



newsletter

Minutes of the

1999 Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held at 8pm on Thursday 11 March and attended by Peter Smith, Eric Audsley, John Wheeler, Jon Watson, Rod Ashwell, George Collin, Judy Anderson, Terry Mahoney, John Bevington, Paul Sharrock and Tim Brewer.

1. Apologies for absence.

Received from Irene Davis and Vic Rees.

2. Minutes of 1998 AGM and matters arising.

The minutes of the 1998 AGM were accepted.

3. Reports.

Chairman: Peter Smith made a brief statement, referring amongst other things to the opportunities offered by the new hours of opening and the quality of the newsletters.

Secretary: John Bevington referred to the need to have some members available as coaches for new members or groups wishing to play during the day.

Treasurer: Eric Audsley explained that the high level of hire fees came from charges for evening visits from local groups, £150 from Bedford Modern School and money from English Heritage weekend events. There were also agreed CA lawn hire fees for the All England area final and national final, plus fees for other clubs holding matches at Wrest Park. Our charges conform to the standard CA rates.

Terry Mahoney initiated a discussion on the level of the club subscription, suggesting that the figure of £50, which we were fast approaching, could prove a psychological barrier, and questioning its effect on recruitment. The main points arising were:

- the argument over the effects of gradual vs substantial increases in subs
- the need to balance regular income with the level of membership
- whether the subs had to be agreed at the AGM (true, the Treasurer's recommendation must be voted on)
- new members do get a discount for the first season
- the existing sub may seem a lot to beginners or to existing members who have only limited opportunities to play
- the image of the game is still a disincentive to potential members
- problems of a payment system based on green fees
- the possibility of introducing a country membership
- potential members may be put off by distance to the lawns and the level of non-playing facilities

These points will be discussed further at the next committee meeting. The 1999 subscription was voted on and carried with one vote against.

Tournament Secretary: Eric said that in general the level of entries for our tournaments appeared satisfactory, but it would be nice to see more club members entering. The De Grey Plate for beginners would revert to a Draw and Process this year. There was a general discussion about tournaments and their management. Comments included:

- entries can be dictated by the fixtures calendar, i.e. if there are six advanced tournaments on one weekend then one or more will not have many entrants - there are only so many tournament players. Maybe there are too many tournaments
- earlier sight of the fixtures calendar might enable better planning of dates to avoid clashes
- some visiting players resent not being able to play when there are empty lawns. We need to give visitors as much lawn time as possible
- would full bisque games without a base be an answer (it was suggested that this can cause problems of its own and that a base of some sort is usually beneficial)
- club players can upset the system when their own games are protracted
- the perception of why a player is waiting for a game is important
- different management systems, e.g. Egyptian vs American, might lead to more lawn time for players
- do fewer people have time for three-day tournaments nowadays?
- we should do a survey to establish what players really want out of a tournament and the formats they prefer
- is the need to establish a winner really as important as it might appear, given that it no longer has a direct effect on one's handicap?

The committee will look at these points and make recommendations. It was agreed that management is not an easy job, and it was also mentioned that feedback suggests that Wrest Park is seen as an ideal place to play one's first tournament because of the friendly atmosphere.

Regarding internal competitions (to be organised this year by Rod Ashwell), it was suggested that the finals day should be held before the September tournament, and that earlier rounds be speeded up in order to ensure that this can be done.

Team Captain: George Collin provided a written report in which he commented that in all matches we suffered only one heavy defeat and cited this as evidence of commitment and strength in depth. Raising teams is a perennial problem and on average there is a match every weekend during the season, discounting bank holidays

and Wrest Park tournament weekends. Thanks were expressed to all who took part, with especial thanks to Howard Bottomley for captaining the Mary Rose and Inter Club teams.

Groundsman: George Collin's report started with last year's weather - the above average rainfall was ideal for grass growth and there were few problems with weeds or fungal attack. Scarification took place in July and again in the autumn. As part of the three year cycle of autumn treatment the lawns were hollow-tined and top dressed with 20 tons of sand. Continuing wet weather over the winter has discouraged fungal attack but has encouraged moss.

Immediate plans are to apply moss and worm killer and treat the lawns with spring fertiliser over the coming weekend. Lawns 2, 4 and 6 have hoop holes and are playable. Lawns 1, 3 and 5 do not have visible hoop holes, and as they have had a double dose of sand in the valley running along the west boundary which has yet to be fully absorbed, it is to be requested that they are not used until the May tournament.

George estimated that John Wheeler drove the mower about 200 miles last season (for which the meeting expressed grateful thanks).

Publicity Officer: John Bevington expressed the hope that advertising the opportunity to play during the day might encourage a more positive response from future enquiries from the public. Poster campaigns would continue, and there was now an opportunity to register with the Milton Keynes Council Sports Club database.

Andrew Wilson, David Parsons and Peter Berry had all responded with help on the development of a website, and the committee will arrange a meeting to agree the objectives and discuss the setup and maintenance costs. There followed a short discussion of the proposed poster for the display board, and the general agreement was that it should not include too much text and, as far as is practical, encourage the reader to approach players and ask questions. More proposals to be put forward at the next committee meeting.

Development Officer: Tom Anderson commented that we should not neglect the coaching of new members and do all we can to encourage them to continue their interest. Jon Watson suggested that coaching would also benefit the more experienced members of the club and that this could be done by a combination of demonstration, observation and feedback, possibly involving the use of video. He agreed to putting forward a proposal for others to comment on.

It should be noted (*Editor speaking*) that the CA are very keen on being able to advertise coaching opportunities at clubs. We could probably do more for our own members, but given many people's other commitments success is more likely to come through members making requests for coaching rather than waiting for something to be organised. Do your split shots go where they should? What about your rushes? Do you know when to take those bisques? If anyone does want some coaching then by all means arrange something individually by ringing up any member you think could help. We can obviously organise a course for a group - all that is needed is for someone to request it.

Equipment Officer: John Wheeler, in his written report, said that the mowers had been overhauled and sharpened, but that the Atco would not be refurbished as the cost (about £1000) was prohibitive. We will therefore continue to use it as a back-up until it becomes unserviceable. The maintenance bill was £207.47. As reported in the December newsletter, the Dennis has been sold.

Outstanding work includes disposing of the miscellany of wood, metal and bricks near the small hut (which needs some re-glazing), treating the huts with preservative and re-painting the hoops and corner pegs, and developing the hoop setting clamp.

4. Election of officers.

It was decided that we would turn a blind eye to the need for the role of Chairman to be undertaken by an Institute employee which has led in the past to having a Chairman and a separate Chairman of Meetings. Other changes are as follows:

- Equipment Officer to cease as a separate post. Activities to be continued but included as part of Groundsman's responsibilities.
- Team Captain to be replaced by Club Captain as overall coordinating role - individual teams may have their own captains.
- New position of Competition Secretary, to run all internal competitions. Tournament Secretary now responsible for tournaments and CA events only.
- High Bisquer's rep - Tim Brewer's successes last year have effectively disqualified him from the position, so a new representative is needed.
- The position of Catering Officer was missing from the list in the 1998 AGM minutes and is reinstated.

The elected officers for 1999 are:

Chairman: Peter Smith
Secretary: John Bevington
Treasurer: Eric Audsley
Club Captain: George Collin
Tournament Secretary: Eric Audsley
Competition Secretary: Rod Ashwell
Groundsman: George Collin
Development: Tom Anderson
Publicity: John Bevington
Catering: Judy Anderson
EACF rep: George Collin
High Bisque rep: vacant (Peter Newman to be asked)
WI rep: Dorothy Craggs (if still willing - not at meeting)

5. Club activities for 1999

These were covered in Eric's Tournament Secretary's report in the last newsletter.

6. Catering

Nothing to report. However, (*Editor speaking*) I am sure that anyone involved with tournament catering would welcome suggestions regarding the menu, implements we might usefully purchase, what drinks to offer, etc. I would also like to thank all club members, friends and relatives who helped with the tournament catering in 1998. It does make a big difference.

7. Any other business

John Wheeler presented a letter (copy attached) to the organisers of the Silsoe Millennium Time Capsule

outlining some ideas for our contribution. Please let him have any views on this as soon as possible.

John Bevington requested some feedback from the EACF AGM held the previous weekend. Judy Anderson commented that there were now some Lottery grants available for which we might be able to apply, also that the CA are keen to get feedback on the new WCF Golf Croquet rules, copies of which are on order. Attendees at the AGM had the chance to try the new artificial lawn at Bury St. Edmunds - the initial reaction is that the hoops, which are set in concrete with rubber mounts, are virtually impossible to run unless you are very close and dead in front.

The meeting closed at about 10.45pm. I would like to suggest that next year we start earlier.

Diary

- There will be a friendly against Oxford University on Sunday 2 May. If you would like to be considered for this please call Paul Sharrock.
- Paul is also organising a visit from the members of the Institute of Measurement and Control for the evening of 9 June.

Can we start playing yet?

The groundsman says yes, but note the following:

- Please stick to lawns 2, 4 and 6 for the moment.
- Don't forget to sign in at the Institute reception if playing during the day on Monday to Friday.

New Golf Croquet rules available

The World Croquet Federation Golf Croquet rule books which were on order have now arrived and are in the box with the other literature in the left-hand cupboard under the left-hand bench. Price £1.50 - please help yourself and leave the money in the usual place. As some if not all of the changes are likely to become officially adopted eventually it is suggested that golf croquet players use them this season so they can feed their comments back to the WCF.

You are advised to read in particular 6e and 7c, possibly experiment with 11, and consider the implications of 14 (make sure someone has a supply of red and yellow cards). I would suggest that anyone wanting to practise jump shots should do this off the lawn and not use one in a game until they are confident there is no risk of their damaging the lawn.

VIRUS strikes !

This virus, also known as "Six 'R us" was released into the Silsoe School hall on 25 March by Peter and Dorothy Smith, Jon Watson, John Wheeler, George Collin and John Bevington. Our opponents in the school's quiz couldn't find the antidote, so there are now three bottles of wine for the cellar, and we have our first trophy of the season.

National club competitions draw

Inter Club 1st round vs **Bowdon** (by 1st June)

Mary Rose 1st round vs **Colworth** (by 1st June)

Longman Cup 2nd round vs Ealing (by 5th July)

Our Longman Cup draw is intriguing. We haven't played Ealing before, but their team organiser is a certain Colin McKenzie, who until recently was a member at Wrest Park.

CA Tournaments in 2000

Our bid for the Selector's Weekend was unsuccessful. There was a large number of bids, and the Tournament Committee suggest that: "*their decisions could be made easier if they considered a 3 year period when allocating tournaments. They saw advantages in being able to arrange a rotational spread for the 8s and clubs could bid for and obtain longer tournaments such as the Veterans, Peels or Seniors for 2-3 years thus aiding their own planning.*" Comments on this proposal should go to Derek Trotman, Chair of the Tournament Committee.

Groundsman's poetry corner

*"If you have all the lawns hollow-tined,
There's something you're likely to find.
That as soon as you book it
The rain it'll chuck it,
Though right up till then the sun shined.*

*And also I've found to be true,
That you might have counted the crew,
But as soon as work starts
The bunch of (deleted at request of our lawyers - Ed.)
Find something else better to do.*

*But top dressing is ever so cheap
If only the tinings you'll keep.
So it wasn't the moles,
but the cores from the holes,
Were the whole of the cause of the heap."*

Publications from the CA

The CA have sent copies of the Fixtures Book and the Registered Club Handbook, the latter being a compendium of information about the CA: names and addresses, committees, equipment and literature, handicapping, the WCF, grants, roll of honour etc.

John Bevington

9 April 1999