

Best Kept Playing Fields Competition

(Sponsored by Essex Police)

It seems that no sooner has one year's competition ended than the next year's is under way, but to such extent has the BKPFC grown in recent years that that is indeed the case.

By the time you read this, entry forms will have been sent out to all last year's participants. If you are one of them but you haven't received your entry invitation, please give Malcolm Webb a call (01277 218005). We automatically send them to the nominated contact on last year's entry forms, but of course such contacts can alter from one year to the next without us being made aware.

Entrants to the competition increased last year by over ten percent on 2006 numbers, and we fully expect at least a similar level of growth this year. All the sponsors of the various classes have already confirmed their continued

involvement, and we are delighted to welcome Essex Police as sponsors of the overall competition (see separate article in this issue). There is little doubt now that the competition is second only to the Rural Community Council's "Best Village" competition in terms of prestige.

The additional benefit that was brought to the competition last year for the first time of offering the services of our Field Officer to visit any entrants after the results were announced in order to discuss any particular issues raised by the judges also went down well. A number of participants have taken advantage of this facility, and any that haven't but would like to can contact Colin Freeman (0845 1080124) to arrange an appointment. All the advice given by Colin is free to our members: all we ask is a modest contribution to his travel costs. And remember that if, following the meeting, it is apparent that remedial

work is necessary, Colin can also put you in touch with prospective grant providers in all probability.

Obviously our judges are key to the success of the competition. We currently have around twenty volunteers, which means that none of them has to judge more than five entries. If the number of entrants does indeed increase again this year, we shall need a few more judges to maintain that limit. As we have said before, it is a worthwhile pastime for a couple of sunny summer mornings. No previous experience is necessary, and the appropriate training is supplied free. We even pay a mileage allowance!

If you think you'd like to be a judge, why not give Malcolm a call to find out more? You're under no obligation if you ultimately decide it's not for you, but all our recent 'recruits' have found it to be a most agreeable diversion.

Intercricket Tournament 2008

Following the successful launch of our Intercricket Tournament for Year-7 schoolchildren last year at Dunmow Cricket Club and involving pupils from four schools in the Saffron Walden area, we are taking the show to Witham this year.

As before, four schools will be involved – Bramston and Rickstones in Witham, Thurstable in Tiptree and Alec Hunter in Braintree, providing six teams of eight to play in two "mini-leagues" of three, with the group winners, runners-up and third place sides playing each other to determine the overall positions. The winning teams receive trophies and every participant gets a certificate to commemorate the event.

This year's tournament will take place on Wednesday, 18 June, starting at 1.00 pm.

The whole purpose of the tournament is to encourage 11-year-old boys and girls to get involved in cricket. They may well have had an introduction to it in the form of "Kwik Cricket" at primary school, but organised competitive cricket invariably doesn't start at secondary school until Under-13 level – certainly so far as the County is concerned, and our aim is to plug that gap so that fewer children are lost to the game through lack of opportunity.

To that end we are very grateful to Essex County Cricket Board for their support of this event and also to Sean Bunch at Witham Cricket Club for agreeing to host it. Hopefully the sun will shine, everyone will enjoy themselves, and Witham CC might even end up with some new colts members!

A full report of the day will appear in a later edition of "The Playing Field".

The Playing Field



Essex Playing Fields Association Newsletter

New Ambassador for EPFA

We are delighted to report that we have our second Ambassador on board.

Former Essex and England cricketer, Peter Such, has agreed to assist us when required, particularly in the areas of helping to develop our profile and increase public and corporate awareness of who we are and what we do in the County.

As a cricketer, Peter took over 1,000 wickets with his off-spin in a career lasting twenty years with Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and, ultimately – and most successfully – Essex. He played in eleven Test Matches and took 37 wickets (and also has the dubious distinction of recording the longest 'duck' in Test history!)

After retiring from professional cricket, Peter created, launched and directed the Essex County Cricket Club Academy and was a specialist coach for the England Under-17 and Under-19 squads. He now runs his own Life Coaching Consultancy helping individuals and companies in the City and locally to develop skills to help them perform to the best of their abilities.

Peter will also be helping us with our on-going membership drive by writing to organisations within the county or hosting seminars introducing EPFA to those who are unaware of our existence (yes, there are still some!) and as a bit of very advanced notice, those of you who attend our AGM on October 30 will have the chance to hear him speak.

"I am very pleased to be involved with Essex Playing Fields Association" said Peter.

"I firmly believe in the need for all of us to do whatever we can to ensure that playing fields are not lost but maintained to the highest level.

As a youngster I can well remember the enjoyment I derived from having the use of a local playing field where my chums and I could play safely and informally, and I am quite certain that without those opportunities I would never have developed as a cricketer and enjoyed the career that I had."



Peter Such
Ex England & Essex Cricketer

Spring 2008

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Give Us A Go!
Play Day 2008
Wednesday 6th August

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Essex Playing Fields Association

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- 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:

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From the President's Desk

As I write this in mid February, I reflect that Essex Playing Fields, like many other charities, are preparing for the year ahead to meet the challenges imposed by tightening budgets, increased expectations and of finding the right people, who will give their time to help us. How are we doing? In brief:

1. we are writing our Strategic Plan and Programme for 2008 – 2110.
2. we are revising our current Business Plan for the next financial year.
3. we have completed the handovers of our Chairman and Honorary Treasurer. So Robert Smith has now succeeded me and Roger Humphries has succeeded Barry Watkinson. Robert Smith and I have carried out a programme of twelve networking visits to introduce Robert to EPFA's key partners.
4. we have appointed Peter Such, the former Essex and England off-spin bowler as our Ambassador. Peter is joining Danny Crates. We are so fortunate to have two such well known and inspirational Ambassadors willing to help us.
5. we have succeeded in signing up 19 volunteer Judges for our Best Kept Playing Field Competition 2008. Our thanks to you all. We need at least 3 more Judges to cope with the growing entry to our competition.
6. we now have an urgent need for a Fundraiser on our Executive Committee. Any volunteers should ring our Director, Malcolm Webb on 01277 218005.

On the project planning front:

1. we have held our first meeting to plan this year's Best Kept Playing Field Competition; Mike Bonner and Herb Danenbergs, our new Technical Officer, are updating the Competition Guidelines. The venue for the briefings of Judges this year will be Danbury PC, The Dawson Memorial Field, winners of Class 1 in 2007.
2. we have held our first planning meeting for our Inter Cricket Tournament for year 7 pupils (boys and girls), which will be hosted by Witham CC for 4 schools in the Witham/Braintree area on June 18. We hope that this will mirror the success of our pilot at Dunmow CC last year.

As many of you will know, the Cricket Foundation charity launched the "Chance to Shine" campaign to regenerate competitive cricket in state schools in England and Wales in 2005.

Its aim was to reach two million children in a third of schools by 2015. In 2007, 200 clubs helped to deliver coaching and competition to more than 1200 state schools. Our Inter Cricket Tournament seems to fit this concept very nicely indeed.

David Gwynne-James

More support from Essex Police

For the third year running we have been made a grant by Essex Police Authority from their Police Property Act fund, and following discussions between our Director, Malcolm Webb, and the Chairman of Essex Police Authority, Robert Chambers, it has been decided that we shall 'ring-fence' this latest grant and any more that we receive in the future specifically to assist with the running costs of our annual Best Kept Playing Fields competition.

As a result, the competition will now carry the by-line "Supported by Essex Police" on all the documentation that we put out and in all the press releases that we distribute regarding the competition.

But this is much more than just a token acknowledgement of the help we've received from Essex Police. We see their agreement to be openly associated with us as a boost for our profile: a form of endorsement, if you like, that we work together towards the same ends – which of course we do. We both have the desire to give youngsters somewhere safe to play to keep them from being bored and hanging around street corners.

And our links with Essex Police go back a long way as well. Ex-Chief Superintendent Iain Munro was a member of our Executive Council for a number of years, and our Council now includes two current serving members of Essex Police: John Hills, their Senior Architectural Liaison Officer, and Colin Freeman, our Field Officer.

The picture shows Malcolm Webb being presented with our cheque for £500 from the Chief Constable, Roger Baker, and Robert Chambers at the recent awards ceremony at Essex Police Headquarters.



Wanted / Offered

This is going to read like a miniature version of the 'classified ads' section of your local newspaper, but here goes.....

Wanted by EPFA

Someone who understands website design and maintenance. Our website, www.essexpfa.org.uk, is – to put it bluntly – a mess. It's out of date, confusing and dreary. It's not for the want of things to put on it: indeed, our Director has piles of articles, information, links and all sorts that he desperately wants to add to it. The trouble is that neither he nor any of our Committee have the foggiest idea how to do it!

Is there anybody out there who can help us???

What we need is somebody to sort it out and tidy it up in the first instance, and then to educate one or two of us so that we can add to it as and when we want to in the future. We're so desperate that we're even prepared to pay for the privilege if necessary (but if someone wants to help us for free, so much the better!)

Please give Malcolm a call (01277 218005) if you can assist. At a time when we're working so hard at raising our profile it's frustrating that what should be our publicity flagship is in such disarray.

For hire

Did you know that we keep two pretty extensive reference libraries of brochures, magazines, booklets, articles and such like – including a comprehensive set of publications from FIT (NPFA, as was) and RoSPA, amongst others. They deal with such diverse matters as health and safety at playgrounds, seed and soil issues on playing fields, insurance, legislation, safety surfaces, and a myriad of other matters that you might find you suddenly need to know about. Give Colin Freeman a call (0845 1080124) if you think we can help you. He can either lend you the publication(s) concerned or perhaps send you a photocopy of a specific article. Either way the service is free to our members.

Also available

Our President, Chairman, Director and Field Officer are all available to speak at your group's meetings. In the past year one or other of us has spoken at Rotary Clubs, Probus Clubs, Local Council Associations, Round Table Associations, Women's Institutes and various other organisations who want a speaker to natter about something different for twenty minutes and are prepared to provide him with a free meal. That's all we ask: a free meal or whatever refreshments are on offer. No other charge, so long as the request comes from one of our members. Call Malcolm for more information.