



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CROQUET CLUB

Newsletter - February 2005

Welcome to the new season!

2005 promises to be a significant year for the Club as we plan a major improvement to our lawns. Much work has been done since club members unanimously backed plans put to the AGM to level and re-seed the lawns and install a watering system. We have taken advice from the Croquet Association, from several clubs with recent relevant experience, from the Sports Turf Research Institute and from leading contractors and suppliers in the field.

The project is taking shape rapidly now and we anticipate work starting in mid-September in order to give the maximum time for the turf to get established before May of 2006. We have a tight schedule to meet if we are to complete specifications, obtain tenders and consents in order to start in time, but most importantly now need to secure the necessary funding.

We need partners in funding. We have submitted grant applications to the Croquet Association and South East Federation, to the Gatwick Airport Community Trust, the Borough Council and Awards For All (the Lottery Commission). We await forms from Kent County Council to apply to their Community grant fund.

It is at this stage difficult to estimate our likely level of success. The Borough Council is yet to sanction a programme of grants for 2005/6 but the Croquet Association has an enthusiastic recommendation from its Development Committee to grant us £6,000. That represents, together with the £4,000 we have already in the bank, a sound start.

We should at this stage aim to raise £20,000 in total to be sure of realising the complete scheme and to allow for contingencies. If, as seems most likely, the CA does as it is being recommended, we are halfway there, and with reasonable hopes of some success with some at least of our other applications, we now need to consider carefully how we can raise the balance ourselves.

The Committee is now appealing to all members, as we agreed at the AGM, to supplement their subscriptions for this year with a voluntary donation to the Development Fund. Please remember that for each Tax Payer contribution of £10, the Inland Revenue will return us a further £2.80 (and if you're a higher rate tax payer you also get a £2.32 tax rebate). If our membership of 50 raised £4,000, our total income would be boosted to more than £5,000.

Of course we appreciate that not all members are in a position to be generous in their donations, but many of us are, and we look to them to help us invest in the future strength of the club. Our subscription level has again been kept unchanged - and at a level very significantly below what it would cost to belong to a golf club or to a health club. Please be as generous as you can.

It remains the Committee's intention to call a special General Meeting to consider the final plans and the funding outcomes (probably in June) before committing us to expenditure.

The attached proforma from our Treasurer now invites you to

- renew your Annual Subscription, due now
- make a supplementary donation (attracting a tax rebate) to Club Funds, and

- indicate your willingness to give a further donation (also attracting a tax rebate) if the Special General Meeting gives the go-ahead to the project.

Last year saw a welcome rise in our membership from 35 at the beginning of the year to 54 at the end. Let us all try to bring along friends, encourage others to come to the Open Days planned, to experience the fun and friendship we enjoy. We would like to see our membership grow to 75 by 2006, and with improved facilities to offer, that should be attainable. It would also give us a securer financial base as well as strengthening our playing skills.

The Committee has looked at the Club's strong points and its weaker ones and how we might develop further. We see the club as a friendly one with a particular strength in our Club afternoon structure. We feel we could do more to strengthen our standing in competitive play and in introducing those who have mastered Golf Croquet to the rewarding skills of the Association game.

We will develop a Thursday evening session for new and improving Association players to match the Club afternoon approach to Golf Croquet. Do come along.

We also have given thought to how we might build on the social atmosphere Club Afternoons generate, particularly by organising some events which will serve to let us meet each other out of season. Do please come along to our first informal Pub Lunch at the Hay Wagon, Hartfield on 31st March at 12:30.

Also, watch out for an early season Club Day on 10th April with a soup and ploughman's lunch to fortify us as we get out on the lawns again. To assist with logistics, please let Jon Diamond know if you're planning to attend either of these events.

For more details on these and other events please visit our website <http://www/tunbridgewellscroquet.org.uk>

As a Club, may we grow in numbers and be business-like and successful in our endeavours to raise the standards of our facilities. I wish all members a season of success on the lawn and plenty of good fellowship to go with it.

Richard Clark

Chairman