

Wrest Park Silsoe Bedfordshire

July 2007

newsletter



Heavy weather - the lawns at 5.35pm on Thursday 14th June, with forty hours to go before the start of the Home Internationals.

Match results

Inter Club v Jersey (away)

19 May

Lost 3-4

Wrest Park	Jersey	WP score
Ben Ashwell (-1)	Matt Burrow (-2)	-5
Rod Ashwell (0)	Tony Le Moignan (-2)	
Bryan Harral (1)	Kevin Garrad (3)	+13
Tom Anderson (2½)	Sarah Burrow (-1)	-26
Ben Ashwell (-1)	Matt Burrow (-2)	+26 TP
Rod Ashwell (0)	Tony Le Moignan (-2)	-26 TP
Bryan Harral (1)	Sarah Burrow (-1)	+2
Tom Anderson (2½)	Kevin Garrad (3)	-21

Wrest Park's first ever overseas fixture is described by Bryan Harral

All six of us met at Luton airport: Rod, Ben, Tom, Judy, Bryan and Sitar Case. Sitar Case, looking for all the world like a large red onion, had been recruited to carry the mallets and Tom's trainers, and had to travel in the hold covered in bubble-wrap. Excitement at our first overseas fixture carried us through the queue at check-in, Ben's breakfast and on to the departure lounge only to find an empty space where the plane should have been. Only an hour's delay and we were off. Ben phoned ahead and we were met and whisked to the club in glorious sunshine. The lawns are at Les

Quennevais playing fields near St Brelade, close to the airport. Sarah Burrow gave a welcoming speech and play began. Facilities? Oh, nothing much, just a superb clubhouse and four immaculate lawns provided and maintained free of charge!

The doubles had Ben and Rod playing Tony Le Moignan and Matthew Burrow, and in the singles Tom played Sarah and Bryan played Kevin Garrad. Bryan won, Tom lost. One-all at lunch with the doubles being hotly contested - that's the weather! After a delicious lunch, (prepared by Tony's wife Paula) Bryan played Sarah and Tom played Kevin, and still the doubles raged on, but it did provide a memorable episode - the peg straightening incident.

Ben and Rod's balls were almost cross-pegged, but the peg was leaning over at a slight angle making a few millimetres difference to the amount either ball could see. Ben and Rod asked Sarah for the peg to be straightened, and without a moment's hesitation, and before their opponents could react, she whipped out the peg and put it back vertically. Tony and Matthew protested, laws were produced, the ROT (Tom) was summoned, but it was too late - in the end, Tom decided she was right. Ben and Rod eventually lost after four and a half hours! Bryan won against Sarah, so at this point it was two-all. Tom then lost to Kevin, but Ben went on to beat Matthew with a triple. Three-all at tea.

The outcome of the match hung on the result of Rod's singles game against Tony, which Tony won with another triple. Once all the excitement had died down, we were treated to a sumptuous evening meal of beer, wine and seafood at the Old Smugglers' Inn. We then went to our respective hosts for the night, Ben, Rod and Bryan to Sarah's, and Tom and Judy to a farm with a lot of cockerels - no lie-in for them. Before catching the plane home on Sunday morning Ben, Rod and I were treated to a quick tour of the old German fortifications and a walk on a spectacular beach - deserted in May but no doubt packed in July.

At the airport Ben and Rod were able to see exactly where the weights are in their mallet heads, courtesy of a kindly and not too busy X-ray machine operator - what will they find to blame next? Altogether a very enjoyable trip and our thanks to everyone we met at Jersey Croquet Club for their kindness and hospitality.



Here's looking at you, kit. A young mink photographed by John Wheeler during the July tournament.

Mary Rose v Pendle and Craven (away) 17 June Lost 1-5

Wrest Park	Pendle and Craven	WP score
Bryan Harral (1)	Robert Essler (2½)	-9
George Collin (2½)	Peter Wilson (3)	
Tom Anderson (2½)	Roger Schofield (4)	<i>unfinished</i>
Eric Audsley (3)	Liz Wilson (3½)	-17
Bryan Harral (1)	Robert Essler (2½)	-8
George Collin (2½)	Peter Wilson (3)	+15
Tom Anderson (2½)	Liz Wilson (3½)	-17
Eric Audsley (3)	Roger Schofield (4)	-12

First south by plane, and now north by train. George and Bryan, who had driven up with Tom, were able to meet Eric on the platform at Skipton station on Saturday evening and they made their way back to their overnight accommodation at a pub. There was a minor crisis next morning when they came down for breakfast earlier than expected, which set off the burglar alarm. In trying to turn it off the landlord then managed to activate the fire alarm as well. Breakfast was eventually prepared and eaten, and the team set off for the club in the village of Earby, a few miles to the south-west just across the Lancashire border. The story of the renaissance of the Pendle club was described in issue 296 of the CA Gazette. The lawns are good and there is an impressive new clubhouse with bar and changing rooms.

The match itself is perhaps best forgotten. In the doubles Bryan pegged out one of the opponent balls but

then failed to get a perfect wiring and Pendle hit in to make the last two hoops. Tom's morning game was pegged down after three hours with the clips on 1-back and 2-back v 1-back and 3-back. The team were treated to an excellent lunch, and George recorded our first win sometime after 4 o'clock, but by 4.30 Eric and Tom had both lost, and when Bryan lost half an hour later Tom's earlier game was mercifully abandoned.

Beds & Herts League v Letchworth (home) 23 June Drew 3-3

Wrest Park	Letchworth	WP score
Bryan Harral (1)	Duncan Hector (-1)	-4
John Martin (20)	George Woolhouse (3½)	
Ray Pearcy (20)	Robert Staddon (9)	+11T
Cliff Hayes (20)	David Clancey (20)	
Bryan Harral (1)	Duncan Hector (-1)	+10
John Martin (20)	George Woolhouse (3½)	-13
Ray Pearcy (20)	Robert Staddon (9)	+9T
Cliff Hayes (20)	David Clancey (20)	-10T

Beds & Herts League v Colworth (home) 30 June Drew 2-2

Wrest Park	Colworth	WP score
Bryan Harral (1)	Arthur Weightman (2½)	-6T
Geoff Strutt (8)	Steve Jones (10)	
Bryan Harral (1)	Arthur Weightman (2½)	-2T
Elaine Newman (18)	Trevor Wilkins (8)	
Geoff Strutt (8)	Steve Jones (10)	+10
Elaine Newman (18)	Trevor Wilkins (8)	+8

Longman Cup v Merton (home) 1 July Won 6-1

Wrest Park	Merton	WP score
Geoff Strutt (7)	Nick Furse (6)	+14T
David Morris (22)	Colin Whiting (16)	
Steve Jones (10)	Colin Percival (11)	+9
Elaine Newman (18)	Peter Gunn (8)	+21
Geoff Strutt (7)	Nick Furse (6)	-9
Steve Jones (10)	Peter Gunn (8)	+11
Elaine Newman (18)	Colin Percival (11)	+19
David Morris (22)	Colin Whiting (16)	+3T

Report by Geoff Strutt

We had mixed weather with scattered showers in the morning, thinning out in the afternoon. 3½ hour time limits were bad news but compulsory in the Longman! Some of us had lunch about 2pm which meant we were suffering from lack of sustenance.

Luckily this did not show in the outcome of the morning's play which was a clean sweep for Wrest Park (doubles and 2 singles). Geoff helped David to 4-back while making a couple of hoops before starting his own progress. This proved effective as, luckily, Merton could not get going. Elaine used her bisques well to overcome Peter Gunn and Steve got the better of Colin P with a combination of 'hitting and splitting'.

In the afternoon, only Geoff failed to be a winner. He got black to rover before getting marooned on 6 and 1-back with blue. Meanwhile, Nick found his rhythm and went round with red. After threatening a peg-out which had to

be abandoned he managed to get yellow round as well by taking opportunities presented by Geoff's mistakes. David ran out of bisques and was being caught by Colin W when time was called. Steve repeated his morning's success and was the first 2nd round game to finish. Elaine, with fewer bisques than in her first game, still managed to slaughter Colin P.

Longman Cup v Norwich (away)

14 July **Lost 3-4** (two games conceded)

Wrest Park	Norwich	WP score
Steve Jones (10)	Neil Chalmers (6)	+9T
Elaine Newman (18)	Harry Bruford (11)	
David Woolley (7)	Alan Ringer (8)	+4
Steve Jones (10)	Alan Ringer (8)	-9
Elaine Newman (18)	Harry Bruford (11)	-9
David Woolley (7)	Feargal Smith (3½)	+10

Report by Steve Jones

Elaine Newman, David Woolley and I journeyed to Norwich to play them in the Longman Cup in an agreed 3-man team fixture. They actually played with four players, one of the morning players standing down in the afternoon to allow the fourth to have a game. In the morning, David played Alan Ringer, a rapidly improving 8 (so it proved in the afternoon) and managed to peg out, winning +4. Elaine and I played in the doubles against Neil Chalmers and Harry Bruford, with five and a half bisques. I managed to shepherd Elaine around to rover, expending two and a half bisques on the way, while I had progressed to 6. With three bisques to get me the rest of the way around, we should have been a shoo-in. I used one bisque to get the innings back, but almost immediately had to use another one to keep the break going. Being so far ahead and with well over an hour left to play we decided to keep the last one for insurance and ended up playing out time, winning +9 on time. So, 2-nil up to Wrest Park at lunchtime.

In the afternoon, David played Fergal Smith, Elaine played Harry Bruford and I played Alan. Alan quickly got his first ball into the inward half, with his first six hoops gained virtually on a 2-ball break! I used a bisque to try to get the innings back, gaining one hoop. But then Alan immediately hit in and proceeded to get even further ahead. In the meantime, Elaine took an early lead and looked to be doing well. Unfortunately Harry started hitting in, and slowly her bisques were used up. Eventually she was forced to take her last bisque but still looked to be in control and ahead. However Harry hit in and started motoring, and she ended up losing -9.

Back at my match, Alan got his first ball to rover, and blobbed penult, with my first ball on 6. I decided that this was as good a chance of using my last bisque as any and I shot softly at my partner ball (a good 20 feet away) and hit in! The sensible thing would have been to roquet his ball in the jaws of 6 from behind the hoop, effectively peeling him. So I tried to hit in very softly from in front of the hoop - the result was the ball rolling four inches behind the hoop and impossible to take croquet from to get the hoop position. So I had to use my bisque after all, and got my ball around to rover. But, of course, the inevitable happened and Alan hit in. It looked all over, but then, with one ball on the peg, Alan blobbed rover with his second ball, with my ball for rover nearby. So I carefully ran rover and managed to peg his first ball out.

My second ball was for 2, making it a long shot but giving me a fractional chance to snatch victory. I had left Alan's second ball near rover at what I considered an impossible position to run the hoop. I didn't see it (heading back to my seat) but he ran rover, apparently with an audacious jump shot, and then missed the peg. I managed to get around to 5, all the while putting Alan into corners, and he shot twice more at the peg and missed. Then, with me laid up near 5 with his ball in corner 2, he changed tack, shot at my balls and hit in. - 9, but at least I had made him fight for it.

I was aware that David was ahead in his game, and so we sat down to watch. David's second ball was on 6, and he had just reached rover with his first. His opponent was on rover and 2, but David still had a half-bisque in reserve. David then blobbed 6, and Fergal hit in. It looked like he was going to go round, and then he blobbed what looked like a simple 5. David split him up and joined up, but Fergal hit in again, ran 5, and then made a hash of 6, blobbing again. David ran 6, and then there was a short period of keeping Fergal apart. Finally, David got a chance to make a break, and proceeded to go all the way to the peg, but not without a few scares. Several times in his break, he got a bit out of position, and played some very brave shots which came off, a few of them being longish hoop shots. Then after running rover with his second ball, he roqueted his partner ball into the peg. Fergal was not joined up and failed to hit in. David calmly pegged out from 10 feet.

(Even though we won on the day, the fact that we could only raise a team of three meant that two games had to be conceded, hence the overall loss - Ed.)

Home Internationals 16/17 June

England won as expected, but second place remained in the balance until 9.35pm when Martin Murray won the third game against William Prichard to give Scotland the win and relegating Wales to third ahead of Ireland. The only witnesses were Scotland's Jonathan Kirby (who admitted he had perhaps been unwise to turn down the earlier offer of a lift) and John Bevington, caretaker for the day, who had briefly been under the impression that the mass departure at the end of the previous game had signalled the end of the tournament.



L-R: Ian Lines, Sam Tudor and partner, Robert Fulford, Jack Wicks, Keith Aiton, Ailsa Lines, David Maugham, Ian Burrige (on grass), Chris Williams, outplayer Martin Murray, Jonathan Kirby.

The tournament began with England v Scotland and Ireland v Wales. Robert Fulford began with a sextuple against Keith Aiton, lost the next game after having done four peels of a second sextuple, and won the last

with a triple. We were wondering whether this was the first sextuple to be completed at Wrest Park, but Martin Murray said later he remembered Paul Hands completing one in an Inter Club match many years ago. Perhaps someone can confirm this. England beat Scotland 4-1 and Wales beat Ireland 3-2.

The next round was England v Ireland and Scotland v Wales, and this was well under way when the rain came back with a vengeance and play had to be abandoned shortly after 5 o'clock with several games having to be pegged down. Manager Chris Williams issued instructions for play to start at 9am the next day and everyone left to dry out.

Sunday turned out sunny and warm, to everyone's relief. Chris started the next round (imposing 2½ hour time limits), in which England beat Wales 5-0 and Scotland beat Ireland 3-2. It was then left to conclude the second round games, during which Fulford completed his second sextuple in the third game to beat Ireland's Simon Williams (and that on lawn 2, complete with its own bog extending some distance from the 4th corner). England beat Ireland 4-1, and Scotland finally beat Wales 3-2. Martin Murray's win was particularly impressive as in the previous game he had walked onto the lawn with little time remaining and levelled the match with a triple, in front of one of Wrest Park's biggest and most star-studded crowds.

Golf croquet singles 24 June

Report by co-manager Richard Keighley

Flaming June produced another day of gloom and showers for this event which attracted nine entrants. A draw was made and the field divided into unequal blocks of 5 and 4 on a one plays all basis. Games were timed as even worse weather had been predicted. In the Red Block, Linda Potton emerged as the clear winner with 3 wins, but the runner up was declared to be Peggy Kenny on countback as 3 players had recorded 2 wins each. In the Blue Block, Richard Keighley won his 3 games and Sally Clay was runner up with 2 wins. The highlight of lunch was a fine cake provided by Margaret Marshall. In the afternoon, the form book was turned upside down as Sally beat Linda by a convincing 7 hoops to 2, whilst Richard's early 4-1 lead was pegged back and overtaken by Peggy. The final was closely contested and reached 5 hoops all. Peggy then started to discard items of clothing at hoops 11 and 12 and the only male present was hoping that the game would go to the extra hoop. It was not to be and Peggy was presented with the trophy as a worthy winner.

Preliminary block play

	P	W	L	+	-	Diff
Linda Potton	4	3	1	24	20	+4
Peggy Kenny	4	2	2	25	19	+6
Judi Priestley	4	2	2	21	17	+4
Ronnie Richardson	4	2	2	20	24	-4
Margaret Marshall	4	1	3	14	24	-10
Richard Keighley	3	3	0	19	12	+7
Sally Clay	3	2	1	15	14	+1
Yvonne Banks	3	1	2	12	16	-4
Vera Pearson	3	0	3	15	19	-4

Knockout

Linda Potton	}	Sally Clay 7-2	}	Peggy Kenny 7-5
Sally Clay				
Richard Keighley	}	Peggy Kenny 5-4		
Peggy Kenny				

Advanced Tournament 6-8 July



Mark Fawcett, winner of the top block, with Gina Lewis

In marked contrast to recent weeks the sun shone and it remained fine all weekend, with a stiff breeze on Friday and a very light shower on Saturday. Manager Eric Audsley had split the players into three blocks based on handicap, opponents being mainly drawn from the same block but with some flexibility at the edges depending on individual performance. We welcomed some new faces (Pauline Reid from New Zealand was combining a holiday with some croquet tournaments) and old friends (Cliff Jones, whose daughter came over on Friday bringing with her a pair of elegant and aristocratic borzois who charmed everyone they met).

The top block was won by Mark Fawcett (½) of Roehampton, who won 8/9 and had beaten Rod Ashwell, who with 7/8 was his nearest challenger. Ken Pickett from Ealing won the middle block with 7/9, ahead of James Skelton (6/8), and Pauline Reid and George Collin who both had 5/9. Sylvia Steer from Bowdon was the other winner with 6/9, ahead of Gina Lewis and Ian Mantle who each had 4/8.



Five characters in search of a break: Sylvia Steer, Pauline Reid, Cliff Jones, Peter McDermott and Ken Pickett

By lunchtime on Friday Pauline must have been wishing she was elsewhere. Having played George Collin, who wasted little time in winning +21, she then played Alain Giraud who won +7 in spectacular fashion with a straight triple, thus gaining his gold award. Cliff managed a triple on each day, starting with +26TP against Nigel Polhill on Friday. On Saturday he did a triple on Mark Fawcett but lost -14, and then set up a sextuple leave against John Bevington, but this enterprising plan became unstuck when he realised that he had yet to go through hoop 6. Order was restored on Sunday with another +26TP against Bill Sidebottom

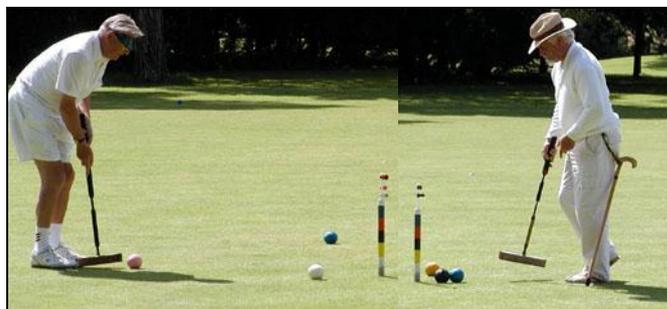
As is so often the case at Wrest Park, the croquet was a backdrop to the activities of the local wildlife. For most of Friday the lawns were occupied by a large number of swallows who were tearing back and forth at high speed and zero feet. They were feeding on small yellow insects (probably yellow mayflies) and it was not uncommon for a bird to suddenly swoop up and appear to feed another in mid-air, twittering all the while.



Watch the birdie: swallows caught at an exposure of 1/1000 sec

The resident kestrels were busy finding and delivering a succession of small mammals to their noisy chicks. Either they or a sparrowhawk were responsible for a mess of pigeon feathers, blood and entrails which had to be cleared off lawn 4 on Sunday morning.

There was more drama off the lawns. John Bevington got back to his car on Friday evening to find he had accidentally switched on the sidelights on in the morning and had a flat battery. After walking back to the village and phoning the AA he went to the Star & Garter to find Nigel Polhill and Alain Giraud also waiting for the AA after having locked the keys in their car. A couple of hours later George Collin turned up to report that the AA were in the car park, so he ferried us all down the drive to find that the locked car had already been freed with the aid of an airbag and a piece of wire. When John asked the patrolman if he could attend to his car as well he was initially told this would not be possible and he would have to wait, so George volunteered the use of his jump leads and manoeuvred his car into position. When the patrolman saw this (the car was only 20 yards away) he realised that it might be more sensible to show willing, produced his heavy duty starter pack and fired up the car in a matter of seconds.



Ken Pickett and Cliff Jones go for a simultaneous peg-out. Photos by Elaine Newman.

When clearing up on Sunday evening we found a piece of paper near lawn 1 which revealed that one player had been putting his spare time to good effect by jotting down thoughts on technique and tactics. #8 was to do with wiring, while #9 simply stated "Hoop approaches – concentrate entirely on your ball". One player already aware of this was James Skelton (who accounted for three players from the top block – one to watch). John Bevington had invited him to try a stop shot approach to the first hoop from corner 1, and he responded by getting his ball six inches dead in front and going to rover with a contact leave, eventually winning +18.



Manager Eric Audsley catches up on the paperwork during his Saturday evening game against Gordon Weir

Diary

August 4-5	Advanced tournament
August 13	Dunstable U3A (6 lawns 9.30-6pm)
August 14	B&H League: Meldreth v St Albans
August 14	Amphill 41 club (6 lawns, evening)
August 25-27	Wrest Park Craft Fair
September 1	Amphill 41 club (afternoon)
September 5	Hertford U3A group (4 lawns all day)
September 7-9	Handicap tournament
September 22	EACF leagues playoff
September 23	EACF Champions Day
October 6-7	CA Club Finals weekend

- **Anyone organising home matches or any other events must let me know the dates as soon as they are confirmed.** We have to inform EH who is using the lawns and when, so please tell me before writing anything on the calendar in the pavilion.