



Wrest Park Silsoe Bedfordshire

February 2005

newsletter

Annual General Meeting 2005

The AGM will be at **7.30pm** on **Thursday 17 March** in the upstairs room at the Star & Garter in Silsoe.

1. Apologies for absence
 2. Minutes of 2004 AGM and matters arising
 3. Reports: **Chairman**
Secretary
Treasurer
CA Tournament Secretary
Club Tournament Secretary
Club Captain
Groundsman
 4. Election of officers
 5. Diary of events
 6. Facilities and equipment
 7. Coaching
 8. Catering
 9. EACF news
 10. SRI and EH news
 11. Any other business
- If you can't attend the meeting but want a topic discussed, let me know and I can raise it under AOB.
 - You will receive your own membership form. **Please make any corrections and return the form with your subscription before 1 April.**
 - The distinction between the membership categories is that all full members have keys to the equipment shed, whereas group members come as a group with a nominated keyholder. As a general rule Monday evenings are for golf croquet and Thursdays for Association. Other than that you can all play what you like whenever you like, but check the events diary in case the lawns have been booked, and always sign in at the mansion during working hours on weekdays.

Subscriptions for 2005

- **It is proposed that for 2005 the membership fees be raised by 50p.** Constitutionally speaking we should have a vote on this before the membership forms are sent out, so this year we will advertise the proposed rate for 2006 in the last newsletter of the year to allow time for any objections to be considered. If anyone has any views on this year's proposed rates could he or she contact Eric as soon as possible. The rates are:
Full membership £46.35 (£40 + £6.35 CA levy if applicable)
Junior membership £20
Group membership £14.00
- The green fee for visitors remains at £3.50 per person per session, and is payable by guests of members and by visiting groups. Please record these payments in the Visitor's Book in the pavilion. Full members can bring three guests free of charge during the season.

Events diary for 2005

April 17	Easter Egg
May 20-22	Handicap tournament
May 28-30	Wrest Park Garden Show
June 14	Dunstable U3A group booking (pm)
June 15	Lesley Spriggs group booking (pm)
June 22	Waterways group booking (pm)
June 26	Group members golf croquet singles
July 8-10	Advanced tournament
July 19	Dunstable U3A group booking (pm)
July 20	Waterways group booking (pm)
July 24	Group members golf croquet doubles
August 6-7	Advanced tournament
August 27-29	Wrest Park Craft Fair
August 31	Hertford U3A 2-5pm 4 lawns
September 7	Hertford U3A 10am-6pm 4 lawns
September 11	EACF club champions tournament
September 16-18	Handicap tournament

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

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

Award for Irene Davis

Irene Davis has received an award for service to sport from the Leighton Buzzard Sports Council, one of two awarded annually. It is believed to be the first time that this honour has gone to anyone connected with croquet and is a just reward for all Irene's efforts in setting up the Leighton-Linslade club and her fund-raising croquet marathons. Our congratulations.

Vacancy – catering rota manager

After several years organising the catering rota, for which much thanks, Irene Davis is taking a well-earned rest. We therefore need someone to take on the job. It involves taking the list of volunteers (which I assemble from the returned membership forms) and organising teams of two to do the preparing of lunch and tea on tournament days, of which there are 11 this year. If you are interested and want to know more, please call myself or Irene.

Why not try the one-ball game?

I include this exhortation as a way of trying to encourage any group members who want to dip their toes in the Association game. One-ball is just what it says: Association croquet singles played with one ball. If your ball hits the other ball you then play a croquet stroke followed by a continuation stroke. If you run a hoop you get another stroke. It isn't so very different to golf croquet, but you get the chance to try croquet strokes. It is good practice for hoop running and shooting at another ball, and the games don't take long.

You spread twenty tons, and what do you get?

In our case, the answer was not another day older and deeper in debt, but another five tons. We had the hollow-tining done by contractors on 9 November.



The hollow-tining machines in action.



The holes and cores.

As the weather was rather wet clearing the cores by machine was postponed for a couple of days, otherwise they would have been smeared over the holes which would have stopped the top dressing getting into them.

We had 20 tons of an 80:20 sand/loam top dressing mix delivered and applied it the following weekend. This was done by filling a spreading machine which uses a moving belt at the base of the hopper to drop the material onto the lawn. One fill is enough for a single run back and forth across the width of the lawns.



Clearing the cores and spreading the top dressing.

After applying the top dressing it was worked into the holes with a dragmat (like a large metal link doormat) which is pulled back and forth across the lawn.



Filling the spreader. In the background, two of the gang work in the dressing with the dragmat.

We ran out of top dressing before we reached the bottom of the lawns, so we had to order another five tons which were put down the following weekend.

As you can see it all took a lot of work, and our thanks to everyone who came to help (including the child labour). The photos were taken by John Wheeler and George Woolhouse.

Handicaps for high bisquers

by club handicapper Eric Audsley

Several high bisquers are now playing regularly, in particular in the high-bisquers knock-out competition (the De Grey Plate). The 'traditional' method of adjusting handicaps was to reduce the handicap of a tournament or event winner by a substantial amount. The 'modern' method is to fill in a handicap card starting with the index number corresponding to your handicap, and then changing the index figure by +10 for a win and -10 for a loss. Your handicap then goes up or down automatically once the index reaches the 'trigger point' for the new handicap.

Could I therefore ask all high bisquers to fill in and maintain a handicap card. If you are unsure how to do this ask Elaine Newman or any regular Association playing member. If you cannot provide evidence of your progress I shall have to adopt the traditional procedure. If you have not got a handicap card and/or an initial starting handicap please ask me.

The Wrest Park Garden Show

This event takes place on May 28-30. The organisers have written to us to ask if they can advertise the opportunity for the public to play in the same way that they do for the August Craft Fair. We have supported the Craft Fair for years – it is a useful money-spinner but it does require members to turn out from 1.30-5.30pm each day to set up all the equipment, supervise the players, collect the money, hand out leaflets, demonstrate the game and so on. You need about four persons on hand to be on the safe side.

The problem is that the Garden Show clashes with two major county events, so there will be few if any Association-playing members available to help. The only

way we can realistically support the event is if some group members are prepared to take the job on, one of them taking overall responsibility.

If anyone is interested I need to know by the AGM, as the event organisers will want to know if they can include croquet in their publicity material for the event.

2004 Annual Dinner

The venue for the dinner had to be changed at the last minute owing to the indisposition of the chef. Emails and phone calls flew thick and fast, and the guests all managed to assemble at Arthur's restaurant in Luton where by all accounts a good time was had, aided somewhat by a freedom of movement that allowed people to swap tables and chat to everyone. After the browsing and sluicing Tim presented all the trophies for the club competitions, as well as re-presenting the trophies for the League and national club competitions which the club won in 2004.

John Wheeler took the photographs.



Penny and David Woolley (backs to camera) with Eric Audsley, Vera Pearson, Irene Davis and Linda Potton.



Chairman Tim Brewer doubled up with Elaine Newman (and the trophy for winning the EACF leagues playoff) and Bryan Harral (with the EACF Beds & Herts league trophy).

New balls please

*When you go down to the lawns this year
You're in for a big surprise.
When you discover the croquet balls
You'll never believe your eyes.*

As Jaques balls are no longer made and not used for major tournaments we have had to re-equip with a different make approved by the CA, and have purchased a stock of Dawson 2000 balls which we will use for tournaments this season and thereafter. This

means that we can use our old tournament balls for normal club play and dispose of some of our old club balls (more on this later). Our stock of balls has therefore been reorganised as follows:

Make and mark:	Dawson 2000 International. Stamped on one of the 'poles' of each ball.
Sets:	7 1 st , 7 2 nd colour
Stored in:	Grey tubes.
Where are they:	In the cupboard halfway down the pavilion.
What are they used for:	Tournaments, CA events, club matches and club games. Can be used for golf croquet but need looking after.

Make and mark:	Barlow GT. G stamped on one of the 'poles' of each ball.
Sets:	2 1 st , 2 2 nd colour.
Stored in:	Black tubes.
Where are they:	In the ball locker in the pavilion.
What are they used for:	General use, also for practice if you are going to play in an event elsewhere (many clubs use them). Approved by CA for tournaments.

Make and mark:	Southport. Wide milling, distinct colours.
Sets:	2 1 st colour.
Stored in:	Black tubes.
Where are they:	In the ball locker in the pavilion.
What are they used for:	General use and public events. You are unlikely to come across them at other clubs.

Make and mark:	Jaques Eclipse. Our old tournament balls. Traces of the gold stamp may be visible. Surface may have small cracks.
Sets:	6 1 st , 6 2 nd colour.
Stored in:	White tubes.
Where are they:	In the ball locker in the pavilion.
What are they used for:	General use – enjoy them while you can. Note that as the hoops will be set for Dawsons, which are the right size, using Jaques (which are smaller) will not improve your hoop running skills.

Make and mark:	Jaques Eclipse. Our old club balls. Faded colours and considerable wear and tear.
Sets:	6 1 st , 6 2 nd colour.
Stored in:	Wooden boxes.
Where are they:	In the ball locker in the pavilion.
What are they used for:	Public events (e.g. the Craft Fair) and visiting groups. Any amount of abuse tolerated.

Please make sure you don't get the different types mixed up and make sure they go back in the right containers and in the right place. We have 3 extra 1st colour and 3 2nd colour sets of the oldest Jaques balls for disposal at £20 per set (including a free ball rack), and there are also some old racks available. If you want to buy some please contact George Collin (01582 458665) before the AGM, after which we will offer them to other clubs who have already expressed an interest.

Early season coaching course

Peter Newman is planning an Association croquet coaching course for beginners and improvers. He is proposing to run it on Tuesday mornings from 10-12, starting on 5 April and running for six weeks, and hopes to do follow-on work from previous courses (e.g. tactics at the start and use of bisques) alongside a beginners course. Please get in touch with Peter (01525 222446 or dpjnewman@tiscali.co.uk) if you would like to take part.

Any experienced players who would like to come and assist would be very welcome.

If you are interested in coaching but cannot manage the proposed time let Peter know and he may be able to rearrange it to accommodate more people.

EACF/NT tournaments 2005

The East Anglian Croquet Federation/National Trust tournaments are at the following properties:

Melford Hall, Long Melford, near Sudbury, Suffolk

Blickling Hall, near Aylsham, Norfolk

Ickworth House, Horringer, near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Short Croquet (14 point handicap)

June 26 Melford Hall (Heat 1)

July 10 Ickworth (Heat 2)

July 24 Blickling Hall (Heat 3)

Sept 4 Ickworth (Final)

Golf croquet

July 9 Ickworth (Doubles)

Sept 4 Ickworth (Singles)

I have full details for anyone who is interested.

Can we start playing yet?

You can, but you must take the lawns as you find them. Try to avoid smearing any worm casts and use the oldest balls. The top dressing is still evident, so you may need to wipe your mallet head to keep the sand off it.

Corrections and clarifications

In the last issue I inadvertently promoted Bryan Harral from runner-up to winner of the B level trophy at the EACF Champions Day last September. The event was in fact won by Arthur Reed of Watford, as the latest issue of the EACF newsletter makes clear.

The Golf Croquet Selectors Weekend, held the previous month, was won by Ivor Brand. The final order was Ivor Brand, Tom Weston, David Hopkins, Chris Sheen, Roy Ware, Nelson Morrow, Richard Brand and Don Beck.

Golf croquet competitions and coaching course

This year there is an All England golf croquet handicap competition for individuals and two competitions for groups, both of which are advertised in the CA Fixtures book. Anyone wanting to organise an entry from Wrest Park should let me know as soon as possible.

I also have details of a ladies-only doubles day organised by Thames Valley CC at Abingdon on 12 August – please call me if you are interested.

There is also a CA golf croquet coaching course at the Leighton-Linslade club on 24 April – details from Richard Keighley (01296 681235)

Lawn bookings – a reminder

Could I ask any members wishing to book the lawns for a group visit to let me know (a) how many lawns they need and (b) what time they intend to start and finish. I can then put this information on the calendar which will allow any other members who might want to play at the same time to see at a glance if it is possible or not.

New huts for old

Some years ago we took over an old wooden hut in the fenced yard by the path near lawn 5. It contains bags of fertiliser, old chairs, the dragmat, fertiliser spreader and other essentials. We are going to replace it with something larger, but as it is a non-standard size we had to get some special quotes. Unfortunately one firm misread 274x213 cm as 274x213m and assumed that we were contemplating a total makeover. They sent an illustrated brochure – the photo shows their “Colonial” model*.



The firm also offer an advanced dynamic GPS system (accurate to 1 micron) with sensors built in to the court surface, mallet heads, hoops and balls which relay signals to an array of receivers concealed in trees planted around the courts. Players can interrogate the system via a button in the mallet handle, and decisions are transmitted through speakers and displays concealed in the trunk. A boon to referees, and not before time.

All data is routed to a central server so that games can be displayed diagrammatically in real time on the plasma screens in the bar area. A constantly updated expert knowledge base provides the latest rulings (invaluable for golf croquet players).

Facilities on offer for the groundsman include a fully automatic ride-through mower wash with foam scrub, full wax and choice of shampoo.

We have yet to discuss the building proposal with English Heritage, but suspect that the process of obtaining Scheduled Monument Consent for a modern interpretation of the pre-Raphaelite/William Morris school might take a considerable time.

* as featured at the Rotorua club, New Zealand.