



newsletter

Annual General Meeting 2001

The AGM will be at 7.30pm on Thursday 15 March in the upstairs room at the Star & Garter in Silsoe. Please come along if you possibly can as it is your opportunity to have a say about the running of the club. The provisional agenda is as follows:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of 2000 AGM and matters arising
3. Reports: **Chairman**
Secretary (to include Publicity)
Treasurer
Tournament Secretary
Club Captain
CA Tournament Secretary
Club Tournent Secretary
Groundsman (to include Equipment)
Catering
4. Election of officers
5. Club activities for 2001
6. Coaching
7. Any other business

The minutes of the 2000 AGM were included with the April 2000 edition of the newsletter. I will have a copy available at the AGM. Such reports as I have to hand are enclosed with this newsletter. If you cannot attend but want a topic discussed please let me know and I can raise it under AOB.

Committee Meeting - 1 Feb 2001

The main points are summarised below:

- **We are proposing that for 2001 the membership fee be £12.50 for existing members from the Silsoe WI and £44.90 (including £5.90 CA levy) for everyone else.** This needs a historical explanation. Years ago, when we could only play in the evenings, we introduced a reduced membership fee for a small group from the Silsoe WI who play golf croquet once a week and share a key. They also help with tournament catering. The group does not figure in our membership returns to the CA and does not pay the CA levy. This arrangement will continue.

The advent of daytime play has attracted a number of other members (included in the membership list under WI golf croquet club members) who currently pay the same reduced fee. The club has decided that it can no longer afford this distinction as it discriminates against members paying the full rate and deprives the CA of the levy which is due. We hope those affected understand and appreciate this decision and continue to support the club.

Members get a key, regular newsletters and free access to Wrest Park at weekends on production of a club membership card. Please remember to sign in at the

reception desk at the mansion if you are playing during the day.

We appreciate that members might like to bring friends to introduce them to the game - this is to be encouraged as it is a good way of attracting new members. The green fee for guests is £3 per visit with a maximum of five visits per guest per year. A visitors book will be provided.

- If there is sufficient interest we will organise a golf croquet competition. If you would like to enter please tick the appropriate space on the tournament entry form.
- If we get more members who are playing golf croquet exclusively it would be useful to have one of their number on the committee. If you would like to volunteer please come along to the AGM.
- The club exists to support both association and golf croquet within an inclusive membership, although we would naturally like to encourage golf croquet players to try the association game as well. It would therefore be wrong to specify particular days as being reserved exclusively for golf or association, unless booked in advance. That said, Thursdays have traditionally been club evenings when association games in club competitions are played, so there is bound to be more pressure on the lawns than on other days. We would obviously like to see golf croquet players down on Thursdays as it is a social evening followed by supper in the pub. Of course club games can be played on other evenings as well (if more were, there might be more chance of getting the competitions finished on time!)
- **There will be a coaching day on Sunday June 10.** A notice will be put up on the board in the pavilion, on which anyone planning to attend can enter their name and those aspects of the game on which they would like coaching.
- The club has undertaken to provide a new set of centre pegs for the Hunstanton club to replace those lost in last year's fire and we are inviting members to contribute towards the manufacturing cost. Now read on.

The Hunstanton Appeal

Those of you who are members of the CA will have read of the disastrous fire that destroyed Hunstanton's Edwardian club house on 29 September last year. Hunstanton is one of the oldest clubs in the country, with five lawns. It has a distinguished history and like ourselves is a member of the East Anglian Croquet Federation, running a number of tournaments every year at which Wrest Park members are regular entrants. While the clubhouse was insured the contents were not - this includes not only the croquet equipment but

everything from the kitchen and dining area as well. The replacement cost will obviously be substantial.

Wrest Park have offered to provide Hunstanton with a new set of centre pegs. These will be made by Rod Ashwell's brother, who has already made sets of centre pegs for us. The cost of the pegs will be £50-60, and we are inviting club members to contribute. If you would like to make a donation (say £5 or more) please send it to Rod Ashwell, to whom any cheques should be made out. His address is on the attached membership list. Any money left over will be sent to the Hunstanton Appeal fund.

The Laws (6th edition)

The new edition of the Laws of Association Croquet (blue cover) is now available, and the Laws will be in force for this season. A club copy will be kept in the pavilion, and anyone wishing to purchase their own copy can do so from the CA.

At the recent seminar for referees Dr Ian Vincent, Chairman of the CA Laws Committee, outlined the changes from the previous version of the Laws, and a copy of his notes will be pinned up in the pavilion. The main changes are as follows:

- If a player swings the mallet back and forth a number of times before hitting the ball (referred to in the notes as 'casting'), then the stroke and striking period (during which various faults may be committed) begin when the mallet leaves the ball on the final backswing before the ball is struck. It is therefore not a fault if you happen to catch the ball on one of your preliminary swings.
- If a ball is occupying the corner spot and another ball is played into the corner it is replaced on either yard line in contact with the corner ball. This is as before. If a third ball is then played into the corner it can be placed on the yard line either (a) in contact with the corner ball, so that the three balls form a right angle, or (b) on the yard line in contact with the second ball, so that the three balls form a straight line. Previously (a) was the only option.
- If a player commits a fault then the turn ends and the opponent can elect to either (a) have the balls replaced in the position they were before the fault occurred, or, and this is the new bit, (b) have the balls left in the position they came to rest after the fault occurred. As an example, if a player played a crush stroke in the course of which the ball went through the hoop (which would not score the hoop). then the opponent can have the balls replaced as they were before the crush stroke took place, or could choose to have them left as they were after the stroke took place, with the striker's ball now on the wrong side of the hoop. If the striker elects to play a bisque after committing a fault then the balls must be replaced.

Any comments, rulings or amendments arising from the new Laws will be shown on the noticeboard.

The laws for golf croquet are unaffected - the rules currently in force are the WCF rules (yellow cover), copies of which are available from the CA.

Dates for your diary

April 22	Easter Egg 2001
May 12-13	CA Gold Coaching course
May 18-20	Handicap tournament
June 10	Coaching Day
June 12	Irene Davis' Golf croquet group
July 6-8	Advanced tournament
July 17	Irene Davis' Golf croquet group
Aug 18-19	Advanced tournament
Sept 1-2	All England area final
Sept 14-16	Handicap tournament
Sept 22-23	All England Golf national final

Anyone wishing to enter the Easter Egg competition should contact Rod Ashwell by early April - it is a light-hearted tournament whose format depends on the number and standard of the entries. All welcome!

The All England Handicap Area Final (Association) on 1/2 September will need the services of a manager. This could be done by our own club representative(s) should one of them also be a qualified referee, or possibly even an assistant referee. Eric has volunteered to organise the draw.

CA All England Golf Croquet Handicap 2001

We have been asked if we can host the national final for the above event which is scheduled for the weekend of 22/23 September. The organisation is similar to the equivalent Association Croquet event. You don't have to be a member of the CA, or even a member of a registered club. Clubs or groups submit the names of the entrants, together with the entry fees, and hold their own preliminary competition. The winners from each of these go through to the area finals held in August.

The more people you have playing in your preliminary competition, the more representatives you have in the area final (up to 8 entries - winner, 9-16 entries - 1st and 2nd, 17-24 entries - 1st, 2nd and 3rd).

I'm publicising this as a suggestion to the Leighton-Linslade club, as Wrest Park do not normally run a preliminary competition for this event. If LLCC were to run a preliminary competition, then Wrest Park members who are not members of LLCC could still enter under the LLCC banner, and the more entries there were, the more representatives would go through to the area final. Games in the preliminary competition could be played at either venue. More details are available in the 2001 edition of the CA Fixtures Book.

EACF/NT croquet tournaments

The East Anglian Croquet Federation, in conjunction with the National Trust, are staging their annual short croquet and golf croquet competitions at various NT properties over the summer. Entries are invited from CA clubs or other groups.

Short Croquet - 2 small lawns at each venue. 4 teams of 2 players at each venue.

1 July Long Melford Hall
 15 July Anglesey Abbey
 29 July Anglesey Abbey
 12 August Felbrigg Hall
 2 Sept Ickworth (Final)

Golf croquet - 2 small lawns at each venue. Up to 16 teams (doubles).

15 July Anglesey Abbey Doubles
 3 Sept Ickworth Singles

I will bring the entry forms to the AGM.

Raising the roof

Last autumn's high winds brought down several trees in the park, and it also did for a branch of one of the yew trees which fell across the little hut (the original if no longer the best), cracking the roof beam. The Institute kindly came down with chainsaws and other equipment and removed the fallen limbs.



JB instals the air conditioning.

John Wheeler and John Bevington then repaired the roof and replaced the damaged felt. The hut is now weatherproof but will need more work in the spring. The screen of undergrowth behind the hut had to be cleared to allow the tractor in to remove the branches. This has opened up a vista to the east, which was enlarged considerably when, shortly before Christmas, the rest of the tree was cut down. We now have no cover at the back, but any gentlemen seeking light relief will be glad to know that the fence in the woodyard has been replaced.



Up on the roof - JB and JW getting felt up.

And now for something completely different

The Friends of Silsoe Church have written to ask if we would be interested in taking part in the proposed Festival of Flowers and Crafts over the weekend of 22-24 June. The event will raise money for restoration. To quote: *"It is envisaged that a number of village associations would take part ... and enter a display of flowers or craftwork such as tapestry, which would reflect village life"*

I hope we can rise to this challenge. Black flowers might be a problem, but the secondary colours of pink, white, green and brown would offer plenty of scope. Please give it some thought.

EACF AGM 2001

This year's East Anglian Croquet Federation AGM will be on Sunday 18 March. Anyone who has something for discussion at the meeting and who is unable to attend in person can bring it to the attention of either George Collin or Judy Anderson, who are Treasurer and Secretary respectively.

Catering in 2001

As you are no doubt aware, we rely on the profits from tournament catering for a proportion of our income (about 15%). We also rely on volunteers, drawn from club members and their relatives and friends, to prepare food and serve it, make and serve tea and coffee, wash up and dispose of the rubbish, and (most important) make our guests feel welcome.

For various reasons it is becoming increasingly difficult to find volunteers to assist with catering. This applies not only to events we host for the CA but also to our own club tournaments. In 2001 there are potentially 17 days for which we will need catering support, so can I urge anyone (men are currently under-represented) who is prepared to don an apron and wield a carving knife to tick the box at the bottom of the attached entry form. As they say, we very much look forward to hearing from you.

Dunstable U3A Coaching Course

We have had an enquiry from Mrs Richardson (01525 220600) of the Dunstable branch of the University of the Third Age requesting a coaching course for about a dozen members, preferably on weekday afternoons although I daresay it could take place at weekends if necessary. The CA is encouraging U3A groups who are interested in the game to contact local clubs as they represent an ideal target market (active retired) for recruitment.

I organised a course on four weekday afternoons for the Bedford U3A some time ago, using the old CA Coaching Handbook (which, in my opinion, had a rather optimistic expectation of the students' rate of progress). The attendance tapered off as the course went on, and no new members resulted. Part of the problem is that simply learning how to hit the ball consistently takes longer than people realise. However we now have the current coaching handbook at the club (a great improvement), and if anyone is willing to take this on please let me know and I will let them know what we can do - we must be able to manage something!

1961 + 40 = 2001

This simple sum is a reminder that 2001 represents the club's 40th anniversary, and we would be grateful for any ideas for playing or social events which could be organised to mark the occasion. Over the coming months we hope to publish some of the early history in the newsletter, and we would also welcome personal memories, anecdotes and suchlike - for example, a record of the individual and team successes in CA competitions.

Forty years on

*The lawns in winter have a naked face.
They wear no make-up or accessories
To give away their purpose as a place
For living out our sporting fantasies*

*But, looking down, a closer glance will show
Thousands of little holes, a film of sand.
To get a better class of grass to grow
Men and machinery must take a hand.*

*In spring green blades push up towards the light
To be culled twice weekly. Next, marking out
Corners, siting hoops and pegs, painting white
Lines to mark the edges. All this, without*

*Forgetting fertiliser, fungicide,
And teasing out the clover with a knife.
The playing surface is a source of pride.
Maintaining it's a handicap for life.*

*Now coins are tossed, it all begins again.
Another opening. Which shot to take?
The roquet missed, the hoop stroke made in vain.
Looks like he's going round. Give me a break.*

*So summer passes. After play, the pub
For pints, committee meetings, cards and food.
How much can we afford to raise the sub?
Is scarifying really any good?*

*Most weekends there's a match to organise.
At home, against good teams, we play the host
And offer wine with lunch. If they should rise
Unsteady to their feet, all's not yet lost.*

*Bisques and leaves lie scattered in September.
The tournament's over, our play is done.
Games best forgotten, games to remember.
So it goes on, since nineteen sixty-one.*

Secretary and Publicity

Officer's report

There is really very little to say, for which I am sure you will be grateful. Apart from sending out newsletters, secretarial duties consist of receiving letters and phone calls from individuals or organisations wishing to know more about the club, arrange friendlies and group visits, pinning up copies of the CA News, ordering literature and other items, and keeping track of the membership list.

There are two forms of publicity: publicising the existence of the club and publicising events staged by the club. The ultimate purpose of both is to ensure the survival of the club by attracting new members. We are on the CA and Bedford Borough Council websites, and I have recently added us to the Sportcom, Bedford Index and Luton Index sites. The Luton Council site doesn't have a suitable area for a listing. Posters are circulated to libraries in the Luton and Bedford areas (could someone report back on the existence/visibility of these the next time they are passing?). Publicising events really needs regular contact with the local press, and whether it would be of much benefit, in comparison to the work involved, is open to question. We did nothing last year.

My personal view is that we are more likely to benefit from a higher national profile for the sport. One can imagine what Ellen MacArthur's success will do for sailing. Last year's MacRobertson Shield victory went unnoticed by the media, and I wonder what the CA will be doing to (a) publicise this year's World Championships and (b) encourage members of the public to attend.

Last but not least

Please check your entry on the attached membership list and let Eric know the following details if they are not already present and correct:

- whether or not you are a member of the CA
- your **current** handicap, address **and** postcode
- your car (make, model, colour and registration)
- phone numbers
- e-mail address (if you have separate ones for home and work please give the one you prefer)

John Bevington

13 February 2001