

The

Issue 363 September 2016

CROQUET

Gazette



From our files researched by Frances Colman

10 years ago - 2006



John Prescott - (from Chairman Ian Vincent's Column) – the story that John Prescott (the then Labour Deputy Prime Minister) had been playing croquet at Dorneywood, broke just after I wrote my previous column, while a good number of us were playing in the Inter-Countries at the end of May.

Many thanks to all of you who responded to requests for interviews from the media.

Although there were concerns about the tone of the coverage, we did get the opportunity to put positive points across . . . On balance, I'm pretty sure the publicity was helpful in increasing awareness of the game: sales of garden croquet equipment apparently boomed and hopefully the interest will eventually filter through to clubs.

Croquet ban in House of Commons –

A Commons motion praising croquet was banned from being tabled on June 22 by Bob Russell, Lib Dem MP for Colchester, after officials claimed it mocked John Prescott.

The Mitsubishi British Open (AC) – . . . Robert Fulford won his 7th title (beating Reg Bamford in the final) . . . Chris Clarke achieved the most peeling finishes in an Opens with 22 TPs, while Reg won the peeling trophy for his 7 sextuples in the tournament.

East Anglian Golf Croquet Open (by Chris Sheen) – A wet weekend didn't dampen spirits at the third Championships.

Players from Austria and Belgium made it an international event and the general standard of competition was the highest so far. . . Pierre Beaudry, who is comparatively new to the game, made his mentor Simon Carter proud in beating David Hopkins.

David, after a South African winter, has found his form again and so Pierre's win was no mean performance. . .

In the final Pierre put up a great show of resilience to take Robert Fulford all the way eventually losing 7-5, 7-4. . .

(Pierre) is a valuable addition to the golf croquet ranks.

50 years ago - 1966



Weekend croquet - The Cheltenham Club is to be congratulated on organising such a popular event (30 players were accepted from 38 applicants), and doubtless their other four weekends will be well supported. Edgar Jackson not only played and showed good form, but managed all the events with ease and tact. His method of scoring by plus and minus results was admirable. These weekend tournaments certainly supply a much needed outlet for the 'workers'. A number of young people can get tournament experience in a short time because their holidays are so limited . . .

The Tunbridge Wells Club was formally constituted and opened on Monday, May 2nd at Shernford Park, Frant. It was a most lovely day and the grounds were at their best. The two croquet lawns, with extensive views for miles, looked gay with their new equipment and an excellent pavilion erected under the trees nearby proved not only useful but an attractive addition. There were about 30 – 35 people present most of whom played some time in the afternoon – and 18 members were enrolled, There was a good attendance of the press and the Croquet Association were represented but the Chairman, the Hon. Treasurer and the Secretary.

3 Hour Limit – Dear Sir, with regard to Derek Caporn's letter. . . I feel I must rebut his five points in favour of a time limit.

1. A tournament is run for the benefit of the players and not, that of the Manager.

2. Players should be interested enough to be watching matches until it is their turn to play instead of arriving at a fixed time to play.

3. Far from "encouraging attacking play" it fosters stonewalling, for as soon as some players get ahead of their adversaries, they play safe.

4. To say "it would benefit the long-bisquer" is a monstrous reason. A handicap is based on a player's ability to score 26 points: not just to get a point or two ahead of his adversary.

Yours faithfully, W.B.C. Paynter

100 years ago - 1916



Military Cross has been awarded by His Majesty the King to Lieut. Eric W Sheppard, of the Royal West Kent Regiment, now acting Captain with the Lancashire Fusiliers, for gallant conduct on July 1st. Lieut. Sheppard and a Sergeant were sent out after an attack, under heavy machine-gun fire, to see if some men out in the open could be brought in. The Sergeant was killed and Lieut. Sheppard slightly wounded in the head, his steel helmet having saved him. Lieut. Sheppard ascertained that there were no men left alive, and returned and made his report.

CA Fixtures – The Council have decided to make no pre-preparations for carrying out the usual Association Meetings as long as war conditions prevail.

Publication of the C A Gazette - During the continuance of the war no further issues of the "Gazette" will be published, except such as are required for official communications to the Associates.

Death of Mr A T Minton - It is with much regret that we have to report the death of Mr A T Minton . . . (who) was knocked down by a motor car . . . Mr Minton was well known in the Croquet World, having been the croquet correspondent of "The Field" for many years. . . For a short period he discharged the duties of the *Editor of the Croquet Association Gazette*.

Felixstowe – An American tournament was held in the grounds of Felix Hotel, Felixstowe, from 12th to 18th August. The pleasant meeting was promoted by Col. Sir Kenneth Kemp for the benefit of those interested in the 2nd Garrison Battalion the Suffolk Regiment, of which Sir Kenneth is Commanding Officer. . . .

Australia – Croquet in Victoria, Australia, has during the last year or so made a distinct advance, and is now regarded as being well established, and admitted to the same standing as bowls, lawn tennis, golf, and other thoroughly recognised sports.

Editorial

There was a time when I didn't know what croquet was and all around was dark. Then came the light and this wonderful sport filled my life to the extent that I am now its slave and seem to do little that is not croquet-related in some way or other.

I now find it hard to think what I filled my days with in the B.C. (before croquet) years. Maybe my croquet bubble will burst and my interest will wane, but right now, my interest in all-consuming. What is it about this game that is so addictive?

This Gazette is a mixed bag of articles that will hopefully satisfy all levels of croquet interest. From the success that was National Croquet Day for many clubs, to coaching and difficult shot-making advice; from croquet history, changes in CA membership and governance, to reports of today's star players at Championship Level.

It was so good to see the return of the Women's AC Eights after a 13 year lay-off, indicating a resurgence in the women's game. Linked to that: this Gazette has a lovely upbeat article by 'cover girl' Alison Girdlestone, that will inspire improving players of both sexes to 'Challenge Yourself' to achieve more by entering stiffer events.

On the subject of entering tournaments, I've entered an awful lot this season, and

enjoyed almost all, but I do wonder why some of the most enjoyable ones aren't better supported.

The CA's National (AC) Seniors was a case in point. There was an excellent turn-out from A and B class players, but where were the higher handicappers? I think that it's all down to the tournament titles - 'The National Seniors', or the historic 'Challenge and Gilbey' (complete with 100 plus year existence tag) - they sound so grand.

What the titles don't say (but they should) is that both these and similar tournaments INCLUDE CLASSED EVENTS. Yes I know that's in the info section of the fixtures book/list, but high handicappers aren't giving these grandly titled events a second look because the impression given by the titles is that they are for the elite only.

How about giving that a try?



Chris Roberts

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The
CROQUET
Gazette



Issue 363 Sept. 2016

Front cover: Alison Girdlestone and Dave Kibble leave the court victorious and happy, at the AC Open Doubles at Cheltenham.

This page: The Editor practicing or just posing, in the dark in South Africa, and the Chairman, happy at Budleigh (cover image by Phil Girdlestone, others by Frances Colman and Chris Roberts)

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Contents

- 4 CA Governance review
- 5 CA Membership Changes update
- 6 CA AGM notice & 2017 subscriptions
- 7 Letters to the Editor
- 8 Obituaries
- 10 Coaching
- 11 Hammer and Jump Stroke legalities
- 12 AC Opens and other Championships
- 14 GC Opens and other Championships
- 16 National Croquet Day
- 18 GC & AC round-up & croquet history
- 19 Ask the Ref & lawns advice
- 21 CA Development Grants
- 22 Mallet adverts. 23 CA Contacts

Chairman's Column

At the risk of name-dropping for my second column in a row, I started to write this one while in Spain, having woken up on the same morning to the news of the Brexit referendum result.

Putting aside the specific merits of the result, the referendum certainly gives cause for anyone in a leadership role to ponder the perils of losing touch with the grass root citizen (member).

Furthermore, the result poses a fundamental question as to how a group of people can remain united when the split is so close to 50-50.

In the weeks after Brexit, one (not related) topic on the Nottingham List was the CA Tournament Regulation on wearing white clothing for events.

The possibility of "Whexit" was born!

As so often, the Nottingham List revealed

as much passion and diversity of opinion as one could imagine arising from any national political issue.

If, however, the CA had a simple "yes / no" vote on "Whexit", I can only see the same dilemma as posed by Brexit: the choice of abandoning whites would be supported by a broad community, covering those who thought they would get total freedom of clothing through to those who just want permission for the shirts of club teams to be a colour other than white.

The issue of whites will be considered this autumn by the CA tournament committees because they have received a letter that questions aspects of that particular regulation.

My experience of CA committees is that they strive to be responsive to the needs and views of the wider CA membership, not least because the committee members are also CA members.

They also, however, welcome external input as additional evidence to drive and support the decisions they make.

Despite the benefits of the role of the current committee structure, the CA Council has launched a working party to review whether our governance mechanisms are fit for purpose. This review is appropriate in light of the changes to the constitution to reconfigure membership of the CA.

Ultimately, the duty of the leaders of the CA is to sustain the playing of our historic and culturally significant sport.

We do not necessarily need to change anything further but a review will make sure that we have tested our ability to balance the need to adapt with not being in constant flux by chasing the latest bright idea.



Tim King



Time to look at the Governance of the CA by Strat Liddiard

There have been momentous changes in the Croquet Association:

- All members of all member croquet clubs are now entitled to membership of the Croquet Association.
- A membership changes implementation group has been established.
- All the Federations elected to join the CA as member Federations.
- At the time that Federations were set up the Sports council insisted that they should be totally independent of the sports governing body, the CA – that has changed.
- The tremendous contribution of Federations to the development of croquet in their regions must be acknowledged and the CA looks forward to working closely with them in the future.

Modern Communication

As well as the changes to the CA structure, there has been a revolution in communication technology. E-mail is now the common way of writing to each other. Tele-conferencing is commonplace and then there are websites, Facebook, Twitter, and so on.

The National Picture

The CA signed up to a government initiative called the Voluntary Code of Good Governance a few years ago. This Code was updated in 2014 and followed by three new Strategy papers.

The Government's 2015 Sporting Future Strategy:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation>

Sport England's "Towards an Active Nation" Strategy 2016-2021

<https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-features/news/2016/may/19/sport-england-triples-investment-in-tackling-inactivity/> and the recent "Charter for Sports Governance"

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-governance-code-will-ensure-highest-levels-of-transparency-in-british-sport>

Looking at what we do

The time has come for a serious look at the Governance of the CA. However, this should not be the job of a few council or committee members. It must reflect the needs and thoughts of the whole of the croquet community.

I am therefore asking you to write to me, Strat Liddiard, in my capacity as Chairman of the Governance Working Party.

A special mailbox has been started – to receive the views of Federations, Council members, CA Committees and most importantly individual members.

The GWP Members

The Governance Working Party (GWP) members are (presented in alphabetical order of given name):

Brian Havill is an active AC member playing at Enfield, Hampstead Heath and Watford. In a professional capacity he has been a director and company secretary of PLCs and for 15 years carried out both roles for the England and Wales Cricket Board. In a voluntary capacity he was on the Council of the Lawn Tennis Association for six years and is currently the Hon. Treasurer of The Surrey County Lawn Tennis Association.

Brian Storey has been the secretary of many sports organisations including:

football, athletics, ice hockey and croquet, especially as Secretary-General of World Croquet Federation. He is currently Secretary of Bowdon CC.

Ian Vincent, the Honorary Secretary of the CA, has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the structures and practices of the CA.

Martin French has played top class AC and GC. He brings experience of both public and private business practices, including advising organisations on their structure. He led reform of the World Croquet Federation's practices when Secretary-General.

Patricia Duke-Cox describes herself as "an ordinary player from an ordinary club." She also happens to be a past chairperson of the CA Council.

Ros Key-Pugh was among those who started Camerton and Peasedown CC, which recently hosted part of the World GC Team Championships. She is a SWF GC Advisor, GC Referee and Coach, and now encouraging GC and AC at her club.

Strat Liddiard (Chair) – a far country member of Surbiton. A GP for 30 years, a National Clinical lead for the Coronary Heart Disease and an advisor to a number of committees in the Department of Health.

I hope to bring the ideas and views of as many of you as possible to the AGM 2017.

Strat Liddiard on behalf of the Governance Working party

Please write to me, Strat Liddiard, at croquetstrat@gmail.com

Tell me what the CA does well.
Tell me what the CA doesn't do well.
Tell me how the CA could do things better.

England retain Home Internationals title

England retained the AC Home International Championship at Compton (Eastbourne) in late June.

They were too good for their opponents and they won every one of their best-of-three matches, with impressive game results too - Wales 9-3, Scotland 10-2 and Ireland 10-1.

Scotland beat Wales and Ireland, to finish second, and Wales consigned Ireland to the wooden spoon.

England: David Maugham, Samir Patel, Robert Fulford, Mark Avery and Jack

Wicks (*far right*). **Scotland:** Duncan Reeve, Martin Murray, Jonathan Kirby (*right*), Sam Murray, Campbell Morrison.

Wales: David Walters, John Evans, Garry McElwain, Chris Williams and Ian Burridge (*both below*). **Ireland:** Simon Williams, Ian Vincent, Danny Johnston, Jane Morrison, Evan Newell.



Membership Changes by Jeff Dawson

Further to my article in the February 2016 (*Gazette 360*), we now have more news as to what will be happening with the planned membership changes for next year.

On-line database

As you may know, we are developing an on-line membership database system to replace the current office-based one.

This will allow for the expanded membership (to include all club members), enable members to maintain their own handicap and contact details, and eventually provide a resource to clubs for managing their own membership data.

Unfortunately, as is often the case with significant software developments, this is running behind schedule, and it is not yet clear how much of this will be available for the 2017 season.

Irrespective of this, we have taken the decision to press ahead with one of the most significant changes next year, which is to allow all members of CA member clubs to play in club and CA tournaments listed in the Fixtures Book.

Membership categories

In view of this change, we are restructuring our membership categories, as it no longer seems appropriate to refer to 'tournament members' when all club members can play in tournaments.

In addition, we are making several significant changes to the system.

- We are reducing the amount individuals have to pay, to reflect the fact that you are now paying a little more through your club subscriptions.

Paper Gazette & Fixtures Book (or not)?

- We are also for the first time allowing members to 'opt-out' of receiving The Croquet Gazette and Fixtures Book in paper form, and discounting the membership rate for those who choose this option.

For those who do opt out, all the information will be available online on our website and we will send email links when each Gazette or Fixtures Book becomes available.

End of Dual membership

- We are abolishing the dual membership categories. Dual membership was available to people who shared the same address and did not require more than one copy of the Gazette and fixtures book. As each individual will now be able to opt to receive these or not, it is no longer necessary to continue to offer this as a separate discount.

The new membership structure will have the following categories.

All membership prices are given in the notice on page 6.

Premium member

Roughly equivalent to the old Tournament Member category, this category gives members discounted entry into tournaments, worth around £5 per playing day, and will give priority entry where a tournament is over-subscribed. Thus if you play in tournaments for more than three weekends in a year, it should be worthwhile financially to continue as a Premium member, quite aside from the priority entry and the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to support the sport.

Supporter member

Roughly equivalent to the old Non-Tournament membership, this category is a way of supporting the CA, for those who want to contribute to the game they have enjoyed, even though they no longer play in tournaments. A few people may want to take out Supporter membership if they do not belong to a CA member club, in order to obtain Standard membership rights. Membership rights for CA club members will in future be available through Standard membership, so for those people taking out Supporter membership the only remaining benefit will be the discount vouchers you receive for shop purchases.

Standard Member

This category is free to all members of CA member clubs, and will be conferred automatically from a date to be set once the new database is implemented and your club has registered its members, unless you tell your club secretary you wish to opt out. Standard Members will get the Gazette and will have voting rights. Paper copies of the Gazette will be sent out to all such members free for the first year, and those who want to continue getting the Gazette in paper form after the first year of implementation will pay a small subscription for this. As with other membership categories, all the publications will be available on-line for those who are interested, without having to pay anything extra. Everyone who will be eligible to become a Standard member will be able to play in CA tournaments from the beginning of 2017, even if we have not yet been able to implement the rest of the benefits for this category. Full implementation of the Standard membership category will only be possible once work on the new membership

GB selection

Although this news item will be too late for a good luck message, for the record, the CA AC selection committee selected the following team for the annual Maugham Salver match v Ireland at Carrickmines on 3-4 September (*a report on which will be carried in the next Gazette*).

Congratulations for their selections are therefore due to: Christian Carter (*below*), Harry Fisher, James Hopgood, David Maugham (Captain), Robert Wilkinson and Gabrielle Higgins (who came in as a reserve for the injured David Walters).

Stop press: GB won 14 - 0



database is complete, which may not be in time for 2017.

Student and Overseas membership

These categories will continue unchanged, except that they too will be able to get a discount for taking the Gazette on-line instead of in paper form.

Further communication

We will be writing individually to all existing members to spell out what these changes mean well before the end of the year and your next subscription is due.

You will have the opportunity at that time of selecting what options you wish to continue with, but the plan is that existing Tournament Members will become Premium Members and existing Non-Playing Members will become Supporter Members without the need for you to do anything.

Jeff Dawson, The Membership Changes Implementation Group.

AGENDA

(1) Apologies for Absence.

(2) Minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 17 October 2015.

The minutes are on the website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1264> and will be sent to Home Members on request to the CA Office.

(3) Report of Council.

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

(4) Accounts for the year to December 2014 and Hon. Treasurer's Report.

The accounts are on the website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1455> and will be sent to Home Members on request to the CA Office.

(5) Motion to Amend the Constitution

The changes agreed at the March 2015 SGM, which are to come into force on a date agreed by Council no later than January 2020, would not make members of school or university clubs Individual Members of the Association, as those clubs do not pay a per-capita subscription. While considering this, it was noticed that there is no minimum age limit.

To remedy this, Council proposes the following amendments to the constitution:

A1. that a new clause 2(c) shall be inserted as follows:

"Individual Members under the age of 16 years shall not be entitled to vote, hold

office, or be members of the Council."

A2. that the new clause 11(a)(iii) which is to be inserted, with consequent renumbering, as follows:

"Membership of a Member Club shall entitle that member to be an Individual Member of the Association in the class determined by the Council under Clause 2(b). The entitlement is conditional upon the Member Club paying a per-capita subscription in respect of its members and supplying the information about them required by the Association."

shall be extended by appending:

"The entitlement also applies to individual members of a School or University Member Club, subject to a maximum of 30 per club at any time."

Individual Associates may vote electronically on the website, by post, or at the meeting; Clubs may vote by post or, with a letter authorising their representative, at the meeting. Votes in advance of the meeting must be received by 12 October. A 6 to 4 majority of those voting in both constituencies is required.

(6) Election of Hon. Secretary.

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

(7) Election of Hon. Treasurer.

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

(8) Election of Reporting Accountant.

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

(9) Election of Council Members.

The following members of Council retire by rotation and seek re-election under clause 18 (a)(i): Martin French, Strat Liddiard and Ian Lines, who were elected in 2013, and Brian Fisk and Lionel Tibblee, who were co-opted after the 2015 AGM. In addition, Dave Trimmer, Beatrice McGlen and Brian Shorney have been nominated, so there are 8 candidates for 8 vacancies so there will not be a contested election.

(10) Benefactors' Book.

The names of benefactors will be read.

(11) Presentation of Trophies for the Most Improved Players.

Apps Memorial Bowl: Jonathan Powe (Kingston Maurward, Charlton and East Dorset);
Steel Memorial Bowl: Alison Girdlestone (Nailsea and Cheltenham);
Spiers Trophy: Peter Dowd (North'pton).

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

The Coach of the Year award is to be presented to Ian Burrige (Colchester and Nottingham).

A lifetime coaching award is to be presented to Keith Aiton (Nottingham).

(13) Presentation of CADiplomas.

(14) Presentation of Council Medal.

The Council Medal is to be awarded to Robert Fulford.

(15) Any Other Business.

(16) President's Closing Remarks.

2017 SUBSCRIPTION RATES

The subscription rates for 2017, in pounds sterling, will be as follows:

Individual members

The revised membership categories are described on page 5.

Standard membership (when implemented)

will be free for members of CA member clubs

	Direct Debit	Other
Premium Member		
First year	14.50	N/A
Second year	28.50	N/A
Full rate	40	45.50
Paperless discounted rate	33	38.50
Overseas Member including EU		
Full rate	43	48.50
Paperless discounted rate	36	41.50
Student Member		
Full rate	15	15
Paperless discounted rate	8	8
Supporter Member		
Full rate	20	25.50
Paperless discounted rate	13	18.50

(Payments by other than direct debit are possible in the Premium, Overseas, Student and Supporter categories only. Members outside the UK will need a UK bank account to take advantage of the direct debit rates.)

Member clubs

Standard (Clubs with 2+ lawns) per capita	10.50
Standard (Smaller clubs) per capita	8.50
Each Junior or student member of a club per capita	5.00

(The minimum club subscription remains at a total of 60. For newly-registered clubs in their 1st, 2nd or 3rd year the subscription is capped at a total of 60, 100 and 150 respectively)

Universities and schools 30

Affiliate clubs

UK	45
Overseas	45

Club subscriptions have been increased by £1.00 per capita for larger clubs, as permitted by the Special General Meeting resolution in March 2015. Most individual subscriptions have been reduced.

Peter Death, Hon. Treasurer

Changes to Gazette needed

Dear Editor,
How rewarding to read in today's Daily Telegraph (20.7.2016) of the increase in popularity of croquet and indeed in the Editor's Column an article on the success of Stephen Mulliner in Florida.

Does the CA have a publicity department? Recently all clubs were encouraged to run a National Croquet Day.

I did not see any advertising for this, though I must confess to not reading all papers.

In the latest edition of the Croquet Gazette there is no mention of this at all. Was it a success?

It does appear that the Gazette is becoming an organ for the elite of the game.

At one time there were more letters from members and many more photos of clubs and news of their activities.

If, as I believe, in the future all members will receive a copy, I wonder if they will bother to read it.

Valerie Harding,
Ipswich & Mid-Suffolk CC

Royal patronage extended

Dear Editor,
Although George V was the CA's first official Patron (*Gazette 362, page 5*), his father, Edward VII, was the first monarch to support the Association.

In 1901 he expressed a wish to see good croquet played at Homburg, in Germany. A club was duly formed and a tournament held the next year. This was effectively the beginning of organised croquet on the Continent under the aegis of the Association, which quickly extended elsewhere in Germany and to the French Riviera.

Edward VII was an enthusiastic player, playing at Marlborough House, Sandringham and wherever he could, on his many travels at home and abroad, including Homburg. Opinions of his abilities varied: one contemporary press report states that he was "a fine shot and a lean and sporting player"; but he never competed in public and it was well known that he hated losing – so he was allowed to win many of his games! Needless to say, he usually played

Editor Chris Roberts replies:

Thank you for your letter Valerie.

I do know that a lot of publicising work was put in by the CA Marketing Committee in the run-up to the first National Croquet Day. Getting media interest in our sport is always an uphill struggle but at least with the first NCD now under our belts, we have something to build on. Publication times for the Gazette, got in the way of reporting NCD in the last issue, but you will see good coverage in this issue on page 16.

Moving on to your other point about the content of the Gazette, it is true that in the summer months the magazine focuses on competitive croquet, but far from being the preserve of the elite, others' events are covered in the 'round-up' articles.

The last issue had no less than a dozen letters from members covering a wide range of subjects, and together with pages for coaching, club development projects, not to mention lawn care, the magazine seems to appeal to the current membership.

I am however very mindful that a change in emphasis will be necessary when the demographic of our membership changes.

Your ideas and those of others will be appreciated.

Uruguay Cheapo Court update

Dear Editor,

Gazette readers may recall from last year, that the Uruguayan Croquet Federation were experimenting with inexpensive court surfaces.

Here's an update.

They had levelled an area 20m by 16m and had laid 5cm of sand over taped-together polythene sheeting.

They added some sacks of calcium chloride to the sand to help keep it damp and firm, but even when firm they found that it slowed the ball down too much.

They then tried covering the surface with shade cloth (about £200) to speed the ball up, but the sand underneath still needed hardening.

They're currently pouring in cement mixed with water, but may have to resort to Plan A: proper concrete with a second-hand football carpet on top.

All suggestions are welcome.

Jonathan Lamb,
Canterbury CC & Parsons Green CC
Punta del Este, Uruguay



HRH King Edward VII, clutching a croquet mallet, taking tea with friends Daisy, Princess of Pless, and Grand Duke Michael of Russia before a game at Keele Hall in July 1901.

doubles with a lady of his choosing as his partner.

His Equerry and Assistant Private Secretary, Sir Frederick Ponsonby, who hated croquet, was once recruited by the King to make up a doubles. (He wrote)

We played for two and a half hours and whenever I got the chance I sent the King's

ball to the other end of the ground. This made him quite furious, and the beautiful Madame Letellier (the King's partner), who was quite a good player, begged me with tears in her eyes not to make him so angry, adding that she understood that courtiers always allowed monarchs to win. I replied that this was out of date and that personally I always made a point of beating the Royal Family at any game if I possibly could. I continued my tactics although it made the game distinctly unpleasant. ... Just as we were winning, Madame Letellier caught us up and made things so awkward that we were held up. Then the King did several hoops and caught us up. We had a very exciting finish and they just won on the post. To my horror the King said that this was by far the best game he had had and that therefore we would have a return match the next day."

Edward VII was probably one of the first to play croquet when it was introduced into England from Ireland in the 1850s. Several of Queen Victoria's children are recorded as being keen players, and this enthusiasm was passed on, in varying degrees, to her grandchildren, including George V and Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Roger Bray, Colchester CC

Richard Harris's name is one of only a select few immediately synonymous with Ryde Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club. His death after a year-long battle with cancer has left the club and Round Table in particular with a void which will take some time to restore.

Richard first joined RLTC as a tennis player in the early eighties and it was not long before the whole family became involved with developing his young children's talent for this game.

He qualified as an LTA referee and the promotion of tournament play on the Isle of Wight, particularly for juniors, was an involvement which he never relinquished.

Early in the new millennium, Richard decided to apply his sporting enthusiasm and talents to croquet; he never picked up a tennis racquet in anger again and soon played both AC and GC.

He appreciated the value of mainland competition and many players will have first met him on his travels as a high-bisquer, often being the sole Island representative.

It was The GC All-England Handicap competition which provided the platform

Obituaries

Richard Harris 1947 - 2016



for his greatest croquet achievements, as he won the trophy in both 2007 and 2009 and was a losing semi-finalist in the intervening year. It is a tragic irony that Richard was the natural choice to manage this year's final on its first ever visit to Ryde in September.

Richard was just as fulfilled organising as he was playing, and despite his illness he completed this season's AC fixture list and proposed dates for the traditional Ryde GC

doubles. He would have been delighted that after a minute's silence this event went ahead in tribute the day following his death.

He found time to qualify as a GC referee and was a very valued croquet administrator, sitting on many committees throughout his lifetime, with lengthy periods as club treasurer or secretary, roles he also fulfilled for the Southern Federation.

He was also honoured with the Round Table presidency.

We remember Richard as a kind and courteous colleague, invariably critical of his performance on court but always the most gentlemanly of opponents. His ball-by-ball anecdotes were legendary and intransigence and ignorance shown by others were not well received.

As a regular GC county player in the Hampshire team Richard never forgave the CA's failure to recognise the Isle of Wight as a county in its own right.

Ryde and the wider croquet world have lost a real super trouper and, along with his wife Diana and family, we all miss him greatly.

Roy Tillcock

Following an early career in dentistry, Dr John Reynolds joined the International Atomic Energy Agency where he spent a productive career assisting with nuclear security both at home and abroad.

John discovered croquet late in life and became a member of Purleybury CC for a short while, before moving to Ealing.

His contributions to Ealing CC were many and various. During his chairmanship the club witnessed a resurgence in membership numbers.

He was primarily responsible for the format of the current web site and was

John Reynolds 1947 - 2016



instrumental in the introduction of the first Ealing events into the CA tournament calendar.

Those who have visited the club in recent times will no doubt recall his excellent catering skills. He also enjoyed being part of the Surbiton catering team from time to time.

Most recently John had taken on the beginners' coaching and was proving a popular mentor. He will be sorely missed by everyone at Ealing Croquet Club.

He leaves a sister, Lesley, and two sons, Mark and Phil.

Nigel Polhill

Croquet Durham is deeply saddened to announce the death of Lynn Jordison, one of our most active members, after a very short illness.

As our Competition Secretary, Lynn was well known to all of the clubs in the North East as well as the others who crossed our path in the Murphy Shield competition. She had recently decided to branch out and try her luck at a competition in Ripon earlier this year, which she greatly enjoyed. Shortly afterwards she became

Lynn Jordison

unwell and died a few weeks later.

Lynn had been a committee member of our club for several years, hosting most of our committee meetings and providing much wise counsel (not to mention delicious currant buns). She was also a JP and was the Independent Chair of Durham City Homes, a local social housing provider, among many other contributions to public life. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her. Our thoughts are with her family.

Nigel Martin



Letter to The Oldie leads to Trans-Pennine croquet challenge

This was a croquet away weekend which might never have happened if it had not been for a letter John Hague, Vice-Chairman of Bishop Monkton Croquet Club, wrote to The Oldie magazine.

Ed James, a member of Fylde CC, spotted the letter, saw the name and wondered if it might be the same person he had worked alongside at BT some 40 years ago.

It was - and as a result a reunion was planned between the two old friends and a croquet away weekend for the Bishop Monkton club resulted as a bonus.

The outing duly took place in June and brought a group of Bishop Monkton players over the Pennines, into 'foreign country' to take on the formidable forces of that amiable and friendly 'foreign' club.

The home team pipped the visitors by 78 - 65 and presented John Hague, with a lovely wall plaque, embossed with a real miniature wooden mallet (Bishop Monkton Chairman Richard Field joked it was thoughtful they had not replaced it with a wooden spoon!).

John presented Ed with a croquet tee-shirt with the words 'Croquet is Life' and the latter thoughtfully wore it for the match the next day.

The outing was a resounding success, so



much so, that plans are already afoot for a re-run at both clubs.

After the match John and Ed caught up with old times, and found out what they had both been doing since they were colleagues at BT (then known as Post Office Telephones) in Birmingham in the late sixties. In those days, apart from their work, they played cricket (not croquet) together.

Ed impressed crossword buff John by telling him that for the past 18 years he has been compiler of the crossword for Private Eye, working under the pseudonym of 'Cyclops' and more recently in the team of cryptic crossword compilers for The Guardian, working under the pseudonym of 'Brummie'.

His wife, Jo, also compiles crosswords.

'But at home we never have a cross-word between us,' he joked.

John told Ed that he had set up as an events organiser, and had been responsible for many years for organising major events and concerts, including some at the Royal Albert Hall, amongst them the annual Christmas BT carol service.

More reminiscences will be exchanged when Fylde and Bishop Monkton meet again next season.

If time permits they might even get round to playing a bit more croquet!

**Richard Field, Chairman,
Bishop Monkton Croquet Club**

ouch!

Dear Editor,

A friend and I were reminiscing about our competitive years.

"We probably both attempted too many peels," he said.

"Yes," I agreed, "but that is how we wanted to play.

Every peel gave us more zest for the game."

David Appleton, Tyneside CC

The CA Shop All you need for croquet

New this year:

PFC Hoopmaker Mallets

The CA Shop is now the agent for PFC Hoopmaker Mallets

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The Coaching Page by Dave Kibble

Women's Group Coaching Weekend, Surbiton, 23/24 July



IPD Ian Burrige with: Sara Anderson, Beatrice McGlen, Mary Knapp, Sarah Melvin, Caroline Denny and Frances Colman. (Photo by George Noble)

There was a disappointing turnout of only six players for this coaching session given by Ian Burrige and Samir Patel. A "hands on" approach was taken on the Saturday with real game positions being analysed on the lawn with an emphasis on improving the lines of play taken when picking up and playing breaks. This was very successful and enjoyable and followed up on Sunday with more formal sessions on extracting balls from corners, practising and triples. Necessity had meant that this event had been held mid-season rather than at the start of the year when most coaching traditionally takes place, however the benefits of the good weather and the players being in form was an obvious advantage of this timing.

Development Squad Mentored Match Weekend, Nottingham, 13/14 August

This was the third holding of this annual Development Squad event and it was again well supported by various international players including David Maugham, James Death and Jack Wicks providing strong opposition for the squad members. Mentoring was provided by Keith Aiton, Samir Patel and Ian Burrige and the excellent weather ensured that there was plenty of good play and enthusiastic discussion and analysis of games. Various fun competitions were invented to provide a competitive edge to the weekend. 'The Rest' just failed to overcome their 41 point target to beat the Development Squad who ran out winners by seven. Robert Wilkinson (The Rest) and Dave Kibble (Development Squad) were joint winners of the individual competition with 7.5 points and Samir Patel won the mentors' competition.

Ian Burrige, AC International Performance Director

How to use GC Extra Turns effectively

The most common thing I get asked for advice on is use of extra turns in Golf Croquet.

To reach an answer, it is wise to consider why you have those extra turns – what is it that your opponent can do better than you that makes their handicap lower than yours?

If you are a very high handicap then the answer is most likely they are better at hitting the ball.

That's not a flippant remark – you need an accurate assessment of how accurately and how hard you can hit the ball before you can make a good decision about your best move.

A good clearance

A good clearance must send the opponent far away (and/or wired) but crucially, often needs you to stay near the hoop to establish and maintain hoop control.

Only the better players can do this reliably – it's about hitting your ball fairly hard (so it skids rather than rolls) and it hitting the target ball in the middle (so it stops rather than deflecting off). An extra turn can get you close enough to the target ball that you can accomplish this as well as a good player can from further away.

Or, as your skills improve, it can get you to a position where you can clear the opponent and go to the next hoop if you have a very good chance to make the hoop with your partner (i.e. clear and play to the next hoop but remain on side).

Getting into the hoop jaws

Running an odd-numbered hoop to the next one breaks the swing of scoring sequence – an extra turn can help you do this like a much better player by getting into the jaws, where the better player will expect to do it from a foot or more away.

Using an extra turn to remove the opponent from a potential scoring position but without taking control of the hoop is a wasted opportunity – better to save it for later.

One possible exception is at an even-numbered hoop when your opponent has jawsed and your partner is in scoring position: clearing a next-to-play jawsed ball to great distance will most often win you the hoop. If you do this, make sure you don't block the hoop – i.e. play the clearance at an angle.

Don't waste your Extra Turns

If your opponent has two balls at the hoop (i.e. is 'in control'), you probably won't shift the balance without spending two or more extra turns so don't waste them.

If one extra turn won't shift the balance significantly in your favour, only consider using two extra turns together if it leaves you in the jaws of an odd-numbered hoop and your opponent on the playing side a long way away.

That way you are likely to win two hoops for a two extra-turn investment.

The best time to use an Extra Turn

The best time to use extra turns is after putting blue to hoop 1 (if you won the toss) – i.e. after the first stroke of the game.

You won't get a better opportunity: never again will both opponent balls be so far away and at such an angle with you in the jaws of an odd-numbered hoop!

Practice is key

Many players don't practice enough – they play friendlies and club games, but that does little to improve their skills.

To get better, you must play a stroke with a clear intention, watch what happens, think about how to do it better, and repeat it until your intention is achieved.

Use markers so you are repeating exactly the same shot.

In the musical world, people often say that an amateur musician will practice a piece until they get it right, whereas a professional will practice until they can't get it wrong – think on that.

**Dave Kibble,
Chairman of the Coaching Committee**

Newly qualified Coaches

I congratulate the following two members who have earned coaching qualifications since my last Gazette article:

Derek Knight (Beverley and York): - Club Coach, AC Grade 2 Coach.
Graham Tucker (Sussex County): - GC Coach.

Hammer and jump strokes - *what is legal?*

You've dribbled through the hoop and now have a hampered backswing - it happens.

A common solution is to try a hammer stroke.

Martin French explains what you can and cannot legally do in this situation, and tells all about the legality of some jump shots.

In the last issue (*Gazette 362*), we covered potential faults when attempting to strike a ball in a hoop with other balls very close by. "Hammer strokes" were mentioned in passing, and we have been asked to elaborate. The following covers hammer strokes or jump strokes where the mallet is brought down firmly on the ball in a hampered situation – the action is similar irrespective of which way the striker is facing.

A clean stroke

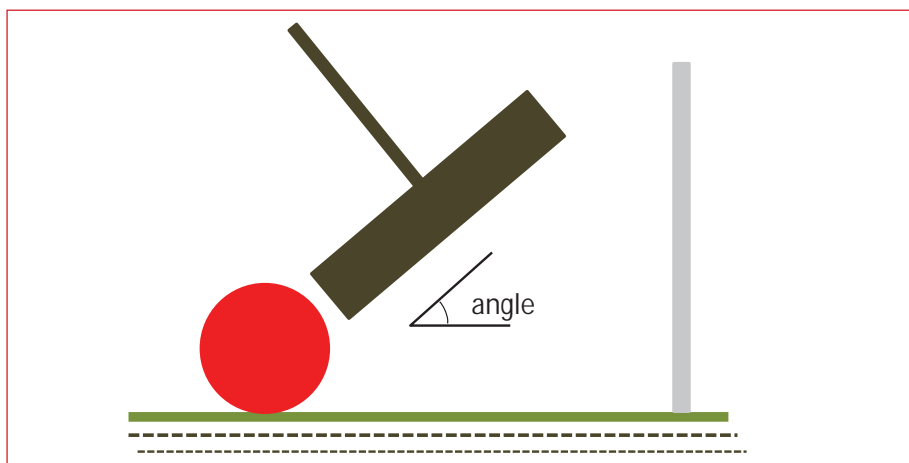
When we play a good jump stroke – hitting down firmly onto the ball – it jumps nicely up from the court. Reviewing slow motion video evidence shows that many – but not all – such strokes will be clean. So our first requirement of any hammer or jump stroke, when the mallet is played firmly downwards onto the ball such as when hampered by a hoop, is that the ball needs to be seen to jump if it is to be given clean. Strokes which squirt out along the ground should be faulted under 13(a)5 or 6.

That's a bit steep!

Further video analysis shows that many hammer or jump strokes played at 30 degrees or more to the horizontal are faults. At 30 degrees some are clean, but as the angle is increased, these become less common and by the time we get to a 45 degree hammer stroke, we have found no video evidence showing a clean stroke. All are faults either due to the mallet retouching the ball as it tries to rebound out of the grass or remaining in contact with the ball – (13(a)6).

Back to the engine

Particularly suspect is a hammer or jump stroke played with your back to the line of play. It is all too easy to hit at 45 degrees or more – and you can add the risk of pulling the ball (a fault under 13(a)11) to the other faults listed above. So these are best avoided.



Guidance to players and referees

We can't equip all referees with slow motion video cameras, so instead we give a simple benchmark – if the mallet strikes the ball firmly at 45 degrees or steeper, the stroke should be faulted unless the ball is seen to rise clearly from the court. A badly played hammer stroke at less than 45 degrees may also fail to jump or give rise to an audible double tap and should be faulted accordingly.

Hammer strokes should routinely be watched by a referee (or experienced player, if no referee available) to ensure the stroke is played fairly.

You can see the video evidence for yourself – go to <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/golf/refereeing/slomo> and look at "Series E – Hammer Strokes".

So how best to get out of a hampered position?

It depends on where you're trying to play towards. Often, the most effective stroke is to play a normal stroke at an angle from close behind the last hoop to somewhere a few yards to one side or the other of the next hoop – often a better choice than trying to play some very hampered stroke straight at the next hoop.



If you are not trying to move the ball far you may find a "sweep stroke" a better option than a hammer stroke – ask your club coach to show you how to play these cleanly. If you decide you have no option but a hammer stroke, play it: facing forwards; at an angle comfortably less than 45 degrees; and strike crisply. This minimises the chance of it being faulted.

Can the referee help me?

Referees are not allowed to advise, though they can answer questions about the rules. So you cannot ask them "is this angle going to be OK?" – but you can ask them what faults might be committed in a situation. It's best to practice at your club with a coach or experienced club player until you are happy you can recognise what "less than 45 degrees" feels like and how to play such strokes cleanly.

And finally....

A related question is the tap on top of a ball when you don't want to move it.

For some time, this has been a common way of "deeming" a turn in GC, because, though it might technically be a fault (multiple contacts between mallet and ball are inevitable), the remedy was to put the ball back and that was end of turn – so you achieve your aim of not moving the ball. However, the 2016 Official Rulings issued by the WCF remind us that deliberately playing a fault is an error under the Etiquette Rule 14(a), which has its own escalating set of penalties. So if you want to leave a ball as near possible where it is, the best option is a minimal tap on the side of the ball, aiming to move it a few millimetres.

Martin French, GC Rules Committee

You should always have your hampered shots watched by someone (preferably a referee)

The AC Opens and other

The Open Championships

Rothman records a rare victory for the foreigners

Ben Rothman from California became the first overseas-based player to win the AC British Open for 27 years, when he beat Samir Patel to this year's Championship at Cheltenham in July.

It was New Zealand's Joe Hogan in 1989 who last took the title out of the UK, and looking back at the CA's roll of honour, I thought that might well have been a first, but CA Archivist Chris Williams says 1954 winner Arthur Ross was New Zealand based, *writes Chris Roberts.*

So this was a rare occurrence for sure, and hats off to Rothman (or hat on in his case) for his achievement, in which, amongst others, he accounted for the New World Champion Stephen Mulliner.

Top seed Reg Bamford scored two sextuples in his first knock-out game, and another during his quarter-final exit to three triple peels by Patel, and as one should expect at this level, peeling turns veritably abounded throughout this stage of the Championship.

Of the 58 game played in the knock-out phase, no less than 51 games involved a triple peel or greater, leaving only seven won with 'regular' finishes.

Rothman's path of success is impressive: (he beat) Brian Cumming +3tpo, +26tp; Stephen Mulliner +16, +20tp, +17; Paddy Chapman +10otp, -10otp, +9otp, +18tp; and finally Samir Patel -26tp, +19, -20tp, +25tp, +26tp.

The Doubles

In the Doubles, peeling turns were no less frequent, and the title this time went to Paddy Chapman and David Maugham, who beat James Death and Samir Patel -14otp(C), +9oqp(D), +12oqp(D) in the final.

The full scores for both events (and the plates and consolations) are on the CA website www.croquet.org.uk and

Men's & Women's Championships

Maugham & Bradforth both win again

CroquetScores.com.

The Singles events were both won by previous winners, with **David Maugham** perhaps surprisingly only turning the trick for the third time, a feat bettered by one by Women's winner **Louise Bradforth**, *writes Chris Roberts.*

Maugham retained his title from last season, while Bradforth's victory was her first since a hat-trick of Championship successes between 2006-08.

The Women's event was run as a seven-player block leading straight to that final, where Bradforth did for Gabrielle Higgins +23tp, +26tp, +11tp, the first time the Women's final had been won by three completed triple peel finishes.

Not content with making this history, Bradforth then did another TP finish in her very next game, (which was in the consolation Du Pre event) making it four in a row!

The men's event was awash with peeling turns. James Death completed a sextuple peel in his semi-final, on the way to defeat by Maugham, who progressed to meet James Hopgood, who himself had knocked out Stephen Mulliner. Maugham dropped the second game only in the best of five final, and won +26qp, -13tpo, +25tp, +26tp.

Mixed Doubles

Only a disappointing five pairs contested the mixed doubles event, where a block stage led to a knock-out, which culminated in Gabrielle Higgins and David Maugham beating James Death and Beatrice McGlen +8otp(D). This gave Higgins her fourth consecutive win, and sixth overall, although all her previous successes had been partnered with Keith Aiton, while for Maugham it was his fifth win, with the fourth different partner, stretching right back to 1989.

The Du Pre

This is the consolation singles event, bringing the men and women into competition.

Playing in her first season of Championship tournaments, Alison Girdlestone did remarkably well, and contested the final against Robert Wilkinson, which the latter won +19, +24tp.

On the opposite page, Alison reflects on her first season playing in the top flight.



Photos: David Maugham (above), Alison Bradforth, Paddy Chapman (both below), Ben Rothman (bottom left corner), by P&G Roberts in NZ, Robin Burnell and Dave Kibble.



The Coles Championship

Reg Bamford won the Coles Championship beating James Hopgood 3 – 0 in the final, with two impressive sextuple peels and an exciting ending to the third game, *reports Dave Kibble.*

Forgetting that the decider would be played to Super-Advanced rules, Hopgood (having been let in by Bamford) was unlucky to finish a triple-peel, with an Irish peel at Rover that left a difficult shot at the long ball that nicked his partner ball. Bamford got in again, and, after a bit more drama from both players, won the match +26SxP, +26SxP, +1.

Now that the historical 'macho reasons' for moving the Western Championship is sufficiently far in the past, it seems a foolish scheduling error to have the Coles and Westerns on the same weekend - isn't it time to return the Western Championship to Cheltenham and bring together the two groups of top players?



Championship tournaments

Challenge Yourself

A motto to be considered for the up and coming player ~ by Alison Girdlestone

At the beginning of this season, like many croquet players around the country, I looked at the fixtures list and began planning the year's diary.

Taking into consideration my handicap of 5, I entered a few advanced tournaments locally to me in the South-West, a few B-Levels and one A-Class tournament; the latter being held at my home club so I thought 'why not'.

A few weeks into the season, I started receiving advice from A-Class players after matches and suggestions were made that I should enter the Men's and Women's Championships and the British Open Championships. Looking at the entry list of players, with minus signs before most of their handicaps, I must admit I was sceptical. And much like many of my fellow players, I really don't like to lose.

Having made the brave phone call to David Maugham to ask if it would be okay if I entered, his reply was simply:

"Absolutely, how will you get better if you don't challenge yourself? You do know you are going to lose though...don't you?"

Well naturally my competitive spirit kicked in, and I realised I actually did have nothing to lose but a very small number of index

points, and of course the possibility of a little wounded pride. So off I went.

Men's, Women's & Mixed Doubles – Budleigh Salterton

This was my first ever Championship tournament, and although I was nervous, I couldn't stop grinning with excitement. The idea of playing 'minus' players was incredibly daunting, but this was something that I knew I needed to do. I admit, losing is not something I enjoy much, but losing to players who comfortably hit 25-yard shots and who can triple-peel with their eyes closed started to open mine to the real possibilities of achievement in this sport. Watching the breaks played obviously improved my understanding of the game, but that was only the beginning of what I was about to learn.

Over the previous year, my club members at Nailsea had often seen me throw my arms around in despair, and possibly even stamp my foot on occasion. Having now witnessed my opponents shrug off a missed three-foot roquet or laugh at a ball over the line by an inch, my entire approach to the mental game of croquet began to change. I realised that although taking the game seriously is, in parts, a necessity, being able

to calmly accept that things really do just go wrong, is just as important.

The British Open Championships – Cheltenham

Well, let me start by saying that I played 18 games of singles and won the grand total of...drum roll please...three!

Ouch...now there was a lesson in learning to lose well.

I understand that by saying this I am not really selling the idea of entering tournaments at a higher level than that of your index, but believe me, I have only lost one handicap game since. It's not just watching the A-class players that helps one improve, it's being around the atmosphere, the advice at the end of the games, and the genuine interest that these players have in helping others succeed.

We are now nearing the end of the croquet season, but for next year I will be entering tournaments that will challenge me. I also look forward to meeting more 'up and coming' players who also want to stretch themselves and jump into the learning cauldron – the top-class croquet circuit in England.

Below: Alison with Open Doubles partner Dave Kibble (by Phil Girdlestone)

The Championship of the East Midlands

Paddy Chapman was undefeated in both the Draw and Process to win the East Midlands Championship, without the need for a play-off, **writes Ian Vincent.**

On the way to victory, Chapman (*pictured below winning, by Dave Kibble*) completed six sextuple peels.

The ground was undoubtedly soft, having soaked up a lot of rain, but it was clearly a Freudian slip when I referred to court 1, after the winner had reported yet another xsp, as verging on a paddy field!

Another milestone for Maugham

David Maugham notched up another impressive achievement at the East Midlands when his completion of three sextuples made him the third player (behind Robert Fulford and Reg Bamford) to reach the milestone of 100, in ranked singles games.

The Championship of Surrey

World Champion Stephen Mulliner won 'the Surrey' for the fifth time at Surbiton at the beginning of August, moving him level with Robert Fulford (Colchester), and now only one victory behind Jeff Dawson (Woking) in the history of the tournament, **writes Chris Roberts.**

Surbiton's Mulliner beat Chris O'Byrne (Reigate), Christian Carter (Surbiton), Duncan Reeve (High Wycombe) and Andy Myers (Aldermaston) on his way to victory over David Maugham +24qp, -3tp, +24tp, +21tp in the final.

Myers had sprung the surprise of the event in the previous round when he took out England Mac captain Samir Patel (Surbiton) +8otp, +15, which helped him into previously uncharted waters with a handicap reduction from -0.5 to -1. Others earning a one-step reduction were Phil Cordingley (Hampstead H.) to 0.5, Graham Gale (Guildford) to 0, and O'Byrne to 4.



The GC Opens, Championships and

The Open Championships

Mulliner sees off young pretenders for another year

The 'year of the youngsters' this so nearly was, but, just as last season, the 'Old Guard' showed that it is not quite ready to relinquish top dog status just yet.

Stephen Mulliner (photo below) saw off the young pretenders and recorded his seventh Open Championship victory since 2000. With the exception of Ahmed Nasr in 2004, the title has been shared by Mulliner and Reg Bamford.

For some time now, the new breed of exciting and deadly accurate younger players have been snapping at the heels of the establishment and they are getting closer every year to unseating the 'old f**ts', as Bamford put it last year.

Bamford himself was the victim this time round when he exited at the quarter-finals stage at the hands of last season's runner-up Harry Dodge, who is looking more and more the mature player with each passing year.

Tobi Savage was impressive throughout as well, and deserved his shot at Mulliner in the final, having beaten him in the block stage, which, along with Dodge's block loss to this season's GC 'find' Jamie Burch against the seeding, meant that the knock-out had an unfamiliar look, with the pre-tournament fancied players scheduled to meet earlier than had been expected.

'Mac' ace Burch got past the experienced Simon Carter and Pierre Beaudry to reach the semis, where he met the on-form Savage, whose long range shooting and jumping now has such reliability that it is difficult to know how to play him.

In the other half of the draw, Dodge's prize for beating Bamford was a semi-final match-up with Mulliner, which was tough on the young man who might have expected an



easier passage to the final than that.

Mulliner was not quite the sum age of the other three semi-finalists, but it was close, and the rise of these younger players (together with Rachel Rowe, and the absent Will Gee and John-Paul Moberly) sees the top level GC with a very bright future for years to come.

Savage recovered from 2-4 deficits in both games of his semi with Burch to sneak the match 7-6, 7-6 for a first shot at the final, and Mulliner was even harder pressed by Dodge before getting through 4-7, 7-5, 7-6.

In the final, Mulliner was just too clinical for Savage; the latter made the new Champion go to 7-6 in the first game but he gave way 7-3 in the second.

So, no trouble for the engraver of the Open Cup for another year, just 'copy as above', but there is now such a gathering of the youngsters that it would be a brave soul who would bet against one of them breaking the mould of the Open next season.

The Open Doubles Championship

Stephen Mulliner and Reg Bamford

'circled the wagons' for the old guard and teamed up to win the Doubles Championship together for the first time since 2008, giving Mulliner a Singles and Doubles 'double' for the first time.

They defeated Harry Dodge and Pierre Beaudry in the final 7-4, 7-5 and are the first pairing to win the Championship three times.

Full results of both Championships and most ENSC tournaments are available on www.CroquetScores.com.

The ENSC Qualifiers

The remaining three qualifiers for the English National Singles Championship all produced different winners in the second half of the season.

Martin French (photo left) eventually won the **National Forest Open at Ashby**, but was taken to 7-6 in both of his two game semi-final victories over Nick Mountfield, and he repeated the feat in the final versus local man, David Bell, who who took the final's middle game impressively.

John-Paul Moberly had looked the man to beat, sailing through manager Tim King's pre-drawn Swiss and knock-out quarters unscathed; but he fell to Bell in the semi-finals.

At the **Nottingham Open**, Martin French made the final again, along with Ian Burridge, but both had tough three games semis against Lionel Tibble and Rachel Rowe respectively. They then enjoyed another close encounter in the final, which Burridge won 7-6, 6-7, 7-4.

The last qualifier was the **Lancashire Open** which was back at Bury CC's older Coronation Park venue because of over-running works at their newer facility.

In the semi-finals, Jane Pringle couldn't live with David Walters, but the other Davids, Crawford and Widdison, had a right good tussle before the latter won through in three games, the last two being 7-6s.

Widdison has had a good season by anyone's standards, but as a -1 handicap, he started the final as underdog to Wales international -4 Walters, who had impressed at the World Team Championships.

Walters won the first game 4-7 but Widdison is evidently full of strong stuff because he came back to win 7-6, 7-5, to record a giant killing!

In the ENSC, the finalists from the eight qualifiers qualify for the Championship Finals tournament (for the converted Ascot Cup), and any places either not taken up or resulting from players appearing in more than one final, are offered to a pool of losing semi-finalists in ranking order.

Accordingly, the following will play in the ENSC Finals: David Bell, Ian Burridge, Mark Daley, Martin French, James Goodbun, John-Paul Moberly, Stephen Mulliner, Chris Roberts, Lionel Tibble, Tom Weston (all qualifier finalists) and then Tobi Savage, Pierre Beaudry, Rachel Rowe, Nick Cheyne, Richard Brookes, Andrew Dymond (all from the pool of qualifier semi-finalists).



Series tournaments - by Chris Roberts

The A-Level Series

With only one A-Level Series tournament to go, as the Gazette went to press, the name of the first title holder hangs in the balance.

Bishop Monkton's David Widdison heads the competition with 20 points thanks to his two Series tournament victories at **Northampton Open** (as reported in the last Gazette) and the **Pendle Open** in June.

Lionel Tibble (Northampton) won the always popular, and now strong, **Wiltshire Open** at Hamptworth, that grew in size to accommodate 20 entrants, and still had reserves lined up.

The **Ryde Open** followed, and it is a constant wonder why more players don't venture to 'the South Island' (as they like to say), such is the welcome at their Championship-standard courts.

James O'Keefe was the surprise winner of this, his home Open event, beating your writer into second place.

Victory at the **Dorset Open** put Kingston Maurward's Jonathan Powe into second place for the Series title with 16 points accumulated with that win and by finishing runner-up at the Wiltshire.

The last A-Level Series tournament of this inaugural season is the Sussex Open at Southwick.

For this competition there is no national Final at the end of it, this is a purely points accumulation race.

The B-Level Series

Four players share the plaudits for winning two Series tournaments each this season. Andrew Carpenter (Durham) won at **Ealing** and **Phyllis Court**, Ross Bagni (Leighton-Linslade) won at **Hunstanton** and **Nottingham**, Roger l'Anson (Ripon Spa) was victorious at **Bury** and **Ashby**, and Richard Peperell (Phyllis Court and High Wycombe) got his successes at **Bath** and **Edgbaston**.

All duly qualify for the National B-level Final at Budleigh on 8-9 October, along with single tournament winners: Chris Heath (Guildford), Paul Gunn (Wingrave), Brian McCausland (Nailsea), Marian Manning (Colchester), Peter Moore (Budleigh), Richard Bilton (Nottingham), Arthur Reed (Watford), Roger Stroud (Leighton-Linslade) and Louise Taylor (Merton).

Although most Series tournaments reported full entry lists or good numbers generally, it was sad to learn that two events at **Middlesbrough** and **Northampton** didn't receive the same support and were cancelled. So with 13 individual tournament winners, this left the door open for others who have been accumulation points for good place finishes throughout the season.

At the time of writing, exactly how many places at the National Final will be available via this route is still being finalised, but it looks like a ballot will be necessary to split several tied players.

The All England Handicap

Over 200 players have taken part in this season's All England GC Handicap Championship, which is a slight increase on last year's figure.

This competition starts with a club-staged round, from which one in every four participants qualifies for one of three geographically based Area Finals.

There is strong support from Southern clubs but that is less good in the North, such that the most northerly **Area Final is at Nottingham**, and even then most of the eight players in that one travelled north to get there.

Fourteen players opted to play in the **South Area Final at Hamptworth** and no less than 28 players made for an interesting management day taking over all seven courts at the **London Area Final at Surbiton**.

Places at the National Final at Ryde on 17/18 September were allocated pro-rata and the following 14 booked their places accordingly: Al Brown (Handicap 4, Maldon), Hazel Clarke (8, Cheam), Robert Cook (6, Cheam), Steve Dennis (1, Watford), Carolyn Doswell (2, Merton), Pauline Harvey (4, Kenilworth), Geoff Johnson (2, Watford), Marian Manning (4, Colchester), Mary Neale (5, Ramsgate), John Noble (0, Letchworth), Ron Piper (11, Guildford), John Sim (2, Ryde), Pam Sim (3, Ryde) and Des Taylor (5, Enfield).



At its height, the 60 strong gallery that supported Phyllis Court for the July visit of Ashby, set a new record for the Inter-Club Championship. All told over a 100 came by to watch the International stars Will Gee and Rachel Rowe (above) at some point in the day. Ashby won 4-3. (photo by Derek Whittingham)

Chris Sheen rolled back the years to win the tenth staging of the GC Veterans at Southwick, under reporter Bill Arliss' management.

The 21 players were whittled down to the best 16 after a block stage of single games, and those 16 contested a best-of-three knockout from then on.

There were no real upsets in the first knock-out round, although Bill Arliss did give block winner Richard Brooks a good run by winning the first game 7-3 and

Veterans Championship

leading 5-3 in the second.

Brooks then showed his class by running hoop 10 from 9, 11 from the boundary at an angle, and then put his first ball to 13 in through 'the back door'.

His luck ended in the quarter-finals, where he left the competition after three hard games with Sheen.

A 'rejuvenated' David Hopkins, who had

made a good climb up the rankings since arriving from South Africa on his annual stay here, fought well but lost to Sheen in the semis, whilst in the other half of the knock-out Dick Stover qualified for the final at the expense of Daphne Gateley.

The final pitted old adversaries and Sheen got the better of Stover 7-3, 4-7, 7-4.

It was interesting to note that five of the entrants for this tournament had also played in the first staging in 2007, with Stover actually winning in 2008 and 2009.



National C 'an outstan

National Croquet Day was an "outstanding success and we will build on this", said CA Marketing Chair Brian Wilson.

"The 2017 National Croquet Day will be Sunday 4 June.

We will be taking your reports and comments into account, so watch out for further updates".

The First National Croquet Day duly arrived - the sun shone, courts looked inviting, and the welcomes were warm - no wonder that so many clubs have told us about their own National Croquet Day successes.

Whether clubs highlighted croquet as a competitive sport, as a game everyone can play, or just wanted to show croquet in its true light - one thing is certain, NCD was an outstanding success!

Clubs took the opportunity to showcase the game and their own offerings. Several Clubs with other commitments on the actual NCD, put their efforts into celebrating croquet on an alternative day.

Members' dedication made sure that NCD was a special occasion, one that attracted many visitors and new members.

So heart-felt thanks to all those who made sure that NCD went so well.

Here's some of the feedback:

'It was a fab day, we will definitely be doing it next year' - 'visitors were interested in trying croquet, plus the wine' - 'we had 48 visitors' - 'NCD gave us the opportunity for more promotion' - 'I was interviewed by the local BBC who produced a fabulous trailer and we had 30 visitors' - 'we got copy in local free magazines and over 30 people turned up' - 'we had a Crazy Croquet Day with lots of visitors throughout' - 'our small village club attracted some 40 visitors' - 'our pre-event publicity efforts paid off' - 'NCD was a great advert for our club and croquet' - 'we had fantastic response, people took up their Croquet Experience and a cream tea!'

Finally, many clubs sent their thanks to the CA for all its hard work. I thank the CA Marketing Team, CA Office at Cheltenham, plus Chris Roberts, for all their hard work.

Without their dedication, NCD would not have got off the ground and certainly would not have been such a success.

- Here's to NCD 2017 -

Please contact me with your ideas at brian@europaassociates.co.uk or 07970 922867.

Brian Wilson
Chairman, CA Marketing Committee



Case study High Wycombe CC

High Wycombe CC celebrated the opening of our new club house on National Croquet Day .

In the morning, we played some informal games on short lawns, followed by a barbecue lunch to which key sponsors were invited.

In the afternoon we opened to the general public, attracting around twenty visitors.

They played a combination of AC and GC, coached by club members.

CA President Quiller Barrett (above right) paid us a visit in the afternoon and the lovely weather made this one of our most successful 'Come and Try' events to date.

We publicised widely in local free advertisers, libraries and shops, and also online using Facebook and Meetup.

The latter has been especially effective in engaging a new younger age group of attendees.

David S Warhurst,
Chairman, High Wycombe CC

Save the date NCD 2017 ~ 4 June



croquet Day ding success'



Photographs from National Croquet Day at High Wycombe CC and (right) Dauntsy CC



The very model of local press coverage for Swindon CC

Swindon CC Secretary, John Airey, got in touch with the Gazette to share this splendid coverage that his club were given by **THE SWINDON ADVERTISER**. I was keen to show members the sort of coverage that Swindon have managed to get for our sport, through the good contacts that they have built up with their town's newspaper through their many community-based activities.

This just shows what can be achieved. The Gazette is very grateful to The Swindon Advertiser for allowing reproduction of their images and layout.

Chris Roberts, Gazette Editor

The story behind the actual event covered is taken up **by John Airey**: "Our member, Terry Hunt, suggested we have the charity event and he organised the first one in 2013. Terry was to pass away later that year and the club has kept it in our programme as an annual event in memory of Terry and the work that he did for the club.

'The Terry Hunt Charity Shield' is a charity match between the local 'Football in the Community' group, who run a weekly activity for the over 65s called 'Extra Time', and club members.

The men and women of the Extra Time

group visited the Club through 'Football in the Community' programme and enjoyed it so that much over half of them have become members.

The charity match is a fun GC session, with members and friends signing on and nominating which team they are playing for. Played on half lawns, there are two separate legs, the first of which this year raised £155 for the Wiltshire Air Ambulance and the second leg is due to take place as the Gazette goes to press. We are hoping to hit our target of £300, so as to match last year figure."

Tyneside honour Bill Hill

At the AGM of Tyneside CC, members unanimously appointed Bill Hill to honorary membership in recognition of his many years of service.

Bill joined TCC in 1988 and until recently was a major influence on both the strategic and the day to day running of the club. The latter contribution is manifest in his manufacture down the years, of various innovative items of equipment (hoop lifters, trolleys, ball boxes and court measuring devices) that have proved extremely useful in their efficient design and polished workmanship.

Bill was Honorary Secretary of the club for 21 years, during which he negotiated with consistent success, our landlord's continued maintenance of the lawns to a high standard (and for a low rent), and was instrumental in securing their protection by a rabbit-proof fence. In 2005 Bill was awarded the CA Diploma and in 2014 the club's own long service award. Now in his 90's, Bill still plays croquet and, taking a back seat from administrative duties, continues to be a valued source of historical information on which the present committee frequently call.

Tyneside CC

Moberly wins strong London Masters

The third edition of Surbiton's London Masters tournament attracted its strongest field to date, and an exciting event, eventually won by John-Paul Moberly.

Manager Don Beck reports, that players from the USA, Egypt, Germany and New Zealand took on 'the best of Britain' on some slippery fast lawns.

Stephen Mulliner was trying for three tournament wins in a week and looked like a strong contender through the early rounds, as did Harry Fisher, who swept aside the three top seeds in his block, and looked very comfortable in this his first GC event.

Germany's Wolfgang Usbeck took a while to fine tune his mallet but then upset Moberly in a deciding game of their match. His hoop running was most impressive.

Mulliner continued his winning ways until he met Moberly in the last round of the block phase, where the latter needed a 2-0 win to progress, and that's what he delivered to qualify for the final.

In the other block, Fisher left previous winner Lionel Tibble, Harry Dodge and a competitive Guy Scurfield to fight over second place. But in the final Moberly's greater GC experience and a good start, meant he was always just ahead in a tight match that ended in his favour 7-6, 7-5.

Watford's octogenarian AC team

For an inter-club AC League match, Watford fielded a team consisting entirely of octogenarians to play St. Albans, writes **Simon Hathrell**

And here they are (below): Robin Barry, Quiller Barrett and John Bee, with an aggregate age of just below 250, an average AC handicap of only 8 and all in fine fettle, this team was not to be trifled with! They acquitted themselves very respectably for a 2-2 draw, against a significantly younger team with a higher average handicap as well.



The welcome return of The Women's Sixes

After a 13 years' absence, the Women's Selection Sixes for the Barlow Bowl and Longman Bowl were competed for at Cheltenham in August, reports **Sarah Hayes and Sophie McGlen**. The sun shone, the lawns were fast and the chatter (and wine) flowed throughout as the newly formatted Women's Selectors sixes re-emerged.

Contested as a single round robin, the sixes were competed for over a weekend which seems to have re-ignited interest from players to enter. The top six (the Barlow Bowl) was won by the undefeated Cheltenham's Sarah Hayes and the second six (the Longman Trophy) by Liz Farrow from Sussex County, who also gained her silver medal.

The sixes have been brought back by the CA as a trial, following on from the success of the Women's World Championships at Nottingham last year. They certainly seem to have been a great success with good interest and are an encouragement for women to compete in advanced tournaments.

Long may they continue!
First Six (Barlow Bowl): Sarah Hayes (5 wins), Beatrice McGlen (4), Gabrielle Higgins (3), Alison Girdlestone (2), Mary Knapp (1), Sylvia Steer (0). **Second Six** (Longman Bowl): Liz Farrow (4 wins), Wendy Dominguez (3), Jane Babage (2), Patricia Duke-Cox (2), Frances Ransome (2), Sophie McGlen (0).



National Seniors Championship

The much improved Peter Moore capped a good season with victory in the A block of this ancient CA Championship at Southwick.

Just like another CA 'historic', the Challenge and Gilbey, this tournament comprises both handicap and classed level play events, meaning that it is suitable for all playing standards, and it remains a constant wonder why more high handicappers don't enter.

Nonetheless, as manager Julie Horsley reports, the handicap doubles was a tight one, with 'The Thompson Twins' (they are not related) Bob and Peter winning on the 'who beat whom' rule over Peter Death and Gareth Denyer.

It was an all Australian affair in the Handicap Singles final, where Denyer, playing in his first UK tournament, beat compatriot David Wise.

And so to the class singles, where the mathematicians had worked out that five of the eight players were still in with a shout on the last morning, but by lunchtime it boiled down to an effective final in which Peter Moore beat Dave Mundy +15.

In the B Block, David Mooney was rightfully cock-a-hoop with his first ever QP (quadruple peel), as he complied with Frances Colman's playful request for a quick game against Chris Roberts (win or lose, she claimed not to be bothered which) so that she and the latter could go out for dinner! Mooney had incurred only one loss by last round of games and in another effective final beat the hitherto undefeated David Marsh to claim the cup.

Peter Thompson was the clear winner of the C Block, being undefeated in his seven games, one ahead of Neil Coote; and Peter Miller beat Frances Colman into second place in the D Block.

Photo above, from left: Moore, Mooney, P Thompson, Miller and B Thompson.

Gold Cup winner is talk of the Town



Woking's Mike Town won the coveted Gold Cup at Roehampton in July, ending undefeated in his six games. Leo Hawkins packed in and won an extra game to end on 5/7, just ahead of Christian Carter, And Dibben and Mark Ormerod on 4/6.



Town is top at South of England Week

This year the CA's historic South of England Week, held as usual at Compton CC, was reformatted and held six weeks earlier than its traditional calendar slot. This succeeded in attracting a good entry for each of its three constituent parts and it is to be hoped that this new-look style will ensure the long-term future of this century-old event.

Hillary Smith reports, Two newcomers to this tournament walked away with two trophies each: Mike Town (Woking) won the advanced one-ball and was undefeated in the A class, completing the only triple peel of the week; and, gritty as ever in his comeback season, Phil Cordingley (Hampstead Heath) took the big handicap and the B class.

Other winners were: Ann Jarman (Compton) in the handicap 'plate', Philip Marshall (Compton) won the handicap one-ball, and Philip Windred (Letchworth) and Neil Chalmers (Norwich) won the C & D classes respectively.

Waters sneaks close Students Championship

Oxford University's Jordan Waters won the Students Open Championship with a classic +1 on time victory over John Francis Martin of Trinity College Dublin. This was the culmination of a knock-out event that brought together four players from each of the aforementioned establishments and the same number from Cambridge University. Although missing out on the individual final, Cambridge were victorious in the Students Team Championship, with Cesar Miranda-Reyes and Craig Winfield getting the better of their Oxford counterparts Mark van Loon and Harry Williams in the final.

A Fresh Light on Croquet's Dark Ages

As many readers of the Gazette will recall, the Croquet Association celebrated its Centenary in 1997.

Alan Oldham observed, when writing about the birth of the Association in issue 246 of the Gazette (November 1996), that the choice of the correct date was not beyond dispute and the information then available was limited to that included in Prichard's path-breaking 'History of Croquet.'

Indeed, very little was known about the years between the All England Croquet Club's abandonment of croquet competitions and change of name in 1882 and the formation of the United All England Croquet Association (UAECA) about fifteen years later.

I have recently taken the opportunity to augment Prichard's evidence using the online newspaper database provided by the British Library, and what emerges is both a somewhat earlier start date for the UAECA and a significantly more active croquet scene at that time than was evident from the periodicals he searched in preparing his History.

For example, an open croquet tournament was held in Ryde in 1893 – predating the Maidstone tournament of 1894 – and one was advertised there in the previous year (though the absence of press reports suggest that it may not actually have been held); and tournaments were also being held as far afield as Yorkshire (Thirsk and Pickering) and Northern Ireland (Belfast and Ballymena) before the UAECA had been formed.

As the British Library database includes only the more significant regional

newspapers, there is probably more to be found in the local press.

From that source, we have long known for example that tournaments were held in Surbiton from 1897 to 1900 by a peripatetic club there which rented lawns each season.

As to the UAECA itself, a letter to the editor of The Morning Post in June 1896 by someone identified only as 'a member of the Committee' talks of the United All England Croquet Association being 'in course of formation', and both the Bristol (July) and Bath (September) tournaments that year are reported in the local press as having been organised by the UAECA.

A press article in April 1898 states that Walter Peel first floated the idea of an Association at the Maidstone tournament in 1895 and refers to his 'indefatigable exertions' – rather giving the lie to Prichard's impression that Peel was rather indolent.

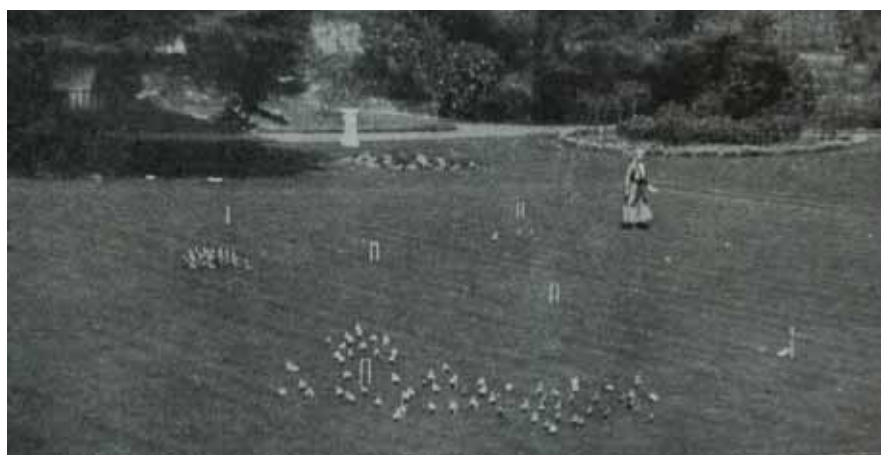
Even if the Committee did not formally meet until 1897, we should perhaps regard 1896 as the first year of the Association's existence.

While none of this is of any great moment, it would be interesting to know if any local records still exist which could add to our knowledge of croquet's Dark Ages.

Fuller details of my own recent findings are available on the Oxford website.

On this evidence alone, it is hard to resist the impression that (as we now know is also true of the Dark Ages) there was rather more going on before the UAECA was formed than we once thought.

Ian Bond, Surbiton CC



Whilst not strictly on topic with Ian Bond's article above, here is a charming historic photograph nonetheless ~ It dates from a 1916 Gazette, showing a croquet court at Byfleet being put to dual use in war time. Note the double pegs of the Hale setting and the duckling attempting to peg-out! (Photo by the famous player Mr Trevor Williams, 1916).

Ask the Ref

Andy from South London 'Asks the Ref':
This scenario happened to me in a practice session yesterday.

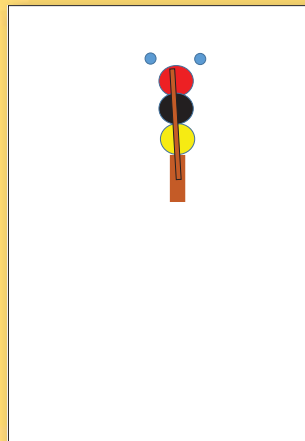
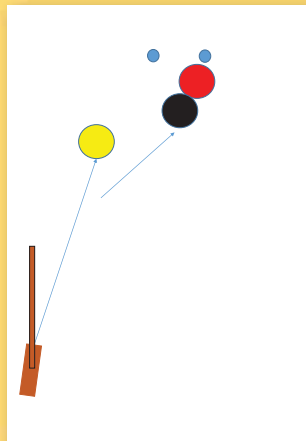
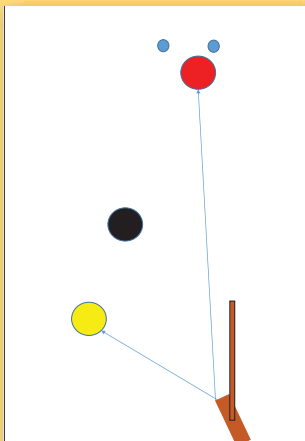
I cannot see anything in the laws that prevents me from using the unusual solution of the 'in lawn' cannon to complete my otherwise failed TP! Is this okay Ref?

Yellow tries a rover peel on Red which fails and leaves Yellow with a rush on Black to rover

Yellow tries to rush Black onto Red to complete the peel which ends up with Red and Black in

contact and Red in an 'unrunnable' position

As this is now a 'cannon', can red be moved to a position where it can now run the hoop? Assume the repositioned Red has not started to run the hoop. Is the following shot likely to be a fault?



The Ref replies:

My answer to this is that moving red for the in-court cannon is legal and I don't think that the subsequent croquet stroke is likely to be a fault if the balls go cleanly through the hoop.

Although of course it could be a fault, if yellow gets impeded by one of the other balls sticking in or bouncing off the hoop and the mallet catches up with it again after a visible interval.

The Ref also volunteered another interesting situation:

The question arose during a tournament last weekend, of how the game should proceed after a stroke in which the striker's ball, which was for the peg, hit the peg and then 'roqueted' a live ball.

The striker wanted to ignore the peg-out and instead take croquet.

However, his ball has been pegged out under 15(a)(1) and, under 15(c), it has validly moved the ball it subsequently hit.

But his turn ends under 4(d) (3) (as, under 15(d), his ball became an outside agency at the end of the stroke), and so he cannot take croquet.

Thanks Ref!

Lawn Care by Duncan Hector

DO NOT DISTURB - An extract from an article by Richard Windows, Turfgrass Agronomist STRI. *"The true cause of annual meadow-grass ingress comes from the creation of gaps in the turf. Modern practices and their mechanisation have radically increased the disturbance pressure imposed on fine turf. While such aggressive practices are done for the right reasons, they might, in the end, be causing untold harm."*

After the invention of powered scarifiers, manufacturers invested heavily in the production of machines to satisfy a new market. Hard selling started and continues today, even though the machines often do more harm than good.

Scarifiers weaken fine grass and can create bare areas and scarring. But thatch can be controlled by the use of nature instead of machines. I deal with numerous clubs around the country and carry out thatch audits, taking a number of readings across all lawns. These records are building up and already show that thatch can be reduced and managed by using an appropriate nutrition programme and regular aeration. The reduction in thatch is around 15 to 20% per annum, whereas scarification usually removes only 5%. Using nature is more effective and perfectly logical because thatch is dead organic matter and can be broken down in the root zone by bacteria and micro-organisms. By applying bacterial boosters and aerating regularly nature is able to do all the work for you.

The result is a healthier sward, no bare areas and less opportunity for moss and meadow grass invasion.

Winter mowing

Mowing encourages side shoots to grow (tillering), thus creating a denser sward and no bare patches for coarse grasses to establish. In winter keep the height of cut to 8 or 10mm. Some lawns can be too wet to mow at times but a rotary mower is better than nothing.

Duncan Hector, duncan@duncanhectorturfcare.co.uk

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CA Grants help more clubs improve their facilities

Colchester Croquet Club were kindly granted £3,200 by the CA in November 2014, towards a new mower and roller, supporting a series of improvements at the club, **reports Robert Fulford**. Colchester is one of the country's bigger clubs with four lawns, a good clubhouse, 80 full members and many other second club members who make the journey to Colchester to enjoy our facilities. We stage our own tournaments and usually hold one to two CA events each year, such as Selection or All-England events.

In recent years we have been particularly blessed to have Peter Kenward as the driving force behind many improvements, supported by many other of our members. Peter's contribution to the club has been colossal. Below in Peter's words is a description of what has been going on.

~

For many years our club has totally relied on a contractor to do all its lawn maintenance. Initially this worked well but as time went on and the contractor was bought by a larger organisation the quality and speed of the lawns became worse. In April 2014, **it was decided that we should ask Duncan Hector to visit our club and his report made a number of suggestions** including buying our own equipment and taking a more hands-on approach to the maintenance of our lawns. He advised that using riverbed sand for top dressing, a better mower to ensure that the grass was cut cleanly, the fertilisers he supplies, frequent use of a spiker to aerate the grass and over-seeding with dwarf rye grass would improve the speed of the lawns.

Throughout 2014 Duncan worked with us, using our existing contractors to mow the lawns and apply the fertilisers, as we did not have suitable equipment. However, it soon became apparent that we would only achieve the speed improvements that everyone wanted, if we bought our own mower and spiker. Duncan suggested that we buy a ride-on Allett mower, which has a groomer to ensure that the grass is cleanly cut, and a towed Sarel spiker to aerate the grass throughout the summer period. In view of the high cost of this equipment, it was decided to apply to the CA for a grant.

Last September the lawns were scarified and then over-seeded with dwarf rye grass using a machine supplied by Duncan. This is just the start of the slow process of

replacing our meadow grass with a breed which we hope will make the lawns faster and more resilient to heavy wear. A few weeks later, we top dressed with four tonnes of riverbed sand which was used instead of our usual 70/30 top dressing to improve the lawn speed.

We continued to use our contractor but also found a small family-run company who were keen and showed a real interest in what we were trying to do. So far they only mow the lawns each week and look after the surrounds but our intention is eventually to ask them to do more.

Towards the end of 2014 we bought a towed sprayer and a pedestrian spreader so that we could apply the fertilisers ourselves. We also realised that our wooden equipment shed was neither big enough nor secure enough to accommodate all the new equipment. So at the start of 2015 we bought and craned in a 20 foot shipping container.

Early in 2015 we heard that the CA had approved our application to buy the mower and spiker and so these were immediately ordered. Allett Sales Director, Leigh Bowers, delivered the mower and demonstrated its use and maintenance. Although this mower enables us to cut down to about 3mm for major tournaments we noticed an immediate lawn speed improvement when cutting at 5mm due to the groomer. The sit-on attachment is hopefully reducing some of the smaller bumps on the lawns but we hope that the top dressing will gradually make the lawns flatter.

Completely changing the way that our lawns are maintained has not been without its challenges. The company we now employ have been superb but we have had to buy many bits and pieces to enable us to undertake the equipment maintenance. So far we have also done all the line marking, sprayed all fertilisers and other chemicals, and done all the spiking. Duncan Hector continues to provide advice and, of course, we use the fertilisers and other chemicals he supplies. It has been a steep learning curve but we now hear lots of positive comments about our lawns instead of the being told how slow they are. There are still lots of improvements that need to be made but at least we are moving in the right direction thanks to the grant from the CA, ongoing advice from Duncan Hector, and a lot of hard work.

Beckford Croquet Club were all thrilled to be awarded a CA Grant for our new clubhouse.

This, together with a grant from Wychavon Borough Council, has enabled us to build a 4.5 x 3.5 Tuin Log Cabin.

Our development Officer, Robert Moss, has patiently guided our club since its inception in 2012. Always a pillar of support he never failed to answer my endless queries within hours. The CA provided our start-up package of hoops, balls and four mallets, and I was able to drum up some local support for what was then a virtual club. Four years later, we have two full-size courts and 28 members, the majority of whom play GC. However, with encouragement and coaching, we have five members improving their AC game. This will be our third year competing in SW Federation GC competition.

On the infrastructure side, we have been busy as well. A concrete garage was donated, dismantled and reassembled by press-ganged helpers. In 2014, two local farmers dug up and levelled one of the two courts; a move that was all financed by a generous member. We seeded with 'Barwell Extreme' which germinated very quickly, only to see rain persisting for many weeks, before a low point came when two ducks decided that our lawn was a fine place to smooch.

Many tons of sand was spread in early 2015, and later, **with the good advice of Duncan Hector**, we also spread soil improver, procured from a municipal dump. Transporting many tons of this black smouldering stuff and collecting three punctures was eventually very well worth the labour, when the lawn became a good playing surface.

The latest project was the construction of our new 'Tuin' Club House, which was undertaken by two people, one of whom knew what he was doing. It was delivered in an enormous package and deposited at the back of the Beckford Village Hall car park one dark windy day in March. The immediate impression was that this was a flat pack from hell. However, with the help of good online instruction, assembling the kit was much easier than we had imagined, and I would thoroughly recommend this company. However, we are still pondering over many pieces of left-over timber!

Chris Hague, Beckford CC



**Peter Kenward,
Colchester CC**



The Openshaw Shield

In my report on New Zealand's triumph in the GC World Teams Championship (*Gazette 362*), I neglected to record that the winners received the newly introduced Openshaw Shield, which due to its design, will sit nicely alongside its AC counterpart the MacRobertson Shield.

New Zealand hold both World Team Championships, and CA members Chris and Jenny Clarke played in both teams. Congratulations to Jenny, who has just been named as captain of the NZ team for 2017 Mac.

~ **Chris Roberts, Editor**



Don't get shirty with me!

This time nothing about my shirts, but I found this cartoon in a pub in Sussex a few years ago. After explaining my interest in croquet, I persuaded the landlord to give me his copy in return for a donation to his charity. I note that the fellow's shirt seems to be white with the club name on it, so it should meet the current regulations. ~ **David Openshaw**



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Travels with and without things

Somethings in croquet I do well, others I do less well. The thing that I do best of all is to leave things behind - yes I know, we've all done it from time to time but I truly am an expert at this.

Two years ago I left my mallet at Budleigh and had to have it couriered to my next tournament at Tyneside! Last season there was an occasion when I had left four hats at four different clubs, none of which were my home club. Quite impressive, I'm sure you'd agree, but this season, I've developed this to a completely new level.

I was congratulating my self for leaving the Isle of Wight still wearing my trusty Panama, when upon boarding the hovercraft, it was sucked off my head and into the huge rear fans, then shredded and spat out like confetti into the Solent. I'm not sure how I'll top that! ~ **Ed.**

Sidmog

Twas Sidmog and the waves did roll so snugly on the pebbledash All cosy was the B&B and tasty was the publinosh

But underneath this calm extere there lurks a green expanse of fear where those in white attempt to clear a hoop or two or curl up in a corner near in mortified abjection

Meanwhile the mänge in smooth supere arranges matches there or here oh everywhere and over there's the clear blue sea that sparkles tantalisingly and brings us chilly misty morns as well as Sidmogafternoons of baking heat

And we have tried sometimes prevailed more often failed quite dismally (but generally enjoyed ourselves) as hoops jump out and balls breathe in dodging all that we can throw at them

In Sidmog where the gulls do call so glibly on the thermipoo all friendly is the welcomal and we'll be back you can be sure

Jonathan Toy
Sidmouth week, June 2016

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