

BLEWBURY CROQUET CLUB

Chairman's Newsletter No 36

23 October 2003

Dear Croquet Player

Well, it's been quite an autumn. Four tournaments, an Annual General Meeting and days for weeding and sweeping, all separately reported below. As a result of the fine weather, Godfrey kindly allowed us to play on until 8 October, which must be a record for the sun-loving Blewbury Club. If this newsletter largely looks back, the accompanying questionnaire looks forward to next season. What would you like to do? What would you like your Committee to lay on for you. Please fill them in and return them to Bernardine Shirley-Smith, 2 Westbrook Green, Blewbury 9QD.

AGM

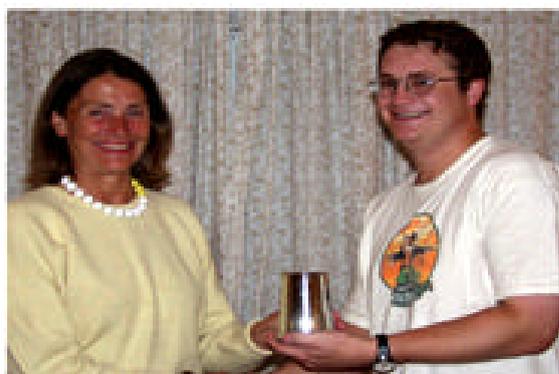
The Annual General meeting of the Club was held on 22 September at 2 Westbrook Green, Blewbury, 29 members attending. The Treasurer reported that he expected a balance of £2100 on March 31 2004, which he considered the least necessary as a contingency to meet any unexpected expenses. He proposed that Membership fees remained at £50 for adults, £100 for families and £20 for juniors. We would henceforward charge £10 for coaching courses, £5 for a tournament, except that one-day tournaments would cost £3 only. Members could hire a court for their personal use (eg, for a party) for £15 a session. We should charge what the market would bear if we hired the courts out to companies or other bodies. On the proposal of Michael Collins, seconded by Jolyon Kay, the fees were agreed unanimously.

Brian was warmly thanked for his services as Treasurer, and also for organising the Fun Day so successfully. The Chairmen of the Sub-Committees presented their reports. The Chairman of the Grounds Sub-Committee was thanked for his, and his team's, stewardship of the courts.

The President, Vice-Presidents and officers and members of the Committee having expressed their willingness to continue in office, they were, on the proposal of Gerald Mitchell, seconded by Doug Ironside, re-elected *en bloc*. I explained to the meeting, as Chairman, that the Committee had considered stability necessary in this period of rapid development, but that I hoped that a number of the new members of the Club would agree to join in the work of the Sub-Committees, and would soon play a vital role in the Club's management.

Our Vice-President, Deirdre Cochrane, presented trophies to the winners of tournaments. Nick Butler was named 'Player of the Year', in recognition of his success in the Founder's Cup Tournament and as runner up in the Prebendal Cup competition as well as the work he had done in helping to coach junior members. Christopher Balshaw was awarded the title of 'Junior Player of the Year'. On display was the Croquet Association Townsend Trophy, awarded to Blewbury as the most improved small club of the year. I also had

pleasure in startling Jolyon Kay by announcing that he was to be presented with the CA Diploma in London on 11 October. As indeed he duly was; see below



Deirdre Cochran presenting the Founder's Cup to Player of the Year Nick Butler and the Junior Player of the Year award to Christopher Balshaw at the Annual General Meeting

Use of Courts

The following have been provisionally set up as a guide for the use of the courts for next season.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday	Maintenance	Coaching or Practice	
Tuesday	Practice	Golf Croquet Club Day	
Wednesday	Maintenance	Practice	League matches
Thursday	Practice	Association Croquet Club Day	
Friday	Maintenance	Coaching or Practice	
Saturday	Open to all	Tournaments or Free for Members' use	
Sunday	Tournaments or free for members' use		Junior coaching

Croquet Association

In my absence Jolyon Kay represented the Club at the AGM of the Croquet Association on 11 October. He was presented with the CA Diploma for working selflessly and beyond the call of duty to develop the Club. He reported that the message coming out of the meeting was that the CA is very anxious to do what it can to help croquet clubs, especially those with problems. Your Committee is preparing a further development project which will be an early candidate for a development grant from the CA. We can only have been helped by the announcement of new CA members made at the meeting. There were more from Blewbury than from any other club. Jolyon was elected Chairman of the International Committee of the CA, Many congratulations, Jolyon; our small Club too is honoured

by the appointment, and we may expect to see the name of Blewbury spread even more widely in the world than it already is.

Founders Cup Tournament

The Club held their first major Association Croquet Tournament over the weekend of 5 to 7 September.. The Founder's Cup Tournament is an invitation level play event for ten of the best players in the Club. Players play singles, each playing each in two pools of five. In Pool A shocks were plentiful. Jolyon Kay lost successively to Paul Wolff, John Spiers and John Munro, all of whom on the form book he should have beaten. Indeed, John Munro, the Club Chairman, climbed back from 24 – 12 down to come out a deserved winner 26 - 25 when Jolyon inadvertently pegged out one of his two balls, leaving his other ball helpless. Consolation came for Jolyon when, again against form, he beat David Spear 26 – 3. John Spiers came out on top of the pool by one point on hoops difference over John Munro, both having won three out of their four matches.

In Pool B Mike Duck had a series of easy victories over Henley Spiers, Miren Tong and John Harrison, but despite a strong start could not quite bring off a win against Nick Butler. In his other games Nick carried all before him with an impeccably methodical display of break-building, which he repeated in the final against John Spiers, who could only sit and watch as Nick came out the winner by 26 points to 2. The effort brought his handicap down a point to eleven. Our President kindly presented him with the Cup.

High spot of the day for all, however, was a delicious tea spread out by Rosemary Tilden on the slowly improving lawns, which, thanks to Godfrey Nehring and his team of waterers, had survived the hot dry summer well over almost all of its surface.

High Bisquers Tournament.

This tournament was a singles 14 point Association Croquet Handicap Tournament for players of 18 handicap or over, played on 13/14 September. Some were old hands like Bernardine Shirley-Smith and Barbara Anderson. Some were new, like Jim Bartlett and Mike Marshall. And three were juniors; Christopher Balshaw, Tim and Christobel Jones. Christopher, who was subsequently named 'Junior Player of the Year' at the Annual General Meeting, swept all before him and won the tournament for the second year in succession. So down came his handicap again. We are lucky to have such a promising bunch of young players. Stuart Parks was the runner-up, to the aforementioned Christopher Balshaw.

Tenth Anniversary Doubles

The Club held a Tenth Anniversary Handicap Doubles Tournament over the weekend 27/28 September. It was the first open Association Croquet tournament to be held since the opening of the new courts on 31 May this year. 22 players, ranging in age from 9 (Christabel Jones) to over 70, competed on half size courts in some thirty 14 point games.

Three pairs emerged as early potential winners. John Spiers and his 17 year old son Henley, played their first game only on the Saturday afternoon. They lost that 14 – 8 to Nick Butler and newcomer to the game Steve Boddy. After that they were unstoppable, catching Jolyon Kay and Jazz Macrearie by pegging out Jolyon's ball and leaving Jazz with an impossible task to catch up. Nick had been nominated 'Player of the Year' at the Annual General Meeting the week before, in recognition of his successes in tournaments and his contribution to the junior players coaching programme. He and Steve went on to win all their other matches except that against Jazz and Jolyon, who just caught them as time was called to win by one point. But that was not quite enough to stop Nick and Steve, who came out winners of 86% of their games as against the runners up's 83%.

Several players were sporting the new White Horse logo, in green on white, awarded to those who have played competitive games on the Club's behalf. The 'white horse' was chosen in recognition of the help provided by the Club's sponsors, White Horse Contractors, of Abingdon, whose work in building the courts was, despite the summer drought, magnificently in evidence, and by Vale of White Horse District Council, whose seed corn funding secured the club the biggest lottery grant for croquet ever awarded.

Players at the Tenth Anniversary Tournament in September enjoying the sunshine and the Chairman's eloquence. Right – the winners.



The Weeders and Sweepers

What a turnout for, to say the least, some not obviously attractive events! A majority of our membership seemed to turn up on the lovely first Saturday morning in October for the task of cutting out the coarse rye grass that had infiltrated our more refined fescues and brown topped bent grasses. As well as the weeding, there was mowing, strimming, patching and darning the court to be done. And a very thorough job was made of it. I estimate that at least sixty person hours were spent on a task which would have taken Godfrey at least a week of Sundays. We can now congratulate ourselves on an almost weed free lawn!

On the following Friday our contractors and sponsors, White Horse Contractors, applied top dressing to the courts. Alas, it did not go exactly according to plan! Several buckets of small stones were included in the consignment of topsoil their sub-contractors provided. Working parties of volunteers was enlisted to sweep the lawns. These stoics then spent another sixty man (and woman) hours sweeping the croquet courts and removing (nearly) all the stones! Now we can get on with the seeding as soon as it rains. Thanks again for dealing with such difficult and demanding situations. We shall have faster and more exciting courts next year as a result.

Coaching

We shall be running courses next year for Golf Croquet, for Association Croquet beginners, revisers, improvers and league players. Format will be the twice a week, afternoons and evenings one that was so popular last year. Fee £10 and probably a limit on the numbers to about 12 a course. And there will be weekend courses run in Southwick (near Brighton) on 24/25 April and at Cheltenham (date not yet known) which some of our members have found very helpful and enjoyable in the past.

Prebendal Manor Cup Competition

The competition for the cup generously presented by our President, the Lord of the Prebendal Manor of Blewbury, Mr Rustom Patel, took place over the months of June, July and August. Three pools of 5 players each fought it out on a round robin basis. In Pool A Paul Heath and Mike Duck both won three games; Paul got through to the semi-finals on the who-beats-who rule. In Pool B Deirdre Cochrane won three games, and indeed only lost to Mike Dawes by 21-20 in one of the first games of the tournament. In Pool C Nick Balshaw won all his games; Nick Butler

won three and with 41 difference of hoop points was best runner up, which procured him also a place in the semi-final. Nick Balshaw maintained his form through the semi-finals and finals, and was awarded the Cup for the inaugural year.

Winter Programme

We shall be running a number of events this winter. Do come along to those that interest you. We shall try to make them all interesting, some even fun. The programme is to be

November 6 th at 7 pm	Course for Tournament Managers	Ickleton House Blewbury
December 5 th at 7 pm	Indoor Croquet	East Hagbourne Village Hall
January 9 th at 7 pm	Games and Quiz	Upton Village Hall
February 9 th at 7 pm	Winter Party	Blewbury Village Hall
March 15 th at 7 pm	Coaching without Mallets	2 Westbrook Green, Blewbury

The first of these is for anybody who fancies themselves as managing a tournament one day. To do that well you do not need to hit straight – or even to be able to play croquet at all. But we do need a stock of willing hands. The course will last about an hour and a half, and in the Club tradition will be followed by drinks and a pudding. There will only be room for ten potential managers, so book early with the organiser, Jolyon Kay, on 01235 850010 or JolyonKay@aol.com

Golf Croquet

In the Southern Federation Golf Croquet League we played 5 matches; won 2 lost 3;. The results were High Wycombe 3 Blewbury 1, Winslow 1 Blewbury 3, Thames Valley 3 Blewbury 1, Eynsham 0 Blewbury 4, Ryde 3 Blewbury 1. We also played a friendly away at Phyllis Court, losing narrowly.

On 29 August we held a Golf Croquet Doubles Competition, for those members who took part in the Golf Croquet Coaching Course held at the beginning of the season, augmented by Sidney Hardwick's son and granddaughter. The eventual winners of a closely fought comp were Gordon Hardwick and Steve Russell, with Mike and Yvonne Collins as runners-up.

Cheltenham

Congratulations to John Spiers who entered his first CA tournament at Cheltenham on 10/12 October, and won it. Good news for all of us; his handicap has come down again! There are a whole host of tournaments suitable for first timers to enter; Cheltenham, where the World Championships are to be held in 2005, had weekend handicap tournaments last year on 18/21 April, 24/26 May, and an over-50 midweek handicap tournament on 17/19 June. Next year will be similar. Anybody with a handicap of 20 or less would feel at home in these events. And for your first CA Tournament you do not even need to be a member of the CA. Look also to Woking and Hurlingham; grand it may be; intimidating it is not. And all in easy daily reach of Blewbury.

John Munro
Chairman