

# T&RA CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2016

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## Chief Executive Update

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Another exciting four months which saw the usual season opener at Queen's showcasing the junior talent at Tennis and the Noel Bruce started proceeding for Rackets. November is always one of the busiest calendar months, with the World Rackets Doubles and the Invitation Singles, neatly sandwiching the Real Tennis British Open. It was a story of two world champions, with Jamie Stout adding the Doubles crown with partner Jonathan Larken; and then Camden Riviere swept all before him in the Open Singles and Doubles, with partner Tim Chisholm. A great effort by Chris Chapmen to reach his first Singles final. One other name to note is Tom Billings, who captured the Invitation and the Amateur Singles.

Some momentous news in Real Tennis as our sponsorship arrangements with Neptune will draw to a close at the end of the season; but what a magnificent eight years it has been. A huge amount has been achieved in the period, including transformation of the British Open into the event it is today, and also encouraging the sport at grass roots, both boys and girls. In our second year of Brown Advisory sponsoring Rackets, we have seen further growth in the game with the usual packed house for the National Schools Championships.

I was also delighted to see the Rackets court at BRNC, Dartmouth open once again. A massive effort by Luke Danby, in particular; the South Hams is back on the map.

Finally - Gift Aid. We currently have about 20% returns from the membership which means we will claim about £5,000 (the good news) but will leave £20,000 unclaimed with HMRC. If you haven't returned your Gift Aid form, please help us to help you. [Click here for a form](#)

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## British Junior Open Singles Championship 2016

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Over 50 youngsters from many different clubs around the country plus a large contingent from France and America competed over three days in the top junior event of the year. The finals were all held on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> in front of a large crowd of parents and supporters. Overseas juniors dominated the older age groups with Victor Lethulier from France winning the under 16s and Erik Barker winning the under 18s in an all American final.



U18 Erik beat Noah (Washington DC) 6/5 6/4



U14 winner - William (Seacourt)

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*Girls Plate U12 Olivia beat Martha (both Seacourt)*

## Over 60 Amateur Doubles



*Paul Weaver, Duncan Colquhoun, Richard Moore, John Prens*

A pre-qualifying group saw Ian Barry/Andrew Johnson squeeze past Mac Bailey/John Deere and Bob Compton/Peter Mason (the latter in a very close encounter 8-5). They played with honour in the main competition, finally losing to Paterson/Bryant in a pleasing match. Paterson/Bryant finally lost to Dean/Shaw-Hamilton in the final repechage stage.

Early matches in the main event saw the three top seeds (holders Dean/Shaw-Hamilton, Prens/Moore and Weaver/Colquhoun) qualify

comfortably, though Dean/Shaw-Hamilton then just lost to Prens/Moore 6/8 in a very tight match to reverse last year's score. Newby/Bebb lost to Weaver/Colquhoun but then battled through the repechage, just pipping Stefanovicz/Colegrave 6/5 in an epic encounter to reach the semi-final, where they fell to Prens/Moore in a highly respectable 7/3 as (perhaps) fatigue played its part.

Colegrave/Stefanovicz also battled through the repechage, beating Danby/Griffith-Jones 6/2 then Deere/Cattermull in an exciting 6/4.

Paul Weaver and Duncan Colquhoun beat John Prens and Richard Moore 7/5 in the final, though at 5-5 it was very finely balanced. With Prens's all-court presence, Moore's solid serving and gallery defence kept them in the game until the very death, when Colquhoun's steadiness under pressure allowed Weaver's high-voltage attack to tip the scales in the last two games and the day, starting at 0900, finally finishing at 2030.



By Malcolm Thorp

The tournament was ably won for the second consecutive year by the LRTA represented this time by the talented pairing of Izzy Candy and Evelyn Fleming. Very well done to them both. They will now have to fight over who displays the lovely silver cup on their mantelpiece! Also very well done to the semi-finalists of the LOUITS (last year's winners when representing the LRTA) and the Old Malvernians, and the other finalists.

Many thanks to generous hosts – the Friends of Hardwick House. All were most impressed with the court improvements at the club, confirming it as one of the best courts on which to play our great game.

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*Jon Speirs; Isabel Candy; Evelyn Fleming; Andrew Keeley.*

## Inaugural Match - HAC vs Queen's Club

The HAC Tennis and Rackets Club played their first match of the season against a strong Queens Club side at the site of the 1908 Olympic Games Real Tennis.



*Simon Puddick (2 Sqn), Alexander Anderson (Sig), Sidney Yankson (Gn Trp),*

*Jeremy Norman, Queen's Players (Jon Halse, Tony Penny)*

## Noel Bruce

2016 saw a revised Cheltenham first pair of Richard Owen and Alex Duncliffe-Vines ease into the final after a six game tussle with Wellington in the semi-finals. Their determination overcame their valiant opponents, James Coyne and James Fuller,

from 2 games all to win 4-2. The other semi-final saw the long established pair, Alex Titchener-Barrett and Charlie Danby, lose out to Winchester, Christian Portz and Mike Bailey, in another six game thriller which could have gone either way.



*Alex Duncliffe-Vines and Richard Owen with James Coyne*

The final started well, with all four players already striking the ball well, although some early season inaccuracy created the occasional unforced error. It was Winchester who fought through to take the first game 15/11 and take an early lead. The second game was similarly closely balanced, although Winchester maintained the advantage reaching game ball, but the point was missed and ADV served to level and force a set to three. However, a superb Portz return won back the serve and Bailey served out the game without loss, to give Winchester a two game lead.

The third game was more of the same, with Winchester nudging ahead at the business end of the game to take what seemed to be a winning three game lead. At 12-10 in the fourth, the game did appear to be edging near to its conclusion and the Winchester support was ever more expectant. But Owen and ADV dug deep into their reserves, winning back the serve and then serving out the game to close the deficit.

Into game five and all four players were honing their shot-making, but now it was Cheltenham in the ascendency, with Owen hitting straight winners deep into the corners to edge ahead. A close game again, but the momentum was turning, with the Cheltenham pair serving superbly to take the vital points. The holders turned the screw in the sixth, as Bailey struggled with heavy legs, although Portz covered an ever-increasing percentage of the



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court to try and keep the game alive. But now Cheltenham were selecting their shots well and the game was won at a canter, to level the match at 3-all.

The final game was sadly quite one-sided as Cheltenham despatched their worthy opponents, and not a real reflection on an extremely tight contest. James Coyne presented Cheltenham with the prestigious trophy, which will return to Gloucestershire for a second consecutive year. He thanked marker, Steve Tulley, and referee, Andrew Lyons, for their close control of the match and to Alastair Gourlay for coercing the usual suspects back onto court after the summer break. A final word of thanks to the Rackets Patrons, whose generous support is keeping the non-sponsored tournaments running.

## Category B Hyde

### The 10-14s

Zak Eadle (the number one seed) reigned victorious in the final of the 10-14s after defeating the home professional Ben Ronaldson down at the Hyde Real Tennis Club 6/5 6/2.



Zak Eadle

Zak had had a tough match with Josh Smith in the semi-finals, who in turn had seen off Tom Bomford in relatively short order in the quarter finals. Ben had started the tournament off strong with a comfortable victory in the quarter-finals against John Prens, but was gradually slowing as the weekend progressed, so by the time the finals were reached Zak found himself down 2-5 in the first set, but flew to victory from there on.

### The 15-19s

A late bout of food poisoning saw off Jules Camp as a challenger, so the underdog to the tournament Chris Aley received a late bye to the semi-finals. Simon Barker managed to win his quarters convincingly, but then had to pull out in the second set against Alex Evans in the semi-finals.

Chris Aley managed a surprise victory against Charlie Harries-Jones 6/0 6/4 in the semis in the battle of the lefties, and then underwent a marathon in the final against Alex Evans, who was serving gloriously in the first set, but emerged victorious 2/6 6/4 6/2. Chris had entered the tournament as a handicap 22, so was pleased to walk away with this title.



Chris Aley and Alex Evans

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## Category G Leamington

The British Open Category G tournament was held at Leamington Spa on the weekend of September 23. The tournament, open to members with handicaps of over 60 was split into two categories: 60+, played level, and 65+, played on Handicap.

Ray Longbottom, from the home court, took the 60+ title after a long battle with Richard Williams from Hatfield. Longbottom took the first set 6-5 and then trailed 0-4 in the second set but played steady, accurate tennis to make a terrific comeback to win 6-4.

In the 65+ competition Martin Bronstein, RTC, won his second open title, coming back from a 2-5 deficit to win 6-5 against Laurence Sampson of Leamington. Sampson, is a 22 year old theology student and Bronstein quipped that to win the title he had to beat Man and God.

In 2014 Bronstein, then aged 79, beat 21 year-old Ben Compton to win his first national title. Compton won the title in 2015 but did not compete this year.

## Over 50 Amateur Doubles



*David Watson & John Prenn beat Mark Devonald-Smith & Martin Richards 6/2 6/1*



*David Watson and John Prenn*

## Manchester Gold Racquet

With an enormous amount of entries, the presence of the World Champion and the World Doubles champions - the Manchester Gold Racquet 2016 was one of the most memorable in living memory. Two divisions of the singles tournament therefore operated in order to accommodate the large amount of competitors, meaning a feast of Rackets was on offer for all concerned.

Play began on Friday and continued until 2am on the Saturday morning, with the main shock of the first round draw coming in the shape of George Loup who defeated the 8th seed George Sandbach in two close games. The top 4 seeds of the doubles draw also negotiated the first round without any real hiccups, before Alex Duncliffe-Vines upset the seedings in the quarter-finals by defeating James Coyne 2-0.

Duncliffe-Vines continued his good form by claiming the first game from Tom Billings in the

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semi-final, however Billings' superior fitness carried him through to a 3-1 victory. On the other half of the draw Richard Owen also defeated Christian Portz 3-0 despite his opponent pushing him to the limit in 3 punishing games.

The New York pairing of Stout and Cipriano then defeated Coyne and Duncliffe-Vines 3-0 before Portz and the three time Gold Racquet winner Alex Titchener-Barrett defeated a tired Owen and Billings by the same scoreline to reach Sunday's final.

The final of the singles tournament was a superb contest between two of the rising stars of the game. Last year's winner Richard Owen explosively won the first two games by returning serve expertly and taking the ball early in the rallies. However, blisters hampered his progress in the third and fourth games with Billings finding a better length on his service and retrieving relentlessly. In the end, Billings romped away in the 5th game to claim his first Gold Racquet title to the delight of the packed Manchester gallery.

The doubles final had been eagerly anticipated and it did not disappoint with James Stout's power on the forehand side being defended superbly by Portz and Peter Cipriano more than holding his own in his first experience of a British tournament. The British pair managed to edge the first two games despite rallies of prolonged excellence before holding firm in the third game to claim victory in straight games.

The organiser of the tournament, Brendan Hegarty, was praised for ensuring that the event ran smoothly despite the abundance of entries. It was also particularly pleasing to see members from both New York and Detroit taking part in the tournament and it is hoped that the Gold Racquet next year will prove similarly successful.

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## Invitation Singles Rackets

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Sunday 27th November saw the Final of the 2016 Invitational Singles tournament being played. 1st Seed Tom Billings and 2nd Seed Richard Owen came through their respective semi-final with relative ease to set up an eagerly awaited final. The first game saw both players come out of the blocks fighting and it was nip tuck scoring for the majority. Tom was the first to really pull away with some excellent retrieving and clinical finishing. He continued this to close out the game and take a 1-0 lead in the match.



*Tom Billings Invitation Singles Champion*

The Second game, despite the score line, was close fought in parts. It was, however, rather dominated by Billings who found a venom in his serve and continued to retrieve unbelievably well. Owen hit some spectacular shots but couldn't capitalise when in the box. Billings took a 2-0 lead. The third game saw Billings well in his stride and despite Owen's best efforts Billings was too strong on the day and provided a well-rounded performance. He capitalised on



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the opportunities presented to him and in turn won the final three games to love - 15/9 15/6 15/3.

Thanks as ever to The Queen's Club for hosting the event, the T&RA for running it and Richard Owen for organising. A huge thank you to the Rackets Patrons for their generous support of this event and many other in the season.

## Ladies Amateur Rackets - Malvern

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*Lea Van der Zwalmen and Izzy Duncan*

Women's World Rackets champion Lea Van Der Zwalmen and BBC cricket commentator Isabelle Duncan, the favourites, underlined their dominance as they took the Neptune British Women's Rackets Doubles Championship at Malvern College with an entertaining final victory over second seeds Chey West and Karen Hird. The event attracted a record entry of 9 pairs just 6 years after the College staged the first national women's Rackets challenge, disproving the male traditionalists who insisted beforehand that rackets, the ancient forerunner of squash, was too explosive and dangerous for women to play.

Van Der Zwalmen and Duncan outhit Malvern College's top schoolgirl pair Lisette Royan and Ella Warren in the quarter-final, giving the youngsters a master-class in aggressive volleying and miraculous retrieving. Warren 16, a gifted tennis and hockey player and Royan, 17, a squash and badminton specialist had earlier put out the stylish Clifton College partnership of Rosie Watts and Hannah Lowe

in straight games. The favourites then battled hard to overcome national schools champion Georgie Willis and Eve Shenkman, who rallied grittily. Van Der Zwalmen's power and touch proved decisive however as the pairing eased through despite explosive hitting from their opponents.

In the other half of the draw, Chey West, Malvern College's Director of Girl's Sport, a former hockey international plus badminton international Karen Hird showed their extra experience as they powered to a dogged quarter-final win over India Deakin and Millie Broom, one of three pairs from Cheltenham College. They then took on the highly-fancied Wellingtonians Issy Thorneycroft and Lauren Gooding and fought back from an early deficit to reach the final 15-7 15-7. As expected the top seeds took an early lead thanks to Van De Zwalmen's speed, weight of shot and big-match experience. Exquisite touch-play from Hird and West's pick-ups and athleticism delighted the packed gallery but as Duncan found her stride, serving tightly to produce a string of unreturnable, skidding aces, the favourites moved further ahead, displaying impressive teamwork to record an emphatic win in three straight games. For Van Der Zwalmen it was a successful defence of the title she won last year with Chey West and gave Duncan her first national championship.

In the Plate final, India Blake and Rose Jones squeaked through a thrilling all-Cheltenham battle beating Martha Elliott and Georgie Baillie-Hamilton 15-7 18-13, all four players showing great promise for the future.

"I was delighted that the field of entrants more than doubled from last year," said the elated Duncan. "Malvern, Cheltenham, Clifton and Wellington College provided the bulk of the girls, with a senior presence from Queen's Club and Oxford University. I was lucky to partner Lea, the current world champion, to take us to the title. This all bodes well for the future of women's Rackets."

"It was a great day for the women's game," added Tom Newman, Malvern College's Master-in Charge of Rackets. "The standard this year was the highest ever in a women's event with a string of enthralling matches. Huge

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congratulations to Lea who showed just why she's the world champion – and to Isabelle on her first national rackets title. We're also extremely proud of our Malvern players: Chey leading the way and inspiring so many of the youngsters – and our top schoolgirl pair Lisette and Ella who are improving all the time and learned a lot from their matches against some of the top players in the world. This will stand them in good stead for the National Schools Championships in December."

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## Neptune British Open 2016

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**Singles** - Camden Riviere started strongly and established an early 4-0 lead, although Chris Chapman was playing much better than the scoreline suggested. The support from Hampton Court erupted when Chapman served out the fifth game, and put himself on the scoreboard. However, Riviere continued to recover awkward shots from the corners and hit his targets; winning the first set 6/1.

The second set was closer. Riviere drove on the lead 2-0, but then Chapman played a superb game to close to 1-2, serving tight to the back wall. Once again Riviere rattled off two more games, then one to Chapman, to leave the score at 4-2 and everything to play for. The players shared the next couple of game to 5-3, but it was once again Riviere with the answers, taking the set 6/3 and a critical two-set lead.

The third set saw Riviere master the Chapman serve and once again start to make in-roads towards the title. As Chapman moved less freely, the match edged nearer to its conclusion, eventually poised at 5-0. Riviere held match point but Chapman volleyed to depth off the tambour to save the point and then take the game - 1-5. However, it was a mere

respite, and Riviere soon closed out the set 6/1, and the match by three sets to love.

T&RA Chairman, David Watson, introduced Robert Warner from Neptune Investment Management to present the prizes. He praised the usual highly professional performance from marker Andrew Lyons; and gave huge congratulations to Tournament Director, Alistair Lumsden on another fine event. This was an incredible championship by Chris Chapman, who had beaten former World Champion, Rob Fahey, and holder Steve Virgona on the way to the final. Camden Riviere recaptured the title he won in 2014, playing remarkable shots at will, the mark of a true champion.



*Robert Warner, Cam Riviere, Chris Chapman, David Watson*

**Doubles Final** - The match certainly saved the best till last. The packed Dedans and Galleries witnessed a pulsating match of the highest quality as Bryn Sayers & Ricardo Smith took the match to World Champions, Tim Chisholm and Camden Riviere. The top seeds quickly settled into their rhythm to establish a 2-0 lead; but the Sayers/Smith partnership struck back and established their own two game lead, 4-2. Chisholm/Riviere fought back to level 4-all, then the pairs shared games to the inevitable 5-all. Sayers/Smith reached set point first and took the set at the first time of asking, 6/5. The second set started equally promisingly, with games shared until 2-1 to Sayers/Smith. However, now Chisholm/ Riviere hit their top form and despite the incredible retrievals, reeled off game after game, five in all, taking the set 6/2. The match was level and both pairs knew they had a real opportunity at the title.

More of the same in the third set as the pairs shared the first four games, although the fourth



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seeds always had their noses ahead. Now it was the turn of Sayers/Smith to break away to 4-2. However, this inspired their opponents to rekindle the magic of true world champions, slowly closing the gap and then the set, 6/4. Now was their opportunity as they were at last ahead. The fourth set saw their ambitions thwarted as Sayers/Smith took an early 2-0 lead. Back came Chisholm/Riviere to level, then 3-2 Sayers/Smith. As the spectators grew ever more animated, now Chisholm/Riviere opened up a convincing 5-3 lead. Back came the British pair to 4-5, and deuce in the next game. A sporting call yielded championship point and it wasn't wasted, 6/4.

The match was played in true sporting fashion, with a mixture of power, heavy cut and unbelievable retrieving. This was a true inspiration for many watching. David Watson introduced Richard Green of Neptune to present the prizes and Pol Roger champagne to the players. Congratulation also for young William Flynn, Grays' Young Player of the Year, who was awarded his prize racquet and then posed for photographs with the champions; a day he won't forget. Always good to see Andrew Lyons back at Queen's marking; and also yet another satisfying event for tournament Director, Alistair Lumsden.



*David Watson, Tim Chisholm, Camden Riviere, Ricardo Smith, Bryn Sayers, Richard Green of Neptune*

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## World Rackets Doubles Championship

The Champions started in tremendous form, quickly gaining the serve from Stout and surged into a 6-0 lead. Portz served all the points, hitting perfect length, with Titchener-Barrett running well to hit clean winners. Larken scored the Challenger's solitary point, but the ATB/Portz partnership relentlessly extended their lead to 9-1. The match then went through a brace of hands without score, before Stout acrobatically clawed back a point, then Larken another two. Portz responded, but could only manage a point to lead 10-4. Another point apiece from the Challengers gave them hope at 6-10, but they reckoned without the Portz serve. Stepping up, he reeled off point after point to 14-6, then into a tense rally to close out the game, with ARB's service still in hand. First game to the Champions, 15/6, closing the formidable gap.

The second game saw Portz secure the first three points, a run of eight points in total. Stout failed to score but now Larken was in the box, recovering the points with the help of a rare ATB error to reach 3-all, and then five further points, to match the Portz tally. Suddenly the Challengers were ahead 8-3. ATB and Portz were playing steadily, both scoring two points to close the game score to 7-8. But Larken wasn't finished, supported by Stout's incredible court coverage, he scored a further three points on his next hand to recover the lead to 11-7, although a diving ATB dislodged the Larken serve. Great length from the Portz serve and power from ATB once again saw the score close to 10-11. One further point from the Larken serve, with a silky winner from Stout, saw the score reach 12-10. Two points apiece saw the Champions reach game point, seeming impossible after Larken's opening service, but they failed to close out the game, with a spectacular Stout winner breaking their hearts. Stout now served superbly at this critical phase to reach 14-all, and send the game into a set to three. Larken opening their account but then

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the Champions punched the air as they recovered the serve. But their jubilation was short-lived as neither now scored at this critical stage; Stout didn't waste his opportunity, serving beautifully to close out the set to three, 17/14. With match score at one-all, only one more game was required to change the guard.



Stout was now in dominant form, methodically serving six opening points in the third game, his own eight point run in the match. Leading 6-0, it needed something special to change the match. The next pair of hands saw neither pair score, but the match play was outstanding, with all four players at the top of their game. ATB & Portz inched back to 2-6, but minutes later it was 10-2, as Larken continued to hit perfect length serves. The Challengers were now reading the Portz serve better and it was the fighting ATB who narrowed the gap to 3-10. A point apiece saw the margin increase to 12-3, once again scrambled back to 5-12. Stout then served out the remaining three points without reply, taking the decisive third game 15/5, and with it the World Championship.



As one great World Doubles Champion Pair steps down, another takes their place. Jamie Stout and Jonathan Larken announced their credentials by winning the 2015 British Open Doubles and have risen mercurially since then. They will be tough to beat, with magnificent understanding and teamwork in their quest to the summit.

## T&RA ANNUAL AWARDS

**Henry Johns Trophy 2016 winner - Louis Gordon.** Louis Gordon had a success on court (including the British Open) and improved as a player. Most importantly he had made substantial progress off court obtaining a merit in his CPD level one assessment (the only candidate to achieve this level). He had turned everything around, was very popular at Petworth and a great asset to the Club.

**The Greenwood Trophy (most improved player) Robert Shenkman,** with a mention to Zak Eadle, Charlie Braham and Robert Stewart. Robert Stewart is worthy of mention for those reducing higher handicaps. For lower handicaps, there were five contenders. Horatio Cary was the lowest (relative) mover and Robert Shenkman just pipped Charlie Braham. Ed Kay was very impressive. Between Robert and Zak: both were committed to the game but Robert just ahead by a whisker.

**The Baerlein Cup (best performance by an amateur). Ed Kay** had an impressive handicap reduction of 4.3 over the 12 month period and significant performances in both British Open (beat Conor Medlow, lost to Chris Chapman) and Amateur – (beat John Prens and Luke Danby, lost to Jamie Douglas) - and vital contributions towards CURTC/ Varsity.

**The Warburg Cup (best performance by a professional) Ben Taylor-Matthews** He was a finalist in the Australian open, quarter-finalist in British Open and currently British number one. He also reached the semi-final of the US Professional Singles in Newport.

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**The Latham Cup (professional award).** **James Stout** was confirmed having won everything he entered, is World Champion, and dominated the sport for the last 12/24 months. Stout won it last year but his dominance was considered complete.

**The Negretti Cup (amateur award).** Awarded to **Lea van der Zwalmen** as the clear winner holding the Ladies World Champion, Open Singles Champion, Amateur Doubles Champion. Like James Stout, she has dominated the sport for about the same period, and certainly the last 12 months. Special mention to ATB for his eighth straight Amateur Singles – a record and a remarkable achievement; and also Richard Owen who has had a remarkable season.

**The Renny Trophy (best improver) Richard Owen.** The stand-out candidate is Richard Owen, who relative to his ranking, has achieved a phenomenal points gain. Richard has beaten good players to achieve his points. Another good performance by ADV, last year's winner, demonstrated his continued progress.

**The Maltby Salver (most significant contribution by a volunteer) Alan Giddins.** Alan worked tirelessly on the Rackets sponsorship project, and is the inspiration behind the Rackets Patrons, bridging the gap and maintaining the T&RA tournaments at their current level of support. Alan was been confirmed as a T&RA Trustee.



*Table of Winners Louis Gordon, Robert Shenkman, Lea Van der Zwalmen, Richard Owen, James Stout*

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## Amateur Singles Championships



*Alex Titchener-Barrett, David Norman, Tom Billings*

Both players had played exceptionally well to reach the final, a finale which would test the resolve of both competitors. The opening exchanges were typically tentative, with the small advantage by Tom Billings being snuffed out by Alex Titchener-Barrett. However, Billings settled to open a 9-4 lead, six points in one hand. ATB couldn't add to his tally and slowly Billings closed in on the first game, reaching 14-4. ATB rallied but went down 15/6, to give Billings the early advantage.

The second game was equally tight, although Billings again just stayed ahead. At 5-6 ATB, Billing recovered to 9-6, then 10-6. Strong play by ATB yielded five points and an 11-10 lead. Again Billings rallied, and the game reached the inevitable 13-all and Billings called a set to five. Further tight exchanges but now Billings speed beat ATB's power to win 5-3 (18-16), and an important two game lead.

The third game was just as tight as the second; close early exchanges before Billings established a 9-5 lead. However, ATB fought



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back strongly to take a narrow 11-10 lead. But Billings seized on a rare mistake as ATB failed to put away a winner, scrambling round turning defence onto attack, closing to 14-11 and match point. ATB refused to give up, playing brave shots to level and take the game into set to three. ATB held the momentum to lead 2-0. Billings saved the game but ATB secured the set 3-1 (17-15), to bring himself back into the game.

Billings was not unnerved and won the early exchanges in the fourth game, brilliantly straightening the ball, to lead 4-1. ATB had not won the previous eight finals by chance and forced his way back into the game to trail 4-5. Billing now pounced, winning five points in the next pair of hands to lead 10-4. ATB could only manage one point in his next serve, to four by Billings, leaving the game at 14-5, and another match point. ATB brilliantly saved this, and another adding a brace of point; but the end was nigh. A relieved Billing stepped up to serve, forced ATB back to win the vital point. Final game 15/7 to Billings.

Both players were magnanimous in their praise for each other after David Norman has presented to Amateur Championship Bowl to a deserving Billings. Once again, thanks were recorded to the Rackets Patrons for their support of the amateur game.

## National Schools Championships

The National Schools Champions were in their second year of sponsorship by Brown Advisory. Four busy singles competitions along with the second year of the popular schoolgirl doubles.

### Results

Robin Geffen Cup: (Senior Girls) Cheltenham I (I. Blake & R. Jones) beat Cheltenham III (M. Broom & I. Deakin) 18/13 15/10

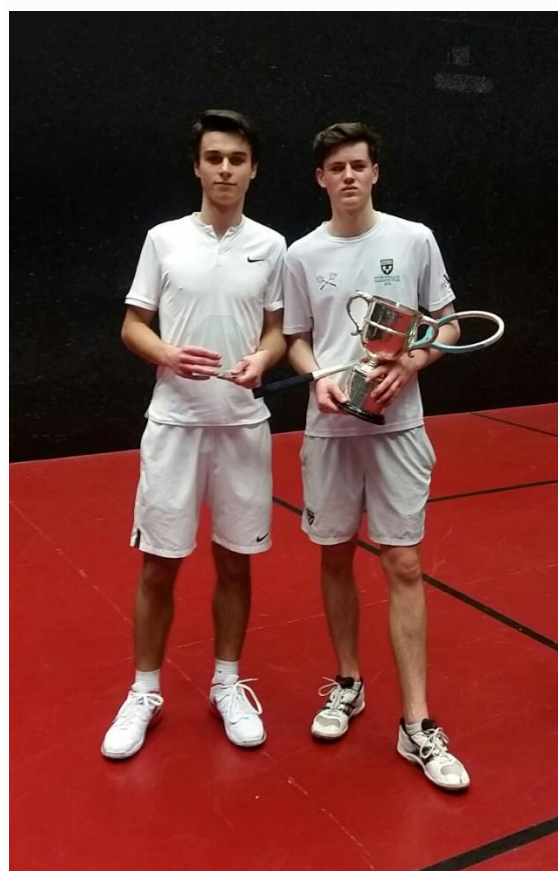
Alex Brodie Cup: (Junior Girls) Wellington (I Thorneycroft & L Gooding) beat Cheltenham (E. Drysdale & J. Carson) 15/0 15/5

Foster Cup: Hector Hardman (Eton) beat Nico Hughes (St Pauls) 15/4 13/16 15/8 15/12

Renny Cup: Billy Mead (Marlborough) beat Jack Davies (Wellington) 9/15 12/15 15/7 15/9 15/10

Inclendon-Webber Cup: J. O'Riordan (Tonbridge) beat O. Butcher (Cheltenham) 15/13 15/2 15/2

Jim Dear Cup: F. Bristow (Wellington) beat G. Genieser (Eton) 15/7 15/5



*Foster Cup Finalists*

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**Every good wish to all our members for a Happy Christmas and New Year**