



newsletter

Match results

Mary Rose vs Bristol (home)

5 August

Won 6-0

Wrest Park	H'cap	Bristol	H'cap	WP score
Rod Ashwell	1	Frances Ransom	2½	abandoned
John Bevington	2	Marian Hilton	3½	
John Wheeler	2½	Bob Scott	4	+17
George Collin	2½	Peter Willoughby	4½	+22
Rod Ashwell	1	Frances Ransom	2½	+8
John Bevington	2	Marian Hilton	3½	+13
John Wheeler	2½	Peter Willoughby	4½	+16
George Collin	2½	Bob Scott	4	+16

Well, we won, but I don't remember too much about it. The doubles was lacklustre until Frances got on with things. We then recovered some ground but stopped for lunch, intending to resume after the singles if there was anything in it. Food and drink followed and we were all in a good humour. My theory is that it is not the alcohol alone that renders the advantage - after all, the host is likely to consume as much if not more than the guest. No, the advantage comes through the convivial spirit arising from a relaxed lunch, which undermines the guests's will to compete against the host.

So naturally we won all the afternoon singles, although Frances, not to be fooled by such tactics, had good chances before finally losing to Rod. And that's it, except to say that our next booking for lunch is a four from Nottingham, on 10 September.

Mary Rose vs Nottingham (home)

10 September

Lost 2-5

Wrest Park	H'cap	Nottingham	H'cap	WP score
Rod Ashwell	1	Beatrice McGlen	1	-17
John Bevington	2	Jed Allen	1	
John Wheeler	2½	Rick Davis	2	-1
George Collin	2½	Nick Hyne	1½	-17
Rod Ashwell	1	Beatrice McGlen	1	-2
John Bevington	2	Jed Allen	1	+12
John Wheeler	2½	Nick Hyne	1½	-13
George Collin	2½	Rick Davis	2	+13

Our hold on the trophy had been well and truly loosened by lunchtime when we were 0-3 down. Rod failed an angled hoop 5 and Beatrice calmly went to 4-back. We were rarely left a safe shot, and Jed played well, trying a delayed triple without success. George lost a tactical battle with Nick, but John's game resulted in a tense finale, with long hits-in matched by missed short shots. John and Rod watched the closing stages as George dished up lunch for the rest of the Nottingham team who couldn't wait any longer.

Revived and refreshed, John B got off to a flyer against Jed and made the most of some uncharacteristic misses. George accounted for Rick, but John's loss to

Nick assured our visitors of a place in the final. Rod and Beatrice had a gritty battle, Beatrice being well ahead for a long time but Rod caught up as she repeatedly tried to get through rover, and very nearly sneaked past.

Oh well, no Cheltenham visit this year. Never mind, it was a glorious day and we all enjoyed it.

Beds & Herts League vs Watford (away)

13 August

Drew 3-3

Wrest Park	H'cap	Watford	H'cap	WP score
George Collin	2½	Bill Gillott	8	+1T
Paul Sharrock	8	Mark Homan	10	
Peter Cox	18	Robert Bateson	14	+3T
Gordon Sampson	18	Adam Huby	12	
George Collin	2½	Bill Gillott	8	+4
Paul Sharrock	8	Mark Homan	10	-23
Peter Cox	18	Adam Huby	12	-16
Gordon Sampson	18	Robert Bateson	14	-1T

Off to Cassiobury Park, where, as reported in the Gazette, earlier this year the croquet club hut was razed to the ground, the hoops being the sole survivors. Wrest Park were fielding new signings Peter Cox and Gordon Sampson. Playing together and backed by the Five Bisques they recorded a win first time out against Adam and the old campaigner Robert. George and Paul eased home with a classic scoreline, and so the team went into lunch two up.

In the afternoon singles George won, Peter and Paul took flight only to crash, and Gordon found himself sailing in the uncharted waters of a sudden death ending and was unluckily wrecked on the reef of attendant rules and ramifications.

Beds & Herts League vs Meldreth (home)

9 September

Won 5-1

Wrest Park	H'cap	Meldreth	H'cap	WP score
John Bevington	2	Robert Skeen	12	+9T
Elaine Newman	24	Charles Tyzack	20	
Peter Smith	12	Angus Bell	14	+13T
Peter Newman	16	Stuart Warren	11	
John Bevington	2	Stuart Warren	11	+14
Peter Smith	12	Robert Skeen	12	-2T
Peter Newman	16	Angus Bell	14	+12T
Elaine Newman	24	Charles Tyzack	20	+5T

This was something of a first. Team captain George Collin is often hard put to raise a single team of four, yet on this sunny day we were able to put out two teams at once. John and Elaine got home after a peel, some judicious wiring and an increasing willingness by Elaine to hit the ball harder than she had previously felt necessary. The petermen combined to break open the Meldreth safe and give us a handy lead at lunch.

We then had some visitors - Stuart's sister and her husband, living nearby but never having been to Wrest

Park before, came to watch. Stuart and John took turns to explain the other's play. Elaine provided the star turn of the afternoon, winning her first league singles and finishing with a real flourish - already ahead when time was called she made 4-back, penult and rover on a 2-ball break with extravagant roll-ups, totally ignoring the opponent balls. Poor Charles was so nonplussed that on his last turn he roqueted his partner and then mis-hit the roll stroke so badly that neither ball went more than four feet and he almost fell over in his follow-through.

Beds & Herts League vs Enfield (away)

9 September

Lost 2-4

Wrest Park	H'cap	Enfield	H'cap	WP score
George Collin		Alan		won
Peter Cox		Wendy		
David Parsons		Keith Davis		lost
Tim Brewer		Ken Pickett		
George Collin		Keith Davis		lost
David Parsons		Alan		won
Tim Brewer		Ken Pickett		lost
Peter Cox		Wendy		lost

There appears to be a collective amnesia concerning the details of this match, so I can't add anything to what you can see above, except to say that it was fortunate indeed that the match was played when it was, given the ensuing week's petrol crisis.

Eastern Championships

28-30 July

David Maugham won the championship with a 3-0 win in the final against Phil Cordingley. Three triples, two +26, tell their own story. The lawns were moved, the grass was pared, in new ground were the hoops prepared. And there were 13 triples in 52 games, or 24%.

Maugham only lost one game, to Tony LeMoignan in the semi-final, and even after stuttering at 1-back in the decider he hit the lift confidently to finish. Jeremy Dyer won the Swiss with 8/10. The results have been posted on the CA website (www.croquet.org.uk).

Some of you will know that last year we lent a set of second-best balls out for a garden fête. One was lost, and the person responsible made amends by going into a now defunct Bedford sports shop and spending a tidy sum on a brand-new set of Jaques Eclipse balls as replacement. The box, containing the balls individually wrapped in plastic bags, lay undisturbed in the back hut.

On the Sunday, with the final due to be played on lawn 4, David Maugham made representations about the yellow ball which he claimed was somehow defective. Apparently this wasn't the only ball he was unhappy with. George Collin offered up some alternatives, but these too were frowned upon. Finally it was agreed to use the brand new set for the final, so here was this set of balls, one of the last of its kind, rescued from the relative ignominy of being split up to rescue existing sets to be sent out as a unit to make its debut in the final of a major championship. You can almost imagine the stories they told each other as they were packed away again, wondering on their next appearance.

Weather notes: floods on Friday, otherwise good. Four of the lawns were mown again on Friday evening, and

the others on the following evening. On the catering front many thanks are due to John Martin, who on Friday carved his home-cooked ham and dispensed other delicacies, unflustered by the fact that he was sharing the hut with all the players who huddled together balancing plates and glasses as while the rain poured down outside.

Inter Counties Golf Croquet Championships 12-13 August

Imagine the situation. You have volunteered to make up the numbers for a county's golf croquet team. You arrive on Saturday morning to find you are playing against Essex and your first match is a singles. Against Chris Clarke. That's what Eric Audsley had to contend with. John Wheeler, standing in on Sunday, had a rather easier time.

The following report was written by Bill Arliss and has been copied from the CA website:

After three years, the Kent stranglehold on the Inter Counties Golf Croquet Championship was broken by Essex during the weekend of 12/13 Aug at Wrest Park. However Essex did have use of the services of previous Association World Champion Chris Clarke to help them claim the title. The weather was very kind with glorious sunshine for the first day and only a slight rain shower during the presentation on the second day.

Eight counties took part in this first two-day format for the event and Manager Don Beck had set an all play all format followed by a similar format for the top and bottom fours. Each inter-county match comprised two singles and one doubles match with all competitors playing doubles and singles alternatively, singles and doubles roles being reversed when teams met again in the second stage. Time limits were set for each game and after time had been called only four further shots were allowed and as such tied games were a possible result.

After the first session on Sunday morning the four leading counties were Essex, Northumberland, Sussex and Kent with Lancashire, Bucks/Beds, Warwickshire and Oxford forming a second division. In the second stages Essex very quickly put themselves into an unassailable position with 2-1 wins over Northumberland and Sussex but this left the second position wide open for the remaining three counties. After the final round all three remaining counties had a total of six wins each and Kent, Northumberland and Sussex were declared joint second place.

The lack of rain prior to the event had produced some very fast lawns and with the very firm but not tight hoop settings, long range hoop running was very rare and a large majority of games went to time. Players rapidly recognised that tactics and extreme accuracy rather than power was the name of the game.

The two day format appeared to be very well received and will be repeated next year, hopefully with even more counties.

Editor's note: Our stint as hosts is over as next year's event will be at Southwick. I had intended adding my catering report, tentatively entitled A View from the Sink, but suffice to say that doing it yourself gives you untold

respect for all those who volunteer to do it the rest of the time. Apart from anything else, boiling two dozen eggs two evenings in a row puts you off eating one for a considerable time.

Advanced Tournament 19-20 August

Tony LeMoignan, who played in the Eastern Championships, found Wrest Park so much to his liking that he returned for the tournament and walked away with it, winning seven out of eight games (more triples) and losing only to manager Jon Watson. As at the Easterns there were floods on Friday, which meant setting the hoops had to be done early on Saturday morning. Mike Percival failed to turn up, leading to a hasty reshuffle.

In Tony's wake were Nick Evans with 5/6, who with Alan Edwards scored the most Lamb points. Just below Nick was Paul Swaffield from Edgbaston, whose last win was enough to take him down to scratch. Our visitors included Roger White from New Zealand, playing very elegantly with the longest of mallets and the most extended of backswings - one spectator wondered whether he had ever hit himself on the back of the head.

All England Handicap Area Final 9-10 September

Wrest Park's representative this year was Eric Audsley, who had beaten Peter Newman in the final of our club competition. He also managed the event, which was won by Roger Berkeley (4) from Nottingham with five wins in six games. The two runners-up who will accompany Roger to the final at Nottingham were Colin Hemming (4½) from Colchester and John Rusted (7) from Newport.

Handicap Tournament 15-17 September

The petrol shortage meant that not only were we deprived of several entrants, we also found ourselves without manager Cliff Jones. Eric, who had been busy managing the All England area final the week before (which didn't finish until 7.30 pm on the Sunday), found himself back in action as a collection of mainly Wrest Park and Letchworth players assembled on Friday morning. The weather was ghastly - continuous rain, which, although not hard enough to prevent play altogether, made conditions both difficult and dispiriting. Thankfully it brightened up a bit over the next two days.

The tournament was organised as a sort-of Swiss with prizes for the best performers in the lower and higher handicap groups. Keith Davis from Enfield was the overall winner, not losing a game and seeing his handicap fall from 8 to 6 in the process, and the other winner was Eric himself.

The tournament marked the debut of Ben Ashwell, who has been persuaded to write a report for the Gazette which will be reproduced here as soon as possible. Ben, who has only been playing the game for a month or so, played extremely well off 18 to come second in his group. One shot sticks in the memory: playing Derek Powell he was faced with a tricky hoop at 1-back, his

approach having caused the forward ball to lie against the wire so that he did not have a clear shot. From a distance of about four feet he executed a jump shot which cleared the hoop altogether, flicking the brown clip from a vertical to a horizontal position. Why can't I do that? John Wheeler later noted with approval that the surface of the lawn was unmarked.

On the catering front Judy had to manage the last two days unaided, for which much thanks. John Bevington sowed the seed of a possible future innovation when, having been deputed to open up on Saturday, took advantage of the club frying pan to cook a bacon sandwich for his breakfast.

Craft Fair 26-28 August

Report by Judy Anderson.

Takings of £99.81. This may seem a strange amount, but it is the cash extracted from the Come and Try It days for the general public at the Wrest Park/English Heritage Craft Fair over the August Bank Holiday weekend. So, we must have had 100 customers over the Sunday and Monday, as it rained all Saturday - once all the equipment, table and chairs had all been taken across! We had all 6 lawns, double-banked all the time, we did have the megaphone, but no surplus members to enable demonstration games. A few details: Saturday - no play, rain and drizzle all afternoon, but everyone turned out - Team: David P, David W, George and Dilys, Tom and Judy, and Michael Holford. Sunday - no problems, takings £48. Team: Peter and Elaine, Tom and Judy, Mary, David W. Monday - patchy rain (ask John Martin and Peter Smith), takings £51.81. Team: Peter and Dorothy, Tom and Judy, John W. John M, Peter Cox and Gordon Sampson. Grateful thanks to everyone for coming, congratulations particularly to the rookies, and thanks to Dorothy and Martin for fudge, ice cream and moral support.

Committee meeting 7 September

- The amount of Coca-Cola consumed during tournaments, coupled with the cost of buying it from the Sports and Social Club bar, suggests that we should consider a cheaper supplier, i.e. almost any supermarket. (*Given the imperious attitude of the Coca-Cola corporation at the Olympics which has resulted in spectators being banned from bringing in rival beverages and the removal of mineral water from press conferences I am tempted to suggest we boycott the stuff and buy Pepsi instead - Ed.*)
- A list of tournament entrants should be provided for the catering staff so that players can tick off their requirements for lunch and/or evening meals at the pub.
- We hope to scarify all the lawns by the end of September. The next operation will be to vertidrain the lawns in October, followed by top dressing with the sand/soil mix left over from the last hollow-tining. George will be asking for volunteers in due course, so get yourselves toned up at the gym and clean up those spades and shovels.
- In an attempt to counter the effects of flooding Martin Field has very kindly brought down a submersible pump together with pipe and couplings which should

shift 200 gallons per hour running off a 12V battery. We will be trying it out at the earliest opportunity.

- In view of the fact that, yet again, we have been unable to stage the club finals day as intended, there was some discussion as to how we might streamline these events for an earlier conclusion. It was also suggested that we introduce a doubles competition (possibly pairing high and low handicaps and playing alternate strokes). The format could be a knock-out, an all-play-all block or a ladder.

We do need your views on this - please pass on any ideas, however radical, to Rod Ashwell

- In response to a request to all clubs from the CA we are volunteering to host a one-day course for Assistant Referees and have suggested the weekends of 21-22 and 28-29 April as possible dates.
- Our proposed tournament dates for 2001 are May 18-20 (Handicap), July 6-8 (Advanced), August 18-19 (Advanced) and 14-16 September (Handicap). We are not down to stage any other events next year (apart from the inevitable request to stage the All England Area Final), but there is the possibility of organising something to mark the club's 40th anniversary.
- The growing number of Golf Croquet players, which has expanded considerably from the original group drawn from the Silsoe WI, means that we shall have to look at the subscription levels for next year. Strictly speaking we are supposed to register all playing members regardless of which game they play, and pay a levy to the CA for each member. In the past the numbers playing golf croquet were such that this obligation could be conveniently forgotten, but next year we shall have to do something about it. Quite what has yet to be decided.

Hi, I'm in the middle of a break.

Members are respectfully requested neither to make nor receive calls on mobile phones during play.

This newsletter marks the virtual end of the playing season. Two of the club competitions are still unfinished, but all our tournaments are over and the club teams have played all their league matches and got as far as they could in the national club competitions. As you will have read, we have staged quite a number of events in the last few weeks, and I would like to extend a big thank-you to everyone who has had a hand in staging them, be it mowing, line marking, hoop setting, managing, refereeing and catering, organising teams and all the other things that go towards a well-organised event. We don't have a vast membership to draw on when it comes to performing all these duties, so it represents a lot of regular work for relatively few people. And thanks also to all those who took part - this year we have seen several players make their first appearances in the league and at tournaments, and we hope that their experiences were sufficiently enjoyable to persuade them to do it again next year.

John Bevington

20 September 2000