

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CROQUET CLUB

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14th 2002 AT 10 a.m. in FRANT

Present: John HOBBS (Chairman), Clive HORTON (Treasurer), Mick BELCHAM (Secretary), Richard CLARK, Pamela CLARK, Derek CROCOMBE, Nita DAVIS, Eric DENNISON, Jon DIAMOND, John GREENWOOD, Derek HEATH, Jean HEATH, Heather HENDERSON, Brian HOUGH, Doreen HOUGH, Colin MABEY, Sue MABEY, Richard MANN, Ray MEECH, Roger MORRIS, Pauline MORRIS, Hazel MOSS-DAVIS, Stan OXENBURY, Laurel PRICE, Miriam READER, Bella STEINHAUER, Christopher STURDY, John TIMMIS.

Apologies for Absence: Pat BOWLER, Jolyon CREASEY, Monica GOULD, Ken HUCKLE, Barney LEWIS, Chris MARSHALL, Lucy REES-EVANS.

PRELIMINARY

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies from those unable to attend were listed. There were no Matters Arising from the Minutes of the 2001 AGM.

1. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman reviewed progress made against each of the five objectives that he identified at last year's AGM:

- To increase membership: "very encouraging". Would like all members to actively "spread the word". Thought a membership of 60 would be optimum.
- To ensure enjoyment: we've done very well this year. Special thanks to Colin Mabey for his efforts on Club Afternoons. The level of informality that he has injected into these afternoons is in stark contrast to some other clubs. For example, Worthing where the Golf and Association players never meet – nor want to!.
- To raise playing standards: thanks to Richard Clark not only for organising the formal Coaching this year but also for his willingness to provide Coaching and general support on Club Afternoons
- To involve more Members in running the Club: general thanks, particularly to those who helped with catering and housekeeping and to the Committee Members who have taken on specific roles and responsibilities this year
- To re-negotiate our Lease: being led by Richard Clark and already seeing progress.

We are hoping to register the Club as a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) this year. This is a new Government initiative to encourage clubs to be more "open" and, for those that match up to the criteria, there are some potential tax advantages particularly in the way the Club can treat Donations as being under Gift Aid.

In Conclusion: "Probably my most enjoyable croquet season!"

2. TREASURER'S REPORT .

The Treasurer reviewed the Accounts for year ending September 30th 2002 and highlighted a number of points concerning comparisons with the previous year. In response to two questions (Eric Dennison):

- He will consider whether or not to separate the expenditures for Insurance and Electricity in

future Accounts.

- He said that we are in a strange position re the valuation of the Clubhouse. It is an asset while we remain in Calverley Park but of no value at all if our Lease, for some reason, is not renewed. In fact if we have to move, it is a liability as we would have to dismantle it!

The Accounts were accepted. (See later item re discussions on Lease and Skateboard Park that, in fact, were handled during this Agenda item)

3. LAWNS, EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES.

The Secretary summarised the Winter maintenance programme:

- Lawn 3 closed early October through to mid May. Lawns 1 and 2 closed only for December, January and February (weather permitting).
- All lawns will be scarified, hollow-tined and fertilised, as well as being slit regularly throughout the Winter.
- Lawn 3, in addition, will be spread with all of this year's Top Dressing allocation

In response to concerns regarding grass length (Nita Davis) he said that we are, effectively, experimenting with how short we can cut it. We would all like it shorter but, with two or more inches of thatch under the healthy growth (not to mention the "undulations"!), we are not able to consider cutting it as short as, for instance, the Southwick or Compton clubs do. Also we have not been able to use the Club's own mower this year as it was out of commission. It has now been repaired so we hope that that will make a difference next year.

The Chairman commented on "Clubhouse-keeping" matters and said that the rota system would be repeated next year. Also that we may organise a "spring cleaning" day, both for the Clubhouse and for the equipment. Both matters will be included in the Questionnaire for member comments prior to the start of the 2003 season.

4. CLUB AFTERNOONS

Colin Mabey commented on how successful these had been this year. Altogether there were 30 sessions during the year with a total attendance of 402. The peak month was August when there was an average of 22 attendees at each session, with an all time high of 26. He reiterated that all forms of Croquet are played, not just Golf as some might presume.

Seven Friendlies were organised with other local clubs; many thanks to Miriam for her help with the Brenzett Club.

Also he wished to thank particularly both the Chairman and Richard Clark for all their help and commitment to providing coaching on Club Afternoons.

He mentioned that the Committee is considering extending the Club Afternoon programme to two sessions. No decisions have been made about which day, whether it should be a morning or afternoon or, indeed, whether it should be fixed or vary week by week. The Questionnaire (mentioned earlier) will also seek member opinion on this topic. The availability of Car Parking would make Sunday an attractive possibility. Additional parking issues were then raised and discussed.

5. TOURNAMENTS AND COMPETITIONS

The Secretary reviewed this year's tournament programme as well as the Club's participation in inter-club League competitions (4th out of 16 in the SECF 'U' League and 14th out of 17 in the SECF 'B' League). He mentioned that there had been some confusion this year regarding two issues – mainly because Club Rules had not been publicised (to be rectified next year!). The two issues were:

- o "whites": white clothing is always encouraged. However it is only mandatory in tournaments and competitions that are either inter-club or open to entry by members of other clubs.
- o internal club tournament "cut off" dates: please observe these dates next year as any games not played on schedule will be declared as walk-overs or null and void.

Two changes next year: firstly the consensus appears to be that Alternate Strokes play in the internal club Association Doubles competition was not a success as it biased the result towards those pairings with fairly similar handicaps. It was recognised however that Alternate Strokes is a most effective form for Coaching. The second change relates to the Club's Open High Bisquers Tournament in September. This was a real success this year, to such an extent that two such Tournaments will be scheduled for 2003.

Many thanks to Peter and Audrey Howell for their presentation to the Club of the Howell Cup. This is to be awarded each year to the winner of the Club's internal High Bisquers Competition.

Congratulations to the Chairman and Miriam Reader on their Doubles win at Southwick and also to Jon Diamond on his Singles win. also at Southwick. Congratulations are also due to Chris Sturdy who was a joint winner of the Regional Finals of the All England Association Handicap Tournament at Compton.

6. COACHING AND HANDICAPPING

Richard Clark reviewed the year's programme. He was disappointed at the low turnout for the Sunday sessions particularly as the profile of member handicaps shows that two-thirds of the members have Association handicaps of 18 or over. We have a strong team of very good, low handicap players – and a yawning gap in between! Our ambition must be to fill this gap but it can only be done by coaching and/or Tournament play. So next year we hope to encourage more to participate.

During discussion, it was agreed to hold an additional coaching session early in the year specifically for those middle/lower handicappers to learn the intricacies of Advanced Play games.

The Chairman encouraged all members to keep a Handicap Card even for friendly games. John Greenwood cautioned against too much rigour in this area as it can stifle experimentation. Richard Clark suggested that keeping notes in a Log Book is also useful for coaching purposes. After discussion it was agreed that whatever system was deemed appropriate should be clarified in the Club Rules.

7. PUBLICITY, MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Chairman commented on two innovations this year – the Newsletter (which the Meeting agreed was very useful) and the use of Email which both reduces costs (as two-thirds of our members use this facility) and enables the more frequent distribution of Club news and notices. There was some further discussion regarding general publicity issues.

On the subject of Membership, the Chairman proposed that Peter and Audrey Howell should be elected Life Honorary Members. He presented a brief history of the Club and the critical roles that Peter and Audrey had played in it. Quite simply, he said, without Peter and Audrey, there wouldn't be a Club. At an earlier Committee Meeting, it was agreed to recommend their election. However it also required a two-thirds majority vote of members at an AGM to be effective. The motion was duly proposed and seconded and the necessary two-thirds majority of members was easily obtained.

Regarding Annual Subscriptions, he proposed that for 2003 they should remain effectively the same as for 2002 with two slight exceptions:

- We should highlight the category of Student Membership as provided in the Constitution and establish a rate specifically for it. (There was some discussion regarding the age restrictions for a Student which the Committee will review)
- We need a caveat that would allow the Committee to offer other forms of membership during the year, such as for a "2nd Club" Membership, or to vary these annual rates in exceptional circumstances

The following schedule was then proposed for 2003 and agreed:

- Full Membership:
- First Year: £50
- Second Year £75
- Thereafter: £100
- Student Membership: £30

In order to cater for exceptional or unforeseen circumstances these rates may be varied by the Club's Officers

8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

The Chairman stated that two members of the Committee – Miriam Reader and Nita Davis – were standing-down and not offering themselves for re-election. Both had been on the Committee for more than 10 years and had contributed hugely to the smooth running of the Club. He presented each with an arrangement of flowers in appreciation of all their efforts over the years.

It was proposed to re-elect the 3 existing Officers and four other existing Committee Members en-block. This was seconded and carried as were the proposed nominations of two replacement Committee Members, Jean Heath and Brian Hough.. The Committee then for 2003 is as follows:

Chairman John Hobbs

Treasurer Clive Horton

Secretary Mick Belcham

Committee Richard Clark, Derek Heath, Jean Heath, Brian Hough, Colin Mabey and Sue Mabey

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Constitution Change**: the Secretary proposed 3 changes to the Club's Constitution. These had been prompted principally by the Committee's decision to register the Club as a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) in 2003 in order to gain certain tax advantages for future Donations. However they also reflected the Club's own commitment to appealing to a wide membership and to being a not-for-profit organisation. In addition Richard Clark proposed that the Constitution should also be amended to allow for any future requirement to appoint Trustees. After several points were raised regarding the precise wording of the changes, four amendments to the Constitution were proposed, seconded and carried. These included:

- a commitment to encourage members to learn and play Croquet (in Paragraph 2)
- clarification of the circumstances in which membership may be revoked or declined (in Paragraph 6A)
- provision for appointing Trustees (in Paragraph 11E)
- the imposition of constraints on how the Club's assets (after liabilities) may be distributed should the Club be dissolved (in Paragraph 12).

(See attached revised version of the Constitution)

- Leasehold**: Richard Clark reported that he was making progress re-negotiating the Club's Lease with the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and this will be finalised shortly. It is

essential to have such a formal arrangement in place if we are to apply for grants and/or other financial support. (As part of these discussions, he has already applied for funding for the purchase of some replacement balls and has been granted £500 by the Council to do so!)

- c. **Skateboarding**: two potential sites have been proposed by the Council for a Skateboard Park, one of which is adjacent to our lawns in the old hard courts (currently used mainly for basketball). Should they propose to go ahead with such a Park, we will be involved in the Consultation process. The Chairman commented that, much as we would prefer that such a facility was not created "in our own backyard", should it in fact be so, then we should endeavour to "live together amicably" and not to become the "snobby" stereotypes that we may be assumed to be!
- d. **Miscellaneous**: a number of additional points were raised principally concerning publicity via the Courier Newspaper and ascertaining whether or not there is a Sports Organisation in Tunbridge Wells to which we should be affiliated.

10. **PRESENTATION OF PRIZES**

The Chairman presented the Club Trophies as follows:

Miriam Reader Golf Ladder

Richard Clark Golf Rose Bowl

John Greenwood Spa Salver (Advanced Level) + Lustau Cup (Advanced Handicap)

Jon Diamond - Howell Cup (High Bisquers) + Association Ladder + Doubles Goblet (with Chris Sturdy)

Chris Sturdy Lewis Shield (All England Handicap) + Calverley Cup (Handicap) + Doubles Goblet (with Jon Diamond)

11. **CLOSE**

The Chairman then declared the Meeting closed.