

Nailsea and District Croquet Club
Minutes of the zoom committee meeting 18th March 2021

Present: G McCausland, A Wimshurst, P.Dyke, D Hunt, B Roynon, S.Morgan E. Malaiperuman.

Apologies: Sandra had to leave at 11.00

Minutes of the last meeting: Accepted (subject to treasurer's report where it was agreed that grants should be under a separate heading) and signed by **EM** on behalf of **GMC**

1. Matters arising:

2. Treasurer's report: Noted and discussed.

3.Membership: There has been an excellent uptake of membership. We now have 58 full members, 1 Associate, 1 Junior and 2 country, plus 8 Social and a further 8 Life members.

4. Recruitment and competitions: Report noted and discussed. Kathy's list of applicants for coaching for beginners is continuing to grow. (10 definites) The club competition forms have been issued. There will be a further update on competitions next meeting. Peter questioned which of the members listed as being 'happy to coach beginners' were actually club coaches. Andrew and David have both attended coaching sessions with Dave Kibble. Erica to check with Dave Kibble on their coaching status. Erica intends to do the club coach course this Spring through the SWF coach Roger Mills. **Action EM**

5. Property Report:

Geoff and Steve are in the process of preparing the nets for the coming season.

Tony Willoughby is happy to proceed with necessary repairs on the boards and with Tony Dowman they will place them around the lawns next week. Boards will be placed between lawns 4 and 5. Graham will trim the overhanging trees in the NE corner of the outfield. It was decided that a working party on the outfield would not be necessary until the back end of April.

6. Fixtures Report:

Peter has been extremely busy over the past month and did not have time to write his report before the meeting. He gave a verbal report to the committee and promised to send a written report (attached at the end of the minutes) within a few days.

6.1 League Fixtures

Peter has arranged 21 of our 30 league fixtures and he expects to complete the rest over the weekend. **Action: Peter**

6.2 Secretary's Shield: Peter to contact any member who is eligible to play in the Secretary's Shield to find out who wishes to play in this event. **Action: Peter**

6.3 Juniors:

Peter is likely to need assistance with juniors this year and is looking for one or two reliable members to help him. **Action: Peter**

8: Club play and COVID restrictions.

On Saturday 3rd April, our first day of play for the season, there will be absolutely no rolls or soup and no roll up play. The kitchen will remain closed at all times. Congregating in the clubhouse is not allowed.

All players will have to book lawns as usual. Members will be allowed to invite visitors as long as their names are properly put on the booking sheet. All covid restrictions on numbers will be followed as will the 2021 covid precautions for playing croquet issued by the CA .

[/www.croquet.org.uk/?p=press/news&NewsID=7188&pup=y](http://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=press/news&NewsID=7188&pup=y)

Much discussion followed regarding the handling of the croquet balls. It was decided that members should continue to wear gloves when putting out and taking in the equipment. Players are allowed to touch the balls when putting them into a critical position (especially AC). Players are advised to wash their hands before play. Hand gel is available for use. Players who feel especially vulnerable may wish to bring their own cleaning equipment for the balls. Inside the clubhouse antiseptic wipes are also available for use on equipment.

Graham will send out a Chairman's update detailing covid restrictions which members must adhere to when visiting the club. **Action:Graham**

Erica will liase with Joan regarding availability of hand gel on the site. **Action:Erica**

Players will shelter in their cars during inclement weather.

Should it rain during Junior sessions Peter is allowed to bring them into the clubhouse.

AOB: The committee agreed that Graham request that members who play in SWF or CA tournaments and whose handicap details were not up to date on the CA website should go on to the website and update them themselves. This is necessary so that the booking sheet displays handicaps which match those on the CA website. Other members whose handicaps were also out of date on the CA website but who did not play in any SWF or CA tournaments would not be requested to change them.

It was agreed that Brian should hold the first of the season 100 club draw at the club with witnesses on April 3rd.

Club afternoon play: Erica will put forward plans as to how we might run Wednesday AC club afternoons whilst following covid restrictions on organised play.

There will be a Zoom meeting on Wednesday 24th March at 7.00 by Dave Kibble to explain the recently agreed **changes to AC laws**. Erica will inform AC playing members.

DONM : Zoom meeting on Thursday 22nd April. 9.45 for 10.00 start

The meeting closed at 11.30

Signed as a true and accurate account

Name.....

Signature.....

Treasurer's report to the committee meeting held on 18th March 2021

Attached is the income and expenditure account for the current year made up to the 11 March 2021 showing cash at bank to be 19,691.32 . Cheques yet to appear in this total are a further £330.00 giving a balance to carry forward of £20,021.32.

Income so far this year is approaching the amount required to cover our budgeted expenditure.

The Bank Mandate has been submitted to HSBC and I have moderate confidence that it will be accepted

Reports for meeting on 18 March 2021

Recruitment Report

I am now in receipt of 5 completed application forms for lessons. Three have paid and the other two will pay shortly. Another three people have requested and been sent forms. There is also the Shanghai connection couple. More details are supplied in the accompanying email.

I have various other feelers out and have started a Facebook campaign.

I have arranged an ad in the April Nailsea Paper. This entitles us to a much longer article as well as the ad. The editor formatted the ad for us and has made it look very professional. I will invite the editor for a croquet experience with some sort of refreshments as soon as it is permitted and the weather is more suitable. We have had free articles with them all winter.

The Club website is now updated with the banner at the top showing a slideshow of photographs with a wide variety of players and also a picture of a voucher and the Short Croquet scene.

Nailsea Active is launching a website and we will have our own page there. Glen Schmidt, who runs Nailsea Active on behalf of Tyntesfield Medical Group, works very hard and will be promoting the website so that might bear fruit for us. He is also introducing a range of Nailsea Active promotional clothing, sourced locally.

Competitions Report

The entry forms for internal competitions entries are trickling in. As discussed with Graham, I will keep the paperwork at home in the early part of the season and update it when people inform me of their results. The Blocks etc will have been sent out to all participants by email. I hope to be able to put the sheets on the board by the time people are playing matches at a rate of knots.

Tournament Report

The Fixtures Calendar went live on 1 March. The GC tournament is already over-subscribed so, on the Allocation date, I will have to follow the rigorous protocol laid down by the Director, Chris Roberts. With some caveats, this basically takes players in order of their grade.

The June and July tournaments have 10 and 9 entries respectively with a good spread of handicaps and from a range of Clubs, mainly in the south-west. I think there will be more entries to come. The Open Advanced Tournament only has two entries but that's a typical pattern for that particular tournament and I expect many more entries later in the season. That's £580 in entry fees to date although the Club will only receive £435 after the CA has taken its 25% levy. The Manager (and winner) of the Treasurer's Tankard players from 2019 is hoping to come to Nailsea again this year so we must be doing something right.

CA liaison Report

There is nothing to report other than on-going Covid advice which has been forwarded and is also on the CA website. I really hope that the Committee advice will allow the striker's ball to be touched so that AC shots can be lined up accurately. Advice on use of clips in AC competitions would also be welcomed.

Fixture Secretary's Report for the meeting on 18 March, 2021

League Fixtures

So far I have arranged 21 out of a total of 30 league fixtures. Despite having fewer fixtures to arrange this year has been more difficult than usual. The SWF League Secretary has advised club fixture secretaries not to arrange any league matches before 21 June – the earliest date that most lockdown restrictions are likely to be lifted (reason: it is unlikely that members of two or more households will be allowed to share car transport before that date. However he has agreed with me that clubs that are close to each other (eg. Bristol and Nailsea) where a team could easily travel separately may play each other before 21 July provided they follow the government guidelines that are in force at the time. The team that I have had most difficulty arranging fixtures for is the Advanced League division 1 team – there are only three members in the team and all three work and could play only at weekends. I checked with the team to find out their availability and found that there were only three weekends after 21 June when all three members of the team may be available. On one of those weekends there is a tournament at Nailsea so I would only be able to arrange an away fixture on that date. I managed to get Bristol to agree to play us in May and have arranged two of the remaining three Advanced League division 1 fixtures and hope to arrange the remaining matches this weekend.

Secretary's Shield

The Secretary's Shield is a National Handicap Tournament between the winners of the previous season's Federation handicap leagues. Neither the Secretary's Shield nor any SWF Federation Leagues were held in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. As Nailsea won the Federation League in 2019 we have been chosen to represent the South West Federation (SWF) in the Secretary's Shield this year. The Croquet Association's attitude to inter-club competitions is very different to that of the SWF. The organiser of the Secretary's Shield has informed me that matches can take place from 29th March in line with Govt. announcements as we are an outdoor sport and the competitions are organised through the NGB with Covid-19 guidelines to be followed. He adds that "it's up to individuals how they want to arrange transport." This concerns me because of the distances involved – we may well have to travel over 140 miles for our first round match if we are drawn to play away; subsequent rounds may be even further.

Juniors

- (a) **Coaches.** I am not sure if I will be able to commit to taking juniors every week this year, so I am looking for a couple of reliable members who would be willing to assist with juniors. They would need to have DBS checks.
- (b) **One-ball trophy.** After the last meeting I spoke to Kathy about purchasing a Junior One-ball trophy. She thought it was a good idea and mentioned it to Brigit who pointed out that we already had one and that it was in the trophy cabinet in the club house. We have not had a junior one-ball competition for several years (Ryan was the last winner) and I had forgotten it existed. I have now picked up the trophy and passed it on to Luke. I also collected the Junior Pirates trophy and given it to Esme. Esme is the first girl to have won this trophy.
- (c) **National Junior Squad.** Naomi Whitehead, the U18's organiser at Cheltenham is arranging a meet-up for female members of the National Junior Squad at Cheltenham on 11 April and Esme has been invited to join them. I have passed the information on to Esme's mother and they both hope to attend. Ian Draper will be the lead coach with other coaches helping out.

Ian is planning a number of fun activities for the girls to try. I hope that Esme and her mum will be able to go; it sounds like an excellent opportunity for Esme to meet and get to know other girls who play croquet. I have been invited to go along and assist, but it seems unlikely that I will be able to attend.

Peter Dyke
(18/03/2021)

Lawn Maintenance Report – March 2021

Lawns

As reflected in figure 1, rainfall was much reduced from mid Feb until mid March apart from a few very wet days last week. This was actually a nuisance as fertilising and overseeding activities would have benefited from some rain. This was frustrating. The lawns generally look a little better but with some way to go before we achieve the thick sward desired.

1. Weeds and Moss

The wet winter generated much moss and I concluded that the only way of treating it was with an Iron spray. As mentioned in my last report the first 20L dose was applied on February 15. This appeared to brown the moss but not blacken it. After consultation with Duncan Hector a second 20L dose was applied on February 26. The combined effect does appear to be having the desired effect. In the short term there are many dark brown patches of moss but these should gradually fade as the spring progresses.

The Praxys spray last October slowly killed off most of the weeds but I notice that new patches of trefoil are beginning to reappear on the lawns, particularly lawn 4. Herbicides are not systemic so a Spring spray of Praxys will be required. Spot spraying with Weedol should then keep the lawns weed-free during the summer.

2. Fertiliser Programme

The 2021 fertiliser programme started earlier this year on February 24 with an application of Caviar granular fertiliser in addition to the regular monthly application of Essentials Plus. Caviar is made from molasses and as well as supplying Nitrogen (N) and Potassium (K) it also provides Fulvic and Humic acid. The Fulvic acid is particularly helpful in low light early spring conditions. Rain was due on the evening of February 24 but there was actually none until March 10. Fortunately, as the lawns were not in use, I was able to wait and not resort to irrigation.

The overall aim of the programme is not only to supply the necessary N and K and other trace elements such as Sulphur(S) and Calcium (Ca) but Biostimulants that encourage healthy soil biology. I have attached a technical note written by Martin Ward (Symbio) which explains why Biostimulants are so important in improving soil structure and biology. Table 1 shows how the different components of the NDCC programme relate to the various Biostimulants referred to in the Martin Ward article.

4. Over-seeding

The winter rye overseeding of bare patches on the North boundary using green waste has been successful with plenty of new young shoots filling in the bare patches. Kathy has recently repeated the exercise in a few similar spots on the South boundary. With luck the seed will germinate in the coming weeks.

My prototype over-seeder construction was completed in late February and Lawns 1 & 2 overseeded with AberRoyal Bent on February 26. The main points to note from the exercise were as follows.

- a.* The seed distribution mechanism works without any sign of blockages or jamming.
- b.* The sprockets generates holes at the desired spacing of 14mm.
- c.* The seeding width of one unit (50 centimetres) is not wide enough to ensure good coverage without overlap. As a result, it is too easy to miss strips out. As planned, a second seeder unit operating in parallel is required in the longer term. (This was always part of the original design concept.) Width of a single unit is the same as a Toro cutting unit so that it can cope with minor undulations in the lawn surface.
- d.* On stripping down the unit the day after seeding I noticed that the sprockets were not aligned correctly with the seeding units. On inspecting the lawns, I did indeed find strips of seed beside the sprocket holes with little seed actually pressed into the ground by the sprockets. The reason for this is not clear but it may be related to the forces exerted on the sprockets when cornering as they are all locked in synchronism via the shaft keyway. Further experiments suggest that it might just have been incorrect set up on my part!
- e.* The seed exits seed distribution units through a series of 8mm holes. However, width of the seed strips on the ground was of the order of 10-12mm or more in some places. After much experimentation at home I concluded that the main problem is that very small Bent seeds bounce off each other or other objects. I thus developed a modification that reduces the exit hole to 5mm and operates at a height of about 9mm above the grass surface.. Today's (16/March) trial at the club suggests the modification is helpful but not a complete answer. It looks like the seed bounces off blades of grass and thus still tends to spread out. The seed is still being more widely distributed than is desirable if the sprockets are to push useful quantities of seed into the ground.

It has been too cold and dry to expect seed germination on Lawns 1 & 2. My own trial patch in plant pots at the same time shows no sign of germination. In addition, the majority of the seed is simply lying on the surface rather than pressed into the ground. It is unlikely that much of the seed will therefore germinate this spring. However, we may be lucky!

The prototype exercise has demonstrated that the very fine Bent seed can be distributed at the required (very low) seeding rates required. Further work is needed to ensure that the essential seed-to-soil contact takes place.

Figure 1 Rainfall and ET



