



BLEWBURY CROQUET CLUB

Newsletter

2011/1

Season 2011

Welcome to the start of the new croquet year. Here's a Newsletter to keep you in touch while looking forward to the summer croquet season. We don't know when the lawns will be ready for play, but we hope in April, as usual.

Winter events

The Skittles Evening on Saturday week, 12 February, is looking good. Of our fifty-six or so members, over forty will be coming to Aston Village Hall. Susan and June are still selling tickets, at the full price of £10 for supper and skittling now that the early-bird discount period has closed.

There's also a Quiz Night planned for 19 March, maybe in the new Recreation Ground Clubhouse (or is it the new pavilion?). Whatever it's called, it is opening soon, and there's a preview hour from 4 to 5pm on 5 February, so if you want to go and have a look and report back to the Social Committee, do feel free!

Committee changes

As you all know, Jim Bartlett has for several years been longing to give up the job of Treasurer, and appealing for volunteers to take it over. There were none again at the last AGM, so Jim reluctantly stayed on and was re-elected, but now he has finally stepped down, and Malcolm Cochrane – not only a croquet player but an accountant! – has kindly stepped forward and offered to keep the Club's accounts for us. So Malcolm will be acting as Treasurer at least until the next AGM.

Jim has also decided to retire from the Committee altogether, after doing so much work for the Club in recent seasons, and hand over all the running of the Club to your new Committee elected at the AGM. Jim has done so much for us in the last half-dozen years that he's been Secretary, and latterly also Treasurer, that we all owe him an enormous debt of gratitude. Our sincere and heartfelt thanks, Jim. Now enjoy your croquet without responsibility!

Managing competitions, teams and matches

Although last year's Captain Nick Butler hasn't the free time to act as Captain through this coming summer season, he will be helping us set up the playing programme during the next few weeks. The Croquet Sub-Committee will be meeting on 21 February to settle it. The jobs of selecting teams, and acting as captain and/or manager for individual matches, and of managing the club's own internal competitions, will be distributed among members, so no one person has to take on all this responsibility. If anyone would like to volunteer to manage any single aspect of these, such as the Golf Croquet or Association Croquet league matches, or one of the various Club trophy competitions, or to make any proposal for friendly matches against any particular clubs with which you may have links, please don't hold back, but tell a Committee member.

The new lease on the Club's grounds

As reported at the AGM, Blewbury Parish Council is in need of a consistent set of leases among some of the user clubs of the village recreation grounds. The Blewbury Tennis Club and the Blewbury Brass Band, along with the Blewbury Croquet Club, have rights to patches of land and structures on them, and the Council has requested that we all agree to new 25-year leases.

As far as this affects your croquet club, a new lease will prolong our security of tenure by nine years, until 2036, and neither the Council nor your Committee sees any reason why on expiry this shouldn't be renewed, though this can't be guaranteed. The existing arrangement is arguably not a lease at all, merely an agreement for us to build and occupy croquet courts and a clubhouse on the Tickers Folly Field site. The new lease is proposed to be granted to named individuals acting as Trustees of the Club, which will allow the lease to be recorded with the Land Registry and will put our occupancy of the grounds on a proper legal basis.

Our Rules, which make up our Constitution, do not presently envisage Trustees to hold property for the Club. We will need to change this, so that the relationship between the Trustees and the Club is properly set out and drawn up, and the tenancy of the land can be passed on and remain for the benefit of the Club whenever there is a change of Trustee (which there certainly will be during the next 25 years). The current proposal is that the initial Trustees and named tenants under the lease will be Deirdre Cochrane (Club Chairman) and Paul Wolff (Club Secretary).

In order not to delay the process of taking on the new lease, your Committee has resolved to appoint Deirdre and Paul as Trustees as soon as the lease terms are finally agreed with the Council and its solicitor, and subsequently to submit the necessary changes to the Club's Rules for the approval of members and formal adoption at the next AGM. If any member is unhappy with this arrangement, please let a Committee member know at once. The alternative would be to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting urgently to consider the rule changes, and to adopt or reject them, before the lease can be signed.

Coaching

Back to croquet! At the AGM, members asked for more coaching. There are at least two ways to augment basic club coaching by those of our members who currently hold coaching qualifications.

The first way is for members to go to external coaching weekends organised or approved by the Croquet Association. They usually take place in April, near the start of the season. They are tailored to different levels of ability, and distinct Association and Golf Coaching Courses are provided.

For example, there will be a 'Bronze' Association Croquet Coaching Course at Southwick in Sussex for players with Association Croquet handicaps from 11 to 18 on the weekend of 2-3 April, and a Golf Croquet coaching course held at Hamptworth, not too far from here down in Hampshire, on 16 April, for players with Golf Croquet handicaps from 2 to 6 who want to improve their game. There are other courses on other dates adapted for players with handicaps outside these ranges.

The second way is to send some Club members on a Coaches' Training Course, so that they can add to the coaching resources within the Club. These courses teach how to teach others. A Coaches' Training Course at Hamptworth from 9-10 April teaches how to coach, and isn't specific to the golf or association games, but is good for both.

If you're a member of the Croquet Association (and who isn't?) you'll already have the Fixtures Book for 2011 with all the details. If you aren't a CA member yet, just ask someone who is for details of any course that would suit your needs. We expect that there will be Club members going to at least the Bronze Association Coaching course at Southwick on 2-3 April, and the Coaches' Training Course at Hamptworth the following weekend. Transport can be shared. If you're interested in either, please say. Paul Wolff can co-ordinate this.

Subscriptions

Subs for 2011 are due for payment on 1st April. They are the same as last year: see the web site at <http://www.blewburycroquetclub.org.uk/membership.htm> if you aren't sure. It would help the Club's administration if you could send your cheque to June Wolff, membership Secretary, during March, to save on the chasing-up work.

Richard Brockbank

And a sorry note to end on. Richard Brockbank first joined the Club in 1995, moved away and left us for a while, and came back to East Hagbourne and rejoined last year. Sadly, Richard died in December. We'll miss him, and his enthusiastic play.

Deirdre Cochrane
Chairman

Paul Wolff
Secretary