

Nailsea and District Croquet Club
Minutes of Zoom Committee Meeting 24th September 2020

Present: Graham McCausland, Meriel Forshaw, Brian Roynon, Peter Dyke, Joan Timmins, Andrew Wimshurst, Sandra Morgan joined the meeting at 10.43hrs.

1. Apologies: Mike Tracy

2. Minutes of the meeting held on the 26th August 2020: agreed and signed by MF on behalf of GMc.

3. Matters Arising: None

4. Hedge Update: Graham and Brian met Sam Phillips from North Somerset Council and Friends of Trendlewood Park on the 23rd September. A reasonable compromise has been reached regarding the height and future cutting of the hedges. In future, hedge cutting will only take place between the end of September and the beginning of February.

5. Disposal of Lawn Cuttings: The committee agreed the following:-
No lawn cuttings would be placed under the hedge in the car park area.
The boards around lawn five would be moved to create a bigger practice area.
Lawn trimmings could be placed in the ditch under the hedge in this area. The equipment in this area would be moved into the corner area.
The corner areas around lawns two and three are to be tidied up and Tony Willoughby will be approached and asked to create box areas for grass trimmings.

Brian will arrange an 'Autumn Tidy Up' work day.

Action: BR

6. Treasurer's Report: discussed and noted in Mike's absence.

The committee agreed the increase of BACS transfers to £1000, with immediate effect.

Action: MT

7. Property Report: discussed and noted.

Work needs to be undertaken on some of the soffit boards.

The car park project is now on hold following information received from North Somerset Council.

The committee wished to thank Tony Willoughby for the excellent work he has done on the middle bench.

Action: GMc

8. Covid Risk Assessment: Brian has completed the risk assessment, which the committee approved. A copy will be sent to Brigit for the archives.

Action: BR

9. Membership: Nothing to report.

10. Lawns Report: discussed and noted.

The committee support in principal, John's proposal for an Automatic Irrigation System. The committee awaits a more detailed review from John and the LAG.

11. Recruitment Report: discussed and noted.

We have a few new members this year despite Covid 19.

Kathy has been invited to join the new Facebook Group 'Nailsea Active' and hopes this will help with recruitment in the coming year.

The committee recognised the need to promote recruitment through the press.

Tournament Dates – B/C Class Advanced Tournament moving from May to August. The committee agreed it was too early to make a final decision.

Competitions – The committee agreed the following dates for 2021 - Semi finals: 4-5 September; Finals: 25-26 September.

12. SWF AGM Proposals: Peter and Graham will represent the club at this meeting and the committee agreed that they had voting rights on amendments.

13. League Secretary's Report: The committee agreed it was still too early to decide on league entries for next year. Our juniors have worked hard and continue to improve.

Congratulations to James Galpin on his recent competition success.

14. Any Other Business:

a) Sport England Crowdfunder - reference page 10 of the Croquet Gazette, September 2020. Following discussion it was agreed not to undertake this type of fund raising activity.

b) Old and damaged croquet balls – It was agreed that two of these balls could be loaned to a new member for the winter period. Joan would take the responsibility to ensure the balls were returned at the start of the season.

Action: JT

c) Lawn closure – members have raised concerns that all four lawns are being closed for the winter. Committee members are disappointed that the lawns have had to close and appreciate the members' concerns. However, it is agreed that to ensure future play during the winter, long term consideration of the lawns needs to take precedence.

d) Greta Stringer - Donation of glass trophies etc. - Greta has now moved into St Monica's and her sons have recently donated to the club, trophies that

Greta has won over the years. An immediate decision could not be made as to how these trophies may be used in future so they will be stored in a safe place for the time being.

The committee wished to express its thanks to Greta’s sons.

Action: JT

e) Zoom meetings – As the Covid restrictions do not allow large group meetings, meetings via Zoom will have to continue. Graham will look into the cost of holding a regular Zoom meeting.

Action: GMc

f) 18 members have responded to Andrew’s request to help with leaf clearance. Andrew will convey the committee’s thanks to Kathy for the excellent way that the competitions have been run this year.

Action: AW

g) The format for the AGM was discussed and how members may vote if required to do so. Meriel will host the AGM meeting via Zoom. The next Chairman’s update will include information on the AGM.

Action: GMc

The meeting closed at 11.50 hrs

Date of next meeting 22nd October 2020 10.00hrs

Signed as a true and accurate record:

Name.....

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

Date

Reports

Treasurer's report for NDCC committee meeting 24th September 2020

This report has been prepared on 19th September 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 unrepresented cheques £16,507.64. I also have a cheque for £30 (new member). Our financial assets therefore stand at £16,537.64. The year is showing a surplus of £6530.66. Without the small business grant this would have been a deficit of £3,469.34 The major expenditure since our last meeting was the hire of the Dynaseeder (£864) which appears to me to have been a successful operation, despite the torrential rain the day after the seed was put down.

An examination of the accounts showed that we had never been invoiced for rent, which was due early in October 2019. After a month of phone calls to voicemail and emails to various people the council has agreed that the invoice was not sent out as it should have been and that one will be issued shortly. The rental charge is £500.

I asked the committee at the lat meeting to consider what the cap on BACS payments should be, the current cap of £100 necessitating significant use of the cheque book. I note that the treasurer of Bristol Croquet Club has no such limit. To get the ball rolling I would like to suggest a limit of £1,000, but any increase from the current limit would be helpful for the treasurer, whoever he or she might be.

M Tracy

19/09/2020

Property Report for committee meeting Sept 24th 2020

Outfield

Needs cutting and tidying.

Fire Extinguishers

The fire extinguishers were tested and inspected.

Car Park

Just as an update Geoff spoke to the Council to see how they would respond to a request for a tarmac carpark and they would not support it we would have to have grass growing through anything we put in.

We now know what we must consider at a future date.

The Central Bench

Tony is going to carry out repairs to the central bench. I have authorised him having a main gate key cut so that he can drive in with his materials and equipment without opening the Pavilion.

Report for meeting September 2020

Recruitment

Three of our four new members are very happy and becoming well-integrated. Many thanks to Andrew, James, Tony Hinchliffe, Libby and Terry for all their time and encouragement. I am not up to date with the progress of the 4th new member but she has joined the Club.

I was delighted for the Club to be invited to join a new Facebook Group called Nailsea Active. This was initially the initiative of an individual called Glen Schmidt but he now has funding from the Tyntesfield Medical Group which runs four GP practices in Nailsea, Backwell and Long Ashton. The objective of the FB group is to encourage people to do exercise and get fit, both physically and mentally, particularly in the post Covid period. I really hope this will help us next year. It will be a way for us to reach a huge number of people and make them aware of the Club and any taster sessions and other promotional events that we hold. We can also publicise our big competitive events through the page. The GC Home Internationals might prove quite timely. This is an exciting opportunity for publicity for the club. We have already had a “welcome” post from Nailsea Bowls Club. I thanked them and suggested a “play date” in due course!

Tournaments

It occurred to John that events later in the year in 2021 are more likely to be able to run normally than any arranged for early in the year. With this in mind, I wondered if we should move our proposed May Tournament (B/C Class Advanced)) to a date in August. It would mean that we had two weekend and one single day tournaments in August but that would be better than having an early tournament cancelled or restricted. Whilst it is not ideal for a normal year, I think the various teams involved would cope for one year. The managers would all be different. On this matter, (dates), we can wait a bit longer to make a decision. I also need the dates for Trent Bridge Test Match unless anyone else is willing to manage one of the two Advanced Class tournaments. The CA office hasn't sent out the requests for dates yet and I suspect it might all run late while people wait to see what happens with Covid and vaccine news. The dates that we are committed to are:

GC Home Internationals: 17/18 July 2021
Selectors' Weekend: 10/11/12 September 2021

Competitions

Most competitions are nearly complete. I will issue a full list of results when they have finished and I will get a report into the NS Times.

For 2021, I would like to suggest semi-finals take place 4/5 September and Finals 25/26 September. We have sometimes gone into October in the past but the weather often goes off

around then. Leaves always start to fall, the morning dew always gets heavier and it always gets dark earlier. All these things make it difficult to provide good playing conditions for the finalists and “grand days out” for the spectators. I think this year will be a good example of how the weather changes quite quickly from the second half of September onwards. I would like to announce these dates as soon as possible so that members can decide on their priorities when booking holidays for 2021.

CA matters Nothing to report
19/9/2020

Kathy Wallace

Lawn Maintenance Report – September 2020

1. Review of the Year

Looking back over the year I feel that the substantial changes to the maintenance regime have produced positive results. The rye grass is healthier now than 12 months ago and it survived the drought quite well. The use of slow release liquid fertiliser has undoubtedly been successful. However, the annual meadow grass (AMG) component simply died, leaving a uneven playing surface. Had it been a normal season, players would have been very unhappy and we would have had to resort to irrigation to revive the AMG. Progress with regard to reducing the AMG component presence remains ongoing. The application of mycorrhizal fungi inoculant, the elimination of phosphorus from the fertiliser programme and the recent overseeding with Bent should gradually reduce it. I have consulted many people on this issue including a number of golf green professionals. All agree that our approach is sound because there is no simple magic solution. Thus, I plan to continue the current maintenance programme forward to next year, subject to a soil test in the Autumn to check phosphorus and other nutrient levels.

2. Lawn Over-seeding

The lawns were overseeded on August 26 and flooded by a flash flood on August 27. Two weeks of twice daily irrigation persuaded much of the Bent seed to germinate, culminating in visible rows lying in an E/W direction. The Rye overseed may have been more affected by the flooding and there were no obvious rows of germinated rye seed in the expected diagonal direction of NW/SE or SW/NE. Close inspection did find individual examples of germinated rye seed but the intended solid lines did not appear.

There were some strips on lawns 1 & 2 where there was no obvious Bent germination. The regularity and width of these E/W strips in the mid-section of the lawns suggested a temporary fault with the Dynaseeder. Photos were sent to Devon Garden Machinery but they could not offer any explanation. By contrast Lawns 3 & 4 had lines of germinated seed throughout.

To achieve germination required twice daily irrigation for two weeks, assisted by heavy morning dews. Further irrigation was applied on 13th and 17th September. However, since twice daily irrigation ceased, the lines of Bent on Lawns 1 & 2 have diminished and are no longer visible in many places. The best time to see them is after a heavy morning dew but the dew has also disappeared in recent days. Lawns 1 & 2 have a deeper top layer of sand than Lawns 3 & 4 and my fear is that the dry weather and lack of frequent irrigation may have resulted the young seedlings dying before being able to develop sufficient root capacity to access the moist soil below the sand layer. Time will tell but I am concerned.

3. Overseeding Capacity.

Annual overseeding the lawns is an integral part of lawn maintenance. Previous attempts with dimple seeders and rye grass have not been successful for a variety of reasons. The Dynaseeder proved to be a good machine for overseeding very fine Bent seed but perhaps not quite so effective with rye grass. However, the hire of the Dynaseeder and operative was expensive and I am currently exploring the option of constructing an NDCC replica to be towed by our Countax lawn tractor. If successful it would mean that apart from some initial capital expenditure there would be no ongoing expenditure.

I plan to construct a small-scale prototype and carry out some cold-seeding with Bent during late winter or early spring. The seed supplier (Germinal Amenity) have shown that cold seeding does work so if the prototype works (not guaranteed!) then we can overseed whenever weather conditions suit without incurring cost except for seed.

4. Irrigation capacity.

The mains-fed portable three sprinkler system has served NDCC quite well but is time consuming and laborious to use because of the need to set up, constantly re-locate sprinklers and pipes and clear away at the end. Even to irrigate each lawn for 30 minutes (equivalent of 1mm of rain) takes two people two and half hours. It is nearer three hours with one person. All the time that irrigation is taking place, the lawns need to stay closed. Indeed, the areas close to the sprinklers get particularly wet and should probably be left for an hour or so before play commences.

It is often necessary and important to irrigate after spraying liquid products or applying granular products as most require watering in. For example, Revolution avoids local dry patch developing and keeps the (rye/bent) grass green even under drought conditions but it has to be watered into to be effective. It is sometimes possible to avoid irrigation by spraying when rain is expected but this is hit and miss as weather forecasts for rain are less than perfect. It also represents a considerable disruption to my life as other events have to be continually postponed or moved. This happens about every two weeks throughout the season.

Regular annual overseeding is a part of normal lawn maintenance but, to succeed, regular light irrigation is required up to and beyond germination. The recent over-seeding exercise illustrated just how problematic the time taken and effort required are to irrigate using the current irrigation system. To ensure that germination succeeded, it was necessary to irrigate both in the morning and evening. With a normal 10am to 5 pm playing session this means starting to irrigate at 7.45am and again at 5pm through until dusk (8pm at that time of year). Volunteers to assist with the morning shift were thin on the ground, an increasingly common occurrence at NDCC. (Special thanks to Kathy, David Hunt and Andrew Wimshurst for regular assistance and also Pete Longden, John Hancock and Graham McCausland).

Aside from the above, leatherjackets have proved troublesome with the lawns being continually being pecked by crows. Numerous golf clubs have large areas completely destroyed by crows digging up leatherjackets. (Bristol being a case in point this year). In our case we have been lucky so far in that the damage has been more limited. However, Kathy has had to repair the holes with soil and seed every few days since May. With chemical solutions no longer available, the only viable method of containing leatherjackets (and chafer grubs) is to employ nematodes. These have a mixed reputation because it is necessary to continually irrigate the lawns for a period of two weeks or more after application. Many people are not able to do this and hence do not achieve the desired level of control.

To ward off the leatherjacket (or chafer grub) damage, overseed and regularly spray requires a huge effort using the existing portable irrigation system. This effort and disruption to my life (and Kathy's) is such that I feel NDCC must therefore install an automatic irrigation system that can operate independently. This would be even more essential if somebody else were to be looking after the lawns as I very much doubt if they would be prepared to operate on the same basis as I do at present.

Bearing the above in mind I have developed a proposal for an automatic irrigation system. This has been sent to LAG members for discussion. The document details a design that is robust and feasible. The component cost is around £3800 with a further £3800 required for installation. The component cost is fairly accurate but the installation cost is less certain.

Following a decision on how much work NDCC members are prepared to undertake themselves, quotations against a specification would need to be acquired to firm up cost.

In the present financial and Covid19 uncertainty there is no prospect of such a scheme being funded by NDCC. However, by establishing a reasonably accurate cost estimate I hope the committee will give it due consideration as soon as practicable.

JNW

22/9/20

League Secretary's Report for the meeting on Thursday, 24 September, 2020.

League Fixtures 2021

Stephen Custance-Baker is asking for our entries for the SWF Leagues for 2021 on the assumption that we are able to return to normal by the beginning of next season.

Junior Croquet

Both juniors are continuing to improve. Esme, in particular, continues to impress me. She is doing really well at the skills exercises that I have given the juniors this year and has won both the junior competitions that we have played. Hopefully we will be able to fit in a one-ball competition before the weather gets too bad and we have to close the lawns.

James Galpin

James won The Bowl in the GC First Eight. He was unlucky to be knocked out of the Plate Competition in the AC Open Championships losing to Tim Jolliff by just one point in the first round of knockout competition. He was second equal Chairman's Salver (AC Second Eight). Also he beat Marcus Evans to win the club Open Advanced Competition.

Peter Dyke
(24/09/20)