

The

Issue 352 October 2014

CROQUET

Gazette



**Burch wins AC
President's Cup**

**Mulliner &
Fulford share
GC honours**

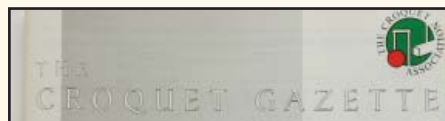
**Ormerod wins
GC 'Second six':
*"This is the first GC
trophy that I have
won for 60 years!"***



From our files

researched by Frances Colman

10 years ago - 2004



(On the recent GC World Championship)... If the Egyptian (hard hitting) approach is taken up in this country, then both at club and tournament level serious consideration will have to be given to the safety of both players on neighbouring courts and spectators. Despite the safety netting used at Southwick, fiercely struck balls bounced at speed over fences and in one instance onto the railway embankment. There were several near misses from balls travelling up to 40 mph, including one from another court which grazed my arm as I stood in one of the shelters... As a former Safety Officer, there is no doubt in my mind that if the Egyptian style of play were to be adopted more widely there could be an accident waiting to happen. Michael Hague, Woking.

~

There is some merit in Chris Bennett's idea for golf croquet handicaps. Any scheme that brings further interest to GC is worthy of consideration, but I do believe there are also some flaws if we consider the countrywide use of the handicap system. Chris claims that his system works for 3-6 handicaps, but I feel its extension much further would produce some very unacceptable results... Bill Arliss, GC Chairman.

~

Having just seen the English rugby team accepting their well-deserved OBEs and MBEs, I am reminded of a letter which appeared recently in the Gazette, commenting on the fact that when we won there was enormous media coverage, whereas within a week or two we had won the MacRobertson Trophy for the fifth time in succession and that had little or no exposure... There is no doubt that the RFU would have made a strong case (to the government) for the honours. We cannot expect the full recognition we believe we should have if we do not take the initiative ourselves. I hold myself partly to blame, as President at the time, for not pursuing this and I would strongly urge that in future the President and Chairmen of both Council and Publicity should seize on any opportunity to draw attention to such successes... John Solomon, Past President.

50 years ago - 1964



Dear Sir, One cause of lengthy games is the player who, before each stroke, stands with legs crossed. Places one hand on a hip, rests the other hand on his mallet and gazes about the court for a long time like a pioneer leaning on his gun and surveying his new found land. There is ample remedy against this state of affairs if referees would exercise their rights under regulation 4(k) as law 49 is part of the 'customs of the game'. Yours faithfully, W B C Paynter.

~

Ireland and Scotland v England and Wales – Almost for the first time in the long series of matches at Eastbourne the weather destroyed the main purpose and pleasure of this year's contest. This was the more unfortunate since the teams were particularly strong ones and the BBC arrived in strength to televise the occasion. They must have been as disappointed as we were. *(The Celts won the match 6-3)*

~

Woking – The revival of interest in croquet at the old club was greatly boosted by the enterprise and initiative of its members in organising an exhibition match between Dr W R D Wiggins and Mr P J M fiddler during finals day of the club's Open Junior Tennis Championship... A fortuitous storm during the first game brought tennis players and spectators into the pavilion in time to see Dr Wiggins demonstrating a classic 4-ball break... This exhibition not only produced several new members but gave an opportunity for many to see the game played properly for the first time... We now have 13 members, when at the start of the season we had one. This is most satisfactory. We shall be pleased to welcome new members.

~

The Hunstanton Tournament is becoming increasingly popular and even with the use of a sixth lawn, converted from two tennis courts, the number of entries had to be restricted... Especially welcome were the Pritchards – all five of them: many a cheer could be traced to the Pritchards greeting frequent victories for the family. Ages of competitors varied from 11 to 89.

100 years ago - 1914



Sir,
Surely able-bodied men, irrespective of age, can find something to do for their country instead of playing in croquet tournaments. All ex-soldiers should offer their services, civilians can become special constables, etc. I have done the former, and even old ones like myself may be wanted eventually.

We are fighting for our existence as a nation.

The ladies are doing their share well; a hundred thousand of them would have come forward far quicker than the manhood of Great Britain did.

I sincerely hope that every lady will ask every able-bodied man they know, "what are you doing for your country?"

Yours faithfully, Reginald Brooke.

~

Sir,
In expressing my opinion with regard to continuing croquet tournaments, I fail to understand how anyone can possibly advocate doing so. Surely none of us are so useless that we cannot find some way of helping in the present crisis, whatever age or sex.

Occupation, and that a useful one, is undoubtedly the best tonic for our nerves.

How people can be so heartless and selfish as to want personal and futile amusement when thousands of our brave soldiers and sailors are laying down their lives for honour and glory I fail to understand.

Yours truly, Julian M Parr.

~

Sir,
I confidently appeal to the members of the Croquet Association to contribute to the Prince of Wales' Relief Fund.

Like others, at this serious crisis we have had to forgo our favourite pastime or sport.

Entrance fees and incidental expenses which, owing to the war, remain in our pockets would provide a large sum.

Apart from that, let esprit-de-corps and common charity go hand-in-hand.

Yours faithfully, Henry C Needham.

Editorial

I have to admit to having been in more of a quandary than usual about the cover of this Gazette, such was the choice of notable successes recorded since the last issue. The end of season October Gazette is always heavy with tournament news and, other than The Opens which were featured last time, this issue includes all the other Championship events for both AC and GC.

So which to lead with on the cover?

Then the answer came to me, and it turned out to be very close to home - William Ormerod's wonderful quote upon beating me to the GC Selector's 'Second Six' and winning a top GC title for the first time since 1954! It was such a lovely moment, that just at the time I should have been gutted at two 13th hoop losses to William, I couldn't help forgetting all that and enjoying the moment with everyone else.

Here is a man, whose croquet career had spanned 60 years at the very top level or thereabouts - *I wasn't even born when he first played for Great Britain in the MacRobertson Shield!* - and so in celebration of this, he got my decision.

Elsewhere in this issue, our Chairman Jeff Dawson outlines the important proposals for changes to CA subscriptions and we have three pages devoted to Clubs' reports about how they have been helped to start-up, relocate or improve facilities by the provision of grants from the CA. Tangible proof if you like, of the value of your CA membership fee, that is in addition to that which we all enjoy on a personal level though actually playing our sport.

Also this issue includes two of my other interests modeling and railways, so it's hats off to Sam Murray for his super detailed model of Surbiton and elsewhere there is a miniature train!

Away from the Gazette, since my last, I've ticked off visits to three new (for me) clubs and been royally looked after at each.

So a big thank you Colchester, Pendle and Camerton & Peasedown.



Chris Roberts

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Chairman's Column

It seems amazing, but my two years as chairman are already drawing to a close, and this will be my last column.

Time has flown by quickly, and I would like to thank all of those who have helped me in the role.

I will, of course, be carrying on as a council member, and continuing to work towards the proposed changes I have helped to initiate regarding greater federation integration and revisions to the CA income structure.

These are issues I believe need to be addressed sooner rather than later for the good of the game as a whole.

You will see later in this issue the current proposals regarding the latter. These are important changes, and I hope you will all take time to read and understand them,

whether you agree with them or not!

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss them further with each of the federations, and at the EGM we plan to hold (hopefully in March).

In the meantime I wish my successor all the best.

Subject to election at the next meeting of council, I expect that to be Tim King.



Jeff Dawson

The
CROQUET
Gazette



Issue 352 October 2014

Front cover: Dr William Ormerod is a real doyen of our game. In which other sport would a 60 year career at such a high level be even possible?

This page: The Editor in typical pose captured by the brush of fellow Phyllis Court member Denise Keir.

The inscription on High Wycombe CC's new bench, in memory of founder and former CA Treasurer Alan Oldham (see story on page 8). Chairman Jeff Dawson in action at Hurlingham earlier in the season.

(Photographs by Chris Roberts)

Next issue published 10th Dec. 2014

Next copy deadline 20th Nov. 2014

(Please note that these dates are subject to change, so check with the CA web site)

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William Ormerod

For those unfamiliar with the croquet resume of Dr. William P. Ormerod (pictured on the front cover), it really is quite something. He played on the MacRobertson Shield series winning team in 1956 when at Cambridge University, aged 19 years, as well as in 1963, 1969, and 1974. He won the Delves-Broughton Open Golf Croquet Doubles Championship in 1954 when aged just 17, partnering Brigadier A.E. Stokes-Roberts. He went on to win The Open Doubles Championship seven times (in 1960 partnering H.O.Hicks, and in 1971/2 1975/6 and 1977/8, partnering G.N.Aspinall) and the Parkstone Dorset Salver Open Croquet event on nine occasions between 1956 and 2010—a remarkable 54 years between winning it for the first and the latest time!

See the story of his 2014 success on page 20.

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GB beat Ireland again

Great Britain scored a resounding 11 – 2 victory over Ireland to retain the Maugham Salver at Carrickmines in late August.

This was the twelfth meeting between the two teams, the first of which was played back in 2000.

In all that time, Ireland have only won once, in 2005.

David Maugham again captained the GB team: Robin Brown, Gabrielle Higgins, James Hopgood, Peter Trimmer and Jack Wicks.

The Ireland team was one of all familiar names: Andrew Johnston, Patsy Fitzgerald, Simon Williams, Jack Clingan, Danny Johnston and Evan Newell.

Freda was first to answer Nigel’s plea

In the June issue (Gazette 350), a plea was made for two old issue numbers to complete Nigel Aspinall’s collection.

Both Liz Taylor-Webb of Bowdon and Bob Prichard of Surbiton generously answered the call but had been beaten to it by Auckland’s Freda Vitty.

She brought the two Gazettes to the GC Open at Southwick and enlisted the services of Reg Bamford as her courier.

Thus a Champion to Champion hand-over was set up at Roehampton.

~

Corrections

My apologies to John S Alabaster, for an omission from his ‘Mathematics of Handicapping’ article that appeared in the last issue (Gazette 351). The vertical axis of the figures on p.22 & 23, which relate to the scores of the player concerned, cover maximum and minimum values of +7 and -6, +6 and -6, and +6 and -5 for the three figures, respectively – *Editor*.

~

There was a problem identifying the correct Charles in the report and photograph of the Hunstanton Over-50s Handicap, as reported on page 15 of the last issue (Gazette 351). The winner was neither Charles Martin, nor Charles Mann, but was in fact Charles Ostler, and my apologies to him. My middle name is Charles and so I don’t mind admitting to being a bit of a Charlie! – *Editor*.

CA beat Scots counterparts



Three Scotland-based players - Brian Murdoch, Alan Wilson and reporter Fergus McInnes - made their way down the A1 and were joined in Middlesbrough by three from further south - Sam Murray (above), David Magee and Derek Knight - in an attempt to wrest back the Glasgow Quaich from the English.

The CA team was Eugene Chang, Phil Errington, Charles Waterfield, Andrew Killick, Derek Watts, Barry Keen, and handicap wise, the SCF held a slight advantage

The opening doubles round was in line with this, going 2-1 to the SCA, but in the singles things began going the wrong way for the Scots, and the score after the first day was 9-6 to the home side.

The first round on the second day increased the CA’s lead to 13-8, meaning that the SCA could still turn it around to 13-14 (a good score-line for a Scottish victory!) but only by winning all six games in the final round.

This they failed to do, achieving only an equal split in the head-to-head games; and so the final result was a win for the CA by 16 - 11.

Fergus McInnes

Williams is Welsh Champ

Chris Williams won the Welsh AC Championship for the fourth time overall, and the first time since 2001, when he came from a game down in the final to beat David Walters.

Eight players contested the event at Dyffryn Gardens, west of Cardiff, over three days. Defending champion and eleven-time winner Ian Burridge went out in a thrilling semi-final to Walters, while Williams defeated current Welsh GC Champion John Evans in straight games in the other semi.

Earlier on the block games threw up two results worthy of special mention:

Sarah Melvin (4.5) scalped Garry McElwain (-1), and Richard H Smith also beat McElwain by the rather unusual scoreline 11-10, before going on to win the consolation plate.

Dyffryn was hit by a hailstorm on the Saturday morning, which flooded the lawns in about 15 minutes and resulted in a two-hour delay whilst the lawns were cleared.

Special thanks were given to Tudor Jenkins for his inspired use of various pieces of equipment, including a plastic bin, to sweep the lawns.

Later results - Semis: Chris Williams beat John Evans +16, +15, John Walters beat Ian Burridge +10tpo, -26tp, +4.

Final: Williams bt Walters -19tp, +3, +17tp.



Chris Williams



Proposed changes to CA subscriptions

A report by Chairman Jeff Dawson

The Croquet Association proposes significant changes to its relationships with the Federations, and to how income is raised in support of development.

Ongoing consultation with the Federations will guide the CA to firm proposals in time for members (both individuals and clubs) to vote at an Extraordinary General Meeting in March, with a view to implementing any agreed changes for the following year (2016).

My article, in the September 2013 issue of the Gazette, explained why I believe subscription changes are necessary.

In short, our biggest expense outside of necessary membership services remains general club development, but our income relies on CA tournament players whilst our research shows national tournament play declining in favour of shorter, local events.

The objectives driving the changes are:

1. Re-balance income to reflect fairly how it is spent whilst maintaining present development levels
2. All club players become members of their governing body
3. Improved communication with croquet players
4. Easier access to CA tournaments for all club members

The proposed changes for phase 1 of the plan are as follows.

1. We introduce a two-tier club membership system. For smaller clubs that have fewer than two full sized lawns, or access to their lawns only part-time, we hold membership fees at the current level. For larger clubs we increase the fees paid per croquet-playing member from the current level of £7.95 per head by £1 per head above inflation each year for the

next five years.

2. We ask that all clubs belonging to a Federation also become members of the CA (where they are not already). We believe this is both necessary for the plans to succeed, and fair considering the degree to which the CA supports Federation activities. There will remain an option to join as an affiliated club only, but the fee will increase to £50 per year (from £35). Members of affiliated clubs would not benefit from the new measures below.

3. We make all croquet-playing club members Non-Tournament Members of the CA with a vote at General Meetings as soon as is practicable (administration systems to handle the changes could take up to a couple of years to become fully operational, and an 'opt-out' would be possible for those not agreeing to pass their details to the CA). For obvious reasons CA membership would apply only to club members for whom a 'per capita' fee has been paid.

4. We distribute The Croquet Gazette to the enlarged membership as soon as is practicable. The best way to achieve this is under discussion, and it is likely that some or all copies would be available only by electronic means in order to keep costs down, with an option to pay an additional subscription for paper copies if wanted. Tournament members would continue to receive their paper copies, although that too is under review.

5. Allow the enlarged membership to enter CA tournaments by paying a supplement of £5/day. Tournament membership would remain for those paying the extra individual subscription, and Tournament members would have priority entry to tournaments. This should also help to ensure tournaments are fully subscribed.

6. Once all club members are members of the CA, we drop the system of clubs having a separate vote on CA issues, so that only individual members may vote.

(Club voting was introduced because otherwise some clubs were not properly represented, but this would no longer be the case under the new system.)

7. Reduce Tournament Membership fees over the five year period from £40.50, as far as is possible while balancing income, with a target of reducing to £30.

Throughout the five-year implementation period of this phase, the CA would monitor the effects of the changes, and may halt the changes if necessary.

It should be noted that a further phase of change is envisaged, but exactly what this might entail is unclear at the moment, and will depend on phase 1 outcomes.

Possibilities include abolishing the priority for Tournament Members to enter tournaments, so that Tournament membership would simply earn a discount on tournament entry fees, as well as paying for paper Gazettes and fixtures book. Alternatives might be to scrap Tournament Membership, or to adjust the balance between it and the levy paid on tournament entries. The issues will be the subject of further debate, and I do not expect the vote in March to cover any further phases at this stage.

If you want to know more about the proposed changes, including options for greater integration between the CA and the Federations, and options for handling the enlarged Gazette distribution, please see the discussion paper sent out to the Federations, which is available on the website at www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1008.

In the meantime we are refining the proposals, and are still taking into account views put forward to us - please let me know yours through a letter to the Gazette or by contacting me direct at jeff.p.dawson@gmail.com.

Jeff Dawson, CA Chairman

The organising committee for the 2nd WCF Women's AC World Championship is delighted to announce that the WCF and the Croquet Association have signed an agreement that the event will be hosted at the Nottingham Croquet Club from 25th July to 1st August, 2015.

It is being run in support of Cancer

Women's AC Worlds

Research UK.

As the Gazette went to press, the WCF was due to be formally inviting its members to participate in the championship and to nominate all those of its players who wish to play in it.

There will be an entry in the on-

line fixtures book for CA members to declare their availability, but advance information for those who may be interested in playing is now available on the event's website, which is at <http://www.wacwc2015.org>.

**Beatrice McGlen,
Chairman of the event organising
committee.**



Snooker made me think of 'Lambicaps'

Dear Editor,

My brother has a snooker table and, as a result, is consistently luckier at the game than me.

When his luck prevails over my skill, he collects a quid and gives me a black in the following game.

That is, he allows me a seven-point start. If he flukes another win I get two blacks the next time, and so on, but when my innate skill eventually triumphs (currently at around five blacks), my head start goes down by seven points.

In this way we soon find a level playing field and have a good game.

Would something similar not be worth trying in golf croquet?

The present system of free turns could be said to falsify the sport, in that it gives a quick fix but doesn't teach people how to play properly.

In real tennis, a good player can start at minus thirty rather than 'love', and a novice can even start at thirty up.

The expert thus has to make six points before the novice can make two.

In golf croquet, could handicaps maybe reflect the difference between the two starting points?

If W Champion plays A Hacker, WC could start on minus something and AH on plus something.

There would need to be some experimentation with levels and to try and standardise the length of games, but at least we could do away with artificial shots and little white sticks.

Jonathan Lamb, Canterbury CC

Photograph above: Paul Castell employing help to guard his 'little white sticks' in an AC match at Surbiton. Does Jonathan Lamb's alternative idea for handicap GC have any support? (Photo by Chris Roberts)

Letters to the

Great War tribute cover and historical writings were overwhelming

Dear Editor,
I was completely overwhelmed by your front page for the latest edition of the Gazette (351).

This and subsequent two pages was a wonderful tribute to those lost in WW1.

In this conflict I lost two great uncles, who of course I never met.

However, my grandfather who served for two and a half years on the Western Front as an infantry officer (including Passchendaele) and later as a gunner/observer in the RFC.

Luckily for me he survived despite being wounded twice and



having his plane shot down by The Red Baron.

He was awarded the MC for his courage at the above battle.

Subsequently, my father flew Halifaxes during WW2 and my war was the Cold War, a secret war with very little medals to show for it.

So you can see we have a proud 20th century family history.

Being something of a military historian I am a great believer in keeping memories of these events alive, to show what was achieved by so much effort and pain. Many thanks for your efforts.

Terrey Sparks, Hunstanton CC

Dear Editor,
I was very moved by the cover of the latest Gazette (351), plus the inside couple of pages and the research done. What a wonderful tribute to 100 years ago.

Roger Goldring, Phyllis Court CC

Memories of wartime from the Cheltenham archives

Dear Editor,
Your article in the August issue (Gazette 351) dedicated to those who served in The Great War prompted me to look through the Cheltenham Croquet Club minutes book of that era.

Written below is an account taken from the Club's history which, in a lighter vein, will contrast to the more sombre stories that you will undoubtedly recount.

The onset of that war highlighted two rather strict rules that the Club had at that time in regard to membership and subscriptions.

The first ruling was that you were assumed to be a member of the Club unless you wrote a formal letter of resignation. Obviously, being a member, you were expected to pay your subscription.

The second ruling was that your name

was posted on the clubhouse notice board if you failed to pay your subscription by the due date.

In 1915 the Secretary requested instructions from the Committee regarding those members, absent on military duty, who had omitted to send in their resignations within the stipulated time laid down in the rules of the Club.

He was instructed to assume their resignations and not call for their subscriptions.

But this was not the end of the matter. At the end of the war, the Secretary sought the Committee's advice as to whether or not those returning from military duty (who the Club had 'allowed' to resign), should pay another entrance fee on re-joining the Club. Fortunately sense prevailed.

David Magee, Cheltenham CC

Two GC wrong ball queries

Dear Editor,

Probably your readers will rapidly turn the page if you publish a letter on a topic with such an established reputation for sleep induction.

But I have two queries.

1) Rule 11b says: if ...the striker ... has played any other ball than the striker's ball then a wrong ball has been played and 1) if the ball belongs to the striker ...

These descriptions are oxymoronic if referring to doubles play and, in singles,

still require a differentiation between 'the striker's ball' and 'the ball (that) belongs to the striker' which can only be sustained if the latter refers to the ball of the striker's partner.

2) Rule 11e defines what is to be done if ... when play is stopped ... the last player had played a ball which belongs to them ** but that the previous stroke was played by the opponent with a ball that did not belong to their ** side. The remedy is not described for the situation when, in this situation

the previous stroke has been played by an opponent with his/her own ball but when the other opponent ball was the next ball in sequence.

This happened in a recent game. When yellow was the next ball in sequence, red was played by its owner out of turn to an advantageous position, blue condoned by playing next (as would have been in sequence after yellow), the wrong ball play was then discovered and red, the next ball in sequence after blue, ran the hoop.

I have marked with ** instances when "them" instead of "him/her" and "their" instead of "his/her" have been used in the Rules - ungrammatical but to this argument, incidental.

Peter Lowe, Tyneside C C

Martin French replies ~ *The key to understanding the rule* ~

In previous articles about the new 4th Edition of the GC Rules, we recognised that the new edition is far from perfect. However, there is more logic to the re-wording of the Wrong Ball rule than perhaps is widely realised.

The letter from Peter Lowe of Tyneside CC has helped the GC Rules Committee crystallise one of the major sources of confusion in this, the most difficult rule.

To understand how to apply Rule 11 'Playing a Wrong Ball' you have to take note of the reference made to Rule 1(e) for any of it to be correctly understood.

Rule 1(e) defines two critical terms – and they may not mean what you think!

"After whichever ball was last played, the next ball in the appropriate sequence is known as the striker's ball, and the owner of that ball is the striker."

It may be clearer if you think of the 'striker's ball' as the ball due to be played next (as opposed to the one actually played), and the 'striker' as the person due to play next (as opposed to who actually played) – following whichever ball was actually played last.

You need to examine the situation after an error with these definitions in mind if you are to make the correct decision on how to remedy it.

So, if Blue has just been played, then the striker's ball (the ball due to play next) is now Red, and the striker (or due player) is the owner of Red (in doubles) or the owner of Red and Yellow (in singles).

Peter's first query is about the meaning of these two terms and though he quotes from Rule 11(b), he unfortunately omits the

reference to Rule 1(e), which provides the resolution to his confusion over these two terms.

Peter's second query asks about resolving multiple wrong balls using Rule 11(e).

Unfortunately, the situation he describes clearly doesn't fit that covered by 11(e); instead 11(f) and 11(c) apply.

"When Yellow was the next ball in sequence, Red was played by its owner out of turn to an advantageous position. Blue condoned the error by playing next (as would have been in sequence after Yellow). The wrong ball play was then discovered and Red, the next ball in sequence after Blue, ran the hoop."

How should this situation have been resolved?

I understand it was a doubles match – I'm going to use 'R' for the correct player of the Red ball, 'Y' for the correct player of Yellow, 'U' for Blue and 'K' for Black.

A wrong ball has been played (R played Red, instead of Y playing Yellow, after Black had played), but play was not stopped.

B then played Blue – which under Rule 11(f) condoned R&Y's wrong ball.

This was a second wrong ball as Blue does not follow the previous ball (Red) in sequence, and Rule 1(e) makes clear the correct striker's ball for this turn (following Red) – the ball due to play - would be Black.

As Rule 11(f) states, when a series of wrong balls has been played before play is stopped, only the final error is remedied, using 11(b), (c) or (d) as appropriate.

Being doubles, Rule 11(c)1 applies. U&K should have played Black rather than Blue after Red. So Blue (and any other balls

moved by Blue) is replaced and K now plays Black instead, without penalty. (If it were singles, the equivalent rule is Rule 11(b)1 - but the remedy would be the same: replace the balls and Black is played.)

So after play was stopped, the most recent wrong ball (Blue) has been remedied by Black being played instead. The correct continuation is then for Y to play Yellow – and not for R to run the hoop with Red!

If Red did in fact play next instead of Yellow – as Peter describes – then that would be a new, separate wrong ball incident, simply resolved using 11(c)1 – replace the ball(s) and replay with the correct Yellow ball.

In Peter's example, the correct rectification wouldn't have 'gifted' the next hoop to Red, but there can be unsatisfactory outcomes on occasion. Of course, all players are meant to be alert for wrong balls by their opponent and to forestall in appropriate cases (see Rule 11(h)) – but that is little comfort when you are simply playing your two balls in turn, oblivious to a sequence error by your opponent.

Many better brains than mine have so far failed to find a solution that works in all situations, and which has gained international agreement.

Some sporting players have been known to decline to take advantage of the 'gifted hoop' - and simply tapped the top of the Red rather than score the hoop.

The international rule-making effort will no doubt continue to search for a better solution that works fairly in all cases.

Martin French and the GC Rules Committee



A new home for High Wycombe

by Judy Halls

High Wycombe Croquet Club found themselves homeless and set about relocating. It was a far from easy journey, as Judy Halls explains.

High Wycombe CC was founded in 1983 by former CA Hon. Treasurer and local resident, Alan Oldham. It flourished at its council-owned and -maintained site at Bassetsbury Manor with one half and one three-quarter sized lawn. The charming Manor House, which locals remember being used for wedding receptions for many years, started to crumble elegantly and there was no money available to renovate it.

Wycombe District Council therefore, understandably, accepted an offer from a local school to purchase the Manor and attached grounds including the Croquet Lawns. The negotiations took many months during which HWCC was continuing in uncertainty. The first offer was made in 2010 but agreements were not signed until 2012.

In the meantime some committee members showed great initiative and, after a number of false starts and dead ends, identified a possible new site in an

adjoining parish where sports facilities including a modern sports pavilion were in existence.

Negotiations started with the relevant Parish Council and continued...and continued...and then, modern political life being what it is, ground to a halt. Undaunted, our committee members found some land almost next door to the proposed site but owned by Wycombe District Council.

These discussions proceeded much more favourably and so the next problem was to be funding.

WDC started with quite a generous offer (they obviously felt for us in our likely homelessness) but this by no means the entire cost.

Approaches were made to the Croquet Association and Sports England (one of the many reasons to be grateful for the Olympics) who both offered some money, and at last things were looking up. Further grants were made through Buckinghamshire Community Foundation and local donors including club members.

Our tireless committee tackled planning, took lawn advice from George Noble, and spent many more hours designing and deciding on the specifications for two new courts.

By autumn 2012 the dream looked like being realised, but then it was the turn of the weather to cause delay; having by that time left Bassetsbury we needed a temporary home. We are very grateful to Ealing CC who took pity on us in the summer of 2013 and gave us access to their splendid lawns and friendly hospitality one day a week. We were also able to play on the grounds of Missenden Abbey which is a beautiful site, but with longer grass and a few entertaining rabbit holes was a way off match standard.

Through all this the club remained united even when the weather further delayed us still further in spring 2014, but at long last came our Grand Opening on 3 May.

It was a beautiful day and the ground looked wonderful, and



Happy

CA grants assist relocation & growth

thanks to members' hard work there was celebratory bunting, as well as gazebos and refreshments. Members, friends and many new faces contributed to over 300 people attending to witness the opening by our local MP Steve Baker. The Mayor of High Wycombe and CA President Quiller Barrett were also in attendance.

There was a wonderful themed cake, the unveiling of a superb oak bench carved in honour of Alan Oldham, and a tremendous atmosphere.

Visitors took part in a 'come and try'



playing session and this started a run on membership that has seen a 70% increase.

We have a lively U3A group who meet every week on a 'pay as you go' basis and we also see a youth group regularly.

We have had some successful sessions with visiting (and paying) groups such as the WI and Lions and we hope to extend this next season into profitable corporate evenings.

Our new members join a healthy and friendly club that is all the stronger for having survived the move to a permanent home in such a lovely setting.

Existing members should congratulate themselves on seeing the difficult period through, but the greatest thanks must go to our committee members and most notably, past chairman Dr Michael Bowker.

We hope that our story will inspire other clubs who find themselves in similar situations.

y Days

ist a start-up, nd improvements

New courts and improvements at Bishop Monkton

by Richard Field

Almost 60 members and guests gathered at Bishop Monkton CC on Monday in early June, to celebrate the completion of the club's £17,500 ground improvement project and the opening of splendid new lawns.

To mark the occasion a special wrought iron weather vane was created by Ripon blacksmith Chris Clarke of Skell Wrought Iron, and its unveiling was the highlight of the opening ceremony.

Vice Chairman John Hague, fixed the top part of the new croquet-themed device in position and gave it a triumphant spin to loud applause.

In his opening speech, Chairman Richard Field said that the day marked another notable milestone in the history of the club and he recalled that in 2005 the area now occupied by the sports field was just a rough pasture, with a tangle of grass and weeds up to a height of 3 feet.

Along with several co-conspirators and subsequent founder members the dream to create a croquet club was soon to be realised.

In 2006 the fledgling club had a semblance of a lawn but no shelter and very basic equipment. Members actually sat on orange boxes between games! By 2008 the club had raised £5,000 to build a clubhouse/storeroom, and a year later was playing matches against other Yorkshire Clubs.

Three years later, it had a team in the Yorkshire League and now fields three such teams, more than any other club in Yorkshire.

The blackest year for the club was 2012

when, due to unprecedented summer rainfall, the lawns were regularly under water, causing the grass to die and ominous hollows to appear.

"We believed that other clubs might be slightly concerned if their players disappeared without trace down a sink hole while visiting us", said Richard.

The plan to undertake a major ground improvement scheme involved laying 420 yards of piped land drains, importing 320 tons of new top soil, levelling the area with up to eight lasers, then seeding - and hoping for the best! Those hopes have now been realised, with pristine lawns providing 'level play' for the first time.

"Our only regret, of course, is that we have now lost our previous home advantage of knowing where we needed to aim off by a few feet to go through a hoop", joked Richard. Raising the £17,500 was achieved as a result of the enormous generosity of the CA, outside donors and the club's own members, who had dug deep into their own pockets.

Two individuals donated £1,000 each to become Life Members and almost every other member contributed anything from £10 to £500 - "This was wonderful response for which we are enormously grateful" said Richard.

Derek Knight represented the Croquet Association at the opening event and congratulated the club on completing its project. He told of when he had first become involved in the scheme and on one visit witnessed the lawns being just 'one big lake'.

He was glad the CA had been able to contribute £3,000 towards the work as it had helped earlier by putting £1,500 towards the new clubhouse.

The outside donors to whom we were extremely grateful are:

The Croquet Association (£3,000), Bishop Monkton Village & Hall and Queen Elizabeth II Field (£2,000), The Garfield Weston Foundation (£2,000), The Two Ridings Community Foundation (£1,000). The Sylvia and Colin Shepherd Trust (£300).



New midSuffolk Club start well

The midSuffolk Croquet Club was only formed last year and they can already boast two regional champions!

David Crawford reports that the club, which was founded on an old bowling green by Mike Percival and himself, started enthusiastically with over 35 players from the very local area around the village of Thurston.

The East Anglian Croquet Federation (EACF) helped with playing equipment and the club has recently been **awarded a CA start-up grant.**

Local clubs, most notably Colchester and Ipswich, have been helpful with the donation and loan of equipment, and several have also played friendly GC tournaments to help the club's beginners.

midSuffolk have certainly started with a bang; they swept the board at the recent EACF Club Champions GC tournament at Colchester.

In the level event midSuffolk's Crawford won all his elimination games, and then beat Colchester experienced Dick Strover in the play-off. But the real star of the day was club mate Barrie James in the handicap event, which brought him victory in his first tournament. Welcome to croquet midSuffolk CC - with two titles in your first year, how are you going to top that?



Photographs (opposite page from top): (1) Local MP Steve Baker and CA President Quiller Barrett (left) at Wycombe's official opening. (2) A new bench in memory of founder Alan Oldham (see page 3 for inscription detail).

(3) Locals came out to try croquet.

This page: Bishop Monkton Club Chairman Richard Field hits off the first ball on one of the splendid new lawns (2) The new weather vane.

(Bench image by Chris Roberts, others supplied by the clubs)

The Challenge & Gilbey

1900~2014



The CA's second historic tournament of the season, The Challenge and Gilbey (first played in 1900) returned to Sussex County CC in late August, after three years at Budleigh Salterton CC.

Manager **Julie Horsley** reports that, the tournament started with the handicap singles for the Gilbey Goblet and, as there were only 16 entries, it was played as four blocks with the winners of each to progress.

The semis threw up a repeat of last year's final, in which Roger Mills (Sidmouth) turned the tables on 2013 winner Quiller Barrett (Watford) to win +2t.

Four class events started after lunch on the Friday with block play scheduled all round. But the following morning two players from the already small A Class (who were to have played each other twice) withdrew, due to injury and feeling unwell.

This left Nigel Polhill (Ealing) and Luc Berthouze (Sussex) to play a best of five for the Roehampton Cup, which the former won +16TP, (-26TP), +12TP, +10.

In the other classes, four wins from five were enough to win in each case. Roehampton's Peter Siddall won a close B Class and the Council Cup, Roger Mills turned the same trick to secure the C Class

Reckitt Cup, and Frances Colman (Phyllis Court) secured the D Class Stevenson Cup.

The tournament will linger long in the memory of Mills, not only for his pair of event victories, but for achieving his first competition triple peel into the bargain.

There were smiles all round as Quiller Barrett presented the trophies and encouraged all to spread the word about this famous old tournament that deserves more support, especially from those with mid to high handicaps.



Photographs: Top (from left) - Peter Siddall, Nigel Polhill, Roger Mills and Frances Colman. Circles (left) - Sussex Chairman Liz Farrow and (right) Nigel Polhill in action at the Challenge & Gilbey (Images by Chris Roberts)

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North of England

- Grade 1 Championship event -

Avery's win is 32 year record

Mark Avery set a record when he won the 2014 'North' for the first time since 1982 – a gap of 32 years was the longest interval between wins for any UK major croquet championship.

A full field of 24 turned up to contest this year's Championship at Bowdon where the preliminary round went according to seeding, but in the first round Keith Aiton demonstrated a return to form with two TPOs against David Goacher, and Richard H Smith played solidly to beat Robert Wilkinson 2-1.

Aiton continued his run in the quarters, coming back from 0-2 down to beat Jack Wicks, and Ian Lines took advantage of some unlucky shooting from David Maugham to win 3-2.

Colin Irwin also played his best for several years, beating James Hopgood with very few errors.

In the semi-finals, Aiton stuck in a few hoops early on against Lines, but gave very little away, and played fairly clinically to win 3-0.

In the other semi, Irwin took the first game off Avery, but the latter always looked the form player and won 3-1.

The Avery v Aiton final was over shortly after lunch, with Mark winning -26tp, +17tp, +24qp, +20, in about the same time that David Goacher and Ian Lines played the first game of the Plate knockout; an event that Goacher eventually won.

~

It's interesting to note that Avery last won the event in 1982, at the age of 16, when he beat Peter Death in the single game final.

The event was played as Draw and Process in those days and had only been resurrected in 1979 after a gap of 23 years.

It was also pointed out that this was the first time in the modern era that the contestants in the final had a combined age of over 100!

Mike Town was in in sparkling form when he triumphed in this year's 'Selectors' at Hamptworth, **reports Kevin Carter.**

A rejuvenated Beatrice McGlen was a great runner-up, Andy Myers took third ahead of Nick Steiner and a ring-rusty Dave Trimmer won the Consolation Swiss.

A stronger than usual field was attracted, and included a former winner and three

Championship AC

East of England

- Grade 1 Championship event -

Twelfth time for Maugham

David Maugham won back the Eastern Championship at Hunstanton to take his tally of victories to a very impressive dozen.

One has to look back 22 years to 1992 to find that maiden win, and since then, he has won over half the titles, which is a show of quite remarkable consistency.

Despite a good quality field, Maugham qualified for the 2014 final without dropping a game, as he defeated Rachel Rowe +6 +25tp, Keith Aiton +26tp +26tp +24tp and Lionel Tibble +13 +9 +24tp.

Only Stephen Mulliner had an answer and got two games from 'The Beast' in going down valiantly +18 +12tpo -4tp -17 +13oqp.



West of England

- Grade 1 Championship event -

Readers are reminded that **Jamie Burch** (pictured above by Paddy Chapman) won this tournament in May, as reported in the June issue (Gazette 350).

South of England

- Grade 1 Championship event -

Burch retains title

Jamie Burch retained the South of England Championship, ahead of a strong field of 20 that featured three winners of this year's invitation Eights and the runner-up in the fourth. This was a first for this event, **reports Roger Wood.**

It was good to see a quartet of newcomers: Christian Carter, Alain Giraud, Matt Holmes and Dominic Nunns; plus Duncan Reeve returning after a gap of 24 years.

The weather was kind by day - only the occasional chilly breeze - but overnight rain on Friday was preceded by several hours of the most spectacular, continuous lightning display out to sea.

2012 winner, Gavin Carter was the in-form player of the weekend remaining unbeaten until Sunday lunchtime and the third game of the best-of-five final.

Defending champion Burch impressed with his consistent shooting but conceded a game to each of Christian Carter, Alain Giraud and Gabrielle Higgins on his way to the final where, having lost the first two closely contested games, he came back strongly with a fifth turn quadruple peel in the third.

He levelled the match in the fourth and was first to 4-back in the decider only to be TPO'd by Carter who then uncharacteristically failed 2-back with his other ball allowing Burch to finish and reclaim the O'Callaghan Gold Cup (-9tpo, -15, +26qp, +17, +7otp).

Jack Wicks dominated the Swiss, as he did last year, winning all seven games and throwing in two quadruple peels for good measure.

Only Burch had more peeling finishes, but Ed Duckworth sneaked the peeling prize with two triples and a fine sextuple against Giraud, while Holmes' sextuple attempt faded after four peels, but he did achieve a (losing) QPO and later a QP.

Selectors Weekend

- The fifth tier of 'Eights' (see overleaf) -

Mike is 'Top of the Town'

previous Treasurer's Tankard competitors.

But in common with the rest of British croquet, this event, that suits up and coming players, was short of these.

Only Myers and Omied Hallam featured in this regard, and both played with

distinction, if not consistency.

Hamptworth lawns, with no automatic watering system, were unusually patchy and tricky, with most games lasting over two hours and some over three.

Consequently there were few triple peel attempts and only one that succeeded; this was smoothly executed by Dave Trimmer late in the tournament.



Burch wins President's Cup

Eleven time winner Fulford beaten in first eight play-off

Stephen Mulliner reports

Jamie Burch beat Robert Fulford +14 in a play-off after both had scored 9/14 to win his first President's Cup.

He shot superbly well throughout the event and, despite some vicissitudes in Round 14 and one in the play-off, was a very worthy winner.

The Bowdon lawns were very well presented and the hoops were as well-set as possible. However, the ground had enough inherent moisture to suggest that players of this standard would be unlikely to make many hooping errors and so it proved.

No fewer than 47 of the 56 games had peeling turns, including three sextuples (one a 4th turn sxpo by David Maugham) and 12 quadruples (seven qps, three qpos and two oqps).

Stopping at 3-back was regularly adopted as a strategy to avoid being pegged out, not always successfully, and some 3-back positions were converted into 4-back without a lift and then a tp'.

Day 4 started with four players in

contention.

Burch (8/12) beat Samir Patel (8/12) +24tp after the latter made two highly uncharacteristic hooping errors.

Fulford (8/12) failed on a sxp against Stephen Mulliner and lost -6qpo, and Paddy Chapman (7/12) kept his hopes alive by beating Pete Trimmer +3.

Round 14 pitched Burch, now the outright leader on 9/13, against Mark Avery, the back-marker on 2/13.

Burch reached 4-back and was tp'o'd but had the title in his grasp ("on his mallet" to quote Paddy Chapman's evocative phrase) when Avery left two balls near hoop 1 and Burch hit.

However, both this chance of a 3 ball break to win and a second (when Avery laid up below hoop 1 after running hoop 4!) were spurned and Avery won +2tpo.

Meanwhile, Fulford kept his hopes alive by beating Trimmer +11tpo to join Burch on 9/14, as both Chapman and Patel lost to Mulliner and Maugham by 26sxp and 1tp

respectively.

The play-off between Burch and Fulford was quite short and culminated when Burch's roll to rover was rather short of pace but his Solomon-grip swing remained smooth and he ran rover to the boundary, leaving a seven yard return roquet.

This was hit and he pegged out to win +14 to deserved applause.

Colin Irwin changed jacket from chief hoop-setter to CA Vice-President and presented the trophies to the winner and runner-up.



Final positions:

1 Jamie Burch, 2 Robert Fulford, =3 Paddy Chapman, David Maugham & Samir Patel, 6 Stephen Mulliner, 7 Pete Trimmer, 8 Mark Avery.

Holmes takes Spencer Ell for first time

Local brews a fine finish at third eight

The Spencer Ell this year was set in the hills north of Manchester at the Pendle & Craven Croquet Club, and had a distinctly north-west feel, *writes Ian Lines*.

Not only were locals Paul Rigge and Matt Holmes playing, but Ian Lines was returning

to some of his former stamping grounds, and Dave Nick from Cumbria was drafted in as a last minute replacement.

The four main lawns were a pleasant surprise – looking in quite good condition and generally flat – although there were a few local irregularities which could make backward take-offs or close hoop approaches a little dangerous

The weather was generally good, with plenty of sunshine, and the players all enjoyed the views of the surrounding hills and countryside.

Saturday was somewhat wet, with the lawns slowing from 10 to about 9 Plummers, making big full rolls and large splits rather difficult.

At the start of the event Lines was

probably the bookies' favourite, but Mark Ormerod had the best current ranking.

The former started well with three wins on Day 1, but the relatively easy conditions meant that results were a little random.

The key game was probably the first round between Holmes and Lines, where the latter hit his last lift, and had all three peels of a triple completed before failing 3-back after a series of poor shots.

On the morning of the last day, Holmes, Nick and Lines were all still in contention, but the last few results fell right for Holmes and he won with a round to spare.

The general standard was probably typical of most Ells, with just a few error-free games and a reasonable handful of triples, but with most games having two or three errors of



Photograph – The Spencer Ell line-up - (Standing) Dave Kibble, Paul Rigge, Dave Nick, Mark Ormerod, Jaimie Mussi. (Seated): Ian Lines, Matt Holmes, and Martin Murray.

The Chairman wins the Chairman's

Jeff Dawson creates history at the second eight

When Jeff Dawson won the CA Chairman's Salver at Hurlingham it was the first time a sitting Chairman had ever won 'his own' event!

He secured this, his fourth Chairman's, after a play-off against Gabrielle Higgins, with a consistent run of good shooting and peeling breaks, reports James Hoggood.

Play began with a shooting competition, in conditions perfect for ensuring relatively few break play errors. The rare blobbed hoop was

typically the result of a long-angled attempt after an aggressive pick-up.

If your shooting boots weren't on, or worn out as Hoggood claimed, then you were in trouble; unless, that is, you were lucky enough to play Lionel Tibble early on, who gifted you with errors such as trying to run the wrong hoop.

Nevertheless, the easy conditions highlighted a general weakness in break-play, with relatively few forward rushes after hoops and frequent poor pioneers.

The use of the contact leave in

super-advanced often masked the lack of break hygiene expected at this level, and poor standard-leaves were costly. Higgins and Dawson were by far the best shots, after Tibble, and Dawson edged ahead in terms of peeling consistency, playing for quads to avoid being tpo'd. This strategy won him the play-off, +20qp.

Final positions: 1 Jeff Dawson, 2 Gabrielle Higgins, 3 Robin Brown, 4 James Hoggood, 5 David Goacher, =6 Richard M Smith, Lionel Tibble, and Robert Wilkinson.



Luc Berthouze won this, his first selection event after a three-way tie occurred at the end of the round-robin games. Manager and **reporter Nigel Polhill** successfully finished off two uncompleted games to draw level with Sam Murray and Berthouze at Sunny Hunny (Hunstanton).

The latter got free passage to the final while the other two fought out a 14 point advanced game with a 1.5 hour time limit for the right to meet him.

Murray's early lead was reined in by Polhill who pegged out his opponent's forward ball. As time approached the scores were level, allowing Polhill to go ahead by also pegging out his own forward ball to leave Murray just a long shot, which he missed: Polhill beat Murray +1(T).

This meant that the final also had to be 14pt

Berthouze wins the TT

The fourth eight

advanced, and with the same time limit, there was distinct possibility of finishing in complete darkness. As time (and darkness) approached, Berthouze was well ahead and attempted a finishing turn which nearly ended in disaster, as he rushed a ball into a hoop, both of which he could hardly see!

He joined up mid-lawn not realising time would be called before Polhill could shoot. The shot was missed however, meaning Berthouze had won the title - and his final turn gave him a +7 result.

A huge thank you to Hunstanton CC for being such excellent hosts - This wonderful club deserves to be on everybody's 'must visit' list.

Final positions: 1 Luc Berthouze, 2 Nigel Polhill, 3 Sam Murray, =4 Paul Smith and Ian Vincent, =6 Richard Griffiths and Jeff Race, 8 Graham Gale.

some sort from each player.

Holmes was clearly the most robust with fewest errors, and he tended to make leaves rather than try to dig out difficult breaks. Martin Murray had some purple patches, got six peels against Lines with no letters, and Paul Rigge could easily have won more. Jaimie Mussi shot phenomenally, with a 'critical distance' that must have approached 20 yards over the event, but he struggled with angled hoops, croquets shots and making tight leaves.

Dave Nick was getting better and better throughout the event, easily justifying his last minute place, and Dave Kibble probably played the best croquet strokes and rushes, but also made a few too many errors. Kibble did, however, make some history by

completing the first ever sextuple peel in the Ell, starting from a super-advanced leave, even if it was described as 'ragged'.

Final positions:

- 1 Matt Holmes,
- 2 Ian Lines,
- 3 Dave Nick.
- 4 Jaimie Mussi,
- 5=Mark Ormerod,
- 5= Paul Rigge,
- 7= Dave Kibble,
- 7= Martin Murray





August

Thanks to the support of the CA with a grant to help them move to a new lawn, **Norwich CC** was able to return to the tournament scene this year, with a running of the **Chalkhill Mallet Handicap** event that attracted players -2.5 to 20. **Nick Harris reports** that Robert Fulford amazed everyone, when amongst the balls, with Octuple attempts, although three players can now say that they '26'd R Fulford! The ten players were kept on their toes by efficient management that saw thirty games played over the weekend on just two courts. Norwich's Sarah Barley was runner-up in her first ever CA tournament, and she lost just the one game to the overall winner, Ian Draper of Nottingham. Jonathan Toye took advantage of a short interval between games on Sunday afternoon to ride the miniature train (the line goes past the lawns as pictured below) – Is there any better incentive that that to pay Norwich CC a visit? *(This Club has just moved up to my*



'want to visit' list - Ed.)

Nobody could stop Mike Bowser winning the Rose Bowl at the oversubscribed **Colchester Summer Handicap, reports David Haslam**. Bowser lost only once in nine games to win from seventeen players from eleven different clubs from as far afield as Dorset, Brighton and Lincolnshire. Nigel Parkins fell at the last hurdle that was Peter Kenward and so ended runner-up. Susan Fulford shared third place with Heather Bennett whom she beat 26-0 in the final game.

Hurlingham members were only one event off a total clean sweep at their own **Hurlingham Week** tournament, which started with victories in all the handicap events. **Nelson Morrow reports** that Alan Chance won the Singles and Hugh Carlisle the Singles Plate, while Bob and Anne Stephens won the Mixed Doubles. Hurlingham continued that success when Mark Ormerod partnering Ray Hall (Sussex) won the Doubles title, and only in the Ladies Doubles did the hosts not have a hand on the winners' trophy; that went to Roehampton pair Sue Davies & Jean Oades. In the level play class events, it was Hurlingham all the way - (Class A) Gabrielle Higgins, (B) Veronica Carlisle, (C) John Culhane and (D) Sudy Harrison. And even in the Advanced Mixed Doubles, Ormerod won again, this time with the assistance of Caroline Denny (Bear of Rodborough).

David Maugham won the **Tyneside Advanced** by winning all his games, including a SXP and two TPs, while at the Letchworth A Level tournament, Nigel Polhill's single loss to Jack Wicks did not stop him winning the event.

Alison Heywood-Hill (Tyneside) earned her Bronze award at the **Heaton Park (Bury) Handicap** and won the event with only one loss to dent her record, as ex-hurricane Bertha threw the playing schedule into chaos. Fortunately Alison had already beaten the only other player on the same number of wins and that relegated Margaret Eccles (Bury) to runner-up.

Nottingham Week (see also the family story, far right) missed the torrential rain that hit nearly everywhere else in the Midlands, and this allowed James Death to beat Ian Burrige to win the Open Singles title. The five-game final took just over 3.5 hours, the final game was won by Death with a fourth-turn triple and, as the score line shows, both players played to an extremely high standard: +25qp, +6oqp, -16tp, -14otp, +26tp. **Peter Death also reports** that Ian Draper (10) beat Bob

AC Tourname

Thompson (3.5) +16 in the final of the Robin Hood Cup (handicap singles), and Roger Staples beat Cliff Daniel +24 in the Advanced Handicap +3 event final. In the C Level (8+) Singles final, Anna Giraud beat Ann Brookes +1t; in the D Level Handicap Singles final (for players on 14+, with a full bisque base 10), Sophie McGlen beat Judith Moore +11. And finally, in the Handicap Doubles, Omied Hallam & Ian Draper beat David Brydon & Beatrice McGlen +8.

Dave Mundy beat Jonathan Lamb in what was effectively the final of the **Medway Midweek**. Despite the excellent conditions, the lawns were particularly tricky throughout, hoop 2 on the pavilion lawn 2 occasionally resembling a Christmas tree, with most clips parked there or at 1-back following the tricky approach. The 'final' was closely contested till a black clip was found to be accompanying a blue ball being played at 1-back, and the subsequent re-positioning after H5 gave Mundy a flying start which he never relinquished.

Tim Jolliff and Colin Walls ended with a one-ball contest in the final of the **Sidmouth B-Level Advanced** (h'cap 2 - 8) which was fully subscribed early in the year. Jolliff's decision to peg-out both balls when well in front was clinical (as he was 2back v 2), and went on to win within a few turns. In winning the event for the second year running, he included a +26 victory and a triple peel, and earned a CA Gold Award, **reports David Temple**.

Andy Brandwood's final game narrowly missed earning him his Gold Award, as he won the Sally Nichols trophy for the **Edgbaston B Class event, reports Ian Slater**. His attempted TP gradually reduced to a straight double, but it still earned him a share in a three-way tie with Clive Goode and Adrian Morris, which was determined by net hoops.

Wet weather disrupted the **East Dorset Class weekend** and eventually caused its abandonment, but not before Mark Ormerod (Hurlingham) and Peter Moore (Nottingham) had done enough to win the A & B events with unblemished records.

Ian Lines swept all before him winning 7/7 including five triples at the **Nottingham Open weekend**, and Debbie Lines came



nts - round-up

in second on 6/7 with four triples and her maiden sextuple. She made it look very controlled (**writes James Death**) and only three other games stopped to watch its completion!

Carole Jackson won a very competitive **Hamptworth B-Level Advanced** Tournament (for handicaps 0 - 8), **reports Chris Roberts**. Jackson (1 handicap, from Helderbeg Village, South Africa) tied with Paul Wolff (4, Blewbury), Jim Field (0, Nailsea) and John McMordie (0, Aldermaston) - all on four wins from their five Swiss games. As 'who beat whom' could not determine precedence, an exciting '2-ball break from corner 4' decider was instigated by the manager. The two zero handicappers scored precisely that number of hoops, whilst Wolff managed a brace to leave Jackson's trio enough to win.

September

Jordan Waters emerged as yet another outstanding prospect from Ian Plummer's school of excellence at Oxford University, to win **Roehampton's end of season handicap** tournament. **Mike Hann reports** that Waters (playing off 10) only had one hiccup when beating several seasoned opponents, and he kept his head particularly well in the final to beat the host's Peter Siddall in a game requiring tactical skill at the close. Waters dropped only one game in winning the Hussar Cup during the three day event which enjoyed good conditions and much sunshine for the dozen players, whose handicaps ranged from -½ up to 16.

Bear of Rodborough's Caroline Denny won **Sidmouth's inaugural C-Level Advanced Weekend** Tournament undefeated, reports Julie Horsley. She defeated the host's Philip Harris +7t as both finalists saw handicap reductions 5 to 4.5 and 9 to 8 respectively.

Anyone pondering the decline in tournament entries should take heart from **John Bevington's report** of the **Wrest Park Handicap**. Initially only seven club members entered, but a plea went up on the CA website, which was well answered, and there were four extra entries. 'It pays to advertise!' The seven club members were joined by regular visitor George Woolhouse.

Cesar Miranda-Reyes was a last minute entry. And there was certainly no lack of quality, as the other two players were Susan and Robert Fulford!

Robert, who played on the Saturday only, prior to taking part in an Inter-Club match the following day, began with a +16 win over Rod Ashwell and he followed this with a TPO against John Bevington. He then went one better with a QPO against Peter Aspinall. Susan opened her account with a +26 against event winner George Collin but then lost by 2 on time against Aspinall, and that turned out to be her only defeat.

Two dozen **veterans**, many from the further points of England and one from South Africa, enjoyed a three-day advanced handicap tournament at **Hurlingham**. The event was split in two with the 'youngsters' (under 70's) playing a fiercely fought American block and their 'seniors' a 6-round Swiss.

Mike Bowser (Hunstanton) won the 'unders' event on the who-beat-whom rule from John Reynolds (Ealing), with Sue Davies (Roehampton) third ahead of Ann Stephens (Hurlingham). Manager and **reporter Richard Hoskyns** (Hurlingham) surprised himself and others (with many mutterings of 'a fix'!) by winning all six of his matches and so took the 'overs' event, with John Pollard (East Dorset) and Bob Stephens (Hurlingham) one and two games adrift respectively.

Phil Scarr (Middlesbrough) retained the Sandiford Salver beating Tom Griffith (Crake Valley) in the final of the **Southport Advanced**. Griffith and Ray Lowe both failed attempts to peg-out the other's forward ball, before Lowe did succeed but pegged his own ball out in the same stroke! The impromptu one-ball game was a close one, with Lowe just failing to claw back the three hoop lead he handed to Griffith, who won +1. The other semi between Scarr and Derek Knight was less eventful and the former won +20. In the best-of-three final Scarr failed a TP attempt with a missed peg-out, but won the first game +22, before 'getting it right' in the second to win +26tp.

Ramsgate's own Trevor Longman not only managed but also won the club's Open C-Level tournament by winning all five of his games, **reports Ashton Hulme**. Of the five visitors that locked horns with the locals, Owen Pugh from Colchester, who had won the handicap event in July, did the best and finished runner-up.

Alex Jardine won **The Tunbridge Wells B-Level** with six wins, one ahead of Jon Diamond.



Championship of Surrey

- Grade 2 Championship event -

Samir Patel won an all-Surbiton final against rival Stephen Mulliner, to take this tournament title for the second time. He dropped only one game during the event, to Jeff Dawson in his semi, while Mulliner progressed to the show-down undefeated.

Later results - Semis: Stephen Mulliner beat Alain Giraud +19, +10tpo; Samir Patel beat Jeff Dawson -25, +11, +8tp; Final - Patel beat Mulliner +26tp, +15.

Keeping it in the family

Nottingham week attracted 33 players, ranging in handicap from -2 to 20, and in age from 12 to 80+ (*see August report*). There were three parent-child combinations among the competitors - Ian and Euan Burrige, Peter and James Death, and Beatrice and Sophie McGlen. Is this perhaps a record?

Photographs, clockwise from top left: (1) Sophie McGlen, (2) Veronica Carlisle, (3) Dave Mundy, (4) Jordan Waters, (5) The miniature train at Norwich CC (6) Middle - Caroline Denny learns about corner cannons from Roy England. (Train image by Nick Harris, all others by Chris Roberts)





The English National and Doubles C

Mulliner wins Singles title ~ Two doubles victors as The

Stephen Mulliner and

It was surprising to learn that Stephen Mulliner's victory at the English National Singles Championship was only his second such success at the event, which sits behind only The Open in the hierarchy of GC Championships.

The six time Open and three time European winner has been 'Mr Consistency' over the years and this latest success gives him due reward for a season in which he relinquished those two titles.

He reports here on the 2014 Championship (aka The Ascot Cup).

Sixteen players gathered at Ryde LT&CC where the lawns were in excellent condition despite a torrential downpour on the previous Thursday and the club members spared no effort to make the 14 visitors from "the Big Island" feel welcome.

Play began with two blocks of eight playing single 19 point games with the top two to proceed to a best-of-three 13 point knock-out.

In Block A, there was an early surprise when Helena Fensome (the UK's resident Finnish croquet player and penguin enthusiast) turned over former holder, Stephen Mulliner, by 10-8. Fensome played very steadily and produced two excellent long hoops at just the right times (from her perspective!).

18 year old Harry Dodge looked to be in excellent form and ended Saturday unbeaten at 6/6 with only one tight game.

Mulliner survived his own tight game against David Bell despite the latter producing a superb crunch hoop-shot at hoop 14 in extra turn 8 after time had been called - by running it from the north boundary! However, Mulliner took good position at 15 and Bell could not repeat his heroics with the clearance.

By the end of the day, Mulliner was 5/6 and could not be caught for second place because he had beaten his nearest rival, Andrew Cowing.

Block B offered a much more interesting range of Sunday options.

Lionel Tibble, fresh from his London Masters triumph, looked in superb form and rattled off five wins by 10-4 or 10-5 to be the clear favourite. However, he was pegged back 10-9 by Nick Cheyne who, after losing 10-9 to Tom Weston in round 1, proceeded

to play with increasing confidence and was also on 5/6.

Pierre Beaudry, another ante-post favourite, had dropped games to Cheyne and to Chris Sheen but was still in contention with 4/6. Jason Carley, a relative newcomer from East Anglia, was also in the mix with 4/6.

The final round saw the Beaudry v Tibble and Carley v Cheyne ties, which the former won in each case, thereby creating a 4-way tie on 5/7. Under the tie-breaking regulation, Cheyne and Beaudry with two wins against those in the tie went through and Tibble and Carley with just the one win were relegated to the Plate.

Tibble gained some consolation when he beat local player Roy Tillcock in the Plate final.

Meanwhile, in the main event semis, Mulliner produced a fairly rapid win against Beaudry by 7-3, 7-6 but the second game was not without incident.

The other semi was a great spectacle.

Dodge took the first 7-4 but Cheyne hit back promptly by 7-3, before Dodge took a 6-4 lead in the decider.

Cheyne pulled it back level to set up an extended battle at 13 with some excellent clearing, including one remarkable chip of black out of the jaws of 13 by Cheyne from the North boundary.

The match was decided by Cheyne missing an eight clearance and Dodge made no mistake from three yards.

Game 1 of the final was closer than the score of 7-3 to Mulliner suggests.

Dodge's single ball clearing was extremely consistent but his hooping let him down on three occasions when he would normally expect to score the point.

Game 2 was even closer with some lengthy battles at 5, 7 and 9.

Hoop shots were taken from at least five yards and Mulliner had to run 7 from the boundary and 9 from five yards angled to take a 5-4 lead and get position at 10. This proved decisive and Mulliner took the Championship for the second time* having won it in 2012.

(*This was actually Stephen's third success as I found out when I researched the CA web site's roll of honour, but he is forgiven for forgetting his first victory because it was way back in 1991! - Ed)



onal GC Singles hampionships

and lifts the Ascot Cup Open event is incorporated ~

Tim King report

Pierre Beaudry, Harry Dodge and the Cheyne boys Howard and Nick, were all winners thanks to Tim King's clever management of this 'Super-Doubles' weekend at Hamptworth.

Here he tells us how it all came about:

When the GC Tournament Committee decided to change the format of the Open Championship by using the first day to extend the time available for singles play, a challenge was born: what to do with the dropped doubles competition?

The choice for the 2014 season was to stage the Open Doubles Championship on the same weekend as the English National GC Doubles Championship (competing for the Ranalegh Cups).

As Tournament Director, I contemplated long and hard (also having to wait on how many pairs would want to take this potentially unique opportunity to win both competitions in the same weekend).

The main consideration was to not just award both pairs of trophies to winners determined by only one method.

Once twelve pairs had submitted their entries, the way forward became apparent: conduct a straight, seeded knockout for the English National (each match being the best of three 13 point games) and an 'all-play-all block' for the Open Championship (single 13-point games).

In the first round of the knockout, the top four seeds received a bye and the first game of any knockout match (unless the players had already played) would count towards the block.

The only difficulty with this cunning plan was identifying the right playing order to avoid duplicated matches but after much head scratching, in the end, only the final was a repetition of an earlier block game.

The weather was almost as perfect as Goldilock's porridge (not too hot, not too cold) and players generally made a great effort to follow the complex instructions and play with suitable expedition.

The trend in the block was not easy to

follow but the biggest surprise was top seeds Beaudry and Dodge losing their third and fourth games.

Meanwhile, Moore & Sheen were on the wrong end of one 20+ yard clearance at hoop 13 and otherwise would probably

have had a perfect five out of five record at the end of Saturday.

They sustained their form until Sunday lunchtime and at that point they and the Cheyne brothers were both each on only a single loss and clear of the rest of the field.

Meanwhile, in the knockout, matches all went to seeding, except for the 8 versus 9 tie. Here young Euan Burrigge played with great credit and after losing the first game, he and his father held firm to defeat the Brand brothers.

In the semi-finals on Sunday morning, Beaudry & Dodge never looked in trouble against David Crawford and Mike Percival but the Cheyne brothers had a see-saw battle with Sue Lightbody and Lionel Tibble.

In the end, the former won through and as a result, they faced two crucial matches on Sunday afternoon.

Firstly, they played Moore & Sheen and won 7-5 to give them 9 wins out of 10.

The manager kept them in cruel suspense but no other way of reading the results suggested any other pair would be worthy winners of the Open Championship.

In the meantime, they went onto court to compete in the final of the English National Championship, but they met Beaudry and Dodge who made very few mistakes.

This was especially impressive given the speed of the court and the number of poor approaches played by other pairs throughout the weekend and they never looked in difficulty and won 7-3 (including taking the score from 2-2 to 6-2), 7-4 (having taken a 4-0 lead) to retain their title as English National Champions.

One of the highlights was Harry Dodge scoring hoop 7 in the first game with a dambuster shot from the north boundary.

The ball sailed through without touching the sides and the crowd took several seconds to register what had happened.

So, in the end, the grand experiment resulted in two different pairs taking the trophies under two different regimes for determining the winner.

The manager always teetered on the edge of losing control of all his pieces of paper but the format seemed to work to the general satisfaction of participants.

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Sussex Open

Cowing wins from local

Andrew Cowing won the Sussex Open beating local Janet Hoptroff in the deciding game of the final.

The tournament was disrupted somewhat by the withdrawal of sick Mark Hamilton and injured Martin French during, and at the completion of, the block games stage respectively. Nevertheless, eight progressed to the 19 point quarter-finals, where the biggest casualty was Tobi Savage who lost 8-10 to the eventual winner.

Hoptroff meanwhile saw-off the tricky Richard Brooks 10-6 to book her best-of-three semi-final berth where she needed the deciding game to get past Goran Norberg. Cowing had no such trouble and beat Ray Mounfield in straight games and so met Hoptroff in the final which he won 7-4, 2-7, 7-5.

Hurlingham Open

Morrow is 'Comeback King'

After battling poor form in the block stage and a burst of poor weather on the Saturday evening, Nelson Morrow took full advantage of a format that took all players through to the knockout stage, **reports Tim King.**

He played with great determination and success in winning four best-of-three matches in a row, beating Nick Cheyne in the final 7-5, 7-5.

Helena Fensome also showed great powers of recovery from block to knockout stages and reached her first ever national level-play semi, and both Ian Norris and Jason Carley both played with great credit in their first appearances at this level.

Photographs, opposite page from top:

- (1) Stephen Mulliner
 - (2 & 3) Harry Dodge and Pierre Beaudry
 - (4 & 5) Howard Cheyne and Nick Cheyne
 - (6) Jason Carley
 - (7) Nelson Morrow (*below*)
- (All images by Chris Roberts)





GC Selectors' Sixes

Fulford and Ormerod win something they had never won before!

Tim King reports

Arguably, Rob Fulford had one hand on the Musk's Cup by the end of his first match of the weekend for the First GC Six, while William Ormerod only emerged victorious with his last game in the Second Six.

Following the traditional random draw for Selectors Sixes (Eights) Fulford had beaten Will Gee at the 13th hoop of the third game in that first match, with the two being clear favourites.

Fulford then went on to complete straight games victories over all the other participants. Gee was somewhat frustrated by knowing he had lost ground in trying to win the cup and this affected his subsequent performance but eventually he

came through and claimed second place.

Fulford had achieved the feat of adding his name to yet another different croquet trophy.

Meanwhile, results in the Second Six were far less clear-cut.

Ormerod was only able to complete one game against Chris Roberts on the Saturday evening and the manager decided to hold back this match until after the rest of play on the Sunday.

As a result, the pair had both reached three match wins (with all four other players on two wins each), with the incomplete match serving by way of a final.

Roberts took a 6-4 lead upon resuming the match but Ormerod continued with his relentless accuracy (he plays a rare side style that was inspired by his also playing cricket; his direction of aim makes it look as if he will miss every shot by a large margin).

After some tense play at hoop 13

Ormerod clinched the match and deserved title.

Rarely (if ever) can a winning speech have included the line "This is the first GC trophy I have won for 60 years!"

William had also added interest to the weekend with his steady stream of stories of many famous names from croquet history. In addition, having achieved much success at AC, he had been inspired to resume his GC career having seen Reg Bamford win the Musk's Cup at Parkstone in 2009.

Final positions

First Six (Musk's Cup): 1 Robert Fulford, 2 Will Gee, 3 David Crawford, 4 Tim King, 5 Tobi Savage, 6 Richard Thompson.

Second Six (Kate Jones Trophy): 1 William Ormerod, 2 Chris Roberts, 3 Chris Sheen, 4 Tom Weston, 5 Joel Taylor, 6 Andrew Dymond.

Photographs, clockwise from top left:
 (1) Robert Fulford and William Ormerod
 (2) Middlesex (Inter-Counties winners)
 (3) Graham Good
 (4) Andrew Dymond giving Helena Fensome's penguin a grandstand view
 (All images by Chris Roberts)

London Masters ~ Tibble wins inaugural event

The first 'London Master' is Lionel Tibble who won the title from a strong international entry, **reports Don Beck.**

The attraction of fine lawns, good food and quality single-banked competition over two days attracted a past European and two National Champions.

The dozen players were placed into two blocks for five rounds of best-of-three 13point games with a final to come for block winners.

Saturday saw a couple of quick games in the first round as some players took longer to acclimatise to the faster lawns and firm hoops (expertly prepared by George Noble).

The standout result the early rounds was eleventh seed Andrew Dymond taking first

games from second and third seeds Will Gee and James Hopgood, before the fancied men regained control of the matches.

Overall the Saturday matches went with the

rankings, but would Sunday hold any surprises?

Round 4 saw top seed Stephen Mulliner, Lionel Tibble, Gee and Hopgood all win in two games, meaning that all four top seeds were undefeated going into the final round of block games.

Hopgood took the first game against Gee 7-3 but the latter's expected fight back never came. His spectacular clearances were followed by misses or poor approach shots and Hopgood's steady play prevailed and he took the second 7-4.

Attention then swung to the other lawn, where Tibble in the first game also upset the seeding with a 13th hoop victory over Mulliner.

The favourite won the first hoop of the second game but then struggled as Tibble built up a 5-1 lead, which he then cut back to 5-2, then 5-3, before missing shots at the ball at 9, allowing Tibble to win 7-3.

So the final pitted seeds 3 and 4 together in a match between players of similar styles; great accuracy, not so much power and top-notch hoop running.

The early exchanges were pretty even but gradually Tibble got the upper hand to win 7-5, 7-3.



'TWO GOOD' at BOTH

Graham Good of Bury scored a unique All England double when he secured both the AC and GC 2014 titles, report Robert Upton and Chris Roberts.

He won the AC at Colchester where Competition Organiser Peter Wilson had directed that area qualifiers would produce an eight player national final.

Robert Upton (Dyffryn) said "Being such a small group, we got to know each other well, and a spirit of friendship and camaraderie developed over the course of the weekend".

The award for brinkmanship went to Tony Elliott (Enfield) who had two 'cliff-hanger' matches and throughout Nick Archer (Watford) played in a free spirit, attempting hoop runs that most AC players would refuse. He earned a Silver Award as did the eventual winner Good, who tied on four wins with three others, and then triumphed in a four-way GC style 'shoot-out'.

GC Inter-Counties

New boys Middlesex win the strongest event yet

Bill Arliss reports

In their first venture into the competition, Middlesex produced a team that took the lead from round one and won the GC Inter-Counties with aplomb.

They all but maintained a 100% record throughout but let it slip in the very last round when they fell to holders Leicestershire 1 – 2.

Twelve counties contested this event over the middle weekend of September and used all eleven Southwick lawns as the event moved into a new era with the strongest entry by far.

It was also the first time that entries exceeded the maximum and the event actually started with a qualifying play-off at Hampworth in early May.

Last season's bottom county Gloucs/Worcs, faced Oxfordshire who did not play in 2013 and newcomers Middlesex.

The latter showed their strength with a clear victory and manager Bill Arliss had to use the competition small print to separate the other two teams.

Gloucs/Worcs just lost out and their captain Ivor Brand has made it very clear that it will be all systems go for a return of

his team in 2015.

Another very promising feature of this year's event was the attendance of most of our younger top players.

Previous winners Kent struggled hard but only managed a 7th place finish, holders Leicestershire lost three early matches but fought in the later rounds to collect 3rd place and with that last round win over Middlesex, Surrey ended runners-up.

Because of the very likely possibility of another over subscribed competition in 2015, the pressure remained on the bottom teams right to the very end to keep out of the play-off zone.

Although Suffolk managed a final round win against Somerset to leave both teams with three wins, Suffolk got the wooden spoon with a smaller game win total.

Both Somerset and Sussex finished with three match wins and 13 game wins but Sussex came out on top when the published 'who beats whom' criteria was used.

Hopefully we will be able to find a workable format that allows an increased entry in future years and we are already



looking at possibilities as this appears to be a very popular competition.

However initial work would suggest that we may have to increase by at least four entries to make this possible and it will most likely mean multiple venues and an increase in days.

Results Table

Wins - matches / games

1	Middlesex	10	24
2	Surrey	9	22
3	Leicestershire	8	21
4	York./Durham	7	17
5	Hampshire	6	18
6	Glamorgan	5	15
7	Kent	4	16
8	Dorset	4	16
9	Oxfordshire	4	14
10	Sussex	3	13
11	Somerset	3	13
12	Suffolk	3	10

National B-Level Series, Centre Stage and Grass Roots Competitions

See page 22

All Englands ~ Good records unique double victory

Upton commented "I felt that it was a shame that after 15 hours of hard-fought AC, the result of the event had to be determined this way, but in fairness to manager Colin Hemming, his hands were tied and the method that he chose was clearly the most practical that time would allow".

Before presenting the trophy, CA President Quiller Barrett highlighted some of the illustrious winners of the competition over the past 50 years and of course thanked the hosts.

Part one of the double complete, Good then set about the GC national final at Pendle, and recorded an emphatic victory, ending undefeated and five wins clear of the field. He mastered the tight hoops (left over from the recently hosted AC Spencer Ell) and was first to adopt the successful strategy of fine ball placement over long range hoop attempts.

He was first to show on the leader board of manager Frances Colman's efficient 'all play all' format, which kept the 16 qualifiers busy all weekend.

They collectively and playfully ganged up on Good, all looking for a downfall that never came.

David Whyte (Dulwich) won ten games to end as Good's closest challenger, ahead of three others on nine. Only two finalists were bothered by this seasons introduction of 'effective handicaps' and both Rich Waterman (Maldon) and Gavin Taylor (Merton), like the majority of the field, ended with within the 40 to 60% winning margin.

Good's 100% record earned him a handicap drop from 6 to 4, and his name on the trophy, presented by CA Vice President Colin Irwin, means he joins a string of players who have gone on to make their marks on the senior level-play circuit.



The Nailsea and District Croquet Club has been working hard to improve its lawns.

We are striving for deep rooted, drought resistant, healthy, fine grass consistently across all four lawns.

We are also seeking to make them as level as possible.

The programme was started four years ago with the engagement of a professional groundsman who looks after the lawns of other croquet and bowls clubs.

His brief was to provide guidance for the work we do ourselves (mowing height, verti-cutting, hollow and solid tining) and to carry out specialist work himself.

After three years the condition of the grass was greatly improved and we were ready to start on the levelling work and successfully applied to the CA for a grant to help with the cost of this.

The CA Development Committee awarded us £3900 split over four annual installments.

CA Grant helps Nailsea improve their lawns

Chairman Mike Tracy talks grass

Work started in Autumn 2013 and the plan was to level one lawn each autumn, partly to spread the cost and partly to keep some lawns available for our members for as long as possible.

We hollow tined and generously top dressed the first lawn to be levelled using approximately five tonnes of kiln dried sand and repeated the same action next lawn ready for autumn 2014. Scarifying, mowing and the application of autumn/ winter fertiliser followed, along with spraying for leatherjacket and chafer grubs. Next we over-seeded using half of the total seed to be applied and spread seven tonnes of kiln dried sand, which was distributed and levelled by a 3m lute pulled by hand.

Finally the remainder of the grass seed was spread and we waited for six months.

The following spring the grass looked superb and everyone was keen to play on this improved lawn. The views of players of all standards were canvassed from A-Class to novice, and all were agreed that there was a marked improvement in flatness. Minor undulations can have a devastating effect, especially when approaching a hoop when the conditions are fast.

Such imperfections have quite definitely been reduced but we have to acknowledge that larger-scale

changes in level, such as a lawn dropping away in one corner by a couple of inches or a small hump covering several square feet cannot be addressed by this method in a time scale of

less than years.

If laser levelling is not a possibility, then the method we have used will bring about useful improvements, and we will continue the programme through our other three lawns year by year.

We believe that a high quality and consistent sward is just as important for good playing conditions as absolute flatness.

The pre-levelling work (done the previous autumn) combined with the treatment given, when the sand was spread, has brought the benefits in grass quality that we had hoped for.

We can see that if we can keep on iterating this programme, the lawns will continue to improve.

We are also addressing the high spots by hollow tining them more intensively than the rest of each lawn.

We have found that every groundsman has a different view of best practice. Ours is of the opinion that laser levelling is not only expensive but is not a permanent solution.

He has observed that perfectly level lawns gradually develop undulations over time and he is also of the opinion that kiln dried sand is the best material for both top dressing and levelling.

Others are adamant that moist sand is better for levelling and is adequate for top dressing.

Having paid our groundsman for his guidance and expertise it would have made no sense to use materials other than those he recommends, but if other clubs are doing this sort of work they should not be surprised if they receive different advice.

All the authorities seem to agree that the grade of sand which is used is important – grain size and shape will significantly affect the outcome.



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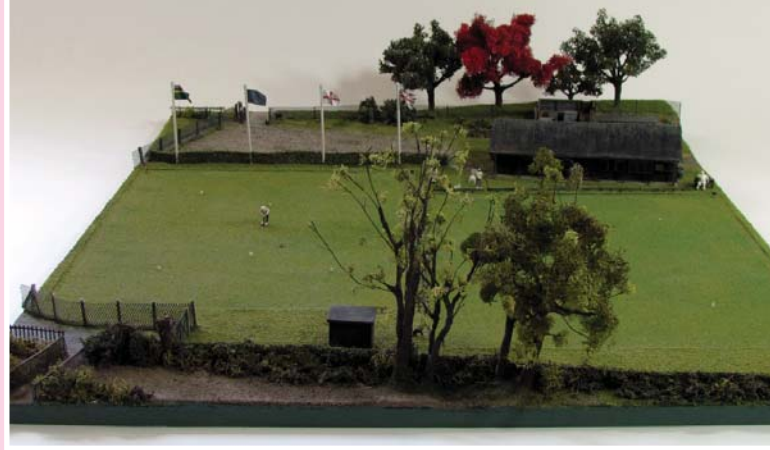
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Model-making is an interest of mine dating back to my childhood, and I have recently taken it to a new level.

Making a model of Surbiton Croquet Club was a natural choice, allowing me to combine two passions.

And George Noble's 70th birthday provided the right timing.

The model is 1:100 scale, which is towards the smallest scale that still allows

Surbiton in miniature by Club member Sam Murray

a reasonable level of detail, whilst ensuring that the finished model is not too large.

The list of materials used is very extensive, including woods, card, paper, wire, plastics, synthetic foams, powders, glue, paint, specialist modelling clay, and lichen.

I didn't count the hours I spent making

this model, but it certainly ran into the hundreds.

Much like croquet, considerable patience and focus was required.

A major challenge at this scale is subduing the contrast of individual colours, to avoid a 'toy-like' quality.

The figures each represent an actual Surbiton member – some were less flattered than others upon seeing their miniature selves!



The 2014 Schools' Champions Oakham outplayed hosts Nottingham High School when sixth formers from the two schools met in their first ever fixture.

The Rutland school won 6-2 at Nottingham CC in mid-September, **reports David Brydon.**

Seven old men (plus Jack Wicks) playing on adjacent lawns in the Bowdon v Colchester match, watched on as eight sixth formers (plus young Euan Burrige) battled it out in 14 point games, provoking senior comments such as "I didn't know there was any schools croquet" and "I had to pinch myself when I saw so many young people playing a serious match."

One of those old men, CA International Performance Director and Oakham's coach Ian Burrige, said: "It was great to see young players enjoying themselves and competing against each other for the honour of their schools. The challenge for clubs and the CA

Oakham School win at Notts

now is to attract more young players like these, and to develop their game, so that we have a pool of people from which can emerge the stars of the future.

Alongside this, we also need a national junior squad structure to capture and develop those young individual players who are often the only junior member at their club.

This will not only help develop their skills, but also keep these young players from drifting away from the sport."

Two rounds of handicap doubles saw Oakham take a 3-1 lead by tea, when current National Junior Champion Liam Payne made way for Burrige junior.

Oakham won the first two of the level singles games fairly convincingly to secure

the match, before what might otherwise have been an exciting finale.

Playing at his home club, Tom Westhoff narrowly lost to the undefeated Austin Steele on time, whilst Rowan Lee was able to peg out against Anthony Morris after time was called, for the closest of wins +1 on time.

Photograph: The Nottingham High School team - Will Stevens, Kam Khalil, Tom Westhoff and Rowan Lee. (Oakham were featured in the last issue):



found more than he expected at Cairo's Gezirah Club

~ Here he shares a clubman's view of croquet Egyptian style ~

Hurlingham member Fred Marsh had visited Egypt a number of times but had never looked out the croquet there before. This year, he changed all that and here he shares his observations with the Gazette.

As President of the Royal Aero Club Trust I was invited by James Watts, British Ambassador to Egypt, to take part in celebrations to commemorate the intrepid British aviation pioneer Frank McClean's 1914 historic flight from Alexandria to Khartoum.

After my stay at the old and exclusive Embassy Residence, built in 1894 (shades of Lord Cromer and Field Marshal Lord Kitchener) I had made arrangements to meet Amir Ramsis Naguib, President of the World Croquet Federation who is also President of the Egyptian Croquet Federation.

He looked after me like a brother.

Amir spoke warmly and admiringly about the Hurlingham Club which he had last visited during the 2012 World Golf Croquet

Championships.

Amir arranged for me to have some coaching, as I was keen to find out about their technique and tactics.

My coach was Abdul Hameed, a Club employee. He only spoke a few words of English, whilst I had no Arabic, except: Shukran (Thank you) and Salaam Alaikum (the standard form of greeting).

In Egypt they only play Golf Croquet and

really hard so, to protect spectators, the lawns of the Egyptian Golf Federation Club are surrounded by metal fences, whilst those of the Gezirah Club are surrounded by stout hedges.

The hard hitting is achieved by a well-coordinated wrist and arm movement.

Egyptians do not use any form of 'handicap system'. They have a Club Ladder, which naturally indicates ability and

competence, and they find this quite satisfactory.

I watched several 'club level' games, both singles and doubles.

There is a referee/scorer for all games, as well as two 'ball boys', who mark the spot where the ball leaves the playing area.

The referee and ball boys are usually club employees and receive payment for their services.

When players complained about 'rabbit runs' inside the base of metal hoops during some of the games a small amount of fine sand was sprinkled into the 'dip'. I was told that this is carefully supervised to prevent consequential damage to the lawns.



their lawns are superbly kept and fast. The Gezirah Club has three, and the Egyptian Golf Federation Club, just five minutes-walk away, also has three. All lawns have score boards, some of which are electronic!

All lawns have floodlighting facilities as even in mid-March the light fades at around 6pm, and during the summer, when the daytime heat is unbearable, croquet is played at night time, often until well after midnight.

Egyptian players like to hoop and clear

GC Centre Stage and Grass Roots

Eynsham sweep the board

Oxfordshire Club Eynsham had a most successful weekend at Ashby in mid-September when their players won both of the CA's restricted events, **reports competition director Terrey Sparks.**

On the Saturday Pat Edginton was undefeated in his seven games to lift the Grass Roots Trophy (for handicaps 9+), closely followed by Libby Dixon (Ben Rhydding) on eight wins.

The Centre Stage Trophy (for handicaps 5 to 8) followed on the Sunday and Eynsham went one better by filling the top two places, with Brian Hitchins edging out Tony Newport 7-5 in a tense final. Thanks to the Ashby Club for providing such a superb venue and their member Eileen Buxton who managed in an exemplary manner.

GC B-Level Series National Final preview

Raby leads strong final field

The 17 tournament National B-Level Series (for handicaps 3+) will reach its 2014 zenith at Hamptworth just as this Gazette comes through your door, **reports competition director Chris Roberts.**

Worcester's Richard Raby probably starts as favourite having won three of the qualifying events, but he won't have it all his own way in the 20 player final as Les Heard (Northampton), Mike Huxley (Guildford) and Kath Wright (Long Eton Park) were all two-time winners during the season. Another five won one qualifier apiece and the rest of the field is made up of players who accumulated points for 'placed' finishes.

The Series has really taken off this season and two more clubs are keen to be added to the Series roster for 2015.

GC Round-up - GC Rou

Maggie Cowman and Freda Vitty won the Women's Doubles at Ripon with only one loss from their ten 19 point games. Ann Brookes and Jane Collier pressed them hard and finished runners-up with just one less victory. Although there was a field of just six pairs, it did include tournament newcomers Andrea Widdison and Chris Wood who won three games and are now keen to enter other events, **reports Freda Vitty.**

~

The prolific **Richard Jenkins reports** from Hamptworth, that he is now close to having run 70 GC tournaments at the hospitable Wiltshire club and he contacted the Gazette to announce a 'first' had just occurred.

Most of his weekend events are split into two, one on each day, with players able to choose to play in one or both.

Brian Williams, a senior citizen from West Wittering, wrote his little piece of croquet



All the croquet mallets I saw being used were standard wooden mallets, made in Egypt. They are lightweight, probably half the weight of a standard (2 lb 4oz) Hobbs Mallet. The price – approximately £20 (220 Egyptian Pounds). Amir even presented me with one before I came home.

Photographs: (centre & top right) Reg Bamford & Ahmed Nasr in the 2013 World GC final in Cairo (by Nick Cheyne).

(Above) Courtside scoreboards and the author at the Embassy Residence (supplied by Fred Marsh).

End-up - GC Round-up

history last month, by recording a victory in both events of the same Hamptworth weekend. Surprisingly, this had never occurred before.

Thames Valley CC of Abingdon was delighted to receive some generous support for their Ladies Doubles tournament in August.

Norma Rayne reports that local firm Renaissance Retirement Ltd. courted the club and sponsored the event with two handsome trophies.

Phyllis Court's Helena Fensome hit a boundary shot that scored a 'two-in-one' through hoops 11 and 12 (somehow missing the peg), to win the final with partner Pam Mead, to the astonishment of everyone watching and especially opponents Ann Wotherspoon and Marion Hebblethwaite of Eynsham.

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Publication Details

The Croquet Gazette is published six times per year, usually in February, April, June, August, October and December. **Copy should reach the Editor before the 20th of the month before publication is due.** However if you have something that you think the Editor may be willing to expand this deadline for, please contact him direct.

E-mail contributions, including tournament reports should be sent direct to the Editor, or copied to the Editor if they are being posted to the Nottingham List. Digital images are preferred, but photographic prints may also be acceptable. Please send digital jpeg or tiff format files. Please accompany all images with a description of the subject. If you require any material to be returned please enclose an SAE.

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

The Croquet Gazette is printed by Billingham Press, Central Avenue, Billingham, Stockton on Tees.

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