



LEIGHTON-LINSLADE CROQUET CLUB

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“10th Anniversary Season a Great Success”



What a fine group we are! John Cundell's camera performed well by itself!

Welcome to the fourth newsletter of 2009. It's been an interesting and busy season, and despite the changeable Summer weatherwise, we were lucky in that almost all our events managed to find good days, including the 10th Anniversary day which was a great success. We rounded off the last newsletter with the Stony Stratford Friendly on 12th June - and since then it has been almost non-stop on the lawns. Before we get to the match reports, we will jump ahead to the 14th July to the Anniversary celebrations, so without more ado, let's get into the detail of the second part of 2009.

10th Anniversary Celebrations

Tuesday 14th July at Page's Park was the time and venue for the club's 10th Anniversary Celebrations. The Council Groundstaff had prepared the courts for us and they

looked superb in the bright morning sun. Just after 8.00am, the 'workers' arrived - namely David Ball, Len Buckingham, John Cundell, Peter Davis, Roger Stroud and Tony Wells. Their tasks were to put up the large marquee provided by Peter Davis, plus gazebos from the Council and our own club one; set out the hoops and court markers, tables and chairs. The second work crew then arrived, Jean Ball, Eve Buckingham, Judith Cundell, Val Jeffers and George and Margaret Lawson. Their tasks were to decorate the lunch table and prepare the food and refreshments that had been produced by Val Jeffers and her team of Eve, Jean, Judith and Margaret. The work was completed by 11.30am and we were then treated to a very heavy rainstorm for about half an hour that was a bit worrying. Was it going to last all day and ruin the celebrations? Fortunately it cleared just a few minutes



It needed an 8.00am start to get the marquee and gazebos erected. Right, John Cundell sets up the tripod for the group photo (see above); and George Lawson prepares the lunch table. Left, Margaret Lawson, Judith Cundell and Jean Ball spent the morning preparing the lunch. Right, committee and helpers await the arrival of our guests.





Left, Tom Miller and committee members discuss croquet matters with our guest of honour, the present Chairman of The Croquet Association, Patricia Duke-Cox. At right, Patricia with Margaret Brown and Tom. Below, the lunch party with 'waitresses' Judith and Jean, whilst Tom and Patricia are obviously discussing an important point.



before the welcoming trio of David Ball, Len Buckingham and John Cundell made their way to the Billington Road car park to look out for our guests - The Croquet Association's Chairman Patricia Duke-Cox and her colleague, Roy Ware, one of the UK's leading players. They arrived spot on time, despite getting lost around Milton Keynes' roundabouts and coming through the rainstorm, which had just cleared us.

After introductions to the club's committee and past Chairmen, Patricia and Roy were entertained to a light lunch, with waitressing duties carried out very professionally and expertly by Jean Ball and Judith Cundell.

The weather continued to improve and by 13.45pm it was bright and sunny, welcoming the 33 club members all smartly dressed in whites, plus three founder members who are no longer with the club, Barbara Weare, Ronnie Richardson and Linda Potton.

At 2.00pm, members and guests assembled in the

marquee and Patricia Duke-Cox gave a short talk of congratulations for the achievements of the club's first ten years, and in particular thanked Margaret Brown, who was the main inspiration leading to the foundation of the club, and who led and guided progress through the decade - and mentioned Margaret's 'History of the First Ten Years' booklet of which a copy has been placed in The Croquet Association archives. Patricia then outlined her task as Chairman of The Croquet Association and benefits of belonging to the national body, and that she would like to see younger people become more involved with our sport. She finished by trusting that the club would further develop and that more members might be encouraged into taking part in events and competitions further afield, and reading the poem on page 4.

At this point, all present assembled on court two for a group photograph taken by John Cundell's camera on remote!

Patricia and her colleague Roy Ware were then invited to



Roy Ware soon had an interested audience as he demonstrated advanced techniques.



Left and right, Patricia's speech. Below, two invitation games - Patricia played John Guest and Roy Ware played Margaret Brown.

The wind had risen somewhat - see below right where the marquee is about to take off! Tony Wells and George Lawson acted as scorers. For the record, Patricia won her match and Roy won his.



Below, the superb cake arranged by Jean Ball was ceremoniously cut by Tom with assistance from Margaret. It tasted good too!



play two demonstration singles matches against two club members whose names were drawn - one of the lucky players was Margaret Brown - entirely fortuitous and there was no fix! Margaret was to play Roy Ware and the other winner was John Guest who had the honour of playing Patricia. An avid audience watched two fascinating games, ultimately won by our two visitors.

After this came the cutting of a fine cake that had been made by Jean Ball

and that had been professionally decorated with the club logo. Present Chairman Tom Miller performed the cake-cutting ceremony. Tea, coffee and refreshments were then available.

Finally at 4.00pm, 14 children, accompanied by School Sport Coordinator Chris Boardman, arrived from Leighton Middle School to play their school croquet tournament.

Leighton Middle School croquet players with Margaret Brown and Tony Wells who were much involved with setting this up - and Patricia Duke-Cox who is also very keen to promote children playing croquet.





The lawns packed with children enjoying croquet. Above, "Please put my score up?" Note our Chairman Tom and The Croquet Association Chairman Patricia in earnest conversation. Left, David Ball and Tony Wells in coaching mode. Right, Patricia with the two winning boys.



The club has been fostering croquet at the school for a number of years now and it was encouraging to see the enthusiasm and skill applied. The children were all ages and Chris Boardman mentioned that this is one of the advantages of croquet - it can be played by all ages and sexes. The children were split into pairs and four doubles games were played simultaneously (with some of our members taking the extra two slots to make up 16 players). With every game also, members helped keep the games on track and offered advice where necessary. Enjoying this were David Ball, Len Buckingham, Judith Cundell, Val Jeffers, John Thorp and Tony Wells.

After 90 minutes play, the winners were the pair of Matthew Smith and Jack Gammage, both from Year 7, and Patricia Duke-Cox presented them with medallions.

So ended our first celebratory event. A considerable amount of planning went into arranging this day, led by our Chairman Tom Miller. Like all such events, it didn't just happen, and I would hope that all club members who came along enjoyed the day and would add their thanks to all those involved in making it such a success.

An excellent day that was a fitting celebration to the first ten years. In the words of Margaret Brown, "the club looks forward to further encouragement of a sport which offers exercise, enjoyment, competition, challenge and comradeship."

Patricia's Poem

Croquet players if properly taught
By those who know their corn,
Know they play upon a court
And NOT a croquet lawn!

Read the Laws: it there defines
The ground on which you stride,
The square topped hoops, the boundary lines
These, only a court provide.

Bowlers never get the itch
To call their "green" a bowling pitch
So croquet players really ought
To call their playing field a COURT.

Marie Curie Cancer Care

Margaret Brown has received a letter of thanks from the Marie Curie Cancer Care organisation, thanking the club for the donation of £107 that was raised at the 10th Anniversary Celebrations by the distribution of Margaret's 'First Ten Years' booklet. Thanks to all those who contributed.

Match Reports

EACF League - Watford - 22nd June was a lovely warm, calm Monday morning that greeted ours and Watford's teams of four players for our second EACF League match of 2009. On the previous Friday, we had assembled nine of our League team for a short coaching session led by Richard Keighley, which was well received, and we were hopeful that some of the lessons and tactics learned would prove useful for the match. Initially we had a rather hectic build-up, as Val Jeffers, the first reserve who had agreed to play after Irene Davis withdrew, had to withdraw herself on Sunday evening due to her mother suffering a broken arm; Richard Keighley was tied up at a meeting until 11.00am; so next on the list was Len Buckingham, who duly agreed to play. Unfortunately, just as Watford were arriving at Page's Park, Eve Buckingham telephoned to say that their car was trapped under their garage roller shutter door! This proved quite a problem which took Len most of the day to sort out; so after approaching Irene again (who was already involved in her task as Scoring Manager), it was finally agreed to ask David Ball who had come along to help George Lawson and John Cundell organise the day's proceedings. David stepped up and duly won three of his four games.

After the first round of singles we were all square with Tony Wells and David winning their games. The second round was our least successful as only David won. Round three was shared with Tony and David again performing best. We all enjoyed a pleasant lunch break and the final round of the singles followed - and once again honours



Watford League match featured Roger Stroud, Tony Wells, David Ball and Bryan Ferris. Team members above are Roger Nicholls (W), Ron Drew (W), David Ball, Janet Lewis (W), Roger Stroud, Anne Dennis (W), Tony Wells and Bryan Ferris. Thanks are due to our merry band of scorers ably led throughout the season by Scoring Manager Irene Davis.

were even, with wins by Roger Stroud and Bryan Ferris. So we needed to win both the doubles to take the match to a play off situation. Bryan and Roger stormed off to a good start and they won 7-5. David and Tony were playing against Janet Lewis and Anne Dennis and this game seesawed from start to finish. Unfortunately Watford managed a couple of great positional shots up to the 13th and from then on the result was inevitable, despite some fine shots by our two. Yet another close League result with Watford winning 10-8. They are all much tougher games this season and whilst we have improved our standard of play, so have our opponents.

Players for the League match against Wrest Park were Ronnie Richardson (WP), Roger Stroud, Erica Fogg, Sally Clay, Judy Priestley (WP), Don Barrett (WP) and Diana Phelps.



EACF League - Wrest Park Home/Away - 3rd July. You might be intrigued by the title 'Home/Away'. Wrest Park have only a few golf croquet players that are currently interested in playing in the League and they could not find enough people to help with the organisation of their match against us, so it was agreed that the match be played at Page's Park and we would supply the organisation.

So on the Friday that the June/July heatwave broke, we assembled at Page's on an overcast day that dropped a little precipitation, but which later turned into a very pleasant playing day.

Our team featured two long-term players in League matches, Sally Clay and Diana Phelps, together with Roger Stroud who has played in a number of games this year, and newcomer to the League, Erica Fogg.

Round one started with us halving the first four singles games against Ronnie Richardson, Peggy Kenny, Judi Priestly and Don Barrett. The latter two are also members of LL so they knew our courts reasonably well. LL winners in this round were Sally Clay and Roger Stroud.

The results from rounds two and three were disappointing as all four of LL team lost their games - so in effect that was that as Wrest Park were leading at lunch by 10-2. Food obviously helped as Round 4 and the doubles games were halved - Diana Phelps and Roger Stroud winning their singles, and Diana and Sally their doubles. So the overall was a win for Wrest Park by 13-5. See comment on the League later.

Club Handicap Singles - 11th July - This competition attracted twenty keen members, five more than 2008 - who were drawn into four blocks, each competitor playing four games. Despite the dire weather forecast, although the day started off initially grey, apart from a few short drizzle showers in the late morning, the sun appeared for much of the afternoon and the event was completed in its planned time, finishing shortly after 6.00pm from a 9.00am start.

The winner of each block went into semi-finals and after some hard fought games, Tony Wells won Block 1; David Ball Block 2; John Cundell Block 3 and Martin Field Block 4.

Results in detail are on the next page.



Club Handicap Singles. Semi-finalists Martin Field, Tony Wells, John Cundell and David Ball - eventual winner was John over Tony. Martin Field and Len Buckingham start their match - cricket under way in the background. Others pictured are Elaine Newman and Caroline Stroud, Richard Keighley and Val Jeffers, Sheila Beal and John Thorp, Helen Wilkinson, George Lawson in the shower - and Judith Cundell who was a busy organiser.

3rd	Val Jeffers	2	+2
4th	Len Buckingham	1	-2
5th	Caroline Stroud	1	-8

Tony Wells was the winner over David Ball by 7-4 in the first semi and John Cundell managed to beat Martin Field 7-5 in the other. So to the final, another hard fought match with the game swinging first one way, then the other, however shortly after 6.00pm John Cundell ran the 12th hoop to win 7-5.

We would thank the usual crew of David Ball, John Cundell and Tony Wells who turned out at the crack of dawn to set out the courts, erect the gazebo, set out the tables and chairs, etc., - and also to Judith Cundell who handled the paperwork and general organisation of the match progress for the day.

Fun Day - This event seems to be afflicted with wet weather! Just like last year the scheduled date of 19th July proved ideal for ducks, so it was decided to reconvene on 2nd August. The sun shone upon organisers Tony Stammers and David Ball, as well as the 24 members who turned up to what was an enjoyable and fun-filled afternoon. This year the challenges involved striking the balls through paper covered hoops, tying two and later three members' arms together (is David Ball into bondage!), and trying to hit table-tennis balls with golf balls. There were some very bemused looks from passing public and train passengers. In between all this were a couple of quizzes devised by Tony and some excellent cakes from Jean Ball. After much deliberation we ended up with John Guest and Peter Davis playing for the second hoop from the top at which John Guest was aided by the rabbit-run! Booby prize went to Roy Kemp.

Well done to Tony and David - more chaos next year please.

Block 1	Wins	Diff.
1st Tony Wells	3	+11
2nd Helen Wilkinson	3	+2
3rd John Guest	2	-4
4th Irene Davis	1	-3
5th George Lawson	1	-6

Block 2	Wins	Diff.
1st David Ball	4	+10
2nd Elaine Newman	3	+6
3rd Margaret Lawson	1	-1
4th Diana Phelps	1	-6
5th Peter Davis	1	-9

Block 3	Wins	Diff.
1st John Cundell	4	+8
2nd Sheila Guest	2	+5
3rd Roger Stroud	2	+3
4th John Thorp	2	-1
5th Sheila Beal	0	-17

Block 4	Wins	Diff.
1st Martin Field	3	+8
2nd Richard Keighley	3	0



Fun Day FUN! Above, hitting the table tennis balls and breaking through the paper-covered hoops. Left, John Guest was only hitting a table tennis ball! Above, don't ask what Len was up to. Right, being tied together when you are of quite different heights added to the difficulty. Bottom left, Rita Kingston, Judith Pengelly and Sheila Beal just missed. Tony Stammers enjoying the quiz and cakes.



Hunstanton Friendly - 25/26th July - Members will recall from the previous newsletter that Tony Wells had been making enquiries with Hunstanton Croquet Club about a Friendly to take place over a weekend. This came to fruition and ten members were drawn from 14 entries to represent the club. Hunstanton, being 120 miles away, was obviously not going to be a day trip, so members found accommodation in a hotel, a B&B, a holiday bungalow, and at a close relatives! All drove to 'Sunny Hunny' on Friday, and after booking-in John & Judith Cundell and George & Margaret Lawson located the club, with John and George discussing the weekend's detailed programme of events with Hunstanton Chairman Terrey Sparks.

The club has the most wonderful facilities, both in terms of the courts and clubhouse. There are five smooth and level courts in beautiful condition, and the clubhouse has a general room, kitchen and bar (yes they are licensed!), and mens' and ladies' changing rooms. A substantial fence surrounding the whole complex protects the courts and there is even a very large water tank for irrigating the lawns in dry periods.

It was decided that we would play Level Doubles and Handicap Singles alternately with competitors selected by

drawing from playing cards, avoiding any duplication where necessary. This format gave us 30 Singles matches and 15 Doubles. To play that number on our two courts would take two full days, however with five courts there was no problem and it was not even necessary to enforce a time limit. Play was interspersed with a morning coffee/tea break, a lunch break and afternoon tea.

Our team consisted of John and Judith Cundell, George and Margaret Lawson, David and Jean Ball, Len and Eve Buckingham, Sally Clay and Roger Stroud. Unfortunately Jean Ball developed a back condition, which meant she had to withdraw, so we were very fortunate to have Hunstanton's Chairman Terrey Sparks step in to replace her.

Both teams had assembled before 10.00am on Saturday morning, which had dawned one of the few beautiful days of late July. Sunny Hunny was living up to its reputation. After introductions all round and a welcoming drink, play commenced. The games were mostly very close and were all played in good humour and sportsmanship. The rounds alternated between Doubles and Singles with many going to the deciding 13th hoop. Play finished around 5.00pm.

After a brief break, we all assembled in the clubhouse,



Main image, just three of the five courts.

Insets: the superb clubhouse; the water tank and note the surrounding fencing; behind Sally Clay are the tennis courts.

Below, John Cundell receives the 'Hunstanton/Leighton-Linslade Challenge Trophy' from Hunstanton Chairman Terrey Sparks.

Below right, the teams.



which had been laid out as a dining area by the wonderfully efficient catering ladies from Hunstanton who had looked after us all so well for the whole day. We then enjoyed a fish and chip dinner followed by a quiz and raffle, after which Terrey Sparks addressed the gathering. He stated that this was the first occasion that Hunstanton had organised one of these Friendlies, and was pleased at the success of the event. He then announced the result - a win for Leighton-Linslade by 24 games to 21! John Cundell responded on behalf of LL and accepted the trophy presented by Terrey. A wonderful day all round.

On Sunday morning, four members - David, Sally, Roger and John - enjoyed a pleasant couple of hours playing Ricochet Croquet against four Hunstanton members - a simple yet intriguing game which certainly helps develop shot accuracy.

So ended an excellent weekend and we left having made a lot of new croquet acquaintances. Tony Wells is to be congratulated on setting up this first distance event - it was a pity that he could not make the weekend due to other commitments. The obvious popularity and success for this event has led Tony to look at similar outings in 2010 - and we will be invited back to Hunstanton.

There isn't space to list all the results, which have been published on the Club Noticeboard, however a synopsis follows:

Singles

Player/s	Wins	Losses
John Cundell	3	0

Roger Stroud	2	1
David Ball	2	1
Sally Clay	2	1
(Terrey Sparks)	2	1
Margaret Lawson	2	1
Len Buckingham	1	2
Eve Buckingham	1	2
George Lawson	1	2
Judith Cundell	0	3
Total	16	14

Doubles

David Ball/Terrey Sparks	3	0
John Cundell /Judith Cundell	2	1
Len Buckingham /Eve Buckingham	2	1
Roger Stroud/Sally Clay	1	2
George Lawson/Margaret Lawson	0	3
Total	8	7

Leighton-Linslade won by 24 - 21.

Stony Stratford Friendly Home - 31st July - Following Hunstanton on the 25th was this Friendly and once again we were so lucky with picking one of the few sunny days in July. Eight members from Stony Stratford arrived at 10.00am - six old friends and two new members (to us).

The usual format of four doubles over four rounds, two in the morning and two in the afternoon was followed, amounting to 16 games total. Whether or not LL members had been enthused by the Hunstanton win, this was the second match in seven days that we were to win. Indeed it was one of our best wins for some time - 13 wins to us against three for Stony Stratford. In our pairings, Len and Eve Buckingham and the pair of Sheila Guest and Roger Stroud won all four games; Sally Clay and Diana Phelps won three and Val Jeffers and Margaret Lawson two.

Well done to all and thanks to Irene Davis and her band of scorers, Val Jeffers for catering and John Cundell and George Lawson for general organisation.

Watford Friendly Away - 10th August - As the season moved on events came thick and fast, and hard on the heels of our two wins with Hunstanton and Stony Stratford we travelled to Watford's Cassiobury Park with high hopes. A warm welcome from Watford as usual and our team of Eve and Len Buckingham, Margaret and George Lawson, David Ball and John Cundell, and Erica Fogg and Val Jeffers, were pleased with our first round results of three games to one. A good start in the normal Doubles format for these friendlies of four rounds.

Watford came back strongly in the second round - winning all four of the games. After lunch the third round was shared, however Watford struck again with three wins in round four so the overall result was a win for Watford by 10 - 6.

EACF League - Northampton Away 14th August - This was originally scheduled to be our last League match for 2009, however postponement of the Stony Stratford Away due to bad weather meant that the latter was to be the final match. So on a warm Friday morning, David Ball and John Cundell made their way to the Northampton Club's courts at the St Andrews Hospital on the outskirts of Northampton, to be met at 10.00am by Eve and Len Buckingham who had made their way from Lutterworth on their way home from visiting relatives.

The four members making up the Northampton team



A super day both weatherwise and playing croquet with our old friends from Stony Stratford - and what's more, we won!

made us very welcome and play commenced promptly at 10.30am with us looking after our own timekeeping. This was not a problem and the games proceeded very smoothly. The courts are very smooth and beautifully looked after, however there is a marked slope across them which means that hitting from hoops 1 and 4 to 2 and 3 for example necessitates allowing between 18ins to 36ins offset! Obviously a considerable home advantage and it takes at least one game to learn the courts - and each court is also slightly different. No excuses though as Northampton played very well and very fairly with not one foul shot attempted during the entire day. They also had relevant handicaps. John and Len halved their singles matches, David scored one. The overall result was a win for Northampton by 13-5.

Letchworth Friendly Home - 22nd August - This year's return match against Letchworth was greeted by a superb August day of blue sky and broken cloud with a light warm wind - just perfect for croquet. The courts looked great and we were all ready to welcome the eight Letchworth members who arrived promptly at 10.00am. After a friendly greeting and a welcome cup of tea or coffee we got down to business. The usual Doubles format was played with no time limit. This enabled some very hard fought but enjoyable games. After the first round LL had a 3-1 lead, and with the second round being halved we went to the lunch break with the score 5-5 to LL. After a



Some fine action shots by David Ball at the Letchworth Friendly Home. Below, our hard-working officials and helpers, George Lawson, Peter and Irene Stevens, Margaret Brown and Irene Davis.





Action shots by the League team at Stony Stratford - Tony Stammers, Val Jeffers, George Lawson and Peter Davis

leisurely lunch, the day's organiser, David Ball, called everyone back to the fray - and two excellent rounds were then played where the results seesawed one way, then the other. LL managed to retain their lead and the final result was a win by 9-7 - mirroring the earlier away match against Letchworth where they won by the same result.

A very enjoyable day with very friendly and competitive people and we look forward to further contests next year. For the record our team and results were: Jean Ball and Sally Clay 3 wins; Judith & Una Pengelly 3 wins; Len Buckingham and John Cundell 2 wins; Tony Stammers and Tony Wells 1 win.

Thanks to the usual early morning crew - David Ball, John Cundell and Tony Wells, Organiser David Ball, Scorer George Lawson, the scorers, tea and cake providers - and the members who turned up to help generally.

EACF - Stony Stratford - 28th August - Our last League match of the season was originally scheduled for mid July, but was postponed due to bad weather until late August. Again it seemed doubtful as the forecast was heavy showers and a blustery cool wind. However on the day there was only one cloudburst for a few minutes early in the match, and Stony's superb court drainage soon enabled play to resume.

Our team was Peter Davis, Val Jeffers, George Lawson and Tony Stammers. The first round was won 3-1 by Stony, with George winning his match; and in rounds two and three Tony was successful - so at lunch the score was 9-3 to Stony Stratford.

The afternoon singles round featured a fine win by Peter and in the doubles Peter and Tony had an excellent win at 5-1. So the overall result was a win for Stony Stratford by 13-5. Our team enjoyed tea and cakes and Stony Stratford thanked them for a good day's play, and Irene Davis who looked after the timekeeping.

Well done to Stony as this win gained them first place in



Not content with making a success at organising our scorers for this season, Irene Davis stepped in at Stony Stratford to look after the timekeeping etc., at the EACF League match.

the EACF League Western area. For the final League results see below.

League Team Coaching Session - 19th June

On this dry Friday morning, nine of the twelve club members who played in this season's League matches, attended a coaching session following an invitation from Tom Miller. As Tom said in his invitation letter: "As you may know, five Club members attended the Croquet Association's Coaches Course on 28th/29th March, at Page's Park. In preparation, we had to (re) familiarise ourselves with the rules. During the two days, we learnt how to coach but were also given instruction on rule interpretation and application plus a lot of tips on tactics/play. As a result, we realised that we individually, and as a Club, have drifted in to some grey areas, where we could find ourselves being quite rightly challenged by opponents, particularly in League games, as to the validity of our play. Bearing in mind that other participants on the course came from Stony Stratford, Dunstable and Watford, we are concerned that members of our league teams are 'up-to-date'".

Richard Keighley lead the session, assisted by John Cundell, David Ball, Eve Buckingham, and George Lawson. The subject matter followed was as follows:

Warming Up and Basics.

Potential Problem Areas:

Push/Pull shots around the hoop.

Crush shots in the hoop.

Crush / Double Taps when balls are almost touching.

Playing the wrong ball in Singles and Doubles.

Half Way Law - special circumstance of promoting partner ball when running a hoop.

League Tactics:

Time limit is harsh so:

Follow your ball - but stop whilst opponents are taking their shot.

Think about your next shots even before opponents have taken theirs.

Don't waste time fighting around a hoop if you are in a difficult situation - give it up and try to gain a tactical advantage for the next hoop.

Use your extra shots to gain an advantage - not just for defence.

General Tactics:

Consider split shots.



Wrest Park Singles and right, Doubles events at which LLCC members were successful. Reports below.



- Striking touching balls.
- Use of 'phantom' balls.
- Stop and roll shots.
- Jumps are not just for the hoop.

Those who attended felt that the session was very useful and the interaction and discussion brought up some useful ideas and suggestions as to improving our play.

2010 Coaching

Many of the topics covered above will obviously be of value to all members who wish to improve their Golf Croquet skills. If any member would like help on any of the above or even more basic skills, we now have a number of qualified Club Coaches who are prepared to coach in either group sessions or a one-to-one basis.

Please contact John Cundell in the first instance in order that we can get some idea as to requirements, and we will take the necessary action in due course early next season.

EACF Golf Croquet League & Comment

The winners of the four areas were: Northern - Hunstanton 'A'; Eastern - Enfield; Central - Bury St. Edmunds (W); Western - Stony Stratford. In the semis held at Bury St. Edmunds over 5/6th September, Enfield and Stony Stratford won through to the final, and the winner was Enfield by 10-9 - a play-off was required after the teams drew 9-9. We ended up sixth and last in our area - not our best year!

We had decided at last year's AGM to give everyone who wished to be a member of our League team at least one game - in all some 17 members took part and no doubt many gained an insight and valuable experience regarding playing in this type of competition.

The League is of course a handicap event and with matches timed to just 30 minute games, extra shots become overly important. We took our handicap situation seriously and checked all our players at the beginning of the season, adjusting handicaps to a realistic level where necessary. We would hope that other clubs in this competition exercise the same criteria for 2010. This is a fine competition and it is a shame that there are still a few individuals taking part in this League who have been playing successful golf croquet for many years, have even appeared and won other competitions, yet still insist on playing with a handicap of 10!

We have some new ideas for next season's team selection, which will be raised at the AGM.

Wrest Park Singles Handicap - 21st June - report by David Ball

We awoke to a fine Summer's day. Eight members made their way to Wrest Park for the annual Singles Handicap Tournament. There were seven members from Wrest Park plus last year's winner, a gentleman called Doug Smith from Stony Stratford, who was the main organiser as it is a tradition of this event that the previous winner organises the following year's tournament.

We all played five games against different opponents and everyone seemed to enjoy the day. There was a break for lunch and a chin-wag. Play then continued until all the games were finished. Doug then analysed the totals. One person had won all five games and it was then down to hoop wins to find the other finalist and the two semi-finalists. Your reporter and Yvonne Banks were the former and Eve Buckingham and Linda Potton the latter. The battle began and I was the winner against Yvonne. Eve beat Linda and so ended up in third. A cup was presented to me with the news that I was to be next year's organiser. Whoopee! The day ended with tea and cakes and I thanked Wrest Park members and Doug Smith for hosting the day.

Wrest Park Open Doubles Tournament - 19th July - report by Eve Buckingham

There was a win for Leighton Buzzard pair Elaine Newman and Eve Buckingham on this Sunday in July. This level play competition is open to all clubs in the area who wish to take part at this fine venue.

On a typical English summer day - warm, sunny at times and rainy at times with a dash of breeze, Eve and Elaine came through as winners, beating Peggy Kenney and Margaret Marshal in the final 7-5, with the semi-finals being played between Eve and Elaine versus Don Barrett and Roy Kemp, (also LLCC members), and Peggy Kenney and Margaret Marshall versus Linda Potton and Vera Pearson, all members of Wrest Park. This is the second win for Eve who won the cup with Len Buckingham as her partner in 2004.

Golf Croquet Inter-Club Plate

Members will recall that we were knocked out of the first round of the Golf Croquet Inter-Club National competition. Quite well into the season we were informed that there was to be a Plate event for the teams that had met a similar fate; Chelmsford & Bentley, Sussex County, Blewbury, Tyneside, Broadwas and Letchworth. We were initially drawn against Sussex County who decided to withdraw so we came up against Chelmsford & Bentley in



The Garden Party was held on 15th August at the home of Diana Phelps.

It was supported by over 30 members and friends who enjoyed a dry if not completely sunny afternoon. There were a number of games brought along by Peter and Irene Davis in full use from 3.00pm until 6.00pm; a humorous and interesting quiz by Sheila Beal, plus a fine spread of tea, cakes, etc., put together by Val Jeffers, Judith Cundell, Margaret Lawson, Sally Clay, Jean Ball, Dierdra Ellins and Erica Fogg.

Bryan and Joan Ferris organised the raffle, and our thanks to Bryan, David & Jean Ball, Judith Cundell, Tony Stammers and Eve Buckingham for organising the prizes.

Thanks are due to Diana for her kind hospitality and to all those who worked hard to make the event a success - especially all those who transported chairs from Page's Park, and David Ball and John Cundell who brought and set up the Gazebo, um, tables, umbrellas, etc. - and returned everything to Page's on Saturday evening.





Above: early morning court clearing for Tony Wells and George Lawson in his scorer's chair. Right: Richard Keighley attempts a hoop in his Doubles with David Ball. The ball stuck in the hoop and Chelmsford's Judith Hand performed a super jump shot.



The Inter-Club Semi-Final against Chelmsford & Bentley. Above: scorers Irene and Peter Stevens watch Chelmsford's John Skuse playing for position against John Cundell. Above right: Len Buckingham marching determinedly off to his next shot against Vera Cox and David Ball attempts a hoop, watched by June Brown. Right: David Ball, June Brown, Richard Keighley, John Cundell, Len Buckingham, Vera Cox, Judith Hand and John Skuse.



a semi-final, and the match was played on a fine Autumn day at Page's Park, as we had won the draw to play at home. The other semi-final was between Letchworth and Tyneside, however the latter could not raise a team so Letchworth received a bye.

The match consists of one Doubles between each team's strongest players (decided by handicap) and two Singles in the first session, followed by four Singles in the afternoon. Each match is the best of three level play games which are not timed, so it can be a long, hard day's play. This proved the case - our opponents were matched almost identically in handicap and a number of the games went to the 13th hoop. Three of our seven matches ran to three games each - some of those games lasting well over an hour. Play started at 10.30am and finished just before 5.00pm with hardly a break in some cases.

We got off to a good start with David Ball and Richard Keighley winning their Doubles against Judith Hand and June Brown in two straight games; on the other court Len Buckingham gained a win against Vera Fox and John Cundell had two very long games against John Skuse, both of which went to the 13th hoop with John Skuse winning. In the second round of Singles, John Cundell and David Ball won their two matches against June Brown and Vera Cox respectively; Len lost to John Skuse and Richard lost to Judith Hand. So it was a very close win by four games to three with John C needing to beat Vera Fox in the last game left on Court 1 to decide the competition.

We now look forward to meeting Letchworth in the Final - see later.

Thanks to the usual support crew of David Ball, Len Buckingham, David Ball and Tony Wells who reset all the

hoops the afternoon before the match and then set everything up on the day - plus Roger Stroud acting a MC and George Lawson looking after the scoring, and our four scorers who had a long and cool day in the shade of the trees - Jean Ball, Irene and Peter Davis and Tony Stammers - also the catering crew of Val Jeffers, Eve Buckingham and Jean Ball - and finally to the substantial number of members who turned up to give support and help when needed and cheer on our team.

An excellent croquet day and a fine advert for our club which was much appreciated by Chelmsford & Bentley despite their defeat.

Club Doubles and Singles Championship

Our club tournaments regularly bring our playing year at Page's Park to an end and the first event, the Doubles, attracted a very healthy 32 members, an increase of eight from 2008, playing as 16 pairs who were drawn into four blocks a few days previously by non-playing members, each pair playing three games.

Play started at the early hour of 9.00am, in chilly but dry conditions and most games took their full length. By early afternoon the sun was out fully, even the sun cream was required and it was pleasantly warm. Soon a winning pair



Club Doubles - finalists at left - Jean and David Ball were the winners. Above Jean attempts a jump shot watched by David, the Pengellys and in the background, Tom Miller, Judith Cundell and Richard Keighley. Below: an enthusiastic crowd stayed to watch the final.



emerged from each block as follows:

Block 1		Wins	Diff.
1st	John Cundell/Richard Keighley	3	18
2nd=	Sheila Guest/Sally Clay	1	-5
2nd=	Roger and Caroline Stroud	1	-5
4th	Sheila Beal/Tom Miller	1	-8

Block 2		Wins	Diff.
1st	David and Jean Ball	3	9
2nd	Bryan and Joan Ferris	2	0
3rd	Roy Kemp/Florrie Jeater	1	1
4th	John Thorp/Dierdrea Ellins	0	-11

Block 3		Wins	Diff.
1st	Len and Eve Buckingham	3	11
2nd	Don Barrett/Peter Davis	2	2
3rd	George and Margaret Lawson	1	-2
4th	Yvonne Banks/Diana Phelps	0	-11

Block 4		Wins	Diff.
1st	Judith and Una Pengelly	3	11
2nd	Tony Wells/Val Jeffers	2	8
3rd	John Guest/Irene Davis	1	-4
4th	Arthur and Mary Murgatroyd	0	-15

In the semi-finals Jean and David Ball beat John Cundell and Richard Keighley 7-4, and Judith and Una Pengelly beat Len and Eve Buckingham 7-3. The final took place in front of an enthusiastic audience. It swung first one way, then the other, with some excellent stroke play by both pairs, plus some nervous misses which added to the excitement. It was ultimately won by David and Jean Ball with a score of 7-5 hoops. Congratulations to both.

So to the Singles - this was a very different day weatherwise - the first winds and showers after a month of dry, calm conditions greeted the 26 players on 3rd October, again at the early start of 9.00am. The wind strength worsened as the morning progressed and even though the preparation team (at the earlier hour of 8.00am) had decided to move the scoring gazebo to a more sheltered position than normal, there were still a number of occasions during the day when it was close to departing Page's Park as a low flying tent! The wind force made play very difficult and at times a bit of a lottery - accurate striking was hard with waving mallets, positional shots ruined - and balls were even moved from rest positions!

Their were four blocks, two with seven players and two with six. This meant a very packed programme of 72 7-hoop games - 22 more than last year! Judith Cundell, for the second week running, took on the task of keeping games moving along, and is to be congratulated on her herculean effort. The blocks were completed at 4.00pm. The decision had been taken at the commencement of play by all players that in view of the weather conditions, as soon as it became apparent in any one block that a player had reached an unassailable number of wins, further play in that block would cease. As a result of this it is impossible to determine exact positional details for each block, so in the following details the number of games played by each player has been added for clarification.

Block 1		Played	Wins	Diff.
1st	John Thorp	4	4	13
	John Cundell	4	2	-3
	Tony Wells	3	1	0
	Bryan Ferris	3	1	-4
	Una Pengelly	3	1	-2
	Peter Davis	3	1	-4

Block 2		Played	Wins	Diff.
1st	Elaine Newman	4	4	8
	Len Buckingham	5	3	6
	George Lawson	5	3	-1
	Don Barrett	4	2	0
	Roger Stroud	3	0	-5
	John Guest	3	0	-8

Block 3		Played	Wins	Diff.
1st	Jean Ball	6	5	15
	David Ball	5	4	3
	Eve Buckingham	5	3	1
	Richard Keighley	5	2	0
	Sheila Beal	4	2	-3
	Roy Kemp	4	0	-7
	Florrie Jeater	4	0	-10

(Note: David Ball v Roy Kemp was not completed as David would have to have won by 13 points to beat Jean!)



Club Singles - the hardy members who stayed to watch final moments of the last club event of 2009 pictured with the winner John Thorp. Above right: John and Judith after a close fought final. Left: Jean Ball seen playing for position in her semi-final match with Judith, and right, Elaine Newman was the other semi-finalist against John Thorp, seen here attempting a jump shot over the yellow.



Block 4

1st	Judith Pengelly	6	5	6
	Sheila Guest	6	3	3
	Margaret Lawson	5	3	1
	Val Jeffers	6	3	0
	Tony Stammers	5	2	0
	Tom Miller	5	2	-5
	Caroline Stroud	5	1	-5

Semi-finalists were John Thorp who beat Elaine Newman by 7-1; and Judith Pengelly who beat Jean Ball by 7-3. The final was a hard fought battle in very windy conditions, and was watched by an enthusiastic audience of hardy members who cheered both players. The match ended on the 12th hoop where John Thorp was successful, winning by seven hoops to five. Many congratulations to John, a new name on the trophy.

Thanks from Una & Judith

Once again the club enjoyed two successful end-of-season days of competition with participants in the singles battling the wind as well as their opponents.

A big thank you to Judith C. for organising the players - not an easy task when everyone wants to play at the same time! Many thanks, too, to all members of the committee who set up everything and provided those extra goodies which we all enjoyed.

Golf Croquet Inter-Club Plate Final

As mentioned earlier, we were due to meet Letchworth in this final. It was originally scheduled at Wrest Park on 26th September but due to the late announcement of this

date, neither us nor Letchworth could make that date as it clashed with previously arranged matches within both our clubs. As our courts are not available after 4th October, after due discussion we decided to play Letchworth on their courts. So on 9th October, the players, Richard Keighley, David Ball, Len Buckingham and John Cundell travelled to Letchworth, ably supported by eight LLCC members to act as scorers and give support.

Letchworth fielded a very strong team, handicaps of 1, 2 and 3s - a combined handicap of 9 against our 28! The scores reflected the quality of their players and they won every match of the seven games, however we all learnt a lot and enjoyed the day against a fine team. Our team managed to score 27% of the available hoops. We need to drastically improve our long shot removal technique - essential on flat courts such as Letchworth. This event is an eye-opener to those who play and watch and can only give us added incentive to improving our techniques. Well done Letchworth.



Inter-Club Plate Final teams; left to right: Len Buckingham, John Cundell, David Tutt (L), David Ball, Duncan Hector (L), Nick Mounfield (L), Colin Davies (L) and Richard Keighley.

Attendance Breakdown - 2009 - by Membership Secretary

Our Membership Secretary Judith Cundell has extracted the following information from Len Buckingham's attendance sheets for 2009. There were 28 weeks of play. Figures include all matches - players, helpers and spectators.

Sessions	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Average attendance	20	16	5	11	15	15	4
Highest attendance at one session	31	25	12	18	25	26	11

Best week was 11th September with 114 attendances.

Most attendances by players:

David Ball	115
John Thorp	102
John Cundell	93

Most attendances in one week by one person was 6:

David Ball	5 times
John Cundell	Once
John Thorp	Once

The figures are approximate. We know that not everyone marks the register - please try to remember to do it. Morning and afternoon have been counted as one attendance. If you bring a visitor, please come at a quiet time. Although we try to be welcoming to all, it is not fair to paying members to be sitting out while beginners are being taken over the court. Also, please mark all visitors on the register as 'friend of'. (We know that not everyone marks the register because it had not been marked on the day the balls were left out on the court!) There were 41 guests of members in 2009. We currently are 59 members.

Garden Party Raffle Profit

A profit of £35.00 was made at the Garden Party Raffle and this was utilised to purchase the set of Davidson hoops that have been on loan from The CA for some time.

Winter Matches

Tony Wells reports that during the winter months we will have Soham indoors - four people put their names on the notice posted in the clubroom since 13th May and they will receive priority - however if any others are interested please contact Tony Wells on 01525 379107 or email anthony.wells11@btinternet.com.

Also being planned are winter friendlies with Stony Stratford and Northampton. More details in due course.

Handicap Sessions

The committee is considering a number of ideas to regularise the situation where a few members have inappropriate club handicaps. Look out for further information prior to the start of next season.

Leighton-Linslade Social Club

The Wednesday morning social club met for the first time this winter on 7th October in Page's Park pavilion at 10.00am. The fee is £2, and for that you get refreshments and the opportunity to play many board games, darts, snooker, table tennis (hopefully), dominoes and crib. The activities generally finish about noon, so please support this venture if you possibly can. Friends of members are welcome for the same attendance fee, refreshments included. So organiser Len looks forward to seeing you all on the first Wednesday after you receive this newsletter.

Any Expense Claims?

The Treasurer, Len Buckingham, asks if any member has an expense claim yet to be submitted to get this to him no later than 20th October in order that the 2009 financial breakdown can be ready for presentation at the AGM.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held at Northall Village Hall at 7.30pm on Friday 13th November 2008, followed by the traditional jolly party. Every member is entitled to bring a guest to join in the fun, but the meeting itself is an opportunity to raise any matter of interest or concern. It is also an opportunity for a member to volunteer his or her services to the Club. All members will receive Agenda, etc., shortly. Please come along to the meeting and party. You are all very welcome!

Groundstaff Access to Courts

THERE WAS AN INCIDENT IN LATE SUMMER WHERE A FEW MEMBERS EXPRESSED RELUCTANCE IN VACATING THE COURTS WHEN THE COUNCIL GROUNDSTAFF HAD ARRIVED TO MOW, AND WHO THEN TRIED TO PLAY AROUND THEM. THIS IS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE AND THE COMMITTEE WILL TAKE A DIM VIEW OF ANY FUTURE OCCURRENCES. WHEN THEY ARRIVE PLEASE STOP PLAYING IMMEDIATELY AND GIVE ACCESS - EVEN IF YOU HAVE JUST TURNED UP AND HAVE TO WAIT. THIS IS ONE OF THE CONDITIONS APPERTAINING TO OUR FLEXIBLE PLAY ARRANGEMENTS. ABUSE IT AND WE COULD LOSE IT.

And Almost Finally...

1. Are you the person who leaves the water heater switched on?
2. Are you the person who forgets to lock the fence gates?
3. Are you the person who leaves the balls out on the courts?
4. Are you the person who can't be bothered to put the hoops in with the mallet and kicks them in?
5. Are you the person who can't be bothered to use the hoop lifter, kicks and waggles the hoops and damages the grass area between the hoops - then complains about the poor surface?
6. Are you the person who makes life difficult for the groundstaff when they come to mow by pressuring them to finish as quickly as possible.
7. Are you the person who wants to lose the club the use of Page's Park by thoughtless action?

Not just an Editorial moan. All the above have taken place in recent months!



And Definitely Finally...

Perhaps not the first - but have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Croquet Year!