



# NEWSLETTER

## April 2007

### From The Chairman

It's that time of year again! The grass is finally beginning to grow enough to require mowing, so we'll shortly be starting our Official Season, despite the fact that several stalwarts have been playing throughout the winter on the Bowling Green. As last year, we'll be restricted to the Bowling Green for at least the first month of the season; our first Club Afternoon will be Easter Sunday (with cakes for tea!) and hopefully opening the main lawns on 6<sup>th</sup> May (but see the website for updated information). Elaine Houslop is planning a Soup and Ploughman's lunch when we open the main lawns, so please use the sign-up sheet in the Pavilion if you're going to be there.

Since I was unable to attend the AGM (thanks to British Airways who seemed to think that we'd prefer an extra day on the beach in Barbados), I was unable to express my thanks to Richard Clark for his efforts as Chairman. I'm sure that without him leading us, especially with fund-raising, we'd have been unable to achieve the re-laying of the lawns and building of the Equipment Store. So, thanks Richard, and I hope to see lots more of you playing this year.

We've finally agreed the terms of the new Lease for our main lawns and hope to have it signed in the next two weeks! It's been a long time in negotiation.... but will give us security of tenure for a small annual rent. We've also signed a Licence for the Bowling Green which allows us to play on it, on an annual basis, for a nominal rent and I hope this will continue in future years. This doesn't cover the Pavilion, so we're only using it on a grace and favour basis.

You're probably aware that we're not allowed to entertain people who aren't members' guests. We've acquired some Visitors Books, so please can you ensure that everyone who comes into the Club House/Pavilion or plays on the lawns is signed in. Ann Boyle has volunteered to follow up visitors to ensure that they actually join as members as soon as possible, so make sure you've got sufficient details for her!

We've scheduled Open Days on the first Sundays of May, June, July and August. Please invite anyone you know to these days, so that newcomers can be made specially welcome. An invitation card is being produced for you to give out, so please collect supplies from the Pavilion/Club House.

I regret to announce that Frank Gunstone has resigned from the Committee for personal reasons. I'd like to thank him for his contribution, but he has promised to continue looking after the Sunday and Wednesday Club Afternoons – taking over fully from Colin who shared the burden with him last year.

Finally, those of you who are observant may have noticed a new logo/roundel at the top of this page. We'll be using this in place of the old badge, which only had our initials, on the web-site and in all literature. Another reason for the replacement is that we only had a scanned image of the badge which didn't print very well at a large size and we want to put a new Welcome Board with the logo on facing the steps at the entrance to our lawns (when the funds are available). We've tried to keep the colours and style of the middle section as close as possible to the old badge and hope you like it. We'll be producing new badges, for sewing on to sweaters etc, in due course.

Now it's time to oil your mallet, practise a bit, sign up for the coaching we all need, and get stuck in. I hope to see you all on the lawns very shortly. Oh, and invite all your friends to join in too.....

*Jon Diamond*

### Winter Fun and Games

Six members of RTWCC challenged the prestigious Hammock Dunes Croquet Club in Florida to an American Rules Golf Croquet match on Friday 16th March (Wal Mart supplied the whites). Mallets were non-standard objects except for Elaine Houslop who had her Super Mallet which was in great demand by several players.

Our team played well winning the majority of games. We were made very welcome and invited back on the next afternoon to continue the contest as guests of Elaine and Mark Houslop, who are members of the club. Thanks to all for a memorable event.

*Frank & Carolyn, Roger & Pauline*

Now onto the serious stuff...

## Secretary's Notes

If you haven't paid your subscription yet there's still time! Please send the form, together with payment, to Mick as soon as possible, so that he can make the draw for our internal competitions shortly and get our fixtures organised. We are running a Finals Day again this year on 29<sup>th</sup> September, so we're expecting all the other games to have been completed by then! If you haven't entered and want to do so please fill in the form and return it to Mick NOW.

More keys will be cut for the Pavilion by the Bowls Lawn, but there's one on the Notice Board in the Club House. It's very important that we lock the Pavilion (and the Gents toilet) after use, and return the key to the Club House if it's taken from there.

We will draw up a rota for cleaning the clubhouse as has been done in previous years, but first we have to get it spick and span. If you are willing to give a hand with DIY, probably in late April, please get in touch with John Hobbs.

The South East Croquet Federation is organising a Golf Croquet referees course in May. If you're interested in being a referee, or just learning more about the rules, please contact Mick in the first instance

## Lawn Report

As you will remember the bowling green suffered badly during the drought last year; so much so that there was hardly a blade of green grass to be seen. After some care and attention mainly by club members, it has recovered remarkably well and with the exception of patches of moss, is now covered with lush green grass. Stan has cut it recently, removing a mountain of clippings and then we had a short period of play. Further work is necessary to remove moss, but it is available for play. Please take note of any notices posted in the pavilion that may restrict play if the lawns have been recently treated with chemicals. The first official club afternoon will be held on Easter Sunday 8th April. A special tea is being arranged.

Turning to the main lawns, these will not be ready for play until at least early May as the new grass has suffered from excessive rain during the winter. (It should be noted that other Croquet Clubs have the same problems.) A party of four volunteers recently worked hard on preparing the lawns for play; their help was much appreciated. Dan manhandled the slitter and managed to cover lawns 1, 2 and 3 in record time. The lawns were then fed to encourage spring growth. They need another month before play can commence. We will open them for limited play as soon as they have recovered from the damage, hopefully for Sunday 6th May.

We need at least one further month of good weather and careful tending to get them to a position to allow play throughout the year. So, we will review the lawn condition at the end of May and then make further decisions on their use at this time.

We intend to continue using Tony and Gerald to carry out the major elements of lawn maintenance but we need volunteer members to carry out occasional tasks at short notice. If you wish to be involved in this work and are not already involved please contact Roger.

## Fencing

As you will have seen if you have visited the park recently the council have nearly completed new fencing on the North and Eastern boundaries. Unfortunately this does not meet the specification agreed between the council and the club. The council have agreed the fence is not to the agreed specification but appear reluctant to do anything currently.

Unfortunately the buildings have had graffiti painted on the white panels on two separate occasions – at least once during the day. We are going to turn on the alarm on the Club House to try and minimise the problem, but only after dusk; so this shouldn't affect players under normal circumstances. If the alarm does go off as you approach the building it should turn itself off within two minutes, but anyway the on/off switch is to the right of the main door.

## Buildings Maintenance

When the weather gets warmer we will arrange a DIY day at the pavilion to paint the hoops, and seats, touch up the woodwork and make a few repairs. I hope some volunteers have put down their names for this. We are also assessing what is the best way to deal with the notorious graffiti 'artists' who have decorated the white panels. There are at least three of them, following the schools of Picasso, Pollock and Yo Fum (Chinese), but nothing like as valuable.

## Handicapping

Everyone should have a handicap, so that when you play singles against a player of different handicap the game is not one sided. The system of having a card (Golf and Association) works best when you play against members of other

clubs, in the leagues or in tournaments. The next best is in club competitions or tournaments, where you play a variety of opponents once or twice in a season. Where the system falls down is when you play friendlies against the same people in a small group. All that usually happens is that you swap points among each other as you win or lose. If someone steadily wins then the other players lose points, even though they may be improving.

What we will try to do this season is for all players to keep a card and record on it all the singles games they play. For club competitions and tournaments and any external games, you will use the system of adding or subtracting points after each game. But when you play a friendly it would help if you keep a separate part of the card, just for friendlies. In these games you don't add or subtract points, just record the result, then we can see if you keep winning or losing. This means that if you play only friendlies or only doubles you won't have any change on the handicap part of your card. However, if you are improving and require a lower handicap before you start playing 'serious' games, then the results of all your friendlies will help decide on any necessary adjustment to your handicap. John Hobbs (as club handicapper), will do the adjusting, assisted by Frank Gunstone, for Golf Croquet. We will start beginners off at a maximum of 22 for Association and 6 for golf, but will try to give initial handicaps that reflect experience and ability.

## Coaching

We hope this year to encourage a few more members to have some coaching in Association Croquet and to give the game a try. To this end John Hobbs will be running a four week coaching course (assumes you've played Golf Croquet previously) , on Sunday afternoons for about 1-1.5 hours starting at 2:30pm from 20<sup>th</sup> May. More coaching can be arranged for new recruits and members who've already had a try and want to improve.

Coaching is not enough and you must have some practical experience, so to this end we will organise some 10 point games in which there is at least one experienced player who can advise on shots and tactics. The 10 point game (instead of 26) enables you to finish in about an hour and to have the pleasure of pegging out. Some beginners, playing 26 point games have never reached the pegging out stage! The other aid to learning is for both players, or both sides, to have bisques, because this keeps the game moving and also teaches you when it is worthwhile to take a bisque. The final suggestion is that you should play these early games on the smaller lawns of the bowls green, so that the shots are easier.

The SECF B league exists for beginners to have the fun of playing against members of other clubs and visiting their premises to see how other clubs do things. Although we try to win these games that comes second to giving members the experience.

For Golf Croquet the ideal way to help you improve your game is short coaching sessions on club days, for say 30 minutes, during which a particular topic is demonstrated and practised. What has been learned can then be applied immediately. Playing more singles games will also raise the skill level generally, since everything is up to you to decide and execute.

## Tournaments

All players are welcome to our second one-day Open Golf Croquet handicap event on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July, our Open Handicap Association Croquet event on Saturday/Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> September and our two-day Open Advanced Croquet event on Saturday/Sunday 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> September.

An Open High Bisquers Association Croquet event will take place on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July (Handicap 18+) and an internal High Bisquers on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June.

Entry forms for our Open events are on the website and in the Club House. Please send them in, with your payment, to Mick as soon as possible.

This year we're also hosting the Kent Cup, an Advanced Association competition for players from clubs in Kent, on 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> June. If you're interested in entering please contact Mick.

## Inter-Club Matches

We are playing in the same four South Eastern Croquet Federation leagues as we did last year - two Association (U and B leagues) and two Golf (Level and Handicap). John Hobbs will be organising the teams/dates for the Association ones and Richard Clark for the Golf. Due to the condition of our lawns we're planning our early matches to be away ones.

The B league is intended for high handicap players (the team must have a total handicap of 48 at the time the match is arranged). Unlike the other leagues this one requires play of only 3 games. Some people have said that they don't want to play just for a morning if they're travelling a long way, however it's possible for Captains to agree that a match can be more games (in reality the Rules allow Captains to agree almost any format). So, please make your views known.

We've also entered teams into two SECF events at Southwick– Association on 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> May and Golf on 29<sup>th</sup> July.

Please help if you're contacted by one of the organisers of these matches/events.

## Club Afternoons and Friendlies

Frank Gunstone has taken over from Colin the organisation of Club Afternoons and we would all like to thank Colin and Sue for all their past efforts resulting in the success of these events. Club afternoons will continue to be on Wednesday and Sunday, generally starting at 2pm with tea at 3.30 and play continuing until early evening. We intend to introduce more coaching during the 2007 season (see above for details). Golf Croquet coaching will be for about 30 minutes after tea on most Wednesdays and beginners Association Croquet on four Sunday afternoons in May/June.

Golf Croquet will be the primary game on club afternoons, but the opportunity to learn and play association croquet will be introduced as will be other derivatives such as one ball. Various fun croquet games such as pirates will also be played at appropriate times. The overall emphasis of club afternoons will focus on improving the individual's game whilst having fun and enjoyment in a friendly environment. Competitive singles play will be encouraged alongside the usual doubles games. Club afternoons will be held on both the bowling green and at the upper lawns subject to lawn conditions and numbers attending.

We're planning a limited number of friendly games with local clubs and visits to National Trust properties (Ightham Mote, Chartwell and new for this year - Batemans) for demonstration games and promotion of croquet. However, we're short of an organiser for friendlies with other clubs. If you're interested in doing this job please contact Jon ASAP.

## Marketing and PR

We're be using the friendly visits to National Trust properties for marketing purposes, but the main PR thrust will be for the Kent Cup, which should interest the BBC rather more than a Tunbridge Wells only event. We'll be using the Corporate Challenge as a subsequent booster, especially as we expect more Courier participation and coverage again.

## Corporate Challenge

Despite the disappointing entry last year, we've decided to run our Corporate Challenge again, but only on one evening (6<sup>th</sup> July) and a maximum of 16 teams. This is a fun event for *any* organisation (company, volunteer, sports etc.) or even a family, to form teams of two players – although we're targeting companies as our marketing effort. Multiple entries per organisation are encouraged (perhaps as an internal friendly competition?) with a nominal charge of £15 per team. Full instruction is given at the start of the evening and we provide assistance during the games.

An additional free Coaching Session has been scheduled on 4<sup>th</sup> July for those who are keen on learning how to play the game. We hope to have all the players from last year as they enjoyed it so much.

If you know of anyone who might be interested in learning about Croquet, playing in the *Corporate Challenge* or sponsoring this event please let Mick or Jon know. Full details and the entry forms are on our website and in the Club House. Please put the date of the 6<sup>th</sup> July in your diary.

## Social

Our successful programme of pub lunches over the winter peaked with 20 attendees – about one third of the club! We'll continue this next winter. Our current ideas are to have a Soup and Ploughman's lunch on the Official Opening Day in May, something for the Finals Day and Closing Day. Perhaps also something in the evening after the Croquet Challenge? If you have any ideas or want to help in some way please let Jon know.

## Important Diary Dates

Easter Sunday - Season Opening (Bowling Green)  
May 6 - Season Opening (Main Lawns)  
May 12/13 - Association Team @ Southwick  
May 20 – Association Beginners Course starts  
May 30 – Family Day @ Batemans NT  
June 16/17 – Kent Cup @ TW  
June 17 – Visit to Ightham Mote  
June 24 – Internal High Bisquers  
July 6 - Corporate Challenge

July 28 - Open Golf Croquet Tournament  
July 29 - Open High Bisquers Tournament  
July 29 - Golf Teams @ Southwick  
August 15 – Family Day @ Batemans NT  
Sep 1/2 - Open Advanced Tournament  
Sep 22/23 – Open Handicap Tournament  
Sep 29 – Internal Competitions Finals Day  
Sep 30 – Main Lawns Closing Day

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 direct them to <http://www.tunbridgewellscroquet.org.uk>