



Wrest Park Silsoe Bedfordshire

newsletter

Handicap Tournament

7-9 September

John Bevington arrived early to open up, only to find that when manager Eric Audsley pinned up the first round draw his name wasn't listed. This was to be expected, as he hadn't entered the tournament. The fact that Jane Evans was drawn against Bye seemed to offer a neat solution until it became clear that Jane could not play on Friday, so John was left in charge of the coffee trolley. As Ken Pickett had had to cry off due to ill-health we ended up with 16 players whose handicaps ranged from 0 to 16.

Friday (sunny, warm) saw Geoff Strutt, Nigel Keward and Tony Thomas off to flying starts, all winning their first three games. Nigel Polhill managed five games in the day but failed to win any of them.



Nigel Keward with possibly the longest-shafted mallet in the country.

On Saturday (dull, cooler) Nigel, John Hall, George Collin and Doug Smith recorded their first wins. Nigel Keward beat Geoff Strutt but then lost to Tony Thomas who remained unbeaten. George Woolhouse and Steve Jones maintained steady progress.

Sunday saw the sun back again, and Tony continued his winning ways with victories over Geoff Strutt and Elaine Newman to finish the tournament unbeaten with eight wins. George Woolhouse and Steve Jones both won their last two games to finish with six wins each, followed by Geoff with five. We had been wondering up until the last minute who would be able to help with the catering on Sunday, and our prayers were answered when Judi Priestley, Elaine Palmer and Margaret Marshall arrived, Margaret bearing gifts in the shape of some cold roast beef and a large fruit cake. Our thanks to them, and also to Helen Wilkinson and Tim Brewer who did solo turns on Friday and Saturday.

Two trophies were awarded, these going to the players from within the lower and higher handicapped halves who had done best overall. Tony Thomas was one

obvious winner, while in the other half George Woolhouse had two more wins than his nearest rival.

	Hcp	P	W
Nigel Polhill	0	10	2
Nick Evans	0	8	4
John Bevington	1	9	4
George Collin	2	8	2
George Woolhouse	3	8	6
Eric Audsley	3½	8	4
John Hall	5	8	3
John Lonsdale	7	8	4
Geoff Strutt	8	8	5
Amanda Keward	8	8	4
Tony Thomas	9	8	8
Nigel Keward	10	10	7
Steve Jones	10	8	6
Doug Smith	12	8	3
Elaine Newman	16	8	3
Jane Evans	16	5	0



Nigel and Amanda Keward, Doug Smith and winner Tony Thomas with his trophy.

Ben Ashwell wins the Spencer Ell

Club member Ben Ashwell, who recently won our August tournament, went on to win the Spencer Ell which was played at Southport on 5-9 September. Each of the eight players plays the other twice and Ben tied for first place with Jerry Guest and Chris Williams, beating them both in the playoff with triple peels.

The Spencer Ell is the third-ranked "Eight" for players selected by the CA, the others being the President's Cup, Chairman's Salver and the recently introduced Treasurer's Tankard. It is named after Monty Spencer Ell, who had both arms amputated above the elbow after being wounded and taken prisoner after the battle of Loos in 1915. He played croquet (with a mallet screwed into the stump of his arm) to a high standard playing in the Surrey Cup between 1955 and 1959 when it was the second Eight (the Chairman's Salver was introduced in 1966). When he died in 1968 he left £4000

to the CA in his will, with the request that some of it should go towards a better trophy for the Surrey Cup, which was renamed the Spencer Ell Cup in 1973.



The Spencer Ell Cup

Ben is the first club member to win an Eight since Vic Rees won the Chairman's Salver in 1980. He was originally selected for the Treasurer's Tankard but was promoted after one of the players dropped out. At the time I sent him an email wishing him luck and suggesting that he was a good each-way bet - one of my more successful predictions.

League player records

EACF Beds & Herts League

	Doubles			Singles		
	P	W	L	P	W	L
Bryan Harral	7	0	7	5	3	2
Cliff Hayes	4	3	1	4	1	3
Geoff Strutt	3	2	1	3	3	0
Ray Percy	2	1	1	2	2	0
Elaine Newman	2	1	1	2	1	1
John Martin	3	1	2	1	0	1
Tim Brewer	1	1	0	1	1	0
George Collin	1	0	1	1	1	0
Eric Audsley	1	1	0	1	0	1

EACF Golf croquet league West

	Doubles			Singles		
	P	W	L	P	W	L
Linda Potton	3	1	2	12	4	8
Peggy Kenny	2	2	0	8	5	3
Vera Pearson	2	0	2	8	1	7
Don Barrett	1	1	0	4	2	2
Helen Wilkinson	1	1	0	4	1	3
Maureen Watts	1	1	0	4	0	4
Ronnie Richardson	1	1	0	4	0	4
Elaine Harrington	1	1	0	4	0	4

Many thanks to all who took part, and especially to Bryan Harral and Ronnie Richardson for organising the teams and arranging the matches.



Does my bum look big in this? George Collin gives lawns 1, 3 and 5 a late cut on the Saturday evening of the September tournament.

EACF League playoffs and Champions Day 22-23 Sept

The fine weather held on for these back-to-back Federation events. Watford (Beds & Herts) won the playoff on Saturday against Colchester South (Essex & Suffolk) and Norwich (Norfolk & Cambridge) and will play in next year's Secretary's Shield.



Mark Porter (in sweater) receives the B level trophy from Peter Allnut, the EACF Chairman

There were three events in the Champions Day. The Advanced competition was won emphatically by Simon Hathrell (Watford), who dropped a mere four points in his three wins, his handicap dropping from 1 to 1/2 as a result. Mike Porter (Newport) was undefeated in the B level event, and Ian Thompson (Downham Market) won the handicap event in a tight finish. Full reports and more photos can be seen on the EACF website.

John Bevington and Geoff Strutt represented Wrest Park in the Advanced and B level events but were singularly unsuccessful, losing all their games.

CA Club Finals weekend 6-7 October



Team captain David Goacher lines up the rover peel in the last game of Bristol's 6-1 win against Bowdon in the Inter Club final.

The teams for the Club Finals weekend came from all points of the croquet compass: Bowdon, Pendle & Craven and Fylde from the north, Woking and Surbiton from the south, Dyffryn and Bristol from the west and Norwich from the east. No matter what route they took, they all managed to negotiate the various gates and padlocks and arrive in good time. The event takes place when many players might think the season to be already over, with the dew hanging on until lunchtime and the light rapidly failing in the early evening. Even though the sun may have struggled to show itself through the cloud the weather remained dry and reasonably warm throughout, with barely a breath of wind.

games took place on the outer pairs of lawns, with the Mary Rose and Inter Club finals on the middle lawns with tighter hoops. There was an ulterior motive, as most of the available referees were thus exposed at the centre. Doubles games were on the lawns on the pavilion side – you had to watch out for the slope, but you were closer to the bar.

The Longman Cup semi-final between Norwich and Dyffryn saw Norwich 3-0 up at lunch, but in the afternoon Dyffryn came back to take all four singles and win 4-3. Callum Ringer's game against James Clancy demonstrated the value of the third of the general principles of Gamesmanship, namely "Play against your opponent's tempo". Callum plays at a speed that taxes his opponent's ability to sustain the role of ever-vigilant adversary, and when he failed 2-back James took things more steadily to win +14.

In the other semi Woking made a good start by winning the doubles. Fylde's Betty Bates, partnering Leonard Ainsworth, had to play off 20 instead of her club handicap of 24, but she adapted well enough to win comfortably in the afternoon. Fylde had won the two morning singles, and Martin Bradshaw and Terry Vernazza won their second games to give Fylde the match 5-2, Bernard Jones getting Woking's other win.

Pendle made a good start in the Mary Rose final when John Filsak made light of the conditions to beat Bob Stephens, and Liz Wilson made a great recovery to beat Ian Parkinson +3 in what turned out to be the crucial game of the match. The doubles was pegged down at lunchtime with Pendle on peg and penult against Surbiton on 3-back and 4-back. Having taken part in several finals himself manager and ROT George Collin was well aware that the Mary Rose, with no time limits, is the one to keep an eye on. If the doubles is unresolved and the afternoon games fail to start in good time you can find yourself at 3-3 with the light fading fast and wishing you had hired floodlights.

In the afternoon Liz continued her good form with a win over Bob, but Surbiton then recovered to 3-2 when Ian clawed his way back to beat John and Mary Knapp, whose smooth hoop running was exemplary, overcame Peter Wilson +3. Mary, against peg and rover, hit the long lift shot and laid up outside corner 1 for peg and peg. Peter missed a 20 yarder but Mary rushed partner into hoop 1 and had to split the opponents and lay up south of rover. Peter missed and that was it. Manager and ROT George Collin then had to impose a time limit on the game between Robert Essler and David Mooney, but Robert eventually finished to take the game and the match. It wasn't until everyone had left that we realised that two of the scores were missing from the sheet.



Points mean prizes, and here they are. Clockwise from top left (not to scale) are the Beddow Cup, the Longman Cup, the Inter Club shield and the Mary Rose tankard.

Wrest Park were hosting the event for the first time and almost immediately failed the first managerial hurdle by getting the some of the names in the wrong place when filling in the pre-prepared order of play sheets. We soon realised that the safest course was to enter the order of play for the afternoon before that for the morning. The matches were arranged so that the Longman Cup

Sunday saw an early start with the mowing of the four lawns for the finals, the other two having been mown the previous evening. The Longman Cup final between Fylde and Dyffryn had Dyffryn 2-1 ahead at lunch, Les Bowker and Marian Clancy winning the doubles +5 on time and James Clancy beating Terry Vernazza. Fylde captain Martin Bradshaw led from the front, winning +22 against Alwen Bowker, and continued his good form in the afternoon with a +26 win against Les Bowker. Fylde won the remaining afternoon singles to win the match and the Longman Cup 5-2.



Fylde captain Martin Bradshaw, who won all four of his singles games and earned a handicap reduction to 10 as a result.

There was one refereeing incident during this match which began with a roquet on an opponent ball in the jaws of hoop 1, observed by an umpire, leading to an assumption of hoop and roquet, intervention by a spectator referee and a lengthy discussion between the ROT and Bernard Neal himself. Resolving the situation required reference to numerous Laws and Regulations and may well appear as an example in a future Commentary on the Laws, but we do not propose to go into more detail here (for which you may be thankful).

The 3rd/4th place playoff between Woking and Norwich saw some team changes: Feargal Smith and Callum Ringer took over the doubles spot for Norwich and Chris Gay substituted for Michael Holland to play with Bill Wood-Roe in the Woking pair, Woking winning +16. Norwich's Neil Chalmers and Harry Bruford both won their morning singles, but Woking revived after lunch with Bill, Chris and Michael Hague all winning to give Woking 3rd place by 4-3.

Did someone mention lunch? Wrest Park has always been a salad bar but we felt that this might not be appropriate to October and determined on hot food. It was literally meals on wheels as Tim and Gill Brewer on Saturday and Judith Roberts on Sunday used the club trolley to ferry the containers of curry, beef stew and coq au vin from the car park to the pavilion. It all went down very well (the wine ran out on Sunday) and we are hoping to book them all again next year.

The Inter Club final got under way at 10.30 and turned out to be rather one-sided. Colin Irwin and Ian Lines won the doubles against David Goacher and Roger Jenkins, but the real action was on the far lawns. At one point Dave Kibble and Martin Murray were queueing up for the rover peel (Martin being on a straight triple), and although Martin failed to complete, winning +19 shortly

afterwards, Dave went on to win +16TP with a combination peg-out, a half-ball cannon from 3-4 yards on the partner ball a yard from the peg.



They also served. Irene Davis, Linda Potton and Vera Pearson after lunch on Saturday. Pendle's Liz Wilson is in the foreground.

In the afternoon Martin Granger-Brown and Ken Cooper could only sit and watch as Martin completed another triple and Dave wrapped it up for Bristol with a quadruple. On the other lawn Roger Jenkins, continuing his recent good form, took full advantage of the opportunities provided by an out-of-sorts Colin Irwin. David Goacher sealed it with a +14TP win against Ian Lines. The closing stages were done with a flourish, and it was all over, with Bristol 6-1 winners, by 5 o'clock.



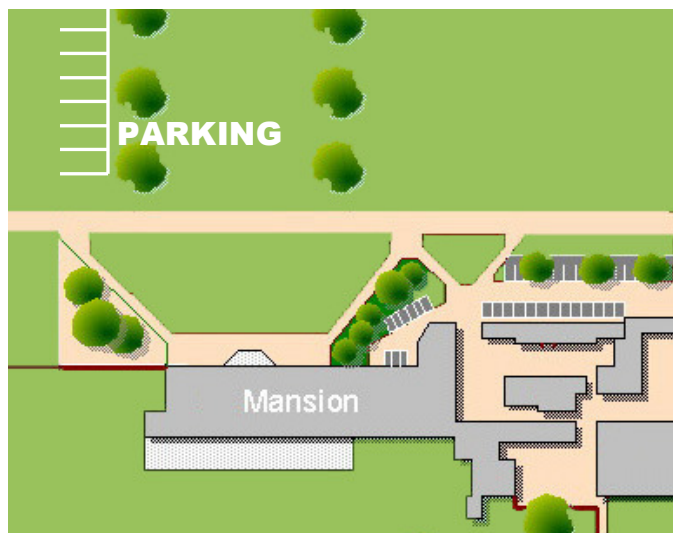
Bernard Neal prepares to present the Beddow Cup.

Bernard Neal, on behalf of the Croquet Association, presented Bristol with the Inter Club shield and the Beddow Cup, receiving a new lease of life after over 70 years, and stayed on to present the Longman Cup to Fylde. The tumult and the shouting dies, the captains and the teams depart. It's at Wrest Park again next year - try and be there.

I have left copies of photos of the finals in the pavilion. If anyone wants copies of any of them please let me know. Unfortunately the wizard used to print the sheets does not save the print file, so you'll have to provide an accurate description of the one/s you want.

Revised parking plan and new padlock number

Here is the map which shows exactly where to park on the grass opposite the house. When the park was opened to the public during the week we were asked to park between the trees, and there were tape barriers as a guide (the implication was that you parked in a row parallel to the line of trees). The barriers were then removed. I later heard unofficially that we should park on the **outside** of the row of trees, as shown on this plan. Unfortunately some people chose to park on the grass in the middle of the space between the trees, which caused a bit of an upset. No names, no pack drill, but please don't do it again.



It is likely that we will shortly be asked to park somewhere else so as not to run the risk of damaging the grass over the winter. When the details are finalised I will let you know. In the meantime the safest course of action is to park as per the new plan. When you sign in make a point of asking the staff at reception if you have parked in the right place. If any new measures are introduced at short notice then I trust that they will be able to provide you with a map and any other relevant information.

I must apologise for any confusion that may have arisen. These things take time to settle down and we will be having a meeting shortly to review the existing arrangements with a view to sorting out a practical long term plan. Please bear with us.

The new padlock number is already in operation. Ring me if you don't know what it is. If you forget it you can always ask the staff at reception.

2007 Annual Dinner

This will be at the Bell Hotel, Woburn, on Friday 30 Nov at 7.30pm. The cost will be £22.95 per head. There will be live music provided by a soloist. The hotel also offers overnight accommodation and breakfast for £50 for a double room. If you wish to take advantage of this ring the hotel on 01525 374697 referencing the croquet club dinner. Their website is www.bellinn-woburn.com.

Please call Howard Bottomley (07880 781 666) as soon as possible with your choices from the menu below. I have omitted the more fulsome descriptions of each dish to save space.

Anyone who won a club competition trophy last year should make sure it is present, preened and polished for presentation at the dinner.

Soup of the day

Chicken liver and mushroom pâté

Salmon mousse

Mushroom soufflé

Roast turkey

Pork ribeye Calvados

Lamb cutlets (3)

Roast crown of duck

Salmon Thermidor

Butternut squash, leek and chestnut cheese Wellington

Christmas pudding

Passion fruit cream

Sherry trifle

Chocolate torte

Christmas Cracker

This fun club tournament will take place on Sunday 16 December. Everyone welcome – ring Rod Ashwell for details.

Club competition progress

I would normally expect to be able to report these by now, but several of them haven't finished. Well, it's up to you. Please note that regular mowing has more or less ceased and is only likely to take place as part of other lawn maintenance (see below), so you will either have to take the lawns as you find them or mow a pair before your match. It will take about an hour. If the worm casts are particularly bad you are advised to use the switch (the long cane inside the long blue tube in the small hut) to disperse them before you start, in order to save undue wear and tear on the mower blades.

The Great Scarification

We intend to scarify the lawns in two directions over the weekends of 20/21 and 27/28 October, weather permitting as always. This operation is done in several stages: preliminary mowing, scarifying, brushing and final mowing. All the material removed has to be raked up and carted away.

It all takes a deal of time and effort and we really need four to six people to be available at any one time. If you can make yourself available for a morning, afternoon or even a whole day please call George on 01582 458665 as soon as possible.

We can also show you how to use the mower if you are not already familiar with it. Regular mowing is essential and also time-consuming, and it would be greatly to our advantage to have a larger pool of trained operators to draw on for the future.