

Nailsea and District Croquet Club
Minutes of Zoom Committee meeting 22nd May 2020

Present: Graham McCausland, Meriel Forshaw, Mike Tracy. Andrew Wimshurst, Brian Roynon, Peter Dyke, Sandra Morgan, Joan Timmins.
(due to poor zoom connection Sandra was only present for the beginning of the meeting)

1. Apologies: None

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 17th April 2020: agreed and signed as a correct record. (signed by MF on behalf of GMc)

3. Matters Arising:

Graham confirmed that members who needed help at this difficult time were receiving support from other members.

The insurance premium for the club is due at the end of July 2020. MF will correct in diary.

4. Treasurer's Report: Discussed and noted

Local Authority grants – Sandra proposed that as a club we should apply for the grant. Following discussion, the committee agreed to ask Mike to put in an application to the local authority. Mike did not feel that it was necessary and felt that the club was in a position to weather the storm, but he would prepare and submit the application to the local authority.

Action: MT

Provision needed to be made within the budget for costs that will occur later in the year.

i.e. Hedge cutting; it was agreed that Graham would arrange for the hedges to be cut later in the season

Action: GMc

5. Membership Report: Nothing to report

6. Property Report: discussed and noted

Outfield and machine maintenance work has been undertaken whilst the club has been closed.

7. Car Park:

Work continues in preparation of plans, costs, quotes and gaining planning permission which will enhance the car parking facilities. Geoff had suggested that any specific donations made towards the car park be identifiable within the clubs finance sheets

8. Lawns Report: Discussed and noted.

Mats have been purchased instead of green waste. Generation mats are in place on lawn 3. There has been a definite improvement in the lawn but we still need to be patient.

9. Recruitment Report: discussed and noted

10. GC Home International 2021

The committee agreed that Nailsea would host the GC Home Internationals event in July 2021 - the dates being the 17th and 18th.

Graham to inform Kathy so that she can inform Ian Burrridge.

Action: GMc

11. League Secretary's Report:

Peter gave a verbal report to the committee.

Tournaments – We have just two tournaments remaining. Peter felt we should cancel them both, but as they were not until August we did not need to make an immediate decision. The committee decided to cancel the Golf Croquet B-Level Tournament. GMc to inform Chris Roberts, director of the B-Level series, and Kathy. Peter to chat to Marcus before making a decision about the Association Croquet Advanced Tournament. **Action: GMc / PD**

SWF League Matches – Peter requested that before making any further decisions to cancel league fixtures, we wait to see what the SWF decide regarding continuing with league matches for the remainder of the year. When he has any information, he will email other committee members.

Club competitions – Peter felt that some club competitions still had time to take place during the remainder of the year.

Coaching of Juniors – Peter felt that, with the current restrictions in place (only two people per lawn and no spectators), he would not be able to undertake the coaching of juniors. He agreed to contact the CA task force on this matter to see if there is a way we can do some junior coaching before the end of the season. **Action: PD**

12. Opening the Lawns:

A number of members had contacted the chairman requesting information regarding the re-opening of the lawns.

Joan had prepared and submitted to the committee a proposal for re opening the lawns. It was felt by some that this would be too restrictive for those members who have now returned to work. Following discussion, a motion was put forward to open the lawns on a restricted basis for social playing only. The motion was passed by a majority decision and the lawns will open on 20th June 2020.

It was agreed that members would be informed of the decision in the chairman's update, together with clear guidelines regarding safety and hygiene standards. Prior to this going out, Graham would speak to John Wallace.

Andrew would contact John W and Erica re white lining.

Lawn bookings can only be made up to one week in advance via a designated committee member – Joan Timmins.

In order to reduce 'risk' lawns will have a maximum time limit for GC and AC play.

Any problems or issues will need to be reported to a committee member.

This decision will be reviewed at each committee meeting.

Action: GMc/AW

13. AOB

Peter to send Meriel the completed Safe Guarding Policy.

Action: PD

14. Date of next meeting:

Thursday 25th June via Zoom at 10 am

The host will be Mike and invitations will be sent prior to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 12.30 hrs

Signed as a true and accurate record:

Name.....

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

Reports

Treasurer's report for NDCC committee meeting 22nd May 2020

This report has been prepared on 20th May 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 is less unpresented cheques is £8,477.19. I still have cheques to the value of £504 (mostly for membership) which I have not taken to the bank as I am self isolating for the time being. I also have £121.50 in cash, not yet banked for the same reason. Our financial assets therefore stand at £9,102.69. The year is showing a deficit of £874.29. There have been no major outgoings since our last meeting.

John has asked if he may buy 2 more strips of germination blanket (£258) and 3 bags of Ultrafine grass seed (£366, offset by a credit note for £134.88 due to a delivery of sub standard chemicals). I told him to go ahead and these costs are included in the figures above. Note that the reseeding is being done now rather than in the autumn, so it is budgeted expenditure. Also note that the germination blankets are cheaper than the green waste which we planned to use and should continue to be useable for 5 to 7 years.

Outgoings for the rest of the year are £83 pcm for electricity and water, £500 for rent and about £1,100 for insurance. We will also need diesel and petrol for the machinery. I have budgeted £400 for this (£119.80 so far claimed), but as we are mowing less frequently I would expect to come in under budget on this item. 100 club prizes will cost £55 per draw. Projecting to the financial year end I would expect our balance to be about £6,800. Projecting to the end of the calendar year (after which subs become payable) I expect our balance to be about £6500. I have assumed that there will be no income from club croquet activities or for any tournaments.

As we are classified as a small business we are entitled to apply for a grant from the local authority. I understand that Bristol, Cheltenham and Sidmouth have made successful applications. Despite the inevitable decline in our financial fortunes it seems to me that we are able to weather the storm and that it would be inappropriate to seek public funding under this scheme. I would welcome a discussion about this if anyone feels differently.

M Tracy

20/05/2020

Property Report for committee meeting May 22nd 2020

Outfield and machinery.

Andrew has been strimming the outfield which is much appreciated. While Geoff has been carrying out maintenance of the machinery to keep John looking after the lawns.

Fire Extinguishers

The fire extinguishers are overdue for inspection. I have been in touch with the company and they offered (a) to come and inspect them if someone

could open up or (b) we could defer until later. As the club is still closed on judged the risk to be low and that they would still work so on agreed to defer until July when they will ring me and make arrangements.

Car Park

Geoff's original hope was that the work could be completed before we resumed play.

This was ambitious with the need for research of regulations, possible options, drawing up plans and obtaining quotations from contractors.

Geoff has obtained a quotation from Trojan Civils Ltd., for the carpark work. This was to get some idea of the ball park cost. This quote was on a verbal detail of our requirements. The price quoted was £2,2275.12.

We are still continuing to carry out research and prepare a plan to submit for planning approval and for contractors to quote. Any quote is only valid for 60 days. With this in mind we will hold off sending out invitations to tender until the current situation is clearer.

Report for meeting on 20 May 2020

Recruitment- still stalled!

Tournaments

The two August Tournaments are still on the Calendar and a decision about them will have to be made at some point.

The GC Home Internationals event that was due to be hosted by Nailsea in July has been cancelled. Ian Burrige has asked if we are prepared to host it in 2021. No dates have been mentioned. We are due to host the Selectors Weekend in early September 2021(part of Eights Week). Personally, I would favour hosting both these events but I haven't checked with Lawn or Catering teams. The income would clearly be useful.

Competitions (as last month)

I am still holding entry forms and a small number of cheques. It would be good if any update to members could include competitions status.

CA matters

None other than communications already forwarded.

The issue of opening the Club during the pandemic

I have been at the club quite a bit lately helping with the lawns and thought I should share my experiences of using the Clubhouse. I have become aware of all the problems when people share indoor space during the Pandemic. I used gloves to unlock the gate padlock. I then felt that these gloves were potentially contaminated. Gloves to unlock and open the main door shutter – same problem. Handling of car-keys, sunglasses and phones was also very problematic. Wearing gloves doesn't stop the movement of virus from one surface to another. I found myself frequently washing my gloved hands. None of the taps in the kitchen can be operated with elbows or the backs of hands as they require turning. Thus any virus on hands/gloves could be transferred to the taps before washing then back to the hands/gloves after washing. The kitchen light string-pull also requires use of hands. Hand dryers and toilets produce aerosols which are particularly good at transmitting viruses and bacteria by leaving them hanging in the air for a significant period.

I wish we could see these pesky little viruses and swat them like flies – but we can't!

Lawns Maintenance Report - May 2020

1. PhD thesis

As you may (or may not!) recall, the lawn maintenance programme was redesigned for this season to incorporate reported research from London University (Royal Holloway). I received a copy of the PhD thesis by Francesca Baylis from the librarians on April 21st. This contains a wealth of information on a variety of products which I hope to eventually summarise in an NDCC document. However, there are a number of issues that need to be clarified before I do that. My email correspondence with Francesca has been badly interrupted by Covid19 but I have established telephone and email correspondence with the MD at Plantworks whose products Francesca researched and who supply Nailsea via the distributor AGS.

The main points to arising from the research were:

Mycorrhizal fungi

- a. A consortium of specific Mycorrhizal fungi does degrade annual meadow grass (AMG), reducing growth by a factor of three. (This weakening of the AMG does make it more prone to disease)
- b. It boosts dwarf rye grass growth by about 30%.
- c. Adding phosphates (P) to liquid fertiliser negates the benefits.
- d. Optimum application rate is 32-64Kg/hectare if the granules are directly mixed in the soil or brushed into holes. This is much lower than Plantworks specify. However, no rate is specified for surface application followed by watering in.

Plant Growth Promoting Rhizobacteria (PGPR)

- a. To my mind, the thesis did not provide clear evidence that PGPR's targeted at dwarf rye grass boost rye grass growth.
- b. I have contacted Plantworks and asked for comment on the issue.
- c. I have suspended PGPR spraying until I get an answer to my questions. (As it happens, with so much dry weather PGPR spraying is impossible anyway as the bacteria are killed by chlorine in tap water and so irrigation cannot be used in place of rain).

2. Lawns overview

As everybody is aware last winter was very wet (about 920mm of rain from September to March), nearly twice as much as we had in 2017/18. Recently the westerly Atlantic airflow has ceased and rainfall has dramatically fallen. Appendix 1 illustrates this with the usual rainfall and evapotranspiration loss data plotted on a four-week rolling average basis.

As from April 27 mowing frequency has had to increase and is now being carried out weekly in order to prevent coarser grass leaves developing. During the 10 days prior to April 27 the annual meadow grass (AMG) had flowered in many places. The seed heads were well above the grass surface because they were not being constantly being flattened by the Toro rollers. Mowing cut most off them off. This was unusual as normally they creep along the ground below the height of the mower.

Spraying and Sarrel rolling have continued every two weeks or so with Revolution being added in at the start of each month. I was able to catch rain for the April sprays but the May 16th spray required 6 hours of irrigation (equivalent to 3mm of rain) to water in the liquid bio fertiliser.

Recently, my subjective impression has been that the sward is improving, with AMG clumps less pronounced. Checking back on my March/April/May photos this does appear to be the case. Clearly, the slow release fertiliser is providing an adequate supply of nutrients but the mycorrhizal fungi may also be playing a part. AMG does not like dry weather so it is difficult to separate out effects. Lawn 5 was not treated with mycorrhizal fungi in early March but received all other treatment. It too has improved but possibly not quite to the same extent. This is a very subjective judgement on my part. With time the picture will become clearer.

3. Overseeding

In the Autumns of 2018 and 2019 attempts were made to over seed the lawns. For a variety of reasons, both efforts were not successful. During early April I was discussing the lack of appropriate options for NDCC with David Hunt (on the phone!) when my thoughts turned to germination blankets. Research quickly revealed that such blankets are widely used in both professional cricket and football to quickly establish new rye grass pitches during the summer months. The football clubs use large, disposable, blankets whilst the cricketers use reusable blankets with 7 year plus age limit. It turned out that that a Bristol company have been manufacturing such blankets for thirty years using a patented mesh product. (The patent ran out last year). Tildenet offer Bristol sports clubs a 20% discount so I ordered one 25x 3.8 metre blanket plus plastic pegs, at a cost of £123 plus delivery.

Over-seeding of lawn 3 began on 27th April using the normal 25gms/m² seeding rate. Within seven days there was a vigorous grass response both from the existing rye and AMG grass and a reasonable germination rate. The previously dormant AMG had already developed long seed heads which I was able to cut off. The grass was a vivid green colour because the extra warmth generated by the blanket raised bacteria activity and release more N to the grass. The new seed did not germinate evenly because I did not irrigate the blanket.

The second strip was more successful. Seeding rate was doubled to 50g/m² and some additional irrigation was applied on two out of seven days. After again trimming the AMG seed heads off at seven days, the blanket was replaced for another three days to encourage young seedlings to germinate. The end result after two weeks was excellent. (Appendix 2) and two further germination blankets have thus been purchased at a cost of £258. This gives us the capability to

over-seed more than a third of a lawn at a time. Apart from enhanced germination, there is the advantage is that birds are unable to eat the seed whilst it is germinating!

Lawn 3 will be completed in early June but the new seedlings need a few weeks to develop adequate roots and thus support closer mowing with the Toro. The sward coverage is excellent at present but some of the sward is newly invigorated AMG. The hope is that as the AMG gradually degrades again due to drought and mycorrhizal fungi the new rye grass will maintain a good sward as it matures. To assist with this, the strips to be over-seeded were Sarrel rolled after irrigation to soften the ground and create fine holes in the surface. Some Mycorrhizal fungi granules were mixed in with the new seed at a rate of 50Kg/hectare (in the optimum range) with the intention of washing the propagules into the holes using the irrigation required to stimulate germination.

4. Lawn Damage

Throughout the spring, I have repeatedly observed one inch diameter holes in the lawn due to digging by wildlife. I had always assumed this was squirrels but recently I have observed a solitary crow wandering about, pecking at the lawn. Most of the time I think it's just eating insets on the lawn surface. However, I suspect the crow occasionally locates an insect in the ground (leatherjacket, worm etc) and pecks away the surface to get at the food. It has even pecked a small hole in the first germination blanket.

Like the particular tame pigeon that ate grass seed all winter, this crow seems almost oblivious to the presence of humans and noisy machinery unless very close. As a bit of fun, could somebody on the committee give this crow a name? Kathy and I used to have a pheasant that visited our garden regularly. We named it Derek!

If the damage continues, I will have to re-introduce Rigel G spraying. This is a safe product that does tend to discourage leatherjackets if used in Spring and Autumn. It is not as effective as the licensed chemical that was banned by the EU but is the only available solution to leatherjackets.

5. Thankyou

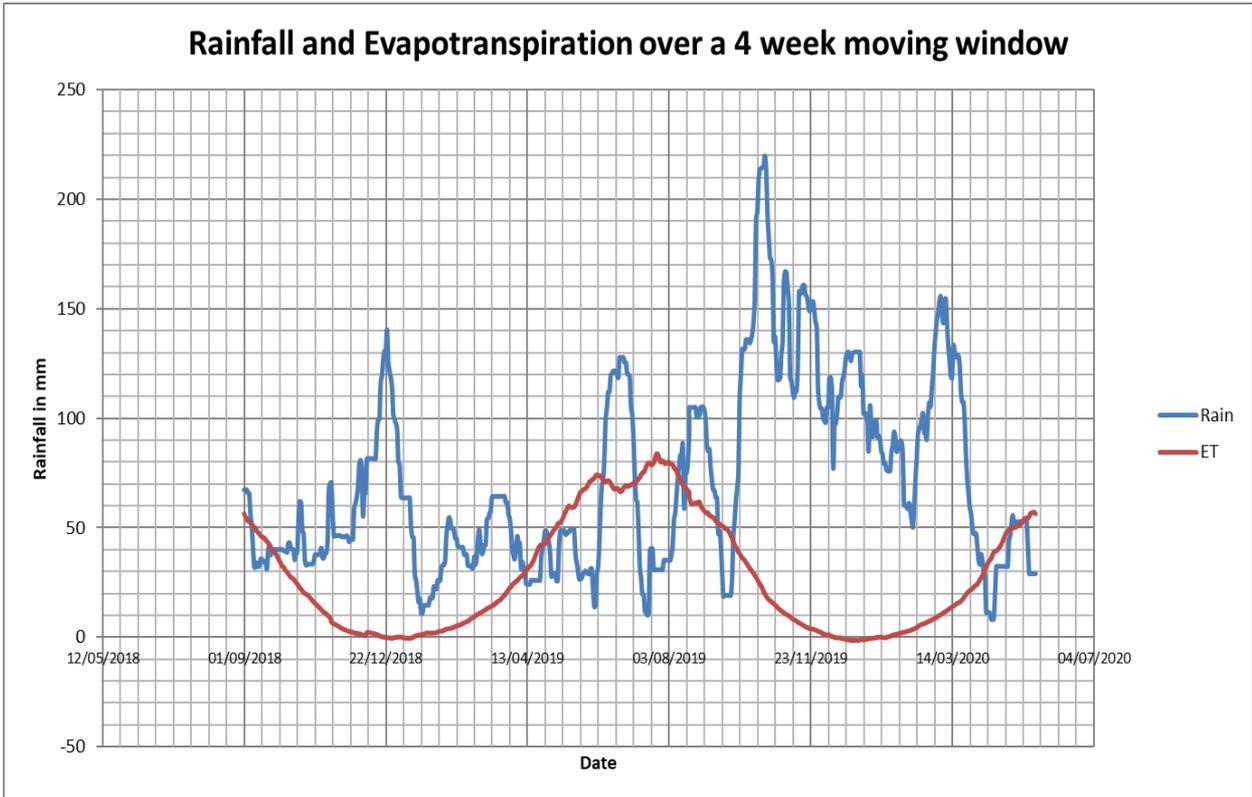
Two people have helped enormously during the lockdown period. They are:

- a. Kathy, who has spent many hours hand spraying weeds and provided me with much assistance in other maintenance activities.
- b. Andrew, who has kept the boundary areas strimmed and under control.

6. Covid19

I understand that the issue of opening the club is under discussion. I have outlined my thoughts in Appendix 3. Cases are still increasing by 10-20 per day in North Somerset and with many asymptomatic carriers of the disease the problems of using the pavilion seem insurmountable to me. Opening up the club would affect what I can do in terms of maintenance but I cannot comment in detail at present.

Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Appendix 3. COVID19 and NDCC

The CA issued some guidance on 13/5/20 regarding re-opening of croquet clubs. In the context of NDCC I think the guidance is limited and does not really address some of the important issues. Covid19 presents particular problems that need careful consideration. The main ones are

1. Something like 50% of infected people exhibit no symptoms but do spread the infection. This is why the infection is so difficult to control.
2. The virus is present in aerosols from infected patients in the air surrounding them for several hours. The act of breathing out is sufficient to generate an aerosol. Talking is ten times worse in terms of virus spread. Coughing and sneezing are worse again. This is a particular problem inside buildings. Outside, airflow tends to disperse the aerosol.
3. The virus is capable of surviving on hard plastic and metal surfaces for up to three days.
4. Social distancing requires a 2metre separation. At one metre the risk of being infected rises by a factor of about 20.
5. Risk of death is related to age, comorbidity, obesity etc and hence many members of NDCC are at increased risk. The most at risk, such as Kathy, are in the shielded category and must be protected at all costs. Those living in the same household also need to be shielded to the same standard.

Bearing the above in mind, there are several major obstacles to be overcome before it could be considered safe to open the club:

1. **Contaminated surfaces.** The clubhouse and machine room are full of hard plastic and metallic objects which can readily become contaminated.
2. **Lawn preparation.** There is a significant amount of work to reopen the lawns, the most difficult of which would be setting out the hoop holes. These would need to be re-measured prior to setting. The hoop areas would need to be watered as the ground is hard. With luck, the WestWest holes created in March be located by measurement. Even so, the setting procedure involves two or three people and precludes social distancing and the hoop clamp plus balls are both potential virus carriers. David Hunt, who leads hoop setting is in the shielded category and would not be available to direct or assist. (Neither would I)
3. **Playing a game.** There are a number of issues here, from making sure numbers are controlled to maintaining safe distancing and avoiding touching balls, hoops, chairs, door handles etc. The aerosol issue in the toilet and clubhouse area seems insurmountable to me, not helped by toilet generated aerosols and blower hand driers. For those with more profound hearing loss, maintaining social distancing can be impossible.
4. **Lawn Maintenance.** At present, in addition to normal spraying, Sarrel rolling and lawn repair activities I am mowing once per week. I have also initiated a major new weekly over-seeding operation using a germination blanket and specific targeted irrigation. Kathy continues to do all the weedkilling and generally assist me when needed. We can do this in the sure knowledge that nobody else is at the club, there are no aerosol issues to worry about and no plastic or metal contaminated surfaces can arise.

Spraying takes place approximately every two weeks but I try and spray on rainy days to wash the various products into the soil. Similarly, I sarrel roll approximately every two weeks after rain because the ground is soft. If the club opens for play then this flexible operation will cease and I will have to irrigate for perhaps 6 hours at designated times, thus substantially increasing the total time taken to complete the various tasks. As a result, it will be necessary to keep the club closed for two consecutive days on alternate weeks so that turf maintenance can continue.

I can continue to mow once per week as a part of that two-day closure. However, twice weekly mowing would be needed to keep the grass short enough for play, thus necessitating a second cut per week. It would also be necessary to ensure all other regular activities that involve use of equipment/machine room access (the second mowing, white lining, machinery maintenance such as adjusting reel/bed clearance, hoop moving and occasional mowing of boundary areas with the Countax lawn tractor) take place three days before or after this designated period so that there is no risk to anyone from contaminated machinery. For others involved in lawn maintenance, surface contamination issues can possibly be avoided by making sure that nobody touches machinery that is not relevant to their particular task and that gloves are worn at all times. However, it is easy to make mistakes in such situations. Timing would have to be such that periods for two people working were sufficiently far apart that aerosol issues do not arise. An interval of 3 hours is really required to ensure safety. It might well be that the white lining equipment could be stored outside so that the possibility of mowers and white liners touching each other's equipment was eliminated.

The logistics of such arrangements is not trivial and it may well be that during these periods of lawn maintenance the club would be closed to players.

Conclusion

The volume of work I need to undertake is not an issue and I am more than happy to carry on as things are. However, eliminating (not minimising) the risk of myself, Kathy or our disabled son catching Covid19 is substantially complicated by opening up the club. I am therefore not enthusiastic about opening up at this point in time. There is absolutely no chance of Kathy or I even considering going anywhere near other people until there is a vaccine available.