

## **Ron Swash (1930-2015)**

Born in South London Ron attended Dulwich Prep School, then Llandovery College when the family was evacuated to Wales during the war. After the war Ron went to Oundle School where he excelled in athletics and Fives among others.

On leaving Oundle Ron did his National Service, assigned initially to the Intelligence Corps, then posted to Trieste which was at that time governed by an Allied Military Government. There Ron learned Italian.

After the period of military service he went up to St. John's Oxford to read Modern Languages, later converting to a Law degree. He played Fives for Oxford in 1952 and 1953, and tennis for his college.

Over the next twenty years Ron had a variety of jobs in a number of different cities, including Cambridge where he started a life-long love of Real tennis, playing on all 43 courts in the world and later becoming Treasurer, then Chairman of the Royal Tennis Court. Eventually he moved back to London and became a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. He married in his forties and moved with his new family to Milton Keynes, where he had a spell of teaching Business Studies and finally took on the post of Executive Secretary of the Royal Meteorological Society.

In retirement Ron and Jenny moved to her village of Holford in Somerset. He soon became active in the local community and a valued member of the Holford Investment Club. With his brother Phil he ran a charity to help the elderly.

A member of the MCC, as well as of the Jesters and the RFA, Ron would travel up to Lord's for Test matches and to Taunton for County games. He also played golf occasionally.

Ron was scrupulously fair, self-deprecating, honourable, and always generous: he was a leading light in the campaign to build Fives courts at Oxford and was a significant donor to the new Cambridge courts.

Ron was effortlessly witty and at events connected with Fives always had a story to tell or to share, particularly with his Oxford contemporary Alastair Mackenzie.

Based on a eulogy spoken by Ron's son at funeral

# From The Royal Tennis Court, Autumn Newsletter 2015

## **RONALD SWASH (31/07/30-13/10/15)** **RTC treasurer 1976-80 and chairman 1980-88**

**R**onnie Swash was a pivotal figure soon after the 'Palace Revolution' of 1973. He was a fully qualified senior accountant and had spent his working life in industry, commerce, professional institutions and charities, so he made an excellent treasurer for the RTC. It was through his influence that Chris Ronaldson was employed in 1979.

Succeeding Henry Wollaston as chairman in 1980, he proved to be outstanding and oversaw the club's transition from backwater to prominence, from fewer than four bookings per day to being the busiest court in the world. Under his aegis the finances of the RTC went from near insolvency to a comfortable position, wherein much-needed improvements could be made to the court and premises and a second court was being contemplated.

In the days before the RTC had club rooms, Ronald's dining room in Ember Court Road was often used for committee meetings and stuffing the club newsletter. Fostering a spirit of harmony, he put together an excellent and efficient committee and developed the system of sub-committee reporting. He was always conscious of the good for tennis worldwide and, at a national level, served on the Tennis and Rackets Association and was captain of Britain's Bathurst Cup team in Australia in 1988.

Ronald was a very proficient doubles player, with a handicap of around 20; he won the prestigious National Pro-Am event in 1980. He always played with a towel around his neck, and was unfailingly courteous in victory and generous in defeat. Murray Glover, an old sparring partner, recalls that Ronald used to take Vernon Ely out

for drives from his old people's home.

Ronald was a kind and a caring friend and family man and, although he could be firm when necessary, it is hard to imagine that he had enemies. Jane Vaughan remembers him "as being so supportive and with great attention to detail. When I was helping with an RTC dinner he asked me to do the place-name cards – on the night, horror! I'd left them at home... Whereupon Ronald produced a spare set from his pocket."

David Best recalls that he used to suffer from Richard East's barracking when he made speeches at the club's annual dinners, which he took with humour and dignity.



*The photograph above was taken by Murray Glover and shows Ronald Swash (right) receiving the Field Trophy from the Marquis de Ruvigny, general manager at The Field magazine. In the eight years of Ronald's chairmanship, RTC won the trophy seven times*

He was also an enthusiastic fives player (a Rugby fives Blue at Oxford), played lawn tennis for Cambridge and held office in several sports clubs. Latterly, with two colleagues, he raised funds and arranged for the building of new fives courts at Oxford and subsequently for the restoration of the Thames Ditton Village Hall. He and his family started a Memorial Fund in the 1960s to help elderly people.

Ronald and his wife Jenny went to live in Holford, Somerset, about 20 years

ago. As Jenny's second husband, he was a wonderful father to her three children.

**Lesley Ronaldson**

***There is a celebration of Ronald's life at 2pm on Monday 2 November at Taunton Deane Crematorium in Somerset. Anyone who wishes to pay their respects to Ronald via a donation to The Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance can do so c/o Grandfield & Son Funeral Directors, Nether Stowey, Somerset, TA5 1HZ. (Tel: 01278 732219.)***