

Giraffe Newsletter 2014-15

The 2014-15 season has been a cracking one for CURTC student members, as you will find out in this newsletter. Jimmy Campbell even took the Club's 20-29 category title, keeping this particular CURTC trophy firmly in the students' hands after Alex Evans won it in 2013 and 2014.

As always, we're intensely grateful to our Giraffe members. You make all kinds of things possible that would not otherwise happen. Racquets, court fees, transport to matches, and tours are all supported by your membership fees, and the current crop of students are all benefitting from your continued contributions.

We're also very grateful to former Men's captain, James Berger, whose company B1 Capital is principle sponsor of the Club.

Finally - we will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Green Court over the 2015-16 season, and events to mark this occasion will culminate in an alumni tournament and black-tie dinner at Trinity in April 2016. If you want to be kept informed about the dinner, tournament and other celebrations, please email the pros, pros@curtc.net, and they will add you to the 150th anniversary mailing list.

Captain's report: a year of poor chat and great tennis

Training hard under the watchful eye of Kees there has been a significant improvement in the quality of play by the Cambridge men's team. We had an all Cambridge final in the inter-universities tournament and were able to dominate the Varsity match for the second year in a row. Jamie Giddins and Ed Kay were also able to take the Division 2 National League and are now representing Great Britain Under 26s in Australia in the Limb and Van Alen trophies. As well as these real tennis successes we have enjoyed ourselves immensely off court with some dubious banter and some epic trips to away courts. We would like to thank the support of all those at the Club and the Giraffe Club who make this sport possible.

Jamie Giddins, Fitzwilliam
Men's Captain 2014-15

Captain's report: several years of building the Ladies' squad starts to pay off

The ladies have gone from strength to strength this year, culminating in fantastic Varsity matches where both the first and second teams stormed through to win against Oxford.

The year started with a good recruitment season, raising squad numbers and introducing several new players to the game. Fingers crossed our new talent will continue to develop over the coming months.

With our Varsity squads selected in January, we then went full steam ahead with preparation, playing useful matches at Hatfield and Newmarket, and benefitting immensely from the pros' coaching. The two days at Lords were a great experience for everyone involved and we really appreciated how many members of the Club turned out to support us. The dedication and support of the pros, the Club, and the players themselves has made this a great year, and here's hoping a repetition of that success next year!

Annie Plews, Magdalene
Ladies' Captain 2014-15

Cambridge Crowned University Champions

On the last weekend of the Michaelmas term the Cambridge Men's Real Tennis team triumphed in the finals of the inter-universities championship. The equivalent of BUCS, the tournament saw eight universities arrive at Cambridge hoping to take the trophy off the hosts and defending champions. Cambridge's strength meant that both the first and second teams were competing and their positioning in opposite sides of the draw opened the door for an all Cambridge final.

First up was the Cambridge 2nd team against the Exeter 2nds. Jimmy Campbell went out as first string and never looked in trouble, rattling the grill from all corners of the court. Fresher Matt Shaw was then sent out at second string looking to seal the tie. Displaying some superb volleying the match was over in minutes with Shaw winning 10-0.

Lying in wait in the semi-finals for the 2nd team was the much tougher obstacle of the Exeter 1sts. Jimmy once again sent himself out first, this time as the second string. Displaying a similarly gorgeous exhibition of ball striking he once again proved himself far too strong for the Exeter boy, finishing him off 10-4.

The red hot Alex Evans had been brought into the team to face the Exeter number 1 who boasted a 5 point handicap advantage and it was clear from the warm up that this was going to be a very tight affair. Evans started strongly, not letting Boddington down to the service end, but after building up a lead Boddington started to fight back, displaying some of the shots that warranted his lower handicap. The match came down to the last game with the scores tied at 9 all, Evans found a couple of crucial kills and recorded a well-deserved 10-9 victory, sealing their position in the final.



The first team's semi-final saw them pitted against Oxford, Jamie Giddins was out first in the second string singles and although there were some competitive rallies the Oxford player never got into the match and Cambridge were able to seal the rubber 10-1. The first string match saw Ed Kay up against a much improved Oxford number 1, this match again showed glimpses of competitiveness but Ed, who has been on a hot run of form, including qualification for the British Open, was far too classy, winning 10-4. With the match already sealed Cambridge went into the doubles looking to make a statement before the Varsity Match. Statement they made, winning the rubber 8-1.

With the trophy already remaining in Cambridge the only battle left was to see which of the Cambridge teams would take the spoils. Captain Jimmy Campbell rested himself after a long day (and night) on Saturday and so sent out Shaw to take on Giddins. In a close match Giddins was able to pull through. Kay was then up against the inspired Evans, the nerves on show were ample evidence that this was going to be no easy match for Kay. In what was fittingly the best real tennis of the weekend the match to-ed and fro-ed before Kay pulled away to take victory 10-4, the Cambridge first team retained their trophy for another year.

It was a fantastic weekend of real tennis and we are very grateful to all of the other universities for coming to compete. The weekend could not have run so smoothly without the fabulous work of our professionals Kees, Peter and especially Scott who was instrumental in running the event.

We must also thank the Athletics Club for hosting our dinner on Saturday night, which was suitably eventful. Finally we must thank the tournaments sponsors Pol Roger who provided drinks aplenty on the Saturday as well as some very well received bottles as a first prize for Giddins and Kay.

Men's Real Tennis Varsity Match Report 2015

The MCC calendar is filled with some incredible fixtures, however there is only one event that the members' really care about. It's not the first ball of the Ashes, or a rained off day of county championship cricket but of course the Oxford vs Cambridge Real Tennis Varsity Match. In fact it is rumoured that Mike Gatting was once overheard saying 'I only wanted to captain England so that I could become a member of the MCC in order to watch the Varsity Real Tennis Match' (Source: unknown).

Anyway, this great fixture was to be played on 27th/28th February and there were two big changes to the Cambridge team. For the first time in living memory Jules Camp was to be absent and Freddie 'Poor Chat' Kalfayan had sauntered off to Paris for a year abroad. Big boots to fill... Yet after a rigorous selection process Ed Kay, Jamie Giddins (Captain & President) and Alex Evans were joined by fresh faced, freshman Matt 'Fresh' Shaw. This was a formidable team and on paper Cambridge came into the match as strong favourites.

The match kicked off with the first string doubles, as the nervous looking fresher Shaw and Kay took on the Oxford pair of Whitaker and Mullan. The match started slowly and a visibly pumped up Oxford settled much faster, and to the galleries' surprise took the first set 6-2. Yet as Cambridge settled the tide began to turn and railroad by railroad, framed winner by tambour boast Cambridge began to take control of the match, in the end easing to a 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-0 victory. In the second string doubles, Giddins and Evans were too strong for the Oxford pair, who could not compete against the clean hitting aggressive returning and intelligent understanding of the game displayed by the Cambridge pair, Cambridge taking the match 6-3, 6-1, 6-2.



After a fine first day and buoyed by the ladies victory earlier in the day, Cambridge were keen to clean the Oxford boys up and recreate last year's 6-0 victory. Shaw was first on court in the match that was billed to be the closest of the weekend. However, Shaw was dominant, putting in some fine cut volley returns and tambour winning gallery lobs as he moved to a 6-0, 6-3 victory. Next up was Alex 'Oxford sympathiser' Evans, who started the match rather suspiciously, as he went down early.

This left the first set evenly poised at 5-5, however Evans found some inner strength, probably provided by the previous night's team talk, and took the game to love.

From there, there was no looking back as he finished the match off 6-5, 6-3. This victory ensured that the trophy and Pol Roger would be heading back to Grange Road for another year.

The second string match saw Jamie 'Leader of Men' Giddins up against Burgess in what ended up as the longest match of the day. With some dubious play in the first set Giddins fell behind as Burgess punished poor tactics and weak ball striking. However after losing the first set Giddins started to take control, and playing more aggressively was able to push through to victory 4-6, 6-2, 6-2. The last match on was the big boys and two very different styles of play. Kay, who is rumoured to have been unaware a backwall existed on the other side of the court, against Whittaker who has never been seen to hit a floor shot.

The match was enthralling, however Ed's play has been far too good all year and he was easily able to counteract Whittaker's power with some short chases and winning galleries, taking the match 6-2, 6-2. And so Cambridge retained their trophy as deserved 6-0 champions.

The only thing left to do was to celebrate with dinner in the Long Room. This was, as always, a fantastic event with a brilliant off-the-cuff speech and good banter all round. It was the perfect end to a wonderful weekend and we would all like to thank Pol Roger for their generous sponsorship of the dinner and match. We would also like to thank Brian Sharp, the T&RA and the MCC for hosting and organizing the match.

The Cambridge team would also like to extend our deepest gratitude to James Berger and B1 Capital for sponsoring us over the last year, their generous support is the main reason that real tennis in Cambridge has prospered so much in the last year.



And so onto another year, and with the return of Kalfayan and the departure of no one, Cambridge will be keen to build on their recent Varsity success.

Results:

Singles:

4th: Matt Shaw (Homerton) vs Alex Mullan (Balliol) 6/0 6/3

3rd: Alex Evans (Jesus) vs Ben Graves (Worcester) 6/5 6/3

2nd: Jamie Giddins (Capt., Fitzwilliam) vs Archie Burgess (Pembroke) 4/6 6/2 6/2

1st: Edmund Kay (Emmanuel) vs Jonny Whittaker (St Hilda's) 6/2 6/2

Doubles:

2nd: Giddins/Evans vs Burgess/ Graves 6/3 6/1 6/2

1st: Kay/Shaw vs Whittaker/Mullan 2/6 6/3 6/2 6/0

Ladies Real Tennis Varsity Match Report 2015

Would all those hours of training and gruelling fitness sessions pay off? We felt it was time for the Ladies' Varsity pendulum to swing Cambridge's way, and had done all that we could to prepare for those two fateful days at the end of February. The early start on Friday for the Ladies' singles matches

kept the crowds thin to start with, but by lunchtime the Cambridge supporters were in fine voice and we really appreciated their encouragement. Emily Brady, making her fourth, and final, appearance for Cambridge at Lord's was first up, and all that experience paid off as she looked cool, calm and collected taking the match in straight sets, 6/4, 6/1.

Karen Pearce decided to scare the schedulers by providing us with the longest match of the day, at just under two hours. She looked well in control in the first set, taking it 6/2, but her feisty opponent Claire Bucknell got into her rhythm in the second set, and a nail-biter went Oxford's way 6/5. By this time the crowd were nervous wrecks, and Karen realised she was desperate for a coke.

The only way to get it, as she pointed out afterwards, was to win the third set as quickly as possible. Newly inspired by her longing for a fizzy beverage, Karen romped away with the final set 6/1.

Venetia D'Arcy was up against Oxford's newest star in Izzy Hunt, who made her decisive debut on the real tennis court in the Seconds in 2014, and has clearly gone from strength to strength since then. Venetia is always a dogged and determined player, hunting down the ball from corner to corner and never letting a rally end with the ball on her side of the net if she can possibly help it, but Izzy proved even more determined than Venetia. The match went 3/6, 1/6 to Oxford, and it was up to Sophie Morrill to keep Cambridge ahead going into the doubles on Saturday.



This she did with aplomb, taking on veteran Oxford player Maggie Henderson-Tew in a fast and entertaining match that ended 6/4, 6/2 in Cambridge's favour.

But being 3-1 up going into the doubles on Saturday is not always guarantee of success, as we have seen in the not-too-distant past, so there was no let up as the last two matches of the competition started. Both teams decided to pair their 2nd and 3rd string players, and 1st and 4th, perhaps thinking there might be a deciding doubles in the offing. But although Oxford took the match to 2-3 overall by winning the first doubles rubber, Sophie and Emily proved too strong for the Oxford 1 and 4 pair, and a straight sets victory saw Cambridge win the Varsity Trophy for the first time in a while.

As always, Lord's, the MCC, Brian Sharp, Adam and his team, and our dear friends from Pol Roger made the entire event a fantastic celebration of real tennis and age-old rivalry played out in truly sporting fashion.

4th singles

Emily Brady (St Catharine's) vs Evelyn Fleming (Corpus Christi) 6/4 6/1

3rd singles

Karen Pearce (Wolfson) vs Clare Bucknell (All Souls) 6/2 5/6 6/1

2nd singles

Venetia D'Arcy (Emmanuel) vs Isabel Hunt (St Hilda's) 3/6 1/6

1st singles

Sophie Morrill (Sydney Sussex) vs Maggie Henderson-Tew (Exeter) 6/4 6/2

2nd doubles

D'Arcy/Pearce vs Hunt/Bucknell 2/6 0/6

1st doubles

Morrill/Brady vs Henderson-Tew/ Fleming 6/3 6/0

RESULT: Cambridge won 4-2





Why not come to next year's Varsity match dinner? We always have a few extra places at the dinner for members, alumni and other guests, so if you're interested, let Kees know and he'll send you an invitation when the time comes, kees@curtc.net. The 2016 Varsity match will take place on February 26 and 27, with the dinner on the 27th.

Varsity Seconds results

This year's Seconds matches were hosted by Cambridge, with Archie Cornish and Katie Forsyth taking on the Captains' roles. The form from Varsity clearly carried through to the rest of the squad, and Cambridge came out triumphant - this time with the results switched, the Ladies winning 6-0 and the Men winning 4-2. Will next year be the year Jimmy makes the firsts?

Ladies

4th singles

Helen West (St Johns) vs Rachael Griffith (Christchurch) 6/1 6/1

3rd singles

Katie Forsyth (Sidney Sussex) vs Rosie Alterman (St Hughes) 6/0 6/0

2nd singles

Ems Lord (Wolfson) vs Lottie Fullerton (Jesus) 6/4 6/1

1st singles

Annie Plews (Magdalene) vs Izzy Crealy (Lady Margaret Hall) 6/0 6/0

2nd doubles

Lord/West vs Griffith/Fullerton 8/5

1st doubles

Plews/Forsyth vs Crealy/Afterman 8/0

RESULT: Cambridge won 6/0

Men

4th singles

Ross Smythe (Darwin) vs Alexander Flint (St Hughes) 1/6 3/6

3rd singles

Archie Cornish (Corpus Christi) vs Mark Fischel (Balliol) 0/6 1/6

2nd singles

Oli Watson (Pembroke) vs Tim Dadd (Kellog) 6/1 6/0

1st singles

Jimmy Campbell (Robinson) vs Charlie Defries (St Hilda's) 6/1 6/2

2nd doubles

Watson/Cornish vs Flint/Dadd 8/1

1st doubles

Campbell/Smythe vs Defries/Fischel 8/5

RESULT: Cambridge won 4/2

Join the Giraffes!

The Giraffe Club is for alumni and other supporters of the University Club who are no longer regular players at Cambridge, and its aim is to promote real tennis among current Cambridge University students. Membership fees go towards the Giraffe Fund, which is used to encourage new players to try the game, and to develop our existing squads.

Thanks to the Giraffe Fund, we have one of the strongest men's and women's squads for some years. Subsidies for the costs of coaching, court fees and rackets for the most promising players have made all the difference. The Fund also supports our top players so that they can enter major tournaments, helping with entrance fees, travel expenses and racket stringing.

Members of the Giraffe Club are invited back to Cambridge every year to take part in the Cambridge Weekend, and are also invited to attend the Varsity match dinner. The 2015-16 season will be extra special, since we'll be celebrating 150 years of tennis on the Green Court at Grange Road, and welcoming back Giraffe members will be a major part of the celebrations.

We are immensely grateful for the opportunities that the Giraffe Club makes available to us, and hope to continue justifying your support with our efforts on court. If you are not already a member, please consider joining and contributing to the growth of real tennis in Cambridge University.

Membership of the Giraffe Club is £40 per year, or you can take out Life Membership for £350. If you would like to join, please email Kees, kees@curtc.net.

Thank you!

In other news...

It's been a while since we've done a Giraffe Club newsletter, so here are a few more snippets of student news from recent years.

James Watson (Trinity Hall, Men's Captain 2011-12) partnered with CURTC Assistant Pro Scott Blaber to take the National League Division 2 title in 2012.

2012 saw eight players head off to France for a summer tour, playing Paris, Fontainebleau, Bordeaux (a few months before the court closed), La Bastide (thanks to keen player Johnny Borrell of Razorlight) and on the trinet court at Arcangues.

CURTC took the Field Trophy in 2013. The team that defeated Jesmond Dene in the final included four current students, Jules Camp, Ed Kay, Jimmy Campbell and Alex Evans, alum Ed Pearson, and Senior Members Duncan Colquhoun and Andrew Petrie.

Student players continue to play a big role in CURTC's National League teams, with Ed Kay taking over James Watson's place in Division 2, playing alongside Scott Blaber. Jules Camp, Alex Evans, Jamie Giddins, Jimmy Campbell, Alastair Kwan, Freddie Kalfayan, Oli Watson and Matt Barr have all represented the Club in other National League Divisions.

Emily Brady won the Club's 2013 60+ tournament, and Alastair Kwan took the 30-39 category in the same year. In 2013 and 2014, Alex Evans won the 20-29 tournament, with Jimmy Campbell taking the category in 2015.

Karen Pearce reached the semi-finals of the 2014 Ladies' tournament, with Imogen Whittam reaching the quarter-finals.

CURTC Club officials 2015-16 season

President	George Pearson
Treasurer	Jeremy Fairbrother
Men's captain	
Ladies' captain	Sophie Morrill
Secretary	Gillian Moore
Fixtures Secretary	Keith Beechener
Administrator	Simon Stokes
Senior Professional	Kees Ludekens
Assistant Professional	Peter Paterson
Trainee Professional	Scott Blaber
Committee Members	Bernie Carpenter, Ken Moody, Jane Phillimore, Jonathan Spence, Julian Stafford
Principal sponsor	B1 Capital
Major sponsor	N W Brown Group
Singles Leagues sponsor	Tayabali Tomlin & White
Doubles Leagues sponsor	Earthworks