

The

Issue 369 September 2017

CROQUET

Gazette



From our files researched by Frances Colman

10 years ago - 2007



The Championship of Surrey -

In an expert display Chris Clarke won the Championship of Surrey, completing a TP in all 11 games he played, winning 10 of them.

He beat Robert Fulford in the final (+26tp, +25tp, +17tp) to win the trophy for the first time.

Last year's winner Rutger Beijderwellen, was beaten 3-2 by Fulford in a close semi-final (-26tp, +25tp, +8qnp, -26tp, +22), while Clarke dispatched Jeff Dawson (+14tp, -9otp, +7tpo, +26tp) in the other.

~

Smaller clubs hosting tournaments -

Some smaller clubs I have visited said that they would love to host a CA Tournament but felt they were too small.

A clever way round this problem is very well demonstrated by the Six Lawns Tournament hosted by three two lawn clubs Hamptworth, Littleton and Winchester.

Run over three days, I have the pleasure of playing and socialising at all three clubs.

I can thoroughly recommend the experience . . .

- Jonathan Isaacs (*from his Chairman's Column*).

~

The World Croquet Federation (WCF) today announced the 2007 inductions to the 'WCF Hall of Fame' . . .

Each year no more than five persons can be inducted making it a very special group of croquet enthusiasts and supporters.

The 2007 inductees are:

Nigel Aspinall, England
Andrew Hope, Scotland
John Jaques II, England
Jack Osborn, USA
John Prince, New Zealand

~

National Seniors Championship -

Playing in his sixth final, Dave Mundy won the Trevor Williams cup, beating Roger Hayes +22, +6 at Budleigh Salterton.

The Hemming Cup for the B Class was won by Colin Hemming who beat Terrey Sparks +2.

Neil Chalmers, Quiller Barrett and Jack Thompson won the C, D and E Classes respectively.

(*report by Nigel Graves*)

50 years ago - 1967



Her Majesty's visit to Hurlingham -

July 28th 1967 will ever be a red letter day in the annals of croquet, H.M. Queen Elizabeth II having honoured us by coming to Hurlingham to present the Centenary prizes. . . There was a good attendance (900 - 1,000). The prizes were won by two young men - the Rose bowl presented by the CA went to Lt. Cmdr. R.D. Sinclair of Edinburgh Club, who narrowly beat H.B.H. Carlisle of Hurlingham Club.

~

Devonshire Park - John Solomon played Keith Wylie, each winning one game.

Everyone knows John Solomon has been World Champion so it says a great deal for the undergraduate Wylie, that he played so well he won the first game. In the second game Wylie did a quadruple peel and then made an error after Rover, thus enabling Solomon to go out with a double peel. There were a large number of spectators who were keenly interested. The match was played on the centre court at Devonshire Park and there was a public address system.

~

Chartwell - the late home of Sir Winston Churchill - was a garden party setting . . . John Solomon and Dudley Hamilton-Miller played a singles and were joined by Nigel Aspinall and Robin Godby to play doubles. 800 people were going over to the house that day (it is now National Trust) and the greater proportion had to pass the croquet lawn so we had a large, though changing audience. The exhibition made a great number of people conscious of the game of croquet who had never heard of it before. . .

~

Open Championships - It would need research to say with assurance that an entry of 34 for the Championship is the highest figure recorded since World War II. . . A final between Hicks and Solomon has often produced a magnificent match but it did not do so on this occasion, for although Humphrey began each game with some beautiful strokes, all too soon he failed at a hoop and this is not an occurrence which is likely to pass with impunity against John. And so this shining star gains his fifth consecutive Championship.

100 years ago - 1917



Lieut. G. Ashmore -

Drowned in The Transylvania. . . In June 1915, he obtained a commission in the Western Army Troops and signal Co., and in April 1917 received orders for Egypt, and while taking a draft of men out, he met his death.

The following extracts are quoted from his soldier servant, who was among the survivors. "When The Transylvania was struck the second time, the order was given 'each man for himself', and the Lieutenant calmly lit a cigarette and told me to go off with the other men. He himself stayed behind, and true to his position as an officer saw all his men clear . . . This was the last I saw myself of Mr Ashmore, but from inquiries I have made since, I find that as the ship went down, he was still standing at his post on the parade deck . . ."

Mr Ashmore was well known in the croquet world and one of our first-class players. He won the Championship in 1909, and in the same year was selected to play in the Champion Cup.

~

Lieut.-Col. The Hon. H.C. Needham -

We very much regret to announce the death of Lieut.-Col. The Hon. H.C. Needham, which took place at Cranbourn Grange, Windsor on August 2nd.

Col. Needham was honorary Secretary of the Croquet Association from 1898 to 1904, being successor to the late Walter Peel, the founder of the Association.

The amount of work done during that period on behalf of the Association, and the energy with which Col. Needham carried out his duties, practically singlehanded, will be remembered with gratitude by all Associates whose recollection goes back beyond the last ten years. The number of members of the Association had grown from about three hundred in 1898 to about fifteen hundred by 1904, and in addition to the amount of correspondence involved, generally the work of referee and handicapper at Association meetings . . .

Col. Needham had been a Vice-President and Honorary Member of the Association since 1908, and his interest in the game continued unabated until the cessation of play at the beginning of the war.

Editorial

Well, here it is at last, your much delayed Gazette which has been far too long in production.

This stemmed from a problem with my CA supplied Gazette computer (yes, it has its own dedicated machine) which started to run slower and slower before stopping working all together.

Fortunately the CA is awash with clever people and, in this case, one in particular who wishes to remain nameless, but who nevertheless is a 'computer wiz'.

I am indebted to 'The Fixer' with whom I left the computer at one tournament for him to investigate the problem and, by my next event, it was fully mended. The only snag then was that my Gazette production window had been well and truly missed and so 'September has become the new August' so far as this issue is concerned.

On the upside, there isn't long to wait for the next issue which will be timed for a late October delivery, after which we will be back on track.

This issue once again has competitive croquet at its core, so much of the season having passed since the last publication.

All hail Reg Bamford again, this time for winning the AC and GC Opens 'double' which leads this Gazette. Look out too for

Andrew Dutton's advert for his croquet computer game (see page 11) - not only is it fabulous, but Andrew is very generously giving all profits to the CA - for which I'm sure we all thank him sincerely.

The cover this time is from our AC National Seniors at Budleigh Salterton and shows just what it meant to Gareth Deyner to peg out and get his handicap down to scratch for the first time. It was so good to see The Seniors fully subscribed under the careful and thoughtful management of Julie Horsley, whose report is also within these pages, along with much else besides.

My own season has been one of ups and downs, the latter exemplified (below) by a simple hoop 'blob' that Harry Dodge, returning after an exam year, duly moved in on to punish.



Chris Roberts

Chris Roberts Editor

49 Ancastle Green, Henley on Thames, Oxon. RG9 ITS
07973 787710 gazette@croquet.org.uk



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Front cover: The joy of winning and becoming a 'scratch' player hits Gareth Deyner at The AC National Seniors at Budleigh Salterton.

(Photograph by Chris Roberts)

This page: The Editor slumps in disappointment in the rain at the Wiltshire GC Open at Hamptworth and the Chairman happy in victory at Budleigh.

(Photos by Michael Bilton and Chris Roberts)

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

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Chairman's Column

Croquet has taken up most of my time throughout July, mainly playing and watching, but with rather less administrative involvement than usual.

Members will be aware that the CA meeting schedule takes a break during the playing season with the exception of a Management Committee meeting each July.

But this does not mean that your officers are inactive throughout the summer.

Indeed, two groups have been particularly busy this year: the Membership Changes Implementation Group (MCIG) and the Governance Working Party (GWP) and I am extremely grateful to the members of both for their endeavours.

The GWP has consulted widely with all sectors of the Association regarding the governance of the CA and identified a number of common concerns.

Two main themes emerge from these identified shortcomings: firstly, Council is not an effective, efficient policy-making body; secondly, the federations are not effectively or sufficiently involved in the governance of the Association.

The July Management Committee approved the GWP's draft proposals for change and agreed that a report will be put to the October Council meeting before going to all parties for consultation.

In order to meet some immediate issues and to start the process of transition, the Management Committee also approved some interim changes to our operational procedures to take effect from the October 2017 AGM.

Although most can be implemented by changes to standing orders and the Practice Book, the proposal that chairmen of standing committees no longer need be members of Council will require a change to the CA Constitution.

A motion to execute this has been approved by Council and this will be put to the 2017 AGM (see *Agenda on page 5*) and I

hope that clubs and members will exercise their vote.

If agreed, this change would take immediate effect at the October Council meeting.

Following this meeting, the GWP Chairman, Strat Liddiard, will detail the longer term proposals in the Croquet Gazette.

In terms of the overall timetable, our aim is for Council to present fully worked-up proposals, with a rewritten constitution, to the AGM in October 2018.



Brian Shorney

Expanding the CA membership

After over a year developing a new database system, we are on track to launch Standard Membership of the CA for 2018.

That means that all club members of croquet clubs which are full CA member clubs will be entitled to CA membership.

The next stage in this process is to ask club members if they wish to take up the membership, and then to collect their details from the clubs.

By the time you are reading this, all club secretaries will have been contacted with the details of what is required, and they should be contacting their members.

Following the advice of the Information Commissioner's Office, we are advising clubs that individuals must give positive consent that they wish to take up the offer – it is not enough to just give them the ability to opt out.

Becoming a member has no cost implications to either individual or club, so

An appeal by Jeff Dawson

we hope that the take-up will be good.

However we expect that there will be a good few people who may be reluctant to agree to clubs forwarding their details to the CA unless they can see positive benefits to themselves.

As someone who is reading this article, the chances are you are already a member or, if not, you have an interest in the wider world of croquet.

You are probably therefore in the camp of those likely to want to become a Standard Member.

It is up to all of us enthusiasts to extol the virtues of membership and make sure as many club members as possible take up the offer.

Becoming a member means getting your own copy of the Gazette, so that you can see more of what is happening outside of your club.

With the launch of the wider membership we will be amending the content of the Gazette to contain more information of relevance to ordinary club members, so we hope this will be attractive to all players.

Becoming a member also means having entry to tournaments in the fixtures book (the temporary policy of allowing entry to all club members will not apply once standard membership is introduced).

You will also be entitled to vote on critical issues, so will be able to influence future policy. It helps us all to have as many people as possible taking an interest in the future of the game.

Please help us to sell the message!

Jeff Dawson,
Chairman of
Membership
Changes
Implementation
Group.



2018 Subscription Rates

It is expected that the new Standard Member category will be implemented for 2018. Council has resolved that, if this does not happen, the subscription rates for 2018 will remain unchanged at the 2017 figures.

Otherwise, the subscription rates for 2018, in pounds sterling, will be as follows:

Individual members

Standard membership will be free for members of CA member clubs, provided that the club supplies details of its members.

Premium Member	Direct Debit	Other
First year	14.50	N/A
Second year	28.50	N/A
Full rate	38	43.50
Paperless discounted rate	31	36.50
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	18	23.50
Paperless discounted rate	11	16.50

(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	11.70
Standard (smaller clubs) per capita	8.70
Each Junior or student member of a club per capita	5.00
<i>(The minimum club subscription remains at a total of 60. For newly-registered clubs in their 1st, 2nd or 3rd year the subscription is capped at a total of 60, 100 and 150 respectively.)</i>	
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, plus 20 pence to account for inflation. Most individual subscriptions have been reduced.

Peter Death,
Honorary Treasurer

Roger Goldring got in touch to highlight that **Reg Bamford recently became the first player to achieve a GC handicap of MINUS SIX!** Not that Reg plays much,

if any, handicap GC but this really does emphasize the skills range between the World Champion and the average club player. Yes, in theory at least (and probably

in practice as well), Reg gives you more than a dozen extra turns and he still wins.

Congratulations Reg; it's an achievement I don't suppose you were even aware of! - **Ed.**

NOTICE OF MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Croquet Association will take place at the Hurlingham Club on Saturday 21 October 2017, commencing at 11 a.m.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence.

2. Minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 22 October 2016.

The minutes are on the website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1493> and will be sent to Home Members on request to the CA Office.

3. Report of Council.

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

4. Accounts for the year to December 2016 and Hon. Treasurer's Report.

The accounts are on the website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1786> and will be sent to Home Members on request to the CA Office. There is a commentary on them at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1830>.

5. Motion to Amend the Constitution

Currently, the Constitution requires that the chairmen of committees appointed by Council must be members of Council. Council, on the recommendation of its Governance Working Party, would like that restriction to be relaxed, to widen the field from which committee chairmen can be drawn. **It therefore proposes:**

that in the first paragraph of Clause 25 of the Constitution, which currently reads:

"The Council may appoint committees and sub-committees consisting of members of the Council and other Individual Members and may delegate some of its powers and duties to such committees. The Chairman of such a committee shall always be a member of the Council and the Council shall have the power to elect and remove him and to withdraw the powers delegated to a committee."

the words "be a member of the Council"

shall be replaced by "be a member of the Association".

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. The postal

ballot paper may be downloaded from <https://www.croquet.org.uk/news/docs/AGMBallotPaper2017.doc>. Votes in advance of the meeting must be received by 11 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): Bill Arliss and Roger Staples, who were elected in 2014. No other candidates have been nominated, so there are 2 candidates for 2 vacancies and 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: Andy Myers (Aldermaston); Steel Memorial Bowl: Louise Bradforth (Bath and Cheltenham); Spiers Trophy: Paul Gunn (Wingrave).

12. Presentation of Club Awards.

The Townsend Award is to be presented to Cheam CC. The Apps-Heley Award jointly to Bath and Wrest Park CCs. The Millennium Award to Sussex Country CC.

13. Presentation of Croquet Association Diplomas.

14. Presentation of Council Medal.

The Council Medal is to be awarded to Martin French.

15. Any Other Business.

16. President's Closing Remarks.

Dr. I. G. Vincent, Honorary Secretary.



Kirby's four swift games at Colchester

Jonathan Kirby won this year's Colchester Advanced tournament which was reduced to one day. He finished undefeated after four games. This included going round in the third turn in his first game, having hit partner down the east boundary replying to a Duffer tice; finishing sixth turn in his next two games and then eighth turn in his last. A really high level of performance given how little time Jonathan has to play. ~ **Rob Fulford**

VACANCY

New CA Independent Examiner

Marian Hemsted, the CA's Independent Examiner, has decided to retire after many years of service to the membership.

The Examiner is appointed each year by the AGM, and the CA is now seeking applications from suitably qualified and experienced members willing to put their name forward for election.

The accounts are prepared each year by the Hon Treasurer, and the Independent Examiner's role is to check the underlying records and schedules, and to report to Council and the membership any particular matters which have come to his/her attention.

The CA is not required to have a statutory audit of its accounts, and the extent of the examination required does not provide all the evidence which would be necessary in a full audit. The Examiner is normally involved in work from mid-January to early March each year, with the intention that Council at its March meeting should be able to approve the accounts for submission to the AGM.

A modest honorarium is paid to the Examiner.

For more information, please contact the Hon. Treasurer, Peter Death, at peter.j.death@gmail.com in the first instance, **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

'Going for Growth' with NDO Dave Gunn

In my first article I wrote about my initial focus on the 'journey of a typical new croquet player' and how I needed to find ways to add value in my role to each of the various phases I identified in that journey.

I also shared my findings that there are many examples of best practice around the country and that I need to try to capture as many of these as possible and then look at ways of sharing that best practice nationally.

If I am to be successful, I will need plenty of help...from individual members, from clubs, from the CA and also, perhaps most importantly, from the Federations around the country.

The nine Federations are all different.

The challenges they face will vary widely, as they consider their own local circumstances, their geographies and their density of clubs.

They will all have their individual strengths (and weaknesses) and will have many goals in common with each other when it comes to supporting their clubs and growing our sport in their area.

On top of that they will have something even more important - local knowledge and relationships with their member clubs.

To be able to fully capture best practice and new ideas and to then successfully implement them on a national basis, I am going to need to tap into this wealth of knowledge and experience.

With this in mind, a Federations Conference was held in London in August and all nine federations sent along between one and three representatives.

By working together on the day and beyond, I hope that we will be able to arrive at a broad combined view of what 'a perfect Federation' might look like...and then agree how we might get closer to it, than we

typically currently are.

The resulting working parties were set up and tasked with producing action plans as promptly as feasible.

- Any club committee that thinks all its members want the same or should do the same is mad.

- Any County/Region/Federation that thinks all its clubs want the same or should do the same is barking mad.

- Any National Governing Body that thinks all its Counties/Regions/Federations want the same or should do the same is extremely barking mad!

I hope you all enjoy the remainder of your season, and many thanks to those of you who have contacted me since my first article with thoughts and ideas that will undoubtedly prove useful for me...please keep them coming!

Michael Goodman 1930 - 2017



Michael Goodman joined Hurlingham, where he and his wife Pat played tennis in their younger years. Then he was introduced to croquet and

became a regular and keen member of the weekly sessions.

After retirement in 2000 he added membership of the Dulwich club and the following year became Club Secretary there for the next 14 years, continuing to play at Hurlingham during this time as well.

Though never aspiring to a low handicap he was an extremely enthusiastic player at both clubs and played AC and GC equally enthusiastically.

He was a great organiser of friendly matches against other clubs including the lesser clubs in South-East London, to whom he became well known, and the All England Club.

At Dulwich he was a major force in greeting new players and a renowned organiser of Fun Days, New Year's Day tournaments and Club Dinners. Both clubs will miss him and his good humour.

Ray Hall

Bill Hill 1924 - 2017



This 'selfie' photograph was taken with a plate camera in 1949.

Bill Hill took up croquet in 1986 shortly after he retired from a 47-year career as

chartered principle design engineer in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

His lateral thinking meant he took to Association Croquet very readily and he enjoyed the challenge of the game for the next 31 years.

He gained a long service award from the Croquet Association, a Diploma for Services to Croquet, and was made an honorary member of his club, Tyneside CC, where he served on the committee as Secretary for 18 years.

The only boy in an extended family of 19 women, Bill knew how to be heard and used his practical knowledge to help.

Bill made and repaired many things for croquet including a hoop lifter that the most delicate of ladies could use without damaging the lawn.

He was a kind and gentle man who has served our sport well, and even at 92 still had a handicap of 12.

Alison Heywood-Hill

Betty King 1931 - 2017



Betty King began playing Croquet in the late 1980s, quickly became an important part of Norwich CC and served as secretary and treasurer over the years.

By the millennium, low membership numbers threatened the Norwich Club's survival. Appreciating that a shorter and more social game might prove an attractive alternative, Betty launched her Golf Croquet offensive and her talent for promoting the game and encouraging new players knew no bounds.

The WI; the WEA; the UEA; Blickling Hall; the Bishop's Garden Party; Denman College - all fell within her sphere and at every opportunity she was there.

Her success in imparting her love of the game has been amply rewarded because the Club's current membership stands at around 60 players. Betty was keen to encourage League play, participated enthusiastically herself, and one time played overseas at the club in Corfu.

In 2014 Betty was made an Honorary Life Member of Norwich CC and was awarded a Croquet Association Diploma for outstanding services to the game in 2016.

Kay Jefford and Peter Scott

CA Grants helping our clubs' development projects

Lawn improvement at St Agnes



Ipswich 'On the road again'



St Agnes Croquet Club is now in its third full season, having been started in June 2014. One of our founding members was an experienced player from the Cornwall Club in St Austell.

Ours is a familiar story of borrowing old equipment from other clubs and members; we also received a starter set from the CA.

We have had to balance our enthusiasm and ambition with strict financial control. Membership hovers around 55; we have targeted 75 as being an optimum number.

We have been fortunate to receive grants from our local improvements committee and Sport England, the latter allowing us to buy a decent second-hand mower and a shed to store it in.

The club entered the SW Federation league last year and, despite some tough results, we are playing again this year with much useful experience gained.

We have been very pro-active in the community, running free taster and fun days, inviting local groups and societies to play and we have also taken the game into schools. One of our members has recently obtained a GC referee and coaching qualification and this now gives us two qualified members.

Because of our financial position, we have to maintain and improve our lawns ourselves. We are fortunate to have a willing band of members prepared to put their shoulders to the wheel and in addition, we have received excellent advice from local specialists who have given their time and expertise freely.

The grant from the CA of £536.88 has allowed us to buy two pieces of essential equipment to complement the 'new' mower. This has been match-funded by us through our regular fund-raising activities. Both the trailer sprayer unit and a lawn spiker have now been purchased and put to use. Spraying three lawns and a substantial outfield area using a knapsack sprayer was not viable in the long term and the trailer sprayer has made this part of our lawn maintenance regime so much easier to perform.

We recognised the need to reduce the moss in our lawns and, having **followed the regular advice given by Duncan Hector in The Gazette**, determined that one of the important pieces of kit to have at our disposal would be a spiker.

It is early days but we are confident that we can continue improving our lawns. With the right advice and the right equipment, we are making steady progress. We hope that improved lawns will enhance the reputation of our club within the SW Federation, help us attract more members, perhaps enter a second team in the league and develop AC within the club.

Three years ago our lawns were a pony field; the transformation is amazing.

Ivan Corbett, Chairman, St Agnes CC

In 2012, we moved our croquet club from an Ipswich park out to a golf club two miles outside town. We've just moved again – this time a more modest 50 yards!

For the first move, having negotiated a deal with Fynn Valley Golf Club, we built a new log-cabin club house and moved the club from the park to a beautiful spot at the golf club. It was a great success, and we doubled our membership in the first few months. The club is now vibrant with year-round play and more club sessions each week than ever. **Two articles appeared in the Croquet Gazette (#337 and #340) about our move, as it seems a model that would suit many croquet clubs – golf clubs already know how to grow really good lawns on their soil in their micro-climate, and expect to play on them all year round.**

The patch of land was formerly the farmer's daughters' pony paddock. But these daughters were now grown up and it had only been used as an overflow car park for many years. The golf club quickly improved the lawn surface, although there wasn't the money to do anything about the steady slope that ran diagonally across both lawns. While this posed an interesting challenge when the grass was green, in the famously parched East Anglian summers, they could become blisteringly fast and almost impossible to play a controlled break on.

Then a year ago, the golf club owner approached us with the idea of building a new and better golf club house. This would help secure the future of the golf club and give everyone – including the croquet club – much improved facilities. There was just one snag... the only obvious place to build this new club house was on our croquet lawns!

They had surveyed all their available land and decided they could pinch just enough off of the nine-hole golf course to give us two new lawns about 50 yards away. They started work on improving this area of fairway, and it is now a new pair of decent croquet lawns which are pretty flat – just a very slight slope along their length.

The golf club kindly moved our log-cabin croquet pavilion to the new site and immediately after our mid-October Finals Day, we moved to the new site. Luckily, we didn't have to dismantle the cabin, just empty it of anything heavy. They then jacked it up carefully onto a pile of concrete blocks, reversed a trailer under it, and drove it across the golf course to our new site.

So we've now started our winter programme of tournaments and club sessions at our new home and are getting used to croquet on the flat once more. We've also decided to invest in a travelling sprinkler system, so in future years we don't have the 'fun' of playing for the summer months on something like sloping lino!

Martin French, Secretary, Ipswich CC

Australians should have been on the cover of the Gazette

Dear Editor,

I received my June Croquet Gazette and was looking forward to the report on the Mac. and a picture of the winning Australian team having won the trophy for the first time since 1935, "a mere blink in time" in the croquet world.

It is also the first time that three brothers have represented any country in the event since its inception and the background to their progress would be worth a detailed article.

There were many pictures of the Australian team on the internet both during and after the event and I am sure that one of these could have been used.

However there were no pictures only a reference that having been denied a picture of the winning England Team "because they finished second" for the front cover you published pictures of the inaugural Students' GC Championship from April, a very worthy event but hardly as important as the Mac.

Perhaps this might be rectified in the next edition and give the Mac the prominence it deserves with a photograph of the winning team on the front cover, whether in future the winners are Australia, New Zealand, USA or England.

Frank Moir, Bowdon CC



Dear Frank,

Thank you for your letter and expressing your opinion so well. The achievement of the Australians in winning after such a long wait was indeed impressive.

Had I been supplied with a photograph of the winning team I might well have used it alongside the report within the magazine, however time was against me during the last Gazette production.

Copyright considerations and the low resolution of images that are on the internet prevented any quick fix along the lines you suggest being possible.

To your main point however, I have to disagree with you about using the winning Australians on the cover of the Gazette, because this publication is the magazine

for the **Members of the Croquet Association**, not the world game.

The New Zealand team that won the previous Mac were not given the whole cover of the Gazette, and nor were the two previous winners of the GC World Team Championships (Egypt and New Zealand), for the same reason.

I have little doubt that the Egyptians and Kiwis featured large on the covers of their own magazines at the time and, thanks to the generosity and courtesy of the Australian Croquet Association, I am able to show here that their Mac winners of course got their front cover accolade in their own country.

Ed.

The photographs are courtesy of Croquet Australia.



Who was Budleigh's 'Lady in the Lake'

Dear Editor,

We have just had the Challenge and Gilbey tournament at Budleigh Salterton and everyone enjoyed themselves.

On the final day we had torrential rain, but matches were still played by our stalwart croquet players even though several lawns were flooded.

This brings us to the important question.

We, on the veranda, sheltering from the downpour, remembered a similar day several years ago, when a lady player was seen demonstrating her special skills whilst playing in bare feet in several inches of water.

She sent her shots speeding through the torrent and she was snapped looking very elegant as only a lady croquet player can, especially in those conditions.

So who was she and where are the snaps?

Please can you or your readers help?

Sam Watts, Budleigh Salterton CC

Dear Sam,

I had a recollection of a photograph that appeared on the cover of the Gazette a few years ago, which featured a woman player, standing water and much spray, so, in much hope I looked it up (the last 12 years of Gazettes are readable on the CA website).

It turned out that the image I was thinking of hailed from Gazette 340 of October 2005, but is of Louise Bradforth at Cheltenham, so the answer to your question remains unanswered for the time being.

Does anyone remember the incident to which Sam refers?

Ed.

'One for sorrow, two for joy - Magpie...'

Dear Editor,

The Italian for magpie is gazza, which gave us 'gazette' - a newspaper full of gossip and chatter.

Another age related record claim

Dear Editor,

After reading your snippet in the June issue (Gazette 368) about age-related record breakers, I checked with the CA Archivist Chris Williams, and the age gap between Ryan Cabble and William Ormerod is 55 years, which, as you say, may well be a championship record.

However, my son James can go one better. He played in his first tournament at Cheltenham in 1995 when he was 13, and one of his opponents was John Exell, who was 75 years his senior!

Sue Mackay, Dyffryn CC

The English word comes from 'Mag', short for Margaret - a name used in English slang to denote a talkative woman.

Richard Bilton, Nottingham CC

Golf Croquet missing from BBC 'Get Inspired' website

Dear Editor,

It was good to read in the June edition (Gazette 368) two articles making reference to the new video promoting croquet on the BBC get-inspired website.

The text supporting the video reads: "The international version of the sport - Association Croquet - is highly competitive, however for the half million people in the UK who own a croquet set all they need is a Garden."

What is very noticeable is that there is no reference to golf croquet - the most popular and growing version of our sport.

The links to the CA website take you to the Association section and the Garden section of the site.

It is a shame that the powers that be seem only interested in promoting Association.

It is a missed opportunity, having worked so hard to get croquet onto the BBC website, not to have promoted both codes of our sport.

**Keith Bryant,
Dowlish Wake CC**

National Development Officer, Dave Gunn replies:

Thanks for raising this issue Keith, as it gives me the chance to clarify progress so far with the BBC.

When their 'Get Inspired' programme came into being, several 'smaller' sports such as petanque and bobsleigh managed to get in early and secure a slot on the list of permanently featured sports.

When I approached the BBC in May asking for croquet to be added, they explained that they are reticent to grow the list too quickly but that there might be an opportunity in the short term to showcase our sport.

With National Croquet Day in mind I sent them a number of things, including the recently produced video, and was delighted to hear that they felt they could use it.

The problem I had was that the item you refer to appeared on their site on 2 June and I was only informed the day after and without having had any direct input to the accompanying text and links.

As this was so close to NCD on Sunday 5

June, I felt it better to let the article run, and it did receive several thousand hits that may have generated visitors to events around the country.

The article has now dropped off the 'Get Inspired' site (although it is archived) and I am continuing my efforts to get us a permanent presence, one that you can rest assured will feature both AC and GC in equal measure.

CA webmaster, Dave Kibble replies:

For some time, the CA has invested heavily in promoting and supporting GC and is delighted that it now stands well on its own feet.

In that same period, AC has suffered something of a decline and AC regeneration is now an important focus of attention.

CA policy is to support all codes, so visitors to the website should see no bias and I wonder which page on the CA website Keith is quoting from - an email to the page's owner (link at the foot of each page) should gain speedy redress.

Was this Croquet's northernmost outpost?

Dear Editor,

Frances and I spotted this sign whilst walking in a pine forest near Savonlinna, Finland, about 250 metres south of Lusto railway station (latitude 61 North).

The hotel is still there, but no sign of the croquet lawn!

Was this the northernmost outpost of croquet?

John Low, Sussex County CC

Although reproduced too small to read here, the words attached to this illustration say that it shows croquet being played in the hotel yard in the 1950s. It is also in two other languages, Finnish of course and what looks like Russian script, and these spell our sport 'Kroket' and 'Kpocket' respectively.

Ed.



James Hawkins takes on Chris Evans with 9 million listening

James Hawkins, a leading AC player and author of 'Complete Croquet', is to be congratulated on getting croquet on to the Chris Evans Radio 2 show, **writes John Dawson.**

He initially phoned in to "put Chris right" on the history of croquet at Wimbledon, and was promptly "rewarded" with a live interview with Chris within days. A brave man!!

And whilst in the interview James may not have revealed anything new to croquet aficionados, he did get croquet into the public arena.

Not many of us create the opportunity to talk to 9 million people in the UK about croquet, and to get on to the Chris Evans iPlayer site (along with a photo of AC World Champion Stephen Mulliner) for even more. Readers can listen for themselves on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p058x6kh>

Well done, James.

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Croquet debuts at BBC Cou

Countryfile Live is an annual show which is a spin-off from the BBC TV programme Countryfile, and is held over four days in August at Blenheim Palace, near Oxford, **reports John Dawson.**

It is attended by over 120,000 people.

This year the CA persuaded the organisers to allow a croquet court to be set up in the centre of the show, on which visitors could play under the tutelage of experienced CA players.

On the ground, Tony Newport and Pat Edgington from the nearest club Eynsham had to make a lawn out of the parkland, and then 50 players from neighbouring clubs, and some from further afield, volunteered

to staff the court over nine hours on each of the four days.

The result was that hundreds of visitors got 15-minute slots to play croquet, and thoroughly enjoyed it!

Tens of thousands of visitors watched as they walked past the court, and many stopped to chat to the whites-clad CA volunteers, to learn what croquet was all about and pick up some leaflets.

Many of the visitors – who were of all ages – were locals, but some came from as far afield as Ireland, Spain, Canada and even Australia!

The coup was that we even got BBC Countryfile presenter Anita Rani “to give croquet a go”.

Afterwards she tweeted “Today I played croquet! I’m a bloomin natural!”

Over 80 people were sufficiently



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interested to leave their email and postcode details for Dave Gunn, our National Development Officer, to steer them towards clubs near their homes and a further twenty had serious chats with members of clubs local to the show.

How many will end up playing croquet we don't of course know, but it was clear that the CA and modern croquet raised its public profile and made a real impact on show

visitors.

Many thanks must go to the 50 volunteers who staffed the court with great enthusiasm; to Tony and Pat for setting up the lawn, to Eynsham CC for providing the equipment, to Chris Roberts, Klim Seabright and Frances Colman for recruiting the volunteers, and to Liz Larsson and Dan Atiyah of the CA Office for managing the complexities of the admin.



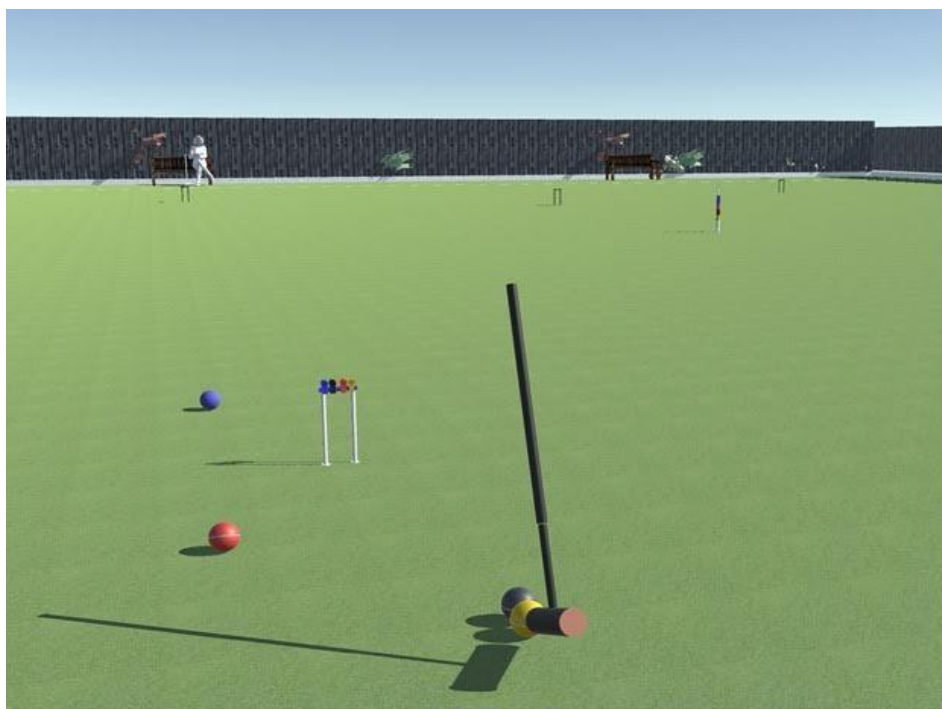
* John Dawson's modesty prevents him from reporting that he not only made the initial contact with the BBC, but oversaw negotiations with the show organisers, and was team leader of the volunteers one day – Ed.



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150th Anniversary AC Open Championship

A field of 40 players gathered under glorious sunshine for the 150th Anniversary Open Championship at The Hurlingham Club, **reports Samir Patel.**

The nine-round Swiss started on the front six Hurlingham lawns; these were running at a quick 12.5 to 13 Plummers, although the hoops were quite forgiving. When the back lawns were available later in the week, they proved a significantly different challenge – they were around 9 Plummers, with much firmer hoops.

Players needed five wins to qualify for the knock-out, and those leading the pack (with five wins from five games) were Jose Riva, Reg Bamford, Robert Fulford and Samir Patel. The remaining places were hard fought for, with Andy Myers, Joel Taylor, Mark Ormerod and Stuart Lawrence sneaking past the cut on five wins from nine games, to make up a knock-out field of 20.

Dave Kibble, James Hopgood and Robin Brown were the unfortunate trio on the wrong side of that cut.

The 139 games of Super Advanced had seen lots of interactive play and a variety of tactics, but pace of the lawns limited the notable peeling to four SXPs (two each for Fulford and Bamford), eight TPOs and two QPs.

The early exchanges in the knock-out produced few surprises with the eight seeds progressing to the quarter-finals.

Despite the hoops being moved to new holes (and hence becoming firmer),

watering slowed the lawns to 11.5 seconds, so the later rounds of the knock-out put more emphasis on shooting and peeling, and it was little surprise that sextuples became the order of the day.

The semi-final day set several new records, for the number of sextuples in a single day (seven, including one in the plate) and the most sextuples in a single match (four), as the top seeds Robert Fulford and Reg Bamford progressed to their tenth Opens Final, which was another record!

The doubles final concluded after completion of the singles semis and saw James Death & Samir Patel beat Reg Bamford & Stephen Mulliner +17tp(P) -26tp(B) +26.

This left the last day for the Singles Final.



Bamford does

Fulford had won their last encounter (in 2014) 3-0, and raced into a lead with an SXP in the first game. The second game was tighter, with two failed sextuples, but Fulford edged that +3. However, the afternoon belonged to Bamford who won the final three games to take the title.

Semi-final 1: Reg Bamford beat Mark Avery +19sxp +26sxp +17

Semi-final 2: Robert Fulford beat Stephen Mulliner -26sxp +11sxp +19sxp +20sxp

Final: Reg Bamford beat Robert Fulford -25sxp -3 +20sxp +26sxp +19sxp

Fulford and Bamford now jointly hold the most Open Singles Titles, (11), one ahead of John Solomon.

The Trophy Winners

Croquet Championship: Reg Bamford

Ayres Cup: Robert Fulford

Doubles Championship:

James Death & Samir Patel

Association Plate: Robin Brown

Doubles Plate: Jeff Dawson & Mike Town

Consolation Z: Jose Riva

Solomon Peeling Trophy: Reg Bamford



This year's August Bank Holiday weekend saw the triumphant return of the Student Championships, managed by Will Nathan and hosted as usual at Oxford University's Lawns in the delightful University Parks, **writes Joshua Bull.**

The blue sky turned out for the duration of the tournament, along with competitors from University clubs across the UK. This year the competitors included undergraduate and postgraduate students who travelled from their home universities in Cambridge, Exeter, Plymouth and Sheffield, as well as Oxford locals.

The first day saw action in both the Singles and Doubles events, with the first result being the strong Oxford pair Mark van Loon and Will Nathan (*right*)



Student AC Championship

dispatching the Exeter/Plymouth duo Ross Moore and James Woolas* 26-2.

There were also first-round victories for the two other Oxford players, Mo KaramiNejadRanjbar and Joshua Bull, who knocked out Alex Clunies-Ross (Exeter) and Gregory Peters (Sheffield), and a win for Ian Mak (Exeter) against James Woolas (Plymouth) saw the former through.

Day two saw the completion of the Doubles event, with a victory by the second Oxford pair over Exeter's Mak and Alex Clunies-Ross, leading almost immediately into an all-Oxford final where van Loon and Nathan claimed the Edmund Reeve Universities' Croquet Challenge Cup against KaramiNejadRanjbar and Bull.

The Singles reached the semi-final stage, where Craig Winfield (Cambridge) beat

KaramiNejadRanjbar 25-1, and van Loon got the better of Nathan 26-14.

With the Doubles competition complete, day three was completely free for the best-of-three singles final between Winfield and van Loon, for which the hoops were quietly narrowed to 1/32". While their previous rounds had seen some spectacular near-miss attempts at the sextuple peel, both players entered the final day with much tighter, more defensively-minded play.

Despite a bold effort from van Loon, Winfield (*left*) won a hard-fought two-game victory.

All the players deserve to feel pleased with their performances, and they demonstrated the broad appeal of the Student AC Championships.



The Golf Croquet Open Championship

'The Double'



Reg Bamford won the GC British Open Championship at Surbiton, beating JP Moberly in an entertaining final, *writes event Director Rachel Rowe.*

After two long days play on challenging lawns during the doubles event over the two previous days, the first order of business before start of play in the singles was an alteration to the block format from best of threes to best of twos.

Two days of block play on the same lightning-fast lawns with tight, firm hoops that we had experienced in the doubles event supported this decision, when there were

multiple play-offs required to determine who would qualify from the blocks for the knock-out.

Surbiton put on a lovely barbecue for all the players and guests on Friday evening, whilst the remaining block games provided the entertainment.

We trialled the Modified Grade Based Seeding methodology agreed after the

event last year, and this seemed to work well for producing a fairer draw this year. All the players have been asked for their feedback on this to see if this should be used again for 2018.

The temperature picked up for the knock-out rounds, with many players choosing to find a spot in the shade to watch the latter rounds of the knock-out in preference to playing!

There were a lot of close matches in the later stages of the knock-out and the challenging conditions made for a great week of croquet.

Will Gee joined us on the Saturday and started Croquet Scores commentaries on the quarter-finals and beyond, and after a successful live-streaming at Ramsgate



the previous weekend, Tobi Savage set-up to live-stream the final between Moberly and Bamford (see this on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/EOobaD8GZ-E>). I hope this will be the start of live-streaming for more of our major events.

The final was an excellent match to watch, with Bamford winning the first game 7-3, Moberly striking back 2-7 and final game going Bamford's way 7-5, to get his name back on the trophy.

Elsewhere, Stephen Mulliner won the Bowl, Lionel Tibble won the Shield, and Martin French the Plate.

The Doubles Championship Reg Bamford and Stephen Mulliner won the GC British Open Doubles Championship ahead of a very strong field at Surbiton where all were greeted with lightning-fast lawns and tight, firm hoops.

Twenty-eight pairs battled it out in two blocks on day one, and eight pairs progressed to the knock-out on day two as others contested the Plate.

Mohammad Kamal and Richard Thompson won the Plate, while the challenging conditions led to some very long battles in the main event.

After the introduction of time limits to ensure a result on the day, the final was Tobi Savage and JP Moberly v Bamford and Mulliner, with the latter winning in straight games to regain their Open Doubles title.

Thanks to Stephen for managing the tournament as usual and the whole team at Surbiton for creating such a fantastic venue.

The 2017 GC Inter-County Championship was held over the weekend of 19/20 August at Southwick, *reports Bill Arliss.*

Originally, 14 counties applied for this event but with only eleven lawns available for the final, this number was reduced to twelve by an earlier play-off at Surbiton.

Surrey and Northamptonshire came through this quite stiff play-off leaving Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire to try again next year.

Looking over the team lists before the start, it appeared to most that there were three very possible contenders for the title.

These were: Leicestershire led by Will Gee and Rachael Rowe, Kent with Tobi Savage and James Goodbun and Durham/Yorkshire with John-Paul Moberley and Richard Bilton.

Our predictions proved to be quite true with Leicestershire and Durham posting 100% wins through all rounds on the

Leicestershire win GC Counties

Saturday but with Kent losing two matches (to Hampshire and Durham).

Saturday's weather was not quite up to the forecast with the odd heavy showers but luckily these were very short-lived and caused no problems to the playing program.

The two leaders continued their winning ways on the Sunday for a further two rounds, until Durham met Leicestershire which gave Durham their first loss 1-2.

Unfortunately for Durham, they'd hit a bad patch and recorded two further losses to Sussex and Dorset.

Kent, however, were staging a comeback and won their first four matches on Sunday, three of them being clean sweeps.

Nevertheless, Leicestershire (*right*) finally put matters beyond all doubt with a 3-0

victory over Kent in the final round and, thus, posted eleven wins.

Kent's scoring in all other Sunday rounds was sufficient to give them second place with a better games record than Durham/Yorkshire.

As someone who has been involved with GC since its rebirth, it is very pleasing to report on an event where all the 'headliners' are from the younger generation. It bodes well for the future.



CA Grant helps at Canterbury

When the late Maurice Copus invited his neighbours to play croquet on his lawn he secretly hoped this humble start would lead to greater things - That was nearly 30 years ago.

No-one would have been prouder than he of how the Canterbury Club has since progressed, **writes Frank Hughes.**

In those early days, on a small, uneven, lawn, we slowly built our numbers and began, with Maurice's approval, looking for better facilities.

It was in 1995 that we were offered ground at the privately-run Polo Farm Sports Club in Canterbury.

We were moved around for a while but eventually were offered space for two courts adjacent to a cricket ground.

There we continued to increase our membership and organised internal AC competitions.

We entered the South-East Fredericton B-League and, later, the Unlimited Handicap league.

Before long we won the U-League and so qualified for the Secretary's Shield.

The first-round draw was against Newcastle and we didn't realise that we could have asked to play nearer to home, so flew north. We won there but were knocked out in the semi-finals.

When we won the league again, we progressed to the Secretary's Shield final and beat High Wycombe, to be told that we are the only South-East team to have won this event.

The club continued to compete in AC but GC began to grow in popularity and became the primary source of new members.

For several years, the club had known that Polo Farm wanted to sell the land on which we played and when the time came for us to quit, we were offered alternative sites that were too poor for hosting matches.

We lost members and playing standards dropped.

The club might have folded but for a loyal band of players and the determination of our chairman Barry Sales to find us a new site.

Several options came and went but Barry finally succeeded in persuading Polo Farm to create three new lawns for us on scrubland it had bought.

Many thousands of tons of soil were needed to laser-level the ground, which was seeded last autumn and was fit for play by June.



Mystery player wins Canterbury One-Ball

A player who had not picked up a mallet for five years beat the current world champion in a thrilling tournament final at Canterbury CC in August.

Dutchman Rutger Bejderwellen abandoned top-level croquet for kitesurfing in 2012 but Canterbury member Jonathan Lamb invited him to enter his one-ball tournament, organised to help celebrate the opening of the club's new lawns.

Bejderwellen entered on condition that his entry should not be publicised, so Lamb announced that there would be a mystery player!

Lamb said the player could well turn out to win the event: a tall order as one of the 14 competitors was the current AC World Champion Stephen Mulliner.

The mystery player seemed to hail from the Middle East as he emerged from a

Jaguar whose smartly-attired chauffeur looked remarkably like Canterbury's chairman Barry Sales.

The mystery was solved once the player removed his headdress.

Bejderwellen revealed later that at first, his hands did not feel in tune with his mallet but his languid style showed his class.

In the past he specialised in one-ball play, winning a major tournament three times.

By the time Bejderwellen was in the final against Mulliner he was like a tiger stalking his prey.

Mulliner fought hard but could not quite match the intensity of Bejderwellen's play.

It was a fitting end to a memorable day.

Canterbury's Tobi Savage (*pictured below*) was knocked out of the main event but won the consolation event.

Frank Hughes

Meanwhile the club had decided that the new ground's delightful setting was worthy of a first-class clubhouse. A building by Passmores was selected but hopes of buying it sank when a grant application failed.

It was then that **the Croquet Association came to the rescue with a £5,000 grant and we received an additional £500 from the South-East Croquet Federation.**

This sum, added to the club's own funds, enabled the building to be erected.

Now, thanks to a generous offer by a long-standing member, the club is aiming to fit out the interior.

To help celebrate the opening of the new lawns, our member Jonathan Lamb, who plays for Canterbury during his half-yearly stays in Europe, organised a one-ball tournament (*see the boxed story above*).

It was hailed as a success and the club hopes it can become an annual event.

The club recently scored its first victory in the South-East Unrestricted Handicap GC League; a sign that playing standards are rising as a result of good courts.

Canterbury CC is applying for grants to provide toilet facilities and also for a first-class lawnmower.

This year around 80 people replied to invitations to try out croquet, eight of whom have so far joined the club.

Our membership drive will continue in earnest and fundraising events are planned for the close season.



AC Varsity Match

Cambridge beat Oxford 7-2

With over 2000 students once again participating in their annual 'Cuppers' tournament, Oxford had a larger pool of players to draw from than Cambridge for the annual Varsity Match at Hurlingham, **reports Simon Hathrell.**

But Cambridge had beaten Oxford in the previous year, their first win since 2003, so another interesting contest was in prospect.

The match used the usual six-a-side format comprising three doubles in the morning and six singles in the afternoon, all played as Level Advanced.

The Hurlingham courts were measured at about 10 Plummers by Ian Plummer himself, the match referee.

With a time-limit of only 2.5 hours to ensure a finish in time for lunch, it was evident that all three morning games would reach that limit, and so it proved, with Cambridge, the stronger team on paper, duly closing-out the first round 3-0 up.

Fortified by a good Hurlingham lunch, the afternoon singles were more lively affairs.

First to finish was Craig Winfield (Cam) with a +26tp against Alex Bishop (Ox), the former's first competitive triple peel which was made in spite of mistakenly running hoop 1 a second time with his forward ball after Bishop missed lift shot.

Soon afterwards Louis McBride (Cam) also won +26 against Joshua Bull (Ox) with a single rover peel which gave Cambridge in an unassailable 5-0 lead.

Jordan Waters restored some Oxford pride by winning +26 against the top Cambridge player Adam Swinton; then James Brind and Sam Trueman chalked up two more wins for Cambridge, leaving the remaining Oxford player Mo KaramNejadRanjbar eventually to salvage another win +1 on time.

The 7-2 match result for Cambridge brought the historical tally to 27-23 in their favour since the first contest back in 1961 (see http://users.ox.ac.uk/%7Ecroquet/varsity/varsity_results.shtml).

Cambridge: James Brind (C), Adam Swinton, Craig Winfield, Louis McBride, Edward Linscott (am only), Cameron McCormack (am only), Sam Trueman (pm only), Douglas Buisson (pm only)

Oxford: Jordan Waters (C), Alex Bishop, Joshua Bull, Will Nathan, Mo KaramNejadRanjbar, Jasper Theodor Kauth.

An extended match report with some photographs can be found on the East Anglian Federation website at http://www.angliacroquet.co.uk/2017/varsity/varsity_match.php.

AC National Seniors Championships



The National Seniors' Championship returned to Budleigh Salterton CC in July, having been at Sussex County CC for the past three years, **reports manager Julie Horsley.**

The Class event attracted a record entry of 41 with players travelling from Australia, Canada, South Africa and Uruaugy to join those from many parts of England.

There was a tie in The Seniors' Championship for the Trevor Williams Cup, with Brian Cumming from Canada and Bath's Jim Field both having 7/9 wins, but Cumming was declared the winner on the 'who beat whom' rule

He also won the peeling prize with four TPs and the prize for the fastest game at a blistering 30 minutes and 10 seconds in a double banked game!

Block B for the Colin Hemming Cup had a three way tie for first place with Gareth Denyer (Australia), Peter Thompson (York) and Richard Wood (Sidmouth) all having 5/7 wins. This time 'who beat whom' and 'quality of wins' both failed to produce a winner and it therefore came down to net points which favoured Denyer, with Thompson as runner-up. Denyer achieved his Gold Merit Award for his first Triple Peel in a Tournament and then went on to do another one!

Block C for the de Ansorena Cup was won

by Nigel Amos (Budleigh Salterton) with 5/7 wins and there was a four-way tie for second place between Bob Thompson, Ian Draper (both Nottingham), David Hopkins (Phyllis Court) and Richard Williamson (Bristol), from which Thompson had the best 'quality of wins'.

Block D for the Nigel Graves Trophy again had a tie for first place with Jane Babbage (Sidmouth) and Charles Ostler (Hunstanton and Pinchbeck) both having 6/7 wins, but this was more straightforward, as Babbage had won the head to head game.

Block E (which has not been contested for the last three years), for a small silver goblet, was won by the CA's Chairman of Council, Brian Shorney (Eardisley and Cheltenham) with Richard Peperell (High Wycombe and Phyllis Court) playing in his first Advanced tournament, edging out Meriel Ellerby (Bristol) on the 'who beat whom' rule.

The final of the Handicap Singles was between Shorney and Ostler and the former's bisques proved too much for his opponent, enabling Shorney to win the Quiller Cup.

The Handicap Doubles for the Croquet Association Cups was won by Adam Wimshurst and Scylla Blackwell (both Budleigh Salterton and Exeter) with Field and Ostler as runners-up.

And in the final of the Y Doubles, last year's winners Peter and Bob Thompson were beaten by Sidmouth duo Philip Harris and Susan Rogers.

All of which gave Peter Death on behalf of the CA plenty to do at presentation time, at which he thanked Budleigh Salterton CC for hosting the event, everyone involved in running it and the players for entering the tournament in such numbers.

The A-Block international visitors: Jonathan Lamb (Uruguay), Carole Jackson (South Africa), David Wise (Australia) and Brian Cumming (Canada).

Photographs by Chris Roberts



European AC Championship

Jose Riva won the 2017 European Association Croquet Championship, which was held at Stavstorp Croquet and Tennis Club in Sweden from 11-13 August – the first time it has been held outside England, Ireland or Jersey since 1994, *writes Stephen Mulliner.*



the first sextuple in Sweden. This was his first sextuple, and he promptly followed it up with two more in the knock-out stage.

There is a fuller report (dated 13 August) on the CA website, but available space in the Gazette means

only producing this edited version, which now fast forwards to the deciding game of the final – Ed.

Spain's Riva became the 2017 champion by defeating the defending champion, Duncan Reeve (High Wycombe and Scotland), in a high-quality five-game final by -26tp, +6tpo, +4tp, -20tp, +8tp.

Riva won the 2016 European Golf Croquet Championship at Budleigh Salterton, and so joins Mark McInerney and Stephen Mulliner as a member of the "European Double Club".

The Stavstorp club is the brainchild of Anton Varnas, who took up both AC and GC in 2004, and has represented Sweden in several GC World Championships as well as the GC World Team Championship in 2016. Stavstorp is located about 140 km west of Stockholm and 8 km north of Eskilstuna.

It has four flat and smooth lawns in an attractive setting just south of Lake Malaren, a vast expanse of water that extends all the way to Stockholm. Varnas is in the process of building houses at Stavstorp, and the hope is that the club will attract members from the local community.

Sixteen competitors from eight countries (England, Germany, Latvia, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Sweden and Wales) played in four blocks of four on the Friday to determine the quarter-finalists. The generally easy conditions encouraged sextupling, but despite early attempts from Mulliner and Riva it fell to Reeve to achieve

the first sextuple in Sweden. This was his first sextuple, and he promptly followed it up with two more in the knock-out stage. There is a fuller report (dated 13 August) on the CA website, but available space in the Gazette means only producing this edited version, which now fast forwards to the deciding game of the final – Ed. Reeve had the opportunity to win in style with his fourth sextuple, but it never got going and he was forced to settle for one peel and a 2-back and 4-back position. Riva missed the lift, but Reeve unexpectedly messed up his approach to 2-back and failed a very angled hoop. Riva went to 4-back and, after a missed lift, brought a delayed TP home to take the game, match and title after an absorbing final watched with great interest by most of the players.

The presentations were preceded by a hearty vote of thanks to Anton Varnas for his establishment of the lawns, mowing them on Sunday morning, and his great generosity in providing a superb evening meal on Friday, as well as three excellent lunches, as part of the £40 entry fee. Joakim Norback did not play in the event, but was there throughout and made sure that the catering side and everything else worked, while Simon, Lewis and Joi set up the courts each day. Barring a mercifully brief downpour on Sunday morning, the weather was kind and everyone had an excellent time at a very pleasant venue, which is a great addition to European croquet. The full results are on CroquetScores.

WCF World AC Te

Tier 1 of this series, the MacRobertson Shield, was played in California and reported in the last issue. The remaining three tiers were hosted at the Southwick ground of the Sussex County CC during the week 17 to 22 July., *writes Ray Hall*

A welcome reception was held on the evening before the start of play, later in the week there was an international skittles evening and 68 participants (*below*) squeezed into the canteen building for a Championship dinner to boot.

Tier 2.1 had Ireland, Scotland, Spain and Wales (*above*) in competition. The format was four singles and two doubles, all best of three, over two days. Ireland had won last time in 2014, so much was expected from the. However, they went down to Scotland, while Wales swamped newcomers Spain in a contest which featured two OTPs, one on each side.

In the early hours of Wednesday morning the Met Office yellow warning released a deluge (*below right*) which flooded the lawns. They had drained by the morning when Ireland and Spain were one-all (featuring a quintuple peel by Jose Riva), but Ireland nudged ahead on day four to give an idea of the final order. Scotland and Wales were tied after their doubles but only the Scot's Duncan Reeve held out in singles.

The third round was not completed because of a further deluge early on the



ams - lower tiers



sixth day. By then Wales had dominated Ireland and the principal feature of the Scotland-Spain contest was an OQP by Riva.

So while we were hoping for the weather to ease, Stephen Mulliner, on behalf of the WCF, presented the Salver and medals to the Welsh team:

Ian Burridge, Chris Williams, Garry McElwain and Cliff Jones.

Tier 2.1 and 2.2

Thses tiers had five participants: Canada, South Africa, Sweden, Czech Republic and Germany. The format was one half test each day (doubles and two singles; all best of one), interleaved so that in four days each of the five teams had played a complete test.

This made it much less obvious for spectators to see how teams were faring but by day five Canada (4 wins) and Sweden (3 wins) were ahead of the others.

Tier 2.2 therefore featured Canada and Sweden. By the time that rain stopped play on Saturday, they had one doubles victory each, two one-game singles, and another singles stopped at one-all, so manager John Low had no alternative but to declaring a tie.

Tier 2.3 featured the remaining three teams attempting three rounds. The crucial fixture turned out to be Germany v South Africa, in which most games were timed-out but Germany won 5-3: they also established a dominant lead over the Czechs. This enabled Germany to be declared winner of Tier 2.3. The Czech Republic now have a four-lawn club for the first time and will no doubt see further improvements by the next championship in 2021.

Summary: Wales won Tier 2.1, Canada and Sweden tied for 2.2, and Germany won 2.3.



AC Regional Championships

Northern

David Maugham won the North of England Championship at Bowdon, beating Marcus Evans 3-2 in the final, **writes Ian Lines.**

A full field of 22 players, including some first-timers at Bowdon like Nick Parish, enjoyed glorious weather for four whole days – the warmest August Bank Holiday in decades. The lawns were significantly improved since June, and were playing quite reasonably at about 11 Plummers.

In the main event, Joel Taylor had good match wins against Ian Lines and Nick Parish, before losing to David Maugham in a semi-final where he had a few good finishing chances. Taylor has clearly improved significantly over the last year.



Evans was also playing as well as ever, and beat James Hopgood in the other semi-final.

The final was closely fought. In game two Evans finished off the contact, and in game four he also hit in and finished after being TPO'd when Maugham failed hoop 4. In the deciding fifth game, Evans missed a seven-yarder for a reasonable TP chance, and Maugham had a tidy QP to win.

In the Plate, Mark Suter completed his first CA tournament sextuple against Paul Rigge, earning his Platinum Award, and Jerry Guest was almost as pleased with his triple peel against Debbie Lines.

The Plate knockout again saw Taylor playing well, with wins against Hopgood and Robert Wilkinson, before beating Ian Lines in the final.

Of great interest during the event was in the collection of several hundred old croquet photos that Liz and Rupert Webb brought to the club – many hours were spent trying to identify old faces. Some of these fantastic photos will be put online.

Eastern

A small but quality field contested 'The Easterns' at Colchester in July and was **won by Robert Fulford.**

Wins in two games for Fulford, Miranda Chapman, Mark Avery and David Maugham over Sam Murray, Jack Wicks, Nick Steiner and Phil Cordingley respectively, settled the first round.

Every game was won with a triple-peel except for Fullford who recorded a quintuple and a sextuple.

Fulford beat Chapman +18, +9SXP in one semi, Maugham took an extra game to beat Avery -18, +13TPO, +10TPO in the other and then Fulford maintained his form to beat Maugham +26SXP, +12TPO, +25 in the final.

East Midlands

Ian Lines (left) beat James Death in the play-off for the East Midlands Championship, +20tp +14otp, after the finals of both the draw and the process had ended nearly simultaneously with pegged-out endings, **reports Dr Ian Vincent.**

A tea-time finish was achieved, but only thanks to Andy and Richard for staying late on Saturday evening, while many of the rest of the field debated whether to go for a film, a Chinese, darts or to The Vic, where they eventually congregated. Andy Myers beat Omied Hallam in the 3rd/4th place play-off and Alain Giraud beat Richard Huxley to win the plate.

The Championship was being played for the 21st time, but a more notable figure is that during it Dave Maugham, one of the tournament's most loyal supporters, completed his 4,000th ranked game.

Surrey

Stephen Mulliner didn't drop a game on his way to retaining the Championship of Surrey at Surbiton in early August.

The same was true for runner-up David Maugham until Mulliner got the better of him +8, +22TP, +22 in the final.

Fresh from his runner-up achievement at the European Championships, Duncan Reeve was on good form and reached the semis, collecting the 'scalp' of Samir Patel along the way; while James Hopgood came back from an OTP loss in his first game to also reach the semis at the expense of Harry Fisher. This was Mulliner's sixth victory in this event, which draws him level with Jeff Dawson and one ahead of Robert Fulford.

The GC Series of Tournaments

The English National Singles Championship Qualifier Series

The remaining four Championship qualifiers have been held since the last Gazette issue and first up was the **Ramsgate Open**.

Tobi Savage and John-Paul Moberly bossed the block stage, coming through undefeated, but Stephen Mulliner was only off the pace by dint of a single loss to the latter. The programme pleasingly accommodated a full quarter-final round which featured the popular Australian visitor David Wise (warming up for the GC opens the following week).

In the semis Mulliner took three games to get past Savage, and Moberly took rather less time to see off Guy Scurfield, setting up a final line-up that was a re-run of the earlier block encounter between Moberly and Mulliner, and Moberly was the winner, 7-6, 7-3.

The **National Forest Open at Ashby** followed on after the not inconsiderable distraction of the British Open, which is reported elsewhere in this issue.

Moberly was in fine form again, and Tim King reports that he brushed aside his opponents and only had one wobble when Martin French managed to win the first game of their quarter-final.

Moberly kicked on from that setback and won his remaining six games in the knock-out 7-0, 7-1, 7-1, 7-3, 7-1, 7-2, with the last two accounting for local David Bell in a quick-fire final that ensured he still caught his train back to Edinburgh!

At the **Nottingham Open**, Richard Bilton emerged as a 'contender' with a block victory over Ian Burridge behind him and a semi-final berth secured at the expense of Richard Thompson.

Joel Taylor converted his much improved AC game into GC successes that took him past Tim King, himself now recapturing his lost form, by two 7-6 results and into the semis.

Top seeds Ian Burridge and Rachel Rowe had also progressed to the semis and two three-game encounters got them past Bilton and Taylor respectively.

Rowe wrapped up her third Nottingham Open title in six years with a straight games win 7-4, 7-6.

The eighth and last Championship Series qualifier was the newly promoted **Wiltshire Open at Hamptworth**,



which was expanded to accommodate a 20-strong field for the second season running.

Top news here was the return of Harry Dodge after fifty weeks away from croquet whilst his studies rightly took precedence.

It was like he'd never been away and he dropped only one block game to Lionel Tibble to cruise through to the semi-finals with Stephen Mulliner, Jonathan Powe and surprise package Ian Norris from Phyllis Court, enjoying his best tournament yet.

Perhaps overawed at first, Norris lost his first game to Mulliner 0-7, but then won the second 7-6 with some precision ball placement skill, doubtless borrowed from his single-figure 18-hole golf handicap.

Mulliner wrapped up the decider 2-7. In the other semi, Dodge was also made to work and he too needed a deciding game to beat Powe 6-7, 7-6, 7-1.

The final was a ding-dong affair too, and Mulliner proved to have just the edge necessary and won 7-6, 6-7, 7-4.

All Series finalists qualify for the English National Singles Championship Final at Nottingham 'as of right'; defeated semi-finalists are next in line and any remaining places will be decided by ranking. A report of this final will be in the next Gazette.



The A-Level Series

The second season of this Series of eight unrestricted tournaments is being keenly contested again this season with three more events having taken place since the last Gazette issue.

Pendle staged their own Open tournament in June, not so long after giving a new home to the Lancashire Open which was reported last time.

Manager Abdul Ahmed reports that the all-Auckland CC final ended in Jane Pringle overcoming Freda Vitty 7-4, 4-7, 7-0, who had fought hard but faded at the end.

At the other end of the country, the Series' 'overseas' tournament at **Ryde** on the Isle of White was as enjoyable as ever, and it provided Stephen Custance-Baker the opportunity to scoop the winner's points for the second time this season.

His ball promotions and plays to position were too good for runner-up Chris Roberts, who was the best of a four-strong visiting contingent from Phyllis Court.

This win moved Custance-Baker into a good lead in the A-Level Series points race and although four 6-7 losses in the 'all play all' block phase contributed to his failure to make 'the podium' in the next Series tournament at **East Dorset**, his leader's position was unaltered thanks to all the points going to players who were new to the leader board. Jonathan Powe beat Richard Brooks in the final ahead of Nick Archer and local Tom Weston.

With just one Series Tournament to go at the time of writing, Custance-Baker leads Lionel Tibble by four points and so the Series title hangs in the balance.

Photographs this page: Rachel Rowe (top), and Ian Norris taking an unexpected game off Stephen Mulliner at Hamptworth. (All images by Chris Roberts)

Tibble rediscovers form

Lionel Tibble won the 4th London Masters at Surbiton in August, **reports Don Beck**.

The format is two blocks of six players playing best-of-threes throughout.

In the last round of Right Block, Martin French needed to beat Mark Daley 2-0 to reach in the final but lost 7-5, 7-0, which left the route to the final open for Nick Archer who, apart from a match against Nicholas Cheyne, had played accurate, consistent croquet thus far.

The Left Block looked like a formality for

The B-Level Series

There have been no less than 16 B-Level Series tournaments played since the last Gazette issue and, at one point, Series director Chris Roberts was getting worried about the number of different winners that were appearing on the CA website page that is dedicated to this Series.

This was because every winner is guaranteed a place in the National Final, to be played at Southport in October, and the ideal number of 16 participants looked certain to be exceeded.

Thankfully, Roberts was able to stop pulling his hair out because Ross Bagni (Leighton-Linslade), Paul Durkin (Long Eaton Park), Keith Pound (High Wycombe), Louise Taylor (Merton) and Stuart M Smith (Northampton) all won for a second time, so making it less likely that there would be more than 16 different winners by the end of the Series.

Additionally, there were season first time wins for Michael Bilton (Richmond Park), Steve Leonard (Kingston Maurward), Tony Lee (Norwich and Hunstanton), Brian McCausland (Nailsea), Derek Cole (Hunstanton), Robert Chatwin (Wingrave) and Peter Chadwick (Budleigh Salterton).

The last of the Series tournaments will have been played at Edgbaston by the time you read this, and with one or two qualifiers known to be unable to take up their places at the National Final, it now looks very likely that the players who didn't achieve a tournament victory but who are top of the 'points gatherers' will also qualify.

This will be news for leaders Andrea Huxley (Guildford & Godalming), Andrew Carpenter (Durham) and possibly a couple of others who may get a call-up to join them at Southport in October.



Keith Pound



Andrea Huxley



Andrew Carpenter



GC International Performance Development and Elite Squad mentored match weekend

West Park Croquet Club hosted the first ever mentored match weekend on 5 and 6 August, involving the GC Elite squad and the Development squad players.

Considering that the croquet fixtures schedule is pretty busy at this time of year and in competition with the Championships of Surrey, it was great to get thirteen players together in one place; it was just a pity that the weather on the Saturday was showery, although a superb sunny Sunday redeemed the weekend.

The dates had been selected prior to the fixtures book being published but, as always, a clash with other events was only to be expected, no matter which dates were considered.

The ever resourceful Rachel Rowe had put together a schedule with a variety of doubles and singles playing combinations, mixing Elite and Development squad players.

So far, the initial responses from the Development players involved has been positive and more detailed feedback, helping to shape the future format of these weekends, will be sought as part of the event management programme.

All participants deserve a hearty 'thank you' for giving up their weekend, travelling many miles in a lot of instances and incurring costs just to be at the event. The dedication of the Elite players in making this weekend a success deserves a separate mention, demonstrating how helpful and unselfish croquet people can be.

Lonel Tibble,
International Performance Director GC

to win London Masters

the fourth seed Tibble, who won his first three matches without conceding a game.

He then beat Guy Scurfield and included **'The Shot of the Year'** - A cut rush blue on red, when from 3 to 4 yards, made red hit black in the jaws of 10, peeling it and replacing the black in the jaws, so that red was hampered for being able to play to hoop 11.

In the final, Tibble's superior accuracy proved too much for Archer and, though the score does not reflect the closeness of the contest, Tibble won 7-3, 7-2.

Oxford Uni. AC Cuppers

Invading this otherwise GC page (*hopefully pleaseing Dr Plummer no end*), is the news that 2017 Oxford Cuppers Champions are New College. They are pictured here (left) receiving their trophy from the Croquet Association President, Quiller Barrett.

(L to R) Declan Manning, Alexander Talbot (captain), Quiller Barrett, Alex Dwornik, Ru James. This huge event, that regularly attracts 2,000 entrants, is sponsored by The Croquet Association.

Photograph by Tim Foot

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Lawn Care ~ by Duncan Hector

Maintenance matters

Many clubs will be planning their autumn and winter maintenance. The problem is that top-dressing and over-seeding works best before the season has ended. So there is always a compromise.

If you use Bar Extreme seed (dwarf rye grass) it has the advantage of germinating at lower temperatures than most other cultivars. It is still best to complete the job as early as possible but I know some clubs can't fit it in until October. I have visited two clubs on the same day that are on virtually the same nutrition programme, but the lawn qualities are totally different.

This is all down to mowing - Unfortunately some people read books about domestic lawn maintenance and apply what they have read to a croquet lawn. The biggest problem is people who think grass should not be cut short. It is hard to believe but I have visited more than one club this year where the grass was cut to 25mm or more, this makes a mockery of the game.

The grasses that we want to encourage are the fine grasses and regularly mowing to 5 or 6mm during the season and 8 to 10 mm in the winter encourages the fine grass and discourages the coarse grass. The advantage of this is a healthier sward and faster lawns which exactly what we want for croquet. My audit of thatch thickness now covers around 80 croquet lawns across the country. Using my system, the clubs do not scarify but they do use nutrition programmes that reduce the thatch naturally by composting it where it lies in the root zone. There was a spectacular result at one club where the thatch has reduced from 24mm to zero in 12 months. That is unusual; a 33% reduction is what I normally expect.

At my new home in Norfolk, I am converting a paddock into a full size croquet lawn on a shoe string budget. If you want to know how, please e-mail me duncan@duncanhectorturfcare.co.uk.

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Nottingham week was fully subscribed again

Another full house for this year's Nottingham Week, with 37 players in the singles events, plus another who entered only the doubles, *writes Peter Death.*

The big Handicap, the Robin Hood Cup, saw a range of handicaps from ½ to 11 in the quarter-finals, after four days of flexible Swiss competition to find the top eight. The final was between Richard Forman (Huddersfield) and Sophie McGlen (Oxford University). Richard won +10 to take the trophy back to Huddersfield for the second successive year, following Anna Giraud's victory last year.

The A class had 14 competitors, divided into two blocks, followed by a play-off involving the top two from each block. Joel Taylor (High Wycombe) swept all before him in block play, with a quad, a TPO, and two triple peels in his six games, but then came to grief in his semi-final against Omied Hallam (Nottingham). Taylor lost 0 – 2 after finding himself hampered from all balls after rover, having done the three peels of another TPO. In the other semi-final, John Davis (Luxembourg, Yorkshire and Nottingham) beat Ian Vincent (Nottingham) 2 – 0 in the latest instalment of a rivalry that goes back over more than 20 years. The final was, by agreement, played as a single game to enable one of the players to catch a booked train, and Davis beat Hallam +23tp.

The B class was played to the same format as the A and produced semi-finalists Charles Ostler (Hunstanton and Pinchbeck), Heather Bennett (St Albans), Neal Bacon and Michael Finnigan (both Nottingham). In the final Finnigan beat Bennet +7.

The C class was played as ordinary level singles and had five entries in a block from which Sophie McGlen and Betty Bates (Fylde) qualified to contest a final. Bates got revenge for her defeat in the block stage by winning +8 on time.

The D class was full bisque to base 10 handicap play in a six-player block, followed by a play-off in which Mark Lansdale (Nottingham), in his first tournament season, beat Derek Buxton (Ashby) +2 (t).

Fifteen pairs entered the **Handicap Doubles knockout**, and in the final, Ian Draper and Alex McIntyre (Nottingham), with Alex new to tournament play, beat Trevor Longman and Derek Buxton (Ramsgate and Ashby respectively) +14.

CA Contacts

Elizabeth Larsson

Manager

The Croquet Association
Old Bath Road, Cheltenham
GL53 7DF 01242 242318
caoffice@croquet.org.uk



Dave Gunn

National Development Officer

72 Musters Road, Ruddington
Nottingham, NG11 6HZ
07710 981561
davegunn59@gmail.com



Quiller Barrett

President

10 Frost House, Chesham Rd
Berkhamsted
HP4 3AY
quiller3@gmail.com



Brian Shorney

Chairman of Council

Cagebrook Mill, Clehonger
Hereford HR2 9TQ
01981 250521
brian@shorney.net



John Bowcott

Vice-Chairman of Council

7 Walham Rise
Wimbledon Hill Rd, London
SW19 7QY 020 8947 6032
bowcott@hotmail.com



Peter Death

Hon. Treasurer

252 Hockley Road, Hockley
Tamworth, Stafs. B77 5EZ
01827 251738
peter.j.death@gmail.com



Dr. Ian Vincent

Hon. Secretary

21 Cedar Avenue, Beeston
Nottingham NG9 2HA
0115 925 3664
ian.vincent@cantab.net



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CA Council Committee Chairmen

Executive

Brian Shorney brian@shorney.net

Management

John Bowcott bowcott@hotmail.com

AC Laws

Ian Vincent ian.vincent@cantab.net

AC Selection

Ian Lines ian.lines@atkingglobal.com

AC Tournament

Brian Fisk brian.pe.fisk@gmail.com

GC Rules

Martin French martin.french@btinternet.com

GC Selection

Martin French martin.french@btinternet.com

GC Tournament

Tim King tmk@ntlworld.com

Handicap

Strat Liddiard stratmale@gmail.com

Coaching

Jonathan Isaacs jonathanisaacs@btinternet.com

Development

Roger Staples staplessteeples@live.co.uk

Equipment

Dave Trimmer davetrimmer@talktalk.net

ICT

Ian Vincent ian.vincent@cantab.net

International

Tim King tmk@ntlworld.com

Investment

Strat Liddiard stratmale@gmail.com

Marketing

Brian Wilson brian@europaassociates.co.uk

Publishing

Jeff Dawson jeff.p.dawson@gmail.com

CA Federation Representatives on Council

Croquet North

01642 712551

Charles Waterfield

cwaterfield41@gmail.com

North West

01244 675929

John Dawson

johngdawson@onetel.com

Yorkshire

01484 716663

Anna Giraud

eag@giraudnet.co.uk

East Midlands

01332 516541

Mick Haytack

mickhaytack@gmail.com

W.Midlands & Wales

01743 243532

Brian Christmas

bchristmas60@gmail.com

East Anglia

01553 770390

Terrey Sparks

tds3elm@aol.com

Southern

07774 639 061

Frances Colman

frances@luxtersfarm.com

South West

01242 512933

Klim Seabright

klimseabright@gmail.com

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David Mooney

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