

Rainford Eagle and Child Crown Green Bowling Club "AGM" Report - February 2022

As previously communicated, a decision was taken not to have a face to face AGM due to the COVID pandemic. This will be the second year without a traditional AGM meeting and we are optimistic that normal business will resume for the next one. Many of the AGM topics lend themselves to an information download such as this and we will be providing further communication avenues for those topics requiring two/multi way interactions in due course.

Chairman's Report (Ged)

Reflecting on 2021, it's easy to forget we started the year in full lockdown and by the time the season should have started, all members displayed a mature approach to booking time slots on the green to aid compliance with ever diluting lockdown rules !! Then the Leagues were up and running (including playing in the Maghull League as a temporary substitute for the Orrell League), albeit we experienced varying levels of compromise across most of them. So a big thanks to all our Members for your individual and collective flexibility.

As we look back at last year, we remember Kath Kelly, who very sadly passed away and again our thoughts and condolences go to Terry. We would also like to extend our thoughts to Members who sadly lost members of their family and friends through last year.

Towards the latter part of the year, there were some name changes on our Committee. We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to James and Kathryn Burkhill for investing a lot of personal time over the last few years as Chairman and Secretary respectively. We would also like to thank Jim Davis for stepping in for a couple of months at the end of 2021 as Secretary and Geoff Lambert who has worked hard over the first 6 weeks of 2022 to ensure the essential Secretary aligned activities associated with League AGMs/Player registration etc were not missed.

Congratulations again to the following winners of our internal competitions in 2021 :

The Houghton Trophy - Mike Cox

The Ken Forber Trophy - Frank Cardwell and Alan Fairclough

The John Bancroft Trophy - George Fitzpatrick and Steve Johnson

The Past Players Trophy - Graham Glover

Well done to all !!

The last part of the lookback, acknowledges a category we could badge as "*without whom our bowling would not have been possible*". Three significant mentions here:

Firstly, Peter and Siobhan - they have continued to support our Club through 2021 (more of this in the Treasurer's Report) and it's worth noting we are now apparently one of only 3 "pub aligned greens" in the St Helens area. In the spirit of a true "partnership", it is encouraging to see many of our Members acknowledge the Landlord and Landlady's support with their patronage of the Eagle and Child, imbibing on match nights and non match days/nights alike. It would be great to maintain and possibly increase our collective show of mutual support through 2022.

Secondly, we would like to express our sincere thanks to Graham and his team who look after the green and outer grounds - investing a significant amount of their time on the weekly maintenance of our facilities. More about this later in the update.

Thirdly, a big thanks to our Team Captains for organising the Teams and working together to ensure our Club fields as many full teams as possible, especially in this "difficult" year. They are of course, Dennis Cowley, Geoff Lambert, Keith Haskayne, George Fitzpatrick, James Burkhill and also Mark Holden for providing cover/assistance on occasions. An extra special thanks goes to John Pickavance, who has decided to step down as Team Captain at the end of last season - after a 10 year stint !!!

Looking forward to the 2022 season :

- We have finalised the Leagues we will be joining - see the Secretary's Report below
- We are aiming to open the green on Tuesday 29th March 2022
- We are planning to create a "sub committee" consisting of the Team Captains and the Committee - to meet a couple of times per year with an open agenda
- We are exploring the value of, and Members appetite for creating another "sub committee" to aid with our internal competitions (logistics/handicaps etc)
- We are looking to set up a Club website to improve communication. This could include Committee documents/League results/news/activities/Member's feedback etc
- We are exploring the possibility of internal coaching sessions for those that would like to exploit the experience and skill of other Members - more about this in due course

Two fantastic pieces of news to start the new season:

We are delighted to advise that Mike Cox has kindly agreed to step into the Secretary Role with immediate effect - he has a long history with our Club and brings a lot of bowling experience too.

We are proud and delighted to announce (following a warm, heartfelt and compelling nomination from Brian Pearce) that George Fitzpatrick is now a Lifetime Member of our Club. This reflects many years at the Club, as a Committee member, Team Captain and playing a big part in some of the major improvements at the Club - not to mention our green/outer grounds maintenance and his wider involvement as Chairman of the Aughton League.

Finally, as you read through the rest of this update, you will notice a few **requests for volunteers** to help the Club out with various things. We would encourage you to take some time to digest these and possibly allow the obvious pride you have for your Club to influence a decision to help us out.

Secretary's Report (Geoff)

This was a year in which much happened, including a return to bowling in most of the Leagues, and it was great to get back on the green.

In respect of bowling for the coming year, details currently known are as follows:

Monday afternoon

(St Helens) Pensioners League – Start and Division make up tbc. Captain Dennis Cowley

Monday evening

Orrell League – is returning and commences mid April, subject to final decision on Division make up. Captain Geoff Lambert

Tuesday evening

St Helens League – Meeting to be held 16 February to advise of Division make up and number of players. We have proposed a change in scoring to a point per winner and 2 or 3 points for aggregate. Captains – A Team Mark Holden B Team Keith Haskayne.

Wednesday evening

Aughton League – Captains – A Team George Fitzpatrick B Team currently vacant. The season commences on 20th April and the teams remain at 8 players for the coming season. ***We are looking for a volunteer to Captain the B Team. Please contact Mike Cox if interested.***

Thursday evening

Newton League - Committee to decide Division make up and advise shortly. Season to commence 21st April. Captain James Burkhill.

Friday evening

Westhead League – Season to commence 16 April, and teams to consist of 8 players.
Captain Geoff Lambert

If anyone wishes to be registered for any team that they have not previously played for please advise the team captain ASAP.

Treasurer's Report (Geoff)

The accounts for year ended 31st December 2021 show an increase of £2072 in total club funds.

The Club remains in a healthy position, however this should be viewed in the context of the commitment to improvement of the green.

The majority of the accounts speak for themselves but I would just like to highlight a few items.

Income

The club had a successful year on the green Wed and Friday and this reflects on Prize Money of £180. Additionally we continue to benefit from the use of the green by the Tuesday and Wednesday bowlers.

The Club also received £150 from the Forber family, for which we are extremely grateful.

Membership fees returned to broadly similar to pre pandemic figures. Also Club footer fees reflected a return to more normal participation.

Finally, the Mower Fund stands at £570 as a result of previous years Bonus Ball

Expenditure

Obviously the monies spent on maintenance of the green is another significant area of expenditure, and this has increased over 2021 due to remedial work being required and a substantial investment to improve the bowling surface going forward.

The final area of major expense is the premium to the pub for use of the green, however for this year the landlord has kindly indicated that we can use the money to help the club, and you will be able to see the new Houghton trophy board displaying all winners in the very near future.

The majority of other costs are broadly in line with pre pandemic, although League Fees had been prepaid as a result of no bowling in 2020. The club continues to benefit from the transfer of green-keeping duties to a team of three for the majority of the work – at no cost.

Green Development and Maintenance Update (Graham)

At the time I accepted responsibility for the upkeep of the green and surrounding area, I said I had very little knowledge of how to maintain a bowling green and could only devote a limited amount of time to green duties. Over the last few years nothing has changed regarding the time I am able to spend on the green. What has changed for the better is my knowledge of bowling green maintenance. From speaking with greens people, reading lots of application notes and using trial and error methods I have built up some expertise but continue to learn more.

Over the last few years we have improved the quality of the green by removing the majority of moss and several grass diseases, including fusarium patch disease. As with most greens we still have issues with annual meadow grass and continue to work to address this problem. We have devised an excellent fertiliser programme, including producing some of our own fertiliser from grass clippings, all helping to provide healthy grass all year round. Pleased to report we often receive complimentary remarks from visiting teams regarding the quality of the green.

I would like to express my thanks to both Alan Fairclough and Jim Sowler, two great volunteers who have contributed so much to prepare the green each week for our members. The costs for maintaining the green have greatly reduced with their help. In addition thanks also go to Mark Owens (Bowling Green Services Ltd) for his advice and work in scarifying, verticutting, slitting and overseeding the green, tasks for which we do not have suitable machinery or expertise to undertake.

As well as compliments, I am also aware of comments made regarding the length of the grass and now wish to take this opportunity to provide clarification on this issue. Throughout the bowling season the green is cut every Monday morning, obviously weather dependent. At the same time we also undertake maintenance to the surrounding area to make everywhere look as good as possible for the week ahead. These tasks normally take about 3 hours and when we open the green at 12 noon the green is in excellent condition, with the grass cut to 6 – 7 mm in length. We cut it to this length for the following reasons:

Firstly, we have not been able to identify the type of grass we have on the green and therefore we cannot cut it to the minimum height recommended by the seed manufacturer.

Secondly, based on my experience cutting the grass shorter results in shallower roots and will easily dry out as we experienced a couple of years ago.

Thirdly, cutting the grass too short has caused the fusarium patch disease I mentioned earlier. A thick, healthy turf will be more resistant to drought and weed infestation, reducing the risk of disease and moss. Cutting the grass too short also puts unnecessary stress on the grass. Lastly, we also run the risk of scalping the grass in undulating areas. The cutting height of 6 – 7mm is based on my knowledge and experience together with the guide given by Mark Owens.

We currently do not cut the green again until the following Monday, unless there is a club tournament at the weekend or if requested in advance for a particular match. The grass is in such a healthy condition and fed on a regular basis, so if we do experience good growing conditions then by the end of each week the green will have grown and users will experience a slower green. In summary the green is cut to the correct length, the problem is the frequency the green is cut.

I am aware some greens are cut several times a week, unfortunately I do not have the time to do this, ***so for anyone who wishes the green to be cut more often then please contact me directly and I will provide full training in use of the machinery and methods we currently use to maintain the green. What would also be helpful is if we could have a group of volunteers to take responsibility to maintain the surrounding area to the green, which would then leave us with more time to concentrate on preparing the green. An appropriate name for this group would be the 'Garden Gang'. Look forward to hearing from volunteers.***

Internal Club Competitions for 2022

John Bancroft Trophy	Sunday 29th May 2022
Dennis Houghton Trophy	Sunday 26th June 2022
Past Players Trophy	Sunday 31st July 2022
Ken Forber Trophy	Sunday 4th September 2022

Election of Officers

As detailed in the Chairman' update, Mike Cox has just been announced as Secretary following a request for nominations/volunteers.

The following will continue unless another Club member wishes to put their name forward. If anyone does want to be considered, please contact Mike Cox by the end of February. We would then ask the members to vote.

Chairman	Ged Hope
Treasurer	Geoff Lambert
Green Development & Maintenance	Graham Fenney
Committee Member	Tony Ford

Subscriptions and Footer Fees for 2022

The annual subscription fees for single (£25) and joint (£35) membership remain unchanged for 2022 as do the footer fees of £2 per game. However, we have taken an opportunity to simplify our Membership options with the two mentioned immediately above being the only ones available (excepting Lifetime Members). For the vast majority, this means no change, although our Associate/Social Members will be invited to renew under whichever membership option above is applicable to them. Our Associate/Social Members will continue to be offered exclusive use of the green on Tuesday/Wednesday afternoons and their footer fees (£2) will not increase in 2022.