



BLEWBURY CROQUET CLUB

Newsletter

2013/1

Nearly there!

It's been cold and wet, or sometimes cold and dry. We've had to delay opening the courts from our optimistic target of just after Easter. But it won't be long now. David Seed, Nick Butler and Bruce Gallop marked out the court boundaries and set the hoop-holes last weekend. The scarifier has at last been returned from being repaired – it suffered from a hydraulic leak – and David wants it to earn its keep in the next few days as part of an assault on moss which will continue during the season.

David is also doing some levelling, especially along the south (that's in croquet terms: geographically, it's the northeast) boundary of Court 1, which is an inch or so lower than it should be, so balls played along that edge tend to drift off the court, a serious problem for association croquet play. We think that a regular application of top dressing here in particular will, over a couple of years, raise the level. It can't be hurried, as the existing grass mustn't be buried by too much sand and enthusiasm.

Opening dates

We aim to be up and running no later than Friday, 19th April, when Alan Cottle, who has coached golf croquet at Blewbury before, has offered to come again this year on that date. He has suggested a quick review of shots and then tactics, best done by actually playing. This should get your season off to a flying start.

Susan Tilbrook is organising this for you and needs to know as soon as possible who would like to come, and whether all day (10.30 am – 12.30, 1.15 pm – 3.30 pm) or half a day, morning or afternoon. Email Susan at douglas@deejaytee.plus.com or telephone 01235 850 066 to book your place. There will be a small charge of £5.

The next day, Saturday 20th April, is reserved for this year's Charity 1-ball tournament, a great opportunity to brush off some of those cobwebs in an easy and fun version of the association game. Golf players are very welcome to come and have a go, as you have in previous years, especially as it often turns into something similar to golf croquet – the rules and a demonstration of the take-off shot (the simplest of the croquet strokes) will be offered to any who require it before play begins. Games are played with handicaps, which allow extra turns, not just single shots, and any golf players who don't have an association handicap will be given one of 24 for the tournament (definitely an advantage).

Play will begin at 10am and finish around 3pm, depending on numbers. The entry form is being sent together with this Newsletter, and should be returned by post, or by email with payment on the day, to Nick Butler at n.p.butler@talk21.com by **Wednesday 17th April**.

To follow, we'll have the GC and then the AC Spring Doubles in quick succession. Here is a list of some of these dates for your diaries:

19th Apr - Golf Croquet Coaching

20th Apr - One Ball tournament

23rd Apr - GC Spring Doubles

27th Apr - AC Spring Doubles

29th May - GC Ladies' Doubles

8th Jun - Blewbury Village Festival "Have-a-go Day"

16th Jun - Roger Cambray One Ball tournament (Hall Barn, with National Gardens Scheme)

26-27th Jun – Blewbury & Phyllis Court AC Midweek Handicap

13th Jul - Intervillage Festival (AC&GC)

10-11th Aug - Blewbury & Harwell AC Weekend Handicap

24th Aug – Founder's Cup

21-22nd Sep - Club Finals Weekend

24th Sep - GC Autumn Doubles

28th Sep - AC Autumn Doubles

Ladder competition/Sunday morning croquet

The Ladder is being relaunched with some changes to relax the rules even further, and to give a reason for coming along on Sunday mornings. Unless there's a match or tournament, Sunday mornings are usually quiet on our lawns, and we think that we ought to offer more at weekends, and on an informal basis, especially to people who work every day during the week, and those who'd like to come along to try the game. So we suggest that Sunday mornings would be a good time to fit in some ladder games, and see that the club is populated at least between 10 and 12 o'clock.

Of course the ladder matches can be played at any time to suit the two players, not just Sundays. On the rule changes, you can now challenge up to **five** places higher, and the format of the match is entirely open to the two players to agree between themselves.

As before, if you win you simply put your name card above the person you challenged, who drops down one place, as do all other names that were originally between you. If you lose your challenge, nothing changes. The match format is preferably some recognisable form of croquet, using handicap conditions appropriate to the croquet played. Association, golf, one-ball, American rules – it's up to you.

The start order will be re-drawn, randomly. As before, if you don't want to take part, just put your name card at the bottom of the ladder and no-one will challenge you.

Open Tournaments

Our two AC tournaments, jointly with Phyllis Court for the first, and with our close friends at Harwell for the second, are (probably) the first that we have organised to be in the Croquet Association Fixtures Calendar.

We hope this is a good step for our club: the official Introduction to the printed edition says "...it's encouraging to see new tournaments created, with several small clubs joining together to create two-venue tournaments."

All we need now is for players to enter! We know that the joint midweek tournament will be fully subscribed, and the August weekend tournament is half full so far, but could do with more local support.

Entries to Paul Wolff please!

More Croquet

The same general weekly timetabling of golf croquet, association croquet, lawn maintenance, and free for members, will apply this year as in previous years. Check the web pages at www.blewburycroquetclub.org.uk/playing.htm if you aren't sure, and the calendar at www.blewburycroquetclub.org.uk/events.htm to see if any change has been booked for a particular day.

We'll be holding local rounds for the Croquet Association's All England Handicap competitions again, both GC and AC, for individual competition, and our own Club handicap competitions, the Prebendal Manor Trophy for AC and the Icknield Trophy for GC. Entry invitations will be circulated at the appropriate time. We need a volunteer organiser for the Icknield – nothing arduous, just some clerical work – any offers?

We've entered teams in the Southern Croquet Federation's AC handicap and advanced leagues, and GC handicap league. Bruce Gallop is organising the AC handicap matches and Susan Tilbrook the GC handicap matches, so let them know your availability. We've again entered the Longman Cup, a national AC inter-club handicap competition (David Spear organising). We have a number of friendly matches arranged, mostly GC (Susan Tilbrook) but one or two AC (Paul Wolff). Again, let them know of your interest if you'd like to play.

There are also external events available, GC and AC, often at Hamptworth. Details of some of these will be found in the clubhouse.

Clubhouse and other facilities

As usual, there is a continuing need for maintenance and improvement work to be done, and volunteers who give their time to support the Club and keep it running smoothly are much appreciated by us all. Your Committee is only too keen to share out the glory, and all offers of assistance will be gratefully accepted. One of the final jobs before we open will be to get together a working party to clean the clubhouse after the long, long winter. June Wolff has offered to co-ordinate this, so please let June know if you can make yourself available.

Summer Pub Lunches

In response to popular demand, we've decided to extend this experiment from the winter months into the summer. So far, members have been visiting the Red Lion in Blewbury on the third Tuesday of each month, but we'd like to change this, as it doesn't suit everyone. Next Tuesday, 16th April, we'll meet at the Red Lion again, but review possible alternatives. A Thursday each month has been suggested, partly to encourage AC players to turn out before the AC club afternoon(!), and staying in Blewbury seems to make sense for those who want to go up to the courts afterwards. For those who like a glass of beer or wine with lunch, the Barley Mow does inexpensive food, and looks a viable option. Why not come along to the Red Lion next Tuesday and help us decide, in a show of democracy in action?

Paul Wolff
Club Secretary