



Wrest Park Silsoe Bedfordshire

newsletter

Handicap tournament May 21-23

Report by Peter Newman, with photos by Elaine Newman

Friday's forecast was mixed sun and showers, cool and breezy, with better to follow for the weekend, and we were treated to weather pretty much as predicted, except the showers were no more than a few spots. Wrest Park looked its best, with the usual complement of pheasant, partridge, peacock and incontinent geese. Twenty five players assembled, but George Woolhouse had got there first, to set up his telescope on its tripod focused on the kestrels' nest, and to confuse everyone by making coffee in a teapot.



George Woolhouse – positive for caffeine.

Play was in two blocks, and the main issue of day one was George Collin's hoops. All available referees were kept busy adjudicating shots stuck in hoops or just through but hampered. On subsequent days the situation seemed better – obviously all players had improved as a result of the experience.



Gina Lewis showing good form.

In Block B, after two days Gina Lewis was unbeaten and Nigel Polhill and Peter Newman had five wins. In the

latter case it was a close thing; Mark Homan, after three hours of missing everything, needing 15 hoops in the last quarter of an hour, hit in and started a break. He then proceeded round the court at a pace only matched by the resident hare frequently spotted around the park, but could only make up 13 points before time.

Sunday decided it when Nigel beat Gina and then Peter to emerge victorious. George Woolhouse had beaten both Gina and Nigel, but was obviously impaired by the coffee in other games. In Block A John Lonsdale was the winner with 7 wins, the same as John Bee, but having beaten him plus one on time. John Lonsdale only defeat was to John Norris, his only win. (There were actually some players in Block A not called John). Most importantly, everyone had enjoyed the event, and praised the organisation, catering, setting and weather.

Match results

Beds & Herts League vs St Albans (home) 16 May Won 5-0

Wrest Park	St Albans	WP score
John Bevington (3)	Terry Mahoney (3)	+7T
Peter Newman (11)	Chris Frost (8)	
Bryan Harral (3½)	David Kitson (7)	+20
John Bevington (3)	David Kitson (7)	+6
Bryan Harral (3½)	Terry Mahoney (3)	+13
Peter Newman (11)	Chris Frost (8)	+10T

This year's campaign got off to the best possible start on a warm and sunny day. Bryan finished off David in quick time and had a long wait for his lunch. Terry made the first move in the doubles and Chris began to show some form after a hesitant start. Peter used the bisque to good effect, but we were still four points down with little time left when John hit in and went round from hoop 2 to peg.

Bryan then continued where he left off, John finally beat David after two short misses and Peter won against Chris. George Collin arrived by bicycle in the afternoon and we ended by repositioning hoops and corner pegs, an exercise completed in fading light shortly before 9pm.

Inter Club vs Hurlingham (away) 5 June Lost 2-5

Team captain Howard Bottomley reports:

A beautiful day, with wedding preparations in evidence and coffees being served as we arrived.

Playing on lawns 5 & 6 in the morning, George had more time to contemplate the top dressing than play. Howard started well in the doubles but the opposition crept up on us before Ben could get going. While the rest of us enjoyed a pint Rod secured a win to take us into a very good lunch at 1-2. After lunch we moved to lawns 2 & 3, which were faster. Rod was able to take pictures whilst George had all the play making it 2-3 by mid afternoon.

Howard and Ben had exciting games. Howard at 4-back and peg looked a certainty before sticking in 4-back, and being pegged out. He managed two further hoops but lost by two to give Hurlingham the match. Ben traded peels with Nelson Morrow before losing by the narrowest of margins.

Afternoon tea was served, our supporters Tom & Judy then left, and a final drink and walk along the Thames concluded the day. Can we play them again?

Wrest Park	Hurlingham	WP score
Howard Bottomley (-½)	Nelson Morrow	-13
Ben Ashwell (-½)	Tom Browne	
Rod Ashwell (0)	Bob Stephens	+16
George Collin (2½)	Richard Hoskyns	-23
Howard Bottomley (-½)	Tom Browne	-2
Ben Ashwell (-½)	Nelson Morrow	-2
Rod Ashwell (0)	Richard Hoskyns	-16
George Collin (2½)	Bob Stephens	+26

Beds & Herts League vs Enfield (home) 5 June Won 4-2

Wrest Park	Enfield	WP score
John Bevington (2½)	Michael Ruggins (12)	+1T
Bill Tapper (6)	Wendy Spencer-Smith (20)	
Bryan Harral (3½)	Ken Pickett (5)	-8T
Tim Brewer (9)	Alan Foott (18)	
John Bevington (2½)	Ken Pickett (5)	-19
Bryan Harral (3½)	Michael Ruggins (12)	+15
Bill Tapper (6)	Alan Foott (18)	+4T
Tim Brewer (9)	Wendy Spencer-Smith (20)	+5T

Given that we were handing out an average of 8½ bisques per game this was an impressive win, in which Bill Tapper played a big part. His morning doubles became tied when John ran rover and peeled him through hoop 5 to level the scores. Time was called after he played his last stroke, but Michael played and missed under the impression we did not have another turn. We allowed them to have it again (yes, George, I know), and Bill then made hoop 6 for the decisive point. In his singles he overcame a two-point deficit to beat Alan, which with Tim's win (another recovery) and Bryan's efficient despatch of Michael gave us the match. Michael said he would never play again, but we were assured by his team-mates that he is known to say this at regular intervals.

Connoisseurs of trivia might like to record that this was the first Wrest Park home match played with Dawson balls. We were able to offer a choice of three makes and after checking that the hoops were wide enough gave the Dawsons their debut. More on balls later.

Inter Counties 2004

It turned out to be a northern benefit this year, with Cheshire overall winners and Lancashire runners-up. Suffolk came top of Division 2. The CA teams are ineligible for promotion. The Bedfordshire team consisted of Jon Watson, Howard Bottomley, Ben Ashwell, John Wheeler, George Collin, Tom Anderson, John Bevington and Arthur Weightman. We beat Warwickshire, Kent, Berkshire and CA England but there were a number of matches where we failed to get

the vital second win and went down 2-1. And as for losing to Norfolk..... More war stories and anecdotes may follow in the next issue.

Division 1

	Matches	Games		Matches	Games
Cheshire	8	24	Suffolk (P)	9	22
Lancs	7	18	CA Europe	8	21
Surrey	6	20	Yorks (P)	7	20
Essex	6	16	Glamorgan (P)	7	17
Avon	6	16	Warwicks	6	14
Notts	5	15	Devon	5	18
Gloucs	5	15	Beds	4	16
Herts	4	12	Kent	4	14
Dorset (R)	4	12	Norfolk	3	12
Middx (R)	4	11	Berks	1	7
Sussex (R)	0	6	CA England	1	4

Division 2

Not the Inter Counties

Report by Bryan Harral

Six teams from the Eastern Counties played for the Anderson Shield (donated by Tom and Judy) at Newport Croquet Club on 29/30 May. The result was:

1. Essex
2. Cambridgeshire
3. Suffolk
4. Hertfordshire
5. EACF Select
6. **Bedfordshire**

The EACF Select team was included to make the number of teams up to six.

Beds team: Bryan Harral, Peter Newman (Saturday), Rodney Ward (Sunday), Bill Tapper and Geoff Strutt

This is the first year the event has been held. The weather was perfect, the lawns were fast and true (mostly), and the event was well organised. So what went wrong? The usual excuses - hoops too narrow, balls too big, balls too small, etc. etc. I can only think that the Beds team was overawed by the occasion, but it was a very friendly affair and I'm sure we would like to see if we can do a bit better next year. The event was rounded off with champagne, also donated by Tom and Judy, and there was a unanimous vote that the winners should provide the champagne next year.

Forthcoming events

June 15	Waterways group (pm)
June 19-20	Home Internationals (CA)
June 22	Scouts group (pm)
June 27	Group members golf croquet singles
June 29	Howard Bottomley's group (pm)
July 6	Dunstable U3A group (pm)
July 9-11	Advanced tournament
July 21	Waterways group (pm)
July 25	Group members golf croquet doubles
July 28	Bedford WI group (from 6.30pm)
August 14-15	Advanced tournament
August 21-22	Golf croquet Selector's w/e (CA)
September 12	EACF club champions tournament
September 17-19	Handicap tournament

For details of English Heritage events at Wrest Park ring 01525 860152, or visit www.english-heritage.org.uk.

Early season coaching course

Report by Peter Newman

We have now completed our six-week coaching course. It was attended by a mixture of beginners, golf croquet players and association improvers, and the average attendance was ten. All seemed to enjoy it, and many showed much improvement over the period. They agreed to continue playing on Tuesday evenings (when available), as well as some attending club night on Thursdays. Any other members who wish to join them will be welcome.

We look forward to a good number of them becoming regular association players. Two more have already signed up for the De Grey Plate.

Bubble Reputation

No1



Peter Newman addresses the class. Photo by Elaine Newman.

What is Peter saying? Please avoid anything that might offend editorial sensibilities or arouse the interest of m'learned friends. You may style yourself "Name withheld" or adopt a pseudonym. The winner will receive a free copy of the next newsletter.

Men in form – tournament news

On the first weekend in May George Woolhouse won the Colchester Handicap tournament and Ben Ashwell won the Hunstanton Advanced tournament. The latter event is a regular date for a number of Wrest Park members, and Ben excelled himself by winning all his games and earning a handicap reduction to -½.

A load of balls

Over the years the club has invested in a number of different makes of croquet ball with the result that we now have a substantial collection. We will soon be replacing our tournament balls and felt it was time to dispose of some of our old stock, so it is an opportune moment to list what we have. Some disposals will have been made by the time you read this.

For a long time the only ball used for tournaments was the Jaques Eclipse. Jaques balls were made of compressed cork with a plastic skin, which gave them a certain elasticity and liveliness in play, but they are no longer made. They tended to be variable in size and were prone to cracking and going out of round. Other makes are solid plastic and retain their size and shape, but they have different playing characteristics and tend

to be less lively than a Jaques ball. The balls currently approved by the CA for tournaments are the Barlow GT, Dawson and Sunshiny (more on these later).

What makes have we got?

1. Walker. Of faintly translucent appearance with an unmistakable sound – a staccato crack. Good for rush strokes, but nothing else. They never caught on and we are disposing of the ones we have left.

2. Southport (or Birkdale). Distinguished by their wide milling, these are another make we tried, but they never gained universal acceptance so we were perhaps wise not to buy more. Our two sets (first colours) have been reprieved and are kept in the little hut in green racks. They are perfectly adequate for golf croquet and for use by the public at events such as the Craft Fair

3. Jaques. These come in several versions:

3.1 Eclipse - Slick, i.e. no milling. One set, to be disposed of.

3.2 Eclipse - Low grade. Several old sets, often with minor damage, marked with an L and used by SRI staff for lunchtime golf croquet and at public events. They are in the small hut, in black tubes.

3.3 Eclipse - Club balls. Old but reasonable quality for everyday use, kept in white racks in the locker in the pavilion. There are six sets of both first and second colours.

3.4 Eclipse - Tournament quality. The newest and best, although now showing their age. These are kept in boxes in the locker in the back hut and reserved for matches and tournaments. We have six sets of first and second colours plus some spares.

4. Barlow (from South Africa). There are two types:

4.1 Barlow C, distinguished by a C stamped in the centre of the milling. The first of the Barlow balls, they are a bit 'dead' and are hard work on a heavy lawn. We are disposing of our two sets.

4.2 Barlow GT. More lively than the Barlow C, but less so than Jaques, these are one of the standard balls for tournament play. They have a G stamped in the centre of the milling (it's not that obvious – check both sides) and are approved by the CA for all tournaments. We have four sets which are kept in the pavilion, in the third cupboard from the door, in grey tubes.

5. Dawson (from Australia). The Dawson 2000 is the new alternative to the Barlow GT, approved by the CA for major events and with a strong foothold at some clubs. The playing characteristics are said to be more akin to Jaques than those of the Barlow GT and they can be clearly identified by the Dawson 2000 stamp in the milling. We had one set each of first and second colours and have recently purchased three more sets of each. Two sets are in grey tubes in the same cupboard as the Barlows - the rest are still in their boxes but will be transferred to tubes when George has made up some more. Dawsons will be our tournament balls in the future and we will be investing in more sets.

At this point I must make the obvious point – please make sure you don't muddle up the Dawsons and the Barlow GTs in the tubes – check the maker's stamp.

I have not mentioned Sunshiny, the balls used at the MacRobertson Shield in Florida last year. The story behind them is far too complicated to go into here, but you will perhaps be relieved to know that we have not bought any and have no plans to do so.

Which balls should I use?

Golf croquet – use the Eclipse club balls (3.3)

Association croquet – for friendlies and most club competition games use the Eclipse club balls (3.3). You can use the Barlow GTs (4.2) or Dawsons (5) for club games if both players agree, but you are advised to check the hoop clearance before you play – if you are playing just after a tournament when the hoops have been set for the Jaques Eclipse tournament balls (3.4) you may find the hoops too narrow and the Barlows or Dawsons may actually stick in them. For team matches use the Eclipse tournament balls (3.4), Barlows or Dawsons according to taste.

We would encourage you to practise with the Barlows and Dawsons, as you will encounter them at other clubs and it will also improve your ability at running hoops.

Visiting groups and public events - use the Eclipse club balls (3.3), plus the Southport balls (2) and low grade Eclipse balls (3.2) if you need more.

Easter Egg – 18 April

Report by John Wheeler

The day started wet and inclement and finished wet and inclement. Five of us turned up for play. Tom Anderson and John Wheeler volunteered to play as a pair which gave each participant three games. George Collin took the trophy with three out of three; the others managed a win each. George Woolhouse won the plate by virtue of a superior points tally.

Towards the end of the morning our prospective members arrived, Pat and Lionel Mann. They must have wondered why there was ribald laughter when John played after George C's turn, John was puzzled too but it was revealed to him that he had forgotten the lift option.

Howard provided a splendid lunch of chilli and rice followed by fruit and cheese and biscuits. This was washed down with a glass or two of Jacob's Creek Shiraz Cabernet then coffee or tea. The final touch was that each diner received a packet of miniature Easter Eggs. Pat and Lionel were quite impressed and enjoyed the lunch and the company. Thank you Howard.

Pat and Lionel tried the fundamentals of croquet after lunch but there was no further tournament play.

	1	2	3	4	Wins	Pts	Pos
Wheeler & Anderson		W 14	L 6	L 4	1	24	3
Bottomley	L 1		L 7	W 14	1	22	4
Collin	W 10	W 14		W 9	3	33	1
Woolhouse	W 14	L 6	L 6		1	26	2

A public apology

It has come to my notice that during the May tournament certain comments were made to the persons who had volunteered to help with the catering, as a result of which they said that they would not be prepared to do the job again.

Well, no names, no pack drill, and no requests for resignation either, but let me take this opportunity to apologise wholeheartedly to the persons concerned on the club's behalf in the earnest hope that they might be prepared to reconsider their decision, and remind players that the people who help us out at tournaments give freely of their time and are entitled to our help, cooperation and, not least, good manners.

I have said it before, and will say it again, that it would be no bad thing if more Association players came forward to do a turn behind the lunch counter. We still need two people for Sunday September 19, so if you can help give Irene Davis a ring on 01525 210260.

John Bevington

12 June 2004

PS Don't forget the Home Internationals at Wrest Park on 19/20 June. The England team includes World Champion Robert Fulford, Mark Avery and David Maugham, who all played in the Great Britain team which won the MacRobertson Shield last year. It's not often you get the chance to see players of this quality.