



# NEWSLETTER

## August 2007

### From The Chairman



The season is now more than half-way through and already it's been the best ever, with the lawns in superb condition (and will get even better next year), an image update, an almost doubling in size of the Croquet Challenge and membership at a record high of over 60!

Following a suggestion from one of our members I've put mug shots of as many of you as possible inside the Club House, at the entrance to the Ladies Changing Room. So if you don't know someone else on the lawns you can look them up! We're missing a few members, so if you want to be included and aren't there please send me a suitable photo of yourself. I'll be taking photos at the BBQ (see below), so will hopefully catch up with a few more then.

All of you should have seen the new signs incorporating our new logo on the side of the Equipment Store and the far side of the Club House. To complement this we've produced iron-on transfers of our new logo suitable for T-shirts, caps etc. These are available from the Club House (on board opposite door), price £2.00 each, together with an instruction leaflet. We hope to have sow-on badges and T-shirts, caps etc with printed logos to order later this year.

### New Club Sessions

There have consistently been a large number of players attending Club Afternoons, typically about 20, and we've had to use the Bowling Green on some occasions. Because of this, and with some demand for more 'professional' Golf playing we're initiating two addition Club Sessions - Association on Wednesday mornings from 10am and Golf Handicap Singles (primarily) on Thursday evening from 5pm. The latter should prove useful for those of us still working!

### Member News

Most of you will be aware by now that Jean Heath, a long-time, stalwart member of the club, and a past committee member, has died after a long illness. Our sympathies are with her husband and family and we're now happy to see Derek back on the lawns.

Another member, Ursula Powell, has recently had a severe stroke, but is now recovering in Kent & Sussex Hospital. We wish her a speedy recovery, but

unfortunately I don't think we'll be seeing her playing croquet this season.

### Lease

We've finally managed to agree and sign the Lease with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council! The fencing isn't quite what we thought had been agreed, but it's clear that the Council aren't going to replace it, so we'll have to enjoy the new style and use it to encourage more spectators to actually come in and play.

### Summer BBQ

Thanks to Elaine and Mark Houslop we'll be having a Summer Barbeque on 22nd August at their home - Nine West, Hungershall Park, Tunbridge Wells TN4 8NE. Nibbles at 6pm, with the main food at 7pm - price £10 per head including wine. So far there are 15 people who are coming - to reserve your place(s) contact Elaine on 01892 619192 before August 15<sup>th</sup> or fill in the sheet on the notice board (which will be put up shortly).

I hope to see all of you on the lawns, or at the BBQ, during August and September. Enjoy the weather while it lasts!

*Jon Diamond*

### Secretary's Notes

It's that time of year again, when the deadline for completion of the blocks for our internal competitions is getting closer and lots of games haven't yet been played. So, if you're having trouble completing all your games please let me know ASAP. The completion date for the blocks for all events is 21st September and for the first round in the doubles is **17<sup>th</sup> August**. We've planned a single Finals Day on 29th September, so if you qualify for an event final, but can't play on that date please also let me know this ASAP

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

*Mick Belcham*

### Lawns

With a lot of effort from Tony and Gerald the grounds men and with help from our members, the lawns have been brought up to a high standard and I am sure everyone has appreciated playing on flat fine grass. We have cut as short as 7mm but dare not go any lower this

year as the young grass is not fully established. The lawns will be sprayed mid August to reduce the worm casts and apply a selective weed-killer. A deal has been agreed with a turf care company to provide fertilisers etc at a good discount. We now have lawns we can be proud of. Next year we can expect the lawn speed to increase as we cut even shorter.

We have purchased a Sarrel spike roller for our scarifier to carry out summer aeration which promotes strong growth and keeps the grass healthy. Several members have been trained in its use and if you find you have some time available please spike a lawn or two. The more aeration it gets the better.

Please can I remind you not to mark balls with coins, but to use plastic markers which are available in the ball-store. Our mower recently hit a hard object but luckily the damage was minimal.

Will any new member who has time to spare and is willing to help with lawn maintenance tasks please contact me. Currently I have a damaged ligament in my ankle which precludes me from doing any of the regular work so any help is appreciated.

Finally, we're currently experiencing some fox damage, so if you notice any holes please fill them in and also remove any droppings from the lawns, otherwise they'll burn the grass.

*Roger Morris*

## Coaching and Handicaps

Aaron Westerby, currently ranked 6th in the World, gave our Advanced Association players two coaching sessions at the end of June. Obviously, we all need to tighten up on our 4-ball breaks! Hopefully he'll be able to give some more needed tuition when he returns to TW in early September.

Those of you who are gradually practising Association Croquet and want a bit of coaching on specific points can get in touch with me and arrange a convenient time, probably best on one of the Thursday evening sessions, because the club afternoons are a bit crowded. However it is still possible to use the Bowls Green when all lawns are full.

There are five copies of the notes that Dan Long brought back from the Summer School at Southwick, if you would like a copy, see me. For Golf coaching and basic hitting technique, again contact me if you need some help, for example on bisque taking.

Please record all your 'serious' club games and any external games on your Handicap cards, so that you can see how you are progressing. Recording your friendly games of singles separately can also tell you how you are faring. If you don't have a Handicap card there are plenty in the Club House.

Those of you who attended my association coaching sessions might like to follow up by teaming up with some of our more experienced players to get to grips with all the new shots and strategy involved in the game. This would have to be outside normal club sessions and Elaine Houslop will be happy to organise times when we could meet together. Let her know if this is of interest to you.

*John Hobbs*

## Housekeeping etc

Despite the wet Summer we seem to have had many afternoons of club croquet regularly attended by at least twenty or more. My thanks to all those who have prepared tea and slaved over the open sink to make sure everything is cleared away. Many hands make light work!!

John Hobbs kindly produced a rota, on an alphabetical basis, for the cleaning of the clubhouse. Could I remind you to take a look at the notice board to check which week is your responsibility. Perhaps a tick against your name on completion of the task would be a good idea.

In case of any minor injuries, a new FIRST AID KIT has been put on the top shelf of the cupboard above the tea and coffee.

*Elaine Houslop*

## Opening Day

After a long spell of summery weather of course our Opening Day for the Main Lawns was quite chilly, but dry. Nevertheless almost 40 people turned up at some stage during the day, with more than 25 for Elaine's excellent Mushroom Soup and Ploughman's Lunch.



The morning One Ball Handicap event was contested by 10 players, for most this being their first experience of the game! The handicaps varied between 24 and -0.5, so there were some very different styles of game to be seen. A closely contested final between Miriam Reader and Ray Meech saw Ray run out the winner by the narrowest of margins.

The afternoon saw several newcomers to the club being shown the ropes by experienced club members in a mixture of Association and Golf playing during the normal Club Session, with an overflow having to use the Bowling Green as the other 3 lawns were full. We were obviously successful since two cheques for membership were handed to Mick later in the day and several more new members look in prospect.

Finally, after tea (with splendid cakes), about a dozen players took to Lawn 1 for a game of Pirates. Much hilarity ensued, obviously everybody enjoyed themselves and I'm sure there must have been a winner, but nobody told me!

Many thanks must go to Elaine for the food, Roger Morris and his helpers for the lawn and garden maintenance and John Hobbs plus his helpers for the improved state of the club house and surrounds.

## Tournaments

### *Kent Cup*

The Kent Cup is an individual competition amongst members of all the clubs in Kent and rotates around the county each year. This year was the first in Tunbridge Wells for some years and allowed us to show off the development on our lawns. A final cut just as the players arrived got the lawns even, but they were still said by all participants to be too slow. Luckily, despite the forecast, the rain mostly held off and the second afternoon was a lovely sunny one.

Participants from Tunbridge Wells were Mick Belcham (Manager), Jon Diamond, John Hobbs and Chris Sturdy. In addition, Alex Jardine, a ex-member of Tunbridge Wells living in France and winner of the Kent Cup twice, also played. However, our players didn't manage to do quite well enough with the final being contested between two Medway players - David Parkins and Robert Alexander, with Robert ending up winner in a one-sided final by +26. Jon Diamond was third and Chris Sturdy won the Consolation Event.

### *Open Golf*

Despite being held the same week-end as the SECF Golf Team event at Southwick 10 players took part, although only one was not from Tunbridge Wells (Neil Coote from Reigate Priory). It was a 7-round Swiss event on a slightly blustery but mostly sunny day and a pleasant introduction to tournament play for five of our new members this year.

After 5 rounds Neil Coote was the clear leader having won all his games, but he lost the last two and after the smoke had cleared Neil, Miriam Reader, Frank Gunstone and Val Rocca all had 5 wins. After a tie-break on hoops scored; Miriam, who beat Neil by 7-3 in the final game, was declared the winner with Neil as runner-up. A tight finish, but everyone enjoyed the day and learned a lot about playing the game - especially that if you receive bisques they actually need to be used if you're losing! Miriam also had her handicap reduced to 5.



### *Open High Bisquers*

Sunday 29th July saw us play host to an Open High Bisquers Tournament (Association), the fourth annual one of its kind. Despite the rival attractions of the big South East Federation Golf Croquet fest at Southwick, we had eight contestants from four clubs. Very heavy overnight rain left the lawns little short of squelchy at the start of play, but they dried out fast rapidly to provide good playing conditions as the cloud gave way to sunshine.

This year Richard Clark, as tournament manager, opted for slightly longer games (four rounds of 14 point games played over one hour and a quarter each). Skill levels quickly proved to be higher than in previous years and a clear leader emerged in each of the blocks. Betty Body from Ivychurch won all three of her Block games very convincingly, whilst John Wright from



Medway topped the second Block. The play off between these two was a thriller. When time was called, the game was even, but John had a ball in his next hoop. In extra time, all hinged on Betty's long attempt to roquet, which was narrowly missed. John tapped his way to glory and a handicap reduction.

The three local contenders, Miriam Reader, Ray Meech and Dan Long all acquitted themselves creditably, without this year hitting the high spots. They will be back for more next year as all our visitors vowed to be.

### *Future Tournaments*

All players are welcome to 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.

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.

## Inter-Club Matches and Friendlies

### *SECF Leagues*

So far of the four matches in each of the Leagues, we've won one and lost one in the Golf Level League, won one in both the Golf Handicap and B Leagues and lost both games in the U League, so about an average performance. Must try harder...



## **SECF Team Doubles**

Southwick was a picture as usual on 12/13th May as 14 teams from all over the South East Region played this annual Association Doubles Event with 5 games over the two days. Medway turned out easy winners - assuring their victory after 4 rounds by winning all their games, well ahead of the other teams.

Our team of Miriam Reader & Jolyon Creasey (Saturday)/Mick Belcham (Sunday) and Jon Diamond & Ann Boyle (Saturday)/Ray Meech (Sunday) didn't perform brilliantly - each pairing winning 2 games. Things could have been marginally better as Jon blobbed in Rover with his last turn after time in the final game against Ember; ensuring a loss by one hoop when he had an excellent opportunity to peel Ray through his next hoop to win the game! Shame...

## **SECF Golf**

We took two teams of four to this event at Southwick, but unfortunately the team captain had to leave before the prizes were awarded, so don't know where we came! Anyway, reports indicate that everyone who went enjoyed themselves.

## **Friendlies**

We've had our traditional one with Bromley (we share two members) and hope to have some more later in the season. Contact Ann Boyle if you're interested in playing/arranging one.

## **Marketing and PR**

### **Bateman's NT**

A disastrously wet day on 30th May thoroughly soaked Stan Oxenbury and Paul Barnard who volunteered to try and teach some youngsters at Bateman's on one of their Family Days. Thanks for their perseverance and better luck next time!

We've another one on the 15<sup>th</sup> August and hope to have better luck then!

### **Ightham Mote NT**

Most of the other players from TW not involved in the Kent Cup went off to a visit to Ightham Mote NT on

17th June to participate in one of their family days, organised by Selwyn Ward. There were lots of people there and the croquet proved a big attraction - we had people literally queuing to play throughout the whole day - and even had to stay 'open' an hour or more beyond the scheduled time. Everyone seemed to have a good time and we had some genuine interest from people in taking it further (tho' not necessarily with us, as, inevitably, many came from farther afield). National Trust people seemed equally well pleased.

## **Corporate Challenge**

The second year of this event, inaugurated as part of Royal Tunbridge Wells 400 last year, was a great success with a doubling in the number of teams taking part to 11. Taking place on the evening of 6th July it sadly didn't attract quite as many spectators as the other major sporting event in Tunbridge Wells over the weekend - the Tour de France.

The previous year's winner (Lovat Insurance Brokers) entered an additional team this year, but just failed to repeat their previous success and had to give second-best to the team of winners Jim Page and Rob Kirwan from the Blockley Partnership, a local dental practice in Mount Ephraim, who won all four of their games.



Runners-up were Tim Austen and Cheryl Bowden from Lovat. [We now have 4 new members as a result of this; three from Lovat - Tim, Cheryl and Robert Elkins plus Jim Page!]

## **Welcome**

Finally, welcome to our many new members this year - Tim Austen, Cheryl Bowden, Judy Brown, Angela and Jeff Chapman, Duncan Cox, Robert Elkins, Michael Gentry, Michael Greagsby, Valerie Jackson, Jim Page, Joyce and Val Rocca, Barbara Ross-Jones, Michael Sander and Kathy Youngman.

## **Important Diary Dates**

Aug 10 Golf Handicap League v Ramsgate  
Aug 11 Association U League v Canterbury  
Aug 14 Ashdown Probus Session am  
Aug 15 Family Day @ Bateman NT  
Aug 16 Association B League @ Ember  
Aug 20 Association U League @ Compton  
Aug 22 Summer BBQ 6pm @ Nine West, Hungershall Park  
Aug 23 B League v Canterbury  
Aug 26 Private Party 11am-5pm

Aug 30 Golf Handicap League v Littlehampton  
Sep 1/2 Open Advanced Tournament  
Sep 4 Crowborough U3A Session pm  
Sep 11 Ashdown Probus Session am  
Sep 15 Golf Level League @ Southwick  
Sep 22/23 Open Association Handicap Tournament  
Sep 29 Competitions Finals Day  
Sep 30 Main Lawns Closing Day  
Nov 17 AGM, 11am (coffee 10:30am), followed by Lunch, 1pm approx @ Frant Village Hall

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>