



Royal Tunbridge Wells Croquet Club

Minutes of the AGM held on 22nd February 2020

Present

Jon Diamond, Richard Mann, John Greenwood, Michael Hughes, John Moore, Chris Barham, Michael Sander, Kate Sander, Derek Crocombe, Jeff Chapman, Angela Chapman, Jane Smith, Mick Belcham, Nigel Barton, Derek Heath, Barney Lewis, Tim Luke and sons, Richard Clark, John Hobbs & Jolyon Creasey.

1. Apologies for Absence

Paul Gamba, Carolyn Gunstone, Brian Smith, Mike Gentry, Beverley Brown, Barbara Tasker, Mark Houslop & Bob Bruce.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous AGM held on the 16th February 2019 were approved. There were no matters arising.

3. Chairman's Report

Jon Diamond reported that the club had had an excellent year with an increase in membership to 73 members (including one corporate member), 5 more than last year's previous all time high of 68.

It is not clear what the main cause of the increase was but it may be down, in part, to the club's advertising using the Simon Carter Golf Croquet World Championships (GCWC) as a spring board. Four Introduction to Croquet course for new players had been well attended having had 30 participants and 34 people had attended National Croquet Day. The club had also received good publicity by way of some 3 minutes' exposure on the TV program "Escape to the Perfect Town" (a clip of this may be available in due course).

The GCWC went very well the only hiccup being the 2" rainfall the night before which delayed the start of the event to the afternoon. There were no RTWCC entrants but we did provide referees. Jon expressed thanks to the many volunteers that made it such a success. We made a surplus of about £2,000 helped by support from the main sponsor Simon Carter and local sponsors Wells Associates, AV Trinity and Thomson Snell & Passmore and a grant from Royal Tunbridge Wells Together. We thank them all.

It was noted that the lawns were in excellent condition for the GCWC, and very satisfactory for the players, and our lawn furniture was generally refurbished (eg hoops and lawn dividers) for the event. We had also acquired some more flags and local publicity for the event (which can be seen on the website).

As regards competitions, we again didn't do too well in the SECF leagues.

Thanks were extended to the managers of the various club teams: Alex Jardine, John Greenwood, Richard Mann, John Skates, Jon Diamond, Derek Crocombe and Jane Smith.

Barney Lewis excelled in the Croquet Association's All England competition reaching the National final.

The club finals day was a success, 7 of the club finals being held on that day.

4. Treasurer's Report

Richard Mann presented the previously circulated accounts which had been reviewed by John Timmis. There has been an increase in our reserves of about £2,000 primarily due to the GCWC surplus and the costs for lawn maintenance being a little less than last year, leaving the club's reserves at about £20,000.

The committee has reviewed our capital reserves taking account of Charity Commission guidelines and has looked at ways to reduce them. The committee has already introduced free tea and coffee and free entry to the internal club competitions. After some discussion the AGM agreed to the club paying the coaching fee in respect of one AC or GC coaching course per member per year, and to pay contractors to carpet and paint the interior of the club house to a maximum expenditure of £3,000.

The committee will also look at improving usability of the club for the disabled (eg hand rails in the toilets) and the pros and cons of providing of a defibrillator - either our own one on the club premises, or a public one near the club by arrangement with TWBC.

The accounts were then accepted and approved, proposed by Nigel Barton and seconded by Kate Sander.

5. Lawn & Facilities Maintenance

Jeff Chapman updated the AGM on the position as regards lawns and facilities.

Ray Kemp is happy to continue as our groundsman and he will continue to liaise with members.

We have a continuing badger problem. They have their den in Calverley Park grounds and enter the croquet grounds through the far side fence.

The clubhouse was improved and externally painted for the GCWC.

Our main lawn machines are a few years old but still in good shape. As noted at previous AGMs, we have been advised that they are soundly engineered and we will be better off continuing to maintain them rather than replacing them new, possibly less well engineered, versions. Last year the mower had a replacement petrol tank and the blades were sharpened.

The public benches above the club grounds have been removed which appears to have resulted in people coming to the club seats in the evenings leaving litter, including broken glass on the lawn. The intrusions have been reported to the police.

Club house maintenance and improvements will be looked at by the committee, as noted earlier.

The drain at the base of the north embankment will be checked to ensure it is still functioning properly. The deep scarification has helped drainage and retained water after rain is no longer a problem.

The lawns continue to get flatter due to the ongoing treatment.

The intention is to close the lawns for treatment immediately after this year's finals and Honeygrove Cup - the final playing day scheduled is 13th September. The month delay last year meant it took a long time for the lawns to recover after the end of season treatment.

6. Tournaments, Competitions and Events:

The club will be running our usual open tournaments this year: the Kent Cup (Association), Montevideo Cup (Golf), Pegasus Plate (Association) & Honeygrove Cup. We will hold the CA charity 1-ball club competition on 5 April 2020. There will, additionally, be a series of 14-point, AC, one-day tournaments at the club organised by Alex Jardine and a trial GC Mixed Doubles event.

We will hold the same internal competitions as last year.

We will enter the same SECF competitions as last year as well as the Ladies Day competition.

John Greenwood will canvas members to see if there is sufficient interest in joining the SECF AC high handicap B-League this year.

7. Coaching

There were no proposed changes to last year's AC and GC coaching regimes for new members which had gone well.

There are still some places available on the one day GC coaching days, with coaches from the Croquet Academy, on 27th and 30th April.

Members were reminded about the grants available to make Coaching and Referee courses free of charge.

8. Private Events

The arrangements for private events would be as last year, except that the committee had decided not host any further French School visits due to the unacceptable behaviour of two or three of the students last year.

9. This Year's Subscriptions:

The meeting accepted the Committee's recommendation that all subscriptions remain unchanged but that the visitors' lawn fees be increased to £5/half day, and £8 per day.

Proposed by Nigel Barton and seconded by Jane Smith.

10. Election of Officers, Committee and Trustees

Chris Barham was co-opted onto the committee on the 6 January 2020. There were no candidates for the committee positions other than the present incumbents who were all willing to serve a further year on the committee.

The election/re-election of Officers, Committee and Trustees for 2020 were then proposed by Nigel Barton and seconded by Kate Sander, and agreed by the meeting as follows:-

Chairman - Jon Diamond

Secretary - John Greenwood

Treasurer - Richard Mann

Committee Members - Jeff Chapman, Paul Gamba, John Moore, Kate Sander Chris Barham & John Skates

Trustees - Jon Diamond and Richard Mann

11. Any Other Business:

Kate Sander informed the meeting that she would soon be requesting volunteers to help with the spring clean of the club house.

The number of people attending the Wednesday pm GC social croquet had fallen off markedly. John Greenwood will canvas members to see if there is another preferred weekday/time for these sessions. The Sunday pm GC sessions would continue.

It is hoped that all members who take part in our teams would wear a shirt or sweater with our logo on. Pritchard Embroidery (01273 452058) provide these for Southwick, so we've decided to use them ourselves - shirts or sweaters cost about £15-16 and can have your name added for a small additional charge.

Jon Diamond thanked all the volunteers and team captains for their help through the season.

The meeting was closed at 12.45pm.

12. Presentation of Trophies

Jon Diamond presented the following trophies for the 2019 season:

Association

Spa Salver: Alex Jardine

Lustau Cup: John Greenwood

Lewis Shield: Richard Mann

Calverley Cup: Chris Barham

Howell Cup: not contested

Miriam Reader Memorial Doubles: Jolyon Creasey & Jane Smith

Ladder: Bruce Edwards

New members competition: Tim Luke

Golf

Hunter Plate: Jon Diamond

Kitching Rose Bowl: Richard Mann

High Bisquers: not contested

Handicap Doubles: Bruce Edwards & Tim Luke

Fraser Tankard (Teams): Paul's Pioneers

Ladder: Bruce Edwards

New members competition: Simon Manwaring

13. Honorary Memberships

Jon Diamond then announced that club had awarded John Hobbs and Richard Clark honorary membership of the club in recognition of their efforts over many years.

He said Richard had been the Chairman before him and had received a Croquet Association diploma for services to croquet in 2007. He had negotiated the club lease and was a driving force behind the relaying of the lawns raising some £26,000 from club members and a further £14,000 from other donors. He was awarded a Croquet Association diploma for services to croquet in 2007.

He said John had been the Chairman of the club before Richard and had served 16 years as a committee member and for a a good deal longer as a club coach. Many club members and others (and the club) had benefited from the high quality mallets he made over the years. He was awarded a Croquet Association diploma for services to croquet in 2006.

Jon then presented Richard and John with engraved crystal glass bowls to mark the occasion.

