

Nailsea & District Croquet Club
Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 5 December 2016

Chair: Andrew Wimshurst
Present: Kathy Wallace, Brigit Clayton, Peter Dyke, Mike Tracy, Linda Shaw
Coral Harrison, Brian Roynon

A short Committee meeting had been held immediately after the AGM on 12 November and Brigit Clayton had been co-opted on to the Committee.

The meeting opened at 10am and Erica Malaiperuman and Mark Suter were present for items 1 and 2

1. Apologies None

2. Recruitment

Erica began by outlining the recent recruitment methods. These included:

Visits from Golden Valley school Y5 pupils

Annual Open Day: publicity for this day included publications, newspaper, posters, Facebook, Streetlife, Meet-up. Some children came following their school visit in the previous year.

Andrew had introduced croquet to groups of Y9 pupils at Clifton College. Over each summer terms in two consecutive years, he had taught 8 groups of 10 pupils thus reaching 160 youngsters. These were unlikely to join NDCC but the wider croquet community might benefit.

Mark observed that he and several other A Class players had taken up croquet at the age of around 11 years and he thought this was the ideal age. Linda observed that we had had visits from Guide and Scout Groups and some had shown further interest but eventually fallen away.

Mark explained that his background – he had run his own marketing companies in different countries and been involved in worldwide marketing. He said that “follow-up” was very important. Brigit assured him that we did follow up on Open Day visitors, sometimes by phone call and sometimes by e-mail.

Coral observed that we ran Social evenings for local groups on many occasions during each summer but had only ever picked up one new member from the groups.

Mark said that his methods would involve sending regular newsletters to those who had attended on Open Day and the newsletters would lead them to the Club website. The newsletters could be automated and take minimal effort. Andrew observed that we would have to build up a list of people to whom the newsletter should be sent before this could happen.

Mike explained the Croquet Challenge where teams of 4 from local sports clubs had taken part in a croquet competition. The day had been enjoyable and raised money but it had not been fruitful in terms of recruitment.

Mark then talked about targeting people who had visited the Club website by the use of cookies. He said that Facebook could be used to target suitable people as prospective new members. Kathy observed that this would be really useful and that the Club desperately needed a successful recruitment campaign. Mark said that we would need to know how many new members we wanted in order to decide how much to spend on the marketing process.

Andrew asked Mark to formulate a plan and report back to the Committee. We would arrange a meeting for Mark and Erica and the members of the Committee who were particularly interested and the plan would be discussed.

MS

Erica and Mark left the meeting at 11.15am.

3. Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 2 November 2016

The minutes were signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 2 November 2016

4. Matters arising from Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 2 November 2016

The wording on the draft composed by Brigit was considered to be excellent. Kathy to inform Geoff that the wording had been approved by the Committee and to ask if he was happy with it.

KW

It was thought that the new plaque and the existing plaque should both be placed above the door to the machine room where they would be more visible.

BR

Peter said he would pursue the DB checks for himself and Erica.

PD

A meeting had been held to discuss Mad Monday and those present would report back to the next Committee Meeting. Brian said that he had been asked to state that Robin was prepared to run mad Mondays next season with the proviso that the results of matches did not get recorded on AHS cards.

Brigit commented that the Mad Monday trophy could not be engraved at the same place as the other trophies because it was glass.

Peter had not yet sent the report of the AC Handicap Committee

PD

Andrew thanked Mike for his speedy and comprehensive report from the SWF AGM

5. Treasurer's Report (Mike Tracy)

*Treasurer's report for NDCC committee meeting 3rd December 2016
Spreadsheet attached. It is compatible with old versions of Excel, so if you have been unable to open it in the past, this one should work. You can print the summary page if you wish by going to the High Level Actuals worksheet tab.*

Current balance at the bank less un-presented cheques is £17,668.23

The deficit for the year is £742.84

Income includes £1144 (52 x £22) for the Christmas lunch, much of which will go to the caterers. This level of attendance assures us of a modest but useful profit.

Expenditure for the year includes rent (£500) and about £1,000 of the £1,800 to be spent on lawn chemicals.

I am delighted to see that bridge is continuing to bring many of our members together through the winter and maintain a steady income stream for the club. Our finances are on track. To keep them that way, which is especially important this year in view of the lawn levelling which is to come, we need to avoid any unplanned expenditure that is not essential and/or which can be postponed.”

In addition, Mike reported that the surplus for the Christmas Lunch was £127.51. He intended to query the amount charged for the food as it did not seem consistent with the price quoted which was £17.95 per head.

MT

Mike announced that the CA grant application had been approved by the Development Committee but it would not be confirmed until the Major Grants Committee met in January.

Mike was also wondering if we might be able to apply for a grant from the Low Carbon Community Benefit Fund. If ever we were considering a project that would benefit the Community and would lead to lower carbon emissions, we should bear it in mind.

6. Property Report (Brian Roynon)

“Pavilion

Hand Basins

The taps on the basins have be fitted along with in-line ball valves. The tiles behind the sinks have also been replaced by Brian with Robins assistance.

The Roof

I have contacted a roofing contractor who has seen the roof and I am awaiting his quotation. He says he will not need scaffolding.

Hedges.

The tops of the hedges on the East and South sides have been cut by Mike, Robin and Brian. This will slow the growth at the start of the year. Some of the brambles on the South hedge have been cut of low down.

Bisques

Tony Willoughby has been asked to look after the Bisques. He immediately took away samples and has made a selection of spares already. They are located on the top of the mallet rack in a nice box that Tony also made to hold them.”

7. Lawn Maintenance Report (John Wallace)

1. Lawns

During November there was a short period of heavy rain that left the North boundary and corner 1 of Lawn two very soft and muddy. As a result these areas have been closed. Curiously, the overall rainfall in November has not been high as figure 1 shows. However as there is no evapotranspiration all the rain that falls collects in the ground, leaving it relatively soft.

The lawns have all been sprayed with Rigel G which is thought to offer some protection against leatherjackets. The exact mechanism remains the subject of discussion but it is cheap and may help!

Further reseeding of corner 1 on Lawn has been carried out. This will be attempted if/when the weather becomes a little warmer as dwarf perennial Rye Grass will germinate at 7C. Figure 2 illustrates the relative growth rate of (cool season) grass at different temperatures. Inherent in the (simplified) equation that generates this curve is the notion that there is an optimum temperature and that if the weather is too hot the grass growth slows. Note also how the grass continues to grow slowly at the sort of winter temperatures normally experienced at NDCC.

The Duncan Hector technique of using surface seeding and an 8mm thick covering of green waste has also been considered. (The green waste retains moisture for germination but then rapidly composts to nothing after germination). However, the areas to be reseeded are quite large and hence the cost/effort would begin to become significant. Also, the approach cannot be easily repeated if a bout of warmer winter weather appears. By contrast, plant pot overseeding can be repeated whenever it is considered judicious to attempt it.

The new grass growing out of the "plant pot" tining holes has been cut with the 22inch cylinder mower which has a groomer. As an experiment, the North half of lawns were cut at the same time. The process took 30-35 minutes so cutting to all four lawns would take about 2.25 hours. Once the lawns are levelled next Autumn it will be necessary to cut the newly germinated grass using the cylinder mower at least two or three times a week throughout the Autumn. The purpose of regular cutting is to encourage the new grass shoots to tiller out and thicken up the sward. A special rota of fit volunteers will be prepared! This is a key activity in the context of maximising the sward density at the start of the 2018 season.

Leaf removal has now been discontinued as all the leaves are finally down! Regular grass cutting has also been discontinued.

2. Revised method of cleaning the Toro triplex mower

In October I described Geoff Hughes suggested approach to cleaning the Toro. This proposal did not meet with universal approval but since then I have been able to construct a simple hose-pipe connected spray bar that slips on to the grass box mounting rails. The operator can safely sit on the mower, power up the cutters and watch the water being injected onto the rotating reels. This is completely safe but solves the problem! It will certainly make Toro cleaning easier and more effective.

3. White lining.

I have now devised a simple method of correctly locating the corner position using modified Nylon bolts located in the ground below surface level. In conjunction with a wind up reel of string it should be possible to rapidly mark out consistent white line position. The system will be in operation for 2017.

Andrew Buchanan has decided to give up white lining. He is being replaced by Erica Malaiperuman.

4. 2017 Chemicals

All the chemicals for 2017 have now been delivered. The corresponding cost of fertiliser is a little higher than last year as Duncan Hector has, based on soil testing, decided to boost the Phosphorous component as this can affect the germination of new grass.

One minor complication of the levelling contract is that the contractor is supplying the pre-seed fertiliser as a part of the contract. However, Duncan Hector is keen to avoid the contractor supplying a standard synthetic fertiliser as opposed to the organic fertiliser that he employs. I am therefore hoping to persuade the contractor to purchase their fertiliser from Duncan, thus avoiding the problem but leaving the contractual responsibility with them.

The encouragement of bacterial and mycorrhizal fungi in the rootzone is an important part of a good lawn treatment programme. Bacteria compost the thatch whilst the fungi augment the grass root system and aid the take up of nutrients. It has also been shown that the fungi composition can encourage the existence of perennial grass at the expense of shallow rooting annual meadow grass which is susceptible to drought and disease.

My recent thatch measurements show that over two years Duncan Hectors programme has reduced the thatch from about 18mm to about 10mm without any scarifying. The improved health of the rootzone has also led to the disappearance of the fairy rings (touch wood!) and almost complete elimination of Fusarium disease without the use of fungicides.

8. SWAN

The editor of SWAN had asked if we had any items for inclusion. It was decided that we should submit a short piece concerning the three Nailsea members who had died this year. Linda agreed to do this LS

9. Coaching

Linda was continuing to compile lists of coaches and topic requests.

In addition. Linda reported that Martin Kerly was willing to assist her and shadow her in organising the competitions next season. Kathy pointed that the Blocks and Knockouts could be ready to be started as soon as the lawns opened. In view of the early finish to the season, this would be beneficial. Linda had been aware of this and planned to have the information up by the start of the season

10. Skittles Evening

The figures from last year suggested that £10 was an appropriate charge.

Kathy to send out information and organise responses

Brian to organise food. Mike and Liz will not be able to help as just back from holiday that day

KW

11. Allocation dates for tournaments

There had been a request from the CA that Clubs review their Allocation dates in order to give meaningful privilege to premium members of the CA. The CA was recommending that the date be approximately 8 weeks before the tournament. The Committee made the decision to make this change. Kathy had raised the issue of players whose handicaps changed after entry but before the Allocation date, rendering them ineligible. The CA had advised us that we could specify a separate date for handicap compliance. The Committee decided to make this date 12 weeks before the tournament, thus reducing the probability of this happening.

KW

12. Dishwasher proposal

As the policy at the moment is to avoid unnecessary or less urgent expenditure, the decision was made to put the proposal on hold

13. Newspaper Reports

As press coverage is important for publicity, Andrew will ask Doreen if she is prepared to continue her liaison with the North Somerset Times

AW

14. Corporate events

Andrew raised the possibility of holding corporate events in order to raise money. Kathy observed that this would be trading and would be subject to Corporation Tax. Andrew to investigate how other Croquet Clubs deal with this

AW

15. AOB

Coral asked for a date to be set for the opening of the 2017 season. Saturday, 1 April was set.

Peter wondered where the Gateball mallets were as it had been suggested that the junior might fare better as she was finding it difficult to control a croquet mallet

Alison had asked Peter to recommend that she be awarded the CA Steel Bowl for the Most Improved Lady in 2016. He had done so as her AC handicap had fallen from 5 to 0, ie 10 steps.

The ladders had been popular. Two prizes for each would be awarded. There was a debate about the fact that the matches were not recorded on AHS cards. Peter felt that they should be. Kathy didn't agree as conditions in the winter were not typical competition conditions and favoured high handicap players. There had been a request for the handicap of one particular player who had done well in the AC ladder games to have his handicap reduced.

15. Date of next meeting

Marketing meeting: Wednesday 11 January at 2pm at Coral's house

Full Committee Meeting: Monday 16 January at 10am at Mike's house

The meeting closed at 12.30pm

Signed as a true and accurate record

Name.....

Signature..... date.....