

Newsletter

Oxford University Tennis Club



Summer 2019

Welcome to the summer edition of the Club Newsletter.

It's been quite a while since we last put one together and rather than trying to catch up completely, I've focused on the events from last summer onwards. As you can see, there is plenty to report!

We've had a good and varied season at the Club, with, I'm pleased to say, all of the regular tournaments being supported by the same sponsors as previously, and you can catch up with the results later in this issue. We're incredibly lucky to have the long-term support of our sponsors. Please join me in thanking them wherever you get the opportunity.

The regular tournaments have been augmented by two new annual competitions; the Mixed Doubles tournament (we're looking for a sponsor for this one – let me or the Pros know if you're interested!) and the Mayfield Cup handicap singles tournament.

We also hosted a private event for Club benefactors, the Broadbent family, and enjoyed a visit from Prince Edward as part of his year-long challenge to play all of the courts in the world.

ROYAL VISIT

It was back in April 2017 that I received a letter from Bagshott Park, the office of the Earl and Countess of Wessex, telling me of Prince Edward's plans for a real tennis challenge and requesting our club's support for the event.

The aim was to play every real tennis court in the world during 2018 and to use this challenge primarily as a fundraiser, but also to promote the work of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme. It was also the aim to promote awareness of real tennis.

All in all, quite a busy season, and successful too with a clean sweep at Varsity for our Women's and Men's teams, with both Firsts and Seconds delivering comprehensive victories, and our Club's first ever victory in the Brodie Cup. As I write, the season is not over, and we have the possibility of wins in several divisions in the National League, and a chance of topping the Thames Valley League.

This year marks 25 years of service to the Club by our senior professional, Andrew Davis. As you'll read later, this event has been celebrated at the Varsity Match at Lord's in March and more recently at the 0-9 Club Dinner at Balliol College. An amazing milestone and the fact our Club is such a good place to play and visit is in no small measure down to the welcome that Andrew gives, and the efficient way he runs our Club.

2019 is my last in the Chair, with Neil Mortensen due to take over from me at the AGM this coming January. It has been a privilege and (mostly!) a pleasure to serve you all. I'd like to thank the many that have supported me over the last six years and I hope that all will join me in wishing Neil well.

Derek Williams





Pupils and staff from Headington Girls School, St Gregory the Great School, Littlemore and the Oxford Academy

Whilst our club is well set up to serve our needs, the thoughts of hosting a royal visit and all it might entail in our limited space, and the likely level of organisation involved were quite daunting. Nonetheless, we were delighted to offer our assistance and the process of working on agreeing a date and defining an event plan began.

After a meeting with Merton College, a date of 15th November 2018 was set. The initial plan was to host a dinner at Merton in the evening directly after the event, but unfortunately it transpired closer to the date that Merton were unable to host, and the dinner was held at Magdalene College.



A slightly bigger class than Craig is used to

It quickly became apparent that HRH, who gained his own DofE award in real tennis, was taking the sporting element very seriously. The plan was to play doubles for three hours at each court, with three separate matches to be played. After a meeting with the DofE and HRH's representatives, we decided that we would set up the matches as Juniors, Students and Seniors to best represent all elements of tennis at Oxford.

The DofE were keen to get local schools involved, and I was equally keen that, if at all possible, the schools that came along would not just participate on the day but would get the chance for coaching beforehand. I was also aware that Prested, in conjunction with The Dedanists were looking into creating a DofE award in real tennis and they kindly shared their programme outlines and initial ideas with me.

Through direct contacts with Radley member, Tim Roberts (who was at that time Equerry to Prince Edward), Headington Girls School were already interested and I felt it important that we involved schools from the state sector. The DofE's office gave me some contacts and it was time to do something that I last did at the age of 16 and filled me with fear – go to school!

I started off at Headington Girls School and then visited St Gregory the Great School in Littlemore, the Oxford Academy in Blackbird Leys and Marlborough School in Woodstock, armed with a racquet, a ball and plenty of

enthusiasm. It's never easy to explain real tennis and this was no exception, particularly as I wanted staff and pupils to give up their time to play an ancient and slightly quirky sport that they'd never heard of in the middle of Oxford. Oh, and there's no parking either! Thankfully, three of the schools engaged fully, with only Marlborough School unable to commit despite the fact that Andrew's son, Alfie is a pupil there. Andrew and I then set up a series of coaching sessions in advance of the event, so that on the day all would have at least a basic idea of how our game is played and would have had a chance to get on court and hit some balls.

As you might imagine, there were quite a few hoops to jump through with organising the event as, in addition to HRH's office and the DofE, we needed to have contact with the Lord Lieutenant's office, Thames Valley Police and the Royal Protection Team, all of whom's wishes needed to be considered. Prince Edward was also using the opportunity to visit two of the schools prior to coming to OUTC, and the timings were planned to the nearest five minutes. I can remember Andrew and I wondering quite what we'd let ourselves in for when, at one meeting, we had a total of twelve representatives from the organisations involved in the committee room, and aside from anything else, that's a lot of cups of tea! Thankfully, Lindsey Simmonds and Laura Puddefoot-Knaggs from the DofE and Pippa Sands from Bagshot Park had it all worked out, having seen it and done it at the other participating courts and brought an air of calm to the proceedings.



How many points do you have!

On the day, HRH arrived about half an hour late, with Oxford's traffic and a very tight schedule conspiring to leave me pacing about nervously outside the pro-shop under the watchful eye of the police and Tim Lawrence, the Lord Lieutenant, who, thankfully, was a very reassuring influence. HRH arrived and to my surprise was driving himself in what I assume was an armoured Jaguar and Tim introduced me.

Prince Edward was charming and engaging right from the outset and quickly put me at ease. I introduced him to Andrew, who took him on to the court where Craig was giving a lesson to ten pupils and Anisha Charania, DofE coordinator from Headington Girls School. It turned out that Anisha had previously coached squash and had quickly taken to the game. As Edward approached the court entrance, Anisha was completing one of Craig's inventive drills – floor forehand, then backhand, then forehand volley, backhand volley and





HRH with OUTC Juniors Ambrose Garson, George Herbert and Merlin Kavenna

finally a shot played from between the legs – and this was the first shot HRH saw played on the Oxford court – very impressive! Prince Edward then joined the lesson and got to meet Craig and all of the school children, teachers and DofE representatives.

This was followed by a lunch provided by Matthew Alden in his usual impressive style – three giant fish



Later that afternoon, a pensive Rory Giddins wonders if Andrew and Craig will leave him any supper.

platters, and various cooked meats etc; truly a feast fit for royalty. HRH sat for lunch with his Equerry, Paul Arengo-Jones, the Lord Lieutenant and the nine players he was about to face on court and all were well served by Richard Alden and John Stevens.

As soon as HRH and the players moved downstairs to play, we sent waves of hungry school children, teachers and visitors up to the committee room to try to make further dents in the mountain of wonderful food that Matthew had provided, but even after all had had their fill, there was plenty left over. I was grateful for Matthew's generosity with the catering later too as I was still a bit focused on proceedings to be wanting to eat. Thankfully I managed to enjoy a bite or two once the event was over – not that I was in any danger of wasting away!

The first match was with our juniors, and HRH chose to spend the hour rotating partners so that all three got to play with and against him. There was some pretty spirited action with all three boys unafraid to put a bit of pace on the ball, and there were some very good rests

played, and many shots that I am sure would make our juniors quite a handful in any handicap competition.

I'd asked a few times what Prince Edward's handicap is in order to try to balance the matches but in the end, I had to take a guess based on hearsay. He plays some pretty good, (mid-to-late thirties handicap I'd say) tennis and has been well coached. It was good to see that he plays with passion and poise and he was not averse to questioning some of Andrew's calls. That said, Andrew was firm in his decisions and was happy to over-rule the Prince's protestations over a couple of close calls – so that's his chance at an MBE gone!

Next up were our students; last year's Women's Firsts captain, Natalie Barber, current Men's Firsts captain Charlie Defries and, HRH's playing partner for this match, Men's Seconds captain Ben Barber. This was a well-balanced match with plenty of strong hitting from Natalie and Charlie being countered by good line and length from HRH and Ben. Several times HRH was forced into evasive action, in particular by Natalie's fantastic volleying. The game went all the way to seven all with the final game and victory going to Ben and Prince Edward.



OUTC Students Ben Barber, Charlie Defries and Natalie Barber watching to see that HRH spins the racquet fairly!

The final hour of doubles was with our senior players. Playing places in this match were bid for and we are grateful to Matthew Alden, Stewart Licudi and Mary Joyner for their generosity towards the DofE charity. However, on court there was no generosity shown by any of them or indeed HRH. A full-blooded match ensued with no quarter given or asked for. In fact, in all three games, as soon as play was in progress, it was simply the case that there were four on the court giving it their best without any deference to who one of the



Matthew Alden, Stewart Licudi and Mary Joyner enjoying the moment with HRH. This picture typifies the spirit of the day.



HRH gave us all an insight into the challenge to date and presented certificates to those that had played

players may have been, and the tennis was all the better for it. This game also went the distance, with Stewart and Mary edging it to win 8-7.

Whilst the matches were in play, I had the chance to chat to our visitors from the DofE Awards, Lord Lieutenant's office, police and others and I remember chatting to one of the close protection officers and admiring the lapel badge on his suit. I innocently enquired as to whether the badge was from a club he belonged to, only to learn that, if bullets started flying, it was one of the ways that armed officers could distinguish themselves from others. This information certainly shut me up!

Once play had finished in the final game, we all gathered on the court where HRH presented certificates to all those that had taken part in the matches. As you can see from the photos, the players were all provided with a polo shirt from the DofE Awards too. Andrew had come up with the idea of not letting HRH leave Oxford empty-handed and presented him with an OUTC mug and an embroidered ball, which was well received.

I also received two racquets on behalf of the Club. The first is in the picture to the right. Each club that HRH played at received a purple presentation racquet to be kept by the club as a memento of the day. I was also presented with the racquet that HRH played with on the day, a top-of-the-range Grays CLX racquet with a custom silver and black colour scheme. This was to be used to raise further funds for the DofE charity.

Prince Edward then went off court to get changed and people generally started to thin out, but about eight of us remained in the club room to say goodbye. We were all delighted when he came back down in his tracksuit and instead of shooting off, stayed and chatted to us for around 15 minutes.

Oddly, for me, this was one of the highlights of the day as it was an opportunity to be with a member of the royal family in a relaxed setting, away from the



Andrew and Craig also received certificates



Prince Edward was delighted with his gifts from Andrew

constraints of the formal part of life, and it was clear that the engaging nature and charm that HRH had shown throughout the day was not something that was brought out just for show. He was genuine and interested, and it was just like chatting to any other real tennis player after a match, with talk about the play and a few memorable points, and then on to conversations about the other courts he'd played on, even getting his mobile 'phone out to show us pictures of the court on Lambay Island.

All too soon though, he was reminded that he had other duties to attend to and it was over. It has to be said that organising the event was quite a challenge, and not without its stresses on occasion, but thankfully, all had run without a hitch and we'd all had a great day. We'd manage to raise the profile of the game locally and raise funds for Prince Edward's cause too.

I'm very much hoping that we will manage to build a legacy from the event too. We've established links with several local schools and, together with help from The Dedanists, we have put together a programme for a DofE Bronze Award in real tennis. Meetings have taken place with Andrew, Headington Girls School's DofE coordinator, Anisha and I, and the intention is to try to get the programme up and running first with them later this year, and then fine tune as needed and offer the programme to local state schools.

Once HRH had left, it was time to go and put on the dinner suit as my wife and I were to attend at the dinner at Magdalene college. It was good to see a few familiar faces there too, with Stewart Licudi, Neil Mortensen and Chris Conlon in attendance, along with Freddy

Adam and Nick Browne, although Freddy was being kept very busy in her capacity as official photographer.

As you'd expect, we were very well fed and entertained, with possibly the longest grace I've had the pleasure of hearing, sung by a choir from the minstrel's gallery. We were also reminded of just what a worthy cause the DofE Awards are, with speeches from young adults from disparate walks of life that had worked towards and received awards and in so doing, had their lives changed and enriched by the experiences gained.

All in all, quite a day.

I'd like to say a massive thank you to Matthew Alden for feeding us all in such style, and to his father, Richard, and John Stevens for serving everyone; to Roger Nathan who helped with managing the school participants and DofE in the morning, and to all who played for doing so in a manner that showed our Club in the best possible light. A particular thank you also goes to Freddy Adam who took the majority of the photos in this article. Finally, I'd also like to thank Andrew and Craig for putting up with me at my most intensely focused which, I'm reliably informed by my long-suffering wife Jane, is far from easy!

Derek Williams





Left to right: Freddie Freeman (sub), Charlie Defries (captain), Rory Giddins, James Bates and Harry Lawes

VARSITY REAL TENNIS BLUES REPORT 2019

Georgie Willis and Charlie Defries

On the 1st and 2nd of March Oxford had our annual Varsity match against Cambridge at MCC. The first day saw the women's singles matches from a confident side coming off the back of a crushing 5/1 victory in the Seconds Varsity at Cambridge the weekend before, where all the girls had shown off the high quality of Oxford Ladies tennis and the even higher quality of our chat. New recruit to the Blues Lottie Hoskin did not disappoint, pulling off quite possibly the quickest match ever seen in the history of the varsity with a stunning 20-minute victory over Cambridge's Elle Curzon. 3rd seed Lucinda Maxwell had a much tougher match, coming up against some interesting seeding from the Cambridge team which managed to get them back in the running at 1-1.

The Men's 2nd doubles followed, with Charlie Defries and James Bates taking on Jimmy Campbell and Ivo Macdonald. Campbell's solid start at the back, coupled with Macdonald's proficiency up at the net caused our 2nd pair trouble in the opening set, and Cambridge quickly built a 3-0, 40-15 lead with some good court coverage and order-barking from Campbell at the back, and quick hands from rackets player Macdonald at the

front, who looked slightly bewildered whenever Campbell screamed "WHERE IS HE?" as the ball dropped from the penthouse. Oxford managed to settle down and took a string of games at the serving end following some errors from Cambridge and soon they had taken the opening two sets. A change of receivers in the third set helped Cambridge mount a comeback and the momentum shifted. Macdonald dealt well with Defries' railroads and a smattering of errors at the net from Defries helped Cambridge wrap up the set 6-3. The 4th set thankfully began with Oxford at the receiving end, taking the wise decision to revert back to the original receiving pairings. Defries was able to capitalise on some loose serving from Campbell and his forcing started to find the dedans again. Some solid play along the walls gave the spectators some quality long rallies, with the Oxford pair prevailing in some important exchanges to take a rather tense final set 6-4.

Dominance was then reasserted for the women by the arrival of OG Natalie Barber on the court, facing captain Alex Baranowski. Unfazed, Natalie's experience was evident, and she smashed through to take the match 6/1 6/0. Last up in the singles, captain and top seed Georgie Willis faced Olivia Chesser for the third time, with a 6/0 6/0 win taking Oxford to a 3-1 lead.

The first day ended with the men's first doubles. Ed Hyde and Jack Drew for Cambridge walked on to face Rory Giddins and Harry Lawes for Oxford. Lawes was excellent at the net and Giddins dictated the game from the back. A surprising, and certainly unique strategy for the Cambridge team proved ineffective, with Drew defending the winning gallery at the hazard end and Hyde scampering around to defend both the tambour and the winning gallery. This paid dividends in the opening set, as Cambridge raced to a 5-2 lead after an epic opening rally that saw Drew manage to dig the ball out from behind his back and Hyde cover every bit of court space until he buried it into the net. Lawes then started to find his feet and the momentum shifted, with Oxford coming out top in a string of long rallies and taking the set 6-5 with Giddins' return of serve causing Hyde difficulty. Cambridge's strategy started to take its toll in the second set, with Hyde valiantly scrapping at the back but cracks were starting to show. Despite their serious commitment and completely unnecessary dives, the Cambridge pair was unable to break through the Lawes' volley. The Cambridge pair struggled, and Oxford took the second set 6-2. The third set was wrapped up after a 5-1 lead was too much to overcome, and Oxford prevailed 6-3, giving Cambridge a mountain to climb on the second day.

Day 2 saw some unusual tactics from Cambridge coach Kees as they showed their competitive side and tried to overturn Oxford's 3-1 lead and fielded their top two seeds in the women's 1st doubles pairing. This however left their 3 and 4 to face the all-powerful Natalie and Lucinda dream-team, who managed to take the match in two sets and confirm Oxford's overall victory.

The first men's single match (4th string) was a real battle between Cambridge's Ivo Macdonald and Oxford's Harry Lawes. Lawes struggled to find his rhythm in the first set, which Ivo quickly took 6-1. Some tighter railroads helped him find his groove in a tense second set. Bolstered by some raucous support from the dedans, Lawes won five games on the trot to take the second set 6-3. The deciding set gave us some of this year's most exciting tennis. Lawes kept the momentum, targeting the corners and doggedly digging in during some longer rallies to take a 4-1 lead. It was at this point that the match turned, and Macdonald rallied with some relentless tambour hitting from the service end helping him take the lead at 5-4. At 5 games all, the match went into a nail-biting deciding game was edged by Cambridge as Macdonald chipped the ball into the galleries to win a chase better than the door and close out an excellent match.



Left to right: Lucinda Maxwell, Lottie Hoskin, Georgie Willis (captain), Natalie Barber and Isobel Lewis (sub)



Rory Giddins in the midst of dominating Cambridge's Ed Hyde

With the score now 2-1, Oxford's James Bates and Cambridge's Jack Drew took to the court. Bates' experience led to him winning the first set 6-1. The second set was closed out in similar fashion and Bates didn't drop a game in a dominant display, despite a spirited attack from Drew who hit some superb cut volleys that caused Bates some trouble. The trainee surgeon was clinical from the service end, and steady at the receiving end picking off the galleries well.

In the women's first doubles, 4th seed Lottie completely held her own against Cambridge's best female players, and with Georgie taking no prisoners at the back our W1 breezed to a 6/1 6/0 victory. Tense for a moment, the women's varsity match ended up being the clear victory we had dreamed of, and Oxford came out with a 5/1 victory overall.

Cambridge went in to the men's 2nd string match needing a win to keep the tie alive. Following a fraught game at the inter-universities tournament in November 2018, rivals Jimmy Campbell (Cambridge) and Oxford captain Charlie Defries stepped on court with a packed-out dedans buzzing with excitement. Tight underarm

twists from Campbell started the match, with Defries responding with his trademark railroad that had caused Campbell some trouble in the doubles on the first day. Campbell returned and retrieved well in a tight



Charlie Defries having just shouted "COME ON!" – again!

opening set. Poised at 4 games all, some crucial errors from Defries gifted Campbell the first set 6-4. Defries found his rhythm again in the second set, racing to a 4-1 lead after some frustrated errors from Campbell. Some measured play, strong retrieving and relentless shouts of “COME ON” after points won saw a fired up Defries take the second set 6-3. The momentum took him to a 3-0 lead in the deciding set, but Campbell scrapped to bring it back to 3-3. Defries managed to close out the set 6-3 as he continued to drive a tired Campbell into the corners, finding several short chases and forcing some decisive errors.

The final men’s singles match saw top seeds Ed Hyde (Cambridge) and Rory Giddins (Oxford) battle it out. Hyde was characteristically determined, ending up splayed out on the court after some impressive superman dives, but struggled to find a way through a calm, steady Giddins who retrieved too well in the first set and quickly took a 3-0 lead. He kept punishing the loose balls and raced to a 6-1, 6-1 victory to give the men’s team a decisive 5-1 victory.

A great dinner in the Long Room was followed by an even better night out, a great way to cap off a year of hard training and even harder socialising. The close bond this group has shared was reinforced, and new ties were even made with the Cambridge team. Overall it was a great weekend for OUTC that we hope will be repeated next year!

This year also marked Andrew Davis’ 25th year at Varsity and, with thanks to Brian Sharp and the MCC, Andrew was accorded the honour of speaking in the Long Room after dinner. Standing to speak in the Long Room is always daunting, but Andrew evidently won his fight with nerves and spoke very well, clearly conveying to the audience his passion for OUTC, real tennis and, in particular, student tennis. Much to long-term Cambridge coach, Kees Ludekins chagrin, he also managed to sneak in the fact that he has amassed a winning record over the years; 15 matches to 10 in the Men’s matches and 18 to 7 in the Women’s.

Derek Williams



BRODIE CUP VICTORY FOR OXFORD!

Chris Lintott

The Brodie Cup is the T&RA's knockout cup for handicaps between 30 and 50. After being beaten in the final by Radley for the last two years, the team were excited to set off to the Hyde - the traditional home of the Brodie final – after a detour to Wellington last year. We were much less excited to return to the club almost immediately because Grant Miller had left his kit behind, but once we arrived in Dorset, a professional training session was followed by dinner by the harbour, and a special mention should go to Danny Dawson and Wayne McLennan who were seen drinking soda water. Our opponents – Seacourt – were returning to the final for the first time since winning in 2013 and were confident, having made it this far without the benefit of a home tie.

After a fulsome breakfast (for most) and a yoghurt 'platter' and pancakes (for Freddie, exploring the lesser used bits of the Haddon House menu) we were raring to go. Danny and Wayne started against a youthful pair of Max Jones (son of Wellington pro Dan) and Max Truman. Wayne had issued dark blue

headbands to the whole team, but Danny stuck to his normal bandana.

Anticipation was high, and the dedans full, as one Max or other served a flawless railroad that didn't even seem from where we were to touch the right side of the penthouse before falling for an ace. The next point they hit the grille. And then... well, you get the idea.

Danny and Wayne got to deuce in the second game, but soon fell 6/0. Every time they got close to winning a game, the opposition stepped up and hit winners into the dedans or the corners. By the end, the Oxford pair were looking at each other for answers, and Wayne in particular never stopped running as they slipped to an unfortunate double bagel defeat. Special mention, though, for their trick shot where Danny ran in front of Wayne to prevent the opposition reading where the ball might go, only dropping to the floor at the last moment. Very inventive!

Harry Lawes was next up against Jess Garside. Jess took the first game, and the second took eight deuces and four changes of serve before Harry took Oxford's first game of the final - 76 minutes after the start of the match!



Grant Miller and Freddie Freeman on their way to beating Josh McMurragh and Simon Armstrong



The Lintott style of match preparation is unconventional, but effective and much admired!

Ben walking into the dedans on being told the score was 1-1 assumed we meant sets, but no, things were just getting started. At 4/2 Harry set chase the line – described immediately by the dedans as good tennis and by Jess as ‘great tennis’.

After Harry hit the grille to take the set Jess walked off court for a chat with her parents about a dog, but Harry wasn’t distracted, keeping the ball away from her lethal volley. After a reste ended with a Lawesian sweep into the corner, Jess advised her opponent to ‘hit it off the strings, man’. Harry didn’t need telling twice, or indeed once, and finished things up rapidly. He just missed winning his first match point with a shot that hit the corner of the grille frame; only slow reactions prevented the Oxford dedans erupting embarrassingly early, but the next point was a winner. One rubber each – game on!

Next, Ben Barber up against Simon Flynn. A couple of years ago during a Brodie match, I lobbed Simon perfectly, with a ball that dropped satisfyingly into the dedans. I told Ben this story at least twice during the weekend, and I think it inspired him. Certainly he was playing well, staying in reste after reste and moving Simon to all the corners of the court; at one point Simon resorted to hitting through his legs but Ben was more than equal to anything he tried. 6/1 the first set, then at

3/3 in the second a boast off the main wall and into the winning gallery (a shot now known as a Coupe de Barber) broke Flynn’s Seacourt spirit. I thoroughly expect Ben to be as boring about that shot in the years to come as I am about that time I lobbed Simon perfectly, with a ball that dropped satisfyingly into the dedans. Mine’s on Youtube, though.

Graham Piddock – playing his first final after three years in the squad – was next up, with another product of Seacourt’s youth policy, James Medlow, on the other side of the net. Graham responded to the opportunity to bring the cup home with aplomb, hitting brilliant returns



Good Tennis!



The winners! Left to right: Graham Piddock, Grant Miller, Wayne McLennan, Danny Dawson, Chris Lintott (captain), Ben Barber, Harry Lawes and Freddie Freeman.

which skidded low, crosscourt over the net. At 1/1 it seemed like we might be in for a close tie, but James discovered an annoying ability to hit winners and started to run away with things. Graham got to deuce twice in the first few games of the second set but ended up

asking increasingly forlornly from the hazard end whether any of his shots – most of which would have been sure-fire winners in Oxford – happened to have set a chase. They hadn't, mostly. Graham did beat chase two to save the first match point, and hit the dedans to save the second, but the net cord was his undoing as he searched for an answer.



Brodie Cup, complete with OUTC's "Don't Care Clare Bear" mascot – not enough space here to explain – ask Chris!

The Brodie is a team competition – though losing in the final, Graham, Wayne and Danny had all won well to get us through a tight tie at MCC earlier in the season – but now it all came down to Grant and Freddie Freeman in the final doubles. Their opponents were Josh McMurragh – another Seacourt youth product who is now twice the height of when he first played us in the Brodie – and Simon Armstrong, a late substitute. The two settled quickly, racing to a 0/2 15/40 lead, the last point obtained by sliding a mishit into the bottom of the dedans. Spectacular defence kept the Oxford pair in it, and Grant hit the nick to take the game. Seacourt took it to 1/3, but Oxford reeled off three quick games and we began to believe... only for Seacourt to get the serve and use it to go 4/5 up. Freddie and Grant got the serve back, and it was quickly 5/5, but they were back down the hazard end quickly. Good tennis of the last gallery variety brought them back and Josh hit an unplayable

cross-court return straight into the top of the net to give Oxford the first set.

Freddie and Grant were playing great doubles, moving fluently around the court exactly like people who actually know how to play doubles. They kept the serve and fought back several times from 0/40 down. Highlights include a Freddie volley headed straight for the winning gallery, scooped out by Josh, and a lovely soft volley a game or so later for the same target that Josh didn't get anywhere near. When Grant and Freddie did lose the serve – at 4/2 up - they won the chase and then laid two of their own. Suddenly, they were serving for the championship and a rare Seacourt error made it 6/3. I went mad somewhere around last gallery, the dedans went suitably crazy and everyone streamed onto court to celebrate.

Thanks to Chris Peri and Paul Brown who made the trip to support us, to the Hyde who were gracious hosts and Seacourt for being fun (and for not winning). An email from Jez at the Hyde today says that 'both teams found the right balance of competitiveness, sportsmanship and banter', which I think is true, and only partly due to the fact that Danny was driving.



OUTC Club Treasurer, Graham Piddock, making sure that the silverware is well looked after during celebrations at The Bear.

Up the Unicorn, and see you next year!



Oxford's dream team, flanked by their acolytes who have witnessed most, if not all of their triumphs this season..



Finalists Robert Shenkman and Tom Durack

0-9 TOURNAMENT, AMATEUR DOUBLES AND CLUB DINNER

We had a full entry of 16 players for this year's tournament, although unfortunately Marc Seigneur had to pull out with an injury late on, leaving Craig with a bye on the Friday, but it was good to see Marc and Georgiana at the Club on the Saturday.

There was some great play on the Friday. The pick of the matches for me was Moreton Morrell's Tom Bomford taking on Ladies World Champion from Prested, Claire Fahey. Tom's retrieving throughout was incredible, with penetrating boasts forcing Claire to think carefully about what shots to play. Tom took the first set convincingly, but all the while it was apparent that Claire was getting used to the length and bounces on the Oxford court, and she fought back to take the second set and force a decider which she won, despite some excellent defending by Tom.

Saturday morning started with Tom Durack taking a fairly comfortable win over John Woods-Casey followed by Craig taking on Robert Shenkman. Craig was quickly into his stride and won the first set and raised all our hopes for an upset of the form book, but Robert took the second, and was clearly adjusting rapidly to both the court and to Craig's game, and ran away with the deciding set 6-1.

It was Claire Fahey's turn next against Queen's Club's Neil Mackenzie. This proved to be another very closely fought match with both players seemingly unstoppable at various stages of the match, only for the other to claw their way back in. Claire eventually ran out the winner 5/6 6/3 6/4 and we were now well behind schedule.

Up next was home player Roman Krznaric versus last year's winner Darren Long. Unfortunately, Roman had a rare off-day and Darren's fierce hitting and consistent targetting of the grille quickly proved too much and he won 6-2 6-0, despite seeming to struggle with a niggling injury. Disappointing for Roman and the home crowd, but the timings were now back on track!

Time now for the Amateur Doubles and, part way through, an unusual drama – Matt Alden's dog escaped so he had to rush off! Andrew Davis stepped in to partner our sponsor, and was clearly a poor substitute, failing to help his partner reach the final. The good news was that thankfully Matthew's dog reappeared later!

James Bates and James Mallinson reached the final, along with Geoff Baker and Mark Fischel. In a close and entertaining final, Baker and Fischel triumphed 6/4 and made off with the spoils (a new racket each).

Unfortunately, I couldn't be there for the semis and the final on Sunday, but from what I gather, the first semi-final between Robert Shenkman and Claire Fahey was another fascinating tactical battle, with Robert taking the match 6/4 1/6 6/2 despite some excellent play by Claire.



Category A Singles (handicap 0-9) winner, Robert Shenkman



Amateur Doubles winners Geoff Baker (L) and Mark Fischel (R)

In the second semi-final, Tom Durack beat Darren Long 6/5 6/2, with Tom playing some great tennis and Darren looking a little below par due to injury.

The final between Tom and Robert was another game with plenty of ebb and flow. At one point, Tom was a set and 2-0 up, but Robert turned it around and was the worthy winner 3/6 6/2 6/4.

Overall, a really good, tight tournament, with some truly inspirational tennis from all the players, which was an absolute treat for the many spectators who came to watch throughout the weekend.

The Club Dinner took place at Balliol College on Saturday evening, attended by over 80 people. I may be biased having organised it, but it was one of the nicest black-tie college dinners I've had the pleasure of attending. We were very well served and the meal was excellent, helped in no small part by the fact that Balliol had purchased the food from Matthew Alden. Judging by the sensational piece of lamb I had, he had checked every morsel personally!

Equally good were the champagne at the drinks reception and the Sagesse wines we had with dinner as they had been purchased from Savage Selection, run by Club member and Master of Wine, Mark Savage.

After welcoming all, it was my pleasure to congratulate our winning Varsity and Brodie captains and award the Neptune Most Valuable Player award to Charlie Defries for his stand-out game at Varsity. Adam Jeffrey then really kick-started proceedings with a tennis-related grace of his own making, which amused all. After dessert came the main event. Roman Krznaric was engaged to propose a toast to Andrew Davis to celebrate his 25 years of service at OUTC which proved an inspired choice.

Few people know Andrew as well as Roman, but he called upon those that did such as Steve Brockenshaw and Tom Granville (who were also guests of the Club at the dinner), Spike Willcocks and other Club alumni and proceeded to give a fantastic speech worked around the title of "The Seven Ways of the White Wolf". For those not in the know, Andrew was nicknamed the "White Wolf" some years ago by the students, a monicker he's carried ever since – not always graciously!

There's no point in trying to set out here exactly what Roman said, but suffice it to say that there was plenty of laughter which was mixed in with a genuine and obvious regard for Andrew, both from Roman and all those who contributed anecdotes to his speech. Andrew then had a chance to respond and gave us plenty more laughs, along with a good number of fond reminiscences of his time at Oxford.





Let's hope that there are many more years of the White Wolf to come at Oxford!

Derek Williams

Andrew has also asked me to include the words below:

Dear Members,

Whilst making my speech at Balliol College on Saturday a few things didn't come out quite as I intended! I wanted to get the message across that I have had a fantastic 25 years at Oxford, meeting so many interesting people. A more intriguing, charming, generous, charismatic (and occasionally slightly eccentric!) group you could not wish to meet. This mix of people, both seniors and students absolutely makes this job what it is.

I also wanted to thank everyone who came along on to Balliol for what was a truly memorable occasion. The success of the evening was down entirely to Derek who puts so much work in to these events and into the Club in general. And I also really appreciate the kind words many of you said to me before and after the dinner. Thanks also to Roman for his amazing speech on the seven ways of 'The White Wolf'! If anyone has a video of this, I would be most grateful if you could let me have it. Thanks, Andrew

It then fell upon me to finish the celebrations off with a few words, firstly thanking our tournament sponsor who has allowed us to stage such a great tournament here at Oxford, in fact for the eighteenth year. I then formally thanked Andrew for his remarkable service and loyalty to OUTC and presented him with an engraved tankard to mark the occasion, pictures of which you see in this article. It took a bit of work to get the illustration on the back to work well for the engraver, but it really did come out pin-sharp!

I hope that this serves well as a memento for Andrew, who is truly appreciated by all at the Club and, together with Craig, provides the convivial environment in which we play our game.

CLUB NEWS

Committee changes

As you may have read earlier, Derek Williams will be standing down at the AGM in January 2020. The post of Vice Chairman has been created on the committee to give incoming Chairman Neil Mortensen a chance to be fully informed of Club matters prior to taking over. In addition, Wayne McLennan has joined the committee with responsibility for Membership, taking over from Liz Leach. Thanks are due to Liz for her service and please give a warm welcome to Wayne, who is already getting into his stride.

Thanks also go to Roger Boning (Senior committee member), Graham Piddock (Treasurer), Roger Nathan (Compliance), Jonathan Clark (IT) and Ed Wigzell (Facilities) for continuing to serve the Club on the committee, to Martin Mercer who continues to be the Club accountant, to Alana Davies who does the Club book-keeping and Julie Sachno who tackles payroll.

Tournoi de Tres Tripot: Alan Oliver writes:

Quite an event at 4 different courts with 24 teams and 140 players. The winning team was an anglo-dutch side comprising of the Bollerman family and Oxford's Clare Bucknell along with Sophie Danreuther and her father.

They were a pro short and so I had to work for six days (mostly 9am to 7pm!) and did 39 hours of marking, and Gill, who thought she was going to have a quiet time, was employed as a court manager. We were staying two miles from Biarritz but never found time to visit!

Still it was an interesting experience. The courts were like real tennis courts without a back penthouse. The side penthouses were shallow and narrow. These features meant that marking became a bit tedious and it was difficult to get a set completed in half an hour as there were no end of hazard chases and service faults. I also managed only a few games on one court and a few hits on another.

New Chair of LRTA

Oxford's Katie Leppard has long been involved with the Ladies Real Tennis Association and has now succeeded Alex Garside as Chair of the association. We all wish her well in her new role.

Junior Day at the British Open

Oxford junior player and grandson of Ron Mutton, Ruben Sills, got to meet world champion Rob Fahey during the Junior Real Tennis Coaching Day at Queen's Club in November. The coaching day took place during the British Open and was supported by The Dedanists with the aim of encouraging young players in the sport. The dedanists also support Oxford's junior section, helping to pay for Craig's professional coaching expertise. Ruben is also a brown belt at karate and is inspired by tradition, a love of ancient games and good sportsmanship.

Rob Fahey is the President of the Dedanists Foundation, who raise money and spend time supporting Junior tennis. You can make a donation by going to the website www.dedanistsfoundation.org and selecting "More" and then the "Donations" tab.



Ruben Sills with Rob Fahey

Benefactors and Sponsors

We are lucky at Oxford to be blessed with a good number of sponsors and I'd like to list a number of them here for thanks as I know that I can be guilty of not always doing so personally.

Broadbent Family Foundation

William S Broadbent, his wife Camille, and family are responsible for the Club having the use of the wonderful Club and Committee rooms it has, and have provided an endowment to help student tennis at the Club.

Neptune Investment Management

The Club's main corporate sponsors and principal supporter of student tennis.

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John Simms: Bower & Bailey

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Grant Bates Cup: Club Handicap Doubles tournament

Matthew and Richard Alden: Aldens Specialist Catering Butchers, Meatmaster & Osney Food Shed
Silver Racquet and catering for many other Club events.

Mark Savage: Savage Selection

National League Division 1 team and supplier of fine wine to the Club.

Ron Mutton: A1 RAM Plumbing

A1 RAM handicap doubles cup

Nick Hextall: Strutt & Parker

Winter pennant competition

Derek Williams: Mayfield Press

Mayfield Cup: Club handicap singles tournament and National League Division 1 team. Club printing.

We also have several sponsors who prefer to remain anonymous but our thanks go to them for the sponsorship of the 0-9 tournament and the Student Summer Leagues.

THE WINNING GALLERY



Inter-University Tournament. Oxford's team of Rory Giddins and Charlie Defries beat Cambridge two rubbers to one



Mike Henman (right) beat Stewart Licudi 6-5 6-4 in the Knight Cup which took place on 6th to 7th October



Lucas Jones and William Brettle beat Alfie Gibbs and Luke Pitman 6-1 in the A1 RAM Doubles on 24th November



Andrew Johnson and Ian Barry beat John Simms and Adrian Fort 8-4 in the Over 60s (age) Doubles on 3rd December



Ladies Silver Racquet: Lottie Hoskin beat Lucinda Maxwell



Mens Silver Racquet: Rory Giddins beat Charlie Defries



Another excellent spread kindly put on by Silver Racquet sponsor, Matthew Alden of Aldens Specialist Catering Butchers



*Buster Gut beat Penthouse Playboys 4-2 in the Strutt and Parker final on 26th February.
From the left: Ed Wigzell, Ian Barry, Martin Mercer, Roger Boning, Lottie Hoskin and Natalie Barber*



Derek Williams and Adam Jeffrey beat Nick Owen and Seth Whidden in final of Grant Bates Doubles 11th to 12th January



National League Division 7 Winners from the left: Freddie Freeman and Chris Lintott and Roger Nathan (kneeling)



National League Division 5 winners. From the left: Charlie Defries, Anthony Bewes and Stewart Licudi



Wroth Cup: Mike Henman and Ashley Deakin beat Richard Oliver and Freddie Freeman 2-6 6-4 6-5



Christmas Fun Doubles winner Wayne McLennan (left) with Roger Boning presenting the champagne on 28th December

In addition to the gallery, there are a few victories where unfortunately I don't have photos:

The Simms Summer League finals;

A Final: Bruce Morrison beat Chris Lintott 8/7

B Final: Pete Wilkinson beat Mary Joyner 8/0

A solid Oxford win in the Varsity Seconds match at Cambridge. The Men (Ben Barber [captain], Ivo Trice, Freddie Freeman and Hugo Shipsey won 6-0 without dropping a set and the Women (Isobel Lewis, Olivia Becher, Jenny Jones, Alexandra Reyner) won 5-1.

Mixed Doubles: Natalie Barber and Chris Lintott beat Derek Williams and Mary Joyner 8-6. We don't have a photo of the winners, but do have a photo of the food!



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