



If the weather allows, we will start the season on Sunday 6th April. By your votes, Sunday is going to be our second club day. Thank you for replying to the questionnaire and for volunteering for so many of the jobs that have to be done to keep the club running smoothly. Six of the members who volunteered for DIY activities turned out over the weekend of 21st to 23rd March and totally transformed the Club House. You may have heard that this included covering the purple graffiti that decorated each white panel. What we have yet to fix is the clock, which was wrenched from its mounting and left hanging by a wire. We hope that we will not continue to attract the attention of mindless vandals.

What is especially gratifying is that all the members who joined last year have renewed for this year, which means that we can build on this base of members and reach a level at which we will have sufficient funds to continue our attempts to improve the lawns. Let us all try to recruit a new member from among our friends and this, combined with advertising open afternoons and direct approaches to local societies, should further increase our numbers, perhaps even up to our eventual target of around 60 or more. Stop press.. We already have a prospective new member who saw the DIY team working away - it augers well! (John Hobbs – Chairman)

Membership

We're sorry to see two of our "stalwarts" resign this year – Lucy Rees-Evans (who's joint responsibilities to motherhood and the working community have finally caught up with her) and Ken Huckle (who, it is rumoured, has moved to be closer to an otherwise all female club). Keep in touch, both of you, please. (Mick Belcham)

Lawns

Another winter of frustration. Lawn 3 was "put to bed" early as planned and Lawns 1 and 2 were still being played on up until the last week in November – something of a record! After that it all went downhill. The top dressing is still waiting to be spread and even the slitting programme had to wait until the New Year before things were dry enough to start it. Still, we're on the way now and on-schedule for Opening Day (for Lawns 1 and 2) – **Sunday April 6th (at 2pm)**. Put it in your diary! (Mick Belcham)

Internal Club Competitions

A record number of entries this year, not only in total, but also across the board. What is really encouraging is the number of members who are "in transition". We've more than doubled the numbers entering the High Bisquers (Association) Competition and the Golf Rose Bowl (i.e. those wanting to add a competitive element to their games) and we've increased significantly those wanting to try the Advanced

(Association) game. (Richard, please note!! Your coaching targets to increase the number of improvers in the Club may already be surpassed!). Please watch the Notice Board for the games you are scheduled to play as well as the required dates of their completion. (Mick Belcham)

Inter-Club Matches

As in previous years we are entered in two Southeastern Federation Leagues (the U and the B Association Leagues). Also we are sending two teams to the Federation's Golf Croquet Teams Day **on July 27th** and a team to the Ladies' Day (Association) on **July 9th**. Finally, the "Friendlies". What can I say? More than half the Club wants to play in these immensely popular events. We only hope we can fit you all in. Incidentally, a slight change for this year in all inter-club events (League and Friendlies). All players (Home and Away) will be asked to pay a Match Fee (of £3) into the catering fund. This will mean we can continue to "subsidise" visiting teams' refreshments (as they do for us) without depleting Club funds. (Mick Belcham)

Open Tournaments

We've planned five open tournaments (i.e. open to "outsiders") this year. They are:

Kent Handicap (High Bisquers and Improvers) **May 31st**

One Ball (Anybody – and great fun!) **July 5th**

High Bisquers (Handicap of 16 or over) **August 31st**

Open Advanced (Not for the faint-hearted!) **September 6/7th**

Open Handicap (again, High Bisquers and Improvers) **October 11/12th**

In addition (though not strictly "Open") is a further High Bisquers Tournament specifically for our own club members to "practice" being in a tournament without the "pressure" of "outsiders". This is only a one-day event and is scheduled for: **June 29th**. Ample opportunity to prepare yourself for it – no excuses! (Mick Belcham)

Club Afternoons

It has been a long winter and we would greatly benefit from a return to the fray. Not unexpectedly the weather conditions have made it very difficult for the groundsman to operate to our best advantage. All of us want an improved playing surface on the lawns. To achieve this we may just have to be patient for a while longer.

From the replies we have had to the general questionnaire-- 100% of you are happy to continue with Wednesday afternoons as a definite core fixture in the programme. We may decide to start at 13.00 or 13.30 instead of 14.00 perhaps depending on the season or even taking your wishes into account. Now that would be a novelty!

The other proposed session will probably be on Sunday afternoons at the same sort of time. Sunday had overwhelming support over any other day than Wednesday, which may be not unrelated to free car parking being available on that day. Another factor is the possibility of coaching occurring in the morning for any who might to wish to make a full day out of these events. Naturally the mooted plans will all depend on lawn availability. Home matches and tournaments against other clubs would take priority as the dates are centrally decided. When this occurs, the general opinion favours Mondays or Fridays, again in the afternoon, as a fall back. Be assured that every effort will be made to accommodate the choices of as many of you as possible. For example Mondays and/or Fridays would still leave something of a gap with

Wednesdays when a Sunday was already spoken for.

We hope that two weekly sessions will more easily accommodate simultaneous playing of internal matches and coaching. Many of you would like coaching to continue to be available during these club afternoons. At the same time we do not intend to lose sight of one of the original objectives of providing a social afternoon for those looking for a more relaxed programme. To provide for all three aspects at the same time will need further examples of the flexibility you all showed last season. Even so, the convener has taken the precaution of investing in a whistle!

Although Association and Golf will continue to be the mainstays we may encourage other *official* versions of the Game, such as Pirates. There will be an attempt to introduce a gradually more competitive environment, but definitely only when this is not an intrusion on those bent on a less demanding formula. Variety will be the keynote! (Colin Mabey)

Coaching

With Spring in the air, what better time to turn your mind to spring cleaning your repertoire of strokes, brushing up your tactics and learning new strategies for the season? We intend to provide a programme of coaching and training, some built into Club afternoons, some structured on Sunday mornings to meet all levels of ability. Watch the Newsletter and the Club Notice Board for details.

The season's first Coaching event will be for those hoping to embark on the Advanced game and maybe tournaments this year as well as those who have already tasted the heady delights of advanced matches. If that tempts you, come along on **SUNDAY 27th APRIL** when John Greenwood will take us through a morning and afternoon session beginning at 11 a.m. with a short break for lunch. (Richard Clark)

Winter Croquet in Florida

In February I went on the Florida trip that you may have seen advertised on the notice board. I had visited the National Croquet Centre at Palm Beach last year and played briefly on their laser-levelled, fast lawns. This year I had six days of play, under sunny skies, with a cooling breeze and feel that coming back to dear old Tunbridge Wells is going to be a bit of a contrast. Some 32 British players and a dozen American and Canadian players enjoyed handicap and advanced games, plus mixed doubles, in which a Brit was paired with someone used to American rules. This caused some problems until, for example, the Americans realised that when you roquet a ball it doesn't matter if your own ball goes off the lawn. We were double banked most of the time and since the Americans don't have secondary colours, we had a white stripe painted round the second colours. In many ways this was better because, when moving, the white stripes stood out very clearly.

As comic relief we also had access to the 'Harpo Marx' course. Harpo was an avid croquet player! This was a spare bit of land, about 80 by 25 yards, with trees, steep banks and hoops placed on slopes. The object was to go round nine hoops, using golf croquet rules. Alternatively you could count how many strokes to get round the full course. The record was 26 and I gave up counting at 57!

It was a splendid break in mid winter and the eight people not playing croquet enjoyed themselves on outings organised by our courier (my daughter Nickie Evans). It remains to be seen how many people go next year, but it should turn into an annual event. The NCC has a superb building, with a shop, selling clothing with their logo on, plus my mallets, and they have full catering facilities. One thing the Brits didn't take to was the American practice of having a 15% tip expected on all food and drink, so it was bundled in for the duration of our stay and it made winning games a bit expensive; that's why I lost most of mine! (John Hobbs)

Webcam

Have you ever wondered what the weather is like in Calverley Park? Is it worth the journey to play croquet? Up until now we have had to "phone a friend" to find out. Several times I have not attended the Club Afternoon because the rain was bucketing down at home, only to find out later that the Calverley

skies were clear blue and everyone sweltered in the heat. Not any more: things have changed: the 21st century is here, now! There is a camera that permanently points over Calverley Park and takes a picture every five minutes. These photos are broadcast on the Internet at bbc.co.uk/kent/webcams/ Check it out now. You can't actually see our croquet lawns, although it is sometimes possible to see the pavilion just below and the sky above. There will be no excuse in future for missing a fine day's croquet. (Derek Heath)

The Crown is back

In our first issue, the Crown was correctly shown on our logo but it was missing from later issues - due to a technical difficulty. It is back now – and nobody missed it!

Your Committee

- John Hobbs - Handicaps, Equipment, Building, Publicity and Marketing
- Mick Belcham - Secretary, Tournaments (internal & open), Lawns
- Clive Horton – Finance
- Richard Clark – Coaching, Publications, Lease
- Jean Heath
- Colin Mabey – Club Afternoons, Golf croquet, Membership
- Brian Hough
- Sue Mabey – Catering team
- Derek Heath – Newsletter, U & B League matches