

# THE CROQUET GAZETTE

ISSUE 328

OCTOBER 2010



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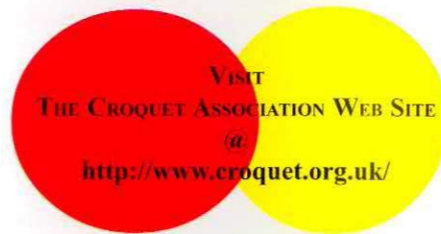
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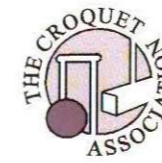
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**CONTENTS**

<b>Chairman's Column</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Letters</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>News &amp; Information</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The View from the Bar</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>A summary of discussion topics from the Nottingham List by Nick Parish.</i>	
<b>Editorial</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Club News</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Points of View</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Bill Arliss responds to a previous article on Golf Croquet referees</i>	
<b>MacRobertson Shield &amp; World Team Championships</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>James Hawkins sets the scene and reports on the first Tests at Bowdon &amp; Heaton park.</i>	
<b>Keith Aiton of GB, Jeff Soo of USA and Aaron Westerby of New Zealand give their respective captains' overviews of the Series.</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Tier 2 and 3 reports of the WCF World Team Championships</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>The Jiminy Wicket Story</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>How a game of croquet in an English garden is now part of an international effort to help dementia sufferers and their families.</i>	
<b>Tournament Round-Up</b>	<b>18</b>

**Chairman's Column**

I would first like to congratulate the winning British team in the MacRobertson Shield World Team Championship. Our grateful thanks are also extended to the legions of croquet club members who played their part in making every Test Match such a success.

Have you noticed representatives of the CA have been present at the majority of CA prestigious events? Quiller Barrett, our new President, was keen to see us "Fly the flag" and organised the calendar between himself, myself, past President John Solomon, Vice-Presidents and senior Council members. I am not sure if we have a CA flag, but I could pursue this with the Marketing committee unless you know of the existence of one.

October marks the end of much competitive play within the CA's domain, but some clubs stay open throughout the whole year; whilst some players seek warmer climes and continue their sport overseas and yet others play inside. For your elected Council members, the season of meetings starts soon after the CA's AGM.

After two years as your Chairman I shall not seek re-election and will hand over to my Vice-Chairman, Barry Keen. I have been honoured to act as your Chairman and I have enjoyed the experience and opportunities to meet and play croquet with so many of you. I managed to visit 17 clubs this year – about 10% of our member clubs.

Some of you may ask what have I achieved. I have referred to my twin aims in this column before, and I am therefore pleased to report some success. The juniors now have a bursary scheme to which they may apply if representing their country or attending tournaments that will help them develop their game. In addition Council saw fit to introduce a mentoring scheme that is beginning to be adopted and may be extended. Collecting and caring for the history of the game is an on-going project. Tremaine Arkley, our benefactor of the Solomon collection, has begun to send items that are now stored in the small library at the Cheltenham office. Our next task is to catalogue them for your information and consultation – perhaps more web-pages will be added to our website in due course.

I will finish with grateful thanks to all who have supported me as Chairman. Committees have worked well together and hopefully you, the members, will be pleased with the coaching and development opportunities, be reassured about the equipment and laws you use, have entered the tournaments scheduled by the CA and clubs listed in the newly designed Fixtures Book, have delighted in the reports published in the Gazette and on the website, have distributed the marketing leaflets supplied from the office and found the selection of players representing us rewarding.



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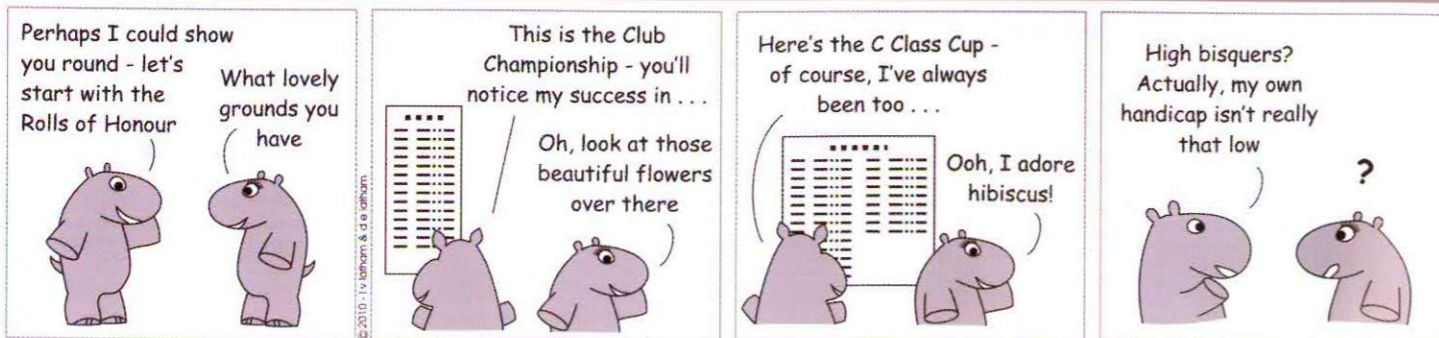
Email contributions, including tournament reports should be sent direct to the Editor, or copied to the Editor if they are being posted to the Nottingham List. Digital images are the easiest to work with, but coloured photographic prints are also acceptable. Please send digital .jpeg or .tiff format 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 Manager of the Croquet Association and not to the Editor.

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**HOOPOTAMUS**

by Victor



## Letters

### A grey area

I should like to reply to the letter by Nick Evans in issue 325, April 2010, regarding wearing colour. I wholeheartedly support "white or mostly white" on the playing field but temper this, as the regulations allow, to include my club colour. WCF (and ACA) tournament regulations require clothing to be predominately white with allowance for national, state or club colours.

My club colour is red so, when playing in an individual capacity, I wear a red wind vest, a red jumper and, as the published photograph would undoubtedly show, a red hat with club logo. I also have a red rain jacket but chose to take my white one to the World Championships as it is less bulky. In 20 degree dry weather I am all in white save the hat.

Possibly CA UK regulations do not permit the wearing of club colours. If so I hope someone informs me before I leave these shores as I do intend playing croquet in the UK at some future time and would not wish to distress fellow players with my gay abandon.

Alix Verge

### Croquet in Southern Spain

In the city of Jerez (Cadiz) there is a croquet club, "Santa Clara CC", which was founded by Henry Fernandez de Bobadilla in 1979. Although it is a private club it is open to all players wishing to play, and has been visited by numerous foreign players, especially from the UK.

Last year we opened a new club "The Fuensanta CC" at the Club de Golf Costa Ballena in Rota, 20 km from Jerez, and this year opened another in the "Vista Hermosa Golf Club" in Puerto de Santa Maria 12 km from Jerez.

The province of Cadiz offer good croquet weather and facilities for Croquet players from the UK during Autumn and Winter months.

Cadiz is very interesting for tourists as its landscape is varied from the mountains (with deer and wild boar) to the beach, with an interesting array of places to visit and enjoy. We also have a large choice of golf courses highlighting the famous Valderrama



Coaching in progress at the attractive Costa Ballena Club, in the province of Cadiz.

and of course the famous Bodegas de Jerez producing the very important "Sherry wine" that can be visited daily.

There are direct flights to London and if we are one hour from Seville which is also accessible by air from London. Those interested in visiting to play croquet can contact us at Santa Clara CC Fernando de Ansorena ffanso@telefonica.net

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### Re: full bisque play

I cannot agree with Keith Ross' remarks (Gazette August 2010) on players with a handicap above 6. I have stayed around 10/11 for some time although I did get down to 8 some years back.

I have a bronze and a silver award, as do a few members of our club who have handicaps in the region of 8 to 12: you don't get those if you can't sustain a break.

Of thirty two games played recently twenty nine finished before time. I have many times played one of our members with a handicap of 1.5, winning some and losing

others but all finishing well within time. We often play two games in an afternoon and on one memorable occasion played three full games in under three hours.

People assume, as does the Bray system, that high bisquers always take longer. But other factors influence the speed of a game: not being fully aware of the situation before taking your turn, excessive swinging, ambling across the courts, deliberating for a long time, failing to indicate early on that you are not taking a bisque.

At a recent tournament most of my games finished well before time, even though for most games our combined handicaps were high.

Owen Bryce

### A simple hoop-lifter

As I struggled to get a well-stuck hoop out of the ground one day by hitting upwards with a mallet – and made a divot in the lawn – it struck me it would be useful to have a lever to simply prise the hoop out of the ground. A bit of web research showed a few designs available around the world and I've also seen some interesting prototypes at a couple of clubs. None quite met all my objectives of being:

- cheap to buy or simple to make
- simple to operate whether kneeling or standing
- lightweight and easy to carry with one hand.

The last point is important – whether



you're setting hoops or clearing away, you've already got your hands full and don't need another burden. I've also seen a couple of prototypes where you have to lift upwards on the handle rather than press down – this is cumbersome to operate from both kneeling and standing positions, and is also not good for the back.

So I knocked up the illustrated prototype from offcuts and scraps I had to hand – total cost was zero. It took a couple of hours including varnishing. Having tried it extensively for a couple of months, including setting hoops at a recent test match, I think it meets the objectives rather well.

Many clubs have someone who could knock up something similar quite easily, using whatever they have to hand – but if you would like some sketch plans of my example, email me at martin.french@btinternet.com.

Martin French

### Could Clubs be more helpful?

With regard to travelling to tournaments (Editorial Issue 326) I would suggest that although the economic climate may affect some areas such as the type of accommodation and mode of travel, there are other factors.

I enjoy going to Clubs around the country. As a single person I prefer to stay in an hotel where I can have an evening meal rather than having to go out and search an unknown area. I feel that here some Clubs could be more helpful. On several occasions having enquired if there is an

accommodation list I have been directed to the town's website, which is not easy if you have not visited that Club or area before. Here at Ramsgate we provide an accommodation list and some of our members offer accommodation. Our Tournament Secretary checks Hotels and Guest Houses annually and we are always grateful for any feedback that we get from players.

At some of our weekend tournaments we provide a Saturday evening meal. This depends of course on the number of players who wish to stay at the Club for the evening, but is advantageous if it is an Association Tournament finishing later. For our Ladies Tournament, for the last three years, we have arranged a meal at a local pub. This has proved very popular.

Every effort should be made to encourage people to travel to other Clubs, not only for the advantage of meeting and playing with new people, but seeing how other Clubs are run can provide ideas to take back to one's own Club.

The point about whether there is too much choice is valid. I think having a choice is a good thing. Clubs make money from running tournaments; effort should be made to encourage players to enter theirs.

Valerie Harding

Several years ago Mike Evans and myself produced a small book called 'Help II' which was the humorous guide to enlighten lost croquet players. The book listed clubs with directions, as well as recommended accommodation, pubs etc. Maybe it's time to consider e-publishing.  
Ed.

### Long distance thanks and yes to cyber referees

I have just seen (over the Internet) a letter in the October 2009 edition of The Gazette from Geoffery Taylor in which he recounts being interrupted whilst playing at Cheltenham to act as a referee, only to find that he was summoned to the telephone to answer a question from Tangier, Morocco. He ends his letter by asking whether, in our new modern age, refereeing should be made available over the internet.

Firstly I must admit to being his mystery caller; and I hope, Mr Taylor, you will forgive me for calling you off the lawn

for a somewhat jejune query over law 17. At the time a disagreement had developed on our (bumpy) lawn here in Tangier and, had it not been for the timely interruption of Tea and a rather good Seed Cake, tempers might have become tested. As it was a quick call to Cheltenham solved everything amicably.

Yes, cyber refereeing has its place. So a big cheer and a vote of hearty thanks for Geoffery Taylor and all at Cheltenham for being good sports.

As I have just laid an Astro-turf lawn in my house in The Algarve I do hope I may approach the club again in case of similar necessity?

William Weber

### Thanks to kind friends

I wish I could have replied individually to all of the cards and letters that we the family received after Audrey's death. However as we received more than 100 cards and letters of condolence and sympathy, to answer all of them would have been an impossible task. I would therefore like to thank all of you on behalf of Vanessa, Peter and myself for your kind thoughts and wishes.

Bob Whitaker

### Small Ads request

In my view a small ads column in The Croquet Gazette could be very useful to the membership.

It would provide clubs and individuals with a means of disposing of surplus equipment and provide smaller and start-up clubs, and also individuals with a source of equipment at a lot less than retail prices.

There would be some revenue to The Gazette from advertisement charges, revenue which might otherwise go to e-bay.

Is this worth a try?

Rex Hale

*This used to be available and there's no reason why it can't be again. The rates can be found on Page 6. Ed.*

## News & Information

### Corporate Events Manager

Following the announcement that he is stepping down by David Collins, who has been managing corporate events on behalf of the CA for the past 10 years or so, the CA is looking for a new events manager. This is a paid role, earning £30 per hour plus expenses, plus an organiser's fee.

The events take place almost exclusively at Hurlingham, although there may be scope in future to expand to other venues. There are usually 15 to 20 events during the year between May and September. For each event the coach will be paid a minimum of 4 hours, plus 1 hour for setting up and clearing away before and after the event. Travel expenses will also be covered, on the assumption that the people involved will be based in the London area. Where there are more than 50 guests at an event, two coaches will be paid for (about a quarter of the events fall into this category).

It is the responsibility of the Events Manager to liaise with the Hurlingham club and the companies involved to ensure the event is run to their specifications. The manager will be responsible for running the events and for finding a substitute if they are unable to attend. They will also be responsible for finding an additional coach where needed for the larger events.

Typically events may include some players who have played before, but also many complete beginners. Coaches need to be friendly and enthusiastic about croquet, putting guests at their ease while showing them the basics of what is involved. They will then usually organise a mini golf-croquet tournament among the guests.

No previous experience in this type of function is necessary as David Collins will give all the help and advice needed in the early stages. However the successful candidate will be an experienced croquet player who is knowledgeable about the basics

### CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING RATES

Classified lineage (minimum 15 words)

#### CA members:

First 15 words £5.80

Each further 5 words £1.15

#### Non-members/Trade/Commercial:

First 15 words £9.25

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Series discounts: 3 insertions 10%, 6 insertions 20%

All prices include VAT at the standard rate.

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Classified advertisements must arrive not less than 30 days prior to the publication issue.

Please return the completed classification order form, with cheque made payable to 'The Croquet Association' to:

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Croquet Association Manager

The Croquet Association

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Cheltenham GL53 7DF

Tel: 01242 242318

Email: caoffice@croquet.org.uk

of the game and able to communicate this effectively to the guests. He or she will also need good organisational skills.

If you wish to apply for the position, please email or write, with details of your experience and suitability to Liz Larsson at the CA office, on 01242 242318 or email caoffice@croquet.org.uk. Alternatively, if you just want to discuss the position informally please call either Liz or myself on 01483 770400.

Jeff Dawson

### Do you recognise this scene?



John Hyde has an old oil painting of seaside croquet in Victorian times. He would like to identify the location. He suspects that it may be on the South coast, and there is a rather distinctive church in the background. If anyone recognises the scene they can contact John directly by email jandmhyde@hotmail.co.uk, or contact the Editor if they don't have access to email.

### Notes from the CA Office

Now that the summer tournament season is over, we're turning towards our autumn/winter tasks.

#### Fixtures Book

Entries are now coming in from clubs and the draft calendar online is being updated to provide a complete draft calendar.

#### Membership Renewals

Letters will be sent to all members in November containing details of their membership renewal, the cost of membership for 2011 and details of that member's records. Please do take time to check your record, especially name and address and your bank details if you are paying by DD. If you have changed your bank account in the last year, the latter point is doubly important. Although banks say that they take care of all DDs in when accounts are changed, they do not always do this and we've had instances where the new bank account hasn't been communicated to us by the bank.

#### Shop

The CA shop continues to provide a useful income to the CA and this year, for Christmas, we're trying out some new winter lines. One thing we've noticed is that croquet players frequently play bridge and chess, so we're offering some of Jacques' chess and bridge sets to members. These are quality sets and I hope will prove popular for those long winter days.

Liz Larsson

## The View from the Bar

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

Ever headed into a croquet match feeling that you have absolutely no chance? Me too. But an entertaining post by Chris Williams put the case for the underdog by listing the biggest upsets ever pulled off, a question triggered by the defeat of James Hopgood of Scotland in the recent World Team Championship by Lucas Azcona of Spain. At the time of their match James was ranked around 69<sup>th</sup> in the world, while Lucas was ranked around 699<sup>th</sup>, but Lucas pulled off an extraordinary victory. However, James can take some comfort in the fact that (measured by the difference of the grade of the two players involved) twelve games have provided even bigger shocks than this. The biggest upset on record was in 1993 when Bob Jackson of New Zealand, then one of the world's top ten best players, lost to Margaret Melville, then not one of the world's top 400 best players. Bob was also the loser in the second and fifth biggest upsets on record – quite extraordinary that one very accomplished player should have been the loser in three of the five biggest shocks on record. The only other player to feature more than once as a loser in the top 20 upsets is equally surprising – none other than Chris Clarke, the current world number one.

The biggest upset ever in the UK occurred last year at Southwick – I was there and remember it well. Jamie Burch, ranked around 10<sup>th</sup> in the world went down in the consolation plate to defeat at the hands of Rodney Parkins, ranked around 500<sup>th</sup> in the world. Presumably the pain of this defeat was lessened by the fact that Jamie went on to defeat Stephen Mulliner 3-2 in the final of the main event. As they say, form is temporary... Chris Williams promises to put a "Biggest upset" query on to the Interactive rankings so that you can find out any player's biggest upset wins and losses. Anoraks like me know theirs off by heart already.

Another interesting thread was where do you go for a cheap game of croquet? Several clubs vied for the cheapest membership. To an extent, that of course depends on exchange rates, and right now Jersey Croquet Club offers 365 days of play for just £45. At current exchange rates that beats Marton Croquet Club in New Zealand, where the annual rate works out at £46. However on a pro-rata rate no-one could top England's northern-most croquet club, Bamburgh, which charges a princely £12 for six months of play. That doesn't include a coat or mittens, mind.

Finally, the President's Cup was this year played under Super Advanced rules, becoming the second championship in the UK to do so following last year's Southern Championships. It also produced some rather strange results, with underdog Ed Duckworth coming second just behind the winner Robert Fulford, while Keith Aiton, who went into the tournament as newly crowned Northern Champion, became the first player not to record a single win. There was considerable debate as to whether the changed rules contributed to the result, and whether they were worthwhile. There was some agreement that the new rules did bring about greater interactivity, which was their primary aim – there were

fewer than half as many +26s in 2010 than in 2009, while the number of peeling finishes remained roughly the same – and so overall there was cautious support.

Two main concerns were expressed. First, is it sensible to introduce a further variation to Association Croquet, when it is only needed for the few very top players who can do TPs in their sleep? Some thought having Advanced and Super Advanced was too much. Others thought that Super Advanced would probably by default seep into the lower echelons of the game, in much the same way that Advanced play is now played occasionally in the UK by B and even C-class players, where lifts are really not needed to ensure interactivity. If Super Advanced took over from Advanced over time, that would solve the problem of an additional variation, but realistically Super Advanced just isn't needed for most players. The second concern was whether it solved the "Main Problem" that break play is too easy for the top players. Super Advanced makes it much more difficult to finish in two turns, and gives the outplayer an extra lift (or a contact instead of a lift), but doesn't fundamentally make break play harder. Some players think solving the Main Problem is more important – whether by designing more challenging hoops or by some other change to the rules.

So overall the jury is still out, but David Maughan has said he hopes to use Super Advanced more widely next year in the Men's and (partially) the Opens, which will provide a much wider-ranging trial if it happens.

To subscribe to the list, go to <http://nottingham-lists.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/croquet>. You can receive emails individually or as a daily digest.

## Editorial



Having spoken to numerous players who travelled to watch the MacRobertson Shield, it was interesting to hear them speak in terms of the atmosphere of the matches and the excitement of the nail-biting finishes, particularly at Nottingham. Those conversations came in very useful during September when I was contacted by the BBC, who are interested in making a series of programmes about quintessentially British minority activities and their publications. Croquet had made it onto the initial list of interest along with several other activities, which I can't divulge but you could probably guess.

I was interviewed initially by telephone by a researcher who admitted to not knowing much about croquet. Thankfully she was not pre-disposed to the Alice in Wonderland train of thought, as I was ready to dispel that as quickly as possible. Having answered many questions covering several aspects of the game

and the Gazette, she said she'd go and do some more background and get back to me. I was drawn to the analogy that metaphorically croquet had perhaps just entered the 'X Factor' process. As the days passed the researcher called on several occasions looking for more information and exploring many different angles, perhaps the key question being what makes people so passionate about croquet. It was at that point I related the spectators' stories of the Mac, as well as many other aspects of the game and the sheer diversity we have to offer. Liz Larsson and myself exchanged some phone calls in the process of finding young, enthusiastic and passionate players. As I write this I'm not aware that their part has been undertaken yet, I also had to find the same kind of person who had contributed to the Gazette. A week later two people from the BBC duly arrived in Newcastle, and four members of Tyneside CC were roped in to show the game being played as well as being interviewed, while I was interviewed on camera to make a non-broadcast tape around croquet and the Gazette. I don't usually have much sympathy for the contestants on the 'X Factor', but I think I might in future. Once the Tyneside end of the tape had been completed, I told Sarah about my X Factor analogy, and asked her if we were at 'boot camp' or the 'Judges houses' – "definitely Judges houses", she replied. If their enthusiasm and interest in the game are anything to go by, then I think it would be safe to say we have two new supporters, who have been shown the game without the stereotypes, and thankfully did not try to film everything from through a hoop. They expect to have a complete picture of croquet by the end of September, I hope we have whetted the appetite enough to make it to production, as it would be nice to have the opportunity to show croquet in the light of our choosing, and not that of the typical stereotype we have for so long had to endure in sound bites and local press in order to gain any coverage at all.

## Club News

### The renovation of Bury Croquet Club Lawn, Coronation Park, Radcliffe

Following on from the front cover photo of the previous issue of the Gazette, featuring Vicky Binns taking a break from filming on Coronation Street to open the renovated lawns at Coronation Park, Bury. Margaret Anderton takes up the story of the work involved at the club.

**B**ury Croquet Club moved to Coronation Park in 1997 on to a crown bowling green. Everyone liked the location and the atmosphere but the crown in the middle and the sloping edges were not too good for croquet. There was just enough room to have two slightly undersized lawns where reasonable play was possible and the turf was superb. Over the years the slopes at the edges became worse with wear and about two years ago we decided to investigate the possibility of having the area leveled. Just raising the edges was considered but when we compared quotations for this and having the whole



The old turf cleared and levelling can begin. Photo by Paul Rigge.

area leveled we realised that whichever we did would require outside funding so we decided to apply for enough money to do the whole lawn. Some members expressed worries that the drainage was not as good as it had been and there seemed to be some slippage at one corner of the lawn so we asked Robert Essler (Professional Geo-engineer and also fellow croquet player from Pendle and Craven CC) for advice. Surveys showed that there were some problems so correcting these was added to the project.

Bury Croquet Club put in some of the money and we are very grateful to have received funding from The Croquet Association, Awards for All, The Community Foundation for Greater Manchester Grassroots Fund and the Radcliffe Local Area Partnership. We also received a great deal of support from Bury Metro.

The contractors, were selected, Souters Sports and Bury Drains, and work started in October 2009. The work was originally contracted to take 14 days. It was almost completed when the weather broke at the end of the month. The turf had been stripped off and laid out on sheeting over other areas of the park with one of the club members guarding it during the nights for several weeks but then it was so saturated that it would have been impossible to take away. After a month of heavy rain, the snow came, followed by the frost and ice and the lawn area was left like



Finally the new turf is laid. Photo by Paul Rigge

a ploughed field with the members wondering if it would ever be sorted out. All through the winter club members called in at the park at all times of the day and night to check on what was happening (nothing) and worry about the state of the lawn area.

Eventually half way through March the turf was re-laid and it had survived remarkably well though we did need a small amount of new turf. We had sleepers put all round the edge, an idea 'stolen' from Hunstanton CC, which got rid of the untidy gutters there previously and the mower can now go right to the edge. We have had very little rain during the last few months so once again the weather seemed to be against us. However, the grass grew well and we started playing on it at the end of May after the members had worked hard to put stop boards all round the fence. There are still a few slightly bumpy areas but we are certain that by the end of the season the lawns will be even better and already the members are delighted that they can hit a ball in the direction they want and it will stay on line. Other advantages are that the hoops can be moved to minimize wear to the lawn and there is room for practice areas at the ends of the courts.

Saturday 17th July saw the Official Reopening of the lawn by Vicky Binns (Molly) who swapped Coronation Street for Coronation Park for the afternoon. Typically this was also delayed by the weather, heavy rain fell all morning and had flooded the generator that was to power the PA system, shouting became the plan B. As she declared it open eight members hit balls across the lawn. We were glad to welcome Barry Keen representing the Croquet Association, Janet Davies - the NW Federation Development Officer, Robert Essler and representatives from the funding organizations, from the contractors and from Bury Metro Leisure Services. It was good to see some members of other clubs and members of the general public attend. The sun shone in the afternoon and everyone, including three Community Support Officers and the Park Rangers, enjoyed some light-hearted croquet games. The guests enjoyed champagne with excellent sandwiches and cakes prepared by one of our members.

This Winter final work will be undertaken by the main contractor to address the court areas that have 'sunk' due to settlement.

## Points Of View

### Golf Croquet Referees

By Bill Arliss

**I**would like to refer back to Michael Hague's letter in the June Gazette as I feel rather strongly on the views mentioned. Sorry Michael I did not manage a response in the Aug issue but a stay in hospital trip rather upset my programme.

I feel the views you are expressing are rather dangerous and a charter for mediocrity. I feel the arguments you use are flawed as I will try to explain below.

I most certainly have no arguments against improving the knowledge of the laws amongst our club players but to call someone a referee, albeit second class, who does not have a full working knowledge of the laws, is a recipe for

disaster and an insult to those who have qualified. When a referee is called onto a lawn during a GC game, it is 95% likely that it will have something to do with one of four basic laws, viz,

- a) Striking and non striking faults laws
- b) The wrong ball law
- c) The halfway law

The players are going to expect anyone bearing the title of CA Qualified referee (of any calibre) to be able to sort such matter out quickly and efficiently and I would suggest without reference to a laws book every time. I am quite happy, in fact encourage referees to use their laws books if there is the slightest doubt about the latest wording of any law but if there becomes a need in connection with the above four most used laws then I believe that the referee's reputation would soon be very tarnished. Because the above are the most likely questions to be raised, the written test paper specifically concentrates on these four laws. In fact 72 of the required 75 marks to pass are awarded on questions that cover these four laws.

You mention the case of Assistant referees in Association Croquet but this is not awarded to players because they have a substandard knowledge of the laws, it has been awarded because they do not need a full knowledge of the laws as the tasks which they are allowed to undertake are very limited. Have a look at the Tournament Regulations. I don't think we have a need in GC for a similar 'animal'.

You feel that the written test is a false test of ability. Again I would take strong issue with you. I feel that having to go on a lawn to sort out a point of law when you have two players who may be in a very antagonistic mood and give a ruling in a concise and logical manner is just as demanding as taking a written test. There have been a number of people who complain that there is too much to do in the hour allowed for the written test. I can only respond by saying that those who have a good knowledge of the laws, always appear to have plenty of time to spare as well as exceeding the pass mark.

In summary I would say that I will strongly oppose any attempts to dumb down the knowledge and skills required to become a 'CA qualified referee. Having taken this stance I still fully support any moves to improve all players' knowledge of the laws and am quite happy for non referees to join any course I run.

I also support the view that a prime duty of any qualified is to set standards within their own clubs, but it is just as important that any advice they give is as near 100% correct as possible. There is nothing that spreads faster in a club than incorrect rulings given by a substandard referee.

# MacRobertson Shield 2010



## GB Retain the MacRobertson Shield under pressure

### Setting the scene at Bowdon & Heaton Park

By James Hawkins

The MacRobertson Shield holds a certain prestige in croquet, above and beyond the World Singles Championship. For one thing, it bears a history going back to 1925. For another, it's a team event, with each of croquet's leading nations fielding their top six players. And for another, it's so damn long – three five-day tests, with just one day's rest between them. This is as much a test of survival under pressure as it is of technical and tactical prowess.

That was particularly so in 2010. The driest summer on record had resulted in a hosepipe ban in the North West. Lawns were playing perilously fast up to the middle of July. At that point, the rains came, and damp and soggy ground became the dominant characteristic for each of the venues throughout the series.

Bowdon and Heaton Park provided the setting for each of the opening tests. Great Britain played the USA at Bowdon, and Australia met New Zealand just up the road in Bury. The wet weather was especially disappointing at Heaton Park, whose sandy soil makes testing hoops difficult to set. Relying on fast lawns, a last minute deluge slowed the surface right down, making conditions (theoretically) easy. Even at Bowdon, there was little to test the technical skills of the croquet elite.

This was all to the disadvantage of the British team. On paper, the home side



Ilan Lines puts points on the board for GB



The successful GB MacRobertson team of Stephen Mulliner, Ian Lines, Keith Aiton (capt.), Rutger Beijderwellen, David Maugham, Robert Fulford. Photo by Samir Patel.

were by far the strongest. Stripping the event down to a test of straight hitting and holding one's nerve took away some of the edge that GB had against their opponents. Furthermore, we were without World Number One, Chris Clarke, who was invalided out with ongoing back trouble.

So, out went Clarke, and in came the debutant Ian Lines as substitute. Britain's only other newcomer was Rutger Beijderwellen, with the squad's experience coming from Robert Fulford, Stephen Mulliner, David Maugham and Captain Keith Aiton. Still an impressive line-up, but some patchy form might have hinted that results would be closer than might have been predicted.

By contrast, the other three nations had the benefit of up and coming younger players. The US were fielding Ben Rothman, runner-up at the last World Championship. New Zealand had the impressive Paddy Chapman, and Australia had their new rising star, Robert Fletcher.

The Fletchers are an interesting family. They live on a farm in the middle of nowhere. It's 30km to the nearest (small) town, and the brothers (Robert, at 16, is the oldest of

four) recently took up croquet. It's clear that Robert has yet to peak, and a powerful showing at the British Opens shows he's still improving, almost on a daily basis.

This year, the Mac finally caught up with modern technology, and the event's website featured a real-time text commentary for each match throughout the three week duration of the series. I was part of the team which covered the first two tests, flitting back and forth between the venues. Chris Clarke kept a lawnside vigil at Bowdon, providing expert – and often highly critical – tactical analysis of proceedings. Ian Burridge and Ian Vincent made up the rest of the team which kept office-bound shirkers the chance to keep abreast of events. This service proved yet more successful than anyone had anticipated, with thousands of web hits throughout the 15 days of the series. Hopefully, it's a service which will continue and evolve in future events.

And so to the play. Great Britain entered their test against the United States as clear favourites. The US were, of course, also a man down, with the sad loss of Jerry Stark, their star player who died in May. Jerry had been on impressive form just a

few months earlier, but the current team had – for the first time – the strength in depth to threaten even the strongest of opponents. So, the Americans were fired up for success, and the Brits were, in places, struggling to find form. The British captain, Keith Aiton, was shooting poorly, and David Maugham – ever a dauntingly straight hitter – has failed to capitalise on his own strength.

It's interesting to observe the displacement activities of players as they suppress nerves in such a pressurised situation. Maugham appears to concentrate on everything except his own game – juggling with balls on the sideline, or playing solitaire on his laptop. Lines chats to fellow clubmates. The rest pay a greater or lesser amount of attention to the matter in hand. Most curiously, there were some entertainingly bizarre challenges to referees. Maugham complained about hover flies settling on his Yellow ball (they don't like the other colours, apparently). The referee was obliged to spray the ball with fly repellent – quite useless, of course, as it wiped off as soon as it rolled across the grass.

Ian Lines proved an excellent selection. As sixth man, he quietly got on with the job. He's the least flamboyant of the British team, and just scores hoops without making mistakes. His partnership with Rob Fulford was a strong one, and help the home side to an 8-4 lead after three days.

Day Four saw a major reversal, as the USA took all three doubles matches. For the first time ever, GB and the US entered



Greg Bryant in play at Heaton Park

the last day with an open match. The Brits had a one-match advantage, but needed three of the six remaining singles matches to win the test.

Aiton and Maugham finally found some form, with immaculate peeling turns to inflict TPOs against Doug Grimsley and Ben Rothman. In both cases, they proved fruitless, as their opponents each took contact and finished the three-ball ending. That left the score at 9-8 to the US.

Beijderwellen and Mulliner won their matches within a couple of minutes of each other. The score went 10-9 to the Brits. The final two matches started after lunch, with the British needing a win in either. Fulford was drawn against the in-form Danny Huneycutt, and Ian Lines was up against the nervy US captain, Jeff Soo.

Huneycutt took an early initiative, before his triple disintegrated at Penult and

Rover, allowing Fulford to snatch a last minute win. Meanwhile, Lines took the first game of his match. The British win looked inevitable, but it was all a question of who'd reach the peg first.

Eventually, Fulford took the glory, with a smart TP, before Lines narrowly crept home with another late triple. A 12-9 win to GB, but not an overwhelmingly impressive one. Conditions may have been easier than the players wanted, but a good showing for the American team, who managed to hold back their opponents until 5pm on the final afternoon.

Meanwhile, the New Zealand – Australia test at Heaton Park produced more nervy and variable play. The opening day saw no one hit a single lift shot in any match, and interactivity between opponents result only from unforced errors - balls sent off on take-offs or failed hoops.

It was the Kiwis who found their form most quickly. Greg Bryant, the All Blacks' Number Three, had some impressive play throughout the five days, with fast and accurate wins. Paddy Chapman, at One, is a truly world class player, and looked difficult to beat. And down at Number Six, Michael Wright played an inelegant but effective game.

By contrast, the Australians achieved success only sporadically. Their young star player, Robert Fletcher, was the only consistently strong player, winning both his singles matches, and two of his three doubles. It wasn't enough, and the New Zealanders took the test 13-8.

## THE MACROBERTSON TEAM CAPTAINS OVERVIEW OF THE 2010 COMPETITION

### Keith Aiton, GB

The first thing I would like to do is pay tribute to my team. Their efforts, their commitment and dedication to the cause were fantastic. Everyone played their part and it was a true team effort. It was a pleasure for me to be their captain and an honour to stand with them as we were presented with the Shield at the closing function.



Having played for the first time in the MacRobertson Shield in 2006, when Great Britain won with lop-sided scores in every

match, I was hoping that I would be able to relax and enjoy my time as captain and that it would be relatively stress free. That turned out not to be the case, and it gradually dawned on me that it might not be the case, starting pretty much as soon as the team was picked. The first 'cloud' on the horizon was when Chris Clarke, our top-ranked player, told me that he probably wouldn't be fit to play every match. In view of that I asked the Selectors immediately to pick a reserve and they picked Ian Lines, which turned out to be a very good choice!

The next little warning notes were sounded in the apparent early season form of the players. David Maugham had a rough time in the Jersey Open in April, and his best form didn't seem to return until the Open Championship. Meanwhile Robert

Fulford, for so long our 'flagship' was showing worrying signs of fragility. Rutger wasn't firing on all cylinders and I was struggling to find a reliable swing. I remember that we consoled ourselves with the mantra – "We don't want to peak too soon!"

We had a bad day playing our 'warm-up' match against a GB 'B' team. We played three rounds of single game doubles and lost 3-6. But we didn't want to peak too soon so that was okay. At least everyone seemed to like our new, individually named, shirts.

It's very difficult in a full English croquet season to find a time when all of the team can be together. Obviously that is even more of an issue when one of the team lives in New Zealand. So no pre-Mac meetings were held. Basically we arranged to turn up at Bowdon on the day before the event, which was three days after Chris had announced that he wouldn't be able to play

in any of the matches. Luckily, Ian Lines would be making his debut at his home club, and in his first match, playing doubles with Robert, he won both games with a triple peel. We had our 'local hero'.

If only everything had been going as smoothly in the other games. Stephen Mulliner and I did not even manage to take croquet in our first match, and I couldn't help noticing that the American players seemed to be making roquets with alarming regularity. In fact it became a bit of a feature for me to be scanning the lawns looking in vain for GB players in play. As captain you start to wonder what you can 'do' about it. The main thing is to be supportive, particularly when a player isn't playing badly but just happens to face opponents who play better. In the end the result of the match against the USA came down to the last two singles matches, Fulford against Huneycutt and Lines against Soo. We needed to win one of them, but for some reason I felt confident we would win both matches, which is exactly what happened. I think I was a little bit relieved that we had won, and a little bit surprised and disappointed that we hadn't won more easily. Aside from the croquet there was much to applaud in the way Bowdon had hosted the match. The lawns were as good as they could have been and the catering was superb.

I was looking forward to improved performances in the next match at Nottingham. To an extent this is what happened, although New Zealand were clearly confident from their win against Australia and had two excellent players in their top order in Paddy Chapman and Aaron Westerby. Despite a continued lack of top form we did manage to take a 10-5 lead, therefore needing only one win from the six singles to be played on the last day. When the order of play was made it turned out that Rutger and I would be the players waiting for lawns to become available. Tongue in cheek, and bearing in mind that I had lost all three of my singles matches up to that point, I told some of the players that their motivation was to make sure the result didn't hinge on my match. Wow, did I regret saying that when shortly after lunch I started my match with Jenny Clarke with the score at 10-8, soon to become 10-9. Luckily I was on lawn 1 of my home club, which I didn't particularly feel helped me to settle down, but I thought possibly wouldn't be Jenny's first choice of lawn. Meanwhile Rutger's match was on lawn 5, as far away from the clubhouse as possible.

That's about as tense as I would ever wish to be playing croquet. Although I couldn't help looking towards lawn 5 and noticing whether Rutger or Greg Bryant was on the lawn, I detached myself as much as possible from other people and just kept telling myself, "It doesn't matter what happens or how bad it gets, you are going to win this match." When it was all over I felt elated, but also so sorry for Jenny. The test match didn't finish until nearly everyone had gone home, so unfortunately the club members who had worked so hard making our time at Nottingham so enjoyable weren't around to hear the expressions of gratitude from both teams.

At this stage I was hoping that by beating New Zealand we had survived our toughest test and that we would now retain the Shield. On the other hand I had by now realised that nothing is certain, and although Australia could no longer win they might well be 'up' for stopping us from winning. At Surbiton we finally had a very good day, the first singles day, with David registering his first singles win by beating Robert Fletcher, the boy wonder, 'no croquet' with two triple peels, setting the tone for the rest of us. That set up the possibility of winning with a day to spare, but in the event it took a very good, and 'sweaty' triple peel from Ian to get us to 10-5. I didn't try any motivational 'quips' this time, and we had a relatively stress free last day. After the win was secured, our Robert beat their Robert with two sextuple peels and Stephen Mulliner, our excellent host for the week, finished off his match with a sextuple. Well done, partner! Surbiton put on a real show and the crowds, by croquet standards, were enormous.

So it definitely wasn't relaxing, but winning with such tight and tense matches did provide the satisfaction that we had been tested and come through it. Never again do I want to hear about what a shame it is that the Mac isn't more competitive!?

### Jeff Soo, USA

The Mac is a complete and sus-stained test of croquet. Winning requires not only strong individual performers, but also doubles compatibility, consistency over fifteen days of top-class competition, and coping with the additional pressures and



distractions that come with a team event. Developing a winning team is a long-term project; experience matters.

So it was a setback for the team as well as a personal tragedy to lose our most experienced Mac player. Jerry Stark was a member of every US Mac team, the best test-match player we have yet produced. An outsized personality, the team's emotional leader for twenty years, a close personal friend; his death from cancer in May left an unfillable void. To honor Jerry's memory we each carried a small personal memento and wore his initials on our team shirts.

Starting the tournament against the six-time defending champions is a challenge. But the first round of any tournament is a good time for upsets, and we hoped to catch GB by surprise. We won the first day of doubles 2-1, our first-ever winning day and first-ever overnight lead against GB in the Mac. We were outscored 7-2 over the next two days, but then won all three doubles matches on day four, GB's first winless day since 1990, to climb back into contention. We tied the score at 8-all by winning the first match of the final day, before falling behind to lose the test 12-9. A disappointing finish, but we scored well enough to retain a real chance of winning the Shield should either NZ or Australia beat GB.

While the GB team weren't at top form, we weren't either, totaling an abysmally poor six triple peels for the test. But we took advantage of two unexpected factors: the easy conditions, caused by wet weather, and the struggles of two GB players in particular. Easy lawns and hoops magnified the importance of shooting, where we held our own. And we won eight of the ten matches involving either Maugham or Aiton. The sobering corollary is that we won only one of the other eleven matches, food for thought as we continue working toward our goal of winning the Shield.

Playing a test match at the Roehampton Club was a special treat for the US team. Not only was Roehampton the site of the first test in Mac history, in 1925, it is also the home club of Nigel Aspinall, who holds an honored place in US croquet history for his invaluable coaching and administrative help during the founding years of the USCA.

The first three days of our test match with Australia ended 6-all, after many changes of lead and momentum. We led 2-0 before finishing the first day 2-1. The Aussies charged ahead to 3-2, but we

recovered to tie 3-3. On the first day of singles we developed a 6-4 lead, only to see the Aussies climb back, to 6-6. It is difficult if not impossible not to notice how the other matches are going while you are in play, and dealing with this is one of the essential challenges of team croquet.

We started day 4 with two quick doubles wins, and then had some good luck winning a scrappy three-game match for our second 3-0 day of the 2010 Mac. In a 21-match test there's an enormous difference between 9-6 and 8-7, giving us a big psychological boost going into the final day. Our winning score of 14-7 disguises how close the match really was.

We entered the final round tied on individual match wins with both GB and NZ, another first for us. The winner of the NZ v. USA test would at least attain second place, and would win outright if Australia beat GB. The Aussies were longshots to do so, of course, but were a talented team with a real chance to pull off the upset.

Though losing the first day 1-2, we gave a good fight in all matches and felt evenly matched against the Kiwis. But the pattern of the first day became all too familiar as we repeatedly took matches to a third game, only to lose the decider. The Kiwis won the second day's singles 5-1, then swept the next doubles day 3-0, for an all-but-insurmountable 10-2 lead. Over those three days, eight matches went to a third game, and NZ won all eight. The final score of 16-5 was the most lopsided of the 2010 Mac.

What happened? One factor was the court and lawn conditions. While not as challenging as Surbiton was expected to be, due to some heavy rain the week before the test, conditions were quite different from what we had experienced at Bowdon and Roehampton. The ground was much firmer, making the hoops more difficult to run. Many shots that would have run cleanly enough at Bowdon or Roehampton simply died in the hoop, or barely grovelled through leaving no shot. Hoop shots had to be struck firmly, leading to many long return roquets.

Players from all teams made these errors, but we made the most by far. We have the least experience playing in such conditions, and it showed. The Kiwis also had the good sense to play a practice match at Surbiton shortly before the start of the Mac. This is not to take anything away from the NZ team, who were clearly the stronger players that week. They taught us some



The New Zealand Team that came so close to winning 'The Mac'. L to R: Charles Jones (President of the WCF), Paddy Chapman, Jenny Clarke, Paul Skinley, Aaron Westerby (Capt.), Michael Wright, Greg Bryant. Photo by Samir Patel.

hard lessons, showing us plainly where we need to improve in our continuing quest to win the Shield.

Finally, I can't say enough about the quality of the management, hospitality, and volunteer support: simply superb throughout. It is very much appreciated by all the players, and I hope we can do half as well when our turn comes around again in 2017.

### Aaron Westerby, New Zealand

Firstly I'd like to congratulate and acknowledge the GB team's impressive achievement of winning their seventh straight series. While there has been much talk of their surprise under-performance on this occasion, they did what was required to lift the shield and that's the all-important bottom line. Although I hope to see the day the Shield is lifted by another (hopefully NZ) team, I'm sure GB will still be the strong favourites when the MacRob comes to NZ in 2014.

In my view it was a very successful series adding yet another great chapter to the history of the competition. The close nature of this contest was refreshing. The CA did a fine job hosting. Going 'on tour' and playing tests at three different clubs was also a nice feature of this series. Fifteen



playing days is a long time to spend at a single venue so while the travelling comes with some logistical challenges, I personally enjoyed the variety of playing at different clubs. I would again, on behalf of all my players, like to sincerely thank all the clubs that hosted test matches. And in particular I would also like to especially thank all the individuals, many of who contributed enormous amounts of time and energy, in a whole variety of capacities, to ensure that it was such a great occasion in our sport.

To best prepare for the series my team assembled in England as much in advance of the main event as we could given work leave constraints. Just over a week's lead-in allowed recovery from jet lag and the accumulation of 'court time', which most of my players had difficulty acquiring in the NZ winter leading up to the event. We took a risk and opted for a warm-up match against a strong side. Samir kindly organised a team for us play (Patel, Death/Burch, Brown, Dawson, Avery & Farthing) with the Surbiton Club generously hosting us for this two-day match, and our initial practice beforehand. Given our general lack of match fitness as a team we played very well and manage to squeeze out a victory in this match by a small margin. Undoubtedly coming away

with a win from the warm-up match was a good confidence boost. I was especially pleased and relieved that we came through the match having not been 'crunched up'. While we might have still been able to deal positively with a poor result, it would have been much harder to get the momentum that I think this result gave us. Also I think critically we played the warm-up match in conditions that, due to the wet weather throughout August, provided to the most difficult on tour. In fact significantly more difficult than when we later returned to Surbiton to play the USA in the third test. I think this may have given us as a little 'edge' going into the first test against Australia. Certainly it was my impression that we made less hoop errors which I attribute to the relatively tough workout gained at Surbiton.

Personally I found the first few days of the Test against Australia quite stressful. There is of course the extra pressure that comes with test match croquet, but it was also because, as Captain, I was very aware that the result in this test was probably going to define our entire tour. On top of that I didn't feel I was playing particularly well despite having arrived in the UK in early July and having had an extensive buildup, playing both the Opens and Easterns. I managed to get through the first couple of days feeding off opponent mistakes and taking full advantage of my partner's strong finishing skills. In particular, the all critical first day of singles on day 3 was probably the most stressful. With six points up for grabs there is the potential for a big swing back in your opponent's favour. However having secured an 8-4 lead going into day 4, I made a few mental and technical adjustments and from there played OK for the rest of the series. The team was playing well but with relatively easy conditions a single mistake could easily change the outcome of a match and therefore the encounter always felt very close. While we went into the final day needing only two wins from six matches the considerable pressure and tension only lifts once those wins has been achieved. Thankfully the first two matches went our way with Paul's win against Martin Clarke giving us a very important test victory.

At Nottingham we started very strongly against GB in the 2nd test. In fact there was a moment on the first day when a 3-0 double clean sweep looked possible for us. To their credit GB punished a couple of our mistakes to regain momentum and a 2-1 lead. Although we lost each of the next 3 days we always felt competitive and a



Robert Fletcher of Australia in action at Heaton Park. (photo by Tony Thomas.)

number of matches were very close.

The final day of the Nottingham test I am sure will remain with me as one of the most memorable days in my croquet career. Being 10-5 down, we needed to win all six singles on the last day, which in my book qualifies as a 'croquet miracle'. However having been involved in one previous 'croquet miracle', against Australia in Newcastle in '95, I knew it was possible and there was definitely a strong feeling in the team to give it a good shot. Paddy (coming from game down) and I lead the charge securing wins against Fulford and Maugham before lunch. This was soon followed by Paul, who beat Mulliner, and then Michael who won in the third against Lines. The door was opening and we had a real contest. The atmosphere at the venue was then very intense. From outside the venue increasing interest via the web was causing major problems delivering the live commentary. However finally, at 6:10pm, Keith, having had to apply all of his experience, gave GB the single match win it needed for victory. Coming so near to pulling off arguably the big upset in the Mac's history was obviously disappointing but at the same time it was still very satisfying to have mounted such a fight-back.

Despite losing to GB by one match we arrived back at Surbiton to play the USA in good spirits. Based on the test results from the previous rounds we were expecting a very hard fought contest. The doubles on day 1 was tight and we did well to sneak a 2-1 lead. However using our disastrous 6-nil singles loss against the USA in the previous

MacRob at Rich River as motivation we almost repaid that clean sweep by winning 5/6 singles on day 2. This gave us a commanding 7-2 lead that we extended with three more doubles wins on day 3. With only two days to play we were in the comfortable position of only needing a single match victory to clinch the test match. Paul delivered this for us early on day 4 with an emphatic +26tp +26tp win against Doug Grimsley. Although any more match wins from here weren't going to affect the final placings, the team was keen to push on and in the end was managed a very convincing 16-5 result. Of all the performance defining statistics that could be drawn from our test against the USA, I think the most telling one was our winning of 10 straight matches that went to a third game.

Naturally I'm very proud of my team's final scorecard. We had the advantage of being underrated by many, which only assisted the enormous focus and determination that I believe underpinned my team's performance. It was a team goal to become stronger and stronger as the event proceeded and I was really pleased that we clearly achieved this. Finally, very quickly running through my team:

**Paddy** : A 'world-class' performance for us at #1. A fantastic win against Robert Fulford to lead our comeback attempt at Nottingham.

**Greg** : His best MacRob by a long margin. He has taken his game to the next level. Along with Paul gave us a very solid middle order. Won all his matches against the USA.

**Paul** : Back very close to his best. As our MacRob veteran, fittingly clinched the test winning points against both Australia and the USA.

**Jenny** : Formed a very effective doubles partnership with Greg. Got significantly stronger as the series progressed. Won all her matches against the USA.

**Michael** : A great first MacRob. Won 5/6 singles. His win against Ian Lines at Nottingham to really turn up the heat was my pick of his matches.

So we all now roll onto January 2014 when it's New Zealand's turn to host. Let's hope for an equally close, keenly contested and successful series!

*Editors note: The Australian team captain was unable to provide his overview in time for publication.*

## Summary of Results

Country	Matches	Games	Country	Matches	Games	
Australia	8	21	v	New Zealand	13	32
Great Britain	12	28	v	USA	9	20
Australia	7	17	v	USA	14	32
Great Britain	11	26	v	New Zealand	10	25
Great Britain	14	34	v	Australia	7	19
USA	5	23	v	New Zealand	16	32

### Overall position at the end of the series:

Position	Country	Tests	Matches
1	Great Britain	3	37
2	New Zealand	2	39
3	USA	1	28
4	Australia	0	22

For a single list of all the results, with statistical analysis at the end, please see Chris Williams' Croquet Records site at <http://www.macrobertsonshield2010.org/results>

## WCF World Team Championship Tier 2 Division 1

### Welsh Team Triumphant Hurlingham, 16th-21st August 2010

#### Report by Ian Burridge

After years of waiting finally the non-Mac countries got what they had been yearning for, the opportunity to compete in a team event on the World stage. Thirteen countries took advantage of the opportunity and the top four found themselves playing on the four front lawns at Hurlingham in an all play all format over six days. Teams were made up of four players and each two-day match consisted of two best-of-three doubles on the first day and four best-of-three doubles on the second day, in the event of a three-all draw there would be a further round of a single games, one doubles and two singles.

The first round saw South Africa, captained by Reg Bamford, playing Wales, and Ireland playing Jersey. Jersey took what on paper looks like a commanding lead of 2-0 but as became apparent throughout the event with five points to play for it was the second day that mattered. Wales quickly won the top doubles but the other match was an all day battle which South Africa finally won when Sam Tudor missed a five yard return roquet on a triple in the third against 4back and peg. South Africa maintained their momentum from thereon and went on to win the match 4-2, with Nick Harvey making the most significant contribution at number four

beating Sam Tudor with his first tournament TP (a TPO) in the first, following it up with his second (a TP) in game two. Whilst this was the peak Nick continued to play well above his previous level throughout the week and showed why events like this need to exist, to inspire and provide the opportunities for players from around the World to develop their game. Ireland fought back to 3-3 to force the first croquet "penalty shoot out", sadly it was a rather one sided affair which Ireland dominated to record a 4-3 victory.

The second round saw Wales beat Jersey although unfortunately the critical

match, the singles between David Walters and Tony Le Moignan, was decided when time became a factor in game two. A farcical few minutes saw some bizarre tactics and Tony jump over a short rush out of a scar before David sealed a 2-0 victory. The match between the two winners was always in the balance but I would have been very surprised if you had told me beforehand that Reg would lose his singles to Andrew Johnston and South Africa would still come out 4-2 winners. But that is exactly what happened after Reg had to peg out one ball at the end of a sextuple with his partner for rover conceding a contact in game 3. Despite conceding more shots than he would have liked Andrew managed to complete a fine +2 victory.

So the final round began with three of the four teams in the hunt, the equation for South Africa was simple: beat Jersey to win. The hopes of Ireland and Wales were in the hands of Jersey, but if Jersey could pull off what on paper would not be a particular surprise a decisive win for either was likely to lead to them being crowned champions. Ireland were effectively out of things after the doubles as Wales took a 2-0 lead and with the other match balanced at 1-1 going in to the final day it was effectively between Wales and South Africa. Wales were looking good for a victory throughout the day and it was only the margin that was in really in question so it was all eyes on Jersey v South Africa. Reg managed to win a scrappy match with James Le Moignan but South Africa lost the next two matches to finish leaving everything hanging on Nick Harvey v



The successful Welsh team who won division 1 of the 2nd tier at the WCF World Team Championships. Left to right: David Walters, Chris Williams, Ian Burridge, Sam Tudor. Photo by Liz Larsson.



Richard Griffiths. In game 2 Nick played an amazing after time turn to equalise the scores but just failed to get the penult peel he needed to take the lead and had to peg out his other ball. This left Richard Griffiths with an 8 yarder with his peg ball for the match and to win the title for Wales (where his father was born) but he missed it which meant a third game was needed. Richard got off to a flyer, getting to 4-back and peg without allowing Nick croquet; the game got a bit scrappy thereafter, but it wasn't long before Richard won and Wales by virtue of their 5-1 victory over Ireland became the first winners of Tier 2 of the WCF World Team Championship.

The event had been arranged to allow all the lower tier teams to get to Surbiton to watch the finale of the MacRoberston Shield on the Sunday and attend a joint function in the evening at the Wimbledon Club where Wales were presented with a salver to commemorate their achievement.

**Overall positions of Tier 2.1**

Position	Country	Tests	Matches
1	Wales	2	11
2	South Africa	2	10
3	Jersey	1	9
4	Ireland	1	7

**WCF World Team Championship Tier 2 Division 2  
Compton 16th - 21st Aug 2010**

Report by Martin Murray

Four teams, from Canada, Scotland, Spain, and Japan, gathered in Eastbourne for Tier 2, Division 2 of the inaugural World Team Championship. A late arrival by the Spanish team meant that there was no possibility of challenging their eccentric team order, which had been e-mailed in. Their two highest ranked players, Ojeda and Riva, were put at 3 and 4, and quickly showed their prowess when Ojeda started a standard triple on turn seven of their doubles match against Magee and Morrison of Scotland. The triple came to grief, but the Spanish pair quickly wrapped up a straight games win. The Spanish "number 1" pair, Azcona and Jose Alvarez-Sala went down equally quickly to the Scottish pairing of Hopgood and Murray. The prospective upset failed to materialise on Tuesday, Scotland winning all four singles fairly comfortably, though not without Hopgood losing the first game of his match against Azcona, thus losing 57 ranking points in winning a best-of-three match!

Meanwhile, the Canada v Japan match was also proving a one-sided affair, the top pair of Cumming and Emmett meeting little resistance from Salisbury and Moriyama, while the second pairing of Westaway and Jane Beharriel were eventually reasonably comfortable winners over the Japanese pair of Tanaka and Yamada. Japan gained their first rubber in the singles, Moriyama recovering from losing the first game to beat Emmett, but Canada gained a comfortable 5-1 victory overall.

The Scotland v Canada match now looked as if it would be decisive, though Scotland's evident greater strength at 3 and 4 made them the clear favourites. Only the (error-strewn) top doubles was close, but the final error was Canadian. In Thursday's singles Scotland proved just too strong for Canada, so what had seemed a close match on paper ended up as a 6-0 win for Scotland.



Charles Jones, President of the WCF, presents Scotland with their trophy for winning Tier 2 division 2 of the world Team championship. Scotland L to R: Martin Murray, James Hopgood, Campbell Morrison, David Magee.

The Spanish team order for their match against Japan was substantially different from that against Scotland. Ojeda and Riva were now appropriately at 1 and 2, while two replacements, Andres Alvarez-Sala (brother of José) and de Diego came in for Azcona and José Alvarez-Sala. This team proved too strong for Japan, running out 6-0 winners.

Day four was dominated by two time-related incidents, since the manager was unaware that the singles should have had a three hour limit for the first game, not the four hour limit as in the doubles. When in the Scotland v Canada Beharriel asked Emmett (a spectator) how much time was left, he replied "One twenty", meaning one hour twenty minutes, but Beharriel interpreted this as one minute twenty seconds! She therefore took a desperate last shot at Morrison's ball in front of rover, but her error was immediately discovered. It was therefore decided to allow her to take her shot again (having been misled), but she missed and Morrison wrapped up a close win.

Meanwhile, in the Japan v Spain match, Andres Alvarez-Sala, believing the time limit was four hours, pegged out Yamada's ball after about 2 hours 50 minutes of play. Shortly afterwards, Yamada claimed that time was up after three hours, and that he had won on time. Alvarez-Sala countered that he would not have pegged out Yamada's ball, increasing his lead by one point, if he had believed the time limit was three hours. The referee decided that applying either time limit would be unfair to one side or the other, so allowed an additional fifteen minutes, which proved just enough time for Alvarez-Sala to overcome the deficit and win +1 on time.

In the final round, Scotland comfortably wrapped up a 6-0 victory to secure first place, all four players completing triples in the first game of the singles, only the top doubles (where Japan won the second game) being a real contest.

For their match against Canada, Spain again changed their line-up, Azcona returning to replace Riva at number 2. This promised to be a close match, and duly all depended on the last rubber, Beharriel coming back from game down with two on-time wins to level the match score at 3-3. In theory a play off was required at this stage, but, with players having travel plans, the teams agreed to settle for a draw, which meant that they shared second place.

For a new event it must be considered a success, though the

distances involved meant that Canada couldn't field their strongest team. Who is likely to turn up for the event if it is held in New Zealand in 2014 must be in question, with Scotland potentially being absorbed by Great Britain, and the distances for most teams being a serious disincentive.

Finally thanks are due to the Compton club for excellent hospitality, which extended to the food and the weather, and to Roger Wood for his usual relaxed and efficient management. Though in future I'm sure he'll make sure he's better clued up about time limits!

**Overall positions of Tier 2.2**

Position	Country	Tests	Matches
1	Scotland	3	17
=2	Canada	1.5	8
=2	Spain	1.5	10
4	Japan	0	1

**WCF World Team Championship Tier 3  
Southwick, 18th-21st August 2010**

Five teams competed over 4 days in an all-play-all format with each test match consisting of 2 doubles and 8 singles games. The top two teams Sweden and the Czech Republic played out a 5-5 draw and having both beaten the other countries a count back of games won was required to give the Czech Republic the title.

**Overall positions of Tier 3**

Position	Country	Tests	Matches
1	Czech Republic	3.5	33
2	Sweden	3.5	30
3	Germany	1.5	15
4	Belgium	1	15
5	Norway	0.5	7

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**THE JIMINY WICKET STORY**

How a game of croquet in an English garden is now part of an international effort to help dementia sufferers and their families.

By James Creasey

When I first learned to play croquet I never imagined it would create a new connection with my Dad in the silence of his dementia.

Dad became post-verbal as vascular dementia sporadically stole his memory and capacities. He would forget that "Cophorne", our family home of 40 plus years, was still the place where he laid his sleepy head. "When are we going home?" he would ask seated at his own dining room table.

In October 2007, I got a call from my brother saying that Dad had experienced a minor stroke. The diagnosis of vascular dementia helped us plan how to take care of him and give back some of the love and dignity that he had given to us over the years.

What am I going to do with Dad day after day? This question troubled me on my night flight across the Atlantic in June 2008. What will we do in those lengthening silences? Conversation had become more intermittent. Sentences were a real effort for him. Golf had gone...too precise; ping pong... too fast; Scrabble, chess and Mah Jong...all too complex.

I wanted to give my parents the gift of being able to take another vacation together. For more than fifteen years my Mum and Dad had been taking a two-week summer holiday by the seaside. They stayed at the most charming and welcoming little country-house hotel called The Nare on the cliff tops of Cornwall, near Veryan, in south-west England.

About five summers prior to this, one of my colleagues at work had introduced me to croquet at our annual summer picnic. A year later we played again. Being eager to play more than once a year I joined the Denver Croquet Club and found a game that had been waiting for me. I loved it.

Imagine my delight when we arrived at The Nare in June 2008 and I discovered on that cliff top with spectacular views of the countryside and the far western reaches of the English Channel was the most perfectly kept croquet lawn.

As a child I had always wanted my Dad to play with me - cricket, soccer or whatever the seasonal game might have been - but the work that he brought home from his office too often took precedence over playfulness. I had no idea how he would respond if I asked him to play croquet with me now.



James, Maxwell and Andrew Creasey enjoying a game at the Nare.

I knew the game needed to be kept simple if Dad was to stand a chance at following it. So I brought out two mallets and just two balls. And then there we were, on the cliff tops of Cornwall, playing in a way that I had longed for as a child. What joy! We were playing together now, and that was enough.

He may have been confused, post-verbal and not able to find his way down the corridor, but with a little guidance he could play a cracking game of croquet. He frequently made a hoop from one end of the court to the other! It took every bit of skill I could muster to keep up with his accumulation of points.

The next morning I invited some Australians at the breakfast table to join us for croquet. The day after that an English couple joined in and by the end of our holiday several families were promising to return home and buy a croquet set to play in their own back gardens. We were one of those families. On my flight back to Denver I felt so satisfied with the gift I had left behind and the gift I was taking home.

A few days later I began to receive excited phone calls and emails reporting that my siblings as well as my nephews and nieces all had something they could do with Dad besides sitting with him in the silence. They were playing croquet together!

As Dad's condition continued to deteriorate his ability to play croquet did not. If he answered the front door family, friends or complete strangers could expect to be silently ushered to the back lawn and handed a mallet and a ball for a game of croquet. As Dad played he would smile from ear to ear.

Maxwell Creasey passed away on September 21st, 2009 at the age of 87. In the Order of Service for the Thanksgiving of His Life is a picture of him playing croquet on that lawn at The Nare. And yes, he's smiling.

#### What's next?

I am forever grateful that my father taught me to play croquet with someone who is dealing with dementia. With my family on both sides of the Atlantic, we learnt the mental, physical and social benefits of playing croquet together with Dad.

Inspired by my own experience, in the summer of 2009, I started a program with the Alzheimer's Association and the Denver Croquet Club. We have published a simple how-to booklet for playing croquet with people who are dealing with dementia that can be used by other clubs around the world and in settings as simple as your own backyard.

Through a collaboration with Alzheimer's Disease International, we are expanding this program to 11 countries and 1,000 locations by the end of 2011.



See our [Through Hoops to Hope](#) video,

recommended equipment and resources or contact us, at:

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It's a great day to play with someone who is dealing with dementia. Enjoy your game!

## Tournament Round-Up

### Colchester Spring Handicap Weekend 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> June

Nick Steiner wins the Colchester Handicap

Tournament

Report by David Haslam

The Colchester weekend handicap was blessed with sunshine and warm conditions. A strong field competed for the Rose Bowl.

At the end of the first day six players had achieved 100% successes with the holder, Gerry Varndell, in there amongst the leaders. Colin Hemming continued his excellent form of late whilst George Woolhouse with the low handicap of 2 was also playing some excellent croquet. Peter Kenward and David Haslam were also seen as threats, each having three wins.

Day 2 started once again in blazing sunshine and Colin Hemming overcame David Haslam by +1 on time, the latter having confused the pink and red clips and thereby handed the win to Colin. Georgeen Hemming had an outstanding win over Gerry Varndell whilst Colin was losing to Nick Steiner. However, the key match was that between Peter Kenward and the in-form Woolhouse, the latter winning comfortably +16. A praiseworthy game took place between Neil Chalmers and Ann Brookes (hcp 20), Ann playing her first tournament and winning her first CA match in fine style.

Hence Day 3 started with George Woolhouse in pole position and Colin Hemming, Peter Kenward and Gerry Varndell all in second spot. In the first match of the day Colin overcame George +7 whilst Gerry Varndell was a comfortable winner over Peter Kenward. In the final matches Nick Steiner outplayed Gerry +12 leaving Colin a likely champion if he beat Terrey Sparks. In the event Terrey edged it +3 leaving Nick Steiner as overall winner with a rating of 67, George Woolhouse second with 65 rating points and Gerry Varndell third with 61.

### Woking Midsummer Golf Croquet Handicap Tournament 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> June 2010

Report by Bernard Jones

Woking's annual two day golf croquet handicap tournament took place in mostly agreeable weather. As usual it comprised singles and doubles, each of the fourteen competitors playing six games of each. All the manager could guarantee was that nobody played the same person twice in the singles or with the same partner more than once in the doubles! Extra points were awarded for completing games on time. In the singles all but twelve of the 42 games were completed within fifty minutes while, perhaps surprisingly, in only one out of 21 doubles games did either side fail to score seven hoop points in 55 minutes.

The singles, tied on points between Gillian Noble-Jones, Peter Redshaw and Henry Safran (all of Woking), was won by Gillian on net hoop points scored, whereas Elaine Gubbins (also Woking) was a clear winner of the doubles followed by Chris Roberts and Frances Coleman of the Phyllis Court Club in second and third places respectively.



Play in progress during Sidmouth's summer tournament.

### Sidmouth Mid-Summer Tournament 9<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> June

Report by Julie Horsley

Wednesday morning saw the start of the knockout handicap singles. At the end of the day the 4 semi-finalists were Jamieson Walker (Edinburgh), Rosemary Bradshaw (Budleigh Salterton/Fowey) Robert Hammond (Sidmouth) and Brian Pollock (Budleigh Salterton). Thursday morning saw Rosemary Bradshaw beat Jamieson Walker and Brian Pollock beat Robert Hammond. The Final on Sunday saw Rosemary Bradshaw narrowly beating Brian Pollock.

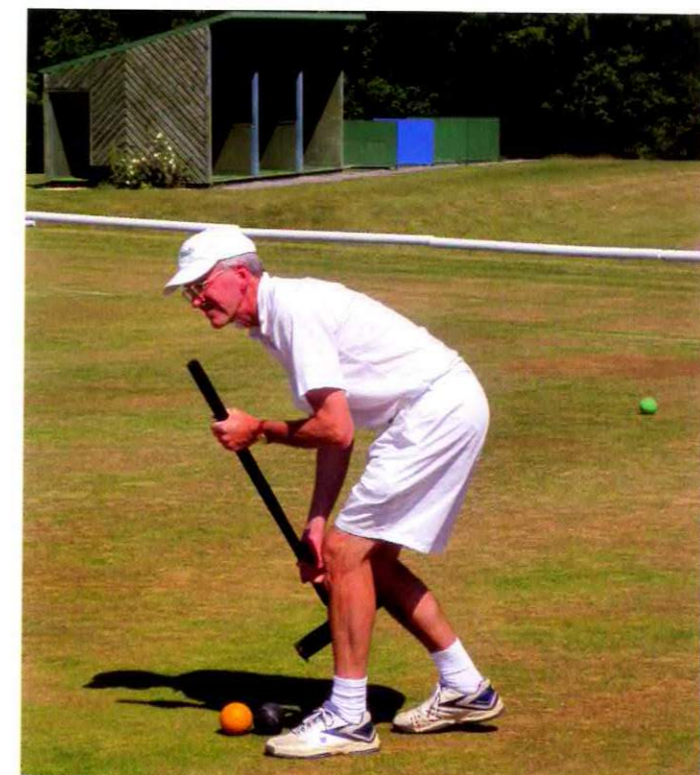
The Class games started on Thursday and continued through to Sunday. Block A - Advanced Play for the Challenge Cup saw last year's winner Richard Mills (Sidmouth) and Brian Shorney (Kington Langley/Cheltenham/Budleigh Salterton) in the Final, both only having lost 1 game. After a close game Brian Shorney emerged as the winner. Block B - Advanced Play for the Fortfield Cup saw Ken Wallman (Sidmouth) beat last year's winner Brian Pollock (Budleigh Salterton) in the Final. Block C - Handicap Play for the Dwerryhouse Cup saw Rosemary Bradshaw narrowly beaten by Derek Powell (Sidmouth) in the Final. The Egyptian saw both Jamieson Walker and Geoff Young (Bury) with level points but in the game between them to decide the winner it was Jamieson who took home the trophy. Derek Powell won the fastest game - with his row of bisques - in a time of 70 minutes.

The weather was good throughout the tournament, with just a gentle breeze blowing off the sea.

### Crake Valley Advanced wknd, 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> June

Report by Charles Waterfield

The Cumbria Cup was won by Phill Scarr of Middlesbrough, playing in his first advanced weekend. Phill had wins over top seed and manager Dave Nick +4, Paul Rigge +4 and Charles Waterfield +6 to get to the final, where he met Crake Valley player Tom Griffith. Tom had beaten Bob Burnett +5 and clubmate Peter Wardle +5 on his way to his first final in many years. In the final, Tom got away to a good start taking the first game +20. As the second game started, the very rare occurrence of a sudden downpour at Crake seemed to spur Phill on and he found his rhythm, which had served him so well all weekend, taking the game +24. Phill then powered away to take the third and final game also +24,



Alan Edwards in play at Hamptworth during his first TP. Photo by Richard Stevens.

with Tom struggling to adjust to the pace of the lawn, and with one eye on the runner-up's prize of a bottle of fine wine, donated by Angus and Debra of the Farmers Arms at Lowick.

Subsequent to this tournament Phill's handicap was reduced from 4.5 to 3.

### Hamptworth Super B, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> June

Report by Kevin Carter

This year Hamptworth doubled the number of lawns to four. While the new lawns are not fully bedded down - they are playing a little slow - they soon will be. Then this superb club, between Salisbury and Southampton, will be able to hold some seriously good tournaments.

This 'Super-B' attracted fourteen players, with a broad range of handicaps from -0.5 to +9. For this reason the manager decided the most appropriate format would be an Egyptian. This means that the number of 'points' won or lost varies depending upon the quality of opponent. This can sometimes result in some strange looking results, as it did here, with David Kendrick (hcp 3) winning 4/5 and gaining 21 points beating Nigel Polhill (5/5 and +14) - not that Nigel seemed to mind at all; in fact, he joined in universal praise of David, who played consistently well all weekend and will soon surely be heading for a handicap nearer to scratch.

At the other end of the ability range, John Bee won 4/4 and clocked +18. So, David & John both collected prizes.

It was good to see Anthony Dix and Chris Crowcroft each reserving one of their rare appearances for this tournament, though both were rusty. Roy Edwards just wanted his back to survive the weekend, so he succeeded in his own private challenge.

A special mention needs to be made of the fast-improving Alan Edwards, who was delighted to complete his first ever TP. There will be many more.

**Bristol B Level 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> June**

Report by Hamish Hall

A tropical downpour on Friday evening tested the resolve of the ground staff in preparing the courts for the Bristol 'B' level tournament. Beneath dripping umbrellas, the hoops were reset at 1/16", a challenge less severe now that the rain was negating the hazards of parched courts.

Entry was restricted to 12 players, arranged in 2 blocks, with handicaps ranging from 2 1/2 to 8. Results, not unexpectedly, went according to form, but block winners remained in doubt until the final round, with Bristol's Rosemary Gugan and Geoff Hughes from Nailsea being undefeated and Nigel Amos and newcomer to Bristol, Jonathan Wolfe runners up on 4/5.

Scorching sun since the downpour had progressively reinstated the speed of the court. The hills and slopes, well known to Rosemary, gave her the 'home' advantage, and she confidently went to 4 back. Geoff responded, only to be caught out by hoop 6. Neither player was able to dominate play and nerves and errors crept in, with one too many from Geoff, allowing Rosemary victory +10.

So it was a jubilant Barbara Evans, who culminated the celebrations of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in presenting her trophy to Rosemary, much to the delight of the very partisan audience.



Patricia Duke-Cox, Chairman of the CA, presents Margaret Anderton with her trophy at Hunstanton.

**Hunstanton Over 50s 18th - 20th June**

Report By Terrey Sparks

Sunny Hunny again lived up to its reputation over the weekend of 18/20<sup>th</sup> June when, it staged its annual over 50s three day tournament in weather more akin to mid winter in the South Atlantic rather than the Riviera east coast of the UK.

However, regular visitors to the club are made of more doughty spirit and battled through gale force wind and rain for the first two days before being rewarded on the Monday with a rather unexpected pleasant summer's day.

Despite the weather, spirits remained high and on the final day the Egyptian formula produced three likely winners entering the final session. Nick Steiner (Colchester) looked to be in an unassailable position provided he saw off Bryan Saddington from the home club. However, Nick fell at the last hurdle leaving the field open to the winners of the game between Margaret Anderton (Bury) and Patricia

Duke- Cox. Before the match Patricia mentioned to the Manager she had never beaten Margaret in competition a prophesy that only proved to be true as Margaret carried off 'The Jane Neville Rolphe Trophy.

**Pendle and Craven Advanced Wknd 19th - 20th June**

Report by Ron Welch

There were twelve competitors including eleven visitors. They were arranged with seven players in the A Class and five in the B Class. The weather was fine, if a little cool on Saturday, leading to an early finish, and the lawns were in good condition allowing forty games to be played over the weekend.

Star of the show was Lionel Tibble who, boasting the lowest handicap of -1.5, was the form favourite. He played consistently well and won nine games out of nine, including two triple peels. He was twice run close, by Jerry Guest in the A Block (won +4) and by Peter Wilson in the first round of the Open event, prevailing finally by 3tp. On the other side of the Open draw, Tom Griffith handicap 0.5, came through strongly to beat two minus players, Lee Hartley and Dave Nick, before succumbing to Lionel in the final.

In the A Class, Dave Nick won four games out of six, all with triples, to take the trophy. Second Lee Hartley, three wins; Third Tom Griffith, three wins; Fourth Mike Town, two wins; Fifth Peter Wardle, one win; Sixth Jerry Guest, one win. The B Class went according to handicap with Peter McDermott the lowest handicapper winning four out of four matches. Second equal were Liz Wilson, Peter Wilson and David Turner, and Abdul Ahmad finished in last place.

The trophy for fastest game went to Lionel who won his first encounter +26tp in 40 minutes, setting a standard which no-one could surpass. On Sunday afternoon one enthusiastic competitor said the only way to improve the event was to attract more entries. Please note for 2011!

**Compton Summer Tournament 23rd - 27th June**

Report by Roger Wood

Despite a distinctly thinner field of players than previous years, the glorious sunshine throughout, the excellent al fresco lunches and the complete absence of vuvuzela accompaniment ensured all-round satisfaction. Our antipodean visitors (Pauline Reid, now a welcome regular, and freshman Greg Rowberry) each had a good week. Pauline again teamed up with Compton's Ann Jarman and they won all their games to regain the

doubles trophies that they last won in 2008. Ann also emerged unbeaten in the handicap singles to achieve a well-deserved handicap reduction from 10 to 9. In the advanced singles Greg despatched all opponents in fine style and brought his handicap down to scratch.

**Nottingham Week 19th - 24th July**

Report by Peter Death

Brothers Sanaa and Omied Hallam collected trophies in every event for which they were eligible at the Nottingham tournament - moved this year from its traditional August slot to accommodate the MacRobertson Shield Test match.

John Davis won the Open singles, beating Robert Wilkinson in the play-off, while Wendy Betteridge, visiting us from New Zealand, beat Glasgow's Tony Whateley in the B class.

**London Clubs Golf Croquet Championship, Surbiton 22<sup>nd</sup> July**

Report by Don Beck

A strong group of players assembled at Surbiton representing Surbiton, Dulwich, Hurlingham, Roehampton. Thirteen of the sixteen players having handicaps of 3 or better. Perhaps this strength of entry deterred other clubs with less strong individuals from entering.

The tournament format involved alternate rounds of doubles then singles. Matches between clubs consisting of 4 singles and 2 doubles.

Surbiton the hosts and reigning national clubs champions were pre-tournament favourites but soon reinforced their reputation as generous hosts by running a losing streak. Encouraged by this all the players from the other clubs raised their game. The standard of play was of a high standard.

After 2 matches the clubs stood at Dulwich 1.5, Hurlingham 1.5 Roehampton 1.0 Surbiton 0. At this point Surbiton's old rivalry with Dulwich awoke them from their slumbers and they produced sufficient form to win 4-2. This left the winner of the other mtach to take the title and Hurlingham prevailed 4-2.

The winning captain Nelson Morrow collected the trophy and went looking for team-mates to have several hundred photos taken.

Let battle recommence in 12 months!!!



Alan Rew and Chris Clarke winners of the SCCC Alternate Stroke Doubles

**Sussex County alternate Stroke Doubles, Southwick 31<sup>st</sup> July - Aug 1<sup>st</sup>**

Report by John Low

Over the weekend of July 31st and August 1st the Castell SODA Siphons Tournament took place at Sussex CCC (or 'Southwick' to most of us!). The Sussex Open Doubles 14pt Alternate Strokes Tournament was started by Paul Castell who generously provided the unusual trophies. The event is in its third year.

Paul wanted to encourage alternate stroke play as he believes that this form of the game is a better team effort because both partners are involved in every successful turn. Also it avoids the long periods of 'sitting out' that invariably occurs in conventional doubles.

Thanks to this year being a MacRob year, we had the real pleasure of entries from Jeff Soo (USA team) and his wife Eileen, and Chris Clarke over from New Zealand. 24 entries, 2 blocks of 6 pairs each block, top 2 pairs from each block contesting semi-finals and final.

One particular feature of this tournament was the calculation of bisques, as a modified handicap system was used. This was suggested by David Harrison Wood who remembered reading about it in the Gazette some years ago but can't remember who the author was (so if anyone recognises their idea, thanks very much and please make yourself known!) When a low and high handicapped player make a team, they have an additional advantage in the alternate form of doubles as the strong player can influence each turn by correcting errors and more effectively directing strategy. To offset this advantage, the handicap for each team was set at (2L +H)/3 rather than the normal (H + L)/2. The effect of this change is to give a greater advantage to pairs with more evenly matched handicaps.

One of the players, Dr Richard Jackson, kindly undertook an analysis of the results: "I sought for evidence from the results that the handicap system used was fair. 12 pairs took part; I divided these into two groups of 5, designated LARGE and SMALL, based on handicap difference, and left out the two teams with a handicap difference of 8 which lay between the two groups.

In the groups, playoffs, and consolation event, 11 matches were played between LARGE and SMALL teams. LARGE won 5, SMALL won 6, suggesting that the handicapping was fair, admittedly on a small sample. On the normal handicapping system, LARGE teams would have had an average of 2.5 more bisques, compared with 0.25 for the SMALL teams. It is impossible to assess what

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difference this would have caused, but it would be likely to have resulted in more LARGE victories. The winners and runner-ups were in fact both LARGE teams, suggesting that the new system had not deprived them of a fair chance.

It would be interesting to have more results, from tournaments played under both normal handicapping and the new system, but this single tournament suggests that the new system is fair and should be tried out further."

The weekend was very successful with many close-fought games. A relatively long time limit of 2 hours for 14 point games was placed on the block and playoff matches, with 1.5 hours allowed for consolation event games (for practical considerations).

Block winners were Jeff Rushby / Margaret Russell and Chris Clarke / Alan Rew. Chris Clarke and his Sussex partner, Dr Alan Rew, were the eventual winners over last year's winners, David Harrison-Wood and Helena Urban, in a very close game which could have gone either way and which gave huge pleasure to the audience of players and visitors.

So come on you minus players (and everyone else!) lots of entries next year and give Paul a surprise.

### Colchester Over-50s Midweek Tournament, 3rd – 5th August

Report by David Haslam

The popular Colchester over 50s attracted a full house of 16 players and with an unusually strong field for a handicap event played as an Egyptian. Handicaps ranged from 2 to 16 with several towards the lower end and given the hot, dry conditions the courts were very fast. Day 1 saw John Andrews (hcp 11) back to his old self and leading the way with three straight wins. Several players were on two out of three with the season's most improved performer, Nick Steiner (hcp 3), enjoying three out of four, being beaten only by Terry Mahoney (hcp 2). And so to Day 2 with rather overcast conditions. The morning session went much slower and with rain promised it was the waterproofs being looked for. The usual excellent lunch had barely been finished than the heavens opened and with thunder and lightning raging in the background the courts rapidly turned to lakes. Play was suspended and various alternative activities sought whilst the waters receded. Some were sceptical when the manager (me) forecast how quickly the water would disappear but were relieved when after two and a half hours it was possible to resume play, even if the speed of the courts was now extremely

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slow. Consequently most folk enjoyed just 2 games that day.

The leader board on the final morning showed the Rev John Andrews still performing well but, having been beaten by Dr Nick Steiner, was just in second spot, with Nick the outright leader. However, another five contestants had now entered the race with the delightful Georgeen Hemming (hcp 14) and wearing a Chairman's look alike hat, enjoying her generous allocation of bisques and playing some excellent croquet, the youthful Ron Atkinson (hcp 16) was back to something of his former self after ill-health and the Norfolk wonder, Neil Chalmers (hcp 7) performing with poise and no little success. Not to be outdone the Lincolnshire poacher, Mike Bowser (hcp 6), was also no pushover and on the rails with an increasingly strong push it was good to see the man with the stick, Terrey Sparks, as a realistic threat.

So, with two games to go any one of seven could end up with the treasured Franklin Bowl. John Andrews just outplayed Mike Bowser and thereby ended Mike's challenge. Nick Steiner, meanwhile, was being executed by the lady with the hat, Ron Atkinson fell away against Terrey Sparks whilst Neil Chalmers progressed relentlessly with a fine win over Terry Mahoney.

Another fine roast dinner preceded the final round of matches (and it is rumoured some after dinner snoozes) with the deciding contests featuring Georgeen against Mike Bowser, Neil Chalmers against John Andrews and with Nick Steiner against his bete noire, Terrey Sparks. Terry won that one thereby ending Nick's challenge and with Georgeen thrashing the unlucky Bowser +23 it was down to two – Georgeen and John. As Georgeen reduced her finger nails to ruin, and with everything crossed, it looked as if the glittering prize was heading her way. John had been outplayed by Neil – desperate for one more win and a lower handicap – but suddenly it all happened. John pegged out Neil and held on to win by 5. The crowd gasped, Georgeen couldn't believe it and the manager breathed a sigh of relief that it didn't require the Hemming tie-break to resolve the outcome. Thanks were extended to all the players for the 63 games played in such good spirit and with very few going to time. Not bad for the geriatrics on show!

### Hamptworth Handicap 7th & 8th August

Report by Richard Stevens

Richard Smith retained his title with four straight wins. The format for the eight entrants was two blocks of four and a play off. The runner up was Sam Murray who visited us from Surbiton. Chris Cockcroft, a promising player from East Dorset and Derek Knight from Beverley, who was holidaying in the New Forest, were the other visitors.

The new pavilion came into its own during the heavy rain showers on Saturday. This is a much appreciated new facility. The players were kind enough to speak well of the new lawns, and much fun was had at a local hostelry on Saturday night.

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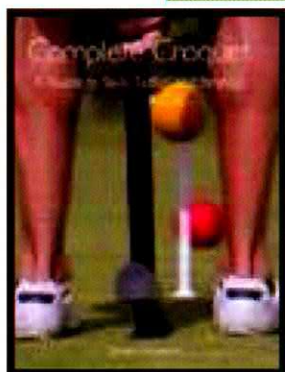
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