

CROQUET ASSOCIATION

... NEWS ...

Forward Plan

The Croquet Association submitted revisions to the Forward Plan to the Sports Council as part of the review at the end of two years. The new English Sports Council (ESC) have confirmed that funding will continue for the remaining two years of the plan at the level originally agreed, i.e. £25,000 for 1997 and £20,000 for 1998. However, the ESC objected to our proposals to increase the allocation to the international fund from £3,000 to £4,000 on the grounds that they had turned down an application for a supplementary grant for the MacRobertson Shield. They have asked us to re-allocate the extra £1,000. The savings available by relinquishing the services of a National Development Officer (NDO) have been allocated mainly to the Schools programme and the Regional programme. In the latter, money has been made available to federations to fund Area Development Officers (ADOs). Paul Campion will take on some of the administrative duties of the former NDO. The special project on synthetic playing surfaces will continue, and there will be a new project to expand the Croquet Association database to encompass clubs as well as associates. We do not feel it is justifiable to continue to allocate funding to sponsorship activities whilst the prospect of achieving positive results is bleak.

Recruitment

By the end of 1996, one hundred and seventy-four new associates had joined the Croquet Association, increasing our associate membership (excluding overseas) from one thousand, four hundred and eighty-two to one thousand, five hundred and forty. Eagle-eyed readers will realise that our drop-out number is still in excess of one hundred, but this is a considerable improvement over the drop-out in previous years. The monthly recruitment figures for 1995 and 1996 were:

| | 1995 | 1996 |
|------|------|------|
| Jan | 13 | 20 |
| Feb | 18 | 16 |
| Mar | 9 | 13 |
| Apr | 13 | 13 |
| May | 22 | 14 |
| June | 9 | 6 |
| July | 7 | 3 |
| Aug | 21 | 37 |
| Sept | 18 | 15 |
| Oct | 8 | 12 |
| Nov | 5 | 15 |
| Dec | 8 | 10 |

The figures are probably too small for monthly variations to be statistically significant, except that it is apparent that the June and July figures

are low because players wait until August to join to take advantage of the concession.

Direct Debit

By the time the direct debit file was submitted to our bankers, eight hundred and forty-two associates (55% of our membership) had returned direct debit mandates, and more have been received after the submission date. This has been a magnificent response and will simplify office procedures in future. If you have not yet paid your subscription, it is still not too late to do so by direct debit and benefit from the discounted rate. Send your mandate to the Croquet Association office as soon as possible.

Handicapping 1997

There are no changes to the Automatic Handicapping System (AHS) for 1997 and it will therefore operate according to the guidelines as published in the booklet, *Principles of Handicapping*. All clubs and handicappers have been issued with this booklet and club secretaries should make it available to their members, particularly new members who have just acquired a handicap. The booklet deals extensively with the reasons for the AHS and suggestions that have been made from time to time about its operation. Further copies are available from the Croquet Association office at a price of £2.00, discounted to £1.50 if ordered in sets of 10.

Although the AHS works well, there are some areas of concern:

1 Anyone who has looked at the handicapping alterations published in most issues of the Gazette will have noticed that the number of handicap decreases is far greater than the number of handicap increases. In fact, comparison of handicaps registered on the Croquet Association database at the beginning and end of last season reveals a ratio of decreases to increase of 297:134. In 1995, the ratio was 304:139. This may be due to some extent to an element of non-reporting. Some players may accept the automatic handicap increase but be reluctant to report it. However, if players are reluctant to accept the automatic increase or miss out a few losing games to retain their handicap, the system will gradually break down. The AHS was intended to operate as far as possible without being policed but it may be necessary to introduce checks to ensure its fair operation. I do not want to impose a further burden on tournament managers and handicappers by asking them to inspect all handicap cards, but I do ask them to enquire gently about players who

have lost a substantial number of games.

2 Some instances have been brought to my attention of handicappers acting arbitrarily when a player is a member of more than one club. When that player plays regularly in competitive games and has a Croquet Association handicap according to the AHS, it is not acceptable for a handicapper in one club to reduce that handicap further on the grounds that handicaps are wrong in the other club. Handicappers must not seek to impose their standards on the Croquet Association or other clubs: that is bad handicapping.

3 I am occasionally asked to arbitrate on handicapping matters when disputes arise between teams containing high-bisque affiliates, or players who do not play many competitive games, playing in federation leagues. I cannot do so - I do not know the players or the conditions. All I can say is that advice on setting new handicaps and maintaining them is given in *Principles of Handicapping* and that the matter is one that should be resolved at local or federation level. Club handicappers should take their responsibilities seriously and not take the easy way out and start everybody off at twenty-four. Club handicappers are now the most important element of handicapping outside the AHS. New clubs that do not have anyone experienced enough to be their club handicapper should be adopted for a time by their federation. Any other clubs without an official club handicapper should contact me.

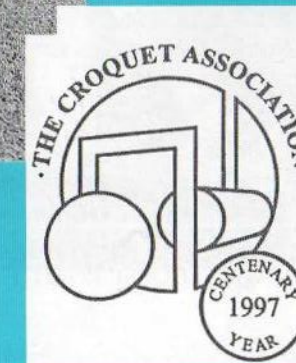
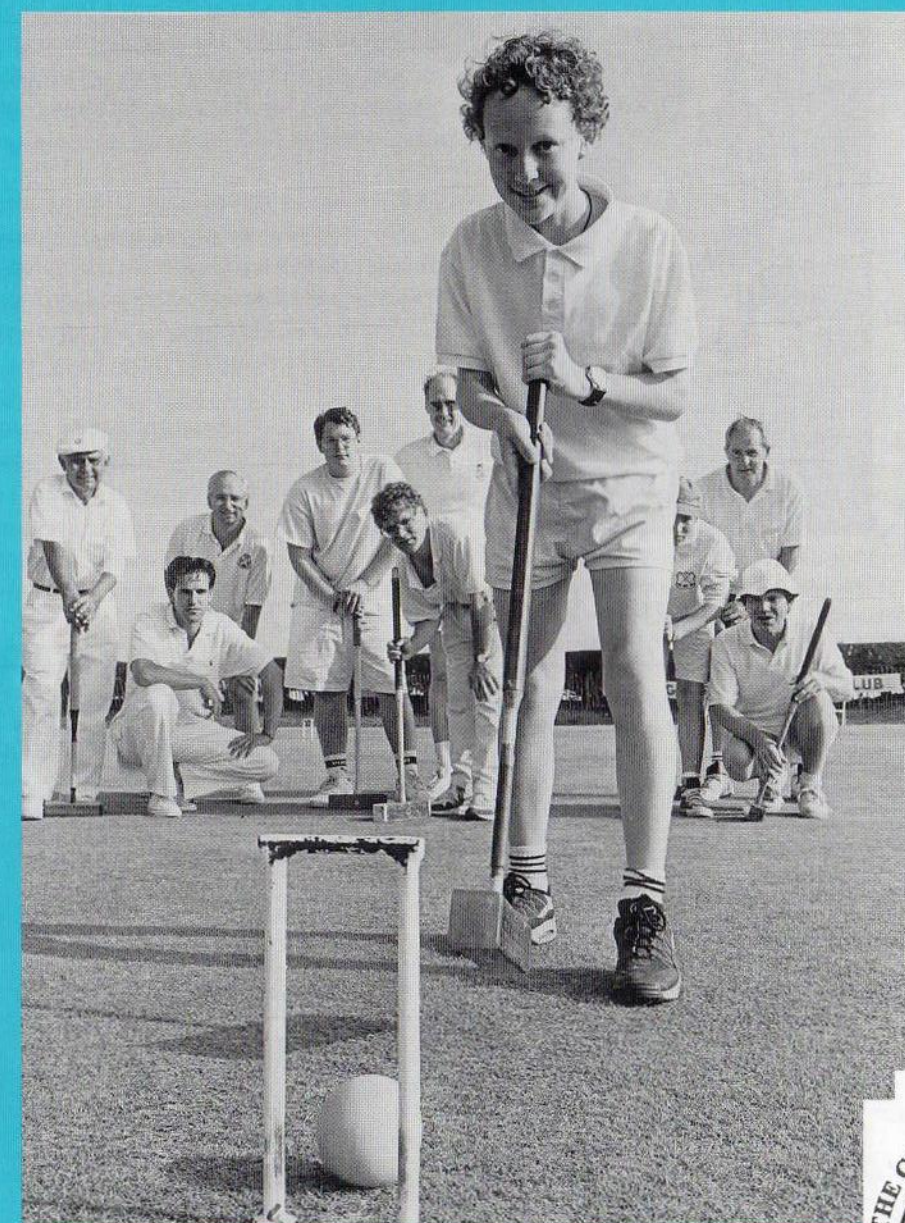
Finally, you may be interested in some statistics about handicaps that it is now possible to obtain from the Croquet Association database. At the end of 1996 the mean handicap of the 1338 Croquet Association associates with handicaps was 10. This is a slight increase on the figure of 9.75 from 1273 associates at the end of 1995, and may be explained by the fact that the extra members have come in with high handicaps. Nevertheless, the mean is higher than I expected and shows the potential for coaching to improve the standard of play and the level of enjoyment. The handicap distribution in blocks of four handicap steps is:

| Range | No. 1996 | No. 1995 |
|------------|----------|----------|
| -2 to -0.5 | 78 | 80 |
| 0 to 1.5 | 100 | 94 |
| 2 to 3.5 | 100 | 112 |
| 4 to 6 | 196 | 188 |
| 7 to 10 | 258 | 237 |
| 11 to 16 | 343 | 323 |
| 18 to 24 | 252 | 234 |
| over 24 | 11 | 5 |

The CROQUET Gazette

Issue 248

March 1997





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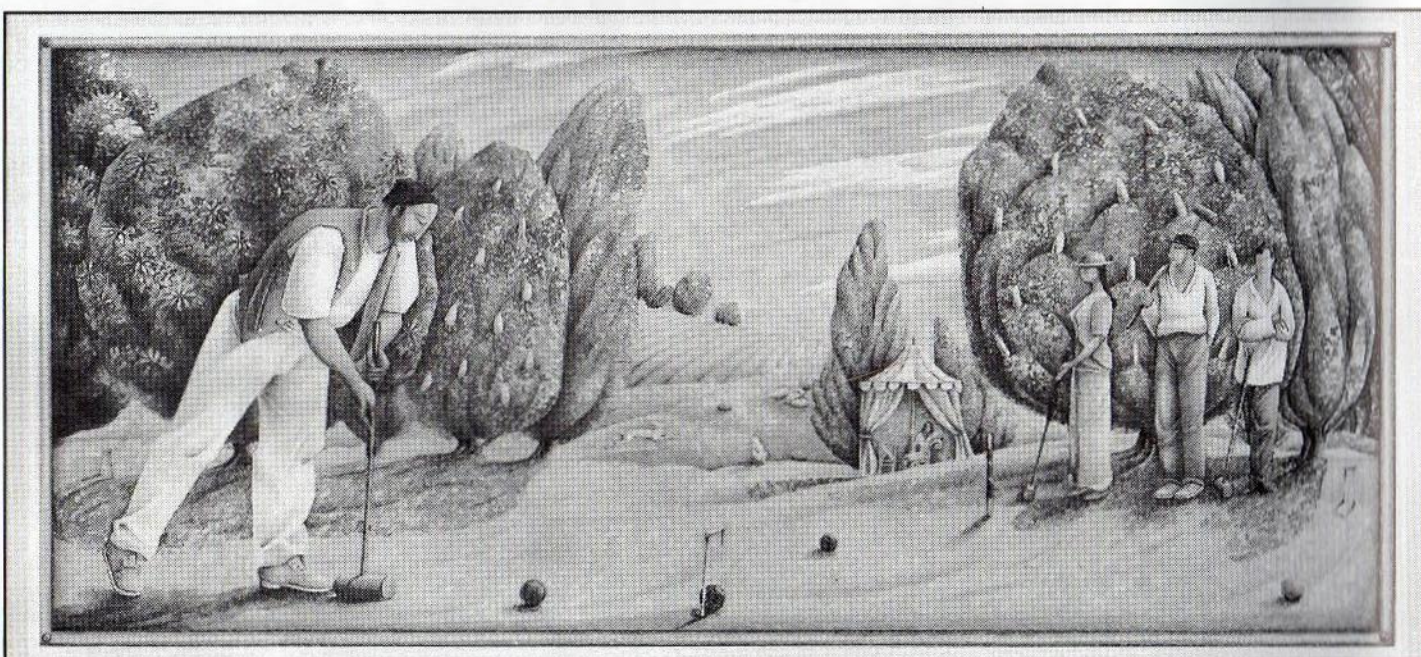
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**The
CROQUET
GAZETTE**

No.248 (March 1997) Price £2.50

Front Cover: Niall Carter on his way to victory in his very first tournament last August - the Ramsgate Doubles (accompanying his father Kevin).

Published in the second week of every other month throughout the year by the Croquet Association *Written contributions* on computer disk (PC or Macintosh), typed or hand written *Photographs/illustrations* are welcome and should be sent to the Editor *Cartoons* are by Jack Shotton unless otherwise stated *Copy date* is shown on the inside 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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STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS

SECRETARY'S S.O.S

Unfortunately one of our secretarial assistants, Hazel Sherrington, has recently suffered a long term back problem and is unable to continue her work in the office. If you know of a 'croquet friendly' person (male or female - age not important, though enthusiasm is -) who would enjoy assisting the Secretary on a part-time basis, learning to use the office computer and being involved at the nerve centre of administration, please contact me by phone or by letter as soon as possible, when we can discuss further details.
Paul Campion.

ADVANCED COACHING COURSE DETAILS

How often do you hear "I should have won that game but I talked myself out it". The CA's latest coaching course will help you to reduce this problem.

On 28/29 June at Southwick, there will be an advanced coaching course with approximately half the course devoted to the mental approach to competition. On the psychology side, the course will be led by Dr Gordon Underwood, a sports psychologist from Canterbury who will cover such subjects as analysing mental performance, setting goals, competitive thinking, developing concentration and focusing plus coping with stress. Robert Fulford and Don Gaunt will provide the technical croquet input with openings, leaves, peeling techniques and risk analysis again with particular emphasis on the mental approach. The course will be a mixture of presentations and workshop sessions which will enable all course members to take an active part in the proceedings. It is intended for handicaps of 2 and below.

The cost of the course will be 40, payable to the CA. Details and application for the course to Bill Arliss, 30 Hove Park Villas, Hove, BN3 6HG. Places will be limited to 20 so book early to avoid disappointment.

SPARE MALLETs REQUIRED

The newly formed Berkshire Croquet Club at Thatcham, near Newbury (UK) is seeking help from well wishers and other clubs around the country. 1997 will be our first season and we have most of the equipment we need, either purchased, made or kindly loaned by the Southern Croquet Federation and local clubs. However we are rather short of mallets. So, we are now seeking donations of mallets to be available to our newmembers or for people to use when they are introduced to the club. We already have some spare mallets from founder members but would like to ask now if you have a spare mallet (or two!) would you consider either donating or lending it to us? I hope you can help - if so please contact me via Reading (0118) 934 0214 (AMWadley@Compuserve.Com) - home, or Bracknell (01344) 413703 (Adrian.A.M.Wadley@gbjha.zeneca.com) - work

NEWS & INFORMATION

Qualifying Tournament for the WCF World Championship

The 1997 WCF World Championships will be held in Bunbury, Western Australia 7-16 November 1997. In addition to Chris Clarke and Robert Fulford (who qualify by right) England have been awarded four other places. David Maugham, Stephen Mulliner and David Openshaw have been selected to fill three of these and a qualifying tournament for the final place will be held at Surbiton Croquet Club 20th - 22nd June. Whilst accommodation will be provided free of charge in Bunbury players must pay their own travelling expenses.

The format will be a seeded best of three knock-out, with no consolation event (the same as in 1995). The Friday will only be used if more than eight entries are received. Competitors must be English qualified and be able to play in the championships themselves. The entry fee will be £20 and the winner will receive the final place in the World Championship. His/her entry fee will be paid should sufficient revenue be raised.

Please send entries direct to Ian Burrige, 47 Porter Close, West Thurrock, Grays, Essex RM20 4AS. (Entries close 1 June 1997. Cheques payable to The Croquet Association)

Solomon Trophy Team

The following players have been selected for the forthcoming Solomon Trophy match against the USA in Los Angeles 7-12 April.

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Mark Avery | Ian Burrige |
| Chris Clarke (Capt) | Steve Comish |
| Robert Fulford | David Openshaw |

European Championships

Robert Fulford and Stephen Mulliner have been selected to represent England in the European Championships 19-21 September.

Sonoma Cutrer

The following English players have been selected for The Sonoma Cutrer tournament in

California 24-31 May.
Chris Clarke Steve Comish
Jeff Dawson Stephen Mulliner

Exciting New Open's Plate Format - More Games for Your Money

This year will see the trial of a new format for the plate event at the Open Championships. By utilising two lawns at the Parson's Green Club (only 15 min walk from Hurlingham), in addition to those at Hurlingham, the plate will be run as a progressive swiss style tournament, followed by a knockout. This will guarantee 6 games to all entrants in the singles (although most will receive at least 8), rather than the 4 that is currently the case.

It will work as follows: first round losers in the main event will play six rounds in the plate, second round losers will be credited with wins in the first two rounds of the plate and receive four games and third round losers will be credited with four wins and receive two games in the

plate. After the six rounds have been played (at Parson's Green and Hurlingham Sunday-Saturday) the top 12 players will play a knock-out, in which the top four players will receive two lives, to determine the overall winner. This knock-out stage will take place on the final Saturday and Sunday at Hurlingham. This assumes a capacity entry of 56 players. If fewer entries are received we will be able to offer even more rounds in the plate.

If you want any further details please contact Ian Burrige (01375 379275).

A note from the Secretary

Some Tournament members will have been surprised (to say the least) to find that their new handicap card is suffering from a severe case of the misprints.

Please accept my apologies for this occurrence, caused by a serious oversight in the office. I hope it will not spoil your pleasure during the coming season when the time comes to enter your results on the card.

The Centenary Tournament - A high-low bisque handicap doubles tournament

As a centrepiece of its centenary celebrations the CA has decided to hold a "Centenary Tournament". This will take place 30-31 August 1997 at Cheltenham Croquet Club. It is our hope to encourage teams from as many clubs as possible to participate and hopefully have 40 teams (160 players) present. We hope to be able to create a good festival atmosphere, there may be a brass band and small competitions organised on George's Lawn. The format will be such that teams will play in alternate rounds either day, providing a good balance between play and socialising opportunities. Whilst the technical rules and conditions can be found in the fixtures book pages 8&9 there follows a brief summary of the intended schedule on each day:-

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 9.30-11.00 | Round 1 |
| 11.05-12.35 | Round 2 (lunch for those who played in round 1) |
| 12.50-14.20 | Round 3 (lunch for those who played in round 2) |
| 14.25-15.55 | Round 4 (Tea for those who played in round 3) |
| 16.00-17.30 | Round 5 (Tea for those who played in round 4) |
| 17.35-19.05 | Round 6 (Optional on Sunday) |

A barbecue will be held Saturday evening, this and all other food being provided by Eileen Magee's renowned catering team.

On Saturday the teams will be split into two groups. These will effectively play separate competitions, with one group playing in rounds 1,3 and 5 and the other in rounds 2,4 and 6. The top twenty teams after Saturday will then play in rounds 1,3 and 5 on the Sunday and the bottom twenty in rounds 2,4 and 6.

For each match a team will consist of 2

doubles pairings (four players) who will each play one 14 point handicap doubles game against a pair from the opposing team. Thus a match can be won (2 points), lost (0 points) or drawn (1 point). Pairings for each round will be decided according to the Swiss system. The lowest allowed combined handicap for any team is 24.

If all this sounds rather daunting and your club does not usually enter such events please do not be put off, we particularly want to use this opportunity to encourage smaller and newer clubs and their players into the tournament scene. Just enter and turn up there will be no shortage of people able to offer a helping hand. If you would like any further advice or details please contact Ian Burrige (01375 379275) otherwise just fill in the entry form on page 9 of the fixtures book.

Gifts to the Association

The Croquet Association has recently received from Mrs Dorothy Devitt of Wellington, New Zealand, a fine copy of H F Crowther-Smith's *Croquet Nonsense Book* (1929) which will go in our reference library and archives. When sending us her gift Mrs Devitt wrote in affectionate terms of her croquet playing days at the Compton Club, Eastbourne, in the 1960's and 1970's.

In recognition of the coming centenary of the Association Mr John Beech of Woodlands Croquet has presented a silver Challenge Cup to be used in connection with the Apps-Heley Award which, as indicated elsewhere in *Extracts from Council Minutes*, will be awarded in future every two years to the established club which has made the most progress in the intervening period.

The Council is most grateful to the donors of these gifts and is appreciative of the kind thoughts which lay behind them.

Barclaycard and Sports Council National Hotline For Volunteers In Sport

The UK's hidden sports army - the 1.5 million volunteers who dedicate the equivalent value of £1.5 billion of their spare time refereeing, coaching and administering local clubs and governing bodies, received a major boost in February with the launch of the **Barclaycard Volunteer Investment Programme Hotline** in conjunction with the regional Sports Council. The hotline, which will operate throughout the UK, will provide information on Volunteer Workshops, guidance packs and support materials.

The programme is a national initiative delivered in conjunction with the four home country sports councils and is available for any club and governing body throughout the UK. Local clubs and governing bodies will be able to access practical information and workshop courses through the freephone VIP hotline number: **0800 363 373**, and enter national and

regional awards to receive a cash prize to invest in club programmes and resources.

Bronze Coaching Course

John Simmonds, the manager of the Bronze coaching course to be held at Parkstone on 26/27 April, has recently moved house. If you need to contact him you can now do so at 5 Birkdale Road, Broadstone, Poole, Dorset BH18 9AY Tel 01202 - 691646.

New Administrator for the Sale of CA Approved Gauges

Don Williamson has recently taken on this position, which was formerly held by Tim Haste. If you require any gauges you can contact Don at the White House, 6 Walmer Road, Southport, Merseyside PR8 4SX Tel 01704 - 567268.

Fixture Book Corrections

The correct telephone number for John Haslam, tournament secretary at Southport & Birkdale, is 01704 - 547875.

If anyone has any further corrections please send them to the editor as soon as possible, as corrections will not be printed after the next issue of the Gazette.

Centenary Inter-Counties Dinner, Southwick, Sunday 25th May

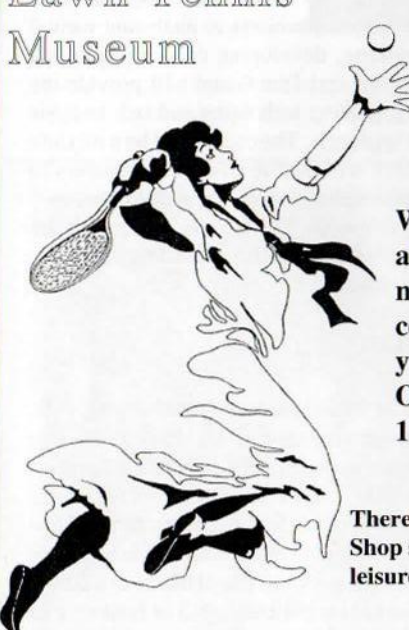
To mark the centenary of the Inter-Counties competition a celebratory dinner will be held at Southwick on Sunday 25th May during this year's tournament. The venue will be the hall of Shoreham College (immediately opposite the club car park) at 8.30pm with drinks available beforehand in the club's own bar. Players and all other croquet followers will be equally welcome. There will be seating for up to 150 guests, but the occasion is intended to be completely informal.

A 3 course meal with a choice of rib-eye steak, salmon or vegetarian dish will be provided at a cost of £12.50 for tickets purchased prior to May and £14 thereafter. Wine at £5 per bottle, beer and soft drinks may be purchased.

To apply for tickets send a SAE and your cheque payable to Sussex County Croquet Club, specifying your choice of main course, to Mrs Christine Constable at 51 St Lawrence Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 7JJ. Queries may be referred to her by phone on 01903 205664. Since numbers are limited early application is advised.

The Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum

Visit the Museum at the home of Lawn Tennis and find out why Wimbledon is more than just two weeks of the year



Why not come and visit the new exhibition celebrating 100 years of Croquet. Opens Tuesday 13th May 1997.

There is a Tea Room, and a Shop selling Wimbledon leisurewear, gifts and books.

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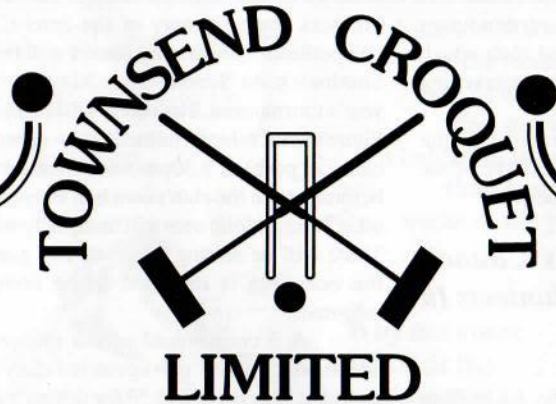
~ The Chairman's Column ~

One sometimes hears it said that the CA is bad at communicating. Yet looking at the last two Gazettes I notice there is now a regular news item on the back page as well as the extracts from Council minutes to say nothing of the editor's own news and information section and a plethora of snippets. So where does the chairman's column fit in to this? Should it be a light hearted *tour d'horizon* or a penetrating analysis of the problem of the moment or a simple sales pitch? In the absence of any fan mail to direct me, I will settle for the last of these this month.

You will find elsewhere in this edition a brief account of the content of the new exhibition celebrating 100 years of croquet which is opening at the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum on Tuesday 13th May. Do go to it. In the interval I would like to pay tribute to the Museum Committee of the All England Club who are making available the resources to make the exhibition possible. They and their staff have been very generous and very sympathetic. I would also like to thank the clubs and individuals who have freely made exhibits available on loan.

In advance of the opening we shall be publishing a special Centenary Year Book and History of the Croquet Association to mark the centenary year. This will contain a complete (we hope) list of past winners of the principal CA and international events, lists of trophies and affiliated clubs, etc and a new history of the CA. All in all, a mine of fascinating information. In this case I would like to thank Colin Prichard, who has written the history, Alan Oldham who has compiled the statistics and David Drazin who is acting as production editor. This opus will be available at the Exhibition or from the CA Office in May at an estimated selling price of £12.

Finally, the Inter Counties which is celebrating its own centenary this year. I write this before the closing date for entries but it may well turn out to be the biggest ever. As you will know it is played at Southwick and



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Compton over the Bank Holiday weekend 24 - 27 May. If you aren't playing yourself, why not come along and watch. An added attraction this year is the celebratory supper at Southwick on the evening of Sunday 25th May. All croquet enthusiasts (players, spectators, visitors, friends, whatever) are very welcome. Tickets are available now at £12.50 in advance (or £14 in May) from Mrs Christine Constable, 51 St Lawrence Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 7JJ. Tel 01903 - 205664. So get yours now.

As before I set out my telephone numbers below and am very happy to be contacted by anyone with comments or suggestions to make. Stephen Badger 0171 - 2748126 / 01242 - 516603.

~ Obituary ~

Harry Crookenden Green 1913 - 1996

Harry, as we always knew him, died on Sunday 8 December after a long illness. He was educated at Oundle and Peterhouse where he obtained a degree in Natural Science and a Diploma in Agriculture. After Cambridge he joined what would later become the National Institute of Agricultural Engineering when it was based in Oxford. While at university he qualified as a pilot but after war broke out he became a boat navigator in the army. After the war he rejoined the N I A E, which moved to Wrest Park in 1947. He carried out research on a wide variety of topics until his retirement in 1973.

Most of us remember Harry as a croquet player. He had been a schoolboy marksman and was in the Oundle team that won the schools trophy at Bisley, but had not taken part in other sports until he discovered croquet in 1965. He played in many tournaments round the country and was a member of the Wrest Park teams which won the Longman Cup in 1966 and the Inter-Club in 1974. He was in the Bedfordshire county team which tied the Championship with the Midlands in 1976 and won it outright the following year. He reached the final of the Men's Open Doubles championship with John Wheeler in 1979 and subsequently played in the Spencer Ell in 1979 and 1981. He also had some success in the Veterans.

Harry was a mainstay of Wrest Park Croquet Club and he was in most of the work parties especially when building our pavilion during the winter of 1977-78. When we started our own tournaments in 1972 Harry made the trophies. He was a skilled wood carver and turner and one of his carvings is mounted in the pavilion. He made his own mallets and tried novel designs. One experiment utilised a handle made of plastic tube with steel tension wires fore and aft so as to be able to adjust flexibility. This marque was abandoned because of its tendency to over-roll on two ball shots.

Harry was a quiet gentle man who never lost self control. He was sociable without being flamboyant. We Wrest Parkers miss him but smile when we think of him.
 John Wheeler.

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Letters...

Attribution

Dear Editor

Having harangued you somewhat over attribution of photos, I am now puzzled by the provenance of the excellent illustrations in the tournament review. Admittedly I am due another eye test, but unless I have missed something very obvious could you now, so to speak, reveal all.
 Ray Hall

The splendid sketches for the Tournament Review were provided by ace contributor Liz Taylor-Webb. My apologies for accidentally omitting this information from the Review and not attributing Liz's fine works. Ed.

Dear Editor

Just another mourning of those past. I was particularly sad to see news of Frank Beard's passing at Southwick. Attribution as a great character can sometimes have its pejorative overtones, but Frank always welcomed one, however rare a visitor to the club, as though we had played only yesterday and croquet always seemed a warmer and sunnier activity when he was around.
 Ray Hall

A sticky question

Dear Editor

I was intrigued by the "Croquet is Oquet" sticker which arrived with the latest copy of my Croquet Gazette as I had never come across this before. (The stickers, not the Croquet Gazette!!) Assuming this is a new idea, has any thought been given to using them to raise money, as I would be pleased to place an order for twenty of them for sale to Club members? I may, as usual, be speaking from ignorance about something which has been established for years, if so please bear with a lonely Geordie miles from home.
 Ken Dawes

I am pleased to say that you are not the only one to want more. A new printing will be available in early March so just contact the CA office and say how many you need, get them on cars and think of ideas for the next one!
 Syd Jones, Publicity Committee Chairman

Trying something different

Dear Editor

As our thoughts turn towards plans for the

forthcoming season, your readers might be interested to hear of a tournament with a difference which may be unique to the Worthing club, but could quite easily be run at other venues. Devised and managed by the Club's President, Miss Patricia Shine, it is a 'Breaks' Tournament open to high bisquers with a handicap of 14 or over.

The balls are placed on marked spots on the lawn: two approaching hoop 1, one at pivot and one pioneer at hoop 2. The maximum score is 13 points and each player has to get as far as he/she can in a single break using the appropriate allocation of bisquers and under the scrutiny of a referee. It is excellent practice, good fun and I strongly recommend it.

Pauline Griffiths

No doubt this is not an isolated 'alternative' game which is suitable for high bisquers as well as other players. If you know of other suitable alternative games please send details of them to the Gazette. Ed.

Something new perhaps

Dear Editor

I am a relatively new member of Taunton Deane Croquet Club but very keen to improve my knowledge and game of croquet. Will you consider having the following additional sections to your magazine?

Looking after your croquet lawn.

A large number of members have their own lawns and this could be a very popular section. You might also consider getting some of the fertiliser/machinery manufacturers etc to take out some adverts.

Having just levelled and laid my own lawn I have learnt a lot on the way and would be willing to write an article to start the ball rolling or alternatively find someone with a little more expertise.

Improving Club Membership

We are currently working in conjunction with our local College of Further Education to offer courses for beginners. Have any other clubs tried this approach? If they have we would welcome any advice and help.

Paul Brunsch

I am always happy to receive and act upon suggestions from readers. The only problem is that I can invite contributions but I can't make people write, therefore it might be an idea for you to start the ball rolling. Ed.

Practical advice

Dear Editor

The article on qualified umpires by Colin Irwin in the last issue is most appropriate for Australian consumption as the same subject is to be considered at the next meeting of the Australian Croquet Association due to be held on 24 March 1997, at the end of the Australian Championships. Some of us have noted the New Zealand system and believe there is merit in having a lead-in to the relatively onerous exam for full referee qualification.

This topic is a little confused in Australia as it is mixed in with a long overdue proposal to do away with State qualified referees. At present three Australian States have State qualified referees as well as Australian qualified referees. The main proposal is to recognise all existing referees as Australian, however originally qualified, and standardise the Australian referees' examination. The examination would consist of three parts (as has been the practice for the existing exams for both State and Australian referees, as far as I am aware), a practical exam on the court, an exam without the Law Book and a verbal exam with the Law Book.

The secondary proposal is that the practical exam on the court would be conducted first and success would qualify the candidate as an Umpire. Some candidates may proceed immediately to the other two parts and some may choose to delay, temporarily or permanently, the other parts of the exam.

So I was intrigued to read Colin's discussion. To this point I have found no-one who does not agree with both NZ and Colin that the umpire's duty should be to judge "matters of fact". In answer to his question "So what Laws does the umpire need to know?", he says "Fundamentally it is the practical part of our referee's exam, but with some additions." He then lists the laws concerned but fails to distinguish which ones are the "additions". From a relatively casual reading I cannot find any he includes that are not examined on the court in the exams with which I am familiar. Of course the details may be looked at in greater depth in the other parts of the exam, but a genuine understanding is essential to judging "matters of fact".

Thus my answer to his suggestion that the British Laws Committee develop a training course and an examination is that they already exist - the current course and practical exam for referees! The additional information gained by candidates would do them no harm, and, in any case, there is not much that is really irrelevant.
 Tony Hall

How's your wrist? Results of survey: part 1

Thanks to all who participated in the survey of croquet injuries, especially the 214 of you who returned your questionnaires soon enough for them to be analysed. Since there were at the time about 1330 registered associates of the Croquet Association such a response represents only 16% of the membership and we therefore cannot regard the survey as offering any definitive results on the incidence of injury among players in general. It is likely that people with injuries will have replied more readily than those without, leading to an overestimation of the extent of the problem. Nevertheless a good cross-section was obtained in terms of age and ability and the three main grips and four types of mallet shafts were adequately represented.

The age distribution of respondents is shown in Figure 1 and the lowest handicap they had achieved in Figure 2. The mean age of starting to play was 44 for the men and 50 for the women, and the mean duration of play was 10 years for either sex, and was not strongly related to age at starting, though if you want to play for 20 years you would do well to start before 65 (see Figure 3). Total playing time covered was 2130 seasons. The median number of games per season for a player at his or her most active was about 60. The amount of time spent in practice was extremely variable, and not obviously related to ability, though the six most intensive practisers had all achieved handicaps of scratch or better.

In this report I shall deal briefly with accidents, and in the next issue will say more about wrist injuries. In fact, although I set out mainly to study the latter, the most serious injuries were caused by accidents not connected with playing strokes. Falling as a result of standing on a ball had the worse effects, including a broken wrist, torn foot ligaments necessitating elbow crutches, and cracked ribs. Other falls, over court borders, hoops or mallets, led to broken or sprained ankles, and one lady with a bone condition, osteoporosis, broke a femur, two ribs and a collar bone in one such incident. Since injuries caused by falls could be quite serious, and were often associated with double-banking, players should be made aware of the dangers, and players and clubs would be well advised to take out insurance against causing such injuries.

One referee suffered a black eye from being struck on the head by a mallet (while refereeing a stroke, not after giving his decision), and in the pilot study a referee was reported to have been rendered unconscious in a similar accident.

One player broke a bone in her foot putting on a Wellington boot, but on the other hand, fourteen people mentioned sunburn as a problem - yes in England!

Many respondents, rather shamefacedly it seemed, mentioned hitting their ankles with their mallet, but only five cases required treatment.

There were three problems, including a hernia, caused by using 'side style' and in view of the relative infrequency with which this style is seen (at least for single-ball strokes), I regard that as quite revealing. I shall certainly discourage its use in my coaching sessions. Back or neck pain was reported in fourteen cases, but this was usually stated to be an aggravation of a previous injury not associated with croquet and, given the age distribution of the respondents, the prevalence of back pain is really quite low - certainly much lower than in golfers of the same age.

If you really can't wait two months for the results as they relate to wrist injuries, you may find them in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* which should have published them before this article appears.

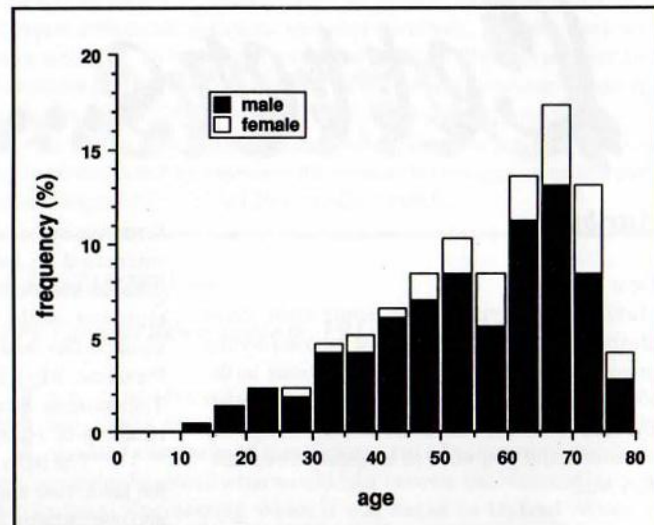


Fig. 1.

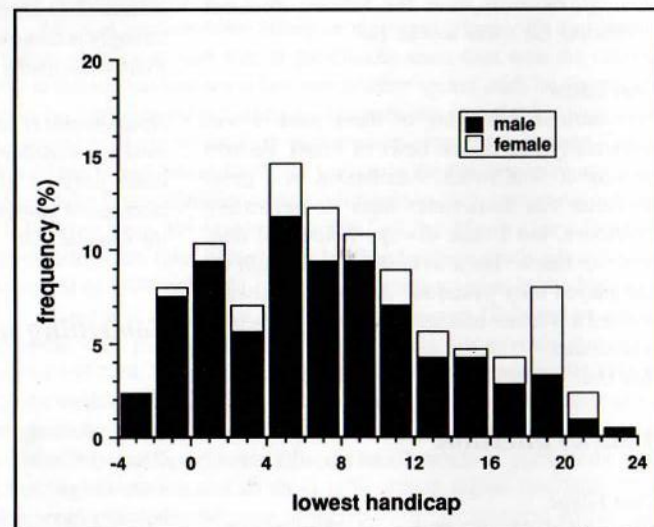


Fig. 2.

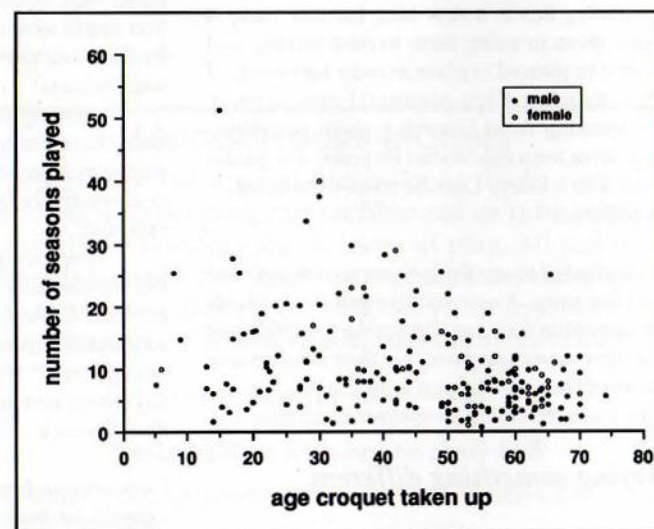


Fig. 3.



Omega Croquet embraces all croquet happenings that are inadvertent - whatever the cause or outcome. David Wedmore has imagined a Grand Order of Omega Players (Goops) which is dedicated to putting this kind of croquet on a properly organised basis, and which reports here.

2. Strategic Developments

Leadership. The Grand Order of Omega Players is even now busy taking soundings at the highest level as to who might be graciously pleased to become its first High Master, and thus to be known (in due course) as either "HM" or as "The Great Goop".

From our representative at Court, we understand that a suggestion (inspired by Alice in Wonderland) that the Queen of Hearts might take charge was very badly received. We feared that this might in turn lead to a vivid demonstration at the Omega Croquet Shop which is little more than a stone's-throw from Kensington Palace: but we are very happy to report that all remains quiet on that front.

Headquarters. Plans have been drawn up for a purpose built Omega Croquet headquarters building in Hyde Park. The site is close to the Albert Memorial where (under cover of work on the Memorial itself) an underground chamber is being prepared, along lines set out in the recent 'Mysteries of Ancient China' exhibition at the British Museum. This chamber is designed to receive the body of The First Great Goop upon his earthly death, and to ensure that he enjoys everlasting success in the Infinite Croquet Game of the Hereafter. There he will lie at rest, protected by a veritable army of terracotta bisques, and accompanied by those of his croquet balls which failed to make him a hoop in his lifetime. Now it only remains to find some jade to suit him.

Lottery Funding. No luck yet, but we got TWO right last week!

For the Grand Order
Adam Fluke
Omega House
29 Mt Pleasant Rd
London W5 1SQ

3. Dictionary

Appreciation of the finer points of Omega Croquet requires an understanding of the technical terms involved. To meet this need a comprehensive illustrated Dictionary will soon be available. Meanwhile, to avoid a very slight possibility of confusion, note should be made of the following definitions:

- Omega Rush = striker's ball leaps the target ball
- Omega Cut-rush = " " misses on that side
- Omega Undercut-rush = " " " " other side
- Omega Hit-in = a collision with peg (or hoop)
- Omega Join = wired from partner ball
- Omega Leave = double target
- Omega Jump Shot = double banked player does the jumping
- Omega Scatter Shot = scatters any spectators
- Beyond The Pale = any court allocated to Omega

The Dictionary will greatly extend the Limited Edition concept; and will be presented as an Omega Collectors quarto, combining legible letters on recycled paper with proper pictures in a very practical binding. We now extend to you all the opportunity to reserve copies at the special concessionary pre-publication price. Once the Dictionary is published you will find it is too late. Yes indeed.

The Omega Croquet Shop
Abner Bisk, Sales Assistant
Old Games Pavilion
Hyde Park, London

POSTBAG

Dear Editor,
May I seek relief through your columns? In furtherance of the Omega Croquet referred to in your recent issues, I drafted an order for a batch of Omega-shaped hoops to replace the conventional Pi-shaped ones. Unfortunately, the appropriate Greek capital letters did not appear in the printed document, and in consequence I now have a garage full of 4" wide mild steel lower case omegas, on very substantial carrots. These "curly W's are (of course) useless as hoops; but they might well serve as edging for a border or path in the better sort of garden. If any of your readers can find such a use for them they are very welcome to come and collect them free of charge - and the sooner the better. It is often said of me "This man needs help". On this occasion it is only too true.
David Wedmore

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HELPFUL HINTS No.7

by Don Gaunt

A Series of short tips and ideas for beginners and improvers

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

No. 8 Laws Definitions

In this Helpful Hints I consider some of the definitions used in the Laws Book. Cross-references are shown in *italics*.

This Helpful Hints is not intended to be a guide to the laws, but only as an aid to beginners and improvers to help them understand referees' decisions.

Accessories. All items of lawn equipment except hoops and the peg. They include corner pegs, flags, and the peg extension which holds the clips. All accessories may be temporarily moved if they interfere with play.

Compound error. More than one *error* in the same turn, eg playing wrong ball and double-tapping it.

Condoning. An *error* that has passed the *limit of claims* is said to be condoned. There is often (but not always) no penalty for a condoned *error*.

Deem. To play a *stroke* without actually doing anything, eg "I will leave my red ball where it lies". Note that by deeming, you are responsible for that ball's position, so you cannot then claim a wiring lift on it. Also, a roquet may be deemed to have occurred when your ball lies in contact with another.

Error. An error occurs when you do something wrong according to Laws 26 to 35. Note, however, that;

Faults are also errors;

Variations of the game eg handicap, doubles etc may modify these laws;

You may have to pay a penalty for committing an error.

Fault. A fault is something you do wrong that is covered by Law 32. Only if you break this law will you commit a fault.

Forestalling. Stopping a player who has, or may be about to, break a law. Although forestalling is normally done verbally, it can be done with a signal if, say, the player is hard of hearing.

Foul. Question: how many foul shots are there in the Law Book? Answer: none. There is no such thing in croquet.

Interference with play. This refers to the illegal movement of the ball in specific circumstances. These are given in laws 33 and 34. Other illegal ball movement can occur eg in Law 32(a)10 but this is not called interference.

Law. One of the 56 laws and 5 appendices detailed in the CA Law Book. Note that the section called 'Customs of the Game' also contains laws. They are mandatory not optional! Note also that some laws modify others.

Limit of claims. The point at which, after an *error* has occurred, it is *condoned*. This is usually expressed in terms of an action, eg 'after the striker's next stroke'.

Misled. If you play any part of your game due to false information you may be entitled to a replay. The false information can come from your opponent, an official, or the lawn eg the clips.

Misplaced. Something in the wrong position. This could be a ball or a clip or a hoop etc.

Penalty. What you pay for breaking a law. Penalties vary from nothing (not taking croquet when you should) to loss of game (cheating).

Regulations. While the *laws* are international, regulations are individual to a particular Association (although in practice they are much the same throughout the world). Although regulations mostly deal with the way officials operate, they sometimes involve players directly. An example is the situation regarding bisques when time is called - this is covered in regulation 13.

Striking period. The law book explains this precisely, but essentially it is the whole time you are making your swing plus just after, while you are leaving your stance. See also HH No.5.

Stroke. This starts when you swing with intent to hit the ball (practice swings are not part of the stroke) and ends when all balls have stopped moving. A miss, or a *deemed* shot are also strokes.

Turn. The time from which you are entitled to play until the time when you are no longer entitled to do so and all balls have stopped or been replaced, is your turn.

Within your turn is the *stroke* and the *striking period*.

The next turn starts as soon as the previous one has finished.

If you take a bisque, this is a completely new turn.

13 MAY 1997 — A DATE TO ENTER IN YOUR DIARY:



THE CA CENTENARY EXHIBITION OPENS AT THE WIMBLEDON LAWN TENNIS MUSEUM

BY DAVID DRAZIN

Never mind the open championships or the dawn of the next millennium, this show is going to be really compulsive viewing — as sure as death and taxes, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Thanks to the generosity of the All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club, the exhibition will open on 13 May at the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, and is being mounted by their curatorial staff to the highest professional standards.

There will be plenty of interest for everyone — seasoned tournament players and administrators, the garden croquet fraternity, people who have wondered what croquet is all about and whether it might not be their sort of game, and mere lawn tennis enthusiasts who are surprised to learn that the All England Club once dabbled in trivial pursuits.

While the main story line will focus on the development of the game of croquet under the auspices of the CA during its first hundred years, the earlier history will also be well represented. So visitors will be taken on a fascinating journey through time from the birth

of the mallet, via the heyday of mid-Victorian croquet (complete with voluminous crinolines), through the infancy of the United All England Croquet Association, right to the present day, with glimpses of the smartest hi-tec equipment now on offer. And, for good measure, art lovers, collectors, and high-bisquers who are planning to challenge for the top croquet honours will be able to feast their eyes on sumptuous oil paintings, the earliest manuscript records of the CA and AECC, the books which track the development of tactics from 'tight croquet' to the duodecimal peel, the MacRobertson Shield, the Coronation Gold Cup and other premier trophies, and memorabilia of all sorts. Add a merry Victorian ditty vamped out on a crazy old bar piano as background music, assorted video side-shows, and an infernally sophisticated computer croquet game, and you get the picture of a many-splendoured multi-media extravaganza.

For anyone not already au fait with the Wimbledon scene, take a train or tube to Wimbledon or make for Gate No 5 in Church

Road, where there is ample car parking — though obviously it could be a bit tight during Wimbledon fortnight. Opening hours are Tuesday-Saturday 10.30-5.00, and Sunday 2.00-5.00. Fix a day, take the family, introduce a friend to the 'queen of games', and enjoy yourselves. Closing date, probably towards the end of March next year, will be announced in these columns in good time.

I would echo the Chairman's note in this very issue with a word of thanks to all affiliated clubs, Associates, supporters from overseas, and equipment manufacturers who have helped to make this event possible by their generosity in offering us the loan of treasures galore. It is especially gratifying to record that no one, but no one, has refused us anything — with the single exception of Tissot's 'croquet girl', who has been gated by the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Ontario (what can she have done?), and even she has managed to sneak us an understudy. So everything from everywhere which is worth a peep will be on view.

THE ACTUARIES CROQUET CLUB

Report by John Taylor, Reigate Priory

A new club has been formed for members of the actuarial profession. Actuaries are that mysterious body of people who calculate how long you are likely to survive, your chances of having accidents and how much you should pay into funds - rather like tournament managers, in fact!

The birth of the Actuaries' Croquet Club stems from a discussion at an actuarial Dining Club where, coincidentally, three people, (Mike Burrow, Elaine Fairless and John Taylor) all belong to croquet clubs in the South East Area. We argued the principles of risk and return involved in croquet made it an instinctive game for actuaries, and we were therefore surprised that we didn't know more actuaries who did play it seriously.

As a result we advertised in our professional journal, and were pleasantly surprised to get an immediate response from nine other actuaries. They represent a wide range of playing abilities from scratch to an ungraded player who acknowledged ominously that "he had played a little while up at Cambridge".

We resolved to form a club, open to all actuaries, and the inaugural meeting and tournament was held on Saturday 14 September at the Surbiton Club, organised by Mike Burrow and John Taylor. Held on a bright day with fast lawns, the event was a great success, attracting eight competitors.

Regarding future activities, we are somewhat restricted by lack of a "home" lawn. However, we are aiming to have one or

more tournaments during the season, plus a number of friendly matches against other professional bodies. We have already got known contacts with the Law Society, the Bar and Lloyd's, and have located a firm in the city with an immaculate croquet lawn on the roof of their building.

If any other readers belong to similar bodies and would like to play us, perhaps they would contact John Taylor during the day on 0171 - 488 0733 ext 354. Similarly, we would like to hear from any other actuaries who have escaped our net so far!



The Actuaries' Croquet Club inaugural tournament at Surbiton

FINANCE FOR CLUBS FROM THE CA

BY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DEREK TROTMAN

It is now over two years since Council agreed to a policy whereby clubs could apply for funds from the CA to assist in development of playing and ancillary facilities or to augment their contribution to a project submitted for a lottery grant. In a further attempt to publicise the availability of these funds a guidance note for clubs has been prepared and together with a new application form will be included in the next issue of the Registered Club Handbook. In the meantime to aid clubs considering an application for funds from the CA the guidance note is reproduced below. Space prevents the inclusion of a copy of the application form but this is available on request from the CA office.

The CA has a limited budget to give financial help to registered clubs in appropriate circumstances. Funds for the development of playing and ancillary facilities (up to £500 per club) can be provided by the Development Committee as grants. Funds for major projects (including support of lottery applications), up to a maximum of £5,000 per club in the absence of exceptional circumstances, are administered by the Finance & General Purposes Committee and are only available as loans, although they may be supplemented by a Development Committee grant. In either case applications must be submitted on the appropriate form accompanied by the documents specified.

Applications to the Development Committee should be sent to the chairman

c/o the CA office but should first be discussed with the development officer of the local federation. The purpose of such grants is to aid the extension or improvement (but not the maintenance) of playing and ancillary facilities. In considering applications the Committee will *inter alia* place weight on whether the club will be of a viable size both financially and operationally (which would normally require at least two full-sized lawns), whether it will have appropriate off-court facilities, whether it can commit a significant part of the total cost itself and what is the considered assessment of the development officer.

Applications for loans for larger projects should be sent to the chairman of the F&GP Committee c/o the CA office. If possible such applications should be received before the end of January each year so that they can be considered by the committee at its regular meeting in February/March but, if urgent, they will be considered by the loans sub-committee at other times. In either case considerable weight will be attached to the view of the relevant federation development officer, which must be expressed in writing and which should set out a balanced assessment of the project. It is also important that any project for which a loan application is made carries the support of the club as a whole.

The terms and conditions of all loans will be determined by F&GP. Normally repayment in full will be required in equal instalments over a three year period and annual interest will be payable at a rate of not less than 3%. Where a loan in excess of £500 is granted personal guarantors will be required for the full amount and annual accounts must be submitted promptly while it is outstanding.

Tournaments Round-UP

Championship of North West England

Southport 10th ~ 11th August

report by Gail Curry

Only some eight players assembled to contest this relatively new championship, but the eight did include one Chris Clarke, current world champion and captain of the winning MacRobertson test team, as well as David Openshaw the former test team captain and Mark Saurin a former test team player making a welcome return to the game.

Chris gave his reason for playing the event to be that he had won all other events at his first attempt at Southport and he was hoping to add to this somewhat unique record, as well of course as visiting home. David Openshaw's reason for entry was little less imaginative, his family being away on holiday, with David not having played in an event at the club for some time, and the photos in the old copies of the Gazette proved that. Mark Saurin's return to his former nursery lawns coincided with a visit home. The remainder of the field was made up of the editor of a certain croquet magazine who yearned to write a tournament report, semi-local constabulary member Brian Storey, Don 'you'd better ring the Royal' Williamson, Quarry man Dave Nicholson from Crake Valley and John 'I love black and white' Haslam.

The format was simple, and agreed by all eight managers. The first round was best of three, losers dropped into the plate to play best of three, winners moved into the semi-finals and played best of five. Those who progressed to the best of five were, in order of expedition, Clarke, Saurin, Openshaw and Curry.

Mark played David, although he did not see much of the first game, with David winning +26TP. The second was slightly closer at +17, but still to David. Mark finally changed his fortune winning the third by 17 but the fourth went to David by 15 and Mark made a sharp exit to the plate.

In the other semi-final Chris made his intentions clear to Gail by winning the first +24TP. This spurred Gail into action with some aggressive but accurate shooting, which finally spurred Chris into performing the ubiquitous TPO. Far from giving in Gail continued to take the bull by the horns, but try as she might she could not get the 'break' she needed and Chris finally won +5TPO. The third game was no less eventful with Chris performing another TPO and finally progressing into the final +3. As one would imagine the final was far from slow, and true to form Chris performed two consecutive triples followed by a TPO to add to the quadruple he had performed in the first round and one more title to a very impressive winning record in

tournaments held at Southport.

The final of the plate should have been contested by Mark Saurin and Gail Curry, but travel commitments prevented it.

It has been suggested that next year the championship should be run along the same format, with a limited entry of 16 to facilitate this. It is not certain whether this year's finalists will return to play, but the others have already signed up, so if you want one of the remaining ten places you had better get organised quickly when the fixture book arrives in 1997.

CA versus CA Ireland - The McWeeny Trophy

Carrickmines 11 - 12 August

report by Ronan McInerney

After an enjoyable dinner on the Saturday night, heads were delicate at ten o'clock the next morning so both teams sat quietly and relaxed and play commenced at 10.35 ish. Sunday was doubles day. Matthew Davey and Jane Shorten lost in two games to Ian Maugham and James Hawkins. Ireland's second pair, Ronan and Mark McInerney beat Bill Ward and Andrew Gregory 2-0 and it was left to Simon Williams and Michael O'Shaughnessy to get the lead for the Irish team against Don Gaunt and David Kibble. They did it, but made very hard work of it. Losing the first game by 1, they struggled through the next two to win +9 and +8. Nobody in the Irish side was complaining about how they won; instead they were just pleased to be 2-1 in front.

Monday brought six singles matches. Simon, playing Andrew Gregory, won comfortably in two games and was free for the rest of the day to watch his team mates who would sadly let him and themselves down. Matthew was beaten in two by James Hawkins and Jane was beaten in two by Ian. Ronan's match against old rival Don Gaunt went to three games, and his poor play disappeared as he quickly leapt ahead to focus on a sixth turn triple. All went well until a rush of blood at the straight rover peel when an Irish peel saw Ronan's peelee rolling off the lawn. From there Don finished excellently in three perfect turns. This game cost Ireland victory although the confirmation only arrived at 7.20pm after Michael had played brilliantly to come from behind to beat David Kibble. Michael's first international match in quite a while certainly brought out the best in him.

So with the score at 4-4, it was all pressure on Mark McInerney his second consecutive international due to major availability problems but nobody could have asked more of Mark. After coming back from

the dead in game two with very impressive play to win +3, he lost the third to Bill who left his disastrous play of Sunday behind to gain a strong level of consistency against Mark.

Congratulations are due to Ian and his team. In Ian's speech he told of how he will continue to come to Ireland for this match for as long as he continues to play croquet. The Irish invite him for as long as he can walk; it is thanks to him that this match is running so solidly.

Results:

S Williams & M O'Shaughnessy bt D Gaunt & D Kibble -1 +9 +8 R & N McInerney bt A Gregory & W Ward +6 +12 Miss J Shorten & M Davey lost to F I Maugham & J.D. Hawkins -21 -3

R McInerney lost to D Gaunt +16 -25 -1

S Williams bt A Gregory +25 +23

Miss J Shorten lost to F I Maugham -14 -12

M O'Shaughnessy bt D Kibble -3 +25 +17

M Davey lost to J Hawkins -26 -14

M McInerney lost to W Ward -3 +3 -18

Match Result: CAI 4 CA 5

Fettes Week Edinburgh 12-17 Aug Phew what a scorcher - but watch out for Rotweillers

report by Charlotte Townsend

One of the joys of Fettes each year is seeing the people you lost to last year, who remember losing to you. No-one ever remembers winning at Fettes. This year we had our regular visitors and some new faces - Chris and Gladys Johnson, the Kays, Sharon Wood and Brian Rees, Paul Campion and Douglas Gurney, Dee, John Beech. It's truly remarkable that year after year these people, (and us locals) return to be beaten by the lawns. And some people even enjoy being beaten - an anonymous contributor to this article said his day had been made by Gladys winning a game against him!

But where did the ROT weiller come into all of this? ROTy was relatively unobtrusive at first, growling a little at crushes, or snarling from the sidelines as I slouched onto the lawn with only five minutes to time. (Which reminds me, should any of you be tempted to have discussions about puddings on the lawn when only five minutes are left in your timed game, and you're winning by about one hoop, it really isn't on. I apologise, Douglas!) ROT looked on impassively as John Beech had his ball grabbed, first after Marjorie mistook it for a ball in hand, and latterly as a puppy decided to take it away to another lawn. He remained unmoved as balls were moved around to avoid lawn one's mascot, Albert the Bumblebee, who was escorted repeatedly from the lawns, but invariably staggered out yet again to lawns 1 and 2, narrowly to avoid death by croquet ball, feet, and

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| DATE | TOURNAMENT | DETAILS |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 19 - 20 APRIL | ADVANCED | 'A' class players. |
| 24 - 26 MAY | HANDICAP | Open to any player up to 20 handicap. |
| 5 - 6 JULY | LONG BISQUERS | Handicap 10 to 24. New players welcome. |
| 12 - 13 JULY | FAMILY DOUBLES | Any combination of relatives; 'live in' partners welcome. |
| 1 - 3 AUGUST | HANDICAP | Open to any player up to 20 handicap |
| 9 - 10 AUGUST | NORTH WEST CHAMPIONSHIP | Limited to 16 'A' class players |
| 30 - 31 AUGUST | SHORT | Open to all |
| 20 - 21 SEPTEMBER | ADVANCED | 'A' class players |

TOURNAMENT SECRETARY JOHN HASLAM 3 BRADLEY ST. SOUTHPORT PR9 9HW.
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EARLY BOOKING IS ADVISABLE

exhaustion.

Albert and the puppy demonstrated some of the problems which confront a referee. It was generally acknowledged that the puppy must represent an outside agency (see rule 34(1)(b)). But did Albert? And what if one of us had roqueted Albert? Would our natural grief in the circumstances have meant that we should have been allowed to replay the next three shots?

A contentious decision was that in an early doubles game. Malcolm O'Connell and Stella McCraw had beaten (some might say thrashed) ROT and me in the first round of the doubles. Was this wise? Could they expect any further wins after this? Their next game was against Ruth Goudie and Peter Smith and the outcome was hanging in the balance when time was called. Peter was in play, and the score was level. Malcolm took his turn and stuck in the hoop which, had he run it, would have won the game. Nigel Gardner was called on as referee for the next shot, and was asked whether Ruth and Peter could now take a half bisque which they had not taken before time had been called. He asked if they were playing during extension time, and when Ruth and Peter said they were, said they couldn't. [N.B. Handy note - if asked about something when you don't understand the terminology, get it clarified. I don't (or didn't) know the term 'extension time' - do you?] They shot at Malcolm's ball, missed, and Malcolm made the hoop in the next turn. Congratulations all around, but Malcolm asks as they begin to walk off why they hadn't taken the half bisque. ROT is called as they reveal that they were told they couldn't, and he rules that they were misled. Their last turn is replayed, they dislodge Malcolm's ball, and they win the game. ROT, in some quarters, is demoted to RoTen. Many discussions follow, but I shall comment no further since all six parties involved are liable to sue.

Many of these incidents seem to involve the same people. Is there a conspiracy?

Stella and Jamieson Walker had all four balls for the peg in their game in the big handicap. Stella had a rush on her own ball towards the peg - bam! The rushed ball hit the peg. She threw it off the lawn and went back to partner ball (at this point ROT stirred a little) and did a magnificent final shot to hit the peg. Wild applause all round (from me too, though I did wonder how I'd failed to notice that that previous shot had been a croquet shot) except from ROT. Jamieson and Stella walk off the lawn, with Jamieson making gentlemanly noises about how well she'd played. Stella begins to describe the last turn, and says something about "and I rushed it right onto the peg" and I say "yes, you did rush it didn't you?". Stella goes pale and calls ROT, who confirms that it is too late to do anything about it. Stella has won, and Jamieson tries to work out how her turn could be over when he hadn't started his next turn. ROT eats lunch alone.

Oh no. Not Malcolm again. And no, ROT couldn't be involved. Fraid so.

John Beech appeared to be having an easy game against Malcolm in the game on the final day to decide second place in the elite 'Cramond Cup' (you know, the one we're none of us ever going to be good enough to play for). ROT really had nothing to worry about here since he'd already won it - but that lost doubles game was obviously still ranking.

Malcolm made a late come-back, and ended up with both balls for peg joining up on the east boundary. John had one ball for peg, and one for three back. Malcolm ended up at East Wittering - at least ten shots windscreens-wiping at the east boundary. John finally ran penult from an earlier shot which had left him stuck in the jaws, and ended up just beyond penult. The shock of running the hoop was too much for him. He walked off the lawn without taking his continuation shot. Malcolm was clearly going to win on the next turn. But, what was this? Malcolm asks John "I take it you've deemed your continuation shot taken?" John gasps, and realises that he had another shot. ROT is consulted, and putatively suggests that Malcolm was correct to point out John's error, and that John can continue. He offers to consult the rules, but Malcolm concedes. John plays on, and wins the game. A huddle of referees eventually decides that in fact, John was taking advantage of Malcolm's advice and should have left the shot where it was. John offers to concede the game, or replay it. ROT rules that the game is over and that John has won. The pit bull terrier in Malcolm begins to sharpen its teeth with a view to doing something nasty to ROT. Sarcastic comments such as "act of ROT" begin to be used.

Thanks to everyone who made Fettes another enjoyable tournament to remember - Ian Wright for managing it (and, I hope, providing the results for this article), Sheila Creary for all the hard work of being tournament secretary, etc., etc. Gosh, and me for writing it up. Well done, Charlotte!

(ROT = Referee of Tournament = Rod Williams)

Nottingham Week 12 - 17 Aug

report by C.G. Bennett

29 competitors, 7 good lawns, an excellent weather forecast and Ian Vincent in charge. A recipe for a fine week of croquet and so it turned out.

The handicap range was wide: three minus, six at 1 or under and a varied spread up to 20. With six events on offer there was no shortage of games.

The big handicap, the Robin Hood Gold Cup, was played as a Swiss with the top eight (having played five) going into a knockout. The early form book indicated three likely winners: Michael Fraser-Allen (20 - who was to lose only one singles game all week), David Harrison-Wood (-1) exhibiting his silky skills and Alain Giraud (2) who played increasingly well as the week progressed. David, conceding 21 bisques, secured the sole singles win against Michael and Alain came through the other half to play David

in the final. Alain's bisques went early on the first break but, undaunted, he played a sound tactical game to win the cup. David was runner-up for the second year in succession.

The class events also went more or less to form. Michael Fraser-Allen was unstoppable in the D block with 4/4.

In the C block David Brydon battled through the semi-final of both draw and process. He won one one but narrowly lost the other and it was agreed to defer the final *sine die*.

The B block was dominated by Alain Giraud who saw off all challenges, notably from Beatrice McGlen and Arthur Addis, and won both draw and process. Although he left Nottingham with a reduced handicap it is a pity that this was his last tournament of the season, as regular play would surely lead to further reductions.

In the A block it seemed likely that the three minus players would dominate but Peter Death (0) played an excellent game to defeat Chris Farthing after Chris had set up for a sextuple. Peter took the desired shot with the desired result but the effect began to fall apart quite quickly and the game developed into a dog fight with Peter winning +1. Peter came through to the semi-final of the draw and process but Ian Vincent was able to divert sufficient time from his management duties to ensure he contested the final with David Harrison-Wood. David's involvement in the Robin Hood resulted in the final starting at 7.00 pm after the prize giving for the other events. David was solidly round to 4-back and was eventually joined there by Ian. There followed an interesting passage of play in which David not only played the wrong ball but approached the wrong hoop while doing so. His opponent alertly spotted the second error (and a take-off of the lawn) to a strong wind which he (alone) perceived to have sprung up. The outcome was that Ian got a very promising triple going but just failed to position partner ball for the second peel. During David's next turn darkness fell. The club's excellent floodlights were switched on for (and by) Ian but the long shots just missed and David finally took the game and the cup.

Meanwhile the doubles had been progressing steadily throughout the week and for a time it seemed that Graham Fowler's skills (not least his choice of partner) would be decisive. Alas, in the end, Michael Fraser-Allen's 20 bisques were not enough and Peter Death and John Handy took the trophy.

What a pleasure it was to enjoy a near total absence of time limits. One effort between Ian Hall and John Handy in C block meandered gently on for eight hours over two days before Ian upped the tempo and not only made rover but peeled 4-back and left a wired leave. This abrupt change of pace proved decisive and so Ian won well into the ninth hour of the game.

Ian Vincent exercised his usual relaxed management skills and was able to indulge all players' requests including that of one player who stipulated that she could not play nearer than two

lawns from your correspondent.

Harrow Oak Handicap

17 - 18 August

report by Richard Hilditch

The event itself saw David Ruscombe King sweep all before him with 7 straight wins and a double handicap reduction. More interesting was a large garden umbrella that flew up into the air from the bowls club. It hovered for a while before flying over the club house and coming to rest on the adjoining putting green. This was truly an inappropriate use of garden furniture (unlike the entirely appropriate use of the Hurlingham member in a previous Open championship).

Ipswich Handicap Weekend

17th - 18th August

report by Lewis Palmer

A field of 10 with handicaps ranging from -1 to 20 turned up to do battle on the very tricky Ipswich lawns. The players were split into 2 blocks of 5, all play all with the top 2 players from each group progressing to the semi finals. In the block play, every player managed at least 1 win but with half the games going to time, the tournament format looked decidedly ambitious. The anxious manager Lewis Palmer tried his best to alleviate the situation with a +26 win over Reg Cook with 12 bisques left standing! Cathy Storey, playing off a 5 handicap, and surely one of the most promising female players around, found making progress on the Ipswich slopes a bit on the slow side but came out the winner in 2 of her block games by 12 points to 11 and 13 points to 10! Move aside Tom Anderson!!

The semi finals saw Richard Kimmerling, who came through undefeated in his block, beat Peter Allnut and Lewis Palmer defeat Ian Storey in very one sided games. The same could not of been said of the final in which Lewis beat Richard by the embarrassing score of 1 on time. (The legacy of Don Gaunt lives on!) The very difficult conditions devalued the bisques to such an extent that out of the 27 games played in the tournament only 6 were won by the higher handicap player. I know it would be almost impossible to put into practice but a lawn difficulty handicap factor could be used to adjust handicaps making games more even, and thus a more enjoyable contest. Any comments?

Ramsgate Doubles Weekend

17 - 18 August

report by Pam & Bill Arliss

This event was advertised as a simple doubles weekend but turned out to be very much a family affair with an international flavour. There were 12 couples entered, five were father and son combinations, two husband and wife teams and three pairs came from Belgium. Manager Roy

Ware ran the event as a five round Swiss with three hour time limits on each game but this proved insufficient in most cases as nearly all games went to time. The conditions were ideal with bright sun and slight breeze for the two days. Right from the start Kevin Carter and his twelve year old son Niall, who was playing in his first open tournament, showed the rest of the competitors they would have a fight on their hands and after two days they finished clear winners with five straight victories. A close second with four wins was Paul Miles from Medway with his son Simon.

It was a treat to watch young Niall over the weekend, with his bubbling enthusiasm and the effortless smooth swing of youth. We would forecast that in a few seasons Dad will have quite a fight on his hands in level play.

For those who enjoy a weekend's competition at a very friendly club, we would recommend the Ramsgate Doubles Weekend.

Nailsea and District Handicap Weekend 17 - 18 August

report by Diana Trickey

Scorching weather found Kristian Chambers in scorching form. The fourteen year old was unbeaten in all his games and was a worthy winner, beating Brian Smith in the final. The event was notable for the high proportion of promising young players - one third of the field were under 25 and third place went to Naomi Green, aged fifteen.

Competitors came from near and far - Suffolk, Bucks, Devon and Wales - as well as a strong entry from Somerset and Bristol. It was encouraging to find nearly as many ladies entering as men.

Peter Dyke, stepping in as tournament manager at short notice, coped with many problems that arose at his first tournament calmly and efficiently. He juggled 20 players onto four lawns, despite conditions which meant that nearly every match on Saturday went to time. His tip for future managers is, "Don't forget the screwdriver". The growing popularity of adjustable mallets will make this a frequently requested piece of equipment. When asked, he produced one from his bag.

In the blazing weather, Maureen Murphy and Pat Long, assisted by Margaret Cleveland Smith, were the heroines of the hour with their cooling drinks and delicious salads. The elegant pavilion tent provided shade but they were making frequent dashes home to replenish the water supplies. Roll on the Lottery application for a permanent pavilion!

Club members had rallied round to prepare for the event; Brian Coverley even manufactured extra bisques. David Murphy, though, was felt by some unlucky competitors to have made too good a job of cutting lawns until they resembled an ice-skating rink. Fine touches and delicate dabs were definitely the strokes to cultivate. Perhaps we should have been

warned when we arrived to find David Lilly apologising for setting one hoop too wide. The other 23 were quite wide enough for anybody.

Not everyone was deterred, however. David Lilly won his block, though he lost in the play-offs for the finals. David Price lost only one block match, but scored good wins in the Sunday Swiss. Kristian Chambers' game gained fluency and momentum as the tournament progressed. He had a slightly nervous start and the closest match was probably his first one. Giving away 11 bisques, he had to make a brilliant and determined late run to level the match as time was called. His opponent was not best pleased when her desperate shot at his ball just in front of rover resulted in a rush peel to give away the golden hoop.

Meanwhile Claire Heritage and Brian Coverley were enjoying their match so much that it was half an hour beyond time before they consulted their watches. The manager allowed them one more turn each. Claire also tested Hamish Hall's refereeing skills in an appeal for "not out". The corner peg had been placed inside the white line. Her ball rebounded back in to the lawn. It had never actually left the court! Hamish would have none of it.

Cheltenham Level Weekend

24 - 26 August

report by Deborah Latham

This turned out to be an absolutely bargain weekend - each time you looked down to address the ball, you realised you got a free hover fly with every shot! (Not to mention free showers at regular intervals.)

Allow me to quote from manager Michael Rangeley's information sheet: "There are four groups" - Blue ranging from -1 to 1.5, Red 2 to 4, Green 4 to 7, and Black 7 to 14 - "all operating on the Hands Ladder system, which will intermingle slightly as play progresses. All games are level and advanced with no time limits. However, to save players further anguish, Wharrad turns may be introduced should any game be making little or no progress after three hours or so. Close of play in the evening is 7.30 pm (4.30 pm on Monday) when a bell will be rung. Any game in progress then should finish in the usual way: the player in play completes that turn, the opponent has one further turn and, if the match is level, sudden death will apply. After each game: Report the lawn vacated to the manager. Enter the result on the order of play sheet. Fill in your index on the Hands cards. Sign the waiting to play list if you would like another game. However, if you would like a rest, sleep, lunch, tea, chat or just a break, please enjoy all of these before signing the list." A good refinement, I thought, was that when you did sign for another game you didn't choose your own opponent but were paired with one by the manager. All these things combined to make for a very relaxed tournament in which a lot of games were got through and the only thing left to do

was to arrange to be the out player while the showers were falling.

I couldn't help toying momentarily with the notion that Adrian Wadley's real motive in reading "Soil Physics" between games was in order to help him decide how the playing surfaces were going to behave; at any rate despite Lionel Tibble being in the sort of form which enabled him to TPO Bernard Neal, Adrian beat Lionel causing the latter to mutter darkly to his index card, "Blimey, that was expensive!" and Alex Jardine to observe cheerfully to Adrian, "Up there to be shot at now!" Taking from this remark the sort of comfort obviously intended, Adrian nevertheless proceeded subsequently to complete a triple peel which gained him his gold award.

The various prize winners were as follows: the players from each block whose indexes increased the most over the three days were Adrian Wadley (Blue), Brian Wainman (Red), Colin Snowdon (Green) and Angela Hall (Black). There were also special prizes for each block. The most improved lady and gentleman were, respectively, Carol Smith and Dennis Regan. (At the prize giving Carol got a kiss from Bernard Neal but, despite vociferous crowd encouragement, Dennis didn't, causing him to complain, "I was looking forward to that too!") In Blue block Roger Jenkins completed the most triple peels - two. In the Red block Alan Bogle won the prize for the most 12 hoop breaks and Paul Pristavec of the Green block won the prize for the most 9 hoop breaks. The Black block was not settled so simply: Dab Wheeler and Paul Watson each had the same number of six hoop breaks. There was, therefore, a shoot out at the peg, with Malcolm McBean volunteering to be "ball boy" and Mike Hammelev watching the peg. (I greatly admired the controlled, quiet dignity with which Mike repositioned himself to the north of the peg following a ragged chorus of "We can't see!" from certain elements among the spectators....!) I'm not sure whether having Peter Darby drape himself with a genial grin on the back directly in the line of sight behind he peg was intended to add to the degree of difficulty or not: however, when the "sudden death" stage had been reached (a misnomer - it was slow lingering and horrible, wasn't it Paul?) Dab finally smacked the peg sweetly in the middle, and it was all done.

Hunstanton August Tournament 24-27 August

report by Su Stenhouse

Tournament at Huns'ton in distant Norfolk, Welcoming and friendly and with five good lawns, With an entry of Celias, Noble and Hopewell, Birdseye, Gosdens and other old chums.

The tournament started on Friday evening with candle-lit croquet and a delightful supper provided by the ever hospitable Hunstanton

members. The croquet was necessarily of the golf variety since night lights suspended in the hoops effectively precluded jump shots! There was much hilarity and the final rounds were played in complete darkness which means I cannot tell you who won this hard fought contest as it was too dark to see. A thoroughly enjoyable start to the weekend.

Saturday morning was grey and a change of format, block play before Egyptian, caused some disgruntlement amongst the players. A bit of Egyptian to "get one's hand in" seemed to be desired. Despite this play proceeded apace and no serious ill effects seemed apparent. The main difference was that George Noble was able to spend more time on the lawn and less in the clubhouse with the paper acknowledging his opponent's bisques.

The Bank Holiday crossword in the Grauniad absorbed many of the out players. This was based around 'Cargoes' by John Masefield hence the opening lines of this report. Those who had done their homework at school and learnt it off by heart were much in demand. Thanks to them the crossword was completed.

Some games were played in a polyglottal fashion. Jonathon Toye and Celia Pearce played "en francais" more or less successfully although Celia's failure to respond to a shout of "pieds" resulted in bruised ankles and a further cry of "merde".

Martin Kolbuszewski's management was as amiable as ever and he was particularly skilled at restricting the heaviest rainstorms to mealtimes. The President of Hunstanton, George Noble, fittingly and not surprisingly won the 'A' block. Celia Steward won the 'B' block. Malcolm Harbord won the 'C' block and Roger Ivill showing good form romped home in the 'D' block. The Egyptian was won by Malcolm O'Connell with Su Stenhouse as runner-up. The latter, a smoker, was a most welcome winner of a handsome silver cigarette case normally entrusted to healthier souls! A jolly good time was had by all and many thanks to Arthur and the assorted club members who kept us so well provided with food and drink.

Championship of the North of England, Bowdon 23 - 26 August

report by David Goacher

'It never rains but it pours' suitably summed up the Northern championship this year, as on at least 3 occasions large parts of lawn 1 and 2 were under water. This caused repeated frustration to the manager, David Maugham, but also amusement to some players as David was seen falling flat on his face while squeezing surface water from off one of the lawns.

If thunderstorms were somewhat unusual then so was the draw this year as there were 23 seeds and only Richard Hilditch was unseeded!! The first round saw Colin Wild as pleased as Punch at taking a game off Debbie

Cornelius and an even better performance by Peter Taylor with a victory over Colin Irwin. There was also the standard timed game from Harrison-Wood and in a needle match a first ever victory for David Maugham over his father - something I find hard to believe. He must however have still been dwelling on his victory as he perished to a much improved Phil Cordingley in the next round without even taking croquet. Also in the quarter-finals Keith Aiton, seemingly back to his best form, produced an immaculate performance in beating Steve Comish +26TP +26TP. Debbie Cornelius, who had decided not to go to Portugal on holiday, but to come to sunny Manchester instead to defend her title, seemed to have accounted for David Goacher as she was going round on a standard triple in the third game when she inexplicably over-approached hoop five and David was able to finish in two turns.

The semi-finals saw 2 interesting games - Ian Burrige who had had an easy passage through played Keith Aiton. In the third game Burrige did a TPO and pegged out both balls, even though the other 2 balls were both for hoop 1. This confidence in his shooting ability almost proved unfounded as Aiton would have won if he had been able to achieve a relatively easy wiring at rover. Instead Burrige hit, played an excellent roll to 4-back from near rover and finished in that turn.

The second semi-final pitted David Goacher against Phil Cordingley. The first game saw Goacher complete a delayed triple; the second saw a very exciting finish. Goacher pegged out his opponent's ball having both the other balls for 4-back. After some cautious play, Cordingley eventually hit, but in trying to get rush on the other ball on the boundary rolled off the lawn - the cry of anguish was heard all around the club. Goacher was unable to finish from this position and Cordingley hit again only to stick in rover from a foot on Goacher's peg ball! Goacher confidently thinking that lightning couldn't strike 3 times, laid up leaving a full length of the lawn shot, but looked on in disbelief as Cordingley hit his third long shot in a row. This time he finished to win by three. The third game was played on the final morning and resulted in a fairly easy victory for Goacher.

A best of three final was agreed upon because of lack of time. The first game should have been won by Burrige as Goacher missed the lift when Burrige was for peg and penult but his approach to penult was short and Goacher then hit in with his 4-back ball. He went to the peg but then missed with his attempted peg out of Burrige's ball. Burrige then missed an 8 yard lift shot resulting from this and a little later surprisingly perhaps pegged out his own ball. Goacher then made hoop 2 and a good stop shot approach from corner 3 to hoop 3 established a 3 ball break and he finished in that turn.

Possibly deflated by his missed opportunity, Burrige made several errors in the second game after Goacher's delayed triple ended at rover and peg. Eventually Goacher was

presented with a fairly simple rush to rover but failed to make the hoop and even his second attempt at rushing to the hoop five minutes later was not good but he was able to play a good angled approach to the hoop which also gave him a chance to rush back to the peg. This he did to complete his second major win of the year. Ironically the match ended in bright sunshine - a very pleasant contrast to the atrocious weather of the previous three and a half days.

Results: Round 1 P Cordingley bt Ms J Shorten +26TP +26TP, D Gaunt bt J Haslam +2 +21, A Linton bt J Hawkins +15 -3 +5, Ms D Cornelius bt C Wild -8 +10 +26TP, S Liddiard bt M Sandler +18 +2, P Taylor bt C Irwin +21 -15 +15, D Harrison-Wood bt P Eardley +20 -1(T) +26TP, S Comish bt R Hilditch +17 +26TP. Round 2 D Maugham bt I Maugham +3 +10TPO, P Cordingley bt D Gaunt +12TP +5, D Goacher bt C Southern +21 +22, Ms D Cornelius bt A Linton +26 +16TP, I Burrige bt Ms G Curry +15TP +20, S Liddiard bt P Taylor +7 +4, K Aiton bt B Hallam +26TP +17TP, S Comish bt D Harrison-Wood +17TP +16TP. Quarter Finals: P Cordingley bt D Maugham +26TP +26, D Goacher bt Ms D Cornelius -26 +12 +13, I Burrige bt S Liddiard +3 +13, K Aiton bt S Comish +26TP +26TP. Semi-finals: Goacher bt Cordingley +16TP -3 +17, Burrige bt Aiton -14 +26 +2TPO. Final: Goacher bt Burrige +3 +14.

Southport Handicap Doubles 31 August - 1 September

report by Roger Tribe

Eight teams entered this new handicap doubles tournament, with visiting players from High Wycombe, Colchester, Bristol, Kenilworth and York, and with the complete range of abilities on show. In what other tournament would players entering only their first tournament get a chance to play in a competitive match against the British test team captain and World Champion.

The crunch game of the first block was between the partnerships of Carol Lewis with Brian Kerr and Tribe and Tribe. Brian attempted to peg out Tribe junior, accidentally ran his own ball onto the peg and, under the approving eye of John Haslam the manager, he removed his ball from the game. Carol shot well in the subsequent three ball game and reached penult when time was called with the Tribes one point behind on penult and peg. Tribe junior croqueted his partner ball towards penult and played onto the peg for the tying point. Chris Clarke, the referee of the tournament, had strategically placed himself near the lawn, apparently absorbed in his newspaper. Carol suddenly remembered the correct rules and the balls and clips were returned to their positions immediately after Brian's invalid peg out. Brian and Carol won the replay to reach the final.

Chris Clarke and Pat Rimmer were the winners of the other block, losing to Barbara Haslam and Brian Lewis but going through on points. In the final, Chris, with two quadruple

peels in earlier rounds, started a turn from 4th hoop in which he triple peeled Brian out of the game and simultaneously peeled his partner through 2nd and 3rd hoops. Carol, the single ball, again shot well but Pat seized her opportunity to learn from her senior partner and secured the victory. Was she nervous? "Of course, but Chris was lovely with me".

Handicap doubles is a uniquely challenging format for croquet and this friendly and entertaining event should be repeated next year.

All England Handicap, Southwick Area Final

August 31 to September 1

report by John Laws

On a bright and slightly breezy weekend, ten members of the clubs in the Southwick area, (Chichester 1, Dulwich 2, Medway 1, Ramsgate 1, Reigate 2, Sussex County 2 and Tunbridge 1) gathered at Sussex County Club to play in a tournament to decide who should represent the area in the national final later in the year. Our jovial manager Bill Arliss had, with the aid of his lap top computer, arranged for us to play a five round Swiss format tournament, each game being limited to three hours. Our handicaps varied from 16 to 2.

I am relatively new to the game and assumed that the manager made all the arrangements on these occasions. Even so, I was impressed when it appeared that, in addition to croquet, we were to be treated to an air display from the near by Shoreham airfield. Possibly Bill meant to distract us, so that we would not worry about the standard of our croquet? Certainly a fly past by two spitfires and a Lancaster bomber, accompanied by a constant flurry of helicopters sometimes made concentration difficult. A spectacular and ear shattering fly past by the Red Arrows brought play to a halt.

A surprising number of games went to time and a few to extra time, indicating that, on the whole, the handicapping system was working well. One effect of this was that Peter Nash (2) had to sit out for most of his games until his opponent's picket fence of bisques had almost disappeared before he could get going. However, his stylish turn-out in white plus threes, braces and a rakish cap, enlivened and added an Edwardian air to the scene. One long bisquer was delighted when the manager congratulated him on being eligible for a CA bronze award for making a break of twelve hoops with the aid of only one bisque; only to have the award "dashed from his lips" when he told the manager that he had lost the game!

To decide the winner it was necessary to find out who had beaten whom. Unfortunately from the manager's point of view, Barney had beaten Peter who had beaten John who had beaten Barney. So it came down to counting the points that each had scored. At this stage Bill Arliss put aside his lap top and used the back of

an envelope. As a result Barney Lewis (Tunbridge) was declared the winner with +33 points and Peter Nash (Dulwich) runner-up with +25 points.

As always at Southwick, the atmosphere was relaxed and the hospitality everything one could wish. For this our thanks are due in large part to Pam Arliss and the many other ladies who looked after us so well. So ended a most enjoyable, well organised and altogether delightful tournament.

All England Handicap Pendle Area Final August 31 - September 1

report by John Beech

The CA had arranged for eight players from five clubs to do battle at Pendle for area representation in the national final at Southwick later in the month. In the event only four clubs produced four players. The four competitors from Bowdon apparently couldn't find the time to spare. So Robert Essler (Pendle), Julian Tonks (York), Bob Gatenby (Shrewsbury) and Don Wright (Tyneside) played for the trophy in a modified Swiss.

Front runner Bob Gatenby was clearly going to win it because by Sunday lunch he had won 3 out of 3 beating Essler +6, Wright +14 and Tonks +3. Robert Essler had won 2 out of 3 and improving. He had lost to Gatenby -6 beat Wright +6 and beat Tonks +24.

The final round of the modified Swiss saw Robert Essler in devastating form beat Bob Gatenby +25. Winner Robert Essler (Pendle) 3/4 +4 Runner-up Bob Gatenby (Shrewsbury) 3/4 -2

Hurlingham Open Veteran's Tournament 10 - 12 September

report by Quiller Barrett

In mid-September if you had looked up from your morning paper in the verandah room at the Hurlingham Club - shock, horror, double-take - that really was a mass of Grey Power in action on the lawns below.

For the fourth year running Paul Macdonald organised a Veteran's event which originally was open to players in the South East Federation but now attracts entrants from further afield.

The formula is to encourage anyone over 60 to enter a strictly fun tournament where the games do not count for handicap record card purposes. This year handicaps ranged from 3 to 20 so several forests of bisques were planted. Paul divided the 30 competitors into four American blocks: the over 75's or Mega-vets; over 70's or Super-vets; over 65's of Just plain vets and the over 60's or Junior-vets. We were all guaranteed two 22 point time limited games each day.

Bookies would have had a good time as

there were numerous upsets to the form book in the early stages of the tournament. But by the third day the worthy winners were declared: John Robinette (Bury St Edmunds) in the Junior-vets; Bronach Reid (Hurlingham) Just plain-vets; Keith & Doreen Parsons (Caterham) in the two Super-vets blocks and Paul Macdonald (Hurlingham) in the Mega-vets. After the play-offs the three overall winners were Bronach Reid, Keith Parsons and Paul Macdonald.

Plans are already being made for 1997 so if you will be over 60 by then look out for Paul's poster: whatever your handicap you should have a very enjoyable and relaxed few days playing on those immaculate Hurlingham lawns.

Budleigh Salterton Handicap Tournament September 13 - 15

report by Geoff Underwood & Alan Newman

The tournament was blessed with three days of beautiful September weather, with wall to wall blue skies throughout and Panama hats much in evidence.

The lawns were dry and fast and generally in excellent condition. But one or two did have minor spiteful characteristics just to keep players on their toes.

The entry was 34 and the tournament was run on the Egyptian basis. Players were encouraged to try for three games a day when time permitted. Some games were still in progress well into the evening with long shadows appearing across the lawns. There were many interesting games including a family battle between the Toyes junior and senior. Honours in this game finally went to John Toye but not before the match was reduced to a two ball game due to some subtle pegging out strategy!

At the start of the final day many players were in contention for the trophy. By the end of play the prize went for the second year running to Richard Danby, who was a clear winner.

Not so the prize for the runner-up, where there was a tie between Mike Evans and Alan Newman. The manager, Shaun Carter, quickly devised a sudden death "penalty shoot out", both to settle the issue and to entertain the tea drinking crowd sitting in front of the pavilion.

Each player had to fire at the peg in turn from the side line with a deadline imposed in case it was getting dark before a hit was achieved!

A pin dropping would have been a serious intrusion to the silence as Mike lined up his first shot. His aim was spot on target and could have lifted the peg out of the ground. The silence of Alan's shot was broken only by a sound of mallet on ball. The peg remained untouched.

With Mike the runner-up and Alan third, fourth place went to Shona Vaissiere, a very rapidly improving player from Plymouth. Shona obviously benefits playing croquet all year round by spending our winters in Australia.

The event was very well managed by

Shaun ably assisted by Stuart Orr. Congratulations to them and to the Budleigh Club for a very enjoyable tournament.

Wrest Park Handicap Tournament September 13-15

report by John Bevington

" 'Tis the last roquet of summer . . . "

Thursday night, and a panic in the Star and Garter. To misquote Belloc, the hoops were solid, the lawns were squared, the management was unprepared. Eric Audsley, who had the names of the entrants, was at home. Manager Cliff Jones was in the pub with assorted Wrest Parkers. Having obtained the names by phone, Cliff was rash enough to ask if anyone would like to do the first round draw, the only condition being that players from the same club be drawn apart. This was too good an opportunity to miss, especially when nearly all the players were familiar faces. And no time limits. How might X fare against Y? If A finds he is down to play B - will the prospect colour his whole weekend? The perfect example of power without responsibility. Cliff glanced down the list, occasionally raising one eyebrow by a few millimetres, and pronounced himself satisfied. The die was cast. Would Friday the thirteenth prove unlucky for some?

Friday morning, and Cliff must have been relieved to see that the weather seemed set fair for the weekend. And indeed, apart from a strong wind on Friday, the remaining days were sunny and hot enough to bring out the shorts and panamas and have outplayers seeking the shade. A welcome contrast to recent September tournaments. So what was on view this time? Let us start with Tom Anderson against Graham Bond. Tom had pegged out Graham's forward ball, the other being for hoop 6. Tom was for penult. Graham was on the north boundary and Tom with a rush out of corner 4. There were repeated deems until Tom hit, and eventually ran his hoop, but in the wrong direction. Meanwhile Derek Powell missed a three inch roquet. George Collin peeled his ball through hoop 1 so successfully it crossed the north boundary. John Norris pegged out Eric Audsley when his other ball was for hoop 6 and Eric's for 2-back. Unfortunately he pegged out his own ball at the same time.

Wait. There's more. What about John Wheeler making two points with his first two strokes of the game (there's a novel opening, a perfect counter to the Duffer tice). Or his ill-fated comeback, when, on 1 and 2 with the opponent on 4-back and peg, he had got round to 4-back with one ball and right round with the other, pegging out the opponent ball in the process, leaving a rush to 4-back out of corner 2 and the opponent in corner 4. You've guessed it. Hit-in, end of game. And there was John Bevington's wiring debacle against Ian Mantle. In conjuring a leave (opponents near hoop 5 and behind 3) John noticed they were wired from each other

and rolled over behind hoop 1. Horrors - both balls were now wired from the ball at hoop 5. After much deliberation the last shot was played - with the wrong ball, which had to be replaced to give an instant lift. Nigel Gray got off more lightly. He had run 3-back and then played the wrong ball, went to 4-back and stuck, within range of his opponent. The balls were replaced in front of hoop 4, well away from his opponent, and conveniently at the hoop required by his other ball. Why is it that playing the wrong ball is still such a common occurrence, even though every time it happens we vow never to do it again? I'm sure anyone wishing to develop a theory will find ample space afforded by the Gazette, or the CA might wish to sponsor a post-doctoral research fellowship. Perhaps it is no more than a variation on the phenomenon of confusion when faced with a instantaneous forced choice between left and right.

At this point the reader might expect to learn about the exploits of the tournament's star players, but I neglected to observe one of the cardinal rules for reporters and failed to make sure I had a copy of the results before the manager left the tournament. Nevertheless I do remember that it was deservedly won by Peter Allnut, that the runner-up was Nick Evans, and that Alan Edwards reduced his handicap with several examples of meticulous break play - something I can definitely vouch for as our game yielded me a mere three points.

South of England Week, Compton 16 - 21 September

report by Audrey Howell

Mad dogs and croquet players go out in the mid-day wind and rain! The south of England week 1996 will be remembered for watery sunshine, buffeting winds, bitter cold temperatures and a day of rain which chilled the bones. There is a limit to the number of layers of clothing a player can don without interfering with the backswing and, as a cold female, I confess to six though there were still some hardy male souls still racing round the lawns in shorts, with Terry Burge (Surbiton) wearing the shortest shorts on the croquet lawn I have ever seen. (Where and when is your first tournament next year, Tel?)

On a particularly grey, cold, damp afternoon, hearing the woeful cries when a gust of wind played havoc with a shot, Barry James, chairman of Compton, suggested that players might like to buy their way out of the tournament? A few eyes lit up but only for a moment. We croquet players are a hardy lot. We battled on, some players coping with the blustery wind better than others. One was heard to lament that his game reminded him of his long ago school report - tries hard, progress slow.

Bored with news of the weather? Blame the lack of response to a notice posted in the clubhouse at the beginning of the week which read 'please report anything interesting, heroic or spectacular to the intrepid reporter'. I have to

go it alone.

Interesting? - A yellow ball hampered by the left hand wire of 3-back was blown cleanly through the hoop by a gust of wind much to the astonishment of the player (me) and Dennis Shaw, the referee of the tournament. Unfortunately I could not claim this as an act of God. The ball was replaced and the clip remained on the side.

Heroic? - Without doubt, veteran Betty Salmon of Compton. She donned her wet suit for a 9.30 doubles match, still similarly attired, pegged down her second singles match in the descending gloom of 7.00 pm before scurrying home for a well deserved whiskey.

Spectacular? - The lawns. They were in superb condition. Spectacularly fast for the first three days, slowing down only marginally following Thursdays rain. 3 Triple Peels? Hardly spectacular for A class players, Terry Burge managed two during the week but this was not enough to contain Bill Arliss (Southwick) the other triple peeler. I knew Bill Arliss had won the Ionides Cup (advanced play A class) by the huge grin on his face!

His grin faded, but only a little when he lost the final of the Devonshire Park cup (handicap x singles) to Graham Bonnet of Dulwich who had previously defeated Gordon Drake (Compton), Graham Thompson (Compton) and 'he of the short shorts'.

Congratulations to Roy Wallis (Compton) for managing the tournament while still focussing on his own play. A difficult job. He won the splendid Devonshire Park Salver (advanced play B class) which he said he had coveted since 1984. Well done Roy. With the same number of wins Peter Nash (Dulwich) was declared runner-up.

David Collins (Dulwich) was 'man of the tournament' he told me so! No he didn't, he's far too modest for that. Not only did he win the Luard cup (advanced play C class) for the second time by winning six games out of seven, he kept his form and concentration to claim the Brittain Porringer (handicap Y singles) defeating Chris Patmore +9 in the final.

In the main handicap doubles, the Arlisses appeared unstoppable when they won their second round match +26, but Chris Patmore and Mavis Harris's partnership proved sound. They defeated the Arlisses +7 in the semi-final, then Roger Wood and Kay Poland in the final. It is a pleasure to see A class players take on high bisquers for their partners. I'm sure Mavis and Kay, both with 16 handicaps, benefited from the experience.

The handicap Y doubles, for first round losers in the main event, was won by that indefatigable partnership of Peter Read and Betty Salmon. In an all Compton final, they beat Margaret Ward and Molly Pyman whose combined handicap was 30! It was a close battle, Peter and Betty winning by +4 on time.

So - that was the week that was. It's over - let it go - but not before thanking Compton for hosting the event and Roy for being a worthy replacement manager to Derek Caporn.

Extracts from the Unconfirmed Minutes of the Council Meeting on 14th December 1996

compiled by A J Oldham

1. S T Badger (Chairman), J W Solomon (President), B G Neal, A J Oldham, L Wharrad (Vice Presidents) and 18 other members of Council were present with P W P Campion (Secretary) and Ms G E Curry (Editor of the Gazette) in attendance.
2. An informal discussion on future policy preceded the formal meeting of Council. Four papers by members of Council covering such major topics as the composition of the membership, the role of the Federations, The organisation of Council and its Committees and the need for financial self-sufficiency were considered.
3. Sports Council. An interim report dealing mainly with development work under the Forward Plan has been submitted to the Sports Council and discussed with our liaison officer there.
4. World Championships 1997. The CA will request 4 places in the Golf Croquet Championships in Cairo. Our allocation for the Association croquet Championships in Bunbury, Australia is 4 plus the current World Champion and Runner-up (Chris Clarke & Robert Fulford). The WCF is unable to provide funding for travel expenses to Australia.
5. Handicap Forms. It was confirmed that making a full return of club handicap forms to the CA office at the end of every season is optional subject to clubs and players keeping the office fully informed of changes during the season.
6. Re Executive Committee. (1) Arrangements for support to the newly appointed Schools Promotion Officer (David Haslam) were approved. (2) The Treasurer's advice that, in order to avoid embarrassments, potential sponsor names should not be made public until the arrangements had been fully agreed with the company concerned was noted.
7. Re Finance & G P Committee. (1) The Budget for 1997 was approved. It was noted that some curtailment in the Gazette might be necessary and that no Directory would be published in 1997. (2) The recommendation that Brian C Macmillan be elected a Honorary Life Member of the Association was approved.
8. Re Tournaments Committee. (1) It was agreed that the CA should pay the English team's entry fee for the Home Internationals. (2) Details of the various arrangements for the 1997 Tournaments were approved.
9. Re Development Committee. (1) It was agreed that the Apps-Heley Award will only be made biennially after 1997 and will be given to the registered club more than 5 years old that has made the most progress during the two year period. The monetary part of the award would be increased to £100 from 1999. (2) A revised

Registered Club Handbook will be issued in 1997. (3) It is intended to hold an Indoor Tournament in March 1997. (4) No Federation Conference will be held in 1997.

10. Re Coaching Committee. (1) 1996 had been another good year for new coaching courses. (2) The Coach of the Year Award had been made to Mrs C Heritage. (3) In order to improve coaching provision for beginners and improvers, particularly in the smaller clubs. Club Coaches will be given an approved role on a trial basis in 1997.

11. Re International Committee. (1) Approval was given to the establishment of a management committee by the MacRobertson teams to organise a second world event for all the other member countries of the WCF - the MacRobertson Shield being recognised by all as the premier world event. (2) The International Committee was empowered to negotiate various matters with the WCF relating to the rules of the WCF and to its organisation of and financial provision for international events.

12. Re Centenary Committee. It was noted with much disappointment that our patron H M The Queen will be unable to attend any Centenary events. Other arrangements are proceeding satisfactorily.

13. Re Publicity Committee. The Committee's report outlining the direction in which they thought publicity should be sought through magazine articles, revision of the range of leaflets and local small scale sponsorship was approved.

14. Re Trophies Committee. (1) The Committee's proposal that the Malvern Bowl (surplus to requirements at the Compton Club) be purchased and used as a replacement for the stolen Inter-Club trophy. (2) Council accepted with pleasure the silver challenge Cup presented by John Beech for use in conjunction with the Apps-Heley Award. (3) The use of scrolls of Honour to supplement awards and replace missing trophies will be extended.

15. Re Golf Croquet Committee. The Committee's report dealing with the Golf Croquet magazine, Golf Croquet handicaps and laws and the selection of players for the 1997 World Championships was approved.

16. Council confirmed the election of 24 new Associates. The Secretary reported that at 6th December 1996 the number of Associates was 1600 including 69 overseas. He also reported that 740 members had so far agreed to collection of their subscriptions by Direct Debit.

17. The results of a two year survey of new members carried out by W E Lamb and designed to elicit the sources of new member's attraction to croquet and to joining the Association was circulated but not discussed.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Hurlingham Club on Saturday 19 October 1996

Present: JW Solomon (President) - in the chair, WE Lamb (Chairman of Council), ST Badger (Vice-Chairman of Council), Dr RW Bray (Treasurer), AJ Oldham (Vice President), LWD Antenen (Secretary) and 42 Associates.

Apologies were received from: Chris Clarke; Ms Gail Curry; Andrew Hope; Chris Hudson; Roger Jackman; Mrs B McGlen; Prof B Neal; Miss Pat Shine; Dr and Mrs Roger Wheeler.

OPENING ADDRESS

The President opened the Meeting and welcomed all present and thanked them for their support of the meeting.

1. MINUTES

1.1 The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 21 October 1995 were signed as a true record of that Meeting.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2.1 The Chairman presented his report to the meeting:

"It is nice to be able to start my report on a high note. That is provided this year, of course, with the success of our team in the MacRobertson Shield. My congratulations go to the captain, Chris Clarke and his team of Ian Burrige, Steve Comish, Debbie Cornelius, Robert Fulford and David Maugham and their manager and coach, Keith Aiton. Although they gave us a fright in the early stages in a couple of matches, their class told in the end and they emerged comfortable victors. It was a success in other ways as well. The cooperation of the host clubs, the arrangements they made, showed how well the Croquet Association works when we have a common objective. Individuals also made a considerable contribution. Richard Hilditch served as Tournament Manager cum Referee for the whole of the series and, incidentally, then went on to manage the Opens, at which a number of the overseas members played. Even Richard, though, could not be in two places at once and whilst he was at Parkstone overseeing the match between Australia and New Zealand, Chris Irwin managed the match at Bowdon between Great Britain and the USA. Brian Storey provided a superb results and publicity service for all of the matches. At the end of each day's play, results and reports were faxed to all of the quality newspapers, to radio and TV, and were also winging their way round the world via the internet. Others served as referees at various times during the series. All of these people have a full time job and gave up part of their holiday entitlement to help the Croquet Association. It was a magnificent effort and our thanks are due to all of them.

However it needs more than time and effort to host a Mac series; it takes money as well and this has made a large hole in the International fund. Our application to the Sports Council for a special grant was turned down partly on the grounds that the event was not recognised by the World Croquet Federation as a world championship. New Zealand have already indicated that such recognition would help them in their efforts to secure funding for the next Mac series in the year 2000. The Mac countries will be making an application to the World Croquet Federation for recognition and in return will consider how the event can be opened up to more countries than the present four without reducing the format or the prestige of the event. Sadly, the initial reaction of the World Croquet Federation has not been helpful.

We also experienced some difficulty during the year with the World Croquet Federation over ownership of the Wimbledon Cup, which was given to the Croquet Association by the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club for the first world championship, thanks to the good offices of Bernard Neal. In spite of all of the evidence to the contrary, in the form

of minutes of the All England Club and the Croquet Association, the World Croquet Federation persisted in its claim to ownership and denied the holder the right to have it in his possession for a period of time. The matter was resolved eventually, but only after the Croquet Association threatened to take legal action. The Croquet Association has been generous to the World Croquet Federation in making the cup available on indefinite loan for the world championships in the future and, over the years, has shown goodwill in hosting the first three world championships and being the major force in establishing the World Croquet Federation. I just hope that the goodwill will be reciprocated.

Turning to domestic matters, it is pleasing to report associate membership is increasing, although rather slowly. The figure of new members is starting to grow and the drop out rate has been further cut back. We lose around a hundred and twenty associates each year for a variety of reasons. Campaigns which give incentives to associates who recruit new members seem not to be successful but I believe that the positive efforts of the Croquet Association to help clubs via grants, loans and support for national lottery fund applications is beginning to make more and more people realise that the Croquet Association is not just a vehicle for tournament players. Indeed, in my view, the most important people in the Croquet Association are the people within the clubs who coach beginners and keep their clubs alive, and indirectly keep the Croquet Association alive, with a supply of new players.

Of course, we need publicity to attract players in the first place, and that was a point of concern earlier in the year, when no-one could be found to chair the Publicity Committee, yet in spite of that, publicity did not stop. I have already mentioned Brian Storey's efforts for the MacRobertson Shield. Sad to say, Brian received a fax from national TV saying "please do not send us any more faxes, we are not going to use them." That message was borne out also in a meeting I attended at the Central Council for Physical Recreation on publicity for minor sports. We were told bluntly by the sports editor of a national paper that there is so much pressure now on sports pages from year-round major sports, that there is no hope of minor sports getting extensive or even at times any coverage. The advice was to concentrate on regional and local newspapers. I think that is good advice because a survey of new associates that I have undertaken in the last two years show that no-one has been attracted to croquet by national coverage or publicity, overwhelmingly, players come into contact with the game through local publicity and through friends and acquaintances.

I am disappointed to say that this year no associates put their names forward for election to Council, apart from the new federation representatives. We need to keep Council alive and representative. Council exists to take decisions, decisions that affect associates and clubs, and it is an important part of decision making to listen to a variety of views from those affected. That Council listens was shown by the decision at the last meeting, after hearing representation on behalf of junior players, to reduce their non-discounted rate of subscription. The resumption of the club conference, held in February, was also of great value. Over a hundred people attended and discussion was lively on a number of topics. The conference gave its enthusiastic support to the introduction of a direct debit scheme for the payment of subscriptions. Progress on this scheme is well on schedule. To date almost four hundred associates have signed direct debit mandates and we are well on our way to our initial target of a third of the membership on direct debit. If you have not already signed up, please do so; it will cut down the administrative work in the office tremendously.

This year has seen the end of an era in our development plans, as Chris Hudson's contract as development officer has come to an end. In the early years, his enthusiasm did much to promote, develop and expand croquet, and I pay tribute to his work. However, it has become clear that, with the growth and strength of federations, employing a national development officer is not the best way to use our Sports Council grant.

The emphasis has changed and the Sports Council is now looking not for growth but self-sufficiency. We have to look carefully at the cost effectiveness of our plans and we hope to make more money available directly to regional development and to the development of the young players.

We also say farewell at this AGM to our Secretary, Tony Antenen, who reaches retirement age next month. It has not been easy for Tony to be Secretary in a small organisation like ours. We have never been able to afford a full time secretary with full-time assistance, and there has been many a time when Tony has been alone in the office with urgent duties to attend to and with constant interruptions from the telephone and visitors. He has coped loyally and cheerfully with all of these demands on his time. Thank you very much, Tony, and I am sure we all wish you a long and happy retirement.

Paul Campion will be taking over from Tony on a mutually agreed part-time basis, and that has made it possible to employ assistance full-time. I say full-time with some hesitation because the duties will be shared by Mrs Shirley Moore and Mrs Hazel Sherrington, both of whom have come today to meet as many people as possible. The office will be staffed five days a week.

My term in office is now almost over. My predecessor, Colin Irwin, predicted that I would have a lively time and he was right. It has been a lively and interesting time, and it has made me even more aware of how much croquet owes to the voluntary efforts of so many people. I hope and believe that my successor will have a quieter time and I am sure that you will give him the same support I have had. Thank you all very much."

The Chairman's report was adopted nem con.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

3.1 In presenting the 1995 Accounts and his commentary thereon, which had been published in *The Croquet Gazette* No 244 (July 1996), The Treasurer, Dr Roger Bray, drew attention to the sizable increase in general reserves which had resulted largely from 'windfalls' in the last two years. This would enable the CA to give more help to Clubs, particularly through the recently revived and extended loans scheme. But he also warned that the years ahead were likely to be much tougher, given that the main Sports Council Grant was projected to fall from £30,000 in 1995 to £20,000 in 1998, with the distinct possibility of no further funding beyond that. Costs are being, and will have to be reduced, but it would be wrong to reduce to zero the costs of activities like international events, publicity and development which are presently aided by the Grant. This was one of the major reasons why Council had agreed to increase subscriptions in 1997. It was imperative to take prudent steps now in order to work towards a balanced budget by 1999.

The report was followed by several questions and observations. In response to a question from Don Cornelius concerning investment policy, the Treasurer explained that an Investment Sub-committee had recommended that some of the CA's reserves, presently deposited in a building society account, be invested in a selection of Government Stocks. He welcomed Cornelius's offer to advise on this matter. On the issue of the cost of computer service and equipment, opposing views were expressed from the floor of the meeting about the necessity or advisability of continued expenditure at a significant level, but for the immediate future it was noted that the CA's database needed to be completed.

The Treasurer's report was adopted nem con.

4. ELECTION OF THE HONORARY TREASURER

4.1 The President thanked the Treasurer for his continuing efforts on behalf of the CA and, there being no other nominations for the post, Dr RW Bray was re-elected unanimously and to acclamation.

5. ELECTION OF AUDITORS

5.1 The Proposal by DW Shaw (Compton), seconded by H Hall (Bristol), THAT Messrs Morgan, Brown and Spofforth be re-elected as Auditors, was approved nem con.

6. ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

6.1 Eight members of Council, viz: KMH Aiton, WH Arliss, IJ Burrige, TJ Haste, AB Hope, CJ Irwin, SO Jones and CN Williams had retired by rotation under Rule 2: SN Mulliner, who had been chosen to fill a casual vacancy on Council had also retired under Rule 16. Three of the resulting nine vacancies on Council were reserved for representatives from the Croquet North, East Anglian and North West Federations.

Dr Haste and Messrs Arliss, Burrige and Jones sought re-election under Rule 7A(a)(i) and no further nominations having been received, these gentlemen were declared elected to Council.

6.2 In response to the suggestion by AJ Oldham, the President announced the names of the elected Federation representatives: BM Rannie (Croquet North); SNH Gray (East Anglia) and CJ Irwin (North West Federation).

7. BENEFACTORS' BOOK

7.1 The Secretary read the names in the Benefactors' Book.

7.2 Responding to a request from the floor, the Treasurer undertook to provide a form of words which could be used as a codicil for anyone wishing to leave money to the CA in his or her will.

8. THE PRESIDENT'S CLOSING ADDRESS

"Bill Lamb has told you about those things that have happened during the last season and in a moment I shall be looking forward to next year. Before I do so there are a number of other things which need to be said. First, not all of you may know that today Bill completes his term of two years as Chairman of Council and he will be retiring from that arduous position. Every Chairman has his own style and I would describe Bill's priority as that of "information". He has been keen to ensure that we all knew what was going on and his articles appeared regularly in the Gazette detailing the developments that we all ought to be aware of. Thank you, Bill, for a very productive and hardworking two years as Chairman.

A month or so ago Chris Hudson retired as National Development Officer, a position he held for some 7 or 8 years. During that time he devised many new initiatives, including the Golden Mallet and the Garden Croquet Classic among a number of others. We are grateful to him for his work on behalf of the game and I have written to him to express the appreciation of all Associates.

In a few weeks Tony Antenen will be retiring after some half dozen years as our Secretary. He arrived knowing practically nothing about croquet and he leaves shortly very little the wiser! But seriously he has conducted our affairs most efficiently and I want to thank you, Tony, for all you have done during your time with us. The occasion will be marked more formally in the near future.

Now I should like to turn to the future. Next year will be an auspicious one for us because it will be the Centenary of the Association. In fact it was 99 years and a few days ago that the first meeting of the United All England Croquet Association was held and which 3 years later became The Croquet Association. It has been agreed that such an auspicious occasion should not go unmarked and a Centenary Committee has been formed to devise suitable ways of celebrating the event. With the willing, I might say enthusiastic, cooperation of the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, a Croquet Exhibition will be held alongside the tennis museum at Wimbledon, opening in May and running until October. Those of you who have visited the Tennis Museum will know the wonderful quality of that exhibition and we can be very confident that the croquet exhibition will compare favourably. Many articles for inclusion have already been offered both from home and from overseas and Wimbledon

have earmarked a very substantial budget for it. It is hoped that we shall have a much smaller travelling exhibition which will move around the country during the season visiting suitable sites such as local libraries, maybe stately homes.

During the Inter-Counties championship a reception will be held at Southwick, probably in the form of a barbecue, where it is hoped to erect a marquee and excellent refreshments will be available at a modest price, hopefully no more than about £10. The tournament has some 130 competitors so that with spouses and others living not too far from Sussex, we might expect some 150 people to attend.

There will be a special centenary doubles competition taking place during the season, the finals being held at Cheltenham on the last weekend in August. It will be a 14 point game with a one and a half hour time limit. Every club will be able to enter up to, I think, four teams and it is hoped that as many as 40 teams will make the finals, making it a very splendid event. The details will be published in the Fixture Book. Centenary medals will be presented to the finalists and also to those in the finals of the All England Handicap which will probably take place in September.

On the 18th October we shall hold the Annual General Meeting, only 3 days away from the original meeting. This will be held here and in the evening there will be a Centenary dinner at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club at Wimbledon. It seemed to us very appropriate to celebrate in convivial surroundings, in a venue with such close associations with croquet.

Finally, it was thought that it might be an idea to round it all off with a lecture which I have been asked to give. This will be during the Annual Meeting of the South West Federation near Bristol, on 9 November. It is a daunting thought for me to do this but at least I have a year to prepare it!

There will be an article or two in the Gazette advising everyone of these special events. It is also hoped that we will publish a short book updating the history of the CA.

Finally we have been in some correspondence with Buckingham Palace over the last two years hoping that it will be possible for our Patron, Her Majesty the Queen to attend one of our more prestigious events during next summer. We had been led to believe that we might have a definite reply by last month but none has yet been received and we live in daily hope. If we do not hear by the end of this month it would not be inappropriate for me to write again.

On the carpet - the Albert Lawrance Trophy at Soham - November 9/10 1996

by John Bevington

When the playing season is over and the clocks go back I am normally content to spend the winter months assisting with whatever lawn maintenance programme our groundsman has planned, writing up various reports for the club's AGM and wondering what on earth I can do to improve my rushes. Apart from the club's social mini-tournaments at Christmas and Easter the mallet is laid to rest until May. Terry Mahoney's phone call therefore came as something of a surprise. Would I be interested in playing for Wrest Park in the Soham indoor tournament? Why not.

The carpet, is laid out on the floor of a multi-purpose hall whose floor contains enough coloured tape to suggest that it could handle anything from synchronised badminton to a naval field-gun competition. Claire Heritage's programme indicates a busy weekend: there are to be eleven double-banked one-hour games each day, starting at 9am. Two American blocks of seven teams, with a final between the block winners. There are teams from all over East Anglia.

Wrest Park are not playing until mid-morning, so there is a chance to watch a game. I have played on the carpet before, but it was some years ago before the Speed Croquet format became established. Each side is allowed thirty minutes play to make their 14 points, and your turn ends

So, we have devised quite a full programme. I have been a little premature in telling you all this since it is still subject to Council's approval, which we hope will be formally given this afternoon. I would like to assure Council that my having leaked all this in advance is no attempt to force their hands! but we could not let this opportunity go without telling you what we intend should happen. Needless to say, if anyone has any bright ideas it may still not be too late for them to be implemented. Please talk to Stephen Badger.

Thank you for coming and best wishes for a happy and successful season in 1997."

9. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

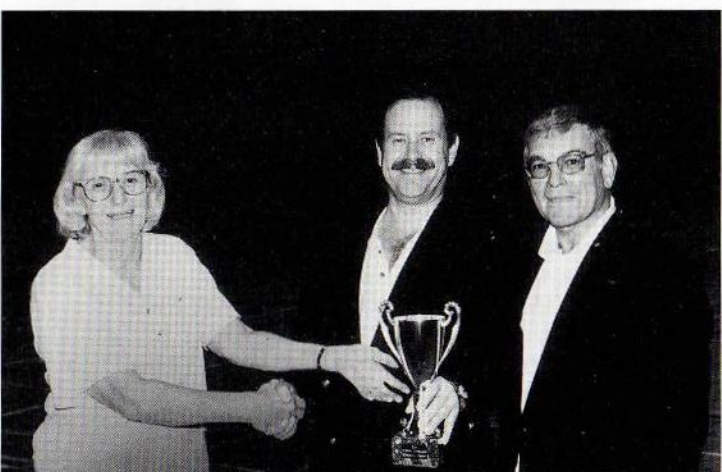
9.1 Apps and Steel Bowl At the conclusion of his address, the President announced the presentation of the Apps Bowl for the most improved male player to Ian Lines (Bowdon) and the Steel Bowl to Mrs Ailsa Lines (Bowdon). The original Steel Bowl having been lost, this award now takes the form of a glass bowl awarded outright on each occasion and is accompanied by a scroll listing the names of the holders of the award. Mr and Mrs Lines were, happily, present and received their trophies from the President and to acclamation.

9.2 The Beddow Cup The President drew the attention of the Meeting to the Beddow Cup which was on display. After recounting a brief history of the origins of the trophy, ie it had been the original cup for the winner of "the Best Ten", had been won outright by Miss DD Steel in 1934 (after winning it four times) and then after her death in 1965 had vanished from sight, he invited Mr & Mrs Anderson (Wrest Park) to explain its happy re-emergence.

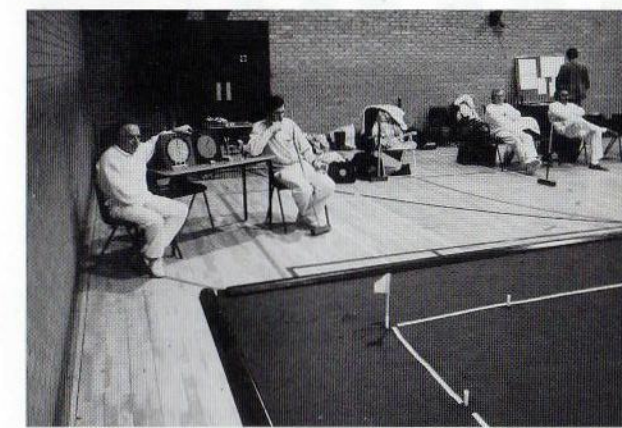
9.3 Mr Tom Anderson spoke of their having seen the cup advertised in a Bedfordshire newspaper in 1978, it having been bought by an antiques dealer when the Steel family effects were auctioned off after Evelyn Steel's death. Tom Anderson and Mr John Wheeler had made a joint purchase and thus prevented its being melted down for scrap silver value.

There being no further business for inclusion in these Minutes, the Meeting closed at 12.00 noon.

when you have placed the balls in their lawful positions and quit the court. The timekeeper will then flick the switch to stop your clock and start that of the opposition. He or she must remain alert to requests for pauses to compensate for the inevitable delays of double-banking (signalled by a variety of sounds and gestures, with or without the aid of the mallet). If your time management skills let you down and your time is used up before that of your opponents you can only play single ball shots, which is most



Claire Heritage presents Jeremy Scott and Nigel Gray with the trophy.



Terry Mahoney and David Harley on the timekeepers' chairs.

frustrating.

You cannot afford to waste time, so you need a good understanding with your partner, both in deciding who is going to attempt what, and knowing where to position yourself to retrieve and replace balls on the yard line. The time to worry is when your partner lines up a long range shot at the opposition who are close together near a corner. A miss, while regrettable, is easy enough to deal with, but a hit can see three balls shoot off in all directions, often flying over the guttering that serves as a ball stop and sometimes even exiting at speed through a doorway to be pursued at the double down some corridor.

The carpet is fast, and playing on it takes a bit of getting used to. A delicate long-range take-off, like Old Man River, just keeps rolling along, and it is quite normal for a player to walk after and overtake the ball, and then wait anxiously as it finally comes to rest. When approaching and running hoops it pays to be gentle but firm. It is best to try and avoid the line of the edge of the carpet square around the hoop as the ball may suddenly diverge from its chosen course (invariably in the wrong direction). Attempting to crash through the hoops from a distance invariably leads to disaster, as they are only fixed to a baseplate and are therefore not firm in the ground. The whole hoop shudders backwards and the ball can go just about anywhere. And do not suppose that just because you are playing on a carpet your shots will go in a straight line - some display the sort of late swing that any fast bowler would envy. The speed of the carpet and the fact that most of the play is at relatively close quarters means that stop shots are difficult to judge and most breaks progress via little rolls and splits. But beware - if you get too used to the indoor game you may find that a heavy spring lawn leaves you wishing you had either brought a heavier mallet or indulged in a little pre-season weight training.

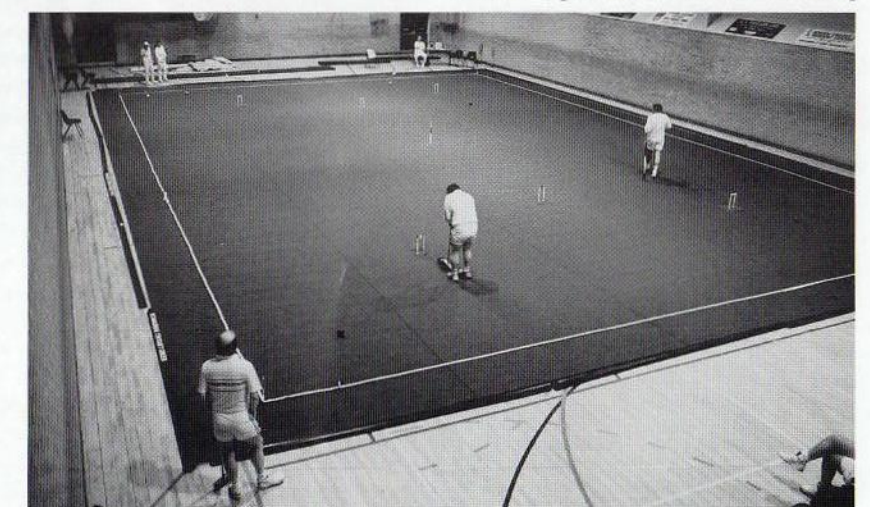
One of the attractions of this tournament is the fact that it includes relative beginners and MacRobertson Shield players all playing together under the same roof. Handicaps varied from 20 to -2.

As there are only three games to play

during the day there is plenty of time to sit out. You may be timekeeping (a duty which by tradition falls to the winners of the previous game). You can sit and chat with old friends, or you can make a contribution towards the completion of the Ipswich jigsaw puzzle (a 1000 piece aerial photograph of Bamburgh Castle and the surrounding fields and beach). You can watch another sport - on Saturday there was also an indoor bowls match, and a number of players all wearing blazers covered in badges congregated on the upstairs gallery to watch some

of the croquet. One said he had considered taking up the game but hadn't realised it was quite so energetic. Also upstairs are the cafe (with choice of hot dishes for lunch) and bar. This last is of course essential at any tournament, since without one you are prevented from complying with the customs of the game by being denied the opportunity to buy or be bought a drink. And there is even more sport in the bar: snooker and pool tables and English football's finest marching (not always in step) through Georgia on the television. Back in the hall you can try your hand at a trade unique to the indoor game - real-time lawn maintenance. When in play this is restricted to occasionally repositioning the hoops after an especially violent impact, but bystanders can always rejoin the pieces of guttering or even the lawn itself. As the carpet is laid in strips there is a tendency for them to ride out with wear, so if the road is clear you can dash on and sew them back together with the carpet kicker.

Sunday morning, and we're all back for more. Bamburgh Castle now has most of one tower standing, but the builders don't seem to be getting on very fast. Waiting for materials? Surely not. Transport problems? Unlikely. Too much cider in their lunch break? To be fair, not even that. It turns out that this particular firm like to build castles without looking at the drawings. I contribute a hundred yards of beach



Viewing from the gallery gives the best view of play.

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while waiting for our next game. This is going to be tough - a local derby against Northampton. Terry gets pegged out, but I get round only to mess up at least two easy chances at the last hoop and we lose by one. But since Northampton and Wrest Park are now level on games and we have scored more points we go through to the play-off between the second-placed in each block, where our opponents will be Newport. As Dayanon have withdrawn the match for the Albert Lawrance Trophy will be between Ipswich and Letchworth. We manage a win and watch the rest of the final in which Letchworth at last conquer their nerves to take the cup.