



newsletter

Annual Dinner

The dinner will be on Friday 25 November, 7.30 for 8pm, and will be held at Wrest Park in the Institute dining room. Car parking is beyond the mansion on the right. Walk across the yard and go in through the door under the colonnade.



We must apologise for the late notice of this event. All members and their partners are invited, and I would be grateful if group members in receipt of the newsletter could tell the others. Our chef is David Lucas, who has worked at the Savoy and elsewhere. Please note that the bar closes for good the night before, so you will have to bring all your own drinks. The cost is £25.

Book your places by telephoning (no emails, please) Rod Ashwell on 01582 504536 before Friday 18 November, quoting your choice of main course:

Menu

Éventail de melon façon de Montmartre

Flower of melon with strawberry jus and fan of orange

Entrecôte de boeuf Henri V

Roast loin of beef encrusted with mustard seed and horseradish, served with stuffed tomatoes and pommes Château

Feuilletté de marron Oubliesk

Puff pastry parcel filled with chestnut purée, grapes and spinach, served with a chive cream sauce

Tarte aux pommes Gaelic

Caramel apple pie flavoured with cinnamon, with Cornish clotted cream

Coffee

The individual club trophies will be presented at the dinner, so if you are currently in possession of one of these please bring it with you or, if you are not able to come yourself, make arrangements to give it to someone who is.

Annual subscriptions for 2006

In the last few years we have sent out all the membership forms for the coming year with the notice of the AGM, and the forms reflected the proposed subscription for the year. This obviously made it difficult if the proposed subscription was not agreed at the AGM, as members might have already filled in their forms and sent off their cheques.

We are therefore publishing the proposed subscriptions for 2006 now. If anyone has any objection they should put this to the Treasurer in writing before the end of the year. The Committee, who meet at the end of January, will resolve any outstanding issues and the subscription appearing on next year's membership form will be taken as having been previously agreed to by the membership.

The proposed subscriptions for 2006 are:

Full membership £40.50 (to which will be added the CA Levy. This was £6.35 last year. The figure for 2006 is not yet available, but it might rise to, say, £6.50)

Group membership £14.50

Green fee for visitors £3.60

Junior membership (18 or under, or full-time student) likely to remain at £20

Autumn lawn maintenance

The lawns had a light N-S scarification prior to the application of the autumn fertiliser, and on 29/30 October they were all scarified diagonally using the ¾" reel. This generated a prodigious amount of material – possibly the biggest heap ever. We were lucky that the rain predicted for Sunday afternoon failed to arrive; had it done so it is unlikely that the job would have been finished in time as we were rather short-handed.

Club competition winners

Steel Cup (Advanced) Winner: Howard Bottomley
Runner-up: Bryan Harral

Archer Cup (Handicap) Winner: *awaited*
Runner-up:

Ashwell Cup (All England h'cap) Winner: Peter Newman
Runner-up: Geoff Strutt

Thomas Philip Earl de Grey Cup (B level) Winner: Tim Brewer
Runners-up: Terry Mahoney and Geoff Strutt

14 point advanced Winner: *awaited*
Runner-up:

De Grey Plate (14 pt h'cap) Winner: *awaited*
Runner-up:

The highlight was Howard and Bryan's battle in the Steel Cup. Howard, who was through to the final in one

half and playing Bryan Herral in the other semi-final, takes up the story:

Saturday, the semi-final, beautiful weather, Howard starts brightly going to 4-back and makes two peels of his triple before failing at 2-back. Bryan gets in and makes steady progress with Howard passive and shooting poorly. Bryan gets to the stick with his second ball with good breaks, whilst Howard gets the innings only to be thwarted by Bryan's good shooting and completion of the game with a 2-ball two hoop finish to win +5.

Sunday, the final, a cold night brought heavy dew and Bryan continued where he left off with Howard going off the lawn twice. With Bryan at 4-back after a couple of turns Howard makes some hesitant progress before failing at 2-back, again with a perfect break. Bryan picks up and makes his way calmly to the stick. Howard hit the lift and went through rover before pegging Bryan out. Bryan makes two hoops as Howard re-groups before getting a wired long rush to 4-back. Bryan elects to lay up and a good rush saw Howard 2-ball it through penult to sneak victory +2 (phew).

It would have been worth watching, which is an argument for a finals day or even weekend. The fact that we never seem to get this organised may be partly due to changing weather patterns prolonging the playing season.

Beds & Herts League tables

Notice the plural. The situation was complicated by Meldreth, who were unable to play all their matches. The official table, with Meldreth's matches left out, looks like this:

	P	W	D	L	Pts
Watford	5	4	0	1	8
Wrest Park	5	4	0	1	8
Enfield	5	3	1	1	7
Letchworth	5	1	2	2	4
Colworth	5	1	0	4	2
St Albans	5	0	1	4	1

As Watford beat Wrest Park they became this year's winners. The unofficial table, with Meldreth's matches included, is subtly different:

	P	W	D	L	Pts
Watford	5	4	0	1	8
Wrest Park	5	4	0	1	8
Enfield	6	3	2	1	8
Letchworth	6	2	2	2	6
Colworth	6	2	0	4	4
St Albans	6	0	2	4	2
Meldreth	4	0	2	2	2

This left a three-way tie. Watford had beaten Wrest Park, who had beaten Enfield, who had beaten Watford. But neither Watford nor Wrest Park had played Meldreth. If those matches had been played and we had squeezed out one point more than Watford then we would have won. It was that close.

Watford went on to win the EACF league playoff at Colchester on October 1, beating Bury St Edmunds (Essex/Suffolk) and Norwich (Northern).

WPCC fail to crack Eggheads

Those of you with a weakness for TV quiz shows will know of one called Eggheads which goes out on BBC2. The Eggheads are an *überteam* made up of various champions from other quizzes, and you put up your own team to take them on. Vic Rees thought that the club could muster a worthy challenge, and after an initial telephone audition and a further audition in the production company's Soho studio we were invited to take part. The filming took place at the BBC Television Centre in London on 24 February and the programme was eventually transmitted on Tuesday 18 October.



Standing L-R: The Eggheads Chris, Daphne, CJ, Kevin and Judith, together with Tom Anderson
Seated L-R: John Bevington, Vic Rees, George Collin, John Wheeler, Howard Bottomley

When the series starts the prize is £1,000 and increases each round by £1,000 until the Eggheads get beaten. We stood to win £12,000. Had we done so you would have known by now (stupid grins, new mowers, champagne bar at the July tournament, etc), but we gave them a good run for their money and even had them calling for more questions.

It was left to George, our sole individual winner, and Vic to try and overcome overwhelming odds in the final round. Just don't mention Marble Arch.

Another triple (by George)!

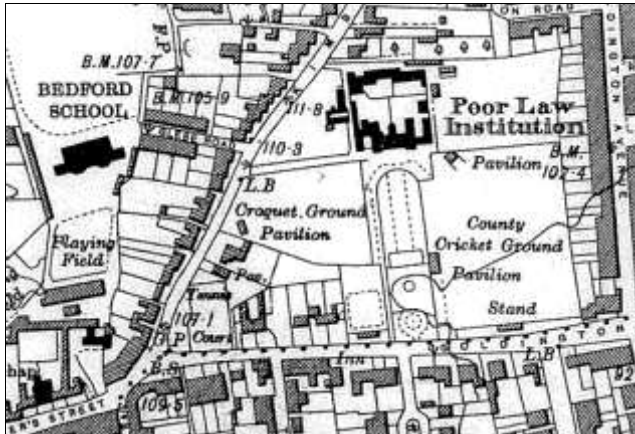
Lacking the official report (now available through the latest copy of Face East, the EACF newsletter) I was previously unable to record yet another first competitive triple, this time by George Woolhouse while playing Martin Leech at the EACF Champions Day here on 11 September, just after narrowly missing a triple attempt against David Kitson. George's scores were +24, +24 TP and +23. No bling, sadly, because it was not an official CA event.

Leighton Linslade win EACF Golf Croquet League final

Newport hosted the final on 8 October between Downham Market and Leighton Linslade, the winners of the northern and southern area competitions. Leighton Linslade won convincingly, the team consisting of Len and Eve Buckingham, John Cundell and Una Pengelly, all regulars at Wrest Park. Our congratulations, and thanks to Face East for the news.

Notes on Bedford Croquet Club

Bedford Croquet Club was the second croquet club to be founded in this country, shortly after Worthing which started in May 1865. The club was in the middle of the town, situated off the Kimbolton Road, and its location is shown on this 1927 map.



Wrest Park may feel itself blessed with six lawns. Bedford had nine. In 1975 John Wheeler and the late Norman Davren visited the site of the club (which had disbanded some years before) and recovered the framed plan of the lawns and two honours boards.



Norman Davren with the plan of the Bedford courts

John also managed to take a photo of the club pavilion, which was burnt down the following April.



The Bedford Croquet Club pavilion

The club had a proud record. Bedford won the Inter Club Championship in 1908, 1910, 1912, 1913, 1922 and 1936. The club also won the Longman Cup in 1936 and, as Bedfordshire, won the Inter Counties in 1936, 1946 and (with Huntingdonshire) in 1947. They came second in 1923 after a tie with Surrey. In 1926 Mrs C.E. Boote of Bedford won the All England Handicap off 3½.



Captain Duberley in play at Bedford in the 1930s.

One name will always be synonymous with Bedford croquet. Dorothy Dyne Steel, always referred to as DD, was born in 1885. She won the Ladies Field Cup four times (the first in 1914), the Open Championship four times, the Ladies Championship 15 times and the Presidents Cup six times, as well as playing in the MacRobertson Shield on three occasions. It is a stunning record. After the war her hands became crippled with arthritis and her last success was in the Mixed Doubles Championship in 1947, but she continued as a tournament manager for some time afterwards.

In 1933 Miss Steel won the event for the best ten players, known variously as the Champions or Beddow Cup, for the fourth time, as the result of which the cup became her property. The following year it was replaced with the President's Cup, which she also won. DD Steel died in 1965, aged eighty.



D.D. Steel, seated second left, with the 1934 Presidents Cup players

It is hard to establish when the Bedford club actually disbanded, and one can't help but wonder as to the circumstances that led to its demise.

With photos by John Wheeler and material borrowed from R.D.C. Pritchard's The History of Croquet (Cassell 1981).

John Bevington

4 November 2005