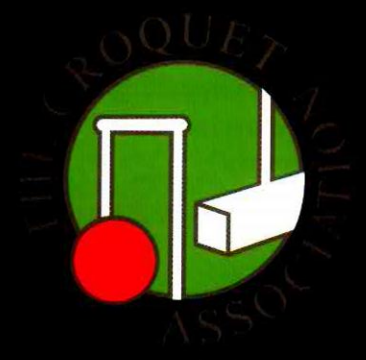


the croquet gazette



issue 280 - july 2002



**recruiting the television generation :
*an unattainable fantasy?***

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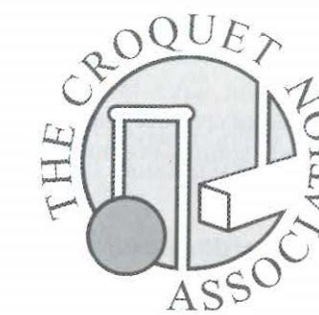
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the croquet gazette

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Cover photograph of visitors to Nymans Garden, Crawley by Robin Pond

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publication details

The Croquet Gazette is published six times per year, in January, March, May, July, September and November.

publication schedule

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advertising

Full details of all advertising rates and data are available at all clubs as well as through the Editor of the Gazette and the Secretary of the CA.

specific questions and queries

Specific questions or queries should be sent direct to the Editor. Email contributions, including tournament reports, should be sent direct to the Editor, or copied to the Editor if they are being posted to the Nottingham List.

Both black and white or colour prints of photographs can be used. Slides are no longer accepted. Photocopies of pictures or print-outs of digital images cannot be used. If using digital photography please send in jpeg or tif format files. Resolution of scanned images must be at least 300 dpi. 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 and reports

Emailed reports are welcomed. Attachments may be sent in Microsoft Word format, or any other PC-based word processor. Hand written reports are no longer accepted.

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.

disclaimer

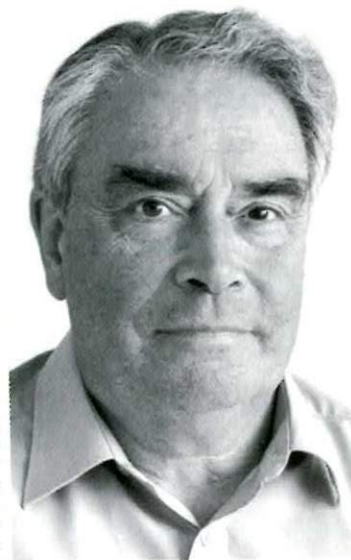
The opinions expressed in the Croquet Gazette are those of the editor and contributors. The Croquet Association is not responsible from statements other than those clearly defined as being made on behalf of the Croquet Association.

Visit the Croquet Association website at www.croquet.org.uk

One of the CA's tasks is to represent the interests of croquet players in the world outside our game. We have had some recent examples.

safeguarding children in sport

The NSPCC and Sport England have sent us a draft consultation document on standards for safeguarding and protecting children in sport. This is an issue that has been around for a while, although so far there has been no reason for it to be a particular focus for the CA's attention. But now it has to be, if the CA and our clubs are to stand any chance of obtaining future lottery funding. In any case the CA, as a national governing body, would wish to support the principle of having such safeguards.



We have responded to the draft, saying that we agree there should be cross-sport standards, relevant to all levels of activity. However, we have also expressed concern that if the procedures are too bureaucratic and burdensome it may have the effect of causing some of our clubs not to accept any under-18s as members. We hope that funding and controlling bodies will recognise that some sports do carry much higher risks for children than croquet.

The practical consequences of the new safeguards are that the CA will be looking to publish its own child protection policy and we shall be advising our member clubs about producing similar statements. The policy will be mandatory for all members who have any significant contact with under-18s in an organised croquet setting. We shall consult Federations and clubs that already have some experience of coaching, and running events for, young croquet players, but if you have relevant experience, or views, about an appropriate policy for the CA please do contact me. Your input will be appreciated.

tax reliefs for sports clubs

A welcome initiative from the Chancellor in his budget is the prospect of tax reliefs for sport. These will apply to "community amateur sports clubs". There are two possible routes for clubs: to become charitable bodies or to apply to the Inland Revenue for tax reliefs. Clubs must operate an open membership policy that allows anyone, within reason, to join and use its facilities. They must also be not-for-profit bodies, with no provision for payment to members during the life of the club or upon dissolution. Another criterion for charitable status is that the sport is capable of improving physical health and fitness; we are confident that croquet will be accepted.

Benefits include possible security against property speculators moving in on valuable sites, mandatory rates relief,

Gift Aid and inheritance tax relief on gifts. At the time of writing, not all the legislation has been passed; we will advise clubs when we know more.

volunteers (that's you . . .)

Recently I attended a seminar on volunteers in sport and it was interesting to hear about the experiences of some 30 other governing bodies. It's astonishing that the national economic return on the output from volunteers in the UK is £12 billion, that 22 million adults take part in a voluntary activity every year and that 26% of these activities take place in sport. Well, in a very small way we certainly play our part because virtually all the people who help to run our clubs, Federations and the CA itself, are volunteers.

Research has shown that nationally 7 out of 10 volunteers are critical of the way their work is organised, and more than a quarter complain that their efforts aren't always appreciated. I very much hope that a survey of croquet volunteers would produce a happier outcome because our members who go to all those meetings and organise things for us are the lifeblood of our game.

But to club and Federation committee members I would ask the question: are you sure you show sufficient appreciation of the massive efforts some of your club volunteers (who may not be in the limelight) make? Now is the time of year to put forward nominations for Croquet Association Diplomas. These are awarded to anyone (not necessarily CA Individual Associates) who has made a very significant contribution to croquet by helping at club level. Diplomas have nothing to do with croquet prowess and everything to do with help given to other club members. Each nomination must be approved by a club committee, accompanied by a citation of not more than ten lines, and signed by a club official. Send them to the CA Secretary before 1st August (or very soon afterwards) and presentations will be made at the CA's AGM in October. Don't let any hard working volunteer in your club feel unappreciated!

Quiller

tournament vacancies

Pendle Autumn Midweek 10 - 13 September. Class events - advanced and handicap. Open handicap. All welcome. Phone 01282 813070

news and information

English allocation for World Championship announced

England have been allocated 12 places out of 64 for the WCF World Championships to be held in Wellington New Zealand from 2nd to 8th December. In addition Robert Fulford as one of the Semi Finalists last time also receives a place.

This allocation by the WCF was based mainly on the number of players we have in the World top 50 together with some consideration of the number in the top 100. By this method of allocation the WCF is committed to trying to have all the strongest players in the World playing, irrespective of their country.

The Selection Committee will select the 12 places from amongst those English players who are in the World top 100. The selectors may, if they



deem it desirable after the availability of players is known, decide that up to two of the 12 places should be determined by a qualifying competition.

Phil Cordingley, Chairman of Selectors, will be (or already has been)

Llanfairfechan youth scheme celebrates £1,486 community chest windfall

The Llanfairfechan & North Wales Croquet Club is £1,486 better off thanks to the latest round of lottery grants from the Sports Council for Wales's Community Chest scheme.

Young people are the main beneficiaries of the Community Chest grants, which are small awards of up to £750 distributed in every community throughout Wales.

The Croquet Club was successful in its

application in June 2001 (£750) and again in March 2002 (£736) and can now afford to buy shorter shafted croquet mallets for the many children who want to play croquet (Brownies, Guides, Pant y Rhedyn Primary School and Secondary school children) as well as various other playing equipment. For the last 7 or 8 years Llanfairfechan Brownies have enjoyed playing the game but found difficulty playing with mallets with the 36" shafts owned by the Club.

in contact with those players in the World top 100 ranking to establish their availability.

English players not selected or outside the World Top 100 have the possibility to play in a WCF Qualifying Event. This will be held the week before the World Championship in Nelson New Zealand. The top four players in the Qualifying Event will play in the World Championship.

Any players wishing to enter this WCF Qualifying Event should inform the CA Office by 31 August.

David Openshaw, Chairman CA International Committee



As the only club in North Wales and only the second registered club in the whole of Wales, the Club was founded in 1990 on a piece of land left between the A55 and the station approach road in Llanfairfechan. The Club was awarded the Townsend Cup for the most progress during its first 5 years, and continues to make promising progress in its role within the community.

a wicked weekend

Dear Editor,

During a recent visit to my native south Hampshire I bought a copy of Portsmouth's evening newspaper, which happened to be celebrating 125 years of publishing. In a special supplement charting local news over that period (far too much of which seemed like a personal nostalgia trip) I spotted a particularly intriguing entry for 1934 (before my time!).

The City Council's Piers & Beach Committee, in an attempt to encourage visitors, launched a poster which became something of a publicity coup. It depicted elderly busybody and killjoy Mrs.Grundy with bags packed and heading for the local railway station having discovered that Southsea was to be "the resort with no restrictions". This did not mean topless bathing or unlimited pub opening hours, but gave the go-ahead - wait for it - for croquet and bowls to be played on Sundays.

Prichard's "History of Croquet" records that weekend croquet was not common until the 1950s (Hunstanton hosted some of the first weekend tournaments), but it seems that for anyone with an overwhelming urge to disappear for a truly wicked weekend, then forget Brighton or Blackpool - Southsea was the place to go!

Roger Ivill
March, Cambs.



By courtesy of The News, Portsmouth

converting to association

Dear Editor,

At Sussex County, following the reintroduction of Golf Croquet ten years ago, most newcomers started with Golf, and a few of the better players went on to Association.

Now that we have 72 playing Golf Croquet, 33 of whom do not want to learn Association, we are having a re-think because we want our Club to play both games to a high standard.

It appears that those who begin with Association and learn Golf later continue to play both games, but those who start with Golf are reluctant to try Association.

So, this year, those that look likely players will begin with Association and play 1-Ball as light relief. In addition, two of our younger members are intending to teach 1-Ball to young recruits in the coming season, at weekends. This will still leave many newcomers starting with Golf, so it's going to be an interesting experiment.

Diana Brothers
Shoreham-by-Sea

hoopball? I think not!

Dear Editor,

I am amazed to hear that some people want to change the name of Golf Croquet. These must be the new people to the game!

Most players of the game find no problem in understanding what it is; and, as the name has been satisfactory for over 100 years now, isn't it a bit late to look for a change now?

Changing tradition should be considered very carefully and with great reluctance.

If some still have difficulty, why not just call it "Croquet" - after all it is the most popular version today.

Why "Association" anyway? Maybe based on origin, we should call Association "French Croquet", and Golf "English Croquet"

Syd Jones
Whitley Bay

a room with a view

Dear Editor,

Visitors to tournaments often ask me in the tea room whether I wouldn't rather be playing croquet than cooking.

Well, of course, but someone has to make the lunches.

But whilst waiting for something to boil, I often observe through the kitchen and tea room windows what is happening out there in the world of croquet and feel I have picked up sufficient tips to go off and take part in a tournament.

I know the first thing to do is to arrive early, as there may be limited parking. As I'm not surprised to find only one car already there, there's no need to crowd the guy, so I leave about seven feet between us. Get all the kit out, put bag on ground - a bit muddy, but never mind, it should dry out if I put it on that seat with a cushion. May as well put the mallet there as well to keep them both together.

The Manager seems a bit tetchy: sent me off to read some notice or other. Why couldn't he just tell me what I'm supposed to be doing? Just time to visit the loo before play. Loo roll now empty, but someone else will put up another who isn't in as much of a hurry as me. Conscientiously wash hands, and leave the tap just running - someone else will want to use it any minute.

Right. Which lawn am I on, and where is my opponent? Ah, here's a set of balls. Let's go. Why is that man waving - what does he mean can't I read and why have I got the wrong set? Old misery guts. Now, in the unlikely event of being the outplayer, where shall I sit? One chair in the doorway of this hut will do, and another on that nice piece of grass over there. I wish the double bankers would be a little more courteous. They keep pushing past me all the time.

Well, the game went on quite a bit, but never mind, let's go and get a drink. What do you mean exactly? You want me to pay for my drink now? And wash my glass up? Well really. What's for lunch? Almost too late - don't you serve food all day when there's a tournament on? You wouldn't think it necessary to have to put your name down, would you? And they wanted money as well. That's all they seem to think of at this Club.

I ought to check up on my B&B, make sure they got my booking. Where's my phone? The signal may not be too good near the Clubhouse. Perhaps if I stand out on the lawn and speak loudly and clearly, the landlady will hear me.

Now I am ready for my next game. Why will I have to wait, can't I have an opponent now? Not very good management at this event. Well, that game went on a bit, nearly dark. My opponent suggested taking the balls in but I said there's sure to be someone else wanting to play. No point taking balls and putting chairs away. Anyway the Club probably has someone to do that.

Well that's the end of the tournament, time I was leaving.

Who's this? Oh not asking for money again. I'll send a cheque when I get home.

Must ring that Club I played at last week and get then to send on my wet weather gear and the heavy pullover I left behind.

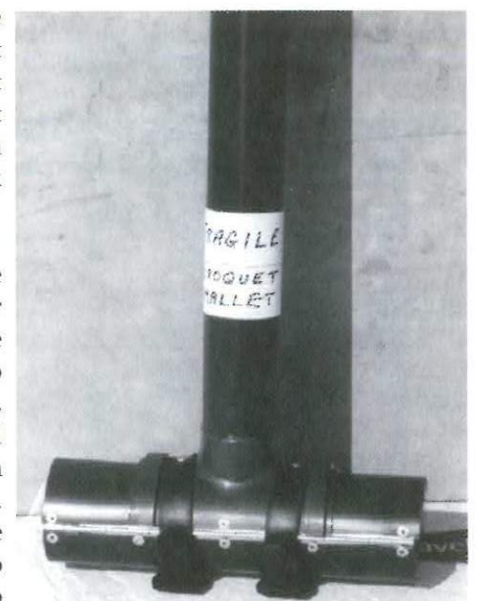
Cooking versus croquet? No contest.

Eileen Magee
Cheltenham

for enterprising DIY-ers

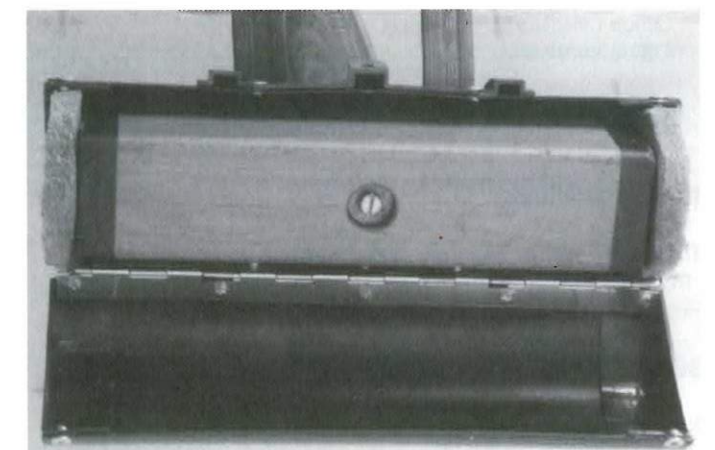
Dear Editor,

The case I have made for my mallet went into aircraft holds when I went to Cape Town in March, without risk to the mallet.



It is mainly made from rainwater goods, viz. a piece of down pipe, two pieces of gutter, four gutter end stops and a down pipe connector. Other items include a piece of piano hinge, a few pop rivets, a bit of sponge and a couple of tree ties. Total cost about £15.

Peter Highton
Sittingbourne, Kent



the croquet gazette - issue 280 july 2002 comments on the 2001 accounts

Thanks in large measure to the surplus of income over expenditure (before transfers to special funds) in each of the last two years, the CA has been able to embark on a strategy to give more financial support for club development. For many years the CA has helped clubs with their development programmes through low-interest loans and modest-sized (viz. up to £500) grants. It is now making provision to give some larger grants for commensurately larger developments. In recent years the CA has received a steady trickle of applications for quite sizeable projects and the hope is that it can now respond, where appropriate, with more than the erstwhile token gesture, even if it cannot be over generous. Note 2 to the Accounts shows that the Development Fund was boosted by over £26,000 to give a total of £33,000 available for this purpose.

This significant change in CA policy was prompted by four of the largest clubs (Budleigh, Cheltenham, Southport and Southwick which host many of the CA's most important tournaments) proposing major developments and improvements early in the year. Consequently a substantial portion of the money in the Development Fund has been earmarked for these projects. But

income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 December 2001

	2001		2000	
	£	£	£	£
Income from:				
Subscriptions:				
individuals		36,951		37,165
clubs		22,175		20,439
Levies		11,835		11,519
Surplus of income from -				
commercial activities		14,612		11,102
tournaments and coaching		6,150		7,055
Advertising and royalties		3,222		2,770
Investments		9,395		7,992
Sponsorship		6,021		(55)
		<u>110,361</u>		<u>97,987</u>
Expenditure on:				
Publications	19,696		19,765	
Marketing and development	4,926		2,716	
Grants to clubs and federations	10,700		5,200	
International activities	4,466		7,397	
Central administration costs -				
Salary costs	29,871		29,062	
Office overheads	3,986		4,831	
Office services	3,086		5,427	
Council members' travel expenses	4,136		2,834	
Accountancy	650		854	
Sundry expenses	1,353		862	
		<u>82,870</u>		<u>78,948</u>
Total expenditure				
		<u>82,870</u>		<u>78,948</u>
Total surplus for the year before tax		27,491		19,039
Provision for corporation tax		1,573		1,330
		<u>25,918</u>		<u>17,709</u>
Surplus for the year after tax				
		<u>25,918</u>		<u>17,709</u>
Net transfers to special funds		26,748		6,325
		<u>(830)</u>		<u>11,384</u>
(Deficit)/Surplus for year transferred to General Fund				
		<u>(830)</u>		<u>11,384</u>

there is also scope to provide greater support for significant developments planned by medium and even smaller sized clubs, particularly if, as is hoped, the CA is able to top up the Development Fund regularly in future years. The new policy was implemented during 2001 and grants to both large and small clubs totalled £8,000, compared to £2,500 in the previous year.

The healthy surplus in 2001 (before transfers to special funds) was in large part due to Lincoln Unit Trust Managers' sponsorship and yet another superb performance by David Collins as Commercial Agent. But there were several other factors at work, such as the continuing excellent support given by clubs through subscriptions. These and other aspects of the 2001 Accounts are covered in a more detailed commentary available on request from the CA Office (please send an SAE). It will also be distributed at the AGM in October.

Roger Bray,
Treasurer

balance sheet as at 31 December 2001

Notes	2001		2000	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets				
Croquet and office equipment at written down value		1,438		975
Trophies at valuation		10,000		10,000
Investments at cost	1	28,836		38,825
		<u>40,274</u>		<u>49,800</u>
Current Assets				
Stocks held for resale		7,826		5,489
Loans to clubs		3,600		5,053
Debtors and prepayments		4,732		5,454
Cash at bank and in hand		170,099		132,579
		<u>186,257</u>		<u>148,575</u>
Current Liabilities				
Subscriptions received in advance		2,921		2,783
Creditors and accrued expenses		15,995		14,691
Provision for taxation		1,498		702
		<u>20,414</u>		<u>18,176</u>
Net current assets		<u>165,843</u>		<u>130,399</u>
Net Assets		<u>206,117</u>		<u>180,199</u>
Financed by				
General Fund				
Balance at 1 January 2001		93,343		81,959
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year from Income and Expenditure Account retained in General Fund		(830)		11,384
		<u>92,513</u>		<u>93,343</u>
Special Funds	2	<u>113,604</u>		<u>86,856</u>
		<u>206,117</u>		<u>180,199</u>

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Email Hobbsmall@aol.com

the croquet gazette - issue 280 july 2002
notes to the accounts

1. LISTED INVESTMENTS AT COST

		2001 £	2000 £
10,019	7.00% Treasury Stock 2001	-	9,989
10,395	6.75% Treasury Stock 2004	10,026	10,026
15,409	4.125% Index Linked Treasury Stock 2030	18,810	18,810
		<u>28,836</u>	<u>38,825</u>
	Market value at 31 December	38,385	51,513

2. SPECIAL FUNDS

	Development £	Enterprise £	Benefactors £	International £	Duffield Bequest £	Total £
Balance at 01/01/01	6,800	5,000	30,713	25,116	19,227	86,856
Transfers from General Fund:						
Investment income (net)	-	-	1,520	1,243	746	3,509
Donations	-	-	440	-	-	440
General allocation	26,200	3,000	-	2,236	-	31,436
	<u>33,000</u>	<u>8,000</u>	<u>32,673</u>	<u>28,595</u>	<u>19,973</u>	<u>122,241</u>
Transfers to General Fund:						
General allocation	8,000	-	637	-	-	8,637
	<u>8,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>637</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,637</u>
Balance at 31/12/01	<u>25,000</u>	<u>8,000</u>	<u>32,036</u>	<u>28,595</u>	<u>19,973</u>	<u>113,604</u>

notice of meeting

The Annual General Meeting of The Croquet Association will be held at the Roehampton Club on Saturday 12 October 2002 commencing at 11.00am. Coffee will be served beforehand from 10.15am.

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for absence.**
- 2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on Saturday 13 October 2001.** These are published in the current issue of *The Croquet Gazette* no. 280, (July 2002). Copies will be available at the meeting and will be sent to Home Members on written request to the Secretary.
- 3. Chairman's Report.**
- 4. Accounts for the year to 31 December 2001 and Treasurer's Report.** These accounts and a brief commentary are published in the current issue of *The Croquet Gazette*, no. 280, (July 2002).

Copies will be available at the meeting and a more comprehensive report will be sent to Home Members, on written request to the Secretary.

- 5. Election of Treasurer.**
Dr RW Bray offers himself for re-election.
- 6. Election of Reporting Accountant.**
- 7. Election of Council Members.**
The following four members retire under Rule 18 (a)(i):
Messrs WH Arliss and HM Hall by rotation. Messrs P Cordingley and DM Magee, who had been chosen to fill casual vacancies on Council under Rule 24(a).
Two further vacancies arise from the resignations of Mrs TW Anderson and Mr DJ Hopkins.
Messrs Arliss, Hall and Cordingley seek re-election under Rule 18(a)(i). Two other nominations have been received as follows:
Mr DJ Kibble Proposed by IG Vincent and seconded by Professor A Pidcock; Mr CL

Sheen proposed by DJ Hopkins and seconded by WH Arliss

Consequently there are five candidates for the six vacancies on Council and an election will not be necessary.

- 8. MOTION OF THE COUNCIL**
That the Rules of the Croquet Association be amended by the deletion of clause (e) of Appendix 1.
- 9. Benefactors' Book.**
The names of the Benefactors will be read.
- 10. Presentation of the Apps and Steel Memorial Bowls.**
- 11. Presentation of Croquet Association Diplomas.**
- 12. Any other business.**
- 13. President's Closing Address.**

Nigel Graves
Secretary
1 July 2002

minutes of the annual general meeting
held at the Hurlingham Club on Saturday 13 October 2001

Present:
JW Solomon (President) - in the Chair; DL Gaunt (Chairman of Council); RQ Barrett (Vice-Chairman of Council); Dr RW Bray (Treasurer); AJ Oldham (Vice-President); Prof BG Neal (Vice-President); NR Graves (Secretary)
and 48 Associates

Apologies were received from John Beech, Gail Curry, Faith Gaunt, Hamish Hall, James Hawkins, Pauline Healy, Bryan Judson, Jolyon Kay, Andrew Keeble, David and Eileen Magee, Barbara Solomon and Bob Whitaker.

OPENING ADDRESS

The President welcomed all those present to the Meeting and thanked them for their support.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 14 October 2000 were signed as a true record of that Meeting.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman presented his report to the Meeting. He called on Judy Anderson to report on the new clubhouse at Hunstanton and to thank those in the croquet world who had made its rebuilding possible.

He thanked those who'd made the World Championship a great success, and commended the ever higher standard of the players. He also highlighted the tremendous gain in the popularity of Golf Croquet.

In trying to improve communication between the CA Council and the membership, he claimed some success, with visits to most of the Federations during the winter, as well as the CA web site, the Gazette and the Club news-sheet. Whilst on the subject of the Gazette, he thanked Gail for her work and welcomed James into the job.

Two new thrusts made by the CA into improving croquet started this year, namely the Enterprise Fund and the grants to large clubs. The EF should trigger some new and exciting ideas while the grants are intended to provide the level of lawns and facilities necessary for the increasing number of large events held now.

As for the CA and its committees, things like marketing initiatives, coaching courses, international affairs, commercial activities and many others have been covered by the dedicated band of volunteers on the Council committees. There is also the time-consuming, often tedious, but very necessary administra-

tion work carried out by the management committee and those on it.

He assured the meeting that a solution to the move from Hurlingham was being sought by the Council Executive to find a satisfactory solution.

In the 15 years since first being on Council, the membership of the CA has altered little. This must not, cannot, be allowed to continue. He earnestly asked those present to go back to clubs and make a determined effort to get members to join the Association. In highlighting the benefits of joining, he emphasised that without the CA, there would be no croquet, or none to speak of. If every club set itself the target of getting 25% of its non-CA members to join, what a wonderful increase in membership that would be!

After 15 years on Council, the Chairman has just taken on the job of Secretary of the European Croquet Federation, to promote and develop croquet in mainland Europe.

Finally, he singled out Nigel Graves and Quiller Barrett for particular thanks, and wished them and everybody a happy and successful year to come.

3. ACCOUNTS & TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer presented the Accounts for the year to 31 December 2000, and gave a brief report.

The Accounts were approved nem. con.

4. ELECTION OF TREASURER

There being no other nomination, Dr RW Bray was duly re-elected as Treasurer.

5. ELECTION OF REPORTING ACCOUNTANTS

John Knight & Co, Chartered Accountants were re-elected as Reporting Accountants for the current financial year nem. con.

6. ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

There having retired under Rule 18(a)(i) Messrs AG Fathers, DK Openshaw, Prof. A Pidcock and Dr IG Vincent by rotation, and Mr J Isaacs who had been chosen to fill casual vacancies under Rule 24(a), and Messrs DL Gaunt and PWP Campion having given notice of their resignation from Council, the number of vacancies on Council was seven.

All retiring members sought re-election under Rule 18(a)(i).

There had been no further nominations, no election was necessary, and the meeting declared these five persons elected to Council.

the croquet gazette - issue 280 july 2002
7. MOTIONS OF THE COUNCIL

The following motions were approved nem. con.

Motion 1. That the Rules of the Croquet Association be amended to establish formal Disciplinary and Appeals Procedures.

Motion 2. That Rule 11(a)(ii) be amended.

Motion 3. That in order to permit the use of electronic mail by the Association the Rules of the Croquet Association be amended.

Motion 4. That Rule 28 of the Croquet Association be amended.

Motion 5. That Rule 27 of the Croquet Association be amended.

The full text of all additions and amendments to the Rules is shown on the voting paper appended to the minutes.

Motion 6. That SN Mulliner be elected a Vice-President of the Association.

8. BENEFACTORS' BOOK

The Secretary read the names in the Benefactors' Book.

9. PRESENTATION OF THE APPS AND STEEL MEMORIAL BOWLS

The Apps Memorial Bowl for the most improved male player of 2000 had been awarded to Andrew Keeble of Bowdon Club. He was not able to be present, and Alan Pidcock accepted the award on his behalf.

The Steel Memorial Bowl for the most improved female player of 2000 had been awarded to Gail Curry. In her absence the award was accepted by Bruce Rannie on her behalf. He also accepted for her an inscribed glass goblet in recognition of her five years' service as Editor of the Croquet Gazette.

10. PRESENTATION OF CROQUET ASSOCIATION DIPLOMAS

The Secretary announced the award of the Diploma to the following:

Derek Bradley - nominated by Cheltenham CC; John Grimshaw - nominated by Dyffryn CC; Len Hawkins - nominated by Ramsgate CC; Bernard Smith - nominated by Ramsgate CC

All four recipients were present to receive their Diplomas from the President.

The nomination of Brian Teague as Coach of the Year for 2001 was announced, and Bill Arliss accepted the award on his behalf.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Len Hawkins (Ramsgate) suggested that clubs might be more enthusiastic in recruiting new Associates if they were discounted when calculating the Member Club Fee.

The question of the relocation of the office was raised, but it was too early to give any clear indication of what might be decided. The Secretary informed the meeting that in his discussions with the Executive Secretary of the Hurlingham Club it had been made clear that they would be happy to host Annual General Meetings and meetings of Council once the redevelopment of the club was completed.

Alan Oldham (Vice-President) proposed that a message of sympathy and support should be sent from the meeting to the USCA relating to the events of September 11. The Secretary was instructed to send an appropriate letter.

12. PRESIDENT'S CLOSING ADDRESS

The President thanked Don Gaunt for his many initiatives in seeking a solution to the Hurlingham problem. Following a meeting at the Hurlingham tournament, the Club's croquet sub-committee prepared a paper to submit to the Hurlingham Main committee meeting to be held in mid-September.

The paper pointed out Hurlingham's invitation to the CA in 1958 to establish its headquarters. The club has since been synonymous with croquet, as Wimbledon is to tennis, and Lords to cricket. Money spent by attendees at CA meetings was another advantage. All the other sports are administered by the games office, whereas virtually every-

thing connected with croquet was administered by the CA, at no expense to Hurlingham, except for their August tournament, which went through the games office so far as entries were concerned but thereafter was administered by the croquet sub-committee.

In the original redevelopment plans for the east wing, planning permission was denied for a CA office above the new kitchens. Accommodation in the new tennis pavilion but would be unavailable until 2004. In the meantime the licence for our portakabin expires next July.

An extension another two years seems possible, and we'd be happy to tolerate it in the short term rather than move to an inferior location. But during the redevelopment the Club will need the space taken by the portakabin.

The Main committee met last month and were unable to agree to rescind their decision. The management committee are actively considering alternative venues and hope to reach a decision in the near future.

Realistically, it is only the administration that's moving. Nigel and Janet do a wonderful and essential job for this Association. But for over 60 years the CA office was in Holborn which was a perfectly acceptable location. There's a strong croquet section at Hurlingham which will be unaffected by this situation and Hurlingham will still welcome the Open Championships and other major events, without charging for the courts, a very valuable sponsorship which the CA's been grateful for for many years.

The President thanked Don Gaunt for his many years on Council and for his two years

as Chairman. During that time he has been a member of many sub-committees and put in an immense amount of time for the benefit of croquet and the CA, including for many years the preparation of the Fixture List, an immense amount of work in itself. He will still have some influence through taking on the role of Secretary of the European Federation.

Thanks were also paid to the very valuable, and much needed, sponsorship from Lincoln Unit Trust Managers of the World Championship, which made such a difference to the presentation of the event. We are very grateful to them.

Many clubs and some Federations now produce newsletters. This development was welcomed, as information is vital for encouraging existing players and gaining new ones.

Until a few years ago the CA did virtually nothing for Golf Croquet. Some members would have preferred to disown it altogether, but it is now a powerful weapon in attracting new members to our clubs. One of our main concerns as an Association is to attract new members to the CA but we can only do that if the clubs themselves attract new members and it has been proved that golf croquet is almost certainly the easiest way to do this. Once hooked, a percentage will start to play Association croquet and some of them will eventually join the CA.

Finally, the President thanked all those members of Council who give up so much of their time to work on committees and in Council for the advancement of our sport.

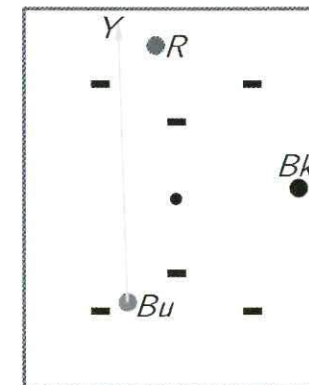
There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.25.

break builder 8

The latest Break Builder quiz was first published in the Scottish Croquet Association Bulletin, numbers 35 and 36, and was written by David Appleton, to whom thanks are due for his giving permission to adapt for use in this series.

The original situation has Blue/Black for Hoops 1 & 1, Red is for the peg and Yellow is for Hoop 1. Red/Yellow had used 3 bisques to get round and fit to set up the leave, with 6 bisques left, conscious that he could not afford to let David, his A-class opponent, an easy shot.

His leave was: Blue one yard north and one yard east of Hoop 1, being a good pioneer; Black on the yard line halfway down the East Boundary; Red and Yellow east of Hoop 2 two yards in from the North Boundary with a rush for Yellow to Black. David really has to move Blue, as shooting with Black and missing leaves the winning break with little effort. The choice then is which direction to shoot Blue.



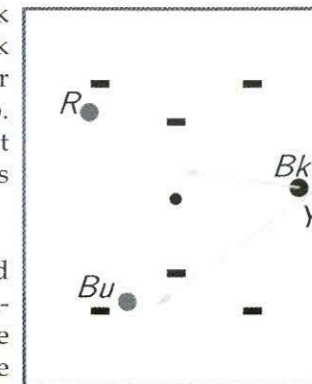
Blue shoots & misses

David chose to shoot at Red, missed and started thinking about his next game. The question is "How do you set up the potentially winning break from this position, with least risk of failure?"

Realising that he needed a pioneer at Hoop 1 to replace the one David had moved, another ball at Hoop 2 as its pioneer, and a ball in the middle as the pivot, the anonymous opponent took the following course of action.

- 1 He roqueted Blue with Yellow and stop-shotted it to Hoop 1 to replace the pioneer.
- 2 He turned round and roqueted Red, put that to Hoop 2.
- 3 From distance, he shot at Black.
- 4 Missing, he took a bisque, roqueted Black, tried to roll it to the middle going to Blue, and came up short.
- 5 Missing again, he took a second bisque, hit Blue, now going away from the hoop, took off, tried an angled hoop, stuck on the wire and needed another two bisques to run the hoop. Eventually the bisques ran out and David won in two breaks (these were the days!).

So - where was the risk, and how should it have been minimised? Had Black been off the yard-line, then the first bisque would have been used to take a rush into the middle of the

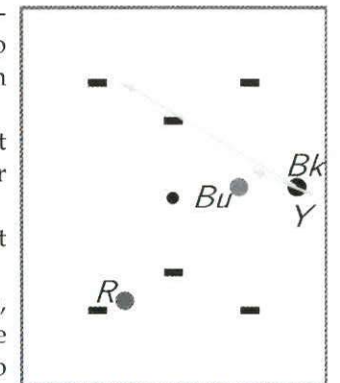


Yellow must play a difficult roll

lawn, simplifying the croquet stroke to reach Hoop 1's pioneer. As it was, there was one difficult shot that could have been eliminated, the split-pass-roll from the East Boundary to reach the Hoop 1 pioneer, and the consequences of that shot going wrong, missing the pioneer and having to rush it away from the Hoop.

This is a more productive approach.

- 1 Stop-shot Blue as near as possible to a point a yard or two north of midway between Hoops 3 & 4.
- 2 Then turn round and roquet Red, put that as the pioneer for Hoop 1.
- 3 Then from distance, shoot at Black.
- 4 On missing, take a bisque, then roquet it a short distance North up the East Boundary to where it may be croqueted to Hoop 2 without Blue or Hoop 6 being in the way.
- 5 Then put it there stopping the striker's ball East of Blue
- 6 Finally rush Blue into the middle and take off to Red, ensuring a proper approach to Hoop 1 follows with Red placed correctly as the exit ball.



Yellow has an easy set-up for one bisque

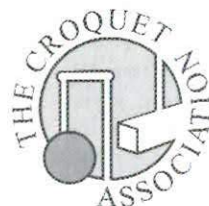
This gives a solid 4-ball break for one bisque and removes the difficult shots. It utilises rushes and the rush-line, ensures that most shots are straight with little or no split element, and uses shorter shots whenever possible, with the position of one ball only being vital from each croquet stroke, not both. In Shot 1, the position of Blue matters. In Shot 2 a good pioneer is important. In Shot 4 the Black is important, as the line to Hoop 2 needs to be clear, and you have to ensure in Shot 5 that the Yellow will gain a rush on Blue for Shot 6. If you happen to hit Black in Shot 3, then do not be ambitious with the croquet stroke, as you have used all three balls, so must take a bisque to continue. Improve its position whilst treating it as though you had missed, then roquet it again having taken the bisque, and continue with Shot 4 as before.

This example illustrates very well that you have to put a ball where it will let you get the difficult ball into the break. Had Black been off the boundary by a foot or two the method the player actually chose is fine, but with it on the yard-line it needs help. To give it help, the pioneer for Hoop 1 is not the first ball to be croqueted into position, rather the helping "pivot", i.e. the ball to be used second in the sequence of three to get to Hoop 1, is placed first. In addition the pioneer for Hoop 2 is not placed until the bisque has been used, and the ball on the boundary has become an integral part of the standard break.

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Michael Wilson presents an imaginative approach to the rising standards of top flight croquet

Two cheers for croquet! No-one can doubt it is an example of amateur sport at its very best. Few other games can boast such a solid coaching ladder, intelligent literature or effective handicapping. Few games have such approachable stars. Nor have many other pastimes such whole-hearted encouragement for their long-term beginners.

There is however a point at which amateur sport can become *amateurish* sport. That there should be complaints about the *Gazette's* World Championship coverage is symptomatic. Factors which are engrained in the game itself include the gentlemanly ban on practice and the inconsistent leniency of rules such as unintentional striking. The game's image also suffers in the hands of one or two of the more single-mindedly social players. Amateurism and croquet go hand in hand and that combination is not always in the best interests of the game. As we plough forward through a new century we might make a nod towards the benefits of a less completely 'Sunday afternoon' reputation.

Professionalism is a dirty word in croquet, but it shouldn't be. Although the term might conjure up images of money and tantrumming prodigies and the infection of mass-marketeering, the truth is simpler. 'Professionalism' is an approach to sport, one which encourages excellence and eschews irrelevancies.

A more dynamic foresight in croquet would shake the cobwebs out of some of the game's dustier corners, and that dynamism can only begin with the upper echelons, those who in a different sport would indeed be the professionals. Our top players are not irrelevant to the world of the lowly club regular. Far from it, they are the leaders and shapers of the sport. If croquet makes it to the mooted 'minority sports channel', they will be the public players and the game's ambassadors. Everything possible should be done to pose new challenges and stretch the abilities of the genuinely talented.

And there is room not only for croquet to be stretched, but for the benefits of that development to help all players at all levels.

Amateurism encourages a fettered, unambitious notion of the future of the game. Should it be such a shock, for example, that the leading few players require regular sextuples in their arsenal? The real shock is that the world's once long-standing number one is only now finding competition which makes the triple an uncertain tactic. Imagine professional snooker without the need for 70-plus breaks.

“
'The A-class have to leave a shot of at least 23 yards,' I explained. 'And hope the opponent misses.' His reply was, 'How come they miss?'

Snooker is a success story among still-ball games and an unfair comparison perhaps. Nevertheless, we can look to the exponential rise in the standard of snooker as an idea of the heights to which croquet might aspire. In the 1970s Bill Werbeniuk's World Championship high break of 142 was thought unlikely to be beaten, and the televised 147 seemed a long way off. Players made few century breaks in a tournament and offering a ten-foot pot was tantamount to a safety stroke. The game today is unrecognisable from the time when a 60 break was a guaranteed match winner.

Croquet could - and should - develop in the same direction. The sextuple, which has been described as the 147 of croquet, is of course nothing of the sort. Even today the competitive sextuple is far more regular than the competitive snooker 147, and with Stephen Mulliner's predicted 'Banister effect' (*Gazette* issue 275 September 2001), a

new class of player should stretch its lead on the pack, a class whose members can confidently and regularly perform a sextuple. An exciting side effect of this development may mean that the substantial second-turn break becomes an essential feature of the game's tactics, along with the extra ability needed to conjure a sextuple out of something other than the standard leave.

Sounds decades away? I imagine not. The true 147 of croquet, the ultimate break, must be the dodecatuple peel - no, the dodecatuple peel on the third turn... What about an exhibition dodecatuple-peel-on-opponent second turn?

Even this is not as far-fetched as it sounds. Two balls have been enough to see today's top players through the last three hoops with a straight triple peel. The problem of 'turning the corner' from 4-back to penult need only be conquered four times, the rest is simply down to a level of accuracy never yet seen on a croquet court.

But why shouldn't that level be seen eventually? When explaining the game to a non-playing yet sporty friend, the notion of the leaves came up: 'The A-class have to leave a shot of at least 23 yards,' I explained. 'And hope the opponent misses.' His reply was, 'How come they miss?'

We know why they miss. The shot is difficult. It's difficult on dodgy lawns in poor weather conditions and this is another point at which the accusation of amateurism might aim. But the fact is that it's far from impossible, and the days when players are good enough to virtually guarantee the shot and virtually guarantee the sextuple are only as far away as the next group of talented players encouraging each other's improvement.

That group of players may come, it may not. Association Croquet lovers must surely hope it does. It's a shame that our sport is so difficult for the uninitiated to watch, hence no TV, no national obsession and no accompany-

ing acceleration of standard. But there are things which can be done to encourage the best to stretch themselves, the game and the professionalism of croquet as a whole. We might start by adapting the rules.



"Our gifted minority would develop their skills and the rest of us would watch, dream and love croquet for new and excellent reasons"

The rules of croquet have tended to change in order to rebalance the match towards the incoming player. Croquet - we know - is all about retaining the innings. Players of all levels do what they can and then lay up for the minimum risk and maximum gain, whether this be after each individual hoop or after a spectacular break. It was a rebalancing act which saw the 4-back lift introduced in 1928, followed in 1946 by two lifts and contact. The main idea was to force the first person in to offer a half-chance to their opponents. The by-product was a development of the skills of the game, resulting in the multiple peels we expect from the better end of the A-class today.

So, why not introduce a new rule solely to promote a further step forward in mallet skills? Whilst we're waiting for the golden age of regular sextuples, such a rule could encourage the one or two players already on the threshold to try ever more fascinating feats, as well as providing a new stratosphere of discussion to plague our clubs' myopic Aunt Emmas. The best should certainly be encouraged to attempt miracles and the next step must be to make octuples (or even nontuples) a more regular feature.

How can we do this? Conceding a leave after hoop 5 would obviously do the trick - hoop 4 for the nontuple. But should this be *instead of* or *as well as* the current 'lift hoops'. As an alternative to 1-back it would simply extend the already tough run to victory for the expert peeler. So, how about a new 'lift hoop' to supplement the current two? Players could lay up for the octuple with no lift conceded, or develop a leave for the sextuple which took the lift into account. (The current standard leave for the 'ladies' sextuple would be made obsolete). Running 5 and 1-back would concede a contact, as would a break which involved the running of any two 'lift hoops'.

As for the cavalier who makes 5, 1-back and 4-back with the first ball, a suitable penalty needs to be thought up. Moving a ball by hand seems possible, but is a clumsy option, as amateurish as the attitudes we hope to dispel. My suggestion is that the player running all three 'lift hoops' concede a bisque turn, like a two-visit turn at pool. Would anyone dare to go to peg and give away a bisque? Moreover, those attempting the octuple should be rewarded: perhaps a turn which included an eight hoop peel

wouldn't give the bisque whether or not it went to peg. Early experiments could be played under the title of 'championship' rules, a step above mere 'advanced'; our gifted minority would develop their octupling skills and the rest of us would watch, dream and love croquet for new and excellent reasons.

This is an imaginative approach. What is however important in the real world of croquet is a genuine aspiration to professionalism in an amateur game. The satisfactions of sportsmanship and the gentility of a summer's-afternoon friendly need not be thought in threat. But so long as those reporting on expert croquet feel they need in any way to apologise for their articles, and so long as club affectations are more clearly part of the image than ultra-skilled play, then there will always be (to adopt Forster's phrase) two cheers for croquet's amateur infrastructure, not three.

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croquet on TV

the answer to our recruiting dreams or unattainable fantasy? James Hawkins reports

I'd like to think that croquet will become the next big television sensation. Maybe we'll see the World Champion, £500,000 cheque in hand, posing for the cameras as he kisses the winner's trophy. And maybe I'll be sat in the studio, chatting with Gary Lineker about Rob and Reg's stroke technique. Clubs will be inundated with new members, and the future of the game will be assured.

Wishful thinking for sure - but those who might herald croquet as the TV game of the future should first look at the sport's past dalliances with the medium.

short croquet

Back in the early 1980's, the CA established a committee looking at televising the game. Their efforts finally bore fruit in May 1986 with the Royal Bank Nations Trophy. That few players now have even heard of this event is no surprise. A live broadcast, the show went out mid-afternoon to viewers, but was screened only in North West England.

David Plowright, then the Managing Director of Granada Television, was a keen garden croquet player. Heading the project from the CA's end was Chris Hudson, then the full-time National Development Officer. The idea of the competition was very much Plowright's personal crusade, and a short croquet lawn was laid at Granada's Manchester Studios.

One of the main stumbling blocks to the broadcasting of croquet is the dimensions of the court. Snooker was popularised (in the UK at any rate) because of the advent of colour television; the colours look fine on screen, the table fits well into the dimensions of a television set, games finish within 30 minutes, directors can get away with filming using just three cameras, and - vitally - it never rains.

By comparison, cramming a croquet lawn on to a TV screen would be like showing a snooker match played with marbles - the balls would be just too small for viewers to see. The play happens outside, which is both expensive and, on a rainy day, miserable. What's



more, games are long, drawn-out, frequently one-sided and often boring.

Snooker is not short of climaxes, providing interest with the potting of each difficult ball. An expert croquet player can manoeuvre himself so there is never a difficult shot. So where's the tension?

The CA's solution came with the invention of Short Croquet. Shrink the playing area down to half size, cut the game down to six-hoops-and-the-peg, and put on a time limit. To toughen the game up, handicapping rules were introduced to force mandatory peeling on partner balls.

The twelve players who took part in the Granada event were selected as representatives from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. They battled between themselves in blocks of three, before playing off for a single winner. The week before, players had met at Cheltenham for a briefing. The Irish were absent, and played more defensively than a demonstration tourna-

ment required. Each of their games went to time. Indeed, the imposition of the compulsory peeling rule left many players struggling beyond their own capabilities, and made for a defensive spectacle throughout.

Martin Murray (for Scotland) tried his best to heat things up, by attempting to peg out with a jump shot over Hoop 6. Eventually, both the Welsh and Scottish blocks gave a three-way tie, and were reduced to an unedifying penalty shoot-out at the peg.

Three days of rain-soaked play saw the dream pairing for the final: Nigel Aspinall (the top seed) against the rising young star of the future, the 20-year old David Peterson. To little surprise, Peterson scored just two hoops, and Aspinall sailed home to win. Under the CA's strict rules on professionalism, Aspinall could keep only £25 of the £150 prize money from the Royal Bank of Scotland. The balance was donated back to the CA.

Looking back now, Andrew Hope, who represented Scotland, highlights a major problem. "Nigel was the best player, but like the vast majority of us, did not have a personality that came over on TV."

As a young viewer in my first season of play, it'd be difficult to disagree. Sixteen years on, my only clear memory is a characteristically extrovert interview between Richard Hilditch and the programme's anchorman, Elton Welsby. Hilditch is perhaps the most positive of the event's veterans: "Overall, I was proud to have taken part. The TV company did a very good job, with serious coverage which didn't patronise at all. Live coverage was a mistake, but the evening highlights programme was much better, and showed that a reasonable job

could be done." Sadly, the highlights of the final went out 45 minutes late after the UEFA Cup Final overran (Steaua Bucharest's boring win on penalties over Barcelona could hardly have fired up the viewers ready for croquet).

Even so, viewing figures weren't disastrous. Average audience over 11 programmes was 189,000 homes, or 285,000 individuals. This peaked with the Wednesday 5.15 programme edging towards half a million. Audience share averaged 33% of homes, peaking during the Thursday afternoon broadcast, with 61% of households.

The national press found enough material to sustain themselves for a week or so. Good natured though much of it was (including one piece by an unknown young journalist named Alastair Campbell), none of the items seemed able to shed the writers' preconceptions. As the Daily Telegraph put it, "It is difficult to dispel visions of lazy days pottering about on the vicar's lawn."

Both the viewing figures and the post-transmission feedback probably came as some relief to Granada's executives. With a 35-strong crew and seven cameras, costs must have been huge. And yet, noises were made about repeating the event subsequently. Once David Plowright, as the project's driving force, retired, this idea was shelved. The purpose-built lawn was never used again.

indoor speed croquet

This was not the last time British audiences were to see televised croquet. Five years later, Yorkshire Television tried again. This time the problem of an oversized lawn was solved by going indoors. A lightning-fast indoor carpet was laid out in a sports centre in Doncaster. Compulsory peeling had failed to find much favour in Manchester (being both confusing for viewers and too hard for most of the players). Here the game was speed



The Royal Bank of Scotland's 1986 Short Croquet event at Granada TV Studios in Manchester

croquet, with giant chess clocks rationing out the time to the two players. The selection of competitors was interesting. John Walters, veteran of the Granada programme and now a surprise World Champion, was back. Test players Mark Saurin and Stephen Mulliner provided some hyperactive spectacle, and Debbie Cornelius showed that the game could suit both sexes.

Despite a better format, the broadcast was perhaps less successful. Being more of a demonstration match than a competitive event, many viewers were left wondering what was the point. Playing technique on an indoor carpet differs greatly from grass, and Walters adjusted least well to the indoor hoops. Failing several hoops before running out of time, it must have puzzled audiences to see a World Champion sink to such ungraceful defeat.

Audience share amounted to something like 25% for a Saturday afternoon. It's questionable how good this was. Long before the launch of Channel 5 and Sky, only BBC1 could have been expected to provide much serious competition to Yorkshire's coverage. Needless to say, this pilot programme was never repeated.

Since then, there has been little interest

in the game from networks other than the independent regional broadcasters. It's been impossible to detect whether coverage has produced much of an upturn in club recruitment. Back in the mid-80's, Granadaland had few CA-affiliated clubs. Only Bowdon saw much of an increase in membership. Much of that increase came, not from the viewing public, but from TV employees using the Granada plot during lunchbreaks. The construction of the Granada Studios theme-park (now defunct) subsequently left them with no daytime practice court, and their interest dwindled. As for Yorkshire TV, the broadcaster's catchment area consisted largely of a croquet desert. With few clubs in the region, there seems to have been no interest at all from viewers taking up the game at a club level.

Assessing the CA's forays into televising the game to date, it is difficult to see many beneficiaries. While screenings may have challenged the idea of a class-ridden and elitist game, some viewers must surely have gone away with the new preconception of a game of impenetrable complexity. And those who did find a renewed enthusiasm for the game did so not through their nearby club, but by causing an upsurge in sales of garden croquet sets.

golf croquet

A decade later, a few people still hold out some hope of growing the game by attracting TV cameras. Egyptian television shows live coverage of Golf Croquet championships. Maybe, say the cynics, this is just flag-waving national pride. Golf Croquet is their national sport. It's the only sport at which they can boast a World Champion. But, let's face it, it's a heck of a lot easier to explain what's going on.

Bob Alman at Florida's National Croquet Center has been courting the County Film and Television Commissioner. "The big problem is

2. hoop-running

what the camera has to see and show in order to give the viewer a sensible overview of what is actually happening. In Golf Croquet, it's not all that difficult, and I think it can be done. I believe it'd be possible to show an entire Golf Croquet game that people unacquainted with the sport could understand and enjoy. The challenge is getting access to the right producer and production team to convince them it's worth doing."

Liz Williams from Dyffryn Croquet Club is an acknowledged expert in sport and public relations, and remains sceptical. "Every couple of years I can get TV to come along to Dyffryn because I have enough of a newsworthy story to sell. I don't think that croquet, even in its Golf form, will feature heavily on sports [rather than news] programmes - you'd need a lot of camera crews to show it properly, and they're expensive."

For the sake of shareholders, networks tend to pick sports to satisfy the revenue from advertisers. Many of the middle-class, middle-aged viewers who might be attracted to croquet are at the same time relatively impervious to on-screen advertising.

Satellite broadcasters have spent fortunes on deals for major sporting events. A successful policy has accounted for much of the recent growth in Sky's viewing share. On the reverse side, the fees paid by ITV Digital to the Football League for such gloomy audience figures have led in no small part to the network's downfall. With Granada and Carlton so badly wounded by the venture's collapse, it's hard to see them or any other UK broadcaster taking any chance on a minority sport such as ours.

Many sports - netball, hockey, archery and the rest - cope without TV coverage. The Badminton Horse trials is one of the world's best attended events, with 250,000 people present. This year it got one hour's television coverage. What chance then does croquet have?

As an uncoordinated child subjected to the ordeal of school athletics, I once had to attempt the 100m hurdles. Once I'd clambered over the course in extra-slow time, the exasperated games teacher explained, "No, no, no. Don't jump over the hurdles. Try to hurdle them." To this day, I've never discovered what I was doing wrong, nor what the process of hurdling actually involves.

The same peril confronts the croquet coach when teaching hoop running. This is so fundamental a skill to the game that *everybody* knows exactly what's required for a successful shot. Ask a good player how they line up a hoop shot and the response is often muddled. Some claim to aim at the middle of the gap between the uprights; some claim to sight the edge of the mallet with the edge of the ball and the edge of the hoop; some just plain don't know what they're doing.

So let's start at the beginning with stalking the ball.

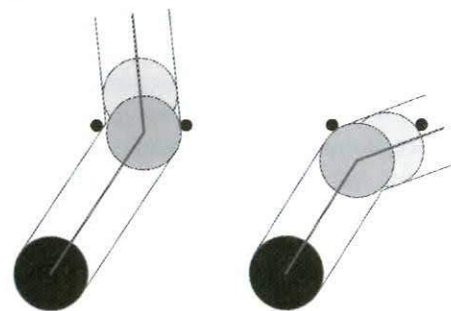
stalking

Point your body in the right direction, and once you've mastered a smooth action in swinging, you'll hit straight. Stalking is a grand way of stating that your feet should be pointing along the line of aim. So try this at home. Get a mug of coffee (about the size of a ball) and place it on the floor in the middle of the room. Stand with your back against the wall, facing the mug. Relax. Walk towards the mug, stop, and pick it up. You should now be in the perfect stance for hitting a ball. Your feet should be about six inches behind the mug's (ball's) position, and - crucially - you should feel relaxed. And that's all there is to it.

on the lawn

Lining something up in front of you is a perfectly natural thing to do. Here on a croquet lawn, in front of a hoop, that process is harder. What are we really looking for?

Most coaching courses start with the technique for running a straight hoop. Think about this, as the word 'straight' is misleading. There's only perhaps 1/16" leeway between a dead straight hoop and a slightly angled one. It takes a protractor and set square to find yourself a position which *isn't* angled, so why visualise the two positions differently?



Visualising the hoop stroke: aiming for the middle of the gap (right) is incorrect

Let's assume, then, we've always got some angle to cope with. Aiming for the gap in any situation is therefore wrong. Maybe the angle's so slight as to cause no worry. Maybe you'll hit the near wire. And if that happens, you're finished. Try lining the edge of the ball with the inner edge of the hoop. OK, this works, but it's difficult to find a line to stalk along, and the body has a tendency to skew the mallet towards the point of aim (the upright's inner edge). So here's the trick. Imagine your ball is sitting in a length of guttering. This piece of guttering extends into the jaws and out the other side. Stalk the ball, line yourself up with the shot, and just concentrate on hitting the ball cleanly. It never fails.

JDH



"THEN, WHAT DID YOU DO WITH MY MALLET?"

tournament roundup

Wrest Park Handicap Tournament, 17-19 May
by John Bevington

The 22 entrants were divided into two blocks of 10 and 12, with the home club providing five sacrificial lambs of handicap 2fi or below on whom the visitors could feast.

Block A ended with David Hills (Bottisham) and Nigel Polhill (Ealing), handicaps 10 and 9 respectively, level on six wins each. Circumstances required a playoff, so they had a 14 point decider in the Sunday afternoon sunshine with David emerging the winner. Manager Eric Audsley upheld the honour of the home club with five wins, a total equalled by Gordon Weir (Cheltenham) and John Bee (Watford).



David Hill leaving Nigel Polhill to work out his next move

Block B was a walkover for Ian Parkinson (Watford), who won all his games and had his handicap reduced from 14 to 11 as a result. Trailing in his wake were Ben Ashwell (Wrest Park), Colin McKenzie (Ealing) and Mike Gardner (St Albans) with six wins each. Ben and Mike both had handicap reductions (8 to 7 and 10 to 9), and Mike also gained his silver award.

The lower bisquers frequently had their backs to the wall, none more so than George Collin who was for 1 and 1 with opponent Mark Homan (Watford) for peg and peg, with a bisque in hand. This sort of situation is not given much coverage in Advanced Croquet Tactics, or indeed anywhere

else. George's answer was to go round with one ball, leaving Mark in the jaws of 2 and rover, leaving partner in the jaws of 1 with the ball for 1 just beyond it. Unfortunately he was unable to test the theory as Mark hit his lift and used the bisque to finish.

Going good to soft, weather warm and sunny for the most part, with a break for a cold wind and showers on Saturday.

Surbiton Charity One-Ball 26 May
by Kevin Carter

Quiller Barrett, CA Chairman, lifted the crystal brandy glasses after winning the inaugural Surbiton Charity One-Ball last Sunday, the wettest day of a wet month.

His six wins from seven was ahead of the other section winners, Strat Liddiard and Robin Hoare. The best break prize went to George Noble. The event was organised and managed by Niall Carter and it raised £400 for Raleigh International.

Almost overcome with emotion at the prizegiving, Quiller was heard to say: "But I never win anything". Until now, boss.

Surbiton Speed Doubles 18-19 May
Report by Jon Male

The speed-doubles at Surbiton this year had a record 13 pairs taking part, many from Surbiton, but including visitors from Bowdon, Ipswich, Nottingham, Caterham, Budleigh and elsewhere. For those unfamiliar with this variant of the game, it is played in rounds of 14 points with each side having 30 minutes of normal play available. If time expires for a team it may only play single stroke turns thereafter. As you can imagine, this makes for pacy play right from the outset and can favour an aggressive,

risk-taking style.

As it turned out, play was even faster than the organiser had anticipated and 7 rounds were squeezed in on Saturday with 5 and a final on Sunday. As byes had been built in from the start this meant that every team played all but one of the others.

The first finalists who emerged from these rounds were Kevin Carter and Dorothy Miller, whose record of 10 wins included two notable recoveries won +1 and +2. The latter of these took advantage of the unfortunate Ted Matthews who had not been able to get onto the lawn and play his 3ft shot to the peg in the remaining 7 seconds and so forfeited the turn! (a rule that surely needs revising for next year's event.)

Their opponents were the youthful pair of Samir Patel and Gabrielle Higgins, one of 3 teams on 8 wins. Samir's break, peeling his partner through both final hoops and pegging out, incorporating some snooker-like trick shots en route, was certainly a tournament highlight for me.

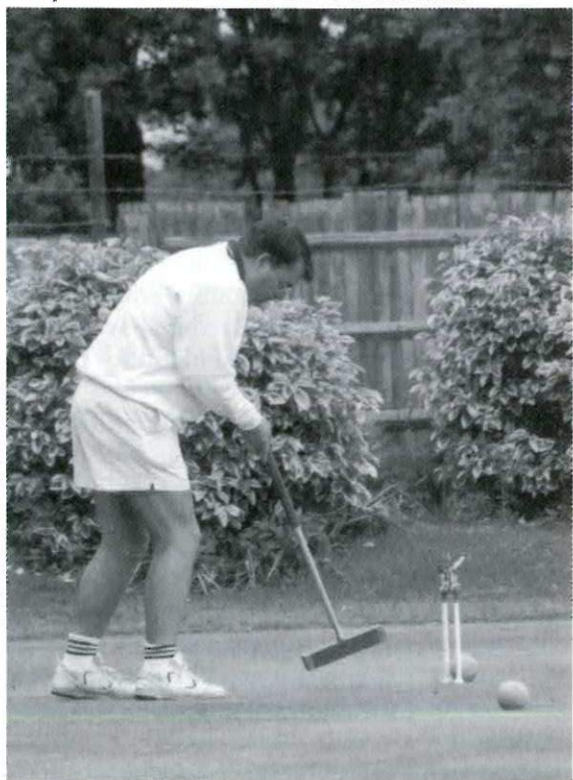
In the event, Kevin and Dorothy won the day (and the Nelson Morrow Tray), with Dorothy, in her first speed-doubles tournament, showing some of the less-experienced players present the true meaning of "more haste less speed". Indeed, with a combined age of 130 this pair proved that this game is still about much more than sprinting around the lawn.

As a newcomer to this event myself, I was highly entertained by the format (and the excellent hospitality at Surbiton) and fear that regular doubles will now seem very tame by comparison. My partner's wife (a novice at the game) was even heard to say after watching my breathless rush (the running kind) to run rover and peg out in the last couple of minutes "I never knew croquet could be so exciting". So there.

Sue Mackay reports on Essex's victory

Essex won the Inter Counties Cup for the second time in three years over the Jubilee Weekend at Southwick and Compton. Their team of Chris Clarke, Debbie Cornelius, Robert Fulford, Justin Goddard, Michael Heap (captain), Paul Stephenson and Guy Willard achieved 8 match wins, losing only to Surrey and Gloucestershire. Last year's winners, Northumberland, were runners up with 7 match wins. Dorset, Sussex and Lancashire were relegated.

The second division was won by Hertfordshire, who didn't win a match in 1999 and won the wooden spoon again the following year. This year it looked as if their team of James Dixon, Duncan Hector, John Gibbons (captain), David Lilly, Richard Smith and David Tutt would finish the tournament undefeated, but they were beaten 2-1 in the last match by their local rivals Bedfordshire. When collecting the shield John Gibbons paid tribute to Nigel Gray, the former Hertfordshire captain, who has been very ill but had been instrumental in putting the team back together - and who even lent John his mallet for the tournament!



Chris Clarke, whose Essex team notched up its second win in three years
(Photo: Nigel Graves)

Suffolk won the same number of games as Hertfordshire but they only had 8 match wins. Nevertheless they earned promotion to the first division next season, along with Glamorgan. The wooden spoon was won by Berkshire, who won 7 games but only one match.

The Channel Islands had been unable to raise a team this year, so Sarah and Matt Burrow formed the nucleus of a CA Select team to play in the second division. This meant that

Avon, relegated last season, earned a reprieve. On the first day it seemed they were going to emulate Denmark, who won the European football championship when they were let into the competition at the last minute. Avon started with two 3-0 victories over Lancashire and Dorset, with 16-year-old Marcus Evans making his Counties debut and playing well.

Robert Fulford (Essex) attempted an octuple peel in his first game and succeeded in getting six of them, the first four straight. Reg Bamford (Middlesex) was playing at Compton for the first two days. I asked a member of the team if Reg had done many sextuples worthy of inclusion in the report and was told that Reg had broken down on a triple. "Now that IS news!"

Cliff Jones of Devon injured his shoulder two days before the tournament lifting a heavy bag of flour (obviously not self raising) and Devon were unable to find a replacement at short notice, so they were allowed to borrow a club player from Southwick and Compton, although the team would not be eligible for promotion. 14-year-old Craig Oakley from Compton [a possible record as youngest player? - Ed] thus had a chance to experience the unique atmosphere of the Counties for two days and played remarkably well.

On the second day groups of croquet players could be seen huddled round chairs and skulking in huts, despite the bright sunshine. It soon transpired that several players had come equipped with hand held televisions to watch the England-Sweden game in the World Cup. Tony Mrozinski (Surrey) broke down fortuitously at 1-back just as the game was about to start, leaving Don Gaunt (Gloucestershire) to do a TPO on George Noble's ball. Don, however, failed the rover peel and missed the scatter shot, forcing his opponents away from their TV just as England scored.

Glamorgan and Kent provided lunchtime entertainment at Compton on the final day. The game started late and finished last. As time was called, and only three balls on the lawn, Glamorgan pegged one ball out to go one ahead. Kent hit in across the lawn on the final shot and managed to make 4-back to level the scores. With both remaining balls for penult Kevin Ham and David Collins played a very exciting game of cat and mouse, but James Mackay's one ball tactics won through for Glamorgan in the end.

Tighter yet was one match which resulted in both pairs having a ball for peg and a ball pegged out. Each remaining player spent the last few minutes of the game shooting at the peg from different boundaries.

As ever the Counties was a wonderful festival of croquet and thanks must once again go to Chris Williams for managing the event and to the Southwick and Compton members who worked so hard preparing the lawns and providing the catering.

men's and women's championships

Bamford sets new standards, as David Magee reports

The Men's and Women's Championships were brought to fantastic conclusion at Cheltenham on Sunday 26 May, with Reg Bamford successfully completing an octuple in the third and final game of the Men's Final to win the title for the fourth year in a row. This achievement, the first time in singles in this country, came on top of winning the first two games of the Final with sextuples, and brought his total for the competition to five. This follows hard on the heels of the six that he completed in the Coles Cup three weeks earlier, and consolidates the fact that Reg is leading the game to new heights of performance.

Notable in the third game was the shot which regained the innings for Bamford. Goacher had laid up hampered from Bamford's ball alongside 3-back. Reg capitalising on his perfectly straight swing by trickling his ball directly at the east boundary ball by striking it through the hoop. Goacher failed to score again in the match, as Bamford stopped at hoop 5, then completed the eight peels.

British fans need not be too despondent though, as one of our own players showed that they too have the

capability to perform at the same level. In the Mixed Doubles Event, David Maugham, arriving hot-foot from an overnight flight from the States, an internal flight to Manchester and the delights of a traffic jam on the motorway, was hustled on to the lawn by Jenny Williams and promptly the first of his own series of sextuples. He went on to complete three more in the first two rounds of the Men's Event before jet lag really caught up with him and affected his performance. Chris Farthing will, of course, argue that point, and certainly his complete focus and concentration in the final game of their quarter-final tie deserves its reward. Not even a torrential downpour could stop Chris on his final break and, though thoroughly drenched, he calmly ran Penult and Rover to win the third and deciding game.

In fact the atrocious weather throughout the week almost took centre stage and I am full of admiration of the players who battled with strong, gusting winds, frequent squally showers and lawn speeds that were effectively 20% different depending on whether you were going up or down wind. At one stage Beatrice McGlen found it com-

pletely impossible to form a corner cannon as the wind kept funnelling through the balls and driving them apart.

David Openshaw had the best idea in the Mixed Doubles, persuading his partner that it was always her turn to play whenever it rained. Though ultimately successful in lifting the Doubles trophy, such unchivalrous behaviour resulted in Kathleen Priestley aggravating her back injury, which meant that she had to withdraw from the Women's Event.

Once again, it was somewhat disappointing to have only ten women contesting their Championship, and both Jenny Williams and Beatrice McGlen had relatively smooth paths through to the final. Their match was a strongly contested affair and the score belies the closeness of the match. Both players were hitting in well, but then making unforced errors brought about, I am sure, by the distraction of the events in the Men's Final on the adjacent court.

The same could be said for the final stages of the Du Pre on Court 7 when, at one stage, Lionel Tibble was spending more time worrying about what was happening on the court behind him than what was happening to his own ball. Lionel was playing Jeremy Dyer who had strung together a sequence of eight triples on his route to the final stages but, unaccountably, saved his worst game to last. This meant that Lionel, even with mind elsewhere, was able to win and thus guarantee new names on at least two of the trophies.

And so the results were:

Men's: Reg Bamford beat David Goacher +17 xsp, +15 xsp, +17 8tp

Women's: Jenny Williams beat Beatrice McGlen +4, +17

Du Pre: Lionel Tibble beat Jeremy Dyer +25



Winners at Cheltenham (L to R): Lionel Tibble, David Maugham, Jenny Williams, Reg Bamford, David Goacher, Beatrice McGlen, David Goacher

golf croquet international

Reg Bamford reports from Ramsgate

It felt great to be home. There I was, standing courtside next to a roaring braai, reminiscing about the good old days in Cape Town. My two fellow South Africans and I were enjoying a bottle of KWV Chenin Blanc, Paarl's finest, to protect us against a fresh Southwester that whipped in off the sea. They'd even hoisted the old RCC (Rondebosch Croquet Club) flag...

Talk of England's win against Argentina the day before brought me back to reality. We were playing in Ramsgate's Golf Croquet Tournament, and what a great tournament it was. Here are my memories of it:

The Wind.

Sunday delivered the worst of it, and it certainly evened things up a bit. Long-range hoop running and clearances became more and more difficult and the "swingers" in the field battled in the gusty conditions.

The Organisation.

The schedule ran like clockwork and every game had a referee, smartly dressed in a blazer and tie. Teas, lunches and dinners were sumptuous affairs. A local school was entrusted to provide about twenty young children to help marking balls in and with the scoring. They seemed to be having a great time. Some of them are already members - many will join soon, I suspect.

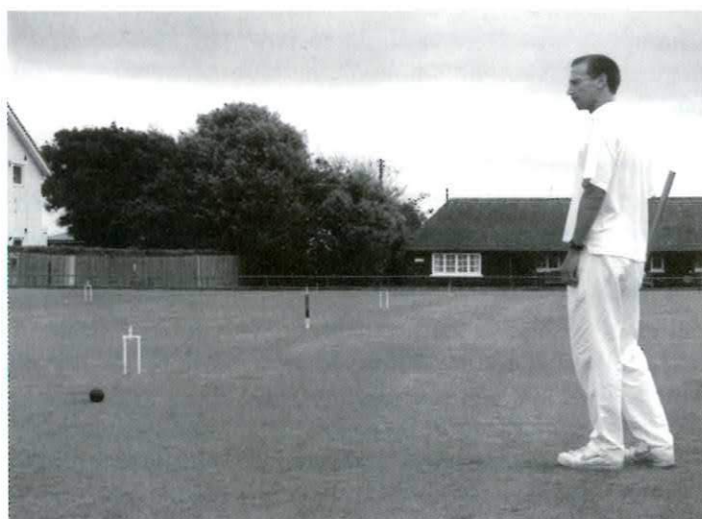
The Players.

There was a strong international flavour to the event. Two Italians, a Swiss, an Irishman, a Belgian, a South African, a Palestinian and even a Bosnian accompanied the many people from around the country. Reg Bamford and Robert Fulford meant that even the top Association players were represented.

The Croquet.

Having adopted its new rules, Golf croquet is THE game for a weekend like this. Each game is a terrific contest. Derek Old took an early 5-3 lead against Reg in the one semi-final, before losing the best-of-three first-to-ten. In the other semi, Robert had the beating of John Moore. The final was played in a bitterly cold wind, but was of a high standard. Robert was quickest out of the blocks, and with some fantastic long hoops and hitting, built up a 6-3 lead. Reg, incredibly, won the next nine hoops and ran out a 7-6, 7-1 winner.

The prize-money on offer was gratefully accepted by the top four and coupled with Ramsgate's friendly hospitality and Roy Ware's organisation will ensure next year's event will again be fully subscribed and enjoyed. Was Rondebosch ever this good?



Tyneside's John Moore, semifinalist at Ramsgate's Golf Croquet International

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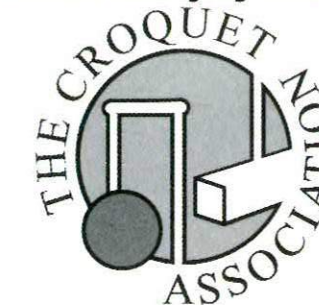
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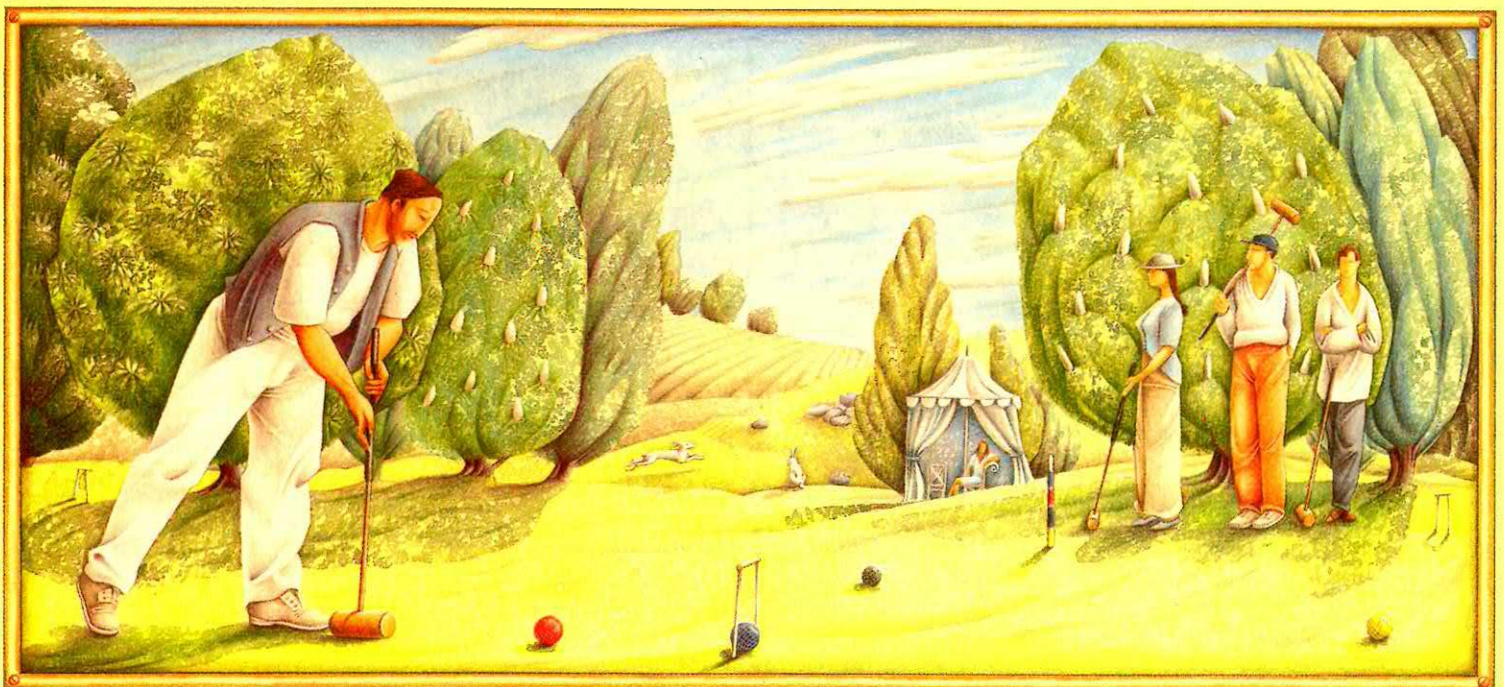
John Jaques II won a place in sporting history - and a Gold Medal- for introducing croquet into England at the Great Exhibition in 1851. His display there attracted such wide attention that the game speedily became the vogue and over the years has developed into the absorbing sport enjoyed by so many world-wide.

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