

Nailsea and District Croquet Club
Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 24th June 2021

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

Apologies: B. Roynon

Matters arising: Phonecall from Sandra to Joan regarding Clubhouse cleaning and employment of a cleaner: Joan expressed her disappointment and frustration that members do not seem to appreciate our wonderful clubhouse and do not sign up for the cleaning rota, she feels that if the cleaning is done regularly it is not an onerous task. She will continue to do the job because she wants the clubhouse to look nice. However if in the long run volunteers do not sign up it would seem sensible to consider employing a cleaner who would also take away the rubbish that people leave. She thinks a cleaner would have to be employed for 2hrs a week at £15 an hour.

Short Croquet teams: Tony Griggs has managed to enlist players with high handicaps for his teams.

Treasurer's Report: Nothing to add. David would like the committee to think carefully about the need to raise subs for the next year. He would like it discussed in July or August.

Property Report: Discussed and noted. Andrew raised the question of allowing the banks to grow and be more attractive with summer wild meadow flowers. This year the flymo had trouble cutting the banks. Boards should stop the balls being lost in long grass. This will be discussed at the next LAG meeting.

A suggestion of replacing taps in the toilets with taps which turn off automatically, to avoid losing water, would be put to Brian. (Brian was not present at this meeting)

Membership Report: No change in membership. 72 Playing members, 13 social or Life members. One of our members having moved further away (more than 27 miles) will become a Country member. Andrew will continue to add new members to the CA website provided they have agreed to share their data.

Booking system: Graham will gradually update the booking system with first names (updated facility from webmaster) He will also remind members to update the booking system with any changes in their handicap in the next Chairman's Update.

Competitions and Tournaments Report: Discussed and noted. Thanks to Kathy and all the helpers for a very successful tournament. The fact that the players were happy to bring their own lunches and have a quick turn around midday was noted as this might impact on future arrangements for tournaments.

Fixtures Report: Discussed and noted. The Claret Jug has now been tracked down to Mr. Brian McCausland.

Away SWF Matches:

In a email to Peter regarding SWF matches, Stephen Custance Baker has raised the question of car-sharing for away teams as some more vulnerable players may be unwilling to share transport until after July 19th. The committee agreed that they would refund (at the going rate per mile) the cost of two separate car journeys to an away match.

Fixtures Secretary: Marcus has agreed to take on the role of fixtures secretary from Peter. Peter will work with Marcus for the first year.

Backwell Scouts: Should the scouts' coaching evenings go ahead both Ryan and Marcus will need a DBS check, unless they both attend the same session, in which case only one of them will need it.

Covid and Catering for tournaments: Catering arrangements for GC home internationals on 17th and 18th July will follow the same guidelines as for our previous tournament in June. Libby has organised helpers for the catering. Erica to check if extra cleaning is needed. It was agreed that only players and helpers should park their cars in the clubhouse grounds. Any visitors from outside the club will have to sign in. (post meeting) QR codes will be on display for track and trace

White van obstructing entrance to club on Avening Close: Libby has left a polite note on this van, we await a reaction. We hope this will resolve the problem.

Lawn report: discussed and noted. Several players over the tournament weekend were impressed by the condition of the lawns.

Irrigation system: It was agreed that John Wallace will commission an irrigation specialist to advise on the design and specification before inviting tenders. The LAG committee discusses all decisions regarding the lawns. Graham will explain the role of the LAG in his next update.

Safeguarding: Erica to make sure that all Team Captains and Social Event organisers are aware of the safeguarding policy.

A.O.B. Sandra would like to request that we have a defibrillator on the premises, should funds allow it. Sandra also suggested that we should buy a dishwasher. After some discussion the committee unanimously agreed against purchasing a dishwasher. (Sandra abstained in the vote) .

CA GC tournaments: Graham explained that there are three levels of Golf tournaments in the CA calendar. C = 7+, B = 3+ and A = 0+. Graham would like Nailsea to consider running an A class tournament. Peter is not in favour of having another tournament. He feels that we already run enough tournaments and another would put too much pressure on the fixture list and the volunteers who prepare and run a tournament. Generally the golf A level tournaments are 2 day events. Graham will speak to Chris Roberts and ask if it would be feasible to run a **one day** A Class, midweek tournament. There are players in Nailsea CC whose handicap is below 3 and are unable to enter the B class golf croquet tournament.

D.O.N.M. 22nd July. 10.00.

Meeting closed at 11.20

Signed as a true and accurate account

Name.....

Signature.....

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Treasurer's Report to the Committee June 2021

I attach Income and Expenditure Account Made up to 23rd June 2021 showing balance of £27,139.07. To this needs to be added receipts of £40.00 being refreshments sold at the recent weekend B tournament.

I would like an item to be discussed at the next Committee meeting in July – certainly not later than August. This is the adequacy of the current annual Membership subscription and whether a proposal for an increase should be put before the AGM

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**The Property Report for Committee Meeting
24th June 2021**

Work Morning

A work morning was held on the 17th June to tidy up the outfield and car parks in preparation for the tournament weekend. Although a call for helpers was sent out the response was less than was hoped for. 3 members appologised with good reasons and 6 members attended with Joan doing what she could in the pavilion and Brenda painting the summer house. The rest of us did achieve most of the basic requirments to make the club look presentable and they should all be proud of their efforts.

The club look so much better afterwards so thank you to all those that attended.

Trolley Maintenance.

With the Committees approval I have been trying sorce and purchase some more pairs of spare wheels.

Our original supplier no longer stocks these wheels. I contacted the manufacturer and which they can still produce them unless we have a bulk order to justify the expence of setting up a production run they couldn't help me. Eight wheels are not enough! I will keep looking at the problem.we may need a re design or modification.

As on said at the last meeting please accept my appologise for this meeting.27,139.07. To this needs to be added receipts of £40.00 being refreshments sold at the recent weekend B tournament.

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Tournaments and Competitions Report for June meeting 2021

Tournaments

The June Tournament was full and was a success. The new format with two classes worked well and we had two worthy winners – Klim Seabright from Cheltenham and Peter Kirby from Bristol. We were lucky with the weather so the Covid restrictions didn't present any problems beyond being a nuisance. Players brought their own lunches and ate them outside. Players complied with the requests to wear masks indoors and to stay outside as much as possible. We had every door and window open and there was a good draught blowing through from the machine room door. The sun umbrellas gave excellent shelter from the persistent fine drizzle on Sunday.

Many players commented on the quality of the lawns and compared them very favourably to those at other clubs. They also commented on the friendly atmosphere at the club.

I actually preferred the lunch arrangements and it certainly saved a lot of time and gave extra flexibility. Particularly on Saturday, when there were 3 matches to fit in, it was a big help from a time aspect. The lack of mountains of washing-up was not regretted by anyone, as far as I am aware. Many players said they preferred taking sandwiches. One said he missed the pavlova for which Liz Tracy became famous.

It was heartening to see so many players enjoying AC. This year, AC tournaments all round the country have been desperately short of entries with many being cancelled or running with very few entries. GC Tournaments fill up quickly but we must do as much as we can to preserve AC. It may have been made worse by Covid but the trend has been there for some time and is worrying.

The July Class Advanced Tournament is full with two reserves desperate to play and another enquiry this morning. The August GC Tournament is also full, both the reserves have been called in. The August Advanced Tournament has 7 entries but Marcus may well conjure up more.

The GC Home Internationals

It's still not known what is happening re this event but I think it will take place, with or without the Irish team. The AC equivalent replaced the Irish team with the "Bombardiers" which included James Galpin. I have informed Ian Burrige that we won't be able to offer lunches and have given him the postcodes of the local shops for sandwiches. This did not provoke any consternation at all.

Competitions

The hard copies for all the competitions results are now on the board. It was getting too time-consuming updating the website. For the same reason, the handicap tracking charts are now both back in their rightful place on the board so that players can update their own records.

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Recruitment Report for May Meeting

It has definitely been a bumper year for new people. A total of 24 have had lessons or are still having lessons. To date, 4 have left after the completion of their course and 8 have joined the club. We have also consolidated the membership of four 2019 recruits by offering them Improvers coaching with Martin. Libby has incorporated several new people into the catering team and they are all enjoying it and being very helpful. Martin Kerly and John Hancock have been splendid. Martin has assisted Linda and given many tailored sessions to two separate pairs of people. He is soon to be awarded his Club Coach's badge after producing the most impressive portfolio that Roger Mills has ever seen. Roger was truly impressed not just with Martin but with the Nailsea set-up that made it possible. John Hancock took a class of 4 for 6+ weeks and now has a further class of 2 who are thriving. I am coaching at the same time as the latter with a class of 5 and we hope to combine the classes at some stage. My original class of 6 has nearly finished the course. I am beginning to feel a bit like the Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe! I hope more of the 24 will join the club in due course and make all this effort worthwhile. It has in any case brought in about £1200 with lesson fees and mship fees.

The Scouts Evenings have been successful and it has been particularly exciting to see Marcus and Ryan throwing themselves into the exercise. Pat, Graham, Steve and Tony H have also given invaluable help for one, two or three weeks.

Kathy Wallace 21/6/21
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Fixture Secretary's Report for the meeting on 24 June, 2021.

League Fixtures

Peter Longden has a shoulder injury and he does not expect to be able to play this season. Martin Kerly has taken over as captain of our Intermediate League team.

There have been no fixtures since our last meeting so I have no results to report. However our fixtures start in earnest this week so there will be plenty to report on next month.

I have received an email from the SWF League Secretary, regarding the implications of the delay in lifting all covid restrictions, which I would like to discuss. He seems to be implying that no more than two players should share car transport for away matches until the remaining restrictions are lifted.

Secretary's Shield

Our team are due to play Chester at Edgbaston on 29 June. We wish them good luck.

SWF Trophy

I have made no further progress on this. The trophy, a Claret Jug, is still missing. I still need to contact Ryan.

Junior Croquet

This week Luke won the junior one-ball competition, beating Esme +2, +3.

Backwell Scouts

I had a phone call from Kathy this morning. Following the visits to the club by the scouts, she has had an enquiry from a parent of one of the boys about her son having croquet lessons. Kathy has

sent an email to the scout leader to forward to the scouts' parents to find out if any of the others would be interested in having coaching. Marcus and Ryan have volunteered to coach them on a Monday or Thursday evening.

Peter Dyke
(23/06/2021)

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Lawn Maintenance Report – June 2021

1. Lawns

The wet May was replaced with a very dry period in June. Between 25th May and 16 June only 8mm of rain fell. However, between 17th June and 20th June we had 22mm of rain so the lawns have turned green again. The heaviest rain (13mm) fell overnight between 19th and 20th June. Despite the heavy rainfall the lawns did not flood, probably because of the application of Revolution the week before and increased soil porosity from grass root development.

General reaction to the state of the lawns has been positive although I still regard them as being “work in progress”. It was very noticeable how quickly the annual meadow grass died off during the dry weather. Lawn speed remained a little low at around 10 plummers and hence for the Class tournament I reduced the cutter height to 5mm. In the end, the effect was negated by the high rainfall between 17 and 20th June but as more normal weather returns lawn speed should rise towards my target of 11 plummers. “A” class players would like 12-13 plummers but 11 represents a reasonable compromise that does not render them too difficult for normal club play.

Amazingly, Taunton are hoping to arrange to play their home match against Marcus’s Parkstone team at Nailsea because of the comparative state of the lawns at the two clubs. This is definitely a first!

2. Fertiliser programme

The normal two weekly cycle of Liquid Bio Fertiliser and Biostimulants continues with Revolution being applied every four weeks. Due to the dry weather I had to irrigate the lawns on 13/14th June after spraying. The whole exercise took 8 hours so I look forward to the arrival of automatic irrigation!

The final component of the lawn treatment is the application of a concentrated form of Compost Tea called BioLift. (It is made from worm casts by XL ProBio) This needs to be applied with dechlorinated water and without the presence of other chemicals so it is applied two weekly but a week out of phase with the fertiliser. I employ a carbon water filter to dechlorinate the water. The concentrate costs £200 for 20L (6 or 7 applications) but avoids having to brew the Compost Tea myself. The purpose of Compost Tea is to improve soil biology. The claimed benefits should hopefully be observable by the end of the season.

3. Weeds and Moss

To subdue weed growth the lawns were given a supervised spray with Praxys on 10th June. This has already impacted on most of the weeds but the Pearlwort is showing no signs of dying at present. Supervision cost from Greensleeves now costs £60 so it is avoided wherever possible.

The early spring iron spray checked the moss and the grass is slowly covering up the browned areas. I hope to avoid an Autumn Iron spray as it is not good for the lawns or the sprayer. However, if we get a wet Autumn I might have to apply Iron.

4. Automatic Irrigation

I have attached a separate Design Note (Design Note 2) discussing the economics of Automatic irrigation. The broad conclusion is that its use should not increase total revenue expenditure on the lawns because of reductions in the use of soil surfactants and the avoidance of the use of the commercial Dynaseeder.

As a result of the committee decision re irrigation, I mapped out a structure for the tender specification but really wanted feedback from an installer site visit before I proceeded any further. I therefore contacted a couple of installers to arrange site visits. One took umbrage at the thought of a competitive tendering process because it cost him money (£1000) to prepare a tender with no certainty that he would be awarded the contract. I then contacted Green Irrigation who, as it turned out, are based near Ilminster (not Wiltshire) and regularly visit Bristol because they supplied and maintain the Bristol City Football club irrigation system (which I have seen in action!). They initially offered to visit NDCC but subsequently backed out because of the sheer volume of irrigation work on their books.

This increased volume of work turned out to be common across all installers. Asking for bids at present is therefore likely to result in inflated prices. In order to make progress I therefore took up a suggestion from KAR UK who are a large UK distributor of irrigation equipment. They suggested that we consider the use of an irrigation consultant to produce a design and specification/bills of materials. The one they recommended was a company called Irritech Ltd run by Roger Davy. He offered a site visit at a cost of about £250 and, after consultation with the Lawn Advisory Group (LAG), I sent him some briefing notes to fill in the background.

The use of an irrigation consultant will almost certainly increase the total cost of the project but reduce the design risks and simplify/de risk the installation contractors task. From my point of view, it would reduce my own workload and ensure that design responsibility rests with somebody who has proven expertise and experience.

This is the Irritech website link:

<https://www.irritechlimited.co.uk/services/>

The LAG all agreed that it would be worth paying for a half day visit. I have therefore sent the briefing notes to Irritech and requested a quotation for the cost of a full design/spec/bill of materials. Once the cost is known, a decision can be made about our approach to procuring an irrigation system.

5. Lawn 5 Experiment

I overseeded the part of Lawn 5 not fenced off by stop boards on 29th May and irrigated the area every evening for 30 minutes until 16th June (when it rained). I first spotted germination after 8 days and after 11 days rows of germinated Bent seed began to appear, just as they did last Autumn with the Dynaseeder. Granular 5-3-8 Organic fertiliser was applied after two weeks to encourage seedling establishment.

The experiment has been quite successful. The main conclusions are:

- a. My prototype seeder is capable of creating rows of seedlings which are identical to those produced by the Dynaseeder. The principles behind the seed distribution units have been shown to be effective.
- b. Regular evening irrigation was sufficient to ensure germination despite the warm dry weather. Morning irrigation was not required.
- c. Germination was not uniform, with some strips having no germination at all. This was probably due to strips being missed by the seeder. It may also have been due to some strips being squashed by the Countax tyres as the prototype is narrower than the Countax wheelbase.
- d. The prototype is probably good enough to be used in the Autumn overseed but the design deficiencies need to be corrected in the next version.

The prototype seed has the enormous benefit of avoiding hiring a Dynaseeder provided we can irrigate every evening or cold-seed. The main conclusions are:

- a. The original design concept was to have two seeder units side by side with a seeding width of 1.0m. Two units are required to avoid missing strips or squashing seed drills with the Countax tyres. However, the effort (hundreds of man hours) in producing one unit deterred me producing a second.
- b. Each seeder unit needs a (dog) clutch fitted so that the seeding can be switched off whilst turning. Very neat commercial electromagnet clutches exist but cost in the region of £120 each (two needed). I hope to avoid this cost by devising an alternative design that I can manufacture at home using my own lathe and milling machine.
- c. The actual effect of the back sprockets is still unclear. Their design role is to push seed into the ground. However, like the Dynaseeder, the prototype produces continuous rows of seed which suggests most of the germinating seed is simply in contact with the surface. It appears that irrigation is the key to successful germination. In lawns which have a thick thatch layer this route to germination may well not work but at present our thatch layer is thin (about 5mm).
- d. As result of “c” above, there is probably no need to have the sprockets locked together with a keyway. Construction cost can be reduced by having freewheeling sprockets. This also eliminates turf damage during turning. The sprocket weighting mechanism could also do with being moved to the back of the frame.

- e. It would be sensible to revise the seeder design such that it is constructed with precision components machined on commercial CAD operated lathes or milling machines. The intention would be to produce a seeder unit that was robust and long lasting for about the same cost as one years-worth of Dynaseeder hire.

I have discussed a commercial implementation with David Hunt and am currently considering a revised design that would eliminate the deficiencies identified. All timber frame elements would be replaced with steel or aluminium components.

6. Overseeding Programme

I plan to hold an LAG meeting in the near future to discuss and finalise the overseeding strategy for the Autumn.

It would be helpful if a note was circulated to all members explain the management role of the LAG in connection with all lawn matters.

JNW, 21/6/21

Figure 1 Rainfall and ET

