



# LEIGHTON-LINSLADE CROQUET CLUB

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**“Busy - Damp - But a Very Enjoyable Season!”**



**W**elcome to the fourth newsletter of 2007 under the Editorship of John Cundell for this issue as Richard is currently walking the Lakes! It's been an interesting and busy season and October seems to have come around much too quickly. The weather has been a little unkind however we have been fairly lucky with most of our matches - and all that water has helped to provide the best-looking lawns we have ever had at Pages Park. So, without more ado, we will start off with a round-up of the remaining season match reports since our July newsletter.

## **Match Reports**

**Club Handicap Singles** - This competition on Saturday 21st July, attracted sixteen keen members - an increase from twelve in 2006 - who were drawn into two blocks, each competitor playing seven games. The top two from each block went into semi-finals, and after some very hard fought games, Roger Stroud beat Sheila Beal (7-6), and Len Buckingham beat Bryan Ferris (7-2). The Final resulted in a fine win for Roger, beating Len (7-1).

**Wrest Park Doubles** - Five of our members had an

The happy handicappers at the Club Handicap Singles Competition on 21st July. A very happy Roger Stroud was the winner over Len Buckingham.

enjoyable day at Wrest Park Doubles on 22nd July. John Cundell assisted Ronnie Richardson with the organisation and the pairing of Sally Clay and John managed to reach the Final, but were beaten to the trophy by Linda Potton and Vera Pearson.

**Winslow Away was at Home!** - On 27th July, we played host to members of Winslow Croquet Club. By rights, the match ought to have taken place at Winslow but the lawn there had been re-seeded and was not ready for play, and unhappily their club shelter had also been vandalised.

The home team comprised the pairings of Sally Clay with Tony Wells and Yvonne Banks with Valerie Jeffers. Sally and Tony won all their three games and 2-1 in favour of Yvonne and Valerie gave the match result of 5-1 a rather one-sided look. However, the games had been closely contested and the Winslow players expressed their appreciation for the warm hospitality they had been given.

**EACF League - Letchworth and Finals** - On a perfect day for croquet with bright sunshine and a light breeze, members welcomed a team from Letchworth to Pages Park



A perfect day for croquet on 3rd August saw team members Eve Buckingham, Sally Clay, Valerie Jeffers and Richard Keighley defeat Letchworth in the EACF League match by 10-8. Also pictured are the Letchworth contingent plus our band of organisers, helpers and scorers. Right: along with John Cundell who was organiser and photographer, was umpire Len Buckingham and scorer/timekeeper George Lawson.

for an all-important league match.

The home team comprised Eve Buckingham, Sally Clay, Valerie Jeffers and Richard Keighley. The format was that each team member had to play a timed and best of 13 hoops singles game against all four opponents. Handicaps were applied. After each of the first three rounds, the



scores were level, but Leighton-Linslade drew clear in the final round of singles to lead by 9 games to 7. Eve Buckingham had played consistently well and had won all her four games. Valerie and Richard had won two each and

Watford Friendly on 17th August. You can't see all of them as one is hidden, but all 16 players are in the photograph below left. Below: Sally Clay and Una Pengelly in action.



Sally had won one. The match concluded with two doubles games with the players knowing that Letchworth had to win both to force a shoot out at the centre peg to decide the match. Fortunately this was not necessary as Sally and Richard won their game convincingly by six hoops to two, whilst Eve and Valerie slipped to 1-3 defeat. The win by ten games to eight meant that Leighton-Linslade had drawn level with league leaders Watford, who at that stage had one match to play.

Unfortunately for us, Watford went on to win that match and so had an unbeaten record in our group - they were the only team to beat us.

The winners of the four areas were Downham Market who played Enfield in one semi-final, and Sudbury who were meant to play Watford in the second semi-final. Enfield won their match, however Sudbury withdrew at the last minute, leaving Watford to contest the Final which they won by 10-8. We were certainly in one of, if not the strongest group, so should not be disappointed that we lost that one vital game against Watford earlier in the season.

This was an enjoyable league season and our games were organised by John Cundell, with impartial refereeing by Len Buckingham, unflustered timekeeping by George Lawson and the watchful enthusiasm of a number of scorers, including Diana Phelps, Tony Stammers, Irene Davis and Sheila Beal.

Next year, proposals have been submitted to the EACF that the number of games should be increased to home and away fixtures for each match, and that some consideration should be given to removing the time limit which spoils handicap games, and is also very difficult of apply where doubling up on lawns is required.

**Watford Clean Sweep!** - Earlier in the season our Away Friendly at Watford was won by them with 9-7 games - and then they won our first League match of the season as mentioned above - so it was with determination that 8-9 members entertained Watford at Pages Park on Friday 17th August with a view to exacting revenge!

On one of August's few dry days, each pair of players had

An amicable draw was the result against Stony Stratford when they were entertained at Pages Park on 31st August.

to play one 13 hoop game against the four opposition pairs. Sally Clay and Una Pengelly won a convincing three of their four games; Bryan Ferris and Sheila Beal won two and were very unlucky to lose their other two games; whilst the usually strong and reliable pairing of Eve and Len Buckingham suffered an 'off-day' with one win. Also scoring one was the pairing of Yvonne Banks and either Tony Stammers or Diana Phelps who shared their four games due to injury problems. So the final result was another 9-7 defeat by Watford who went away jubilant. We will get our revenge next season!

**Honours Even with Stony Stratford** - The last 'Friendly' match of the season was played against Stony Stratford Croquet Club at Pages Park on Friday 31st August.

The weather was cool but kind and the playing surface excellent apart from the flurries of early Autumn leaves which were removed with the help of a couple of air blowers kindly loaned to us by the Council's groundstaff. In the usual 'Friendly' format each pair of players had to play one 13 hoop game against the four opposition pairs. The duo of Sally Clay and Una Pengelly, and that of Eve Buckingham and John Cundell, were not up to their usual competitive standard, and both pairs managed one win each. Bryan Ferris and Yvonne Banks fared better with two wins from their four games - however the 'star' pair were Margaret Brown and Tony Wells with an invincible four wins out of four.

The overall result was therefore eight wins to Leighton Linslade and an equal eight to Stony Stratford - so no-one went away disappointed.

**Centre Stage Finals** - This event took place at Edgbaston Croquet Club on Saturday 8th September and our representative was George Lawson, who was runner-up in our club qualifying event.

George reports that ten members of various clubs were split into two blocks of five - all with handicaps of 2, 3 or 4. There were three lawns and one was double banked and everyone played on it once. The system used was a trifle complicated as hoop 3 on the normal layout became hoop 1 on the double-banked circuit! The games were timed at 60 minutes but no-one needed this.





Pages Park in Autumn. The Club Singles Championship enjoyed fine weather.

Group 1 had two outright winners with four and three wins respectively. Group 2 had one outright winner with four wins and three players, of which George was one, had two wins. Countback on hoops meant that George unfortunately missed out by one hoop! George was fifth overall out of ten, and he was disappointed as he would very much have liked to have played in the semi-finals. They were both tight games and each was won by 7-4, who incidentally were the two block winners.

The final was a very tight game of nip and tuck right up to five each when the eventual winner took the eleventh hoop and the other player unfortunately hit the centre peg when going for hoop 12 - leaving Ian Morrison from Bath to finish 7-5. Runner up was Roger Bathley from a club in Hampshire.

George enjoyed the day which was well organised and is looking forward to getting there again next year. Well done George.

Doubles & Singles. Many of the players at the Doubles & Singles are in this group photograph. Missing are Peter Stevens, Joy Bown, Richard Graves, Ann Smith, Irene Davis and Judith Cundell.

**Club Doubles and Singles** - Our club tournaments traditionally bring the golf croquet season to an end, and this year was to be no exception - with the refinement (we hoped) of playing the events over two weekends to, a) give more time matches, b) allow for inclement weather, and c) accommodate the expected larger entry.

The latter certainly occurred with 24 members entering the Doubles and the Singles - 50% of the club membership which is a fine achievement in terms of interest.

Unfortunately the best laid plans were thrown asunder when we were told three days before the Doubles weekend of 29/30th September that the Council had arranged contractors to start on the winter preparation of our lawns on Monday 1st October! And this date could not be changed! So some quick thinking by Len Buckingham and John Cundell resulted in much last minute arrangements, lots of telephone calls to members, and agreement by the Council to let us use the cricket pitch as a third lawn so we could fit everything into one weekend. Another hectic day followed on Thursday 27th to mark out the third lawn and make the necessary holes for the hoops.





Doubles & Singles. On Singles Day, was all that smoke and steam coming from Tom Miller and George Lawson - or was it one of the locomotives at Pages Park station? Above: Richard Keighley and Tom Miller in their tense Singles Final.

Fortunately almost all members were able to accommodate the new arrangements and we were very lucky with the weather which improved as the weekend progressed.

The draws for both competitions had been made some weeks previously by two non-playing members. In the Doubles on Saturday there were two blocks of six pairs, and after some very hard fought matches the overall results prior to the semis and final were as follows:

		Wins	Diff.
1st	John Cundell/Richard Keighley	5	+9
2nd	Una and Judith Pengelly	4	+9
3rd	Caroline and Roger Stroud	4	+4
4th	Peter Stevens/Sheila Beal	3	+7
5th	Margaret Brown/Irene Davis	3	+5
6th	Margaret and George Lawson	3	-2
7th	Ann Smith/Judith Cundell	2	-5
8th	Joan and Bryan Ferris	2	-7
9th	Sally Clay/Tony Wells	1	-3
10th	Diana Phelps/Yvonne Banks	1	-5
11th=	Joy Bown/Richard Graves	1	-6
11th=	Eve and Len Buckingham	1	-6

Semi-finalists were Richard Keighley and John Cundell who beat Caroline and Roger Stroud by 7-3; and Una and Judith Pengelly who beat Peter Stevens and Sheila Beal by 7-2. The Final was hard fought and resulted in a fine win by Una and Judith by 7-4. Very well done.

So to a lovely Autumn Sunday and the Singles. This time there were four blocks with six in three blocks and five in the fourth block. Two original entrants could not play on

the changed date, and some last minute telephone calls managed to locate Tom Miller as a replacement.

As for we did not have the same numbers in each block it isn't possible to provide a 1-23 breakdown of the results - however the block results were as follows:

Block 1			
1st	Roger Stroud	3	+7
2nd	Judith Pengelly	3	+2
3rd=	Sheila Beal	3	-1
3rd=	Sally Clay	3	-1
5th	Tony Wells	2	0
6th	Diana Phelps	1	-7
Block 2			
1st	Richard Keighley	4	+10
2nd	Eve Buckingham	4	+8
3rd=	Margaret Lawson	2	-2
3rd=	Len Buckingham	2	-2
5th	Margaret Brown	2	-5
6th	Joan Ferris	1	-9
Block 3			
1st	Tom Miller	4	+11
2nd	George Lawson	4	+9
3rd	Una Pengelly	3	+3
4th	Yvonne Banks	3	-3
5th	Caroline Stroud	1	-11
6th	Richard Graves	0	-9



Doubles & Singles. Left: whatever they are all looking at, it must have been worth it from the expressions. Above: a real tussle between Richard and Len drew a good audience on lawn 3. Right: a determined Roger Stroud.



#### Block 4

1st	John Cundell	4	+6
2nd	Bryan Ferris	2	+6
3rd	Valerie Jeffers	2	+2
4th	Joy Bown	2	+1
5th	Sue Cross	0	-5

So Semi-finals were between Richard Keighley and John Cundell - and Roger Stroud and Tom Miller. Two hard fought and close matches enjoyed the same results of 7-5 - to Richard and Tom.

The Final was also a very hard fought contest with a number of long battles over certain hoops which could easily have gone either way. However the match experience of Richard Keighley came through and Richard ended up as Club Scratch Singles Champion for 2007 with a score of 7-3. Tom should certainly not be disheartened as he has not been able to play much this season, and to come in at the last minute and perform as well as he did is very commendable. Look out next season when he hopes to be able to play more frequently!

The overall results of both the Doubles and Singles Championships show a marked level of improvement all round over previous years and there is obviously much increased interest in these competitions this year. OK, so the eventual winners were no surprises, however it is good to see that more members are entering and presumably aspire to beat the champions by raising their game.

An interesting point is that the only pair to beat Una and Judith were Eve and Len - and ironically they ended up last! And even stranger was that in the Singles Eve was the only person to beat winner Richard!

On a personal note I would congratulate Richard Keighley on the time and effort he has given this year to coaching many members - the result of which was apparent over the weekend - so if anything, members should be pleased that their helpful coach came out on top.

Doubles & Singles. Finalists at both events - Richard Keighley and John Cundell were pitted against Una and Judith Pengelly; and Tom Miller and Richard Keighley. Photos: Elaine Newman.

#### Garden Party

The Garden Party on 11th August at the home of Diana and Jim Phelps was a great success and also was blessed with excellent weather. Thanks are due to Diana and Jim for their kind hospitality and to all those who worked hard to make the event a success - organising and providing food, the raffle, moving all the chairs and gazebo and urn from Pages Park, etc. We hope that John Fogg's photographs give some idea as to the enjoyable time.

#### Possible new Doubles Competition for 2007

Following comment from one or two members it was suggested at the September Committee Meeting that the Doubles teams for our club competition should be drawn rather than allow pairs to enter as desired. If members have any views on this perhaps they could put them in writing to Len Buckingham or John Cundell. It may be that this could be incorporated within a Club Handicap

Below: on Doubles day Judith Cundell attempts to run a hoop, watched by Peter Stevens and Sheila Beal.





Glorious weather for at least one event this year was enjoyed by the Garden Party - members seen here enjoying the usual food, drink, fun and frolics. Photos: John Fogg.



Doubles Competition to be held around the same time as the Club Handicap Singles in mid-summer.

### Soham Indoor Competitions

A number of members have queried whether the Soham Indoor Competitions are to be held this coming winter. The answer is 'Yes' - however the dates are a little awkward being just before Christmas and Easter. To be precise they are the weekends of 15/16th December and 15/16th March.

Any members interested in attending are requested to forward their details to Tony Wells on 01525 379107 or email: anthonywells2004@yahoo.co.uk.

### Living History Heritage Day - 13th October

One of the town's most popular events is back and looking to put fun on the agenda. The annual Living History Heritage Day, arranged by the Town Council, takes place from 10am to 3.30pm in and around the town centre.

The theme for this year's event is 'Popular Pastimes' and

the focus is on having fun as a community and finding out how to make the most of our precious leisure time. The Town Council will be hoping to build on the success of last year's day, when the 50's theme proved a big hit with scores of people dancing in Leighton's streets and exploring different cultures.

The focus this year will be more local, with the festival exploring the history of the clubs, interest groups and societies that meet regularly in Leighton and Linslade. Over 30 local clubs will be taking part, representing many different hobbies and pastimes - and we are one of them!

Donna Hughes, the Town Council's leisure and promotion officer, said: "The Town Council hopes that this year's event will encourage an even greater interest in the leisure opportunities that are available to residents throughout the year."

We will be demonstrating and offering the public the chance to have a go at croquet. There will be a small charge for the public to take part in a game with the proceeds going to the club's new lawn funds, and with a

### Attendance Breakdown - April to August 2007

Sue Cross has extracted the following information from Len Buckingham's attendance sheets for the above period. Figures do not include September and the Championships. Also not included are visitors and games played on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings.

	Saturday	Sunday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Average to include all sessions	14	12	6	12	11
Average excluding sessions where no play	16	14	7	13	11
Best turn out during period	31	20	11	23	18
Number of sessions in excess of 16 players	6	6	-	4	1

Total number of visitors was 36. School session on 14th July was 14.

At the September Committee Meeting it was agreed that the normal sessions as above will be repeated in 2008 - and that the experimental Sunday morning (Singles) sessions will be continued with initially in order to better gauge popularity, as it was rather late in the season that these were included this year - and also in the middle of the summer holiday period. Also at the Sunday morning sessions it is intended to repeat the 'One-Ball Croquet' demonstrations.

donation to All Saints Church - because the event is to be held on the Vicarage Garden lawns, by kind permission of Father Grant Fellows.

We will need some members to come along and man our stand (the gazebo!), plus show and help members of the public play the game - as we do on our annual 'Come & Try Day'. If you can attend just pop along to All Saints Church Vicarage garden during the day. This is NOT a normal play day - it is to encourage others to join our sport. The entrance is via the Churchyard.

### **Membership closes at an all-time high**

Our Membership Secretary John Fogg reports that we almost reached the half century in terms of members this year - 48. There is also known interest from at least half a dozen others for 2008.

### **New Lawn and Fencing**

Obviously the demand for a third lawn has been necessary on a number of occasions this year, and not just for competitions. If we had been blessed with better weather there would have been more days which would have entailed sitting out.

So we are pleased to report that we understand from the Council that the fencing around the existing two lawns should be under way soon - and of course this is essential to try and stop the football damage caused in the winter months which will otherwise undo all the excellent work that the Council's groundstaff have carried out on our behalf. The lawns have never been better and we as a club are very fortunate to have groundstaff that take a pride in how the lawns are maintained. Most clubs have to do all this work themselves!

Also we understand that quotations are in hand concerning the necessary earthworks for the construction of a third full-size lawn below and towards the station. We hope to have more information on this at the AGM.

### **School Sports Partnership**

As reported in the July newsletter the Club has forged a strong link with Leighton Middle School over the past two summers, and thanks are due to Richard Keighley, Margaret Brown, Tony Stammers and Tony Wells, amongst others, for fostering this initiative.

We have managed to obtain four mallets for the children to use on loan from the EACF, plus two from Peter Davis at cost, and three more from a source of Len Buckingham's which may be suitable.

### **Club Badges**

Club Badges are always available. They are 3ins in diameter, cloth embroidered and can be ironed or sewn on to items of clothing. The cost per badge is £3.50. If you want one or more, just contact John Cundell on 01525 374620 or 01525 400512. They will also be available at the AGM.

### **Leighton-Linslade Social Club**

Members will be pleased to hear that after some negotiation with the Council, Len Buckingham has managed to retain the Wednesday morning slot at Pages Park Pavilion for 10.00am to midday, as per last year. This is initially on a six month booking so obviously Len is looking for as much support as possible. Sessions will

commence on Wednesday 10th October at a fee of £2.00 including tea and biscuits for **all** attending. Len looks forward to seeing you on the 10th!

### **Correspondence**

Dear Sir,

Having enjoyed the Club Championships on September 29/30th, may I say a big thankyou to Len and John that the weekend competitions went ahead so smoothly. After being told on Wednesday that the lawns would not be available after Sunday 30th, they hastily had to concertina both events into one weekend. This meant telephoning every competitor in the Singles event, also the marking out and preparation of the third lawn which took until past 4.00pm on Thursday.

It is with thanks for their hard work that the events ran smoothly and the third lawn was in such good repair.

**From 'A Competitor.'**

### **From the Treasurer**

Will any member who has outstanding expenses incurred on behalf of the Club please note that all claims for expenses must be with Len Buckingham by 14th October at the very latest. After this time any outstanding claims will be considered in next year's finances.

### **From the Chair**

Margaret Brown has asked for the following message to be included.

"On days when I've played croquet here I feel so much calmer and positive about life", members comment.

So many folk have had so much enjoyment from this season's play that inevitably there was a touch of sadness as we packed away on Sunday at the end of our eighth season.

As someone who has benefited from membership of the Club PLEASE give thought to how you might be able to assist its continuation in 2008.

There will be vacancies on the committee, which meets four or five times a year, and help needed with the many non-committee supporting-roles so that things continue to run smoothly. No job is too onerous. Could you offer to help, as many members have previously, for just one year?

Please contact me, vice-chair John Cundell, or retiring secretary Richard Keighley to discuss the needs and possibilities as soon as you can. Thank you! Telephone no's are 373860/ 374620 or 01296 681235 respectively.

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### **Annual General Meeting**

**The AGM will be held at Northall Village Hall at 7.30pm on Friday 9th November 2007, followed by the traditional jolly party.**

**Every member is entitled to bring a guest to join in the fun, but the meeting itself is an opportunity to raise any matter of interest or concern. It is also an opportunity for a member to volunteer his or her services to the Club, as mentioned by Margaret above - examples being in the running of a match day, or in catering for an event. Any offers would be much appreciated.**

**Please come along to the meeting and party. You are all very welcome!**

