical sport of Kings. In



Picture: Doug Sheperdigian

Peter Wright at full stretch on the Royal Tennis Court

2001, at the age of 33, he embarked on a new chapter, immersing himself in the captivating world of amateur Real Tennis.

Throughout Peter's ascent and impressive career in the world of Real Tennis, he achieved many notable titles including the prestigious World Champion Over 50's crown, five Amateur Doubles titles, and the honour of representing and captaining Great Britain on three occasions in the esteemed Bathurst Cup.

But when asked what he feels are

his biggest successes, beyond the titles and accolades, Peter says it is the immense pride he has in his ability to compete at the highest echelons of the game. His competitive spirit is evidenced by his taking on and defeating younger, full-time professional players, even when well into his 50s. It's a testament to his skill, determination and enduring love for the sport.

In just a few short months, Peter has transitioned from Real Tennis stalwart to padel enthusiast, igniting a flame of passion that will burn brighter with every

practice, training session, and match. Inevitably, with the same fervour and dedication that defined his Real Tennis career, he has thrown himself wholeheartedly into mastering the intricacies of this new and dynamic sport.

Already, Peter has donned the red dragon of Wales at the over 55's level, proudly representing his homeland (on his mother's side) on the international stage. Yet his ambitions extend far beyond national borders. With a steely resolve and unwavering commitment, he sets his sights on representing Great Britain Seniors and competing in tournaments nationwide.

With each swing of the racket, he embodies the pursuit of excellence, refusing to settle for anything less than his best. "I'll carry on being me and give padel everything I've got. That way I will get the most out of my time on court - enjoyment and maybe some victories along the way," he says.

Here's to Peter Wright and his bold venture into the next campaign. As he continues to chase his dreams we can all be reminded of the transformative power of passion, perseverance, and the relentless pursuit of finding the best in ourselves.

The world of Real Tennis will feel the loss, as will those who were lucky enough to partner and train with Peter, or spend time on the court and receive his wise and experienced guidance.

Nick Wood

It'll be a corker of a Cockram

RTC members will be aware that RTC is hosting the prestigious World Masters - Cockram Trophy event from the 5th-8th May. Teams of the best players over the age of 50 from Great Britain, Australia, USA, and France compete in a group of matches - six fixtures, three singles and two doubles per fixture. It would be wonderful to have your support during the event. If you were able to drop into the club and support the tennis as an RTC representative, that would be great! Here's the format and times for this fantastic event:

**Saturday 4th Practice sessions 09:00-18:00;
Saturday 4th 18:30 Welcome Drinks Party;
Sunday 5th Practice session 09:00-12:00; Sunday 5th USA v Australia 12:00 start; Monday 6th Australia v France 08:00 start; Monday 6th Great Britain v USA 15:00 start; Tuesday 7th USA v France 08:00 start; Tuesday 7th Great Britain v Australia 15:00 start; Wednesday 8th Great Britain v France 08:00 start.**

Hopefully we'll see you there!

Nick Wood

Shorts' long journey

I introduced my son Jack to Real Tennis a few years ago and he's been part of the club's excellent junior programme. His interest in the game has grown and grown over the last year or so, as has his ability. It seemed only recently that I was giving him shots and taking it fairly easily on him when we played. Recently though, his handicap has dropped like a stone and he's now giving me shots (although noticeably, not taking it easy on me!).

He recently turned 18 and wanted to play tennis on his birthday, so we booked a court at Hampton Court for an early start. This morphed into a plan to play other courts on the same day. We also fancied Seacourt on Hayling Island and catching up with Josh Smith at Holyport (Josh was Jack's first coach at RTC). We booked Seacourt at lunchtime and Holyport in the late afternoon, and planned our route. It was on Good Friday and it was going to be tight if there was lots of traffic, so we hoped the weather would be terrible to deter people from driving down to the coast.

The first game at Hampton Court began at 8.30am and I raced into a lead with a couple of quick wins, largely because Jack was still asleep. Unfortunately for me he woke up and started to reel me in, eventually winning 6-5, 2-1 after some hard-fought games. I didn't help myself by somehow managing to hit my own funny bone with my racquet in the penultimate game, but no excuses!



James and Jack Short at the end of their birthday tour

Onwards to the South Coast and Hayling Island. Luckily, it was pouring down and there wasn't much traffic; we had time to drive down to the beach before we played. I'd arranged the court with Tim, one of the pros, and he looked after us very well, giving us a tour of their great facilities.

On the court there was a similar pattern to our first match: again I took a quick lead and felt revenge was on the cards. However, again Jack reeled me in and won the first set 6-5, ending 3-3 in the second set. At least I was getting closer to him though!

The court at Seacourt seemed to suit Jack's game very well, being

very skiddy. He often hits the ball very hard with a low trajectory close to the nick; this made a lot of his shots unreturnable for me. We both really enjoyed playing a new court. The picture of the Mary Rose on the grille is a really nice touch.

We hit the road again with a quick refuelling stop at GR Eggs, the choice of all the best athletes... It was a pleasant drive up to Holyport, near Maidenhead, particularly noting the traffic jams now heading down to the coast, as it was now an sunny Bank Holiday.

After a bit of confusion due to a Thames Water van obscuring the entrance to Holyport, we arrived at the final court of the day. We

managed to get there a bit early and had a great catch up with Josh. Holyport is a hidden gem; the clubroom is a wonderful light and airy space.

I was starting to feel the effects of two matches and the driving (excuses in early!). Jack seemed to be as fresh as he was when he started and was, unfortunately for me, now wide awake (I'm sure he had a nap in the car!).

My hopes of a win in the final match were quickly extinguished with Jack winning 6-1, 6-2. I lost the ability to count in the third set but it felt like annihilation (75 minutes court time is too long, Josh!).

It was a great day, even if I was on my knees by the end, and I felt very lucky to have spent it with Jack - he has become a promising player. I think I need some more lessons to try and keep up - that's probably the last time we'll play off level!

The final tally was about 35 games to Jack and about 19 to me, and 160 miles covered. We're now planning to head up to Jesmond Dene via Leamington for our next road trip.

Many thanks to Tim and Josh for being so welcoming. I'd recommend anyone who gets the chance to go and play at both courts, as it was great to experience our wonderful sport in some different locations.

James Short



Congratulations to Bashir Mohammed & Max Morland who won the RTC Handicap Doubles tournament, defeating Will Emmines and Jack Short in the final. A total of 32 pairs competed in the doubles group stage event providing lots of tennis for everyone.

Over the weekend there were 37 matches with all the players competing with all kinds of handicap differences but ultimately overcoming nerves and playing consistently. Well done to Bashir and Max - worthy winners of this year's event. And a 'hats-off' citation to the tournament's best-dressed players - Dick Cowling and Oliver Buckley

What a fabulous weekend of tennis we had at the Under 25 Tournament Weekend from 12 to 14 April! We had 14 players enter the tournament, the majority of whom entered at least two events, resulting in a successful and sociable weekend. We also had a great mix of players, some of whom had not entered the tournament before, so it was a fantastic opportunity for everyone to meet and play some competitive tennis. It was particularly lovely to see Oscar Bush back playing - the last time we had seen Oscar was at the tournament two years previously.

The weekend started with the Wollaston Cup Handicap Singles. We had three round robin groups of four, each group matched as closely as possible by handicap. Group 1 saw Will Emmines winning the Group stage with Henry Dalton as runner up. Group 2 saw three individuals each win two matches, so the winner and runner up were decided on games won, with Henry Pearson-Miles going through as the winner of the group, and last year's Wollaston Cup holder, Martha Rait, coming through as # runner up. Particular mention goes to Jack Short and Henry Pearson-Miles, who went down to the wire with Jack just beating Henry 6/5.

In the final Group there were some tremendous matches but the best was the game between Max Morland and Kelan Humphries which again went to 5-5, with Max just winning 6/5. Max therefore went through as the winner of that group with Kelan as runner up. In the quarter finals Kelan beat Martha and Max beat Henry Dalton. The two semi finals were spectacularly close, showing the handicaps are working. Kelan beat Will 6/4 and Max beat Henry Pearson-Miles also 6/4 to set up a

Juniors put on a dazzling display

great final between Kelan and Max, with Kelan taking the title for the first time 6/3.

Saturday afternoon saw the final of the Vaughan Trophy Level Doubles, with Robert Blizzard and Henry Dalton taking on Michael Galley (who had won the title the previous year with Robert) and Thomas Dolan. What a thrilling final, with both sides playing a very tactical game with incredible restes. It could not have been closer— unsurprisingly it went to 7/7 with Michael and Thomas winning the final game to win the title 8/7. It was lovely for Michael to win the title for the second year in a row, and also for Thomas to win in his first year of entering.

Sunday was devoted to the Chairman's Cup, the U-25 Level Singles. Again we had a great entry so were able to start with two groups each playing each other off level. Particular mention goes to the very close matches between Henry Dalton and Thomas Dolan (Henry finally winning 6/4) and the match between Jack Short and Henry Pearson-Miles (with Jack holding his nerve to win 6/5). James Derrick went through as the winner of his group with Henry Dalton coming through as the runner up.

In Group 2 Robert Blizzard proved too strong for all his opponents, winning his matches 6/1, 6/0, 6/0, so went through as the winner of Group 2. Henry Gibbons was runner up but had to concede as he needed to leave, so was replaced by Jack Short as the runner up. The quarter finals saw a fantastic match between Henry Dalton and Jack Short, both playing shots significantly better than their handicap, with Jack winning 6/3.

Robert Blizzard played James Derrick in the first semi final with a great 6/1 win. In the other semi final George Parsons proved too strong for Jack Short, winning 6/0. The final therefore was George Parsons vs Robert Blizzard. Although George won 8/0, the match was tremendous with some great restes and Robert showing huge talent – he will definitely be the one to beat next year.

Thank you to all the players, to Jack for coordinating the draw, to Jack and Les for marking a lot of the matches and to the parents for all their support. As Junior Development Officer I am delighted to see such a great bunch of juniors who are clearly loving their Real Tennis. Many are preparing for their GCSE and A level exams, starting in May, and we wish them every success in these. We also very much hope that some of them will have the opportunity to play our wonderful sport at university.

Final winners:
Wollaston Cup Handicap Singles: Kelan Humphries. *Vaughan Trophy Level Doubles:* Michael Galley and Thomas Dolan
Chairman's Cup: George Parsons

Sarah Parsons

Double (doubles) delight for Darcie



RTC's Darcie Blaber and Martha Raitt (right) did fantastically at the National School Girls Level U-19 tournament at Wellington College. Martha played superbly, winning two group stages before losing at the next group stage on the Saturday - what an achievement, playing eight matches in a day. Darcie joined in the final group stage on the Sunday with some very tight matches with excellent restes that went down to the wire. She successfully reached the final and went on to win the U-19 School Girls title 8-4! Brilliant achievement, Darcie! In the doubles Darcie and Martha teamed up and reached the final. Again it was a fabulous match, but the pair finally lost 8-4.



RTC duo win National School Girls Level Under 15 Singles and Doubles Championships 2024! Congratulations to Darcie and Eadie Blaber, with Darcie winning the singles AND the doubles competition with sister Eadie. She also now holds both the U19 and U15 National Schools Singles titles. Darcie hit so accurately into both corners and some beautiful cross court backhands to deservedly win the match 8-2. Five pairs competed in the doubles competition from five different schools. In the finals, despite their opponents Georgia and Cecily's efforts to stay at the service end, Darcie's consistency and her ability to retrieve proved just too strong, and Darcie and Eadie won 8-3.

That's just champion, Mr Chairman

As many of you will know, after tendon repair surgery and since January I've been playing left-handed while rehabbing my right elbow. You can find me on RTO as "Lefty" Sheperdigian.

For those of you who suffer injuries to your playing arm, I can recommend trying the game out with the off-hand. It forces you to learn (re-learn) the basics, is good for your neural pathways, and you meet new people.

Our game's handicap system takes care of any deficits, of which there are several. Things don't work so well. That which was once simple becomes difficult. Overheads? Forget it! The safe bobble? It's a lottery; I've never double faulted so much! It's one thing to play friendlies and quite another to compete. In competition, sometimes, the machine breaks down in new, unexpected ways.

My new handicap allowed me to compete in the Category G held at

Oratory school on the 12-14th April. The Oratory facilities are extensive and impressive, including a Real Tennis court, which I can recommend for those looking for a game in the Reading area.

The tournament was straight knock-out with 15 competitors, all within 60-69 handicaps. Almost every match in the tournament was close and could have gone either way with just a few points. My first round was three sets, as was the final, with two matches in between on a knife edge.

Consequently, for the organisers it was two very long days (Ged Parsons on Saturday and the GOAT himself on Sunday). Admittedly, simply being on court under Rob Fahey's eye provided high motivation. We have no doubt about his playing ability yet his marking was no less impressive as he marked more than 11 hours without making an error!

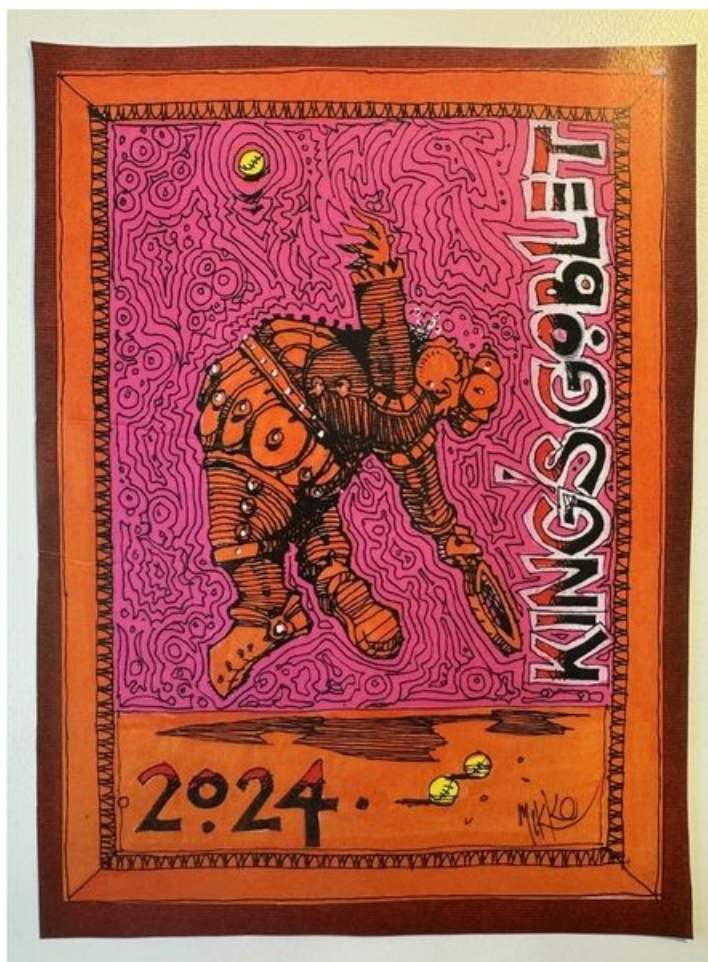


Here's a picture after my seven hours on court. In the final I played Chris Blake of Wellington, who took me to the absolute limit! I'm pleased to report that despite being down 5-1 in the second set, I was able to claw back to level and managed to win the final set 6-4.
Doug Sheperdigian

Preparations continue apace for the 2024 King's Goblet tournament, taking place from June 27th - 30th. This is RTC's only open tournament, counting five non-RTC winners over the years. Usually we welcome between 15 and 25 non-RTC players from around the UK (and sometimes from abroad!) to make up the field of 48.

The four days of handicap doubles will see Prested Hall's Dan Worboys and Holyport's Daniel Konrad Cooper battle to defend the crown they won magnificently in 2023.

There is a full schedule of social events and the club will be buzzing – feel free to pop down and experience the event and chat to players, and maybe we can tempt you into entering



Champions' Trophy



The Real Tennis Champions Trophy 2024 will take place at RTC between Sunday July 28th and Sunday August 4th.

This is your chance to see some of the world's best players battle it out for our club's premier annual Real Tennis event. Once again this tournament is supported by Mitsubishi Electric.

Make a date in your diary to come along, see some fantastic tennis and support your club. Details to follow by e-mail.

Hamsters knock MCC for six

RTC stalwarts prove too strong for visitors

In March MCC visited Hampton Court for the annual fixture versus the Royal Tennis Court's Hamsters, for five doubles matches over six hours: 1hr12 per match or best of three full sets. The hosts RTC Hamsters won 3 – 2.

Graeme Marks & "Arch Hamster" Oliver Buckley kicked things off with a smart victory against Iain Harvey (MCC skipper) & Jonathan Channon. With three 40-alls in the first four games one would be forgiven for thinking the score-line would be closer, but Hamsters took the first five games without much trouble.

Jonathan really got his eye in to claw a bit back, and he and Iain were much improved in the second set, although again having to come from a few games down before they threatened the oppo. The Hamsters closed it out with only a minute to spare on the clock: 6-2, 6-5 RTC.

RTC's Richard McMillan & Charlie Kearn took a pummeling from Nigel Smith & Fergus Boyd. Nigel is the holder of the MCC's H.D. John's club doubles trophy and Fergus was one of his defeated final opponents, so no surprise that they were capable as a pair.

The less said about this match the better, only the need to credit the MCC players for their ruthlessness and the Hamsters for immediately cracking on with hospitality duties after their loss. 1-6, 3-6 MCC.

Ian Hopkins was partnered by Ralph Wilkinson from the wider RTC membership as they took on Anton Eisdell & Stephen Oldschool. Stephen had not played since eye surgery a couple of years ago - brave to return to court in a competitive



match. Stephen had no trouble with calling 'hazard ½ chases', so we assume his eyesight was just fine, but his lack of match play was telling.

Ralph deployed his learnings from time spent with the RTC Pros, having taken up the sport not quite a year ago (on Graeme Marks' recommendation): unreturnable railroads galore.

The best shot of this match was Ralph's half-yard corner seeker which beat chase 2nd and won the first set. Ian was steady as expected and a good supportive partner throughout. 6-1 6-2 RTC.

Graeme came on for his second match of the day (his third in 24 hours after winning for MCC v Rugbeians on Friday night) this time partnering Vernon Morris, who had put in a shift marking the preceding matches. The marking sheet for this one has gone AWOL, but from the memory of the players the key was a mix of aggression and consistency.

Oliver Wise and Jonathan Cundy used their bisque handicap extremely well. Graeme (MVP) achieved his second win of the day and with it Hamsters retained the Laurie Lowenthal Trophy with a final score of 6-5 6-2 RTC.

News in Brief

The Club's Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday May 12, starting at 11am in the Club room. This is your chance as a member to hear about your Club's current state of play, finances, and aims for the future. There will be opportunities for questions from the floor. This is an important day - please do attend.

ooOoo

The Club garden has been given several makeovers by a small team of volunteers and in spite of the wet and cold Spring the results are now beginning to bloom. As the weather warms up it is a lovely space in which to relax before or after a game. The garden is also available for hire by members for private events - one member is planning a wedding party there in May!

ooOoo

Earlier this season RTC were delighted to host a social match vs Petworth Real Tennis Club. The format was four doubles matches of 90 minutes each, allowing for a decent three sets per match. The handicap ranges were fairly even which resulted in some very close sets - the 3rd rubber was 6-5, 5-6, 5-6!! The result was a 2-2 draw, so a rematch is on the cards. RTC's team consisted of Jed Dalton, Nick Jeffery, John Leach, Tim Church, Tom McNeilis, Patrick Jenkins, Nick McCleod Clark and Giles Doy. Everyone was able to enjoy lunch in the dining room with plenty of food and wine to satisfy hungry players. Thank you to everyone who helped on the day to make it such a successful fixture. Peta Louise Jeffery

ooOoo

Many congratulations to RTC's Joe Sharpe, playing for Newcastle 1, who edged the final of the Inter University Cup 2-1 against Cambridge 1. In the Inter University Tournament, a gripping final was won by Joe Sharpe of RTC who narrowly defeated Arianna Magnanini from MURTC, 6-4. Congratulations to all the players and thanks to the sponsors, the Dedanists' Foundation and Pol Roger together with the Tennis & Rackets Association and the CURTC Pros.

ooOoo

Isabel Candy and Nicola Doble, alongside former RTC members Jess Garside and Ed Kay, and other top amateurs travelled to Australia in March to represent GB in the Bathurst Cup. After many long and close matches, unfortunately both teams came second by just a single rubber.



Hatfield Tennis Club hosted the Billy Ross Skinner Invitational Mixed Doubles sponsored by Jesters & The Dedanists Foundation. The Billy Ross Skinner is an invitational event where the top 16 ladies available are paired with men of similar handicaps to try to give every pair an equal chance of winning. The early rounds are played to a repechage format which means each pair can lose a match but still progress and this year it was the runner-up in each group that ended up winning their quarter-final match to progress on the Sunday. This year's final was between Alex Brodie & Oskar Knötschke vs Nicola Doble (RTC) & Grant Miller (Oxford) and it did not disappoint. Alex and Oskar came flying out the blocks taking the first set 6/0, before Grant and Nicola tactically switched the return of serve and managed to get a foothold in the match. Trading games in a very tight 2nd set, it was Grant and Nicola that edged it 6/4 to set up a 3/3 final set finale! The final set went the distance and we found ourselves at 5/5 40-all, going down to the final point - and it was Nicola Doble & Grant Miller who were crowned the 2024 Billy Ross Skinner champions!

Oratory are on song



RTC hosted Oratory School in the Peter Luck Hille Cup in a great afternoon of real tennis. Despite the large handicap difference in each match in favour of Oratory, the matches were incredibly close with

some fantastic retrieving and restes. In addition, all the players were developing some very effective serves.

Oratory went ahead in the singles 2 matches to 1. RTC had their chances in

the doubles but Oratory proved too strong, coping well with the loud support for the home team, eventually winning all the doubles matches.

Final score 5/1 to Oratory School. Congratulations to