

Nailsea & District Croquet Club
Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 7 Nov 2015 at 2pm in the Clubhouse

Chair: Andrew Wimshurst

Present: 40 people present- list of names attached (hard copy only)

1. As President, Jim Gregory welcomed everyone to the AGM and thanked them for coming. It would be his last AGM as President. He thought Nailsea was a unique club in the South West with a wonderful spirit. This was partly to the fact that the members do all the work themselves as opposed to paying others to do it. He felt very proud of his Club and outlined some of the major successes of 2015. These are detailed in the reports of the Chairman, Treasurer and Tournament Secretary
2. **Apologies:** 10 apologies – list of names attached (hard copy only)
3. **Minutes of last AGM held on 8 November 2014**
The Minutes were signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 8 November 2014
Proposed: Brigit Clayton Seconded: John Wallace
The minutes were accepted.
4. **Matters arising from the minutes of AGM held on 9 November 2013**

There were no matters arising

5. Chair's report

(note, Jim Gregory had not been expected at the meeting)

“May I first welcome you all to the AGM. Normally proceedings are opened by the President, but Jim is unable to be with us today. Enormous thanks are due to Jim who has presided over the club for the last three years and stands down today. It is sad that he can't be with us so that he could experience firsthand how much we appreciate his contribution as President. As we all know Jim is tireless in his support for the club, as a player, coach, handicapper and white liner. Sad as we are to lose him as President, we are delighted to welcome his replacement. The Committee was united in their choice of his replacement, who has graciously accepted – welcome Pat Long. I think it an understatement to say that we are all delighted. May your reign preside over the continued success and development of the club.

Until I began as chairman I had no idea what work the committee get through behind the scenes. Our time in meetings is taken up with the day to day running of the Club - the buildings, the lawns, the equipment, the competitions, the social and fund raising events, recruitment, the management of volunteer effort, CA and SWF business. As you can imagine that is quite enough to be going on with. Outside meetings, this year a lot of time and energy has been spent on our application to Sport England, for a grant to help with the levelling of the lawn and I wish to elaborate on this in this report.

It has been the ambition of the Club for many years to level the lawns. Our lawns are far from flat and we all will have experienced balls wandering off line by several feet just when we thought we had nailed it. It was only when John Wallace produced a contour map of the lawns, did we see how big the deviations were. The CA had given us a grant of £4000, over 4 years towards our levelling programme. It was thought that top dressing was sufficient to improve levels. However with some places deviating by as much as 9 cm (3.5 inches), it was realised that trying to level the lawns this way was never going to work and so the money was largely being wasted. The committee decided

that to go on accepting the grant from the CA, knowing that the work was not going to be effective, was wrong and so we declined further monies, something seldom experienced by the CA! With such large deviations, the best way to get our lawns level will be to use laser levelling and the Committee asked John Wallace to investigate. As we had not planned for this expenditure, we thought we would apply to Sport England for help. Following a phone call with Sport England, John was sufficiently encouraged to recommend that we apply and the Committee agreed he should proceed.

One of the stipulations with which we had to comply in order to make the application, was that we should either own the land or have at least 7 years still to run on the lease. As our current lease only had 3 years to run, we thought we would ask the Council either to let us buy the land or to renew the lease.

Tina Taylor, Nick Taylor's wife, is a Chartered Planning & Development Surveyor and has firsthand experience of dealing with Councils. She kindly agreed to see what she could do.

Sadly, she was not successful in getting the Council to agree to sell us the land, but she was successful in getting them to agree to renew the lease, this time for a further 25 years. Tina is to be congratulated on achieving this new lease and while we now have to pay an increased rent, it is a very modest increase especially when compared to what other clubs are paying. We are now secure for the next 25 years. We are very grateful to Tina for her excellent work.

With the new lease in place, we submitted our application to Sport England for the laser levelling of all 4 lawns and redoing the Car Park. In the event we were not successful with our application. We were competing with many others and it is likely that we could not demonstrate that there would be a big enough increase in people playing as a result of the grant.

That is not the end of the story, however, as the committee is still firmly committed to laser levelling the lawns and has decided to delay the levelling till September 2017, by which time we will have sufficient reserves to cope with any budget overrun.

John Wallace worked tirelessly in researching every aspect of this project, obtaining several quotes for all aspects of the work. When we take the final decision at the end of next season, you can all rest assured that we will have as complete a picture of the likely costs as it's possible to get.

As far as the lawns in 2015 are concerned, we are all heavily indebted to John Wallace for the time he has given to research what we should do to improve the conditions of the lawns and then implement his findings. He has taken expert advice and I think we are all agreed that their condition has improved markedly over the season.

To help with the maintenance of the lawns the committee agreed to additional equipment all designed to make us more self sufficient. The treasurer will enlighten you further in his report..

Moving on to other matters we have been very fortunate to welcome several new members in 2015, many of whom have indicated that they would be willing to help in any way to keep the club going. For the first time we have more than 100 members.

This club works. It is a friendly unstuffy club where everyone pulls together. It is the fact that we are all so involved that makes Nailsea the enjoyable club it is. Teams love coming here. They are impressed by the conditions both on and off the lawns and know they will be well looked after. We are immensely lucky to have so many in the club giving up so much of their time to keep the club running so smoothly. However, many of those people have been doing it for 10 years or more and we can't expect them to go on forever. We do need others to step up to the plate.

The world has changed and some of the old values that saw people working for the common good are being diluted by the culture that expects to be able to buy everything in. There may well be those who say that they have paid their subscription and feel entitled to expect the club to be there when they want to play. That's one view, but Nailsea does not operate on that basis. We have teams of people doing the cleaning, maintenance, hoop setting, white lining, coaching, mowing, and lawn preparation to mention just a few of the tasks. None of these people seek remuneration and their involvement gives Nailsea the character that it has - that of one big family.

Were we to have to start buying in services, we would jeopardise this atmosphere which has been developed over many years and serves us very well. What people should realise, and many do, is that buying in the services would increase the Annual Subscription beyond the reach of many of us on fixed incomes.

You may be interested to know that lawn maintenance at Budleigh, who buy in the service, costs them £55,000 per year, which is roughly £5000 per lawn. If applied to us, it would mean we would have to find £20,000 to have our lawns looked after - an extra £200 per member on our subscription. If we had to add the cost of cleaning and maintenance and other services, then we would be looking at a club membership of not far short of £400 per year!

We are thus very fortunate that with all your wonderful support we are able to enjoy the club at a very modest subscription. Please take a moment every so often remind yourselves how lucky we are to have this level of commitment in the club.

Could you all spread the word that Nailsea does need more helpers to take some of the load carried by the present band of a willing few.

To finish may I just say how much I have enjoyed this year's play, as I hope you all did, and may I wish you lots more enjoyment in 2016."

6 (a) Treasurer's Report (Mike Tracy)

"Income and expenditure accounts have been published for the financial year ending 30th September 2015, accompanied by the 2014 accounts for comparison.

The headline figures are a net surplus for the year of £3,963.38 and a closing bank balance of £13,709.62. I have issued cheques to the value of £219.90 which had not been presented by the 30th September, so our assets to carry forward to the next financial year are £13,489.72.

Any questions on the current year?

The comparison with last year is that in 2014 we had a surplus of £3165.28. The Jack High contract ran throughout this year and expenditure was reduced by not carrying out some of the treatments that had been planned, thus saving material costs (but not labour.). This year all scheduled work was carried out plus some additional application of chemicals on the advice of Duncan Hector. We also made some investments in equipment, namely replacement of the ATCO pedestrian mower (£1,440), the new Sarel roller (£780), a backpack sprayer (£45.54) and a towable sprayer (£452.76), all of which came to £2,718.30. Even if we only use the sprayer for moss treatment (soluble iron, once in the spring and once in the autumn) it will soon pay for itself as John Swift would charge £360 for this element of the programme. There is no comparison between the state of our lawns now and twelve months ago. Then there were large areas of Local Dry Patch and a poor covering of grass in many places. John Wallace is to be congratulated and thanked for saving a great deal of money whilst improving our playing conditions.

My book keeping system makes it possible to forecast our financial position at the end of the next financial year. The accuracy of the forecast is dependent on the completeness of its vision, the accuracy in estimating predictable costs and income and on the effect of unexpected costs and income. 2015 was a good year. Income from tournaments and the associated catering was better than expected. The invitation to host the Women's AC World Championship Qualifier here resulted in unexpected income of almost £900. The take up on beginners' lessons was much better than expected, with several people coming along after Open Day. Thanks to our coaches we are better off by £325 than we had expected, with the added bonus that many who came to the lessons took up membership (another £270) and we can hope that many of them will continue with membership next year and into the future. I had forecasted a surplus of about £2400 and we achieved a surplus of £3963. I have prepared a forecast for next year which includes an increase in our chemicals budget (designed to prevent Local Dry Patch), higher water charges (to allow for these chemicals to be watered in if the weather does not cooperate), purchase of irrigation equipment, an increase in our rent, the legal fees involved in arranging the new lease and generally adjusting income and expenditure predictions to reasonable expectations.

Taking all this into account, and bearing in mind the fact that reality is generally at variance with expectations, I believe that by 30th September 2016 we will be in a position to commit to having all four lawns levelled in September 2017.

Given the healthy state of the club's finances I have therefore suggested to the committee that we keep membership subscriptions at the current level. It should be noted that many clubs charge much more than Nailsea. Some have no choice due to the high level of rent that they have to pay, but many charge more because they pay contractors for many of the things that we do for ourselves, for example lawn maintenance, lawn mowing, catering etc., etc.. It is my belief that our do-it-yourself culture is responsible not only for keeping the membership subscription at such a modest level but also maintaining the atmosphere of camaraderie that we enjoy. In order to maintain the low cost of membership and keep the club together it is essential that everyone comes forward to do whatever they can."

(b) (Income and Expenditure analysis for this and previous financial year attached, hard copy only)

(c) Setting of subscription

Mike announced the Committee proposal that the subscription for a full member remained at £135.

From the floor, Geoff Hughes asked why we were not increasing the subscription. Mike replied that the annual surplus had increased because our lawn costs had been dramatically reduced so the Committee did not feel it appropriate to recommend an increase in fees.

Geoff enquired as to the likely costs of the levelling project, planned provisionally for September 2017. John Wallace (Lawn supervisor) replied that he expected it to be in the order of £10 000 - £12 000

Geoff then asked about the cost of installing a durable surface for the car park area. Mike replied that we had only considered this work because of the minimum awards made by Sport England and the requirement to demonstrate an increase in play. An all-weather car park would have helped in this respect. As our bid had not been successful, we had no plans to do the car park. However, if we maintained the current surplus rates, we should be able to consider funding it in the near future. Geoff suggested an increase of £5 on the subscriptions. Mike replied that this would only raise a total of £500pa.

Andrew Wimshurst pointed out that this year we have bought various pieces of maintenance equipment and still generated a healthy surplus. The purchases would not need to be made again so future surpluses should increase. This was why we did not need to increase the subscriptions. The Sarel roller was one new item of machinery and it was proving invaluable for aerating the ground.

Andrew Buchanan asked how much the rent had increased with the new lease. Mike replied that it would be a change from £374 to £500pa. However, under the terms of the previous lease, much the same cost would have been incurred in any case. He felt that Tina Taylor, who had negotiated with the Council on our behalf, had struck an excellent deal for us overall.

The proposal to keep the subscription unchanged was passed.
Proposer: Mike Tracy Seconder: Andrew Buchanan

6(d). Appointment of Honorary Auditor

Mike proposed that we retain the same auditor. This was seconded by Pat Long and the proposal was carried

Mike then delivered an update on the Club website:

“Alison Girdlestone offered to redesign and rebuild our web site. She did not give us exactly what we wanted but something much better – a web site that we can mould and adjust for ourselves whenever we want. Our objective was to have a layout that was less cluttered, comprehensive content and a site that is fresh, up to date, relevant and interesting. We wanted, as far as possible, for the people who generate material for the web site to be able to put it there themselves. Alison gave me some basic training and I have in turn passed it on to a number of people who have started to update the site. Brigit now looks after the Wild Wednesday section and Chris Jackson will look after the Mad Monday section next year. Linda will be putting up news about forthcoming club events followed by the results when they have been played. I would therefore encourage everyone to look at the website regularly, in particular the ‘Coming soon’ and ‘News’ pages that can be found under ‘Club Notices’. There may be some glitches along the way as everyone finds their feet, but I am confident that as everyone gains in confidence the completeness and timeliness of the information will improve. We do not expect league team captains to post their match reports. These reports and anything else which is also to be sent to the local press should be sent to Chris Jackson who will edit them appropriately for the press and the web site. If you do not see match reports for your team it is almost certainly because your captain did not send one to Chris.

If you have any suggestions or observations on the site or its content, please tell me and I will see what can be done.”

7. Tournament Secretary’s Report –to be attached (Peter Dyke)

NDCC Competitions.

Peter said that the results of internal competitions were on the Club website and he read some of them out. He was pleased to see ladies winning some of the major competitions – in the past the Ladies’ Competition had been introduced because men won all the others. More than 70 players had taken part – an excellent situation. He thanked Linda Shaw for all her hard work in organising and managing these competitions. He also thanked all the people who had helped in any way with this.

SWF League teams.

Peter read out the SWF league positions of all the Nailsea teams. These are on the SWF website. Peter explained that the Committee had been disappointed about the conditions for the B league semi-final and had written to the SWF Committee concerning this. It followed a similar experience for the Intermediate League semi-final in 2014. It was hoped that the SWF would ensure that future venues would be more suitable.

Peter said that for AC we would be entering two teams each in the B, Intermediate and Federation Leagues and three in the Advanced Play league. For GC, if the SWF proposal to create a league for players of handicaps ≥ 8 were passed, we would enter a team for it. Nailsea would support the proposal at the SWF AGM

Nailsea Tournaments and the WACWC Qualifier held at Nailsea

Peter read out the names of the winners and runners up in the four tournaments.

He then outlined the success of Nailsea players at the qualifying tournament for Women's AC World Championship. There was great applause for the success of Pat Long who had qualified and gone on to the main event at Nottingham. There she had earned an award as runner up in the Shield, one of the consolation events.

Individual successes

Alison Girdlestone and James Galpin had been particularly successful. Details were given in both cases.

8. Election of Committee

The following were proposed, seconded and elected unopposed

Name	Role	Proposer	Seconder
Andrew Wimshurst	Chair	Brian Roynon	Kathy Wallace
Kathy Wallace	Secretary	Erica Malaiperuman	John Malaiperuman
Mike Tracy	Treasurer	Geoff Hughes	Tony Griggs
Peter Dyke	Tournament Secretary	Coral Harrison	Mike Tracy
Coral Harrison	Member	Mike Tracy	Peter Dyke
Brian Roynon	Member	Coral Harrison	Mike Tracy
Linda Shaw	Member	Chris Jackson	Valerie Jackson

Proposer: Brian McCausland

Seconder: Mary Barnes

9. Any other business

- (i) From the floor, Violet Delmas said she would like the caterers to be mentioned as they had worked hard and raised valuable funds for the club.
- (ii) Violet also described the visits organised by Erica and herself to introduce children from Golden Valley School to croquet. The visits were always enjoyable and had become an annual fixture.
- (iii) Terry Young was concerned about the cleaning rota. Andrew Wimshurst replied that the Committee were aware of the problem and plans were in hand.
- (iv) Terry then raised the issue of damage to lawns and said that we should all know how to make good the damage using a repair fork. Jim Gregory thought that some of the damage was caused by people leaning on their mallets whilst not actually playing strokes. John Wallace thought that jump shots also caused damage. It was agreed that tuition in avoiding and repairing damage should become part of the coaching courses for beginners.
Brian Roynon agreed to put a fork on each trolley Terry agreed to put up a notice explaining how to use the forks
- (v) Geoff Hughes said that Nailsea had a reputation for high handicaps. He felt that the members of the Handicap Committee should attend Wednesday afternoon sessions so that they could play and observe all the AC players.

Peter replied that he was unable to attend on Wednesdays so relied on Jim Gregory and Pat Long to inform him about abilities.

Peter said that he would like the results of Wednesday afternoon matches to be recorded on AHS cards. This was not a popular suggestion. In particular, Linda Shaw said that players used these games to experiment with shots and styles of play.

Geoff said that he thought many players in the range 10-20 had handicaps that were too high
Jim Gregory said that in his opinion this was not true.

Andrew Wimshurst said that pairs of opponents should reach their own arrangements for having satisfactory games on Wednesday afternoons. Otherwise the low handicap players just sat and pulled out bisques

John Wallace said that so many of the matches played by the Nailsea players were within the Club that the handicaps were not affected by external games and a local system developed.

Erica said that over a 3 year period she had lost 17 of 40 matches played against Nailsea members. However, by playing against opponents from elsewhere as well, during that period her handicap had fallen from 20 to 11. It would have been 18 if she had only played Nailsea members

Geoff asked if it were true that a Club handicapper could only reduce handicaps if he reduced them by at least 3 steps. Peter replied that two CA handicappers had indicated that to be the case but that, in fact, this was erroneous (unless the current handicap were 8 or below)

Polly Reynolds said that if Nailsea handicaps were all too high then we would win all the leagues.

Andrew Wimshurst asked everyone to report to the Handicap Committee if they felt that an individual's handicap needed adjustment.

- (v) Geoff Hughes remarked that the boundaries to the site were very untidy. It was explained that the person responsible had been unable to carry out the work. Other members had been approached to take over the responsibility but none of them were willing to do so. The Committee had already made the decision that the hedges would be cut twice a year by contractors and that the edges would be dealt with by working parties. These parties would be organised, as in the past, for the Fridays preceding the weekend tournaments. Brian Roynon had agreed to direct the effort on these days. The dates would be on the Club Calendar and reminders would be sent out. Brian observed that the Friends of Trendlewood had asked us to refrain from trimming the top of the hedge that adjoined their wildlife area. Erica reported a phone call from the North Somerset employee who was charged with liaison between the Council and the Friends of Trendlewood. She had given her contact details.
- (vi) Erica asked whether it was acceptable to book a lawn for double banking when free lawns were not available. Peter replied that he usually phoned the players who had booked the lawn in this situation – but would only book to double bank with a match of the same code.

10. Date of next AGM

The next AGM was arranged for Saturday 12 November at 2pm in the Clubhouse

The meeting closed at 3.40 pm

Signed as a true and accurate record

Name.....

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