



newsletter

Wrest Park win the Beds & Herts League

Wrest Park won this year's Beds & Herts League, winning four and drawing three of their seven matches to end the season unbeaten with 11 points. Everything depended on the result of the match between Letchworth and Watford on 7th September – had Letchworth won they would have had the same number of points but would have won more games. In the event they lost, to leave us the clear winners. The full League table can be seen on the EACF website. Wrest Park now goes through to the EACF Leagues playoff at Colchester on 27th September, with the chance of qualifying for next year's Secretary's Shield competition if we win. Congratulations all round, especially to Bryan Harral who arranged the matches and led from the front, winning 75% of his games.

Beds & Herts League v Watford (home) 7 August **Won 4-2**

Wrest Park	Watford	WP score
Bryan Harral (1½)	John Smallbone (6)	+3T
David Morris (18)	Janet Lewis (9)	
Elaine Newman (14)	Quiller Barrett (7)	+9T
Ray Percy (16)	Peter Chadwick (18)	
Bryan Harral (1½)	John Smallbone (6)	+4
Elaine Newman (14)	Quiller Barrett (7)	-3
Ray Percy (16)	Janet Lewis (9)	+13
David Morris (18)	Peter Chadwick (18)	-1T

Beds & Herts League v Meldreth (home) 21 August **Won 3-2**

Wrest Park		WP score
Bryan Harral (1½)	Chris van Essen (3)	+1T
Cliff Hayes (20)	Alec Osborne (12)	
Geoff Strutt (8)	Robert Skeen (9)	-1T
Bryan Harral (1½)	Chris van Essen (3)	+20
Geoff Strutt (8)	Alec Osborne (12)	+13
Cliff Hayes (20)	Robert Skeen (9)	-4T

Report by Bryan Harral

On a rain-free day Wrest Park played their last match of the 2008 campaign. Bryan and Cliff came from behind to snatch victory in the doubles – Cliff making a crucial angled hoop at the end. Geoff continued his disastrous Nottingham week form and lost to Robert by one on time. However the yoghurt at lunchtime (which he wanted to eat with a knife and fork for some reason) turned him into a Usain Bolt and he ran away from his next opponent – luckily doping tests don't cover yogurt. The win gave Wrest Park the lead in the Beds and Herts league, and we now have to wait to see if Letchworth or St Albans can catch us.

EACF Beds & Herts League player records

	Doubles			Singles		
	P	W	L	P	W	L
Bryan Harral	7	7	0	5	2	3
Cliff Hayes	4	4	0	4	3	1
David Morris	5	4	1	5	2	3
Ray Percy	4	4	0	4	1	3
Geoff Strutt	2	2	0	4	1	3
Elaine Newman	3	2	1	1	0	1
Tim Brewer	1	1	0	1	1	0

Our Golf croquet team, playing in the Western division of the EACF League, were less successful and finished in sixth and last place without winning a match. The matches against Watford, Northampton and Stony Stratford were lost by narrow margins, and had they won one more game against Watford it would have given them the match and put them level on one win with local rivals Leighton-Linslade. However even this would not have been enough to avoid the wooden spoon, as Leighton's only win was against Wrest Park. Never mind – experience, as they say, is cheap at any price, and many thanks to Judi Priestley for organising the teams. Things can only get better.

EACF Leagues playoff 27 Sept

The three-way contest between Wrest Park (winners of the Beds & Herts League), Colchester South (Essex & Suffolk) and Hunstanton (Northern Area) was won by Colchester South. Each team played one doubles and two singles games against each of the other teams. Wrest Park were represented by Bryan Harral, Tim Brwer, Geoff Strutt and David Morris. The team finished level with Colchester with four game wins, but lost out on the who beat whom rule. I am reliably informed that the champagne moment was the finale of Geoff's win +1 against Cathy Storey.

Handicap tournament 13-14 Sept

What a difference a day makes. The tournament, which in the past has started on Friday, was made a true weekend tournament this year in the hope that it might attract more entries. It was just as well, as when John Bevington arrived on Friday afternoon to deliver the food for the weekend he was caught in a local downpour which would have done credit to Hurricane Ike and flooded the lawns in half an hour. Saturday and Sunday, in complete contrast, were warm and sunny, and as Wrest Park was holding a Heritage Open Day with free entry on Sunday the grounds were full. Outplayers found themselves explaining the game to interested spectators, a task which became a little strained for both sides when it came to describing your opponent peeling your ball through rover and pegging it out.

We would have been 13 but in the event were reduced to 11 including six club members, which not only eliminated the need for double-banking but allowed

manager Eric Audsley to match locals and visitors and keep the latter fully occupied. Handicaps ranged from 1 to 8 with local member David Morris an outlier on 18, who obtained his only win against the manager. As there were six players in the 1-3 range and five rated 5 and above there was a prize for the best performance in each group. One went to George Collin (1½) with three wins from five games, just ahead of George Woolhouse (1) and Ken Pickett (2), both on four from seven. The other winner was Charles Townshend (6) who made a triumphant return to Wrest Park after a thirty-odd year absence, winning five of his six games ahead of John Hall (5) with four out of six and Geoff Strutt (8) with four from seven.



Charles Townshend – a winner at last

Play was interrupted at lunchtime on Sunday to allow everyone to raise a glass of champagne to celebrate club member Ben Ashwell's wedding. If his day went as well as ours it must have been a great success. That said, there were undoubtedly occasions during the afternoon when a player who had carefully constructed a short rush and seen his opponent hit in might have wished that the instruction "let no man put asunder" had been more rigorously observed.



Wrest Park's Magnum Force. Standing L-R: Ken Pickett, David Morris, John Hall, Geoff Strutt, John Lonsdale, Charles Townshend. Seated: Terry Mahoney, George Woolhouse, Eric Audsley, George Collin, Tim Brewer, Dave Smith

Golf Croquet Inter Club Final 27 Sept

Wrest Park was invited to host this event as a neutral venue halfway between the two competing clubs. Surbiton were out for revenge, having been beaten at home by Ashby in the previous year's semi-final, and they fielded a very strong team, duly winning the match

5-2. Ashby made a good fight of it, and one of the highlights was William Gee's 2-1 win over Samir Patel in the afternoon singles. Several club members came along to watch and pick up a few tips, marvelling at the players' shooting skills and ability to run long hoops – an extreme example was when Reg Bamford clinched one game by running 2-back from beside 1-back.



L-R: Chris Farthing, Don Beck, Reg Bamford and Samir Patel (Surbiton), Ray Mounfield, Tim King, William Gee, Mike O'Brian (Ashby)

CA Club Finals Weekend 4-5 Oct

"Hard pounding this, gentlemen; let's see who will pound longest." The Duke of Wellington at Waterloo.

It didn't seem fair. The previous Saturday had seen a glorious sunny day for the Golf croquet Inter Club final. One week later, and the far lawns were covered in leaves which swirled around all day in a cold wind. 24 hours later we were warmer but much, much wetter. Although the rain persisted for most of the day the lawns held out and no flood warnings were necessary. Welcome to Wrest Park in October.



Allan Knight of Shrewsbury rolls through the autumn leaves.

Saturday saw a rerun of last year's Mary Rose final, with Surbiton looking for revenge against Pendle & Craven. They were 2-1 up at lunch thanks to Bob Stephens and David Mooney winning their singles games. David had completed two peels of a triple and then got into trouble at 3-back, but he survived to win +3. After lunch it got to 3-3 and Pendle must have been hopeful when Liz Wilson, on peg and with a rush to 4-back, saw Bob, for peg and rover, send his peg ball crashing into 3-back with partner just outside corner 4. Liz made 4-back and over-rolled the approach to penult. Bob ignored the lift and hit what he could see of the ball at 3-back,

eventually pegging out Liz's ball and his own and going on to win the game +3 and with it the match.



Tim Brewer presents the Mary Rose trophy to Surbiton's Mary Knapp, with (L-R) Bob Stephens, David Mooney and Graham Brightwell.

Fylde got through to their second successive Longman Cup final by beating Purley Bury 4-3. In retrospect the decisive game was probably Alan Morton's win in the morning singles - +1, on time. In the other semi-final Parsons Green's captain Rob Minshall did his bit with two solid singles victories, but it was left to Ann Robillard to save the day when, with the games level at 3-3, she held on to beat Shrewsbury's Jim Penny +5 on time.

And so to soggy Sunday. The heavy hitters in the Inter Club had arranged to start at 11 o'clock, and the opening turns of the doubles were enough to show that a little extra effort would be necessary. That said, it was most impressive to see how quickly top players adapt to the conditions, with Keith Aiton running up a triple against Sam Tudor in next to no time. Nottingham took the other singles but lost the doubles, James Death going to lunch as the only member of the team who hadn't scored a point. After lunch Keith completed another triple against Jack Wicks and Marcus Evans beat Robert Fulford. With the trophy decided, James made up for lost time with a straight triple against Ian Burridge, and Sam Tudor got a consolation win against Richard White with the fifth triple of the match.



Andrew Hope presents the Beddow Cup to Nottingham captain James Death, with (L-R) Marcus Evans, Richard White and Keith Aiton.

Meanwhile the Longman Cup teams were battling hard. The 3rd/4th place playoff finally went to Purley Bury when Margaret Hampson beat Jim Penny +3 in the deciding

game. The final was the last match to finish. Parsons Green had been 2-1 up at lunch, but Fylde hit back when Martin Bradshaw and Betty Bates both won comfortably. Rob Minshall then levelled it at 3-3 by beating Terry Vernazza +6 on time, and the match hinged on the game between Fylde's Alan Morton and Ann Robillard from Parsons Green, both playing off 20. It could have gone either way, but when time was called it was Alan who was ahead by – you guessed it – three points, and so Fylde retained the cup.



Fylde's Terry Vernazza, captain Martin Bradshaw with the Longman Cup, Alan Morton and Betty Bates.

Andrew Hope, representing the Croquet Association and suitably clad in wellingtons, presented Nottingham and Fylde with their trophies. Our thanks to him and to all those who served up much-needed hot lunches on both days. The changing room doubled up as a second dining room, and the groundsman's hut, cleared of machinery, was used to serve coffee. Dripping umbrellas were everywhere and the bisque bucket was found to contain a pair of wet socks. Those who travel to Surbiton next year will find things rather different, and we can only hope they also have better weather.

Club competition results

Steel Cup (Advanced)	Winner: Bryan Harral Runner-up: Tom Anderson
Archer Cup (Handicap)	Winner: Ray Percy Runner-up: Eric Audsley
Ashwell Cup (All England h'cap)	Winner: Tim Brewer Runner-up: Eric Audsley
Thomas Philip Earl de Grey Cup (B level)	Winner: Geoff Strutt Runner-up: Tim Brewer
14 point advanced	Winner: Runner-up:
De Grey Plate (14 pt h'cap)	Winner: Runner-up:
Golf croquet	Winner: David Parsons Runner-up: Judi Priestley

The final of the Steel Cup took place on Thursday October 9th on a glorious afternoon. Bryan and Tom had the lawns to themselves with Bryan going one better than last year and winning +25. The Archer Cup was won by Ray Percy, who paced his game to perfection and had a bisque left for the pegout, winning +17. Any remaining games should be completed before October

31st, which is when the playing season officially ends. If you still have a game to play after that date you will need to seek English Heritage's permission.

Ben Ashwell acquires new doubles partner

Ben and Becky were married at St Michael and All Angels, Brinkworth, Wiltshire on Sunday 14 September. Tom and Judy Anderson and John Wheeler were there to represent the club, and from the evidence of John's photos it was a marvellous day. Our fondest good wishes to them both.



Ben and Becky with their attendants. Note the portable antenna – just what a girl needs to ensure a strong mobile signal in rural areas.

Golf Croquet Coach's Course

The Leighton-Linslade club will be hosting a CA course for Golf croquet coaches on 28-29 March 2009. For further details contact Margaret Brown on 01525 373860 or via email at mjbrownhome@freeuk.com.

A switch in time

Quite apart from mists and mellow fruitfulness, autumn brings heavy dew and an abundance of wormcasts. We have bought some new dew switches, and we would request that anyone using a lawn on which either is present use a switch to brush the lawn before playing on it. This will provide about ten minutes of light exercise – an ideal pre-game warm-up. The switches are in the small hut, high up on the left. They should also be used in the early season when there is dew on the surface.

Car parking – disabled spaces

English Heritage are reserving the small row of spaces nearest the house and facing the courtyard gate as disabled spaces on days when the park is open to the public. They will not be marked as such but there should be a sign nearby to indicate their intended use. Please do not use these spaces at weekends or on other days when the park is open. The car parking map will be revised to show these spaces outlined in yellow.

Annual Dinner

This will be at the Bell, Woburn, on Friday 28th November. Details to follow.

A cautionary tale

Lines written to commemorate the occasion during the Club Finals weekend when two women were spotted by a member of the English Heritage staff.

When girls (and boys) come out to play
Their games may well go on all day.
And frequent pauses to hydrate
Bring on the urge to urinate.
But if the loo's four hundred yards
A shorter trip is on the cards.

Be well advised to take good care
When seeking relief *en plein air*.
It's hard to keep things out of sight
If what's on show is pink or white.
When in the woods, to stay unseen,
You're better off with brown and green.

So please make sure you're not in view.
Sensitive visitors may sue
For injured feelings (twenty grand).
As for the club, it might be banned.
The moral is to keep it clean
By squatting down behind a screen.

John Bevington

13 October 2008