



OPENING DOORS TO CROQUET EALING CROQUET CLUB

In 2021 Ealing Croquet club ran a public Pay & Play trial over the course of a few weekends at our site in Lammas Park.

The trial successfully demonstrated a strong local interest, and we set about planning for a significant increase of those sessions in 2022. A key strand of the club's strategy is to open up the site to the wider community, and provide an offering which will appeal to locals and park users wishing to play on a more informal, ad hoc basis. While some may only ever wish to play informally in this way, we hoped the sessions would also provide an entry point to membership and, as importantly, would raise awareness of the club in the community.

This year during April to September we ran 3 hours of public sessions every Saturday afternoon. We only cancelled two sessions in this time – one due to essential lawn maintenance work and one due to the heatwave! Covid remained an ongoing consideration and did hit some bookings, but did not have a significant impact overall, and we offered a full refund in those circumstances.

From the trials we knew that the majority of bookings had come from notices put up around our site, due to the benefit of our location being in the middle of a local park. The competition prize money was spent on a new and welcoming club entrance sign and large impactful Pay & Play promotional banners, matched by a grant from the local council ward forum.

The sessions were costed at an affordable £6 per hour per person, with bookings taken via Eventbrite. We quickly realised that running these on a weekly basis



would stretch our volunteer workforce, and recruited a local youth football coach as a Pay & Play supervisor (with a crash course in the basics of GC and simple games of "5 hoop") to lead the sessions, supported by club volunteers on hand to help with play and answer more technical questions.

The people booking the sessions were noticeably younger than the average age of our existing members, with family groups and young adults making up a high percentage of the bookings. During the course of the season we took 289 bookings, of which 19% were children. A number made repeat bookings, proving that the sessions were enjoyed.

An unexpected spin-off was a significant rise in enquiries from local community organisations looking to book group Pay

& Play sessions, which we offered at any time in the week to suit the groups, run entirely by our volunteers. An additional 149 people came to the club via these Pay & Play group bookings, which conversely were predominantly older retired people, although we also hosted a small number of exuberant children's birthday parties too!

Six bookings resulted in enquiries about membership, of which three signed up, with one pending. Although this was not as high as we had hoped, it reinforced our observations that these sessions were attracting younger people keen on sampling different activities, and families with younger children whose other



commitments meant it was not easy to join up to full membership and, as such, considerably broadened the range of people playing croquet at the site. In total we took an amazing 438 bookings over the course of the season. Our challenge next year will be to increase the number of bookings per public session. Armed with our new signage and with the learning from this year we anticipate a great season ahead.

Lindy Jordan
Treasurer
Ealing Croquet Club

