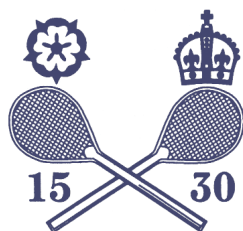


# THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT

## Hampton Court Palace



## SILVER SERVICE

LATHOM BROWNE FINALISTS FRED SATOW AND  
KAREN PROTTEY REUNITED AT THE CLUB DINNER

*Read more on page 4*

The Winter Newsletter 2014  
*Number 109*

# Chairman's Chat



**Club Dinner** Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's Club Dinner such a success, particularly Owen Saunders for organising the event, Nick Wood for sorting out the trophies and Linda Sheraton-Davis for buying and arranging the table flower arrangements. Many of the hundred who attended expressed to me their delight and pleasant surprise that the Garden Room at the Palace was such a welcoming venue for the event.

**Carol Service** Coming up on Wednesday 17 December at 7.30pm is the annual Carol Service in the Chapel Royal at the Palace, with mince pies and mulled wine afterwards at the club. Please come along and support this wonderful chance to hear some beautiful singing.

**National League Premier Division** As I write, the next home match for our team of Chris Champan and Peter Wright is on Saturday 6 December, against the Queen's Club. These matches are your opportunity to see top-class tennis for a very reasonable cost (included is a glass of Pol Roger Champagne and a hot meal). If you're reading this after 6 December, pencil in the dates for the next home matches instead: 31 January 2015 against Petworth and 28 March against Holyport.

**Court Closure 2015** Historic Royal Palaces have notified us that they are planning to undertake major structural works to the bases of the posts between the court windows. As I write, final approval has yet to be obtained, but this work is now highly likely to be done between May and November 2015. Unfortunately, the programme envisages closing the court from 1 June until 28 August. Once the scaffolding on the court has been removed, we should like to the opportunity to undertake

the repair and repainting of the court floor, including the lines. It is therefore proposed to reopen the court as early as is practicable in September 2015. While the closure of the court for such a length of time is of course regrettable, it is an inevitable consequence of being based in a building that is approaching 400 years of age. Further details of the proposed work as provided by HRP are set out on page 3. Compensation to the club for loss of the court and garden during the period of closure is currently being negotiated with HRP. In addition, arrangements are being made with neighbouring real tennis clubs for the temporary use of their courts by RTC members – look out in the next newsletter for further details of these arrangements.

**New Court Lights** Members of the Board have for some time been seeking suitable replacement light fittings for the court. We are in discussions with two possible light fitting suppliers, but some details still need to be resolved. We need to undertake field trials on the court and hope to do this within the next two months. An application to install LED light fittings will be included in the application for consent being submitted by HRP to English Heritage for Listed Building Consent for the structural works to the court. Assuming that we can identify a suitable light fitting at a reasonable cost, we hope to install the lights while the court is closed and the internal scaffolding is erected in summer 2015.

**Julian Sheraton-Davis**

## DATES FOR THE DIARY

### Pol Roger Trophy

☛ What better way to avoid Christmas shopping than sitting in a warm dedans watching the club's best players go for glory? Phil Dunn's team, boosted this season by the return to the fold of Tom Freeman and Nick Hatchett, take on Manchester from 10am through to 5 or 6pm on **Sunday 14 December**.

### Christmas Carol Service

☛ As advertised in the previous newsletter, the Carol Service takes place at the Chapel Royal at 7.30pm on **Wednesday 17 December**, followed by mulled wine and mince pies. Contact the pros for tickets.

### National League Premier Division

☛ The next home match for Chris Chapman and Peter Wright (following one on 6 December) will be against Petworth on **Saturday 31 January**.

## COMING UP

### RTC

**14 Dec:** RTC v Manchester (Pol Roger Trophy)  
**17 Dec:** Annual Christmas Carol Service  
**16-18 Jan:** Chetwood Trophy (for handicap champions)  
**24-25 Jan:** Harris Watson Trophy doubles  
**31 Jan:** RTC v Petworth (NL Premier Division)  
**1 Feb:** Pol Roger Trophy semi-final  
**7-8 Feb:** Barker Camm Cup Grade C (30-39 handicap)

### ELSEWHERE

**2-4 Jan:** Fathers & Sons Championships (Leamington)  
**6-11 Jan:** U-21 and U-24 Open (Middlesex University)  
**13-21 Jan:** Australian Open (Melbourne)  
**23-25 Jan:** Leamington handicap singles tournament  
**6-8 Feb:** Ladies' Masters (Holyport)  
**7 Feb:** Manchester v RTC (social match)  
**10 Feb:** Holyport v RTC (NL Premier Division)  
**13-15 Feb:** Billy Ross Skinner (mixed doubles, Hatfield)  
**19 Feb:** Queen's v RTC (NL Premier Division)  
**21 Feb-1 Mar:** Amateur Championships (Queen's)



# Court closure 2015

*Next summer Historic Royal Palaces will be carrying out conservation repairs to the roof support timbers and a number of other elements of the west elevation of the tennis court. Sadly, this will require the closure of the court for around three months. Details of arrangements to minimise the inconvenience to members will follow in the coming months, but in the meantime here are details of the planned works, courtesy of HRP surveyor **William Page***

## **Why this project?**

The real tennis court building stands on the same site as the original court, which was built by Cardinal Wolsey between 1526 and 1529. The original court was open, without a roof, and was built against the boundary wall on the east side and had timber sides.

The first major refurbishment to the court was by Charles I in 1625, when the walls were rebuilt in brick. In 1636 the court was covered for the first time when a roof was constructed, but the side windows were not glazed until the 19th century. Dendro-chronology carried out in 2010 enabled our curators to discover that the roof structure is a rare example of an Inigo Jones early design. The posts that support this important roof structure are in need of urgent repairs.

## **What is the problem?**

The main roof is supported by 11 timber posts to each elevation and forms part of the Inigo Jones roof structure. Our structural engineers' surveys, carried out during the last phase of work, revealed that all the bases to the posts and also the supporting sills to the windows are in varying stages of decay due to wet rot.

This decay has primarily been caused by a cement topping which was applied in the mid-20th century on top of the wall, abutting the window sills and also surrounding each of the post bases. When this cement dried, it shrank back from the adjacent timbers, allowing a moisture trap to form which precipitated the deterioration of the



*The cement capping moulded around the base of each post has provided a gap for trapping rainwater, leading to wet rot decay on the west elevation of the court*

timbers. During the last phase of work to the roof, a badly decayed timber balcony was fully recorded and then taken down for safety. Access scaffolding for the work to the posts will allow a new balcony to be fixed back on to the west elevation.

This access will also allow work to be carried out to the brickwork on the west elevation, as well as a complete redecoration of all the external joinery.

## **What are we doing?**

Our consultant architect and engineer have carried out detailed surveys and produced drawings and schedules for the conservation repair works. This work will include:

- Repairing the decayed lower end sections to all of the main timber support roof posts on the west and east elevations.
- Conserving, repointing and repairing the brick walls to the west elevation.
- Constructing and fitting a new balcony to replace the old balcony

which was taken down on the west elevation.

- Removing sections of the internal cementitious render currently covering a 16th-century wall to one side of the public viewing gallery corridor, allowing the wall to dry out.
- Complete external redecorations.

## **When is the work happening?**

The work has been put out to tender under a JCT CE contract this year. Construction works are planned to be carried out between May and November 2015. The playing court will need to be temporarily closed from June until the end of August. This is to allow support scaffolding to be constructed within the playing court area to support the roof structure while the post repairs are being carried out.

Approximately half the area of the club garden will also need to be cordoned off for scaffolding and to provide access for the contractor from the adjacent walled garden.

## • NEWS IN BRIEF • NEWS IN BRIEF • NEWS IN BRIEF •

### **On the rise**

Harriet Ingham, a leading squash player through her teens, has continued her improvement since turning her attention more to real tennis. She reached the semi-finals of the French Open in Paris, earning a shot at Claire Fahey (and taking four more games off the world champion than most of her contemporaries do), and she has enjoyed a 'double bagel' 6-0 6-0 win in the National League this season. In recognition of various successes and a tumbling handicap

(44 to 33 in 12 months), she won the Ronaldson Trophy at the Club Dinner, given to the club's most improved player.

### **Junior coaching sessions**

Work on junior development continues over Christmas, with more coaching sessions for kids. For beginners, there are one-hour sessions on 20, 21 and 27 December (all at 10am), and for intermediate-level children sessions are at 11am on 22, 23 and 24 December and at 10am on 28 December.

# The rocky road to Radley

*RTC's Brodie Cup team flourished briefly before running into Ronaldson's recruits*

After an opening win at home against Cambridge that was not nearly as straightforward as the 4-1 final score suggested, RTC headed up to Radley for the second round of the Brodie Cup. Things started perfectly for the visitors, with our 45+ doubles pair, of David Stephens and John Halliday, matching their performance in the first round with a resounding 6-1 6-1 win. A couple of youngsters with bright futures there.

Matt Webb, in the 30+ singles, was then unfortunate enough to come up against the rapidly improving Nino Merola. Nino works at the Radley sports centre as a squash pro and his handicap has dropped by 15 points in the past year, and six this season alone. Matt put up a brave fight, but Nino was too strong for him, taking the match 6-3 6-1. His returning of Matt's railroad serve – boasted hard against either wall or cut-volleyed to a

consistently good length – was particularly impressive.

On paper at least, Martin Daly, in the 40+ singles, had the best chance of our singles players. He made a better start than his opponent, Adam Jeffrey, and was soon 4-2 up. However, Adam's play moved up to a level that Martin could not match, and he won 10 out of the next 12 games to prevail 6-4 6-2.

That meant Will Cockerell had to win his 50+ singles match to keep RTC in the competition. However, opponent Nick King was a rapid improver, having reduced his handicap to 46 since the 1 September cut-off date.

The first set was 20 minutes in length and the punishment was swift and severe. In the second set Will took the first game, but again fell behind to 1-4. A brief comeback ensued, but it was all too brief and the home player closed out the match and the tie 6-0 6-2.

In the final, dead, rubber (35+

doubles), Dick Cowling and Harriet Ingham played a very tidy match, although it's hard to pay the blood price when the M40 home is going to be a sad slog whatever you do. In the second set they led 3-1 at one point, but then their wily opponents, Vern Cassin and Tim Robinson, set to work to crush the mutiny of the Palace, 6-2 6-3.

Anyway, it was still a fine day, the court is wonderful to experience, and our hosts laid on a majestic coq-au-vin, much chocolate cake, and far too much triple cream. And there's something quite thrilling for a novice to be marked by Chris Ronaldson.

The team already has the blinkers on for next year. Perhaps, as befits such a long-standing club, we are playing a long game: win one round this season; two the next; and so on until victory is ours in 2016-17!

**Martin Daly, Will Cockerell  
and Dick Cowling**

## Annual Club Dinner

*The Palace's Garden Room was a suitably grand venue for our prizegiving evening*



Early November saw the return to the Palace of the Annual Club Dinner and Prizegiving, as 100 members and guests celebrated in the magnificent Garden Room.

After a Pol Roger reception, guests enjoyed an excellent three-course meal, with the prizegiving hosted by Owen Saunders (above). The many and varied successes of the 2013-14 playing season were recognised, with winners' handicaps spanning from 6 to 72. Members also took the opportunity to thank the professionals for their fantastic efforts in making the competitions happen and running them.

The social committee is very keen that the annual event should take place at the Palace, and it's the intention to keep doing this in future. With members' support, we will look to do it in different venues within the grounds, possibly even a return to the Great Hall if there is enough support.



*There were plenty of prizes to go around (see winners above), plus a chance to thank the professionals (left) for their efforts over the past 12 months.*

**All photographs (including cover) by John Halliday**





# Conquering Middle England

*Two RTC members fared well in the Ladies' British Handicap in Warwickshire*

**T**hirty-six players gathered at Moreton Morrell and Leamington for this year's British Ladies' Handicap tournament, and it turned out to be a prosperous weekend for the Royal Tennis Court contingent.

In the **Division 1 singles** event, RTC's Charlotte Barker looked to be on the way out at 3-5 down in the quarter-finals against Linda Fairbrother, but a broken string for the latter meant lost time mastering a borrowed racket, during which Charlotte refound her form and won the next three games to go through 6-5.

In her semi-final, Charlotte faced Lucy Hutchinson. Charlotte came out all guns blazing and showed no mercy, stepping in and hitting at will on her way to a 6-1 win.

Charlotte was up against youth in the final, in the shape of Georgie Willis, the youngest player in the draw. Charlotte had rec 15-½ owe 30 in her favour, but this didn't seem to bother the Seacourt player. Charlotte was not tight enough on her serves to contain Georgie's big hitting and her ground strokes were floating too high, allowing Georgie to volley into the corners. At 0-3, Charlotte finally won two games in a row and Georgie began



*Top: RTC's Isabel Candy, Felicity Sargent, Diane Binnie and RTC's Charlotte Barker. Above: Charlotte and Isabel before their respective singles finals*

to look rattled. Could Charlotte capitalise on the errors and pull it off? No – Georgie reeled in the games, and won the match in fine form, 6-2.

In **Division 2**, more young players enjoyed success, including RTC's Isabel Candy. In her first match Isabel was too athletic for Liz Fisher (6-2). The quarter-finals saw her beat France's Audrey Perie 6-3. Then she took on Bristol's

Julia Vermont in a great contest, with Isabel fighting back from 2-4 to prevail 6-5.

Into the final, then, and an opponent, Cecile Alchuteguy, a very useful lawn tennis player back in France. Their style of play was similar: good at getting to the ball and great volleying, but not so effective at dealing with low cut balls.

Again Isabel trailed 2-4, and again she fought back, to 4-4 and then 5-4. Isabel then turned on the heat with a shot to the grille to reach 30-0 and then a super serve to make it 40-0. She held steady to force an error from Cecile, winning 6-4.

In the **Division 2 doubles**, Charlotte Barker and Julia Levy were knocked out in the first round but Charlotte then teamed up with fellow doctor Diane Binnie, whose partner had had to withdraw due to injury. This turned out to be a

cunning plan, as they advanced to the final – where Isabel Candy was waiting with partner Felicity Sargent.

The doctors began well and continued better, pulling out a lead of 4-1, and the youngsters had no plan B, enabling Charlotte and Diane to win comfortably 6-1.

**By Diane Binnie, Katy Weston, Lucy Hutchinson and Linda Fairbrother**

## H\*\*\*Ingham victorious as Pigeons are roasted

**I**n the social match that traditionally signals the start of the tournament season, RTC were victorious by a 3-1 margin over the Hurlingham Club, thanks in no small part to rising young star Harriet Ingham. Though mainly selected so that the match manager could conjure up a H Ingham/Hurlingham headline pun for this report, Harriet justified the selectors' faith as she put in an assured display to win what was, on paper, the hardest match to call.

Opening up proceedings, Lindsay Hatchett and Peter Ohlson came from behind to win a tight match against Rachel Heslop and Anthony Wilson, 5-6 6-5 4-1. Hatchett's strategy was mishit/winner/mishit/winner etc for the full 80 minutes, while Ohlson prowled the court silently and sagely, waiting for the moment to unleash his traditional match-winning pique serve at the crucial time. He duly delivered, as the pair came from

0-4 down in the second set to pull off an unlikely victory.

Next up were Ingham and Owen Saunders versus Elvira Campione and Patrick Jenkins. Fortunately Ingham wisely owned up to having "no idea about doubles, just tell me what to do" just before the match. Saunders marshalled his young charge and she followed the three cardinal doubles rules to the letter: get it over the net, hit the galleries, and there's nothing wrong with smashing it every now and again. A pleasing 6-3 6-4 victory to RTC.

Saunders and Robin Mulcahy then took on Heslop and Hurlingham captain Saverio Campione. A bravura performance from Heslop could not prevent an RTC victory as Saunders and Mulcahy targeted her mercilessly.

With the match won, Ingham and Matthew Webb lost focus against Michael Marcar and Patrick Jenkins, going from one set up to lose 6-5 4-6 1-2.

**Owen Saunders**

# National League

*It has been a challenging autumn for RTC's teams*

A healthy crowd was on hand to see the return of Premier Division tennis to the Palace – and it also saw the return of prodigal son Ben Matthews, who had just started his new role as head pro at Leamington.

Joining him was his former boss at Hatfield House, Jon Dawes, whose stylish play is matched by the fragility of his body. The last thing Jon would have wanted was a gruelling three-setter against RTC man Peter Wright – but that is exactly what he got. After they shared two tight sets, a long seventh game at 3-3 in the decider was the key, and after Jon took it with a backhand into the grille he was able to close out the match 6-3.

That brought the top men to the table, in the shape of Ben and our own Chris Chapman. After trailing 1-3 early on Chris used his railroad serve to great effect and backed it up with very sharp and authoritative volleying. He was on the front foot throughout, taking the match away from Ben and dictating everything. Five straight games gave him the first set 6-3, and after Ben had a better spell to lead 3-1 again in the second, Chris powered back, finishing off a 6-3 6-4 win with a quick love game.

Alas, a poor start in the doubles (RTC trailed 2-6 at one point, on the way to a 6-8 loss) meant victory on the night for Leamington – but for Chris it was still another promising evening.

By the time you read this, Chris and Peter will have hosted their second match, against Queen's. A trip to Petworth follows on 17 December.

## Division 2 (10 hcp +)

Early days here, although David Watson has already made his mark with two strong singles wins. In the home opener against Cambridge (featuring RTC member Ed Kay), David also teamed up with James Sohl in their doubles to claim a 2-1 win, but their trip to Lord's ended in a 2-1 defeat after a doubles loss.

## Division 3 (15 hcp +)

This division has been a strong one for RTC in recent years, and the defending champions have made a decent start, despite skipper Josh Smith being out for the foreseeable future with his ankle problem. After a 2-1 defeat at Moreton Morrell, they bounced back with a win

at Prested Hall before destroying the Paris team back at RTC.

## Division 4

Not much joy so far for RTC, as a trip to Lord's ended with a 3-0 defeat and the home opener against Hatfield was lost 2-1, with Stephen Goss grinding out a hard-fought three-set win before Simon Edmond came up just short in the No 1 rubber, losing 5-6 in the third.

## Division 5

It could not have been a better start for RTC, as a remarkable 3-0 win at Lord's was achieved without the loss of a single set – and in Geoffrey Russell's case without the loss of a single game! Our boys fell back down to earth at early pace-setters Hatfield with a 3-0 defeat, but with all their home fixtures yet to come they remain well placed.

## Division 6

Paul Wright's team have won this division four years in a row now, so expectations were high as the season began. However, it has all gone horribly wrong. Three away fixtures have ended in 3-0 defeats, leaving RTC with a mountain to climb in their home matches to catch up with the rest.

## Division 7

Dick Cowling's outfit opened up with a solid 2-1 home win over Leamington before succumbing to a 2-1 defeat at Lord's. In what promises to be a tightly fought division, the improvement of Matt Webb may help RTC towards the top of the table in the new year.

## Division 8

The highlight of an opening 2-1 win over Moreton Morrell was Harriet Ingham's 6-0 6-0 victory. Two days later, the team was on the wrong end of a 2-1 scoreline, with Peter Mather losing 6-5 in the third set of the top match.

## Division 9

A humbling 3-0 defeat at Oxford was followed by a much closer encounter at Canford, although the result was another loss (2-1), despite Saverio Campione's win. Back on home soil against Leamington, victories for both Elvira and Saverio Campione backed up a strong effort at No 1 by John Leach.

## Competitions round-up

☛ The T&RA's autumn category tournaments are a traditional season-opener for many players, including a healthy RTC contingent who headed to Dorset for the Category B event at the Hyde.

In the 10-14 section, **Ed Kay** breezed past all-comers, taking the title without dropping a set. Another trophy for the rising star, whom we share with Cambridge University. In the 15-19 draw, **David Watson** lost out in a three-set semi-final to Charlie Harries-Jones, and **Phil Dunn** suffered the same fate in the final, despite having led 6-5 4-0 at one point against the young Radley/Jesmond Dene player.

At Moreton Morrell, **Sue Haswell** reached the 25-29 final of category C before losing out to Hatfield assistant pro James Law. **Matt Webb** reached the 30-34 semi-final of Category D at Hatfield, meanwhile.

The highlight of the autumn events for RTC, though, surely came up at Leamington in Category F, where **Martin Bronstein**, erstwhile editor of this publication, broke a 30-year duck by claiming his first real tennis title. The 79-year-old (pictured) defeated a 21-year-old student in a tight final.



☛ The Barker Camm Cup is under way, as we move up through the grades to find the club singles champion. In the Grade F (60+) final, **Dick Haly** beat **Tony Cooke**, and Grade E saw **Sarah Parsons** defeat **Linda Sheraton-Davis**.

☛ Just before this newsletter went to press, **David Watson** won his fourth Bridgeman Cup (the national over-50s title), beating familiar foe William Maltby in a three-set final at Lord's. Congratulations to David.



# Chris Chapman, marathon man

*Josh Smith on an exhausting but very promising British Open for his colleague*

**T**welve months on from the 2013 British Open, many things remained the same. Chris Chapman was not one of them.

In 2013, Chris emerged victorious (3-1) against Conor Medlow in a tightly fought match, progressing to meet Tim Chisholm. That match saw the American outplay Chris, winning 3-0.

## **Medlow**

In 2014, Chris had an identical draw: Conor Medlow, Tim Chisholm and potentially Steve Virgona. Chris started well against Medlow, limiting the talented left-hander to his backhand (Medlow's forehand is a weapon that is ideally avoided). Cut side-wall serves forced the Queen's man to return on his backhand volley, a comparatively weaker, shot allowing Chris to capitalise on his position at the service end. Conversely, when receiving, Chris attacked Medlow's backhand with his own cut volley, meaning Chris started most points in a dominant position. He was too much for the young amateur, dispatching him 6-5 6-3 6-3.

## **Chisholm**

In the past 12 months Chris has developed his serve and return, two areas where Chisholm was deadly in the previous encounter. Ready for the challenge, Chris started well with pinpoint serving (giraffe) and vicious returns, racing ahead to a 3-0 lead. Chris was clearly trying to extend the rests, whereas Chisholm was looking to finish rallies early with his trademark returns. There was nothing to pick between the two, and in the blink of an eye Chisholm grabbed the first set 6-5.

Chisholm then moved 5-2 ahead in the second set. Chris tightened his serve and worked his opponent across the court with shots underneath the grille and winning gallery, bringing the set back to 5-5. However, the world No 5 resisted and again, seemingly without much ado, took the set 6-5.

Should Chris alter his game plan? The answer was a resounding no. He went 5-4 ahead in the third, and at 15-40 down, attacking a chase of better than a yard, Chris firing the ball at the dedans, forcing a racket error. A chase from Chris assured his return to the service end, where he then secured the set. A fist-pump from Chris: the match was on!

The fourth set was nip and tuck, and again it went to 5-5. As before, Chisholm played expertly, going 40-0 up from the receiver's end, setting a chase of better than two. Chris was staring down three match points and a short chase. Again, he attacked the return, and again he forced an error. He saved the remaining match points and crafted multiple set points of his own, but each was denied. Following deuces nearly in double figures, over 15 or 20 minutes, Chris was at another set point. This time he wouldn't let it go... Two sets all.

In the fifth, Chris was playing with more confidence and Chisholm was beginning to struggle when pushed into the corners. Chris pushed on and took the set 6-2. This was, to date, the biggest result of Chris Chapman's career.

## **Virgona**

Less than 24 hours later, Chris was back on court to face the defending

champion Steve Virgona, another venomous left-hander. Against a strong opponent who had yet to be tested in a long match, Chris needed to overcome both Virgona and fatigue if he was to progress.

The match began at a furious tempo; the steely-faced Chris of yesterday was gone and an increasingly emotive man was on court. Using the spectators to provide him with extra energy, Chris came out all guns blazing. The first set was a shootout and Chris took it 6-4. The same pattern would be repeated as he took the second; the match was a fast-paced, big-hitter's paradise.

Then Virgona took a five-minute injury break, after which the tide had changed. Chris's momentum had stalled; Virgona came out a new man, playing with increasing precision and power. The third and fourth sets seemed to roll by in an instant.

Chris needed a change in momentum. For the second day in a row he was into a fifth set. The first four games of the set were incredibly tight and Chris took the fourth with two main-wall dedans that were noisily cheered by all. Virgona found an extra gear, increasing pressure on a fatigued Chris, who in the heat of battle landed awkwardly and needed his own injury break. Unfortunately for Chris, there was no recovery from here, as Virgona put the pedal to the metal and secured the set and match.

The 2014 British Open was over for Chris. His last two matches, played over a 27-hour period, consisted of ten sets and 95 games out of a maximum possible 110. Much to be proud of – and who knows what we will see in 2015 from Chris Chapman...

## Professional tournaments: Riviere on top

**B**efore the British Open in late November, Chris Chapman had already played tournaments in Paris and Manchester this autumn.

In the French Open in Paris, he had the unenviable draw in the last 16 of world champion Rob Fahey – but this turned out to be the match in which Chris confirmed that he belongs at the top table. The champion advanced 6-3 4-6 6-5 6-5, but only after Chris had put him through a gruelling three-hour examination. The title was won by Camden Riviere, who annihilated Steve Virgona.

Up in Manchester for the IRTPA Championships, a softer draw meant an easy passage for Chris through to the

semi-finals, where he found Riviere too much to handle. The American world No 1 then beat Bryn Sayers in four sets to add another title to his long list.

Riviere then added the British Open to that list, defeating Virgona in a five-set thriller. This means Riviere has won every singles event he has entered in 2014 except one... the World Championship.

Claire Fahey (née Vigrass) made history in the British Open, competing alongside the men and winning one match before losing heavily to Ben Matthews. In September, Claire had added another ladies' French Open title, beating our own Harriet Ingham in the semi-finals.

# Woking overtime

## David Best on a revealing visit to Woking Palace

Following an invitation from the Friends of Woking Palace for members of the Royal Tennis Court to visit the site during the recent excavations, an intrepid band of would-be archaeologists set off for Old Woking on a sunny Sunday afternoon in September.

The remains of the palace are at a remote spot about a mile east of the village and lie on the northern bank of the River Wey. Occupying some 27 acres, Woking Palace was built by Henry VII on the site of an earlier manor house and included facilities for jousting, bowling, archery, and it seems tennis. During his son's, Henry VIII's reign, a typical progress from Richmond to Windsor would take in Hampton Court, Oatlands, Woking and Chobham, along with a few smaller hunting lodges.

On arrival we were treated to a guided tour where we learnt about the history of the site, saw the exposed remains of the palace, and enjoyed a very informative talk by Rob Poulton of the Surrey County Archaeological Unit, explaining what had been discovered during the latest dig. In one of the four open trenches we saw the foundations of the Great Hall, Tudor kitchens, and the remains of much earlier medieval kitchens, while in another they had found a workshop. But naturally our main interest was in the two surviving high red brick walls that the archaeologists and English Heritage now believe was a tennis court.

Two years ago it was thought the

walls were those of the Great Hall, but subsequent excavations have proved the Hall was in a different location leaving them unexplained. Despite there being no surviving documentary evidence to confirm the structure was a tennis court, the archaeological findings are compelling.

The floor dimensions are similar to those of smaller tennis courts of the period, such as the two constructed by Henry VIII at Whitehall for the game played with the hand; the height and thickness of the walls, which we were told would have supported a roof; the lack of any ground floor windows; its north-south orientation, the preferred alignment for a tennis court; the fact that it is the second largest building on the site; and its location, at the back of the principal buildings where one would expect to find the sporting facilities of a palace; all point to this being a tennis court.

Although Henry VII's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, was the owner of Woking Manor before her son claimed it for the Crown in 1503, it seems unlikely that she would have commissioned a tennis court, even though the King had been a keen tennis player since the mid-1490s. The archaeologists believe the court was constructed as part of the building works that commenced in 1503, which included the Great Hall, new lodgings and kitchens; work that turned the manor house into a palace.

This would seem to be the oldest surviving tennis court in British Isles, of which anything remains.

## RESULTS

### Barker Camm Cup

**Grade F, semi-finals:** Dick Haly beat Ian Wimbush 6-1 6-4; Tony Cooke beat John Traversi 6-3 6-1. **Final:** Haly beat Cooke 6-1 6-4. **Grade E, semi-finals:** Sarah Parsons beat Patrick Griffith 6-5 6-3; Linda Sheraton-Davis beat Andy Anderson 6-4 6-4. **Final:** Parsons beat Sheraton-Davis 6-5 6-5.

### Autumn Night Pennant

*Simon Boorne/John Mather/Mike Shattock beat David Stephens/Will Cockerell/Patrick Griffith 8-6*  
Boorne lost to Stephens 5-6; Mather lost to Cockerell 5-6; Shattock lost to Griffith 3-6; Boorne & Mather beat Stephens & Cockerell 6-1; Boorne & Shattock beat Stephens & Griffith 6-1; Mather & Shattock beat Cockerell & Griffith 6-2.

### Brodie Cup

**Rd 1: RTC beat Cambridge 4-1**  
David Stephens & John Halliday beat Malcolm Howlett & Gerald Smith 6-1 6-1; Matthew Webb beat James Thomas 1-6 6-2 6-2; Martin Daly beat Gary 3-6 6-2 6-5; Will Cockerell lost to Becky Coombs 4-6 4-6; Dick Cowling & George Sleighthome beat Mark Perriton & Keith Beechener 4-6 6-4 6-2.

### Rd 2: Radley beat RTC 4-1

James Fleetwood & Maggie Henderson-Tew lost to David Stephens & John Halliday 1-6 1-6; Nino Merola beat Matthew Webb 6-3 6-1; Adam Jeffrey beat Martin Daly 6-4 6-2; Nick King beat Will Cockerell 6-0 6-2; Vern Cassin & Tim Robinson beat Dick Cowling & Harriet Ingham 6-2 6-3.

### French Open

**Men's final:** Camden Riviere beat Steve Virgona 6-2 6-3 6-1. **Ladies' final:** Claire Fahey beat Tara Lumley 6-0 6-1.

### IRTPA Championships

**Final:** Riviere beat Bryn Sayers 6-2 4-6 6-4 6-4.

### US Ladies' Open

**Final:** Penny Lumley beat Tara Lumley 6-0 6-4.

### British Open

**Final:** Riviere beat Virgona 6-3 3-6 0-6 6-3 6-3.

## RTC Top Ten

Singles handicaps  
November 2014

1	Peter Wright	0.9
2	Charlie Crossley	8.5
3	Ed Kay	9.5
4	Dave Harms	10.0
5	David Watson	12.6
6	Tom Freeman	13.4
7	James Watson	14.3
8	Nick Hatchett	15.2
9	James Sohl	15.3
10	Phil Dunn	17.0

## World Amateurs

Singles handicaps  
November 2014

1	Kieran Booth	+4.7
2	Mathieu Sarlangue	+1.1
3	Conor Medlow	+0.3
4	Bret Richardson	0.7
5	Peter Wright	0.9
6	Julian Snow	1.3
7	Jamie Douglas	2.2
8	Mike Happell	3.6
9	Nicolas Victoir	4.0
10	Hilton Booth	5.3

## The Royal Tennis Court Newsletter

*is published four times a year and the editor would love any contributions from members. Please get in touch if you have any ideas for the spring issue, either via the professionals or by email at the address below.*

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