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The grass courts offer a unique facility. Photo: Supplied.

## Rapaura eyes tennis ton

PETER JONES

A major milestone looms for Rapaura tennis - and Marlborough's iconic grass court club intends to celebrate in style.

Next year the club will have been located at their current address on Rapaura Rd for 100 years, prompting their pro-active committee to schedule a weekend of celebrations designed to mark the occasion. Three days in November, 2023, have been earmarked for the centenary celebrations.

It is proposed to hold a meet-and-greet at the club on Friday, November 24, followed by a raft of tennis-based activities the next day, including a centenary dinner in the evening, with a guest speaker. On Sunday, a formal ceremony will take place and a 100-year memorial unveiled.

The tennis club's grounds sit on the Rapaura Memorial Park, which was created on a slice of land donated by the Gifford family.

In October 1923, the Park was

opened and dedicated as a memorial to the young men from the district who had fought and lost their lives during the Boer War and World War 1. A plaque was added later to include those lost in World War 2. Those plaques have been incorporated on the gates which lead into the courts.

The tennis club has been based at the Memorial Park since the summer of 1923. Over the years it has evolved into a modern, six-court facility with its well-tended grass courts now becoming a rarity on the modern tennis scene.

Life member Ewen Robinson began work as groundsman at the club in 1948, earning half a crown a week from his grandfather for mowing the courts. He has been involved ever since and said that the club held a special place on the Marlborough, and national tennis scene.

"The club has a very long history," Ewen explained. "Before it came to its current home it had been going since the mid-1880s

on a couple of different sites in the district.

"There are less than half a dozen grass court clubs in the country nowadays," he said. "And I guess as time goes on there will be less still, so we are determined to carry on as we are, so we can become a real icon."

He also underlined the fact the club venue had a two-fold purpose, describing it as "a special place".

"Apart from hosting the tennis club, it is a RSA memorial site and that part will also be celebrated on centenary weekend. We will have a service on the Sunday morning to remember those guys who never came back."

Organisers are working hard on contacting past and present members, who are urged to register their interest as soon as possible with club captain Glen Cameron via e-mail at rapauratennisclub@gmail.com.

The club are also on the look out for old photos relating to the club's history which can be displayed at the centenary.



Marlborough player Joseph Gilhooly tosses up a lob in his singles match. Photo: Peter Jones.

## Tennis tyros make most of winter sun

PETER JONES

Marlborough's junior tennis players picked up a string of titles at the recent Winter Open junior champs played at the Forrest Tennis Centre.

Players did battle across four age groups - 10s, 12s, 14/16s and 16/18s - with local players bagging seven titles.

Mia Harris claimed the girls 12 singles crown, Ella Sowman took out the girls 14-16 singles, Leon Marusaki won the boys 14 singles while Luke Marusaki triumphed in the boys 16/18 division two singles. Joseph Gilhooly and his partner Henry Swinton-Robertson, from Hutt Valley, won the boys 10 doubles competition, with local pair-

ings Lincoln Hantz/Aiden Su and Ben and Henry Cameron second and third respectively.

Mia Harris and partner Elsa Pryor won the girls 10/12 doubles, with Valentina Kopusar second alongside Summer Robertson, while Dan Clarke and partner Stanley Vercoe, from the West Coast, prevailed in the 16/18 doubles.

Archer Keown and Oliver Heaney were second and third respectively in the boys 14 singles, Clarke runner-up in the boys 16/18 singles, Valentina Kopusar and Zoey She were second and third respectively in the girls 12 singles, Isobel O'Brien second in the girls 14/16 singles while Oliver Clarke and Max Sowman finished runner-up in the boys 12/14 doubles.

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