

THE CROQUET GAZETTE

THE CROQUET GAZETTE

Number 142 December 1976

The Official Organ of the Croquet Association

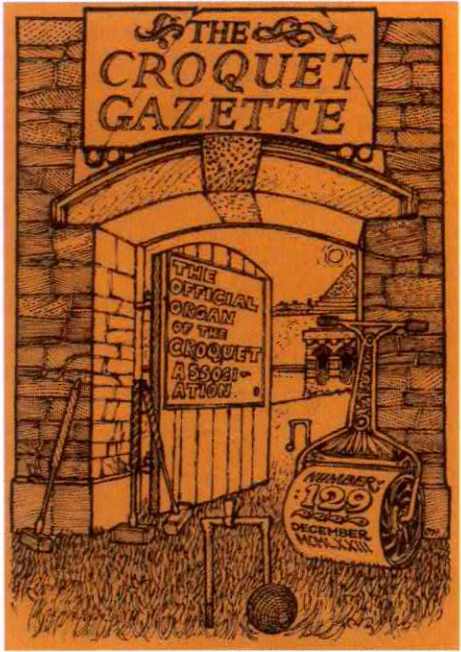
Editor: Sir Major The Duke

Calendar 1977

May 10-11	Bodleigh Salomon
May 25-26	The President's Challenge
May 31-June 1	Woking
June 11	June Cup
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December 29-30	June Cup
December 31	June Cup

Weekends

April 10-11	Chesham I
April 11-12	Chesham II
April 12-13	Chesham III
April 13-14	Chesham IV
April 14-15	Chesham V
April 15-16	Chesham VI
April 16-17	Chesham VII
April 17-18	Chesham VIII
April 18-19	Chesham IX
April 19-20	Chesham X
April 20-21	Chesham XI
April 21-22	Chesham XII
April 22-23	Chesham XIII
April 23-24	Chesham XIV
April 24-25	Chesham XV
April 25-26	Chesham XVI
April 26-27	Chesham XVII
April 27-28	Chesham XVIII
April 28-29	Chesham XIX
April 29-30	Chesham XX
May 1-2	Chesham XXI
May 2-3	Chesham XXII
May 3-4	Chesham XXIII
May 4-5	Chesham XXIV
May 5-6	Chesham XXV
May 6-7	Chesham XXVI
May 7-8	Chesham XXVII
May 8-9	Chesham XXVIII
May 9-10	Chesham XXIX
May 10-11	Chesham XXX
May 11-12	Chesham XXXI
May 12-13	Chesham XXXII
May 13-14	Chesham XXXIII
May 14-15	Chesham XXXIV
May 15-16	Chesham XXXV
May 16-17	Chesham XXXVI
May 17-18	Chesham XXXVII
May 18-19	Chesham XXXVIII
May 19-20	Chesham XXXIX
May 20-21	Chesham XL
May 21-22	Chesham XLI
May 22-23	Chesham XLII
May 23-24	Chesham XLIII
May 24-25	Chesham XLIV
May 25-26	Chesham XLV
May 26-27	Chesham XLVI
May 27-28	Chesham XLVII
May 28-29	Chesham XLVIII
May 29-30	Chesham XLIX
May 31	Chesham L



croquet

WHICH WAY NOW?

We look at responses to Stephen Adger's 'Why Abner' and risk where the CA gets now



THE CROQUET GAZETTE

ISSUE No. 179 SPRING 1985

THE CROQUET GAZETTE

ISSUE 283 - JANUARY 2003

Inside:

- 9th WCF World Croquet Championship
- Croquet at War
- The Handicap debate continues...

CROQUET

March 1989 Issue No. 202

The Continental Airlines World Croquet Championship
Harrowdon - 16th - 23rd July

Inside:
Law Changes
Views & Comment
Federation News
Sponsorship

£2.00

Published by

THE CROQUET GAZETTE

ISSUE No. 115 SPRING 1971

The Official Organ of the Croquet Association

CALENDAR, 1971

May 3-8	Bodleigh Salomon
May 10-15	Full Members, including the Golf Croquet Championship - at Chesham
May 17-22	Woking
May 23-27	June Cup
May 31-June 1	June Cup
June 7-12	June Cup
June 13-18	June Cup
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May 4-6	Chesham IX
May 7-9	Chesham X
May 10-12	Chesham XI
May 13-15	Chesham XII
May 16-18	Chesham XIII
May 19-21	Chesham XIV
May 22-24	Chesham XV
May 25-27	Chesham XVI
May 28-30	Chesham XVII
May 31	Chesham XVIII

Full details of all the Tournaments are included in the C.A. Fixture 1971 Book, together with particulars of the Inter Club Championships and the Longport Club Tennis Cup which are completed for throughout the season.

The Croquet Gazette

Issue 251 September 1997

In This Issue:

- The Chairman's Column
- Letters
- Tournament Reports
- News & Information
- CA News
- Bibliographer's Notebook
- Omega Croquet
- Helpful Hints
- Points Of View
- A.G.M. Agenda
- Cracking Thoughts
- Centenary Indoor Tournament Details
- American Blocks
- Handicap Alterations

CENTENARY Edition ISSUE 290 - APRIL 2004



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Publication Schedule

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Advertising

Full details of all advertising rates and data are available at all clubs as well as via the CA Shop and the Secretary of the CA.

Specific Questions and Queries

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

Both black and white or colour prints of photographs can be used. Slides are no longer accepted. Photocopies of pictures or print-outs of digital images cannot be used. If using digital photography please send in jpeg or tif format files. Resolution of scanned images must be at least 300 dpi. Please detail on the reverse of all photos the subject of the picture, and, if you require the photographs to be returned, please include your address on the reverse.

Tournament Results and Reports

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

Delivery Queries

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

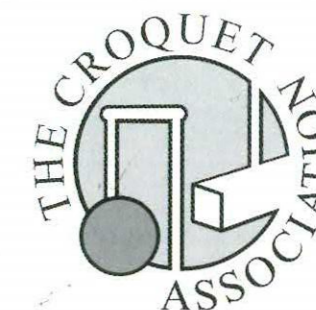
Disclaimer

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

THE
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Sponsorship News

Bellingham Wines To Sponsor English Croquet

We are delighted that Bellingham Wines have decided to enter into an agreement to sponsor English Croquet.

The initial contract will last for 12 months from April 2004 with Bellingham's generous donation to help the CA's development projects particularly at Club level.

Bellingham will be actively involved in promoting Croquet on their wine bottles and with their promotional activities in major UK retailers where the brand is stocked.

They will be present with their range of Premium South African wines at a number of our top events in 2004 including The Inter-Counties, The Open at Cheltenham and The World Golf Croquet Championships at Southwick.

At these events players and spectators alike will have the opportunity to try their wines.

A number of tastings will be organised during the season and a special deal will be made available to stock their wines in our licensed clubs.

The Croquet Association are looking forward to working with Bellingham to further our joint interests and to enjoy the occasional glass of their excellent wine!

Jonathan Isaacs
Chairman, CA Marketing Committee

A Message From Bellingham Wines, Our New Sponsor

Bellingham is a very well known name in South Africa and is recognised throughout the Cape for producing quality wine.

We're delighted that more and more wine drinkers over here in the UK are now buying and sampling the range of Bellingham wines available.

We are very pleased to be The Official Wine Of The Croquet Association and are looking forward to our involvement in the sport over



the coming year.

We think there is a great fit between Bellingham wines and Croquet and our aim is to promote the two together through the numerous promotional activities we have planned.

Hopefully Croquet will become more visible as a result of this relationship with new people wanting to try the sport.

Bellingham are looking forward to working with The Croquet Association and our sponsorship monies should help with development projects at club level.

We hope that a number of you will be trying our excellent wines during the season.

Cheers,

Zoe Bristow

Bellingham Brand Manager (UK)

The Men's Championship

The CA is pleased to announce that The Men's Championship will be sponsored in a five year deal by Simon Carter.



SIMON CARTER

LONDON

Simon Carter is a designer of men's clothing and accessories, sold in leading stores throughout the world. There will be a prize of £500 for the winner, and refreshments/champagne will be provided at the closing Ceremony. All contestants in the event will be provided with shirts.

This year's event will be held at Hurlingham from June 10th to 13th. Entries should be sent to the CA office by 15 May.

World Golf Croquet Championship

The MGM Assurance 6th WCF World Golf Croquet Championships will be held at Sussex County (Southwick) and Compton (Eastbourne) from 20 June to 27 June. 64 competitors from around the world will be playing.

This includes for the first time competitors from Sweden and Austria. In addition there will be a strong entry from Egypt including reigning champion Khalid Younis. Reg Bamford, Stephen Mulliner and Paolo de Petra are expected to challenge the Egyptian contingent for the title. Four places are available through a qualifying competition. This will be held at Surbiton on 17/18 June. Entries via the CA Secretary.

Letters

Platinum Awards

May I clarify the situation re qualifying turns for the Gold and the new Platinum Merit Awards? Contrary to my article published in the last edition (February 2004), a TPO and winning the match qualifies for the Gold Award should that be the first successful attempt, and similarly a SXPO and winning the match qualifies for the Platinum Award. The conditions on page 15 of the 2004 CA Fixtures Calendar take preference over any article that may have appeared in the Gazette. I apologise for any misunderstanding my article may have caused.

Bruce Rannie
North Shields

Battle of the Sexes?

On reading through some old issues of the Gazette from the 70s and 80s I frequently came across names of players whom I have met and played against on the tournament circuit recently. But very rarely did I see any ladies who were playing then and are still playing competitively now. Is it because men can play to a high standard for a longer period of time? Or is it as I suspect, when a couple decide to start a family, the woman gives up all her pleasurable pursuits to look after the children, while the man just carries on with his chosen hobby regardless. I wonder if, since women are now more emancipated, we may see some of our present lady players still competing in twenty years time? I sincerely hope so.

Tom Weston
Bournemouth

Calling All Hampshire Players

I would like to enter a Hampshire team in the 2005 Inter-Counties championship. I realise that 2005 is a long time ahead but I need to submit an entry by 1st September and before then I need to be sure that I have a sufficient pool of players. By the strict rules of

the tournament to qualify to play for Hampshire you have either (a) be born in Hampshire, (b) have lived in Hampshire for 2 years prior to 1st January 2005, (c) have been a full member of a CA club in Hampshire for the years 2003 and 2004 (d) have played for Hampshire in a previous tournament. You also have to be a member of the CA. I would expect the team to be composed of a mixture of 'A' class and 'B' class players. If you are interested please contact me as soon as possible.

Brian Fisk
Littleton
telephone: 01962 865458
e-mail: brian@fiskfamily.org.uk

Tips for Bisque-taking

When I am playing a handicap game of golf croquet and I am giving say six bisques to my adversary, I put 6 plastic ball markers in to my pocket. When he or she decides to take a bisque, I then hand him or her one of the markers. We both know how many bisques have been used and how many are left and it saves me having to trek across the lawn to pull a bisque out of the ground.

Tom Weston
Bournemouth

100 years : Another Anniversary

I was interested to note that the Gazette is approaching its 100th birthday in April. Here at Cheltenham we have been much engaged for the last 18 months or so carrying out research in preparation for a Centenary of our own. For the older croquet clubs, there are any number of centenarians to celebrate. In 1998 we celebrated the centenary of the first open tournament held in Cheltenham and no doubt in the future we may celebrate the 100th July week tournament, but March 1904 was rather special. Fourteen visionaries attended a meeting in a Cheltenham Hotel, called it the first Annual General Meeting of the East Gloucestershire Croquet Club (later renamed the Cheltenham

Croquet Club in 1909 - another centenary?) and the rest as they say is history.

Carrying out research for this Centenary has been a fascinating, if at times frustrating, exercise. Researching books held by the British Library and looking through newspapers in its newspaper library at Collindale, to root out information for croquet in the 19th century only occasionally yielded tempting titbits. The newspapers supplied far more interest in the way of social history in other spheres of life (for which David often reprimanded me for not paying attention to the job in hand). Since the vandalism of the Bridge Room at the Club in 2001 when some of our photographs were lost, we have become aware of the vulnerability of our historical data. Gathering together and sorting through the various papers, photographs and maps liberally stuffed in drawers and lockers around the Club, together with the Club Minutes from 1904 to the present day, has taken quite some time. We felt it was worth displaying some of these papers and photographs for members to see and marvel at how the club has survived all these years.

David had thought to record just a single account of the Club for posterity. However, I felt one of my intermittent needs to interfere and have persuaded him to produce and have printed 'The History of the Cheltenham Croquet Club', partly as a club fundraising exercise and partly to give enjoyment and entertainment to anyone who has visited the Cheltenham Croquet Club or has a connection with Cheltenham or Croquet. The cost of The History is £3.50 plus 50p for postage.

Eileen Magee
Cheltenham

Correction

In the February edition's listings of Icaptains for the Inter Counties Championships in May, the email address for John Hobbs, the Kent captain, was incorrect. Potential Kent players may contact him at HobbsMall@aol.com

Editorial

On the 27th April 1904, the Croquet Association produced Issue No 1 of the Croquet Gazette. A century later, as I sit at my PC, pasting e-mail contributions into colour-coded text boxes shuffled around the screen in QuarkXPress, it's clear that times have changed for the editor.

The workload which must have faced the Gazette's first editors is mind-boggling. Not only were all contributions submitted in the handwritten script of various tournament managers and reporters, but the editor was required to turn round one issue each week. David Drazin details this massive undertaking, and charts the history of the Gazette from its inception elsewhere in this month's magazine.

Touring the country, drinking tea, eating cakes and occasionally playing the odd game, there seem to be varying factions of players.

Many associates welcome the move towards a features-based magazine, but several tournament veterans have tutted their disapproval at the inclusion of items which do little to reflect their own activities as players. In particular, one or two folk have specifically singled out historical articles as their own personal hates. Important birthdays come round rarely, and I make no apologies here for going overboard on historical features in this edition.

What I can offer is a questionnaire to get your definitive views on what you'd like to see, both in print and on the CA website. I can't hope for more than to please most of the people some of the time, but feedback would certainly help in achieving the CA's goals for communication with members.

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Budleigh Salterton
Devon
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www.hansardhousehotel.co.uk

Letters Page : April 27th, 1904

Frequency of publication made the Gazette of the early 20th century an ideal forum for extended discussion. Much of that communication centred around the standardisation of the laws.

These were days when the game looked very different from its appearance now. Most of what we're used to now had yet to be fixed. As could be expected for a game whose rules were still in a state of flux, the letters page features much discussion about what changes were appropriate.

The Davidson Hoop (today's standard design) was invented only five years previously, though its width remained at 4 inches until 1920, when it was reduced by a quarter inch to its current dimensions. Baulk lines had yet to be considered, as had wiring lifts. Play was in sequence (Blue, Red, Black, Yellow), and there were still two pegs. Tactics would have been quite different, especially bearing in mind that the game started with each ball having to score from the start point - six inches dead in front of Hoop 1.

In a letter headed "A NOVELTY", a correspondent signing himself "INNOVATOR" proposes moving the start point back to a foot in front of the first hoop. "The suggestion may be worth considering," replies the Editor. "But Croquet players, as a body, are conservative, and we doubt whether the time is yet ripe for introducing so drastic an innovation." Innovator's plan was not adopted. Within two years, the starting position had been moved well away from the hoop, to the centre of the south boundary.

In the previous season, Jaques had successfully campaigned to have the weight of balls increased, in order to use better boxwood. Many in the croquet community had, presumably, been critical of this change, as Jarvis Kenrick writes to defend the decision. "The alteration has encouraged manufacturers to devise substitutes for boxwood balls ... there is more than one that would replace boxwood if such a step became necessary. Boxwood being of extremely slow growth, and Croquet appearing to grow in popularity every year, it is possible that in another generation the supply may fail.

Good boxwood will suit us well in tournaments, but these substitutes will doubtless come into favour for private use for people who do not care to take the trouble to see that balls are wiped dry and oiled after playing in the wet."

Such a campaigning spirit led to the universal adoption of composite balls. By 1906, the use of boxwood balls had been discontinued at all CA tournaments. It's difficult to imagine players in 2004 oiling and repainting wooden balls each weekend to preserve them from a damp British summer.

The final letter in Issue 1 of the Gazette was an open letter to all Associates, from Henry Needham, the CA Secretary. It's clear that his was a thankless and underappreciated role. "I wish to take the opportunity of your first number to address a few remarks to your readers, a privilege which hitherto has not been available. Till now, when I have had to convey anything to the croquet community, I have had to rely upon the pages of a so-called official organ, which only reached those who chose to purchase it or borrow it; or to put the Association to the expense of a circular letter.

"No one can be better aware of the inconvenience of our late arrangement than myself. Querulous questions and indignant remonstrances have inundated my letter-box, which their writers would have spared me had they been in possession of the real condition of affairs. I am bound to confess that I may have neglected to reply to some of the more futile of these, and at the same time thank Associates generally for their sympathetic attitude towards me.

"I cannot deny that I welcome the transfer [to the Editor] of a good deal of the work which I have hitherto had to do at the office. Centralisation is the mainspring of our recent progressive movement. The success of this official organ depends on the efforts of individual Associates in their support."

100 years on, CA membership has doubled. Subscriptions are up (from 15s 6d for gentlemen and 10s for ladies). But 1,260 editions later we're still here.

"It's like Snooker, but with more rain"

Michael Wilson urges us to run for the cover of the clubhouse



Is Croquet an Outdoor Sport? It seems a strange question to ask anyone who has waded across the courts during an average English season. Everything croquet stands for is inalienably linked to the outdoors: sunshine, teas and greenery for the occasional players, waterproofs and wind-wobbled mallets for the die-hards. What else is the game about?

But while we finish hacking around on our winter lawns, itching for the spring's ephemerally excellent grass, perhaps we should spare the idea a thought: just because we normally play outdoors doesn't make croquet an outdoor game.

Some British sports are indubitably outdoor or indoor. Football with a roof on, for example, is universally accepted as anodyne and lacking in the essential atmosphere, even in the days of finely-manicured Premiership turf. We know table tennis is an indoor sport for good reason, as is darts. We would find outdoor snooker slightly odd. And angling speaks for itself.

There are more contentious examples though. Could cricket in a weatherless environment ever be countenanced, even though its distant relative, baseball, is regularly played under a roof? Cricket is a game where fortunes change with the conditions and no serious fan would have it any other way. Should athletics really be robbed of its

weather elements for indoor competition? Is archery a better test of skill with or without the challenge that the wind introduces?

No doubt that some of the sports we play outside are not really outdoor sports. Tennis for example is notionally held outdoors, but all serious matches are surrounded by protective banks of seating and kept covered from rain. Wimbledon is now even roofing off their centre tennis court, though I guess that the All England Club won't be doing the same for the other sport in its title. What about badminton? (Though not Badminton, whose outdoor location is ideal.) Shuttlecocks are regularly thrashed about in gardens all over Britain, often in ungentle summer winds. Yet this sport is never played seriously outside. Is croquet like holiday badminton? Are we guilty of playing an indoor sport outdoors?

We Brits have always loved the weather to play a big part in everything we do. From the Spanish Armada to a summer picnic, the excitement of unpredictable weather is essential to the spirit of the occasion. Dodgy weather's place in sport is that it throws up unpredicted winners, something we can see from the list of recent victors at Golf's Open Championship.

Indeed, golf has a parallel question to be asked of it. Clearly not regarding indoor/ outdoor play, but one equally

interesting. Which is real golf: the pristine conditions of an inland course, or the very coarse courses of an inclement North Sea links? As a Brit with a dash of Scot in me I believe fervently that a real golf competition should have a different extreme of weather every time the course is played, preferably with some further climatic intrigue from hole to hole. The steady progress round familiar doglegs, over well-known lakes and around plants unruffled by breeze is a nice test of a good player's consistency, but to me it seems to lack something for anyone who can hit their targets with a 99% accuracy. Of course, fans of inland-American golf disagree entirely and are incredulous at the poor conditions in which our Open is often played.

Golf, I believe, is a real 'outdoor' sport. It's at its best when the elements are part of the ordeal. 'Extreme Croquet' (more properly called "Silly Boys' Golf with a Big Ball") can perhaps join it in as far as it gains much of its competitive dimension from battling against semi-natural conditions and the true test is adapting to the hazards thrown up by nature.

But are Association and Golf Croquet the same? Should the conditions be something top players contend with in order to prove themselves worthy of a win? I think not. In fact, I believe the opposite is true. Poor conditions randomise the opportunities of winning and neutralise genuine skill with a mallet.

You don't have to be an international star to have felt the effects of this. All croquet players' main gripes are about the conditions of play. We hate the hummocks around hoops, we hate the slopes at the boundaries. Some hate fast grass, some hate slow grass. Most of us hate that mottling of fast bald brown bits and fuzzy thick green ones which is so popular around the country. We hate slack hoops, we hate tight hoops. We hate the wind, we hate the rain. Basically we hate it when our own best efforts are thwarted by circumstances in which ball movement is difficult to predict. If we lose to a lesser player, the chances are it is because of the poor conditions.

So surely the answer is clear - we

should eliminate the quirks that nature throws our way. This is something indoor croquet can do. In this way we can introduce some consistency into the tournaments: consistencies of hoops, surfaces and of course weather - i.e. none. All players from high-bisquers to 'A' class could then enjoy a game without the feeling that they could have done better if only the conditions hadn't been against them.

Indoor croquet exists already - the Belgian winter tournament being perhaps the most prominent example - but the form needs support and improvement to progress. We might look for inspiration to the sport of bowls, which has a successful indoor variety for both amateurs and pros., and has a seasonal structure to go with it. Bowls, however, is lucky because it has the money which popularity brings. Facilities for it are seen as a decent business venture. Sports centres can offer a rink to a group of up to eight players, and there are six rinks in the space of a bowling green, slightly larger than a croquet lawn. A full-sized indoor croquet lawn on the other hand can offer a game to eight players at the most, and some people see this as a prohibiting factor. Is it really an excuse though? Plenty of sports halls accommodate five aside football for an hour. They are also happy to allow space for a couple of indoor tennis matches. Surely if croquet players suffered double-banking it could be profitable for a hall within reach of a thriving croquet club.

For the game to go indoors successfully, there are important technical considerations. Hoops for example cannot be fixed rigidly. They need some flexibility, as Bill Arliss explained in the Gazette last year. The rabbit-runs which appear between hoop stays also mean that a single sheet of artificial turf is impossible. Rutger Beijderwellen, a passionate advocator of the indoor game and part-time inventor, is currently researching a system of inflatable sleeves for the hoop stays and replaceable squares of artificial turf for the lawn. If successful these could be of huge import to the quest for perfect croquet conditions. Perhaps an indoor venue could be persuaded to take these devices into their range of facilities and

could start holding winter indoor croquet tournaments and friendlies. All-weather courts could also benefit from the new technology, and these should be considered seriously by all clubs, as a state-of-the-art all-weather court could solve a lot of the problems which the traditional lawn throws up.

Croquet courts need to be made of a surface which is not eroded by the British weather. They need to be laid on ground which is flat. Hoops need to be set using a technology whereby their rigidity and width can be accurately controlled, instead of just bashing them further and further into the earth. Hummocks and rabbit warrens need to be eradicated. And they can be. In a world where most tennis and hockey is played on artificial surfaces, there's no reason why croquet can't be too. Even the weather can be kept out of the picture. All we need is to take the game indoors.

With good indoor equipment our croquet experts would be able to enjoy the same controlled conditions that snooker players can, and mastery over the balls themselves would dominate without the interference of random acts of nature. And it wouldn't only be the top players who would benefit. Having control over the pliancy and clearance of the hoops would mean that these things could be changed according to the class of player. Instead of two players having to apply to the forestry commission for their bisques, we could make the hoops more forgiving. Beginners might thus feel more encouraged with their game, while on the other side of croquet, Masters Tournaments could be played with tougher hoops, just as the snooker professionals play with tighter pockets.

Not everyone believes that perfect conditions are important. There is an argument that the best competitors adapt to poor conditions quickest, and that it is this talent that marks them out as great sportsmen. No doubt that adapting to bad lawns and weather is admirable. But I still contend that croquet is at its most enjoyable, both to play and to watch, when the talents of the individual are not hampered by the elements. In a game based on accuracy, delicacy and perfection of technique,

poor equipment and conditions are handicaps to players producing their best.

There is also an argument that the conditions are the same for both players and that therefore the pernicious effect of bumpy grass and blinding wind is neutralised. Competitive parity is not however the issue. It is important that individual players produce their best. For all croquet's atavism, it needs the level of competitive play to keep improving, and on an indoor court, or good all-weather surface, it can. A thriving indoor scene may or may not lead to the wider audiences of television in the manner of bowls and snooker, but popularity and finance are not the reasons why standards must improve. For both its dignity and its future, the sport needs its best players to reach an unquestionably first-class standard as sports-men and women.

Playing outdoors is great, of course. If what you love about the game is its atmosphere and its social side then there's no reason to have the courts taken from their settings in parks and gardens. If you want a spot of summer entertainment whilst your face and arms get tanned, again, by all means whack a few balls around outdoors, on a grotty patch of farm-grass if necessary. But that's fun, not sport; not by any twenty-first century definition of the word 'sport'. And the way the general public see Croquet is exactly that, a bit of whimsical fun. If we want the esteem which is given to a sport, then the conditions must be created to match.

On a closing note, I'm well aware why we really love to play outdoors. It's not that we're partial to a sunny day's recreation, nor because we consider the amateur-gentlemanism of croquet sacrosanct. It's because the conditions are a great excuse for our own lack of talent. I have to say, it doesn't matter how many sextuples Rob Fulford performs on court 7 at Southwick, my own brain tells me that the lawn is grotesquely warped and on the verge of unplayability. If the game went indoors, all I'd be able to blame would be my mallet or the Barlows or - in extreme circumstances only - myself.

Obituary

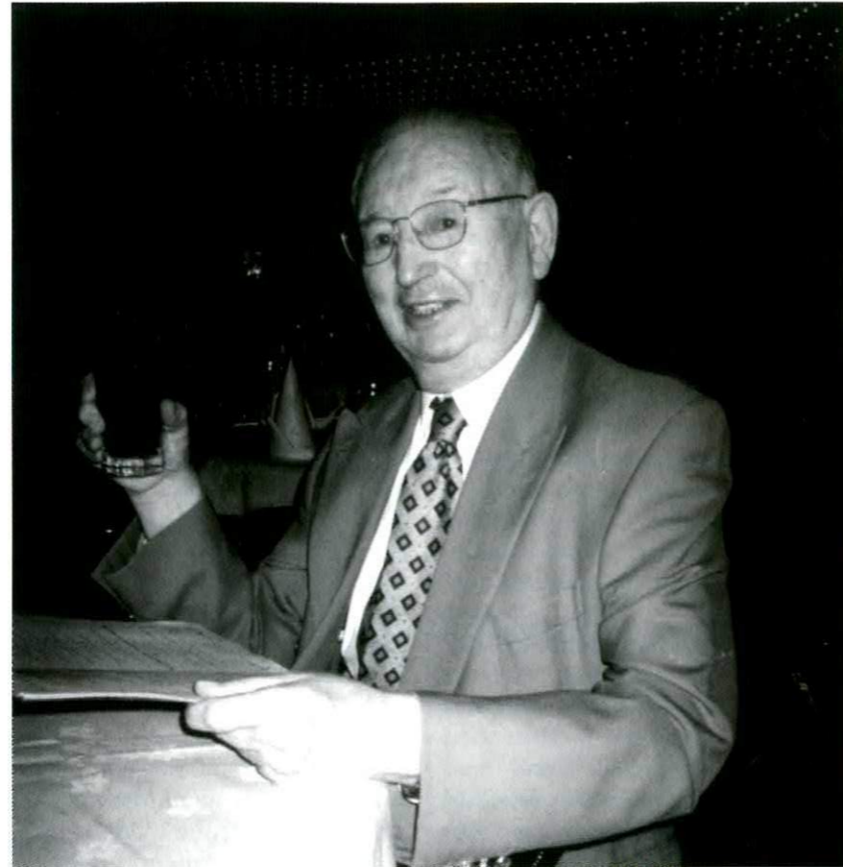
Brian C Macmillan

Brian Macmillan died on 10th November 2003 after a long period of ill-health which he bore with great fortitude and cheerfulness.

Brian was born in Nottingham on 14th December 1922. He always showed a keen and active interest in all sports, football and particularly boxing, and was able to indulge this interest during his wartime service in the R A F Air Sea Rescue division. On demobilization he entered the retail tobacco business and rose to become Promotions Manager for Players Cigarettes, part of the Imperial Tobacco Company.

When the time came in 1982 for Richard Rothwell to retire from the position of Secretary and Development Officer of the Croquet Association, our then Council had great difficulty in finding a successor, and it was a stroke of remarkable good fortune that Brian noticed the advertisement that had been placed - not, I may add, with much expectation of success - in the local Putney newspaper. Having just retired from Imperial Tobacco and not wanting to be idle at home in nearby Wimbledon, Brian found the job offered to be exactly what he was looking for and he brought to it all of his tremendous enthusiasm.

This was probably the first appointment to be made by the CA of an administrator with no background knowledge of the esoteric croquet world, and there were consequently misgivings on the part of many members of Council. Although he was spared the unenviable task of minuting the tortuous discussions of Council and its committees, it could not have been easy for him to learn how to manage the CA office, particularly at a time when an expansion in the number of Associates and in development activities was taking place. But Brian's enthusiasm for working with people and his unfailing good humour overcame all these difficulties and his wartime training enabled him to deal effectively with the sometimes tire-



some enquirer, from both within and without the Association. He soon had matters well under his control and 'ran a tight ship' as Administration Secretary for eight eventful years.

For a man who had already had an arduous and successful career Brian possessed a surprising ability to accept and develop new ideas. His main forte was in his salesmanship and he single-handedly created the concept of the Croquet Shop within the CA office. Hitherto sales had been confined to leaflets, Law books and the like, but Brian saw the potential for much more than that and, calling on the skills he had learnt while working in the tobacco business, began to build up a first class service for the supply of croquet equipment, clothing and promotional advice for hotels and business entertainment, as well as books and the traditional stand-bys. Selling things was a fine art for Brian and legend has it that unsuspecting visitors to the shop, who came merely perhaps to purchase the odd pamphlet or item of equipment, were judged lucky to escape without having bought at least

one other item which they hadn't thought they needed!

Brian continued to run the Croquet Shop for many years after he retired from the position of Administration Secretary in 1990 and its present day continuing success - which adds so much to the Association's income - is a fitting memorial to Brian in the CA's annals.

He was also responsible for organizing the many corporate croquet days, usually held at Hurlingham, that became so popular in later years. Dressed in his whites, a striped blazer and flashy boater (see picture opposite), he would prepare for the event (in the comparative privacy of the office) by performing his celebrated song and dance routine - 'And she wore a tulip, a lovely yellow tulip and I wore a red, red rose' - to the delight of any friends or colleagues who happened to be present. Then it was out to the croquet courts on the cricket pitch, ready to inspire those City bankers, lawyers or whoever, who little realized how hard he would make them work playing Golf Croquet, and how much they



Brian Macmillan demonstrating the game at the Chelsea Flower Show in 1998

would enjoy themselves!

Brian always appeared cheerful

and youthfully exuberant, bringing, it seemed to us, the best of the past into

the play of the present. Although he chose not to involve himself very much in the competitive side of either Croquet or Golf Croquet, he was always welcomed at tournaments and other events.

Brian was a great companion, a lover of the finer qualities of life and a connoisseur of theatrical entertainment: many will miss him and the CA sends its condolences to his widow, Carmel, his four daughters and the other members of his family.

The CA and the Hurlingham Club were represented at Brian's Funeral Requiem Mass at the Church of St. John the Baptist in Westerham, Kent - a beautiful and moving service - and afterwards at Putney Vale Crematorium on 20th November 2003.

A J Oldham and P W P Campion

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ASSOCIATION CROQUET TACTICS

For Beginners and High Bisquers

No 5 - Principles of Play:
Exploit the Rush
by Michael Hague

In my last article, we examined the Line of Rush and how we use it to set up rushes, especially Dolly Rushes and Double Dollies. Being an ex-soldier, I liken the shots available to me to an armoury of weapons. The most accurate, my sniper's rifle, is the straight single ball drive. My straight take-offs, croquet drives and stop-shots should be pretty accurate if handled well and they are my standard issue rifle. Rolls are less accurate like a shotgun, full choke for straight rolls, open choke with a wider spread of shot for split croquets. The rush is my light mortar, an area weapon which in the hands of a well-trained mortar man can often land a shot very near to the target.

Although the rush may not always be a reliably accurate way of manoeuvring a ball, it is an absolutely essential weapon, especially when setting up a break or restoring it when falling apart. A roquet gives us the opportunity for another two strokes; a rush is a roquet with the added benefits of manoeuvring the roqueted ball to a position of tactical advantage; in effect it gives us a free, extra stroke. So not only do we deliberately create rushes as discussed in the last article in this series, but whenever SB is by chance close enough to a live ball for a rush, we must always stop to think of any way that that rush can be exploited to advantage. Let us look at a few examples, using our diagram of the court and smarties to illustrate the play.

Give yourself a clear shot

Firstly Figure 1 is a situation which often faces High Bisquers who fail to get striker's ball (SB) close enough to the hoop to be able to run it under control and/or fail to put the pilot ball in the correct position on the far side of the hoop to achieve the desired rush towards the pivot and the next but one hoop. Having just run Hoop 1, SB and the pilot ball have ended up close

together but the rush is back towards corner 4. Useless? Certainly not! If the pilot is merely roqueted and then driven to Hoop 3 with the SB joining up with the pivot, the pilot will probably have to negotiate a dangerously narrow gap between peg and pivot. So in this situation always check the furniture and see if a short rush should not be used to get clear of it.

Play to the boundary, to send the pivot back to the middle

The leg of the 4 BB from 1-back to 2-back is a difficult one for High

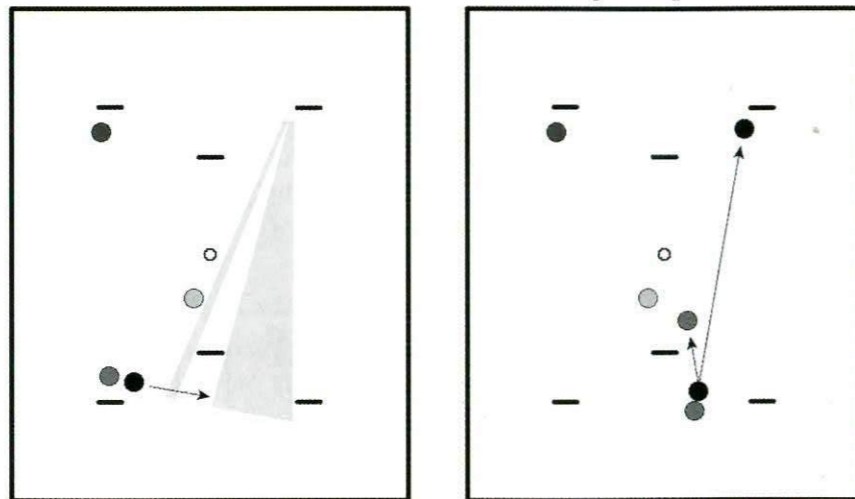


Figure 1. Striker can take a rush on Black to either shaded area, the smaller of which risks failure in sending Black towards 3. The rush to the larger area need not be very accurate, but gives the chance of an easy drive to follow.

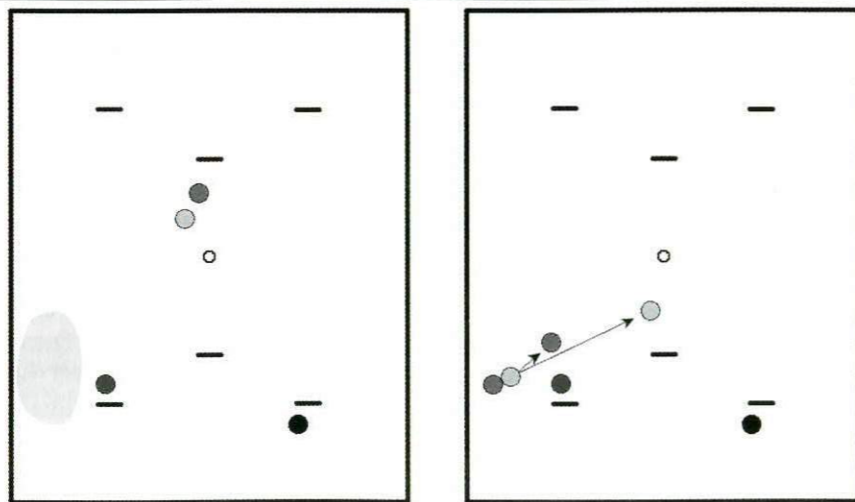


Figure 2. Again, striker needs a rush to improve the position, but it need not be too accurate. Anywhere in the shaded area gives an easy drive to put the pivot back to the middle, finishing on the 2-back ball. Landing in any westerly position as far down as the corner should be sufficient for playing the straight drive, but avoid landing to the east of 2-back, which threatens an ugly split-roll.

Bisquers, as it involves a long stop shot or drive to place the pioneer just south of 3-back, and at the same time come on to the pivot to rush it down with the continuation shot to its next position just southwest of the peg. SB not infrequently ends up positioned close to the pivot but with a rush not in the intended direction. In Figure 2 we have the situation where SB has come to rest with a rush towards corner 1. Maybe we can cut rush the pivot to its next position southwest of peg. But for most High Bisquers cut rushes are notorious for failing, the target ball often being missed and SB ending up where a single bisque will not be suffi-

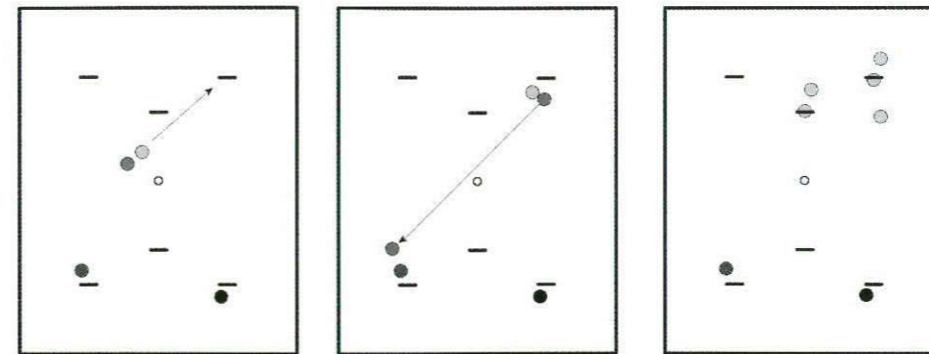


Figure 3. A rush on Yellow to 4-back presents itself (left). Should Striker take it on? If the take-off back to 2-back (centre) is a comfortable one, there's no reason why not. Beware of sending Yellow to any of the positions shown right. The danger of wiring may leave Striker with no angle for a take-off. Always check your target position, and plan your shot within your own margin for error. There are no bonus points for over-ambitious shots which fail!

cient to rectify matters. No, it is safer surely to straight rush the pivot as far towards corner 1 as possible and then play a straight drive or stop shot to put pivot in its proper place and SB within easy roquet distance from the pioneer at 2-back.

Placing an early pioneer

In Figure 3, although we have good pioneers on Hoops 2-back and 3-back, our SB has let us down and is just on the west side of the pivot. It offers a straight dolly rush to 4-back so why not use it to rush a pioneer there? We prefer to croquet pioneers to hoops and the take-off to the pioneer at Hoop 2-back will be a long one but that is the price one pays when earlier shots were not accurate enough. Once within roquet distance of pioneer at 2-back, we have a 4BB with a double pioneer layout ahead of us which should give us an easy journey through both 3-back and 4-back.

A word of warning

It's a standard principle of croquet that, when you need something to go right, it never does. Rushes requiring great accuracy always seem to be the ones which fail. Most of the examples here need not be too precise, give or take a yard or two either way. The example in Figure 3 is a special case, in that it presents a rush which should only be taken on if you're happy with it.

If all goes well, you've an early pioneer at 4-back, and can proceed with the long take-off (if that's a shot which suits you). After the hoop, the 2-back ball can be placed anywhere in front of your break, knowing that the next two hoops have their pioneers already well placed.

There are all sorts of things which could go wrong, though. If Yellow stops near a hoop (4-back or penult) or the peg, there's a chance of a wiring yourself from 2-back, or giving yourself a hampered swing. Even worse, Yellow could drop in the jaws of a ball you next need to hit. Turn - and possibly game - over.

Hitting Yellow too hard or in the wrong direction is not fatal, but just

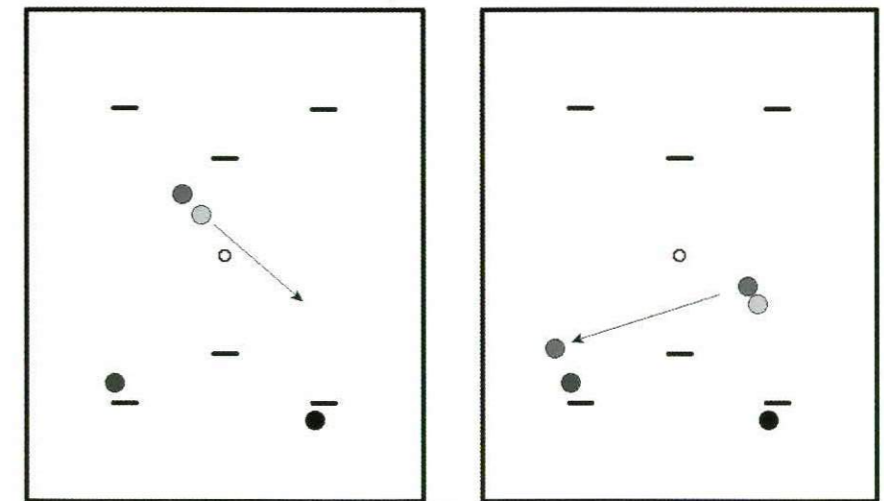


Figure 4. Mind the furniture! Leaving Yellow at the peg doesn't give striker a problem until after 2-back. That gives the possibility of a long half roll to 4-back, with the peg interfering. Right now, getting Yellow clear of the peg is awkward however you play it, unless it's rushed somewhere near the position shown. There's a big area allowing an easy take-off to 2-back.

gives a very bad pioneer. One good rush after 2-back is enough to recover position, but it might be that this is just a course of action you'd rather avoid at the outset.

The advice is as it has been throughout these coaching articles: plan ahead, and aim for accuracy. Bear in mind that hoops are not movable obstacles, and check that the spot you're aiming at is (a) achievable, and (b) the spot you really want to reach in the first place. Always take a couple of seconds to walk up to your target position, and check you've a clear view of where you're going after that.

Avoid that awkward next shot

Finally, in Figure 4, SB has a rush on the pivot towards corner 4. Can we make use of the rush? The alternative to doing so would appear to be roquetting and taking off leaving pivot where it is or hitting a long split pass roll down the court. Ugh! Better surely to exploit the rush and send pivot straight to its position for the leg Hoop 3-back to 4-back and take off to the pioneer at 2-back. We will have to make some adjustment to the standard 4BB play when running Hoop 2-back to deal with pivot's position SE of peg. How we do that we will examine in the next article when discussing the fourth Principle of Play - Use Straight Shots.

Golf Croquet Rules

Many of you will have no doubt heard or seen on a web site that the WCF Golf Croquet Rules committee have released a new version of the rules in time for the forthcoming world championship at Southwick and Compton. But please don't worry, you will not have to rush out and buy a new laws book and learn a different way of playing the game before the season starts in April. In fact some of the temporary laws that the CA issued before the start of last season have now been adopted in principle in the new WCF rules. There are however two fundamental changes in the new WCF rules that will affect the basic way in which the game is played and of course we must take account of these changes in our domestic play, particularly as several of our players will be involved in the World Championship.

Our problem has been that the new WCF rules were not released until 15 March and this has given us very little time to get things organised for our domestic scene. We have therefore decided that the best and easiest course for the 2004 season is to retain our present laws as they stand together with the changes introduced at the start of last season and issue three further changes for the 2004 season, which are described below.

The new WCF rules are an interim

issue that will be reviewed after the World Championship and a brand new edition will be issued. The CA laws committee will at the same time review our internal position with a view to accepting in part or in full the new WCF rules for our internal use in the 2005 season.

For the new season, the temporary changes on laws 5, 6 and 8 as agreed for last season, will be retained. These cover the choice of going first or second as winner of the toss, the extension of the starting area for club play, the clarification about a boundary ball and the relief for limited backswing. Other than the extended starting area, these changes are now incorporated in the WCF rules.

A minor change in the CA Laws is that the reference to non-metallic ends are removed from **Law 3 (d) (1)** to line up with the requirements in the WCF rules and also those for Association Croquet.

The first major change is in the Half Way Law, i.e. **Law 12 Playing for the Next Hoop**. The revised wording tidies up the procedure for moving a ball to a penalty point and put the onus on all players to identify any ball that is past the half way line and not subject to an exception. Effectively any ball that has to be moved must be moved before the shot following that in which a hoop is scored. The major

change is that the opponent can now decide which penalty point a ball is sent to. The full wording of the law is given at the end of this article.

The other changes concern faults. The WCF Rules Committee have been persuaded to include the definition of a striking period in the rules and have defined the period as the time between when the ball is first struck and when the striker leaves his/her stance under control. This is very similar to the present CA laws definition of striking interval and we agree it makes certain advanced refereeing functions slightly easier. We have therefore adopted it.

The first sentence of **Law 14, Striking Faults** is replaced by the following:

The Striking Interval is defined as starting from the time the striker's ball is struck by the mallet and ending when the striker leaves his/her stance under control.

The WCF have also adopted the Association Croquet principle that after a striking fault, the opponent can decide if he wants the balls left where they lie or replaced in their original positions. So now after that almighty 'crush' that scores a hoop and gets the ball down to the next hoop, it is unlikely to be replaced so that you can have another go in the next shot.

Law 14 (b) (1) is amended to read *Any ball moved during that stroke is either replaced in its original position or left*

where it lies at the choice of the opponent. No point is scored for any ball and the turn ends. In handicap play, the balls must all be returned to their original position if the player intends to take an additional stroke.

As a consequence of the change in the definition of the Striking Interval in Law 14, it is necessary for us to include the same fault as that described in Law 14 (a) (10) also as a non-striking fault in Law 13. This is because the fault in question may arise without the striker's ball ever being hit. **Law 13 (a)** is therefore amended by the addition of - *It is also a fault if the player causes a hoop or the peg to move or shake a ball at rest by hitting a hoop or the peg with the mallet or any part of the body or clothes;*

The full wording of Law 12 is now **Law 12 Playing for the Next Hoop**

(a) (1) *At the end of a stroke in which a hoop point has been scored, any ball (other than the ball that scored the hoop point) which is resting beyond the halfway line between the hoop scored and the next hoop in order (see Law 12(d)) is a "relevant ball" for the purposes of this Law.*

(2) *A relevant ball shall be moved in accordance with Law 12(b) before the next stroke is played unless Law 12(c) applies.*

(3) *If the side which owns a relevant ball plays a stroke before it has been so*

moved and the opposing side or referee forestalls play before the opposing side has played a stroke, then the opposing side may choose to have the stroke in error cancelled and any balls moved replaced so that Law 12(a)(2) may be applied.

(b) (1) *A relevant ball shall be placed on either of the penalty spots D or E on Diagram 3 as chosen by the opponent of the owner of the relevant ball.*

(2) *If the relevant ball when so placed will obstruct the playing of another ball which will be played before the relevant ball, the relevant ball is placed after the other ball has been played.*

(3) *If the relevant ball cannot be so placed because of the presence of another ball which will be played before the relevant ball, the relevant ball is placed after the other ball has been played.*

(4) *If the relevant ball cannot be so placed because of the presence of another ball which will be played after the relevant ball, the relevant ball is placed on the boundary in contact with the other ball and as close as possible to the penalty spot.*

(c) *A relevant ball shall be played from where it lies:*

(1) *if it reached its position as a result of:*

(i) *contact with an opponent's ball, or*
(ii) *an opponent's stroke, or*
(iii) *peeling the ball that scored the*

hoop point, or

(iv) *being hit by its partner ball which scored the hoop point in the same stroke.*

(2) *if the opponent of the owner of the relevant ball:*

(i) *plays a stroke before it has been moved; or*

(ii) *announces before it has been moved that it shall be played from where it lies.*


(d) *Referring to Diagram 3, the halfway lines are as follows. When the next hoop in order is hoop 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 or 13 the halfway line is DE. When the next hoop in order is 3 or 9 the halfway line is BG. When the next hoop in order is 5 or 11 the halfway line is CH. When the next hoop in order is 7 the halfway line is AF.*

Diagram 3 in the present laws shall still apply.

Small inserts for the present rule book giving details of these changes are available from the CA Office on request.

Bill Arliss
Chairman, Golf Croquet Rules
Committee

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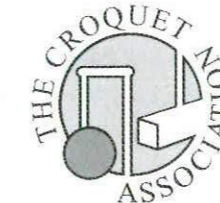
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Brits Abroad

News from tournaments in the winter sun

February: Florida 'English Week'

Samir Patel won the Second English Week Tournament, played at the National Croquet Center (NCC) in West Palm Beach, Florida, organised by Diplomatic Travel.

As last year, the 12 lawns were in superb condition - carpet-flat, evenly paced and weed-free - and temperatures in the mid-80's (about 27C) made for ideal playing conditions for the 53 players, half of whom played last year.

Samir Patel, co-manager with Ian Plummer, was interviewed by the Palm Beach Daily News and was "quoted" as saying: "Word has gotten [sic] around about the fabulous clubhouse and 12-lawn spread you have here." Sounds just like him! The same accurate article also stated "Most of the visitors are from the London area. They include John Hobbs of Kent, Brian Smith of Devon, Jeanne Ackermann of Nottingham, and..." Never trust news reports - including this one.

Three UK players had chosen the Florida "English Week" tournament to be the first tournament that they had ever entered! Trevor and Alma Longman, and Rosemary Bradshaw probably did not know what they were letting themselves in for. Rosemary's enthusiasm for croquet could not be sated - she played as many games as she could and practised in any odd moments.

Special mentions should also go to Mike Jenner who started the tournament living in Chicago but finished as a Florida resident, having bought a house between games. Tony Fathers was given the Pull-of-the-Week award, following a clearly impressive performance in the doubles!

During the organised day off, players scattered around Florida, some choosing an arduous 300-mile round trip to Naples while others raided the local shopping malls. Airboat tours and alligator spotting in the

Everglades were however the most popular.

To promote faster games we used the 'Yorkshire Variable Base System' which meant generally that both sides got bisques; for example if an 8 played a 12 then they would get 3 and 7 bisques respectively (see the Management section of <http://www.oxfordcroquet.com/> for details). Although played in summer temperatures we had winter daylight hours and consequently game times were set to 2.5 hours.

On day 2, Mike Jenner maintained a strong performance, to finish the event ahead of the chasing pack to win the Handicap Singles. Stewart Jackson (NCC) proved to be the best of the rest, beating Peter Quinn (Hurlingham) and Tony Backhouse (Cornwall & Plymouth) after a quality-of-wins count.

The doubles paired US with UK players. For many of the American players this opportunity to 'Bond with a Brit', as advertised in the American-generated literature, was too much to resist. Gisa Wagner (NCC) and Samir Patel won the competition (+1T, +1T, +1T, +2T). Tina Therkauf (NCC) and Trevor Longman were the runners up.

Ken Shipley (Ottawa, Canada) produced the performance of the tournament, beating Tony Backhouse by completing his first ever tournament triple peel, in the C-class block which he went on to win. He was one of only three players to complete a TP during the whole tournament.

The B-Class block was very tight, with a play-off required to determine the fourth semi-finalist. Keith Jones (Prairie Lights, Chicago) claimed his place with a +1(t) win over David Mumford (Woking). The other three qualifiers, Peter Quinn (Hurlingham), Jim Potter (Newport, Essex) and Richard Danby (Bear of Rodborough) had all tied. Jim Potter beat Peter Quinn in the final.

The A-Class was played as an 'Eight' (double all-play-all), over four days. Game times were set at 2.5

hours, but only 5 of the 56 games went to time - although one had to be pegged down by the light of torches and the grounds' buggy. Although Samir Patel had to fend off the two American players, Stewart Jackson and Mike Jenner who both finished on 10 wins, he managed 6 triples over 14 games winning the event with 11 wins.

And Finally...
Alma Longman won the magnificent Wexford Club Trophy, an elegant silver drink mixer/shaker in the shape of a rooster presented by Harvey Geiger on behalf of the Wexford Croquet Club in South Carolina. The conditions for winning? "For the player who has needed to purchase the fewest rounds of drinks during the event". This highly desirable object was keenly contested for and it was only decided on a who-lost-to-whom basis in the final reckoning. Our thanks to Wexford for starting such an excellent tradition. You lose all your games, get bought drinks AND win a trophy!

March: S African Golf Croquet

Just a week after Louise Bradforth's tense victory in the Association Singles final in South Africa's Western Province, David Hopkins swept down like a wolf on the fold and took 17 consecutive games to win first the WP Golf Croquet Singles Championship before winning the prestigious 19pt "Level Best" championships at Somerset West. This tournament, over two days, between the ten top players in South Africa ended with a fighting final between William Louw, last year's holder, and Hoppy keeping the spectators engrossed with startlingly good Croquet until the final hoop.

All were agreed that this tournament was the highest standard seen in South Africa and bodes well for the future.

News & Information

Expert Advice on Croquet Lawns

The CA is now offering Member Clubs advice on lawn maintenance and construction in three ways.

1. The revised booklet *Croquet Lawns: Their Construction, Maintenance and Development* has recently been published and a copy will be sent to all Member Club Secretaries shortly.

2. Members of the CA Lawns Advisory Group are available to give initial advice on lawn matters by telephone or by visiting the Club.

To take advantage of this service, clubs may contact their nearest group member:

John Beech, Chairman, Woodlands, Skipton Road, Barnoldswick, Lancs, BB18 6HH. 01282 813070 (phone/fax)
George Noble, 13 Sandy Lane, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 7EW. 020 8940 1427. karin@netcomuk.co.uk
Bob Whitaker, 23 Rockcliffe Road, Bathwick, Bath, BA2 6QW. 01225 462718. whitarch@lineone.net

There is no charge for this service. The CA will pay any travel costs.

3. Professional advice from an agronomist.

The CA is affiliated to the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI). Member Clubs have the privilege of seeking advice from an STRI agronomist. Such advice would involve a visit to the club to inspect the lawns, give advice on the spot and follow up with a written report to the club.

The cost of a visit to the 'average' club is £205 + VAT. 'Average' has so far been defined as a club with up to three courts. Larger clubs may be charged more, and these clubs are advised to seek information about the charge before the visit takes place.

The CA will SUBSIDISE an Advisory Visit to a Member Club by £100 as a grant aid contribution.

The procedure to activate a visit is to make a request in writing to John Beech, indicating briefly what sort of advice is required, or what lawn prob-

lem needs sorting out, and confirming that the club will pay the costs of the visit less the subsidy of £100.

John Beech
Chairman, Lawns Advisory Group

2004 All England Handicap Tournament

The Area Finals to be held on 4th/5th September will be played at Pendle, Newport, Surbiton, Compton and Bristol, and the final a fortnight later is at Nailsea.

Member Clubs are reminded that it is their responsibility to inform the Area Final Manager of the names of the successful candidates, and electronic mailing should be used, as this minimises errors.

Hamish Hall
Tournament Director

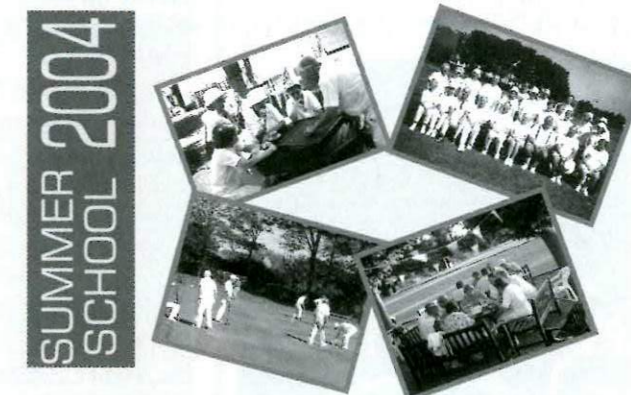
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At the next AGM, which will be held on Saturday 16 October, five members of Council will have completed their terms of office, three of whom have indicated their wish to stand for re-election.

The names of any Associates who wish to stand for election to Council should be notified to the Secretary of the CA by 1 June. In addition it would be helpful if notice of any motions to be put to the AGM could be given to the Secretary by that date.

Nigel Graves
Secretary, The Croquet Association
c/o Cheltenham Croquet Club, Old Bath Road, Cheltenham GL53 7DF.
Email caoffice@croquet.org.uk

SOUTH EAST CROQUET FEDERATION



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Southwick's club grounds, in an informal and relaxed atmosphere under the direction of friendly CA approved coaches in charge of groups of four. Morning coffee, a superb lunch and afternoon tea is provided, and a barbeque is held on an evening later in the week.

For more details, prospectus and entry form, contact Daphne Gaitley, 38 Monks Close, Lancing, West Sussex, BN15 9DB. Tel 01903 767174 or email daphne.gaitley@virgin.net

One hundred years and still counting

The Gazette celebrates its centenary, as reported by David Drazin

This issue of the *Gazette* - No 290 in the current series that started in 1954 - is actually the 1260th. That's an awful lot of history! Looking back at earlier issues, from Volume 1 No 1 to the present day, remarkably the only tidal changes that strike the eye are trends in literary style and format that have nothing to do with croquet or the Croquet Association. In the beginning, 'the official organ' of the Association was every inch an official record. Reflecting the literary standards and mores of the Edwardian era, articles and announcements were models of English prose that would have done credit to a legal office or financial institution; and successive issues, regularly dated, appeared like clockwork weekly in season. And just as our newspapers unbuttoned over the years, so the *Gazette* shed traditional formality and was designed to achieve visual impact, the latter trend facilitated by advances in printing technology. But its essential functions - to inform members about current events in the croquet world and offer a forum for the exchange of views - remain unchanged.

The stock contents of the *Gazette*



Col. Needham and C.D. Locock discussing arrangements for the first number of the *Gazette*, from Vol II No 1, April 1905

today are much the same as they have always been: who's who and how to contact them, official announcements,

proceedings of Council, croquet news, editorial comment, feature articles, correspondence, obituaries, illustrations of people in the news and topical happenings, classified and display advertisements, enlivened by occasional cartoons, puzzles, competitions, and contributions in verse. Periodic lists of individual rankings have lately extended the repertoire, but lists of prize winners and annual indexes have fallen by the wayside.

The most striking changes in the *Gazette* rather reflect the stylistic idiosyncrasies of its several editors, the house styles of successive printers, and financial constraints dictated by the changing fortunes of the Croquet Association. The first three editors, who spanned a full fifty years, set standards of excellence that all their successors may have emulated, but which none may be judged to have equalled. Charles Dealtry Locock (1904-15) - polymath extraordinary, Association Handicapper, and leading light on croquet tactics and all matters technical - got the *Gazette* off to a solid start; Robert Leatham Jones ('RLJ') (1920-37) set his personal stamp on it with no less authority; and Horace Francis Crowther Smith ('Crowther') (1937-54), master wordsmith and caricaturist, added wit to wisdom. Today Crowther is mostly remembered for his caricature supplements to the *Gazette* and for his own illustrated books of humour, and we may be inclined to forget that he also knew his onions. Not many people know that he also published *The Art of Croquet* (1932), one of the best general books on the subject, and *How to Win at Golf Croquet* (1913), the first serious account of golf croquet.

Crowther's retirement as editor marked the end of an era. He and his predecessors had been gentlemen of leisure, presumably of private means. They compiled the editorial content for each issue of the *Gazette* in longhand or typescript, sent it to the Holmesdale Press in Redhill, and that was that. The printer composed the magazine, added the ads, ran it through the press, and handled the distribution. From then on, gentlemen of leisure with aptitude and energy were not generally avail-



'X-cuse me for putting myself in the Book, But I wanted to show you how I think I look.' (from *A CROQUET ALPHABET* by HF Crowther Smith)

able, and the editor's job became more demanding, so future editors took the job for no more than a few years. Perhaps best remembered, though for the wrong reasons, will be Brian Lloyd Pratt (1970), who set out with the most grandiose manifesto and certainly succeeded in titivating his readers, but his various indiscretions drove Council to distraction and he was dismissed within the year [see article on Page 21].

The collapse of the Holmesdale Press, following the destruction of its premises by fire in 1964, came as a double whammy. Editors could no longer take the composition and distribution of the magazine for granted and had to involve themselves more and more in such humdrum activities. As a result, publication schedules slipped, issues no longer appeared when they should, and there was widespread muttering that the *Gazette* had gone to the dogs. Things began to look up when Christopher Hudson (1985-91), the CA's first salaried Development Officer, assumed the editorship. With the backing of DDS Colour Printers in Weston-Super-Mare, who had installed a new desktop publishing system, and the CA's new membership

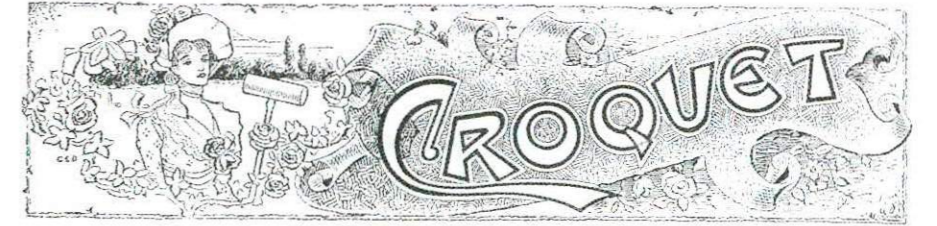
database, he produced 40 highly professional issues 'on the first day of every second month'. It fell to his successor, John Walters (1992-94), WCF World Champion and a printer by profession, to bring new printing technology in-house. The front cover of his first issue (No 220) showed 'one of the UK's leading woman players', mallet in hand and balls at her feet, modelling a fashionable wedding gown. In a tableau harking back to Lloyd Pratt's *Roquetetta*, the scantily-clad young lady who first appeared in the frontispiece to Leonard Williams's scholarly tome *Croquet* in 1899, he was proud to have used new technology to enhance her waistline.

The core function of the *Gazette*, which has always been distributed free of charge to all members of the CA at home and abroad, has been to disseminate information, especially about recent and forthcoming events in the croquet world, which they could not be assumed to receive from other sources. Naturally, therefore, its contents have been designed to complement other



Brian Lloyd-Pratt's Issue 113 from Winter 1970 featured *The Rape of Roquetetta*, the frontispiece from Leonard B Williams's *Croquet* (1899). Annabel McDiarmid mimicked the pose for John Walters's debut edition, No 220, in March 1992

publications issued by the CA from time to time to all members. As it happens, it has only ever produced two such works - a directory of members,



The masthead for the Croquet section of *Lawn Tennis & Croquet*, circa 1900

with their addresses and handicaps and sundry other information, called the *Croquet Association Year Book* when it was first published in 1902, and the annual Fixtures List, first issued in 1969. So the contents of the *Gazette* have only ever had to adapt to the introduction of a single new source of reference. But the impact of the introduction of the Fixtures List, the brain-child of Derek Caporn, was quite dramatic. Up to 1969, the *Gazette* was the only medium which could be used to advertise open tournaments, so naturally in season it carried several pages of advertisements for forthcoming tournaments. Since then it has only been used to advertise unofficial tour-



naments and special events arranged late in the day after the Fixtures List has gone to press.

The frequency with which the

Gazette has been published has varied over a wide range. Until soon after the outbreak of World War I - during which it appeared intermittently - it was published weekly between April and October, and every few weeks between seasons, in annual volumes of 30 issues. Between the wars the number of issues published annually fluctuated in the upper 20s, hitting 30 exceptionally in 1928 and 1929. And after World War II - during which it was again published intermittently - numbers hovered between four and eight per year until 1987, when the present bi-monthly pattern was established. The main factors underlying these trends have been production costs and the state of the CA's finances.

I have not been able to make any sense of printing price inflation over the past 100 years, though I have been told, and I am inclined to believe, that in the latter half of the last century printing costs generally increased at a greater rate than the overall cost of living. Be that as it may, the cost of producing the *Gazette* has often been a sensitive issue because it has always commanded a big slice of the CA's revenue. Throughout the last century, costs of editing, printing, and distribution varied between about 20 and 40 per cent of the Association's income, depending largely upon its current membership strength.

Thus, in striking an annual budget, especially in hard times, the CA has usually thought long and hard about how much it could prudently spend on the *Gazette*. And, if stretched, the solution, however regrettable, was obvious: cut the number of issues and, if push came to shove, reduce their size. Costs of distribution were fixed and no other cuts could offer significant savings. Thankfully, the CA now has a

healthy membership base, so the cost of producing the *Gazette* is not so much of a burden. In 2002, the last year for which accounts are available, it amounted to no more than eleven per cent of the Association's income.

The fact that the national newspapers give croquet scant coverage at best has been a perennial grievance. But, in the grand scheme, perhaps it would be naive to expect anything better, for after all croquet has never been more than a tiny sport. We have only ever been taken seriously by specialist media. In the beginning, before the foundation of the Croquet Association, croquet was served wonderfully well by *The Field*, edited by John Henry Walsh ('Stonehenge'), and its sister journal *The Queen*, and during various periods by *Land and Water*, *Westminster Papers*, and *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*. Walsh saw the potential of croquet from the very start and used his influence to great effect in promoting the game.

As soon as the United All England Croquet Association (later renamed the Croquet Association) began to get its act together in 1896, *Lawn Tennis*, the official organ of the Lawn Tennis Association, took note; and, in the next few years, until the CA was able to launch its own journal, it took croquet under its wing. Various entitled *Lawn Tennis*, *Lawn Tennis and Croquet*, and *Lawn Tennis and Croquet and Badminton*, it worked in close collaboration with the CA authorities and covered croquet affairs in a dedicated section under its own masthead. In April 1902 it was agreed that this section should become the official organ of the CA, and so it remained until the *Gazette* was launched two years later. It is pleasing to note that the parting was amicable. *Lawn Tennis and Croquet* continued its croquet section until April 1905, when it announced its closure in a fulsome farewell message.

Apologies to anyone who call recall my article in Issue No 250, saluting the

Gazette on the occasion of the CA's centenary in 1997. Unavoidably, I am repeating myself here and there. But in the light of recent developments in information technology, it is timely to revisit the hope I then expressed that the *Gazette* should remain above all a journal of record, so that we and future generations may continue to be able to piece together our heritage. While we may stand by that hope, it is now far from clear that the *Gazette* should continue indefinitely in the form of a printed magazine. I am told that the integrity and accessibility of digital records can now be guaranteed in perpetuity. As soon as we all have broadband internet, there will be no reason in principle why the contents of *Gazette* should not be integrated with the CA website, which went online in 1999. Paper has the comfort of familiarity, but what price comfort? We may be thankful for the blessings of the IT revolution.



That's Canon Ball - the Patron Saint of croquet...

Jack Shotton

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The Gazette and Development

James Hawkins looks back at how Croquet's development has been mirrored in the *Gazette*

It would be difficult to argue that the *Gazette* under Bryan Lloyd Pratt had a great positive effect on the development of the game.

His brief but extraordinary tenure as editor began in Issue 110 in the Spring of 1970. This was a time when the administration of Croquet had reached a critical point. The Sports Council (then the Central Council for Physical Recreation) had just agreed to give its first grant to the development of the game, and this modest sum was to be spent touring the country, giving lectures on the game.



Lloyd Pratt was an eccentric, flamboyant character. He stumbled upon the game in the mid 50s, and clearly saw croquet as some sort of haven from the ills of the modern world. This left him at odds with Council's new inclusive policy, something he reflected in his impassioned, and immoderate, editorials.

The four issues of the *Gazette* which he produced are certainly lavish. The quality of the paper, the *art nouveau* cover and the extravagance of the typography all gave an impression of opulence to which Associates had been unaccustomed. It's Bryan's four editorials which have left an indelible, though not entirely palatable, mark in the history of the *Gazette*.

Under the title *Survival, Expansion or Decline?* his first contribution argued against modernisation: "In an overcrowded, and increasingly nasty modern world, [croquet] seems, to those who have a hypersensitive social conscience, to be a crime against the modern democratic way of life ... Just as chess is better than bingo, or bridge is better than whist; so is croquet better than, say, bowls. That is not to say that

that jejune and proletarian pastime is not more suitable for the majority of people - it is."

Three months later, Issue 111 left many more players uncomfortable. Under the headline *The Gazette - The Official Organ of the Croquet Association* was a short piece entitled *For the South African Croquet Association*. Giving the impression that this was a clear CA policy, Lloyd Pratt spoke out against the recent cancellation of the Cricket Test Matches to South Africa. Red faces must have resulted, both within the Croquet Association, and with the Sports Council, whose official line was firmly anti-apartheid.

For his third edition, Bryan had evidently been told to withdraw his remarks, though there there seemed to be little remorse in his tone. "Views expressed in the leading article ... are not a reflection of Council's deliberate policy. Such views may happen to coincide with what the majority of Associates think, and, equally, they may not."

By now, clamorous voices were calling for the editor to temper his views. Letters to the Editor variously read: "I am fascinated to discover that Colonel Blimp lives and edits this publication"; "I find the sentiments expresses on the subject of South Africa regrettable to say the least"; and "Such phrases as 'our halcyon days before socialism and punitive taxation', attributed to you, Sir, contribute to my impression that a certain rightward bias is creeping into the editorial contents." The editor responded, accusing his detractors of half-wittedness and "woolly and petulant fatuity". This was surely a position from which Lloyd Pratt could not bounce back.

And so it proved. His fourth and final edition bore an editorial headed *Croquet and the British Tax Payer*. Lloyd Pratt came straight to the point which he'd hinted at previously. He referred to the plans for development of the game as inept and inane, and argued against such plans being funded from public money. "Croquet's appeal is an esoteric one, and attempts at popular-

izing (i.e. vulgarizing) the game only dismay the faithful." Far from backing down under growing evidence that he was swimming against the tide, he pressed forward: "A zealous but misguided faction, who are not representative of the majority of CA members, are pushing blindly forward with a scheme whose implications are, we believe, harmful to Croquet."

And that was it. The row reached boiling point, and spilled over on to the pages of *The Times* and towards the BBC. For a week, Croquet, which had kept itself in the media shadows for decades, burst into the spotlight. Bryan Lloyd Pratt had to go. Ostensibly, though, it was not his political uncorrectness which finished him off. The budget for the *Gazette* had rocketed skywards during the year, exceeding the £800 target for the year by a huge £263. The CA's coffers were empty, and the magazine's elegant production quality could not be sustained.

Shortly after, Bryan emigrated to South Africa. A sorry end to his tale came with his murder in 1983, stabbed by a young acquaintance in Cape Town. He was 52.

Issue 114 was a simple four-page document, listing some tournament results, and detailing Council's position on the matter of Bryan Lloyd Pratt's dismissal. It fell to Peter Hallett to assume control for the new magazine.

He remained for seven years and 32 editions. The magazine, and the CA, were by now in a much healthier state. His last editorial states, "Croquet has changed quite a lot these last ten years ... Perhaps Bryan rightly perceived what was to come of the Development Scheme. Things have turned out much as he thought - the difference is that I welcome it."

The game was undeniably moving on. Immediately following Peter's final editorial is a report of England's first experience of Golf Croquet, as it is played in Egypt. "The hosts [England] were quite taken aback by the standard of play of the visitors, and lost

Brush up on the Laws

No 5 - By Michael Hague

the match 8-1." A growing interest in Golf Croquet would intermittently be reflected in editorial policy from now on.

Betty Prichard assumed control for seven issues, before David Foulser and Phil Johnson (19 and 7 issues respectively). With Chris Hudson, the CA's first full-time Development Officer, the magazine entered what was arguably its heyday.

For 40 editions, from June 1985 to January 1992, Chris edited the *Gazette*, now renamed simply *Croquet*. Pursuing a clear agenda of developing the game, the magazine had more of a focus towards club players. Golf Croquet featured more heavily, with occasional pull-out supplements. This marked perhaps the birth of the general interest article in the magazine, though a larger budget still allowed space for many tournament reports.

By now the Editor was faced with a dilemma. Even in 1985, tournament croquet was becoming so popular that there was just insufficient space to accommodate all results, on top of dealing with a changing profile of CA Associates, whose interests could not be fully met with a publication of endless tabulated results.

Subsequent editors recognised this, but each in their different ways. John Walters succeeded Chris Hudson in 1992. Impressive in their visual layout, the substance of Walters' *Gazettes* was perhaps variable. He'd recently come from nowhere to win the World Championship, and took on the role of editor with some celebrity. The Walters Manifesto was uncompromising in its focus on the game at the top

level. Critics saw this as squeezing out handicap play in favour of the editor's own exploits. Indeed, there was much concern over the perceived vanity of a heavy reliance on the editor's image throughout certain editions.

Wrangles over payment of advertising commission, and lateness of delivery led to John's departure in 1994 after 17 issues. His total disappearance from the croquet scene has led many to speculate on his whereabouts.

After publishing in paperback the (much improved) second edition of Keith Wylie's *Expert Croquet Tactics*, John Walters went on to edit other titles. He is known to have produced a magazine for collectors of phonecards, and, according to recent reports, now lives in Amsterdam.

Gail Curry came as a surprise successor. She had been the subversive editor of a rival publication *Taking the Bisque*, which ran in parallel throughout John Walters' tenure. As poacher-turned-gamekeeper she took on the CA role for 38 issues from 1995 to 2001. Costs were forced back down and distribution was tightened up. The name reverted to *The Croquet Gazette*, and she sought to re-enfranchise the rank-and-file club players with more general features articles.

And that brings us to my term of office. This is Number 16 under the current rule. Times have changed immeasurably in the magazine in my lifetime, but also in the 18 years I've been a subscriber. None of us can say what the game, or the magazine, will look like in 50 or 100 years' time. Let's hope it's a happy future.

The Early Peg-Out

Beginners in their early days of playing croquet may not always reach the pegging out phase of their handicap game and thus are not always familiar with the rules for it. Many A-class players are equally unsure if they rarely play handicap games! In a handicap game, when may striker peg out his adversary's ball and his own and/or partner ball?

Answer

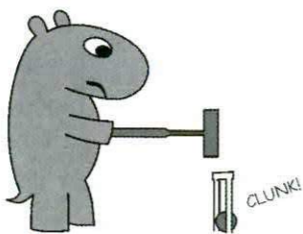
Laws 15 and 38. In a handicap game, once striker's ball has become a rover (i.e. it's completed all 12 hoops), it may peg out a rover of his adversary at any time. To peg out his own ball(s), striker's partner ball must have become a rover, before or during the pegging-out stroke. If an adversary's ball has been pegged out, either by the adversary or the striker, striker may peg out either one of his balls (if it's for the peg) without waiting to get both his balls through rover. This could be important to know in a close timed game.

However just to complicate matters, when playing Advanced Handicap play (using both bisques and lifts/contacts from the advanced game), Law 38 does not apply, i.e. both striker's balls do not have to become rovers before pegging out. This is a CA ruling and not to be found in the Laws (which do not cover combined advanced and handicap play)!

HOOPOTAMUS

by Victor

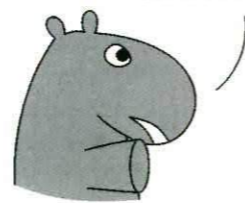
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AARGH!
What went wrong
this time?

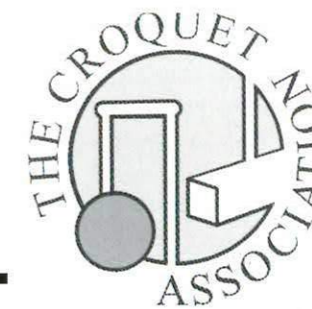


Some stupid alien
left a force field
switched on!



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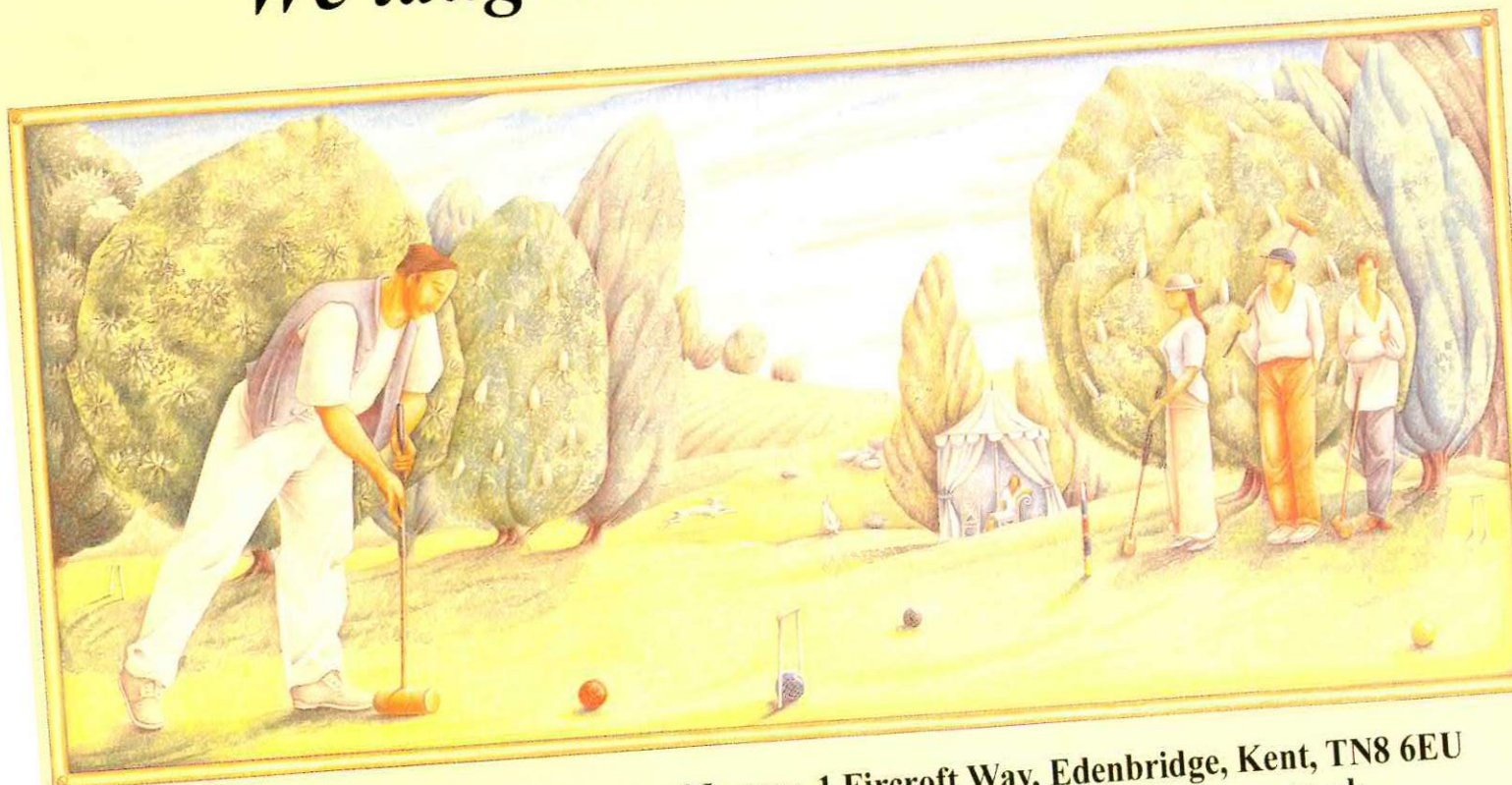
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