

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CROQUET CLUB

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16TH 2006 AT 11.00 a.m. in FRANT

Present: Richard CLARK (Chairman), John TIMMIS (Treasurer), Mick BELCHAM (Secretary), Chris BARHAM, Pamela CLARK, Derek CROCOMBE, John GREENWOOD, Carolyn GUNSTONE, Frank GUNSTONE, Derek HEATH, John HOBBS, Elaine HOUSLOP, Mark HOUSLOP, Dan LONG, Colin MABEY, Sue MABEY, Ian MARSHALL, Ray MEECH, Roger MORRIS, Pauline MORRIS, Hazel MOSS-DAVIS, Stan OXENBURY, Ursula POWELL, Miriam READER, Peter SINCLAIR, Jane WARD, Selwyn WARD, Gerald WHITE.

PRELIMINARY

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies from those unable to attend were noted. There were no Matters Arising from the Minutes of the 2005 AGM so they were duly signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman conveyed the best wishes of Honorary Members, Peter and Audrey Howell. He also mentioned that a member of the last 2 years, Aaron Westerby, was currently New Zealand's No. 1 player and had recently beaten England's Nos. 1 and 2 in an international tournament. Aaron hopes to visit the club during the 2007 season and hoped to be available to provide some coaching sessions.

1. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman listed the improvements made during 2006 to the club's facilities:

- The Lease has been extended from 10 years to 21 years
- TWBC has at last agreed on a replacement fence for the club's north and east boundaries
- TWBC has also agreed on an annual licensing arrangement for the club's continuing use of the old Bowls Club lawn
- We now have three full-size level irrigated lawns
- We have purchased 6 items of lawn maintenance equipment and have built a new Equipment Store in which to house them, together with the playing equipment (balls, hoops etc.) in newly designed and built trolleys.
- The frontage of the Pavilion has been upgraded with additional seating as well as, through the generosity of some club members, with awnings for shade and rain protection
- New cabinets have been installed in the Pavilion's kitchen area

Altogether we have spent £42,000 on improvements to the club and its facilities. £27,000 of this resulted from grants provided by Kent County Council, TWBC, the Croquet Association, the South Eastern Croquet Federation, Awards for All (the Lottery) and the Gatwick Airport Community Trust. The remainder came from member donations, the club's existing Lawn/Ball Fund (built up in previous years by members for this purpose) and tax benefits resulting from our status as a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC).

2006 was a year of many high profile events – the official Opening Day for the new lawns and Equipment Store, a new Open Golf Tournament, the Croquet in the Park Week, a Corporate Challenge, support of Sport 2006 at Groombridge Place, the award of the TW Civic Society's Community Contribution Commendation and the hosting of two highly successful corporate events for a local firm of solicitors.

He thanked the individual Committee members for their various contributions to the club during this very busy, eventful and successful year. He noted that Colin Mabey is retiring from the Committee and thanked him for his 6 years of organising the Club Afternoons.

He also thanked Derek Heath for his efforts in organising our Golf League Matches.

2. TREASURER'S REPORT.

The Treasurer reviewed the Accounts for year ending September 30th 2006 and highlighted a number of points:

- The Surplus of Income over Expenditure in 2006 is in the region of £1000. However it should be noted that, because our lawn maintenance costs in 2007 are expected to be £1000 higher than our 2006 figure, we cannot expect a similar Surplus in 2007.
- These additional lawn maintenance costs can only be born if voluntary member donations continue at a generous level. This would allow us to keep the Annual Subscription rate at the same level it has been for more than 10 years. The advantage of us doing so is twofold: first it allows our members to pay variable amounts and secondly, because donations are purely voluntary, we gain considerable tax advantages. In 2006 these amounted to additional income of £700.
- Now that our major development projects are nearing completion, the Accounts are being restructured to remove the separate accounting for what was initially called the Lawn and Ball Fund.

The acceptance of the Accounts was proposed and seconded and passed unanimously.

3. LAWNS, EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES.

Roger Morris reviewed the events of 2006:

- We had sufficient Grant Monies available to start the building of an Equipment Store in March 2006.
- 3 weeks into the project and our Contractor was unable to continue with the project due to cash flow problems. The club effectively took over the management of the construction using a combination of contractor manpower and club volunteers
- The Store was completed within the original budgeted figure (mainly due to the fantastic 300 hours of club member time and commitment) and has provided more than sufficient space for the storage of the required equipment.
- The only job remaining is the rebuilding/refitting of the oak door which has warped due to the level of rain to which it has been exposed
- We now have all the basic maintenance equipment we need with the exception of a wheeled fertiliser/spreader.
- We also have a new set of full-specification ball trolleys – home made but much admired
- The lawns were ready for use for tournaments and events at the end of 2006 despite the dry summer, mainly due to the effectiveness of the new irrigation system. They were closed for the season at the end of September. Autumn maintenance included the spreading of 20 tons of top dressing by the contractor to counter the ridging problems. This together with the scheduled overseeding and other work has been very successful. They should be ready for play in April/May 2007
- The annual cost of lawn maintenance is expected to be in the region of £4300.
- The Groundsmen this year have been a big disappointment. Despite their assurances at the beginning of the year regarding their availability, they have often not been able to do the required work when needed. This has been aggravated by the extreme weather that given us only narrow windows of opportunity to get essential work done. For instance, a combination of both problems has delayed some autumn maintenance work by more than 8 weeks. Does anyone know of someone who would like to become a (paid) part-time groundsman for the club?
- Regarding the "Bowls Green", this also has had some end-of-year maintenance work but we need a week of dry weather to complete it.

4. MARKETING AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

No discussion due to Jon Diamond's absence

5. TOURNAMENTS AND COMPETITIONS

The Secretary reviewed the past year's programme:

- We scheduled fewer than normal Friendlies due to the non-availability of our regular lawns, however we were able to participate in a full schedule of League Matches and Open Tournaments.
- We did poorly in the Leagues this year. The one highlight was the club's participation in the new Golf Level-play (i.e. not handicap) League which allowed our more ambitious players to compete against the best in the region on a level basis.
- We ran four Open Tournaments this year including an addition to our calendar, an Open Handicap Golf Tournament. These were all particularly well attended (56 entries in total), so much so that we had to use the "Bowls Green" as a fourth full-size lawn. The club was represented by players in each of the four tournaments, however only 3 made it to the "leaders board" – Selwyn Ward was 4th in the Open Golf and Mark Houslop and Stan Oxenbury were winner and 2nd respectively in the Association High Bisquers.
- We only completed seven out of the nine normal internal competitions this year due to lawn availability.
- We entered the world of Corporate Hospitality this year by running two evening events for Cripps Harries Hall, a local firm of solicitors. We have devised a charging mechanism for such events that provides good value (some would say TOO good value!) for the company while contributing significantly to club funds. They were both very much enjoyed both by the visitors and by the club coaches and are expected to be repeated in 2007. The Committee was asked to review the charging mechanism with the view to potentially increasing charges and to consider whether or not it would be advantageous for us to offer catering for outside events

6. PRESENTATION OF PRIZES

The Secretary noted that we have been unable to arrange for the Club Trophies to be engraved in time for presentation at the meeting. These will be distributed when they become available. However he asked the Chairman to recognise and congratulate the following as winners of the Club's Competitions:

Ray Meech	Golf Croquet Rose Bowl
Selwyn Ward	Golf Croquet High Bisquers
John Greenwood	Spa Salver
John Timmis	Calverley Cup
Jon Diamond	Lustau Sherry Cup
Richard Clark	Lewis Shield (All England Handicap)
Chris Barham and Roger Morris	The Doubles Goblets

The Howell Cup for Association High Bisquers and the shield for the Association Ladder were not awarded this year.

Also on the subject of recognising individual club members for their achievements during the year, the meeting was asked to approve requests to the Croquet Association for the issuance of individual CA Diplomas to Roger Morris, Richard Clark and John Hobbs. Their individual achievements (as attached) were read to the meeting and approved.

7. MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

We currently have 52 members including 3 Honorary Members, Hazel Moss-Davis and Peter and Audrey Howell.

Regarding Subscriptions, the Secretary reminded the Meeting of the Club's policy to have a two-tier Annual Subscription mechanism to allow those that feel they are able to make contributions over and above the minimum to do so in the form of Voluntary Contributions. He also reminded the Meeting of the Treasurer's earlier comments regarding the need for these donations, not only because of the additional tax advantages but also, in the current situation, to meet our increased running costs.

The Committee proposed the following Annual Subscription rates for 2007:

- Full Membership:
 - First Year: £ 75
 - Thereafter: £100
- Student/2nd Club Membership: £ 35

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

The existing schedule of Green Fees for visitors (i.e. £5 for a full day, £3 for a half day) would continue to be applicable for 2007

These proposed Subscription and Green Fee rates for 2007 were agreed unanimously.

The Committee was asked to consider the possible introduction in the future of Joining Fees for new members though this would potentially conflict with current practice of a reduced annual subscription for new members in the first year as an incentive to join.

8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

The Chairman noted that he and Colin Mabey were retiring from the Committee this year and again thanked Colin for his 6 years of support. All other members of the Committee (including the other 2 Officers) are standing for re-election.

There have been 3 nominations for roles on the Committee – Jon Diamond for Chairman and Ann Boyle and Elaine Houslop as Committee Members

The re-election of the 7 existing members, the election of the 2 new members and the election of Jon Diamond as Chairman were all proposed, seconded and unanimously approved.

The Committee then for 2007 is as follows:

Chairman	Jon Diamond
Treasurer	John Timmis
Secretary	Mick Belcham
Committee	Ann Boyle, Frank Gunstone, John Hobbs, Elaine Houslop, Roger Morris and Selwyn Ward

9. PLANNING FOR NEXT YEAR

John Hobbs elicited the Meeting's views on how we might take advantage of the continued availability of the Bowls Club lawns.

The general feeling was that the extra lawn space would allow us to provide more alternative forms of play particularly on Club Afternoons when the lawns are most used. Suggestions for the use of the Bowls Club lawn on Club Afternoons included:

- scheduling more Association play particularly for beginners who would welcome the three-quarter size,
- scheduled coaching sessions e.g. of Association and of Golf tactics,
- beginner and visitor coaching and games

Other suggestions that related to the additional space available for Club Afternoons were to allow for competitive, handicap and singles play to run alongside the traditional doubles non-competitive format.

There was considerable interest in John's offer of a 2 hour beginners Association coaching session on Sunday afternoons over a 4 or 5 week period early in the season though there was also interest in scheduling this coaching for another day/time, maybe Sunday mornings.

The Committee will consider these and other options further.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A suggestion: the Committee should consider whether or not to formalise who-calls-who to arrange internal club competition games so that someone takes responsibility for each scheduled match

11. CLOSE

The Chairman then declared the Meeting closed.

Attachment to AGM 2006 Minutes

Tunbridge Wells Nominations for CA Diplomas

Roger Morris

Since September 2004 Roger has spearheaded the project to completely upgrade the Club's facilities – the replacement of the existing 3 lawns, the installation of the irrigation system, the purchase of the necessary lawn maintenance equipment, the building of the Store in which to house this equipment, the upgrade of the frontage of the existing Clubhouse to double the amount of shelter and seating provided, and the conversion of the neighbouring Bowls Club lawn for croquet use. All of this was completed, effectively, within a 12 month period – on-time, within budget and with an outcome that was well beyond the Club's expectations. His total commitment to the amount and detail of the work involved and to ensuring its complete success has been, to use the modern vernacular, "really awesome".

Richard Clark

The Club is now a very different club from that which Richard took over as Chairman two years ago. Not only has he been able to mastermind the sourcing of all the funding necessary to drive the Club's mammoth (£42,000) upgrade project (a daunting task in its own right) but he has also ensured that the Club has not been diverted from its commitment to become more than just a traditional private members' club. To cite the Commendation presented to Richard by the local Civic Society, he has enabled the Club to play a key role "in preserving and enhancing the ambiance of Calverley Grounds" (the public park in the centre of Tunbridge Wells) and "in the provision of leisure opportunities for the community".

John Hobbs

There are two John Hobbs! There's the one that everybody who is anybody in the croquet community would recognise – the master-maker of quality mallets and the (sometimes) giant-killer of veterans' croquet. And then there's the less publicised one that his fellow club members know only too well. In Newport they recognise him as the force behind the founding of their club in 1984 and his dedication and professionalism in guiding it through its initial years. More recently, in Tunbridge Wells, we know a committed "worker-beaver" when we see one - particularly during this year of major development projects. The number of hours he has spent on carpentry, roofing, painting, installing, cleaning and repairing go well beyond the call of duty – and that's in addition to all his coaching, managing, chairing, refereeing, handicapping and captaining.