



# The Veterans Squash Rackets Club of Great Britain

## MINI NEWSLETTER – MAY 2021

### WE'RE NEARLY THERE!

Greetings to everybody as we gear up to play squash again, although some of us may remain in a lower gear for a while yet. Many of you will have already tried out some solo court time to refresh your memories and muscles. We can now look forward to May 17th when, if vaccines roll out remains high and infections continue to fall, we may enter the next phase allowing indoor sport in groups, bubbles and/or sides.

The GB Vets are already going through the gears with our fixture secretary Nick Sheppard arranging matches and thinking about tours. Geoff Howes has the tournament in hand with emails being sent out shortly.

I said in my first Newsletter that broadening the scope and reach of GB Vets is a priority



Ian Graham

and to this end offers of Golf Days in the Midlands and North West have been accepted as have Doubles events at Nottingham SC and a North West venue (tbc). Scotland, Ireland and Wales are on my 'to do' list!

We would like all members to play in GB Vets kit and the committee have decided to offer a 50% reduction on tops and shorts/skirts. This is great quality merchandise from Andy Murray at IPro Sports. To order on line see page 3 below. There are many good reasons to be optimistic on the squash front and I hope you enjoy reading the rest of this Newsletter.

**Ian Graham Chair GB Vets**



## BACK TO SQUASH TIMELINE

From 17 May \*

### Step 3 TBC

*A group of up to 6 people or two households can meet indoors.*

- Adults & juniors-modified version of squash.
- Coaching a group of up to six players (adults and juniors)
- Internal club Competition
- Indoor hospitality areas may open, including club bars and cafes.

From 21 June \*

### Step 4 TBC

*Social contact measures relaxed. households can meet indoors.*

- All play, competitions and coaching.
- All hospitality areas open without restriction.

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- **THE FIONA PEARSON INTERVIEW**
- **50% OFF ALL KIT – BUY NOW!**
- **MARK COWLEY'S INCREDIBLE STORY**



# The Veterans Squash Rackets Club of Great Britain

## FIONA PEARSON - One Player, Five Questions

Interviewed by Aubrey Waddy

You have to be a veteran by age, obviously, to become a member of GB Vets. Many are also veterans of the club itself. Fellow members become familiar friends and it's always a pleasure to catch up at club events, in the galleries or on the courts, joie de vivre vying with collagen fatigue. Some long term members join promptly on their threshold birthday, but happily there is a steady intake of players already well beyond. Fiona Pearson, who answers five questions about her squash life below, is a recent joiner, though she is now just into her sixties. At the time she qualified for the club she was too immersed in work, and only became a member in 2018, prompted by her long time friend Karen Hume.

Fiona rose through the business sector after a degree in electronic engineering, becoming Managing Director of two software companies before being recruited as Chief Executive of CliniSys, a clinical laboratory systems company. When she took over at CliniSys it was a small organisation serving the UK. Sixteen years later, she had increased revenues by a factor of thirty and established CliniSys as the

market leader across Europe. Her determination to make CliniSys a success was the main reason she dropped out of



Fiona Pearson

squash from 2006 to 2017.

Fiona started the game at the age of seventeen, encouraged by her Dad, who had a big hand in establishing the squash courts at Bromley Cricket Club in the boom of the 1970s. This was where she met Karen. They played many times in their twenties, with Fiona at that time usually the winner. Her career took her away from Kent, into Worcestershire, where she played for the county first team, Berkshire, and finally Surrey, where she is now based. In Surrey she reconnected with squash after a gap of more than a decade.

Apart from squash, Fiona's passions include skiing, golf and flying. With flying, she and her partner Rick have been hugely frustrated by lockdown. They recently acquired a light aircraft, and had plans to visit friends all over Europe. Both are 'Instrument Rated' pilots, which is the aeronautical equivalent of playing golf off scratch, in fog. With golf, Fiona is intent on returning her handicap to single figures. With squash, her enthusiasm shines through in the answers to these five questions.

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

Fiona is clear and specific on her strongest ever opponent. In the late eighties and early nineties she captained Camberley in the first division of the Surrey Cup. 'Richmond Town away' was a difficult fixture, in several respects, including the challenge of raising a team for the forthcoming drubbing. On one occasion Fiona had to promote herself from her usual number three position to first string, which led to the misfortune of an encounter with the formidable Scottish international, Senga Macfie. The brutalities of hi-ho scoring are plain in the result that Fiona quotes, "27-0"!

### 2. *What was your hardest or most memorable match?*

Fiona's first time back on court after her long lay off was not a tentative solo hit with one of the - to her - new-fangled racquets. It was a memorable game with the coach at West Byfleet, Neil Frankland. Fiona had found Neil via a simple Google search when she decided to start playing again. Squash being a small world, she discovered that at one time she used to play Neil's mother! In the game in question, Fiona remembers rediscovering the "sheer euphoria" of being back on a squash court. Neil apparently pitched the game just right, "we didn't rush", and the evidence is Fiona's obvious enthusiasm now. All credit to West Byfleet too, with its friendly set up and active leagues.

### 3. *What squash achievement are you most proud of?*

After a lot of reflection, Fiona gives her entry into squash at Birmingham University as her most satisfying achievement in the sport. This being the GB Vets newsletter, I'm tempted to say... so far. She had chosen Birmingham as a pre-eminent sports university, up there with mighty Loughborough. But strength in your chosen sport has a down side if you want to be successful at uni: the competition. After drawing a blank in hockey trials, Fiona not only made it onto the squash first team, but ended up as University Captain. She speaks

happily of the meals the team used to enjoy at away matches in the West Midlands!

### 4. *How does squash compare to your other interests?*

Fiona enormously appreciates the work-out you get from the mere hour of a game of squash, and the fun of team matches. Squash is so different from another of her passions, golf, which she loves "for the sheer torment". It's different again from flying and the freedom it gives "to visit Le Touquet for lunch"; and from skiing, "fantastic to be outside in winter, and very social". An interesting angle on the flying is the mental exhaustion that apparently follows the concentration needed for a significant trip. It sounds as though Fiona would be particularly safe to have as your pilot.

Fifth question, chosen by Fiona:

### 5. *Who is or has been your role model for squash?*

It's no surprise to learn that Fiona's role model in squash is Karen Hume. Despite sporadic contact after their Bromley days, Fiona and Karen remained firm friends and in 2018 Karen encouraged her to join GB Vets. The finals weekend that year took place at Colets. Fiona went along to support Karen and find out more about the club. On seeing Karen playing, she says, "I thought, blimey!" And then, "That's my objective!" She feels inspired and motivated by Karen's "speed and fitness and skill". You gain the impression that Karen will have to maintain her own very high standards to stay ahead if Fiona focuses on squash as much as on her various other passions.

With luck Fiona's happy story will remind other members that we can inspire former players to come back to the game and join GB Vets.



# The Veterans Squash Rackets Club of Great Britain



The Veterans Squash Rackets Club of Great Britain send their heartfelt condolences to The Queen and the Royal Family on the death of The Prince Phillip, who graciously wrote a letter for the forefront of both the 40th and 50th Anniversary books for the Club. The Prince Phillip was Patron to England Squash to which the Veterans Squash Club is affiliated.

**From: The Veterans Squash Rackets Club of Great Britain**

## 50% OFF ALL KIT!

Take advantage NOW of this fantastic offer and be smart for when squash returns.

Purchase through Iprosports and send a copy of the receipt or email a scanned copy to the Hon. Treasurer, Robert Smith, (details in Handbook and on our website) and he will reimburse your 50% through a Bank Transfer.

Go to [www.iprosports.co.uk](http://www.iprosports.co.uk) click on the 'Club Zone' scroll down and click on the GB Vets logo. Browse the range, go to checkout and then follow the on line instructions! This is a once in a lifetime offer!



**BUY NOW**  
Offer ends 31st December 2021

## 2021 CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS

Normally one of the most important highlights of the GB Vets squash year, the Championships have now not been played since March 2019. In an effort to complete this year's Championships by the end of 2021 we have tentatively booked the finals weekend at Colets for 27/28 November. The Tournament Director, Geoff Howes, will soon be emailing all members inviting them to enter. This all assumes of course that restrictions are lifted as per Step 4 of the Roadmap on 21st June and that the nation continues to return to normality.

## INTER CLUB FRIENDLY MATCHES

If Boris' Roadmap Step 4 comes to pass and all restrictions are lifted on 21st June theoretically matches could start soon after that date. However there is still a big question mark as to when Clubs are likely to welcome players from other Clubs back onto their courts. The Hon. Match Secretary, Nick Sheppard, is now actively canvassing Match Managers to ascertain answers to those questions. We of course are hoping for positive feedback from Clubs so that some fixtures can be arranged over the summer and early autumn months. **Watch this space!**





# The Veterans Squash Rackets Club of Great Britain

## MARK COWLEY'S incredible Covid story

**“Life is like a game of squash - you fight and you never give up. I always believed I could win. This is my journey so far, thank you to all my family and friends who have helped me on the way.”**

“On the 19th of March 2020 I got in touch with family and friends to let them know I had the Coronavirus and was self isolating. My condition was deteriorating and not able to keep food down and breathing was becoming difficult.

Covid was all over the news and my sons convinced me that I needed to go to hospital. They decided to call an ambulance and on the 4th of April I was taken to the North Middlesex hospital. My condition went downhill and doctors informed family that I needed to be put on a ventilator and due to bed shortages I was transferred out on the 23rd April to the Nightingale hospital.

My family had been informed that I may not make it as my kidneys and lungs were damaged, and it was 50/50. I was again transferred on the 3rd may to University College London Hospital for an operation to insert a

tracheostomy.

I was on the ventilator for 7 weeks to help with my recovery and my lungs collapsed twice due to Covid pneumonia. At this time I want to give a special mention to the Doctors, nurses and staff at UCLH. They set up video calls with family and friends to aid my recovery. The time I was there I got excellent care. The next stage of my journey was rehabilitation and physio.

At the end of August I went into a care home to try and improve my mobility and gain weight as I had lost 25 kilos, although I did gain some



Mark Cowley

muscle gain, I felt the best place to be was home.

After many meetings to access my needs at home Bridgette was busy with dealing with the NHS to help organise a wheelchair, special bed, oxygen supply, wall banisters etc to make the transition to home as easy as possible. Now with Bridgette by my side, home comforts and lots of home cooking, my recovery will be ongoing and have gained over 7 kilos thus far. My heart goes out to you all who have been there for me with your kind messages and support. Thank you Rob Draper for setting up the Facebook page. I am truly thankful and humble. My family have been my rock and I am very lucky to have them.

After 34 weeks and on the 13 November I was home”.

“Never give up, there’s always hope. God bless and thank you all”.

**Mark**

*Thank you Mark for sharing your horrendous story with us. I know I speak for all members in wishing you continued recovery and a return to excellent health very soon. Nigel Belle, Editor.*

## COURT SUBSTITUTE when needs must!

The lengths one member goes to keep in training! Andrew Beeston has taken his farmer’s neighbouring yard to keep playing, except when ‘grain stopped play!’



1. Grain stopped play



2. Sweep up with a view to resuming play



3. Andrew ready for action!



# The Veterans Squash Rackets Club of Great Britain

## POEM FOR TODAY

*Today I dared to let myself dream  
That the world will one day open again  
That the locks will loosen, the walls will fall,  
The doors will fly open and reunite us all*

*I dared to imagine the warmth of a cuddle  
A group of my friends all locked in a huddle  
I felt all the heartbeats, drumming with mine,  
I heard all the laughter, I tasted the wine*

*I thought of the feelings I've missed for long  
The room full of music, united by song.  
The freedom to roam, to plan and to meet  
To hold someone's hand, to meet, to greet.*

*Just for a moment I dared to dream of  
The flights I would board to the places I love.  
The moment those eyes would meet mine at the gate,  
The feeling of joy after so long a wait.*

*Today, I dared to let myself dream,  
That the life we once had would happen again.  
That we'd no longer fear the danger of air,  
That our lives would not depend on such care.*

*They say that we mustn't wish time away.  
But it's hard, my friend, when faced with a day  
So long in blank hours and so wiped of laughter,  
It's tempting to drift away to thereafter.*

*So yes, I dared to dream just a while,  
Of life coming back, it brought me a smile.  
One day I know, this will be in the past,  
And hugs will be free, again, at last.*

**Donna Ashworth**

## IS EXERCISE BAD FOR YOU?

All through this pandemic, 14 months +, I have been doing stretching exercises virtually every day to keep me reasonably fit so that I don't fall apart when I set foot in a squash court again.

A few weeks ago, for no apparent reason, I woke up with a raging pain in my left knee. To cut a long story short, after an x ray, and consultation with a surgeon, I have to have an arthroscopy to remove 'bits' floating about in the knee.

So, have I overdone the exercising, is it old age or just bad luck that I have to wait a further 6 weeks at least before I can return to the sport I love?

**Nigel Belle**

## FROM NEARLY 20 YEARS AGO

The 2002 England O60 team. Apart from David Tweedle the whole team are members of the GB Vets. Just as good looking now as they were in 2002!

David Tweedle (Res), George Aplin (No.4), Chris Stahl (No.1), Len Froggit (No.3)  
Adrian Wright (No.2), John Shaw (Res), Berge Kay (No.5)



Photo courtesy  
of Berge Kay

## COURT HEATING

Closely related to court heating is the issue of speed of ball. How many dots? The optimum ball for a match is clearly influenced by the court temperature. Also by the strength and ability of the players. The regrettable norm for older players, and children, is being unable to get the ball warm. We've all seen this in Vets matches: two and three shot rallies; only one tactic, go for a winner; no play off the back wall; no exercise; no need for stamina. Above all, no fun! The equivalent for pros would be playing with a punctured ball. Five set PSA and WPSA

matches would be over in twenty minutes. Renowned coaches such as Richard Millman and Nick Taylor passionately advocate faster balls for all but competent younger players.

For GB Vets I suggest standardising on single yellow dot balls. Any pair of players can agree on slower or faster balls if they wish.

If it's not hot it's the wrong dot!  
Aubrey Waddy.

What do you think?

Email the editor NOW!

## LAST CHANCE

To amend any of your details for the Members Handbook. Just let the Hon. Sec. know. The new edition will be printed and available by end June.

## TAKEN FROM A PARISH MAGAZINE

Correction: The following typo appeared in our last edition: Lunch will be gin at 12.15. Please correct to read '12 noon'.

## LONDON SQUASH FESTIVAL 2021

Ben Ford, squash player/coach well known around Kent Clubs, is running a festival over the weekend 3/4 July this year. Teams will be made up from one Club or a group of players. There is a move afoot for the GB Vets to enter a team. More info to follow or contact Nick Sheppard, contact details in Handbook and website.





# The Veterans Squash Rackets Club of Great Britain

## • NEWS • NEWS • MEMBERS • NEWS • NEWS •

### NEW MEMBERS

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

- Terry Belshaw** - Kendal
- Chris Nicholls** - Chichester
- Roger More** - Leamington & Ardencote
- Adam Gill** - Hove Fitness & Squash

### JOHN RAE

Whilst John died in October 2019 he must be remembered as one of those great gentlemen players who achieved 5 Regional wins. This he did all in one season 2016/17, a tremendous achievement for which he richly deserved receiving the England Squash Masters 'player of the year' award.



Receiving the award from Stuart Hardy

### WHEN I MET HRH

At an England Squash Anniversary dinner I was presented to the Prince Philip as Hon. Sec of the GB Vets Squash Club. However he thought I was a veterinary surgeon! I was not given the time to put him right so never knew whether it was his mischievous sense of humour or...

### MEMBER INFO

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

[www.gbvs.co.uk](http://www.gbvs.co.uk)

Login: **GBVETSSQUASH**

Password: **RACKET7288**

**ALL UPPER CASE!**

### BOB GRAY

It is with great sadness that we advise that Bob Gray passed away in March after a long battle with Parkinson's Disease. Bob was a stalwart of Surrey Squash. He played Surrey Cup, Vets and Vintage for Dorking where he was also Chairman of the Squash Committee for a number of years. He played for and captained Surrey in many National Inter-County competitions.

He joined the GB Vets in 2003. For over a decade he organised the Dorking side for the annual match against a GB Vets side. Always such fun! Our condolences to his wife Harriet.



### FORTHCOMING EVENTS - All TBC

ESM Regional	-	North	-	1-3 October 2021
ESM Regional	-	Midlands	-	5-7 November 2021
GB Vets Finals Weekend	-	Colets	-	27-28 November 2021
Masters British Open	-	Colets	-	8-12 December 2021
ESM Regional	-	East	-	14-16 January 2022
British Closed (Nationals)	-	?	-	9-13 February 2022
European Masters	-	Edinburgh	-	22-25 June 2022
World Masters	-	Poland	-	August 2022

### DID YOU KNOW...

There is more money being spent on breast implants and Viagra today than on Alzheimer's research. This means that by 2040 there should be a large elderly population with perky boobs and huge erections and absolutely no recollection of what to do with them.

### '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** **Geoffrey Hickson**
- Robert McIntosh** **Geoffrey Mortimer**
- Aubrey Smith** **David Taylor**

# STAY FIT, SAFE, HEALTHY AND HAPPY!