



BLEWBURY CROQUET CLUB

Chairman's Newsletter No 37

20th March 2004

Dear Croquet Player

New Season

The new season will soon be upon us. It was good to see so many of you at our various winter events – we are already planning yet more for next season. The programme for the coming summer season is given below. If you have suggestions to make about other things we might do, let me know. But for the present make sure you have the Easter Tournament (taking place at Harwell) and the Open Day (May 30th) and our first international match (May 31st) in your diaries. And put your cheque-book on the table in front of you and follow the simple instructions below.

Subscriptions

Membership fees for 2004/5 become due on 1st April and are the same as last year - £50 for adults, £20 for under eighteens, and a maximum of £100 for all members of a family living at the same address. Please complete the form attached/enclosed and send it with your cheque to Brian Simpson. His address is shown on the form.

Winter Programme

We ran a number of events during the winter. Some were fun, some were interesting, some were both.

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| 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 | Skittles | 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, |

The first of these was for anybody who fancied themselves as managing a tournament one day. In the Club tradition it was followed by drinks and a pudding. Thanks to the organiser, Jolyon Kay. The willing victims were put through their paces at the end, managing an imaginary tournament complete with inconvenient results, difficult judgments to make and complaining players or late arrivals. We shall be giving them all an opportunity of trying out their skills on real players – you, the members – this coming season.

The Indoor Croquet at East Hagbourne was constrained by lack of space for our mat and misunderstandings about timing. The skittles evening at Upton was very enjoyable. The main event was won by Jim Bartlett, who was a fearsome competitor. Gillian Hewitt-Taylor organised the knock out competition, which was won by Austin Maytham. Many thanks to Brian and Daphne Simpson, Mike and Yvonne Collins, Margaret and Austin Maytham and Godfrey Nehring for all their hard work.

The Winter Party was in our home base, at the Blewbury Village Hall. Members were tortured by a fiendishly difficult quiz set by Jim Bartlett and played some good croquet on the indoor mat. Nobody actually won the croquet, or won the quiz. At least some of us left with their brains intact. The teddy bear racing was a great success. Thanks are due to Rosemary Tilden who supplied the bears, and Ken Gotch for making the matching coloured dice.

Coaching without Mallets took place on Monday March 15th at 2 Westbrook Green, The double act of Jolyon Kay and myself took our place at the coaching board, and Jim Bartlett's brilliantly crafted hoops, and subsequently round the pudding table. There was a discussion of tactics at the start of a game and at various commonly met with situations, the use of bisques and how to leave the court giving your opponent the least chance of developing a break.

And special thanks are due to Rosemary and the other ladies of the social subcommittee for providing all the mouth-watering refreshments at East Hagbourne, Upton and Blewbury.

Use of Courts

The following have been provisionally set up as a guide for the use of the courts for the coming season. There will be interruptions caused by bad weather, by matches, and by occasional pesticide application, but we shall try to give prior notice. This notice will be posted for all to see by the entrance to the courts.

| | 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 |

Development Programme

We are proposing a development programme for next winter. We badly need a proper irrigation system that will diminish the strain on our gallant watering team during drought. Last season they had to be called out up to three times a day. At the same time we shall have to put in a drainage ditch to prevent run-off from Ticker's Folly Field onto the courts, which has been causing excessive growth of moss in winter. Furthermore we now need a larger groundsman's shelter. Our storage of chemicals is insecure, some of our equipment is stored in the main recreation ground shed too far away and to get out the croquet balls means moving out the mower, at least, and sometimes more. We have identified a secure steel shelter which can be supplied prefabricated and dressed up to look like a picturesque summerhouse. Well, a bit like. The total cost looks likely to come in at some £10,000.

We shall be appointing a project team similar to the body who ran the project to build our new courts. Would anybody who has useful experience in irrigation, construction, fund-raising, arm-twisting, finance, project management or draftsmanship and who would be willing to join the team let me know. I think this time the original project team can be allowed a rest.

Programme for 2004

The provisional Programme of events for next season is as follows. There will certainly be other friendly matches to add, and maybe one or two other surprises, but it was drawn up with your responses to our questionnaire in mind, so I hope it will meet with your approval.

Friday April 9th to Monday April 12th (Easter weekend). The season opens with a 4 day event with a mix of Golf Croquet and Association Croquet, which we are arranging together with Harwell C C at their courts.

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| Day 1 – Association Croquet Doubles – Pool A | Manager, John Spiers |
| Day 2 - Association Croquet Doubles – Pool B | Manager, Mike Duck |
| Day 3 pm - Golf Croquet Doubles | Manager, B'dine Shirley-Smith |
| Day 4 – am One Ball, all day | Manager, David Spear |
| pm Final of Golf & Association Croquet, Manager and Weekend Director, Jolyon Kay | |

Saturday/Sunday 24th /25th April Association Croquet Improvers Course at Southwick, for CA members only. Contact Fixtures List or Jolyon Kay for further details

***Thursday April 29th** Friendly Association Croquet match against Swindon, at home. Manager tba

***Saturday May 1st to Sunday May 2nd** Association Croquet Low-Bisquers Tournament (Handicap 12 and below). Advanced Rules Manager, Mike Duck

Monday 3rd May, Friday 7th May, Monday 10th May, Friday 14th May
Association Croquet refresher course for 2003 beginners. Afternoon and evening sessions on all days. Just turn up on the first day at 2.30 pm or 5.30 pm Manager, Jolyon Kay

***Tuesday May 4th** Prebendal Cup Competition for Association Croquet Manager, Jim Bartlett
and Icknield Cup competition for Golf Croquet open Manager, Mike Collins

***Saturday May 8th** Friendly v Harwell at Blewbury. Manager, Nick Butler

Saturday May 15th to Sunday May 16th
Association Croquet Improvers Course, Oxford University Manager, David Follows

Saturday May 15th to Sunday May 16th Golf Croquet Tournament. Manager, Diana Elliott

Mondays, May 17th through to May 30th
Golf croquet refresher course. Monday afternoons Manager, Gerald Mitchell

***Saturday May 29th** High-Bisquers Tournament (Handicap 16 plus). Manager, Miren Tong
Sunday May 30th Open Day Manager, Jim Bartlett
***Monday May 31st** Croquet Match v Croquet Club Bayeusain Manager Jolyon Kay
Weekend Director John Munro

June 7th to 25th Association Croquet improvers' course (mainly beginners from 2003).

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| Mondays and Fridays, afternoons and evenings. | Manager Jolyon Kay |
| Saturday June 12th Friendly Association Croquet match, Blewbury v Hurlingham at home. | Manager, Deirdre Cochrane |
| Wednesday June 21st Friendly Golf Croquet match at home to Phyllis Court | Manager, tba |
| Saturday/Sunday June 26th/27th Roger Cambray Memorial One Ball, At Hall Barn | Manager John Munro |
| Saturday/Sunday. July 4th /5th Golf Croquet Course run by the Croquet Association. | Manager, Jennet Blake (CA) |
| July 5th to July 23rd Association Croquet beginners' course. Mondays and Fridays, afternoons and evenings, over 3 weeks. | Manager John Munro |
| Sunday July 11th 1 day interclub Golf Croquet Tournament (Southern Croquet Federation). | Manager, Norma Rayne (Thames Valley C C) |
| Saturday July 17th to Sunday July 18th Intervillage Association Croquet Tournament. | Manager, Jolyon Kay |
| *Saturday July 24th to Sunday July 25th All England Handicap Competition, first round (Jointly with Harwell), | Manager, Mike Duck Asst Manager tba |
| Friday 30th July Friendly Golf Croquet. Away to Phyllis Court | Manager, tba |
| Saturday July 31st to Sunday August 1st Golf Croquet Tournament. | Manager, Brian Simpson |
| Saturday August 28th to Sunday August 29th *Founder's Cup Tournament. Level play singles | Manager, Jolyon Kay |
| Monday August 30th (Bank holiday) From mid-day. *Founder's Cup Final and *Prebendal Manor Cup Final. | Manager, Jolyon Kay Manager, Jim Bartlett |
| Saturday September 25th to Sunday September 26th Autumn Doubles Association Croquet Tournament. | Manager, Jim Bartlett |

To be added; possible friendly Association Croquet match against Cheltenham. Would anybody who would like to play in one of the friendlies please let me or the manager know.

The Sports Turf Research Institute Court Inspection

Steve Gringel, our STRI consultant came to inspect the courts this last Thursday 18th March. This was arranged to be just as the grass was beginning to grow (keeping in mind that fescue starts growing later than most other grasses).

Godfrey Nehring reports that Steve had made a number of points, which will be included in his full report to arrive shortly. However the overall impression was that it would be inadvisable to plan any play on the courts until the end of April. There were several reasons: -

1. We need time for recovery from the current red thread infection, which has attacked the grass because it is weak and needs a little nitrogen. To start with, this will be remedied with lawn sand and perhaps some additional ammonium nitrate. Treatments will begin as soon as weather permits.
2. The young grass that germinated last November has not moved much since then and needs time to toughen up.
3. There are still bare patches (or patches of moss) particularly on the Blewbury side of the courts and these should be scarified and seeded in a few weeks time prior to the commencement of play. It is still a bit early to seed now.

Having said this Steve assured me that our lawns were amongst the best he had seen so far this spring; most were in an awful state. Thanks to our weeding work party last year, the only grass, other than fescue, present in noticeable amounts is a large bent grass, which is an asset. In addition, the root system is even stronger than last year and better than any he has seen in a lawn of this age, confirming my conviction that it is better to rest young grass in the winter. On the bright side Steve sees no reason why the lawns should not be fully playable by the end of April.

In consequence we have had to rearrange our proposed Easter Tournament and the coaching schedules we had planned. The revised programme is as given below.

Archives

Dorrie Warren has kindly agreed to act as the Club Archivist. There exists a large volume of papers, press cuttings, photographs, newsletters etc from our ten year history, and it would be a shame if they were all lost, so Dorrie will be most grateful for contributions from anybody who has some. Get in touch with her on 768032 (email donovan.w@virgin.net).

Summer Outing

We have received an invitation to visit Ardington House, home of the Baring family, in Ardington, near Wantage. A member of the family will give us a guided tour, followed by afternoon tea of sandwiches and cake. The cost would be £7.50 per head. The visit would be in mid-week, but no date has so far been fixed. We shall need to have some idea of numbers before making a booking. Please let Bernardine know if you would like to come; friends would be welcome.

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, and won by Nick Balshaw, will again be competed for this year, starting from May 4th. Entries on the form enclosed or attached should be sent to Jim Bartlett, with the fee of £5.

Golf Croquet

The club is holding a round robin tournament for the Icknield Bowl for golf croquet players this season (Entry Fee £5).and we hope all the golf croquet players in the club will enter. Each competitor will play the others in his/her block, or all will play all depending on the number of entrants, over the course of the season, at mutually convenient times. If you are interested please let me know as soon as possible.

The club will enter a team in the Southern Croquet Federation Golf Croquet League again this season. This is a doubles competition with two pairs in each team and we shall welcome new players.

There are also two national golf croquet competitions being held this season as follows :-

1. Grass Roots Golf Croquet Competition for beginners and high handicap players. Entry fee £ 5 (£ 4 for C.A. members). The closing date for entry is 26th May and we need a minimum of 8 players to hold a preliminary tournament at Blewbury with the winner going forward to a regional final in July / August.
2. Centre Stage Golf Croquet Competition for medium handicap players (1-5).This competition provides the next stage on from the Grass Roots Competition. Entry fee £6 (£5 for C.A. members) and is played as a series of club events, then regional tournaments . Any C.A. members, who should by now have received the Fixtures Calendar 2004, can find full details of these competitions on Pages 51 and 52. Do please consider entering enter the Grass Roots Competition as your first tournament experience. Those interested contact me.

The Golf Croquet World and British Open Championships are being held at the Sussex County Croquet Club and Compton Croquet Clubs near Brighton from 20th – 27th June. This is a rare opportunity to see the best golf croquet players in the world in action, and if enough members are interested we will see if we can organise a visit to the finals.

Finally if members are unsure of their golf croquet handicap then have a word with Gerald Mitchell or myself.

Handicaps

Each playing member of the Club should have either a Golf Croquet handicap, an Association Croquet handicap or both. Those that have been awarded are listed in the sheet enclosed/attached to this letter.

Association Croquet handicaps are either awarded by the joint Blewbury Harwell handicap committee, consisting of Mike Duck, Jolyon Kay and myself, or changed by the Automatic Handicap System (AHS). The handicap committee usually awards first handicaps on the basis of watching play and seeing the results of games played in competition. The highest handicap that can be awarded is 30. When it comes down to 24 you are eligible to play in Southern League matches. As soon as you play in any match outside the Club you should obtain a handicap card and start recording all your games. Cards are obtainable from the Secretary or from any member of the handicap committee. The handicappers will look at your card from time to time and review your handicap in the light of your results. They may also ask you to do a 'handicap test'.

When you become a regular team player, or become a Member of the Croquet Association, you join the Automatic Handicapping System. You now fill in your handicap card only for what are known as

qualifying games. These are full-court singles matches in a competition that is either a CA competition or a 'designated' club competition. You will see on the programme for 2004 above that some competitions are marked with an *. These are all competitions that have been designated as qualifying for AHS purposes. You now have to find out your index. This is a number that corresponds to your present handicap, and is read from a table on the handicap card. Then you add to, or subtract from, your total every time you win, or lose, a game. When your index reaches the next trigger point, your handicap automatically changes.

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. The Southern Croquet Federation is to run a weekend course at improver level on 15th/16th May in The Parks, specially for giving would be coaches an opportunity to qualify as grade 1 Coaches. And there will be weekend courses for improvers, handicap 24 or less, run in Southwick (near Brighton) on 24th/25th April and a bronze level, i.e. handicap 18 or less, course at Bath on 15th/16th May. Some of our members have found these very helpful and enjoyable in the past.

International

I am delighted that the Croquet Club Bayeusain, France's leading croquet club (since its only rival, Geneva, is technically in Switzerland) has accepted an invitation to send a team to play Blewbury on 31st May, the first anniversary of the opening of our new courts. It is also only a little while after the one hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Entente Cordiale between Britain and France, which makes it particularly appropriate for us to have a visit from a French team. We shall be looking for volunteers to accommodate the members of the team; please get in touch with me, Bernardine or Rosemary Tilden if you would like to offer. Preferably in Blewbury or not too far away.

John Munro
Chairman

