

newsletter

Wrest Park out of bounds

It looks as though the season will have a delayed start as the foot and mouth crisis has resulted in the park being pieced out of bounds for leisure activities. This measure is being reviewed at regular intervals and we will let you know once the all clear has been sounded.

We are hoping that it will be possible to carry out maintenance activities on the lawns - the most pressing jobs are scarifying to remove the moss, which was sprayed earlier in the year, and mowing.



Before the ban - snowdrops under the beech tree

Minutes of the 2001 AGM

The 2001 AGM was held on Thursday 15 March and attended by Peter Smith, Eric Audsley, John Bevington, George Collin, John Wheeler, Rod Ashwell, Tom and Judy Anderson, Peter and Elaine Newman, Dorothy Craggs, Charles and Grace Howell, Irene Davis and Margaret Brown.

1. Apologies for absence

Received from Howard Bottomley and Joan Miller.

2. Minutes of 2000 AGM and matters arising

The minutes of the 2000 AGM were accepted.

3. Reports

Chairman: Peter Smith commented that it had been an above average season in terms of the club's success in competitions - in both the Mary Rose and the Inter Club we lost to the eventual winners, and we retained our place in the first division of the Inter Counties. On the other hand, it had also been above average in terms of rainfall, which had caused the lawns to flood regularly and had prevented the application of top dressing in the autumn as planned. Peter also took the opportunity to mention the prevailing access restrictions caused by the need to prevent the spread of foot and mouth disease.

Secretary/Publicity: In discussing his report, John Bevington mentioned that the Bedford and Luton Index websites, to which details of the club had been submitted, were currently inactive due to financial

problems, and that it was hard to find the club's entries on other sites due to the way they were organised. The sites would be contacted to see if this could be improved. Tom Anderson felt that the supply of posters to Bedfordshire libraries should continue. John also asked if anyone attending the EACF AGM could pose to Don Gaunt (the CA Chairman who would be at the meeting) his question regarding publicity for the forthcoming World Championships and encouragement for members of the public to attend.

John also asked to be provided with a copy of the club's constitution; this request was satisfied there and then by John Wheeler.

Treasurer: Eric Audsley pointed out that income in 2000 had benefited from the various CA events held at Wrest Park, such as the Easterns and Inter Counties Golf Croquet championship. Expenditure had included the purchase of one set of hoops and three sets of Barlow GT balls. Judy Anderson wanted to know why the income from catering for the August tournament was so low. Eric explained that this was due to the accumulation of bills for beer and soft drinks - it was not uncommon for the bills for several tournaments worth of liquor to arrive at once, and these would then be offset against a single tournament. It was then suggested that separate kitties be established at tournaments for food, drink and tea/coffee in order to keep closer track of where the money went - in particular, that there should be a list of entrants so that individuals could indicate that they had paid for lunch and/or tea on each day.

Eric also explained the distinction between group and individual membership, as the proposal outlined in the February issue of the newsletter had caused some concern. Group membership (e.g. the groups from the Silsoe and Leighton Buzzard WI) meant a group with a single keyholder. Members of the group were not obliged to pay the CA levy. Individual members had their own key and paid the CA levy as part of their subscription. He proposed that for 2001 the individual membership fee be £39 plus CA levy of £5.90, and the fee for members of a group be £12.50. The proposal was seconded and carried nem con.

CA Tournament Secretary: Entries were down compared to the previous year, as were the number of entries from club members. Part of the problem is that there are now more tournaments, so our tournament becomes one attraction among many. It is difficult to avoid this situation, but it was noted that it can work to our advantage - this year's July tournament is the only Advanced tournament for that particular weekend and is already attracting a healthy number of entries.

Club Tournament Secretary: Rod Ashwell reviewed last year's club competitions. He felt the Draw and Process system was still the best method in that it offered more games, but it was incumbent on players to do their best to get the rounds completed on time, and

the possibility of being scratched if they failed to do so should not be considered an empty threat.

It was also planned to have a Golf croquet tournament as well this year. The possibility of this had been alluded to in the last newsletter which mentioned a Golf Cup as one of the club events. However it had stated that this was for "beginners or (Association) handicaps over 18" and Rod felt that all members should have the opportunity of taking part in a tournament if they wished. This raised the question of handicaps for golf croquet, a subject with which we as a club are relatively unfamiliar, although there is some advice in the rule book and in the guidelines recently issued by the CA.

It was resolved that we would organise one or more tournaments based on the number of entries, and that all members would be encouraged to enter, including low handicappers and members of WI groups, and that this would be advertised in the next newsletter (see note elsewhere - Ed.)

Club Captain: Howard Bottomley sent a written report which was read out by Peter Smith. Howard outlined our achievements in the various competitions, stating that it had been "a satisfactory year . . . but not quite the killer finish in some games to bring team trophies back to the club" In the Longman Cup we lost 4-3 to Northampton, and in the Inter Club went out to Harrow Oak, who posted a couple of triple peels and went on to win the competition. In the Mary Rose we had a good run only to lose to the eventual winners, Nottingham, in the semi-final. We came third in the Beds/Herts League and retained our place in Division 1 of the Inter Counties. Howard also mentioned the number of players involved in the Beds/Herts League and how this had made it easier to arrange fixtures (not an easy matter at the best of times), and the need to field our strongest possible team if we are to meet the challenge of the Inter Club. Howard finished by thanking George for his support in organising the Longman Cup and League teams, and also thanked all the players who had represented Bedfordshire in the Inter Counties.

Groundsman (to include Equipment): George Collin described the events of the season, the most significant of which was the arrival of the new scarifier. This was used for verti-mowing in the summer and scarifying in both directions in early October. Heavy rain in the summer caused flooding, which was perhaps not surprising as the last hollowtining was done two years ago. Vertidrainning (deep solid tining) was done in late October, followed the next day by heavy rain and more flooding. The wet weather made it impossible to top dress with the 15 tons of sand that had been delivered, and the foot and mouth restrictions mean that the plan to top dress this spring is now in doubt, and we will talk to the Institute and English Heritage about any issues they may have regarding the continued presence of the sand.

The high rainfall during the winter has caused a lot of moss to appear; this has been sprayed but we have not had an opportunity to scarify it out. Apart from the moss the lawns look good, with no sign of fungal disease. The application of spring fertiliser, due soon, may also have to be delayed for the reason already quoted. We have purchased a new leaf sweeper of a more robust construction and have had the Allet mower serviced and also bought replacement parts for the Atco, with the

intention of using the Atco for offseason use and reserving the Allet for summer-duties to prolong its life.

John Wheeler, in his capacity as 'under-groundsmen', also submitted a report, summarised below:

The lawns were mowed routinely through the year, and the lawns were mowed in the summer in dry conditions which meant having to use a drill and masonry bit to make new pilot hoop holes. The Allet mower had a major overhaul costing £596.72, and the Atco had essential maintenance to the rotor clutch with parts costing £109. Rogers, the firm we used to use for maintenance, has closed its mower section, but the staff have formed a new company called Groundcare, and we are dealing with them.

Renovating the hoops has been researched. The cost for overhauling all six sets is as follows:

Remove nylon coating (5 sets @ £30/set)	£150
Remove existing paint (1 set)	£9
Zinc treat and powder coat (6 sets @ £42/set)	£252
Total	£411

After consultation with the treasurer it has been decided that we will have two sets treated and observe the results during the season.

John has also repainted the centre pegs and made two hoop racks, corner pegs, yard line pegs and a quantity of bisques, as well as repairing the small hut after two of the roof trusses were broken by failing branches in the autumn. Although now weatherproof the roof needs refelting and a window needs to be replaced. Rod Ashwell added that his brother has constructed a device for making initial hoop holes which is an over-engineered hoop, capable of being hammered in without distortion or risk of breakage.

(Editor's note: It was an oversight not to have done so at the time, but on behalf of the membership I would like to thank John and George for all their efforts in looking after the lawns in what was a difficult year, especially John's tireless work on the mower and Pandora's invaluable assistance.)

Catering: Judy Anderson said that although we managed last year without any crises new volunteers were always needed as we will not always be able to rely on those who have helped us so often in the past. Two new flasks have been purchased which will help us to offer coffee on more of a self-service basis. Eric noted that we need a new water container.

4. Election of officers

Peter Smith stated that he was not seeking reelection as Chairman. Other members had been consulted regarding their willingness to take up the post and it was understood that Tim Brewer might be willing to accept. Peter will continue as Chairman until the new incumbent is officially confirmed. The other officers were reelected:

Secretary/Publicity: John Bevington

Treasurer: Eric Audsley

Club Captain: Howard Bottomley

CA Tournament Secretary: Eric Audsley

Club Tournament Secretary: Rod Ashwell

Groundsman: George Collin

Development: no appointment

Catering: Judy Anderson

EACF rep: George Collin

High bisque rep: Peter Newman
Silsoe WI group rep: Dorothy Craggs
Leighton Buzzard WJ group rep: Irene Davis

Group representatives will receive a copy of the newsletter and will be responsible for passing on any relevant information to the other members of their group, and they will also receive notification of and be welcome to attend all committee meetings.



Yew's been had - the scene behind the pavilion

5. Club activities for 2001

The Easter Egg tournament is under threat because of the foot and mouth restrictions and an alternative venue is being considered. We should also be prepared to face the fact that other early events such as the Gold Coaching course and the May tournament are also at risk. The club will be entering all the national competitions and the Beds/Herts League.

There was some discussion regarding an event to commemorate the club's 40th anniversary, and we will be checking the records to establish a list of old members and past tournament entrants as possible invitees. There is a possibility that we might be able to use the Orangery for the event and we will contact the relevant authorities to see if this is feasible and affordable. A sub-committee (John Wheeler, John Bevington, Eric Audsley and Elaine Newman) will meet and report back in the near future.

Details and entry forms for the EACF/National Trust Short croquet and Golf croquet tournaments were provided - although no immediate interest has been expressed by the club it is possible that the Leighton Buzzard club might participate.

The Leighton Buzzard club also expressed the intention of running a heat for the All England Golf Croquet handicap competition, and any members from Wrest Park who want to enter the competition are advised to contact Irene Davis and enter via this route, as we are not planning a heat of our own.

6. Coaching

The club coaching day is planned for 10 June. Further details will be announced in due course. The enquiry from Mrs Richardson of the Dunstable U3A for a coaching course was confirmed as being for Golf croquet only, and John Bevington will write to Nigel Gray to ask if he would take the course.

7. Any other business

- Rod Ashwell asked whether players in the Easter Egg would contribute to the cost of lawn hire should the tournament have to be played at another venue.
- John Bevington enquired as to the recent discussions between the Institute and English Heritage which had resulted in hurried requests for confirmation of our agreements with these bodies regarding the use of the lawns. Eric Audsley, in reply, stated that the Institute were in the process of renewing the lease. As a result of this they were interested in any activities that took place within the park, which naturally took in the croquet club, and we therefore needed evidence of any arrangements that had been made to allow the club to play in the park. John Wheeler read from letters dating from 1962 and 1963 which quoted phrases such as *"by kind permission of the Director"* and *"in 1964 four croquet lawns can be used"*. We also have correspondence relating to permissions for erecting the various buildings. The file has been passed on to Eric to use as required.
- John Bevington mentioned that the Visitor's book was now available (see elsewhere) and asked about the possibility of holding an exam for prospective Assistant Referees.
- Judy Anderson proposed a vote of thanks to Peter Smith for his Chairmanship, which met with unanimous agreement and a well-deserved round of applause.

Club Golf Croquet tournament

The form included with the last newsletter which you use to indicate the events you plan to enter this year mentions a Golf Cup for beginners or handicap over 18. We would like to give everyone - members of WI groups and full members of whatever handicap - the chance to take part in a golf croquet tournament if they wish. If you would like to enter and have already sent off the form without entering because you did not think you were eligible, please ring Rod Ashwell and you will be included in the competition. The format has yet to be decided - there might even be two separate tournaments.

Intending entrants would be well advised to familiarise themselves with the Laws of Golf Croquet, available from the CA, and the handicapping system, should this be used.

Visitor's Book

We now have a Visitor's Book which you should use when you bring guests down to play. Please enter against the appropriate date your name, your quest's name or names, and the green fees. This is £3 per person per visit with a maximum of five visits per year. Money can be left in the red cashbox.

Way back when

As promised, this season's newsletters will include memories from the early days of the club from John Wheeler's archives. To begin with, the club's first ever success in a national team competition:

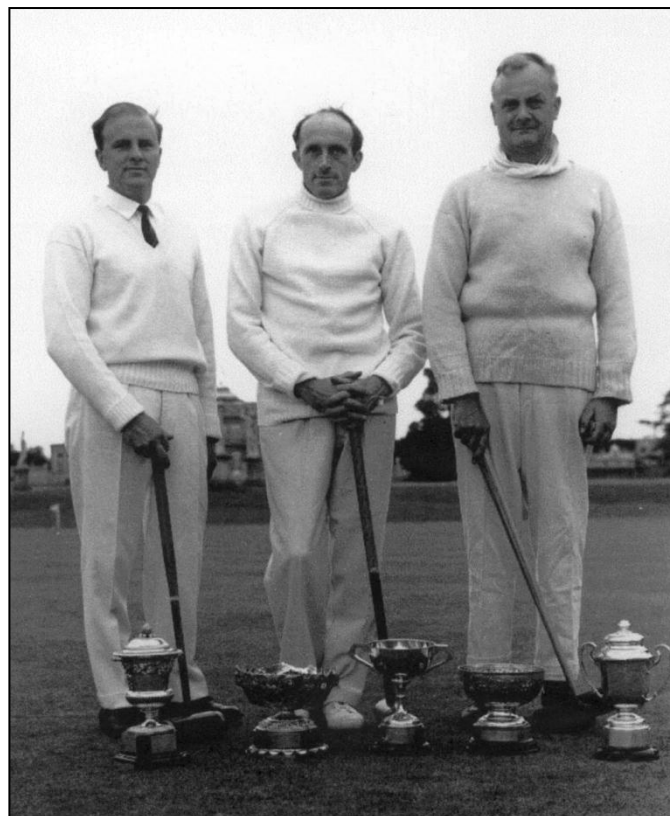


Wrest Park's victorious Longman Cup team of 1964. Left to right: John Clarke, Tom Marchant, Vic Rees and Anto Davies

Wrest Park also won the Longman Cup in 1966 and again in 1971.

Describing Wrest Park in his book *The History of Croquet*, David Prichard wrote "One of the founder members was Major E.J. Bromley-Fox, a military looking man, who not only initiated the neophytes into the mysteries of croquet, aided by his own postage stamp version of the laws, but was the main instigator of a plan to upgrade the activities of the club from a few friendly matches to the status of holding official tournaments. His pupils soon outstripped their mentor and D.V.H. Rees, J.A. Wheeler and H. C. Green became first class players."

They obviously learnt fast. Here's the proof:



Left to right: John Wheeler, Vic Rees and Harry Green with spoils from the 1967 season, won at the CA Challenge and Gilbey tournament and tournaments at Hunstanton and Nottingham

Your membership fees

It was confirmed at the AGM that these will be **£44.90 (including £5.90 CA levy) for full members and £ 1 2.50 for members of groups.**

If you have been waiting for the report of the AGM in order to find out what the fees would be before returning the sheet sent out with the last newsletter, please make sure that any amendments included at the bottom of the sheet are visible. If you make the amendments, copy the sheet and then send the copy, be aware that most copies are made using a small enlargement so the edges of the paper do not show on the copy. Anything written very close to the edge may be rendered illegible or lost altogether.

Save or Delete

Earlier in the year I was tidying the noticeboard and disposed of, among other things, the draws for last season's club competitions. It turns out that the organiser was hoping to use them for some statistical analysis. To avoid this happening in future I promise to stay my hand until the end of the year, so if anyone wishes to retain any material relating to the previous season, could he or she please remove it before New Year's Day.

John Bevington

22 March 2001