



newsletter

Annual General Meeting

The 2009 AGM will be on **Thursday 12 March at 7.30pm** at the Star & Garter in Silsoe.

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of 2008 AGM and matters arising
3. Reports: **Chairman**
Secretary
Treasurer
CA Tournament Secretary
Club Tournament Secretary
Club Captain
Groundsman
4. Election of officers
5. EH news
6. Diary of events
7. Groundsmanship
8. Facilities and equipment
9. Coaching
10. Catering
11. CA and EACF news
12. Any other business

- Please check the details on your membership form, make any corrections and return it with your subscription before 1 April. You will then be sent your membership card which shows the relevant numbers for the padlocks on the gates and the groundsman's hut. Cards must be carried at all times and shown to EH reception when you sign in.
- Please indicate your availability to help with tournament catering by circling dates on the form.
- **Please return the form even if you don't want to renew your membership, or if you joined as a full member last year and therefore don't have to pay.** In the former case it helps us maintain an accurate membership list, in the latter we need to receive the form before you can be sent your membership card.

Subscriptions

The subscription rates for 2009 are as follows:

Full membership	£45
CA levy	£7
Junior membership (under 16)	£10
16-18 or full time student	£20

- The CA levy is payable by all full members unless they are also members of another CA **registered** club and have nominated this club as their main club. Members of CA **affiliated** clubs have to pay the levy.
- There is a family membership option. If two adults in a family both take out full membership then any children under 16 from that family get free junior membership.
- If you want to pay your subscription using internet banking please confirm your intention to do so with Eric beforehand, and use sort code 20-05-74, account

80983861 (Wrest Park Croquet Club). Please make sure your name is referenced in the payment.

- The green fee for members' individual guests and any groups for which individual members are responsible remains at £3.60 per person per session. Please record these payments in the Visitor's Book in the pavilion. Members can bring three guests free of charge during the season.
- The green fee for independent visiting groups requiring a member to supervise them is now £5 per person and the member who is looking after the group can claim £20 expenses.

Dates for 2009

The lawns should be ready for play from April 1, which means that we shall probably spend the previous weekend marking out, mowing and spring cleaning.

April

- 7 CA Golf croquet coaching course
- 18 Club social day
- 26 EACF Champions Day

May

- 15-17 Handicap tournament
- 23-25 Wrest Park Garden Show

June

- 21 Golf croquet singles tournament

July

- 3-5 Advanced tournament
- 15 Dunstable CC 10-4 (6)
- 19 Golf croquet doubles tournament
- 24-26 CA Eastern Championship

August

- 8-9 Advanced tournament
- 10 Dunstable U3A 10-4 (6)
- 29-31 Wrest Park Craft Fair

September

- 12-13 Handicap tournament

- Anyone organising home matches, group visits or any other events must let me know the proposed dates as soon as possible so they can be cleared with EH. Please provide approximate start/finish times and the number of lawns required.
- Please do not write bookings on the calendar in the pavilion without letting me know first. There should be no need to book a lawn for casual play.

Signing in, car parking etc.

Last year's arrangements will continue for the time being. If you need to be reminded of these let me know. We have a review meeting with EH the week before the AGM and will be asking if the restrictions on weekday play can be relaxed. If there are any changes they will be announced at the AGM and circulated to all members before the start of the season.

Social on 18 April from 11am

Following the success of last year's start-of-season social day we plan to do it again this year. Food and drink will be provided, and possibly a guided tour of the new mower. There will be play for those who want it. If you know anyone who is interested in joining the club, this would be an ideal opportunity to introduce them.

Early season coaching

We will be offering Association croquet coaching starting on Thursday 23 April from 5.30-7.30 and running for six weeks. The coaching will not be aimed at complete beginners as we think that those members who play the Association game are already familiar with the basic concepts, so the sessions will take the form of clinics, looking at various aspects of technique and tactics, bisques and how to use them, break play and so forth. If there are any topics you are interested in then let me know or write them down on the sheet in the pavilion.

If you want to improve your game there are few substitutes for taking two or three sets of old balls out onto the lawn and practising certain strokes, e.g. hoop approaches or split croquet strokes. It may sound boring but it builds confidence.

Olympic croquet in 1900



The sand court built in the Cercle du Bois de Boulogne

Vic Rees reminds us of the only time croquet featured in the Olympics:

The 1900 Olympic Games held in Paris included four events which uniquely have appeared at no other Olympiad, namely live pigeon shooting, obstacle swimming, underwater swimming and croquet. The croquet event included doubles, one ball singles and

two ball singles which were contested by 10 competitors made up of seven men and three women, of whom nine came from France and a solitary male from Belgium.

All events were won by the French, who were awarded three gold, two silver and two bronze medals. Doubles was scheduled first to be followed by one ball singles and ending with the two ball singles, the whole event being spread out over three weeks. The laws governing the event are unknown, but a photograph shows what appears to be a referee wearing a tail coat and top hat. No mention of this tournament occurs in Prichard's *History of Croquet*, which seems strange since in 1900 the Open Championship had 32 entries and Paris is relatively near London.

Incidentally the underwater swimmers were awarded points for the distance covered and for how long they stayed underwater. Presumably if a competitor remained submerged longer than his rivals but drowned in doing so he would be awarded a medal posthumously.

Golf croquet club tournaments

I have allocated dates for the club one day singles and doubles tournaments, and you can enter these by ticking the box on the membership form. These events do not have to be restricted to Wrest Park members - we can accommodate up to 24 entries in singles and more in doubles, so please ask players from local groups or clubs if they would like to take part. We will put up a preliminary list of entries in the pavilion prior to the event, which can be added to later.

Each tournament will need a manager who will be responsible for deciding the format and running the event. These appointments need to be done in good time to avoid confusion and wasted time on the day itself, so I would be grateful if any volunteers could let me know as soon as is convenient.

Several clubs now offer open golf croquet handicap tournaments which are advertised in the CA Fixtures book. We have not yet held one at Wrest Park but there is no reason why we should not do so in the future. If you are interested in taking this idea further please contact a member of the Committee.

EACF/NT tournaments in 2009

Golf croquet

July 5 Norwich Croquet Club (Doubles)
Sept 7 Ickworth House, Horringer (Singles)

I have an entry form if anyone is interested

There is a level play golf croquet tournament at Ipswich on July 26. Entry limited to 14. Apply to Terrey Sparkes (tds3elm@aol.com 01362 853872)

Short croquet

This will be held at Ickworth on Sept 13 and is being organised by Jonathan Toye. To enter please contact him (jonathantoye@hotmail.com 01366 382280)

Club photos on CA website

The CA website has a News & Press section which contains their Photo Library. This is maintained by Samir Patel and contains photos available for use by the media and anyone else who might be interested. The Clubs section now contains a few recent photos of

Wrest Park, which might prove useful if you are trying to describe the club to a friend or a prospective member.

Ke-e-e-e-p switching

The worms have been busy during the close season. If wormcasts are left on the lawn they wear down the mower blades, and, when smeared over the surface, become sites where weeds and disease can thrive.

Before you play, please inspect your chosen lawn, and if there is a good crop of wormcasts and/or a covering of dew, disperse them by using one of the switches which are kept in the small hut. This is a good warm-up exercise and takes about 15 minutes.

Howard's Way

Howard Bottomley will soon be moving to Cromer and it is an appropriate moment to thank him for all he has done for the club. He will be retaining his membership and returning for tournaments, and will continue to manage the Inter Club team.

Howard's successes in the club's internal tournaments have included five wins in the Steel Cup (the first in 1990), the Archer Cup in 2001 (off a handicap of ½) and the 14 point trophy in its inaugural season the following year. Back in the 80s he had several wins in the club's CA handicap tournaments and in 2002 he was runner-up in the Selector's Weekend when it was held at Wrest Park. Howard was also part of the team that won the Mary Rose for the first time in 1995, and in 1999 was in the team that was runner-up in the Inter Club final.



The 1995 winning Mary Rose team in celebratory mood. L-R: George Collin, Eric Audsley, Howard Bottomley and Rod Ashwell

Howard has acted for many years as the club captain, a sometimes thankless task involving the organising of teams and haggling over dates, and, as catering officer, buying, delivering and frequently preparing food for our CA tournaments and club matches. He has been an invaluable member of the committee and an entertaining tournament reporter and we look forward to seeing him during the summer.

Howard has also been an ever-present in the Bedfordshire Inter Counties team for over 25 years, usually accompanied by his mother Enid, our most loyal supporter (unless we were playing Warwickshire when her allegiance was divided). Howard's team management skills and Enid's calming influence have been invaluable, especially during the noisy late-night

team meetings, fuelled by alcohol and anecdote, which are the invariable conclusion to each day's play.



Enid Bottomley sitting on the team during an Inter Counties match at Compton. Photo by John Wheeler.

English Heritage news

English Heritage has now obtained all the necessary licences for holding weddings and Wrest Park is now featured in the Hiring a Venue section of their website. The initial Heritage Lottery Fund grant has been awarded, which provides funds for developing detailed proposals for the gardens restoration plan. The plan will then be incorporated into a second grant application next year.

Contractors have begun dredging the lake between the Bowling Green House and the Orangery. The grounds staff have also been busy, and, amongst other things, have cut down all the elders at the back of the huts, which has left them rather exposed.



Snowdrops under the beech tree on 22 February

John Bevington

23 February 2009