



# ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CROQUET CLUB

*Newsletter - July 2005*

## **From The Chairman**

Our Extraordinary General Meeting on Sunday July 3rd gave unanimous agreement to going ahead with the project to relay our lawns. Huge thanks are due to all those who have donated to our funds for this - it is not too late to add a contribution if you wish. Prior to the EGM we had had promises of some £3,200 and now with just a few potential donors left we've raised almost £4,300! For a small club like ours to raise such a significant sum in six short months is truly remarkable and we are now set to have lawns the Club can be truly proud of. Nevertheless, it still leaves us with a (manageable) shortfall, after we have taken account of tax repayable to us, of about £2,500, so all further donations will be gratefully accepted. Well done to all who have helped in making it possible.

Our thanks go to the Croquet Association, the South East Croquet Federation, The Lottery Fund, The Gatwick Airport Community Trust and the Borough Council who between them have put up £15,000 to support us, and in particular to Roger Morris who is to follow through his sterling work in developing the specifications for the work who now takes on the role of Project Manager to oversee its completion.

And now we do not have to forgo our chance to play on into the Autumn. The Bowling Club below us in the Park is closing on September 10th, and with the Borough Council's agreement we can have use of the bowling green and clubhouse from Sunday September 11th. Club afternoons will flourish albeit in a new setting for a while!

Meanwhile, make the most of the season. Get those tournament games played and remember it's never too late to improve your game. There is an opportunity on Thursday evenings (5.30 p.m. onwards) to learn a bit more about Association Croquet and have a game with friends. Do come along. And for those with handicaps higher than 16, and for newcomers there will be a gentle introduction to match play on Saturday 20th August. Just put your name on the list in the clubhouse or have a word with me if you are unsure what's involved. This High Bisquers' tournament has been much enjoyed in previous years and valued as a toe in the water experience.

## **Roger Morris on the Lawn Project**

The orders for both the Turf Laying and Irrigation have been placed, with preparatory work already started under the patio where the two water tanks will sit (they'll be delivered in mid August). Work on the banking by Lawn 3 should commence at about the same time. The Borough Council won't be able to install the new fencing at the extension at the end of Lawn 3 in time for our works, so a temporary fence will be erected (at the Council's cost). The major work should start on 30<sup>th</sup> August.

One point that we'll need to think about is how we're going to treat the banks and un-mowable lawn edges. We cannot allow them to continue as seed generators that will pollute the new lawns with unwanted weed seeds. We're probably going to spray with a total weed killer, but reseeding with fine grasses is likely to be necessary to maintain bank stability.

To help with continuing play during this time, as Richard mentioned above, we've managed to organise with the Borough Council to have use of the Bowling Green further down Calverley Grounds during September and much of next year. This will allow us to run two  $\frac{2}{3}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$  size courts whilst the main lawns are closed and also relieve the pressure on them early next year when they need maximum growing time.

## Secretary's Notes

It's that time of year again, when the deadline for completion of the blocks for our internal competitions is getting close and lots of games haven't yet been played. This year is especially difficult, since the deadline for completing the competitions is both earlier and rather immovable due to the relaying of the lawns. So, if you're having trouble completing all your games please let me know ASAP.

The completion date for the blocks for most events is 13<sup>th</sup> August, apart from the Spa which is 30<sup>th</sup> July. We're also looking to have a single Finals Day on 27<sup>th</sup> August, so if you qualify for an event final, but can't play on that date please also let me know this ASAP.

Congratulations to Richard Clark on winning the Lewis Shield. He'll be our representative at the All England Regional Final in September.

Finally, please note that the date for the AGM has now been set for 10<sup>th</sup> December in Frant.

## Social

Tea at Three, a fund-raising event for the Hospice in the Weald, was held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June at 3pm at the same time as many other similar events. Organised by Pauline Morris it included a Quiz, about Tea naturally! We raised a total of £85 – congratulations to all!

The Summer Lunch Barbeque on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July was well attended by nearly 30 people, not wholly surprising since it was followed by the EGM. Everybody



seemed to have enjoyed themselves and there was a profit of some £75 towards Club Funds. Thanks to Pamela Clark, Jon Diamond, Sue Mabey, Pauline Morris and Janice Ware for providing the food and especially Jon for his barbecuing skills.



Finals Day is scheduled for Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August, so we're planning on organising a Cream Tea. All are welcome, but please let us know if you're coming so that we can buy enough scones etc!

Finally, we're going to have some more Pub Lunches in the Closed Season, probably monthly – watch this space (and the web-site) for updates.

## Tournaments

Our internal High Bisquers Association Tournament will be run on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August from 9:30am to 5:30pm. It's for players with a handicap between 16 and 24. Please sign up on the sheet in the Clubhouse or contact Richard Clark for more details.

## Marketing and PR

Following our successful outing last year to Chartwell, this year we added two Exhibition Days at Ightham Mote, courtesy of the National Trust. They are very helpful, providing a tent for us to shelter in (from the sun) and moving the lawns pretty well. The only problem is to avoid the balls going into the "Deep Water" of the pond! We even got some people coming along for tuition as a result of the advertising of the event in the NT local magazine, so thanks to everyone who went and helped with all the enquirers.

Many of you have noticed that we've had articles in the Kent and Sussex Today section of the Courier (titled *Hammered* and featuring Mick) and the Index Magazine (*The mallet strikes back*). Copies of these, together with others from the National Press are on the walls in the Clubhouse. We've also managed to have a few bits in the Courier and also the Kent and Sussex Messenger mentioning our Lottery grant and the Lawn relaying Project. Hopefully, we'll manage to keep up our number of mentions next year as well.

BBC South East TV came filming at the club on the 20<sup>th</sup> July. It was arranged at very short notice and regrettably we're only in it as part of the back-drop for an interview with one of the Conservative

Tunbridge Wells Councillors. Still, as they say, any publicity is good publicity and they did film the Clubhouse sign, so maybe someone will notice us! The programme is called Inside/Out and will go out sometime in September. We got a small donation for providing the facilities and should get a copy of the programme when it goes out.

BBC Local Radio were also interested by the fact that Aaron Westerby, a member of our club from New Zealand, is playing in the World Croquet Championship in Cheltenham. So they came to interview him, and also talk to one of our other members (Janice Ware) about her views on the game. Hopefully a piece on that, together with some coaching background noises, will go out shortly.

Oh, by the way, you can help publicise the club too! One easy way is to include the club's website address in the signature of your emails.

We've got some A5 size posters, suitable for putting on a noticeboard (library etc.) or a shop window and also a leaflet suitable for handing out to anyone – with full information about the club. Please ask for copies – the leaflet is also available in the club house or on the website. We've also got quantities of the Croquet Association's leaflets to hand out – one each for Golf Croquet and Association Croquet.

## Members' Activities

Mick Belcham and Jon Diamond helped out Virginia Wade (yes, **THAT** Virginia Wade, Wimbledon Champion in 1977) with her 60th birthday celebrations at her family home Sharsted Court near Sittingbourne in Kent. Virginia lived in Tunbridge Wells for 5 years and went to Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Girls.

She had arranged several days of events, one of them being a competitive day for some 80 guests from all over the world (including many well-known friends - we didn't recognise most of the tennis ones I fear) divided up into 6 teams. As well as the obligatory tennis and golf, croquet was also included as they have a croquet lawn often used by the family.



Mick and Jon had volunteered to manage the croquet event on behalf of the Club [and gaining the Club a donation for their pains], taking mallets, balls and hoops and creating some slightly simplified rules to teach all comers to play Golf Croquet.

A good time was had by all, as the weather cleared just in time for the start. The croquet was not quite as competitive as the tennis appeared to be (except for certain participants who would presumably compete fiercely at Snap), but most people took part!

Apart from that, not too much else to report – John Hobbs went to the Veterans and Nottingham but doesn't want to comment on the results. Jon Diamond didn't do well at the Woking Advanced, but did better at the Surbiton Handicap winning 2 of his 3 games.

Aaron Westerby is going to the World Championship in Cheltenham in August representing New Zealand. He's also just taken part in the Jersey Open, but lost in the semi-finals to Reg Bamford.



## Jon Diamond on the Royal Tunbridge Wells 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Some of the most discerning of you may have noticed that 2006 is not only the year we're going to get some new lawns, but also the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

The Borough Council is offering up to £3,000 for a maximum of 50% of the cost of a suitable event, project or scheme, but not including alcohol or food or existing projects. It's also providing additional help in co-ordinating events and publicity for the year as a whole. You'll be noticing a Royal Tunbridge Wells 400 branding for events etc. in due course.

I've been mulling over for some time which way we should be celebrating the opening of our new lawns, letting local people know what's going on and also letting the rest of the Croquet world know how good the new lawns are, so this has provided an extra boost in trying to put something together.

My current (and very early) thinking is that we should put together an event (perhaps too grandly titled "Festival of Croquet") at the end of August/early September 2006 to act as a focus for our PR and Marketing for next year. In addition to putting on something for our members, both in internal events as well as getting the best UK players to show their skills off on our lawns, one of the main aims would be getting other people in Tunbridge Wells interested in Croquet, perhaps via local companies, or even our twin town Wiesbaden.

I'm currently putting out feelers to local companies for sponsorship or participation, but it's a little chicken and egg at the moment, since we haven't decided what we want to do and therefore what the cost might be! So if you have any contacts in local companies or suggestions please let me know.

If you've got any ideas about this prospective event or you're interested in helping decide what we can do and/or help put it all together please contact me as soon as possible as I'm putting together a group of people to look at this idea in more detail.

## **Website**

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

## **League Matches**

We're now more than half-way through the season and we're doing pretty well in the SECF Leagues. Our Golf team has won both its matches against Merton and Bromley. Our Association B League team won its only game so far against Ivychurch (which used to be called Brenzett) and the U League team has beaten Caterham, but lost to Compton and Caterham.

## **Important Diary Dates**

20 <sup>th</sup> August	High Bisquers Tournament	September	Most away friendly matches
27 <sup>th</sup> August	Finals Day	10 <sup>th</sup> December	AGM @Frant
29 <sup>th</sup> August	Lawns Closing Day		

Don't forget - changes to dates and events are normally on the web-site as well as in the Clubhouse.

## **Welcome**

And finally, welcome to our new members this year – Theo Farley, Valerie Hannon, John Hunt, Raquel Lloret, Dan Long, Jane and Selwyn Ward.