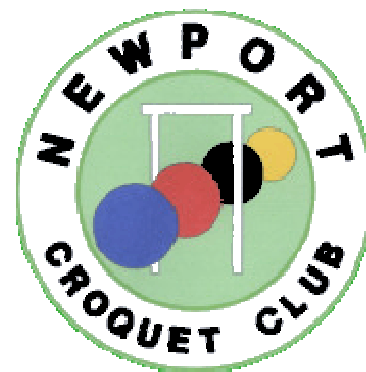


28th March 2011



## **Chairman's Letter – March 2011**

A belated "Happy New Year" to all members of Newport Croquet Club!

### **Lawn Renovation – an update**

As I'm sure you remember, the task of restoring our lawns to their former quality began with top-dressing last autumn – a Herculean effort in which many of you were involved. Work has continued over the winter, with applications of grass seed, fertiliser, herbicide and wetting agent, and as a result the playing surface should be noticeably better and more drought-resistant in 2011 than it was in 2010. This is just the start, however – there is still much hard work to do if we want the lawns to achieve real top quality. We have planned a series of further lawn treatments through the year, and will be repeating the top-dressing operation in the autumn.

In addition, the playing area has been expanded slightly by cutting back the banking around lawn 1. This should mean rather fewer impeded backswings at the ends of this lawn.

The seed and chemicals for lawn maintenance do not come cheap, and nor does the equipment for dispersing them. I am therefore delighted to report that the club has been awarded a grant of £2000 by Stansted Airport Community Trust, which has allowed us to purchase, among other equipment, a new lawn tractor. Enormous thanks go to Roy Darling, who authored the grant application.

I must also acknowledge our gratitude to two members of Letchworth Croquet Club, Duncan Hector and George Woolhouse, who have been hugely generous in lending us their expertise, their manpower and their equipment; to Fran Lambert, who has taken on the task of overseeing lawn maintenance; and of course to all the members who lent a hand last autumn!

### **David to the Rescue**

A further maintenance issue came to light recently in the clubhouse – the cold snap over winter had frozen water in the pipes and once the water supply was re-established, leaks sprung up in multiple places. Thankfully David Manley was on hand to apply his plumbing skills and get everything fixed with minimum fuss (and cost). Thanks David!

### **Start of the Season**

As you will appreciate, we are at the mercy of the weather in determining how well grass grows over the winter period and unfortunately, since the last application of seed and fertiliser, Newport has suffered a drought! We need some rain to get the seed to germinate before we can start playing this year and so we have not yet been able to decide on a start date for the season. Rest assured that we want to get going as soon as possible – so once we have had some rain, we'll decide on a start date and let you know by email. I would certainly hope to be up and running by Easter at the latest.

## **The 2011 Season**

In the coming season, we will continue to hold Golf Croquet days on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, while Thursday afternoons will still be set aside for Association Croquet.

We will be entering two teams in the Golf croquet league and one in the Association league; we are also entering a team in the national Association croquet knockout competition known as the "Mary Rose". If you want to play in any of these competitions, contact Ernie Turkington (golf) or Bernard Yallop (association).

We will again be issuing membership cards with contact details of all members – these should be available by the start of the playing season (thanks to Tony Marks for organising this).

## **Get Involved!**

One of the most gratifying sights of 2010 was the huge turnout when we appealed for your help with the autumn top-dressing. This showed what a great communal spirit we have within the club and I want to encourage people to involve themselves even more in the club's activities in 2011. Here are some ideas of things you might try...

*Play in competitions:* I know that many of you see croquet as a social rather than a competitive activity, but the two aren't mutually exclusive. If you haven't tried it before, perhaps this is the year that you should volunteer to play in one of the club teams... or even enter as an individual in one of the many tournaments run by the East Anglian Croquet Federation or the Croquet Association. It's a scary prospect to start with... but croquet players tend to be friendly and it's great fun to go and visit other clubs.

*Help out at tournaments:* We run several golf and association tournaments through the year, and any offers of help are always gratefully received. Whether it's doing the white lining the night before a tournament, serving teas or coffees, making lunch for a dozen hungry players or helping to tidy things up afterwards, we'd be glad of any assistance people can offer.

*Sample "the other side":* If you've only ever played association croquet, why not go and meet our golf croquet players on a Monday or Wednesday afternoon? And if you've only played golf, then let us know and we'll introduce you to the association game!

*Lawn care:* As I mentioned previously, we'll continue to need helping hands for various lawn treatments during and after the season. Rest assured we'll ask you when we need help!

*Suggest events/improvements:* The committee exists to serve the club's members. If you have a suggestion for ways to improve the club, or for events you would like to see us run, get in touch with a committee member.

*Generate publicity:* I'm always looking for material – either text or photos – to put on our website ([www.newportcroquet.org.uk](http://www.newportcroquet.org.uk)) and John Sibson is always grateful to receive any publicity material to send to the local press. If you're a budding photographer then send us your snaps; if you have a way with words, then write us a match report!

*Bring your friends:* The club could always use more members. You know how great a sport croquet is... so now's the time to persuade your friends how great it is too!

Wishing you all a successful 2011, and looking forward to seeing you on the lawns!

