

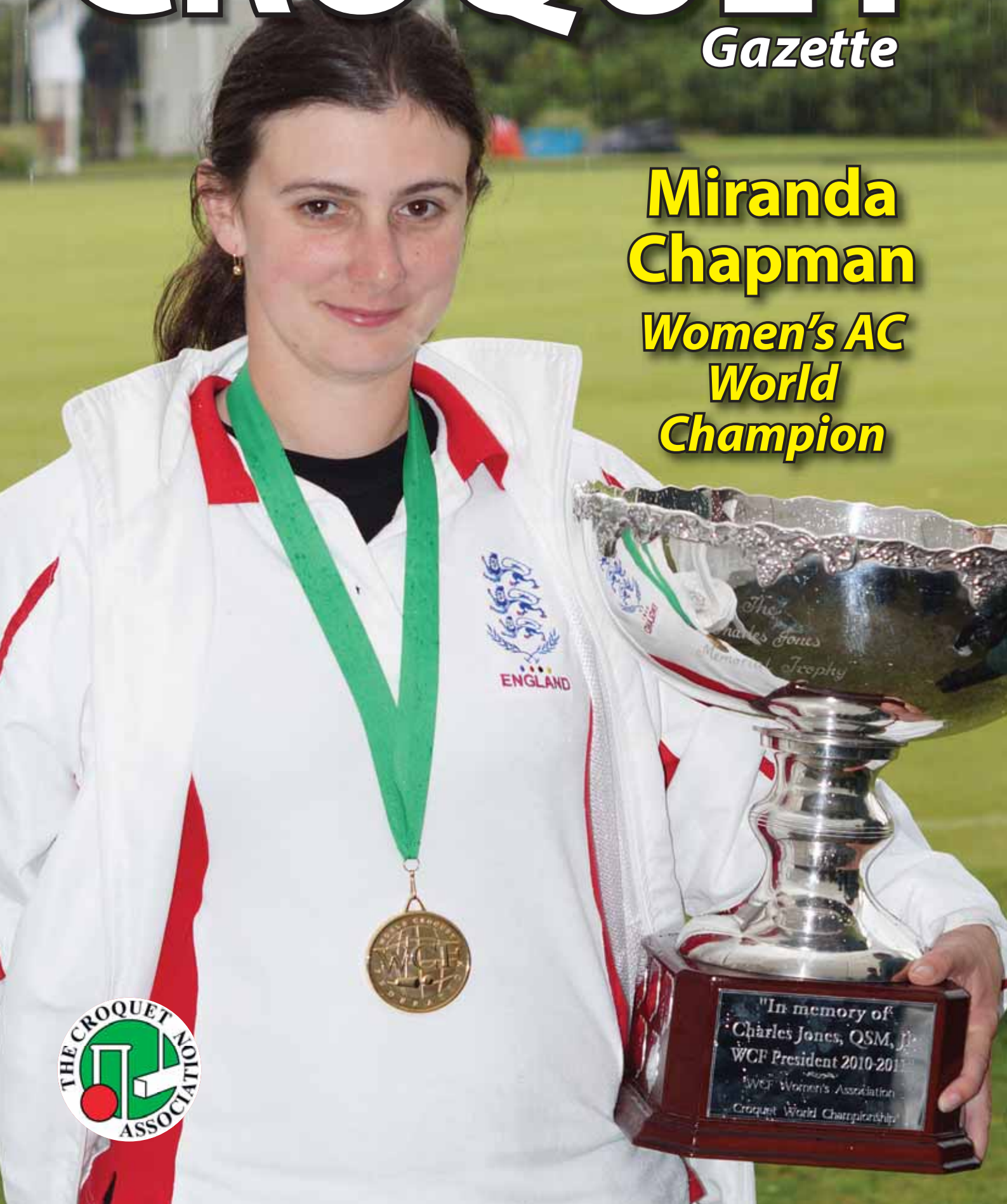
The

Issue 357 August 2015

CROQUET

Gazette

**Miranda
Chapman**
**Women's AC
World
Champion**



From our files researched by Frances Colman

10 years ago - 2005



Eighty players from nineteen countries, dozens of officials and helpers, hundreds of spectators, four clubs, twenty-one lawns, and nine days went into making the **Mitsubishi Motors 2005 World Croquet Championship** - the largest and most successful event of recent years (*reported by Jonathan Kirby*). . . Phil Cordingly and Brian Storey spent a lot of time keeping the WCF website up to date. This must be the first major croquet tournament to have all the results available on the web as they came in. (*The final: Robert Fulford v Reg Bamford*) . . . Over 100 people were there for the start of play and the crowd rose to over 250 by the middle of the day. . . Bamford completed his second sextuple to win 3 – 0 and become World Champion for the second time.

The foot on the ball question – The answer to George Houghton’s query in issue 297 about the croquet stroke in which one foot was placed on the striker’s ball (known a “tight croquet”) is that it was a legitimate stroke, but was banned as long ago as 1870. . . My source for this is “Croquet” by Leonard Williams, published in 1899 by D Innes and Co Ltd. (*Contributed by I Howard Wright*).

CA website receives record number of visitors – David Maugham’s ‘live updates’ for the World Championships quarter finals became the most accessed page. Active for only one day, it received 15,000 hits from a total of 450 people. The figures suggest that around 50 people were tuned in for most of the day. The week of the worlds was the busiest yet for the CA site as a whole, with a total of 5000 different visitors.

Henley 2000 - by Smokey Eades
I’m eighty now and time is running short
For sprightly games upon a croquet court.
The active years that blazed the Summer
through
Are Autumn now; yet whilst the beaded
dew
Still shows the early morning shots that
stray,
With escalating handicap I’ll try
To make a further hoop or two.

50 years ago - 1965



Closed shop? – Once again our congratulations go to John Solomon on winning the Open Championship. He is the fourth player to win the title three times in succession, the others being A.H.Spong (1880-2), Duff Matthews (1914, 1919-20), and Humphrey Hicks (four times in succession, 1947-50). Though he lost one or two games and others were close, he was never unduly extended. In fact one wonders, when watching him, whether he is playing against his opponents or the lawn.

Obituary - The Rev. B.V.F. Brackenbury
– News of the death of Basil Brackenbury, suddenly but without pain or stress, on July 26th will come as a grave shock to his many friends and admirers in the Association for which in so many ways he did so much. . . He joined the CA Council in 1951 and at once made his mark, so much so that he was elected its Chairman. But even before this he had performed service in pioneering the transformation of rather dowdy and typographically untidy Gazette into the handsomely produced journal we now have. . . A further service to the game performed by Brack (*as he was known*) was his fostering of it at Oxford; without this generous encouragement there is doubtful whether we should have a regular Varsity match today. . .

The Hurlingham delegate at the 1963 Club Conference bemoaned the virtual non-existence of **the white trouser** except on state occasions, but his words do not seem to have had any considerable effect. Far too many players still appear at tournaments looking as though they are on their way to paint a boat. . . Part of the trouble may be the weather: In the rain even the sleekest of players is apt to look like a coastguard on a motor-cycling holiday. . .

The first ever match between the **Edinburgh and Glasgow Croquet Clubs** was played on Saturday 26th June. Edinburgh won by three matches to one. . . A considerable amount of publicity was obtained in the national press in Scotland. . .

100 years ago - 1915



In the loss of his second son, the Hon.G.W.Grenfell, on August 1st, only about two months after his eldest son, Capt. the Hon. Julian Grenfell, had died of his wounds, the President of the Croquet Association, Lord Desborough, has indeed been called upon to pay heavy tribute to the War.

In offering Lord Desborough our deep sympathy in his hour of great trial, we fell sure we are only voicing that of every Associate and the Croquet world in general.

Mrs Milne-Redhead will be most grateful for any small donations towards a fund for local Prisoners of War in the neighbourhood of Frome. Twenty-four men are getting regular parcels to the value of 4/- weekly and the men all acknowledge them. . .

Dear Sir, Will you kindly insert in the Gazette the following query concerning handicap games under “Alternative A”.

What is the most awkward leave that the odds-giver can arrange at the end of his first break, supposing that the other three clips are on the first hoop? The weaker player will be forced to take a bisque and obtain the innings (unless he wishes to see his opponent go out), so how can the latter best place the balls? Perhaps some kind master of the game will be good enough to give me a little advice.

Yours faithfully, Scientiae Questor.

We presume that the various matches in the Hurlingham Club tournament will be reported in the following style:-

“We opened with a strong attack on Bridge 1. In spite of one lucky shot at 35 yards, the enemy’s reply was ineffective. In fact, for the next quarter of an hour he was feverishly engaged in making bridges, in order to secure a retreat at the earliest moment”. . . “On resuming the offensive we considered it expedient, for reasons which it would be premature to disclose, to abandon for the moment our attack on Bridge 1, and to readjust our strategic position by taking up some previously prepared ground in Corner IV, which is strongly fortified by wire entanglements. . .”

Editorial

There was never going to be any choice to make about the cover image for this issue, once two England players had won through to the Women's AC World Championship final.

Congratulations to both Gabrielle Higgins and Miranda Chapman on their fabulous achievement and to the latter on becoming the new Women's World Champion.

The Gazette leads with this event on the centre pages, and overleaf CA Chairman Tim King and International Performance Director Ian Burrige respectively pay their tributes to the host club Nottingham and the excellent performances of many of the British players.

I visited the Championships for a couple of days and was super impressed with the whole spectacle, especially the organisation and division of labour between the officials and club volunteers - a real team effort!

Whilst on visits, since my last editorial, I have added AWE Aldermaston and Nailsea to my tally of 'played at' clubs. The former is sited within an Atomic Weapons Establishment in Berkshire. There is much security fencing and some men with guns!

However the croquet courts were just like most others (better in fact) and adjoining the club's rugby pitch on which I had played more than 30 years before. The visit got me

thinking that it would be good to hear from any other clubs that play in unexpected places or if there are any unusual locations where readers have played our lovely sport.

Back with this Gazette; we are heavy with tournament reports this time, with both The AC and GC Opens having taken place in the past two months. Congratulations to Robert Fulford and Reg Bamford for their respective record breaking victories.

It was as encouraging to see the young turks coming to the fore in the GC Open, as it was disappointing for your truly to lose to two different Australians on the same day!

I have managed to name most of the tournament reporters within their stories and I thank them, and unknown scribes, for keeping us all so informed. Other articles, omitted from this issue but the non-time dependent ones are lined up for inclusion next time.



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The
CROQUET
Gazette



Issue 357 Aug/Sept. 2015

Front cover: Miranda Chapman with her Women's World AC Championship trophy (photograph by Paddy Chapman).

This page: The Editor was a shadow of his former self at the GC Open (photograph by Liz Farrow) and the Chairman awaiting the outcome of a long shot at Surbiton some time ago (photograph by Chris Roberts).

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

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

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Chairman's Column

A few weeks ago, I was on a business trip to Plymouth and able to spend an enjoyable evening at the local croquet club, which I had not been to before.

This club is just one of many, defying the recent speculation in the national press that croquet will die out by 2037.

The club sits on top of a reservoir and has to comply with many restrictions so that the water company can protect the purity of the supply to local residents. These restrictions, however, do not prevent an enthusiastic group of players from enjoying their sport.

The visit had me wondering how many clubs I had actually visited since the first time I traveled away from my home club of Ashby. That away match in 2000 was at Woodhall Spa, another one of our more remote clubs.

I was hopeful that my record would be

suitably impressive and was founded on a discussion on the Nottingham List a couple of years ago. That discussion arose from Ian and Euan Burrige making their tour for charity of all the clubs that have ever hosted an AC 'Eight' tournament.

The initial responses involved several senior players reporting that they were a few short of the full set. I was quite surprised as, despite playing more GC than AC, the only one missing for me is Jersey, an island I have, unfortunately, yet to visit for any purpose.

In the end, a few players did come forward with the full set; no mean feat as Ian and Euan discovered by dashing from one end of the country to the other to complete their challenge.

Having asked myself the wider question the other day, I ended up being disappointed as my total is only about one fifth of all our member clubs.

Stepping back though, the answer made me realise that while we are a small sport, we should never underestimate our

diversity and the extent of the passion that drives us to nurture what we love.

The recent constitutional changes of the CA are the opportunity to bring our diversity into focus and connect more directly with members at all levels of the sport.

Meanwhile, I need to venture out further and boost my club count to discover yet more about you, the members. These discoveries will help me in leading Council to ensure croquet not only survives beyond 2037 but captivates yet more players, whether on top of reservoirs or in other, more conventional locations.



Tim King

Treasurer's Report on the 2014 Accounts

The 2014 Accounts will not be published in the Gazette, as allowed by the constitution changes approved at the 2013 AGM.

They are, however on the CA website (www.croquet.org.uk/) together with a detailed commentary and are available, on request, by post. They will also be distributed at the 2015 AGM.

The 2014 Income & Expenditure Account shows a surplus of £100 (after tax), which appears to be a marked fall from the £11,500 recorded in 2013.

The difference is that the 2014 accounts include the cost of sending the England team to New Zealand for the MacRobertson Shield.

Factors like this make comparison from year to year difficult. Council overcomes this problem by using a modified set of accounts where such major fluctuations are averaged out.

With that measure, the balance between income and expenditure still improved

– by some £5,500 over the adjusted figure for 2013 – and thus the CA's financial performance in 2014 was indeed reasonably strong.

Subscription income from individuals and clubs rose by 2%, in a year when subscription rates did not change, so there has been a modest increase in membership.

Tournament levies increased by 4%, but shop turnover and profits fell, mainly because of a drop in sales to members: sales to non-members increased 3%.

The overall effect was an increase in income of just over 1%, a slight fall in real terms after taking inflation into account.

Applications for grants were fewer in number, and the grants budget was boosted by the return of a grant awarded in an earlier year, when the recipient club proved unable to complete its project because of problems with the landlord.

Nine clubs were awarded Development Grants to improve and develop both on and off-court facilities.

Five newly registered clubs also received grants in the form of start-up equipment.

The grants total of £28,000 was down £2,000 on 2013.

General administration costs, including staff salaries, remained under control.

Total expenditure increased marginally, a fall in staff costs being matched by the return to a normal level of Council meeting costs.

The Balance Sheet shows that the value of Shop stock fell 19% to £42,300 over the year.

This includes the cost of a substantial stock of Dawson balls acquired during the year.

The investment of reserves remains a problem in the continuing low interest rate environment and given Council's low-risk investment policy.

Surplus cash has been invested in fixed-term deposits, which pay slightly more than instant access deposit accounts.

Peter Death, Honorary Treasurer



Peter Death,
Hon.Treasurer

GC Sequence Umpires A follow-up

The last Gazette explained the Temporary Variation that enables a Tournament Referee to appoint Sequence Umpires to watch out for wrong ball plays in GC matches.

In response to a question raised, please note that it is a decision for the Tournament Referee (or Manager) as to whether the Sequence Umpire trial should apply to a particular event.

If they have not announced such a decision the trial will not apply.

Martin French,
Chairman, GC Rules Committee

2016 Subscription rates

Individual members paying by direct debit.	Single	Composite
Standard and overseas, including EU		
First year	14.50	22.50
Second year	28.50	45
Full rate	43 (48.50)	67.50 (73)
Student (formerly Junior)	16 (16)	
Non-tournament	25.50 (31)	36
(41.50)		

(Payments by other than direct debit are possible in the full, junior and non-tournament categories only; the rates for these are shown in brackets.)

Member clubs

Standard (Clubs with 2+ lawns) per capita	9.50
Standard (Smaller clubs) per capita	8.50
Each Junior member of a club per capita	5.00
<i>(The minimum club subscription remains at a total of 60. For newly-registered clubs in their 1st, 2nd or 3rd year the subscription is capped at a total of 60, 90 and 120 respectively.)</i>	
Universities and schools	30

Affiliates

UK	40
Overseas	45

Subscriptions were last raised in 2015. Council decided to increase the member club rate by the rate of inflation over the year, plus £1 for larger clubs, as allowed by the revised CA Constitution adopted at the SGM in March. Council also decided to introduce a discounted per capita rate for junior members of clubs (those under 21 or in continuing full-time education to first degree level at 1 January 2016). Individual rates have not been increased this year.

Peter Death, Hon. Treasurer

NOTICE OF MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of The Croquet Association

will take place at the Hurlingham Club
on Saturday 17 October 2015
commencing at 11.00 am

AGENDA

1 Apologies for Absence.

2 Minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 18 October 2014.

The minutes are on the website at <http://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1081> and will be sent to Home Members on request to the CA Office.

3 Minutes of the SGM held on Saturday 28 March 2015.

The minutes are on the website at <http://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1223> and will be sent to Home Members on request to the CA Office.

4 Report of Council.

The Chairman of Council, Tim King, will present Council's annual report. There will be an opportunity to ask questions.

5 Accounts for the year to December 2014 and Hon. Treasurer's Report.

The accounts are on the website at <http://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1235>, with a commentary at [/?d=1234](http://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1234) They will be sent to Home Members on request to the office and copies will be available at the meeting.

6 Election of Hon. Secretary.

Dr. I. G. Vincent offers himself for re-election and is the only nomination.

7 Election of Hon. Treasurer.

Mr. P. J. Death offers himself for re-election and is the only nomination.

8 Election of Reporting Accountant.

Marian Hemsted is willing to serve and is the only nomination.

9 Election of Council Members.

The following members of Council retire by rotation and seek re-election under clause 18 (a)(i): John Bowcott, Jeff Dawson, Richard Hoskyns and Tim King, who were elected in 2012, and Brian Wilson and Dave Kibble, who were co-opted after the 2014 AGM. No nominations were received, so there are six candidates for seven vacancies and an election is not required.

10 Benefactors' Book.

The names of benefactors will be read.

11 Presentation of Trophies for the Most Improved Players.

Apps Memorial Bowl: Ian Anderson (Woking);

Spiers Trophy: John-Paul Moberly (Croquet Durham).

12 Presentation of Coach of the Year and Lifetime Coaching Award.

The Coach of the Year award is to be presented to Janet Hoptroff (Sussex County).

A lifetime coaching award is to be presented to Peter Dyke (Nailsea).

13 Presentation of Club Awards.

Townsend Award: High Wycombe; Apps-Healy Award: Swindon and Camerton & Peasdown; Millennium Award: Budleigh Salterton.

14 Presentation of Croquet Association Diplomas.

15 Presentation of Council Medal.

The Council Medal is to be awarded to Ian Vincent.

16 Any Other Business.

17 President's Closing Remarks.

The Host with the Most

Tim King, Chairman of the CA
pays tribute to Nottingham CC

The Croquet Association is unable to run a permanent staff to deal with organising and managing individual croquet events.

Even the most major event is utterly dependent on the enthusiasm, competence and energy of the local host club.

We have just witnessed Nottingham CC delivering a performance of the very highest quality with their hosting of the Women's World AC Championship.

This performance was evident from beforehand: extensive publicity, a comprehensive website and a charity fun day highlighted the impending main event. The Championship went on to build on these beginnings and no detail was too small for the club to treat with care and attention.

Success is always a result of activity by a large number of individuals and this appreciation is too small to list them all. The individuals who have stood out though include Beatrice McGlen (Chairman of the Organising Committee), Peter Death (Tournament Manager), David Brydon (Media Relations), Martin Beacon (Grounds Manager) and Charlie Paget (Groundsman).

Beatrice has truly been indefatigable and anyone who has ever mixed playing with organisational responsibilities will be in total awe that she was able to walk away from the week having also won the Shield. After the closing ceremony, she was there in the pouring rain as the last few hardy souls cleared away the trappings of a World Championship. I have no doubt she slept deeply after all her exertions.

And while Charlie is an employee of the city council, he has shown dedication beyond the call of duty to deliver the Nottingham courts at their very best. Others (Paddy, Roger, Rachel, two Ians and so on) have all played a part know and much better than I can tell how much effort they have also provided. As for the rest of the Nottingham Club, I am sorry that I cannot name you all but thank you from the CA. People will remember this Championship for many years to come and, without you, it would never have been possible.

IPD, Ian Burrige praises our new World Champion and the other British successes

The enthusiasm that all the British players displayed towards this event, both before and during, was infectious, and I am sure contributed to the excellent performances of many.

Winning the Bowl and Shield, in addition to having both the finalists in the main event, was well above expectations.

Miranda's victory is a tribute to both her talent and the amount of effort she has put in over the past twelve months of preparation. I am delighted that her focus and attention to detail paid off; she was the best prepared player and a very worthy winner. If her fellow competitors can continue to improve, off the back of the momentum and motivation that this event has provided them, Miranda's title defence may prove to be an even sterner test. Women's croquet was the ultimate winner from these Championships, which are now firmly established as the focal point of the Women's calendar.

Ian Burrige, International Performance Director

The wisdom of honesty to the press is questioned

Dear Editor,

Your readers will, no doubt, be aware of a survey that Heathrow has conducted into public awareness of croquet compared to Quidditch (a game played on broomsticks by characters in the Harry Potter novels) if only by the press feeding frenzy it has provoked.

Taking the survey's poorly-based conclusions at face value, so-called serious national newspapers have competed to produce the most clichéd, snide, patronising, superficial and dismissive account of croquet, its devotees and its future.

There may, indeed, be no such thing as bad publicity but I was surprised that the CA Manager, Elizabeth Larsson (consulted by The Times), acquiesced in the suggestion that croquet's "ageing demographic was a worry" (The Times, July 9, page 21). Everyone is getting older.

Croquet (and concert and theatre-going) mostly attract one age group, and squash and soccer another: I haven't yet seen predictions of the latter's imminent demise because most who play it retire in their thirties: an activity span averaging about half that of those who swing a mallet.

The Times croquet piece excelled in misinformation by illustrating the game being (sort of) played by two women dressed à la mode for 1950s débutantes including high heels. I bet the gofer who found that pic has been promoted to tea boy!

But wait! One realises The Guardian does not represent the press or national establishment but that paper's contribution to the debate is measured and fair and the reporter actually visited a croquet club and talked to members. To lift your spirits a little, read Zoe Williams, The Guardian, July 11, page 20 - it should be still available on line.

Peter Lowe, Tyneside CC

Elizabeth Larsson replies:

Please note that the article also quoted my other statistics in support of the very real growth we've had over the last few years and the number of tournaments, etc., that were being played.

However, the ageing demographic is a worry and I cannot avoid saying so given that is an acknowledged concern of Croquet Association and that several of our committees are actively looking at ways to recruit younger players.

What was not reported, were my other comments about the successes of our junior players, our development officers, development squads and bursaries. I also said that we are not the only sport with ageing demographic problem: golf, rugby and football and bowls have the same issue.

I cannot and will not mislead the press about CA activities, and people should beware of drawing conclusions based on what the paper has printed which, inevitably, is only part of an interview.

By the way, readers may be interested to know that the photograph that The Times used, was that of Princess Marina and Princess Alexandra, at their home in Buckinghamshire, in 1954, which presumably was a specific photoshoot for an Illustrated London News article about Princess Marina, but it appeared in other newspapers at the time as well.

Elizabeth Larsson, Manager, Croquet Association

Ball colour is a problem for the colour blind

Dear Editor,

A somewhat offbeat (but not frivolous, I assure you) point for your consideration.

In my Club of twenty-five members there are two who are colour blind (including me). Since the national ratio is around one in eleven, it follows that all Clubs must be affected.

The primary colours pose no problem but we have difficulty with the drab secondary colours and I feel that in these days of giving more consideration to the difficulties of minorities there is a strong case for change.

The two colours causing the most difficulty are brown and green. I usually go by the degree of darkness but sets differ; in one the green is darker, in another the brown.

During club matches I have to ascertain which is which (to raised eyebrows) and competition is hard enough without the added distraction of repeatedly pausing to check.

My solution would be to relegate the brown and replace it with a brighter alternative such as orange, Cambridge blue or checks.

Since nobody I know likes the secondary colours, another (more expensive) answer would be to promote the entire tertiary set above them.

I would appreciate views on how an approach to officialdom might be received.

Yours sincerely,

Ted Sisterson, Alnmouth & Alnwick CC

Martin French replies:

Ted raises an interesting point.

I know Alan Pidcock (my predecessor on the CA Equipment Committee and still WCF Equipment Officer) has done some work with a number of ball suppliers to ensure their ball colours are light enough and distinct enough to minimise problems.

But I'm also aware that many clubs still play with older balls such as Barlows, where the green and brown are very dark.

At the recent Women's AC World Championship at Nottingham (well done Miranda!), there were problems with some brand new clips, where the brown, green and blue were all so deep they were hard to distinguish from each other or the black, until you got up close – even for those with no colour vision difficulty.

The Equipment Committee has previously considered whether it ought to expand the specification of balls (and clips?) to cover acceptable colours – we'd need to take advice from an expert though.

One way we could perhaps mitigate the problem – which will persist until current equipment is replaced – is for Tournament Managers to give preference to players with significant colour vision defects, to choose the balls best for them (first, second or tertiary colours – and which pair in that set).

I'd love to hear from other members with colour blindness: is this a serious and widespread problem when playing croquet; and do all varieties of colour defect cause problems with the same specific balls or combinations of ball?

**Martin French,
Chairman, CA Equipment Committee**

Is such vigilance on handicap accuracy the right thing to do?

An open letter to the Chairman of the Handicap Committee

Dear Strat,

I have been somewhat preoccupied with personal matters since Christmas and so came cold to my first tournament of the year, managing the Coles Championship at the beginning of May.

So I was somewhat bemused when, whilst pinning up my standard request for players to confirm/correct their handicaps on my list, I was asked if this was my response to the new regulation with regard to the checking of handicaps.

I thought that I had read the Gazette quite thoroughly but obviously not (apologies to the Editor), so I then found and read your article in the April issue.

I confess that I am rather dismayed by your "more vigilant approach" and my disquiet is on two fronts; administrative and philosophical.

As a manager, I have many more important things to do than check through thirty odd handicap cards before the start of play on the first day.

Yes, I know that someone else should/could have been appointed but regardless of who does the check, ten minutes before the start of a tournament, is not the time to try to check for any errors.

If handicap cards do indeed contain too many errors, you should target the club handicappers to remedy the situation. These club handicappers can minimise errors if they do their work correctly, correlating their members' performance throughout the season and correcting their handicaps if necessary. They could then countersign the handicap card at the start of the new season and periodically throughout the season if necessary.

But my much greater disquiet is with the unwritten undertone of the regulation.

Our game is built on the foundation of trust and self-regulation, and I look with horror at anything that threatens to break that ethos. As the Laws state, "each player acts as a referee of the game and expects a player to immediately announce any error they believe or suspect that they have committed".

If my opponent tells me that their handicap is X, then X it is, and I hope I never see the day when people follow to the letter of the regulation that "players should personally confirm each other's handicaps".

Finally, you mention your hope that players will sign off their opponent's result and you are also considering that penalties will be introduced if needed.

I hope that you re-think the concept of such penalties because I, for one, will not be party to such a measure.

David Magee, Cheltenham CC

~

Strat Liddiard replies:

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter expressing your concerns.

The "more vigilant approach" was born out of the work Martin French did in checking and entering into a database information from a large number of golf croquet handicap cards.

He found that nearly half of them contained one or more errors. Many of these were trivial but some were not.

In addition nearly everyone I have spoken to, who plays or played handicap games can remember playing someone who was playing off the wrong handicap.

This last point is anecdotal and of little worth but the handicap committee decided to ask people to look and see.

I confess we did not think of the idea of asking club handicappers to examine all the cards annually and I will put this point to the committee at its next meeting. It seems to me to be a good way of achieving the desired result.

I respect your views about the traditions of the game, but people make mistakes and these mistakes can cause distress to their opponents. Some people do not fill in handicap cards accurately or forget to fill them in at all.

I am not in any way suggesting that people are cheating or deliberately making false entries, but not all the world is as conscientious as you.

The measure this year is intended to see to what extent a problem exists.

If there is only a minimal problem then I dare say the handicap committee will abandon the idea, but if there is a large problem it would be negligent of the committee to look the other way, relying on the traditions of the game and the spirit of fair play.

We would not be serving those who elected us to oversee and administer the game.

I would also point out that Golf prides itself on being a game that is played in a spirit of play and camaraderie and they sign each other's cards having checked them after each game.

Vigilance is not at odds with fairness or honesty.

**Strat Liddiard,
Chairman of the Handicap Committee**

Dear Editor,

Having heard about Bury CC's new Whitehead Park venue with some interest, my wife and I took the opportunity to go and have a look at the place by entering their GC B-Level tournament in July.

We arrived in good time so as to be able to have a look around, and my first thought was WOW!

The courts looked magnificent, and the pavilion was short of nothing, with kitchen, dining and rest room areas all set out to a

Whitehead Park WOW!

good standard.

The courts were excellent to play on – receiving much praise from all competitors – and the tournament was very well organised. The standard of play was very good, making the whole day a most enjoyable experience; my only disappointment was not playing as good as the courts looked. We were treated to

an excellent final, with Gary Greenwood fighting back from 6-3 down to win 7-6 against David Widdison.

We were well catered for throughout the day, with bacon butties available on request on arrival, and a superb lunch, followed by afternoon cakes, with tea available all day all at a very reasonable charge.

If anyone ever fancies taking in a B-Level tournament I can certainly recommend this venue.

John B Crossland – Sheffield CC



AC

GC

Robert (Bob) Stephens was born on 11

Obituary

March 1943 and educated at Steyning Grammar School; he went on to study dentistry at Guy's Hospital and then pursued a successful career as a General Dental Practitioner in West London.

Apart from being a good cook and guitar player, Bob was a keen sportsman, initially water skiing and then that developed into power boat racing, skiing, tennis – and of course croquet.

Despite all this activity, he found time to marry Anne in 1969 in Southwark Cathedral, and to have three children.

Anne joined him in his main passion for skiing, and they bought a chalet in Flaine where they enjoyed many family holidays, not just skiing but summer holidays as well.

Bob and Anne joined Hurlingham in 1987, where they played tennis and started their croquet careers. Bob became a good croquet player and a stalwart of Hurlingham teams.

Together with Anne, they were well known on the croquet circuit.

They were also for some years members of a group of Brits who went every winter to South Africa to play in tournaments there.

Although not a committee man, Bob learnt the art of managing croquet tournaments; this he did not only for

Bob Stephens 1943 – 2015



Hurlingham but also for Guildford & Godalming.

He was also a respected AC referee.

In 2004 Bob suffered a heart attack and

subsequently needed an operation on his lung.

This period of ill health made Bob retire earlier than intended from his dental practice.

This at least enabled him to devote his efforts to enjoying retirement.

Unfortunately in late 2014 he developed an aggressive form of cancer.

However Bob dealt with the prognosis in his usual stoic fashion and set about planning what he was going to do in the time remaining to him.

After spending Christmas in his second home, Flaine, his focus then was on their annual trip to play croquet in South Africa.

Unfortunately his condition had deteriorated and he was unable to make the long flight.

However he was determined to spend his birthday in Flaine, and, although extremely weak, he made the journey and did spend his birthday there with his family.

Bob died on 23 April and his funeral was held at St Mary Abbott's in Kensington with his family and friends filling this large church. There was a reception afterwards at The Abingdon, Bob's favourite pub opposite his cottage, where his life was celebrated by all.

Richard Hoskyns, Hurlingham CC



Bob enjoying in South Africa last year

Do you want to be a Croquet Master? Sign up soon for the remaining tournaments across Europe that are part of 2015 European Croquet Masters series, *writes John Swabey.*

The background – Thirteen countries (including England) have nominated eleven tournaments that count towards the European Masters (Sweden agreed to take part after my last article, making these totals). In addition there are the two European Championships organised by the Fédération Européenne de Croquet (FEC) / European Croquet Federation.

England takes an early lead in the Country Masters competition – Only the player who does best in a given tournament scores points for their country. Stephen Mulliner's win in the GC European Championship, followed by his win at the first Spanish (GC) Open, and James Hopgood's performance at the two Scottish events in the series, together bring England 62 points in the so far. Scotland are currently in second place with 27 points.

In the Individual Masters competition, again Mulliner's two wins put him in the lead with 34 points for GC, followed by countryman Lionel Tibble on 18, while Hopgood leads the AC table with 14, just ahead Scotland's Campbell Morrison's 12.

Prospects – There are only three AC Opens, plus the European Championships, so the field is quite restricted. The Swiss AC Open will have just been played (by the time you read this article), with Austria's Open due in September. However in GC there are still another five events to go, leaving scope for continental players who have entered at several venues to accrue lots more points.

Several of the remaining Masters events still have **places available**, and bear in mind that you are not selected by your country, so it is down to individuals to decide for themselves when and where to play. For more details please see the European Masters website www.eurocroquet.com/european-masters.

The remaining European Masters events:

Swiss	(AC) 31/7 - 2/8
Belgian	(GC) 15/8-16/8
German	(GC) 29/8-30/8
Austrian	(AC) 4/9 - 6/9
Baltic	(GC) 5/9 - 6/9
Portugal	(GC) 11/9-13/9
Sussex	(GC) 12/9-13/9
South of England	(AC) 25/9-27/9

Mulliner regains EuroGC crown

Stephen Mulliner reclaimed the European GC Championship title at Budleigh Salterton in early June. He takes up the story of the 2015 tournament:

The 'EuroGC' returned to Budleigh, whose lawns, catering and support were simply first rate. Ten countries were represented and the BBC South-West sent a reporter and cameraman on Friday. They produced a very positive two-minute slot on the prime evening news program and emphasised the international nature of the entry by opening with short comments in Spanish, Swedish and Finnish from the relevant players.

The top seeds divided into the 'young' and, shall we say, the 'experienced'. In the former category was the defending champion, Rachel Rowe, and Sweden's Jonatan Andersson, who was runner-up in 2014. The latter came in the shapes of Stephen Mulliner, a three-times past winner, and Lionel Tibble, a man who seems to miss his clearances only very rarely.

The block stage went more or less as expected. Mulliner and Andersson emerged undefeated while Tibble and Rowe both suffered just one defeat – to James Goodbun and Latvia's Janis Steins respectively. Nick Archer and Jim Field both scored 5/7 to qualify comfortably while Lewis Palmer, now living in and representing Sweden, had to win two play-off games to get through.

Round 1 produced a mild surprise when Nick Archer defeated Goodbun, but a much bigger surprise when Palmer, having lost the first game to the impressive Andersson, fought back to take both the next two by 7-6. He went on to beat Ireland's Evan Newell to become the surprise semi-finalist alongside Mulliner, Rowe and Tibble.

The experienced pair won through and so it was Mulliner and Tibble who took to the court to contest the final at in front of a crowd of about 70. The match was an epic that took three and a half hours to go the full distance of 7-6, 6-7, 7-6.

Mulliner won eventually, after surviving a protracted duel at hoop 13 in the deciding third game, to take the title for the fourth time. The standard of play was high and it was one of those matches where it really was a pity that there had to be a loser.

The Bowl event (for round 1 losers) was won by Wolfgang Usbeck (Germany), the Shield (for losing quarter-finalists) went to Nick Archer and the Plate (for those missing 'the cut' from the blocks) to Roar Michalsen (Norway).

GC round-up

Non-ENSC qualifying Open Tournaments

The **Wiltshire Open** at Hamptworth attracted a good field and a new winner in Mark Daley of Dulwich, *reports Richard Jenkins*. He beat the experienced Richard Brooks in a tough three-game semi and then met Mike Fensome (Phyllis Court), who had scored a great two-game win over Nick Cheyen (Surbiton), in the final. Daley took the first game 7-6, Fensome the second 4-7 and then, with everyone gathered, the decider went to the last hoop again.

~

Manager Don Beck had to contend with the awkward number of thirteen players at the **East Dorset Open**, and was made to work harder still when the initial block ended with four tied on four wins: William Ormerod (Swanage), Steve Piercy (New Zealand), Richard Brooks (Sussex County) and Jonathan Powe (Kingston Maurward).

Applying the CA Regulations eliminated Ormerod on the 'who beat who' rule, and then Powe was dropped on net points. The final was a best-of-three, with the result of the block game, which Piercy had won, counting as the first. He then repeated that success and defeated Brooks 7-3 to win the tournament, *reports Don Beck*.

~

Manager Roy Tillcock retained his **Ryde Open** crown with a straight games final defeat of Cliff Jones (Budleigh). The much improved Stuart Peters (Ryde) was third, ahead of club-mate Jon Sim, and David Bell (Leicester) won the plate, *reports Richard Harris*.

Harry Dodge v Chris Clarke

~ an Exhibition Match ~

Harry Dodge came up with a novel way to thank his fellow **Budleigh** members for their support when he went to New Zealand for the Under-21 World Championship in February.

He organised a GC exhibition match with two-time World AC Champion and MacRobertson Shield player Chris Clarke.

A large and appreciative crowd enjoyed a match of the highest quality, *reports Elaine Marsh*. Hoop running alternated in the first game, until Dodge got the break at hoop eight, only for Clarke to get back to back scores at nine and 10, before Dodge won 11 and 12 for first blood.

The stunning long clearances that were a feature of the first game, continued into the second. Clarke took an early three hoop lead; Dodge pulled out an angled eighteen yard hoop score to stem the points flow and got the score back to 4-5 after a lengthy hoop nine tussle. The local man pulled level at the next and then nosed in front 6-5, so securing first shot advantage to hoop 13, if Clarke ran 12. Wise to this Clarke placed his partner ball in position to promote his hoop runner and executed the shot with pinpoint accuracy. He converted to tie the match.

Clarke again went 3-0 up in the decider after a twenty minute battle at the third, and that was enough to see off Dodge's game challenge 7-2. What was the shot of the day? Was it Clarke's 22 yard hoop run in the second, one of the thirty yard clearances, or Dodge's ten yard jumped shot? The Budleigh spectators will be debating the point for some time to come!

The National B-Level Series

Three players have been out in front so far in this season's B-Level Series which totals 18 qualifying tournaments.

Northampton pair Jayne Stevens and Peter Dowd, and Roger Goldring of Phyllis Court, have all won two events each which is impressive because the competition appears to have attracted the strongest fields yet.

A tournament win ensures the victor a place in the 16 player B-Level National Final at Hunstanton 10 and 11 October.

Now with three multiple time winners, at least one qualification place will become available for players cumulating points for 2nd to 4th place finishes.

The list of winners/qualifiers so far is:

Tournament	Winner
Sussex	- Keith Southern (Swanage)
Watford	- Geoff Johnson (Watford)
Wrest Park	- Graham Good (Bury)
Ealing	- David Frost (Enfield)
Northampton	- Jayne Stevens (North'ton)
L'ton-Linslade	- Roger Stroud (L'ton-Lins.)
Colchester	- Roger Goldring (Phyllis Ct)
Hunstanton	- Peter Dowd (Northampton)
Bath	- Roger Sutton (Sussex Co.)
Bury	- Gary Greenwood
Nottingham	- Jayne Stevens (North'ton)
Middlesboro	- David Widdison (Bish. Mon)
Hamptworth	- Roger Goldring (Phyllis Ct.)
Guildford	- Peter Dowd (Northampton)

The **Phyllis Court, Ashby, Hurlingham** and **Edgbaston** tournaments, were still to be played at the time of writing.



Bamford wins British GC Open for eighth time

as youngsters come to the fore



Reg Bamford retained the British Golf Croquet Open title in the strongest ever field at this event, **reports Chris Roberts**

But the big talking point was the breakthrough of the 'youngsters' who collectively came to the fore to fill six of the quarter-final positions and then three of the semis.

Only multiple winners Bamford and Stephen Mulliner and the consistent Lionel Tibble held up for the 'Old Guard' and this surge by the younger players bodes well for the future of our sport at the top level.

Thirty-two players congregated on day one of four to contest the 2015 tournament at Sussex County CC, Southwick; the field included seven of the top 50 ranked players in the world. Overseas visitors were there in force, with five Australians and four Swedes in attendance, as well as UK based regulars, from South Africa, New Zealand and Belgium.

Reg Bamford, Stephen Mulliner, Harry Dodge and John-Paul Moberly won their blocks and most of the other fancied players also duly qualified for the knockout stages, with Will Gee making rather hard work of it and needing to win his last block match to avoid the chop.

Martin French was probably the biggest casualty to miss out, whilst on the other side of the coin, Guy Scurfield's qualification exceeded a rankings-based expectation.

Gee recovered well and beat six-time winner Mulliner in the quarter finals and the other three block winners maintained their form to fill the other semi-final berths, giving probably the youngest average aged semi-final line-up ever.

Bamford met Moberly in a reprise of their first Open meeting in the block stage last year when the latter burst on to the A Class scene, with a win in three games over the then reigning World Champion. This time Bamford knew what to expect and won 7-5, 7-5. The other semi was a spectacular affair with long range hoop shots and clearances in abundance, as Dodge got the better of Gee in three games 7-5, 5-7, 7-4.

A large crowd assembled for what was to be a very entertaining final of the highest quality. The terrifically accurate distance skills continued and were augmented by wonderful long jump shots that wowed the spectators.

When Dodge took the first game 7-6, there was the whiff of an upset in the air and the thought that the Delves-Broughton Cup might just be in line for a new name on it for the first time in almost a dozen years (when Ahmed Nasr's victory in 2004 punctuated the 15 year stranglehold that Bamford and Mulliner have had on the event since its first staging in 2000).

But one could also see that the loss of the first game hadn't phased Bamford, the master of the mindset.

He won the second game 7-2, and cleaned up in the decider 7-4 when Dodge got hoop-bound at a crucial stage.

Bamford's win was his eighth Open title and in his acceptance speech, he was full

of praise for Dodge, and the other younger players that had fared so well. He said that he hoped to be able continuing clocking up the wins in the next few years, because it was clear that it wouldn't be long before the talent coming through would be sure to push aside the Old 'Men' (*he actually used a flatulence related term!*).

In the consolation events, Mulliner won the Shield (for those eliminated in the quarter-finals of that main event), Pierre Beaudry won the Bowl (for first round-losers), and Australia's John Van Der Touw won the Plate (for those missing the cut to the knock-out stage).

The Open Doubles was happily restored to a two day affair and back to preceding the Singles after last season's separation.

Pierre Beaudry and Harry Dodge, the reigning English National Doubles Champions (Ranelagh Cups), teamed up again to win the Open Doubles this year, in a tournament which culminated in a tense final against Reg Bamford and Stephen Mulliner. Beaudry and Dodge won the first game fairly easily but the remaining two went to the thirteenth hoop. Meanwhile, New Zealand pair Nelson Morrow and Dennis Bulloch beat Andrew Dymond and Guy Scurfield 7-5 in the plate final.

Photographs (clockwise from top left): (1) 'Well played Harry', a handshake from Champion Bamford, who (2) received the trophy from Stephen Mulliner; (3) Rachel Rowe; (4) John-Paul Moberly; (5) David Wise; (6) A relieved Will Gee who needed to beat Virginia Arney in his last block game to qualify for the knock-outs; (6) Nick Archer and (7) Tobi Savage (all by Chris Roberts)



Other Senior GC Tournaments

~ English National Singles Championship (Ascot Cup) Qualifiers ~

Ramsgate Open Fulford wins again

It was the familiar figures of Robert Fulford and Stephen Mulliner who locked horns in the final of the Ramsgate Open this year; this time Fulford took the title and the prize money, generously donated from the estate of John Ruddock, **reports Ashton Hulme**.

Two blocks of eight, played single 13-point games, with the top four in each making the cut to the knock-out stage.

The best of three quarter-finals were all won in straight games: Martin French (Ipswich) beat Sue Lightbody (Dulwich) 7-4, 7-4, Mulliner (Surbiton) beat James Goodbun (Ramsgate) 7-2, 7-2, Tobi Savage (Ramsgate) beat Peter Freer (Australia) 7-1, 7-6 and Fulford (Colchester) beat Lionel Tibble (Northampton) 7-4, 7-5.

In the semi-finals, Fulford beat Savage 7-4, 7-1 and Mulliner beat French 7-5, 7-3, so the final was between the top two English players in the rankings, and it went Fulford's way 7-5, 5-7, 7-2. Savage beat French 7-2 for third place and the plate was won by David Wise (*below*) from Melbourne, who in an example of 'carrying coals to Newcastle' received a bottle of Australian wine!



Ashby Open Moberly wins first major event

John-Paul Moberly won his first top title with victory at the National Forest Open at Ashby in early July, ahead of a field that included players from Ashby, other Midland clubs, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Australia.

Ray Mounfield reports that one of the top seeds, Nick Mounfield, was unfortunate when he suffered mallet failure early in his first game and had to adjust to a substitute one with somewhat different characteristics.

By the evening of day one, the block placings and semi-finalists were decided: J-P Moberly would play Australian Peter Freer and Ashby's Mike O'Brian would face Will Gee of Nottingham, Ashby, Bygrave and Newport).

The following day, Moberly (*below, at The Open*) beat Freer in two games and O'Brian scored a great win in three against Gee.

In the final, O'Brien pushed Moberly to a third game as well but the younger man eventually prevailed 7-4, 5-7, 7-3.

In the consolation events, the 'headers' was won by Nick Mounfield (Letchworth) and the 'footers' by Philip Wood (Kennilworth).



Cheltenham Open ... and then does it again!

John-Paul Moberly won the Cheltenham Open, his second ENSC qualifier success of the season. A large field of twenty players was arranged in two blocks by manager and **reporter Kevin Ham**, and contested as thirteen-point games.

The manager himself took full advantage of his own 'no time limits' rule and saw his first game last two hours, before a time limit was then imposed and it ended as a 6-6 draw! At the end of three rounds the participants had caught up.

The lawns had been moved one yard east, and the hoops were in new holes, so remained firm and challenging throughout, but the old boundary down the west side was a confusion. This was overcome by declaring that stopping a ball there did not become a non-striking fault.

Rain on the second day cleared up for the final between Moberly and Jaimie Mussi, which the former won 7-5, 7-5.

Nottingham Open Rowe pushed by AC ace

Rachel Rowe won in the end but this Nottingham Open, which had a record entry of 20 players, certainly was and interesting one. Managed by Will Gee, the event was given extra spice by the inclusion of AC aces Alain Giraud and Miranda Chapman, something of 'unknowns' as GC.

The former, playing in his first GC event at this level, turned out to be a real surprise package and dropped only two games in easily qualifying for the quarter-finals, where he then took out UK top 20 ranked Martin French in two straight games!

The other quarters also finished in two, giving a semis line-up of Rowe v title holder

Lionel Tibble and Giraud to face last season's bombshell John Paul Moberly.

Rowe (*right*) and Giraud both won through to the final in three games. Rowe took the first game 7-5, Giraud the second at hoop 13, and the former Women's World Champion closed out the decider 7-5.



Tournament	Date	Winner	Runner Up	Losing Semi-Finalists	
Lancashire	11-12 April	D Walters	J Hopgood	P Rigge	R Mounfield
Surbiton	18-19 April	S Mulliner	Will Gee	J Spiers	J Goodbun
East Anglia	16-17 May	R Fulford	J Wicks	P Beaudry	R Thompson
Ramsgate	13-14 June	R Fulford	S Mulliner	T Savage	M French
Ashby	27-28 June	J-P Moberly	M O'Brian	P Freer	W Gee
Cheltenham	11-12 July	J-P Moberly	J Mussi	M French	G Good
Nottingham	18-19 July	R Rowe	A Giraud	L Tibble	JP Moberly
Yorkshire	11-13 August				

Chapman wins Wo



David Brydon looks back at the eight days of the WCF's Championship hosted by Nottingham Croquet Club. He begins with the qualifying event held a week earlier.

A testing time at the qualifiers

There were very testing conditions at Nailsea for the qualifying tournament, and all three Australian entrants got through safely. Rosemary Newsham would go on to play well above her grading, and Anne Quinn would also have a good main event, along with English qualifier Pat Long, who would finish runner-up in the Shield.

The Championships

In the Championships, after three days of block play, all but one of the nine-player groupings produced four clear qualifiers, but block B needed a three-round play-off to retain two from the three tying for third place. The resulting 16-player seeded knock-out comprised six players representing Australia, five England, four New Zealand, and one from Jersey.

The top four seeds reached the semi-finals, where excellent play from England's Gabrielle Higgins and Miranda Chapman put out top seed and title holder Jenny Clarke (New Zealand) and number two seed Alison Sharpe (Australia).

The Finals

In a high quality final played on her home lawns at Nottingham Croquet Club, Miranda Chapman beat Higgins -10 +4 -23 +26 +26tp in the best-of-five final.

Higgins started well in Game 1, with Chapman showing some early nerves on her hoop approaches, plus the odd misjudgment in croquet strokes. But as the match progressed the 29-year old prosthetist from Beeston started to settle down, and got into her stride.

The turning point came when Higgins missed a hampered shot after penult in Game 2 while on a tripling finish. This unexpectedly let Chapman back in, and she

took her chance to pinch the game.

Chapman didn't get much of a chance in the third after making an error at hoop 3, but she put this behind her, and games 4 and 5 were one-sided as the local woman's performance got ever stronger.

With her rock-solid stance, accurate shooting and tight breaks, Chapman took the title with a beautifully controlled triple peel, watched by son Ollie and husband Paddy, who had been following the online commentary out of sight.

Higgins had made very few mistakes, and paying tribute to her opponent said: "The final result was of course a disappointment, but I played well and got to a world final. I'm glad I got beaten rather than that I lost".

Chapman had set her sights on this title and committed to serious practice with Keith Aiton (former GB coach and fellow Nottingham member) over the previous three months. Thanking Aiton, Chapman said: "I don't know what you did, Keith. Somehow you changed nothing, but you changed everything."

Meanwhile Ailsa Lines and Beatrice McGlen were on other lawns contesting the finals of the consolation events. They also won the Bowl and Shield respectively, which impressively gave the Nottingham Club three of the four titles, with the third-ranked Plate title going home to Australia with Wendy Dickson.

Finals results

The Championship - Miranda Chapman (England) beat Gabrielle Higgins (England) -10, +4, -23, +26, +26tp.

The Bowl - Ailsa Lines (England) beat Sarah Hayes (Jersey) +2, +14.

The Plate - Wendy Dickson (Australia) beat Elaine Coverdale (Australia) +3, -17tp, +23.

The Shield - Beatrice McGlen (England) beat Pat Long (England) +13.

The full results of all the Championship games are available on www.croquetscores.com. Reports on each day's play with photos and videos can be found at www.wacwc2015.org where there is also a link to the Facebook page

The Opening Ceremony

The Queen sent her Lord-Lieutenant; the City of Nottingham its Sheriff; and the CA and WCF their top brass. As the 25-strong silver band played the anthems, it started to drizzle. As this became light rain, there was a touching moment as the nine England women returned from being presented to



men's AC World Championship



the Lord-Lieutenant to shake moist hands and exchange damp hugs with the other 27 players in the line-up. "This simple action was possibly the most moving experience I have ever witnessed at a World Championship" commented a member of the CA Council. Sir John Peace's declaring the event formally open on behalf of Her Majesty was the signal to scurry for cover, the rain clouds thinking that they were supposed to open even further. Apart from one afternoon of heavy rain, it was mostly sunny intervals with occasional light drizzle. All very English.

England's Red and White Kit

In sharp contrast to the souvenir Olympic T-shirts taken to Melbourne in 2012 as a bit of fun, the nine England players now sported stylish shirts with bold red trim, three lions motif, and their names on their backs. Ailsa Lines, one of the three Brits who played in 2012: "This simple lesson learned at Melbourne created huge togetherness in the squad. The uniforms helped support and encourage colleagues. Several times, all you could see on every lawn was England's red and white. Having a smart uniform certainly helped motivate me to play well."

The Lawns and Grounds

Considered by some as one of the easiest venues in the country, Charlie Paget's close mowing kept Nottingham's flat lawns fast enough for most players, despite the rain.

As per WCF regulations the hoops were set as close as possible to 1/32", and tightened further for the final.

Despite being on the brink of major refurbishment, Highfields Park was looking good. Wild flower borders neatly covered the base of each nation's flag poles that greeted visitors at the park entrance.

The Food

From the tasty canapés and bubbly at the opening ceremony, through daily cooked meals, the Nottingham Club catering volunteers certainly delivered. There was also a Belgian beer and chocolates evening, courtesy of Caroline Denny (Belgium), a barbecue with local clog-dancers, and an impromptu players' ceilidh!

The Tournament Dinner on the eve of the finals enabled 85 old and new friends to look back over a great week of shared experiences. The players were asked to dress smart and wow, they did!

Gordon's Bar and lots of G&T

The WACWC Bar was in the far pavilion by Lawn 6, with Gordon Hopewell managing

a team of willing barmaids. Gin and tonic flew off the shelf as fast as Aussie beer, and Gordon was sent out for more gin, more tonic, more lemons. By the end of the week, competitors and spectators had got through more than six litres of G & T!

The Charity

Beatrice McGlen explained: "We chose Cancer Research UK as the event charity in memory of New Zealander Alison Wall, who sadly died soon after the first Worlds in Melbourne. I send a big thanks to everyone who helped us raise more than £2,300."

At the dinner, former WCF President David Openshaw successfully bid for an England sweatshirt to be autographed by the next day's champion, and he immediately presented this to Australia's Rosie Landrebe, his erstwhile colleague on the WCF Management Committee.

Also on offer were masterclasses with Mac players Mulliner, Aiton and the two Clarkes (by Skype if required). Asked why bidders should pay good money for his tuition, Aiton's short reply was: "Whoever wins tomorrow, I'm the man who coached the new World Champion!"

Women's croquet - then and now

From the Gazette Archives (*issue 341 December 2012*) - from the report on the Inaugural WACWC of October 2012

"The top 100 rankings places in the UK contain just five ladies"

There are now seven.

"Many of our advanced level tournaments have only one or two female competitors"

English players at Women's Championship:

2012 (x4) - 2015 (x14 including both finalists)

East Midlands Championship:

2012 (x1) - 2015 (x7 including runner-up)

Nottingham B Level:

2012 (x1) - 2015 (x7 including both finalists)

The Championships in numbers

£2,300 Raised for Cancer Research UK

968 Meals served

278 Games played

36 Competitors

28 Triple peels

12 Countries represented

8 Days of play

6 Litres of gin

3 Trophies for Nottingham women

1 New World Champion

Photographs, clockwise from top left (1) World Champion Miranda Chapman; (2) Gabrielle Higgins; (3) Jenny Clarke; (4) Rosemary Landrebe; (5) An all England final awaits; (6) a happy 'team'; (7) Beatrice McGlen; (8) qualifier Pat Long; (9) Champion Chapman (all by Chris Roberts, except 6 by George Moulson and 7 by Martin Beacon)



Fulford sets new record w British AC Open

The 125th Open Championships took place, for only the second time, at Surbiton Croquet Club in Surrey and attracted some 50 players to compete in the Singles or Doubles (and in most cases both).

This year there was a particularly international flavour about the event, with half a dozen North Americans and a similar number of Antipodeans, as well as a Spaniard, jetting in to join the usual motley crew of Brits. Perhaps because of the forthcoming Women's World Championships there were, disappointingly, only two female entries this year, and not a single British woman entered.

The Surbiton lawns were in fine shape and had been very fast leading up to the event, but a prolonged torrential downpour on the evening before play started slowed them down considerably, making them fairly easy initially. A series of hot, sunny days meant they grew more challenging every day, however, and by the latter stages they were very tricky, with hoops to match. This continued up to the final day, when rain and clouds meant that conditions were again somewhat easier.

As for the past few years, the event began with the Burrigge Swiss, in which each competitor has up to 11 games to record the six wins necessary to progress to the knockout. As soon as a player reached six wins, he qualified and stops playing; while anyone amassing six defeats also stops playing (by virtue of no longer being able to qualify) and moves on to the plate event.

This format has the advantage of ensuring at least six main event games for everyone without any 'dead' games (which can easily happen if blocks are used) and it is popular with the players.

The Swiss proceeded largely according to the form book, with the biggest upset clearly being Aussie Alison Sharpe's

(below) stunning victory over world number four, England-based Kiwi expat Paddy Chapman. José Alvarez-Sala from Spain had an excellent win against Robert Wilkinson, and came within

touching distance of an even bigger upset against James Death. He was on a break with his backward ball with just the rover peel to do, which he did neatly after hoop 5, but in his excitement and with the game at his mercy, he then proceeded to head for, and 'run' 1-back, completely omitting hoop 6. Sadly for him, James noticed and went on to win.

Alvarez-Sala did gain a measure of revenge by subsequently defeating Death in the consolation Z event; he has clearly learned a lot from his compatriot José Riva and is one to watch for the future.

All the favourites qualified for the knockout, with David Walters, Brian Cumming and Harry Fisher the most surprising players to miss out. Previous champion Mark Avery was on the rack at 3/8 but won his last three games to squeeze through, while Robert Wilkinson also had a tough time. He had broken his mallet in the doubles and had to borrow a spare; he lost his first four games while getting to grips with it, before the penny dropped and he won the next six to qualify with a game to spare.

As sometimes happens, one player, David Walters, was marooned on 5/10 with everyone else through or eliminated. The solution is to draw a 'lucky loser, eliminated on 5/11, who gets back in for a final chance to qualify. The lucky loser was Alison Sharpe, who got the reward that her win over Paddy deserved by defeating David to secure the last knockout spot.

The main knockout was slightly anticlimactic because for the most part all the favourites won comfortably, with the seeding committee awarding themselves a pat on the back as all eight seeds reached the quarter-finals. Seven of those only dropped two games between them getting there, the exception being Chapman, who was made to fight very hard by Wilkinson and American Ben Rothman in turn, before prevailing against each.

The most fascinating quarter-final pitted Reg Bamford against James Death; with the latter a game up, and only needing a break to the peg for his backward ball to win, Bamford hit a 35 yarder to take the

game and stay in the match. Undaunted, Death took the deciding game to record an excellent victory. He was not able to reproduce that form in the semi-final and lost in straight games to Chapman, while Robert Fulford accounted for Jamie Burch in the other semi.

The Doubles had been enlivened by Chris Clarke's (temporary) return from New Zealand to re-form the famous Fulford/Clarke partnership, that had appeared in 16 previous finals and won 10.5 of them (one being shared).

Other intriguing pairs included Burch/Wicks, Chapman/Maugham, and Avery/Openshaw, the latter being previous winners of the event as long ago as 1985 and 1987! As it turned out, Clarke (below) and Fulford proceeded serenely to the final without dropping a game, where they met Bamford and Rothman.

Whether because of the use of super-advanced play throughout the main event Singles (as well as much of the Doubles where it was at the pairs' discretion but generally used), or the tricky conditions in the knockout, the event was behind schedule, causing the manager to play the final as best-of-3 rather than best-of-5 for the first time for over 20 years.

The conditions on the last day were easier, and Fulford won fairly comfortably over Chapman in a final that failed to reach the heights spectators might have hoped for. There were a handful of errors by each player and no completed peeling turns for the first time since 1988, but that should take nothing away from Fulford, who was clearly the best player of the event, dropping just two singles games throughout.

Following a fallow period of five years without winning the Opens, Fulford has now won twice in succession and in doing so sets a new record of 11 Open Singles

championships, beating the record of 10 which he previously held jointly with Reg Bamford and the great John Solomon.

Following on from the Singles final was the Doubles, with Bamford & Rothman 1-0 up overnight. There was a controversial



With eleventh title

Nick Parish reports

incident in that one, which occurred when Rothman had a 'not-quite-under-control' three-ball break to win the game, his partner being for peg having pegged out Fulford.

Rothman then made a roquet having hit more of the ground than striker's ball and Clarke questioned, justifiably in the view of some spectators but excessively in the view of others, whether this was a double-tap. A referee eventually ruled the shot clean and allowed play to continue, but Rothman then proceeded to fail 1-back, allowing Clarke to hit and level the match.

In the decider, Fulford was midway through a TPO (*triple peel and peg-out of an opponent's ball*) on Rothman when he un-characteristically missed a five-yard return roquet, and Bamford made no



mistake with the rover peel finish to win the match - his second doubles title with Rothman (*above*) and seventh overall.

In the consolation events, James Hoppgood won the Plate, David Goacher the Z, and Luc Berthouze and Robert Wilkinson the consolation doubles.

I think Surbiton is a great venue for the Opens, but then I would - it's my club and is ten minutes from my house. However others, more impartial than me, share my view. The club goes to great lengths to provide hospitality for players and spectators, and wonderful playing conditions. The lawns were in great condition and provided a tough challenge, as shown by the low number of peeling finishes in the latter stages.

My very sincere thanks goes to everyone at Surbiton who contributed under the laconic but benign leadership of George Noble, and to Samir Patel for managing.

If you fancy top competition then you should definitely enter the Opens when they return here in 2019. ~ **Nick Parish**

Peter Ross did well to spot the 'Fulfords' sign!

Other photos by Chris Roberts.

Other AC Championships

The Men's and Women's Championships

~ Grade 1 Championship event ~

Maugham and McDiarmid are Champs at Cheltenham

The Men's Championship is always very well supported but not so the Women's in recent years. The trend was bucked this year however, and was surely due to the advent of the Women's coaching group having been set up by International Performance Director Ian Burrige, together with the encouragement coming from the top female players.

The Women's more than quadrupled last season's poor showing with 14 entries this time, sufficient for block play and semis before the final.

Annabel McDiarmid came back from a game down to beat Rachel Rowe in one semi -2, +13, +10, and Gabrielle Higgins dropped the middle game to Miranda Chapman in the other, to win +13, -17, +4.

The Final also went one way and then the other, with McDiarmid getting 26d in the first but coming back well with a triple peel to boot in winning -26, +16tp, +21.

It was peeling all the way of course in the Men's Championship as one would expect with a semi-final line up of David Maugham, James Death, Chris Williams and Gavin Carter. The detail reads impressively:

Maugham had already recorded six triple peeling victories before he beat Death +3oqp +13 +22tp, who had himself made two successive quads in his quarter final. Carter was at it to, and had three TPs to his credit before he beat Williams +11 -25tp +14tp +11. The final went all the way to the deciding fifth game before Maugham wrapped it up +7, -17tp, -1, +20tp, +26tp.

Jack Wicks beat David Goacher 2-0 in the final of the Men's and Women's Du Pre Cup, the consolation event.

The Mixed Doubles Championship

Aiton and Higgins win

Keith Aiton and Gabrielle Higgins beat David Maugham and Miranda Chapman in the final of the Mixed doubles event. The losing semi-finalists were *doubles reporter* Dave Kibble and Louise Bradforth, and Marcus Evans and Pat Long. The mixed doubles final usually requires at least one person playing in the Men's or Women's final and so starts when those have finished; this year it ended in strong sunlight at 20:15 with hoop shadows about eight feet long.

The East Midlands Championship

~ Grade 2 Championship event ~

Maugham wins at Notts

David Maugham won the East Midlands Championship at Nottingham in late June, defeating Gabrielle



Higgins in a best of three play-off

between the winners of

a draw and process format tournament. Super-Advanced rules were used by agreement throughout the event and the pair reached the play-offs respectively at the expense of draw runner-up Mark Ormerod and Roger Tribe who gave a walk-over in the plate final. *Manager Ian Vincent reported* that Richard Huxley gained a Gold Award and known handicap changes were: Mark Ormerod -1.5 to -1, Louise Bradforth 0 to 0.5 and David Brydon 4 to 3.

The Eastern Championship

~ Grade 1 Championship event ~

Burrige wins in wet

Ian Burrige pulled out a straight triple peel on his way to knocking-out top seed David Maugham in his semi-final and eventually winning this very wet Eastern Championship at Wrest Park. John Bevington's photo (below), really does sum up the conditions: he has captured Robert Wilkinson and Burrige (right) trudging off after the latter's final victory +3 +17tp +14.



Late May

Paddy Chapman beat David Maugham +13, +25qp, +17qp in the final of the **Bowdon Advanced Weekend** to retain the Peterson Cup - which he has held since 2011, *reports Ian Lines*.

In the final, which was played to Super-Advanced rules, Chapman hit third turn in each game and had dream leaves which Maugham missed. Each time Chapman went to 3-back, conceded the contact, and left his opponent four feet apart across corner 4 and himself in corners 2 and 3.

Maugham failed a qpo (*a quadruple peel on opponent*) in game one, which was probably his only error in the final (although he still had a decent leave), Chapman hit and had tidy quads in the next two games.



~
 Meanwhile at the **Colchester Spring Handicap**, *Nick Steiner reports* that Enfield's David Frost (*left*) was extremely accurate, and his centre-ball

roqueting from all over the court was the feature in his winning of the singles event and the John Foreman Cup. David Haslam and partner Keith Saunders were undefeated and victorious in the doubles.

~
 Chairman John Pearson (HC 4) won his own club's **Roehampton B-Level**, but it was a close run thing with club mate Peter Honey (4) and Hurlingham's John Bowcott (4) all tied. Pearson got the nod on a countback of games and points against the other two. Pearson and Honey both reduced their handicaps to 3.5.

Pearson then turned reporter to bring news that Enfield's Tony Elliott won the Roehampton C-Class Handicap for the Thorpe Cup. In the all-play-all block, Jordan Waters of Oxford University (8) returned to the scene of a previous success (he won Roehampton's end of season handicap) and played strongly again to win all five of his games. In the process he achieved his CA Silver Award, but in a very tight final play-off he missed out to Elliott +1 on time. Both



players reduced their handicaps to 7.

~
 In the **Nottingham B-Level**, *Richard White reports* that two keenly contested semi-finals saw a determined Beatrice McGlen defeat last year's finalist and local favourite Omied Hallam, and the ever-improving Annabel McDiarmid accounted for Mark Lloyd's challenge. In the first all-female final, McDiarmid was too strong for McGlen and won in two games to claim the Sage Bowl.

~
 At the fourth time of asking, Phyllis Court's Chris Roberts won the **Tyneside Midweek Handicap**, winning all his games, bar one to club mate Frances Colman, who gets the better of him every year!

~
 On the last two days in May, Edinburgh based James Hopgood won **The Scottish Masters**, beating a dozen others including a visiting trio all the way from Surbiton.

June

A very strong field assembled for **Colchester's Open Weekend**, staged again over the Solstice. There were no heroics with anyone playing record numbers of games this year, with spirits and bodies dampened by heavy rain on Saturday afternoon, but some players were still keen enough to be playing at 9.45pm.

Rob Fulford, playing his first AC tournament with his new bent-handled mallet, won without dropping a game for the second year in a row. It was a good weekend for the Colchester players, with Jack Wicks finishing runner-up, only losing to Fulford, and Nick Steiner ending with a very creditable 3/5 in this field. Jack earned a handicap reduction to -2, and moved up to no.5 ranked English player.

Steiner and Fulford are pictured below left, by Susan Fulford.

~
 Terry Mahoney and Carole McLoughlin won at the **Watford One-Dayer**. In the Level Advanced block, Surbiton's Gary Bennett was trying to win his third consecutive title, but his hopes were dashed in the first round when he unexpectedly lost by 1 on time to Alan Clark (Watford).

The final between Mahoney and Bryan Harral (Wrest Park) was a closely contested affair which the former eventually won +5. The consolation prize for the largest net index-point gain amongst the losers went to John Smallbone (Watford). In the Handicap Advanced block, Ealing's McLoughlin beat Robin Barry (Watford) +1

on time, in a tense golden-hoop finish, and she ended as undefeated winner ahead of Barry and Robert Skeen (Meldreth).

~
 In his report of **East Dorset's June Week**, Roy Edwards looked back with envy at the pre-1914 era when over a hundred players participated in the tournament. He also said sadly, that this was the first June Week that he could remember that was without any lady players and only a couple of players were in the 10 -20 handicap range, which used to account for half the field.

He pondered if the reason for the decline was the increased number of Federation matches that are now available for higher handicappers who only have to give up a day to play instead of a week or weekend.

Nevertheless, this year, seven visitors did compete with a dozen locals for the splendid cups that the three class and handicap events offered.

Star of the week was Charlton and Kingston Maurward's Jonathan Powe (*photo below centre, by Nigel Parkins*), who only started playing the game two years ago on leaving the Army. Shortly after being informed of the CA's Merit Award scheme, he achieved the silver grade, won the X handicap singles, the C class, and the doubles with his partner Ken Pickett. He collected a swingeing handicap cut from 8 to 4.5 to go along with his cups but the thoughts were that this was unlikely to hamper his progress!

The A class was won by David Harrison Wood (East Dorset), the B class by Peter Thompson (unattached) and there was another home victory in the Y doubles by Harrison Wood and John Pollard.~

The singles at the **Woking Midsummer Open** was split into classes A and B and the host's Jeff Dawson and Steve Woolnough (Aldermaston) emerged as the respective winners. Dawson then teamed up with Sara Anderson to win the doubles.

~
 Players from as far afield as Sweden and Colchester contested the **Sidmouth June tournament**, which started with victory in the handicap singles for Colchester's Georgeteen Hemming.

The Advanced Class events had very different outcomes. There



was a three-player tie in Block A for the Challenge Cup, which was easily decided by the 'who beat whom' rule in favour of Simon Carlsson (Skellinge, Sweden). Carlsson had played in the GC European Championships at Budleigh the previous week and had taken in this and a few other events during an extended trip.

Block B for the David Rawkins Cup was won very convincingly by the undefeated Richard Williamson (Bristol) and Block C for the Fortfield Cup was won by Philip Harris (Sidmouth). Long-standing member of the club Vera Henderson presented the trophies.

~

Adam Moliver of Cheltenham won the **National Forest Trophy** in the drizzle at Ashby, losing only to local Arthur Rowe and earned a handicap reduction from 4.5 to 4.

~

A full entry partook in the **Hunstanton Over 50's Handicap** for the Jane Neville-Rolphe Salver on a weekend where the weather was not that kind, *reports Terrey Sparks*. After three days using the Egyptian system, the overall winner was John Bowcott (Hurlingham) ahead of Chris Rolph (Southwick) and Bob Thompson (Nottingham) in third place. All three earned handicap changes for their efforts and Rolph, playing in his first tournament, qualified for the Bronze award.

~

Aldermaston's Andy Myers won the annual **Hamptworth 'Super B'** (handicaps -0.5 to 6) tournament for the second successive year, but only by the skin of his teeth. There was a triangular three-way tie between Myers, Chris Donovan (Budleigh) and manager/reporter *Kevin Carter* (Blewbury and Surbiton) which was settled by the 'quality of opponents' formula, which favoured Myers. If it were a handicap tournament then birthday-boy Richard Stevens (Hamptworth) would probably have won. He played superbly off 7 (the highest handicapped player by a long way) to secure two good wins. There were many peeling attempts. In fact, Andy peeled 4-back

five times but had difficulties with penult. David Boyd's TP attempt also failed when he peeled penult backwards. Yes, the good food and beer had a lot to answer for.

~

Caroline Denny of The Bears CC won the **Nailsea C Class Advanced** ahead of 13 others, *reports Mike Tracey*. The most exciting end-game came in the round two Nailsea derby between Kathy Wallace and Peter Dyke, after the former had failed to peg out her partner ball after time, and chose to peg-out her striker's ball. This left Dyke with the daunting challenge to make five hoops, one peel and peg-out to win with only three balls on court. He duly made all the hoops, with a posthumous rover peel and then pegged-out one of his balls to draw the game, so forcing play to continue to the next score. This he finally achieved to a deserved round of applause. Denny won the event in style with a 26-0 victory over Stephen Custance-Baker (Taunton).

~

Regular manager of the **Surbiton Midsummer Handicap** Timothy Dutton QC was unable to extract himself from the Bar this year, so Andy Dibben and Sam Murray heroically volunteered to fill the breach *reports the latter*. Happily, they were able to secure a QC's hourly rates and for the first time in the tournament's history the management arrived on time. Luckily for the pair, a clear winner emerged, and no complicated deciding mechanisms were required. Joe Prinold of Surbiton (*right*) won each of his five games, earning a cut in his handicap from 14 to 10.

~

The **Middlesbrough B-Level Advanced** was split into two classes this year (-0.5 to 2.5, and 2.5 to 8) and after five games for everyone Derek Watts (Tyneside) and Dennis Scarr (Middlesbrough) were undefeated at the head of each. Manager Charles Waterfield reports that Watts reduced his handicap from 2 to 1.5 and Derek Knight (Beverley) went from 0.5 to 1.

July

Cheltenham's Paul Watson came through to win the **Letchworth B Level Midweek** but at the end of the first day an undefeated George Woolhouse seemed to have a comfortable lead. At the start of day two, it started to go wrong for the overnight leader when he lost by -3 on time in a dour game against manager and *reporter Terrey Sparks*. Meanwhile both Watson and Arthur Read's wins revealed their challenge. In the afternoon Woolhouse played Watson,

in what proved to be a final round and the latter scraped home +2 in rather overbearing heat. Although it was still only 3.30pm and there was time for one more round, it was decided to call it a day because of the oppressive temperature.

~

With the qualifier for Women's Worlds scheduled at **Nailsea** the following week, several hopefuls took the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the host club's courts the weekend before, *reports Kathy Wallace*. And as well they did, for along with the rest of the **B-Level** field that attended, they found the hard ground and very firmly set hops quite a challenge!

Dyffryn's Sarah Melvin (*centre photo*) made the best of it, as all were helped by a downpour that flooded the lawns and caused a suspension of play on the Sunday morning. Thanks to Geoff Hughes, John Wallace and the club's tractor-hauled spiker and roller (*below*), play resumed after an hour and Melvin completed the job, beating Hughes in the final.

~

Colchester's oversubscribed Over 50s Handicap was won by John Andrews (Colchester and Ipswich) by a one win margin from Jonathan Toye (Bygrave), and Enfield pair David Frost and Tony Elliott. *David Haslam reports* that it is many years since the Colchester turf has been in such excellent shape and it was thanks to the advice of Duncan Hector and the implementation of a new maintenance strategy, overseen by Peter Kenward.

~

Home players were to the fore at **Bowdon's Northern Week**, when Brian Storey won the Advanced section with six wins from seven games, one ahead of Annabel McDiarmid (Woking). Bowdon's David Holland tied on game wins with clubmate Charles Harding in the B Class, but got the event victory. The visitors did have some success, though, when New Zealand's Pauline Reid teamed up with Richard



AC round-up

Williamson (Bristol) to win the Advanced Doubles.

~

Ashton Hulme reports that the **Ramsgate Open Handicap** attracted ten players from four clubs, and in her first game, Susan Fulford (Colchester, handicap

10) quickly trounced Trevor Longman (Ramsgate, 3.5) +25 with skillful play and use of her bisques. By the start of Day two she had progressed to the semis and there beat Roger Loram +19 whilst Owen Pugh defeated Christina Rice +7. In the final, Pugh got both balls round, pegged out the first ball but missed with the second one, with Fulford on Rover and Penult. She managed to clear away Pugh's remaining ball and, in stages, peg out for victory. To win +1 on time is one thing, but to do so 26-25 takes some doing.

~

Omid Hallam and Clive Goode, both visitors from Nottingham, won the **Super-B and B events the Southport** tournament, reports Kevin Carter. The Super-B (up to 2) was played as a block and Hallam showed true class in remaining unbeaten, including one TP and several near misses.

The B, for those handicapped at 2+ (which has a larger, historic trophy) was run as a swiss, and had a more complex outcome. The manager, John Haslam, at one time feared a three, or even four-way, tie. But he resolved it well and Goode won with 4/5. However, Andy Brandwood (Bury), was the star of the show, completing his first ever TP and earning his gold badge.

~

South African visitor Peter Dreyer won the Symons Cup (**handicap**) at **Edgbaston** which was played as an all-play-all format. Dreyer (4) and club President Ken Jones (6) both won four games and Dreyer was successful in the tie-break game.

~

Keswick's Ian Hall cleaned up three events, the Advanced, Open Handicap and Egyptian Highest Rating events at the **Pendle Midweek** tournament in mid-July, but the top event, the Pendle Rose

Bowl (Open Advanced Singles), was won by manager Liz Wilson. As usual there were visitors from far and wide, and especially so this year, with the inclusion of Phil Bateman and Sally Harper from Australia. David Lloyd won the handicap singles and reporter Peter Wilson (Pendle and Fylde) teamed up with Peter Hallett (Bowdon and Fylde) to take the handicap doubles.

~

The Ranelagh Gold Cup at Roehampton was won by Colchester's Jack Wicks (*top left*), with seven wins and only one loss to Mark Ormerod, and that featured an exciting two-ball end-game, report Mike Town and Peter Siddal. Ormerod started his turn with his clip on hoop two, five hoops behind Wicks. He managed, by means of some accurate long roquets and an extended two-ball break, to get to the peg and then pegged out eventually with a 20-yard shot from corner one to win +5. Ormerod finished in third with the host's Tim Russell and the runner-up spot was taken by Jeff Dawson (Woking). Impressively, eight of the eighteen players completed triple peels, including one which earned a gold for Leo Hawkins (Hampsted Heath) and a quadruple peel for Joel Taylor (High Wycombe).

~

Woking's David Mumford (*bottom left*) tied on 4/5 wins with Andy Dibben of Surbiton and the unattached Peter Thompson from Yorkshire, at the end of the two-day **Hamptworth mid-week B-Level**. With the who-beat-whom rule failing to break the tie, manager Chris Roberts employed a quality of opponents calculation which hung on the result of the last game to finish. Mumford got the nod over Dibben and was presented with a new cup by Hamptworth Chairman Janet Trueman.

~

Home player Roger Mayhew won the inaugural **Ealing Handicap Weekend**. Joe Prinold (Surbiton) proved a worthy second and may well be one to watch in the future. Both earned handicap reductions from 10 to 9, reports Nigel Polhill.

~

Robin Brown won **The Isle of Wight AC Championships** at Ryde and ended with a 100% record, ahead of runner-up Simon Carlsson from Sweden. The entry allowed a B Class event to be held as well and this was won by reporter Richard Harris (Ryde), with an effective final victory over Derek Beard (Taunton Deane). The handicap event which brought another Ryde success with Pamela Sim (handicap 14) undefeated.

Oxford win Varsity again

Eager but nervous teams from Oxford and Cambridge Universities converged on the Hurlingham Club for The Annual Varsity Match, reports Ian Plummer.

Oxford had a good spread of abilities ranging from 4.5 handicap up to this year's new crop of recruits, now playing off 10-18 after just seven weeks' training.

The match however is played level-advanced, and so much depended on the Cambridge team's abilities and unfortunately their top player, Will Gee was wired from the event by a 'diary problem'. Seasoned Varsity player Cesar Miranda-Reyes was Cambridge's Captain and fielded Oxford-export Luke Valori, who started his Varsity career with the Dark Blues in 2010. The remainder of the Cambridge team were dark horses.

Three doubles were played in the morning with the short time limit of 2.5 hrs - to accommodate the catering arrangements, however only game went to time.

Oxford's Martin Lester guided novice Alex Bishop to a +15 victory over Miranda-Reyes and Francis Wragg in the first game to finish, but Cambridge pulled level when Valori used his Varsity experience to guide partner Tony Dent to a narrow +4t victory over Richard Sykes and Dan Gott.

Oxford's middle pair, Jordan Waters and Mark van Loon, were the stronger on paper playing against Cambridge's Matt Hitchens and Adam Barker, but were slow to get going. They eventually prevailed +14.

At lunch, were delighted to be joined by Bevis Sanford who is still supporting and enjoying the Varsity at the age of 97. He spoke to many of the players and shared anecdotes spanning some 80 years. He was joined by two of the other sponsors of the event, Hugh Carlisle and John Culhane. The latter welcomed the players and hoped they would be inspired to go on to great things. Was it a first that when giving their thankful replies, neither captain spoke in their native language - Oxford's van is Dutch and Cambridge's Miranda-Reyes is Mexican!

The afternoon saw Oxford win five of the six singles with only Valori finding success for Cambridge. Sicores (Oxford names first): Lester beat Miranda-Reyes +18, Sykes lost to Valori +20, Waters beat Hitchens +9, van Loon beat Barker +25, Gott beat Brind +19, Silkstone-Carter beat Matthews

This was the eleventh consecutive win for Oxford (*photo, right*).



Vets & Seniors AC Champs

This year's **Veterans** Champion is Simon Hathrell of Watford who defeated last year's winner Cliff Jones (Budleigh) in an exciting final of the A Class players event to take home the Rothwell Challenge Cup.

Elaine Marsh reports, an international field of entrants took to Budleigh's immaculate lawns this time, as two Australians and two South Africans joined the English to contest various events.

The week started with the Handicap Doubles, which saw success for three Budleigh members.

The main event was won for the second year running by the long-time partnership of Brian Shorney (Budleigh) and Jane Hull (Cheltenham), and the consolation 'Y' event was won by all-Budleigh pair Barbara Thompson and Dave Mundy.

The Meredith Cup for the Unrestricted Handicap Singles was won by Dennis Cross of the Hurlingham Club in a classic +26 victory over tournament manager, Peter Siddall of Roehampton.

There were three further singles events for competitors grouped by handicap range and one exclusively for over 75s'.

The Strickland Cup for Handicap play was won by Australian Sally Harper, a consistently good performer who also won the 'Y' consolation event in the Unrestricted Handicap Singles.

Sidmouth's Mike Taylor was undefeated in winning in the Felixstowe Cup for Advanced play.

The Pidcock Trophy for the Over 75s' Championship saw success for Richard Hoskyns (Hurlingham) with a narrow victory on points over Brian Shorney and 88 year old Roy Edwards

The Championships were very ably managed by Peter Siddall in his first outing as a tournament manager.

The Croquet Association's President, Quiller Barrett, thanked him and the Budleigh club for staging another successful national event.

Entries were very poor again for this year's National **Seniors'** Championship at Sussex County CC, despite the field being bolstered by five visitors from Australia, **reports manager Julie Horsley.**

Overall entries were down again on last year's disappointing number, and after three late withdrawals due to illness there were only 18 entries for the Class Event, which meant that the C and E classes weren't contested at all.

By the last session in the Championship event, there were five players each with four wins and one game to play.

With Jim Field to play David Marsh and David Wise to play David Magee, two players were guaranteed five wins and Simon Hathrell could also achieve that mark with victory over Cliff Jones.

Hathrell lost but Field and Wise both won their respective games, so it came down to who beat whom, and Australia's Wise was declared the winner.

In Class B for the Colin Hemming Cup, it was even closer as there was a three-way tie between John Arney (Australia), Peter Thompson (unattached) and Liz Farrow (Sussex). Who beat whom and quality of wins could not produce a winner, so it came down to net points, which favoured Arney.

So that was 2-0 to Australia, but thankfully Phil Dunk (Sussex) rescued the situation for the Brits and was undefeated in winning Class D for the Nigel Graves Trophy.

The final of the Handicap knockout was between Farrow and Dunk which the former won +18 for the Quiller Cup, and there was a four-way tie in the consolation swiss between Arney, Wise, Thompson and Christopher Rolph (Sussex).

But Australia weren't done yet and got half a hand on a third title when Wise teamed up with Jonathan Lamb (Surbiton) to retain their Handicap Doubles title by beating Rolph and Bill Arliss (Sussex), and Thompson and David Mooney (Roehampton) to take the CA Cups again.

Northampton find their sun in Corfu

Last December, during a bleak and perplexingly cold day on the club lawns, one member wistfully sighed, "Wouldn't it be nice to be playing somewhere warm and sunny?", **reports Lionel Tibble.**

No one could disagree and, taking the idea further, contact with the Croquet Club of Corfu was established and early May a dozen Northamptonians set off for the sun.

Our splendid hosts had arranged for us to have access to all three of their lawns at their club which is adjacent to a marina in Kotokali, just north of Corfu town.

We had sole use on three separate days and three more days of handicap play with the local Corfiot GC players.

We also had a Northampton v Corfu fixture and finally a huge evening meal at a local tavern.



The weather was everything we could have wished for and many new croquet friends were made.

In the final of the singles event, Tibble managed a narrow victory over the improving Jayne Stevens and he also won the doubles partnered by Corfiot Dick Mulder.

The inter-club match was tied.

We extend many thanks to our generous hosts who made it such a memorable visit, and in particular to Karen and Rich Quilter, and Gail Dowd who worked so hard to make it happen. Keep up the good work on the lawns, Michael!





One wedding, two trips and charity day

Dogmersfield Croquet Club (photo below) celebrated its 10th anniversary earlier in the year, with a trip to Ripon Spa Hotel and Croquet Club, **writes Peter Fennell.**

The club was originally set up by the CA, with the help of Michael Hague of Woking, at the Four Seasons Hotel in Dogmersfield which is just outside the town of Fleet in Hampshire. The hotel allows the use of their half-sized croquet lawn to members.

We participate in Federation League matches but we always play away from home.

Twenty-one members and spouses journeyed to Ripon and on the first evening, a group went to the City, to attend the "Wakeman" ceremony. Since the year 886 AD, a horn is sounded at 9pm every night, and this is recorded as the longest on-going tradition in the world.

A members doubles event was won by Sue Smith and Cathy Fennell, while our stronger players took on Ripon Spa CC which resulted in a resounding home win.

Dogmersfield presented their hosts with a yellow rose bush with a commemorative plaque, and they in turn provided a crystal bowl as a trophy to be played for next year!

After an excellent three course dinner, our Chairman, Rupert Catt, gave a resume of our 10 years and congratulated us on our progress.

Much of this is due to the sterling efforts of our founder members, Martin Mander, Anthony Cox and Jill Catt and the progress of Roger Barnacle as a world class referee. (Roger was the referee in charge at the 2011 World GC Championship Final - ed).



American bride-to-be, Heather Queyrouze from Boston, Massachusetts, and her British fiancé, Paul Wagner, decided that an afternoon's croquet would just be the ticket for their trans-Atlantic families and friends to get to know each other on their wedding eve.

Camerton and Peasedown CC provided the venue and the croquet magic (photo above), **reports Brian Wilson.** The visitors arrived by coach from the centre of Bath to find a celebratory arch created by Club members holding mallets aloft. All moved down to the Club grounds for Pimms and a short introduction to Croquet and there was fantastic applause when the club coach, Ros Key Pugh, demonstrated how to score a hoop!

The club provided four more coaches and many other members to get everyone into the swing of things and soon enough the croquet even became very competitive.

Peasedown St John Scouts had provided a marquee which was bedecked with bunting and the flags of both countries, where a traditional afternoon tea was served on old English china for over 50 attendees.

The guests were reluctant to leave the sunlit grounds with views across the Somerset countryside but a final group photo call would be a reminder of this fantastic day. "It was a lot of hard work by everyone at the Club and although it did swell funds, the occasion introduced two families to each other and helped make the couple's wedding something special to remember", said Club Chair, Mo Boys.



Lymington Croquet Club (photo below) welcomed thirty-five members of the public to their mid-July Charity Day in aid of Oakhaven Hospice, **reports Chairman Sheila Ward.**

On a breezy but bright afternoon everyone 'had a go' and were all very satisfied with their introduction to GC in our lovely setting at the Woodside Recreation Ground. Town Councillors Peter Allen, Martina Humber and Alan Penson came along to watch, and Peter Allen, who is Chairman of Amenities, was able to assure members that their refurbished lawn should be available from the start of the 2016 season. The total raised for the hospice was over £550, with more expected from other activities. The photograph (below centre) shows members Sheila Ward and Margaret Skeldon discuss tactics with two visitors.

~

Lodsworth Croquet Club (photo below) has ever keen to broaden its horizons and in just our second playing season, we ventured 'over the water', **reports Tim Johnson.**

Our destination, in June, was the Isle of Wight, where we were made very welcome by the Ryde Club. As Gazette readers will know, Ryde have a wonderful set-up with four immaculate lawns, that were used last year for the Ascot Cup. Our party of 18 spent three days on the island, a dozen of us joined a Ryde club session and we followed that with a match between the two clubs.

The sun shone for us throughout, and whilst Ryde were worthy winners, we were not disgraced. We are most grateful to Ryde members, Roy Tillcock and Stuart Peters, and to their hospitality team and members.



Control that moss

There are some 12,000 species of moss of which around 600 are found in the UK. But of these only three main groups are found in croquet lawns. A general assumption is that the invasion of moss is caused by acidic, waterlogged and compacted soil conditions. But some species favour chalky alkaline soils and others can be found on light sandy soils.

Where moss is found it usually indicates some fundamental weakness in the turf. So just treating with moss killer isn't sufficient, the causes also have to be addressed. Usually this is as simple as instigating a proper maintenance programme which will create a healthy and vigorous sward. It is important to aerate regularly, preferably monthly using a thin-tined spiker such as a Sarrel. Scarifying can be very damaging and moss thrives on the bare areas that are created.

The Sports Turf Research Institute has published a series of articles on Non-Disturbance and the benefits of an ecological approach that produces an excellent surface without the need for scarification.

Moss crops twice a year producing spores that, when ripe, explode into a cloud which is blown by the wind across a wide area. These spores will lie dormant in the soil waiting for the right conditions to germinate and start the whole process again. So to eradicate moss infestations it is vital to stop the fertilisation of the spores and this means killing the moss before fertilisation.

The only herbicides that actually killed moss have been withdrawn from the market but the programmes that I provide include treatments that control and blacken moss thus preventing the production and fertilisation of spores. This treatment is carried out in the spring and autumn while moss is present. ~ **Duncan Hector**

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The Coaching Corner by Roger Staples, *Coaching Committee Chairman*

New coaching pods have been formed in Devon and Hampshire - to register your interest please visit the members' area on the CA website. Unlike other pods, due to the difficulty in obtaining a critical mass for regular evening meetings, the plan is to try to meet once per annum and cover the material of two or three pods in one day. Sessions will be facilitated by Dave Trimmer (Devon) and Dave Kibble (Hampshire). The North-East coaching pod has also decided that it will operate better as a one-dayer and Ian Burrige facilitated their session this year at York in July.

The Croquet Academy has been successful in creating popular and exciting courses, but there are many who feel that it is geographically unattractive to attend one of its courses.

The following case history from John Harris, Chairman of York Club makes interesting reading:

"York Croquet Club offers an interesting case study of a club driving forward by placing coaching at all levels at the heart of its development plan.

At national level, in the last two years York has run two bronze coaching courses,

a silver course and a coach training course. Participants have come from across the Midlands and North, and discussion about a programme for 2016 is now starting. Building on the enthusiasm of its Club members, York is keen to capitalise on its excellent transport links and the quality of its lawns - as well as a growing reputation for providing cake at training courses - so as to consolidate a position as a venue of choice for national training events in the North of England.

At a regional level, York has just hosted a very successful training pod for A and B class players run by Ian Burrige, focusing on the four-ball break, leaves and lifts, and the three-ball ending. The Club is now in discussion about becoming a regular venue for further pod sessions.

It is at club coaching level that the focus on coaching has perhaps had most impact. York now has five Coaches trained to Yellow Badge level. This allowed the Club to run three six-week introductory courses in 2014, attracting 18 takers, of which over half went on to become members. This season the Club is running four introductory courses and is on track to enrol a record number of new members.

The Club also runs in-house refresher and improver courses and is now keen to add a course on technique. Well-advertised, free 'drop-in' taster sessions, at the Club or elsewhere in the city, are another part of the mix. York's experience is by no means unique but clearly demonstrates the power of coaching to help drive Club development and increase membership."

Congratulations to the following in achieving their coaching awards.

Club Coach (Yellow badge) -

Mary Bradshaw (Taunton-Deane) and Graham Tucker (Sussex County).

Golf Coach (White) -

Ivan Segal (Rottingdean), Robin Wootton (Sussex County) and Maggie Cowman (Ripon Spa).

Grade 1 Association (Blue) -

Caroline Denny (The Bears), Avril Rangoni-Machiavelli (Blewbury), Graham Pegley (Compton), Ivan Wheatley (Westmorland) and Francois Garcia (Bowdon).

**Roger Staples,
Coaching Committee Chairman**



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From Russia with croquet love

Chester Croquet Club played host to a group of journalists from Russia in late June, which was organised by Visit Britain, *reports Sally Slater*.

The group of six, from Moscow, were on a cultural tour based on the 150th anniversary of the publication of Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland', which of course features croquet. The book is apparently popular in Russia.

They had visited Daresbury, the home of Carroll's family, before coming to Chester and were later to make their way to Oxford to see Christ Church College, where Charles Dodgson/Lewis Carroll was a tutor, and where he most probably saw and played the newly popular game of croquet.

Croquet is largely unknown in Russia, and the visitors wanted to see how it was played.

Led by Dasha Motyagina from Visit Britain, the journalists Martha, Alexandra, Christina, Vadim and Elena lunched at the club, and were given a brief history of croquet by David Guyton.

Then had a try, assisted by members Paul Watson, John Dawson and Sally Slater.

It was great fun, and Martha thought they should definitely set up a club in Moscow!

In fact as North-West Federation Secretary Paul Rigge later correctly pointed out, Russia is a member of the WCF and there is already a club in Moscow.

The journalists all represented different publications including Cosmopolitan, an airport magazine and an on-line one for women, and they intended to write about the tour when they returned home.

In Sally Slater's photograph above, David Guyton demonstrates how to hold a mallet

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