



NEWSLETTER

March 2009

From The Chairman



It's that time of year again! The grass is finally beginning to grow enough to require mowing, so we'll shortly be starting our Official Season, despite the fact that some stalwarts have been playing throughout the winter and we've had two special *Alex* days.

According to our current plans, and obviously depending on the weather, we're officially opening the season on 5th April. See below for more details.

We've scheduled Open Days on the first Sundays of May, July and August (but *not* June as we're hosting the Kent Cup then). Please invite anyone you know to these, so that newcomers can be made specially welcome. Supplies of an invitation card for the Open Days for you to hand out will be available shortly in the Club House.

Just a reminder - we're not allowed to entertain people who aren't members' guests. We've acquired some Visitors Books, so please can you ensure that everyone who comes into the Club House/Pavilion or plays on the lawns is signed in. Hopefully, Mick Greagsby will be able follow up visitors to ensure that they actually join as members as soon as possible, so make sure you've got sufficient details written down!

On a more mundane note: I've removed some clothing and sports shoes/sandals that were left over the winter in the Men's Changing Room. Please let me know if you're claiming any item, otherwise they'll be disposed on in 3 months time.

Finally, sadly, I have to report that Colin Mabey, a long-time member of our club and a committee member, died in the middle of March, after a short illness. Our thoughts are with his wife Sue, who was also a member of our club.

Now it's time to oil your mallet, practise a bit, sign up for the coaching we all need, and get stuck in. I hope to see you all on the lawns very shortly. Oh, and in case I forgot, invite all your friends to join in too.....

Jon Diamond

Winter News

The AGM in November managed to take place without any catering diversions. Thanks to Kate Sander for the really excellent venison pie.

Despite much trepidation over the weather forecast, with the 5-day forecasts showing freezing weather for many days, 20 people came to our first ever Frostbite Challenge on 2nd January! The weather was only about 4-5 degrees, but as the picture on our website shows the sun even came out for the occasion. Plenty of croquet was played with two separate events running side-by-side - Golf Croquet Handicap Doubles with 8 players and One Ball also with 8 players. According to the results sheet Gerald White and Val Rocca won the Golf having won both their games and Mark Houslop won the One Ball, winning all his 5 games. Thanks to Alex Jardine for organising the event and Elaine Houslop

for the hot soup and organising the variety of other food available for lunch. A good time was had by all..

Our Valentine's Day one had to be cancelled, due to the weather, but the Ides of March had 16 players on the lawns, also in good weather.

The First Flight of the Desert Classic Association Rules Croquet Tournament, played at Mission Hills in California, was won by our very own Mick Greagsby. In the final he played the lowest handicap in the flight (Jon Essick - ranked 61 in the USA/516 in the world) and won 13-11! And this with a dodgy shoulder and a split mallet head. (Yes, John Hobb's replacement did arrive in time, but he didn't want to change it.) All this under clear blue skies and temperatures in the 70's, life is so hard!



Aaron Westerby lost in the second round of the Knock-Out phase of the New Zealand Open to the eventual winner, Stephen Mulliner from England - 17-26, 26-22, 26-19. Aaron finished up 7th overall and winner of the Z-event. He also won the Doubles with Bob Jackson.

Many people attended what is by now almost a traditional event – the Winter Warmer Chili in February at the Houslop's.

The Sussex County Golf Inter-Club tournament is a new event as part of Southwick's Winter Programme. With only five lawns available it was restricted to 6 teams of four, playing a Doubles and two Singles in each round. Despite the awful weather in the afternoon it was enjoyed by all, and won by the local team, with 5 straight wins. Our team consisting of Jon Diamond, John Hobbs, Derek Heath and Miriam Reader won three of our matches, finishing up second equal.

Opening Day

Opening Day will be Sunday 5 April and, apart from the social atmosphere and the food, starting at about 10am the main event will be a heat of the Winchester One-ball Charity Championship Handicap (the *Cryptorchid* for the technically-minded), the whole event of which is being run in aid of Cancer Research UK – a minimum donation of £3 per player is required.

One Ball is a cross between Association and Golf with, obviously, each player only having one ball each on the lawn and the first player to run all 12 hoops and hit the peg wins. There's a premium on positioning of the ball and running hoops, as in Golf, and the normal Association break play is very limited. It will be played using 1/3 of normal Association handicaps. Of course, you can always play Golf instead if that's your forte, as one lawn will be dedicated to you.

Kate Sander is providing a Soup and Ploughman's lunch (cost £5) for Opening Day at about 1pm, so please use the sign-up sheet to reserve your place or just phone/email Alex Jardine to say you're coming and let him know which event you'll be playing in.

Don't forget to look at the website for updated information on this, as in all club activities.

Secretary's Notes

In case you haven't noticed Dan Long has fully taken over as Membership Secretary! If you haven't paid your subscription yet there's still time. Please send the form, together with payment, to Dan as soon as possible, so that we can make the draw for our internal competitions shortly and get our fixtures organised.

More keys have been cut for the Pavilion by the Bowls Lawn, but there's one on the Notice Board in the Club House. It's very important that we lock the Pavilion (and the outside Gents toilet) after use, and return the key to the Club House if it's taken from there.

If you're playing an internal match you should reserve a lawn in advance in the Diary Book in the Club House. You may have to double-bank or play on the Bowling Green (lawn 4 left/right), especially if a match is in progress. Please remember that ALL lawns are expected to be in use during Tournaments and on main club afternoons. On days when we've got other events scheduled at least one main lawn **should** be available, but the Bowling Green will **always** be available, except during certain tournaments. Don't forget that the master club diary is on the website, so you can always check there before turning up on spec.

Finally, the Catering Price List has been revised, so please check the new prices!

Mick Belcham

Lawns Report

Our lawns have come through the very wet winter reasonably well. Our major problem is poor drainage on the northern half on lawns 2 & 3. The ground has remained soggy for some months and grass growth is poor. The drain we installed last year has helped to dispose of water coming down the bank and works well in periods of heavy rain but fails to adequately drain the whole area. In an attempt to improve the drainage we have deep tined the lawns to a depth of over 200mm on centres of 100mm - some 250,000 holes. This will also improve the aeration and promote root growth which is essential for a good lawn.

Norman has commenced the spring maintenance programme by first treating the moss that has appeared over the winter. Scarifying is the next step to remove the dead moss and dead grass or thatch. The lawns will then receive a spring feed to boost growth followed by regular cutting by Tony. Further scarification and slitting will be carried out over the next few months. The lawns remain flat and should be in good condition for play during 2009.

You can also help in the care of lawns by avoiding playing on lawns showing signs of wear around the hoops, avoiding play after heavy rain, only practising jump shots off the normal playing area and marking balls with the plastic markers not coins.

Norman and Tony will do the majority of lawn maintenance work but we still need volunteers to assist Norman with occasional tasks. If you are able to assist contact Roger or Norman.

Despite what you may have heard the Borough Council will continue to let us use the Bowling Green Pavilion, albeit with it mostly boarded up and we therefore won't be using it for tea/coffee etc. We haven't done any work to the Bowling Green over the winter, but will be doing some shortly to bring it up to scratch for the season.

Divot repairers are now available in the Club House, price £3. These should be a part of everyone's kit bag, so that if you (accidentally of course) break the surface of the lawn you can do what all golfers do – repair the surface by drawing the two sides of the break together again. This will prevent your fault from affecting other people.

Roger Morris

Handicapping

We want all players to keep a card, available in the Club House - White for Association and Green for Golf, and record on them all the singles games you play. For club competitions, tournaments and any external games, you will use the system of adding or subtracting points after each game. You don't need to record friendly games, but it would be helpful for adjusting your handicap if you do so (without changing the index).

This means that if you play only friendlies or doubles you won't have any automatic change to your handicap. However, if you are improving and require a lower handicap before you start playing 'serious' games, then the results of all your friendlies will help decide on any necessary adjustment to your handicap. John Hobbs (as club handicapper), will do the adjusting, assisted by Frank Gunstone and Derek Heath, for Golf Croquet.

Law Changes

There don't appear to be any this year - hooray!

Copies of the Golf Rules are available (price £2.50) – some people have one already, so just ask.

Just a few reminders about some of the laws that some of our lesser experienced players are not terribly good at observing:

- ◆ you mustn't hit your ball twice (a “double tap”), except this is OK when making a roquet in Association. This usually happens when balls are close together and you're not hitting at a tangent.
- ◆ you mustn't have the ball in contact with the mallet and hoop simultaneously (a “crush” shot). This usually happens when you're trying to run a hoop from a short distance and you follow through, not playing a stop shot.
- ◆ in Association it's part of the laws of the game that when placing a ball on the yard line that you do so when facing out from the lawn! The point of this is that there is then no question as to whether the ball is placed to your advantage as you can't see the other balls.

If there's any doubt about any shot, especially the situations above, when you're playing in a tournament or a match you should always call for a referee, if there is one available, to observe the shot. In any other game or if there isn't a referee or experienced player around to observe, then you should get your opponent (as he is a joint referee of the game with you) to observe closely. In that latter event you must accept his decision as to whether the shot was a fault or not.

Coaching

Coaching for beginners and high-bisquers in both codes will be masterminded by Richard Clark this year. He's not planning a formal schedule, but will no doubt be around quite a lot during various club sessions. If you'd like some coaching please approach him directly and let him know your interests.

Improvers should keep their Tuesday evenings clear for alternate Golf (1st and 3rd weeks in month) and Association (2nd and 4th) to be master-minded by Alex Jardine. These sessions are planned to start just after 6pm (say 6:15pm), so that you don't have to pay for parking!

While it's not exactly coaching as we know it, Jim, it is also hoped that single-figure handicaps will play Advanced games on a Monday evening, with some mutual exchanges of views and shoulders to lean on after the weekend's disasters (or otherwise, of course, if you're very lucky).

Don't forget there are many courses being run at Southwick – see the Diary for more details. In particular, there are some Golf courses on 15/16 April for which you should apply quickly.

Competitions and Tournaments

First of all, we need all your Renewal Registrations in so that we can do the draws for the Internal Year-long competitions that you will all be entering (lots, I hope ;-)

Apart from those events in the CA calendar which are already public, the South-East Federation Calendar has now been published and is on our notice-board and included in our Diary, as well as on their website soon. Please give these events a go as they are genuinely friendly and gentle ways of extending your croquet experience.

Next up will be the Inter-Club matches. In Association, we will be playing in the Croquet Association Mary Rose competition and **three** South East Croquet Federation (SECF) leagues, the A, U and B and I will be chasing for some commitment from those available to play.

The A league is new for this year and is for the Advanced game, so we expect to put out our strongest team. The U league is Handicap, so we can put in people of any strength and the B league is intended for high handicap players (the team must have a total handicap of at least 48 when the match is **arranged**).

The SECF B league exists for beginners to have the fun of playing Association against members of other clubs and visiting their premises to see how other clubs do things. Although we try to win these games that comes second to giving members the experience.

We've entered teams into two SECF events at Southwick – Association on 9th/10th May and Golf on 9th August. Please help if you're contacted by one of our captains. We haven't entered a team for the Ladies Day as we don't have enough ladies playing Association to put up a team.. However, if you'd like to play please contact me and I'll see what we can organise.

All players are welcome to our fourth one-day Open Golf Croquet handicap event on Saturday 27th June, our Open Handicap Association Croquet event on Saturday/Sunday 26th/27th September and our two-day Open Advanced Croquet event on Saturday/Sunday 12th/13th September.

For higher handicap players an Open Handicap Association Croquet event will take place on Saturday 22nd August (Handicap 16+) and an internal High Bisquers sometime in July (date to be arranged).

New for this year is an Open Level Golf Croquet event on Bank Holiday Monday 4th May, for players with a Golf handicap of 5 or more. This is a great opportunity to introduce you to competitive tournament play in a controlled environment, with some non-TW players hopefully – there will probably be 6 or 7 games, starting at 9:30am and finishing about 5pm. Enter now!

Entry forms for all our Open events are on the website and in the Club House on the left hand wall above the mug shots. Please send them in, with your payment, to me as soon as possible.

Finally, the Kent Cup (Association) is being held at Tunbridge Wells on 6th/7th June. The Kent Cup (Golf) will be at Ramsgate on Sunday 9th July, please see the flyer in the Clubhouse for details of how to enter.

Alex Jardine

Club Afternoons and Friendlies

Frank Gunstone is continuing to run, with help from others, the main Club afternoons on Wednesday and Sunday, generally starting at 2pm with tea at about 3.30 and continuing until early evening, commencing on 8th April. Golf Croquet is the primary game on these afternoons, with the overall emphasis of club afternoons being fun and enjoyment in a friendly atmosphere. We'll also be encouraging competitive singles play and trying to improve your playing skills.

Club afternoons will be held on both the Bowling Green and on the Main Lawns subject to lawn conditions and numbers attending. Please observe the notices on the Notice Board as we may close an individual lawn from time to time to allow for maintenance, even the wear etc.

Roger Morris will be co-ordinating a weekly competitive singles Golf afternoon, timing yet to be decided.

We're planning friendly games with local clubs and visits to National Trust properties (Ightham Mote, Chartwell and new for this year – Penshurst Place) for demonstration games and promotion of croquet. If you're interested in participating, or have suggestions about possible friendlies, please contact Duncan Cox ASAP.

The first friendly has been organised as Golf Croquet at Bromley on 27th April, for up to 8 people. If you're interested in playing please contact Duncan.

We'll be revisiting Penshurst Place for the second year on Sunday 7th June for a public demonstration afternoon. They're paying us a considerable sum for the privilege, so we're looking for volunteers to help. If you can please contact Mick Greagsby (who negotiated the deal).

Corporate Challenge

Following a great third year, we'll be running our *Corporate Challenge* again, on one evening again (Friday 19th June) with a maximum of 20 teams. This is a fun event for **any** organisation (company, volunteer, sports etc.) or even a family, to form teams of two players – although we're targeting companies as our marketing effort. Multiple entries per organisation are encouraged (perhaps as an internal friendly competition?) with a nominal charge of £15 per team. Full instruction is given at the start of the evening and we provide assistance during the games.

If you know of anyone who might be interested in learning about Croquet, playing in or sponsoring the *Corporate Challenge* please let Mick Belcham or Jon Diamond know. Full details and entry forms are on our website and in the Club House. Please put 19th June in your diary.

Social

Our successful programme of pub lunches continued over the winter and Elaine and Mark Houslop hosted another successful Winter Chilli. Hopefully, we'll repeat these next winter.

Due to the earlier start to the season than predicted last autumn, we've decided to cancel the final pub lunch for 2008/9 on 2nd April at a location TBA!

Our current ideas for the summer are to have another BBQ mid-summer. Perhaps also something in the evening after the Croquet Challenge? If you have any ideas or want to help in some way please let Jon or Elaine know.

Cleaning

Roger Morris has repaired the Equipment Store door and Jeff Chapman has painted the hoops and will do other bits and pieces. A spring-clean is also planned before the Opening Day.

So please help to keep the Club neat and tidy! We've had a number of occasions over the winter when it's been left in an unsatisfactory condition. If you follow these rules then we'll all benefit:

- wash up and put away all cups, saucers etc. (glasses upside down please to minimise dust)
- if the waste bin is full take the rubbish away and dispose of it, putting in a new liner (stocks under sink)
- if coffee, tea, sugar, milk or biscuits are running out either replace them (taking money from the pot) or let Elaine Houslop know

A reminder about this will be put on the Notice Board in the Club House, next to a similar one about Lawn Care.

We've also put up a Cleaning Rota sign-up sheet on the Notice Board. Please help to ensure that the club house remains a clean and tidy place by volunteering for at least one week of the season.

Club Uniforms and Our On-Line Store

Since we changed our logo a few years ago the only item that we've been able to provide to our members with the new logo on was an iron-on transfer (available in the club house). This has been somewhat limiting, especially for those members playing in one of our teams.

This transfer is still available until stocks run out, but we're now able to offer a range of white tops for both men and women with the new logo already printed on. Rather than order a large stock for ourselves, with all the cost and complications that that involves, we are providing a clothing ordering service via an on-line store provided by another company (spreadshirt.net). Our particular store has been set up specifically to include items suitable for our members with our logo on - especially good as a uniform for members who are playing in one of our teams...

This store may be accessed via a new page (click on Buy... on the left hand menu) on our website that has more detail on this and some other things you may need to buy to help you play (better).

Please note that

- ◆ there is a standard delivery charge (currently £4) so it might be worthwhile for members to get together to order a number of items at the same time
- ◆ I've tried as far as possible to position the badge on the tops at a suitable size and position, but it isn't possible to see EXACTLY what it's like without getting an item delivered. So, if you get an item and think the logo should be slightly smaller/larger or moved a bit up/down/left/right please let me know as soon as possible after you receive your order.
- ◆ we're limited by the items supplied by spreadshirt.net, so can't provide wet gear or sweaters or other such stuff.

In addition to the clothing there are a few other items that members might wish to purchase with the logo on - a tote bag, mug and metal badges of two sizes (50mm and 32mm).

I'll be leaving a small number of badges (price £2 for the large and £1.50 for the small) in the club house for ad-hoc purchases.

One item we haven't produced that some other clubs have is an enamel badge at (say) 32mm in size, which would be better quality than the metal one here. If there is sufficient demand then we'll consider doing so, but this would probably require us to order a minimum quantity of 200 and retail to members at about £3.50. Please contact me if you'd like us to produce these.

Jon Diamond

Thinking (from the BBC website)

Golfers who think too much about their technique between shots could be seriously affecting their performance, a study has suggested. St Andrews University and US scientists said they had established that too much analysis made the golfer's game worse. They said thinking too much about the previous shot can disrupt performance.

In total, 80 golfers were given shots to practise until they got it right. Those who discussed their putting between strokes took twice as long. The study found that when the mix of skilled and novice golfers tried again, those who had discussed the shot took longer to get the shots right as those people who had spent a couple of minutes engaged in other, unrelated activities.

Psychology Professor Michael Anderson, from St Andrews University, said: "This effect was especially dramatic in skilled golfers who were reduced to the level of performance of novices after just five minutes of describing what they did. Novices, by contrast, were largely unaffected, and perhaps even helped a little, by verbally describing their movements. It's a fairly common wisdom in sport that thinking too much hurts performance; during a game it can be an obvious distraction. However, what we found surprising is that simply describing one's putting skill after it has been executed can be incredibly disruptive to future putting performance."

He said overthinking did not seem to affect novices because "they probably haven't developed enough skills to forget in the first place" and claimed that top professionals would be less susceptible as they were very focused in their approach.

The researchers think the loss of performance was due to an effect called verbal overshadowing, which makes the brain focus more on language centres rather than on brain systems that support the skills in question.

The study, which also involved the University of Michigan, marks the first time researchers have claimed to demonstrate that verbal overshadowing can adversely affect motor skills. Prof Anderson said the findings may have consequences for people who take part in other sports. This observation may have repercussions for athletes who depend on effective mental techniques to prepare for events. Moreover, those who teach golf, or any other motor skill, might be undoing their own talent in the process.

Important Diary Dates

April

5 Season Opening (Main Lawns)

14 eve Start of Association Improvers
“Silver” coaching

15/16 Golf Croquet course @ Southwick
(see poster)

18 Roehampton Golf Handicap

18/19 Dulwich Association Handicap

21 eve Start of Golf Improvers coaching

May

2/3/4 Association High-bisquers
introductory Tournament @
Southwick

**4 OUR Mayday Golf Open level-
play (handicap 5+) – entry
essential!!**

6 Crawley Golf handicap doubles

9/10 SECF Handicap Association teams
of 4 @ Southwick

30/31 SECF Golf Croquet Championship
@ Compton

June

**6/7 Kent Cup (Association) @
Tunbridge Wells**

7 Exhibition @ Penshurst Place

19 Corporate Challenge

20 Open Super B Advanced

27 Open Golf Croquet Tournament

July

1 SECF Ladies Day @ Southwick

4/5 Golf Coaching Course @ Southwick

9 Kent Cup (Golf) @ Ramsgate

27-31 Association Summer School @
Southwick

August

1 Open Super B Advanced

9 SECF Golf Teams @ Southwick

22 Open High Bisquers Tournament

September

12/13 Open Advanced Tournament

26/27 Open Handicap Tournament

November

21 AGM @ Frant Memorial Hall

Finally, remember that the latest dates, information updates etc. are on the web-site, so if you're asked about Croquet or our club details just direct them to <http://www.tunbridgewellscroquet.org.uk>