



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CROQUET CLUB

Newsletter - October 2006

From The Chairman



As we put our lawns to bed and oil our mallets, it's no bad time to pause and reflect on the season. What a year it has been! Certainly our Club has never had a more active one and we have so much to show for it. As this Newsletter amply records it has been a year not only of effort, but real achievement in so many areas.

Just over a year ago we were still talking about our aspirations. Now we have lawns which are level and irrigated, an equipment store to be proud of housing equipment other Clubs would covet, a pavilion basking in a face-lift from awnings, benches and new kitchen fittings. We have been noticed too.

£26,000 of grant speaks of the confidence Councils and others have had in us; the Courier and the BBC are now aware of us and the final accolade has come with the Civic Trust Award. We've opened our doors not only to 11 very welcome new members, but to organisations, individuals and firms on a scale we never even contemplated before. Read on and hear about some of the events we've organised or participated in, both on and off the lawns. And we are remarkably still a debt free Club whose members have together raised the funds to make all of this possible. Above all though, it has been a year of quite outstanding contributions in kind - of time, of skills and know-how, and of sheer sweat and physical labour. We owe immense debts to those who have put so much into the Club in so many ways, none of them, however small, in any way insignificant.

I come to the end of the two years I said I would serve as Chairman very proud of what we have achieved and very grateful to all of you. Now come along to the AGM on December 16th, enjoy celebrating our achievements together and set the Club's course for an even more successful 2007.

Internal Club Competitions

These are now virtually complete though many of the games/players had to scratch for a variety of reasons, most resulting from the lack of availability of the "upper" lawns. Congratulations to the following winners:

Golf High Bisquers	Selwyn Ward
Golf Handicap (Kitching Rose Bowl)	Ray Meech
Association Advanced (Spa Salver)	John Greenwood
Association Advanced Handicap (Lustau Cup)	Jon Diamond
Association Handicap (Calverley Cup)	John Timmis
Association High Bisquers (Howell Cup)	(No Result)
Association Doubles (Goblets)	(still to be decided)
Association All England (Lewis Shield)	Richard Clark

Open Club Tournaments

Despite some difficulties with lawn scheduling this year we have managed to run our standard three Open Tournaments as well as a new Golf Handicap Tournament. Entries have been very high (resulting in a record income), probably due to external players' interest in what our new lawns were like. Results were:

Association High Bisquers (8 Entries)	Mark Houslop (Tunbridge Wells)
Golf Handicap (16 Entries)	Geoff Croxford (Ivychurch) – <i>see picture above</i>
Association Advanced (16 Entries)	Jon Male (Caterham)
Association Handicap (12 Entries)	Philip Mann (Medway)



Membership

We end this season with a membership of exactly 50 with 11 of these being new members this year. Welcome aboard!

Civic Award

We have been honoured this year by the Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society. It has decided to recognise the Club's endeavours by the award of the Society's new "Community Contribution Commendation". As the Club's briefing document stated:

"From its roots as a traditional private members' club, it has become a community-oriented club that not only is open to all but also recognises that it has a key role to play in preserving (and enhancing) the ambience of Calverley Grounds".

The Commendation was presented by Lord Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, Chairman of the Local Government Association, to Richard Clark at an Awards Ceremony at the Town Hall on October 12th.

Hospitality Events

We have never hosted events like we have this year! Not only did we set out to run a Corporate Challenge (see elsewhere) but we have coached, "hand-held", fed and/or watered 4 visits by Probus, two by Headway (the brain damage charity), one by the Vines, two private birthday parties and more than 60 members of Cripps, Harries Hall (the local solicitors) during two evening sessions of "intra-corporate competitiveness". For some of this we waived any fees (the Charities) or we charged standard Green Fees. However when hosting corporate events we have charged an inclusive price that includes the standard per-person Green Fee, a charge for our coaching time and for any refreshments consumed.

Lawns and Equipment

Our three re-seeded lawns are coming along reasonably well and should be ready for normal play by next May. The fine grasses are becoming established and the lawns are very level but still have 'tramlines' left over from seeding. This will be rectified by autumn/winter treatment. The last play was the Open Handicap tournament 23/24th Sept after which the lawns will be closed for maintenance. They will be scarified, slit and top dressed with 20 tonnes of 50:50 mix of sand and loam and a low nitrogen feed applied. The top dressing is being applied by Judges as part of their original contract. Further slitting and feeding will take place throughout the winter as required and we expect the lawns to be in first class condition during 2007.

We have purchased a metering pump so will be able to apply feed and herbicides via the irrigation system resulting in considerable cost savings. The irrigation system has proved to be invaluable throughout the hot dry summer enabling us to keep the new lawns growing.

Thanks to a band of willing volunteers our Equipment store was completed and looks splendid alongside the pavilion. In order to spread the workload and keep down the costs we are seeking volunteers to take on some of the smaller but regular tasks necessary to keep the lawns and grounds in good order. If you are willing and able to help please contact Roger Morris.

We have approached TWBC regarding continued use of the bowling green. Depending on their response we will carry out sufficient maintenance to get the lawn into reasonable condition for play in 2007. The bowling green will be available for play throughout October weather permitting.

Other Equipment

This year we bought two new sets of hoops, which are smooth and should be easier to run than the older rougher cast iron hoops. We have had a steady supply of mallets from the three mallet makers



in the club and this enables us to equip all players in corporate events. We must thank Roger and Richard for the three new trolleys, which have been much admired by visitors. The three sun blinds were much appreciated by visitors during matches and tournaments and a gazebo was much appreciated during our visit to Sport 2006. We received kitchen cupboards from Miriam's very kind neighbour and the bottom cupboards will be fitted shortly, so that we don't have to bend down so much for crocks. Together with the new refrigerator this gives us quite a respectable kitchen facility.

Association League Matches

We won three matches and lost five matches in the South East Croquet Federation Leagues (2:2 in the U league and 1:3 in the B league – all the latter matches were won/lost by 2 games to 1), so not too bad. The great difficulty has been in raising teams, given that we have some keen players who cannot often play in mid week games. In the B league, where handicaps have to be at least 48 in total, this is a further limitation. We got round this in two matches by fielding Miriam, who had already played for Medway B league and, in theory, should not have played for us. Other clubs seem to have similar difficulties and understood our problem. Next year it would be good to see more members playing in the B league, which provides an excellent chance to see other clubs, meet new people and try out one's skills. You learn quite a lot by seeing how other clubs do things. Some early season coaching, which was missing this year, might help.

Golf League Matches

Our performance in the SECF Golf Handicap league was average, i.e. won 2 lost 2. However, for the first time we entered the Level play league and suffered a bit, especially against Dulwich, with some of our better players being unable to play. However, we did manage to win one of our four games, against Compton at home (advantage of knowing our own lawns obviously).

Other external events

We've had our, by now, traditional visits to Chartwell and Ightham Mote (twice). The latter was notable that because we'd been scheduled in the National Trust programme there were even people who'd come specifically to watch and learn how to play! In addition we've had Golf friendlies against Bromley, Compton and Crawley both home and away.

Marketing and PR

Our main efforts this year were focussed on the official Opening Day (thanks to the Mayor for hitting a ball through the first hoop) and our new idea – ***Croquet in the Park***, held over the Bank Holiday week at the end of August. All three newly relayed lawns were used, in addition to one full-sized one on the Bowling Green.



With Royal Tunbridge Wells celebrating its 400th anniversary year, through sponsorship from the Borough Council and The Courier, we thought it was appropriate to add to the general celebrations with our own, use the occasion to publicise ourselves and croquet in Tunbridge Wells and also take advantage of the Council's special grants to volunteer organisations running an event for RTW400.

On Bank Holiday Monday there was a special Open Day; with a series of demonstrations and coaching sessions to more than 20 members of the public, some of them for more than two hours! Other of our members took an active part by dressing up in historic costume. This drew special attention from photographers from both the Courier and Kent Messenger.

The main public event of the week was for novice players our ***Community and Corporate Croquet Challenge***. Despite significant publicity in the Courier, a radio interview with Mick and John, and a mailing to 500 organisations in Tunbridge Wells there was a disappointing entry, so this was held over just a single day on Friday 1st September, from 6-8:30pm. Despite the lack of entries everybody

who came enjoyed themselves hugely, so much so that they decided to have a rematch in October – sadly curtailed by heavy rain. Winners were Lovat Insurance Brokers (see picture on right).



Other events during the week were an Open High Bisquers Association Croquet event, our first one-day Open Golf Croquet event and our regular two-day Open Advanced Croquet event at the end of the week. There was also a programme of Inter-club matches.

So, much good publicity and prospects for at least a number of corporate events next year. A special thanks to everyone who helped with all these events. Now all we need to do is to convert everyone who showed an interest to new members as well!

Sport 2006

Sport 2006 was an innovation to encourage participation in sports, sponsored by Sport England and showcasing some 40 different sports of all kinds in Groombridge Place. As the closest club the Croquet Association had nominated us to participate.



Groombridge managed to provide a flat enough lawn, albeit with some rabbit holes and lengthy grass which we shared with The Grove Bowling Club. By the middle of Saturday there were 3 groups of players on the lawn simultaneously, with people queuing for a go! We were about as busy as any and introduced more than 100 people to Golf Croquet, with an age range of 7-70 and people as far away as Dulwich, Canterbury and Worthing. So hopefully we've contributed to membership at other clubs too.

One definite message is to bring some short mallets for the children next year!

Social

We've had a quietish summer, because of the lateness of the new lawns opening, with only the Soup and Ploughman's lunch on the Opening Day, although some other tea events with cakes just seemed to happen! However, we're repeating our successful programme of pub lunches over the winter. The detailed programme of dates is at the bottom of this Newsletter – we've booked for 12:30pm!

Don't forget to let Jon Diamond know if you're planning to attend any of these lunches at least one week before (to ensure that we have a large enough space booked for us). Also, if you have any ideas for other events over the winter or next year, or want to help in some way please let Jon know.

Website

We know that some of our members can't access our website, which is why this Newsletter is posted to them. However, this is a time-consuming effort, which is why all updates are made to the website only and only put on the Notice Board at the club house at irregular intervals – sorry... We'll try and phone those of you with no email addresses when there's significant timely information.

Annual General Meeting

Don't forget that our AGM is being held in Frant Village Hall on 16th December, followed by a buffet lunch (probable cost £5). This is an ideal opportunity for new members to meet other members and for everyone to have their say on the way the club is run and especially what happens in 2007.

Important Diary Dates

October 25th – Lunch @ The Hare, Langton Green

November 21st – Lunch @ Brown Trout, Lamberhurst

December 16th – AGM @ Frant 10:30am

January 24th – Lunch @ Globe & Rainbow, Kilndown

February 21st – Lunch @ Rose & Crown, Fletching

March 14th - Lunch @ somewhere else

Finally, don't forget the latest dates, information updates etc. are on the web-site, so if you're asked about Croquet or club details just send them there – <http://www.tunbridgewellscroquet.org.uk>.