

# ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CROQUET CLUB

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15<sup>th</sup> 2003 AT 10.30 a.m. in FRANT

**Present:** John HOBBS (Chairman), Clive HORTON (Treasurer), Mick BELCHAM (Secretary), Chris BERWICK, Richard CLARK, Pamela CLARK, Derek CROCOMBE, Nita DAVIS, Jon DIAMOND, Richard ELLIOTT, John GREENWOOD, Frank GUNSTONE, Derek HEATH, Jean HEATH, Barney LEWIS, Colin MABEY, Sue MABEY, Ray MEECH, Roger MORRIS, Pauline MORRIS, Hazel MOSS-DAVIS, Andrew QUYE, Miriam READER, Bella STEINHAUER, John TIMMIS.

**Apologies for Absence:** Brian and Doreen HOUGH, Richard MANN, Chris MARSHALL, Stan OXENBURY, Laurel PRICE, Chris STURDY, Derrick and Mary USHER.

### 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 2002 AGM which were duly signed by the Chairman.

#### 1. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman summarised the year as "A year of steady progress".

He then reviewed progress against each of his five objectives:

- To increase membership: we have remained pretty static having gained 6 new members this year but lost 4 through non-renewal
- To ensure enjoyment: everyone is encouraged to progress at their own speed. He has a firm belief that those progressing to a higher level enjoy the game more, so would encourage all to take advantage of coaching opportunities. Special thanks to Colin Mabey for his efforts on Club Afternoons. We have done well in the SECF U and B Leagues this year winning 5 out of our 8 games. However he would like more players to join the pool of those willing to represent the Club especially as we will be entering the SECF Golf League as well next year
- To raise playing standards: next year we are planning a more individual and aspiration-led approach to Coaching. Many thanks to Richard Clark for organising this year's programme.
- To involve more Members in running the Club: this year our volunteering approach worked well. Many thanks to those who helped with housekeeping/cleaning (run on a rota basis), to those helping on the DIY weekend, to Jon Diamond for keeping the garden area free of weeds etc and to Sue Mabey and others that helped out in catering activities
- To re-negotiate our Lease: Richard Clark has been involved in this throughout the year for which many thanks. We are now at a point of needing a Solicitor to look over the final document and would hope that someone in the Club knows of someone who might help out "pro bono"

We registered as a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) this year. This allows us to take advantage of some potential tax benefits in the way that the Club treats Donations, effectively adding 28% to their nominal value

We now have our very own Website (courtesy of Jon Diamond). We now need to understand how best to exploit it, if only by giving it a more recognisable name.

We continue to publish a Club Newsletter 2 or 3 times a year for which we must thank Derek Heath.

We are sorry to lose Clive Horton as our Treasurer after so many years of unstinting service to the Club. We wish him well with his Golf!

Thanks also to our Secretary, Mick Belcham, without whom we would achieve very little. The

Chairman showed his appreciation for Mick's efforts with a personal gift of his favourite tippie!

## 2. TREASURER'S REPORT.

The Treasurer reviewed the Accounts for year ending September 30<sup>th</sup> 2003 and highlighted a number of points concerning comparisons with the previous year.

He pointed out that we have now written off the "value" of the Clubhouse as it could never be realised as an asset.

The comparatively low Surplus this year is principally due to the extra planned Lawn Maintenance work and the cost of major repair work on the lawn mower.

Regarding Annual Subscriptions: he pointed out that they had remained the same since 1995 so the Club should expect to raise them in the very near future.

The Treasurer thanked the Committee both past and present for their assistance during his 12 years as Treasurer. He was thanked again by the Chairman.

The Accounts were accepted.

## 3. LAWNS, EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES.

The Secretary provided an update on the lawns, confirming their intended opening next year in mid-March and thanked members for their patience this year both with the dry conditions and some fox damage.

He also outlined the Club's options regarding the future of the lawns: to continue as-is with only minimal increases in maintenance costs, to seek out a "benefactor" willing to finance both the complete renewal of the lawns (approximately £30,000) and the on-going increased maintenance costs, or to attempt some "radical surgery". He would favour the last of these approaches. It will entail conducting a laser-based assessment of lawn undulations, identifying the worst high/low spots and then raising and/or lowering surface levels accordingly. This will be a multi-year project depending almost exclusively on the level of extra funds that might be made available. For this reason he is recommending to the Committee the setting up of an initiative that would seek to build a "war chest" specifically for this purpose. As the principle source of funds will be from our Membership, we should take advantage of our CASC tax status and ask for any donations that our members feel inclined to make to be made under the Gift Aid umbrella.

The Chairman re-iterated our Balls policy – 4 sets: the best for Tournaments, the second for inter-club matches, the third (kept in the trolleys) for general competitive play and the last (with white stripes) for practice and other "social" play. We have a number of balls for disposal to good causes!

## 4. TOURNAMENTS AND COMPETITIONS

The Secretary reviewed this year's programme:<

- Four Open Tournaments. Club Members won two of them – Brian Hough the High Bisquers and Jon Diamond the newly-sponsored Pegasus Plate Handicap
- League Matches: we won 5 out of 8 matches played. The members voted overwhelmingly to enter the SECF Golf League next year.
- Internal Club Competitions: it was agreed that the Committee should look at the possibility of organising the Block competitions differently (maybe on a 2 life basis) to avoid the need for players who are already out of contention being obligated to play the scheduled number of games. It was also agreed that there should be two Golf competitions next year – an Open (for all handicap levels) and a "High Bisquers". This latter competition might be organised on

a Block basis or as a Ladder.

There was significant interest in Club members supporting the World Golf Championships being held in Southwick and Compton in June next year. Many were interested in volunteering to help as "ball boys" and scorers and there was also some interest in organising a "Club Away Day" to visit as spectators.

## **5. COACHING AND HANDICAPPING**

The Chairman outlined a potential change to our approach to Coaching. He said he felt that there were a number of members who were both willing and capable to improve but were not able to progress as fast as they would like. He said that for next year we would provide Coaching more on a Demand basis (reacting to individual needs and developing individual programmes) rather than on a Supply basis (running standard coaching courses). He said that the focus of such a programme would be the identification of a number of mentors willing to work with people on a one-on-one basis, especially playing coaching based games. These mentors would not necessarily be low handicappers. However we have to avoid the risk of teaching bad habits!

Richard Clark also suggested setting up a game between our two A Class players (Aaron Westerby and John Greenwood) and using it as a coaching opportunity for those watching. There was considerable interest.

## **6. CLUB AFTERNOONS**

The Chairman said that we would be looking for input from a Member Questionnaire again this year particularly on how we can structure afternoons better and provide alternative activities such as coaching and competitive games.

There was general agreement that Friendlies should be organised more like other inter-Club matches ie arranged earlier, a sign-up mechanism for those available to play and a nominated Captain to take responsibility for transport, teams, catering etc.

There was also a request to arrange more Association Friendlies as last year 7 out of the 8 were Golf.

## **7. MEMBERSHIP, SUPPORT AND SUBSCRIPTIONS**

On the subject of Membership, the Secretary noted that we currently have 42 members (including 2 Honorary). This year we "trialed" an arrangement with PPP personnel whereby a number of them would join as normal members and they would be able to bring in other PPP guests specifically during lunchtimes and after work at a concessionary rate. The two PPP members at the meeting confirmed that the arrangement worked well and are looking forward to next year.

The Secretary also confirmed that Registration Forms and a Questionnaire would be sent out in mid January.

On the subject of Support, the Secretary re-iterated that the Committee hopes that "everyone finds something to contribute" to their Club. This has been well supported in the areas of Housekeeping, Catering, Coaching, DIY etc.

There was considerable discussion regarding the existing policy of asking players in inter-Club matches (Friendlies and League) to contribute £3 each towards the cost of providing teas for themselves and visiting teams at Home matches. Opinion was approximately evenly divided between those who felt that it was an appropriate approach to fund catering expenses, and those who felt that, while it might be appropriate for Friendlies, it was an imposition on those asked to

play in League matches. The Committee will review the alternatives for the new season.

Regarding Annual Subscriptions, the Secretary reminded the Meeting of the Treasurer's earlier comments regarding how long we have maintained subscriptions at the current level (8 years) and that sometime soon we should consider raising them to reflect the increase in costs during that timeframe due to inflation. The Secretary recommended that, given our CASC status, we should think in terms of a two-tier arrangement – a fixed annual Maintenance Subscription (to cover the basic ongoing costs of running the Club) and a voluntary annual Development Contribution (to allow the Club to improve, for instance, its lawns). The advantage of such an approach is that we would be able to treat the Development Contributions as Donations for tax purposes effectively adding 28% (or more) to their value. Development Contributions will be discussed further in documentation accompanying the annual Registration Forms being sent out in January.

However we have to agree at this AGM what our (fixed) Annual Subscription for 2004 is to be. The Committee proposes that they should remain effectively the same as for 2003, namely

Full Membership:

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

And, in order to cater for exceptional or unforeseen circumstances, these rates may be varied by the Club's Officers when deemed appropriate.

These proposed rates for 2004 were passed unanimously.

## **8. COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY**

This is the area where we do least and need to do most. The major reason for this is that we have yet to have a member volunteer to handle it. We need to explore the whole subject and we plan next year to set up a "working party" to decide how best to approach it. A volunteer from the membership would be very welcome! This is particularly crucial as we now have an embryonic Website.

Following the suggestion that we need to be more visible in the Courier newspaper, the Chairman agreed and re-iterated the need for a volunteer. However he/she must have access to Email as articles are now only accepted in electronic form.

## **9. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE**

John Timmis was elected Honorary Treasurer unopposed to replace Clive Horton who was not seeking re-election.

Jon Diamond and Roger Morris were elected unopposed as Committee Members to replace Sue Mabey and Brian Hough who were not seeking re-election.

The remainder of the Committee were seeking re-election and were duly elected unopposed.

The Committee then for 2004 is as follows:

- o Chairman John Hobbs
- o Treasurer John Timmis
- o Secretary Mick Belcham

- o Committee Richard Clark, Jon Diamond, Derek Heath, Jean Heath, Colin Mabey and Roger Morris

The Chairman gave notice of his intention to retire as Chairman at next year's AGM as he believes that after 3 years the Club needs new "blood".

#### 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a. **Next Year's AGM:** there was no significant majority for either of the two potential dates – Saturday November 20<sup>th</sup> or Saturday December 11<sup>th</sup> 2004
- b. **Lease:** the Secretary stated that, within the next few months, the Club will have to establish itself sufficiently as a legal entity that it is able to sign the Lease. This is likely to involve the Committee appointing 3 (or so) Trustees. If this is the case these Trustees will need to be further elected at next year's AGM.
- c. **Rules:** the Secretary stated that the Club is currently in breach of its Constitution in as much as it has yet to publish a Rules document. This will be rectified in 2004.

#### 11. PRESENTATION OF PRIZES

The Chairman presented the Club Trophies as follows:

- o Nita Davis Association Ladder
- o Golf Ladder
- o Chris Berwick Kitching Rose Bowl
- o Miriam Reader Howell Cup for High Bisquers
- o John Timmis Calverley Cup
- o Jon Diamond Lewis Shield (All England Handicap)
- o John Hobbs and Doreen Hough The Doubles Goblets
- o Barney Lewis Lustau Sherry Cup
- o Aaron Westerby Spa Salver

The Chairman then presented Clive Horton with a gift from the Club members of 6 bottles of Vintage Port in recognition of his many years as Treasurer.

#### 12. CLOSE

The Chairman then declared the Meeting closed.