

THE ROMPA RECORDER January 2022

Happy New Year!



May this be the year you master the topspin backhand, return that maniac's serve or see victory over the crafty club afternoon specialist against whom in a few years' encounters you've scarcely made a dent.

First, thanks to my predecessor Simon, for launching a few years ago this esteemed journal. To come up with measured yet lighthearted prose 3 or 4 times a year, whilst making it interesting and informative is no small task. And that's without Simon's poetry!

A reminder. It's worth remembering that Meads Tennis is a members' club. Heavens! You say - will he continue like this? No, I shan't, but not everybody is aware of the distinction between members' and commercial clubs, especially those new to joining who may simply have strayed from the commercial sector. You will have noticed a big club not so far away where people greet you, wear uniforms, prepare your breakfast and lunch and dinner, who take your bookings and serve you drinks. Regardless of fees it's easy to become used to that kind of thing.

Not at ROMPA, which is run by the members for the members. There are no staff, no one is paid. Volunteers run the club. This is important as a newcomer to the club (or anyone else) can occasionally seem to expect service from someone they apparently assumed was a 'member of staff.'

A committee of eleven runs the club each with a role - finance, welfare juniors, coaching, courts and grounds, tennis secretarial, membership, publicity, website, maintenance, social.

The committee has a chairman, who conducts the meeting or wields the baton, without whom committee meetings could descend into chaos, and who coordinates the many issues that occur in the running of the club.

Chairman Change

Through the pressures and immense workload of her own career as a barrister Linda Saunt, the chairman since 2014, has now decided to step down.

We are very fortunate that Hazel Sneath has taken over the chair position.
(See below interview with Hazel)

During her chairmanship Linda presided over some of the club's happiest and successful years. The growth of membership, general friendly atmosphere and continued liaison with the L.TA regarding our grass courts have been major features.

Linda originally came on board, joined the committee that is, to help contest the council's refusal for a third floodlit court. I can vouch for how many hours Linda put in canvassing the local neighbourhood on this very topic. She and the committee were successful.

A small but crucial step followed for her to become club chairman.

When she first took on the position Linda's professed aim was to make the club more welcoming, especially to juniors. Judging from letters and emails received since Linda decided to step down she has been more than successful. Under her guidance membership has grown to over 200 adults and more than 100 juniors.

The Café at Rompa

Sadly no more tennis followed by cheesy scones, latte, and choice gateau on Saturdays mornings. This coach's rest, this haven, this little world, (I won't go on) this would be Persian/French styled bistro coffee bar, (no wonder Bernard was a frequent habitué), ran on Saturdays and Tuesdays. It has now closed its ovens, tables and bars. Hats off to Fay and Debbie for getting it off the ground in the first place. A first for Rompa and always with a promise of something grander if that was what members wanted. But you didn't want, or at least, not in sufficient numbers.

Thank you Fay and Debbie for all the tastes, effort and gossip. Perhaps another try?

Bridge

Evenings continue Wednesdays from 7.30. There's a group of about 12 who play although this diminishes during the winter months when those taking part sometimes adjourn to a player's house.

Glenda introduced bridge a few years ago and there was much enthusiasm for her teaching. David Lampert took over the organising, but now cannot make Wednesday evenings as often as he'd like. If you'd like to give bridge a try Barbara and Mike Hadlow are the members to approach mhadlow@sky.com.

Table Tennis

Iain Paterson is in charge of very popular table tennis evenings – Mondays, 6 p.m. – 7.30 approx. and runs each year between October and end of March. A booking system for table tennis now operates. Please contact Iain if you'd like to take part on Mondays. iain@cvcc.org.uk

Coaxing Matters

Even the title is ambiguous. It could mean coaxing is important (it matters) while matters also means topics. And why coaxing? What's wrong with coaching?

Here's why. I'll say to a middle aged chap who comes to a group, 'Neil, it's better to hit volleys like this, not like that,' and show him.

He takes the advice with a begrudging smile, misses the first shot and snarls, 'You see, I knew it wouldn't work.'

My answer could be, 'why come for a lesson then?' And forty years ago it might well have been. But not now. I gently let him get on with it until he discovers for himself my suggestion was the better way.

Hence coaxing not coaching.

Coach as in teach is derived from the French 'coche', a kind of four wheeled carriage. And then became early c19 Oxford University slang to carry a student through an exam and thence to train someone at a sport.

Having had so many pupils not do what I suggest, I now prefer coaxing. **Fancy a free tennis coaxing session with Clay?** Be the first to send me the correct answer to this question and the lesson is yours.

Q. Which 2 Wimbledon tennis champions were also world-class table tennis players? One was world champion, the other was runner-up.

While we're at these indoor games, are there any chess fiends out there? There must be. More books have been written about this wonderful game or sport, than any other. Would anyone like to take on the running of a regular chess evening?

Tennis Teams



Representing the club as a member of a team may not be everyone's desire. Many just want a friendly game of tennis. But for others, who's competitive flame burns bright, it can be a worthwhile ambition.

Team play offers a measure of one's own standard and rate of improvement. It also means of course competition against outsiders, players from other clubs, new serves, backhands, attitude. Learning to cope with the various minor tensions involved, can only lead to becoming a better and more complete player. If that is what one wants.

After a successful summer when the ladies first and second teams and the men's seconds all gained promotion, winter tennis has proved tougher.

Men's Teams

In the Wilson Sandford Winter League Div. 6, we lost 3-1 to Hampden Park 3s, 3-1 to Southdown 4s, 3-1 to the Green 2s and 2-2 against Seaford 3s and Maresfield 2s.

Sympathy for team captain Noel Bennet. Covid, winter bugs and occasional injuries have played havoc with team selection, meaning Noel has not always been able to play his best team.

Looking ahead to the summer the plan is to have 3 men's teams. Chris Rummins would captain the first team, Noel the seconds and Barry Winn would take over a new 3rd team. It's possible the Cassidy boys, club champion Lemuel and his brother Chet, may be available for the first team. If they were able to play regularly with other team members Chris Rummins, Andrew Murphy, Jung and Peter Bray there would be every chance of further promotion.

Ladies' Teams

Perhaps it was the shock of approaching winter but our ladies teams sadly got off to a rather dismal start. The 1st team lost successive matches to East Grinstead and East Hoathly. Then with scintillating play, we beat local rivals Hampden Park 2nd team 3-1. Hazel Sneath, Lucy Parkin, Jess Gisby, Mary Sherlock, Glenda Pelling, Polly McCarthy and Brigid Argyle played for the 1st team.

Our 2nd team had similar results. First of all losing 3-1 to Maresfield and 4-0 to Cross in Hand. Then, like the 1st team, they collected themselves to score an impressive 4-0 win over Hampden Park 3. Our 2nd team players were Brigid Argyle, Glenda Pelling, Mary Thorne, Wendy Lambert, Clare Greenwell and Joanne Gale.

Junior Tennis

... **or Under 23s.** Just one of the idiosyncracies of Meads Tennis.

There, I've just mentioned another. What is our actual title? The proper one is Meads Lawn Tennis at Rompa, a right mouthful if you're in a hurry. Often shortened to Rompa, Meads Lawn Tennis or MLTC.

Same with juniors. If you're 22 you are an adult but a junior member of the club. I mention this because it's worth remembering that both our club champions, Lemuel Cassidy and Gabby Pacheco-Lagoda are juniors or at least under 23's. Gabby is 12, and Lemuel 18. Imagine that, club champion at 12! That's Emma Raducanu territory.

Also a fact is that the outgoing chairman Linda and the incoming Hazel have emphasised the importance of juniors at the club. 'They are the future of Meads Lawn Tennis'. No arguing with that, remembering the long gone days of juniors being regarded as something approaching second-class.

Junior mix-ins, coaching and holiday camps.

Mix-ins started in mid-January and continue each Saturday between 10.30 and 12.00. Just turn up and play.

Junior coaching groups restart on Saturday 5th February. A new course starts on Tuesday 22nd February between 4 pm and 6 pm.

Holiday Tennis Camps

9.00 until 3.00

February half term: 15th – 18th February

Easter holidays: 5th April – 8th April and 12th April – 15th April

Please contact Luciano, 07538 656905 for further details on any of the above events.

During the winter Gabby Pacheco-Lagoda notched up several victories during national tournaments. Also watch out for Alexandra Caulfield 12 yrs, Sienna Charsley 9 yrs, Darina Bodnar-Dybash 10 yrs, Lily Pacheco-Lagoda 9 yrs,

Emma Valks 12 yrs, Ethan Wrench 9 yrs and Emily Luzi 9 yrs– All have been selected for special L.T.A training at either regional or county level.

Pavilion Refurbishment

To help raise the necessary funds Maria, the club membership secretary, introduced the *Buy a Brick Lottery*. Look out for it in the Clubhouse. Each brick costs £5. On the first Saturday after 100 bricks have been sold, a draw is made. In the first draw Lorna Holloway won £75 1st prize, Clay Iles won £50, 2nd place.

Club Championships

Message from Tennis Secretary, Peter Stretton.

“ After a wonderful number of entries last year in the Club Finals competition, I am hoping for even better in 2022. The date is Sunday 18th September so please put in your diaries now. Start thinking with whom you would like to play. Entry charts will go up in the Spring to give even more time for early rounds to be organised.

Holidays are banned around the 18th!! The weather will be fabulous!! Let’s make the 18th a great day at Meads LTC. The usual proviso applies. If you can’t be available on the day for some major reason then please do not enter. More info to follow. Be there or be square!!!”

Peter

Practice Wall

There cannot be many, if any, world class tennis players who have not used a practice wall. Why? The oft repeated and obvious answer is that a wall never makes a mistake - the perfect practice partner. Various exercises can be used against the wall to improve technique, footwork and consistency and concentration.

Currently we are awaiting estimates for a proposed practice wall at the club. Estimates for the concrete, not only for the wall, but for the all important level area in front of the wall, where the ball bounces.

In the meantime thanks to the committee for agreeing to install a practice net while waiting for the practice wall. Many members have taken advantage of this.

If you haven't played on court 1, or haven't for a while, the practice net is the contraption at the near end and side of court 1. Just disengage it from the fence, place it where you like, but probably by the net in the middle of the court and off you go – 500 forehands, 500 backhands, lots of volleys. Whatever you want. You can even practice smashing against it. When finished please make sure you retie it securely to the fence.

Tip – it's perfect for practicing early backswing. Just make sure you start to take the racket back after you've hit the ball and before it reaches the net.

The Rompa Recorder INTERVIEW

New Chairman – Hazel Sneath.



When did you start playing tennis ? I can't remember exactly, but think I was about 8.

Why did you start? Who introduced you to the game. My mum always played and encouraged my sister and me to play.

Are you keen on other sports? I used to play golf but gave up when our son Cam came along. I found I didn't have the time. James and I now talk about playing again. I have also recently joined a group of MLTC members playing Pickleball. It's very early days but good fun and great for your reflexes!

What interests do you have apart from tennis? I enjoy travelling, usually somewhere warm and sunny and I have a long list of places I'd like to visit. I enjoy going to the theatre, socializing with friends, walking and spending time with family.

Do you enjoy watching tennis? Yes. When I lived in Harpenden I was fortunate in being able to go to Wimbledon each year. I have also been to Monte Carlo to watch the tournament (the club has a fantastic backdrop of the Mediterranean) and enjoy the intimacy of the Eastbourne international, while listening to the seagulls. One even swooped down and stole my cake!

Do you have favourite players? I enjoy watching Roger Federer play. He makes tennis look so effortless. I also support the British players and look forward to seeing how Emma Raducanu gets on this year.

When you play do you have a favourite shot? Forehand down the middle.

Were you ambitious to do well at tennis? Tennis has only ever been a hobby for me. I never had the desire to put in the hours practising that are necessary to reach the top. Not sure I had the innate ability either!

What has been your career? Since leaving school after my A levels I worked in Human Resources. My career started with Price Waterhouse in London and they supported me through my professional exams. They were a fantastic company to work for and I look back at my time there with great fondness. After I left PW I worked locally in Harpenden as an HR manager for a surveying company and then for a building company. When we moved to Eastbourne until recently I worked for Bede's as HR Manager.

You've been a member at Meads for 6 years. What brought you to Eastbourne in the first place? A mixture of reasons. I'd lived in Harpenden all my life and was looking for a change. We knew Eastbourne as James's parents had moved here and we'd visited many times. It seemed a nice relaxing place. We

also thought if we were going to move it ought to be before Cam went to secondary school. So the planets aligned and we moved!

What is your favourite food? I like all food.

Which travel destinations do you like the most? I love Thailand and also a small island, Boracay, in the Philippines.

Who would be your fantasy dinner guests? Roger Federer, so he could give me some tips about hitting a single handed backhand down the line. George Michael, to sing. Anne Frank to help me understand what it really was like to hide for so many years. Helen Sharman, to find out what it's like in space, Michael McIntyre, obviously for the comedy and Nigella Lawson, to cook.

Is there anything about you that might surprise other members? I don't think there's much that would surprise anyone, but I do love watching Love Island each year!

Thank you Hazel for all you've told us. Very Best Wishes in your new position.

Party Time

Colin Venus's mates supplied the band for a superb bebop Persian Evening at the beginning of December. Very good too the band were, playing, singing many hits from the sixties, with Colin stomping away on the drums. Fay and Debbie provided the Iranian repast.

On the Sunday before Christmas Julie Boon in full elf like attire, won the well attended fancy dress competition in the Xmas tennis party competition. Mulled wine and mince pies added to the festivities.

Enjoyment, purpose, activity are the essentials for any successful group tennis lesson. Roberto, assisted by Noah and junior representative Jess, certainly provided that in the pre Christmas children's tennis party. I never knew so many different games existed using just a bat and ball!

Tennis Tip

The damp courts during the winter often make the ball whizz through at difficult to control speeds. Let this be the winter you learn to take the racket back early. Start preparing for forehand or backhand as soon as your opponent strikes the ball. This is not to say you should take the racket back soon and quickly (there is a difference). If you do the racket just hangs at the back waiting, losing momentum. Start taking the racket back early, then adjust it to the speed of the oncoming ball.

I remember bumping into an old friend I hadn't seen for years. He was married to one of our members. Instead of 'Hello,' he simply nodded at me, saying 'racket back early.' I didn't mind the 'mickey' take or being known by a second tennis expression. The first was 'Claycourt' as Frew McMillan used to call me.

Incidentally, just to contradict what I've said, who among the top players takes their racket back late? – Naomi Osaka. Watch for it next time you see her play. How she copes, I don't know. But on the other hand look for Djokovic's preparation - early, unhurried, he always seems to have so much time.

If you'd like to contribute to the next edition of The Rompa Recorder

Please contact Clay Iles. Clay.iles1@hotmail.com

Our new Editor with Lem, Gerry and Sergio

