



LEIGHTON-LINSLADE CROQUET CLUB

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“Mid-Summer!!”



Opening Day - Hoops Away! - 6th April

Town Mayor Councillor Amanda Dodwell, accompanied by her husband and their son Jack, was at Page's Park on a chilly day to officially start the 2014 playing season. The Mayor struck the first ball straight through the hoop and then she played a game with obvious enjoyment – as did her young son and husband - pictured right with David Ball and Richard Keighley. A majority of members turned up, smartly dressed in their whites, and were very pleased to be able to bring all three lawns into action and shake off the damp winter blues.



Watford and Dunstable Friendlies - 24th and 25th April

Following suggestions from a number of members who are not interested in the more competitive League matches but who would like to play Friendlies, it was agreed by your committee that it would be nice if we were to arrange more of these this year. Just a few weeks into the season the first match was to be an away fixture at our old friends and adversaries – Watford – followed the next day by a match against Dunstable. The latter was actually an away return game at Dunstable but as they only have one lawn, they suggested that the 'Dunstable Home' fixture would take place at Page's Park.

John Thorp spends a considerable amount of time and trouble arranging all these fixtures and he and your Editor were somewhat surprised and disappointed that a few days before the two games, we had only three entries for Watford and three for Dunstable! After our persuasive powers failed to raise any further entries, rather than

having to embarrassingly cancel the games, we asked the more competitive members of our club to make up the spaces. These members had previously agreed to stand back from entering Friendlies to give more members the opportunity to compete.

For the Watford fixture we brought in John Thorp, John Cundell, Roger Stroud and Jean Ball to accompany the three originals – Una Pengelly, Diana Phelps and Peggy Kenny – plus Caroline Stroud accompanying Roger. The teams were John Thorp/Peggy Kenny; John Cundell/Diana Phelps; Roger Stroud/Caroline Stroud; and Jean Ball with Una Pengelly. We arrived at Watford in good time and were pleased that it is now possible to park cars alongside the lawns rather than the 15 minute walk from the normal car park. We were warmly welcomed by the Watford members and by the warm weather. Our pairings worked very well and at the end of the day Leighton-Linslade enjoyed a good win of 10 games to 6 – and also enjoyed the excellent spread of cakes and scones at the end of the day.



The wet but happy Dunstable Friendly teams. The gazebo was very popular. Play continued despite the conditions - there was quite a variety of rain gear on display.



The next day the two Johns, Roger and Caroline Stroud and Roy Kemp were at a very damp and misty Page's Park at 8.30am to erect the gazeboes and prepare the lawns for the 10.00am arrival of the Dunstable team. Once again the three original entrants, Roy Kemp, Sally Clay and Peggy Kenny were added to by David and Jean Ball, Roger and Caroline Stroud and John Thorp – with John Cundell organising the games with the assistance of Joy Harris from Dunstable. The weather was so different from Watford, overcast, cold and rain at the start and during the last round. Nevertheless play continued with enthusiasm by all concerned with three rounds before lunch and one after. Lunch was much improved by an impressive range of cakes from Dunstable! At the end of the final round the score was another good win by Leighton-Linslade with 11 games to five. A rapid photo session in the rain rounded off a good day. Joy Harris of Dunstable emailed later to say 'On behalf of the Dunstable team I would like to thank you all for your warm welcome and hospitality. We had an enjoyable day despite the weather.'

John Thorp and I hope that the poor support for these two Friendlies was early season blues, and we look forward to a better response for the rest of the season's Friendlies. The method we use to select players for these events is very fair. If an event is oversubscribed the initial draw is from players who have not played in any previous friendlies as the season progresses, followed by others as required taking into account previous appearances. Everyone gets a fair crack of the whip.

If you don't support them – they won't be there in the future.

Golf Croquet Inter-Club Murphy Shield - Preliminary Round - Hunstanton - 29th April

This competition requires a team of four who play level in the following format: the two strongest players in handicap play a doubles and the other pair play their opposite numbers in singles; after lunch the morning singles pair swap opponents and the morning doubles pair play their opposite numbers in singles. All games are best of three.

As there are 19 teams entered, in order to reduce the numbers to 16 teams split into two regions – North and South – six teams were required to play a preliminary knock-out round. Unfortunately we were one of these teams. The venue is chosen by draw that we lost, therefore we had an early start to reach Hunstanton by 9.30am. Our team consisted of David Ball (3), Roger Stroud (3), John Cundell (4) and Jean Ball (5). The Hunstanton team was David Thirtle-Watts (3), Terrey Sparks (3), Tony Lee (3) and Derek Cole (4).

Our Doubles pair, David and Roger lost their first game 6/7, won the second 7/6 – and after an exciting third game, they came through with another 7/6 win. John and Jean both struggled with position on the very fast Hunstanton lawns – and John with some missed clearances in their singles games - and both lost.

After lunch, the singles round started with both Roger's and John's matches going to the third games – with Roger

winning against Terrey Sparks and John annoyingly losing form after an initial 7/2 win over Tony Lee. Unfortunately David lost after two very close games against David Thirtle-Watts (6/7 and 5/7) – whilst Jean couldn't keep Derek Cole out of the hoops. Hunstanton are very good at jawing shots.

So on paper a good win for Hunstanton by 5-2 and we all felt that the score line did not match the close play.

Hunstanton's next match will be against Northampton. They have never played there before so if Northampton win the draw for venue, we shall be interested to see how Hunstanton cope with the Northampton slopes.

(Postscript: Hunstanton coped well with the Northampton slopes, winning by the same margin of 5-2 - subsequently they lost to Nottingham by the same score!)

Wingrave Friendly - 2nd April

One week on from the Dunstable Friendly, we entertained Wingrave at home. As a contrast to the Dunstable match which was pretty wet, at least the day dawned dry and stayed that way – however there was an unseasonal cold east wind which brought out scarves and gloves!

Preparation of the lawns was carried out by John C whilst David Ball and John T put up the gazeboes, etc. The Wingrave team arrived promptly and after the usual welcomes, play commenced at 10.30am.

First round was a clean sweep for Leighton and this good form was carried on for the rest of the day with three wins in each of the successive rounds, resulting in an overall win by 13 games to three for the Leighton-Linslade team.

Eve Buckingham lines up to clear the blue, watched by partner Ross Bagni. Right, Peter Cole and Judith Pengelly watch Wingrave's Roy Bradbury playing for the hoop - partnered by Daphne Vessey.



Despite the result, Wingrave's captain, Roy Bradbury, stated that they had enjoyed the day very much – especially the cakes – and looked forward to getting their revenge at the return match later in the season.

Wingrave's team was Roy Bradbury and Daphne Vessey; Richard Skidmore and Ken Francis; Sylvia Francis and Jill Branham; and Dominique Moat and Paul Gunn. The victorious Leighton-Linslade team was Eve Buckingham and Ross Bagni; Jackie Cole and John Thorp; Judith Pengelly and Peter Cole; and Erica Fogg and Sally Clay.

Thanks to John C for managing the day and to the cake makers of Val Jeffers, Eve Buckingham and Jean Ball. The following message was received from Roy Bradbury of Wingrave CC:

'Many thanks for hosting yesterday it was much appreciated and although we went down disgracefully we all had a thoroughly good day. I had hoped to redeem some bonus points for close matches but unfortunately you showed us a clean pair of heels. We'll test your metal next at Wingrave and you can test our cakes. Thanks again.'

Mix 'n Match Doubles Handicap - 10th May

Initially there was an entry of 21 members for this competition. Two withdrew for ill health and one for another commitment that left us with 18 on the day. Most competitors managed to turn up at the requested time of 8.45am to witness the draw for partners. The players had been split into two groups for the draw, based on their handicaps, with a high handicapper playing with a low



Wet weather gear was again in use at the Mix 'n Match Doubles Handicap. Finalists were Judith Pengelly and Roy Kemp against Sheila Guest and Roger Stroud. Left: Judith in action during the final. Right: the Manager's view from the gazebo - resited outside the pavilion due to the strong winds.



handicapper. There were some interesting combinations and the pairs were placed into one block of five and one of four.

The weather started grey and was very blustery with heavy showers for much of the day. The playing sequence over five rounds was followed and there were no delays, with the following results.

Block 1

- 1st Judith Pengelly and Roy Kemp
- 2nd David Ball and Val Jeffers
- 3rd Jean Ball and Ronnie Richardson
- 4th Don Barrett and Una Pengelly
- 5th Peggy Kenny and Len Buckingham

Block 2

- 1st Sheila Guest and Roger Stroud
- 2nd John Thorp and Sally Clay
- 3rd Caroline Stroud and John Cundell
- 4th Malcolm Kirby and Eve Buckingham

The final between Judith and Roy against Sheila and Roger started in dry but still very blustery conditions, watched by all the remaining competitors. Judith and Roy enjoyed a good start and never looked back, winning by a comprehensive 7-3 margin. Roy seems to be making a habit of winning this competition as he did so last year with Don Barrett.

We should thank David, John T, Roy Kemp, Malcolm Kirby and John C for setting up the lawns at an early hour – and to those members that stayed on to help clear up.

EACF Handicap League - Northampton Mallets - 16th May

Our first League fixture this season was against one of the two Northampton teams, this one named 'Mallets'. Our team was led by Ross Bagni and the other players were John Thorp, Roger Stroud and Roy Kemp. With three of the four Northampton players having handicaps of 9, and one on 10, John and Roger, who both play off 3, were giving away 62 extra shots between them! Despite this they and the other two team members put up a brave show however the result was a win by Northampton Mallets by 10 games to 8.

Letchworth Friendly - 19th May

A warm welcome and a warm, almost hot, day greeted the LLCC team's arrival at Letchworth. As usual the lawns were ultra smooth and very fast which took a bit of getting used to. This friendly is played under handicap conditions which ranged from Letchworth's Duncan Hector playing off 1 up to his fellow team member who played off 11. Our handicaps ranged from 3 to 10.

Our team pairs were David Ball/Florrie Jeater, John Cundell/Diana Phelps, Una Pengelly/Sally Clay and Roy Kemp/Val Jeffers. The first round was shared and we hoped that having now got used to the speed of the lawns, that we would fare better on subsequent rounds. Unfortunately that was not the case as only David and Florrie won their second game – and none of us managed a win in the third. With David and Florrie and Una and

Sally securing good wins in the last round of the day, the overall result was a convincing win for Letchworth by 11 games to 5.

Despite this we had an enjoyable day's play in excellent conditions, ended by the usual cream tea – all ably organised by Tracey Martin.

EACF Handicap League - Northampton Hoops - 23rd May

Our second League match was against Northampton's second handicap team, named Northampton Hoops, played at Page's Park. The day was cool, windy and wet at times. The usual preparation crew of the two Johns, David and Ross arrived at PP at 8.00am to set the hoops, swish the lawns, put up two main gazebos and those for the scorers. Our scorers arrived next – Peter and Jackie Cole, Anne Rowe and Florrie Jeater – followed shortly by the Northampton team, captained by 93 year old Owen Bryce.

The Northampton players with their handicaps were Owen (2), Richard Cain (6), Diana Dunkley (11) and Gillian Higgins (11). Our team was Captain Ross Bagni (7), Jean Ball (5), Peggy Kenny (8) and Roy Kemp (10). The first two rounds were great for LL as our intrepid team won all of their games. The third and fourth rounds were also pretty successful with three wins in each – so at the end of the singles we had in fact won the match by 14 games to 2.

Just to round off a very successful day, the pairs of Jean Ball/Roy Kemp and Ross Bagni with Peggy Kenny then went on to win their doubles, giving LL an overwhelming win of 16 games to 2.

Extremely well done to all concerned and a special thanks to helpers, scorers and cake makers.

Wrest Park B-Level Tournament - 21st May - reported by Richard Keighley

Wrest Park is in its second playing season at its new venue and it has three full size lawns and another small one. Our Club provided five of the 12 players who entered this level play tournament, one of the 18 nominated events for qualification for the National "B Series Final at Hamptworth in October. It was managed by Richard Keighley.

The group was split into two blocks of six on an all play all basis. In Block A, there was no stopping Les Heard of Northampton who won all five of his games very comfortably. Richard Keighley and John Cundell trailed in his wake with two wins each.

However, Ross Bagni played consistently well to lead Block B with four wins, and Roger Stroud and Jean Ball had three wins and two wins respectively.

In the Final, Ross found himself 3-0 down but recovered well to 5-6 before Les Heard ran the decisive hoop. It was an excellent day's work by Ross who was taking part in his first B-Class tournament. Participants were offered a salad lunch at a price and the weather stayed fine and warm all day.

EACF Level Play - Watford - 29th May

Our first Level Play match was against Watford. After a dreadful wet and overcast week at the end of May we were lucky to be able to enjoy a relatively warm, dry and even

sunny day at Cassiobury Park. We were a little late arriving after three sets of road works between Hemel Hempstead and Watford, however the usual warm Watford welcome from Roger Nicholls and the rest of the Watford team soon raised our spirits.

Our team comprised David Ball (3), John Thorp (3), Jean Ball (4) and John Cundell (4). We were playing Jason Carley (1), Ian Parkinson (2), Steve Dennis (2) and Geoff Johnson (3). We got away to a superb start with three out of four wins in the first round, but this was not to last as Watford reversed the situation in round two. Unfortunately the third and fourth singles rounds also went to Watford by three games to four. 50% of those games went to 5-7 or 6-7, we just couldn't find that finishing form.

The doubles also both went to Watford – again there was a 13th hoop finish on the game between the two Johns and Steve Dennis and Ian Parkinson. The Johns were 3-6 down, then John T played three superb long distance shots to bring the score to 6-6. On the 13th there were three balls all clustered very close to the hoop – two of them belonging to Watford. John C's very high speed angled shot from the baseline hit the hoop, bounced away and struck all three of the surrounding balls – and unfortunately left Ian Parkinson's ball right in front of the hoop.

An enjoyable day despite losing by 12 games to 6. Watford are a strong team and we gave them a good fight. Thanks to Roger Nicholls for scoring and organising the day.

Ladies Doubles Mix 'n Match Level Play - 31st May

A very disappointing entry in terms of numbers with only eight members electing to play, resulted in just four pairs to contest one of the club's major competitions of the year.

Those that did attend enjoyed one of the best days of the year so far in terms of the weather, just the right temperature with very little wind. The eight players were drawn into their pairs – namely Sheila Guest/Una Pengelly; Sally Clay/Peggy Kenny; Judith Pengelly/Jean Ball; and Diana Phelps with Jackie Cole. Play started at 10.00am rather than the usual 9.00am, and the first round produced a win for Sally and Peggy beating Sheila and Una - and with Diana and Jackie beating Judith and Jean. The latter was a great result for Diana and Jackie with handicaps of 10 each against Jean and Judith at 5 and 6.

In the second round the winners were Sheila and Una playing Diana and Jackie, and Judith and Jean playing Sally and Peggy. The third round produced a quick win for Judith and Jean over Sheila and Una, however the game between Diana and Jackie playing Sally and Peggy took over an hour with the score going from 4-4 to 5-5 and then to 6-6, resulting in a golden hoop play off won by the Diana/Jackie pairing.

After examining the block results the final was between Judith and Jean playing Diana and Jackie, with a third/fourth place game with Sheila and Una against Sally and Peggy.

This time form prevailed and Judith Pengelly and Jean Ball overcame Diana Phelps and Jackie Cole by 7/3. In the other match Sheila Guest and Una Pengelly won on the



Ladies Doubles Mix 'n Match Level Play was another good day for Judith Pengelly, paired with Jean Ball, beating Jackie Cole and Diana Phelps in the final. Far left is an excellent jump shot from Sheila Guest. Below: Sally Clay strikes the first ball watched by her partner Peggy Kenny, Una Pengelly and her partner Sheila Guest.



13th hoop.

An enjoyable day with some excellent play – it's a great shame there was not more support from the other 20 female members.

Thanks to the two Johns and David for preparing the lawns, etc.

EACF Golf Croquet Inter-Counties Tournament - 'Ken Wheeler Shield'

This tournament at Hunstanton on 7th June was the fourth GC team competition between the six counties comprising the East Anglian Croquet Federation. The teams from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex,

The winning EACF Inter-Counties Tournament team was Norfolk - Tony Lee, Simon Carter, David Thirtle-Watts and Jeff Race. Photo: courtesy Hunstanton Croquet Club.



Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk were competing for the 'Ken Wheeler Shield' donated by the President of Hunstanton CC who also acted as the Tournament Manager. There were four players per team and the total aggregate handicap for each team was not less than 8 at the time of team entry. Ken Wheeler organised the competition to take place over a single day and included singles and doubles games for all players. All games were level play.

The competition format was that each team played a match against each other over the first five rounds with a match comprising two singles games and one doubles. In the first round the team captains could elect to allocate players in any role (singles or doubles) irrespective of handicap. In the second round the singles/doubles roles were reversed, and in round three roles reverted to those of the first round. This continued until all five rounds had



been played.

The three leading teams then qualified for a 'Gold Medal Round' and played two doubles games each – using different pairs from round one if desired. The GMR teams carried forward a point for each of their games won in the first block, and were awarded two points for a win in the GMR. The winners would be the team with the most points.

The Bedfordshire team was John Cundell as Captain, David Ball, and newcomers to this competition, Jean Ball and Judith Pengelly. We departed Leighton Buzzard at 6.30am to dire weather forecasts of very heavy thunderstorms – and we found one shortly after joining the A1. The storms had reached Hunstanton and the morning was decidedly wet with rain, thunder, and even hail, which delayed the morning's play a little in that only two rounds were managed by lunchtime. The lawns were in immaculate condition however and after lunch the weather improved considerably and the five rounds were completed by 4.30pm. Most teams were equally matched with wins and losses shared.

The three teams to make the Gold Medal round were Norfolk, Suffolk and Hertfordshire. We were disappointed to find ourselves just outside the top three.

The winners of the Gold medal round was Norfolk. Congratulations to them.

The force behind the idea of this tournament – Terrey Sparks (EACF Secretary) – expressed his thanks to all who made the day such a success – the Team Captains and players, the members of Hunstanton CC who worked hard all day, the catering ladies, and Hunstanton President Ken Wheeler for conceiving the format, managing the day – and finally presenting the fine shield plus commemorative plaques to the successful Norfolk team.

The whole day was played with a fine and fair competitive spirit by all teams with very little work for the referee. Congratulations to all concerned. We enjoyed ourselves immensely and rounded off the day with dinner

at Heacham, arriving back in LB just after 9.00pm.

EACF Handicap League - Wrest Park - 11th June - reported by Jean Ball

Peggy Kenny, Val Jeffers, Roy Kemp and Jean Ball travelled to Wrest Park to play our third League game of the season. A beautiful day with just enough breeze to keep the temperature comfortable.

As we arrived the place was deserted and we were beginning to think that we had the wrong date! However a couple of cars appeared and we all duly helped set out the lawns.

Their new lawns are very good considering they are only two years old. There was the odd bump and lump but better than ours, but then ours are a unique challenge.

They were a good bunch of people and did not seem to mind that we beat them 14/4. Well done team. We all had a very nice day and they were very hospitable. This was Wrest Park's first year in the recently updated League.

Club Singles Handicap - 14th June

All three lawns were green and in excellent condition after an overnight torrential thunderstorm as the two Johns, David Ball and Ross Bagni arrived shortly after 7.45am to set out the two gazeboes and hoops for this year's competition. The weather was thankfully a little cooler than the previous day and with just a small light rain shower in the middle of the day.

All 14 entrants arrived on time, and play was under way by 9.00am on all three lawns. The players were drawn into two blocks of seven which resulted in 42 games to be played. John Cundell had produced a playing list and all the necessary paperwork, copies of which had been sent to all competitors midweek, which allowed the day to run very smoothly, with Eve Buckingham looking after the results entry and amending handicap cards. There was a 60 minute time limit which was not exceeded by any player throughout the day.



Club Singles Handicap players.



Finalists in the Club Singles Handicap were Jean Ball and Judith Pengelly. Jean is attempting a jump shot. Middle; Judith plays her blue ball through the 12th hoop and is (right) congratulated by Jean.

Play continued at a good speed into the mid afternoon and by 3.30pm we had two block winners. The results were as follows:

Block 1

- 1st Jean Ball
- 2nd Len Buckingham
- 3rd Ross Bagni
- 4th Roger Stroud
- 5th Malcolm Kirby
- 6th Roy Kemp
- 7th David Ball

Block 2

- 1st Judith Pengelly
- 2nd John Thorp
- 3rd John Cundell
- 4th Peggy Kenny
- 5th Una Pengelly
- 6th Sally Clay
- 7th Sheila Beal

All players assembled to watch the final between Jean Ball and Judith Pengelly which was a closely fought game

that went to the 12th hoop. After a short exchange of shots Judith produced a clean shot with the blue and won the day – her third club competition win this season.

Leighton-Linslade GC B-Level Tournament - 20th June

Members may recall that at the end last year we reported that David and Jean Ball had qualified for the final of the Golf Croquet B-Level Series held at Hamptworth. Twelve players from eleven different clubs contested this inaugural event that even attracted one overseas qualifier all the way from Latvia. Ian Norris of Phyllis Court was the first ever National Golf Croquet B-Level Champion. David Ball was 6th and Jean was 7th - and we were the only club that had two entrants.

This competition was initiated by Chris Roberts, the Editor of The Croquet Gazette, to try and bring a climax to the series of B-Level Tournaments held throughout the country - in 2013 there were 11 of these events at Sussex County, Hamptworth (4), Watford, Wrest Park, Nottingham, Phyllis Court, Guildford, and Edgbaston.

Participants in the club's first B-Level Tournament - players' names are in italics. Left to right; Referee Len Buckingham, *Jean Ball*, Irene Davis, Peter Davis, *Louise Taylor* (Merton CC), *David Ball*, *John Cundell*, *Roger Stroud*, *David Boxell* (Hunstanton), kneeling *Gavin Taylor* (Merton), *Ross Bagni*, *Kath Wright* (Long Eaton), *David Thirtle-Watts* (Hunstanton), *Les Heard* (Northampton), and *John Thorp*.





B-Level Tournament images: top left, Les Heard watches David Boxell playing for the next hoop; top right, Ross Bagni and Louise Taylor waiting for Referee Len Buckingham to determine whether or not the hoop was run. Above left; David Thirtle-Watts lines up his next shot following that of Louise Taylor. Above middle; Kath Wright's yellow has just cleared David Ball's black. Above right; David Ball promotes his blue. Below left; some of the scorers who were much appreciated by our visitors - Peter Davis, Jackie Cole, Peter Cole and Peggy Kenny. Bottom; left to right, scoring assistant Judith Cundell, referee Len Buckingham, players John Thorp, Kath Wright, and Jean Ball, Eve Buckingham, Roger Stroud, Les Heard and Irene Davis.





Above left; Kath Wright peels her red ball through the hoop to win. Above middle; Tournament Manager John Cundell presents Kath Wright with an engraved glass. Above right; the winners - fourth was David Thirtle-Watts, second was David Ball, winner Kath Wright, and third was Les Heard.

They were Singles Level Play competitions for players with handicaps from 2-6, 3-8, 2-7, 3-7, 4-8, and 5-8! Obviously the variation in handicap levels is somewhat confusing. Chris's idea was to enlarge the competition by getting more clubs to take part and rationalising the events to allow play from the same handicap. This was finalised and the handicap level is 3-8. The clubs taking part this season are those above plus Colchester, Hunstanton, Middlesborough, Ashby, Budleigh and Leighton-Linslade.

Winners of each round automatically qualify for the two-day final at the end of the year. Remaining spaces in the final will be taken up by players who accumulate points for 2nd, 3rd and 4th finishes.

We received six entries from other clubs and six from our own club. The visitors were David Thirtle-Watts and David Boxell from Hunstanton, Louise and Gavin Taylor from Merton, Les Heard from Northampton and Kath Wright from Long Eaton near Nottingham. Our players were David and Jean Ball, John Cundell, John Thorp, Roger Stroud and Ross Bagni.

The twelve competitors were drawn into two blocks of six, keeping clubs separated and husband/wives similarly as far as was possible. All competitors had arrived by 9.30am – some having stayed locally overnight and two travelling the 100 mile trip from Hunstanton. After a warm welcome on what was a glorious day weatherwise, Tournament Manager John Cundell briefed the players on the day's programme. After 15 minutes practise to introduce the players to the vagaries of our lawns, play commenced with Round 1. These were singles games with no time limit, doubled up on all three lawns. The visitors were extremely impressed with our scoring system which was staffed all day by a number of our club members – including Peter and Jackie Cole, Sheila Guest, Sally Clay, Peggy Kenny and Peter Davis. Judith Cundell looked after the results management and Len Buckingham was Referee for the day.

Three rounds were completed by around 1.30pm – lunch was taken – very enjoyable in the lovely sunny conditions.

At this point of the competition Kath Wright was leading

her block with three wins – elsewhere there were a number of players with two wins – therefore the afternoon's two rounds left everything to play for.

Kath continued her winning ways with two more wins and was the only player on the day to complete five out of five wins. Runner up in her block was Les Heard from Northampton – the winner of the Wrest Park B-Level last month. In the other block the final round match between John Cundell and Hunstanton's David Thirtle-Watts would determine the outcome of this block. John and Roger Stroud had three wins at this stage and David Thirtle-Watts had two. David Ball had four wins, however if John C beat David T-W, John would equal David Ball's total – however as John had beaten David in an earlier round John would win the block. After an interminable time on hoop 2 with both John and David T-W struggling to run the hoop, John managed to reach a 6-3 lead over David. This was now the only game in progress and the spectators expected John to seal the win – however this was not to be and David T-W fought back to the 13th hoop which he won after one of the longest matches of the day. This meant Roger Stroud, John Cundell and David T-W all had three wins – however David T-W had beaten both Roger and John so he was the runner-up to David Ball's four wins.

The play off for third and fourth places was between Les Heard and David Thirtle-Watts – the final was between Kath Wright and David Ball. Both matches took place simultaneously on Lawns 1 and 2 – avidly watched by competitors and an excellent turn out from LLCC members – all enjoying a fine spread of cakes..

Kath was 1-3 down in the earlier stage of the final, but fought back with one of her impressive jump shots to bring the scores level – then moving ahead of David at hoop 11. Her final peel shot at hoop 12 won the day for a win by a very sociable, friendly and likeable person.

In the 3rd/4th play off, Les Heard was too strong for a tired David Thirtle-Watts after his mammoth struggle with John C – and Les won 7-4.

David Ball thanked all the helpers, scorers, results managers, referee, tournament manager and cake makers – then John Cundell announced the full results and Kath

Wright came forward to receive an engraved glass with the LLCC logo and the words 'WINNER – B-LEVEL 2014'.

Kath thanked everybody for excellent competition, our well-received scoring system and our overall management of the day. Many of the competitors announced how nice it was to see so many club members supporting the day.

Our first Croquet Association tournament was a great success and we look forward to next year.

Colchester B-Level Tournament - 28th June

Just one week after our B-level Tournament, three members travelled to Colchester for another of the 18 B-Level events spread around England this season. The Colchester event is a relatively long established B-Level which has joined this year's championship series. David and Jean Ball and John Cundell left Leighton at 6.45am and enjoyed a pleasant non eventful trip via the M1, M25 and A12 to Colchester – a distance of some 95 miles. We arrived around 8.30am and were made welcome by the organiser, Dick Stover. The four lawns are beautifully manicured and set in a private complex in a square group of four, in front of a lovely pavilion with mens and ladies changing rooms and toilet facilities – including a shower – plus a large kitchen and meeting/eating area. Outside there is a covered area and adjacent storage cabins and a large irrigation tank. The club has been in existence for some 70 years.

The weather wasn't very kind – heavy rain showers started around 11.00am and continued for most of the day - the lawns even became slightly waterlogged in the late afternoon, however it wasn't cold.

The format for this event differed from the play-all blocks that we are normally used to. There were 16 competitors – most from the surrounding Essex and Suffolk clubs, plus two from South London, two from Hunstanton – and the three of us. The players were spilt into four groups of four who initially all played each other – staying on one lawn – to obtain a seeding level. The winners of each block then played the losers of the other blocks – as did the seconds and thirds. The winners of

these games – eight players – then went into a knockout group – playing quarter and semi finals through to a final. The other eight players went into a consolation doubles competition. The beauty of this system is that even if you didn't win your block, if you then had a good winning game, you would get through to the knockout play.

David Ball and John were in the same block – David won all his three games and went on to win his first knockout game. John Cundell finished at the bottom of his block, however he then had a good winning game against one of the winners from another block and went on to the knockout competition. Jean Ball also did well in her block and similarly got through to the knockout. In the next round, David again managed a good win however Jean and John lost. David was again successful and reached the final against Marion Manning from Malden and Colchester clubs. The final was the best of three games – David won the first 7-4 and the second 7-3, so was a worthy winner. He received a trophy and will now automatically go forward to the final at Hamptworth in October.

Jean Ball and John Cundell ended up playing to resolve fifth and sixth places – John won by 7-4.

After quite a long day's play, David had played eight games and Jean and John seven, we joined the motorways for an uneventful trip home, arriving just before 8.00pm. In conclusion, a very enjoyable day, an interestingly different format and once again the meeting of friends old and new.

Friendly Stony Stratford Home - 3rd July

One of the warmest days of the year greeted Stony Stratford on their annual Friendly visit to our lawns. Fortunately there was quite a strong breeze to keep the playing conditions ideal. John C, Roy Kemp and Florrie Jeater prepared the lawns and set up the gazebos. The first three SS visitors arrived shortly after 9.30am, followed by nine more players in two more cars as 10.00am approached! The SS team captain, Roy Healey, explained that his team had shot up from seven to twelve and he did not want to disappoint the extras as two or three of them



The Stony Stratford and LL teams.

had not played away from their club before and he wanted them to gain experience. Roy expertly juggled his players during the day so that they all had a chance of playing.

Our team consisted of Sally Clay and Malcolm Kirby, Florrie Jeater and Peggy Kenny, Sheila Guest and Diana Phelps, and Don Barrett with Roy Kemp. LL got off to a great start by winning three of the four games; the second round was halved and lunch was taken. This often results in our team finding life a bit more difficult after food! Round three was a walkover for SS – therefore it all depended on the last round. After a good win for SS at 7-2, and a similar score for LL – the last two games would determine the winning team. The Florrie Jeater/Peggy Kenny duo and Don Barrett with Roy Kemp finished with both their games on the golden hoop. Both our teams got into the hoop – only to be expertly removed by SS players – who then both managed to jawse their balls and secure wins. The overall result was a win for Stony Stratford by ten games to six.

Very pleasant tea and cakes rounded off an excellent day. Thanks to Deidrea Ellins for maintaining the kitchen services, and to cake makers Val Jeffers and Jean Ball.

Hunstanton GC B-Level Tournament - 5th July

The third B-Level Tournament attended by LLCC members – just a couple of weeks after our own event – was at Hunstanton. Our entrants were David Ball, Richard Keighley and John Cundell. We left Leighton Buzzard in heavy rain at 6.30am and it was still pelting down as we arrived at Hunstanton at 9.10am. After the usual warm welcome and tea or coffee, we chatted with the other nine players, all from Hunstanton, until Hunstanton's President, Ken Wheeler, gave us his usual concise briefing for the day's activities. We were split into two blocks of six players – John C was the only LLCC player in Block B whilst David and Richard were in Block A. Play commenced promptly at 10.00am with everyone well covered in rain gear as the precipitation continued. Fortunately the rain ended as did the first round and the weather continually improved as the day wore on. Three rounds were played before lunch and two after.

Tea and cakes were taken whilst Ken Wheeler worked out the results. Block A was very straightforward as Hunstanton's Terrey Sparks had scored four wins from his five games. Block B took a little longer as there were four



John Cundell receives The Storey Trophy for his win at the Hunstanton B-Level Tournament from Hunstanton President, Ken Wheeler. Photo: David Thirtle-Watts.

players with three wins – three from Hunstanton and John Cundell. After due calculation and careful checking, Ken pronounced that John C was Block B winner.

The next round of games saw John C and Terrey playing the Final with successive players from each block playing one another – i.e., seconds, thirds, etc. The minor places games, of which there were five each, started on each of the five Hunstanton lawns. As their games drew to a close, John and Terry started their final on the lawn in front of the clubhouse. John started well, winning the first two hoops, and never looked back – beating Terrey by 7-3.

After the presentation of the new trophy provided for the event, called The Storey Cup, to John Cundell by Ken Wheeler, we said our goodbyes – made our way to nearby Heacham for a very pleasant evening meal - and then enjoyed an uneventful journey home on extremely quiet roads – including the normally very busy A1.

This means that we now have two qualifiers for the GC B-Level Championship to be held at Hamptworth in October. Hopefully this will increase as there are still a number of B-Level Tournaments remaining this season and other club entrants include Roger Stroud, Ross Bagni, Jean Ball and John Thorp. Watch this space!

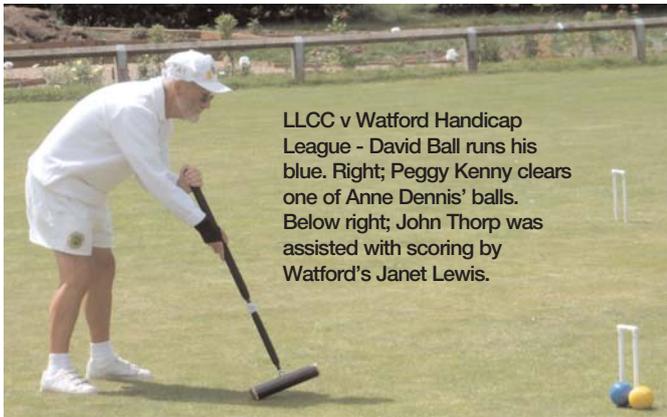
EACF Handicap League - Watford - Home - 7th July

The third game of this year's series was against Watford at home on a sunny Monday. Everything was prepared by 9.30am as Watford's team of Ron Drew, Anne Dennis, Kay Lewis and Robert Archer arrived – to be greeted by our



LLCC v Watford Handicap League - Val Jeffers runs the hoop watched by Kay Lewis. Right; Watford's Ron Drew watched by Roy Kemp.





LLCC v Watford Handicap League - David Ball runs his blue. Right; Peggy Kenny clears one of Anne Dennis' balls. Below right; John Thorp was assisted with scoring by Watford's Janet Lewis.



team; David Ball, Peggy Kenny, Val Jeffers and Roy Kemp. After a few minutes catching up with croquet news, organiser John C got the first round under way. LLCC enjoyed three good wins with only Val being very unlucky on the 13th hoop against Anne Dennis.

Watford really got their act together in Round Two with a clean sweep of four wins. Not to be outgunned, LL then did the same to Watford! Therefore at lunch LL were in the lead with seven games to Watford's five.

The fourth round was a good one for Watford with three wins and only David Ball managing a win for LL. So with just the doubles left the score was nine wins to each club. The doubles pairings were David Ball and Val Jeffers against Ron Drew and Robert Archer whilst Peggy Kenny partnered Roy Kemp against Kay Lewis and Anne Dennis. Peggy and Roy didn't start very well as the two Watford ladies won the first three hoops, however they staged a great comeback to win 7-3. Unfortunately David and Val met their match against the Watford boys and they lost 7-4. Hence the result was a draw which earns both teams one point in the League. They both now have to play Stony Stratford – the results of which may well decide which team will win this year's Western Division.

Thanks to the scorers – Sally Clay, Florrie Jeater, John Thorp and Janet Lewis from Watford – also to the cake makers Val Jeffers, Eve Buckingham and Jean Ball – and to John C, John T, David Ball and Roy Kemp for lawn and gazebo preparation.

Friendly Northampton Home - 11th July

Our first Friendly against Northampton didn't look all that promising as the day dawned very wet and the lawns were partially flooded. The usual crew of the two Johns plus Ross Bagni set out the hoops and three gazebos. The eight Northampton players arrived nice and early and after the usual introductions and a welcoming warm drink, play commenced at 10.15am.

Northampton was playing a number of members who were attending their first competitive friendly – together with a couple more experienced players, including Les Heard who recently won the West Park B-Level Tournament. The first round of doubles was a 3-1 win for LLCC pairs Sally Clay/Peggy Kenny, John Cundell/Peter Cole, and Ross Bagni/Jackie Cole with only John Thorp and Sheila Guest losing 7-6 to Les Heard and his partner.

Round two went the same way – this time the losers were Sally and Peggy – again a close match finishing on the 13th hoop.

Lunch was taken – we moved the tables in front of the

pavilion to offset the cold north wind that blew all day.

After lunch round three was another 3-1 win for LLCC – this time the losers were John C and Peter – again to Les and June. Round 4 was a clean sweep for LLCC. The overall result was a win for Leighton-Linslade by 13 games to three.

Over some super cakes and tea, Northampton stated that despite their loss they had enjoyed the day immensely and invited us to a return before the end of the season.

Thanks to all who helped make the day such a success despite the weather.

EACF Level Play League - Letchworth - 14th July

Our second Level Play League match was against Letchworth at home. Our team was David Ball, John Thorp, Roger Stroud and John Cundell. David and the two Johns arrived at 8.15am as Doug Bolton and one of his assistants were mowing the three lawns on a beautiful morning. John C set out the lawns and John T and David put up the gazebos – Roger arrived and helped complete the preparation work. Sally Clay and Ross Bagni arrived to act as scorers.

All we needed now was the Letchworth team! We were starting to get a bit worried that perhaps this was an away match rather than a home one – fortunately just after 10.00am they appeared at the 'cricket' car park. After the usual welcome to our lawns, play started following a ten minute practice period. Letchworth had sent a very strong team – David Mathews (4), John Noble (3), John Skingsley (3) and Duncan Hector (1). They soon got used to our lawns and enjoyed a clean sweep by winning all four games. In round two we had one win by John Cundell and in the third round there was a bit of a recovery with both Johns and David Ball winning. Lunch was taken and we

were hoping our comeback was to continue. However it was not to be as in the fourth round Letchworth consolidated their win with another clean sweep.

All that remained was the doubles which was shared with our pair of the two Johns winning against Letchworth's two Johns!

A very good win for Letchworth by 13 games to five.

Welcome to new members

We have three new members so far for 2014 - two ladies and one man. The ladies are Barbara Collier and Mary Kemp. Our new man is Ann Rowe's husband, Philip. We extend a warm welcome to them.

Busy Season Continues

There are still a good selection of events left on the calendar:

July

- 25 Wingrave v Phyllis Court – lawns loaned – no social play
- 28 U3A Dunstable Visit Fun Day
- 29 Friendly Northampton - Away

August

- 4 EACF Handicap League – Stony Stratford - Home
- 8 EACF Level League – Northampton - Home
- 9/10 Club Mens Doubles 'Mix 'n' Match' John Fogg Trophy
- 11 Rotary Group – 6.30pm
- 12 EACF Level League - Chelmsford - Away
- 13 Committee Meeting
- 14 Dunstable CC Fun Day - lawns loaned – no social play
- 15 Enfield Friendly - Away
- 18 Watford Friendly – Home
- 19 High Wycombe Friendly - Away
- 22 EACF Level League – Enfield - Home

September

- 1 Wingrave Friendly - Away
- 6 Club Garden Party and Fun Day (10.00am – 4.00pm)
- 8 Letchworth Friendly - Home
- 10 Committee Meeting
- 12 LJB 70+ Trophy
- 20/21 Club Doubles
- 27/28 Club Singles

November

- 14 AGM & Party

There is the John Fogg Trophy competition for men - a doubles event where the teams are drawn at the start of the day. Other major club competitions are the LJB 70+ Trophy, and at the end of the season, the Club Singles and Doubles Championships.

As mentioned earlier John Thorp has made a determined effort to arrange more Friendlies this year. Also as mentioned previously the original support for these was very mediocre. As you can see, we have six more Friendlies before the end of the season. It would be nice to see a good entry for these events. Arranging and organising them is quite time consuming and it is not very encouraging if we only get poor support.

If you have not played in a Friendly before, please do not think that your standard of play is not good enough. Any



One of this year's new members is Mary Kemp (right) seen here with Judith Cundell at one of her earlier 'learning' sessions.

member is more than welcome to take part in these events - and we make an effort to partner you with a more experienced player to guide you through your first time matches.

Also, put a date in your diary for the Club Garden Party and Fun Day on 6th September. More details on this will be circulated in due course.

Free Tuition on the Game and Basic Rules of Golf Croquet

You may recall the recent email concerning Len Buckingham's idea of finding new members by publishing details in local village magazines and also on local radio, for 'Free Tuition on the Game and Basic Rules of Golf Croquet. The invitation to be published reads as follows:

'Hallo - my name is Len Buckingham. I am Treasurer of Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club, and a Croquet Association registered referee. The game of Golf Croquet is very popular today and is also an international sport. Whilst it is mainly played by persons of about forty years of age upwards, it is also very popular with younger members of society.

The game involves considerable skill plus an agile and scheming mind, nevertheless it is also extremely sociable and relaxing when played socially, and is not so physically demanding as many other sports.

Meet at 10.00am in the car park of Page's Field on Sunday 17th August. Please telephone Len Buckingham on 01525 221079 to book a place as the class may have to be limited. Details of how to find the car park can be obtained by telephoning Len or email llcroquetclub@gmail.com. The instruction and a chance to play with one of the club members will last about two hours or so.'

When we learn what support Len has received for this we will circulate members and trust that we will find sufficient players to assist on the day.

