

The Dedanist δ



'The Dinner Match at Leamington' by Anthony Hobson RA (1982)

From The Editors

Welcome to the third edition of 'The Dedanist'. Whilst it is very pleasing to note that court usage at the various clubs seem to have returned to (and in some cases is exceeding) pre-pandemic levels, there is little to report other than news from the Academy, (Dedanists' match reports going directly to the website), so for this edition the section 'From the Marker's Box – on court activities' is dropped. We are, however, pleased that, for the first time, we are able to publish an article from a member of the Society in 'From behind the Grille', on the heretofore somewhat shadowy figure of the French tennis player Clergé, the first world champion of any sport, who held the title from 1740-1765. We look forward to other contributions to future editions of 'The Dedanist'.

*Martin Village
Alastair Robson*

Dates for your Diary...

Dedanists' fixtures March-June 2022

March

6 Pigeons (Wellington)
12 Hatfield
19 Seacourt

May

7/8 Bordeaux
11 Annual Tournament
& Dinner (Queen's)
15 Hyde
27 Jesters (Queens)

Jun

11 Cambridge
12 Prested
18 LRTA (Hardwick)

**If you wish to play in any fixture
Please contact Match Manager**

National fixtures

March

18-20
Cat D open (30-39) Hatfield
Cat E open (40-49) Wellington
Cat F open (50-59) Prested Hall
Cat G open (60+) Oratory

19-20

MCC Allcomers Lord's

April

2-3
O70 Singles/Doubles Wellington

May

7-8
Jesmond Dene Cup Jesmond Dene

26-29

King's Goblet (doubles h'cap) RTC

14-27

World Masters Paris/F'bleau/Bordeaux

27-29

MCC Gold Racquet Lord's



One of our most recent matches...The Dedanists v MCC which was held at Lords on 4th February 2022. To play in a match please contact the relevant match manager. Match manager contact details can all be found on the website www.dedanists.org under the tab of 'Fixtures & Matches'.

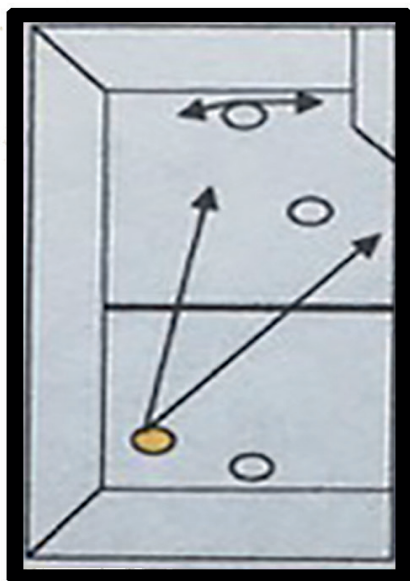
Wood's Words:

More pearls of wisdom from our Honorary Professional!

In Edition 1 Nick reacquainted us after the lockdown layoffs with the tactically useful areas of the court, and in Edition 2 he gave us advice on 'the fine art of serving.'

As the Dedanists play the doubles game in their fixtures, in this issue he offers advice on court positioning when at the receiving end. In the next issue, he will discuss positioning at the service end...

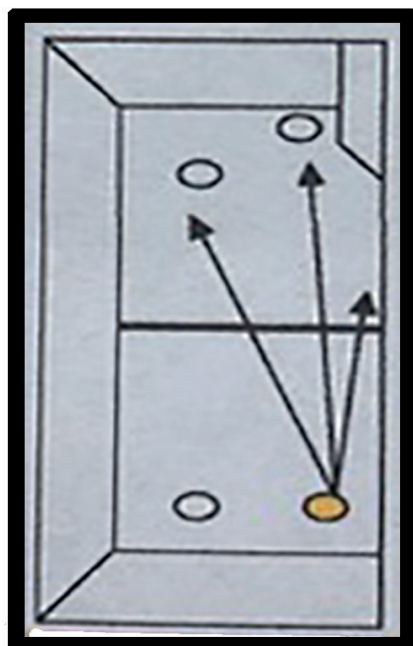
1



Positioning at the Hazard end in doubles

Positioning is everything! The worst thing you can do is stand still and hope the ball will come to you. Between the two of you, you must cover all possibilities when possible, and with good movement and positioning you'll find it a lot easier to defend at the hazard end of the court. Try to be in position before your opponents strike the ball. And, at a risk of repeating myself - if you keep your shots off the penthouse, your opponents will find it very difficult to find any openings/weaknesses in your defence.

2



In the first diagram the player highlighted at the service end can only reasonably hit cross-court, so the receivers must protect the tambour and the grille. The grille player advances as far forward as they can to deter the opponent hitting for the tambour, while their partner sweeps around behind.

In the second diagram, the player highlighted can play towards the tambour or the winning gallery. The grille player stays back and only worries about the ball coming directly towards them, while their partner takes the balls that are struck cross-court or come off the tambour.

From the Academy

Youth development



British U21/24 Singles & Doubles Championships

A Clean Sweep for William Flynn!

At just 19 years of age, Academy squad member, William Flynn won all three events at the U21/U24 Championships, held at MURTC. It was a great tournament for other Academy squad members too with Max Trueman, Ben Yorston, and Ollie Taylor all reaching finals.



RESULTS

U21 Final

W Flynn v M Trueman
6/5 6/3

U24 Final

W Flynn v B Yorston
6/1 6/4

U 24 Doubles

W Flynn & M Trueman v R Giddins & O Taylor
6/2 6/5



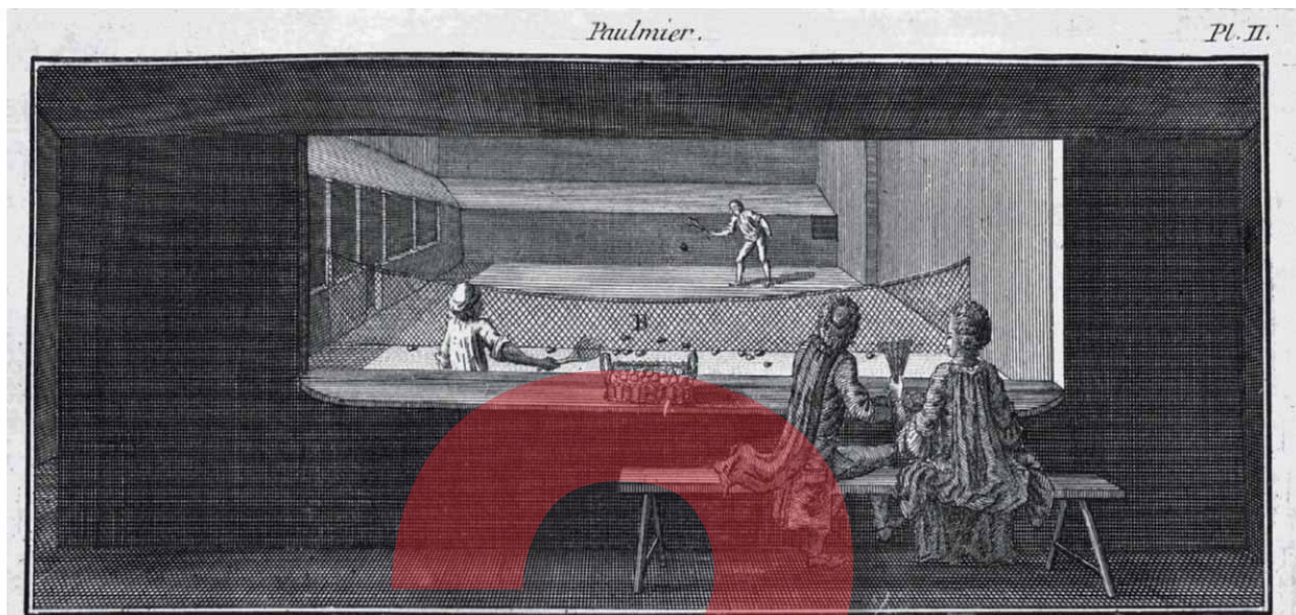
Coaching day for some of The Academy squad, together with Ben Taylor-Matthews, Dan Jones & Josh Farrall. Training was held at Queen's Club, on the 2nd January 2022.

From Behind the Grille

Articles mainly about the history of tennis

Real Life Begins Around 1740: Delving Into The Previously Untold Story Of Tennis Champion Clergé

Ian Harris



More A Question Of “Who?” Than “When?”

The oldest world championship asserted for any sport is the one for tennis. By “tennis”, I mean the sport we now call [real tennis, court tennis, royal tennis or jeu de paume](#).

This piece of amateur research was triggered, towards the end of 2021, by a casual enquiry by Carl Snitcher, a leading light in the [Dedanists](#) & [Real Champions](#) world, while we were on our way to play a match at Hampton Court Palace.

Carl was wondering whether the asserted date of 1740 for the first real tennis champion was accurate. Some had suggested it was not. I was the only amateur tennis historian Carl had to hand at that moment.

The answer to the exam question: “Did Clergé become the first tennis champion in precisely the year 1740?”, is a reasonably straightforward one; I shall answer it briefly in the next section of this piece.

But I realised, on engaging in this small piece of research, that, far more interesting than the numerical, “when?” question, is the more human query, “who on earth was this initial tennis champion Clergé?”

1740?

The earliest use of the specific date “1740” as the initial championship year is in [Julian Marshall's seminal work, published in 1878, The Annals Of Tennis](#):

Other great players of this time (1740- 1753) were Clergé, the elder Farolais, La Fosse, Barcellon (the father), and Barnéon. Clergé was the most remarkable...

p33

Subsequent history books, especially those that cite sources and references, use this 1740 date. Those that source/reference that date, including Marshall, cite [Traité sur la connoissance du royal jeu de paume et des principes qui sont relatifs aux différentes parties qu'on y joue par Manevieux \(1783\)](#) as their source. Marshall's words are mostly a decent translation of the Manevieux passage...

Paumiers qui acquirent, il y a trente ou quarante ans, une certaine réputation de force, furent les sieurs Clergé, Farolais pere, La Fosse, Barcelon pere & Barneon ; — le sieur Clergé étoit le plus vanté...

[P137](#)

...except in the matter of dates, where Manevieux is saying “these past thirty or forty years” rather than stating specific dates. Manevieux no doubt spent several years writing his amateur treatise.

There is other circumstantial evidence, which I’ll discuss later, which makes 1740 as good a guess as any for the start of the period of Clergé supremacy at tennis. More recent tennis historians, such as [Kathryn McNicoll \(The First & The Foremost A Gallery Of Champions\)](#) and [John Shneerson \(Real Tennis Today And Yesterday\)](#), have tended to use “circa 1740” or “1740s” as their base date.

As an early music lover, I am at home with the use of “circa” for dates derived from estimates based on best available evidence. I find the term “circa 1740” suitably precise yet hedged for the starting date of Clergé’s pre-eminence.

Who Was This Manévieux Fella?

Before we explore the story of Monsieur Clergé, I’d like to delve a little into the author, Manévieux, upon whose 1783 writings our knowledge of the early tennis champions is based.

He is almost certainly otherwise (or more completely) known as Louis-Claude Bruyset de Manévieux, who published a couple of other works, in particular a [eulogy to his great uncle, Jean André Soubry](#) (1703-1774), Treasurer of France in Lyon.

One of my bugbears is that we have no picture of Clergé, nor of Manévieux for that matter, but there is a contemporaneous portrait of Soubry, which will have to do in the “eye candy” department for the time being:



Portrait by Nicolas de Largillière, presumed to be Jean André Soubry, c1729

[The several works of Manévieux, including his tennis treatise, all appear to be available as free e-books through Googlebooks \(other sources of this free material are available\) – click here.](#)

In the 1783 tennis treatise, Monsieur Manévieux describes himself as an amateur. Whether he means amateur tennis player, writer or historian is unclear. Sounds like my kind of guy in any case.

Manévieux dedicates the treatise to [Le Comte D’Artois, who went on to become Charles X](#) after the Bourbon Restoration. As a youngster, Charles, Count of Artois was famous for his drinking, gambling and womanising (presumably he wasted the other 10% of his time), the fashionable rumour of the time was that Charles was having an affair with his sister-in-law, Marie-Antoinette. He famously won a bet with Marie-Antoinette that he could get his architect, [François-Joseph Bélanger](#), to design and build a party palace within three months. The result, at enormous expense, was the 1777 [Château de Bagatelle](#).



Charles, Count of Artois, painting attributed “after Antoine Callet”, c1775

Charles, Count of Artois was unusually keen on tennis for a French royal of his era. Thierry Bernard-Tambour (good name for a tennis historian, Tambour) in his article on 18th century royal paumiers, registers, from royal archives that that...

Janvier-Jacques [Charrier] became the King's paumier in 1763, also [paumier to the] Count of Artois and [ball making by] Etienne Edmond [Quillard] in 1765 for the Dauphin and the Count of Artois ...which means that Artois did play tennis from his infancy. The Manéviex dedication suggests that Charles retained an interest in the game into adulthood. Shneerson (pp76-77) provides some fascinating insights into Charles's extravagant behaviours and spending around the game. D'Artois apparently had a hissy-fit when spectators applauded his opponent in a public court. After that, he only wanted to play on private courts. Between 1780 and 1786 he had his architect, Belanger, build him a court on the Boulevard du Temple – as much for drinking, gambling and womanising as for watching/playing tennis [if the designs are anything to go by](#). That was probably the last pre-revolution court built in France.

Charles spent several years in England during his exile from France, during which time he is known to have played regularly at the James Street (Haymarket) court, spectators presumably having been warned not to cheer the future King of France's opponents.

But let us now return to Monsieur Clergé himself.

Wikipedia (Unusually Not) To The Rescue

My usual starting point for research of this kind is Wikipedia, but on this occasion, at the time of writing (December 2021), Wikipedia was having a bit of a shocker in the matter of our first named tennis champion, Monsieur Clergé.

[Here is Clergé's \(wafer thin\) Wikipedia entry, archived 26 December 2021.](#)

[Here is the Wikipedia entry for real tennis world champions, archived on the same date](#), which (wrongly) supposes our hero Clergé to be "Clergé the elder". That entry also wrongly supposes the great Masson who followed Clergé, to be Raymond Masson, whereas it is now firmly believed that [Antoine-Henri Masson \(1735-1793\) was the great Masson \(Nicholas Stogdon via The British Museum](#), Bernard-Tambour, McNicoll, Shneerson). In particular Bernard-Tambour clarifies that Raymond Masson was a less exalted player, born 1740, a cousin of the great Antoine-Henri.

By the time you get to read this piece, the Wikipedia entries might well have been improved, so here are links to the live entries:

["Clergé" live Wikipedia entry.](#)

["List of real tennis world champions" Wikipedia entry.](#)

So Who Was Clergé The Elder?

Having explained that our hero was the younger Clergé, I should explain what little we know about "Clergé The Elder".

Our older source is the nineteen volume [Journal of the Marquis de Dangeau, with the additions of the Duke of Saint-Simon – you can read or download the whole lot through this link.](#)



Philippe de Courcillon, Marquis de Dangeau (1638-1720) by Hyacinthe Rigaud

Parenthetically, it is amusing to note that [Louis de Rouvroy, The Duke of Saint-Simon](#) founded his own fame and reputation as a memoirist on the back of his annotations of Dangeau's memoirs, despite stating that Dangeau's writing was:

of an insipidity to make you sick.

Still, the period of the Dangeau memoirs; 1684-1720, covered the last 30+ years of The Sun King, Louis XIV's reign and the early years of the Louis XV era.

Here is an example from the autumn of 1685:

Sunday 4 November 1685, in Fontainebleau. – The King went to shoot; My lord [[Louis the Grand Dauphin](#)] did not go out all day; he made the good jeu de paume players play, and Jourdain played better than little Breton or little Saumur had ever played, as people say at that time.

I am not the first tennis historian to trawl those 19 volumes for nuggets of information about tennis, nor will I be the last. It is mostly pedestrian stuff, but I discern and

summarise the following:

- . tennis was on the whole falling from favour in royal circles during that period;
- . more or less only in the autumn, when the royals were at Fontainebleau and Versailles for the hunting season, does tennis feature at all in their lives;
- . younger members of the royal family would “have a go” – Louis the Grand Dauphin was still having an occasional hit in the earlier period of those diaries. For example, on 3 December 1686, he played on the three-day old new court at Versailles – the Grand Dauphin continued to play regularly there throughout the winter of 1686/87, but the novelty of playing there soon wore off for him;
- . there was more enthusiasm for watching professional players play than for having a hit themselves – the royals tended to watch if the weather was too poor for hunting and/or if they were entertaining visiting dignitaries, such as exiled English royals;
- . one of the Jourdain brothers was the pre-eminent player in the mid 1680s at least;
- . in October 1687 the professionals at Fontainebleau petitioned The Sun King for a licence to exhibit their skills in Paris; this he granted:

Thursday 9 October 1687, in Fontainebleau. – The King saw the good players of jeu de paume play, who asked that they be allowed to take money to see them play in Paris; it would earn them money, and apparently the king will allow them.

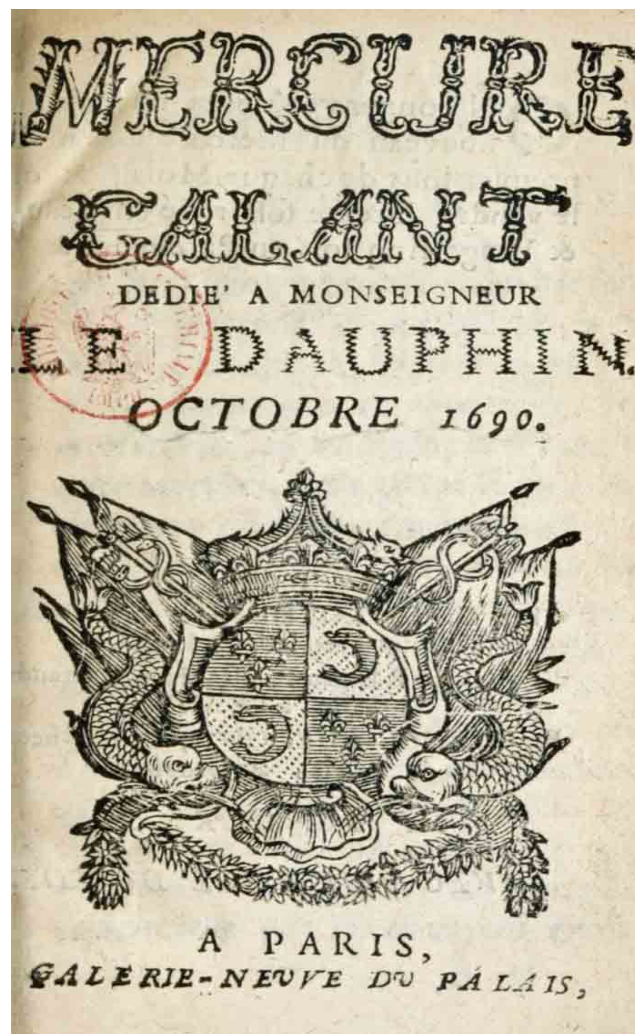
Sunday 26 October 1687, in Fontainebleau. – The king saw the good players of jeu de paume playing, and granted them the privilege they asked for; they will play twice a week in Paris, and will be displayed like the actors. They are five: the two Jourdains, le Pape, Clergé et Servo.

I believe the above mention of Clergé The Elder to be the only one by Dangeau himself. There is a further mention in the autumn of 1690 which comes from a Saint-Simon footnote, the detail presumably extracted from [Mercure](#):

Thursday 12 October 1690, in Fontainebleau. – The bad weather made it difficult for people to go hunting. – The king led the exiled royals [James II & Mary of Modena] of England to the tennis court, where the great players played (1).

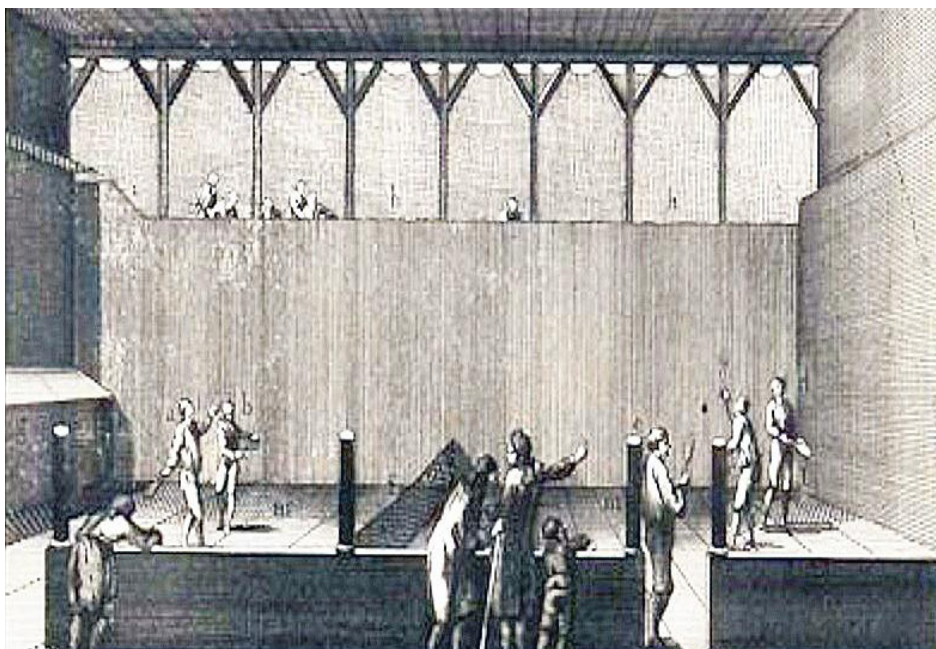
(1) “The weather was so bad in the afternoon that we could not go chasing the deer. So we only went to the game of jeu de paume, where a game between the Jourdain brothers and le Page, Clerget [sic] and Cerveaux against them, gave a lot of pleasure.” ([Mercure of October, p. 297](#))

From *Art du paumier-raquetier, et de la paume* by [François-Alexandre de Garsault](#), 1767



The great journalistic tradition of mis-spelling names goes back at least to the 17th century

Eagle-eyed lovers of tennis might have noticed that the account suggests that the exhibition match might have been three-a-side, or possibly three-against-two. Accounts from the 17th and 18th century, such as they are, suggest that such matches were quite common at that time – possibly even the norm for exhibition matches.



What Do We Know About The Initial Tennis Champion, Clergé The Younger?

The first thing to say is that there must have been an elder and younger Clergé, despite some histories suggesting that the Clergé referred to by Dangeau in 1687 and the Clergé referred to by Manéviex as being pre-eminent for some years from c1740 might have been one and the same person.

Even those of us who marvelled at the skills displayed at Lord's, until recently, by nonagenarians Robin Simpson and the late Major Jan Barnes, would admit that the giddy heights of skill described by Manéviex are probably only at their peak for a decade or two or (at a push) three.

In [The Annals Of Tennis](#), Julian Marshall suggests that Manéviex's Clergé is...

possibly a son, or grandson, of a player of the same name, mentioned above [by Dangeau]

...while in Real Tennis Today and Yesterday, John Shneerson is more resolute:

probably the grandson of the Clergé who played in front of Louis XIV.

I agree. The tennis business tended to be a family business, in those days to an even greater extent than it is today. Assuming our c1740 champion Clergé was the grandson of the Louis XIV petitioning and performing Clergé, it is probable that the father was also "in the business".

In truth, we know almost nothing about the early life of the younger Clergé.

[David Best's research into the Whitehall tennis courts](#) finds our hero employed there in 1736. As Kathryn McNicoll points out in [The First & The Foremost A Gallery Of Champions](#):

...it is possible that he [Clergé] taught [Frederick] the Prince of Wales to play the game

Right: Frederick, Prince Of Wales by Philip Mercier c1736

But it is Manéviex's rapturous report in [Traité sur la connoissance du royal jeu de paume et des principes qui sont relatifs aux différentes parties qu'on y joue](#) that led to Clergé being lauded as the champion c1740. Let's examine what M Manéviex had to say. These passages, pp 136-138, have been extracted and translated into English before, not least by Julian Marshall in 1878 – but - - here is my modern translation of them in full:

The Master Paumiers who acquired, over the past thirty or forty years, a certain strong reputation, were Messrs Clergé, Farolais (the father), La Fosse, Barcelon (the father) & Barneon. Mr Clergé was

the most extolled by the strength of his first stroke, which he executed perfectly. He was the man who played the doubles game best, taking only the shots he had to, according to the rules, bolstering & warning his second, strong or weak, to take the ball. Very different from other players, who tend to make their second useless, by hogging the whole game.

When Clergé had taken the serve [hazard end], he advanced to the last [winning] gallery, appearing to defend the galleries with volleys from boasts, cross-court forces and shots off the tambour, warning his second to play the others. On the service side, he would take his place in the line of four tiles [around chase one-and-two] near the [dedans] post, where he volleyed forehand or backhand the forces or boasts off the main wall. He preferred to allow the ball to land a chase than to move from this position & let his second play all the other shots.

Nobody, in a word, was nor will be held in higher regard, not only for the strength of his game, but also for the strength of his character – Mr Clergé was a totally honest paumier. There was no deceit to his game nor did he succumb to the commercial interests that sooner or later tend to prejudice the professional player; he never played for money.



It really does sound as though he was a great bloke, Clergé, as well as a great player.

We think we know just a little more about his later life.

In 1751, René Clergé received a [Paumier-Raquetier supernumerary patent, as evidenced in the French National Archives](#).

In 1767, the same René Clergé received [a patent of Paumier Raquetier du roi ... following the death of Monsieur Liebault](#).

Between those two notable/notarised events, we find our hero assisting [Louis Joseph, Prince of Condé](#) in putting the finishing touches on his jeu de paume court at Chantilly, in 1756/1757.



[Alexandre-François Caminade](#): Portrait of Louis Joseph de Bourbon, Prince of Condé

Modern travellers can stay at the [Auberge Du Jeu De Paume in Chantilly](#), where the former tennis court is now an exhibition and events hall.

There is more detail in the article [Chantilly et ses princes : des Lumières à la Révolution](#) by Stéphane Pannekoucke, including a full name for our hero:

Henri-René Clergé du Gillon

It was Clergé who put the finishing touches on that Chantilly jeu de paume and who also acted as paumier to Louis Joseph, Prince of Condé for some while after that:

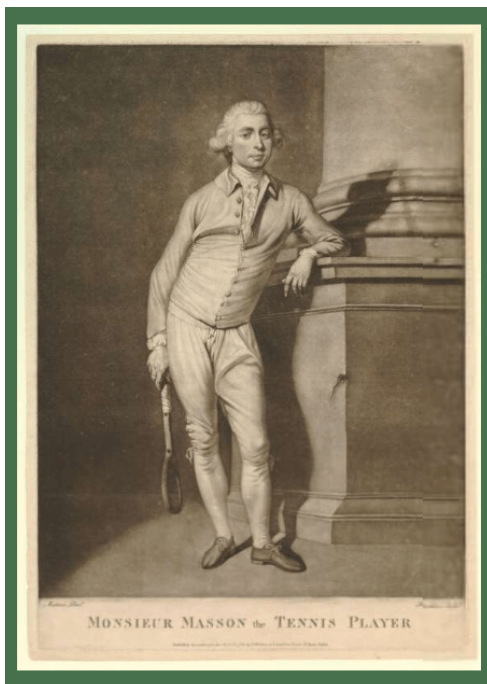
It is to Henri-René Clergé du Gillon, master paumier, that we entrust the regulatory finish of the room, to namely “the black painting of the Jeu de Paume three separate times”. Finally, we equip the room with nets and we buy different “utensils” needed for the game for nearly 1,500 pounds.

By that time, Guillaume Barcellon had been appointed paumier to King Louis XV, in 1753. Modern historians suggest that Clergé's supremacy as a player had probably waned by then and that Barcellon was the champion player for a dozen or so years.



[Guillaume Barcellon 1726-1790, by Etienne Loys, 1753. In Wimbledon Museum, this image borrowed from the Fontainebleau Jeu de Paume Circle on Facebook.](#)

We also know, based on an undated mention in Manévieux, that Antoine-Henri Masson at one time (probably after 1765, once his supremacy had been established) challenged and defeated Clergé and Charrier, having given them half-fifteen in handicap.



Left: [Antoine-Henri Masson 1735-1793](#), this image from [British Museum website](#)

[Thierry Bernard-Tambour](#) in his paper [Les maîtres paumiers du roi au XVIIIe siècle](#), explains that, once Louis XVI comes to the throne, more detail is kept in the royal accounts, which informs us that the following paumiers were on the royal books in 1775:

La Taille et La Taille the younger, Bunelle, Clergé, Farolet, Masson, Charrier and Barcellon

But, when Manévieux lists paumiers and their courts at the end of his 1783 treatise, the name Clergé is absent. Possibly he had retired, possibly he had died between 1775 and 1783.

There might now be enough evidence gathered in one place (I'm pretty sure this article is more comprehensive than anything previously published about Clergé) to enable a keen historian to dig deeper and uncover more.

Picture This: Henri-René Clergé du Gillon, aka “Clergé The Younger”

I mentioned earlier that it seems such a shame that we have no portrait of the first champion of tennis, the first sport to establish a continuous world championship.

We have images of Barcellon and Masson, who followed soon after Clergé The Younger, but none of our hero. Perhaps he eschewed pictorial publicity as well as pay for play.

So I decided to commission a fine artist – the only amateur fine artist I had to hand at that moment – to create an artist's impression of what Clergé The Younger might have looked like.

“Nobody was nor will be held in higher regard, not only for the strength of his game, but also for the strength of his character ”

There you have it – Clergé The Younger – he looks and sounds like such a fine chap.

Acknowledgements

With grateful thanks to the many encouraging and helpful people whose comments and ideas have shaped and are shaping my scribblings on tennis history. In particular thanks to Thierry Bernard-Tambour for additions and corrections (currently in process).



From Other Courts

Home

THE MILLENIUM COURT – *and after...*

The brief life of the Millenium Tennis Court, home of the Middlesex University Real Tennis Club, appears to be entering its terminal phase. Originally gifted by the Luck-Hille Foundation in 2000 ‘to make real tennis a more accessible sport’, the University’s Executive pronounced last December that ‘the long-term future of the club is not considered to be in the best interests of the University and the student body’, and that ‘it is no longer sustainable to devote so much space to real tennis’: (admittedly, it has a mere 50 student members from a university population of 20,000). The tenor of the pronouncement almost certainly means that the

studio), following negotiations in 2010 to prolong its lease. Furthermore, the dedans appears to have been looted recently of its fine oak refectory table, originally donated by Peter Luck-Hille, during its recent ‘refurb’ (see ‘The Dedanist’ *passim*). The remaining two tennis courts in London are very much less accessible – the tube journey to Hendon Central notwithstanding: Queen’s requires a substantial financial outlay for membership, and Lord’s requires 28 years anticipation of playing tennis there by becoming a member of MCC.

What to do? Stare into one’s beer and accept that it is the way of the world, probably, and start saving madly for the Queen’s entrance fee; it’s



Artist's illustration (from the T&RA website) of its standalone prefab court

4-year period of notice of its closure is unlikely to be rescinded.

It is a highly regrettable state of affairs, of course: it is a world-class tennis court, even after its facilities were much reduced – the changing rooms especially – when the bar area was given back to the University (who turned it into a dance

too late for Lord’s – you should have thought about MCC in 1994. Perhaps the Middlesex University Sports Pitches complex in Barnet could be persuaded to offer MURTC a site for a replacement court? After all, Bordeaux’s sports complex that is the home of the city’s football team, recently did just that for the

Bordeaux tennis club, after eight years of their looking for a new site, following the closure and redevelopment of the Merignac court; but with similar recent proposals in Edinburgh and Harrogate failing at the last minute, option one is probably the only one.

A modular court in a redundant church has been one suggestion (and not a bad one), except that the available churches currently for sale by the Church of England, are either rural (not much help) or Listed (not much help at all), and all are too small – the required floor dimensions are 110' x 38' 8", but there must be other suitable buildings.

What is a modular tennis court? The T&RA website explains all: in 2018, extensive research was carried out by a team of architects and other consultants led by Roger Pilgrim on behalf of the T&RA into the feasibility of building a stand-alone tennis court for c.£800,000; (£500,000

if merely a court within an existing building) – about half the “going rate” at the time (although construction costs, like everything else, have shot up in the last four years). Extensive laboratory testing indicated that their model of a modular prefabricated wooden court would closely reproduce the ‘bounce and feel’ of a traditional masonry court. The project progressed as far as finding a contractor willing to supply it in kit form, à la IKEA, but, like the two above-mentioned projects, it too foundered through lack of a site and money. (Further info on court development, with T&RA advice (and grants), can be found on www.tennisandrackets.com).

A final cautionary note: Haven Pell, who has been instrumental in successfully building two tennis courts in the U.S. over the past twenty years, advises: ‘If you have a notion to build a real tennis court, it is possible, if you lie down for a bit, the notion will pass. Breathing exercises can be most helpful.’

Away

In this edition we discuss the state of play – such as it is – regarding the two courts in Dublin and on Lambay Island. The Dublin court and its future featured briefly in last edition’s ‘Whispers in the Galleries’: the court has been a source of frustration to tennis players ever since it was bequeathed to the State in 1939 by Edward Guinness, Lord Iveagh, who expected it would remain in play. The Irish State immediately converted it for other uses, latterly by the Engineering Faculty of UCD, but when their campus moved in 2007 to Belfield, a Dublin suburb, the court became vacant. It’s an interesting building with an interior and floor of black Connemara marble: the 1890 world championship was held there.

Mike Bolton of the IRTA (whose obituary was on the T&RA website recently) tirelessly lobbied the Irish Government to restore it to play, but its future is uncertain.

More happily, Lambay Island’s bizarre roofless court – designed in the 1920s by Lutyens for Lambay’s owner, Lord Ravelstoke - with its recessed main wall with a penthouse and two tambours, is under severe scrutiny regarding restoration.

In July 2018, Dublin University CC played a cricket match v. MCC at Trinity’s elegant cricket ground (of which I couldn’t resist adding a photo). I had the bright idea of combining a day at the cricket with a visit to Lambay.



The Lambay court – galleries are lost but main wall penthouse supports and one tambour are (just) visible



College Park, TCD

The reply to my exploratory email was surprisingly enthusiastic, although it was pointed out that I would have to hire a boat to get over there, and tennis would require me to bring my own net and a set of balls, and a partner, and also to remove a considerable amount of shingle from the interior, deposited by the sea over the previous winter, before any play could commence...However, outbuildings were being converted to holiday lets, and this income stream, I was assured, would allow restoration of the court in due course. Hope springs eternal...

It was time for Plan 'B' - I watched the cricket, and decided I would spend the day originally scheduled for Lambay in Dublin in McDaid's (of which I couldn't resist adding a photo).



McDaid's interior, Harry Street, Dublin

Whispers in the Galleries

Gossip and tittle-tattle from the world of tennis

Recent attempts to give articles from The Dedanist a wider circulation have inexplicably been met with less than enthusiasm (to put it politely) by sports journalists approached.

It appears they have other more pressing interests (or more accurately only one), according to a recent article in Private Eye: Earlier this month The Sun allegedly dismissed its cricket correspondent, a veteran golf reporter and a rugby writer from its staff – despite England cricket being in intensive care after the Ashes series, and rugby's Six Nations about to kick off.

Although, it must be said, The Sun was not one of those papers The Dedanist had approached, sports journalists elsewhere also seem to confine their column inches to merely football – transfer speculations, activities of WAGS and 'interest in Jack Grealish's groin strain or similar', I was informed – which resulted in the articles we offered about 'the first beautiful game' being spiked.

The editors would be very pleased to hear from anyone who knows of a sports journalist whose interests extend to real tennis stories that have a wider appeal to the general public.

