

Club Focus

Ipswich C.C.

Nobody is entirely sure when the first croquet ball was struck at Ipswich but if the date on the Club's oldest trophy is anything to go by it must have been some little time before 1904. To this day an Edwardian aura hangs about the two ancient croquet lawns which snuggle into the gentle slopes of Christchurch Park. On a summer Sunday the sound of the band playing in the park below drifts up to us through the trees, church bells ring out from the town and a 'stop-me-and-buy-one' ice cream vendor cycles idly amongst strolling lovers, street urchins and other sundry town's folk. Visitors to the club approach us along a tree-lined avenue dedicated to the memory of Ipswich's civic dignitaries and known as the Mayor's Walk. The avenue itself, carved through shrubbery grown dense with the passage of time, finally opens out into an airy space where stands our Head Quarters - a building not quite large enough to be called a pavilion yet deserving of a more dignified title than that of a 'hut'. Imagine a wooden ticket office on a country railway station in the 1940's and you've just about got the picture.

It is from this homely edifice that our members sally forth to do battle, not only on our lawns, but on lawns throughout the country and indeed upon some lawns in other countries, for we are a much travelled lot. It is from here also that modest quantities of tea are dispensed together with immodest quantities of the more potent brands of cider - we play better on cider. Catering is basic but always of the highest quality.

But enough of whimsy. Suffice to say that, at Ipswich, we play our croquet in a very friendly atmosphere and in delightful surroundings; which is not to say that we lack competitive vim when occasion calls. For so small a club - about thirty members in an average year - we turn out a remarkable number of teams for both local and national competitions and we seem to enjoy a pretty reasonable measure of success.

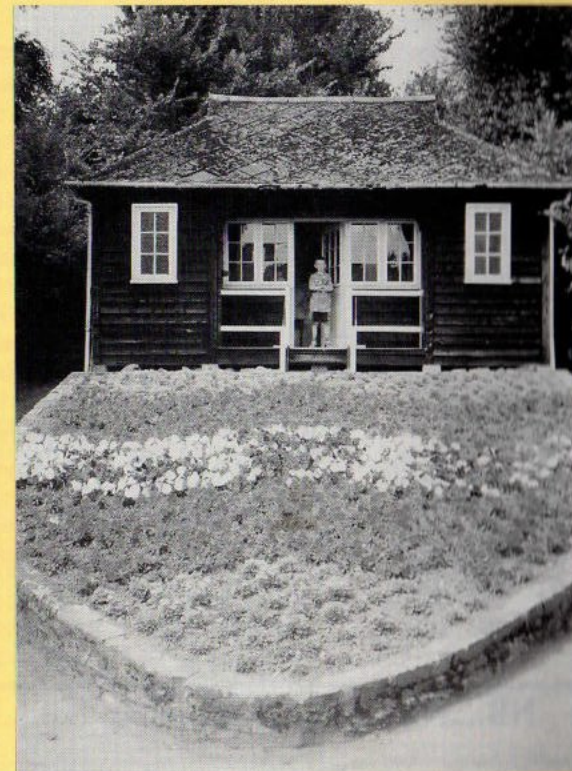
On the domestic front we offer club members the opportunity to participate in a bewildering number of competitions and feel that, in this respect, it is most important to cater for all levels of ability. Our trophy cabinet is impressive and everyone should get the chance to compete for a share in its contents.

The club offers coaching to members at all levels, although the programme for this particular branch of our activities seems to be in a constant state of flux. Our presence in a public park attracts quite a degree of interest, most of it welcome and our policy is to ensure that people who ask are encouraged with information about the game and about our activities as a club. We have at least one club night per week which provides new members with an opportunity to 'taste the waters' or gives existing members the chance to jockey for position in the club ladder competitions, or simply for us all to enjoy a sociable game, followed by a sociable hour or so in the pub.

For a small club, a programme of three C.A. tournaments a year is quite ambitious and its consistent success is due entirely to the efforts of those members who manage the competitions so amicably, who deal with the correspondence so efficiently and who turn up early to help dress the lawns and put out the chairs; not forgetting those dedicated few who never fail to conjure miracles of culinary excellence from a succession of smoky struggles with the fabled club barbecue. In addition, most weekends throughout the summer season will see activity of some sort on the lawns, more often than not in the form of a club competition and we even run a couple of winter tournaments which are always well supported.

The cosmopolitan nature of our membership is phenomenal, not only in terms of ethnic origin but also in terms of age, sex, and mallet skills. In order to avoid embarrassment to individuals, suffice it to say that the age difference between players has been known to hover around the sixty-five year mark whilst the bisque difference can soar to a staggering twenty-six. We are particularly blessed in having a veritable quiverful of very skilful and charming lady players, in fact I would be interested to hear from any club which can better Ipswich's proud boast in that respect. We also have a pretty good smattering of top rank men players. It is perhaps fitting that two players from Ipswich, one man in the comely shape of Steve Comish and one woman, the adorable Debbie Cornelius, will be playing for G.B. in the MacRobertson Shield.

And finally a word about the lawns. We are extremely lucky to enjoy the benefit of professional maintenance to a high standard through the good offices of Ipswich Borough Council Parks Department. However, there has been talk in some quarters of croquet becoming too easy on a flat even-paced surface, even some suggestions that the provision of hills would make the game more exciting. If your thinking leans in this direction then try Ipswich during a hot dry spell when the lawns are fast and unforgiving. Challenging they may be but dull? Never.



The club hut at Ipswich - more like a wooden ticket office on a country railway station in the 1940's.



The lawns at Christchurch Park, Ipswich - fast and unforgiving but never dull.

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The CROQUET Gazette

Issue 243

May 1996



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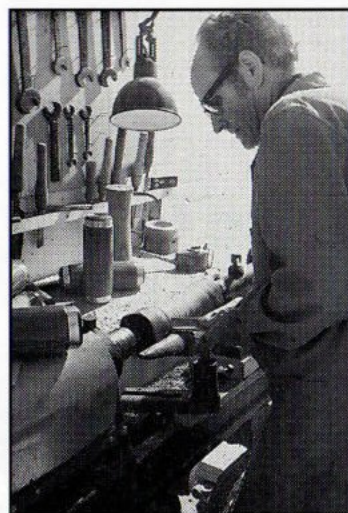
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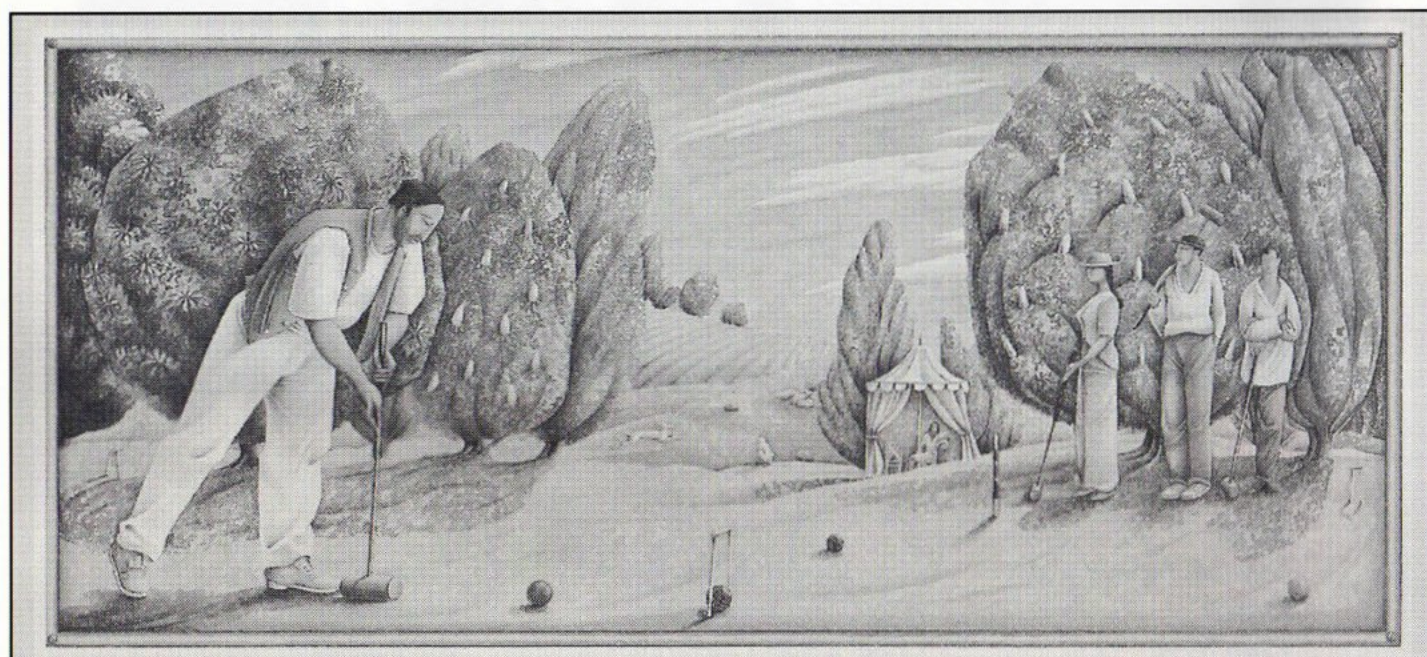
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The
**CROQUET
GAZETTE**

No.243 (May 1996) Price £2.50

Front Cover: Winning photograph from the 1995 photographic competition, taken by Monica Catling (Lansdown CC). The photo was taken at Plymouth CC and features Heather Perrin (Bristol) and Bernard Webster (Plymouth).

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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/Caricatures** 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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Room For Improvement

It is now over a year since I attended my first council meeting, and likewise a federation conference. In the time between then and now I have experienced my first A.G.M and most recently my first clubs conference. None of these events were particularly earth shattering in isolation, but collectively they had a common theme, which was communication. This is also the main theme and reason for the Gazette, but it would appear that we have a lot to learn about the subject, and even more about how to utilise the form and means of communication open to us.

There are obvious difficulties in attaining a good and consistent quality of communication on a regular basis. Firstly, an examination of the number and geographical spread of members causes problems. Then consideration has to be given to the fact that we are basically quite a small bunch of amateurs administered by an even smaller bunch of amateurs. Is it therefore any wonder that, inevitably, our communication is less than it could be?

This is a problem not only perceived and experienced here in England though; it would appear that other countries too have problems in this area. The unfortunate problem is that as croquet expands to new countries and areas our combined deficits in the field of effective communication become more and more apparent.

The reason I have chosen to highlight this problem is because within the recent past weeks the internet has seen the birth of two on-line magazines based in America, the first of which is 'Croquet America', the second 'Croquet World'. 'Croquet World' is the first attempt at an international magazine dedicated to croquet, something that can be of use and value to existing croquet players, but perhaps more importantly, can also provide a window to the croquet world for countless numbers of internet users who may prove to be prospective players in the future. The first request I received from the editor of Croquet World, Bob Alman, was an article on croquet in Europe, as it was stated that players in America know little or nothing of what is going on in the European croquet scene. Unfortunately I had to turn down this opportunity of enlightening our American cousins, amongst others, as I too know little or nothing of the European croquet scene. Alas I could also say the same of Australian, New Zealand, South African and American croquet, to name just a few. I find it difficult to believe there is nothing going on in other countries, and even more difficult to believe that there is not more happening in this country than I am informed or aware of, so where does all of the information go to?

I suspect that some is filed under 'P' for paper, I know that a certain amount is sat upon and not distributed until requested, which leaves only a small proportion to be distributed freely. I am not advocating that every single piece of news or information should be distributed freely to all and sundry, but it is time perhaps that we considered more carefully likely recipients of such information before sentencing it to a year or two in the filing cabinets before it meets its maker in shredders or dustbins.

I have been encouraged by a much improved response and activity from members since the last issue. Whether this was due to the threats of certain articles I have in my possession being published, a certain lament or other reasons, perhaps we will never know. The important thing is that more members are taking an active interest, something that I hope will continue to grow and develop in the future, for the benefit of players present, and prospective players in the future.

Croquet Questionnaire

As yet the number of replies to the questionnaire, regarding injuries in croquet, placed in the March issue of the Gazette has been very disappointing. In order for the study to have any value either in a statistical or practical way many more questionnaires must be forwarded to Newcastle University. You are therefore urged, if you have not already done so, to complete the questionnaire and return it as soon as possible, whether you have suffered an injury or not. This will cost you nothing other than perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes of your time, which seems a small price to pay for some valuable research into croquet, which could be of benefit to you and others in the future.

Southport & Birkdale C.C.

Following the publication of the fixture book, the Southport and Birkdale club would like to point out

that they no longer use Birkdale balls for tournaments, but do in fact use Jaques balls for tournament play.

New Lawns For Swindon

Swindon C.C. have two new lawns at Moredon Sports Complex, Churney Manor Industrial Estate, Swindon. The new lawns were opened on April 20th by the Mayor of Thamesdown, Councillor Bert Smith and the President of the Croquet Association, John Solomon.

1995 Croquet Photographic Competition Winner

The winner of the competition was Miss Monica Catling of the Landsdown Croquet Club, her prize being a weekend for two at The Ripon Spa Hotel. The winning photo is on the front cover of this issue and features Miss Heather Perrin and Bernard Webster.



Winners of the Hurlingham Silver Jubilee Cup for the past five years. L to R: Sue Thrussell, Gina Lewis, Nelson Morrow, Anne Stephens and Robin Brown.

~ CROQUET DEVELOPMENT ~

For some years now, croquet Development work has been funded by mean of a Sports Council grant and the Croquet Association has employed a National Development Officer. When the current NDO's contract expires this year, we shall move to a different system where individual projects under the Forward Plan will be contracted to people with appropriate skills. Such projects would include:

Recruitment: administration of recruitment schemes.

Publicity: review and re-design the Croquet Association's information leaflets.

Schools: promotion of croquet in schools.

Sponsorship: seeking sponsorship for Croquet Association events.

Although each project is separate and a fee would be negotiated for each, it is possible that some might be combined for one person or be an extension of the duties of the Croquet Association Secretary. Their continuation would depend upon continuing Sports Council support. Would anyone interested in any of these projects, please contact me in the first instance the Chairman of Council, Bill Lamb - Tel. 01482 - 840739

There were several other photographs which the judges felt were of a quality high enough to be commended, which will appear in this and future issues.

CA v Scottish CA

The fixture is to be played at Tyneside C.C. on August 31st / September 1st. Anyone wishing to be considered to play in this match should contact Alan Linton on 0161 - 9807769.

Lionheart Designs Competition Winners

Congratulations to the following members who sent the first ten correct entries to the wordsearch competition sponsored by Lionheart Designs. The prizes of personalised T-shirts will be with you in the near future, if you do not already have them. All other entrants will in due course be receiving a £2 voucher to be redeemed against any product in the Lionheart Designs catalogue.

The winning entries were received from:

Mrs B Toye - Sidmouth
Mr G Verinder - Worthing
Mr K Platter - Oxfordshire
Mrs C Leach - Wells
Mrs F Ransom - Bristol
Mrs J Hull - Chippenham
R.J. Hackett - Birmingham
Martin Hodge - Jersey
Mrs M Clary - Colchester
Mrs R Danby - Stroud

Merit Award Scheme

Chris Clarke has relinquished his duties as merit award administrator and Bill Arliss has now taken up the reins. There are still some merit badge claim cards in circulation with incorrect addresses. Please ensure that all future claims are addressed to:-
Bill Arliss, 30 Hove Park Villas, Hove BN3 6HG

Seniors' Championship

Following the Tournament Committee's decision to abandon the Seniors' Championship (over 50's) in 1996, Nigel Aspinall and Martin Murray have got together to organise it, with the Tournament Committee's blessing, though not official participation.

Date 19 - 21 July 10.00am start

Manager Nigel Aspinall

Secretary The Games Manager, Roehampton Club, Roehampton Lane, London, SW15 5LR (Tel 0181 - 876 - 1621)
Entries £12 per player, payable to Roehampton Club, close July 11th.

Format Single life, best of three; Swiss consolation event.

Exceptions and additions to general conditions.

1. Qualifying age is 50 on January 1st 1996.

Letters...

Full Bisque - The Final Word

Dear Gail,

Until last year all our club competitions were played full bisque from either scratch or a base and every year the middle or lower bisquers have taken the trophies.

Last year we devised an 'in club' league using the standard bisque difference method and, lo and behold, two high bisquers (handicaps 24 and 20) took first and second place and generally our high bisquers did better than ever before. The reason for this is quite clear to me.

If you hand a low bisquer a couple of bisques he is likely to make much better use of them than his high bisquer opponent will make of his two extra ones and so on. Surely on this reckoning the standard difference game must favour the high bisquer and vice versa.

Another point often overlooked is that the standard game can help concentrate the mind on finding ways and means of setting up and playing breaks without larger numbers of bisques. Thus the standard tournament is an outstanding occasion for learning and improving. Tony Garner - York C.C.

Dear Tony,

I was tempted not to make a reply to your letter, then I realised that if I did not make some comment we would all have to suffer another ten years of articles on the merits of full bisque play. I believe there is only one thing wrong with full bisque play, that is that very few people wish to play it, for various reasons, and no amount of reasoning or explanations from any source will alter that fact, that is human nature. The subject as far as the Gazette is concerned, is now closed. Ed.

Whiter Than White

Dear Gail

I think I can throw some light on Roger Jackman's letter about white clothing as I rather think I was partly responsible for whites now being the norm, at least for tournaments. Incidentally, there is no rule. It is merely a convention that most clubs like to see observed.

I played in my first tournament in 1947. At that time whites were hardly ever worn. We have to distinguish between ladies (as they were always referred to in those days) and men. Ladies wore dresses, of any colour as I recall, with one exception, namely Kay Longman who wore a gray flannel divided skirt because she played centre style, and a very sensible garb it was for those days, since ladies rarely wore trousers.

Men certainly wore a motley selection

of clothing, the most common I suppose being gray flannels and a blazer, (very few men played without a jacket of some kind). A rather special dress I remember was a Mr. W.E.C. Cotton (Bill, I believe, but as no-one ever used Christian names in those days I can't be positive.). I saw him playing at Roehampton in the President's Cup 1949 in morning dress, for he had married that morning. He was about 60 at the time, and obviously had his priorities right!

In 1950 I was a member of the English team which visited New Zealand for the MacRobertson Trophy and having spent 3 months there Humphrey Hicks and I went on to Australia for another 2 months giving demonstrations at many clubs. When we returned home we jointly wrote the following letter which was published in the May 1951 Gazette:-

"Dear Sir, It is no exaggeration to say that what has struck us most in our croquet tour of New Zealand and Australia was the excellent effect produced by all players wearing white on the courts.

The weather, as was proved at the New Zealand Championships, when it was cold and often wet, makes but little difference on this score.

We most strongly urge that English croquet players - one and all - shall adopt a uniform of white".

The following month the Editor, H.F. Crowther Smith, wrote a lengthy article saying that this letter had aroused considerable discord, mainly because we had suggested that some sartorial uniform be adopted. This word appeared to cause offence, although he conceded that there had been some improvement in male attire - braces were no longer visible. He concluded "The subject has inspired our Poet Associate thus to break into song:-

When I was young and debonair
I wore white flannels with an air
Of confidence undaunted,
Supported round my slender waist,
By scarf of symmetry and taste
My college colours flaunted.
Now I am old, my blood just freezes,
With Northern wind or Eastern breezes,
I hobble round on sticks.
So if I don't appear in court
With lovely flannels newly bought,
Forgive me Mr. Hicks

S.H."

I rather suspect the author was Stan Horsley, a quite good player of around scratch, who was possibly around 70 at that time and

looked very morose with a very hunched back. He tended to moan about anything and everything, but it was all in fun with a twinkle in his eye and he was in fact a most charming man.

Yours sincerely
John Solomon

Dear Gail,

I, for one, like to see all the 'whites' on the lawn on club and tournament days. What I certainly would not like to see is a motley crowd in different coloured clothes on special days.....and what about when other clubs in their different colours get together?

Dark green shirts may be acceptable for club play at Surbiton, but surely muddy lawns from worm casts etc. cause trousers to get grubby, not the shirts. In any case mud is mud - it will still mark coloured clothing... and what about the shoes? Una Atter-Martin
Cheltenham

Dear Gail

Writing as someone who spends a lot of time washing the 'whites', I could not disagree with Roger Jackman (issue 242) more.

In Tunbridge Wells, we have battled with the local council for many years to convince them of the merits of croquet and part of our strategy is to insist that members wear predominantly white at all time to show that croquet is a serious sport and not a halfhearted pastime. We now have a splendid clubhouse and three lawns in a prestigious park in the middle of Tunbridge Wells, courtesy of the council. As it is in full view of the public, it is even more important to continue that image.

Audrey Howell
Royal Tunbridge Wells

Dear Gail

Would Roger (issue 242) rather we wore striped or hooped clothing - croquet colours of course - or vertical stripes for the larger figure? Heaven forbid! Just look what has happened to Tennis and the only reason they allowed change was for MONEY. Shirt sponsors wanted distinctive shirts easily recognised on TV with a change every year to make you buy more to keep in fashion. Come back Fred Perry, your style was everlasting.

Players who cannot bother to wear white just 'lack moral fibre' or are sheer b***** idle. I guess it just reflects modern life - no personal pride - just throw on any old thing and to hell with conforming - 'I'm an individual!' - You're a scruff! So you have to do a little more washing. Once you let things slide a little someone will always go beyond it like wearing warm, waterproof, flat soled ski boots! Let's keep it white - all white!

Modern materials give us an easier life, so my wife tells me.
Len Hawkins
Ramsgate

Is anyone man or woman enough to support Roger Jackman's suggestion? I have a box of a proprietary brand of soap powder for the first such letter. Of course if there is no such letter I shall send it to Roger. Ed

News From Down Under

Dear Gail

I played in the 5th Australian Masters Games at Melbourne, a biennial event which is held in different areas in rotation, and there were excellent features which would greatly benefit competitors in British tournaments. I hope the Council will consider them very carefully.

The Croquet players were well served in the Games, and ten clubs were used in the Melbourne area. I played all my games at the five-court Warleigh Club, headquarters of the Victoria Croquet Association. The innovations which I would like to see adopted world-wide are as follows.

1. There was a non-playing referee on duty by every lawn.
2. After the toss, the five minute practice begins, using one's own balls (ball). This was very popular with players from all countries, and therefore it should be adopted everywhere. Getting the feel of the lawn and the hoops is very important, in a game which can be decided by what happens at the start.
3. The game then started with the referee controlling the clock. When time was called play stopped immediately, and only balls actually in motion could score points. This simple system is far better than that of the CA, which leads to so many complications and controversies. There is no reason why the game should continue after the stipulated time has elapsed.
4. Another excellent reform was the use of quarter bisques in doubles. When partners' handicaps are added together, and the total divided, the result often gives a quarter or three-quarters of a bisque. The totally unfair practice has been to convert these into a half bisque or full bisque. The Australians have ended this unfair practice by creating the quarter bisque, which allows one extra stroke from which no point can be scored. Three-quarters of a bisque are separated into a half bisque and a quarter bisque, taken at any time.

Leslie Riggall
South Africa

Exercising Thought On Warm-Ups

Dear Gail

I read with great interest the letters about warm-ups and also the questionnaire on croquet injuries. As a gym instructor and a Sports therapist I am involved with all types of sports people from weekenders right up to Premier League footballers. The first point mentioned - warm-ups - can be tackled without interfering with croquet etiquette. A few simple mobility and stretching exercises prior to the commencement of the game should help to loosen up the joints and save any pulled muscles.

I do not prescribe a high impact aerobics class in front of the pavilion 30 minutes before the start of play, but just 5 to 10 minutes of mobilising work could save a week of aches and pains. If anyone would like a few tips, I will be at numerous tournaments this year, just ask me. I look forward with eager anticipation to the results of the injury questionnaire sent out in the March Gazette. This research will hopefully help to pinpoint the common injuries we experience in our game and lead to the avoidance of them. Once the root cause has been established then exercises to strengthen suspect areas can be prescribed to stop the injury happening. As they say "the best cure is prevention".

Terry Burge
Surbiton

Golf Croquet - Convince Me It Is A Serious Sport

Dear Gail,

During the past twenty years I have spent many days teaching people to play, and appreciate Association Croquet as a modern day game that calls for much skill, concentration and tactical ability. In addition to this I have waged constant battles with the sporting media, both press and T.V., to present the game as an intelligent and active sport for young and old. In this latter sphere, I cannot claim a great deal of success. Media presenters will not take the sport seriously: the visiting reporters on arrival at the club always trot out the hoary chestnut about it being a vicious game where a player's sole object is to send their opponent's ball into the shrubbery. The reporters' visit usually ends with them wanting to have a 'go'. The final presentation (if any!) in the press or on a T.V. screen is more often than not, a complete comic parody of the original intention.

I was therefore completely shocked to learn that the C.A. had formed a committee to promote Golf Croquet. Cassell's Book of Sports and Pastimes published circa 1900 contains a detailed account of the game of croquet from 1860. Although the game changed several times the croquet strokes were always used and the rules adopted by the All England Croquet Association in 1897 have been basically the same as those used today.

At no time in history is Golf Croquet mentioned as a croquet game: in fact 'Know the Game' and Miller & Thorp's book both state that 'Golf Croquet is not a real croquet game as the croquet stroke is never used'. 'Croquet' by J.W. Solomon does not even mention Golf Croquet. As a club policy in our introductory course of six lessons we do not mention golf croquet. All potential members are encouraged to learn Association Croquet. After becoming full members (our club would not consider a separate committee for golf croquet) all players can join in one-ball game golf croquet sessions purely as social events. I am surprised that more publicity is not given to short croquet for clubs with small lawns, garden croquet, and W.I. activity.

I realise that more players are needed to attract Sports Council grants, but I am sure that the Sports Council, by any stretch of the imagination, would not recognise Golf Croquet as a serious sport.

Iris Dwerryhouse - Sidmouth C.C.

Dear Iris,

Thanks for your letter. You obviously believe in stating clearly what you think, which I applaud. If progress is to be made in croquet we need far more honest comment. So let's have some on all of the subjects raised here.

Ed.

The Big Issue

Dear Gail,

The question is: how do we encourage more Affiliate members to become Associates? My suggestion, for open discussion by all Gazette readers is to allow all levels of Associates to play in one CA advertised tournament competition each year.

Those who pay Tournament subscriptions may feel that this is unfair, as they pay a lot more towards the Croquet Association and the official tournaments.

Many Affiliates, however, are banned at present from playing in C.A. tournaments run by their own clubs. For various reasons - time, money, inclination - they do not go to other clubs, and consider that the outlay on a tournament subscription is not worthwhile, just for one tournament per season. But, neither is the outlay on a Non-Tournament Associate subscription, because all they get is a magazine they haven't the incentive to read. (This is not my opinion you understand!)

If the added interest of being able to play in one of their own or even a neighbouring club's CA tournaments each year would bring in more Full Associate members, the Tournament subscribers might not have so great a share to take on. Some of the new Non-Tournament Associates might also see the value of this new dimension and eventually become willing Tournament subscribers.

Anna Giraud - Zeneca (Huddersfield) C.C.

Dear Anna,

Hopefully, this letter will produce some more open and honest comment upon the issue you have raised (as I know you yourself are an Associate member.) It will, however, be unfortunate that any such responses will not be available to the very people this issue affects, as Affiliates do not receive the next issue individually.

However, to look at the other side of the coin, perhaps some Affiliates who do receive this issue would care to respond as to why they have not become Associate members. I for one would be very interested to know their reasons.

Ed.

The Burley Experiment

The "Good Samaritan" Route to Popularising Croquet

by James Mays

In 1962 a retired Admiral and a retired Brigadier called on a dozen friends and neighbours in the New Forest village of Burley (population:1500) and asked if they would like to learn proper (Croquet Association) croquet.

They said they would, although none had ever seen a game played by C.A. rules. Some knew golf croquet, but most thought the "other game" consisted of putting one foot on your ball and bashing the opponent's ball out of sight so as to make running your hoop easier. A lawn was offered by a local artist, Jane Carey-Morgan, who in her penniless youth had painted her way from Cape Town to Cairo, earning just enough money to move on from one farm or village to the next.

The fledgling Burley Club had a superb piece of good luck in that Jane's lawn turned out to be a disused tennis court originally laid out by the great German player, Baron von Cramm. It was therefore perfectly flat, well drained and most important of all, of half-lawn proportions.

The club prospered, membership eventually reaching 18. Most players quickly mastered the C.A. game and a few (among them Air Cdre. J.H. Greswell, Irene Ledsham and James Mays) joined the nearby Parkstone Club,



eventually winning one or another tournament competition there. These three passed on their growing knowledge of the game, and gradually the standard of play amongst members improved.

Disaster struck when Jane Carey-Morgan died in her early 90's. The new owner, although not interested in the game, generously gave the club a year to find another lawn. Air Cdre. Greswell then made available his small lawn (13 by 8 yards) at nearby Picket Post. This sufficed until he moved away a few years later to Buckinghamshire. With no prospect of a local lawn some members left and the morale of the rest faltered. Then, responding to an appeal at the village fete, Ian Scott (the club's present Chairman) offered the use of his lawn - 19 by 11 yds.

Ian, while vaguely aware of the C.A. game, was at heart a keen golfer. To his surprise and joy, he discovered that putting and running hoops demanded similar skills. The new lawn,

Ian's enthusiasm and coaching of beginners by several experienced members, gave the club a new sense of purpose. Eventually, a second lawn became available and in 1995 a third, a former tennis court, was brought into play.

Membership over the past two years has ranged from 18 to 22, with approximately one third of the players being assigned to each lawn. The sexes are almost evenly divided and include three husband and wife couples.

On the largest lawn double-banking is sometimes used, although players quite happily alternate play and sitting out for 20 minute periods. Monday is club day, primarily for instruction, but players may arrange singles or doubles on other days of the week with the concurrence of the lawns' owners.

Annual dues are £15, the greater part of which goes to the three hosts as partial reimbursement for their maintenance costs. Play is usually from 2 to 5 pm; any extension must be at the discretion of the host. Each player brings his/her own folding chair, refreshments and mallet.

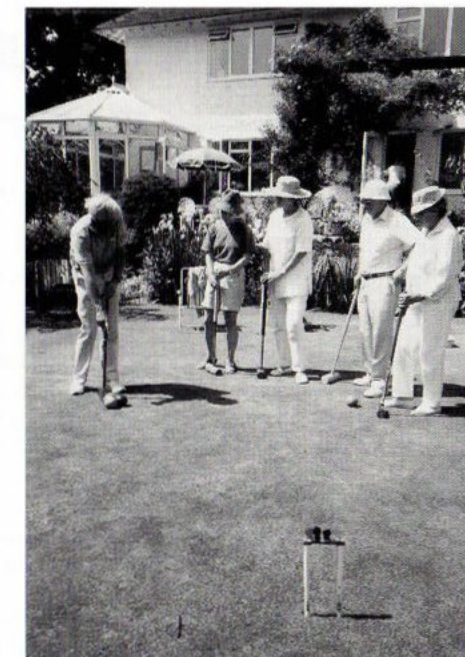
Over the years the club has staged competitions loosely based on two or three handicap groupings. (The beginners' cup is actually engraved "Nervous Class".) New players are encouraged to compete from the beginning, even if an experienced player has to stand by to answer endless questions. Special sessions are held to acquaint members with the C.A. rule book, and to demonstrate difficult techniques such as hampered shots. Occasionally matches are played with the nearby Bournemouth and Parkstone clubs.

As there is no pavilion and the lawns are at opposite ends of the two mile long village, members keep in touch by newsletters issued on an as-required basis, and by social gatherings hosted by one or another member.

Based on the Burley experience, success in starting up similar small clubs probably will depend on at least two essentials: A) One or two volunteers, preferably from an established club, who are willing to devote one afternoon per week to instruction over a year or two and B) availability of at least one playable lawn, which need not be large. The accompanying info lists some other tried and tested ideas for starting up a small, informal club on the Burley model; readers from around the country no doubt can offer other pointers.

Getting Started

1. Get agreement from two or three volunteers from an existing club to devote an afternoon per week to instructing new players, and to nurturing the new club for the first year or two of its existence. Suggested numbers of players: 8 to 16 for one lawn, up to 22 to 24 for two or three lawns. Some established clubs may wish to sponsor a small club, but this is not essential.



Beginners watch as the instructor prepares for a cannon.

Apart from instructing the new players, a sponsoring club can help by offering much used, but playable balls and other equipment at token costs. (Such support may well bring the sponsoring club welcome dividends, as in the Burley example where half a dozen players eventually joined two nearby established clubs.)

2. Select a village or town possessing several houses with lawns large enough to play the game. Half tennis court size and even smaller lawns are quite acceptable.

3. Place a notice about the intention of forming the club in the village/parish magazine or weekly newspaper serving the area. Make the invitation open to potential players in nearby places as well, say a distance that can be covered in a 15 or 20 minute drive.

4. Meet with those keen to form a club and then have them elect officers (chairman, secretary, treasurer) set modest dues (e.g. £10 to £20), examine or adopt one or more lawns for play, and obtain basic equipment.

5. To obtain initial use of a lawn and maintain the goodwill of the owner, club members must guarantee no inconvenience. All players must provide their own chairs and teas and must stick to the agreed timetable (e.g. 2 - 5 pm) for play. The club should offer to help with the owner's fertiliser costs and, if asked, also the mowing.

6. The volunteers should alternate teaching specific techniques with actual play. Some play is essential in small clubs to maintain interest of beginners, even if the quality is poor and time consuming at first.

We will be happy to share any other tips gained from our experience with anyone interested in starting up a small club. Kindly write to Ian Scott, Coach Hill House, Burley, Ringwood, Hants BH24 4HN, enclosing an SAE.

A Glossary of Croquet Terms

by Dr. Ian Plummer (C)opyright 1993-1995

Hoop Position. Being in front of a hoop in a position from which you can run the hoop.

Innings. To have control over the balls. This normally means that you have your balls together and your opponent in a disadvantageous position.

Irish Grip. One of three common methods of holding a croquet mallet for single ball strokes. For a right handed player:- the left hand grips the top of the shaft with the palm in contact with the shaft, the palm facing forward and the thumb downward. The right hand grips the shaft below the left one, the palm against the shaft and facing forward.

Irish Peel. A peel executed during a croquet shot in which both balls pass through the hoop in question. Normally played as a roll shot.

Jaws. The area lying between the uprights of a hoop.

Jawsed. A ball which has been placed partly or wholly between the jaws of a hoop.

Joining-up. To end a turn with both your balls in close proximity.

Jump Shot. A stroke played slightly down on a ball which causes the ball to jump. It imparts forward spin on the ball, but there is little control on the energy given to the ball.

Laws. The official rules of the game prepared by the Croquet Association.

Lay-up. To position your balls at the end of a turn.

Leaves. Configuration of balls at the end of a turn.

Level Play. A game which is not played on handicap. No bisques are involved.

Lift. A lift is awarded as the result of a wiring (Law 13) or as a consequence of advanced play. The ball concerned can be played from where it lies or played on to the lawn from either baulk line.

North. The boundary of the lawn spanning hoops two and three.

NSL. New standard leave. An arrangement of balls adopted at the end of the first break in an advanced game. It differs from the OSL in that one of the opponent's balls is left by hoop 4 rather than the peg.

OSL. Old standard leave. A common arrangement of balls adopted at the end of the first break in an advanced game. One opponent ball is left near hoop two and the other, preferably wired, by the peg.

Pass Roll. A croquet shot in which both balls travel some distance, with the striker's ball travelling proportionally further.

Peel. A manoeuvre in which a ball, other than the one which is struck, is made to run its hoop.

Peelee. The ball which is peeled.

Peeling. To cause a ball other than the one being struck to run its hoop.

Pegging Out. Striking a ball which is for the peg, against the peg.

Penult. An abbreviation for penultimate.

Penultimate. The eleventh hoop.

Pioneer. This is a ball waiting at your next or next-but-one hoop. It acts as a stepping stone to make the hoop approach easy.

Pilot. Another name for a pioneer ball. Often used to indicate a ball at your next hoop, whereas pioneer is used for a ball at your next-but-one hoop.

Pivot. The pivot is the ball near the centre of the lawn in a four-ball break.

Primary Colours. The set of balls coloured Blue, Red, Yellow and Black. Red and Yellow are always paired together as are Black and Blue.

Promote. Causing a ball which was not struck, or in direct contact with the struck ball, to move. For example a croqueted ball can be aimed at a ball in the jaws of a hoop, and that ball be promoted by the collision.

Pull. This describes the motion of balls in a split roll shot. Under some conditions the balls do not travel along their intended lines

but curve slightly back together (towards the aiming line). This is caused by side spin developed in the roll shot.

Reception Ball. A reception ball is the ball you roquet immediately after running a hoop. It is usually placed on the far side of a hoop you are about to run. That being the case, you normally turn your pioneer at a hoop into your reception ball when you play the croquet shot to obtain hoop position.

Roll Shot. A croquet stroke in which both balls travel similar distances.

Roquet. When the striker's ball hits a ball from which it is entitled to take croquet. Past tense roqueted (Ro-Kay'd).

Rover. The final, twelfth, hoop to be run, marked with a red crossbar.

Run a Hoop. When a ball passes through a hoop it requires.

Rush. A single ball stroke in which the striker's ball roquets another ball and causes it to move some distance.

Rush Line. This is an imaginary line which passes through a ball to be rushed and the point to where you wish to rush it to. By approaching a ball along its rush line you avoid the necessity of playing difficult cut rushes.

Second Colours. A set of balls coloured Brown, Green, Pink and White to allow two games to be played without confusion on one lawn.

Sextuple. A rare manoeuvre in which one ball is peeled through its last six hoops and pegged out whilst the striker's ball makes a break.

Shepherd. A fault in a croquet stroke, whereby the mallet accelerates or deviates from its initial line once it has made contact with the striker's ball. The striker is said to be shepherding the balls.

Shoot. To strike a ball towards a target.

Single Peel. A manoeuvre in which a ball other than the striker's is peeled through rover and pegged out.



Bisecting the Angle - the Myth is Exploded by John Solomon

Almost the first lesson we learn when we start to play croquet is how to play split shots. It seems very complicated and difficult, until, of course, our coach gives us the magic formula - 'Bisect the Angle!'.

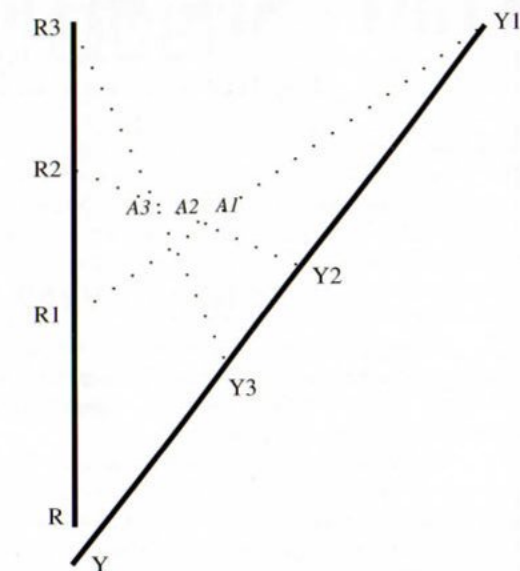
Suddenly, everything becomes clear. You are just beside the 1st hoop and you want to send Red to the 2nd hoop and Yellow to the peg to get a rush back on Blue to the 1st hoop. (Why not make the first hoop off Yellow, as you are right there? OK, you could, but this player is somewhat ambitiously thinking of the break, not just one hoop!).

The line to be travelled by each ball is quite clear, Red to the 2nd, Yellow to the peg - I don't have a protractor but I suppose the angle is about 40 degrees. So, we can see that about half that angle means that we are going to aim just to the left of the 6th hoop and that will be fine. And, if we do really aim there, and play with the right amount of weight on the shot for Red to go to the 2nd and Yellow to stop at the peg, it will probably be a pretty good shot.

But if we consider the enormous number of options for any given split shot the question is nothing like as simple as it at first seems. Bisecting the angle is not in fact a rule at all. What it fails to take into account is the relative distance that each ball has to travel. If we are playing a fairly simple split such as I have described, Red to 2, Yellow to the peg, played from the 1st hoop, it is a relaxed croquet stroke, very little follow-through, no real effort in the stroke.

But if Red needs to go 5 yards short of 2, and Yellow needs to go 5 yards past the peg, it is a very different stroke. You must hit slightly less hard and put more into the back ball, more follow-through, probably standing more over the balls.

This extra follow-through is going to make the back ball go more

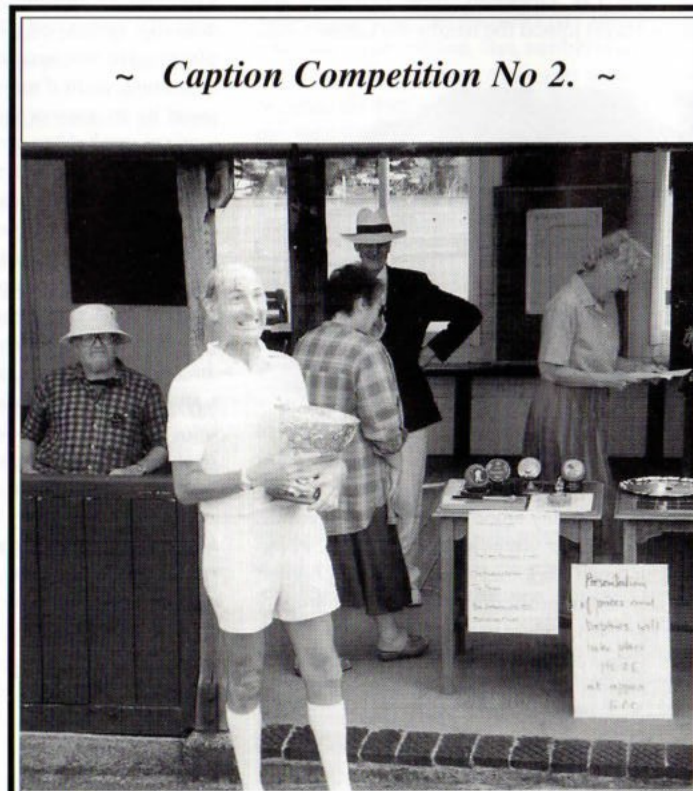


nearly in the direction of aim, and so it is necessary to aim slightly more to the right.

And if you want to play a pass roll so that Red goes only about 5 yards and Yellow goes to the 3rd hoop, you will have to aim even more to the right.

The diagram above illustrates this and from it we can formulate a new rule to determine the point of aim for split shots. It is simply this:- Aim at the point which is halfway between the ultimate destination of the two balls. You will see that for the three different croquet strokes illustrated the angle is identical but the point of aim is quite different for each (A1, A2 and A3). There is a slight difficulty in all this; it is very difficult to be certain that you did actually aim at the right spot. So if you find you are not too accurate don't blame me. I will swear blind you couldn't have aimed correctly!

~ Caption Competition No 2. ~



Just what was David Magee saying, or what was being said to him, when this photo was taken at Budliegh Salterton last season. Send your caption to the editor before June 19th. The winning caption will receive a comedy compilation audio cassette

CLUB NEWS ... CLUB NEWS ... CLUB NEWS

Belsay Hall C.C.

Moving On & Looking Back

Northumberland's loss will be East Anglia's gain! David Price, the founding Chairman of Belsay Hall croquet club, is moving on. During April he will be leaving his present home at Ellington Village in Northumberland to live at Cromer in Norfolk.

In paying tribute David, and his wife Janet, were elected Honorary members at the club's AGM at Belsay Hall. David was also invited to become the club's Life President, a position which David, in replying, said he felt honoured to accept.

Later on the same day, at the AGM of the Federation of Northern Clubs (Croquet North), the Chairman Derek Trotman, presented David with a trophy for his outstanding services to the game of croquet in the north of England. Tributes continued at a club social occasion last month, when club members had an opportunity

to say their farewells to David and Janet and present them with more souvenirs.

Sussex County C.C. (Southwick)

Centenary Plans

Whilst discussing the CA Centenary and how to involve the Sussex public, perhaps by organising competitions between various businesses, Tom Bedford suggested an event between Rotary Clubs. On 12th May teams of 4 from over eight Rotary Clubs are to compete in an all day Golf Croquet event. There will be a short introduction to Association croquet, and the offer of coaching and practice sessions one evening a week. This will lead up to a one-ball event in September. Obviously, we hope to enthruse some of these people to become club members. Then in 1997 there will be a CA Centenary Sussex Rotary Clubs Tournament over a mid-summer weekend, with trophies commemorating the event.

What about other Rotarian croquet players promoting events in their areas, with a view to a National Rotary Clubs Croquet fixture in the year 2000?

New Look Pavilion

Visitors to Southwick will notice a spectacular difference to our pavilion, which has had the frontage renewed. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Enid Ross who, when any option to capitalise was denied us by the rejection of the planning application (and at appeal, too), four years ago undertook fundraising to resuscitate the pavilion, first two soakways, the guttering and the piers, then the roof, and now the frontage, all for an amazing £18,000. Next winter our fantastic working party, who, while the major work was being done, painted and repaired everything else within sight, including rebuilding the machine shed and re-roofing the canteen and replacing windows, has plans to renew the overlap on the sides themselves and, hopefully, the following year the last phase - the back - can be undertaken.

Brave New World And Beyond

Tony Miller's account of his first real tournament

Bang, crash, rattle! Was I at an army training ground or at a croquet club? As I walked from the car park to the pavilion, this percussion was not the gentle click of croquet balls to which I was accustomed. My arrival was requested for 11.30am and I now realised that the first games were still in progress. I was invited to wait until a court was free. My own club was small, one near full size court and one half court, and still recovering from a loss of its top members 3 or 4 years ago. We had no coach or referee. Our lowest handicap had been 18 until one member galloped down the scale to finish at 9 after his first C.A. tournament.

This year we had arranged first a coaching course for novices and later six evenings of coaching under the title of "tactics and the use of bisques". Among the parting words of advice the coach said, "Get out, enter competitions, experience other lawns and other players". So here I was with a club handicap of twenty.

The delay enabled me to study the players already occupying the five courts and to discover the source of the artillery barrage. It was balls hitting edge boards at tremendous speed. We have no edge boards but a four foot thick yew hedge on two sides of the lawn. Even the yellow ball is hard to find and the loss of the black ball can delay play for many minutes. Consequently when aiming for a long distance roquet the tendency is to get the length right and not hit too hard. With edge boards this inhibition is gone and one hits hard for accuracy, especially on a less than perfect lawn. This technique took some hours to master.

All coaching courses start with a run through of the standard grips and stances but end by saying "Try them and choose what suits you". A survey of players at the tournament proved that there certainly is no correct grip, as there so many personal variations it was difficult to count them all. "Remember to stalk the ball." Some did, some didn't, some lifted their mallet, others pointed it. And as for the follow through of a stroke, well they were just as varied.

Eventually I was introduced to my opponent, a gentlemanly 16. We started off evenly and then he gave a display of the four ball break, taking one ball through eight or nine hoops. Was this the real difference between a 20 and a 16? A spell of near misses followed and encouraged by that I started scoring but no matter how often I ran two or three hoops in a break I could not catch up. Shake hands, report score and break for lunch.

This gave me the chance to ask a member why a mallet was often waved aloft, and was kindly informed that this was to obtain the attention of an umpire or referee. "Why would they need such an official?" "To watch the stroke." An operation often preceded with study and use of markers. "Why watch a stroke?" Answers were patiently given, and so my education proceeded.

Massacre!! Then I remembered another piece of coaching advice. "Use your bisques to get ahead and put pressure on your opponent."

My afternoon opponent was a lady of handicap 7. At least nine lower than I had played before. Massacre!! Then I remembered another piece of coaching advice. "Use your bisques to get ahead and put pressure on your opponent." Could I? My rows of bisques drew the comment, "How can I win against such a forest of bisques?" Already round one of the psychological battle, and the birth of my nickname, 'The Forester'. It worked. I got one ball through many hoops before my opponent moved a clip from hoop 1. I went home a happy man.

This state of euphoria was somewhat shattered when Sunday's opponent was a 5 who had played at national level. The 'forest' was still a help to me and I must say I was surprised at how often he missed, but when he did roquet it usually resulted in 3 or 4 hoops. His lead was not such that I was too depressed until about the two and a half hour stage, my usual limit. My concentration dropped considerably and missing a six foot roquet on a bisque with a four ball break ahead was a turning point. I was thanked for a good game, but I had not really tested him.

I had seen no unusual shots, I had seen misses as wide as any novice and some wonderfully positioned shots. I had learnt much by watching and having my sundry enquiries fully and generously answered but one final question remained. Would my club handicap of 20 be confirmed or had I done enough to progress to 18? The manager and secretary conferred, both official handicappers. 20 it was, I was not quite ready for 18. They were thanked and I returned home with mixed feelings. I had played a 7 and won, I had played a 16 and a 5 and lost, but learnt much.

The real reward was back at my club though, where I then only lost two matches for the rest of the season. I can't wait until the new season begins and I get more chances to reduce my handicap.

~ CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN ~

I was pleased with the recent National Croquet Conference. The turnout, with over a hundred people attending, representing more than fifty clubs, was excellent. The subjects covered in the discussion groups were wide-ranging and well reported, leading to some valuable feedback. It was clear at the end that most people felt that they had had an adequate opportunity to air their views and that the day had been worthwhile.

But, of course, that is not the end of the story. It is no use having a conference which results in nothing more than a pleasant feeling of a good day's talking. Legitimate grievances were raised and suggestions were made that need further action, and I am pleased to say that in some cases that action has already been taken.

"I regard the Croquet Association as a co-operative of council and administration, federations, clubs and all players, working for the benefit of the sport".

In my opening address I pointed out that the Croquet Association is no longer just a collection of players interested in playing in tournaments. I regard the Croquet Association as a co-operative of council and administration, federations, clubs and all players, working for the benefit of the sport. A considerable effort in time and money is spent on servicing clubs, and that is bound to increase. Council is committed to helping clubs, and evidence of that will be found in the recent grant of £500 and loan of £2,000 to the Edgbaston club to re-lay a lawn. We now have over £12,000 on loan or on offer to help clubs to improve their facilities.

It is timely to remember this, because this issue of the Gazette is sent to all players, including affiliates who pay only through the club registration fee. If we exclude the Sports Council grant, most of which is devoted to development work, club registration fees amount to less than a quarter of the income of the Croquet Association. That income may seem sufficient in view of the financial surplus achieved last year, but we still benefit from the windfall of VAT refunds and, more importantly, the tremendous amount of work that is done on a voluntary basis by a relatively small number of people. We need to increase the Croquet Association's income to ensure that the healthy position continues, and the best way to achieve that is by recruiting more associates. I am therefore appealing once again to all affiliates to consider associate membership. The non-tournament rate of subscription will remain unchanged, although other rates will be increased next year. There are no plans to raise club registration fees.

If anyone wishes to discuss associate membership with me, please ring me - 01482 840739.

Bill Lamb.



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The 1996 Clubs Conference

~ Report by Derek Trotman

A considerable number of years have passed since the CA last held a Club Conference so the Development committee felt that, despite the annual exchange of views at the Federation Conference, it would be beneficial to give the membership a chance to discuss and comment on the changes that are occurring within the CA organisation. It was therefore decided to hold a National conference at the Hurlingham Club on 24 February 1996 to which Federations and club members of CA registered and unregistered clubs were invited to participate.

On the day, some 100 delegates attended, representing the nine Federations and some fifty clubs. The proceedings were opened by Bill Lamb, Chairman of Council, who welcomed delegates and gave a presentation on 'The CA Today' which covered a number of changes which had occurred in the running of the CA and analysed sources of income and the main areas of expenditure.

Three further introductory presentations were then made by Chris Williams, Gail Curry and Ian Burrige, prior to the meeting splitting into the following four discussion groups:

- 1) How can the Croquet Association help Clubs? (Chairman - J Beech)
- 2) The Handicap System (Chairman - R Gatenby)
- 3) The Magazine (Chairman - Q Barrett)
- 4) The Tournament Programme (R Smith)

After forty minutes, delegates had the option of changing groups so that they could contribute to two of the discussion topics.

Following lunch, Colin Irwin, Chairman, International Committee, spoke on the 'International Scene', explaining the formation of the World and European Croquet Federations and how their operations affected the CA. He then referred to the arrangements for the MacRobertson Shield and introduced the team chosen to represent Great Britain in the event.

Stephen Badger, Chairman, Centenary Committee, assisted by Alan Oldham and Hamish Hall, made a presentation on the ground plans for the Centenary in 1997 and invited comments and suggestions from the floor. When the finalised plans have been agreed, they will be published in the Gazette.

The discussion group chairmen were then invited to report on the main points and conclusions reached during the four sessions and this led to a general debate which was brought to a conclusion by the Chairman calling for a straw poll on two of the subjects:

- 1) Would the membership support a direct debit means of paying subscriptions? A majority were in favour.
- 2) Was the conference considered a success and

should it be repeated? The general opinion was 'yes' and repeats should be at two or three year intervals.

A summary of the points made in the Chairman's report is given below. Some of the matters have already been dealt with and are reported elsewhere in this magazine. The remainder have been referred to the appropriate CA Committee and their actions will be reported in due course.

1) How Can The CA Help Clubs?

- a) The name Croquet is an impediment to the game as it invokes scoffing. Golf Croquet does not describe the game.
- b) The Publicity Committee should be revived with keen volunteers to:
 - i) Increase reporting in National Newspapers, T.V. and Radio.
 - ii) Provide clubs with 'structured base articles' to which they could add local flavour when submitting to local newspapers.
 - iii) Supply the Gazette to libraries.
 - iv) Advertise Croquet once a year in National Newspapers.
 - v) Update publicity leaflets for recruiting with emphasis on enjoyment, not rules.
 - vi) Prepare a library list of CA leaflets for clubs which would be available at photocopying costs. Publish the list annually in the Gazette.

Examples are :
Model Constitution for a club.
Lawn maintenance and ground improvements.
Attracting and keeping new members.
Help and tips for clubs.

- c) Combine Help II and the CA Directory and sell @£10.
- d) The Registered Club Handbook was praised.
- e) All membership enquiries must be passed to the local club.
- f) If National Croquet Day is to be continued more national publicity and clarity on the objectives is required.
- g) Guidance required on handicapping in new clubs.
- h) Issue of badges for Merit Award Scheme has had some long time delays. Requires better system with quicker response time.
- i) Merit Awards should be awarded if qualification occurs in any CA match not just fixture book tournaments.
- j) Garden Croquet Tournament needs more publicity.
- k) New clubs need more support from Federations in their early days.
- l) Strong support for a professionally produced video promoting the sport.

2) The Handicap System

- a) Guidance required by new clubs on setting handicaps and on the duties of a club handicapper.
- b) Club handicappers must take their duties seriously and regularly monitor members' handicaps.
- c) Should all Tournament Managers be able to adjust handicaps?
- d) It was agreed that handicaps based on reaching trigger points should only change at the end of a tournament.
- e) Handicaps of 12 or more should be reviewed by the Tournament Manager on the first day of the tournament.
- f) Some minus players felt there should be no minus limit to handicaps.
- g) Conditions of tournament entry should include 'handicap changes to be notified to the tournament secretary prior to the event'.

3) The Magazine

a) Surprise that the objectives of the Gazette had not been agreed and issued by Council or the Editorial Board. The Editor's objectives were considered satisfactory and it was recommended that Council endorse them.

b) To encourage Affiliates to become Associates, it was recommended that the following features should be continued or expanded:

- i) Mention of as many names of players as possible in small tournament reports.
- ii) Coaching advice, such as a serialisation of a recognised book.
- iii) Explanation of some of the trickier rules of the game.
- iv) Club profiles.

c) The Gazette should remain a journal of record. Managers must supply reports either written by them or someone appointed by them.

d) The editor should edit poorly written or excessively lengthy reports.

e) Copies of the Gazette sent to Affiliates should contain details of events for less experienced players, such as the Garden Classic.

f) It was regretted that the Publicity Committee was not functioning.

g) a majority preferred six issues of the Gazette to four larger issues.

h) It was considered sensible to appoint associate editors to relieve the Editor's heavy workload.

i) Gail Curry was congratulated on the work she had done since her appointment as Editor.

4) The Tournament Programme

- a) Lawn and ball hire. One club made the case

for increasing lawn hire to £15 and ball hire to £3 per day to help cover good lawn maintenance. While this was not supported by other clubs running CA tournaments there was a feeling amongst delegates that clubs were not consulted early enough to discuss their involvement in the organisation of such events especially in respect of the manpower requirement and the length of the competition.

b) Tournament entry fees. A short discussion on the level of club and CA tournament entry fees and the effects of any significant increase was inconclusive.

c) CA Levy. There was no criticism of the present level of levy or the method of applying it as a percentage of the entry fee.

d) Fixture book. It was noted that the length of entry for similar tournaments varied and it was suggested that entries in excess of an agreed length should be charged. It was recommended there should be an additional clear index by tournament type e.g. Handicap weekends, Open weekends.

e) Inter-County Championships. There was a suggestion that this tournament should be considered as a special case in respect of fees paid to the host clubs for the use of their facilities. An increase in entry fees should be used as extra income to the host clubs.

f) National Croquet League. This is unlikely to take place in 1996 through lack of entries. Entrants will be offered places in the Inter-Club.

g) Centenary Tournament(s). Straw polls indicated that delegates favoured club events at multiple venues on the same weekend. A final for all the winners was not supported. An alternative suggestion was a 'Brian Storey Circus' at say four venues on the same weekend. This type of event involves all forms of the game, i.e. association, golf, one-ball and short croquet with clubs providing team members.

h) Clash of dates in same locality. It was recommended that the Tournament Committee should be more pro-active in trying to ensure that events do not occur in the same locality on the same weekend.

i) B class events. It was requested that more B class events should be made available for improving players.

Conference Feedback - Part 1.

Bill Lamb - Chairman of Council

In my introductory address, The Croquet Association Today, I said that the Croquet Association is more than a collection of players who want to play in tournaments. I broke down the Croquet Association income into broad areas and showed how that money was spent, including the considerable time and effort that goes into supporting clubs and promoting croquet. In a personal story I showed how the CA's support for the Bowdon club, when that club was almost dying, had led indirectly to the formation of new clubs in Yorkshire and Humberside. All clubs and Federations are liable

to go into decline, if they do not have sufficient players with the enthusiasm to keep them going. Only the Croquet Association has the critical mass to ensure that croquet will survive and thrive. I stressed that I regard the Croquet Association as a co-operative between the Council, the administration, the Federations, the clubs and the individual players, and that the conference was intended to find out how to strengthen the Croquet Association.

Conference Actions.

A number of points were raised at the National Croquet Conference and action has already been taken on some of them, as detailed under:

Handicapping

A booklet, 'Principles of Handicapping', has been circulated to all clubs and handicappers. An extract from this booklet on setting new handicaps is printed in this issue together with some guidance on how to do the test.

The Handicap Coordination Committee (HCC) is looking into the possibility of appointing Regional Handicappers to take care of problems and complaints for Federation leagues and to assist new clubs.

Clubs that do not have a club handicapper have been identified and urged to submit names of suitable individuals to the HCC.

Merit Awards

Bill Arliss will be looking after the scheme for the coming season, and those who qualify should apply in the normal way as indicated in the Fixtures Book.

Bill cannot be expected to deal with all past problems. I shall be happy to deal with those personally. If anyone entitled to a Merit Award Badge in past seasons has not received one, please contact me (01482 840739).

Tournaments

Don Gaunt will classify tournaments by type as an extra list in the Fixtures Book.

Why you should join the Croquet Association To gain the immediate benefits - magazine, discount on items from the Croquet Association shop.

To improve your game through coaching from Croquet Association courses and from Croquet Association members.

To have a voice in the affairs of the Croquet Association through contact with Federations and Administration.

To help croquet grow as a sport - development work is largely funded through a Sports Council grant and the continuation of this aid depends upon growth.

To put back into the game something in exchange for the enjoyment you get out of it.

Gail Curry - Editor

The clubs conference proved to be a long and tiring day for your editor, but worthwhile, as it provided the first

opportunity to gather some meaningful feedback regarding the Gazette. Hopefully you have already read the general report of the conference. I look forward to your comments upon it and the action and comments from the respective committees in due course. Here I am taking the opportunity to give a response to the discussions regarding the Gazette and matters relating to them, whilst the information is still clear in all of our minds.

The general consensus in both of the discussion groups relating to the Gazette was that the magazine should have a wide appeal to all levels of players, and that this criterion was generally being met at present.

Subjects on which there were comments or suggestions made were of a fairly wide ranging nature, and deserve to be given an explanation of how they are possible either to act upon, or not, as the case may be.

There were several items relating to the production and distribution of the Gazette. The question was asked whether or not the Gazette could be put upon the shelves of the likes of W.H. Smith, to gain a wider audience for the sport. The simple answer to this is that it could not be sold in such a way, as we do not produce anywhere near the number required for this method of circulation. Whilst the idea of gaining a wider audience through making our publication more readily available to prospective players is applaudable, it raises I think an interesting and possibly controversial point. That is, the Gazette is essentially a 'house' magazine, it is entirely devoted to croquet on a national scale, and it is the only publication that we have for the purpose.

Therefore in order to make it appealing to the browsing reader or possible prospective player in a newsagents, would we not have to dilute and generalise the content to such a degree that would be detrimental to our current members' needs? My predecessor John Walters believed that this move was right, but I do not and my reasons for this are, I think, simple. Like it or not, I believe croquet is a minority sport, and will always be viewed as one. We spend and have spent countless hundreds of hours nationally, promoting the game through come and try it days, coaching courses, national croquet day etc.

etc., and with all that effort we have mostly only introduced people to croquet who wish to be introduced. This I would suggest points to the fact that either we have yet to learn to promote our game in such a way that it would be of universal appeal, or that we are a minority sport and will remain one, the latter of which I think is true.

Whilst I have stated the reasons why the Gazette is unavailable to newsagents etc. it would be foolish to simply to ignore the fact that perhaps the Gazette could offer a line of publicity. How many clubs I wonder have local libraries in their locality? Would it be worthwhile pursuing placing a copy on their periodicals shelf, together with details of the local club? If this avenue has not, or is not, being pursued perhaps it should be, as the cost of an extra 125

copies every issue to enable this to be possible would not be that great - but of course it would require somebody from a club to arrange the transfer of issues. If your club think that they would like to explore this opportunity please let me know by the end of May.

Other items relating to production included changing to a quarterly format from the established bimonthly. Whilst this may appear to save some postage costs, which are not of insignificant proportions, it would, if the four issues had the same total of pages as six issues be a relatively small saving. However the main consideration I think, would be the scheduling of the contents and the difficulty in keeping news fresh, as this is still a problem with six issues and in reducing it further to four, would I think simply compound the problems.

There was also the suggestion of the possibility of producing a glossy year book at the end or start of a season, such as that produced in the USA. Whilst there would no doubt be some demand for such a publication, it would I think be relatively limited, as the cost of such a publication would be prohibitive - to say nothing of where the contents would be obtained from. The final point pertaining to the production side was that of producing a pull-out section for beginners, or producing items that would be of use to beginners on different coloured paper. It is of course important that beginners are catered for within the Gazette, as it is for any other class of player. However, it could prove to be a costly exercise to implement either of the above suggestions, but they have been noted and will be explored further.

As to the actual content of the Gazette, you should not be surprised to hear that tournament reports were discussed. The main

points raised on this subject related to the numbers of them, the difficulty in acquiring them, their length and their content. Some of the attendees thought that too much coverage was given to reports. This view can be understood, as a majority of them are not of general interest to players who do not compete in tournaments, however the Gazette is not only a national forum for members and the Association but is also a journal of record, and must remain so.

Regarding ensuring that reports for all C.A. events were published, the feeling was that managers of such events should be held responsible for commissioning the report, or alternatively, that if they could not find a willing writer for the report they should supply the results and a brief report themselves within seven days of the tournament. It was further felt that if managers could not support this level of responsibility they should not undertake the management of the event. This may seem a little harsh towards managers, given that they have many other responsibilities, but who is better placed at a tournament to make the arrangements for a report?

There was a feeling that some reports were extravagantly long and unnecessarily technical in their content. What was thought was required to make reports more appealing was an increase in the inclusion of players' names, and the use of more of the editor's blue pencil. I have to admit that in the past I have exercised no blue pencil on tournament reports, the reason for this being that I thought it was important to let contributors have their freedom in an effort to encourage players to submit reports. It is too early to judge whether or not this policy has worked, however there were I think a very small minority of reports which abused this freedom

last season, but I shall sharpen my pencil in readiness for the new season, should the abuse continue.

For this season at least, in an effort to accommodate all suggestions regarding tournament reports, I am prepared to pursue the Tournament Review supplement which will be a pull-out section. This will free up some space for other items in the Gazette itself, hopefully pleasing those who have little interest in the reports, but will allow the publication of all reports forwarded to me, so pleasing those who are interested in the reports also.

Coaching too was a subject that was broached, with the suggestion that perhaps one of the many familiar books on this subject should be serialised. Whilst this sounds a good idea in principle it does raise the question of which one, and how does one get round the question of placing one author's work higher than another's. The obvious answer is two pronged: either take pieces from all of them, or use the coaching manual. However even if, say for example the coaching manual was to be used, who is to serialise it? The initial suggestion obviously pointed towards the editor. Perhaps if this suggestion had been made at the same time last year I would have been willing to undertake the task, but alas now, my schedule of 180 hours per issue is full to the point where I am unable to increase my work load any further. So is there a volunteer from the ranks of those who require the coaching?

There was a brief mention of photographs, or to be precise the lack of them. (Need I say more?)

The final point to cover is that of republishing material that has appeared in earlier issues of the Gazette, particularly items such as coaching, break builders and other technical matters. This is something I have considered and have in a limited way started to do but it is not as simple as it might seem, as there is no index for either past or present issues of the Gazette, and consequently it can take some time to find the relevant items. It would be quite a simple matter for me to generate an index for the issues I have produced so far, as they are all kept on computer disk and the programme used to create the Gazette allows the generation of an index with relative ease. However issues prior to 237 would be a more complex task, but nevertheless quite interesting and useful to anyone who has the past issues in their possession. If anyone would like to take on this task, or part of it, please let me know.

In closing I would like to thank all of those members who attended the conference, in particular those who contributed towards the discussion on the Gazette. Your views and comments were welcome and valued. If anyone who was unable to attend the conference feels that they would wish to pass on their views or comments regarding the Gazette, I would be happy to receive them either by telephone or in writing.

Book Reviews

By Roger Wood

The Lighter Side of Serious Croquet by David Appleton, 1996.

93 pages, 7 x 9 1/2 inches, £5.95 (£7.10 inc P&P)

David Appleton's book is sheer delight. I was immediately impressed by the splendid font used for the lettering on the front cover - a good omen I thought, and so it proved to be. Then, as with ancient copies of Punch found in the dentist's waiting room, I flipped through (why is it that one always starts at the back?!) enjoying Jack Shotton's cartoons - more than 70 of them in all. Readers of the Gazette will already have had a little taste of Jack's graphic skills, but here is a complete feast of astonishing variety and wonderful invention (quite worth the price on their own in my view) again with an especially pleasing font for the captions.

But wait: in the course of this rapid dash through the book I had glimpsed verses, crosswords, music, short stories, puzzles, fiendish contraptions and other temptations. Over the next few days I dipped into this entertaining assortment again and again, finding interest and amusement at every turn. The majority of the material has come from the fluent pen of David Appleton himself. He writes with equal facility whether recounting an amusing incident, describing croquet strategy and break-making, or composing a pastiche in the style of P.G. Wodehouse. I particularly enjoyed his account of Jeeves's foray into, and, naturally, mastery of the finer points of croquet: quite on a par with pieces by that now familiar belle dame de belles-lettres Dorothy Rush, two of whose admirable contributions also appear.

Then there are the crosswords, puzzles and quizzes: all challenging and informative - nothing trivial here! At this point I began to think that I was getting a bit carried away on the praise front and asked myself the serious question: Was there anything about the book that I didn't like? After some reflection and more paging through, the best that I could muster was that fact that the reproduction of the computer-scanned photographs leaves something to be desired by way of clarity.

In his foreword David says that this compilation was many years in the making. One can only say that it was time well spent and has resulted in a volume of very high standard, unique in its subject matter and sure to be a tonic to those who turn to it after a savage defeat on a wet and windy afternoon. I shall keep a copy at hand for just such occasions! My fervent hope is that he is already amassing material for a sequel to celebrate the millennium.

Croquet and Other Ball Sports & Seeing the Science in Croquet by Peter Rudge.

Both published by Corat, Australia, 1995. Each 28 sides of A5, paperback.

Peter Rudge is clearly a sports' enthusiast who, like many before him, has discovered the delights of croquet after strong interest and participation in a wide variety of other sporting activities in his younger years. The mini-biography on the back cover tells us that he is a Level 2 coach and organizer of an Australia Day competition in Canberra, so he is obviously keen to spread the word to others. But quite what audience he has in mind for these slim booklets, and what is his purpose in compiling them, is not immediately apparent from a close reading of the text.

"Croquet and Other Ball Sports" attempts to compare and contrast the game of croquet with twelve other ball games in order to "see what aspects there might be in them which provide relevant insights into how croquet is or might be played"; and the reader is invited to "Do a bit of lateral thinking" and "See how skills and tactics can be transferred from one game to another". There follows a two-page spread on each of the chosen sports (bowls, cricket, Australian rules football, golf, hockey, rugby, snooker, soccer, squash, tennis, tenpin bowling and volley ball) outlining the lessons which the author thinks are to be learned for croquet. At best these can be described as obvious and simplistic (both snooker and croquet "are played on a plane surface with multiple coloured balls"), at worst as arbitrary and contrived ("With the six-tackle rule in rugby league, there is a limit to the amount of possession one team has.....And so it is in croquet. Between each hoop a player has a maximum of six shots...").

My quick digest of the contents would be:

- o it is much easier to run a hoop (or score a goal) if you are close to it and directly in front;
- o acute angles are possible, but in croquet you have to use a jump shot (but he does not explain how to execute one);
- o there is a lot of geometry in croquet, as in other sports;
- o it is quite a good defensive ploy to leave an opponent's ball close to, but unable to run, his next hoop.

I opened "Seeing the Science in Croquet" in the hope that this might provide a better vehicle

for Mr Rudge's analogy approach. Here the comparisons are drawn with factors which "have the quality of science about them in that they are physical, measurable, and predictable". The factors are: simple arithmetic, mensuration, ratios, ballistics, geometry, avoirdupois, the Great Circle route, friction, curvature, elasticity, promotion and redundancy. At one moment he assumes no knowledge of the game on the part of the reader and explains basic features in the most elementary terms; and at the next refers to triple peels and corner cannons without further elaboration. The whole style might best be characterised as magpie-like: interesting trifles are gathered and presented as isolated snippets without placing any of them properly in context or tying them into a coherent thesis.

It is disappointing that two titles which seem to have the promise of fresh viewpoints on the game do not, in the event, fulfil that promise. A good deal of work has gone into producing these two attractively laid out and well printed little works, but unfortunately the content is very meagre and does not, in the opinion of this reviewer, add anything worthwhile to what is readily found in standard texts. Anyone unfamiliar with croquet would be much better employed reading "Know the Game, Croquet": those already hooked should try something more substantial from the CA's booklist.

The A-Z of Sports Club Fund Raising

Chris Meredith & Greg Tesser, 1995

38 pages (+6 adverts) 4 1/8 x 5 7/8 inches

This tiny booklet is packed with good, common-sense advice about ways in which sports clubs can bring in extra cash. It has to be said that much of the advice is aimed at cricket and football clubs where large memberships allow exploitation of merchandising, credit cards, corporate hospitality and other activities that we now routinely associate with the commercial side of the nation's sporting life, but which are as yet (thankfully?) alien to the croquet world.

Nevertheless there is still easily enough of value in its pages to whet the appetite of any croquet club treasurer for the modest outlay of £3.99 - surely (in terms of £ per oz) unbeatable value!

Here the section on National Lottery money and a step by step guide on how to apply for grants will be of particular interest; and there are many useful hints on advertising and sponsorship. Much of the material may well be familiar to anyone intimately involved with the nitty gritty of club finances, but the adoption of just one new idea from this snappy compilation would certainly repay its cost and might lead on to greater things.

Available from: Chris Meredith, 19 Worlds End Hill, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 0XH. Price £3.99 inc. P&P.



Audrey Whitaker, the relaxed opponent, looks on while Frances Ransom considers carefully her dilemma around hoop one. Photo by Deborah Latham, a commended entry.

The Lost Art of Hoop Setting

by Martin French

reproduced in part from issue 203

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

Setting hoops accurately takes no more than 15 minutes per lawn, and less if they were roughly right to begin with. The task usually falls to club stalwarts or Referees of Tournaments - not many clubs have ground staff on hand to do this chore. Referees of Tournaments will remember that they have a duty to check each hoop before play each day, but can of course delegate the re-setting to others.

For speed, the following approach can be recommended from experience. It avoids the frequent use of expensive hoop and ball gauges, but still guarantees that critical gap. Instead, get a metal strip one eighth of an inch thick and a few inches long (if you don't have one they are available from the equipment committee). If you are thinking of taking things a little more

seriously, use a strip one sixteenth of an inch. Next find the largest ball to be used in the event. Reject any balls at this stage which are excessively oblate.

Without access to ball gauges, the largest ball can be found by, for example, rotating each ball in turn between a fixed and movable upright on some flat surface. If this biggest ball is not instantly recognisable amongst the others, mark it! A blob of paint will persist in the knurling for at least one whole season. I have found that, as legend would have it, it is usually a black which is the largest.

Venture on to the lawn with:

the metal strip

the biggest ball

a bucket of grass cuttings

a large screwdriver or similar

a plastic, wooden or rubber mallet (there are some excellent nylon-faced mallets available that seem indestructible).

For each hoop:

- check the width using the ball and metal strip, its firmness and how close the carrots are to the surface

- unless all is well, loosen the hoop by tapping upwards, and remove. If the ground is at all soft, tread firmly over the carrot holes. This will give a firmer setting.

- if too wide, use the screwdriver to scrape earth from the 'inside' of each carrot hole. Pack in some grass cuttings, especially on the 'outside' faces. Squeeze the carrots together and push the hoop in the holes. Tap it down, checking its width against the ball. Squeeze the uprights together with one hand while driving it home if necessary. Note that the hoop should never be struck in the middle of the crown, it will distort. Tap it only over the uprights.

- if too tight, scrape earth from the outside faces, pack the inside faces with grass cuttings and replace the hoop. Check the width, and if necessary wedge a foot between the uprights as the hoop is driven into place.

From experience, hoops that are well set at the start of a tournament will need only minor adjustments on subsequent mornings.

"How's Your Pythagoras?"

Or Lawn Marking Made Simple

by Arthur Addis

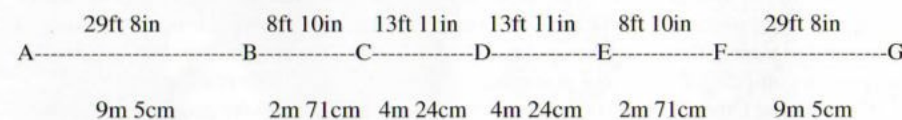
The time is upon us when lawns must be marked out and hoops set, and each year I wonder how other folks do it. We started with the chief (the one with the tape measure) and a couple of assistants armed with a handful of bisques ready to mark important spots. It was a pleasant enough way to spend a sunny, spring afternoon but it was much more likely that the grass was wet and the wind was blowing. Tapes don't like getting wet and how they flap in the wind and twist into a rope when dragged across the lawns! Not any more.

The preparation may take a little longer but it only has to be done once and can be done indoors.

The boundaries are marked out from a base-line using the well known Pythagorean 3,4,5 triangle but first make your triangle from three lengths of good string or cord tied to three small rings. Actually I prefer to go the whole way and use 28 yards, 35 yards and 44 yards 2ft 6ins to save further use of the tape measure. I wonder how many of us can still find the square root of 2009 using only a pencil and paper. However, even the cheapest of calculators, now, give square roots so let us press on with the method for the hoops. Measured from the south

boundary hoop 5 is 52ft 6in from corners 1 and 4. Hoop 1 is 29ft 8.4in and 66ft 5in from corners 1 and 4 respectively. Similarly, the distances are reversed for hoop 4.

Now for the subtle bit. Make your string with measurements as shown (imperial above and metric below). Each letter represents a small ring.



Steps for marking the position of hoops.

1. Fix A and G on corners 1 and 4 respectively with nails or something similar.
2. Using D, draw the strings taut and mark the middle of hoop 5.
3. Insert a thick stick through rings B and C together, then, adjusting the position until both parts are taut, mark hoop 1. The string setting BC is just a loose loop.
4. Marking hoop 4 is similar putting E and F together instead of Band C.

To mark hoops 6, 2 and 3 the process is repeated from corners 2 and 3.

The advantages of the method are speed, that it can be easily done by one person and, once made, there is no further need of a tape measure.

Purists might worry about possible stretch in the string but there are several suitable kinds on the market including pre-stretched ones available from yacht chandlers. We have not found this a problem and the results have been well within the permitted tolerances.

~ Obituaries ~

Tom Barlow

Thomas Barlow died suddenly at his home in Somerset West, South Africa, on 10 February 1996, aged 57.

Tom became known in croquet circles throughout the world for his equipment development, but his interest was stimulated by his mastery of the game. He won the South African Singles 10 consecutive times, from 1973 to 1982, reached the final of the British Open in 1975 at his first attempt, and captained South Africa against Scotland in 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1979, against the USA in 1982 and against Japan in 1995.

Tom Barlow attempted the first economical alternative to the Jaques 'Eclipse' croquet ball, when his 'Championship' ball was developed in 1989. This proved very popular due to its stability, durability, consistency and economy. A significant proportion of UK clubs used this ball for general club use and some for tournaments. He responded to the critics who complained about its sluggish properties, by developing his 'GT' ball which he launched only months before his death.

On graduating at Cambridge, Tom spent five years as a Missionary in East Africa before taking over the family farm, Vergelegen, where he farmed cattle, sheep and fruit for 22 years. He was a man of faith, active in Bible studies and preaching in the Western Cape, a seasoned traveller, avid historian, superb pianist and generous host. Latterly, he researched works on David Livingstone, the incorporation of Biblical principles in State Constitutions and the decline of family values in modern society.

Tom leaves a wife, Ilsa, sons Charles, SA Croquet Champion 1983 - 1985, now living in England, and Tom-Tom, former WP Currie Cup fly-half, daughter Priscilla former WP dressage champion, and three grandchildren. His croquet friends around the world extend deepest sympathy and condolences to Ilsa and the family.

John Beech.

Patrick Cotter ~ 1904 - 1996

Edmond Patrick Charles Cotter, who died on March 8 1996 aged 91, was born in Ireland in 1904 and appeared on the English croquet scene in 1947, having hurt his leg (only slightly) which prevented him playing golf at Roehampton and he wandered over to the croquet courts, having played as a young man, possibly when an undergraduate. He took up the mallet again and entered several tournaments, and having been a scratch golfer, soon shot down the handicap list when he won the Gilbey off 9 handicap and by the end of the season was 1.5. In the following year he won the All England (off -2). This was

the year that I first met him, though I didn't play against him (or with him) for some time. He was senior classics master at St. Paul's School.

In 1949 he won the Plate and the President's Cup with 13 wins only two years after taking up the game after some 20 years. I remember there was an auction of the players and I thought my father was brave when he 'bought' Pat for, I am almost certain, £100, but this confidence clearly paid off. He had a truly meteoric rise to the top of the tree.

It was in 1952 that he and I first played together in the Open Doubles Championships and did so every year except 1957, when I was unable to play, until 1973, during which time we won the doubles on ten occasions and were runners-up six times. We were a natural doubles partnership as we both thought along the same lines and hardly ever consulted each other, each trusting the other. If thought was needed to which shot to take as outplayers, Pat was insistent that we should not go on the court together which he considered to be quite unnecessary and it was only on very rare occasions that we did so.

As a player he had a very easy, relaxed style. He rarely hit the ball hard, preferring a 'touch' approach to the game, and he invariably got the pace of the court within two strokes. It was he who was largely responsible for 'reviving' the triple peel which had apparently almost died after the war. It was of course done on occasions but Humphrey Hicks, who had dominated the game post-war preferred more subtle tactics and rarely, if ever, attempted it, (though he was perfectly capable of it as I found when we were playing exhibition games in Australia in 1951). But Pat made it an objective of almost every game unless for some reason he had broken down at 3-back or 2-back when greater peels were attempted. He did not favour the sextuple and I believe only attempted one on two or three occasions. He won the Opens and the Mens surprisingly only three times each, and the President's Cup six times.

He was a good tactician, what is known today as a percentage player, and preferred to bide his time as an outplayer rather than risk a doubtful shot, for he was not a good long shot, perhaps because he hit the ball rather gently. I remember when I devised what is now known as the old standard leave, peeling one's partner through hoop one on the first break and laying up in the fourth corner on the basis that one would get one's partner immediately to the 3rd for the 4-back peel and make the 2nd off an opponent. My leave left an opponent at the peg which meant that the lift shot from 3rd corner ended up in 1st which presented problems. Pat thought of leaving the peg ball well to the east of the peg which improved the leave immensely.

He had a few failings - who hasn't? Technically he considered the cannon from the 4th corner to make 1st hoop was impossible. He didn't realise that you have to play as a roll in order to get the rush to the hoop. His temper was sometimes a problem, though he was never intentionally rude - he just got black in the face

when someone did something he considered wrong, or when his defence of cornering was answered by an all-round break. He sometimes tended to assume that others had the same intelligence as he. He was an expert bridge player (he won the World Bridge Championship in 1938) and wrote articles regularly in Country Life and the Financial Times into his nineties. I remember reading one of these which he ended by saying, of the last four tricks, "it is obvious that in this situation East must throw the Ace of Spades in order to defeat the contract". I couldn't follow this and rang him up to ask why. "Well", he said, "if he does, then so-and-so will happen". Then I understood and had to ask him why on earth he had not said so! He also compiled crosswords for the Financial Times for many years.

He was the author of "Tackle Croquet This Way" published by Stanley Paul & Co. Ltd in 1960 in a series on various sports. In looking through this book again one realises that, although it covers all the basics, his explanation of technique was not the most clear of various books that have been written since. Again it assumed rather more intelligence than a beginner would have but contained a great deal that would be of help to the more experienced player.

A not so well-known aspect was his becoming a Christian Scientist, though precisely when that occurred is not certain. When I first knew him he drank and smoked (in moderation) but these were abandoned, and he was a regular church goer. He probably became a better person in that he seemed more tolerant of other people and shrugged off any little difficulties which might arise.

Pat Cotter was undoubtedly one of the greats in post-war croquet. He was captain of the England teams in 1956 and 1963 and was a great ambassador for croquet and for this country on overseas tours.

J.W.Solomon.

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Handicaps For High-Bisquers

By Bill Lamb

The first article, Setting an Initial Handicap, is part of the guidelines that are circulated each year to club handicappers. It also appears in a larger and more general publication, 'Principles of Handicapping', which will be available shortly. The second article gives some advice on how to tackle the test and is an example of how to build a break with bisques. The test is designed for high-bisquers, say 14 or more.

Setting an Initial Handicap

Given the standard set by the scratch player, namely his ability to take a break to the peg without the use of bisques, it is possible to devise an objective test to set the handicap of any other player. In practice, the situation is rather more complicated than just counting the number of bisques a player requires to make two laid, all-round, four-ball breaks. A player's handicap is usually determined by a number of factors: his ability to play a four-ball break; his ability to set up a break with bisques; his ability to build a break without bisques; his ability to play carefully when conceding bisques.

Fortunately, most players who require an initial handicap are beginners and consequently high-bisquers. In these circumstances, the last two of the above factors are largely

irrelevant and it is only the first two which need to be tested.

The test for a new player (and good practice for him anyway) is to start with two balls about three yards apart on the East boundary. The adversary balls are in a tice position on the West boundary and in the second corner. This is a common enough position at the start of a game when the opponent has missed the shot at his own tice. The player must then set up a four-ball break with bisques and take the break to the peg, finishing with a tidy leave. The total number of bisques required should be noted and the exercise repeated a number of times. He can be left to do this for himself over a suitable period of time and then report the results to the club handicapper. Each attempt must be continued to the peg, even if disaster strikes along the way. It is probably better for the handicapper to discount the first couple of attempts to take account of the unfamiliarity of the exercise. The remaining attempts should be averaged, and one bisque subtracted from the average. This should then be doubled and rounded off to the nearer integer to give the handicap. The averaging process is most important and the handicapper should stress this to the player under test. High-bisquers are inconsistent in their play and averaging takes this into account. In theory, the resulting handicap is a couple of bisques too high but it makes some allowance for the difference between practice and competitive play, and the natural tendency to discount disastrous attempts.

Note that the hoops should be set to normal tournament standards for the club, as it is the tournament players who will set the benchmarks by which other players will be judged. It is quite common for beginners to improve rapidly, particularly if they are prepared to practise. They should be encouraged to incorporate the above exercise into their normal practice routine and to keep a record for the benefit of their club handicapper, particularly if they intend or are requested to play in league fixtures or handicap tournaments such as the All-England, in fairness to their opponents.

Note also that the above test does not apply to established players. It is far easier to learn how to do the test than it is to cope with conceding bisques.

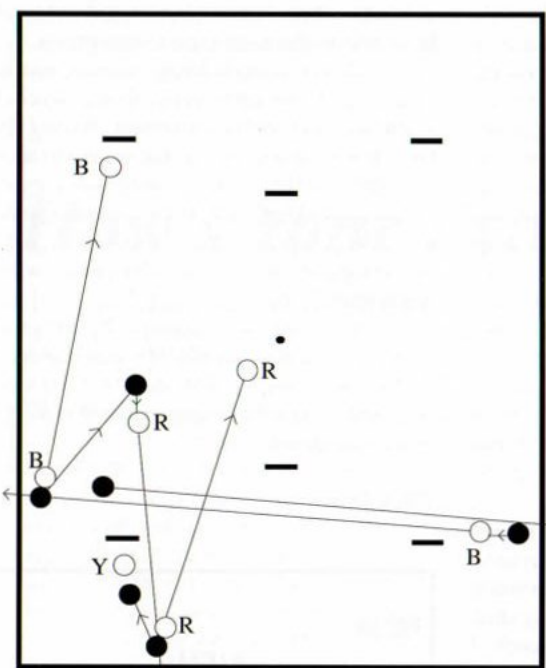


Fig 2.

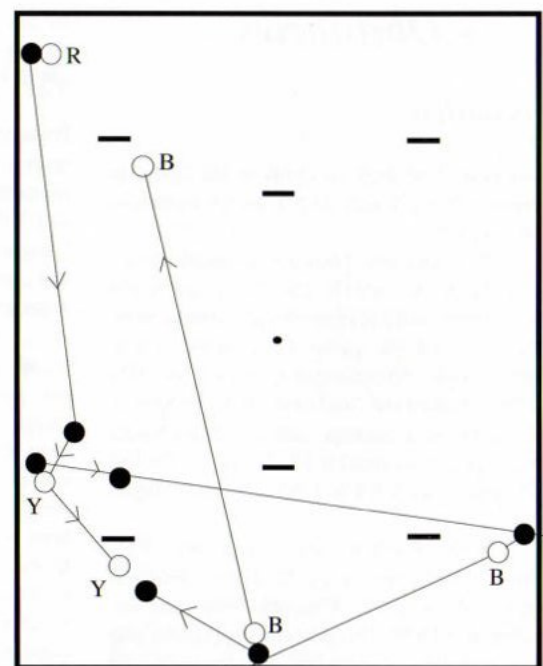


Fig 1.

Building the Break

The starting position and initial strokes are shown in Fig.1. (Croquet diagrams are notoriously difficult to follow: some compromise between having an enormous number of simple diagrams or one complicated diagram is essential.) You are playing Black, which is the solid colour in the diagram; the other balls are B = Blue, R = Red, Y = Yellow. You may find it easier to follow if you colour these balls in your diagram with a felt-tip pen or crayon. For simplicity, I have assumed that when a ball is roqueted, it does not change its position significantly, as opposed to a rush where the new position is shown.

Roquet Blue fairly gently. Do not attempt to rush Blue down the court or to cut it into the court. It is not necessary and a miss would be disastrous. Take off from Blue to the ball in the second corner, in this case Red. It is important that Blue should be moved away from the yard-line in the take-off but not more than a yard away. Roquet Red; at this stage there are two lines of play depending on your competence with full-roll strokes: (a) If you are happy with big rolls, then roll Red out of the second corner into a position somewhere between hoops one and two. The actual position of Red is not important and it is better not to attempt too much of a split. However, it is very important that Black should finish within easy roqueting distance of Yellow, but do not be too ambitious in trying to get a rush on Yellow to hoop one. Roquet Yellow and then in the croquet stroke play it into position as a pilot for hoop one. Make this stroke as easy as possible, but make sure that Black has a path back to Blue. (You may be tempted to try a pass-roll to get Black and Yellow into position so that Black can run the hoop; put temptation behind you; if you cannot, save time and read no further - there is a remote chance that you may become a minus player under your own steam but it is much more likely that you will remain a high-bisquer for the rest of your life.) Take stock of the position: you have

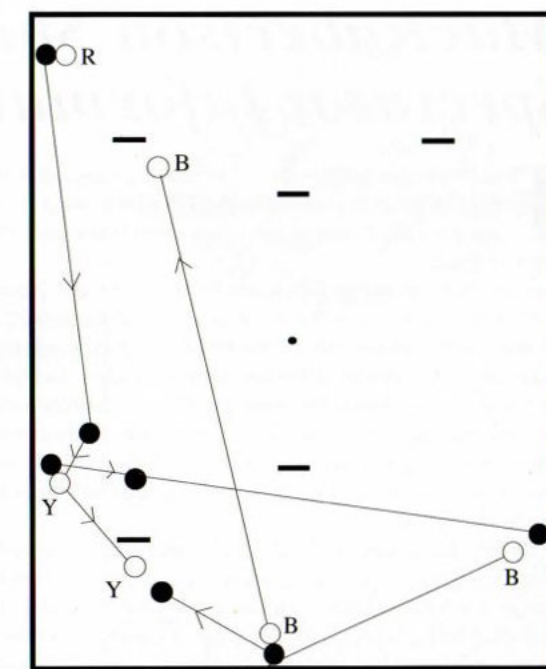


Fig 3.

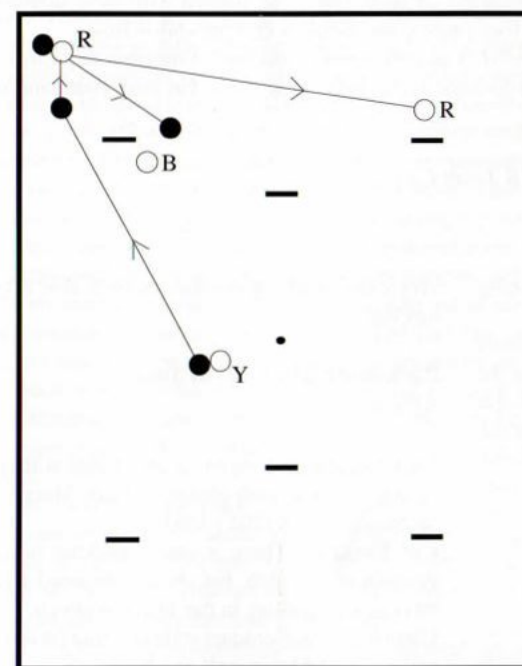


Fig 4.

Yellow as a good pilot at hoop one, Red is between hoops one and two, Blue is just off the East boundary and you have a continuation stroke to come; this is the final position of Fig. 1 and the start of Fig. 2. Choose a spot on the East boundary to play Black, so that it will be replaced on the yard-line giving an easy rush on Blue to Red. Now you see the importance of moving Blue only a yard off the yard-line in the first croquet stroke. You don't need a precisely-weighted stroke to get behind Blue, just play Black off the boundary to your chosen spot. Take a bisque and rush Blue towards Red. If Red is not too far away from the West boundary - remember, you did not try too much split on the roll from the second corner - you need not worry how hard to hit the rush; just rush it off the West boundary. Croquet Blue as a pioneer to hoop two, and your four-ball break has been set up at the expense of one bisque. With this croquet stroke you may choose to leave Black in a position to roquet Red further into the court or to roquet Red to the boundary behind Yellow.

The take-off from the East boundary towards the second corner and the roll from the second corner are the crucial strokes. If you get these right, all the other strokes are simple. You may find on a slow court that the roll is too strenuous; you have to roll both balls about twenty-two yards. If so, proceed as in (b) under;

(b) After you have roqueted Red in the second corner, take off to Yellow, leaving Red in the vicinity of the corner - Fig 3. Again, play safe and be content to get an easy roquet on Yellow, not a rush to hoop one. As before, croquet Yellow as a pilot to hoop one. Eventually, you want to rush Blue to the south boundary, so that it can be played in the croquet stroke as a pioneer to hoop two, with Black finishing within easy distance of the pilot, Yellow, at hoop one. Choose the spot on the East boundary to play Black, so that this plan can be adopted. After you have run hoop one with the assistance of Yellow, roquet Yellow again preferably towards the centre of the court and take off to Red near the second corner - Fig 4. Roquet Red and in the croquet stroke split Red as a pioneer to hoop three and Black to the waiting pilot, Blue, at hoop two. None of the strokes are as strenuous, but it is more difficult to get a good pioneer at hoop two from the South boundary. In order to make the split from hoop two easy, it is better to have the pioneer deep rather than short at hoop two.

Whichever play you adopt, continue to the peg with bisques where required. Good luck. There are a couple of general points about setting up breaks with bisques that are illustrated in the above which can be used to good effect in other situations.

First, put the pilot in position from as short a distance as possible; this will increase your chance of getting the break off to a good start. It follows, therefore that the chosen pilot will usually be the ball closest to the hoop at the start of the turn: in the above example, Yellow to hoop one.

Second, the value of moving another ball a yard off the yard-line if you plan to take a bisque before running the first hoop of your turn. It makes it so much easier to get a rush in the right direction, when you return to the ball.

You want me to believe don't you, you want me to stop doubting. Well let me get picked to play in the Longman Cup team next week.

Laugh with Jack



I don't wish to appear to be preaching to you Miss Jones.....but



The ball didn't move Father!

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MacRobertson Shield Spectator Information

The MacRobertson Shield will be starting soon and it would perhaps be helpful for readers if I explained a little about the format of the competition. Potential spectators would then have a better idea of what to expect.

Four countries are taking part, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the USA. Each country will be fielding a team of six players, and will play one test match against each of the other countries. Each test match will consist of twelve singles and nine doubles matches, each played best-of-three with no time limits. The winner will be the country winning all three of its test matches, or winning two of its test matches and the higher (or highest) percentage of individual matches. A play-off will only be needed if two or more countries win two test matches and win the same percentage of individual matches.

On the first day of each test match the team captains must provide a team order for singles (1 to 6 in descending order of strength) and three doubles pairings. Each pair of players in the singles order, 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6 will play both players in the same pair from the opposing team, giving twelve singles matches, and each doubles pairing will play all three of the opposing doubles pairings, giving nine doubles matches.

Each test match lasts for six days and is comprised of six rounds, four singles or three doubles matches being played on alternate days.

Play starts at Nottingham on Saturday 15 June with the test matches GB v Aus and NZ v USA. As there are seven lawns available at Nottingham there will be both doubles and singles to watch on every day, with GB v Aus starting with three doubles, while NZ v USA starts with four singles. The test matches finish at Nottingham on Thursday 20 June. Play resumes on Saturday 22 June with GB v USA at Bowdon and NZ v Aus at Parkstone,



The GB MacRobertson Shield Team

Back Row L to R: Keith Aiton (Team Coach), Ian Burrridge, Steve Comish, David Maugham. Front: Robert Fulford, Chris Clarke (Captain), Debbie Cornelius.

with both test matches starting with three doubles. Those test matches finish on Thursday 27 June. The final round of test matches starts at Cheltenham on Saturday 29 June, GB v NZ starting with three doubles, Aus v USA with four singles, and finishes on Thursday 4 July. Entry will be free to CA members (on production of membership card) at all the venues, so do come along and support the event (and your national team).

Keith Aiton - GB Team Coach

Venue Information

Nottingham C.C. 15th - 20th June USA v NZ & AUS v GB

The daily schedule is for three doubles from one match to be played on the adjacent bowls greens and four singles from the other to be played on the croquet lawns, starting at 9:30 am and continuing until they are finished, or the manager calls a halt.

The Club looks forward to welcoming spectators and there will be no charge for admission (whether or not you belong to the Croquet Association). Some seating will be available, but it will not be under cover, so bring an umbrella if the weather looks changeable!

Please contact Ian Vincent (0115-925-3664 or Ian.Vincent@nottingham.ac.uk)

if you want any further information, or plan to bring a coach load!

Club Location: The club is at OS Grid Reference SK543378. It is about 2.5 miles WSW of the city centre, just South of the University of Nottingham campus, between the lake and University Boulevard. By public transport, take the train to Nottingham Midland station. Turn right out of the station entrance and go north about 200 yards to Broadmarsh Bus Station, from which routes 18 and 32 pass the

club: ask for the stop beyond the University South entrance.

Car Parking: There is an international tennis tournament taking place over the road from the club and arrangements have been made to use their parking facilities, which will be signed. These will be free of charge over the weekend, but cost £3 per day once their main event starts on Monday. Anyone thinking of booking accommodation locally should note that three European Cup football matches are taking place in the city.

Catering: It is intended that there will be a bar and that hot drinks and cakes will be available for spectators, but not lunches: you are welcome to bring a picnic as there is unlikely to be anything else available within easy walking distance at the weekend.

Bowdon C.C. 22nd - 27th June GB v USA

Club Location: AA route signs will be posted on route. Should you require more detailed directions telephone Altrincham Tourist Information Office on 0161 - 9280530.

Car Parking: There is ample free car parking adjacent to the club.

Catering: Refreshments will be available at the club. As well as this there are two pubs within

very close walking distance, which also offer lunches.

Parkstone 22nd - 27th June AUS v NZ

Club Location: If anyone is unfamiliar with the location of the club please contact Margaret McMordie, tel. 01202 - 746145.

Car Parking: There is ample parking in the grounds of the club, but should the need arise there is also parking in the adjacent streets.

Catering: Usual croquet style catering facilities will be available, as well as a bar.

Cheltenham 29th June - 4th July GB v NZ & USA v AUS

Club Location: RAC signs will be posted on route.

Car Parking: car parking facilities are available in the adjacent East Gloucestershire Tennis Club.

Catering: Usual croquet style catering will be available at the club, as well as a bar. Larger parties who will require catering are asked to contact Eileen Magee (tel: 01452 - 700353) to make the necessary arrangements.

The Inter-Federation Indoor Tournament

'On the Mat at Burton' ~ by The South Easterners

Find a very large hall with a flat floor, cover it with green carpet, set in two sets of croquet hoops and pegs, lay down boundaries with white Velcro tape and you are then ready to play croquet. Find 48 croquet players from eight federations, spice up the entry with the current world champion and his predecessor playing as a pair, throw in manager Trotman and you have the recipe for a very enjoyable weekend tournament. This was the scenario for the Inter Federation Tournament held at the Bretby Conference Centre just outside Burton on Trent on 30/31 March

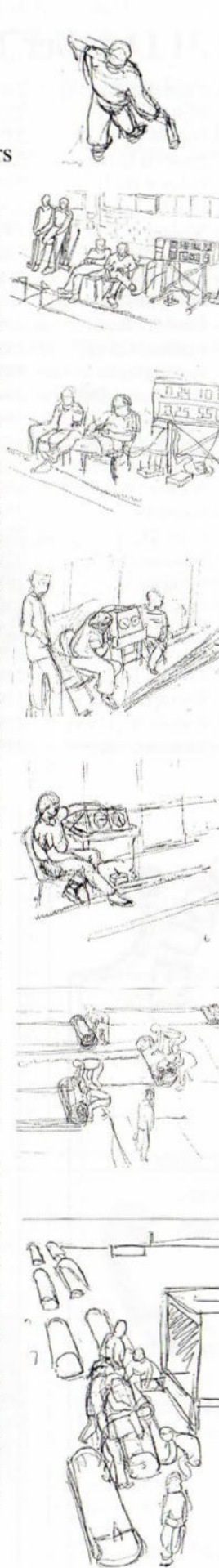
For those who had never tried this form of play before, it was quite a surprise. All play was doubles play but to short croquet rules. The main differences from normal association croquet are the method of handicapping and the fact that wiring two partner balls concedes a lift. With shortened games and the smaller 'lawns', the handicaps are severely reduced but an additional twist is that players with a normal association handicap of less than 2 have to do mandatory peels. This left Rob Fulford and Chris Clarke who were playing for the Eastern Federation, with three peels to make in every game, a feat they achieved in all but one of their games, when they were frustrated by a south eastern pairing. On top of these complications you have the lightning speed of the mats (no grass will ever match the carpet) and matters are further complicated by introducing speed croquet. The effect of this variation is that each team is only allowed 30 minutes in total to complete the full game of 14 points. A team's time starts from when an opponent leaves the mat or when the player enters the mat, whichever is the earlier, and similarly finishes when he leaves the mat having replaced any balls in their legal position. These rules certainly do not allow time for the lengthy conferences we see at normal tournaments and ensure that players operate as a team, always recovering out-of-court balls for one another and saving vital seconds. The fact that over 50% of games reached a pegout in time even though hoops on the mat are difficult to make, may well question the way in which we play our traditional game. I am sure most croquet players, other than the young fit types, really felt they had played a full game by the end of their time.

As each team had to play all others throughout the weekend it meant an average of about one and a quarter hours playing and a similar time free. That may be a slight exaggeration as when you were off, Manager Trotman was very likely to put a time clock in your hands. Nobody had time to be bored!

Competition remained very fierce throughout the weekend and by Sunday evening we had Eastern and Croquet North Federations both on 11 wins out of 14. After a countback on points scored, Eastern were declared winners. South East finished third with 8.5 wins and East Midlands on 8 wins. Yes you can have a draw in speed croquet! A special thanks must go to the Ashby Croquet Club, without whom the weekend would not have been possible. They collected carpets from Cambridge and Wolverhampton, laid them and arranged for their return.

I am sure most participants thoroughly enjoyed their weekend and many would be quite happy to repeat the experience. However it appears the venue may be sold off and it is also quite an expensive event to stage. If anyone knows of a hall with flat floors somewhere in the centre of England, which is able to house two carpets about 27x20 yards and not cost a king's ransom to hire, I am sure Manager Trotman would be pleased to hear from you.

Sketches by Imogen Smith of the Ripon Spa Hotel Croquet Club.



The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund's Silver Jubilee International Tattoo 96
RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire
20/21 July
Sponsored by Rover.

By completing the wordsearch below you could win one of fifteen pairs of tickets that would give the opportunity to join the celebrations as the world's biggest military airshow marks its Silver Jubilee with the most spectacular flying display of the year. Up to 400 aircraft from around 35 nations will fly into RAF Fairford for the IAT 96 birthday party.

Simply complete the wordsearch and send your entry to arrive before June 1st to: DEPT IAT 707, Silver Jubilee Airshow Competition, RAF Benevolent Fund Ents, PO Box 1940, Fairford Glos GL7 4NA

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F	A	A	R	R	Y	T	B	L	O
A	R	R	U	I	S	A	I	A	B
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R	W	A	S	I	L	V	E	R	I
I	S	P	I	T	F	I	R	E	C
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From time to time the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund Enterprises may wish to send you details of other events and services they feel may be of interest to you. Please tick the box if you do not wish to receive this information ()

WORLD RANKINGS at 31 October 1995

10 game minimum

	Grade	Gms	Wns								
1 Fulford RI	2805	131	100	28 Chambers BM [A]	2416	20	14	57 Riches J [A]	2287	14	11
2 Bamford RL [SA]	2766	73	53	29 Fleming B [A]	2374	34	25	58 Hallam BG	2282	124	77
3 Jackson RV [NZ]	2689	66	59	30 Walters JO	2374	51	37	59 Surgenor J [S]	2276	38	25
4 Maugham DB	2675	105	77	31 Paterson D [A]	2371	46	30	60 Peterson EM [USA]	2275	43	24
5 Clarke CD	2659	147	109	32 Baker R [NZ]	2370	31	19	61 Watts H [A]	2274	18	10
6 Mulliner SN	2648	57	39	33 Day PE	2368	47	23	62 Palmer LJ [W]	2270	75	48
7 Westerby AJ [NZ]	2629	34	22	34 Wislang B [NZ]	2365	13	8	63 Mehas M [USA]	2260	30	25
8 Cornelius DA Miss	2611	101	59	35 Heap MEW	2360	33	19	64 Taylor HP	2258	36	23
9 Burrige IJ [W]	2609	149	99	36 Carter R [A]	2357	27	17	65 Boal K [A]	2252	16	10
10 Dawson JP	2597	65	43	37 Avery MN	2356	63	32	66 Noble GW	2251	66	48
11 Prince JG [NZ]	2566	32	25	38 Faulkner A [A]	2353	17	12	67 Williams S [I]	2241	56	33
12 Bury G [A]	2556	25	21	39 Liddiard GS [S]	2351	41	21	68 Thurston H Mrs [A]	2240	23	14
13 Stephens AJ [NZ]	2545	49	39	40 Cordingley P	2351	84	45	69 Farthing CN	2235	18	13
14 Openshaw DK	2539	67	41	41 Dumergue I [NZ]	2348	22	14	70 Linton AM	2233	54	34
15 Taylor M [A]	2523	16	6	42 Symons AJ	2341	16	10	71 Schmieder CS von [I]	2230	22	15
16 Stark J [USA]	2517	27	21	43 Barlow C [SA]	2332	15	8	72 Burge TR	2229	28	16
17 Comish S	2501	83	49	44 McInerney R [I]	2328	56	35	73 Williams CN [W]	2228	82	38
18 Cleland A [A]	2487	10	7	45 Prichard WdeB [W]	2326	12	8	74 Evans MJ [W]	2224	32	22
19 Goacher DJ	2485	79	50	46 Gaunt DL	2320	89	51	75 Duckworth ET	2222	65	43
20 Louw JW [SA]	2483	46	29	47 Guest JE	2315	42	28	76 Cunningham AE [I]	2216	35	22
21 Jones SG [NZ]	2456	43	27	48 Ketelaars S [A]	2314	23	14	77 Carr S Mrs [A]	2210	19	13
22 Couch PD [NZ]	2431	48	34	49 Goddard JP	2312	10	6	78 Patmore CJ	2210	43	23
23 Taves JB [USA]	2430	18	11	50 Prater M [A]	2306	32	17	79 Brown RJ	2206	57	31
24 Irwin CJ	2428	58	38	51 Bond ID [S]	2297	41	20	80 Barlow T [SA]	2205	13	9
25 Pickering C [A]	2428	27	14	52 Davis S [NZ]	2297	18	12	81 Watson JPG	2204	16	7
26 Skintley PJ [NZ]	2425	41	25	53 Costin I [A]	2293	11	7	82 Hewitt B [A]	2204	26	17
27 Johnson A [NZ]	2423	43	30	54 Rudolph P [NZ]	2291	27	13	83 Toye JS	2203	19	14
				55 Rodoni W [USA]	2290	23	14	84 Burnes G [A]	2196	17	9
				56 Latham G [A]	2290	10	5	85 Harrison-Wood D	2193	85	43
								86 Foulser DR	2192	27	17
								87 Rogerson F [I]	2180	17	12
								88 Gunasekera DL [W]	2178	26	13

Handicap Alterations

Littleton C.C.

Mrs P Asa Thomas	7
Brig. Roy Harmer	8
David Middleditch	10
John Corrie	14
Mrs Kathleen Clarke	16
Mrs Margaret Barnett	18
Mr Chris Walters	18

Ellesmere C.C.

Mrs W Hague	3.5	to	4
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New Associates

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Mr P. Gregg	
Mr M. Hardy	Ormesby Hall C.C.
Mr D. Harley	Letchworth C.C.
Mrs H. Masheter	Phyllis Court C.C.
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Mr C. Moriarty	Roehampton
Mr D Mumford	Woking C.C.
Mr D Nicholson	
Mrs M. Peebles	Cheltenham C.C.
Mr P. Scott	USA
Mr N. Stanbridge	Ripon Spa Hotel C.C.
Mr D. Windham	Norwich C.C.

Anything But Word 6.0

Would all of the helpful and kind-hearted souls who send in contributions on computer disk please note that Word 6.0 causes spectacular crashes on the editor's computers. In future please save the files as TEXT documents. (Thank you from the bottom of the editorial back-up files.)

Competitions & Offers

From time to time there will be competitions and offers in the Gazette. Not all of them will have a direct croquet link, as they are obtained through registering the Gazette with public relations and advertising directories. Whilst the immediate benefit to you the readers responding to such offers may be relatively small, you are asked to consider responding to all such offers as it helps to publicise croquet by an indirect means, which may in turn prove to be beneficial to the sport in general in the future.

Caption Competition No.1

The winning caption to the photo in the March issue was sent by Liz Taylor-Webb, whose caption was "When I referred to the mad cow at lunch time, she didn't have to take it personally."

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Bed & Breakfast

Croquet in Kent. Stay at our secluded woodland cottage with oak beams, wood burning stove and new for 1996 a full-size croquet lawn. All rooms are ensuite with colour T.V. and refreshments. Close to Rochester and convenient for visiting Kent's historical places and gardens. Easy access to London. Single £30 per night, Double £50 per night, including delicious three course English breakfast. Tel/ Fax 01474 - 823269

Summer Schools

For groups of 4 or more, coaching as you play in pleasant surroundings. Dates, duration, venues and accommodation by arrangement. For details contact Ron Welch 01737 - 772889.

Tournaments

High bisquers, improvers and beginners are welcome at the Pendle August Weekend. Handicap 10+ 24th & 25th August. Short Croquet 26th August. For full details, accommodation and tourist information - phone 01282 - 813070.

Wanted

Players. Nailsea CA weekend tournaments. Short croquet 6/7/96. Handicap 18/5/96 & 17/8/96. See fixtures book page 55. J Jeffrey 01275 - 852508.

NEW ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES

Classified advertising has now been introduced to the Gazette at very competitive rates, to both individual members and clubs as well as rates for non-members and trade/commercial. The categories available are:

- Bed & Breakfast
- Guest Houses
- Accommodation
- Tournaments
- Events
- Club Tournaments
- For Sale
- Wanted
- Personal
- Miscellaneous.



Don't forget to use the Editor's Hot-line on Monday June 3rd 7 - 9pm

NB....NB....NB....NB....NB....NB....NB

All England Championship 1996

The Regional finals for this event will be held at the following venues on the weekend 31 August to 1 September - Bristol, Pendle, Wrest Park, Sussex County (Southwick), Harrow Oak and Surbiton.

The final will be held at Sussex County (Southwick) on the weekend 21 - 22 September.



MCP Mallets by Michael Percival

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You may not have the same level of skill as Chris Clarke, the 1995 World Croquet Champion, but you can have a mallet made by Michael Percival who will use the highest level of skill and care to make your mallet to the same high specifications as he did for Chris.

All mallets are hand crafted from the finest materials and custom made to individual requirements. Moderately priced club mallets are also available as well as a full repair service for all types of mallets.



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Announcing the publication of two attractive easy-to-read small books:

SEEING THE SCIENCE IN CROQUET

- a simple presentation of the physical factors which impinge on how the game is played.

CROQUET AND OTHER BALL SPORTS

- some lateral thinking about what croquet players can learn from other ball games.

Written by PETER RUDGE and illustrated by FRANK ATACK, both being members of the Burleigh Heads Palm Beach Croquet Club on Australia's Gold Coast. Peter has a bisquing of 6 and is a level 2 coach accredited by the Australian Coaching Council.

The books are now available in England at a special introductory mail-order price of £6-00 for one, or £10-00 for both.

Send your order with a cheque in £ sterling payable to CORAT (the publisher) and send to: Gail Curry, 33 Percy Gardens, Tynemouth, North Shields, Tyne Wear NE30 4HQ and await your air-mailed copies.



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