



# Welcome to New Members. . . .

## . . . . from your Committee

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This welcome pack provides new members with an introduction to the club and how it operates.

## A Brief History

The club was founded in the mid-1960s by Gerald Williams, a croquet enthusiast and member of the Croquet Association, in the grounds of his mansion at Shernfold Park, Frant and we continued there, despite his having sold the property until the hurricane of 1987 and further storms in 1989 damaged the lawns beyond the ability of the club, with only 30 members, to afford to repair.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council then offered us a corner of grass on the Hawkenbury Recreation Ground with shared facilities. However, the quality of the lawns were very poor and we struggled to survive.

In 1994 we took over some under-used tennis courts on our current site, taking over responsibility for maintaining the lawns and also building our own club house (a gift from one of our members Hazel Moss-Davis).

With the growth in membership to more than 40 we decided in 2005 that the lawns are so poor that they need to be replaced with laser-levelled ones and raise £40,000 towards their replacement, together with an irrigation system and an Equipment Store. Of this £14,000 came from members and the rest from the Lottery (Awards for All), Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Kent County Council, Gatwick Airport Trust, the South East Croquet Association and the Croquet Association.

By 2007 the membership was up to almost 60, our playing strength is improving and now we're getting good publicity for our annual Corporate Challenge for novices, we've hosted our first Croquet Association event, have many corporate events and also regular visits from other groups enjoying our facilities.

## Members

We have about 60 members. An electronic copy of the membership list with their phone numbers/email addresses is available from the Membership Secretary. To help you know who other members are we've put pictures of many on the Notice Board to the far left of the Club House, together with a membership list. If your picture isn't there just send an electronic one to Jon Diamond (webmaster) or get him to take one of you.

On the second year of membership if you specifically opt in you can become a member of the Croquet Association, which entitles you to a discount at the Croquet Association shop and on tournament entry at most tournaments at other clubs. This membership includes other benefits and is included in your membership fee.

## Club Facilities

We have three lawns at the top of Calverley Grounds in the centre of Tunbridge Wells. Access to the park can be from Crescent Road via the arch opposite the multi-storey car park, from Mount Pleasant via the entrance opposite the Station or from Grove Hill Road via either Mountfield Road or Mountfield Gardens.

We have a Clubhouse with changing rooms and kitchen facilities, for limited refreshments. More extensive teas, lunches etc. can be found within Calverley Grounds at the Cafe (2 minutes walk downhill) or in the main shopping areas of Tunbridge Wells itself (5-6 minutes walk to either the far side of the car park in Crescent Road or Mount Pleasant past the Cafe in the park). Some players leave items of clothing here during the season, but please leave the Club House clean and tidy.

*In Winter if you want to use the facilities:* the system is drained down with the water turned off off to ensure we don't get burst pipes. so to get it working: turn off the kitchen tap and turn on the left stopcock in the Mens' Toilet. When you leave turn off the stopcock and turn on the kitchen tap.

**Ladies:** please do not use the Ladies Toilet – use the Mens, as the Ladies is usually disconnected even when the stopcock is turned on.

## Parking

Difficult! The two multi-story car parks (on Crescent Road and opposite the Station) are costly (now even on Sundays 10am-4pm) at £1.40 per hour or £6.30 for the day and £1.50 during the evenings apart from Thursday from 6pm (**2019 prices**). There is some on-street parking with a 1 hour time limit in the Grove Hill Road area with some free from 5pm onwards. You can still park on the streets on Sundays on single yellow lines or in parking bays (residents or otherwise) free of charge, but not on double yellow lines. Otherwise it's either a bit of a walk or having to pay for it.

Our website has full details about parking charges and where you're likely to find free parking.

## Playing Times and Access

We're open dawn to dusk, 7 days a week! However the lawns are not playable when very wet or in frosty conditions. The season runs from early April to mid October, but Autumn maintenance may interfere with this in September/October. Unfortunately, it's not always possible to plan this much ahead of time as this needs to take place during a dry period.

We try to have at least one lawn available throughout most of the winter. But this depends on the weather and the schedule of maintenance work. Please always check the notice boards before you play. During winter play **jump shots are forbidden** as they may damage the lawns at a time when they are unable to recover.

You will need a key to access the Club lawns and the Clubhouse. These are available to all Club Members from the Club Membership Secretary. The keys remain the property of the Club. Please don't lose them as they cost £20 to replace (payable to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council) and remember to return them if you cease to be a member of the club.

Sometimes our lawns are booked for tournaments or other kinds of events and there may be limited, or exceptionally, no lawns available for play. Our diary on the website and on the Notice Board should tell you about these events, so don't forget to check it if you're planning to play outside our regular Club sessions.

If you wish to book a lawn, e.g. because you're arranging an internal competition match, please do so via our WhatsApp group. You must also check the online Diary first, to ensure that we don't have an scheduled event or other booking that might conflict and take priority over your play.

Please note that even if you want to book a lawn for a match that if all the other lawns are in use you may need to share a lawn (double-banking). Double-banking between Association Croquet and Golf Croquet games doesn't work, so if (for example) two lawns are taken with single-banked AC games and the other with two GC games double-banked and you wish to play GC then you should ask the two AC games to consolidate on to a single lawn.

Our Groundsman, Ray Kemp, is in charge of all maintenance activities on the lawns. If he asks you stop play or there's a notice about restrictions on lawn usage please comply – this is in your best interests in the long term. If the grass is being mown please help if you're asked to move to another lawn, so that the person mowing the lawns can use the lawn you're on.

## **Dress**

The only mandatory item regards shoes – these must have flat soles. Predominantly all-white clothes are required if you're playing in inter-club matches and Open Tournaments i.e. when we entertain visitors. Some members prefer to play in whites at all times. This is encouraged as it makes the Club more “noticeable” to users of the Park.

A free woven club badge and an enamel one is available when joining the club. Additional ones of these are available at £3.50 each from the Secretary. If you're representing the club we'd like to wear a club badge on your predominantly clothing.

## **Club Sessions**

On most Sunday and Wednesdays afternoons during the Summer from about 1:30pm until about 6pm the lawns are reserved for Club Play i.e. an informally organised opportunity to play and/or be coached – and/or be sociable! It has traditionally been the focus of the Club's Golf Croquet players.

John Greenwood hosts a social Association Croquet session, including informal coaching, on Thursday evenings from 5:10pm in the Summer and 6pm at other times. (The start time is to allow you completely free parking on single yellow lines - one hour free from 5-6pm and then the regular Thursday free parking from 6pm to 8:30pm.) We also have occasional AC sessions at other times, primarily for coaching.

We have a Golf Team League on Tuesday evenings.

## **Equipment**

The Club provides all hoops, pegs, and balls as well as a selection of mallets. All equipment for the three lawns is held in the Equipment Store beside the Clubhouse, the key for which is in the main Clubhouse itself on the Bookshelf. Please return it there when you lock up. The only essential item of equipment you need are flat-soled shoes.

If you have your own mallet and leave it in the Equipment Store then it is available for members and visitors to use. If you don't want allow this to happen please bring it with you when you play or leave it inside the Changing Rooms. Please leave all club mallets in the Equipment Store.

In general, except for tournaments and matches, we only put out hoops and not the corner pegs or flags. The trolleys and hoops are identical for all the main lawns (despite what it says on one of the trolleys). When inserting a hoop you may need to use a hoop mallet, which has a rubber end, on the top to make it firm – bang this alternately on each side, not on the centre of the top of the hoop. The hoop carets do not need to be level with the ground, just that a ball doesn't foul them.

When removing a hoop **DO NOT WAGGLE IT** to loosen it. This will damage the hoop hole and ensure they need to be re-drilled much quicker, but more importantly *this may damage your back!* There is a hoop lifter, with a crowbar lever, in the Equipment Store. After you've removed a hoop tread on the holes a bit, to prevent mounds being created in the longer term.

Damaging the lawns: don't! However, occasionally when you play a shot, especially a jump shot, your mallet may cut the surface of the lawn. This may be a fault, but in any event you should repair the lawn immediately. **DON'T STAMP IT DOWN AS THIS WILL LEAVE A DAMAGED SURFACE THAT WILL TAKE TIME TO REPAIR.** We have some divot repairers, price £3.50, inside the Club House. Please use one of these under a divot to drag any grass tucked underneath the cut out and so leaving just a tear, before tamping down.

Boundary boards are kept under the bench seats. These are not normally used to separate lawns, except during tournaments and matches, but are useful if people are hitting balls hard. Please put them back when you take in the other equipment.

## First Aid and Emergencies

We have a First Aid kit on a shelf in the Mens with plasters, sprays and other minor bits and pieces. If you use some of this please ensure that you replace them. Many of our members attended a First Aid Course in 2018, so although they don't have certificates they should be able to help. The nearest A&E is at the main hospital in Pembury.

A Pay as You Go mobile phone for use for emergency calls only is attached to the main wall opposite to the door. It will almost certainly need to be plugged in to charge it before use.

## Refreshments

Tea and Coffee and Biscuits are generally available in the kitchen area, at a nominal price of course – please see the Price List and put your money in the jar in the tea cupboard.

Beer and Wine are also often available in the cupboard nearest to the sink. As we have no license, it is not for sale but the Club welcomes donations from those members who may wish to consume some!

Please ensure that you leave the club house in the state you would like it to be in when you arrive! So, wash and dry-up afterwards and put away any crockery or glasses, and take away the contents of the waste-bin if it's getting full. There's a dish-washer to help you do this (which you may need to put on if it's getting full of dirty stuff), so there's no excuse for leaving any unwashed/undried crockery around. There's a fuller check-list on the wall above the sink. [We also need volunteers to keep the club house clean – we normally draw up a rota for this at the start of each year.]

We do provide some catering for special events on an ad-hoc basis, especially for matches and some tournaments. If you would like to help with these please contact Kate Sander.

## Coaching and Practising

You'll be notified about our ad-hoc coaching programme from time to time.

We have a stock of publications, including coaching material, on the bookshelf in the Club House. Please feel free to borrow them for a week or two, but do return them!

Practising regularly is recommended for all players. There are a few things to note:

- ! please use the secondary colours, as this will help even out the wear on the two sets of balls in the trolleys
- ! if possible use the balls in the ball carriers on the floor of the ball store, not the ones in the trolleys, to prolong the life of the trolley balls
- ! ***don't practise jump shots*** on the lawns as this often causes damage. There's normally a spare set of hoop holes near corner 4 off lawn 1 or lawn 2
- ! don't practise running hoop 1 of any lawn as this is the hoop that gets the most wear.
- ! Don't practise on lawn 1. For some strange reason it seems to be used most...
- ! we have several half-balls on a spike. This is useful as a target on a spare lawn for practising roquets or hitting accurately at a distance. Just take out lots of spare balls and gradually increase the distance as your accuracy increases.

## Handicaps

It is a requirement of the Club that members record on their Croquet Association Handicap Cards for every 'singles' game played in official competitions. These include all Club Competitions as well as any External Competition games that are played. Games when you play with a partner – i.e. 'doubles' - should not be recorded on your Card.

This system has separate (not necessarily related) handicaps and cards – White for Association and Green for Golf. Details on how to use these are on the front of the cards which are available in the Club House. (There's also a single sheet to help explain the Golf Handicap card.) If you don't have a handicap, or can't understand the instructions, please ask one of the experienced players for help.

The Club Handicappers reserve the right to change your handicap, despite what it says on your Handicap card! If your handicap changes please write the new one on the membership list on the Notice Board and let the Secretary know.

## Club Competitions and Tournaments

There's something for everyone! All the way from Open Tournaments for the experienced to internal Club Tournaments – both singles and doubles – to informal Club Ladders (Golf and Association). Information about our scheduled tournaments is available on the Notice Boards, together with entry forms.

The draws for our internal Club Tournaments are made at the beginning of the season and displayed on the Notice Boards. You can join either of the ladders at any time during the season by writing your name on a piece of paper and inserting it at the bottom of the ladder. You can also join in the Tuesday Golf Teams League during the season. Please contact the organiser if you're interested in this (see the Committee page on our website for the current incumbent).

There's a Finals Day towards the end of the season to wrap up the competitions - Presentation of the cups/shields is made at the AGM in February.

We are also a member of the South East Croquet Federation (SECF), so we participate both in league and in occasional friendly matches (in Golf and Association) throughout the season against other South Eastern clubs. Details of these are on the Notice Boards. And for those who wish to, there is always the option of doing none of the above!

If you need any further information about a tournament or are interested in playing in one of our teams please contact our Secretary.

## **Finances**

As a new member you will have paid your membership. However, the regular membership fee doesn't quite cover the cost of maintenance of the lawns and other equipment, insurance etc etc. Gift Aid is an excellent tax-efficient way of donating money to the club, so please consider this for future years if you're enjoying our club. More information on this is available on our website. Of course, we'll also like you to consider leaving a bequest to the club in your will if you enjoy playing croquet with us. Please note: if you are giving some money to us via Gift Aid HMRC rules mean that we must have a signed copy of their form to be able to claim it, so make sure that our Treasurer has it.

One way in which we raise funds is to host corporate and other events, teaching people Golf Croquet for up to 50(!) people. So, if you know someone who might be interested in trying croquet in this way please let one of the committee members know.

We also demonstrate the game at a number of other venues – Ightham Mote and Chartwell have been popular recently with Penshurst Place and Hever being visited recentl. They pay a significant sum for our presence.

These home and away events are good fund-raisers, but they do require quite a number of people to organise properly and teach/mentor those turning up, so if you can help please contact one of the Committee members or sign-up on the notice in the Club House.

## **Visitors**

Visitors are always welcome. If you would like to bring friends or others to see what Croquet is all about before deciding whether or not to join, please bring them to one of our Open Days – the first Sunday afternoon in May, June, July and August. Bringing newcomers in on these specific dates, all at the same time, means that at other times members won't need to interrupt their games to help with teaching and that we'll get a better critical mass for teaching/playing.

Please note the following;-

1. Any Club Member may invite up to 3 guests/visitors to play croquet at the Club provided that the Club is not already reserved for any other event. However the Member must ensure that all visitors sign the Visitor book upon arrival, and the inviting Member remains responsible for his/her visitors at all times. Additionally the visitors must leave the Club either before or at the same time as the Member. The Member and his/her visitor guests are asked to play on ONE lawn only, leaving the other 2 lawns for our other members to use.

2. Exceptionally, and with the prior approval from any Committee member, a Member may bring up to 7 visitors with him/her to play at the Club but all the rules and restrictions detailed above still apply including the use of only one lawn.
3. Any case where a Member wishes to bring to the Club more than 7 visitors is treated as a Private Event and the procedures detailed under the Private Events heading on our website apply. The charging rate does not apply, so please agree this with the Chairman or Secretary.
4. Except for Private Events, there is no charge for games played on a visitor's **first visit only (each Open Day counts as a visit)**. Thereafter, Members are asked to ensure that a Green Fee of £5 (£8 for a full day) is paid by or for each Visitor, on each day that they play. Please leave the money in the tea/coffee money jar or ensure that you transfer the money to our bank account.

*We've got a leaflet dispenser at our main gate. If you see that it's empty or nearly empty please top it up from the supply in the stationery cupboard in the Club House.*

## **Social Programme**

As a friendly club we also run a small Social Programme. In recent years this has involved:

Winter Monthly Pub Lunches	Winter Supper	
Winter playing - Monthly One-Ball/Golf with lunch		
Lawns Opening Event - Soup & Ploughman's Lunch		
Summer Lunch Barbeque	Finals Day tea	AGM lunch

You'll get information about these by email, through the website and on the Notice Boards.

## **Website**

Our website (<http://www.tunbridgewellscroquet.org.uk>) is normally the most up to date source of information about the club, so please refer to it first if you have any questions. Otherwise our Secretary will be most happy to help.

## **Help**

We always need help in the various organisational activities – coaching, catering, club house and equipment maintenance, garden and banks maintenance, housekeeping, match organisation, recruitment, social, website etc. etc. Please contact one of the committee members if you can help with any task, no matter how small.

Rather than ask for volunteers for cleaning we now set up a rota at the beginning of each season, so that everybody is expected to help. Obviously in your first season you won't be asked to help with this, but you will in subsequent years! With sufficient members you may not even be asked to do this every year. If you can't do your appointed week please arrange a swap with someone else.

Your committee is actively looking for new members. If you can help by serving the club in this way please talk to one of the committee members to put yourself forward.

**... and finally a very warm welcome and enjoy yourself!!**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon Diamond". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jon Diamond

April 2021