

## Get out of the house!

A recent poll conducted by Play England revealed that only one in five children are allowed to "play out" in the street or the local park on a daily basis in today's society.

How very sad.

We are willing to hazard a guess that the vast majority of you reading this newsletter can look back with nostalgic pleasure at playing cricket in the street with a lamppost as a wicket, or football in the local park or 'rec' (with, of course, the ubiquitous 'jumpers for goalposts'), or tennis during the first two months of July – didn't it seem that every park had municipal tennis courts in those days? – or even 'run-outs' or cowboys and Indians, dodging in and out of neighbourhood front gardens. And we did it every day, until mother yelled out those immortal phrases "Tea's ready!" or "Have you done your homework yet?" or, worst of all, "Bedtime!"

Yes, we know that there is far more traffic around nowadays – not

just hurtling around the streets but also inconveniently parked to preclude street sports. And we know too that as parents we are only too well aware of the dangers of undesirables preying on our children. And the children themselves have alternative, indoor, pursuits with which to occupy themselves – computers, for example.

But nonetheless, this lack of outdoor play is a fundamental reason for child obesity in today's world. Adrian Voce, Director of Play England, said "Children are not allowed out the way they used to be, so they are not getting enough exercise. If you keep children cooped up in front of the computer for long periods of time, they eat less healthily because food becomes simply a source of stimulation. Therefore they are more likely to be overweight".

However, all is not lost. Mr Brown's post-Blair Government includes a brand new department: the Department for Children,

Schools and Families, led by its Secretary of State, Ed Balls, MP for Normanton.

Mr Balls is clearly very enthusiastic about his new job: "Children and families are the bedrock of our society, and our responsibility will be to ensure that children are safe and healthy and that they enjoy their childhood" he gushes on his personal website. And in a separate interview he was quoted as saying that "school playing fields will only be axed as a last resort".

Hmmm, seemingly Mr Balls still has a bit to learn. We don't want to hear that they will only be axed as a last resort: we want to hear that they won't be axed at all! Even Tony Blair's government worked that one out. Let's hope that as Ed grows into the job so he gets a better handle on precisely how to ensure that kids stay 'healthy' and 'enjoy their childhood'. We shall watch his progress with anticipation tinged with apprehension!

## Inter Cricket Tournament

In the last edition we announced that a cricket tournament aimed at Year 7 school pupils was being organised to encourage children in this age group to take part in the game. This took place at the Dunmow Cricket Club in mid June with 6 teams, each of 8 players (boys and girls) representing 4 schools in the Uttlesford area, taking part. We were very fortunate with the weather! We must have chosen the only fine afternoon in the whole of June and although the previous days had been very wet, Nick Down and his team at Dunmow had done a superb job in ensuring that the ground was fit for play.

In the inter cricket format each innings consists of 8 overs with an over being bowled by every member of the team. Each pair of batsmen faces 2 overs and have runs deducted if they are 'out' – but keep batting. The great advantage of this format is that every single person was thoroughly involved in the proceedings throughout the afternoon, irrespective of their level of skill. In addition, each side received 20 minutes of individual coaching from Tom Gould, who is an Essex County Cricket coach. While it was obvious that there was a wide spread of cricketing ability it was equally clear that everyone

benefited from and really enjoyed the afternoon.

Trophies were presented to the winners – a team from Dunmow School – and the two runners-up. Everyone who took part was given a certificate signed by Tom Gould and Ronnie Irani.

The generous sponsorship from the Fryerning Foundation ensured that we could supply the necessary equipment for the tournament. We hope that it will become an annual fixture in the Uttlesford area and that EPFA will be able to organise similar events in others parts of the country in the coming years.

# The Playing Field



Essex Playing Fields Association Newsletter

## Support and Advice from the Field Officer Colin Freeman

We mentioned in the last edition of *The Playing Field* some of the roles that Colin Freeman our new Field Officer would be getting involved with. As you will see from Colin's article on page 23 of this edition, he is embracing his new position and getting to grips with the matters in hand with considerable enthusiasm (and no little ability).

One of the main areas that Colin will be concerned with is providing advice and information to our members following any feedback from judges of the Best Kept Playing Fields competition.

For some years now we have been aware that entrants to the competition are not told of any deficiencies that have been noticed by the judges, nor why – for instance – their facility didn't receive higher marks. Now that Colin is on board we aim to rectify those issues.

There will be two ways in which you can tap into Colin's advice and support: either give him a call (0845 1080124) if you would like to know what (if anything) was found lacking with your facility, or, if Colin picks up comments to cause concern from the judges' marking sheets, he will contact you and offer his services. Either way, he will be prepared to meet you on site and discuss the matter.

This service will be free of charge to our members, although they will be expected to pay Colin's travel expenses. And the upside is that if a problem is identified, Colin will probably be able to put you in touch with organisations that will be able to deal with it for you, and also invite you to submit a bid to our Small Grants Fund to help with any cost involved.

We must, however, stress that we are providers of help and support (and possibly funds!), but we do not provide a professional inspection service for playground equipment, or a thorough examination of soil conditions, for example. There are other, more qualified, organisations who will do that – for a suitable fee. We can, though, as part of our service, put you in touch with the appropriate firms or individuals.

**Colin Freeman, EPFA Field Officer**  
Tel: 0845 1080124

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### INSERTS

**SMP Playgrounds**  
**Matta Safer Surfacing**

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## Essex Playing Fields Association

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- The Fryerning Foundation
- Lloyds TSB Foundation
- The Rural Renaissance Fund Community Hub
- Essex County Council
- Essex County Council Millennium Fund
- Essex Community Foundation

And also by the subscriptions received from our members – town and parish councils, local authorities, clubs and individuals – and we are extremely grateful to them all for their support without which we simply would not be able to survive.

## Acknowledgements

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*The Playing Field*:

OPFA, NPFA, RoSPA, IOG, API, SAPCA, PSLG & ILAM

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## From the President's Desk

When writing this a year ago we had just experienced the hottest and driest July on record. This year we have just experienced the wettest since records began. While in Essex we have not (so far) had to face the floods which have struck Yorkshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, we need to spare a thought for groundsmen, who have been severely tested by these extremes. We still expect them to maintain and improve our playing fields and children's playgrounds and have them fit for purpose despite the elements. Support them in any way you can - and above all please thank them for their efforts!

Our Best Kept Playing Fields Competition judges – twenty one (a record) of whom will have judged ninety six entries this year – have had difficulty in picking a fine day to judge their fields. We are much encouraged by the growing entry to this Competition, despite for the first time making membership of EPFA a condition of entry. Now that we have a part time Field Officer (Colin Freeman), we can offer an added value service to our members, who may need some free independent advice on the protection and maintenance of their Playing Field or Children's Playground. We hope that by the time you read this, many of you will have attended our **Protection and Maintenance of Playing Fields** training seminar at Writtle College on 17 September. We hope you found it helpful.

As you can glean, we are determined to help local communities hold on to their outdoor play and recreation space, use, adapt and maintain it to a higher standard, and to safeguard and improve it for future generations.

On the project front we have some good and some disappointing news. As reported elsewhere in this issue, our pilot Inter Cricket Tournament on 20 June at **Dunmow CC** for year seven boys and girls from local schools was an outstanding success.

Not so our pilot Rugby Club/Local Schools Affiliation Scheme to be hosted by **Braintree RFC** to coincide with the Rugby World Cup. Despite having approached nine schools in the Braintree area – where the opportunity for boys and girls to receive expert rugby coaching and for their parents to qualify as coaches or referees was met with much enthusiasm – this has not yet been converted into enough applications to make our pilot scheme viable. **Awards for All**, who granted us £4,700 to kick this pilot off, have allowed us until November to get sufficient children and parents signed up – or we shall have to return their cheque.

### Please apply now!

Leaflets and Application forms are available from:

**Alan Darby, Schools Liaison Officer, 23 Smiths Field, Rayne, Essex CM77 6BX Tel: 01376 551049 Fax: 0870 751 5962 or**

**Colin Freeman, Field Officer, Tel/Fax Direct Line: 0845 1080124.**

Finally, we look forward to welcoming as many of our members and our readers as possible to our AGM at **Essex County Cricket Club** on Thursday 25 October at 7.30 for 8pm. The presentation of Awards for our Best Kept Playing Field Competition and our Guest Speakers will once again make it an enjoyable gathering of like minded people, who are interested in sport and recreation.

**David Gwynne-James**

## New website - www.essexpfa.org.uk

At last our new website is up and running – take a look at it at [www.essexpfa.org.uk](http://www.essexpfa.org.uk).

The intention is that it will be updated regularly with news and information about our activities and what we are trying to do. It will also contain that part of our newsletter, "The Playing Field", that is specific to our county.

In due course, we hope that we shall be able to incorporate a "members only" section to give those individuals and organisations that support us financially even

better value for money, and also a message board where members can raise issues or topics of their choice relevant to Essex Playing Fields Association.

In the meantime, we would particularly like to draw your attention to the section regarding our Small Grants Fund. We make grants to support worthy playing field or playground causes twice a year – and to be frank, we have more money available than we have applications! Obviously we aren't going to throw the money away at facetious applications, but have a look at the

list of past recipients, and if you have an up-coming project that you would like some financial help with, download the application form and send it off to our Secretary, Kate Gibson.

Our belief is that the website should be a vibrant tool of our Association, and a forum where members can come and go, obtain information and offer points of view. Whether that happens successfully is largely down to you, our members and supporters. Please let us have your feedback.

## A message from our Field Officer

Having only been in post as your Field Officer since 1<sup>st</sup> May, it has taken me a little while to get to know 'how things tick,' in Essex Playing Fields Association, but I think I am now beginning to get the hang of it!

I was pleased to be so warmly welcomed by the Trustees and indeed by Malcolm, our Director, who has been a great mentor in respect of 'all things EPFA.' We share the same ideals and vision and it is good to work with so many like-minded people, who, collectively, are keen to promote the health and well-being of sport and recreation facilities across Essex.

Having come from mainly a Police and Voluntary Sector background, this is a new and exciting challenge which will allow me to utilise my

skills for the benefit of our member organisations.

My aim is to be able to offer professional advice and guidance relating to the issues which can arise in respect of the day to day running of facilities. To this end the EPFA are funding my attendance on various training courses, which will supplement and enhance my understanding of the issues involved, as well as compliment my Health & Safety, Crime Reduction, Facilitation and Training Skills for which I hold appropriate qualifications, coupled with 'hands on' experience.

In a nutshell, I am happy to help members to resolve local issues, to signpost, carry out site visits, and to give advice where required. Please

feel free to contact me accordingly. I cannot personally guarantee to know all of the answers, but I'm sure that I will be able to find someone who will be able to help your organisation in matters that are outside of my knowledge base or remit.

I would really appreciate your comments or suggestions regarding my role as your 'Field Officer.' In addition, I always welcome input from members and will be pleased to respond to your emails, letters or telephone calls.

Colin I. Freeman,  
MInstF. MIDPE. MITOL  
EPFA Field Officer  
Tel / Fax: 0845 1080124  
Mobile: 07778 461214

## Library

Please remember that EPFA maintains a library of reference books, brochures and pamphlets available to all members. We hold copies of all current NPFA publications as well as a wide selection of RoSPA material and many catalogues from manufacturers of play equipment, etc.

Members are welcome to borrow any of the items for a nominal sum to cover postage. Should you wish to purchase your own copy of a NPFA or RoSPA publication, we can obtain a discount on the cover price in most instances, so long as the order is placed through us.

Contact Malcolm Webb on our helpline, 012177 218005