

THE CROQUET GAZETTE

ISSUE 321

AUGUST 2009



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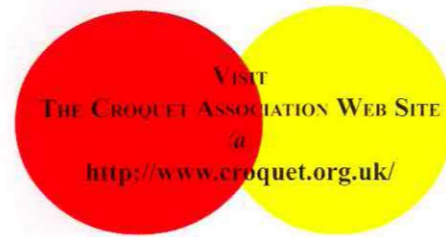
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the Editor may be willing to expand this deadline for please contact her direct before making any assumption.

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

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THE CROQUET GAZETTE



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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.

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Chairman's Column



One job for the chairman is to ensure the smooth running of the Croquet Association with good staff and volunteers. I am therefore thankful that I have a good team around me, not only Council members, but also staff in the office, our Gazette editor and the unsung heroes maintaining the website and rankings lists.

I would like to thank Ted Isaac for his work as the Commercial Assistant. He has now finished working for us but he began the job last October under very trying circumstances with the arrival of stock from our previous Commercial Agent at the same time as building works began at the Cheltenham office. His ability to liaise successfully with both suppliers and buyers was appreciated and I'd like to wish him well with his croquet at club level.

I also thank the Cheltenham Croquet Club's Chairman, Sue Edwards, who stepped into the breach and worked on a temporary basis in the absence of Liz Budworth who has now happily returned. Sue's grasp of the office needs and her ability were excellent and she now appreciates what the office contributes to the members.

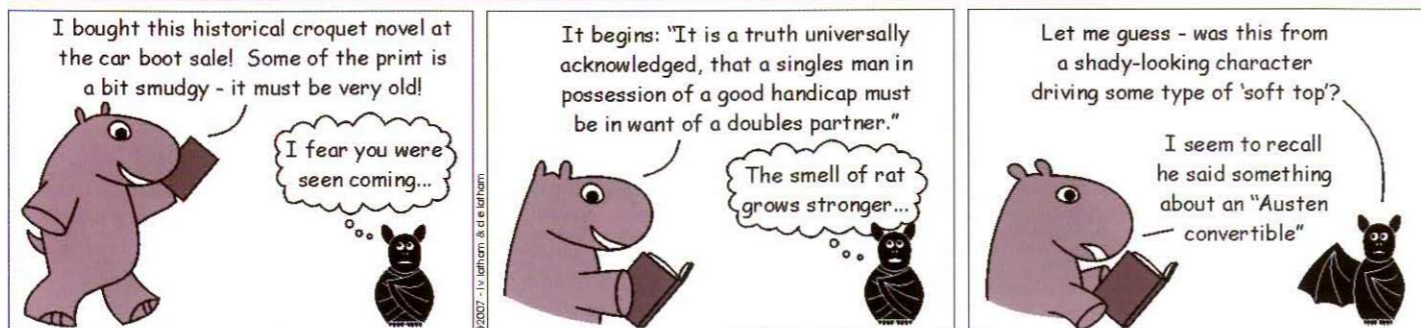
There is to be an election for the ceremonial role of President. Last month I asked members to let me know if they had any thoughts as to who might succeed Bernard Neal and I was heartened to get some suggestions by phone, email and word of mouth. The Executive committee considered them with a view to presenting members with a nomination from Council, but just before the deadline one of our Vice-Presidents lodged a nomination. It will therefore be up to you, the members of the Croquet Association to elect the President you want from the two personal nominations before you. To make life easier, and to avoid having to find envelope and stamp, I hope it will be possible for the first time in the CA's history to register an electronic vote. All I can do is to ask that you do vote!

Still with volunteers, it is good to know that some nominations for the CA Diploma have been received from clubs. We are well aware that there are unsung heroes and heroines in our clubs. These will be reviewed and the awards presented at the AGM in October.

Next issue I hope to bring up some of the topics that have come my way as I go around the federations for tournament play or celebrations. It would be good to hear the views of those of you I do not meet so do write in to the Gazette with ideas or thoughts about croquet.

HOPOPOTAMUS

by Victor



Letters

Random Golf Croquet

This game could become a fun alternative or a game in its own right. The only extra equipment required are six tokens numbered 1 – 6 (paper stuck to 2p coins or similar and a small bag to put them in).

- The game can start in corners 1, 2, or 3. This reduces wear on corner 4.
- Before the first ball is played a numbered token is drawn from the bag and players approach and run that hoop in the normal way.
- A second token is then drawn and the procedure is repeated until six hoops have been run.
- The tokens are replaced in the bag and another token is drawn. If it is the same as the hoop just played it is replaced and another drawn.
- The second six hoops are run in the reverse direction.
- If a deciding 13th hoop is required one proceeds as in 4 above.

I would be interested to learn if something on these lines has been tried before. It would introduce some much needed variety into the game. It would speed up the game because of the use of penalty spots would only be needed prior to running hoops 6 and 12 (On the other hoops players would not know which hoop they were going to next). It would also even out wear and tear on the lawn because apart from corner 4 there are a number of well beaten tracks across the lawns such as corner 4 to hoop 1 especially when the game is played socially.

Obviously the rules could be altered in the light of experience. I hope this alternative game will be experimented with and it would be interesting to know players' reactions and comments.

Philip Kennerley

Trigger Points

I am sure that members of the Chelmsford and Bentley Croquet Club are not the only ones who find it difficult to grasp how the automatic trigger point system works. I think I understand it but it can be difficult to explain and convince

others and the Croquet Association website offers no help.

Searching on the internet I came across the following, taken from the Australian AHS Card

Triggers: Your handicap changes when you reach the trigger point of a handicap that is different from your current one. For example: if your handicap is 8; the trigger to move to 7 is 1400; and the trigger to move to 9 is 1300.

Very simple to understand – and explain.

I therefore wonder whether you might consider an article in the Gazette on handicapping - including the above guidance. It would also be helpful if the guidance was included on the CA handicap card.

David Bateson

Handy Cap?

At present, Golf doubles players are not subjected to handicap 'promotion' and, based on a fair amount of varied play, this is not an issue: for myself, after scrabbling up the greasy hoop of singles play for a couple of years, I have reached a handicap of 5. However, when playing in doubles, I find opponents who *only* play doubles (and therefore never touch their original handicap) playing off ridiculously high handicaps and getting an unreasonable number of extra turns. One such player I met recently has been playing for more than 20 years, is a club coach - and yet still plays off 10!

What should be done? Surely it is now time to introduce some sort of handicap change possibility within doubles play - or scrap handicaps for doubles altogether.

Tony Lee

Holiday Croquet

We would like to thank the Thames Valley Croquet Club for their kind hospitality when we met them in Abingdon while we were on holiday.

It happened by chance, we were on a boat on the Thames, and we had moored up at Abingdon. On our way back to the boat we saw them playing croquet on the cricket field, so we made our way over to watch

them. When they came off the lawn we spoke to them, and were promptly invited for afternoon tea. There was also a birthday celebration, so we had birthday cake too. After tea we were invited to have a game of croquet with them, so we stayed until the cricketers arrived and we had to leave the lawn.

They were all very friendly and made a big fuss of us, we had a lovely afternoon with them.

As we do not have any contact details for the club, we thought we could convey our thanks via the croquet gazette, and hopefully somebody from their club will see it in here.

Many thanks to the Thames Valley Croquet Club, and don't forget to look us up if any of you are ever in the Southwell area of Nottingham.

Tim & Michele Robson

In response to 'Thirdlies'

I read Keabright's letter concerning Iroquets and thirdlies with interest. My first thought was the silly old fool, can't even get his name right!

But then I thought that perhaps the subject was worth taking forward and so I consulted my colleague Dr Pen Ult of the Chinese research laboratory Hooflungdung. Readers will of course note that Pen Ult is quite a bit forward of Wunbach and therefore I had hoped to make some headway with this interesting subject.

However I regret to report that the only light that Pen Ult could throw on the subject was that he thought Thirdlies should be spelt Turdlies (this must have some connection with the name of the lab:) and the name he had therefore allocated to the sound of the Turdlies was 'splat'.

As with Wunbach, Pen Ult had also not witnessed the turd set. I am sorry not to be more helpful to Mr Keabright. The only other point of interest that I can add is that the spell-checker hasn't half come up with a lot of queries.

Mavid Dumford.

Cheating to prosper - heaven forbid!

While accepting that croquet players are, to a man (and woman), ladies and gentlemen of impeccable honour dedicated to the highest ideals of sportsmanship, I am, nevertheless, concerned that the penalties described and

sanctions available to deal with foul or devious play under the Laws of Golf Croquet display a naive approach to the discouragement of the occasional boulder who may appear among us.

Imagine that I am just such a damnable cad; with no interest in maintaining my good name or the respect of my fellow golf croquet players, but only in winning.

I am playing blue and black. Black is in a position from which it can hardly fail to run the hoop that will win me the game, match, tournament, the hand of the Chairman's daughter and the considerable fortune she will inherit. I have almost, but not quite, hidden black with my blue ball from red which plays next but is too far away for a jump to be feasible and not in a position to run the hoop.

My opponent plays – but what execrable fortune is this? I can see from the direction the shot is taking there is a good chance red will strike the minute area of black which is vulnerable to attack, possibly wire it and leave the hoop open for yellow.

I am, however, no mealy-mouthed mutterer of "good shot" but a man for decisive action. Just in time I make my decisive move: kicking out of the way the approaching red ball.

Now, bear with me and consider how such a situation is dealt with according to the rules of another game. A corner is taken in a football match and a defending full-back catches the ball to prevent an opposing forward from heading a goal. There is no question: the referee must award a penalty and send off the offender. How extreme and justified would be the anger of the attacking team if he ordered instead only that the corner be re-taken?

But that is exactly what is prescribed in golf croquet under Law 12(c)(2) as a remedy for my egregious non-striking transgression described above. My opponent can hardly ask in these circumstances for red and black to be placed where his shot might have left them - for red hitting black is a likely but not certain outcome and where black would have then come to rest is even harder to determine. The remedy remaining under Law 12(c)(2) is for red to be played again from the same position and so my opponent is required to re-attempt the perfect shot it seemed he might have achieved but is unlikely to repeat.

This is hardly justice, but Law 13(b)(3) describes a greater anomaly yet.

Imagine my blue, the striker's ball, is wired from red which is directly in

front of the decisive hoop and will play next. If I play a legal shot deliberately to strike my opponent's foot, I am required to re-take the shot (Law 12(c)(2) and gain nothing. But if I play my blue with the side of my mallet so that it strikes my opponent's foot, Law 13(b)(3) is invoked: "If a player commits a non-striking fault (*that includes under Law 12(a) a moving ball touching any part of a player*) on a ball that is still moving after a striking fault (*under Law 13(a)(5): striking the ball with any part of the mallet other than an end-face*) has been committed by the other side, any balls moved are replaced ...and the side that committed the non-striking fault loses its next turn.

So in these circumstances: blue is replaced, red loses its turn and black has the opportunity to clear it – the baddy wins again!

Aha! I hear you cry: such monstrous behaviour cannot succeed and is dealt with under Law 14 (Etiquette).

Well, no – under Law 14 penalties are not imposed until bad behaviour is repeated: so, being a cunning cheat, I will delay the first misdemeanour until it can end the contest in my favour. And, depending on how Law 14(C) (when a referee is not present) is interpreted I may even be able to cheat twice before losing a turn and three times before being disqualified.

Of course, I am not really such a bad chap and have no (immediate) plans to augment my meagre abilities by exploiting the Laws. But who can foretell the future: Sky Sports is losing its grip on football and may look to sponsor an alternative game. When croquet is played before millions for big money rewards, heaven knows what tactics might be employed.

Peter Lowe

Time for a change - no thanks

I would like to take issue with Owen Bryce, (Letters, June issue)

Owen Bryce and I have had many fine games over the years, but I feel I must query his 'Time for a Change' letter. If the croquet ball does not have to move, Owen, then one avoids the pull imparted to the Striker's ball. This makes the outcome of the shot marginally more predictable. And of course, a long take off from a corner ball to the opposite corner becomes very simple indeed, not the risky business it is now. I often ask for an umpire to watch the croquet ball in the latter case, allowing me to concentrate on the shot. I do agree however that the opponent sitting out several yards away is

wasting his time (and possibly his sang froid) by calling out 'Did the ball move?' I gave up on that some time ago, as it upsets me possibly more than the opponent.

George Woolhouse

Curious success

Despite a natural curiosity, there appears to be a reluctance by some of the new Golf Croquet players to even consider playing Association Croquet. During the 1990's, I invented a game called 'Optional Lift and Rush Croquet', to help players at Sapcote Croquet Club get started, because a poor court surface was making it difficult for them to hit in. the game served a particular purpose, and because it was also encouraged the development of 'stop-shots' and 'rushes', it was incorporated within Don Gaunt's book 'Alternative Croquet', that was published in 2005.

Essentially, the game allowed a player to lift any ball, usually a boundary ball, and place it a mallets head length from one of his own balls. So his turn commenced by 'dolly-rushing' the lifted ball towards a third ball, and in the croquet shot that followed, the rushed ball would be 'stopped' to the players next hoop but one. then during the continuation stroke, this third ball would be rushed to his next hoop and the break continued in the normal manner. Rules were incorporated to limit the number of hoops that could be run in one turn, and variations added to take account of different levels of ability, but the main objective was the achievement of instant success. Might this be a way of encouraging 'curious' Golf Croquet players to investigate the Association game?

John Hansen

Please send all tournament reports and photos to news@croquet.org.uk

this ensures that your contributions go to the website and the Gazette.

If you upload your own news or tournament reports please remember to forward to the Gazette.

Editorial



Well I have kept to my pledge of playing croquet this year, and managed to combine my recent visit New York for a holiday with a tournament – more by good fortune than planning as I had intended traveling earlier in the year, but as ever best laid plans and all that. I can safely say the tournament and the holiday were a good experience.

Travelling with my mallet proved to be eventful. I used to be able to remove the head by removing the Hobbs Screw, but as I hadn't had to do that for some time, no longer being a motorcyclist, whilst the screw still removed, the head would not budge. Won't bore you with my antics, just use your imagination. Thankfully having a very short mallet a 30 inch suitcase solved the problem – or so I thought.

On arrival in the USA at Newark airport I was 'processed' by the rather stern customs officials, no 'have a nice day' as I left to explain my luggage – chalk marked for being suspicious!

The offending item being my croquet mallet of course. I had put a croquet t-shirt on the top of my luggage to help explain the strange item, but the large official with the purple rubber gloves wanted to get to the bottom of the matter, so I had to unpack everything and present them with the mallet. Of course they spotted the screw and asked me to remove it, which I did, but then when I tried to explain that it no longer came apart, well lets just say they were inclined not to believe me and made their own crude attempts. I was tempted to give them John Hobbs phone number, but in the end as my protestations grew slightly more vocal, bearing in mind that Guantanamo hasn't been closed yet, the thought of that announcement on the CA Website would have been rather embarrassing. They eventually scanned it again before finally returning it to me and moved onto their next suspect. Thankfully that was my only scary experience of the trip New York made me very welcome and the holiday and the tournament were good experiences. Anyone wishing to know more about my trip can check out my blog at <http://myawfullybigadventureinnewyork.blogspot.com/>, I'll pre-warn you that there isn't a lot of croquet in it, but there are some funny stories and strange 'New York state of mind' happenings.

Since returning I have made my pilgrimage back to Tyneside and I met up with friends old and new. During play someone took a divot, well we've all done it I'm sure, and like most of us he did his best to repair the damage. Most people attempt to flatten the piece of turf back and then usually it looks OK, but by the end of a dry day, the damage can be much worse, as the piece of damaged turf invariably dries out and dies and then simply blows away. My gardening experience has taught me that if you repair the divot by flattening the grass back down, and then watering it, it stands a much better chance of surviving and re-growing, although I have never seen any one do it before. My opponent duly heeded my advice and watered the divot, and the next day the grass was looking much healthier than if he hadn't. So next time you damage a lawn, and attempt to put things back, give it a cup of water and save the groundsman some work.

Book News

Bill Arliss shares his thought process behind his book 'Shortening the Odds'.

Shortening the Odds, the Tactics of Golf Croquet, plus development of training/coaching By Bill Arliss

A5 Softcover

Price £9.50 inc P&P from The CA shop

Golf Croquet is a very simple game, so simple in fact that with less than five minutes tuition virtually anyone who has never tried croquet before can start playing and enjoying the game. However if one takes it a stage further and starts to play competitively things are not quite so simple. Initially one finds that success on the lawn comes from improving your stroke play; being able to run those five and six foot hoops consistently, being able to place your ball on a specific blade of grass and being able to remove your opponent away from a scoring position when you yourself are ten to fifteen feet away.

As your interest in the game continues and your mallet control becomes reasonably proficient you start to look in much more detail at why you choose specific shots each time it is your turn to play. In very many cases you may find you have a choice of up to four possibilities,

- Go for the hoop
- Clear you opponent away
- Promote your other ball
- Simply take position with your own ball

How do you make the choice; it is seldom very clear cut. Besides considering the present position of all balls on the lawn you also have to rate your own ability to perform a chosen shot and take into account how your opponent will respond and make allowance for his/her capability. The aim must of course be to choose what is most likely to produce the next hoop point for you. This requires a complex mental process before each and every shot is played and demands a degree of concentration because of the interactive nature of the game. It is no use going for a hoop if failure means gifting the hoop to your opponent.

In 'Shortening the Odds' I have summarised all the various factors I feel can lead to success on the Golf Croquet lawn and provided an effective check-list for all players to use when making their best shot selection. There are no routine manoeuvres such as the three and four-ball breaks that we have in Association Croquet, it is quite often a change in plan virtually every time the opponent responds.

Most players with reasonable mallet ability can put one of their balls in a possible scoring position in front of a hoop. However, ensuring it remains in that position until it is that ball's turn becomes the basis of tactical decision making.

As there are pre-choreographed moves in Golf Croquet which can be used as practice routines, the book concludes with suggested training routines for improving mallet ability and specifically looks at shots which have particular reference to Golf Croquet. It finally suggests a number of starting scenarios that can be played through to practically demonstrate the various options described earlier in the book.

NOTICE OF MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Croquet Association will take place at the Hurlingham Club on Saturday 17th October 2009 commencing at 11.00 a.m.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on Saturday 11th October 2008.

The minutes are in the documents section of the members' area of the CA Website and will be sent to Home Members on written request to the office.

3. Chairman's Report.
4. Accounts for the year to December 2008 and Treasurer's Report.

These accounts and brief commentary were published in the Croquet Gazette. Copies will be available at the meeting and a more comprehensive report will be sent to Home members on written request to the office.

5. Election of President.

Mr. R. Q. Barrett has been nominated by Mrs. P. Duke-Cox and seconded by Mr. B. A. Keen; Mr. D. K. Openshaw has been nominated by Mr. S. N. Mulliner and seconded by Mr. A. B. Hope. A ballot of Individual Associates will be held before the meeting, for which a ballot paper and election addresses are published in this edition of the Croquet Gazette. Alternatively, a facility to vote electronically will be provided on the CA website. Votes must be received by the CA Office no later than 7th October.

6. Election of Hon. Secretary.

Dr. I. G. Vincent offers himself for re-election.

7. Election of Hon. Treasurer.

Dr R. W. Bray offers himself for re-election.

8. Election of Reporting Accountant.

9. Changes to the Constitution.

Changes to the Constitution proposed by Council, together with a ballot paper, are published in this edition of the Croquet Gazette. Both Individual Associates and Member Clubs may vote on them by post or at the meeting. Individual Associates may alternatively to vote electronically on the CA website. Votes before the meeting must be received by the CA Office no later than 7th October.

10. Election of Council Members.

The following four members of Council retire by rotation and seek re-election under clause 18 (a)(i): Mr. J. P. Dawson, Mrs. P. Duke-Cox, Mr. R. F. Hoskyns. and Dr. T. M. King. Mr. J. Isaacs has resigned with effect from the date of the meeting. Mr. B. A. Keen has been proposed by Mr. C. J. Irwin and seconded by Mrs. L. Frost, so there are 5 candidates for 5 vacancies and an election is not required.

11. Benefactors' Book.

The names of benefactors will be read.

12. Presentation of Trophies for the Most Improved Players.

13. Presentation of Lifetime Coaching Award to Mr. C. Jones.

14. Presentation to Mr. J. P. Dawson for service as Commercial Manager.

15. Presentation of Croquet Association Diplomas.

16. Any Other Business.
17. President's Closing Address.

Dr. I. G. Vincent
Hon. Secretary
18th July, 2009

THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION Proposals for changes to the Constitution proposed by Council to the 2009 AGM

A. Changes to remove the requirement for Council to Elect Individual Associates and Member Clubs

At its October 2008 meeting, Council decided to propose that it should no longer elect Individual Associates, but that they should instead be admitted on application, subject to a right of refusal for good cause. As well as abolishing what has long been a formality, it was felt desirable to make this change to clarify that the Association is an organisation with open membership, rather than a private club, in line with the requirement for clubs which wish to qualify as Community Amateur Sports Clubs. The Constitution also requires Member Clubs to be elected, though it is not clear that this has been done in practice for some years, and Council also proposes that this requirement should be dropped.

Council therefore proposes:

1. that clause 2(a) of the Constitution, which currently reads:

“(a) Membership of the Association shall comprise Full Members and Affiliate Members.

- (i) Full Members

Any individual interested in Croquet shall be eligible for admission as an Individual Associate.

Any club providing facilities for the playing of Croquet shall be eligible for admission as a Member Club.

- (ii) Affiliate Members

Individuals, groups of persons, clubs, other Croquet associations and councils not fulfilling the requirements of Full Members may be eligible for admission as Affiliate Members.”

be replaced by:

“(a) Membership of the Association shall comprise Full Members and Affiliate Members.

- (i) Full Members

Any individual shall be eligible for admission as an Individual Associate, regardless of sex, age, disability, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, religion or other beliefs.

Any club providing facilities for the playing of Croquet shall be eligible for admission as a Member Club.

- (ii) Affiliate Members

Individuals, groups of persons, clubs, other Croquet

associations and councils may be eligible for admission as Affiliate Members on such terms and conditions as Council may from time to time determine.”

2. that clause 3 of the Constitution, which currently reads:

“3. INDIVIDUAL ASSOCIATES: ELECTION

(a) The Council shall elect Individual Associates.

(b) Applications for election as an Individual Associate, giving the name, address and other contact details of the candidate, may be made via the Association’s web site or sent to the Office. Pending the decision of the Council, a candidate may play in Calendar Fixtures as an Individual Associate upon depositing his subscription with the Office.

(c) The Council may elect as Life and Honorary Individual Associates persons who have rendered special services to the Association.”

be replaced by:

“3. INDIVIDUAL ASSOCIATES: ADMISSION

(a) Applications for admission as an Individual Associate, including the name, address and other contact details of the applicant and payment of, or authorisation to collect, the appropriate subscription, may be made via the Association’s web site or sent to the Office.

(b) The Council, on the recommendation of its Executive Committee, may refuse an application only for good cause, including but not limited to conduct likely to bring the Association into disrepute or hinder its operation.

(c) Applicants may exercise the privileges of membership immediately, though shall cease to do so if informed by the Hon. Secretary that the Council has been recommended to refuse their application under (b) above.

(d) The Association, on the proposal of Council, may elect as Honorary Individual Associates persons who have rendered special services to the Association.”

3. that clause 6 of the Constitution, which currently reads:

“6. MEMBER CLUBS: ELECTION

The Council shall elect Member Clubs on such terms and conditions as it may from time to time determine.”

be replaced by:

“6. MEMBER CLUBS: ADMISSION

Member Clubs shall be admitted on such terms and conditions as Council may from time to time determine.”

B. Renaming of Regional to Federation Representatives

In March, 2008, Council resolved that Regional Representatives should be known as Federation Representatives, to accord with common usage and reflect the fact that in practice their relationship is with their region’s Federation.

Council therefore proposes:

1. that clause 12(a)(3), which currently reads:

“(iii) a maximum of nine Council members (“Regional Representatives”) elected via the Federations to represent Member Clubs situated within the Domain; Regional Representatives shall be elected on the basis of one Council member for each Regional grouping.”

should be replaced by:

“(iii) a maximum of nine Council members (“Federation Representatives”) elected via the Federations to represent Member Clubs situated within the Domain; Federation Representatives shall be elected on the basis of one Council member for each Federation.”

2. that throughout clauses 18(b) and 24(b):

“Regional”

should be replaced by:

“Federation”.

ELECTION ADDRESSES

Quiller Barrett

I have not been involved in CA affairs since I stood down from Council in 2003 and I certainly did not seek to be nominated as President. However, prior to anyone being nominated, the Chairman asked me if she could put my name forward and after some thought I agreed. If elected I will endeavour to follow the example of our distinguished past-Presidents.

The President’s role is to chair the AGM, to be available to ‘front’ the CA at major events and, if required, to advise the Chairman of Council. Here are a few details about me.

Since 1990 I served on club and Federation committees and on Council (Chairman of Council 2001-3). In 1998-9 I chaired a constitutional working party and our recommendations led to major reforms that made the CA’s constitution more democratic and streamlined the work of Council and its committees. And in 2000, as part of our plan to improve connections between clubs and Council, I proposed that the CA should present Diplomas to club members; it proved to be a popular innovation.

I am a member of Watford and Surbiton clubs. I enjoy coaching and playing in tournaments, particularly the Seniors and Veterans.

Prior to taking up croquet I flew gliders and volunteered to help administer the sport at club, national and international levels. I was Chairman of the British Gliding Association in the 1970s

and have been a Vice President since 1980.

I had to find time to earn a living and was a director of publishing companies until I retired in 1997. Currently I am a volunteer adviser at my local Citizens Advice Bureau.

David Openshaw

I am pleased to be proposed for the Presidency of the Croquet Association by Stephen Mulliner and Andrew Hope current Vice Presidents and former Chairmen of the Croquet Association.

I believe there are two key roles for the President of the Croquet Association (CA). Firstly he should represent the CA at a number of key functions including the AGM, and events like the Open Championships. Thereby ensuring that the CA has a high profile within the croquet community.

Secondly the President should help clubs and the CA to raise the profile of croquet both locally and nationally. I would be pleased to respond to any clubs who feel that the involvement of the President of the CA can help them in the further development of their club. We should extend our range of contacts within government and its agencies, commercial organisations such as potential sponsors and the media.

I believe that I can fulfil these two roles very well. I have a wide experience of club croquet having played at over 40 member clubs. I have represented Great Britain from 1979 to 2000 and have been a member of the CA Council from 1982 to 1986 and from 1998 to the present day. In 2003 I became President of the World Croquet Federation and complete my second and final term in this position in December of this year.

I already have a good record in promoting croquet for example in 2001 I took the initiative and invited the Sports Minister Kate Hoey to attend the World Championships and this year in China I was involved in the promotion of croquet and was interviewed on national television.

In my professional capacity I offer extensive knowledge and experience of the world of business including 11 years in the position of managing director of two well known international companies and for the last 12 years I have run my own management consultancy business.

If elected I will actively represent the CA and work with clubs and the CA Council to further the development of croquet.

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**THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION
BALLOT PAPER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL
CHANGES**

The Council of the Croquet Association proposes the changes to the Constitution of the Croquet Association published in the August 2009 issue of the Croquet Gazette. If you wish to vote, either as an Individual Associate or on behalf of a Member Club, please indicate your agreement or otherwise to each set of changes by placing an “X” in the appropriate boxes, then sign and return this ballot paper to the CA Office. Alternatively, a facility for Individual Associates to vote electronically is available on the CA website. You may also vote on these motions (but not for the election of the President) at the AGM on 17th October, 2009. Votes before the meeting must be received by the CA Office no later than 7th October. If you require further copies of this ballot paper, it may be photocopied or downloaded from the CA web site.

A) Changes to remove the requirement for Council to Elect Individual Associates and Member Clubs

In Favour of the Motion

Against the Motion

B) Renaming of Regional to Federation Representatives

In Favour of the Motion

Against the Motion

**THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION
ELECTION OF PRESIDENT
Ballot Paper**

There are two candidates for the office of President of the Croquet Association. In the absence of explicit provision for a contested election, it has been agreed that there will be a ballot of Individual Associates. Election addresses provided by the candidates are published in the August 2009 edition of the Croquet Gazette.

If you wish to vote, please place an “X” in the box next to the name of the candidate you wish to vote for, then sign and return this ballot paper to the CA Office. If you require more than one ballot paper per household you may photocopy this or download one from the CA website. Alternatively, a facility to vote electronically will be provided on the CA website. All votes must be received by the CA Office no later than 7th October, 2009 and the result will be announced at the AGM on 17th October (it will not be possible to vote at the meeting).

Mr. R. Q. Barrett,

prop. Mrs. P Duke-Cox, sec. Mr. B.A. Keen

Mr. D. K. Openshaw,

prop. Mr. S. N. Mulliner, sec. Mr. A. B. Hope

Name

Signature.....

Around the Clubs

Improving Court Drainage at Parkstone

Introduction

At the end of 2005, the CA Major Grants Committee awarded the East Dorset Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (EDLTCC or the Club) the sum of £3,000 towards the cost of improving the drainage on 2 of our 5 croquet courts. This report will briefly describe the original problem, the work that was carried out, how successful it was in achieving its objectives and what further actions we have needed to carry out following the initial work. Finally it will describe the ground work that we want to implement in the near future and suggest a few lessons that other clubs with similar problems could learn from our experiences.

The Club and Its Drainage Problem

The EDLTCC, which has 5 full-sized croquet courts, is located in the Parkstone district of Poole, Dorset, about 700m from the shores of Poole Harbour. To the north of the Club grounds there is a steady uphill slope for a distance of about 1000m, across an area which has a number of springs and which is susceptible to localised flooding during rainy times of the year. The Club grounds slope down from the northern boundary, where there is a railway embankment, to the southern boundary, which is in the direction of the Harbour.

Adjacent to the northern boundary there is a car parking area and a row of hard-surfaced tennis courts. To the south of these, a steep bank drops down to the first 2 croquet lawns, (numbers 3 and 4). After these 2 courts there is a shallow drop down to the next 2 courts (numbers 2 and 5) and then, adjacent to the Club's southern boundary, is the final court (number 1).

The steep drop down to courts 3 and 4 and the prevalence for a high water table in the area frequently led to these 2 courts, and their northern ends in particular, becoming waterlogged for extended periods. At the start and end of the season, these courts were usually unusable for a period of some weeks, unless extremely dry winter conditions were experienced. During the croquet season, heavy rain on the courts – or on the higher ground to the north of the Club – often led to extended periods when play either was not possible or was hampered by soggy conditions on the courts.

During the drier months of the season, extended periods of rain or the heavy storms, which seem to be more prevalent in recent years, could have similar disruptive consequences. Even after the other 3 courts had drained off, the Club was often left with 2 unplayable courts for a number of days.

The situation described above could disrupt both planned tournaments, when all 5 courts were needed for the planned entry, and club events on days with good turn-outs from amongst the 130-plus croquet members. To help alleviate the situation when courts 1 and 2 were unplayable, the Club had been forced to purchase sets of tertiary balls and clips, to enable more players to fit onto the 3 available courts. Needless to say, this is not popular with those contending with 12 balls on the court and up to 6

(doubles) players milling around.

The Proposed Solution

Professional advice was sought, and we were advised that the drainage originally provided for these 2 courts was probably inadequate to begin with and had become silted up over the considerable time period since it was installed. The replacement drainage method that was recommended as being most cost-effective was the Shelton System 25. The purpose-built trenching machine cuts a series of narrow trenches, about 50mm wide, 400mm deep, and 1000mm apart, backfilling them with aggregate. Topsoil is replaced and turf re-grown along the trenches. The water collected would be taken by pipes (interconnecting the channels) to where it could enter the Club's existing surface water drainage system, with a number of new inspection chambers added to enable any subsequent blockages to be cleared.

The optimum time to carry out the work would be during the winter non-playing period. However, the sooner work could be started, the more likely it would be that the courts would be fit to play on at the start of the new season. Also, the earlier that work started, the less likely it would be that the 2 courts concerned would already be waterlogged by the early winter rain. Soggy conditions would make the trench-cutting more difficult and would increase the damage that heavy machinery would cause to the court surfaces. The Committee decided to start the work in mid-September 2005 after the last major tournament of the season. Losing 2 courts for the last month or so of the season was seen to be an acceptable penalty for the benefits of starting the work earlier than would otherwise be the case.

Financial Considerations

The cost of this work was quoted to be almost £8,700 including VAT. There would be an additional cost of about £1,400 for removing the excavated material (about 90 tons), bringing the total contractor's bill up to over £10,000. There would be additional costs for materials and groundsmen's time after the contractor left site; we decided not to try to quantify these costs, but to absorb them into our running costs at the time. The contractor's work would be funded by Club croquet funds, built up over earlier years during which major works had not been carried out.

A grant of £4,000 was requested from the CA to help with the cost; our application drew attention to the benefits of the work to the numerous CA tournaments held at the Club, including during that year (2005) the Western Championship (regularly hosted at Parkstone) and the Chairman's Salver during Eights Week. The Major Grants Committee subsequently awarded £3,000 towards the cost of the project.

Implementation of the New Drainage and Subsequent Recovery

The ground work was carried out as planned during the autumn of 2005, and our groundsmen subsequently provided the required follow-up activities (re-turfing, top-dressing, nurturing new growth, etc) during the winter non-playing period. However, the lack of serious rainfall over the entire winter, together with generally cold weather, gave extremely poor grass recovery conditions. Hence, for the first few months of the 2006 season we were unable to resume play on the courts concerned and were also unable to test the effectiveness of the new drainage system. On a more positive note, this did afford club members the opportunity to gain experience

in the use of tertiary balls.

The courts were reopened in time for the June 2006 week of tournaments, and they have been in use since. Through the 2006 season there were still noticeable furrows where the drainage channels had been cut into the ground and, in places, the lawn in-between the channels appeared to have been pushed upwards by up to an inch half-way between the channels. Both these effects, together with some patches where the grass had not yet fully recovered, could influence the route taken by croquet balls, and were used by some players to explain their less than perfect play. We believe that the reason for the lack of flatness across the treated courts is that whereas the material removed from the drainage channels was largely clay, the replacement material was of a far lighter constitution, so we suffered from the inevitable settling of this new material and from differential swelling and contracting of the 2 different materials. Top dressing, especially along the routes of the channels, was carried out during the 2 winter seasons since the summer of 2007 and there has been a gradual improvement, until we now consider that we are back to level lawns. To put the unevenness into perspective, during 2007, 2008 and 2009 the Club did host the Western Championships, and we are unaware of any complaints about unevenness of these 2 courts.

Effectiveness of the New Drainage

So far as the effectiveness of the new drainage is concerned, we did experience a few torrential downpours during the generally dry 2006 summer, and the 2 courts concerned drained very quickly, leaving the other 3 courts with standing water for some further hours. This experience was repeated during the far wetter summers of 2007 and 2008 when several periods of very heavy rain demonstrated that flooding, which previously would have put the courts out of action for days at a time, was easily dissipated in a matter of hours. Hence the primary objective did appear to have been achieved, even though the side effects lingered on.

A more critical examination of the courts concerned after extended periods of rain showed that their northern boundaries were remaining wetter than other areas, due to the large amounts of water running off from the higher ground by the car park and hard-surfaced tennis courts to the north. In order to counter this effect, more recently we had another drainage channel cut, from east to west outside the north boundaries of the 2 courts. This 30 cm wide channel was connected to our existing surface water drains and was left un-turfed to allow any water running over the grass to sink into the channel and drain away. Subsequently, the ground to the north of the new channel is frequently "squelchy" whereas on the southern croquet court side it is quite dry. This extra work cost the Club about £1,600 to be professionally carried out.

Future Work

Having improved the drainage, the main problem we have with our 5 courts is that where the ground level drops between courts, the subsoil near the edge of the higher courts appears to be gradually moving down-hill, leading to slight downward slopes towards the relevant court boundaries. We see the solution for this problem being retaining walls, sunk into the ground with their tops level with the higher courts. We would then need to bring the higher courts' boundary areas up to the proper levels by inserting material beneath their turf. We plan to have these walls built at the end of this season, using railway sleepers held in place

by vertical metal girders, and are currently researching how best it should be done. Hopefully this work will enable us to overcome the boundary problems that recently forced us to decline making a bid to be one of the host clubs for the 20th Croquet World Series (the MacRobertson International Trophy) in 2010.

Points to Think About When Planning Drainage Schemes

With the benefit of hindsight (a talent that most croquet players are very familiar with), we would carry out the same drainage exercise, as it has vastly improved the drying out time for the 2 courts concerned and has given us their use for the days that previously they would have been waterlogged. However, we were unprepared for the amount of work (and the length of time) that would be needed to return the courts to level surfaces. The degree to which this would be a problem probably depends upon the type of subsoil removed – in our case, replacing clay with a far lighter material (necessary for the drainage channels to be effective) gave us worse problems than might occur elsewhere.

Where there is a substantial surface (or sub-surface) water run-off onto a court from immediately adjacent higher ground, a simple drainage channel between that higher ground and the court, leading into a suitable drainage system, should be considered. This could either be part of a comprehensive court-drainage system or be a separate and far cheaper measure, which might help with a situation less serious than ours was.

One other planning aspect that needs particular attention is in locating exactly where any off-court drainage runs and inspection chambers should be put. At Parkstone we have a small amount of court-side space that enables us to move some courts a few feet sideways; this spreads wear, particularly at corners and around the hoop locations. Unfortunately, the location of the necessary inspection chambers for the new drainage system has reduced the amount that we can move one of the courts concerned. Also, when planning where the main drainage pipes (connecting the narrow drainage channels) should run across the court, take into account where hoops will be situated. The aim should be to prevent any resulting surface irregularity being across a hoop approach – and ensuring that hoops do not have to be hammered into any less than optimum soil material.

Conclusion

The work we carried out to improve drainage on 2 of our croquet lawns has been successful, although it has taken 3 years for its adverse side-effects to be overcome. Others considering similar work should be aware of and prepared for these potential side-effects. They should also take into account other potential problem areas, described above. We are grateful to the CA for its contribution to the cost of the work and trust that the improvements to our facilities will be beneficial to participants in the CA events hosted by the Club. We further trust that our future planned work will help to bring our courts up to international event standard.

10th Anniversary Celebrations for Leighton-Linslade CC

Report by John Cundell

Tuesday 14th July at Page's Park, Leighton Buzzard, was the time and venue for the Leighton-Linslade Croquet Club's 10th Anniversary Celebrations. After sterling work by a number of members to erect a marquee whilst dodging the morning rainstorm, at 12.30am the Chairman of The

Croquet Association, Patricia Duke-Cox, and her colleague, Roy Ware, were entertained to a light lunch by the club's committee and Chairmen since the club's inauguration in 2000.

At 2.00pm, club members arrived, all smartly dressed in whites, together with a number of founder members that are no longer with the club. Patricia Duke-Cox gave a short talk of congratulations for the achievements of the club's first ten years, and in particular thanked Margaret Brown, who was the main inspiration leading to the foundation of the club, and who led and guided progress through the decade. Patricia mentioned Margaret's 'The First Ten Years' booklet recently published, an account of the formation and development of the club, of which a copy has been placed in The Croquet Association archives. She then outlined her duties as Chairman of The Croquet Association and the benefits of individual subscription, and that she would like to see younger people become more involved with our sport. She finished by trusting that the club would further develop and that more members



Patricia Duke-Cox with the young winners of Leighton Middle School's croquet tournament – Matthew Smith and Jack Gammage.

might be encouraged into taking part in events and competitions further afield.

A group photograph was taken, following which Patricia and her colleague Roy Ware, were then invited to play two demonstration singles matches against two club members whose names were drawn



A sizeable contingent of LLCC's 60+ membership together with founder members and Chairman Patricia Duke-Cox.

- one of the lucky players was Margaret Brown - entirely fortuitous and there was no fix!

After this came the cutting of a fine cake, decorated with the club logo, by present Chairman Tom Miller, plus refreshments.

Finally at 4.00pm, 14 boys and girls arrived from Leighton Middle School to play their school croquet tournament. LLCC has been fostering croquet at the school for a number of years now and it was encouraging to see the enthusiasm and skill applied. After 90 minutes play, the winners were two lads from Year 7, and Patricia Duke-Cox presented them with medallions.

An excellent day that was a fitting celebration to the first ten years. In the words of Margaret Brown, "the club looks forward to further encouragement of a sport which offers exercise, enjoyment, competition, challenge and comradeship."

The First Kenilworth Festival Trophy

Report by John Handy

In view of the expansion of Kenilworth Festival, we felt as a club that we would like to be included in the celebration. Why not a Midlands inter-club competition - Golf Croquet to make it more interesting to spectators. Wednesday the 13th was chosen which turned out to be a less than inspired choice!

The day was damp, cold and very windy. However, teams of two hardy players from Ashby, Edgbaston and Sapcote arrived promptly at 10am to play the two from Kenilworth. A number of spectators braved the elements – and we were particularly pleased to welcome Patricia Duke-Cox.

The tournament started with all players in two blocks of 13 point singles. High standards were promised when the first three balls of the first game all ended within 1 foot of hoop 1. David Lambert from Sapcote twice made a very good hit from long distance only to leave Adrian Morris's ball (for Kenilworth) in the jaws (twice!). Rachel Rowe (a Kenilworth member studying at Warwick University) was playing with her usual force and accuracy. Derek Buxton, for Ashby, won two of his morning matches but did succumb to Rachel, whilst his wife Eileen, as well as Paddy Heath & Ian Whitlock for Edgbaston were finding the conditions difficult.

Kenilworth had two fairly comfortable wins, but their game with Sapcote was a tense affair progressing via scores of 7-7, 8-8 and 9-9 to a final hoop. From 6 yards Adrian cleared Sapcote ball left just in front of it, leaving Rachel to score the winning hoop. The last match, in the gathering gloom, was also a tense affair between Ashby and Edgbaston ending when John Hanson got his red into the jaws of hoop 19 from near hoop 18. Unluckily, Ian Whitlock's shot from the same distance was so good it actually knocked John's ball through to give the win to Ashby.

The Festival Trophy was presented to Kenilworth. Despite the weather, all the players seemed to really enjoy the day and the visitors agreed this competition should be continued next year when they will come to get their revenge on Kenilworth.

Littlehampton Celebrates Again

Report by Michael Holdsworth

Photo by June Caffyn

As Press Secretary to Littlehampton Croquet Club which is celebrating its Centenary Year, it is especially pleasing that one of our leading members, Colin Thornton, has just been voted Coach of the Year by the Littlehampton Sports Forum. The Forum covers the whole range



of sports including cricket and football (both men's and women's), athletics, swimming, wrestling and stoolball, as well as croquet, and covers all age groups.

Colin was crowned Coach of the Year for his work over many seasons in coaching prospective, new and existing members.

He has been a member since 1994 and has played in many South East League matches, friendlies and competitions over the years. He qualified as a referee in 2001 and took over as Captain of the Club. Colin commented "I am absolutely staggered to have got the award. I certainly wasn't expecting it. I'm sure all the people nominated were very deserving of the award too and so it's an honour for me. We are always trying to get new people to come and try croquet and we offer help and coaching to them. It's great getting more people involved with the game."

News & Information

Eyes Down for New TV Game to Benefit Sport

The CA is to take part in a new lottery designed to help sporting bodies and clubs. The CA is a member of the CCPR which is supporting the new lottery game, BingoLotto.

BingoLotto is a new TV game which will be broadcast on Virgin 1 from 13 September 2009. Participants will be able to buy a gamecard from Tesco for £2 which will allow them to play alongside a TV game that offers multiple chances to play and win. For every BingoLotto gamecard that is sold, 20% will be donated to UK good causes which includes more than 130 governing bodies of sport, including the CA.

A pilot series of BingoLotto was aired last year and was very successful, raising more than £100,000. Some of the bodies that benefited, such as the Auto Cycle Union, are overlooked by sporting funding bodies – much like croquet. The funding they received has, a result, helped them to develop participation across all motorcycle sports.

BingoLotto originated in Sweden and since it started 15 years ago, 1.5 billion gamecards have been sold providing just under £1bn to sports clubs and charities in Sweden.

How much the CA will receive will depend largely on sales, and all funds are distributed by the CCPR under several different headings such as Coaching, Sports Kit, Facilities for Sport etc.

Gamecards will be on sale at Tesco from 7 September 2009 and the more that are sold, the more that the CA and other sporting bodies will benefit.

The CCPR was set up in 1935 as the Central Council for Physical Recreation and Training, and is a national alliance of governing and representative bodies of sport in the UK.

Office Staff

We are delighted to welcome Liz Budworth back to the office following her leave of absence while she nursed her husband Richard through his final illness. We extend our sympathies to Liz and her family.

Competition – Design a Logo

Design a logo for the 2010 MacRobertson Shield and win yourself a bottle of bubbly and a shirt with your logo on it!

The MacRobertson International Trophy (commonly known as the MacRobertson Shield) is competed for by Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and the USA. It is held every three or four years and was last held at the Rich River Country Club and Shepparton Croquet Club in Australia in November 2006. It will next be held in the UK in June 2010, so we want to make a bit of a splash with a unique logo for the event.

The logo will be used on shirts, caps and other promotional materials. You don't need to be a professional artist – come up with a good idea and we'll get a designer to give it the final polish.

It's worth bearing in mind that the logo might be used on small items, so it shouldn't be too fussy or use lettering that will be hard to read in very small print.

The shield was donated in 1925 by Sir MacPherson Robertson for competition between Australia and England. In 1930 New Zealand were admitted and the competition became a triangular one. The USA were admitted in 1993.

The shield is actually inscribed with 'MacRobertson International Trophy'

Entries, which can be electronic or on paper, should be sent to the CA office by 30 October 2009.

David Nicholson Rewarded for his achievements and service in Croquet

Report by Serena Kennedy

Poole Sports Council have awarded the Freddie Rowe Cup to David Nicholson, a member of the East Dorset Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club, for services to sport and in particular croquet. This cup is awarded annually to an individual for achievement and/or service in sport. Freddie Rowe gave the Cup in 1985 when he was Chairman of the Dorset Playing Fields association and Chairman of the Sports Council.



The Cup was presented to David by the Mayor of Poole on Wed 24th June at the Annual General Meeting of the Sports Council.

The Club was represented by Pat Newman, Club President and Pat Oxley, Croquet Chairman. Serena Kennedy and John Lonsdale were present as members of the Sports Council representing tennis and croquet.

The citation was read to the meeting before the presentation. The mayor then spoke of the dedication and courage shown by David as an example to many young people at the meeting who had earlier been among those of all ages presented with certificates of commendation for achievement in a variety of sports.

David Nicholson is a member of the East Dorset Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club. He was a first class sportsman, representing the Royal Marines and Royal Navy at Rugby, Soccer, Hockey, Boxing, Sailing, Swimming and Diving. After he left The Services, he served for eight years in the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Brigade, playing all Brigade sports, and he also played rugby for Poole as well as for Dorset and Wiltshire.

In 1995 David, by then a divisional Officer in the London Fire Brigade, was involved in a serious road accident that resulted in serious injuries to his legs and brain damage that has affected

both his long and short term memory.

Unable to work, he returned to his wife's family home near Poole, which is near the East Dorset Club. As David developed his walking skills once more, he started to walk to the club, which was in his line of sight from home (very important as otherwise he would get lost) and sat watching croquet being played there. He became intrigued with this new sport and in 1998 he started to play croquet with a specially adapted walking stick with a pad at the end, to avoid damaging the grass courts. In spite of his disabilities he mastered the physical techniques and tactical complexity of croquet. Having started with a handicap of 24, he now has a handicap of -1 and plays on level terms against the top players in the sport. In 2003 he gained his gold merit award.

David has been coaching beginners and improvers for some years since he became a grade 1 coach in 2005 and a grade 2 coach this year. He now runs a coaching clinic for rapid improvers who have to potential to become players at the top level. He has served on the Croquet Committee and he spends the winter months refurbishing the Club stock of mallets.

Having reinvented his sporting career after his accident, David has given years of dedicated service to the sport of croquet and to his club.

New 2009 Merit Awards Achieved up to 10 July.

Particular Congratulations to Lee Hartley for Achieving GOLD and to Avril Rangoni-Machiavelli for Achieving BRONZE and SILVER in the same Tournament and also for making the front cover of the last issue of THE CROQUET GAZETTE for being in the winning team at Littlehampton.

Bronze

Barry McKenzie - Bowdon May Weekend 2 May
Howard Cheyne - Surbiton Wknd Hcap Tournament 11 April
Georgeen Hemming - Hunstanton "Over 50" Weekend 12 June
Anne Peek - Nailsea Handicap Singles Tournament 3 May
Avril Rangoni-Machiavelli - Compton CC Summer 26 June

Silver

David Temple - Budleigh Salterton May 8 May
Peter Kenward - Colchester Spring Hcap 4 May
Bob Prichard - Roehampton Summer 27 May
Joe Lennon - Tyneside Midweek Handicap 10 June
Sheila Watts - National Veteran's Championship 19 June
Avril Rangoni-Machiavelli - Compton CC Summer 27 June

Gold

Lee Hartley - Pendle & Craven B-Level Advanced Wknd 17 May

President of Palestine Croquet Federation Dies

It is with great regret that WCF announces the death today of Dr. Khalil El Haj, President of the Palestine Croquet Federation, following a long battle with cancer.

Many players will have met Khalil, who was a business man. He had participated in many Egyptian National Golf Croquet Championships and four WCF World GC Championships. He was a member of the Shams Club in Cairo and married with one daughter. He was President of the Palestine Croquet Federation from inception until his death. He will be sorely missed.

The View from the Bar

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

Being "bar-room chat", much of the Nottingham list is either mundane, or forgettable, or both. However it's at times of the major championships that the list really proves its worth. That's because results generally find their way to the list very quickly – much better than waiting for the Gazette, or even consulting the C.A. website. And it's not just the bare results. There are often musings from the players on the competition, the organisation, the lawns and so on, which serves to add the sort of colour that you can otherwise only get by being there. And sometimes live commentary is provided, either direct to the list or via a website, which can be fascinating – it takes a while to get used to the terminology, especially if you're not conversant with the Advanced game, but once you do, it's a lot of fun to follow (albeit generally while doing something else at the same time – such as being at work...). And finally videos of the games are sometimes posted on Youtube, which is really is as good as being there.

All of the above were in evidence at the recent World Championships in Florida, and all but the videos in the Open Championships at Hurlingham in early July. If you want to see the videos from the Worlds, the easiest way is to consult <http://croquetonfilm.com/> which features an excellent collection of most of the croquet videos posted on the internet. I won't say much about the Worlds results themselves as they have been fully covered elsewhere, but following up on previous columns, I would like to make what I promise will be this year's last mention of Australian teenager Robert Fletcher. Just 18 months after playing his first ranking game, he won his block of ten players with just one defeat, before reaching the semi-finals of the main event, eventually going down to eventual winner Reg Bamford (but not before taking the first game off him). And as if that wasn't enough, Chris Clarke thinks his younger brother Malcolm will be even better. Eek! We may get to see him in the flesh in the UK if he is selected for the Australian team for next year's MacRobertson Shield.

Meanwhile, the Opens have kicked off an interesting discussion of what the correct response is when a player has to withdraw, as Chris Clarke did from the final (before play started). It has been suggested that the vacant place should be taken by someone else – e.g. Chris's place could have been taken by the player he beat in the semi-final. However most people believe that once a player is beaten in a knock-out that result must stand – even if (as in this case) that means a final cannot take place. One reason for this is that it seems somewhat arbitrary as to which loser gets reinstated – should it be the losing semi-finalist? Why not the player Chris beat in the quarter-finals, or second round?

Finally, the tricky question of how to conduct a play-off when there are three players chasing one or two qualifying spots has been under discussion. The difficulty is that even if there is enough time available for the three players to all play each other, that may result in A beating B who beats C who beats A – with the result that nothing is settled. The current method is that A plays B, and then

the winner plays C – but that, of course, gives C a huge advantage (and how you determine which of the three players gets the initial bye becomes a matter of critical importance). Gerard Healey has cleverly suggested that A should still play B, but when the winner takes on C they play a best of three, in which C would start 1-0 down. This still does not equalise the three players' chances (in fact now C is disadvantaged compared to the other two), but it is much fairer than the other method. It would also work in reverse where three players were chasing two qualifying spots – this time A plays B, the winner qualifies, while the loser gets a second to take on C, starting 1-0 down in a best of three.

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COACHING

The Art of the Take-Off

by Michael Heap

Originally written for 'The Mallet', a club newsletter edited and published by Rudy Rencoret in Australia, but kindly reproduced here with Michael's Permission.

Rudy entered into some email correspondence with me following a posting I made to the Nottingham Board and persuaded me, by immense flattery, into writing some notes for your club magazine on the subject of fine take-offs, both strength and direction.

I am not particularly interested in arguing about the importance or otherwise of the physics when coaching, but I am, for example, interested in **how** to get a fine take-off (or single ball shot) to go the correct distance. Rarely have I seen or heard anyone try to explain how they do it and often players have seemed to regard this skill as less important than hitting in a straight line and not worthy of the same practice and study. Personally, having never been a great shot, I have to get results by some other method and many is the time that, at the start of a break, I have planned and have then used a really accurate take-off to create a break out of nothing. Yes, there can be the fear of going off when the take-off is into the yard line area, so I castigate myself more for stopping short than going off, but quite often this danger is not there. A long take-off to a hoop, having put another ball there first, is rarely dangerous. It is regarded by many as so unlikely to succeed that it is not even considered, but it is far, far easier to be accurate than rolling the same distance with two balls. For a start the direction can be pretty well guaranteed by placing the balls absolutely correctly, so there is only the strength to worry about. Furthermore, this manoeuvre can often be done without risking a loss of innings or even giving the opponent a safe shot if it fails. It is particularly useful when you have been unable to work a normal break pick-up having got the innings.

Just a quick example – You have roqueted your own ball in or near the second corner. Oppo's balls are on the East boundary defensively seven or so yards apart. You are for the first hoop. Take off, as you must, (trying to move your partner ball perhaps a

yard off the boundary, if at all possible) to one of oppo's balls and roquet it. Croquet it to the North side of the first hoop while going to the other ball. Take off for position at the first hoop, putting oppo's ball some two or so yards into court (it is then easier to pick up a break and also much more difficult for oppo to defend). If successful in getting good position, make the hoop and try to get a rush somewhere useful and go for the break. If unsuccessful, play your ball back to the second corner, carefully choosing the spot on the yard line that gives you a rush usefully while not giving a double, especially to the ball you have put to the first hoop. I have always liked situations where I can have a go at a break while keeping the innings if I fail, while also giving the opponent no safe shot. It is both having your cake and eating it.

Getting the length of the take-off is critical to getting the break started and this is not the only time that can be important. Take the simple situation in a four-ball break where you have a poor pioneer at the next hoop and have hit but have not been able to get a rush on the pivot/centre ball. Take off accurately to get a rush to your hoop and the break is immediately recovered. Good stop shots are the best way to keep control of a break, good take-offs often save them.

So, how to do a good take-off? Let us assume you are doing a fine take-off as you have then the very best chance of getting it absolutely right (and you should always be trying to get every shot, however simple, absolutely right).

First get the direction right. I line up very thin take-offs with the assumption that my ball will travel along the common tangent between the two balls. I stand behind the line and make sure this common tangent is **exactly** where I wish my ball to go. The strength required is as near as makes no matter the same as for a single ball shot as the other ball is going to move just a few inches and thus take very little energy from the stroke.

I make sure my ball is actually in contact with the other ball and that the milling on my ball is locking with that of the other ball (if I have to move the other ball to make the contact because of the lawn, I do not turn this other ball round at all as it is not allowed). Even if I hit in error straight along the tangent rather than slightly into the other ball, the other ball will at least shake. I pick a line of aim that is very close to the common tangent but slightly towards the other ball and swing straight along the line I have chosen. I approach the shot with just the same care as for a long-distance roquet.

As an aside, for thicker take-offs (and other croquet strokes), I choose the point of aim on the principle of drawing a line between the desired end-points for the two balls and finding the point midway between these two end-points. It works remarkably well. Though it is possibly not absolutely perfect mechanically, it is a very good rule of thumb to be used whenever one does not **know** what to do. Of course, as the take-off gets thicker, you will have to recognise that your ball will start to travel further inwards from the line of the common tangent and you will have to adjust the position of the balls for the croquet stroke to allow for this.

As I have an Irish grip, the hands are working together, which helps me in many ways and here too. Hitting the ball in the centre of the mallet is necessary for consistency. The **smoothest** long flattened swing gives predictability.

I hold the mallet very lightly, indeed I do for all shots where this is practicable. In the swing, because I am holding the mallet lightly, my fingers can hardly avoid providing **gentle** and **continuous** (and constantly applied) forward pressure and some natural

resistance to the backward reaction of the mallet on contact. I help the mallet to swing through the ball as though it is not there, actively (only with the gentle resistance of the fingers) taking the mallet straight and onward, feeling (thinking) it to the end-point of the take-off. I actually plan to end the swing at a point related in distance to the take-off end-point and this guides the strength I put in through the swing.

In essence, I take the follow through of the mallet to the end-point for the ball (we are dealing here with a fine take-off or single ball shot and I am treating the direction of the ball as that of the mallet, for simplicity of explanation only). Of course, I do not actually let go of the mallet, but try to **think** of the mallet head going to the end-point of the take-off so the follow through will be proportionally longer the further the ball has to travel.

It makes a great deal of difference to both picking up breaks and the recovery of breaks if a take-off can be really accurate in length. Considering how little I play, I have been grateful that this method allows me to regain a feel of the game remarkably quickly. I cannot guarantee that what works for me will work for others, but it should be worth a try. Remember to visualise your stroke beforehand and really focus on achieving what you have visualised.

For distance control, the best practice I have found is to see how many shots it takes to play one ball through all 12 hoops and hit the peg. Getting accurate position in front of hoops from all sorts of distances is the secret to a good score. I start from A baulk and find that immediately after a lay-off from the game, the low thirties is typical. On a good lawn that is not ridiculously fast, below 30 is par. Once fully warmed up and in practice an occasional 26 should be achieved by a minus player. I have done 23 on one occasion but that needed some really good (fortuitous?) hoop running as well. But it is not really how many shots you take, it is about taking fewer than you did before. Practice helps me improve quicker than play, but it must be structured, challenging and never boring. This little exercise done two or three times at the beginning of your session will help you greatly.

If you have any coaching tips which you would like to share through the Gazette please feel free to forward them. It would also be good to hear from players what they would like to see published in the coaching pages, perhaps you have a particular bete noir that someone could help you with. Please send any submissions or queries to the Editor:

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CROQUET TAKES TO THE HIGH SEAS

Report by Jonathan Isaacs
 Photos by Celebrity Cruises & Samir Patel

Earlier this summer The Croquet Association was approached by Celebrity Cruises who informed us that they had developed a real grass croquet lawn for their latest ship - The Celebrity Equinox.

This 2,850 passenger luxury cruise liner was scheduled for commissioning from Southampton in July. The cruise line wanted to host a "Pro-Am" croquet tournament and asked if we could help by providing a team of "top" croquet players.

With less than 2 months to go to the event, time was of the essence, finding 10 top croquet players in the middle of the season being a potential problem. The idea was posted on the Nottingham Board and interest so great that we eventually had to conduct a draw to select the team.



The Winning team of travel journalists are presented with their glass mallet

The event was scheduled for 25th July as a centre piece for the ship's launch.

Having discovered some details of the technology involved in creating a grass lawn on a ship we decided that a pre-inspection of the facilities would be prudent and eventually managed to find a slot 2 days before the event when the ship would be available for boarding.



The lawn looked magnificent but promised to be rather slow. The hoop carrots were only allowed to be sunk 4 inches for fear that we could rupture the lawns drainage and watering system. We

also discovered that the soil structure was somewhat loose due to its composition and lack of maturity of the roots - this meant that the hoops became rather loose if run with the force typical of an "A" class golf croquet player.

The tournament consisted of 4 teams each with 4 amateur players accompanied by 2 experienced "amateur professionals". Due to the potential problems with the hoops we decided to implement a point scoring system to determine the winners where the amateur player gained 3 points for running a hoop whereas the "professional" only gained 1 point if they ran the hoop. This encouraged the top players to show off their clearing skills and to set up their team partners to run each hoop.

The tournament proved to be a great success. A sizable audience watched the event and were somewhat vocal, cheering on their respective teams with alacrity. Eventually a clear winner emerged in a team of travel journalists

who were presented with a magnificent glass croquet mallet specially commissioned for the event by the Corning Museum of Glass.

As a thank-you our team were entertained with a short overnight "cruise to nowhere" where we enjoyed the excellent facilities of this magnificent cruise liner.

Croquet players wishing to take a cruise should consider the Celebrity Equinox - one could even keep in practice whilst on the high seas!

Reports & Results

OLD FACES – NEW NAMES Men's & Women's Championships Cheltenham, 10th - 14th June 2009

Report by David Magee

In the 78 years that the Men's Championship has been held, 11 men have won the trophy more than once and this year 4 of those 11 were playing in the hope of adding to the number of their successes. Two further players were also hoping that they could join this select band of multiple winners. So the stage was set fair for a competitive contest. Compare this situation with the Women's Championship and once again one despaired of the small field of only 4 competitors. Some years ago I asked whether our sport's female players would like to explain in the Gazette why they did not wish to play in this event. I do not recall reading any replies to my question and I confess that my draft contained some harsh words to these players. On reflection, I can only be saddened that today's female players do not share my sense of history when looking at the 140 years of their event. And saddened that they do not want to hold the gold locket that links the present day competitions with those that took place under the aegis of the All England Croquet Club long before the Association was formed. Fortunately the Championship is greater than any one player and at least the situation would result in yet another new name being engraved on the trophy. That name turned out to be Carol Smith who beat Gabrielle Higgins in a best of 3 final on Saturday.

It was good to see the Mixed Doubles Championship reunited with the Singles Championships this year after a gap of 5 years. The return was celebrated with a field of 6 pairs and one



Carol Smith, winner of the Women's Championship

lone man – Dave Trimmer had failed to read the Fixtures Book correctly and arrived a day early! Two couples rapidly rose to the fore in the Draw and Process format, David Foulser partnering Carol Smith and Keith Aiton playing with Gabrielle Higgins. A third pairing of James Death and Sue Edwards challenged briefly but were beaten by David and Carol in both halves of the event. Indeed it looked like David and Carol would run away with the Championship as they had beaten Keith and Gabrielle in the final of the Draw and looked well set to beat them again in the final of the Process. However Keith managed to snatch success with a triple peel and so the pairs had to play yet again on the Sunday to decide the outcome of the Championship. Some slightly nervy play to start with but in the end another triple peel by Keith meant another new name would appear on a trophy – but only one name in this case as Keith Aiton had won the Championship previously, in 1985 partnering Mrs Mary Collin.

Talking of peels brings me back to the Men's Championship and the condition of the courts. Torrential downpours during the weekend preceding the Championships softened the ground and made for easy-paced lawns and forgiving hoops. Peels therefore abounded (what is the collective noun for peels?) and I doubt that there have ever been so many scores with post-nominals. There was only one upset in the first round when the 5th seed, Ian Burridge, fell (quite literally at times) to Martin French. And there was almost a big upset early in the second round with David Maugham going through by about three inches – the distance Graham Gale's second ball failed to get in front of, and therefore run, 3-back. That was the last chance Graham had so instead of winning with two triple peels, he lost in the third game to David's 26sxp – such are the margins between success and failure! There were two more upsets in the quarter-finals with James Death coming second to Robin Brown in a peel-laden best of 5 and David Openshaw beating Stephen Mulliner by winning the 5th game 4tp when Stephen's ball was completely wired from all other balls after running penult. 4tp in the 5th game was also the winning margin for Keith Aiton against David Goacher who unfortunately also broke down on a supposedly finishing turn. In contrast to the quarter-finals, the semi-finals seemed relatively one-sided and saw David Maugham and Robin Brown both progress to the final by winning their matches in 3 straight games. So there was to be no repeat success and another trophy was going to have a new

name engraved upon its surface.

Having finished watching the Mixed Doubles final on court 10, I was free to turn through 180 degrees to look at court 7 and watch the knockout stage of the Du Pré. Lionel Tibble played Martin French and David Kibble played David Goacher. No 'ibbling' final as David Kibble failed his side of the bargain leaving Lionel to face David Goacher after lunch. My private hopes of fresh names on every trophy were dashed when Lionel completed a comprehensive victory to record his second win in the event.

Back to the Men's Championship. The first three games, rat a tat tat; each 26tp and David Maugham is 2-1 down almost before I have finished my morning coffee. Robin Brown breaks down on his triple in the fourth game but David Maugham is faced with a must-hit lift shot as Robin is peg and penult. My selfish management worry that the Men's final will be over before the semi-final of the Du Pré, is washed aside as David hits and we go to lunch two games apiece. The start of the final game shows how much tension each player is under as uncharacteristic mistakes abound and there are probably more turns in this final game than there were in the preceding four games. David eventually gets control and, when Robin misses the long shot, David completes a sextuple to win the Men's Championship in magnificent style.

The 95th Inter-County Championships Southwick & Compton 23rd - 26th May 2009

Report by Sue Makay

Photos by Liz Larson

The 95th Inter-Counties Championship started less than a week after the World Championships in Florida. Returning players brought the Florida sunshine with them for the first two days of the tournament, but a few top players who had used up their leave entitlement were unable to make it to Sussex. Nottinghamshire, however, proved unfazed by the lack of James Death, and their team of Keith Aiton, Dean Bennison, Gary Bennett, Patrick Hort, Richard Huxley and Richard White lifted the trophy for the fourth time in five years, losing only to Suffolk



Nottingham celebrate their well-deserved victory

Bedfordshire won the Second Division with an equally impressive performance of 9 wins, their one loss being at the hands of runners-up Gloucestershire, who were also promoted to the First Division next season along with Middlesex. The Bedfordshire squad of Tom Anderson, Ben Ashwell, John Bevington, Howard Bottomley, George Collin, Brian Harral, Jon Watson and John Wheeler were usually fairly easy to spot on the lawns, thanks to Jon Watson's long socks in croquet colour stripes.

Yorkshire won the wooden spoon last year with no match

wins, and started the tournament with four losses, so their victory against Kent ended a run of 14 consecutive defeats in the Counties, which inspired them to three further wins. Kent were looking such a certainty for the wooden spoon, with only one win at the end of Day 3, that the manager sent the trophy over to Compton, where they were playing on the last day. Kent then proceeded to beat both Warwickshire and a depleted Wiltshire team, as Roger Hayes had sadly had to leave to attend the funeral of Nick King, a promising Bath player killed in a motorcycle accident. In the end there was a tie for bottom place between Warwickshire and the CA Select team (formed when Devon had to withdraw), with the CA Select winning the wooden spoon on the "who beat whom" rule.



Bedfordshire celebrate their promotion back to the 1st Division

The greatest interest on the last day at Southwick was the battle for the third relegation spot. Hertfordshire and Northumberland had each only managed one match win and were clearly relegated, but there were four teams still in danger on the last day. Suffolk had thus far failed to be as strong as they looked on paper, and they played their first match against Glamorgan with both teams on 3 wins in what was billed as the relegation clash. Mark Avery completed a TP to take the first game for Suffolk just one minute before Ian Burridge retaliated with a STP to make it 1-1. The third game looked as if it might go Glamorgan's way, but then ex world champion John Walters recovered from earlier errors and clawed his way back into the game to win by the proverbial +1 on time.

Glamorgan therefore still only had 3 wins, but their last match was against already relegated Hertfordshire. If they could win that match, then they would have a superior game tally to either Dorset or Essex, both on 4 wins and playing strong opposition in their last matches. Somerset and Lancashire duly obliged by beating Dorset and Essex respectively, but Glamorgan seemed to be throwing it away on lawns 7, 8 and 9. John Evans and David Walters won the first game relatively easily, but neither Kevin Ham nor Ian Burridge could get going on the next lawn and time was fast running out. Ian was sprinting round the lawn in an attempt to finish his turn before time was called so that Kevin could have another turn, but failed penult. 1-1. In the decider Garry McElwain had managed to get to 4-back, but Hertfordshire's Simon Hathrell had made the first break and David Tutt was able to capitalise from uncharacteristic errors from Chris Williams. In the end Chris

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played a captain's innings by getting back in as time was called and taking his ball from hoop 5 to the peg in a largely two ball break to save Glamorgan from relegation and to send Dorset to the Second Division next season.

There was another exciting timed ending on the first day at Compton between Hertfordshire and Dorset. With the match score 1-1, David Trimmer did an all round break as time was called and pegged his ball out, with his side two hoops ahead and the remaining balls well scattered. George Woolhouse (Hertfordshire) hit in across the lawn, did a long take-off to 1-back, ran the hoop to A-baulk, roqueted the ball by Hoop 6 and took off to get in front of 2-back. He only had to run the hoop to take the game into sudden death, with the advantage of still having a partner ball, but after all that work he blobbed the hoop. There can't have been too much hard hitting at Compton, however, as at one point a fox was seen trotting across the lawns.

The shot of the tournament was not played at Southwick or at Compton, but at the pitch and putt course, where Lancashire had gone during their bye game. Alan Pidcock drove off the first tee and managed to hit his ball straight through the windscreen of a car on the A259 - fortunately no-one was hurt. Apparently John Haslam hit a bus on the same course a few years ago, so beware when Lancastrians play pitch and putt! When they played Glamorgan at Compton, Alan was only on Hoop 4 when time was called and he needed to get to rover.

Dave Nick encouraged him to go for long hoops by saying "just imagine a pane of glass in the middle!" They won that game, but although Lancashire may have lost the match to Glamorgan, their captain David Openshaw will not have minded. He missed the games at Compton so that he could watch his beloved Burnley FC reach the Premiership, and as the icing on the cake Lancashire beat Cheshire, which will give them bragging rights at Bowdon for some time to come. Paul Rigge and Ray Lowe were the Lancashire heroes, winning a tense decider against Colin Irwin and Alan Mayne in the last game of the morning to finish.

The Counties is always a marvellous festival of croquet but is not always a festival of great play. Top players often get the best out of their B class partners and then fail to get round themselves. There were sextuples from Samir Patel and Stephen Mulliner, both playing for Surrey, and one from Rutger Beijderwellen (Sussex) on the first day. Mostly, however, the story was of failed multiple peeling attempts or QPOs that turned into OPQs. The weather turned on Bank Holiday Monday, with thunderstorms making conditions at Compton in particular extremely difficult. As usual, however, the groundsmen at both venues had done a magnificent job of preparing the lawns, and the catering was of the usual superlative standard. Thanks are due to all the Southwick and Compton members for helping to organise the tournament and making it so enjoyable, and to Chris Williams for managing the event.

Nailsea Open Weekend 30th -31st May

Report by Chris Williams

Due to the World Championships and various other commitments for several of our regular visitors, numbers were rather down this year. However, some last-minute phone calls produced a good quality field of 8 (well, 7 plus two "halves" playing one day each). Nailsea's lawns are rarely quick, even though the usual hot sunshine prevailed throughout the weekend, so the manager (me) decided an all-play-all block of eight to be perfectly feasible.

Nailsea's entirely voluntary groundstaff (drawn from club members) had done a superb job moving the hoops and preparing the lawns, and while the hoops were of course not as tough to run as Florida "superhoops", they demanded some respect. Some local gradients around them, coupled with the baking sun, caused conditions to be

rather more testing than anticipated, and with short time limits of 2.5 hours, several games went to time, with a few more almost doing so.

Fresh from his successful Inter-Counties debut, Jim Field (0.5, Bath) continued to impress with some good shooting and break-play, having one win on the first day and some close results in his other 3 games, all against experienced minus-handicap opponents.

Day 1 ended with two games pegged down, both involving Nick Saxton (0.5, Cheltenham), partly because his opponent in the final round David Mundy (-1, Cheltenham) had to leave to entertain some visitors. The manager did not ask them to arrive early the following morning but they both did so anyway, which allowed them to catch up, Nick eventually clawing back some of the points he had lost the day before to Peter Dyke (7, Nailsea).

Day 2 saw David Hunt (9, Nailsea) step in for Peter who had a prior engagement. David claims to have enjoyed the experience and had some good turns against quality opposition. Meanwhile, Nick's other pegged-down game against the eventual winner was finished over Sunday lunchtime, while some of the other players enjoyed a disposable barbecue courtesy of player-chef Dave Kibble (-0.5, Bristol).

Nick also won this one, which set up an interesting finale with three players in contention on one loss each: Don Gaunt (-1, Cheltenham), Lionel Tibble (-1, Northampton), and Marcus Evans (-2, Nailsea). In the sixth round, Marcus beat Lionel, and Don beat David Mundy (by his book title score), finishing at around 4.30. The final round was to pit Lionel against Don and Marcus against David, but at this point there was some discussion as to whether or not to actually play it, as all competitors were somewhat drained. The problem was that yours truly had stated at the start of the event that (in the spirit of recent discussions on the Nottingham List) neither net points nor who-beat-whom would be used as a tie-breaker - ties on number of wins to be decided by a play-off (1-ball if time was short).

At this point in proceedings, no-one felt much like even a 1-ball play-off if it was to start at 7pm, but unfortunately if this idea was discarded, it was impossible for Lionel to win. After some A-class dithering, the manager therefore stuck to Plan A and the final round commenced. If Marcus beat David, he was guaranteed a play-off against the winner of Don v Lionel; if not, the

winner of that game would take the trophy. Obliging, with the incentive of a choc ice offered by Lionel, David despatched Marcus +26, leaving Don and Lionel to battle it out in the "final", Don winning +9 to secure the trophy and a bottle of wine. Lionel was awarded the bottle of wine for runner-up on the basis of being the only person to successfully complete a triple peel in the event.

My thanks to Peter Dyke for his assistance with the management of the event and preparing the lawns on Saturday, the Nailsea members for preparation and use of the lawns, and Dave Kibble for his excellent ad hoc catering.

Full results:

Don Gaunt 6/7, Lionel Tibble 5/7 (1 TP), Marcus Evans 5/7, David Mundy 4/7, Jim Field 3/7, Nick Saxton 2/7, Dave Kibble 1/6, Peter Dyke 1/4, David Hunt 0/2.

The Ramsgate Golf Croquet Championship, 6th - 7th June 2009

Report by Ashton Hulme

This event was held on the 6th & 7th June and attracted 16 entries, including the current World Association Champion, Reg Bamford, and a Belgian, no less than Charles-Eric Villain XIV.

The players were divided into two blocks of eight, and to cut down on waiting times, each player played two 13-point games against every other player in the same Block.



In his 19 point semi-final against Mark Hamilton, New Zealander Nelson Morrow tries literally to run hoop 16 - he lost 10-8.



Tyneside Midweek L to R: Phil Errington, Roger Staples, Derek Trotman (Manager), Patricia Duke-Cox, Howard Bowron, Tony Whateley, David Millener, Alice Fleck, Ian Whitlock and David Turner.

The quarter-finalists from Block A were Reg. Bamford, who won all his 14 games, Nelson Morrow and Chris Sheen



Reg. Bamford wins the first game of the Final 7-1, with this jump shot at hoop 8.

with 9 wins, and Bill Arliss with 8 wins. Mark Hamilton and David Dray, with 11 wins each, Tim King with 9 wins, and 16-year-old James Goodbun with 8 wins, qualified from Block B.

In the quarter-finals (played over 19 points) Reg Bamford beat James Goodbun 10-5, Chris Sheen beat David Dray 10-6, Nelson Morrow beat Tim King 10-8 and Mark Hamilton beat Bill Arliss 10-9.

The semi-finals were again over 19 points. Reg Bamford beat Chris Sheen 10-4 and Mark Hamilton beat Nelson Morrow 10-8.

The final was over the best of three 13-point games. Reg Bamford won in two straight games 7-1, 7-2. He told Mark Hamilton he had hoped to whitewash him

in the first game, but won it anyway with a jump shot at the next hoop!

The Plate, for those knocked out in the Block stage, was won by Richard Harris with Bob Ellis as runner-up.

The Manager, Evelyn Martin, was congratulated for the organisation of the event, as were the catering ladies, who in addition to lunches and teas had produced a fine dinner on the Saturday evening.

Tyneside Midweek H'cap 9th - 11th June

Report & photo by Derek Watts

With 12 entries, Manager Derek Trotman arranged for 2 blocks of 6 to be played on the two lawns at Exhibition Park and the single lawn in Nuns Moor Park (some 2 miles away). This worked very well and did not interfere with the overall running and conviviality of the event. Unfortunately, one player phoned in with a sick note on the first day and local players were drafted in to enable games still to be played so there was no sitting out.

In the "Red Block" David Millener (Belsay Hall) won all his games with Tony Whateley (Glasgow) runner up. The "Blue Block" saw Phil Errington (Belsay Hall) win all his games with Alice Fleck (Tyneside) runner up.

In the semi finals, Tony beat Phil +3 and David beat Alice +12 and the final saw Tony beat David +4 in an exciting finish. David used 5 bisques to build up a convincing lead but when the bisques were down, Tony clawed back and eventually overcame David's lead. However, in Tony's long pegout, the front ball missed so he pegged out his striker's ball. This allowed David to

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chip away 1 hoop at a time with Tony either shooting at balls or the peg until he eventually pegged out with a single ball shot from hoop 1 area.

The weather was very kind and the players were well catered for by the now famous "Sheilas Meals"!

Block Results:

Red Block; David Millener 4/4, Tony Whateley 3/4, David Turner (Tyneside) 2/4, David Appleton (Tyneside) 1/4, Ian Whitlock (Egbaston) 0/4, Eugene Brady (Auckland) absent through sickness.

Blue Block: Phil Errington 5/5, Alice Fleck 3/5, Howard Bowron (Penrith) 2/5, Joe Lennon (Glasgow) 2/5, Roger Staples (Middlesbrough) 2/5, Patricia Duke-Cox (Woodhall Spa) 1/5.

Joe Lennon gained his Silver Merit award and David Millener had a handicap reduction from 12 to 10.

Ryde Festival of Croquet, 10th - 14th June 2009

Report & photos by Klim Seabright

I was looking forward to my second "Ryde Festival of Croquet" but needed a "cunning plan" to circumvent the high cost of the ferry crossing.

I decided to apply for the post of Third Stoker on the White Link Line vessel MV Tasker. I thought that I would stand a reasonable chance of getting the job since I had once played with my scale model sailing boat on a local boating pond. It was therefore with great delight that I was invited to an interview in February of 2009. I was greeted by Personnel Manager Mr Ladd who greeted me with a warm handshake and a cheery "call me Jim".

I was asked if I had my "Stokers Ticket" and quickly flashed my senior bus pass. I was then tested on my general knowledge by being asked to name the letter which following "Q" in the alphabet. Quick as a flash I replied "R Jim Ladd" and was in!

The plan was to stoke until the second week of June and then 'jump ship' and swim ashore. I consulted all the forecasts and charts and discovered that the second week in June would be moonless. Ideal!

MV Tasker was moored off Hobbs Bay (yep, it exists) and, while the crew enjoyed a late night supper, I seized my chance. I pulled the balaclava over my head, used the coal dust to darken

SPONSORSHIP AND FUNDRAISING

To host major events it is becoming important that the CA can either find sponsorship or other means of raising funds to support these events.

Being a voluntary organisation we cannot afford to pay an agency in the hope that they may come up the results. We are however prepared to pay people based on a percentage of the result achieved.

If anybody has the expertise required or knows of someone who would be prepared to work on a voluntary or percentage fee basis could they contact the Chairman of the Marketing Committee, Jonathan Isaacs Tel: 01798 812028, email: jonathanisaacs@btinternet.com

my face and gripping my Pidcock firmly between my teeth slipped quietly into the black oily water. It was a tough swim and I was struggling to make it when I heard a loud whisper from the shore. It was the unmistakable voice of Tournament Manager Cliff Jones. "You can take it easy, I've put you down for a late start tomorrow!" he said. I waded ashore and noticed that he was similarly dressed for the occasion. He picked me up, dusted me down and simply said "Red Funnel, Fifth Engineer, jumped ship yesterday" and we were off to the Croquet Festival!

The weather was near perfect for the whole five days, which this year included a day of Golf Croquet. The lawns continue to be a joy to play on and the croquet is the usual mixture of serious competition and good companionship. The Ryde club goes out of its way to accommodate any special requests which this year included bell-ringing and the breaking of car headlights from Lawn 1. It has to be reported however that the headlight breaker felt that a BMW was a bit of a let down since the last headlight broken



Ryde CC, the Hurlingham of the small islands

was a top range Mercedes!

David Harrison-Wood took four complete changes of the tide (which adds up to eight around here doesn't it?) in the final to win the championship. Helena Urban won the "Y" group with élan. Gordon Hopewell glided around the lawns to secure the handicap shield. Robin Thornton shimmied his way to a first GC win and someone wanted for desertion by the Isle of White Navy won the advanced level B group! It was good to see players from New Zealand and Ireland at this event and I certainly hope to sneak back to the "South Island" next year. BTW (to use the computerese!) don't take any notice of the time assigned on your ferry ticket....it's for approximate reference only! Either that or all ferry staff know of last year's report in the Gazette and are subjecting me to a kind of marine fatwa. Must get some practice in for next year. The plan is to buy a cross channel foot passenger ticket and pole vault from a cross channel ferry as she passes the IOW.

Post Script.....

Did you know.....there is a kind of Olympic Games for small islands which is imaginatively called The Small Island Games. The IOW finished thirteenth in the medal table at the last games, behind such places as Goatland and Saarenaa (come on, you must know where they are?). I see that Croquet was not included but other minority sports were. I do hope that the Chairman of the CA Tournament Committee will be making representations to ensure that Croquet is included in 2010 and that the IOW can attend. 'Spect it'll be declared a matter for the WCF though!

The Croquet Association

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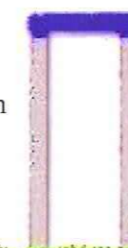
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Email sales@croquet.org.uk
Or visit our website, www.croquet.org.uk
Or telephone 01242 242318

The shop is based at the CA offices at Cheltenham Croquet Club, Old Bath Road, Cheltenham, GL53 7DF and is normally open between 9am and 5.30pm, but if you are planning a trip, it's wise to contact us beforehand.



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