

Newsletter

Oxford University Tennis Club



Winter 2014/5

Edited by Maggie Henderson-Tew

Welcome to this edition of the Club Newsletter. It's been around six months since we last published and there has been plenty happening.

As you will read, we've been having a decent run in the national Brodie Cup competition and the finals of recent Club tournaments have seen some exciting play. I've thoroughly enjoyed watching some of these matches. Do come along to spectate if you get the chance, as the players always welcome an audience.

The Committee has been busy as ever, and there are developments in hand regarding the court itself and improvement of the Club's facilities.

Please feel free to comment on anything you see in these pages, or indeed any other Club-related matter, to the Pros (real-tennis.club@studentclubs.ox.ac.uk) or to me (del636@yahoo.co.uk). I look forward to hearing from you.

Derek Williams

BRODIE CUP by *Tim Dadd*

Unusually for Oxford, we finally had the opportunity to host a Brodie Cup round. Better still this was the quarter final.

First up was the H45 doubles pair of Derek Williams and Chris Lintott. Derek brought along his own supporters' club (dad, step-mum, wife etc.), whilst it was questionable if Chris was going to turn up at all given that the Astrophysics Christmas Party was the night before. I received a text a full five minutes before his match was due to start, while I was carefully assessing the dedans for possible partners for Derek, assuring me and the team that he was on his way. Unfortunately this really meant that Chris never settled throughout the match. This wasn't helped by Derek boasting many return of serves into the net. Chris, remembering his Physics, then managed to serve a ball into the winning gallery which clearly shattered the opposition. Derek then started to hit back-hand volleys into the grille at will, and the tide turned. He and Chris won the match in 2 sets: 6/5, 6/5.

Next on was Roger Nathan, playing the 30 handicap singles. Roger clearly played the home court advantage. His opponent, Martin Tucker, was doing everything to hit balls whilst they were kicking out sideways to the detriment of his own knees and ankles.

Roger played a mix of delicious floor shots and volleys that never allowed Martin to settle, although he fought back hard in the second set. Roger dropped only three games in total, winning decisively: 6/1, 6/2.

With two rubbers already in the bag, Daniel Baltzer now had the additional pressure of taking the third, and thereby winning the match for us. His opponent in the H40 singles was Tim Harper, a canny, ambidextrous player, who serves with his left arm but returns with his right. This gave him a strong serve and return, and, additionally, his retrieving under the grille was exceptional. He returned ball after ball and continuously aimed cross-court, with great effect, hitting the battery wall under the last gallery. That's a very tricky ball, as we all know. To his great credit, Daniel took control of the game, winning in two sets: 6/2, 6/3, and propelling Oxford to victory and to a place in the Semi-Final!

Fortunately, Oxford has talented players at every level, so when Liz Leach was injured and had to pull out a couple of days before the match, Jonathan Clarke stepped in to play the H50 singles. He dropped only one game in the opening set, and, although Nick Pickard put up some stiff resistance in the second, Jonathan secured the set, and the fourth rubber: 6/1, 6/3.

As in the previous match at Seacourt, the pressure was now on Alex Mullan and Ray Cooke to complete the match with a clean sweep by winning their H35 doubles rubber.

Taking note of the last Brodie match report about poor preparation for the doubles, Craig gave the boys some specialist doubles education. This coaching completely changed Alex and Ray's attitude and approach to the game, paying dividends. Now they both knew exactly where they needed to stand to defend and attack everything. Ray's volleying strength supported Alex's floor game perfectly.

Hatfield's George Foxall and James Hay are a formidable doubles combination. They kept changing tactics to try to find a weakness in Alex and Ray's game, but they were unable to do enough. Alex and Ray won 6/3, 6/3, with Ray volleying the winning ball into the grille after a fantastic rest.

So, Oxford sail into the Semi-Final, which will be a local Derby match against Radley, at the Radley court, on Sunday 1 Feb. Radley had an equally emphatic 5/0 win to gain their place in the Semi, which sets up a spicy encounter.

The order of play for the day will be:

10.00 H45 Doubles
11.00 H30 Singles
12.15 H40 Singles
13.30 H50 Singles
15.00 H35 Doubles

Your support on the day will be much appreciated. Radley will be providing refreshments all day, so do drop in, for as long as you can, and cheer us on. It should be a terrific match, and you'll probably recognise many of the Radley players who are also Oxford members.

Knight Cup winner Geoff Baker



KNIGHT CUP (LEVEL SENIORS' CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP)

An excellent competition eventually saw Geoff Baker and Mike Henman face one another in the final.

The first set to Geoff was much closer than the 6-1 score-line suggests and had those of us sitting in the dedans worrying that Mike's forcing might start to test the strength of the netting. Nevertheless, Geoff was able to cope with Mike's fierce forcing and won a very tight second set, 6-5.

Congratulations to Geoff on a hard-won and deserved victory and to both players for putting on such a superb display of Tennis. Grateful thanks go to Roland Knight for his kind sponsorship of this event.

OVER 60'S DOUBLES

With Roland Knight unfortunately having to withdraw with a nasty bout of the 'flu, his brother, Julian, woke up on match day to find himself partnerless on the morning of play.

Thankfully, Jeremy Irwin-Singer stepped in at last minute to fill the gap and it proved fortuitous. Their partnership flourished, they reaching the final and overcome spirited resistance from Chris Hancock and Adrian Fort, eventually wining, 8-5.

Over 60's Handicap Doubles (age!) winners Julian Knight (left) and Jeremy Irwin Singer



SIMMS SUMMER LEAGUE FINALS

December brought us the Simms Summer League finals, which were the culmination of a competition that had brought together over 60 players through the summer months, during which the league stages were played.

The competition was very kindly sponsored again this year by John Simms and Bower & Bailey Solicitors, and John strode through to the semi-final this year, before being knocked out by the eventual winner of the B final, Jonathan Clark.

The scores in both the A and the B finals turned out to be rather one-sided, and identical, despite opponents Nick Owen and Andrew Macintosh's best efforts. That said, both Charlie Lane-Fox and Jonathan Clark gave no quarter in either encounter and played excellent tennis. Each was completely focused on victory - and no doubt the extra bottle of champagne that makes the winner's glory taste even sweeter!

Charlie Lane-Fox beat Nick Owen 8-1 and Jonathan Clark beat Andrew Mackintosh 8-1.

Sponsor John Simms presenting the Pol Roger champagne to A Final Winner Charlie Lane-Fox



B Final winner, Jonathan Clark, receiving his Pol Roger champagne from John Simms



A1 RAM Handicap Doubles winners Piers Dickinson (left) and Thomas Sinclair (right) with sponsor Ron Mutton



A1 RAM HANDICAP DOUBLES

Twelve pairs contested the competition this year and, as ever, it was a good social event, with large handicap differences and some interesting tennis. Chris Lintott and Derek Williams were hot favourites, having not lost a doubles match since joining forces in the Grant Bates Trophy. They reached the finals as expected, but their opponents, students Piers Dickenson and Thomas Sinclair stopped their smooth progress. Piers and Thomas's play seemed to improve with every stroke through the competition, and they ran out winners 6-2. Many thanks again go to our splendid sponsor, Ron Mutton, who has supported this tournament for many years. Long may it continue!

SILVER RACKET

Richard Alden of Hayman's Fisheries and Alden's Meatmaster sponsored the Silver Racket again this year and it was an excellent event. The prize was played for by a pair of Oxford Blues, Ben Graves and Archie Burgess. Each of them has a handicap in the low twenties and now heading towards the teens. Who knows where they will be by the time Varsity arrives at the end of February. In what was once again a great exhibition of student tennis, Ben eventually triumphed 8-4.

Our sincere thanks go to Richard Alden for his continuing and generous support of this event.

Sponsor Richard Alden flanked by Silver Racket winner Ben Graves (left) and runner up Archie Burgess



FROM THE COMMITTEE

By Derek Williams

COURT FLOOR

In the last newsletter, we reported that we intended to start monitoring the heave of the court floor to enable the Club to better understand and predict the reasons for and rate of movement of the floor.

Following the initial survey on 16th June, a second visit on 15th September had produced the first measurements of possible movement of the floor. The report stated that a movement of 0.3 of a millimetre is deemed to be “no movement”, due to equipment tolerances. A movement outside of these parameters (of 0.4mm) had been recorded at a single point only. The slight movement noted is upwards to a slab that is already slightly raised noted as point 16 on the diagram (in the centre at 2nd Gallery at the service end).

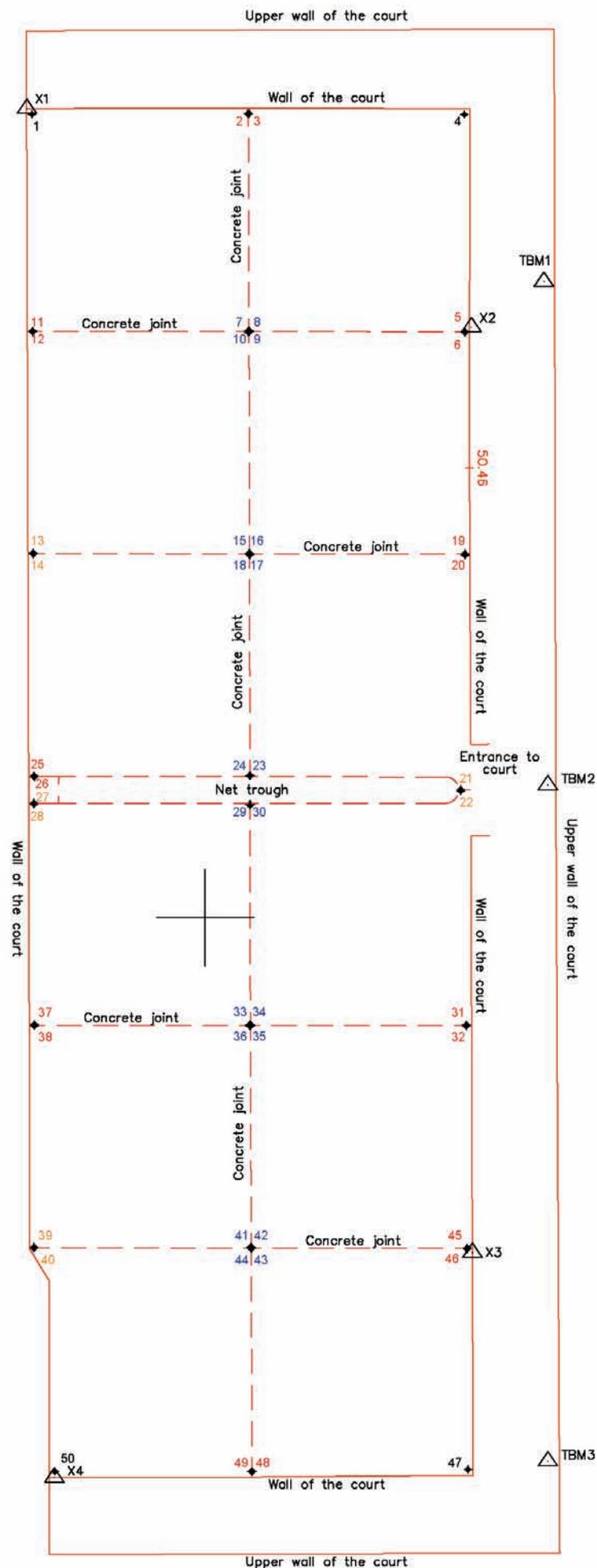
A third set of measurements were taken on 15th January. Point 16 has risen by a further 0.1mm making a total increase over the whole period of 0.5mm. Point 44 in the centre of the hazard end is now showing slight movement (0.5mm) and point 29, which is right at the net trough on the hazard side has moved 0.7mm.

Further quarterly visits will follow. It will also be interesting to see over the two years that the survey will monitor the court what, if any, effects the changing seasons have on the movement on the court.

I am hopeful that when this process is finished, the movements prove to be not so large that we have to consider work on the surface of the court. Apart from the occasional uneven bounces off the concrete seams, I think the floor itself is a good and even one.

We have carried out considerable research into possible solutions. Should the changing heave indicate that the way in which the court plays will deteriorate beyond a tolerable level, modern concrete technology may well have the required answer.

That said, I have yet to hear of a court floor that's been altered or resurfaced to the complete satisfaction of the players, and it would be a great shame to lose an original Bickley floor.



FACILITIES

In the spring, we are planning to re-decorate throughout much of the Club and will be freshening up the paintwork in the pro shop, clubroom, stairway and changing rooms along with all of the connecting doors and frames. Additionally, the men's changing room floor will shortly receive a new covering as will the shower area.

We are also taking an initial look at the costs to change the lighting to an LED system. A couple of clubs have made the change and I have heard favourable reports. One company has taken a look up in the rafters, kindly assisted by Ray Cooke, and hopefully we'll have a quote to consider shortly.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

Back in December, some of us visited Seacourt and were very impressed by their new camera and TV system. Three TV's are mounted on the wall in their bar. Two are provided with video from a camera mounted at either end of the court. The cameras are tiny and mounted into small holes drilled in the bandeau. The third TV screen shows the game score. To facilitate this, the marker has an Android-driven tablet computer on which he marks, and this is linked wirelessly to the TV screen.

The whole system was very well thought out and enabled spectators in the bar to watch and enjoy the game. The view from the cameras was excellent too. There's a short report on this on the T&RA website: www.tennisandrackets.com/NewsItem.aspx?id=1264

'The Real Tennis Scoring App' has been created by Leamington and Hampton Court member, Robert Frost, who I had the pleasure of meeting at Leamington recently. Robert took the time to show me the functionality of the App. As well as keeping the score and chases, the App stores the information and this can be used to generate statistics on the game in a quite amazing way. I was able to see how my game had progressed, saw statistics on the pattern of chases set by me and my opponent, and where every point was won and lost – sadly, mainly lost by me in relation to the game I'd just played! It's a very clever piece of software. It's free and available to download if you have Android-based equipment, so do take a look.

There are also potential benefits to coaching as video can be recorded and played back. The committee is looking into the possibility of installing a similar system at Oxford. Some of us will visit Seacourt again shortly to look at the set-up in more detail and we'll consider the practicalities and costs shortly.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

NATIONAL LEAGUE DIVISION 1

THURSDAY 29TH JANUARY AT 18.30

Oxford vs Middlesex at home

Please come along and watch your home team of Craig Greenhalgh and Roman Krznaric take on Will Burns and Leon Smart. Entry is £5.00 (free for students) which also provides you with a glass of wine.

VARSIITY MATCH

Oxford and Cambridge Men's and Women's First Teams will be playing at Lord's on Friday 27th and Saturday 28th February and you are welcome to come along to lend your support. Further details will be on the noticeboard shortly.

TOWN & GOWN

The Club is planning to hold a Town versus Gown match in late spring. Further details will be put on the noticeboard in a month or so.



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