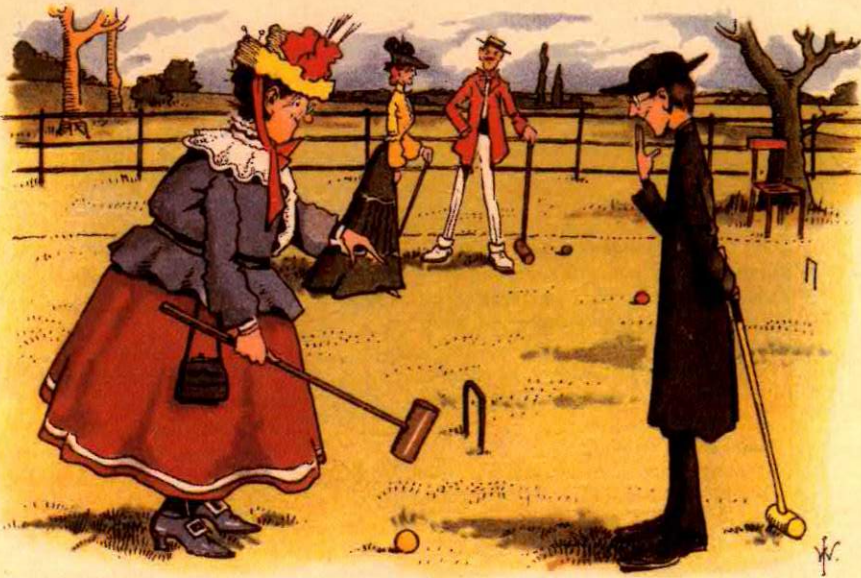




THE CROQUET GAZETTE

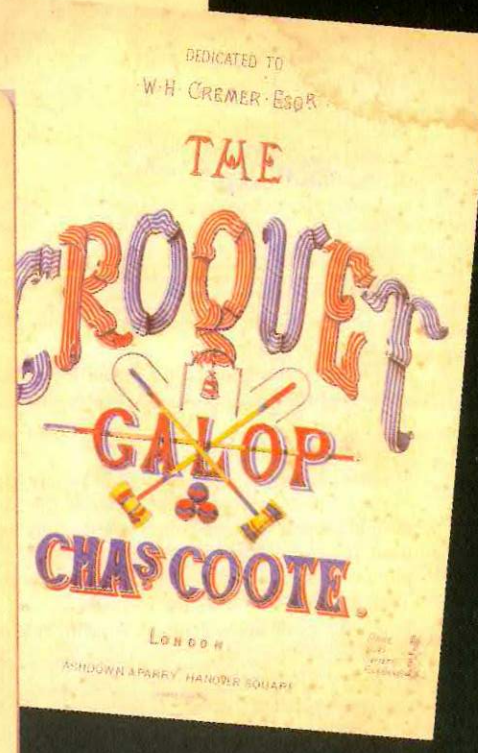
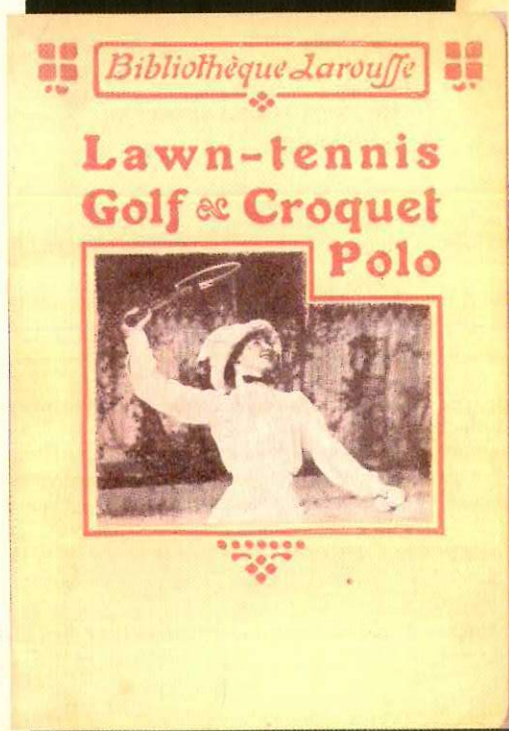
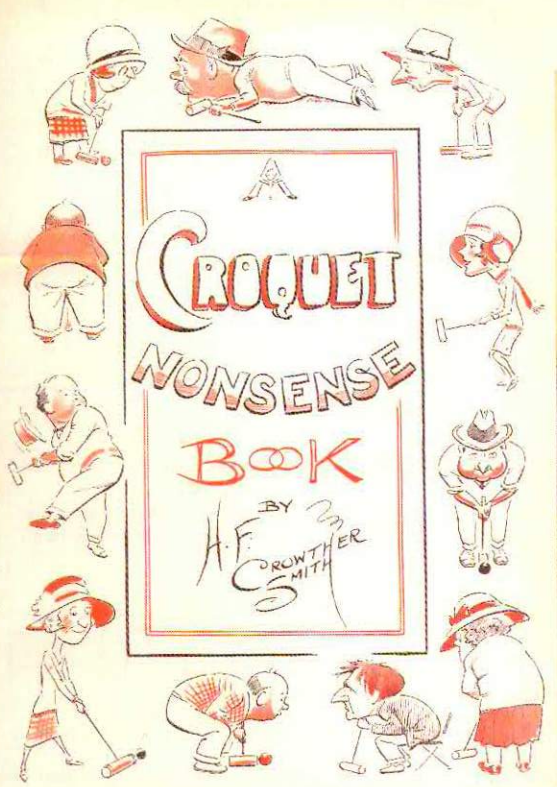
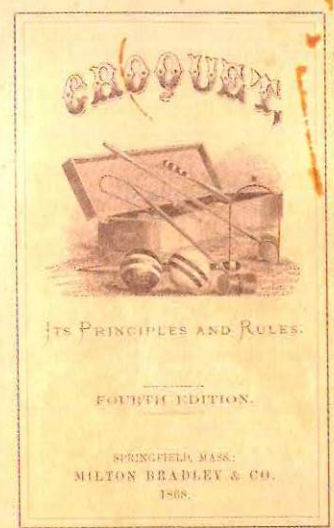
ISSUE 288 - NOVEMBER 2003

Misch & Stock's "CROQUET SHOTS" Series No 174. Inspired by Eugene Ippolito-Bonard



"Croquet-Shots."

LARGE LADY. — Have I to get through that hoop?
The CURATE. — Well-er-that is, your ball, as it were,
has to go through.



Collecting Croquet: a beginner's guide

Chairman's Column

Introducing Ian Vincent, the new Chairman of Council

The editor has invited me to start by indulging in a brief autobiography, to give you some idea of my background. Born and brought up in Sussex, I first played croquet as a teenager staying with relatives in Ireland: much of the fun was in preparing the court and trying to work out the rules. I next came across it at when I went up to Downing College, where there was a small lawn set out on the paddock.

Back home for the summer, I looked for a local club and found one at Preston Park: their full-size court seemed enormous. A couple there, the Clements, were very kind to me, to the extent that after a few games they sent me on to the Sussex County Club, where Howard Austin took me under his wing. I played in my first tournament in 1972, off an initial handicap of 5*, showing an early interest in management by having the temerity to suggest that I could make quicker progress if my opponents played more than two games a day! Tolerantly, this

interest was encouraged by their tournament secretary, Betty Tucker, and I was also fortunate to be trained as a Referee by the Prichards at one of their Wrest Park courses: they showed exemplary patience with my insatiable questions.

After my first degree, I combined my interests in chemistry and computing by doing three years research in theoretical chemistry at Sussex University, somewhat surprising my supervisor by telling him that I couldn't start before October because I had entered for Devonshire Park.

Opting for computing, and after consulting the CA Directory, I found a job at Nottingham University, where I have stayed ever since.

At the adjacent club, I found a group of rapidly improving players, among them George Noble, who when he moved down to London invited me to stay and partner him in

the Open Doubles. This not only led to a partnership that survives to this day, but to the first of a number of invitations to play in the Eights (in the days before rankings you had to be seen by the selectors), which I very much enjoyed. I am also indebted to him for introducing me to my other great enthusiasm, bellringing.

For many years, both as a player and club secretary, I took the CA very much for granted, apart from one uncharacteristic burst of political activity when I opposed a plan to abolish individual membership. My constructive involvement started in 1997, when I was co-opted onto the Laws Committee. I was elected to Council two years later and having chaired the Laws, Publishing and Management Committees now find myself as its Chairman. In guiding its work I hope to contribute something back to the sport which has given me so much pleasure and lasting friendship.

Quiller Barrett said goodbye in the last *Gazette* and has now retired from Council, but we cannot let him do so without our heartfelt thanks. He took over as Chairman at a difficult time, with the need to find a new location for the CA Office, but used his quiet diplomacy to see us safely through the resulting turbulence.

Although keen to delegate as much as possible, in line with the structure his working party introduced in 1999, he not only tried to ensure that Committees set and achieved their short term objectives, but kept Council focused on longer term ones. In particular, he saw the importance of having a strategic plan, both to direct our own efforts and to support funding applications by clubs and federations, and undertook much of the work of preparing the draft that will be considered at our December meeting.

Personally, I am very grateful for

the encouragement, support and patience he has shown me during my time on Council and wish him a well earned rest.

Hamish Hall, latterly Chairman of the Development Committee and Douglas Gurney, formerly Chairman of the Handicap Committee, also left Council with our thanks and we were pleased to welcome Jeff Dawson, Brian Fisk, David Mooney and John Ruddock. I am grateful to Richard Hoskyns for agreeing to stand as Vice-Chairman and to the committee chairmen whose names you will find on the inside front cover.

In addition to Hamish, two others handed over the chairmanship of major committees: Bill Arliss, after the maximum four years, from Golf Croquet and David Openshaw from International. Both have done a great deal and neither are hanging up their mallets: Bill is chairing the Management Committee for the MGM 6th WCF World Golf Croquet Championships to be held next June and David is becoming President of the World Croquet Federation. Our own Association will also have a new President next year, as at the end of an otherwise uneventful AGM John Solomon announced his intention to stand down.

Thanks has been the theme of this column and it is due not only to the few individuals who serve on Council and its Committees, but to the many of you who contribute to the running of the Federations and Clubs without which the CA could not function. I was reminded of this both on the day of the AGM, when a number of notable absentees were contesting the President's Cup at Surbiton, and the previous weekend, when Cheltenham staged the finals of the national club competitions for the last time after a number of years.

I trust you winter well.

Ian

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

Watford Croquet Tour

As is so often the way it all started in the bar. Several ex-cricketers in the club recalled the cricket tours of their misspent youth and regretted that croquet clubs do not show the same itinerant tendencies. Mark Homan, as the most vociferous, was deputed to do something about it. Thus was born the Watford Croquet Club tour.

From a central base in farmhouse accommodation overlooking the Mendip Hills and close to excellent local hostelrys with Butcombe bitter, fine wines and good food, Watford embarked on a five day August tour of Avon. John Bee, Robert Bateson, Mark Homan and Ian Parkinson took part in the Nailsea Weekend Handicap Tournament whilst Bill Gillott and Simon Hathrell entered the Bristol B Class Tournament. Three closely fought matches against Swindon on the Friday (lost 3-4), Bristol on Monday (drawn 4-4) and Bath on Tuesday (won 5-3) completed the itinerary. Peter Dyke at Nailsea, John Airey at Swindon, Frances Ransom at Bristol and Bob Whitaker at Bath all helped with the arrangements which made for a smooth running and enjoyable tour that Watford hope to repeat next year.

Could this pave the way for similar activities by other clubs? Watford is

willing to play host, but cannot claim to offer quite the same countryside as Avon!

Ian Parkinson
Watford

On being focused

This year Chester Croquet club has had a 29% increase in membership.

Janet Davies our coach has worked hard inducting and programming a new batch of players. "You must stay focused," she repeated.

One evening Helen and Steven were concentrating on their game and ignoring any onlookers. However when they came to play the fourth hoop they found it missing. The onlookers had removed it! They did however search the bushes and like good croquet players retrieved the situation- maybe we should add this to their coaching?

Mollie McBride
Chester

MacLauren vs MacRobertson

When I received the latest Gazette (Sept, Issue 287), I was assuming the front cover would have photos of our MacRobertson Test players, a last

chance before they represent us in Florida in November.

I WAS WRONG - Lord MacLauren was right, we had a delightful front cover of croquet at Chew Magna in 1912 - a nice story - but surely a Gazette item for winter months.

I certainly would not expect the Mac players to get together beforehand for a "Team Photograph", but surely you could have included a photo of each (head and shoulders), plus at least a Banner Headline wishing them well. I did manage to find in the last paragraph of Martin Murray's report of the Opens (page 18) mention of the Mac players - thanks Martin. The MacRobertson Shield Test Matches take place every 3 - 4 years, are the pinnacle of a player's achievement - and surely deserve some coverage.

Croquet players might like to have seen details of the timetable of matches and the format, also where to find the results. Are there plans for us to follow the matches and obtain national publicity/TV coverage of the Mac?

Judy Anderson
Colworth

Once again, this has been a problem of the timing of the Gazette. This year's Mac has unfortunately fallen after this edition of the magazine goes to the printers, but before its delivery. Even so, I felt it better to allow Martin, as a former Test player, and ex-chairman of the Selectors, to provide the brief preview which he did. Rest assured that the next edition of the Gazette will report fully on the outcome of the Tests. By the time you read this, the results will have been decided, so for those unable to wait until the New Year, full reporting is available on the Internet at: <http://js00.home.mindspring.com/macrob2003/> - Ed.

Croquet Jazz

I recently came across a recording by The Carson Jazz Band of USA called 'Let's Play Croquet'. I know nothing about this band although I believe it to be a West Coast outfit. Cannot even

remember how I obtained it, but thought the words might be of interest.

Won't you come over
And stomp down the clover
And Play Croquet

I've lots of things
I've been saving for you
If you'll only play

We're gonna have lots of fun
In the grass in the sun

We'll knock that old ball
Right over the wall

Won't you come over
And stomp down the clover
And Play Croquet

Owen Bryce
Northampton

Choice of Grip

Players who do not use the Irish grip have little conception of the strain it puts on the top wrist. A trial swing or two does not reveal the problem which is admirably highlighted in Clifford Walker's letter (Issue 287), and indeed a bend in the shaft does afford the best relief. I have used such a mallet for 25 years. However it might not

be obvious to others because my initial constructions showed that a large bend, such as those illustrated in Mr Walker's letter, amplifies any accidental rotations of the shaft about its long axis. When playing, the small 'crook' at the top of my shaft is almost entirely hidden in my left hand. But it has been most effective in reducing the strain - I have even won a match or two!

It is natural for people who have played cricket and hockey to use the Irish grip, and a few of these have adopted techniques which also reduce the strain, though I don't know if that was the motivation. Humphrey Hicks, for example, played side style and swung his upper body from the hips, and I have heard William Ormerod's style described as a 'forward defensive shot'. But as I get older and stiffer I am intending a radical change from the Irish grip. I have always considered the asymmetry of the standard grip to be suspect, so I shall not be using that. The most relaxed type of grip for a majority of strokes is, I am sure, the Solomon (John, not Eric) grip used with a long shaft. Notable modern players who use this style are David Maugham and Jeff Dawson.

Eric Solomon
London

Brush up on the Laws

No 3 - By Michael Hague

In the previous question in this series on the Laws of Association Croquet, we concluded examining Law 23, and the fact that a player must forestall immediately if he suspects or becomes aware *inter alia* that a non-fatal error or an interference is about to occur.

One such error is not placing the striker's ball on the ground in contact with the croqueted ball and no other (Law 19(a)). The question which arises this:

Does an error occur which has to be rectified, if a croquet is played when the balls are not in contact at the time of the stroke being played?

Answer

Law 27(b). A ball is deemed to have been in contact with another ball if in preparation for the stroke, the striker attempted finally to place, adjust or leave the balls in contact. The player is not allowed to leave them out of contact deliberately or even attempt to do so. The acceptance of minor displacements is a recent change to the laws, but beware! Having the balls out of contact can distort the results of the croquet. In a thin take off it increases the likelihood of a fault being committed when the croqueted ball is not moved or shaken (Law 28(a) (14)). The accuracy of the take off will suffer if the player compensates for the balls not touching by hitting in more towards the croqueted ball. The line of take off of the striker's ball will shift towards the side of the croqueted ball. Extrapolated over a long distance, the position of the striker's ball finally at rest can be unexpected and disadvantageous. Similarly on say, hard or rough ground, a straight drive croquet with the balls well out of contact may result in the two balls failing to end up with the 1 to 3 or so ratio but near to 1 to 2 or less. This will probably mean that a double hit has occurred, a fault under Law 28 (b) (8). (Note that Law 27(b) specifically says that the fault cannot be ignored when resulting from a minor displacement).



Jack Shotton

Whose bright idea was it to invite the Corsican team over for a friendly?

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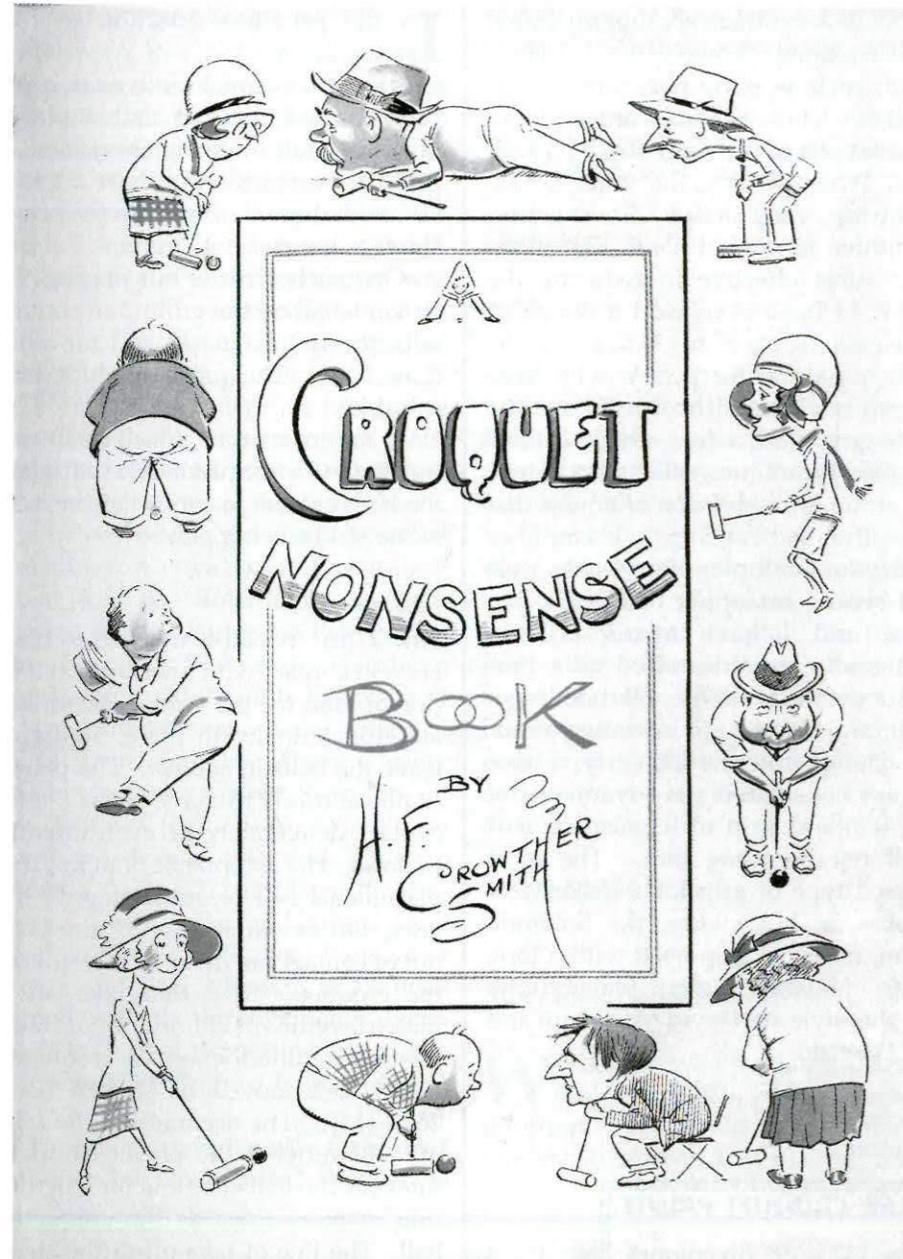
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IDEAL CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

The Croquet Bibliophile

David Drazin examines the market in rare croquet books



The literature of croquet has long been of interest to scholars and collectors. It is now ideally collectable. Prices are increasing at a healthy rate, and although, as every dealer will tell you, there is not much of it about, there are still bargains to be had. A handful of specialist dealers ask premium prices, but with patience the same titles can be found at quite modest prices at book fairs, from non-specialist bookshops, and through Internet websites.

The field is also especially enticing in terms of quantity, quality and variety. Whereas there are a good number of books about croquet or which refer

to it in the text, that number is not so astronomically large as to deter the collector of 'completist' inclination.

The condition of the older and more collectable croquet books which now come on to the market poses a special challenge. Most specimens look desperately sad: missing covers and jackets, heavy soiling, liberal annotations, tears, and lost matter are all par for the course. Instructional manuals and rule books tend to be heavily thumbed; they are handled in a hazardous environment (to wit, a croquet court); and having relatively few pages (seldom more than 32), the abuse suffered by each one is corre-

spondingly severe. So few books are in better than Good condition, but every cloud has a silver lining! It is generally economic to have a complete copy in Poor condition restored professionally - even at a cost of £50 or more - and there is every chance of picking up a better-than-average copy at a bargain price.

There has always been a good choice of introductory handbooks. The earliest, in Good condition, typically now fetch a few hundred pounds. One of the prettiest and most sought-after, Routledge's *Handbook of Croquet*, a petite hardback with illustrated yellow paper boards, first published in 1864, sold new at 6d.

It is a remarkable fact that, although the game of croquet attracted the attention of historians from its infancy, there is no reported sighting of any original dated record which refers to it prior to 1853. And it is also remarkable that there have been no reported sightings of most of the well-attested early accounts of the game in the past 100 years. Hence there are some prime targets for bounty hunters.

Pride of place must go to Isaac Spratt's *Rules of the New Game of Croquet*, possibly the very first printed account of the game. This work was registered at Stationers' Hall in 1856 and there are several independent references to it in the columns of *The Field* in the 1860s. Since then, amazingly, it is as if it has disappeared into thin air.

As the game became more popular in the 1860s, attempts were made to unify its laws, but no lasting attempt was possible before the foundation of the United All England Croquet Association (later the CA) in 1897. Up to that time, it was very much a free-for-all. Publishers (notably Routledge, Warne, Ward Lock, Cassell and Longmans) did their best to cash in on the popularity of the game; clubs and regional associations compiled their own laws; sports equipment manufacturers produced simplistic rule books to help sell their croquet sets; and self-styled experts were emboldened to

join the fray.

It might be supposed that publication of the UAECA's authoritative code of laws in 1897 would have stopped the freebooters dead in their tracks. But not so. As the laws of the game were subsequently refined, more or less annually, they became increasingly remote from the needs of the new 'garden croquet' players who merely aspired to an agreeable recreation. So manufacturers turned their back on the CA and continued to issue simplified rule books with their equipment. And the association's lawmakers also left other countries far behind. Most new national associations adopted various forms of the game, with varying rule books to match.

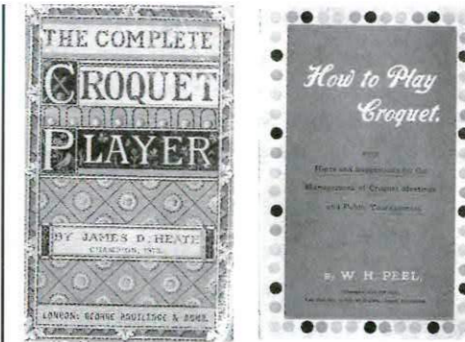
D.M.C. Prichard's *The History of Croquet* (1981) still ranks as the definitive history of the game, but some of the earlier histories are fascinating artefacts, and are no less readable, though they're generally less reliable as historical records. The most sought-after is Prior's *Croquet and Some Ancient Ball Games Related to It* (1872), an elegant cloth-covered hardback with exquisite inset plates.

There has been a steady stream of club histories, notably of late from the antipodes. None of these now fetch more than £10-£20, but there could be future potential here. Print-runs were modest, so prices of favoured titles could harden dramatically.

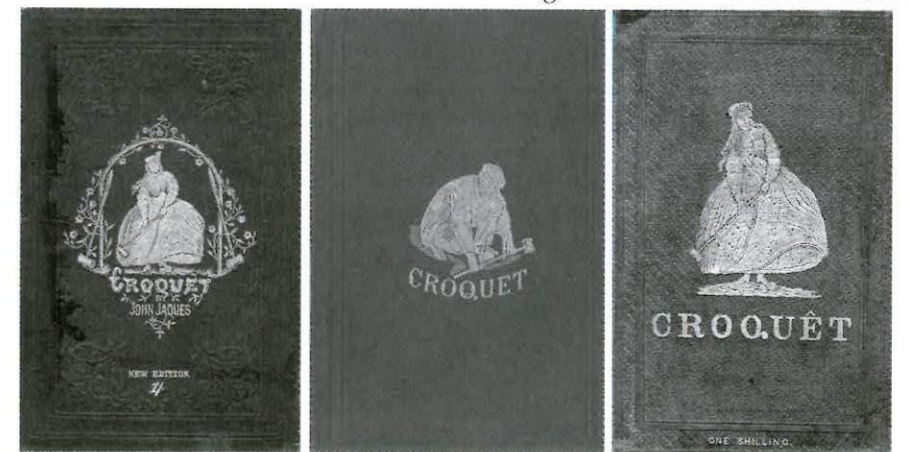
Every generation of players has

Lord Tollemache's work has long been the croquet collector's number one target. Though not especially scarce, few copies offered for sale come complete with the dustjacket, six 'diagrammes', two 'diagrammes', a huge plan of a croquet court, and twelve coloured tokens (three each in Blue, Red, Black and Yellow) in a manila envelope.

Even so, copies without the dust-jackets and accompanying extras can be expected to fetch around £200 - £300. A complete specimen in perfect condition would have a current market value nearer to £500 - £600, though a recent sale on the Internet went well past the \$800 barrier.



produced a fair crop of perfectionists, and it is our good fortune that a few have been moved to commit themselves to print. Their works, bristling with eccentricity, are the essence of collectability. Three titles stand out: *Croquet Tactics* (1868) by Walter Jones Whitmore, founding father of croquet as a scientific game; *Croquet* (1914) by Lord Tollemache, an eccentric confection with a pocket inside the rear cover, packed with all sorts of goodies (see below); and *Expert Croquet Tactics*



The Tollemache family had settled in Suffolk in the 11th Century. With a fortune from the brewing industry (Tolly Cobbold became part of Ridley's Brewery in the 1990's), and a seat in Parliament, John Tollemache bought a 30,000 acre estate in Cheshire, and constructed his faux-mediaeval mansion, Peckforton Castle, in 1854.

His grandson marked out a croquet court at the castle, and was a prominent member of nearby Bowdon Croquet Club. His championship career flourished in the years before the Great War, and he was a prominent member of the CA Council for many years.

(1985), a meticulous do-it-yourself job by Keith Wylie (subsequently updated and repackaged in a glossy paperback version). Further examples include James Heath's *Complete Croquet Player* (1874), and Walter Peel's *How to Play Croquet* (c.1898) (shown left), but buyers should be aware that collectability often reflects the importance of the author. Books by former champions such as Arthur Lillie and C.D. Locock fetch a healthy price, as do those by H.F. Crowther-Smith and Leonard B. Williams (both former editors of the *Croquet Gazette*). The relative obscurity of writers such as Miller & Thorpe leaves their 1950's work languishing even now at little more than £10.

From time to time, associations have produced all manner of ad hoc publications, dealing with such matters as lawn care, interpretation of the laws, recruitment, coaching, and the management of tournaments. Most of



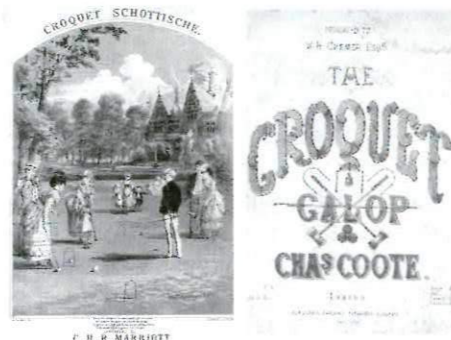
"M for the mallet Lord Tollemache wielded; There's a rumour that once it a quintuple peel did." From A CROQUET ALPHABET [HF Crowther-Smith 1913]

these are more in the nature of ephemera than real books, but some have acquired collectable status. Watch out, in particular for three classics published by the CA: *A Handbook of Modern Croquet* (1931); *The Basic Laws of Croquet* (1975); and D.M.C.Prichard's *Commentary on the Laws of Croquet* (1973).

National and regional associations have produced various year books and directories, detailing the names and addresses of members, their current handicaps, the names and appointments of officers, the laws of the game, lists of calendar fixtures, etc. These will perhaps appeal only to the most dedicated collectors, but exceptionally the *Year Book of the Croquet Association* (first published in 1902 as *The Croquet Association*) and *The New Zealand Croquet Annual* (from 1923) were generally well produced in earlier years, and could attract a keen following. Again, prices could be very variable.

Croquet equipment has been the focus of a good few trade catalogues, but perhaps not so many as might be supposed. Understandably, most manufacturers of sports equipment have concentrated on general catalogues. Those who have made a special feature of croquet are John Jaques (from 1864), F.H.Ayres (circa 1872 to 1948), Slazengers (circa 1910), Geo

Bussey (circa 1900), and Roy Brothers of East Barnet, Vermont (from around 1911). Their catalogues are now very scarce, and prices are variable. They change hands at anything between £5 and £150.



For those collectors with a penchant for the lighter side, there is a wondrous rag-bag of sheet music, caricature, satire and sundry blurrings. In the 1860s and 1870s, croquet was a fashionable pop music theme. Copies of the sheet music of the period now change hands at £50 - £150. *Croquet: Tempo Schottische* (1870), in a chromolithographed cover by Alfred Concanen, is an especially lovely example. But the most sought-after works in this class are the collections of caricatures drawn and published by H.F.Crowther-Smith ('Crowther') - *A Croquet Alphabet* (1913) and *A Croquet Nonsense Book* (1929). His artistry, gift with words, and understanding of the

game are of the highest order.

Aided and abetted by equipment manufacturers, several dedicated croqueteers have been at pains to adapt the essential characteristics of the game for special purposes and surfaces - for table and carpet play, to help beginner, and more recently to promote media coverage. The end-products have been slim pamphlets describing modified games. Undoubtedly the most celebrated of these are Lewis Carroll's 'Croquet Castles: For Five Players' (1863) and 'Castle-Croquet: For Four Players' (1866). The former work was never published and all extant copies are believed to be held in trust. But the latter, first published in *Aunt Judy's Magazine* (August 1867), can also be found in *Aunt Judy's Christmas Volume* (1867).

Over the years, croquet has been bundled with other games in all sorts of multi-sports books. Where croquet rubs shoulders with games which command high premiums, prices tend to take their cue from the highest-ranked game represented. Look out, in particular, for compilations with baseball, golf, cricket, lawn tennis and real tennis. One of the most highly prized croquet titles, a Ward & Lock 'Sixpenny Handbook', *Lawn Tennis, Badminton, Croquet, Troco, Racquets,*

Fives (1879), contains merely a few pages about croquet. A copy in Fine condition changed hands recently at about a thousand pounds. Another fascinating example of this genre is *Lawn-Tennis, Golf, Croquet, Polo* (circa 1911), a pretty French anthology in art nouveau covers with a photographic onlay.



I conclude this brief survey with a handful of titles, mostly works of fiction and verse, which happen to include the word 'croquet' and which would hence be thrown up by a keyword search of any library online system or e-commerce website. The most

commonplace is H.G.Wells's dark novelette, *The Croquet Player* (1936), which accounts for over sixty per cent of all croquet books now advertised. More recent works of this ilk come with such racy titles as *Nude Croquet* (by Leslie Fiedler; 1958), *Naked Croquet* (Douglas Melnyk; 1977), *Croquet Lover at the Dinner Table* (Jonathan Aldrich; 1977) and *Human Croquet* (Kate Atkinson; 1997). They may not say much about croquet, but they can't be ignored.

A few more words about prices. These tend to be higher here than anywhere else in the world. There are good bargains to be had, especially in the U.S., France and Australia. So access to the Internet is vital. Auctions are worth following, but don't expect to make rich pickings. They are generally well advertised and attract keen competition. Note that copies in Poor condition may be worth as much as eighty per cent of those in Good condi-

tion, so restoration is often worth considering.

The above article, updated and edited, was first published in Book and Magazine Collector, Issue No 193, April 2000. Back issues available for £3.50 may be ordered from 0870 7327070 or The Magazine Editor, Book and Magazine Collector, 140 Wales Farm Road, London W3 6UG (cheques payable to Diamond Publishing Limited).

David Drazin's Croquet: A Bibliography (2000) is published by Oak Knoll Press, U.S. and St Paul's Bibliographies. It describes over 1,000 croquet books and pamphlets and may be obtained from the UK distributor: Scott Brinded, The Coach House, 106 Dover Road, Folkestone, CT20 1NN. The price is £66, inclusive of UK inland postage.

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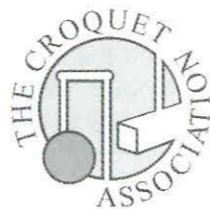
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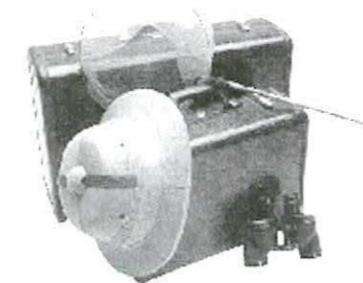
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Croquet Postcards

James Hawkins discovers a fascinating aspect of Edwardian social life



Back in the olden days, before e-mails, and text messaging, and video mobiles, it was *de rigueur* for folk to send each other picture postcards.

The sending of postcards is something we have all taken for granted throughout all our lifetimes, though how long the custom lasts in the next century remains to be seen. Even over the last half a century, postcard usage has become much reduced. Postcarding of late has become virtually confined to a holiday pursuit, though in its heyday the craze for cards was as all-pervading as the current vogue for mobile phone messaging.

Once the Post Office deregulated the production of cards in 1894, the quest of publishers for card images became insatiable. The golden age of postcard production over the next 20 years went hand in hand with croquet's peak in popularity, and this is seen in the wealth of collectable cards from that era.

Postcards are in many ways the ideal target for the collector new to the croquet market. They're relatively cheap to acquire, and storage presents little problem for even the largest col-

lection. Liz Webb from Bowdon has been in the business since about 1990, and her collection now stretches to about 600 specimens.

Croquet began to appear on cards around about 1901. Advances in printing technology made it much easier to reproduce photographs, and these early examples are mostly black-and-white images of exteriors. Liz's collection includes fine examples of croquet courts set out at English country houses, including an excellent early image of Sheen House, the former headquarters of the CA. By way of illustration of the sheer number of cards produced around this time, she's sorted her collection by type of building - private houses, clubs or schools. It's even possible to subdivide the latter into girls and boys schools, and have each group still stretching to several pages.

By the onset of War in 1914, the postcard industry was in full flow. More convenient than a letter, they were now a standard, and cheap, means of communicating. Printing was advancing still further, and by now colour cards were becoming commonplace. By the Twenties, there was a vast range of eyeball-popping graphic effects: scalloped edging, embossing, metallic highlights, coloured photos, and cartoon animals in dayglo ink. And throughout this period, sitting alongside the postcard craze in the popular culture of the day, was croquet. Winsome, doe-eyed children stare into the camera clutching mallets, cutesy cats play a game while their kittens chase after the balls, and Disneyfied toddlers struggle to wield a mallet twice their own size.

Maybe it's the earlier cards which form the core of any serious croquet collection. Liz Webb herself is somewhat embarrassed by the trashier entries in her hoard. They're not especially rare, their subject matter isn't at all interesting, and they fail outright on aesthetic grounds. For me, though, there's no better snapshot of life in the 1920's than looking at the rubbish left behind by ordinary people. It's diffi-



Above: a fine example of an early French card. The original is in full colour. Left: Whatever their subject matter, Art Deco images attract a high price.

cult to imagine how croquet, seen by the 21st Century world as a minority-interest piece of esoterica, could ever have been so apparently commonplace and, well, banal.

Whatever one's own interest, the question is how one puts that first foot forward in the collecting business.

The advent of the Internet has seen a great upsurge in interest in postcards. As antiques go, cards can be displayed at actual size on a computer screen. So, a collector in Australia can examine the goods in America before committing to a purchase. And once the buyer's decided, they're small enough to mail direct from the dealer.

Having said that, Liz is one of the old school who likes to get down among the fray at the postcard fairs which take place around the country. She's something of a lone voice in the postcard world. While other collectors specialise in Art Deco, or Art Nouveau or images of the Titanic (the three top subject matters, commanding the highest prices), many vendors still express surprise at her choice of



Above: Some of the stranger cards available to the collector. Below: One of Misch & Stock's Croquet-Shots series. Another is shown on the front cover.

theme. Indeed, she's been the subject of features in the postcard magazines as a result.

Prices for cards are relatively modest. Depending on quality, it's possible to get a typical card for around £3 -£4. If the card has some interest to collectors of another genre, such as the Deco image opposite, prices can touch £10 - £15. Some cards are desired, not for the picture at all, but for the stamps, or the inscription, or for the artist or, as below, for a specific publisher.

The overseas market is lively. With cards being sent throughout the world, many British examples have

found themselves on the shelves of collectors in the States. Allen Scheuch, the king of croquet collectors in the USA, tracked down an early photo of Bowdon Croquet Club, contacted Liz and sent it over. It now hangs in the clubhouse, just feet from where the photographer must have stood 80 years ago. The Scheuch collection amounts to a huge library of 1,100 cards. Public decency forbids me from reproducing here one picture in particular. Suffice it to say that it depicts a young lady croquet player whose dress code would be unacceptable even now at all but the most relaxed of clubs. Allen's is a largely



North American collection, though he does hold many European cards. Liz Webb is much more of a specialist, with the bulk of her set coming from Britain. It's hard to know what constitutes a definitive collection, but her 600 must come close to a full house.

Despite what you might think, mainland Europe is not a croquet desert for the card collector. Liz has a couple of interesting Dutch cards and a few French ones, as well as the odd specimen from beyond our immediate neighbours. Twelve years ago she met another collector in France, who claimed to have something in excess of 300 postcards, all of them French. It's clear that the cards are out there for whoever has the time and energy to seek them out.

One sideline essential for the postcard completist is that of croquet cigarette cards. These, certainly, present fewer of the challenges for the experienced forager. As they were designed for the express purpose of collecting, cigarette cards are much easier to find, and a complete set would take no time at all to achieve for the diligent hunter. Gallaghers featured a fine series of just ten cards featuring the likes of Cyril Corbally, Viscount Doneraile and the ubiquitous Lord Tollemache. Otherwise, bar the odd card within a larger set of general sporting scenes, there's little to find. Perhaps this is the ideal point to dip a toe into the waters of collecting. Once started, though, be warned that the thirst for collectables seems unquenchable.

Croquet artwork, equipment and other collectable miscellanea will be covered in a future edition of the Gazette.

Weblinks:
www.postcard.co.uk
 The Postcard Traders Association gives information on dealers and specialist fairs around the country
www.ebay.com
 The online auction site often includes croquet artefacts of all kinds.

CA Diplomas

Whitford Harris Naylor - Auckland

Whit has been a member of Auckland Croquet Club since it started in 1998. He has never stood for office, but is always willing to help in any way he can. He acts as unofficial greenkeeper and the club's lawn is a credit to his efforts. He is a regular on the rota for setting out the courts and is always ready to cover for anyone unable to fulfil his/her turn. He is ready to pass on his knowledge of the game to newcomers. He is always cheerful and is the life and soul of the club's social gatherings.

John Grant - Belsay Hall

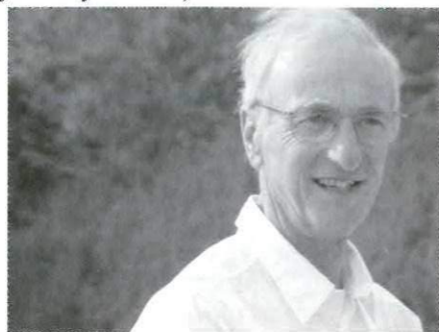
John became a member of Belsay Hall Croquet Club shortly after its formation in 1989, and immediately became involved in the club's development, becoming Chairman in 1996. He was enthusiastically involved in practically every aspect of the club life, organising everything from tournaments and leagues to the club's annual dinner, and compiling annually a 48 page club handbook. His enthusiasm for croquet was infectious, and he willingly taught new players; through his dedication and application he built the club up to sixty members. He served for many years on the committee of Croquet North, and as their Development Officer he was largely instrumental in obtaining a lottery grant to purchase a mini-carpet for use in village halls. Failing health has forced John reluctantly to wind down his involvement in croquet, but the club is keen to show its appreciation of the enormous contribution he has made over the years.

Jolyon Kay - Blewbury

Jolyon founded Blewbury Croquet Club ten years ago, and has served on the committee ever since, with spells as Chairman and Secretary. He chaired the project group set up when the club applied for a Lottery Grant from Sport England, and was heavily involved in the discussions leading to the success of the application and in the contractual negotiations which followed. He has served as Chairman of the Southern Croquet Federation, and is currently their Coaching Officer and Regional

Representative on Council. He has worked selflessly to publicise and promote croquet in the local area, and is running a series of coaching courses for club members and juniors, including two girls who have chosen to play croquet as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Neil Williams - Westmorland (formerly Kendal)



Neil has had a long and varied history in croquet, having been a member of Cheltenham, Southport, Crake Valley and Kendal Croquet Clubs. He has interviewed many distinguished players and written numerous articles for the Croquet Gazette. He has been a great teacher of the game, and has given unstintingly of his time to manage and act as referee at tournaments. When problems of vandalism forced Kendal Croquet Club to seek a new venue he was tireless in his efforts to find a suitable location, raise the necessary finance, and finally to recruit an expert groundsman to look after what is now a fine croquet lawn in the ornamental grounds of Levens Hall. Owing to recent prolonged ill health Neil has been unable to take advantage of playing on the new lawn or to continue as Chairman of the renamed Westmorland Croquet Club, but the club's committee is keen to ensure that his immense contribution to the game should not go unrecognised.

Mike Sandler - Bowdon

Mike Sandler retired as Hon Treasurer of the Bowdon Croquet Club in November 2002 after 22 years in office. Mike joined the Club in 1973 at a time when it was recovering after a long decline. He was one of a group of enthusiastic younger members who

sustained the Club when no money was available, culminating in the revival in 1979 of the Northern Championships. During his period of office as treasurer he has acted also as the Club's honorary legal advisor, particularly in the matter of the renewal and extension of the lease with the National Trust which enabled the Club to obtain a crucial Sports Council grant. When the Club hosted a number of Test Matches in the 1990s, Mike Sandler sponsored the events through his Legal Practice. His generosity was multiplied by the efforts of other members, who built on the resulting publicity to expand the full playing membership by an unprecedented 25% in a single year. The income flowing from this surge in membership now underpins the undoubted success enjoyed by the Club today, and is a direct result of his generous example and sound financial leadership.

Donald Beck - Medway

Don was a founder member of the club, and acted as Secretary for twelve years until his move to Middlesex for business reasons. He played a large part in the development of Medway into a four lawn club with upward of fifty members. He was especially effective in raising money by grants, loans and donations, and also in recruiting new members and publicising the activities of the club.

Joyce and Mary Goodhart - Budleigh Salterton

Joyce and Mary Goodhart are stalwarts of Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club. Since joining the club in 1986 both have been highly active committee members. Mary has been Chairman of both the Club and Croquet Committees, and for many years has occupied the hugely demanding position of Tournament Secretary; Joyce has been Croquet Secretary and Chairman and a member of the General Committee, and is currently Chairman of the Handicap Committee. Apart from their committee work both are assistant coaches, help with catering, and find time to be keen players. Their presence at CA Tournaments is invaluable, with their

ability for making visitors feel welcome, ensuring that the club is tidy, that trophies are ready for presentation and that everything runs smoothly. The club owes them a great debt of gratitude for all their hard work over the years.

Bunny & Dennis Porter - Budleigh Salterton

Bunny Porter, assisted by her husband Dennis, runs both the Club and the Players' bars. If you have ever been to Budleigh Salterton you will know that, while Bunny is playing, Dennis is attending to our liquid refreshment. No club function, lunch or dinner, goes by without Bunny or Dennis at the bar. Bunny has served on both Croquet and General Committees, and often caters for weekend tournaments. In addition to his bar duties Dennis, who has yet to be induced to play croquet, nevertheless fills an invaluable role in general maintenance work, bringing to bear his many handyman skills. Their joint contribution to the needs of club members and visitors is enormous, and we would be hard pressed to manage without them.

Bill Mell - Huddersfield (Syngenta)

As a founder member of the club Bill has been a stalwart supporter, serving both as a committee member and as Secretary. His major contribution has been the development of coaching courses for the local U3A. Over the years he has introduced many people to croquet in this way, and many new members have been welcomed into the club. Bill is a highly valued club member, always prepared to help in any way he can, and is fully deserving the award of the CA Diplomas.

John Gilbert - Caterham

John has served the Caterham Croquet Club both on and off the committee for many years, including 5 years as Chairman. His immense contribution to the club has been mainly in two areas. Firstly he has built up a strong relationship with the local council and their ground staff, exhorting them on lawn maintenance, and undertaking

most of the negotiations that led to the club getting its second lawn. Secondly he has been very active in attracting and keeping new members. It is largely due to John that golf croquet is now played, both as an introductory aid and competitively, and recent increases in membership and retained members are largely due to his enthusiasm in this area. Not only does John run adult education courses which largely benefit our club and the local community, but he also runs croquet courses at Polesden Lacey which take croquet to a wider audience.

Alec Coleman - Caterham

Alec was a well-known low handicap player on the tournament circuit in the 60's and 70's before giving up the game for personal reasons. When Caterham Croquet Club was formed in 1986 he was persuaded to return to the game. Unable for health reasons to return to serious competitive play, he has nevertheless devoted himself to helping the club, often unobtrusively, and to spending countless hours coaching, particularly with beginners where he has shown endless patience. Typically, he has donated a trophy to be presented each year to the club's most improved player. Unfortunately he is unable any longer to continue coaching, but he frequently comes along to provide friendly encouragement and advice.



Bernard Neal - Cheltenham

Cheltenham members count themselves particularly fortunate to have a club president as supportive and versatile as Bernard Neal. A player of eminence at the top level of the game who may be found as often as not helping to set out lawns ready for our next tournament; a manager giving his total attention this week perhaps to a major

championship and then next week presiding over a club afternoon knock-about. A skilled reporter and negotiator, an activist on committees, a go-getter, Bernard is a determined advocate for the development of his club and for croquet in general. Here is a 'hands-on' president highly regarded and esteemed by all who meet him. There can be few more deserving of the CA Diploma.

Roy Ware - Ramsgate

Roy joined Ramsgate Croquet Club in 1989 on his return from South Africa, and from the beginning has been active in promoting croquet in general and the club in particular. He has been the driving force behind the Ramsgate Golf Croquet Championship, which attracts an international entry, and organises the four CA Calendar tournaments that the club runs each year. He serves on the committee of the South East Federation, he edits and contributes the bulk of the material to the Club Magazine, and, perhaps most important of all, with his partner Mary runs the junior section of the Club, giving up his Saturday mornings, when not playing in tournaments, to coaching the 15 junior members.

Pam Overton - Woodhall Spa

Pam Overton was a founder member of the Woodhall Spa Croquet Club in 1991. She has served two stints as club secretary, and has also been the coaching officer, press officer and organiser of competitions. She has arranged for club members to go into schools at primary and special school level as well as locally at a local leisure park to offer coaching sessions. Pam is also a willing team member who will travel to games within the Federation. She was instrumental in providing funding for the club's search for a home of its own within Woodhall Spa and has spent many hours on lottery and other applications for grants, land, building permission and other related matters. This award from the CA will serve to confirm the appreciation felt by the members of her achievements within the club.

ASSOCIATION CROQUET TACTICS

For Beginners and High Bisquers

No 3 - PRINCIPLES OF PLAY: FORESIGHT

by Michael Hague

When beginners are faced at the start of a turn with the task of setting up a 4BB, or during a break with imminent break down, a little imagination and flexibility are required, a touch of tactical flair, the creative ability to deal with the unusual situation. The experienced player will have a memory bank of similar situations on which to draw, backed by a higher degree of accuracy and probably a wider range of shots on which to call. But for the High Bisquers, each tactical problem is virtually unique and to deal with them a good understanding of the Principles of Play is required.

Principles of Play

Principles are fundamental truths from which other actions arise. The Principles of Play were revealed to me researching Lord Tollemache's book *Croquet* printed in 1914. The Principles are just as relevant today as in 1914. The A Class player uses them virtually instinctively but lesser mortals such as myself need them to be spelt out with clarity.

I have appreciated receiving much instruction over the years from a variety of coaches. Some of them may have mentioned one or another of what I now call the Five Principles of Play but it was Lord Tollemache who brought them together for me as the planks on which to build play and deal with an infinite variety of tactical situations, too numerous to replicate and coach individually. The degree of emphasis on any one principle or another will depend on the particular situation, including the unique strengths and weaknesses of the individual player concerned, and of the opponent.

Foresight

Let us start by discussing the First

Principle which all experienced players and coaches at any level will always emphasise, namely Foresight or thinking ahead.

At the beginning of a turn

Although there may be occasions (such as the very start of the game) when the High Bisquer will know what to do at the start of the turn, once play is underway the High Bisquer should follow the play of the opponent and as each shot is played, think what will be the aim of the next turn if the opponent breaks down and how that aim will be achieved. This mental exercise during the opponent's play allows the High Bisquer to develop tactical understanding and to start a turn confident as to what to do. Maybe that'll involve an aggressive action by setting up a break using a bisque, or a defensive one, such as playing a ball lying near opponent's next hoop to a safe corner. Perhaps there's a safe shot, having a crack at another ball which if missed will not give the opponent tactical advantage etc. Start-of-turn dither or the "Let's try to hit in and then see what happens" approach are poor ways to address tactical problems or develop a memory bank.

During a turn

Once into a turn, the High Bisquer is advised to get into the habit of pausing briefly to take stock at least before playing the roquet/ rush on pioneer. If a 4BB is well set up, then the striker

going for, say, Hoop 1 knows that SB can make Hoop 1 and Hoop 2 with simple, easy shots. He or she has also planned how to make Hoop 3 if the other balls are re-positioned well enough along the route. At Hoop 2 and all the subsequent hoops, striker should take stock again to see that everything is in order to play the next two hoops after the current one. In other words striker is planning the next 17 shots! As SB is manoeuvred between Hoop 1 and Hoop 2, mental note is made of any ball not accurately re-positioned for the journey from Hoop 2 to Hoop 3.

Making adjustments

Before roqueting the pioneer at Hoop 2, striker confirms any adjustment needed to the normal 4BB play to rectify the pioneer on Hoop 3 and/or the pivot being out of position. This frequently means that the pioneer (in this case at Hoop 2) has to be rushed to where it can on the hoop approach, to be best positioned for a rush in a direction different from the norm.

In figure 1 (below) the pivot is on the line between Hoop 1 and Hoop 2 and a rush is required from near the western boundary to put it in a better position for the leg Hoop 2 to Hoop 3. In Figure 2 (opposite, top), a rush on the pilot at hoop 2 is required back towards Hoop 6 to deal with the out of position pioneer for Hoop 3. Note the difference in the positioning of the pilot for the two situations.

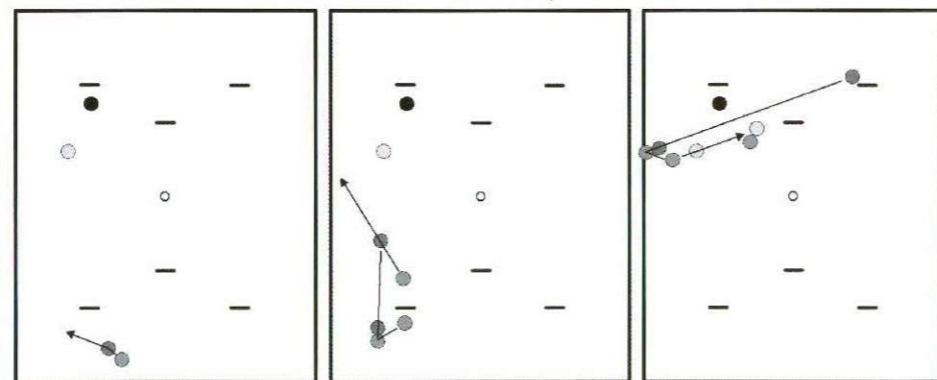


Fig 1. With the pivot out of position, Hoop 1 needs approaching from the left, to get a rush out to the West boundary. A straight drive puts the pioneer to Hoop 3, getting close to the pivot.

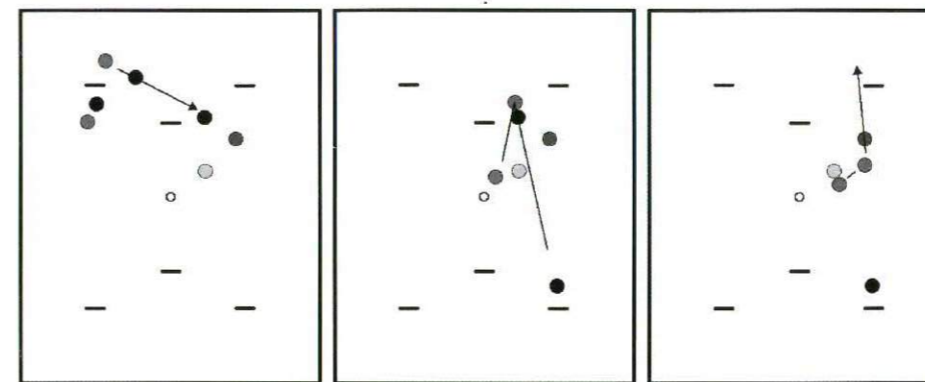


Fig 2. Striker needs to improve the poor pioneer at Hoop3. Getting close to the pivot after Hoop 2 gives the best chance. While approaching Hoop 2, the object ball is placed wide, to allow a rush in the right direction.

About to break down

If SB goes out of position and the original plan cannot be accomplished, then we go to Plan B. Plan B may be at the back of striker's mind but will involve the thinking-ahead process starting afresh. Suppose a poor hoop approach has been played, and the hoop is not runnable. Before playing the continuation shot, the layout of the whole court is checked out. The obvious and usually unthinking play is to use the continuation stroke to put SB in front of the hoop and take a bisque. This is rarely the best play. Better use of the continuation stroke may be made by using the bisque to tidy up the break before having a second attempt to run the hoop (see example at Figure 3).

Playing individual shots

By applying Foresight and pre-planning the manoeuvre of the balls between hoops to positions for the journey to the next but one hoop, the

player ensures that only shorter, simpler shots are required for the break. The chances of breaking down are much reduced. However, the Principle should also be applied to individual shots. For instance, when playing a stop shot, drive or roll, striker should determine which of the two balls involved in the croquet is the more important and focus on that ball reaching its objective accurately. In some cases, SB has merely to drop off close enough for a safe roquet on a third ball, so focus can be concentrated on the croqueted ball, especially if it is going to a pioneer position. More usually however, it is SB which is the more important and always so on hoop approaches. If SB ends up at a difficult angle to the hoop or goes too far, the consequences can be costly or even disastrous. If the Pilot ball is out of place, the player may not have achieved the desired rush away from the hoop but the break can be continued, albeit with a more testing croquet than had been intended.

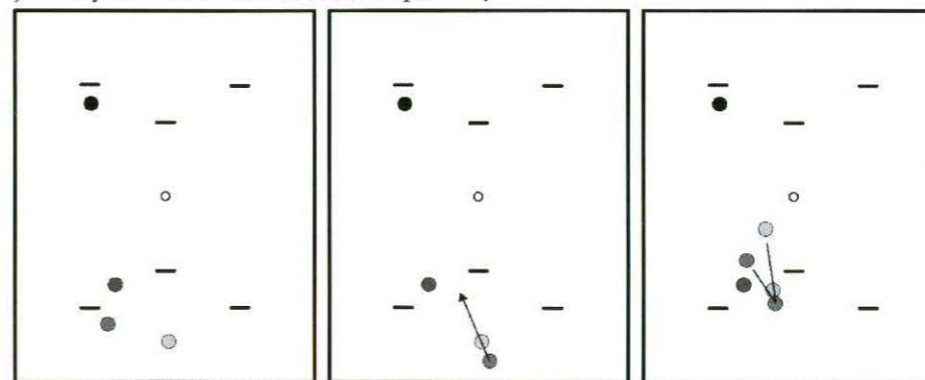


Fig 3. Blue has failed to get position at Hoop 1. Rather than ignoring Yellow, Blue shoots back to the boundary, then takes the bisque to rush it up near Red. The standard break layout follows

The conservative approach

High Bisquers should think ahead to the consequences of a shot going wrong and take any precautionary measures necessary. For example with a break established, care should be taken that if a roquet is missed, the balls do not become so separated that it would probably take two bisques instead of one to re-establish the break.

So, imagine Red (for Hoop 1) is taking off from near hoop 2 to get to Blue on the boundary halfway between him and his hoop. The skilled player will take off to a point close to the west boundary to rush Blue nearer to Hoop 1 for an easier hoop approach. A High Bisquer trying to do the same, runs the risk of going off beyond Blue, having to use a bisque to roquet, and then face a difficult hoop approach which is likely to end up with a second bisque having to be taken. More appropriate for the High Bisquer lacking confidence on take-offs, would be to take off to in-court of Blue with a good margin of error. From here an easy roquet on Blue is followed by the long hoop approach to Hoop 1. If and when that fails, Red can park himself north of Blue, take a bisque and rush Blue south of Hoop 1 for another, but simple hoop approach. Some High Bisquers might prefer the still simpler plan of not even trying to save a bisque by having a go at the difficult hoop approach, but of using the croquet from the boundary to set up the rush to the hoop and then taking the bisque.

Thus the player has three choices in this situation with varying degrees of risk. The choice should be determined by the player's own strengths and weaknesses. When bisques are being invested, the choice should err on the side of the conservative - plan on having to use one bisque rather than risking a probable two.

So, High Bisquer, be proud that when setting up a 4BB, you are thinking at least 17 shots ahead; the A class player for his Triple Peel and End Game starts his planning at least at 1-back. Foresight is essential at all levels of playing ability.

Tournament Round-up

English National Golf Croquet Championships
26th. & 27th. July
By Chris Sheen

Over one of the few damp weekends of the summer Parkstone hosted the English National Golf Croquet Championships. The first day saw 20 singles players, who had come through the preliminary rounds held around the country, battle through the blocks and, as the light faded and the rain increased, to the semi-finals and final. In the end, after a tense two hour match Chris Sheen beat Ivor Brand by the tightest of margins, 7-6,4-7,7-6 to win the Ascot Cup.

The next day, following a dry night, the lawns were slow and sixteen pairs played for the Ranelagh Cups. After three years there were new champions in the form of Nelson Morrow & Tom Weston, who beat Roy Ware and David Dray in an engrossing final.

Italian Experience
By Michael Hague

Many croquet players envy golfing friends who can so easily combine their sport with a holiday on the Continent. Peter Payne of the European Croquet Federation is considering the suggestion of creating through the web, a Guide to Croquet Opportunities in Europe (clubs, hotels etc.) to enable croquet players to find reasonable croquet facilities across Europe.

One such location is the Cascina del Lupo (Wolf's Farm), Busto Arsizio near Milan. The Italian Croquet Federation recently ran its Italian Golf Croquet Championship there with players from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the USA, Egypt and England playing alongside those from the host country. Edouardo Lualdi won the championship by two games to one over his compatriot Gianpetro Donati in a stimulating final.

The Cascina del Lupo boasts two very new and excellent courts similar to those at the National Croquet

Centre at West Palm Beach. They are constructed on sandy soil and thus have the same problem of relatively easy hoops as has the NCC. The Federation has ambitions to increase the number of courts to four, to restore the decrepit farmhouse and to build a small motel on the site which is surrounded by trees and maize fields on three sides plus a rather dilapidated looking prison on the fourth. The prison will soon to be concealed from view by a row of conifers.

Milan is 40 minutes away by train, Milan (Malpensa) airport just 10 minutes and the Italian Northern Lakes an hour or so bus-ride. The modernised three star Hotel Hortensia with its air-conditioned bedrooms (110 euros B&B for two) is recommended. To find out what events are planned for the coming season including a Golf Croquet Doubles tournament at Lucca in Tuscany in May, telephone (0039) 348 3009586, or e-mail info@croquetitalia.it. Whatever event you book, you may be sure of a warm welcome, generous hospitality and excellent organisation.

Bob Vaughan Memorial Trophy
Crake Valley Club 7th September
By Gail Curry

Crake Valley is a small club nestled away in the south of the Lake District, situated in the village of Greenodd. It has a chequered history involving croquet archery and tennis. However, its recent history is firmly based in croquet, due largely to the efforts of Bob Vaughan, who sadly passed away in January of last year. Bob was an inspirational driving force, and we all know how important it is to have just such a person to drive a club forward.



Needless to say he is sadly missed not just in his own club, but also through the northern region. His wife, Liz, kindly donated a trophy to celebrate Bob's efforts and it was decided that the trophy would be played for annually between two teams representing Crake Valley and Croquet North, with a mixture of advanced and handicap play.

The inaugural event was played, contrary to the weather forecast, in glorious sunshine and a good spirit. The hospitality of the club was, as ever warm and welcoming, and both players and spectators enjoyed a memorable day's play.

Alas Crake did not manage the fairytale ending of winning the trophy, but it was not the winning but the taking part that made the event so special. Croquet North eventually won 7 - 2, but will be happy to invite the Crake Valley Team to their side of the Pennines to compete again for the trophy and to remember Bob.

Budleigh Salterton - Autumn Handicap Weekend
By Peter Miller

Twenty-three happy handicap hopefuls assembled on the first of three glorious autumn days to be greeted by splendid plateaux of green grass cut short, glistening in the morning mist. It was to be yet another of the tournaments managed by Cliff Jones. The inspired selection of Julie Horsley as Assistant manager enabled Cliff to plead other duties, in between banging about 50 "wickets" in the early hours and devouring cream cakes for tea. The gaps were set at 1/8th and the pavilion clock to a tolerance of 6 hours 11 minutes.

Despite the recent arid weather, the automatic watering system had ensured the greenest playing areas, as in Jersey, and the new surfaces on four courts were a real pleasure to play on; no longer could the levels be blamed for missed shots. Oh well!

Richard Danby towered 4 1/2 bisques above the pack but his presence was appreciated by those who

were able to share the challenge of his skill.

The Knockout Competition for the Stransham Bowl was won by John Daniels of Purley in straight games from Alan Knight, Shrewsbury, and the Consolation Egyptian by Brian Shorney, Kington Langley, narrowly claiming a bottle of vintage Claret. Congratulations went to Gilbert Crook, Littleton, and Eric Bevan, Kington Langley, who won their Silver badges and to Ainsley Jones, Budleigh, for her Bronze.

Budleigh's experienced team provided their always much enjoyed hospitality as a backdrop to Julie Horsley's efficient and engaging execution of all the hard work front of house, as well as behind the scenes. An innings to remember, to give the lie to Lord MacLaurin's recent baleful comments, whereof hearing Graves had delighted those with greying hairs, not to mention the younger and increasingly important and skilful contingent of this growing sport.

We can't wait to return to Budleigh's green and pleasant lawns...

European Championships
by Stephen Mulliner

The Jersey Croquet Club again produced four lawns in magnificent condition. The hot summer and judicious use of automatic watering produced surfaces that were uniformly green but distinctly quick. The 20 strong field was strengthened by the appearance of Robert Fulford (England), the World Champion and No. 1 ranked player, and Jonathan Kirby (Scotland) to add to regulars Matthew Burrow (Jersey), Stephen Mulliner (England) and Simon Williams (Ireland). The Italians were also well represented by Eduardo ("Edo") Lualdi, Paolo De Petra and Gianpetro Donati.

The opening day produced a record-setting display of four consecutive sextuples from Fulford on Lawn 3. The only opponent to make any progress at all against him was the 17

year old Spaniard, Andres Alvarez-Sala who shot extremely well and scored 8 points. Burrow, Kirby and Mulliner all won their blocks comfortably (with the possible exception of Mulliner who had injured his back playing squash earlier in the week and was moving around the court with - for him - unnatural stateliness). Saturday was an even hotter day than Friday, with blue skies from dawn to dusk, and this clearly had an effect on some of the players as they attempted to cope with the pace of the lawns.

The four block-winners progressed to the semi-finals on Saturday but did not all have it their own way. Fulford had two unsuccessful attempts at sextuples against Donati but the result was never in serious doubt and Mulliner cruised slowly past Tony Mrozinski. However Peter Payne (Switzerland) was in good form and had two breaks in each game against Kirby. The real fun involved Burrow and Lualdi. Edo made all the running in game 1, even attempting a triple, before failing 4-back from close range. Matthew hit, peeled him through 4-back and finished with his own triple. Game 2 seemed all over when Burrow pegged out two balls leaving himself for penultimate and Lualdi for 2. However, on his second attempt, Edo hit in, rolled off hoop 2 and proceeded to play an excellent 2-ball break. When he ran 4-back to get a 4 yard rush to penult, a finish seemed on the cards. Alas, Edo only nicked the rush, underapproached the hoop and stuck. Matthew then hit and finished without more ado (or Edo, you might say).

The semi-finals were started on Saturday and completed on Sunday morning. Fulford/Kirby semi-final featured remorseless break-making by Robert and good hitting by Jonathan coupled with a pair of accidents that were sufficient to hand back the innings and an inevitable triple on each occasion. The Mulliner/Burrow match consisted of two TPOs by Mulliner with much creaking and wincing. In the second game, with Burrow on 2-back, Matt hit from South boundary to 3rd corner but then con-

trived to miss a 5 yarder after running 2-back and that was shortly that.

The final was staged as a best-of-three on the basis that there might not be time for more given the departure deadlines of the players. However, this seemed a little conservative when Fulford shot off like a greyhound and completed a 5th turn triple shortly after midday. The second game was a mirror image of the first, with Mulliner equalising.

Game 3 looked as if it would be a carbon-copy of Game 1 when Fulford hit on turn 3, but an error left Mulliner a double-target, which he hit. Fulford never regained the innings, allowing his opponent to regain the European Championship (his seventh win) and ending a two year drought.

European Golf Croquet Championship

In the second European Golf Croquet Championships held at Carrickmines near Dublin, 15-17 Sept, Mark McNerney retained the title he first won in 1999 with an awesome display of shooting that left fellow Irishman and finalist Evan Newell rather shell-shocked and for once quiet after the first game. Mark managed to run virtually every hoop from the 12 to 15 foot range and only bouncing on one hoop to win the first game 7-2 in about 15 minutes. Not only was his hoop running superb, but his long distance clearances were of a similar standing with a 90% hit rate at over 25 yards. The pace slowed rather in the second game and allowed Evan to come back with a steady 7-5 win but Mark then stepped up a gear to take the final game 7-3.

If Mark can maintain this kind of form, we may have a possible challenge to the Egyptian supremacy for next years Worlds as Mark's style is very much like the leading Egyptian's. Mention must however be made of Evan's record over the previous two weeks having been the losing finalist of the Yorkshire and Irish Opens and the European Championship.

Handicap Golf Croquet

By Bill Arliss

We are now at the end of the third season of operating the present handicap system for Golf Croquet and it is time to examine and analyse some of the problems that the system has thrown up. As usual after the main national handicap event and the finish of the Federation golf leagues we have the usual crop of horror stories about massively incorrect handicaps. However I have lost count of the number of moans about the opposing teams handicaps which have finished with the words "We only just won, it was a hell of a struggle".

One factor that I am sure is forgotten in many of the arguments is the way handicap games work. The result of a handicap game does not just depend upon a player's ability to hit a ball accurately, or to position it on a particular blade of grass, or to do a jump shot, it is also very much influenced by the ability of a player to use any additional shots the handicap system gives him*. I have seen so many high handicap players waste the additional shots they receive simply by using them to knock away a better opponent who is just about to score a hoop. This is a totally negative approach as it only puts off the time they will most likely lose. Certainly, you can't use an additional shot to score a hoop directly but there are relatively simple techniques that can be employed to turn an additional shot into a hoop score and I will come to that later. I am sure that if many of our 4, 5 and 6 handicappers learned how to use additional shots correctly, they would rapidly improve by 2 or 3 strokes.

As Chairman of the Golf Croquet Committee, I received a number of letters discussing the fairness of the system when there are wide variations in handicap. If I look at these in isolation then I'm sure they have a point. A -4 playing a 0 is not the same as a 0 playing a 4 or a 2 playing a 6 but they all

receive four additional shots. The main point is that the system has to be a compromise. In handicap play we do not always play other players of a particular handicap, we have to play a complete variety of players and the system has to take account of this. It may not be totally fair throughout but surely it is much better than no handicap at all. It does level the playing field somewhat.

I must of course come on to the question of abuse of the system. I acknowledge that it does occur to some extent, but most certainly not as widespread as some imagine. There are a few players who deliberately play the system and will always manage to hold on to a high handicap by only normally playing doubles, or similar ploys. I can only say that in these cases the club handicapper must be held to account for inaction. Everyone else in the Federation leagues knows of these players so I am sure the club committees must also know. Then we have the players whose handicaps are wrong simply because of lack of knowledge of the system within their club or total inexperience in the normal levels of grading. This is not deliberate and in most cases can be remedied with a little help from outside the club. With the use of the automatic system and the growing number of golf croquet leagues, this will eventually cure itself but players generally do not want to wait that long.

We must remember that the system has only been operated for three years and at the beginning we had no real yardsticks on which to base new handicaps. Originally we used the 'three times round the course' as suggested by the WCF. After a year we found that this produced some very anomalous results for those who had a proven record in association croquet and we suggested that initial golf croquet handicaps be linked to existing

association handicaps where the association handicaps were below 10. All of these recommendations are fully documented and have been sent to every CA registered club. Further copies are available from the CA office. The one point that very often gets forgotten is that these recommendations are only for setting initial handicaps and should under no circumstances be used each year to review handicaps. After a player has started to play golf croquet his handicap should be based on playing record only, not introductory tests.

There are an increasing number of regular association players now playing golf croquet as well. This is excellent for the sport but it is throwing up some handicap problems. I have every sympathy with players who bemoan the fact that their opponent has a single figure association handicap but is playing with a golf handicap of 3 or higher. I would not say that this is impossible but think it is unlikely. If the club handicapper has followed the CS guidelines for allocating the initial handicap, then a player only has to produce his handicap card showing sufficient losses to justify the higher golf croquet handicap. I therefore feel that in national competitions such as the All England, we will have to insist that all competitors produce their handicap card before they start play in any area or national final. The old excuses that "I don't play enough competitive golf croquet to warrant keeping a card" or "my club does not keep handicap cards" cannot be justified. Their handicap card must at least show how they got to that final.

Of course the other type of player who beats the system is the rapid improver. They are always going to be around. They win every thing in sight for a season or two until their handicap settles down. I think their wins are quite justifiable, but how long their reign continues will depend on

whether they have a very active club handicapper who steps in and overrides the automatic system.

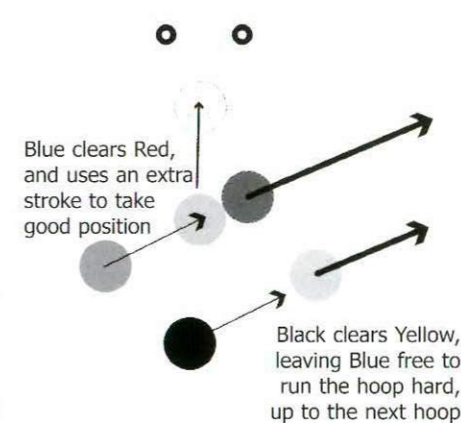
Overall I am not too unhappy with the progress of the system but I would recommend that all clubs appoint a handicapper who is a competent golf croquet player; every Federation should appoint one or more senior golf croquet players who can assist clubs to set handicap levels comparable to the national average and we should not be reticent about asking to see or to show handicap cards. In the South East Federation we did introduce a rule that states that players must have a handicap card or play off a maximum of 2. I don't think we have ever enforced that rule but I am sure many of the anomalies will swiftly disappear if we do.

Earlier in this article I talked about ways of using additional shots so I will finish with a short tactical discussion. Using an additional stroke simply to remove an opponent from the front of a hoop is a complete waste. The better player simply comes back on the next shot, the status quo is resumed and there is one less additional shot to use. What must be done is to use an additional shot to ensure the weaker player scores a hoop.

If for example a weaker player has a ball in a hoop scoring position but it is likely to be removed by the stronger

player's next ball then if the weaker player's other ball is due to play next, use the additional stroke to drive the opponents ball well away. If a weaker player has first shot to the next hoop and finishes close to the hoop but not in a scoring position, use the additional stroke to place the ball in a guaranteed scoring position. This tactic should only be used when all the opponent's other balls are well away from the hoop e.g. starting to play hoop 2 when all other balls are close to 1. The weaker player may get hit away but the odds are on his/her side. If for example the weaker player has the first shot of the game with blue and finishes close to hoop 1 but not in a scoring position, then why not use an additional stroke at this time to put it in the perfect scoring position. It needs an accurate 20 yard shot to remove it from that position and the better opponent will not be fully warmed up at that stage.

The laws prevent a player from directly scoring a hoop on an additional stroke but this does not stop a player putting the ball in the jaws with that stroke. This is difficult to achieve if the player is directly in front of a hoop when the additional stroke is taken - as the ball is likely to go the whole way through and the additional shot wasted. (NO, the ball does not have to come back, it stays where it is, and the player has to start to run the hoop



Use of an additional stroke, as here, is best at an odd hoop (1 or 3), when a good firm shot through will allow Blue to get an early ball to the next hoop.

again.) The best way of putting a ball in the jaws is from an angle of about 45 degrees; simply play a gentle shot straight at one wire. It needs some practice but can be done quite simply. Please also remember that you cannot score on an additional stroke by peeling your own ball through a hoop, but you can score for an opponent by peeling either of his balls. The weaker player should also remember that he/she does not have to wait until he/she is two or three hoops down before using an additional stroke. The various techniques for making an additional stroke count have to be engineered from specific ball positions, so be ready to recognise and use the opportunities as soon as they arise.

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*I use the term 'additional strokes' many times throughout this article and thought how much easier it would have been to say 'bisque'. For some reason or other the term bisque has been removed from the vocabulary of the golf croquet player and I do not know why. We nearly all play the game of golf croquet at clubs which play association croquet. Many of us play both games. We both use those little white sticks to record our bisesques or additional stokes so why do we not use the same terminology?

Selection Events

Chris Clarke won his fifth title in the President's Cup in October, in what was probably the closest result the event has ever seen.

Testing conditions at Surbiton saw many mistakes made, with fast, bouncy lawns and tight hoops. By the last day, it was conceivable that all eight players could have tied for first place on seven wins. As it transpired, Mark Avery was held back to five wins, and Clarke and Colin Irwin sneaked ahead, each with a late win to tie on eight. The play-off went in Clarke's favour, leaving a five-way tie for third place.

The Chairman's Salver at Parkstone was much less open. Rutger Beijderwellen led all the way with some awesome shooting, winning every game bar the two against Ed Duckworth. Duckworth's early losing streak ruled him out of a challenge, leaving John Gibbons as the only serious threat to the Dutchman.



Beijderwellen (pictured above) started his croquet career just four years ago. He came to Southwick as a raw beginner, attended a Summer Coaching School, fell in love with the game, and emigrated in order to pursue croquet. He was nominated for the Apps Memorial Bowl for his improving play in 2002 - over the next two years he elected to cut his own handicap from 12 to 6, and then to 2, before it drifted down under the automatic system. It now stands at -1.5.

Even now, while still developing, he is almost certainly the strongest cro-

quet player ever to come from mainland Europe. He represented the Netherlands at the World Championships in 2001, and was subsequently invited to join David Openshaw's coaching courses for potential MacRobertson Shield test players.

Another graduate of the David Openshaw coaching course is Tim Wilkins, who won the Spencer Ell at Nottingham. This was Wilkins second appearance in the event, and second title. Long-time Ell veteran Chris Williams threatened, but trailed by a game. Bowdon's Jenny Williams, in her first Eight, started the event with three straight losses, but left her recovery too late to challenge.

Marcus Evans, the youngster from Nailsea, won the Treasurer's Tankard at his home club. He played consistently well, but the later stages saw him fail the Tankard's first sextuple, when he broke down at penult with five peels in the bag, and good position for the sixth at rover.

Louise Bradforth won the Selectors' Weekend at Surbiton in a tightly fought event. Meanwhile, the ladies in the Barlow Bowl (right) and Longman Bowl fought bravely at Cheltenham. Kathleen Priestley came through in the top six, with an 80% record, as did Jane Babbage in the second six.

Results

President's Cup - Surbiton

| | Wins | TPs | Pos |
|------------------|------|-----|-----|
| Chris Clarke | 8 | 2 | 1 |
| Colin Irwin | 8 | 3 | 2 |
| Matt Burrow | 7 | 5 | 3= |
| David Maugham | 7 | 5 | 3= |
| Robert Fulford | 7 | 3 | 3= |
| Stephen Mulliner | 7 | 3 | 3= |
| Pete Trimmer | 7 | 1 | 3= |
| Mark Avery | 5 | 3 | 8 |

Chairman's Salver - Parkstone

| | Wins | TPs | Pos |
|----------------------|------|-----|-----|
| Rutger Beijderwellen | 12 | 7 | 1 |
| Ed Duckworth | 9 | 7 | 2= |
| John Gibbons | 9 | 5 | 2= |
| David Harrison-Wood | 7 | 3 | 4 |
| David Goacher | 6 | 3 | 5= |
| Robin Brown | 6 | 4 | 5= |
| Jeff Dawson | 4 | 1 | 7 |

Spencer Ell - Nottingham

| | Wins | TPs | Pos |
|----------------|------|-----|-----|
| Tim Wilkins | 10 | 0 | 1 |
| Chris Williams | 9 | 0 | 2 |
| Jenny Williams | 8 | 0 | 3= |
| Richard White | 8 | 2 | 3= |
| Don Gaunt | 8 | 0 | 3= |
| Dave Kibble | 6 | 3 | 6 |
| David Magee | 4 | 0 | 7 |
| Dave Mundy | 3 | 0 | 8 |

Treasurer's Tankard - Nailsea

| | Wins | TPs | Pos |
|-----------------|------|-----|-----|
| Marcus Evans | 11 | 1 | 1 |
| Chris Patmore | 9 | 1 | 2= |
| Phil Cordingley | 9 | 0 | 2= |
| Cliff Jones | 8 | 0 | 4 |
| Jerry Guest | 6 | 1 | 5 |
| Peter Taylor | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Paul Smith | 4 | 0 | 7= |
| Lionel Tibble | 4 | 0 | 7= |

Selectors' Weekend - Surbiton

Semi-final

Paul Castell beat Duncan Hector +3
Louise Bradforth beat Ian Vincent +19

Final

Bradforth beat Castell +7

Barlow Bowl - Cheltenham

Kathleen Priestley 8
Sarah Burrow 7
Deborah Forrington 6
Alison Thursfield 4
Greta Stringer 3
Frances Ransom 2

Longman Bowl - Cheltenham

Jane Babbage 8
Diana Williamson 7
Eileen Magee 6
Angela Martin 4
Penny Crowe 3
Gina Lewis 1



News & Information

Bernard Neal: Wimbledon's Greatest Champion

There's never much cheer for the England supporter in many other sports. For journalists accustomed to breaking bad news to the country's sports fans it must have come as some light relief to discover the achievements of Bernard Neal.

As one of a few, dedicated members at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, Bernard has won the club championship and impressive 37 times. This was not lost on the Times reporter who read the honours board at Wimbledon while waiting for another failed Henman onslaught in July. The story soon spread from the Times to the Sunday Express and onwards. Even now, the November edition of Saga magazine carries the same story.

Wimbledon these days is hardly the croquet mecca it was 100 years ago, but we should avoid downplaying Bernard's achievement. It's beyond our reason to predict what Fleet Street deems is newsworthy about the game. We should just sit back and accept whatever publicity we receive.

GC World Championship Comes to Southwick

As many of you will have seen on our web site, the CA have agreed to host the Golf Croquet World Championship in 2004 on behalf of the WCF. A Championship Committee has been formed and has awarded the event to the Sussex County Croquet

Club. The event which is scheduled for 20-27 June 2004, will be run in conjunction with the normal CA Golf Croquet Open Championship. Initially we had considered limiting the event to 56 players contesting a singles championship but our ideas have now widened and we are proposing 64 players and also staging a doubles event. This will mean expanding the venue to include Compton as is the normal practice with Association Counties.

The organising committee will therefore have a massive task to find all the necessary support that is needed to stage a top level Golf Croquet event with its usual complement of referees, scorers and ball boys on each lawn. Whilst I am sure we shall get full support from the host clubs and many of the local clubs, all additional help will be greatly appreciated, especially from experienced referees. If you have previous experience in refereeing GC events and would like to help please let get in touch with Bill Arliss, the Chairman of the Championship Committee. (Contact details are inside the front cover). For Golf Croquet players within the south east who are interested in becoming referees, we shall be arranging training courses during the winter season which will be announced to all local clubs.

Eddie Hunt

Readers will recall the passing of the former Australian MacRobertson Shield player, Eddie Hunt, who died earlier this year after one of the longest periods as a member

of the CA. We are pleased to report that Eddie remembered the Association with a legacy of £1,000. The CA is honoured that a man whose croquet career spanned the era of both the modern game and the pre-war heyday of Corbally, Duff-Matthews and D.D.Steel should recall his links with croquet in this country in this way.

CA President

It was announced at the AGM of the ICA that John Solomon is to stand down as President of the Association after twenty years. He must be thanked for his long service as an ambassador for British croquet.

Improved players

Congratulations to Rutger Beijderwellen (Southwick) and Greta Stringer (Nailsea) who have received the Apps Memorial Bowl and the Steel Memorial Bowl for most improved man and woman in 2002.

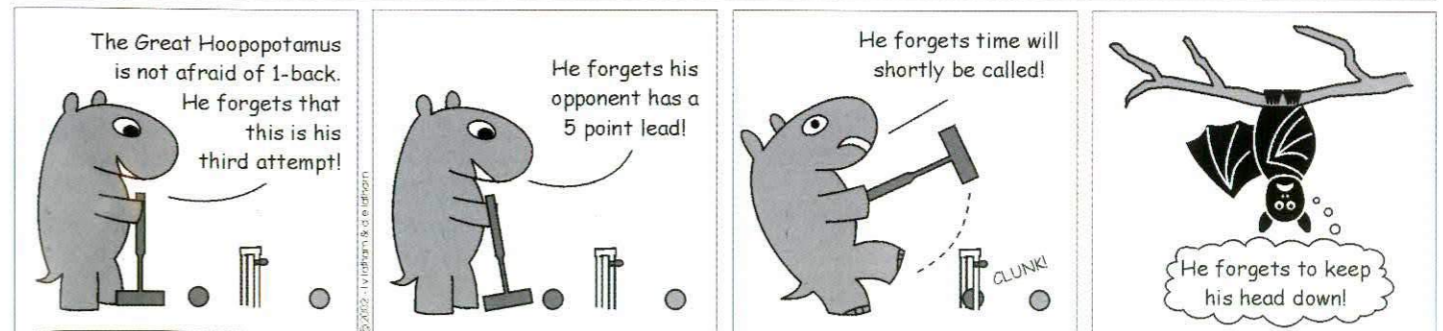
Stop press

The sad news has just been received of the death of Brian Macmillan, who died on 10th November after a long illness. Brian was Administrative Secretary of the CA from 1983 to 1990, when he founded the role of Commercial Agent, a post in which he continued until 1999. The debt which croquet owes him is immense.

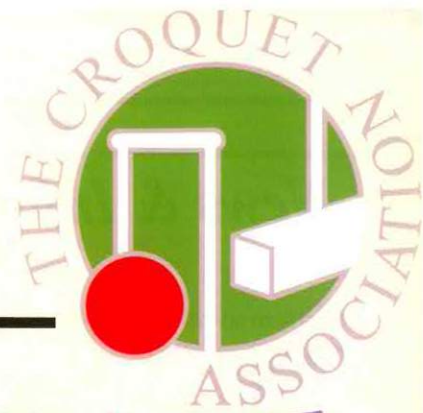
A full obituary will appear in the January Gazette.

HOOPOTAMUS

by Victor



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| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
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| | |
|---|--------|
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| Know the game | £5.00 |
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| | |
|---------------------------------|--------|
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