

# Newsletter

Oxford University Tennis Club



Spring 2012

Edited by Katrina Allen

## VARSIITY SPECIAL!

### WOMEN'S 1ST TEAM VARSITY

by Maggie Henderson-Tew (Captain)

The headline news is that Oxford Men and Women's teams won both their respective Blues and Seconds Varsity Matches. The Double-Double Varsity win is a feat never before achieved by Oxford. To put this in historical context, you may know that the Real Tennis Varsity started in 1859 (The Boat Race began in 1829), but in a very different format to now. In that year, F Ponsonby of Oxford beat G Barclay of

Cambridge by 3 sets to Love. There has only been a Women's Varsity since 1992 and the Second Team Varsity was instituted in 2006. So, a little bit of history has been made this year.

The Women's Blues Varsity teams play their four singles on the first day and so one team can take an unassailable lead in the match, if all are won. The singles are played in reverse order, and this year the Cambridge Number 3 and 4 players were each around 20 points weaker than Oxford's equivalent players.



Women's Varsity 1st Team (from left to right)

Sophie Dannreuther, Cameron Ormsby, Maggie Henderson-Tew (Captain) and Vicki Ormerod

Sophie Dannreuther, playing at Number 4, got Oxford off to a terrific start, losing only one game in her rapid and emphatic 6-1, 6-0 win over Kate Kirk. This performance was followed almost exactly by Cam Ormsby who beat Emily Brady 6-0, 6-2 with a commanding performance. This was exactly the start for which the team had hoped.

The Number 1 and 2 players on both teams were very close on paper. The two captains played first: Maggie Henderson-Tew against Emma Samia-Aly, who brought a winning streak of a dozen matches to the tournament and proved a tough, in-form opponent. The match did not go according to the Oxford script, although Maggie won the tight first set 6-5. The next two sets went to Emma 6-4, from a 3-all position. There was one rubber left before the Men's Doubles began. Vicki Ormerod had endured exams all week. She finished her final one at 09.30 that morning, raced up to Lord's to play and took on last year's Cambridge captain, Lucie Browning. Lucie was clearly determined to avenge her 3-6, 2-6 defeat by Vicki at last year's Varsity. But it was not to be, with Vicki winning 6-4, 6-2. There was some excellent tennis played, with both players giving their all and stretched to the utmost.

With the score 3-1 after the first day, the first doubles on Saturday could, and did, determine the Oxford win. Lucie had to get back to Cambridge for Varsity hockey trials and so, against tradition, the first string doubles pairs played first. Lucie Browning and Kate Kirk were matched against Vicki Ormerod and Cam Ormsby. This was a tactical Cambridge pairing, as Kate was over 25 points weaker than the strongest player on court. She positioned herself in the galleries and proved highly effective. Lucie was on fire and Cambridge started like a whirlwind, completely unsettling the apparently much stronger Oxford pairing. The first set went to Cambridge 6-2 and at 5-all, Oxford were staring down the barrel of a surprising loss, but they played the big points well and nipped the set 6-5. After that, the momentum was with Oxford, who took the set 6-1 to give their team an unbeatable 4-1 lead in the Match.

The next doubles was neither as exciting, nor, happily for Oxford supporters, as nerve-wracking, as Maggie and Sophie ran out winners against Emma and Emily 6-5, 6-2. Oxford won 5-1 overall, repeating their winning score in the 2011 Varsity Match.

## **MEN'S 1ST TEAM VARSITY**

*by Alex Evans (Captain)*

Buoyed by the 3-1 success of the Oxford Women's team that morning, the Men's doubles on the Friday began well for the dark blues with Miles Jackson and Johnny Beale dominating the second string doubles to come out on top 6-1, 6-0, 6-1 against the Cambridge pair of Jules Camp and Oliver Watson.

Cambridge took their revenge, however, in the next match, through some incredible volleying by fourth seed player Edmund Kay and solid back court play by captain James Watson which proved too much for the nervous Oxford pairing (Simon Roach and captain Alex Evans), the score 6-0, 6-4, 6-5.

Thus Saturday began with the scores tied at one rubber each with a thrilling day of singles to look forward to. Once again, following on from the great example set by the successful Women's team that morning, Johnny Beale completed a focused 6-2 6-3 win over Edmund Kay, despite some continued talented hitting by the latter.

The contest between Oxford debutant Miles Jackson and Oliver Watson was to follow. Whilst the slight handicap advantage favoured Miles, the outcome of the match was far from certain. However, Miles held his nerve to complete a 6-3 6-2 victory and leave the match score 3-1 in the dark blues' favour.

The second seed singles was to be contested between Jules Camp and the Oxford captain. The Cambridge team were hoping that Jules would exact revenge for the year before when they also played one another, whilst Oxford knew they needed just one more win to secure the Varsity victory. Oxford got off to a good start, securing the first set 6 games to 2. The second set was, however far more closely contested with tensions high both on and off the court and the score reaching 5 games apiece. The match finally ended with Alex emerging in front securing the overall match victory for Oxford.

The spectators could have been forgiven for believing the last match wouldn't be as interesting given that Oxford had already amassed an unassailable lead. However the two players involved fought out an intensely close and riveting match. James Watson (Cambridge) eventually came through 6/4, 4/6, 6/4



against Simon Roach (Oxford), but it was a match to remember, with both players retrieving seemingly impossible shots throughout and providing a very fitting ending to a weekend of excellent Tennis.

## WOMEN'S 2ND TEAM VARSITY

by Maggie Henderson-Tew

The Seconds Match, like the Blues Match, was played in a fiercely competitive spirit, with equally high levels of sportsmanship, and was clearly enjoyed hugely by both teams.

The Cambridge team were at least 10 points weaker than their Oxford opposite numbers and Oxford were able to achieve a 6-0 win without having any really difficult moments along the way. Although it was a rather one-sided match, the Cambridge representatives all played well above themselves and fought their hardest. This is the first time Oxford had ever achieved that margin of victory in this match and it bettered the 5-1 wins of the previous two years.

The rubbers were played out of order to accommodate players from both sides who were involved in other Varsity Matches. The Women's match began with the third string singles, with Juliet Wesley against Imogen Whittam. Juliet bravely played through a painful foot injury to win 6-5, 6-0 and this was followed by the Number 2 singles between Audrey Davies and Olivia Power. Audrey completely out-powered Olivia to win 6-0, 6-2, putting the match ahead of schedule.

Going into the second day's play, Oxford were 2-0 up and the Number 1 doubles pair of Clare Wiles and Maddie Grant took on Imogen Whittam and the Cambridge captain, Kirsten Wilmot. Clare is a new and rapidly-improving player but lacks the match and doubles experience that Maddie possesses, so Clare took the galleries and Maddie played powerfully and accurately from the back of the court.

The Seconds Match doubles comprises one 8-game set and Oxford recorded a comfortable 8-3 victory. This was followed by an 8-1 win by the well-established pairing of Audrey and Juliet, who



played with such force and pace that their opponents were not able to settle. The Oxford serving was particularly impressive. The Match had now been won by Oxford, as 4 wins had been chalked up and they could not be caught. The Number 4 and Number 1 singles were played with no loss of focus and Clare's first ever match ended in a 6-0, 6-0 victory, with her serve proving virtually un-returnable.

Maddie repeated her forceful and positive performance in the doubles by sweeping through 6-1, 6-1 against Kirsten, who only really showed how she was really capable of playing in the final stages of the match, when she played much more freely. Then it was all over and Oxford had achieved an unprecedented 6-0 victory.

A very big THANK YOU to our sponsors Axiom, Coutts, Pol Roger and Neptune and to a number of club members who gave the teams and events financial support, for all the generous assistance and unstinting encouragement that has enabled us to achieve this terrific pair of wins for the Oxford Women and Men.

## MEN'S 2ND TEAM VARSITY

by Alex Gilmore (captain)

The Merton court was the setting for a thrilling 2nds Varsity match this year which came down to the wire. Friday 2nd March saw the doubles matches between the Unicorns and Cambridge 2nds.

The Oxford team led by Alex Gilmore played poorly on the first day. First up Alex Portz and James Sills who lost a close match where too many errors cost them. Sills' volleying was a little tentative and they were unable to get up to the service end enough to allow Portz to dominate things from the back of the court. Cambridge drew first blood. Euan Campbell, who had to step on court literally minutes after finishing a gruelling Classics exam, played with Gilmore in the second doubles match. Campbell took up position in the galleries and with his powerful left handed volley dominated anything loose from the Tabs. Gilmore however never really got going and made endless errors at the back of the court, frequently finding the dreaded hazard chases, which can be so damaging in doubles. It was a poor

performance from the Captain that led to frequent and annoying fist pumping and excessive screams of "Jimmmyyyyyy" from the opposition, and ultimately to Cambridge's second win of the day. Cambridge led 2-0 at the end of the day's play and Oxford had some serious thinking to do.

Whether motivational e-mails sent out by the Captain made a difference or not is up for debate (no e-mails were actually sent), but what is certain is that the next morning saw a revitalised team. Sills, at no.4 and with a handicap of 41, played first against a slightly weaker Cambridge opponent who rejected the traditional whites for a khaki combo that would almost certainly have led to a lifetime ban at the MCC. Once nerves were settled, Sills got the serve and my goodness did he keep it. He served for almost 12 games uninterrupted and in the end his superior technique and heavier cut were too much for his khaki clad opponent. Oxford 1-2 Cambridge.

Portz, at no.2 and with a provisional handicap of 34, played next. Having only stepped onto a real tennis court a handful of times and with a handicap

approaching the 20's, he is one of Oxford's brightest prospects. He lost a close first set but improved with every game played. One set down and 3-0 down in the 2nd set, Portz looked dead and buried but he started playing some majestic tennis and psychologically chipped away at his opponent. Portz won the 2nd set and went on to finish the match convincingly in the last He must have shaved off about 5 handicap points during the match.

Gilmore played next, at no.1 and with a handicap of 31, against a Tab of similar ability (although he was somewhat more lanky). Gilmore played a good first set taking it easily and he even led 5-3 in the 2nd. However, nerves got the better of him, or perhaps he felt the galleries hadn't been entertained yet, and Cambridge won the 2nd set 6-5 to go into a decider.

Again Gilmore led, 5-2 this time, but it was only until Cambridge pulled it back to 5-5 that Gilmore finally decided to win a match point and put the match to bed. A classy winning gallery won the match in the end but it was actually an earlier shot in the match which was voted shot of the day. Having misjudged



*Mens Varsity 2nd Team (from left to right) Alex Gilmore (Captain), Alex Portz, Euan Campbell*

a return into the forehand corner, Gilmore was forced to attempt a shot behind his back as the ball spun out, and he sent it straight as an arrow into the winning gallery. Hurrah's all round. So Oxford led 3-2, going into the final singles match.

Campbell, at no.3 and with a handicap of 40, was slight underdog on handicap. He played admirably and was unlucky to lose the first set. The Cambridge player's experience in the end proved too much as he found chases much more regularly and punished anything loose to his forehand. The Varsity match was tied at 3-3 and required a deciding doubles match.

The Oxford no.1 and no. 2, Gilmore and Portz, took on their counterparts from Cambridge. The match followed an almost identical pattern to Gilmore's

singles: Oxford win the first set easily, then failed to close out the second set and finally almost threw it away in the third set. Fortunately, Portz kept a cool head and guided his Captain over the finishing line, winning the last set 6-4 to rapturous applause from the galleries and to great relief for Oxford.

It was a fantastic comeback from Oxford after an abysmal Friday and secured the whitewash of Varsity matches this year.

James Sills does not feature in the team photo as he had to race off to shoot some clay pigeons!

Well done to all involved in the Unicorn's season and many thanks to all the sponsors who provided us with such lovely kit and the court time to train.

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

### **Thursday 12th April**

#### **NATIONAL LEAGUE DIVISION 1 HOME MATCH VERSUS MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY**

Roman and Craig will be up against Matt Ronaldson and Ged Eden

### **Thursday 19th April**

#### **NATIONAL LEAGUE DIVISION 1 HOME MATCH VERSUS RADLEY**

Roman and Craig versus John Lumley and Andy Chinneck

For details of away matches please contact Craig.

### **Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd April 2012**

#### **CATEGORY A TOURNAMENT "0-9's"**

A good opportunity to watch tennis of a high standard.

Local players Roman Krznic and Craig Greenhalgh will be entering with the possibility of Andrew Davis and Rob Walker playing too.

### **Monday April 30th**

#### **OUTC SPRING GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP**

Oxford City Golf Club 2.30 p.m. start, cost £32.00. Anyone wishing to join us sign up on the club notice board or contact [alanjoliver@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:alanjoliver@hotmail.co.uk)

#### **MATT SLATER CHALLENGE**

These handicap leagues for all students run from 2nd to 7th week in Trinity Term. Overall winners from each section will receive a new racket! Please contact the pros or sign up on the noticeboard if interested.

#### **SIMMS CHAMPAGNE LEAGUES**

These handicap leagues for players of ALL standards run throughout the months of June, July and August. Please keep an eye on the noticeboard for the sign-up sheet.

## CLUB REPORT

by Simon Stubbings

The past year has been a generally satisfactory one for the Club. When the main complaint amongst members is the difficulty in getting courts during term time, the game in Oxford could be said to be in robust health. This can be ascribed to a number of factors. The enthusiasm of the student captains, Maggie Henderson-Tew and Alex Evans, has been an important contributor. However, perhaps the most significant cause has been the work of the professionals in coaching and encouraging members, while fostering the friendly atmosphere that has for many years been a distinctive feature of the Oxford club. Although Alan's retirement after thirty years of loyal and committed service has inevitably left a gap, Andrew has risen to the challenge as the Head Professional while Craig has added a further dimension to our professional team with his coaching skills and great enthusiasm around the place. A clubroom festooned with decorations over Christmas was an innovation of Craig's that had many members rubbing their eyes in disbelief!

In addition to their day-to-day activities, the professionals have organised the regular series of club tournaments. Here we have been fortunate in our sponsors who have routinely stepped forward to support the game.

The 2011 Simms Champagne Summer Leagues, sponsored by Bower & Bailey, were eventually won by Anna Cherry [leagues F-K] and Peter Kidd [leagues A-E].

The Club Singles Championship was played in October when players competed for the Knight Cup

*Knight Cup runner up Mike Henman (left, with son Henry, surely a future player!) with winner Ashley Prior, Right*



with prizes generously provided by Roland Knight. This was won by Ashley Prior who beat Mike Henman 3/6 6/5 6/2 in the final.

More varied talent came to the fore at the end of November when players mustered to contest Ron Mutton's A1 RAM 40+ Handicap Doubles. Archie Cornish & Ellie Harris emerged the winners, having defeated Andrew Mackintosh & Jonathan Nash in the final.

*A1 RAM Winners Archie Cornish and Ellie Harris*



A couple of weeks later Nick Stogdon and Julian Eeley beat Anna Cherry and Nick Manby-Brown in the final of the Over 60 (age) Handicap Doubles Tournament.

The number of entries for the Club Handicap Doubles Championship in January was the largest recorded, with 24 pairs taking part. This was sponsored by the Manor Hospital who, in addition to providing prizes

*Grant Bates Trophy winners Anna Cherry and John Murphy being presented by James Bates (left) and Sue Bates (right)*



for finalists, generously contributed to a trophy in memory of Grant Bates, who had for many years been a dynamic presence both in the Hospital and on the Tennis court. After nearly three days of play in group

and knock out sections, the Trophy was eventually won by Anna Cherry and John Murphy who beat Aroop Mozumder and Ray Cooke in the final. Aldens Butchers provided food to ensure that, whatever their fortunes on court, competitors did not leave the Club hungry.

Later in the month, the strength of student tennis showed itself in the non-handicapped Wroth Cup Doubles Championship when Miles Jackson and Johnny Beale beat Adrian Fawcus and Mike Henman 6/2 6/2 in the final.

*Wroth Cup winners Miles Jackson and Johnny Beale*



The Silver Racket was contested this year for the first time since the dark ages, the last time being in 1998 when a young Alan Oliver lifted the trophy. The Blues number 1 (Simon Roach) and 3 (Miles Jackson) gave a packed dedans a thrilling match with Miles eventually winning the titanic battle 10/8. Thanks to Richard Alden for supporting the event and his dozen or so guests who were enthusiastic throughout the match.

*Silver Racket Winner Miles Jackson with the trophy presented by Richard Alden*



A report of the John D Wood Tournament, once again generously sponsored by that firm, appears elsewhere.

Alongside the sponsors of the senior game, student tennis has enjoyed the support of a number of organisations including Neptune Investment Management, Pol Roger, Axiom Financial Services, and Coutts Bank, in addition to that of many individuals. This assistance is very much appreciated and has contributed greatly to the success that has been achieved in the recent campaign against Cambridge, reported elsewhere.

In fulfilling their responsibilities of keeping the club running smoothly, the professionals are supported by the committee.

Throughout my time as chairman I have been very lucky in the skills that the other members have brought to the club. The past few months have seen some changes in the committee's composition. After many years' service Lesley Smith and John Stevens have retired. Lesley has been replaced as Senior Treasurer by John Murphy and John Caunt has joined the committee assuming the role of Membership Secretary.

The committee now comprises: the student captains, Maggie Henderson-Tew and Alex Evans; secretary, Alex Gilmore; John Caunt, Adam Jeffrey, John Murphy, Simon Stubbings, Ed Wigzell and Derek Williams. The efforts of the committee are underpinned by those of many other members. I would like to recognise in particular Martin Mercer's work on our accounts, Katrina Allen's editing of the Newsletter, and Ray Cooke's contribution to IT and maintenance. Through Mayfield Press, Derek Williams has been very generous in arranging the printing of club notices, stationery, and other literature, including this Newsletter

We have implemented a number of changes aimed at making members' lives easier. One has been the addition to the booking section of a facility whereby members can get contact details for other members (see below). We have also just introduced a facility whereby members can view their accounts with the Club online (see Ray Cooke's report below). This should help us ensure that our balances with the Club remain in credit!

Obviously, it is important that the correct information finds its way into the accounts. As most members will be aware, there is a daily paper booking sheet on the small noticeboard, just inside the main door into the Club. This is to ensure that the court is charged for correctly. If you do not indicate changes on this, the court will be charged as it appears online. If you need to add names to your booking, indicate whether you hired a racket (perish the thought!) or the fact that your opponent has not shown, please do so here. It is not usually possible to amend your booking online within 48 hours of your court. Also, please write clearly.

Looking forward, we expect to have to do some major work on the court over the next year or so. The floor is recording an increasing number of erratic bounces which can't all be attributed to subtle spin, and the penthouse needs patching. Through Ed Wigzell we are exploring how best to achieve this, drawing on the experience of other clubs. We are also looking at ways in which the appearance of the corridor running outside the galleries can be improved.

If there are other ways in which members feel that improvements can be made to the club and the way it operates, the committee would be happy to hear about them.

## **PARKING**

There have been complaints from Merton College that cars have been parked outside the professionals' shop, restricting access to the Merton College car park. It is important to our relations with Merton that this should not happen. Not only are they our landlords, but we rely on them for certain concessions which are important to the smooth-running of the Club and which we would therefore not want to jeopardise. Members and guests should accordingly ensure that the "No Parking" sign clearly on display in that area is respected.

## **MEMBERS' CONTACT DETAILS**

For the last six months or so it has been possible to access many members' contact details through the Club website. This has been extremely helpful in enabling members to arrange games without the extra hassle of having to contact the Professionals. For data protection reasons we only display such details where individuals have agreed that we may do so.

The value of this facility obviously increases as more members consent to the release of this information. If, therefore, you have no objection to this happening and have not yet formally agreed, perhaps you would let the Professionals know.

## **SAGE MEMBER ACCOUNTS BALANCE**

*by Ray Cooke*

Throughout my years with OUTC, the process of managing the court fee accounts has seemed to be a bit of a dark art. Along with everyone else, I've topped up my account as and when prompted, without any real idea of what transactions the balance reflects, whether these have been correctly recorded, or whether (as usually seems to be the case for me) I really have played rather more than I thought!

Whilst never doubting the honesty of our professionals for one moment, I have seen how very busy they are at times, and supported the automated transaction feed from our booking system into Sage to reduce exposure to occasional human error.

Now, following work in recent years to streamline the admin of the Club so that the pros can spend more time on tennis, I'm pleased to announce real transparency in court fee accounts through the introduction of on-line visibility of current balance and transaction history.

On the Welcome screen (displayed after successfully signing in to the Members' Area), there is now a third option: 'Your current balance', offered alongside the two member contact lists. The balance feature is unique to each individual member, so clicking on it will display a new screen showing your current balance, and your transaction history over the previous 90 days. There is no facility to look at other members' balances.

Please note that the transaction history is not real time, so you will not see the latest fee as soon as you come off court! There will typically be about a week's delay.

If you have any comments or suggestions about this feature then please contact the pros.

## JOHN D WOOD FINAL 2012

by Frank Close

### Penthouse Playboys 5, The Surgical Spirits 1

*John D Wood Winners (from the left) Mark Bale, Wayne McLennan, John Murphy, Frank Close and Julian Eeley*



One of the great traditions in OUTC is the John D Wood team competition, sponsored by the eponymous estate agents through Nick Hextall, now in its 24th year. In their brochure of National Sporting and Social Events (available at the OUTC bar) "March 6 Tennis: John D Wood & Co. Real Tennis Trophy Final, Merton College, Oxford" may be found sandwiched between "Rugby – Six Nations" and "Crufts Dog Show". Surely there can be no greater glory in sport than to take part in such an Olympian event!

The names of the winners record the history of the Club, and some of the wit of its members, many teams recognising either a link with their captain – such as this year, the Cherry Pips, or the sponsor's team "Hexameters", variously reinvented as Hex Factor or Hex Pistols; – their common heritage as in The Surgical Spirits, twice winners and competing in this year's final; or the game itself – Dedans Buried, Hot off the Grille, Buster Gut, and the other finalists this year: Penthouse Playboys.

A great social event, the matches consist of 4 singles and 2 doubles, each lasting exactly 20 minutes. Whoever is ahead when the bell tolls, be it 9-8 or 1-0, wins their game. The rules have evolved over the years to eliminate anomalies. In the past it was possible to win against a superior opponent by elongating the knock up, scraping to 1-1 as the bell rang, and then to win the match due to the next game

(which was not played) beginning at love-owe 30 in your favour. Veterans of the JDW are well versed in the subtle arts of playing to the bell. If you are one game ahead, and about to serve at 40-40 with 19 minutes and 40 seconds gone, a tactical deliberate service fault can run out the clock – an attempt at a slow looping giraffe maximises the time, (but make sure it doesn't actually land on the penthouse in case the receiver returns it into the Dedans) - and leave you the winner on completed games. Setting a chase can use up half a minute at a critical juncture; if you are behind, ensure that you have plenty of balls ready in the dedans, or your pocket, and beware the polite opponent who uses up time by emptying the dedans of balls, sets a chase, and then offers to "help" by bringing the basket of balls to the dedans for you so he can return it, emptied, to its place by the net.

Eight teams have played on Monday and Tuesday evenings, with Craig and Andrew keeping score, and sharing in the emotions.

In this year's final, the Surgical Spirits set out to anaesthetise the Penthouse Playboys, before submitting them to a clinical dismemberment. For the PP the omens were not good. They approached this, their 6th successive year in the final, with a record that read Win, Lose, Win, Lose, Win; determining the next entry in that sequence is hardly the stuff of Oxford entrance exams. However, the sequence was broken, the Playboys winning 5-1, though the score does not tell the real story of a match that was finely balanced throughout, with the amounts of nervous energy expended in the dedans matching that of the players on court.

The bell proved critical.

In the opening match John Murphy (PP) was twice two games ahead of Vicki Ormerod (SS), who looked threatening every time she served, valiantly drawing level just as the bell rang. This led to an extra deciding game, in which Vicki's elegant spinning serves duly triumphed. Wayne McLennan (PP) also got two games ahead of Chris Conlon, only for Chris to fight back and squeeze ahead. However, Chris had peaked three minutes too soon, leaving enough time for it to be Wayne's world when the bell tolled. One-all in the match and initially Frank Close (PP) ran up a substantial lead against John Stevens, until John produced a series of vicious railroads and chipped

back 1, then 2, then 3 games, and was threatening to turn the match around when the bell came to Frank's rescue.

Mark Bale (PP) was one game up and 40 all in the first string match, when his opponent, Chris Milford, sank to the floor in agony. Several spirits of surgeons materialised on court, who diagnosed an injury with impressive Latin names, and prescribed high-tech medication (pack of frozen peas), but regrettably Chris had to withdraw.

In the doubles Wayne and Julian Eeley (PP) were nip and tuck with Vicki and Chris Conlon, the lead oscillating from one pair to the other, until once again the bell intervened when the Playboys were ahead. Finally, Chris Milford's injury enabled Neil Mortensen to return to competitive tennis, partnering John Stevens in the final doubles against Mark and Frank.

Nick Hextall, for John D Wood, presented the unique trophy, and all celebrated the climax of this classic competition with some Hexcellent Champagne. Once again, we thank the sponsors for their generosity and we all hope that the JDW will celebrate a glorious Silver Jubilee in 2013.

## RAF TENNIS REPORT

*by Aroop Mozumder*

The Royal Air Force Real Tennis Association was formed two years ago and has adopted Oxford as its home court, with the strong support of Simon Stubbings and Andrew Davis. The RAF RTA Association was initiated by one of our members - Aroop Mozumder, a serving RAF officer, who was in turn introduced to the game by David Morris. Over the past two years the small pool of military players has grown, with coaching provided by our two pros.

The Army and Royal Navy have had Tennis Associations for some time, so it was only correct that the "Junior Service" should join them. In only their third time of entry to the Army-led Inter-Service Championships held at Queen's, the RAF managed to play in all three finals: the regimental doubles, the "past and present" doubles and the men's singles, winning the latter two trophies. Their star player, Squadron Leader James Treweek managed to win

the singles with a handicap in the low thirties, despite playing the game for only two years, overcoming in a tense three set match an Army Officer who was an ex-Cambridge Blue.

This is a remarkable achievement for the RAF and Oxford can be justifiably proud of this Service association. We all hope that this arrangement will continue for many years.

## FRENCH FROLICS

*by Janet Peach*

Last September saw several Oxford members leaving the late English heatwave for the equally warm Basque region of South West France for the 'Tournoi des Trois Tripots'. One member, who shall remain nameless, unexpectedly got to the quarter-finals and had to book another later flight home!

*La Bastide-Clairence court*



Originally intended for 96 pairs, the doubles competition had to be extended to allow for 224 players from all over the world who wanted to participate. Organised with military precision by Simon Berry, in league with many French friends,

*Frank Close and Derek Williams in action at Pau*



### Court at Bayonne



the tournament took place in three quaint and quirky Tennis courts at Pau, Bayonne and the little-known village of La Bastide-Clairence. The local Pays Basque newspaper reported on the event in which the English and Australians had forgotten their 'rhumatismes' to play!

A spirit of fun and friendly rivalry prevailed throughout the week as we went from court to court with each one differing from the last with missing penthouses or tambour, tiny grille or, in the case of Clairence, open side walls.

### Pasaka demonstration



When a ball was 'out of court' here it meant that it would be retrieved from the garden, usually by the local children.

Some of the highlights of the week were an exhibition match featuring Rob Fahey, beautiful local choir singing, dinner at the neighbouring Chateau D'Arcangues and an exhibition match of a variant of Pelote Basque called Pasaka that only has 50 remaining exponents and is played with a large, soft leather ball with the players wearing a huge leather glove.

The French sunshine and the backdrop of Pyrenean views certainly helped to lend an air of old-fashioned glamour to the jeu de paume!

## HATFIELD REVISITED

by Janet Peach

*Ladies Seniors at Hatfield (from left to right) Katie Leppard, Janet Peach, Anna Cherry and Marion Windsor*



Just after the Christmas and New Year break, Oxford Ladies revisited the lovely setting of Hatfield House. In an enjoyable day, Oxford won two out of four of their singles games against a tough opposing team of both young and experienced players.

Next January, Oxford will return the Hatfield hospitality as their members would like to come and try out their skills on our court.

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