



60th ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF The Veterans Squash Rackets Club of Great Britain

NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2023

2023 60th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

The GB Vets will celebrate their Diamond Jubilee in style with a number of extra events and regular fixtures given a boost.

Our larger team fixtures got off to an early start last December with the Scottish Masters winning the opening match against GBV in Carlisle. The Welsh Masters challenge is arranged for April 1st at Bridgend with games against England and Ireland Masters to follow later in the year.

A celebratory dinner has now been planned at Colet's on November 25th with Squash games

in the afternoon. The annual Festival of Squash follows on the next day at RAC Woodcote Park. Our tournament has been opened up to all comers with links on the GBV and ESM websites for entries. Iprosports have kindly agreed to sponsor this event. We anticipate a larger entry at St Albans. The Non-County and Doubles events should be popular this year and there are some very fine trophies to be won.

Players and players no longer, are all invited to get involved. Put yourself forward for matches (we need a range of abilities), or come along to

support our teams. You can attend the Dinner at Colet's or watch the Finals at St Albans and attendant AGM, Golfers should give the events at Surbiton and/or Windermere a try.

The Newsletters and Website will keep you up to date and do not miss General Sir David Leakey's (Black Rod) answers to 5 questions. The GB Vets are an all inclusive club and your support in this historic year will be much appreciated.

Ian Graham (Chair)

CLUB TOURNAMENT – ST. ALBANS

19-21 MAY (see page 3)

DINNER/DANCE – COLETS

25 NOVEMBER – Details to follow

FESTIVAL OF SQUASH – RAC EPSOM

26 NOVEMBER – Details to follow

+ MATCHES VS CLUBS, UNIVERSITIES & COUNTRIES!

+ GOLF WINDERMERE (8 MAY) & SURBITON (4 SEPTEMBER)

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DAVID LEAKEY - One Player, Five Questions

Interviewed by Aubrey Waddy

“You’ve just lost a five setter on a dodgy let (decision). You hit the wall with the butt of your racquet.” These are the words of long time GB Vets member Lieutenant General David Leakey, the former parliamentary Black Rod, describing the required technique for knocking on the door of the House of Commons. The occasion is the State Opening of Parliament. Black Rod’s ceremonial duty is to summon MPs to the Lords for the Monarch’s Speech.

The title “Black Rod” comes from the staff wielded by the holder of the position. In construction, the famous rod is not so far removed from the racquets some Vets Club members will distantly recall from the olden days of mighty wooden shafts, comically small heads and dense catgut strings. The rod is made of ebony and topped with a golden lion.

David held the post of the ‘Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod’ from 2011 to 2017. I was surprised to learn that to achieve the appointment it was not a question of being quietly summoned into some splendid office in the Palace of Westminster and nodded into the post. In seeking a role after retiring from the Army, David had simply responded to a newspaper ad spotted by his wife Shelagh.

With so much of parliament now televised, viewers may have heard earnest commentators intoning the details of David’s career, very much a military one after his degree in law at Cambridge University. Looking at the details, you wonder, how did he manage to play any squash at all after the Blue he won in a winning team against Oxford? Except perhaps while undertaking officer training at Sandhurst, where he nearly lost the sight of an eye to a ball hit by an Australian ‘hacker’, and with colleagues such as Chris Wilson, Robbie Robinson and Neil Stewart.

During the 1980s and 1990s David moved steadily through the Army ranks, commanding the Second Royal Tank Regiment and then increasingly significant operational units on UK, NATO and UN operations. In 1997 he was appointed Director of Military Operations at the MOD and then Chief of Staff in Northern Ireland. In 2005, as a

General, he commanded the EU and multinational security force in Bosnia. His final EU appointment was as Director General, with responsibility on behalf of the then 27 member states for intelligence assessments, security and defence policy, strategic operations planning, and management and control of military and civil operations. How would any squash marker below the rank of Field Marshall ever have dared give an unfavourable let decision to David on any occasion, let alone on a match ball?

Squash was always David’s favourite sport. He started with a cut-down racquet at the age of eight. At school and university he was also accomplished at hockey, rugby and cricket. Among his further sports he includes skiing, a regular Sunday activity for him with



Black Rod



David Leakey

Paddy Ashdown during his time in Bosnia. His love of squash meant that throughout life David would always find a way of getting regular competitive games. In the 1970s this included representing Hampshire. In the 1980s he played for the Army at Woolwich in the Kent league, while stationed in Bovington, the far side of the New Forest. That’s 157 miles each way according to Google Maps. As a Brigadier he would travel hundreds of miles from Paderborn to play in the German league. In the 1990s he ran the Southbank team in the Surrey Cup (note David’s reply to question 1). As a General in Brussels he played for the EU team in the Brussels Premier League.

David’s squash has not been restricted to Europe. He played in what may be the most Southerly courts in the world, in Patagonia, during “a strategic study in Colombia, Brazil and Argentina.” In his first game in Bogota, at 2,640 metres, he recalls struggling with the bounce of a normal pro ball. In the unexpected cultural hinterland of Buenos Aires he broke new personal ground, “the first time I’ve been kissed by a man!” During his Black Rod interview I doubt if he recounted the full details of his tour with a Combined Services team to Hong Kong, where his stay was extended by a whole week after he missed the return RAF flight on account of an important social enterprise!

David’s squash story ends, for the moment, in a familiar way. On leaving the Army, back home in Wiltshire, an obvious thought was to start entering Masters competitions. He beat the second seed John Goodrich in the first round of the first tournament he entered, the West of England in Bristol. A rare distinction for John, losing to Black Rod! Unfortunately, David immediately had to withdraw, having aggravated a longstanding knee problem. The orthopaedic advice was, specifically, to desist from squash. Perhaps though there’s hope that we might see David in GB Vets tournaments in the future. He keeps his hand in with a single annual game, for the Jesters against his old school, Sherborne. This may eventually undermine his knee to the extent that it has to be replaced. After which, as various members will confirm, a full squash life will beckon again!

1. *Who was the best player you ever played?*

Ross Norman, who zipped me (27 – 0 in old money) in a game lasting 42 exhausting minutes.

2. *Did squash help or hinder your military career?*

The sheer fun of playing squash and the explosive physical exertion has been a wonderful therapy and relief from the pressures of life, along with a lifetime of squash friendships both within and outside the Military. So yes, squash helped my career!

3. *Do you have any regrets about not having been able to focus more on squash?*

I have always avoided expressing regrets about things I haven’t done fully in my life because life is a balance of taking opportunities and picking

priorities. I would love to have been a better player, but to have focussed more on squash would have been at the expense of my family and professional life and the many other activities and sports which have given me so much pleasure. So, no regrets.

4. *What title would you give your autobiography?*

I am not sure I will ever write one but, if I do, it will be for my close family and won’t need a title.

Fifth question, chosen by David:

5. *If you have a knee replacement will you return to competitive squash?*

Yes!



TOURNAMENT DETAILS

A REMINDER...

- **DATE:** 19-21 MAY
- **VENUE:** NUFFIELD HEALTH, ST. ALBANS
- **ENTRY:** As it is our 60th Anniversary Year, to increase participation, we are inviting members of England Squash Masters to enter the singles events. They may enter the doubles but only if they join the club.
- **EVENTS:** Singles, Doubles & Mixed Doubles.
Members may enter a maximum of 3 events. There are also singles categories for players who have not played Inter County or represented their Country in the Home Internationals in their age group.
- **TO ENTER:** Go to our website www.gbvs.co.uk and in the middle of the 'GB Vets 2023 Championships' article click 'HERE' and follow instructions.
- **PAYMENT:** Is made through Stripe and must be made at the point of entry.
- **CLOSING DATE:** 30th APRIL
- **TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR:** Geoff Howes, 07836 335494

GET YOUR ENTRY IN NOW!

If you haven't already done so!

Brenda and Steve took their six-year-old son to the doctor...

With some hesitation, they explained that although their little angel appeared to be in good health, they were concerned about his rather small penis. After examining the child, the doctor confidently declared, *"Just feed him pancakes. That should solve the problem."*

The next morning when the boy arrived for breakfast, there was a large stack of warm pancakes in the middle of the table. *"Gee, Mum,"* he exclaimed, *"for me?"* *"Just take two,"* Brenda replied. *"The rest are for your father."*





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INTER CLUB MATCH REPORTS

ROEHAMPTON – 12 JANUARY 2023 – WON 3/2

ROEHAMPTON

1. Dave Newman beat
2. Andy Levy lost to
3. Nathan Tavares lost to
4. Andy Levy beat
5. Nick Charteris-Black & Andrew Wakely lost to

GB VETS

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Steve Jackson | 3/0 |
| Kevin Connors | 1/3 |
| David Parker | 0/3 |
| Mick Murray | 3/1 |
| Kim Ricks & Steve Wright | 1/3 |

HURLINGHAM – 9 MARCH 2023 – DRAW 2/2

On a cold, wet evening, after introductions, we were asked to decide from 8 main courses and 5 desserts what we would like to eat post match! I know of no other club that offers this level of hospitality – and the food was fantastic!

The match consisted of 3 singles and 1 doubles. 4 out of our 5 players played last year when we suffered a 5/0 defeat, so we were looking for revenge!

Fergus Burnett at No.1 was first on and had a relatively easy 3/0 victory whilst **Mick Murray** had a more difficult time but also came through a 3/0 winner.

Philip Courtenay-Luck battled for 5 evenly matched games but unfortunately, just as last year, failed at the final hurdle losing agonisingly 13/15 in the 5th.



GB Vets team

The dynamic duo of **Nigel Belle** and **David Parker** (well at least David was dynamic!) faced the same opponents as last year where we endured a 2/3 defeat. Unfortunately this year we lost 1/3 – 16/17, 12/15, 15/12, 11/15. So an honourable draw 2/2 although in games we won 9/6!

So having tucked into our delightful pre-arranged meal, a few drinks, much banter, a few words of thanks from the Match Manager, we all braved the still cold and wet evening and wended our way home already looking forward to our next encounter in 2024.

Nigel Belle, Match Manager

A Doctor was addressing a large audience in London...

“The material we put into our stomachs is enough to have killed most of us sitting here, years ago. Red meat is awful, soft drinks corrode your stomach, Chinese food is loaded with MSG. High fat diets can be disastrous, and none of us realises the long-term harm caused by germs in our drinking water. However, there is one thing that’s the most dangerous of all and we all have eaten or will eat it. Can anyone here tell me what food it is that causes the most grief and suffering for years after eating it?”

After several seconds of quiet, a 75 year old man in the front row raised his hand and softly said, *“Wedding Cake.”*





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APART FROM PLAYING SQUASH I ALSO... DO STATISTICS

Following on from Beth Dryhurst and her indoor rowing from the last newsletter, I was fortunate enough to play Sam in the East Masters. After the game Sam told me it was his 1004th career defeat and many more statistics which I found fascinating.

Sam has kept records since November 25th 1974 when he played his first match in Box 12 at Newton Abbott SC. At the recent Nationals, Sam's defeat to John Goodrich was his 1010th from 4244 match but still giving him a win rate of 76%.

Sam is a squash enthusiast of epic proportions. He has a car number plate SOU45H which with judicious screws looks like SQUASH even though the local Police were unimpressed and fined him £100 straight off!

The stats just keep coming: 74 matches against his most popular opponent: played on HMS Cambridge with mushrooms growing in the

front corners: only one ever conduct warning for calling himself "a nobby"!; has played at 289 different clubs.

Perhaps Sam's greatest claim to fame is his appearance in the Guinness Book of Records. The reason given: "The person, who in his



Sam Balsdon

lifetime has played the most competitive games of squash in the world.' It appeared on the website in 2009. Sam had to provide two visitors books (pre-computer) a spreadsheet and find two people who could swear affidavits in front of a solicitor that the details were correct.

Sam will keep playing and collecting his statistics. He has played on Unst the most northerly court in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland and Lowestoft, the most easterly. He has yet to play at Ventry, the most westerly and Jersey, the most southerly. Not forgetting Buxton S.C the highest.

In 2016 Sam played in Svalbard, the most northerly court in the world. The most southerly, Ushuaia, is also on the list.

Can any members suggest a player for this part of the newsletter? Please contact me at ipg49@btinternet.com or 07881823175.

Ian Graham, Chair

WHERE IS HE NOW? – BRIAN SAYER



Brian Sayer

The short answer is that Brian lives 4 doors away! I did not realise this until recently when I thought members may be interested in the subsequent lives of players they used to compete against, following the report on Malcolm Gilham in the last newsletter. Brian has been a member of GBV for 32 years and will celebrate 60 years at Middleton on Sea SC in 2023. Brian won the O60 title in 1999 and the O70's in 2009 also playing for England during that period. Much of Brian's early squash years was spent at St Georges Hill after a successful Rugby career playing scrum half for many Army sides. He loved playing Rugby and particularly enjoyed playing alongside international players including Brian Gabbitas, Phil Horrocks-Taylor and Kenny Scotland. Brian's day

job was in Operational Research including early Cybernetics in the City for several prestigious organisations including Arthur Anderson, Mars, Spillers and Price Waterhouse.

Brian returned to Tennis for many years at Middleton and he is also a formidable Bridge and Chess player of some distinction. After 3 replacement hips and approaching his 90th year in 2023, Brian has agreed to borrow a racketball bat to see if he would enjoy getting back on the court again.

Always busy, Brian still tutors A level and undergraduate students in Maths, Physics and Chemistry.

Ian Graham, Chair

JESTERS TOURNAMENT

VINTAGE



Eamonn Price (Left) & Alex Betts
Betts won 3/0

VENERABLES



Laurence Molke (Left) & Dermot Hurford
Hurford won 3/0

VULNERABLES



Peter Culver (Left) & Stuart Hardy
Hardy won 3/1

ALSO COMPETED - Richard Winter, James Barrington, Kevin Connors., Richard Mosley, Martin Miller, Nigel Belle, Chris Lowry, Harry Parkes, Maurice Lyons



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TOURNAMENT RESULTS

EAST REGIONAL – IPSWICH

13/15 JANUARY

6 WINNERS

MO50 Matthew Stephenson
MO65 Allen Barwise
MO70 John Goodrich
MO75 Barry Featherstone
WO45 Catherine Ruffle
WO50 Linda Pritchard

6 FINALISTS

MO55 Stephen McLoughlin
MO60 John Parkes
MO65 Ian Bradburn
MO70 Paul Reader
MO75 Aubrey Waddy
WO60 Sarah Howlett

10 SEMI-FINALISTS

Polly Woodward, Ian Graham
James Dubois, Nigel Bacon
Teejay Sogunro, Neil Cross
Jeremy Krzystyniak
Ray Burke MBE
Andy Murray

NATIONALS – EDGBASTON PRIORY

8/12 FEBRUARY

5 WINNERS

MO65 Allen Barwise
MO70 Terry Belshaw
MO75 Ian Ross
MO80 Adrian Wright
WO50 Linda Pritchard

4 FINALISTS

MO70 Ian Graham
MO75 Barry Featherstone
MO80 Nigel Belle
WO50 Sarah Parr

13 SEMI-FINALISTS

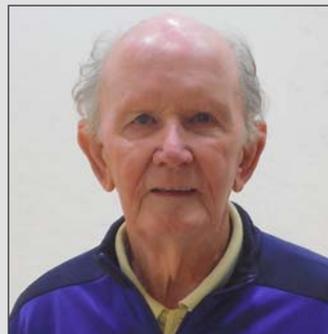
Eunice Bond, Lynne Davies
Mick McLaughlin, Neil Cross
Aubrey Waddy, John Parkes
John Goodrich, Stuart Hardy
Mark Woodliffe, Tim Burrell
Eamonn Price, Steve McLoughlin
Matthew Stephenson

NATIONAL OCTOGENARIANS!



Nigel Belle

I retired from running a small engineering company in 2009. I love gardening which is a full time job! I do an Adult Education course on furniture restoration and upholstery. Apart from doing a lot of skiing (spending the kids inheritance!) I am lucky enough to still play squash albeit a lot slower than even last year! Have been married to the lovely Jane for 54 years and have 3 wonderful children and 5 grandchildren.



Mick McLaughlin

I am doing OK health wise. I play squash a couple of times a week at Uxbridge Squash Club and Brunel University. I watch a lot of football, I have a flat on Hayling Island, so lots of travelling up and down. Am looking forward to some good warmer weather!



Adrian Wright

Regrettably I have recently been advised to retire from competitive squash as I have been diagnosed with heart failure. Up to now I play a little golf, am a lifelong cricket fan and like dabbling in metal and woodwork. I have lived in Diseworth for nearly 50 years, have been married to my wife Vivien for 60 years this November and have 3 wonderful children and 6 grandchildren. The friends and companionship that I have made and enjoyed during my squash career has been amazing.



Bev Boag

I'm fortunate to still be fairly active, playing squash in the leagues at Winchester once a week and playing fives once a week at Winchester College. I have been long retired, but continue as Chairman of my two engineering companies. Much time is spent with Rosmarie in the garden and dog walking daily in the New Forest. We are both looking forward to swimming again when the weather warms up.



GB VETS VS OXFORD UNIVERSITY

26TH JANUARY – A DRAW 6-6

The vets rolled up in Oxford for the second leg of the Varsity pair. After a hard fought win last year the matches with Oxford were tied 1-1 so there would be some bragging rights to be claimed this time – especially as the Vets had beaten a strong Cambridge outfit last October and were looking for a double. Clashes with County Closed events meant that the Vets were short of regular players at the top of the order but with some fresh faces coming in there was every reason to believe this would be a well matched line-up. The Oxford courts are next to the track where Roger Bannister ran his famous mile and the setting conveys a great history of the university's sporting endeavours. More pertinently for the day, the courts are furnished with highly efficient heating which easily overcame the freezing temperatures outside and ensured plenty of long rallies.

5. **Fergus Burnett** vs Trajan Halvorsen. A rematch of last year. Lots of long rallies pitting Fergus' control and placement against Trajan's raw speed. **Fergus won 3-1**

6. **Teejay Sogunro** vs Will Taylor. Teejay struggled to find a way past Will's long

reach and taking the ball short across the front didn't work. **Teejay lost 1-3**

7. **Stuart Hardy** vs Marcus Roberts. The ESM Chairman is a renowned competitor for whom losing is simply not to be contemplated. His control and court sense won the day. **Stuart won 3-1**

8. **Simon Evenden** vs Will Taylor. 2-0 down to the 6'8" Will. Change of strategy, mixed up his shots with plenty of reverse boasts and cross drops 2-2. The effort however was just a bit too much. **Simon lost 2-3**

9. **Steve Jackson** vs Tim Bennett. Tim specialises in getting everything back. Steve 1-2 down, took the 4th but lost 10-12 in the 5th. **Steve lost 2-3**

10. **Nick Sheppard** vs Alex Gunasekera. A see-saw match to 2-2 Nick raced to a 9-4 lead, but Alex got the serve back, 9-9, 10-10 but Nick's drops won the day. **Nick won 3-2**

11. **David Parker** vs Dylan. David wins a lot from soft drops from anywhere on the court but a hot court and a fast opponent, together with some control problems at critical times saw Dylan win

through in the end. **David lost 1-3**

12. **Kim Ricks** vs Alex Gunasekera. Alex enjoys running, Kim enjoys hitting the ball hard and deep. Kim took the first 2 Alex the second 2 before Kim reasserted control to take the 5th. **Kim won 3-2**

4 fresh faces, not yet confirmed GB Vets, played, Won 2 Lost 2.

Paul Boyle lost to Eliot Heywood 0-3

Adam Giles lost to James McCouat 2-3

Steve Rogers beat Sam Greenrod 3-1

Steve Dodridge beat Jeff ? 3-2

A great afternoon of squash with some high grade matches and all played in a good spirit. Many thanks go to the Oxford team and their President, Sam Greenrod, for their hospitality. Rooms in Wadham College had been arranged for Vets who stayed overnight and the students entertained the Vets with drinks in the College bar at Christ Church before going on for a meal in the evening. With one win apiece and now a draw it looks like we are going to be doing this again next year!

Nick Sheppard



5. Fergus Burnett (rt) & Trajan Halvorsen



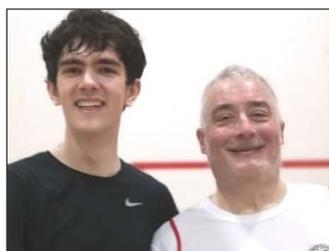
6. Teejay Sogunro (lt) & Will Taylor



8. Simon Evenden (lt) & Will Taylor



9. Steve Jackson (rt) & Tim Bennett



11. David Parker (rt) & Dylan



12. Kim Ricks (lt) & Alex Gunasekera



Steve Rogers (rt) & Sam Greenrod



Paul Boyle (rt) & Eliot Heywood



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NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome the following new members who have joined since the last Newsletter:

- Geoffrey Lees - Avenue Squash Club
- Linda Pritchard - Shrewsbury Squash Club
- Damian Jay - Shrewsbury Squash Club
- Paramjit Deol - Coolhurst, Uxbridge, B'ham Uni
- Rob Reid - Whitecross, Hereford

MEMBER INFO

Don't forget you can access all members details via our website:

www.gbvs.co.uk

Login: GBVETSSQUASH

Password: RACKET7288

ALL UPPER CASE

'LOST' MEMBERS

Surely someone must know the whereabouts of a 'lost' member below? If so please let the Hon. Sec. know.

Alf Barker
Tim Higginson
Robert McIntosh
Aubrey Smith

OBITUARY – ROBIN CHALMERS

Robin Chalmers, a member since 1995, died on 24th February after a long illness not helped by the Covid lockdown.

Robin was a Scottish international through the 'amateur' era of the 1970's/1980s. He was known for his capacity to play elegant squash, to make elegant dives for the ball when stretched, and to make elegant dives for the bar floor when his capacity to drink copiously was finally overcome. I enjoyed many club and international weekends with him at that time.

He did not play much veterans squash, but transferred his elegant swing to the golf course, which is where we were able to meet him in more recent years.

His funeral will take place on Tuesday 4th April at West Clandon. For further details please contact Jackie Chalmers. Jackie.chalmers@ntlworld.com

Philip Ayton.

60th ANNIVERSARY HANDBOOK

A special anniversary edition of the members handbook will be available at the finals of the Club tournament at St. Albans. Now is your last chance to let me have, by 1st April, any amendments to your details.

Nigel Belle
thebellsareringing@outlook.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	VENUE	CONTACT
1st April	vs Wales Masters	Bridgend	Ian Graham
19 April	Club Match	RAC Pall Mall	Nigel Belle
20 April	Club Match	Dorking	Nigel Belle
21 April	Club Match	Oxshott	Nigel Belle
8 May	Golf Day	Windermere	Allen Barwise
19-21 May	Club Finals	St. Albans	GB Vets website
6-11 June	British Open	Colets	ESM website
24 June	GB Vets vs ESM	Colets	Karen Hume
14-17 July	Gibraltar visit	TBA	Allen Barwise
4 September	Golf Day	Surbiton	Geoff Howes
29 Sept-1 Oct	North Regional	TBA	ESM website
5-9 October	Jersey Festival	Jersey	Allen Barwise
3-5 November	Midlands Regional	TBA	ESM website
25 November	GB Vets Dinner/Dance	Colets	See March Newsletter
26 November	Festival of Squash	RAC Epsom	Ian Graham
8-10 December	South Regional	TBA	ESM website

HAVE YOU ENTERED THE TOURNAMENT YET?