

The

CROQUET

Issue 348 February 2014

Gazette



Croquet & Bowls



Kiwis win The Mac



Wet Winter Blues



Croquet in the Sun



From our files researched by Frances Colman

100 years ago - 1914



Editorial - With the present number the Gazette concludes the tenth year of its existence. The annual volumes have grown steadily in size, Vol.IX. easily surpassed the record in the number of its pages, but the present volume equalled that record before the publication of the current number.

~

Dear Sir,

I read in your description of the tournament held at Portsmouth that a time limit of three hours was put on every game. It is earnestly to be hoped that this iniquitous and unfair restriction will not be allowed again to creep in. Regulation 17 was altered specially for the purpose of preventing these restrictions, which had become a perfect scandal in the past. I can only imagine it was overlooked, and that the players did not know it was against the Laws, or it would have been withdrawn.

Yours faithfully,
Charles S.Kershaw

~

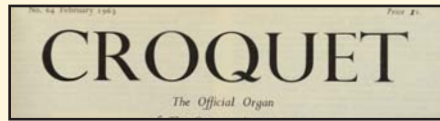
Dear Sir,

Will you spare me a little of your space for the defence of a practice often attacked, but never, I think, defended in your columns – the running of a hoop to the boundary.

Mr.F.W.Croft, in his condemnation of this in your last issue, is more eloquent than accurate. A player who adopts this method of hoop-running is by no means necessarily allowing himself to “run riot in sheer brute force”. Even in an ordinary break his approach stroke will probably have been played with a view to obtaining a rush on the ball with which he has made the hoop, after his own ball has been placed on the yard-line. Such a stroke demands care, and the reward of its success is justified. But the conditions are often far more exacting. To run a hoop hard and take a sporting shot at a corner ball is frequently the only way to pick up an otherwise impossible three-ball break, and such a course is now more likely to be called for than previously since the adoption of Alternative “A”, which demands greater skill and enterprise in the manufacture of breaks. . . .

Unnamed

50 years ago - 1964



It is reported that the Council have in mind for the annual match at Devonshire Park a contest between representatives of England and those for the other parts of the (once) United Kingdom.

The qualifications for membership of these teams will, one must suppose, be analogous to, though not identical with, those governing the County Championship, and if so it is likely that it will be birth or descent, rather than present residence, which will provide the bulk of what we may for convenience describe as the Celtic side.

We know the Britain's Test Captain is of Hibernian origin, but if he heads the 'Celts' on this occasion he may find himself reinforced by some of the up-and-coming players now beginning a very welcome invasion from across the Irish Sea. . .



Dear Sir,

An incident occurred in “Counties” week which seems to be worthy of mention. Yellow was in the middle of the penultimate hoop, Black straight ahead in front of the peg. As Yellow was half-way through the hoop, it did not seem necessary to call a referee, but the opponents, rightly as it turned out, asked for the shot to be watched. Black shot, missed the ball, but grazed the left hand wire of the hoop, thus shaking yellow. Under law 13(b) the opponents claimed a lift, as the position of the ball had been altered as a consequence of the stroke. *Verb.sap.* doubtful shots of this nature should always be watched by a referee.

Yours faithfully, E. Anthony Roper

Editor's note: 'Verb. sat. = 'a word to the wise...' (with thanks to proof reader Amanda Haste, who 'has the Latin' that is sadly missing from your editor's education)

10 years ago - 2004



Great Britain beat each of the other three Test nations to win the MacRobertson Shield for a record fifth consecutive time.

The Test Series took place for the first time at the National Croquet Centre in Florida.

Each Test was a five-day best-of-21 mixture of singles and doubles.

GB arrived as favourites having a team comprising two World Champions (Chris Clarke, and reigning Robert Fulford), three highly experienced veterans (Stephen Mulliner, David Maugham and Mark Avery), and the impressive newcomer Matt Burrow from Jersey.

~

There can't be many countries who have won two 'World Cups' in one month!

Whilst England's rugby union team got all the publicity (quite rightly) for their exploits in Australia - Great Britain's croquet team completed the 'double' by retaining the MacRobertson Shield for a record fifth time in the USA.

I know that the press publicity for croquet is usually minimal but riding on the back of the rugby train, an article in the Guardian (Nov 20) indicated that Australia were 42-29 up against England (before the rugby final) in producing world Champions and asked “. . . where were you (Australia) at the croquet?”

Robert Fulford, singles and Robert Fulford/Chris Clarke, doubles were quoted as (two successive) World Champions for England.

As they say - any publicity is good publicity.

David Maugham's 'drop goal' to clinch the series demands an OBE just like Jonny! . . .

Derek Watts, Tyneside CC

~

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

~

Photograph: The last time an England team (rather than GB) contested the Mac in New Zealand was in 1963: Humphrey Hicks, William Ormerod, Bryan Lloyd Pratt, David Curtis, Joan Warwick, John Solomon, Patrick Cotter, Bobby Wiggins.

Editorial

Whilst little of the UK has been left untouched by endless rain and the least fortunate have experienced the worst flooding for many years, we have still been able to enjoy a croquet 'fix' vicariously through the exploits of our national team down under.

Congratulations to New Zealand for lifting the MacRobertson Shield for the first time in 30 years. But England's achievement in presenting a significant challenge to the Kiwis shouldn't go unrecorded, and neither should their solid victories over Australia and USA.

I thank Ian Vincent once again, this time for being our Test Series correspondent all the way from the land of the long white cloud, and this Gazette rightly leads with his centre-page report.

At the other end of the playing spectrum I am pleased to have commissioned reports from three new clubs who have either branched-off from, or taken over the facilities of bowls clubs.

Bowls numbers are apparently on the decline, and the opportunities for croquet clubs, both new and existing, to share or take over redundant greens, has never been greater.

Hopefully you will have fared better than me if you have tried to play this winter.

My excitement at the return of winter play at my own club has been foiled thus far by the rising water of the Thames at Henley; a single day's One-Ball at Winchester, and less than an hour's AC before abandonment at Hamptworth, is the sum total of my croquet on home soil since September.

I can't cry too much though, as I did join others fortunate enough to have been able to enjoy croquet in foreign parts since the end of our regular season. This Gazette attempts to relieve your winter blues with a duo of warming 'Brits abroad' reports in an 'Escape to the Sun' feature, in which I extol the appeal of croquet in Corfu, and Martin French showcases our game in the Algarve.

South Africa now awaits me, my mallet and notebook, and so I will have some croquet to report on in the next issue, whatever the English weather!



Chris Roberts

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The
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Gazette



Issue 348 February 2014

Front cover: Clockwise from 'red' - The hand of Brian Fisk, Mac Shield, Frances Colman and Alan Clark. **This page:** The Editor at the Croquet Club of Corfu and the Chairman at Hunstanton. (By Paddy Chapman, Dick Mulder and Chris Roberts)

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Chairman's Column

It seems a bit late to be saying it, but happy new year to you all!

By the time you read this, you will probably have the fixtures book for 2014, and like me will be busy planning your croquet for the season.

Why not try a few different venues, or try a different type of tournament this year?

Whatever you enter, may your croquet year be a successful one.

I'm writing this just as the MacRobertson Shield has completed in New Zealand.

I hope many of you have enjoyed the commentary and news reports sent out during the event, as I have.

The last test was always going to be a nail-biter, especially with the Kiwis in season and on home turf.

I think it is fitting that it all came down to the last day's play, albeit that England started the day with a significant disadvantage due to the 3-0 loss on Day 1.

Anyway, congratulations to the New Zealand team, and my commiserations to England; I think the competition could easily have gone the other way.

Should we be worried about having lost the Mac for the first time in over 20 years?

Of course it's a wake-up call for us, but I think we should rejoice in the fact that New Zealand were able to put out such a strong team, and that competition is healthy and strong there.

We can perhaps also take consolation from the fact that one of their team, Chris Clarke, learnt his croquet here and had been on our team.

The remarkable thing, of course, is that we managed to win the competition seven consecutive times, over so many years (ignoring the fact that Britain has become England for the event, which I don't think had any significant effect).

Our past success, of course, was in no small part due to the 'core' team of Fulford, Clarke, and Maugham, who have stood out in their performances over this time.

It was perhaps careless of us to lose one of them to the opposition!

Should we be taking remedial action?

No doubt there will be many views aired on this topic, but personally I think we remain very strong at the top level, and we already have in place development squads for those aspiring to play in the Mac.

I don't think we need to worry too much.

The main issue to me is ensuring that we maintain our depth of strong players, and in this regard I think we still stand well ahead of the other countries.

That is not to say we should be complacent, and indeed it is a concern to me that in some clubs competitive croquet appears to be losing out to the more social 'pat and chat' brigade.

We must all do our bit to try and keep our clubs active and competitive.

From this the seeds of future champions are sown.



Jeff Dawson

CA Council meeting

The January Council Meeting took place at the Hurlingham Club, with a usual attendance of twenty-one members., **writes Elizabeth Larsson, CA Manager** (the Hon Sec is away)

The main topics of discussion were:

The 2013 Accounts were approved.

A discussion on development loans concluded with the decision that Clubs no longer need to find a member to guarantee a loan from the CA; it was felt that this was put many clubs off applying for loans.

There were some amendments to the wording of some clauses of the Selection Policy and changes to wording in the Council Practice book, with regard to electronic voting, presidents and vice-presidents sitting on committees and co-option of members with lawns experience.

The Handicap Doubles Law Variation trial is to be continued for another year: Feedback from players indicated that it was popular, but the system needs to be used more widely before a final decision is made. All handicap doubles fixtures listed in the Fixtures Book should now use this variation (to be found in Appendix 5.2 of the Tournament Regulations).

The Coaching Committee reported that a GC Coaching Manual is nearing

completion and is awaiting the final version of the GC Laws. The WCF has revised the GC rules and this new version, with the addition of a CA commentary, will take effect in the CA's domain from 9 April 2014 and a new edition printed. As the WCF refers to the GC Laws as Rules, the CA will now follow suit and the Committee is now the GC **Rules** Committee.

The Chairman reported that the South West Club Conference had been well attended with a lively debate about the proposals of the Federation Working Party. There will be a full report following the conferences in Huddersfield and Surbiton.

The England team was congratulated on their wins over Australia and the USA in the MacRobertson Shield, and running New Zealand close, with NZ ultimately winning the event. This was followed by a major discussion about the development of AC international players. Various initiatives have been put in place following the publication of the Marketing Committee's AC regeneration report. Ian Burrige, who runs the International Development Squad, is producing a paper to present to the Management Committee in March.

It was reported that the regulations with regard to the spraying of pesticides were to be strengthened in 2015 and the effects of this on croquet clubs carrying out their own maintenance will be investigated.

CA Council approve a New Edition of the GC Rules

You will have read in December's Gazette that the World Croquet Federation had just approved a new version of the Rules of Golf Croquet – the Fourth Edition, **writes GC Rules Committee Chairman Martin French**

Since then, the CA's GC Rules Committee has worked quickly to identify which existing CA Rulings and Commentary needed to be carried over to the new edition, and so produce draft text suitable for use by players, clubs and federations.

As was anticipated in the December Gazette article, this draft CA text has been available from the CA website since before Christmas, in a comment cycle running until 12 January. GC Referees were emailed directly to solicit their comments.

The limitations of the new edition were mentioned in the December article, and several of the comments recognised that the new text, while not perfect, was at least an improvement on the Third Edition.

There are two further aids to readability: the international rulings and commentary, and the CA rulings and commentary, have all been integrated into the main body of text, so the reader does not have to keep flicking forward and backward through the booklet to find an answer.

Also, for the first time, we have included a colour diagram as summary of the Wrong Ball Rule, to aid navigation of this still-difficult rule.

The CA's Council has now approved this new edition, including the CA additions. Consequently, we plan to have new Fourth Edition Rules of GC booklets available from the CA Shop by the end of March, in time for the new 2014 season.

I hope to publish details of the specific changes to the rules in the April Gazette.

Photographs: Ashby's Tim King (top) and Simon Carter of Dulwich, in action at Surbiton. (images by Chris Roberts)



CA Office News

By the time you read this, membership cards will have been posted to all members, along with the Fixtures Book for tournament members, **writes Elizabeth Larsson.**

All CA tournaments (except inter-club competitions) can be entered on-line and this year we have extended the entry system to three more clubs: Bowdon, Nottingham and Hurlingham are now joined by Letchworth, Nailsea and Surbiton, as clubs whose tournaments can be entered via the CA's online system.

The annual mailing for clubs will also have been sent out, which this year has a lot of information to digest.

The situation regarding the provision of public liability insurance is one that all clubs should note and be aware of – it's free with membership of the CA.

We are also trying to find out if clubs own their own land or have to pay rent to a landlord and the level of charges.

Many clubs, particularly those on

council-owned land, have had to face large increases in rent or have had to take on their own maintenance, resulting in more applications for grant aid to buy expensive equipment.

It would be useful for planning purposes to know the breakdown between privately owned and rented premises.

It would also help clubs if we were able to advise on what current rents are being charged in case a club needs to quote figures during rent negotiations.

Clubs should also note that the closing dates for entries for the inter-club tournaments is 16 March for AC and 7 March for GC, so please ensure your entries are with the CA Office by these dates, or you could lose out.

The CA shop is always open for business and we are happy to give advice on croquet mallets, wet-weather gear and all other croquet equipment.

The on-line shop is open 24 hours per day and in the office from 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, and to 4.30 on Fridays).

See 'STOP PRESS' on page 23

CA Fees - The Case for Change

Jeff Dawson argues that the time has come

I believe the time has come when we need to reconsider how we fund croquet in England.

In my article in the October Gazette, I showed how the CA raises its money, and also how it spends it.

Just to recap; about 57% of income comes from tournament players in one form or another – that's including tournament levies, and individual CA membership (which most people only take out when they need it to play in tournaments).

I think the perception is often that the CA is for elite players, or at least tournament players, but the reality is that most of the money raised goes towards the development of the game in one form or another.

In fact taking all the CA spend on tournaments, including organising them, administration, producing the fixtures book, office time, etc., and adding in what we spend on international events both home and away, the total expenditure comes to just 18% of the overall budget.

Development loans and grants, and work done in sorting out handicaps, coaching, refereeing, etc., is a much more significant element of our expenditure.

Does this imbalance matter?

Well, the question of what is fair does of course need to be considered, but putting that aside for a moment, then one might argue that if that is the end of the story then it doesn't matter.

Tournament players are, of course, the most enthusiastic among us, and for the most part they do not begrudge the relatively small amount they pay for their CA membership.

They tend to spend a lot more travelling and staying overnight in order to compete anyway.

However, it does become more clearly an issue if we believe tournament play is likely to decline.

If this were to happen, then the CA's income is reduced, and consequently the money we put into development comes under threat.

Is a decline in tournament play likely?

In its current form, I believe it is, and that's for two reasons.

The survey of croquet players carried out in 2012 showed a worrying trend that many clubs are seeing an increase in the number of 'social' players, who are not really interested in competitive play. That tends to mean that the number of competitive players is falling.

When we analysed what has been happening in the federations, we saw a significant shift in the way in which many people play their croquet. The success of the federations in organising leagues, especially in the SW and SE federations, has led to as many competitive man-days being played through federation-led or advertised events as there are in the whole of the CA fixtures book.

This is a significant shift from say ten years ago, and we think the trend is likely to continue. That's great, of course, but it does mean that, for many, they get all the competitive play they want without having to join the CA or play in fixture-book events.

I have increasingly found when asking players if they would join the CA that I am getting that reaction, and it's a message I'm getting from other people trying to recruit CA members too.

At the moment, the CA's finances are sound, and we have been able to continue our grants programme unabated.

We have not yet seen any significant fall-off of tournament members; however, we have seen a decline in tournament levies (about a 10% decline over the last five years, after correcting for inflation and the reduced percentage the CA introduced a few years ago).

I believe that if we continue the way we are, then a fall in CA membership is almost inevitable.

We are fortunate that we have a large number of loyal members, who tend to stay members once they've been hooked, even if they no longer play in tournaments.

However, if we can't get new members to replace them, then eventually numbers will decline.

The advantage of taking action now, rather than waiting for a crisis, is that we can introduce change gradually.

I believe we need to shift towards charging clubs more for their membership

(thus effectively charging ALL croquet players, rather than just tournament players).

Done slowly over a period of time, this should not be too painful for club members – after all, if we scrapped tournament membership completely and put the whole burden on club players, then it would mean charging them only an extra £10 per head or so.

I'm not actually suggesting we need necessarily go that far, but even if we did then croquet remains a cheap game to play, and for most clubs this increase would be small compared to overall membership costs.

Changes to the fee structure is just one aspect of the report put forward by the Federation Working Party, albeit probably the most controversial.

The report also proposes changes in the relationship between Federations and the CA, changes to the boundaries between federations, widening the CA's membership base to include all club players, and other factors affecting the overall administration of croquet.

If you would like to learn more, then please read their report on the CA website www.croquet.org.uk.

We are keen to hear your views – why not write a letter to the Gazette, or email me directly and let me know what you think.

Jeff Dawson

Chairman of the Croquet Association

**Is your Club's voice
being heard?'**

**Club Conference 2
Saturday 15th February**

11:30 - 14:30

**The Canalside Sports
Complex, Huddersfield**

509, Leeds Road, (A62) Huddersfield
HD2 1YJ

**Club Conference 3
Sunday 16th February**

14:30 - 17:00

Surbiton Croquet Club

Alexandria Drive, Surbiton KT5 9AA

Obituaries

Roger Best

1936 - 2013



Roger Best died last year aged 77. He was born in Liverpool in 1936, where his father worked in a Pierrot troupe and his mother was a variety hall artiste.

After winning a scholarship and attending the Liverpool Institute, he was offered a place with the National Youth Orchestra.

He went on to win a scholarship to the Royal Manchester College of Music and later became the principal viola player of the Alborni Quartet.

He was widely regarded as one of the leading exponents of the viola.

Roger first started playing croquet in Dorset when teaching at a music summer school in Langport, finding the family with whom he stayed had a croquet lawn on which he used to play in the evenings.

He then became a regular croquet player at Madingley Hall, part of Cambridge University, where Roger coached chamber music every August.

He would organise a doubles croquet tournament to get everyone mixing and this gradually became more important than the chamber music.

After a few years of this he wanted to find somewhere to play regularly; the CA suggested Dulwich CC and he became a member in about 1984.

Roger was intensely competitive and in 1985 entered his first tournament at Ramsgate CC organised by Dennis Shaw, where he won a silver-plated duck.

He also played in the Garden Croquet Classic and won a watch.

From then on he got bitten by the croquet bug and entered tournaments in August and September, when musicians have their holidays, playing at Southwick,

Compton, Surbiton, Hurlingham and Roehampton.

He also played at Budleigh Salterton when staying at Taunton with his mother.

He was essentially self taught and he developed an effortless and relaxed swing.

An adventurous creative and artistic player he was intuitive and every hoop was a fresh challenge.

He positively hated percentage croquet: if one outrageous shot could turn the game to his advantage he would go for it, even if failure meant that he lost.

Amongst other trophies he won the Trevelyan Bowl, the Kent Cup, and the Ranelagh Gold Cup (*pictured*) in both 1996 and 1999.

He was married first in 1959 to Bronwen Naish, a double bass player.

That marriage was dissolved and in August 1981 he married Susan Brown, an architect who survives him with two sons and three daughters from his first marriage.

In one SECF doubles match at Compton, Sue wasn't playing well and



Roger was goading her to play better; in exasperation, he asked her "why did God make you so argumentative?"

They eventually won, one of their opponents saying, "I'm sorry we lost the match, but I think we've saved your marriage."

Despite his laid-back disposition, he was a relentless perfectionist, both in his music and in his hobbies.

He loved all sports and was a devoted fan of Liverpool FC. He was also keen on DIY, making furniture and later taking up violin making.

In 1996 he was diagnosed with Parkinsons and he left his string quartet and the Royal College of Music a few months later.

David Collins Dulwich CC

Matt Burrow

1979 - 2013



Matt was introduced to croquet at Jersey Croquet Club in his early teens and, being already a talented golf and hockey player, made rapid progress in the Association game using a classic standard grip that he never needed to alter.

He had the natural style of an athlete and, when playing at or near his best form, made playing croquet look very easy.

Matt made his competitive debut in the 1995 Junior Championship and completed his first triple peels in the 1996 European Championship. In 1997, he made his first appearances in mainland events and was selected for the Spencer Ell.

1998 was an even better year, including a defeat of Robert Fulford in the Western Championship, victory in both the Jersey Open and Closed Championships and selection for the Chairman's Salver.

An excellent run in the Open Championship and victory in the 1999 Irish Championship further underlined Matt's abilities and gave him his first taste of croquet in America at Sonoma-Cutrer.

The years from 2000 to 2005 were Matt's golden years as a player.

He played in the 2001 and 2005 World



Letter to the Editor

'Pat and Chat' Golf Croquet ~ Why are we funding this pervasive weed?

Championships and his American experience included a total of four trips to the Sonoma-Cutrer event and two to the Resort at the Mountain Invitational.

He made his President's Cup debut in 2001, won the European Championship in 2002 and represented Great Britain in the 2003 MacRobertson Shield in Florida and in the Solomon Trophy in 2002, 2004 and 2005.

He was particularly proud of his part in Jersey's victory in the 2011 European Team Championship.

Settling down to a steady job proved elusive and Matt's life took an unfortunate turn following the death of his father

when he became involved with the Jersey drugs scene.

This led to a short prison sentence which he was determined should be used to make a fresh start.

He returned to croquet in Jersey in 2010 and 2011 and appeared for the Channel Islands in the 2011 Inter-Counties where he was warmly welcomed back by his many friends.

Matt was a likeable and friendly young man who very was popular wherever he went in the world of croquet and at home in Jersey.

His death at the age of 33 from a suspected heart attack shocked everyone and he will be greatly missed.

Stephen Mulliner CA Council



Dear Editor,

It is widely known and accepted that Golf Croquet (GC) is 'crowding out' Association Croquet (AC) in clubs the length and breadth of the country.

Furthermore, the vast majority of GC being played comprises the non-competitive 'Pat and Chat' kind. In the face of this the CA's avowed raison d'être is to support and develop competitive croquet.

Meanwhile the CA maintains its mantra of supporting equally all variants of croquet, while also forming working parties to arrest the decline in AC. However, it appears that the right arm does not know what the left is doing.

While the majority of CA income is derived from AC players most of its development expenditure goes towards forming new clubs or assisting existing clubs to expand where their sole or main

aim is to provide GC.

A calculation based on the latest CA Accounts shows that a minimum of 63% of the CA's £130K income results from AC, despite the larger proportion of predominately GC players overall.

An analysis of the £71K provided to 29 clubs over the past three years shows that 84% benefits GC and just 16% AC.

Although these calculations (a copy of which has been passed to the editor) are based on samples and estimates I would defy anybody to show that they are more than a few percentage points from reality.

Non-competitive GC contributes comparatively little to the CA, nor indeed to croquet as a whole.

It is a pervasive weed which should be eradicated. Instead we find it being liberally fertilised.

It is time the CA woke up to this!

Kevin Carter - Surbiton CC

Peter Death, Chairman of the CA Development Committee, writes:

Kevin is right to point out that the CA's income arises disproportionately from those players who compete in calendar tournaments.

The issue of what would be a fair contribution from those who play the game only at Federation or club level is currently the subject of debate at the Club Conferences being organised around the country.

His assertions about the way that development funds are spent are, however, misconceived.

Having looked at the detailed analysis he submitted to the Editor, I have a number of issues with the assumptions underlying his figures, and would indeed assert that the outcome is in fact more than just a few percentage points out. What is more important than an argument over the AC/GC divide, however, is the extent to which development funds have gone to support competitive play.

The CA's development strategy is available on the CA website, but in summary:

1. *The CA's firm policy is to support both forms of the game, with an emphasis on competitive play.*

2. *The Development Committee is accordingly tasked by Council with ensuring that development support, beyond the basic kit issued to new clubs, is targeted at those clubs which support competitive play.*

3. *In the three-year period which Kevin looked at, development grants were made to 29 clubs, ranging in size from one-lawn to eleven-lawn clubs, and from some quite new clubs to some of the oldest established. Of those 29, only six are not at present competing at least at Federation League level. All of those six have aspirations to play at that level or above, but are at present unable to do so because their playing facilities are not good enough to support match play. That, of course, is why they have sought development assistance. 89% of the funds allocated in the period went to currently competitive clubs.*

4. *CA development grants are never for more than 50% of the cost of a development project, and in many cases are considerably less than that. Club members have to work hard to raise funds to improve their club, and are unlikely to go to the trouble if they do not aspire to playing at a better standard.*

Obituary photographs:
Roger Best, supplied by family
Matt Burrow by Samir Patel

The Croquet Club of Corfu

By Chris Roberts

As hoops were pulled up for the last time and seasons closed all over our land, a group of Brits headed off to the sunny climes of Corfu for the annual Greek AC Open Championships.

This event title, though sounding over-grand, is fair enough really as the three courts of the Croquet Club of Corfu are the total in the whole of Greece, and have been attracting a regular band of visitors for the past eight years or so.

Regular tour leader Kevin Carter decided that a house move would have to mean taking a year out of management duty, so the Frances Colman/Chris Roberts team took the reins in 2013, as the latter defended his Greek title with rather fewer bisques than previous years.

Several other previous supporters re-appeared for this latest instalment, including the perennial Liz and Rupert Taylor-Webb from Bowdon, Richard and Diana Stevens from Hamptworth, Bob and Anne Stephens from Hurlingham, and both Kitty Carruthers and Jonathan Edwards from Surbiton.

The Taylor-Webbs had enlisted their Bowdon pals Alan Mayne and Kay Martin for a first visit, and there were debut appearances from Budleigh's Adam Wimshurst and Scylla Blackwell, and finally Paddy Bunch from Phyllis Court.

With the death of founder Tony Blok just over a year ago, the future of the Croquet

Club of Corfu had been in the balance for the early part of the year, but was eventually secured by the enthusiasm of its Corfiot members, who number a few ingenious islanders and a lovely band of resident Brits and Dutch nationals.

Maintaining courts in such heat is no easy task, but the Club have steadily improved their surfaces over the years, to the extent that players from the sharp end of the handicap range have been just as drawn to Corfu as those less proficient.

The Corfiots are always delighted to welcome any visitors, and several CA members have called on the Club during private holidays over the years, and some have even offered some 'spot coaching'.

That theme was embraced during the October tournament too, with Richard Stevens disappearing off to mentor local players more than once.

And the mid-tournament 'GC with the locals' was again popular, and enjoyed by no one more than Paddy Bunch (pictured below left), who played the most games and won the 'international relations' prize.

The locals really did us proud once again, and used their good contacts with the tourist industry to put together another well-balanced package, with enough time for croquet and socialising to suit all.

As usual, the accommodation was provided at the super five star Kontokoli Bay Hotel, which is just a ten-minute stroll from the croquet club in the town marina, and characterful tavernas for evening entertainment.

The usual day-long boat trip travelled South this time so as to please those who had been before, and a beach-side restaurant lunch between swims highlighted that particular day.

Back at the croquet, staggered playing times allowed players to manage as much croquet as they wanted, yet still compete in both set and flexible tournament events.

A fairly late withdrawal left 15 players to do battle for the Greek crowns, and abilities ranged all the way from 20 right down to Alan Mayne's -1, but with tricky lawns and lots of bisques, these handicap events were anyone's for the taking.



The doubles event got the tournament under way, and the tricky 15 number was overcome by the plucky Paddy Bunch being good enough to brave the heat twice as often as everyone else as she partnered herself. A four-round swiss of 18-point games provided clear outright winners in Mayne and partner Kay Martin, who were undefeated.

Some head-scratching from the managers provided a 13 player singles event in which all but two players got a pair of games before elimination, a fate that befell Roberts, ensuring there would be a new name on the Championship Trophy.

A 14-point Swiss for those not making the main semis, saw Rupert 'four peels' Webb eventually win from Roberts in a play-off.

The singles championship semis were an all-ladies affair in which Frances Colman defeated Scylla Blackwell, and Liz Taylor-Webb got the better of Kay Martin.

In an unexpectedly wet final, Colman (pictured) successfully defend an early lead against Taylor-Webb's spirited come back.

There was then a quick dash back to the hotel, change into glad rags, and off again to the Gala Presentation Dinner at a hilltop restaurant with spectacular views across the bay, that were unfortunately masked by a monsoon. The red wine and ouzo washed down a tasty meal before presentations of locally made trophies, and much thanks to our hostess ladies Janneke and Lola.

Colman and Roberts are now organising the 2014 Corfu Tournament which runs from 6-15 October, and Kevin Carter has spaces left for a new Corfu 'teams' event (to which single players are most welcome) being staged from 20-29 May.

Please do get in touch if either event appeals – a warm Corfu welcome awaits you, in more ways than one!



ESC TO SU

Ipswich on the Algarve

by Martin French

Ipswich Croquet Club obviously know a good thing when they see it and have twinned their club with that of Bela Romao in the sunny Algarve.

A couple of years ago, the Portuguese Croquet Federation (PCF) was formed by Lita Gale - a Portuguese solicitor with practices in Portugal and London - and it soon joined the World Croquet Federation.

The PCF is based around the Bela Romao Croquet Country Club on the Eastern Algarve and I've been in contact with Lita

from the start.

Earlier this year, we formally twinned Ipswich Croquet Club and Bela Romao and at the start of November, we took a party of eight players and one non-playing spouse over to Portugal.

Eight visitors is probably about as big a party as one would want to travel with so

as to avoid swamping the hosts.

The trip was great fun and Lita and all the Bela Romao members made us feel very welcome at their club, which is about a 20 minute affordable taxi ride from Faro airport.

Three days of intensive doubles croquet lay ahead, as we were to play two days of GC and one of AC on the club's single lawn, which occupies an elevated position

with fine views out to sea and over the Ria Formosa islands on the shoreline.

The lawn is two years old now and pretty good, although the Algarve weather poses a challenge, with tremendous downpours in some months, then a hot summer fit to burn off most fine grasses.

It isn't a particularly quick lawn, as the grass can't be cut very short because it would just die in the heat, even though it is watered every night even in November!

The surface was a bit spongy due to thatch but was very playable nevertheless.

By dividing the lawn in two, we got all 16 people playing GC at once, with 2 games of doubles on each half-lawn and this worked surprisingly well.

For the GC we mixed Ipswich and Bela Romao into pairs and as well as 'on the job training', we offered some more formal coaching.

The home players could all play to a reasonable standard, so we concentrated on the things we noticed that needed improvement, which were mainly aiming, stalking and shooting.

We also ran a Q&A session around a hoop, concerning GC laws and common faults.

The AC day was also the inaugural match between our two clubs and as this was played level, it was not surprising the final was won by an Ipswich pair, Jane Collier and Georgeen Hemming.

Bela Romao hasn't yet got to grips with the handicap systems for GC and AC, and this was something else we discussed during our visit with their coach David Denman.

By our next meeting, we hope the match will be on a more even basis.

We recommended the use of full bisque play to help the Bela Romao members make



faster progress developing their AC break play.

Our two strongest players, Martin French and Colin Hemming, played a demonstration AC match with Martin Leach explaining to the audience what we were doing.

The fourth day was a touristy day, and our party broke into groups visiting local towns, watching the birdlife on the coastal islands, sightseeing, or visiting a villa in the hills with a nearly full-size AstroTurf lawn (deliciously fast and flat!).



For our five-day visit, six of us stayed on site in the villa and cottage just a short walk from the club house and with Lita's partner, Sarah Byrne, being a professional chef, her delicious food was on offer every day.

David and Ann Denman kindly put up the other three of our party at their house a short distance away and for future visits, there is also the option of other members who offer B&B in the local area.

I hope Bela Romao will visit Ipswich CC next summer, so we can return their generosity, and I am already looking forward to our next trip to the Algarve - not least because I have a queue of Ipswich Club members wanting to book a trip!

I know Lita and Sarah are keen to see other croquet groups visit them too, as each visit helps them develop their club further.

You'll find Bela Romao Croquet on the web or contact Martin French for more details.

TAPE THE UN



Your first tournament? - *Worry ye not!*

Richard Keighley allays any fears and encourages you to 'take the plunge'

I admit to being a huge fan of competitive croquet, even though my results rarely match my enthusiasm,

The purpose of this article is to encourage you to take part in tournaments away from the familiar surroundings of your own club lawns and accustomed opponents. You will find that the challenge is both enjoyable and beneficial to your own play. I offer here a few general suggestions in respect of both preparation and play.

Opportunities

The CA fixtures book and on-line tournament calendar detail a wide range of events and your regional federation will likely have a tournament programme too. Many clubs host their own events where visitors are also accommodated. A recent development is the welcome arrival of GC C-Class Singles Tournaments and for players in the 7-12 handicap range. If you have that competitive instinct, seek out a tournament and do enter, you won't regret it.

Preparation

Once you have been accepted for your first tournament, you will probably be rather apprehensive about what may be in store for you. How should you prepare?

Check the tournament details carefully. Enquire how many games you will be expected to play and whether games are to be timed. You will probably discover that you will be playing for a far longer period than you are used to.

Is there an aspect of the laws which you know that you have not grasped properly? You should resolve this doubt and look this up or, better still, consult with your club coach, referee or a senior player before the day of the tournament. A sound grasp of the laws can often result in a hoop point

being gained rather than lost.

Practice is very important, as this will increase your confidence. Concentrate on your basic strokes especially taking position and be aware of your own limitations.



On Match Day

I am confident you will be given a warm welcome by the Tournament Manager and the good-humoured company of the other participants.

Make sure you arrive in plenty of time and on no account miss the Manager's briefing!

Warming up before play starts is usually allowed, so make best use of this time. Take a ball around the lawn noting its speed and slopes or, if time is short, hit one or two balls from Corner 4 to Hoop 1.

Hoop setters are often not keen on you actually running hoops and disturbing their carefully-prepared handiwork, so check out what is allowed.

Play Begins

I am assuming level play and I cannot emphasise enough the importance of making a good start. Do not prejudge your opponent for, although he may have a lower handicap than you, he may be a slow starter or be having an off day. Watch how he

plays. Is he a high-risk player who shoots at the hoop on sight, or is he a more cautious defensive player? If the latter, does he prefer to clear or block? Once you have assessed your opponent's strategy, you can adapt your own. However, your primary aim should be to focus on your own performance. If a potential shot is within your comfort zone, you have a very good chance of a success.

If you are adept at taking position, demonstrate this skill to your opponent

at the first opportunity because it will put pressure on him.

Similarly, if a reliable jump shot is in your armoury, show this to your opponent as soon as you can, perhaps by jumping over a ball or balls in open play without waiting for a chance to run a hoop by this method.

Get into the habit of planning ahead. For a player generally accustomed to social doubles, the transition to a competitive singles format is a marked one. However, you have to get used to thinking not only about the shot you are about to play, but the one after that and even the following one as well.

Post Mortem

At the end of the day's play, consider whether or not you have performed to your own expectations. Did your strategy work?

What do you need to improve?

How successful were you in adapting your game plan after assessing your opponent's strengths and weaknesses?

What have you learned from your first tournament experience?

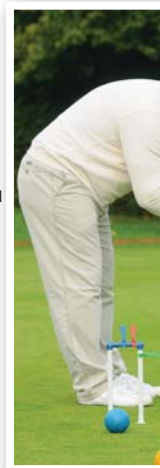
How do you measure success?

I submit that, if you have played to the best of your ability, that is a success, even if you have been beaten by a better opponent who deserved to win.

You will have gained valuable experience, learned more skills, and there is every likelihood that you have enjoyed a congenial and stimulating day.

And so onwards to your next event. . .

Richard Keighley, is a member of Leighton-Linslade, Wingrave and Wrest Park CCs, Southern Federation Coaching Officer and is co-opted to the CA Coaching Committee.



Photographs (this page): Phyllis Court pair Dianne Browne and Helen Walker, who is also a member of Harwell - (Middle): Janis Steins from Latvia, who attended a WCF funded course at the Croquet Academy, where Katharine Minchin is seen coaching Peter Jones of Canterbury - (Opposite page): Academy students being tutored by Don Mears. - Images by Chris Roberts and John Low

Record year for Academy

Jonathan Isaacs (The Croquet Academy, Southwick)

With seventeen courses and more than 200 attendees, 2013 was a record year for the Academy.

I can't thank the Academy team enough for giving freely of their time to help develop our sport.



The Academy gained further recognition in 2013 by running its first series of four courses for the World Croquet Federation which were attended by players and officials many European states including Latvia, Sweden, Germany and Spain.

Three days were spent developing their croquet skills in either AC or GC and the remaining two days gave our visitors the option of a Referees' Course or a Coaches' Qualification Course.

The visitors performed brilliantly with most gaining accreditations that will hopefully help the development of the sport in their home countries.

Also in 2013, the Academy introduced a one day GC Improvers' Course and it was so successful that two extra courses had to be laid on to cope with the demand.

At the end of the season, the Academy introduced trial 'one-to-one' and small group coaching sessions, as a follow up to the course programme and as a specific aid to individuals wishing to progress.

The trial proved very successful and it is hoped that this will become a regular part of the Academy programme in the future.

The 2014 programme has been launched and we have already agreed to add an extra GC Improvers' Course, having had a very high demand for our first two advertised courses, and an extra AC & GC Coaches Qualification Course.

New for 2014 is a three day course on managing croquet tournaments which includes comprehensive notes and a computer programme to enable participants to run the various tournament formats on their PC's or laptops.

We have decided to run two development courses in Advanced play, the first for beginners or early improvers in this version of AC, and the other for people wishing to develop and improve their skills as single figure handicap players.

In addition to courses in April, AC beginners and improvers will have the added advantage of being able to attend a one day follow up course on 4 June.

We will also be running the very popular Supervised High Bisque Tournament.

This series of courses is designed to take players from an introduction to AC through to being confident enough to play in tournaments.

Enter any of the courses on-line at www.thecroquetacademy.com or email courses@thecroquetacademy.com. The CA Fixtures Book and website carry full details of all courses, or contact the Academy Secretary Janet Hoptroff on 01903 859417.

Coaching Column

by Roger Staples

Our elite team of Mac players have gained their reputation through dogged practice and years of honing their skills.

Us mere mortals, who aspire to win tournaments and club competitions, also have to practice and learn these skills.

We are blessed with some excellent coaches in all the Federations who work hard within their clubs at promoting the game and encouraging thoughtful and stimulating sport.

There are also a number of new clubs emerging whose members, I guess, will not have received very much tuition.

They should contact their Federation Coaching Officer or myself who can give them some advice.

For Associates, there is the chance to take part in one of the courses run by the Croquet Academy (see left)

This year also sees a large number of tournaments around the country and almost certainly, there is one near you.

If you haven't partaken before, make this your first step this season.

They are very sociable and fun, and you will find plenty of encouragement from the other competitors.

Again of note is the Golf Croquet B-Level Series, in which there are tournaments taking place in all regions, and the winners progress to a national final in the beginning of October at Hamptworth.

Full details of all tournaments and courses are in this year's Fixture Book and on-line on the CA website.

The CA runs a mentoring scheme to provide one-on-one coaching and advice for talented young players and has established the International Player Development Squad.

If you know of anyone who could benefit from any of these initiatives, please get in touch with me.

Finally, I congratulate Brian Wilson of Camerton & Peasedown CC for achieving his Club Coach badge.

I wish you all good luck in the season ahead.



Dates	2014 Courses	Cost*	Ideal Hcp	Course lead
8 – 10 April	Managing Croquet Tournaments	£72	n/a	C Jones
9 April	GC Improvers (Sold out)	£26	4+	D Gaitley
12 – 13 April	AC & GC Coaches Qualif'n (Sold out)	£40	n/a	C Jones
14 – 15 April	AC & GC Coaches Qualification	£40	n/a	C Jones
12 – 13 April	AC Development in Handicap Play	£40	12 -18	J Isaacs
15 – 16 April	AC Beginners	£40	n/a	P Jackson
15 – 16 April	AC Improvers	£40	18+	F Low
23 – 24 April	AC Development in Advanced Play	£52	6 - 10	C Jones
26 – 27 April	AC Introduction to Advanced Play	£52	8 - 14	N Polhill
26 – 28 April	AC Triple Peel	£72	0 - 4	C Jones
5 May	GC Improvers	£26	4+	D Gaitley
7 May	GC Improvers (Sold out)	£26	4+	D Gaitley
4 June	AC Beginners & Improvers follow up §	£26	18+	F Low
14 – 15 Aug	AC Supervised High Bisque Tournam't	£18	14+	F Low

* Full members of the Croquet Association receive a discount of £8 off all Academy Courses shown above with the exception of the High Bisque Tournament.

§ Priority will be given to applicants attending the AC Beginners or Improvers Course.



The twenty-first competition for the MacRobertson Shield, the top tier of the World Team Championship for Association Croquet, was hosted by Croquet New Zealand at four venues on the Pacific coast over the turn of the year.

The four teams, Australia, England, New Zealand and the USA, all played each other, in a series of six test matches, each lasting five days. As a result of the introduction of the lower tiers, our team was competing as England, rather Great Britain, for the first time since 1969.

GB had won the event since New Zealand last did so, in 1986, so England had something to prove. My excuse for the trip out there was to be one of Graeme Roberts' team of referees.

We were kitted out with what should have been distinctive red shirts, but which looked rather like the England kit when worn under a white top!

Much time was spent checking and supervising the re-setting of the hoops, to a clearance of 1/64th inch, or 0.4mm on the metric feeler gauges I'd brought for the purpose.

The hoops themselves were unfamiliar to most of the players, being made of uncoated stainless steel with square carrots to an adjustable design by Ted Atkins.

They seemed to reject hard, but misdirected, shots further than



conventional hoops and were also more difficult to run gently, but whether this resulted from their width or some aspect of their design needs investigation.

The first pair of tests: England v Australia and New Zealand v US was held at the United Club in Christchurch, on the South Island.

Sadly, the city was devastated by earthquakes three or four years ago and much of the city centre, including the cathedral, is in the process of being demolished, as the buildings are structurally unsound. Temporary shopping malls operate from shipping containers but fortunately, United escaped serious damage, though other clubs were not so fortunate.

The opening function was held in the clubhouse shared with an Old Boys rugby club (so copious supplies of beer).

After a welcome from the hosts, the teams, resplendent in their blazers, were introduced by their captains in turn and their singles order and doubles pairings revealed.

For singles, the teams had to rank their six players on current form (our order was Robert Fulford, James Death, David Maugham, Stephen Mulliner, Samir Patel and Jamie Burch), but had a free hand in arranging their three doubles pairs.

Each pair played the three opposing pairs, to give nine rubbers, and two rounds of six singles made up the 21 rubbers of each test. All rubbers were the best of three games, played to the laws of normal, rather than super-advanced play, which is not widely used outside the UK.

United has seven lawns: six original croquet lawns and a former bowling green, which had a sandier surface.

There had been heavy rain, with some courts flooded on the practice days; enough for the Manager, Kevin Fellows, to have made contingency plans to relocate if necessary, but fortunately there was no need. However, the lawns were less challenging than usual, which was disappointing for Chris Clarke, who maintains them.

Both opening tests got under way with a round of three doubles and all three England pairs each won the first games of their rubbers, though only Fulford and Patel had a convincing score.

They eventually won their rubber, as did Maugham and Burch, but Death and



NZ win

Mulliner had little further play, with two triples from Robert Fletcher.

The first day's score line of 2-1 to England became 7-2 after Tuesday's singles and then the New Year was seen in well with three more doubles wins, leaving our team needing just one more rubber from the final two days, for victory.

The match was wrapped up quickly enough and the final score, a resounding 16-5, made the Today programme's sports report as an antidote to the cricket!

Meanwhile, New Zealand had thrashed the USA 20-1.

The circus then moved to Hawkes Bay on the North Island, which necessitated a 7am flight for the teams keen to practice there.

Two venues were used at Marewa in Napier and Te Mata in Havelock North, which is about twenty minutes south.

Both were again very hospitable, with a local farm having provided copious quantities of the stone fruit for which the region is famous.

England beat the USA 18-3 at Te Mata, but New Zealand took rather longer to beat Australia, under much tougher conditions.

Indeed, several games had to be pegged down when darkness fell at 9 pm, and two rubbers were left unfinished, leaving the score at 15-4. Conditions might have been even tougher had the watering system not been left on too long one night, and heavy rain on the final day led to a dispute as to whether a lawn was playable.

So the stage was set for the expected showdown between England and New Zealand, which took place, together with the match to decide third place, at Mount Maunganui, about five hours drive north.

The previous venues had all been traditional croquet clubs, with homely wooden pavilions, but this was an altogether more lavish



The Mac

set-up, established three years ago, with six croquet lawns, three bowling greens and a large, two-storey clubhouse, with bar, restaurant and gaming room.

Apparently it was provided by the local council, in return for the croquet and bowls clubs giving up their previous sites, which were closer to the centre of town.

Rumours that the lawns would be easily paced proved to be correct, but they dried out rapidly in the sun and strong wind, leaving some treacherous patches round

the hoops as the tests progressed.

George Noble, one of a small band of England supporters, did his Geoff Boycott impersonation, scratching the surface with a key to check the amount of thatch. England took two early games in the opening doubles, but NZ reeled off the other six, five with triples, to take a 0-3 lead.

The second day was not much better, with Fulford and captain Patel, winning the only rubber to go to three games.

The highlight, for NZ, was Toby Garrison playing superbly to win a two-ball ending after Mulliner had TPO'd the NZ captain, Aaron

Westerby, who then completed a triple in the second game.

The resulting 1-5 deficit meant there was the possibility of England losing the test on the third day.

The odds of that shortened alarmingly when we then lost the first three singles to go 1-8 down, but Mulliner, Death and Fulford all won to leave honours even for the day but still trailing 4-8.

The final round of doubles saw the most difficult conditions. No peels were recorded

and the two rubbers that went to three games both took more than 11 hours!

Several of the spectators asked why there

were'n time limits, but only a small proportion of them stayed to find out why, missing a fascinating end to the match between Fulford and Patel and Garrison and Westerby.

Garrison was again involved in a two-ball ending, but this time it was Fulford who was coming from behind.

They both got to Rover, but neither was willing to risk taking position for it.

The referee, Liz Fleming, produced a copy of the impasse regulation, which both sides consulted before asking her to declare one. It provides that both balls are played from baulk, with no roquets being allowed until the turn after the hoop was scored, or the eleventh turn if earlier.

Golf Croquet players would have recognised the tactics, but ten turns later the clips were still on rover with neither ball in position, so another impasse was declared.

This time England won the toss: Fulford took position; Garrison missed a hard clearance into corner 3; Fulford ran the hoop and went between the peg and the West boundary; Garrison, now able to roquet, missed again, and Fulford pegged out.

Meanwhile, Maugham and Burch had completed an unheralded, but vital, marathon win against Greg Bryant and Jenny Clarke.

That left New Zealand needing two rubbers, and England five, of the six singles on the final day. It was not impossible for England, as NZ showed at Nottingham in 2010, but a mountain to climb nonetheless.

With only six lawns available for the two tests, only three of the singles could start first thing. The manager dismissed the possibility of double banking or delaying the doubles in the other test, (in which Australia had already beaten the USA), to get them all started together.

The upshot was that NZ won the first two rubbers to finish, the Mac winning rubber fittingly being taken by Garrison, whom



Maugham had beaten in the decider fourteen years ago.

The rest was anti-climax, although Death entertained the crowd with two sextuple attempts against his club-mate, Paddy Chapman.

So, well done to New Zealand, on their hosting and for wrestling the Shield from us, with a fine display of consistent shooting and break play under pressure from a strong England team.

It was announced at the closing ceremony that our first opportunity to regain it will be at Mission Hills, California, in April 2017.



Photographs (clockwise): The Shield defence started so well, Stephen Mulliner, Robert Fulford and Captain Samir Patel, new Champions NZ, David Maugham, Jamie Burch, a tricky Atkins Quadway hoop and (centre image) James Death. Images by Pamela & Graeme Roberts (Croquet NZ), except Death and hoop by Paddy Chapman and NZ team by Samir Patel.



The MacRobertson Shield results digest

England: Samir Patel (Captain), Jamie Burch, James Death, Robert Fulford, David Maugham, Stephen Mulliner.

New Zealand: Aaron Westerby (Captain), Greg Bryant, Paddy Chapman, Chris Clarke, Jenny Clarke, Toby Garrison.

Australia: Ian Dumergue (Captain), Ken Bald, Malcolm Fletcher, Robert Fletcher, Stephen Forster, Tim O'Leary.

USA: Danny Huneycutt (Captain), Jim Bast, Rich Lamm, David Maloof, Ben Rothman, Jeff Soo.

England v Australia (16-5)

30 December 2013 to 3 January 2014
United Club, Christchurch

Death & Mulliner lost to R.Fletcher & Forster +2tpo(D) -22tp(RF) -25tp(RF); Fulford & Patel beat Bald & M.Fletcher +22tp(P) -11 +26tp(F); Burch & Maugham beat Dumergue & O'Leary +4 +17.

(Day one: 2-1)

Fulford beat Forster +17, +3; Death lost to R.Fletcher -7otp, -26tp; Maugham beat Dumergue +4, +17tp; Mulliner beat Bald +17, +2; Patel beat O'Leary +26, -26, +11; Burch beat M.Fletcher +9, +26.**(Day two: 7-2)**

Death & Mulliner beat Dumergue & O'Leary +11tpo(M) +4; Burch & Maugham beat Bald & M.Fletcher +5 -19 +19; Fulford & Patel beat R.Fletcher & Forster -21 +16 +26tp(P).

(Day three: 10-2)

Fulford lost to R.Fletcher -17, -25; Death beat Forster +13, +26tp; Maugham beat Bald +24, +6 Mulliner beat Dumergue +17, +19; Patel lost to Malcolm Fletcher -6, -16; Burch beat O'Leary +7, -16, +7. **(Day four: 14-4)**

Death & Mulliner lost to Bald & M.Fletcher -11, -16; Burch & Maugham beat R.Fletcher & Forster +25, +2; Fulford & Patel beat Ian Dumergue & O'Leary +25, +16. **(Day five, final score: 16-5)**

New Zealand v USA (20-1)

England v USA (18-3)

5-9 January 2014

Te Mata Croquet Club, Havelock North

Death & Mulliner beat Soo & Lamm +21, -3, +17 Burch & Maugham beat Bast & Huneycutt +12, +26; Fulford & Patel lost to Rothman & Maloof -9, -5. **(Day one: 2-1)**

Fulford & Patel beat Soo & Rich Lamm +26tp(F), +16; Burch & Maugham beat Rothman & Maloof +3, +3; Death & Mulliner beat Bast & Huneycutt +15, +7. **(Day two: 5-1)**

Fulford beat Huneycutt +26tp, +22; Death beat Rothman +21tp, +26tp; Maugham beat Maloof +13, +26tp; Mulliner beat Soo +25, +19; Patel beat Bast +6, +23; Burch beat Lamm +2, -7, +15 **(Day three: 11-1)**; Fulford & Patel beat Bast & Huneycutt +17, -10, +8; Burch Maugham beat Soo & Lamm +10, -18, +24; Death & Mulliner beat Rothman & Maloof +2, +3tpo(D). **(Day four: 14-1)** Fulford lost to Rothman -26, +9, -17tp; Death beat Huneycutt -6, +24tp, +13tp; Maugham beat Soo +22tp, +10; Mulliner lost to Maloof -17tp, +6tpo, -16; Patel beat Lamm +17, +26tp; Burch beat Bast -7, +24tp, +13tp. **(Day five, final score: 18-3)**

New Zealand v Australia (15-4)

England v New Zealand (7-13)

11-15 January 2014,

Mount Maunganui

Burch & Maugham lost to Garrison & Westerby -18tp(W), -16; Fulford & Patel lost to C.Clarke & Chapman +26tp(F), -25tp(CC), -5tp(CC); Death & Mulliner lost to Bryant & J.Clarke +26, -26tp(B), -19tp(B). **(Day one: 0-3)**

Burch & Maugham lost to C.Clarke & Chapman -11, -26tp(CC); Fulford & Patel beat Bryant & Jenny Clarke +17tp(F), -7tp(B), +4tpo(P); Death & Mulliner lost to Garrison & Westerby -20tp(M), -26tp(W). **(Day two: 1-5)**

Fulford beat Chapman +13tpo, +23tp; Death beat C.Clarke +12tpo, +7; Maugham lost to Westerby -19, -14; Mulliner beat Bryant +26, -2, +17; Patel lost to J Clarke -17tp, -15; Burch lost to Garrison -15tp, +5, -15tp. **(Day three: 4-8)**

Burch & Maugham beat Bryant & J.Clarke -4, +7, +17; Fulford & Patel beat Garrison & Westerby +6, +2; Death & Mulliner lost to C.Clarke & Chapman -15, +17, -24. **(Day four: 6-9)**

Fulford lost to C.Clarke -24, -10; Death lost to Chapman -7tp, -14tp; Maugham v Bryant - not played; Mulliner lost to Westerby -17, -25; Patel lost to Garrison -13, -11; Burch beat J.Clarke -26, +17, +3. **(Day five, final score: 7-13)**

Australia v USA (17-4)

1 New Zealand 3 tests (48-12)

2 England 2 tests (41-21)

3 Australia 1 test (26-35)

4 USA 0 tests (8-55)

Individual player statistics
(matches and games, wins and losses)

	Total		Singles		Doubles	
	M	G	M	G	M	G
1 Clarke C	14-1	28-7	5-1	10-4	9-0	18-3
2 Chapman	13-2	26-7	4-2	8-4	9-0	18-3
3 Westerby	12-2	26-7	5-1	11-2	7-1	15-5
4 Burch	12-3	25-13	5-1	11-6	7-2	14-7
5 Clarke J	11-3	26-12	5-1	11-4	6-2	15-8
6 Garrison	11-3	24-10	4-2	9-5	7-1	15-5
7 Maugham	11-3	22-9	4-1	8-2	7-2	14-7
8 Fulford	10-5	22-14	3-3	7-6	7-2	15-8
9 Patel	10-5	22-15	3-3	7-7	7-2	15-8
10 Fletcher R	9-4	23-11	5-1	11-2	4-3	12-9
11 Bryant	9-4	23-12	3-2	8-4	6-2	15-8
12 Mulliner	8-7	20-16	4-2	9-5	4-5	11-11
13 Death	8-7	19-16	4-2	8-5	4-5	11-11
14 Forster	6-7	17-19	2-4	5-10	4-3	12-9
15 Fletcher M	6-9	15-22	3-3	6-8	3-6	9-14
16 Dumergue	6-9	13-19	3-3	6-7	3-6	7-12
17 O'Leary	5-10	14-22	2-4	7-10	3-6	7-12
18 Bald	4-11	11-24	1-5	2-10	3-6	9-14
19 Maloof	4-11	11-25	2-4	5-10	2-7	6-15
20 Rothman	3-12	7-26	1-5	3-11	2-7	4-15
21 Huneycutt	2-13	8-26	2-4	5-8	0-9	3-1
22 Soo	1-14	8-28	1-5	3-10	0-9	5-18
23 Bast	0-15	6-30	0-6	3-12	0-9	3-18
24 Lamm	0-15	4-30	0-6	1-12	0-9	3-18

Results provided by www.croquet-scores.com



The main focus for the last four months has been on administering the WCF Management Committee elections and no fewer than ten WCF Council decisions, these latter using the new e-mail voting system.

This has replaced the old and rather ponderous procedure which relied on WCF Council Meetings to take decisions on all matters other than elections.

The new method has been appreciated by the WCF Members as reflected in the healthy voting responses.

Following the MC elections, we welcomed Pete Landrebe (Australia), Roberts Stafeckis (Latvia) and Geoff Young (New Zealand) to the WCF Management Committee and said goodbye with many thanks to Stephen Meatheringham (Australia) and Gordon Smith (New Zealand).

The MC runs the WCF on a day-to-day



Window on the WCF

by Stephen Mulliner,
Secretary-General



on the experience of players.

These include the approval of the new Golf Croquet Rules, the seeding method for the knock-out section of future

basis using e-mail and fortnightly Skype conference calls.

The system is working well and the MC benefits from the wide experience of its members, drawn from both the world of croquet and outside.

With an eye to the future, the WCF Council has established a Governance Working Group to review all aspects of how the WCF operates.

It is always healthy to look at processes every few years to see what improvements can be made and we look forward to the Group's report in the course of the year.

Referring to the recent WCF Council decisions, seven were purely administrative but three have, or will have, a direct bearing

Golf Croquet World Championships and the process by which places in World Championships are allocated.

The latter will be based largely on positions in the latest ranking list and should prove more objective and transparent and easier to administer.

Following the completion of the MacRobertson Shield in January, the next twelve months contains no fewer than three WCF events, namely Tiers 2.1 and 2.2 of the Association Croquet World Team Championships in Ireland and England in May, and the Over-50 Golf Croquet World Championship and the Women's Golf Croquet World Championship, in Cairo in October and November respectively.

Lawn Care

DON'T DAMAGE THE SWARD

writes Duncan Hector

The fact is that fine grasses do not like being disturbed and root damage caused by over-enthusiastic use of verticutters and scarifiers can do much more harm than good.

The best time of year for verticutting and scarification is the autumn so that the sward has time to recover before the season begins.

Some lawn mowers such as the Allett, have an integral groomer with blades that counter-rotate and are set at 2mm above the soil which is ideal for in-season use.

The groomer teases out dead fibrous material and thus reduces the production of thatch with the added benefit that lawn speed is improved.

The increased lawn speed means that you can raise the cut height without reducing playing speed.

DO AERATE

So, if you aren't going to scarify in the spring, what should be done about moss?

This should have been controlled in the autumn and winter but, if you don't have an effective programme in place, moss needs

to be controlled immediately.

After two weeks this can be groomed or very lightly scarified but most will have to be left in the sward and will become part of the thatch layer.

If the root zone conditions are right, thatch can be consumed by bacteria and micro-organisms.

Just like us, micro-organisms need air and water to survive and if these are in short supply or completely deficient it is obvious that their activity will be substantially reduced or cease altogether.

Two things that prevent water and air reaching the root zone are thatch and compaction.

Aeration punches through these and should be performed on a monthly basis as this will encourage

bacterial activity and help to keep the thatch layer under control.

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Redundant green snapped up at Great Bedwyn

When Woking and Surbiton member **Yvonne Cunnane**

came across a redundant bowling green in the village of Great Bedwyn near Marlborough, her first thought was, 'This would be ideal for croquet!'

Yvonne knew little of how to go about establishing a croquet club completely from scratch, but as she soon found out, help was at hand from a variety of sources.

Knowing her way around the CA structure, she soon approached the development officers of both the Southern and South-West Federations, Chris Roberts and Robert Moss respectively, for advice, and for good measure she spoke with the South-East man Michael Hague too.

It was the latter who recognised the redundant bowls green situation as similar to one he had advised on before, when the now thriving Cheam CC was formed under the watchful eye of Ian and Jean Cobbold a couple of years ago.

A playing surface is the most crucial thing when starting a new club and one's fortune doesn't get much better than finding an available bowls green!

Yvonne reports that Great Bedwyn is a charming village with many thatched cottages, a population of about 1,000 and is located on the Kennet and Avon canal half way between Hungerford and Marlborough with a direct train service to Paddington.

Most crucially however, it is in a 'croquet

desert' and there are no other croquet clubs in a 20-mile radius.

"This has the benefit that we are unlikely to be poaching members from any other club" said Yvonne.

The Southern Federation immediately supplied some hoops and mallets to get Great Bedwyn under way and subsequently the CA supplied a start-up kit of full court equipment to the fledgling club.

"We could not have started the club without this fantastic support," said Yvonne.

Husband Joe stumped up for a 24-inch cut Atco mower that was secured off eBay and local Bunny Cox, who had maintained the bowls green prior to its previous closure, volunteered to assist with the new equipment purchase.

Yvonne decided that it would be a good idea to maintain the bowls link, even if only in name at this stage, and The Great Bedwyn Croquet and Bowls Club opened in mid-October, which is acknowledged as being quite a bizarre time to start.

"The decision was motivated by the need to get the club established as soon as possible and demonstrate its validity to the charity leasing the green to us. I had promoted the idea that the lawn could be used throughout the year," she said.

"Our opening session was a great success with Woking coach Bernard Jones and Surbiton player Richard Bird kindly coming along to inspire, and within three weeks the club had a dozen paid-up members.

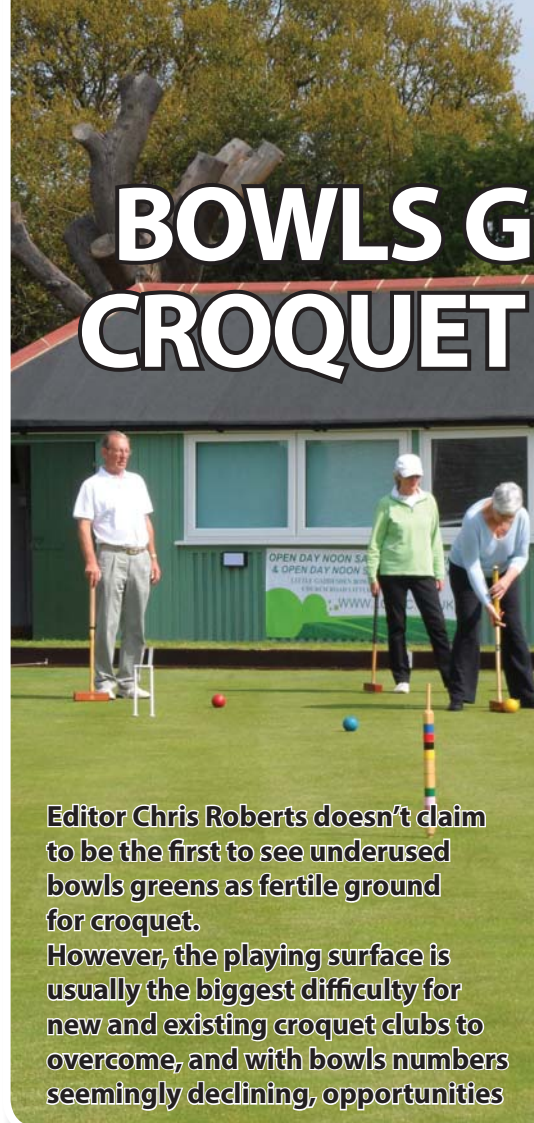
"The lawn is flat and improving in speed all the time. It was like playing on shag pile when we started!

"Scarifying it improved it immensely, so now it's more like playing on Wilton!"

As well as the 'fabulous find' of the actual green, there is even a charming clubhouse on the site and it's in a good state to boot.

"It is too big for our sole use," said Yvonne. "It has 55 chairs in it! I am busy trying to find alternative uses for the space by perhaps introducing a snooker or table tennis table."

Thus far, marketing the club has been confined to the parish magazine but will be extended to Hungerford and Marlborough towns in April. The Southern Federation and CA have both pledged modest sums to kick-start that bigger push for members.



Editor Chris Roberts doesn't claim to be the first to see underused bowls greens as fertile ground for croquet.

However, the playing surface is usually the biggest difficulty for new and existing croquet clubs to overcome, and with bowls numbers seemingly declining, opportunities

Co-existence at Ch

The Cheam Croquet & Bowls Club was started in March 2012 following an approach by the London Borough of Sutton Council to the Croquet Association about the use of a redundant bowling green., writes **Ian Cobbold**.

(See the article in the August 2012 Gazette).

The Club currently has 90 members, of whom 77 prefer playing croquet and 13 mainly play bowls. All but a handful of the members had not played croquet seriously before joining the Club.

Cheam has played a number of croquet friendly matches over the two seasons it has been in operation and last summer entered teams in the SECF'S GC Handicap League and the SECF'S GC Teams Day at Southwick, to give the most enthusiastic members a chance to develop competitive play.

We only have one lawn and combining



REENS to COURTS



for sharing facilities or taking on redundant greens are increasing. Maybe there is just such a potential croquet court languishing near you? Chris asked the leading lights behind three recently launched clubs to tell their tales of turning bowling greens into croquet courts.

eam – two years on

croquet and bowls has not proved to be an issue at all.

The bowlers have found that playing over the hoop holes is not a problem, even though our frequent requirement to divide the area into half lawns results in too many hoop holes for the bowlers to avoid them.

So far the bowlers have only played socially amongst themselves as there are not enough of them to play matches, but clearly the condition of the lawn would not be an impediment if their number increases.

Cheam is open all the year; however, because we have found that the bowls woods quickly cause damage to the lawn once it becomes wet, the bowls season stops around the end of September.

Instead, this year the bowlers organised their own winter croquet and have now challenged us to a match at our own game!



Croquet enterprise rescues flagging bowls club at Little Gaddesden

Little Gaddesden Bowls and Croquet Club has managed successfully to team up bowling and croquet play on the same green, writes

Marika Graham-Woods

The former bowls club close to Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, Tring, Aylesbury, Luton and Dunstable was looking run-down, and membership was flagging with little hope for a reversal in its decline.

That was until 2009, when a local Berkhamsted resident, and former Phyllis Court AC player Angela Searle, approached the existing bowls club to enquire whether they would be interested in forming a croquet section.

Although the lawn is slightly smaller than a traditional croquet court and the clubhouse needed a facelift, the benefits were obvious.

On offer was a potentially nice clubhouse with a bar and facilities and a good lawn, all in an idyllic setting in the heart of the village of Little Gaddesden.

The croquet playing catchment area would span twenty-five miles in all directions

Previously, many existing croquet players living locally were traveling considerable distances to play.

An additional benefit was that local competitive standard croquet players could join LGBCC for a relatively modest fee and use the club for practice as well as to arrange to play with friends without difficulty.

There was the added benefit that some of the bowls members already played croquet.

The bowls club would benefit too with club increased membership overall, additional revenue, better utilisation of the green and a wider participation by local people in that sport.

With a radical upgrade to the clubhouse facilities, croquet membership started in 2010 supported by a first-year loaned CA croquet set, and beginner coaching by existing croquet players.

Membership uptake was good despite

ghastly weather throughout the playing season.

Up to a dozen players would meet to play golf croquet on Sunday afternoons and association players met during the week.

The former bowls club permanently recognised the croquet section by renaming the club to incorporate both sports.

In subsequent years, croquet captain Brenda Theobald has instituted CA handicapping, and the croquet membership and playing quality has increased steadily.

The emphasis now is to develop competitive croquet skills through coaching development and friendly tournaments at the club.

Increasing time has been allocated to croquet play so the future for our sport and the club as a whole looks healthy.

To emphasise the symbiosis of introducing croquet to declining bowls clubs, founding croquet representative Angela Searle and club chairman Marika Graham-Woods presented the section with their first croquet trophies, in what looks like an enduring home at Little Gaddesden for the game we love.

Please contact Croquet Captain Brenda Theobald on 01442 251560 or brenda.theobald4@gmail.com and for more information visit www.LGBCC.co.uk or via the link from the CA website.



Liverpool C C - at long last

James Hawkins reports that 2014 will see the fruits of his labour

Long-standing readers may recall plans I had to start a new club in Liverpool.

To cut a long story short, I found a public park that no one wanted, I approached the City Council and they gave me the thumbs-up to do whatever I liked.

Big patch of flat ground; nice residential area; blank canvas to develop the game in an area where there's no other provision within 25 miles.

The stumbling block, and it turned out to be a deal-breaker, was having no clubhouse.

The project faltered, and all went quiet.

Some while later, I found another venue - this time a decent clubhouse and a derelict patch of grass.

With imagination and hard work, this could be a different proposition, and quite a special project.

Sefton Park lies in the suburb of Aigburth in South Liverpool.

The National Lottery recently sank several million into its restoration, and English Heritage have granted it Grade 1 listed status.

It's home to the world's oldest tennis club (depending on how you measure 'oldest'), the Mersey Bowmen.

They were formed as an archery club in 1781, and relocated to Sefton Park when it opened, just a year after the invention of lawn tennis.

Now, 140 years on, they're in a sorry state of underinvestment.

I caught them just in time before they closed their doors for good and I've spent four years giving their abandoned grass courts some love.

Once, before they were covered in weeds, moss and broken glass, they were flat enough for championship play and so far, I've rescued enough for two full sized croquet lawns, with plans for another two.

The club's last-gasp attempt to replace the dangerously crumbling tarmac courts resulted in a £50,000 grant from Sport

England.

Those came into use a year ago, but the biggest worry has been the rat-infested, vandalised, damp hellhole of a clubhouse.

This really is a ghastly building, and the tennis players have lived with it so long that they've forgotten how great an asset it could be.

For me, as a croquet player, somewhere secure to store hoops, or to have a cup of tea, to run a coaching lesson or to entertain visitors is a pretty important element.

So, while biblical floods ruined the 2012 croquet season, I sat indoors filling in application forms.

There's no guarantee of success, especially if you're applying for another £50,000 from the same pot you've dipped into six months previously.

Nevertheless, Sport England granted us the money in January 2013, and building work started in March.

A year has passed, and the reconstruction has been a long process.

Getting £70,000 worth of work for £50,000 means you'll compromise on (a) cost, (b) quality or (c) time, and I've done well to get Paul, my tame tennis-playing builder, to go way above the original spec whilst sticking to the budget - *But very slowly.*

The downside is that Liverpool Croquet Club's 2013 season - and the first one in seven years with sunshine - took a backseat to building work.

I spent a lot of time managing budgets, buying tile adhesive, painting the kitchen, and expressing exasperation at lazy tennis-players.

The finished clubhouse is quite spectacular - High ceilings with exposed iron beams, a separate bar and kitchen, changing rooms, storage rooms, a wet room, and separate equipment shed for mowers.

It bodes well for 2014

"I now have the facilities, and the next task is to get people playing."

The newly refurbished clubhouse at Liverpool. The plaster frieze above the door to the bar pre-dates the rest of the building and can be traced back to the Mersey Bowmen's origins as an archery club in the 18th century.
Photograph by James Hawkins

CA grant helps renew their



The last stage of Cheltenham's lawns renovation is well under way with the four courts that are directly in front of the Clubhouse, numbers 1, 2, 7 and 8, being completely relaid, **writes Klim Seabright.**

Turf removal, levelling with laser precision and reseeding has been undertaken at a cost of £16,000, and a partial CA grant is currently under consideration.

Completion of the works will mean that all eleven courts have had similar treatment in the last ten years.



Cheltenham show courts



How times have changed since 1904, when the first foot was enthusiastically placed on these courts at Cheltenham: Mr Rolls was signing an agreement with Mr Royce, and the speed limit was 20 mph.

Meanwhile on the 'other side of the pond' the game of Roque was included in the Olympic Games and saw the USA take a clean sweep of the medals...but then they were the only country to enter a team!

Back to the present, and Cheltenham expect these four renovated courts to be playable as early as June.

Coping with high hospitality numbers the Kenilworth way

Hospitality events are great revenue earners but how do you accommodate large numbers all at the same time? Kenilworth CC has come up with a novel idea, as Ray Clipson explains.

Recently a new pavilion at Kenilworth was financed in part by a CA grant, with balance met by the tennis and squash club of which our club is part. This decision was helped by recognition of the income generated by us hosting hospitality events for local organisations.

Kenilworth has only two lawns, so for these hospitality events one is laid out as two half-lawns, leaving the other free for use by members. Guests used to just turn up and play doubles, sometimes double banked, supervised by club members, but even with starts from each baulk and best-of-seven hoops and peg, there was often congestion making it a challenge to complete three games within three hours.

Five years and about fifty visits later, structured arrangements have been developed that now work slickly. Guest organisations are sent a one-page briefing describing golf croquet, how it is to be played and how the visit will be organised, plus a plan of the playing route.

We use a route (pictured right) allowing two doubles matches to be played on each half lawn without crossing and virtually eliminating delays, with up to 16 people playing at the same time.

The four corner flags are re-positioned to identify the corners to which players are sent to start their game. A display board offers a reminder of the route and signs are put on to each hoop.

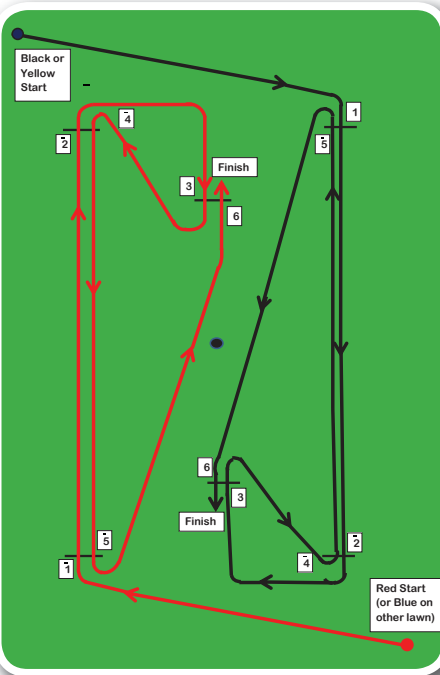
Games are all started at the same time, producing a win by the couple first to four hoops or a draw at three all. This reduces the duration of tight games. The three points (or two for a draw) are awarded to both players of the winning teams who are paired for a sequence of four games played as a mini-league.

As guests arrive they are allocated to form



the teams and are given a self-adhesive label with their team letter, the sequence of start points and the colour of the ball they will be playing with in each of their four games. Some have a rôle as either route-master or score-keeper.

Evening sessions are the norm, with a usual start time of 18.30. The system allows four games within two and a quarter hours – 45 minutes for the first game and 30 minute games thereafter. Even in



mid-September there is time to complete the programme in advance of a meal at half past eight.

Further help and advice can be had from John Copping on copping.jl@gmail.com.



Wider still

How wide is a croquet ball?
3 5/8 inches right?

*Pause for more thought says
Nick Parish*

Picture the scene - it's the final of the Club Handicap and it's been nip and tuck.

You have made it to peg and 4-back but unfortunately your opponent has hit and has made it to peg and peg.

She's made a leave by the side of the lawn with a rush to the peg, so you must shoot and hit to avoid defeat.

You have three things going for you: first, she's left your 4-back ball with the shortest shot; second, it has a perfect double target at her balls; and third, you have an incredible ability to judge distances accurately.

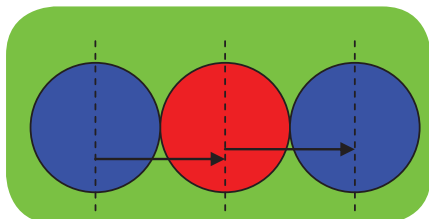
You know that you have an 18-yard shot at her balls which are a perfect double

(i.e. there is a gap of exactly one ball's width between them)

or a 10-yard shot at your partner ball.

Which should you take?

You reason that a single ball target is, in effect, three balls wide – you can either just



snick it on the left, hit it full on, or just snick it on the right.

By the same reasoning a perfect double target is five balls wide.

So, you reason, as the double target is two-thirds wider, it must be right to take that shot if it is no more than two-thirds further away – or in other words, a single ball target at 10 yards is equivalent to a perfect double at 16.6 yards.

As the double is further away than that, you take the 10-yarder.

Unfortunately you miss by a coat of paint, and lose the game.

Luckily all is not lost, as the final is best-of-three. The second game, unbelievably, is even closer. At the crunch you and your



opponent have each pegged one ball out, with both remaining balls for the peg.

It is your turn, and this time you have the option of a 10-yard shot at the peg or an 18-yard shot at your opponent.

Either will win the game for you if you hit but is very likely to lose it if you miss.

What do you do?

You're not exactly sure how much wider a ball is than the peg, but in the absence of a tape-measure you guess a ball is about twice as wide.

In that case, you reason, it must be right to shoot at the peg, only if it is less than half the distance of the ball.

It isn't, so you shoot at the ball.

Again you miss by a whisker, your opponent pegs out and you slope off home with a slight sense of unease about your decision-making and in distinct need of a drink.

You'll have worked out that I wouldn't be writing this article if your choices had been correct

The key to understanding why they were wrong is in the slightly odd question "How wide is a croquet ball?".

That question sounds pretty basic, but actually it isn't – and if you understand what the correct answer is, it will help you make the right choice when faced with decisions like the above.

It seems obvious that a croquet ball is a target of three balls wide - Figure 1 (*left*)

and wider . .

demonstrates that. If shooting blue at red, you can just snick it on one side or the other, or you can hit it in the middle – i.e. a target of three balls' width.

Unfortunately, although that sounds obvious, it's also wrong.

The reason for that is you are measuring from the left-hand edge of the left-hand ball to the right-hand edge of the right-hand ball – and that isn't comparing like with like.

To get an accurate measurement, you must measure from a fixed point on the left-hand ball to the same point on the right-hand ball. You can use any point you like.

In Figure 1 I've taken the centre of the ball.

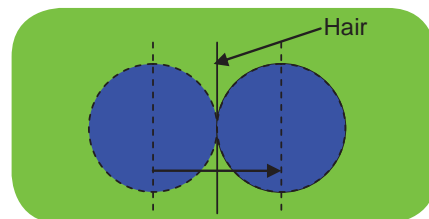
As that shows, measuring from the centre of the left-hand ball to the centre of the right-hand ball reveals that the exact width of a single-ball target for hitting purposes is actually two balls.

By the same reasoning, a perfect double target is four balls wide (not five), and a target of two balls just touching each other is actually three balls wide, not four.

If you find that a difficult concept, you're not alone – I found it a very unintuitive idea when I first came across it.

One way of thinking about it is to imagine the thinnest possible target. Consider an emaciated hair on a diet that would make the edge of a sheet of tinfoil look fat.

It should be intuitively obvious that such



a narrow target is only one ball's width. And if you use the fixed point measurement, as described above, it is (*see Figure 2 above*).

But if you measure from the left-hand edge of the left-hand ball to the right-hand edge of the right-hand ball, that suggests the target is two balls' width – which is clearly wrong.

If that hasn't convinced you, just take it on trust for the rest of this article, and next time we meet at a tournament I'll try to convince you over a pint

So, let's return to your final and consider how that helps you choose the right shot.

The basic reasoning you employed was absolutely right – broadly speaking, a target of twice the width is a better shot provided

it's no more than twice as far away.

Where you erred was in not using the correct width of each target.

A single-ball is a target of two balls' width while a perfect double (remembering that that's two balls with a gap of exactly one ball's width between them) is four balls' width. So if the single ball is 10 yards away, a perfect double is a better target if it is less than 20 yards away.

Which is why you should have shot at the 18-yard double.

What about the choice between a shot at a ball or the peg?

The principles are exactly the same.

You don't actually have to know exactly how much wider a ball is than the peg, since getting it roughly right is good enough, but in fact the ball is 2.4167 times wider – or to put it the other way round, a peg is 0.414 of a ball.

As we have shown, a single ball is a target of two balls' width and a peg is a target of 1.414 balls' width. $2/1.414 = 1.415$.

That means that a ball is 41.5% wider than the peg, and so very roughly, a shot of 10 yards at the peg is equivalent to a shot of 14.15 yards at a single ball.

You don't have to go through the maths every time, of course – you can simply remember the 41.5% figure (heck, 40% is all you need in practice).

But I have gone into a bit of detail because it is important to avoid the elementary mistake of thinking that you can simply compare the actual widths of the targets - that does not work.

A moment's thought will confirm this – if

you have the choice of a shot at a hair of 1mm or a ball, the latter is about 100 times wider than the former but it is quite obvious that you are more likely to hit a hair from a yard away than a ball at 99 yards away.

You need to convert both into balls' widths and then compare the two, which reveals that actually the ball is twice the width of the hair. For croquet purposes, at any rate.

You might be thinking that the situations where you have these choices occur very rarely – and to some extent, that's true.

But if you have a lift, whether a wiring lift or because of advanced play, the scenario suddenly becomes much more probable because it is pretty common to be able to create a perfect double according to where you take your lift from.

When taking a lift against a diagonal spread or NSL (new standard leave), for example, you will often have the option of making a perfect double target of the opponent's balls by shooting from B-baulk near hoop 3. Alternatively you can take the short shot from the end of A-baulk at a single ball target.

Although there are other factors to take into account here – such as how easy a start you give your opponent if you miss – it is essential to understand the basic probabilities of hitting the two targets.

Additionally, the principles here can be used even when the target isn't a perfect double. Perhaps you are thinking of shooting at opponent's balls 30 yards away, separated by a gap of about three balls' width in the middle. That's a total target of

six balls' width – so your chances of hitting or going between the two balls, is similar to a shot at a single ball target 10 yards away.

Of course there is the not insignificant risk of going through the middle, but at least you have somewhere to start your decision-making from.

Similarly, you might have a shot of 25 yards at a single ball with a further half a ball sticking out behind it – that's a target of two and a half balls' width and so is equivalent to a shot of 20 yards at a single ball target.

So, if you thought the answer to the question in the title of this article was a simple $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches, I hope I have given you pause for thought.

It isn't an easy concept – the genesis of this article lay in a conversation I had with an opponent at the World Championships last year who was not familiar with it.

But get it right, and there's one fewer decision you can get wrong in this great game of ours.

Nick Parish

Photograph opposite: Hugh Carlisle lines up long roquet at Hurlingham. (image by Chris Roberts)



Such is Colin Irwin's dedication to **Bowdon CC** that he delivered his AGM Presidential Remarks via a Skype call from his Florida holiday.

As the meeting was at 11am, this necessitated Colin making a call at 5am 'Florida time', so that 54 Club members could not only hear but also see him speak, thanks to Alan Mayne's aching arms that held 'Colin' aloft.

(Photograph by Ken Cooper)

Club Shorts

Letchworth CC's Social Secretary Sue Bathmaker organised a Quiz Night in November and made over £1000, **reports Duncan Hector.**

The club only has seventy members but by encouraging them to bring friends, she was able to attract thirteen teams totalling over ninety people.

Watford Croquet Club sent a team – 'The Cassioberries' – who travelled from thirty miles away to support.

Club member Jeremy Scott was the Quiz Master and his wife Carol, a professional caterer, provided a two course meal for just £3.50 per head!

Profits made from the ticket price, bar and raffle totalled a fantastic £1048.

Colin Gregory's team, 'The Magnanimous



Seven' (pictured above by Duncan Hector) won the quiz with the Cassioberries a close second. The only team with a croquet inspired name was 'Cock-a-Hoop' who blobbed badly and came last.

~

Here a 'nice bit of triv' from Kevin Carter - Question: At which club, has one sextuple been completed, but no triples? Answer: Ashby CC - James Death completed an SXP in a handicap game.

Bright, Competitive but not Athletic

The personal musings of Martin French, on the problem of potential top player recruitment

Over the past couple of years, some clubs have seen real contention between the GC and AC players, which always seems a pity to me.

Last season at a local club, in the space of an hour, I had players tell me that "that AC lot aren't very friendly" then "the trouble with these GC players is they don't contribute anything to the club" – this way to oblivion!

The CA's statistics show croquet is growing steadily and has been for some time. There are more clubs than ever, and more people playing at those clubs.

The thing that's declining is tournament play – particularly in AC and new young players at the top end.

It seems to me both really unhelpful to blame the new recruits playing GC for the reduction in AC play at a club – and more importantly, I believe it actually distracts us from recognising and addressing the real issue.

There are two things happening to the croquet population, and it is a mistake to assume they are causally linked:

Firstly the demographic of New Retirees / Early Retirees is growing quite quickly (Baby Boomers and all that) and also the expectations of this group have changed. More expect to have an active time in retirement rather than just watching day time telly.

For example, the University of the 3rd Age is expanding - I'm told the Ipswich group has 2,000 members, who spend much of their time in a wide variety of activities organised by their membership. These activities can be anything from learning a language, to ballroom dancing.

One of these activities for the Ipswich U3A is croquet - the U3A group were very keen and played on into the cold of November! Of the first such group we ran, a surprisingly high proportion have joined our croquet club, rather than just sticking to coming along once a week as part of the U3A group

It is this demographic that is leading to the steady growth in CA and club membership numbers in the UK. In many cases, they are not after a deeply competitive experience and for some, croquet will remain the 'slot in their diaries on every other Thursday, between Learning French and Art Appreciation'.

But the extra subscription income this

growing demographic brings to clubs should be very welcome and my own club has more than doubled its membership in a season, mostly from this age group.

The second thing that has happened is the disappearance from the croquet population of the demographic which produced the waves of great new young players around 1980, and then again in the mid/late 80s, which could be termed Bright, Competitive But Not Athletic.

Many of the current England, Scotland or Wales top players came from these two waves, and are now in their 40s or 50s. It is recruits from this group that we lack.

The first wave included Aiton, Hyne, Peterson, Hilditch, Harrison, Gunasekera, Avery and Walters, among others. They either knew each other from University or were the same age and met on the croquet circuit and sparked off each other. This little



group includes a World Champion, three MacRobertson Shield players and the 2010 GB England captain.

The second wave were late teenagers when they burst onto the scene, and included Fulford, Clarke, Maugham, Cornelius, Burrige (*above*), the Saurin and Palmer brothers, Reeve, Collighan, and several others. More of these met up on the croquet circuit and again the competition drove them on to new heights of performance. So far, seven World Championships between two of them, and 21 GB appearances by six of them in the MacRobertson Shield.

These waves have been the bedrock of the GB domination of world class AC in the past two decades but since then, there have only been dribbles rather than waves.

I have spent some time considering why.

In the 80s, there weren't many options for the Bright, Competitive But Not Athletic youngster. Other than croquet, there was chess, scrabble, bridge, snooker and perhaps bowls. Some of these games or sports have also seen a steep decline in new

recruits in the past decade. Why?

Nowadays, the options for the Bright, Competitive But Not Athletic youngster are much wider and more attractive - and most revolve around the internet.

There are huge on-line communities playing massively multi-player games, intergalactic trading games, role-playing games etc., sometimes individually but often in clans and cohorts. These let people play together and against each other in stimulating and diverse competitions. The entry cost is low and the rate of innovation of new games is high.

There is also positive peer pressure to be in such groups and to play these games. Don't dismiss these games as solitary occupations either: Many games now provide an "instant messenger" facility so players can type or even talk to other people in their team, anywhere in the world, as the game unfolds.

The social side is important and attractive to many. My two sons (21 and 24) fit this demographic – one son has flown to the USA four times to meet up with "clan members" from Texas, Alaska and Sweden, with whom he plays regularly. Other clan members have flown to the UK recently to meet up with him too.

Both sons have been exposed to croquet and one plays a little. I asked them their thoughts on croquet - why didn't they or their friends consider it? Their answers included: "When I go to the Club it's all old people" and "I have a wide range of exciting and varied games to play from my PC".

I believe if we want to reverse the decline in competitive croquet in the UK – particularly new recruits who might become very good - this is the problem we have to address. Blaming the rise in New Retirees / Early Retirees playing (mainly) GC as the cause of the decline of competitive croquet is simplistic and mistaken.

So what should we do?

First we need to make sure we understand the problem. For example, we could ask all those CA members with teenage or older children to go through a short questionnaire with their kids: What do they think of when they think of croquet, have they tried it, do they still play it, what games or sports do they play instead?

I suspect we also need to revisit how we attract youngsters and introduce them to

the game. Some think if we start everyone on GC, few will ever try AC – perhaps they're right. On the other hand, it does allow them to get playing immediately, and "immediate gratification" is something internet games can offer.

In contrast, the CA's AC Coaching Manual is comprehensive – but at 108 pages, only the very keenest will survive the first few sessions to come back for more.

I think we need to make it much easier and more attractive to start playing AC and Duncan Hector seems to have a great, new approach at Bygrave Croquet Club, which could be an answer.

Instead of either starting beginners with GC, with one ball AC, or with the full weight of the CA's AC Coaching Manual, they start on Garden Croquet.

With a minimum of explanation of the rules or tactics, they get them started playing, then add details and rules only as situations arise. We've had a first experiment with this approach at Ipswich too – I think it stands a very good chance of increasing the proportion of new Bright, Competitive But Not Athletic people who come back for a second go.

Of course, the big challenge is how to get more such people interested in even giving it a first go!

Stop Press

Croquet Development - Sports Management postgraduate Chris Brown will be undertaking an internship with the CA to look at ways of developing the sport.

Chris has worked for a number of national governing bodies, including Netball and Korfball and was involved with the successful 'Back to Netball' initiative. He volunteered his services and the Marketing Committee have taking him up on this generous offer and asked him to develop some ideas.

He has had an introduction to playing croquet from Nick Mounfield and is now starting to gather information about the sport and look at how to develop competitive players, particularly from younger age groups.

He will be contacting players and clubs over the next few months, so if you do get a call your contribution will be gratefully received. If you have any suggestions, or want to contact Chris, you can do so through the CA Office or find his details on the CA website Members' Area.

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