

Nailsea and District Croquet Club
Minutes of Committee Meeting held on Thursday 26th August (zoom)

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

Minutes of the last meeting: Agreed and signed by Erica on behalf of Graham.

Matters Arising: None

Treasurer's Report: Discussed and noted. It was decided that on the issue of Club subscriptions we should hold a separate meeting on **27th September at 10am** at the Clubhouse so that we could discuss this very important decision around the table, if necessary outside (covid), and reach a decision before the AGM. We would take into consideration Kathy's suggestion. We should base our decision on what is best for Nailsea members, regardless of comparisons with how much other clubs charge.

Membership: Numbers remain the same as last month. There maybe one more beginner who wants to join. Andrew will send out the latest membership list during August. There are 92 members at present.

Property: Discussed and noted. Brian hopes to finish the carparking area when time is right (weather and parked cars getting in the way) He hopes to install the new taps on Tuesday. There will be another workday on 9th August before the Selector's Weekend. An invitation to join the work party will be sent out nearer the time.

Tournaments and Competitions: Discussed and noted. It was decided that in future the Catering Manager must be included in any decisions regarding catering. To avoid confusion he or she must receive all emails concerning catering during tournaments.

Selector's Tournament: There will be the usual tea/coffee and cake arrangements but no meals provided. Kathy to inform players of this decision and they will be asked to bring their own mug if possible. There will be no bar. The notice to wear masks in the clubhouse will remain. Graham to inform Kathy of this decision.

Fixtures Report: Discussed and noted.

Occasionally league fixtures need to be rearranged. When this is necessary captains should take care not to clash with other fixtures, home or away, particularly if the same players may be involved in both teams. There was an incident recently where a fixture was rearranged and clashed with an Intermediate League away fixture. This resulted in the Intermediate League captain being unable to raise a team because some of his players were involved in the other match. As a result the Intermediate League match also had to be rearranged. Fortunately this was easily resolved, but it should have been avoided. When arranging fixtures Peter does his best to avoid clashes where the same players are likely to be involved (not always possible this year with the shortened season) and captains should do the same.

SWF Short Croquet Teams' Autumn Tournament in Budleigh. Fri. 8th – Sunday 10th October

Erica to send out emails to invite players who wish to play in this tournament. Replies to be sent to Peter.

Lawn Maintenance Report: Discussed and noted.

Mowing rota

The general consensus was that the mowing rota was working well, though there had been an occasional difficulty. It was felt that this is a job for which finding volunteers is relatively easy and saves the club considerable money. It was also felt likely that if contracted out it would not be done so well. The committee confirmed that mowing takes precedence over bookings but with our online booking system, it should be relatively easy for mowers to book in advance so that problems can be avoided. AW will send a note to all mowers reminding them to book in advance and also remind them that mowing is much better in the evening when the lawns are dry.

Rewilding bank. Options 1,2, and 4 were dismissed.

Option 3 would mean strimming the bank periodically. It was suggested that another strimmer should be purchased – a STIHL strimmer – being the best product. This would enable the bank to be cut by members during working parties. After strimming, wild flower seed could be sprinkled on the bank. Andrew to check out the purchasing cost of a STIHL strimmer.

Lawn Bookings:

It was decided that captains booking slots for their SWF matches should only book 2 lawns, as has always been the case. However if, after 9.00 pm the evening before their match no one has booked a lawn, then the captain may book a 3rd lawn for their match. One lawn must always be available for club play.

Safeguarding:

Ryan and Marcus are still waiting for their DBS checks.

Suggested wording for under 18's on their coaching and membership forms has been sent to Andrew by Linda

A.O.B: None

DONM: Thursday 30th September at 9.45 for 10.00 (zoom)

The meeting closed at 11.33

Signed as a true and accurate account

Name.....

Signature.....

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Treasurer's report: Notes relevant to club finances written August 2021

The AGM is fast approaching and consideration needs to be given to the annual subscription and if the committee is going to propose an increase.

Less urgently the committee need to consider how the club can, in future, fund work which is presently carried out by members.

1. Subscription rates

Year end Sept 2015	135.00	amount raised	10,279.00
2016	135.00		10,189.00
2017	140.00		9,387.00
2018	140.00		8,560.00
2019	150.00		10,655.00
2020	150.00		9,150.00
2021	150.00		9,962.00

2. Inflation

The pound has had an annual average inflation rate of 2.00% between 2014 and today producing a cumulative increase of 14.85% so to keep up with inflation the subscription should be minimally £155. Inflation this year could still reach 4-5%-still very uncertain

3. Income and Expenditure Year end 2015 – Year end 2021

I'm not sure how worthwhile is the following exercise. It demonstrates income and expenditure over the last few years but excluding Grants, Loans, repayments, Lawn levelling and purchase of the Toro. What I think it shows is that prior to Covid the club was able to carry forward a surplus each year but that since 2020 with the lack of income from Corporate lawn hire, social events, Bridge, tournament lunches, etc, income and expenditure are barely in equilibrium.

	Income	Expenditure	Notes
Year end 2015	21,061.09	17,097.71	
2016	19,405.91	14,484.56	
2017	17,702.98	10,860.83	excludes £5,712 lawn levelling
2018	15,633.33	12,473.21	excludes CA Grant of £5,000 excludes £18,000 lawn levelling
2019	19,713.33	14,938.01	excludes Toro purchase £7,000 excludes CA Loan £5000 excludes repayment £2,500 CA Loan

First reported covid case Jan 2020 restrictions apply from March 2020

2020	13,713.00	14,661.74	excludes CA Grant £10,000 excludes repayment £2,500 CA Loan
estimate 2021	14,000.00	11,000.00	excludes £8,000 Grant covid recovery fund

4. SWF club subscriptions for comparison

Bath	200.00	Taunton Deane	160.00
Bristol	215.00	Weston s Mare	130.00
Budleigh	328.00	Nailsea	150.00
Dowlish	120.00	Cheltenham	326.00
Dyffryn	150.00	East Dorset	255.00

5. Expenditure for next year (ending Sept 2022)

Chemicals

AGS products	Growth Products	328.00*	
Symbio Biotech	Mycogrow organic	222.84*	
	Caviar	205.20*	
XIProBio	Biolift Compost tea	384.00*	
Duncan Hector	Revolution	Prob not needed	
	Bio liquid fertilizer	987.30*	
	liquid feed	165.42*	
	delivery	40.80*	
(Mainenance	Herbicide & supervision	200.00*	
Overseeding	Albert Royal Bent seed	400.00*	
	Albert Majesty Bent seed	220.00*	
	Dynaseeder hire	0 (but see below)	
Toro	Spring Service + new reels	1,750.00*(new reels	
	maybe new bed knives	one off)	
	Summer height adjust	110.00*	
	Autumn height adjust	110.00*	
JNW	John's overseeder has cost about £650. He hasn't yet been reimbursed and he proposes to use the parts in a Mark2 which will be larger and more robust and will require outsourcing some of the work. I am setting aside a realistic contingency (see over)		
JNW commercial overseeder		<u>1,500.00</u>	6323
Rent (due to rise next year in line with increase in CPI)		500.00**	
CA & SWF Levy		1,400.00**	
Insurance		1,000.00**	
Website		135.00**	

Electricity	500.00**	
Water	400.00**	
Fuel	400.00****	
Travel	500.00****	
Grounds (hedge cutting)	1,200.00****	
Machinery Maintenance	500.00****	
Admin	200.00****	
Trophies	250.00****	
Miscellaneous	<u>250.00****</u>	<u>7,235.00</u>
TOTAL		13,558.00

* Budgeted by JNW

** Fixed recurring expenses

*** Recurring expenses estimated from past years

I hope to take forward a surplus of approx £26,000.00 into the next financial year commencing 1st October 2021. You are all aware that the Club has received a total of £23,000. in Grants made up as follows:

12/2017	5,000	CA lawns improvement grant
07/2020	10,000	N Som
05/2021	8,000	N Som Covid recovery grant

The committee wish to proceed with the installation of an irrigation system. We should earmark no less than £12,000 for this project which looks unlikely to proceed until late 2022

GENERAL

For as long as I have been a member Geoff Hughes has looked after the machinery used to maintain the lawns. I do not know for how much longer this will obtain. There is no obvious successor with either the expertise or willingness to take over from Geoff.

John Wallace has made Lawn Management his own domain. Nailsea now has lawns which are well regarded within the Croquet world and I think they will continue to improve. If and when John decides to give up this would leave the Club in a predicament.

Bristol Croquet Club have 3 Lawns and contract out Lawn care and twice weekly mowing at a cost of £910 per month. The hedges and boundaries are maintained at an additional cost of £175 per month.

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**The Property Report
for Committee Meeting
26th August 2021**

Work Morning

A work morning was held on the 12th August to tidy up the outfield and car parks in preparation for the first of a run of tournaments. This time members responded and we had 9 men and 5 ladies coming forward and doing splendid work to make the club look good.

A Big “Thank you” to all those members who came and gave their time and support.

Trolley Maintenance.

I have now purchased two wheels to try. I will need to modify one of the trolleys to try them and will then have the 2 wheels from that trolley as spares. On have taken one of the secondary trolleys.

The decking in front of the summer house has been repaired by Tony.

The temporary repair to the car park

A work in progress.

New Taps on sinks

I now have the new taps but I have waited until after the tournaments to fit them. Just in case I have a problem.

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Recruitment Report for August Meeting

Of the 27 who had lessons, 18 have now joined the club. Another one is still being coached by Libby and Terry. Marcus led the first Youth Croquet session with two young people, both of whom enjoyed it very much. Another session is planned for early September with 3 takers. It is hoped that the DBS checks will be completed before next season and that we can then expand the group.

The Thursday evening practice sessions continue to be popular as do the Tuesday afternoon coaching sessions. The Club is indebted to the dedication of the coaches in providing these opportunities as I am sure that they will increase the probability that the new recruits will enrol next year. The Beginners Competitions for AC and GC seem to be inspiring them at the moment. Both are planned for Friday 1 October with the next day as contingency and/or Finals. Steve Durston is coaching 4 of them in GC skills with the competition in mind and Fiona Illing may help a couple more of them.

Martin Kerly has agreed to take on the co-ordination of lessons and Improvers sessions next season. He has played a huge role in this already and is full of ideas and mental energy. He now has his Club Coach's badge and together with his wealth of experience in the Education field, he is well equipped. I'm sure he will lead from the front and continue to give up his time freely.

I am hoping that there will be a knock-on effect next year with some of the Beginners introducing their friends. A taster session is already being arranged. Traditionally and statistically, this is the best source of new members so let's hope that we have kick-started that process.

I am aware from the Minutes that the Committee may recommend a substantial increase in fees next year. I would strongly support this but would like to ask for a reduced fee for those in their first full year of membership. It's already a big jump from £30 then a further sum of £50 (on average) to £150.

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Tournaments and Competitions Report for August meeting 2021

Tournaments

The July Class Advanced Tournament was full but then there were two withdrawals due to injury so we ran with 8 in the upper class and 6 in the lower class. This worked well and it was lovely to see a 14 year old winning the Michael Poole Cup. The August GC Tournament was also full, but, after drop-outs, Peter Dyke had to play to make the number up to 16. The August Advanced Tournament ran with 12 players on each day.

I see from the Minutes that someone would like Nailsea to host an A Class GC tournament. I feel that the club is at breaking point at the moment with a severe shortage of volunteers to help with all the different aspects of hosting tournaments. It has become very hard work persuading people to help and there seems to be little interest in watching the games. A direct consequence of this indifference is a total lack of spectators at the end of Saturdays (in particular) so the Nailsea machine that used to sweep into action clearing everything away simply isn't there. Responsibility falls on the manager who has already had a very long day. I feel very strongly that whoever wants yet another tournament must be prepared to organise, and contribute to, the manpower required.

I am very saddened by the stress caused to the Catering Manager by the sudden change of instructions re lunches at tournaments. It was bad enough for the August tournament but was then compounded by total uncertainty about whether lunches would be provided for the next event. As I write this, one member is fully expecting to cater on one of the three days, another member will cater but not wash up on a second day. It is not known whether or not this will be allowed to happen and, if so, who will wash up and who will provide lunches on the third day. It is also not known whether the Committee is sanctioning a "bar" or whether any Covid precautions will be in place. In addition to the stress caused to the Catering Manager, it makes liaison with the players difficult and embarrassing.

I would appreciate some clarity on the catering situation (including the sale of alcohol) and also on the prevailing rules re Covid precautions in the Clubhouse. I can then inform the players accordingly.

Competitions

Some competitions are producing semi-finalists but, as usual, some players are leaving it rather late. I hope to pull it all together and produce a programme for semi-finals weekend. There won't be as many matches as usual. This is because entries were down this year and many AC competitions had only sufficient players for single blocks and some of these will have outright winners. Others may require play-offs which will take place at semi-finals and Finals weekends. Entries were down because of injuries, new health conditions, infirmity due to age, and, possibly, Covid fears. Some may have entered fewer AC competitions because there are now more GC competitions and they simply don't have time to play as many different AC competitions as they used to, in addition to the GC ones.

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League Secretary's Report for the committee meeting on 26 August 2021
July AC Advanced Singles Class Tournament (two classes):

Super B Class: Winner – Chris Donovan (Sidmouth), runner-up – Peter Kirby (Bristol)

B Class: Winner – 14-year old Harvey Smith (The Bears), runner-up – Neil Fillery Taunton Deane). Libby Howard-Blood (Nailsea) had the same number of wins as Fillery, but lost to him.

August Open Advanced Singles Weekend Tournament: Winner – Tim Wilkins, runner-up – Neal Bacon.

Golf Croquet B Level Series Tournament: Winner – Neil Fillery (Taunton Deane), runner-up Julie Tremble (Guildford). Consolation knockout winner: Graham McCausland (Nailsea), runner-up Michael Manning (Colchester)

South West Federation Association Croquet Fixtures

Advanced League Div 1

No fixtures since our last meeting. We have one fixture remaining (against Sidmouth). If we beat Sidmouth we will finish second in the Advanced League. Bristol A has already won division 1 of the Advanced League.

Advanced League Div 3

Nailsea B	5	Bristol C	2	win
Nailsea B	2	Cheltenham B	5	loss
Bristol C	2	Nailsea B	5	win

Federation League (Central)

Nailsea	4	Bath	1	win
Glamorgan (walkover)	3	Nailsea	0	loss

Intermediate League (Central)

Nailsea	2	Taunton Deane	3	win
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Short Croquet (North)

Bristol B	8	Nailsea	8	draw
Nailsea	7	Kington Langley	9	loss

The following table shows the number of wins, losses and current positions of each of our AC teams:

League	Team	Played	Win	Draw	Loss	For	Against	Current Position
Advanced League Division 1	Nailsea A	3	2		1	7	8	2 nd /5
Advanced League Division 3	Nailsea B	4	3		1	16	12	2 nd /3
Federation League	Nailsea	3	1		2	5	8	3 rd /4
Intermediate League	Nailsea	2	1		1	5	5	3 rd /4
Short Croquet League	Nailsea	4	1	1	2	28	27	4 th /5

Bristol has won the Advanced League Division 1 and if we beat Sidmouth we will finish in second place.

Cheltenham B won Division 3 North and we are in second place. Cheltenham B will play the winners of Division 3 South to determine which team is promoted to Division 2 next year.

Bristol has won the Central Section of the Federation League and play Worcester Norton in the semi-finals.

Wellington are the current leaders in the Intermediate league Central Division. We are in third position and still have to play Wellington.

Bristol A has won the North Section of the Short Croquet League and will play the winners of the South Section in the final.

South West Federation Golf Croquet Fixtures

Level Play (North)

Glamorgan	5.5	Nailsea	14.5	win
Bristol	11	Nailsea	7	loss

Handicap League

Nailsea North	6.5	Swindon	13.5	loss
Glamorgan	6	Nailsea North	14	win
Abbey	5	Nailsea Central	3	loss

High Handicap League (North West)

Nailsea	11	Bath NW	9	win
Nailsea	11.5	Camerton & Peasedown	8.5	win

The following table shows the number of wins, losses and current positions of each of our GC teams:

League	Team	Played	Won	Draw	Loss	Pts	For	Against	Current Position
Level Play League	Nailsea	3	1	1	1	3	31.5	26.5	3 rd /4
Handicap League	Nailsea North	3	2	0	1	4	31.5	28.5	2 nd /4
Handicap League	Nailsea Central	3	0	0	3	0	20	28	4 th /4
High Handicap League	Nailsea	3	2	0	1	4	22.5	26.5	2 nd /4

Bristol won the north section of the Level Play League and has a bye through to the final.

Swindon won the north section of the Handicap League and will play away at Beckford in the quarter-finals.

Camerton and Peasedown has won the central section of the Handicap League and will play away at Dowlish Wake in the quarter-finals.

Llandaff has won the north west section of the High Handicap League and will play at home to Cheltenham in the semi-final.

Peter Dyke (25/08/2021)

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Lawn Maintenance Report – August 2021

1. Lawns

The day before the July Advanced tournament lawn speed reached 12.5 plummers. However heavy overnight rain left the ground soft and speed dropped to nearer 10 plummers. Double cut mowing on the Sunday morning before the start of play recovered some of the speed but the lawns remained on the slow side.

During tournaments both David Hunt and myself are reluctant to remove hoops as the rigidity arising from the initial setting with the clamp is lost. However, mowing around the hoops during tournaments leaves a small rectangle of uncut grass around each hoop. One player did complain about this in July. David Hunt and myself are currently exploring ideas for trimming this grass during competitions. If grass growth continues at its current rate this will be essential for what is a 3-day event.

My general conclusion is that the improved sward density has slowed the lawns. Part of the problem is that the rows of Bent grass have created slight undulations which tend to slow the ball down. Small patches of dead meadow grass do the same thing. As a result, I have suggested to LAG members that we overseed all the lawns (not just Lawns 1 & 2) in November in order to reduce this problem. As recommended by Germinal Amenity, the seed rows will be placed at an angle to the E/W rows in order to fill in the gaps between rows. The Bent will naturally gradually fill in by spreading but it does take time.

Once the Bent sward becomes more uniform, I may well reduce cutting height to 4mm in order to increase lawn speed. The Rye grass present will not thrive at 4mm so this height reduction is not feasible at present.

The May experiment on lawn 5 suggested that the seeder works provided there is sufficient moisture for germination and establishment. During the winter months moisture is plentiful but obviously temperatures are lower and germination can take months. Thus, the hope is that the cold overseeding in November, recommended by Germinal, will be successful but it is not guaranteed. If cold overseeding does work the prize is the saving of £864 by not employing the Dynaseeder.

2. Mowing

There are some problems with the current mowing arrangements:

- a. Mowers are due to cut twice per week but free to arrange timing themselves. This means that the gap between the Monday/Tuesday cut and the Thursday/Friday cut can be up to five days. This is far too long at this time of year when the grass is growing vigorously.
- b. Some mowers book lawns for mowing but others don't. The latter have the flexibility to adapt to weather conditions but experience resentment from playing members when they turn up to mow. The convention that mowing takes precedence has been forgotten. What is the committee view on this subject?
- c. Some mowing bookings take place at times which prevent an uninterrupted morning or afternoon game. (e.g.12.0 pm or 4.30 pm).
- d. The grass needs to be cut three times a week during periods of vigorous growth. This is beyond the NDCC internal resources

- e. The quality of members mowing is not always of the required standard.

I intend to have an LAG meeting to discuss these issues in more detail. However, I would be interested in the committee's view on the principle of outsourcing of mowing to a local sole-trader or small company. There would obviously be a cost to this but as a fee increase has been suggested I would like to add outsourcing of mowing (and possibly white lining) to the possible uses of increased fees. (Generally, a clear plan for the use of increased fees needs to be prepared for the AGM if members are to be persuaded to support increased fees).

3. Re-wilding of boundaries.

In late July Peter Dyke asked for my view about re-wilding the sloping West and South boundaries in order to avoid mowing the wild (meadow?) grass. From a lawns perspective I would prefer to keep the grass cut to minimise seed drift onto the lawns. However, these areas are not the only source of meadow grass seed so I do not want to press the point too strongly. I sent Peter some suggestions:

1. My favourite solution would be to glyphosate the existing grass and re-seed with Browntop Bent. This could be left to flower and go to seed. Any spill-over would help the lawns!
2. An alternative would be to use groundcover planting such as vinca minor/major. This would be expensive and slow but would eventually cover the area.
3. Employ a contractor to periodically trim the grass (like the hedges)
4. Leave the existing grass to go wild. This is the least attractive option as it does risk meadow grass spill-over onto the lawns. How big a problem this would be is unknown as meadow grass is around everywhere.

I noticed recently that Germinal Amenity supply various packs of seeds that contain both grass and flowers for landscaping purposes. This is the link for those who are interested in option 1.

<https://germinalamenity.com/wildflower-seed/landscaping>

I am sure there are other sources. Intriguingly, if one looks at the composition of the Butterflies and Bees seed packs they contain both Bent and Fescue! Seed head drift from these grasses would obviously be better than meadow grass.

In the context of possibly outsourcing mowing (and white lining?) option 3 should be considered. We already outsource hedge trimming.

4. Irrigation System

I eventually managed to speak to Roger Davy, head of Irritech Consultancy about a visit to NDCC. There were a number of significant conclusions:

- a. They are still working flat out and being swamped by new enquiries from golf clubs wanting major installation work. (16 last week compared with 3-4 per month pre-pandemic)

- b. Installation contractors are also fully booked up for this Autumn's work. Apparently, all the golf course work starts in mid-October so even if we had a specification there would be nobody available to carry out the work, even next February.
- c. He believes we should be planning for an October 2022 installation at the earliest.
- d. He does intend to visit NDCC when time permits.
- e. After a brief discussion about the notes I sent him he suggested I look at Perrot sprinklers. They are German as opposed to US manufacture, used throughout Europe and can cover bigger areas. Checking out the data sheets I found the Hydra-2-M range match my preferred pump and give a more than adequate radius of throw with a decent margin of error. Like all the integrated valve sprinklers they are more expensive but save on installation costs. The barriers caused by the nets and central bench remain a potential problem in terms of positioning pop-up sprinklers.

I have also developed a spreadsheet that allows me to study the uniformity of coverage provided by different sprinkler configurations. None of the configurations I had initially studied is as good as an 8 sprinkler solution based loosely on the triangular arrangement recommended by manufacturers. This is another area where consultancy would be of great assistance as they have detailed data about the characteristics of each sprinkler under consideration.

John Wallace

23/8/21