

Nailsea and District Croquet Club
Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 22nd April 2021

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

Minutes of the last meeting: Agreed and signed by EM on behalf of GMcC

Matters arising: Clarification on numbers of Juniors. We have 3 Juniors, this includes James who is still under 25 and therefore still a Junior Member.

Treasurer's report: Noted and discussed. **David** to check out when Public Liability Insurance is due for renewal.

Membership: **Andrew** to send out up-dated membership at the end of the month. The membership status of Kriss still to be confirmed.

Property report: Noted and discussed. **Brian** to organise a work day at the club at the end of April. The committee agreed that there was no trip hazard around the mid lawn bench where the nets meet the bench. **Graham** to request with the maintenance teams that the boards between lawns 4 and 5 must be replaced after mowing.

Fire extinguisher: This will be serviced in May, either the company gets in touch or Brian contacts them.

Social Bookings: Clevedon 41 club will come on 6th July. **Ryan** and **Marcus** have both said they would like to help when Backwell Scouts come (8,15 and 22 June). Kathy mentions in the report that we will still need more helpers for the Scouts' evenings.

Recruitment: discussed and noted. Many thanks to Kathy for her successful recruitment drive. Also thanks to John Hancock for an excellent piece in the NS Times (April 22nd)

Competitions and Tournaments: Discussed and noted. Since Kathy's report there has been one withdrawal from the June tournament, leaving us with 15 entrants.

Fixtures report: Permission was granted to the Advanced League to play their last match a week beyond the official last date. Peter had great difficulty arranging these matches due to family commitments of the players. Andrew is now the captain of the Federation League. The Intermediate league match against Camerton and Peasedown is now on June 25. Tony Griggs has agreed to be the captain of the Short Croquet Team who are still looking for players with a handicap of 6 and above to make up the numbers. A player with an AC handicap of 16 would have a short croquet handicap of 6. **Andrew** and **Erica** to ask players with higher handicaps if they would like to play in a short croquet team. **Graham** to ask players to put their short croquet handicap on the booking sheet in his next bulletin. It was agreed that a short croquet handicap list should be put together this summer.

Secretary's Shield: The first match to played at the end of June will be away for Nailsea. Graham will try to arrange for the match to be played in a club halfway between Chester and Nailsea.

Fixtures during September : Peter urged the committee to be aware that filling up the first two weeks in September can lead to problems for matches that may have been postponed during August because of bad weather.

Safeguarding: No issues reported. Linda (LSO) would like to be informed of our next committee date so that she may send in a report if necessary

Lawn Report: Noted and discussed. The committee unanimously agreed that it is a priority for the club to persue John’s request for an irrigation system and that it should be installed at the earliest opportunity.

AOB:

Adminstrator on CA members database: Both Graham and Kathy are now administrators. They are able to update information about all our members listed on the CA website . This includes addresses telephone numbers, emails and handicap information.

GC Level Play trophy - a Claret Jug: Peter is still unable to trace the whereabouts of this trophy. It was won in 2019. **Peter** to ask James if he has any idea of who might have it.

O.B.E May 18th: There are 10 players for this event. The committee agreed that hot drinks could be served outside the clubhouse, via the west window.. Players would bring their own mugs and would not be permitted in the kitchen. A dining area outside would be available to players who have brought their own lunch. Players would be allowed to use the club chairs. Should the weather be inclement players would be allowed inside to eat their lunch, provided they strictly adhered to the 2 metre rule. Players who feel uncomfortable with this arrangement will have to make use of their own vehicles.

Outsourced maintenance of the Toro with A J Motors: Discussed. Andrew and Graham to set up a meeting with John and Geoff to clarify the situation.

Lawn bookings: Nearly every member of the club has been on the lawns since we opened, bar 8.

Wednesday AC club play: Erica to contact the few AC players who are handicap 24 to encourage them to play on Wednesday club afternoons, while covid requires that games need to be set up beforehand.

Peter reluctantly announced to the committee that as from the next AGM Peter would resign from the committee and as the Fixtures Secretary.

DONM May 27th. Zoom meeting. 9.45 for 10.00

The meeting closed at 11.28

Signed as a true and accurate account

Name.....

Signature.....

Recruitment Report for April Meeting

We have made a promising start to recruitment with 9 people having already had two lessons and another 6 due to start on 7 May. All are fully paid up now and one is talking about joining the club now so that he can practise. They are all doing well and Linda and John Hancock are doing a great job. Martin Kerly is helping Linda and seems to be enjoying his new role. In addition, there are two waiting to be put in a class (they wanted to wait until May to start). I have had verbal messages about 4 or 5 others who may or may not materialise and John Hancock has another PR article going in the NS Times for next week. We might have to put on another class - I will probably have to take it on as well as my Friday afternoon class. As always, some may not take to AC and we will divert them to GC, with Graham willing to make up the remaining quota of 6 lessons. Tony H is also willing to do this for a couple of sessions. We could do with more people to do this. The Backwell Scout troop have booked 3 Tuesday evenings in June (8, 15 and 22). It would be great if we could get some more recruits from this. Ryan, Graham and probably Marcus will help with some sessions but we will need more enthusiastic willing GC players to help as well.

Kathy Wallace 20-4-21

Property Report for Committee Meeting 22nd April 2021

Stop boards and Nets

Tony Willoughby has made new stopboards to go between lawns 4 and 5 and repaired others. Some members have complained that they are a nuisance for the mowers but I feel that doesn't diminish the need for them.

The new nets, fitted by Geoff and Steve, have been admired by many.

Mallets and equipment

Damaged line markers have been replaced and one broken mallet repaired.

Social bookings.

There are currently 4 social bookings
3 from Backwell Scouts
1 from Clevedon 41 Club

100 Club

The first 100 Club draw has been held and the winners informed.

Tournaments and Competitions Report for April meeting 2021

Tournaments

The June and July AC and the August GC tournaments are all full now and the July Tournament has a reserve. There is a good spread of handicaps and also a wide variety of Clubs, Crake Valley being the furthest flung. There is also a good spread of ages with the youngest being a very young teenager playing in the July Tournament. His father is also playing so I don't think we need to be proactive re Safeguarding – just aware of his presence. One player had to withdraw from the July and also the GC tournaments because he had clashes with his Club fixture list when it came out. He generously donated his fees to the club but was surprised when I told him it was a total of £30. I encouraged him to pursue it with the CA but I have heard nothing more.

The GC Home Internationals

There is a question mark about whether or not the Irish team will be able to travel to England. There is a possibility of a 3 way tie but only if Ireland agreed to that taking place. Ian BurrIDGE asked me how much notice we would need of confirmed play or cancellation. I told him that we really only needed a couple of days for lawn preparation. I think we should leave any plans for lunch provision till a later date and possibly be prepared to just offer shop sandwiches or possibly ask a caterer to deliver food. This will all depend on how the easing of Covid restrictions progresses.

Competitions

There were plenty of entries in total but the numbers entering most competitions were awkward and led to larger than ideal blocks. I am keeping the Knockouts up to date on the website and will do the Blocks from time to time. It's a very time consuming task and I look forward to being able to put all the notices up on the board. However, I do think this would lead to people staying inside for longer and not keeping their distances. Some people still seem oblivious to the Pandemic or think that because they have been double-jabbed they are completely safe.

Fixture Secretary's Report for the meeting on 22 April, 2021.

League Fixtures

Unfortunately I have not been at all well since the last meeting. Nevertheless I managed to complete the league fixtures with a few days to spare. Some of the last few matches were more difficult to arrange than I expected – the advanced league division 1 dates were particularly difficult to agree and I had to get permission to play one of the matches a week after the final date for that league. One of the golf croquet handicap league matches was also difficult to arrange, but we finally agreed a midweek date even though both teams contained members who work during the week. I carefully checked all the dates before sending them to the South West Federation League Secretary and I had a phone call from a club wishing to change the date of one of our matches. I was able to oblige and altered the date before sending them off.

I have made a start on the club calendar, but have not yet finished filling in all the fixtures. I will try to complete it this weekend.

Secretary's Shield

Three members of the club have expressed an interest in playing in the Secretary's Shield. Normally the Shield is played by teams of four, but this year they have decided to allow teams of three so we have entered a team. The draw was made last week; we have a bye in the first round and our second round match is against a team from Chester Croquet Club. As we have never played Chester before the home team has to be decided by the toss of a coin or some other random method.

The shortest route from Nailsea to Chester is about 165 miles and the journey takes about 3¼ hours assuming there are no hold-ups. Let's hope we have a home draw!

SWF Trophies

In 2019 we won the SWF Federation League and the Golf Croquet Level Play League. At the moment I have the Federation League Shield at home, but I have no idea of the whereabouts of the GC Level Play trophy - a Claret Jug. I will contact James Galpin, captain of our 2019 Level Play team to see if he knows where it is.

Junior Croquet

As I have not been well I have not yet been down to the club this season I have been unable to take the juniors, but Brian Roynon and Linda Shaw have kindly stepped in and looked after them for me. Brian has reported back to me and it would appear that Luke has improved since last year.

Peter Dyke

(21/04/2021)**Lawn Maintenance Report – April 2021**

1. Lawns

As reflected in figure 1, the rainfall reduction that started in mid-February has continued with minimal rainfall during March and April. There have only really been 3 days in which significant rain fell, one of which was just before the lawns opened. I managed to apply the March fertiliser just before the rain at the end of March. The sward duly responded with a pleasant green appearance for the start of the season. Some of this was due to the meadow-grass being freshened up which not so desirable.

Generally, the sward has thickened a little since last Autumn with Bent grass particularly visible on Lawns 3 & 4 but much less so on Lawns 1 & 2. Mowing height was reduced to 6mm on 1st April which gave a lawn speed of about 9 Plummers on opening day. As the ground dries out speed is increasing and will probably reach 10.5-11.0 as the season progresses. This is particularly important for players with limited strength as slow lawns make it difficult for them to play shots the full length of the lawn. If the slightly thicker sward keeps lawn speed at 10 Plummers I will reduce cutting height to 5.5 or even 5.0 mm.

2. Fertiliser programme

During April the fertiliser programme gets into full swing with Liquid Bio and Essentials plus soil amendment being applied on 18th April. As a result of the dry weather it was essential to close the lawns and irrigate for 4 hours to water in the fertiliser. I also sarrel rolled the lawns as this was not possible the previous day. Total time taken was 8 hours. This can only be fitted in during the day. I mention this because I did receive a complaint about the lawn closure. As the days lengthen, I can usually squeeze the activity in between 5pm and 10.0pm albeit that irrigation of lawn 4 finishes in the dark! Next Sunday (April 25th) I will be repeating the process with Revolution spraying and application of granular organic fertiliser, followed by 6 hours of irrigation. This increased irrigation is necessary to break down and water in the granules.

3. Weeds and Moss The repeated application of 6% liquid Iron appears to have checked the moss but unfortunately left a number of brown patches on the lawns. I would expect the brown patches to be disguised by the grass that is now recovering in those areas. As I feared, the liquid Iron has slightly damaged the sprayer pump, with a reduction in pumping pressure of about 0.4 bar. To compensate, I have replaced the nozzles with new ones that provide increased flow. After two or three years of Iron spraying the pump will probably need to be replaced at a cost of £150. However, for now performance is adequate

4. Over-seeding

The Bent seed sown at on lawns 1 & 2 with my prototype seeder has shown no obvious signs of germination. Neither have the pot sown samples I created my garden to provide a controlled reference. This is almost certainly due to the dry but cold weather. Even worse, the odd rain shower encourages the germination to start but if moisture levels are not maintained germination fails and is not recoverable. The seed will still be there but its status is unknown

I arranged a visit from the Germinal Amenity seed rep on March 29th to discuss the overseeding/germination issue. He emphasised the need to support germination by regular light evening irrigation for at least two weeks and preferably longer. We also discussed the performance of the professional Dynaseeder. This creates holes every 50mm and pushes some of the dropped seed into the holes. However, last September, when the Bent seed germinated it did so in fairly continuous rows that are still evident on lawns 3 & 4. This suggests that it was the regular morning and evening irrigation that triggered germination, including seed that was lying on the surface. Bent seed will only germinate if it is in contact with soil. Thus, we both postulated that the key to using my prototype seeder is to irrigate every evening. I thus plan to overseed lawn 5 when the weather warms up and irrigate every evening for say three weeks. This is more feasible than irrigating the main lawns and will give a good indication as to the viability of the prototype seeder.

Regular overseeding of the main lawns is a necessity both to maintain a healthy sward and to gradually reduce the meadow-grass component by outcompeting it with Bent grass. Timing of the Autumn overseed is tricky. Not only has the ground to be soft but not wet or muddy but it also has to be free of leaves. Thus, this year the only time slot is the last week in September, just after finals weekend. If we decide to wait until late November then use of the Dynaseeder is precluded because of ground conditions. I can probably overseed using my prototype seeder because I can pick a day when ground conditions suit at short notice. I cannot do this with the professional Dynaseeder. Over-seeding in late November is referred to as "cold-seeding" and it does not result in immediate germination because of the low temperatures. The seed lies in/on the ground and gradually germinates over a period of months. During the winter there is plenty of rain so there is no need to irrigate. Germinal Amenity report that the technique does work. However, the cold seeding trials usually employ a top dressing over the seed or use of a disc seeder that tends to damage the soil surface. Neither is a possibility at Nailsea so there remains uncertainty

The over-seeding options will be discussed at an LAG meeting once the results of my overseeding trials on Lawn 5 become available. The ability to irrigate daily is really key to successful overseeding and it would be exceedingly helpful if we could progress the installation of an automatic irrigation system when finances permit. Such an irrigation system would also save me a lot of time dealing with fertilisers in dry weather and avoid lawn closures for manual irrigation. There is obviously a significant capital cost involved but from a revenue point of view there may be only modest impact on the clubs revenue finances. We currently spend £813 /year on Revolution to avoid Dry

Patch. This expenditure may well be avoided if periodic irrigation was applied to the lawns. This corresponds to about 230 cubic metres of water from the mains which is equivalent to about 75mm of rain across the four lawns. That is more than enough for fertilisers and overseeding. 232 cubic metres also corresponds to 145 hours of me watching the current irrigation sprinklers – not an enticing prospect. 75mm of water corresponds to about two summer months of rain so during the spring and early summer it should be possible to prevent the lawns drying out completely. During the July to September period there is usually sufficient rain without resorting to irrigation.

5. Toro

During the (very) wet winter months it was difficult to find a day to mow the lawns when the grass was dry. I experienced a certain amount of dropped grass clippings because there was build up on the lip of the grass boxes. This was particularly true of the right-hand front cutter and was thought to be because the reel diameter had been reduced by grinding operations. However, during late February mowing with dry grass was possible and the build up of clippings diminished to the point where the dropped clippings was no longer a problem. Throughout March this remained the case. When the cut height was lowered from 8mm to 6mm on March 31st there was a lot of grass to take off but conditions were dry and again I had no problem with dropped clippings. My eventual conclusion was that mowing with dry grass was the key to avoiding the problem and I recommended to the summer mowing team that they try to mow in afternoon/early evening when the grass is dry. Eventually, after repeated grinding operations the reel diameter will shrink and dropped clippings will become a problem. At that point the reels will have to be replaced (Cost approx. £1500).

Whilst lowering the cutters on March 31st, AJ Mowers noticed that the bed-knives were worn out. This involves a gentle regrind of reels and new bed-knives so the whole Toro was taken to the workshop. (Cost around £500) The oil service was also carried out at the same time.

When the mower was returned, I had a further discussion with AJ Mowers about minimising bed-knife wear whilst maintaining correct reel to bed-knife clearance. This has to be set very precisely so that the reel blades just “kiss” the bed-knife in order for the machine to cut the grass cleanly without tearing the blades. To maintain this clearance the cutting units are provided with DP (Click) units. These are advanced by one click after each mowing session and reduce the clearance by 0.0178 mm. In NDCCC's case the mowing session is much shorter than those on golf club greens and both Geoff and I surmised that by operating the click units after each cut we were overcompensating for the natural wear that occurs during mowing. I therefore agreed with AJ Mowers to reduce the frequency of click unit operation from twice weekly to once per week. Over the summer season this reduces the bed from knife adjustment from about 0.926mm to 0.463mm. I will be monitoring this experiment in conjunction with AJ Mowers to evaluate its success. He did point out that sand drastically increases bed-knife wear and that mowing when the lawns are wet does tend to lead to sand pick up.

In recognition of the fact that our normal cutting height is in the 5-6mm range compared with the 3mm on golf greens, AJ Mowers have fitted bed-knives with a thicker lip on the bed-knife. This will also increase the time between bed-knife replacements

6.Countax The Countax has developed a fuel leak in the area of the in-line filter. The isolation valve prevents fuel leaking in the machine room but when it is in use there is a risk of fire so it does need to be fixed. It is also true that those who only use the Countax intermittently for

boundary grass cutting quite often forget to turn the fuel valve off after use, thus increasing the possibility of petrol fumes in the garage.

6. Nets

Geoff has put a lot of effort into providing a superior net arrangements for this season. The redesigned system employs a steel cord, tension springs and better winding mechanism. The spring tensioner should mean that constant re-tensioning is not required. I have a concern that new arrangement does represent something of a trip hazard, particularly around the bench area. Perhaps peoples attention should be drawn to this possibility.

JNW, 20/4/21

Figure 1 Rainfall and ET

