

Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club

Newsletter January 2003

NEW YEAR GREETINGS TO ONE AND ALL

Annual General Meeting

This went very smoothly and speedily, so quickly in fact that our visitors from Stoney Stratford who were interested in seeing how we run our AGM, missed it. However they arrived in time for the party and we were very pleased to see them.

The Officers for 2003

Chair - George Lawson
Secretary - Margaret Brown
Treasurer - Len Buckingham

Committee Members

Audrey Bunn, John Cundell, Valerie Jeffers, Richard Keighley, Una Pengelly, Diana Phelps and Joan Slow.

Publicity and Promotion

It was agreed that we should use the leaflet produced with the help of Margaret's son Julian for

publicity and recruitment. We shall try to acquire a trophy to be awarded to the winner of an annual Club tournament.

2003 Season

As Easter is late this year we shall probably open the season a couple of weeks before, weather permitting. Details after the new committee have met.

AGM Footnote

Margaret promises not to demonstrate her aerobatics skills at the party next year. Four weeks after the accident when her arms were beginning to feel more comfortable, the surgeons decided they'd have to do a better job and re-operated (on December 19th). We hope that the worst will be over when the plasters, wires etc. are removed on January 30th. Being Margaret however none of this stopped her typing this copy for this newsletter.

COMMITTEE NOTICE

Committee members are asked to note that the first meeting is Thursday, 27th Feb. at 7.30pm.

It will be held at Len and Eve Buckingham's home 2, St. Mary's Glebe, Eddlesborough.
Telephone: 221079.

Perhaps folk could arrange to share cars with someone who knows the way or who needs a lift?

NEWS OF MATCHES

George played in the FINAL of the Grassroots Competition and won 4 matches of 7 in the first round, so missing the semi-finals.

Much to her surprise, Margaret who went along to watch, found herself playing as a substitute for the Ickworth contingent who failed to turn up. She finished in the top 10 - well done!

George was just pipped into the last 4 by Sarah Martin from Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Representatives from seven clubs took part in what turned out to be a good day. Thank you George for representing us and doing so well.

MEMBERS NEWS

Special congratulations to Club Member Tom Miller, awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours List. This was for his services to the food industry

Erica and John have a new grand son, Rhys.

Margaret and Tony have a new grandson, named Alexander.

The Membership Fee for the new season is unchanged at £45.

Please send cheques made payable to L.L. Croquet Club
to The Secretary at 40, Miles Ave., Leighton Buzzard LU7 3LG

Tournament Trauma Part I

In September 2002 the East Anglia Croquet Federation organised a Golf Croquet Singles Competition at Ickworth House. This is the simple two part tale of a innocent bystander tricked into taking part.

It would be wrong to name names but if we were playing Happy Families then the Baker's daughter would be pretty high up the role call of the guilty.

You know how it is.

A typical Sunday pm in Pages Park. The merry sound of mallet on ball or ankle. The happy ring of ball hitting metal having failed to run the hoop. The torpid heat of the afternoon reinforced by the residual heat from the still smoldering cars and the gentle swish of BMX tyres on the newly sown lawn seed.

Offers Worth Refusing

"Would you like to go to the East Anglian Singles Competition at Ickworth?" Concentrating on lining yourself up for the shot of the century - you offer a muttered affirmative - you play - and realise that you need to wait for another century.

Weeks later the horrific truth dawns.

What you imagined would be a gentle afternoon, sun shining lovingly down on the stately pile behind you as you **watch** the committed striking their balls, turns into your worst nightmare. You are not watching - you are **COMPETING!**

Still - the Club Members do rally round. They find you mallets - they inflict handicaps on you - something you thought you had cunningly avoided this year. They cajole you to do your best - when what they mean is - don't let the side down. Storm clouds of potential disgrace gather above your head.

Try a Little Panic

Suddenly you realise that you don't know you know the rules properly. Are Leighton Club rules different from those of the civilised world? The paperwork arrives with its threat of Umpires and Dispute Procedures. What have you agreed to?

You cross the Baker's relative off your Christmas card list and set sail for Bury St Edmunds. Saintly Eddy may have met his Maker there but Mr. & Mrs. F., are going to

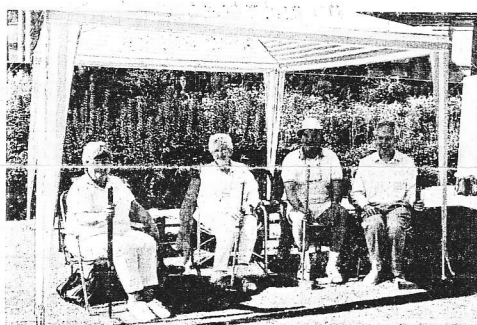
play for England, St George and their ever-diminishing dignity.

In the event it was all rather painless!

The setting was magnificent. The lawns were even rougher than Pages P., and the first warning you get is not about offending the dress-code or the rules of Croquet - it's about the price of a sandwich in the National Trust Coffee Shop!

First Blood

My starting match was with a seasoned player from north Bedfordshire. I apologised explaining that this was my first competition. I offered to throw myself on my sword if I inadvertently broke some obscure rule. She offered to invite our Club to play a match against her lot. I played a foul stroke - she told me to take it again. I started to relax and enjoy myself. She beat me. It did not matter because clearly this was all rather more relaxed that I could possibly imagine.



Erica, Diane, Richard and John fighting the good fight at Ickworth

Game followed game. The fire alarms went off and those of us not playing enjoyed watching Suffolk's finest firefighters race around the gravel paths. The evacuees from the non-existent flames crowded round the lawns until the all clear was sounded.

Lunchtime was an opportunity to watch some Association Croquet on the better lawns at the back of the house. Question? What's more ex-

citing - watching snooker on television or watching Association Croquet? Answer: The TV because you can get really emotionally involved in the commercial breaks as an alternative to watching one person chase balls around for a very long time.

A Winning Streak

After lunch - the pattern was very much the same. The opponents were just as friendly as before - even when we started to beat them! Victory was not exactly being snatched from the jaws of defeat but the underdogs were starting to bark back.

By this time it was clear that Richard was doing very well and looked destined for the semi-finals. Morale amongst the also-rans was definitely raising its little cheery head!

... And poised for triumphs to come, that, gentle reader is where you must wait for Part II of this thrilling tale. To be continued in our next edition.