



# LEIGHTON-LINSLADE CROQUET CLUB

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## “SEASON OVER - OUR FIRST NATIONAL WINNER”



Ten players from as far afield as Yorkshire and Bath gathered at Northampton in early September to play the final of the Centre Stage Golf Croquet Competition. We had two entries, Matthew Houseden and Richard Keighley. We are pleased to report that Matthew accounted for himself very well in his group. We are even more excited that Richard Keighley - who originally got into the competition on a wild card - beat Derek Slow of Southwell 7:5 - and becomes the Club's first National competition winner. Well done to you both.

We only need one picture this season for the Club Doubles and Singles Championships, as John Cundell and Richard Keighley were winners over Judith and Una Pengelley in the Doubles, and Richard beat John on the following day to take the Singles.

**W**elcome to the fourth newsletter of 2006 under the joint Editorship of John Cundell and Richard Keighley.

### Match Reports

**Winslow Away** - Sally Clay reports the club received a warm welcome in perfect weather conditions, for our return friendly match at Winslow on 30th June. Team members Sally Clay, Maureen Leach, Tony Stammers and Tony Wells faced formidable opponents and attempted to

adjust to the small challenging lawns.

Format of match play was based on the best of 3 games. L-L were a game down at teatime but made up in the second half. S/M overall score was 2-2 and T/T scored 4 wins and 2 losses, resulting in a 6-4 win to L-L. Once again our thanks to Winslow for their hospitality. Thanks Sally.

**EACF League - Plaudits for our Club!** - So close were the results in our highly competitive Section of the League that everything depended on the final round of matches. Basically, we had to beat Letchworth and rely upon Wrest Park beating Watford in order to qualify for the Finals. In

The Club's Handicap Singles Day turned into two days due to the changeable weather experienced on the Saturday. The weather also brought out some interesting rain gear as Eve Buckingham models Tony Stammers' lemon yellow lifeboatman's outfit - whilst Tony Wells stayed with his summer shorts. We had the luxury of scorecard display by Maureen Leach, Len Buckingham, Margaret Lawson and Sheila Guest, which was well received by players and spectators. The semi-finalists; George Lawson v Judith Pengelly and Una Pengelly v Eve Buckingham, resulted in a final between Eve and Judith, with Judith winning.





Our Club, as winners of last year's EACF League, were responsible for organising this year's Final at Newport. John Cundell managed to arrange a holiday in Tenerife! - so it was left to the stalwart members at left to organise the competition - and what a superb job they made of it too. Congratulations to all concerned. The shot above depicts a part of one of the three lawns at Newport and the clubhouse.

a very enjoyable match, we were just pipped by Letchworth, and Watford were too strong for Wrest Park. Letchworth earned their place in the Finals on the "Who has beaten whom" rule.

Our Club had the very pleasant task of organising the Finals over the weekend of 23/24 September at Newport, near Saffron Walden. John Cundell devised a successful format for playing 4 simultaneous games on 3 lawns for the 4 rounds of Singles in each match. Len Buckingham put on his George Formby outfit to referee the matches and George Lawson was an impeccable "Statto" and time keeper. Our scorers who topped up their suntans were Eve Buckingham, Sally Clay, Margaret Lawson and Una and Judith Pengelly. Richard Keighley was nominally in charge of the event.

For the record, Letchworth (recovering from 4-8 down) beat Downham Market 10-8 and Chelmsford beat Bury 12-4 to proceed to the Final. In the Final, lunch was taken at 6-6 with one round of Singles and the 2 Doubles to play. Chelmsford moved to a 9-7 lead and clinched the title by winning one of the Doubles in a rather nerve-wracking fashion. The trophy was presented by David Kitson, who

wrote afterwards to say - "Thanks again for running what was quite clearly a very successful competition." Tony Marks, the EACF Golf Croquet rep, e-mailed a note - "Congratulations on a job well done!"

**Ickworth Doubles (8th July) and Singles (3rd September)** - Once again the club had made entries for these two events this year. Unfortunately interest in these competitions has waned to the point where we really struggled to find any members wishing to attend - with the result that we only managed to send a team to the Doubles - and our thanks are due to Sheila Guest and Tony Stammers for their support. They didn't win but we understand that both enjoyed the day, and Tony did report that they may well have achieved a better result had Sheila taken her glasses rather than her husband's!

The committee decided at the September meeting that we will not apply for entry in 2007.

**Stony Stratford Friendlies** - On Friday 14th July, LL entertained Stony Stratford to a 'friendly' pairs match, and the team of Eve/Len Buckingham, Sally Clay/Martin Field, Matthew Houseden/Tony Stammers, and Val Jeffers / Maureen Leach, won by a convincing twelve games to four after a very enjoyable day's play by all concerned.

Poetic justice was served on us at the return away match in August as eight club members faced strong competition. Home advantage produced a win to Stony Stratford by 11 games to 5.

**Club Handicap Singles** - This competition on Saturday 22nd July, attracted twelve keen members who were drawn into two blocks, each competitor playing five games.

We enjoyed two excellent friendlies with Stony Stratford this season. Our pictures were taken at the home game. Far left: Matthew Houseden teamed up with Tony Stammers. Left: Len and Eve played together - so did Len's blue ball make the hoop? We will never know. Below: JC's composite shot shows all three lawns in action on what was a glorious day.





Ten Leighton-Linslade members took part in Wrest Park's Doubles event, and in wonderful surroundings and equally excellent weather and playing conditions, the exciting final between Una and Judith Pengelly and Sally Clay and Martin Field resulted in the latter pair winning. Martin's clearances were a significant factor and there were some wonderful jump shots. Below right are the Wrest Park and Leighton-Linslade teams that took part in our 'local' round of the EACF Golf Croquet League, which LL won.



The top two from each block were to go into semi-finals and a final. The blocks were almost completed when the very strong winds and storms in the afternoon meant that a number of players enjoyed the novelty of 'wet and windy play' - and the conditions enforced the re-scheduling of the semis and finals to Sunday afternoon, enjoyably watched by club members who had come for the normal Sunday play session. After some extremely close games the winner was Judith Pengelly, beating Eve Buckingham by 7/3, with George Lawson taking third place against Una Pengelly's fourth (7/6).

**Wrest Park Doubles** - Ten members had an enjoyable day at Wrest Park Doubles at the end of July. Leighton-Linslade came out on top with the final between the Pengellys and Martin Field and Sally Clay. The winners were Martin and Sally.

**Grass Roots Final** - Although we enjoyed the club round of this competition, which was reported on in the previous newsletter where 8 club members took part, the organisation from the Croquet Association in relation to the regional and national finals left a lot to be desired, with numerous changes almost up to the last minute. The result was that only one of our members was available to make the journey to Northampton - Norma Morris - who of course quite rightly, didn't feel like making the trip by herself - but we would express our thanks to Norma for putting up with the organisational chaos!

This competition is fairly expensive to enter and for little return - so the committee have decided that next year we will not be taking part in this competition. We intend to possibly organise a local competition for members without

a handicap and/or beginners.

**Centre Stage Final - Richard Keighley writes -**

Members will recall that Matthew Houseden was a worthy winner of our club event in June and he thus qualified for the National Final to be held at Northampton on 10th September. As runner up, I was expecting to ferry Matt to the venue with only a remote prospect of taking part. However, a few days before the event, I was phoned by the organiser to say that I had earned a wild card to the Final as she had balloted all the runners up and I had been the lucky one.

Ten of us took part in the Final. We were drawn into 2 blocks of 5 and Matt and I found ourselves in the same block. As luck would have it, it turned out that the winner of the game between us would qualify for the final stages and on this occasion it was me. I finished as runner up in our group with 3 wins and a +9 net hoop score. Matt was 3rd.

Playing on Lawn 3 at Pages Park with all its undulations had been good practice for the sloping lawns of Northampton. In the morning dew, the balls were describing significant arcs.

In my semi-final, I met John Bee, an Association player from Watford. We spent ages on the first hoop but I eventually won 7-4. In the Final, I played Derek Slow from Nottingham. He had beaten me in our Block game but I managed to turn the tables on him. My final shot was a jump shot which I am unlikely to be able to repeat. From an angle and about 4 feet from the hoop, I managed to land my ball on Derek's ball wedged in the hoop - it was a sort of Barnes Wallis bouncing bomb. My ball went



A selection of John Fogg's excellent pictures reflect that the name of the day - 'Fun Day' - was certainly achieved. The turn-out was low due to a number of reasons, including the heat and many other events over that weekend, but those that did go along had a very enjoyable afternoon. Croquet with golf balls, and blindfold croquet were just two of the disciplines. And the winners enjoyed the entry fee, which was an item of fruit or veg - after the prize-giving.

through leaving Derek's undisturbed. I was presented with the "EGG CUP", a sort of wooden pyramid with an egg cup on top. Why? It transpired that the competition had formerly been run by the English Guild of Croquet (EGC) before the Croquet Association took it over.

**Club Doubles and Singles** - our Club tournaments traditionally bring the golf croquet season to an end of course, so on 30th September, 8 pairs contested the Doubles and they were split up into 2 blocks of 4 pairs with each pair playing all the others. Teamwork founded on married bliss led to George and Margaret Lawson and Len and Eve Buckingham winning their respective blocks, with cup holders Una and Judith Pengelly and John Cundell and Richard Keighley being runners up.

In the semi-finals, the Pengellys narrowly defeated the Lawsons 7-6 and the Buckingham lost to John & Richard by 7 hoops to 4. In the Final, played just before a storm broke, John & Richard beat the Pengellys by 7 hoops to 5.

On 1st October, a record number of 18 members took part in the Singles competition.

3 blocks of 6 were drawn out. Judith Pengelly and Richard Keighley, the cup holder, both won all their 5 games to win their respective blocks and to qualify to play each other in one semi-final. In the 3rd block, John Cundell and Valerie Jeffers both won 4 games each and they were drawn to play each other in the 2nd semi-final. There were also very good performances from Joy Bown, Len Buckingham, Margaret Lawson, Una Pengelly and Tony Stammers, who all won 3 of their games.

Heavy rain interrupted the semi-finals but John and

Richard eventually emerged as winners. The Final was extremely close with the lead continually changing hands but Richard ran the extra hoop to win 7-6 and retain the trophy.

### **Competition Entry responsibility**

Just a small moan from John Cundell and Len Buckingham, who are the prime organisers of raising teams for the various events during the season.

On a number of occasions this year a few members have entered a particular event and then found that other social commitments have taken precedence, and they could not then play. Obviously there are family crises, illness, etc., that of course are priority - however last minute decisions due to more 'frivolous' reasons are very frustrating for the organisers to handle.

For 2007 onwards, if you find yourself in this situation shortly before an event, and it's not an emergency, then we would expect you to find a replacement and not to expect us to do it for you. Frequent abuse of the system we use, which has worked pretty well this year, may well result in the offender/s name/s being removed from future events - or perhaps buying a large round of drinks at the Christmas Dinner!

### **Fun Day - reported by John Fogg**

Fear of the unknown or the temperatures in the region of 28 degrees probably accounted for the low level of support for the first club fun day in July.

It was however a distinguished bunch of eight players



The Garden Party was a bit reduced in numbers this year, however those members that did go along to Waterways, kindly offered as venue by Irene & Peter Davis, enjoyed some fine fare and good fun with Boules, Shove Hapenny, the ever popular Jenga - and fine weather for much of the afternoon. Until late in the afternoon that is, when four intrepid members started a game of croquet - and down came the deluge! Pics by the two Johns.

who arrived at Pages Park anxiously clutching their piece of fruit and their vegetable which were the required entry fee for an afternoon of total madness.

The purpose of the entry fee was soon made clear - the winners were destined to be rewarded by enough ingredients to make a fruit salad and a vegetable casserole.

Teams of two were selected by drawing cards and the participants were then handed a set of instructions which described the 'rules' for playing each hoop.

Sometimes hoops were played in the usual manner but many hoops involved special rules, substituting croquet balls for table tennis or golf balls for example. There were also some 'skills' challenges which required the players to show their ability to strike a ball in a particular way or along a straight line.

One of the hoops required players to change from their more normal 'missionary' position of addressing the ball and to use the Len Buckingham 'side-saddle' approach. It was interesting to see how difficult most participants actually found this.

If the number of players was small, their commitment and enthusiasm more than made up for it and there was much laughter and not a little in the way of disgraceful barracking and dubious play.

Probably the most difficult section was that involving

one partner of a team having to wear a blindfold whilst the other partner gave guidance and advice as to how and where to strike the ball. Some partners adopted a very 'hand-on' approach which would, had there been any present, undoubtedly have frightened any horses in Pages Park. Happily everything took place between consenting adults - some of who appeared to be rather enjoying the experience!

Ultimately there had to be some winners but three of the teams nearly ruined the afternoon by finishing first with equal scores. Faced with the prospect of having to divide into 6 equal shares the dubious collection of fruit and veg. the organisers adopted the subterfuge of awarding the prize to the losers so that they would be able to indulge in some comfort eating having been the only team to lose. Tea and cakes then restored normality.

Erica and John Fogg would like to thank everyone who joined in the spirit of the day and if anyone wants to organise a repeat then the 'rules' for the 2006 event are available as a basis for a future event.

**From the Chair**

Margaret Brown has asked us to include the following message.

This month we have, sadly, to come to terms with 'no croquet', always difficult but especially so when it is a

lovely sunny day. We do appreciate that the groundsmen need to work on the lawns to get them in even better condition for next year.

It is clear that members, including those keen new ones, have really enjoyed the season and our 'friendly club' reputation seems intact.

Thanks to the helpfulness of members and the dedicated work of our office-holders and committee members the Club has flourished and grown. Thanks are due to all who have worked so hard arranging and taking part in the various events throughout the season.

We are now coming to the AGM and the election of our new committee. People have tended to join this group, which meets four times during the year, for a couple of years and then to step down. This year Edna Hickman, Sally Clay and Erica Fogg will leave the committee with our thanks for their contribution, thus giving others an opportunity to volunteer - perhaps you? (Contact me on 373860 or Richard on 01296 681235, if you would like to know more about or would like to be nominated for the committee.)

I look forward to seeing everyone at the party on Friday November 10th.

### **Club Badges**

Club Badges are always available. They are 3ins in diameter, cloth embroidered and can be ironed or sewn on to items of clothing. The cost per badge is £3.50. If you want one or more, just contact John Cundell on 756971. They will also be available at the AGM.

### **Welfare Officer**

Members are asked to note that Judith Cundell has taken over the post of Welfare Officer, so if you are aware of any member who may benefit from a card and some kind thoughts, please contact Judith on 756971.

### **Our subs!**

Martin Field has raised two points for discussion about the subs payable to belong to our Club. Decisions about subs are matters for the full membership at the AGM but what do you think about Martin's proposals:-

"The Junior membership fee should apply to anyone engaged in full time education up to the age of, say, 25 years. A substantially reduced membership fee should be charged for adults in full-time employment who would 'typically' be unable to play on weekdays, say £30.

I feel that both these measures would help attract/retain younger people and would be much more equitable for them."

### **Social Club**

Len Buckingham would like to bring to members' attention the following facts that need to be considered in order that decisions can be made at the AGM concerning whether or not we include social activities during the close season in the form of last winter's events at the pavilion. So please consider the following proposals.

1. Our insurers will not charge any excess for insurance cover on almost all social activities for LLCC members.

2. Table Tennis is, however, not covered by our insurers as it is considered to be a 'dangerous activity!' carrying an

excess of £85 per annum.

3. Visitors will be welcome and covered by our insurance.

4. We may wish to rename the club; e.g., Leighton Linslade Croquet and Social Club.

5. It is estimated that the hourly cost charged by the Council will be approximately £2.30 plus supply of tea and coffee.

6. To cover the hourly cost and the Table Tennis excess we need at least 10 persons at each session to pay £2.00 each - which would also give a little in hand for hidden costs/expansion of equipment.

7. It is suggested that the club would operate from November - April for 2006/7.

8. How much should we charge visitors - £2.50 per session or £50 for full membership plus the £2.00?

9. Do you want a Social Club?

10. If so - when? (Thursday mornings are not available).

### **Coaches Course - Richard writes -**

I enjoy coaching and I have been waiting for an opportunity to go on a course. This arose over the weekend of 8th/9th July at High Wycombe although it was not popular with "her indoors" as we were setting off on holiday at 4am on the 10th!

To my surprise, I was one of only three pupils on the course. The others were Linda and Judith from Chelmsford. We had the benefit of two coaches - Jennet Blake and John Munroe who both came to coach our members at Pages Park last year.

The first morning was "theory", with written tasks to perform. In the afternoon, we moved on to the lawn for instructions as to tactics. Each of us had to explain which shot we proposed to play next and explain why. We were given homework overnight as we had to prepare a coaching lesson for guinea pig volunteers from the Wycombe Club. We were assessed and our "pupils" were asked to assess us out of our earshot! Next came a session using a board with metal matchstick figures and balls, again mainly on tactical issues.

We were all pleased to learn that we had earned our Club coach badges and my CA membership also entitled me to a badge to teach members of other clubs. A very enjoyable weekend,... and not bad value for a tenner!

### **Annual General Meeting**

**Members will find papers for this year's AGM accompanying this newsletter. The AGM will be held at Northall Village Hall at 7.30pm on Friday 10th November 2006, 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, examples being in the running of a match day or in catering for an event. Any offers would be much appreciated.**

**Please come along to the meeting and party. You are all very welcome!**

