



NEWSLETTER

April 2008

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 playing only on the Bowling Green till May; our first Club Afternoon will be 16th April and hopefully opening the main lawns on 4th May (but see the website for updated information). Elaine Houslop is planning a Soup and Ploughman's lunch (cost £5) on this latter day so please use the sign-up sheet in the Pavilion to reserve your place or just phone/email me. Following last year's success a One Ball fun event will be held preceding Elaine's lunch starting at 10:30am. Phone/email me if you're interested in playing.

Again, congratulations to Aaron Westerby for reaching the semi-finals of the World Croquet Championship in New Zealand in February. He's an occasional member of the club, of course on our Honours Board as a winner of one of our Club Competitions, and provided some of our better players with coaching last year.

The Council have been at it again! They've now replaced the old fencing around the basketball court with some nice new 'ballstop' stuff, leaving the height untouched, but hopefully it won't get damaged as easily. However, despite promises they've encroached a few more inches into our grass area, so don't forget to ask for relief from your opponent when your backswing is hampered!

We told you about the Kent Youth Service taking over the Bowling Pavilion. Nothing seems to have moved on this since the AGM, so it looks like we'll be able to continue use it as we did last year. We'll let you know if this changes.

Sadly, vandals have been at work again and have damaged one of the awnings badly. We're seeing if it can be repaired or whether we're going to have to replace it.

Just a reminder - 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. Hopefully, Mick Greagsby will be able follow up visitors to ensure that they actually

join as members as soon as possible, so make sure you've got sufficient details written down!

We've scheduled Open Days on the first Sundays of May, June, July and August and an Introduction to Croquet Course starting in May (price £25 to non-members, but no charge if attendees subsequently join for 2008). Please invite anyone you know to these, so that newcomers can be made specially welcome. Supplies of an invitation card for the Open Days for you to hand out are available in the Pavilion/Club House.

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 in case I forgot, invite all your friends to join in too.....

Jon Diamond

Secretary's Notes

In case you haven't noticed Dan Long has taken over as Membership Secretary from me (thanks Dan)! If you haven't paid your subscription yet there's still time. Please send the form, together with payment, to Dan as soon as possible, so that we can make the draw for our internal competitions shortly and get our fixtures organised.

This is part of my not so subtle plan to retire as Secretary of the club at the end of this season, after a period of 10 or so years. As the club has grown in size the job has become larger, so we've started splitting off some discrete responsibilities already, Membership being the first one and hopefully Tournament Secretary the next (volunteers for this not too onerous role anyone?). This should make it easier for someone else to take it over next year. *We're looking for a volunteer to take over as Secretary then, so if you're interested please talk to me or any other Committee members.*

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 outside 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. DIY day is scheduled for 8th April, starting at 9:30am at the Club House to paint the hoops, and seats, touch up the woodwork and make a

few repairs etc etc. If you are willing to give a hand with DIY please contact John Hobbs before turning up – we don't want people falling over each other inside the Club House!

Don't forget if you're playing an internal match you should reserve a lawn in advance in the Diary Book in the Club House. You may have to double-bank or play on the Bowling Green (lawn 4 left/right), especially if a match is in progress. Please remember that ALL lawns are expected to be in use during Tournaments and on main club afternoons.

Finally, the Catering Price List will be revised in April, so please check the new prices when you next play.

Mick Belcham

Lawn Report

Some of you have been playing throughout the Winter on the Bowling Green, which we'll be using again this year. Conditions have been a bit bumpy at times, but reasonable. Feeding and cutting should have taken place by the time you read this, so it will hopefully be in good condition.

The Main Lawns have not had as bad a Winter as last year, so although they're short of nutrition and with some moss etc. they're not in too bad a condition. We're decided to put in some drainage under the banking around lawns 2 and 3. This will cost about £2,000, less a grant of £500 from the Croquet Association and anything we get from Kent County Council and TWBC and should minimise the waterlogging we experienced both in the Winter and the Summer last year. Given this taking place on schedule in a dry spell in April we're expecting to open these lawns on 4th May.

We have finally managed to recruit a person to act in the role of Lawns Supervisor to concentrate on the development of our lawns and to keep them in top class condition. He will spend around one day per week during the summer season (less in the winter) doing all the tasks necessary to keep our lawns, banks and rough grass in tip top condition and ready for play. Norman Croasdale has a lot of experience with fine turf and has already started work on the Bowling Green. He has expressed a wish to learn to play croquet and you may see him at club afternoons.

We will continue using Tony and Gerald to cut the lawns and assist with other major elements of lawn maintenance. We still need volunteer members to carry out occasional tasks and to assist Norman on some of the two person tasks such as slitting. A list of volunteers will be passed to Norman. If you wish to be involved in this work and are not already involved please contact Roger. Both of our main mowers have been serviced and are ready for use.

Handicapping

We want all players to keep a card and record on it all the singles games they play. For club competitions, tournaments and any external games, you will use the system of adding or subtracting points after each game. But when you play an internal club friendly please enter the result, but don't change the index. This means that if you play only friendlies or doubles you won't have any automatic change to your handicap. 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.

The Council of The Croquet Association has decided that with effect from 15 March 2008 the WCF Golf Croquet Rules 2007 should be adopted by the CA as the Laws of Golf Croquet 2008. As a result CA Golf Croquet handicaps will change, from the previous handicap range of -4 to +6, to the WCF handicap range of 0 to 12.

Players with existing handicap cards should transfer their index points to the new green handicap card (available in the Club House). All players with an index of 51 or more should add 4 to their current handicap, whilst those with an index of 1–50 should adopt a handicap of 11 and those with zero or below a handicap of 12. If you gave your yellow handicap card to John at the end of last season he'll leave that together with a new green one in the Club House.

Law Changes

There are a few minor changes to the Laws of Association Croquet this year, but none that are likely to impact any of our games. However, the change to the Golf Croquet Laws are more substantial, especially to the Wrong Ball rule to eliminate the serious penalty that was involved.

If you're playing singles then if you play the wrong one of your two balls there's no penalty, unless you make a striking fault – the balls are all put back to their original position and you play the correct ball. So, it's in both your interests to stop someone before they play such a wrong ball. If you play an opponent ball in a singles game, or any wrong ball in a doubles game, and the mistake is discovered before your opponent plays then there is a penalty – your opponent has the choice to leave the balls where they lie or replace them and then can choose which of their two balls to play next.

If your opponent plays before discovering you've played a wrong ball the mistake is not rectified. The last ball played is then examined to see if it is a wrong ball and therefore whether a penalty might be applied as above. It is a wrong ball if:

- it's NOT played by its owner or

- the previous ball was played by the same side or
- in a singles game it's out of sequence with the previous ball or
- in a doubles game it's out of sequence with the previous ball UNLESS the previous ball was played out of sequence.

The principle is that WHATEVER ball has just been played, the next player must play in the new sequence.

Some examples:

- Red, Black, Red: in singles replay with Yellow, in doubles Black/Blue choose whether the balls remain where they are (without scoring) or are replaced and WHICH of their two balls to play next
- Yellow, Black (wrong but undetected), Red: in singles replay with Yellow, in doubles continue with Black
- Yellow, Black (wrong but undetected), Yellow: continue with Blue in both singles and doubles.

Other minor changes: the winner of the toss always goes first and in a subsequent game of a match the losing side can choose which ball to play with first.

New copies of the Golf Rules should be available shortly (price £2.50) – some people have one already, so just ask.

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 six week Introduction to Croquet course on Thursday afternoons 2-3:30pm from 8th May. People will be able to practice playing after each coaching session until 5pm.

If you've played Golf or Association Croquet previously then you can skip the first two weeks, i.e. starting on 22nd May. The cost of this will be £25 for non-members (please make sure all your friends sign up!) which is refundable if they join later this year.

The SECF B league exists for beginners to have the fun of playing Association 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 we'll be running 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.

Don't forget there are many courses being run at Southwick this year – see the Diary for more details.

Tournaments

All players are welcome to our third one-day Open Golf Croquet handicap event on Saturday 14th June, our Open Handicap Association Croquet event on Saturday/Sunday 27th/28th September and our two-day Open Advanced Croquet event on Saturday/Sunday 6th/7th September.

An Open High Bisquers Association Croquet event will take place on Saturday 23rd August (Handicap 16+) and an internal High Bisquers on Saturday 2nd August. Entry forms for our Open events are on the website and in the Club House. Please send them in, with your payment, to Mick Belcham as soon as possible.

This year we're also hosting the second 8 of the Musk Cup, an invitational competition for top Golf Croquet players organised by the Croquet Association on 16th/17th August. Spectators are welcome.

Finally, the Kent Cup (Association) is being held at Medway on 6th/7th June and the Kent Cup (Golf) makes a welcome return, being held at Ramsgate on 20th July – contact Ron Welch 01843 869326 if you want to play in the latter.

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 Derek Heath for the Golf. They will be in contact with those who indicated they were interested in playing on their Membership Forms when we know our opponents and potential dates.

The B league is intended for high handicap players (the team must have a total handicap of 48 when the match is **arranged**). Unlike the other leagues this one requires play of a minimum 3 games as a match. Some people have said that they don't want to play just for a morning if they're travelling a long way, however the Captains can agree that a match can be more games, so please make your views known. We normally play friendlies for the other half of the day. There have been some minor changes to the Golf Level League to make it a longer event.

We've entered teams into two SECF events at Southwick – Association on 10th/11th May and Golf on 10th August. Please help if you're contacted by one of our captains. We haven't entered a team for the Ladies Day on 2nd July. However, if you'd like to play please contact John and he'll see what we can organise (perhaps with another club).

Club Afternoons and Friendlies

Frank Gunstone is continuing to run the main Club afternoons on Wednesday and Sunday, generally starting at 2pm with tea at 3.30 and play continuing

until early evening, commencing on 16th April. This year Derek Crocombe will be helping him with the organisation.

Golf Croquet will be the primary game on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons. 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 on the Main Lawns subject to lawn conditions and numbers attending. Please observe the notices on the Notice Board as we may close an individual lawn from time to time to allow for maintenance, even the wear etc.

We're planning friendly games with local clubs and visits to National Trust properties (Ightham Mote, Chartwell and new for this year – Penshurst Place) 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 Diamond ASAP.

Marketing and PR

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

We'll also be visiting Penshurst Place for the first time on Sunday 20th July for a public demonstration afternoon. They're paying us a considerable sum for the privilege, so we're looking for volunteers to help. If you can please contact Mick Greagsby (who negotiated the deal).

Corporate Challenge

Following a better second year, we'll be running our Corporate Challenge again, but only on one evening (20th June) 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.

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 Belcham or Jon Diamond know. Full details and the entry forms are on our website and in the Club House. Please put the date of the 20th June in your diary.

Social

Our successful programme of pub lunches over the winter peaked with 23 attendees, more than one third of the club, and Elaine and Mark Houslop hosted a very successful Winter Chili. We'll continue this programme next winter. Our final pub lunch for 2007/8 will be at the Beacon Bar/Restaurant in Rusthall on Thursday 10th April – be there by 12:30pm and do let Jon Diamond know by the 8th if you'll be there.

Our current ideas for the summer are to have a Soup and Ploughman's lunch on the Official Opening Day in May (sign-up sheet in Pavilion/Club House or contact Jon) and hopefully another BBQ mid-summer. 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 or Elaine know.

Important Diary Dates

April 10 – Pub lunch @ Beacon, Rusthall 12:30
April 16 – First Club Afternoon (Bowling Green)
April 19/20 – Association Coaching @ Southwick
April 26/27 – Advanced Assn Coaching @ Southwick
May 4 - Season Opening (Main Lawns)
May 8 to June 12 – Association Beginners Course
May 10/11 – SECF Association Teams @ Southwick
May 31/1 June – SECF Golf Croquet Championship
June 7/8 – Kent Cup @ Medway
June 14 - Open Golf Croquet Tournament
June 20 - Corporate Challenge
July 2 – SECF Ladies Day @ Southwick
July 5/6 – Golf Coaching Course @ Southwick
July 20 – Exhibition @ Penshurst Place
July 20 – Kent Cup (Golf) @ Ramsgate
July 21-25 – Association Summer School @ Southwick
August 2 – Internal High Bisquers
August 10 – SECF Golf Teams @ Southwick
August 16/17 – Musk Cup (CA Golf Invitational)
August 23 - Open High Bisquers Tournament
Sep 6/7 - Open Advanced Tournament
Sep 27/28 – Open Handicap Tournament
Nov 22 – AGM @ Frant Village Hall

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