

newsletter

CHAMPIONS!

Bedfordshire top Division 2 of the Inter County Championship



Tom Anderson, Ben Ashwell, Howard Bottomley, Jon Watson, John Wheeler, George Collin and John Bevington with the trophy after winning the last match against Sussex at Compton on Tuesday morning. Bryan Harral could only play on Monday and won all his games.

Southwick and Compton

May 23-26

We began on Saturday with a 3-0 win against Kent and never looked back, losing only one match to Gloucestershire, the eventual runners-up. It could hardly have been predicted. Last year it was only a recovery on the last day that saw us avoid the wooden spoon.

Why this change in fortune? As Jon Watson noted, the first and third pairs were stronger on paper than the opposition and this was reflected in their performance: Jon and Ben at first pair won all their games, mostly by solid margins including a TP by Ben against Hampshire, and the third pair of John and George or Bryan brought up the rear in fine style, losing only two games, one of which they should have won. Howard and Tom or George at second pair had a more difficult job but still managed five wins, which gave us 3-0 victories over

Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Kent and Warwickshire. The highlight came against CA Select when a memorable last turn by Tom won the game to give us the vital 2-1 match win.

There are other factors which are everything to do with the format and nature of the event. Double-banked doubles is time-consuming and often leads to a frantic scramble for the decisive advantage as the minutes ebb away. Nearly all the second and third pairs' games went to time, often being settled by small margins, and this year for the most part they were decided in our favour.

The pressure can bring out the best in players, as noted earlier, but can also lead to all manner of unforced errors, as in the second pair's game against Gloucester when Don Gaunt, having played his first turn with his own ball, was so nonplussed by an expletives-undeleted

outburst at the start of the other game that he then played the first turn with his partner's ball as well.

The Counties is also convivial. The *après croquet* can hamper physical and mental coordination first thing in the morning, and there is also the *pendant croquet* to consider. Not that members of the Bedfordshire team are known to ever (well, hardly ever) indulge in such things themselves.

So, against all the odds, we shall be mixing it with the big boys next year. Congratulations to the team, not forgetting John Wheeler, our non-playing captain and the team's *éminence grise* (or should that be *éminence chauve?*), whose watchful eye and wise words kept us all on course for the title. Constant be, indeed.

1 st pair	P	W	L	TPs for
Watson/ Ashwell	10	10	0	Ashwell (v Hants)
2 nd pair				
Bottomley/Anderson	7	4	3	
Bottomley/Collin	3	1	2	
3 rd pair				
Bevington/Collin	7	5	2	
Bevington/Harral	3	3	0	

Division 1			Division 2				
	P	W	Games		P	W	Games
Notts	10	9	21	Bedfordshire	10	9	23
Cheshire	10	8	22	Gloucs (P)	10	8	21
Somerset	10	7	21	Middx (P)	10	7	20
Surrey	10	7	16	Hampshire	10	5	15
Lancs	10	6	16	Sussex	10	5	15
Glamorgan	10	4	14	Channel I	10	4	15
Suffolk	10	4	14	Yorkshire	10	4	12
Essex	10	4	12	Wiltshire	10	4	11
Dorset (R)	10	4	10	Kent	10	3	13
Herts (R)	10	1	10	Warwicks	10	3	10
N'berland (R)	10	1	9	CA Select	10	3	10

Match results

Bedfordshire & Herts League v Letchworth (home) 5 April Won 5-1

Wrest Park	Letchworth	WP score
Bryan Harral (1)	George Woolhouse (1)	+12
David Morris (18)	John Hall (5)	
Geoff Strutt (8)	Ian Mantle (4)	+15
Elaine Newman (14)	Philip Windred (4)	
Bryan Harral (1)	George Woolhouse (1)	+25
Geoff Strutt (8)	Ian Mantle (4)	+17
Elaine Newman (14)	Philip Windred (4)	+19
David Morris (18)	John Hall (5)	-11

Report by Bryan Harral

In glorious sunshine Wrest Park started off the 2009 season where we left off last year, with a convincing win over Letchworth. Forests of bisques may have daunted the opposition but the team played well below their handicaps, particularly as it was the first time most of us had lifted a mallet this year. In fact, not practising may be good for you - we shall see!

Bedfordshire & Herts League v Colworth (away) 7 May Won 3-1

Wrest Park	Colworth	WP score
Bryan Harral (1)	Tom Anderson (2½)	+19T
Geoff Strutt (7)	Steve Jones (10)	
Bryan Harral (1)	Tom Anderson (2½)	-2T
Ray Pearcy (16)	Trevor Wilkins (10)	
Ray Pearcy (16)	Trevor Wilkins (10)	+10T
Geoff Strutt (7)	Steve Jones (10)	+12

Report by Bryan Harral

If only I had practiced that little bit more (see 5 April report) the result could have been 4-0, but another great performance to put us top of the league table. For followers of the Peter Principle the results are a proof of the Anderson variation: Croquet games expand to more than fill the time allotted to them.

Longman Cup v Colchester (home) 27 May Won 5-2

Wrest Park	Colchester	WP score
Steve Jones (10)	Peter Kenward (7)	+1T
David Morris (18)	George Jeffrey (8)	
Elaine Newman (14)	David Haslam (6)	+13
Ray Pearcy (16)	Nick Steiner (9)	-1T
Steve Jones (10)	David Haslam (6)	+20
Elaine Newman (14)	Peter Kenward (7)	+14
Ray Pearcy (16)	George Jeffrey (8)	+13
David Morris (18)	Nick Steiner (9)	-1T

The team made a great start to this year's campaign, only missing out on a clean sweep by the narrowest of margins in both games, and will go on to play Watford in the next round.

Mary Rose v Bristol (away) 28 May Lost 3-4

Wrest Park	Bristol	WP score
Bryan Harral (1)	Rosemary Gugan (3)	-2
Eric Audsley (2½)	Marian Hilton (3)	
Terry Mahoney (3)	Greta Stringer (7)	-9
Tim Brewer (4½)	Frances Ransom (3.5)	+3
Bryan Harral (1)	Rosemary Gugan (3)	+26
Eric Audsley (2½)	Marian Hilton (3)	-20
Terry Mahoney (3)	Frances Ransom (3.5)	-26
Tim Brewer (4½)	Greta Stringer (7)	+13

Report by Bryan Harral

It was a case of the girls beat the boys, but as usual if a blobbed hoop here or a narrow miss there could have been avoided the result would have been quite different. Eric and Terry were up against in-form opponents in the afternoon. Marian took off from a ball in corner 4, got perfect position in front of hoop 1, ran the hoop and never looked like losing. Terry had an even worse experience. Frances hit with the third ball and went to 4-back, Terry missed with the fourth ball, Frances took her second ball to the peg, Terry missed the lift and that was that! Fortunately, secret weapon Tim won both his singles games to make the result look respectable.

Beds & Herts League v St Albans (home)

4 June

Lost 1-5

Wrest Park	St Albans	WP score
Bryan Harral (1)	Terry Mahoney (3)	+13
Cliff Hayes (20)	Chris Frost (6)	
Elaine Newman (14)	Chris van Essen (3.5)	-7T
David Morris (18)	Alec Osborne (11)	
Bryan Harral (1)	Terry Mahoney (3)	-26
Elaine Newman (14)	Chris van Essen (3.5)	-6
David Morris (18)	Chris Frost (6)	-7
Cliff Hayes (20)	Alec Osborne (11)	-5T

Report by Bryan Harral

As team captain I feel a bit like Gordon Brown at the moment. What can I say? Could do better would be an understatement. The opposition was made up of St Albans and Meldreth players and we were well and truly duffed up! The only glorious feature was the weather.

Inter Club v Nottingham (away)

6 June

Lost 3-4

Wrest Park	Nottingham	WP score
Ben Ashwell (-1)	James Death (-2)	-26TP
Rod Ashwell (-½)	Richard White (-1)	
Howard Bottomley (-½)	Dean Bennison (-½)	+1
Bryan Harral (1)	Paul Swaffield (-1)	-2
Ben Ashwell (-1)	James Death (-2)	-26TP
Rod Ashwell (-½)	Richard White (-1)	+16
Howard Bottomley (-½)	Paul Swaffield (-1)	-8
Bryan Harral (1)	Dean Bennison (-½)	+1

Report by Howard Bottomley

Arriving early I saw flooded lawns and car park so retired quickly to a local cafe for a rest from the journey, bacon sandwich and a read before being joined by Ben. Returning to the lawns at 11, we found Rod and Bryan supervising operations to clear two lawns and play started at 11.45. An hour later Ben and Rod had lost to a triple by Richard without taking croquet. Bryan and Howard's games had many interchanges and no breaks, not unlike play at the Counties.

The potatoes went on and Ben and Rod started their singles games. Ben watched James perform another triple without taking croquet! Poor Ben. So, 2-0 down and with Richard already on 4-back things looked grim and a second round of the bottom games looked unlikely. Then things changed. Richard broke down at 2 and Rod completed in 3 turns to win +16.

Lunch was taken at 1.30 with Wrest Park 2-1 down. Howard and Dean took a break whilst Bryan continued his game as he was in the ascendancy. Ben headed off home and Rod supported our games, seeing Paul Swaffield peg out Bryan and his own ball, to leave a one ball game. Bryan overtook him before resting in rover. Paul shot and rather luckily managed to hit Bryan without peeling him, to finish +2.

Howard had the same idea leaving a one ball game whilst on 4-back against 2-back. 10 minutes later Dean was ahead and Howard needed a hit after penultimate and a hit after rover to win +1. It was now 3-2 with the two remaining singles to come. Lawn one seemed a lot easier for breaks with all going quickly to 4-back.

Howard made 2-back with his second ball after doing one peel only to have a hampered shot and missed the ball at 3 back. From this Paul went to the stick before finishing +8. This gave Nottingham the match 4-3, but there was still drama ahead.

Bryan pegged Dean out with his forward ball and made steady progress, hoop by hoop. Dean hit several times and also made progress getting to penult. Bryan made rover but did not peg out. Dean hit again and eventually also got to stick but did not peg out. Bryan pegged one out leaving the other at stick which Dean then missed. The crowd rather wanted Dean to hit and cut the ball onto the stick for Bryan to win! Bryan wins +1.

An appreciative audience stayed to watch the final games and a good day was had with interesting matches. James Death was just too good. Nottingham now play Bristol in the next round.

In the pink



The flowering cherry by the entrance gate on April 5th.

Handicap tournament 15-17 May

The committee nominated *in absentia* a reporter who wasn't playing in the tournament, so what follows is based on manager Eric Audsley's copy of the results.

The handicaps of the 19 entries varied widely. There were 10 players between -1 (Lionel Tibble) and 5 (John Hall), then five players on 7, three on 16 (including Ray Percy and Elaine Newman) and one on 20 (Cliff Hayes). Wrest Park contributed 30% of the entry.

Elaine lost her first game to Eric and was sufficiently stung by this defeat to win her next two +26 and to continue with four more wins and a final defeat at the hands of Geoff Strutt. Eric was also in good form, winning 6/8 to come top of the bottom half (?).

The clear winner was Mike Hills (7) from Northampton, whose only loss in nine games was to Elaine. Of the rest, George Collin and Geoff Strutt both came away with 5/8, Nigel Polhill, John Bee and Wendy Spencer-Smith had 4/8 and Peter Thomson 5/10. Lionel squeezed in 11 games including five wins and three -26 defeats. Cliff Hayes (3/8) was the only player to win or lose all his games by single-figure scores

Of the ten games that went to time, half were in the first round. Why?

A hoarding* of mowers



20" Ransomes Auto Certes Mk 1 (c1969 - without flywheel cover), 24" Atco, 24" Allett (1994), 24" Allett (2009)

The photo represents, with two exceptions, all the mowers the club has owned. The missing ones are the 1936 36" Dennis shown below, which was sold at a profit in 1998 after thirty years service, and a Ransomes push mower which was used for cutting the grass round the huts until it was replaced by the Honda rotary.



The Auto Certes (at one stage the club had two) is to go to the Meldreth club and the Atco will be disposed of. The old Allett will become the backup mower.

* Collective noun (origin obscure).

The Anderson Shield – May 23/24

This event (an EACF version of the Inter Counties) was held at Colchester and won by Hertfordshire. The Bedfordshire team consisted of Bryan Harral, Geoff Strutt, Elaine Newman and Ray Percy and drew all four matches but still finished bottom. As Suffolk had to withdraw a handicap singles event was also included and in this we finished second, only losing out to Essex by virtue of having had one game go to time. For full results and a report see the EACF website at www.angliacroquet.co.uk

Golf croquet tournaments

There are still plenty of spare places (and management vacancies) so feel free to put your names on the board and invite players from neighbouring clubs or groups.

Diary

June

- 12 Kempston Rotary (evening)
- 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

- 5-6 All England Area Final
- 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.

As you will have seen it has been a busy couple of months, full of impressive victories and narrow defeats, which has left no space to report on the Social Day on 18 April (a great success by all accounts) and the EACF Champions Day (see the website).

John Bevington

10 June 2009