

## THE ROMPA RECORDER April 2025

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**Editor: Clay Iles**

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It isn't just the weather this winter and consequent disappointing amount of tennis that brings a shorter and possibly more sombre edition of your club newsletter.

Sadly we have lost two of the club's most stalwart members. In recent months Maria Louka and Peter Stretton have passed away. Maria, as membership secretary, took a behind the scenes role, aiding the club in looking after new members. In her warm, engaging way Maria also chased late membership payers, a role crucial to the club's finances.

Peter's position was more up front ensuring all tennis activities, from the social to the tennis teams and competitions thrived. How his jovial "laugh a minute" presence is missed.



Another who loved his tennis but has sadly departed was not a member, **Paul Lucas**. He hadn't been a member for some years now but without him the club may not have existed. A keen sailor and tennis player, he was one of the four founder members of the club. They dug up the weeds and flattened the surface to get the courts in good playing order. In later years he spent his playing days on the comfort of the carpet courts at the David Lloyd Club. But it is as well to remember that without Paul's efforts and those of three others in the early 80s this delightful Meads club as we know it today would not exist.

**Simon Ireland**, a past editor of The Rompa Recorder, who we interview in this edition, wrote this poem in memory of Peter.

***For Peter***

*A light has gone out at the club that we love  
The atmosphere's muted and strange  
Once 'hail fellow well met' and 'salt of the earth'  
Your passing has signalled a change*

*Yet being the essence of the good club man  
Your influence will always live on  
In the ranks of opponents and partners on court  
In the banter, the humour that shone*

*Whenever we met on each side of the net  
Where your volleys were crisply dispatched  
Or in tabletop rallies on dark winter nights  
In the laughter at victories snatched*

*And if we see Jackie and Roland about  
In our minds you'll always be there  
With your passion for county, your passion for life  
And the friendship we were lucky to share*

**Simon Ireland**

## **The Rompa Recorder Interview – Simon Ireland**



*Simon trying out his latest novel on his grandson*

***When did you start playing tennis?***

*I was 9-10. My father had been a county junior and a PE teacher. We soon graduated from the table tennis table to the tennis court.*

***Have you played other sports?***

*I was a keen long and triple jumper as a teenager hence the frustrating state of my knees nowadays. But since then I have mostly played various racket sports and hockey and cricket.*

***Seeing that you write poetry, which poets do you enjoy reading?***

In chronological order, Blake, Yeats, Vernon Scannell, Roger McGough, U.A.Fanthorpe and Simon Armitage.

***You've just published a childrens' novel. Which novels are your favourites?***

Le Rouge et Le Noir by Stendhal, Great Expectations, Rebecca, Animal Farm and today anything by William Boyd, Jonathon Coe and Mick Herron.

***Do you have favourite tennis players?***

Growing up I enjoyed watching Pancho Gonzales, John Newcombe and Roger Taylor. More recently Boris Becker, Steffi Graf, Andy Murray and Jack Draper.

***What has been your career?***

I spent forty years teaching English, Drama and Sport in a variety of independent schools from Sussex and Somerset in the south to Dumfries and Perthshire in Scotland.

***What achievements are you most proud of?***

I've won Popmaster a couple of times, once with the great Ken Bruce, once with Claudia Winkelman and last year managed a hat trick of Crossword wins in the Times, Observer and Radio Times competitions (no prizes for how I spend a lot of spare time)

***Which well-known people would you like to ask for a dinner party?***

Ian Rankin, Victoria Coren Mitchell, Brian O'Driscoll, Bruce Springsteen, Kevin Godley (ex 10cc) and Jenny Agutter. ( I once ended up sitting next to her at a lunch in London and subtly asked what it had felt like filming so many nude scenes in the 70s, 80s in such films as Walkabout and an American Werewolf in London!)

***Where is your favourite holiday destination?***

My wife and I visited Italy more than anywhere else, particularly the Amalfi coast and Sicily. An unbeatable combination of food, history and beautiful scenery.

*Is there anything about you that would surprise members?*

I am a huge music fan, particularly of the 70s/80s pop and rock. Memorable gigs have included Credence at the Albert Hall, Steely Dan at the O2, REM at Twickenham and Bruce Springsteen at Crystal Palace. Just to spite me, my son became a professional Jazz musician. He has played the Albert Hall as well as Ronnie Scott's and Glastonbury.

**With thanks to Simon for such an array of names and memories.**

**COACHING**

Luciano, who has served as the club's head coach for the past 5 years has left. Loaded with coaching commitments, he is head coach at the David Lloyd Club, he has also become an expert on the new sport, padel, which is rapidly growing in popularity around the world. Luciano regularly runs tennis and padel holidays in Portugal. Anyone interested should contact him. Tel.07538 656905

Welcome **Matt Golledge**. He has taken Luciano's place at Meads. He is an LTA part 3 accredited coach and has worked with players of all ages and skill levels. He recently won the Junior Captain of the Year at the Tennis Sussex awards for his work with the under 11s county team. You can contact Matt

[matt.crosscourt@gmail.com](mailto:matt.crosscourt@gmail.com) Tel 07880 515638

**New Coaching Programme** – Headed by Matt.

**Adults** – Team training -Tuesday evenings 7 p.m.

Improvers Group – Thursday evenings 7.15

**Juniors** – Red ball (8yrs and under) Tuesdays 4.30

Orange & Green ball (7-11 yrs old) Thursdays 5.15

Yellow ball (11+) Thursdays 6.15

**Group Coaching** with Clay continues –

**Saturdays** Intermediate players 11-12

Beginners 12-1. p.m.

**Sundays** Intermediate players 12-1 p.m.

**Thursdays** intermediate/advanced players 2-3 p.m

Tel 07773 491531

**Oliver Miller** is also available for lessons. A part 3 accredited coach. Please contact him on 07947 858349, [olliemiller2212@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:olliemiller2212@hotmail.co.uk) for lessons.

**Stoolball** - Sarah King-Spooner runs the club's stoolball team. We are in Division 3. There is usually one match per week on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday evening during May, June and July. Our home ground is New Field, the Eastbourne College land just behind the club tennis courts. This year Sarah hopes more juniors will join the team and those new to the game. Please contact Sarah, [Sarahkingspooner@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Sarahkingspooner@yahoo.co.uk) for more information.

**Clay's Coaching Corner** -There are 3 types of error– hitting the ball into the net, over the baseline, or over the side-line. The most common is into the net. The pros rarely make net errors. Higher net clearance is the key. Watch Nadal. Admittedly he hits with lots of topspin but even so ....*Avoid the net.*

### **Members' News**

Team Player **Lucy Parkin** is appearing in the Polegate Drama Group Production of **Calendar Girls**. 7<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> May at the Polegate Community Centre. Follow this link to buy tickets <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/polegatedramagroup>

A Calendar Girls calendar has been produced. Proceeds of the sale go towards the Children with Cancer Fund Research UK.

**Ian Kerr** is involved with the charity **Child Rescue Nepal**. This non-government organisation rescues children who have been trafficked and wherever possible rebuilds their lives reuniting them with their families. On 22<sup>nd</sup> April Ian is giving a report about the organisation. The presentation is at 1 p.m. East Dean Village Hall and includes a soup and cheese lunch.

For details contact [Ian@Kerr-Watson.myzen.co.uk](mailto:Ian@Kerr-Watson.myzen.co.uk)

**Simon Ireland**, see the interview above, has just published a children's novel, **BETTER PRESS PAUSE**. Check out Amazon for how to purchase.

**Diary Dates** - **12<sup>th</sup> April - Open Day**  
**21<sup>st</sup> April - American Tournament**  
**26<sup>th</sup> April - Quiz**  
**28<sup>th</sup> April - Entries open for Club Tournament**  
**10<sup>th</sup> May - Whist Drive**

To enter the Whist Drive please contact Colin on [colinlockett@live.com](mailto:colinlockett@live.com) or Glenda on [Peterpelling70@gmail.com](mailto:Peterpelling70@gmail.com). Entrance fee is £10 pp and includes ham or cheese ploughmans. Wine, beer, soft drinks are available. Not a team competition, everyone plays for themselves. Prizes for the winner - it promises to be a fun evening!

**21<sup>st</sup> November - A Meads LTC Winter Celebration.**

An early date for your diary. Lucy and Mike are organising the end of year celebration. Moving away from the party at a local hotel with other people format they are putting together a party at the Sovereign Harbour yacht club, just for members and friends and families of members. It will include a private function room, a buffet, a pay bar and a live ceilidh band with a caller. More details to follow.

**New Tennis Secretary – Johnny Fogarty** has taken on the role. His Friday evening tennis sessions and mantra, everyone plays with everyone, have done so much to foster enthusiasm for tennis at the club. You can contact Johnny on [fogartyjohn@gmail.com](mailto:fogartyjohn@gmail.com)

### **News of our teams – Winter Season**

An outstanding season for our **ladies' firsts** as they were champions of Division 4 and will be promoted to Division 3 next season. Captain Lucy Parkin said, *"We are all absolutely delighted to be crowned champions. The winter has been tough with many rescheduled matches but our tenacity and resilience saw us through. Division 3 will be challenging but we have a great squad."*



### **Champions!**

Our first team left and below celebrating a 4-0 final day victory that clinched the title.





## Champions!

Playing Record:

Won 4

Drew 1

Lost 1

Champions with 18 points.

Runners Up – Storrington 3rds  
with 16 points

Our Ladies' seconds finished a respectable 5<sup>th</sup> and were always competitive winning at least one rubber in every match. A highlight was beating Hampden Park 3-1 away.

**It was a season of mixed fortunes for our men.** Bernard Lien-Lambert writes:

*“Last year, we entered one team, as had been the case for several years, in Division 7. Our team did well and just managed to gain promotion to Division 6. This year, we entered two teams, in Divisions 6 and 10. The objective was for the first team to remain in Division 6 and the second team to perform honourably whilst fielding as many players as possible since promotion wasn't a prime objective.*”

*Our first team started well but unfortunately, lost its best players (eg Jamie Francis and Jonathan Scriven) due to lack of availability/injury. Despite this, right until the last match, it looked as if they would remain in Division 6, with our best club player, Lem Cassidy, ready and willing to play but it wasn't to be and they lost 0-4, which meant being relegated by just one point. Had they won that match, they could have finished 4th rather than 6<sup>th</sup>.*

*The second team's objectives were realised. 17 different players were involved and they finished 4<sup>th</sup>. Next Winter will involve at least two teams, maybe three.*

### **MEN'S TEAMS SUMMER 2025**

*After entering two teams last summer and the first team unbeaten, being promoted to Division 10, this summer, we're entering three teams, which means that our second and third teams will both be in Division 11.*

*We have plenty of players to play for the teams, much reinforced by Matt, who's got very good players to join us from Seaford. The objectives are for as many players as possible to play as established pairs and for both the first and second teams to gain promotion, the long-term objective being for our first team to work its way to Division 6 or thereabouts (5 to 7)"*

**The Club Tournament** – Don't forget to enter the club tournament. Singles, doubles, mixed, veterans' events. **Entries open 28th April** and the tournament runs throughout the summer. Finals day in September.

Some members are reticent about entering it. They come for coaching week after week, take part in competitive exercises within the coaching group but then are nervous of competing in an actual tournament. You can learn so much from competing in a tournament. If you've not entered before, now's the time to do it.

You may not win. It doesn't matter. You will learn and can then practise to put things right for next time. **Let this be the year you enter!**

**Tennis Courts** – The top two courts have now been replaced with a newer surface. Huge thanks to Bernard for overseeing the whole operation. From initially canvassing the members, he saw the operation right through to the final laying of the courts. Bernard acted as the link between club and contractor Trevor May. Bernard even painted the net posts.

The courts are a delight, slower, with a slightly higher bounce.

Again, thank you Bernard.

*If you would like to contribute to the next edition of the Rompa Recorder please contact Clay Iles - [clay.iles1@hotmail.com](mailto:clay.iles1@hotmail.com)*

*Huge thanks to Mike for formatting, distribution and photography*