

The Croquet Gazette

Issue 263

September 1999



**SURREY
INTER-COUNTY
CHAMPIONS 1999**

**BEDFORDSHIRE
DIVISION 2
CHAMPIONS
1999**



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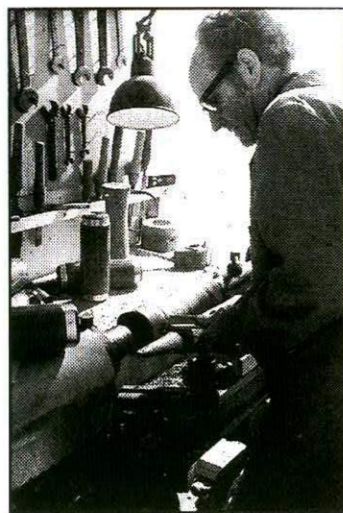
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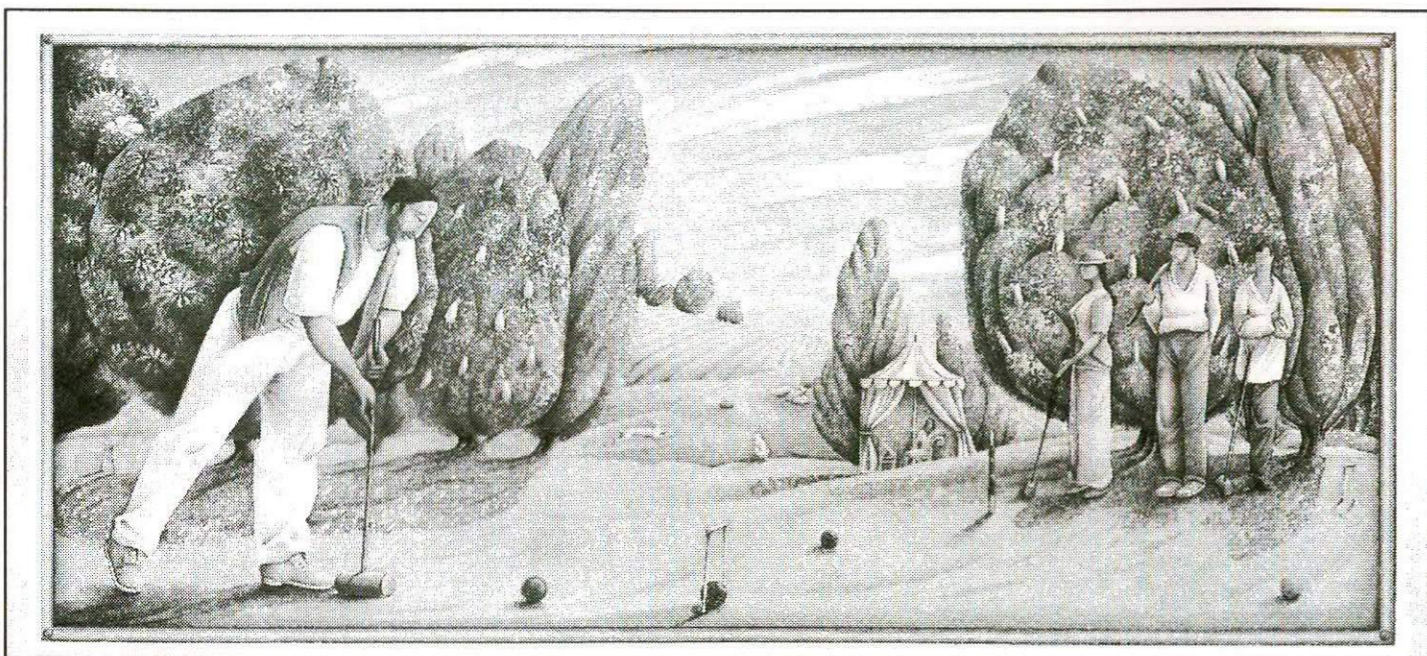


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Specific Questions & Queries

Specific questions or queries should be sent direct to the relevant CA official, e.g. Laws questions to the chairman of the Laws Committee.

Copy Details

General copy and contributions should be sent direct to the editor on floppy disc (text or ASCII files). Typed work or clear handwriting is also acceptable.

Photographs are always required. Both black and white or colour prints can be utilised. Please detail on the reverse of all photos the subject of the picture, and if you require the photographs to be returned please include your address on the reverse.

Tournament Results & Reports

Tournament results should be reported on the new tournament return sheet. These have been issued in a bid to make the reporting of events and the administration of the rankings easier. Please ensure that the forms are used. Tournament reports should be written and sent to the editor within SEVEN DAYS of the completion of a tournament. Failure to comply with this guideline will result in reports failing to be published.

Delivery Queries

Queries regarding delivery of the Gazette to members should be directed to the Secretary of the Croquet Association and not to the Editor.

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THE CROQUET GAZETTE



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Front Cover: The winning teams from the 1999 Inter-County Championships.

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Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in the Croquet Gazette are those of the editor and contributors. The Croquet Association is not responsible for statements other than those clearly defined as being made on behalf of the Croquet Association

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Chairman's Column



Some three years ago my predecessor, Stephen Badger, formed a planning group to look at the possible shape of the CA in the new millennium. Their report was finally accepted early in my term of office and during the following months we have tried to implement the various items in that report. I am pleased to say that after widespread consultation on the membership structure of the Association, all the necessary resolutions to implement the proposals have been prepared for submission to the next AGM and we hope for your approval.

Internally we have also been looking at the structure of Council itself and how it operates. There have been some quite radical changes approved to the various committee structures and we hope this will lead to much quicker decision making by the Council and its committees.

The Planning Group proposal to promote all formats of croquet was given a helping hand in respect of golf croquet by the holding of the WCF World Championships in Leamington last year. It will be followed up this year with the European Croquet Federation Golf Championships at the same venue. The CA are organising this latter event on behalf of the ECF. This year we have been trying out the new WCF version of the rules for this game. I myself have been regularly playing this new format and quite like it but I have heard a number of opposing views. I would make it very clear that these new rules are only an experiment for this year and if they are not liked by the majority, then your golf committee will be looking at alternatives. However we can only do this if we hear your opinions. Questionnaires have been sent to all club Secretaries so please make your feelings known. Next year will see the introduction of two new major golf croquet events. The first will be "The Open Golf Croquet Championship" held at Southwick 12/17 June. We hope to attract overseas visitors to this championship. The second will be an Inter-Club event organised along the lines of the Association Inter-Club

championship but with all initial rounds Federation based to minimise travelling.

As you will have seen in the Gazette we have been advertising for a new Secretary as Paul has decided to move on. I am pleased to be able to tell you that Nigel Graves has now accepted the position and will be taking up his duties later this year. Nigel is a croquet player and is a regular visitor to several tournaments down South. Our thanks to Paul for all his efforts over the last few years particularly for the success he has had in getting croquet into the media.

Our plans to introduce our own web pages came to fruition earlier this year and we came on line in March. We now have the statistics for the first twenty-one weeks on line and have recorded a total of 27,500 visits to our site in this period. At present we are averaging about 2,500 visits per week. The pages on laws and croquet products appear to be the most popular. We hope the regular publication of all the national competition results has been useful to members. I have personally been looking after the site but would welcome regular help to improve our news pages. Please get in touch by email if you feel you could assist me on this matter.

This will be my last column as Chairman of the Association as my term of office finishes after this year's AGM. It has been an interesting and hectic two years. I would like to thank all those who have worked with me, helped, advised and given me support. It is my intention to carry on as a member of Council and hope I can continue to help in the promotion of our fascinating, frustrating, addictive but totally underrated sport.

News & Information

New golf croquet event

The Croquet Association is pleased to announce the inauguration of a major new tournament in the Millennium to be known as The Golf Croquet Open Championships.

These Championships will be held at the Sussex County Croquet Club (Eleven lawns) from Monday 12 June to Saturday 17 June 2000

Included are both singles and doubles events, played to the WCF rules in force at that time: full details of the format and entry qualifications will be issued later this season.

If the Championships are over-subscribed, priority of entry will be established from performances in 1999 tournaments and/or the advice of overseas players' home Associations may be sought.

New website and email for the New Zealand Croquet Council

The Croquet NZ Website has been updated. Updates will be carried out regularly and frequently. The NEW address is:

<http://www.croquet.org.nz>

The new Email address for the NZCC Office is: croquet@croquet.org.nz

Anyone for South Africa?

The Western Province Croquet Tournament for 2000, will be held from 11 March to 18 March. Anyone wishing to know more can contact Carol Knox at:

10 Rustenvrede Avenue
Constantia
7800
South Africa
or via email knox2@ar1.bp.com

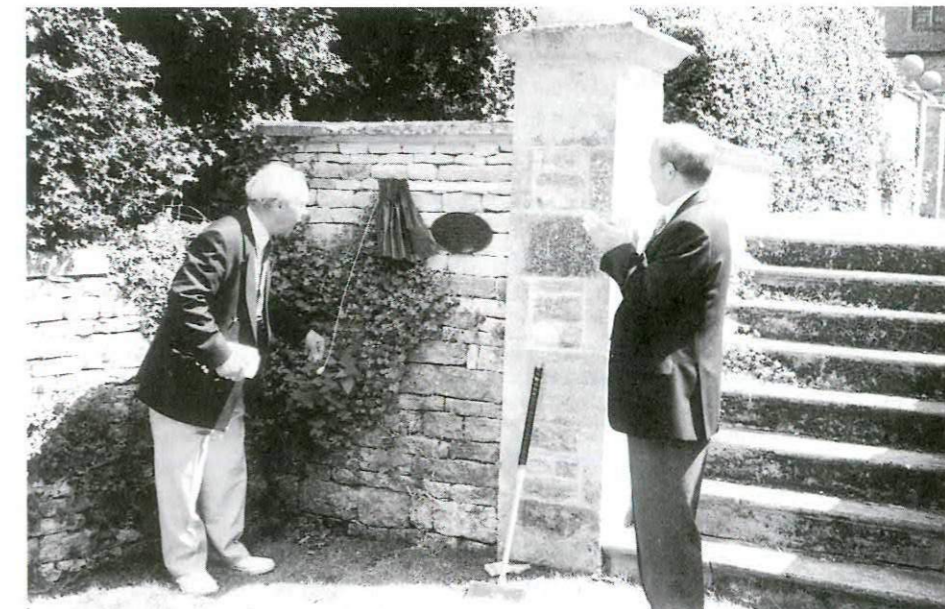
South African Nationals-December 1999 Johannesburg 1-7 December. 8 Association events and 4 Golf Croquet events.

The Millennium Tournament- Western Province Championships at Rondebosch, Cape Town. Golf Croquet events (5) 26-27 Feb. Association events (10) 4-5th March. April/May 2000 Eastern Province Highlander Croquet Tournament at the Port Alfred Club -AC 3 EVENTS gc 1 EVENT 30 April to 6th May. Players in the northern hemisphere will find these tournaments attractive because of the sunshine in South Africa- and the exchange rate! We can assist with transport and accommodation. Enquiries may be addressed to :- Brian Bamford, 47 Sandown Road, Rondebosch, 7700 South Africa. Tel- 027216894432 Fax- 027216852326.

European Championships

The first European Golf Croquet Championship is to be held at the Victoria Park Club, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, England from 6-9 October 1999.

Some 24 participants are expected for the event, from clubs all over Europe. The tournament is organised by the Fédération Européenne de Croquet (FEC) under the aegis of the Croquet Association.



John Solomon unveils the plaque watched by Mike Hemmings, Custodian of Chastleton House.

Honouring Mr Whitmore By Neil Williams

Sunday, 18 July, was a perfect summer's day - just made for croquet. At around 2.30 pm that day at Chastleton House, Oxfordshire, John Solomon, President of the Croquet Association, pulled a cord and revealed behind a small blue curtain a simple plaque attached to a wall of warm Cotswold stone. By performing this ceremony, John completed the process of public recognition and acknowledgement of possibly the most important figure in the establishment and development of croquet, Walter Jones Whitmore.

Quoting Whitmore's near contemporary, Arthur Lillie, the President summed up Whitmore's massive contribution: "He transformed the game from the silliest of open-air pastimes to the most intellectual one."

Whitmore's single most important contribution - the codification of the Laws - and his dates are recorded on the plaque. No more. But the plaque is sited by the flight of steps that leads down to the actual lawn on which he played in the 1860s: his croquet laboratory. What is more, the lawn itself has been restored, and had been laid out ready for play after the ceremony.

John's speech and that of the Custodian of Chastleton, Mike Hemmings, suited the occasion perfectly - just like the strawberry tea served in the house afterwards. To remind us how far we have travelled since Whitmore's day, John had dug out this fact: "There was even discussion, in those early days, as to whether two hands could be used to hold

the mallet as this was thought unfair to ladies, who had to have one hand free to hold their parasols!"

Perhaps above all, co-operation between the National Trust and the Croquet Association was emphasised. The restored lawn will be available for play and the Trust will make available to the many visitors to the house a CA-produced leaflet on the game.

After the ceremony, John Solomon and Bill Arliss - President and Chairman of the Council, respectively - played a demonstration game to open the lawn. Typically, John played with real purpose and to great applause from the assembled guests.

"Good Lord, he really means business!" said an alarmed Chairman. "He's cross-wired me."

How easy it would have been for this event never to have happened. The persistence of a few people - including John and Bill - kept the plan alive. It was the hard work of others - not least, Bob Whitaker, who organised the day's events and saw through the production of the plaque with the NT - which turned plans into reality. It was Bob, too, with his unique contacts at the NT, who liaised with both organisations so successfully.

And now, a bond has been forged - or further strengthened - between the two organisations, from which both will benefit: croquet players will visit Chastleton; Chastleton visitors will learn about croquet.

Even more important, as everyone involved in the project will agree, a great Victorian pioneer and innovator has been brought back into focus, and, for the first time, honoured on his home ground.

Best laid plans and all that.....

Apologies for this issue arriving well after the date it should have. Unfortunately this is due to the fact that most contributors neglected to read the notice informing them of the alternative arrangements for sending copy whilst I was on holiday. The consequences of the copy being sent to the wrong address will have a knock on effect, and it is only fair to warn you that the November issue will also be late. (So much for the best laid plans.) Thanks to Tony Backhouse for typing up the copy that was sent to him whilst I was enjoying myself. Ed.

Visit the Croquet Association Web

Site at

<http://www.croquet.org.uk/>

LETTERS

CA Website

Although we are encouraged to visit the CA website, its address does not seem to be given in any CA literature. Could it, at least, be quoted each month in the Gazette, please? It is quite difficult to find otherwise.

Sorry about the omission. You can now find the address on page 4 of this and future issues. Ed.

Short Croquet

As Chairman of the Reigate Priory Club, I would heartily endorse David Jenkinson's letter (Issue 262) for short croquet within clubs. It is invaluable both for beginners, who would otherwise be intimidated by the full lawn, and by those who physically find the full lawn too demanding for them.

At Reigate, we devote each Saturday morning to short croquet, dividing our one main lawn into two short courts. This is very well supported, mainly by the two types of player mentioned above. Indeed, one of our most devoted attendees is a player who might otherwise have given up the game, due to her medical condition.

So, please continue to encourage this form of play, both as an introduction to the full game, and as a valuable alternative to it!

John Taylor, Chairman Reigate Priory

No cover-up

Dear Editor

I was dismayed at the photographs appearing on the front cover of the May edition. Our constant efforts to dispel the misconceptions held by many about croquet being a 'silly' game can hardly be assisted by producing a prattish shot of someone trying to play it on a mountain. It does absolutely nothing to promote the image of a serious and dignified game, which is surely what the official publication of croquet should be attempting to do. This view was also shared by our fellow members at Edgbaston.

Esther Jones

First I am accused of the Gazette being too serious, now I am accused of using prattish shots on the front cover. It is at times like this I am reminded of the saying "you can't do right for doing wrong". Then again I can no doubt look forward to some far more appropriate photographs from Edgbaston in the near future. Ed.

Comments on New Golf Rules

Dear Editor

The new WCF Rules are the best thing that's happened to Golf croquet since 'sliced bread'! No longer are there four players grouped around the hoop wondering whether the ball half way through the hoop will or will not score the hoop if it is knocked through.

It seems that even more 'A' Class

Players' are being tempted into playing Golf Croquet. The challenge of going for the hoop from a greater distance tests their croquet skills, the challenge set by S Sabry (Egy) who I have seen run hoop four from the north boundary.

The only thing I am against in the new rules is that when winning the toss you have no choice. This is OK in singles but in doubles it can be a great disadvantage if you have to start. Your opponents now know your order of play and can insure that their best player plays before your best player when you want it the other way round. If you win the toss you should have the choice of going first or second. I cannot think of another sport where you are told what to do.

Also, why has the Golf AHS been based on five points when we just managed to master the Association ten point system?

The individual handicap allocation in doubles did not cause too many fights, at our clubs doubles day. A lot of discussion ensued as to who should have the extra bisques when two equally high handicappers were playing opponents with different lower handicaps - the tournament manager's decision was final!

The handicap test threw up some strange results. Two elderly members who had been to the Club on three mornings being taught to play Golf croquet had a handicap rating of 2 & 4! The best score achieved for six hoops by one of our junior members was 12, the middle bisquers averaging between 16 and 19 per round bringing their club Golf Croquet handicap down by 1 or 2 points. Therefore I think the target figures should be lowered by at least 10 points bringing a scratch player to 36 and the other handicaps going up by 2 which would be more realistic.

Len Hawkins, Ramsgate

Dishonest and distasteful

Dear Editor

On the whole, croquet people are lovely people, but there is a sad minority who think that it is clever and amusing to avoid paying for beverages and meals at tournaments. Make no mistake about it, we know who you are, it is just that we do not have the time and resources to do anything about it. I will be especially vigilant when I meet any of you on the croquet courts, as I believe that a person not honest enough to pay 30p for a cup of coffee, is not likely to be an honest referee of their own game.

Southwick relies on catering to provide some of its income, and at present all is done by volunteers, whose goodwill is jeopardised by the selfish behaviour of some players and guests, who leave their crockery, glassware and rubbish practically anywhere, especially at the Inter-Counties. Please consider the volunteers - all clubs have them - before they become extinct and you all have to pay a lot more to enjoy your croquet.

Chris Constable, Catering, Southwick

National Juniors Tournament

Dear Editor

If the size of the entry to this year's Junior championship is any yard stick to measure the

success of the countless hours put into promoting croquet as a sport for youth, one can reach no other conclusion than that the seed fell on barren ground. There were only two entrants for the Championship itself, and one for the other events.

Naturally enough, the reigning champion for the past 3 years wished to defend his title, so Kristian Chambers, now -1, played Bristol's Rachael Scott, whose handicap is 11. Although good friends, Kristian set about his task with determination winning each game with a triple to take the title for the 4th time.

Hamish Hall

I don't think the lack of entries this year is due to the development of youth croquet, although it is some time since there has been any news on that front. Having spoken to a sample of the juniors (always a good idea if you want to know what any group are thinking) it would appear that the choice of venue played its part in the lack of entries this year. I must stress here however that the Northampton Club has done nothing to upset the juniors, nor have the juniors set out to upset the Northampton Club. The problem arose with the CA system of clubs bidding to host particular CA events. It would appear to be common sense for a club where the nucleus of juniors reside to hold the Junior Championship, but for whatever reason the 1999 event was awarded to Northampton. The only problem with this, for the juniors particularly as they would appear to mainly come from the Bristol & Nailsea area, is of course that they have to travel and incur what is probably considerable expense to a junior, or in all probability a parent, for accommodation etc. It is therefore understandable to me that the juniors decided to spend their money elsewhere.

There was unfortunately one other aspect to this year's Championships which, shall I say left a somewhat bitter aftertaste. The two players who entered actually played their instant final at Nailsea over two days after the close of play at another event. For the privilege they each had £10 deducted from their entry fees before they were returned. I hope that I am not alone in thinking that this is a somewhat extreme form of raising revenue and would hope that any other event involving the juniors would be organised in a more suitable and sympathetic manner. Ed.

The 14 point debate

Dear Editor

I feel slightly embarrassed. In my last two British Open finals (both against Robert Fulford), the total number of points scored by the losing player in any one game was one. ONE! Nine games finished 26 - 0, and one game finished 26 - 1. All games were completed with triples.

Having invited a group of friends along on the British Open Finals day, I was hoping they would enjoy the day (and the croquet). They had a great day - drinking Pimms, enjoying the sun and the social occasion. But they had nothing positive to say about the croquet. Absolutely nothing.

Some changes need to be made.

In the same way that cricket has shifted

from the five day test to the one-dayer, croquet must move from the 26 point game to the 14 point game. This includes making all club, national and international tournaments be played to the 14 point rules.

To those of you who may shudder at the thought (and there will be some doubters out there may I point out the following:

- ◆ The 14 point game is a better test of skill than the full game.
- ◆ It takes half the time to play.
- ◆ It eliminates boring 4-ball breaks.
- ◆ It is simpler to understand.
- ◆ The out-player does not sit out more than 10 minutes.
- ◆ More games can be played in a match or in a weekend tournament.

I have yet to come up with one advantage that the full game has over the 14 point game. Small adjustments to the rules, or rejecting changes just because "it has always been played like this" will not grow the game nor lure spectators to tournaments more than once.

Reg Bamford

I can understand Reg's argument for change, but I am afraid that we must agree to differ on whether a change is necessary.

I think it is sad that the spectators had nothing positive to say about the croquet, although I cannot help but wonder had they seen, for example, Tim Henman win a match by three sets to love, or perhaps even an English cricket team win by an innings, they would have enthused about the quality of the play.

In short the advocates of the 14 point game tend to be the players who have developed the playing skills to such a point that they are now seeking a new challenge, I suspect this number is only some six to eight players. It is therefore my view that it is somewhat selfish of these individuals to require the 14 point game to become the norm, simply because they have tired of the old game.

There have been 14 point events in the recent and not so recent past, none of which were overflowing with entries. The latest, which was to have been held this season in Norwich had to be cancelled because of a lack of entries. Hardly a good omen for the demand for this version of the game. But this is only the humble editor's opinion. Surely others have points of view on the introduction of the 14 point game as the standard version of croquet. Ed.

Inter-Counties

Dear Editor

I read with interest your editorial in the July edition of the Gazette which puts a certain point of view on the future of the above tournament. Elsewhere in this edition I hope a summary report of the recent Tournament Committee appears but as this was written prior to your editorial I thought a more detailed account of the Committee's assessment of the problems we need to solve in relation to the Inter-Counties and my thoughts on the subject might be of interest.

OBITUARIES

Arthur Addis - Mr Croquet Plymouth

Arthur served in WWII as a Captain with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. He stayed with the Army in Turkey for a while before returning to the UK to complete his degree at Durham University. After graduating in 1950 his first job was at Plymouth College where he stayed for the whole of his teaching career, becoming Head of the Science Department and Deputy Head of the College. Always an active and accomplished sportsman, he played rugby for the Army against New Zealand, played squash to a high standard and had a go at a number of other games.

He was introduced to croquet in 1987, shortly after the Plymouth Croquet Club was established. He soon became "Mr Croquet Plymouth" in that he became deeply involved developing and promoting the club both in terms of the game itself and building up (often literally!) the club facilities. He soon entered tournaments and for a number of years was a member of Budleigh Salterton and also of Nottingham Club - family close by!

Typically he determined to know as much as he could concerning rules, tactics, coaching, publicity and the history of the game. He was a tremendous competitor, never giving in which sometimes led to longer than usual untimed games as many victims will recall.

He represented Plymouth in numerous South West Federation matches and in his mid seventies he represented England in the World Golf Championships.

Although he had been ill for some time and suffered considerable pain, it seems most

fitting that the very last time Arthur was able to handle a mallet, he and his partner won the 1998 South West Federation Golf Croquet Doubles championship shield at Nailsea.

He will also be remembered for his innovative Archimedean principle device for easy layout of a croquet lawn from scratch, his hoop carrying trolleys (copied by other clubs), his manufacture and repair of members' mallets and his many ideas in the clubhouse for improving facilities. No wonder the South West Federation awarded Arthur their special centenary trophy for his services to the game.

Croquet has lost a great friend and supporter.

Stuart Orr

Andy Knox - Collapse of a stout party

English visitors to Capetown will be sad to hear that Andy Knox, President and welcoming host at the Rondebosch Croquet Club for the last ten years, died of a completely unheralded stroke on 19 June.

Luckily he had his very lively sixtieth birthday party three days earlier, while South Africa were still on line to win the World Cricket Cup.

Andy was a true Capie, loving his country and all its sports, with his barbecues, train sets, computers, golf, squash, wine-bags and his kindly tournament speeches always followed with "give me a key-word" jokes.

For us, a cruel gap has opened in our southern summer world.

Neil and Olive Jackson

Firstly I have with the help of Alan Oldham taken a quick look at the history of the Inter-Counties which has over its 100 - odd years life had a chequered existence even dropping to 4 teams in 1953 and for many years only averaging 10 teams. The Tournament Committee at that time was concerned in increasing the popularity of the event and its efforts at different times resulted in some strange county combinations entering such as Gloucestershire / Warwickshire. Things seem to have improved since 1982 when the event moved to Southwick and also achieved sponsorship. The numbers however did not significantly increase until 1993 when they reached 16. Was this due to the change in rules which banned joint counties? Whatever the reason in 1999 we now have a very successful and popular tournament of a high croquet and social standard. In my opinion we need to be very careful that we do nothing to destroy this situation and that any changes of format take this fact into account. This

conclusion was apparent in the answers to the questionnaire where 13 of the 17 replies received were in favour of retaining the present format.

When considering how to enlarge the event there are a number of alternatives that can be considered. First we might increase the teams but this is limited by the length of the tournament (4 days with 11 playing sessions)and the availability of extra lawns in the vicinity of Brighton. Two leagues of 12 teams becomes a maximum if we retain the all play all format and it might be possible to obtain three more lawns at Worthing or hire bowling greens from the local Council. Discussions with the Manager and other interested parties have so far produced a host of E-mails but has failed to devise a tournament programme which does not involve team travel between sites during the day - an unsatisfactory situation.

The second alternative is that proposed in the editorial of playing the second division at another venue or as suggested in some replies to

the questionnaire creating 3 x 8 team divisions and reducing the tournament to 3 days. For either of these ideas to work we have to find another 9 lawn club for the former or two 6 lawn clubs for the latter which:

- have lawns of the required standard
- have no previous lawn commitments or are prepared to give up commitments over a Bank Holiday weekend
- have back up facilities for catering and for parking.

I mention the Bank Holiday weekend and preferably the one at the end of May as it is already established as a County date in a very full tournament programme and the acquisition of an additional date for this event may adversely affect and annoy the clubs running established and well supported tournaments.

Failure at present to resolve the above alternatives leaves us with a problem of devising an elimination process and the Tournament Committee has decided they should apply themselves to producing revised regulations so the procedure for acceptance of entries exceeding 22 is comprehensively defined. Several conditions have been discussed but the final decisions have yet to be agreed although you will see elsewhere the conditions we shall adopt for next year's event.

Some of the areas being considered are:

- Should the new team meet a specified strength criterion? This has yet to be defined but we note that this year the average handicap of the best 6 players in each team was +5.5 but the first division was only 2.5. It may interest some members to know that in 1964 the Devon team had a total bisque count of 12.
- Will the new team be using established players from existing teams and hence be likely to weaken them?
- Should Joint County entries be accepted in certain circumstances?
- As Government is prone to invent new Counties and abolish others, do we need to redefine a County as recognised by the CA? This year Tyne & Wear appeared as a county in the Golf Croquet County Championship some 5 years after it was dissolved although it remains as a postal address.

This has become a rather long letter and I realise I may have omitted several points. If anyone wishes to raise any other aspects on these matters either contact me or better still write to the Gazette so your views get a good airing.

Finally my own opinion is that the Inter-Counties should be maintained as a high standard tournament that will continue to attract all our top A class players. If the increase in popularity is because of a desire by B class players to participate should we be looking at organising a suitable competitive tournament for them to play in?

Derek Trotman, Chairman, CA Tournament Committee.

COMMITTEE NEWS

Laws Committee

Laws Revision Process

The following statement is issued on 24 July 1999 behalf of the Australian Croquet Association, the Croquet Association, Croquet New Zealand and the United States Croquet Association ("the four governing bodies").

The International Laws Meeting at Bunbury in November 1997 authorised the production of a new revision of the Laws incorporating amendments whose substance was agreed at the meeting. Detailed drafting of the amendments was delegated to the laws committees of the four governing bodies. The drafting process revealed important differences in interpretative approach between certain contributors which made it difficult to reach agreement. Following a review of the situation in May 1999, the four governing bodies have agreed the following:

1(a) A new official revision of the Laws will be drafted for circulation by 31 December 1999 with a view to receiving formal approval at an International Laws Meeting to be held in Christchurch, New Zealand during the MacRobertson Shield competition in January 2000. This revision will incorporate the changes agreed at Bunbury and, in addition, will seek to incorporate other helpful suggestions made since. Responsibility for the preparation of the revision has been delegated to a Laws Revision Committee consisting of representatives appointed by each of the governing bodies, namely: Merv Dunkley (Australia), CA Laws Committee, Croquet New Zealand Laws Committee and Jerry Stark (USA).

(b) It is recognised that different countries have different internal procedures for implementing changes in the Laws and that this may mean that there will be some small differences in the timing of the formal adoption of the new Laws throughout the croquet world. However, the revision will contain no major substantive changes and the timing issue should not be regarded as a problem.

(c) Other proposals for revised laws have been published recently on the internet. For the avoidance of doubt, the four governing bodies wish it to be understood that these proposals are unofficial and have no formal standing. However, constructive interest in the laws revision process is welcomed and the contents of these proposals will be considered carefully by the Laws Revision Committee.

2. The new revision will be supported

by a companion volume provisionally entitled Official Rulings on the Laws of Croquet ("ORLC") which will be subject to the same timetable as the revised Laws. This will include commentary and, where relevant, interpretations and rulings supported by examples. This represents the adoption of an approach to the Laws that is similar to the implementation of the Rules of Golf, namely the formal recognition that the totality of the Laws must include case-law as well as the letter of the law because the latter will sometimes seem inappropriate or inadequate.

3. The "Law and Case-Law" approach recognises that it is impossible to draft the Laws so that (a) they cover every possible eventuality that could ever occur on a croquet court and (b) they will always mean the same thing to every possible reader. The experience of the last two years has demonstrated that alternative interpretations of even simple words can usually be found. It is therefore desirable that, where more than one interpretation is possible, there is a place where the correct interpretation can be stated, namely in ORLC. Concerns have been voiced that ORLC might contradict the plain words of the Laws. Those drafting the revised Laws and the initial ORLC will be responsible for ensuring that no such contradictions occur.

4. ORLC will be published on-line as well as in hard copy and will be capable of amendment by an International Laws Committee ("ILC"), a new body consisting of one representative from each of the four governing bodies, which will be responsible for responding to requests for rulings from the laws committee of any croquet governing body. The ILC will be empowered to amend ORLC and to promulgate on-line its decisions to all croquet governing bodies and the on-line croquet community. The ILC will also be responsible for ensuring that no amendment to ORLC could result in a contradiction of the Laws. The ILC will be appointed before the publication of the new Laws and ORLC.

5. Where a change in the Laws appears to be unavoidably necessary, the ILC will also be empowered to recommend such a change to the four governing bodies but it is hoped and envisaged that such recommendations will be few and far between. This power is not intended to circumscribe the right of any national laws committee to make similar recommendations although, in practice, it is unlikely that any such recommendation would go forward without prior discussion which would obviously involve the ILC.

Bill Lamb, Chairman, CA Laws Committee.

Development Committee

"Lottery Successes"

There has been good news for clubs who have applied for lottery grants. At least two East Midlands Federation clubs were successful with their applications under the "Awards for All" scheme pioneered in the East Midlands. Woodhall Spa received £2,250 for equipment and a new storage shed, and Ashby £650, centered on membership development and training, including equipment. The decisions to give the grants took only just more than the target 12 weeks to make a decision. This scheme opens up real possibilities for all clubs, but is especially suited for small clubs, the limit of grant being £5,000. The application form is straightforward and uncomplicated. There is no necessity to obtain formal backing from the CA as the governing body. Forms and advice can be obtained from the following ten Sport England regions:- East - 01234 345222 East Midlands - 0115 982188 Greater London - 0181 7788600 North - 0191 3849595 North West - 0161 8340338 South - 0118 9483311 South East - 0181 7788600 South West - 01460 73491 West Midlands - 0121 4563444 Yorkshire - 0113 2436443 Central Office - 0345 649649 After several years of negotiation Surbiton have received a grant of £25,000 from the Sports Council as part of a total expenditure of £38,000 to re-lay 5 out of 7 lawns over a 2-year period. Surbiton have also obtained a £5,000 loan from the CA and a £2,000 loan from their Federation. Cheltenham have applied for a major lottery grant of £33,000 to create an additional lawn and re-lay lawns 9 and 10. Grants of this scale do require the formal backing of the CA in the context of a formal CA Forward Development Plan. Would all clubs planning to make a lottery application discuss it with their Federation Development Officer and let him or her know the result as soon as possible. We can all benefit and be encouraged by the successes and perhaps learn something from the failures. Go for it! Now is the time for clubs to formulate forward development plans. Grants and loans are available from the CA for approved development. The budget is limited so an early application through your Federation Dev. Officer is advisable.

Bill Sidebottom, Chairman, CA Development Committee

Marketing & Publicity Committee

What's in a name?

The more alert amongst you (wake up at the back there) will already have noted a dramatic change - well a change anyway. From just Publicity to Marketing & Publicity. So how will this change things for the better? In truth not a lot this year, but - if various marketing initiatives currently being planned are approved and implemented - then possibly quite a lot next year. More news on this in subsequent issues

National Publicity: and follow up

We are having a good year. A sympathetic article in the Daily Express under the headline "Land of Hoop & Glory" (ho ho) led to a lot more media interest culminating in a tremendous burst through the Opens in early July. The Independent, The Evening Standard, The Daily Telegraph, The Times, TV Channel 4, SKY Radio Five Live: these were some of the more important media which reported the Opens or covered the game with a feature. For me the most impressive effort was the 2,000 word article by Lynn Truss in her Monday column in The Times. In the course of it she described Reg Bamford in the Opens as thinking like Einstein and swinging like a garden gate". Just like my croquet except that my swing is like Einstein's.

More seriously I was asked, during the Opens, "How many new Club members has all this publicity achieved?" This is a ridiculous question (to which the honest answer is probably none). A better question is what good has all this publicity done. To which my answer is that it has helped to make more people aware of croquet and to think of it as a serious game; so that when croquet clubs try and recruit new members their efforts are

supported by greater awareness of, and better image for, our game.

Member get member

In the March issue there was a letter urging you to recruit a new Associate to the CA. To remind you: "You could be in line for a £25 voucher to spend in the CA shop. All you have to do is to be among the first 50 Associates to join the CA, the only requirement being that the new Associate pays his or her subscription by Direct Debit. It's as easy as that".

Easy or not we have so far not been overwhelmed. Scores to date are John Beech 3, Tony Fathers 3, Norman Hicks 1 and Georgina Llewellyn 1. This leaves 42 vouchers, each worth £25, cooling their heels. The original form is on pages 5 & 6 of the March issue of the Gazette: further Direct Debit instruction forms available from the CA office.

Tony Fathers, Chairman, CA Marketing & Publicity Committee

Tournament Committee

It has become evident that the date of the autumn meeting of the Tournament Committee is too late for decisions affecting the Fixture Book if a publishing date of early January is to be achieved. An extra meeting was therefore arranged in July to deal with outstanding business. Members reported on their various areas of responsibility and if after initial discussion on matters of concern a solution was not apparent it was agreed the respective member would produce and circulate a written report analysing the problem and recommending the action to be taken by the Committee at its next meeting. Points arising under A class events included:

- The date of the Home Internationals will be moved to 17/18 June in the year 2000 to avoid a clash with a major Irish Tournament. The Irish had also indicated they would make a bid for the Tournament in 2001.
- Concern has been expressed on the length and format of some tournaments including the Mens & Womens, Spencer Ell and the Selectors Weekend. Further comments on these events will be sought before the end

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of the season.

c) Complaints concerning the fixing of Hoops with clearances less than those specified in Appendix 1 of the Fixture Book. Further discussions are in hand to determine whether the rule on hoop clearances needs to be revised.

d) Following requests to upgrade certain Championship events the whole question of the requirements for the various grades will be reviewed.

The subject of the Inter-Counties occupied a considerable part of the meeting as the answers to the questionnaire circulated to team Managers prior to the 1999 event were considered. The discussion concluded that:

a) There was not enough time to implement any major changes to the format before the 2000 event.

b) Enlargement of the Tournament above 22 teams would involve problems which could not be easily resolved.

c) The playing of a qualifying tournament would need to be held in Sept/Oct so the winners would have time to make accommodation arrangements. It was not clear whether counties would support such an event due to extra travelling and accommodation costs involved and this matter would need further detailed consideration.

d) Notices would be sent to all known Managers and published in the Gazette informing them that entries for 2000 must be made by 1st September 1999. New entries taking the numbers above 22 will be assessed by the Committee at their October meeting to see if they fulfil all regulations and they satisfy a strength criteria (yet to be agreed). If at this stage the numbers still exceed 22 a ballot will take place including the bottom county in division 2 of the 1999 tournament.

e) Team lists would be required by 1st May 2000. Names of substitutes will be accepted on the first day of the event. This procedure has been considered necessary as 3 competitors in the 1999 event were subsequently discovered not to be Associates of the CA.

On the subject of CA Club events it was noted that there had been an increased entry in Longman and Inter-club, but no significant increase in the Mary Rose and a low entry in the All England. The latter was due to 9 clubs missing the 1st June entry date and a different entry procedure will need to be devised for next season. Of the CA Individual events the Veterans were reported to be over subscribed but the Seniors to be short of entries. The possibility of changing the dates of the latter is being considered.

Little support has been received for the Junior events which is a matter of concern and is a subject which will need to be addressed with some urgency at future meetings.

The winter season of Indoor Tournaments has now been arranged at Soham and Innsforth. Publicity for these events will be produced for the autumn edition of the Gazette.

A Millennium Tournament to be run at Cheltenham on 2/3 September 2000 has now been confirmed. The format will be similar to that used for the Centenary event.

I hope the above summary is of interest to the membership. Should you wish to make comment on any of the topics please contact me or any member of the Committee.

Derek Trotman, Chairman, Tournament Committee

POINTS OF LAW

By Bill Lamb, Chairman, Laws Committee

The following incident was related to me at Nottingham during the East Midlands Championship. I have forgotten where the incident took place, and that is not important, but both players were experienced referees.

One of the players, on going on to the court, found that both of his balls and one of his adversary's balls were in contact on a yard-line.

In this situation, a roquet is deemed to have been made (law 16) and the striker may rearrange the balls to play a cannon (law 19). He would pick up two balls, which become in hand, and the remaining ball

becomes the roqueted ball.

For example, if the striker picks up one of his balls and the adversary ball to arrange a cannon, of his balls the one that he has picked up becomes the striker's ball and the other becomes the roqueted ball. The adversary ball becomes the third ball in the cannon.

However, in the related incident, the striker picked up both of his balls, leaving the adversary ball in position. This clearly became the roqueted ball but which was the striker's ball? The adversary claimed that it was the first ball that the striker picked up, as he had elected to play it under law 8. The striker disagreed and the referee was called.

As it happens, these cases were the subject of an international ruling in 1990 following the 1989 laws revision. The need for such a quick ruling shows how difficult it is to foresee all possibilities of changing the laws.

The ruling as it applies to this incident is as follows:

The striker is required to nominate which ball he wishes to be the striker's ball. If he fails to do so, the adversary may request such a nomination. If neither side takes the initiative, the striker is deemed to have nominated whichever ball he strikes in taking croquet.

It all seems rather complicated, doesn't it? Fortunately, this will probably be simplified in the forthcoming revision of the laws.

However, for the time being, referees must not only know where to find the relevant laws for any situation but also be aware of international or CA rulings.

AS IT WAS

Days gone by recorded in the Croquet Gazette

The winner of the Open Championship fifty years ago was Humphrey Hicks, one of the giants of the game and well known to a fair number of still active players. This made "... three successive victories and five altogether: 1932, 1939, 1947, 1948 and 1949. This total number of Open Championships has only been achieved by one other player, Mr Cyril Corbally, in 1902, 1903, 1906, 1908 and 1913. Mr A H Spong also won the Championship three years running, in 1880, 1881 and 1882."

Hicks was to win the Opens twice more, in 1950 and 1952, to set a new record of seven wins. He appeared in six subsequent finals, losing five of them to John Solomon who overtook his record with ten wins, the first in 1953 and the last in 1968 (to complete six consecutive wins).

The correspondence column raised a question about the role of the CA which has resurfaced recently in the context of including non-registered clubs on the CA's web site:

"The account of the Bedford Tournament reported in the July Gazette contains the remarks, 'If the Croquet Association is to continue recognition should be made of the North of England Clubs etc'. This is significant and has wider application.

"The Croquet Association exists for the uniform conduct of, and the furtherance of interest in the game as well as the efforts to increase membership of the Association. The Gazette presumably is published to record the activities of the Affiliated Clubs, yet will not make mention of any non-official tournament. Surely a broader view should be taken by the Committee responsible and all items of interest given their mention.

"The Nottingham Croquet Club, of which I am a member, has recently held its Annual Tournament, but for domestic reasons this has to be held as Non-official. We had the pleasure of visitors from Ambleside, Bedford, Buxton and Leamington competing for Club trophies. We are not granted a report which would definitely create an interest in the Nottingham Club..."

Though the Gazette is commendably broad in its coverage today, the CA's attitude to non-registered clubs still has echoes of this earlier stance. It may be defensible in some ways, but this correspondent has a valid point on which today's authorities might like to ponder.

Talking Croquet

By Neil Williams

Many readers of the Gazette may not know any details about the careers or views of some of the people who have made a significant contribution to the game, in whatever shape or form. Our chances of seeing them, let alone talking to them, are necessarily few. It is hoped these conversations will bring them a little closer, so that we may benefit from their advice or experience.

No.4 Robert Fulford

Croquet moves on. Change is evident throughout the game - in the ways in which it is administered and organised, in the variety of formats that tournaments now take, in the array of different forms of the game that are actually played. Even in the heartlands of the game - 26-point Association croquet - a quiet revolution has been underway and its waves are spreading across the whole croquet world.

In Robert Fulford, the present Open Champion and World Champion - both for the fourth time - the new world of croquet is embodied. His record also includes "everything else at least once so far", as he puts it, including the New Zealand, Australian and French Opens and the Sonoma Cutrer in California, not to mention appearances in three MacRobertson Shield series.

It is not the internationalism of this list of achievements that is new - although the sheer scale of his global involvement certainly is. It is that Fulford and the other players at the top of the WCF rankings approach croquet untrammelled by the past.

When he tells me that for six years he was "a croquet bum" in the US, making just enough money from the game to head for the next town, our traditional notion of the croquet player needs a bit of revision. For four of those years Robert spent the summer as club pro in North Carolina. "If you have the 'World Champion' tag there are a couple of places where you could be a club pro and live comfortably," he says.

Where now is the original garden pastime whose chief attraction was that it allowed middle class young ladies and



Robert in play during the 1986 Junior Championships



gentlemen to meet outdoors unchaperoned, and dally in the shrubbery pretending to look for a lost ball? Equally lost are those long Edwardian summer afternoons, when the top players moved from house party to house party, playing in the week-long tournaments. Even the familiar circuit travelled by more recent generations of top players - the Caskets, the Opens, the President's and, finally, Eastbourne in September - begins to fade into history. We think now of the wine auction that comes at the end of the Sonoma event in California (not to mention the cheque to the winner of £3,000), rather than of the chill and damp of the end of the English season.

In the course of our absorbing conversation in central London, Robert gives me an insight into his thinking about many aspects of the game as it now is. In the process he measures the distance we have come, and I realise ever more sharply that the changes now overtaking croquet are as great as any it has seen in its history.

To begin with, his background is instructive. Now 29, Robert is the youngest of four brothers - quite a spur to competitiveness, he agrees. An early influence on his game was playing snooker on a small table at home when he was about 9. Later, his school, Colchester Grammar School, allowed a group of senior pupils, through an informal arrangement between the PE staff at school and the Colchester Croquet Club, to play croquet as an alternative to other sports on games afternoons in summer. Although the arrangement petered out, it had lasted long enough for Robert's interest to have been kindled. (The quality, if not the number of players who have emerged as a result of the initiative of a few key teachers up and down the country should give the CA food for thought.)

Fortunately one of his school friends was keen, too: "My best friend at school knew how to play breaks. He had a friend who was a 3-handicap, and most of the information I got was second-hand from this 3-handicapper. Then from being a beginner to being an A-class player, I did that on my own, just knocking around at the club. The first coaching I had was from Michael Heap, who won the Opens in Nigel's era. What he did was tell me to hold the mallet at the top."

Whether as a result of that advice or not, Robert's progress was rapid: "I started playing in August, 1985, and did my first triple peel the following May. I was still on handicap 8 at this time, playing really at scratch. When I beat the club handicapper with a triple, she brought me down to 7.5. After that both Chris Clarke and I came into prominence very quickly from no one ever having heard of us. The kids who came through after that they cut pre-emptively."

It is now - surprisingly - ten years since he won his first

championship. Durham University, Essex University and the six American years followed before, in 1998, he began the dark-suited life of Accountancy in the City. No more backpacking across the time zones?

How the nine-to-five life will affect his croquet remains to be seen. Much speculation on this, I suspect, in the croquet world, especially in view of the MacRobertson Shield coming up in New Zealand in 2000. His new domestic base is established in Surbiton so that, he says, he will be able to practise every night after work.

The work ethic is strong in Fulford's view of croquet. "I'm sure there was a time for every player when they fell in love with the game for the first time and they were playing every day. I need an hour's play on my own every day, whatever friendly games I might then play. In practice I can have six shots to, say, every one I might play in a game." Later, he adds "You do improve if you play a lot."

And what does he practise? "You should practise whatever you find difficult," he says, but emphasises establishing your own game - the rhythm of the swing, the consistency of all the shots.

In Robert's case his practice programme includes shooting, two-ball breaks, sextuples, hoop-approaches from long distances and openings. It is an interesting list and goes some way to defining the changes currently enlarging croquet at this level.



Robert being congratulated by runner-up Mark Saurin at the 1990 World Championships held at Hurlingham

When I ask how far he analyses his own play, he says, "What I try to do is only think about what I'm doing in practice sessions. So in practice I'll try to tinker with things if they're not working. For example, I might think, 'I'll concentrate on the pause at the top of the back swing'."

We discuss "the theory of openings", now so important since shooting is consistently good. The 'Super Shot' opening - a new development - and the Duffer tice - a revival - are both high on the list of tactics Robert uses. Both are responses to the likelihood of either player going round from the third or fourth turn, and are as far-removed from the traditional 'standard opening' as the standard opening is from the 1898 start, when the ball was placed in front of hoop one.

The same reasoning pushes the top of the 'A' class to develop the two-ball break and, therefore, hoop-approaches from long distances. In these technical and tactical changes, the rule-book is being rewritten. Whereas it used to be the long-bisquers who would "roll up" to their hoops from long distances for lack of anything better to attempt, it is now the Fulfords, Maughams and Clarkes who may be seen approaching hoop one from the East boundary, not for lack of tactical nous but as part of a new orthodoxy. Such tactics can be as stirring and dramatic as anything that has gone before in the history of the game. For the traditionalist it must also be as surprising as seeing the way in which Khaled Younis or Peter Payne run their hoops from 20 yards in golf croquet.



The 1990 GB MacRobertson Shield Team in New Zealand with Mark Avery, David Openshaw, William Prichard, Keith Aiton (coach), Robert Fulford, Mark Saurin and Colin Irwin.

In these ways croquet is opening up for itself new horizons. Robert quotes the example of Bob Jackson of New Zealand, who will play whatever shot he feels he wants to play, without a thought for long-sanctioned traditional tactics. "He did whatever he wanted and made it effective."

It is clear from our conversation that Jackson has been the inspiration for much of Fulford's play, and he recalls as his favourite match the one he played against Jackson in the quarter finals of the NZ Opens in 1990:

"Jackson didn't make a single mistake: he did everything he wanted to in all three games. All he did was corner when he shouldn't, so I went round. People don't do that against me any more. Now they shoot. But in that game I just reached a new level and became one of the best in the world, even though Jackson and Hogan were still thought of in that way."

On the theoretical side, Keith Wylie's Advanced Croquet Tactics strongly influences current thinking. Many of the developments now being put into practice were first expounded by Wylie, a croquet thinker for whom Fulford clearly has great admiration. It is Wylie's terminology that is still used.

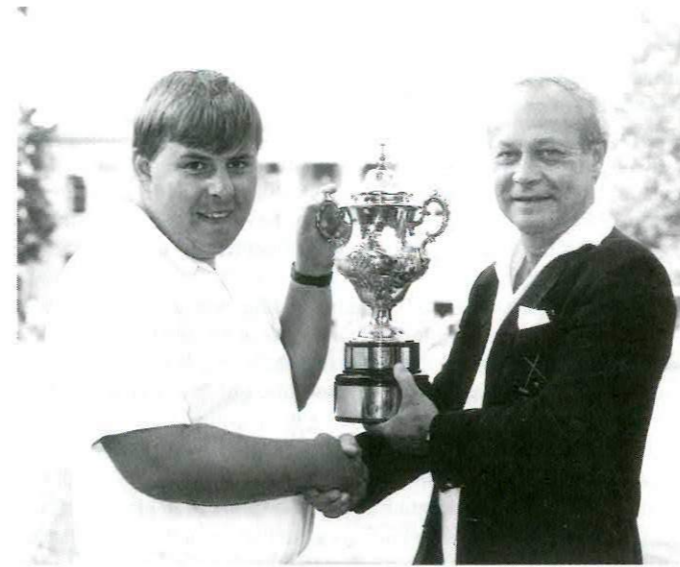
Gradually I am beginning to see the dimensions of Fulford's view of croquet. It is strongly internationalist - not for nothing is he World Champion - and free of established systems. It puts a high premium on enterprise. Nothing is off-limits. It is based on hard work. For example, he thinks hard about croquet tactics - "probably more than anyone else who's playing", he says. In this he most resembles the chess Grand Masters, who will plan their moves and all the possible responses from the opponent far beyond the opening skirmishes. His technical skill also comes from "all the hours I spent practising. You learn by doing something wrong a few times."

He sums up the effects of these developments by saying that his croquet looks "scruffier" than that of the classical player of old. It will certainly be less predictable, since the approach to winning and losing is also changing.

"I know how the game 'should' be played, but I also think, 'I'm good at that shot, so I'll do it that way'. My generation, if you like, hasn't grown out of the kinds of shots that, say, Nigel Aspinall might have done when he was a teenager."

"I'm probably more concerned about whether I'm playing well or not, to be honest. I'm quite pragmatic about winning or losing. If I play badly and someone beats me I quite often wonder whether they think, 'So you don't need to be that good to beat one of the best players.' And I think, well, I didn't really teach you how good you need to be - which is what I'd rather do."

"In the future, obviously, I'm going to reach a point where I'm not the best player, and I'd be very disappointed if that happened because



Robert receiving the trophy from his favourite event, The Opens' from John Solomon.

I got worse rather than that someone had got better than me. It's very important to me that standards in croquet keep going up. It's very bad if a sport stagnates. We need some new blood, but in the meantime I'm going to keep going and try not to get any worse."

Although Fulford does not accept the credit - or should that be 'blame'? - for the technique of swinging the mallet over the ball several times before taking the shot, he defends the practice. He points to two earlier players who approached shooting in the same way - Martin French and William Prichard.

"It's good," he says, "to have a little rehearsal before every shot. My own technique is entirely natural. After a certain number of swings over the ball I decide at the top of the swing that it feels right and that the next swing will be the hit. At that point, I'm ready. For me, with the Irish grip, it seemed a lot easier. Normally, I'll swing around five or more times, but I'm partly stalking the ball as well."

With nothing better in the room than a ballpoint pen to act as a mallet, Robert has difficulty demonstrating his swing for me. However, he believes that you shouldn't 'follow through'. You should "hit through". And, although the orthodox view is that if you wanted to make the perfect croquet player you would chop off the arms at the wrists, he himself is a very wristy player. ("I just break all the rules.") He also strongly believes that in the swing the big muscles - shoulders and thighs - must move first and the hands should come through at the end.

When, I ask, can we see these ideas and beliefs put into practice? Well, in the 1999 season all the top players will have just one thing in mind: selection for the MacRobertson. So all the main contenders for places should be particularly high profile. Robert himself will play as full a season as work will permit, including regional championships such as the Northerns and the West of England. He will also play the Opens, his favourite event. I ask why he likes it so much.

"It's partly to do with the standard of the event. That and the atmosphere make it special. I like playing at Hurlingham on really good lawns." He will also be back at Sonoma in May, for the event that rates, he says, much higher in international esteem than the President's Cup here.

With more and more major international events filling the calendar, I express my concern that Fulford will be seen less on the domestic circuit. He reassures me: "Great Britain is the strongest croquet nation, and I want the best competition. So this is the place to be."

I ask about the President's Cup. This event seems to be losing status. The reason, Robert points out, is partly that, although the term 'Open Championship' is universally understood, 'President's Cup' is a much more ambiguous name, implying no particular standard and lacking international currency. Fulford, in fact, would like to see changes to the

President's.

In his view the 14-point game has much to commend it. He even uses the word "superior" in comparing some aspects of that version with the standard one. He concedes that sextuples would disappear, but -

"As the outplayer in a 14-point game you know your turn is likely to come quite soon. Leaves also become more important and there is less time if peels are required. I'd like to see this form of the game played by the top players. I'd be very happy if the President's Cup could be played as 14-point games. For those players it would have the effect of shortening games."

Before we leave the calendar for 1999 Robert mentions the possible GB v The Rest match in October. Barlow balls will be used and the match will be seen as a team-building opportunity. As a Selector he stresses the need for everyone with aspirations to selection to have a go. "Even if you don't win a place, you will have really helped the team by pushing everyone else." (The team will fly out on 15 January.)

Robert is concerned that new blood is needed at the top of the game. We mention a few names, including that of the 17-year-old Jacques Fournier of Arkansas, but, in general, Robert feels that "croquet education" is now much better than when he started, and standards are rising:

"The number of 10-bisquers who play 4-ball breaks is much higher now. Overall croquet has improved in terms of tactics and overall standards. It's much stronger."

I refer to his own coaching videos, made with a much-admired Australian coach, Kevin Brereton. The first illustrates the point he has just made. Intended for the Australian market primarily, it covers break-making and break-sustaining as main themes. Why Australia? Well, it seems they don't play many handicap games, so they don't have bisques, so they don't make breaks.

The second tape sounds more valuable for the home player. It concerns triples and is aimed at handicaps 4 and 5. In this, unlike the first, Robert is miked up and talks as he plays.

I am increasingly conscious of how much of his time I'm taking, and I must fit in the one question that I have asked all the interviewees so far: If you could change one thing in croquet, what would it be? Robert's is the most direct answer: faster lawns. But it's the old problem: "I know that if you create faster surfaces, you're more likely to kill the lawns."

So if he can't really change that, then what? Experimentation with the 14-point game would come high, but so would starting a new generation of croquet players:

"If the first one or two can be started, a dozen will follow. And they must start early if they're going to get to the top."

I think the reason he sounds so keen on this may go back to those early days at Colchester C.C., as a result of which the World Champion can give me this glimpse of how he feels:



Robert performing one of his trademark peels.

"When I'm on the lawn I'm in my element. I've been to something like 150 different clubs in my life. But once I'm on the croquet lawn it's like I'm at home. That's how much I like croquet. Once I'm on a croquet lawn I'm as comfortable as I can be. I can't really argue that I do it because it's entirely challenging, because one of the things about it is that it's enormously comfortable to me."

It's late when he sets off down the Strand, heading for Waterloo and the train to Surbiton. Croquet is changing radically, but there is more to gain in the changes than to lose. And in Robert Fulford the top of the game at least is in very good hands.

TOURNAMENT ROUND-UP

Wrest Park Handicap Tournament 21-23 May

Report by John Bevington

It would be easy to comply with the Editor's wishes for concise reports by simply stating that there were 26 entries (with plenty of first-time visitors) and manager Eric Audsley divided them into three American blocks. The weather was windy throughout, with heavy showers late on Friday, plenty of sun on Saturday and dull with occasional sun on Sunday, and the easy-paced lawns speeded up over the weekend. Block A was won at a canter by Nick Parish (12) from Parson's Green who won all his eight games, four of them by 19 or more, followed by Alan Edwards and George Woolhouse, each with six wins. In block B Mike Gardner (12) from St. Albans and Wrest Park's John Bevington (4) both had five wins from seven, but Mike's aggregate of +53 beat John's +43 to give him the trophy. Robert Skeen (14), Eric Audsley (1.5) and Pauline Davey (10) were hard on their heels with four wins each. Block C was not decided until the last game on Sunday, when York's David Jenkinson (8) beat Peter Berry (10) to give him six out of seven, leaving Peter as runner-up with five wins ahead of Angus Bell (14) and George Collin (3) on four each. There were a number of handicap changes and Pauline Davey, after getting some advice on technique from Eric, went out and beat Mick Belcham +26 in four turns, gaining her silver award in the process.

At this tournament we had decided to try and get some views on players' preferences with regard to tournament management, such as preferred formats, views on time-limits, full-bisque and shortened games and so on. We can't claim to have discovered very much as there were only five replies (no time to spare!) and little unanimity in the answers. It may be that players are merely grateful that there is a manager at all and are happy to go along with whatever is arranged, but what do you think? How about some letters to the Gazette, if only to make a change from correspondence about handicaps. But you can never get away from handicap issues. One respondent to our questionnaire raised a point that deserves an authoritative answer, and that is whether shortened games qualify for the Automatic Handicapping System - a point which does not appear to be specifically addressed in Principles of Handicapping. Perhaps an answer could be published as a footnote to this report or elsewhere.

Southport Handicap Weekend 29 - 31 May

Report by Colin Hemming

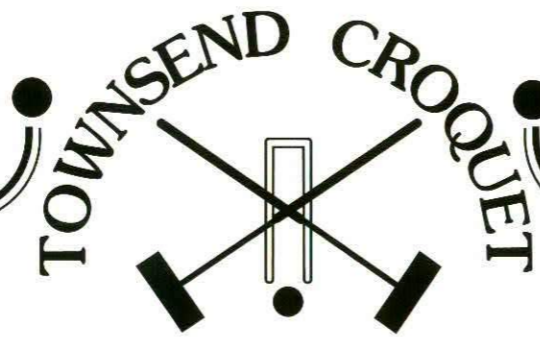
Other Bank Holiday weekend events (most notably the Inter Counties) must have proved a greater attraction, because only 12 competitors assembled in Victoria Park for Southport & Birkdale CC's Handicap Weekend. The tournament, managed by Brian Lewis, was in the format of two American blocks, with 2.5 games on each of the first two days (unfinished games to be pegged down overnight). Semi-finals were to be the winner of each block playing the second-placed in the other block. Final and play-off for third place were to be, obviously, between the winners and losers of the semi-finals. Consolation matches to be played on the final day in the corresponding

positions further down the blocks.

Both Colin Hemming and Ray Belcher (playing in his first CA tournament) had shown early promise with wins in their first games of +25 and +24 respectively, but the format of the tournament meant that it was still very open at the end of the first day. With all of the third games unfinished and pegged down, most of the competitors attended an impromptu get-together at "Blakes", an unusual combination of traditional English pub and Italian pizza parlour. Both the beer and the pizzas were of the highest quality and we all retired refreshed and ready for the fray the next day.

Play on Sunday started under heavy skies and in a steady drizzle, which fortunately cleared after half an hour or so to leave the rest of the day dry. A constant breeze helped to dry the lawns, but was not strong enough to affect playing conditions adversely, and few of the remaining games went to time. The day finished with Colin Hemming a clear winner in Block B with 5 wins, and Ray Belcher second with 4 wins. The situation in Block A was less clear, particularly after one of the players realised overnight that he had inadvertently been playing off the wrong handicap. Playing regulations state that in such circumstances that player's matches should be disregarded as far as the tournament is concerned. After adjustments this meant that both Keith Roberts and Ernest Dalley finished on 3 wins, with Keith coming out on top with a much better points difference.

Finals day on the Monday saw Ray beating Keith +26 in the first semi-final, with Keith contriving to play only two shots in the game. The other semi-final was a very different affair. Both Ernest and Colin were troubled by the conditions and for the greater part of the game were unable to run more than one or two hoops at a time. Nevertheless, by steady play Ernest built and maintained a six-hoop difference. In the last half hour both players seemed to change gear and started to build breaks. Ernest maintained his lead, though, and Colin began his final turn one minute before time with his balls at penult and three-back, with



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his opponent on peg and rover. He started his turn by peeling blue through penult whilst taking off to yellow, then put together a break to take his black ball round and peel blue through rover. He was unable to bring the blue ball back to the peg, however, and finished his break by splitting red and yellow and pegging out the black ball. Ernest missed his final shot. The crowd went wild. Both of them.

The final, whilst not the total rout of the first semi-final, was nevertheless a very one-sided affair. Ray took his first ball to the peg on his second turn. Colin hit in but was unable to make more than one hoop. Ray took his second ball round in two more breaks, Colin hitting in again but once more unable to get a break going. Ray Belcher was thus a very worthy winner +24.

Thanks to Brian Lewis for managing the event, to Carol Lewis for the secretarial work, and to the Southport members who arranged lunches and teas.

Oh, and if you're wondering how Keith Roberts managed to play only two shots in a game where he had three turns, he simply brought his ball on to the B baulk on turn 2 and deemed.

Budleigh Salterton Handicap 30 - 31 May

Report by Audrey Howell

A manager's lot is not a happy one.....?

Usually it is the players which cause the headaches. On this occasion, it was the weather. Discarding his chef's hat for one of manager, Cliff Jones had to contend with a massive storm of fork lightning, thunderbolts, hailstones and torrential rain disrupting the morning's play on Saturday. Even the hardiest of players had to abandon a break to run for cover. With lawns awash, there was nothing for it but to enjoy a long leisurely lunch (and where better for that than at Budleigh) and to watch birds splashing in the pools of water. However, within an hour and a half the lawns miraculously drained and play continued.

Cliff's decision not to impose time limits was welcomed by those carrying bisques to the lawns for the event attracted 25 entrants with a range of handicaps from 0 - 16. Only the last game on Sunday afternoon had a time limit for obvious reasons. There were some good close matches culminating in a two-way tie between two Sidmouth visitors, Jonathan Coombs and Graham Dodd. In a peg shoot-out, Jonathan kept his nerve and on his third attempt hit the peg to receive an engraved glass at the presentation ceremony.

The highlight of the weekend was possibly that of Bunny Porter who gained her bronze award with the help of a mini picket fence, cheered on by her fellow member spectators.

Thank you to everyone concerned for a great weekend - you couldn't help the weather - and as Cliff said in his speech..... a manager's lot is indeed a very happy one when associated with Budleigh.

Edgbaston advanced weekend 5 - 6 June

Report by Chris Bennett

A strong field assembled for this event and the host club was anxious to see if its expenditure on lawn 1 had been productive. Groundless fears: Lionel Tibble opened up with an STP and followed it up with a TPO.

At the other end of the draw David Kibble had an edgy start against Paul Swaffield +3T. Semis and final were best of three and Lionel had a nasty scare against Henry Fellows. Henry won the first game with ease and 'all' he had to do was finish from 4-back with the innings to record a notable win. Alas.....

David came through his half with a good win over Ian Vincent and an excellent final gave it to Lionel two games to one.

Henry came back to in the Swiss: more will be heard of this young man. The weather held, the catering was superb and the lawns were excellent. Book early for next year: this is a very good tournament.

Sidmouth Week 7 - 12 June

Report by Ron Selmes

The Sidmouth Croquet Club week opened with 24 players with handicaps ranging from 1.5 to 16 divided into 4 blocks of 6 for the handicap event and rearranged into 4 different blocks for the class event, in which the top two blocks played advanced, the third played level and the fourth played full bisque to a base of 8.

The first two and a half days were devoted to handicap play at the end of which the four block winners who would play off for the final on Saturday included three Sidmouth players - Richard Clark (12), Vera Henderson (10) and Graham Dodd (10) - together with Jeremy Marshall (7) from Kingston Maurward.

On Saturday morning Graham beat Richard and Jeremy beat Vera, with Graham going on to beat Jeremy in the final.

The class events resulted in Mike Hammelev (2) winning the Sidmouth Challenge Cup, Brian Judson (7) winning the David Rawkins Cup, Jolyon Kay (12) winning the Fortfield Cup and Brian Shorney (11) winning the Derryhouse cup with 4 wins.

All games played during the tournament were incorporated in the Egyptian event with extra games available on Saturday for those not involved in the handicap play-offs. Tony Doughty (5) played the most games (13) and Mike Hammelev completed the only triple peel of the tournament on Saturday afternoon but could not get enough points from his last two wins to affect the final result. The winner was Graham Dodd.

Two CA awards were won during the week. Margaret Pena (7) won her silver and Peter Miller (16) playing in only his second tournament, won his bronze.

No tournament can ever succeed without a large amount of 'back room' work and the Sidmouth Club are extremely lucky to have lots of willing volunteers to carry out all of those unsung but necessary jobs to back up Tony & Elaine Hope in the food and drinks department. The four lawns were in first class condition thanks to Sidmouth's new groundsman, Terry Riding, who was overseeing his first croquet tournament.

Finally, having managed quite a few tournaments on my own, for the first time I had the experience of an assistant manager, and in Sheila Adams I found the perfect assistant. Sheila carried out all those early morning and late evening jobs that are the bane of the manager's life and also prepared my crib sheet for the presentation time. Many thanks, Sheila.

Sussex County High Bisquers 8 - 10 June

For 12 years, early June in Sussex has meant the Sussex County High Bisquers tournament. Introduced by Pat Shine 12 years ago, and run by her for the first ten years, the aim of the tournament is to encourage less experienced players to take part in tournaments, and to realise that competitions really can be fun. She hoped that, once the ice had been broken, high bisquers would enter tournaments as a normal part of their croquet life.

The 36 enthusiastic competitors who met at Southwick proved, without doubt, that tournaments CAN be fun. Good grass, good grub and good gossiping: what more could a croquet player desire?

They came from as far afield as Bath and Enfield and included four married couples and at least one person, Miriam Reader, who had attended the first tournament in 1987. Twenty eight of the players had handicaps of 16 or more and over 50% sported handicaps of 18 and above. Clearly, there is a market for Pat Shine's idea.

Managed by Brian Teague, who was assisted by Gene Mears, the competition was organised as a two-block Swiss with 22 point games, a 3 hour limit and bisques awarded from a base of 10. The choice of 22 points was a good one because the majority of the games finished inside the time allowed, much more satisfying than ending OT. During the three day tournament each person played six games.

After five rounds, only one person in Block A, Victor Hunt from

Purley Bury, had won 5 games. In Block B, three had five wins: Mavis Buist of Compton, Tom Frost of Crawley and Ted Salisbury from Chartham Hatch. As Ted had beaten the other two, he went through to the final with Victor Hunt.

The final, played in front of an audience on lawn 1, was keenly fought. Ted used his bisques to take an early lead but this was soon demolished by Victor, assisted by his bisques. At 'time' all clips were on Rover and it was necessary to continue play to achieve a result. In an atmosphere of rising tension, Ted was the first to run a hoop, winning the competition.

First prize, the High Bisquers' Salver, was awarded to Ted Salisbury by Pat Shine and she gave the Runner Up prize to Victor Hunt.

Pat Shire commented that "The competition was originally set up to be a training tournament, with players being congratulated and (tactfully) criticised as appropriate. I was very pleased to see that this tradition continues."

Roehampton Summer Week 8 - 13 June

Report by Paul Macdonald

The display of gold and silverware for this long standing tournament must surely be unrivalled throughout the country. The number of people competing this year was unfortunately a little lower than in the last two or three years, some of the regulars being unable to play for one reason or another. It was therefore all the more heartening to welcome some newcomers to the event, notably Susan Edwards from Cheltenham, Fernando de Ansoena from Jerez in Spain and two young men from Surbiton, Chris Ross and Tim Wilkins.

The standard of play was judged to be higher than in recent years; certainly the games were hard fought and the result of all five events remarkably close. Thus, there was a triple tie for the premier event, the splendid Ranelagh Gold cup, played as an American block of 6, with Roger Best of Dulwich the winner well ahead on net points of Martin Haggerston of Roehampton and Chris Ross. The second event, the massive Brooke Cup, was played as 2 American blocks of 4 with a criss-cross play-off; the winner by the narrowest possible margin was Dennis Cross of Hurlingham who beat Tim Wilkins by +1, having also having also won the semi-final and the last game of his block by a similar margin. The third singles event, the Thorpe Cup, was an equally close encounter, Mary Knapp, (Roehampton) winning -2, +2, +2 against Tim Mariarty (Roehampton). Event 4, a 6 round Swiss, was also close with Tim Wilkins and Russell Bretherton with 5 wins each, the Trevelyan Bowl going to Tim who had beaten Russell in an earlier round. The final event, the handicap doubles for the Creyke cups, could have been won by either side early on but, in keeping with what had gone before, it had to go to a close finish, Nigel Gray and Susan Edwards narrowly defeating Fernando and Peter Quinn +2.

The week had one novel feature. The central lawn was still not fit for play after levelling and relaying in the autumn and as no tennis

lawn was available resort had to be had to the bowling green area behind the main club house, some distance from the croquet lawns and pavilion. This is a delightful area in a walled garden, seldom seen by visiting croquet players, and was welcomed by many players as a restful spot away from the manager's ministrations. There was of course much speculation about this becoming a permanent feature of the tournament scene at Roehampton and providing a fourth lawn for croquet (a far cry from the 14 lawns of yesteryear, but at least one more than three!)

Ramsgate 14pt advanced weekend 12 - 13 June

Report by Audrey Howell

The weather may have been grey but the warm welcome from club members more than made up for the lack of sunshine. With 8 entries, the block format, ably managed by Mary Currie, provided 4 games on Saturday and 3 on Sunday and there were some close and well-fought matches, the lush, green lawns belying their speed.

The clear winner with 6 wins was Peter Howell (Tunbridge Wells) who received a large handsome shield coupled with a miniature replica - nice touch. Roy Ware was runner-up. I must give mention of David Dray (18 handicap and even younger in age) playing in his first tournament, stepping in as a late replacement and capturing a couple of scalps. Ouch! cried a 3 handicap player.

Thank you Ramsgate for a great weekend of croquet plus the excellent catering. I do hope there is a larger entry next year, for we left with a lasting impression of a great band of enthusiastic and committed members intent on improving and nurturing the club into the next century.

Woking Midsummer Tournament

Woking Mid-Summer Open 12-14 June

Report by Geoffrey Cuttle

Apart from a downfall during the Saturday Barbecue, which totally failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the 30 revellers in the clubhouse, the sun shone throughout the Tournament and all Events were happily completed according to the Manager's plans though not, in some cases, according to form.

The Doubles (Level Advanced Play) was won by Chris Farthing and David Burns over Collin Southern and MacGowan by +8 TP. The Y Doubles saw the scratch favourites Nelson Morrow & Paul Castell beat the highest handicapped pair (14) Andrew Dutton and Stan Harding by +12.

In the Singles all competitors initially played four blocks of four (seeded with two A-class and 2 B-Class), the top two in each block going through to the knock-out for the Challenge Cup. Two of the B-Class, James Wankling and John Cosier displaced two of the A-Class (who shall be nameless) to go for the Challenge, and the remainder went into the knock-out for the Caporn Casket. Meanwhile the Manager

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and the Woking Chairman played an Egyptian on a remote lawn.

The Challenge Cup was won by Chris Farthing against Collin Southern by +17, profiting by a gallant but failed TPO by Collin. Incidentally, including the doubles, Chris achieved 4TPs and Collin 2TPs during the Weekend. Meanwhile the Caporn Casket went to Andy Davies beating Andrew Dutton by 12, Andy having previously won his Silver Merit Award badge in his semi-final against David Mooney.

Handicap Singles 15 - 16 June

Report by Malcolm Bigg

The Handicap Singles, played over the weekend of 19/20th June, was the last event of Woking's Midsummer Tournament, and like the other events this year was played mainly in brilliant sunshine.

The winner was Ron Welch of Reigate, who was in superb form. Apart from a momentary lapse in concentration in his second game, which was made the most of by his opponent Liz Batin, his points record speaks for itself - +18, -3, +22, +20, +8, +17 - and these were 22-point games!

Runner up was John Davey of Purley Bury, who also recorded 5 wins. John also played with speed and accuracy, but was only runner up owing to his much lower net point score.

Wharrad turns were used successfully throughout the two days, and all but three out of 48 games finished within time.

Handicap Doubles 17-18 June

Report by Peter MacGowan

The Handicap Doubles was played as a kind of Lego format, with two stages of blocks, the winning two pairs from the first day's blocks forming a 'top block' for Day 2, the remaining four pairs also rearranging for the second day.

Both Wharrad turns and shortened games were employed to encourage pegged-out finishes ... with mixed success! However double-banking, the curse of Doubles, was mostly avoided.

A wide variety of game times was recorded. In their 18-pointer, John and Pauline Davey and Geoff Cuttle/Stan Harding were level after their 12th Wharrad turns at 3 hours; a further half hour then elapsed with careful lay-ups but unsuccessful hoop approaches/attempts by both pairs before John was able to run penult. (So THAT'S what 'sudden death'!)

At the other end of the spectrum, John Cosier/Ron Welch notched-up victories below an hour in two matches. Their unstoppable form was halted only in the last game in the winners' block, when their "streets ahead" start ran into the doldrums and Roger Bell/Gina Lewis caught up, who then held off a late challenge by John/Ron to win another exciting finish. This put three pairs on 2 out of 3 wins, but John/Ron were ahead on net points scored.

The prize for the second days 'other' block was taken by Mary and Richard Knapp, who won all their last three games. Winners: John Cosier (Surbiton) and Ron Welch (Reigate)

Parkstone 14 - 19 June

Report by David Ruscombe-King.

I arrived on the Monday, and my first thought was, "what beautiful lawns". They were very fast. As the sun beat down during the week they became a little more testing, but they remained very good to play on. John Gibbons was prominent amongst the improving players, winning the B class event as well as the singles handicap, without loss of a game. His handicap was reduced from 7 to 5 and he won a silver award. In the C class Vera Henderson's solid play won the first place. In the doubles final Peggy Nutland and John McMordie were matched against David Ruscombe-King and Daniel Mills. Peggy made a good late break which eventually resulted in a win. David Harrison-Wood

and Jane Matthews were winners in the Y. The final of the A class was between William Ormerod and David Harrison-Wood. Play started at 12 o'clock. At about 5 o'clock David's attempt to set up a triple failed at the 4th hoop. At around 6 o'clock William's mastery of cunning croquet brought him to a straight rover peel which stuck. He was too close for the jump so completed the peel with a scatter shot, leaving David with three balls together and clips on 1 back and 4 back. A little before 7 o'clock William pegged out his second ball!

Ryde Open 16 - 20 June

Report by Christine Bourn

Glorious weather set the seal on a particularly amiable and relaxed tournament. Following the death of Roy Newnham, Philip Kennerley managed the event for the first time. He reserved sufficient energy and concentration to produce a barnstorming performance in the advanced singles. Winning all of his games, he took the championship of the Isle of Wight in some style.

The handicap event produced a much tighter result, but David Hoyle triumphed eventually with 5 wins. Christine Bourne, Ian Mantle and Roy Tillocock won 4 games apiece, but as Christine had beaten the other two, she was runner-up.

We look forward to meeting past visitors and new competitors at future tournaments.

Championship of Surrey Surbiton 18-20 June

Report by Graham Gale

Robert Fulford eased his way to the Championship of Surrey title with nine consecutive triple peels (including two TPOs). Elsewhere in the main event the seeds did not fare so well, 4 of the 8 losing in their first match. Most notable of these was Chris Ross's victory over Chris Farthing. He won +3 in the third after Farthing had failed to run rover from WITHIN THE JAWS! An improving Paul Castell did well to progress as far as he did, with three fairly close match wins, and indeed should have had a game off Jeff Dawson in their semi-final.

In the (flexible) Swiss consolation, run in Richard Hilditch's inimitable style, it looked like the deciding game had taken place BEFORE the main event, when Dyer beat Farthing in an "early Swiss". However, after only having played 6 main event games on the first two days, Alex Leggate won 3 games on the Sunday, including a quin against Dyer, to pip him to the post by 0.8% (Leggate 7/9; Dyer 10/13).

Hunstanton Over 50's 18 - 20 June

Report by Sarah Hampson

In East Anglia the highways Commission waits for a sunny weekend, then

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out come the traffic lights, every set they can lay their hands on, and roadworks commence. Thus the tournament got off to a slightly shaky start as several visitors were held up for an hour or more. However the courts were fast, the sun was out, and the programme completed, each player being offered six games, whilst the enthusiastic could have a further game in the evening.

Television coverage of the royal wedding was provided, but croquet provided far more competitive once the dress had been seen. Ken Anerton soon became the man to beat. Playing steadily, with control and accuracy his breaks were a delight to watch, he proved unbeatable. All the more remarkable as his home club has only one short lawn.

The Student Championships Oxford University 18 - 20 June

Report by Sam Tudor

The strength of the Student Championships has gone from strength to strength in recent years; and this tournament was no exception. The field included a minus 1, a scratch and a half handicap along with a nine and a myriad of higher handicaps.

In order to encourage more entries from outside of Oxbridge, the number of players in each team had been reduced from 4 to 2. However, due to an unfortunate mix up of the Exeter team, the entrants were 4 pairs from Oxford and 2 from Cambridge. The team results went true to form, with the final being competed between the senior Oxford team (Gabrielle Higgins and Rupert Parson) and the senior Cambridge team (Matt Davey and John Wentworth); with Matt and John winning +18.

The second and third days saw the individual event. On the fast and slightly uneven Oxford University lawns, the standard was surprisingly high; a couple of triples just failed to be completed - including a superb 2-ball straight triple attempt by Jack Betram (h'cap 16) which only failed when the striker's ball rolled onto its partner after rover. The format was an innovative one; with 3 American blocks forming the first round, with the three winners and the best loser going through to the second day. It worked in its aim; a meaningful competition for the title hopefuls, while encouraging lots of games for the higher handicaps.

Sam Tudor beat Gabrielle in one semi, while in the other Chris Dent gave James Death a scare before James clinched it. The final (best of three) was of reasonable quality; in the first game Sam made the most of some errors on the part of James to finish ahead, while in the second, Sam came from behind to win a pegged out ending.

Thanks must be given to Alan Oldham for representing the CA, and to Oxford University (and especially the manager, Gabrielle) for being such excellent hosts and for keeping the free Pimms' (such a cliché!) flowing.

Championship of the East Midlands, Nottingham 25 - 27 June

Report by Sam Tudor

My East Midlands Championships started about midday on the Friday; 3 hours after the rest of the players had started. Beatrice calmly asked me if I was planning to play in this year's tournament, and if so, when I could be expected to arrive. It is rather frightening for someone to realise that they have no recollection whatsoever of their past actions; especially when these involve the signing of a cheque. Mulder and Scully of the X-files are still investigating the situation.

The Championship used a Draw and Process format governed by Dr Vincent's own rules; avoiding the 'hanging byes' that you apparently get with the Bagnell-Wild system. I nodded in polite ignorance when Ian tried to explain this to me, but it certainly seemed to work, helped by the manager's program on his laptop.

The process was won by David Maugham, while in the semi-

final of the draw, Beatrice McGlen missed the peg from an inch to give Tibble passage to the final +1. Beatrice was under the (incorrect) belief that a double tap could occur on the peg-out stroke of a single ball, and so played to glance off the peg at a large angle; she missed entirely. Ian Vincent beat Tibble in the final to produce a play-off for the championship between Vincent and Maugham.

However, Maugham missed some unexpected short shots; and had an abortive first break. Ian, by contrast kept his cool to finish the game off quickly at +23. Mention must also go to Richard White who collected his gold award in a game against myself. His superb eighth turn triple was a delight to watch. The flexible swiss was won by Jeremy Dyer.

Budleigh Advanced Weekend 26 - 27 June

Report by Alex Jardine

With just 15 players, manager John Toye, with Strat Liddiard and Cliff Jones as his gofers, ran a very flexible Swiss which catered equally for those who wanted to get five games in a day and those who managed just a civilised two, taking full advantage of the excellent catering and facilities!

Peter Taylor was first to show ahead of the bunch, four straight wins in short order including a sixth-turn 26TP on David Kibble. Apart from that one set-back, DJK was also going along very nicely, his four wins including two TPs and an attempted sextuple in a thunderstorm which stuttered after two peels but still ended up as a +26 (very nearly straight) TP. Strat was unbeaten in his two games while Cliff was coming up on the rails with just the one loss to David.

And so to Sunday morning with David reeling off two more +26TPs and Peter struggling to beat Tom Weston in his first game. Cliff went down to a very tidy Brian Smith but then TPO'd Peter to leave the two leading proponents on just the one loss each. A final was decreed and traditionally lawn 7 appropriated at lunch-time. With David very much on form, the result was a straightforward two-love victory in under three hours.

Colchester Weekend Handicap 26 and 27 June

Report by David Haslam

On the pristine Colchester courts an entry of 18 competitors with handicaps from 2 to 20 enjoyed a total of 50 games under the quiet and efficient management of Norman Hicks. The glorious hot and sunny weather had led to very fast conditions on the first day after which the club chairman, David Haslam, led the field with three wins together with Jonathan Hills, a local lad who demonstrated his rapid improver status with some excellent play. Day two brought overcast conditions but with only slight precipitation. Fortunes changed with the rapid rise up the ladder of Colin Hemming (Colchester), Marjorie Boyd (Nottingham) and Ron Harris also of Colchester. In the midst of all this David Haslam enjoyed his lunch whilst watching Colin make two all round breaks to earn his silver award, a feat later repeated by Ken Wheeler of Bottisham whilst David enjoyed his tea! At the end of the day Jonathan Hills remained unbeaten with six wins whilst Colin Hemming's five from seven earned him second place, one rating point ahead of Terry Sparks from Norwich who claimed his bronze award, as did Jonathan. Again one of the highlights of the weekend was the excellent lunch each day provided by members of the host club.

South East Federation One ball competition Tunbridge Wells 27 June

Report by Pauline Davey

Sixteen players from Littlehampton, Eastbourne, Medway, Purley, Tunbridge Wells and South Africa took part in this well organised tournament. After two weeks of brilliant sunshine the games started

in very showery weather and waterproofs were on and off throughout the day. This did not dampen our enthusiasm and we all set about challenging one another to 13 pt level play games. At the finish the outright winner was Brian Kitching, who won all of his 15 games despite some excellent opposition.

Surbiton, 1 - 4 July, National Seniors Championship

Report by Paul Macdonald

The second new style championship, introduced successfully at Southwick last year to replace the earlier championship which died out in the early 90s, moved this year to Surbiton. It again proved successful though the entry was substantially smaller, probably due in some part to its clashing with other events in the area (including Wimbledon tennis) but also perhaps to the absence of the South Coast sea breezes that have attracted large numbers to the Veterans Championships held at Southwick and Budleigh Salterton over the last ten years. Nevertheless the format chosen to accommodate the smaller number of players meant that all were kept fully occupied throughout the four days. The format was a little unusual, not fully understood by some and confusing to others. Each of the three class events was played as an American block (of 6, 6 and 4) with the two leaders of each block playing off against each other, with the best of three if necessary. Places in each block were determined by number of wins, ties being resolved on a "who beat whom" basis with net points as a last resort.

However misunderstood or maligned, this format resulted in some remarkably close finishes. The Championship for the Trevor Williams Cup was won by George Noble (Surbiton) who beat Edward Dymock (Dulwich) +9 and +1, George having just managed to beat Eric Solomon +1 in their game in the block. The finish of the B Class event was equally close, John Cosier (Surbiton) beating Alex Thomas (Surbiton) +25, -10 and +1. In the final of the C Class Ron Benson (Surbiton) beat Gina Lewis (Surbiton) +15 and +6. The Handicap event was also won by Ron Benson, winner of one block, who beat Tony Tizard (Ealing), winner of the second block, +4.

The 2-ball, 1-turn finish to the match between George and Edward for the Championship was considered by those present to be worthy of inclusion in any report. Edward (black for peg) was 3 or 4 feet from the peg and George (yellow for 4-back) a few feet east of 4 back. George hit black, split it to north of hoop 2 and got 4 feet in front of 4-back which he ran to the north boundary. He then hit black some 15 to 20 yards away, black was split to rover, yellow finishing in front of penult which George ran to the south boundary, picked up black, ran rover and pegged out. A good practice game for his first match in the Opens the following day!

Wrest Park, 2 - 4 July

Report by Howard Bottomley

Was it that Wrest Park members can now play during the week or that Bedfordshire had been promoted in the Counties? Whatever, we were delighted to entertain one of the strongest fields in the 23 years of the event.

Day 1: Eric Audsley, the Manager, is late. Jacques Fournier arrives with fleece. "Will there be enough coke?" the caterers ask. To deem or not to deem? This was the question which lasted most of the weekend. The outcome was a quadruple for Chris Clarke against David Openshaw. Block B was led by failed TP Gordon "how did it go off the lawn?" Hopewell. Block C saw David Tutt with a good catch do doubt assisted by his enormous umbrella. Block A contested by Jacques and sneezing Phil Cordingley.

Day 2: Jacques arrives with personal photographer. Roger Ivill, level after time with Judy Anderson in the jaws, does the decent thing by hitting in and then roqueting her through. Peter Stansfield grinds his way to the top as Gordon collapses, David Harley now shares Block C and Chris Clarke joins Phil at the top of Block A.

Day 3: Phil Cordingley sighs as Howard Bottomley fails at rover to let Chris Clarke win. Chris needed another break at the pub to recover! John Wheeler and Ian Mantle enjoyed a one-ball game - well, Ian did when John's croquet peeled him through rover en route to 3-back. David Openshaw rose to the top of Block A, Gordon Hopewell had a snooze before making a come-back to sneak Block B and David Tutt held on for Block C.

David O thanked the Wrest Parkers but asked Eric for fewer games - there's a first! Other winners were Nick Evans for Lamb points, David Lilly for navigation, George Collin for mallet abuse and David Openshaw for penguin jokes - you had to be there.

Roehampton, 3 - 4 July, B Level Tournament

Report by Tony Fathers

A field of 12 players in a handicap range of 3 to 8 had a most enjoyable tournament. The format of two blocks with five block games, with a full play-off in the second afternoon meant that we each had six games - a tribute to the Manager, Douglas Gurney.

The final was repeat of last year's, Mike Town defeating Kathleen Priestley. Kathleen's progress to a handicap of 3 in only three seasons is a tribute to her dedication to the game plus her background as a county golf and hockey player. Before long, we shall surely be seeing her in the Opens.

A feature of the tournament was the opening of the re-laid Lawn 2. With all the previous humps and hollows levelled, it was wonderful to see one's long roquets travel straight and true.

Southport Long Bisquers 3rd - 4th July

Report by Peter Wilson

The tournament was ably managed by Neil Williams who divided the entrants into three blocks of six in which all played all in an eighteen point game. The winners of each block plus one "wild card" would gain places in the semi-final of the knock out stage.

Saturday provided fine conditions and after three rounds Julian Sweed (Hcp 14 - Doncaster), Tony Thomas (Hcp 16 - Southport) and Ray Belcher (Hcp 18 - Southport) were the block leaders. Julian's accurate style enabled him to build sizeable breaks in his games and immediately pressurise his opponent. Ray and Tony were rumoured to be playing "gopher croquet". Subsequent investigations revealed this to be short for "go for it croquet". Anyway, it appeared to be paying off since they both achieved bronze awards in round two.

Sunday lived up to its name weather-wise which enabled referees Don and Diana Williamson to soak in the sunshine whilst assessing the handicaps of players from Isle Of Man and Wales where there is no official handicapper. The players had had time to think about the finer points of the opening shots in an eighteen point game and with the time limit being cut to two hours everything was set for some sharp games.

Georgina Llewellyn (Llanfairfechan) won her bronze award in the morning. The overnight leaders held their positions and were joined by Pauline Lewis (Southport) in the semi-finals. Ray beat Julian and Tony beat Pauline to set up a fascinating final game. A tactical slip by Tony allowed Ray to "go for it" and after sixty one minutes Ray (black & blue!) pegged out to win.

Southport itself is a lively seaside town with a wide range of nightlife and accommodation and makes an ideal place to visit for a long weekend. This annual tournament can be recommended to any long bisquer who wants to improve their game and take some of the famous Southport air. State-of-the-art roller coaster fans will also benefit from attending this tournament as they can ride the Traumatizer between matches.

South East Federation Short Croquet Medway 11th July

Report by Don Beck

This was the first time the event had been held in Kent and 4 teams entered. It was played as a four round singles tournament with team points earned by final placings and Medway, the host club, won!

Local knowledge of the lawns together with the lunchtime distractions; Schumacher's crash, and large-size portions of a roast dinner proved to be too much for the visitors. For some this was their first trip "away from home" and despite the results most seemed to enjoy themselves. (Though some did find the hoops to be a little tight.)

An experiment of using a base of 2 was trialled and with most games going the full 80 minutes proved to be about right in ensuring all players felt as though they had been in a game.

This type of tournament is an ideal opportunity for players to dip their toes in the shark infested waters of tournament play. Perhaps clubs should consider how to encourage more of their higher bisquers to enter.

Results:

	Team:	Individual
Medway	47	1st Jeremy Hackett (Medway)
Ember	40	2nd Roger Dollimore (Ember)
Merton	29	3rd Brenda Powney (Medway)
Ealing	17	4th Margaret Payton (Merton)

Tyneside Over 50's Handicap 13-15 July

Report by Derek Watts

Over three dry & sunny days - eight competitors ranging in handicap 4.5 to 11 played on two excellent courts. The Manager Derek Trotman arranged for everyone to play each other - 3 games on the first day and 2 games on the remaining days - this worked admirably and the overall winner was Derek Watts of Tyneside winning 5 games out of 7 saw his handicap change to 10. Ian Hill of Nottingham was second and achieved a silver merit award. The lunches & teas were declared to be one of the highlights of the tournament thanks to Sheila Watts. We hope to hold this event annually so make a note now in your forward planners for the next century!

Challenge & Gilbey, Nottingham 15 - 18 July

Report by Rob Edlin-White

For 4 continuously dry and sunny days, 21 players competed in the CA-sponsored Challenge and Gilbey. It was sun-cream and shorts weather; beer stocks had to be replenished after only 2 days. Visitors included a friendly contingent from Edinburgh, who were pleased to find fellow Scot, Gordon Hopewell, managing the tournament.

The Nottingham lawns were playing very fast due to the dry weather and close cropping by the groundsmen, giving challenging conditions to all players. Lots of games went to time; lots of take-offs to boundary balls went off. (Fergus McInnes had the dubious distinction of all his games going to time; mostly won).

The format was 3 blocks of level advanced, grouped by handicap range, and a Swiss handicap. With 5 lawns and an optimal 21 players, there was little waiting around for games, and enthusiasts were playing informal one-ball games until 10:00 some nights.

Results:

Roehampton Challenge Cup (A block):	Malcolm O'Connell
Reckitt Challenge Cup (B block):	Geoff Caldwell
Stevenson Challenge Cup (C block):	Jed Allen
Gilbey Goblet (Handicap):	Rob Edlin-White

Southwick, 19 - 24 July, National Veterans Championships

Report by Geoffrey Cuttle

The Veterans is a social event. Of course, with 52 entrants, with class, handicap and doubles events, there was quite a lot of croquet played. But with so many players having so many years of tournament experience (some over half a century) the renewed friendships and the reminiscences have a tendency to dominate the conversation. At times the atmosphere was more that of a (very well behaved) weeklong party rather than of a dedicated sporting event. Some would say that is the proper spirit of croquet anyway - if so, the Veterans epitomises it.

The party hosts were Sussex County Croquet Club and they fed and watered (or beered and spirited) us magnificently under the generous guidance of Christine and Hyacinth respectively. And the MC was of course the ever genial Paul Macdonald who contrived to give everyone just as much or as little time on the lawns as they wished and made us all feel, whatever the result, that we had achieved a victory. Even so, it took Paul several days to get the weather under control. The strong winds that had plagued Carnoustie clearly looked for the next most important sporting event to attack once that was over and found the Veterans. Winds, clouds and the occasional shower kept us all delving in our bags for the appropriate gear and it was on the Thursday that the traditional Southwick sun began to shine. But by the finals on Saturday the weather beamed as broadly as Paul and spectating with a glass in hand was more than adequate compensation for not being in a final.

As for the croquet, I believe that the only TP achieved was that by John Solomon over John Hobbs, but Solomon did attempt a quad against Dennis Moorcroft and I am told that Moorcroft, in an earlier game, essayed a valiant but failed TPO. It would be interesting (but personally unlikely) to be around in forty years to see whether the current generation can still produce sextuples in their Veterans or whether they too will succumb to a more relaxed and elegant style with maturity.

Back to the 1999 finals. The Rothwell Challenge Cup was played in two blocks. One went to Ian Scott, beating Peter Howell who also had three wins. The other (in the way of American blocks) depended on the result of a match between two non-contenders, Geoff Cuttle and Hamish Hall. Had Hamish won, John Solomon would have gone through but, Geoff winning, it went to John Hobbs on points since he had beaten Cuttle who had beaten Solomon who had beaten Hobbs, all on three wins. The Hobbs/Scott final was an exciting one with each in turn wrestling the innings magnificently only to lose it again at the last moment. A typical moment was when Scott missed a long pioneer at 6 only to run on through the distant hoop and hit the long return. Nearer the end, Scott again got in when Hobbs failed with blue at 4-back, but then ran rover too straight and missed the long return, leaving Hobbs with three minutes to go and all but blue on the peg. Running 4-back, Hobbs had to make a very awkward long angled shot to get to penult but just succeeded and, from there, could clinch the game.

Meanwhile, in the Felixstowe Cup, Gene Mears beat Dorothy Miller, both having won all four games in their blocks, and, in the Strickland Cup, Peter Gosney succeeded with five wins. In the Over-70s Division, Rex Davis with four wins beat Derek Trotman and, in Division 2, Don Mears beat Brian Rees on points with equal wins between them and Peter Read. Subsequently in the Doubles, Gene Mears and Geoff Cuttle beat Peter Howell and Miriam Reader for the Sussex Trugs (for the second time) and Ian Scott and Barbara Toye beat Ron Atkinson and Roy Edwards for the Gilbert Spoons. Finally, in the big Handicap, Gene Mears just failed to achieve her third win of the day when losing narrowly in the Meredith Cup to Martin Rogers; in the Y, John Solomon beat Don Mears and Nigel Gray won the Z.

Jersey, 19 - 25 July, Championship of Jersey

Report by Tony le Moignan

Ed Duckworth won his first Jersey Open title and the main cash prize by beating Terry Burge 2 - 0 in the final. Matt Burrow and Tony le Moignan beat Don Gaunt and Burge in the Open Doubles and Niall Carter beat Ronan Rogerson in the B Class.

Lots of others won cheques in a variety of tournaments, thanks

to the support of Barclays Bank. Entries from all the nine countries taking part used up gobflus of sunscreen on all but one day. Headache tablets were welcomed by quite a few on most mornings. I think (and hope) most of the 40 players had a good week.

Eastern Championships

23 - 25 July 99

Report by Richard Hilditch

Maugham extends streak to 6

The pleasant 3-year cycling of the Eastern Championships brought us to the sunny resort of Hunstanton this year. Well almost all of us, sadly Reg Bamford had forgotten he had entered so he was a no-show and not a victim of the massive M.25 crash that Graham Gale was nearly involved in. Nevertheless the entry was very strong again including 5 MacRobertson shield players and 5 other internationals.

The closest 1st round match pitted Keith Aiton against David (call me Dave) Kibble on the recently repaired lawn 3 (a very good job has been done on the north boundary next to the football goal). Both players had some trouble with the lawn and Kibble triumphed in 3, Aiton then announcing that his faint hope for a test place had now evaporated. Overall the lawns were quick but by no means unplayable, so combined with some reasonably easy hoops we were able to switch to best of 5 in the last 8 where all the seeds arrived safely.

The lopsided results in the last 8 (each match was won 3-0) did not really do justice to the play of the losers. Ian Burrige in particular lost a very close pegged out game to Jeff Dawson.

The semi-final match between Chris Clarke and David Maugham promised to be something of a peeling feast, both players are known to favour TPOs pegging out two balls against weaker opposition. However in this case the only TPO was done by Clarke in the first and he left 3 balls in the game and won by the maximum score. After this it was one way traffic to Maugham as his shooting and Clarke's hoop failures allowed Maugham to win the next three games handsomely. Relieved of the pressure of the main event Clarke went on to win the Swiss without dropping a game. The other semi pitted another pair who played regularly, Jeff Dawson and Stephen Mulliner. Indeed Jeff had managed to beat Stephen a couple of times in the past. However this time the test player had the upper hand.

The final day saw the lawns a little slower, with bright sunshine replaced by a hot overcast day. Maugham was clearly very keen to win his sixth regional title in a row, he played carefully (sometimes slowly) throughout. In the first game the players exchanged errors and breaks before Maugham pegged out Mulliner's peg ball with both backward balls on 2 leaving 3 balls in the game. This is despite some 'he man'

email banter between the two in recent months which would have led us to believe that the game would be reduced to 2 balls. Maugham won the 3 ball game without taking any risks (he turned down a 10 yard roquet to go into a corner at one point). In the second game Mulliner was not able to get a TPO going and settled for an equalising break to 4-back. Needless to say Maugham hit the lift and finished. The third game saw hoop failures from each player but again Maugham hit the key lift to finish with a triple peel giving him a 3-0 victory. When he wants to concentrate Maugham looks to be as strong in a match situation as Fulford, his ability to nearly always hit the big last shot allows him to overcome the odd early error that he may make in a game.

The Swiss allowed players to get plenty of games (up to 13 in under three days). The most impressive feat was achieved by Aiton who performed a 3-ball triple, Graham Gale's ball remaining lodged in corner 4 throughout. Although this is not as elegant as his previous 3-ball third turn TPO at Oxford, the conditions at Hunstanton were certainly more testing.

The prize giving was spoiled by the lack of trophies (Maugham and Openshaw take the blame), but we were able to show our appreciation of the excellent catering job done by Sarah Hampson and her assistants. Burgers and beans and ice cream, what more could you ask for?

Rd 1: Dyer bt Cordingley +16 +17, Clarke bt Tudor +18tp +6, Comish bt Bradforth +17tp +23, Maugham bt Saurin +26 +26tp, Mulliner bt Gale +7 +8, Kibble bt Aiton +22tp -18 +24, Dawson bt Castell +2 +17, Burrige bt Hilditch +17 +9.

Rd 2: Clarke bt Dyer +19tp +25tp +15tp, Maugham bt Comish +5 +9 +26tp, Mulliner bt Kibble +16tp +26tp +25tp, Dawson bt Burrige +2 +24 +25tp.

Rd 3: Maugham bt Clarke -13tpo +25tp +24tp +22, Mulliner bt Dawson +24 +5 +25tp.

Final: Maugham bt Mulliner +10 +17tp +5tp.

Swiss: Winner: Clarke 10/13

Pendle Over-50's July 27 - 30

Report by Geoff Young

Pendle's first Over-50s, and mid-week, tournament was favoured with the hottest and sunniest week so far this year. 21 players came, including visitors from seven clubs, in approximate distance order - Bristol,

Middlesborough, York, Huddersfield, Bowden, Fylde and Bury.

The Doubles Knock-Out was entered by seven pairs, including four married couples doing little for their qualifications for the Dunmow Flitch. The full range of handicaps came into contention. Manager John Beech (1.5) partnering novice Robin Delves (24 less doubles discount) The discount was vindicated by the fact that they won two games to reach the final which they lost by two points to Geoff and Barbara Young of Bury.

A couple of people, when asked where they had played, said "Lawn 2, it won", leading to a suggestion that a few T-shirts should be run off, inscribed "I survived Lawn 2". By way of demonstrating that it was playable, John and his Assistant Manager David Jenkinson took each other over to it, John returning in triumph having pegged out in 110 minutes.

The games produced a fair amount of "moments" such as one player who, when asked why she was taking croquet with Blue off White, was quite unable to remember. There was a mass meeting of referees round a case of whether there was or was not a fagpaper of clearance on the non-playing side of a hoop for a roqueted ball with stopped clocks in many directions beside the double-banked game. One 24 on the hoop 5 start developed quite a habit of running it from the baulk line. A younger lady player was heard to comment that the decline of her figure was leading to interference with her twisted "Irish grip" as her arms couldn't get in as far as they used to. But I digress.

In the Handicap Event, David Pollitt made himself the man to beat by winning all three of his games on the opening day. He remained ahead until the last morning but then lost to Margaret Anderton. By the last afternoon four players were still in contention and were paired off for two deciders. David played Liz Fraser who beat him to become the tournament runner-up. David had to settle for the consolation of the trophy for the most games played. Barbara Young, playing in her first tournament, beat Margaret and became the first winner of the "Irish Cup". The winner in the Under-10 Handicap section was John Beech who claimed it as his first success in a Pendle tournament. Considering the distractions he had as Manager it was a considerable feat. Finally a complete report must congratulate the catering team for their magnificent efforts.

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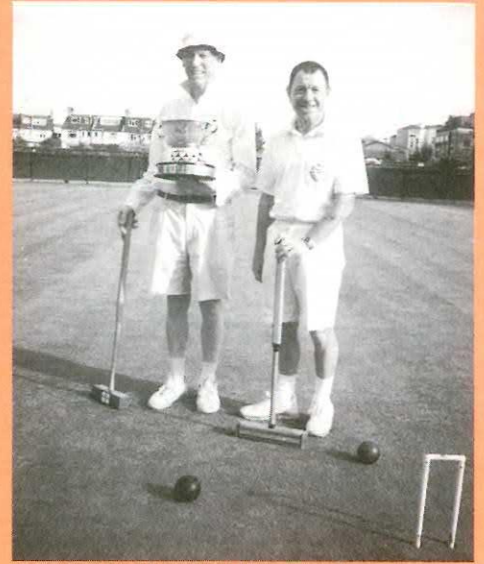
The successful Irish team which won the Home International event held at Budleigh Salterton.



The successful Kent team, winners of the Inter-County Golf Croquet event held at Wrest Park.



Ailsa Lines winner of the Bowdon handicap weekend with runner-up Rupert Webb.



Ed Dymock and Tom Weston, winner and runner-up of the Golf Croquet Championship.



Dressed to thrill at the Surbiton speed doubles, Chris Osmond, George Noble, Celia Steward and Tim Dutton.



Cliff Jones presents Jonathan Coombs with his trophy at the Budleigh Salterton handicap weekend.