

Newsletter

20 March 2024



Chairman`s Report

We are now just past the halfway point in the 2023-24 season and it is great to see some new faces in the club. Our internal handicap tournaments are now in full swing, we continue to play many social matches, leagues and pennants so there is plenty of opportunity to test your skills against others.

All clubs survive on subscriptions and court fees. Our club has one of the lowest memberships on the circuit and, at barely 30%, the lowest court usage (bar Falkland Palace) in the country. Therefore, I do encourage members to introduce new people to our club. We find it best if you can introduce people to join as a group as they find it more fun that way. We have a very generous pathway to join. Any potential member will benefit from 2 free lessons and court fees before they have to decide if they wish to join. Once they have signed up, they are entitled to 2 more lessons at 50% of the Pro`s normal fee. After that we try to get them playing against members in normal matches, which Andrew, if he is not marking, should watch the last 5 minutes off to comment and advise on improvements.

So just think outside your normal friendship circle and do try to bring one person or group in before the end of the season.

Hugo

Important Dates!

**Thurs
March 28th
Over 65
Wine break
Doubles**

**The
Founders
Cup
Doubles
April 27, 28**

**New
Members
Challenge**

This Newsletter has been compiled by Sandy Norman. Thanks to all contributors. If you have any news you would like included in the newsletter, or suggestions for how to improve the content, please contact Sandy at Sandy.norman1@gmail.com..

Notes from our Professional, Andrew:



As well as the usual friendlies and fixtures our club competitions are progressing well and we have plenty of great events coming up:

Wine Break over 65 Doubles: open to all over 65 years old

Founders Day Doubles Cup: open to all club members

New Members competition day: open to all members joining in recent times

Watts Doubles and Thurlow Open

Singles: members are welcome and encouraged to come and watch our top players compete

Brown and Co and Fingleton Cups

The Brown & Co singles handicap competition and Fingleton Doubles handicap are nearing their final stages! I will let you know when finals as there are sure to be good matches

Half price tennis!

Some members maybe do not realise that not only there is a lot of court availability on many weekends but courts are half price!



Upcoming Fixtures and Events

See the fixture list at the end of this Newsletter and the [NRTC website](#) for a full list of fixtures and details.

My huge congratulations to George Aretakis reached the Final of the National Open Championships for Handicaps 70-75

More Dates for
your diary!

**14/15/16
June 2024:
Rose Bowl**

**15 June
Candlelight
Dinner on
court**

Lessons and practice sessions:

I continue to give tailored lessons and great drill sessions for you in a group or individually. Speak to me and I will organize!

Christmas 2023.....



It was a great atmosphere in the club over the Christmas period with plenty of court usage and relaxing in the social area



.... and New Year was brought in with the Hangover Doubles

There was a high level of participation and a lot of fun with plenty of coffee and a lunch.

Well done Sue and Rob Bawden, the winners!



National League



Our **Division 10** which represents players between handicaps of **45 to 50** team have been busy playing their home and away matches. We narrowly lost away v Cambridge, (Mark Elliott, Sandy Norman, John Burnett). We won on 23rd Feb away v Middlesex (Ben Turner, Sandy Norman, John Burnett.) We played home to Prested on 6th January (team comprising Mark Elliott, Sandy Norman and Ben Turner and result 1-2), away to Hatfield on the 1st December (team comprising Mark Elliott, Ben Turner and Sandy Norman and result 0-3) and away to Prested on 18th November (team comprising Sandy Norman, Mark Elliott and John Burnett and result 1-2)



*Teams
away at
Middlesex*

Pennant

Pennants Since October our team captained by Ben Turner have played three Pennant matches, Prested away (3-3), Cambridge home (2-4) and Hatfield away (3-3). The Pennants are now completed for the year. Ben Turner has been doing a sterling job of all the organising. Ben is always looking for players to join the Singles and Doubles format. It`s a great way of playing other clubs in a social but competitive format so for next season you should get your name in early!

Competitions

Very well done George Aretakis (on the right) for entering and competing so well in the T&RA National Open Championships for Handicaps 70 to 74! He won through to the final, after several close matches including winning the semi final, in an incredibly tight contest against Sarah Lambie (Holyport) 6/5 6/3. He lost the final 6/3 6/3 to D-K Cooper (Holyport) in a match much closer then the scoreline indicated.



Club Matches

Since October we played social matches with Hatfield, The Brigands, Prested, The Jesters and Queens Club.

We also have the following match reports from Graham Smith:

Played on Wednesday, January 24th

Harry Saint & Bernard Anscomb v George Aretakis & Chris Swales 6/3 2/6 3/6

Geoffrey Shield & Paul Grainger v. Tim Middleton & Graham Smith 1/6 0/6

Simon Mansfield & Bernard Anscomb vs. Christopher Kingzett & Chris Swales 4/6 5/6

Paul Grainger & John McVittie vs. Graham Smith & George Aretakis 3/6 6/2 3/6

John McVittie & Harry Saint vs. Christopher Kingzett & Tim Middleton 5/6 2/6

A clean sweep!

At Moreton Morrell, 11 February, results were:

Ollie Newbury vs. Phil Payne 4/6 2/6

Jacque Sole vs. Jonathan Becher 4/6 6/4 6/5

Joel Woolf vs. Dave Isherwood 3/6 0/6

Lucas Castillo vs. Felicity Riddell Bell 4/6 6/5 5/6

Joel Woolf & Lucas Castillo vs. Dave Isherwood & Graham Smith 4/6 5/6

Newmarket won 4 - 1.

Newmarket travels and adventures..... Boomerang 2024



21 teams gathered in the Royal Melbourne this year for 30th anniversary Boomerang Cup. Derrick and Charlie Wells represented Newmarket along with Katie Leppard (capt and LRTA Chair) from Hardwick, Jonathan Hamer RMTTC and Kevin Snell from The Netherlands and Radley. They also had the support of their team mascot, Clare Hamer pictured

This was not an easy tournament for the Remnants team as they scraped their way through the round robin section having won one match on countback. Teams play four sets of first to 8 games with no repetition of pairs and nobody is allowed to play more than twice. All matches in the knockouts were very close, and Derrick and Charlie Wells played better and better, knocking out the Leamington Bath Pigs, Not to Boast and the Judas team, before being beaten by the Serve and Slay team in the final. They are a team of under 25 year olds, that improved with every match and played very well indeed.

From your court correspondent down under.

And in the USA.....

Ben Turner was given a warm welcome and played at the beautifully fitted out Real Tennis Club in Philadelphia

France

See later slides in the Newsletter for details of invites for late April and October



France in April.....



Baudouin from Bordeaux here. I'm reaching out to share some exciting news about an event we're organizing here in Bordeaux – the **Edouard Kressmann Trophy**.

It's an **international amateur singles and doubles handicap tournament for those aged 50 and above**.

This iconic tournament is known for its great atmosphere and fun experience, often enjoyed by your members who take the opportunity to explore our beautiful region!

Here are the key details:

Tournament - Edouard Kressmann Trophy 2024 - Singles and Doubles handicap with a plate for first round losers.

If you enter both, you're guaranteed at least 4 good matches!

Dates - From April 23 to April 28, 2024

Location - Jeu de Paume de Bordeaux, 107 Avenue Marcel Dassault, Mérignac, France

Eligibility - Must be 50 years or older in 2024 and have more than 3 results in the RTO for the year

Handicap - Players above 70 will be entered with a handicap of 70

Tournament Dinner - A surprise three-course dinner on Saturday evening in an exceptional setting. Purchasing a dinner ticket also grants access to the welcome cocktail at the club on Wednesday evening.

Registration - [Link to the registration form](#) by **Monday 8th April**

And in October.....The Tripots

TTT2024 will take place between Thursday 10th – Tuesday 15th October 2024, playing on the oldest playable Jeu de Paume courts that we have found in the Pays Basque, with up to 24 teams competing for the TTT trophy and the Coupe D'Arcangues.

Teams must comprise a minimum of 5 players (no maximum) and will play at least 6 matches.

It is a very quirky competition so important that anyone interested understands what is involved.

Newmarket are again sending players / a team....contact Rob Bawden to find out more and join in!

Feature: Continuing the theme about key people who have made NRTC what it is:



Dr. John Shneerson has been an eminent Consultant Respiratory Physician at Papworth, Addenbrookes and the West Suffolk. He founded and was Director of the Respiratory Support and Sleep Centre at Papworth, the first and largest unit of its kind in Europe. Without John, NRTC would not exist. Here is his story....

How you got involved in the game real tennis in the first place?

Well that goes back quite a while because when I was a boy I was a junior member at Queens club and played squash and lawn tennis and at that time, real tennis was in the doldrums. It wasn't played that much; for example the second court at Queens was full of benches and wasn't used from the 1930s up until the early 60s. I started knocking a ball with a friend and playing the game there in 1959. And so I got into the game then and played there for a few years. And then I played when I went to university and played on the court at Oxford. It became quite a key sport for me.

And then did you manage to continue after University?

Yes, and from Oxford I came up to Newmarket in 1980 after I started a job up here, and played at Cambridge. I knew there had been a court in Newmarket, funnily enough, although it seemed nobody else in the town did.

A court in Newmarket???

Rather amazingly I had a lesson when I was younger with an old pro, a very old pro, who played on this court at Newmarket in 1902 in front of King Edward V11! He said it was a really good court, one of the best courts in the country. It was much like Moreton Morrell is today. And so, from this old professional, I knew there was a court here.

The hunt for the old court....

So during the 1980s, I thought I'll try and find it. It was supposed to be on the High Street. Originally the access to this court was from the High Street. That's all changed, so at first, I couldn't find it. I looked around and then I saw this building in Fitzroy Street. I thought that might be the old court. It was nothing like it is now because it had a shop front where we sit now in the club room. There was a shop window selling double glazing and some bits and pieces. And behind that were offices right up to the ceiling, about three floors. At the front of the court, where the changing rooms are now, there was a gap cut in the wall for HGVs to get in, five metres wide and four and a half metres high.

This was a massive entrance with metal doors, straight through where the changing rooms are and into the court area. So, when I entered, suspecting this was a tennis court, I said to the manager "I think this might be a tennis court". He said "No, this is my workshop and it was a garage workshop originally".

I had a look around and as soon as I saw the tambour (with an RSJ across the top running onto another structure!) and the floor (because it was built with 16 feet square concrete slabs and I could see the joins between them), I knew for certain this was a tennis court. So, I asked him "Are you thinking of selling the building?" He said, "Oh no, never, it's my business". So I said, if you ever do think of selling the court, let me know because I'd be keen to turn it back into a tennis court

Demolition or flats!

I gave him my contact details etc and that was that although I think that visit saved the court because two years later, they decided to sell up the business, and they got permission from the District Council to demolish the whole building or turn it into flats. But he obviously kept my details and after receiving planning permission phoned me and asked whether I was interested? I said yes, naively perhaps, but this was the turning point because it had already an approval for a complete change of use or demolition.

Raising the money.....

This was 1991 and there were then three phases to address. There was a question of trying to find the money to acquire the court. Then to renovate it into a tennis court and then there's the question of setting up a member's club. So those three things took five years.

First of all, it was in a recession in the early 1990s and the asking price was £350,000. I contacted the T&RA who were not interested. I turned to raising some money from sponsors, donors, investors and friends. I've played a lot of sports so I knew quite a lot of people in the sports world and had a number of good contacts. I raised some money in that way. It worked up to a point and then with some grants managed to raise about £150,000.

Re-mortgaging my house!

I didn't have much money but I re-mortgaged my house.

My wife was very understanding and agreed to put the money into the court project. This helped to raise enough money to buy the court and have some money left over to do something with it.

The years 91 to 93 were spent raising the money in one form or another which was quite difficult.

Renovation.....

It took the next year or two getting it transformed from a derelict industrial unit, into a functional tennis court. It was just a shell apart from gantries, space heaters, hydraulic ramps etc inside.

The structure the building was poor and there was a lot of damage to the roof, particularly at the dedans end.

It was quite hands on at first, I climbed up on rickety wooden ladders to get on the roof, inspect the tiles and that sort of thing; Health and Safety wasn't my strong suit. The building has very deep foundations., they go down six or eight feet it's is a well-built structure, which is what saved it.

So, there was a lot of work in sorting the structure and then reconstructing it as a court. Of course the floor had to be redone, laying down epoxy resin floor over the original to keep it nice and level, then do the walls, penthouses, dedans, changing rooms etc

By 95, the court was very much as you see it now.

We used the racing colours of Charles Rose, who originally built the club, for the finish and image of the club, peacock blue, red and black. I had a photograph of the court in 1908, which meant I could copy the lay out and artwork in the original, in terms of types of crowns and that sort of thing. So, we pretty much tried to replicate the original court.

And so, it was it was April 95 I was able to play the first shot on the court for over 70 years!

Starting a Club!

Then the third phase was the question of getting the members.

I used contacts in the tennis world, local clubs near Newmarket, the Leisure Centre and offered them discounts and special terms etc. I tried to do a lot of media work, local press, local television.

I even went down to Buckingham Palace to see Prince Edward to see if he would become a Patron and managed to get to speak to him in his office rooms in Buckingham Palace.

In fact, I think he wanted to become the Patron but for some reason couldn't.

So, we made efforts to get a profile for the club and actually within a year or so, by 1996, had well over 100 members. Nearly all the competitions that you see on the boards, they were all set up at that time.

We had two professionals from the time in the club opened; the first was Kevin King, who later was at Bristol & Bath for about 25 years. Kevin was a great player. John Dawes, who is now at Hatfield, was the assistant pro.

And so, they looked after the members and got the competitions going.

Troubles....

Now, in the middle of this, I'd taken on a partner to help because although I had the supporting contacts and donors to start the club, I was busy with work and not a businessman, so I needed someone to help with the business and finance side of things and this worked okay for a while.

But by about 1996, which was a year after the club opened, although it seemed to be going well, I became increasingly aware that his motives and direction were different to what we needed and the members were getting less satisfied. There were a lot of difficulties with our suppliers and people who had helped were becoming less happy with how things were going. And so, the club was getting a poor reputation in the town because of the way it was dealing with people, tradesmen for example.

I was very busy at work, and at this stage, it was becoming a bit of a hassle. I had really achieved what I wanted to do, which was to get the building safe, get the court reconstructed and get a member's club going. I left my position in the club and was replaced by a member from Petworth who was a friend of the chap I worked with. The club was quickly getting into financial difficulties and went into liquidation in 1998.

Rescue.....

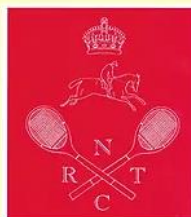
Fortunately in stepped John Burnett, Chris Hollingsworth and Alex Riley. They basically got it back on its feet again.

They did a really good job with the club from 98 until 2011. I think at that stage, Alex wasn't so active and so it's really John and Chris who had the vision to decide it was best to sell it to the members in 2011. This was very good of them and brought much more long term security.

Today....

I have tried to keep involved in the club in a practical way, giving some financial support; for example I've given loans and money for projects, including getting the new lighting, which was quite expensive, and presenting the Rose Bowl Cup and pictures in the club room. I wrote a book about the club in 1997 describing tennis in Newmarket which goes back to 1600. I'm actually working on another book on the club now which hopefully will be out later in the year.

Two Centuries of Real Tennis



John Shneerson

NRTC Fixtures and Dates 28th March to end June 2024



Thursday, 28 March 2024	Over 65 wine break doubles	Home	Eric Nutter	Andrew Knibbs
Saturday, 6 April 2024	Hardwick	Home	Derrick Wells	
Sunday, 21 April 2024	Leamington	Home	Graham Smith	
Saturday, 27 April 2024	Founders' Cup	Home		Andrew Knibbs
Saturday, 27 April 2024	Founders' Cup	Home		Andrew Knibbs
Tuesday, 7 May 2024	AGM	Home	Hugo Johnson	
Saturday, 11 May 2024	MCC	Home	Ed Turner	
Saturday, 18 May 2024	LRTA	Home	Phillippa Wells	
Saturday, 8 June 2024	Jesmond Dene	Away		Andrew Knibbs
Friday, 14 June 2024	Rose Bowl	Home	Derrick Wells	Tom Marriott
Saturday, 15 June 2024	Rose Bowl	Home	Derrick Wells	Tom Marriott
Sunday, 16 June 2024	Rose Bowl	Home	Derrick Wells	
Saturday, 22 June 2024	East Anglia Cup	Away	Bill MacIntosh	
Sunday, 23 June 2024	East Anglia Cup	Away	Bill MacIntosh	
tbc	New Members Challenge	Home	Tom Marriott	Sandy Norman