

Newsletter

Oxford University Tennis Club



Winter 2012

CLUB OVERVIEW

by Simon Stubbings

All in all 2012 has been an active and generally satisfactory year for Oxford tennis.

Apart from some downtime for repairs and a lull in August, when members may have been distracted by the Olympics, the court has been very busy throughout the year. Club tournaments have generally been well subscribed and some enjoyable tennis played. A summary of the tournament results during the current season appears later in this Newsletter.

There is also a notice of some of the forthcoming events in which I am sure you will enjoy taking part or watching.

You will also be able to read Ed Wigzell's report on work that has been done on the court together with some that is in prospect. I would like to thank Ed for masterminding this and Andrew Davis for ensuring that it has been completed to a high standard - even to the extent of wielding a paint brush himself!

IT has in the past been an area in which Oxford has led the field when some of our members designed our



Club President Simon Stubbings (right) with former Club Presidents Matrin Mercer (left) and John Cook

booking system. However, the hardware has recently begun to creak somewhat. We have accordingly embarked on an upgrade to our systems. Ray Cooke, who has been at the forefront of this project, describes what has been involved below.

Our financial year ending 31 July 2012 was a satisfactory one. On a turnover of just over £100,000 we came through with a surplus of slightly more than £6,000. This was largely due increased subscriptions and court usage, coupled with no major expenditure on repairs. The 2012 surplus will stand us in good stead to absorb the small deficit that we expect to incur during the current year as a result of the work mentioned by Ed and Ray.

September has traditionally been a month for showcasing the Club. Once again Derek Williams organised our Open Doors event. I would like to thank him and those who took part for making it the success that it was. That month also saw the visit of a German TV crew who, in making a series incongruously entitled "Castles and Palaces", were sufficiently intrigued by real tennis to film the court. Unfortunately there are no current plans to show the product on the UK networks so that members wishing to see Andrew's play preserved for posterity will have to make the trip to France or Germany.

Following that overview, there are a couple of administrative points I should make:

- Maintaining good relations with Merton College, who are our landlords, is important if we are to continue to enjoy undisturbed use of the court. Parking provides a perennial burr in our efforts to achieve these. I would ask that members should refrain from parking in the Merton College spaces to

COURT REPAIRS

by Ed Wigzell

Hopefully, many of you will have noticed the improvements made to the court over recent months.

Things started in earnest in March 2012 when a fine new net with a gloriously deep red, well stuffed, headband was strung up and some modifications made to the main wall net fixings. The net is settling in nicely and the fixings remain firm despite the best efforts of our members.

the right as you enter the gate, even for short periods of time, and particularly during the day. The evenings are not so much of a problem. The College's maintenance people are in and out of these slots all day. It causes real problems when tennis players' cars are parked there and puts the pros in an impossible position.

- There is a list of club matches on the notice board - both home and away. Please sign up for any you are interested in playing. It is not a guarantee that you will be selected but very often match managers are looking to see who is interested and available.
- The Christmas period, when the court is not so busy, is a good time to get as many Aberdare, Beard, or Pamela Wallace matches played as possible. If you are still in any of these tournaments, please see if you can get your next round scheduled
- Please note the Club's AGM is to be held at 6:35pm on Tuesday 15 January 2013. In addition to receiving the accounts for the previous year, there will be an opportunity to elect the committee for 2013/4, discuss club developments with its members and to hear from the University captains on their prospects for the forthcoming Varsity Matches. There may even be a glass or two of wine!

Before concluding I would like to take this opportunity of thanking my colleagues on the Committee for all the hard work they have put in during the year. In particular I would like to thank Andrew and Craig for their work in running the Club on a day to day basis and maintaining its convivial atmosphere.

I hope that everyone enjoys a Happy Christmas!

In September extensive repairs were made to the penthouse and bandeaux with many of the old cracked timber boards removed and replaced with new hardwood boards. The craftsmanship of the work undertaken is of a very high quality and should withstand the test of time, even around the most heavily punished service spots and winning openings. With the court closed Andrew Davis took the opportunity to organise the painting of the entire penthouse and galleries.



Roger Nathan kindly making sure that the area his side-wall serve lands is well painted!

Arrangements are being made to have the court windows repainted next year to stop the sunlight from creeping through and dazzling players (at least, the pros think that this may be the cause in some cases).

More irrefutable is the increasing number of erratic bounces caused by the raised edges of the joins in the floor. The committee is currently researching various options to remedy the situation and is hoping to have a plan of action by Summer 2013.

If you have any suggestions for maintenance improvements to the court or the rest of the club please either contact the pros or Ed Wigzell edwardwigzell@hotmail.com.

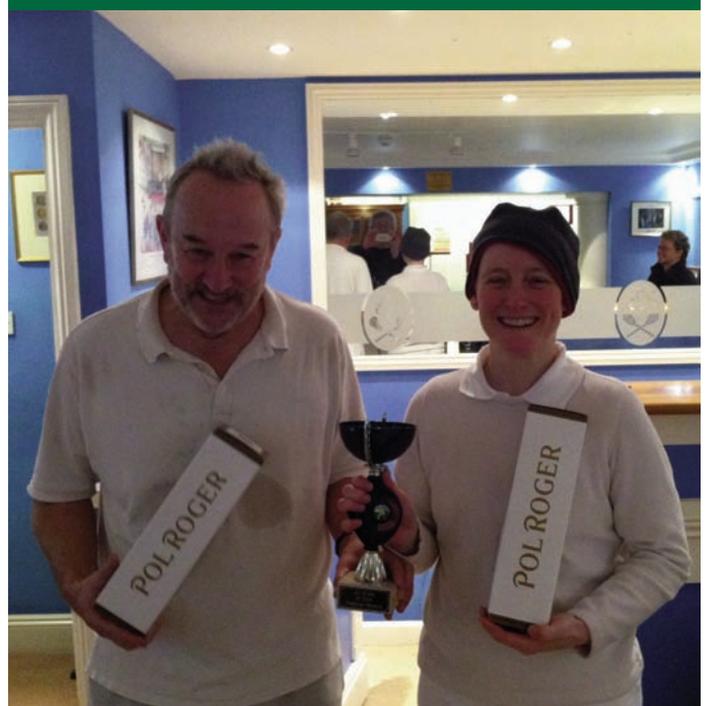
RECENT RESULTS

**A1 RAM Doubles [over 40 Hcap doubles]
24th November 2012**

A fun day was had by all with some very close matches and even closer group results with the second group eventually being decided on count-back.

In the final, Liz Leach and Jonathan Clark beat Simon Wratten and Nick Manby-Brown by 6-2. Our thanks to Ron Mutton for his sponsorship of this tournament.

Jonathan Clark and Liz Leach, winners of the A1 RAM over 40 handicap Doubles Tournament



**Knight Cup [Level Club Singles Championship]
6th-7th October 2012**

Adrian Fawcus beat Richard Oliver in a close three set final. Thanks once again go to Roland Knight for his continued sponsorship.

Pol Trophy 1st Round [Home] 9th December 2012

This is the level Inter Club championship. Underdogs Oxford beat RTC [Hampton Court] by 3 rubbers to 2. Jonny Beale and Alex Portz won the deciding doubles. The semi-final is against MCC at Queens Club on Sunday 3rd February.

Brodie Cup 1st Round [Away] 18th November 2012

This is the Inter Club Championship for various categories between approx 30 and 50 hcap. Tim Dadd did a great job as captain (even organising team practices!). Unfortunately Oxford lost narrowly to Radley.

Over 60's [age] Handicap tournament for the JC Smith Trophy. 8th December 2012

Although the numbers weren't as great as previous years (maybe with players being exhausted from 'Olympic Duties'). It still didn't distract from a great tournament by all who entered.

The final saw John Caunt and Scott Mcglashen face off against John Stevens and Neil Mortensen with a handicap shift of 25 points in John and Scott's favour! (30 owe 30).

Caunt and Mcglashen seized the initiative and stormed straight through, beating Mortensen and Stevens 8/0 to take the J.C. Smith trophy.

Silver Racket 2012

This years event saw the top Blues men up against each other to contest the Silver Racket.

Johnny Beale and Alex Portz played in front of a packed Dedans courtesy of sponsor, Richard Alden and his guests. They weren't disappointed as both guys went like a train straight from the off exchanging fantastic rallies for point after point. Johnny eventually pulling through to win 10/6.

The match was followed by a beautifully set out dinner from Richard, Upstairs in the dining room

Our sincere thanks go to Richard Alden for supporting the event.



Johnny Beale receiving the Silver Racket from sponsor Richard Alden



Committee Room in splendid order for the Silver Racket dinner

National League Division 1

After four matches, Oxford's Division One team of Craig Greenhalgh and Marc Siegneur are now sitting in a steady 3rd spot with another four matches to go. If we can maintain our form, we should be on track for the play offs.

The next two home matches will be;
Thursday March 7th versus Queens
Thursday April 11th versus Middlesex

Silver Racket runner up, Alex Portz



OUWTC - MICHAELMAS TERM 2012

by Maggie Henderson-Tew, Joint Women's Captain

The new academic year started, as it always does, in Noughth Week, of which a highlight is The Freshers' Fair. The OUTC stall was again an impressive sight, being greatly enhanced by the professional quality of all our club publicity materials, from posters to postcards, printed for us by Mayfield Press (thank you, once again, Derek Williams). More Freshers expressed interest in real tennis than ever before, which was marvellous.

We were, however, relieved that all 433 people who had given us their names and contact details did not actually come to the successful student-run Try-Out Session for Freshers held at the court on Sunday 7 October. That extraordinary number was inevitably inflated by our stand being positioned next to Lawn Tennis, which caused understandable confusion. It was interesting to hear from a number of people that they had seen a piece on real tennis included in a film about Oxford played on the Induction Day for all International Freshers, which led them to seek out the OUTC stall as a result.

As things stand at the end of Michaelmas Term, we have a group of about 25 female students, Freshers and others, playing tennis enthusiastically. Many are regular players and their handicaps are improving as a result. We have had a number of inter-club matches this term, and have had more volunteers to play than spaces in the team.

All matches have been won by a margin of 4-2 and have comprised a mixture of singles and doubles. We have played home and away matches against Radley and an away match against Holyport. Unfortunately, two other planned fixtures were cancelled by our opponents.

In addition to these matches, some of our members have played in such events as the National U21 Handicap competition at Radley, played successfully in a match at Queen's, have ventured onto the newly-reopened court in Chicago and Prince's Court in Washington and have visited the Irish courts in Dublin (the 'marble' court) and on Lambay Island (no roof, penthouses on all four sides and a tambour at each end!). It is hoped that both Irish courts will be brought back into play in the near future.

We are looking forward to next term's encounters. In Hilary Term, we are scheduled to play five inter-club matches in advance of the Varsity matches, which will

be in Sixth and Seventh Weeks respectively. This year, the Blues Varsity Match will be played at Lord's on 22 and 23 Feb 2013 (we will be defending Oxford wins in 2011 and 2012) and the Second's Varsity Match will be played in Cambridge this year on 1 and 2 March 2013 (we will be defending wins in 2010, 2011 and 2012). Preparations for these matches are well underway and our squads are shaping up well.

We are thrilled that Audrey Davies, Joint Women's Captain this year, has been awarded an LRTA bursary, rewarding her promise and commitment as a player.

The women have benefitted, as have the student men, from sponsorship monies, which has provided high quality racquets for matches and squad practice, team match kit, and support of our Varsity campaigns through assistance with travel, accommodation, coaching and court-time costs. We are extremely grateful to our sponsors and supporters and are particularly delighted that the Men and Women's teams have embarked on a generous multiple-year agreement with Neptune Investment Management as OUTC's exclusive corporate sponsor, building on and extending Neptune's support over a number of past years.

Tennis is thriving within the community of student women at Oxford and we look forward with optimism to 2013.



OUTC stand at the Freshers' Fair

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Simms Champagne League Finals

4.30pm on Thursday 20 December - come along and give your support

Thursday 28th December - Christmas Doubles

This is a fun tournament for a maximum of 12 players. For the first time ever the tournament was full after one day of its announcement! Sign up on the noticeboard if you would like to be a reserve

11th-13th January 2013

Grant Bates Trophy - Club Handicap Doubles

The main Handicap Doubles Competition. Played on the Friday evening, Saturday and concluding on the Sunday afternoon. Sign up on the club noticeboard

John D Wood Trophy

This team pennant competition is again fully subscribed and starts week commencing Monday 7th January

9th-10th February 2013 - Wroth Cup

This is the level Club Doubles Championship. It is heavily seeded so we encourage pairs of up to about 50 Hcap to enter

22nd-23rd February 2013 - Varsity Match (1st teams)

This to be held at MCC. Supporters welcome

1st-2nd March 2013 - Varsity 2nds

These are to be held at Cambridge this year. Supporters welcome

Thursday 7th March

National League Division 1

At Oxford vs Queens

Thursday 1st April

National League Division 1

At Oxford vs Middlesex

T&RA DOUBLES HANDICAPS & OUTC

by Ray Cooke

The main concern of the T&RA Handicaps Committee in 2012 has been the inaccuracy of players' doubles handicaps. This usually manifests itself where players are doubles specialists, but whose doubles handicap is allowed to default to their inferior singles handicap, giving them an unfair advantage in tournaments.

At Oxford nearly all doubles play is informal and this issue is not one we have heard complaints about – but elsewhere it has a profile which has prompted extensive debate, culminating in some recommendations from the T&RA geared to resolving the situation, backed by insistence on maintained doubles handicaps for players in Pol, Brodie and Field events.

The T&RA ideal would be the recording of all doubles results into the handicap system so that players' doubles handicaps can be adjusted and maintained independently from their singles handicaps (albeit subject to a constraint limiting how far apart the two values can be).

The OUTC position is that this seems a lot of effort for very little return, and so a leaner way to support the T&RA objective of removing this anomaly has been sought. The key requirement is that we should not have our members pitching up at T&RA events or other clubs' doubles tournaments as handicap bandits as described in the opening paragraph.

To this end it has been decided that the pros will identify all our doubles specialists, now and in the future, and maintain doubles handicaps for them on RTO, by initially gauging the correct differential between singles and doubles performance for each, and applying manual adjustments thereafter as necessary. Doubles results will also be entered in respect of club doubles tournaments, and inter-club doubles matches including National League. The pros have earmarked a number of players as doubles specialists already. If you are an OUTC member whose doubles ability differs markedly from your singles handicap, then please discuss this with the pros as soon as possible.

OUTC IT – a resilient service for 2013

by Ray Cooke

The recent weekend outage of the pros' PC (depriving them of booking system, admin database, accounts system and email) was due to a hard disk failure on what is now an antique PC. We were fortunate that a prompt repair could be achieved because the corrupted area of the hard drive was the operating system rather than our data. The timing of the failure was however unfortunate as, recognising the risk of old kit in the context of the club's increased dependency on its IT assets, we had already embarked on an upgrade programme.

The first improvement arrived a few days after the outage, with the deployment of a business-class resilient link to the internet, immediately improving booking system availability, reliability of email traffic, and firewall security (where our old link was failing regularly and there was no firewall).

A new server has since arrived and as I write we are busy migrating our core applications from the old PC to the server, via a painstaking test process to ensure that where we move to newer versions, these still work as we want them to in the new server-based configuration, including the interactions between them.

This is a significant step for the club, reflecting the increasing role of IT in the club, both in terms of operational efficiency of the professionals, and convenience and transparency for members, and backed by a third party support arrangement.

Whilst the financial impact of all this is being managed closely, it has required some investment and will increase running costs going forward – but the recent outage has served to illustrate why this is necessary, and elimination of the disruption the pros have been suffering will improve their efficiency and our enjoyment of our game.