

Leighton Linlade Croquet Club

2010 - 11th Annual General Meeting

MINUTES

Held on Friday 12th November at Northall Village Hall

1. Welcome by the Chairman

Tom welcomed 31 members and Marjorie Cliffe, our auditor, who has kindly agreed to present our prizes; also welcoming any new members who are attending for the first time. Tom also pointed out where there are repairs in progress to the floor requesting that everyone be careful not to trip over. Tom asked everyone if they could sign the attendance sheet being passed around and also said that everyone should have received an information pack containing the agenda and the reports of the Chairman, Secretary and the Treasurer.

2. Apologies for absence

Tom announced that he had invited Joan Slow and had recently received a call from her declining the invitation as she is ill. Also he had received apologies from Nigel and Julie Clark.

Roger said that he had received apologies from the following people: -

George & Margaret Lawson, Diana Phelps, Caroline Stroud, Denise Ewing, Rose Gillett, Erica Fogg, Gillian Antosiewicz, Roy & Joy Liggett, Ann & Vernon Smith, Yvonne Banks & Irene Davis.

3. Approve minutes of the 10th AGM (13.11.2009)

Tom asked if he could take the minutes of the last AGM as an accurate record of that meeting. Everyone at the meeting agreed and Tom signed the copy of the minutes of the 2009 AGM.

4. Adopt reports of the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer (inc. Annual Accounts)

Tom pointed out that these reports had been circulated to all members and hoped that everyone has had a chance to read them in advance.

For the Chairman, Secretary & Treasurer reports Tom wished to handle them as follows:

- a) Each of us in turn will present our report and then take questions in our turn.
- b) After all three of us have spoken Tom will ask for proposers, seconders and voting to adopt each report.
- c) Approval of the membership fee recommendation for 2011 will then have a separate seconder and voting, as the Treasurer will have proposed it.

4.1 Chairman's Report

Tom paid tributes to Len, Tony Wells and Roger, who through various personal difficulties have soldiered on with their roles for the Club. "Thank you".

He explained one of his difficulties during the year related to our relationship with Leighton Linlade Town Council on two particular issues.

4.1.1 Social Club

Tom explained that it was related to the hiring cost of the Pages Park Pavilion, which is not just for members of the croquet club, visitors are also welcome.

In March we found ourselves battling the imposition, retrospectively, of a 523% rise in the hire charge. He presented our case to the Town Council's Leisure & Community Committee and, thankfully, the increase was rescinded.

However, this decision only applied until April 2010. So, for this winter we needed to engage them afresh. Having put together an amended strategy, he again presented to the same committee on 25th October.

Prior to the meeting, Len especially did a great deal of researching of the costs of alternative venues. Tony Stammers and John Cundell chipped in. However, all along the preferred option was to remain at Page's Park because, whilst it is not a high quality venue, it has certain advantages. The research showed that to hire an alternative venue the minimum cost, for a two hour session, would be £18 compared to the £5.12 we had been paying. Via Tony there was the possibility of using the Bowls Club pavilion for an agreed donation.

The Council Leisure and Community Committee resolved that we would be charged £5.22 until 1st April 2011 and then £5.48 until April 2012. So we know where we stand for the next 18 months. The Officers hope you consider this a good result.

4.1.2 Formal Agreement with the Town Council

Tom had explained the background to this issue in his written report. On 27th September, the Town Council officials indicated that rather than an agreement that simply put down on paper what the Club has enjoyed for the last 10 years, they wanted the Club to pay a peppercorn rent but take over all the lawn maintenance and be responsible for making good any vandalism. Our General Committee met two days later on 29th September; as a result Tom wrote to the Council Officials dismissing the vandalism element but said we would investigate the other aspects of the option.

Tom had obtained a copy of the agreement between the tennis club and the Town Council as well as acknowledging complaints from within the croquet club as to the standard of the playing surface. The view was taken that we should avoid such an onerous imposition. In any case, the Council had failed to come back with their draft document.

But what of maintaining the lawns ourselves? Again from much research, it was concluded that we should look to contract out the work. However, if we did this the annual subscription would need to rise to £122.

Therefore, we looked at what we called a hybrid approach, with Club looking after treatments for the lawn – that's fertilising and weed killing etc. plus scarifying – plus we would do the white lining. Most importantly, in this strategy, the Council would continue to mow and water the lawns.

This approach, we calculated, could mean a subscription increase to £76 pa. Thanks again to people's time and effort, from the subscription rates for 17 other clubs, we deduced that the average is £112 pa.

So armed with the agreed strategy, he and Richard met the Council officials last Monday and proposed that the Croquet Club would look after the treatments and white lining AND pay them £1500 – this year's fee – plus 5% each year of the Agreement.

Where we now stand is that the officials have accepted “in principle” what I have described, subject to:

- a) Their internal discussions
- b) They will then re-draft the agreement we had previously produced for them and forward it for the Club’s agreement
- c) This then needs to go to their lawyers – then back to us – and finally before the Leisure & Community Committee on 14th February.
- d) The intention is that the Agreement takes effect from 1st April 2011.

Tom pointed out the implications for the Club?

- a. The agreement is for 6 years with what is known as a break clause after 3. This means that at the end of 3 years, either side can give the other 12 month’s notice but has to compensate the other by the subsequent 2 years fees. Therefore we have at least 4 years security of tenure but should have £3924.56 in the bank at 31st March 2015, in case we wish to pull out.
- b. Compared to the past, the Club would have to arrange and have the extra cost of lawn treatments and scarifying plus white lining.
- c. We would know what fees we are to pay for the next 6 years.

On the afternoon prior to the AGM the Town Council agreed to our proposal in principle and had re-drafted the agreement for our consideration.

Tom added a word of caution regarding the response from the Council to ensure that the wording ‘weekly mowing’ is retained and then asked if anyone had any questions.

Margaret Brown asked “*what will be the charges for next year*”?

Tom replied in saying that the charges for next season will be £1,575 – that is £1,500 (the 2010 Charge) plus 5%.

Elaine Newman asked, “*Regarding our use of a white lining machine, will we share a machine with others to minimise cost*”. Len answered by saying that “*he is following up several possibilities regarding shared use of a machine*”. John Cundell mentioned that it had been currently done every few weeks by the council.

John Thorp posed the question, regarding the ‘peppercorn option’ – “*is there someone around who would want to earn £1500 pa to mow the lawn*”. Len answered the question – “*we have been in touch with 5 contractors to potentially do our mowing and the cost of having it done is prohibitive*”. John Cundell added that the cost of the council mower maintenance was £1000pa.

Margaret Brown asked if, within the Agreement, “*Is the use of water & electricity included*”? Tom answered by saying that it is.

Peter Davis commented that our club is a bargain in that the Watford & Stony Stratford croquet clubs cost members £100pa.

Richard Keighley commented that it is important to build on the goodwill between our club and the Town Council built up over the 10 years.

Tom re-iterated that in general we will contract work out rather than ask our members to carry it out and whilst small tasks might be tackled by our members, mowing the lawns for example is 'a bridge too far'.

Tom concluded by asking the members present to take part this evening in a survey of members ages retaining anonymity just writing down your age and putting the slips in the box provided. The information gained from this will be used at the meeting with the Leisure & Community Committee on 14th February. Tom also explained that he is willing to continue with the specific project in dealing with the Town Council if the new Chairman and the Committee wish him to do so. He has not put his name forward to be on the Committee and does not wish to be co-opted. He would not be dealing with other issues with LLTC, e.g. the H&S Risk Assessment or, say, deficiencies with the toilets.

It was agreed by the members generally that a good deal had been obtained for members and the meeting endorsed the re-drafted agreement.

4.2 Secretary's Report

Roger thanked Tom Miller and Richard Keighley for the immense work they had carried out for well over a year now, with support from other members, in the negotiations with the Town Council which should give us a fine base for the future.

Roger also remarked that our newsletter is well respected and enjoyed not only by our club members, but also by many other clubs. It was this that prompted the decision to approach the CA assisted by Tom Miller to approach the CA suggesting that John Cundell be awarded a CA Diploma.

Tom added that our Town Council send a copy of our club newsletter to other Councils, clearly demonstrating the quality of our newsletter.

4.3 Treasurer's Report

Len started his report by stating that all members owed an awful lot to Tom & Richard for their superb work.

Len presented the audited accounts for the year ending 31st October 2010.

He informed us that our yearly fees will now have to be £65 and not £60 as he had recommended in his earlier report feeling however that this still represents good value for money. Maintaining the annual fee at this level does leave a shortfall of about £100 which will be made up from club funds.

Len advised us that it is not possible to predict what our annual fee will be in 2012 as we will get an idea throughout the 2011 season what costs are involved in maintaining our lawns.

He stated that in 2011 we will be paying the full Croquet Association levy (£7.30) as was agreed at previous AGM's; this is considered better value than separate insurance fees that would otherwise be necessary.

Len also pointed out that the Social Club annually raised about £400 for club funds.

He also suggested that advertising in our newsletter would raise funds for the club as well as trying to get a sponsor for the club. John Cundell suggested a cautious approach to these suggestions.

Eve mentioned that the Social Club is open to everyone, not just club members.

Roger proposed that both Len Buckingham & Irene Stevens have a free year for 2011 due to their inability to play during the 2010 season due to illness. This was seconded by David Ball and approved by all members.

Tom re-iterated that the agreement covers for a season of 29 weeks.

4.4 Reports Adoption

The reports just presented were then put to meeting for adoption.

Chairman's Report: Proposal to accept by David Ball and seconded by John Thorp and accepted unanimously.

Secretary's Report: Proposal to accept by Don Barrett and seconded by Eve Buckingham and accepted unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Proposal to accept by Val Jeffers and seconded by Brian Ferris and accepted unanimously.

5. Membership Fee for 2011

The Treasurer's proposed that the membership fee for 2011 be increased to £65 per member which was seconded by Margaret Brown and was accepted unanimously by the members.

6. Appointment of an auditor

Marjorie Cliffe has very kindly agreed to act for us again next year so Tom proposed Marjorie to be the auditor which was seconded by Richard. This was unanimously agreed by the members.

7. Election of the Officers – Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer

Tom announced that he is retiring as Chairman at this AGM. One nomination has been received for Chairman - David Ball. This was unanimously agreed by all members present. Tom said that he has agreed with David that he will take over as Chairman after the trophies have been presented.

Len and Roger said they are prepared to serve again for another year and have accordingly been proposed and seconded. There being no other nominations and all members present agreed with those appointments.

8. Election of the Members of the General Committee:

Tom pointed out that during the year Peter Davis was asked to take on a role external to the Club which, he felt, meant he could not continue to play his usual full role on our Committee, which was fully understood. Therefore, he stepped down from the committee part way through the year.

Also, Margaret Lawson indicated that if there was somebody to take her place, she would wish to step down at this meeting. Tom thanked them both for the service they have given the club.

Tom also said that all other members of the General Committee were willing to serve again. They have all been nominated along with John Thorp. They are John Cundell (as Vice Chairman), Tony Wells (as Fixtures Secretary), Eve Buckingham, Val Jeffers and Tony Stammers.

As there were no other nominations Tom asked the members for adoption which was unanimously agreed.

Tom also asked that if there is anyone else who would be willing to serve on the committee but is hiding their light under a bushel, he would be sure that David would be very pleased to hear from them.

Tom thanked the Committee for their commitment and patience in some rather lengthy meetings, while we wrestled with some difficult issues. Without your help the Officers would be struggling!

In addition, Tom stated we have the long list of specific, non-executive roles, without which the Club frankly just would not function. He was unaware that anyone of them wished to step down, and paid tribute to their unstinting help. A list will be given in the first Newsletter of 2011.

9. Presentation of awards

Tom announced that prior to the presentation of general awards he would like to make a special award to Richard Keighley.

Tom said that whilst there have been a number of people who have made significant contributions to the Club and helped me this year; there is one person who we must recognise as making a major input. He has very quietly, behind the scenes worked hard on all your behalves and given great help & support and, through his expertise, has saved us a lot of money. That is Richard Keighley. Richard was then presented with an award of a book on cricket which is another interest of Richard's.

Tom also said that earlier this year the Croquet Association re-published its Guide to Golf Croquet, which had been updated by our members, John & Richard and that we would like to have a copy of this book signed by both of them for the Club's archive.

Marjorie formally presented John Cundell with the CA Diploma which was awarded to John for his services to croquet.

Marjorie then presented the trophies for the 2010 season: -

Mix 'n Match Handicap Doubles Runners up	Peter Stevens and John Thorp Sheila Beal and Sally Clay
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Mix 'n Match Ladies Doubles Runners up	Eve Buckingham and Margaret Lawson Judith Pengelly and Caroline Stroud
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The John Fogg Trophy Runners up	David Ball and John Cundell Richard Keighley and Roy Kemp
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Handicap Singles Runner up	John Thorp John Cundell
Doubles Runners up	David and Jean Ball John Cundell and Tom Miller
Singles Runner up	David Ball Sally Clay

At this point, John Cundell & Len Buckingham re-iterated the appreciation felt by everyone about the work done by Tom & Richard this year. Marjorie then presented Tom with a lead crystal whisky glass engraved with the club logo and the words “Tom Miller O.B.E., Chairman 2009/10”.

Marjorie was then presented with a horticultural gift for both acting as our auditor and presenting our awards. Mention was made that Diana Phelps had been given a similar gift the previous day for allowing the club to use her house and garden for the Annual Garden Party.

10. Any other business:

David announced that the club annual dinner has been organised and will be held at Leighton Buzzard Golf Club on 25th March. Also, numbers are limited to 40 people so please put your names forward if you wish to go as soon as possible.

Tony Stammers explained the organisation of the raffle for the evening.

11. Closing remarks

Tom said that it truly has been an honour to be Chairman for the last two years. However, he is looking forward to returning to anonymity “on the back benches” and once again becoming the guy who turns up late, is a bit too enthusiastic and noisy on the lawns and is usually first to the cakes. He also said that last year the Chairman at Letchworth told him that our Club is a beacon for collective contribution to running a club.

Tom also commented that at the end of this week’s meeting with officials at the Town Council, the Deputy Town Clerk thanked our club for the approach we had taken and said it was very honourable; and if we are known as an honourable Club, that is enough for me and is a great reflection on you its members.

David then spoke as the new Chairman.

He initially again thanked Tom & Richard for their efforts during the year.

“Tom’s closing remarks a year ago were “this coming year, the theme is one of ‘what a fortunate club’ and we are going forward”.

Well – wasn’t he right and what a good year for the club and it’s members.

We have three lawns, two teams in the league, with the A team coming second in the league with the B team doing well towards the end of the season.

The A team travelled to Newcastle for the Murphy Trophy and came second.

We purchased equipment to assist in setting and adjusting the hoops.

Our club had individual members competing in competitions in Ipswich, Nottingham, Watford, Edgbaston and Hunstanton where Roger won the day and came home with an engraved trophy.

John Cundell and Richard Keighley updated the Third Edition of 'A Guide to Golf Croquet'.

We visited Hunstanton leaving the cup there but intending to be collecting it next year.

In general, there was a lot of fun and enjoyment and very competitive play amongst a few.

And to finish the season, well deserved diploma presented to John Cundell for his dedication to our club, the Croquet Association, and help to croquet in general.

Next year will be even better with lots more going on and recognition of our club amongst others.

On behalf of the committee and himself, David wished all those who do not attend our Wednesday morning club a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous and Healthy New Year and looked forward to seeing you on March 25th at the Annual Dinner and of course on the COURTS.”

The meeting closed at 9.02pm.