

# Newsletter

Oxford University Tennis Club



Winter 2013

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



As I approach the end of my term as Chairman it is pleasant to reflect on what has been a most enjoyable five years in office. The solid platform built by my predecessor, Martin Mercer, made maintaining the standards he had set seem a daunting task. However, as it turned out, the support of the professionals, a dedicated committee and other helpers and members generally meant that I could hardly go wrong.

I saw my main challenge to be overseeing the transition amongst professionals on Alan Oliver's retirement. Alan had been the mainstay of the club for so many years that it was difficult to imagine life without him. However the way in which Andrew Davis has broadened his role into that of sole Head Professional shows that I needed to have had no concerns. With his gentle but firm manner Andrew has put his own stamp on the way the club operates, maintaining his good humour in often trying circumstances. Under his leadership, the club has run smoothly throughout. It has been a great pleasure working with him.

Andrew has of course been supported by Craig Greenhalgh who has brought his enthusiasm and coaching skills to bear in securing victories over Cambridge for both the men's and women's blues teams throughout his time with us. Simultaneously he has somehow managed to engineer improvements in the performances of even the most entrenched seniors.

During my tenure I have been supported by a committee which, although its composition has changed from time to time, has always contained a range of talents. As a result we have seen a number of changes ranging from the technical, including improved IT, to the practical involving new lighting, repairs to the penthouse and court maintenance. Although not on the committee, Martin Mercer has continued to work behind the scenes to ensure that our finances remain sound.

Our sponsors have been very important to our success. The advent of Neptune Investment Management as sole commercial sponsors of University tennis has eased the financial pressures on student participation in the game. I am also very grateful for the many individuals and other organisations who give us their support, as well, of course, as the local businesses that sponsor senior tennis. It would be good to feel that we can from time to time reciprocate by giving them our own custom.

We do of course need to continue to ensure that we keep the court and club in a state where members and guests can enjoy their tennis and each other's company. Ed Wigzell writes elsewhere of possible improvements to the floor to eliminate the irregular

bounces which, although an occasional boon to some of us, can be frustrating to the more polished players. The new committee will be looking into how this can be achieved. Members may have ideas on how improvements that can be made and I know the committee will be happy to hear of them. Above all, however, it has been the members themselves that have made my position as Chairman so enviable.

I would therefore like to conclude by thanking you all for doing me the honour of electing me five years ago and providing me with your friendship and companionship during what has been an enjoyable term of office.

Happy Christmas!  
*Simon Stubbings*

## FROM THE COMMITTEE

### OXFORD RACKETS

We have some very smart, extratec rackets in natural wood with the club logo printed on. There is only one left in stock at present, but we will be getting more in the New Year. If you would like to order one, please speak to Andrew.



### CLUB DINNER

*Stuart Herbertson*

For a number of years, the club held an annual dinner in association with the Morris and Verdin competition. Sadly this competition is no longer held in Oxford; and Morris and Verdin no longer exist as a company. As a result the habit of an

annual dinner has fallen away, the last being the very successful one in 2011 which marked Alan Oliver's retirement. Following a positive response to the e-mail circulated earlier this year, the committee has decided to arrange a dinner next year on Friday 25th April. This happily coincides with the annual 0-9 tournament being held in the club over the weekend of 25-27 April. Please make a note in your diary of this date. Further information will be circulated in the New Year.

### COURT FLOOR UPDATE

*Ed Wigzell*

The club is continuing to pursue its investigations into finding a suitable remedy for the increasingly irregular court floor. A specialist flooring contractor was appointed in the summer to scientifically analyse the surface characteristics of the existing floor and to make recommendations for providing a new floor of equal or better quality.

The flooring contractor presented its findings at the October Committee meeting. The preferred remedy involves the full diamond grinding of the floor to remove all lips and sudden irregularities, the application of a hardening and densifying agent, followed by a colour stain and then a final polish.

The Committee is currently exploring the financial, planning and playing implications of undertaking the works and looks forward to keeping members updated over the course of 2014.

### FROM THE TREASURER

*Stuart Herbertson*

The first two weeks in July are a frantic time for Andrew Davis and myself as the annual subs flood

in. Reconciling what has been paid with what should be paid is a painstakingly detailed affair. It is noticeable that a number of members pay a standing order that is incorrect for their membership status. Would all members please check their bank instructions and if necessary amend the amount to

be paid. Details of annual subscription rates are posted in the clubhouse. Additionally, can I please remind members that they are required to keep their playing accounts in credit - if Andrew sends you a reminder to pay, please respond promptly.

## CLUB REPORTS

### ENGLISH HERITAGE OPEN DOORS EVENT

*By Jonathan Clark*

Once again, OUTC was pleased to participate in the Oxford Open Doors event held on Saturday 14th September. Derek Williams organised the event with his usual thoroughness, though he had managed to double book himself this time, and wasn't able to attend in person. Nonetheless he left an able team of volunteers in place who were able to demonstrate the game continuously between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. As well as playing, the volunteers manned the galleries and the club-room to explain to the public what was going on.

At the start we kept count of the visitor numbers, but the tide became too great. Nonetheless we estimate that over 600 people passed through the doors during the four hours we were open. Let's hope a few more people are inspired to take up the game as a result, and thank you to the volunteers who gave up their time.

### THE A1 RAM DOUBLES TOURNAMENT

*By Stuart Herbertson*

The latest performance of this perennial favourite took place on 23rd November. There was a wide spread of age and handicap in those who entered. Two groups of four pairs vigorously contested a series of round-robin matches to produce four semi-finalists.

In the first semi the experienced pair of Mark Bale and Ray Cooke were outgunned 6-2 by Lesley Smith and Ed Sulston. In the second semi Sophie Dannreuther and Ellie Harris dispatched Chris Peri and Alex Ekserdjian.

The final was a close fought contest but eventually the elegant stroke play of Ellie Harris and the powerful forcing of Sophie Dannreuther proved too much for

*A1 RAM winners, Ellie Harris and Sophie Dannreuther*



Lesley Smith and Ed Sulston. Grateful thanks are due to Ron Mutton, who was unfortunately unable to attend, for once again so generously sponsoring the event. Many thanks also to Craig for his efficient dealing with handicap issues and his careful and accurate marking.



*A1 RAM runners-up, Lesley Smith and Ed Sulston*



## **KNIGHT CUP**

*By Craig Greenhalgh*

Adrian Fawcus beat Julian Fox 2/6 6/3 6/1 in the final of the level Seniors Club Championship. In this tight three setter, Adrian had to come back from a set down, eventually winning the match 2/6 6/3 6/1. Losing semi finalists were Ashley Prior and an ever improving Johnny Whittaker. Once again our sincere thanks go out to the sponsor, Roland Knight, for his continued support of this event.

## **BRODIE CUP**

Our team, captained by Tim Dadd, narrowly lost at Seacourt in the first round of this national inter-club knock-out tournament

## **NATIONAL LEAGUE**

Oxford have four teams entered for this year's leagues.

**Division 2** (5-10 handicap). The Club is represented by Craig Greenhalgh and Miles Jackson. With the first fixture abandoned due to the Oxford court sweating and other postponements due to injuries to opponents, Craig and Miles kicked off their season on 5th December at home to the Prested/MCC team of Lewis Williams and Claire Vigrass. Playing first were Craig and Lewis. Craig didn't settle in the first set and Lewis edged it with some fierce and accurate forcing.

The second and third sets, whilst similarly hard-fought, were emphatically Craig's much to the crowd of twenty or so's approval.

The second match saw some beautiful and powerful tennis played by both but in particular by Claire who saw off Miles in two fairly quick sets with a display of wonderful retrieving and superb line and length tennis, never really allowing Miles to play his game.

A fast and furious doubles followed and Oxford won the set 8-2 with some great serving and volleying and thus the match.

Thanks go to Hugo Shuttleworth of Berwyn Catering & Events and Derek Williams of Mayfield Press for jointly sponsoring the Oxford team.

**Division 6** (25-30 handicap) are captained by Ed Wigzell and are unfortunately yet to get off the mark.

**Division 8** (35-40 handicap) are captained by John Conibear and are currently lying second having recorded wins against Leamington and Petworth.

**Division 9** (40-45 handicap) are captained by Adam Jeffrey and are top of their league having beaten Canford, Leamington and Moreton Morrell.

*Silver Racquet winner, Johnny Whittaker, being presented with the trophy by sponsor, Richard Alden*



## SILVER RACQUET

*By Derek Williams*

This coveted trophy is played for by two of the university's most promising student players each year and the event is kindly sponsored by Richard Alden.

Competing for this year's trophy were Johnny Whittaker (St Hilda's) and Euan Campbell (Queen's). With Johnny and Euan both playing off a handicap

*Sumptuous spread in the Committee Room*



of 25 a close contest was expected, but in fact it was a topsy-turvy game with Euan taking the first three games and then Johnny the next eight in a row to close the match out.

Despite the scoreline, there was some great tennis played which was much appreciated by the crowd of invited guests, many of whom were watching Real Tennis for the first time. It is fair to say that they were both enthralled by the skill and athleticism and baffled by the rules in equal measure!

In addition to watching the match, Richard's guests (and I was lucky enough to be among their number) were treated to a fantastic meal in the Committee Room and it was a pleasure to be served by Richard's son Matthew.

*Runner up Euan Campbell*



With lobster from Richard's company, Haymans Fisheries and steak from Aldens Specialist Catering Butchers, run by Matthew, there was little chance of anything but an excellent meal and so it proved with a magnificent spread being enjoyed by all.

Wine and conversation flowed and it was interesting to hear all of the guest's opinions of our game. There were a couple former squash players present who had played at county level that particularly appreciated the court skills displayed.

The Club is very grateful to Richard Alden for sponsoring this event and I'd like to say thank you to Richard too - an evening of great tennis, wonderful food and good company.

*JC Smith Trophy Winners, Jon Conibear (left) and Roger Boning (right) with the trophy being presented by Jo C Smith*



## **OVER 60'S HANDICAP DOUBLES 7 DECEMBER 2013**

*By Simon Stubbings*

There was a larger entry than usual this year requiring the creation of two groups who played in a round robin tournament before the winners and runners up of each progressed to the knock out stages. This was as well since the disparity in handicaps between the strongest and weakest pairings made for long games.

In both their semi-finals and finals Roger Boning and Jon Conibear started each game 30-owe 40, a forbidding mountain to scale. However after an exhibition of very controlled tennis it was to that pairing that Jo C Smith presented the winning salver that he had generously donated to the club.

*Runners up, Ian Barry and Richard Youdale*



## **SIMMS SUMMER CHAMPAGNE LEAGUE, 9 DECEMBER 2013**

*By Simon Stubbings*

A reminder of our spectacular 2013 summer sliced its way through the wintry gloom at the Oxford club house on the evening of Monday 9 December when members gathered to witness the finals of the Simms Champagne League.

Over half the club's regular playing members had participated in the round robin groups. They had been followed by two knock out competitions for the winners and runners up of each group. The finalists in each competition were Rafa Perera and Derek Williams, and Malek Al-Chalabi and the sponsor himself, John Simms.

*Winner Derek Williams (left) and runner up Rafa Perrera (right) with sponsor John Simms*



The game between Rafa and Derek was one of two halves, both to be found at Derek's end of the court.

He began the match with his customary determination to test to destruction the stitching on the balls that Craig had carefully sewn, boasting them at every conceivable opportunity. Then, after Rafa had shown himself more than capable of anticipating the shots and the associated spin and had opened a significant lead, the audience was treated to the remarkable spectacle of some subtle Williams stroke play. Rafa battled gamely against this phenomenon but the

unexpected change in styles was too much and Derek emerged the winner of well fought contest, 8-6.

Before the other match took place there was some speculation as to whether John Simms would, after so many years of generously sponsoring the event, finally win it. Malek's determination to prevent this prevailed however. Resisting a spirited Simms fight back, Malek clung to the serve in the final games and closed the match out 8-5.

Sipping Pol Roger champagne following the presentation of prizes, players and spectators alike reflected fondly on memories of an enjoyable summer's tennis tournament generously sponsored by local solicitors, Bower and Bailey.

*Winner Malek Al-Chalabi (left) with sponsor and runner up John Simms*



## SENIORS' ANNUAL MEETING

In the Clubhouse on  
Tuesday 14 January 2014  
at 6:35pm

You are warmly invited to attend this meeting. It is an opportunity to:

Review last year's accounts

Receive reports from members of the Committee on various aspects of the club over the last year

Elect a new Committee for 2014-5

Make suggestions as to how you would like to see the club improved

Witness the prize draw from the Restoration Lottery Fund and generally enjoy a glass of wine with fellow members

The formal part of the meeting should not take more than half an hour or so.

The informal part is up to you!

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Sunday December 15th**

**Pol Trophy**

(Away match at Royal Tennis Court)

Oxford field their best players in this National Inter-club Knock-out first round match.

Oxford are captained by Rob Walker

**Friday December 27th**

**Christmas Fun Doubles Tournament**

10.30-2.30pm

**January 10th,11th &12th**

**Grant Bates Trophy**

Club Open Handicap Doubles Tournament

**January 14th**

**Seniors AGM**

**February 8th & 9th**

**Wroth Cup**

Level Club Doubles Championship

**Throughout January, February and March**

**John D Wood Trophy**

Evening team Pennant Competition

Please contact the pros if you would like to enter any of the competitions,  
or sign up on the main club noticeboard

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