

## Highlights

### The Continental Airlines World Croquet Championship Strong Interest and a Steady Demand for Tickets

By Chris Hudson

News of the first-ever World Croquet Championship has been received with much excitement abroad and a strong overseas entry is expected.

Representatives from Croquet Associations all over the world will meet at Hurlingham on the morning of Saturday 15th July to progress the formation and future activities of the World Croquet Federation.

Meanwhile, the CA's Hurlingham Office is already receiving requests for tickets to watch the Championship - CA members are admitted free on production of a current membership card; non-members can obtain a ticket from the CA Office (in advance please) on payment of \$5.00.

The organisers of the event are concerned that anyone who wants to attend should be able to do so, but realistically only a certain number can watch a match in comfort. We would therefore ask clubs who are thinking of coming as a group to advise the CA Office of their plans well in advance. Parking at Hurlingham could be a problem if large crowds turn up unexpectedly, particularly in the final stages of the competition.

We have no previous experience of how many spectators to expect at an event like this, but if we are successful in attracting corporate hospitality and achieving a high profile in the media, there could be a considerable

number.

So please obtain tickets early, and let us know, approximately if need be, how many to expect. We can then plan properly to ensure that your day out at the Championship is as enjoyable as possible.

The next issue of this magazine will include a separate section giving the background to the Championship, player profiles, articles about the World Croquet scene, and the full event programme, with travel details telling you how to get to Hurlingham.

We look forward to meeting you there.

### The Croquet Classic Entries Up Again!

By Chris Hudson

Early indications are that individual entries for this year's Croquet Classic will once again be up on the previous year. Many players who have competed in earlier competitions have entered again to test their skill against all-comers in the search for the best garden croquet player in the country.

Clubs have until 1st June to make group entries for their beginners and new recruits this season. Remember that anyone can enter, provided they have never had a handicap of 18 or less. The minimum number of competitors in a group is eight, and the group competition can be organised in any way you like.

The only stipulation is that the winner must have played at least three games to win the group, and that the group competition is decided by 30th June in time for the winner to go through to the National Regional Finals.

Last year, group entries were received from hotels, schools, businesses, polytechnics, local groups of players and croquet clubs. Several group qualifying competitions were organised by regional newspapers.

If you would like to enter and find you have missed the closing date of 1st May for individuals, then persuade your friends to enter as a group! It's great fun, and if successful you can win your way to the final at St Mary's College, Twickenham, (home of Hugh Walpole) on Saturday 16th September.

For full details of the competition, entry forms, etc, please contact Chris Hudson (Tel: 0270-820296).



The 'Champion of Champions' tournament, Hurlingham 1967. Will this year's crowd be bigger?

#### The Keystone Summer Leisure Competition

A prize, a Keystone Regency All-weather 35mm camera, will be awarded to the CA member who takes the best croquet-related photograph published in 'Croquet', Issues 204 to 207 inclusive. In judging the entries, account will be taken of 'atmosphere, interest, and action'.



The Keystone Regency All-weather 35mm Camera.

The Keystone 35mm camera is simple to use and with built-in flash it freezes even the fastest action, producing good, sharp pictures. It is resistant to dust, sand and rain and it even floats. It retails at approximately \$50 at most major stores.

#### Keystone Tips for Great Pictures

Picture taking can be a snap, and with today's aim-and-shoot cameras, anyone can take photos they'll be proud to share with their friends and family. There are no big secrets to taking good photos. Here are some tips that can make the difference between taking good and great shots.

1. Keep your hands steady and elbows tucked in as you press the shutter button.
2. Stand at least five feet away from your subject. Being too close will cause the image to blur.
3. When outdoors, try to shoot the picture with the sun at your back. Also, avoid shaded areas that will cause shadows or cover up your subject. Indoors, place your subject close to a background; do not shoot into the middle of a large room - and don't forget the flash!
4. Whenever possible, include people in the picture. This will make a more exciting, personal photo.

5. Focus on a small group or part of a scene for each photo. If you try to get too much into each picture, most of it will be lost and the photo will be confusing.
6. Never leave your camera or film in the boot, glove compartment or on the rear window of your car. Direct sunlight and high temperatures could

have an adverse effect on the quality of the film.

Following these few rules will help you take photos you'll be proud to pass around, and keep your camera working at its best for many, many years.



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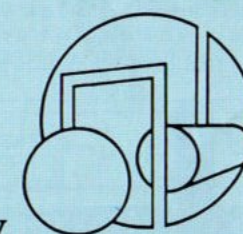
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Your letters

and lots more!

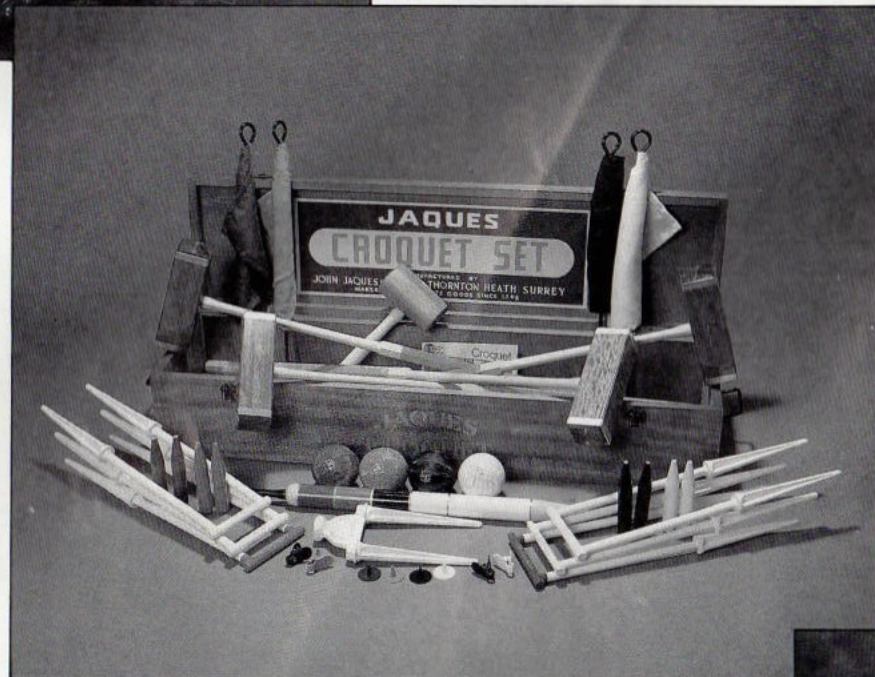
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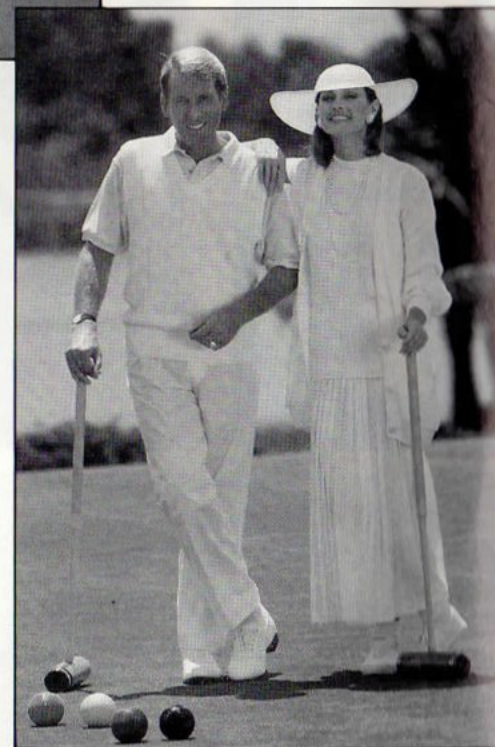
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### Publication Details

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**Contributions** (except tournament reports and results) and photographs (preferably black and white) should be sent to the Editor. They will be much welcomed and acknowledged.

**Tournament results and reports** to be sent direct, within 7 days of completion of the tournament, to the Secretary of the CA.

All correspondence about non-delivery of 'Croquet', changes of address, telephone numbers, handicaps or officials should be sent to the CA Secretary and **not** to the Editor.

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## Editorial

### LOOKING AHEAD

Members of the CA's Development Committee have been asked to think about the 'Constitutional Role of the Federations within the CA' over the summer, in preparation for a more detailed discussion at the Committee's next meeting in the autumn.

With the formation of the Southern Federation and the discussions now in progress about forming three separate Northern Federations - Yorkshire & Humberside, the North East, and the North West, all operating within the umbrella of a 'Northern Croquet Conference' - all clubs should shortly have an opportunity to affiliate to their own local Federation.

Strong, financially viable Regional Federations will make (and indeed, are already making) a major contribution to the administration and development of croquet in the Regions. They will enable the CA's operational overheads to be kept to a minimum commensurate with providing a central coordinating service.

We shall have to wait and see what conclusions the Development Committee and Council reach, but personally I would like to see each Federation given the right to nominate its own Council representative. Under this arrangement, Council could still consist of 24 members as at present, but with 9 members nominated by the Federations and 15 members elected by national ballot. There must be many different views on the future role of our Federations, and I would welcome letters on the subject for inclusion in our next issue.

Once self-sufficient, Federations will be keen to seek their own local sponsorship, and several Federations have already achieved this. Most recently, the West Midlands Federation has obtained sponsorship from the Heart of England Building Society for three West Midlands 'Masters' tournaments this season. The entry fees from these competitions will provide an additional source of income for the Federation - which makes me wonder why no-one had thought of it before!

These 'Masters' tournaments have an unusual format, which may well provide what some croquet players have been seeking for some time. Entrants will

be split into blocks of 6 or 7, and will be required to play everyone else in the block by the end of August. Block winners will then play in a knockout competition culminating in a final in October to decide who holds the 'Master's' title.

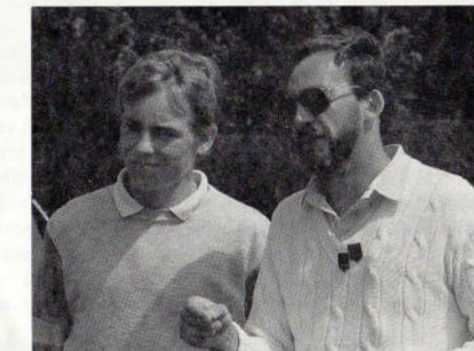
This format enables those who are short of time or saddled with heavy business or family commitments to choose the venue and time for each of their matches. It should thus be a boon to those who cannot find the time to take even a weekend off for a tournament, giving them a chance of competitive play at their own level.

Finally, news of another interesting development - the introduction of 'group' membership by a number of clubs round the country. Under this scheme, any group (such as a local school or a WI or TWG branch or federation) can pay a 'group' subscription which enables anyone from that group to use the club facilities for a particular morning or afternoon each week.

Many club facilities are under-used during the daytime, and this scheme has the great merit that it provides an introduction to the game for potential members whilst not depriving existing members of facilities at peak times.

Detailed arrangements about fees and facilities will obviously be a matter between the club and the group concerned, but I would be very happy to provide more information about existing arrangements if that would help anyone considering introducing such a scheme.

CHRIS HUDSON.



Andrew Bennet explains a point of law to Roland Sinker.

### SHORT STORY PRIZE

Congratulations to Dorothy Rush, who has won the Short Story competition for the second year running, this time with her story entitled 'My Uncle George, the First Professional', published in Issue 197. A cheque for £10 is on its way to Mrs Rush.

The judges were: Alan Tunbridge, Vincent George, Mark Saurin, Deborah Latham, Roy Tillcock, Don Gaunt, Peter Hallett, Juliet Povey, Andrew Potter, Gwen Holliday, David Ruscombe-King, and Jeane Ackermann.

A large majority of the judges felt that the stories *did* enhance the magazine and I look forward to receiving more contributions from budding authors. Please bear in mind that you are writing a short story (maximum 2000 words), and don't be disappointed if your story is not printed immediately upon receipt, as there are still quite a number in the pipeline.

A £25 prize will be awarded for the best Short Story published in Issues 202 to 207 inclusive. Stories already received will become eligible for a prize when they are published.

Once more, the Editor would like to thank all those who have submitted short stories for the pleasure they have given. Thank you also to the judges for sparing time to judge the competition.

**Photographs in this issue by:** Andrew Bennet, Ely Standard, Chris Hudson, Phil Gamble, Roger Jackman, Pat Shine, Andrew Saurin, Peter Bradshaw, David Higgs, Fraser Mackenzie, Don Gaunt, John Walters, Charles Townsend, Smokey Eades, Jeff Bowden, David

Isgrove and Dennis Ripp.

**Front Cover:** Martin Hodges welcomes two members of the public at the East Anglia Federation's National Trust competition, sponsored by Moët & Chandon.

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## Indoor Croquet

### 1989 Soham Indoor Weekend

Report by Chris Clarke.

The world's first indoor open croquet tournament took place at Soham Sports Centre on 14th and 15th January. Twelve players had been invited and despite three of these being unavailable, the field was still strong with 8 of the top 11 players competing. The players were separated into 4 top seeds who were to play the winners of 4 lower seeds vs 4 non-seeds.

Players arriving on the Friday night had been told to start rolling up at 7pm which several did. It was 9pm when the ever-punctual tournament organiser John Walters arrived. However, the CP's used this time to play on a general knowledge machine. With hindsight, it is interesting to note that the success achieved on this machine was directly proportional to the success achieved on the croquet lawn - so next year's event may well be decided in the bar.

Friday night also brought several CP's their first sample of John Walters' newly-acquired driving skills. Perhaps it is unfair to say that the hair-raising journey to Cambridge before the gates were locked was all John's fault... at least he ignored Graham Budd's directions to go straight on, which would have led to a battle between a red Ford Escort and a brick wall. The epic proportions of moving between colleges and a poker game finally ensured the members of the U-21 squad their favourite bedtime - 4.45am.

11 o'clock arrived and the tournament was under way. A crowd of about 30 were waiting eagerly to see the promised 'sort of croquet spectators often dream about'. Unfortunately, they were disappointed.

The first two hours of play between the non-seeds and the lower seeds was not the most riveting croquet ever seen. Keith Aiton provided a brief insight into what was possible with a solid performance against Martin French, but it was Cordingly vs. Walters that brought the excitement. Phil had played well to obtain a large lead, but had used up a great deal of his time. With less than a minute left, Phil started deeming, thereby allowing John to trundle round on a 1½ ball break. Phil was forced to play and his flag dropped with him still needing 4 hoops. The result was therefore Walters bt Cordingly - 4(TO) (timed out).

And so the big guns arrived with Nigel Aspinall showing his skills after very little practice to defeat John Walters. Mark Avery, however, fared less well against Robert Fulford who played well and benefitted from Mark's mistakes. Clarke vs. Saurin followed and Chris managed 2 hoops before Mark reached peg and peg. A missed 3 yard peg out allowed Chris to clang hoop 6 again but Mark failed to capitalise and Chris made it to rover before another clang. Mark used the contact well to miss another 3 yard peg out but Chris was unable to hit in (perhaps he couldn't face making more than 12 mistakes in half

an hour), allowing Mark through to the semis. The last quarter final between Aiton and Mulliner showed Keith to be in top form - Steve's misery being com(pounded) by pound coin bets on Keith being dropped to the bookie (Robert) from the balcony above. Steve's exit was welcomed by the other top seed failures who now realised that the results wouldn't go towards the rankings!

The swiss now started and Martin Murray became the first and eventually only player to complete a double peel.

Chris Clarke, playing with Steve Mulliner's mallet, proved that it is impossible to miss with it until he started experimenting with how much Wrist to use.

The semis were both fairly standard games with both winners providing solid performances - the finalists being Aiton and Saurin. Fulford had an extra incentive to beat Aiton since he had been running a book. Much money had been placed on the outsiders, especially Aiton and Saurin, and Robert now stood to lose 20 pounds whichever won.

The match of the tournament was undoubtedly the 3rd round swiss between Steve and Debbie Cornelius. Debbie had played well, but was in dire time trouble. With one ball left for the peg, Debbie had only 10 seconds left. Her shot was excellent, but just hilled off leaving her about 4 seconds left. Steve meanwhile was wiring Debbie from the peg and making a few hoops himself. Steve's kind nature showed in that he didn't toy with Debbie too long - when he

started laying up right next to her. Debbie, not having time to take croquet took a wild shot at the peg and her time ran out.... a result N.I.D. as they say. This match provided an excellent finale to Saturday, finishing at 11.45.

The evenings (or rather mornings) entertainment of a game of Scruples proved two things:-

1. That Mark Saurin could be beaten at something and
2. That Keith's daughter had aged 1 year.

Sunday's games started off with the swiss which allowed Steve to regain some of the top seeds' honour by beating Martin Murray in the final.

After an excellent lunch, the third and fourth place play-off between Aspinall and Fulford began. This was played as a full 26 point game with 1 hour each. This format provided a much better class of game and despite a good 4th turn break by Robert, Nigel managed to secure 3rd place.

The final started at 4 o'clock and Keith took the first game after forgetting a lift, missing the subsequent 3 yard roquet, but running his hoop, 4 back, in the distance. Keith then hit the long return roquet and finished.

The second game contained plenty of mistakes and good shooting by both players, but Mark took it. Mark was soon in again in the third and got one ball to peg in a few turns, but Keith replied with a break to penult. Lack of control, however, forced him to concede the innings by going into opposite corners. After more innings-shifting, Mark looked

## Indoor Croquet

set to finish, but mis-approached penult - twice! He took a wide join along the south boundary when Keith had laid a rush to 6th. Keith mis-approached 6th and Mark was left with an easy finish, thereby becoming the winner of the first Soham Indoor Tournament.

There were several side events during the weekend which provided both players and spectators alike with a chance to take a break from the main lawn and perhaps even win one of the many trophies that Charles Townsend generously donated.

The final of the bowls carpet event gave Don Cornelius victory over Fiona McCoig, whilst Albert Lawrence beat Charles Townsend (who had beaten 2 President's Cup Players) in the final of the level play hard floor event. Finally, Martin French became the winner of the inaugural Tiddly-croquet Championship and intends to donate the trophy (which you've got to see to believe), as a prize for 'the most drunk Ipswich player!'

The tournament was voted a suc-



Keith Aiton in play on the HardFloor Indoor Croquet at Soham, January 1989.

cess and everybody expressed their hope that this would become an annual event. The venue, Soham Sports Centre, was excellent in virtually every aspect. However, the incredible 'hilliness' of the carpet did detract somewhat from the standard of play, with some strokes curling more than a yard. The format was not completely perfect, and the top seeds' bye was more of a punishment than anything else.... especially on such a foreign surface. Most people found the 40 minute time limits satisfactory for an 18 point game, but the 1 hour 26 point game did appear to give a more controlled performance to the play of Aspinall and Fulford.

Finally, two questions:-

1. Why wasn't Chris Hudson present for such a good opportunity to promote the game, and
2. Who won the raffle?

\*The event was promoted by the East Anglian Federation to obtain regional publicity. No doubt Chris was doing his bit elsewhere! - Ed.

## Natural History

### WILDLIFE ON THE CROQUET LAWN: Part II

By Leslie Riggall

#### SOUTH AFRICA

At a distance of 12 miles we are too far from the Indian Ocean (Durban) to receive visits from seagulls. But we do see an extraordinary range of beautiful birds while sitting beside the croquet lawn of the Fern Valley Botanic Garden.

The only bird which is not welcome is the Hadeda Ibis, a large species which makes a raucous noise which I find irritating. My garden is in effect a bird sanctuary, and because we have no cats or boys with airguns, as in the residential area which entirely surrounds us, the garden is a natural refuge for them. We have more than 150 species resident here, and other interesting visitors for short periods.

Perhaps the most exciting is the fruit-eating Purple Crested Lourie, a large bird the size of a crow, with iridescent plumage, green violet and purple, contrasting with its large brilliant crimson wings. When these birds fly past, usually two or three at short intervals, their crimson wings flashing in the sunlight, it is a sight which can never be forgotten. We have three breeding pairs, due to our policy of ecological preservation. Although we do have thousands of exotic plants, I have maintained areas mainly covered with indigenous trees and plants, and these attract the birds by providing vast quantities of fruit, and the millions of insects which are hosted by the indigenous trees and plants. Because there is such an abundance of their natural food, fruits and exotic plants are rarely eaten. Thus the deep red or cream berries of *Ardisia crispa*, and the beautiful blue berries of *Dichroa febrifuga*, stay on the plants until the next crop appear.

One of the most familiar of the large birds is the Yellow-Billed Kite, soaring effortlessly overhead, looking for food. Normally harmless to other birds, because it is a raptor it is often harassed by the Fork-tailed Drongo, a plucky little bird which is quite fearless. Such duels are amusing to watch.

Another raptor constantly seen is the African Goshawk, a ferocious and powerful bird not afraid of humans, and a danger to poultry. It does not dive onto its prey like other hawks. We see it waiting in a tree, from where it launches its attack on a bird, and pursues its prey with great speed and agility through the branches of the trees.

Occasionally we see the magnificent Crowned Eagle and also the mighty Black Eagle soaring overhead. Measuring about 3 feet in

spite of a very short tail, they are Africa's most powerful eagles, killing the smaller antelopes, hyrax, monkeys, young baboons, mon-goose, etc. The Black Eagle knocks even large antelopes over precipices and is reliably reported to molest leopards. I presume this is to drive the leopard away from its prey, quite amazing when one considers the extreme ferocity of an angry leopard.



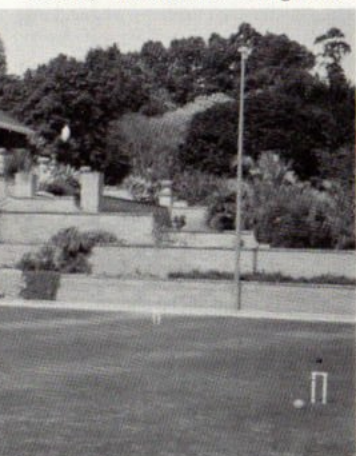
The walled terraces above the croquet lawn.

One of the raptors seen constantly after our winter is the Steppe Buzzard, which flies all the way from the frozen steppes of Russia to subtropical South Africa. But the strongest raptor we see is the Gymnogene. Mainly a beautiful soft grey, ornamented with black and white bands, it has large wings and long yellow legs which have evolved from its specialised method of hunting. It feeds mainly on tree-dwelling lizards, and climbs up and down tree-trunks, feeling in all the holes and crevices with its long legs and talons for lizards, nestling birds, mice, etc. It is the only raptor which hunts its prey without looking at it. It also hangs upside down clinging to suspended weaver bird nests, flapping its wings rather clumsily as it tears into the beautifully woven nest to obtain the nestling.

The lawn overlooks an attractive pond down below, and a visitor which stayed for a while was an African Fish Eagle. This splendid bird, white, chestnut and black, is well known for its wild ringing cry, which evokes a deep nostalgic response in all lovers of Africa and its wildlife. Looking down on the pond we see at various times many fishing birds, cormorants, the Giant Kingfisher and other beautiful kingfishers, the Great White Egret, various herons, and the unique Hamerkop (Hammerhead), regarded with superstitious awe by the Africans, a weird bird which is

quite tame and feeds on crabs, frogs and fish.

The smaller birds display every colour of the rainbow, especially the charming sunbirds, which resemble humming-birds and feed on flower nectar. Our birds are as colourful as the flowers, as the names indicate, for example. Emerald Cuckoo, Yellow Bunting, Blue-Billed Firefinch, Golden Oriole, Malachite Kingfisher

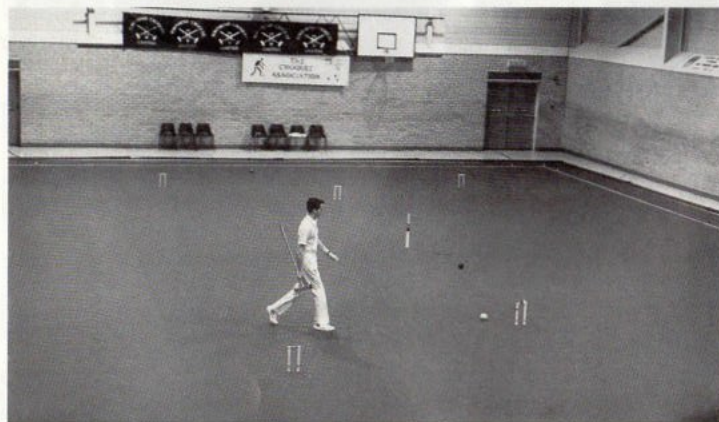


(mostly purple and orange), Yellow Canary, Cinnamon Dove, Paradise Flycatcher (blue and orange, two very long pendulous tails) Orange breasted Shrike, Glossy Starling (brilliant iridescent green, purple), Plum Coloured Starling, Trogon (crimson and green) Blue Waxbill and Yellow Weaver.

The croquet lawn is embellished by a series of walled terraces on the higher ground above it, with 'hanging gardens', and as they face north they are warm and dry and are much favoured by Lizards. Of these our clear favourite is the Agama Lizard. It is the largest Lizard here and the males are impressive, with a very large bright blue head and orange flanks and thighs. Although they do run on to the lawn to catch insects, open ground is rather dangerous with predatory birds around, and they watch for insects from the terrace walls or the low wall surrounding the lawn.

We do not see many mammals, no doubt because of the danger of open ground, but a troop of Blue Vervet Monkeys comes through the valley regularly, and they insult us with coughing and scolding sounds from the safety of the trees near the lawn.

One night a small dog which strayed into the garden was killed right beside the croquet lawn by monkeys. The method which these monkeys always use to kill a dog is bizarre and horrible. They surround it until it becomes confused



Keith Aiton playing in the final.



John Walters (left) and Richard Hilditch.



Mark Saurin holds aloft his trophy.



Fiona McCoig playing on a croquet court made from short mat bowls carpets, with the hoops fitted between the individual carpet strips.

and terrified by the noise and rapid movement. Then the monkeys dash in to attack in turn. Each monkey leaps onto the dog and tears a strip of skin lengthways off its back. When we found it the next morning the whole of the dog's back was flayed from the head to the end of the tail. The strangest feature was the neat precision with which the dog had been skinned in narrow strips. We found no serious bite, but the cumulative effect is fatal.

Although we do not like to see these lively animals leaping around our treasured exotic plants, they do not eat them, they feed mainly on the leaves and fruits of the indigenous trees of the woodland.

We have seen three species of mongoose here. The large White-Tailed Mongoose is probably only an occasional visitor. But the nocturnal Water Mongoose is definitely resident, even though I have seen it only once, by the pond below the lawn. We have a small stream and a series of ponds, and every morning we see fresh tracks in the mud right through the valley. It is a large and powerful mongoose but harmless, feeding on frogs, crabs, rodents, and insects.

Even normally reliable writers make wild statements concerning mongooses. Col. J. Stevenson-Hamilton, Warden of the Kruger National Park, in his classic, 'Wild Life in Southern Africa', refers to 'its taste for waterfowl, among which it creates considerable havoc'. But an examination of the stomach contents of nineteen specimens produced no trace of any bird, the contents being as stated above, plus 4.5% of fish.

The species we see constantly is the small terrestrial Slender Mongoose, delightful to watch, especially a small family of this species, which is normally solitary. It is intelligent, lively and inquisitive, and its quick movements are sinuous and graceful. The colour varies from golden sandy to dark brown, but at present we seem to have only dark ones. They like to follow roads and paths, and search for insects on open lawn, which makes them vulnerable to their predators the eagles. A friend in the garden, this mongoose feeds mainly on insects and also eats mice and lizards, and contrary to general belief, it rarely kills snakes.

Again Col. Stevenson-Hamilton is misinformed about this species. He must have listened to a lot of nonsense on the subject by farmers, who are usually prejudiced against predators, most of which are beneficial to farmers. He wrote that it 'has the reputation' of

attacking hen roosts, will kill the deadly Black Mamba, and is nocturnal. In fact it is diurnal, and does not appear until well after sunrise when it is warmer. An analysis of 60 Slender Mongoose stomach contents revealed only 5% of birds and 2.5% of snakes. It is only the size of a stoat, and if it did have a serious encounter with a Mamba the ten-foot snake would probably eat it. In practice I am sure the little mongoose would vanish as soon as it saw such a terrible snake. It is a friend of the farmer, like the eagles which are so often shot or poisoned by farmers who misunderstand the function of predators.



A Red-lipped Herald snake trying to swallow a platanna.

Incidentally we do not have the terrestrial Black Mamba here, and if we do have any of the inoffensive arboreal Green Mambas they would be in the tree canopy out of reach. In eleven years I have seen many snakes here, but never a dangerous one. The Zulus panic at the sight of these harmless creatures. I once had to 'rescue' a woman completely transfixed and paralysed by fear of a pretty Natal Green Snake in a bush. When I arrived the snake disappeared immediately, and the woman came to life again.

We have vast numbers of amphibians and some seek food on the croquet lawn. Even the truly aquatic platanna sometimes wanders about (very awkwardly, because it is so completely adapted for swimming) looking for a new home. This is familiar in England as it is frequently featured in zoo aquaria as the 'Clawed Frog'. It is extremely voracious and when my superintendent placed one wanderer in a jar with three shubunkins he found to his dismay twenty minutes later that only the platanna remained. The photograph shows a Red-lipped Herald snake trying to swallow a platanna. It gave up the impossible task after an hour. The mild venom, not dangerous to humans, was fatal to the platanna.

For a naturalist the widest and most interesting field for study and observation here is the incredible variety of insects and other small

creatures such as spiders. We are very fortunate in that, apart from mosquitoes which are found everywhere, even in Arctic regions, we have no stinging flies.

The indigenous trees support millions of caterpillars which all become moths or butterflies. Every colour of the spectrum, and every shade of those colours, is flaunted by butterflies as they float or flicker through the garden.

We have an equally wide colour range in those living iridescent jewels the dragonflies. The oldest flying creatures, preceding the pterodactyl by 100 million years, their ancestors included the largest



flying insect that has ever existed, measuring 2½ feet (75cm), which is the size of an eagle. No other creature or machine can match their amazing mastery of flight. They have dazzling speed, stopping instantly, followed by instant acceleration or even reversal of direction. I only wish I had more time to watch them. One other interesting fact is that the dragonfly invented jet propulsion, 300 million years before man copied the idea. It is used in the larval stage, when it is entirely aquatic. Dragonflies are important controllers of mosquito populations, catching them in the water and in the air.

One of the strangest experiences I had while playing on the croquet lawn was when it was floodlit after dark. There was a nuptial flight of termites at the time and these were fatally attracted by the 18,000 watts of light. A large bat seemed to understand the situation and swooped back and forth over the lawn, eating an incredible number of them. The termite's head and thorax, to which the four wings are attached, are hard and had no value to the bat, but the body is succulent, sweet and nutritious (in fact the Africans eat them). As the bat hit each termite I heard his teeth snap as he neatly severed the head, thorax and wings from the large abdomen instantaneously in flight, so that he swallowed only the body, while the useless part with the wings fell onto the lawn.

I watched with great interest and found on examination of the remains all over the lawn that the bat never made a mistake, always snapping at the junction of thorax and abdomen. The mystery lies in the fact that the bat was swooping at speed, and its vision is poor - it relies on echolocation to 'see' things.

An entirely different species is the very large nocturnal fruit bat. Called 'flying foxes', they have a ghostly appearance flying around in moonlight. There is a huge wild fig tree just above the lawn, bearing many thousands of small figs, not edible to human taste, but very attractive to fruit bats. The 'flying foxes' make a delightful musical sound like a high-pitched bell at night when not feeding. Another interesting visitor to this tree in daytime is the large noisy Trumpeter Hornbill. They come in flocks and make a strange loud sound, almost like a baby crying.

I could write another article or even a book on the spiders of this garden. The fishing spider, the spider that spins a golden web, (it shines in the sun just like spun gold), the quite large black spider, which is so miraculously camouflaged and shaped that people cannot see it even if you tell them where it is. Perhaps I should explain that one would never know where it is unless one sees it go to its diurnal resting place on a branch or twig. It does this early in the morning after eating its nocturnal web, destroying the evidence of its presence. Another curious fact is that each bark spider differs from all others in shape, so birds or hunting wasps cannot learn to recognise them. The legs are heavily fringed so that when it folds itself up they merge, and neither they nor the body can be seen. I have seen only three in eleven years, and the first time it folded up in one very quick movement, I was baffled, as it appeared to have vanished, and I could not find it.

Spiders are normally lone hunters or trappers, and readily kill each other, yet we have a communal spider, many individuals sharing a huge web and the food which is caught. Palystes, with a leg span up to 5 inches, is a powerful wandering hunter capable of killing geckoes, but harmless to humans unless one is so foolish as to poke a hand into a female's nest when it is guarding its baby spiders. This formidable spider is the prey of a beautiful blue and orange wasp, which attacks and paralyzes its much larger adversary. Occasionally they drag a live but help-

Continued on Page 15

## Chairman's Report

By Martin Murray

I recently heard of a gathering of players at a large croquet club who were quite adamant that Andrew Hope was still chairman of the CA. This comes as a salutary reminder towards the end of my first year in office that the CA, and certainly its officers, are not as important as we might sometimes like to think. But this is perhaps a useful theme for an annual report, as we look back over the last year.

In his report last year Andrew mentioned the importance of ensuring that the finances of the CA are sound, and this continues to be the largest problem with which the Council has to deal. Most of our income comes from three sources - subscriptions, sponsorship, and the Sports Council grant. The futures of the latter two are very uncertain, so that a sound funding of our essential activities can only be based on increased membership.

Membership showed another healthy increase in 1988, but we need more than 2000 members to fund our regular expenditure (magazine, secretary, tournament programme etc.). The alternative will be a smaller magazine, unless we can continue our current level of sponsorship income.

The sponsorship and grant components of our income are being mainly applied to the development programme, including the employment of our Development Officer and Gazette Editor Chris Hudson, with the aim of increasing the membership to the required levels.

The Sports Council grant does however come with strings, particularly the requirement that funds be applied to particular programmes. Thus we have to spend money on coaching videos, which have been supported by the Sports Council, rather than on grants for the provision of new lawns, which have not been supported.

Sponsorship is the only way that we have been able to support the recent level of activity in the development programme, but it is never easy to get new sponsorships when agreements expire. This makes budgeting, particularly in the medium to long term, very difficult, and we have to make contingency plans for the situation

where we have no sponsorship income at all. The Garden Croquet Classic, which was so successful in its first year when sponsored by Lassale, was run without sponsorship in 1988, and attracted even more entries, but cost quite a lot of money as well as volunteers' time and effort. Its publicity value as a means of attracting new members to the CA makes the effort well worth while, and we will continue supporting it in 1989.

While we were relatively successful with gaining sponsorship in 1988, most of those agreements (Listers, Carlsberg, and Bombay Gin) have now expired, and we have so far only got one definite agreement to replace them. This is however a most exciting opportunity, since our agreement with Continental Airlines will enable us to stage croquet's first ever official World Championship, at Hurlingham in July.

This represents a unique opportunity to gain publicity for croquet, and all members can help in this by collecting any press cuttings from their local press, as well as details of local TV and radio coverage. An example of what can be done was provided by the Solomon trophy match against the USA in 1988, when the excellent hard work put in by Peter Danks, Chairman of the Publicity Committee, resulted in an unprecedented amount of media coverage of the event. For the first World Championship we can and must do even better.

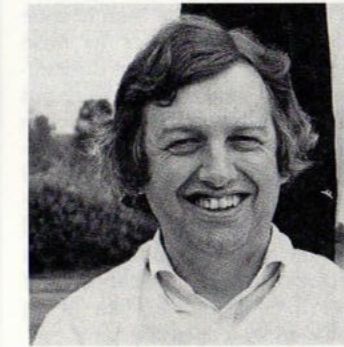
The fact that this new World Championship can be titled 'official' is a concrete result of the formation of the World Croquet Federation. This body has taken longer to form than we had originally expected, but it is already showing benefits. International croquet is becoming more important, with increased contact between different countries. The American players who came to England last year for the Solomon Trophy match and the Open Championship made many friends, and we look forward to seeing some of them and players from other countries at the World Championship in 1989.

The pages of our gazette frequently contain reminders that we have a lively membership

with strong opinions about the running of the CA. Two recent issues that have raised members' concerns have been professionalism and drugs. Both issues may seem irrelevant to the friendly atmosphere we all expect at tournaments, and Council may seem to be out of touch with members in raising these two issues. In fact, both changes of regulations were responses to outside pressures; in the case of professionalism the threat of a split as a few players become attracted by prize money offered by sponsors in the USA, and in the case of drugs a requirement of the Sports Council, who are following government demands to ensure that all sports are free from drugs.

It is my firm belief that croquet in England will remain almost totally amateur, and drug-free, whatever rules we make. But if Council had failed to change the regulations on professionalism, we would have risked a damaging split between the majority of players and those few lucky enough to be able to win prize money abroad. The effects of such splits on other games, such as rugby, are not what I would like to see happening to croquet, and the example of rugby also shows that amateurism is not the cast-iron guarantee of good behaviour by players that some people suggest. And a failure to introduce anti-drug regulations would have put our Sports Council grant in danger.

Once again I seem to have come back to money, which is not what croquet is about, but



Martin Murray.

unfortunately tends to be what administration is about. Instead I would like to end by acknowledging all those people who have worked so hard during the past year to make croquet the enjoyable game I want it to be for us all. Chris Hudson and Brian MacMillan are both paid for their services to the CA, but we are very fortunate that both of them are so dedicated to the interests of the Association.

The volunteers, members of Council and others, are too numerous for all to be named, and it might seem unfair to mention only one. But in fact it would be unfair not to mention our long serving Treasurer, Alan Oldham. Only when I became Vice-Chairman did I start to appreciate how much work Alan does for the CA. Having worked so closely with him for the last year I cannot imagine how the CA could survive without his wisdom, experience and dedication.

### OBITUARY

Miss H. D. Parker

Many of the older visitors to Southwick will be sorry to learn that Hazel Parker died at the beginning of February.

At one time she was a member of the Compton Club, but she was associated with Southwick for over thirty years, where she was a loved and respected member. She worked hard for the Club in many ways, being Hon Secretary in 1960 and 1961 and also at one time Tournament Secretary. Her first tournament win was the 'D' class event at Devonshire Park, Eastbourne, in 1950, which she won with a handicap of 10. For the next twenty years

and more her name was seldom out of the prize lists, particularly at Southwick and Eastbourne, and her handicap came down to 2½.

In 1967 she played in the Ladies' Invitation Event. In the early 1970s she moved from Hove to live in Southwick, very near the Club, where she became an almost daily visitor. She played in tournaments until 1979, and even after she could no longer play she came often, with her inseparable companion, Bella, a long-haired dachshund, to meet old friends and watch games. In 1988 she moved into a nursing home in Seaford to be near her family, and she died there.

J.H.B.

**Hands off Cheltenham!**

Dear Sir,  
Having just come back from a long winter holiday I find the wolves at the door. In the March issue Richard Hilditch tries to raise support for an attack on Cheltenham Club - and as if that were not enough I find a personal criticism of me as a manager in an anonymous article on page 14. At least I think it is meant as criticism. The whole article is so flabby that I feel like the politician who said that an attack on him by the Chancellor of the Exchequer was like being savaged by a dead sheep.

I don't intend to discuss the article, which I find pathetic - but I do seriously suggest an end to anonymity in the Croquet magazine. I can understand why people like Dorothy Rush and Peg Howt are, with good reason, modest about their literary ability, but if they want their blushes spared they should refrain from controversy. If they want to mention others by name, and if they want a serious discussion about conduct at tournaments or about management, they should have the courage to sign their name.

Dennis Moorcraft,  
Cheltenham.

**More Research Needed**

Dear Sir,  
I think I understood some of Eric Solomon's article, 'Ban the Heavy Roller', concerning possibly suspicious aspects of giant pass rolls. However, there was one variable which his article appeared to overlook.

A pass roll implies that the balls travel in different directions. The wider the angle of split, the further the striker's ball will travel, since a smaller proportion of energy is taken by the croqueted ball. Has Eric Solomon taken this into account?

There must presumably be some angle of split at which a pass roll producing a ratio greater than two to one could be achieved with a perfectly clear conscience.

David Purdon,  
Budleigh Salterton.

Dear Sir,  
Might I be permitted to enquire what is to become of the game of Croquet in this country, once the Ayatollah Hilditch has banned, boycotted, or 'phased out' any tournament or individual that has the temerity to disagree with him? Will discussions about professional players be elevated to the status of blasphemy?

Jon Watson,  
Stevenage.

**Prize Money**

Dear Sir,  
On return from holiday I was horrified to find a letter on page 19 of your January issue which bears no signature but gives the impression that it is from or on behalf of the Cheltenham Committee. It was in fact a personal letter from Andrew Hope and the views expressed in it are his personal views. I am glad to see that the Editor has apologised for omitting the signature; I only hope that not too much damage has been done.

The Cheltenham Club do not believe that tournament play in general is too cheap. We are merely trying an experiment in one tournament (and it is only in one out of the many which we hold) so as to find the reactions of A class players to a tournament where entrance fees are higher but prizes are as well. We will in fact be handing back virtually all the entrance money in prizes and our profit - which we need to swell the fund for our new mower - will come from the sponsorship money.

If you don't like our experiment you are entitled to say so. Andrew did ask for comments to be sent to our Secretary. The Committee have an open mind and if the majority of opinion is against the new format we shall think again when deciding the conditions for next year's tournament. I would remind you that Cheltenham has been an innovator on many aspects of tournament play and some of the

**LAW 36**

Dear Sir,  
With reference to Leslie Riggall's letter in Croquet No. 201, I would like to completely refute his statement that the +26 is 'unfair'.

In my semi-final against Nigel, I certainly believe that I played two games of croquet. Part of the joy of croquet is to struggle for the first break and select which way you can best achieve this. It is not just a matter of lifts.

Nigel's play was almost perfect and was a pleasure to watch. If Mr Riggall's rule changes actually took place, the art of triple-peeling would die and lower class games could be reduced to just laying up in the middle of the lawn for single peels through the contact hoop.

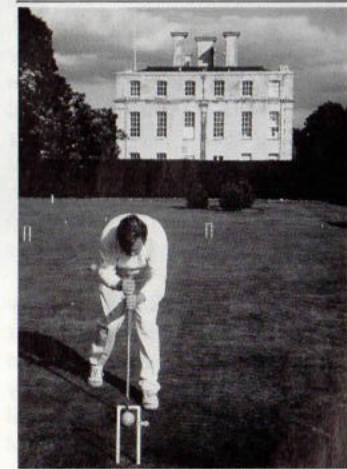
The +26(TP) is not easy to obtain, especially under pressure, whilst the 15 yard lift shot provides what should be a near 50% chance to regain the innings.

Why can't we leave croquet as it is - a vibrant sport - instead of trying to tamper with the laws which have been successful for so long.

Chris Clarke,  
Blackburn.

things we have pioneered are now accepted throughout the croquet world. We do not intend to stop experimenting just because Richard Hilditch is opposed to professionalism. As a matter of fact I share his views. But the Dunnett Ward Championships are nothing whatever to do with professionalism, so can we please stick to the point in future.

As for boycotting Cheltenham, I have too much respect for the good sense of most croquet players to believe that they would adopt such bully boy tactics. We have more tournaments at Cheltenham than any other club in the country. This is not without a big price paid by our own members. I don't mean the effort in running so many events, although this is considerable. I



Craig Hitchcock and Kingston Maurward House.

**Doping Tests**

Dear Sir,  
Before the flak begins to fly, I ought to stress that my article in the last issue was meant as a satire on certain other highly mathematical articles which have appeared in the Gazette recently. These articles seem to typify the way croquet is currently going, what with Sports Council sponsorships, television, professionalism, etc, and now 'dope tests'.

I can only assume the feature on Doping Regulations was a similar spoof and extend my congratulations to the humorist - or are we really going to have dope tests at the Budleigh Salterton weekend? I am never going to submit to any dope tests even it means I withdraw from all CA events, for ever. Matters have gone quite far enough and I urge all CA members to protest now and refuse now - let's set up a rival CA if necessary, but let's get rid of this nonsense now.

Perhaps I ought to say I would never consider taking any 'dope': croquet is a summer game, not a matter of life and death.

Neil Griffin,  
Tytherleigh.

mean that a large number of our own members, including very many long bisquers, are debarred from the lawns for a considerable part of the season. If we cannot make a reasonable profit from these tournaments we shall have to stop having so many. This would not be good for us because we want to see our friends from other clubs; it would certainly not be good news for the croquet world in general. Despite the disgracefully late appearance of the Fixture List I am glad to say that Dab Wheeler reports that our tournament entries so far do not suggest any lack of support in 1989 and I can assure all our old friends that they will get just as warm a welcome as always.

It might benefit all Clubs if we could have a reasoned debate about entrance fees for tournaments. But please Richard, do we have to get so emotional about it? Dennis Moorcraft,  
Chairman, Cheltenham Club.

Dear Sir,

I was much interested in Neil Griffin's article on the acoustics of roll strokes, as we have been similarly experimenting on our lawn in the Cathedral Close.

Our organist, Dr. D I Pason FRCO and myself, an amateur radio enthusiast, sealed micro-transmitters into the croquet balls and recorded their vibration frequencies on a modulator/receiver connected to an IBM PC. This all started because of suspected foul strokes by several of our vicars choral, and my chaplain, the Rev. O Slope.

The findings were slightly different from Neil Griffin's, namely:- (a) Black balls in summer ambient temperatures vibrate at G, Yellow balls vibrate at D, with the others in between.

(b) Good blue/yellow and red/black roll strokes are harmonious thirds, while push-shots are unharmonious because vibration frequencies are then altered.

(c) The reverse is true for black/blue and yellow/red combinations since they are only harmonious when incorrectly struck.

Therefore, if one is monitoring push-shots, the ball combination must first be known - hence the need for a personal computer.

With three and four ball combinations, most attractive harmonies can be obtained, and based on these our organist has composed several voluntaries. 'Penultimate in F' is his best work, while another striking fugue is called quite simply, 'Balls'.

P. Barcastra,  
Bishops' Palace,  
Barchester.

**A Knotty Problem!**

Dear Sir,

During a handicap tournament last season an absent-minded player in another game picked up my mallet, which is similar to his own, and walked onto his lawn with it. Fortunately his turn was a short one and I realised where my mallet was, as I was due to begin my turn.

But what if his turn had been a long, slow break held up by double-bankers? I would have been in breach of Law 48 (Expedition in play) because of lack of mallet (4c). The player in the other game, however, could not have changed mallets unless he broke mine (2e).

I suppose that the laws of the

Dear Sir,

I support the acceptance of professionalism by the CA, and applaud the wisdom of Council in addressing this matter before it could become a problem. Thus I agree with many of the points made by Stephen Mulliner in 'Croquet' issue 202.

However, I can sympathise with some of the concerns expressed by Richard Hilditch and Hamish Hall in the same issue. Stephen may be rather over-reacting when he refers to 'the tactics of the picket line' in his reply to these letters.

I must say, however, that I think the prize money plans at the Western Championships seem particularly inept. Taking larger entry fees to help build-up club funds is acceptable. Getting healthy prize money from sponsorship is also reasonable. However, these plans seem little more than running some kind of 'sweepstake', with the majority of entrants sponsoring those who finish in the top nine.

For most players in most tournaments, I do not believe professionalism will cause any significant changes. For those playing at the highest level, in a handful of major championships each year they may occasionally find themselves playing alongside professionals. However, unlike snooker professionals, these croquet professionals will not be able to devote themselves full-time to practice and training. Instead, the majority of croquet professionals will earn most of their money by coaching at expensive country clubs. This is not going to greatly improve their own top-class game!

There is another issue that the last edition raised - that of privilege. I was surprised to see a lengthy reply printed immediately following the letters against professionalism. 'Having the last word' is a privilege that should not be abused!

Martin French,  
Ipswich.

land override those of the game, so that I should demand the mallet back from the thief, leaving him with no implement to continue his turn. He would then have to deem his next stroke (31d) or commit a fault (32) by using hand, foot, etc., unless the mallet, now in my hands, was damaged before he did so. Perhaps his best option would therefore be to break the mallet before I retrieved it or call an ally to intercept my mallet on its way from the lawn and damage it. (This is not covered in Law 49. The Laws of the land would apply but probably not be enforceable before the Manager's time limit.)

As a bisque (38) is defined as an

extra turn, he could however indicate that he was taking one if so entitled, find his own mallet quickly (48) and continue.

It is as well to know what to do: this sort of thing must happen all the time.

Andrew Bennet,  
Blackburn.

Dear Sir,

I read with some dismay the article written by Mr Griffin on the application of musical theory to croquet, in particular the roll stroke. It was clear that he set out to prove such strokes faulty and designed his experiment accordingly. Unfortunately there are numerous



Buckinghamshire WI members who took part in last year's WI County Croquet Final.

Dear Sir,

Recent developments in our sport have caused a resurgence in the 'professionalism' debate, highlighted by a number of letters in the last gazette.

I am a long standing supporter of 'Open Croquet'. I have never seen why we should prevent money from entering the sport, nor why we should prevent individuals being awarded it. But now, as if a dense fog has been lifted from my field of vision, I am beginning to understand why there is cause for concern.

I played in my first croquet tournament in 1980, aged 15, having been playing some approximation to the game for two years. At that level there was no reason for winning above that end in itself, and the possible honour of a handicap reduction. The game was there to be played and enjoyed; a brief moment of anguish after a loss, soon forgotten with no further penalties. As I improved, the game remained just as enjoyable; finally the bonus of the 'thrills' that may be obtained by attempting some seemingly spectacular manoeuvre - first triples, and then more esoteric turns!

To coin a phrase, 'Croquet was

fun' (dating the time at which this state of affairs began its decline, I wonder whether the statement is one of those that ceases to be so as soon as it needs to be uttered - or indeed printed!) I am sure it is true that my enjoyment was heightened by the discovery of that chameleon group 'led' by Richard Hilditch and later referred to by some as the 'Brat Pack'. Here was croquet truly played for its own sake, where the skill employed by meeting a challenge so much more exciting than simply a win, gave pleasure that most 'serious' players couldn't even dream of.

Like so many others, these halcyon days were numbered. I can remember even now the first tournament at which professionalism reared its ugly head. I must even bear the guilt of knowing that it was I who eschewed fun in order to achieve victory, when *amour de soi* fell victim to *amour propre* and I first fell victim to that temptress - the Mulliner Wranglings (sic). The disease quickly spread through my colleagues at the tournament; now this insidious attitude governs hearts and minds nearly everywhere I look in croquet.

It is the wicked child of an evil mother that has captured our

gaping holes in his method that render his conclusions of no value.

Where are the control experiments? As any player can tell you all mallets are different and sound different in use. Why then was no test done on single ball strokes, or on other croquet strokes to see whether the observed effect is restricted to the roll stroke, or whether it is a general phenomenon. I suggest that given the variation of mallets, balls, grass, etc. that similar results could be obtained from any type of stroke.

Bear in mind also that a croquet ball is not a uniform solid, but a composite body of different materials, unlike a xylophone.

Until proper testing is done, such articles do not serve to inform, but rather cloud the issue. I cannot prejudge the eventual outcome - it may be that Mr Griffin has a point, but until he can prove that point properly he should not make it publicly under the guise of a scientific examination.

If all the suggestions as to refereeing are adopted, we shall see our referees submerged under a huge pile of computers, video cameras, frequency analysers etc etc etc. We apply the laws which are written so as to avoid as far as possible the need to make decisions on dynamic events, and rely upon basic common sense.

J.P.G. Watson,  
Stevenage.

country and much of the Western World. The will to win being paramount and one's 'position' giving self esteem, is the tail to which material gain and competition is the head. As collaboration gives way to competition, 'purity' is lost not just in a sport like croquet but in Arts, Sciences and enterprises we embark on daily. When these activities are pursued through their own intrinsic good we are fulfilling both their potential and our own; once we need or are driven by reasons such as wealth and position, or holidays to California, Florida, Canada, New Zealand, etc, then in themselves they are pointless exercises!

Perhaps open croquet would take ego-driving ranking systems, freebie trips abroad and prize money, away to a different arena together with those players who need them. Just as 'win-win-win' used to be confined to the Championships, while croquet was purely for pleasure elsewhere. That might help the rest to regain the spirit of time past.

In conclusion, professionalism is not a financial definition, it is a state of mind.

John Walters,  
Ipswich.

## Coaches Corner

### Coaching Comments By Bill Lamb

Croquet is one of the few sports which does not permit some form of knock-up or practice before a game. Perhaps this can be justified nowadays, with the prevalence of weekend tournaments and double-banking, by the need to give everyone as many games with as little interference as possible.

However, if your first game of the day is against someone who has already played, the Manager will usually allow you a few minutes on court before the start of your game. This is to allow you to become accustomed to the pace of the lawns, so that you are not at a disadvantage with respect to your opponent. You should use this limited time as effectively as possible.

The first shot you are likely to need to play well, when you get the innings, is the take-off. Suppose, for example, that you hit your own tice on the west boundary on the fourth turn. You will probably have to take off across the lawn to your opponent's balls on the east boundary, and a poor take-off could leave you several yards short or, even worse, over the boundary. Start your prac-

tice with a few take-offs of this length along the north or south boundaries until you are satisfied. Another useful, and longer, take-off distance is the length of the court along the east or west boundary.

The next shot you need to play well is rush to hoop 1. Here, it is not only the pace of the lawn but also the elasticity of the balls that is important. Again, practice the rush of this distance along the north or south boundary.

There is very little to be gained by practising hoop running or hoop approaches. You will learn far more about the lawn and balls if you restrict your practice to the two simple exercises above, and, by using the boundaries, you will also keep out of the way of other players on the lawn.

Although practice is normally forbidden in tournaments, it is a mistake to apply this convention too rigidly to all games. If you turn up at a club for a friendly, suggest to your opponent that you both practice for ten minutes or so before you start to play. If you use this period properly to work on a weakness in your game, you will soon see the benefit.



Barry Keen instructing a Grade II Coaching Course at Southport last year.

Practice is important for all players who wish to improve. If you do nothing but play games, you will soon reach a plateau where you are restricted by your technique and your thinking about the game. Take time out occasionally to watch players better than yourself to pick up fresh ideas and then practice them yourself.

Treat friendly games as exactly that; the result is of no importance. That does not mean that you should not try or play carelessly; rather, use the friendly as an opportunity to extend your game, to bring into use shots which you have previously practised or seen others using, and to note your weaknesses for future practice.

### The Merit Award Scheme By Bill Lamb

As was pointed out in the January issue of Croquet, the introduction of the Merit Award Scheme was postponed because of the delay in obtaining badges. The scheme was received with ridicule in some quarters, but it does have a serious and worthy purpose. It is intended to recognise the achievement of certain standards and to encourage players to improve their play to the appropriate standard. Most sports have a similar scheme. The scheme will be relaunched this season and the standards are as follows:

**Bronze:** A break of ten hoops or more, using bisques if necessary.

**Silver:** An all-round (12 hoop) break, without bisques.

**Gold:** A triple peel.

#### Conditions:

1. The player must be a CA member at the time the standard is

reached.

2. The break must be a singles game on a full-size court.

3. The player must win the game.

4. The game must be part of an event advertised in the CA calendar and played in England.

5. Further awards must be of a higher category.

6. Players with handicaps of 10 or below are not eligible for the bronze award.

7. Players with handicaps of 5 and below are not eligible for the silver and bronze awards.

The original intention was to distribute the badges amongst clubs for presentation at the tournament. However, in order to avoid excess badges accumulating in some clubs whilst others run out, a certificate will be awarded at the tournament, signed by the opponent and the manager. Instructions for obtaining a badge will be on the certificate.

### Coaching Courses

#### LOUGHBOROUGH SUMMER SCHOOL 1989

This year's Summer School at Loughborough will be held from 31st July to 4th August.

This course is aimed at improving the personal performance of 'beginners' - those players who have not yet obtained an official handicap, or those whose handicap is 12 or more.

Applicants are sent a self-assessment form for completion on enrolment, and this is used by the coaches, in conjunction with a series of practical tests on the first evening, to split the players into groups of equal ability.

The course provides both coaching and competitive play. Major emphasis is placed on good stroke production. As soon as groups have a good command of stroke technique, the emphasis shifts to tactical play. Players are

moved on to higher groups if they progress faster than expected.

There are opportunities for individual coaching on particular difficulties and successful performers will be awarded a handicap at the end of the course, existing handicaps being adjusted if necessary.

Short lawns (24yds by 16yds) will be used throughout the course.

Full details are given in the Summer School Brochure, obtainable from:

Mrs Shirley Sandover,  
Loughborough Summer School,  
University of Technology,  
Loughborough, LE11 3TU.  
(Tel: 0509-222773).

Only a few places remain. Please contact Mrs Sandover for the latest position.

**Course Fees (including accommodation and tuition):**  
£146 (CA members)  
£158 (Non-members)

## Croquet in the Gulf

Croquet players from all over the United Arab Emirates met on 13th January to watch CA member Fraser Mackenzie lead his Dubai team to beat, convincingly, scratch sides from Abu Dhabi and Jebel Ali on the occasion of the inauguration of the new Jebel Ali Hotel Croquet Club Court.

Many of those watching, and indeed some of the those playing, were unfamiliar with modern rules and disconcerted by playing balls 'out of order'. They were all, including attending press photographers, moved by the excitement and interest of the play to take the game seriously, and the UAE's first tournament is to be launched in February.

The court, the first in the Emirates, was laid down in October with grass, Bermuda Tift 419 Hybrid B, specially selected to give a closer cut than the coarser grasses usually used in the Gulf to resist the intense heat. Watering twice daily is necessary in this region, and mowing as often as in a sunny April in England. Even so, the running is slow, and only 25yds by 20yds of the admirably flat lawn are at present being used. Grass experts are working on the problem, and an increase to 30yds by 24yds is confidently predicted.

Two couples from each centre played one from each other during the Thursday/Friday

## Birnam Wood Tournament Report by David Higgs

The annual invitational tournament was held at Birnam Wood, Montecito, California from 17-19 February, with magnificent trophies for the winners and runner-ups to honour one of the club's founders, Robert McLean.

The Chairman of Birnam Wood Croquet Association, Captain Forrest Tucker, had kindly invited me to play in this, and - with the very kind offer of fellow Caterham member, Roger Lenard, to stay with him during the tournament - I had no hesitation in accepting, and set off with Joan for a part of the world I had not seen before.

Roger had warned me that the lawn was fast and flat. He did not mention that the surface was true, with a weed free grass surface, which makes it the best lawn I have ever played on. The lawns also have, uniquely, a boundary marked by slightly sunk marble tiles, which removes the problem of maintenance, and the interpretation of which is the latest white-wash line. Association rules only are used. To quote a post card from Forrest Tucker: 'We only play the CA rules here in our Birnam Wood club. We want none of that 'dead ball' stuff.... Unfortunately no one in America has ever tried to promote the true CA game. Those who do play it usually prefer it to the so called American game'. There are certainly a large number of clubs or hotels where



(L to R): Horace Gray, Forrest Tucker, Jim Torrian and Janey Lufkin. Forrest is wearing a feather in his hat to mark the most outstanding shot of the tournament.

weekend tournament, playing for one hour against the clock. Jebel Ali's second couple, British Consul General Jolyon Kay and Alia Al Geziry, pipped Abu Dhabi's first, consisting of British Ambassador Michael Tait and Colonel 'Tug' Wilson, in the last match to avoid the wooden spoon. The handsome cup, handed to the winning Dubai team by British Ambassador Kirsteen Tait, was presented by the Hotel.

A loudspeaker commentary to the substantial number of onlookers, lured to the scene by the Jebel Ali Hotel's generous provision of Pimm's and smoked salmon for the occasion, indoctrinated them into the finer points of tactics. A goodly number signed up for the proposed spring tournament and took away literature on the art of the game to study. Target:



Mrs Tait, British Ambassadress, presenting the trophy to the winning Dubai team captain - Fraser Mackenzie helped by Mrs Caroline Temple.

croquet is played in California alone for promotion of the 'true game'.

The day before the tournament, the three of us (Forrest, Roger and myself) visited the San Ysidro Ranch (a large exclusive hotel type establishment) to advise and publicise the croquet lawns to be built. For the photo-call, the various shots were demonstrated and described as various 'crouches and foot positions', and the half-roll in the photograph printed as 'with one knee bent and mallet cocked'.

So, with mallets cocked, the tournament started at 8am each day with seven doubles teams playing advanced rules. There were six players from Birnam Wood, two from Santa Rosa, two from Beverly Hills, and three from Rancho Santa Fe clubs. Double-banking - except for half an hour in mid-afternoon to miss playing in the dark - was avoided by limiting games to 2 hours with each team playing four games. To expedite play, a time limit of 45 seconds between shots was imposed as a special tournament rule - a rule which might well be used in many other tournaments. As might be expected only one game was finished, and there was only one instance when the expedition rule was invoked, with play resuming before the limit was reached. Horace Gray and Dick Marsellus (Birnam Wood) won all four games, including a win over the second placed team, Janey Lufkin (Santa Rosa) and Jim Torrian (Rancho Santa Fe), which had three wins. The tournament rules required a play-off between these teams, with the result this time in favour of Janey and Jim.

I mentioned earlier that the lawn was true. The shot of the tournament was therefore rather surprising. Forrest Tucker was wired by the peg from hoop 6, his hoop. He played to get a good running position, and to his - and everyone's - delight, ran the hoop with ease. It would be very pleasant to emulate Forrest in similar situations.

## News from Overseas



Fraser Mackenzie in play, watched by Colonel 'Tug' Wilson.

10 CA members by the end of the year. Rumours of croquet being played elsewhere in the Gulf, in Bahrain and Riyadh, have sparked speculation about an international tournament. Or perhaps the CA could send promising youngsters for winter training.

The Jebel Ali Hotel, one of the 'Leading Hotels of the World' group, has thus added another first to the astonishing range of leisure facilities of this garden in the desert, introduced to British viewers in the 'Wish You Were Here' programme in 1986. The weather on the day was distinctly cool, with the flags of the UAE, Dubai and Jebel Ali fluttering bravely in the wind, and more than one of the players were glad to reach for a pullover. But the summer will be another matter, and plans are afoot for floodlighting to allow play in the cool of the evening. Another first for Jebel Ali?

## Croquet - Gambian Style Report by Don Gaunt

'Croquet is easy, just hit the ball like this!'

So says 'Mad' Addi, one of the entertainments staff at the Hotel Kombo Beach, The Gambia. Well, the setting may be odd, the lawn non-existent and the rules nothing like croquet, but we had fun anyway.

The Gambia is an impossible shaped piece of land in West Africa created as a result of European colonial interests. It is about 200 miles long and about 35 miles wide, situated on the banks of the River Gambia. It is a very poor country, with groundnuts and tourism being almost the only industries.

The people are extremely friendly but the constant begging becomes wearing, even



Croquet instruction at the Hotel Kombo Beach.

though one understands the reason for it. The weather in the dry season (winter) is superb and the beaches magnificent. The roads are appalling and the main town of Banjul little better than a shanty town.

Go if you like to do little else but laze around the hotel all day, or if you enjoy African culture and experiences.

Avoid if you like comfortable trips out, lots of interesting sights and browsing round shops.

After the croquet, Addi kept calling me 'Mr Professional Croquet Player' - I hope I don't get banned!

## THE WILLIS SETTING

By Allen Parker (Parkstone)

A wide variety of arrangements of hoops and pegs was in vogue in the early days of croquet, of which two examples were given in a previous article ('Looking Backwards in 1896', Jan. 1988, No.194). The All England Croquet Club setting for the Wimbledon Championship in 1870 is shown in Figure 1. A new setting was introduced by J.H.Hale in 1872, and this was generally adopted and in use for the next fifty years. It differs from our present day setting in having two pegs; a turning peg at the North end of the court, and the winning peg at the South end. It had six hoops, but the middle two were separated by only 7 yards instead of 14. See figure 2.

Although our present setting, the Willis Setting, was not generally adopted until 1922, it was first mooted in the year 1904, and the events leading to its testing are illustrated by the following excerpts from the Gazette of that year.

The following letter, published in the 1904 Gazette, from an old-time player, well known in the 'seventies', was taken from the previous week's 'Field'. As the then editor comments, 'It is interesting as showing that the desire for radical changes in the game is not confined to some of the modern players'. The letter was headed 'Modern Croquet' and continued: Sir, A

process of development and evolution is constantly going on in games, as in other things. There come times in the history of most games when the increased skill of the players renders necessary changes in the laws that govern the play if the game is to hold its own in competition with other games. Such a time is thought by many to have come in the history of cricket, in view of the huge scores and many drawn matches that occur. Such a time came in the history of billiards when the spot stroke enabled one player to monopolise the table and made watching the play a weariness to the flesh, until the stroke was barred. Such a time seems to have come in the development of the modern game of croquet, which living players can remember from its beginning. From the first the game has gradually been made more difficult. Hoops have been narrowed, settings improved, and the laws increased and amended. Step by step the game has progressed. As skill overcame difficulties, fresh restrictions have had to be devised, but still the best players have risen superior to the changes, and are practically masters of the game. This mastery, to the prophetic eye, is a danger to croquet. When a game consisting of 28 points is frequently won, with two first class players engaged, by 26 points, the other two points made by the loser being merely nominal

ones, it surely does not need much argument to show that there is need of a change. A game where practically one player only may occupy the ground from start to finish has reached the stage, which billiards reached with the spot stroke, when some alteration is imperative. The question is - what? Hoops can hardly be made narrower, and though some improvement may be effected in the setting, as I shall try to show presently, no changes in these respects can so materially increase the difficulties of the game as to shorten appreciably the length of the breaks. Where, then, is the remedy to be found?

Looking back, as I do, upon all the changes and developments of the game with a personal experience of them, one law seems to stand out from all the rest as that which has had most to do with the making of croquet. That law is the one that created the 'dead boundary'. I recall the game before that law was adopted, and the wonderful change its adoption at once produced in scientific play. I remember, too, the storm of opposition with which it was met, and I am glad to think that I strongly advocated it in the columns of the 'Field', with the late Mr. Walsh and 'Cavendish' on the reforming side, some 34 years ago. And now I look again to the extension of the same principle to add fresh interest, science and skill to croquet. I suggest a law therefore that shall make all balls 'dead', not being 'dead' already, as soon as they pass the boundary. In other words, if a ball after running a hoop crossed the boundary, the player would have no further stroke, or if the player's ball struck another ball over the boundary, the same penalty would follow. But if the player's ball, after glancing off another ball, passed the boundary, or caused another ball to pass it, no penalty would follow, his ball being 'dead' at the time. The penalty for passing the boundary after running a hoop would not often be incurred, but the danger of striking another ball off the ground would be a constant one. It would, therefore, compel a much greater attention being given to the niceties of strength than has hitherto been the case. So great, indeed, would be the difficulty of hitting a ball on the boundary when shooting from a long distance without knocking it off that I recommend that the bringing in of balls from the boundary should be two yards, instead of one as now. This extension of the dead boundary principle will be found, I think, by all who try it to add immensely to the interest of the game, to shorten breaks, to divide the game more equally between the players, and to make games more even. Great skill will have to be developed in the matter of strength, and judgement of pace and delicacy of stroke will become more prominent features of croquet. 'Rushing' (a word for which I would substitute 'driving') would become still more the fine art which it deserves to be. Its further development alone would I believe, justify the change that is here proposed.

As regards the arrangement of the hoops and pegs, there seem to be one or two points in which some alteration would be a distinct improvement. In the first place, it is most absurd that the opening stroke should be so easy that a point is necessarily scored. The reason why it was made so was that originally no ball was in play until it had been through the first hoop. Now that that reason no longer exists, there is no object in making the first point a certainty. The custom remains now as an unmeaning survival from a ruder day, like the appendix in the human frame,

the opportunities for wiring, which would be of advantage to the back player.

As I am no longer playing the game myself, I write from a position of detachment; but as a cool, impartial outsider, my view of the game may be more valuable than that of one more influenced by more personal interests, and therefore blinder to the imperfections of the game that he is playing. The chief objection to making croquet more difficult is that it is hard upon the indifferent performer; but you cannot by such an argument stop the natural development of games. It is skill that must be considered, and it is skill that must be rewarded; but skill must neither be allowed to make a game monotonous, nor enable one player to monopolise the play.

This was promptly followed by a criticism in the 'Notes' in the following issue: The letter from the 'Field', on 'Modern Croquet', which we quoted last week, seems to us to carry with it its own condemnation. The writer's avowed object is to make the game harder for the in-player, and easier for his opponent. With this object in view, he proceeds to suggest an alteration which practically destroys the opponent's one method of getting in - the long shot. Then, observing his dilemma, he proposes another modification - a 'two yards from the boundary' rule which is just the one thing that the in-player requires to make his life entirely happy. With this modification the 4-ball break from any position would become almost a certainty; at any rate all attempts at defensive play would become utterly futile. Mr. Willis' letter in the present number may, perhaps, stimulate the efforts of those who consider that croquet is not yet perfect....

The letter referred to gives a diagram of the 'Willis Setting'. This was exactly the same as the present day setting except that the starting point was a couple of yards in front of the first hoop. There was an experiment with this setting at Roehampton in 1902, but it was not generally introduced until 1922. Some abstracts from Willis' letter are as follows:

Sir, I have read with great interest the two letters on Modern Croquet, which appeared in the 'Field' of June 11th, and as the subject is worthy of discussion, I venture to make a few remarks.

Had not Croquet be better left alone, at all events for the present? If it is deemed necessary to make any alteration, this should be slight, and at the same time one that would make the game easier for indifferent players and more difficult for good ones.

There is no doubt that Mr Croft is quite right when he says 'there is a certain lack of true sport in Croquet as now played', but I do not think that either of his suggestions is likely to improve matters....

I am afraid that I cannot agree with Mr Croft's suggestion that a lawn should be undulating. This would lengthen the game and might cause frightful exhibitions of temper; no one but a saint could remain calm and smiling, if every time he approached a hoop, he found it impossible to run it owing to hills and valleys on the lawn. Croquet is quite trying enough as it is, without being made more so.

With regard to the change in the setting, I may mention one which I believe has only lately been tried, and which is thought by several players to be superior to the present one. In the hope that it will be more generally tried, I submit a diagram of it. It has been suggested to me that this setting should be tried in a small tournament

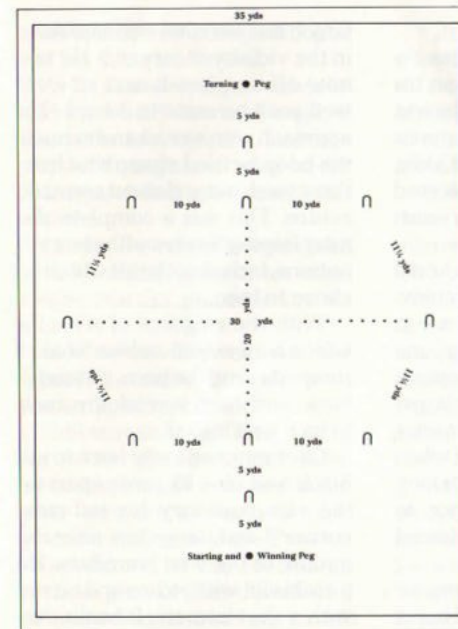


Fig 1: The All-England Croquet Club Setting for the Wimbledon Championship, 1870.

though, happily, it can be more easily removed. I suggest the following setting of five hoops. Instead of the two middle hoops, one in the centre of the ground, this centre hoop to be run first, the spot from which the first stroke is made being anywhere within one foot of the peg. After the centre hoop has been run, the second hoop to be the one which is now the first, and then the rest of the outside hoops in the present order. After the five hoops have been run once they would be run again in reverse direction. The turning peg is quite unnecessary and should be left out, for there is no reason why this point, so much easier to make than the hoops, should be kept in the middle of the game. It merely makes breaks easier, affording a rallying place, which is by no means required. The game would thus be reduced to 24 points, which is quite enough, and those points would be made rather more difficult, which is a desideratum. The final points would be made less easy than now, because the approach to the peg would be from the corner hoop; and, with only five hoops and one peg on the ground, there would be some reduction in

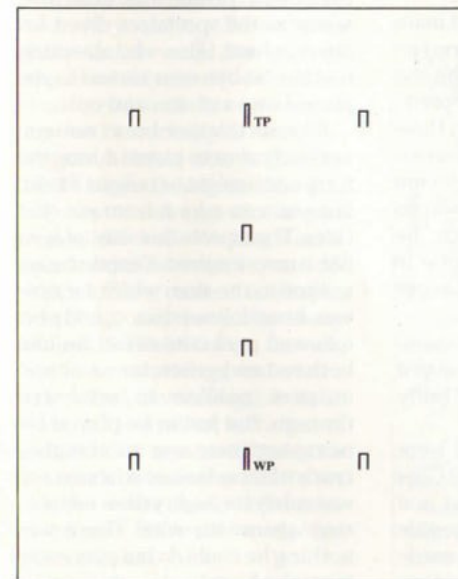


Fig 2: The Hale Setting. TP: Turning Peg. WP: Winning Peg.



Mr C.E. Willis, inventor of the "Willis" setting, and Champion of England, 1897.

later on in the year at Roehampton.... Yours faithfully, Charles Edwin Willis, June 14th, 1904. This elicited comments in the issue of July 13th: The setting proposed by Mr Willis in the Gazette three or four weeks ago will be used this week in the Open Handicap Doubles at Roehampton. It is a modification of one which we have often tried in private, and at least has the merit of abolishing the turning peg. We think, however, that the introduction of new units of measurement, in addition to the familiar '7 yards', would be a mistake.

And the 'Notes' were again devoted to the Willis Setting in the September 14th Issue: The 'Willis' setting, which was given a further trial in all events at Roehampton last week, met with very general approval. It certainly seems to possess many advantages over the old 'Hale' setting, which has so long been left undisturbed. It will be given another chance in the Open Doubles at St Leonards, and we sincerely hope that at the end of the season it will be formerly recognised, at least as an alternative setting.

The advantages of the new setting are:

- (1) The 'Ladies' Mile' is abolished together with the turning peg. Thus breaks involve careful play throughout, and mistakes and inaccuracies are less easily remedied.
- (2) The defence is strengthened; for the corner by the third hoop becomes as useful to the out-player as the first corner, formerly his only refuge in the early stages of the game.
- (3) Wiring becomes decidedly more difficult. The double lines of wire pointing to the corners are abolished. Any double lines still left are either much longer or much thinner, and in other respects are harder to utilise.
- (4) The winning peg being in the centre of the ground, the finish becomes much more difficult, safety being no longer insured by the old line of wire and wood down the centre of the ground. In addition, the solitary rover will get better chances of a reasonable shot at the peg.
- (5) The setting is not too difficult for the moderate player. At the same time it is more worthy of the skill of the expert.

Despite all this, it was another 18 years before the Willis setting was generally adopted in England.

## Short Story

## BORN TO IT?

By Reginald Baunt.

Bill Johnson sat in a corner of the club-house staring morosely through the rain-drenched window. Lawn 1 was almost awash already, he noted. Far away to the right a few hardy souls, looking like spacemen in their water-proofs, were still battling each other and the elements. Indoors, three ladies were finalising arrangements for next week's tournament-catering over by the kitchen, and off to his right four A class players were hunched over a magnetic board deep in tactical debate.

With no-one to play, and with the weather outside getting even worse, Bill slumped morosely in his chair and gave himself up to gloom.

Just then a figure passed his window and burst through the door to the right. The new arrival peeled off a soaking anorak, splattering the seated man, and made a bee-line for the men's changing room. Emerging almost immediately he turned to Bill and said 'I do apologise if I splashed you - its like a monsoon out there. By the way my name is John Travis and I'm very new here.'

Bill gave him a friendly smile. 'I'm Bill Johnson, one of the club's old fogies. I don't think there will be much more play today, and we try

to keep off Lawn 1 when it's very wet, except in tournaments. Pull up a chair and tell me about yourself.' As soon as the new arrival had complied Bill asked him how long he had been playing croquet.

'I started last year at one of those 'Learn to play' courses, on the short lawns at Collington. It took me all last season to get the hang of a four ball break. I'm now beginning to see the game as a series of repeating patterns, and I understand the necessity of always thinking at least three shots ahead. I also realise only too well that if I want to improve I am going to have to practise, practise, practise.

'You are absolutely right about practise,' Bill replied, 'but in my opinion you need to have something born in you if you are to achieve perfection. It's a rare - or lucky - individual who gets everything right every time - when it really matters!'

After a short pause Bill continued: 'As a matter of fact, our chat, and this appalling weather, reminds me very clearly of a chap who used to be a member here in the sixties. Giles Thompson was his name and during the season he almost seemed to live here. He was a very presentable man in all respects, tall, lean, hair brushed back over his ears, straight-backed, square-shouldered and with very

definite 'presence'.

'Always immaculately dressed in white, whether practising on his own or playing in a match, he was always in freshly pressed flannels and newly laundered shirts. Oddly, his shirts were always long-sleeved and always buttoned at the wrist, however hot the weather.'

'A man of few words, when he did speak it was in extremely cultivated tones. Conjecture was rife in the club regarding his back-ground and there was a school of opinion favouring Wellington, Sandhurst and service in one of the smarter line regiments. Occasionally, when he had had a gin or two after a long hot day, a casual reference to drinking in 'the Mess' reinforced the popular view.

'Concerning his shirt-sleeves, we guessed that he had suffered burns on active service but wished to conceal his scars from the ladies.

'Don't get the idea that we normally spend time discussing members behind their backs, but Giles was an unusual person, who spent a great deal of time here, and speculation was inevitable - particularly because he would be out there practising on his own in the rain quite often while those of feebler spirit were cowering in the club-house.

'Clarice Graham, a dashing divorcee, made a play for him once or twice, mainly via mixed doubles competitions, but he managed to parry all her advances without bruising her ego unduly.

'The upshot of all this was that Giles improved over the five or six years that he was here, getting his handicap down to 1 and proving himself a very acceptable member of the club. But throughout this period he remained a man of mystery so far as his past was concerned.

'Over the years Giles had managed to get his name engraved on most of our silverware but the one trophy to elude him was our premier pot, the Swanson Salver. However, during the Summer Tournament of '67 he played like a demon throughout the week, and it was no surprise to anyone when he reached the final of that event - to play an international called George Noakes.

'The game began in the same glorious weather we had enjoyed all week, except for the odd puffy cloud in the sky.

'The opening exchanges were pretty routine and cagey until Giles hit in from corner to corner and by virtue of an almost impossible passing roll from corner 2 made hoop 1 with his red, rushed yellow to hoop 2, made it and then brought into play black and blue

which had been left well separated in the vicinity of corner 3. He was now off on a break, and all went well until he came to 3 back. His approach was over-hit and to make the hoop he tried a jump shot from three yards out and about a yard off centre. This was a complete disaster leaving Noakes with plenty of options, including the lift which he chose to take.

'With the elegance of style for which he was well-known Noakes romped round the lawn, through 3 back and then spread the balls before walking off.

'Giles returned to the lawn to see black and blue 12 yards apart on the east boundary, his red near corner 2 and the yellow near the middle of the west boundary. He took his lift with yellow and hit red with a shot from the B baulk. Another marvellous passing roll took him towards black, the more northerly of the two balls on the east boundary, leaving red near hoop 2. An exquisitely precise roquet on black sent it off the lawn immediately behind blue, which was on the yard line. Just as he played the resulting cannon the rain began to fall - quite gently. Giles rushed blue to hoop 1 and then paused a moment to collect his thoughts. Provided he could make a quadruple, which he had never done before, it was possible to win on this turn.

'He proceeded to make hoop 1 off blue which was rushed to hoop 3. Hoop 2 was made off red, which was then rushed south of hoop 4. The take-off from red left it perfectly placed and, picking up black en route Giles made hoop 3 off blue.

'When he peeled red through 3 back the word spread around and people began to gather on those steps outside. Unfortunately it then began to rain in earnest. Now whereas the spectators dived for cover in here, Giles, who obviously had the bit between his teeth, just played on - and on - and on!

'After all this time I can't remember every shot he played during the turn, and it might be tedious if I did, but you can take it from me that Giles Thompson that day played like a man inspired. Despite being soaked to the skin, which he now was, hoop followed hoop, and peel followed peel until at last he had both red and yellow for rover and in peel position to send red through. But just as he played his next shot there was an almighty crack of thunder and whereas red was safely through, yellow came to rest against the wire! There was nothing he could do but play away from the hoop!

'As Giles walked off the lawn, for the first time in all the years we had

known him, his shoulders drooped and his back was bowed.

'As he passed George Noakes he said he would like to change, if George had no objection, and then pressed through the crowd to the changing room you have just vacated.

'Out on the lawn, George opted for a lift and, playing in his usual precise manner, proceeded on his way.

'Meanwhile, Giles entered the apparently empty changing room and stripped to the skin.

'Unfortunately for Giles, one of the older members had been 'attending to a call of nature' in the inner sanctum at the time, and when he emerged, to the clamour of our cistern, he was confronted by those parts of Giles that no one we knew had seen before.

'Instead of the horrendous scars that popular imagination had conjured up, Tim Bates, the member concerned, was facing - all in glorious technicolour - the most impressive collection of tattoos he had seen in his life. To this day Tim still recalls with wistful admiration the feminine attributes of the goddess who embraced Giles' right arm, and the equally delectable damsel on his left.

'As you can imagine, Tim beat a hasty retreat from the men's room and headed for the bar forthwith.

## Natural History (cont'd from Page 6)

less victim across the lawn, well aware that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.

Among the flowers around the lawn are many crab spiders, but they are shy and not easily noticed because of their colours, which are often very pretty. White crab spiders lurk in white flowers, and yellow ones in yellow flowers. They do not need the help of a web, as they are remarkably strong, seizing and holding bees and other insects larger than themselves.

Perhaps the strangest of all our small wildlife is the Praying Mantis. Some species are weird beyond description. They come in all shapes and colours and many effectively mimic all kinds of things, flowers, dead leaves and twigs, and even a perfect imitation of a grass stalk. When a fly or other victim approaches, what appears to be a grass stalk suddenly opens up and strikes with the usual deadly front legs, armed with double rows of interlocking spikes.

Although well past normal retiring age, I seem to be more busy now than ever before, and I regret

'Giles emerged in waterproofs, stony-faced, and despite the rain sat alone at the lawn-side to watch his opponent. He was just in time to see the first of what was to become the winning triple peel.

'When Noakes came off the lawn, modestly triumphant, Giles immediately stretched out a hand in sincere congratulations. As they came towards those steps outside, to the applause of the members, however, a newly arrived visitor, a stranger to us, moved out of the crowd. 'Jolly bad luck, Giles,' he cried, 'you certainly caught a tartar there!'

'At the sound of this unexpected voice Giles turned to its owner and for the first and only time in our knowledge his courtesy failed him.

'With a mumbled 'Didn't expect to see you here, of all places' he ignored the proffered handshake and dived into the club.

'Very shortly afterwards he pleaded a pressing engagement, asked to be excused the prize-giving, and disappeared from the scene.

'During the course of the rather rowdy evening which ensued, Tim Bates found himself elbow to elbow with the stranger who had spoken to Giles and asked how long they had known each other.

'It must be about fifteen years I suppose. We did our National

not having more time to enjoy the wildlife of Fern Valley. I am one with the Welsh poet W.H. Davies, who wrote,

'What is this life if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.'

**CONTINENTAL  
AIRLINES  
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16-23 July**

included with this magazine is an A4 poster advertising the above events.

To help us achieve a high profile for Croquet during the Summer, please arrange for this poster to be displayed in your local library, sports hall, or other appropriate place.

At the same time, why not put up an additional notice giving the name and telephone number of a local Croquet contact?

Additional posters are available from the C.A. office, including A3 size (twice the size of the enclosed A4 poster).

Your help in advertising this event will be much appreciated.

## Short Story



Albert Laurance introduces the game to beginners at the Soham Indoor Weekend.

Service together in the Coldstream. Giles landed a cushy number as a waiter in the Officers' Mess - and acquired that incredible accent. When we came out of the Guards we both joined the P & O Line as stewards. I have made it to Purser but Giles preferred to remain a bar-steward. There's no doubt that he's the best First Class bar attendant the Line has ever had. He only works the winter cruises and makes a fortune every trip - not least from elderly American widows, who seem to dote on him.'

'We never saw Giles Thompson after that day, though Tim still reminisces about those naughty naked ladies, and he still recalls the Purser's final remark. 'I always wondered what Giles did with himself during the summer months!'

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**Triple Banking**

Dear Sir,

In the Spring issue of the 1985 Gazette I wrote, perhaps a little light-heartedly, about the possibility of our having to resort to triple banking at Roehampton, given that only 3 lawns are now available at this erstwhile centre of croquet excellence.

We have not yet, thankfully, had to resort to this for tournament play, although this winter, having (for the first time in our illustrious history) one lawn open during the winter, we have begun to experiment with three simultaneous games.

Our experience so far is that there has been much less interference between the games than might have been expected, and certainly that interference is not much greater than that found with double banking.

I have not heard of triple banking having been used anywhere than in Australia and I should be very interested to learn of any experience in other clubs and of course to receive any help and advice of how best to deal with the problems arising.

The third set of balls we have used are primary colours with white rings painted round them (a colour other than white on the yellow is preferable) and with white flashes painted on the clips. We have not attempted to modify the Code of Practice for Double Banking but we have found it useful to start one of the 3 games with the third hoop, going round 'the wrong way' or 'upside down' (Australian style!).

Comments on quadruple banking would also be welcomed!

Paul MacDonald,  
Roehampton.

**Wrong Corpse!**

Dear Sir,

Chris Bennett's account of the latest doings of the West Midlands Federation displayed the vigour which we all hope will be a feature of the region's activities from now on. He was, moreover, generous in his praise of my puny efforts at Ludlow.

However, lest mourners turn up at the wrong funeral, I must point out that the club which has died was the South Shropshire Club, which failed, sadly, to attract the hoped-for support from the people of Ludlow Town and environs.

The club known in the Midlands as 'Ludlow' is, in fact Ludlow College Croquet Club, which, I am delighted to report, continues to thrive.

Peter Dorke,  
Ludlow.

**Advanced Handicap Singles**

Dear Sir,

At its meeting in February the Council of the CA passed a motion by Lionel Wharrad and myself by 14 votes to 4 to investigate the preparation of an alternative version of the game, namely 'Advanced Handicap Play'. To help the Laws Committee to decide what, if any, variations are required, the Publicity Committee at its meeting in March decided:

1. To ask Clubs to try the game.
2. To promote tournaments at the Surbiton Club.

The game can be played using the existing rules for open play. That is, lifts at 1-back and 4-back with contact if the first ball of one player makes these two hoops in the same turn. The existing rules of handicap play will also apply. Thus the higher bisquer will receive bisques.

This variation of the game will



The Nottingham Club House and the corner of Lawn 1. The picture was taken last year at the Final of the National Schools Championship, sponsored by The Royal Bank of Scotland.

**Club Rankings**

Dear Sir,

Chris Bennett's report on the West Midlands Federation in Issue 202 raised the question of which club other than Edgbaston might have five players in the Top 100 Rankings. Allow me to jostle with all the other clubs who will now be anxious to join this 'elite'!

The question reminded me of a discussion at the Soham Indoor Weekend (soon after the publication of the Almanack) of the merits of a Club Ranking system. Note these are only advanced play rankings, and say nothing about a club's other glories.

First, the challenge in Chris Bennett's article. Ipswich ended last season with four players in the top 25, and one other in the top 100. Our membership ended last year at 25, so this is indeed 20% of the Ipswich membership.

Further, we have two 'prospec-

present an excellent opportunity for introducing players to advanced play, and from these experiments we shall be able to decide if it is possible to have the same game for everyone instead of the improving player suddenly being confronted with new problems. It is essential during these experiments that the 'out' player should remind his opponent of the lifts after, I suggest, he/she has made the 5th and 2-back hoops.

The results of these experiments will be discussed at the Club Conference on Saturday 25th November, so I hope other clubs will also 'have a go', and thus be able to contribute to the discussion.

The Surbiton Club will hold two one-day Advanced Handicap Singles at Alexandra Drive Surbiton on Saturday 5th August and Sunday 24th September, commencing at 10am with a format to

give all players at least 2 games.

Please forward your entries to me (at Pinelands, 12 Beechwood Avenue, Weybridge, Surrey) with £2.50 per event, in my favour as soon as possible, and at least 14 days before the event.

I hope we shall get a good entry for both events.

Derek Caporn,  
Woking.

**Rules for Doubles**

Dear Sir,

I am sorry no-one has followed up my previous letter in which I proposed an alteration in the rules for doubles play. However, several people have spoken to me about it, mostly not agreeing that there should be a change.

Be that as it may, in doubles matches where there is a strict time limit - as was the case in the Jersey v. Guernsey match in which I played - my arguments are given added weight. For, on 10th September in St Helier, with the matches restricted to 75 minutes (and later reduced to one hour as the time for our return flight drew near) the better of the two partners played virtually all the shots in order to score as many points as possible with his ball before time was called.

Would it not be possible, if the Law cannot actually be changed in my favour, for my method to be accepted as an Official Alternative which has the blessing of the CA?

Andrew Potter,  
Bristol.

ive' A Class players who we expect to get into the top 100 this season - Lewis Palmer and Steve Comish. In the last two years, we have also lost Don Gaunt (to Cheltenham and a new job, when in the top 50) and Danny Palmer (to London and accountancy, when in the top 30). What is it that makes so many otherwise-sane young croquet players take up accountancy?

Edgbaston and Ipswich are certainly not unique in having several good players, despite a small membership. I do not know the full membership list of Harrow Oak, but they seem to have four players in the top 30, and like us have a fairly small membership (in numbers, if not physical size!)

So what about the idea of a Club Rankings list? It might be a bit of fun. Perhaps this formula might be suitably silly:

- sum the end-of-year rankings of the club's top five players,

- divide the sum by the number of club (playing) members,  
- the lower figure, the 'better' the club!

I suspect that Harrow Oak would take the honours using this formula. Now, all good computerised ranking systems have fudge-factors, called weightings. Therefore a better formula (for us) might be to further divide the sum by the total weight of the top five players. At Ipswich, we have concentrated on breeding slim-line croquet players, without the chubby build that has become so fashionable for young(ish) croquet players. I am confident that with this formula we could come out on top of any other club in the country! How about inclusion in the next Almanack?

Martin French,  
Ipswich.

**The New Drugs Control Regulations.**

By Charles Townsend

Croquet is very fortunate in that it does not have a drugs problem. No one has ever suggested that any Croquet player has ever taken drugs to improve his performance; indeed the very idea would be totally repugnant to most Croquet players.

However, many sports are not so lucky and do have serious drugs problems. Because of this, the Sports Council and other bodies such as the International Olympic Committee have brought considerable pressure to bear on all sports to institute drug control policies. This has been irrespective of whether the sport has a drugs problem or not.

Sports Council grants are now only given if the sport has a drug control policy. Entry to international sporting events such as the Olympic games is also conditional on the sport having a drug control policy. Croquet was therefore faced with a stark choice - either to cut ourselves off from Sports Council grants and international sports meetings or to introduce a drug control policy. The Croquet Association Council therefore decided to introduce such a policy.

**DRUGS REGULATIONS.**

There are some obvious problems to introducing a drug control policy to Croquet. In particular, Croquet has a number of older players who are taking drugs prescribed by their doctors for medical conditions. It would obviously be wrong either to exclude these players from all Calendar fixtures or to pressurise them into giving up drugs that they may urgently need. To get over this problem, a two-tier system has been introduced.

Calendar fixtures have been divided into two groups. The 'most important' fixtures, and the rest. For 1989 Council has designated The President's Cup, The World Championship, The Men's Championship and the Home International Championship as being in 'the most important fixtures' category. In these fixtures players may not use any drug on the IOC list of banned substances. In all other events, which form the bulk of the Calendar fixtures, players may take drugs on the IOC list of banned substances provided they have been prescribed by a doctor. This means that the new drug regulations will hardly affect the majority of Croquet players.

This is all included in the new Regulation 2(d) to 2(g) which was published in the March edition of 'Croquet'. The new regulation also states that the penalty for taking

banned drugs is disqualification from competing in Calendar fixtures; that refusal to take a drugs test when requested will be taken as if that test was positive, and anyone assisting or inciting people to take drugs may be subject to disciplinary action.

**WHAT PLAYERS SHOULD DO ABOUT THE DRUGS REGULATIONS.**

If you wish to compete in Calendar fixtures the practical steps you should take are as follows:

*Players not competing in The President's Cup, The World, Men's and Home International Championships.*

(1) If you are only taking drugs prescribed by a doctor there is no need to do anything.

(2) If you are taking drugs that have not been prescribed by a doctor you should check they are not on the IOC list of prohibited doping classes and methods. Copies of this list can be obtained from the CA office. Drugs to be particularly careful about are some cold and flu cures. If in doubt, you should ask your pharmacist or doctor.

*Players competing in The President's Cup, The World, Men's and Home International Championships.*

(1) If you are taking any drugs you should check whether they are on the IOC list of prohibited doping classes and methods. You are not allowed to take a prohibited drug even if it has been prescribed by a doctor.

(2) If you are taking a prohibited drug, you should try to find an alternative. The Sports Council are able to give advice on this and claim that all prohibited drugs do have alternatives.

(3) If you are unhappy about using an alternative drug, you can apply for a dispensation to use the prohibited drug. Applications for a dispensation should be made to the Chairman of the Croquet Association, who will refer it to a drugs sub-committee. If the drugs sub-committee believe the drug will not affect your performance and should be allowed to be used, they will refer the matter to the Sports Council. If the Sports Council agree, you will be given a dispensation to use the prohibited drug. This procedure will inevitably take some time, so you should allow as much notice as possible when applying for a dispensation.

**DRUG TESTING.**

It is not intended that there should be drug testing at every tournament or even at all tournaments in

'the most important' category. The Sports Council feel that there are other sports that are far more important to test for drugs than Croquet. However, a request could come from the Sports Council at any time, with little or no notice, for a tournament to be tested. If that happens it would most likely be one of the tournaments in the 'most important' category where no drugs are allowed. The drug tests themselves would be carried out by Sports Council nominated testers, according to the Sports Council drug testing procedures. Full details on drug testing procedures can be obtained from the Sports Council or from the Croquet Association office.



Richard Southgate (Bishop Vesey's), winner of the 1988 All-England Handicap.

**RESULTS OF THE DRUG TEST**

The Council of the Croquet Association would deal with the results of drug tests as follows:

If the result is negative or if the result is positive but the competitor has been given a dispensation to use the drug, the competitor would be informed and no further action would be taken.

If the result is positive, i.e. drugs have been detected, and no dispensation has been given to the competitor, the following procedure would be adopted:

- (1) The competitor would be informed and would be suspended from all Calendar fixtures.
- (2) At the testing, half the sample is sent for analysis while the other half is kept as the 'reserve sample'. The reserve sample is used as a double check if the first sample is positive. The competitor or his

nominee would be offered the opportunity to attend on the date when the reserve sample is tested. This would normally be within seven days of notification.

(3) If the reserve sample is negative, the competitor would be informed, the case would be dismissed and no further action would be taken. In practice there are almost no cases where the reserve sample has shown a different result to the initial sample.

(4) If the reserve sample is also positive, the drugs sub-committee of Council would meet to investigate the circumstances of the alleged offence. The competitor would be invited to attend. The sub-committee would have the power to:

- (i) dismiss the case and remove the suspension;
- (ii) disqualify the competitor from the competition where the drug test samples were taken;
- (iii) disqualify the competitor from competing in Calendar fixtures with immediate effect.

(5) The sub-committee would notify the competitor of the result of its investigation and its decisions.

(6) The competitor would have the right of appeal against any adverse decision. The appeal would be heard at the next meeting of Council.

**FURTHER INFORMATION.**

It is difficult in a short article to cover all aspects of the new drug control policies. If there are any points that are unclear, further information can be obtained from the Sports Council or the Croquet Association office.

**THE 1989 FIXTURE BOOK**

Unfortunately the Calendar Fixture Book was published late this year.

This was due to problems associated with setting up the text on a new word processor. In addition, some clubs did not provide full details until December.

The Council of the Croquet Association apologises for any inconvenience caused to clubs and players.

The Executive Committee felt that references to the exclusion of professional croquet players from the Open Championships and the Mens' & Womens' Championships should be deleted as being contrary to CA policy.

The Tournament Committee has confirmed this action.

Keith Aiton,  
Chairman,  
Tournament Committee.

## Club News

### WORTHING Worthing wins Apps Heley Award

Report by Diana Nicholson

A short history of Worthing Club was given in 'Croquet', Issue 192, July 1987. Now we bring you up to date from the time of the hurricane, when our small chalet Club House was smashed beyond repair.

The 1988 season was a busy one - a large number of members started to

play on the 1st April, as though nothing had happened. Patricia Shine, Chairman of Worthing, has always had great ambitions for the Club. This year she has concentrated on the lawns, with the help of Alan Hutcheson. Pat has spent many hours at the Town Hall - every step has to go through the Council, which has been most helpful. We finished the 1987 season with two full-sized sloping and bumpy lawns, but, by continual cajoling in many directions, we shall start 1989 with two full size and

two short croquet lawns and one further full size lawn, which is being levelled - a tremendous feat. It should be in use by the Autumn, when the next lawn will go under repair, to make another nearly perfect lawn. How can we raise over £7,000 for this? Suggestions would be most welcome!

Many more people are playing Association Croquet, and by the end of 1989 we hope to have 50 Association and 50 Golf Croquet Members. The introduction of Short Croquet is really making



Pat Shine supervising the early work on preparing the new lawns.



Play goes on (left) whilst the new lawns are constructed.

### BEAR OF RODBOROUGH The Croquet Bears Picnic

Report by Don Gaunt

The Bear of Rodborough Croquet Club held its first club dinner in February. It was a great success and will probably become an annual event.

The Bear is a Trust House Forte hotel situated in a glorious part of the Cotswolds near Stroud. The club exists thanks to generous help and support from THF. At the dinner, the Chairman, Norman Gooch, paid tribute to this support, thanking the

Manager and his wife, Mr and Mrs Tony Hutton for attending. He mentioned particularly the superb glass croquet figure which had been donated for the club championship. This had been won by Adrian Lee.

After the dinner, a 'Croquet trivial pursuit' was hotly contested, with the winning table being sportingly cheered with cries of 'Cheat', 'Fiddle' etc.

This year, thanks to THF support, the Bear team will be immaculately turned out in their new shirts with the Bear emblem on them. Watch out SW Federation!

its appeal-it is a great game, especially for those learning.

We are fortunate in being so ideally placed on the edge of the Downs, adjacent to the Municipal Golf club, whose excellent facilities we share. Our Members are able to meet socially twice a month during the winter - between 11am and 2pm, having any refreshments they wish. We are also fortunate in having a keen and friendly membership, supporting us throughout the whole year.

We are delighted to have won the Apps Heley Award for 1988, and should like to thank the Croquet Association. We are pleased for Pat, for without her vision and leadership we doubt if we should have moved so far.

### NEWPORT (ESSEX) Croquet Club's New Lawns

Report by John Hobbs.

At last the Newport Croquet Club - near Saffron Walden, Essex, not one of the many other Newports - has a proper playing surface. Three lawns in fact.

It is nearly five years since John Gordon put an advertisement in the local paper and called a meeting to discuss the merits of forming a croquet club. The potential playing site was a corner of the Newport Playing Fields, created from surplus material during the construction of the M11. About 20 people set up a committee which was to raise funds and arrange construction of some full size lawns.

Enthusiasm was high and to maintain it some sociable meetings were held to play (or try to play) a kind of croquet on a very sloping and very rough lawn of the local Grammar School. However, in the following season permission was obtained from English Heritage to play on the lawns in front of Audley End House.

The lawns were not ideal, the grass was too long, and it could not be cut shorter than the normal gang mowers achieved. But the management realised the benefit of having croquet as a side attraction and the setting was magnificent. Unfortunately there was nowhere we could store equipment and we were not allowed to play on Sundays. This virtually limited play to Saturdays only and consequently restricted our ability to recruit people who would be interested in playing midweek.

However the lawns offered excellent training for John Hobbs and John Farley who, because they were used to long grass, twice won the competition sponsored by Moët & Chandon and the National Trust and played at National Trust properties throughout the East Anglian Croquet Federation area.

In 1985 a sloping area of the playing fields, sufficient for two lawns was levelled and allowed to settle for two years while efforts were made to raise the money required to complete the job. One committee member undertook to raise money by exploring all avenues and complying with the rules required by each body



Getting started at High Wycombe.

Classic. During the summer the club hosted golf croquet sessions for the Round Table and Womens Institute and five of our new members came from the WI golf croquet days.

With our increased income we have purchased more equipment and our future plans are to try to get a second lawn, to continue coaching sessions for new members, to import a coach for the middle bisquers, and to try to attract some more low bisque members.

we managed to obtain a grant from the Sports Council and later from the Croquet Association. Each was impressed by the fact that the club had managed to raise money from its own sources and was therefore willing to provide top-up funds.

A second contractor was chosen in 1987 to put in drainage, lay and level topsoil and then sow grass. Unfortunately the topsoil put down contained too many stones and for several months there was doubt that the drainage would work properly or that the surface would ever be good enough. However after much argument with the contractor and some back breaking stone picking by members, the grass began to look playable. It was however deeply rutted by football boots and bicycle tyres during the wet winter. At this stage there was no fence between the lawns and the adjacent football pitch and the bank left by levelling was an ideal BMX cycle track.

The original plan was for two lawns end to end, but it was discovered that with a few feet extra to the south side and six extra yards into the bank it would be possible to have three full size lawns side by side. So with the help of generous donations from several members the first contractor dug out the bank and extended the drainage. By the end of 1988 the extension had been sown with grass and the whole of the original area had been heavily top dressed and levelled to remove the footmarks, thanks to the efforts of several working parties and Ron Atkinson our lawns manager.

In June 1988 one full size lawn was marked out and the club started to meet on the new grounds instead of Audley End. The surface was not very good because of the damage by boots, but it was faster than we had been used to. The final step before undertaking the top dressing was to erect a 12 foot high wire fence to keep out footballs on one side and a 5 foot fence to keep out bikes. A notice was also put up asking people to treat the surface carefully. Later on a large notice was erected announcing the name of the club and the telephone number of a contact. We also managed to recruit some of the local children for the top dressing, to give them some vested interest in looking after the lawns.

So, for 1989 there is a flat surface, ready for three full size lawns and hopefully with only minor evidence of the damage of previous years. Before the spring a windbreak of fir trees will be planted and the next project will be our pavilion, for which planning permission is being sought. A garage was put up to accommodate our second hand 34' mower, wheelbarrow and hoops and balls. Other facilities are available in the brick-built changing rooms shared by all clubs using the playing fields.

The main lesson to be learnt from our experience is that one should be very careful in choosing a contractor

### KINGSTON MAURWARD Kingston Maurward wins Townsend Award

Report by Peter Bradshaw.

Kingston Maurward Association Croquet Club, sponsored by Wilcox Young Investment, with its one and a half lawns but 86 members, are the winners of the Townsend Award for 1988.

The club is rather unusual because, despite its large membership, it had no players with previous experience of organised croquet. It was formed in May 1987 thanks to the efforts of John McCullough and the South West Federation coaches together with CA and Sports Council grants. Under its first chairman, Craig Hitchcock, and the present committee the club has maintained a high local profile with regular



William Steadman in play at Kingston Maurward.



Taunton Deane play Sidmouth at Kingston Maurward during the semi-finals of the SW Federation's B League.

press coverage and contacts with local groups.

During 1988 it entered the Federation B league, finishing runners up and hosting one of the semi finals. Club member William Steadman played through the club's Croquet Classic group and went on unbeaten to the national finals where he lost just one game. He is well on target for a single figure handicap after only taking the game up last May.

The club plays at the Dorset College of Agriculture and Horticulture near Dorchester. It is lucky to have their expert staff to tend its lawns and to help plan for future expansion. During 1989 an extra one and

a half lawns will be laid out as an interim measure pending the development of a new sports complex including four full size courts.

This will also provide much needed off-court facilities. At present a hut provided by the sponsors doubles as the only shelter, although catering etc is available in the college itself.

We have learnt a great deal and will continue to do so for some time to come. We are grateful for the help given by numerous coaches from Parkstone and Budleigh Salterton as 110 new members in two years take some helping!

Our Officers in 1988 were: Chairman- Chris Griggs; Secretary - Peter Bradshaw; Treasurer - Stephen Ryder.

### PERSONAL COLUMN

20p per word. Min £5. (Please add 15% VAT)

**SOUTH DEVON:** Farmhouse B&B with optional Evening Meal overlooking River Dart. Full size croquet lawn, heated swimming pool, horses, boats and tennis court. Tel:0804-23278. Claire Grimshaw.

**LOS ANGELES** Apartment with croquet in Beverly Hills (available year-long) for accommodation near Hurlingham, July 16-23, 1989. Contact: D. Collins, 818 843 1285. Address: 3311 West Alameda, Apt G. Burbank, California 91505.

### THE Simple CROQUET SERIES AT LAST

Volume 1 is now available  
**Simply Teach Yourself Croquet**  
This second book by Peter Danks concentrates simply on teaching beginners the basic strokes needed to play the game in garden or club. Forty diagrams. Easy open flat wire binding.

Volume 2  
**Simplified CROQUET  
the MINI-BREAK way**  
Having learned the strokes in Volume 1 this book continues simply by removing the mystique of break-making. Easy open flat wire binding.

Separate volumes £7.95 each. Both ordered together £15 including (UK) post and packing. Cheques payable to the Shillingate Press, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6SX.

### HIGH WYCOMBE

Report by Roger Jackman.

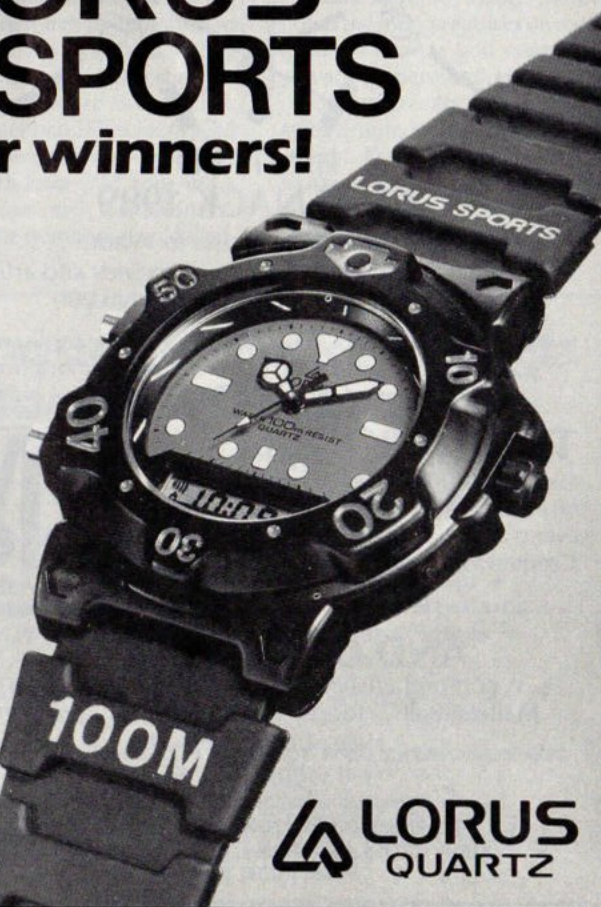
The High Wycombe Croquet Club, founded in 1982, found itself with only 10 playing members at the end of 1987. In the spring of 1988 we embarked on a recruiting campaign and on the first Sunday in May, 15 newcomers turned up for coaching.

Of course it was a pouring wet day but 5 stalwart members did their best to get the new members started on Golf Croquet. By the end of the month the weather had improved and everyone was playing short croquet with varying degrees of success. As the season progressed some of the new members moved on to Association Croquet and two of them played in the Southern Croquet League.

The end of 1988 saw the club with 28 members and a short waiting list. With only 1½ lawns it sometimes gets very crowded but it is good to see the facilities fully used.

High Wycombe finished in the mid-table position in the Southern Croquet League, club members won competitions at Southwick, at Parsons Green and in the Isle of Wight, and one of our new members reached the final of the Garden

# LORUS SPORTS for winners!



**LORUS  
QUARTZ**

- our first one has been made an honorary member. The second is that you should try to obtain as much land as possible and make up your minds about the long term plan so that expensive amendments do not have to be made at a later stage.

This summer we will be inviting clubs throughout the Eastern region to play at Newport. The lawns may be slightly 'sensitive' but in due course they should be among the best and we hope before long to hold one or more weekend tournaments each year. Visitors could stay in Saffron Walden, Bishops Stortford, Stansted or even Cambridge.

The 'official opening' of the lawns will be on Saturday May 20th when a 'Come and try it' session will be organised, along with an Inaugural Tournament with some visiting players with minus handicaps to show us a quality target to aim for. John Solomon has kindly agreed to come along in his capacity as President of the Croquet Association. Our objective will be to interest potential new members and to have an enjoyable time.

Anyone who is interested in visiting the club at any time should contact John Gordon on Saffron Walden (0799) 40293.

## Handicaps

### GUIDE TO HANDICAPPERS FOR THE 1989 SEASON

By Barry Keen,  
Chairman, CA Handicap Co-ordination Committee.

**Administrative Procedure.**  
The administrative procedures for effecting handicap changes remain unchanged from previous years. CA Handicappers can obtain further supplies of handicap alteration cards and forms from the CA office.

**Standard Handicaps.**  
It is the judgement of the Handicap Co-ordination Committee (HCC) that in general the existing system of handicapping is working well and no major changes are proposed for 1989. The introduction of Club Handicappers for the 1989 season should help to control handicaps of players in the many new and small clubs.

It is recognised by all concerned that the setting of handicaps is not an exact science and any system must rely on the skills and integrity of the appointed handicappers. However as in previous years, the HCC strongly recommends that handicaps should be related to the success of players. Therefore we recommend that handicappers use the following to adjust handicaps both up and down:

Players winning more than 70% of

games - reduction of two handicap points.

Players winning more than 60% of games - reduction of one handicap point.

Players winning less than 40% of games - increase of one handicap point.

Players winning less than 30% of games - increase of two handicap points.

(A handicap point is the minimum change at the players level.)

A minimum of at least 12 games should be played before adopting these guidelines, although less games can be used if they are spread over a full season.

Tournament handicappers should always bear these guidelines in mind. As it is very rare for a player to play 12 games in a single tournament, tournament handicappers should consider recent performance at other tournaments before making alterations.

**Rapidly Improving Players.**  
Where a player's skills are improving very rapidly, so that an obviously unfair advantage is

being obtained, handicappers should consider a considerable reduction in handicap. The amount of reduction is at the discretion of the handicapper but it is worth noting that step changes of up to 40% have been seen in recent years. Handicappers are also reminded that handicaps can be changed during tournaments.

#### Bringing Club Handicaps into line with other clubs.

Handicappers at clubs should also attempt to bring the handicaps of their members who do not play elsewhere into line with the handicaps of their members who have justified their handicaps at other clubs. This is necessary to prevent clubs from drifting too far from the national average. In particular, all clubs should recognise that their handicaps are not necessarily correct and they might be out of step with the rest of the country.

#### Short Croquet.

The changes to the correlation between Short Croquet and CA handicaps last season appear to be more realistic than the previous season and no further changes are to be made. Handicappers may give short croquet handicaps to players who do not play the full game according to their ability. However, players with only a Short Croquet handicap must adopt the parallel CA handicaps as a starred handicap when playing in a standard tournament. A standard handicap will then be awarded according to the play in that tournament. Further, handicappers must not change a standard handicap as a result of play in a Short Croquet competition. This means that players with a standard handicap cannot have a change to their handicap in Short Croquet games by playing Short Croquet. It may be necessary to have Short Croquet handicaps altered independently of standard handicaps in the future and this is under consideration by the HCC.

**Restrictions on Handicap Alterations.**  
For 1989 there will be no restrictions on the alteration of handicaps in either direction within the limits of 20 to -2 by CA Handicappers. Club Handicappers will only be permitted to recommend changes to official handicaps to the Chairman of the HCC.

**Maximum Doubles Handicap.**  
Following on from the recent increase to the maximum singles handicap, from the start of the 1989 season the maximum doubles handicap will be increased from 14 to 17.

**Automatic Handicap Changes.**  
The HCC is considering automatic changes of one handicap point for players who either win or lose all of their games in a handicap American or Swiss tournament. The HCC would welcome the views of handicappers and players on this point.

**Open Play Tournaments.**  
The CA handicap system has been used mainly to provide a national framework for handicap play. The HCC has therefore decided that the alteration of handicaps at tournaments with no handicap events is anomalous and that in future there will be no general handicap alterations as a result of play at a single tournament with open play only. In practice this rules out a large number of advanced play tournaments. The HCC does not expect there to be any problems with players who only play in advanced competitions and who may improve, as their handicap would be irrelevant in the short term. It will be up to CA handicappers at



Barry Keen.

their own clubs to alter the handicaps of these players as a result of play over several tournaments (open or handicap). Tournament handicappers at events with open play only will also be able to make changes provided that the evidence of several recent tournaments (open or handicap) is considered. When making an alteration, tournament handicappers should list the tournaments they have considered. Finally, should an over-handicapped player make an appearance in a handicap competition, then the handicapper for that competition always has the option to catch up by altering the handicap as the player progresses through the event.

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### The Lost Art of Hoop Setting

By Martin French.

The laws that affect hoops and balls have changed little in recent years. Why is it, then, that when you stick in a hoop you rarely see the 1/8" gap you should expect?

Wide, irregularly set hoops make the game a matter of chance. Some hoop shots will rattle through the anticipated distance, while others take no wire, run well past the getaway ball, and destroy any chance of a forward rush. In short, sloppily set hoops encourage careless hoop shots, and penalise a player striving for control of a break.

Playing in tournaments (and sticking in hoops!) all round the country reveals that accurately-set hoops are the exception rather than the rule. Come ROTs (Referees of Tournaments), we can do better than this!

So, how should hoops be set for tournaments and matches? First, the law:

- hoops should be 3 3/4" + 0"
- 1/32" and firmly set; Law 50(d)
- balls should be 3 5/8" diameter +/- 1/32"; Law 2(c)

Thus legal hoops and balls should give a total clearance of between 1/16" and 5/32".

Whilst hoops are generally found to get wider with age (due to the battering they receive?), many of the balls in regular use are on the small side. This is not surprising, as new balls first lose their shiny finish, and then their knurled surface gets worn.

Setting hoops accurately takes no more than 15 minutes per lawn, and less if they were roughly right to begin with. The task usually falls to club faithfuls or ROTs - not many clubs have ground staff on hand to do this chore. ROTs will remember that they have a duty to check each hoop before play each day, but can of course delegate the re-setting to others. At Ipswich, we now have quite a few members who are prepared to set the hoops accurately for club events and local matches.

For speed, the following approach can be recommended from experience. It avoids the frequent use of expensive ball and hoop gauges, but still guarantees that critical gap! Instead, get a metal strip 1/8" thick and a few inches long. If you are taking things more seriously, use a 1/16" strip! Next find the largest ball to be used in the event. Reject any balls at this stage which are excessively oblate.

Without access to ball gauges, the largest ball can be found by, for example, rotating each ball in turn between a fixed and a movable up-

right on some flat surface. If this biggest ball is not instantly recognisable amongst the others, mark it! A blob of paint will persist in the knurling for at least one whole season. I have found that, as legend would have it, it is usually a black ball which is the largest.

Venture on to the lawn with:

- the metal strip
- the biggest ball
- a bucket of grass cuttings
- a large screwdriver, or similar
- a plastic, wooden or rubber mallet (Thor make some excellent nylon-faced mallets that seem indestructible.)

For each hoop:

- check the width using the ball and metal strip, its firmness and how close the carrots are to the surface
- unless all is well, loosen the hoop by tapping upwards, and remove. If the ground is at all soft, tread firmly over the carrot holes. This will give a firmer setting.
- if too wide, use the screwdriver to scrape earth from the 'inside' face of each carrot hole. Pack in some grass cuttings, especially on the 'outside' faces. Squeeze the carrots together slightly (big hands help here!) and push the hoop in the holes. Tap it down, checking its width against the ball. Squeeze the uprights together with one hand while driving it home if necessary. Note that the hoop should never be struck in the middle of the crown - it will distort. Tap it only over the uprights.
- if too tight, scrape earth from the outside faces, pack the inside faces with grass and replace the hoop. Check the width, and if necessary wedge a foot between the uprights (big feet needed this time!) as the hoop is driven into place.

From experience, hoops that are well set at the start of a tournament will need only minor adjustments on subsequent mornings. Apologies if all the foregoing is 'teaching your grandmother', but it is evident that some tournaments need to try harder with their hoop setting!

Players who are anxious about 'tight' hoops will find that they do not pose a real problem. Instead, it is irregular hoop setting that makes hoop shots difficult and a lottery; consistently-set hoops allow a player to develop reliable hoop-running skills.

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### THE MOLE TRUTH Press Release from Eliza Tinsley & Co.

Frank Taylor is a man with a 'hush hush' mission. The task is enormous - but the day of the mole is over. Their cover has been blown and the trap is set. No - this isn't a tale about espionage, but about those furry little 'critters' who can turn a snooker table lawn into a battle field overnight.



'Gotcha!' Frank Taylor and mole.

For sixty-year old Frank Taylor, of Pattingham, Wolverhampton, is a professional mole-catcher. Made redundant in 1986, Frank set himself up as a mole catcher with the help of the Government's Enterprise Scheme.

Frank's new found, and one could say down to earth career, has rescued a dying country art and his services are much in demand. On one 'under cover' job at Willey Park, near Broseley, Shropshire, he caught 561 moles in two months. Lord Forester had 150 acres of solid mole hills before Frank began, but armed with knee pad, trap and a skill that can catch a mole in 2 1/2 minutes, the numbers soon dwindled.

'I have trapped moles since I was a boy, usually for my family and friends in the countryside. The use of poisons for controlling moles has always repelled me', said Frank. 'I think I have proved that trapping is the only effective method of mole control', he added.

Frank only uses traps manufactured by Eliza Tinsley and Co. He explained that he uses Tinsley traps exclusively, because they are

a fine, well-finished product. 'They work brilliantly', he said, 'I have caught moles with them every day since I began'.

Frank often has his leg pulled about the Jasper Carrott sketch on the mole catcher. His answer? 'If he'd sent for me, he wouldn't have written the sketch!'

Frank can be found hunting down the furry creatures on sports grounds such as golf courses; in private gardens and even on the occasional country estate. Once he spies a mole, he won't rest until it's caught. Frank has no intention of hanging up his trap yet. 'Moles aren't an endangered species, but mole catchers are. We're well worth preserving', he added.

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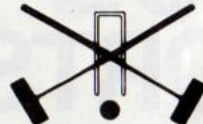
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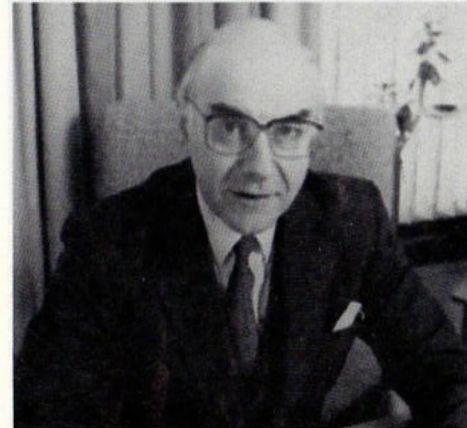
## 1988 Accounts

The Treasurer's Commentary  
on the 1988 Accounts.

Once again I am pleased to report increases in the Association's income from subscriptions, registration fees and advertisements as a result of our growing development activity. Overall the figures are better than expected at the time the 1988 budget was prepared.

Concominantly this activity has caused an increase in our general overheads expenditure, particularly in salaries of the office staff and in travelling expenses. A special payment arose in 1988 through the decision to commute the small pension paid to our former secretary Vandeleur Robinson by the purchase of an annuity for him. Allowing for this, the increase in overheads is 17%.

The overall deficit on ordinary activities has been reduced and in the budget for 1989 we aim to reduce it still further with a view to eliminating it altogether by the end of 1990. Since greater



Alan Oldham.

expenditure on salaries and administration must be expected in the years ahead, this objective depends on our ability to generate additional income from an increased membership, from tournament activity, and from sales.

Our development activities are largely funded by the Sports Council Grant and by sponsorship. During the year sponsorship totalling £13,210 gross (£11,800 gross in 1987) was received from Lister Garden Furniture (Inter Counties Championship), Carlsberg Brewery (Open Championship), Bombay Gin (President's Cup), and the Royal Bank of Scotland (Development of Croquet in Schools). The figures shown in the Accounts are net of the expenses which are directly related to these tournaments and activities.

Coaching activities have generated an income of nearly £2000 during the year and this has encouraged us to make provision in the 1988 accounts for the production of a first class coaching video for use in 1990.

Grants of £50 each were made during the year to start up clubs at York and Morpeth. By making use of an over-provision made in 1987, and not ultimately required, a grant of £250 was made to the East Midlands Federation. Short term loans of £500 each were made to Crawley and Plymouth clubs to enable them to develop their facilities.

A Club Development Fund has been established. By means of a transfer from the Benefactors Fund, Surbiton Club have been granted £6000 to enable that Club to become a 'centre of excellence' within the next few years. Creation of new Regional Competition Venues was part

## STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AS AT 31st DECEMBER 1988

	1987	1988
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		
Office Furniture and Equipment at Written Down Value	934	1,193
Croquet Equipment at Written Down Value	1,600	1,600
Trophies, estimated to realise	10,000	10,000
Investment, as per attached schedule	34,163	42,162
	46,697	54,955
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Stocks of Literature and Equipment	1,218	1,800
Loans to Member Clubs	4,000	3,000
Sundry Debtors and Prepayments	2,564	5,393
Cash at Bank and in Hand	6,998	3,169
	14,780	13,362
	61,477	68,317
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Subscriptions received in advance	3,826	5,432
Accrued Expenses	15,081	9,904
Taxation	753	1,463
	19,660	16,799
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>£41,817</b>	<b>£51,518</b>
Representing:		
Accumulated General Funds as at 1st January 1988	29,997	22,990
Transfer to Club Development Fund (Deficit)/Surplus for the Year	(1,050)	-
	(4,230)	7,007
	24,717	29,997
Life Membership Fund	1,640	1,640
Apps-Hepley Memorial Fund	216	216
Test Tour Fund	3,471	3,238
Benefactors Fund		
Balance 1st January 1988	13,608	
Income for Year	544	
	14,152	
Transfer to Club Development Fund	6,000	
		8,152
		13,608
Tournaments and Trophies Fund		2,571
Club Development Fund		
Transfer from General Funds	1,050	
Transfer from Benefactors Fund	6,000	
	7,050	
Allocated in Year	6,000	
		1,050
		-
	<b>£41,817</b>	<b>£51,518</b>

Signed: M. MURRAY, Chairman of Council  
A.J. OLDHAM, Hon. Treasurer

## INVESTMENTS HELD AT 31st DECEMBER 1988

Nominal Value £		Market Value £
18,817.92	<b>QUOTED INVESTMENTS</b> 10% Treasury Stock 1990	20,000
10.00	<b>UNQUOTED INVESTMENTS</b> Roehampton Country Club Nationwide Building Society	10 14,154 £34,164

of the Association's submission to the Sports Council for obtaining of grant aid and the Sports Council attaches considerable importance to their development. Therefore a transfer of £1050 has also been made from General Funds during 1988, and it is expected that further transfers will be made from time to time, with a view to building up the Club Development Fund to the point where further substantial grants can be made to develop 'four lawn' clubs at which tournaments can be held.

Taxation of various kinds has proved to be a troublesome matter for the Treasurer in 1988 and with the increasing size and extended activities of the Association will no doubt continue to be so. VAT in particular has implications for almost everything that we do, and it is most

unfortunate that HM Customs & Excise chose during the year to question our right to recover all our input tax. As the sums involved were - for us - considerable, amounting to about £3000 per annum, and the arguments employed were so recondite, I found it necessary to obtain advice from expert accountants. Although I am pleased to report that the outcome is fairly satisfactory in that the demands have been reduced to £600, with a further reduction likely and little continuing liability in future years, the cost in accountancy fees alone has been £1,150. This has been included (appropriately) in extraordinary activity expenditure.

A.J. Oldham.  
4th April, 1989.

## 1988 Accounts

## Contacts

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE  
YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 1988

	1987	1988
<b>INCOME</b>		
Subscriptions	15,957	13,783
Registration Fees	2,411	2,237
Levy	4,584	2,867
Tribute	77	70
Sale of Books, Laws etc. (net)	4,347	4,657
Advertisements in Publications	4,511	2,797
Surplus on Tournaments	2,796	2,202
Investment Income on General Funds (net of tax)	2,127	1,851
	36,810	30,464
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Publications (Magazine, Fixtures Book and Directory)	18,228	16,859
	18,582	13,605
<b>GENERAL OVERHEADS</b>		
Office Rent	1,440	1,125
Rent of Land	500	400
Staff Salaries and Pensions	12,543	9,293
Council and Committee Travelling Expenses	1,445	781
Postage and Telephone	1,590	1,580
Printing and Stationery	1,149	1,479
Insurance	490	430
Sundry Expenses	450	739
Audit and Accountancy Charges	1,025	950
Maintenance of Office, Furniture and Equipment	726	536
	21,358	17,313
<b>DEFICIT ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>(2,776)</b>	<b>(3,708)</b>
<b>EXTRAORDINARY ITEMS</b>		
Income		
Sports Council Grant	26,552	25,956
Sponsorship (net)	1,366	3,550
	27,918	29,506
Expenses		
Development Officer's Fees	17,916	17,388
Grants to Clubs and Federations	100	850
Coaching (net)	5,251	427
General Publicity and Development (net)	6,105	126
	29,372	18,791
<b>(DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>£(4,230)</b>	<b>£7,007</b>

We have examined the books, vouchers and other records maintained by The Croquet Association for the year ended 31st December 1988 and obtained such further information as considered necessary. To the best of our knowledge and belief the Accounts give a true and fair view of the State of Affairs of the Association at 31st December 1988 and of the Deficit for the year ended on that date.

Alhambra House, 27 Charing Cross Road, London W2H 0AU  
22nd March 1989

NICHOLASS, AMES & CO.  
Chartered Accountants

## OBITUARY

Edmund Strickland, OBE.

Ed Strickland died in hospital in Eastbourne on the last day of November 1988. He spent most of his working life in the Far East and was deeply involved in the higher echelons of sports administration both there and later back in Britain. His 28 year career in the Colonial Government Service in Singapore was interrupted by the war when his life was rudely shattered by the Japanese invasion of 1942. With the aid of a marine engineer friend, he managed to flee Singapore just ahead of advancing enemy troops and after some adventures, made his way to Australia working as a greaser on board ship.

Later he returned to London to work for the British Olympic Committee, efforts which culminated in his taking the British team to the 1952 games in Helsinki. He was awarded the OBE in 1955 for his services to sport and went on to take a major role in planning the 1958 games in Cardiff.

Ed discovered croquet when he and his wife Jill

moved to Eastbourne in the early 1970s and bought a flat overlooking Royal Eastbourne golf course on one side and Larkin's Field, the home of Compton Croquet Club, on the other. He soon mastered the rudiments of the game and established himself at a steady 6 handicap where he found himself much in demand as a doubles partner. Off the lawn, he inevitably joined the club committee and rose to be its first official Chairman. He and Denno Harris (then well-launched on his 14 year tenure of the secretaryship of the Club) were largely instrumental in the planning and execution of Compton's hosting of the Australia versus New Zealand Test Match in 1974 and Ed also acted as manager.

Ed's early years at Compton were marked by his constant attention to the state of the lawns and his genuine interest in and encouragement of young players, especially at Devonshire Park. In fact he saw the South of England Championships, traditionally

The Croquet Association  
Administration Secretary

Brian Macmillan, The Croquet Association, The Hurlingham Club, Ranelagh Gardens, London, SW6 3PR. Tel: 01-736-3148.

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## Southern

Terry Scrase, 21 Bexmoor Way, Old Basing, Hants, RG24 0BL. Tel: 0256-22522.

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**North East Region**  
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## Yorks &amp; Humberside Region

Keith Smith, 37 Headlands Close, Liversedge, West Yorkshire, WF15 7QJ. Tel: 0924-406495.

## CA Schools Committee

Ivor Brand, 54 Foxwell Street, Off London Road, Worcester, WR5 2ET. Tel: 0905-358-304.

## APOLOGY

The Editor would like to apologise unreservedly to Peter Danks for publishing the article in the last issue (Page 14) headed 'Around and About'.

Those who know Peter will have appreciated that the matter of stealing Dorothy Rush's handbag was referred to in a light-hearted way and was not based on fact.

However, the Editor now realises that it is possible that those unaware of Peter's professional background might have taken the allegation seriously.

In view of this, the Editor considers he made an error of judgment in publishing the article, and deeply regrets any offense that the article may have caused, either to Peter personally or to any other readers.

In addition, he would like to apologise to Dennis Moorcraft, whose name was also mentioned in the article. Both Peter and Dennis have done sterling work for the CA over many years, and their efforts deserve to be properly recognised.

held at Eastbourne's Devonshire Park, through their darkest days of falling entries and increasing pressures from tennis; the existence of the Championships today, in their new format, owes much to his persistence and constant lobbying.

In recent years he served on the Council of the CA and relaxed his croquet interest in Eastbourne in favour of the wider context of the Eastbourne Saffrons Sports Club of which Compton is a tenant. Here he continued to encourage young people in a variety of sports and became President of the Club in the years 1983-87.

Ed Strickland will be remembered for his abiding interest in all aspects of sport. In the words of Dr Michael Mynott, his successor as Saffron's President, 'He was a man of immense passion and enthusiasm for sportsmen and sportswomen and was devoted to the pursuit of excellence.'

Roger Wood.

## Golf Croquet

### The Art of Golf Croquet'

Introduced by Chris Hudson

In 1936, Mr H.F. Crowther-Smith published a little 20-page pamphlet on 'The Art of Golf Croquet'. Crowther-Smith was the Editor of the Gazette from 1937-1954 and had previously published a book on 'The Art of Croquet' in 1932. He was also an accomplished caricaturist and cartoonist.

His pamphlet on Golf Croquet is reproduced here in full, firstly to demonstrate that there is more to Golf Croquet than might meet the eye, and secondly to show how even the Rules of Golf Croquet have evolved over the years.

Those with enquiring minds might like to ponder on why various changes to the rules were introduced, and how these changes might affect the tactics nowadays. (The reason why the jump shot was banned will be revealed in our next issue, but why is the start now from 'B' baulk instead of the East yard line?)

Historians amongst us might like to find out when such changes were introduced. Perhaps a modern pamphlet on the game is now required, covering both history and tactics?

### THE ART OF GOLF CROQUET

BY  
H.F. Crowther-Smith



Price 1s.

The original cover for the pamphlet.

### The Art of Golf-Croquet

By H F Crowther-Smith

#### Preface

The fact that the Council of the Croquet Association has recently drawn up a Code of Laws and thus given Golf-Croquet official recognition should bring to this fascinating game many adherents.

But before Golf-Croquet can be really enjoyed a knowledge of the tactics is essential. It is quite as necessary to understand the matter of how to position the balls, and other vital principles of the game, as it is to know the four-ball break in the parent game, Croquet.

There could be no pleasure in playing either game without this fundamental knowledge.

So with the object of instructing beginners, and helping them to derive full enjoyment from the game, this small primer on Golf-Croquet has been written.

## GOLF-CROQUET

In order to understand fully the instruction that follows reference may be necessary from time to time to the Official Laws of the game which will be found at the end of the book (see the end of this article - Ed).

#### The Strokes.

Though the strokes of the game are only single strokes (for there is no croquet stroke in the game of Golf-Croquet), for that very reason they each require special accuracy and careful concentration.

#### Playing for Position.

1. This stroke which concerns (when it is played as the first stroke for the next point in order) only the 1st and 3rd players must be played with particular accuracy. By 'position' (both here and elsewhere) is meant position from which to run the hoop. A really good position in front of the hoop must be concentrated upon by both the 1st and 3rd players and the full advantage of their order of play extracted from the stroke. It is advisable, however, not to try for a position too close to the hoop, which often results in no position at all.

#### Running the Hoop.

2. Here again, as long as the hoop is reasonably 'on', concentrate upon running it. If the position is one which permits not only running that hoop, but getting down to the next, play the stroke accurately and with sufficient strength to get well down to the next - but not beyond it. This is most important because it considerably discounts (if it does not actually deprive them of it) the advantage of players 1 and 3 for the next point in order. This matter of running the hoop and trying in the same stroke for position for the next applies, of course, only to the first, third, fifth, one-back, three-back, and penultimate hoops. In the case of running the fifth hoop or penultimate and also trying for position for the next, the peg may prove an obstacle to the desired result.

#### The Stroke for the Peg.

3. This requires no explanation; but as this last point may often decide the game it should be played with every care and studied accuracy. If the peg presents to you a difficult target - for from thirteen yards, as the laws prescribe, it looks small - practise the shot from this distance until you get familiar with it and gain confidence.

#### The Remove Stroke.

4. This stroke is so called for the obvious reason that it is used to remove a ball that is in position to run the hoop, or a ball that, if not removed, will itself remove a ball that is in position. The stroke may be



Phyllis Court - 'home' of recent Golf Croquet Championships.

divided into two kinds: the controlled remove stroke - or stop shot; and the uncontrolled.

Of these two kinds the first is not only the more useful but, next to the stroke that makes a point, it is the most valuable in the game. When properly played it not only removes the ball in position to run the hoop perhaps 20 yards, but the striker's ball remains itself in close proximity to the hoop - and sometimes even in position for it.

This controlled remove, or stop-shot, can only be made with any degree of success when the ball to be removed is not more than a yard from the striker's ball.

The stop-shot is made with the toe of the mallet held well up, the heel being dropped and the mallet checked by being brought sharply down on the ground immediately the ball has been struck.

The uncontrolled remove stroke is that which has to be made from a distance at a ball which, if not removed, will run the hoop directly after. From, say, 20 yards, after the ball is hit the direction of the striker's ball is of course uncontrollable. At its best the stroke is often only of temporary value; the ball displaced returns at once to the hoop - again, perhaps, in position.

#### The Rush Stroke.

5. This is the same stroke so invaluable in Croquet. It may often be usefully employed in Golf-Croquet to rush a partner-ball into position for the hoop. The use of the stroke in this connection is fully described elsewhere.

#### The Stymie.

6. This form of obstruction (a Golf term, of course) comes into Golf-Croquet frequently, either through skill or through luck.

The stroke that stymies a ball deliberately from its objective requires very careful play and an accurate estimation of strength. The value of the stymie is great; to protect a partner-ball that is in position for a hoop from being removed, or to get between an opponent and a hoop to prevent his running it.

Because of its value it is well worth developing by practice.

#### The Jump Stroke.

7. It is as well to emphasise the fact that this stroke is a foul (see Law 9).

**Importance of the Order of Play.** As explained in the Laws, after

tossing for choice of start, or balls, each player in proper sequence of colour plays his ball from any spot on the East yard-line. The two sides play alternate turns.

The first stroke of each player of a side for the next point in order is of supreme importance; and the side that plays 1st and 3rd for the next point has a very great advantage over the other side that plays 2nd and 4th. The beginner at Golf-Croquet must thoroughly digest this fact and see the reason.

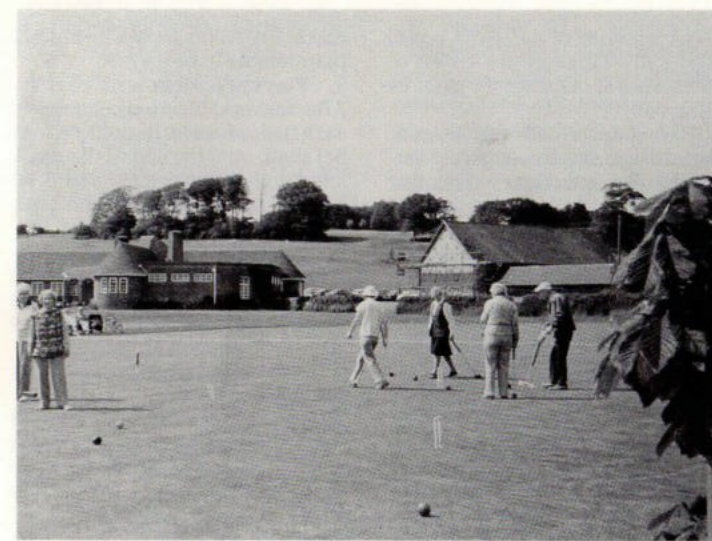
To put it simply (colours of the balls can be ignored), because 1 plays before 2 it follows that if 1 gets position for the hoop it is idle for 2 to try to do the same; for 1 plays before 2 and can run the hoop first. Even if 1 does not get position it is useless for 2 to try to get it; for, again, 1 plays before 2 and can therefore remove him. The same principle applies to the first stroke of 3, and of 4; as 3 plays before 4, he can, with impunity (because of his numerical advantage) afford to take position, while 4 cannot. You may say that 2 plays before 3, and so 2 will remove 3 from position for the hoop; but 1 plays before 2, and, unless 2 has been very clever and used the safety zone area (see diagram of Court) so as to prevent it, 1 will see that 2 does not interfere with 3's position.

It will be seen therefore, that a constant eye on the numerical order of play is essential to an understanding of the game. The one side that plays 1st and 3rd for the next point in order, has a big advantage over the other side that plays 2nd and 4th. They command, through numerical order of play, the hoop to be contested by the fact that each can afford to take position for the hoop; they, as 1st and 3rd players, can nearly always enjoy a two-to-one superiority; and because of their superiority the other side, the 2nd and 4th players, are kept on the defensive and are forced to finesse.

But the 1st and 3rd players may lose this command (and the hoop) through bad tactics, by reason of the clever play of the 2nd and 4th players, or through bad luck - which enters into Golf-Croquet as much as it does most games.

#### The Tactics.

Though each player has a very wide choice of spots (anywhere on a line 33 yards in length, to be exact) from



Golf Croquet at Worthing.

which to play his first stroke of the game, the tactics of one side of the two or four players with regard to that stroke differ very greatly from those of the other. We repeat this to emphasise its importance.

This difference applies to the first strokes of each side of players for every 'next point in order' - except the Peg - and to the tactics of each side thereafter.

We will assume that the game is a foursome and that the start is made in the order of colour - Blue, Red, Black, Yellow, representing respectively, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th players.

With such a wide choice of start from any spot on the East boundary, where should the first player (Blue) play from? That of course depends upon what his object is. We say at once there is only one object on which the 1st player should rigidly concentrate (being here for the first hoop) and that is to get as nearly perfect a position as possible for that hoop.

To achieve this it seems fairly obvious that he should choose a spot on the East boundary on the playing side of the first hoop and play such stroke with every possible care and accuracy.

Now the 2nd player (Red) will be influenced in playing his first stroke by two things: (1) if the 1st player (Blue) has been clever enough to get any reasonably certain position for running the first hoop; and (2) if he has not. In the first case Red must definitely shoot at Blue.

Here we must explain the two dotted lines on the diagram of the Court which, with the two yard-lines, form a six-yard square SW. of the first hoop. This imaginary square provides a safety zone for the 2nd and 4th players (here Red and Yellow), and materially governs their tactics. These two players (the 2nd and 4th) must always realize that they are on the defensive against the commanding advantage possessed by the 1st and 3rd players. Their chief danger must be looked for from the deadly stop-shot.

To minimize the disastrous effect of this 'remove' stroke, players 2 and 4 (when for the first hoop) must never play their ball outside this imaginary

square. By going South or West of the ball of 1, or of 3, the stop-shot is rendered comparatively harmless because of the protection afforded by the two boundaries. To return to the stroke of the 2nd player (Red) and how Blue will influence it. If Blue has succeeded in getting position for the hoop Red should shoot at Blue, and from such spot on the East yard-line that if he misses, his ball will be replaced on the West yard-line, within the safety zone, and therefore on the playing side of the first hoop.

If Blue has not succeeded in getting such position for the hoop that he can run it in his next turn, the 2nd player (Red) should play to a spot four or five yards South of the hoop; here he is safe from the stop-shot and yet well situated to deal with either ball of the opponents which may threaten to run the hoop.

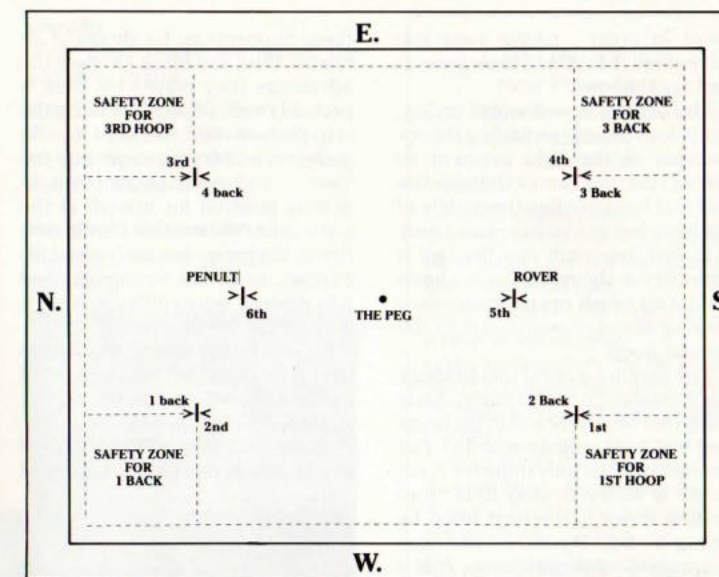
The 3rd player (Black) must, as his partner Blue did, accurately play for a position for the hoop - even if Blue (missed by Red) is still in position. This is the advantage of the 1st and 3rd players, that each can play for position with impunity - an advantage denied to their opponents.

It is now the turn of the 4th player (Yellow) and his stroke depends chiefly on Blue - the ball that plays immediately after him.

If Blue (missed by Red) is in position the 4th player (Yellow) must shoot at it. It is a desperate stroke for, if missed, Blue will run the hoop. As Yellow's only idea is to remove Blue, let him concentrate upon this; let him hit Blue, chancing where his own ball or Blue will be replaced afterwards.

If Black and not Blue is in position Yellow may shoot at it, following the directions given to Red when shooting at Blue. It is not essential for Yellow to shoot at Black, for Red, it will be remembered, is at hand to deal with either ball that threatens to run the hoop. Yellow might then, instead of shooting at Black, play to any spot within the six-yard safety zone that gives him protection.

This briefly suggests the play of the first four strokes of the game for the first hoop. The tactics apply in the main principle to the first strokes for every hoop; and again we emphasise the difference between the tactics of



Court diagram showing 'safety zones'.

the 1st and 3rd players, and the 2nd and 4th.

It is not necessary - nor indeed possible - to try and give the strokes that were afterwards played before the first hoop was finally run, but the same tactics apply all through. Blue and Black, playing 1st and 3rd, should with that advantage of numerical order (and keeping it) have won this first point.

If, however, Red and Yellow won the hoop they must somehow - perhaps by being given the chance to employ the devastating stop-shot - have robbed Blue and Black of their advantage. On the other hand, tactics at Golf-Croquet are sometimes routed by either the 2nd or 4th player running the hoop from six yards!

When Blue, Red, Black and Yellow play for the first hoop in that order, and Blue and Black lose that hoop they again become 1st and 3rd players for the second hoop. Assuming then that the 1st and 3rd players for any hoop ought to run the hoop, hoops should be won alternately and the score be six all, leaving that elusive target, the Peg, to decide the game. But so many unforeseen circumstances occur in practice which show that this theory can often be upset. The tactics that have been outlined will, nevertheless, be found profitable, based as they are on sound reasoning and experience.

Never fail to note the order of play - i.e. whether your side plays 1st and 3rd, or 2nd and 4th - and apply the principles that have been laid down to this all important matter.

It must be noted that the 2nd and 4th players for the second hoop have no safety zone to protect them, only the side boundary; this applies also to the fourth hoop, two-back and four-back. When playing for the middle hoops - the fifth and sixth, and penultimate and rover - specially careful positioning by the 2nd and 4th players is necessary. Here, completely isolated as the hoops are, these two players must keep well back out of range of the stop-shot.

**Wiles.** Under this heading are given a few

variations in tactics which go outside the orthodox principles of the game.

It will be appreciated that they are of considerable value as they aim at robbing the 1st and 3rd players for the next point in order of their advantage as such.

The first example of this kind of artifice applies only to the first, third, one-back and three-back hoops - possibly, though remotely, to the fifth and penultimate. We have previously hinted at the advantage of running, say, the first hoop and trying, in the same stroke, to get down to the next. Here the essential thing is for the player to seize the chance to get into the middle of the hoop when the opponents are so placed that they cannot get him out before he plays again. Then, in his next turn, he not only makes that point but - if he plays carefully and with correct strength - he arrives first at the next point in order. Supposing then that Blue and Black were 1st and 3rd players for the first hoop they not only, by this device, run that hoop but become again 1st and 3rd players for the next



Ivor and Richard Brand, 1988 National Golf Croquet Doubles Champions. Richard (right) also won the individual title.

## Golf Croquet

