

The Bears Croquet Club

February 2015 Newsletter

Updates

COMMITTEE NEWS

Your committee met a few weeks ago to plan for the next stages in our journey. Currently, several sites are under consideration with one being particularly interesting. As negotiations are at a delicate stage, I am not putting too many details in print. It would be wrong for me to raise hopes for them to be dashed later. However, there is a site in Minchinhampton with room for two full size courts within the site being developed by the rugby club. If we can achieve a home here it would be a dream result though expensive to establish. There would be little if any conflict of interest because the rugby season is from September to April and the croquet season from April to October. It would take a minimum of one year to get proper lawns constructed from virgin land but there is a possibility that we could be offered a different, small piece of land for the current season just to tide us over. This small plot would be far from perfect but would enable us to have a practice court while the permanent courts are being constructed. It would also be a “probationary year” for us to prove what nice folk we are to have around.

There is nothing definite about any of this so please do not get too excited yet.

Being eagle-eyed, you will have noticed an amendment to the name at the top of this page. The committee decided that it would be more appropriate to add the words “Croquet Club”, not least to be prepared for when the time comes to apply for grants. When we find a new home, we may keep this name or may decide to change it if a more appropriate one becomes obvious. Such a change would be debated widely when the time comes.

New Constitution. The club constitution has served us well for the arrangement we have enjoyed for the last thirty years. However, it would not serve us for either our present position or for when we have a new club. Some changes, such as the name change, are minor but others need to be significantly different. For example, when applying for grants, any organisation or individual approached would need to be sure that the money they donate would be wisely spent and protected. If the club folded, all debts would need to be paid, loans repaid and any remaining money or equipment given to either the Federation or the Croquet Association or divided between them. The current constitution allows for members to have a share in any remaining assets but this is unacceptable to the donors of grants.

Some years ago, we spent a lot of time updating our constitution and we want to keep the important principles that are dear to us. In order to move forward we are working on a new draft constitution based on our existing constitution but adopting the format and guidelines recommended by the Croquet Association. This format has been used successfully in whole or in essence by many other clubs.

We also want to include some new principles. It seems profoundly unfair that any member unable to attend an AGM is unable to vote - which is our current position. We therefore want to include provision for members unable to attend meetings to submit a written vote in advance of the meeting.

The committee is currently working on a draft and when this is ready, it will be sent to you with plenty of time for you to study it. Eventually, we will need to call a Special General Meeting to adopt it. All this will need to be done before we can apply for any grants so it is a task we are working on with some urgency.

Bank accounts. In a few weeks time, the existing bank account will be closed and all money transferred into a new Treasurer's Current Account. We will also be opening a separate savings account into which donations, loans and grants will be paid. Here it will be protected by keeping such money separate from day-to-day expenditure. Until then, our existing account will continue.

League matches. Richard has been exceptionally busy and proactive in arranging our matches and these are all booked. You will be able to get the dates and details from the on-line Lawn Booking website.

Much to our delight, all our partner clubs have agreed to us playing our "Home" games at their clubs so we have no need to hire lawns from Cheltenham for this purpose. Some clubs have also said that we do not need to take match teas with us (as would normally be the case in these circumstances) because their members will not have to incur travelling expenses.

When team managers contact the clubs prior to their match, they will need to check the detail to see whether this arrangement applies to their matches or whether we should offer a contribution to the host club.

Draft Programme for 2015. While there is uncertainty about a permanent home, we are currently working on a programme for the year and want to ensure that there is ample opportunity for everyone to play whether that be just social play, or includes match play, or includes visits to other clubs. Ideally, everyone should be able to play as much or as little as they choose and at a level they enjoy.

It has been gratifying to receive very kind and generous invitations from other clubs - most known to us but some from clubs who have just heard about our plight and want to help.

It would be possible to get carried away and arrange far too much but it would be embarrassing if we arranged a visit and no-one was able to go and so we need your feedback before we firm up any arrangements.

So here comes the next survey because we need to be guided by how much you want to play and are prepared to travel. Arranging joint transport would be up to members. Without committing yourself at this stage, please could you let us know whether you are interested in any of the following or if you are DEFINITELY NOT interested in any of them. As you know, we need to amass a lot of money for a potential move but that must be balanced by the fact that you have just paid a £30 annual subscription. So please can you let us know your view about whether you think the people going on the trips should contribute to any green fees we have to pay, or think that the club as a whole should pay out of its funds. As an example, Cheltenham have kindly allowed us to book a lawn for one club day per month. This will be at a fee of £25 per day. Some other clubs will not charge us a green fee but it would mean we have to pay increased travel costs to get there.

DRAFT PROGRAMME. Black = booked. Green = suggestions

February

Wednesday 4th Snooker

Wednesday 11th Dinner at Egypt Mill, Nailsworth 7.00 p.m.

Wednesday 18th Snooker

Saturday 21st Snooker Challenge Day v Bristol CC 1.30 p.m.

March

Wednesday 4th Snooker

Wednesday 11th Dinner (venue to be confirmed) 7.00 p.m.

Wednesday 18th Snooker

April

Date and venue yet to be arranged for our Annual Dinner

Wednesday 1st Snooker Finale – presentations

Sat 4th VISIT e.g. Camerton and Peasedown tba

Thurs 9th Swindon club day

Saturday 11th Short Croquet League at Nailsea – Team/s of 4.

Thursday 23rd Club Day at Cheltenham – from 2.00 p.m 'til dusk (provisionally booked) or

Thurs 23rd Swindon club day

May

Thurs 7th Swindon club day

Sat 9th VISIT e.g. Dyffryn tba

Tues 12th Parkstone match Nailsea

Sat 16th Intermediate match Kington Langley

Sun 17th Federation match Swindon

Thursday 21st Club Day at Cheltenham – from 2.00 p.m 'til dusk (provisionally booked) or

Thurs 21st Swindon club day

Fri 29th BL match Worcester

June

Tue 2nd VISIT e.g. Phyllis Court tba

Fri 5th BL match Swindon

Sat 6th Parkstone match Bath

Thurs 11th Swindon club day

Sat 13th Federation match Kington Langley

Tues 16th BL match Llandaff

Sun 21st Federation match Dyffryn

Thurs 25th Intermediate match Broadwas

Thursday 25th Club Day at Cheltenham – from 2.00 p.m 'til dusk (provisionally booked) or

Thurs 25th Swindon club day

Sat 27th Parkstone match Bath

July

Sat 4th VISIT e.g. Cameron and Peasedown tba

Sun 5th Intermediate match Broadwas

Thurs 9th Swindon club day

Sat 11th Federation match Worcester

Tues 14th Parkstone match Nailsea

Thursday 16th Club Day at Cheltenham – from 2.00 p.m 'til dusk (provisionally booked)

Fri 17th Intermediate match Worcester

Thurs 23rd Swindon club day

Thurs 23rd BL match Dyffryn
Sun 26th Intermediate match Nailsea
Tues 28th Parkstone match Taunton

August

Sat 1st VISIT e.g. Ipswich CC followed by Canterbury CC (Canterbury must be midweek) tba
Thurs 6th Swindon club day
Sun 9th Intermediate match Dyffryn
Tues 11th Parkstone match Taunton
Thurs 20th Swindon club day
Thursday 27th Club Day at Cheltenham – from 2.00 p.m 'til dusk (provisionally booked)

September

Sat 5th VISIT e.g. Cornwall tba
Thursday 24th Club Day at Cheltenham – from 2.00 p.m 'til dusk (provisionally booked)

October

Saturday 17th Short Croquet League at Budleigh Salterton – 1 Team of 4.
Wednesday 28th AGM (tbc)

November

An invitation from Swindon Croquet Club.

They wrote saying: *“From last weeks committee meeting Swindon Croquet Club has offered the use of the clubs lawns at Moredon for The Bears members on Thursday Evenings.*

We usually start our season on the 1st April but we are unsure if the lawns will be ready due to the levelling and re-seeding that has taken place over the winter, but I will let you know when we do start playing.

The lawns should be free after 4 pm on Thursdays. As the fixtures for the coming season are finalised we may be able to offer you more lawn time.

Hope your search for a new venue is successful in the near future.”

An invitation from Nailsea Croquet Club.

“We wondered if any of you would like to join Nailsea as Country Members. The annual fee is half of the fee for full members so is currently £67.50 (2015 season). This allows full participation in all AC and GC club afternoons, our wonderful monthly all day Wild Wednesday competition (AC). Entry to all our internal competitions would be available as well but we all pay £2 per event for that. ...Practice time, in fact all the perks of full membership would be available. The reason for the reduction is only the assumption that those living 25+ miles away are unlikely to get as much play as locals. In fact some of our country members do quite well out of it!

In addition we are hoping to offer you a friendly match day here but must wait until the Calendar is complete. If that appeals to you, let me know and I'll progress the idea. It could incorporate a lunch at the Old Farmhouse or you could bring sandwiches.

I hope that doesn't sound like PR. It certainly started with sympathy and a desire to help the homeless Bears!”

If you are interested in taking them up on this offer, you can either contact the club direct or let Robert know and he will coordinate a response.

We have also had invitations from Camerton and Peasedown CC (south of Bath), Cornwall CC, Phyllis Court CC (near Henley), Canterbury CC and Dyffryn CC for day or two-day visits.

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No stopping her! Congratulations to Caroline who has been selected to play for the Belgian Team at The Ladies World Championships at Nottingham in July. She qualifies to play for Belgium owing to her father having been born there. We wish her the very best of luck.

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The age of the dinosaurs. Don's story:

Recently I emailed my colleagues on the Glos. Inter-Counties team to say that I was no longer fit enough to play the 11 games over 4 days needed for the event. I thought you might like to see the very nice replies I received. The team was Louise Bradforth, Dave Foulser, Dave Kibble, Dave Munday and Paul Smith and of course, me.

Don

From me to the team,

To the Gloucestershire Inter-Counties team. Sadly, after over 30 years, I am going to bow out of the I-C team this year. I do not have the strength, nor due to lack of play, the ability, to play at top level anymore. This is not a whinge, I have had a good innings and enjoyed the company. It happens to all of us in the end. I wanted to give plenty of notice so that a replacement can be found.

Good luck for this year - Go Old Spots!!

Don

From Dave M

Sorry to hear this, you will be missed

From Dave K

It's the end of an era (sad face)

From Dave F

Thanks for Don's email & I too agree it's the end of an era.

Many thanks to Don for his huge contribution to the Gloucestershire team over such a long period of time & his very productive partnership with Louise, in particular, was the stuff of legend.

From Louise

*Ahhh, the mighty Donozoic era when the Gauntosaurus ruled the earth. Mallets have been found perfectly preserved in the peat of the Southwick flat lands; these range from just wood, those with brass bands and some are presumed much more ancient and seem to have decayed to a fibrous carbon. Much has happened in these foundational years; lawns have formed, grass levels risen and tactics evolved. Quote: 'I wouldn't start from there,' 'shut your eyes,' 'I've never seen one like that,' 'it's raining - it's your go,' 'b****r.' And after 30 million years the first modern croquet players have emerged.*

Be assured though, the Gauntosaurus is not extinct. In wet weather they can be found huddled in sheds dotted around flat open spaces. In snow they are extremely well camouflaged. Look for the black crest on the adult male. They can be coaxed into the open using a combination of tea, chocolate and beer. The shed was never the same again - the unleashed toxic gases caused about half of all species of croquet player on the planet to become extinct. The plus was that the consequential runaway global warming enabled the Gauntosaurus to populate vast swathes of the globe - they like the warm. Those in the know attribute the length of the Donozoic era purely down to the common sense of the female - they usually, unless provoked, care for the weaker male and search out a heated den.

Back to the key point - Don is a fantastic team player and the Gloucestershire team would have been sunk many times without him pulling off some outrageous turn - usually against a pairing we were not meant to win against. The most important thing for me though is to thank Don for being a wonderful doubles partner - I greatly appreciate the time we've spent chatting and playing on the lawns together at the Inter-Counties.

Love Louise

From me to the team

Many thanks to you all for your kind comments.

I believe that it was 1983 when I played in my first I-Cs. This was when the CA struggled to get enough teams to make up a tournament. So the whole of East Anglia was amalgamated into "Eastern Counties". At that time Middlesex and Surry dominated the scene. They were quite happy to let a rag-tag of counties enter - until we started winning! At that point they decided that only individual counties could play. It didn't help though as by then the many rising stars made the competition much fiercer. Our E Counties teams were an eclectic mix of players including Johnny Haigh, Sarah Hampson, Keith Wylie, Lewis Palmer, Martin French and John Walters. Shortly after I started, Anchor Butter sponsored the event and I still have some Anchor glasses that the team got for winning. Anchor also were promoting a new fruit drink they had produced - it was horrible! I have played in every counties since then except for the year when I moved to Glos and was forced by the rules to miss a year. There have been some memorable times:

I had an 8 yard single shot to the peg to win. Before I could take the shot, a phone call from my son informed me that the house was flooded! I said I would call him back and went back to the shot - which I hit!

Playing with Martin French, my back went and I could only play standing upright while Martin placed the balls for me. Again we won!

A match on lawn 12 in weather so foul that none of the players cared who won.

Dave F's famous pep talk at Compton "You're all playing crap, get a grip!"

Watching, with many others, the Bedford team carefully laying up in corner 1 - with a lift due!

Two players who had had a row and sat across the lawn ignoring each other

Louise's favourite sayings - Coiled Slug, Foraging, and Grrr! (this last to be said, not imitated)

Louise and my famous run of about 17 out of 22 wins.

Dave K arriving early one day - or did I dream this?

That awful pig

Playing with Dave F against Cordingly and partner. Phil's partner had had to leave and it was about 20 minutes before we realised!

The great support Faith has given to the team.

The friendly atmosphere of the event.

The many great team meals and the many many laughs.

From Dave F *Thanks for that & what a wonderful summary of so many memorable moments - great stuff.*

Yes please pass on my thanks to Faith for her support.

“Great achievements never come from comfort zones.”