

## **Early Club records from Roland Gribben**

Early club records provide an insight into the extensive efforts made to ensure the club made a successful and memorable debut. Considerable efforts were made to provide an attractive match list but the absence of a track record and a cautious response from some established clubs meant the Bletchingley pioneers had to polish their sales technique.

The traditional practice of regular and long-term fixture lists and long-term relationships made it difficult for a newcomer to find fixture list space for the 1993-94 club programme. Tandridge initially had a full house for two years. Nizels, another newcomer, felt it would be 'unwise' to commit the club to further matches. Betchworth Park was unable to accommodate any more matches while East Sussex National had to decline the fixture offer 'with great regret.' Purley Downs was among a number of clubs with a full fixture list willing to pencil in club matches in 1995 diaries.

A general 'welcome' for a newcomer to the circuit accompanied the responses received and coupled with a healthy set of results the Bletchingley fixture list has added quality to quantity over the period. Malcolm Brodie, first Club captain, looks back over the early years with satisfaction in developing and refining the inter-club programme as well as improving his writing skills!

Early committee meeting minutes reflected the lengthy series of housekeeping issues that exercise any new venture. Improving lighting in the conservatory and providing a service bell in the bar cost £301.25. A sum of £32 was allocated from the Members' Fund to pay for the bell. Evelyn Brodie, first Ladies captain, was given a vote of thanks in appreciation of the efforts she made in organising mixed matches. Back in 1995 Ted Van Look, then Club vice-captain, demonstrated his enthusiasm for silverware by providing a trophy for the winner of the Spring and Autumn meetings.

The committee also found that discipline among members was an unexpected issue that demanded attention. What was described as 'inappropriate behaviour' by one member during a match resulted in the committee unanimously deciding that the ungentlemanly offender would not be considered for club match selection 'for the foreseeable future.'

There was no shortage of suggestions for improving the course or dealing with hazards. The suggestion book records that a proposal for a call on bell on the 16<sup>th</sup> fairway was deemed unnecessary. Complaints about slow play figured regularly on committee agendas, some of them generating considerable heat.

The November 1994 medal produced a formal letter of complaint from several members. They felt that the speed of play ahead of them meant they were unlikely to complete their round before dark! They decided to register their dismay by only completing nine holes, handing in their cards and asking for a refund of their entry fee. The committee rejected the refund and instructed the secretary to write to the complainants about action being taken to avoid similar problems.

The manager told the committee he had not been able to accept the suggestion that the fairway to the left of the 11<sup>th</sup> fairway should be declared out of bounds or to erect nets to the right. Instead the scrub would be cleared to the right to provide a view of the 11<sup>th</sup> fairway from the tee. He also said that no changes would be made to the lampshades or other furniture and fittings in the near future!

The committee meeting on August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1995 when chairman John Boakes provided details of the club's financial position following unease among the members about an unexpected 5pc jump in subscriptions, is the most important of those early records. It appeared that a

revised profit forecast did not cover capital repayments to the bank and to meet the shortfall directors decided it as better to 'share the pain' with members through subscription increases rather than borrow more!

Ends