

THE CROQUET GAZETTE

ISSUE 317

DECEMBER 2008



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the Editor may be willing to expand this deadline for please contact her direct before making any assumption.
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. Digital images are the easiest to work with, but coloured photographic prints are also acceptable. Please send digital jpeg or tiff format files. Please accompany all images with a description of the subject of the picture. If you require any material to be returned please enclose an SAE.

Tournament Reports & Results
Emailed reports are welcomed. Attachments may be sent in Microsoft Word format, or text format. Handwritten reports are no longer acceptable due to the illegibility of most.
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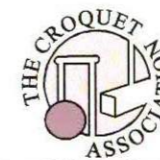
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However if you have something that you think

HOPOPOTAMUS

by Victor



THE CROQUET GAZETTE



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Front Cover: 'Life imitates art' by Andrew Winn. One of the winning entries from the Croquet World Online Photo Competition.

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Disclaimer

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

CONTENTS

Chairman's Column 3
Editorial 4
Homage to Handicap Doubles 4
Introducing the New Chairman 4
The editor interviews the new chairman of the CA, Patricia Duke Cox
Letters 5
News & Information 8
AGM Minutes 9
CA Diploma Winners 12
CA Diplomas recognise those club members who have been active in club affairs over a long period.
The View from the Bar 15
A Summary of Discussion topics from the Nottingham List by Nick Parish
Talking Croquet - Tremaine Arkley 16
David Appleton interviews Tremaine Arkley, twenty years ago he was one of the USA's top players and a member of several Solomon Trophy teams. He also is the world's most ardent collector of croquet art and memorabilia.
Development News 19
Club awards 2008, how to apply, by Pat Kennett, Chairman of the Development Committee.
Laws Committee 20
Tournament regulations for extra turns and bisques
Selection Event Results 21
President's Cup, Chairman's Salver, Spencer-Ell, Treasurer's Tankard.
Golf Croquet Second Eight
Obituary 23
Gwynmeth Dart

Chairman's Column

You will find the opportunity to learn more about me from my interview by our Editor. This column allows me to talk about our Association and the people in it.



I'd first like to thank Jonathan Isaacs for spearheading the changes to our staff structure and the expansion of the office at Cheltenham. His awareness that some of the volunteer stalwarts were thinking of relinquishing their posts enabled him to propose and implement a carefully managed timetable of change. His energy and dedication to this task was undiminished even with taking on a key role in the launch of the Academy at Southwick and assuming the chairmanship of the Sussex County CC. So I am delighted he is staying on Council and will chair the Marketing committee.

The restructure of staff means that I shall be well guided by friendly and professional service from our Office Manager, Liz Larsson, and also knowledgeable and helpful support from our Honorary Secretary Ian Vincent, also a recent past chairman.

I'd like to welcome to our midst Ted Isaacs, the new Commercial Assistant, who is learning the intricacies of our shop assets from Jeff Dawson who is retiring at the end of the month. Ted will be based at the Cheltenham office which will be expanded to accommodate the shop. During Jeff's time in charge of the shop, profits have steadily risen and he has reached out to the general public as well as our own members so our sincere thanks go to him for such sterling work.

Planning permission has been obtained for the extension; the groundsman's hut was successfully moved to create room to build with the help of a tall crane. Building work should have started as this Gazette reaches you. At this stage I'd like to acknowledge the support from the Cheltenham Croquet Club, especially David Magee who has been diligent on our behalf, and the members of the working party set up to facilitate this project.

Many of you will be aware that there was an election for Council this year. This is a healthy sign that there is interest in the governing body and the democratic process is alive. It is always sad when just one person is not elected, but I do thank all the candidates for submitting to the process. Council has welcomed newcomers David Maugham, John Spiers and Jonathan Kirby, and welcomed back Bill Arliss, Dave Kibble and Nigel Graves. Next year I will need to seek your votes! I'd also like to welcome newcomers who have agreed to be co-opted on to committees. If they enjoy it they may seek election to Council in the future and we secure a succession of interested and committed members working for the common good.

Now is the right time to thank Phil Cordingley who resigned just before the AGM as chairman of International and finished his

term of office on Council. He has overseen the MacRobertson Shield successes and maintained dialogue with the WCF on a variety of issues.

November and December see most of the committees meeting to plan ahead. Some will be planning for next year, others further ahead. All will be considering their budgets and how to produce the best for our members. I know Marketing will be introducing a new PR course based in London in March and tutored by Liz Larsson. Look out for it in the Fixtures Book.

Talking of books, have you got copies of both Bill Lamb's Skills of the Game and Ian Vincent's new edition of Know the Game for your clubs? Both are excellent starting points for newcomers to the game.

It just remains for me to say I wish you all a Happy Christmas and New Year and hope I meet many of you as I travel to tournaments around the country.

Patricia Duke-Cox

Editorial

Welcome to the final issue of 2008, which in essence celebrates the completion of another successful season. As we welcome Patricia Duke-Cox to take over the Chairmanship of Council I asked her for an interview and she kindly obliged, in order that some of you who might not have met her know what she has in mind for her term. The interview can be found later on this page. I am sure she is open to hearing about ideas and initiatives from members.



There have been some light-hearted contributions for this issue, which has been good to see as they were requested by readers in the last survey. I therefore offer my contribution to this end, a homage to handicap doubles, written in memory of a particularly testing match one hot summers day at dear old Budleigh.

I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas, and best wishes for 2009.

Gail Curry

Homage to Handicap Doubles

Senior partner, senior partner
I have missed my dolly rush
Shall I risk it?
Shall I bisque it?
Or should I join it in the bush?

Junior partner, junior partner
You are causing me much stress
Now let us sit down and discuss it
While you give your brain a rest.

Senior partner, senior partner
I've run hoop four, instead of three
But before you start your shouting
Let me buy you, a refreshing cup of tea.

Junior partner, junior partner
Just what do I have to do?
I said put your ball off in corner four now
But you joined them up by two.

Senior partner, senior partner
The oppo's want a referee
My take-off's not quite off the lawn now
But it did bounce off a tree.

Junior partner, junior partner
Have you tried a change of grip
Try taking one hand from your pocket
Then your mallet might not slip.

Senior partner, senior partner
I am stuck now what to do
I am wired from the red one
And the black one and the blue.

Junior partner, junior partner
Only five minutes remain
Put your own ball in a corner
And we might just win the game.

Senior partner, senior partner
Look, I've peeled and pegged out blue
Oh no I've dropped a clanger
That means we've lost the game by two.

Junior partner, junior partner
You've done everything but crush
Goodbye I will not miss you
Now I'm off to catch my bus.

Introducing the New Chairman

Patricia Duke Cox is the new Chairman of Council, some of you will know her well, others probably not, so here is a brief interview to introduce her

Many members of the CA will have heard your name and some will have met you, so who is Patricia Duke-Cox?

On a personal and professional level, I trained as a librarian at Leeds after completing a BSc in Biology at Sussex University. I worked as an information officer for a pharmaceutical firm at Basingstoke initially before moving the Yorkshire to work at what is now known as the British Library. After a career break for family reasons I returned to work in a teacher training college, a couple of schools and finally a hospital library before downshifting to part-time administration. My husband and I are now both retired, and we have lived in Lincolnshire for the last 30yrs.

As a croquet player, I regard myself as a standard 'grass roots' club player who has been slowly improving since taking up the game in 1990 as a member of the Women's Institute. As someone who is a founder member of the club at Woodhall Spa where I live, I understand the problems setting up a club, learning the game of both Association and Golf croquet, enthusing other members to learn, offering coaching and guidance, organising club and regional competitions and getting an overview of the croquet scene.

Why did you decide to get involved in the administration of the sport?

I was spurred on by a club member, wondering what the regional representative did, and wanting to know more about the CA. Instead of standing himself, he urged me to get involved as I was currently serving as the federation secretary. There was an election and I won. I then had to ensure I reported back to everyone and introduced an occasional newsletter passing on CA news and explaining my involvement.

Which areas did I get involved in and why?

I chose to serve on Golf Croquet and Development initially. I felt I was representing the ordinary club member from my federation, and these two committees would be appropriate starting

places. I was pleased to be able to introduce the Grass Roots and Centre Stage golf croquet tournaments when Syd Jones needed to relinquish them and enjoyed being on Development as it enlarged the size of grants it was able to offer.

Do you feel that the areas you got involved in gave you the appetite to stay involved in the administration or was there another reason for that?

I very much enjoyed my time on the Development Committee and was delighted to take on the chairmanship after a couple of years. This then led to me serving on the Management Committee. Being a standard club member I felt my contribution was at that level, and since my federation (East Midlands) is a stronghold for golf croquet I felt I should start there. These were two principal committees, but I also served as chairman for the Administration committee before it became a principal committee. Originally it was my intention to serve for 6 years, so I informed my federation that I was standing down and they would need a new representative. However, Jonathan Isaacs asked me if I would consider being his Vice-Chairman and I have to confess I did enjoy the involvement at national level and was charmed by his offer, which I accepted. I then sought re-election to Council as an independent member.

If someone was an inspiration to you in croquet, who was it and why?

My inspiration probably came from the late Roy Taylor, a local club member who enjoyed his croquet immensely and did so much to help my club at Woodhall Spa both in practical terms and with his encouragement. He did so much that we put him forward for one of the first CA Diplomas in 2000 when they were introduced and he was very proud of this accolade. I continue to be inspired by those cheerful and helpful players that I meet around the country who make it such a pleasurable sport.

Did you ever foresee yourself being chairman of the CA, or are you still getting used to the idea?

No, I did not foresee chairmanship of the CA until into my term as Vice-Chairman. Many have asked if I am the first woman to assume this role, but of course the historians of our game know that Daisy Lintern was the first lady exactly 50 years ago in 1958. I feel honoured to take on this role and comforted to know that I head up an excellent team of Council members, office staff and other willing volunteers.

You worked closely with Jonathan Isaacs, the previous Chairman, do you feel that you are continuing down a path that has already been outlined by him, or now you have the hot seat do you have any plans or ideas, or perhaps direction that you would like to explore or pursue with the CA?

Working with Jonathan was a delight. He is very easy to get along with and we usually had similar views on points under discussion. I am continuing down the path he laid out with the restructuring of the staff, but that is nearly complete, together with the office extension to house the shop. My special interests are to ensure our history is preserved and that our younger members are suitably encouraged and sustained.

What for you would constitute success during your chairmanship of the CA?

In a nutshell, continued increase in membership, both individuals and clubs; success of our teams, especially in the next MacRobertson Shield; positive feedback when I meet members and being approachable on any croquet related topic.

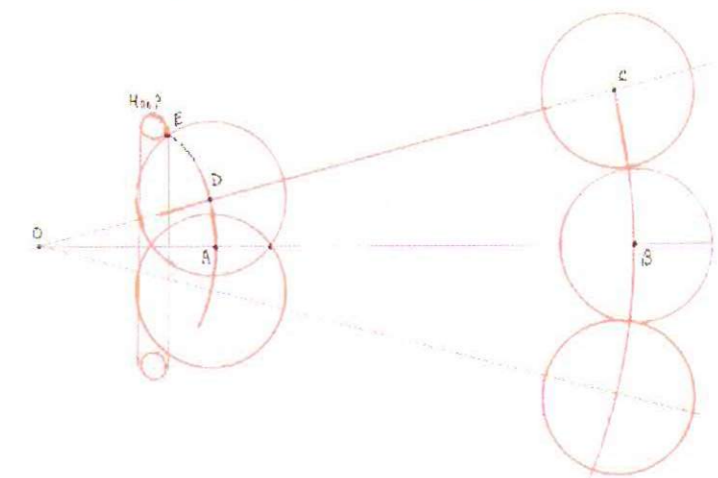
Letters

So that's why it's harder than it looks

Tony Treglown and I play croquet on my lawn and it occurred to us to wonder how accurate one must be in order to pass cleanly through a hoop normally set to 3 3/4 inches. To gauge the accuracy, we compared the clean hoop shot from one foot with a long roquet. We have a short and simple proof to show that the equivalent range is 19 yards.

This can be illustrated by:

OB is a line passing through the centre of a hoop at A and



through the centre of a ball at B. OC is the line taken by the centre of a ball starting from O, which just barely touches a hoop upright and just barely touches the ball at B.

θ is the angle COB

If OA = a and OB = b then $\theta = \text{arc AD}/a = \text{arc BC}/b$

Now if R is the ball radius, the hoop width is set to $2R + 2k$

When θ is a small angle, the arc AE approaches $R + k$ and the arc AD approaches k

And for small angles arc BC approaches $2R$

So that $\theta \text{ radians} = k/a = 2R/b$

Hence $b = 2R \times a/k$

Using inches as units, let a = 12F, where F is feet and let b = 36Y, where Y is yards.

$Y = 1/36 \times 2R/k \times 12 \times F = 1/3 \times 2R/k \times F$

2k is normally set to 1/8 so that $k = 1/16$ inches. $2R = 3 + 5/8$ inches = 29/8 inches

Substituting, $Y = 1/3 \times 29/8 \times 16 \times F = 2/3 \times 29 \times F = 19.33F$

A clear hoop shot from 1 foot is equivalent to a roquet of about 19 yards, a yard or two short of the distance between hoop 1 and hoop 2 - so next time you run a hoop, give your self a pat on the back.

Paul Schofield, Cornwall Croquet Club

The Bury St Edmunds Artificial Lawn.

Following on from Sue Edwards' letter in Issue 315 and Ronald Rawden's response in Issue 316 it might be useful to look at actual practical experience of the use of our lawn as against perceived possible advantages.

As Ron said in his comprehensive letter he and Bryn Lewis spent a lot of time and energy over three years in researching the best solutions and getting the Council to agree and fund the installation. Ron himself was responsible for manufacturing all the stainless steel hoops and other lawn equipment.

When the lawn was opened in March 1999 the Council, wishing to recoup some of their money, set the annual rent at £1600, an impossibly large amount for a small club. Some hard negotiating by Bryn Lewis brought this figure down to £960, where it remains; but our new sub-landlords are now talking about raising it. For a club of about forty strong that does all its own maintenance our subscription of £85 with the clubhouse a portacabin with a rotting floor and 300 metres from a toilet does seem rather large. As both Bryn and Ron left the club in early 2002 some up to date information is relevant.

Do we use the lawn? Yes we do every winter when we run a popular golf ladder and it is used for ordinary practice as well, both Association and Golf. Since the hoops are rather unforgiving it does encourage very careful hoop running and we normally use some old Walker balls which, being solid plastic, cope with the bounce of the hoop better. The bias of the pile has improved over the years as the pile has been trodden down but is still there and presents a good intellectual exercise in reading the direction but can be very frustrating at times.

I will now take Ron's bullet points and see how they are borne out in practice:-

All year round play. Yes, but in the summer the surface gets very hot underfoot and is unpleasant to play on.

Elimination of almost all maintenance. If only. Leaves and twigs from nearby tree are a great nuisance; small detritus, animal and bird droppings work down into the pile; moss grows and needs spraying. To remove surface rubbish we have tried domestic and commercial hand propelled leaf sweepers, a rotary mower, set high, as a vacuum cleaner and, currently, a leaf blower. Whichever method is used is hard work and takes a long time. We did try a fence on the windward side and succeeded in collecting 10 builders bags of leaf drifts on the lawn side - a large working party a whole morning. Professional, mechanical sweeping equipment should be built into any future scheme.

No white line marking. Yes, good. Slight problems with crows pecking out.

No standing water. Up to a point. Not fast draining, water stays within the pile and balls go along in a spray.

Snow can be swept away. We have played over snow but I would not like to sweep the whole area free 'immediately'.

Use of stainless steel. Yes, good. Hoops are left out all year. Only once have vandals removed a hoop and left it lying on the surface. The problem is with the plastic sleeves into which the hoops fit. Some of the sleeves are breaking up into crumbly mess, fortunately we have spares from the double lawns layout but this will be a problem soon.

Man made, very flat and stable, last for twenty years. As long as the bias problem is sorted. We have been given estimates of ten years life but at nine and a half years it looks ok for a while yet.

Can be split into two. A doubtful advantage, we haven't used it. The surface is fast enough for beginners to hit the full length.

Overall our members prefer to play on grass if available. Last Saturday we had 16 members double banking on our three grass lawns and no one thought of moving to the artificial.

Would we go down the same road again? Probably not. With hindsight the money would have been better spent on levelling our sloping grass and making other improvements. Nevertheless it may have been a worthwhile exercise; someone has to try these things out for the benefit of others and we do appreciate the flatness and the winter facility.

From time to time people ring to ask advice and I try to give them an honest opinion but tell them to seek advice from the CA and to look at contracts very carefully indeed. I also advise them, and anyone who reads this, that they are welcome to come and try for themselves - a phone call will suffice.

John Robinette.

Banish those winter blues

There are many dreaming, and possibly languishing, without the opportunity to use croquet courts in the winter. Somehow, just imagining the actions does not seem to satisfy! I enclose some suggestions and pictures of my home-grown facilities that I use to prevent withdrawal symptoms during those dark days.

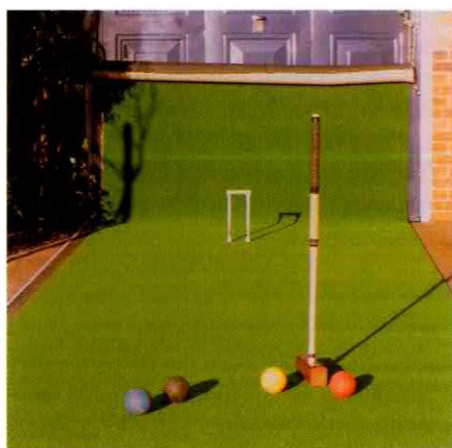
Picture 1 (the football field) - enables the mallet swinging muscles to be exercised with satisfying thumps.



Picture 2 (the garden) - with the piece of Lowestoft fishing net allows jump-shot practice.



Picture 3 the driveway) with an end piece of Astroturf, facilitates fine tuning and delicate play to the hoop.



I hope these ideas may encourage others to keep up the good croquet work outside the usual playing season, maybe even encourage some new ones. Don't forget: the more we practice the luckier we get!

Tony Lee

Mallet sought

I recently borrowed a Fenwick Elliott Mallet which I liked a lot and wondered if anyone knows of one that may have fallen away from favour or is not currently being used and may be available for purchase. If so please contact me at sturtwoodfarm@btopenworld.com

Roger Mackinnon

Warm welcome in Corfu

Readers may be interested in a little further information about Corfu (issue 315 Aug 2008). My wife and I landed in Corfu whilst on an Adriatic cruise in the Hebridean Spirit. We had previously telephoned Antoinette Goes and she confirmed that we would be able to play at the club. After a short taxi ride to Gouvia Bay and borrowing mallets we had a most enjoyable foursome with Antoinette and Jan in very warm temperatures.

We can strongly recommend the club to everyone, even if only on a fleeting visit to Corfu.

Fred & Muriel Marsh

Flying the flag

I think a more likely explanation for the front cover photograph of the previous issue (316 Oct 2008) should be.

"David, what on earth are you doing up there?"

"I'm measuring the height of the flag pole of course."

"Why don't you lower the pole, then measure it along the ground?"

"Don't be stupid, I want to know the height not the length!"

Top Turn Tom

Reality Croquet

Switch you TV on most evenings and you will probably catch some form of reality TV. Personally I think it's all rubbish, but the one thing you can't deny is that it certainly gets publicity, which got me thinking - dangerous I know. My thoughts ran in the direction of perhaps capturing the public's fascination with such matters but with a croquet bent of course. Imagine such scenarios as: Big brother with a croquet lawn; The 'X factor' becoming perhaps 'the H hoop factor'; Or even 'I'm a celebrity' get me into that game, I'm sure the Rt. Hon. Mr. Prescott would be only too pleased to help us out: But by far the best opportunity capturing the genius of

John Sergeant, with 'Strictly Croquet'.

I am in the process of putting my ideas down on paper, so perhaps if anyone would care to offer comments, or perhaps better still join me in the exchange of ideas through this page.

Daisy Root

Vintage Editions of the Gazette

I am looking for a caring home for Editions No 615 dated 15 June 1929 and No 617 dated 29 June 1929 of The Croquet Association Gazette. Please e-mail mj.hague@virgin.net giving any particular reason for having them. A small donation to Help for Heroes (www.helpforheroes.org.uk) would be appreciated.

Michael Hague

The Drawn Game

One of croquet's more illogical and therefore irritating aspects is the timed game. Managers love timed games - with good reason: they allow tournaments to run efficiently - but they can hardly be said to provide an unquestionably fair result and their use contradicts both the intention and the spirit of the game.

The winner of a game of croquet is the player who pegs out his balls; that is, who reaches the winning post first. It makes no difference that before his final turn he was 25 points behind or only 1: he has breasted the tape, crossed the line, taken the flag. In no comparable game - golf, snooker, darts, tennis - does a referee call time and declare the leading player the winner. In these games, as in croquet, there is a finite goal, which, once reached, marks the end of the game. Time limits, on the other hand, exist in those games in which there is no predetermined score which a player must reach and time is the only - and essential - limiter: football, hockey etc., etc.

Croquet is a race. Lewis Hamilton would have had reason to complain if time had been called just as he was about to overtake Glock on that fateful last bend at Interlagos. And I do not for a moment believe that finishing one's turn or having a last turn after time makes enough difference to deny the validity of the comparison. And please do not mention Wharrad turns: they have something of the odour of the penalty shoot-out.

However, as I have said, time-limits are an essential tool of management and cannot be abolished. So, why not consider the revolutionary concept of the DRAWN

GAME or the NO RESULT? This to apply in tournaments only and clubs to adopt a play-to-a-finish policy for all other games. The benefit might be great, especially, though not solely, in handicap matches.

Yours in anticipation of roars of approval from your discerning readers,

Peter Dorke

Unwanted Records

Like the players who had three balls stuck in hoops at the same time, I wonder if I may have set an unenviable record. At the Pendle & Craven B class tournament last May I won my first game +2t; I won the next two both +1t. This put me in a semi-final, which I lost -1t. However, I managed to come third by winning the last game +1t.

Is anyone willing to risk the sort of mockery I've had to put up with ever since by admitting to having gone through a five-game tournament with such a narrow margin in each game? Can anyone beat it, with +1t or -1t in every game? (That +2t first game began to seem a bit luxurious.) For those who haven't had the experience, I can report that one's nerves are thoroughly shredded by the end of it. I can also recommend the Pendle B class as a most enjoyable weekend.

Mark Miller

The Apricot Chutney Mystery

As I was staying with my eldest daughter during the B level advanced at Surbiton this month I thought that I would call in at the club on the Friday to watch the Mary Rose semi against Medway and hopefully get some practice.

I met for the first time David Mooney the B level Manager and took in the warm atmosphere of the Surbiton clubhouse with its photo gallery going back many years and showing pictures of Lords and Ladies and prominent members of Parliament.

My eye also went to the wonderful array of chutneys on sale - I couldn't resist - one Apricot chutney for me, one Date and Apple for my daughter - money in the pot, my £10 note joining one or two others - just as I was thinking that there was a lot of cash sitting there a Surbiton Mary Rose player came over to the chutneys and started to count the notes in the pot commenting that "his wife would be pleased with the takings". But hang on I thought that I heard this player being referred to as Graham (I now know it was Graham Brightwell) when the chutney maker was called JAN MOONEY as indicated in

the small notice in the money pot and there was David Mooney, Jan Mooney's husband, in the same room – all very odd and done so casually in front of everyone even David Mooney didn't seem to be concerned that someone, and a fellow club member a that, had just "raided" the chutney money, JAN would be furious....

..... very strange I thoughtwhat would Hercule Poirot make of this?

The little detective with the little grey cells would I am sure have considered this scenario at great length and then checked



"all" of the facts.

Chutney – cash pot – JAN MOONEY notice in cash pot – the "villain" masquerading as Chutney makers husband (his words "my wife will be pleased...") – victims husband David Mooney in the same clubhouse.

These are the facts, now, should I do anything? What a dilemma – is it the Police, Club Secretary or the one and only George Noble, what would he have to say about all of these shenanigans?

All good detectives I have noticed review the circumstances a "scene of the crime" as it were – so here we go

1. Check counter with JAN MOONEYS chutney

2. Check notice showing JA....what's this JAM I thought it said JAN....

MO ...M O N E Y
JAM MONEY not JAN MOONEY whoops!

What a mistake, my only defence is that the well thumbled notice was blurred I hope Graham takes that into account when he sues!!

David Williams.

News & Information

Emergency Action

Has your club got emergency details clearly displayed in the event of an accident or emergency?

The question is posed because of an incident at a tournament at the Hunstanton club earlier this year. A player cut himself with a bread-knife, he fainted, and because someone knew some of his medical history, it was felt necessary to call an ambulance.

Because it was a player from away who called 999 he had no local knowledge. When asked for the location, the name of the road and the road opposite the entrance to the recreation area, opinions varied. It had also been assumed the ambulance would come from the station a few hundred yards away, but in fact it came from the opposite direction!

So, now that it is a quiet time, perhaps committees would like to ensure they have a basic first aid kit and a large sign giving location of the club including postal code, road name or even global positioning system number.

Coach of the Year

Nominations are invited for the 2008 Coach of the Year award. The Coaching Committee wishes to ensure that suitable candidates are not overlooked. So if you know of someone you consider worthy of this award, please send their name, together with the reasons you consider them special, to flwhittaker2@waitrose.com. Nominations close on 31 January 2009.

WCF Hall of Fame 2008

Devised to meet the requirements laid down by the founders of the Federation, "to make awards to those who have contributed to the achievement of the Federation's aims", the Hall of Fame is virtual, existing only through the WCF web site, www.wcfcroquet.org

Each year no more than 5 persons who meet the exacting criteria, can be inducted, thus making it a very special group of croquet enthusiasts and supporters.

The WCF Hall of Fame Committee of four persons, led by their Chairman, Rhys

Thomas (USA), made the 5 difficult choices from the nominations received.

2008 WCF Hall of Fame Inductees
Jean Armstrong (Australia)
Humphrey Hicks (England)
Bob Jackson (New Zealand)
Archie Peck (USA)
Keith Wylie (England)

Full details of the achievements of each inductee can be seen on the WCF web site.

Nominations for the 2009 induction will open to the public on 1st January 2009. It will automatically include all those nominated in 2008, but who were unsuccessful on this occasion.

WCF World Championship 2009

The USCA has now confirmed that the Qualification Tournament for those players that are unsuccessful in securing a direct entry or selection via the wild card process, will take place at the National Croquet Centre, West Palm Beach, Florida, USA from 4th to 7th May 2009 inclusive.

Details of the cost of entry and booking details will be confirmed in due course.

Win some wine by telling us what we already know!

You've all been asked "What is Croquet" by someone who knows little of the game and we want your best answers to prime our press spokesmen and to inform those who stumble across our website.

There's a prize of a half-case of wine for the answer that we think the best. There are no constraints, except it must be to the point and very short (maximum half a page), put across some benefits and interesting truths, and stimulate interest and desire to give croquet a try.

Entries to the CA Office by email with subject "What is Croquet", or alternatively by post with "What is croquet" clearly marked on the envelope, by the end of 2008. The winner will be announced in January 2009.

The competition is open to anyone, including overseas players, but please note we can't deliver the prize to anyone outside the UK except by special arrangement or to anyone under 18.

AGM Minutes

THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION

Unconfirmed (4th Draft) Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 11 am at The Hurlingham Club on Saturday 11th October 2008.

Present: Professor Bernard Neal (President), Jonathan Isaacs (Chairman of Council), Dr Roger Bray (Treasurer) and 58 other Associates.

Professor Neal took the chair and gave special welcomes to John Solomon at his 60th AGM and to Liz Larsson who was attending as Manager for the first time.

1. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Quiller Barrett, Roger Buckley, Hugh and Veronica Carlisle, Gordon Hopewell, Andrew Hope, Richard Hoskyns, Cliff Jones, Tim King, Beatrice McGlen, David Openshaw, Stephen Mulliner, John Spiers and Bryan Teague.

2. Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Saturday 13th October 2007.

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on the 13th October 2007 were signed as a true record of the meeting.

3. Annual Report from Council

The Chairman of Council, Jonathan Isaacs, presented the following report to the meeting:

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be able to report another successful year for English croquet.

The Association World Championship was played in New Zealand in February 2008. Three of the four semi-finalists were English, namely Robert Fulford, Chris Clarke and Stephen Mulliner. Clarke beat Fulford in the semi-finals 3-2 and then went on to beat Stephen Mulliner 3-1 in the final. Our congratulations go to all of them.

A month later the Golf Croquet World Championship was held in South Africa. Whilst the Egyptians are still the best performing nation the margin is narrowing. Chris Clarke got through to the semi-finals where he was beaten by Ahmed Nasr. In the final Nasr beat South Africa's Reg Bamford 3-1. Again our congratulations must go to Chris Clarke for proving his ability in both games and to Reg Bamford who, whilst being a South African, lives in England and is very much an important part of our croquet scene.

In June Reg Bamford beat Stephen Mulliner 2-0 to retain the British Open Golf Croquet Championship at Nottingham and in July Robert Fulford retained his British Association Croquet title beating Samir Patel in the final. He went on to complete the double by winning the President's Cup.

Off the lawns there has been considerable activity.

The International Laws Committee's amendments to the Association Laws were adopted and implemented in our domain for the 2008 season. The changes were mainly to consolidate the 2000 revision, but introduced a few innovations.

The WCF Golf Croquet Rules were adopted as the Laws of Golf Croquet in our domain. This I regard as a significant step

as we are now playing under one set of laws throughout the world. The major changes in these new Laws concern the wrong ball law and the fact that we are operating under one handicapping system ranging from 0 to 12.

The Laws of 10/10 Golf Croquet were published in January 2008. This is an exciting speed version of the game. Ideal for the close season, it enables the players to keep moving during our inclement weather and allows for meaningful one-day events. The Golf Croquet Tournament Committee is fully behind this new variant and would urge clubs to give it a try.

Our thanks go to our representatives on both Laws Committees. Drafting changes to laws in our domain is difficult enough. To agree them on a world level is even more difficult. Our thanks also go to the International Laws Committee and the WCF Committee for getting these changes agreed and implemented.

In October 2007 Council took a significant decision to restructure the administrative side of the Croquet Association. For some time there has been concern that a considerable amount of the Association's administrative work has been carried out by a number of very capable individuals on a part time basis from their own homes. Whilst these individuals have done a superb job the Association has been vulnerable in that there was little succession planning or back-up available in the case of a serious illness or death.

During the later part of 2007 the officers responsible for the Shop, the Fixtures Calendar and some of the accounting functions indicated that they would like to reduce or handover their workload on a phased basis over the next year or two. In addition to this the need for more advanced IT practices at the CA Office were becoming apparent.

The time was therefore right to implement changes to our administration structure. A working party had been considering these changes and their recommendations were adopted at the Council meeting in October 2007.

Our thanks goes to Klim Seabright who acted as Secretary to the Association for the last 3 years and helped us effect a smooth handover to the new structure.

The first phase involved appointing an Honorary Secretary for the Association and a CA Manager at Cheltenham with the duties of the old CA Secretary being distributed between the new officers. Once this plan had been put in place the outsourced PR function was to be taken over by the CA Manager.

We were delighted when Dr Ian Vincent was appointed Honorary Secretary and Elizabeth Larsson appointed Croquet Association Manager. Both people bring considerable knowledge and experience to their respective roles. This has already been proven by what I am pleased to report has been an exceptionally smooth implementation of the first phase of the restructure.

Work has now commenced on the second phase, to bring the Fixtures Calendar and the Shop in-house. The Fixtures Calendar will be jointly produced by Elizabeth Larsson and Nigel Graves and they have already started with additional help from our IT experts, led by Dave Kibble. In addition we will need to start absorbing some of the bookkeeping functions currently undertaken by our Treasurer, Roger Bray.

The amount of work and time that Roger devotes to the Association is immense and I am sure you will agree with me that Roger deserves a well earned rest or at least a reduction in his workload.

Although Jeff Dawson and Nigel Graves will still be involved with the Shop and the Fixtures Calendar this autumn I would like to put on record the Association's sincere thanks for their excellent contribution to the running of their respective posts.

To house the CA Shop permanently at Cheltenham is involving us in obtaining planning permission for an extension to the existing CA building, which is currently being sought. We have identified a suitable Commercial Officer to assist the CA Manager in running the Shop and other commercial functions of the Association. Ted Isaac has accepted a temporary contract to enable us to start transferring the shop to Cheltenham, initially in temporary accommodation, from November 2008.

I would like the Croquet Association's appreciation of the Cheltenham Club's help and support put on record as without their agreement this project would have been extremely difficult to implement.

Earlier in the year Beverley Croquet Club approached the CA to discuss an idea that The Right Hon. John Prescott would be invited to a presentation at Beverley Croquet Club, where he would be awarded a special mallet for services to Croquet! After several cancellations due to his heavy work load the event eventually took place in early August.

The presentation was well received and within days we were approached by the media as John Prescott had made mention of this presentation during a speaking engagement in Edinburgh. This resulted in some further good publicity for our game.

My thanks go to Alan Pidcock for manufacturing and engraving the presentation mallet and to the various members of Beverley Croquet Club for their contribution in making this public relations exercise a reality.

A number of significant actions have been taken in the coaching department.

Firstly, we have two splendidly updated books on Croquet available for this Christmas.

The first, "The Skills of The Game" by Bill Lamb, has been republished and updated. Bill has also very kindly handed over the copyright and entitlement to royalties to the CA.

The second, "Know the Game" has been completely revised by Dr Ian Vincent with help from Quiller Barrett and is available for sale for this Christmas.

The Croquet Academy was launched earlier this year based at the Sussex County Croquet Club at Southwick. The first year has been very successful with record numbers enrolling for CA, SECF and Academy structured courses. Their year finished by running a tailor-made weekend course for the Norwegian Croquet Federation.

The Academy has planned its activities for 2009 and will be introducing a number of additional courses for Golf & Association players as well as a series of one day master classes led by our top players.

This report has highlighted the exceptional items, but the routine work of Council, its committees and the individuals and clubs that make it all possible must not be forgotten. A full tournament programme has been run (despite the weather!), players selected, grants and awards made, and all this reported in the Gazette and on the web site.

After this meeting I will be retiring from office. I have greatly enjoyed my time as Chairman of Council, mainly because it's been a pleasure to work alongside a loyal and committed team of volunteers on Council who all have the good of the game at heart. Special thanks must go our President Bernard Neal, who has given

me excellent support and advice, and to my deputy Patricia Duke-Cox, who has been an ideal right-hand person. Special mention must also go to Roger Bray and Ian Vincent. Their help and support have been without equal. These two Honorary Officers bring knowledge and considered wisdom to the Association and I know that my successor will find their help and guidance invaluable.

4. Accounts for the Year to December 2007 and Treasurer's Report

4.1 The Treasurer, Roger Bray, presented the Accounts for the Year to December 2007 and gave a brief report. The accounts had been printed in the June Gazette, although those for the previous year had inadvertently been distributed at the meeting.

4.2 He highlighted the significant increase in the Association's reserves since the 1990s, which had resulted from a combination of generous bequests and the commercial activities of Brian MacMillan, David Collins, Jeff Dawson and Jonathan Isaacs. Furthermore, a total of £90K in grants had been given to clubs over that period.

4.3 The £17K surplus in 2007 had not been planned, but had resulted from buoyant income and lower than expected grant expenditure. A weakness in the budgeting process had been identified and would be corrected by budgeting for grants on the basis of the previous three years expenditure, rather than the funds available.

4.4 The outcome for 2008 was still uncertain. Applications for grants were low earlier in the year, but a number of substantial requests had recently been received. Sales from the Shop had been affected by the economic downturn, having dropped by 15%. There would be a one-off restructuring cost of £17K.

4.5 Looking ahead, the proposed office extension to accommodate the Shop would take £55K from the reserves, which would be written off over 20 years, increasing expenditure by £6K per annum. Council had increased subscriptions for individual Associates by about the rate of inflation, but only by half that rate for Member Clubs.

4.6 He acknowledged that the Association was vulnerable to the current financial crisis, in that it had £120K on deposit with the Bank of Scotland and was unable to move swiftly due to the need to get signatures of trustees. However, it also had £100K in government stocks.

4.7 The accounts were adopted on the proposal of Eileen Magee.

5. Election of Treasurer.

There being no other nominations, Dr Roger Bray was re-elected as Treasurer by acclamation.

6. Election of Reporting Accountant.

The Treasurer expressed his appreciation of the work of Marian Hemsted during the previous year. Marian Hemsted was re-elected by acclamation, on the proposal of Bill Arliss, seconded by Nigel Graves.

7. Amendments to the Constitution.

The amendments to the Constitution of the Association published in the August Gazette were proposed by Jonathan Isaacs, seconded by Ian Vincent and approved as follows:

Section A (Definition of "Croquet"): Individuals 81 for, 0 against; Clubs 5 for, 0 against.

Section B (Restructuring): Individuals 88 for, 1 against; Clubs 5 for, 0 against.

Section C (Timing of Nominations and Notices of Motion):

Individuals 89 for, 0 against; Clubs 5 for, 0 against.

Section D (Allowing Council to make Nominations and Propose Motions): Individuals 88 for, 1 against; Clubs 5 for, 0 against.

Eileen and David Magee were thanked for their work as tellers.

8. Election of Honorary Secretary

There being no other nominations, Dr Ian Vincent was elected by acclamation to the newly created post of Honorary Secretary.

9. Election of Council Members

The following were successful in the ballot for Council Members: Bill Arliss, Nigel Graves, Dave Kibble, Jonathan Kirby, David Maugham and John Spiers.

10. Benefactors' Book.

The names in the Benefactors' Book were read.

11. Presentations of the Apps and Steel Memorial Bowls.

11.1 The Apps Memorial Bowl was presented to Tony Forbes of the Cheltenham Club.



Tony presented by Bernard Neal. Tony made outstanding progress during the 2007 season. He won 62 out of 73 games resulting in an increase of 537 index points and a handicap reduction from 18 to 5.

11.2 The Steel Memorial Bowl was presented to Elaine Norsworthy of the Budleigh Salterton Club.



Elaine Norsworthy, Budleigh Salterton Elaine made significant improvement during the 2007 season. She won 35 out of 50 games resulting in an increase of 200 index points and a handicap reduction from 14 to 9.

12. Presentations of Croquet Association Diplomas

The President presented CA Diplomas to:

David Godfree (All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club), Graham Roberts (Cheltenham), Liz Wilson (Fylde), Connie Chick (Littlehampton), Christine Constable (Sussex County), Ian Burn (Rother Valley) and Chris Bennett and Esther Jones (Edgbaston).

Peter Jones and Roger Bowen (Budeigh Salterton), David Barrett (Bury), Tony Backhouse (Cornwall), Gordon Hopewell and Beatrice McGlen (Nottingham), Andy Mitchell (Ramsgate) and Margaret and Tony Garner (York) were unable to be present and will receive their diplomas on other occasions.

13. Presentation of the Council Medal to Derek Trotman.

The President presented the Council Medal to Derek Trotman.



CA President Bernard Neal presented a CA Council Medal, its most prestigious award, to Derek Trotman who retired from Council.

Derek served on Council from 1992 to 2008 and was the "Father of the House". During that time he made a major contribution by chairing at least three of the Principal Committees: Development, Publishing and Tournament, and always tried to ensure that high standards of administration have been maintained.

In earlier years, he was heavily involved in the administration of hockey, and brought his experience of that to the Council table. In addition to his contribution nationally, he has been heavily involved with Croquet North and the Tyneside Club.

14. Presentation of Coaching Awards

The President presented the Coach of the Year Award to John Munro (Blewbury) and the Lifetime Award for Outstanding Service to Coaching to Jonathan Isaacs, who received it on behalf of Bryan Teague (Sussex County).

15. Presentation of Secretary's Shield

The President presented the Secretary's Shield, the trophy for the competition between clubs that had won their Federation Leagues in the previous season, to Frank Hughes, who received it on behalf of the Canterbury Club.

16. Any Other Business

David Mumford (Woking) asked that copies of motions published in the Gazette should be available at meetings.

17. President's Closing Address.

The President remarked that one of the pleasures of his office was to hand out trophies at the major tournaments and he

congratulated Robert Fulford on winning both the Opens and President's Cup this year. Unusually, the latter had been double-banked due to flooding of one lawn and he had been particularly impressed by the courtesy shown by the players in giving way when the state of the other game was critical. He hoped that there would be a trickle down effect.

He concluded the meeting by thanking Jonathan Isaacs for his work as Chairman of Council, in particular for having instigated and seen through the restructuring to bring more of the CA's administration in-house while at the same time developing the Coaching Academy at Southwick.

There being no further business the AGM closed at 12.10.

CA Diplomas 2008

CA Diplomas recognise those club members who have been active in club affairs over a long period. The Diplomas have nothing to do with croquet prowess and everything to do with help given to other members.

David Godfree All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club

David Godfree has acted as croquet secretary for over 30 years. During that time he has developed a full range of internal club competitions, both Association and Golf croquet. With infectious enthusiasm he has persuaded many club members to try their hand at croquet, and to maintain their interest, has organised regular informal club days. David also developed indoor croquet to keep up interest in the winter, using snooker balls, small mallets and hoops fitted to sockets under a carpet.

Due to David's initiative, there is now a programme of club matches, both home and away.

Peter Jones Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club

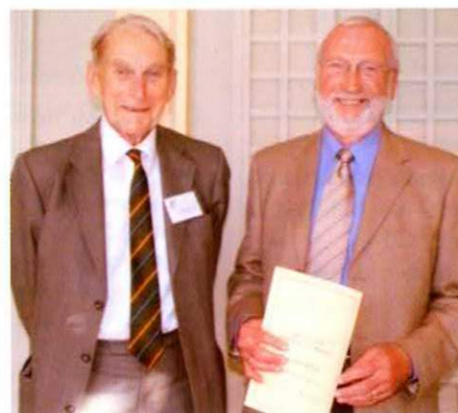
Peter is a past Club Secretary, a past Club Chairman, current Chairman



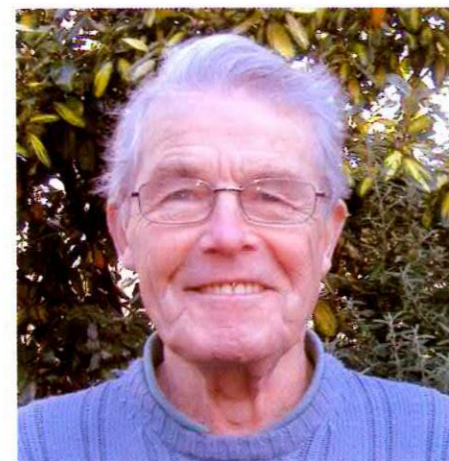
David Godfrey with Bernard Neal



David Barrett



Graham Roberts



Tony Backhouse

of the Club's Handicap Committee, current Chairman of the Club's Federation League Team, an Association Croquet referee, a Grade 2 approved coach, a manager of CA and Club tournaments, and a past member of a busy sub-committee. For many years he has given generously of his time, his talents and his energy. He has coached extensively and acted as a mentor; he has also done an enormous amount of work recruiting and training hoop setters throughout the season (ten lawns and a practice lawn) and has performed much of the hoop setting himself.

Roger Bowen Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club

Roger is a past grounds manager, a past Croquet Chairman, a General Committee member, with extensive sub-committee service, a referee (Association and Golf Croquet), a hoop setter, assistant coach and mentor. He is an enthusiast with a penchant for innovation: for example he played a leading role in effecting major improvements to four lawns and the raising the necessary funds for this from various sources; he installed automatic watering on eight lawns; he designed a retaining wall with a honeycomb structure for the full length of one lawn and personally built it; he set up and ran for a time indoor croquet sessions at various locations, and these attracted new members; he set up and maintains the club website and he has written a history of the Club.

David Barrett Bury Croquet Club

David was a founder member of the Bury Club 20 years ago and has served on the committee in many different capacities ever since. He has run coaching courses at the club every year and has also helped other North West clubs. Ten years ago he arranged the relocation of the Club's present lawns and also negotiated with Heaton Park for the use of the Commonwealth Games bowling greens for croquet. During his last three years as chairman he raised money and organised all the work required to bring electricity to the club house and put in a very good fitted kitchen. He has inspired everyone in the club to work on improving the clubhouse and also to play for club teams and in the North West Federation Leagues. This year (2008) marks two significant anniversaries at Bury and David has been committed to the development of the club in every way

over the whole time.

Graham Roberts Cheltenham Croquet Club

Graham Roberts joined the Cheltenham Croquet Club in 2000 to learn to play croquet as his wife Maryse had done the year before. He has succeeded very well and frequently plays for the club in various leagues and competitions. He was talent spotted early on by the Committee as someone with other abilities and over the last few years has transformed many areas of the club buildings. Graham sees what needs doing and proceeds to do it with great skill and little fuss. He was also talent spotted by the lawns manager and Graham uses his careful and accurate approach as part of the hoopsetting team and his contribution to the club's activities do not end there. He is a calm and able manager of members' days and group visits to the Club. He can also be found in the kitchen that he has so improved, helping with the catering. We sincerely hope Graham doesn't go off croquet.

Tony Backhouse Cornwall Croquet Club

Having served on the committee of the Woking club, Tony moved to Cornwall in 1995, found no formal club there and contacted seven enthusiasts to set about forming one. In 1988, Tony became the Chairman/Secretary of a club that relied on private lawns and, after eight years of searching for a permanent site, established a two-lawn venue, at Porthpean, that was opened in May 2005.

The Club has gone from strength to strength, with Tony as the guiding light. When he retired as Chairman this year, all members acknowledged the work and effort that Tony has put into making this a successful club, with some forty members playing both codes, and entering teams into the South West Federation Leagues. His work for the club continues as Tournament Secretary and wherever, he is needed, including duties as Association Grade One coach and referee.

Undoubtedly, without Tony's persistence and vision the club would not be as healthy as it is.

Liz Wilson Fylde Croquet Club

Liz has been a member of the club for almost 20 years and during that time has dedicated herself to the Club



Liz Wilson



Connie Chick

and sport of Croquet. Soon after joining, she began to take an active part in running of the club, becoming treasurer and running annual beginners' courses. Her teaching methods are lively and fun and she keeps the social side of the club active which we believe contributes to the success in obtaining new members who stay with the club and develop as players.

Liz served on the North West Federation Committee for several years and this post brought her into contact with the larger world of croquet and the best players in the region. Liz brought this knowledge back to the club and used it to help each and every member improve as players.

Over the past six years the club has grown from only having one short lawn team in Federation leagues to having five teams covering all the four disciplines of the game, and this is because of Liz's drive, enthusiasm and coaching skills. She now holds the position of Match Captain and recently became a Grade one Association Coach. Liz has also been a member of Pendle and Craven for many years and has managed several tournaments there and often will assume ROT duties.

Connie Chick Littlehampton Croquet Club

Connie became the Club's president in 2002 having been the Chairman for the previous four years. Since she joined Littlehampton Croquet Club in 1988 she has served on the Committee almost continually and her many activities have included coaching new members, catering for match teas and fund raising, which are met with equal enthusiasm.

Connie has been a member of both the South East Croquet Federation (SECF) Croquet Committee and the CA Golf Croquet Committee. She has been match secretary for both friendly and SECF League matches and has represented the club in the SECF League.

In the winter of 1994/5, together with her late husband Don – Treasurer and Sportsfield representative – Connie oversaw the relocation of the Club's elderly wooden clubhouse to its present site on the Sportsfield. Next year, 2009, marks the centenary of Littlehampton Croquet Club and, no doubt, Connie's boundless energy will be spearheading the celebrations.

Gordon Hopewell Nottingham Croquet Club

Gordon Hopewell first played at the club while a pupil at the Nottingham High School, being one of a group of five talented players who contributed significantly to the revival of the sport. He returned to Nottingham in 1980, served briefly as Treasurer and then generously as President for 16 years. Throughout this time, he played a full part in managing and catering for tournaments, coaching beginners and passing on his wisdom to more experienced players and undertaking improvements to the pavilion, in addition to his ceremonial duties.

Beatrice McGlen Nottingham Croquet Club

Beatrice McGlen joined the club while working and playing at the Bretby Coal Research Establishment and improved rapidly, winning the Steel Bowl and playing for the winning Nottinghamshire Inter-counties team. Despite living an hour away from the club, with family and work commitments, she has been generous with the time she has given to it, and in encouraging new members. She has served as a very efficient Chairman of the Committee for two spells and, notably, she reintroduced the practice of members

catering for tournaments, after a period when it had been contracted out. She did this by organizing rotas, cajoling members to take part, and most importantly, leading by example, taking on the task when others were not available.

**Christine Constable
Sussex County Croquet Club**

Christine started playing croquet at the Worthing Club in 1991. In 1992 she joined Sussex County Croquet club and quickly established her self on and off the lawns.

In 1995 she offered to take over the running of the Club's substantial catering operation. On numerous occasions under her leadership, the club has catered for in excess of 60 people each day, a number that many successful restaurants would be proud to serve. During her leadership of this important operation, she continued to obtain volunteers, raise standards and most importantly maintain the catering operation as a major contributor to club funds.

In 2007 she relinquished her catering responsibilities to step into the breach as Club Chairman for 12 months in spite of just having been appointed a magistrate. Chris is an active referee and has also managed Tournaments since 1999. In spite of her heavy workload she is still a member of the Club's Management Committee and club Vice-Chairman.

**Andy Mitchell
Ramsgate Croquet Club**

Andy Mitchell was one of the founder members of the Ramsgate Croquet Club when it formed in 1984 and is now Vice-Chairman, having served as Chairman for four years.

He heads the Club's maintenance team, dealing with any mechanical items that need repairing such as mowers and sprinklers. He has devised a method of using drainpipes as stop-boards which are much easier to use than wooden boards and he is responsible for painting lines and hoop setting. The Club house is a dilapidated listed building and he and his maintenance team keep it in as good order as possible.

Andy organises all club competitions usually with at least 60 competitors, and organises the First and Last days, which although trophies are presented are considered fun days and supported by nearly all members which requires a great deal of juggling of numbers.

Although in full time employment, Andy can be found at the club at weekends



Christine Constable



Andy Mitchell



Ian Burn

for most of the year, doing something and he also helps with the Saturday Junior club if there is a shortage of volunteers. When he takes a holiday it is to catch up with a job at the club. He is the hoopsetter and assists with all the CA tournaments at the club, usually being first to arrive and last to leave. He has a phenomenal memory and can recall incidents since the Club opened, and past members which is a great help on occasion.

**Ian Burn
Rother Valley Croquet Club**

Ian, a retired surgeon, has been a member of Rother Valley Croquet Club since its inception in 2000, and before that for at least three years when the club played less formally in Fittleworth. He took a leading role in the decision to move to the club's present site and in all the work involved in setting up a new club. He has been on the committee for most of his time in the club, and has served as Chairman and latterly as Vice-Chairman. He has been Club Tournament Secretary from the beginning, and was Club Captain for five years. While encouraging and often coaching others in both Golf and Association croquet within the club he has also done much to promote our club's standing in the wider croquet world. He is currently Club Archivist, and is presently working on a brief history of the club's first ten years, to be ready for the 10th anniversary in 2010. In 2002 he wrote a widely publicised article on the health benefits of croquet.

Ian is a natural leader and inspirer of others, generous and full of encouragement, but never seeking the limelight for himself. His wise counsel has helped to steer the club through difficult times. Without his tact and hard work behind the scenes we would not be where we are now. He has been supported throughout by his wife Fiona, who plays an active role in the club's hospitality.

**Margaret and Tony Garner
York Croquet Club**

Margaret was a founder member of the club and has been on the Committee for most of the last 20 years. She was Social Secretary for two years and Match and Tournament Secretary for five years but perhaps her greatest contribution to the club has been in the four years up to last December when she was Club Secretary and devoted much time to instruction and enthusing newcomers.

Tony joined the club one year after his wife, son and daughter (if you can't beat 'em...') and joined the Committee in 1993. He became Match and Tournament Secretary in 2001 and has ensured that the club completed every fixture for the last six years – no small feat in a small club in up to four leagues. He has also been 'official' photographer and webmaster and 'unofficial' policeman when they lived nearby and there was 'yob' trouble.

**Chris Bennett and Esther Jones
Edgbaston Croquet Club**

In 2002 Edgbaston Croquet Club was facing a falling membership, deteriorating lawns, a potentially prohibitive renewal of its lease and a general lack of funds. Chris Bennett and Esther Jones offered to 'run' the Club for the time being, increasing the number of tournaments, improving the standard of play and encouraging a more active membership - they guaranteed to cover any losses personally.

The first task was to get Birmingham City Council to admit liability for extensive lawn damage and flooding due of lack of maintenance of a culvert, and to make appropriate guarantees and compensation. By 2005 the lawns were so much improved



Tony & Margaret Garner



Chris Bennett & Esther Jones

that the Club was invited by the CA to be one of the venues for the World Croquet Championships. This gave Chris and Esther the opportunity to successfully apply to Birmingham City Council for a grant of £8,000 - mainly to provide a badly-needed new cylinder mower and other lawn machinery, also six sets of Dawson balls and 15 club mallets. It also enabled them to persuade their landlords and neighbours to carry out in excess of £10,000 worth of surgery on surrounding trees which were causing damage to the lawns, at no cost to the Club. The promotion of croquet parties with local corporate organisations was another project which now provides an annual income of some £2,000. All of the above resulted in a long-term renewal of the lease on very favourable terms incorporating a deal on the connection of an electricity supply - a grant from the CA covered the purchase of appliances.

In 2007 the Club celebrated its Centenary and was transferred back to a traditional committee structure. It is now a regular and popular venue for CA events. The award of a Diploma to Chris and Esther is appropriate recognition of their work over five years in carrying the Club through its crisis.

The View from the Bar

A Summary of Discussion topics from the Nottingham List by Nick Parish

It's been a quiet period on the list. Perhaps the Europeans are getting their breath back after their season has ended, while the Antipodeans are too busy playing croquet once again. For whatever reason, October was the quietest month on the list for two years.

One item of interest was an unusual tournament in Florida – the International Polo Club tournament. It was held at the International Polo Club, which as the name suggests is largely about polo but also has one high-quality croquet lawn. This single-lawn tournament offered a first prize of \$5,000 out of an overall prize fund of \$6,000. Maybe it was this that attracted one Canadian and two Channel Islanders, Tony and James Le Moignan, to join the five Americans. However with eight players and only one lawn, the format was single-game draw & process which made travelling 3,000 miles for just two losing games of croquet a real risk. James was unfortunate enough to do exactly that, although if you're looking for small mercies he did at least make some hoops. Leo McBride of Canada was the winner of the richest prize in croquet, beating Tony +22, +17 in the overall final.

Still further afield, David Openshaw, President of the World Croquet Federation, has been demonstrating croquet in China in Shanghai. With Amir Naguib and Khaled Younis of Egypt,

demonstrations of Association and Golf Croquet were given to an invited audience of Chinese businessmen, in one case on a polo pitch while being televised by the national sports channel. David reported that the visit had been very worthwhile with a significant amount of interest, although there are significant challenges to overcome if the game is to migrate to China (terminology being one – "Golf" Croquet is not a helpful start).

Elsewhere there has been some interest in a new approach to writing the rules, intended to make it easier for newcomers to get the hang of the game. Two main themes have emerged – first, the need to provide a better introduction, perhaps not part of the formal rules, which would be written in an informal style to provide an easy-to-understand synopsis of how the game works for those not familiar with it. Second, the need to eliminate forward references, i.e. not to use any terms that have not already been defined. The latter is clearly sensible in theory but not easy to achieve in practice. There seems to be broad support for the former, but some think it does not belong in the formal laws, and others suggest it can effectively be provided elsewhere (e.g. in the "Know The Game" guide to croquet).

Finally, the experience of playing croquet among the hoof-marks of a polo pitch in China has inspired some sparring as to who has played croquet on the worst surface. Unsurprisingly, no-one was able to surpass Reg Bamford's tale of 25 minutes of Golf croquet played in -30 degrees. On ice. At the North Pole.

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Talking Croquet

Tremaine Arkley - Part 1

Interviewed by David Appleton

Although Tremaine Arkley no longer plays croquet, around twenty years ago he was one of the USA's top players and a member of several Solomon Trophy teams. He also is the world's most ardent collector of croquet art and memorabilia. In the summer he and his wife Gail spent some time away from their Oregon farm to holiday in England. David Appleton met them in Barnard Castle for a visit to the Bowes Museum, lunch and a chat. The conversation between Tremaine and David continued by email and in this issue and the next we offer a summary of what passed between them. Here Tremaine recalls his introduction to the game and his playing days. In the next issue he tells us about how he came to start his collection and of his plans for it.

DA When did you start playing croquet, Tremaine?

The backyard nine-wicket game was my first introduction to croquet when growing up. In the early 1980s I learned of the "other game" from a friend during a nine-wicket game at our farm.

I went to Eugene, Oregon where I learned to play six-wicket croquet from Michael Hanner who was playing it at his rural home on a rolling court. I was amazed to learn that this esoteric obscure sport had a national organization, national and regional tournaments and, most important, USA National Teams!

DA So you took to this new game at once?

I immediately bought some mallets, got a USCA Rule Book and started playing against local players. I quickly became the best player in Oregon on non-regulation long grass courts, mostly at the local fairgrounds. This was also, unbeknownst to me, the beginning of my edgy relationship with other croquet players, as I was an aggressive player who played to win and discarded the "nice guy, let's have fun" approach on the court. It also improved my game as my opponents became more determined to beat me, which required me to play better. I had a goal for the future and Oregon was my stepping-stone.

DA When did you start competing nationally and how did you get on?

Right away I started to go to regional and national tournaments and quickly discovered that my game was not competitive when played on unfamiliar smooth regulation croquet courts of which there were none in Oregon. I also discovered, much to my amusement, that the sport had a Hall of Fame and that Harpo Marx was a member. I thought it couldn't be that bad with Harpo in the Hall of Fame. It wasn't until much later that I discovered that Jack Osborn created the Hall of Fame as a marketing ploy for croquet!

I also noticed that most of the players playing the USCA version of six-wicket croquet were not particularly good athletes. They were not young, and most were rather casual in the competitive aspect of the game. They did not take it seriously. Many were social players with non-athletic lifestyles mixed in with a few well-to-do dilettantes. These were the people who kept the game alive in the USA, started the USCA, and wanted it to remain as their domain. They were not particularly interested



Tremaine during his playing days pictured at Hurlingham

in outsiders joining their exclusive croquet clubs.

DA What made you so sure that you would succeed in croquet?

As a former state champion in college badminton at and a competitive four-way (downhill, slalom, jumping and cross country) skier all my life, I knew if I just learned the game, the strategy, and had a better court on which to practice, I would be able to become very competitive. I also had great hand-eye coordination and loved geometry. I just knew. My confidence was overwhelming.

I also realized that since there were so few people playing this sport that my chances of success were very good!

DA Who were your early teachers?

I immediately signed up for the USCA Coaching School in Palm Beach. While there I had some excellent instruction, particularly from Nigel Aspinall, Ted Prentis, Kiley Jones, Jack Osborn and the Australian Ron Sloane, a member of the Australian team competing against a USA team as part of the school.

It is amazing how one remark can sometimes make a big difference. Ron told me after watching my determined efforts and raw skills that still needed lots of work: "Tremaine with your potential someday you will be an American Champion", plus many other words of personal encouragement. I took his words to heart and believed what he said.

I watched with dismay the USA getting humiliated by the likes of John Mager, Sloane and others. I also watched our best and knew it was just a matter of time before I would be at their level. But I realized that to rise to the top level I would have to have access to a regulation court on which to practice. The nearest courts of any quality were in San Francisco and at the Seahawks (NFL Football team) practice field near Seattle where one of the owners, Ned Skinner, was a croquet player. I could also move to Florida.

DA Where did you find a court in Oregon?

I didn't so I built what was at that time the best croquet court in America at our farm in Oregon. I converted a sheep pasture to my court. It was irrigated with an automatic underground system

and seeded with a Penncross bentgrass. My court was a laser levelled 128' x 110' greensward 1/4" off corner to corner. We mowed it with a 9 bladed walk-behind greens mower. I practiced for months upon end in between maintaining my greensward, at times mowing four times a week to maintain the fastest grass speed possible. This was before the courts were built at Meadowood and Sonoma Cutrer in California. I provided each of them with consultation and later sources for their Penncross bentgrass seeds, which are all grown by farmers in Oregon.

During this time my play at tournaments improved and I started to place and even win some events. I think a lot of people wondered where I came from and how I improved so fast.

DA The investment and the practice continued to pay off?

I continued to play enthusiastically in other tournaments that year including many at Palm Beach, Arizona and California where I met the personalities of the organization and made many friends. At heart I can be a likable person! For my enthusiastic support of croquet in 1984 I was selected at the end of the year as the USCA Rookie of The Year.

The following year, in between tournaments, I spent an inordinate amount of time day after day practicing on the court. I was obsessive. I had the time and desire to master the game: the split shots, the one ball shooting and all the rest.

DA When did you become interested in the International game?

Earlier I purchased Ron Sloane's book when in Florida, properly inscribed to a future champion, and concentrated on his chapter on croquet shots with his engineer's discussion of angles, and other fine points. I had to prove to myself what did or did not work based on my body and particular stance and grip. I also started to learn the rules of Association play.

While reading his book and with a quick visual introduction to the International game in Palm Beach, I realized the USCA game was an anomaly and not the game played throughout the world. When reading Ron's book I also had to absorb ideas in the International game.

Earlier the USA teachers and top players were slavish on how one should stand, grip the mallet, swing and look when playing the game. It seemed to me that style rather than content was the rule. Originality was not encouraged. How you looked was most important to them. It also included what you wore. (If you're white you're all right!)

I quickly realized that I was never going to be, nor did I care to be, like other players. A close non-croquet-playing friend of mine who knows me well told me: "Tremaine, to succeed you must develop your own style and stop trying to imitate them. Play your own game and create your own persona on the court. Do not be like them!"

I continued to practice, practice, and practice daily during the year, well into the evening, and improved my shot-making ability. In retrospect I realize I was probably the only one in the USA doing that much practice as almost all the players at that time were treating the sport as a game and not to be taken too seriously. They also had jobs and family obligations. I was working but retired in 1987 and had a wonderful wife Gail who supported me to try this out to see if I could make my mark. I was a croquet maniac on a farm in Oregon on the best court in America living my own dream, determined to be one of the best and make all those USA teams and win.

That year, and the following year I won or was runner-up in USCA rules Regional and National Championship plus other local

and regional tournaments.

DA When and why did the USCA start recognizing the International game and begin the National Championships for that version of the game? Wasn't Jack Osborn, the founder of the USCA, opposed to Association Rules?

Yes he was and it took a lot of convincing from his core supporters and friends whom he could trust within the organization for him to change.

In 1986 the first Sonoma Cutrer World Singles Championship was held and it became obvious that this event was going to become a fixture on the USA croquet calendar, outside of the USCA's influence. During this period a breakaway group of croquet players in the USA formed the American Croquet Association (ACA) focusing on the international game. It was a small group but its membership included many strong USA players who were interested in playing Association Rules and had played the game for many years, mainly in Arizona.

During many USCA/CFA [Croquet Foundation of America] board meetings, mainly in Florida, we discussed how to counter and/or support this movement. Many of us in the group urged Jack, who was the dominant voice in the two USCA organisations that we had to recognize the international game and start our own national championship. We told him we could not ignore the world game and needed to put the organization behind it if we were ever going to become members of the MacRobertson Shield sometime in the future, and to step into the world of international croquet.

DA When did you start playing regularly in International tournaments?

By late 1986 I started to play the International game. I realized to compete at the world level I had to play Association Rules. The USCA game was going to continue to remain an isolated club version of croquet and would never become accepted throughout the world, despite our founder's intensive efforts to proselytize it to other world associations and the attraction the game had within the clubs in the USA.

In 1986 I concentrated hard on learning the world game. The next year I was selected to play on the USCA International Challenge Cup team against world players and subsequently on a USA National Team against Great Britain and then the second Sonoma Cutrer World Championships in California. These three 1987 events were great learning experiences for me on the tactics and strategy of the Association game, the shots required and composure needed to win.

DA You were on the first Solomon Trophy Team that played at Cheltenham. What was that experience like?

In 1987 Reid Fleming and I won the first Association Rules National Championships Doubles title held at the Bon Vivant Croquet Club in Bourbonnais, Illinois. That win gave me a place on the inaugural USA Solomon Trophy Team to be played at Cheltenham in 1988. Reid, a Canadian, could not be a team member.

We were an inexperienced team that year but the highlight of my career at that point was when Peyton Ballinger and I broke the duck and won the only USA match that year in doubles against William Pritchard and Colin Irwin 2-1. We were over the top despite the 20-1 final team score.

Peyton who later died at an early age was a calming influence on me on the court, encouraged me during my play and was a great person.

DA In the next four years or so you had some good results at the top level. Would you like to tell us which ones gave you most

pleasure?

Following the Solomon I played in the first World Championships at Hurlingham in 1988 and made it to the final 16, the highest ever American finish, and replicated that finish in the 1992 Worlds at Newport, Rhode Island, again the highest USA finish, including a block win over Reg Bamford. In between those events I was on all the Solomon teams but one. I also played in many British Open Championships.

I was beginning to improve my game and during the 1991 Solomon I beat Chris Clarke 2-1, and in doubles with Bob Kroeger beat Clarke and Fulford 2-1. I also took one game from Nigel Aspinall in our singles match. After I won that game and was a bit full of myself, Nigel reminded me (after he won the best-of-three match) that I needed to win two in a best of three! In the 1989 Solomon in doubles we posted a win over Openshaw and Avery 2-1.

During this time I made many friends from overseas including Bernard Neal and his wife Liz; William Pritchard and his mother; Keith Wiley, the Irwins, John Solomon; the youngsters at that time, Clarke, Fulford and Maugham; David Openshaw, Stephen Mulliner, Reg Bamford, Phil Cordingly, Simon Williams, Keith Aiton and many others. I was beginning to feel very much at home overseas and made some very good friends that remain so today.

During this period I also sponsored a few international tournaments, with purses, at my court in Oregon. I invited Chris Clarke, David Maugham, and Robert Fulford. One year all three were guests at our farm, and one evening David Maugham started a fire in our kitchen showing us the correct way to make chips boiled in oil for some amazing chip butties! Gail, my wife, saved the day (and house) by tossing the contents of a box of baking soda on the flames on top of the stove that were beginning to creep up the wooden walls of the kitchen while David was frozen in inactivity. The chip butties were fantastic!!!

It was at this point in my croquet playing that I think I made a bit of a jump to a higher level where the top players would no longer watch me play and say, don't worry, he will eventually break down and we will get the innings back. This was also true of many of the other USA players who were becoming competitive on the world scene. We were now becoming serious international competitors.

My best teaching experience was when I spent time with Rob Fulford on my court when he would walk with me when I was running a break and show me where to place each ball during the shots and tell me why. He also complimented my single ball shots, which I depended upon and needed to keep me alive on the court as I was still a bit of a sloppy break maker. These lessons were very important to me in the future.

DA You took a break from croquet near the end of 1991. Why, when your game seemed to be getting stronger?

Near the end of 1991 I took a six-month hiatus from croquet after many successful results in the 1990 and 1991 season including runner-up in our International Rules singles and winning numerous other international and local tournaments. I felt I was hitting my peak but I was getting bored with the political social croquet scene. I was also burned out. I needed a refreshing break.

I had been involved with Foxy Carter, president of the USCA, in the negotiations to have the USA included in the 1993 MacRobertson Shield. I was a member of the USCA Management Committee and an officer and board member of the Croquet Foundation of America. At that time these two boards were intertwined. By then I was fully involved in the politics of USA

croquet.

When it became apparent that we would be included in the MacRobertson, every player in the USA geared up to be selected. The competition was going to be fierce for the six positions on the team.

After six months of no play I felt rested and ready to compete again. My good friend and croquet mentor, Foxy Carter, encouraged me to get back into play and earn a spot for the upcoming world championships in Newport, Rhode Island, where he and I were part of the small group putting that event together.

Due to a variety of reasons, much to my chagrin, I was not selected as an official USA representative to the Worlds that year and to earn a spot was forced to play in one of our two qualifiers for the additional four slots. I chose to play in the Eastern Qualifier at Palm Beach where I felt more comfortable than the one in Northern California where I had some personality conflicts with a few players.

At the Eastern Qualifier I won my block then had to face newcomer Dan Lott in one of the finals for a slot. In the first game of the best-of-three match I was casual, loquacious, talking to spectators and not concentrating and lost decisively. It was at that point that Foxy came up to me, before the second game, and told me to shape up, stop socializing, sit down, focus and play my game. He and his wife Mary wanted to see me in Newport. I did, too, and beat the unsuspecting and overconfident Dan +26, +26. I then went to the Worlds and tied for ninth, along with Reg Bamford whom I beat in the block, and then for the rest of the season, now highly motivated, I put together a tournament record that would make it hard for the selectors not to choose me for a spot on the MacRobertson Shield team.

I played in the Solomon, the British Open, Chattooga, and in many tournaments in the USA and had the strongest results of all the players that year including winning the USCA International Rules national singles title, beating all the major USA players who were contending for the MacRob Team. I was totally in the zone. In retrospect I think I realized that this was the final goal I had set for myself in croquet and I got lost in the ambiance of the moment and never played better.

During this period I played under the code: show me a good loser and I will show you a loser! I was not a very pleasant person to face on the court as I was intense and played to win, not to socialize. I had a supremely arrogant attitude on the court, projecting a sense of superiority. I suspect I burned some bridges in the process but I knew if I did not have a great season I would not be selected.

DA What influence did the USA being included in the 1993 MacRobertson Shield have on you?

The Shield was an overwhelming historical event that forced my mind into a different level. One could feel the history of the event throughout the test. It was distracting at times and I did not realize then what an influence it was having on my confidence and pride to play in the event. In many ways it was a humbling experience.

Before selection it forced me to focus and concentrate on my play and build my competitive style. I knew I had to play my best that year to make the team as I still remained a bit of a non-conformist within the politics of players. There were two players on the eventual team who tried to have me kept off the team due to personality clashes. I was not very tolerant of fulsome people. I think I was a bit too rough for many who, at times, I considered



Tremaine Arkley and Jerry Stark at MacRobertson warm-up match in Manley outside of Sydney March 1993

too insincerely "nice". When I played singles I projected a lot of hostility and negative thoughts toward my competition while on the court, while keeping inner conversations to a minimum and ignoring court and personal distractions. It was an amazing state of mind.

When the Selection Committee was making their final decisions the head of that committee called me and said that my season record and current status as National Champion made me an obvious pick. However he said that he and other committee members and a few team members wanted my assurance that if I was selected I would be good! I kept my reply to myself and told


David Barrett

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him of course I would be good! I felt like I was back in grammar school talking to the head teacher again.

I had poor results in the event. I broke my favourite mallet before the start of play, did not have a replacement and spent a lot of time borrowing various mallets from my friend Bob Jackson who was my mallet maker.

However, after the Shield I was at the top of my game and followed with a very strong Sonoma Cutrer tournament, being the only USA player to pre-qualify. But by then I could feel my interest in the game flagging. I had achieved all my croquet-playing goals. I think I had MacRobertson Shield burn-out and at the end of the following year I stopped playing and quit cold turkey. No more playing goals were left and I did not want to spend the time and energy on high-level competition. It was easy to quit!

Development News

Club Awards 2008

By Pat Kennett
Chair of Development Committee

Your club could be awarded £250 The CA gives three awards every other year in recognition of a club's progress. You can find the details in the CA Club Handbook.

The Townsend Award is open to all clubs with one or two courts, the Apps Heley Award to clubs with three or four courts and the Millennium Award is for clubs with five or more courts.

- The judging criteria include
- Facilities that the club has managed to develop off court
 - Development and quality of courts
 - Playing achievements
 - Participation in Federation activities
 - Hosting of CA or Federation events
 - Local and regional publicity
 - Fundraising activities

The winner of each award will receive an inscribed plaque and a cheque for £250. The actual trophy will be presented at the following AGM of the CA and will be held for 2 years. Clubs must be full members of the CA.

Clubs wishing to be considered should submit a nomination form from the handbook to their Federation Development Officer by 31 December 2008. This will then be forwarded to the Development Committee who will consider all the applications at their first meeting in 2009.

The 2007 winners were Cornwall, Crake Valley, and Tunbridge Wells

The Laws Committee

Tournament Regulations for Extra Turns and Bisches

By Ian Vincent, Chairman of the Laws Committee

With only a few seconds of a timed Golf Croquet game left, Blue plays her ball up to the next hoop, with the intention of clearing red which is in position to run it. She calls for the extra turn she had been keeping in reserve for just such a situation, but time is called before she can get to her ball to play the stroke. Can she use the extra turn, or is she prevented by the fourth sentence of Reg T4(b):

"In handicap games, additional strokes may not be taken after the expiry of the time limit, except that unused additional strokes may be taken at any time after the first extra stroke played because the scores are level."?

Similar situations arose in at least two Association Croquet games last season and the equivalent Reg T2(b):

"HANDICAP GAMES No half-bisque or bisque may be played during the extension period or immediately thereafter by the player in play when the extension period ends. If play continues after the end of the extension period under (a)(3) above, any half-bisque or bisques may then be played."

was also felt to be ambiguous. It could mean that, to be allowed to play a bisque, you only have to request it before time is called, but it could also be interpreted to mean that you must have played the first stroke, or even all the strokes, of the turn before the cut-off.

To clarify these situations, the Laws and Tournaments Committees have decided to change the regulations to state that an extra turn or bisque can only be used if its (first) stroke is played before time is called. If the extra turn or bisque is called for, but not played in time, then it remains available for use if play continues because the scores are level. In Association Croquet, the player giving the extra turns or bisques should be treated as having been in play when time was called (as they would have been if their opponent had considered taking a bisque but decided not to do so).

The Committees also considered the issues raised by Avril Machiavelli in her letter to the August Gazette, but have yet to reach a conclusion. They see a clear distinction between, on the one hand, a player claiming too high a handicap and, on the other, the players merely miscalculating the number of extra turns or bisques to be given in their game. The Committees believe that the players should be jointly responsible for the calculation. The main points still to be resolved are whether the number of extra turns or bisques given can be corrected during a game; whether play should be wound back if necessary to achieve this; and whether either player can claim a replay for having been misled. Please let me know if you have any views on these.

Selection Event Results



Robert Fulford, winner of the 2008 President's Cup. (photo by Samir Patel)

President's Cup, Bowdon 4th - 7th September 2008

Report by Samir Patel

In the run up to this year's President's cup, there was much discussion about whether four days were really necessary. And with a field of Keith Aiton, Rutger Beijderwellen, James Death, Robert Fulford, Jonathan Kirby, David Maugham, Stephen Mulliner and Samir Patel, slow play didn't appear to be a problem, so it was agreed to play over three days, Thursday - Saturday, with Sunday as contingency. Wet weather in the run up to the event resulted in very easy paced lawns, although had they not been as well prepared as those at Bowdon, we may have found ourselves with very slow conditions.

Standings at end of day 1, after 5 rounds

- 4 wins = Beijderwellen, Fulford
- 3 wins = Mulliner, Maugham
- 2 wins = Aiton, Patel, Kirby
- 0 wins = Death

We arrived the next day expecting to find lawn 4 still underwater, and we were not surprised. More worryingly so were the others. Your reporter and manager found himself in the unfortunate position of having to actually manage the event!

With no sign of the rain abating, a very flexible Egyptian was run, with Aiton beating all challengers on the chessboard, several rounds of tournament hold-em poker resulting in very little net movement of cash and Stephen displaying evidence of a mis-spent youth on the pool table. After another excellent lunch and tea, a break in the rain prompted a few players attempted to clear some standing water. But despite lawn 3 being timed at 8 seconds through the biggest puddle, the rain soon returned and the players retired for further entertainment from Wii sports. A Saturday finish was now looking unlikely!

Thankfully on Saturday, lawns 1,2 and 3 were all playable, with little sign of lawn 4 coming back into action by the end of the weekend. As a result, the manager decided to double bank the game scheduled for lawn 4 with one of the others.

Positions after 1st Series

- 5 wins = Beijderwellen, Fulford
- 4 wins = Maugham, Mulliner
- 3 wins = Aiton, Patel, Kirby
- 1 win = Death

Four rounds of play were necessary on Sunday and the final placings at the end of the event were:

- 1. Fulford (12 wins)
- 2. Beijderwellen (10)
- 3= Maugham, Aiton (7)
- 5= Mulliner, Kirby (6)
- 7= Death, Patel (4)

Chairman's Salver, Nailsea 4th - 7th September 2008

Report by Chris Patmore

Final positions:

- 1. Ian Lines (11 wins)
- 2= Robin Brown (8)
- 2= Jamie Burch (8)
- 4= Mark Avery (7)
- 4= Jeff Dawson (7)
- 6. Ed Duckworth (6)
- 7. Chris Patmore (5)
- 8. Jack Wicks (4)

On my way back from the Chairman's Salver in Nailsea I came across a bundle of old tattered pages, very badly worn, some passages washed away or hard to read and some evidently missing.

Chapter i - shootings

Call me Chrismael. Some days ago - never mind how long precisely - having little or nothing to do with myself I thought I would travel a little, play some croquet and see a watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly September in my soul; whenever I find myself watching golf on TV - then, I account it high time to get to play as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball, preferring to shoot with a mallet. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the lawn. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the game with me.

Chapter v - breakfast

The club-room was now full of the players who had been dropping in the night previous, and whom I had not as yet had a good look at. They were all croquetmen; a brown and brawny company, with bosky beards; an unshorn, shaggy set, all wearing white oilskins for morning gowns.

"Grub, ho!" Cried the landlord, flinging open a door, and in we went to breakfast.

First went the boatswain known to all as "Lines" due to his prodigious expertise with rope; next was Painted Jamie, known as "The Burch", as he was following in the footsteps of old Jemmy legs himself. Our purser, Robin Brown, came afterwards with the botanist Avery and the helmsman Dawson, who would steer with the slightest drop of one shoulder. The cook Edward "Duck" Worth was famous for never having been seen to consume the meaty morsels he prepared for the crew. Last was Jack Wicks, the cabin boy, whose red face spoke not of distant climbs but a mount much closer to home.

Chapter xxxii - Hitology

Avery was a renowned shooter, plying his trade in the Irish manner with a fluency that would have the Terriers proclaim "Ah! That's the knack". With palms forward, he target would fall under his eye, and would be as good as dead from twenty yards. Dawson used an English style, whitened knuckles pushing through towards

our prey, then the drop of the shoulder as he steered the errant missile towards the inevitable doom. "Lines" and Brown preferred the standard method, as do I, but who is to say which is the greatest of these techniques?

Chapter cxxxiii - The chase, first day

"Man the mast-heads! Call all hands!"

Thundering with the butts of three mallets on the clubhouse deck, I roused the sleepers with such judgment claps that they seemed to exhale from the scuttle, so instantaneously did they appear with their waterproof clothes in their hands.

"T'gallant sails! - stunsails! Alow and aloft, and on both sides, the game starts now!"

Four hours past like a moment, Brown and Painted Jamie taking two prizes apiece, but a storm was upon us and the chase had taken us into dangerous waters. Blackwell is aptly named - forty fathoms of inky nothingness - but it is a mere puddle to the chilling Nail-sea, where many young shipmates had fallen to inglorious ends.

Chapter cxxxiv - The chase, second day

Nearby the port of Bristol we found our prey the second time. My pegging-down charts led the way, and the chase resumed. Our pace was relentless, though we were double banking. The Burch was whipping all who faltered. Brown fell away though Lines was making up for lost time with scalp after scalp.

Chapter cxxxv - The chase, third day

The storm still raged over the Nail-sea, deepening those waters to unnavigable depths, so we returned to where we had our last success, and sighted land again. Now we were in our second series, and the tide was turning. "Painted" Jamie, so true so far, could smell the prize, but it kept distant from him, yet still within sight. Avery bagged a six-er, though it was set for him as a lady might. All the while "Lines" drew near, reeling and coiling with grim inevitability.

Chapter cxxxvi - The chase, fourth day

At last! The Nail-sea was becalmed, tho' a sounding showed 8 Plummers - heavy going even for a crew like ours. Another six-er was taken, this time for Jack - the first ever known in the Nail-sea - but again a ladies setting earned him the rebuke of older hands. Our chase was nearly run. The Burch still swung but without the vigour of the early rounds. Another lucky strike for Lines, when Dawson was set to take the prize. His hit, barely making the mark, put him in front. From here he drew away like Charon floating a Stygian coracle to an inevitable end.

Epilogue

And I only am escaped alone to tell thee. JOB

The Drama's Done. Why then here does any one step forth? - Because one did survive the wreck; limb-weary, aged, full of rum, sodden and lashed, mind spinning though I were another Ixion. On the eventide a ship drew near and picked me up at last - another orphan to the game.

Spencer-Ell Cup, Hunstanton 3rd - 7th September 2008

Report by Liz Larsson

James Le Moignan beat David Goacher to win the Spencer Ell Cup, becoming at 18, the youngest ever winner of the event. The event culminated a three-way play off with James Le Moignan, David Goacher and Martin French all finishing with 10 wins apiece. David Goacher drew the bye and James beat Martin by +17

In the final play off, James quickly took black round to four-



James Le Moignan, winner of the Spencer-Ell Cup. (photo by Liz Larsson)

back but David hit the lift and attempted a tpo. This however, failed with black missing the peg, giving James a contact and a really good opportunity to finish. James, however, elected to play with his black ball, and eventually got the ball in a position to run a very angled hoop one. The spectators, including dad Tony, watched in stunned silence as he kept trying to stalk the ball for the hoop and eventually his body language indicated that he'd spotted that he'd played with his forward ball and he scattered the balls. Although this gave David a chance to claw back the game, he failed to get back in and James once more gained the innings. This time he played the back ball and neatly finished the game.

This year the Spencer Ell was played rather more quickly than of late, with a fourth round being played on the first day. This meant that the two play offs were completed by 5pm on the Sunday afternoon, even taking into account the slower nature of some of the players. It was also an event to break records: most peeling finishes (25) in a Spencer Ell and most peeling finishes (7 by David Goacher) by one player.

The Hunstanton Club was ideal for an eight, and this year proved no exception as far as the weather was concerned as it was largely sunny, with only an hour's disruption for rain. This was so different to the reports from the other eights, especially the Chairman's Salver and President's Cup where rain was a major hindrance.

The players were well looked after and thanks must go to the club for providing excellent lawns and hospitality.

Full Results:

Play Offs

James Le Moignan beat Martin French +17
 James Le Moignan beat David Goacher +14
 James Le Moignan 10 wins David Goacher 10 wins
 Martin French 10 wins Paul Castell 7 wins
 Chris Williams 6 wins Roger Jenkins 5 wins
 Louise Bradforth 4 wins Nick Butler 4 wins

Treasurer's Tankard, Roehampton 3rd-7th September 2008

1st Martin Murray (12) 2nd Jerry Guest (9)
 3rd Nigel Polhill (8) 4th Dick Knapp (7)
 5= Paul Smith (6) 5= Mark Fawcett (6)
 7th Gary Bennett (5) 8th Richard Dickson (3)

Golf Croquet Second Eights, Royal Tunbridge Wells 17th - 18th August 2008

Report by Freda Vitty

A Golf Croquet Second Eights was held for the first time for a trophy donated by Tim King in memory of his sister, who died earlier this year and prize money from Chris Sheen's company, Musk's. It was played at Royal Tunbridge Wells; this is the first time they have hosted a National Competition (and hopefully it will not be the last). Having completely re-laid their lawns three years ago, they were in excellent condition and although lush and a little slow, were the truest running I have played on for some time. Also, whatever the technical side of the lawn composition, the hoops remained firm for the whole competition without adjustment or tapping in Egyptian style, despite the combined shooting power of Nick Butler, Bill Arliss and Tom Weston.

A last minute replacement from the local club, Mick Greagsby, who although playing in his first major competition, was not out-classed, despite not winning a match. He has only been playing for a year and is now even more enthusiastic, having had his first taste of top competition. Support from the locals was evident and they aspire to playing their club games on a different level.

The worthy winner was Nick Butler, who also managed the competition admirably, winning 7 out of 7 best of 3 matches. Bill Arliss and Freda Vitty both had 4 wins out of 7.

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Obituary

Gwynneth Dart

Died on the 9th October 2008 at the age of 88.

Within all Croquet Clubs, I suspect, there are some members who stand out as an inspiration to others by their dedication to the game and services to their clubs. Gwynneth was such a person. She joined the Sidmouth Club in 1988 and quickly established herself as the leading lady player. She was still playing at handicap 5 up to two years ago at the age of 86. Her name appears many times on our awards boards.

Although an outstanding player, she will be best remembered for her service to the Club. In her time she served on the committee and was for some time the Club Secretary. As you will all well know, The Secretary is the one who does all of the work! She also spent considerable time searching records and archives and produced a definitive history of the Club.

Her enthusiasm and cheerful manner was infectious. Being a qualified coach, this was passed on to all she taught. I joined the Club with my wife some ten years ago and Gwynneth was our coach. We well remember those cold, wet April days (why does this always happen on coaching sessions?)—with Gwynneth, then well into her seventies, spurring us on with her encouragement and patient manner. Along with many others, we both owe our enjoyment of the game to her.

Although a cliché, it is true to say that she was one of the 'old school' for whom nothing was too much trouble, and she is missed by all of us.

John Dixon

Chairman, Sidmouth Croquet Club



The second Eight competitors at Royal Tunbridge Wells

Keith Webb from Southwick with 3 wins had some very close matches, one of which was against the winner. This match had the small crowd and several of us players enthralled, not just for the quality of play and closeness of the result, but because we may have seen a record being set for the most out-of-sequence balls being played! Keith peeled his red with yellow at hoop 8 in the third game and both players continued with out-of-sequence balls through hoop 9 and 10, this being the winning hoop for Nick with his black; about to shake hands, it struck them that something was not quite correct. Under the new rules, black was replaced and Nick played blue making the winning hoop anyway.

The weather held up for the whole weekend play and our thanks go to the members of the host club, who provided a comfortable and friendly atmosphere throughout.

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"Oh my god in heaven!"

Tom Anderson is a gift of a subject, and the category award in 'Reactions' with the Croquet World Online Photo Competition 2008 went to John Bevington, photographing the West Park August 2007 tournament. He explains, "Tom Anderson had completely missed a short roquet. He does this from time to time." We all do it, from time to time, and when we do it, we feel the same pain.

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