



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CROQUET CLUB

Lawns and Equipment Store Opening

16th July 2006

Programme

12-12:30pm	<i>Lunch</i>	
1:30pm	<i>Raffle</i>	
2pm	<i>Official Opening</i>	
	Welcome	Richard Clark <i>Chairman, Royal Tunbridge Wells Croquet Club</i>
	Address	Bernard Neal <i>President, Croquet Association</i>
	Address	Councillor Ron Weeden <i>Mayor, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council</i>
	"Running a hoop"	
	Wrap-up	Richard Clark
2:30pm	<i>Demonstrations and Fun Games</i>	
3pm	<i>Free Play</i>	
4-4:30pm	<i>Tea</i>	

Attendees

Royal Tunbridge Wells Croquet Club Richard Clark (Chairman), Roger Morris (Project Manager)
Mick Belcham (Secretary), John Timmis (Treasurer)
Jon Diamond, Frank Gunstone, John Hobbs, Colin Mabey,
Selwyn Ward (Committee)

Our Sponsors

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Councillor Ron Weeden (Mayor)
Mrs Barbara Weeden (Mayoress)
Councillor J E Scholes
Sue Latham
Councillor J E Scholes

Kent County Council
Awards For All
Gatwick Airport Trust
Croquet Association
South East Croquet Federation Michael Sander
Bernard Neal (President)
Richard Hilditch (Secretary)
Michael Hague (Development Officer)

Contractors

Judges Bryan Judges, Matt Judges
Rainmaker

Other

Calverley Park Residents Association Christopher Weller (Chairman)

Contact Information

Our secretary is Mick Belcham, phone 01892 520128 - our website is www.tunbridgewellscroquet.org.uk
The Croquet Association website is www.croquet.org.uk

The Project

It became apparent in 2004 that our lawns, patiently tended over the years to improve them, still showed the outlines of the old tennis courts from which they were developed and that the random irregularities in level were damaging our reputation with other clubs and frustrating our play. The AGM that year gave the go ahead to a project to improve the lawns. Roger Morris was appointed to manage the project and Chairman Richard Clark set about seeking funding.

After taking advice widely, we settled on a course of stripping our lawns, deep cultivation and improvement of the structure, laser-levelling and then re-seeding. To ensure the best results, we planned to carry out all this work in September 2005 which should allow us at least half a seasons play in 2006. An automatic watering system was designed to ensure good germination and future protection against drought.

The £25,000 costs for this work could only be met if our own fund raising could be supplemented by outside help and we are indebted to the following who contributed:

The Croquet Association	£6,000
Awards for All	£5,000
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	£2,750
Gatwick Airport Community Trust	£ 750
SE Federation of Croquet Clubs	£ 500
TOTAL	£15,000

The Club raised the balance of £10,000 itself, a tremendous effort for a small Club.

But we were not finished yet! New lawns demand the best of care if they are to be properly kept up to standard. We needed to buy new (or second hand) equipment to tend the grounds and we badly needed somewhere secure and on site to store it. Roger Morris designed and sought planning permission for an equipment store designed with materials and style fitting to sit alongside our handsome pavilion.

Again financial support was needed towards the £13,400 anticipated cost and this time Kent County Council provided £8,000 from their Sports Development Funding, and the Borough Council a further £3,000. Although the construction period this time was far from plain sailing, heroic efforts by Club Members led by Roger Morris saw us through, and gave us a building to be proud of.

The Club is deeply indebted to our Sponsors for the £26,000 donated, our contractors, Bryan Judges and Rainmaker, our members for the balance of £14,000 raised, and many too numerous to mention who devoted time, skills and effort of an order quite exceptional for a small club.

The lawns which promise to be of very high quality and the storage space stand as a testimony to all these efforts and will put Tunbridge Wells back firmly in the Regional Croquet scene.

Further Development

This Project has completed all the physical work to upgrade the club facilities. So we're intending to focus on spreading the word about Croquet in and around Tunbridge Wells over the next year or so.

This year we've a major new event – *Croquet in the Park* from 26th August to 3rd September. This will provide a showcase for Croquet in Calverley Grounds, using our new lawns and also the old Bowling Green. We're planning a range of activities; tournaments for experienced players in both Association and Golf Croquet, an Open Day on Bank Holiday Monday and our *Community and Corporate Challenge* (supported by the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and the Kent and Sussex Courier). The *Challenge* is a competition for novice players in the evenings from 29th August to 1st September.

We're also participating in *Sport 2006*, being held at Groombridge on 19th/20th August. This will allow us to showcase Croquet to a large number of people interested in sports in SE England.

Club History

Tunbridge Wells Croquet Club was founded in the mid 1960s by Gerald Williams, a croquet enthusiast and member of the Croquet Association, in the grounds of his mansion at Shernfold Park, Frant. He established two lawns and a clubhouse for the enjoyment of relations and friends. The setting was delightful - fringed by magnificent fir trees. Tunbridge Wells, being the nearest town, seemed a logical choice for the naming of the club.

When Gerald Williams sold the mansion to a property developer to be converted into apartments, he stipulated that the croquet club was to continue. This verbal agreement, although not legally binding, was honoured, the club paying a peppercorn rent to the Residents' Association and the club continued to operate with a modest membership for many years.

In 1987 some 70 ladies from the WI had had an introduction to the game at the club! With only modest club funds available, the clubhouse roof was renewed. However, one week later, during the night of the 18th October, an infamous hurricane devastated South East England. Forty trees in Shernfold Park were uprooted, many falling across the croquet lawns. One fell across the new clubhouse roof rendering the building a 'write-off'.

During the next two seasons, the club struggled to survive, repairing the lawns as finances would allow; but in February 1989, a further storm brought down two additional fir trees across the lawns and neither the club nor the Residents' Association had sufficient funds to repair the damage.

We then approached Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to request a venue for croquet within the borough. For the 1989 season, the Council allowed a corner of grass at Hawkenbury Recreation Ground to be set aside, with the use of a room in the communal clubhouse. Although the lawns were far below standard, the club was able to survive but it was difficult to attract new members, due to the poor facilities. At this time the word 'Royal' was added to the title as the club was sited in the Royal Borough.

In 1991 the Abbey Challenge Cup at Southwick was won for the third successive year by a RTWCC player - this time John Hobbs and Peter Howell became National Veteran Champion.

In 1994, the Council offered the under-used tennis courts in Calverley Park ground and the club took over three lawns as from 1st May 1994, paying a peppercorn rent and thereafter taking on the responsibility of building a clubhouse and maintaining the lawns.

Work on the clubhouse commenced on 17th August 1994 and was opened by TV personality Jilly Golden on 3rd June 1995, in the presence of the Mayor and Mayoress, heralding a new era for the club. The cost of the club-house was donated by Hazel Moss-Davies (some £30,000!) and the carpets provided/laid by Calverley Carpets.

In both 1996 and 1997 parties of French tourists visit the club and we also hold our first two-day tournament. Further progress is shown in 1999 with many wins by club members at external tournaments, including Miriam Reader and Peter Howell as runners-up in the National Veterans Doubles.

In 2001, after a period of 16 years as Chairman, Peter Howell retires and is succeeded by John Hobbs. Honeygrove Property donate a silver cup for the Open Advanced tournament.

2004 showed an increase in membership to over 50 for the first time. Richard Clark takes over as Chairman and Hazel Moss-Davies is made the third Life Honorary member on her retirement from the club.

And then there was the Lawn project! 2005 saw the initiation AND completion of the project over the winter to relay all 3 lawns and the building of an Equipment Store, mostly handled by our able Project Manager Roger Morris.

About Croquet

The main variations are Association Croquet and Golf Croquet. Association Croquet is more the game for the thinking person, who is happy to take longer to learn the game and its subtleties. It is often described as being akin to Snooker played on grass. Golf Croquet is a very popular sociable game, easier to learn and played at a faster pace.

Both games are played with the same equipment (four balls, Blue and Black versus Red and Yellow) and as either singles or doubles. Both games require great skill to compete at the top level and both are played at International and World levels.

Association Croquet

Each ball must run a set course, as shown, going through each hoop twice in a specific order and direction and then hitting the peg. The side which achieves this with both balls wins the game.

A ball scores a hoop when it passes right through a hoop in its correct direction in one or more strokes. The hoop is scored whether the ball is struck directly by the player or by another ball.

Coloured clips are placed on the hoops or peg to indicate the next hoop for each ball. The clips are placed on the top of a hoop for the first six hoops and on the side of the hoop for the last six.

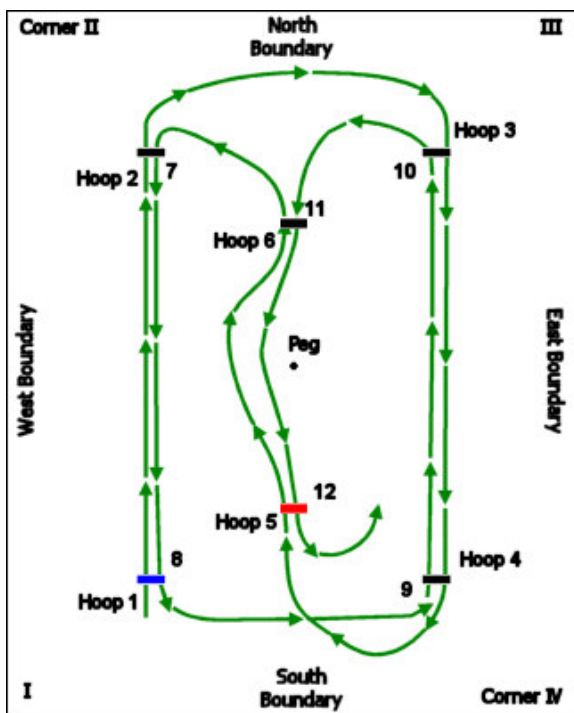
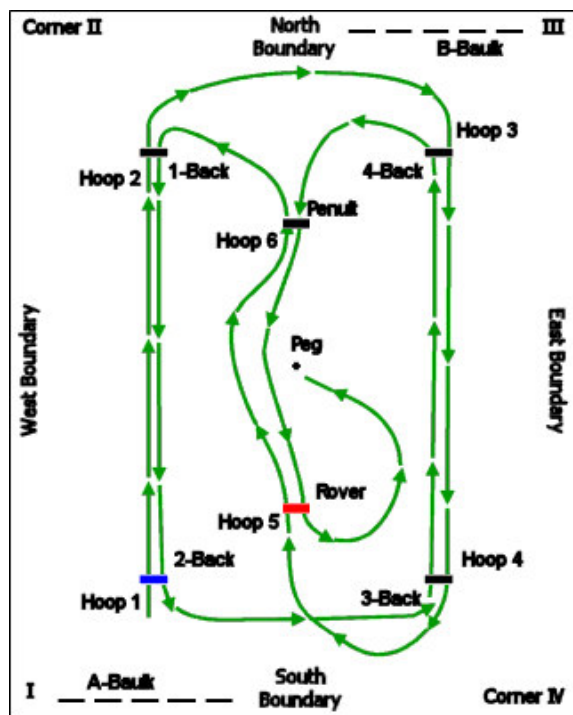
In the first four turns the four balls are played from one of the Baulk lines at each end of the court. Once the four balls are on the court a side chooses which of its two balls it plays in each turn. A turn consists initially of one stroke only, but extra strokes can be earned in two ways:

- If a player's ball runs a hoop
- If a player's ball hits another ball ('makes a roquet'), the striker's ball is placed in contact with the other ball and then hit so that the other ball moves ('takes croquet'). The player is then entitled to one further stroke.

A player may roquet and thus take croquet from each of the other three balls in succession in any turn; each time the player's ball runs a hoop this process repeats. Thus, by a combination of taking croquet and running hoops, a series of hoops can be scored in a turn ('a break'). A turn ends when the player has made all the strokes to which he is entitled, or sends a ball off court when taking croquet, or makes a fault.

At the end of each stroke any ball which has been sent off or is less than a yard from the boundary, except the player's own ball, is placed on the yard-line. When a ball has run its last hoop it becomes a 'rover ball' and is removed from the court by the player hitting it onto the peg or by being hit onto the peg by another rover ball.

Association Croquet is in essence a tactical struggle with each player trying to manoeuvre **all** the balls to make points for his side whilst restricting their opponent's chances of doing the same.



Golf Croquet

Each side plays alternately in rotation: blue (always starts), red, black, yellow. Each turn consists of one stroke only: no extra turn is gained by running a hoop or hitting another ball.

The opening shots are played from within one yard of Corner IV, and the players run the hoops in order from 1 to 12. The side that first gets a ball completely through a hoop scores that point and then all balls go for the next hoop in order. A deciding hoop (3) is run if the scores are equal at this point, making thirteen. The winner is the side that scores the most points.

A player may proceed towards the next hoop before the previous hoop is run, but not more than half-way. A ball that goes off the court is replaced on the boundary where it went off.

If a player plays out of sequence and it is noticed before the opponent plays, the opponent may either have the balls left where they are or replaced where they were before the error, and the opponent then continues play with either of his balls. If it isn't noticed immediately there are complicated rules for deciding the implications.