



# LEIGHTON-LINSLADE CROQUET CLUB

Founded 2000

GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015  
At 12.00 midday - Page's Park pavilion

**Committee Members present:** -David Ball (chairman), Roger Stroud (secretary), Len Buckingham (treasurer), Eve Buckingham, John Cundell, Malcolm Kirby, John Thorp, Ross Bagni, Peter Cole, Sally Clay

## Minutes

### 1. Welcome

David opened the meeting and welcomed everyone at 12:10pm.

### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Sheila Guest.

### 3. Minutes of meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Minutes accepted and signed by David.

### 4. Matters arising & review of Actions (if not included below)

No matters arising.

### 5. Reports: -

#### **5.1 Secretary's report including correspondence to Club**

Correspondence received: -

##### a) Croquet Association

Ballot paper requested by CA regarding their proposals to change the constitution (see Appendix 1 of these minutes).

##### b) East Anglian Croquet Federation (EACF)

Club registration documents requiring payment of £20 and club details completion of their form. Payment has been made by Len and details completion by John C.

##### c) Tom Miller's Sports Council Report (see Appendix 2 of these minutes)

Roger congratulated John T of getting his award from the Sports Council and then John C summed up the report to the committee.

#### **5.2 Treasurer's report**

Len handed out copies of the latest balance sheet.

In addition, mentioned that we have purchased another mower for £499.

Regarding the secondary colour match balls that we are in the process of obtaining, the manufacturer's (Sunshiny in China) have replied to Len requesting that he buy them from the Croquet Association. Len went on to say that he will place the order with the CA today for £400.

#### **5.3 Membership Secretary's Report**

John C reported on the report from Judith - we have 27 paid up members, including 2 new members, and about 20 more are expected.

In addition a potential new member from Wingrave has made an enquiry.

#### **5.4 Sports Council Report (see Appendix 2)**

John T said that he told the Sports Council the grant they awarded our club would be used to contribute to our maintenance cost of the lawns.

Len said that he is already filling in an application for another grant regarding new balls that we are buying from the CA.

### **6. Official Opening**

David said that the Official Opening for the 2015 season will be on Sunday 5th April 2pm. carried out by Councillor Alan Brandham.

### **7. Fixtures**

#### **7.1 Murphy Shield**

John C reported that we have entered for this competition and have not yet received a response from the organisers.

#### **7.2 League Matches**

John T reported that nothing has been firmed up on; as yet just some provisional dates. He also mentioned that there is a change to the rules in the handicap league. The total of the team's handicaps must be a minimum of 16 with no player less than 3. John T also mentioned that the effective handicap system will carry on for 2015 but will most likely change for 2016.

#### **7.3 B Level**

John C reported that the response has been very good and we have 13 players who are definites. There is one space remaining.

#### **7.4 C Level**

John T said that he would like our club to email other local croquet clubs to advertise this event.

#### **7.5 Other Tournaments**

John T & David, who both have a handicap of 2, which means they cannot enter B Level tournaments, were describing the difficulties in entering the open tournaments suitable for that level of handicap.

#### **7.6 Friendlies**

John C gave out a latest diary dates which includes dates of Friendly matches already planned.

### **8. Lawns**

John C reported that we have until 25th March to mow the lawns and mark them out - so it was decided that we would mow the lawns this week with further mowing next week. John T said that using both mowers the three lawns could be mown in about 1.5 hours.

After discussion, it was decided to start marking out for the hoops and clearing out the clubroom on Monday 16th pm. David, Roger & Sally offered to be at the clubhouse at that time.

Malcolm said that he could assist John T in mowing the lawns on Wednesday 18th March.

John T reported that there is a possibility of getting a second hand petrol driven scarifier from the store where we recently bought the mower.

### **9. Social Club**

After discussion it was decided to end the weekly social club on Wednesday 1st April.

### **10. Web Site**

Roger spoke in favour of our club developing a web site; John C had researched how many croquet clubs registered with the CA have got their own web site and found this to be a little over 50%.

Ross added that it is important to develop this web site to be seen to be moving forward to the future, especially as Roger could develop this website.

The question of web site maintenance was asked and John C estimated that it would probably require about 2 hours per week to keep it up to date.

David added that on another committee he is involved with, that organisation have discussed having their own web site and feel that it is important to move in that direction.

Roger had estimated the cost to be about £80 per annum to pay the service provider and the meeting voted in favour of developing a web site allowing initially a maximum of £100 pa for the service provider.

## **11. Any other business**

### **10.1 Malcolm**

David said that 37 people would be attending the annual croquet dinner on Friday.

### **11.2 Peter**

Peter said that he is moving house and it was decided that if he initially pays the full subscription for the club membership, if he moves house before the end of the season he would be awarded a pro-rata refund.

### **11.3 David**

David repeated his request (which he made previously at our January meeting) for our club to write to the Council asking for permission for our elderly / infirm members to be allowed to drive through Pages Park and park vehicles at the club house.

Roger said that he is reluctant to write to the Council suggesting that would be dangerous for very elderly members to be driving through the park whilst there are families / young children in the park. Roger also said that comments have been made that if a member can play a game of croquet (estimated walking distance of 3/4 mile) then a walk of 200 yards from the car park to the club house should be manageable.

John T mentioned about the ruling in Cassiobury Park (Watford) in that whilst it is allowed to drive your car through the barrier to the croquet lawns, the maximum speed limit is 5mph and there must be a person walking in front of the car and that most of the route through the park is on a road.

John C said that it is important to know exactly what we are asking of the Council in terms of who could qualify to park at the club house, such as 'blue badge' holders for example.

Ross said that why don't we explain our problem to the Council asking them for advice and a possible solution.

It was agreed that the idea Ross put forward was acceptable, a vote was taken and that Roger would write to the Council with that in mind.

### **11.4 John Cundell**

John said that the Council had agreed that the lawn fences that are falling down would be replaced.

To date we still have some fences that are falling down. It was agreed that Roger would write to Ian Haynes requesting that these fences be replaced as soon as possible.

### **11.5 Sally**

Sally said that she would take a bottle of wine to the dinner on Friday to be used as a raffle prize.

## Gazette Article for Feb 2015

### Proposed changes to CA subscriptions and structure

As most of you will know by now, the CA Council is proposing some significant changes to our subscriptions and membership structure. We believe this is necessary in order to safeguard croquet's future throughout the country and at all levels of play, competitive and social. For a game such as ours to survive long term it requires constant effort towards development and publicity to attract new players. The CA has extensive programmes to achieve this, but to sustain them we need to ensure that the money available is sufficient. All indications are that the current subscription structure relies too heavily on tournament players, while current trends are for reduced tournament play – please see the last edition of the Gazette for a more complete breakdown of the issues. It is time we took action to address this.

Following my paper in the October Gazette regarding the proposed changes, I have been consulting with the Federations and have attended some of their AGMs to discuss the issues further. While it is clear that a number of you have concerns, I believe the majority support the plans and hence Council have decided to go ahead with the proposals as put forward at that time (and re-iterated below). We have also confirmed that this will be the subject of voting at a **Special General Meeting to be held at 11:15am at Hurlingham on Saturday 28 March 2015.**

The resolutions being put to the vote are on the formal agenda, a summary of which is published on pages 4 and 5 of the Croquet Gazette and the full version, including detailed constitutional changes, on the website. Individual Members wishing to vote in advance of the meeting can either do so online, or post the ballot paper, which you can cut out or download from the website. Member Clubs can only do so by post or by email (which must come from the club secretary, please).

Motion 1 is to allow the CA to rebalance subscriptions (increase club subscriptions while reducing individual tournament subscriptions), and will require a simple majority. Motions 2 and 3 are for changes to the CA constitution which therefore require 60% of votes cast to be in favour. The motions are phrased in the terms needed for the CA to be able to make the changes, and as such are relatively simple. They should be viewed in the light of our overall intentions, which are as follows:

(1) We introduce a two-tier club membership system. For smaller clubs that have fewer than two full-sized lawns, or access to their lawns only part-time, we hold membership fees at the current level (after inflation). These clubs will benefit from the other changes listed below, while not having to pay anything extra. For larger clubs we increase the fees paid per croquet playing member from the current level of £7.95 per head by up to £1 per head above inflation each year for the next five years.

(2) We make all croquet-playing club members eligible to become Individual Members of the CA with a vote at General Meetings as soon as is practicable (administration systems to handle the changes are likely to take two or three years to become fully operational). This will result in a roughly threefold increase in the CA's membership. For obvious reasons CA membership would apply only to club members for whom a "per capita" fee has been paid and thus non-playing members and members of clubs that are only Affiliate Members of the CA would be excluded. Clubs which do not wish to participate in this scheme will not be forced to do so, but this would mean that their members would lose out. Similarly, individuals may ask their clubs not to forward their details if they wish, but again this would mean they are not recognised as members.

(3) We distribute The Croquet Gazette to the enlarged membership as soon as is practicable. The best way to achieve this is under discussion.

(4) Allow the enlarged membership to enter tournaments in the CA fixtures book. We would enable this by increasing the levy payable by £5/day, while allowing tournament members a discounted entry of the same amount. Tournament members would also be given priority entry to them. This should help to ensure tournaments are fully subscribed.

(5) Once all club members are eligible to become members of the CA, we drop the system of clubs having a separate vote on CA issues, so that only individual members may vote. (Club voting was introduced because otherwise some clubs would not be properly represented, but this would no longer be the case under the new system.)

(6) Reduce other fees for tournament players over the five year period as far as is possible while balancing income.

For the scheme to succeed, I believe we will also need to ask Federations to ensure that all clubs belonging to a Federation also become members of the CA (where they are not already). We believe this is fair, considering the degree to which the CA supports Federation activities. It will remain an option to join as an affiliated club only, but the fee will increase to £50 per year (from £35). It should be noted that members of affiliated clubs would not benefit from the new individual CA membership as described above. These measures will be the subject of negotiation with the individual Federations over the forthcoming year.

Throughout the five-year implementation period of this plan, the CA would monitor the effects of the changes, and may recommend that the changes are halted if necessary.

If the changes go through, the CA will be seeking the help of club secretaries in maintaining the membership details. We plan to provide an on-line membership database facility which clubs can use and which we hope will help them in maintaining their own records. Clubs which use this facility will not then need to take any further action. For clubs not using the facility, we will need secretaries to enter or amend membership details on-line once a year, or to forward these details to the CA office.

Finally, I have heard a number of concerns regarding giving the CA email addresses and other personal details. I would therefore like to reassure members that all such data is held securely, password protected, and is not shared with any other parties except as needed for our own purposes (e.g. for the distribution of the Gazette). This facility has been in use for tournament members for some time, and we have had no issues with misuse of the data. Members can, of course, opt not to provide email addresses if they prefer, but our plan will be to increasingly use electronic means of notification for any upcoming issues or votes, so that it is possible they may miss important information if they choose to do this.

## Appendix 2

### Report to the Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club (LLCC) of the Leighton-Linslade & District Sports Council Committee meeting, held on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Note: This constitutes my full report but items 4, 8 & 10 were reported in my 21<sup>st</sup> January email.

- 1) In addition to the Chairman and Acting Secretary, there were 8 club representatives and Councillor Alan Brandham (Vice Chair of Leisure and Community Committee) in attendance.
- 2) Also Councillor Amanda Dodwell (Deputy Town Mayor), (deputising for the Mayor, Councillor Ray Berry, who was not able to attend due to a family bereavement) was in attendance to present "Service to Sport" Awards to Kerry Whitford (Leighton Fun Runners) and John Thorp (Leighton Linslade Croquet Club). She also presented grant awards to both club representatives (6 in number) and 2 individual grants. Councillor Dodwell then retired from the meeting along with the individually award winners.
- 3) John Thorp received a cheque for £300 on behalf of LLCC and explained that it would be used to offset some of the cost the Club incurs in maintaining our lawns.
- 4) The Cricket Club has negotiated with a training provider for two first aid courses to be held, in Leighton Buzzard, leading to the "First Aid at Work" certificate. They are offering places to other LL sports clubs. The charge is £60 per person.
- 5) Councillor Brandham encouraged Sports Clubs to use the Council's facilities e.g. web site, market place stalls (free to clubs?), entries in and publicity leaflets to advertise the clubs and their activities. He said, as we already know, Ian Haynes is the Council's contact at The White House.
- 6) Len will be pleased to know that the suggestion, from one club representative, that the annual membership fee of £10.00 should be increased was not endorsed by the Committee!
- 7) The Annual Subscriptions for 2015 should be paid to the Sports Council Treasurer by the end of May. I assume Len has his details.
- 8) A fresh round of grant awards is starting, with applications required by first week in April. I have arranged for a form to be sent to Len.
- 9) As per John Cundell's report to the LLCC General Committee meeting in January, there is a move to make Page's Park a cricket venue. However, this move was not necessarily initiated by the Town Council alone but by Bedfordshire also, in the light that Sport England are concerned that not much money is coming in to South West Bedfordshire. It is hoped grants will be forthcoming for both pitch and pavilion improvements
- 10) As an opportunity arose, I re-emphasised the problem of football being played on our lawns. I explained the problem of the quagmire 5-a-side pitch and our suggestion of an all weather surface. Whilst this does not fit Ian Haynes' agenda, it is possible he will have heard it for a second time, as he and Councillor Brandham were to meet on 22<sup>nd</sup> January.
- 11) Next meeting: Yet to be advised but likely end April/early May.