

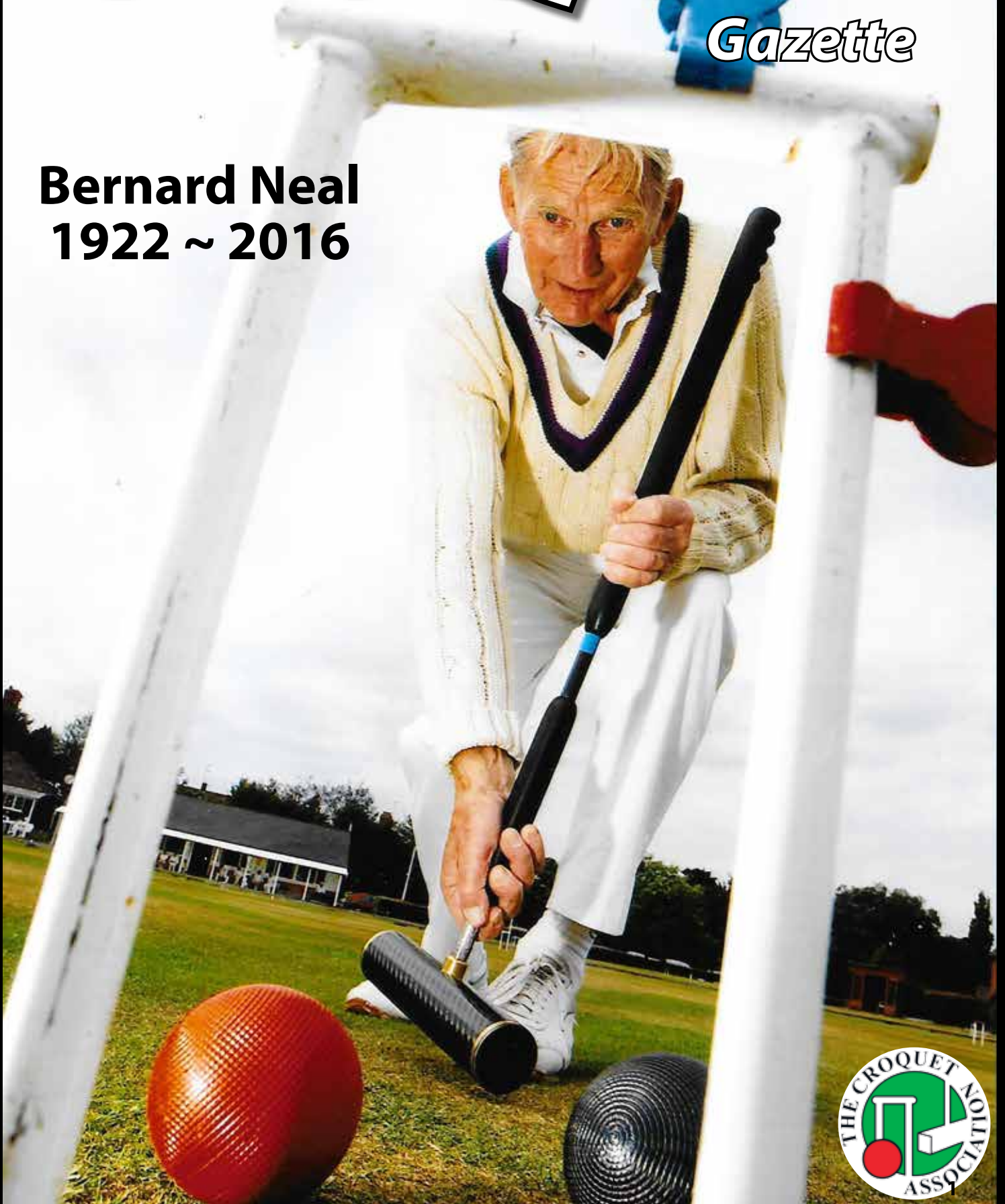
The

Issue 361 April 2016

CROQUET

Gazette

**Bernard Neal
1922 ~ 2016**



From our files

researched by Frances Colman

10 years ago - 2006



WCF 7th GC World Championship, Hawkes Bay, New Zealand (*Tim King reports*) – Sixty-four players from nineteen countries gathered to compete. . . The ten England representatives were Chris Clarke, Chris Daniels, Robert Fulford, David Hopkins, Julie Hudson, Tim King, Ian Lines, Stephen Mulliner, Chris Sheen and Dick Strover. . . Simon Carter sponsored the team shirts, which helped to provide a sense of national pride. . . The reputation of the Egyptians (*for hard hitting*) had clearly gone before and the court layouts were generous with substantial boundary boards.

At Te Mata, the hard hitters occasionally found some bumpiness and one shot from an Egyptian suddenly leapt to chest height after travelling part way across the court. . .

Stephen Mulliner reached the semis where he lost to Salah Hassan (Egypt) but beat Reg Bamford on the way. The other losing semi-finalist was Mark MacInerney (*Ireland; later to be crowned World GC Champion in 2011*). . . Jenny Williams (*now Clarke*) finished 7th, the best performance by a woman at a World Championship. . . About 300 people gathered to watch the final encircling the court. Mohamed Nasr and Salah Hassan did not disappoint. . . (*Mohamed Nasr won 7-4, 7-6, 3-7, 7-5, to take the World crown, succeeding his brother Ahmed*).

Juniors – The Tournament Committee is pleased to announce that from 2006 there will be a 50% reduction in entry fees to CA tournaments for junior members of the CA. . . Whilst it is not for the CA to dictate entry fees to clubs, it is hoped that many will consider whether they wish to offer similar discounts to their tournaments to juniors.

Italy – The WCF is pleased to announce further grants from the WCF Development Programme, this time to the Italian Federation. . . Awards of 1,000 Euro to assist in the production of a DVD for eventual distribution to key places in Italy for development of the sport and 3,350 Euro to assist in the organisation of a golf croquet coaching course in 2006.

50 years ago - 1966



Our New Face – One of the first things that Associates will have noticed is that the form of the magazine has changed. It is in fact no longer being printed in the traditional way (letter-press) but is being lithographed.

Council meeting – The radical change from having five of six weekday Council meetings commencing at 2 p.m. at Southampton Row to three meetings on Saturdays at 11.45 a.m. at the Hurlingham Club, met with general approval.

Centenary plans – On the proposal of Mr Rivington seconded by Mr Birch the adoption of a report of a special sub-committee, comprised of Mr Caporn, Dr Wiggins, Mr L.E.W. Stokes-Roberts and Miss Lintern, and convened to consider the form of celebrating the Croquet Centenary Year, 1967, on a National Scale, was agreed.

'Croquet' (Gazette) – Council received recommendations from the Editorial Panel (*of the magazine, which included*) where ever possible to include in each issue at least one article of intelligent propaganda and literary merit.

MacRobertson Shield – The Chairman reported receipt of a challenge from the Australian Croquet Council. The contest to be played in 1969 in Australia. The Secretary was instructed to write to the Australian CC accepting the challenge, . . . but suggesting that this series be played here in England and the following series in 1975 in Australia, as 1975 would make the Jubilee of Contests which were inaugurated by an Australian player who also presented the trophy.

Dear Sir,
Recently when driving north I stopped for lunch at market Deeping, near Peterborough, and was served with soup from a magnificent bowl inscribed "Sleaford Croquet Tournament 1906". One wonders what usually happens to challenge cups and bowls from since departed croquet tournaments. A soup tureen seems as good as any – as long as the soup is good.

Yours faithfully, T.F.H. Jessel

100 years ago - 1916



Dear Sir,
If a letter be allowed on a subject of late rather alien to the Gazette, namely Croquet, may we be permitted to publish some revised rules for the Compulsory Peeling Game? In the absence of tournaments last year, this game proved remarkably successful in giving zest to knock-out matches at places where both lawns and the standard of play were so good as to render the usual round rather uninteresting.

Since conditions this year will be not unlike those of last, these rules may be of use to such players as are able to get a turn in the intervals of war work, or to such as sex, age or infirmity prevent playing the nobler game. (*Rules then followed in some detail, which appear to be very similar to current triple-peel practice, but with the added compulsory element*).

O. Thomas and A.F. Brice

Dear Sir,
Last year I had a most kindly and helpful response to an appeal I made in your paper for flat-soled shoes. I venture again to ask for help in two items for our hospital – croquet balls and flat-soled shoes.

My Tommies all and each in turn have a fixed and unalterable belief that, no matter where the ball is or on which side of the wire, a hard bang will take it through the hoop. Under this treatment balls and hoops both get broken, and we have used up all our spare sets of balls. We have no fads or fancies, wood or composition, heavy or underweight, we only want unbroken balls.

We badly need more flat-soled shoes, the boys wear them out so fast; our croquet lawn is an unfailing attraction in all weathers.

I am, yours truly, C.E. Esbell Laurence,
Felthorpe Hall, Norwich

The Serbian Legation presents its compliments to the Editor . . . contributions for the benefit of the distressed Serbian population (via) the Serbian Relief Fund, of which H.M. the Queen is Patroness, should be sent to the Earl of Desart, KCB, 5, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, SW.

Editorial

Always leaving the writing of this editorial until the very last job, does mean that I can be more topical than other contributors.

Therefore I have the privilege of being able to react to the passing of the Croquet Great that was Bernard Neal.

His playing days and Council work pre-date my time in croquet, but it is clear, from the tributes that have flown in to other forums this past week, what an influential figure Bernard was in our great sport.

I only met Bernard a couple of times in his later years but this week I telephoned a contemporary of his on another matter.

Smokey Eades, a doyen of my club Phyllis Court, who at 96 is still a keen croquet follower (see his letter on page 7) remembered Bernard fondly, as he did another good croquet man and friend, David Godfree whose obituary is also carried in this issue.

Older readers will remember from Gazette's of decades past that Smokey was a great writer of poems and doggerels. Today (*the day that this Gazette is due at the printers*) a poem from arrived from Smokey,

that he wrote back in 1977. I don't know who Sheila is, but just couldn't leave it out and the only space left was in this column.

~

If Sheila were my croquet girl.
I'd dance a triple peel.
I'd run a hoop from thirty yards
And play like Bernard Neal.
I'd hit the peg from corner IV
And win by twenty-two. . . .
But Sheila's NOT my croquet girl -
Oh hell I've missed the blue!

~

Thank you to Stephen Mulliner (for his warm obituary), Chris Williams (for his research) and my trusty proof readers who have all made it possible to re-jig this issue in the past few days.

Chris Roberts

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The
CROQUET
Gazette



Issue 361 April 2016

Front cover: RIP Bernard Neal 1922-2016.

This page: The Editor invites Nelson Mandela for a game. It looks to me like he'd play with a Solomon Grip!

The Chairman in charge of a Council meeting. (Photos by Frances Colman and Chris Roberts - Mandela's mallet supplied by Christine Wakeham)

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Chairman's Column

The Council meeting on 19 March addressed probably the most difficult issue of my time as Chairman.

This issue was the subject of a petition signed by 83 members of the Croquet Association. The petition demanded action by Council.

I received the petition ten days before the meeting and this began frenetic exchanges of communication between the different parties involved.

Such a large number of signatures indicated a significant degree of feeling about a decision made by the Association Croquet Tournaments Committee.

The constitution of the CA, however, proved to be the basis on which Council could approve an equitable settlement to the matter, rather than being dragged towards protecting its own (i.e. unequivocal support to the Tournaments Committee) or towards acceding to a petition just because of the number of signatures.

The constitution specifies two

mechanisms of potential relevance to the issue. The first mechanism is a disciplinary panel: the only means by which a committee can seek sanctions against individual members (for example, when a player contravenes our tournament regulations). The second mechanism is an appeals panel: the means by which members can seek redress against maladministration by Council, its committees or officers.

These mechanisms, however, are both to be proceeded by an important step: attempting "to resolve the matter informally".

Ultimately, the wisdom of the constitution became apparent on this occasion: the extensive communication prior to the meeting served as the informal phase and Council had no need to refer the petition to an appeals panel (potentially lengthy).

The eventual agreement included Council recognising that all parties had sought the best interests of croquet; nobody had acted with vindictive intentions at any point.

The whole affair has revealed (unsurprisingly, in hindsight) how the croquet community can assemble impressive collective wisdom.

In the first instance, our constitution reflects such wisdom and embodies important principles such as natural justice, which includes the right to a fair hearing. These principles ensure our committees do not become judge, jury and executioner when we think that rules have been broken.

Equally, however, on occasions we have to re-assemble our collective wisdom to remind ourselves how the constitution can meet the needs of specific situations.

Any crisis is an opportunity to learn lessons and, in the meantime, Council has launched a working party to identify ways in which we can improve our governing documents to help us apply our processes correctly on future occasions.

~

As this edition went to print, we learnt the sad news of Bernard Neal's death. He was a major figure in our history. We send our condolences to his family and thank them for giving him the support that allowed him to give so much to us.



Tim King

Report of March Council meeting

Council met at Hurlingham on 19 March.

While reviewing a number of matters arising, it was decided that, in future, a larger than the minimum necessary number of selectors for World Championship teams would be appointed, with those people deciding which of them meet the criteria of being either definite members or definitely not members of the team two months before the advertised selection date.

Committees are to look at a paper from Dave Kibble suggesting possible management metrics and the Council Practice Book (a long and complex document) is to be published in HTML on the website to make it more accessible.

Hon Treasurer Peter Death reported that the draft accounts had been signed off by the Examiner and they were approved for submission to the AGM. In discussing the unusually larger surplus, which was primarily due to a lack of applications for development grants, Council was urged to look favourably on proposals to appoint national and/or regional development or project officers. However, it was recognised that, in view of the forthcoming membership changes, next year may see a substantial deficit and that the outlook was uncertain.

Under the **Hon. Secretary's report**, **the retirement of Alan Pidcock from Council after 18 years of service was noted and he was warmly thanked for his contribution to its work.**

Several items were discussed under Liz Larsson's **Manager's report**, including encouraging clubs to make use of the online tournament entry system (both for their and potential tournament players' benefit); a so far unreproducible login problem with the new website, which had otherwise settled in well; the format of the new handicap cards; a data sharing agreement between clubs and the CA and new accounting software.

Strat Liddiard introduced the **report of the Management Committee**, in the absence of its Chairman, Brian Shorney, who was one of several members unable to attend due to ill-health. None of it was

controversial. The first item for ratification was to **move the date of the AGM and subsequent Council meeting to 22 October**, and reschedule dates for committee meetings. The second was to approve the **report of the Membership Changes Working Party**, in particular for membership categories and subscriptions for 2017, if the necessary database enhancements have been completed. The third was to approve budgeting and authorisation procedures and the final one was to give representatives of coaching academies a seat on the coaching committee. Items for information included one that Strat himself had been appointed to chair the Governance Working Party.



Tournament Regulations gave tournament officials such as the manager summary power to impose sanctions on a player during an event, to ensure that it could be completed in an orderly fashion, the Tournament Committees only had power to refer players in breach of the regulations to a Disciplinary Panel, rather than impose further sanctions itself.

It was thus agreed to quash the suspended ban, and further agreed that, given the circumstances, it would not be in the interests of the Association to seek to have it re-imposed in this instance.

The final point was to set up a working party to examine whether the CA's disciplinary and appeals processes could be improved and how they could be better documented and communicated.

The last substantive item was to award the Council Medal to Robert Fulford, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the game over the last 25 years.

Photo: Robert Fulford with the first of his five consecutive President's Cup wins (2008-2012); a unique achievement. (Photograph by Samir Patel)

The meeting concluded with a plug for **National Croquet Day**, and, by way of light relief, an extract from the Radio 4

comedy programme "The Now Show", in which a foreign dictator was purportedly offered the Presidency of the World Croquet Association, as a suitable sinecure in his enforced retirement and as a means of livening up the sport!

I suspect that Council's Chairman felt that the meeting had been lively enough already!

Ian Vincent, Honorary Secretary

The main business for the afternoon was to consider a petition in the

name of some 80 members expressing concern about the imposition, by the AC Tournaments Committee, of a suspended ban on playing in the 'Eights' on a player who had mistaken when last year's event started, and thus arrived too late to complete all of his games in the round-robin event. As it happened, this didn't affect the eventual winner, but it could well have done.

Much patient and useful work before the meeting had resulted in an agreement between representatives of the committee and the petitioners, which Council was asked to adopt. It contained 10 points, which Tim King, the Chairman of Council, asked the meeting to consider in turn.

It had emerged that, whereas the



Tournament Regulations – Changes for 2016

A full list of the 25 significant changes that will affect players, managers and referees can be found on the CA website (at the start of the 'Regulations' page, in the 'Tournaments' drop down menu - <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/regulations>).

Those most likely to affect events are as follows:

- The tournament entry acceptance process has been updated to allow a choice of selection by grade or ballot for first-class events.
- The terminology for blocks has been standardised on single or multiple 'series', removing references to 'lives'.
- The treatment of incomplete blocks has been updated to deal better with an incomplete multiple-series block.
- Adoption of the new GC handicap system.
- A new duty for managers to give priority, where possible, over first-colour balls to players with a colour vision deficiency.
- Clarification added regarding whether an opponent is deemed to have won a game that a late player is deemed to have lost.
- All players (rather than just the striker) now have the responsibility to draw the manager's attention to any conditions that may result in their allocated court being declared unfit for play.

- Dealing with the circumstance when an 'air-stroke' is played as time is called. (*Yes, this did happen in 2015.*)

~

The new regulations also incorporate the following new Laws variations which have been approved by the CA Council

- Updated to reflect the ILC's official ruling on Law 53(b)(3).
- Updated to reflect the modifications made to the trial system for AC doubles calculations.

- A new ruling to extend the State of the Game information to include the double-banked game equipment. This is to assist players with a colour vision deficiency.

- The trial of Sequence Umpires in GC extended until further notice.

~

There have been a very large number of minor changes made to improve clarity or to remove typographical or grammatical errors. Many thanks particularly to David Harrison-Wood who undertook the considerable task of proof-reading the Regulations with such thoroughness.

Samir Patel, CA Tournaments Committees

Call for Nominations and Notices of Motions for the 2016 AGM

The 2016 AGM will be held at Hurlingham on the morning of Saturday, 22 October. Please note the change of date, which is because the club is unable to accommodate us on the scheduled one.

Any nominations for the posts of Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary or membership of Council, or any motions to be put to the AGM, should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Dr. I. G. Vincent, 21 Cedar Avenue, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 2HA, or e-mailed to ian.

vincent@cantab.net by 1 June. Nominations should give the name of the candidate together with those of the proposer and seconder, and state that the consent of the candidate has been obtained.

There are expected to be seven vacancies on Council. Three retiring members (Martin French, Strat Liddiard and Ian Lines), together with two who were co-opted during the year (Brian Fisk and Lionel

Tibble), have stated that they are willing to serve again and so do not need to be nominated, so at least two additional nominations are required to fill the vacancies. Alan Pidcock has decided to step down after eighteen years of service and David Maugham after eight.

Ian Vincent, Honorary Secretary

CA representatives to attend The Patron's Lunch

On 12 June, representatives of the 600 organisations that hold the Queen's Patronage will take part in a lunch down the Mall in London.

The Croquet Association has had a long tradition of having the monarch as Patron, stretching back in fact to King George V, after whose Coronation the AC Open Championship Cup was named.

Following her father, uncle and grandfather, the Queen is also our Patron and has been since November 1952, the year of her accession.

In October 2015, we were invited to send representatives to the lunch, and we asked all members if they wanted to buy tickets in our annual November membership renewal mailing. In fact, we were successful in



gaining 60 tickets (10 tables in all) for all the members who wanted to go.

Everyone attending will receive an individual hamper within which will be lunch and afternoon tea.

The Event itself starts at 10am with the

hampers distributed from 11am before the formal proceedings start at noon with an entertainment parade down the mall, between the diners.

At 3pm, the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh will take to the stage to receive thanks and speeches, after which they will then return down the Mall followed by the entertainment parade and the event conclusion at 4.30pm.

The event is in honour of the Queen's unrelenting support and service that she has given to the community over her 63 year reign.

For more information, see <http://www.thepatrons-lunch.com>

Liz Larsson, CA Manager

Call for an added signature column on handicap cards

Dear Editor,
Adding a date for games on the new handicap cards is an excellent idea.

Equally important, however, would have been a column for opponent's signature. This would prevent queries arising on results after matches. Regretfully we found this essential at our club last year following a league match.

There is space to do this if the results column is halved. In addition it is a pity that level play scoring has to be on a separate sheet, especially as you are assuming that continuation sheets will be used for the main card already.

You can't please everyone, but I would seriously ask for a signature column to be added!

Ian Simpson, Sidmouth CC

Response from Strat Liddiard, Chairman, Handicap Committee

Thank you for this helpful suggestion. In the original new design we did indeed have a box for signature. I would refer you to the

letter from David Magee published in the Gazette 357 last year. It represented a tenor of comment we received from a number of people, and so decided to put the whole subject of verification of results on hold, pending further evidence. Perhaps you could use the space beyond the right-hand-most column to insist that your members comply with a local rule of your club's making? We, the CA Handicap Committee, would be very pleased to receive any anecdotal or statistical findings from your implementation of this.

Regarding your second point, during the EACF trial of the GC handicap New System in 2015, they were obliged to use an A5 insert with the trigger points and level play tables, as they were still using the old cards. It turned out to be a usable approach, with most clubs also pinning an A4 poster copy on their noticeboards – which was easy for everyone to read. So we adopted the approach with the new cards, as it leaves more space available for recording scores. We would also welcome feedback from players, perhaps after a season of trying the new cards and inserts, as to how they found them.

Canadian croquet silks found

Dear Editor,

A couple of years ago, an article appeared in the Gazette concerning cigarette cards with a croquet theme.

As well as collecting cards, I also collect silks, which are similar in size and content but are made of silk, linen or thin canvas, either woven or printed.

In February I acquired two silks of croquet (*below*), issued in 1912 by Imperial Tobacco of Canada in a set of 121, entitled Canadian miscellany, and the two in question were in the Sports section of that set.

Recently I gave a talk on my collection at my club and concluded with "You heard it here first".

Paul A Miles, Medway CC



Try 'Meetups' for attracting new members

Dear Editor,

Some of the readership of the Gazette may not be aware of 'Meetups', but may be interested to know about them.

<http://www.meetup.com/>

In the words of Wikipedia, "Meetup is an online social networking portal that facilitates off-line group meetings in various localities around the world. Meetup allows members to find and join groups unified by a common interest, such as politics, books, games, movies, health, pets, careers or hobbies.

Users enter their city or their post code and tag the topic they want to meet about. The website/app helps them locate a group to arrange a place and time to meet."

There are thousands of Meetups in the UK alone, for interests as diverse as wine tasting, theatre going, technology and sports. At the time of writing there are ten Croquet Meetups worldwide, but High Wycombe Croquet Club is the only one in the UK.

Creating a Meetup is very simple: the basic service costs \$9.99 a month* ; add

a few enticing details which can include pictures and logo; choose tags to describe the Meetup (croquet, outdoor sports, etc.); set up meetings for club sessions, coaching, open days, or whatever suits.

The Meetup then comes to the attention of people in your area searching for that kind of activity.

Having only recently created the HWCC Meetup, it is too early to say how effective it will be in practice. However, early indications are good. On the first day we had two people saying they will come to our next 'Come and Try Day', and another saying they can't make that day, but expressing interest. If we get just one new member it will more than cover the cost.

Rather than wait for hard evidence I thought other clubs might like to think about trying something similar early in the season.

**Duncan Reeve,
High Wycombe Croquet Club**

* This fee in fact entitles you to set up three Meetups.

Well trollied Penrith help CA Bursary Fund

Jeff Rushby's generous offer of his court equipment trolley (*Letter, Gazette 360*) will net the CA's Young Players' Bursary Fund a welcome £60, thanks to Howard Bowron who snapped it up for use at Penrith and North Lakes CC.

The last I heard, the pair were discussing the logistics of transporting it from Caterham to the Lake District, which is 320 miles away. It's got wheels, what's the problem! - Ed



The early GC recollections of Smokey Eades

The following letter from Smokey Eades (a long-time member of my club at Phyllis Court, who circuit players of good vintage will remember well) was sent, via me, to Ray Hall, in response to his article (Gazette 360) about the

evolution of Golf Croquet rules. I thank both gentlemen for agreeing to allow me to share the letter here. - Ed.

Dear Mr Hall,

I am 96 years of age, so my memory of dates and events is poor.

In the 80s, I was a member of Council; I was also the development officer for the 'Southern' area. Lionel Wharrad was CA Chairman.

Golf Croquet was an anathema to Lionel. I accompanied him to Oxfordshire CC hoping that they would introduce croquet to their parks. On the way home I said to Lionel that perhaps it would be better to sell the simple game (GC). He replied (as a past marketing manager), "I would always first offer my best product, not my worst!"

If, at a Council Meeting, I would refer to Golf Croquet, I would either be ignored or told to talk of serious things. There was even a suggestion that Golf Croquet should be renamed. I remember one

suggestion 'Mallets'.

Sometime in the 80s, Southwick who had held the annual GC tournament for many years, decided that numbers entering did not justify continuance. This was reported at a council meeting and I volunteered Phyllis Court Club in Henley-on-Thames as a new location. So for a number of years, Phyllis Court held the annual tournament and the appropriate CA cups were presented to the singles and doubles winners.

At that time, Chris Hudson prepared two leaflets - one for Golf Croquet and the other for AC. I helped him with the former. There seem to be no copies at the CA and both Chris and I have long since destroyed our copies.

The rules were very simple. The start was as for AC but on the line in front of hoop one. There were no restrictions - once one ball had run a hoop the following balls could try for position at the next hoop. Jumps were permitted. As soon as one player (or in doubles - two) had run seven hoops, that was a won game. As we only scored by games, play ceased. I think that when a ball went off court, it was replaced as for AC. It was good uncomplicated fun.

I doubt that this helps - if only I could locate that GC leaflet (printed in green on white glossy paper).

Have fun.

Yours sincerely,

Smokey

RS Eades, Phyllis Court CC

Photograph: Smokey Eades at Phyllis Court last summer, watching over the Club's National B-Level Series qualifying event which bears his name 'Smokey's Cup'. The tournament's eventual winner Andrew Carpenter of Durham is in the background (photo by Chris Roberts).

Peter's book search

Dear Editor,

Can anyone out there help?

I am looking for a copy of Geoffrey

Naylor's book "Play Better Croquet".

It seems that the volume is no longer in print, so I am keen to track down a second-hand copy.

The publishers were Hazard Press, PO Box 2151, Christchurch, NZ and the ISBN No. is 1-877161-66-7.

If any member has a copy that is gathering dust on the top shelf of their bookcase and in need of liberation, please let me know - petercutting@btconnect.com.

Peter Cutting, Cornwall CC

TV's croquet fib

Dear Editor,

Regarding the article (Croquet on TV) in the February issue (Gazette 360).

I have just read "Why didn't they ask Evans?" and there is no mention of croquet in it, let alone Miss Marple

However, as you say it is set in grand country houses, so you can see why a TV adaptation might include it.

Barbara Young, Bury CC



Tram signal dilemma

Dear Editor,

Suffering from CVD?

(Gazettes 359 and 360).

If you were a Melbourne tram-driver in the mid-20th Century you might have had some trouble with this experimental traffic signal for trams. You go on green and stop on red - if you can tell the difference! At about the time that the recent CA working party on Colour Vision Deficiency was finalising its report, I was visiting my daughter in Melbourne and came across this signal in the Melbourne Science Museum.

I could not distinguish the red from the green with any certainty and was grateful that the design never caught on.

John Dawson, Chester CC



Lewis Carroll and the missing 'p'

My apologies to Ian Harrison who wrote a letter about the 'Croquet and Lewis Carroll' pamphlet by Roger Scowen in the last issue (Letters, Gazette 360), giving an e-mail address from where the same could be obtained. The address carried was missing a 'p' at the start; this having been dropped in error from Ian's submitted copy.

The address should have read: patscowen@waitrose.com - Ed.

More Letters

Please support our new tournaments ~
At Southport . . .

Dear Editor,
Southport and Birkdale CC have decided to try a new format this year. We don't think it has been done before, but we might be wrong.

Our May Association Handicap Tournament will have two games a day only over three days (28/29/30May). Play will start at 9.30 with one game before lunch and a second after lunch. Both will be timed games.

This will mean that play will be over by 5 pm so players and partners can have an enjoyable evening without being rushed. How many times have you been to a tournament and finished at 8 pm or later, and then rushed to get changed to go out to eat? Waiting partners have not been amused.

We will take 20 entries for our five lawns, so you get six games over the three days.

**John Haslam,
Hon. Sec. Southport and Birkdale CC**

. . . and in Portugal

Dear Editor,
Even though it is some time away, I am pleased to invite you to make a note in your diary for September and to join us at the first Portuguese Croquet Club for and take part in a unique event for Portugal.

We are very pleased to announce that the Portugal Singles and Doubles GC Championship will take place from 8 to 11 September at our Bela Romao Croquet Club.

The Doubles Championship will be held during 8 and 9 September and the Singles during 9 to 11 September 2016.

We are counting on the presence of players from Belgium, Denmark, England, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Spain and Portugal.

We ask that you support us with your entries and presence at the event, as well as your assistance in promoting the tournament amongst your friends and family and other croquet clubs.

Long Live Croquet!

**Lita Gale,
Bela Romao CC, Algarve, Portugal**
(see back cover for contact details)

Obituaries

David Godfree 1929 - 2016



David Godfree, a long-time member of the All England Club, Wimbledon, was the elder son of distinguished British tennis players, Leslie and Kathleen Godfree (better known as Kitty McKane).

Not only did she win the Ladies Singles at Wimbledon twice in the 1920's but also, later in life, took up croquet, no doubt encouraging David, as a member, to follow.

David took over the position of Honorary Secretary of the All England Croquet Section in the 1970's, a post he held for one more year than Bernard Neal's famous winning run of 38 years in the Club's Closed AC Singles Championships. David was a fair player and a very brave competitor, considering a major debilitating injury to his legs in a car accident several years ago.

Besides getting to the final of the Club's championship twice, he won the Handicap Singles six times. Nevertheless, he would consider winning the Men's Doubles 'Wine Coolers' once (with Bernard Neal) in the Hurlingham Summer tournament as his best achievement.



David Godfree received a CA Diploma in 2008 in recognition of his long-standing commitment to Croquet at The All England Club. The citation includes the following: 'David Godfree has acted as croquet secretary for over 30 years. During that time he has developed a full range of internal club competitions, both Association and Golf Croquet. With infectious enthusiasm he has persuaded many club members to try their hand at croquet, and to maintain their interest, has organised regular informal club days. David also developed indoor croquet to keep up interest in the winter, using snooker

balls, small mallets and hoops fitted to sockets under a carpet'

He continued watching croquet and was a keen supporter of the

Club's teams both home and away.
Mike Hann, All England Club, Wimbledon

Bronach Reid 1931 - 2016



Bronach Reid brought to croquet all the things that steered her busy and accomplished life. In everything she did she was a resolute 'force for good'. She cared about things and she cared about people, and people loved her for it. She was Chairman of Croquet at Hurlingham for 3 years from 2002. Although always an AC player she saw the importance of a 'simple game' of GC and drew people onto the lawns and perhaps later into the bar. She wanted people to play and she wanted the game to prosper. In 2003 neither of these things were certainties but she made it happen. She must have bullied us, but in a caring way, so that all we noticed was more people having more fun playing more croquet.

She introduced me to croquet. Later we

played some Mixed Doubles together, with variable success.

Generally the Manager

considered it a failure, but we always enjoyed ourselves enormously and our opponents were often politely ecstatic. In her time she won some trophies but mostly she saw the game and players as bigger than her. She wanted the Croquet World in general and Hurlingham in

particular to blossom. As Chairman she played a full part in this. She made sure that visitors to the club felt welcome and supported both the C.A. tournament programme and the S.E. Federation. The most important thing about Bronach was that she was always herself. What a blessing that was to all of us. She will be missed but certainly not forgotten.

John Bowcott, The Hurlingham Club

There's so much going on - it will be an excellent day, *writes Brian Wilson*
Here's a selection of what is being developed:

An Open "Fun" Day - come and test your skills by hitting a ball at a target.

A Competition Day – invite other Sports Clubs, Councils and other organisations including charities to a 'Challenge Day' or to try 'The Croquet Experience'.

A number of Clubs are providing refreshments (*ah the delights of cake or cream teas!*) – this brings in money and shows that Croquet Clubs are welcoming.

Clubs are already working with their local media – NCD will make good copy.

~

NCD posters and leaflets have been distributed

The A4 Club poster is designed to encourage your members to take part.

The A4 Public poster and A5 leaflet (which includes an introduction to croquet on the reverse) encourages the public to join you on NCD. There is space for your Club to provide contact details.

More posters and leaflets are available

National Croquet Day 5 June



The CA Marketing Team is here to support you in developing your activities

Contact Brian Wilson
07970 922867 or 01225 708540
brian@europaassociates.co.uk

from the CA Office (01242 242318 or caoffice@croquet.org.uk) or they can be downloaded from the CA web site at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=ca/schemes/ncd>.

Other CA leaflets are also available

The CA has reprinted the excellent series of glossy tri-fold leaflets extolling Croquet: 'Association Croquet', 'Golf Croquet' and 'Have you tried Croquet?' Many Clubs are using these as a part of their marketing for more members and supporting NCD.

All available **FREE** from the CA Office.

Draft Press Releases

Whilst many Clubs are well versed in dealing with the media, others have asked for some ideas, so the CA has created draft Press Releases entitled: Croquet – a game anyone can play', 'Croquet; a sport with that competitive edge' and A Public Invitation 'Come and try 'The Croquet Experience'.

Please feel free to use these drafts, or change them to suit your own needs.

Our objective is simple: to generate both press and public interest with the invitation 'Try The Croquet Experience'. See <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=clubs/info/ExplPressReleases>

~

The CA Marketing team

We are here to help you, so please tell us of your plans (*see below and page 22*).

Media savvy Llanfairfechan are no strangers to TV

The Llanfairfechan and North Wales Croquet Club know a thing or two about publicity, and with National Croquet Day to look forward to, Georgina Llewellyn tells how one publicity drive brought unexpected success!

The Club members pulled out all the stops to advertise our Taster Weekend last April because our numbers had dwindled, our finances were in a bad state and we now had a beautiful new clubhouse to maintain as well as a professional green keeper to pay. Three thousand professionally printed bilingual (Welsh/English) flyers and posters, which cost a lot of money, were put up in shops outside our area and under windscreen wipers of cars in a number of car parks at hospitals, large stores, and in high streets. We also placed notices in all



the newspapers we could think of and, of course, we used social media.

The Saturday was a disaster as it rained all day. We did attract four visitors who enjoyed a cup of coffee and a chat about croquet though. In the Sunday sunshine, we welcomed no fewer than 21 curious visitors resulting in five new members and a few others who attended occasionally and paid a lawn fee to play. We deemed the exercise a success and well worth repeating in 2016.

We thought that this was all we were going to get out of the money spent on printing and the effort put in by members but, we were so wrong. . .

Our latest 2 mins 38 sec of fame!

An **ITV Wales News** presenter had spotted our poster in a shop window months later and contacted me to arrange a visit with his cameraman. I had an hour to find members to meet us at the lawns but efforts were futile. Luckily, when we met there were already six members present and playing. The day was saved and with the help of a drone and the filming showed off our lawns and Llanfairfechan's other sporting facilities to their best advantage.

This was not the first time we had attracted TV film crews to our lawns during the last 25 years. We held a unique position until four years ago, as the only club in North Wales and only the second CA affiliated club open to the public in the whole of Wales. We have the advantage of having Welsh speakers in the Club to cope with Welsh News items and Welsh magazine programmes.

Two minute clips were handy to fill gaps during the media's 'silly season' but our Club had the publicity we needed.

I am so grateful to my 42nd cousin, and CA Archivist, Chris Williams (Dyffryn CC) for recording the latest News clip as I out of the country when it was aired. It now appears on our Facebook page: 'Llanfairfechan Croquet Club'.



In 2014, the croquet world bade farewell to John Solomon at the age of 82, arguably the game's greatest exponent in the 1950s and 1960s and rightly accorded the gratitude of today's players for rescuing croquet from the obscurity it faced after the Second World War. Now, sadly, a similar tribute is due to Bernard Neal who has died just before his 94th birthday.

~

Bernard's croquet career seems at first sight only to have had a distant similarity to that of the man he succeeded as President of the Croquet Association in 2004. But closer inspection reveals an extraordinary degree of complementarity between the contributions of these two great servants of the game. John was "front of house", a rare talent who emerged in the late 1940s when in his teens, took the game by storm and propelled croquet into public consciousness by his media appeal. Bernard took up the game much later in life and, although he competed and succeeded at the highest level, made his greatest and equally valuable contribution to croquet as a hugely effective administrator and promoter of the game for almost 50 years.

~

Elected to Council in 1966, Bernard was soon appointed Chairman of the Publicity Committee and ensured that words like 'development' and 'coaching' became part of the CA's vocabulary so that Solomon's efforts might be translated into a lasting

benefit for the game. In this regard, Bernard played the key role in exploring the possibilities of obtaining government funding for both the CA and its clubs. An early gain was a grant towards the costs of the 1969 Test Tour to Australia. But of much greater significance were the discussions that he led with the Central Council for Physical Recreation and the newly-formed Sports Council which resulted in the first of the latter's annual grants to the CA, eventually spanning twenty-eight years and making a huge contribution to the CA's finances and enabling the initiation of a development programme. The momentum this generated eventually led to the appointment of Chris Hudson as the CA's National Development Officer and the establishment of the CA's Coaching and Development Committees which now manage comprehensive schemes to help and support both individual players and clubs, all funded from the CA's own resources.

~

Bernard served on the Council continuously as an elected member from 1966 to 1993, becoming Chairman from 1972 to 1974 and then being elected a Vice-President in 1994. When John Solomon decided that, at the age of 73 and after 22

Bernard Neal

years' service as President, it was time to retire, it was a little ironic but entirely fitting that he should be followed by someone nine years his senior, but still very active and as deeply interested as ever in doing whatever he could to promote and support croquet.

Throughout this extended period of service, Bernard's contributions were always characterized by the highest intelligence, sound judgment and quiet, tactful diplomacy. His interventions

in Council discussions were nearly always highly persuasive and he was the ideal choice for anything involving the handling of people. He was an outstandingly successful last-minute stand-in manager of the 1969 Test Team, a key contributor to the development of croquet in the USA and the foundation of the World Croquet Federation and a pioneer of exporting



The demonstration that went wrong!

This is a photograph of Bernard Neal, taken by Eric Solomon at the Opens at Hurlingham in 1984.

Ian Vincent (second left in the photo), supplied the image and tells the tale.

The story behind it is that, at the time, Bernard was Chairman of the CA Laws Committee (AC: there was only one at that time!). A new fault, of deliberately damaging the lawn, had just been introduced and I was asking Bernard why.

He explained that it was to prevent a stroke which had been used by an Australian player, who had avoided a crush or double tap in a hoop stroke by deliberately digging the leading edge of the mallet into the turf to stop it following through.

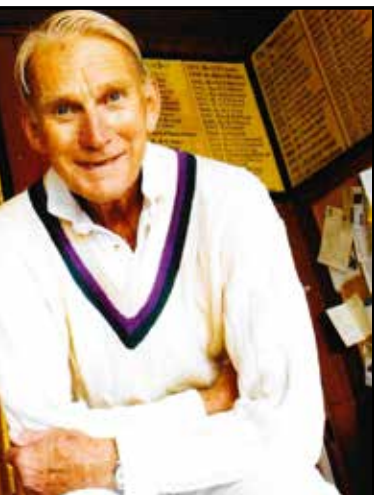
Bernard picked up the nearest mallet to hand, mine, to demonstrate this (off the court, needless to say), only for the shaft of my mallet to break! The full horror of this dawned gradually on us, when we realised that we had been drawn to play in the first round of the Opens the following morning! He kindly took the remains back home, spent the evening in his workshop, and presented me with it re-shafted in the morning ... before going on to win comfortably.

Can any readers identify the other three players in this image?

The photograph opposite shows Bernard in action at Hurlingham c.1985

1922 ~ 2016

croquet to Japan. But it would be a mistake to think of Bernard only as a high-level or strategic contributor. He was a senior and internationally-respected civil engineer who had a keen practical appetite for achievement at ground level. As Laws



Committee chairman, he wrote the "Basic Laws" to improve access to the game for garden players and beginners. As chairman of the Equipment Committee, Bernard was instrumental

in making the CA see the need for and the benefits arising from instituting standard specifications for croquet equipment. He led from the front in devising ball-testing equipment and establishing a set of standards now recognised worldwide. Not content with this, in the early eighties he became concerned with the standard of mallets available. So Bernard designed, made and sold one with a Permali head and an aluminium shaft. The Neal mallet provided a generation of croquet players of all standards with a robust, well balanced mallet and kick-started the cottage industry in mallet-making that we know today.

However, none of this extraordinary level of contribution to the game would have come about had Bernard not had a chance encounter with croquet at Budleigh Salterton in 1962 when he was competing in county standard lawn tennis. He was already 40 but his rise as a croquet player was rapid. He was selected for the Surrey Cup, then the second eight, in 1965, for the newly-instituted Chairman's Salver in 1966 and then for the President's Cup in 1967, the year in which he won the Men's Championship. He won the Hurlingham Cup twice and the Ranelagh Gold Cup three times and represented Great Britain in the MacRobertson Shield in 1969, 1974 and 1979, twice victoriously and winning 27 out of 36 matches. However, without doubt, his finest achievement was to win back-to-back Open Championships in 1972 and 1973,

the years when he was also Chairman of Council – a feat that is unlikely ever to be matched.~

Even this achievement was connected with John Solomon because Bernard beat him in the semi-final on both occasions. In 1972, having lost game 1, Bernard went to 4-back with the Old Standard Leave typical of the era. John, always on the lookout for something alternative, decided to lift the ball by the peg and place it in Corner 1 thereby hoping to induce a "risky" approach to hoop 1 from the corner. However, Bernard was not intimidated, rushed his partner to hoop 3, took off to corner 1, successfully approached hoop 1 and completed a triple peel. In game 3, Bernard once again went to 4-back, John once again placed a ball in corner 1 and, once again, Bernard successfully took up the challenge and went on to win. It must have been very satisfying! He never lost his love of playing croquet and continued to enter ranking events until his 88th year, signing off by reaching the final of the 2009 Cheltenham Easter Weekend tournament.

~
Bernard's other well-known rôle in croquet was as a highly effective link between the Croquet Association and the All-England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club. Having captained Cambridge University at lawn tennis, he became a member of the AELTCC and competed at Wimbledon in the late 40s. He served for many years on the committee, later as a Vice-President and played a part in the design of the famous Centre-Court roof. In 1989, he was instrumental in arranging for the AELTCC's generous gift of the Wimbledon Cup as the trophy for the Association Croquet World Championship. He also became the answer to a classic pub quiz question – who has held the most Wimbledon titles? Forget Billie-Jean King and Martina Navratilova with a mere 20 each - Bernard won the Wimbledon croquet crown 37 times!~

But beyond this record of truly outstanding service to croquet over many decades was the man himself. Bernard was a true gentleman, the most sporting of opponents, a source of wise counsel, a very good and generous friend to countless croquet players in England and across the croquet world. Many will recall the hospitality and accommodation that he and Liz offered players and teams at Moat

Cottage in Leckhampton or at their flat near the Hurlingham Club. He will be very greatly missed and our thoughts and condolences go to Liz, Mike and Cathy on the loss of husband and father.

Stephen Mulliner, Vice-President of the Croquet Association

~

I thank Vice President Stephen Mulliner, a friend of Bernard's for many years, for writing this tribute. I have found it a challenge to follow in the footsteps of such a widely admired President, whose generous advice and judgement I always greatly respected.

Quiller Barrett, President of the Croquet Association

Bernard George Neal

Bernard was a CA Council member for 49 years, one of the longest ever periods of service. He was made a VP in 1994 and President in 2004, standing down in 2009. Chairman of Council 1972 to 1974.

Some playing record details (wins)

Open Championship (2) 1972 and 1973
Mens Championship (1) 1967
Hurlingham Cup (2) 1971, 1972
Roehampton Ranelagh Gold Cup (3) 1966-68
Veterans Championship 1995
MacRobertson Shield (*The AC World Teams Championship*) - Appearances for GB (3) 1969, 1974, 1979. Shield Wins (2) 1969 and 1974. He won 27 of his 36 Mac matches. Played in the President's Cup 11 times.

Chris Williams, CA Archivist





For Association Croquet players, playing in the 'Mac' has always been seen as one of the pinnacles of a playing career. The MacRobertson Shield was instituted in 1925 for competition between Australia and England and now includes New Zealand (since 1930) and the United States of America (since 1993).

Representing your country at your chosen sport as part of the national team is an honour and an experience which transcends achievement in individual competition. Given the rapid growth in popularity of Golf Croquet as an equally serious competitive code over the last 20 years, it is little wonder that appetite for a GC equivalent of the Mac has also grown.

The first GC World Team Championship was held in 2012. Given the large number of countries that wished to take part, it was necessary to institute two tiers.

Tier 1 was held at the Country Club of Johannesburg in South Africa in November 2012 and Tier 2 in Cairo in December 2012.

In the top Tier, despite a superb performance from the New Zealand team, Egypt confirmed its position as the world's top GC nation to become the first holders of the Openshaw Shield, the trophy generously presented by David Openshaw, a previous WCF President.

A month later, Wales became the Tier 2



The 2nd WCF Golf Croquet

Tournament preview by Stephen Mulliner

champions and so gained promotion to Tier 1 for the next staging of the Championship in 2016.

We are now just over a month away from that second GC World Team Championship.

Tier 1

Tier 1 will be held at **Surbiton CC** from Sunday, 15 May to Saturday, 21 May. The top four teams are unchanged from 2012, namely **Egypt, England, New Zealand** and the **USA**.

The Egyptian team looks possibly even stronger than in 2012 with two of its best young players, Hamy Erian and Mohamed Kareem, joining the hard-hitting and vastly experienced Nasr brothers.

New Zealand are strong second favourites, with Paddy Chapman, Chris and Jenny Clarke and Duncan Dixon all in their squad.

The USA was generally agreed to have punched above its expected weight in 2012 and has Ben Rothman and Sherif Abdelwahab from that event as well as Danny Huneycutt, Rich Lamm, David Bent and Ahab Dincer.

England will be without two of its strongest players, Harry Dodge and Robert Fulford, but will field four from Will Gee, Stephen Mulliner, Rachel Rowe, Tobi Savage and Lionel Tibble.

All the other four teams, representing **Ireland, South Africa, Sweden and Wales**, have some formidable players and can be expected to give the top four a very good run for their money.

Tier 2

Tier 2 will be shared between the **Bath CC and the Camerton & Peasedown CC** and will run from Sunday, 15 May to Friday, 20 May. Both clubs are to be warmly congratulated on their enterprise in agreeing to host Tier 2 as their international hosting debut.

Australia, sadly relegated from Tier 1 in 2012, and **Spain** look to be the strongest teams in Tier 2. Spain have named no fewer than four Alvarez-Sala brothers in their squad, which outdoes even what Australia might be able to do in the 2017 Mac when three Fletcher brothers could be selected.

After them, the **Germany** and **Latvia** teams seem well-balanced while **Belgium** will field Pierre Beaudry who, together with Australia's Chris McWhirter, is one of the top two players in this tier.

The teams from the **Czech-Moravian Republic, Scotland** and **Switzerland** all contain experienced players and it will be

fascinating to see who makes it to the semi-finals.

Tier 3

The major development since 2012 is the demand for yet a third tier in the GC WTC.

Georgia (who only joined the WCF in December 2015), **Norway, Portugal and Russia** have all applied to send teams to contest Tier 3 at the **Guildford & Godalming CC** from Wednesday, 18 May to Friday, 20 May.

*'Your chance
World's best*

15 ~ 21

Tier 1 - Surbiton

**Tier 2 - Bath CC
Camerton
(15 ~ 20)**

**Tier 3 - Guildford
(18 ~ 20)**

Follow all the results on

Norway are the firm favourites for this tier but the other teams should benefit greatly from the opportunity to see how the game is played by players such as Norway's Roar Michalsen and in Tier 1 which is being held less than 30 miles away.

The 2016 GC WTC should provide a superb exhibition of Golf Croquet. It is hoped that as many of the Tier 2 and Tier 3 teams as possible will be able to join the Tier 1 teams at Surbiton on the Friday night to celebrate the World Championship before heading home.

**Stephen Mulliner, Secretary-General,
World Croquet Federation**

~

Further information can be found on the WCF's dedicated website: www.gcwtc2016.org.uk ~ and you can keep up to date with results on www.croquetcores.com.

Corner photos, clockwise from top left: Ahmed Nasr (Egypt), Ben Rothman (USA), Stephen Mulliner (England) and Judith Hanekom (South Africa). Smaller images: Tobi Savage, Rachel Rowe, Lionel Tibble and Will Gee (all England)
By Nick Cheyne and Chris Roberts

World Team Championship

The England Team Selection by Martin French

The England Team

The CA's GC Selectors have picked a squad of five players for the top-tier of the GC World Team Championship (for the Openshaw Shield).

The Chairman of the Selectors Martin French takes a look at the players who will be doing battle. in alphabetical order of surname, they are:

to watch the
GC players'

1 May
biton CC

C and
& Peasedown CC
20 May)

& Godalming CC
20 May)

www.croquetscores.com



Will Gee

Will, 25, started playing Croquet in 2004 at Nottingham. He has won the Apps Memorial Bowl (2005) for being England's most improved male AC player and the Spiers Trophy (2011) for being the most improved GC player. Will has won the English National Singles Championship (Ascot Cup) twice and played in the inaugural GC World Team Championship.

Will, is currently studying at Cambridge for a PhD in Sleep Research. He also enjoys chess, travelling and squash.

Stephen Mulliner (Captain)

Stephen, 62, took up tournament croquet at Cambridge in 1976. Hugely experienced, he has twice got to the final of the AC World Championship, been the British AC Open Champion three times, AC Open Doubles champion nine times, AC President's Cup winner five times, and won many championships in Australia, New Zealand and United States. He has played in the MacRobertson Shield (Tier 1 of the AC World Team Championship) seven times.

Stephen is as successful at GC, reaching the semis of the World Championship three times, being British GC Open Champion eight times, English National Singles Champion (Ascot Cup) twice, European Champion four times, and captained England in the inaugural GC World Team Championship in 2012. He is a Vice-President of the CA, President of the European Croquet Federation and Secretary-General of the World Croquet Federation. Stephen lives in Haslemere and is a management consultant, local councillor, keen golfer and all-round sportsman.

Rachel Rowe

Rachel, 26, is the former Women's GC World Champion, a title she won in New Zealand in 2011. She also won the 2014 European GC Championship, the 2011 National GC Doubles Championship with Will Gee and the Steel Bowl for the most improved female AC player in 2008.

Rachel has a Maths degree from Warwick and has been working for Experian as a Data Analyst in Nottingham since graduating in 2010; Rachel enjoys travelling to new places.

Tobi Savage

Tobi, 27, began competing competitively in 2010, playing both GC and AC. He is a

Photos of World no.1 Reg Bamford and NZ star Paddy Chapman are on page 15.



member of Canterbury Croquet Club, plays AC successfully but his main passion is GC.

Tobi has won numerous GC events including the Roehampton GC Open and the Dulwich Presidents Invitational 2016. He is Kent Inter-counties Team Captain, has won the GC Kent Cup three times and the GC All England Handicap twice. He has played in the European GC Championship and twice in the GC World Championships.

He cemented his recent improvement in form by winning the English national Singles Championship (Ascot Cup) in 2015.

Lionel Tibble

Lionel, 62, is a self-employed energy consultant and has been playing AC since 1991 and more recently started playing GC. He is a three time winner of the Du Pre Cup (the plate event of the AC Men's Championship) and was runner-up in the European GC Championship in 2015. Lionel is an active Scottish Country dancer and plays the bagpipes in a local pipes and drum marching band though having no Scottish blood at all!

~

We had hoped to include another young star, but his university exam timetable unfortunately prevented Harry Dodge from joining the squad.

We wish the England team success!





The European Masters

John Swabey introduces the 2016 Series



Attention all Croquet players with a love of travelling.

The 2016 European Croquet Masters Series could be just the thing for you.

CA member John Swabey, who lives in Germany, is the man behind this initiative which is now in its second season.

The European Croquet Masters Series groups together croquet tournaments throughout the continent, for the benefit of keen croquet-playing travellers and the development of the sport in the host countries. Players gain points for participation and high-placed finishes, which accumulate towards Individual European Masters titles for both AC and GC.

There is also a Country Masters title, and that competition runs alongside the individuals' series, with a country's highest placed finisher earning points for their homeland.

Travelling boosts your chances

Players are not selected by their country (except for the European Championships), and are not required to enter several Opens, but those who have eyes on an individual title will realise that entering more than one event will help that cause.

The more tournaments that one takes part in, the greater the chances of points accumulation, and there is the added incentive that simple participation in a

Country	Golf Croquet	Association Croquet
England	10-11 Sept - Sussex Open	23-25 Sept - S. of England
Ireland	10-11 Sept - Dublin	30 July - 6 Aug - Dublin
Latvia	03-04 Sept - Baltic Open	
Portugal	09-11 Sept - Algarve	
Switzerland	30 Jul - 1 Aug - Geneva	6-7 August - Geneva
European Championships	26-29 May - Budleigh Salterton	to be decided
<i>More events are being added all the time</i>		

tournament outside one's own country nets a minimum of one point.

The 2015 European Masters

The winners in last year's European Masters series both played in more Masters events than most of their rivals.

Ian Sexton, Switzerland, won the GC Individual Master title by playing in three events outside his country and reaching the semi-finals twice on his travels. Only one other player played in three GC events outside their home country last year, and that was Bernard Thys of Belgium, who finished twelfth overall in the GC standings.

It was a similar tale in the AC Individual Masters, where Scotland's Sam Murray won the title by playing in two events outside his own country and reaching at least the semi-finals in one of those. Nobody else played in more than one AC event outside their home country.

England has in-depth strength

England was the winner of the 2015 Country Masters title. Overall they scored 100 points more than the 58 registered by their nearest rival, Switzerland.

In every event where multiple English

players took part, the highest placed of them got to the semi-finals or better.

Countries taking part in 2016

At the time of writing in mid-March, there are nine countries known to be participating in the 2016 Croquet Masters. There

are more tournaments being added at this time, but so far the dates of eight Opens are known, in addition to the two European Championships. #Austria, Belgium, Czech-Moravia and Italy are also participating countries, without having nominated a tournament (lawn problems in some cases). We have not yet had confirmation from Germany, Spain, Sweden, Russia, Wales.

Who pays for it all? - Each participating country runs its own Open(s) where possible, but has agreed in any case to pay 10 euros for their best-placed player in each nominated Masters event. If your country is not participating, or you are not in contact with your national croquet body, you can still earn individual points by paying 10 euros extra at each European Masters event you enter.

Questions? - to see the FAQ, the 2016 Rules, who is winning, and contact details of all the organising bodies: visit the website shown below.

Where are the results available? - visit the new site for the European Croquet Federation, <http://eurocroquet.eu>, and click on the tab for European Masters.

A birthday, a victory and someone else's wedding

Here's a nice story about, not one, but three nice people.

It starts with East Dorset's Prince of Entertainment, Tom 'Top Turn' Weston, sending me this press cutting from a Spanish newspaper.

Tom explained that in February, he'd entered a GC tournament in Cadiz, and said "The photo shows me and the other finalist just before we played the final, which, by the way I won and I have a certificate and a little trophy to prove it. Not only that, but it was on my birthday!"

Double congratulations then Tom, but what does the newspaper story actually say, I wondered.

Enter the two other nice people.



Readers will remember from the letters page in the last issue (*Gazette 360*) that your Editor's oldest pal Geoffrey Odds had sent in a photo of a 'Croquet Club' shop sign he'd found in Columbia while on holiday.

What I didn't reveal then, was that he was actually there to get married (*'mucho*

congratulentos') and I am now indebted to the new Mrs Sofia Odds for kindly supplying this translation for Tom and the *Gazette*, all the way from Bogota!

CROQUET - The seventh edition of La Fuentesanta Trophy Club was played last weekend at Costa Ballena Ocean Golf Club.

Tom Weston got the victory ahead of the Gaditano (*from Cadiz*) Ignacio Gutierrez-Trueba by a score of 10-8, the victory was obtained after the Briton won six consecutive hoops and got back from 4-8.

The third place went to the Jerezano (*from Jerez*) Jose Enrique Otte and the consolation prize to the veteran Mercedes O'Neale.

It's not what you know, it's who you know! - Ed.



AC World Championship

Previewed by Samir Patel

This event is about to start - follow it on Croquet Scores!



The AC World Championship returns to the National Croquet Center (NCC), in West Palm Beach, Florida and runs between **16 - 24 April 2016**.

Florida and the NCC last hosted the World Championship in 2009, when Reg Bamford (South Africa) won the title. He'll be one of the favourites to repeat his success as he seeks his fifth world title. Robert Fletcher (Australia), the current World Champion, will start as the favourite for many – the event comes at the end of his playing season, and he has a 98% win rate so far in 2016. Paddy Chapman (New Zealand) beat Bamford in the semi-final in 2012, only to lose to Fletcher in the final. He'll be looking to go one better. David Maugham (England) is yet to play in 2016, but ended 2015 in great form (and his highest year-end grade since 1994) and will start the event as third seed.

Other English players in the top 10 seeds, who will all fancy their chances, include Stephen Mulliner, Samir Patel, Jeff Dawson and James Hopgood. And no-one should ever discount the permanently under-ranked James Death. If you're looking for betting odds, Mark Avery could be worth a punt. He's going to have to first get into the event via the qualifier, but will be the thirteenth seed if he does so.

England will be represented by no fewer

than 21 players and there are eleven others who are travelling from the UK to represent other nations; specifically: Wales (4), Scotland (3), Jersey (1), New Zealand (1), South Africa (1) and Spain (1).

The format for the tournament is as follows:

There are 80 players in total, representing 15 countries, who will start in eight seeded blocks, each of ten players. These games will be played from Saturday 16 to Monday 18 April.

The top four from each block qualify for the knockout. If there are any ties, these are resolved on Tuesday 19 April.

The knockout therefore has 32 players, and will be played as one round per day from Wednesday 20 to the final on Sunday 24 April.

The knockout will start as 'best of three', but will increase to 'best of five' by the quarter-finals.

Readers can follow all the scores as the happen on the Croquet Scores website – <https://croquetscores.com/2016/ac/wcf-world-championship>.

There will also be 'ball by ball' commentaries of some early games and all of the later matches as the event reaches its climax. A full list of all competing players

can be found on the tournament website – <http://2016wcfworldchampionship.com/players.html>

Photos: (top) Defending World Champion Robert Fletcher, (then clockwise from top left) Paddy Chapman, Reg Bamford, David Maugham, James Hopgood, Jeff Dawson and James Death (*by Samir Patel and Chris Roberts*).

The players travelling from the UK, are:

ENGLAND: Keith Aiton, Christian Carter, Gavin Carter, Jeff Dawson, James Death, Marcus Evans, Harry Fisher, Alain Giraud, Gabrielle Higgins, James Hopgood, Debbie Lines, Ian Lines, David Maugham, Annabel McDiarmid, Stephen Mulliner, David Openshaw, Mark Ormerod, Samir Patel, Richard M Smith, Pete Trimmer (*actually he lives in USA*), Robert Wilkinson

WALES: Ian Burrige, Tudor Jenkins, David Walters, Chris Williams

SCOTLAND: Campbell Morrison, Sam Murray, Duncan Reeve

JERSEY: Richard Griffiths

NEW ZEALAND: Paddy Chapman

SOUTH AFRICA: Reg Bamford

SPAIN: Jose Riva



Coaching planning

Following a review, the Coaching Committee has established a vision of how it sees coaching and is now working to understand how the reality differs, how that varies around the country, and what we need to do to change things for the better.

Initial efforts are going into getting coaches and players connected better, finding and spreading good practices for getting people started in the game, expanding the Academies idea northwards, writing a national coaching course programme, and providing coaches with quality support materials (notes).

If you have an interest in helping, no matter how little time you have available, we'd really like to hear from you - please contact Dave Kibble in the first instance. Here's how we think things should be:

- Players are aware that coaching is available at all levels to help them fulfil their potential - the only limits being how far they'd like to go and their ability.
- Players (from new club members to established tournament players) know how to access the coaching they need and see a clear map of what they can expect from their organisation (Club/Federation/CA) in support of their progress.
- The CA supports our coaches by maintaining a comprehensive set of coaching assets that give, as a minimum, a clear nationally-agreed and maintained syllabus for every level and aspect of coaching our sport.
- Active coaches feel well supported and plugged into the organisation; they have clear guidance on current best practices (as agreed by them and their peers) and access to high-quality coaching support material.
- Active coaches feel driven to deliver appropriate coaching to willing students in their area, and are fully informed of the needs and wants of nearby players.
- Coaches work together to bring this about and strive to establish and maintain best practices and continually improve our coaching assets and quality.

Dave Kibble,
Chairman of the Coaching Committee

Confidence is the key for successful performance by Dr Stuart Cotterill

Confidence is crucial for successful performance in all sports, and definitely in croquet.

One of the issues though, regarding confidence, is that many people are confident when they are performing well or in form, but are far less confident when they are not playing well. This is true for both Association and Golf croquet.

This lack of confidence is an issue because by being less confident you are less likely to play well. This can serve to further reduce confidence, which has a corresponding negative impact upon your game and performance.

So, the question really is how can you remain confident even when you are not playing well?

'Form' is often seen as the 'holy grail' in sport.

It is a commonly accepted belief that if you are in form, you are far more likely to be successful. But what does this term 'form' actually mean?

For many croquet players they play best when they are in form. But the question remains, what do you do when form deserts you?

Most players get their confidence from how they are playing. If you are winning and succeeding in making difficult shots you feel far more positive about your game. Also, crucially, you believe that you will continue to make those difficult shots. As a result, you are seen to be confident. Thus you have a belief that you will be successful the next time you play, which in return increases the chance that you will be.

The problem though with form is the impact that a lack of form can have on your levels of confidence (and as a result the way that you play). This is because when you are confident your movements are smoother; there is less tension (both muscular and psychologically); you make better decisions more of the time; and your skill execution is better.

These are all things that will impact upon how well you play. When you lack confidence the opposite happens. You get tense, start questioning yourself, your



movements become overly jerky and your decision-making and timing can become worse.

Most players will get a lot of their confidence (or lack of it) from their form (how they are playing). But it is important to know that your form is not the only source of confidence (although it is the one we pay most attention to).

Current performance will influence your confidence, but there are other sources as well. Some players get their confidence from how it 'feels'. That is how it feels when swinging a mallet or hitting balls. Again this is fine, but what do you do when it doesn't feel good? You still have to go out and perform.

There are other things you can do that will give you the confidence that you can control. Some successful players get their confidence from their preparation. Knowing they have done enough or have done their usual preparation can give you the confidence that you are ready.

Positive feedback from important people whose opinions you trust can also help. So the coach or captain, whose opinion you respect, telling you that you have done a good job will also give you confidence. Maybe not as much as when you are in form, but it helps

Having a number of different places from which you get your confidence will make sure that you only suffer slight changes in your confidence, which will result in you being more confident more of the time – something we refer to as 'robust confidence'. Being robustly confident will then result in better performances on a more consistent basis. Which has got to be a good thing for your game.

~

Dr Stewart Cotterill is a HCPC registered sport & exercise psychologist practitioner, chartered psychologist, and Reader in Sport and Performance Psychology at the University of Winchester

He is currently delivering a range of croquet-focused sport and performance psychology workshops for the South West Croquet Academy.

Rather fittingly for such a one-off occasion, 29 February 2016 saw the official launch of the South West Croquet Academy (SWCA).

The event was magnificently supported by the Budleigh Salterton membership with over 60 turning out to welcome both senior members of the Croquet Association and Councillors from both Budleigh and East Devon councils.

Chairman of SWCA, Rob Weeks, expressed his thanks to all those who made the effort to be there.

"Having asked Dave Kibble and Brian Shorney from the CA to take part in the launch ceremony, I was really grateful - and more than a bit relieved - when it proved to be such a memorable occasion" he said.

"As many of you know, a huge amount of work has gone into the setting-up of the SWCA and it was very heartening to receive such enthusiastic support from our members."

In his speech, Rob pointed to the fact that our club had recruited 50 new members last year and this upsurge in membership

Grand Opening for SWCA



The official opening of the South West Croquet Academy, at Budleigh Salterton CC on 29 February 2016.
From left: Rob Weeks (Chairman of the SWCA), Councillor Courtney Richards (Mayor of Budleigh Salterton), Dave Kibble, (Chairman of the CA Coaching Committee) and Brian Shorney (Vice-Chairman of the CA).

was being mirrored - though not on the same scale, of course - by clubs across the country. Bookings for the SWCA's courses were (at the time of writing) pouring in with more than half of the places already taken - even before the croquet season had officially started.

SWCA's slogan "Learn from the Best" certainly seems to have struck a chord.

Rob also mentioned the potential benefits of the SWCA to the local economy and this theme was taken up by Budleigh's Mayor, Courtney Richards.

"Our beautiful town already has many attractions and the SWCA will be a significant addition to that list" he said. "We look forward to welcoming the many hundreds

of visitors who will be taking part in the croquet courses."

All in all, many problems have been faced and surmounted. An ambitious project, of great potential benefit to all, is up and running. A challenging and significant hoop has been run.

Steve Andrews, South West Croquet Academy (SWCA)



The Croquet Academy add extra courses at Southwick

The Croquet Academy at Southwick have added the following additional courses to their impressive programme detailed in the last issue (*Gazette* 359).

- 3-4 May: Improve Your AC (for handicaps 6-12)
- 3-4 May: Improve Your GC (for handicaps 4-10)
- 5-6 May: Coaches' Training
- 5-6 May: GC Rules and Referees' Qualification Course
- 12 May: Simple guide to Tournament Management with John Low

For the above Extra Courses, those interested should contact The Croquet Academy Secretary Janet Hoptroff on 01903 859417 or courses@thecroquetacademy.com.

For details and applications for of all the previously advertised courses at The Academy, see their website: www.thecroquetacademy.com

Photographs above from SWCA courses, (from left): (1) Cliff Jones giving of his vast experience as leader of an AC Laws Course. (2) Dr Stuart Cotterill, takes his 'Psychology of Winning' Course out on to the court. (3) Dr Cotterill with a presentation in the classroom at Budleigh.

The Academy courses at Southwick have also been well attended, (far left): (4) Daphne Gaitley leads a 'Coaches Training' course.

Photos by Chris Donovan and Ray Hall.

AC Super -

- Advanced

David Maugham concludes his in depth look at some of the more common tactics and scenarios.

Part two of two.

Taking the first break to 3-b instead of 4-b

There are typically two advantages to stopping at 3-b. It reduces your opponents chances of peeling you out, and if their response to your contact leave is simply to extract your forward ball to the middle of the lawn (and leave your hoop 1 ball in II), then you can shoot with it and still feel like you can make progress by making 3-b and gaining time to dig out the opponent's balls for a stronger leave, rather having to immediately make a leave if you start the turn on 4-b.

The disadvantages are that it's more difficult for you to finish if you get in with the hoop 1 ball, and the normal contact leave is more difficult to make immediately after 2-b than it is after 3-b

Options after oppo has gone to 4-b first

If your opponent has gone round first you may well face the normal contact leave with both your balls near (or even in) IV and their balls are in II and III.

Getting a break out from here will usually require approaching 1 with a big roll or a long take-off, and if you try to get all the balls out for this break and don't get in front of 1, your opponent will generally have a shot with his hoop 1 ball that wins the game if hit but doesn't give away too much more than shooting with his partner.

In order to reduce the likelihood that he wants to shoot with his hoop 1 ball, it is normal to leave it in II.

To further encourage him to play with his 4-b ball, you can put it at hoop 1 (or at least in the middle of the lawn). It's normal to croquet the oppo ball to hoop 1 rolling to partner.

If you hit partner you have two choices.



It is playable to try and take off to 1 to get a break going, but even if you get it, there's a fair bit of work to be done (you will probably be approaching 2 from II off the oppo's hoop 1 ball).

Alternatively, simply lay a rush to hoop 1. At the very least, this should be a single ball for the opponent, but could be wired by either hoop 1 or hoop 4.

If the opponent has placed his ball actually in II, and you can get your balls wired from the ball at 1, it is worth giving yourself a dolly rush pointed at the ball in II, and getting that cannon makes picking up your break significantly easier.

If your balls are open, then he may take the shot from 1 at you (which is much more attractive if he has only gone to 3-b), but if he is for 4-b or you are wired then he may well go back to III.

You then have to pick up your break from a rush to 1 from the East boundary and a ball in II and a ball in III.

The 'equalising' break

Once you have picked up your break after the contact with your opponent on 4-b (or 3-b) you have to decide what to do with it.

Simply replying with a ball to 4-b and the same contact leave isn't very attractive as you give the balls back to the opponent and unless you take an aggressive shot, he will have the first chance of finishing (albeit probably with balls in corners), and if you miss your aggressive shot he will probably have an easy finish. However the weaker your opponent the more attractive this option becomes.

The most obvious alternative is the TPO.

If he's taken a shot after your leave, this is probably relatively easy to dig out.

If he's been defensive, then you are probably going to be focussed on picking up the break, and will have to do the TPO delayed if this is your chosen tactic but clearly this carries significant risk.

The TPO and 3-ball ending have been extensively covered elsewhere, but it's worth pointing out that the extra lift hoop at 4 does add a bit of extra complexity to the 3-ball game.

An alternative to the TPO, is to peel the opponent's (POP) hoop 1 ball, ideally to hoop 3 in order to make their finishing turn more difficult.

Typically the leave you want after doing two POPs is to have the opponent's hoop 3 ball on the boundary by 3 (7-10 yards south of the corner), their 4-b (or 3-b) ball in IV, your hoop 1 ball in II and your 4-b ball in I.

Working backwards from this, you want to make 3-b off their forward ball, and 2-b off your partner.

If everything works perfectly, you will make 2-b off partner, then rush it back to II, take off to the peelee (which will be N of hoop 2 having just been peeled) and rush off the East boundary level with hoop 3, then take-off to 3-b, make it and rush the pioneer back into IV and simply take off towards and play off into I.

Of course, things occasionally don't go to plan, so be prepared to take-off back round the balls to adjust them (notably the one near 3) to better positions.

If you only jaws the second peel after 1-b, then rush to it and peel it after 2-b. Leave partner in the lawn a few yards because you will have to take-off to it from near IV. Unfortunately you will be taking off to 3-b from somewhere behind 2, and will have to take-off back again once you've rushed the 3-b pioneer into IV.

Once you've done this, rush partner to near II, and make the same leave as before.

~

Photo (above): David Maugham at the 2015 Championship of Surrey (by Samir Patel).



Worlds prep for GB Squad at Ealing

Thirteen members of the GB squad met up for a coaching weekend in mid-March, in advance of the World Championships taking place in Florida in April. The lawns at Ealing had been in use over the winter and provided a good playing surface which was much faster than would usually be expected for the time of year, particularly given the wet weather. A variety of seminars were given by Keith Aiton, Ian Burrige, David Maugham, Stephen Mulliner and Samir Patel and there was also an opportunity to practice with the CA's set of US Superhoops, which will be in use in Florida.

Ian Burrige, International Performance Director

Photos: Samir Patel (left) and Keith Aiton right (by Chris Roberts and Ian Burrige)



Coaching Awards

In 2012 Ian identified the lack of activity aimed at developing the next generation of international players, and made a proposal to the CA. The proposal was accepted, and Ian was subsequently appointed International Performance Director, an honorary role. Since then, he has used his network to identify squad members, facilitated the squad sessions, and harnessed a range of experts from the croquet community to pitch in and share their insights into top-level play. Ian's appointment was an inspired action.

Addressing the next tier in 2014/15, Ian set up coaching pods around the country, which concentrated upon improving advanced level AC play. He produced the material and supported and encouraged the coaches, as well as running the Robin Hood pod himself. Pod Coordinators have been impressed with the quality and volume of the material Ian provided, and with the set-up that has triggered a lot of quality coaching that otherwise would not have happened. When the Northern pod faltered, Ian went to York to provide a couple of sessions in a day, which was acclaimed as "truly inspirational stuff and a real benefit to those who attended". Ian constantly seeks and acts on feedback on the programme, engaging the participants in a continuous improvement process – his energy, enthusiasm and rigour are an example to all.

Coach of the Year Ian Burridge



In the run-up to the Women's World AC Championship he ran several intensive weekend coaching sessions aimed not only at encouraging our female players to consider putting their names down for selection, but also to give them the confidence to participate in more advanced tournaments. The results of these sessions were clear to see last season, with three of the four trophies at the Women's World Championship being won by competitors who had attended his coaching sessions. Also, the number of women entering advanced tournaments up and down the country showed an increase, not to mention a new-found camaraderie amongst women

players.

Ian has also found time to write coaching articles for the Gazette, which are well thought-out, clear, and concise. It is obvious that Ian not only knows his subject very thoroughly indeed, but that he also possesses the ability to transmit his croquet knowledge extremely well to others – the sure mark of a quality teacher.

Good coaches are found at all levels of the game, and are important in introducing and encouraging people to take up our sport. They are also important at every stage of a player's development, and Ian has demonstrated a particular skill in developing advanced level players. To all those he has helped he remains available for individual support as they grow.

Ian Burridge has exhibited an infectious enthusiasm for competitive croquet, and instilled a desire to improve into all those he has coached. In this year, he has transformed upper-level AC coaching in England. Most players will not make it to the very top, but the important thing is that, thanks to Ian, there is now a clear and sustainable 'pathway to the top' that is open to every aspiring player, and that encourages many to strive for a higher standard of play.

Dave Kibble,

Chairman of the Coaching Committee

Photo: Ian Burridge with the Women's Coaching Group (by Frances Colman)

Lifetime Coaching Award ~ Keith Aiton



Having proactively offered coaching to players aspiring to top-level Association Croquet for many years, Keith (left and below left) has demonstrated that he is good at identifying and resolving problems, both mental and physical, as opposed to just reciting text book material. He has been an active Grade 3 AC Coach since the qualification was introduced.

He is a highly competent coach, with many years' experience of playing and coaching at an international level.

In the 1980s Keith coached beginners at Nottingham and Southwell, wrote the original Grade 3 course, and led the GB

Under-21 squad, bringing on promising young players such as Robert Fulford, Chris Clarke and David Maugham.

Keith was GB coach to the winning 1990, 1993 and 1996 MacRobertson Shield teams.

As the century turned, Keith focussed upon coaching and mentoring individuals aspiring to reach the top level, including the application of his knowledge as an NLP practitioner to sports psychology on the croquet field.

He wrote a manual for aspiring A-class players in 2003.

It is particularly appropriate to make the award this year because he coached both of the finalists for the Women's World Championship who acknowledged Keith's very significant part in their achievement, as have other women who enjoyed great success in the event.

Dave Kibble, Chairman, Coaching Cttee.

New Coaches

Congratulations to the following who have all been awarded coaching qualifications:

Don Beck (right)
(Surbiton):

Club, GC, AC Grade 1 & 2

Tony Elliott (Enfield):
Club Coach, GC Coach

Bob Hart (Bath):
Club Coach, GC Coach

Dennis Holman (Chester):
Club Coach

Helena Jansson (Phyllis Court):
GC Coach

David Vincent (Blewbury):
GC Coach

Robin Wootton (Sussex County):
Club Coach



Dave Kibble



Southern Cape AC & GC Championships

enjoyable February week in the South African sun.

The multi-event tournament was dominated as usual by holidaying Brits, and well managed by host Judith Hanekom, the reigning Women's GC World Champion, who did at least see the 3+ Singles won by local Peter Dreyer, from wife Silvia in second place.

All the other events were handicaps:

Tibble won a very entertaining singles final against the whirlwind that is Nailsea's Jim Field; Dreyer beat Tony Whateley (Edgbaston) in the plate; and Liz Taylor-Webb beat Bowdon club-mate Carole Steinberg in the Vets by virtue of her single point victory in the head to head block game.

Rupert Webb was delighted to win the restricted handicap singles doubles, and the Wakehams, Chris and Christine, from Johannesburg and Worcester here in the UK won the handicap doubles.

Steinberg was similarly pleased, and no little surprised, to win the prize for most wins overall without an event victory.

The AC was followed a week later by the GC, which by contrast was a largely local players' affair.

Of the Brits, only Tibble stayed on and started as favourite for the Open Singles, of this eight-day multi-event tournament.

Clever management intertwined all the events, as Tibble made light work of most of his games, conceding just eight hoops in five games against opponents with handicaps ranging from 2 to 6.

If fact he went on to make the knockout stages in all three of his other events, only failing to reach the final in the open level doubles with local Caroline Burr (6), but they won the handicap doubles instead.

In the Open Singles, the biggest shock was Hanekom losing in the quarter-finals, which allowed fellow South African International William Louw an easier passage to the final to meet Tibble. With an eye to the upcoming GC World Team Championship, the pair decided on a best-of-five final. Tibble took the first game 7-3 but then Louw, perhaps fresher having only entered the one event, gradually turned the match to win the next three 5-7, 6-7, 4-7.

There was an upset at the Southern Cape AC Championship at Somerset West CC, near Cape Town, when neither of the top two seeds reached the final of the Open Singles, **reports Chris Roberts.**

Surbiton's George Noble was a popular winner of the final, despite Mike Town (Woking)'s heroic performance in losing, and his attempt to woo local support by playing in a host club shirt. The pair had beaten fancied David Openshaw (Roehampton) and Lionel Tibble (Northampton) respectively in their blocks to set up the final showdown, which Noble squeaked +4 and closed out a most

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Lawn Care by Duncan Hector

Why is the grass yellow?

There can be several causes, but in most cases it is simply a lack of Nitrates. In the growing season the quickest cure is to spray liquid biofeed which is absorbed into the plant within an hour. Out of the growing season it is unwise to apply much Nitrogen so I would spray Soluble Iron which controls moss and hardens grass at the same time.

What are Zeolites?

These are crystals which can absorb up to 55% of their weight in water and slowly release it under plant demand. This could be useful for non-irrigated croquet lawns. The problem is that the zeolites need to be in the root zone, not on the surface. So at the construction stage zeolites could be incorporated into the profile, but it would be expensive.

Which weed killer do you recommend?

What you need is a post-emergence, translocatable systemic weed killer. In English – a product that kills weeds that have already germinated, will move through the vascular system of the plant to the roots, but will not kill grass. The one that I supply is Barclay Holster XL which is very effective, especially with speedwell. The best retail product that I have used is Verdone Concentrate. George Collin at Wrest Park has a cheaper alternative – a pen knife!

Why doesn't Carbendazim work?

This product deters worms, but if diluted in hard water it will lose its effectiveness. In very hard water (pH 9) the half-life is as short as 12 minutes. This means that only half the product put into the sprayer will be active after that very short time. Diluting with rain water solves the problem, if not, use a water conditioner. This will increase the half-life to 30 hours which is long enough to apply the spray without degradation.

Avery and Storm Katie win at Surbiton

Mark Avery won the Surbiton Easter Handicap, with seven wins from eight games, **reports Samir Patel**. The field for the event had a pre-World Championship warm-up feel to it, with no fewer than six players with handicaps -1.5 or better. This, together with unseasonably good weather for March, allowed several players to race through more games than usual. Everyone lost at least one, leaving a group on a single loss. Mark Avery, by virtue of winning more games (7 from 8) beat Stephen Harbron and Andre Machell (6 from 7).



Katie stormed ahead of a good field on day two of this popular tournament, **reports Kevin Carter**.

Yes, it was Storm Katie which dumped a few hundred tonnes of rain on the already sodden Surbiton lawns overnight. As if to laugh at us all for being so silly as to schedule a croquet tournament in March she also delivered us winds gusting up to 50mph.

We did get some play in on Sunday, despite being reduced to four playable lawns after several heavy showers. Mark Avery and James Death were joint leaders on 4/4, with Malcolm Bigg on 3/3 and a host of players on one loss, including Paddy Chapman, James Hopgood, Samir Patel and



Marcus Evans.

Included in those names are six who will travel to another tournament in Florida next month. Good luck to them all, and we are sorry we could not provide you with more practice. - Blame Katie.

Photos: Mark Avery had a good weekend (by Chris Roberts) and 'Three Ducks Leave' the abandoned courts (by Sam Murray).

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Swindon gear-up for National Croquet Day

Swindon CC's super relationship with their local community has seen their membership double last year, yet they hope to grow it still further; they have big plans for National Croquet Day (NCD), as Honorary Secretary John Airey explains:

I don't know whether the National Croquet Day (NCD) had been announced before the South West 2015 AGM, when Brian Wilson asked everyone at the meeting what they were doing for the occasion, but Swindon CC already had a plan for the club's 30th Anniversary, thanks to our treasurer Neil Morrison, and that would blend nicely with NCD for a weekend of celebration.

Swindon CCC is very community minded, with many groups visiting and being introduced to croquet. Neil proposed that we had a get-together with all the groups we have shared the sport with over the years to celebrate.

The Mayor's office was contacted and he has agreed to open the weekend's first session when we shall hold a croquet taster and then lunch. Justin Tomlinson, Swindon North MP and Minister for Disabilities, has agreed to visit the club as well. Justin came along three years ago when we opened

our new clubroom and he came back the following day with his family and spent the day playing croquet with us.

Our 30th Anniversary and NCD is a weekend of celebration to welcome new members and friends from the visiting community groups and to thank longer serving members for the time they have donated in organising and coaching the groups. **This resulted last year in our membership doubling from 30 to 60.**

Four sessions have been organised for the weekend of GC on six half-lawns with a light lunch for morning visitors and high tea for the afternoon group at £5 per head.

An A5 flyer to be handed out to community groups is being designed for circulation to all the other groups. We already have a dozen signed on for the weekend, so our social secretary Elizabeth Bennet will lead the team of ladies covering the catering, will be which doubtless be nothing but outstanding as usual.

The membership increase was achieved through our members' efforts in donating their time to coach the visiting groups.

The two groups we have gained most members from are 'Extra Time' (a group of retirees), who are from a larger group within the Football In the Community (FIC) scheme, sponsored by a percentage of the Swindon Town FC receipts. FIC coach

mostly children but a small amount of the sponsorship is set aside for retirees. The sponsor's coach organised weekly activities, one of which was croquet with us. They enjoyed it so much that most of the group arranged to come along once a week, and that has now grown into memberships.

Credit for introducing the second group goes to Mary Booth, who organises the annual North Wiltshire Trefoil Guild session. She also helped organise events for the Swindon Parkinson's Group and was invited to bring them along for a croquet session.

We have had two spin-offs from these two groups joining the club. The Extra Time group challenged the club members to a charity match over two legs which raised £300 for Wiltshire Air Ambulance last year. And the same group went on to introduce the Parkinson's Group to indoor bowls under John Witts' lead (*see photo*).

This approach to increase membership requires significant time commitment from the members to coach community groups, and may not suit all clubs. There are always plenty of groups looking for social activities and besides our regular visitors, this season we have had inquiries from two classic car clubs and a Scout group.

The only down side from this increase in membership is that we will soon need another lawn!

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Penrith floods lead to the birth of a new club at Braithwaite

The north west has a brand new club which owes its birth to the winter floods. *There's no ill wind at Braithwaite!*

February's Gazette included a report from Keswick CC about the severe flood damage to their lawns at Fitz Park. The lawns at nearby Penrith and North Lakes CC are also presently closed, but with much less damage, *reports Howard Bowron.*

It has therefore been a lifeline to be able to enjoy winter croquet in Cumbria at Braithwaite Bowls and Croquet Club.

Keswick member Brian Jones, who lives within sight of the lawns, saw the potential of an underused and neglected bowls lawn at the Braithwaite Institute and Sports Ground, near Bassenthwaite. At the end of last season he suggested forming a croquet group and has since persuaded the institute to invest in a lawn improvement programme using materials sourced from **Duncan Hector Turf Care** (see page 20).

Although Braithwaite was itself very badly flooded in December, the standing water on the lawns caused no damage and drained very quickly. Apparently the turf is laid on a bed of clinker, which is probably the spoil from lead mining at Force Crag mine.

So croquet players in north Cumbria now have a refuge while damaged lawns are repaired, a new croquet venue, and arguably the best views available anywhere for out-players to enjoy.

Snooker re-match

The annual challenge snooker match between The Bears CC and Bristol CC was played on 5 March, and was a fiercely fought affair over ten frames, *reports Richard Danby.*

Once again Bristol fielded an A-Class team, with an aggregate croquet handicap of -6, dwarfing the Bear's +11.

And the croquet quality was duly transferred to the snooker table, when Ed Duckworth recorded the highest break with 18 and Bristol CC ran out the clear winners 7-3, to retain the Misspent Youth Trophy.

Bristol CC was represented by: Ed Duckworth, Martin Murray, Robert Wilkinson, Richard Smith and David Goacher and The Bears by: Matthew Jackson, Howard Spellman, Richard Way and host at home Richard Danby.

At the time of writing a return challenge was in the offing – this time at table tennis!

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