

Nailsea and District Croquet Club
Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 8th January 2020

Present: Graham McCausland, Meriel Forshaw, Mike Tracy, Andrew Wimshurst, Joan Timmins.

In attendance: Kathy Wallace from 10.30hrs

1. Apologies: Sandra Morgan, Peter Dyke, Brian Roynon

2. Minutes held on the 26th November 2019: agreed and signed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising: Graham has spoken to Marcus re the New Season ‘one ball’ competition. Therefore, April 4th 2020 will open the new season and on 5th April the ‘one ball’ competition will take place.

Graham welcomed Kathy Wallace to the meeting at 10.30hrs.

4. Kathy joined the meeting to discuss various matters:

4.1 Mark Suter’s email – The committee agreed we should make a bid to the CA for the GC Students Championship, to be held on 9-10 April 2022.

The 2021 bid for an AC event has been accepted and a bid will be put in for a GC event in 2022.

Action: KW

4.2 Beginners - There will be 3 courses of lessons for beginners in total. Kathy will coach the 4 people who have already enrolled, plus any others who appear sufficiently early. These lessons will probably take place on Thursday or Friday mornings, starting as soon as the weather permits.

Andrew will start a course on 12th May - time to be decided.

Another coach, with Graham and Mike prepared to stand in on occasions as necessary, to run a course, also starting in May. Beginners would be offered a choice of morning, afternoon or evening sessions.

These courses will take the form of six lessons at a cost of £30 per person.

The committee also agreed to hold taster sessions covering the following three dates:- Thurs. 9th April 2-4 pm; Weds. 15th April 10-12 am; Mon. 20th April 6-8 pm. Kathy to advertise and organise these.

Kathy will also issue invitations and offer vouchers for £5 off courses of lessons to people attending Tuesday social evenings.

Action: KW

4.3 Coaching – It was acknowledged that Kathy would not be the lead person organising the coaching sessions. However, she would co-ordinate the coaching of beginners.

Graham agreed to contact Linda Shaw to establish if she is willing to continue to undertake the role in the coming year.

Action: GMc/KW

4.4 Competitions - Following discussion it was agreed that there needed to be some rationalisation regarding the number of competitions.

Kathy made some recommendations which the committee agreed to:-

1. It was felt that the GC competitions held as one-day events were now redundant. The one-day level play version had already been replaced by the Level Play Cup and Level Play Shield. It was decided to drop the Handicap Play (Singles and Doubles) versions. Interest in the one-day events had been low in recent years as most players preferred The Sergeant and Buchanan Cups format.
2. The Over 50s competition had become somewhat of an anachronism and attracted the same entrants as the Open Handicap Singles. It was decided to drop the Over 50s from the programme. In view of this, it was decided to change the format of the Open Handicap Singles from Knockout to Blocks. **Action: KW**

4.5 Semi Finals/Finals - as we are dropping three competitions from the calendar, this would make holding these weekends on two days more achievable and desirable. The conclusion was that the target is to get both weekends run within a two day time frame, but that we should leave open the possibility of using Fridays if absolutely necessary.

5. League Fixtures Report: discussed and noted.

Peter had offered Saturday 26th September 2020 to Stephen Custance-Baker for Nailsea to host the GC High Handicap final and the committee agreed to this. Peter to confirm with Stephen.

The committee agreed to enter a team for the Secretary's Shield. The club would only pay travel expenses but **not** accommodation costs.

Action: PD

6. Recruitment Report: discussed and noted

Kathy had contacted Chris Clark re- 'How we might inspire young people to take up croquet'. Unfortunately his response and suggestions were not as helpful as hoped.

Kathy will be pursuing all ideas mentioned in previous reports.

There has been some confusion regarding which application form should be used for certain activities and so the following was agreed - Membership forms to be white; requests for coaching forms would be green.

Kathy would be putting club information onto the Nailsea Town website.

Action: KW

7. Treasurers Report: discussed and noted

The following was agreed :-

There was no need for a replacement signatory on the Bank Mandate.

£250 would be given to James Galpin as sponsorship towards his first appearance at the World AC Championships in Australia.

Closure of the empty bank account.

Mike will organise the 100 club in the interim period, including the lottery licence.

Action:MT

8. Property Report:

In the absence of Brian, Andrew confirmed that the roof was no longer leaking.

9. Membership

Forms for renewing membership would be sent to members this week.

Action:AW

10. Lawns report - discussed and noted

Winter Play – the club has been open now for two winters, but due to adverse weather, members have not been able to play. The question was asked should we close our lawns from October to April in order for the lawns to recover?

The long-term view was that the lawns would probably benefit from a rest.

The committee agreed that this question should be taken to the next Lawns Advisory Group meeting.

Action: MT/AW

11. First Aid – Joan has made contact with Sarah Ould from the St Johns Ambulance, Backwell and has proposed, Saturday 15th February 2pm – 4pm as the first First Aid training session. 15 members have responded to the recent email, regarding attending the session and they will be advised as soon as Sarah confirms the session.

The cost will be £5 per person and will include tea and cake at the end of the session.

Action: JT/MF

12. OBE Tournament- Terry Young has agreed to organise and run this competition 19th May 2020.

13. Committee Diary – reviewed

Graham to contact Linda Shaw regarding any changes that need to be made to the Safeguarding Policy before the policy is reviewed and signed off.

Action: GMc

14. Christmas Meal 2021 – The Masonic Hall will be booked for the 4th December 2021

Action: MT

15. Skittles Evening – This event will now take place in October. Mike will contact Pat re. including a skittles evening in the social calendar.

Action: MT

16. AOB

Joan proposed that Coral Harrison be offered life membership of the club. The proposal was

accepted and seconded by Graham and Mike and agreed unanimously. Mike will inform Coral.

Action: MT

17. DONM: Tuesday 4th February 2020

The meeting closed at 12.45 hrs.

Signed as a true and accurate record

Name.....

Signature.....Date.....

REPORTS

Treasurer's report for NDCC committee meeting 8th January 2020

This report has been prepared on 2nd January 2020.

Spreadsheet for the financial year attached. You can print the summary page if you wish by going to the High Level Actuals worksheet tab.

Balance at the bank less unpresented cheques is £10,025.18. The surplus for the year is £48.20. The Christmas lunch showed a surplus of £46 excluding the quiz and raffle which together raised £128.00. Major expenditure since our last meeting includes the Fridge/Freezer, £310, SWF fees (mostly league and short croquet teams entry fees), £272, and the first delivery of lawn chemicals, £774.

I have removed Coral from the bank mandate and can see no need to replace her as a cheque signatory. The current signatories are myself, Graham, Meriel, Brian and Peter.

Pat's program of social activities has had good support. The scrabble afternoon raised £75 and a donation of £20 was made at that event. It was understood that this would be added to the Christmas quiz and raffle income. (These monies have yet to be banked and are therefore not yet in the books.). The lunch and quiz organised by Libby is fully subscribed.

The club has had two bank accounts for many years. One of them used to attract interest and I presume was used to hold the bulk of the cash. It has been empty for as long as I have been treasurer as the interest rate is 0% but kept open in case this situation should change. I cannot see that this account will start paying interest in the foreseeable future and suggest, with your agreement, that it be closed.

M Tracy

02/01/202

Report for meeting on 8 Jan 2020

Recruitment

We have received an invitation to put club info on the Nailsea Town website. It looks to be an excellent resource so I will get us on there very shortly.

We have had a request from a Backwell Scout troop to book 3 consecutive Tuesday evenings in April/May. This might be a fantastic opportunity to set up a "Youth Croquet" group. Youth Croquet is a concept used with great success in New Zealand. At this age, they need dynamic but structured sessions. I will take advice from Chris Clarke on how best to spend the time to inspire the boys to want to play croquet.

I will be pursuing all the ideas mentioned in previous reports for the coming season. Our workforce is ageing and developing problems at an alarming rate so recruitment is becoming ever more urgent.

Tournaments

The entry system will go live in early February and we will discover whether the punters find our 2020 programme attractive.

If we offer our lawns for CA events, we should be aware that this creates a huge amount of work for the lawns and catering teams. We feel a certain obligation having been the recipients of CA grants and loans. However, my personal view is that we should try to get something out of this for ourselves by only hosting interesting and prestigious events. The Treasurer's Tankard gave us some excellent publicity and was enjoyed by many Nailsea members.

Competitions

To be discussed at meeting. I am very keen to have a programme of events which leads to a two-day vibrant Finals Weekend. Ideally, there would be a good mix of abilities and forms of the game and as many different players as possible involved.

General

I was somewhat alarmed to see myself in charge of coaching on the list of responsibilities on the notice board. I assume this is a mistake and I have modified it to indicate liaison of coaching for beginners only.

Lawn Maintenance Report -January 2020

1. Overseeding

The autumn/winter of 2019 has been exceptionally wet with close to three times as much rainfall as in previous years (Figure 1). The incessant rain has saturated the soil and left surface water for much of November and December. This has had a negative effect on the over-seeding operation in October on Lawns 1 & 4. As usual the seed which was covered with green waste has had a higher germination rate and thus the hoop hole areas are visibly different in colour. More generally the sward on Lawns 1 & 4 does look thicker with numerous fine grass seedlings visible but it is difficult to be sure whether this is new germination or thickening up of the existing grass. Generally Lawns 1 & 4 look in a better state than lawns 2 & 3 which are not closed. To rest the latter, mowing was suspended at the end of November and the two large bare muddy areas over-seeded but not covered with green waste. This over-seeding has not been successful due to the rain and the

pigeons eating the seed. The “bird” kite does not seem to deter them for more than a few days. Replacing the bird with a more garish equivalent has not improved the situation.

As usual, there are a few bare patches on Lawns 1 & 4 where seed covered by green waste has not germinated. This is mostly on the South end of Lawn 1 where the lack of sunlight has a material effect on average temperature and moisture levels. (This was originally observed during the levelling process). Attempts to over-seed these areas has been unsuccessful up to now but with drier weather expected, a further attempt at over-seeding was made at the end of December. The immediate area around the large lawn hoop holes on Lawns 2 & 3 have also been reseeded and covered with green waste. There does appear to be some germination from this exercise except, infuriatingly, in the rabbit runs.

The lawns have had two winter liquid sprays and all were recently solid tined followed by Sarel spiking and light rolling to smooth out the solid tine holes. A third winter spray is due in mid January. More overseeding will be attempted when some more green waste becomes available. This is not expensive to buy (now £3/bag) but the courier delivery charges are high unless a half pallet is ordered. At present the plan is to order 10 bags and collect them from a click&collect distributor in Wells. The mileage charge for this is much lower than paying for courier delivery on each bag. Finding a member fit and well enough to load/unload the bags is a potential problem.

An attempt were made on Dec 29 to trim the grass on Lawns 1 & 4 using the Toro set to cut at 9mm. However the ground was too soft and the Toro centre rear tyre badly marked the lawn. Alternative methods of trimming the grass may have to be applied if the heavy rain continues.

2. LAG Review of Lawn Maintenance programme

After detailed research and discussions with Duncan Hector, the maintenance programme for 2020 has been substantially revised to minimise the effect of nutrient leaching, maximise rye grass nutrition and degrade the annual meadow grass. Appendix 1 includes some notes on the nutrient issues. The principal changes are :

- a. No use of granular fertilisers.
- b. Summer and Winter Liquid fertilisers are all “slow release”
- c. Inclusion of seaweed into the summer liquid bio fertilisers to complement the humic acid.
- d. No Phosphorous component and reduced Potassium component
- e. Major dose of mycorrhizal fungi via granular product.
- f. Monthly spraying with Plant Growth Promoting Rhizobacteria (PPGR) selected for Rye grass growth promotion

The one off cost of the mycorrhizal fungi is about £800. The addition of PPGR and some additional slow release N fertiliser from AGS add about £480 to the annual budget. The increased quantity of DH liquid bio in slow release form adds a further £300 but these increases are offset by the elimination of the granular fertiliser saving £600. The

application of the mycorrhizal fungi granules in early March 2020 requires care. There are two main problems:

- a. The fungi are UV light sensitive.
- b. They need to be watered into the ground so that they come in contact with the grass roots.

To achieve this it will be necessary to create holes in the lawns using the 15mm solid tines and the sarel roller. The risk is that with dry weather in March and April the holes will dry out and persist thus leaving the lawns bumpy for the season. To obviate this risk the tining will take place in February and the surface rolled to flatten out the tining marks. Last weeks tining exercise was a practice run to check the feasibility of the approach.

The mycorrhizal granules will need to be applied towards the end of the day and watered in for three days if persistent rain is not expected. **This means that lawn 2 & 3 may need to be closed for three or four days in March at short notice.**

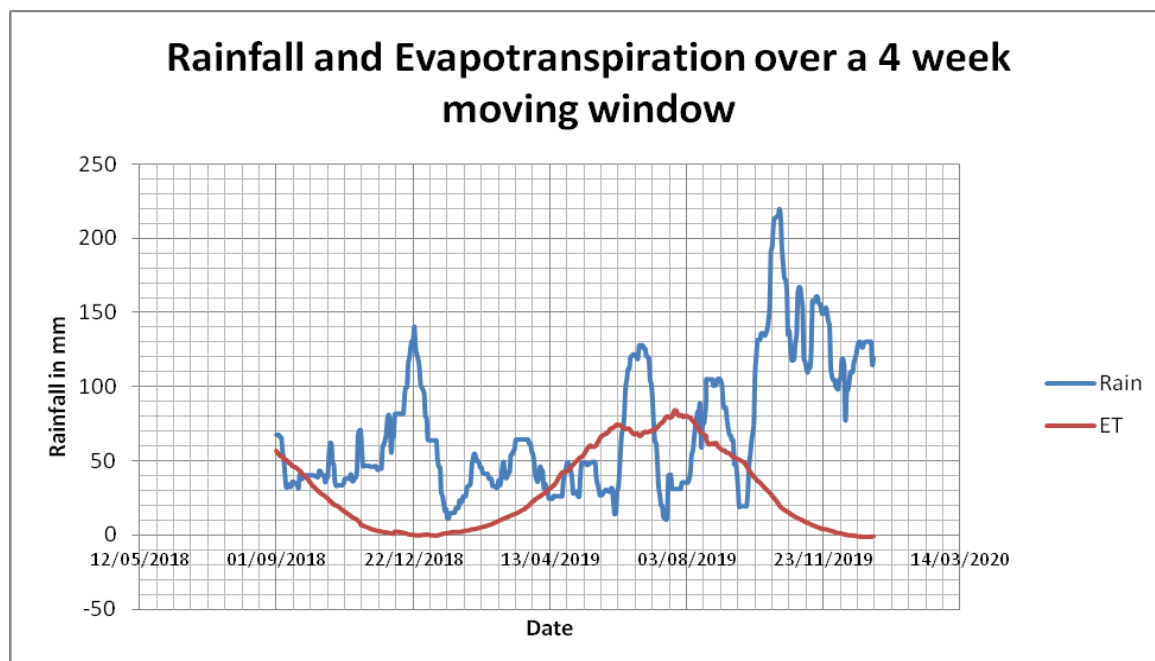
Over-seeding of Lawns 2 & 3 is planned for the Autumn of 2020. The LAG has decided not to pursue dimple seeding in future. Broadcast seeding followed by covering with green waste is the favoured solution but this involves the construction of a large drop spreader aimed specifically at this application. The effectiveness of what was turned out to be broadcast over-seeding on its own will be judged later in the year when the results on the Lawn1 &4 are more apparent.

5. Reallocation of Responsibilities.

The spreadsheet rotas have been handed over to Andrew Wimshurst but before he can produce the rotas a planning meeting with David Hunt and myself is required. The situation is complicated by the fact that David Hunt has a knee problem that may well prevent him hoop setting this year. There is no obvious replacement at present so an alternative strategy needs to be devised whereby David supervises hoop setting but other club members do the work.

JNW 3/1/20

Figure 1 Rainfall and Evapotranspiration



APPENDIX 1

LAG FERTILISER PROGRAMME FOR 2020 DISCUSSION

1. Nitrogen Levels.

As I mentioned at the last LAG meeting , a careful analysis of the current maintenance regime shows that we are applying N at a higher rate (155Kg/hectare) than Duncan Hector's target figure of 125Kg/hectare. However, the rye grass gives every impression of being short of Nitrogen. Every time I apply extra Liquid Bio spray to a patch on Lawn 5 (during testing or cleaning) the rye grass perks up.

In my discussions with Duncan Hector about the lack of vigour in the rye grass Duncan postulated that we are currently suffering nutrient leaching into the soil because of the relative lack of root development. He said this happened at Letchworth and it took 4 plus years to correct. I was quite sceptical about this because of the nature of our soil and the fact that we are not short of potassium which is water soluble and known to leach. However I have been researching leaching and came across the attached paper regarding Nitrogen leaching. In the experimental set up, the soil composition (60% sand, 21% silt and 19% clay) is almost identical to Nailsea (69% sand, 17% silt and 15% clay). The research clearly shows leaching of Nitrogen in quick release fertiliser down to 60cms or more. The use of slow release fertilisers clearly has a big effect in terms of reducing N leaching. The paper does not give data for the top 10 centimetres of soil (the grass rootzone) but obviously the more Nitrogen leaches down , the less there is left in the rootzone.

I have gradually come to the conclusion that Duncan is correct and that we are currently suffering Nitrogen leaching (and possibly some volatisation back into the atmosphere). The solution is to use slow release fertilisers and to apply smaller amounts more frequently. These concepts have already been proposed by others as ways of hindering annual meadow grass so I asked Duncan about the cost of re-formulating his liquid fertilisers in slow release form. The answer is about £14 per 20L container. These additional costs can be absorbed within the budget because of other changes because I am planning to

eliminate the use of granular fertilisers next year. The slow release Nitrogen is derived from Methylene Urea which has quite a low salt index and this helps to reduce the overall salt index and reduce the risk of burning.

The mycorrhizal fungi inoculant from AGS (Plant Works/Prof Gange) contains some nutrients as well as fungi propagules and is equivalent to (2.5-0-2.1) fertiliser with 8% added Magnesium. To supplement this I plan to apply some high N (30-0-0) slow release from AGS supplemented by a Seaweed biostimulant. This combination should give the rye grass a very stable level of N in the early spring and boost the mycorrhizal fungi activity. The aim overall is to achieve the same level of Nitrogen as in 2019 but increase its effectiveness by reducing leaching.

2. Potassium

One of my initial reasons for being sceptical about leaching was that our levels of potassium are high at 156 ppm compared with a target range of 80 - 120 ppm. Potassium is known to leach away and regular fertiliser top up is necessary. I found it difficult to find recommendations about how much Potassium to apply in our situation and Duncan did not really answer the question. I eventually found it in some guidance from a document from Pennsylvania turf grass association. On page 10 of this document there is a table suggesting that for Potassium levels above 75ppm one only need apply 60% of the weight of Nitrogen. With our level at 156 ppm we can therefore afford to apply less Potassium than in Duncan's current programme.

With such a high level of potassium application the Potassium may well be leaching away but the top up rate exceeds what we need at present. Two thirds of the Potassium comes from the granular fertiliser. However with reduced need for potassium we can eliminate the granular fertiliser and replace it with some additional slow release liquid fertiliser which provides potassium at a reduced rate. As the liquid fertiliser will be applied in small quantities at frequent intervals the risk of potassium leaching is further reduced. The resulting change saves a substantial amount and offsets the cost of moving to slow release liquid fertiliser. If necessary some additional low salt index Potassium Carbonate from AGS will be added to the liquid fertilisers in early spring