



# LEIGHTON-LINSLADE CROQUET CLUB

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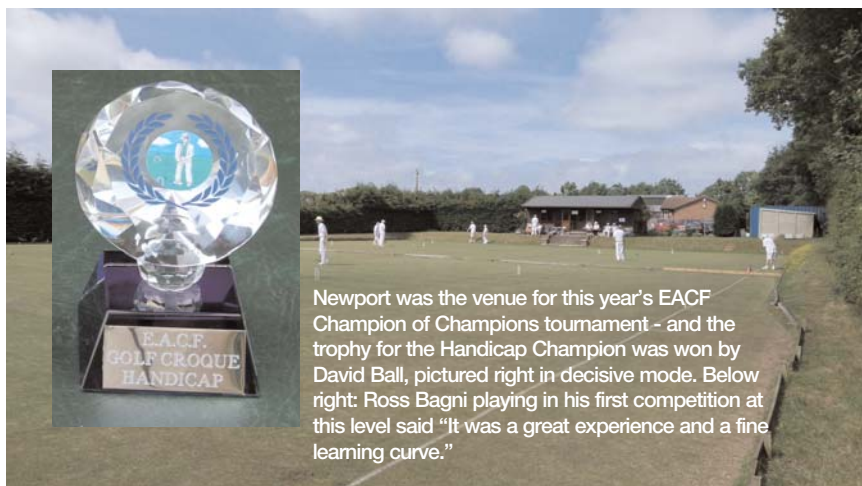
Founded 2000

## NEWSLETTER - OCTOBER 2013 Volume 14 Issue 4

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### "2013 Season Round-up"



Newport was the venue for this year's EACF Champion of Champions tournament - and the trophy for the Handicap Champion was won by David Ball, pictured right in decisive mode. Below right: Ross Bagni playing in his first competition at this level said "It was a great experience and a fine learning curve."



Welcome to the fourth newsletter of 2013. This season I managed to produce an interim summer newsletter, therefore this final publication for 2013 covers the period starting 30th June.

### EACF Champion of Champions - Newport - 30th June

This is a new event inaugurated last year to find the Champion Level Singles Player and Champion Handicap Singles Player in the East Anglian Croquet Federation. Unfortunately in 2012 the inclement weather initially caused a postponement and finally forced abandonment halfway through the competition. This year's attempt could not have been different as the weather was a gloriously warm and sunny June day.

Our representatives were David Ball playing in the Handicap competition and Ross Bagni in the Level play. Together with your editor as supporter we arrived at Newport to meet the other players. There were champions of the following clubs present: Sudbury, Watford, Bury St. Edmunds, Hunstanton, Colchester, Maldon, Enfield, Letchworth and Newport.

The organiser, Terrey Sparks used a system which he described as 'Swiss Egyptian'. To describe this fully would take up considerable space - suffice it to say that it is a good system when you have too many players for single or double blocks to be played in a day. Each player is given the same index on arrival and as they play one another, in no particular order, their index rises or falls. The increase or decrease of the index is governed by a table similar to that used in level handicap play. The system requires a minimum of three games per competitor to be played, and with the good conditions and excellent Newport lawns, Terrey had decided that all players would complete at least five games - some actually played six. There is no maximum limit to the number of games played - however

obviously the more games then the more accurate the result. The players soon got the hang of the system and play continued until mid-afternoon with a short lunch break.

At this point David Crawford from Bury, Peter Ross from Letchworth, Dick Strover from Sudbury, and Geoff Race from Hunstanton were leading the Level Play competition. Our Ross was playing in his first competition at this level and certainly held his own, winning one of his games, and he enjoyed his games against some of the strongest players in the region, and as he stated afterwards, 'It was a great experience and a fine learning curve'.

In the Handicap event at this stage the leader was Hugh Brown from Sudbury playing off 8, with Tony Elliott (7) from Enfield and our David Ball (4) close behind.

The final matches between the leading players in both events produced some excellent croquet and an exciting end to the day. Peter Ross beat David Crawford and Geoff Race beat Dick Strover and when the final points were totalled, Hunstanton's Geoff Race came out on top as Level Play Champion. In the Handicap event, Hugh Brown was beaten and slipped down the table, leaving the battle for Champion between our David Ball and Enfield's Tony Elliott. David triumphed with a 5-4 win after they ran out of time - so ended up as Leighton-Linslade's first EACF Champion of Champions.



Well done David on a superb achievement.

All present thanked the host club Newport for their fine hospitality and looking after everyone in great style. Well done to Terrey Sparks, assisted by Ken Wheeler in promoting and organising this excellent competition.

### **EACF Handicap League - LL Yellow v Watford - 4th July - report by Malcolm Kirby**

Our team consisted of Roger Stroud, Tony Stammers, John Thorpe and myself and we were up against a really strong Watford team which consisted of Jason Carley (2) , Geoff Johnson (4) , Ron Drew (8) and Rob Archer (8).

Many of the games were very close with four losses of 7/6 finishing on the golden hoop plus two 7/5's and numerous 7/4's. The only LL winners on the day were Roger and myself with scores of 7/5 for both – so the overall result was a convincing win by Watford at 16-2.

Nevertheless a great day was enjoyed by all and the Watford team made us feel very welcome as usual. The weather was ideal with sunshine and a light breeze, shirtsleeves most of the day! The parking at the ground has greatly improved and we were allowed to park on the grass next door to lawn 3. Much easier than parking at the bottom car park with the long (ish) walk over the hill - last time in horrendous rain!

### **LLCC v Northampton - 8th July - EACF Level Play League**

After our good win against Chelmsford we were hoping for a good result at our away match against Northampton. The omens were good – super weather and an easy trip to the lawns at St Andrew's Hospital, Northampton for the two Johns, Richard Keighley and David Ball. We were warmly greeted by Mike Hills and enjoyed a welcome coffee and a short practice time on the lawns. These are in excellent condition, quite short and fast. Regular visitors to Northampton will be aware of the slope across both lawns which takes some getting used to.

Mike then introduced us to his other team members and remarked that he had brought out the 'A' team, which included Peter Stansfield and Owen Bryce playing off 3, and Lionel Tibble, a well known and top scratch player.

The first round was almost a walkover for the home side with just David Ball beating Owen Bryce and keeping us alive. A similar situation in round two saw John Cundell beating Peter Stansfield. Unfortunately that was the end of our success in the singles as both rounds three and four went to Northampton. So at the end of the singles the score was an overwhelming 14-2 to Northampton.

In the doubles, David and John C had a good win against Mike Hills and Owen Bryce, leaving Northampton winners at 15 games to 3 – a complete reverse of our first round against Chelmsford.

### **For Old Times Sake - Bury St Edmunds 8-12 event - by Margaret Brown**

During the first year of our club - 2000 - we were all happy playing each other and learning more of the basics of golf croquet. Many of us had been introduced to the game at Waterways - the home of Irene and Peter Davis. Irene taught us and Peter did wonders as groundsman and general factotum.

Having ventured to an East Anglian Croquet Federation meeting in Suffolk and met lots of pleasant and encouraging people like Judy Anderson and John Bevington from Wrest Park club, it was suggested to me that some of us might like a game elsewhere .

In 2001 therefore, Diana Phelps and I, as it were, girded up our loins, and drove over to Suffolk where we met lots more delightful people and a few who were not so friendly - being rather intense and competitive. We thoroughly enjoyed our games, the company, the chat and the tea-party. Nobody much seemed to mind that we were at the low-end-of-average players.

When earlier this year I read that Bury St Edmunds Club was organising a tournament for high, or should it be low, handicap-standard players, my ears pricked up as I have so much missed the old-style sociable friendly-matches and events which characterised our early days.

So, your first representatives to play away, Diana and me, signed up for a day of fun! Irene asked if she could come and watch - which of course she could. Should she bring her mallet? Well there might be an opportunity for her to play in the interval or to use their all-weather lawn, so she did.

It was a glorious hot day and there, again, was that lovely friendly welcoming atmosphere. Someone called Jack from Maldon had not turned up - so Irene was recruited, and played all five matches. There seemed a good chance we might have to stay to the very end because Diana kept winning her games but she was saved from the final, which we watched whilst scoffing sandwiches, cakes and strawberries.

We all won some matches, or at least hoops in each game, but that was not the point- it was for OLD TIMES SAKE - and, though exhausted with heat and effort, we had a thoroughly nice day. Oh, and I'm still a ten!

### **LLCC v Enfield - 15th July - EACF Level Play League**

For our third round in the EACF Level Play League, David Ball, John Cundell, Roger Stroud and John Thorp travelled to Enfield on the hottest day so far this year. After a slow journey around the M25 we arrived around 9.30am. Enfield have two full size lawns and one three-quarter lawn in a lovely public park on the outskirts of Enfield. The lawns are similar to ours in terms of grass surface, but are more level. The only problem was that the recent very hot weather had resulted in some very dry areas with little green grass – similar to problems we have had on our lawns during hot and dry summers.

We were up against Ken Pickering (0), David Frost (3), Brian Dawes (3) and John Street (7). After the first round we were three games to one with wins for both Johns and Roger. Round two saw wins for John T and David; round three a win for John C. So at lunch the score was six games to each club. Unfortunately after lunch, only Roger managed a win, therefore we needed to win both doubles to force a draw. This was not to be and after two long and tiring games in 28 degree temperatures, Enfield turned on even more heat and managed to win both.

The overall result was a win for Enfield by eleven games to seven. We would thank Enfield for their excellent hospitality and good sportsmanship. The journey home was very good – just over the hour.



## **B-Level at Nottingham - 17th July**

This year we had four members entered into the B-Level competition at Nottingham: David and Jean Ball, John Cundell and Roger Stroud. We departed Leighton Buzzard at 6.30am and arrived at Nottingham at 8.40am for a welcome cup of coffee in the club's excellent pavilion. There were 16 other players from clubs ranging from Ripon to Guildford.

The five Nottingham lawns allocated to our competition – there were another three lawns in use for an Association event! – were in excellent condition, extremely smooth, fast and beautifully green as they have an irrigation system. Throughout the day there was a large supply of chilled water available at all times as this turned out to be the hottest day of the year so far.

We were placed into separate blocks and all had to play five rounds – four before lunch and one after. Jean Ball started off very well with two wins and went on to win three of her five games; John Cundell had great difficulty in maintaining good lengths and managed two wins; Roger Stroud won three of his five; however our star player was David Ball, winning his first four games and only failing against Andrea Huxley from Guildford. We first met Andrea at Phyllis Court last year when she was playing off a 6 – she has since progressed to a 4 and is a very strong player in all aspects of the game.

After tournament manager Patricia Duke-Cox had studied the results, it was announced that the semi-finalists would be Andrea Huxley playing Kathleen Wright; and David Ball to play Graham Good. David overcame Graham 7-4 and Andrea beat Kathleen. So the final was to be a rematch between David and Andrea. Andrea got away to a superb start and was soon 4-0 up. David started his comeback with some very impressive long distance clearance shots, and eventually got back to 4-4. Andrea then had a couple of great hoops with some excellent positioning, so at 6-4 and hoop 11, David needed another good clearance shot which he duly played, smashed into Andrea's ball and angled her straight through the hoop!

Tea was taken followed by the presentation of the challenge cup to Andrea, and commiserations to David.

A very enjoyable day and a good result for the club even if David didn't manage to repeat his winning 2011 form.

## **Abingdon Men's Doubles July 17th - reported by Ross Bagni**

I saw the notice in the club house a month or so ago and people said I should play some tournaments, so thinking this wouldn't be too competitive, I asked John Thorp if he would join me and we entered.

We arrived at a very pleasant cricket ground with four courts set on the outfield, in fact they were fairly even, compared with ours, but were running very fast. Originally it was to be four blocks of four in each, with the highest number of hoops scored deciding the winner of each group. Our group was reduced to only three pairs as one pair dropped out the day before, due to the heat.

We started our first match and went four up only to lose on the 13th. Our opponents then played the third pair and lost 7-4. Our last game we had to win and went down 3-0. We then went up 6-3 and finally won 7-5.

After a pleasant hour having lunch and walking along

Ross Bagni and John Thorp (at left) enjoyed a pleasant day at Abingdon, and finished second in the Men's Doubles after a close match that went to the 12th hoop - but at least they won a couple of 'most tasteful' medals that they both wore home in the car.



the bank of the Thames, we played our semi final against two guys from the Isle of Wight. With me clearing and John going through the hoops, we won 7-5.

In the final, again played against another pair from the IOW, it was a ding dong affair which we lost 7-5. For our troubles we both received a most "tasteful" medal, which for some bizarre reason we both wore home in the car!

Afterwards we were treated to a superb tea, which alone was worth the entry fee. Their ladies were looking after our every need. The men players assured us that at the Ladies equivalent they would be reciprocating!

We both enjoyed the day a lot, it was well organised with very pleasant people from a different area to ours, and we have decided that we will hopefully attend next year, with maybe a couple of others from the club?

## **Hunstanton/Leighton-Linslade Friendly - 20th July**

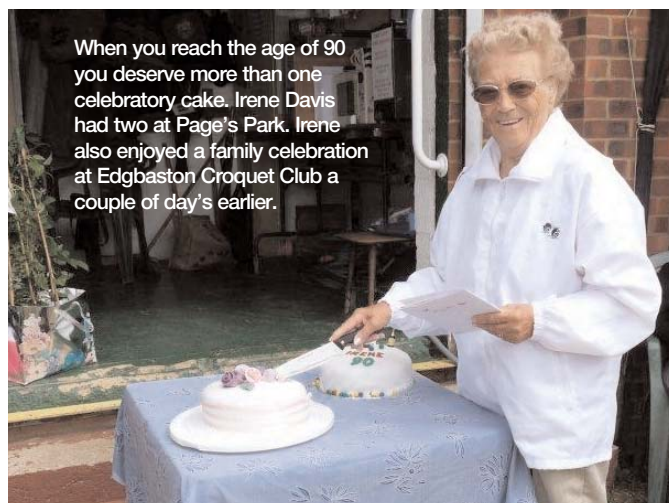
This year's annual Challenge Trophy event was not blessed by the usual wall to wall 'Sunny Hunny' weather even though the rest of the country was basking in temperatures around 30 degrees! The Norfolk coast was enveloped in grey, drizzly cloud for much of the day.

Originally twelve players had put their names down for this event which requires ten players per team, however it was arranged with Hunstanton's Terrey Sparks that all twelve would be able to play by sharing some of the rounds. During the run up to the event, two withdrew, and Irene Davis requested that she only play three games instead of six, therefore Caroline Stroud, who was only attending as a supporter, as was Judith Cundell, agreed to cover the other three rounds for Irene. The other players were John Cundell and Roger Stroud, David Ball and Malcolm Kirby, Peter Cole and Peter Davis, Tony Wells and Tony Stammers, Jackie Cole and Caroline Stroud or Judith Cundell.

Unfortunately, just two days before the competition, Malcolm Kirby had to withdraw due to a health scare – therefore some last minute changes were required. Irene Davis agreed to play the three singles rounds; Judith Cundell agreed to play the doubles with David Ball, whilst Caroline Stroud partnered Jackie Cole.

After coffee, the first round of handicap singles resulted in a 7-3 score for Hunstanton. The next round of doubles was also a good result for the home side, however the next singles round was halved. The remaining three rounds were much closer with LL making a good comeback.

The overall result was a win for Hunstanton by 26 games



to 19. This was disappointing for us as all previous challenges have been extremely close and we were looking forward to winning back the trophy this year. It was an excellent effort by our team, especially taking into account the difficult circumstances caused by the last minute changes to our team.

Also very disappointing was that we were not allowed to play jump shots following a request by Hunstanton's groundsman. This necessitated a major change in tactics which we took a couple of rounds to get the hang off. The Hunstanton team was very skilled at the necessary 'jawsing' tactic required. Our one player to score wins in all three of his singles was Tony Stammers – now you all know why we call him 'Mr Jawser'!

The presentation of the trophy to Hunstanton's Derek Cole was made by Terrey Sparks, and this was followed by the usual fish and chip supper plus a general knowledge quiz.

On Sunday morning five of our players enjoyed some friendly doubles games together with our Hunstanton hosts.

### **Irene Davis' 90th Birthday Celebration – reported by Jean Ball**

Wednesday 24th July was a special day for one of the club's founder members – it was the club's celebration of Irene Davis' 90th Birthday. Over 30 members came to Page's Park to wish Irene a happy birthday and indulge in a piece of birthday cake. There was plenty to go around with a 'club' cake from Jean Ball and another made for Irene by her daughter.

The weather was lovely, perfect for the occasion, and there was plenty of play going on. Irene was presented

with two clematis plants to adorn an arbor which husband Peter has erected in their new garden.

Irene's birthday was actually on the 22nd July which was spent with her family at Edgbaston Croquet Club, followed by lunch.

A very special time as Irene is still a very active member of our club and as mentioned above, was instrumental in the forming of Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club in the year 2000. A separate report on the latter appears later in this newsletter from Peter Davis.

### **B-Level Newport – 27th July**

Five members attended the B-Level tournament at Newport, Essex and enjoyed a pleasant day's play in good conditions. There were two blocks of eight per block with each entrant playing seven games 35 minute games – all level play.

In block one we had David Ball who won six of his games, only losing to Jim Potter from Newport. Ross Bagni was in the same block and he won four of his games, finishing third in the block. In block two John Thorp won six, topping the block, with Malcolm Kirby winning four and Jean Ball two.

The final between John Thorp and Jim Potter resulted in a good win for John by seven hoops to five – John





A happy John Thorp receiving his award after winning the B-Level tournament at Newport.

repeating his win of 2012.

### **Dunstable U3A Fun Day - reported by Ronnie Richardson**

Twenty-four members of the three Dunstable U3A Croquet Groups went to Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club on Monday 29th July to

participate in our annual fun day, held for the second year at Page's Park.

The 12 teams were split into two groups. Each game was of 30 minutes duration. Peter Cole took on the onerous task of time-keeper and he did a marvellous job keeping an eye on the teams when they had to stop due to hold ups. The morning started off well weather wise, but there were downpours in the afternoon, however the games were able to be completed, even though some players were a bit damp.

Positions: Group A - 1st - Peggy Kenny/Ursula Brennan 36 pts; 2nd - Viv Sieling/Pauline Morris 33pts; 3rd - Gean Carmen/John Marr 32 pts; 4th - Kay Hudgell/Ronnie Richardson 31 pts; 5th - Eve Eason/Maureen Gorton 27 pts; 6th - Carol Beatty/Ann Buchanan 22pts.

Group B - 1st - Alan Morris/Florrie Jeater 42 pts; 2nd - Peter Hudgell/Don Barrett 36 pts; 3rd - John Wright/Ann Elmett 35pts; 4th - John Clancy/Barbara Steurs 26pts; 5th - Maureen Watts/Eileen Southern 23pts; 6th - June Black/Ray Kirby 20pts. The final was between Peggy Kenny/Ursula Brennan against Alan Morris/Florrie Jeater. Peggy and Ursula took an early lead and although Alan

Below: 24 happy members who enjoyed Dunstable U3A's second annual Fun Day at Page's Park. 2013 winners were Peggy Kenny and Ursula Brennan (right of picture) with runners-up Alan Morris and Florrie Jeater.

and Florrie attempted a comeback, the final result was a win for Peggy and Ursula 7-2.

Our thanks to members of Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club for putting out the equipment and supply of refreshments.

### **Golf Croquet Inter-Club Murphy Shield - Semi Final - Nottingham - 30th July**

We were pleased to reach the semi-final of the northern region of this competition which found us playing Nottingham. After an early start the team of Richard Keighley (3), John Thorp (3), David Ball (3) and John Cundell (4) arrived at Nottingham's excellent facilities to a very warm welcome from their team – Ian Vincent (2), Patricia Duke-Cox (3), Kath Wright (4) and Eileen Buxton (5).

Just to remind you this competition requires a team of four who play level in the following format: the two strongest players in handicap play a doubles and the other pair play their opposite numbers in singles; after lunch the morning singles pair swop opponents and the morning pair play their opposite numbers in singles. All games are the best of three.

The teams were fairly evenly matched and almost all the games went to the last two hoops. For some reason we were unable to close out the games – losing on the 12th or 13th. At the end of the morning rounds the score was 2-1 to Nottingham with David Ball winning his singles match.





We were pretty confident that there was no reason why we couldn't square things up in the afternoon singles session. Unfortunately our closing out form did not improve and only John Thorp managed a win against Patricia Duke-Cox after a hard fought three round match, their last game being played in the only storm of the day with both John and Patricia ending up absolutely soaked through!

On paper a good win for Nottingham by 5-2 who all felt that the score line did not match the very close play.

We were treated with excellent sportsmanship and hospitality from Nottingham, including lunch and tea, before we joined the inevitable heavy and slow moving traffic on the M1.

Nottingham went on to beat Tyneside (4-3) in the Northern area final whilst Watford beat Hamptworth by the same score. The final is on 6th October. See the Croquet Association website for the result.

### **LLCC v Watford - 1st August - EACF Level Play League**

For our last round in the EACF Level Play League, David Ball (3), John Cundell (4), Richard Keighley (3) and John Thorp (3) played Watford at Page's Park. The Watford team was Jason Carley (1), Steve Dennis (2), John Walker (2) and Arthur Reed (3) – a very strong team and currently leading the table with no losses.

The first two rounds were taken by Watford with three wins per round – with John T beating John Walker in round one and Arthur Reed in round two, Round three was a clean sweep for Watford, however in round four, both John T and Richard Keighley gained wins. Unfortunately the doubles both went to Watford, therefore the overall result was a good win by Watford with 14 games to four.

Well done to Watford who subsequently won the East and West Area. Colchester were winners of the North and Central Area. The final was held at Newport on 29th

The friendly against Watford at Page's Park was quite eventful - see the report for details. Below: Anne Dennis, Peggy Kenny, Geoff Johnson, Valerie Cambridge, Florie Jeater, Sheila Guest, Ron Drew, Linda Williams, Don Barrett, Jackie Cole, Sally Clay, Hilary Isham, John Thorp, Roy Kemp, Angela Hunter and Peter Cole. At right Maureen Croft attempts to clear Sally Clay's ball

September and was won by Colchester by 10-8.

### **Watford Friendly Home - 5th August**

Will it - won't it be on? The previous day's weather forecast was for torrential rain all day and strong winds. We had a number to ring Watford before they left in case the weather was as promised, however as David and the two Johns arrived at 8.30am to a slight drizzle and lightening skies, we decided to go ahead with the competition.

Everything was ready by 9.45am as Ron Drew, Linda Williams, Maureen Croft and Anne Dennis arrived just as the sun showed its face. We awaited the arrival of the other four Watford players until just after 10.00am when a mobile call to Maureen Croft from one of the en-route players gave us the news that their car had broken down on the A5 at Markyate. It soon became clear that the car was unrepairable and was to be taken back to Watford by the AA, together with Watford's captain, Geoff Johnson. David Ball volunteered to go to Markyate and pick up the remaining three players and whilst awaiting their arrival, we played the first round with each Watford player against one of our doubles pairs. Our team of Sheila Guest/Peter Cole, John Thorp/Jackie Cole, Sally Clay/ Roy Kemp, and Don Barrett/Peggy Kenny won three matches with only John and Jackie missing out.

David Ball had arrived by now with the other three Watford players, Valerie Cambridge, Hilary Isham and Angela Hunter. David was free until 2.00pm so he was co-





A tense moment in The John Fogg Trophy final as George Lawson lines up to run hoop 8 - watched intently by the opposing pair of Roger Stroud and Len Buckingham, and George's partner Richard Keighley. Above right: Richard and George powered to an excellent victory.

opted by Watford and played with newcomer Angela Hunter. The results of the second and third rounds were two more 3-1 wins for LL with Peter Cole and Sheila Guest missing out. It was time for lunch.

David had to leave, but luckily for Watford, Florrie Jeater had arrived and agreed to play for Watford in the fourth and final round. This was yet another 3-1 win, only this time it was Peggy Kenny and Don Barrett who lost.

Therefore at what would normally be the end of the competition, LLCC had scored 12 games to Watford's four. However, by now Watford's captain, Geoff Johnson, had arrived in his wife's car to collect his three passengers. We thought that after his frightful day we should at least give him the opportunity of playing some croquet, so we decided to play a fourth round using the round one format but with the original team format Geoff had set up. The result was a shared round with wins by LL's Sally and Roy and John and Jackie; and Watford's Ron and Maureen, and Angela and Geoff!

The overall final result was a win for LLCC by 14 games to six.

Tea and cakes followed and after thanks from Watford for our forbearance and hospitality, they helped us take down the gazeboes and clear up as a very heavy storm threatened. It started raining as we closed the shutter!

### **EACF Handicap League - LL Green v Northampton - 6th August - report by Jean Ball**

Ross Bagni, Pauline Field, Len Buckingham and Jean Ball travelled to Northampton on a very pleasant morning, not too hot with sunshine and cloud, perfect for croquet.

Arriving before the opposition we were beginning to wonder whether we had got the wrong day! They arrived in force just before 10am when we thought we were supposed to start, only to be told we were not starting until 10.30am.

Whilst Jill Carrick (Northampton) fetched water and made coffee, we set to and put all the equipment out including tables and chairs. We just had enough time to have a quick knock about before battle commenced.

At lunch it wasn't looking good for the Green team, the score being 9-3 to Northampton. However by now the team was getting used to the sloping lawns and after lunch we managed to pull the score up to 10-8 after winning three more games and both the doubles. Not a win this time but not completely disgraced. It was a super day in a lovely

setting where we were made to feel very welcome.

Guess What? We all helped to put their equipment away too!

### **The John Fogg Trophy - 10th August**

An excellent entry this year, 16 as opposed to 14 last year, for the fine trophy in memory of John Fogg – a Mix 'n Match Doubles competition for men only.

The players assembled at 9.00am on a dry and reasonably warm day. The first task was the draw, carried out by a number of the players from two groups split into lower and higher handicaps. This resulted in the following pairs: Richard Keighley and George Lawson, John Thorp and Peter Cole, Malcolm Kirby and Peter Stevens, and Ross Bagni and Roy Kemp in one block – then in the second block we had Roger Stroud and Len Buckingham, David Ball and Peter Davis, Don Barrett and Tony Stammers, and John Cundell with newcomer Derrick Haines.

The games were untimed on all three lawns, one game on lawns one and three, and two games on lawn 2. The four pairs in each block played each other and all blocks were completed by lunchtime. Winners of the first block were Richard Keighley and George Lawson – winners of the second block were Roger Stroud and Len Buckingham. These two pairs moved to lawn two in front of an appreciative audience made up by the other players. Len and Roger had been in fantastic form during the block play, but for some reason – after the lunch break – they lost rhythm and Richard and George powered to an excellent victory with a score of 7-1.

After photography of the winners and runners up, all sat down to a welcome drink and the excellent strawberry topped cup cakes provided by Jean Ball.

### **EACF Handicap League - LL Yellow v Stony Stratford - 12th August**

The 'Yellow' team's last match of this season was against Stony Stratford at home and consisted of Roger Stroud (4), George Lawson (10), Tony Stammers (10) and Margaret Lawson (10) playing against Marion Holland (8), Alfred Sawbridge (9), John Burrbridge (10) and newcomer Steve Barber (10), the latter playing his first handicap league match.

The conditions were dry and sunny, if a little chilly. Play got under way shortly after 10.00am and the first round was a 3-1 win by Roger, George and Margaret. Round two



was shared with wins this time by Roger and George. Round three was also shared with wins by Roger and Margaret.

A pleasant lunch break was followed with another shared round, this time the winners were Roger and George. Therefore with the completion of the singles, our 'Yellow' team was leading by nine games to seven.

The doubles game between the pairings of Roger and Margaret playing Marion and John was a hard fought match which ran out of the 45 minute time limit, at which point Marion and John were leading 6-4. The other doubles was won by George and Tony over Alfred and Steve by 7-4.

The overall result was a close win by the 'Yellow' team at 10 games to 8.



A good win for the "Yellow" Handicap League team against Stony Stratford was scored by Margaret Lawson, Tony Stammers, George Lawson and Roger Stroud. Stony team was Steve Barber, Marion Holland, Alfred Sawbridge and John Burridge.

### **EACF League - 'Green' v Stony Stratford - reported by Jean Ball**

The 'Green' team arrived in plenty of time to have a knock about at Stony Stratford on August 16th. A drizzly day brought damp conditions to the lawns, something we had not encountered for a few weeks, so play was a little slow. Their third lawn (their only full sized lawn) was very bumpy, not quite as bad as ours but had a very large deep hole some six feet across and had egg cups rather than rabbit runs in most of the hoops. Roy Healey, playing off a (3) handicap, was very apologetic at the state of it and then promptly said "but then you're used to lawns like this!"

At lunch Eve Buckingham and John Burridge were the only ones playing when the drizzle became harder. They were drawing five all so had to play on. Eve managed to score the eleventh hoop bringing the score at lunch to 7-5 to Stony.

They both arrived at the clubhouse just as the heavens opened. The roof leaked in several places so an array of bowls, a watering can and a few cake tins were strategically placed to catch the drips. Fortunately we were all having lunch, an extended one as it happened as we had to wait for the flooded lawns to subside enough to resume play, which took some 30 minutes. The balls still came to an abrupt halt when they hit a puddle. It was quite comical to see people hitting the ball with as much might as they could muster and the ball not going anywhere fast!

Unfortunately the score at the end of the day was 12-6 to Stony. Eve did the best on the day, winning three out of her four singles and also winning the doubles match, so congratulations to Eve, our champion of the day.

The B-Level Tournament at Phyllis Court was another good result for David Ball, who just missed out on winning Smokey's Cup by losing his last game against last year's winner Raymond Wood. David and John are pictured at right of the group. There were 16 players from 11 different clubs.



### **B-Level at Phyllis Court - 16/17th August**

This was the second B-Level tournament to be organised by Phyllis Court, a club in the Southern Federation based at The Phyllis Court Members' Club at Henley-on-Thames – a country club of distinction which enjoys a splendid location on the bank of the River Thames opposite the finishing line of the famous Royal Regatta course.

David Ball and John Cundell took part on rather different days to the high temperatures that were experienced at last year's event. We travelled to Henley through persistent light rain which was to develop into a major downpour as we started our first round.

Before that the 16 entries from ten different clubs, ranging in handicaps from 3 to 8 were briefed by managers Chris Roberts and Frances Colman. We were to play all other players which meant eight games on Friday and seven on Saturday. These were timed level play games and only one or two went just over the generous 55 minutes allowed.

The standard of play was excellent all round and many games went to the 12th and 13th hoops. The only problem was the weather. As mentioned above, the first round was played in a torrential downpour that flooded part of two lawns. Play continued which was extremely difficult with



the changing speed of the lawns. A short break for coffee in the dry of the luxurious clubhouse was taken during which manager Chris Roberts outlined his thoughts on how to continue if the rain did not relent. Fortunately within a short time, the rain stopped and play was resumed. The rest of Friday was dry, and despite a dreadful forecast for Saturday, we escaped with one light shower in the early afternoon – although the day was much cooler and sweaters and fleeces were the order of the day.

As we approached the final rounds on Saturday it was Dan Ellis from Thames Valley, Ian Norris from Phyllis Court, and our David Ball that were fighting it out for Smokey's Cup. There had been little between these three over the two days, with Dan Ellis making the better running on Friday. Ian Norris and David were consistent on both days, and at the end of the last round, Ian Norris was the winner with 12 wins.

David Ball was unfortunate to lose the last round against last year's winner Raymond Wood from Phyllis Court; that meant David ended up with 11 wins – so was an excellent second place for Leighton-Linslade club. Hard luck David. Third was Dan Ellis.

However David now qualifies for the Golf Croquet B-Level National Final at Hamptworth on 12th October, as Ian Norris has already sealed his qualifying place by winning at Wrest Park.

### **Letchworth Friendly Away - 19th August**

This year's return friendly with Letchworth took place on a lovely, warm day on their excellent lawns at Muddy Lane, Letchworth. The lawns were a little dry and very fast and took a bit of getting used to. Our players were the following pairs, Eve Buckingham and John Cundell, Roger Stroud and Diana Phelps, Ross Bagni and Una Pengelly, and Pauline and Martin Field. There was a warm welcome from Letchworth Organiser Tracy Martin and the rest of their team, and after a welcome coffee, play commenced.

The first two rounds were shared with wins by our pairs of Ross/Una and Pauline/Martin in the first, and Ross/Una and Roger/Diana in the second. Most of the games were longer than normal – they were not timed – due to the very fast and short lawns where it was difficult to find position.

Lunch was taken at 1.00 pm and the repast obviously helped our team as round three was won by three games – Ross/Una, Martin/Pauline and John/Eve proving successful. Round four was shared – this time the winners were Roger/Diana and John/Eve, So a good team performance all round to give the win to LL by nine games to seven. The last two rounds had followed the morning pattern in terms of time taken – one game wasn't far short of 90 minutes!!

So it was around 4.30pm before we enjoyed a superb tea laid on by Tracy and her helpers – cakes, biscuits and scones with jam and clotted cream!

An excellent day all round. Thank you Letchworth. We look forward to next year.

### **Wingrave Friendly Away - 2nd September - report by Richard Keighley**

Wingrave Croquet Club was delighted to host a return friendly match on a glorious sunny afternoon aired by a light breeze. The single lawn is situated in the corner of

the village recreation ground which is ringed by attractive half-timbered cottages built by Hannah de Rothschild for her farm workers over a century ago.

Leighton-Linslade team was a strong one featuring Jean and David Ball, who were limbering up for their B-Class success at Edgbaston later in the week. They were joined by Irene Davis and John Cundell and Len Buckingham and Peter Davis. Richard Keighley's loyalties lay definitely with Wingrave on this occasion. He was paired with newcomer, Chris and Wingrave's other pairs were Dominique and Robert, a recently retired vicar, and David and Vicky, Robert's wife.

Jean and David were on cracking form and won all their three games, 7-3, 7-3 and 7-6. Irene and John found it more difficult to master the "ridge and furrow" lawn and lost their games 4-7, 5-7 and 6-7. It was left to Len and Peter to get L-L over the line which they did by 7-5 and 7-4 but their narrow defeat by Richard and Chris gave a final match score of 5-4 in favour of Leighton-Linslade.

Players then adjourned to the former cricket pavilion for the customary tea party to conclude an enjoyable afternoon of croquet.

### **High Wycombe Friendly - 5th September**

Our home friendly against High Wycombe in late April was a very cold and wet day. There was no possibility of us going to High Wycombe for an away return as they have lost their lawns for this season. They have two new lawns which will be ready for next season, and this season they have been renting Ealing club's lawns for one day a week. John T therefore suggested to them that they would be welcome at Page's Park towards the end of this season for an 'away/home' friendly. This was all arranged at very short notice for 5th September and the team drawn as usual from the 11 applicants - resulting in the pairs of John Thorp/Ross Bagni, Dierdrea Ellins/Peggy Kenny, Sally Clay/Una Pengelly and Derrick Haines/Irene Davis.

The High Wycombe team arrived just before 10.00am and were totally amazed to find that there are days at Page's Park which are warm and sunny. Indeed it was probably the hottest day we had enjoyed to date at the Park this year - and in the first week of September. High Wycombe members were very impressed!

The first round was a good one for High Wycombe with three wins - only our John Thorp/Ross Bagni pairing won. Round two was a complete reversal with our teams of Thorp/Bagni, Haines/Davis and Clay/Pengelly winning. A leisurely lunch was enjoyed and battle resumed with the score at six games each. Round three was another 3-1 win for LL - the losers were Thorp/Bagni against Christine Smith and High Wycombe's captain Geoff Brooks who played a very strong game. The final round was yet another 3-1 win for LL - this time it was the Haines/Davis duo who found their opponents on top form. So the overall result was a good win for LL by ten games to six.

A pleasant tea and cakes session followed and all present agreed that we had enjoyed one of the best days of the year and that this was a great way to end this season's friendlies. Thanks were given to the preparation crew, the cake makers and the organisers.

### **B-Level Edgbaston - 10th September**

This year we had three entries from LLCC at this event,



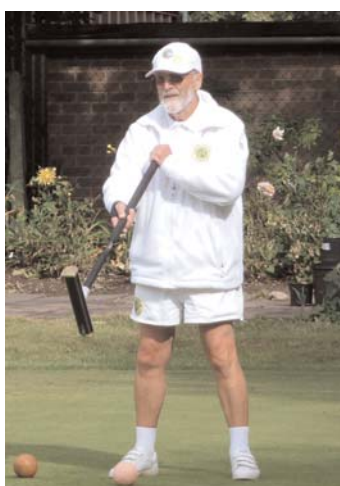
The 'return' friendly with High Wycombe should have been an away match, but due to their new lawns not yet being ready for play, we invited them to visit Page's Park again this season. We were rewarded with one of the best day's of the year in terms of weather and what turned out to be a relaxed, exciting and very 'friendly' day!

one of the last B-Level tournaments in the calendar – and they were John Cundell, accompanied by David and Jean Ball. Edgbaston demands an early start due to meeting the rush hour traffic in and around Birmingham – hence a 6.30am start – and we arrived at the lawns at 8.45am in time for a welcome cuppa and a few minutes practice on the three lawns before the 9.15am briefing and draw for players by organiser Richard Thompson.

The lawns at Edgbaston are always good, however this year they were in even better condition – green overall, consistent length and very level – a joy to play on. The atmosphere is also always very relaxed under Richard's

firm, fair, friendly and efficient organising abilities.

The handicap level for this match has been fixed at 5-8 for many years. Handicaps are taken into consideration at the allocation date which was late July and at that time David Ball had dropped to a four, along with a player from Nottingham (Kath Wright), so in order to allow these two to play Richard Thompson had come up with an innovative idea which was fully agreed by all players as being an excellent compromise to allow the originally selected players to take part. All David and Kath's games would start from hoop 2 with their opponent at 1-0. This system worked well during the day.



David Ball's excellent season continued at Edgbaston B-Level Tournament where both he and Jean Ball reached the semi-finals. The resulting final was described by organiser Richard Thompson, seen here presenting the trophy to David, as a six 'balls' final!

John Cundell, above right, won the trophy last year so it will spend another year in Leighton-Linslade.





The players were from seven different clubs, some travelling long distances to attend. No-one left without at least one win, nor did any player escape unbeaten which shows how good the overall standard at these competitions is, increasing year by year. Good planning by Richard together with expeditious play by all, meant that no time limits were required.

The four semi-finalists were our David Ball playing Edgbaston's Patrick Heath, and our Jean Ball playing Nottingham's Kath Wright. David overcame Patrick in a thrilling 7-6 match and Jean beat Kath by 7-5. Therefore on their first visit to Edgbaston, David and Jean made the final – as remarked by Richard "We are about to watch a six-ball final!"

All the remaining players enjoyed tea, sandwiches and cakes, whilst watching David and Jean play out a good final. In the end, David pulled away from Jean and won by 7 hoops to three. The fine trophy was presented to David, therefore for the second year running (John C won it last year), the cup has come back to Leighton-Linslade.

David and Jean could then partake of their afternoon tea, following which we had a trouble-free run back to Bedfordshire. As David had already qualified for the B-Level Final to be held at Hamptworth on 12th October, Jean, as the next in line qualifies. We wish them both well.

A very enjoyable day and as well as winning, it was nice to meet friends old and new – oh, and for the first time in my four previous visits to Edgbaston – it didn't rain!

### The LJB 70 Plus Trophy - 13th September

The title of this event says it all – entrants may be male or female, 70 years old or over, and competing for a 'main' trophy, a 'plate' trophy, and a consolation award. It was devised by Len Buckingham as a rather different and fun

event. The competition is the best of 19 hoops for sixteen competitors (this time nine men and seven ladies) and is run on a knockout basis. After the first 16 have played, the eight players knocked out are moved into the 'plate' competition. The weather was overcast all day with one or two light showers, however this was certainly preferable to the earlier forecast which said it was going to be wet and windy.

John Thorp, John Cundell, and Richard Keighley had prepared the lawns and equipment after an early start at 7.45am, so all was ready for Len and John's opening remarks and the draw for the eight teams at 9.15am.

The players were drawn for the first round and were John Cundell v Len Buckingham, Tony Stammers v Don Barret, Sheila Guest v Derrick Haines, Peter Davis v Sheila Beal, Sally Clay v Dierdrea Ellins, John Thorp v Roy Kemp, Richard Keighley v Roger Stroud, and Peggy Kenny v Diana Phelps.

In the LJB trophy the following moved on to the quarter finals: John Cundell, Don Barrett, Sheila Guest, Sheila Beal, Sally Clay, John Thorp, Roger Stroud and Peggy Kenny. Those going through to the 'plate' were Len Buckingham, Tony Stammers, Derrick Haines, Peter Davis, Deirdrea Ellins, Roy Kemp, Richard Keighley and Diana Phelps. After the quarter finals those going through to the semi finals were Sheila Beal v Don Barrett and John Thorp v Roger Stroud in the LJB; and Tony Stammers v Peter Davis and Roy Kemp v Richard Keighley in the 'plate'.

After lunch, Sheila Beal and John Thorp won through to the LJB final; Peter Davis and Richard Keighley to the 'plate'.

Both finals were held at the same time on lawns one and two in front of an enthusiastic audience, and after two excellent games the winners were John Thorp over Sheila



The 70+ LJB Trophy attracted 9 men and 7 ladies, some are pictured here before their knockout games. Trophy finalists were Sheila Beal and John Thorp (left); Plate finalists were Peter Davis and Richard Keighley (right). Winners were John Thorp and Peter Davis respectively. Below Tony Stammers and Peter Davis at hoop 5, watched by players waiting for their matches under our trio of gazeboes.





Beal by 10-5, with Peter Davis beating Richard Keighley by 10-7 in the 'plate'.

The consolation prize for the lowest score of the day goes to Peter Davis, scoring 2 in the first round of the day – Peter then going on to a fine win in the 'plate'! What a strange game Golf Croquet can sometimes be.

**Club Doubles and Singles Championships**

The first event of the club tournaments, the Doubles, was played on 21st September and attracted 24 players. John C, John T, David Ball and Richard Keighley had carried out the usual preparation from 7.30am, that included 'swishing' of all three lawns due to the damp conditions to remove dew and worm casts.

The draw had been carried out earlier in the week by three lady members and featured two blocks of six pairs, each playing five games to find two finalists. There was a slight breeze and the day was overcast with a little drizzle. The games soon warmed up the players and there was some exciting play from players old and new to this event.

The opening shots of the Club Doubles Final between John Thorp and Sheila Guest playing John Cundell and Richard Keighley. Sheila was in excellent hoop running form as clearly demonstrated. Bottom: the enthusiastic audience. Right: Club Doubles Championship winners - Sheila Guest and John Thorp.

By mid afternoon our block winners were as follows:

Block 1			Wins
1st	John Cundell and Richard Keighley		5
2nd	Sheila Beal and Judith Pengelly		4
3rd	Sally Clay and Tony Wells		3
4th	Roger Stroud and Malcolm Kirby		2
5th	Una Pengelly and Peggy Kenny		1
6th	Rose Gillett and Vivienne Horner		0

Block 2			Wins
1st	John Thorp and Sheila Guest		5
2nd	Martin and Pauline Field		4
3rd	David and Jean Ball		3
4th	Diana Phelps and Dierdrea Ellins		1
5th	Peter and Irene Davis		1
6th	Len and Eve Buckingham		1

The final was set up on Lawn Two in front of an enthusiastic audience. It was a relatively short game as John Thorp and Sheila Guest were both playing very well with good positional shots and clean hoop running. They kept John Cundell and Richard Keighley in defensive





mode as John and Sheila went into the lead at hoop one and never looked back, winning the 2013 Doubles Championship by 7-3.

**One week later and we were back for the Singles.** As we had 15 entries it was decided to go for a two block event over Saturday and Sunday. The alternatives of three blocks of five or one block of 15 are not feasible alternatives.

Six rounds were played on Saturday which completed five games per person for the larger block and four for the smaller, with the remaining two games per block played over three rounds on Sunday, with a slightly later start of 10.00am. Both days enjoyed dry, sunny weather, and in addition, a motor-bike rally and 'not-so-enjoyable' very noisy pop music!



Club Singles Championships. Winner was John Thorp, pictured at left with Jean Ball - runner up. Other Images show all the players (except your Editor) who was behind the camera! Thanks to Judith Cundell for managing both the Doubles and Singles Championships - pictured below keeping an eye on the play.





By Saturday the block leaders were John Thorp and Jean Ball, and at Sunday noon, the results were as follows:

#### Block 1

1st	Jean Ball
2nd	Roger Stroud
3rd	Ross Bagni
4th	Don Barrett
5th	Una Pengelly
6th	Sheila Beal
7th	Len Buckingham
8th	Derrick Haines

#### Wins

7
5
4
4
3
2
2
1

#### Block 2

1st	John Thorp
2nd	David Ball
3rd	John Cundell
4th	Ronnie Richardson
5th	Judith Pengelly
6th	Eve Buckingham
7th	Peggy Kenny

#### Wins

6
5
4
3
2
1
0

The final was set up in front of an enthusiastic and appreciative audience and was a good battle until hoop 8 with a score of 4 hoops each, after which John drew ahead and enjoyed a 7-5 win. An excellent nine days for John, having also won the Club Doubles the previous weekend.



League Organiser Jason Carley presents the trophy to Ipswich Team Captain Martin French and his three female team members. Right: the winning shot in the play-off. Below, Martin French plays through the hoop during his Doubles game.



Left: the background of steam and two onlookers was unusual for our visitors.



A glorious late September day for the East Anglian Croquet Federation's Handicap League final between Enfield and Ipswich. Right: our scoring system was much appreciated.





Congratulations to John Thorp and to all players who took part in this season's competitions. Roll on March 2014 and next season.

### **EACF Handicap Final - 24th September**

We were honoured to be asked by Jason Carley, the EACF League Organiser to host this year's final of the EACF Handicap League. The finalists were Enfield and Ipswich.

Our preparation work for the day started at 8.30am to 'swish' away the worm casts and heavy dew, and to set out our scoring tents plus gazeboes for the competitors, etc. The start was delayed until 11.00am as Ipswich in particular had a long journey via the A14 in initially quite a dense fog. Enfield had been slightly delayed by the conditions but had arrive at 10.30am, and we were pleased to see the four members from Ipswich arrive just before 11.00am. By then, the fog had completely lifted and we enjoyed one of the best September days for many years with temperatures around 20 degrees and a warm sun – and more importantly for croquet, almost no wind to affect the swing.

Jason soon got play underway after both teams were allowed a ten minute knock-up to learn some of the quirks of our lawns. It had been decided that we play one each of the singles on lawns one and two, and double up on lawn three. After the first round of four singles the score was two games each. This continued for round two with another sharing of games – hence 4-4. The third round produced some excellent play from Enfield, winning three of the four games, who moved into a 7-5 lead at lunch.

Just after 2.00pm the final round of singles swung the other way with Ipswich winning three games – therefore with just two doubles games to come, the score was 8-8.

Towards the end of the doubles Enfield looked to be in a strong position, but then Ipswich played a couple of superb hoops in one of their games, and yes, you have guessed it, the doubles were also shared – giving a score of nine games each.

In the final, if a draw occurs, there is a three hoop play-off. Both teams elected for this to be a doubles rather than a singles game. Enfield went into the lead with the first hoop; then with the first shot to the second hoop Ipswich played straight through the hoop. The Handicap Final had come down to one hoop. After some very tense play around the hoop, Ipswich found their form and took the hoop – so winning this year's Handicap League final for the first time in their club's history. (Newer members to our club may be interested to know that we won the final back in 2005.)

After the presentation of the trophy, all players, scorers and helpers enjoyed tea and cakes. Both teams expressed thanks to LLCC for our hospitality and were very impressed with our scoring system.

An excellent day for the club and thanks to all those members who helped make this a great success.

### **B-Level Championship - Hamptworth - 12th October**

David and Jean Ball will be playing in the final at Hamptworth, Salisbury, to determine the best B-Level player in the country. We congratulate them on getting through to the final and wish them luck and look forward

to one of them bringing the trophy back to LLCC.

### **Other Matters**

#### **Thoughts on the EACF Leagues**

This EACF League season has been under new management and there were a number of changes to the rules. In your committee's opinions, some of these have been beneficial - for instance the abandonment of the 13th hoop play-off if teams draw a match, replaced by a points scoring system throughout the season that awards 2 points for a win, 1 for a draw and 0 for a loss.

The opening up of the Handicap League to all handicaps has in our opinion been detrimental as the initial idea of the Handicap League was to encourage social or less experienced players with higher handicaps to take part in competition - the range was 4-10 with a minimum limit of 24. This was changed to 0-10 with a minimum limit of 20. This has resulted in very experienced and scratch players being drafted in who are often so experienced that even players of 4+ have little chance. There is a vast difference between a scratch player and 4+.

Our club's suggestion to the EACF League organiser for 2014 is that the Handicap League should revert back to 4-10 and minimum limit of 24; and that the Level Play League should have a minimum handicap of 2 with the total handicap of all four players at least 10 (similar to the Inter-Club Murphy Shield rules).

### **LLCC League Teams**

The committee has decided to reduce the EACF Handicap League Teams to one for 2014 rather than two. It has been a struggle to raise a team at a number of matches this season. It was agreed that to assist in team selection and raise the interest level, we create an Improver's Competition for those members who would perhaps like to take part in the League but who feel they are not experienced or confident enough to take the plunge. This competition will take the form of a number of events at Page's Park throughout the season using the League format.

### **Croquet Association Golf World Rankings**

For those members who are Tournament Members of the Croquet Association, below are the current World Rankings as at 30th September - up to position 750:

<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Index</i>	<i>% Wins</i>
433	David Ball	1891	79
486	Richard Keighley	1764	38
508	John Thorp	1788	69
563	Jean Ball	1719	53
583	Roger Stroud	1695	69
590	John Cundell	1668	41

### **Winter Social Club at Page's Park**

The Wednesday morning social club will meet for the first time this winter on Wednesday 9th October in Page's Park pavilion at 10.00am. The fee is £2 per session, and for that you get refreshments and the opportunity to play many board games, darts, snooker, dominoes and card games. The activities generally finish about noon, so please support this venture if you possibly can. Friends of

members are very welcome for the same attendance fee, refreshments included. This group raised the magnificent sum of over £300 towards club funds last year, so why not give it a try and perhaps we can reach £400 this winter.

### **Annual Club Dinner**

Preparations are in hand for this which is scheduled for March 14th at The Golf Club, Leighton Buzzard. Full details will be announced at the Annual General Meeting.

### **Garden Party and Fun Day**

A number of members have expressed disappointment at the loss of the Garden Party and Fun Day and it has been suggested that we combine these into an event at Page's Park in July, and on a day when there no cricket in order that we can make use of the pavilion kitchen.

### **Lawn Stop Boards**

The committee has considered on a number of occasions the fitting of stop boards around all the lawns. This would be very expensive and unless these were fixed to the lawn fencing, they would be vandalised - and obviously could not be restored on each visit!

However, it was felt that boards in front of the pavilion would be a good idea to prevent injury to tea drinkers and biscuit munchers!

Len Buckingham managed to locate a stock of suitable discarded timber and in mid-September these were moved to Page's Park, sawn to length, painted and attached! Thanks are due to Len Buckingham, John Thorp, John Cundell, Peter Davis, and Malcolm Kirby.

### **Club Clothing**

We can supply club branded clothing such as polo shirts, fleeces, sweatshirts and caps. For further details contact Judith Cundell (contact details on Page 1).

### **Club Badges**

David Ball has a batch of cloth club badges. These are available direct from David at £4.14 each. Contact David on 01525 211988 or email him at davidjean.ball@btinternet.com.

### **Lawn Maintenance, Equipment, Storage**

As most members know, the club is now responsible for all maintenance work on the lawns that is required during the closed season - plus the normal work that we undertake during the playing season. The Council

groundsmen mow for us once a week during the playing season and mark the white lines. Any other treatment is down to us, either doing it ourselves or paying others to carry out the work.

Last year was a big learning curve for us and the awful wet 2012 summer and the cold winter which followed made work quite difficult. Our small group managed to carry out scarification, aeration, an attempt to control the large moss problem due to the wet conditions, plus winter mowing where necessary.

We contracted the Council to carry out worm and weed control as we do not have the necessary equipment for these tasks.

John Thorp and myself have taken advice from some of the clubs that we visit that have superb lawns, and following further discussion with the Council Groundsman Doug Bolton, we are proposing the following for the forthcoming winter period.

We will initially need to scarify the lawns to remove the remains of the moss carried over from last year. This was started last week. Following that we need to aerate. The spiker we have used to date is a very heavy piece of equipment to push around and is really beyond the physical capability of most of our members. A much better alternative would be to hollow tine our lawns. This process removes deep plugs of soil which allows excellent aeration and also allows us to improve the quality of the lawns. We are pleased to report that the Council has agreed to lend us their tining machine after two of us have been trained to use it.

The machine will be used on Lawns 1 and 3 and the left hand two thirds of Lawn 2. About 12 members will be required to help remove the soil plugs. Top dressing will be required to fill in the holes and we will also require 20kgs of seed which will be added to the top dressing, and following the seed spreading we will use the spreader for winter slow release fertiliser to be added in late October. We estimate that the cost of the materials for this work will be around £500.

Storage is obviously a problem with regard to our extra equipment - obviously the club room is too small. As per last season, we were again fortunate in obtaining permission from the Council to store our excess equipment in the Referees Room in the pavilion during the playing season. This has worked very well again this season and we are grateful to the Council for this. The Referees Room was obviously needed as soon as the football season commenced at Page's Park, hence the lack



25th September was Diana Phelps 80th Birthday and a number of members gathered to sing 'Happy Birthday' to Diana - and enjoy some cake.



of room for the closing weeks of the season. We are hoping to obtain permanent useage of the Referees Room when some of the football sessions are relocated to Astral Park following completion of the new pavilion there that is now well under way.

Our priority for 2012 was to replace the rough, poor area of lawn at the right hand side of Lawn Two. This was carried out at the end of last season and has been relatively successful. We will try to eliminate some of the 'bumps'. The main priority this winter is to improve the left hand third of lawn one, and improve the overall quality of the grass on all lawns where possible.

### **How It All Began - a fond look back by Peter Davis**

Sometime in the late 1980's Irene Davis came home from a Women's Institute training day and announced to husband Peter "I am a now qualified to demonstrate croquet and I have a badge to prove it!"

As a consequence of Peter's work they were living on the site of a former Water Treatment Works, land was a plenty and in a short time Peter commandeered part of the grounds and made a three-quarter size croquet lawn. Being open ground, at first it was a battle with the rabbits - for reasons of their own each evening and night the rabbits would dig holes in the lawn and each morning Peter and Irene would fill them in. So Peter built a fence around the lawn and apart from the occasional bunny digging under the fence, the lawn gradually became suitable for proper play.

At first Irene played on Wednesday afternoons with several of her friends but gradually, through the WI, others got to hear of it, therefore Irene decided to have an open day and invited anyone that was interested to come along. To her amazement about 100 ladies turned up; thus was formed the Waterways Croquet club.

Some years before Peter had erected a 10ft x 8ft summer house - this soon became the club house and store for all the equipment.

Around 1991 play began in earnest. Mainly it was ladies from the local WI's and eventually there were about eighty ladies playing on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Within a short time Peter had made another croquet lawn, much smaller but quite adequate for fun games. Each session of players would have one hour each on the two lawns. The age range was from middle age to ninety. As for abilities, one lady with terminal cancer would come direct from treatment to play whilst another with severe arthritis used a special adapted mallet to help her enjoy the game. These are just two examples but there were many more.

During the 1990's the standard of play increased to the point where Irene arranged an annual tournament. These events were used to increase the popularity of the game and to raise funds for charities. The number of such events is lost in the mists of time as unfortunately the record keeping wasn't up to much but the noticeable ones are etched on Irene and Peter's memories.

In 2001 Irene decided to hold a twenty-four hour croquet marathon. This began at 2pm on the Saturday. Two sponsored players played for an hour followed by a different two, every hour until 2pm on Sunday. Through the 24 hours the weather, in typical English fashion,

changed from dry to wet and at one point, about 2am, soaked the two players to the extent that when driving home they were sitting in puddles. Another couple brought their caravan and on their turn popped out to play in their pyjamas. After the final hoop at 2pm on Sunday everyone participated in afternoon tea; this was supervised by the famous celebratory chef Zena Skinner. Due to the efforts of the players and the providers of the cakes etc., the grand sum of £2,500 was raised which was presented to Macmillan Nurses and Keech Cottage.

Irene then joined the Wrest Park Croquet Club, and whilst playing there she had the idea of a Fun Evening at Wrest Park for those who played at Waterways. At Wrest Park there were six lawns. Irene arranged for 12 players to attend. At the start two on each lawn would play; after a set time the winners would move on to the next lawn while the losers would remain. It was a very popular event and continued for many years.

Ronnie Richardson from Totternhoe asked Peter to look at a lawn at her house with the prospect of starting play there - apart from a bit of a slope it was fine. Play began in 1998 which helped reduce the numbers at Waterways. So play continued and every year there was a tournament and fund raiser both for Macmillan Nurses and Keech Cottage. Over the years at Waterways, due to the generosity of the players, some £3,227 was raised for the above charities.

In the year 2000 it was suggested to Irene that due to transport problems it would be good if there was a croquet lawn in Leighton Buzzard. Irene and Margaret Brown went to the Council and as a result of their efforts Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club was formed. About this time Dunstable formed a club and had the use of a lawn in the grounds of Priory Church. This was closely followed by Wingrave on a lawn adjacent to their cricket ground.

Play continued at Waterways with the yearly tournament and fund raiser, plus the Fun Evenings at Wrest Park until 2011.

In 2011 Peter decided, much to Irene's dismay, that it was time to move into town. Much as they enjoyed Waterways it needed a lot of work and was very isolated. Looking back it is amazing to think of all the events, all the clubs and the pleasure enjoyed by so many, that started with "I'm a Croquet Demonstrator and I have a badge to prove it!"

### **Expenses**

If any member has any claims for expenses please note these must be with Len Buckingham by 10th October.

### **Annual General Meeting**

You will find an announcement concerning the AGM below. Guests are welcome to accompany members but please make them aware that they may not participate in the business part of the AGM, and also to keep information they hear during the AGM as confidential.

**Members are reminded that it has been tradition for the after-meeting party to take along some buffet finger food of your choice.** If you need any guidance then a call to Val Jeffers on 01296 688543 might help.

Also, we will be holding a raffle to raise funds for the club and would be pleased to receive any **good quality** items you may wish to donate. If you can help please contact Tony Stammers on 01525 757940.





## Roll of Honour 2013



### Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club Tournament Winners

Mix 'n Match Doubles Handicap	Don Barrett and Roy Kemp
Ladies Doubles Mix 'n Match	Jean Ball and Helen Wilkinson
Club Singles Handicap	John Thorp
EACF Champion of Champions Handicap	David Ball
B-Level Newport	John Thorp
The John Fogg Trophy	Richard Keighley and George Lawson
B-Level Edgbaston	David Ball
LJB 70 Plus Trophy (Main)	John Thorp
LJB 70 Plus Trophy (Plate)	Peter Davis
Club Championship Doubles	Sheila Guest and John Thorp
Club Championship Singles	John Thorp

### Attendance Breakdown - 2013 - by Membership Secretary

Our Membership Secretary Judith Cundell has extracted the following information from the attendance sheets for 2013. There were 26 weeks of play. Figures include all matches - players, helpers and spectators.

Sessions	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Average attendance	17	13	7	7	14	11	6
Highest attendance at one session	32	21	16	14	20	31	15

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Best week was week ending April 26th with 103 attendances.

#### Most attendances by members:

John Thorp	119	These include work days.
David Ball	83	These include work days.
John Cundell	81	These include work days.

#### Most attendances in one week:

Peter Cole	7	Dierdrea Ellins	6
John Thorp	7	Peggy Kenny	6 x 2
David Ball	6	John Thorp	6 x 5
Jackie Cole	6		

All figures very approximate as we know that not everyone marks the register - please try to remember to do it. If you bring a visitor, please come at a quiet time. Although we try to be welcoming to all, it is not fair to paying members to be sitting out while beginners are being taken over the court. Also, please mark all visitors on the register as 'friend of .....', and log them into the Visitors Book - this is mandatory to cover us for Health & Safety. We currently are 50 members.

### Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held at Northall Village Hall at 7.15 for 7.30pm on Friday 8th November 2012, followed by the traditional jolly party. Every member is entitled to bring a guest to join in the fun, but the meeting itself is an opportunity to raise any matter of interest or concern. It is also an opportunity for a member to volunteer his or her services to the Club. All members will receive Agenda, AGM Details, reports, etc., shortly. Please come along to the meeting and party. You are all very welcome!

**YOU MAY FIND IT HELPFUL AND INTERESTING TO READ THE OFFICER'S REPORTS  
WHICH WILL BE SENT TO YOU PRIOR TO THE MEETING.**

### And Definitely Finally...

Perhaps not the first - but have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Croquet Year!