

Club Focus

BRISTOL C.C.

There has been a croquet club in Bristol since 1897. It was the Clifton and County Croquet Club until 1957 when we became the Bristol Croquet Club. We moved to our present site during the winter of 1939, when levelling, laying, and sowing of our three lawns cost just £250! In 1947, the Club's Jubilee year was celebrated with an exhibition match between Miss D.D. Steel and Major Robert Tingey, two of the top players of the day. We are now looking forward to our centenary celebrations!

In those early days the Club's membership was only just over 20, so it is not surprising that, when the owner of the land wanted to sell it in 1953, the members could not raise the £1,750 to buy it. The President, Dr Laurence Ormerod, persuaded the Bristol Corporation to buy the land and we continue to rent it from them today.

In the 1960's the Club's membership included such eminent players as William Ormerod, John Simon and Nigel Aspinall, but after those heady days the Club entered a quiet period and threatened to go into decline. By 1980 John McCulloch was a member, and, fired with enthusiasm to save the Club, he set about recruiting and coaching new members. This was the beginning of the revival which has resulted in the Club which we have today. We continue to organise beginners' coaching and improvers' coaching for our members, and as a result we have reached our membership limit of 100. The standard of play has risen greatly in the last 15 years, and many of our members (50 last season) play in competitive matches. In 1986 we won three national competitions - Mary Rose, Longman Cup and the Short Croquet Team Event, and we won the Mary Rose again in 1989.



Bags of enthusiasm is one of the keys to any successful club, whether it is used for presentations or top dressing.

We regularly win one or more of the SW Federation Leagues.

We built a new Clubhouse in two stages in 1985 and 1988, installing water, electricity and drainage, and we have since then extended and improved our lawns, in both cases members doing much of the work. Our lawns are heavily used, and we would like to acquire a fourth, but prospects do not look good as the adjoining sports ground has just been sold for housing.

We hold two CA weekend tournaments each year, and a high handicap tournament for local croquet players. We arrange a number of events for our own members too. These include a Golf Croquet afternoon towards the end of our beginners' coaching courses, played as doubles, with a newcomer partnering an established member; a social evening of Time Share Doubles followed by an American supper which is great fun; and doubles, and high bisquer days. Our weekly club afternoons are well supported, when games of singles and doubles are arranged by draw. A wide range of club competitions run throughout the season, culminating in a club finals weekend and the presentation of trophies. Winter social activities are expanding. We welcome visitors and we hope that as a result of this profile, we shall be seeing some new faces at our club.



Play in progress at the Bristol handicap weekend in June.



Don't forget to use the Editor's Hot-line on Monday November 27th 7 - 9pm

**Next Issue Published
January 10th
Copy Deadline
December 10th
Stop Press Deadline
December 19th**

**If undelivered please return to:-
Inter County Office Furniture
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Icknield Way
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The CROQUET Gazette

Issue 240

November 1995



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**Stop Press Column
The Council & Its Committees
In Search Of The Perfect System
The 105th Opens
Handicap Alterations
The Tournament Review Supplement**



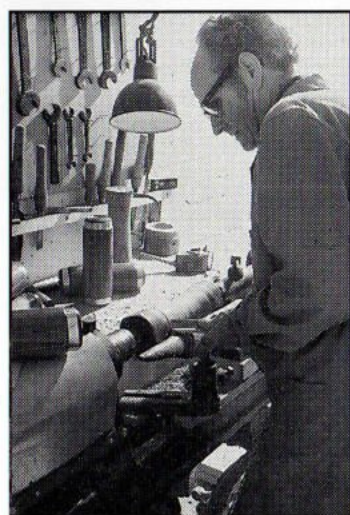
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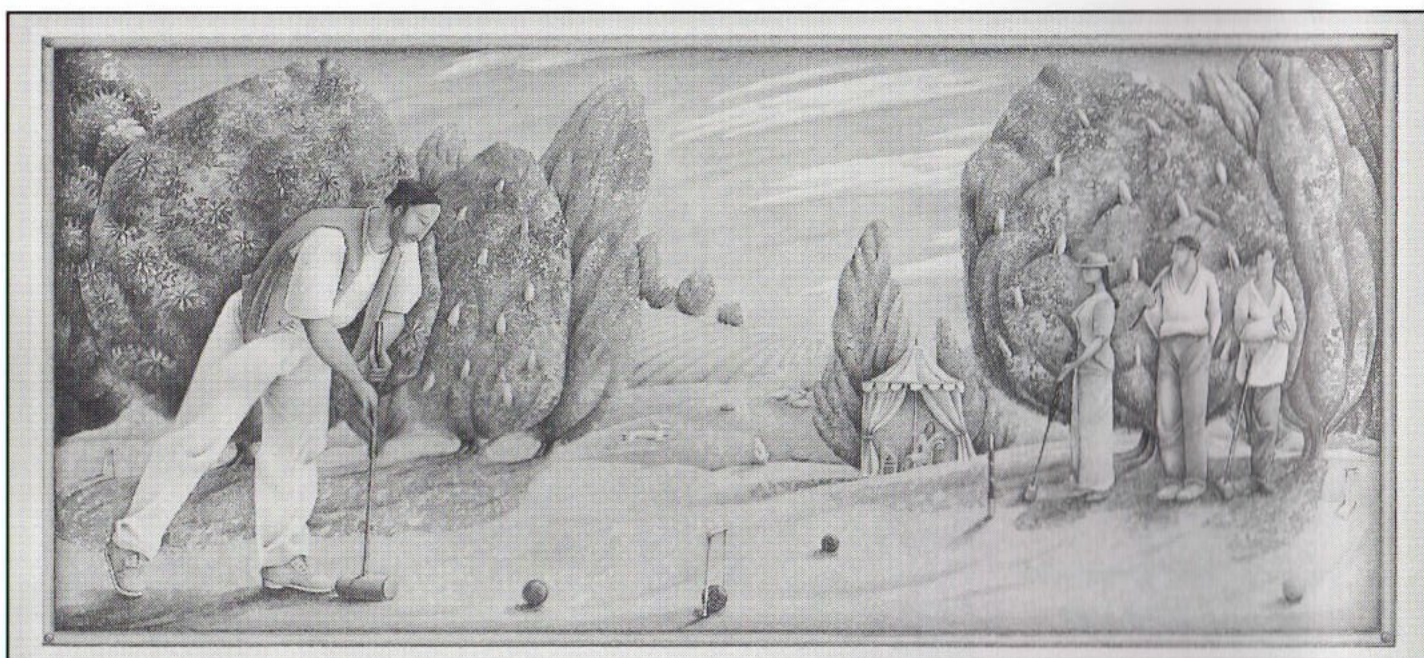
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**The
CROQUET
Gazette**

No.240 (November 1995) Price £2.50
Front Cover: Peter Dorke - The Manager

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Produced by Gail Curry for *Publication* in the second week of every other month throughout the year by the Croquet Association *Written contributions* on computer disk (IBM or Macintosh), typed or hand written *Photographs/illustrations* are welcome and should be sent to the Editor *Illustrations/Caroons* are by Jack Shotton unless otherwise stated *Copy date* is shown on the back cover *Tournament Reports and Results* should be sent via the CA Secretary *Delivery queries* should be directed to the CA Office *Advertising* details are available from the Editor through whom advertising should be booked *Editor* Gail Curry *Design/Typesetting* Gail Curry *Printing, Binding & Imagesetting* by The Print House.

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The Croquet Association The Hurlingham Club Ranelagh Gardens London SW6 3PR (tel: 0171 736 3148) Secretary L W D Antenen Chairman W E Lamb

Apologies First

First on my list is an apology for the out of alignment text on the front cover and the incorrect photograph on page 19 of the September issue. The photograph which did appear was in fact from the Bowdon handicap tournament in May, the odd headgear being mandatory for V.E.Day. The printers have promised me that all of the gremlins have been eradicated, and I hope that this is now true. The photograph which should have appeared, that of the GB and South African Teams, can be found on the centre page.

Thought For Our Future And Our Past

For some a sad one and for others a relief, the end of another season has passed. However, before you throw yourselves completely into your chosen winter pursuits or hibernation, perhaps I can persuade you to spare some time during the next few months to put some thought to what you would like to read in future issues of the Gazette, and perhaps even more importantly, what you would like to see in the way of celebrations for the CA centenary in 1997.

Now I know 1997 sounds like a very long time away in the future, but unfortunately since suggestions were first invited in May (issue 237) from the centenary committee only 2 have been received. This seems to be a fairly pathetic response from players who exude enthusiasm for croquet at almost every other opportunity. Do we really want to let our centenary pass by without celebration? After all, this is the only opportunity most of us will have to celebrate the game we enjoy so much. So let's get organised now and celebrate with some well planned bangs instead of a last minute whimper.

On the subject of the Gazette, the next issue will see the start of a regular feature on the laws and their interpretations. If you would like expert clarification of any law, send your requests to me, marking the envelope 'Laws' and the experts will explain all, I hope.

Gail Curry

MacRobertson Shield News

The Coach House
Church Hill
Old Bilsthorpe
Newark
Notts NG22 8RU
Tel: 01623-871380 (Home)
0115-9473000 (Work)

I would like to announce through the pages of the Gazette that the 1996 MacRobertson Shield will take place next year between 15 June and 4 July. Invitations have been sent to Australia, New Zealand and the USA and the following schedule of matches has been arranged:

15 June - 20 June	Nottingham	GB v AUS, NZ v USA
22 June - 27 June	Bowdon	GB v USA
	Parkstone	NZ v AUS
29 June - 4 July	Cheltenham	GB v NZ, AUS v USA

The matches will be between teams of six and will consist of twelve singles and nine doubles (best of three).

This event is croquet's equivalent of the World Cup, and since it is not expected to be held in this country again until 2010 I hope people will take the opportunity to see the world's best players in action in the world's premier tournament.

I would like to seek readers' help with two specific aspects of the organisation of the event.

Firstly there is an opportunity for a sponsor. Times are hard, however, and obtaining sponsorship from companies is difficult, not least because they receive so many requests. Much can depend on whether there happens to be someone with an interest in croquet in a position of influence. I should like to ask everyone to consider whether they know someone in such a position and whether they would feel able to broach the subject of sponsorship for the MacRobertson Shield. I should be very pleased to hear from anyone and shall be available to meet with any potential sponsor. I have prepared a two page outline of the event which I can send to anyone on request. People should bear in mind that sponsorship need not simply involve payment of a sum of money, but can include the provision of services. Obvious examples of relevance to the Shield are accommodation during the event, flights for the visiting players and travel between the venues.

Secondly I would like to be able to produce a good quality programme for the event which can be circulated well beforehand and thus serve as a publicity vehicle. This will depend on being able to raise sufficient income from advertising to finance the project. Again I would ask people to consider whether they know anyone who would be prepared to advertise their business in such a publication. If sufficient money can be raised then I would like to produce at least 10,000 copies which would be distributed throughout the country, but possibly with more focussed coverage around the four venues if this proved attractive to local advertisers. It is possible that some readers would be interested in advertising their own business in the programme. Alternatively they may be able to generate interest from their employer, their favourite restaurant, a car dealer, a firm of lawyers or accountants etc. I do not have a fixed set of advertising rates in mind at the moment. As a guide the likely cost (depending on the quality of the production) will be between £10,000 and £20,000, and based on, say, 20 pages of advertising this would suggest £500 - £1,000 for a full page of A4.

Finally I would like to emphasise that this is a unique opportunity to raise the profile of our sport, so don't be shy, spread the word, and let's make the 1996 MacRobertson Shield an event to remember.

Yours sincerely,
Keith Aiton
Chairman, Croquet Association International Committee

~ Obituaries ~

Derek Cecil Caporn - A memoir

With the sudden death of Derek Caporn on 17th May 1995 the Croquet Association has lost one of its greatest propagandists and organiser of good works. He was one of those who always appeared to be available to undertake any task that needed to be done for the furtherance of croquet in the U.K. and he gave unsparingly of his time to ensure that the job was done.

Derek was born on 29th December 1923. His father was a Member of Parliament for Nottingham and later a County Court judge in that city. Derek was educated at Dulwich College and on leaving school in 1942 served in the R.A. Educational Corps until 1947, spending some time in Palestine during the difficult years which saw the establishment of the State of Israel.

On demobilization Derek became a solicitor, qualifying in 1951 and eventually partner in the firm of Caporn Campbell based in Surbiton and later Thames Ditton where he specialized in conveyancing and probate work.

As a croquet player Derek came rapidly to the fore when he became a member of the Roehampton Club (having previously been a member of the very small Heathfield Club on Wandsworth Common) and while there won many handicap events starting with the Stevenson Challenge Cup in 1961. His style of play was somewhat pedestrian, of a "let's get on with it somehow" variety and he seldom aspired to anything spectacular but his temperament was calm and unruffled, he made a good doubles partner and in a team match could be relied upon to do what was expected of him.

Derek joined the Croquet Association in 1959. He was elected to the Council in 1962, became its chairman for 1976-78 and was elected Vice-President in 1994. During his period on the Council he performed a great many tasks for the good of the game and innovated even more.

As examples of the former, mention should be made of his organization, with the aid of his mother, of the celebrations to mark the centenary of the Championships in 1967 and his fund raising activities for the MacRobertson Test Matches in the days before Sports Council grants were available. He was for many years the main focus for

the arrangement of CA club conferences, a task which gave him great pleasure. He gave freely of his time to any legal aspect of the Association's affairs including the work involved in periodic negotiations for the renewal of the lease of the CA office at Hurlingham. Towards the end of his active contribution to Council affairs he acted as Honorary Secretary in order to reduce the increasing load of work which was falling on the Administration Secretary and undertook the somewhat tedious task of taking the minutes of Council meetings.

His creation of the CA Fixtures Book should however take pride of place in this record. It will surprise many present day Associates to know that prior to 1969 there was no Fixtures Book: intending competitors had to await receipt of the issues of *CROQUET* in order to learn the details about tournament entry, information which appeared in the form of advertisements (for which clubs paid £2 per insert). It was solely due to Derek's initiative that the Fixture book came into being, now a *sine qua non*, and which he himself produced for the first four years of its existence.

As a tournament organizer Derek can be credited with a part in the post war revival of regional matches between lesser clubs. The Roehampton League, which he established in 1963 for small clubs in the London area which played mainly golf croquet to encourage them to take up competitive association croquet was the progenitor of many such leagues.

In the opinion of many the revival and current flourishing state of the Woking Club would not have been achieved without Derek's inspiration. At the club, to which he transferred from Roehampton, he was jack of all trades (and master of them all) and established there a regular popular tournament, despite the limited facilities, with many innovative features.

Later he directed his attention to the Surbiton Club aiming there to establish a centre of excellence which could become what he always dreamed about - croquet's very own national headquarters. Certainly the establishment in 1985 of a new large club, independent of Local Authority support, overcoming enormous financial problems on the way, is a monument to his zeal and almost unique achievement in the post war world.

Derek was a popular manager of tournaments, being equable, having the ability to get on with everyone and never "getting into a flap". At Woking, Surbiton



and Compton where he managed the South of England Week until the year before he died he will be greatly missed.

Derek did so much for croquet that it is hard to realize that it was only one of his many activities but considerations of space preclude more than a brief mention of these.

He was an active member of the National Trust and, not surprisingly in view of the fact that he lived for a time in a grace and favour apartment in Hampton Court Palace, a member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. He had been from his earliest days a member of the Surrey County Cricket Club, often to be seen as a spectator at the Oval, and also a great scouting enthusiast, becoming eventually Scout Commissioner in the Borough of Wandsworth.

Freemasonry was another of Derek's interests. Twice he took the chair of the Raymond Thrupp Lodge and was a past master of the London/Nottinghamshire Lodge. Derek was also a Rotarian of great distinction, being for 34 years a member of the Surbiton Rotary Club and President three times. He was regarded there in the words of fellow members as "the dynamic engine of the club" driving us all on to greater heights of achievement with the ceaseless flow of imaginative ideas for fund raising and community service. Members of Woking and Surbiton croquet clubs would no doubt echo those sentiments.

Derek was unmarried. He was, to many people, not an easy man to get to know because he was essentially quiet, self-effacing and a bit shy - the latter trait leading to a forthrightness and an abrupt conversational style which could make first

encounters with him slightly difficult. However, once you had "passed through the first few hoops" with him you found a warm and caring individual, a wise counsellor and confidant, one who disliked pretension and pompousness, a workaday person with a liking for the simplicities of life who then very easily became a life long friend. Many persons in the croquet world - and outside it - will find that his passing has created a void which can never be filled.

A.J. Oldham

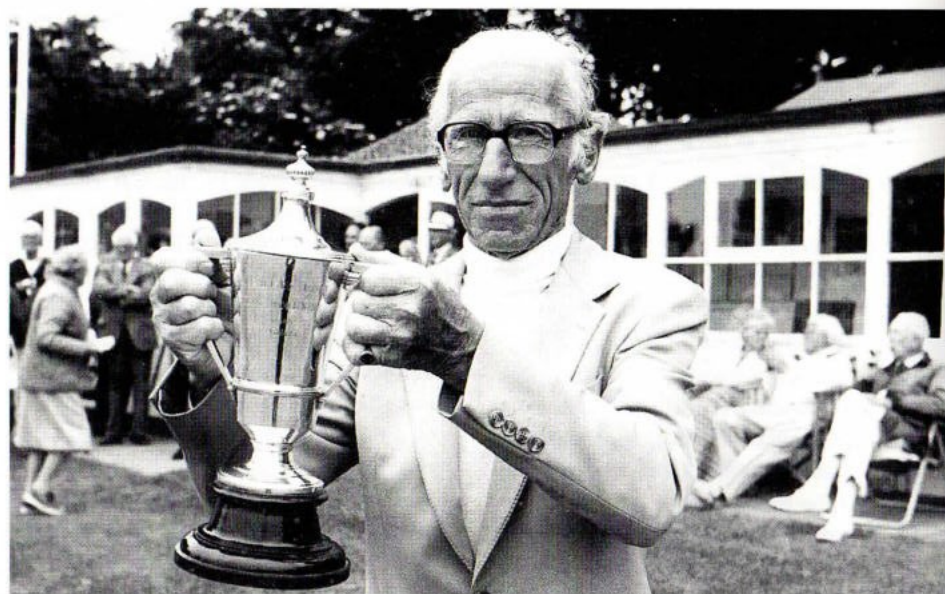
S.S. ('Jim') Townsend

Jim Townsend, a Vice-president of the Association since 1982, died on 17th August 1995 at the age of 87. Although throughout most of his croquet playing days he was an A-class player he only achieved limited success and he will be remembered mostly for his various contributions to croquet in an "off the lawns" capacity.

Sidney Spencer Townsend - always known as Jim Townsend in the croquet world - was born in London in 1908. He acquired the sobriquet 'Jim' in his early working days from the well known character, "Sunny Jim", used, and still used, to advertise Force, the popular breakfast cereal. Although he was intellectually very able, particularly in mathematics, his family's financial circumstances were such that he had to leave school at the age of 16; whereupon he joined the Prudential Assurance Company and qualified as an actuary in 1932.

During the 1939-45 War, his special skills having been recognized, he was seconded to the Statistics Section of the War Office where he worked for Lord Beveridge and for Lord Cherwell, Winston Churchill's principal scientific advisor. Apart from this interlude Jim spent the whole of his working life with the Prudential, being regarded there as one of their ablest actuaries and rising to a very senior position indeed in that office before his retirement in 1969.

Jim joined the Croquet Association in 1950 and was a member of the Hurlingham Club. He won the All-England Handicap in 1954, a few club tournaments in the years which followed and the Peel Memorial Handicap on two occasions in the days when the entry for that event was of a higher standard than today and would have included players of Test Match standard. In his sunset years he won the Veterans' Championship in 1983 at the age of 75. His style was brisk



and businesslike; standing upright and using a long and rather heavy mallet, he liked to get on with the game whatever the circumstances.

Jim was elected to the Council in 1957 and served as its Chairman in 1970-72, during which period of office he had the difficult task of dealing with a recalcitrant editor of the Gazette (Lloyd-Pratt). He himself had been editor of Croquet from 1957 to 1964 at a time when it was published monthly during the summer; and later he produced the CA Fixtures Book for a period of twelve years. In his typically modest way he used to say that probably his most successful contribution to CA affairs was that of standing in at the CA office when the Secretary was away on holiday or ill - a role he performed for a decade.

In the opinion of others, however, it would be Jim's tact and conciliatory approach to administrative problems and any ensuing wrangles which served the CA Council best. When any heated discussions had taken place, committee members would look to him to pour oil on troubled waters and they were seldom disappointed.

Apart from croquet Jim enjoyed many other activities, ice skating in his younger days and lawn tennis. He was a very good card player, playing bridge until the closing months of his life, and had a lifelong interest in puzzles. He composed a number of crosswords and other types of puzzles, all having a croquet theme, which appeared in Croquet during the 1950's and he was also one of the compilers of the fiendish crosswords which appeared in the weekend papers under the Ximenes heading.

Beneath Jim's somewhat austere appearance lay a happy nature possessed of

an impish sense of humour which frequently identified the little physical quirks and mental foibles of others. To his adult friends it came as no surprise to learn from his family that he was the author of many animal personification stories which he had created for the amusement of his children and grandchildren, all of which they remember in detail. Jim was an entertaining companion despite increasing deafness in later years and even in his retirement former colleagues always felt cheered up after visiting him.

Jim had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the characters in the novels of Dickens and could quote aptly and with ease the lesser known as well as the well known passages of the Bible. He had a tremendous memory for other detail and could write and entertain his friends and readers with reminiscences full of facts about events both actuarial and croquetical long forgotten by most of us.

The death of his beloved wife, Frank, some years ago was a great blow to Jim and soon afterwards he left his home in Barnes to live at Westward Ho!. He never forgot the croquet world, however, and until the very end maintained his interest from afar in all that went on. He is survived by his younger daughter, Mrs. Susan Doncaster of Bideford (his other daughter having predeceased him) and by grandchildren and great grandchildren to all whom we extend our sympathy.

A.J. Oldham

NEWS & INFORMATION

Editor's Hot-Line

Following an extremely abusive telephone call on September 25th, the editor would like to inform the anonymous croquet player that the hot-line will continue, and so will the editor.

Cartoon Front Cover Offer

The editor has received many favourable comments on the cartoon by Roy Wallis featured on the front cover of the September issue. Anyone interested in purchasing an A4 sized colour print of the cartoon should contact the editor in writing by December 5th, stating how many prints they require and enclosing a cheque or postal order for £4.00 per print, made payable to 'The Croquet Association'. All prints will be despatched before Christmas.

New C.A. Directory

A brand new CA Directory was published at the end of July, an indispensable addition to the libraries of all get-up-and-go croquet players. The Directory includes the names, addresses and telephone numbers of home and overseas CA Associates, of Club Secretaries and Federation Secretaries. In addition, all official CA Coaches, handicappers and Referees are listed, making it an invaluable guide to the world of croquet. Individual CA Associates may purchase copies from the CA office for £6.50 including P&P.

Memories Of A Century Of Croquet Wanted

Everyone has fond memories of croquet, whether it is of an individual, venue, incident involving them, something they witnessed or perhaps have been informed of by a third party. Such memories, whether serious or otherwise, are a part of the history of our game and the editor would like to offer the

opportunity of recording such memories in the Gazette in the centenary year. Players past and present of all abilities are invited to record a memory, stating the year it pertains to, with the aim of covering each year from 1897 to 1997. Some of the earlier years will no doubt be difficult to fulfil, but there are numerous historians among your number, so a centenary of memories is possible. If you wish to contribute towards this future feature please mark the envelope 'Memories' and clearly state the year on your contribution.

New Thinking From Down Under

Seven booklets by Australian croquet writer John L. Riches are now available over here. The author, ranked No.2 in Australia this year, is Chairman of the ACA Laws Committee, a championship referee and an accredited coach at the highest level. A self-professed critic of the conventional wisdom (some have said an iconoclast, others much worse), he offers a wealth of new ideas on almost every aspect of the game. Time will tell who has the last word. Meantime we may judge for ourselves.

The booklets are photocopied A4 pages in plastic ring binders and are available at the prices given below, inclusive of inland postage, from the CA office or from David Drazin, Roefield, The Green, Croxley Green, Herts WD3 3HJ (phone 01923 774048).

For further information, send a stamped addressed envelope.

Croquet Technique £6.00
Croquet Coaching:
Error Correction £6.00
Next Break Strategy £7.50
The Mental Approach £7.50
Lessons In Tactics £7.50
Referees' Guide £6.00
Finer Points £10.00

STOP PRESS...

Announcing The MacRobertson Team

The team was selected on Friday October 20th and announced by CA President John Solomon at the recent CA Annual General Meeting held on Saturday October the 21st. The team is as follows:

Ian Burridge
Chris Clarke (Captain)
Steve Comish
Debbie Cornelius
David Maugham
Robert Fulford

Congratulations to all of the players on their selection.

Special Notice

Council have agreed to run a joint Club/Federation Conference on 24th February 1996 at the Hurlingham Club. Further information will be sent to all clubs and printed in the Gazette.

Any club wishing to nominate a subject for discussion should contact Derek Trotman Chairman of the Development Committee or their Federation Development Officer.

WANTED TO BUY

Old croquet books, pictures, drawings or anything else related to the subject matter of croquet. Send me your list and price of items to sell.

My interest is to see that these items do not get lost over time, & stay within the "croquet family" in a preserved collection.

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Letters...

Further thoughts on umpires

Dear Gail,

Mike Hammelev in issue 239 put forward the idea of wider powers for umpires. I would like to put forward some ideas on how this might be developed. In principle the idea has merit, but I think it would be rather harder work for the potential umpires than Mike perhaps thinks. A fundamental weakness is how to define when the situation is one where the adjudication is needed from politeness or from a real danger of making a fault. This is largely a question of how skilled the striker is but there is also the unknown to reckon with. Perhaps Mike has never made a fault in a situation where he was confident he would not. If so he is a rare player indeed. Few of us have not had to replace a ball after a fault when we were in no danger of faulting so didn't call a referee. Will this umpire be able to call a fault? Can the opponent overrule the striker and demand a proper referee if he disagrees with the striker's assessment of the situation? Perhaps he has a better knowledge of the laws than the striker and sees a potential fault or error that the striker has not thought of. Does the striker have a choice to ask for a referee or an umpire, and if an umpire arrives when the striker has signalled for a referee can the striker refuse to be umpired and demand to be refereed? If the striker thinks he cannot make a fair attempt at a stroke because of a high carrot, can one of these umpires reset the hoop? One point related to refereeing (and indeed umpiring as at present) which has to be considered is that the referee's duties do not necessarily end with the end of the stroke which he was called to watch but continue until all the consequences of that stroke have been resolved. So, for example, if the fault was in a croquet stroke in the jaws of a hoop, has a lift been conceded? Can the croqueted ball now the striker's ball for the hoop in the other direction score the hoop point from the contact? What if the striker, (a high bisquer lacking tournament experience who has called a referee because he was told to when playing close to hoops) asks what can

I do wrong? The umpire will have to explain potential faults and so on in a neutral way without offering advice even by implication on which shot to play or how to play it. Of course, one could say that in this sort of situation the umpire should then send for a real referee, but isn't that a bit demoralising for the poor umpire, to have to admit he is not competent and send for someone who is?

The laws of croquet are complicated. Mostly they have developed that way because of players trying to bend them to their advantage. For instance, the striker's ball must be placed on the ground in contact with the croqueted ball where else would you put it? The answer is balanced on top, leaning against the upright of the hoop within whose jaws it lies, so that you can play into the ball (downwards) and make it move or shake, and get to your pioneer at hoop two from taking croquet within the jaws of hoop one.

If we are to have umpires then Mike's basic point that they should be trained is absolutely correct, and it is a weakness in the present system that they are not. It is not always the case that just any player handy can umpire. Sometimes the potential outcomes require a knowledge of the laws and a correct procedure to be followed. A third of the referees' exam is the practical on the court so if we are to have umpires as Mike suggests then that plus some examination on the laws relating to faults and play around hoops must be the minimum standard. It would not be acceptable to have a lower standard of competence in the adjudication of faults etc for umpires than for referees.

I can see why many people are somewhat daunted by the prospect of the referees' examination, and I understand that some higher handicap players are uncomfortable with the prospect of refereeing low handicap players. The idea of trained umpires would be an excellent way to introduce people to refereeing gradually, and the test could be a stepping stone to being a referee (a sort of Part 1 of the referees' examination) with the theoretical part following even years later if the umpire

wanted to graduate. A suitable training course could be done in a day, possibly a half day, and would be valuable coaching for players in general even if they did not want to become umpires. I'm still unsure if a suitable limited syllabus can be devised as so much of the Laws is interdependent, but I for one am willing to give it some thought.

Yours sincerely
Colin Irwin

Slow play

Dear Gail,

Last summer (1994) I had the misfortune to watch a Rose Bowl singles match which took five hours to complete. Sadly, there was no time limit so subsequent bookings for the lawn had to be abandoned.

The culprit was a charming 2-handicapper from the visiting club. He took at least five minutes over every shot he played. It became almost fascinating to watch him because one could not believe any human being could ponder for so long! He must have been 'in play' for at least 3.5 out of the 5 hours whilst scoring his (winning) 26 points. Ironically, he and his equally charming wife kept on apologising for his slow play!

What can be done about slow players? Such behaviour, surely, is anti-social and selfish. Indeed, it is tantamount to cheating. Even a timed game would help the slower player because he could frustrate and freeze out his opponent.

There seems to be nothing in the Laws to deter, or outlaw such players. Indeed, even if the game is 'timed', there is endless scope for any player, who happens to be ahead when time is called, to protect his lead by blatant time-wasting/cheating.

If croquet is not as popular as it could be, maybe it is due to the ponderous antics of a small and selfish minority such as this charming gentleman and, maybe, quite a few club members who, when time is called, suddenly behave like absent minded snails!

Chess, snooker and cricket have suffered the same problem, but they seem to have found solutions. Why can't croquet find a suitable remedy too?

Yours sincerely
James Malcolm

Dear James,
Being the co-holder of the world's slowest time for a best of three match, I suspect that there are some who will consider me hypocritical for daring to comment at all on

slow play. However, comment I shall. I would categorize slow play in three ways. The first and most common in my opinion is the higher bisquer, who genuinely requires time to think about the consequences of a shot, that has perhaps not finished in the desired position or, as a consequence of the former, requires some thought on how best to take a bisque. The second category concerns the growing numbers of 'out-players', who, instead of concentrating and following their own games, wander around at tournaments or nip off to the bar. By doing this and not fulfilling their responsibilities as out-players, they frequently require several minutes to decide which shot they will play when they become the 'in-player'. The third category unfortunately consists of those who seem to deliberately, for want of a better phrase, bore or frustrate a majority of opponents into submission or suicidal tactics. I am sure that not many players mind playing opponents that fall in to the first category, as a high percentage of players were once in that category themselves. However, the other categories are an entirely different matter, and I think it would be well worth experimenting with the time system employed in indoor speed croquet, which involves giving each opponent half of the agreed time limit to play. This system, based around the chess clock, would not only require outplayers to be observant of their own games, as they would be required to operate a timer, but would also, hopefully, necessitate players who deliberately slow down the game to change their tactics. This is only my own view, although no doubt we should have some more in the next issue. But in the mean time, a Book token is in the post to you for bringing this matter to the fore. Ed.

Reply on time

Dear Gail,

I write in answer to Phillip Pawson's letter on practising. This has been a bone of contention for some time. It has been objected to by managers (I once heard a respected manager some 30 years ago claim that five minutes' practice before each match (ignoring best of three), say three games a day, equals nine hours over six lawns for a six day tournament and that he could have played three more games!) Such convoluted logic happily does not exist today - I hope.

Players who favour the practice argument seem to have in mind that they

need to practise all their strokes, shooting split-shots, approaching and running hoops. The time to do that is by yourself at your club whenever you have a spare half hour.

There is only one purpose (or at any rate only one that should be allowed) in practising before a match and that is to get the speed of the court. Good players reckon that it requires no more than two shots to get this, some might claim only one. I have always been against any form of practice on the basis that I reckoned I got the pace more quickly than my opponent. But I would have no objection if practice were confined to four shots, which I suggest should be four take-offs, from 1st corner to the 2nd, 2nd to the 3rd, 3rd to the 4th and 4th back to 1st corner. If a player wished he could just play a single ball to these spots. I suppose someone might argue that he would like the diagonal take-off. All right, but no more than four in total!

This should take no more than two minutes and players and managers would all be happy.

Yours
John Solomon

Marking balls

Dear Gail,

I was recently the ROT at a tournament at Southwick where all the games were double-banked. I was appalled at the way many players marked their balls and I posted the following notice on the board. "Marking Balls - I would be grateful if players would give some thought to the way they mark balls in double-banked games. It seems to be common practice for the marker to be placed where the player thinks the centre of the ball is. I have even seen some who press the ball down, presumably to make some impression in the grass to assist in this. PLEASE DO NOT DO THIS.

I would prefer to see balls marked in the golf fashion, that is, to place the marker under the edge of the ball. It is then only a question of deciding which edge. I used to place the marker always on the 'north' side of the ball, but I have recently come to the conclusion that it is better to face the peg and place the marker under the side furthest from the peg".

In other words the peg is like the hole on a golf green. Variations are of course possible. If near a hoop one could face the hoop to mark it, but if for instance you were half way between 4th and 5th hoop you might forget which hoop you had used as

'base'. I think I prefer to use the peg as my guide. Marking in this way is much more accurate. Those who claim that it is only close to hoops that one needs to take care have not thought out that in the middle of the court there could be a potentially wired position where an eighth of an inch could make a difference.

Could the Laws Committee could issue some guidance on this?

Yours
John Solomon

Trophies - time for change?

Dear Editor,

Earlier this year I was the Cheltenham member charged with arranging for the engraving of the 'Men's and Women's' trophies. It is the first time I have had anything to do with trophies and, as a result of my experience, I wish to suggest a change of practice.

Firstly the matter of engraving. I understand the concerns with maintaining a standard quality of engraving knowing that one 'poor year' can blight the whole record. I also noticed that some of the plinths have grown over the years to carry on the engraving; so much so that they now dwarf the trophies they support.

Secondly, there is the lack of a personal record, as presently the winner only holds the trophy for a year. My point is, that once the trophy is returned, the winner has no permanent reminder unless a photograph is taken during the presentation.

I feel that the winner should be presented with a small shield/plaque, theirs to keep. The cost of such items is similar to that spent on engraving, and therefore there would be no additional cost if engraving was discontinued.

I know that to some people, the important feature is that their name is recorded alongside those of the greats of yesteryear. I suggest that this desire can be practically and economically met by a 'scroll of honour' held at the CA and updated annually. Winners would receive a copy of this scroll, theirs to keep.

I write this as an open letter in the hope that those who currently win trophies and those who aspire to, may be prompted to air their opinion and that a consensus view can be taken before next season's tournaments.

Yours
David Magee

Selection Events '95

The President's Cup Bowdon 7th - 10th September

Report by Bill Lamb

What a difference a fortnight can make to the condition of croquet lawns. At the Northern Championships the lawns were completely brown, rock-hard and running at just over 14 seconds. For the President's Cup the lawns had recovered completely, were emerald-green and running at around 10 seconds on yielding turf. No doubt the players would have preferred the former conditions, but it is a tribute to the Bowdon club and the time and money they spend on lawn maintenance to ensure a good, deep root system that the lawns had recovered so quickly. Martin Granger-Brown had set the hoops to strict President's Cup standards, so the conditions promised to be fairly easy. The fact that this was the last major event before selection for the MacRobertson Shield added a little piquancy to the occasion, and brought out the odd strange face. The smart money favoured the local player, David Maugham. He had also wagered that inveterate gambler, David Openshaw, a pound that the latter would come last.

Day 1.

The manager, Keith Aiton, was not available for the first day, so his deputy was left musing to himself whether to warn the players that he would be thinking of pegging down any prolonged game around 12.15, when he realised too late that they had all wandered out to play. All, that is, with the exception of David Openshaw, who had not changed and went off to retrieve his kit from his car to applause from the others. There was really no hurry, as David succumbed to a sixth turn triple-peel from Jeff Dawson. David Maugham was actually the first to finish in about forty minutes with a 26TP against Steven Mulliner and the other games finished with a TPO by Chris Clarke against Steve Comish and a TP by Debbie Cornelius against the new boy, Ian Burrige. The players set out for the second round before anyone had thought to put the kettle on for coffee.

The second round was almost as quick but not quite as tidy. Steven Mulliner went to 4-back on the third turn with a Clarke leave - three balls near the west boundary roughly opposite hoop 6, all in line pointing roughly towards the peg and separated by about a yard. Burrige hit in on the fourth turn, but stuck in hoop five with

one peel of a TPO done - end of game! Jeff Dawson left a ball open by the peg on his leave, which Steve Comish shot at and was mortified to see his ball hit the peg hard and rebound in the direction of hoop one. David Openshaw again failed to take croquet. Debbie Cornelius beat David Maugham in an untidy game. In all two rounds had finished by just after midday and the players decided to wait for lunch rather than break in the middle of the third round.

After lunch David Openshaw at last took croquet and took a ball to 4-back. David Maugham hit the lift but failed to run hoop one, leaving Openshaw with a dream position of partner ball at 4-back and pioneers at one and two - he gratefully accepted the gift. Debbie peeled out Chris Clarke and then sat back to watch as Chris immediately picked up a three-ball break from quite a good contact leave (balls in corner two and on east boundary). The other two games finished with TP's. Steven Mulliner wondered whether he still had the competitive urge but there was no doubt from his reaction when he made a mistake against Jeff Dawson.

In the final round of the day an Ian Burrige attempted triple-peel came to grief with a rash attempt at an angled half-jump over the peelee at penultimate. Chris Clarke went to 4-

back, Ian hit the lift, but failed an angled peel at rover leaving the peelee in the jaws and pegged his other ball out with Chris's balls adjacent to first and fourth corners. Chris hit the ball in the jaws of rover from fourth corner but was unable to make any progress before Ian hit in again to finish. Steven Mulliner TPO'd David Openshaw and although the latter made a valiant effort to progress with a two-ball break, it merely delayed the inevitable. The day's play finished by about four-o'clock and although there was some talk of fitting in an extra round in view of the uncertain weather forecast, Steven Mulliner preferred to get in a round of golf. The games had been largely free from errors and resulted in twelve TP's from sixteen games. Steven Mulliner suggested there could be as many as forty triples in the whole event.

Clarke 3; Cornelius 3; Mulliner 3; Burrige 2; Dawson 2; Maugham 2; Openshaw 1; Comish 0.

Day 2.

With a fair amount of heavy rain during the night it was fortunate that the day remained dry but fairly cold. Keith Aiton arrived to take control and play commenced with the full complement of selectors present. Perhaps this was the reason for the change in the pattern of play from clinical efficiency on the first day to error-prone mediocrity on the second. David Maugham stuck



President's Cup L to R: David Maugham, Jeff Dawson, Keith Aiton (Manager), Steve Comish, David Openshaw, Ian Burrige, Debbie Cornelius, Chris Clarke, Stephen Mulliner.

	Clarke	Burrige	Mulliner	Openshaw	Dawson	Maugham	Cornelius	Comish	Wins	Final Order
C. Clarke		-17 +25	-23 +26TP	+26TP -26TP	-26 +26TP	-7 +25TP	+13OTP +26	+12TPO +26TP	9	1
I. Burrige	+17 -25		-21 -11	-26 -26	+17TP +2	+14 +3	-17TP +17TP	+25TP +16	8	=2
S. Mulliner	+23 -26TP	+21 +11		+10TPO -9	+13TPO -8	-26TP +26TP	-15 +18TP	+2 -9OTP	8	=2
D.Openshaw	-26TP +26TP	+26 +26	-10TPO +9		-26TP +26TP	+26TP +9TP	+13 -17	-17 -26	8	=2
J. Dawson	+26 -26TP	-17TP -2	-13TPO +8	+26TP -26TP		-21TP -26TP	+23 +26TP	+26TP +26TP	7	=5
D. Maugham	+7 -25TP	-14 -3	+26TP -26TP	-26TP -9TP	+21TP +26TP		-26 +25	+26TP +12	7	=5
Ms.D. Cornelius	-13OTP -26	+17TP -17TP	+15 -18TP	-13 +17	-23 -26TP	+26 -25		+7 -16	5	7
S. Comish	-12TPO -26TP	-25TP -16	-2 +9OTP	+17 +26	-26TP -26TP	-26TP -12	-7 +16		4	8

in 1-back, allowing Chris Clarke to make a break with an attempt at a 1-back leave; however he failed to approach hoop six and the resulting disaster set up David for a sextuple attempt. David later claimed that he was not attempting a sextuple, just trying to get as many peels as possible; he succeeded with two. From the contact leave Chris went round, peeling his partner through six and 1-back, and pegged out David's forward ball, leaving his own balls in the second corner and on the west boundary adjacent to hoop 1. David, of course, was for 3-back. As he came off the court, Chris said sadly, "I don't expect to get another turn." He was right! Steve Comish's misfortunes continued when he stuck in 3-back with three peels of a triple completed and eventually lost by two to Stephen Mulliner. Steve was not playing badly; he just wasn't winning. David Openshaw's years of practice at not doing triples showed when he failed to approach hoop six on a delayed triple; Debbie double peeled him out but made no further progress.

There was only one triple in the fifth round (by Ian Burrige) and the sixth round was similarly undistinguished with the triple this time by David Maugham. Worse was to follow in the seventh round without any triples, although Ian missed a five yard peg-out for a triple. Steve Comish at last broke his duck to his great relief. It is not a pleasant experience to have a run of losses in an eight. Chris Clarke had previously remarked, on watching a hoop made from an "impossible" position with a jump shot which visibly moved the hoop, that there was no advantage in playing well.

However the day was rescued to some extent in the final round of the day. All the games finished quickly with triples, including a fifth turn triple by Chris Clarke. Stephen Mulliner had added three wins to his previous day's total and had drawn ahead. He departed satisfied for another round of golf, this time with local member, Rupert Webb, ex-captain of Wilmslow GC. There

was some talk during the day of players being nicely poised if they were two wins behind the leader. It must be a long time since five players were in that position at the end of the second day. Mulliner 6; Burrige 5; Clarke 4; Cornelius 4; Dawson 4; Maugham 4; Openshaw 4; Comish 1. Day 3. More rain during the night was followed by sunshine during the day and a decision to tighten the hoops. David Maugham arrived half an hour late but was still the first to finish, although this time courtesy of a 25TP by Chris Clarke. Perhaps David hadn't realised the hoops were a bit tighter. In the meantime, Debbie Cornelius had made five hoops to David Openshaw's nil. Jeff Dawson played a wrong ball in a TPO attempt on Stephen Mulliner, but still won after Stephen stuck in 2-back.

The tighter hoops were perhaps beginning to have their effect, although Stephen Mulliner triple-peeled out Steve Comish in the next round but lost after an ill-judged attempt to jump through hoop six gave Comish the three-ball break. Chris Clarke had another swift win against Debbie, who remarked that Chris was looking quietly determined. The Maugham/Openshaw game was full of errors until the latter finished with a triple peel. Ian Burrige pegged out Jeff Dawson's and his own ball to leave himself for rover against 4-back. After they had both made one hoop, Jeff was unfortunate to run penultimate up to the peg and had little option but to shoot at Ian's rover near the side boundary. The missed shot gave Ian the game.

After lunch Chris Clarke had another seemingly effortless game against Ian Burrige until he left himself an extreme cut rush to the peg to finish a triple and then missed a peg-out from three yards. Jeff Dawson creamed Debbie Cornelius 26TP. David Openshaw pegged out Stephen Mulliner after a triple failed, to leave peg and two against five. Stephen was allowed one lift, a couple of long shots and numerous deems, and failed to make a point. David

Maugham had a 1-back leave against Steve Comish, and then attempted to make a many peels as possible in his next turn, in this case making two before breaking down at hoop six. He later said that was a serious sextuple attempt. I wish I could read these players' minds!

The final round of the day was over fairly quickly to make up for the slower play in the previous three rounds. Chris Clarke recorded his fourth win of the day with a 26TP against Stephen Mulliner to lead the field. David Maugham beat Jeff Dawson by the same score, David Openshaw and Steve Comish beat Ian Burrige and Debbie Cornelius respectively. David Openshaw had also had a good day with three wins: he had been nicely poised from round three to round eleven. Stephen said that it was the first time he had ever lost four games in a day (was it the golf beginning to take effect?) and he intended it to be the last. Clarke 8; Burrige 7; Openshaw 7; Dawson 6; Maugham 6; Mulliner 6; Cornelius 5; Comish 3.

Day 4.

The prospect of a multiple tie loomed with six players still in contention. The prospect loomed larger as David Openshaw quickly beat Chris Clarke by 26TP to join him in the lead with eight wins. David Maugham and Jeff Dawson beat Debbie Cornelius and Steve Comish respectively, to move up to seven wins. Stephen Mulliner looked to have the edge over Ian Burrige when he pegged two balls out but the game rapidly became stuck. Stephen had the points advantage as he was for penultimate against hoop three, but Ian was occupying the strategically important area by the second corner with Stephen near the west boundary. Stephen could neither approach penultimate nor shoot at Ian for fear of giving the rush towards hoop three. With such easy conditions it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that Ian could two-ball it round. They called for ruling on what would happen if the impasse continued. This is one of the few occasions in which law 51 applies, and occurs because eights games are not time-limited. In a time-limited game, of course, the player behind must break the impasse or lose on time. The result was obviously important to both players and they were acting quite properly. Keith Aiton and Bill Lamb both went into a huddle and eventually decreed that, if the impasse were not resolved, the game would start again. This was naturally more to Ian's satisfaction than Stephen's, who moved to the east boundary roughly opposite penultimate. When Ian moved to second corner, Stephen hit in with the help of a yard of hill and finished. The intended ruling caused a lot of discussion and was generally thought to be duff, but nobody could think of a better one which would avoid the probability of a similar impasse. Solutions please on a postcard to Bill Lamb.

And so to the final round with the possibility of a five-way tie. If Keith was worried, he didn't show it, and the issue was quickly resolved with a swift 26TP by Chris Clarke over

Jeff Dawson and a quick win by Steve Comish over David Openshaw. Stephen Mulliner beat Debbie Cornelius to share second place with David Openshaw and the winner of Burrige and Maugham. Ian pegged out two balls leaving himself for 1-back v five. David quickly caught up and a further impasse occurred with both players for 1-back and straddled diagonally across corner two about ten yards up the yard lines. They called for a ruling: the referee at first declined saying that there were seven hours of daylight left and that they should sort it out themselves. The players broke for lunch and the referee relented and said the game would restart, if the players did not resolve the impasse. This was not to Ian's liking, so he broke the impasse and eventually won.

This was perhaps the closest President's Cup ever. The easy conditions were a great leveller but the fact remains that the top players are no longer so dominant and their pursuers are catching up. Chris Clarke deserved to win, he was the most fluent and consistent player and seven of his nine wins came with TP's; he faltered during the first series on the second day when his shooting was not up to its usual standard but he dominated the second series. Stephen Mulliner had a disastrous third day and is more prone to error than formerly; nevertheless, he remains a force to be reckoned with. This is not David Openshaw's favourite format and he did better than most people expected. His croquet strokes and break play are excellent but he lacks the ability to shoot as well as most of his competitors. (David Maugham settled his bet with David Openshaw in full, although there was a good precedent set for paying a penny a year for a hundred years.) Ian Burrige made an excellent debut: his shooting is brilliant, at times threatening to eclipse David Maugham, but he lacks the latter's precision of croquet strokes and his propensity to stick in hoop five (or any hoop he pokes the ball at) are cause for concern. David Maugham's form was disappointing. His normally devastating shooting and long hoop running were a bit patchy and he never really seemed threatening. Jeff Dawson overcame his reputation for doing badly in the President's Cup. He played consistently with four of his seven wins achieved by 26TP and when beaten it was usually by the same classic score. Debbie Cornelius started well, played steadily rather than flamboyantly, was involved in more scrappy games than most and will be disappointed with her final position. Steve Comish had a disastrous start losing six straight games, but coped stoically with such adversity. He probably had more narrow misses when shooting than anyone else and this showed in the final results.

Twenty eight games out of fifty six were decided by triples of one form or another, a good ration but far fewer than might have been expected after the first day. Yet, in some ways, mistakes make the games more interesting to watch. Were the selectors any the wiser? Time alone will tell.

Chairman's Salver 1995 Hunstanton 7th - 10th September

Report by Andrew Gregory

Hunstanton is tucked away on that geographical paradox, the West coast of Norfolk. It was somewhere that each of us had been to, though it was only now that we were returning that we realised how long it had been since we were last here. Indeed, Michael Heap had been away so long that he remembered the club being in a different place. This was some achievement, since the Club has been on its present site since 1911.

The Club has five good lawns, which demonstrated a remarkable property on the second day. Prolonged deluge forced us to shelter in the pavilion, a fine wooden structure which no longer keeps out the rain. This delay was doubly annoying since we had only just persuaded David Harrison-Wood to resume the lawn after his lunch. Standing water was collecting on the lawns, and the manager was drawing up battle plans in case we could not play again that day. Yet within half an hour of the rain easing off, the lawns were entirely playable. The chalk cliffs on which the Club stands had thirstily sucked down all the moisture. This marked a sharp contrast with my 1994 Eights venue, where the merest hint of drizzle mysteriously submerged the lawns under an inch of water.

This enabled me to resume battle with Harrison-Wood. I was glad to finish this game, since I played badly from its start to its end. Sadly, this was one of four Harrison-Wood games that had had to be pegged-down, so this period of bad play lasted two days and nine consecutive lost games.

Going into the last day, Heap had lost only one game, though he was behind in his unfinished game against Gaunt. Goacher had four losses, and Day and Cordingley still retained a slim chance having lost five each.

If Heap beat Goacher in their morning game then the Salver was his. Goacher had chances but his errors were evident from his clips - 3 and 3-back. Heap had embarked on a triple peel. He had already completed five triples, which was as many as the other seven managed between them during the event. This one came to grief when attempting the straight rover peel, leaving his clips on rover and peg, and the balls such that Goacher could try almost anything, even a quadruple had he been in the mood.

Goacher was not in the mood, but did manage to get his backward ball round to the peg. He then made a surprising decision, one that is not recommended in the books. Despite Heap's

backward ball being for rover, Goacher pegged out Heap's forward ball. He then attempted to leave his balls joined wide on the West boundary, but a hoop got in the way, so Heap was left with a twelve-yarder. This was missed, and Goacher was able to obtain a yard-line cannon, about ten yards South of corner 2. He played a thick wafer, rushing to about 4 yards from 3-back while pushing the other ball well into the lawn. From this he finished, and the competition was still alive.

Heap then lost quickly to Avery, and was thus able to witness Goacher's fortune in not losing to Gaunt, as the latter took off the lawn on his finishing turn. Gaunt then failed to show similar generosity to Heap as he finished off their pegged-down game. Perhaps Gaunt as manager had divined his best chance of avoiding the tie and hence finishing the tournament.

The last round: Goacher was on nine wins, as was Heap, while Day was on eight wins. Elsewhere Avery beat Harrison-Wood without the loser taking croquet - remarkably the only such game of the event. Avery thus completed a respectable eight wins after a poor first series. Harrison-Wood disappointed after his second place last year, his individual tactics failing to convince the other players. Gaunt beat Cordingley to share fifth place. Cordingley never quite recovered from a bad start, and was probably justified in bemoaning his luck. For example Cordingley's failure completely to wire Gaunt's last shot was punished when what was reckoned to be the equivalent of a 150-yard shot was hit. Gaunt also had a bad start, which occasioned an early audition of his traditional refrain "I'm fed up with this game I want to go home". Six wins was a reasonable total after 0/4 on the first day.

Day and Heap had to play in the last round, and initially it looked as if Day would win +26 with one of the untidiest triples ever seen. Justice was done and the triple died with Day's clips ignominiously on rover and rover. Heap's comeback came to an end when he was hampered after three-back on his second break, and Day won without further intervention. This tournament completed Day's rehabilitation after a dreadful start to his season - still not a pretty player, but effective.

Thence Goacher held his nerve to win his last game, thus avoiding a three-way tie and claiming the Salver outright. He was fortunate that his three losses on Saturday didn't disqualify him from contention, but a typically determined last day performance saw him home ahead of a disappointed Heap. Heap played well throughout, continuing his good form from the Opens, but on the last day it was his luck that ran out.

	Gaunt	Cordingley	Goacher	Gregory	Day	Heap	Harrison-Wood	Avery	Wins	Final Order
D. Gaunt		+4 +15	-2 -3	-25TP +18	-3 -17TP	+6 +17	+12 -25	-12 -10	6	=5
P. Cordingley	-4 -15		-26 +2	-25 -20	+6 -17	-1 -11TP	+3 +2	+3 +17TP	6	=5
D. Goacher	+2 +3	+26 -2		+12 +14	+25 -22	-22TP +2	+17 +15	+1 -3	10	1
A. Gregory	+25TP -18	+25 +20	-12 -14		-26TP -26	-22TP -2	-5 +18	-20 -2	4	=7
P. Day	+3 +17TP	-6 +17	-25 +22	+26TP +26		-17TP +8	-5 +15	+3 -15	9	=2
M. Heap	-6 -17	+1 +11TP	+22TP -2	+22TP +10	+17TP -8		+8 +2	+26TP -16	9	=2
D. Harrison-Wood	-12 +25	-3 -2	-17 -15	+5 -18	+5 -15	-8 -2		+17 -26TP	4	=7
M. Avery	+12 +10	-3 -17TP	-1 +3	+20 +2	-3 +15	-26TP +16	-17 +26TP		8	4



The Chairman's Salver L to R: Mark Avery, Andrew Gregory, Michael Heap, Paul Day, David Harrison-Wood, Phil Cordingley, David Goacher, Don Gaunt, Sarah Hampson.

23rd Spencer-Ell Cup Nottingham 6th - 10th September

Report by Ian Vincent

The Spencer-Ell is an invitation event for the 3rd best eight available players, and this year the stress was on available. After running through the selected reserves, Paul Smith had been asked to fill a vacancy that arose the previous week, but he fell the day before the event and decided that the groundsman would not appreciate his crutches. As the event was being played at Nottingham, he left a message on Ian Vincent's answerphone. Rather than shoot the messenger,

Chris Williams, the manager, asked him to play, so Ian found himself as father of the tournament, his 5th appearance and 16 years after his first. Chris Williams, the holder, had played each of the last 3 years, but apart from them only Colin Southern (9 years ago) and Chris Patmore (last year) had been in an eight before.

There are several factors that make the invitation events such a unique, and, to the author at least, enjoyable experience. One, obviously, is that there are just eight of you: competitors, certainly, but also a group who are, for better or worse, in it together, and who get to learn something of each other's character as the days go by. Another is the pre-determined order of play, which gives structure both to each day and the overall event. There is no distraction from dou-

ble banking and no time limits to curtail close games. Everything combines to assist concentration.

Each eight also has an individual chemistry, of course. This was more sober than some, though there might have been some takers if a barrel had been organised. Laptops were much in evidence, which produced additional statistics, though were hardly needed to keep the traditional charts. News from the President's was available from the net, though the technology didn't seem to have reached Norfolk.

An age spread of some forty years meant that tastes in evening entertainment differed: not all of us were inconvenienced by the lack of information about games arcades. Colin Southern discovered Mr. Manns, an excellent Chinese where we dined together on the second evening. While waiting for the starters, lots were drawn to select the reporter. Later on, little red books were consulted to disprove the notion, apparently suggested at another event, that merely lifting an opponent's ball incurred the full penalty of the wrong ball law. The only other time that law books were required was when Brian Hallam, the ROT, wanted to confirm that he was allowed to guide the head of his mallet with his foot in a hampered stroke: we concluded this was legal, but he then successfully played an unaided Aitonic sweep instead.

The lawns had started to green up again after the long hot summer and there was a fair amount of rain during the first three nights, followed by heavy dews on the last two. In contrast, the days were pleasantly warm, which meant that the going varied from slow in the mornings to easily paced. At lunchtime on third day a ball took about 9.75 seconds to come to rest after travelling the length of lawn one. The hoops were set to 1/16" and were in new holes. They were even left out overnight, to reduce wear on the holes, but the softish ground meant that, while there was always a risk of a careless shot, or over-ambitious attempt at control, sticking, they usually succumbed to bullying.

Brian Hallam, from Northampton, led from the front throughout. He lost only one game in the first series and was uncatchable, barring accidents, with two rounds to play, which saved any arguments as to who should hold the trophy in the traditional photograph. He shot well and made few mistakes, usually establishing breaks by means of a big roll shot. Edward Duckworth, from Bristol, was one behind him at the half way stage and kept just ahead of the pack to take 2nd place.

Four players shared third place, with 50% records. Alex Leggate, the other, lankier, young Bristolian, started slowly but equalled Hallam with 5 wins in the 2nd series. Alan Linton, from Bowdon, can also be pleased with his first appearance, though he was not quite as

The Long Hot And Co



Chris Clarke winner of the 1995 World Championships, pictured with his trophy the Wimbledon Cup.



Bowdon members Howard Taylor and Helen Peddie participated in their doubles match of the season on July 22nd, when they were married.

Chris Osmond & Celia Steward soaking up the atmosphere of the World Championships, with a glass or two of the local vin blanc.



Mike Evans of Beverley concentrates on his game, despite of the large and somewhat unusual double banker.

Andrew Potter 'resting his eyes' between games at Cheltenham.

The Tournament Review

The Reports & Results Supplement of the Croquet Gazette

Vol. 1 No.1

November 1995

Supplementary Information

Tournament reports and results are important and interesting elements of our sport, which many players take time in producing for the benefit and enjoyment of many more.

In my relatively brief time as editor it has become apparent very quickly, that it is impossible to publish all of the reports and results forwarded to me, unless the number of pages is increased significantly in each issue. Whilst this at first seemed at least plausible, some elementary mathematics quickly ruled out this option because of the extra costs involved, and to some extent too, the increased preparation and production time, the former being unacceptable to the Croquet Association and the latter being unattractive to the editor.

My appeal for report writers to limit themselves to 200/300 words was one way I thought might help to alleviate the problems, however this was not universally popular so I started to look for another solution.

I have now been able to solve the problem of increased preparation and production with the kind consideration of Andrew Gregory, who has consented to be my sub-editor for tournament reports and results. The problem of the extra costs took a little longer but I think can be solved with supplements to the Gazette.

So here is the first issue of the supplement which I hope you will see as a positive development. Ideally it would contain a slightly different lay-out, but due simply to a lack of time this has not been possible, however future editions will.

Gail Curry

South East Federation Summer School Southwick 15th - 20th May

We arrived at the lawns on a sunny Monday morning, rather awed by the sight of eleven lawns. After threading our way to the clubhouse, we were warmly greeted by Pam Arliss with coffee on the lawn. David Collins, who efficiently organised the week, soon had us sorted into three groups of four. The other three coaches involved, Gordon Drake, Bryan Teague and Ron Welch, together with David, visited each group and dealt with various aspects of the game. Every day we discussed a 'topic' such as "openings", "pegging out" and "laying up", and were given a bisque problem to consider and offer our solution.

Pam Arliss and her helpers supplied us with an excellent cold lunch and tea each day. Afternoons were spent either playing in a Swiss tournament or free to do as we wished. The tournament was won by David Moore of Ealing with 5 wins, the runner-up was Janet Pascall of Purley Bury who had started the school without having ever used a bisque.

In all a very enjoyable and worthwhile week.

John Criddle & Ron Farr

Cheltenham Weekend 27th - 29th May 1995

The conclusion arrived at was that certain strokes might have been better, and that in certain emergencies neither player had experienced that amount of luck which a human being has a right to expect." Thus spake M.R. James in his ghost story "The

Mezzotint"....

The tournament was organised by Roger and Dab Wheeler as a Swiss, without time limits but with Wharrad turns imposed at the managers' discretion - something the players generally seem to find preferable to time limits. Mind you, when one particular game had gone to four hours I got the distinct impression the players were about to crawl on bloodied hands and knees to the managers' table to plead hoarsely for Wharrad turns through dry, cracked lips...! The average age of the participants was probably higher than at some tournaments: the male range went from Kristian Chambers at 13 (whose excellent play moved Roger to intone "We'll be seeing more of Mister Kristian!") to John Exell at 88. All I will say about the ladies' ages was that I was definitely the youngest at 35! (I remember Alan Girling thinking I was mad for once before publishing my age in the Croquet Gazette, so this'll confirm it - absolutely barking...) The managers had cannily put people who were staying/travelling together in the same blocks, which, while it resulted in a couple of husband versus wife contests (to wit the Gugans and the Regans), which some managers will go into all sorts of contortions to avoid, did mean that the time-tabling of play was consistent for each carload, which was a terribly sensible and practical move.

I shall always fondly remember that Edgar Jackson sometimes referred to me as his "Amanuensis"; Roger and Dab have acquired a very able Amanuensis of their own in John Lansdown, who deputised as administrator while the managers were playing, and kept us all occupied as promptly as possible with unfailing courtesy, demonstrating (M.R. James again, this time

"The Stalls of Barchester Cathedral") "...That necessary business will be transacted without a complete loss alike of voice and temper". Another definite plus point was Eileen Magee's 'home cooking', which provided a hot main course plus sweet, cheese and biscuits and coffee, all at tremendously good value for money. Even those who had not initially put their name on the lunch list were seduced by the aroma of the chicken casserole wafting from the lunch room!

Locals Jane Mathews and Margaret Gosden were participating in their first tournament, and there were 22 visitors among the 56 competitors: for instance, Fred Smith and Julian Remfry, respectively from Shrewsbury and Church Stretton, who were travelling together. On the Monday morning they spent the time engaging in a profound discussion about tactics, only to find they were playing each other! I gather things didn't go entirely according to plan thereafter (!), but despite that Fred succeeded in tying with Kristian as joint winner of Block A, as well as joining Derek Bradley, John Jeffrey, Kismet Whittall and Nick Heriz-Smith in triggering a handicap reduction.

Block B saw the only outright winner in Richard Wainman, by virtue of having beaten runner-up Derek Bradley, but the situation in Block C was a real cliff-hanger right up to the end, with everything depending on the outcome of the last two games to finish. Had John Jeffrey succeeded with either of his peg-out attempts against Bo Harris, he would have been clear winner with six wins, but as he didn't, the number of wins depended on Nick Heriz-Smith's contest with Gerry Eccles (who was playing some of his best croquet ever this weekend, as when he twenty-sixed Kismet Whittall). At one point Gerry attempted a wire which turned out to be not quite total, and Nick asked him to watch while he went for the ball, as "it might twitch a little". "Twitch", my eye! The blooming thing convulsed! At any rate, Nick won, which meant that since he had beaten Bo, Bo had beaten John, and John had beaten him, they formed a triumvirate of victors. Most of the rest of us had to settle for agreeing with Dab's pearl of wisdom: "I'm quite good at playing this game; I'm just not awfully good at winning..."

Since nobody came bouncing up to the managers shouting "I've just done a triple peel!" or anything of that ilk, the only other observations I can make are about the

hats; flat caps seemed generally de rigeur, with variations being offered by Paul Watson and Veronica McClements in the shape of visors, Liz Taylor-Webb's elegant wide-brimmed straw hat, John Jeffrey's pith helmet, Kristian Chambers' white, black and fluorescent pink cap with eminently practical Foreign-Legion style neck protector, and Roger Schofield's Stetson. (He had to give it up after the first day - the brisk breeze kept making away with it.) Last but not least let us pay homage to Alex Jardine's jersey, which Laurence Latham said reminded him of columns of newsprint. Nobody had pointed out the likeness to Alex before, but he agreed that if he couldn't make the news, he might as well wear it!

Deborah Latham

Results

Block A

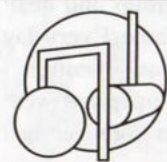
5 wins - Fred Smith (11) Kristian Chambers (8)
4 wins - Michael Rangeley (1) Veronica McClements (11) Dab Wheeler (8)

Block B

5 wins - Richard Wainman (7) Derek Bradley (5)
4 wins - Rosemary Guban (2) Malcolm McBean (4.5) Liz Taylor-Webb (6) Alan Bogle (3)

Block C

5 wins - John Jeffrey (3) Bo Harris (4) Nick Heriz-Smith (5)
4 wins - Gerry Eccles (14) Deborah Latham (5)



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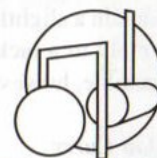
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Kismet Whittall (4) Alex Jardine (4.5)

Colchester Spring Bank Holiday Handicap 27th - 29th May

I put a pen to paper to write this report following a most enjoyable 3 day tournament at Colchester, well run by Pat (Mrs. Colchester) Hetherington, excellent catering by Mrs. King and jolly good company. The lawns could do with some more growth and were a little bald in places, but this is in hand and rain is all that is needed. John Wilkinson was the clear winner, winning most of his matches by a considerable margin and losing only one to John Robinette.

Graham Bond

Results

1st John Wilkinson 6 wins
2nd Marjorie Boyd & Graham Bond 5 wins
4th John Robinette, John Rolfe & Jean Ackerman 4 wins

Roehampton Summer Tournament 5th - 10th June

Twenty six enthusiastic competitors, twelve members from the host club and fourteen participants from seven other clubs, gathered at the Roehampton club during the summer

tournament.

The genial manager, Paul Macdonald, had bravely decided to run the event without the pressure of time limits (except "in extremis"). This decision was welcomed by most players for producing conclusive results but gave Paul a few headaches (so he confided in me). However, any problems were not apparent to competitors and everyone agreed that they enjoyed a good week's croquet held in an atmosphere that was very relaxed and friendly. My penance for beating the manager in the first round was to be given the job of writing the report. I will be brief.

Player of the Tournament: Martin Haggerston - not only for winning the Ranelagh Gold Cup, but for participating in the unrestricted handicap event too - not a popular choice among top class players these days. His No. 1 supporter, Mrs M.H. must have been really proud of him.

Shot of the tournament: by Lilian Shayek - from the south boundary Lilian took off to pink at hoop one, missed the roquet and ran hoop 6 (which she was for) quite cleanly. However incredible this shot appeared to onlookers, I wondered if it might be a common occurrence at Roehampton as I personally witnessed an almost identical shot couple of days later by Jack Marks!

Weather report: fair all week - Thankfully no rain, so fashion conscious Pauline Healy had no occasion to don her see-through plastic boots.

Singer of the tournament: Neil Jackson - for his rendition, en route to the bar of "It takes a Wharrad man to sing....", whilst a certain charismatic octogenarian was engaged in combat in a hard fought battle on lawn one.

Most entertaining body language: Tony Fathers - "The white gloved traffic controller"

General gossip: Lionel Wharrad dislikes three hour timed games "because he only has a two and three quarter hour bladder". (Another retired gentleman was actually quite envious of Lionel when he heard this.)

Gina Lewis

Results

Open singles - Ranelagh Gold Cup
Winner: Martin Haggerston Runner-up: Bob Stephens

What a pity that there weren't more contestants for this prestigious event. 'A' class players please take note for 1996.

Level Singles - Brook Cup

Winner: Douglas Gurney

Runner-up: Graham Bonnett

The above had the same number of wins but Douglas beat Graham +8

Handicap singles - Thorpe Cup

Winner: Gina Lewis Runner-up: Vincent Corney

In this final the winners in the previous month of the ladies' and gentlemen's Peel memorials handicap singles at Surbiton met. In this instance the female of the croquet species proved the stronger (or luckier) player.

Unrestricted handicap singles - The Trevelyan Bowl

Winner: Graham Bonnett

Runner-up: Martin Haggerston

Relatively new to croquet, Graham from Dulwich croquet club gave an impressive performance.

Handicap doubles - The Creyke Cups

Winners: Ed Dymock & Graham Bonnett

Runners-up: Neil & Olive Jackson

South East Federation Team Doubles Tournament Southwick 10th June

Take 72 croquet players, a cool day, and Ron Welch conducting proceedings and what do you get? The S.E.F. Team Doubles tournament. 18 teams of 4 players per team are drawn against each other and with handicaps varying from around 2 upwards a large range of playing standards and abilities are to be seen. With so many games taking place it is not possible to report on individual games and true to the title everyone is far more interested in how their respective team is progressing.

This is the fifth time this event has been held and each year the number of teams taking part increases. A large part of this is due to the successful management of Ron Welch, the S.E.F. Development Officer who each year makes everything about running the day look so easy but it is his hard work and organisation that make the day go with such a swing.

At the end of the day the result was announced with Ealing winning the event after winning all six of their games, Worthing were runner-up and the host club Southwick were third.

To those clubs that were not represented this year I would strongly suggest that you make a note of it in your diary for next year.

Roy Ware

Edgbaston Open Weekend 10th - 11th June

While the rest of the country, it seemed, was involved in England's efforts at rugby, cricket, soccer or the Derby, sixteen mavericks gathered at Edgbaston for the club's premier event. Seeds and rain fell in equal profusion - the four seeds (established from the CGS rankings on display) neatly, one in each round, and the rain intermittently. Kevin Carter firstly enabled Andrew Gregory to concentrate his efforts on managing the consolation "Gregorian Flexible Swiss" from the inside, so to speak. In the second round, Ed Duckworth dumped travelling companion Alex Leggate, while Kevin progressed at the expense of Ian McClelland and, by the Saturday evening, had reached the final by defeating his third minus player, Brian Hallam, in two straight games. Roger Tribe justified his ranking, reaching one game up in his semi-final against Ed Duckworth before time intervened.

Meanwhile, the consolation event was well under way, the Gregory/Kibble and McClelland/Ward games going deep into the gathering gloom, causing considerable delay to communal Chinese meals and subsequent bridge! On the Sunday morning, Roger Tribe needed only one more game to finish off Duckworth. In the first game of the final, Roger was round to rover and 3-back before Kevin's elegantly wielded mallet got under way. An unfortunate failure at 3-back while setting the leave let Roger back in to complete the game. The second game again saw Roger leading off, though Kevin kept closer in touch. With both balls for 4-back and black by penult, Roger rolls gently to preserve the peel position and yellow turns right and slides past by millimetres - game to Kevin. Unfortunately, at this point Roger's worsening "flu" took over and he felt obliged to retire, leaving Kevin to take the decider, and the trophy, by default. Both had played very well during the weekend and, no doubt, Roger will return for his revenge.

The loudest cheer of the afternoon, however, went to club president Martin Grainger-Brown who qualified for his gold award by completing his first ever tournament triple to the discomfiture of Ian McClelland.

Alex Jardine

Results (from Semi-final)

Kevin Carter bt Brian Hallam +3 +12
 Roger Tribe bt Ed Duckworth +11 +16
 Final Carter bt Tribe -8 +5 rtd
 Consolation Swiss: Ed Duckworth 4/6

South East Federation One-Ball Tournament
Royal Tunbridge Wells 18th June

A new venture for us, a one-ball tournament played on an individual basis but with the winners being the club with the best overall performance. Our hosts were the Royal Tunbridge Wells Club in the splendid setting of their new ground in Calverley Park, which had been formally opened by the Mayor only a week before.

The sun shone and 14 players participated from 4 teams - Chartham Hatch, Beckenham, Dulwich and Tunbridge Wells itself. Chartham Hatch were the overall club winners and Audrey Howell presented a bottle of bubbly to Ken Dawes, their most successful player. Many thanks to her and other club members for their delicious tea and to Peter Howell for organising and running a most enjoyable day.

A good time was had by all. We therefore intend to repeat the fixture next year and hope it will steadily grow in popularity.

June Reeves

Parkstone 19th - 24th June

We had decided to go to the Parkstone tournament from the Isle of Wight in our own boat. Unfortunately there was a stiff westerly breeze on the Monday morning in question and the resulting head sea made us very late. In an effort to appease the management we volunteered to write the report.

The aforesaid management took the form of Bob Bailey ably assisted by Margaret McMordie, and it was so efficient that things ran like clockwork and we didn't even have to fill in our own Egyptian cards. They even managed the weather, which was sunny and hot. Just as well they had returned to Jaques balls as the Barlows of past tournaments would have been most unpredictable in the sultry conditions.

The unrestricted handicap was run as a knockout X and Egyptian Y for the losers at any stage. In a second round match John Simmonds went for the peg-out when Cliff Jones was for 3 and 4 and failed to hit the stick with one of his balls. He had a frustrating time trying to hit something -

anything, while Cliff made his way steadily round and won by +1. In another match Charles Moon tried to run 1-back hard to get to the two opponents balls at 2-back. He only ran through 5 yards leaving him a 15 yard shot. He missed both balls but ran the hoop and continued his break.

The real bandit was John Wilkinson (10) from Cheshire who beat Norman Eatough from Switzerland in the final. The other semi-finalists were Maureen Evans from Cheltenham and Les Butler from the home club. Peter Trimmer, also from Parkstone, won the Y.

The doubles were disappointing for the first round losers in that there was no Y event. In the first round the somewhat unusual pairing of John Exell (Cheltenham) and Norman Eatough (Switzerland) was playing the duo of Roy Edwards and Ian Scott. Roy inadvertently pegged himself out in the process of pegging Norman's ball out leaving the two junior partners to slog it out in a two ball game. In spite of having a one hoop deficit initially, John's superior roqueting and experience won the day +3. They subsequently progressed to the final where they lost -3 to local pair Cliff Jones and Peggy Nutland.

And so to the class games where the C class was played as handicap in two blocks. Margaretha Regan and Mrs. C Street both had 3 wins in block 1, the latter going through on hoop count. A similar situation arose in block 2 where Peggy Nutland had five more net points than John Wilkinson. The final was won by Peggy Nutland +8(T).

There was only one block for the B class playing the advanced game. Again hoop count had to be used to separate Ian Scott (5) and Len Hawkins (6) from Ramsgate. Ian having a net count of +36 as opposed to Len's +17 was declared the winner.

The A class playing the advanced game in two blocks was very keenly contested. In block 1 David Harrison-Wood (-1), in spite of having completed a straight quadruple peel against Don Cornelius, only managed second place when he succumbed to Peter Trimmer's triple peel. Peter won all his matches, mostly in double figures. Of the six players in block 2 three emerged with 4 wins each, only losing to each other. They were William Ormerod who lost to Cliff Jones, who lost to Bob Fewtrell, who lost to William. Cliff went through on hoop count.

Peter Trimmer won the Dorset Salver in the A class and the Y only losing 2 of his 14 games all week. John Wilkinson won the

X playing a total of 9 games in the week and only losing one in his class. A most successful tournament and the sea was kinder to us going home.
 Bob & Faith Fewtrell

Results

Dorset Salver - A Class
 P. Trimmer bt C.S. Jones +6
 Weldon Trophy - B Class
 Dr. I Scott
 Cope Cup - C Class
 Mrs P. Nutland bt Mrs C.M. Street +8(T)
 Cripps Memorial Cup - Unrestricted Handicap
 J. Wilkinson bt N Eatough +8
 Summer Doubles Cups - Handicap Doubles
 Jones & Mrs Nutland bt Eatough & Exell +3

Home Internationals Budleigh Salterton 24th - 25th June

England began the tournament as strong favourites, fielding their strongest team for some years and possibly ever. The team was captained by Chris Clarke, playing his first tournament since becoming World Champion. His more than capable colleagues were Steve Comish, Debbie Cornelius, Robert Fulford and David Maugham. All went to plan in the first round as England beat Ireland 3 - 1 (1 unfinished), Ronan McInerney providing the upset by beating Chris Clarke. Wales also got off to a flying start with a 4.5 - 0.5 victory over Scotland. In the second round Scotland staged a comeback with a 3.5 - 1.5 win over Ireland. Wales ended Saturday still with the slight chance of an upset over England after Lewis Palmer had beaten the luckless Clarke. Maugham and Fulford had both won for England, but it was not until the following morning that Comish and Cornelius were

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able to struggle to unconvincing 2-1 wins in their matches over William Prichard and John Evans respectively. England secured victory with a 5 - 0 win over Scotland and Ireland ensured that everyone went home with at least one win by beating Wales 3 - 2. This year ended a three year association of the event with Budleigh. Next year the event moves north to Southport, where all the players will no doubt hope that they are treated to the same excellent hospitality as is always provided at Budleigh.

Ian Burrige

Teams:

England: C. Clarke, S. Comish, Ms. D. Cornelius, R. Fulford, D. Maugham.
 Wales: I. Burrige, J. Evans, L. Palmer, W. Prichard, C. Williams.
 Ireland: T. Browne, E. Cunningham, R. McInerney, S. Williams, C von Schmieder.
 Scotland: I. Bond, S. Liddiard, M. Murray, M. Ranshaw, J. Surgenor.

Results

1st England 3 matches
 2nd Wales 1 match 7.5 rubbers
 3rd Ireland 1 match 4.5 rubbers
 4th Scotland 1 match 4 rubbers

Bristol Handicap Weekend 24th - 25th June

The weather forecasters - with not one hint of reservation or doubt - stated categorically that there would be blue skies and brilliant sunshine throughout the weekend. Frances Ransom accordingly (and trustingly) got out her shorts on the Friday night, ready for two days of unrelieved sun - and that's what I blame for the overcast skies that were what we actually got on the Saturday...! Not until the middle of Sunday morning did the conditions resemble the forecast. Ah, well! The courts were certainly very dry and fast, causing more than one ball to go rolling on....and on....and off!

Despite the difficulties inherent in running the second event as a Swiss with an entry of twenty competitors, the four Bristolians and sixteen visitors (coming from such diverse places as Ramsgate, Swindon, Pendle, Kenilworth, Dyffryn, Nottingham and Plymouth) enjoyed a good tournament under the watchful eyes of manger Hamish Hall and Ray Ransom, the ROT. One of the strongest contingents was from Nottingham, which besides David Carpenter and Jean Ackerman included Beatrice McGlen, who was joint runner-up with Syd Wakeham in the Swiss. (A young lady whose husband

doesn't play croquet - as the cider advert says, "that makes a refreshing change"!)

Also from Nottingham was Marjorie Boyd, who overcame Roger Tribe's not inconsiderable challenge to meet Edward Duckworth in the semi-finals, and played such a cracker that Edward won only narrowly, +3.

The other major assault was launched by the Peter Dyke Protege Club from Nailsea, consisting of contemporaries Kristian Chambers, James Dixon and Peter Spencer, whose collective comportment caused one player to remark that they had contributed more than just croquet to the tournament and that he came away with a much better impression of the nineties than he had had for a long time! James did not enjoy the success his standard of play deserved, but Peter went on to win the Swiss with a style very reminiscent of a young (or perhaps I should say younger!) Chris Clarke; one feels that when a greater degree of control has been added to his game he will become a very formidable player indeed. Giving thirteen bisques, I succumbed to him in the third round (the furthest I've ever got in the Latham Cup, and that was with the benefit of a bye!), as Beatrice did to Kristian and Michael Poole to Edward. Kristian beat Peter +15 to face Edward, who was playing in his fourth final, having first won the event eight years ago, and at twenty-three finding himself a decade older than two of the other semi-finalists!

The final got under way with a rather cagey start. Kristian passed on his first opportunity to start using his bisques when Edward missed a return roquet after running the third hoop with blue too thoroughly, and didn't get another chance until Edward stopped black at Penult with three balls safely in corners and yellow near hoop 2. (Parenthetically, I must say that Edward is one of the finest exponents of accurate stop-shotting I've seen for a long time.) A couple of turns later Kristian used two of his seven and a half bisques to get red round to penult and lay up at the first for yellow. He was soon on his way again, though "sadnesses" at the second and sixth left him only one bisque in reserve as he started on the home stretch. He reached the peg without further incident, but the speed of the dry court made his lay-up for penult come to rest not quite as he had intended. However, as Edward missed the nineteen yard shot that constituted his best option, Kristian took his last bisque to finish a comfortable winner +13.

Interestingly, although Edward has

won it more times than anybody else, Kristian has become the first person to succeed in retaining his cup since it appeared in 1981. One wonders when the last thirteen-year-old successfully defended a trophy - that's one for the statisticians to research...!
 Deborah Latham (with more than the usual degree of input from Laurence!)

Cheltenham 5 day Tournament 28th June - 2nd July

Over 40 contestants took part in the traditional two tournaments arranged for the five days. In the morning were the doubles, and in the afternoon class singles. The doubles partnerships changed every day, being made up of a high bisquer and a low bisquer. Winners were paired with losers, so that the partnerships were very well balanced. This proved a most enjoyable format, especially to those of us who were visitors, and in some games, it was difficult to know who was the high bisquer.

In one respect, however, Cheltenham belied its reputation. The tournament took place under a baking tropical sun. The flag hung dejectedly, unmoved by even a breath of breeze, while the competitors searched out ever more sun cream. The lawns responded to the weather. Overnight watering slowed them to merely fast at the start of the day, but soon the sun speeded them up. The contestants showed less enthusiasm about moving quickly. The cedar tree was very popular among the out players.

The morning games were timed, and so finished at an ideal time for enjoying the excellent lunches. On the first day, the afternoon games were not timed, and some players seemed determined to set new duration records. The manager, Stephen Badger, decided that seven hours was a little too long, and so imposed limits, albeit generous, for the higher handicap blocks.

The doubles produced several close games, and John Exell continued his established practice of getting his partner ball pegged out as a prelude to winning. However, in the end, the high bisquer trophy went to Jean Powell, with Charles Edmonds coming a close second. Andrew Potter prevailed among the low bisquers, ahead of Stephen Badger.

In the class singles, the 'A' was played as two blocks of five, with the winner of each block then playing off the final on Saturday afternoon. The other places in the blocks also played off to give a single overall result. In the final Michael Rangeley defeated

Paddy Paddon, to take the Bill Gladstone salver for the coming year.

In block 3 which was also played under advanced rules, Chris Dent proved unstoppable, winning all five of his games, thus demonstrating the standard of university croquet. Betty Weitz won block 4, winning 4 of her five games, and Edith Bailey won block 5 with a similar result. In block 6, John Exell added to his collection of trophies, winning all four of his games.

In all, the tournament provided much civilised enjoyment, and the Cheltenham club deserve thanks and congratulations for their hospitality, and for the abundant supply of welcome liquid refreshment.

Southport & Birkdale Family Doubles 1st - 2nd July

10 couples fought out the second of these extremely friendly tournaments and no divorce proceedings are likely to start as a result. The combined handicaps ranged from 3 to 30. A surprising number of games finished well within time and the winners after two days of glorious sun was the only father and son team of Peter and Fred Hallett (joint handicap of 20) with Colin and Christine Irwin (joint handicap 3) as runners-up, both having won 4 games but the Halletts had beaten the Irwins.

D. Williamson

Results

Rev. P and Mr F Hallett 4 wins
Mr. & Mrs C Irwin 4 wins
Ms. Fraser and Mr. P Wilson 3 wins
Mr. & Mrs. J Haslam 3 wins
Mr. & Mrs. J.D. Williamson 2 wins
Mr. & Mrs. E Dalley 2 wins
Mr. & Mrs. B Kerr 2 wins
Mr. & Mrs. P Stoker 2 wins
Mr. & Mrs. G Youd 2 wins
Mr. & Mrs. B Lewis 1 win

Keith Prowse Championships of Jersey 3rd - 8th July SOUTHERN COMFORT

The most fun you can have with most of your clothes on! 'Croquet's' own JERSEY COW reports back

For many players it seems that Jersey is still "a Championship too far". Perhaps it is the distance at which they balk, and yet it is just an hour and £80 (return) from London Stansted. They may be worried about the quality of facilities, when the States of Jersey

have recently lavished thousands of pounds to make this a superb 4 lawn club with a spacious and well-equipped club house. Indeed the two most recent lawns boast a grass quality and flat surface which few English clubs could match! But for those lucky people who have already discovered the hidden pleasures Jersey has to offer, it is the sheer enjoyment of this tournament that will bring them back again and again.

We Band of Brothers (and Sisters)

With all facilities now up and running the Jersey Club decided that their 1995 event should be the first 'Official CA' tournament. Twenty entrants made it to the event, including the 1994 Champion John Walters who was joined by two other of England's top minus players - Don Gaunt and Cliff Jones. Cliff had also taken on the duties of Manager. A strong local presence was further fortified by the Dourthe brothers from France, Philip Archer from Guernsey and Nigel Gray from East Anglia, while Pat and Joan had journeyed from far-off Leicester.

Setting the Stage

The preparation put into this event was typical of the care and thought that the Jersey Club take. Many readers will have seen the full-colour brochures sent out to all clubs, declaring £1000 worth of prize money - courtesy of sponsors Keith Prowse and Island print. Cliff Jones' scheme was a novel one: a 5 round handicap doubles Swiss to start each day before finals day; 4 blocks to qualify for the handicap singles semi-finals; best-of-three seeded knockout for the Championships, with first round losers entering an advanced level 'B Class'; and if that wasn't enough, a handicap Egyptian later in the week! Pheww! The format worked brilliantly - the doubles idea was an inspiration. The greatest tribute payable to any manager was paid to Cliff - all players had a wonderful time. John Walters said that the tournament reminded him why he started playing croquet in the first place, 15 years ago.

On Sunday we started as we meant to go on, with a communal reception in the club house where wine flowed freely. From that moment on, no-one need worry about lonely nights; not because of Rodolphe Dourthe's legendary libido but because Anne Van der Vliet took on the role of Social Secretary with the kind of zeal that might have seen Napoleon through Waterloo! The reception turned out to be just the first of three club house soirees: there was also the

night when Paul Duckworth's Chicken (or was it Paul Chickenworth's Duck?) met Ursula Taylor's Rhubarb Pie (and when she said "You may know how to play croquet, but I know how to make Rhubarb Pie" she wasn't just whistling Dixie!); of course there was the Pizza or Chinese night, which turned into an Indian and Chinese night when the pizza couldn't deliver till 11pm - sadly for the ten little indians amongst us the Indian didn't deliver till 11 either! Eschewing their rival as one of the "two great cuisines of the world" the French found anticipation was indeed the greater pleasure and declared Indian food "disgusting"! Gourmet night at a local restaurant led some players into the depths of philosophy, but it was during the visit to the local brewery "The Topsy Toad" that they found the answer to the meaning of life. No doubt helped by the free samples to accompany meals after the brewery tour!

The Heat of Battle

Three couples emerged from the doubles: Gaunt/Van der Vliet; Jones/M Sowerby; Walters/R Dourthe. In the last round Don, having been plugging his book hard with +1 OT wins in earlier rounds, found himself the victim of a big comeback in the closing half hour to lose by 3 to the "bad boys" as they were somewhat implausibly being called. Meanwhile, the third pair of Mirielle and Cliff won. Cliff's dream of avoiding a handicap doubles final "clogging up" finals day was thus shattered, with 2 pairs on 4/5 who hadn't played. To the delight of those involved the tournament was thus extended by a day. In the closing minutes of the final Cliff decided to peg out John with Rodolphe on penult and Mirielle hoop 2, with a bisque still left. As his ball also drifted onto the peg, Mirielle was left with something of a challenge against her young nephew. Throughout the week Mirielle had looked a deadly doubles opponent; constantly followed by the soothing words of her partner ("smoozzz swing keep zee ead down") she had been able to obey his wishes like someone under hypnosis! Now she bravely made it to 3-back before Rodolphe hit the peg with a gentle shot from 10 yards away. Having brushed aside John's assurances after their first round loss, Rodolphe was thus forced to concede that yes, the best way to win a Swiss is to lose the first round!

In the effective final of the Egyptian Rodolphe found himself simply outbisqued by the crafty local magician Tom Weston. Having managed to get to 4-back with one ball, Rodolphe was made to vanish from the

game. At least his two triple peels earlier in the Egyptian secured a gold medal for Rodolphe.

The B Class and Handicap produced the same finalists: Paul Duckworth and Nigel Gray. Having eliminated Walters in the semi that morning with 5 bisques left, even 1.5 was sufficient for Paul in the afternoon. The level match was a more exciting and close affair, attracting a bunch of spectators, but the result was the same - and helped secure a severe 1.5 bisque handicap cut for Paul. Nigel's scalp from the semis was local Iris Cottillard, an impressive victory over a lady whose skill and determination had impressed all week and got her a 2 bisque reduction.

Coup de Grace

As the week progressed, the sun had gradually been baking Jersey's perfect new lawns. Come finals day they were just about done - though the sun continued baking. The front lawn was perfect for a challenging open croquet final and hoops were set mercilessly. The grassless stretch in front of hoop one in particular was reminiscent of Hurlingham lawn 4 after a hot summer - there'd be no easy starts to a break here! Top seeds Walters and Gaunt had got to the final. Both after comebacks against semi opponents Jones and Le Moignan respectively. Cliff in particular had an impressive first game in the semis. The smooth, straight, slow swing a pleasure to watch. Walters had double-peeled Cliff out after a failed triple, and played a cagey game to reach 3-back vs Cliff's 1-back. But at that point, given the opportunity of a lift, Cliff was clinical - hitting it and with one good split, one good roll, finished the game.

The challenging surface and hot Barlows, that looked more likely to blend into one with each passing croquet shot, guaranteed there would be no whitewash but excitement was somewhat more than anyone expected. In game one Don took a lead of one point as time was called, getting to Rover alone vs Walters' Penult alone (having been pegged out by Don some time earlier). In his last turn Walters took the 20 yard shot from corner 1 at Don's ball on the West boundary. He hit, to gasps from the spectators, took off to 1 yard in front of penult, ran it and took position at rover. Don missed and Walters ran a 2 yard rover for victory +1 OT!

A further two and a half hours in the blistering heat were scheduled for game 2. Again Don took the lead as time was called

(after a game which the two had played even more defensively than the first!) but inexplicably missed after penult leaving himself for 3-back and rover vs John's 1-back and 4-back. John hit the 4 yarder and set up a break, though having to run a worrying 2 yard angled 1-back and jump through an almost impossibly angled 4-back. John pegged his ball out and left Don a shot at two balls 14 yards apart on the West boundary. Don shot from corner 1, but missed - the spectators had had enough excitement for one day! +3 OT! You'd have to say, not the most pleasant way to lose (whether or not you're playing for £200) but Don took it in his substantial stride without murmur or complaint.

Wish you were here?

If one were being selfish, it would be easy to say "Stay away from Jersey" in order to try and keep it exactly as it was this week. But selfish is hardly the name of the game - as demonstrated by the Sowerby/Dourthe family, when Boris and young brother Cedric were moved out to the shed, Rodolphe to the neighbours and even Richard and Mirielle took to the living room, so that Don & Faith, Richard & Lizzie, and John could have bedrooms in their home! Poor Richard, President of the club, wasn't even able to play because of work; every lunchtime he phoned to ask how things were going and every evening he would appear straight from work to gaze longingly at those in play. I hope that next year Richard will be able to play, and I hope next year to see some more of you in beautiful Jersey during the first week of July.

John Walters

South East Federation Ladies Day Southwick 5th July

This event looked like having eight teams this year, which would have been more than the last few years, but unfortunately both Ramsgate and Ealing had to withdraw in the last two weeks.

Six teams were the final number, with Sussex County putting in half of them, the others being Havering, Compton and Worthing, the faithful few. Compton was captained by Mrs. Margaret Payton who made a welcome return after missing last year through injury. We would certainly welcome some more teams entering next year, so come on ladies let the S.E.F. hear from you.

Thanks go to the Sussex County

Croquet Club for hosting this event again, and for making available their excellent facilities, and equally excellent lawns, which were running a lot easier after recent rain.

There were three rounds of two and a half hour games run as a Swiss, and thanks to the ladies all arriving in good time we were able to get off to a prompt start. Havering, Compton and Sussex 'X' all won their first round matches. The second round saw Compton and both Sussex 'X' and 'Z' teams win. For the third round Havering and the two Sussex teams 'X' and 'Y' came through. The result was that Sussex 'X' were the winners with Havering and Compton not far behind.

There were a lot of close matches with nearly a third finishing with +1 and several of +2 and +3. Nearly all of the handicaps were well above ten with only five of the 24 players being 9 and below, which should encourage clubs with lady high bisquers to enter the tournament in the future.

The weather was kind to us, with it being a little chilly during the afternoon, but it was a very successful day and it finished with the shield being presented to Sussex 'X' by John Solomon who was delighted to see so many ladies playing croquet together.
Gene Mears

Wrest Park Open Weekend 7th - 9th July

Did you know that June '95 was the 4th consecutive month seriously drier than average? the driest June since 1976? and the 10th driest June this century? Well you do now, and let that be a lesson to those who say tournament reports are not interesting.

It was still dry up to and including our July weekend - and HOT. It was so hot that Vic Rees loosened his tie. The surface was fast and tricky in parts. Presumably one of these parts was where all eight clips were perched on top of the same hoop (not hoop one). Only one triple succeeded, namely Openshaw against Tibble.

David Openshaw won block A, only dropping one game to Graham Fowler. From experience I can report that an heroic failure against David gives a greater sense of satisfaction than some wine I could mention. Ian Mantle overcame the disadvantage of having the lowest handicap in block B, to win without losing a game.

There were the usual quota of flukes and disasters. When will allegedly A class players learn that they are about to give or

receive a lift? John Wheeler, having seen great players in the past take a ball to the stick and peg it out with the other 3 clips still on hoop one and go on to win, discovered that it is possible to lose. Tom Anderson taking over 4 hours to win by +18 ought to be newsworthy but.....

Referees Corner - Player A runs a hoop in the wrong direction and removes the clip. In the hoop stroke, A roquets a ball not previously hit. Should B point out the misplaced clip immediately? or should B wait until A has exhausted all shots legally playable? Try law 35(c) but is a clip misplaced if it is on the player's pocket? or is it only misplaced when on the wrong hoop? Fortunately in this case A realised before it had made any difference to his tactics. Next time the referee of the tournament may not be so lucky.

George Collin

Results

Block A
David Openshaw 7/8
Brian Hallam 6/8
Eric Audsley 5/8
Block B
Ian Mantle 7/7
Graham Bond 5/7
Celia Steward 4/7

Roehampton B Level 8th - 9th July

With the Wimbledon finals in progress just down the road on a blazingly hot weekend, ten "final acceptors" met for Paul Champion's variation on American blocks. In each round, the two players free in each block of five played each other, giving everybody five games in the qualifiers, followed by playoffs for everybody from the winner to the wooden spoon.

Block A was much tighter except that "Mr X" (the visiting player from block B) would have won it easily! The tie-break rules were invoked to separate Paul from the others with three wins. Meanwhile, in the battle of the hyphens in block B, Robert beat Julian to gain the block.

In the final, Paul played very steadily to beat Robert and take the silverware.

Alex Jardine

Results

Block A
Paul Champion 3/5
Graham Bonnet 3/5
Gary Bennett 3/5
Block B
Robert Pennant-Jones 4/5

Julian Sheraton-Davies 4/5
Play-off
Campion bt Pennant-Jones

Tyneside Croquet Club joins the tournament circuit Handicap Weekend 3rd - 4th June & Open Weekend 8th - 9th July

There have been two CA Weekend events held at the new tournament venue of Tyneside Croquet Club during 1995, a handicap event with twelve entries in June, and an advanced one with sixteen entries in July. Croquet North is classifying Tyneside as a four court club, over two venues, the original Newcastle University site with two courts, and the new Exhibition Park site, also with two courts about a mile and a half away. Whether this was justified this year was open to question, and the handicap event with its twelve players used only one of the new courts at Exhibition Park, with great success apart from the weather on the Sunday.

The format was arranged to minimise travel, as all three courts are of similar standard - in fact the bowling green at Exhibition Park was in top condition at that time of year, thus the final was played there, in front of the pavilion with full electrical and water facilities. The final was a truly memorable event, which kept not only the players but also the spectators on edge right until the last shot, as nobody could have written such a script if they had tried. Finally the event was won by Bob Gatenby from Shropshire, who beat Don Wright of Tyneside, by not a lot in torrential rain.

The advanced competition attracted Scots, Irish and English, with six minus players including the guest manager Ian Maugham, and used all four courts. The second court at Exhibition Park is an abandoned bowling green, which needs a lot of work, and it showed. Unfortunately, the draw was organised to give equal chances of all courts as far as possible, with knock-out and consolation Swiss, but this increased the travelling, and with the road works between the two sites, the waiting time. However, all appeared to enjoy the occasion, the camaraderie, and the catering (including Guinness), and the trophies went international. Jane Shorten beat Rod Williams in the main event final +16+5, and John Surgenor won the Swiss after a play-off with Ray Ransom. John achieved the only triple peel of the event in his first match on the better bowling green - against

Tyneside Chairman Bruce Rannie, so what a way to treat the host on the Saturday morning!

Tyneside Club thanks everybody who entered the tournaments and for making our venture into the brave new world of tournaments such enjoyable occasions, and especially Su Stenhouse and Don Wright for the catering. Gail Curry and Ian Maugham managed to manage the split site with aplomb, and those who succumbed to the late Saturday Chinatown dinner found the city's reputation is justified. We will advertise both events again in 1996, but ensure that travel is minimised, and catering is laid on at both sites (unless entrants wish to foregather in the middle of the day to exchange hard luck stories about the hoops (perfect), the balls (Jaques) or the slopes (not many). So, watch out for the fixtures in June & July, and consider coming up to Geordie-land for a fun weekend, with a touch of good croquet thrown in.

Bruce Rannie

Over 50 Handicap Tournament Cheltenham 11th - 13th July

Thunder and lightning filled the air for miles around, yet miraculously avoided dampening the hallowed turf at Cheltenham, leaving the lawns with that glossy surface associated with high summer.

Able assisted by Betty Weitz, Dennis Moorcraft managed the tournament in that urbane and relaxed manner we have come to expect of him. The absence of 'young lions' can lull unsuspecting participants into a false sense of security, yet games were keenly contested, many going to time because of the speed of the lawns.

Fifty-six players, of whom roughly half were visitors, took part in 336 matches on 9 lawns, although the soporific atmosphere encouraged waiting players to take a nap under the trees, or in one case to seek out the Secretary's deck chair.

The pleasure of the tournament was considerably enhanced by the excellent three-course lunches cooked and served by Club Secretary Eileen Magee, and the usual high standard of teas provided by the members.

The Cheltenham club is to be congratulated yet again for staging a most enjoyable tournament, reminding us that the age of elegance is yet with us, and that the pursuit of victory can still be a civilised and delightful challenge.

Don Clay

Results

Block Winners
Block A - Alison Thursfield
Block B - Colin Thursfield
Block C - Don Clay
Block D - Dorrien Bilson
Block E - Colin Snowdon
Block F - Brian Toomey
Block G - Fred Smith

Veteran's Tournament Southwick 17th - 22nd July

Once again the Veterans of the game gathered for their annual tournament, held for the second year running at the Sussex County Club's lawns at Southwick. They brought with them a wealth of experience and not a few creaking joints. In all there were 45 competitors from 21 clubs, with players coming from as far north as Newcastle, as far west as Bristol and, as you might expect, a fair number from just around the corner at Southwick. The handicaps, too, ranged far and wide from -0.5 to 20. The company was very distinguished with large proportions of the CA Council playing. The writer had the rare experience of playing a Vice President and having the President double banking on the same lawn.

Each day started with a 'social' around the coffee table and a quick check to see which lawn had been allocated. Paul Macdonald was the tournament manager and he carried out his duties with his customary efficiency, also finding time to play.

The weather held fine all the week - in fact at times we sweltered in the heat and Hyacinth had a busy and profitable time in the bar supplying cold beer and her own concoctions of St. Clements and Henrys. There was also no compunction when the tea bell rang at 4pm to stop the timers and disappear to the pavilion for refreshments.

As for croquet - there was an Open Championship for the six lowest handicap players; a new event for the over 65 and an advanced play singles, all played on the American block system. The higher handicap players played in a Swiss competition. In addition there was an unrestricted handicap singles, X & Y knockout, a handicap doubles, X & Y knockout and for the really energetic, who could not get enough of the game, a 14 point Egyptian event.

Among the lowlier players in the Swiss competition the talk was of the play of Myra Gosney, who was decisively beating all her opponents and who finished up as the winner of 6/6. Her talent was recognised not

only by winning the Strickland Cup but also by having her handicap reduced to 4.

In the main doubles event the final was between Hamish Hall with Diana Brothers and Gordon Drake with Pat Asa-Thomas. The first couple won through and were rewarded with the Longman Trophies - small silver Sussex trugs suitably mounted. Diana was thrilled to find her father's name had been engraved thereon several years before. In the Y event there was a close fought struggle between Geoff Cuttle with Gene Mears and Don Mears with Enid Ross, the former couple winning by +1T and thereby earning the Gilbert Spoons.

The Meredith Cup for unrestricted handicap singles was won by Arthur Rajotte who was delighted to have won his first CA trophy. He narrowly beat Bill Gillott in the final by +9T. Lionel Wharrad won the Y event final from Derek Trotman rather more comfortably.

The leaders in the two blocks of the over 65's singles were Bryan Teague and Derek Trotman with Bryan winning the play-off. The final of the Felixstowe Cup for advanced play singles was a husband and wife affair between Don and Gene Mears with Don resisting the urge to be chivalrous and winning through.

The open championship final of the Rothwell Challenge Cup attracted a great deal of attention being between John Solomon and Bernard Neal, both of whom had been unbeaten up to then in the block. With players of such calibre it would have been expected that the match would not have gone to time but it ran for 3 hours due in some measure to the difficulty of controlling the ball on the fast lawns. The finish provided much interest and bewilderment among the spectators. John's black clip was on the peg and his blue on 3-back; time had been called and John fired black from corner two at blue some way down the west boundary, missing narrowly. This meant that there was only Bernard's turn to come. He had both his red and yellow clips on 4-back and was therefore 2 behind. He rushed red to 4-back with his yellow, ran that hoop and duly ran through penultimate and rover to make him one up on John and thus the winner.

All in all, it was a good week for renewing old friendships forged over the years and with plenty of interesting play, it proved that there is life in the 'old dogs' yet.

Len & Jean Nash

79th July Tournament Cheltenham 24th - 29th July

Apart from a short spell of rain on the Wednesday morning, the tournament enjoyed very hot weather and extremely fast lawns. Early in the week a 3 bisquer was in great distress after five failures to approach hoop 5 - such was the difficulty. Consequently the games were very long and the Hands Ladder only really got going late in the week and very few managed to fit in the required 6 games.

Your reporter was new to Wharrad Turns having only just returned to croquet after a long absence - but he much enjoyed some exciting ends to the doubles games under this system and found the variety of tactics stimulating and most satisfactory! The doubles were in 2 events with Bo Harris and Jane Mathews winning the Barwell Salvagers; in the Secretary's Spoon for family pairs, John and Tim Exell (grandfather and grandson) got through to the finals in their attempt to be the third generation of John's partners to win the event. However they lost to the strong partnership of Bill and Pam Arliss from Southwick.

The Wednesday rain dramatically slowed the lawns, but only temporarily; they soon dried out and by Thursday afternoon was as difficult as ever. To prove this, one of the semi-finals of the 'A' class on Saturday took well over 5 hours(!), delaying the final which was still in play at 7.30pm - with Don Gaunt beating David Harrison-Wood in a very close finish.

The Daniels Cup - the handicap event was won by Dennis Moorcraft (1) who made excellent use of his bisques in a very quick final against Don Gaunt. Dennis also won the 'B' class. Ron Selmes won the 'C' and Tim Exell the 'D'. When your reporter had to leave at 7.30pm Mitch Watts and Veronica McClements were on Wharrad turns in the 'E' final, Veronica winning by one.

This Cheltenham week is a marvellous tournament for enjoying a lot of croquet in a relaxed atmosphere (thanks to the skilful and unobtrusive management of Roger and Dab Wheeler) and in beautiful Cotswold scenery. We were very well provided for with coffees, lunches and teas; each day Eileen Magee set before us a varied lunch menu of delicious courses - was it 3 or 4 courses? and all for just £3!

John Andrews

14th Compton Open Weekend 5th - 6th August

The consolation event of the weekend was a Swiss tournament, the Cowbell. Those who have seen the trophy know that it is a genuine Swiss cow-bell suspended from a model hoop. Many of us were disappointed that the only competitor who had travelled from Switzerland for the tournament, Peter Payne, didn't win it. George Noble, who did, had a very difficult decision to make. Another trophy traditionally awarded for the weekend is the Ace Peeler's helmet. This is a policeman's helmet sporting the ace of spades, itself transformed into a stripper. (This tournament was founded in 1978 on a plethora of puns!) George is the holder of the helmet, having won it in 1990, the last time the tournament took place. He had forgotten to bring it, and his dilemma was between dashing home to fetch it and winning it again. He chose the latter course and beat both Tony Mrozinski and Don Gaunt +26TP. Peeling points were scored on the Solomon system; no-one else scored any!

The main event, the Cowhorn, a knock-out tournament, rewarded with a post horn (I did warn you about the puns), was won by Kevin Carter who narrowly beat the manager, Roger Wood by +4, +9 in a shortened game final. As the semi-finals had left little time for a full best-of-three final, the contestants agreed on the 14-point game being proposed at the moment by those Olympian Gods who find the game too easy. The tactics of such a game were not instinctive to either player and were all Greek to most of the spectators. In the first game, Roger took his first ball to the peg in a well controlled break, only to have his opponent go round and peg it out. There ensued the usual cat and mouse tactics, during which both players forgot lifts. The result could have gone to either player, but Kevin it was who finished the stronger. The second game was not so serendipitous and the victor well deserved his success.

After a prolonged hot, humid July, the weather was tempered by a cool north east breeze, but the courts, affected by the long, dry spell, were super-fast and were the undoing of many ambitious attempts at peeling. Moreover, they were nearly the undoing of the manager, who had gallantly decided to play the second and subsequent rounds of the main event as a best of three. Law 20(c) was invoked often enough to prevent quick games.

Roy Wallis

Results

Cowhorn Challenge Trophy

1st round: K. Carter bt A Mrozinski +15, A Mrozinski bt G. Bonnett +14, R. Wood bt W. Arliss +5, D. Gaunt bt P. Payne +19.

2nd round: R. Hilditch bt G. Noble +6 +8, Carter bt Mrozinski -11 +4 +6, Wood bt Gaunt +5 +3, G. Hopewell bt A. Wadley +9 -9 +5.

Semi-finals: Carter bt Hilditch +11 +17, Wood bt Hopewell -2 +5 toss of coin.

Final: Carter bt Wood +4 +9

Cowbell Consolation: George Noble

Ace Peeler Award: George Noble

Wrest Park Advanced Tournament 12th - 13th August

This tournament had two added attractions: cold drinks to lay the heat and dust (courtesy of the new gas refrigerator), and free music (courtesy of English Heritage who were staging two open air concerts over the weekend: Glen Miller music on Saturday evening and a Last Night of the Proms affair on Sunday). Although the concerts did not start until the evening, rehearsals and sound checks went on continuously during the morning and afternoon. We pondered what songs would have proved a suitable accompaniment - apart from innumerable titles with colour references suggestions included "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing", "Peg o' my heart", "I can't get started" and, for fans of Reservoir Dogs and A class leaves, "Stuck in the middle with you". On Sunday morning we heard the soprano soloist launch into "Rule Britannia", and manager Jon Watson jokingly announced that tournament was over because the fat lady had started singing.

There were supposed to be 22 entrants but this increased to 23 when John Bevington turned up assuming that he had entered but finding that he wasn't down on the list. Jon Watson calmly took it in his stride, and made his job a bit easier by announcing three hour time limits all round. The wisdom of this will be obvious to anyone who has been on an unwatered lawn during the last six weeks, and was borne out by the fact that only 10% of the games finished inside the limit. An added complication was the arrival on Saturday afternoon of a young and over-zealous security guard from the concert organisers (bringing to mind the old joke about the connection between mobile phones and haemorrhoids) who seemed intent on having us all out of the park by five o'clock. The potential crisis was averted by diplomatic negotiation - we have to maintain good relations with English Heritage - and

play continued as if nothing had happened.

The August tournament is a relatively young event of only a few years standing, and in that time the standard of the entry has risen significantly. This year over half the players were in the top hundred of the rankings and included David Openshaw, Don Gaunt, Brian Hallam and Alex Leggate, to name but four. Players' approaches to the testing conditions varied: David Openshaw kept tight control against Jon Watson by keeping two balls near each hoop, whereas Lionel Tibble overcame the problems of lawn 5 (and Howard Bottomley) by the minimalist ploy of the two ball break. There were a lot of close finishes but on the whole results went as expected and on Sunday afternoon the tournament ended with Brian Hallam, Lionel Tibble and Ian Mantle each having four wins out of five, the order being decided by the number of Lamb points accumulated.

John Bevington

Results

1. Brian Hallam beat Mike Hammelev, David Openshaw, Alex Leggate, Roger Tribe
2. Lionel Tibble beat Graham Fowler, David Tutt, Howard Bottomley, Don Gaunt
3. Ian Mantle beat Rod Ashwell, John Bevington, Terry Mahoney, Mark Firth

Guildford & Godalming Advanced Weekend 12th - 13th August

There was a surprisingly small, but immensely distinguished, set of entries for Guildford's principal tournament. Bob Stephens was a late entry but did not turn up, and so he was automatically nominated tournament reporter, with this record being penned for him by a variety of players.

Before play even started the manager narrowly avoided a riot over a hoax notice announcing that the Cider House had imposed a ban on all croquet players for breaking its children's slide (see photo on the front cover of 'Croquet', issue 237).

The knockout for the open challenge cup proceeded smoothly for all except the holder, Tony Mrozinski - eliminated in the first round, - and Chris Patmore, who flew in from Paris unbeaten in CA matches this year, before crashing to Hugh Smorfitt in the semi-final. However, it was Pete Trimmer who lifted the silverware - a just reward for a weekend's serious endeavour.

Many thought the Egyptian consolation event offered sufficient flexibility, with players able to choose

opponents, courts and whether to play full games, 14 point games or one-balls. Tony Mrozinski, however, added a new dimension, unforeseen by the rules formulators, by playing in two games at the same time. Since only his opponents benefited, no action was taken. Meanwhile, arch bandit Richard Hilditch, playing off 3.5, finished ahead of the field.

Bob Stephens (with assistance from others)

Results

Open Challenge Cup

1st Round

Chris Patmore bt Bob Stephens; Jeremy Ames bt Tony Mrozinski; Hugh Smorfitt bt Alex Jardine.

2nd round

Patmore bt Ames; Smorfitt bt Ruscombe-King; Carter bt Gale; Trimmer bt Hilditch.

Semi-final

Smorfitt bt Patmore; Trimmer bt Carter

Final

Trimmer bt Smorfitt

Consolation Egyptian

Winner - Richard Hilditch

Edinburgh 14th - 19th August An Australian's view of the Edinburgh Friendly Fettes Festival Croquet Competition

Last year a croquet playing sailor wandered into my croquet club in Manly (Sydney, Australia) and, among other things, Nigel Gardner told me about the E.F.F.F.C.C.

Well, no-one who plays and enjoys our beloved game of croquet should miss the opportunity of experiencing the excitement and challenge of "crown" croquet as offered in the E.F.F.F.C.C. The exponents of bowls in the U.K. will be well aware of the skills needed to succeed in this environment: but unfortunately I have not yet mastered the techniques before I found that for me - the games were over.

While I have been delighted by the warmth and generosity (except on the courts) of the welcome I have received in Edinburgh, it was a bit of a shock to travel 16,000 miles from Sydney to be beaten (26-25) in my first match by a "neighbour" from New Zealand. Bob Fewtrell in his turn met an 18 bisquer who not only double peeled but also 26'd him!! - Well played Fergus McInnes.

After missing NO ROQUETS for most of her game against me Charlotte Townsend (T.P.F.) had reached the peg with her white clip and penultimate with her pink. Then she made THREE CONSECUTIVE MISSED ROQUETS! This allowed me to creep from 4 to 9 hoops

before she decided to put me out of my misery!

With a combined age of 170+, a combined total of 33 bisques, and a combined resource of unlimited experience and "sneakiness", Mona Wright and Donald Lamont bludgeoned Malcolm O'Connell and Chris Robertson, then myself and Jolyan Kay out of the doubles. I am happy to report that they finished in the Final against Jamieson Walker and Maria Limonci. Donald played a total of 15 games in the week, all but one going to time. He reached two finals, and very deservedly won the Lauder Bowl for the player getting the furthest without winning anything - not bad for an 87-year old!

During the week I had the pleasure (and misfortune) to meet a 7 bisquer (Charlotte) who made 9 hoops against me! and a 12 bisquer (Peter Smith) who made 7!! I can't even make the excuse that the lawns "were against me" as most of my opponents were playing on the same lawn as I was at the time!!

There can be no doubt that I, and most of the contestants with whom I spoke, thoroughly enjoyed the atmosphere and spirit of the 1995 E.F.F.F.C.C. It would be remiss of any reporter of this event not to mention the organisers - the magnificent catering - the calm, efficient, helpful manager, Ian Wright - and to say a big THANK YOU to all involved.

I look forward to getting my "revenge" on all of you when you join me at our (Manly) Annual Sea Breeze competition held during the first two weeks of October, or when I return to Edinburgh.

Michael Mills

Results

Open Singles - The Cramond Cup

Winner - John Beech

Open Singles for handicaps of 4 and over - The Ian Wright Trophy.

Block A 3 wins Alasdair Adam

Block B 3 wins Andy Campbell

Play-off A. Campbell beat A. Adam +21

Handicap Singles with lifts, for handicaps of 8 and over. The Silver Jubilee Salver.

Winner - Peter Smith(12)

Handicap Singles for handicaps 11 and over - The Walter B. Laing Cup

Block A 4 wins Jamieson Walker(18)

Block B 3 wins Fergus McInnes(18)

Play-off Jamieson Walker(16) beat Fergus McInnes(18) +1t.

Handicap Doubles - The Norton Wright Trophies. J. Walker & M. Limonci beat D. Lamont & M. Wright +6t.

Event 6 - Unrestricted Handicap - X - The Edinburgh Cup.

Final F. McInnes beat J. Henderson +10.

Woodhall Spa Croquet Club at Hunstanton - 19th August

On Saturday 19th August 8 players set off early to join the stream of traffic heading for Norfolk.

We again visited Hunstanton Croquet Club. Our first impression was of the lovely green lawns where the council workmen were just finishing marking the boundaries as they have kept the lawns watered in preparation for an important competition soon.

After coffee we split into groups to be coached or to play against members. We certainly needed our full allocation of bisques. In the afternoon most of us played alternate shot doubles with their members. This was a rewarding experience as the strategy needed to achieve a run of hoops became clearer after a break for tea. We continued to play until 5.30 when we helped to clear the lawns and thanked our hosts before leaving for home, to reflect on our day's experience and hopefully remember all we had been taught.

Jean Barr

Ipswich Handicap Weekend 19th - 20th August

Extremely difficult conditions turned this friendly handicap weekend tournament into a battle of self control and patience, both of which were lost on several occasions. The sight of Ruth Youd from High Wycombe depositing her mallet in the hedge brought back fond memories of my brother and his renowned tantrums.

The very fast patches around most of the hoops and the Ipswich slopes meant playing any more than a 3 or 4 hoop break without using a forest of bisques a very rare event indeed. Because of these conditions, only four rounds were played, with 19 of the 24 games going to time.

Peter Allnutt, the club chairman won with an unbeaten record although he met stiff resistance from Ann Stevens and the jovial Neil Jackson.

Due to the slowness of play, the manager even had time to slip in the Ipswich versus Crystal Palace football match (+1T to Ipswich). Hopefully next year they will emulate the towns croquet team by returning to the premier league!

As a matter of interest, Michael Percival wore a pedometer on the Sunday to measure how far he walked during the day. After two timed games, the reading was 5.3 miles. No wonder the legs can get a bit weary after a day's croquet.

Finally, thanks to Celia Pearce and Jill Waters for keeping the players, spectators and manager fed and watered during the weekend. The Ipswich Bar-B-Q lunches will certainly keep me managing tournaments there for many years to come. *Lewis Palmer.*

Results

1st Peter Allnutt 4/4
2nd R Kimmerling 3/4
3rd N Jackson 3/4

Championship of the North of England

Bowdon 25th - 28th August

This year's championships sadly came just at the end of the so called drought in Britain. Even so the excellent condition of the lawns made the conditions very difficult (the club has spent a lot of money improving the surface and fresh holes made for extremely firm hoops). This promises to be an excellent venue for the 1996 test series. As the weekend progressed we were treated to various forms of rain and Chris Hudson visiting in tropical beach wear while it was raining (it was fine in Crewe, honest).

A full entry of 24 was received with 8 seeds. All of the players in serious contention for the U.K. test team in 1996 were playing except Jeff Dawson and Robert Fulford. With the President's Cup under 2 weeks away (also at Bowdon) this venue was going to prove key to the all-important selection. All but one of the selectors were present with Bill Lamb and Keith Aiton dedicating themselves to just watching. Before the event there appeared to be six players (Ian Burrige, Steve Comish, Debbie Cornelius, Jeff Dawson, Colin Irwin and David Openshaw) competing for 3 places in the team (Chris Clarke, Robert Fulford and David Maugham already being certain of a place). After the event it looked unlikely that Irwin was still in contention, but I don't think anyone else could say that their position was determined.

The first round saw some very long games (as the fresh hoops were at their most difficult). The seeded players got through although not in all cases convincingly (Cordingley and Burrige dropping games

they should not have and David Goacher only winning his second game +1T against an unlucky Colin Southern).

The highlight of the second round saw Irwin playing Openshaw (unseeded as a late entrant). The match was untidy and David won without too much problem, being better than Colin in all phases of the game. The other seeds progressed in straight games although Ian Maugham and David Harrison-Wood were unlucky not to take games from Cornelius and Goacher respectively.

Due to the slower previous matches the quarter-finals were just best of 3. Maugham and Comish progressed as expected. The match between Openshaw and Cornelius exemplified the competition for test team places. That the test team captain's place is in doubt is more to do with the improvement of players like Debbie than to his demise. In the event Debbie was a comfortable winner, particularly winning the shooting contest. The upset of the round was Burrige defeating Clarke in straight games. Chris was never in the match and Ian did not have to play particularly well to win, making a number of errors himself.

Maugham beat Comish with his normal aggressive methods in 4 games. Steve made hardly any errors but came up against David playing in top form. Steve did well in the openings restricting David to a 17 yard shot on the 4th turn. However David's shooting, hoop running and tripling was formidable.

The match between Burrige and Cornelius was very close with both players playing reasonably well until the fifth. Here Ian lost confidence in his hoops and starting smashing at relatively short hoops without success. Clearly the tension of the occasion overcame him.

Looking at the previous play of Maugham (he had 6TP's with only 2 others done so far) no one was offering odds on Cornelius beating him. Indeed we were probably not expecting her to win a game. In the first Debbie got the first ball to 4-back, David had two breaks that both ended stuck in hoops before Debbie got the innings. She finished in 2 turns to take the first game. At this stage the crowd were predicting that the next three games would go to David in less time than the first game. The second game saw David get the first break, Debbie hit the lift and failed to get the TPO after running 3rd too hard, she got her ball to 4-back but left a 10 yard shot in the leave. David hit the shot but then took off the lawn, Debbie hit and finished in 3 turns without David hitting

back.

The crowd were now starting to worry about there being enough time for the match to finish (assuming that David was still going to make a come-back). The third game saw David first on 4-back in two turns after an error by Debbie. However Debbie hit the long lift shot to equalise the clips. David missed and Debbie started on a delayed TP which went wrong when the peel ball was hit after a straight rover peel. Debbie missed the 8 yard peg out and left 4 balls on the lawn, David then embarked on a delayed TP of his own. Amazingly he too failed at rover where he stuck his straight Irish rover peel to leave him with a stroke left and nothing to do. Debbie won +3 to the delight of the substantial crowd. She is the first woman to win since the legendary D.D. Steel. Although David did not play to his best, the victory should not be underestimated. Debbie played better than him throughout despite a few errors and no TP's.

The plate was held as an Egyptian followed by a knock-out (to try and prevent the unsatisfactory result seen in earlier events where the player at the top of an Egyptian refused to play further games). Despite being the strongest player in the event, Clarke was keeping alive by the skin of his teeth. Having dropped games to Alan Linton, Colin Irwin and Don Gaunt in the Egyptian he contrived to qualify for the last 8 knock-out simply because the losing semi-finalists chose not to play. Having qualified he then did pick up his game. The final of the plate saw him pitted against David Goacher, it was nearly a 3 TPO match for Clarke (with Goacher winning the first OTP). However the middle game was only a double peel on David's ball. This win kept alive his record of winning each of the three regional plates so far this year. It looks like an easy draw for whoever gets him in the main event of the Southern's at the end of September as he bids for all 4! It is hardly a particularly impressive achievement for the world champion to get this record, but it is good to see him competing in the consolation events which many other strong players avoid to protect their rankings.

Richard Hilditch

Parkstone August Tournament 28th August - 1st September

Twenty-five players gathered for the new format 5 day tournament on Monday morning, and were blessed by a dry warm week throughout.

Croquet's claim to be a sport for all ages was well justified on the first day, when the evergreen John Exell played newcomer Naomi Green with an age difference rumoured to be 75 years, give or take a year or two. Experience triumphed in this encounter, but Naomi still had a good tournament culminating in winning the doubles with her brother Ben, who also went away happy, having lowered his handicap to -0.5.

The most successful player was Parkstone's Peter Trimmer, who won both the 'A' class event and the handicap singles. Peter's speed around the court would delight any manager, and his attractive style makes his game a joy to watch. If anyone could make croquet a spectator sport it is he; interminable 'swingers' please note! By the end of the week John Haslam had got the measure of the height of the club house door but he failed to get the measure of Peter in the handicap final, the latter's victory in which event being revenge for his earlier one defeat of the week, by John in the 'A' class.

The most entertaining break of the week was that of Smokey Eades who, playing Beatrice McGlen in the Egyptian 'Y' singles, made a 20-yard roquet to find himself for hoop 5 and taking croquet from his partner ball midway between hoops 4 and 5 on the south boundary. Surveying his opponent's balls laid up behind 1-back Smokey announced that he wasn't going to walk all the way down there but would run his hoop instead. Executing a 15 yard roll satisfactorily he did so, made the return roquet, and played a thick take-off putting his partner ball to 2-back while gaining position to run hoop 6. Struggling through 6 he then hit a 15 yard roquet on his opponent's balls behind 1-back and continued his break. And all this with a pint in one hand and a cigar in the other! Beatrice later qualified for the unluckiest player of the week award when, in the 'B' class final, with four rover balls on the court and her partner ball nicely placed for the peg-out she rushed her opponent on to the peg, shortly afterwards to lose by 2.

David Price of Kingston Maurward, playing off 9 in his first tournament, soon attracted mutterings among fellow players and the interest of the handicappers, who reduced him to 6 after five matches. This was just enough for John Haslam to beat him in the final of the 'X' handicap, but David went on to win both the 'B' class final and the 'Y' singles event, reducing his

handicap still further to 5 in the process.

Bob Bailey

Results

A class - Peter Trimmer bt William Steadman
B class - David Price bt Beatrice McGlen
C class - Dulcie Birrell bt James Tuttiott
X Handicap singles - Peter Trimmer bt John Haslam
Y Handicap singles - David Price
Handicap doubles - Ben & Naomi Green bt Peter Trimmer & John Lonsdale

All England Handicap - Northern Regional Final Pendle C.C. 2nd - 3rd September

The regional round of the All England Handicap for the Northern area took place at Pendle on the weekend 2 - 3 of September. The competition followed a Swiss format.

The ten competitors drawn from Edgbaston (two), Bowdon (four), Himley Hall, Southport, York and Pendle, double banked on courts one and two and single banked on court three, leaving court four vacant. The weather was extremely good for the Pennines in September but the food was really good without any qualifying remarks. I am sure I can extend everyone's grateful appreciation for the catering to Pat George and Betty Brierley.

In the final round the undefeated Ian Lines met David Mathews, last year's winner. Ian took a strong lead with some well controlled breaks to a position of rover and peg against two and two. At this point David used his two bisques to make a break to 3-back. Though Ian hit in regularly he was unable to gain the last hoop. David managed to get one of his balls round and pegged Ian out leaving David for peg and penultimate and Ian for rover, but unfortunately conceding a wiring lift.

Ian took the lift, missed the mid-court double and ended sixty to seventy centimetres from penultimate. David then made his last two hoops running rover quite hard and missed his eight yard return roquet, his first ever miss at this distance, leaving Ian a similar length shot. Ian hit the shot and won a very exciting game +2. Both players lifted their games to play far better than their nine and eleven handicaps.

I would like to thank John Beech for the preparatory work he did arranging everything and Abdul Ahmad for the part he played in managing.

Roger Schofield

Results

1. I. Lines 4 wins
2. R. Deacon 3 wins
3. D. Garton 3 wins
4. A. Starkey 2 wins

Selector's Weekend

Compton 8th - 10th September

Results:

6 wins - L. Tibble bt Trimmer +5, Jenkins +16, Fewtrell +9, Hammelev +14, S. Carter +5, Wadley +3.

A. Wadley bt Jenkins +15, Shaw +20, Bennett +4, Brown +1, S. Carter +8, Magee +3. 5 wins - R. Brown bt S. Carter +7, Magee +8, Tibble +25, Smith +11, Fowler +25TP.

R. Smith bt Ransom +21, Tibble +3, Fewtrell +16, Wadley +14, Fowler +3.

G. Bennett bt Fowler +18, Brown +17, Ransom +5, Fewtrell +15, Smith +24.

D. Magee bt Ford +18, Shaw +12, Jenkins +15, K. Carter +26TP, S. Carter +13.

4 wins - S. Carter bt Fowler +3, Shaw +17, Bennett +3, Smith +10.

D. Shaw bt K. Carter +4, Tibble +16, Ford +19.

3 wins - R. Jenkins bt K. Carter +4, Tibble +16, Ford +19.

M. Hammelev bt Magee +4, K. Carter +16, Bennett +26.

G. Fowler bt Trimmer +16, Hammelev +3, Ransom +22

R. Fewtrell bt Ford +3, Hammelev +15, Ransom +13.

P. Trimmer bt Shaw +11TP, Jenkins +23TP, Fewtrell +14.

Mrs. F. Ransom bt Trimmer +10, Hammelev +1, K. Carter +20

C. Ford bt Fowler +10, Hammelev +15, Trimmer +8

K. Carter bt Trimmer +1, Ford +2, Fewtrell +26.

Sidmouth Handicap Weekend 9th - 10th September

Taking part in my first tournament, my lasting memories of the weekend will be lovely lawns and rain! After a couple of months playing on what seemed like concrete, the well watered Sidmouth lawns were wonderful.

The weather was lovely on Saturday morning and reasonable in the afternoon but on Sunday it poured all day and play was abandoned after about two hours. Four prizes were awarded to Brian Smith, Tony Duston-Smith, Don Waterhouse and Lawrence Latham who had most wins.

On Sunday morning John Toye took no more than 40 minutes to beat Deborah Latham, (with 5 of her 6 bisques unused),

finishing off with a double peel. The rover peel was a "combination"; with white almost in the jaws but slightly to one side. John used his croquet stroke with brown to place white in the jaws, then jump-shotted pink, thereby pushing white through as well, with brown still convenient for pink to then rush white up for the peg-out. John was quite rightly proud of that!

On Saturday Laurence Latham had not been playing well and was on 2 and 5 while Vera Henderson had two balls on rover, with about twenty minutes until "time". Laurence suddenly went into overdrive and took green to penult and in his next turn took brown to the peg to draw level and make it sudden death. Vera failed to hit whereupon Laurence made penult and won.

And on my own playing experience? After a win in the morning I was well ahead of Don Waterhouse with one ball on peg. Don completed a good break and tried to peg me out but missed. That taught me a lesson but I managed to peg Don out in retaliation. I got both balls on peg but Don found inspiration from somewhere to complete a two ball break of about six hoops, achieve a series of impossible roquets and finally win.

Derek Stooling

Results

Block A	B. Smith
Block B	A. Duston-Smith
Block C	D. Waterhouse
Block D	L. Latham

South of England Championship Compton 15th - 17th September

The rain had come in time to ensure a green backdrop to the South of England Championship. It also meant that the lawns were even-paced and that the hoops, though tight, could not be made firm.

The early rounds caused little comment beyond recording the speed of play in the Ian Burrige/Dennis Shaw tie. Dennis had made the score 1-1 before most of us had finished our midmorning coffee. Chris Clarke, laying up for a sextuple against Andrew Gregory, watched in disbelief as his ball continued to trickle on and eventually run 1-back.

The final was rather one sided: Chris Clarke was obviously unwell and clearly had difficulty in holding his concentration. But this should not take anything away from Ian Burrige who played very well throughout the tournament. His skill and

speed of play was perfectly illustrated in his final game against Chris Patmore. Ian is playing blue and black. Black, for 4-back is in corner 2. Blue for first hoop is 6yds north east of hoop 4 in which nestles red. Chris Patmore has placed yellow in A baulk, wired from blue, and threatening Ian's shot of blue at red. With very little of red visible, Ian shoots, hits, and 13 minutes later has finished his game with a triple peel.

The Sussex Union Cup was played as a Gregorian Draw and Process - a format that is obviously catching on. The only disadvantage seems to be, that as the manager needs to conclude the first round of both the draw and process on day one, any individual having a slightly off day could be out of all of the serious events by the end of the first day. The event was won by Brian Hallam, playing his standard, steady croquet and beating Terry Burge with relative ease. However, Terry did win a stick of rock for his winning performance in the Egyptian consolation event, despite Colin Southern's valiant attempt to come from behind, playing 6 games on the final day.

David Magee

Results

Championship Singles
O'Callaghan Gold Cup

1st Round: A.K. Gregory bt C. Southern -16 +26TP +16, C.D. Clarke bt A.M. Wadley +19TP +13TPO, J.O. Walters bt D.J. Magee +2 +26TP, R. Dourthe bt T. Burge +9 +10, B.G. Hallam bt Dr. G.E. Fowler +6 +26, C.J. Patmore bt R. Best -3 +26 +9, M.A. Hammelev bt L.G. Tibble +17 -4 +12, I.J. Burrige bt D.W. Shaw +25 -13 +15.

2nd Round: Clarke bt Gregory +26TP +21TP, Walters bt Dourthe +6 +21, Patmore bt Hallam +7 -4 +17TP, Burrige bt Hammelev +25TP -5 +24

Semi-Finals: Clarke bt Walters +24TP -14OTP -17 +26TP +5, Burrige bt Patmore +17TP -5 +17TP +24TP.

Final: Burrige bt Clarke +4 +26TP +23.

3rd place play-off: Walters bt Patmore +25TP +26TP -1 +10.

Plate Event
Sussex Union Cup

Draw Final: Hallam bt Fowler +17

Process Final: Burge bt Fowler +8

Play-Off: Hallam bt Burge +26

Consolation Egyptian Winner: Terry Burge.

Wrest Park Handicap Tournament 15th - 17th September 'For the rain it raineth every day' (Shakespeare: Twelfth Night)

Manager Cliff Jones must have felt an unwelcome sense of *deja vu* - the first tournament he managed at Wrest Park started with flooded lawns, and here we were with insistent rain (not altogether unwelcome after what can only be described as a dessicated season, but ill-timed nonetheless). It carried on for most of Friday (13mm), reappeared on Saturday morning and returned the same evening (13mm), gave of its best on Sunday morning when play had to be briefly abandoned, and left us with a final flourish later in the afternoon (7mm - daily downpour data courtesy of the Silsoe Institute). Cliff maintained an unflustered demeanour throughout, and set a sporting example by attempting elaborate manoeuvres against highly-bisqued opponents, often without the benefit of any kind of waterproof clothing. His attempted quadruple against Ann Stephens on lawn 5 only came to grief after three peels when his ball stuck in a hole.

In spite of the weather 89 games were completed, Peter Allnut being involved in ten of them and winning seven, but even this heroic effort was not enough to earn a prize.

On Friday afternoon the players using the second colours on lawn 2 were surprised to see the balls suddenly picked up and replaced. Barlows had insinuated themselves, but how? It appeared that they had been placed with the tournament balls, and when the balls were placed in the boxes late on Thursday night they passed for Jaques in the dark. No-one had noticed until George Collin, on the edge of the lawn, asked the question of Cliff, who happened to be nearby. Should anyone need a quick ocular test, the Barlow white is nearer to ivory.

The lack of referees led to some assistants being appointed. John Bevington was invited to inspect an attempted roquet by Eric Audsley. Eric's opponents were cross-wired at hoop 6, right across the hoop and very close to it. Eric's ball was a few yards north of the hoop. Assuming he roqueted the nearer ball, would it strike the hoop in such a way as to cause the other ball to move? The question was never answered, as his ball somehow missed the nearer ball altogether but ran the hoop at such an angle that the other ball was dispatched well clear

of the hoop.

Tom Anderson and Nick Evans thought they were in for a fun game when Tom started in corner 2, Nick put a ball into the middle, Tom followed by going into corner 4 and Nick joined in the middle. Tom shot from corner 4 at one of the balls in the middle and hit partner in corner 2. Even though Nick got a ball round quite quickly the game still took its time, being restricted to a last hour after three and a half hours and then taking a further half hour when both players were for peg and 3-back. Tom won by the usual score.

Wiring, and its consequences, cropped up regularly. Graham Bond used a half-bisque to set up a leave on the south boundary only to have his opponent (Ian Mantle) point out that he had inadvertently wired everything and was going to have to concede a lift. John Wheeler had both balls wired from George Collin's, but his red was possibly wired from yellow. Eric Audsley, playing on the same lawn, was intending a long roquet and found yellow to be in the way, so he picked it up and marked it, his action being greeted with loud rejoinders from the other players. Being on the spot, literally, he adjudicated on the possible wiring but did not award a lift. Morals there for players and referees alike.

So who won? Well, to explain the format, it was an Egyptian (I think) with a base index of 50, the winner adding 10% of the opponent's index and the loser deducting 10% of his or her own index. There were three nominal divisions (-0.5 to 2.5, 3-8 and 9-12) and the winners of each division were Ian Mantle (6/9), Nick Evans (5/7) and John Rusted (6/9), with Nick being the overall winner. A few handicaps were adjusted (John Wheeler is back to scratch) and Cathy Storey gained her silver award. And we all enjoyed ourselves, in spite of the weather - didn't we?

John Bevington

Full Bisque Weekend Cheltenham 22nd - 24th September

The notices told of a Hands Ladder, with games shortened by the Bray System and, if necessary, by Wharrad Turns. You didn't really have to understand any of this to enjoy the croquet. Good-humoured but decisive management by John Lansdown made sure of that.

With bisques for everyone above scratch, play was almost breathtakingly quick. Games lasted from 55 minutes to four

hours but most of us took about two hours. Only two of the 108 games needed to be curtailed by Wharrads. The prize for most games went to Julian Remfry who played ten in the two and a half days. The average was just over seven.

Opinions of the full bisque format ranged from "An interesting tactical challenge" through "Makes a change" to "I have never liked it and I always swear never to play it again".

The event was not over-subscribed. Seven lawns for thirty players meant an ever pressing need to play croquet and left little time for the usual pavilion camaraderie. Bar sales suffered.

The star of the tournament was Phillip Pawson. He gained a silver Award and played with confidence throughout to finish as the overall winner. In a deciding game Phillip beat Don Gaunt into second place despite having his first ball peeled through rover and pegged out. The other prize winners were Carol Smith and Nick Evans. Bronze Awards were gained by Julian Remfry and Una Atter.

Colin Thursfield

Southport & Birkdale Open Weekend 23rd - 24th September The Mysterious West - The Place It Didn't Rain

Driving along the road to the North West on a dark Friday night was slow and tiring, arriving 10.30 at Southport the Mecca of north. I found it difficult to contain my excitement at the prospect of playing at one of the most prestigious clubs around. The four star hotel, heavily disguised as a B&B, warmly invited us in. "You're on the top floor, the older guest can't climb that far!".

After a refreshing sleep I woke to the glorious sunshine. Where is the reputation of flooding lawns? It hasn't rained yet. A short drive to the club. Through a flowered entrance we turn to see the six lush green lawns that will be trod by the mighty and large alike (and me). It's the end of the season for me, a successful one with over 100 competitive games, I'm in the mood for fun - hopefully I'm not asked to concentrate.

First let's look at the format. A Dorkonian special. We play in blocks, all play all, but then there are those games you play outside your block, then there are those games you play if people do not turn up. You are green, yellow, blue or red. Block winners go into a knockout and all others go

into 14 point games. I hope that's simple enough - if so could you write in to explain it to me! The time limits got progressively shorter as the day went on, 2.5 hours then 2 hours then 1.75 then 1.5 - it's good fun up north. Which lawn you play on was decided from the start so we ignored it. Reportedly this was to be the last tournament to be managed by the master. His long white beard and thin wispy hair, he still has the Welsh magic as all wizards do (pity he watches Baywatch!). He will be missed, as will his missed shots and blobbed hoops.

Well, to the croquet. I was sent to the far reaches of the fourth lawn (or was it the fifth? My opponent moved the numbers around so that we probably were the only pair on the correct lawn). I lost my first game. Well concentration was low and trying to avoid the feet of big John Haslam made it difficult. Anyway the radio controlled cars were much more interesting. I was then moved to a different block! This is where the above simple format got complicated. So I lost my second game, it's difficult to orientate yourself to a whole new block and assimilate to the change?!. That's my excuse and I'm sticking to it. Well I thought I'd try for everything and ... well what do you expect?

This isn't a tournament report, more a diary entry. Well it's difficult to write a report on all the games because I only look at my own. I'd rather chat or walk about. How these experienced reporters make it sound as though they saw all the most interesting games I'll never know.

Anyway lunch was great. I'd had two drinks bought me and so was ready for a relaxed afternoon. Sun was still shining - it still was not raining. Let me think, what other games can I report on, err... none! I decided to play as fast as I could in the afternoon but missed most of my shots! Silly tactic. Barbara Haslam (yes the manager thought I'd better lose to both husband and wife to save the arguments in the evening, however that didn't work) was ahead with only twenty minutes to go. I hit, went round and finished. Phew!! Nearly beaten by a 3.5! Fourth game of the day, I go round in 15 minutes to 4 back, he misses I go to peg in another fifteen minutes (These triple peel things, I can't be bothered to try this late in the season). He hits and runs round to five, missing a short shot. Well that's it, I finish in couple of turns from then. I thought I'd better describe a game for those who expect it. Boring!

Now let's look at the results for

Saturday. My block (I'm not sure which block I'm in) two have lost one game, I lost two and Barbara lost four. Now other blocks - Do you care? Well maybe it's better if I mention everyone so that at least some will read this, then again maybe not. Anyway what makes a good report? Humour, reporting tricky games, your name in the prose or cleverly written one-liners? I don't know. Anyway you'll have to put up with this.

Everyone finished around 7 pm and we ordered Pizza. By 7.30 we were enjoying the best of the tournament in the club house laughing and joking, eating and drinking. Let's see what did we talk about? John's feet again (it does seem to be getting into all of this report), peculiar croquet players and football - that's when I left.

As the haze slowly disappears over the misty mountains, as the bright sun breaks through to trumpet in the morning, as the brave and wise walked over the heather, as all this happened I pulled back my curtains in Southport to reveal a magnificent view of the B&B's in Albert Terrace! Sunday. Last day of the tournament. Who will be in the knockout? Who will win? These questions and many more will be answered during the ultimate day (Rover to those croquet fanatics).

The slate grey sky and fresh breeze (that's what they call a cold wind up here) welcomes the players back to the lawns. Still it's not raining (this is where fact and fiction may get a little blurred). I'm to play a member of my own club Lionel - I'm not playing well - Tibble. When your hearts not

in it it's difficult to win. So, 'I'm not playing well' won confidently. That's the consolation event for me. How do you play a 14 point game?

Now for the block winners

RED: Howard Taylor - Anxious to win
 YELLOW: Gail Curry - Who reckons she should not be in the semi-final
 GREEN : Alan Linton - Only just
 BLUE: Colin Irwin - What a surprise (or for those at the Northerns - he can still play!)
 They go into the knockout! I'll let you know how they got on later. Now my handicap card. At minus one it is difficult to get a positive figure whatever I do. Last tournament I got eight wins out of ten and lost two points. This tournament will lose me twenty. Still the sun is now shining and the food is nearly ready - good I'm ready for the food.

All afternoon it didn't rain - now we are beyond the space between fact and fiction and deeply into fantasy. The lawns slowed dramatically as the lack of rain caused deep puddles (Oh what a give away!). Gail - I shouldn't be in the semi final - Curry lost to Colin - he should win anyway - Irwin. Howard - I want to win - Taylor lost to Alan - I've never played so bad - Linton. So Alan versus Colin in the final (I wonder who will win?).

In the consolation 14 point games I won all four. Surprising as the rules still remain a mystery to me. Still Colin - I've still got a twitch - Southern has the same number of wins. What will the manager do? Anyway he quietly informs me there is no prize for the winner. Drat, the search for the

golden chalice of the north has to continue.

As the sun starts to wane and the long road home beckons the dying embers of the final are played out in front of a disinterested crowd of at least six. An enjoyable end to the season. A good way to make sure your ranking is not too high over the winter. Good-bye to all. - You want to know the winner? Well it was the Irish Cowboy as expected - well done Colin.

Brian Hallam

List of Tournaments included in this issue

- S.E. Federation Summer School
- Cheltenham H'cap
- Colchester Spring Weekend
- Roehampton Summer Tournament
- S.E. Federation Team Doubles
- Edgbaston Open Weekend
- S.E. Federation One-ball
- Home Internationals
- Bristol Handicap Weekend
- Cheltenham 5 Day Tournament
- Southport & Birkdale Family Doubles
- Championship of Jersey
- S.E. Federation Ladies Day
- Wrest Park Open Weekend
- Roehampton B Level
- Tyneside Handicap & Open
- Cheltenham Over 50 Handicap
- Veterans' Tournament
- 79th Cheltenham July Tournament
- 14th Compton Open Weekend
- Wrest Park Advanced Weekend
- Guildford & Godalming Advanced Weekend
- Edinburgh August Tournament
- Woodhall Spa at Hunstanton
- Ipswich Handicap Weekend
- Northern Championship
- All England Regional Final - Northern
- Selectors' Weekend
- Sidmouth Handicap
- Southern Championship
- Wrest Park Handicap
- Cheltenham Full Bisque Weekend
- Southport & Birkdale Open Weekend

Colourful Summer Of '95



Competitors in the Parsons Green 'Hibiscus' tournament held in August. L to R: Roy Fox, Belquisu Ismail, David Bayley, Leila Showan and Anne Robillard (and the Hibiscus).



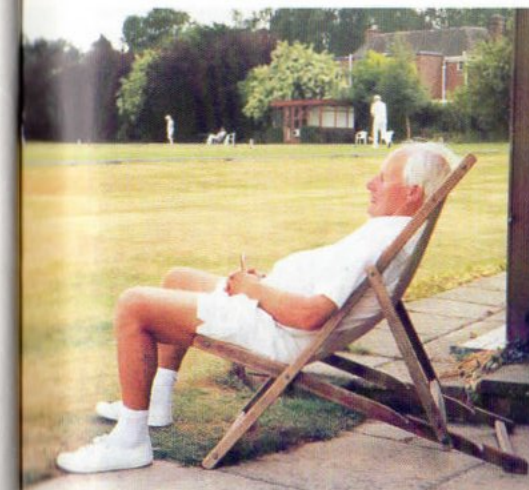
Ken Dawes of Chartham Hatch being presented with his prize for the South East Federation one-ball by Audrey Howell of Tunbridge Wells.



Khristian Chambers, Peter Spencer, James Dixon, Michael Blackwell, David Mathews and Ben Elwell who were competitors in the Schools Championship.



England v South Africa Bowdon July 4th - 7th
 Standing: Martin Grainger-Brown (manager & referee) England: Alan Linton, David Harrison-Wood, Phil Cordingley, Robert Fulford.
 South Africa: William Louw, Wynand Louw, Reg Bamford, Andrew Knox.



The Croquet Association Shop

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Contact: Brian Macmillan, The Croquet Association Shop Tel. 0171 - 7363148

invincible as he was against the South Africans. Chris Williams (Dyffryn) and Ian Vincent (Nottingham) were the other two: both were fairly reliable in break play, but failed to hit in as often as they would have liked. Vincent, at least, was pleased with his result: he now heads the table of games won in the event, taking over the position from John Wheeler

Chris Patmore, who had spent most of the summer in Paris, felt hard done by to come 7th with 6 wins, one more than on his previous appearance. Colin Southern, from Woking, was a bit further adrift, but had several very close games.

The most striking feature of the results was that there were only two +26s, the games between Duckworth and Patmore, and six +17s. Little evidence here of "routine break play" or a need for artificial hills. Another observation was that only half the field seemed even to attempt Triple Peels. It could plausibly be argued that getting to 4-Back and Peg was the percentage play in this company, but the competitiveness of the event may also have accounted for the lack of attempts to qualify for a Gold Award by those who had yet to do so.

One oddity was that the right of choice appeared to be a disadvantage: only 3/8ths of the games went to the tosser (as the first named player on the order of play sheet was inelegantly, and inaptly, designated). The games varied in length from 50 minutes to just over 4 hours, with Hallam being almost an hour quicker per game than Vincent. Dividing the total time taken by each player's games by the number of points scored in them reduced the range somewhat, to between 2:56 to 3:48 (mins:secs), but with the same (predicable?) ordering. Although the schedule was relatively comfortable (only one game was pegged down and the floodlights were only used once), we would have been in trouble without the fifth day, even in the relatively easy conditions. Time is needed to stop and stare, eat and talk together, even to watch some of the other play: in short, to savour the pleasure of these events.

**The Barlow Bowl
Cheltenham
13th -17th September**

Report by Deborah Latham

In issue 239 Andrew Gregory blew the gaff on the "Myth of the Minus Player". I think I there must be some peculiar myth circulating concerning the Ladies' Week which also needs debunking, otherwise why would more women not be clamouring to play? When Diana Williamson was forced to withdraw due to illness there was not so much as one reserve able to take her place, which sadly meant we all played two

The Spencer Ell Competitors L to R: Ian Vincent, Alex Leggate, Chris Patmore, Alan Linton, Brian Hallam, Chris Williams, Edward Duckworth.



	Vincent	Linton	Southern	Hallam	Duckworth	Patmore	Williams	Leggate	Wins	Final Order
I. Vincent		-12 -17	+10 +12	-22 +17TP	-8 +4	-1 +9TP	+10 -7	+7 -7	7	=3
A. Linton	+12 +17		+2 +5	-5 -14TP	-4 -9	-16 +14	+24 -3	+2 -14	7	=3
C. Southern	-10 -12	-2 -5		-17 +21	+4 -20	-11 -16	-21TP +6	-24 -1	3	8
B. Hallam	+22 -17TP	+5 +14TP	+17 -21		+13 +10	+25 +3	-24 +23	+13 +18	11	1
E. Duckworth	+8 -4	+4 +9	-4 +20	-13 -10		+26 -26	+16 +16	+18 -25	8	2
C. Patmore	+1 -9TP	+16 -14	+11 +16	-25 -3	-26 +26		+2 -17	-23 -8	6	7
C. Williams	-10 +7	-24 +3	+21TP -6	+24 -23	-16 -16	-2 +17		+17 +6	7	=3
A. Leggate	-7 +7	-2 +14	+24 +1	-13 -18	-18 +25	-17 -6	-17 -6		7	=3

games less than we should have - entirely leaving aside the fact that the Longman Bowl was not even played for! Wouldn't you like to be able to tell friends and/or colleagues that you were one of the fourteen best women players selected?! (Unless you're a man, of course!) Are there a lot of you out there who think because it's a selection event it's too 'high powered' for you to contemplate? At handicap 5 I might have been the highest bisquer competing for the Barlow Bowl this year, but two years ago, at the same handicap, I was roughly in the middle of the range. I cannot believe there aren't a seething mass of women players out there capable of playing the sort of positive, not to say attacking, croquet in evidence during this contest, and who wouldn't revel in the joyous ethos that pervades

it? Working as I do in a women-only office for five days a week, I have cause to be wary of the concept of a women-only tournament, for reasons I will leave you to speculate on - but I can assure you that with the Barlow Bowl all such wariness can be cavalierly dismissed. If I knew there was this much fun going on somewhere, I'd want to be in on it!

Well that's enough soapboxing - what about the actual tournament? Gail, player-managing, was astutely aware that bribery will get you anywhere, and offered the incentive of priority access to the box of chocolates on the manager's table (which bore a startling resemblance to the bar!) for expedition in play. (At one point, on the subject of being the manager

of this tournament, she was heard muttering about "the harassment and abuse...!" The swift riposte was, "Yes, but we give it all right back to you!") The inducement had a galvanizing effect on the players, for of the 42 games played, only 4 exceeded 3 hours in length. Of the attempted triple peels, Gail completed two, which by all accounts was two more than the winner of the Chairman's! This was no mean feat, for, despite the sterling efforts of the grounds staff, the playing surfaces, although now mostly covered with grass instead of frazzled hay, were still suffering the ravages of the summer's drought, giving rise to peat-bog like heaviness in some places and in others disconcerting patches of longer grass catching you out on otherwise smooth, if undulating surfaces. The combination of a hill and trying to allow for pull on court 8 caused Gail to take an uncharacteristically long time lining up one particular peel, whereupon the theory was proffered that instead of Bruce Springsteen it was really Keith Wylie's book that was being expounded through the earphones, and she was waiting for him to get to the right chapter...

The sun put in a couple of appearances, but otherwise the week was overcast when not actively wet. Only Gail had the physical strength (or was it the weight of mallet?) not to need to adjust her usual game because of the heaviness of the lawns. The rest of us found ourselves sometimes forced to sacrifice accuracy for strength, or vice versa. No doubt women can compete with men on equal terms - but only on dry lawns, in my opinion, which these were certainly not! On Thursday evening two of us were doggedly completing a game on a court with lying water, while Rosemary was trudging disconsolately along the edge of the next court in dripping waterproofs, muttering morosely, "I ate this game..."

Frances, her white cap and ear-muffs collectively giving her a passing likeness to Hermes or Mercury (depending on your cultural background), was going 'whoosh, whoosh' round the courts - but that was only the noise made by her waterproofs! In the end she 'whooshed into joint third place with Beatrice, the famous Nottingham wine drinker croquet thinker, who proved herself very adept at directing her forward peg ball onto the peg - usually when she hadn't planned on it. So why had her handicap reduced to 4 by the end of her debut Ladies' week? The ability to +26 people in a scorching 1 hour 3 minutes might account for it....(Parenthetically, I could detect no evidence that she really does take battery acid in her tea!) Pauline was inspired to write the tournament poem, so perhaps her muse can be blamed for distracting her? Audrey played not in 'dour' but "do-er" fashion, such as her very first game, wherein she dealt out Gail's only defeat of the week. Rosemary played carefully and consistently to attain second place, but despite the high standard of competition (and hectoring from a certain vertically challenged Bristolian!) the Barlow Bowl is sojourning on

Tyneside for another year.

Lady Carmen Bazley presented the prizes, including the two extra the manager donated in the form of bottles of wine, for achievement in the field of expedition in play. As aforementioned, Beatrice had played the fastest individual game of the week (and on the observable evidence she will probably drink the wine fast, too [I expect the libel writ to be delivered soon]). However taking into account everyone's average game times, and bearing in mind that we are selected through declaring ourselves 'available', it turned out that the "fastest available woman" for the week was - me! That's going to be an interesting reputation to live down!

	Curry	Gugan	Healy	Latham	McGlen	Ransom	Whitaker	Williamson	Wins	Final Order
Ms Curry		+24 +25	+22 +15	+24 +26TP	+26TP +11	+4 +14	-3 +24		11	1
Mrs Gugan	-24 -25		+18 +8	+23 +9	+20 -26	+15 -5	+8 -3		7	2
Mrs Healy	-22 -15	-18 -8		-24 -7	+3 -26	-10 -20	+15 +8		3	7
Mrs Latham	-24 -26TP	-23 -9	+24 +7		-7 +20	+7 -17	-17 -4		4	6
Mrs McGlen	-26TP -11	-20 +26	-3 +26	+7 -20		+6 -15	+5 +4		6	=3
Mrs Ransom	-4 -14	-15 +5	+10 +20	-7 +17	-6 +15		+8 -4		6	=3
Mrs Whitaker	+3 -24	-8 +3	-15 -8	+17 +4	-5 -4	-8 +4			5	5
Mrs Williamson	Withdrew due to illness									



Barlow Bowl L to R: Rosemary Gugan, Beatrice McGlen, Audrey Whitaker, Lady Carmen Bazley, Deborah Latham, Gail Curry, Frances Ransom.

The CA Council & Its Committees

The second part of the series in which the chairmen of the various committees explain the role and responsibilities of their respective committees.

The Handicap Co-ordination Committee

The main responsibilities of the Handicap Co-ordination Committee are:

1. The approval of handicaps and changes in handicaps.
2. Matters relating to handicap policy.
3. Overseeing the Automatic Handicap System (AHS)
4. The appointment of all official handicappers.
5. The appointment of Grading Officers who run the Croquet Grading System (the Rankings)
6. The selection of the winners of the Apps and Steel trophies for the most improved male and female players.

The AHS, which was introduced a few years ago, has been a great success. However the system is in continual review. We do not want to get into a situation where players will not play games, because their handicap may increase as a consequence of a defeat. Consideration is being given to requiring a player's card to be countersigned by the opponent after a game. This would ensure that defeats do not get conveniently 'forgotten'. It must be remembered that the main purpose for having a handicap system is to allow players with different abilities to have a competitive game.

Handicappers are going to be encouraged to take an active part in the monitoring and altering of handicaps of associates with handicaps greater than 12. In many cases these players do not play sufficient games within the AHS for their handicaps to change quickly enough. Moreover in the case of small clubs, players take points off each other.

Handicap changes, which are notified to the office, will get printed in the Croquet Gazette. Since the introduction of the AHS many handicap changes have not been sent in. When a player's handicap changes an official or club handicapper should be informed. The handicapper should then send

the change into the CA office on an official form. The new handicap is entered into the database held in the office. At the end of the season a player's handicap may be compared with the handicap at the start of the season. This will allow players with large decreases, who have not been nominated for one of the 'improvers' trophies, to be spotted.

Chris Williams - Chairman Handicap Co-ordination Committee

The Coaching Committee

This committee is responsible to Council for all matters relating to coaching. It covers the training of coaches and players at all levels in the game. In general, the coaching of beginners and improvers is organised at Federation level; the Regional Coaching Officers who form the majority of the Committee provide an important link between clubs and the national organisation.

Last year, the committee revised the organisation and content of the courses run under its auspices. A unified syllabus was produced covering the needs of players in the handicap range from 18 up to -0.5, with courses in four levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold and Master Class). The aims of the first three of these are linked to the respective Merit Awards, which recognise achievements in playing standards under competitive conditions. Full information about the courses was provided in the Fixture Book, and a range of coaching notes was produced. Feedback from those taking part in the courses was actively sought.

Following the encouraging response to the new scheme, the Committee is now planning to improve courses for next year. Extension of the unified scheme to players of handicaps over 18 is being actively considered, to help in particular those just starting the game. The Committee is also reviewing the methods used in training and appointment of coaches, taking into account the requirements of the new scheme, and noting developments in other sports,

especially through the National Coaching Foundation.

The Coaching Committee will always be pleased to receive comments, critical or otherwise, on the way coaching is run, suggestions for improvement will be especially welcome! Please do not hesitate to write, or telephone me on 01202 658119, alternatively contact any member of the Committee.

Tim Haste - Chairman Coaching Committee

Committee members 94/95

Council - Strat Liddiard, Colin Irwin
East Midlands - Richard White
East Anglia - Claire Heritage
London & South East - David Collins
North West - Don Williamson
Croquet North - Bruce Rannie
South West - Ray Ransom
Southern - Vacancy
West Midlands - Chris Bennett
Yorks & Humberside - George Chamberlin

The Laws Committee

The Laws Committee has overall responsibility for all matters concerned with the laws of the game and its variations, refereeing, and regulations for tournaments. The management of tournaments is a responsibility of the Tournament Committee, but the Laws Committee sets the regulations which determine what a manager may or may not do.

Historically, the CA's Laws Committee has been the final arbiter internationally for the laws of croquet, but for many years we have shared these duties with the Australian Croquet Council and the New Zealand Croquet Council. Meetings of the Laws Committees of all three bodies take place during each MacRobertson Shield contest, when proposals for possible changes to the laws may be made. A unanimous decision in favour of a change is needed. Since the last major revision of the laws (in

1989) there has been a general reluctance among all three committees to make changes unless these are seen to be absolutely essential.

The appendices to the Laws, covering variations of the game, and the regulations for tournaments, are not common to all three countries, and the CA (and other national associations) has freedom to change these for domestic application without consulting Australia or New Zealand.

The examining of referees is the responsibility of the Laws Committee, as is the appointment of the Examining Referees who carry out the examinations. The committee also organises courses for players who wish to become referees; details of these are published in the fixture book each year.

Martin Murray - Chairman Laws Committee

Executive Committee

As with all Standing Committees of Council, the duties and responsibilities of the Executive Committee are laid down in Standing Orders. These are as follows: Matters of an urgent nature which require executive action before a meeting (of Council) can be held.

Matters which are not suitable for discussion in a larger forum.

Matters relating to Croquet Association employees.

Budgetary control of Croquet Association finances.

The Executive Committee with the agreement of Council has assumed responsibility for the forward plan which the Croquet Association has agreed with the Sports Council, and also holds a loose rein

over the management of the Croquet Association's business.

The members of the Executive Committee are: the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, and Chairman of F & GP.

Bill Lamb - Chairman of Council

The Chairman of Council

It is a common misconception that the Chairman of Council is the Chairman of the Croquet Association. This is not the case. The President takes the chair at meetings of the Croquet Association and is followed in the hierarchy by the Vice-Presidents, who come before the Chairman of Council.

Apart from chairing Council meetings, the Chairman is also an ex-officio member of the major standing committees of Council. He is responsible in consultation with the Vice-Chairman for the appointment of council members to standing committees, although the committees themselves elect their own chairmen. As chairman of the Executive Committee, he is responsible for the smooth running of the Croquet Association, and needs to keep himself informed of most of the current activities and to look to the future plans.

These are the official duties. However, I also feel that the Chairman of Council is responsible to all members and clubs registered with the Croquet Association. I take a personal interest in all suggestions or complaints which are sent to me directly or via the Croquet Association office. In short, the buck stops with the chairman.

Bill Lamb - Chairman of Council

National Development Officer

I see my role as assisting the Croquet Association to implement the Forward Plan. We have agreed with the Sports Council to develop croquet.

In simple terms, this amounts to getting more people to play the game, but in reality there is far more to it than that.

For the effective development of sport, we need to determine the Association's long term (10-year) goals, to avoid constant changes of direction as Chairmen and their committees rotate every two or three years.

We need to recognise that the current to-day administration of the CA determines how we are seen by others. Our current administration should be regarded as part of our development plan, and we need to consider how best to manage an enlarged organisation to meet today's challenges.

However one looks at it, the Croquet Association is totally dependent on development to maintain its existence. Over half our 120 registered clubs were formed within the past 10 years. As clubs fold, they need to be replaced. As they run into difficulties, they need to be supported.

Within the Association and its registered clubs, membership loss runs at a rate of between 15% and 25% per annum. So unless we all make a continuous positive effort to retain existing players and introduce more people in the game, organised croquet will very quickly become no longer viable.

Development is essential to our well-being.

Chris Hudson - National Development Officer

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~The Chairman's Column ~

Well, we have come to the end of another season, unless you are one of the hardy ones who play throughout the winter, if your club keeps a court open. Otherwise, it is time to re-varnish the mallet, hang it up carefully and await the start of next season. Or do you just take it out of the car and put it in a cupboard out of sight like most of us? The end of the playing season, however, marks the beginning of the committee season for the Croquet Association, when all the background work that is necessary to keep the Croquet Association running and developing is done.

This year sees the first three federation representatives taking their place on Council. They will be followed by three more in each of the next two years until all federations are represented. This is part of the scheme to broaden the government of the Croquet Association. The federation representatives are elected directly by their federations. The remaining members of Council are elected by you, the Associates. In most of the seven years that I have been on Council, it has not been necessary to have an election because of the number of people putting their names forward for election or re-election has not exceeded the number of places available. (One third of the Council membership of twenty-four retires each year in rotation.) Last year was a welcome change with more candidates than places and the same has occurred this year. I think it is a welcome change because it indicates a willingness by more people to work on behalf of the Croquet Association. Whilst I pay tribute to the work which past and present members of the Council have performed, it is not good for any Association to be governed by the same old faces for too long. A proper election helps to maintain the vitality of Council and keep the Council members in touch with Associates. Of course, elections only serve a useful purpose if the electorate actually votes. In the recent election 445 voting papers were returned out of 1474 sent out. I suppose a 30% return is not bad for an organisation such as ours, but it would be nice if the return were higher. Remember, we are spending your money; you should make certain you get the Council you want.

Bill Lamb

British Rankings

The ranking list below is up to date as of October 1st 1995. However the following tournaments have not yet been included because the results have not been sent.

- Jersey (3-8 July)
- Nottingham (29-30 July)
- Northampton (1-3 September)
- Scottish Chairman's Rose Bowl & Mallet Trophy (23-25 September)
- Various Inter-Club, Mary Rose and National League matches are also missing.

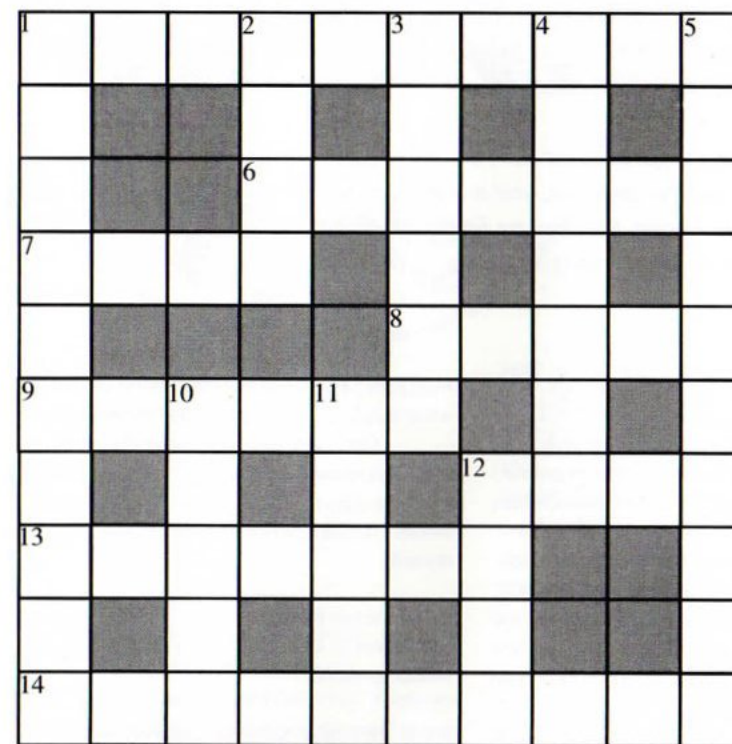
Please could all mangers of advanced level singles events make sure that the results are sent in as soon as possible after the event. A disservice is done to the players in these events when the results are late. A player's non-selection for an event may be caused by missing results.

A copy of a player's results held in the Croquet Grading System may be obtained by sending a SAE and 4 x 25p stamps to: Chris Williams, 36 Fonnon Road, Rhoose, Barry, South Glamorgan CF62 3DZ.

	Grde	Gms	Wins		Grde	Gms	Wins
1	Fulford RI	2818	124	95	51	Gregory AK	2147 90 39
2	Bamford RL (SA)	2766	73	53	52	Maugham FI	2136 28 12
3	Maugham DB	2675	105	77	53	Mrozinski AJ (W)	2135 20 12
4	Clarke CD	2659	147	109	54	Lamb WE	2134 29 13
5	Mulliner SN	2647	57	39	55	Tibble LG	2131 118 67
6	Cornelius DA Miss	2611	101	59	56	Trimmer PC	2131 38 27
7	Burridge IJ (W)	2609	149	99	57	Haggerston MJB	2131 22 14
8	Dawson JP	2597	65	43	58	Ormerod WP	2119 26 18
9	Openshaw DK	2539	67	41	59	Smith RJ	2101 22 11
10	Comish S	2501	83	49	60	Storey BJ	2090 11 5
11	Goacher DJ	2487	79	50	61	Leggate ATR	2089 88 42
12	Irwin CJ	2430	58	38	62	Browne TN (I)	2084 18 8
13	Walters JO	2373	51	37	63	Badger ST	2078 37 20
14	Day PE	2370	47	23	64	Palmer AJ Mrs	2077 38 21
15	Heap MEW	2360	33	19	65	Ames JP	2076 48 23
16	Liddiard GS (S)	2351	41	21	66	Carter KJ	2072 51 28
17	Cordingley P	2350	84	45	67	Eardley P	2072 44 25
18	Symons AJ	2341	16	10	68	Vincent IG	2072 42 20
19	McInerney R (I)	2327	56	35	69	Steadman W	2068 45 27
20	Prichard WdeB (W)	2326	12	8	70	Southern C	2067 93 48
21	Gaunt DL	2319	89	51	71	Willard GM	2064 21 9
22	Guest JE	2315	42	28	72	Curry GE Ms	2059 44 28
23	Goddard JP	2312	10	6	73	Solomon JW	2058 22 10
24	Bond ID (S)	2298	41	20	74	Jones CS	2049 24 13
25	Hallam BG	2281	124	77	75	Wheeler JA	2045 23 14
26	Avery MN	2281	55	26	76	Wadley AM	2032 63 34
27	Palmer LJ (W)	2270	75	48	77	Magee DJ	2029 61 31
28	Williams S (I)	2264	47	27	78	Jenkins RS	2028 43 27
29	Surgenor J (S)	2262	28	18	79	Neal BG	2028 25 10
30	Taylor HP	2258	36	23	80	Le Moignan AS (Jer)	2026 11 6
31	Noble GW	2252	66	48	81	Smith PL	2022 28 10
32	Farthing CN	2235	18	13	82	O'Connell MJ (S)	2014 36 18
33	Linton AM	2233	54	34	83	Hayes MR	2003 12 9
34	Burge TR	2229	28	16	84	Shorten JAI Miss (I)	1997 43 22
35	Williams CN (W)	2228	82	38	85	Sandler MH	1996 23 10
36	Schmieder CS von (I)	2227	22	15	86	Haslam JH	1994 33 16
37	Evans MJ (W)	2223	32	22	87	Harris NR	1994 12 4
38	Duckworth ET	2222	65	43	88	Fewtrell R	1991 32 16
39	Cunningham AE (I)	2217	35	22	89	White DM	1985 15 9
40	Patmore CJ	2210	43	23	90	Ransom RW	1982 32 14
41	Brown RJ	2206	57	31	91	Best R	1973 36 17
42	Watson JPG	2204	16	7	92	Audsley E	1970 10 7
43	Harrison-Wood D	2192	85	43	93	Scott EE	1970 18 12
44	Foulser DR	2190	27	17	94	Rangeley MW	1966 24 14
45	Rogerson F (I)	2187	17	12	95	Fowler GE	1966 54 25
46	Gunasekera DL (W)	2178	26	13	96	Bennett GJ	1962 62 35
47	Toye JS	2174	15	10	97	Death PJ	1953 23 14
48	Coles WT	2160	24	10	98	Shaw DW	1953 23 8
49	Tribe R	2154	25	16	99	Bottomley HJ	1947 19 8
50	Murray M (S)	2150	24	11	100	Carter SE (W)	1946 41 22

The Courtside Crossword

by Mark Evenett



Across

- 1. Ball, boundary - can't park here (6, 4)
- 6. Race - it's out of order to be fatty (7)
- 7. Exclamation of artist in singular alcoholic state (4)
- 8. Honour with vase used to make butter (5)
- 9. Three times entice about an hour (6)
- 12. Odd job lady also means tea (4)
- 13. Useful angled shot - don't speak to and move fast (3, 4)
- 14. Habit of enjoying fun and games - poster has sins, in a bad way (10)

Down

- 1. Cart goes up river of Hades, we hear - standards of measurement (10)
- 2. Behold the saint - the other chap got to the peg first (4)
- 3. Wherefore Duke of Bohemia (of carol fame) loses last half, but keeps his head (6)
- 4. To be avoided in golf, unsettled hour with gin (2, 5)
- 5. Circe has cents to be changed for strange fellows (10)
- 10. Mathematical proportion - small animal has one, love (5)
- 11. On which we play croquet, in front of the Queen ? (5)
- 12. Part of the face which is an inch wrong (4)

Answers from last issue's crossword.

Across

Cached Absent Neal Managing Three-Back Belts Drama
Bingo Wimbledon Dissents Gale Trysts Seeded

Down

Canute Chairman Demob Blackball Emit Tights Endowment
Alarm Liddiard Bandit Intend Bests Ashy

'Poets Of View'

A Fourteen Liner
on the Fourteen Pointer

To one who would be his mistress

Thou pretty creature, lacking all deceit:
Although our friendship be but brief, 'tis true,
So dear delights do come of pastimes new,
And all our trysts (be they so short) are sweet.

The hours we spend together in the sun -
Of greater pleasures there can be but few.
But my affection do not misconstrue,
Alas I cannot love thee, little one.

Thy older sister hath less verve, more guile;
How varied is her temper, cruel her art!
She makes me weep where thou dost make me smile,
And I adore her while she breaks my heart.

Around me still I pray her spell she'll weave.
'Tis her I love, and her I'll never leave.

David Appleton.

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In Search Of The Perfect System

Go to any tournament at any venue and the one topic of conversation that you are guaranteed to hear, good or otherwise, is the Automatic Handicapping System. There are few players who would claim that the system is perfect, so perhaps that we are now at end of another season of its operation it is time for reflection and serious comment to be made upon it.

The first of such comments is made here by Andrew Gregory, who singles out factors pertaining to minus handicaps. However there will undoubtedly be other points players would like to raise, and it is hoped that all would be considered equally on their merits by the Handicap Co-ordination Committee, the reason for this being that whilst we realise we do not have the perfect system yet, there is nothing to stop us from trying to attain it, for everyone concerned.

Minus Handicaps - by Andrew Gregory

The Automatic Handicapping System (AHS) is (almost) universally applauded as a *Good Thing*. The one common reservation about it is its treatment of minus players. Below I consider the problems, and offer a possible solution.

To review the present system from +5 down to scratch, the trigger points are every 50 points, with half a bisque, and one handicap step, between each trigger. The trigger point for scratch is 2000; from 0 to -0.5 (2100) is two steps; from -0.5 to -1 (2250) is three steps; from -1 to -1.5 (2400) is three steps; from -1.5 to -2 (2600) is four steps. -2 is the minimum handicap.

Let me take myself as an example. I am a useful example, since I've been playing at roughly the same level for at least five years. In April 1991 I was allotted a handicap of -0.5, with 2143 points. I believe that equates to a grade of 114.3 - I am currently 114.4. After 173 advanced games, I finally reached -1 at the Northerns in 1994. Given that I'd lost a net ten points in my 5 handicap games over the period, that means my index had increased 0.7 points per game. After a further 65 games, I was back to -0.5 in June this year - having lost 150 points at 2.3 per game. Now it is no coincidence that $0.7 + 2.3 = 3$ - the number of steps from -0.5 to -1.

Now there's nothing wrong with that - it's just the way the system works. If the system and I both carry on as now, I will be back to -1 for about six months in 1997. I have no worries - I know my strength. But others don't understand.

When I reached -1, players congratulated me on my success. When I reverted to -0.5, players commiserated with my lack of form. Now, these players were not necessarily being stupid. The most common reason for a reduction in handicap is an improvement in one's play, and vice versa. But not in my case, I have been neither better nor worse. Like Major Major, I have achieved mediocrity.

It is confusing though. If you meet a player with a handicap of -1, you would expect him to be grade around 125 - Chris Williams say. But depending on what stage of his oscillation he

is at, he could be someone just below 140 - Paul Day, say - or someone just above 110 - Bill Lamb say. And you wouldn't expect Day v Lamb to be a tight match, would you? (OK, bad example.) Again, a -1.5 could be anywhere between Debbie Cornelius and Gerry Guest, say.

These oscillations happen at all levels. But at the minus level the confusion is greater, because the trigger points are further apart, and because there is far more distinction in class between each setting. -1s can do TP's, -1.5s can do delayed TP's, -2s can do what they like. Remember when the -2 handicap had some cachet?

So, my first conclusion is that trigger points should be 50 points apart, for minus players as for everyone else.

Now to the second half of the problem - what should the minimum handicap be? It used to be -5, but is now -2. Yet now some -2s are clearly better than others.

But to consider the minimum handicap, we have to consider handicap games. Suppose Robert Fulford is playing a handicap game. There are broadly three forms the game can take - (i) Oppo fails to use his bisques to set up breaks - Robert wins; (ii) Robert plays 2 breaks before the seventh turn, and wins with bisques standing; (iii) Oppo plays two breaks. Only in (iii) is the number of bisques relevant. If Robert gave Oppo 2 more bisques, say, Oppo would be more likely to finish his 2 breaks. But this only affects a small percentage of games.

Perhaps it is most pertinent to consider how many bisques Fulford could concede to another A-class player - you, for instance. So, I would ask you to imagine that you are playing Fulford in a handicap game which you are both taking seriously. How many bisques do you think you would need for it to be a fair game? Similarly, suppose you were playing a typical scratch player? I believe the typical scratch player should have a grade of 100.0, so step forward, David Magee! If you don't know David, pick anyone within ten places on the rankings, and ask yourself, "How many bisques could I give / take

from him? The answers to the above should yield what handicap Robert Fulford should have!

OK, here's my recommendation on how the AHS should treat minus players. Actually, it's not really my idea, but I can't remember from whom I heard it, so I'll just have to take the credit myself.

Below scratch: trigger points every 50 points, equivalent to one quarter of a bisque, and to one handicap step.

So, if we converted from the Ranking list as at August 6th:

Fulford would be -4.25, Maugham -4, Bamford, Clarke -3.75, Mulliner, Burridge, Westerby -3.25, Cornelius, Comish, Dawson -2.75, Openshaw -2.5, Irwin, Goacher -2.25, Cordingley, Day -2. Then Liddiard -1.75,Bond -1.5,Evans -1,Gregory -0.75,Magee 0.

To get the old minimum of -5 would be equivalent to a grade of 200, which I believe is about the highest grade ever achieved. The top players would have something to aim for, which might induce them to fill in their cards. I'd get 3.5 bisques off Fulford, which I believe would make it a fair game, depending on the quality of the lawn. I'd get 19 points for beating any of the Big Four level, 18 for Mulliner etc. This all seems about right to me. Best of all, everyone would have a better idea of a player's ability from their handicap.

If you have any suggestions for the improvement of the A.H.S. send them to the editor, marking the envelope A.H.S.

All suggestions will be published and the Handicap Co-ordination Committee will be asked to comment upon the suggestions in future issues.

Ed.



HELPFUL HINTS No.2

by Don Gaunt

A Series of short tips and ideas for beginners and improvers

Please note that these hints may not always be the best solution, consider your options carefully.

Using your ratios

In helpful hints No.1, I introduced the idea of ratios. I want now to extend that idea into break making.

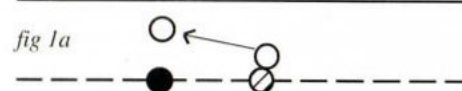
Balls on the Yard Line

There are many occasions where you can play a shot other than a take-off, giving a better break building opportunity. Here are a few which only require a little practice to master.

An important point must be made here. The ratios that have been discussed and were shown in the table in HH1 all assume that the angle of split is small. As the angle gets bigger, so does the distance your ball travels. The amount of change can only be learned by experience, so for now, only use the information given here when both your ball and the croqueted ball are travelling in roughly the same direction.

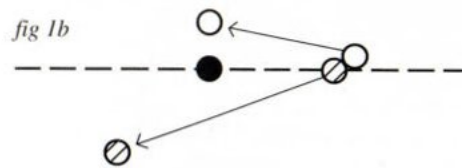
1. Balls on the yard line about 2 feet apart.

fig 1a



In fig 1a, white takes off from stripe to get a rush on black. This leaves stripe virtually on the yard line.

fig 1b



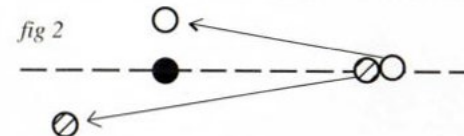
In fig 1b, a little split shot is played. Here, as well as getting the rush on black, stripe is

sent some way into the lawn. How much? This depends on the angle of the shot, but you should be able to get stripe about a yard in ie 2 yards off the boundary. This may not seem much but that extra yard may be very useful later on when you are trying to get a rush on stripe. Notice that a stop shot is suggested even though this is less accurate than a drive. This is because the distance that white has to travel is small and with a bit of practice you should be able to play this shot with confidence. If you have trouble with stop shots then use a drive, but of course stripe will not travel so far. Also, practise your stop shots!

2. Balls on the yard line about 2 yards apart.

Firstly I have to say that any distance shot in the yard line area should be preceded by a careful examination of the slopes! This advice applies wherever ball position is critical e.g. around hoops. Watch others playing and see what happens to their ball. Assuming the terrain is fairly flat, then a take-off can be used, but with the same drawback as in 1a. A split shot as in 1b can also be used. However, this requires a very accurate calculation of angles.

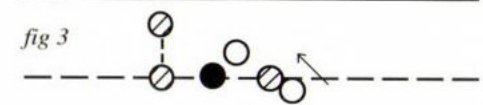
fig 2



A compromise, fig 2, is to aim the croqueted ball (stripe) so that it misses black by one foot to the left as you look at it. Then, if you aim your mallet directly at black, your ball (white) will go one foot to the right of black. You can choose the type of shot to play depending on how far you want stripe to go.

In the example of a half roll was used. Once you have got a bit of confidence, this shot can be played as accurately as a take-off would have been. It may (given a flat lawn) also be played over quite long distances.

3. Balls on the yard line about 2 inches apart.



In this situation you may well find that playing a take-off or a split shot will put stripe in the way of your rush. In this case, fig 3, play a little half or three quarter roll putting both balls into the yard line area - but not off! Stripe is then replaced on the yard line leaving your rush line free.

Balls near hoops

You can use your knowledge of ratios to place a croqueted ball the correct distance beyond your hoop. For example, you are taking croquet from 4 feet in front of your hoop. You want your ball to be one foot in front of the hoop and the croqueted ball to be 3 yards beyond the hoop. The ratio is thus 4:1 which is a drive shot.

Coaching Tip Correction

In the last issue there was an error in example 1 of the Classic Coaching Tips article. It should have read-

1. A drive shot where the croqueted ball travels 8 yards and your ball travels 2 yards.

Points Of View

Lionel Tibble of the Northampton Club focuses his, and hopefully others, attention on a relatively small yet vitally important aspect of our game - Hoop Setting.

An issue which I feel has not received due recognition either in praise or criticism, is the subject of hoop setting. So, here goes my two penny worth.

It has been my experience that different clubs adopt different interpretations on the laws concerning the above especially when hoops are set for tournaments. There are clubs where the hoops can be guaranteed to comply with the laws and there are those clubs which do not comply.

How many of us have watched balls settle into rabbit runs, and in some cases what I would call elephant traps, such is the size of the rabbits at some clubs? How many times has running a hoop at an angle resulted in the ball settling in the jaws with a dull clank in stead of deflecting cleanly from a firm upright? "Loose hoop? what a pity". There is also the problem of iceberg hoops, the ones which have nine tenths below the surface. Ever tried jumping a ball in the jaws when there isn't enough clearance for it to go through the hoop and over the obstructing ball? The above are just three things that

some may think are of peripheral importance when compared to actual hoop width. Again drawing from a limited experience, regulation width hoops promote accurate hoop approaches and good croquet generally. Ever sat out in a game where your opponent is running hoops from all over, success giving him or her the confidence to continue approaching hoops in a haphazard manner?

These are by no means faults which are easily overlooked especially when the Referee of the Tournament or his appointee may spend a considerable amount of time and effort in checking and setting hoops, for instance, at a ten lawn club. If a hoop needs to be moved because either the holes are overlapped or there is a rabbit run, then it should be moved. In fact if these problem hoops are identified and moved prior to a tournament starting, I think the time and effort could well be reduced on a daily basis. Remedial stopgaps for instance, in packing the holes with grass cuttings, may be fine for an hour or so, but after the hoops have been struck hard a few times by the balls and the

cuttings have dried out and fallen to the bottom of the carrot hole, the hoops are just as poor as they ever were.

There are many practical excuses which can be called upon to justify sloppy hoops. If hoops are removed at the end of each day's play then the wear and tear on the holes is increased. Sometimes extra wide hoops are excused since the lawns are difficult and fast. I believe that the latter is catered for within the width tolerances as specified and there is no need to overcompensate.

These are only my own impressions, opinions and experiences, for what they are worth. However, if there is a body of opinion out there in the croquet world, of a sympathetic viewpoint to those which I have expressed, then isn't it time due recognition was given to good hoopsetting and bad, instead of the polite 'thank you' to the hoopsetter at the end of a tournament. If criticism of a person's way of setting hoops is likely to cause friction then the issue should be addressed through the tournament manager who has the comfort of knowing that there are certain standards which are laid down.

Just in case anyone is in doubt where I stand on this - Sloppy Hoops Means That Someone Is Doing A Sloppy Job (albeit with the best of intentions).

No doubt Lionel and others will be pleased to hear that Colin Irwin has kindly agreed to write an article on the art of hoop setting. So who knows, perhaps wobbly and subterranean hoops, as well as elephant traps might just be a thing of the past. Ed.

The 105th British Open Championship

Reg Bamford Completes a hat trick of Singles Titles.....Debbie Cornelius becomes the first woman to reach the semi-finals since 1966.....David Maugham & Steve Comish claim their first doubles title.

Report by Stephen Mulliner

This year's Opens attracted an entry of 45, which included most of the usual suspects, quasi-veterans such as Heap, Murray, Noble, Openshaw and Vincent, and a cosmopolitan element featuring Australia (Dean Paterson - the current Australian Open Champion), Bermuda (John Meachem), France (Yoann Ravez), New Zealand (Aaron Westerby), South Africa (Andy Knox, Wynand and William Louw and, of course, Reg Bamford, the Fulham Springbok) and U.S.A. (Erv Peterson). A notable absentee was Robert Prichard, banker, player and distinguished Opens reporter who lost a three year battle with a brain tumour shortly before the event. His presence will be greatly missed.

The event had a slightly low-key feel despite imminent selection for the 1996 MacRobertson Shield, due no doubt to the hot and oppressive weather, the comparatively short interval since the World Championship in France which involved many of our better players and the rather easy playing conditions. Last year, an enlightened policy of reducing the watering in the fortnight of hot weather before the event had rendered the front lawns "interesting" and the cricket-pitch lawns "fiendish". This year, with similar preceding conditions, the front lawns had been maintained in their traditional verdant state and, unusually, the back lawns were just as slow. There can be little doubt that most competitors would prefer conditions which did not place such a premium on shooting, although, interestingly, the general standard of shooting was moderate and there was little evidence that the conditions influenced the outcome of the majority of matches or the fate of the more fancied players which, as usual, remained firmly in their own hands.

The early rounds of the Singles contained little drama and saw comfortable progress for all eight seeds. This changed in the upper half of the third round where two seeds made an unexpected exit. David Maugham, top seed and usually top shot, met the ultra-steady Jeff Dawson and followed a non-routine 26TP by two failed TPOs which Dawson gratefully converted into his best Open victory. It was also the end of Stephen Mulliner's record of reaching the quarter-finals every year since 1981. Wynand Louw was the victim of a TPO in the deciding game but escaped in spectacular fashion by running 1-back from the north boundary to the south, hitting his

opponent in corner 4 and finishing. Debbie Cornelius had continued her impressive World Championship form with three triples in four games and now disposed of Mark Avery in three rather patchy games marked by some vigorously failed hoops. Michael Heap, retaining his Prichardic accolade of Father of the Tournament, played no fewer than five games during Wednesday and then squared his match against the Champion, Reg Bamford, with a classic 26TP before succumbing in the third. The lower half of the draw obeyed the predictions although Robert Fulford had to quell Steve Comish with two TPOs and David Goacher survived a Chris Clarke TPO in game 2 before succumbing in the decider. They were joined by the improving Ian Burridge, fresh from the World Championship semi-final and a close call against Erv Peterson, and the experienced David Openshaw, the 1995 Men's Champion, who surrendered opening games to both Paterson and Day.

The Manager, the inevitable Richard Hilditch, decided that the conditions were so easy that he should break new ground and use best-of-5 in the quarter-finals on Friday. He was ably assisted by Bamford and Clarke who encountered little effective opposition from Louw and Openshaw in matches which demonstrated the importance of good shooting as the only realistic way of regaining the innings. Clarke was particularly impressive with three TPs, giving him 7 from 8 singles games. Fulford and Burridge staged a re-match of their World Championship semi-final with four TPs. Fulford took the first after a Burridge TPO, although he needed three attempts to assemble the winning break, and the second after Burridge finished on peg and rover. Although Burridge took the third with a routine 26TP and started well in the fourth, a hamper after hoop 3 gave Fulford the opening he needed.

The remaining quarter-final featured Cornelius and Dawson who had outstanding doubles commitments. Hilditch's hopes of another quick result were raised when Cornelius took advantage of errors to lead 2-0, were dimmed only a little when Dawson replied 26TP in the third but dashed when Dawson's TPO in the fourth was followed by very cautious tactics in a two-hour endgame in which Cornelius hit a hatful of shots but could not convert any into a winning break. However, she held her nerve and her

shooting together to take the decider +17TP and become the first woman to reach the semi-finals since Hope Rotherham in 1966.

The Doubles had started off with a bang, or rather a crash, when the defending champions, Bamford and Mulliner, failed to get to grips with the cricket pitch as well as the stalwart Dawson and Wiggins. This appeared to leave the door open for Clarke and Fulford to gain their fifth title and they duly cruised impressively to the final with six triples and a quadruple in seven games and thereby set both a new partnership record of seven consecutive final appearances since 1989 and a new individual record for Clarke of one more, namely all the years that he has entered the event. The other finalists were the seeded Comish and Maugham, who survived a close call against Burridge and Heap in the quarters (Heap failed rover in game 3 with Burridge on penalty with the opponents on 1 and 1) and overcame Dawson and Wiggins in three games in the semi-final. Their closest call came in game 1 of the semi-final against Cornelius and Westerby on Friday evening but +3TP was followed the following evening by +26TP.

The Clarke/Fulford semi-final was one of those rare matches which can be justifiably said to take croquet to a new level. The bald facts are that Fulford won in four games containing 25 turns in a little over 3 hours. A shorthand description gives a flavour of its clinical speed. Game 1: CC hit in turn 3, RF hit, went to 4b, CC hit, failed after two peels of a TPO and RF hit and finished +19 in turn 6. Game 2: RF laid the so-called "super-shot" ball 2 yards west of hoop 5, CC played near corner 2, RF hit him and went to 4b, CC missed and RF won +26TP in turn 5. Game 3: CC laid the super-shot ball, RF played near corner 2, CC hit him but stuck in hoop 1. RF hit and went to 1b with a delayed 6P leave, CC hit and went to 1b with a "ladies" 6P leave, RF missed, CC completed five peels in turn 7 before failing a 4 foot 20 degree angled rover peel and finishing with an imperfect contact leave. RF took forward ball to 4b but CC hit and finished +17 in turn 9. Game 4: RF laid the super-shot ball, CC hit and split the balls off the east boundary peg high and just north of corner 4. In turn 3, RF played from B baulk, rushed the nearer ball to corner 4 and went to 4b. CC missed and RF took the match +26TP in turn 5. Simple, really.

