

# THE ROYAL TENNIS COURT



## Hail King Henry

Weekes's Wellington win keeps Juniors in focus

*See page 5*

Nick Wood's review of an eventful year

*See page 4*

Sue Haswell wins the Billy Ross Skinner

*See Page 8*

**The Winter Newsletter 2020**

Number 127

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# CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

A very happy new year to you all. We start the new decade with the Club in good shape and a full professional team now happily in place. Scott Blaber has joined us from Newcastle as our new senior professional and no doubt many of you will have already met him. As I said last time, Scott's position at RTC will complement the existing professional team, managing the tennis programme, leading the office administration and supporting Josh in his career and playing development. We extend a very warm welcome to Scott, Kerry and their daughters Darcie and Eadie, and wish them a long and happy time at The Royal Tennis Court.

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One of the privileges of serving as Chair is to get to know better those members who serve on the Board and also the four professionals. Most members experience just the front of house parts of RTC - we aim to keep at a high level the whole experience of being a member, playing at the club and enjoying the other services provided. But this happens only thanks to the dedicated voluntary efforts of our Board and the constant hard work of our professional team, whose duties extend a long way beyond marking games, sewing balls, organising games and coaching. Nick writes in this Newsletter about his role as Head Professional and I'm sure it will help you to appreciate all that he and his colleagues do for the Club. The changes in the professional team have given us an opportunity to undertake a programme of work in the two apartments occupied by Scott and Josh. We have done redecoration and some modernisation to give them the best possible accommodation - within the constraints of a 500-year old building and the limits of our budgets. You will also have noticed the new ramp into the building from Tennis Court Lane. This has been planned for a long while - we were keen to improve access while installing a ramp that

would not compromise too much the initial appearance of the Court. Appreciation goes to colleagues at Historic Royal Palaces for delivering the projects and my particular thanks are due to Paul Mather, who looks after all our premises responsibilities on the Board and who has put a huge amount of time and care into planning and supervising all the work.

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There have been some notable playing achievements recently: it was nice to celebrate Chris Chapman's homecoming wins in the Australian Open Singles and Doubles, a good victory for Josh Smith over Paul Wright in the National League at Wellington, RTC Lathom Browne Champion George Sleightholme's progression to the quarter-finals of the Chetwood Trophy and our National League A team reaching the upcoming final of the Pol Roger Cup against Queen's; well done to all of them.

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A diary reminder for all members - the AGM will take place at the club on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May at 11am. Please do come along and take part in this important meeting in the Club's annual calendar. On the evening before, Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May, we will be holding the ever-popular annual Chairman's Event, which will feature another Owen Saunders special quiz, with proceeds going to the Junior and Professionals' support funds. Put the date in your diary and look out for further information about tickets.

**Michael Day CVO**

## Board Talk 11/11/19

**Matters Arising:** Strategic Objectives: future communications strategy proposed wording held over as PN absent. Giles Doy is looking afresh at the de Lazlo game rules following a successful tournament. A new Junior tournament is under consideration. SP has volunteered to take on issues of safeguarding.

**Professional's Report:** NW said the court is currently busy, a fair few tournaments are under way. Things should calm down shortly. In the meantime 10pm courts/training/Early Bird slots can help if players want to take these options. The departure of Chris Chapman flagged up a need for a better tenancy agreement on staff accommodation. New guidelines will be drawn up. Maintenance of the court has slowed owing to staff leave. HCP has a new Commercial appointee who is keen on our game. Thoughts are turning to how we can mutually promote the Real Tennis Experience; two events already planned for 2020. There are noticeably more A-grade players on court. Giles Doy hosted a successful Bisque tournament, more are planned. The Junior programme continues to thrive under the leadership of SP/JS. Staff: Adam Phillips and Simon Marshall taken on as locums and Lesley's hours increased to help the current one-professional shortfall. All working out well, many thanks to them. Scott Blaber to start work at end-December.

Josh Smith is taking part in the British Open and is working hard on his game. Zack Smith has made great strides and his game is improving.

**Finance:** The financial picture is looking reasonably rosy, with savings noted on telephone costs helped by new e-mail game alerts to members, and lower printing/postage costs, helped by good take-up of electronic Newsletter delivery. Debt levels are better.

**Premises:** Work needed to Apartment 53 to make it suitable for Blaber family's impending arrival, funds are available. Board agreed unanimously to spend enough to bring this accommodation up to a decent standard. Ely Rooms (Josh) to get new outside storage space and a makeover. Exterior walls around court's broader area showing considerable wear, this is in HCP's remit.

**Membership:** Club currently has 484 members in varying categories; Full members 295, Social 106, Juniors 38, Honorary 16. Numbers are stable, club members are taking differing routes to membership eg through the new Trial membership programme.

**Tennis and Tournaments:** The National League programme is under way. Our Pol Roger and

Brodie Cup teams are preparing for their first fixtures. B-graders now actively stepping up to the plate in A-grade training programmes. Court statistics show that social singles account for 41% of court time. Doubles account for 4.9%.

**Social:** RTC held a successful prize-giving event on October 19<sup>th</sup>, attended by more than 60 people. Guest of honour Lachie Deuchar did a sterling job, also nice to see Peter Luck-Hille in attendance. Date and format needed for 2020 Chairman's Event; funds already earmarked for Juniors' Fund.

**Juniors:** Group sessions going well. Juniors growing in confidence, now playing/beating adult players. Ideas welcome for summer fundraiser.

**Any Other Business:** a) Update on recruitment of professional Scott Blaber arrives at RTC on 18/12 and will officially start work on 30/12. Two new female Junior Blabers will be especially welcome to the Junior programme. MD expressed thanks to PN and NW for their full parts in the successful recruitment process. b) 2020 WC eliminator bid RTC's bid was ultimately unsuccessful. c) Cloth of Gold Trophy MD outlined upcoming trophy match at Bordeaux to celebrate anniversary of the Cloth of Gold treaty. To take place 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> June in Bordeaux. Cloth of Gold trophy prize to be sponsored by RTC.

# Camden clinches Chicago

Camden Riviere won his ninth US Open title at the 2020 contest held at the Racquet Club of Chicago, defeating Nick Howell 6-1,6-1,6-1 in the final in early February.

Earlier on in the tournament there was bad news for RTC's Josh Smith, playing in his first US Open. Josh went down fighting in the first round 5/6 6/2 6/3 6/0 against Darren Long, who he had previously beaten in the National League. He fared better in the Doubles, making the semi-final with his partner Neil Mackenzie, losing to Camden Riviere and Tim Chisholm 6-1, 6-0, 6-2.

Although disappointed in his singles performance on the day, Josh says he still learned valuable lessons from his experience, as he outlines in Just Joshing, below. He had arrived at the venue with high hopes, as his first report from this historic venue makes clear:

'Greetings all from a chilly, but apparently quite mild, Chicago!

After a busy few months following the end of the British Open, it feels great to be back at a tournament. The US Open (my first one) celebrates a significant birthday this year: it has been 101 years since Jay Gould first claimed the trophy in 1919. This event begins an amazing



**Red carpet welcome: the palatial entrance to the Racquet Club of Chicago**

month for me; the US Open is up first before moving on to Boston to help Chris Chapman prepare for his Final Eliminator against Camden.

This is my first time in Chicago and I am grateful to the RTC for the opportunity, to the Racquet Club of Chicago and their sponsors for generously hosting the tournament and the players. Further thanks go to Steve Hunt, always key to my preparation and more, and to the Pro

Team at RTC for helping me get ready.

The Racquet Club of Chicago is a historic club (1923) and over five floors boasts a Real Tennis court (restored in 2012), two racquets courts, multiple squash courts, pool, gym and a host of events and dining rooms for which the club is most famous for. The club has an old-fashioned feel - warm, welcoming, somewhat maze-like,

which adds to the fun, but it is also ornate and luxurious. My first conversation with Solomon, the convivial hotel porter, reveals that the Racquet Club has one of only two remaining classic elevators in the city, another first for me!

It was straight in to the thick of it with a practice immediately after arrival; finding my way to the court via a combination of plush carpets, marble and hardwood floors, flanked by the Honours Boards that proudly spell the names of nearly 100 years of players of the various racquet sports. The court plays true, which is a great help to the foreign player; balls skip through the floor and tambour but gives time off the walls, drives to the nick are rewarded and finding an effective serve is critical.

My first match is against Darren Long. Darren and I have played twice before; he made short work of me in our first meeting at Oxford a couple of years ago but I managed to turn the tables in a National League match at home last year... I will have to be on my game and I will certainly be doing all I can in preparation. I'm also excited to continue my doubles partnership with Queen's Professional and good friend, Neil Mackenzie. Wish me luck!

Productivity, motivation, performance - all have peaks and troughs. This is nature; waves are all around us and to understand them helps us work with them. Through tennis we can relate to the feeling of being in tune, of being in the zone with effortless performance (the wave peaking). Conversely, we all recognise the feeling of fighting a rip current, the battle, the grind (in the trough). When asked to write this Just Joshing, I was drawn to this subject and how we manage it, as this has been a key feature of my last few months.

In order to perform to our best, often at a precise moment in time, we want to make sure that we are peaking with perfect timing. In order to be in this position we need to understand how to manage our energy, drive and preparation, so that we can cultivate the conditions necessary to perform at our best.

The nature of the peak is that it is transitory, so timing is critical. If our preparation is disrupted, this will impact our ability to perform at our peak.

Disruptions can come from ourselves, or sources external to us. Regardless of the source, disruptions, distractions and

## Just Joshing

difficulties need to be responded to properly, controlling what is within our realm of control as best we can.

In the recent US Open I didn't perform as I know I can, and certainly not at my peak. As we all know very well, this can happen! Learning from the process is key, so that we are better prepared next time. Personally, I like to leave things, having given my best effort. The last few months did not go as I had originally planned, but I am happy with how I applied myself. I gave everything I had, in both the lead up to the tournament and during the event. I have no shame in how the results went as I did my best in every situation that I was presented with. I know if I continue to apply myself, with the help of my team (particular thanks to Steve Hunt, as always), we will continue to progress and develop. This is what gives me confidence and joy in my pursuit.

I recently read an article by Sadhguru (leader, yogi and author) who spoke on the importance of joy in our pursuits. When we play, train, or push, if we can do so with joy,

we reduce friction. We make smooth transitions, adapt effectively, working with what we have to get the most out of any situation. Without joy, we find ourselves in a battle that can seem to require all of our energy just to stay in the same place, or to merely slow a backwards trend.

What are your goals? How long are you willing to work at them? What are your best methods of being productive? How do you need to adapt to make improvements? How do we achieve a better balance? How do we increase our joy in the pursuit?

To find answers to these questions will help us move forward productively, efficiently and with pleasure! We must be open to both ourselves, and to what will aid and support us. The answers might be what we expected, or they might surprise us. It could mean proceeding straight ahead; pushing hard, grinding through... or it could mean making big changes; releasing, taking a step back and altering our perspective. Bashing our heads against the wall is not productive - and it certainly isn't fun, especially when the door to the other side might be just out of view...

**Josh Smith**



# Forward to a bright future

## Nick Wood reflects on a challenging 2019 that brought the best out in everyone

2019 was a very busy year, building successfully on the two big events: the King's Goblet continues to grow in popularity with interest from home and abroad, and the Champions Trophy - such an important RTC & HRP collaborative event - that brings the best players in the world and promotes Real Tennis and the Royal Tennis Court to a huge audience. Both events attract international acclaim.

The Junior Development programme and our young players are all improving, with individual and team successes. Our professional development of Chris Chapman reaching world number 3 and Josh Smith breaking in to the top 20 continues RTC's great reputation for training, coaching and encouraging ongoing generations of professionals. We have seen improvements to training with the introduction of A and B grade players training sessions, and the Early Bird and Lunch Slot training sessions continue to be popular.

Amid all sorts of ongoing repairs that are required for the upkeep of this historic facility we have new court netting improving the safety and appearance of the court, the Ely Rooms apartment has been completely redecorated and Apartment 53 cleaned and made ready for new residents. The project to install cameras around the court is nearing completion

It is with great thanks to Historic Royal Palaces and their many departments that we can maintain the Royal Tennis Court in such fine condition.

In addition, an exciting new initiative between RTC and the HCP Events team saw some outstanding new corporate events taking place, strengthening further this all-important partnership.

However, it was the August 2019 departure of Chris Chapman and the subsequent search

for a replacement that really put the club and Professional team into overdrive. Finding talented and motivated individuals is not an easy task. However, with experienced leadership from the Board, we have made a strong appointment with Scott Blaber.

Throughout the second half of 2019 the RTC Professional team were a person down. Great thanks therefore go to Josh, Lesley, and Adam Phillips, Zack Smart and Simon Marshall, who all worked unbelievably hard to maintain the highest of service to the membership.

All this added up to a very successful year in terms of tennis, member participation and satisfaction, as well as decent financial health.

In a blink and here we are - 2020!

We are delighted that Scott Blaber has joined us from Jesmond Dene, creating a new era of professionals and a strong team set-up. With four highly qualified individuals, each working to enhance the club within their roles, we all look forward to working with the membership to make the Royal Tennis Court *the* place to be!

**RTC Professional Team:** Over recent years, the role of Head Professional has transformed:

Continuing with a strong purpose to provide the best service to members, tennis coaching, the development of our own professional team and promoting Real Tennis generally, the role of Head Professional now covers responsibilities for every corner of the club. Duties include guiding and working with all six committees, including the Board, building and developing careers for a strong team of professionals, and managing the stability, direction and growth of the business. Balancing these responsibilities together with general and daily

responsibilities of a Real Tennis professional has made my job challenging yet greatly rewarding.

Given this expansion of role for the Head Professional, it is great news that Scott Blaber has joined the RTC family.

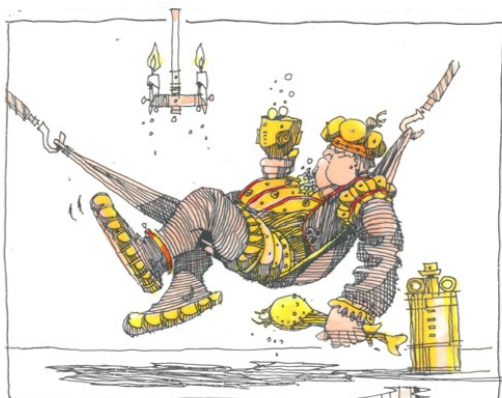
Scott, with his 16 years' experience, steps in to act as deputy to the Head Professional. His role will be to manage and oversee the Real Tennis office, delivering our tennis programme and giving great service to the membership, with the support of Josh and Lesley. He has a steep learning curve ahead of him - getting to know the members, understanding all the operations, systems, club events, levels of service and nuances of the Royal Tennis Court.

**Top 10 watch out!:** Josh Smith will continue as club professional and will also run the Junior Development programme. In addition, Josh now has the support of the club, all the professionals and the Professional Development Fund (PDF) to develop as a tournament player and compete in competitions both domestically and internationally.

**Font of knowledge and enthusiasm:** Lesley's role continues as club professional, providing much needed court and office cover. With her immense knowledge and enthusiasm, she will now also be involved in delivering more historical talks to the various groups that visit the court.

We also have the pleasure of the company of Clare and Jasper, Kerry, Darcie and Eadie and Hailey, who are all welcome and who add to the Royal Tennis Court atmosphere.

Overall the team has great balance. With experience, roles and ambitions well placed, the club can look forward to another great year at the Royal Tennis Court.



## Grab your Goblet place

One of the Club's most popular tournaments, the 2020 King's Goblet, takes place from Thursday 25th to Sunday 28th June. Play starts at 9am on all four days. The King's Goblet is a handicap doubles tournament, open to all real tennis players from any club. There are no restrictions on handicaps - in the past we have welcomed players with handicaps ranging from +3 to 103. All we ask is that you have a non-provisional handicap on RTO.

The format is: everyone plays in one large group stage, with each pair getting 5 x 35

minute matches. At the end of the group stage, all pairs are ranked and the top 8 teams enter a knockout phase. Tournament entry cost is £135 per person, which includes daily refreshments of morning bacon & sausage baps, buffet lunch and afternoon tea, a Tournament barbecue and Pol Roger champagne reception in the Club garden, plus other surprises.

The deadline for entries is 11.59 on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March. This link has all the details. [kings.goblet@royaltenniscourt.com](mailto:kings.goblet@royaltenniscourt.com)



## Lessons in Real life

On Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January, 48 children from Macaulay Primary School in Clapham ventured to the Royal Tennis Court to try their hand at the game of Real Tennis. The children embraced the idea with great gusto, despite never having heard of or seen a Real Tennis court before! Josh and Scott gave a great overview of the history of the game, the court and equipment and what to aim for on court. All of the children were really fascinated and very keen to get on court and see if they could 'hit Henry'!

The children quickly discovered that there's more to real tennis than meets the eye, and there were plenty of comments about how difficult the game is compared with 'normal' tennis. They really enjoyed the challenge though, particularly with the added incentive of making Josh do push-ups if they hit certain targets! Cue rampant celebrations when the eponymous sound of a grille-hit reverberated around the court!

We are enormously grateful to the Professional team at the Royal Tennis Court for giving up their time to share their expertise and enthusiasm with the children - there have been several enquiries from parents about bringing their children back to RTC for another go. Perhaps this session will have inspired a future World Champion of the game! We are also very grateful to financial support from the Queens Club Foundation, enabling us to cover the cost of the court and Professionals' time. All in all, a great day out and a fantastic opportunity to teach a group of children about our historic game!

Katy Doy (Real Tennis fanatic and Primary School Teacher...in that order, for this visit at least!)

## Double delight for our Juniors

Huge congratulations to Henry Weekes who won the Category B Grade National Handicap Tournament held at Wellington in December (see picture on Front cover of Henry receiving his trophy from Adam Player, Professional at Wellington). Henry has been working extremely hard on his tennis and we are delighted with his progress and efforts.

Also many congratulations to Ross Morrison who reached the semi-final of the Category A event, losing to the eventual winner.

Our Peter Lucke-Hille team, consisting of Henry Gibbons, Oli Hampson Evans and Henry Weekes, have got through to the next round having successfully beaten Radley 5/1. It was fantastic to see the support they gave each other and their enjoyment experiencing playing at a different court.

**U25 Tournaments - 8/9 Feb:** How great to have the court occupied all weekend with the U25 RTC tournaments! Saturday saw 12 players competing in the early rounds for the Wollaston Cup, the handicap U25 RTC title.

There were some amazing matches with some huge handicap differences - we had handicaps ranging from 48 to 105! Very well done to Henry Gibbons, Oli Hampson-Evans, Jack Short and Henry Weekes who made it through to the semi-finals on Sunday. The final was between Oli Hampson Evans and Jack Short with Oli taking the title 6/1.

Also on Sunday was the Vaughan Trophy, Level U25 Doubles, with Ross Morrison and Zach Jopling taking the title, beating Oli Hampson-Evans and Finn Hanley in the final 6/0.

The Chairman's Cup, Level U25 Singles, saw a highly contested final between Ross Morrison and Zach Jopling (see picture above). Zach was 5/6 down but battled through a 12-minute game with countless deuces to level the game at 6/6 before taking the match 8/6. Huge congratulations to both players for making it such a fantastic final.

**Sarah Parsons, Junior Development Officer, RTC**

### Wood's Words

The Penthouse Suite is still open and there to help you! We all want a great game of tennis, to improve on our skills and to achieve that 'W' result on our RTO playing record. So don't forget the importance of a good warm up. Whether you make use of the Penthouse Suite warm up area (under the hazard Penthouse) or the corridors and club rooms to prepare for your game, the habit of a good warm up is intrinsic to playing well. It also prevents injury and prolongs your playing career. Equal to a good warm up is the warm down; an absolute must to reduce aches and pains after play. Leading by example - you will see many more members now taking this advice as they dance, stride, bend and lunge their way about the club prior to and post games. These players are getting the most out of the tennis - why not join in! And if you need any advice, chat to a Professional.

### Cookery Corner

Linda Sheraton-Davis cooked up a sweet treat at a recent RTC Ladies' Lunch - the aptly-named Hampton Court Tart! The recipe, given to her by Paula Wilson, was given the thumbs up - although it was eaten cold, the verdict was that it would be better warm. **Recipe:** 210g packet frozen puff pastry, thawed; 50g butter; 225g cottage cheese; 50g ground rice; 125g caster sugar; 50g sultanas; grated rind and juice of a large lemon; 150ml single cream; 2 eggs, separated. **Method:** 1. Roll out the pastry and line a 20.5cm flan dish or tin placed on a baking sheet. Prick the base with a fork. 2. Melt the butter in a saucepan, cool a little then add the cottage cheese, ground rice, sugar, sultanas, lemon rind and juice, cream and the egg yolks. 3. Whisk the egg whites until stiff and fold into the mixture. 4. Turn mixture into pastry case, bake in oven at 190C for about 40 minutes until top is golden brown and pastry is cooked. Serves 6-8.

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# Return of the Champions!

Following the success of last year's tournament, the Champions Trophy 2020 will return to RTC this summer from the 14th– 19th July. Tickets are going on sale on April 1st through the HRP website and will remain at between £15 and £40 for adults (£15 for standing tickets earlier in the week and up to £40 for seated for the Final day of play).

Qualifying matches are on Tuesday 14th July, Match days on Wednesday 15th and Thursday 16th, Saturday 18th (Semi-finals) and Sunday 19th (Finals). Half-price tickets are available for children, subject to availability.

Tickets also include admission to Hampton Court Palace on the day, providing the perfect opportunity for an exciting day out. For further information and to purchase tickets from 1st April visit: **[www.hrp.org.uk/realtennis](http://www.hrp.org.uk/realtennis)**

The Finals Day Garden Party will take place on Sunday 19th July from 3pm and will be a ticketed event. The ticket price of £35 (adults) and £20 (children) will include a two-course BBQ lunch, plus a glass of bubbles or a soft drink. To book your place contact **[events@hrp.org.uk](mailto:events@hrp.org.uk)** together with any dietary requirements. Places must be

reserved in advance as this year there will be no provision for tickets to be bought on the day.

If you would like the opportunity to upgrade to a bespoke package to include an exclusive Palace roof top tour, a delicious afternoon cream tea or luncheon, plus the chance to meet and greet the players, please contact HRP to discuss your requirements as soon as possible: **[events@hrp.org.uk](mailto:events@hrp.org.uk)**

#championstrophy20

*The 2020 Real Tennis Champions Trophy is proudly supported by Mitsubishi Electric*



# Hot result in chilly Cambridge

It was one-way traffic for seven RTC members when they took on Cambridge for a social match in mid-December. Play on the Green Court (aka the "freezing cold court") started with singles matches, and Nick Hyams did not waste time in winning his match 8/0, swiftly followed by Frederic de Sibert winning his match 8/1. Charlie Heard – whose journey took way longer than planned because of train delays – won his match by the same scoreline. Nick and Charlie then paired up in the doubles to ease through their match 8/3. Cambridge would get one back though, as Nicola Doble and Giles Doy formed an unlikely pair to take on Charles D'Oyly and Christie Marrian. Some lucky volleying and tight serving from RTC wasn't enough to make it a clean sweep; the home team winning 6/3 6/5.

The Blue Court (aka "the not freezing but still cold court") saw a similar pattern of matches. Giles Doy overcame Christie Marrian 8/5, while Simon Cripps lost a tight see-sawing game 7/8. Sarah Lambie and Nick Hyams kept the RTC domination going, winning their singles matches 8/2 and 8/1 respectively. Frederic and Giles then paired up for doubles, giving away owe 30-rec 30 to their opponents and rapidly found themselves 6/2 down – no thanks to some terrible volleying decisions by Giles. But Freddie's consistent serving and patience chipped away at the scoreline, and with the score at 7/7 40-all, a calmly place forehead below the grille was enough for RTC to make a considerable comeback. The last match saw Simon Cripps and Sarah Lambie make a great start in their match, but some mis-communication between the pair saw Cambridge win 8/5. With 11 matches played overall, RTC were victorious 8-3.

It was plain sailing for RTC in our first social match of 2020, when we welcomed Newmarket to our



club. RTC was victorious in seven of the eight doubles matches, and it all started when Jed Dalton and Sue Haswell saw off Simon Talbot-Williams and Ed Turner 9/2. Geoffrey Russell and Nicola Doble kept the pressure on with the same scoreline against Gordon Kerr and Ben Turner. Alex Fell and Rhona Russell won their first match 9/4, while Jed and Geoffrey combined together to see off Talbot-Williams and Kerr 9/3. Terry Hopcroft and Steve Hunt made it five wins on the bounce when they saw off Jeremy Richardson and Jonathan Ellis-Miller 9/5. Newmarket's Turner brothers (Ben and Ed) paired up to take one back for the visitors, with a comfortable 9/2 win over Doble and Haswell. Rhona Russell and Hunt

needed 16 games to see off Ellis-Miller and Giles Doy (an 'honorary Newmarket member' following an injury withdrawal) in a close 9/7 win. Fell and Hopcroft rounded off the victory with a 9/8 win over Christopher Kingzett and Giles Doy.

Some social matches coming up: Haphazards v RTC, at Hardwick House, Sunday 5th April - all handicaps welcome. Holyport v RTC, at Holyport, Sunday 19th April - handicaps 20-40 welcomed for level doubles. RTC v Brigands, at RTC, Saturday 30th May - all handicaps welcome. For more information, contact the Professional team or me directly at [RTCFixtures@gmail.com](mailto:RTCFixtures@gmail.com)

Giles Doy

## News in Brief

### National League round-up

The Pol Roger Trophy team have reached the final for the third successive year. Following a walkover against Manchester in the first round, they beat Seacourt 5-0 at RTC in the semi-final (although the Seacourt number 1 singles player didn't turn up which turned the match into a damp squib). The final is on Saturday March 7th against Queens's, hosted by the Oratory. The Brodie Cup team lost their semi-final against Radley.

### By George, he nearly did it again...

The Chetwood Trophy is the National Handicap Singles competition for those players who made it to the final, or were the winner, of their club Handicap Singles. RTC's Lathom Browne winner George Sleightholme was in action at the lovely Hyde Tennis Club in Bridport. After George's successful Lathom Browne campaign he fought valiantly to make it to the Quarter Finals of the Chetwood Trophy. A big well done to George from all of us at RTC for his efforts in both events!

### World Championship Eliminators

The first round of the World Championship Eliminators is complete. On January 27 & 29, Camden Riviere def. Nick Howell 6-3, 6-1, 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 at The Oratory School. On January 28 & 30, Chris Chapman def. Ben Taylor-Matthews 6-4, 1-6, 6-4, 4-6, 6-4, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 at Royal Melbourne Tennis Club. The final eliminator between Riviere and Chapman is at The Boston Tennis & Racquet Club on the 24th, 26th and 28th February.



## A step in the right direction

The new accessible ramp which has been installed in the RTC archway in Tennis Court Lane is complete! This improves wheelchair accessibility for RTC and Palace guests. The fitters had all sorts of issues with the awkward nature of the space and the exact specifications required to adhere to regulations, but the finished product is a lovely piece of work.



## There's gold on court...

Over the rainbow...one of Nature's natural wonders touches down on RTC's historic home – might be worth digging in the Dedans in case there's treasure to be found!

**Editor's note:** This picture quite probably looks better in colour rather than black and white...so, if you are still receiving the printed mono version of this Newsletter, why not take this cue to switch to electronic delivery straight to your PC, tablet or phone? This option gives you much faster copy delivery, in full glorious colour. It also saves the club money on printing, postage and packaging. Please inform the Club Professionals if you want to switch to the e-version. (Fear not, mono hard copies will always be



## Hats off to happy Haswell

RTC's Sue Haswell and her playing partner Simon Mansfield (from Queens) won the final of the Billy Ross Skinner (Invitational Mixed Doubles) 2020, sponsored by the Jesters and the Dedanists' Society and played at Hatfield House Real Tennis Club.

Steve Brewerton, Chairman of the Hatfield House Real Tennis Club, kindly provided the following match report, reproduced with the permission of the Ladies Real Tennis Association.

'Hatfield House Real Tennis Club hosted the UK's premiere Mixed Doubles Tournament, the Billy Ross Skinner, with the top 12 available female players participating from clubs across the country. As with previous years, there was a full weekend of tennis starting with the Group Stages on the Friday concluding on the Sunday with the finals. With three groups of 4 battling to make it through the group stages on Friday and Saturday, the finals days began early on Sunday

with the quarter finals. Despite driving winds and rain all participants arrived safe and sound and play commenced. Early doors Sophie Dannreuther and Nick Brodie made quick work of progressing to the semi-finals followed by Alex Brodie and Julian Stafford. On the other half of the draw Sue Haswell and Simon Mansfield were joined by Louise Mercier and Simon Talbot Williams.

At this point, all the semi-finalists had played four 3-set matches to reach the semis so stamina and concentration were key. The first semi-final went the full distance with Alex Brodie and Julian Stafford making certain of their place in the final despite a 6/0 loss in the second set. They finally prevailed with a 6/5, 0/6, 6/4 victory.

Sue Haswell, a former winner, and her playing partner Simon Mansfield put on a commanding performance, beating Louise Mercier and Simon Talbot William 6-2, 6-2.



A full viewing gallery next witnessed a final which did not disappoint. Alex Brodie and Julian started strongly with Alex hitting her trademark volleys with deadly power and accuracy. This was countered by Sue Haswell's shot selection and consistency with Simon and Julian very much playing their part in this hard-fought contest. The first set went to Sue and Simon 6/4, the second set was even closer with Sue and Simon taking it 6/5 and ultimately the victory.

This tournament is always well attended by spectators and is supported by the club members who help organise and run the event. Breakfast, lunch and supper are provided throughout and the Professional team are at hand throughout.

This tournament would not be possible without our generous sponsors, the Jesters and the Dedanists. The Jesters made a significant contribution to the cost of the tournament which is greatly appreciated. The Dedanists' contribution ensures that all sub 24-year-old players are fully supported and encouraged to play at the highest level both now and in the future.

Thank you to all of our members who helped to make this tournament happen and run smoothly.'

To join the LRTA costs £30pa for women, £10pa for men, see the link here: <http://www.lrta.org.uk/join-the-lrta.html>



**Winter winners: Martin Daly, Simon Barker and Paul Wright won the Winter Night Pennant for Handicaps of under 35. Congratulations!**