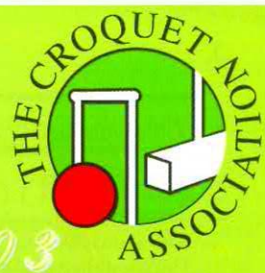


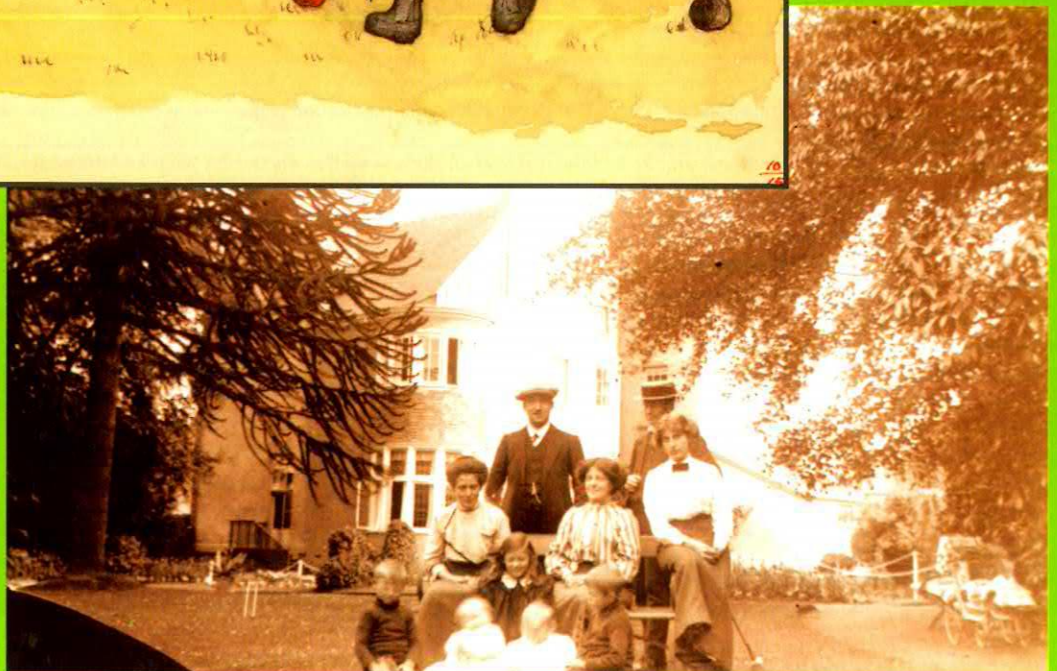
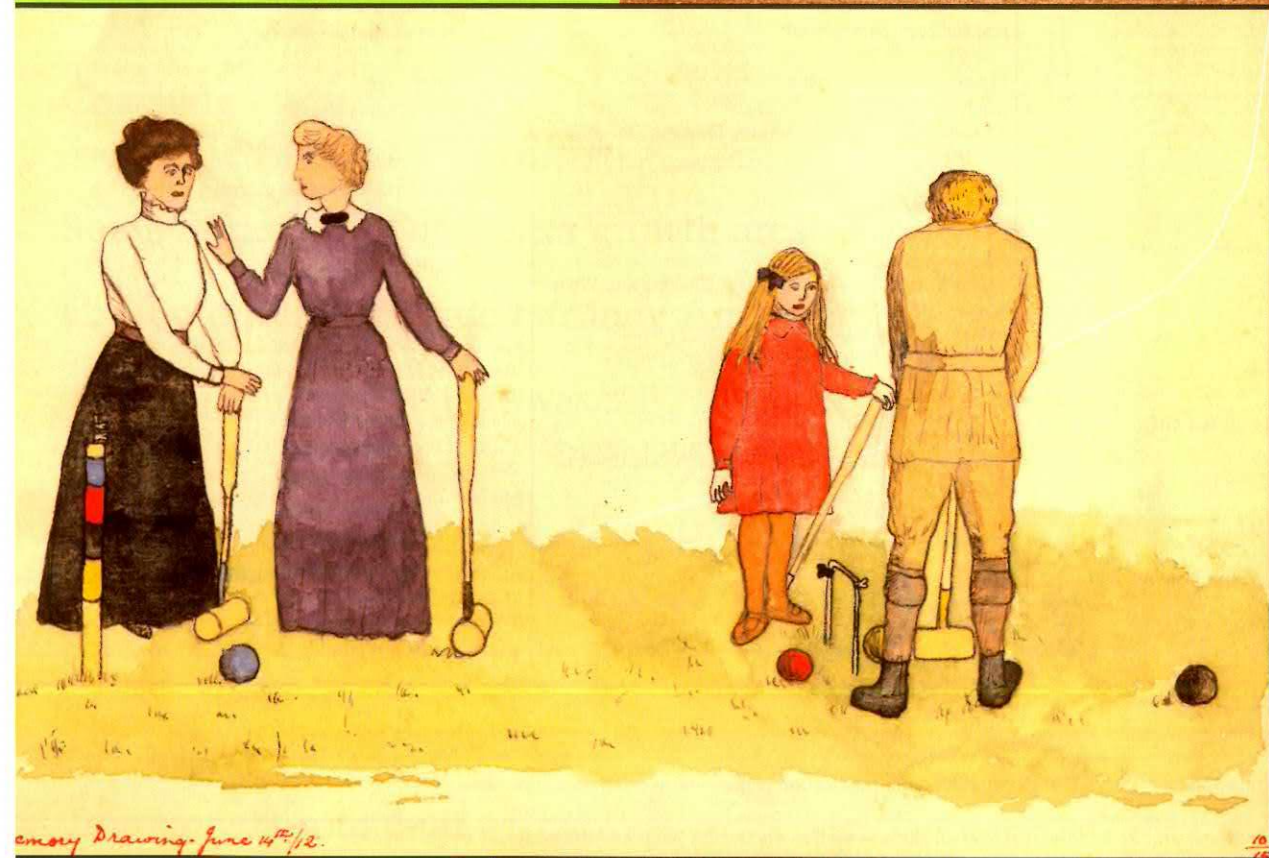
The Croquet Gazette

Issue 287 - September 2003



Inside:

- ⌘ Chew Magna: a story of Edwardian Croquet
- ⌘ Croquet in South Africa
- ⌘ Mallet making in France
- ⌘ The Open Championships



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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.

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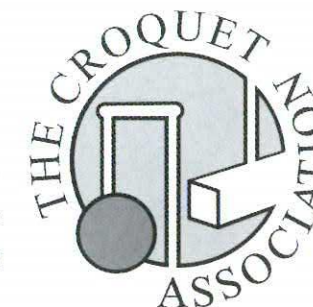
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Contents

Chairman's Column	4
Editorial	4
Letters	6 - 7
Coaching	8 - 10
<i>Association Croquet Tactics: The 4 ball break</i>	
South Africa: Croquet's next growth area?	11 - 13
CA Gold Medal awarded to Judy Anderson	14
"The Summer game that was...."	14
<i>A storm of controversy over with cricket's former supremo</i>	
The Dream of Wood	15
<i>A story of French mallet makers</i>	
Cover Story: Edwardian Croquet at Chew Magna	16
The Open Championships	17 - 19
Tournament round-up	19 - 20
The Gardens of Hanbury	21
<i>Traditional Croquet in an idyllic English garden</i>	
Brush up on the Laws	21
News & Information	22

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Chairman's Column



And it's goodbye from me. As I stand down from chairing Council, a time perhaps to look at some of the more significant changes over the last few years.

Moving the office from Hurlingham was accomplished without too much stress. I wish I could say the same about Council's decision-making process prior to the move. But we were all encouraged by the welcome that Cheltenham members gave our staff and I am pleased that we have settled into the Cotswolds so well.

Council has now bedded down as a policy-making body and our Management Committee is quite rightly reluctant to interfere with the decisions taken by all the other committees that report to it. I am always pleased when someone at a Management meeting says, "For goodness sake, why are we discussing this? We have delegated the authority to solve the problem so let them get on with it". Of course we must rely very much on the chairmen of our committees having sufficient time for our affairs and the right leadership qualities. For the most part we have been very fortunate in these respects.

There has been another culture change for the CA: much more emphasis on marketing and development to help our member clubs. Our finances are in good order thanks lately to the President's Appeal and the contribution made by Internet sales from the CA Shop, which is increasing. As a matter of policy we are now accepting that the CA will reduce its reserves

and provide funds to help clubs that put up a good case. During my time as chairman we have made, and are committed to make, grants and loans to our clubs that total over £40,000. This is a very significant change indeed for the CA.

Undoubtedly the recent importance of the golf croquet game in recruiting and retaining new members in clubs cannot be over-emphasised. I know this sometimes creates strains and stresses in club committees but surely it's better to be coping with these instead of worrying how to keep your club afloat with a low membership?

We are still struggling to increase the CA's membership. But we now have a clear policy of offering more benefits to individuals and to clubs. With the help of the Federations and our existing members we must now sell these advantages to those outside the fold.

Members tell me at tournaments and social occasions that they detect a new professionalism in the ways the CA does its business. This is good to hear because I have tried hard to encourage people with expertise, but sometimes no time to join Council, to help us. Their work is much valued and I hope they get satisfaction from it - to the extent that they will carry on.

Clubs have welcomed the introduction of awarding CA Diplomas. It is one sign that the Council is well aware of the importance of keeping in touch with its grass roots, something I am sure future Council policies will continue to recognize.

My thanks to everyone who made my two years in the chair so bearable - even enjoyable. In particular to Ian Vincent and all our other committee chairmen, to Vice President Alan Oldham and Treasurer Roger Bray who both gave me wise counsel, and to Nigel Graves - our dedicated Secretary - who coped astonishingly well with having me as chairman.

Goodbye.

Quiller

Editorial

Readers of the letters pages in the daily broadsheets will be aware of croquet's current feud with former cricket supremo Lord MacLaurin (*see page 14 of this edition*).

The claim that croquet is "the summer game that was" surely requires some justification. We Associates tend to be a bit sniffy towards garden croquet players, and we might not like the form of the game they play, but let's count them anyway for purely illustrative purposes.

The last estimate I heard about garden players was around ten years ago. If you know how many croquet sets are sold by John Lewis each year, you can make a pretty good guess of the number of recreational croquet players. I may be wrong, but the figure at the back of my mind is something like 500,000. I don't know how this compares with garden cricket players, but, put it like this, *I've* never met any.

Right. Now let's add on everyone under the CA's umbrella. There are around 4,000 club players dotted around the Croquet Association's realm. I imagine that's less than those amateurs playing cricket on an organised basis, but let's look at the top end - those of us who play tournaments regularly as CA Associates. That figure is round about 1,250.

Look at the number of top level (i.e. professional) cricketers in England. There are around about 450 of them. I believe this figure corresponds approximately to the number of croquet players in the advanced level rankings, thought of course we remain unsalaried.

You probably need no more proof that croquet is a more popular game. If not, just ask yourself how many world-beating English cricketers there are, then look at UK names in the world croquet rankings. Enough said.

Purely coincidentally, Lord MacLaurin's former headmaster was Dudley Hamilton-Miller, captain of England's 1950 Test Team for croquet. Were his Radio 4 comments really informed, or I wonder just a reflection of his unhappy schooldays?

Alan and Margaret's story

My daughter asked me the other day

“Dad, what did you do when you wanted to put some money aside for the future?”

to which I replied

“When I was about your age, I put some money into an investment - a unit trust. I invested a little every month and I didn't even miss it.”

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Letters

A badge of office

In my limited experience as a referee (one and a half seasons) there have been occasions, particularly when dealing with inexperienced players, when a Referees' Badge would have been useful in establishing one's presence as a referee and one's authority in that position without having to resort to some pompous statement announcing one's qualifications. This might be more appropriate here in Cornwall where we have, as yet, no club courts and often play on private lawns with novice players, not members of the CA nor even our club.

A referee has no certificate, no proof of position apart from his own word. I have, as a result, not understood why such a badge has never been distributed. Those who see no need and so do not wish to wear it need be under no obligation to do so but this does not mean that it would not be useful for others.

Tony Backhouse
St Austell
Chairman, Cornwall Croquet Club.

An early 'Croquet' set

Can anyone suggest who manufactured the following 'Croquet-like' set acquired by a friend in North Yorkshire, and its approximate date? It appears to be a Croquet variant using equipment intermediate in size between child and adult. He is prepared to sell if any collector is interested.

Long box (damaged) in pine with no maker's name visible.

8 mallets (35.5 ins. long) with round boxwood heads (5.5 x 2.125 ins.), the shafts marked, respectively, with 1, 2, 3, and 4 coloured rings in red and blue.

8 boxwood balls in good condition and marked with red and blue coloured rings (as the mallets). The diameters are 3.26 ins.

2 pegs (24 x 1.375 ins.) each identically marked with sections numbered 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, and 4 alternately in red and blue.

There are no hoops, and possibly it was a game not requiring them.

Eric Solomon
London

play this way when they enter tournaments, turning matches into 3 hours of dreary monotony and boredom, plus a reputation on the tournament circuit.

Audrey Howell
Budleigh Salterton.

This is one of a couple of comments I've received on Michael Hague's coaching article in the last edition. I feel the problem is merely one of phraseology. Aunt Emma's tactic of splitting the opponent and joining up can be seen as destructive. Handled correctly, there's nothing wrong with defensive play when it's called for. It is a matter for individual coaches how they use their terminology, and I hope Michael's article made it clear that he's an advocate of the 'new' Aunt Emma school rather than a dreary traditionalist. - Ed.

Come to North Carolina

My name is Danny Huneycutt, President of the North Carolina District of the USCA. North Carolina is the resident state for several of the top Association Laws croquet players in North America and some of the finest venues in the USA. We have organized an Association Laws training and development platform for our players and we are in the process of scheduling hosted events for 2004 and 2005 with countries that have a developed croquet program.

The events will include singles and doubles matches and would be sanctioned. When an event is scheduled we will make every effort to find no cost or low cost housing and local transportation for our visitors. A minimum of four with a maximum of ten players from the visiting country are required.

Currently our stable of NC residents committed to this endeavor includes some of the top players in North America such as Jeff Soo, Paul Scott, Bob Cherry, Mack Penwell, Ed Roberts, Andy Short and Gene Young. We also have commitments from most of our top venues, Pinehurst (4 courts), Linville (4/5 courts), Etowah (3 courts)

Jack Shotton



Aunt Emma - no thanks!

I have been reading a splendid little book by Patrick Cotter entitled *Tackle Croquet This Way*.

Cotter states that "Whatever happens don't become an Aunt Emma player ... Rather than play like this, be content to lose game after game in an honest endeavour to make a break. Your reward will come, for you will eventually become a croquet player enjoying the rights of man to express intelligence, while the Aunt Emma player will still be wallowing in chaos ... Always play the right shot, even if it is difficult - your object is, or should be, to become a good player, not record a few 'victories' by pawky or unenterprising play..."

Encouraging beginners and high-bisquers to play Aunt Emma invariably means that many will continue to

and Chatooga Club (2 courts).

Please contact me by email to discuss any further details and to schedule an event.

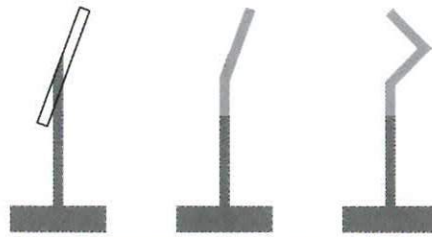
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Wrist relief

My left wrist began to ache two years ago, due, I thought, to it being jarred during a practice golf session on mats. I play little golf nowadays and much more croquet, using the Irish grip. The ache became more troublesome earlier in the year, so I decided to reduce the stress on the wrist by angling the top of the croquet shaft held by the left hand. With this adaptation, the wrist is not bent back nearly as much, particularly when swinging the mallet back between the legs. The right wrist, being lower down the shaft is not subject to the same extreme flexion.

This seems to have cured the problem with my left wrist and produced an unexpected bonus. When making 'roll up' shots, I turn the angled top of the shaft away from the body and don't poke myself in the chest any more!

Clifford Walker
Sidmouth



Clifford Walker's original mallet (left) was altered with a block of hardwood fixed at an angle to the carbon fibre shaft. The finished result is shown in the middle. The third example is in use in the USA.

There are several such instances of adjusted mallets. Around 1900, a 'scythe' mallet was produced, with two handles attached at right angles to the shaft. There seems to have been little to commend this design, and it disappeared from use. More recently, I have seen a couple of players - David Appleton from Tyneside, and former US International Erv Petersen - with a double bend in the shaft. For players with little wrist movement, this permits rolls and stop-shots to be played without joint strain, just by rotating the mallet and gripping a different part of the shaft. - Ed.

Eddie Hunt

The statement you have added to the obituary of Eddie Hunt in the July 2003 issue of the Gazette is incorrect.

There are a number of associates

whose membership is around 50 years or even more: there have been others in the past whose membership has been longer and the longest membership of which I am aware was that of Major "Freddie" Stone who joined in 1911, won his silver medal at the age of 13+ and continued his membership, with a short break from 1922 to 1932 while he was an army officer serving overseas, until his death in 1997. The Associate with the longest membership at present living is, I think, G F Rothwell, brother of R F Rothwell (Secretary of the Croquet Association 1976-1983) who joined in 1938.

Alan Oldham
High Wycombe

Apologies from me to all concerned - I appear to have been misinformed. - Ed.

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ASSOCIATION CROQUET TACTICS

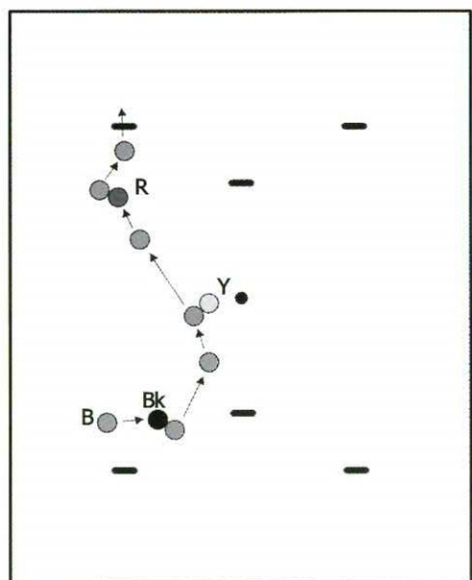
For Beginners and High Bisquers

No 2 - The 4 Ball Break (4 BB)

by Michael Hague

If beginners have been playing the simple Aunt Emma tactics suggested in the previous article in this series, they will know some of the technical terms such as "pioneer", the use and importance of rushes and the rush line, what bisques are, a bit about the laws and etiquette of the game and of the essential need to plan ahead. But we must still try to keep things as simple as possible and gradually add to their knowledge and understanding rather than saturate them with everything in one go. Once they demonstrate that they have reasonable control over the more commonly used strokes, they are ready to learn the 4 BB, how to set it up and how to maintain it.

A simple way to explain the 4 BB is to show on a magnetic board striker's ball (SB) going on a journey around the six or twelve hoops in order. The journey consists of a number of legs i.e. the sections from one hoop to the next. Within each section the other three balls are used as stepping stones but we may only use each of them once to get through the next hoop whereupon they become live and can be used again to get through the following hoop and so on. If we put SB the far side of hoop 1 with another ball near it, one ball in the middle near peg (pivot) and one just in front of hoop 2 (pioneer) (see below), SB can start its



journey from hoop 1 to hoop 2, by hitting the first ball (roquet). SB has now to be placed in contact with the roqueted ball and can be hit towards the centre near the pivot (croquet). One more shot is permitted (continuation stroke) which is used to roquet the pivot and thereby earning a further two strokes. The croquet is used as before to take-off to near the pioneer which is then roqueted using the continuation stroke. The croquet on the pioneer allows SB to be placed plumb in front of hoop 2 which is then run using the continuation shot. All the other three balls become live again and can be used once more as stepping stones to take SB along the next leg of its journey to hoop 3.

How many shots did it take to get from hoop 1 to the far side of hoop 2? Seven. Yes, seven simple shots to get through one hoop - easy-peasey! Any problems? Oh yes, there are no convenient stepping stones in place for the next section so how do we get from hoop 2 to hoop 3? Back to the drawing board. Each time we make use of a stepping stone, we will have to reposition it to a suitable spot to be used on the subsequent leg when it becomes live again as the next hoop is scored.

4BB Layout

How to establish a 4 BB is the subject of a later article but to play one, we will have pre-positioned a ball, say Red, about one and a half yards in front of hoop 2 as the pioneer and Yellow as the pivot near the middle, ideally about three yards SW of peg (see right). SB is Blue and has a croquet on Black four feet in front of hoop 1. We are ready to take Blue through hoop 1 and, if we choose and God willing, all the way round to peg!

Terminology

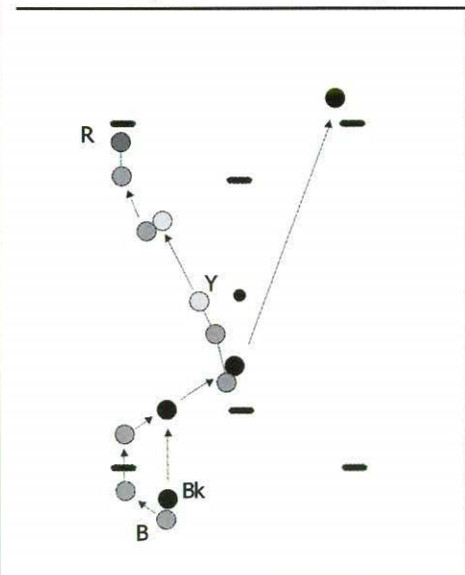
Most are familiar with the meaning of the word "pioneer" in the context of the 4BB, i.e. the ball in position near to the next but one hoop. Likewise most use the word "pivot" to describe the position of the 4th ball in

the 4BB near the centre about a third of the way towards the next but one hoop from the hoop being next run. Less familiar is the term "pilot" used to describe a pioneer once roqueted, which takes SB to, through and away from a hoop just as a pilot takes a ship into and through a strait and out into the open sea, onwards its next port of call.

Hoop 1 to Hoop 2

When taking the croquet on Black (the pilot) for the hoop approach we want to ensure that Black is moved to a position five or six feet beyond the far side of hoop 1 and slightly to the right, to ensure that we have a rush in the direction of the Yellow ball in the middle (the pivot). Thus we play a stop-shot, but SB must end up in front of the hoop for an easy and controlled running of the hoop. If Black ends up not quite where we ideally wanted it, we can cope with that. If Blue on the other hand is not accurately placed, disaster in the form of failure to run the hoop is looming! In playing our stop shot, all focus therefore must be on SB.

Hoop 1 scored, Blue should now have a rush on Black towards Yellow and in the direction of hoop 3, where we want to position Black as a pioneer



for the journey between hoop 2 and 3. Do we therefore rush Black straight to

hoop 3? Certainly not! We may sometimes rush a pivot into position for the next leg of the journey, as it does not matter if it is slightly out of position as long as it is somewhere in the middle. A pioneer we want as precisely placed as possible. So we always use, if we possibly can, a croquet shot which is much more accurate than a rush, to position pioneers. Thus we gently rush Black near the Yellow, careful that Black does not end up with its route to hoop 3 being blocked by the peg and/or the Yellow ball when it is croqueted to its pioneer position. Why bother to rush at all? Well we are cutting down the distance of an otherwise long croquet to hoop 3 and we are ensuring a virtually straight drive or stop-shot (depending on which we prefer to play) free of obstacles to our next but one hoop. We can concentrate on the croqueted ball, Black in this case, knowing that SB, Blue, will drop off close to Yellow. If we get it right, we can then rush Yellow to its new pivot position about two yards NW of peg. We now have a short take-off from Yellow to the Red ball and are ready to run hoop 2.

Hoop 2 to Hoop 3

When croqueting Red for the hoop approach to pilot us through

hoop 2, we send it to a different position from that used for Black on hoop 1. This time Red (the pilot) is going to guide us back down the court before it is sent to hoop 4. Having run hoop 2, our rush shot will be towards pivot and in the direction of hoop 4. So the pilot on the approach shot to hoop 2 is ideally placed about level with and just to the right of the hoop being run. Once again we use the rush to cut down the length of the croquet of Red to its pioneer position at hoop 3 with a straight drive or stop-shot. SB should end up close to pivot, ideally so that it can be gently rushed to two yards or so NE of the peg, ready for the next leg and from where there is a short take-off to pioneer at hoop 3.

Emerging Pattern

As we progress in this manner along the journey going to a stepping stone, re-positioning it and then pressing to another, a pattern begins to emerge. Firstly there are no 'big' slots required; take-offs, straight drives or stop-shots, maybe straight half rolls over manageable distances are all that are required. Long and wide split rolls may have to be called upon to set up the 4BB or when things go wrong or but never during the 4BB if all goes to plan. Next one begins to realise that

for the 4BB the balls are being kept within the rectangle formed by the four outer hoops 1 to 4. The pivot is ideally orbiting around the peg and remains the same ball. The position of the pilot beyond the hoop after the hoop approach needs thinking through carefully for each hoop if trouble-free progress is to be maintained.

It also becomes apparent that the ball which starts as the pioneer at hoop 1 becomes the pioneer at hoop 3,5 etc (the uneven numbers), while the ball at hoop 2 will be pioneer at all the even numbers. In which case striker can have his partner ball with him when running 50% of the hoops. The advantage of this is that more chances with hoop running can be taken if partner ball is pilot rather than an opponent's ball. The latter will have an easy roquet to start a turn if striker breaks down at the hoop. If partner ball at the start of a 4BB is pivot and not one of the pioneers, it may be worth replacing pivot with one of the adversary's balls. This is most easily done anywhere between hoops 3 and 6 as the distances are shorter. Position the pilot on the hoop approach so that after running the hoop, the pilot can be rushed close to the pivot. An easy, straight rush can be set up on the pivot to send it to become the pioneer on the

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**But then one day I tried to play
and I was most surprised,
To find there's much more to this sport
than I had realised.**

**To me a bisque was custard cream
and rushes something fast
And pegging out was washing done
but that's now in the past.**

**And so my time it is well spent
on many a summer's day
When on the croquet lawns at Crake
this game I try to play.**

Margaret Maltman

next but one hoop. From there a short take off joins SB up with the pioneer waiting on the next hoop.

Teaching the 4BB

So now we have the concept and the mechanics of the 4BB explained. But it is never enough for tactics and playing techniques to be merely explained. Beginners should practise or be made to practise the 4BB over and over again both on the magnetic board and on the court until the placing of the balls becomes automatic. At the same time as practising the mechanics of the 4BB on the court, the accuracy of the placement of the balls will tighten up and the beginner will start to learn how to make adjustments to the pattern of play when a pioneer or pivot goes out of position. But more of that in a later article in this series. Suffice for the moment is to remind coaches that in teaching the 4BB and indeed any tactics, the coach who does the most talking and plays most of the shots is usually the least effective. The art is to achieve maximum mental and physical participation of each and every member of the class whether at the magnetic board or on the court. Get the class to work out the problem in a logical sequence and then get the pupils to play the shots, using the magic foot to adjust misplaced balls to the ideal position. Stick to the aim of the lesson and do not get diverted to correct balls out of position using split rolls or to re-teaching a shot that a pupil has played badly when the aim is to teach the concept and mechanics of the 4BB.

Coaches who explain and demonstrate by playing themselves the 4BB around the court to peg, are not focused on their strokes, make mistakes and are often led into playing shots which are not part of what they are teaching in order to avoid admitting defeat and having to take a *bisque*! The class trails behind getting increasingly frustrated and bored with their own inactivity and are certainly not exercising their minds and skills.

They are more probably either quietly chuckling behind the coach's back at the mistakes or thinking "If the coach can't get it right, I certainly can't!"

How to Deal with Unique Tactical Situations

Enough said. We now have to turn our minds to creating breaks and maintaining them. This may require a wider range of shots than for the 4BB and certainly more imagination and creativity. There may be similarities between any two different layouts of the four balls and the hoops they are due to run but they are rarely exactly the same just as in Bridge where the likelihood of being dealt the same hand twice is many millions to 1! So to assist with our thought process in addressing each unique tactical situation, we must understand the Principles on which tactical play is based and how to apply them. That will be the subject of my next article.

Coach's Tip

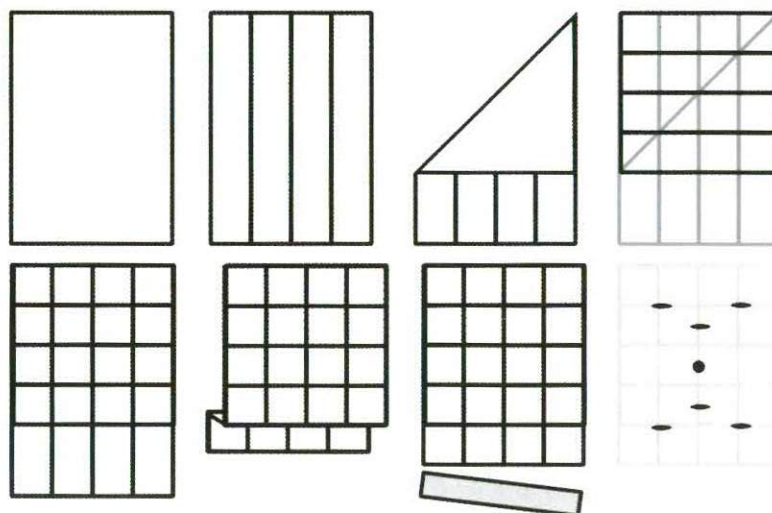
To follow explanations of tactics more easily, a cut-out diagram of the croquet court is always useful. Space does not allow this to be reproduced in the *Gazette*, but, for the coach who insists on travelling light, a scale diagram can be put together in a couple of minutes without the need for complicated measurement. Follow the

diagram below, and experiment with the method. Remember, the faster this can be done, the more impressed your students will be.

Take a sheet of A4, and fold it in half and half again lengthways. The objective is to make a 5 x 4 grid, so the four columns are now measured. The lower point of a diagonal fold shows where the fourth row is, and establishing a 4 x 4 grid should be straightforward. Fold the remainder of the page up and back to measure off a fifth row, and tear off and discard the residue (for A4 paper this will be a band precisely 34.5mm wide).

The outer hoops are easy to place (they come at intersections of folds). If you're insisting on accuracy, there are another three folds needed for the centre hoops and peg, though they should be possible to draw on by eye. Award a bonus mark if you've a blue and a red pen for marking hoop 1 and rover.

Use Smarties as markers. The advantages to coaches are two-fold. Firstly the coach gets to eat all the non-primary colours. Secondly any student who succeeds in producing a better tactical solution than worked out by the coach, can be rewarded by being allowed to eat the Smartie. Once it has been eaten, the coach may have the satisfaction of advising that the Smartie has been handled by a number of students over the season, and may be contaminated and cause food poisoning. It is usually enough to wipe the self-satisfied smirk off the face of the precocious smarty!



South Africa: Croquet's next superpower?

Does Soweto have a future world champion in the making? asks James Hawkins



Courtesy of the Birmingham Post

The years after the end of the Second World War marked a period of political change throughout the world. In South Africa the 1948 elections saw power passing to the National Party and its hard-line traditional (pro-white, anti-black) values. Racial inequality had long been part of life in South Africa from the time of its colonial past, but the new government allowed that to be formalised with the birth of apartheid.

In a divided country, opportunities were limited for black South Africans. By the 1960s, education had ceased to be compulsory (that is to say, it was actively denied) for large sections of the community. An entire generation grew up without schooling.

These times marked some of the lowest points in croquet's popularity, both in South Africa and throughout the rest of the world. Rebuilding the game happened largely down in the south west, in Cape Town and its surrounding areas.

At the forefront was Brian Bamford, himself a liberal political reformer. Although clubs such as his at Rondebosch have always abided by an open-door policy, the practicalities of integration have been difficult to achieve.

The hot dry climate allows the

playing of croquet throughout the year but darkness falls each night at 6pm. As a result, and even more so than in the UK, croquet has remained a game for the retired, with play only occurring during everyone else's normal working hours. International sanctions led to economic hardship among many South Africans, and those of a working age were forced to continue working throughout the daylight hours. Even now all but four of Rondebosch's 35 members are retired.

Little more than a decade after the dismantlement of apartheid, inter-racial problems have yet to flush themselves out of the system. For croquet this presents a dilemma. 85% of the population are non-white, but few among the retirement-age black community have the means to take up croquet. With no black role models in the game, it remains a struggle to recruit new members. It's easy to imagine the difficulties in maintaining croquet's impetus.

Since Brian Bamford's death earlier this year, the Presidency of the South African Croquet Association has passed to Carole Knox, who remains upbeat about the future prospects. Many of the current members, she suggests, are not so young anymore, and play is largely social rather than

competitive.

In croquet's stronghold of Western Cape Province, some limited success has been achieved recently (*see table, below*). Fish Hoek has received a loan from the Western Province Croquet Association to irrigate their two lawns, and in six months the change has been astounding. Membership has more than doubled. Somerset West is expanding from three to four lawns, and golf croquet has proved a hit in recruiting a new batch of strong players. And in a country where water is scarce, Rondebosch have been putting in boreholes to ease the cost of irrigation.

The fact that maintenance of this sort can continue throughout such lean times indicates that the picture is

Playing numbers in South Africa (estimates)

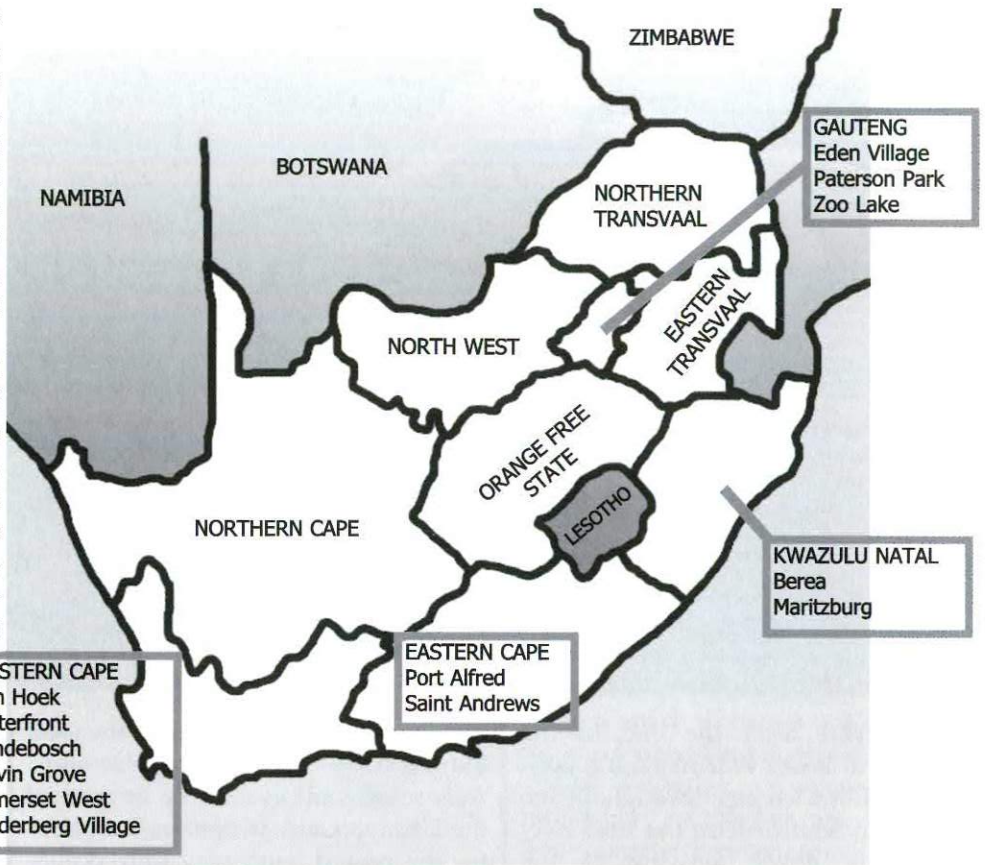
Western Cape	270 *
Eastern Cape	50
Natal	50
Gauteng	20
* Western Cape broken down as follows:	
Kelvin Grove	85 2 lawns
Helderberg Village	40 1 lawn
Somerset West	50 4 lawns
Rondebosch	35 3 lawns
Fish Hoek	30 2 lawns
Waterfront	20 2 lawns

not as gloomy as some commentators would claim. As Carole says, "Croquet in Africa is difficult - but we do try. We play all the year round, which is perhaps the big difference between England and us. We would soon get very bored with croquet if we played four or five times a week for 50 odd weeks. The game's continuing, slowly perhaps, as in the rest of the world."

There's no doubt that the social fabric of South Africa is in a period of rapid evolution. Prosperity has come for many, whether black or white, since the dismantlement of the old regime. Croquet survives in the Western Cape around Cape Town, though only time will tell if SACA successfully broadens its membership to embrace these potential new players.

Johannesburg lies some 1,000 miles north east of Cape Town in Gauteng province. Development here, so far from headquarters, has always stretched the means of the South African Croquet Association. All of a sudden, this has become one of the country's main growth areas, but it has all come about thanks to an unexpected intervention.

Chris Bennett from Edgbaston has spent a great deal of time in Jo'burg, and five years ago was invited to set up a croquet facility at the city's Country Club. During coaching sessions, most of the students are middle-class, white and retired, but it soon became apparent that some staff mem-



bers were taking a great interest in proceedings, and were invited to join in. Over the years, two talented shining stars have emerged - Meshack Mazibuko and Victor Dladla.

As many blacks of their age (they're both 37), Meshack and Victor are virtually uneducated. Meshack works as a gardener at the Country Club, while Victor has worked there as a part-time waiter. Chris Bennett now proudly attests to Victor's recent promotion to Head of Cutlery. At a venue which serves 2,000 meals every day, loss (or indeed theft) of teaspoons is a major worry for the management. Victor's task is to keep the waiters in check, and monitor light-fingered customers.

What sounds like a trivial role to a European is a big deal in South Africa. Blacks have grown up without job security, status or welfare provision. Each of these men are married with dependents. Meshack has three children back in Kwa-Zulu Natal, but his work has led him north to Gauteng. Victor lives in Soweto with his social worker wife and one son. If their lives

are typical, which for many of their generation they are, it's easy to see why there's no time to engage in such trivialities as croquet.

As Chris started his coaching, he found these two watching what was going on, and snatched a few moments after the club members had gone home. Five years later, their play looks formidable. Their readiness to learn, their commitment and their obvious intellect on a croquet lawn shows what each of them could have achieved elsewhere had sufficient opportunity been made available to them. The problem is that, even in croquet, opportunity is limited.

When it comes to access to the facilities, paying members have a higher priority than members of staff. Sunset is at 6pm, and virtually every day Meshack can be seen at 5.30, waiting behind a hedge ready for his daily practice as soon as the last of the public have stepped off the lawn. Chris will come along and instruct him in, say, wiring. Meshack will practise and practise, and Chris will return a few days later to find a beaming Meshack



(L to R) Meshack Mazibuko, Chris Bennett & Victor Dladla.
Previous page: Meshack in play at Edgbaston
Opposite: Victor at Bowdon

having placed all balls millimetre-perfect in wired positions. And so the insatiable learning goes on.

When it comes to competitive play, there are severe problems to overcome. Both are now streets ahead of any of the club members, but there are few other quality opponents this side of Cape Town. The tournament scene is hardly thriving compared with England. There are three provincial championships, one national and three invitation events. Most of these happen in the Western Cape. Even if money for transport could be found, the cost of living is so different between provincial Johannesburg and the commercial centre of Cape Town, that participation is beyond the pockets of many. What's more, finding the money to keep their families during an additional holiday makes travel to tournaments a no-go for Mazibuko and Dladla.

South Africa shares a problem with other croquet nations with a much larger, but just as scattered, population, such as Australia and the USA. The efficiency of ranking systems is difficult to verify when geography prevents top players meeting regularly. For international selection clearly Reg Bamford would be first in the pecking order for the SA Team. To favour Victor or Meshack above other established players is harder for selectors to justify. Nevertheless, they were picked as South African representatives three years ago at the World Golf Croquet Championships in Cairo. Chris and his partner, Esther Jones, managed to secure a sponsor, and, in spite of their inexperience, Meshack and Victor were placed 29 and 31 in a field of 48.

In August this year, another foreign trip was lined up for them. As a frequent flyer Esther found herself with more free flights than could possibly be used, so Chris and Esther arranged a grand tour of England for the pair. An England vs South Africa match was set up at Edgbaston. To show the seriousness of both countries' regard, some big guns were brought out for the occasion. South Africa mustered



Bamford and Mark Suter, while England's team included Robert Fulford with fellow test team players Mark Avery and Stephen Mulliner.

Thanks to a couple of bravura shots from Fulford, England won 10 matches to 5, with two matches unfinished. On another day, the score might have been 8-7 to the home side. Had that been the case, Victor's two unfinished matches (one game all to each of Daniel Mills and Gabrielle Higgins) could have swung the event in South Africa's favour.

On from here the visitors went for a full week's play at Nottingham, and then on to another week at Bowdon. Their abundant talent is clear, and three weeks of constant competitive play obviously left its mark. By the end of the month, Meshack's handicap had settled at 1 1/2, and Victor's at 3.

Right now, Meshack is the stronger of the two. He has a textbook style: a Irish grip with a smooth style, and a confident all-round game. His is a measured temperament, and there's little doubt that a season's play on the British tournament circuit would see him down as far as a minus handicap.

Victor is less consistent. Hitting hard with a Solomon grip, he's a star-

tingly accurate shot. He seems never to aim, but hits many more long shots than one would want from an opponent. His weakness is short roquets - he misses rushes and occasionally fails the sort of hoops he oughtn't to. Still, remember this is only their first month of proper competitive play amongst varied opposition.

Chris Bennett's main worry for the August tour was how they would adapt to the etiquette and customs of British croquet. Such concerns were unfounded, as they proved popular with all opponents. Meshack seems more outgoing, partly perhaps because his English is better (their first language is Zulu). And by their third week, the heat had largely fizzled out of the August weather, leaving an ill-prepared Victor shivering in his waterproof jacket.

Without further sponsorship, it's unlikely that the pair will return to England for the foreseeable future. The trip depended almost entirely on the goodwill of Chris and Esther, and on the understanding attitude of their employers. The Country Club granted them an additional period of leave, and ensured that money was sent to their families in their absence. It's really a feather in their cap; two black sportsmen of international calibre bring prestige (and tax breaks) to a club which is arguably more of a commercial than a sporting venture.

So what happens next? Chris has a few more promising black South Africans (though only in single figures at present) waiting in the wings. Younger than Meshack and Victor, education was more readily available for them. Maybe they'll be ready to go out into public and start setting up croquet for the new multi-racial middle classes around Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Meanwhile, Victor and Meshack return to their menial jobs. Perhaps a rise in the game's popularity will present grants to allow them to turn pro and develop South African croquet full-time. Until then it seems the status of a great croquet nation is tantalisingly just out of reach.

CA Gold Medal awarded to Judy Anderson

Belated congratulations go to Judy Anderson, who has been presented with a CA Gold Medal in recognition of her services to croquet by Alan Oldham on behalf of the CA. The ceremony was attended by representatives from many of the clubs in East Anglia.

Judy has done much for croquet through both the CA, the East Anglian Croquet Federation (EACF) and her clubs - Colworth and Wrest Park.

A croquet player since 1970, she served on the CA Council and its Development and Publicity committees continuously from 1987 until she retired at this year's AGM.

In 1982, Lionel Wharrad, the then CA Chairman, asked her to start croquet development in East Anglia. This she did, with the help of the Sports Council, and has continued being responsible for it ever since. She was particularly active in getting new croquet clubs started with husband Tom. As a result the number of clubs have grown from 9 to now over 25 in the region.

After overseeing the formation of the East Anglian Croquet Federation (EACF) in 1986, she has gone on to

serve as its Secretary and Development Officer ever since. In addition, she produces their 'Green Leaflet' annually and 'FACE EAST' newsletter twice yearly.

Judy started the annual East Anglian National Trust Short Croquet competition in 1986 and has been responsible for both arranging and managing it every year until about three years ago. Subsequently she also created the National Trust Golf Croquet singles and doubles competitions.

In 1987, in conjunction with the CA, she organised the world first indoor croquet tournament at Clacton. Two years later she set up and then, for a number of years, managed the EACF indoor tournaments which have been held every winter since, mostly at Soham.

A member of both Colworth and Wrest Park Croquet Clubs, she has been both the secretary at Colworth and arranger of the catering for the four annual tournaments at Wrest Park for some years.

Despite working full time until last year, she has managed to do all this and play croquet for club, county, and

in the Ladies Invitation events.

Details of many of the EACF activities that she has been associated with can be found in 'EACF - THE FIRST 10 YEARS (1983-1997)', a booklet she produced and published, copies of which can be found at clubs in the Eastern region and the CA Office.

She has enjoyed all she has done but feels it is about time that she handed over her work to others and hopes some will come forward to carry on these roles.

Judy would like to associate this award with all EACF helpers and clubs without whom this would not have been possible.



Judy (centre), with EACF members and CA Vice President Alan Oldham (second from right). Husband Tom is pictured front right.

"There's no such thing as bad publicity..."

On 4th September, Lord MacLaurin, former head of the English Cricket Board, appeared on Radio 4's *Today* programme as chief apologist for the state of modern cricket. With a potential fall in sponsorship, the report claimed, cricket risks the fate of "a lesser game, like croquet." The worst case scenario, MacLaurin concluded, is that "[cricket] will get rather like croquet, and it'll be a summer sport that was. And none of us want that."

Immediately, croquet players were up in arms. Front of the queue was Rob Edlin-White, the chairman of Nottingham Croquet Club, whose irate email to the BBC prompted producers to offer a return spot the following morning.

By that stage, though, the broadsheets had seized the story. Aside

from the pro-croquet news item which hastily appeared on the BBC website, Nigel Graves was giving interviews for the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Independent*.

By the following morning, croquet was back on Radio 4. Rob Edlin-White's phone interview was admittedly pared right down to a single soundbite, and Nigel fought bravely against some pretty tough (and slightly derisive) questioning.

The thing is, no matter how much we protest otherwise, broadcasters will continue to assume that the game conforms to their stereotypical image. So the glowing report on BBC Online was accompanied by photos of two ancient players, captioned with cheap gags, and Nigel Graves was forced constantly on the back foot on the radio. Even so, the *Telegraph*, ever the defender of our game, set aside half a page about

Robert Fulford in its news section, with a staunch editorial about defending our proud tradition from commercialism. All in all, few people could really complain about the hand we were dealt by MacLaurin's remark.

Alas, this sort of coverage doesn't come along every day. With the forthcoming test series in Florida just weeks away, perhaps we now have sufficient impetus to interest the press in the premier event for - let's face it - one of the few sports in which Britain can put out a stronger side than anyone else.

By chance, the evening of our *Today* appearance saw the BBC's *Gardener's World* featuring Blewbury Croquet Club at some length. If and when the journalists' stance becomes as matter-of-fact as this, the public should pay little heed to remarks such as those of Lord MacLaurin.

The Dream of Wood

As John Jaques brought Croquet to England, one Normandy family developed the game in France.

For more than a century, the Jorelle establishments at Bézu Saint-Eloi near Gisors in the Eure have made games in wood. Five generations have perpetuated an ancestral know-how. The 'frog game', croquet and dolls' prams... the toys take life in a cloud of sawdust and wood-shavings, amid the noise of machines, sometimes as old as the walls.

Jean-Francois Jorelle is the great, great grandson of the founder of the



Jean-Francois Jorelle among his fine creations. On the left, a 'frog game'. In the middle, some croquet balls. On the right, the limited edition croquet set in precious woods.

Jorelle establishments. The family spirit is a reality: the wood turner waits for us with his two children and his father on the doorstep. Conviviality is queen. Everyone laughs; they greet us; they slap us on the shoulder. The Jorelles are the quintessence of simple, authentic things. Around us, old models of the 'frog game' and of croquet sets occupy the lean-to, as well as old posters dating from the 19th century. Jean-Claude, the father of Jean-Francois, tells us the history of these walls.

"In the past, about fifty people were working in these red-brick buildings," he testified, "for our 'merchants of dreams' are historical."

In the middle of the 19th century, with the works of the Comtesse de Ségur and of Jules Verne, France began to awaken to the wonders of childhood, while across the Channel, the first rules of the game of croquet were published.

The toy market was nearly non-existent, but was crying out to for its rapid expansion. In 1864, Monsieur Foin, a young journeyman turner, set up in Neaules-Saint-Martin, not far from Gisors. He joined with Alfred

Jorelle. Our two entrepreneurs decided to make wooden games, such as croquet, skittles and billiards. They also took the liberty of adding to and creating some new games. In this way, the already popular 'barrels game' became the 'frog game'*

The business was on its way, and the men themselves transported their products to Paris. For this, they used the most rudimentary means of transport: Shanks's pony.

The geographical situation was an extra asset for 'Foin et Alfred', which had, thanks to its closeness, rapid access to the capital. Very quickly, they sold their games to the most prestigious Parisian department stores: the Bonheur des Dames (the Bon Marché) and the Nain Bleu.

The enterprise grew. It comprised over a hundred employees. But the economic crisis of 1929 obliged Robert Jorelle, the then managing director, to leave Neaules-Saint-Martin to settle in Bézu Saint-Eloi. Bassinets (prams), designed for children and skittles are stacked along the wall of the workshop, waiting to be hand-painted.

"Sometimes I have the desire to make beautiful things," says Jean-Francois, showing us a sumptuous limited edition croquet set, in rosewood and other precious Latin-American woods.

Jean-Francois has been employed here for 33 years. He greets us in a



Croquet in Rosewood and other Latin-American woods. This croquet set costs around 4,500 euros.

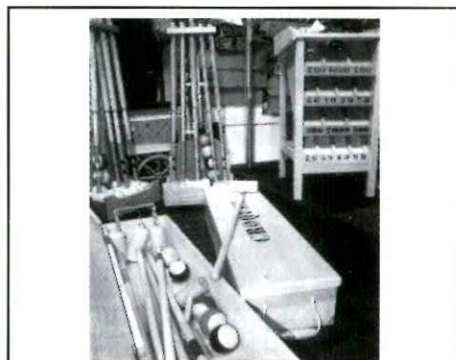
cloud of dust. He saws, he planes, he cuts again. Outside, the wood dries, some beech, some hornbeam. The smell of wood come from the forest round about.

In order to develop the activity, 'Jeff' as everybody calls him, is tireless: turner of wood, from the Boule school, then from the suburb Saint-Antoine, he is also a seller, prospector, and

trade fair exhibitor. Conscious that Asiatic production has become a parallel market to the Jorelle enterprise, he has decided to pursue the export market. He is also on the point of creating a new game for which the rules are still under consideration.

The Internet is also a future outlet for his business, through which he will promote exports. The present vogue for authentic hand crafts can only delight the Jorelles.

Fans of good, old, wooden games can reassure themselves, the revival is on



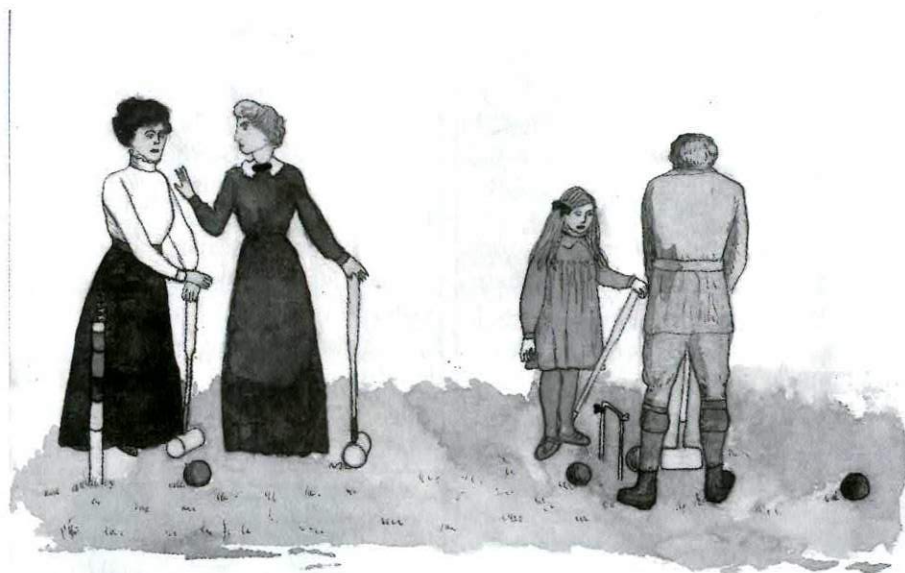
Croquet sets and other wooden games in the Jorelle workshops.

the way. A sixth generation of Jorelles is being prepared.

* The 'frog game' was once a favourite of the Greeks. Under the name of 'break-pot' it was originally a game played with the aid of amphorae [double-handled urns], with flat stones serving as pucks. The Romans, who loved games of skill, took it to Italy. Through their conquests, this game invaded all of Europe. Cider barrels, pierced with holes, replaced the amphorae, and the game became more sophisticated, with a dog's, a lion's, or a frog's head as a mouth in the middle of a sort of bench. The amphibian, green with a red mouth is preferred.

(Translated from an article in *Pays de Normandie* by Roy Wallis.)

Cover Story: Croquet in Chew Magna 1912



Monochrome Drawing from 1912

The coloured picture is taken from the drawing book of my wife's aunt, Dorothy Tripp (1901-1992). She drew it from memory on 14 June 1912 and was awarded 10 marks out of 15, presumably by the governess whom the family shared with the village Doctor's daughter in Chew Magna, Somerset. In the picture, the player with the golfing stance addressing the yellow ball is Dorothy's father, Walter Tripp, the woman on the left is her mother and the girl is Dorothy herself.

The monochrome pictures are from photographic plates of such an entertainment in progress in the Tripps' garden at Harford House at the same period. The man in the boater is Walter and his wife May is wearing the striped blouse. Dorothy is the girl in the middle of the family group.

Dorothy's drawing skills developed and she later received the Full School Certificate of the Royal Drawing Society. More significantly, she read medicine at Bristol, winning

the Sanders and Lady Haberfield Scholarships and Gold Medal in 1927. From this relatively privileged background, Dorothy gave her life to serving others through the Methodist Missionary Society in Hyderabad. Amongst the stories told of her is one concerning the invasion of Hyderabad by the Indian Army in 1948. The Nizam had refused to submit following Indian independence but capitulated after six days of bloody fighting, to great rejoicing among his mainly Hindu subjects. One day Dorothy, then medical superintendent of the hospital at Karimnagar was having her lunch when there was much shouting and breaking of glass. A group of Hindus had burst in, ransacked the dispensary and were climbing the walls to hoist the Indian Union flag over the hospital. Dorothy, a mere 5ft 1in tall, went out and persuaded them to take down the flag. The hospital, she said, was there for all who were sick. As croquet is for all who enjoy it, one might say.

Lawrence Whittaker

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The Open Championships

Martin Murray reports from a parched Cheltenham

Nostalgia, as any ageing croquet player will tell you, isn't what it used to be, but there was plenty on display as players gathered for this year's Open Championships at Cheltenham.

This was only the second time the event had been held here, the reason this time being the building works at Hurlingham. The entry was no larger, nor much smaller, than has been usual over the last few years. Surprisingly, almost a third of the entrants had also played in the 1983 event at Cheltenham, a number reappearing after a considerable gap. In 1983 the lawns had been very fast, with many hoops on hills, and only one triple was completed during the week. Going back even further, to 1968, your correspondent remembers only getting four games in the week (two in the main event, one each in doubles and plate, no draw and process then!). The first day this year, with double banking and block play, produced almost as many games (about 70) as the whole six-day event in 1968.

The flurry of games in the block system (three blocks of nine, one of eight) made it impossible to follow everything. Surprises were the failure to qualify of Kibble, Goacher (a bad tournament for Bristol) and Cordingley. Several players had the unnerving experience of struggling to keep a four-ball break together on the quickish lawns, while a double-banking Reg Bamford or Robert Fulford was completing a seemingly effortless sextuple on the same surface. The format of the qualifying blocks was altered, after player consultation, to one where all players with a 50% or better record proceeded to the best-of-three knockout stage. In one block this resulted in six of nine players qualifying, and a total of 24 players qualified. As almost inevitable in a block system, there were many irrelevant games in the later stages, especially since the seeding for the knockout stage was based on rankings, not on performance in qualifying.

By the time the last sixteen were playing, some prominent clashes came

up. Peter Trimmer, fresh from beating Mulliner, Clarke, and Fulford, without dropping a game, to win the Men's Championship, came up against an in-form James Death who almost completed a sixth-turn sextuple in the first game after Peter had gone round in the third turn. The second game quickly went James's way as well for a notable victory achieved with a commendably speedy and relaxed style. Another surprise was Jonathan Kirby's defeat of David Maugham, though one must question how much David's concentration was affected by the responsibility of managing such a large event. David Harrison-Wood had a real opportunity for an even bigger surprise, being on the second break in the third game against Reg Bamford, but one error was enough to see the chance slip away.

Wednesday was doubles day, and saw all five surviving members of the 1982 Test team playing, David Openshaw playing in doubles (with William Prichard) but not in singles. Only Stephen Mulliner of those five survived the first round, and even his form was causing his partner, Reg Bamford, some concern. In their next match Reg had even more cause for concern, as Stephen made very heavy weather of a triple after Reg had gone to four-back against the new pairing of John Gibbons and Brian Wainman. When Stephen broke down at three-back with two peels done, John took the opportunity to go round and peel and peg out Reg's ball. Stephen had several opportunities to win the pegged out game, but the fast surface and oncoming darkness saw repeated failures, as well as evidence of tactical disagreements between Reg and Stephen. As the tension rose and the time limit of four hours approached, Brian refused a five yard rush to the peg, preferring to let his more confident partner take the reverse shot and peg out one ball, leaving Stephen, now for penultimate, to hit a 25 yard shot to avoid defeat, as time had been called. Claiming (justifiably) that he could barely see the target ball, Stephen requested that the game be pegged

down, a request which, though reasonably granted, disappointed the large, inebriated, and bloodthirsty crowd who were enjoying a barbecue. Next morning the game finished disappointingly quickly as Stephen immediately missed his lift shot, despite taking the full five minutes practice time. The second game started with John making the first break, but failing at three-back. Reg had the first opportunity, but chose to lay up for Stephen, reckoning, fairly enough, that he (Reg) had the better chance of completing the triple. After one or two false starts Stephen did indeed get to four back, but Reg's plans were dashed by Brian hitting the long lift shot and playing an admirable and excellent break to peg, under real pressure on a lawn getting faster and faster. The leave saw Stephen's ball in court between three- and four-back, but Reg predictably ignored the force and took the short lift-shot into fourth corner, thinking (knowing?) that he was certain to finish if he hit. But he missed, giving John an easy finish for a remarkable, but thoroughly deserved victory.

Meanwhile the singles had proceeded through the quarter-finals, which were played best of five, on lawns 1,2,4, and 5. The latter two, in particular, were reminiscent of 1983, very brown, and playing to 12 seconds*, probably faster on some of the browner patches. Even Reg Bamford, on lawn 5, struggled in these conditions - all thoughts of sextuples were quickly dispelled, and triples became hazardous. Jonathan Kirby and Mark Avery took eight hours over their four games on lawn 4, Mark emerging a not totally convincing winner 3-1, and only Robert Fulford, on an easier lawn 1, looked comfortable with three triples against an outclassed Stephen

* Lawn speed can be measured by the time taken for a ball struck dead weight to travel the length of the lawn. The faster the surface, the more gently the ball may be struck, and the longer it will take. On a typical, medium-paced lawn this might take around eight seconds. - Ed

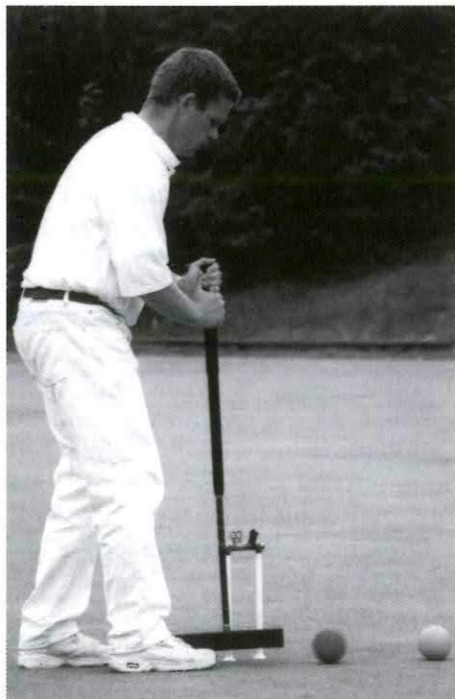
Mulliner. The last match saw Chris Clarke playing canny defensive croquet against James Death. His tactics worked - James's shooting, so effective against Trimmer, deserting him and handing Chris an easy 3-0 victory.

For the semi-finals, on Saturday, lawns 10 and 11, recently relaid, and considerably slower than 4 and 5, were prepared by having the hoops reset in new holes. This made them really demanding, and all four players quickly found just what that meant. While Robert Fulford adapted best, recovering from one or two early sticks to easily overcome a somewhat demoralized Chris Clarke, Reg Bamford seemed more psychologically affected by his early errors. After an attempted four-back peel failed to go through he asked for the width of the hoop to be checked. Predictably, its width was legal, but Reg promptly blobbed an easy one-back. Not only was his hoop running affected, but his shooting deserted him as well, your correspondent observing six consecutive shots of 20 yards or less, only one of which was hit. Mark Avery profited from these errors to take the first game, but he was playing with no more confidence or fluency than Reg, who managed to win the next three games to book his place in the Final against Robert.

For the final lawn 8 was chosen, as Cheltenham tradition dictates, and the hoops were again reset in fresh holes. The ground was softer than lawns 10 and 11, so the hoops were some way short of being as fearsome as they had been for the semi-finals. The match quickly developed into a psychological battle, Robert deliberately applying pressure to Reg's shooting. In the first game Robert left a ball badly wired in first hoop which Reg missed from A-baulk, giving Robert an easy triple. The bad wiring may have been accidental, but the outcome encouraged Robert to use leaves giving Reg shortish shots which would be expensive if missed. Reg missed some, and hit others, but critical hoop failures in both the second and third games gave Robert more and more confidence, and

he ran out an easy winner by 3-0 with another triple in game three. This was Robert's first Open Championship for five years, and the first time Robert had won an Opens final against Reg, their three previous meetings at this stage all going to Reg 3-2, so the convincing nature of this victory will have given Robert immense satisfaction. Following his World Championship title in Wellington in December (though he did not beat Reg in that event), Robert now has a legitimate claim to be the World No.1. With typical modesty, Robert denied that claim in a post-match interview, pointing to Reg's superior record in sextuples and Opens victories over the last ten years. There will however be little doubt in the minds of observers that Robert played much the better croquet in the conditions, particularly over the final days of the event when the lawns got faster. These fast lawns, a marked contrast to Hurlingham's usually easier conditions, made the event a different test, and this was a test for which, on the day, Robert was better equipped.

Since Robert was also involved in the doubles, the final, involving probably Great Britain's top four players, Fulford, Clarke, Maugham and Avery,



David Maugham's form remains consistent

could not start until after the singles final, and the quality of Robert's performance in the singles final was shown by the trouble that all four players had just to play four-ball breaks on the fast surface of lawn 1. Robert may have felt a little flat after his efforts in winning the singles, and the match lacked the sparkle and interest of the singles. By the time dusk fell at 9.30 pm only two or three spectators remained, the score was game-all, break-all, so the (perhaps dubious, but understandable) decision was taken to share the title, the first time that this has been deemed necessary.



Will Stephen Mulliner's self-confidence carry him through November's MacRobertson Shield Test Series?

So what can be forecast for the forthcoming MacRobertson Shield contest on the basis of the week's results? The clear superiority of Fulford and Bamford over the following pack was reemphasized. Clarke, Maugham, and Avery were solid in both singles and doubles, without threatening either of the top two, Burrow was absent (will the President's Cup be enough to get him match fit?) and Mulliner's drop in form was clear to everyone (except perhaps Stephen himself). His unquestioning self-belief has however always been his greatest strength, and will no doubt help him to cope better with the pressure of a Test series than might be the case with some of his hypothetical replacements.

Other Tournaments

As for those who complain about the lack of up-and-coming talent to challenge the established old (or rather ageing) guard, the week gave appreciable evidence of hope for the future. Alongside Burrow, already selected for the team, your correspondent saw Trimmer, Kirby, Death, Gibbons, Wainman and Evans as plausible candidates showing clear evidence of promise and potential. Not all quite ready, maybe, but sufficient of a challenge, and still improving, to make some of the current team start to feel insecure. Irwin, showed that he is by no means finished by putting in a typically solid performance to win the plate, Kirby won the Z consolation, and Mundy and Foulser the Y doubles. I do not have exact figure for how many games, triples, and sextuples were completed, but can guess that these were orders of magnitude greater than the figures for 1968. Then the Test team went on to a convincing victory in the MacRobertson Shield contest, and I see no reason to believe that this year's team cannot achieve the same.

That the move from Hurlingham to Cheltenham produced the welcome challenge of truly fast and demanding lawns was largely a fortuitous consequence of the unexpected warm and fine weather, which cannot be guaranteed for future years. Many players however commented on the different social atmosphere provided by Cheltenham, almost everyone being within the manager's reach at most times, and meals in the evening being more affordable than is so often the case in London. The generosity of Bernard Neal in hosting a barbecue for the players on Thursday night helped to add to the social cohesion of the event, and the absence of city workers trying to rush off to work as soon as they lost a game was also much appreciated. Maybe it's not yet time for a permanent move of the event to Cheltenham, but an alternation between the two sites has much to recommend it. I certainly don't think it will be another 20 years before we see the Opens at Cheltenham.

Challenge & Gilbey Tournament

Marcus Evans, 18, from Nailsea MCC won the Roehampton Cup in the lowest handicap section of the Challenge & Gilbey tournament held at Budleigh Salterton from 28-31 August. He is one of the youngest winners in the 103-year history of this CA event.

Cliff Jones (*below*), older than 18, was runner-up to Marcus Evans.



Golf Croquet Selectors Weekend Report by Bill Arliss

The first staging of this event was played at Hunstanton. The eight players selected for the event were Bill Arliss, Don Beck, David Dray, David Hopkins, John Moore, Nelson Morrow, Chris Sheen and Roy Ware. The format chosen for the event followed the normal 'eights' practice with each player playing every other player twice with a single 19 point game.

As there are no watering facilities at Hunstanton, the lawns were extremely fast and showed every slight dip and rise. Luckily there were not too many of these and the players soon recognised the most difficult hoops and adjusted their approach accordingly. Nelson Morrow quickly adapted to the conditions and finished the day with six wins from seven games with Chris Sheen second on five from seven. No time limits were imposed on day one and several

games took well over the expected hour with play finishing after 7.00 pm.

Day two and the same again. A time limit of 65 minutes was imposed before the start of play but most players had by then partially mastered the conditions and most games were finished within time. Nelson continued his progress without a further loss and finished outright winner with 13 wins from 14 games and collected the Musk Cup and the £250 prize money sponsored by Chris Sheen's company Musks Ltd. Roy Ware and Chris Sheen finished equal second with 9 wins from 13. Perhaps a tweaking of the format will be necessary next year as after eight hours of almost continuous play on both days, stamina started to rival skill in determining results towards the end of the competition.

Ramsgate Handicap Doubles Weekend August 2nd/3rd Report by Gerard Healy

A five round Swiss Handicap doubles event is many croquet players idea of self-imposed torment, but apart from the heat, provided by a relentless sun throughout the weekend, there was little to complain of and much to enjoy for all comers. Handicaps among the twelve pairs involved ranged across the spectrum from a couple of minus players up to some relative beginners of 20+. Several of the high handicappers had just returned from the Summer school held at Southwick and were eager to show off their grasp of the Five Principles of Croquet (quiz question for minus players - what are these principles?).

After the first rounds of the Swiss several pairs stood out as contenders - in particular the highest handicap pair, playing off a combined 36, of Peter Wightman and Marilyn Murray and the lowest handicap pair, off 8 1/5, of Roy Ware and David Dray. Both in their different methods looked very dangerous. The former used their bisques steadily to build up a lead and

then held on for the end of the game, the latter employing the "lets hit in and go round" approach. In an early game between these two, the high handicappers won narrowly and players on neighbouring courts were startled by the loud cheer when David finally ran hoop one shortly before time was called but the lead was by then too great to overcome.

At the end of the first day only one pair emerged unbeaten, Dennis Shaw and Jo Frankish, six others were tied for second place with two wins out of three.

Sunday morning saw Dennis and Jo score a close victory against the bisques held by Peter and Marilyn to give them 4 wins out of 4 and only Roy/David and John Ruddock and Joyce Slawson could then catch them in the final round. John and Joyce had sneaked up through the pack with some good shooting and tidy wins but

in the final round failed to gain the victory that would have given them a chance of the title and given the manager a sizeable headache since he would have faced some form of play-off.

In the event the tournament result came down to the match between Dennis/Jo and Roy/David. If Dennis/Jo won they would have completed the tournament with 5 wins out of 5, if Roy/David won they would take the spoils on the "who beat whom" rule. Very early on David hit in and went round to penultimate flawlessly, Dennis eyeing his bisques decided one opponent was better than two, went round performed the double peel and using his last bisque missed the peg out! However on the next turn he hit in and redeemed the situation - this left Roy on hoop 1 against 3 and peg. He proceeded to compile a series of long hit ins on

semi-wired balls followed by long hoop running and ran out the easy winner. Lesson for us all think carefully before pegging out against an opponent so proficient at golf croquet.

Thus the manager and his partner won but their solid play will surely result in their handicaps falling over the year ahead and the combined handicap limit of 8 will prevent them from combining next year.

The only sadness of the weekend was the paucity of visiting players - the large majority of entrants were from Ramsgate and neighbouring clubs. This is an excellent opportunity to play in an unusual format. The lawns are particularly good, being flat and moderately fast, the catering and bar are excellent and the opposition suitably varied. I would encourage many more visitors to enter.

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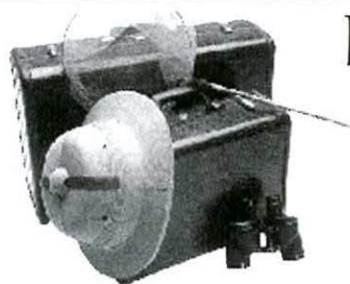
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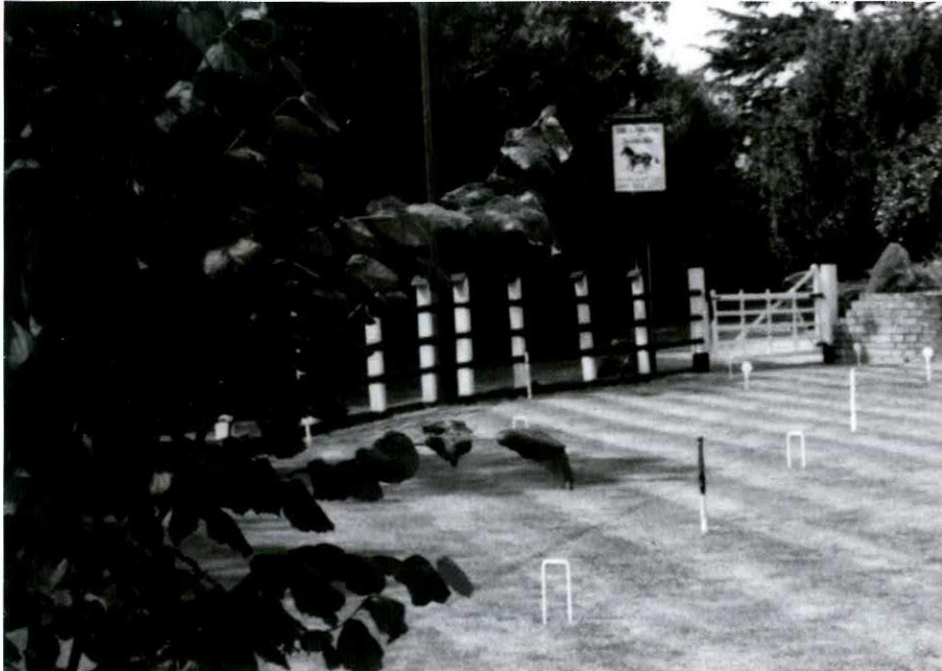
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The Gardens of Hanbury

Brush up on the Laws

No 2 - By Michael Hague



For those who retain a romantic image of croquet in an idyllic English garden setting, the Gardens of Hanbury is the perfect location.

From time to time, clubs seem to spring up of their own free will, and one such potential prospect is in Waltham Abbey on the north edge of the Epping Forest in Essex.

Donald Miller, the driving force, recently happened upon the croquet set of his late grandfather. The mallets - fine antiques made of hardwood and still in pristine condition - seem to remain as a full set, as do the hoops (ten of them) and each of the two pegs. There's only one ball, boxwood and decorated with specks of red. It's almost certain this had been a continuous stripe around the ball rather than a dotted pattern.

Most curious of all, though, is a strange double hoop with a chain suspended from the crosspiece. This would have been an obsolete piece of equipment known as a bell-cage. Never approved by the CA or its predecessor the Wimbledon Club, this novelty device (*right*) had a suspended bell (now missing from Donald's set), which players had to ring on running the hoop. First adopted at the Eglinton Castle garden parties in the 1870s, this strange 10-hoop setting was adopted unilaterally by some manu-

facturers and marketed well into the 20th Century.

Undaunted by the missing elements of his set, Donald has sourced many replacements himself. A local wood-turner has provided more wooden balls. It transpires that the decorative balls on the end of banisters are almost perfect in their dimensions. Playing with oak balls soaked in linseed oil such as these, however, may look attractive, but their durability might suffer, and it's almost a shame to damage them.

First stop in trying to find a bell was - obviously - the local pet shop. It seems the required size was too big even for a budgie, so a trip to a bell foundry in Whitechapel has yielded something of the ideal size of 5cm (incidentally, not by a long way their smallest available).

That completes the 'garden' set, but Donald is keen to drive forward with a more mainstream game. His plan is a club catering for children with disabilities. There's been some success with a friend's son with autism, and he has grand plans for the local community in this beautiful setting.

Anyone with any surplus equipment they feel would be useful can contact him at: "Gardens of Hanbury", Beach Hill Park, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 3QL. Tel: 020 8520 7789.

In the last edition of the *Croquet Gazette*, the reader was asked when must an adversary not forestall i.e. when striker is about to run a wrong hoop, play a wrong ball or purport to take croquet from a dead ball. Those readers possessing a Law Book may have looked up the reference given with the answer and read on. They will have no trouble answering this next question:

When MUST an adversary forestall?

Answer Law 23(c). A player MUST forestall play if he suspects or becomes aware that:

- (1) the striker intends to play a questionable stroke (e.g. a hampered shot) without having it watched
- (2) an error other than a fault (e.g. purporting to play a roquet instead of a croquet) or an interference is about to occur (e.g. from a double banked striker)
- (3) an error or an interference has occurred
- (4) the striker's turn is about to end prematurely e.g. the striker is leaving the court before playing or deeming to play his continuation shot
- (5) a clip is misplaced
- (6) a boundary marker has been displaced.

These are non-fatal errors. Forestalling saves having to put the balls back (in most cases) and playing the shot again. Note that one should not forestall while the adversary is playing a stroke unless the issue (e.g. hampered stroke) concerns the stroke being played (Law 23(d)).



THE CAGE

Is another novelty, formed by placing two hoops across each other, and fastening a bell at the point of intersection, which has to be struck by the ball passing through.

News & Information

Openshaw nominated for World Croquet Federation Presidency



The Croquet Association has nominated David Openshaw for the post of President of the World Croquet Federation. Any election will be held in December this year.

David has been a member of the WCF Management Committee for two years and is well known overseas, having played croquet internationally for Great Britain since 1979. He is currently a member of the CA Council, the CA Executive and Management Committees - and he also chairs the CA International Committee.

The Council of The Croquet Association believes that David Openshaw's experience makes him well suited to be the next WCF President.

A Croquet First?

Congratulations, of sorts, are due to Liz Wilson from Fylde who has achieved what is thought to be a croquet first. Playing at home for Pendle in a Longman Cup match, she and husband Peter were attempting to ignore the sideline barracking from a gang of local youths. The intrusion became more distracting as Liz was witness to the arrival of a the game's first male streaker. Peter showed his mettle, and proceeded to finish his break without noticing.

Meanwhile, the hot weather has produced evidence of an emerging trend, with the CA vs Scotland match subjected to the attentions of a topless young lady. Maybe this is evidence of an elevation of croquet in the public eye. Television coverage is surely not far away.

A Fine Cut Rush

Still in a congratulatory mood, hats must be raised to Phil Eardley, who surely takes the title for World's Worst Missed Roquet. Hampered after 1-back, he attempted to rush a ball which was a mere four inches away. What resulted was a full-on smash with the side of his mallet, sending his own ball away at right angles towards the east boundary. At the furthest point he was a full 28 yards away from the object ball, though it's fair to say that he might have notched up another 20 yards had his ball not reached a vertical bank.

Is this an accolade which any reader can match?

Christopher Miles

News has arrived of the sad death of Christopher (Kit) Miles, who died in Sydney on 23rd July after a short illness.

He did a tremendous job for Australian croquet in his capacity as a player, referee, coach and in his capacity as President of the Australian Croquet Association, for which he received an OAM, Order of Australia Medal. He had been a member of the CA since 1991.

Handicap Committee

With immediate effect, the Handicap Co-ordination Committee has relaxed the restrictions on Association Handicappers setting and altering handicaps of 8 and less. An index change of 80 points is no longer required for such a change to be made. Paragraph 4.3 of the Handicap Guidelines and Procedures now reads:

4.3 Handicaps from 0 to 8

Only Association Handicappers may alter and set Handicaps in this range. However, Club Handicappers may recommend such changes to an Association Handicapper but it will not take effect until confirmed by the Association Handicapper.

Any such change must be by at least 3 steps. Such changes must be based on a period of 10 or more consecutive Eligible Games. Eligible Games are games that count in the AHS.

HOOPOTAMUS

by Victor



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