



LEIGHTON-LINSLADE CROQUET CLUB

Founded 2000

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NEWSLETTER - SEPTEMBER 2005 Volume 6 Issue 4

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Fun, Friendlies and the Fray!

Welcome to the August Newsletter from the Joint-Editors John Cundell and Richard Keighley.

DIARY 2005

September

4th NT - Singles at Ickworth 9.30am
22nd **Committee meeting at the Old Vicarage, Wingrave at 7.30pm**
10th Grass Roots Final / Solihull 11.15am
16th Friendly v Watford (A) 10.30am
24/25th AEH Final at Nailsea 9.30am

October

1/2nd Club Singles & Doubles

November

18th AGM/Party

As we put this edition to bed, the weather is perfect for croquet whether played for fun at a club session, in a friendly match against another local club or more competitively in a league match or a regional or national tournament. Let us hope that the sun continues to shine until the season ends with our Club tournaments over the weekend of 1st and 2nd October! We hope that as many as possible of you will take part before putting your mallets away for the winter! You can enrol now as signing up sheets are on the Club notice board.

In the meantime, we are waiting to discover whether our League team has done enough to win the South section of the East Anglian Golf Croquet League. Our fate is out of our hands as Letchworth must win both of its two remaining matches to pip us. Richard is also waiting to discover if he is to be called up for the Final of the All England Handicap at Bristol for which he is at present a reserve.

Let us now hear from our roving reporters as to how members have fared in matches and tournaments to date...

Match Reports

Grass Roots

On Saturday 11th June, 16 members competed in seven progressive rounds of pairs play in 'Grass Roots', a competition designed to encourage all levels of player to experience competition in a sociable, friendly atmosphere.

Normally the winners go on to a similar regional round and hopefully a National final later in the year. The top four were John Cundell, Una Pengelly, Sheila Guest and Peter Stevens. A couple of members expressed interest in going through to the regional, but at the time of our event we still did not have a date for this from the organisers. This finally arrived with four weeks' notice and clashed with our Garden Party. After considerable confusion, caused when we were offered a second date - which was then withdrawn - we were given the opportunity to send



Two shots from the Friendly with Stony Stratford at Pages Park on 15th July. Above: Erica Fogg plays her black ball at the start of her match with Judith Cundell against Stony Stratford's John and Sarah. Below: I think all 16 players are in this shot!



two players direct to the National Final at Solihull on 10th September. Our two representatives will be Sheila Guest and Sally Clay. We wish them well. Also thanks to George Lawson for being OOD on what was a very busy day.

East Anglian League - Burnham

13th June brought the second round of the East Anglian Croquet Federation's League competition and visitors to Pages Park who had travelled from Burnham on Crouch, Essex. We were due to start at 11.00am but jams on the M25 meant that the visitors did not arrive until after lunch. Nevertheless the games were played in a friendly competitive spirit as four players from each team played 16 singles matches and two doubles. Our team of Margaret Lawson, Una Pengelly, Diana Phelps and John Cundell enjoyed a successful day and won by ten games to eight after a hard fought match. Two fixtures played - two won!

Wrest Park Singles

An enjoyable day was held at Wrest Park for their Singles competition with quite a number of our players taking part. Diana Phelps, Una Pengelly, Margaret Brown and John Cundell all won their groups, but none of us managed to get much further in the afternoon groups, and none managed to reach the semis and final. Most of us dropped two games.

There was also a not-so-welcome guest at this event - a



One of the most noticeable changes at Pages Park this year is of course the new step which has made access to the clubhouse much easier. (It's also a popular meeting/drinking/smoking/heaven knows what else point for the younger generation - we understand they have been told there is no problem as long as they respect the lawns! So far this season - so good.
The club thanked Julian Brown for providing the shuttering work, plus Len Buckingham, John Cundell and four very helpful Council employees for their physical help - plus the Council for providing the concrete.
As Fred Dibnah would have said 'D'yer like that?'



very annoying swan. See the photo below courtesy of Ronnie Richardson.

East Anglian League - Watford

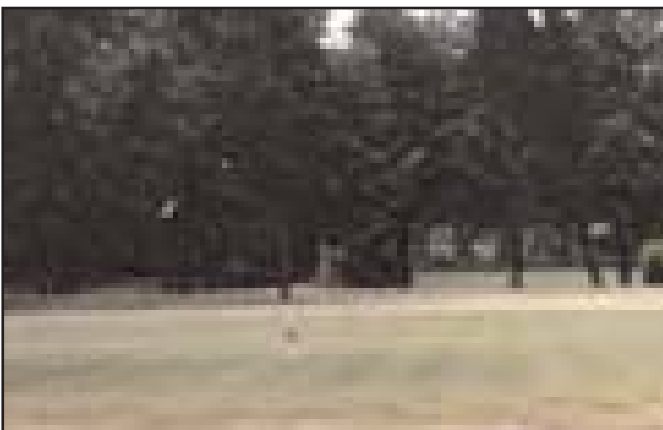
On 1st July the League Team travelled to Watford for the third round - and the League players of Diana Phelps, Una Pengelly and Sally Clay were supported by Yvonne Banks who bravely stepped in at the last moment.

From all reports it was a very hard fought day: Sally Clay won 1 and lost 3; Diana Phelps won 1 and lost 3; Una Pengelly won 3 and lost 1; and Yvonne Banks won 3 and lost 1 - so at the end of the Singles it was all square. Come the Doubles - Sally and Una lost and Diana and Yvonne won - so there was a draw. The rules of this competition require the result to be determined by a Penalty Shoot Out against the centrepost! This nerve wracking finish of our two hits to Watford's one resulted in a win for us. Hooray! Three fixtures played - three wins! One match to go.

National Trust Doubles - Ickworth

At this event on 9th July we were represented by Sally Clay and Yvonne Banks. They both reported that the grass was very long and the lawns were difficult to play on - also it's quite a long way and they were straight on almost as they arrived with no time to get their bearings and the

Wrest Park's latest member is perfectly dressed in white and appeared at the Singles Day. Margaret Brown stashes the rest of her food, Judi Priestley and Barbara Collier affect nonchalance and Vera Pearson estimates the amount of stuffing! Photo by Ronnie Richardson.



pace of the lawns. Unfortunately they didn't get beyond the first round but were pleased to have at least taken part at a venue that at least has very pleasant surroundings. Perhaps the Singles foursome will do better in September.

Friendly v Stony Stratford - Home

On Friday 15th July, we entertained Stony Stratford to a 'friendly' pairs match and the team of Una Pengelly/Sally Clay, Judith Cundell/Erica Fogg, Margaret Brown/Gill Bennett, and Peter & Irene Stevens, won by nine games to seven after a very enjoyable day's play by all concerned.

Wrest Park Doubles

Five pairs of players from our Club entered the Wrest Park Doubles Tournament held on 24th July. On a day when the weather deteriorated from wet to saturating, pools of water formed on the normally immaculate lawns and the conditions were almost unplayable. However, the pairings of Sheila Guest and Judith Pengelly and John Cundell and Diana Phelps fought their way through to the semi-final stage, before both succumbed (appropriately) to pairs representing the Waterways Club!

Here is how John Bevington, the Wrest Park Secretary and tireless organiser of this event, summed up the day:

The rain set in early on and continued for most of the day. Lunch was taken after four rounds, and everyone dripped in to occupy the pavilion and the changing room, which looked like the inside of a third class railway carriage with players seated amongst the water containers and bags. Once the last round was over players not



The Friendly Challenge Ladies Day at Abingdon, general view above, was supported by a number of our members. At right Sally Clay and Yvonne Banks prepare for battle, and below right, Edna Hickman, Margaret Brown, Val Jeffers and Diana Phelps get in a few practice shots. Photos by Erica Fogg.



involved in the knockout were given the options of further games or the chance to go home to a hot bath, and it was hardly surprising that the latter proved overwhelmingly popular.

The lawns were beginning to give up the unequal struggle against the rain, and puddles started appearing everywhere, but the players gamely battled on, and the sun finally reappeared in time for the final, played on lawn 3 (the driest available). Sally, Richard, John and Diana stayed to watch as Linda and Vera won against Irene and Helen, and we celebrated by polishing off a bottle of Burgundy. Congratulations to the winners, indeed, congratulations to everyone for taking part on what was a thoroughly miserable but somehow memorable day.

Club Handicap Singles Championship

The inaugural tournament was held on a lovely day at Pages Park. Twelve members competed and they were divided into blocks of six for the preliminary rounds. In the first semi-final, Eve Buckingham defeated her husband Len, who claimed that he had let her win. In the other, Richard Keighley beat John Cundell and Richard went on to beat Eve in the Final.

East Anglian League - Letchworth

On 2nd August, the team set out to Letchworth with high hopes of maintaining its 100% record. However, this was spoilt on lightning fast lawns when the team lost by 10 games to 8. John Cundell and Richard Keighley each won three of their four Singles games but were pipped in their Doubles match. Eve Buckingham won two of her Singles but let us say that her Len had one of those days! The Club must now wait to see whether it has done enough to reach the play off final against the team winning the North section of the League.

All England Handicap

Richard Keighley represented our Club in the Regional Final of the All England Golf Croquet Handicap Championship held at Newport in Essex. He was one of eight players taking part from Clubs based in the east of the country.

Each player had to play all the other players in one best of 13 hoops game. Handicaps varied from two to six. Three players won five of their seven games and they have progressed to the National Final to be held in Bristol in September. In his last game of the seven, Richard found himself up against a player with an identical playing record. Both had won four of their games and each had conceded the same number of hoops in the games they had

lost. The winner was to be sure of a place in the Final.

When the final whistle was sounded, he and his opponent were tied at six hoops each and they had to contest a deciding hoop. Unfortunately for Richard, his opponent ran that hoop and took the game 7-6.

The upshot is that Richard must now wait to see if he has made it to the Final.

Friendly Challenge Ladies Day - Abingdon

On August 12th, 10 club members travelled to Abingdon to play in this new competition organised by the Thames Valley Croquet Club. There were 60 competitors who had travelled from far and near to take part. Our members were Yvonne Banks, Eve Buckingham, Sally Clay, Judith Cundell, Erica Fogg, Edna Hickman, Val Jeffers, Margaret Lawson, Una Pengelly and Diana Phelps.

Our reporter states that they arrived to a warm welcome and a much needed cup of coffee. They had already been 'colour-coded' - blue, red and green, and after a short speech of welcome made their way to the appropriate lawns.

The club shares its facilities with the Abingdon Vale Cricket Club and the lawns were situated on the outfield of the cricket pitch - very undulating and unpredictable. Those playing on the 'blue' lawns were most fortunate as they were about three quarters the size of Pages Park lawns. The 'red' and 'green' lawns can only be described as dolls-house size - and all lawns were double-banked!

Play was the best of 13 hoops, with a time limit of 30 minutes. This is where it became interesting as the 'lawn manager' had one clock with which he was controlling the games, and our reporter was somewhat surprised in their first game to be called off after 25 minutes (of these they were waiting for four minutes for the game ahead to clear



Away at Stoney. Above: Peter Stevens and Judith Cundell play John and Pam; right, our team poses for photographer and team member John Fogg - Peter Stevens, Sally Clay, Erica Fogg, Judith Cundell, Irene Stevens and Sheila Guest. Right: Sheila starts a game with her partner Irene.



hoops - oh what they could have done with those extra nine minutes!

After playing everyone on the group - although two in our club played one game less than everybody else! - there was a welcome break for a picnic lunch. By this time the bar in the pavilion was open and some partook of a stronger brew in the hope of improving their play.

Soon, people with clipboards were shouting out colours/letters and directing some people to certain lawns. Your reporter and partner discovered they were runners-up in their group and had to play the winners from another group - this time on one of the miniature lawns. The game was lost fairly quickly but consolation was gained from learning the the opponents were Dorset County players!

Meanwhile all those not called up by a 'clip-boarder' were apparently out of the competition. As you may tell from this report, communication was not good, and there was no scoreboard or results chart for anyone to refer to. Hence we cannot report who won in the end.

The weather was excellent, the members of the club were extremely welcoming and many friendly competitors from other clubs were met. An enjoyable, if tiring, and at times, frustrating day.

Fun Evenings at Wrest Park

Sally Clay reports that Irene Davis has organised two 'Fun Evenings' at Wrest Park this summer. Diana Phelps took part in June and Sally and Yvonne Banks were two of 20 competitors in July. The format was progressive doubles, i.e., losers moved on to the next lawn and all players changed partners for each of six games. Congratulations to Sally who won with a score of 32 hoops.

Friendly v Stony Stratford - Away - reported by John Fogg

'Friendly' matches may not count according to some of the English football team's comments following their recent 4-1 defeat by the Scandinavian bacon smokers but our annual 'friendly' matches against Stony Stratford are played in a more determined manner.

The determination does not stop the teams 'lending' each other some of their best players when one of the squads turns up short-malleted at the last minute however. This was what happened when Leighton arrived one short at Stony - perhaps if the Danes had lent England a player (preferably a goalkeeper) the football result might have

been better?).

Comfortable knowing that the last match had produced a 9-7 defeat for Stony Stratford, the Leighton team were fairly confident that Beds could beat Bucks again. Leighton's squad comprised Judith Cundell, Sheila Day, Sally Clay, Peter and Irene Stevens and Erica and John Fogg.

It was not to be. Sixteen games were played throughout the day with Leighton players paired to take on each of the home team's duos.

Leighton's optimism took a knock at the lunch break when it was realised that the Stony Stratford players were taking full advantage of local knowledge when playing on their own ground where the lawns are not as smooth and consistent as the Page's Park lawns which are so carefully maintained by the Leighton Town Council groundsmen. A pained "I don't believe it!" from one Leighton player as he watched his ball zig-zag over the ground brought a knowing response from one of the home team along the lines, "Ah yes there used to be a cinder running track under there some years ago!"

The results at the lunch break were not good and it looked as if Leighton were heading for a best forgotten defeat. The theories as to why this should be were keenly debated. Clearly the two lawns at Stony had characteristics which were very different from each other and even varied from hoop to hoop. At least one of the Leighton players kept finding himself disorientated by the fact that the 'red' hoop, normally located near the 'blue' first hoop was positioned in the middle at the top of the lawn. How's that for a great excuse?

Some of the visitors were uncomfortable with the fact that pairings were decided by drawing playing cards. Thus Erica and I were, by chance, the black Aces. This came as



Audrey Burton - arm behind the back technique.



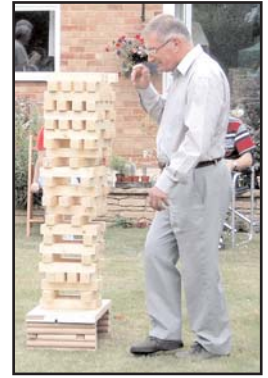
Rita Kingston building up the quick way.



John Fogg applies a low level action.



Martin Field used a prodding technique.



Vernon Smith in contemplative mood.



John Cundell - oo-h - my back!



John Cundell studies Margaret Brown's style.



Peter Edwards style admired by Audrey Bunn and Judith Cundell.



Norma Morris wants to know where the stepladder is.



Len Buckingham reaches for the heights.

a relief because being a 'Queen' - black or red, has never been a hidden aspiration of mine. It's probably the only time I shall ever be an ace at croquet.

Inspired by their lunches, the Leighton pairings produced some spirited play in the afternoon session which brought a final result of 9 games to 7 in favour of Stoney Stratford. Happily this was exactly the same score by which Leighton defeated Stoney at the last close encounter of the croquet kind.

At close of play both teams made a spirited attack on the mountain of home-made cakes provided by the hosts. The Leighton team - fuelled by a need for comfort food - more than happily held their own in the Victoria sponge eating competition but lost out slightly in the fruit cake department.

Both teams are looking forward to further matches in future seasons which will undoubtedly be both as firmly contested and as friendly.

Garden Party

After Friday's deluge, we were lucky to have a dry, if at times slightly chilly, day for the annual Garden Party on Saturday 20th August.

There was an excellent attendance with just a few members not being able to make it due to other commitments. This year's game of jenga resulted in a very impressive tower - see photos above by Judith Cundell and John Fogg - with some deft gameplay by Norma, Martin, Margaret and Len.

Following the delicious tea which everybody enjoyed out of doors, there was the draw for the raffle - three excellent bottles of vino from our wine expert Richard (unfortunately in France) - and then a couple of games of cricket, with noisy barracking from the ladies!

Some confusion towards the end of the day when it was

thought that the Garden Centre gates had been locked with a number of members' cars imprisoned resulted in a bit of an exodus and a frustrating evening for George who was trying to resolve the situation. Those few remaining though enjoyed a game of boule.

A good time was had by all and many members expressed their thanks to Diana and Jim for their kind hospitality and to the many contributors of tasty food.

Our Treasurer Len requests that any members with food expenses should either pass them to him or leave them posted on the clubroom noticeboard for him to collect - and by August 31st at the very latest please.

News of our members

Margaret Brown extends her thanks for the card and roses sent on the occasion of her XX birthday! Also birthday congratulations to Eve Buckingham and Ann Smith who have both reached significant numbers!

Joan Slow has had another spell in hospital. We wish her better health and look forward to seeing her soon..

Past member Jean Floyd is unable to play this year but sends her regards and hopes her legs will be better in time for next season.

New members are Peter Edwards, Rita Kingston and Gill Bennett - all of whom have soon made their mark and are enjoying our game.

And Tony Wells continues his marathon journey around Europe - regularly sending cards back - the recent ones from Provence, Florence, Tuscany, Lake Maggiore and Lake Garda.

Finally, our Chairman George Lawson is shortly to undergo a hip operation and we are sure all members will want to send him their very best wishes for successful surgery and a speedy recovery. He has been very restricted in his ability to play this season but he has been a



More Garden Party pics - left: our hostess Diana takes a humorous lesson in digital photography from John; right: the Lawsons and the Pengellys watching the jenga tower; below left: it's food time; below right: cricket umpire John under fire from the ladies team of Val, Norma, Margaret, Roz, Judith and Margaret.



stalwart when it has come to organising and scoring on match and tournament days. He is looking forward to playing again next season and he wishes it to be known that he does not propose to offer himself for re-election as Chairman now that he has completed three successful years in the post.

Which brings us to the Annual General Meeting to be held at Northall Village hall on Friday 18th November at 7.30pm, Please insert this date into your diaries and bear in mind that nomination of candidates for election as Officers must be made to the Secretary at least 14 days before the meeting.

Is the grass greener?

Occasionally, your Editors like to compare the facilities and lawns offered by other Croquet clubs they encounter on their travels. In this issue, the spotlight falls on Letchworth, the first Garden City.

Their Club was founded in 1987 and now has 57 members who pay a sub of £85 per annum, £140 for a married couple. The two lawns are in a secluded location and are leased from an adjoining Par 3 Golf Centre. Members are responsible for maintaining them. They have

Martin eyeing up the cricket 'field' prior to batting!



no clubhouse of their own but must walk to the Golf Centre to obtain water, to use toilets and to buy drinks/snacks at the cafe. There are three afternoons each week when members can play golf croquet as other times are reserved for association players. Our League team found the lawns to be cut very low and extremely fast but reasonably level.

Next year, Letchworth move to a brand new £1.5 million sports complex in Muddy Lane where they will have laser-levelled lawns at their disposal together with a clubhouse which they will share with the tennis and squash club, They have obtained from the City's Heritage Foundation a grant of £7,000, which is 50% of the cost of construction and project management of the two new lawns. Will the subs go up, we wonder?

Club Badges

Club Badges are now available and many took the opportunity to purchase at the AGM. They are 3ins in diameter, cloth embroidered and can be ironed on or sewn on to items of clothing. The cost per badge is £3.50. There are a limited number of badges displayed in a transparent envelope pinned to the rear noticeboard in the clubroom - you can take one or more from there and just leave your name and the correct money - or contact John Cundell on 756971.

Clubroom Keys

All members are welcome to a key to the clubroom at a small charge. If you wish to have a key please contact Len Buckingham on 01525 221079 or speak to him at the Park.

Walk on the Wildside

There is a sponsored walk on behalf of Keech Cottage Children's Hospice at Woburn Abbey on Sunday 25th September which some members may be interested in - perhaps a group of people may wish to take part. A notice with details is posted in the clubroom.

Newsletter on-line

If any members would like their newsletter delivered as a PDF on-line please email:

John.Cundell@nexusadsl7.demon.co.uk.

