



## Chairman's Report of 2014

The highlight of the year was the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner which raised an impressive £20,000 which means the club's overall financial situation is now reasonably secure for the foreseeable future. We are indebted to James Richardson and Mike Etherington-Smith for masterminding such an impressive event and all members who generously contributed raffle and auction prizes.

The committee is keen to improve the club's facilities and recently decided to invest in new chairs for the dining room and heaters for the bar. It is planned to set up a scoring system from dedans to bar so match scores can be more easily followed.

The Club continues to be a popular destination for tennis players world-wide and it is encouraging to note that the facilities are being used for meetings and social events which provides a useful income stream.

The time is approaching, however, when action will have to be taken to improve the court floor which is increasingly showing signs of stress- little holes are appearing on the surface and the joins are lifting. A sub-committee to investigate and solve the problem will be formed this summer. At least the lights have held up well- the system provides lighting as good as any in the country and hopefully the costs of LED lighting will continue to come down when and if the day approaches when a change is required..

One of the club's great strengths is the quality of tournaments and I would like to thank Tom, in conjunction with Nick, for the excellent organisation of club competitions which have become popular and well supported. As ever the standard of tennis balls we are fortunate enough to play with are second to none- not too heavy and in general spherical! We do, however, need to increase court usage and recruit more members- do bring along anyone you feel might be tempted to take the game up.

I bemoaned the fact that the Club failed to reach the Field Trophy Final last year but am delighted to report that this year we did and trounced Oxford thus achieving promotion to the Pol Roger top division of eight clubs. With a sound and increasingly youthful team, the aim must be to keep our place in the top tier: congratulations to Tom Lewis for driving two great victories, away at Jesmond Dene and at home in the Final. It is also a sign of the Club's strength that teams in the National League have fared very well this year.

The Junior section continues to expand thanks to the work of Nick, Tom and Tim Messer- Warwick School and local youngsters also visit the Club once a week.

A healthy and thriving club does not happen without the hard work of many members and I would like to thank Mike Harwood and Philip Shaw-Hamilton for their work on the accounts, David Bryant for his overseeing of IT matters amongst many others, Bruce Paxton for publishing an informative Court Circular, Keyvan Farmanfarmai for hounding the tennis fraternity so successfully into joining the 50 Club which contributed £1500 to the club's main account and for keeping an eye on the bar, Martin Rogers for leading the Tennis Committee, Martin Trees for pro liaison, John Miller for minuting committee meetings and George K. for his contributions to various social events. I should like to thank the retiring Simon Allen for the work he has done over many years for the Committee and tournaments.

It is important that courts are filled, so if you haven't been contacted to play, do contact Tom and Nick and ask to be fixed up with a game!

Andrew Hamilton, Chairman MMTCC



**Field Trophy final : Moreton Morrell v Oxford**

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at Moreton Morrell

**Sponsored by POL ROGER**

There's a pub on the edge of Dartmoor called the 'Who'd Have Thought It?' Whilst not wishing to change the nomenclature of our beloved club, all those involved in our Field Trophy campaign felt much the same as a 19<sup>th</sup> century publican in the village of Milton Combe who, after months of waiting, was eventually granted a licence to open a pub in his private house. So gob-smacked was he, that he decided to name his pub after his incredulous reaction to the end of his bureaucratic nightmare of a wait. Had we mulled over our permutations for the Final in his pub, we would have concluded that the prognosis was nothing to be too optimistic about. In the run up to the Final there was a daily roll call of the walking wounded and potential reserves' availability- would Philip Shaw-Hamilton's chronic shoulder injury hold up? How were Martin Rogers's wrist and Andrew Hamilton's shoulder? Would Rich Wills recover from his all night lambing midwifery? First reserve Simon Hobson's hamstring sprung in a match early in the week- two potential replacements had unavoidable engagements. What should the doubles pairings be? There was plenty of strategic sturm and drang- no final decisions could be taken by 'skip' Tom Lewis until Friday night... The vibes for the match against a team with a former single figure handicapper and a 16 weren't too positive. But... Rich had delivered triplets for one of his ewes- a most unusual occurrence and possibly a portent....?

It was disappointing that before a shot was hit in anger, Oxford had to concede the third singles as Geoff Baker's wife had been taken into hospital overnight. MMTCC's Hamiltonian second pair of Philip Shaw and Andrew started slowly- they got to 3/3 but fell away in the face of some good serving and powerful play by 18 handicapper Jonny Whitaker. In the second set, the Hamiltons scraped their way to 4/4 but failed to take the second set.

In the first singles tie, Tom Bomford's chances with a nine handicap difference against the experienced Roman Krznic (8.5) were slim but from the outset his speed about the court, power of shot and consistency of retrieval were breath taking. Roman realised he had been ambushed and, non-plussed, he soon realised he was truly in a battle against this scarcely known Carthaginian... The Oxford number one failed to avoid the tambour on too many occasions with Tom's judgement of it impeccable throughout the match. Tom just eased through to a 6/5 win in the first set and to emphasise the strides he has made in mental toughness, he managed to take the second set from being 4/5 down. After Tom's victory at Jesmond in the semi- final, I lauded his performance as one of the best I had seen by an MMTCC player in 50 years (O dear yes 50 years!). Unbelievably, though, he surpassed that level of performance in the Final. As the typical school report goes 'Hopefully Tom now realises what he can achieve...!' Congratulations to both players for laying on a memorable match.

The moment had now arrived for young captain Tom Lewis to show his mettle and to grasp MMTCC's first national trophy. After a nervous start, particularly in the back hand corner, he grew in confidence. Encouraged by the animated dedans he squeezed through to win the first set 6/5. Thereafter his power of shot and tricky railroad service proved too strong for James Bates and romped home to a 6/0 second set win.

Alex Mullan kindly agreed to play Lloyd Pettiford in a 'friendly' 3<sup>rd</sup> singles which Lloyd duly won 6/1, 6/4, a bonus for his watching mother on Mothering Sunday!

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So to the 1<sup>st</sup> Doubles which, after we had sadly been gifted the 3<sup>rd</sup> singles match, we were all keen to win. And what a highly entertaining and exciting match it was! Martin Rogers and Rich Wills unsettled Rob Walker and Mike Henman with their pace of shot and powerful volleying to ease into a 6/2 first set lead. The second set was a close affair and due to increasing error creep from the Moreton pair, and Henman resorting to his effective forcing, Oxford were able to take it 6/5. In the third set Rogers and Wills went into a 5/3 lead with Walker responsible for a string of unforced errors at the back of the court but he stepped up to the plate, played point by point and hit the ball in the right areas to provide a gripping 5/5 finale. But to coin another cliché- 'cometh the hour'... and indeed the MMTCC men held their nerve against an 11.5 doubles handicapper to secure an historic 4/1 win.

Congratulations to Tom Lewis for his adroit team selections during a thoroughly enjoyable campaign particularly noteworthy for the team spirit, even if at times we seemed to be playing against our own team members and their shocking level of humour!

When the crowds had dissipated (and thanks to all those who popped in during the day) it was time for a few quiet moments of reflection with glasses of Pol Roger in hand: the question on everyone's lips was 'Who'd Have Thought It?! Well, perhaps the ewe...

The Club & Professionals would like to welcome all its new members. The Professionals will be pleased to introduce aspiring players to the game, and to help improve current players.

Tom and Nick wish all the members an improving summer of tennis ( and a summer of improving tennis) !

Tom Granville

Dates for your diary

### **Amicus Cup**

The majority of the rounds are to be played over the next few months, and a decent start to the knock-out tournament of the year has been made. Thanks to Steve Walsh for Amicus's continued sponsorship of the winner's new racket.

*Photo of Bickley Bowl*

*The **Warwickshire Bickley Bowl** is currently unavailable for photographic introduction, since it being prepared for presentation at an establishment close to Mornington Crescent Station - Editor*

Teams from Leamington Tennis Court Club and Moreton Morrell Tennis Court Club met at Moreton on Saturday 11 April to play in the inaugural match between the two Clubs for **The Warwickshire Bickley Bowl**.

The new trophy is a silver bowl, hallmarked Birmingham, 1900 - a year falling between 1898, when the Leamington court was re-opened after Joseph Bickley had rebuilt part of the court, and 1905, when his new court at Moreton was first opened.

The first match saw Terence Drane & Bruce Paxton comfortably (but unexpectedly) see off the opposition of John Devis & Chris Sampson, considered at Leamington to be a strong pairing, in straight sets 6-4; 6-4.

The second match was a very much less confident affair for the Moreton pairing of Miles Buckinghamshire & Alastair Robson: Peter Mason & Bryan Harrison (who had first played tennis on the Moreton court in a match which had been marked by Ted Johnson, then aged 90), easily took the first set 6-2. The Moreton pair, by deliberately keeping the ball off the penthouses took the second set 6-4. However, some strong hitting by one of the Leamington pair, (and some lawners strokes, of which Ted Johnson would not have approved), meant Leamington were able to take the third set 2-6; 6-4; 4-6.

The third match proved to be a predictable win for Moreton's Ben Irwin & Vaughan Hamilton over Henry Bryan & Ian Steele: although the Leamington club has a reputation for strong doubles play (especially Ian Steele), both Ben and Vaughan are young, improving players, notably Vaughan, who has an excellent eye and an unnervingly powerful hit. 6-3; 6-2.

It was expected that Sally Grant and Oliver leMaistre would have the advantage over Leamington, and so it seemed to appear after the first set, but Andy Dixon is fast around the court and Geoff Broome is a formidable doubles player at the net, and they were able to claw back the match 6-4; 3-6; 4-6.

In true 'Boy's Own Paper' style, the day depended on the last match. Despite the elegant stroke play of Andrew Hamilton (of which Ted Johnson would have approved), and the effective, if not so elegant, stroke play of his partner (of which Ted Johnson would not have approved), Moreton did not sweep to victory over Gerry Slora & John Yarnall; instead, they managed to lose the first set 3-6. However, fortune favours the brave, and the second set was Moreton's, 6-4. An exchange of games brought the score to 4-4 in the final set, to the delight of an extremely vocal Dedans. At 5-4, some unplayable shots to the base of the tambour by Martin Trees secured the final set, the match, and the day for the home Club: 3-6; 6-4; 6-4. (With thanks to Nick Jury for marking all the matches).

A splendid lunch provided by Dottie Perry, accompanied by the excellent new house wines from the Moreton cellar, concluded the day's events.



**Garland Cup finalists 2015**

Vaughan Hamilton, winner

and losing finalist Jonnie Miller

It was most encouraging to note that there were 32 entrants to the Garland Cup with Tom having to disappoint several who were too slow off the mark! The quarter-finalists were made up of a good range of handicaps between 40 and 60 but where were the lower handicappers? Only Martin Trees and Lloyd Pettiford managed to progress through to Sunday's play. In the quarter-finals Nick Mills (46) found Jonnie Miller (53) a tough proposition (3/5). Owen Pettiford's handicap of 62 proved too challenging for Bruce Paxton (55) (5/3), Jon Murphy (46) found Vaughan Hamilton too steady (2/5) and James Holden (43) managed to wear down the challenge from David Aldwinckle (60) (5/3).

In the first semi-final Miller's left handed serve posed problems for Pettiford (5/2) and Hamilton swept past Holden (5/1). It was unusual and excellent for the club's future that the final should be contested by two members under the age of 20. Vaughan's play throughout emphasised why he has been selected for the prestigious T and RA's Junior Development squad and the progress he has made as a result. Since breaking his foot playing football in the garden, Jonnie has concentrated on his tennis and armed with skills passed down to him by his parents (in equal measure of course) fully deserved his place in the final. And what a final it was with both trading long rests and at 3/3 anything could have happened but the experienced (!) 14 year old Vaughan was able to find reserves of determination and concentration which helped him overcome Jonnie's challenge 5/3. Tom was thanked for organising such an enjoyable tournament; he and Nick provided excellent tennis balls and marking and Marc Seigneur provided them with excellent back up.

**Ponsonby Cup finalists 2015**

Winners

Philip Shaw-Hamilton and Andrew Hamilton



The first semi-final of the **Ponsonby Cup**, for players under 35 handicap and played off handicap, was an excellent match between holders Philip Shaw-Hamilton and Andrew Hamilton (23.4) and Martin Rogers and Martin Trees (23.4). Hampered by Martin Rogers's injured wrist the latter pair found it difficult to overcome the Hamiltons' steadiness and accuracy as they eased through to a 6/4, 6/5 victory. On paper the new pairing of Simon Hobson and David Bryant (31.5) looked unlikely to ruffle the feathers of club number one Tom Bomford and Henry Piney (22.4) who cruised to a 6/4 win in the first set- thereafter, however, the wheels proceeded to fly off in all directions, losing the next two sets 0/6, 0/6 which prompted the usual culprits to suggest that one or other of the pair must have been booked for an unmissable lunch appointment! More likely reasons were the pair's lack of experience of doubles and Tom's preference for singles. The final was fast and furious with Hobson and Bryant pressurising Shaw-Hamilton who was taking the back of the court on the service side. The holders won the first set easily enough 6/3 but at 5/2 up on the second set, proceeded to 'go in the elbow' and allow their opponents back to 5/5. At this point Philip shook off his nerves, pitched into his serves and played with the required intensity to triumph once again.

The **Hobson Cup** for over 35 handicappers provided plenty of enjoyable tennis which in the later stages produced either close matches or easy victories. The relatively youthful fraternal pairing of Charles and James Pittaway proved too strong for Tim Stokes and Steve Walsh (6/1) and Bruce Paxton and Rob Woolston overcame the wily pair of Julian Rawstone and Professor Stuart Hodges who for once misappropriated his angles (6/4). Norman Hyde and David Prophet proved too strong for Mark Savage and Chris Creighton-Thomas (6/1) and the steady pairing of Nick Mills and Flo Holland asked too many questions of Martin Trees and Alan Moug (6/3). The Pittaway bros swept aside Paxton and Woolston 6/1 and for Hyde and Prophet- a 3/6 loss to Mills and Holland (Prophet and Loss)... The final was a disappointing affair as the Pittaways failed to find any form or consistency losing comprehensively 0/6. Another victory for Nick and Flo who were presented the Hobson Cup by Simon Hobson... Tom has promised a cut in doubles handicap as a prize for the winners!

The Ponsonby and Hobson cup competitions were another excellent weekend with thanks due to Tom and Nick for their organisation, marking and ball manufacture. Sadly the vice-chairman's brand new state of the art camera failed to fulfil its duties so the smiles of the happy winning pairs were not recorded for posterity although the Hamiltons posed (again) after their weekly doubles master class!



Tony Parsons presenting the  
**Parsons Cup** to Felicity Sergent



The Chairman presenting the  
**Owen-George Cup** to Tom Lewis

## Owen-George club championship 2015

This year's Owen-George Trophy was an extraordinary catalogue of withdrawals and unfinished matches caused by injury- maybe a reflection of the age profile of many of the competitors?

In the first round matches Lloyd Pettiford proved too steady for Martin Trees in a convincing 6/2, 6/2 victory. Andrew Hamilton and Richard Yorke Long slugged out a two hour marathon with Richard retiring hurt at 3/3 in the third set- a shame as the match could have gone either way, Hamilton having won the first set 6/5 and then failed to hold on to a 5/2 winning position in the second. Simon Hobson pulled a hamstring during a victory at Leamington 10 days earlier and was forced to concede to Martin Rogers. Rich Wills allowed John Miller the opportunity to go through to a quarter-final place against high flying Tom Bomford, a challenge which Miller was unable to fulfil.

In the quarters Tom Lewis overcame the chairman with ease although he failed to take a tenner off Martin Trees for winning 6/0, 6/0: Hamilton was able to scrabble one game! Philip Shaw-Hamilton was unable to play his match due to his chronic shoulder injury thus allowing Rogers a safe passage through to the semis. The best match of the round was a magnificent tussle between Lloyd Pettiford and Mike Henman. Pettiford won the first set 6/3 but Henman bounced back to take the second 6/5. The third set ebbed to and fro but Pettiford's indefatigable running against a tiring opponent clinched a 6/5 victory.

In the semi-finals, Martin Rogers put up a brave show against Lewis whose serve throughout posed problems easing through 6/2, 6/1. Lloyd Pettiford started well against Tom Bomford but after losing the first set 2/6 tore a hamstring and was forced to retire.

The Final was unquestionably one of the best I have witnessed at the club. Tom Lewis was clearly fired up for the occasion, as he had to be to match Tom Bomford after his amazing performance the week before in the Field Trophy. From the outset Lewis was in dominating form, pressurising his opponent with a tricky length of heavily cut rail road serve. Some of the retrieving by both players was extraordinary and Tom Lewis's backhand was much more resilient than in the past. Bomford was finding it difficult to ruffle Lewis and went down 3/6. However, in the second set he upped the tempo and played to his true potential with pace and accuracy but reverted to his earlier indecision in the deciding set. Lewis was playing with authority and aggression to go 4/2 up but Bomford hauled himself back to 4/4 at which point Lewis held serve and nerve to play with power and aggression to win the trophy with a final set 6/4 win. It was a wonderful spectacle played in splendid spirit and it highlighted how far both have improved their game in the last year. Congratulations to both players!

## The Parsons Cup 2015



It was encouraging to note that 4 of the quarter finalists were from the younger age spectrum... Vaughan Hamilton played well to beat John Lillie 5/3, the same score that James Pittaway beat John Murphy. Felicity Sargent also won her game against an improving Bruce Paxton 6/3 and Freddie Freeman made light work of Kevin Higgins 6/2. Vaughan was able to squeeze through against John Pittaway 5/3. Felicity and Freddie had an excellent match which early on looked like a forgone conclusion with Freddie's railroad posing many problems. Felicity, however, got the measure of it, and slowly gained in confidence. Freddie played steadily and sensibly and managed to get back to 5 all 40 all... but Felicity under pressure returned serve with a well-directed shot to the dedans which Freddie netted. In the Final Vaughan found the handicap difference too great and succumbed to Felicity by 2/6. It was most appropriate that Tony Parsons, former secretary of the club for many years, should present his cup to the winner.

An excellent weekend for the Lewis/ Sargent family taking the two trophies and superb bottles of sponsored Pol Roger champagne. Tom was thanked for rounding up 36 of us to play in the 2 competitions, Nick and Marc Seigneur for their marking stints and Nick as ever for a fine set of tennis balls. Many thanks also to George for a welcome and delicious lunch.

## True Champion

Elsewhere there will be a report on the Garland Cup, and frankly anyone that beats me deserves to win it, but I just wanted to pen a few words of thanks to a real winner. Tom Bomford, the club champion, entered the Garland Cup with a handicap 10 better than the next best player. One of his matches was with almost the maximum handicap difference possible. I wasn't there to see him win one group game and lose the other two (thereby being eliminated) but don't doubt for a second that he lost with good grace and muttered not about 'ridiculous handicaps'. I say these words not as implicit criticism of anyone else, nor to embarrass Tom, but as a genuine thank. He is a great club champion in many ways, and if current trends are anything to go by, may remain so for some time. The Garland Cup, however, may remain elusive to him!

Lloyd Pettiford

## The Wrong Hand

The second unofficial 'wrong-handed' club championships were held on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2015. When they were last contested in 2013, Lloyd Pettiford beat Tom Lewis 2 sets to love. This time the same two players contested the final as in fact the only two entrants and the only two players in the club who actually want to make our fine game more difficult for themselves. With both players around the high 40s wrong-handed, this was always likely to be close and so it proved. As each gently lobbed the ball to the other with relentless (but only vaguely accurate) reliability, in the end it took 2 hours for Pettiford to retain his 'title' 4/6, 6/5, 6/3. The crowd – had it existed – would have been bored silly but for the players (neither naturally ambidextrous) it was, as always, a fun challenge. You should try it sometime ☺

Lloyd Pettiford

Hi Bruce - a snippet of news ...

Having won promotion to to the 15-20 handicap band National League, Tom Bomford, Tom Lewis and Philip Shaw-Hamilton were keen to continue their success. Playing home and away against teams from RTC, Prested Hall, Paris and Cambridge all was going well at the half way point. Unfortunately the wheels (or more accurately the shoulder) fell off for the last two matches and the intrepid trio ended up 3rd - which is still quite creditable. For those who have not played in Paris I highly recommend it - if you don't want to make a weekend of it the Eurostar will get you there and back in a day!

Philip Shaw-Hamilton

My thanks to all the contributors, especially all those competing and thus giving a vision to inspire the reporters .!

As always, snippets, pictures, witticisms and other forms of content are welcome.!

Bruce Paxton

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