



newsletter

Minutes of the

2000 Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held at 7.30pm on Thursday 23 March and attended by Peter Smith, Eric Audsley, John Wheeler, George Collin, Tom and Judy Anderson, Peter and Elaine Newman, John Bevington, Tim Brewer, Rodney Ward, Bob Barker, Irene Davis, John Martin and Howard Bottomley.

1. Apologies for absence.

Received from Charles and Grace Howell, Mary Russell and Dorothy Craggs.

2. Minutes of 1999 AGM and matters arising.

The minutes of the 1999 AGM were accepted.

3. Reports.

Chairman: Peter Smith commented on the club's excellent performances in last season's competitions, winning the second division of the Inter Counties championship and also the Mary Rose club trophy

Secretary/Publicity: The report was circulated in the last newsletter. John Bevington described his chat on 3 Counties Radio with Toby Friedner (which has yet to generate any interest from the public) and the article in Silsoe News. This resulted in two enquiries which have been followed up.

Treasurer: Eric went through his report enclosed with the last newsletter. It was proposed to leave the level of subscription at 1999 levels and increase the WI subscription by 50p. The comments at last year's AGM re the level of subscription and the feeling that it might put off potential members had been debated in committee. Although the comments were not widely supported they were borne in mind when setting this year's subscription, which was proposed and carried.

Tournament Secretary: The report was enclosed with the last newsletter. Judy Anderson mentioned that the CA Tournament Committee's intention to raise the profile of the four regional championships. Wrest Park are hosting the Easterns this year and we may have to hire in sets of Barlow GT balls (the current standard ball for championship events).

Club Captain: Apart from our successes in the Inter Counties and the Mary Rose, the club suffered an early exit in the Inter Club at the hands of a strong Bowdon team, and got through the first round of the Longman Cup only to lose to Medway, the eventual winners. We failed to distinguish ourselves in the Beds/Herts League.

Groundsman: The weather during the 1999 season was kind with no excessive rain or drought. No special treatments were required and no scarifying was done during the playing season. In the autumn all the lawns were scarified E-W and lawns 2, 4 and 6 also scarified N-S as they contained significantly more thatch.

The modified verticut scarifier is on its last legs, but the leaf sweeper, after repairs and modifications, continues to do a good job. Half of the pile of cores left from the hollow tining in 1998 were shredded and mixed with 15 tons of sand and spread as a top dressing. A revised Year 4 plan will be submitted to the committee.

This year the lawns have already had a dose of moss killer and will shortly be receiving their ration of spring fertiliser. The lawns will need to be marked out, if only on a temporary basis, to establish their position prior to the St. George's Festival on April 23.

As ever, John and Pandora Wheeler are to be gratefully thanked for their unstinting efforts on and off the mower.

Development Officer: There was no recruitment activity last year, nor were there any formal coaching courses within the club. We did run a short course for the Bedford branch of the University of the Third Age but it did not result in any applications for membership.

4. Election of officers.

The elected officers for 2000 are:

Chairman: Peter Smith

Secretary: John Bevington

Treasurer: Eric Audsley

Club Captain: Howard Bottomley

CA Tournament Secretary: Eric Audsley

Club Tournament Secretary: Rod Ashwell

Groundsman: George Collin

Development: in abeyance for 2000

Publicity: John Bevington

Catering: Judy Anderson

EACF rep: George Collin

High Bisque rep: Peter Newman

WI rep: Dorothy Craggs (if still willing - not at meeting)

Any actions arising during the season which require a Development Officer will be dealt with by club members on an ad hoc basis.

5. Club activities for 2000

Apart from the usual club and CA tournaments we shall be hosting the CA Gold Coaching Course (May 6-7), the Eastern Championships (July 28-30), the Inter Counties Golf Croquet Championship (August 12-13) and the All England Handicap Area Final (Sept 9-10).

6. Coaching

We now have a copy of the current CA Coaching Manual, which, although it is planned to be revised in the near future, is a considerable improvement on the old one and worth reading. We have had one definite request for coaching and we shall also have to organise something for the two persons who have expressed interest in the club as a result of the article in Silsoe News. Howard expressed the view that one-ball croquet on a short lawn is a good way to bridge the gap between Golf and Association croquet and anyone doing any coaching might like to try this out.

George has offered to organise an examination for potential Assistant Referees. If you are interested in this please tick the box on the form for your subscription.

7. Catering

Eric mentioned that fewer players at tournaments were having lunch, preferring to bring their own. This is slightly worrying as we rely on the profit from catering to support club funds. It is not clear if they are declining in order to save money or because they don't like what is on offer. Nevertheless we shall have to consider the pricing policy for all items - for example, possibly charging for each cup of coffee instead of including it as part of an all-in price for the day.

Judy expressed the constant need for helpers, and there is a box on your subscription form for this. We will certainly need extra help for the various events we are staging this year over and above our normal tournament programme.

8. Any Other Business

■ **CA Childline Appeal:** The CA have proposed that clubs have an Open Day on May 7 on which they combine a recruiting drive with fund raising for Childline. Details of this have already appeared in the Gazette. May 7 is impractical as Wrest Park is hosting the CA Gold Coaching course. After some discussion it was suggested that we use the weekend of the Wrest Park Garden Show (May 27-29) for fundraising. The idea would be to give the public (who should be there in large numbers) a chance to pay to have a go in the same fashion as at the Craft Fair in August. We would then forward the proceeds to the appeal instead of retaining them for club funds. The snag is that some of the usual helpers will be away at the Inter Counties that weekend, so we will be looking for volunteers. If you can help please ring Peter Smith.

■ **Hoops:** John Bevington expressed the opinion that the plastic coating on a number of the hoops was in a bad state of repair and wondered whether we should consider stripping the hoops and repainting them. In fact the latest issue of the Gazette had a letter which described various methods of preparing hoops, and it was suggested that we await the outcome of the trials in progress before we commit ourselves to any large scale refurbishment. John Wheeler stressed the need to treat the hoops with care and to use the hoop racks - paint is often chipped off unnecessarily. Please bear this in mind.

■ **Honorary members:** In response to an enquiry as to how this category came into being it was explained that it was as a result of the practice of granting honorary status to retirees from the Institute.

■ **Club website:** Prompted by Howard's request to pursue the idea of a club website, we will write to the members who volunteered their services last time and ask for some proposals.

■ **Bedford School:** As Andrew Wilson has now retired we shall be writing to Bedford School to see if they intend to continue bringing pupils to Wrest Park.

■ **Leighton Buzzard CC Open Day:** Irene's new club is having an Open Day on May 6. Any members who can go along to assist with demonstrations or coaching would be extremely welcome. If you can help please ring Irene on 01525 210260.

■ **New Golf Croquet Rules:** The new version of the Laws, based on the WCF laws, has been finalised and copies will be available in the pavilion. Please use these laws during the coming season and pass on any comments to a member of the committee or directly to Bill Arliss c/o the Croquet Association.

■ **New scarifier:** As our existing scarifier cannot last much longer John Wheeler has generously offered to purchase a new scarifier for the club.

■ **Grass trolley:** Anyone who has had to drag a tarpaulin bearing large amounts of grass across to the composting area by the woodyard will have wondered if there was not a better way of doing things. If you know of a suitable vehicle or have an old chassis which could be modified for this purpose please let us know.

The meeting closed at about 10 o'clock. I should at this point thank Peter Newman for kindly taking the minutes at the start of the meeting as I arrived late.

National club competitions draw

Inter Club vs Harrow Oak or Sussex County by 19 July

Mary Rose vs Letchworth by 12 July

Longman Cup vs Northampton by end of June

Players please!

The new Beds & Herts League season starts on 13 May with a match against Letchworth, and we have a friendly against Oxford University at Wrest Park on 7 May. Anyone wanting to play in either of these matches should contact George Collin as soon as possible - it is much easier if players volunteer before the event as it saves all the telephone calls which have to be made to raise a team at the last minute.

New members evening - May 11

We will be having an introductory evening for new members (including any persons who have expressed an interest in joining the club) on Thursday May 11 from 5pm onwards. Anyone coming should park in the car park at the far end of the drive (don't drive in through the gates as they will be shut later on and your car will be locked in). Walk around the buildings at the far end of the drive, past the ramp, until you get to a large metal plate surrounded by railings which looks as though it might be a weighbridge but is in fact a tilting table to test vehicle stability on a slope. Opposite this is a blue gate with a bolt on the inside top left hand corner. Go through the gate, turn left and go as far as you can before then turning right. After a short while you will come to the gate into the park. Follow the path and you will come to the lawns.

Anyone who has expressed an interest in joining the club and who is on the mailing list but not yet a paid-up member will be receiving a temporary membership card which will allow free entry into the park at weekends - just go in through the house and show the card to the English Heritage staff. You might, for example, want to have a look at the play on 7 May, when we have the friendly against Oxford University, or on May 20-21 when we have our first handicap tournament of the season.

English Heritage events for 2000

April 23-24	St. George's Day Festival
May 27-29	Wrest Park Garden Show
June 11	Cotswold Morris Dancing
July 1-2	Wrest Park Food and Drink Fair Includes cookery demonstrations
July 8-9	The Soprano in Pink Georgian song and spinet music
August 5-6	The Wind in the Willows Performed by Livewire Theatre Co.
August 26-28	Wrest Park Craft Fair

For more information on these events ring EH on 01223 582700. Wrest Park is open from 10am to 6pm from April 1 until October 31 (closing at 5pm during October, last admissions one hour before closing at all times) and admission charges are £3.40, £2.60 (concs.) and £1.70 (under 16).

Diary

- We have been asked to participate in the Silsoe Lower School Summer Fayre on June 24. To quote: *"The Fayre Committee would love the Croquet Club to be involved in some way either by a central arena display or a competition or something the club would consider suitable for this type of event"*. I have replied to ask about the available space and surface. It might be a suitable event for the mini carpet. We should certainly try and support this, any ideas would be welcome.
- Irene Davis has booked the lawns for the Tuesday evenings of June 13 and August 8.

Quiz inquiries

Our team triumphed at the Village Hall but failed to retain the trophy for the quiz organised by the school. The questions in the latter were of an obscurity that left most teams resorting to guesswork. In contention throughout, we were comprehensively undone by the "runner" round, which consisted of about thirty real names of people better known under another and could be completed at leisure. The eventual winners scored about ten more in this round than their nearest challengers. What can one say?

News from the CA

We have had a letter from the Tournament Committee with a list of all the CA Sponsored Tournaments for the next three years. Wrest Park will be hosting the Selectors tournament in 2002 on the 6-8 September. The venues for the Juniors and Schoolboys (not Schools) Championships in 2001 and 2002, which we also bid for, remain undecided.

1999 Christmas Cracker and 2000 Easter Egg

The Christmas Cracker was won by John Wheeler, followed in order by George Collin, John Bevington, Tom Anderson, Howard Bottomley and Rod Ashwell. After extracting the individual performances from the doubles event the most successful player was Peter

Newman followed by Elaine Newman, Peter Smith and Mary Russell.

John Wheeler also won the Easter Egg, ahead of Howard and Rod. The weather was warm enough for George to don his shorts. Elaine won the plate. There were two rounds of pro-am doubles and five rounds of singles, and the players enjoyed an extended lunch courtesy of Howard and Judy Anderson

Daytime play

Just a reminder for those wishing to play during the day to register at the Institute and obtain a visitor's badge before they go down to the lawns. It is quite acceptable to drive through the gates and park by the hedge near the gate into the park if you want to save yourself a bit of a walk, but you should ask when the gates are locked in the evening so you don't find yourself shut in. If you intend playing until after the Institute has closed just leave your badge in the hut.

John Bevington

26 April 2000

P.S. If you haven't started playing yet - well, what are you waiting for? The lawns are marked out, the grass has been cut, so get out there and enjoy yourselves!