

Tony Antenen

Having barely escaped drowning in a floodtide of paper over the last six weeks and with the build up to the AGM that weren't and with the Easter break truncating the working week one might suppose your Secretary could just conceivably be

... The Secretary's cup runneth over

excused for putting up a "This Space Could Sell For You" sign under his header and giving the column a miss this month.

Ah! But not only has he had to contend with the slings and arrows of administration he also is preparing to move his Office. Not far, I grant you, but far enough given the physical task of moving and the three-man work force to accomplish it.

Yea! Even as I put my few words on paper I am surrounded by a packed, half-packed and to-be-packed office. I am constrained, by factors over which I have no control

whatsoever, not to commence moving until the Wednesday before Easter and to have the present accommodation vacated by the Tuesday after the break. Consequently, if you tried to contact the Office over that period and either got the bird-scarer that poses as an answering machine or similarly failed to raise Lazurus, that's the reason.

Of course I realise that this will arrive long after the event but this, a poor thing but mine own, is the reason why there is no contribution from the Secretary in this edition!!

Puzzles

Caption Contest 1

Can you think of a suitable caption for the photograph on the right, kindly sent in by Deborah Latham.

Any particularly apt or witty suggestions will be published and may even receive a copy of the new "Townsend's Croquet Almanack 1992".

Crossword

Also on the right, the solution to Crossword Puzzle No.5, published in "Croquet" number 219 (January).



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Croquet

MAGAZINE & NEWS

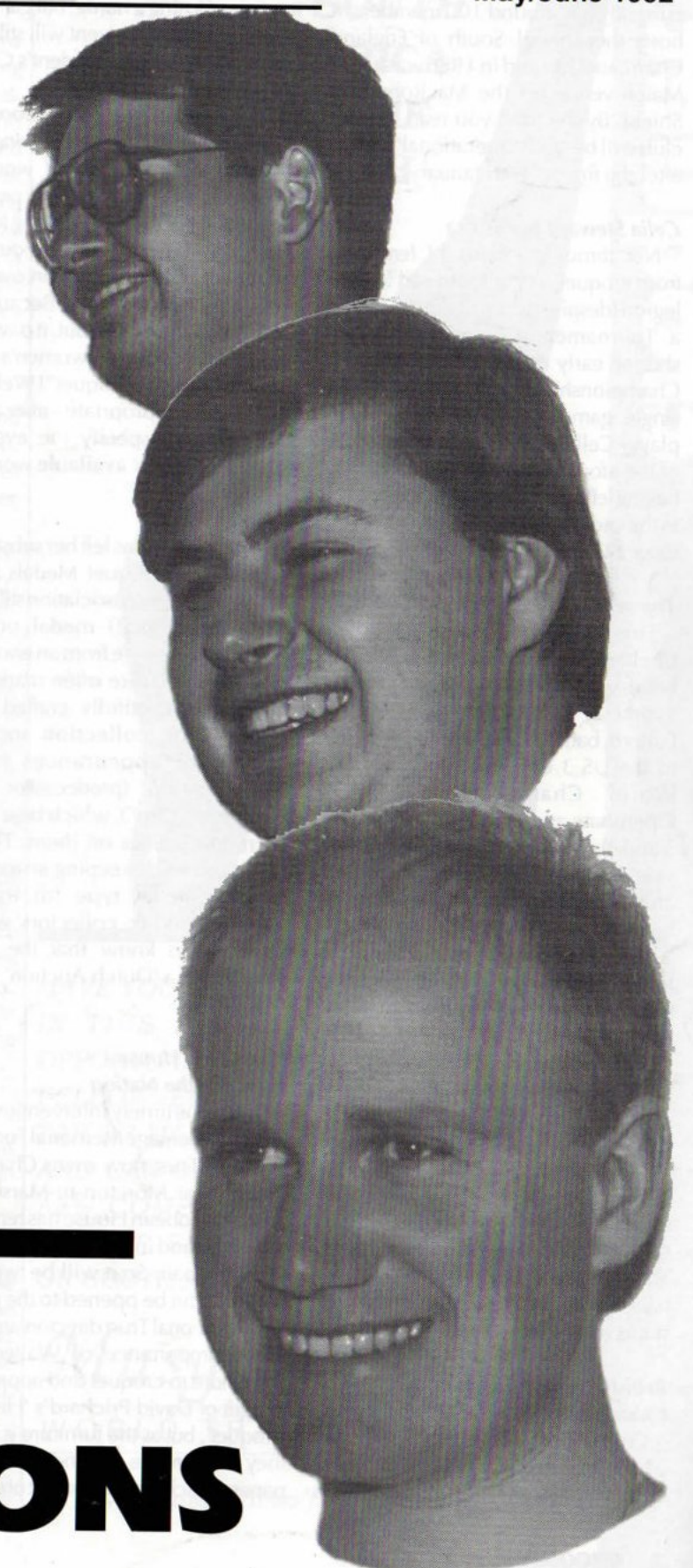
Issue 221
May/June 1992

Nicky Smith
in Italy

Chris Hudson
previews National
Croquet Day

plus
All the Latest
News

British CHAMPIONS



Compton Club Fire

Arsonists have destroyed Compton Croquet Club's pavilion at the Safrons Sports complex in Eastbourne. Detectives are investigating the cause of the blaze, which broke out in the ladies' changing rooms and quickly spread to the rest of the pavilion causing £25,000 damage.

The Club was formed in 1898 and currently has around 100 members; it hosts the annual South of England Championship and in 1986 was a Test Match venue for the MacRobertson Shield. By the time you read this the club will be "fully operational" again, after the fire on 17th January.

Celia Steward burns bra

Not through a burst of feminism from croquet's long repressed female legion (despite the uprising caused by a Tournament Committee plan to shorten early rounds of the Womens Championship from best-of-three to single game). In fact Barlow Bowl player Celia was an unwitting victim of the aforementioned Compton fire, having left a bag of personal belongings in the Ladies' changing room after a far distant Compton tournament!

Top seeds battle over first title

The Western Championship at Cheltenham over the May Day bank holiday saw World and British numbers 1 and 2, Chris Clarke and Robert Fulford, battle for the title before flying to the US 3 days later for the 1992 World Championship. David Openshaw and John Walters (ranked 3 and 4) were both absent, though last year's finalists Steve Mulliner (holder) and David Maugham both made strong bids.

Chris took the title in a best-of-five final, which was of impressive quality for play at this very early stage in the season.

By Royal Appointment

John Walters and Robert Fulford will be representing croquet at Buckingham Palace on July 9th. They have been invited to a Garden Party which will mark the 40th anniversary of our Queen's accession to the throne, with all the men and women of Britain who have achieved World Championship status during her reign.

British Croquet Masters Championship

Council adopted John Walters' paper which implements a new name for the erstwhile anonymous "President's

Cup". In future the select event for the top 8 British Players will be termed the Croquet Masters Championship, in line with other similar sporting events. CA President and past winner of the event (indeed, all events!) John Solomon spoke in favour of the idea at the meeting. Echoing the voices of many a potential suitor, John Walters said afterwards that sceptics should not think in terms of losing a name, but gaining a new one; since the event will still be a competition for the President's Cup.

Who wears the (flat soled) boots?

You have to be made of strong stuff to make it to the top of women's croquet in the nineties, and perhaps the media will soon be looking for our best ladies to get their whips out after the recent Council decision over the croquet Masters. Why? Because as Chris Hudson pointed out, it paves the way to rename the top women's event the "Mistresses of Croquet"! Well, that would seem appropriate - after all the conditions do specify the event as being for the best available women!

Historic Medals

Kay Longman has left her substantial collection of Croquet Medals to the CA. Although the Association still gives a "silver" (effect!) medal on rare occasions, these are from an era where achievements were often marked by the gift of beautifully crafted silver medals. The collection includes medals for appearances in the "Beddows Cup" (predecessor of the "President's Cup"), which bear reliefs of croquet scenes on them. The CA will of course be keeping an example of each medal type for its own collection; other collectors will be interested to know that the CA is considering a 'Dutch Auction' for the remainder.

Chastleton House - saved for the Nation

Due to the timely intervention of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, The National Trust now owns Chastleton House near Moreton-in-Marsh. This unique Jacobean House has remained unaltered and intact but alas in a poor state of repair. So it will be two years before it can be opened to the public.

The National Trust directors are aware of the importance of Walter Jones Whitmore to croquet and appreciated the gift of David Prichard's 'History of Croquet', but as the furniture is in store they are unable to find Whitmore's papers which were in a chest of drawers

in his erstwhile bedroom 25 years ago. They have found a framed photograph of the house with two croquet lawns. It would be wonderful if they could be restored too.



Historic Appearance

John Solomon can look forward to a round of applause, certainly in peoples hearts and quite possibly on their hands, when he steps out onto the lawn at the 1992 World Championship in the USA during May. The man who more than any other represents croquet, after a lifetime of phenomenal success on the lawn, earned a place in the Championship by winning the European Qualifying tournament in France at the end of April. It will be his first appearance in a major event since retiring some 15 years ago after a 25 year career which was the most successful of any croquet player to date.

A Great Improvement

Congratulations to Paul Day and Eileen Magee, who were presented with the Apps and Steel Bowls at the "Not the CA AGM" in March, for respectively being most improved man and woman croquet player during the 1991 season.



Above: John Solomon, most successful croquet player ever

Below: Eileen Magee - up and coming

Statistically Significant

Publication of the 1992 edition of "Townsend's Croquet Almanack", (available from Eastern Rose Publishing) reveals some interesting facts about the past seasons in the main croquet-playing countries. In particular, a new set of tables lists Robert Fulford in the top three of all 7 relevant tables! Empirical evidence also for David Openshaw's reluctance to perform "triple peels" - he is 2nd in the % games won table; but a lowly 16th in the % games won with triples table!

Into Africa

Croquet is wasting no time in taking advantage of the new political climate in South Africa. With Test Tours in the planning and stars like Chris Clarke already playing in major SA tournaments, other croquet players are finding out about the many things this country has to offer. With a number of club players having visited during the 91/92 winter, those wanting to go in 92/93 are set for a much easier time now that Musgrove World Travel are arranging all-in holidays. They will take care of all the details, including play against South African players when you arrive. They specialise in tailor-made holidays, allowing travellers to mix croquet with the unique experience of Africa in whatever way most suits them. See their advertisement on page 3 and write or phone for details.

Croquet Summer Schools

Mainly for players with handicaps of 12 or more. At **Ardley**, 2nd to 8th August 1992; cost for residents: £178, for non-residents: £43.80. (Details: Mrs M Payton, 21 Marine Parade, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2PL. **Open to both CA Associates and non-Associates**; course given by SE Croquet Federation).

Loughborough, 3rd to 7th August (Details: Shirley Sandover, Loughborough Summer School, University of Technology, Loughborough LE11 3TU, Tel: 0509 222773. **Associates Only**).

Beerseller still on tap

Those who might like to get hold of BEERSELLER, to sample one in their wide range of delicious beverages after seeing the advertisement in the 1992 Fixtures List, should note that in their infinite wisdom BT have changed the telephone number! The new number is 0730 266600. Cheers!

Women's prerogative may still be exercised

The closing date for entries in the Womens Championship has been put back, so it is still not too late to enter if you really hurry. This is because the format will include BEST OF THREE THROUGHOUT, contrary to what was advertised in the Fixtures List, and in the light of this additional ladies may wish to play. Entries should be sent to Mrs R F Wheeler at Cheltenham CC. As an added incentive, there are still men desperate for partners in the Mixed Doubles event - roll up, roll up!

Restless British Seniors

The date for the finals of the British Seniors Championship has changed once again. They will now be held at the Roehampton Club between 17th and 18th September. Honest!

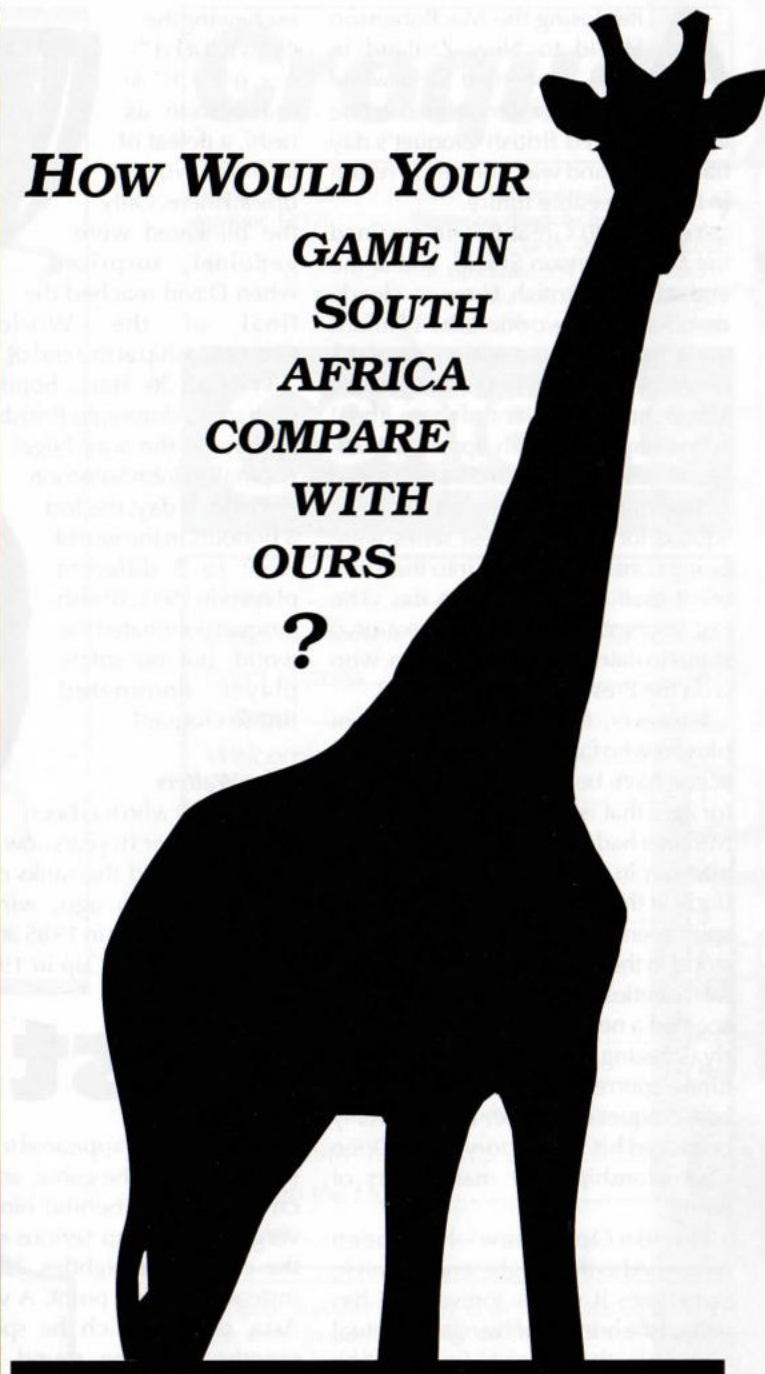
Change of Secretary - Guinness unaffected

Readers who I understand are now queuing up to get into the 1992 event, after my ecstatic review in the last issue, will be interested to know that The Secretary for Carrickmines Croquet Club is now Jane Shorten. Entries should be sent to her care of the club at Glenamuck Road, Carrickmines, County Dublin, IRELAND.

1991 All England Handicap

The 1991 winner of the All England Handicap was C Wood.

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Tailor-made Tours for the Discerning Traveller

After losing the MacRobertson Shield to New Zealand in 1986, it seemed for a while that as far as the international scene was concerned British Croquet's day had passed and was unlikely to return in the foreseeable future.

Yet in 1990 Great Britain regained the MacRobertson Shield, and at the end of 1992 British Croquet clearly dominated the world. Robert Fulford and Chris Clarke were the first of the new breed to give hope, back in the late eighties the talent of these (then) schoolboys was clearly apparent. Mark Saurin's late bid for stardom promoted him from a virtual unknown when test squads for the 1990 test series were being considered, right into the 1990 team itself come selection day. The last youngster to attain international status to date is David Maughan, who won the President's Cup in 1990.

However, it is perhaps the rise of players who far from being new on the scene have been "knocking around" for ages that is most interesting. Steve Mulliner had been considered the best also-ran in the game for many years until, at the end of the eighties a new spirit seemed to possess him. Having stood in the shadow of Nigel Aspinall for countless years, it was as if Steve scented a new vulnerability in his old rival. Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel spurred Steve on to produce the best croquet of his life, and he finally produced his first victory in the Open Championship after many years of trying.

David Openshaw has been renowned as the toughest nut to crack, sometimes it seems forever. He has gained the honour of being a perpetual Captain for the GB team. Few could be more suited; his game revolves around a doggedness that wears the opponent down, producing his best croquet only when on the verge of losing. Unspectacular (except when spectacle may be needed to pull off some astonishing reverse), it is easy for players - especially those who are relatively new to the scene - to regard Openshaw almost like wallpaper! Always there, but not expected to actually win a major against the flashier opposition. Unyet it was Openshaw who performed best against an otherwise unstoppable Hogan, when the New Zealanders were here in 1986. Openshaw who has a more-or-less permanent lease on the Northern Championship trophy. Recently Openshaw has gone from strength to strength; suddenly producing a flourish of a triple peel here (previously

eschewing the "standard" expert's manoeuvre as rash), a defeat of a brash young upstart there. Only the blinkered were genuinely surprised when David reached the final of the World Championship at the end of 1991.

With all its stars, hoping perhaps to dominate British croquet in the way Nigel Aspinall or John Solomon did in their day, the top 3 honours in the world went to 3 different players in 1991. British croquet dominated the world, but no single player dominated British croquet!

John Walters

Is a player who has been around for over 10 years now. He first entered the ranks of A class players 8 years ago, winning the Chairman's Salver in 1985 and playing in the President's Cup in 1986. In his



Best of British

mid-twenties he appeared to have lost his appetite for the game, and his best croquet looked behind him. On the verge of giving up serious croquet at the end of the eighties, he reached instead a turning point. A visit to S E Asia, during which he spent some months travelling round Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia had a profound effect. Returning more focused and committed, but with a more pragmatic even "laid back" attitude, Walters returned to the use of his original grip (abandoned years earlier through injury) and painstakingly constructed a style based on that of Joe Hogan. Over the next two years perseverance gradually paid off as Walters rose again through the ranks.

Finally, during the 1991 season John's efforts appeared to be bearing fruit. Concentration was resulting in more solid play, and the Buddhist-influenced state of mind adopted from his beloved Thailand made for a more sturdy approach. He reached the World Championship having been beaten only by No.s 1 & 2 Clarke and Fulford in several months of British

Championships. Nevertheless, he was surprised and delighted to win his block - including a dream win over Joe Hogan. Victory over David Openshaw in the final was literally a dream come true for croquet's most enigmatic player. What one would do at that point of pegging out for the title "World Champion" is a question that must pass through the minds of most players. When it came to it, John resisted the air-punching of which he has been so critical, no cart wheels or falling to the knees was appropriate, just a smile and a look to the sky of sheer amazement!

Surrounded by bad feeling from peers, the contrasting warmth of feeling shared by a less partisan audience and a band of friends who had been celebrating his progress was a great pleasure. It was perhaps the "romance of sport", as Steve Mulliner described it at the presentation, that a qualifier won the World Championship. While not necessarily wishing to remain the underdog, the feeling of support and shared joy was a memorable aspect of his victory that John hoped might be repeatable.

Above:
John Walters,
1991 World
Croquet
Champion

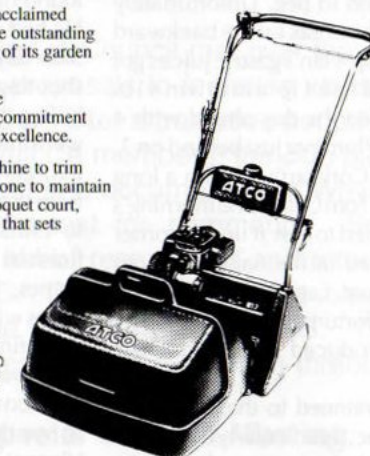
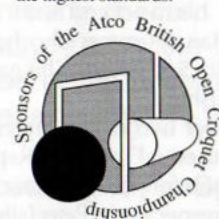
(continued on page 21)

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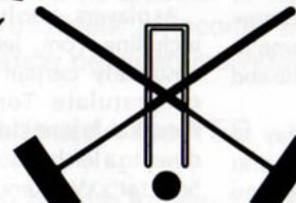
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Croquet

'Croquet' No. 221
(May/June 1992).

Cover: "Champions!"

Featuring (back to front):

Chris Clarke (President's Cup);

Robert Fulford (Open Champion);

John Walters (World Champion)

Photography: John Walters

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"Oh, Dorkee-Lorkee!", said Nicken-Licken, "The sky is falling down and I'm off to tell the Chairman".

At 9.20 under a cloudless sky the select 14 (with Brian Hallam to arrive at 1.00p.m.) met to discuss the arrangements for the weekend. So impressed were we by the Club Secretary's ability to arrange the weather that Ian Vincent was quickly appointed Manager nem con. David Appleton will be pleased to read that Peter Dorke skillfully avoided further complaints of being too limp by taking the ROT's job. I accepted the difficult almost impossible responsibility of "lurking quietly!" and writing crisply.

It was agreed that we would play an "Egyptian" with the winner the player with the best win/played record. Cards were drawn for the first pairings, later opponents were to be chosen from the nearest available "persons" in the waiting column.

In the first round Justin Goddard punished Anthony Miller for early abuse of the squirrels by the use of the TP, Anthony claimed that they had been throwing acorns at him and your reporter got Tom Coles off to a good start by playing poorly.

Brian Hallam's early morning success in the Small Claims Court against a motorist was not repeated in the Larger Court where a fast ROT set in +12. Having stopped midbreak earlier this year at Roehampton to watch Concorde land I was transfixed when on Lawn one I was overflowed by a Parrot whilst in play against Kevin Carter, but many might say I always play like that.

Roger Jenkins opined that failing to run 4-back 6 or 7 times might just have been a contributory factor in him losing his game. He also had the misfortune to have a ball go off after turning a right angle on colliding with a leaf near the Boundary. An appeal to the ROT that it was an outside agency was denied even though it was claimed that it was an "exceptionally hard" Leaf. Several players though commented on the sundry assortment of twigs, sticks and bric-a-brac that the squirrels had provided for use as corner pegs.

Tom Coles, as evening drew in, appeared well on the way to a good win against Ian Vincent on Lawn 4. However an insouciant approach to the Peg Out gave Ian a last shot

Lush Queens of the Greens

Roehampton 3-6 October

No doubt about it, Roehampton's lawns are the queens of the greens. All three are sun-drenched, lush, green, flattish and fast. Even better, the boundaries have a nice upward tilt so that the less delicate players can actually get in behind the dratted oppo ball.

Ginny Greig had ducked off to Paris, so Anne Stephens, lonely, took up with Olive Jackson in the gin tent. The Parsons Creen lot, Pauline, Christine, John and Martin and, separately, Anne got rattled on Thursday night. Didn't seem to do their game much good. Martin now giving up handicap play.

Neil Jackson did better after taking a little something in morning coffee. Hampered after

Selector's Weekend,

AT NOTTINGHAM, SEPTEMBER 1991. By Nick Harris.

which he hit and even under the pressure of choosing Les Artistes for the evening meal he still had a ball round to peg. Unfortunately after he had set up the break for the backward ball by running Hoop 4 Ian's gastric juices got the better of him and he let Tom in to win +10. Tom therefore ended the day ahead with 4 straight wins & Ian Plummer just behind on 3.

On the Saturday Corla arrived with a long length of dowel and Tom Coles, (the morning's out player) proceeded to saw it up for corner pegs. Roger knocked in the nails and Tom applied the undercoat. Later in the day Kevin put on the gloss, unfortunately the only really good finish he produced throughout the weekend.

The Squirrels continued to throw acorns, sticks and bric-a-brac, a particularly large stick just missed Brian's lad who set a large trap using a cardboard box. Anthony chased them on foot but this only resulted in another TP against him, this time by Peter Dorke. Peter also had two peels of a QP on lawn 1 and then accidentally pegged out his forward ball. To make matters worse when he eventually won he also began to clear Dennis (very, very nice hat) Shaw's double banked game away. Chris Williams had his white ball in the river and had to fish for it with the rake and Anthony, who else, had a ball on the far bank! Happily it trickled back down into the water so he had to go fishing too. The evening gloom saw your reporter, under pressure to finish so we could all go out to eat, rolling to the peg with opp well separated and then missing the peg to trickle off beside oppo's backward ball. This was almost as good as winning as we could now peg it down. Tom Coles dropped a game to Brian Hallam but was still 6 out of 7 at the end of the day.

Peter Hallam arrived on the Sunday to inspect his trap and was somewhat nonplussed to find it had been sprung and contained a large scrappy Black Squirrel complete with Mallet. Roger Jenkins managed to hit the 1 foot shot I had left him but stuck in 5 leaving me the longest 12 footer I have ever

had. Justin was lying second on the Sunday and played Tom for the lead. He eventually found himself riggalled - ballbox and 3back. He had got by me from a similar situation on Saturday with some good hitting in but in shooting at Tom from miles away, who was hiding behind his own 1back hoop, Justin went through the hoop but just failed to trickle into either of Tom's balls and Tom finished from there. In his final game, Tom went down to Chris (5/8) Williams - 13, even so Tom finished his weekend with 7 wins from 9 games. Ian Plummer also had a very solid series with 5/8, with 7 of his games against the top 7 finishers.

However two other players were still in a position to equal Tom, your Reporter and Justin, so we therefore played Peter Dorke and Ian Vincent respectively. Peter failed to get a 1back leave so went round to ballbox and 1 versus 1 & 2. Then with the help of some superb shooting, including hitting "centre ball" on a perfect cross wire and some good lurking he got the other ball home to win +5. Justin again found himself Ballbox and 3back, this time against Peg and Penult and again, lost. Ian's win meant that there were now 3 players on 6 out of 9 for a threeway tie for second place behind Tom Coles and that was how we left it.

Throughout all of this Ted Scott and Rick David played on quite happily win or lose and Rick collected all the dues for the bar and the excellent catering with the same tact and care. Brian Hallam, despite the late start still had as many games as Peter Dorke, finishing with the same figures of 5/10.

As players, who had long distances to travel including Tom, left before the result was absolutely certain may I on their behalf congratulate Tom Coles on both his remarkable similarity to David Gower even down to a left handed grip, and on winning the Selector's Weekend. We must also thank Ian Vincent for his management, a total of 64 games were played over 3 days, and the Nottingham Croquet Club for their excellent hospitality.

Tournament News

1-back and encouraged by Greenwood's "go-on, try for the middle ball, why don't you", he did and went on to peg. John dumping his cigar outside the hut, complained to Pat Macdonald "If I'm not allowed to smoke in here why are you allowed to fume about it".

Meanwhile, Eddy Dymock missing red with yellow along the boundary, with pink another five yards on, shouts "PINK! PINK!" at Paul Diver sitting miles away. Spectators cry "Yes, Eddy, that IS the pink" and of course he hits it. "Oh, GOOD pink!". In a later game, pegged out by Martin Haggerston, he made an exciting

one-ball dash for peg, refusing to use his remaining bisques.

The Match of the Week was Wharrad v Greenwood. Lionel, playing the curves gently, was deadly on the long shots but missing the little ones and failed hoop 6 four times. At T minus 10 he was for peg and rover with John also for peg but broken down at 1 back. Lionel hits in, takes off and misses at six foot. John then misses green peg-out and goes back to pink. Lionel hits in but misses the peg-out. John makes a brave hit to peg-out green then does a speedy two ball to penult. Lionel

bounces off penult. John ignores brown but blobs in rover to leave Lionel one point ahead with 90 secs to go. It couldn't last. John (who had been calming his nerves with Walkman white noise) pegged out to win +2.

Eileen Magee, joint runner-up, squeezed past Christine Osmond in a tense game ending with all four clips on the peg. Neil Jackson, after getting a yellow card for remarks concerning Paul Macdonald's nether garments, managed a clean sweep to retain the Hussar's Oup.

A very pleasant sociable tournament altogether, with a high point when Nigel Aspinall, casually passing the hedge, ended the four-hour search for David Magee's black ball, by picking it up saying "is this what you've been looking for?". Oh the giants of the game are giants truly. Neil Jackson

The Northerns

A time limit had been envisaged for the D Class but it was an early game in the B Class between John Haslam and Alan Pidcock which took 7 hours to complete! The result did not affect the outcome as Brian Thompson was in fine form and won all his games to win the event with Alan being runner-up.

The C Class was, again, a clean sweep with Howard Taylor, the resident bandit - sorry, fast improving player - dominating throughout and Roy Edwards taking second place. A 4-way tie in the D Class produced a count back and Rupert Webb was declared the winner, closely followed by the effervescent Hilary Turner.

Tuesday morning saw twenty-eight players involved in the doubles. Early favourites were Thompson and Edwards with two +26 wins. However, the final saw Brian Storey and Alan Linton take on Alan Pidcock and Liz Taylor-Webb, Liz being a late replacement for her son Howard who was called away on business. The day began with Alan Pidcock turning up with eight mallets, followed by the customary wise-cracks about his play, but the substitution proved successful and Liz pegged out in style. The family Taylor/Taylor-Webb/Webb had a great time taking a hand in providing 3 of the winners!

It must be said that Alan Pidcock did give up his place in the A Class singles to allow Chris Clarke to scrape through, which enabled him to play and beat the ever improving Adrian Saurin 2-0 in a best-of-3 final.

The Egyptian saw some interesting combinations, not leastly games between minus and B Class players which can be non-events if the B Class player goes round, cross-wires at 1 and retreats to corner 3. Roger Huyshe with 8 bisques on Ian Burridge decided to change the rules and play 'advanced with bisques' by stopping at 4-back. He then used 4 bisques to do a TP. Was this sporting or was he impressed by Chris Clarke's demolition of the traditional approach? Chris, having been cross-wired at 1, hit the 35 yard shot, did four and a half peels on partner leaving Brian Thompson with 3 bisques and only 2 balls on the lawn.

However, David Watkins just pipped Chris Haslam by 1 point to take the Handicap Singles trophy. The rest of us were comforted by the earned reductions in some of the winners' handicaps while we awaited the main event.

The hot weather did enable resident barman Peter Walker to expound upon his 'live' ale, but the order of the day was definitely for 'shorts'. Ken Cooper.

Beware Little Old Ladies

South of England Week

There were some interesting personalities who deserve special mention. Selection of individuals is of course always invidious but should we not prefer the invidiousness of selection to the boredom of the encyclopaedia? By the way, what does invidious mean anyway? I must look it up.

The Hornbys are an English couple who have chosen to live in Australia and spend their summers in England. He is a tough, gritty competitor who puts a stranglehold on his opponent and never lets go until he or they are dead. She is the most gentle and kindly of people who give the impression that she would almost rather not win because it would upset her opponent, which she could not bear.

No-one can fail to notice the Fewtrells. He is a quiet, determined New Zealander, she a flamboyant tomboy who, after winning her Bronze Award last year is now beginning to play real croquet. And what of the mighty Magees, David and Eileen, who after sweeping all before them at Roehampton earlier this year, won the Devonshire Park Salver. Could it be that she could actually have won the greater event but is wise enough to know how to preserve domestic harmony?

Norman Bircumshaw, for the last two seasons well known as the world's leading (and, by the way, unwilling) bandit finally received his come-uppance by having his handicap reduced by three. This was after a superbly consistent performance in winning the Handicap Singles (twelve and over) in which he won all his games handsomely.

The Evenets Pere et Fils were well in evidence too. Pere is a rubicund and jolly man, Fils seems saturnine by comparison. Put them together and they make a formidable combination. Fils does pretty well by himself, winning the Luard Cup by the light of the moon on Thursday evening after a determined challenge by Michael Hornby.

Derek Caporn, who ably managed what turned out to be a very tight tournament, added an additional touch of spice by generously donating a bottle of gin as a prize in the Sundowner Tournament, a one ball contest (best of three games) which proved immensely popular with the contestants. In one of these games Roger Hayes made ten hoops in a two ball break. The gin was won by Norman Bircumshaw. He does not drink. Applications for the gin, accompanied by a suitable cheque should be made to the Compton Croquet Club.

The Compton Croquet club were hosts for

the event and were able to set an unusually happy atmosphere both by the excellent facilities offered and the superb quality of the lunches. Play was noticeably slower after the steak and kidney pie. All credit is due to everyone except for that well known sadist Dennis who sets the tightest hoops in the world.

The Club is sponsored by Knill James, a firm of Chartered Accountants, who also acted as hosts to a splendid reception on the Tuesday, much enjoyed by players and helpers alike. Knill James has practised in Lewes almost since its inception in 1887. Their performance in Lewes is part of their policy of concentrating their skills in one office, which enables them to give a country wide service based upon the principles of personal service and attention, and independence.

One of the last, and perhaps least important matches, was played on Thursday afternoon. On the one hand we had Mildred Edwards a grey haired Little Old Lady. On the other was Bill Gillott, the Bovver Booted Yob, who lists mugging Little Old Ladies as his favourite pastime. Seeing that she was gaining the upper hand he decided to peg out her forward ball, a thing that any decent red blooded Englishman would never do to a Little Old Lady. He then swept majestically through the remaining hoops in a euphoria disturbed only occasionally by the Little Old Lady popping in and making a hoop here and a hoop there and perhaps by an awareness for an increasing band of spectators who were clearly rooting for the Little Old Lady. Finally he was for the peg, and was somewhat surprised to find that she was too, but he laid up carefully. But with poetic justice she hit in, scattered him to the wind and pegged out to the cheers of the spectators, who carried her back shoulder high to the clubhouse. Bill Gillott.

Cheltenham August Weekend

It was good to see the big names turning out for this modest event: David Foulser, competing as aggressively for an engraved tankard as ever he did for the Mens' Championship, John Greenwood making a rare West Country visit, and evergreen Bernard Neal.

This year's selection of bandits included three youngsters: 14 year-old Ben Green from Bristol, aiming to repeat his success in last year's competition (his sister Naomi wants to play next year at the ripe old age of 12) and two of Peter Dorke's Ludlow College proteges, Philip Rees (6 now but watch out for him much lower soon) and Paul Heath (an effervescent 10, threatening 5).

Chris Williams achieved his CA Gold Award in style by completing not just his first triple but a quadruple peel. Roger Jenkins, too, whooped for joy as his first TP was brought home. A bottle of bubbly is traditionally given to players achieving their CA Award. Cheltenham generously prevailed and they each have their 'Yalumba' Aussie fizz.

Block winners (blocks 1 to 4) were Roger Jenkins, John Ruddock, Malcolm MacBean and Paul Pristavec. Kevin Carter



"CROQUET"

Dear Editor,

I hope you will continue the excellent policy of your predecessor in giving generous space to "Your letters", which are both interesting and often very informative.

May I comment on a few of them? First, I agree with Diana Perry on maintaining a standard of good taste in the selection of photographs. I agree also with her contention that trousers are much more desirable than shorts.

Croquet can and should be an elegant game like Cricket, which would not be nearly as attractive if the players wore shorts. White shorts are appropriate for a game like Rugby, but not for Croquet.

I agree with Eric Solomon's contention that it should be a Custom of the Game not to claim a cannon from a long roquet.

Many years ago cannons were called "corner cannons" because they were only played when a ball was roqueted into a corner, with a ball already on the corner spot. I wrote two articles analysing various kinds of cannons, and advocating that players try to create cannons all around the boundary. The result was a great increase in the number of and enthusiasm for cannons, and I found ladies playing them, something I had never seen before.

Naturally, in addition to corner cannons, I try to create cannons away from the corners whenever I can, normally after a good take-off has left my ball close to opponent balls, one of which is on the yard-line. It is often easy to make a cannon then, with a gentle, careful roquet.

Robert Fulford's suggestion that cannons should be restricted to corner balls is retrogressive, and would reduce the game's interest.

But I would never dream of claiming

a cannon after a long rush which did not end in a corner (a ball deliberately rushed into a corner from a distance should be watched), and I am astonished to learn that there are players doing this. I think the Council should put a stop to this practice as quickly as possible by adopting Eric Solomon's suggestion.

Dorothy Rush may be a splendid companion, and it is natural for Brig. Rush to support her. But I feel that her stories were a waste of space in "Croquet", and that she should write for women's or children's magazines.

Yours faithfully,
Leslie Riggall, South Africa

Dry Summers at Southport

Dear John,

My Committee has asked me to protest in the strongest possible terms at the caption and the re-publication of the photograph on Pg 7 of issue 220 of Croquet March/April 1992. This was first published in Issue 199 Sept 1988 in Croquet magazine.

I would like to point out that this occasion was nearly 4 years ago during a particularly wet summer. Moreover we have since purchased the best equipment available to deal with this contingency which is not shown on the photograph.

We are making Southport club THE CENTRE FOR CROQUET IN THE NORTH WEST but publicity of this kind can only be damaging to our image and do nothing whatever to promote the development of croquet in any way. We look to the C.A. for assistance not denigration.

I have travelled to other clubs whose names I shall not mention where lawns have become flooded in the space of one morning and therefore unusable and where the lawn surface was judged to be too slippery for safety so lawns had to be put out of action. I regard this as the legacy of our English climate and my sympathy goes out to the distraught Managers. I have endeavoured to play on surfaces which are far from ideal at many clubs and Southport lawns are among the best in the country and when other club lawns are dried up to nothing but a few burnt stalks Southport lawns are beautifully green.

Evidence of satisfaction with our lawns comes from players all over the country when we find that all our Tournaments are nearly fully booked BEFORE the season starts!

We would appreciate it if you would

see your way to "waving a flag" for Southport in your magazine and set the record straight either by publishing this letter or refrain from publishing material which could be regarded by us as detrimental to our progress.

Yours sincerely,
Alice E. Dawson
(Hon. Sec. Southport CC)

Handicap Systems

Dear John,

In the last issue of "Croquet" H.J. Bottomley invited comments on suggested changes to the laws relating to the use of bisques. My immediate reaction was and remains one of total disbelief!

A Player within the 16-20 handicap range cannot suddenly become able to hit a 30 yard roquet regularly just because they happen to be playing a player within the 5 --2 level. Imagine a scenario when I (24 Club Handicap) am playing a -2. He wins the toss and puts me in first. He then hits in on the fourth turn and goes to peg, leaving a ball in each corner. Under the proposed new rules I would be unable to take a bisque, unable, because of my inability to hit a ball and with no lift or contact. He hits in again and pegs out.

My understanding of the concept of handicap play is to give players of different abilities as equal an opportunity as possible to win, playing within their own capabilities, and I thought though I may be wrong, that this was the reason the lift and contact laws in advanced play were introduced. Surely it is not within the spirit of the game (not the one I play anyway) that the game is decided on the spin of the coin. If so what are we all doing?

For those who do not like handicap play there is always ordinary level or advanced play, depending upon their ability but for those of us who need them please leave us the free use of our bits of wood.

Yours sincerely,
Margaret E. Jones, Bowdon

Getting 'em while they're young

Dear Editor,

At a recent croquet gathering, I was asked what I thought about young people coming through in the game. The person with whom I held this conversation made the comment that it seemed that very few young individuals were advancing in the game as had happened in the mid-

the concept of handicap play is to give players of different abilities as equal an opportunity as possible to win

I know I speak for at least 3 others, who have achieved a high level of success, of similar age, when I say that there is greater attraction to concentrate on other sports

eighties. Upon reflection, I found this to be a very valid point and one which should cause concern to the Croquet Association, if true.

Whilst in the last issue of the gazette, the CA showed its desire for increased membership, I wonder if its policies have changed so that less emphasis has been placed on the necessity to get young people into the sport.

I, from a personal point of view, believe that there is a greater long term problem for the C A with regards to young players. From early teens to mid-twenties, men and women have the world open up to them. Opportunities to participate in many sports come their way and most at least give those sports a go. It's when it comes to holding on to players that many sports suffer. Unless you are born to live and breathe croquet, which only a few are, many of us have to choose between this or other activities.

I know I speak for at least 3 others, who have achieved a high level of success, of similar age, when I say that there is greater attraction to concentrate on other sports. Thus I am pretty sure that our croquet playing days are small unless something can be found to revitalise the game. Something to give it a new freshness.

What the solution is, I do not know. I simply write to open up discussion on all fronts.

Mark Saurin

Origin of "Croquet"

Dear Sir,

Can any reader cite recent research on the origin of the word "croquet?"

The last serious attempt to document the origin was the study in 1965 by Professor A.S.C. Ross of the university of Birmingham and R.L. Thomson, lecturer in English at Leeds University. Ross was a CA member, Thomson a Celtic language specialist. They concluded croquet originated in Ireland where it was called "cluiche" (a verb-noun meaning "play"). Later this was corrupted ... to become "crooky" (through the British influence), and eventually evolved into "croquet."

Ross and Thomson discovered a 7th century Irish document describing a game played by a young hero (Cuchulainn) at Navan where the playing area was the "cluiche-mag." In the game each player had his own ball, a feature that always has set croquet apart from hockey, hurley and similar field games.

croquet originated in Ireland where it was called "cluiche" (a verb-noun meaning "play"). Later this was corrupted ... to become "crooky" (through the British influence), and eventually evolved into "croquet"

The two scholars gave little credence to supposed French origins of the game, or to the Oxford English Dictionary's belief that the word may have meant crooked stick (or hockey stick) in northern France.

The findings of Ross and Thomson were published in the respected Notes and Queries (Oxford University Press) and condensed in a letter to The Times. Over a quarter of a century has passed; is anyone aware of more recent serious research?

James Mays, Piper's.

A Septuagenarian

Dear Sir,

(With an apology to W.S. Gilbert.)

To be the very model of a septuagenarian

Take aspirin once per day; get semi-skimmed milk from the dairyman.

In hot sunshine seek shade and look on hoops as courtly ornaments;

In equable conditions why not enter sportive tournaments,

Exhibit skill to forge a reputation as the chary one

And be acclaimed the model of a septuagenarian?

Yours sincerely,
Tommy Cameron, York

Kay Longman

Dear Sir,

May I crave your indulgence to add to the well-rounded obituaries of Kay Longman by Betty Prichard and Bobby Wiggins (Croquet No.220, March/April 1992). Betty refers to the feud between Kay and Hope Rotherham over a trivial matter. This was unfortunately one among a number of differences arising in the top flight of lady players 20 or more years ago, so much so that the Ladies' Field Cup, commonly known as the Ladies Eight, was often termed the Ladies Hate, or, as Patrick Cotter put it in an after-dinner speech, "Mulieris Odium".

Betty herself was involved as a victim one year when, faced with a doubtful hoop attempt, asked her opponent whether she would summon the only referee available who was some lawns away from the action, to which she received a reply that Betty herself should fetch him, as in the opponent's absence there was no guarantee that Betty would not adjust the ball to her advantage. Betty at the time was the doyenne of lady referees and was so livid at this reflection on her probity that for a number of years she declined an invitation to compete in the Cup so

long as her opponent was among the invited and playing.

A feature of Kay's play was that, although not a slow player in execution, her games were often very protracted by the exercise of extreme caution in always minimising her opponent's chance of developing a break, at the same time curtailing her own prospects. I recall a year in the Ladies Field Cup when the final day dawned with three pegged-down games uncompleted, all involving Kay, which the Manager had had to impose earlier in the week to avoid interrupting the flow of the tournament. Fortunately none of the games involved the ultimate winner, but the Manager felt it his bounded duty to tidy up the proceedings with the result that it was near dusk when the final game ended, with more than one player having had to adjust their departure times.

Betty refers to Kay and her husband's hospitality. I recall with pleasure their custom for many years on the Sunday preceding the Hurlingham August Tournament of hosting a champagne party at their handsome Chelsea house, with the patio crammed with players, some of whom, following the liberal flow of champagne, and who were due to play in the early morning session on the following day started play still in a mellow condition - whether to their advantage or not I do not recall.

S.S. Townsend, Westward Ho!

Camera never lies?

Dear Mr Walters,

I found the report of the Veterans Tournament very interesting until I looked at the names under the photograph!! No wonder my friends at the Club were teasing me! I was at least glad that I had only become "Dorothy" and I hope if there is a "Dorothy Mears" that she's not too upset either with her new "image" or the result of the "shoot out".

This is no criticism - just a friendly observation on a printing error.

Sincerely,
Beryl Irwin, Brighton.

Lamb not interested in young ladies

Dear Sir,

I trust that your readers have not been misled by the Handicap Guidelines for 1992 into thinking that the HCC is excessively concerned with helping young ladies to reduce their handicaps. I did not write debutante (sic) players.

Yours faithfully,
Bill Lamb, HCC Chairman.

Giardini

Giardini is a soft drink with a distinctive taste and appeal all of its own. A delicious combination of traditional herbs and sparkling fruit juices, Giardini is ideal for today's health conscious consumer who is looking for a drink with a difference. Presented in an elegant blue cut glass bottle, Giardini, the Italian word for garden, not only tastes good, it looks good too. So to add a touch of class to your National Croquet Day picnic, make sure you include Giardini.

GIARDINI from HP Bulmer, retails at around £1.89 for a large 75cl bottle and is available from leading Cullens, Europa, Holland and Barratt, Tesco, Boots, Safeway, Waitrose & Asda stores.



ATCO

For the third year running Atco is sponsoring the British Open Croquet Championships at Hurlingham in July.

Since the 1920s, Atco has been Britain's premier manufacturer of fine garden machinery, and Atco mowers are renowned throughout the world for outstanding performance and reliability. They are also the only lawnmower manufacturer to possess two Royal Warrants.

THE ADMIRAL

For the 1992 season, Atco has launched the Admiral - a top quality rotary mower.

The Atco name is synonymous with the highest quality garden machinery and, in particular, the traditional petrol cylinder mower. This expertise in quality of design and traditional craftsmanship has been combined with the latest rotary lawnmower manufacturing technology to produce the new Atco Admiral.

It is ideal for large lawns, paddocks and rougher areas, and its exceptional cutting performance is guaranteed to produce an attractive finish in even the most arduous conditions.

Powered by an advanced 3.5 HP

Briggs & Stratton engine, the hardened steel blade cuts the grass cleanly, while the unique air-flow fan blasts the cuttings to the back of the large capacity grassbag.

All aspects of the Admiral have been consumer-tested to ensure maximum efficiency and ease of use. The slide-home design of the grassbag makes removing and replacing it simplicity itself, while the padded hand controls make the mower a pleasure to use. The handle can be folded down for easy storage or transporting in a car.

The height-of-cut is controlled by a single fingertip control which can be adjusted between 1/2" and 2 1/2". The numbered height-of-cut indicator then enables you to keep the cut at the correct height for your lawn.

The Admiral is available in two models - both of them self-propelled: the Admiral 16 has recoil start, and the Admiral 16E has electric key start.

Atco supports the prestigious British Open Croquet Championships to draw people's attention to the importance of fine quality grass cutting. Whether it be professional groundsmen, or gardeners who care about the quality of their lawns, an Atco mower is the best long term investment they can make.



THE 1992 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The meeting held on 11 April 1992 did not serve as the 1992 Annual General Meeting because of insufficient notice. The meeting will now be held at the Hurlingham Club on Saturday, 27 June 1992 at 11.00 a.m. and apologies are offered to all concerned, particularly those who cast a postal vote, for the

inconvenience caused.

Technical problems delayed the production of the March 'Croquet' with the result that most Associates did not receive it until 21 March. The date of the AGM had been brought forward to 11 April to avoid Easter and the start of the playing season. The result was that the 24 days notice of the AGM required by the Rules was not quite given and we felt obliged to point this out to Associates and ask for consent to short notice. The

great majority agreed, but the rights of the few who did not must be respected.

A second notice of meeting, agenda and voting paper is enclosed with this edition of 'Croquet'. Please cast a fresh postal vote. The vote cast for the meeting held on 11 April 1992 cannot be counted and the Council urgently seeks your support for the motions dealing with Federation representation on Council and the change of date of the AGM.

S.N. Mulliner

AGM will now be held at the Hurlingham Club on Saturday, 27 June 1992 at 11.00 a.m

GOODBYE ALAN



Alan Oldham has retired as Croquet Association Treasurer after an astonishing 25 years in the job. During a celebration at the Hurlingham Club to mark his outstanding term of office, Associates heard how Alan had originally been persuaded to take up the post by Jim Townsend (then CA Chairman, now the senior Vice-President) "on a temporary basis"! His contribution since that time represents the greatest donation ever made to the game of croquet, tirelessly working on a voluntary basis through an ever more complex maze of accounting. The warmth of feeling towards Alan from grateful Associates and CA Councillors, ever aware of his painstaking but sympathetic approach, was



demonstrated by two presentations. Firstly by a silver cigar box from Associates, and secondly by a silver salver from CA Councillors with whom he has had to work so closely - engraved with their signatures. Tributes were paid to Alan by John Solomon, Jim Townsend and Steve Mulliner. Alan is also retiring from CA Council but, hopeful that he may yet return, Council has taken the unprecedented measure of ensuring that he will receive all papers and be entitled to attend all meetings. It was obvious that the Association couldn't quite imagine life without Alan Oldham at the centre of it, and intended to make sure he was never too far away!

To all Associates: Presentation on April 11th 1992

"Beggars that I am, I am even poorer in thanks, but I thank you"

(Hamlet 2 ii)

The magnificence of the gift which the President handed to me to mark my retirement as Honorary Treasurer and the oration which accompanied it quite overwhelmed me. I was left (almost) at a loss for words to respond adequately to the kind remarks so courteously made

about myself and the work of my treasurership by John Solomon, Stephen Mulliner and Jim Townsend.

The photograph which I hope will appear with this letter in the Gazette shows how fine a piece of silver your contributions have secured and I assure you that it will take pride of place in my study and (Phil Dwerryhouse please note) will be put to its proper use as a cigar store. Thankyou all very much indeed.

You will also be pleased to see from the second photograph that my fellow councillors surprised and delighted me with another magnificent piece - a salver bearing the signatures of appreciation - what an inspired idea!, and as my wife, Jane, immediately said "just what we have always wanted to have in the house".

Twenty-five years may be a long time to be in the position of Treasurer but it has all been very worthwhile because of the friends I have made and the company which I have enjoyed: that, after all, is why people continue to serve the Association. Meanwhile,

Haec olim meminisse juvabit

Yours very sincerely, Alan Oldham (Hon Treasurer Emeritus)

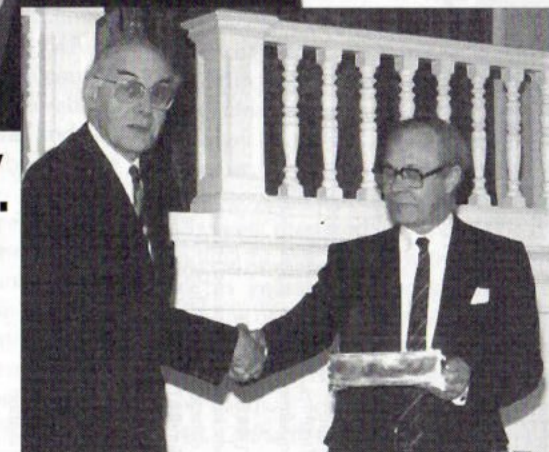
Top Left: Alan thanked Associates. Bottom Left: The Salver presented by CA Council. Middle: Alan and wife Jane.



Top Right: Jane received a bouquet from Sarah Mulliner. Bottom Right: John Solomon presented Alan with the cigar box from Associates



and a hearty 'THANKYOU' from Associates and Councillors



STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1991

FIXED ASSETS	1990	1991
Office Furniture and Equipment at Written Down Value	2,000	1,110
Croquet Equipment at Written Down Value	10,000	1,600
Trophies, estimated to realise Investments, as per attached schedule	41,068	10,000
	54,668	39,376
CURRENT ASSETS		52,086
Stocks of Literature and Equipment	6,000	3,000
Loans to Member Clubs	5,500	3,700
Sundry Debtors and Prepayments	7,669	7,288
Cash at Bank and in Hand	7,504	5,574
	26,673	19,562
	81,341	71,648
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Subscriptions Received in Advance	4,418	5,803
Accrued Expenses	20,778	15,581
Taxation	1,931	5,494
	27,127	26,878
	£54,214	£44,770
NET ASSETS		
Representing:-		
Accumulated General Funds as at 1st January 1991	25,365	16,526
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year on Activities	1,124	(1,246)
Surplus for the Year on Investment	26,489	25,365
OTHER FUNDS, as per attached schedule		
Life Membership	1,605	1,605
Test Tour	4,605	2,281
Benefactors (including Apps-Heley Memorial)	16,478	10,607
Tournaments and Trophies	3,087	2,962
Four Lawn	1,950	1,950
	£54,214	£44,770

INVESTMENTS HELD AT 31ST DECEMBER 1991

Quoted		Market Value
Nominal Value-		
£7,557.40 9% Treasury Stock 1994	7,342	7,380
£7,779.22 8 1/2% Treasury Stock 1994	7,488	7,556
	£14,830	£14,936
Unquoted		
Nationwide Building Society	26,238	
	£41,068	

OTHER FUNDS				
Balance at 1st January 1991	Life Membership	Apps-Heley Memorial	Test Benefactors Tournaments & Trophies	Four Lawn
Add: Interest on Invested Funds	1,605	216	10,391	1,950
Donations	-	-	324	-
From General Funds	-	-	776	-
Transfers between Funds	-	(216)	5,095	-
	1,605	-	2,000	300
			216	
	4,605	16,478	3,262	1,950
Deduct: Allocation in Year			175	
Balance at 31st December 1991-	£1,605	£ -	£4,605	£16,478
				£1,950

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1991

INCOME	1990	1991
Subscriptions	20,886	23,106
Registration Fees	3,292	3,522
Levy	6,020	6,823
Sale of Books, Laws etc. (net)	5,701	4,013
Advertisements in Publications	2,993	2,798
Surplus on Coaching	909	309
Surplus on Tournaments	2,928	4,086
Investment Income on General Funds (net of tax)	2,829	2,041
	45,558	46,698
EXPENSES		
Publications (Magazine, Fixtures Book and Directory)	20,396	16,013
	25,162	30,685
GENERAL OVERHEADS		
Office Rent	2,100	
Rent of Land	600	
Staff Salaries and Pensions	12,090	
Council and Committee Travelling Expenses	1,098	
Postage and Telephone	2,163	
Printing and Stationery	2,867	
Insurance	425	
Sundry Expenses	1,051	
Accountancy Charges and Computer Services	3,600	
Maintenance of Office, Furniture and Equipment	2,240	
	28,234	
	2,451	
EXTRAORDINARY ITEMS		
Income		
Sports Council Grant	23,000	
Sponsorship (net)	5,147	
	28,147	
	30,598	
Expenses		
Development Officer's Fees and Expenses	22,964	
Grants to Clubs and Federations	1,450	
General Publicity and Development (net)	5,060	
	29,474	
	£1,124	
	£(1,246)	

We have examined the books, vouchers and other records maintained by The Croquet Association for the year ended 31st December 1991 and obtained such further information as considered necessary. To the best of our knowledge and belief the Accounts as presented by the Association on pages 2 to 4 give a true and fair view of the State of Affairs of the Association at 31st December 1991 and of the Surplus for the year ended on that date.

Alhambra House,
27, Charing Cross Road,
London. WC2H 0AU.
10th March 1992.

NICHOLAS, AMES & CO.
Chartered Accountants

Commentary on the 1991 Accounts

By Alan Oldham,
Honorary Treasurer of the Croquet Association

Increased net contribution has come from Tournaments as a result of higher entry fees charged, despite the 90% increase in payments made for lawn and ball hire.

Grants were made during the year to the Southern, West Midlands, North Western and Yorkshire/Humberside Federations and to four clubs

It is gratifying to observe that our ordinary income ie. income exclusive of Sponsorship and Sports Council Grant, is now some 23 times its 1967 level

The increase in our income in 1991 was less than we expected. The number of Associates did not increase during the year and the rise in subscription income therefore only reflects the higher rates introduced on 1st January 1991. Although Brian Macmillan has enhanced the sales of books and equipment through the CA office, higher costs and changes in stock valuation have reduced the net contribution to our income from this activity. On the other hand an increased net contribution has come from Tournaments as a result of higher entry fees charged, despite the 90% increase in payments made for lawn and ball hire. In view of the fall in interest rates from 15% to 10 1/2% over the year it was only to be expected that this year's accounts would show a lower return on our investments, though action was taken at the start of the year to obtain some protection against further falls in interest rates by investing in Government stocks.

Expenses are closely monitored by the Finance and General Purpose Committee and have been generally contained. Publication costs have been successfully restrained by reducing the number of pages in each issue of the Gazette and changing to a new printing firm. Exceptionally however, £2000 has been invested in computer-based development and training and a more powerful photocopier has been purchased, all with a view to improving the services which the CA secretariat can provide to members, clubs and federations and to the council itself.

The surplus on ordinary activities for the year, at £2,451, is satisfactory and provides a margin to set against the increase in costs expected in 1992. It is, however, inevitable that we shall need to increase our income from subscriptions and /or club registration fees in 1993.

Sponsorship was received during the year from Atco, the Royal Bank of Scotland, Gieves and Hawkes and Angostura Bitters Ltd and provided funding for the Open Championships, the Schools programme, the Seniors Championship and the Presidents Cup. Some of the expenses of the development officer were also covered by sponsorship

receipts.

Grants were made during the year to the Southern, West Midlands, North Western and Yorkshire/Humberside Federations and to four clubs. Via the Four Lawn Fund a grant of £500 has been authorised for Rowheath and a short term loan of £2000 has been made to the Salisbury club.

Net amounts of £2,500 and £900 were spent respectively on general development, mainly in respect of the Garden Classic and the Golden Mallet competitions, and on Publicity. The annual costs associated with use of the Indoor Carpet were covered this year by the surplus from the "Speed Croquet" event staged for Yorkshire Television at Doncaster. Virtually the entire cost of the World Championships at Hurlingham in September, including some of the travel costs of the overseas players, their accommodation and the much appreciated social events arranged for them, was covered by generous donations from the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, the Wimbledon Tennis Museum and others.

In view of the necessity, in the absence of sponsorship, to build up funds to cover the travel costs of our team going to Australia in 1993 and in conformity with the submission of our 1991-94 Forward Plan to the Sports Council (on which our grant aid is based), a transfer of £2000 has been made to the Test Tour Fund and this, too, has been included in general Publicity and development expenditure.

The Benefactors Fund received a £5,000 legacy from the late Richard Rothwell during the year. The late Kay Longman has also left the Association a substantial financial legacy (which should appear in the 1992 Accounts) and also various croquet memorabilia. The names of Richard Rothwell and Kay Longman have been inscribed in the Benefactors Book.

For many years the Balance Sheet has included the Apps-Heley Memorial Fund as a separate item. This fund initially represented the residue, after purchase of the Apps Trophy, of the money contributed by Associates in memory of Lorn C. Apps (Secretary of the CA at the time of her death in 1959) and was

augmented by a legacy of £100 from the late Mrs D.R.M. Heley in 1972. As the monies were intended for the general benefaction of the Association, Council has decided that it would be more appropriate that the Apps-Heley Fund should be subsumed into the general Benefactors fund and that the memory of Mrs Apps and Mrs Heley should continue to be perpetuated by adding their names to the roll in the Benefactors Book. This has been done.

The 1991 Accounts are the twenty-fifth set of Accounts which I have had the honour of submitting to the Association and on this final occasion I cannot forego the opportunity of commenting upon the financial changes that have occurred in that time. In 1967 the Association's annual income was a mere £2000, incidentally only two thirds of its income 30 years previously, and its net assets were less than £7000. Looking back to those seemingly far off, simple, penniless days, it is piquant and rather touching to recall that one nevertheless generally succeeded in balancing the books each year - albeit sometimes by rather small margins; the closest occasion arising in 1968 when income exceeded expenditure by £2-15-4d!

It is gratifying to observe that our ordinary income ie. income exclusive of Sponsorship and Sports Council Grant, is now some 23 times its 1967 level but less satisfactory to note that our Net Assets, although greater by a factor of 8, have only kept pace with the rate of inflation and are thus in real terms no larger than they were 25 years ago. Taking a long term view it would be right, in my opinion, to try and build up the General Funds of the Association - that is, its free reserves - over the next few years. Of course, as my friend Jim Townsend will readily agree, that is a typical actuary's view!

My twenty-five years have covered a most interesting period and, leaving aside some of the troublesome tasks associated with VAT and to a lesser extent with the Sports Council Grant, it has also been enjoyable. I am delighted that Roger Bray, very gallantly in view of the daunting description I gave him of some aspects of the job, has offered to take over the reins. Members of the Association are particularly fortunate in that Roger starts with a wide experience of croquet and of the problems associated with its governance. I already know that he is well prepared for the work of handling the petty details of treasurership and his years of experience in the discipline of mathematics will I am sure never allow him to evade the logic of financial facts. Your finances will be in good hands.

A.J. Oldham, 8 April 1992



Bill Lamb

It is some time since I have written on coaching matters for this magazine. My time has been taken up with part-writing and editing the new Coaching Manual and a re-write of the KTG booklet for the CA. The latter will appear next year in colour - so much easier to follow the diagrams. However, others have filled the gap and

Good Technique

there has been no shortage of coaching material.

I was interested to see that my name still appears in the editorial team of the new-look magazine under its new editor, John Walters. If the position were paid, it would be a sinecure, as I have never been asked to edit anyone's material. I would not wish to do so: different people have different ideas and it is right that such ideas be freely expressed. I do wish though, that people would sign their articles. In my view, an unsigned article lacks credibility and authority.

Coaches sometimes forget that coaching is not a one-way process. The good coach has to appreciate the difficulties that the player is experiencing and should recognise that players use different mallets and playing styles and will produce different results with standard strokes. The coach cannot

just say, 'do it like this', meaning, 'I do it like this and it works for me'. A croquet stroke, involving as it does a complex interaction between two balls, a mallet and a player, cannot be reduced to a simple formula. One thing coaches should insist on, though, is clean technique. There are many players around who have evolved their own method of playing strokes which are distinctly suspect if not illegal.

The biggest problem lies with prolonged contact between ball and mallet. The relevant law, 32 (e)(2), states; 'The striker pushes or pulls the striker's ball if he maintains contact between mallet and ball for an appreciable period or accelerates the mallet head after it has been checked after its initial contact with the ball. A push is played away from the body. A pull is played towards the body.' Now this may seem vague - what is appreciable? - but it has to

be so. It is a dynamic situation which is not capable of being easily tested without recourse to recording equipment with slow-motion replay. However, it is wrong to take advantage of this vagueness in playing a particular stroke because the intent behind the law is quite clear. The mallet must strike the ball with the minimum contact consistent with a normal swing. Any attempt to produce a particular effect by extending the follow-through is liable to be a fault under this law.

Try it for yourself. If your technique is good, you should be able to play a full roll without much follow-through. Conversely, if you need a lot of follow-through to produce the effect, there is something wrong with your technique and you are probably pushing the ball. Clearly, poor technique which results in questionable strokes is something to be avoided. Good technique has its own reward; it leads to consistency in the result of the stroke and confidence in play. I shall return to this point in later articles.

The Egyptian - For More Serious Events

By Chris Irwin

In the last issue of "Croquet" Kevin Carter gave a description of Paul Hand's "Egyptian" system for tournaments. In this he suggests that the Egyptian should be used in events where the majority of players don't worry too much over the distribution of prizes.

Our new editor has asked me to write a piece about how to use the Egyptian in more serious events. Well I have used the Egyptian for the last 3 years in the plate event of the Northern Championships. I leave it to others to judge how serious an event this is but looking down the latest ranking list, 8 of the country's top 10 players regularly compete in it so perhaps they think it has some merits.

The main event of the Northerns is run as a single life, best-of-3 knock-out. In previous years it has been run as a draw and process. In both cases the Egyptian has shown itself to be a better method than the old multiple-entry Swiss for the plate event.

So here are the mechanics of this system:- All players in the main event have an Egyptian card and are given an initial rating of 100. The reason for the same rating for all players is that this is a level play event and I feel that introducing variations in ratings because of handicap is contrary to the spirit of level play.

For each game (not match) in the main event that a player wins his/her rating goes up by 5 points regardless of the rating of the opponent. For games they lose, the rating is not altered. I cannot defend this method mathematically but experience has shown that it does result in players coming into the Egyptian at the top regardless of which round of the main event they are defeated in.

Once they are knocked out of the main event players play in Egyptian games with their ratings adjusted for both wins and losses according to the usual table:-

Diff in Rating	Hghr Rated Plyr		Lwr Rated Plyr	
	If Wins	If Loses	If Wins	If Loses
0 - 8	+5	-5	+5	-5
9 - 16	+4	-6	+6	-4
17 - 24	+3	-7	+7	-3
25 - 32	+2	-8	+8	-2
33+	+1	-9	+9	-1

Here are 2 sample cards from last year's Northerns to illustrate how this works. Colin Irwin won 2 round and then lost in the semi-final of the main event; he then went on to play 4 Egyptian games finishing on a ranking of 127. David Maugham lost in the first round of the main event, played 8 Egyptian games and finished on a ranking of 125.



NAME:- C J IRWIN. INITIAL RATING 100

Opponent	Oppo's Ranking	Score	New Rating
ME M A Saurin	-	+4, +3	110
ME S Comish	-	+26, +14	120
ME D K Openshaw	-	-4, -15	120
P L Smith	110	+24	124
C J Haslam	107	+9	127
D J Goacher	133	+4	133
R I Fulford	125	-9	127

NAME:- D B Maugham. INITIAL RATING 100

Opponent	Oppo's Ranking	Score	New Rating
ME S Comish	-	+17, -17, -3	105
P L Smith	110	+19	110
J E Guest	105	+9	115
J R Hilditch	87	+24	117
A F Sutcliffe	110	+24	122
R I Fulford	109	+2	125
B J Storey	110	+17	129
F I Maugham	93	-14	120
S Comish	115	+14	125

In the Egyptian, whenever players are available to play they sign a list. As a lawn becomes free, the next 2 players on the list are paired together regardless of their rankings - except that two players who have just played each other are split up and paired against the next available players.

There is one important variation to this pairing system to apply in more serious events. This concerns players who are in contention to win the event. It would be unfair to put one possible event winner into a game where they could only get say 1 point while another possible event winner gets a game worth a possible 5 points. Thus while I do not necessarily put potential event winners together, I do make sure that they are given games where they can win or lose similar numbers of points.

To ensure that no one "quits while they are ahead", the rules can stipulate that to win the event the players must play at least 2 games on the last day.

In conclusion, I have found that this system does work well at this rather more serious level and it is certainly better than the old Swiss format for plate events. As to whether I would use it in an even more serious event, say for the main event itself or even the World Championships, well probably not but I would use it for weekend events.



Expert Tactics - The Series
By Robert Fulford

Winning with 'TPOs'

A TPO is unlike a normal triple in two ways: firstly, if the peeling is not going as planned you simply give up and go to 4b rather than trying anything too delayed; secondly, having gone past 4b you must complete the triple and you must make a good leave.

Having done the TPO and assuming the opponent is still for 1 the best leaves have one of your balls in II, and the current favourite position for the other ball is III - interesting alternatives being on the east boundary with 4 partially blocking a roll to II.

It is very easy to make these leaves if the rover peel is done before 3b (or earlier), so it is worth being a little more committed to this than usual. Often though the rover peel will be done straight. In this case do the rover peel as usual but putting partner as the escape ball to the east of behind rover, and the fourth ball deepish. Ideally the peel goes through, you run the hoop short of the peelee and rush partner to the east boundary, take off to get a rush back to the peelee, peg out the opponent and go off in II. This is quite an adequate leave.

You can see that if the peelee only just goes through you can't merely jump over it and then use the escape ball to cannon the peelee, so an Irish peel becomes more attractive in the TPO.

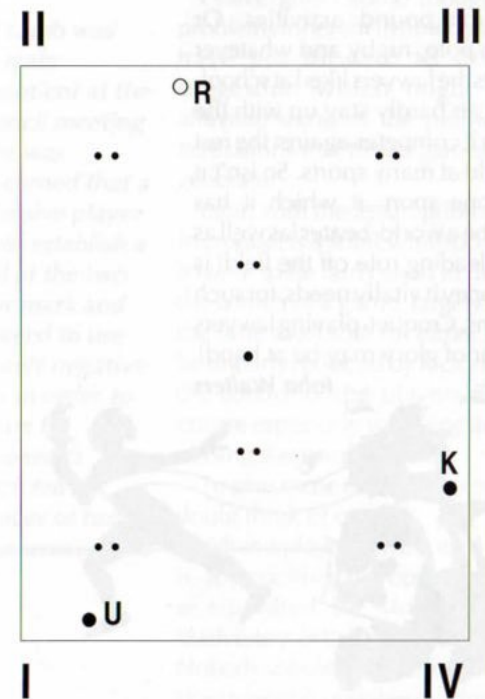
Some of you will remember the correspondence between Keith Aiton and Leslie Riggall on the subject of TPOs about five years ago. To paraphrase Leslie Riggall's final letter in issue 187 he wrote "... the

TPO will go out of fashion, because of various disadvantages such as ... giving contact, having to play very defensively for fear of the opponent getting a break ...".

Giving contact is a pertinent point - however good your contact leave your opponent will have an immediate chance to go out without having to hit in. However the fact is that in the modern three ball game the TPOer is able to play very aggressively precisely because it is difficult for the other player to get a break. For example, the TPOer can go for big 'roll ups' knowing that if he doesn't get in front of the hoop he can simply retire to the furthest corner. The idea that in the three ball game the single ball is the attacker, the two balls the defender, is simply outdated. Both players should be looking to attack, after all the game will almost certainly be won with a three ball break.

For some players a TPO, once the 4b peel is done (or even jawsed) after 3, should cause no problems. Myself, Clarke, Hogan, Bamford, Jackson, Mulliner, Maugham and Prince all have the TPO as an important part of our armoury. Why would all the good players do TPOs if it wasn't at least instinctively correct? By doing a TPO you dictate the pattern of the game, and if you make no further errors your opponent will really have to produce the goods to beat you.

It is difficult to assess exactly when to do a TPO. Colin Irwin was the weakest peeler whom I saw regularly attempt TPOs last season, and certainly Colin is of the ability where he should be experimenting with



them - much weaker than Colin and they are probably dubious.

D.M.C. Prichard wrote of Nigel Aspinall "He does not take a sledgehammer to crack a nut". Well a TPO is a bit of a sledgehammer, but if you try getting through a few rounds of a major tournament you'll find there aren't many nuts around anymore.

Next issue I will talk more about the three ball game. As a poser, consider the position illustrated above. U is for the peg; K is for 1; R is for 2; R is to play next. What should it do?



Moaning Minnies!

In his outgoing address as CA Chairman on page 14, Stephen Mulliner (and I have recently learnt that despite being referred to as Steve by everyone except the ever proper Nigel Aspinall, Mr Mulliner infinitely prefers "Stephen"!) discusses the prospects for croquet development that lie ahead. Recently there seems to have been a wave of desire to "take stock", and this feeling is only reinforced by the appointment this year of new Treasurer, Chairman and Editor.

Unfortunately, the process of taking stock is used by some as an excuse to attack the enormous progress that has been made in recent years. But in his report on page 13, Alan Oldham comments on the enormous growth in CA turnover: Ordinary Income at 23 times its 1967 level, and in addition to that over £30,000 in Sports Council Grants and Sponsorship this year. Those years have been a reverse of the decline croquet was previously experiencing, and would again experience if we were to slacken our efforts. The idea that there is a "hard core" of croquet players who could keep the sport alive, and that we do not need new players who may (at least initially) be less committed is a delusion of those who see activity

around them. They forget just how small the supposed "hard core" is, and how unable to 'reproduce' itself unaided. Now we have better facilities, more clubs, more members, better publicity and public relations - even television beckons. These are a result of the money and substantial time ploughed into the game at all levels.

It is foolish to say that these achievements "are not enough"; that for what we have invested in the game our returns should have been greater - basically to demand "more CA members per development pound spent!" or even that development spending be halted because of its supposed "inefficiency". That croquet has not yet reached the 'Critical Mass' at which interest and players literally explode does not mean it never will, it is no excuse for defeatism and certainly no reason for us to become Luddite. The amount of money spent on croquet is pathetic compared to other (even comparable) sports, which may receive grants far larger than our entire turnover! We fight against a tide, where we lose 25% of CA members a year (clubs will also be aware of similar problems) and have to recruit hundreds of new ones simply to stand still.

Even if one accepts that croquet (in its present form) is likely to remain a 'minority' sport, the notion that we cannot expect to very substantially increase on the 7,000 croquet club members in a UK population of over 50,000,000 is patently absurd. Perhaps the psychology of the defeatists is one that deep-down wants croquet to be small time - hankering after a past of elitism that includes them, and hoping to be "big fish in a small pool". Those who promote such ideas not only undermine faith in the people responsible for developing croquet, they also lack faith themselves in what many of us know to be the best sport yet invented.

Lawyer in the House?

We might also make this point forcibly to the lawyers at the Foundation for Sports and the Arts, who seem to be coming up with some ludicrous rulings about what is and isn't sport. Only "sports" can qualify for grants from the Foundation. Already they have decided that Olympic Sport archery "isn't", also golf, and now croquet seems set to join the growing list. I thought that any members of the law profession blessed with such talent for getting the obvious wrong were immediately promoted to judges in this country - obviously they have a glowing career ahead of them.

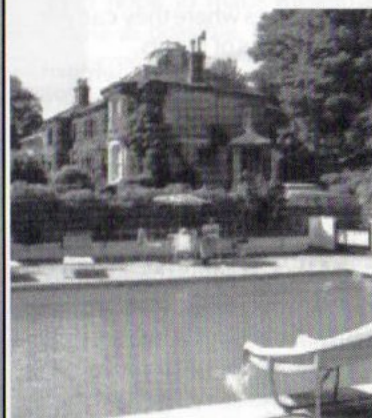
Presumably such money as the Foundation has available (and one must feel sorry for the Trustees and Officials having their hands tied by a bunch of British Lawyers) will go to football (oops, one should probably say soccer in case the lawyers are reading), athletics, and other needy multi-million pound activities. Or perhaps to polo, rugby and whatever other sports the lawyers liked at school.

Britain can hardly stay up with the field when it competes against the rest of the world at many sports. So isn't it sad that one sport at which it has proved to be a world-beater (as well as playing a leading role off the field) is denied money it vitally needs, for such silly reasons. Croquet-playing lawyers - your hour of glory may be at hand!

John Walters



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Timed Games

In the first article of a regular series expressing provocative or controversial viewpoints and ideas, Lionel Wharrad expounds his new system for shortening games.



When a player is in the lead and time is approaching his opponent can be exasperated by slow play be it inadvertent or thought to be deliberate

Bill Lamb was the main dissident at the Council meeting ... he was concerned that a defensive player could establish a lead at the two hour mark and proceed to use entirely negative play in order to use up his opponent's restricted number of turns

The use of time-limits to control court occupation has always been contentious..the Bray system (where the number of points to be scored in a game is decided by the sum of the opposing players' handicaps) was devised as a means of avoiding the need to time games. However this has not resulted in timed games being the exception rather than the rule - this is especially true in Handicap doubles where it seems to be more the rule than the exception for tournaments to impose time limits..sometimes in addition to reducing the game to 22 points.

I have given some thought to the problems inherent in timed games and have put forward to Council a suggestion which might help to alleviate some of the problems and frustrations that timed games seem to generate.

I start with the assumption that time in croquet is a somewhat too arbitrary a factor to be fairly used to determine the winner of a game, largely because the time available for either side can be unfairly reduced by factors beyond the control of the players. This is of course especially worrying during the closing stages of a game.

To give some examples (you can no doubt think of others):

When a player is in the lead and time is approaching his opponent can be exasperated by slow play be it inadvertent or thought to be deliberate. Nobody should be able to benefit from slow play as is possible in a timed game. When it is his turn a player can be some distance from the court and thus takes an unnecessarily long time to start his turn. Nobody should be allowed to benefit from such discourtesy as is possible in a timed game.



In doubles play, team discussions can occupy an agonising amount of time for the side that is behind. It is ludicrous that one's opponents' playing time can be reduced by prolonged tactical discussion as is possible in timed games.

A player in one game on a double-banked court can inadvertently obstruct a player in the other game thus eating into the time that player has left to play.

A ball may be stuck in a critical position in one double-banked game and thus hold up play in the other.

A lift may be claimed in either of the double-banked games. Where the decision is a critical one and the referee concerned has to use test balls, this uses up time for one and often for both games.

A problem can arise when the lengthy attention of a referee is required in other circumstances, such as entangling a series of wrong-ball strokes. This can hold up play for both games.

The opponent may need to quit the court to visit the loo, or suffers some misfortune such as breaking a mallet, splitting a seam, etc..In double-banked handicap games the problem can be really acute during the final stages, when both games having started at more or less the same time, are due to finish at about the same leaving both players often jockeying for court space within a very limited time scale.

It is sometimes difficult to obtain the services of a referee quickly, as the referees themselves can also be playing in their own timed games. Referees are usually very good about sacrificing time in their own game, but this is neither fair nor desirable.

I decided to examine the idea of using a number of turns as an alternative to time. By experiment I found that the average number of turns per hour IN A THREE HOUR GAME is from 10 to 12. This of course is turns by each side, so that the average time for a turn was about 2.5 to 3 minutes. I then came up with the idea that if the last hour of play could be governed by number of turns rather than by time, this would eliminate the problems referred to above, without the

Tournament manager losing control of court time.

Following these experiments I put a resolution to Council that a new rule should be considered under which after two hours play each side would be permitted a limited number of turns each (plus of course any bisque turns). My limited research suggested that perhaps 10 or 12 turns for each side might provide about an hour's play and might be appropriate although because my research was limited I accept that a different number might emerge from actual experience.

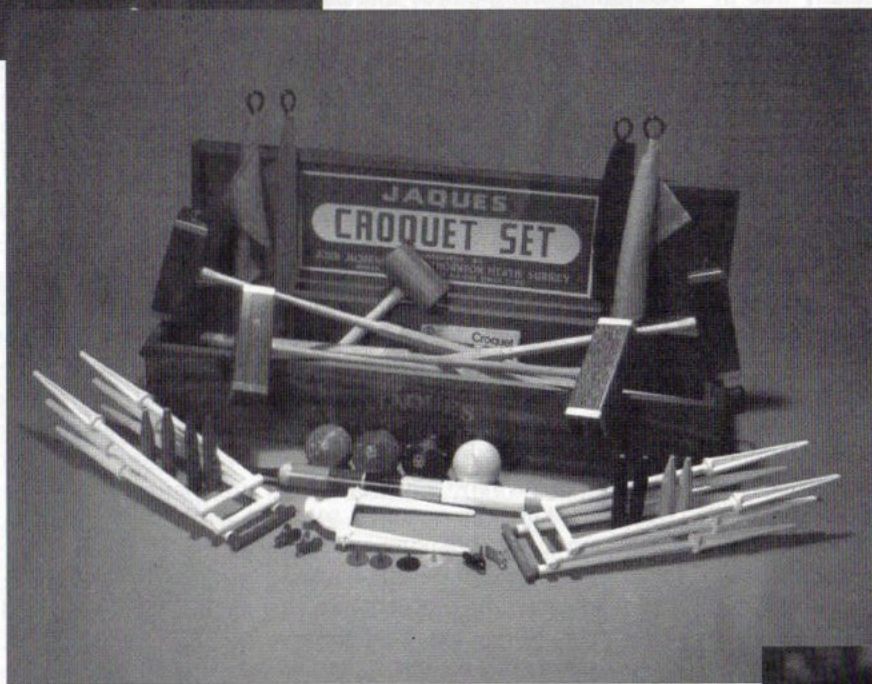
The idea was thought to be an interesting one but the Council was naturally unable to consider putting the idea into general use without it first being tried out in practice. I have now written to Managers asking if they will try out the idea at tournaments they are managing this year, and let me have their conclusions for presentation to the Council at their September meeting. There are some who are already totally opposed to time limits, but they could still try out the idea in those odd dragging-on games upon which a time limit would otherwise have to be imposed.

I must mention that Bill Lamb was the main dissident at the Council meeting. He has some real fears that the use of number of turns will change the nature of the game, especially he was concerned that a defensive player could establish a lead at the two hour mark and proceed to use entirely negative play in order to use up his opponent's restricted number of turns. I hope that Managers will keep an eye on this aspect of the game and that in due course they will be able to express an opinion on whether or not this new idea distorts the end game any more than does the time limit.

If you would like to air a view suitable for inclusion in a future "Talking Point", or would like to respond to this month's article, then please write to us at the usual address.



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Below Left:
Chris Clarke,
1991 President's
Cup winner
Below Right:
Robert Fulford,
1991 Open
Champion

(continued from page 4)

Robert Fulford

Began playing croquet while at Colchester Grammar School, a history shared by Ian Burridge. Robert could easily have been the model for the term "precocious youngster"! His quiet confidence sometimes engendered, in those who thought themselves elder and better, an intense desire that he somehow slip up. In fact Robert has rarely slipped up. He won the Selector's Weekend early in his career, and next year went straight into the President's Cup - to cries of derision from many. Perhaps that selection did illustrate preferential treatment, but to make up for it Robert went on to put his selection beyond any conceivable doubt in future years.

Robert's first years in the top class were most memorable as an ongoing battle with Chris Clarke for the title "most promising youngster". At one point it seemed this fierce struggle for pride could create sufficient ill-feeling for a typically croquetical "life-long feud". Reality could not be further from the truth. In fact Robert and Chris not only went on to team up as (with the Hogan/Jackson pairing) one of the strongest doubles partnerships in history, they also forged a deep friendship of which most people could and should be envious - rare indeed in the croquet arena.

Robert's style is immediately obvious as that of someone who played from a young age. Little is conscious or coached about it, it is a free swing that is entirely "felt" - and deadly accurate. A complete contrast to the rigorously mechanical and coached styles of Walters and Hogan, or even of those who might attempt to copy it - to make

artifice from nature!

Robert's story is boring because it is almost exclusively one of success. Winning the President's Cup at his third appearance, he has gone on to win all the British Championships: Open, Mens, Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, plus the World Championship and with Chris the Doubles. He is still only 22!

Despite a physique sculptured from Mars bars and Coke (the staple diet of British croquet youth), Robert is a "natural sportsman" and tends to excel at whatever he turns his hand to. John Walters has described Robert as the most talented player in the world, and Robert admits that it is important for his game to think he is the best in the world. One must hope for his sake that support from his parents is not crucial to his mentality; his mother (a keen golfer and Ladies Captain) "does not like one person continually winning". For Robert then, there is nowhere to go!

Chris Clarke

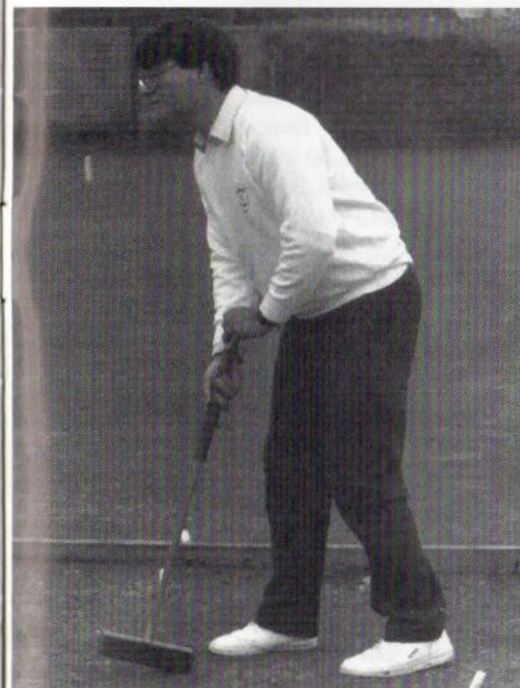
Despite their friendship, while everything has come easily to Robert, Chris has had it the hard way. After their early battles on court, Chris established himself first - in a year of repeated wins over Robert culminating in his 1988 victory as the youngest ever winner of the President's Cup. 1989 was a disaster with both skill and titles slipping through Chris' fingers. That year ended in what must be the biggest disappointment of his life, when the Test Team place he had virtually been promised also slipped away. Surrounded by controversy, the Selectors decided to risk young Mark Saurin (who had played little but with

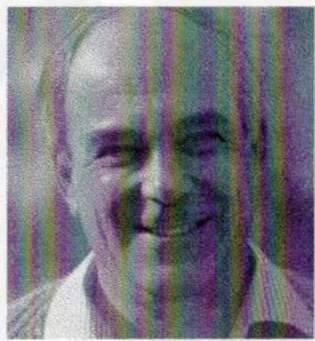
a small measure of success) rather than Chris (who had played much with very little success). The pill was made most bitter in that Mark was a rival from Chris' own Queen Elisabeth Grammar School, and little love is lost between the two. Although the whole feud soon became so legendary that it rapidly became difficult to distinguish fact from fantasy, and even now one wonders if the two have not been victims of their own "hype"! Victims because the Selectors soon appeared to decide that the two could hardly be put on the same team side. Although in the coldness of post-adolescent daylight, such concerns seem now to have been rightly marginalised.

Chris appears an unorthodox player. The difficulties of swinging a mallet when the mallet is as large as you, seem to have left scars on his style. Instead of gripping at top of the mallet, the left hand lightly touches while further down the right hand does the work. Persevering with the most basic of mallets (a "Bernard Neal" - complete with peeling permali head and cylindrical and increasingly grubby rubber grip), Chris should perhaps have taken a hint when the Continental Airlines baggage handlers broke the metal shaft. When they replaced the shaft with a ski pole Chris carried on. Only when without his own mallet, did Chris discover an old Jaques "Solomon" mallet at the Colchester Club. Having tried it out he has never since put it down.

The disappointments which have been forced upon him have made Chris a more serious, perhaps even more cynical person. A happy refrain has now to be preceded by a reason, rather than being apparent by default. One can't help but feel that Chris is conscious now of the philosophy "expect the worse and you won't be disappointed"; perhaps that is a more useful attitude to have, but optimism and fatalism are a mix that produce more smiles.

If 1989 represented a haemorrhage in Chris' rise, 1990 at least stanching the wound. Not until 1991 though did Chris really make a comeback - in the face of sceptical Selectors. Achieving 6 triples in his 6 games at the Home Internationals, Chris also triumphed in several small tournaments. Nevertheless he was unseeded at the Opens, where he stormed through to the final. His place in the upper reaches of croquet was finally regained in suitable manner: he won the President's Cup - the event which heralded his arrival back in 1988.





National Croquet Day this year will be on 23rd May, the first day of the Inter-Counties Championship at Southwick.

The event is being generously supported by Bulmers. Their help will enable the Croquet Association to provide clubs some 4 weeks before the event with posters and leaflets for local publicity, and a club "pack" to suggest ways of generating publicity through the local press.

In the final analysis, much will depend on how much effort clubs can put in to help themselves. First, some 50 Posters and 100 leaflets will need to be overwritten with the telephone number of a club contact. Then club members will need to distribute the posters and leaflets in their local area. If this is done effectively, and complemented by club "activists" contacting local press and radio to publicise "Giardini National Croquet Day" and their own club's forthcoming activities, then each club should generate its own stream of enquiries leading to potential new members.

To support individual efforts by clubs, Giardini's PR agency will be issuing press releases to national and regional newspapers, radio and TV stations, and trade press. The first press release will go out on May 5th to announce "Giardini National Croquet Day". This will be followed on May 18th by a national press "launch" at a London venue, with a "celebrity" and some of our international players. A third press release will be put out on 23rd May, giving a retrospective view of the event.

In conjunction with "Giardini National Croquet Day", Bulmers will be promoting their new Giardini drink. Samples of this drink will be available at selected clubs, but at the time of writing, final distribution details have

Giardini National Croquet Day

yet to be worked out.

Atco, who are generously repeating their sponsorship of the British Open Championship again this year, have a stand at the Chelsea Flower Show on 23rd May. They are planning to show a board listing the 150 clubs taking part in "Giardini National Croquet Day" and if all goes well, Giardini drinks will be available for sampling at the Atco stand.

Yorkshire Television have also scheduled their "Speed Croquet" programme, filmed at Doncaster last December, for 23rd May. It will be shown on the Saturday afternoon, from 1.10pm and 2.05pm, and will provide further support for National Croquet Day. Whilst it is likely that initially this will only be seen in the Yorkshire Region, there is still a possibility that it

Yorkshire Television have scheduled their "Speed Croquet" programme, filmed at Doncaster last December, for 23rd May

may be shown in other Regions later. In any case, the Croquet Association will take steps to obtain a copy of the programme and make this available to clubs who would like to see it.

Each press release put out nationally will include regional contacts to field local enquiries. The volunteers from each Federation are at the end of this article.

At the end of the "Day", we would like a record, both for ourselves and our sponsors, to show how successful we have been in achieving local coverage. It is always very difficult to collect press cuttings as, even with the best cuttings agency, local coverage tends to be missed, particularly in "freebies". Could I therefore appeal to everyone to collect copies of press cuttings relating to the day, and send them to me, Chris Hudson, at The Oaklands, Englesea Brook, Near Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 5QW.

During the weeks building up to the event, many people may find themselves called upon to talk to the media, whether press, radio, or TV. If you find yourself in this position, please remember to do two things:

(1) Quote the full title of the event, the "Giardini National Croquet Day".

This will increase the likelihood of the sponsor's brand name appearing in the report to give them some return for their support.

(2) Remember to include a plug for the Croquet Association.

Many papers will include the full address and telephone number of the Association at the end of their article if you provide them with it.

To increase your chances of getting the above information included in the article, mention that the CA will send a "starter pack" to enquirers who send a large addressed envelope with a 28p stamp. Ask for this to be publicised as well at the end of the article, but emphasise the need for a 28p stamp!

From expressions of support already received, I am confident that "Giardini National Croquet Day" will work well for the clubs, the Croquet Association, and the sponsor. It could well become a major feature of our Croquet Calendar, and I would welcome comments on this year's event when everything is over.

North:	Syd Jones 091-252-2962
North West:	John Beech 0282-813070
Yorks & H'side:	Keith Smith 0924-406495
West Midlands:	Chris Bennett 021-426-2369
East Midlands:	Gary Norman 0530-270826
Eastern:	Judy Anderson 0234-781783
South West:	Hamish Hall 0272-741683
South:	Bob Smith 0734-478802
London & SE:	Stephen Badger 071-274-8126

È strano (ah, fors' è lui)

Summer arrives early in Northern Italy. In Busto Arsizio, a soporific suburb of Milan where the sight of a three-legged dog would set the town talking for a year, the Italian Croquet Association has been active on the lawns since January.

No sooner had the first warm ray of sun filtered through the perpetual Milanese pollution than Luigi Colombo bared his knees, and emerged to face the challenge of the hoops for another year. Undeterred by the fact that he lost the title of Italian Champion last summer, he has been practising hard on 'Urlingham Two' ready to take his place in the World Championships.

'Urlingham Two' (or is it 'Urlingham Too?') is a pocket croquet paradise. Here, beneath the shade of an old persimmon tree, Luigi practices his hoop running and tactics and occasionally over-excites himself with a successful jump shot.

The handkerchief-sized lawn which lies in front of the long, low house, is lovingly clipped and tended. The hoops are championship width and the grass an astonishing shade of green for Italy where, on the whole, they don't seem very good at lawn tenure. Luigi's private patch is certainly much smoother than the 'official' lawns at the Busto Arsizio club where the grass is the large-bladed, coarse variety which seems to grow in clumps rather than as a smooth carpet. Playing on this can be interesting, as competitors in the Coupe Des Alpes (which somehow sounds like a particularly fancy ice-cream dish) already know. There are photographs of Chris Hudson bending over the hoops with an expression of astonishment as the balls zig-zag off the tundra and hit the sandy patches.

But croquet in Italy is very relaxed. It's so relaxed that I've been here for nearly six months now and still haven't managed to play once. Following in the tradition laid down by Chris Hudson and Bill Lamb, I've been 'adjusting to the atmosphere'.

I've heard all the stories. How Chris managed to swallow a pint of 'grappa' - the Italian white brandy which looks and smells like rocket fuel - and still

remain upright (for at least half an hour). How Bill Lamb astonished everyone with his Italian (learnt at evening classes, so they say - what else does he do in his spare time one wonders?) even if it was spoken with too much restraint. (You're supposed to wave your arms about more Bill. Learn a few gestures...) And so on.

Meanwhile, Luigi Colombo is making a film. In the fine tradition of Fellini and Visconti, he has taken to producing and directing and is putting croquet on celluloid. So far he has drawn an incredible ten thousand images which will then be animated in a strip cartoon demonstrating the art of the game. It's a true labour of love which, the Italians hope, will eventually bear fruit in places like Secondary Schools, where they plan

there are pictures of Chris Hudson bending over the hoops with an expression of astonishment as the balls zig-zag off the tundra

to see croquet taught as part of the maths curriculum.

Luigi is a maths teacher himself and also an extremely talented artist. His landscapes of the local countryside do credit to the Northern School of Italian painting. So much so, that a recent attempt to send one to England as a present caused problems with the customs who thought it might have been filched from the Uffizi.

Luigi's plans for croquet are shared by Carlo Farioli, the President of the Italian Croquet Association. Some of you will have met Carlo at Hurlingham last summer and been deceived by his apparent calm. I have met Carlo in the company of his three little daughters and I'm not sure how the man stays sane. These pint-sized ladies who bully him unmercifully and dominate his life, are far more interested in Barbi than croquet. Yet Carlo continues to manage a lifestyle that includes working flat-out for the pharmaceutical industry, organising outings to



Disneyworld, going ski-ing and mountain-climbing and playing croquet.

He has great plans for the coming season, dominated by an ambitious scheme to see croquet included in the 'World Medical Games'. This is an event organised, according to the brochure, for 'male and female doctors, pharmacists, dental surgeons, veterinary surgeons and physiotherapists of all nationalities'. Attempts to get our own CA involved in the organisation of this floundered early on. Enthusiastic appeals from the Italians were met with long-winded letters saying 'No'.

But Carlo is not demoralised. Indeed, his eyes light up like gas lamps at the thought of 7,500 members of the medical profession gathering along the three hills of Ostuni, a picturesque town in Puglia (according to the tourist blurb), to discover the delights of croquet. The game is still in its infancy in Italy.

There are seven clubs now scattered from north to south but the membership of all of them is less than a handful.

But what they lack in numbers, the Italian croquet players make up for in enthusiasm and Carlo is proud of croquet's progress. "In the five years since it was founded, the Italian Croquet Association has already got the game on television and given good press coverage" he says.

Luigi Colombo, however, has set his sights on even bigger things. He plans to re-conquer America and Newport can hold its breath for the moment when he jerks onto the lawn like a man doing an impression of 'Monsieur Hulot' in 'Mon Oncle'. In the meantime, the constant struggle for perfection continues beneath the shade of the persimmon tree and those of us who have visited the spot are fortunate indeed.