



# LEIGHTON-LINSLADE CROQUET CLUB

## THE FIRST TEN YEARS



Margaret J. Brown



**This brief account of the formation and development of the Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club is being completed as the Club moves into the 2009 season and is intended as a contribution to the celebration of its 10th Anniversary.**

**“The AIM of the Club is to foster and promote the sport of croquet at all levels, with associated social activities, providing opportunities for recreation and competition in Leighton Buzzard, Linslade and district.”**  
(Club Constitution)



On the cover; main and top inset - late Summer 2008 - full size lawns, fencing, scoring systems. Bottom inset: inauguration day at Pages' Park in May 2000 - rudimentary lawns and string fences.  
Above: the opening on May 6th 200 was performed by Leisure and Community Manager Linda Hindsen and Town Mayor Cllr Chris Hinchliff.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to John Cundell for his photographs and his invaluable assistance in preparing the draft for publication; also for photographs by the late John Fogg; to Julian Brown for producing the final product and to several members for helpful suggestions.

Even so early in the Club's history some information has been lost or is incomplete so that complete accuracy is not possible. Despite careful research, and because it can only be a summary of such busy years, there will be errors and omissions for which I make apology and take full responsibility.

Margaret J. Brown  
Leighton Buzzard, 2009

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## How it all began

Many of those who later became founder members of Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club were introduced to the game in the 1990's thanks to the hospitality and enthusiasm of Irene and Peter Davis. They had invited members of local Women's Institutes, together with some of their own friends, to play in the garden of their home 'Waterways', on the A5 Watling Street just North of Hockliffe.

Peter cared for the lawns and Irene organised the groups, drew up rotas and taught many people the rudiments of golf croquet. The Davis's also arranged garden-party tournaments to raise funds for charity and held 'fun- evening' contests at Wrest Park Club, of which Irene was a member.

All these wholesome and sociable events were much enjoyed and appreciated by those privileged to take part so that when our hosts began seriously to consider a move to the Midlands, it seemed likely that the playing opportunities of many enthusiastic players were in danger of being lost.

Therefore, after some discussion with Irene and Peter, I decided to make some enquiries about the possibility of founding a croquet club in Leighton Buzzard so that existing players would be able to continue enjoying the sport. Perhaps even more importantly it would present further opportunities to many others, of all ages, who could not reach nor be accommodated at Waterways.

How to go about it? The expectation was that the project would probably take a couple of years to come to fruition, if ever. In October 1999 I made a telephone call to the only person I knew who now worked at the Town Council Offices to ask her advice about which official it would be appropriate to approach regarding the matter. Her surprising response was that she *was* that person and, even more surprisingly, she added cheerfully that she thought she knew a suitable place which could fairly easily be adapted for purposes of croquet-playing.

My friend was of course, Linda Hindsen (later Carter), whose responsibilities at that time included sport and leisure development in the Town. Linda was to put the idea to the appropriate Council sub-committee and would let us know the outcome.

Instead of a demoralising, long-drawn-out process of finding a site, within a few weeks the amazing un-official news was that two disused grass tennis courts in Page's Park might provide the basis of a lawn if we could form a club. I said I was sure we could. In January 2000 the Council approved the project, offered to prepare the site, promised that the surface would be improved year on year and even offered to buy some hoops and balls to start us off.

Several meetings took place between Linda, Irene Davis and myself to discuss details. We were told we could use a small room in the pavilion to store our equipment. Moreover we were offered the use of the Council Chamber to hold an inaugural meeting. All involved were delighted and astonished by all this good news and most grateful to the Town Council and its staff for their support.

The task was now to set about the next stages leading to the formation of a town croquet club!

## Getting Started

The advice of the Croquet Association had already been sought, a copy of the appropriate booklet purchased, a model constitution carefully studied and adapted. A formal request to book the Council Chamber for the inaugural meeting was made and granted.

Members of the Wrest Park Croquet Club were very helpful throughout, giving advice and suggestions during numerous telephone calls. Judy Anderson, who was at that time Secretary of the East Anglian Croquet Federation, was very encouraging and she with husband Tom, John Bevington, Elaine and Peter Newman, all from Wrest Park, accepted invitations to attend the proposed meeting.

Publicity was the next task so, as well as contacting those already involved through playing at Waterways and their friends and families, the press were informed and representatives invited from the Upper Schools. We then set about organising the meeting.

Irene Davis accepted the invitation to chair, Margaret Brown continued with the secretarial tasks and Bob Walmsley offered to look after financial matters. A meeting

An audience for the first playing session on 6th May 2000. Lawns rather rudimentary and the first appearance of a metal fencing pole which with string formed the demarcation of the two-third size lawns for several years.





with Mrs. Hindson helped to clarify various important points such as the method of payment for the use of the lawns which was set at a very modest hourly rate, payable monthly; access to the lawns and storage for equipment.

The Inaugural Meeting took place on March 16th 2000 in a crowded Council Chamber, with an estimated forty-five people present. Introductions were made, current plans discussed and suggestions invited. An ad hoc committee was formed with Irene, Margaret and Bob as temporary officers and Margaret Dilley and Elaine Newman as members. The group was shortly joined by Audrey Bunn and it then set about the task of continuing the organisation until a Special General Meeting could be arranged for the Constitution to be adopted and the Club formally established. Meanwhile the membership fee was set at £35 and those present invited to join; twenty-nine indicated that they would do so.

It was clearly a priority in preparation for the season to acquire basic equipment so we were delighted that the Council had agreed to purchase two sets of (wire) hoops and three sets of balls to lend to us. Peter Davis made our first six mallets and the metal corner flags for the cost of the materials whilst Tony Brown made four wooden ball boxes. Various kettles, bits of furniture and other necessary domestic items were presented by members and the essential supplies for refreshments obtained. From the outset cups of tea or coffee and a biscuit were offered to members at no extra charge. The Secretary purchased shutter keys, and generally collected information and other miscellaneous items necessary for setting up the administration systems. Julian Brown designed the original logo and kindly provided headed stationary.

All these belongings were to be stored in two rather rusty metal cupboards, supplied by the Council, in a small room which formed part of the Pavilion in Page's Park. The room also contained a large quantity of mammoth hose-pipe, used for watering various pitches, though the park staff eventually agreed to find it another home. Access to the room was difficult, particularly for those with stiff knees, as there were no steps. This was solved at first by the use of a single caravan step, later by a double one and both somewhat hazardous.

The park staff worked hard on the two undersize lawns and they erected a rope fence in the hope that 'trespassers' would be deterred. The rope regularly disappeared overnight and its metal supports were used for a number of nefarious purposes. The white lining was applied, marking out the lawns, and with our rudimentary equipment and some keen members, we were in business.

Leighton Buzzard Observer, Tuesday, 9th May, 2000



### Mayor has a go at the town's new croquet club

OUT-GOING Town Mayor, Cllr Chris Hinchliff, was put through the hoops on Saturday when he officiated at the launch of the Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club. The club meets at Pages Park off Billington Road on three weekday afternoons and new members are welcome. For more information telephone Linda Hindson at the town council offices on Leighton 371920. ● Pictured: It looks as though Cllr Hinchliff is just going to miss this shot...

## Up and Running

The first membership cards and Newsletter were produced by Elaine Newman, and informed members that the Town Mayor, Councillor Hinchcliffe had agreed to open the Club's first season by symbolically striking the first ball on May 6th at 2.00 p.m.. This began the practice which has since continued every year.

Playing sessions were chosen so that working members and young players, as well as those who were retired, would have enough opportunities to take part. The season therefore began with sessions arranged for Monday and Wednesday evenings, Wednesday morning and Saturday afternoons but by September this had been modified in light of experience when Wednesday evening was dropped.

Partly as a result of a public 'Come and Try' day on August 19th, membership had risen to thirty-five with five provisional members. For potential members the Club offered two sessions for £5, to be deducted from the full fee if the person decided to join – which many of them did.

Coaching was badly needed by most of us, our knowledge of techniques and strategies being somewhat rudimentary. John Bevington and Peter Newman, from

Wrest Park long time member and club officer John Bevington (middle) is very keen to get the coaching under way on inauguration day.



Wrest Park Club, began this process on the first day by demonstrating a little Association Croquet whilst Linda Potton and Irene Davis introduced us to the finer points of Golf croquet.

On May 10th. John Bevington kindly returned to give us a much appreciated general coaching session on basic strokes and techniques. It had begun to dawn on members at this point that thinking and concentration were important elements in the game which tended to become more interesting and challenging as we learned to employ them.

In August our Club, which by now had become a member of the Croquet Association and of the East Anglian Croquet Federation, was invited to enter its first outside tournament. The Federation had organised a tournament at the National Trust property of Ickworth Hall in Suffolk. Diana Phelps and Margaret Brown represented the Club and much enjoyed meeting people from other clubs in the Region.

The playing season ended with a Club Knockout competition organised by Bob Walmsley and for which Margaret Dilley and Audrey Bunn provided the refreshments. Twenty members took part but there is no mention in the Newsletter or reports about who won. Could this have been because we valued the experience more than the competition? (From rough notes: Martin Field was singles / Martin partnered by Diana Phelps doubles winners.)

On September 21st the crucial Special General Meeting was held at Margaret Dilley's home proving successful in that the Constitution was agreed and adopted, an auditor appointed and the date of the first Annual General Meeting fixed for November 2000.

Irene Davis and Elaine Newman had both resigned from the adhoc committee, being very busy with other interests, so the remaining two committee members, Audrey Bunn and Margaret Dilley, together with our Treasurer, Bob Walmsley, and Secretary continued the planning for the Annual General Meeting and a party to follow. The Officers by this time were attending meetings of the Town Sports Council in order to represent the interests of croquet during planning for future sports provision in the Town, but also to be well-placed if the Club needed to make grant applications for further equipment. This representation has continued to date with George Lawson and Margaret Brown taking an active interest. George was for a time the Chair of the Sports Council and the Club has benefited from much useful information, publicity and several very welcome grants over the years.

The season having ended, members mallets were reluctantly stored and the Clubroom tidied. Members were nervous about leaving all the equipment there and so it was divided and taken to various homes for safe-keeping. Attention now turned to the AGM and party which was held at Northall Village Hall.

On Wednesday November 15th almost all the membership and their friends attended the A.G.M. together with invited guests Linda Hindson and John Bevington. Joan Slow was elected as Chair, Margaret Brown - Secretary, Bob Walmsley - Treasurer and a lively supporting committee of eight. These were Audrey Bunn, Eve and Len Buckingham, Margaret Dilley, Margaret and George Lawson, Irene Stevens and Jean Walmsley.

Decisions made included that all members could be issued with shutter keys, this





The Croquet Association organised a tournament at the National Trust property of Ickworth Hall in Suffolk. Diana Phelps and Margaret Brown represented the Club - obviously the competition was hot stuff! Below: Secretary in 2000, Margaret Brown is very pleased to have run the hoop.

having previously been restricted to committee members, and that sets of alternate colour balls should be purchased. The membership fee would be £35, with children and students being invited free of charge. The new committee was asked to develop a handicapping system for the coming season based on the Croquet Association's rules.

It was announced that the Club had been presented with a gift of several round mallets from Wrest Park Club and Martin Field was thanked for offering to re-furbish them.

The party which followed had been organised by an informal 'social sub-committee' which held congenial coffee-time planning meetings where they had devised a method of collating contributions from various members, and from their own delicious offerings thus producing the impressive array of refreshment on offer.

There were a few games and a raffle, run on this and several further occasions by Tony Brown. The raffle profit of £17 was donated to Hunstanton Croquet Club following the disastrous arson attack on their clubhouse. (A letter of thanks told us they had purchased an all-important new kettle with our gift.) The party was much enjoyed in a spirit of good comradeship which members knew they would miss until it was time to wield their mallets again in the Spring.

Thus ended the Club's momentous first year.



## Consolidation

The Committee began work in February and decided that there were certain priority areas for development. Several volunteers took on responsibilities for some of these which had the effect of reducing the work-load of the secretary and of ensuring that adequate attention would be paid to such topics.

Margaret Dilley and Audrey Bunn began to make arrangements for tournaments and friendly matches with other local clubs, as well as continuing, with others, to organise refreshments as necessary. Irene and Peter Stevens with Martin Field co-ordinated the handicapping process as set out in the Croquet Association's Handbook and soon members were beginning to have their handicaps 'registered'. Eve Buckingham agreed to circulate and then display information and newsletters received from the National Association and the Eastern Regional Federation. This process of sharing administrative tasks steadily continued to expand in line with the Club's activities.

The new season was opened on Easter Monday, April 16th, by the Mayor, Councillor Freeman. The session was a well-publicised open 'Come and Try' occasion for which non-members were charged two pounds. The weekly sessions on offer had been increased to six, Monday and Wednesday evenings, Wednesday and Thursday mornings and both weekend afternoons. Monday evening however was soon dropped for lack of interest.

The layout of the two lawns caused a good deal of discussion, some of it bordering

The playing surface was a bit rudimentary, however the wire hoops were replaced by a set of cast hoops in 2001 - seen here with Bob and Jean Walmsley.



on the acrimonious. Both were undersize but one was smaller than the other. Eventually a solution was agreed that next season they should be the same size but would overlap in the middle. The park staff had worked hard on the lawns and the playing surface was, as promised, an improvement on the first season though the fact that they were laid out on the site of the medieval field strip-system provided certain challenges! We were not the only ones aware of this fact as at one point a metal-detectorist was found digging holes in the lawn in pursuit of his hobby!

The original wire hoops provided by the Council were supplemented and then replaced by a set of cast-iron ones lent/hired from the East Anglian Croquet Federation, and a set purchased for £185. Alternate colour balls were needed to accommodate our membership which, by September, had risen to thirty-two. These were purchased at the Association's Hurlingham Headquarters by a party of members who went to buy their own mallets. Our Treasurer, Bob Walmsley, also took the opportunity to pay the Club's membership dues.

There was from the beginning a willingness to take part in out-of-club events and activities so that the croquet-horizons of members soon widened. Matches were arranged against the Luton & Dunstable U3A group, nine members played in the Grass Roots competition at Northampton and others joined in the National Trust Tournaments, organised by the EACF at Ickworth Hall and Anglesey Abbey in Suffolk. We were also invited, through the good offices of John Bevington, their Secretary, to play at Wrest Park Club as a group once a week on Monday afternoons under the leadership of Margaret Brown who held the all-important key. This great privilege was also extended to the Waterways group led by Irene Davis and to a local group from Silsoe. We were therefore able to meet and play informal matches at this beautiful six-lawn venue with a variety of players, all for a very reduced group-membership fee. Bob and Jean Walmsley attended a Croquet Association first level Club Coaches course and passed whilst George Lawson braved a very difficult Golf Croquet Referees training session from which only one person emerged successfully. George decided he would try again when the opportunity arose. Club Chair - Joan Slow, and Secretary - Margaret Brown, were the first people to proudly represent Leighton-Linslade at the EACF Annual General Meeting at Bury St Edmunds. Contacts made there and at subsequent such Regional meetings have since benefited the Club in many ways.

Another 'thread' was beginning to emerge in the form of community involvement, which enabled the Club to contribute to good causes as well as to publicise the sport at a number of events. One such was when about ten of our members with people from other Clubs took part in a 24-hour croquet marathon organised by the Davis's at Waterways in aid of MacMillan Nurses. We played for an hour at a time, some in the dark and wee small hours, some in pouring rain and then everyone took part in a knockout tournament during the garden party which rounded off the day. All good fun and not even Audrey Bunn, who was completely soaked before driving home very late at night, developed pneumonia. The event raised the magnificent total of well over two thousand pounds.

On September 8th a Handicap Knockout competition for members was held. It was a colourful and busy scene with four concurrent matches taking place before members partook of the usual refreshments.



Nine members played in the Grass Roots competition at Northampton in July 2001. Seven are depicted here; from left, Irene Davis; 3rd in Margaret Brown; Ronne Richardson; Peter Davis; 3rd from right Diana Phelps; Audrey Bunn and Martin Field.

The 2001 season ended on September 23rd. The AGM was again held at Northall our guests including EACF's Development Officer - Judy Anderson and husband Tom; our auditor and Chair of the U3A - Marjorie Cliffe; Sport's Council Chair - Peter Rogers; as well as founder members Elaine and Peter Newman from Wrest Park Club. Joan Slow and Margaret Brown were re-elected as Chair and Secretary for a second year and Len Buckingham replaced Bob Walmsley as Treasurer, Bob and Jean having had to step down as they were leaving the district. Irene Stevens also left the committee whilst Jean Floyd and Richard Keighley were elected as new members. The membership fee was raised to £45 with Juniors, 12 to 18 years, to pay £15. It was noted that in order to encourage the recruitment of younger players, extra convenient sessions should be arranged next season.

A jolly party followed with excellent refreshments. The raffle paid the hall rent, some brain-teasers were attempted and an enjoyable hand-bell ringing session led by expert Erica Fogg, produced, rather to everyone's surprise, some recognisable tunes.





Town Mayors  
from 2000;  
above, Cllr  
Hinchliff; right,  
2002 Cllr Henry  
Fried.



Above, 2004 Cllr Peter Snelling;  
right, 2005 Cllr Russ Goodchild;  
2008 Cllr Adam Fahn.



In 2006 and 2007 Cllr Mark  
Freeman performed the  
Opening Season stroke -  
and came suitably dressed  
in 2007. 2008 started off  
bright and sunny -  
however the Clubroom  
came into good use later in  
the afternoon!





## Notable Events 2002-2005

On Easter Monday 2002 the Town Mayor, Councillor Fried, opened what was to become a memorable season. As agreed, six weekly playing sessions were planned with the aim of encouraging people of working or school age to join in and also to provide opportunities for members to try both the Association and Golf versions of the game. Unfortunately because of nuisance behaviour and vandalism by a section of local youngsters the two evening sessions soon had to be abandoned which again limited employed members to weekends.

There were a number of incidents of lawn damage, not to forget the removal of tiles from the pavilion roof to be used as missiles, but the most serious was the burning of a car on the middle of lawn one. After the clear-up a persistent oily patch remained which took a long time to remedy.

The local press published several articles and photographs, including one of some of the committee, with mallets, looking miserable. Martin Field wrote a witty skit on this picture which appeared in the September Newsletter under the title “Unabated Park Terror, Elderly Troublemakers Reign Supreme”.

This spate of troublesome incidents led to quite serious attempts to find a possible alternative venue for the Club until, as we still hoped, it could be accommodated at the ex-RAF site in Stanbridge Road – to be known as Astral Park – where a sports complex was planned. One possible alternative venue was the Aylesbury Vale Golf Club, to which Val Jeffer’s husband was kind enough to introduce us. Members of the committee visited and liaised with the management who were prepared to close-mow an area for our use. Eventually however for a variety of reasons all the various

Richard Keighley and Chair Joan Slow encouraging people to “Have a Go” at the Leighton Buzzard Town Fayre in 2002 at Parson’s Close.



approaches petered out and the battle against low-level damage continued to be waged at Page's Park.

The theme of the Town's May Fayre was 'A Sports Showcase' which aimed to show how many sporting activities were taking place in the town and to give people the chance to 'Have a Go'. We were allocated a fairly rough piece of ground at the bottom of Parson's Close park where nine of our members introduced a stream of people of all ages to the rudiments of golf croquet. Non-stop, tiring but gratifying work.

A month later, on a lovely summer's day, most of our members were back in the park celebrating the Queen's Jubilee at the Town's 'Posh Picnic'. This time the Brown's caravan was changing room and café, the Phelps's gazebo a shelter and rest-room, and picnic furniture provided so we could eat our 'Posh Picnic'; plus of course lots of flags and balloons in patriotic colours. The Club's contribution to the event was a very colourful 'Alice in Wonderland' version of a croquet match, to be repeated twice. The leading parts were taken by Yvonne Banks as Alice, Sally Clay as the White Rabbit, Judith Cundell and John Fogg were the Queen and Knave of Hearts, whilst Audrey Bunn, Jean Floyd, Diana Phelps and Erica Fogg were some of the supporting playing-cards.

Thanks to the amazing needle-skills of our chairman Joan Slow, we had some delightfully fluffy 'hedgehogs' whose fur tended to fly off when hit by her flamingo-mallets. After the very colourful parade and two extempore performances, much enjoyed by the onlookers, the public were invited to try the game before we all consumed the well-earned Posh Picnics.

Amongst all these goings on, members still managed to play the usual four weekly

Alice in Wonderland Croquet Match starring from left to right; Yvonne Banks, Jean Floyd, Diana Phelps, John Fogg, Sally Clay and Judith Cundell.



sessions – in one month for example one hundred and forty people took part. Teams were also fielded for friendly and competitive matches including Wrest Park Singles, where Una Pengelly reached the semi-finals, as did Richard Keighley at the National Trust Ickworth tournament and George Lawson in the Grass Roots finals at Solihull.

Friendly matches against Dunstable U3A and Stony Stratford gave a range of players of all levels of ability the encouragement and opportunity to experience the slightly wider world of croquet.

The first Croquet Association courses to train Golf Croquet Coaches took place in 2002 at Surbiton Club. Three Bedfordshire people including Margaret Brown joined the course at Surbiton which took place over two days with additional homework. It was a good experience, meeting and learning from world class players like Robert Fulford, playing with a John Hobbs mallet, lent by John himself, and enjoying the company of players from many different clubs. Margaret emerged as a qualified Club Coach, complete with badge which entitled her to coach novices to the game.

The committee approved the production of a coloured publicity leaflet which featured John Cundell and Audrey Bunn with her grandchildren. This was designed, reproduced and donated by Julian Brown. Members were each given several copies and urged to recruit new members.

At the 2002 AGM George Lawson took over as Chairman from Joan Slow and a Committee of five lady and two gentlemen members was elected, reflecting the Club membership ratios pretty accurately. The membership fee was unchanged at £45. The party followed with good food and conversation.

Tony Brown was busily selling raffle tickets to cover the cost of the hall rent, when the proceedings were dramatically interrupted by his better half, at the other end of the room, falling through the double doors onto the stone floor and breaking both wrists. Amazing scenes followed with people rushing to telephone and then guiding the paramedics and later the ambulance up the lane to the hall.

Judith Pengelly and Joan Slow with their medical experience and St. John's training were helpful, Joan accompanying Margaret to Stoke Mandeville whilst Tony followed in his car. Clearing up proceeded at great speed and was probably complete before the convoy reached the hospital. Unfortunately, the wrists had to be re-set at Christmas time, four weeks later, so recovery was delayed. As the next edition of the



Our first junior member - 14 year old Matthew Housden. Matthew was naturally talented at croquet and represented the Club at Ickworth House in Suffolk.

Newsletter said "Margaret promises not to demonstrate her aerobatic skills at the party next year".

**I**t fell to Deputy Mayor, Councillor Colin Hinchcliffe, to take a second turn at launching a season, on April 13th 2003. It proved to be a year of steady development for the Club with members taking part in the usual selection of matches and membership rising to 37 by the end of the season. For the first time we had a Junior member, Matthew Housden aged fourteen, whose younger brother had been hankering to join for some time. Matthew proved to be a naturally skilled player and was soon representing the Club in competition. At Ickworth there was a sharp intake of breath from the audience when he made a successful jump shot of about four feet six inches.

Another first for the Club was the entry into the All-England Golf Croquet competition at Solihull of Diana Phelps and Richard Keighley. They met champion contestants and did not by any measure disgrace themselves. Handicaps were used and it confirmed the advisability of continuing our policy of using the system, now managed at Page's Park by John Cundell and Len Buckingham.

Once again George and Margaret Lawson, having won and come second respectively in the regional heat of the Grass Roots competition at Northampton, played in the Solihull finals.

Members were beginning to enjoy competitive play so the Club Singles and Doubles Knockout events were first instituted at the end of the 2003 season. The winners were John Cundell Singles with Audrey Bunn and Val Jeffers taking the Doubles title. They received the silver cups generously donated and presented by Joan Slow. Joan had also presented the Club with its official gavel, on a croquet theme, to be used at the Annual General Meetings. Later these trophies were to be joined by a cup from George Lawson for the Handicap Singles champion.

Founder member Peter Newman, now a qualified coach, offered to run a course on Association Croquet for our members at Wrest Park. Eight people enjoyed taking part and were grateful to Peter, and to Elaine who helped him, for the experience. The thought was that perhaps some of the participants would take up this much more complex version of the game.

Facilities at Page's Park were gradually improving; stacking chairs were purchased with the help of a Sport's Council grant, sun-shades appeared, a trolley and other domestic articles were donated, the Browns painted the outside of the rusty cupboards whilst John Cundell, Len Buckingham and Martin Field worked steadily, in



John Cundell was the 2003 Club Singles Champion, beating Diana Phelps.



conjunction with the Park's ground-staff, on improving the lawns and equipment.

Members formed little groups in order to purchase their own mallets at a discount and playing standards began to show positive effects.

The garden party was once again at the Phelps's home where a total of fifty pounds was raised for Keech Cottage Childrens' Hospice.

The 2003 AGM was fortunately free of accidents though there were some anxious moments when, following the retirement of Margaret Brown after three years as general secretary, there was a vacancy. After some 'discussion' Richard Keighley agreed to take on this position and was later co-opted to do so. Richard had attended the East Anglian Croquet Federation's annual meeting on behalf of the Club and his wider view of, and experiences in, croquet were to prove their value during his term of service as general secretary.

It was good to welcome five friends from the Stony Stratford club, who came to see how we ran our meeting, but had been unable to find the hall in time. They were however able to enjoy the party. The archive collection compiled by Erica Fogg, profusely illustrated with John Fogg photographs and beautifully presented in a stand-up display folder, was much admired and appreciated.

Membership having risen to thirty six, including two non-playing and two potential members, ambitions for at least one further lawn rose up the agenda as we launched into what was to be a very active fifth season on April 19th 2004. The usual four sessions were to be held plus one on Tuesday afternoon mainly for the playing of handicap games in order that members could improve their ratings.

The first fixture was the 'Come and Try' day on May 22nd to which twenty-two people were attracted. As usual many of our members showed them the rudiments of the game and everyone enjoyed the refreshments provided by our informal catering group.

2004 was the year that the East Anglian Croquet Federation (EACF) launched its trial League Tournament for Golf Croquet and Leighton-Linslade fielded a variable team to take part. They played as far afield as Southend and Burnham-on-Crouch, just failing to win the final of the Southern section of the competition.

The usual friendly matches took place with the addition of games against Winslow who visited us for the first time. The Leighton-Linslade players who took part in the return match at Winslow were startled to find that their half-sized lawn was further sub-divided into three. Clearly a rather different playing style would be required on such small courts but, undeterred, both our pairs - Diana Phelps with Val Jeffers and



Len Buckingham crowns Judith and Una Pengelly with laurel wreaths following their Club Doubles victory in 2004 - one of many Doubles wins for this successful partnership.





We realised how fortunate we are with our lawns when we played a friendly at Winslow on their pocket-sized lawns. Richard Keighley, pictured here at Winslow with Margaret Brown, enjoyed a splendid year and reached the final stage of the All-England area tournament.

Margaret Brown with Richard Keighley - won their matches. A delicious tea followed which rounded off a very pleasant social occasion for players and their 'support group' Sally Clay, Judith and John Cundell.

Richard Keighley entered the All-England area tournament, did well and proceeded to the final stage where he enjoyed competing with a number of leading players.

Three other members also widened their croquet horizons when they visited the Sussex County Croquet Club at Brighton to watch a day of golf croquet at the World Championships. Nineteen countries were represented and ball speeds reached forty mph, requiring the erection of boarding to protect the spectators.

Another 'outside' activity was the Davis's second, shorter croquet marathon and garden party at Waterways in which some of our members took part, helping to raise nearly £2,000 for cancer charities. This was shortly to be followed by our own garden party on August 13th, once again kindly hosted by Diana and Jim Phelps.

Important preliminary work on the lawns was undertaken by the park staff during the Autumn in order to provide two full-sized courts for next season and thus to eliminate the sometimes confusing overlap area.

Home comforts at the Club-room continued to be enhanced with, for example, a notice-board, an urn supplying unlimited hot water for refreshments and washing up and a set of cups for the use of visitors. John Cundell designed a new Club logo and organised the production of Club badges which, as we had noticed, were worn by most players taking part in formal tournaments.

We had made further efforts to contact Upper Schools, offering to demonstrate and/or teach the game in the hope of attracting more young players. Sadly the schools did not even see fit to reply. The Club had adopted a Child Protection Policy based on the Croquet Association model and Richard Keighley agreed to be responsible for its application as Child Protection Officer.

Membership stood at 39 when the season ended at the end of September with the knockout competitions followed by yet another tea party and then preparations began





Most of the Club Singles participants for 2004 - eventual winner was John Cundell beating George Lawson

for the AGM to be held on November 19th 2004.

There was a good turnout at Northall to discuss the several important proposals on the agenda, some of which could have long-term implications for the future development of the Club.

The three Officers were re-elected and, in order to reduce the workload on the general secretary, Margaret Brown agreed to take over membership matters. The previous committee, with the exception of Audrey Bunn who wished to step down, was re-elected en bloc and were joined by newly-elected Edna Hickman.

A proposal was approved to approach the Town Council with a request for a third lawn in order to accommodate the growing membership and towards which the Club would be willing to make a financial contribution.

The new Committee was asked to consider its long-term financial strategy and report back to the membership.

Two changes to the Constitution were proposed. The first related to the Club's affiliation to the East Anglian Croquet Federation and to the Croquet Association. It was agreed that the subscription required by the Croquet Association was too high and that the Club's membership be terminated. In order that the Club could receive information it was agreed that two of the officers were to be joined as standard members of the Association. This was approved.

The second proposal to alter the Constitution was to allow an officer to serve longer than the former maximum term of three consecutive years in one post. This met with some opposition whilst others abstained from voting but the proposal was eventually passed thus allowing the Treasurer to continue in office.

Another important matter for consideration related to the selection of teams for the League matches. The suggestion was that a team would be chosen from volunteers and would play the League matches all season. Meanwhile non-league team members

would be encouraged and given priority to play in the friendly fixtures. If necessary names would be picked out of a hat and only if there were vacancies would league team players be offered places for friendly matches.

Finally George Lawson, Chair, suggested that the practice of allowing members to bring guests to play free of charge on three occasions per season be continued indefinitely. This was agreed.

It was announced that future plans included a Croquet Association day of coaching for our members, Erica and John Fogg having made the necessary contact at Blueberry when attending a similar event. The provision of proper steps giving safer access to the Clubroom was to be undertaken as soon as possible.

After the presentation of cups by Joan Slow to John Cundell, Singles winner for the second time and Una and Judith Pengelly for the Doubles, the longest AGM in the Club's history so far closed and members with their guests enjoyed the usual splendid spread organised by Val Jeffers and made up of contributions from most members present.

The new Committee set to work in January to plan the programme for 2005 and dates were soon set for the opening session, coaching day, singles and doubles matches and the AGM.

The Mayor was to strike the first 2005 ball on April 2nd. so it was alarming to find that, because the pavilion roof was being replaced with theoretically vandal-proof material, the clubroom was inaccessible well into March. Construction of the new steps was therefore delayed until the scaffolding was removed. Speedily, with contributions of materials and expertise from a team of Council staff, Julian Brown's shuttering, Len Buckingham and John Cundell's concreting and help from various supporting members, the job was completed and the steps soon in use. They have been much appreciated by members and by the local youth who find them a good gathering place well out of sight of the surveillance cameras.

By March it had become obvious that a busy season lay ahead with no fewer than eighteen fixtures having already been planned in addition to the fully booked Croquet Association coaching course in April and the 'Come and Try' day on May 1st. Our Southern section of the East Anglian League matches were to be played against Burnham, Chelmsford, Letchworth and Watford, two at home and two away. The winners of this section would play the winners of the Northern section for the championship.

The usual weekly sessions continued on Wednesday and Thursday mornings, Saturday and Sunday afternoons, extended to 5pm, and were again augmented by a Tuesday afternoon session to encourage people to play handicap single and double games so that when members played in competitions they would hold accurate handicap ratings.

It was encouraging that the lawn extensions had been levelled and seeded though it would be some time before the full-sized lawns could be used.

Mayor, Councillor Russ Goodchild, duly opened the new season watched by an eager and appreciative group of members. Later that month sixteen of them attended the coaching day provided by Jennet Blake and other coaches from the Croquet Association. The guidance given and techniques taught were gratefully



The victorious 2005 EACF Handicap League players - Una Pengelly, Eve Buckingham, John Cundell and Len Buckingham, with Downham Market team and Newport and EACF officials.

received as were the explanations of the latest changes in the Golf Croquet rules.

Following a very busy 'Come and Try' session we welcomed at least four new members who joined everyone enthusiastically practising and playing through the long list of League, friendly and special competition matches such as Grass Roots, National Trust and the Regional leg of the All-England Golf Croquet tournaments.

A new Club fixture this year was the Handicap Singles played in July with Eve Buckingham and Richard Keighley as semi-finalists. Ten lady-members entered the first 'Ladies Challenge' competition at Abingdon though it appears that organising such a number of teams proved to be a challenge and eventually no-one could tell which team had won!

The general picture was of a good deal of success within the Club membership. Richard Keighley reached the finals of the All-England Golf Croquet competition played at Nailsea and many exciting and enjoyable days were experienced by a high percentage of our members on various lawns over the Midlands and East Anglia.

The crowning glory was that our six year-old Club won, by 13 games to 5, the East Anglian League at its final match in October against Downham Market.

The nine members from whom the triumphant League teams were chosen during the season were Yvonne Banks, Eve and Len Buckingham, Sally Clay, John Cundell, Richard Keighley, Margaret and George Lawson. Their 'rewards' included the 'opportunity' to organise the competition in 2006 - more hard but probably enjoyable work for the Officers and Committee.

On a domestic note, members appreciated the arrival of a small fridge, acquired by Len Buckingham, and were encouraged to buy and use the Club badges designed by



John Cundell and to purchase their own individual keys for the shutters. Once inside, the systems of unlocking the equipment cupboards, setting out hoops, choosing partners, signing-up for matches, making drinks and washing-up for example seemed to be working very well and responsibly. There were some remarks in the Newsletter however which suggested that a few people were taking all the arrangements a bit too much for granted.

The garden party, once again kindly hosted by the Phelps' on August 20th, seemed to be much enjoyed – silly games,

super food and good company – and was followed by the Club Singles and Doubles matches during the first weekend of October. The sun shone on all three events!

So to our sixth Annual General Meeting, attended by 26 members and their guests. Chairman George Lawson was standing down after his hard-working three years in office. The new Chair was Margaret Brown and re-elected were Richard Keighley - Secretary and Len Buckingham - Treasurer. John Fogg agreed to take on the Membership Secretary's role though he would not be joining the committee. John also re-vamped the Club brochure using the new logo.

It was agreed that the membership fee for 2006 would be raised by £5 to £50.

Joan Slow awarded the trophies to Richard Keighley - Handicap singles and Scratch Singles, with Judith and Una Pengelly once again receiving the Doubles Cup.

Several new and interesting developments were announced and discussed at this meeting. The Club accepted an invitation to play at an indoor croquet match at Soham in January and a decision was made to hold a Club Supper after Christmas, probably in February. It was clear that members were missing the social element in the closed season and so Len Buckingham raised the possibility of holding a weekly meeting at the Pavilion where snooker, table-tennis, board-games and cards could be played. A questionnaire was circulated to gauge support for such a social club.

John and Erica Fogg once again provided a beautifully displayed collection of photographs and press cuttings dating from 2002 as a contribution to the Club Archive.



Members and friends attending the traditional post-AGM party enjoyed reviving memories as they looked through it. Though everyone seemed to enjoy the end of season jollification there were, as usual, feelings of regret as the 2005 croquet year ended.

Since 2000 we had managed with a set of caravan steps, however in 2005, the permanent concrete steps were laid down by Julian Brown, John Cundell and seen here, Len Buckingham.



Richard Keighley won both the Handicap and Scratch Singles Trophies in 2005 - here being presented by Joan Slow.



## A Seasonal Pattern Emerges

A seasonal pattern was becoming apparent as early as the third season and it generally continues as below, though additional events have naturally become established as development has taken place over the years.

In April the current Mayor is invited to officially open the season and play a short game, following which five or six weekly playing sessions begin, avoiding Mondays and Fridays which are available for matches.

Throughout the season various friendly matches, East-Anglian League, Regional and National tournaments take place at which the Club is usually represented.

Community involvement, and the publicity for the game which it supplies, includes participation in National and Town events, such as the Jubilee, May Fayre, or Annual 'Heritage' day. Also frequently offered are 'Come and Try' days, working with youngsters at school during the Summer term or in August and sometimes inviting their families or the general public to try the game.

Coaching for our members is usually offered on a couple of occasions either at the Club or at Wrest Park.

The three regular in-club competitions are the mid-season Handicap Singles and the Club Knockout matches for Singles and Doubles towards the end of September.

Social Events begin with the Club Supper in February, established in 2006, then the June/July Fun Day at which crazy, croquet-inspired competitions take place, the popular July garden party, an end-of-season tea party and then the annual party which follows the AGM in November. From October until March Len Buckingham organises and runs a weekly social and games morning at the Pavilion.

The administration of the Club takes place at the four or five general committee meetings and at less formal meetings of officers/officials whilst the newsletter provides a valued and necessary method of communication with all the members four or five times each year.

The Annual General Meeting in November offers a formal opportunity for any member to raise matters of concern or suggestions for the on-going benefit of the Club as well as to receive the reports of the Officers.





A typical yearly pattern - opposite; the Town Mayor strikes the first ball, and we welcome potential new members at 'Come and Try'. This page clockwise; League Match in progress; Garden Party; Living History Day at All Saints Church in the Vicarage Gardens; Annual General Meeting; Club Singles; Fun Day.



## Further Progress 2006-2009

Once again a very busy-looking outline programme had been arranged by February 2006 which included a number of first-time events. In fact the first fixture had already been played in January, indoors at Soham. Six members had represented the Club and enjoyed a very different playing experience on the extremely fast carpet 'lawn'.

The first Club Supper took place at The Hunt hotel on February 3rd thanks to organisers Sally Clay, Erica Fogg and Tony Wells when thirty members and guests enjoyed a convivial evening. Some of these went on to attend the four initial and well-attended meetings of the proposed Social Club, ably arranged by Len Buckingham at the Pavilion on Wednesday mornings.

Club Secretary, Richard Keighley, admitted to being rather surprised when called forward at the AGM of the East Anglian Federation to accept the League Golf Croquet Tournament trophy which the Club had won in 2005. Richard described it as rather like "an elaborate cake decoration" albeit with a croquet theme. The trophy with its Lowry-type figures was to be proudly displayed at the season's opening ceremony on April 1st!

With membership expected to reach at least thirty five the fact that we would be allowed to use the cricket pitch as a third lawn, the Cricket Club having (temporarily) closed, was great news. So with all three lawns in service the traditional opening of the season by Town Mayor Mark Freeman, took place on what began as a chilly day and ended with torrential rain, people squeezing into the Clubroom for hot drinks.

The newsletter was by now being produced by John Cundell and Richard Keighley and enhanced by John's and John Fogg's excellent photographs. We therefore have pictorial evidence for example of the successful 'Come and Try' day at the end of April proving that croquet is a game for everyone big enough to wield a mallet.

Several members attended both the Watford and Wrest park coaching days whilst Richard Keighley became the fourth member of the Club to complete a Croquet



John Cundell, left, and Richard Keighley, right, enjoyed a three year run of success at the Soham Indoor events. Below: Come & Try Day was again well attended.





The Centre Stage players in 2006 - Matthew Housden and Richard Keighley (both Kneeling) went on to the Final with Richard winning - our first winner of a National competition.

Association Coaches' training course, so qualifying to coach club players.

It had long been the ambition of some members to encourage young people to play and the 2006 season witnessed some hopeful signs of this being achieved. Our only teenage member, a naturally gifted young man called Matthew Housden, won the Club's preliminary round of the Centre Stage competition for players with handicaps of five or less. He beat Richard Keighley 7-4 and was entitled to play in the finals at Northampton in September. Fortunately Richard also gained a place and finally won thus becoming the Club's first winner of a National competition. Matthew also did exceptionally well, coming third.

Another example of youngsters trying and enjoying the game came as a result of a contact with Christine Boardman, the Sport Development manager at Leighton Middle school. She had arranged the purchase of several 'garden sets' for the school and invited some of our members to work with the 9-13 year olds during their lunch break. More than 40 children were introduced to the rudiments of the game during the summer term on rather rough grass, some becoming very enthusiastic. Those interested Club members also offered to run taster sessions at other schools but once again, this was not taken up.

Meanwhile the usual five weekly sessions, friendly matches against our neighbouring clubs, League matches, National Trust fixtures at Ickworth in Suffolk and a doubles tournament at Wrest Park, won by Sally Clay and Martin Field, duly kept everyone busy. Another 'first' this year was the Fun Day organised by Erica and John Fogg and which proved to be just that. Some very strange croquet took place and the prize, ingredients for a casserole and fruit salad, was won by the losers!

The garden party in August was held at Waterways by kind invitation of Irene and Peter Davis.

The final weeks of the season continued the 'busy' theme with the Club The reward for winning the EACF League in 2005 was that we had to organise the 2006 final. Len Buckingham (suitably dressed) and Richard Keighley were the team's leaders.



Singles and Doubles matches, organised and run by a team of helpers including John Cundell, Len Buckingham, Tony Wells and George Lawson who understand the mysteries of the system and somehow keep accurate scores. Those 'officiating' were of course backed up by other less visible members and notably by Val Jeffers who unfailingly produced a selection of cakes and other delicacies to ensure the participants remained well nourished.

As winners of the 2005 League Championship a similarly strong Leighton-Linslade team was responsible for running the weekend finals of the 2006 competition at Newport near Saffron Walden. John Cundell had devised the match format and the Club was warmly thanked and congratulated by the EACF officials for its excellent organisation of the event. Though we still had no qualified referees in the Club, photographs show that Len Buckingham at least dressed for the part.

It was not until the weekend of November 25/26th that the final fixtures of the year were played, at Soham. Ten of our members enjoyed the long days of indoor croquet and acquitted themselves pretty well. John Cundell and Richard Keighley in their usual good form won on the Sunday.

Various acquisitions of useful property had been made during the year. The invaluable gazebo added to the shelter from sun, rain and wind offered by the two giant umbrellas. Supporter Tony Brown, who died in September, had given two timing clocks and a whistle whilst the shields for competition 'runners-up' were donated in his memory by Margaret. The Clubroom facilities saw steady improvement with some coat-hooks, notice boards, mallet racks and other basic items, and now that the pavilion had a new roof there were no more floods to be dealt with

Once the Club mallets were stowed away it was time for the Social Club to recommence. Organisers Len and Eve Buckingham had ensured that a variety of pursuits were available for the regular group of members with a few friends (at least one of whom intended to join the Croquet Club next season) to enjoy. The activities and comradeship were much appreciated during what could be rather lonely winter days for some.

Membership had risen to forty eight and twenty seven of these attended the seventh AGM on November 10th at Northall. Business included further discussion relating to the establishment and development of the Social Club, a unanimous decision to seek funding for a mini indoor- croquet mat as soon as possible and the presentation to Linda Carter, for the Town Council, of a cheque for £1800. This was the Club's contribution towards the costs of extending the two existing lawns to full size, the work to be undertaken as soon as the weather allowed.



Richard Keighley coaching a group of youngsters at Leighton Middle School.



The Officers and four committee members were re-elected and two new committee members, Sue Cross and Tony Stammers, were elected. John Cundell accepted the Chair's invitation to be Vice-chair, Tony Wells volunteered as fixture secretary, also offering to organise the 2007 Club Supper. Ann Smith agreed to take Committee minutes and John Fogg to continue as membership secretary. It was agreed that proceeds of the raffle be sent to Keech Cottage Childrens' Hospice.

Linda Carter, Deputy Town Clerk, kindly presented the Club Trophies to Judith Pengelly (Singles Handicap), John Cundell and Richard Keighley (Doubles winners), and the Club Singles trophy to Richard Keighley. She also presented runners-up shields to Judith and Una Pengelly, and John Cundell respectively. Chair, Margaret Brown, then presented Richard Keighley with a framed photograph of Richard collecting his award as winner of the National Centre Stage competition.

Finally flowers and thanks were offered to Marjorie Cliffe who had been our auditor since the Club began, and to Linda Carter for her continuing friendship and support to the Club. The meeting closed and all proceeded to enjoy the usual social and feast.

In 2007 play again began before the season was officially opened when four members entered the Soham indoor pairs tournament on January 13th. Following a tense play-off John Cundell and Richard Keighley won once again, this time against Bury St. Edmunds whose players have the advantage of an all-weather 'carpet' lawn.

The next event was the second Club Supper, well organised by Tony Wells, at The Cock Hotel in Heath and Reach. Good food and plenty of chat though it was agreed the room was rather crowded.

The lawns were opened for play on April 1st 2007 though the official opening by

Mayor Mark Freeman took place on the 14th. This was Councillor Freeman's third visit in this capacity and he felt comfortable enough with us all to stay and enjoy a couple of games on that fine dry day. Another event this month was the Family Games and Social evening at Leighton Middle School where several members responded to an invitation to offer croquet as one of the activities. Parents and children participated enthusiastically and there were queues of people waiting to try the game. It was interesting to witness the variety of family dynamics demonstrated, ranging from dominance (not always of a parent) to co-operation!

Work began in earnest on the lawn extensions and thanks to a very wet early summer the new grass grew vigorously. Members assisted the groundsmen by 'stone-picking', an

Smoke and steam behind Tom Miller and George Lawson on Singles Day 2007. Tom reached the Final but wasn't quite hot enough to beat Richard Keighley.



occupation reminiscent of peasants possibly clearing this same land in medieval times for strip cultivation. We were pleased to hear that a cricket club had been re-formed though it meant that we were once more restricted to two lawns.

The 'Come and Try' day on May 6th. was fairly dry but cold so that the turnout of newcomers was not as large as usual. The round of Friendly and League matches had begun and a preliminary club 'Centre-Stage' event was held in June resulting in semi-finalists George Lawson and Richard Keighley surviving, perhaps to be called to the finals at Edgbaston in September. In the event George represented the Club and had an enjoyable day, winning his group but disappointingly missing the semi-final by one place on a hoop count.

The number of clubs entering the East Anglian League competition had grown and ours became one of the Western area group so playing Letchworth, Stony Stratford, Watford and Wrest Park. Once again our teams played well though it was Watford which eventually headed the group.

Our relationship with Wrest Park as a 'group-member' had by now disintegrated though a number of our members still played there as individuals, entering the club's singles and doubles golf croquet tournaments. Congratulations were due to Sally Clay who was runner-up in the Singles and in the Doubles, partnered by John Cundell.

The weather did seem excessively wet but all of the planned events were carried through. Both the Fun Day organised by Tony Stammers and the garden party at the Phelp's home took place on sunny days and were much enjoyed. Richard Keighley made very good use of his new coaching qualification and expertise at Waterways, Eynsham and Page's Park.

For the second Summer term Richard with Margaret Brown and Tony Wells, who had each received enhanced clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau to work as volunteer coaches with children, continued their work at Leighton Middle School.

At lunchtimes on Tuesdays queues of enthusiastic children formed and were introduced in fours to the rudiments of the game. This meant that approximately thirty six children, some of whom announced "I'm rubbish at games Miss" took part

Almost all the Doubles and Singles players for 2007 are in this photograph.



each week, some of course coming repeatedly. On July 3rd, accompanied by their teacher Mrs Boardman, fourteen children were invited to play a mini three hoop tournament at Page's Park. The youngsters reaction to seeing and playing on 'proper' lawns was wonderful and they responded with considerable excitement and concentration. Tony Stammers kindly assisted the usual three members to take the children round and the winners were rewarded with chocolate by Mrs Boardman. An invitation to play during the Summer holidays was offered and a plan was made to repeat the coaching sessions in 2008. The Club had purchased two child-length mallets made by Peter Davis and had borrowed, for the cost of postage, four more from the EACF Equipment Officer whom Margaret Brown had met at the Federation's AGM. These were to supplement the School's mallets which are rather too lightweight.

The Club Singles and Doubles competitions, in which a commendable 50% of the membership took part, were a miracle of organisation when both had unexpectedly to be fitted into one weekend as the groundsmen had arranged to begin Autumn work on the lawns before October 1st. By using the cricket-pitch as a third lawn, informing all the singles players, swiftly marking out lines, making hoop-holes and changing the schedules all was accomplished. The match organisers and a variety of helpers were congratulated for this great effort.

Tom Miller, who was called upon at the last minute to fill a vacancy in the singles list, played so well that he reached the final. The coaching and practice certainly seemed this season to have effected improvement in the standards of competitive play both in our Club and in those against which we play.

So the official season ended on a sunny Sunday with the usual welcome refreshments appearing from the kitchens of Val Jeffers and other kind members.

Mallets were however soon in action again, wielded in support of the Town's 'Living History' day in October when hobbies and pastimes were the theme. Thanks to some 'string-pulling', the Vicar of All Saint's Church kindly allowed the Croquet Club to take over his lawn for the day and a steady stream of families, estimated at sixty people, were introduced to the game.

Even this was not the last fixture of the year as six members played on the 15th December at Soham where John Cundell and Richard Keighley repeated their win for the third time.

The usual playing sessions had continued throughout with an extra Sunday morning for singles play. Howard Bottomly from Wrest Park Club had agreed to demonstrate 'One-ball Croquet', a shorter and simpler version of the Association game, and several members enjoyed his coaching.

Membership had now reached forty eight and attendance at one Saturday session, for example, had been thirty one. There were often more than sixteen players, the maximum for two lawns, so that 'waiting and chatting' was often the order of the day. The urgent need for a new third lawn had been acknowledged and the Town Council had agreed to provide it, also promising to

Extending the lawns to full size in hand in 2007.



fence the lawns in an attempt to cut down the damage perpetrated by football players. This was excellent and encouraging news to take to the members at the AGM and typical of the help and support which the Club had received from the Town Council since its inception.

Business at the 2007 AGM included agreements to contribute up to £1000 if required towards the cost of the third lawn, to modify Clause 2 of the Constitution so that the Social Club would become an accepted activity of the Club and to invite Mr and Mrs Nigel Clark, friends of Len Buckingham, who had donated six metal score-stands to become honorary members.

Club Secretary, Richard Keighley, who had given such excellent service for four years in that demanding post, had decided to stand down. He was thanked and warmly applauded for his contribution.

John Cundell had accepted the Chair's invitation to serve as Vice-chair and all other office-holders agreed to continue if elected or appointed. Diana Phelps and Sue Cross left the committee, Irene Davis and Bryan Ferris were elected to join it. There had been no nominations for Secretary but shortly afterwards Roger Stroud offered himself to be co-opted for the role.

The competition trophy awards went to Roger Stroud with runner-up Len Buckingham for the Singles Handicap; to Una and Judith Pengelly with runners-up John Cundell and Richard Keighley for the Club Doubles; Richard Keighley with runner-up Tom Miller for the Club Singles. Margaret Brown, Chair, on behalf of the Club awarded certificates of appreciation to Eve Buckingham, John Fogg, Val Jeffers, Len Buckingham and John Cundell for their outstanding contributions to the smooth and successful running of the Club throughout the year.

The usual party followed where, apart from the raffle, which raised funds to cover the hall rent, it had been found unnecessary to run games or activities since people simply enjoyed the wonderful food which appears as if by magic, looking at the archive photos and just chatting.

**T**he Club's basic activities in 2008 broadly followed the usual pattern. The Club supper, arranged by Sally Clay at the Tilsworth Golf Club in February, was well

2008 and the very welcome fencing is installed. There was also an extensive Clubroom refurbishment.





attended and very enjoyable. Four lady members played indoors at Soham in March with Sally Clay and Irene Davis taking runner-up position to Chelmsford.

The lawns were officially opened on April 5th by the Town's young Mayor, Adam Fahn. Four members attended the coaching day at Wrest Park which was run by Richard Keighley, backed up by three Croquet Association coaches with Margaret Brown as 'refreshment' person.

The first League match, against Wrest Park, took place in June to be followed in due course by games against Letchworth, Northampton, Stony Stratford and Watford.

The Fun Day, organised once more by Tony Stammers, had been postponed from a very wet July 6th to the 27th when eighteen members did strange things involving mallets, balloons, ping-pong balls, fruit and vegetables, egg-cups and blindfolds. Happy chaos ensued!

The very successful garden party took place on a lovely sunny day at Diana Phelp's home for which all members were particularly appreciative, coming, as this did, so soon after her husband Jim's death.

There were only three 'friendly' matches this year, against Letchworth, Stony Stratford and Watford, all very sociable and much enjoyed. The Singles Handicap came in July with the Club Singles and Doubles following in late September and early October. The lawns were then closed for Autumn treatment by the Council grounds-men who had worked on them so well and so obligingly all season.

The Soham weekend in November involved six members, two of them - Sally Clay and Tony Wells - travelling that long distance to play on both days.

The above events formed the standard programme, as it were, but once again a number of innovations and improvements took place which is a sure characteristic of a successfully developing organisation.

A group of the most skilful and ambitious players had become distinctly more competitive and in May five of them entered the All-England, Interclub Golf Croquet Knockout Competition. This involved a round trip of 200 miles to Broadwas near Worcester. They were 'knocked out' though felt it had been a valuable experience and an enjoyable if tiring day.

Howard Bottomley once more obliged by offering two sessions of coaching in 1-ball croquet which, even though not taken up as a regular pastime, may have helped to enhance people's skills.

Thanks chiefly to the sterling work of John Cundell and Len Buckingham, the Clubroom was re-decorated and re-organised making more space to accommodate the needs of the growing membership, which had reached the upper fifties by the end of the season. New ball-storage tubes were made by David Ball and the splendid score-stands with their large laminated numbers were brought into use at all matches, being much admired by visiting teams. Irene Davis became score-rota manager as each match required four people with good powers of concentration to operate them.

The lawn extensions were now playable so for the first time the Club had two full-sized and fenced lawns. The Council had agreed, thanks to suggestions by Len Buckingham, to affix notices to the fences asking people to avoid walking on the lawns. It seems however that the footballers could not understand them, even bringing their own goal nets to use when our members were not present! A large sign, complete with

logo, had been fixed above the Clubroom shutter announcing that this was the H.Q. of Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club.

January had been a sad month because of the deaths, within a week, of John Fogg, our Membership Secretary and of Jim Phelps.

Judith Cundell who had taken over the welfare role from Diana also agreed to deal with Membership, a very busy task. More members of the Dunstable and Wrest Park Clubs were applying as well as local people and it looked likely that numbers would rise above sixty, thus emphasising the urgent need for the promised third lawn.

A meeting of the Officers with Deputy Town Clerk, Linda Carter, had discussed lawn levelling and the proposed new lawn. It was agreed that the Council staff and Club members could co-operate on the levelling of lawns one and two using a method adopted by the Letchworth Club. An assurance was given that work on the third lawn was to be put in hand so as to make it available, even if not in tip-top condition, in time for the 2009 season.

Progress in the work of involving youngsters and possibly developing a Junior Section was once again proving rather disappointing. Due to re-construction work in the school grounds the coaching scheme of the previous two Summer terms at Leighton Middle School was not held in 2008, though the Head hoped that it might be able to take place in 2009. An invitation to 'Have a Go' at croquet was offered on four Wednesday afternoons during August as part of the Town's plan to get more people involved in sport. It was hoped that this might bring in some youngsters and though it did not do so, it did result in a group of four ladies and their leader from MIND, the mental-health charity, taking part enthusiastically in all four sessions. A few others also participated including John Thorp, who joined the Club. Margaret Brown had organised this event and Richard Keighley acted as chief coach backed up by Caroline Stroud, Joan and Bryan Ferris. Another small but potentially valuable contribution to community well-being.

Linda Carter had told us of the plans to run a junior youth club in the Pavilion and it was agreed that the Club will co-operate in introducing the children to croquet.

A Youth Fayre had been arranged on October 4th to advertise sports and other activities available in the Town. Most members were involved with the Club matches that day but Margaret Brown set up a stall to publicise croquet and spoke with several young people who had never heard of the Club. Some other potentially useful contacts

One of the friendlies in 2008 was against Letchworth and all enjoyed a leisurely lunch on a beautiful day.



were made, including one with the chair and secretary of the planned Page's Park youth club.

Although not an official Club event, several members helped Margaret Brown to run a fund-raising tea-party in the Pavilion for the Marie Curie Nursing Service which had been so vital to Margaret during Tony's last illness. It was attended by the Mayor, George Rolfe, Mrs. Rolfe and a Regional Official from the charity. Well supported by Club members and friends, in particular the cake-making ladies, it raised a creditable £124.

Another innovation, possibly the first of many such, was the result of a chance encounter during a playing session with the manager of a local company who was seeking for a staff activity to precede their annual company dinner. Negotiations followed and, after clearing it with the Council officials, Margaret Brown invited them, on behalf of the Club to come and play on September 26th. Thus the Club's first 'Corporate Event' was held with a group of very pleasant people who seemed thoroughly to enjoy learning the game from some keen Club members. The session was rounded-off by all partaking of a rather civilised afternoon tea-party organised by Margaret who had brought the supplies from the car-park in an old push-chair! Our Treasurer was subsequently pleased to receive a generous donation to Club funds with thanks from the firm.

In any organisation there will arise a few hiccups and grumbles which, if wisdom prevails, should be faced and dealt with promptly as indeed they were.

Playing sessions had reverted to daytime once again, the evening ones having met various difficulties. Two sessions had been added, Tuesday afternoon and Sunday morning, to accommodate singles handicap play.

Some members were concerned at the growing trend towards competitiveness and team play with less emphasis and encouragement to involve new and inexperienced members in friendly and informal matches. Suggestions to address this by, for example, holding a district 'Grass Roots' type of competition and to reserve places at

Once again the Fun Day was great fun - hitting a heavy wooden croquet ball through a hoop blocked by a balloon was much harder than first imagined. Below, the Club's much admired scoring stands in action at the Letchworth Friendly.



‘friendlies’ for non-league-team players appeared not to have been carried out.

Some members had been offended at the publication of addresses and of the list of players handicaps.

Fears had been expressed about a newly introduced system of arranging partners by means of numbered cards, instead of the previous random ‘pegs from the bag’ method. It was suspected that it could lead to members choosing to play with their cronies or only with players of a certain standard. Subsequently a mixed system, cards first and pegs to follow, evolved and seemed to have eased the situation.

The Club’s three match organisers had been concerned about anomalies in the handicapping standards and match organisation at League level and were to approach the EACF officials about these matters.

There were complaints, late in the season about the excessive consumption of biscuits. A biscuit and hot or cold drink had always been provided free of charge as a benefit of membership but it seemed that some were abusing this privilege.

Some of the most active and enthusiastic members were becoming irritated, feeling that they were being relied upon to ‘organise’ others at playing sessions, to set out the lawns, to deal with unwashed cups and to tidy up generally whilst some others were enjoying the games and the chat apparently unaware of their responsibility to contribute more than the membership fee. This situation can be a real danger in any organisation. One possible solution, it has been suggested, could be that the one type of member should be encouraged to come forward and feel needed whilst the other type should stand back, fail to ‘organise’ and learn to do the encouraging.

The Club Doubles and Singles finals this year were particularly exciting and kept the audience enthralled. The first, played in sunshine - the second in cold and blustery conditions. Roger Stroud who was poorly fully expected to be going home by lunchtime but he and Caroline found themselves playing John Cundell and David Ball in a nail-biting final. David, a first season player, once again came to the top in the Singles, only losing to Una Pengelly five - seven. Surely, people said, such a gripping spectacle would have more appeal as an Olympic sport than, say, synchronised swimming!

So to the ninth AGM yet again at Northall. Roger Stroud having been co-opted as Secretary following the previous AGM had decided to step down temporarily because of illness so the Chair became acting Secretary to prepare papers for the meeting. Jean Ball kindly agreed to take some notes for the minutes.

Various announcements were made. The Club had re-joined the Croquet Association which offers benefits relating to insurance rates, accessibility to Association grants, competitions and information. The Chair commented that membership also expresses our Club’s solidarity with the sport. The Town Council had agreed to accept an annual fee in advance to cover lawn rent and more flexible use of the lawns when necessary.

The financial balance was satisfactory but Treasurer Len Buckingham warned that there were some large items of expenditure planned so that the membership fee should be raised to £55. This was agreed. The Club is to purchase six sets of international competition standard balls and has offered to contribute up to £1.000 towards the costs of the new lawn. Applications had been made for grants to help to cover these costs and seem likely to succeed.

Members were reminded that 2009 marks the 10th Anniversary of the Club and



various celebratory events are planned to take place during the year. Included are the Club Dinner in February, the Croquet Association 'Coaches Training Course' to be hosted by our own Club at Page's Park in March and the publication of Margaret Brown's account of our history 'The First Ten Years' in the Summer. Other ideas are in the pipeline - see Appendix Four.

Tom Miller was elected as the Club's fifth Chairperson to replace Margaret Brown who stood down having served three years in the post. Roger Stroud and Len Buckingham were re-elected as Secretary and Treasurer. For the first time there was competition for election to the Committee with eight places available and eleven people nominated.

Eventually three female and five male members were elected, these included two members who had not previously served, Peter Davis and David Ball, and two ladies who had been members in earlier years, Eve Buckingham and Margaret Lawson. The other four were re-elected.

Deputy Town Clerk and great friend to the Club, Linda Carter, kindly presented the trophies and awards. Tony Stammers received the Singles Handicap trophy with runner-up George Lawson; John Cundell and David Ball were Doubles champions with runners-up Caroline and Roger Stroud; the Singles champion was Una Pengelly with runner-up David Ball. Posies or buttonholes were presented in acknowledgment of exceptional services to the Club to seven members whilst Linda Carter and our auditor Marjorie Cliffe were each presented with a buttonhole and a garden token with grateful thanks for all their help and support.

Tom Miller introduced himself and paid tribute to Margaret Brown for her work in founding and serving the Club. Margaret was presented with a flowering plant and a card signed by all members present.

Thirty nine members and their guests then enjoyed a party to celebrate another year of good fun, sport and comradeship.

So ended the tenth season of Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club.

Our final photograph of 2008 shows all the Club Championship Doubles players. A cheerful group of people who much enjoy playing the wonderful game of Croquet.



## **Themes, Trends and Possibilities**

**L**eighton/Linslade Croquet Club, which has been so fortunate in the support it received from the Town Council at its inception and since, has undoubtedly flourished as is factually illustrated in the various appendices. Such facts and records are an indication of how well, numerically, the aim of the Club to offer opportunities to people to learn and play the game is being fulfilled.

The membership records hint at how welcoming new members find the Club and whether they enjoy the game enough to continue to belong. They also show the balance between a group of long-term members and the desirable steady intake of newcomers, as well as the age group and gender profile of the membership. Financial statements illustrate how wisely the income and expenditure are managed and used to meet the growing and changing needs of the participants who may be children, adult novices, social players or the increasingly skilful and competitive members.

The lists of Officers, Committee and other members with designated roles suggests the vigour of the Club if it shows that a high percentage of its membership is keen and willing to take turns serving in the multitude of administrative, practical, representative and domestic tasks necessary to ensure that everything runs smoothly. Sessional attendance records, once analysed, offer useful clues and guidance to the Committee when they make decisions about which times and days are chosen for play. They also give information about the patterns of attendance of different types of player or of significant absences.

These appendices then illustrate the themes of steady development and division of labour. Helpful as they are though, facts are only the measurable part of the picture. It was agreed in the first years of the Club that it should set and encourage a friendly, open, democratic and egalitarian ethos in which everyone would be valued and involved. There were to be no cliques, fixed hierarchy or discrimination and the objective would be to open the game to all ages and types of people in the community - to be inclusive. Thus the conservatism which leads to a closed, turgid and eventually reducing membership would be avoided.

These values need to be continuously borne in mind and guarded - especially when changes are under consideration whether these are related to simple domestic or playing practices or to amendments of the Constitution. Sensitivity to all members feelings, wishes and priorities is essential or certain 'groups' will feel less welcome and will leave. If the trend veers towards selfishness, exclusivity or discrimination, for example, then matters need to be brought into the open and challenged, a difficult thing to do if a powerful or influential group should be involved.

The themes of inclusivity and friendliness seem to have survived at Leighton-Linslade though the struggle to involve younger members has met with some internal reluctance and external disappointment. It is clear that all ages enjoy the game of golf croquet, as witnessed at the various family, school, Town and open Club events we have hosted. There have been some hopeful signs but perhaps not yet a sufficiently concerted effort to break down the barriers and arrange matters so that working



The duties of Chairman since the Club's conception have been shared by the following members, pictured here at the 2009 Opening Day with Town Mayor Councillor George Rolfe. From left to right: Irene Davis 2000; Joan Slow 2000-2001; George Lawson 2002-2004; Margaret Brown 2005-2007; and Tom Miller - 2008.

people and students actually enrol as members. For all sorts of reasons a trend towards the Club becoming 'family friendly' would be an interesting development.

Other themes and trends may be detected in the earlier chapters. For example, once established at Page's Park the membership soon began to look outward and to develop friendly relations with other clubs such as Luton and Dunstable's U3A groups, Wrest Park, Stony Stratford and Watford. Entry into any competition open to beginners was seized upon so that by the second year two players travelled to the National Trust tournaments in Suffolk and nine took part in the Grass Roots competition at Northampton.

From the casual and rather naive attitude to performance of most beginners the trend has been to seek and accept coaching and, for some players at least, to play more seriously and competitively. The East Anglian League, Inter-club and even National level matches began to figure in the programme in addition to the Club knockout competitions. Even 'friendly' matches, at first very informal, began to demonstrate significantly improved standards of play and challenge.

It is perhaps a healthy sign if an organisation, as well as running its own affairs, seeks to contribute to the community in which it is based. Leighton-Linslade has almost always responded when invitations to take part in Town events have been received. These events have often resulted in memorable experiences, perhaps the Red Queen's croquet-match at our Queen's Jubilee celebrations proving the most outstanding. Although not a charity itself the trend has been for the Club to support and/or donate to charitable causes. Community involvement such as our work with children, at the Croquet Marathons for MacMillan Nurses, with a group of vulnerable people, as well as the contributions to the health, enjoyment and well-being of our own members, threads through our plans and activities.

Possibilities for future development include improvements to the lawns, bringing them up to a standard which could perhaps lead to Leighton-Linslade hosting national-level competitions. With that in mind it seems increasingly urgent to grow some qualified referees; maybe a couple of members could summon up the courage to submit themselves for training?

The qualification of some more members as coaches is likely following the Croquet Association Coaches Course planned for 2009 at Page's Park. Some of those members, if they undergo the CRB checks for working with vulnerable people, could help the Club to achieve recognition as an 'Accredited Club' as most of the other conditions required for this appear to be met or fairly easily attainable.

The question of an indoor playing facility has been debated over the years but not followed through. Questions of cost, a suitable venue - e.g. a gymnasium type of hall, storage and other potential problems have all deterred progress. None of these are insurmountable given plans for possible new sports provision in our developing town. The Club's representative on the body which drew up the 'Big Plan' for Leighton-Linslade made sure that Croquet appears on the priority lists for both indoor and outdoor sports provision. When, is of course another matter! With the burgeoning population, expanding area and increased popularity of the game the establishment of another club in a different part of town is a possibility. The Town is already known as a 'cycling town', has a successful and famous Canoe Club and could also become an important croqueting centre.

The development of the Club's community activities is another interesting possibility. There are for instance a number of other organisations and groups which could be introduced or, as with U3A which used to have a croquet section, re-introduced to the values and joys of our game. Youth leaders from Scout and Woodcraft Folk groups have expressed an interest in bringing their youngsters along. Workers in business and industry, if invited, would almost certainly enjoy and take up the sport - after all not everyone enjoys vigorous team games! Many more people could benefit from what our members enjoy.

As the 10th season of the Club approaches it can truly be said that its existence and activities have provided exercise and enjoyment, challenge and comradeship, fun and food for a good many people in the Town and district. Whilst we cannot solve the great problems of the world we can, in our own little corner of it, help to make life a little more interesting and congenial for some.





## Members' Gallery

Just a small selection of some of the wonderful people who have enjoyed the game of croquet over the decade of play at Page's Park. No names - just enjoy!





**Founder Members****2000**

Mr. N. Blake	Dr. Jill Jones
Mr. Nick Brett	Mr. Richard Keighley
Mrs. Margaret Brown	Mrs. B Marriage
Mrs. Eve Buckingham	Mr. G. Martin
Mr. Len Buckingham	Mrs. Elaine Newman
Mrs. Audrey Bunn	Mr. Peter Newman
Mrs. Audrey Burton	Ms. Judith Pengelly
Mrs. A. Constantine	Mrs. Una Pengelly
Mrs. Irene Davis	Mrs Diana Phelps
Mrs. Margaret Dilley	Mrs. Linda Potton
Mrs. Marian Farmer	Mrs. Ronnie Richardson
Mr. Martin Field	Mrs. Joan Slow
Mrs. Jean Floyd	Mrs. Irene Stevens
Mr. Ron Hall	Mr. Peter Stevens
Mrs. Pam Hall	Mrs. Jean Walmsley
Mrs. Valerie Horry	Mr. Robert Walmsley
Mrs. Margaret Lawson	Mrs. Barbara Weare
Mr. George Lawson	

**Officers & Committee Members****2000-2009***March 2000 (Ad Hoc)*

Chair	Irene Davis (until June)	Audrey Bunn
Secretary	Margaret Brown	Margaret Dilley
Treasurer	Bob Walmsley	Elaine Newman (until June)

*1st AGM November 2000*

Chair	Joan Slow	Eve Buckingham
Secretary	Margaret Brown	Len Buckingham
Treasurer	Bob Walmsley	Audrey Bunn
		Margaret Dilley
		Margaret Lawson
		George Lawson
		Irene Stevens
		Jean Walmsley

*2nd. AGM November 2001*

Chair	Joan Slow	Eve Buckingham
Secretary	Margaret Brown	Audrey Bunn
Treasurer	Len Buckingham	Margaret Dilley
		Jean Floyd
		Richard Keighley
		Margaret Lawson
		George Lawson

*3rd AGM November 2002*

Chair	George Lawson	Audrey Bunn
Secretary	Margaret Brown	John Cundell
Treasurer	Len Buckingham	Val Jeffers
		Richard Keighley
		Una Pengelly
		Diana Phelps
		Joan Slow

*4th AGM November 2003*

Chair	George Lawson	Sally Clay
Secretary	Richard Keighley	John Cundell
Treasurer	Len Buckingham	Erica Fogg
Membership Sec.	Margaret Brown	Edna Hickman
		Val Jeffers
		Diana Phelps



*5th AGM November 2004*

Chair	George Lawson	Sally Clay
Secretary	Richard Keighley	John Cundell
Treasurer	Len Buckingham	Erica Fogg
Membership Sec.	Margaret Brown	Edna Hickman
		Val Jeffers
		Diana Phelps

*6th AGM November 2005*

Chair	Margaret Brown	Sally Clay
Secretary	Richard Keighley	John Cundell
Treasurer	Len Buckingham	Erica Fogg
Membership (nc)	John Fogg	Edna Hickman
		Val Jeffers
		Diana Phelps
		Tony Wells

*7th AGM November 2006*

Chair	Margaret Brown	Sue Cross
Vice-chair	John Cundell	Val Jeffers
Secretary	Richard Keighley	Diana Phelps
Treasurer	Len Buckingham	Tony Stammers
Membership (nc)	John Fogg	Tony Wells
Minutes (nc)	Ann Smith	

*8th AGM November 2007*

Chair	Margaret Brown	Irene Davis
Vice-chair	John Cundell	Bryan Ferris
Secretary	Roger Stroud (until August)	Val Jeffers
Treasurer	Len Buckingham	Tony Stammers
Membership (nc)	Judith Cundell	Tony Wells
Minutes (nc)	Ann Smith (until August)	

*9th AGM November 2008*

Chair	Tom Miller	David Ball
Vice-chair	John Cundell	Eve Buckingham
Secretary	Roger Stroud	Peter Davis
Treasurer	Len Buckingham	Val Jeffers
Membership (nc)	Judith Cundell	Margaret Lawson
Minutes (nc)	Jean Ball	Tony Stammers
		Tony Wells

(nc) - non committee)

## Summary of Attendances

2000	Wed. am 7.1	Wed. pm 5.6	Sat. pm 8.9 (highest 13)				TOTALS 369
2001	Wed. am 313	Wed. pm 67	Thurs. am 165	Sat. pm 258	Sun. pm 143	Monday (24 - dropped)	950
2002	Wed. am 193	Thurs. am 129		Sat. pm 171	Sun. pm (no evenings/wet weather)	716	
2003	Wed. am 289	Thurs. am 154	Sat. pm 241	Sun. pm 232	916		
2004	Wed. am 235	Thurs. am 194	Sat pm 288	Sun. pm 224	Tues. pm (5) 19	960	
2005	Wed. am 198	Thurs. am 257	Sat. pm 316	Sun. pm 286	Tues. pm 58	1176	
2006	Wed. am	Thurs. am	Sat. pm	Sun. pm	Tues.pm		
2007	Wed. am	Thurs. am	Sat. pm	Sun. pm	Tues.pm		
2008	Wed. am 360	Thurs. am 281	Sat. pm 373	Sun. am 64	Sun. pm 267	Tues. pm 211	1556

**NB:**

*Numbers of sessions available for play rose annually - from 83 in 2003; 91 in 2004; 112 in 2005; 144 in 2008.*

*Figures are approximate as the register was sometimes un-marked.*

*Figures for 2000 are averages only. No figures available for 2006.2007.*

## **Proposed Programme of Club Events**

### **2009**

February	Club Dinner
March	E.A.C.F. Indoor Croquet at Soham Croquet Association Coaches Course
April	Mayor opens the season Regular weekly playing sessions begin (8)
May	League match (home) Letchworth Club 'Mix and Match' Doubles competition Friendly match (home) Watford
June	Possible event to celebrate Club's 10th Anniversary League match (home) Watford
July	Club Handicap Singles competition Club 'Fun Day'
August	Friendly match (away) Watford Club garden party
September	Club Doubles competition
October	Club Singles competition Off-season Social Club begins (Wednesday mornings)
November	Annual General Meeting End-of-season party

*(Programme as at March 2009. Other fixtures yet to be confirmed include League matches with Stony Stratford, Wrest Park and Northampton, plus friendlies with Letchworth and Sony Stratford. The Club has also entered the Croquet Association Inter-Club Championship which may entail home matches with clubs from anywhere in England.)*

