

The

Issue 388 November 2020

CROQUET

Gazette



**14 year old
Jack Good
wins the GC
B-Level Series
National Final**



From our files

researched by Frances Colman

10 years ago - 2010



MacRobertson success as Chairman stands down - Congratulations to the winning British team in the MacRobertson Shield World Team Championship. Our grateful thanks are extended to the legions of croquet club members who played their part in making every Test Match a success.

After two years as your Chairman I shall not seek re-election and will hand over to my Vice-Chairman, Barry Keen. I have been honoured to act as your Chairman and I have enjoyed the experience and opportunities to meet and play croquet with so many of you...

Patricia Duke-Cox

(from her Chairman's Column)

The GB line-up was: Keith Aiton (captain), Rutger Beijderwellen, Robert Fulford, Ian Lines, David Maugham, Stephen Mulliner.

~

Tangier calling - Dear Editor, I have just seen (over the internet) a letter in the October 2009 Gazette from Geoffrey Taylor in which he recounts being interrupted whilst playing at Cheltenham to act as a referee, only to find that he was summoned to the telephone to answer a question from Tangier, Morocco...

I must admit to being the mystery caller; and I hope, Mr Taylor, you will forgive me for calling you off the lawn for a somewhat jejune query over law 17.

At the time a disagreement had developed on our (bumpy) lawn here in Tangier and, had it not been for the timely interruption of Tea and a rather good seed cake, tempers might have become tested.

As it was a quick call to Cheltenham solved everything amicably... *William Weber*

~

WCF World Team Championship Tiers 2 and 3 - After years of waiting the non-Mac countries got what they had been yearning for, the opportunity to compete in a team event on the world stage. Thirteen countries took advantage... Finishing orders...

Tier 2.1 (at Hurlingham): Wales, South Africa, Jersey, Ireland.

Tier 2.2 (at Compton): Scotland, Canada, Spain, Japan

Tier 3 (at Southwick): Czech Republic, Sweden, Germany, Belgium, Norway.

50 years ago - 1970



The Rape of Roquetetta - The lady, perhaps it should be muse, who appears on our cover was christened Roquetetta by Captain Greenham of Ipswich. She made her debut as the frontispiece, designed by Charles Dawson, for Leonard William's book "Croquet", published in 1899. She has come to stand for the more endearing and, let us hope, enduring qualities of our fascinating game: and, like many hallmarks of the Good Life, she is threatened. At the Council meeting in October ugly words like "cheaper paper", "off-set lithography" and "cutting our coat according to our cloth" were rumbling forth - in short, The Gazette was exceeding its budget. . . . The Association is producing a publication that tries to be worthy of Croquet, and sets out to purvey a conviction of quality. The sum of money, derisively small in any case, that would be saved by making the Gazette nasty would be lost ten times over through destroying our belief that Croquet itself deserves the best.

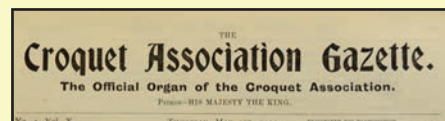
Bryan Lloyd-Pratt, Editor.

~

Nottingham Week - Bryan Lloyd-Pratt very kindly came to manage the tournament at short notice and bullied the players charmingly. *"Come on Dorothy, my dear, go and beat Peter on Court 4."*

In one game Paul Puxton beat Mrs Bucknell +1 after nail-biting agonies of short roquets missed and blobbed hoops. The spectators groaned at these audibly but cheered each hit wildly.

100 years ago - 1920



Retiring on the Peg -

Dear Sir,

Can there be a greater anomaly in any game than there is in croquet, where a player or players who been fairly and squarely beaten in the first or subsequent rounds of a competition are allowed to go through and win the competition.

I have seen this happen twice, in my extremely limited experience of croquet tournaments, and it has made me think such a lot that this letter is the result.

In my opinion, and that of many others I have talked to, it is quite time that the unsportsmanlike practice of "retiring on the peg" in favour of vanquished opponents were put a stop to.

It puts the opponents in an equivocal position if they eventually win, and it should be ruled that matches must be played out, except of course in cases of illness or other unpreventable causes.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
C.H. Hutchinson, Folkestone.

~

Shorter Games -

Dear Sir,

May I suggest to the Committee that they try a croquet tournament with a game of 14 points instead of 28?

The chief interest of the game lies in the start and the finish.

In so many cases after a player has got the balls, there is, from a spectator's point of view, a period of ten to twenty minutes of mechanical monotony.

I suggest beginning as usual and transferring the winning peg to the place of the turning peg, which would not be used (*remembering there was a different two pegs and hoop setting arrangement 100 years ago - Ed*).

Give all events the best of three, and see how players like it. I think it might result in making croquet a more interesting game to watch, and so, in time, assist the finances of tournaments by a 'gate'. Handicaps - eliminate all half-bisques in present handicaps, and play at half the remainder.

I am, Sir,
yours truly,
S.A. Bennett, Beckenham.

Editorial

In contrast to the last issue of The Gazette when we said goodbye to William Ormerod, who was the very embodiment of a foregone era, this issue celebrates an era that is to come, with so many of our younger players now coming to the fore.

These pages report a terrific Junior Programme and Championships weekend that Eugene Chang and his Junior Task Force worked on all year. There is news too of the exploits of the likes of teenagers Euan Burrige and James Galpin, now firmly established in the top class of our sport, and just ahead of them age-wise, Callum Johnson has also been one to watch.

And then we have enjoyed seeing the emergence of Ellie Ross, Aston Wade and Jack Good who beat the experience of years as they all won debut season silverware.

For his achievement in winning the B-Level Series National Final, 14-year-old Jack Good gets The Gazette front cover position this time - and very well done him!

The report of that Final is a cracking good read, complete with cliff-hanger ending, and there were similar close finishes at both the AC and GC British Open Finals too, so

much so, that all three together would not be believed if they were in a film script!

Congratulations to Paddy Chapman on his first AC Open victory (and for his rareish 'double' with the President's Cup) and to Stephen Mulliner too, for his remarkable eighth GC Open win.

It's been a difficult season with Covid-19 and it is a testament to those who organise our tournaments and competitions up and down the country that so many were saved for us to enjoy - thank you all.

The AGM of the CA is covered in much detail in the pages that follow, and here again was a wonderful achievement for croquet, with the meeting live on-line without a hitch. Thanks to the technical wizardry of Mark Suter and Eugene Chang in the 'control room', it was reminiscent of the much-missed BBC Grandstand, with all the cutting away to 'outside broadcasts' and then back to the studio with our President Quiller Barrett in the unflappable Frank Bough anchor roll.

Super performances all round.

*RIP Frank Bough who died this week.
You were a hero of my youth.*

Chris Roberts Editor

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

The
CROQUET
Gazette



Issue 388 October 2020

Front cover: Jack Good burst onto the National scene and won a cliff-hanger B-Level Series Final.

This page: The Editor is on the back cover (in his wets) so no need for photo of him here this time.

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Advertisements are not specifically endorsed by the Croquet Association, unless otherwise stated.

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Croquet Association Deputy Honorary Secretary Wanted

A Deputy is being sought to work with the current Honorary Secretary of the Croquet Association, Ian Vincent, during his last year in office, with a view to succeeding him at the October 2021 AGM. The post is honorary, but there is the possibility of a modest honorarium.

The Honorary Secretary is responsible to the Association through Council for providing independent leadership and guidance in administrative matters, encouraging the highest standards of integrity, effectiveness and openness, and ensuring the CA's regulatory compliance.

The Duties

The duties of the Honorary Secretary are set out in section 1 of the CA Practice Book. In summary they are:

- To be a voting member of the Executive Board and non-voting member of Council.
- To assist the President, Chairmen of Council and the Executive Board, by preparing agendas and minutes of meetings.
- To maintain documents and website pages relating to the CA's governance.
- To organise voting for elections and motions at general meetings.
- To operate the disciplinary and appeals procedure.
- To assist in reviewing the work and staffing of the CA Office, as a member of the Administration Committee.
- To advise Committee Chairman and other volunteers about governance issues.

It is expected that the person appointed as deputy will share in, or take over, some of these during the overlap period, by agreement with the current Secretary.

The Person

The following attributes are desirable:

- An innovative and proactive team worker, preferably with experience of administration of a complex organisation and of working with volunteers.
- Good verbal, written and interpersonal skills with the ability to work to tight deadlines and to a high standard.
- Education to degree level or equivalent, with competency in using current technology for document preparation and publication and for communication.

Applications

For further information or informal discussion please contact Ian Vincent on 0115 925 3664 or by e-mail to

ian.vincent@cantab.net

Interested candidates should forward a CV and a letter detailing their suitability for the role, by 30th November 2020,

to Ian Vincent (as above) and Jonathan Isaacs at

jonathanisaacs@btinternet.com

There have been two main features covering the last twelve months, the first year of the New Governance Structure and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The New Governance Structure started with the installation of twelve Council Members elected from Federation-based constituencies. These members, together with the President, Hon Secretary, Hon Treasurer and Chairman of the Executive Board made up the new Council.

The role of the new Council is to develop policy, strategy and to scrutinise the activities and performance of the Executive Board.

The Executive Board is responsible for implementing these policies and strategies, as well as running the day-to-day business of the CA through its committees, officers and working groups.

Council started by conducting a brainstorming session to identify our future policies, strategies and to prioritise actions.

We defined our top line policy, as ***'to get more people playing more croquet in more places by promoting, developing and administering the sport'***

We instigated a survey to gather additional information which we could use to formulate our plans. Clubs were quick to respond, and the results aided us in identifying priorities.

We established a number of working groups to develop our strategies on Marketing, Efficiency and Technology.

The overall policy is to create growth in the sport. However, funding such a policy has associated costs. Even prior to Covid-19 this created a dilemma.

Funding and expansion

For the past three years the CA has been running at a deficit budget and this has been further exacerbated by Covid-19.

We will need to get our books back in balance in 2021.

Funding expansion will have to come from additional revenue - such as advertising, sponsorship, partnership deals, grants and increased sales through the CA Shop.

The marketing and communications strategy was agreed prior to lockdown namely:

- To merge the Marketing and Publishing Committees into one cohesive unit.
- To improve communication to CA members by publishing a monthly e-newsletter.
- To raise the profile of croquet through the

use of PR at national, Federation and local level.

- To portray croquet as an inclusive sport open to all ages, and dispel the media's preconceived misconception of croquet being a toff's sport.

Metrics were set covering the strategy period and our first aim is to increase CA membership by 20% over the next five years.

Covid-19 and lockdown

Covid-19 and lockdown struck in March and we immediately agreed to set up a Task Force to make quick decisions and manage our way through the crisis. Trying to interpret and make sense of an ever-changing set of government edicts proved demanding.

I would like to record my sincere thanks to all the members of the Task Force for a job well done.

Initially our main concern was clubs finding themselves in financial difficulty and we set up an "Emergency Assistance Panel" to offer interest-free loans to clubs.

Another concern was the maintenance of lawns during lockdown. Many clubs overcame this problem through a plan of reduced mowing, although some clubs have been significantly impacted by restrictions imposed by landlords. The emergence of various government grants, have benefited many clubs.

Lockdown meant that face-to-face meetings were put on hold. We had to find other ways of communicating and running the CA's affairs. We chose to use Zoom and it has transformed the way we do business.

The CA has traditionally run its affairs through a fixed schedule of meetings, focused around the winter months, but by using Zoom we have held more frequent meetings without the need to travel. This has saved committee members' time and substantially reduced the CA's travel costs.

Play resumed well

It has been gratifying to see that most of our clubs have managed to resume play and that a number of our annual events have been held, albeit with adaptations to meet government guidelines.

Coaching and referee development has taken a major hit.

However limited small-group coaching has taken place as well as some activity on Zoom; Tim King ran a very good modular GC referees training course online.

This could be the basis to run a similar AC referees development programme. We

urgently need more AC referees and finding ways of qualifying them is being actively considered within the confines of the Covid-19 guidelines.

Zoom, webinars and website improvements

When we move out of lockdown, I see a future where Council will make increased use of video conferencing, combined with face-to-face meetings.

The introduction of 'webinars' has greatly improved communication with the membership and these webinars are a two-way process where policy, strategy and plans can be discussed, while at the same time members can express their views on how the administration of the sport can be improved.

Many members have been critical of elements of our website and a working group has been set up to make improvements to the front end. These changes are in the process of being implemented and further improvements being discussed.

Inclusive membership

A number of changes to our membership structure have been made over the past few years to make membership more inclusive. Some anomalies have arisen which have been addressed by a membership strategy working group chaired by our new Hon. Treasurer, Ian Burrige.

Firstly - Premium members were being given tournament entry priority over Standard members. Council has agreed that this policy is wrong. However it agreed that a Standard member should pay a higher entry fee.

Secondly - An anomaly has crept in as to what constitutes an Affiliate Member Club. It was never intended that clubs that have their own facilities should downgrade to Affiliate status.

Affiliate membership is there for clubs that do not have their own lawns but visit Full Member clubs to play croquet. Examples of this are U3A groups and societies such as University clubs and the Livery Companies who meet on our lawns from time to time.

Competitive Play Working Group and Performance review

Probably one of the most important and far-reaching working groups to be set up is the Competitive Play Working Group. It has been given briefs for both AC and GC.

The GC brief is to recommend a specific

strategy to further strengthen the growth of GC, for AC it is to recommend a strategy to revitalise the game and arrest its decline.

Performance at all levels of the sport is crucial to its future success and a full performance review of how we develop players from complete beginners through to our international squads will be conducted. It will cover coaching and player development at all levels, the role of the Academies, the role and effectiveness of Merit Award systems and their place in supporting our competitive play strategy.

Diversity in our sport

The last strategy initiative I want to highlight is Inclusivity and Diversity. Croquet needs to be more inclusive and diverse. Council has drafted a policy which has been handed over to the Executive Board to refine and develop as an action plan.

A webinar on the subject was well attended and working groups are aiming to start implementing elements of the policy in time for the 2021 season.

The benefits for croquet of a sound inclusivity policy could be profound – increased recognition, increased membership, availability of grants and a true sport-for-all being just a few examples.

Structure

In addition to reviews of our policies and strategies, we have been examining the Executive Board's structure, to ensure that it will effectively deliver the implementation of our strategies as well as running our day-to-day business.

We concluded that the Executive Board needed to be restructured, with Directors being responsible for the six main functions of the CA.

Three will be responsible for covering Competitive and Grass Roots croquet, Performance and Standards. The other three will be responsible for Marketing and Communications, Development and Infrastructure.

These Directors, together with Officers of the Association, will report to the Chairman of the Executive Board. The Chairman of Council will also sit on the Executive Board as a non-voting member acting as a link between the Board and Council.

Our valued volunteers

Finally, but possibly most importantly, I would like to finish by talking about people.

A most sincere vote of thanks goes to **Peter Death** who retired as Hon. Treasurer

in April. We were delighted when **Ian Burridge** agreed to be Peter's successor. Ian brings huge experience to both Council and the Executive Board in addition to his role as President of the World Croquet Federation.

The Chairman of the Executive Board this year has been **Roger Staples**. Roger stepped in at short notice to chair the Board and has been a huge support in starting to develop the Executive Board and its committee structure. In addition, he also took on a pivotal role in the CA Task Force which helped us to be one of the first sports recognised as suitably socially distanced and able to restart activities. Roger will be taking on the role of Standards Director.

I am delighted that **Beatrice McGlen** has agreed to take over as Chairman of the Executive Board in October. Beatrice is Chairman of the Nottingham Club, has sat on CA Council, the New Executive Board as well as being Chairman of the AC Tournament Committee. I'm sure you will join me in wishing her huge success in this demanding role.

John Bowcott has stepped down as a member of the Executive Board. John was a major contributor in getting the new Governance model formulated and agreed. My thanks go to him for all the hard work he has put into the changes, together with much sound advice during the implementation process.

Eugene Chang has played a major role in getting the Marketing and Communications policy and strategy into implementation mode. He has brought a wealth of new management techniques to the CA, including Zoom, the new monthly Newsletter and the introduction of Webinars, thus improving communications between the Association, Federations and member clubs. Eugene is stepping down from his current role as he will need to devote more time to his family. I'm sure that he will continue to play a major role in croquet's development.

Patricia Duke-Cox has been Vice Chairman for the last twelve months and has helped greatly with many of the thornier issues that we have faced. Her excellent diplomatic skills have been put to good use and I am delighted that she is planning to remain a member of Council for the rest of her term.

Ian Vincent has been a major strength to both myself this last twelve months and the CA for many years. Ian has indicated that he would like to stand down as Hon. Secretary in October 2021. We would like to appoint a new Deputy Hon. Secretary in place this

year so that we can have a controlled handover in the next twelve months. We are currently looking for applicants and hope to have a deputy appointed by the end of 2020.

Unfortunately we have lost one member of Council, **Derek Knight**, who has stepped down due to health reasons. Derek's presence on Council has been much valued, imparting a lot of valuable common sense into our discussions. A bye election will be called for the Croquet North & Yorkshire constituency.

There are many other volunteers and four paid employees of the Association, my thanks also go to them for supporting us in what has been a difficult year.

Changing for brighter future for the Association

As you can see from my report, there has been considerable activity, as well as changes in the way we work and evidence of our labours coming to fruition.

Covid-19 has certainly had a detrimental effect on our plans, but at the same time has accelerated the use of new management practices such as online meetings.

Looking to the next twelve months, Council will fundamentally stay the same, with the first four officers coming to the end of their cycle in October 2021. This will mean an election for four seats on Council. My term in office will finish in 2021 and I am delighted that Samir Patel has agreed to act as Vice-Chairman of Council with a view to taking over as Chairman on my retirement.

Changing the way we work is not easy. However I am confident that with the will to succeed the Association will benefit going forward.

We have a significant number of new younger people carrying out various roles in the new structure – this is encouraging.

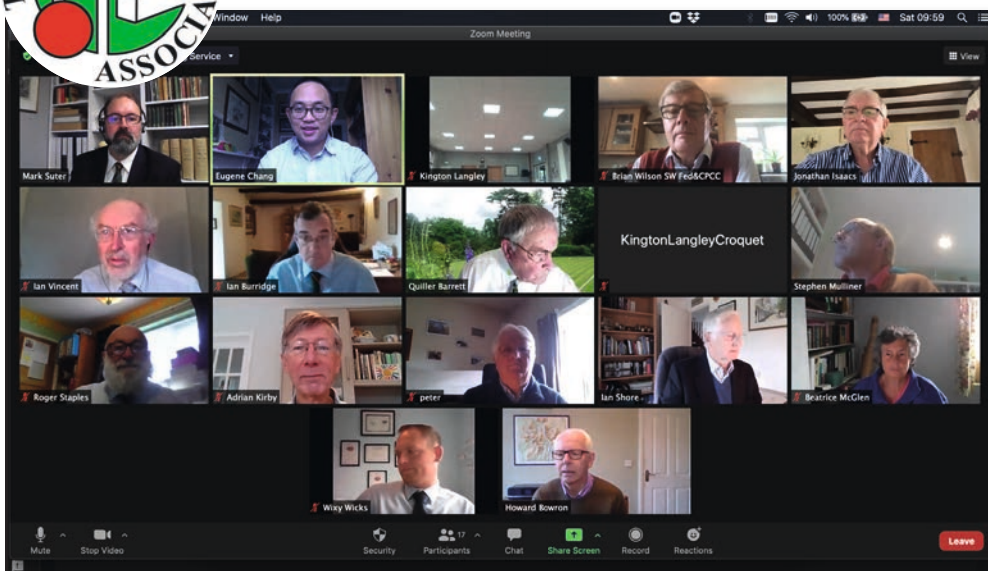
Being an Association based on volunteers has meant that, at times, we have to pace the changes and innovations being put in place.

You can't Build Rome in a Day is a very true adage.

The will is there, and I'm confident that, with a fair wind, the fruit of these changes will emerge over the forthcoming years.

Jonathan Isaacs





The Chairman's annual report

(see pages 4 & 5)

Jonathan Isaacs then gave Council's Annual report, which had been published in advance on the website and it is carried in full on pages 4 and 5 of this Gazette.

To say that it had been an unusual year was an understatement, with a new Council following the governance changes compounded by the drastic impact of Covid-19 on both play and administration.

Council had launched strategy reviews in a number of areas, including refereeing, marketing and communication, efficiency, technology, relationship with the Federations, membership, competitive play (both AC and GC) and inclusivity and diversity. He felt strongly about the latter, feeling that it was a hitherto neglected area which if handled well could bring considerable benefits to the sport.

In terms of practical delivery, for which the Executive Board was responsible, an electronic newsletter was now being sent monthly to members.

The shop website has been revamped, making it mobile-friendly, and a discount scheme for members has been implemented... just in time for purchasing Christmas gifts!

Many members have been critical of elements of the main CA website. A working group was set up to make improvements to the front end, which are currently being implemented.

He ended by thanking a number of the many people who had worked tirelessly for the Association over the year.

Brian Wilson spoke to advocate more ambitious targets for increasing membership, saying that a number of clubs had already expanded this year. Jonathan replied that it was difficult to set percentage targets, as this year had been exceptional, but his immediate aim was to reach 10,000 players.

Jack Wicks raised concerns that stemmed from the handling of a complaint about social media usage, and was assured that the CA's use of social media would be reviewed, along with those for handling complaints in an age of increasingly rapid communication.

The Treasurer

Ian BurrIDGE reported that the 2019 accounts had shown a deficit of £6.5K, which had been smaller than anticipated.

He also predicted a deficit for the current year, though smaller than originally anticipated due to reduced meeting costs

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the AGM took place virtually this year, using a Zoom teleconference streamed on YouTube.

Those wishing to speak were asked to register for the Zoom link, and voting took place electronically beforehand.

Linda Shaw expressed disappointment that a way had not been found to enable voting to take place during the meeting.

She was told that a cautious approach, using relatively familiar technology, had been adopted first time round, but that arrangements would be reviewed should virtual meetings be needed, or wanted, again.

There had already been a proposal to make physical meetings more representative by avoiding votes at the meeting itself.

100 members watched the stream

The President, Quiller Barrett, opened the meeting punctually at 10am, from his home in Hertfordshire, and apologised in advance should any technological hoops be bobbled.

In the event, it all went relatively smoothly, with Eugene Chang and Mark Suter at the controls. There were 17 people (and one club) on the Zoom call, and just over 100 watching the stream.

Tony Salem, in absentia, had given notice that he wished to again raise the issue of the toss in Golf Croquet Doubles.

Roger Staples, the Chairman of the Executive Board, replied that the CA's Golf Croquet Rules Committee had considered the matter, recommended against making a local ruling, but agreed to raise it during the next WCF review.

Stephen Mulliner, its Chairman, confirmed that, and said that a consultation draft was expected towards the end of next year.





and other expenditure as a consequence of the pandemic.

Looking further ahead, Council wanted a balanced budget, which would make the budgeting process more of a challenge.

~

The business part of the meeting then ended with the announcement that the **constitutional amendments had been comfortably passed** with the necessary 6 to 4 majority, the smallest one being 54 votes in favour and 4 against for the change to Affiliate Club membership. Thanks to David and Eileen Magee, our scrutineers.

~

After reading the names in the benefactors' book, presentations then followed.

Presentations of Awards *(the citations are on pages 8 & 9)*

Callum Johnson had been awarded the Apps Memorial Bowl for the most improved male AC player of 2019;

Sophie McGlen the Steel Memorial Bowl for the female equivalent;

Steve Leonard the Spiers Trophy for the most improved GC player, who attributed his success to the organisers of the International Performance Development Squad.

Ian Shore was named as Coach of the Year (see page 8) and spoke of his aspirations for a new Academy at High Wycombe next year.

Abbreviated citations for the Diploma winners were then read, followed by longer ones for the two recipients of the new Bernard Neal awards for exceptional services to Croquet.

Peter Death displayed his, which took the form of an engraved glass vase, and **John Grimshaw** was shown being presented with his by Brian Shorney, a former Chairman of Council. Both paid tribute to the clubs, and their members, who had encouraged them to take up the game: Nottingham and Bristol respectively.

The President

In closing the meeting, Quiller Barrett thanked the members of the Coronavirus Task Force for helping clubs resume play as soon as that became possible after the lockdown. As an uncertain winter approaches, he asked clubs to keep in touch with members who may be vulnerable, particularly if they live alone, and make the most of whatever turns out to be the "new normal" for croquet.

Ian Vincent, Hon. Secretary



The President's closing remarks

I would like to say a word of thanks on behalf of our members to the CA Coronavirus Task Force that helped make a lot of things happen for croquet this year. Set up in March its members were Roger Staples, Jonathan Isaacs, Ian Vincent, Ian Burridge, Mark Suter and Beatrice McGlen.

~

Our sport interests and excites members in different ways.

It's very attractive to competitive people of all ages, yet we must not forget by far the majority of our members are getting on in years, have little or no interest in CA affairs but get lots of satisfaction from their club membership for largely social reasons.

All members benefited by the very effective work done by the Task Force to help our clubs get back to playing quickly. Most clubs managed to organise some restricted competitive events and they also enabled older members in particular to keep in physical contact while playing croquet with friends – at a distance of course. That is very important for everyone's mental health.

~

I was pleased that the Executive Board has been charged by Council to encourage more inclusivity in croquet. It's something I have been going on about for many years after I visited Swindon CC and saw how a club could transform its image by concentrating on inclusivity and community links. It wasn't their intention, but one result has been they received very significant grant funding.

Taking steps to make croquet more inclusive will give us plenty of opportunities to publicise how croquet really is – and isn't how most of the media see it. In our next year the Chairman of Council, the Chairman of the Executive Board and your President will all be asking club committees to get involved in this campaign – please do encourage them.

~

We face many uncertainties this winter and I would ask our clubs to keep in touch with members who may be vulnerable, particularly if they live alone. Whatever restrictions may be imposed on us in the future, may we all make the most of what CA members choose should be the new normal for croquet.

~

Before I close this AGM I would like to thank Eugene Chang, the technology maestro who helped us to make it all happen.

Thank you very much for joining us today. I hope to see many of you face-to-face in 2021.

Quiller Barrett,
President of the Croquet Association



Above: Quiller Barrett addresses the AGM on-line.
Right: Eugene Chang at the technical controls of the AGM and, impressively at the same time, his breakfast!

The Presentations of the Awards for The Most Improved Players of 2019



GC Player
~ Steve Leonard ~

The Spiers Trophy for Most Improved GC Player of 2019 is awarded to Steve Leonard of Winterborne Valley CC (formerly Kingston Maurward CC).

Steve started the 2019 season as a handicap 0 and finished as a handicap -3.

During the year, his ranking dynamic grade improved by 286 points from 1905 to 2191, representing a rise from 133rd in the UK to 35th. At the time of his nomination, he was the player with the third highest ranking grade change in the world.

Steve was nominated for the Spiers Trophy in 2017 and narrowly missed out to Richard Bilton and, following his impressive 2017 and 2018 seasons, he had another extraordinary GC term in 2019. His improvement and playing record this year are impressive and his performances in the GC Opens and the GC World Championships particularly stand out.

In the Open, in qualifying for the knock-out stage, he took games off international players J-P Moberly and Stephen Mulliner, and was only beaten by the latter 6-7 in the deciding game of their match.

Steve won the Ryde A-Level Series tournament and soon after was the top finisher with 13 wins in 16 matches in the World Championship qualifying event. This was the springboard for a great run of results in the World Championship itself where he won 5/6 matches in his block, including beating two-time World Champion Ahmed Nasr 2-1, but he narrowly missed out on a place in the knockout-stage when he lost a block play-off game.

Steve completed his 2nd year in the International Performance Development Squad and domestically he achieved a string of semi-final placings in other CA Fixture calendar tournaments and helped his club Kingston Maurward complete their league season undefeated.



Female AC player
~ Sophie McGlen ~

The Steel Memorial Bowl for Most Improved Female AC Player of 2019 is awarded to Sophie McGlen of Oxford University ACC and Nottingham CC.

Sophie started the 2019 season as a handicap 7, and finished as a handicap 4.

During the year, her ranking dynamic grade improved by 176 points from 1300 to 1476.

Sophie played in her first A-Class tournament, the Men's and Women's Championship, in June and, although not winning any singles games, she came away from it with many compliments about her play, and increased confidence.

She followed this up at the Ladies Sixes where she won the Longman Cake Stand for the Second Six unbeaten, and later won more silverware in the Nottingham Week B-Class trophy.

Sophie also played for the Croquet Association team in the annual fixture against the CA of Ireland where, by ranking and handicap, she was the weakest player, but her determination to win meant that she was our most valuable player, winning three out of five games.

Sophie is now ranked 23rd of women players in the UK, and has set her sights on the Women's AC World Championship in New Zealand.



Male AC player
~ Callum Johnson ~

The Apps Memorial Bowl for Most Improved Male AC Player of 2019 is awarded to Callum Johnson of York CC.

20-year-old Callum started the 2019 season as a handicap 2 and finished as a handicap 0.5.

During the year, his ranking dynamic grade improved by 221 points, from 1743 to 1964, representing a rise from 138th to 80th in the UK.

He achieved his first triple-peel in April at the Surbiton Easter Weekend and by the end of the season was confidently trying this feat in competition with regular success.

Callum represented Yorkshire in the AC Inter-Counties in May, where he won 9 out of his 10 games. He won the Middlesbrough Weekend in June 2019, was again runner-up in the Yorkshire White Rose Advanced Tournament in August where he achieved three triple-peels over the weekend.

Callum was then entered for the Selectors' Weekend in September and won the tournament undefeated in all nine of his games (mostly against minus players) and conceded a low number of hoops in the process. His final tournament record for 2019 shows wins in 24 of his 32 ranked games (75%) and the achievement of seven triple-peels and one sextuple-peel.

Presentation of the award for The Coach of the Year 2019



Ian Shore at High Wycombe CC with home club and Phyllis Court players; Carol Wadsworth, Patricia Mulcahy, Penny Austin & Delia Norris in a GC Improvers Class.

The Bernard Neal Award for exceptional services to croquet



The CA Bernard Neal Award was instituted in March 2020 in recognition of exceptional services to croquet.

This award has been titled so that in years to come members can be reminded of the many outstanding contributions to the sport made by Bernard Neal who died in

2016. He was President of the Croquet Association from 2004-2009.

It is awarded to CA members for outstanding contributions made to croquet in the domain.

Such contributions are considered to be substantially greater than those qualifying

for CA Diplomas but do not rank as high as the truly exceptional services required for a Council Medal. It is not purely an award for long service.

The bar for this award is high so it may not be made in every year.

Peter Death

Peter Death discovered croquet in 1975 by stopping to watch play in the August tournament at Nottingham CC while walking round the lake as a student. He joined the club and rapidly developed into an A-class player.

Before his career with the then Inland Revenue took him away from Nottingham in 1981 he had already been recruited as club Treasurer from 1977. He encouraged his son James to play with a cut-down mallet on the triangle between lawns 1 and 2.

He remained a member of Nottingham, but was also a member at Bowdon, Southport and Shrewsbury as his postings took him around the country.

When Peter returned full-time to the Nottingham Club in 1989 he held various offices including Chairman and President for some years. During this time he developed a keen interest in tournament management, becoming one of the relatively few with the capacity to handle multi-event week long tournaments, showing abundant patience and consideration for the players in them.

He has managed the Nottingham Week for many years, using an updated version of software originally developed for the purpose by Ian Vincent, and also major International Events, including a MacRobertson Shield Test Match, Womens AC World Championship, and was Tournament Director for the U21 GC World Championship.

Peter also quickly qualified as a referee, was appointed an examining referee in the 1980s and is a long-standing member of the AC Laws Committee.

He was elected to the CA Council in 2010 and chaired the Development Committee for four years. Peter succeeded Roger Bray as Hon. Treasurer of the CA in 2014 and saw Council through a time of significant change with the introduction of Standard Membership. Not only was he a reliable bookkeeper, but he helped develop software to import data from the membership database, tournament entry and shop systems into the accounting package, Sage. He was also a source of wise counsel both on strategic financial matters and a valued member of the Executive Committee.

As ever, with the interests of the CA at heart, he decided to retire from office while still in a position to effect a good hand-over, making this an appropriate time to recognise his outstanding contribution to croquet and its governing body.



John Grimshaw

In the late 1970s John Grimshaw responded to a local advertisement promoting a croquet demonstration and, being a chess player, was immediately interested in a sport that required both tactical and technical skills.

He followed this up with lessons at the Bath Club where he took to the game like a duck to water and joined the Club.

Employment then took him to South Wales where, in 1986, he single-handedly set up the Dyffryn CC. He also set up the Welsh CA

and was its Secretary from its formation in 1986 until 2003.

In 2004 John became League Secretary for the South West Federation, an area which covers seven counties and South Wales, a post he held for 14 years, retiring in 2018.

During that period the number of matches increased considerably, with both codes of the game being played at all levels and forms.

John has been a passionate advocate of competitive play and persuaded many of the smaller clubs to participate in League competition for the first time.

A Federation Short Croquet Tournament was introduced in 2006. John became involved two years later and by 2012 it had become a two-day event with three Divisions; a fourth Division was played in the following year, and a fifth in 2018.

This is truly an outstandingly successful innovation.

John was instrumental in raising a team to represent Wiltshire in the annual Inter-Counties Championship, was for some time its Captain and still enjoys representing his county.

In 2006 John returned to Wiltshire and joined Kington Langley CC where he immediately helped with recruitment and coaching, which continues to this day.

He was Chairman, is the club handicapper, and was, for many years, the competition secretary, efficiently organising many internal competitions.

He started mowing the courts 12 years ago and continues that role still.

Croquet owes John a huge debt of gratitude for his unstinting commitment to the development of the competitive game in the South West region for over 40 years.



Ian Shore

Ian Shore has been playing golf croquet at High Wycombe Croquet Club for about 10 years.

He has built up his coaching portfolio

focussing initially on GC beginners and improvers.

After the GC Rules 5th Edition was published, Ian developed and ran a seminar at several clubs to help 170 referees and others who wanted to understand the rule

changes. He has also developed a Youth Coaching programme at his club.

In recognition of his achievements and his contribution to croquet coaching Ian Shore has been selected as Coach of the Year for 2019.

Outgoing Chairman Roger Staples

I am writing this column for the last time as Chairman of your Executive Board.

At the AGM, Beatrice McGlen will take over this role and a new Board will be in place to guide and direct the Association. I wish them all well in this endeavour.

Much has been achieved in the last year of monumental change for the organisation, even though we have all suffered considerable disruption because of the Coronavirus pandemic. Notably, we were one of six named sports allowed to restart activities at the end of May.

We were able to address the concerns that the Government COVID-19 restrictions have imposed on us and a reduced Tournament programme was possible. My continued thanks to the Task Force, who have tirelessly worked to produce regulations that can meet the stringent conditions required by DCMS.

The outlook for next year isn't clear. The Fixtures Calendar is in preparation, but the tournament programme may well be disrupted again as a result of local restrictions imposed to control the spread of the virus.

Courteous conduct

We have always taken great pride as one of the few sports where honesty and courteous conduct are trademarks of our activities. We usually self-referee when there isn't a qualified referee available and honestly own up to faults inadvertently committed in play.

Similarly, we should treat all our opponents and their supporters with respect, not only congratulating them when they are victors in a match, but also in commentary off the lawns.

Sometimes, what is considered amusing banter by one person can be regarded as hurtful and demeaning to another individual.

We need to consider how our comments might be interpreted and if criticism is to be expressed, then it should be both caring and constructive.

People's feelings matter, particularly when our sport and clubs are run almost entirely by volunteers, and one should always err on the cautious side before making any derogatory comment.

Roger Staples

Incoming Chairman Beatrice McGlen

Having spent the last month working with Roger in order to get to know all the ins and outs of the job of Executive Chairman, I now realise why my family said I was crackers accepting the post!

However, I know I have a good team who will be working with me, with an ideal mix of experience and new ideas, so I am confident that we will be able to combine our strengths and push forward with implementing the new strategies and policies coming down from Council.

Changes on committees

Some of our committee chairmen have stood down, having come to the end of their four-year terms and I would like to thank them very much for what they have done

I have worked with most of you in one capacity or another and I know how much day to day work is done by the committees

To the people who will be taking over and to all the members of those committees, I am looking forward to a fruitful and harmonious relationship.

Thanks also to Roger for steering the Executive Board through its first year and coping with all the unforeseen crises of the year.

I sincerely hope that next year is nowhere near so dramatic!

Finally, to all CA members – the Executive Board and CA Council are here to make croquet better for you and to try and bring more people into the sport.

As lockdown is tightening again in many parts of the country, we can reflect how lucky most of us have been this season to get to play some croquet.

If, in the difficult winter days to come, you are thinking about how much your croquet friends and club mean to you, and you have any good ideas or constructive comments on how to make our organisation better, then I will be very pleased to hear from you.

Beatrice McGlen

Club Awards 2020

Have your Club recognised for its progress

The CA makes awards biennially to clubs that have made exceptional progress in providing a good playing environment.

These awards are made at the CA AGM and, in addition to an impressive certificate, an unsanitised cheque for £250 used to be given to the club.

However, in 2021 winning clubs will probably be asked to disclose their bank details so that an appropriate transfer can be made unceremoniously.

~

The awards are made in three categories.

The Townsend Award is given to a club with 1 or 2 courts that has, in the opinion of the Development Committee, made exceptional progress in providing a good playing environment over the previous two years.

The Apps Heley Award is given to the club with 3 or 4 courts that has made most progress at a national or local level in the last two years.

The Millennium Club Award is given to the club with 5 or more courts that has made most progress at national or local level in any of two of the previous three years.

~

To apply for one of the Awards you should contact your Federation Development Officer and complete an application form.

The form is available on the CA web site but the Chairman of the Development Committee will send you one by email, if you ask him nicely.

The Development Committee decided to consider nomination for awards in 2021, despite the current Covid-19 crisis.

It is accepted that 2020 has not been a great year for making progress with the improvement of the playing environment.

However, since reliance may be placed upon earlier progress, we agreed to proceed in the usual way.

The closing date for nominations is 31 December 2020

**John Reddish
Chairman of the Development
Committee**

The By-Election for the member of the CA Council

Following the resignation of Derek Knight as the member of Council for the Croquet North and Yorkshire constituency, a by-election is to be held.

The person elected will serve for the remainder of his three-year term, which ends in October 2022.

Role of the Council and its Members

The Council has overall responsibility for the affairs of the Association, with a focus on high-level policy, strategic initiatives, scrutiny and transparency.

Implementation of that policy is the responsibility of an Executive Board, which the Council appoints. The working committees report to the Executive Board.

There are 12 voting members of the Council, elected by single transferrable vote of individual CA members in constituencies made up of one or more Federations. They are to represent the players, clubs and Federations in their Constituency, balancing the interests of them and those of the CA as a whole as best they can.

Standing for Election

Membership of the Council thus offers a significant opportunity to shape the future of the CA, in the interests of its members as a whole. We would like to encourage

members with an active interest in the future of the CA to stand for election.

A list of the skills needed for this role is published on the website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=ca/gov/SkillsRequired>.

If you are interested in serving in this way, please read on to find out more about the election process and contact Jonathan Isaacs, the Chairman of Council, for further information.

Timetable

The timetable for the by-election is that **nominations will close on 14 December** and voting (if required) will finish on 11 January.

Nominations

Nominations for election by a Constituency should be e-mailed to **returning.officer@croquet.org.uk** and the Secretaries of the Croquet North (David Millener <davidmillener@aol.co.uk>) and Yorkshire (Margaret Wood <margaretwood085@gmail.com>) Federations, identifying the person nominated and their proposer and seconder, who must both be individual CA members registered to vote in the Constituency (the nominee doesn't have to be, but must be resident in the UK). A personal statement by the nominee, of no more than 300 words, may be attached for publication and they must have confirmed

their willingness to stand.

Electoral Register

CA members living in the UK are allocated to a Constituency based on the Federation membership of their primary club, failing which the leading part of the postcode of their home address. You can see the Constituency for which you are registered by viewing your details on the CA website. This you can do, when you are logged into it, by clicking on your name, which appears next to the login/out button on the top right of most pages. It will not be possible to change your Constituency during this by-election.

Voting

If a ballot is necessary for your Constituency, you will be able to vote online or by post. Further details will be published on the website and in the next edition of The Croquet Gazette. You will only be able to receive an e-mail giving a link to the voting application if you have an up-to-date e-mail address recorded in the CA Directory (though you can still be ex-directory if you do not want it published). Please ask your club secretary to set it for you if you can't login to the website to do it yourself.

Ian Vincent, Hon. Secretary

St Agnes CC invest 2019 CA Club Award prize in short mallets for kids

St Agnes Croquet Club in Cornwall was the winner of the Apps Heley Award last year, for which we received the cup and also a cheque for £250.

Rather belatedly, I am in a position to let you know how we have used this cash to promote the development of croquet for younger players.

We have purchased ten short-shafted mallets from a local golf centre which flirted with croquet and then decided to concentrate on the golf business and turn their farm into a nine-hole golf course.

The upshot was that we were able to obtain these ten mallets brand new for half price!

The mallets we were able to buy had been supplied by Uber Games to the Hayle Golf Club. We bought five 24" and five 28" mallets from their 'Executive'



range each priced at £50.

Looking at the Uber Games website I see they are no longer available – although they do have a less expensive range at £25 each. Ours are the considerably better quality mallets with the brass ferrules.

The only thing wrong with the deal was our impeccably bad timing (this was in February), and the mallets have lain in our store ever since, but we have every hope of them being used next year.

Our annual Fun Days (pictured) attract about 200 adults plus children and young people (we don't charge them so have never kept count) and we also run three or four taster days each season, each normally attracting 15-20 people.

Our committee's decision was that the purchase of the junior mallets was a sensible use of the award money and St Agnes CC thanks those responsible for the award; we were very pleased and not a little proud to have received it.

We would appreciate advice from anyone or a club with experience of delivering croquet to children and young people, and will keep the Gazette informed as to how we get on.

Ivan Corbett, Chair, St Agnes CC

'MyClubhouse' on-line membership system is a hit at Budleigh Salterton

Dear Editor,

Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club's 150th anniversary celebrations were dealt a blow when the Covid-19 lockdown threw all our planning into disarray.

Fortunately the immediate problems were greatly assisted by the club's decision in January to adopt the MyClubhouse on-line membership system.

Being a large croquet and bridge club with 11 international standard lawns and nearly 300 members to communicate with, it was a considerable challenge to get rapidly changing information and plans to everyone.

Myclubhouse has proved to be indispensable and has replaced increasingly difficult to administer and labour intensive paper-based lists and spreadsheets run by volunteers.

MyClubhouse is a configurable cloud-based membership system and all actions within the system have definable permissions. This means that officers and members who have specific roles can be allowed to do different things.

~

Using Myclubhouse we have:

- Successfully implemented on-line our Annual Membership Renewal process for over 270 members.

The membership module includes:-

- Email, telephone and member contact details, which are maintained and edited on line by members themselves and allows members to email each other.

- Members individual password protection with on line access to a Member Directory and to club documentation;

- GDPR compliance on every level of internal and external communication for the Secretary, officers and members;

- An on-line card and cheque subscriptions payment module with a full transaction audit trail for all categories of croquet and bridge membership;

- Prepared and published Covid-19 operational and administrative processes via an on-line series of emails and newsletters.

- Conducted an on-line club AGM, with the acceptance of accounts, officer appointments, and various resolutions all voted on using an on-line electronic ballot;

- Successfully introduced On-line Lawn

Booking enabling us to reopen the club lawns for internal competitions, rollups and CA tournaments with an electronic track and trace process recording who is booking and who their playing partners are for Covid19 purposes (This module went live to members in May and has had over 3000 bookings since then, Covid-19 rules notwithstanding);

- A club calendar for all events such as the CA and SWF tournaments, internal competitions, SWF league matches and social events allowing at all times for lawns to be locked down for maintenance or reserved for tournament play;

- Prepared the Team Management module for all events including SWF leagues and other interclub matches, which we will implement once SWF league matches resume;

- Investigated the Website Building module (CMS) - at this stage we have simply integrated MyClubhouse into our existing website to allow both to operate side by side;

- A Shop module which we may add at a later date.

~

This system is commercially available via MyClubHouse,
<https://www.myclubhouse.co.uk>

~

MyClubHouse is used by over 80 clubs of various sports all over England. The system allows any club to configure the system to their needs and is very flexible. MyClubhouse helped us load our member data for free and as the system is modular you only need to buy the modules you need and pricing is competitive.

~

Here at Budleigh, the members have told us how easy the system is to use and we have found that the system has been a great tool to help us manage this difficult year. It has reduced the volunteer administration workload.

We thought it might be useful for other clubs to know of our experience and would be happy if any club wished to contact us for information at

enquiries@budleighcroquet.org

We are now turning our minds to start planning how we will revitalise the postponed 150th celebrations.

Ian Stratford,
Budleigh Salterton CC

Remembering William's altruism

Dear Editor,

Further to the warm remembrances of William Ormerod in the last issue (*Gazette 387*), I offer the following:

Once, during the mid-1970s, I was fortunate enough to spend a full afternoon playing croquet with William at Bristol.

Since I was then an improving B-class player, he patiently arranged a row of ten bisques.

With so much help, I was able to set-up and complete two four ball breaks, affording William minimal opportunity.

The game was soon over and, it being a friendly, I had no hesitation in leaving three bisques standing.

"Let's play again," said William, "but this time I shall only give you seven."

The second game was very similar to the first, with William forced to spend the majority of the time sitting down and removing bisques, with two remaining at the end. I expected him to call a halt but instead he insisted we play a third game, only now there would be just five bisques.

Thoroughly played in and much more recently used to the vagaries of lawn 3 than my opponent, whose visits to the Club were of necessity then rare, I was delighted to complete the game with all five bisques untaken, although certainly not unused.

"Your play just got better and better," declared William, his enthusiasm for my progress apparently overriding any thought for his own almost totally inactive afternoon. That experience certainly boosted my confidence and stood me in good stead thereafter.

I remain grateful to be among the many with direct experience of William's altruism.

Laurence V Latham



William Ormerod (right), with CA Chairman Tim King at The Cuckoo Inn, Hamptworth, for the Chairman's Salver 2016 (photo by Liz Williams). Part 2 of Pete Trimmer's "Memories of William" is on page 29.

Handicap index points: fair or not?

Dear Editor,

I realise the following topic is a tad esoteric but members in lockdown or semi-lockdown may welcome the opportunity to pass time with a logical challenge - however unlikely its satisfactory resolution might be.

So here's the proposition:

Handicap index points transferred after a single competitive game depend only on the result - not the score.

However, the net transfer of points after a multi-game match can depend on whether it is a whitewash (e.g. 2-0 or 3-0) or if games are shared (2-1, 3-2, etc.).

Thus, beating an opponent with a higher handicap 6-7, 7-0, 7-0 (in effect 20 hoops to 7) will probably result in the loss of index points by the winner.

Whereas winning a "36-pointer" by 19-7 (or, for that matter 19-18) against the same guy, would transfer index points in the opposite direction.

Does this anomaly potentially unjustly apportion the spoils of victory?

Can it be resolved?

Peter Lowe, Tyneside CC

~

If I understand your points correctly Peter, you seem to want to reward a player for their winning margin in a multi-game match, rather than by simply whether they won the individual games or not.

Winning is the aim of each sporting contest and the margin of the win is of secondary importance.

I do not recognise your concept of a "36 pointer" (and I think you may mean 39 in GC actually) for that doesn't exist.

It's three separate 13 point games and the rewards are for the individual games, not the 'match' result.

You either win games or lose them; 6-7 is just as much of a loss as 0-7 - you still lost!

You then seek to minimise the loss of index points suffered by a lower handicapped player (and as a consequence reduce the reward earned by a victorious higher handicapped player) when the favourite has been properly beaten in a single game of a match by the underdog.

If the lower handicapped player does end up losing index points in a 2-1 match victory, it's because he/she had no business losing a game to the higher handicapped player, and in my book, the latter richly deserves the points exchange earned. - Ed

Reporting in verse at York

Dear Editor,

York CC members had their spirits raised by the following report from our Social Secretary, Fiona Crompton, at our recent Zoom AGM.

I thought it might also bring a smile to other faces if it reached a wider audience.

Alison Larard, Secretary, York CC

~

The Social Secretary's report 2020

I'm in charge of social do's
But this year's somewhat different.
All I get is social don'ts
And keep your social distance.

Stay two metres plus apart
And don't forget your mask,
And stay within the family bubble,
It's quite a lot to ask.

The clubhouse has to be kept locked
Bring and Share cannot take place.
We'd have to keep a lengthy list
So we can Track and Trace

The summer party is delayed
Moved on 'til '21
That reminds me, for next year
I must rebook the sun.

At least our brand new booking site
Has led to social games
So by next year we hope to have
Some better social fun.

Fiona Crompton

Jump to it from your own 'Lockdown launch pad'

Dear Editor,

Having produced several suggestions in the Croquet Gazette in the past, may I offer an arrangement for those enduring a Covid lockdown.

If you have a small garden, like mine, try a net, one hoop and four balls and a 'launch pad' made of an old mat and a couple of free samples of Astroturf.

It's better than nothing!

Tony Lee, Norwich CC

A tale of the unexpected

Dear Editor

Who'd a thought it!

It was a warm sunny day at Dowlish Wake CC in rural Somerset, when Katie Bryant, Dave Green, Malcolm Norton and Keith Bryant took to the court for a GC handicap doubles game.

It was a competitive but uneventful game when yellow ran the 12th hoop to make it 6-6. No one could have imagined what happened next!

Katie played her blue ball down the long slope (yes "slope" is the correct terminology as visiting teams will testify) towards hoop 13, took her final extra turn, and put the ball in front of the hoop well hidden from the red/yellow combo.

Red played and went through the back of hoop 13 with just enough momentum to move blue so that Katie could not run it.

Her exclamation of "What the ****?" could be heard for miles around!

Unbelievably, this was followed by both black and yellow also going through the back of hoop 13. There followed an exchange of clearance shots before the red/yellow team prevailed.

The chances of three balls all being played in turn down the long slope through the back of hoop 13 must be a rarity to say the least - unless any of your readers know differently!

Dave Green and Keith Bryant, Dowlish Wake CC



The GC English National Singles Championship

Rachel Gee retained the GC English National Singles Championship and with it the Ascot Cup, writes

Richard Bilton.

In doing so, she achieved two landmark feats: she became the first person since Reg Bamford in 2009 to win the tournament without dropping a game and is also the first name to appear on the trophy for two consecutive years since 1997 – both of which are ‘firsts’ under the current structure.

Southport and Birkdale Croquet Club were most welcoming and put lots of effort into the facilities and conditions for this Championship tournament in a time of year which has the potential to have less than desirable weather. Everyone enjoyed one of the warmest, calmest and driest weekends since the beginning of August.

Among the 16 players were three previous winners, including the defending champion, and James Death as the top four seeds (they are all members at Nottingham CC), as well as many regulars at top-level GC events.

It was difficult to predict if there would be another new name on the trophy for the sixth year in a row, and/or whether it would again call Nottingham its home.

Block play

Most seeds progress and Good springs a surprise!

Best-of-three 13-point games in four blocks of four on Saturday determined the top two from each to progress to the knockout and all the blocks A, B and C finished with players on 3, 2, 1 and 0 wins.

Block B went with the seedings, with all matches being won 2-0 bar Tom Weston taking the middle game from Tim King; it was won by Gee, being the only player to not drop a single game.

Block D also went to seeding, although with three players on two wins, Roger Goldring just missed out to Lionel Tibble, having lost their match which concluded at 1845 after everyone else had left.

Block C also saw the top two seeds progressing to the knockout, although in the match between them, Ian Burridge was 2-5 down in game three against Paul Rigge (and was a little bit annoyed while contesting hoop 8 when a positional shot from the south boundary rolled off course into the back of the wire) but came back to win 7-5.

The standout performance of the Saturday was the reason block A didn't go to seeding, as Jack Good won his first two matches, and was guaranteed to be in the knockout of his first ENSC before even

playing James Death, who was also on two wins.

Three quick-fire quarters and one marathon

The knockout consisted of three rounds of best-of-three matches. The rankings were updated with the block games on Saturday evening and the knockout was drawn using Modified Grade-Based Seeding, with the block winners seeded 1-4 and second in each block 5-8, avoiding first-round block clashes.

Burridge looked to have the hardest draw in the form of Tibble, but he dished up a 7-0, 7-3 win in super-quick time, prompting Lionel to say he was “murdered” and “Poirot wouldn't have had much work to do!”

Death also didn't waste much time in beating King 7-4, 7-3 and Gee beat Good 7-3, 7-5 to set up yet another match against Burridge whom she seems always destined to meet.

It is not often that all the semi-finalists at a Championship hail from the same club but to set that up it was by then necessary for Richard Bilton to get past Paul Rigge. The latter made hay to win game one when Bilton's form dipped, but the Nottingham man then raised his game and, after leading both the second and third games 6-2, was able to take the match 6-7, 7-3, 7-5 after four hours of play.

semi-finals

All-Nottingham

On paper, the semi between Burridge and Gee was the hardest to call, with their previous head-to-head score standing at 16-15 to Burridge, who had now reached the semi-finals of all three GC Triple Crown events this year, while Gee had won two of the three remaining qualifying tournaments for this Championship.

There was never much between them in this match either; Burridge levelled game one at 6-6 and had a jump at hoop 13, but clipped Gee's ball, allowing her to run it and, after another close game, Gee kept her winning streak going with a 7-5 victory.

Death appeared to be the favourite against Bilton, as his grade was over 100 points ahead, although he only led their previous games 6-5 and Bilton had won three out of four games this year. Neither player was at their best; Bilton was the more consistent of the two and won 7-6, 7-4.

The Final Gee v Bilton

Bilton's form, while respectable in his last

four games, was quite varied during the event, whereas Gee was solid throughout and she went into the final as favourite.

Gee won the opening in game 1 and she established a 2-0 lead but Bilton ran hoop 3 to the south boundary and at hoop 4 a positional shot from Gee left Bilton a double and he ran the hoop from 12 yards to level at 2-2.

Gee came back to win hoop 5 and an unfortunate characteristic of the lawn left Bilton behind the peg on the way towards hoop 6 which Gee duly won, and she went further ahead at hoop 7.

A flick attempt, an in-off and a jump from Bilton all failed and Gee took a 1-0 lead in the match.

They say ‘the better you are playing, the more luck you have’ – this was certainly the case in game 2, although with a good and bad run.

Gee again lead 2-0, Bilton failed some angled shots, Gee ran hoop 3 and finished in the jaws of hoop 4, establishing a 4-0 lead in no time; but she then rushed Bilton's first approach to hoop 5 into the jaws and removed the possibility of winning 7-0.

Before long, after Gee peeled Bilton through hoop 7 but still led 5-2 and after some more consistent clearing from Gee, as well as a helpful run of the balls, Gee won this game and the Championship, with a well-deserved victory, 7-3, 7-3.

The Shield and Plate

In the Shield (for quarter-final losers) Tibble overcame Good 10-7 and King snatched victory from the jaws of defeat to beat Rigge 10-9 in the semis and he went on to beat Tibble 7-4, 7-6 in the final.

And in the Plate (for main event non-qualifiers) Jane Tewson stepped in after one of the players withdrew and played well to beat Ryan Cabble 7-4 and Callum Johnson 7-5 and come second in her block behind the latter. In the other block, Roger Goldring came in second behind David Widdison despite winning their game.

In the Plate semis, Goldring beat Johnson 10-8 and Widdison beat Tewson 10-5, before Widdison took the Plate for the north, beating Goldring 10-7.

Richard Bilton

Photographs (from top):

- **Rachel Gee** retained the English National Singles title and with it the Ascot Cup (*just as pictured here last year*).

- Full concentration from **J-P Moberly** on his way to the First Eight crown & Ricki Savage Memorial Trophy.

- Likewise for **Euan Burridge** who impressed at the same event.

- And not looking out of place at all in this company is young **Jack Good**, who sprang a real surprise at the top flight English National Singles Championship.

- *Images by Chris Roberts -*



The GC Selectors' Eights

John-Paul Moberly won GC's First Eight to become the first winner of the new Ricki Savage Memorial Trophy. Sussex County CC hosted both GC Eights over the August Bank Holiday, *writes Stephen Mulliner*

The courts were in excellent condition for the end of summer and the use of firmly-set Atkins hoops demanded accurate hoop strokes. Jump shots, especially the angled type, were a challenge for everyone.

Youth in the majority

Richard Bilton, Euan Burrridge, James Galpin, Rachel Gee and John-Paul Moberly are all under thirty and were joined by Ian Burrridge, Stephen Mulliner and Lionel Tibble who represented the older generation.

Indeed, if Tobi Savage had not had to withdraw, the majority would have been even more representative of the current healthy state of affairs in top English GC.

Euan Burrridge impressive in blocks

The first two days of block play produced a mixed bag of results with the stand-out performance being produced by Euan Burrridge, at 18 the youngest player in the field. He lost his opening match to his father, Ian, and then rattled off five wins.

Moberly and Ian Burrridge were next with 4/6 and the last qualifying place was up for grabs between Mulliner and Tibble who were both on 3/6 and had to play each other in the final round on Monday morning. Tibble had showed much improved form and led the field after Day 1 with 3/3 while Mulliner, the top seed, had had the odd experience of beating the next three seeds (Moberly, Ian Burrridge and Gee) but losing to the next three seeds (Bilton, Galpin and Euan Burrridge).

The Round 7 game against Tibble pitched top seed against eighth should, on paper, have been an easy win for Mulliner. However, Mulliner/Tibble matches are always close and this one, as usual, finished at hoop 13 in game 3 with Mulliner progressing. Moberly beat Euan Burrridge and took first place in the block with better net points, and Mulliner was third with one more net game than Ian Burrridge.

Semi-finals

Euan Burrridge gave a very impressive display of powerful and accurate clearing and hooping in the first semi-final against Mulliner. Armed with a Solomon grip and the fearlessness of youth, no hoop was safe from him either on the ground or in the air



1st Eight

The Ricki Savage Memorial Trophy

and Mulliner's only defence was to block as often as he could and take every reasonable hoop opportunity.

Burrridge was dominant in the first game and sealed it by running hoop 11 cleanly from the north boundary. Mulliner dug in and managed to win the second 7-5 and was undoubtedly favoured by the "run of the balls" in game 3. He made the most of it and took that game 7-5 as well to progress to the final.

Moberly and Ian Burrridge had a close first game in which Burrridge held the advantage in the later stages but Moberly managed to snatch a 7-6 win. The second game was a more straightforward 7-4 win for Moberly to set up a repeat of the 2019 final.

The Final – Moberly v Mulliner

Mulliner started the final strongly and Moberly was initially a little "off" with the result that the game 1 score soon reached 6-1 to Mulliner. Moberly then took three hoops on the trot to reach 6-4 but failed an angled 11 to hand the game to his opponent.

Mulliner also started well in game 2, reaching 3-1 before Moberly was able to take hoops 5 and 6.

The tactical situation at hoop 7 was a good example of GC risk calculation. Moberly's Black was on the north boundary 5 yards east of corner 2 and Blue was south of hoop 7 and wired from Red which could jaws next time.

He played a gentle shot with Blue on Yellow to send Yellow to a yard short and four yards east of Black (and thus easily clearable by Black to the east) and left Blue four yards north and a yard east of 7.

What should Mulliner do?

Move Blue with Red and leave Black a shot at the hoop or jaws with Red and risk the jump by Blue? He chose to jaws and Yellow was duly cleared. Mulliner was a shade unlucky that his counter-clearance from 20 yards nicked Blue into straighter position and Moberly demonstrated his impressive jump technique to take the lead and run down to hoop 8. The score was soon 5-3 and then 7-4 to Moberly.

The third game saw Moberly in his best form with powerful clearing and long hooping. There were some lengthy duels but he ran out a very worthy winner by 4-7, 7-4, 7-3.

In the consolation event, Bilton beat Tibble 10-9 while James Galpin had a walk-over against Gee and then emerged a narrow winner against Bilton by 7-5, 5-7, 7-6.

Stephen Mulliner



The GC British Open Cham

~ by Stephen Mulliner ~

The 2020 GC Open Championship was hosted by Sussex County CC on excellent courts with robust hoops. It was a pity that coronavirus prevented Southwick's catering and bar from being in operation but otherwise the event was as normal apart from the cancellation of the Doubles Championship.

The weather was expected to be uncertain but it was not until Sunday lunchtime that there was any interruption of play when a cloudburst accompanied by a thunderstorm turned the courts into lakes in about 15 minutes.

It was a great tribute to Southwick's lawns contractor, Ben Harwood, that they drained promptly as soon as the rainfall moderated and were fully playable (helped by some noble squeegee work by Richard Carline) within an hour.

The entry was strong, albeit missing the quarantined Reg Bamford, although most players were effectively at the start of their seasons.

Block Play

Block A featured the top seed, John-Paul Moberly, who started strongly before losing to a resurgent Mark Daley and then to second seed, Richard Bilton.

Bilton was involved in no fewer than four three-game matches but had the knack of winning them all and ended unbeaten.

Euan Burrridge, fresh from his London Masters triumph, was third behind Moberly by only one net game and Guy Scurfield won the crunch last round match against Daley.

Block B had a three-way tie between Mulliner, Will Gee and Stuart M Smith on 6 won of 7 but Mulliner had the best net games and 46 net points and Gee had the

same net game as Smith but much better net points. Peter Dowd qualified fourth by beating Richard Brooks in round 7.

Block C promised to be the manager's nightmare when Tim King found his best form for some time to defeat Rachel Gee 7-3, 7-5.

Tobi Savage was the form horse and won all seven with a respectable 45 net points. It duly transpired that Simon Carter, Steve Leonard and King all finished on four wins and three play-off rounds were needed to identify Carter and Leonard as the other qualifiers.

Block D was won by the unbeaten Jonathan Powe, with Ian Burrridge second on 6 wins of 7.

James Galpin, the 2019 Under 21 GC World Championship finalist, qualified third in his first British Open and Tim Jolliff from Taunton beat Raouf Allim in the last round for the fourth qualifying spot.

The Knock-out – and a big upset in round 1

The first knock-out round produced one clear upset, when Stuart Smith won at the 13th in game 3 to eliminate Moberly.

Smith had already beaten Mulliner in the block with a display of straight hitting and he repeated the treatment against Moberly to win 7-5, 3-7, 7-6.

Powe had a tough battle with Leonard before winning 7-6, 4-7, 7-4 and the Burrridge family duel produced an excellent close (if not entirely silent) match in which father Ian beat son Euan by 6-7, 7-5, 7-5.

Galpin started well against Rachel Gee but experience told and Gee prevailed by 5-7, 7-4, 7-3. The other matches went with form and in straight games in favour of the higher seeds.

'No fluke' Smith scalps third England International in the quarters

Smith proved that his defeats of Mulliner and Moberly were no flukes when he added a third England team scalp by beating Bilton 7-6, 7-4.

Powe had beaten Ian Burrridge in Block D but a missed ultra-fine cut in front of hoop 13 in game 3 proved to be a fatal error, giving Burrridge Snr. the win by 7-4, 6-7, 7-6.

Savage and Rachel Gee had two very competitive games but Savage's extra

power was the difference and he went through by 7-6, 7-5.

Will Gee displayed great power against Mulliner but had difficulty in keeping his jump shots below cloud level and the latter won by 7-4, 7-5.

Contrasting fortunes in semis

The semi-finals provided a contrast.

Smith never really got going against an in-form Mulliner although the 7-1, 7-1 score line was not a completely fair reflection of the match. It ended with Smith producing an excellent bouncing bomb jump over two balls at hoop seven in game 2 to avoid a whitewash and then clearing one of Mulliner's balls at hoop eight only to peel the other!



Mulliner won his eighth British Open title

That match was over by 11.30 while the other semi-final was enjoying a more deliberate approach.

Savage looked to be continuing his excellent form and took game 1 by 7-3 and, despite determined Burrridge resistance, seemed to be in control at hoop 11 at 5-5.

However, a fault when preparing to play a hampered stroke changed the balance of the game and Burrridge squared the match at the 13th.

The decider had reached 3-2 to Burrridge by 1.30pm when the heavens opened and play was suspended for over an hour but the pause clearly did Savage no harm because he won five of the next six points to advance to the final by 7-3, 6-7, 7-4 and set up a repeat of the 2016 final.

Photographs: Above - Stuart M Smith had an impressive tournament, beating three current England Internationals. Top right - James Galpin had a great Open debut reaching the final of the Bowl Centre - Stephen Mulliner, winner again! (Images by Chris Roberts).

Championship

The Final - Mulliner v Savage 'GC can be a cruel game'

Savage dominated the 2020 Open final for long stretches with accurate and powerful hitting. He has an established swing process with an excellent tempo which delivers a smoothly accelerating impact on the ball. Long hoops, long clearances and long jumps are all well within his compass.

The author Stephen Mulliner's detailed recollection of the 'ball by ball' play in the first two games and right up to the zenith of the decider is a marvel in itself. It can be read on the CA website (13-16 August news item).

Stephen picks up the story at one game all and Tobi Savage 5-3 up in the decider... - Ed

Mulliner's first ball to hoop 9 was cleared but he earned a chance to run 9 from the south boundary. This hit the east wire and bounced away and Savage then ran a superb eight-yard angled hoop 9 with Blue to stop five yards short of hoop 10.

Savage was now 6-3 up and with one hand on the trophy (*thereby evoking memories of the 2019 GCWC final in game 4*).

Mulliner played Red to three yards SSW of hoop 10 and Savage put Black to four yards SSW. Yellow missed Blue and Savage had a straight five yard hoop for what would have been a very well-deserved victory.

Alas for Savage, the shot went left and bounced off the wire to the middle of the north boundary.

Mulliner then went for 10 with Red but only jawsed. Black now missed a jump, also ending on the north boundary and Yellow played back into position but not wired from Black. Savage now declined to try and clear Red with Blue which was arguably over-cautious given his general clearing accuracy and instead played Blue into position for a possible rush by Black. Red ran by 6 inches for 6-4.

Savage now went for the standard tactic of an approach shot and played Black into position, followed by Yellow and Blue, with Blue not blocking Red clearing Black. Mulliner's clearance on Black hit the left edge and sent it to just north of hoop 2.

'Now fate dealt Savage an unkind blow'

Savage's clearance with Black on Yellow also caught the left edge and unfortunately peeled it, sending it to two yards SE of the



peg, cutting Blue to four yards NE of the peg and sending Black to near corner 3!

It was 6-5.

Mulliner played Yellow carefully to a one yard position blocking Blue from hoop 12 and Savage centre-balled Yellow to the south boundary, with Blue following through to seven yards north of Yellow.

Red was played into two yard position and Black played down from corner 3 to join it. Mulliner now cleared Blue to almost the east boundary. Savage missed Red and Mulliner now ran 12 to make the score 6-6.

Savage played Black to six yards NNE of 13 and Mulliner, playing Yellow from just south of the peg, managed to stop it five feet NNE of 13, almost blocking Black at 13.

Fate now played its final trick when Blue, played from near corner 1, stopped on the blade of grass between Black and Yellow that blocked Black at 13 and Black at Yellow.

Red was played well to the west to avoid any risk of disturbing the situation and Savage had to jump to recover the situation.

The jump cleared both balls but hit the west upright and bounced away. Mulliner now had a 5 footer for a somewhat undeserved victory on the balance of play but duly scored the point to take his eighth British Open title since 2000 by 4-7, 7-4, 7-6.

~

In the Bowl semi-final, Galpin beat Euan Burridge 4-7, 7-3, 7-3 and qualified to meet Moberly whose semi-final opponent, Simon Carter, had withdrawn. Moberly ultimately prevailed by 7-4, 4-7, 7-4 to win the Bowl.

The youngest player by far was Jack Good, at 14. He took games from Tudor Jenkins, Tim Jolliff, Ron Carter and Jonathan Powe. The latter was a great match with the closest-possible score, 6-7, 7-6, 7-6, to Powe.

Good has a great attitude and visibly improved as the event progressed. It was both very welcome and no surprise to see him win his Plate block and then defeat Jenkins and the improving local player, Neil Humphreys, in the final to win the Plate.

Jack Good has a great future in croquet if he persists.

Stephen Mulliner

The GC Selectors' Eights

2nd Eight

The Kate Jones Memorial Trophy

Raouf Allim was a popular winner of the GC second Eight to claim the Kate Jones Memorial Trophy for the first time, *writes Chris Roberts*.

Played alongside the First Eight at Southwick over the August Bank Holiday weekend, the reduced number of competitive opportunities available this year no doubt contributed greatly to the strongest field yet assembled for this Eight.

Stuart M Smith put on a stellar performance in the all-play-all block phase, and won 6 of 7 matches, with his black marks being single-point losses to Steve Leonard.

Going into the seventh and final round of best of threes, only Liz Farrow could not progress and she was paired with winner Smith in a 'dead rubber'. The rest, all tied on three wins, played for their lives in head-to-head matches in which Allim, Leonard and Guy Scurfield prevailed over Tim King, Callum Johnson and Chris Roberts respectively.

In the semis, Smith's excellent run came to an end at the hands of Allim 7-5, 7-6 and Scurfield needed an extra game to see off Leonard 7-3, 3-7, 7-4.

The final was a real nail-biter as the cool Allim squeezed out Scurfield by the narrowest of margins, 7-6, 7-6.

In the Bowl, Roberts beat King in the final for fifth place overall, after that pair had got past Farrow and Johnson respectively.

~

Photograph - Raouf Allim, the GC 2nd Eight winner with Kate Jones Memorial Trophy (*Image by Chris Roberts*)



The GC Inter-County Championships

Dorset win Division 1 at Southwick

The Division 1 format was an all-play-all block, followed by a two-round knockout for the teams placed 1-4, 5-8 and 9-12.

All matches were three single games played against opposite numbers in handicap order and on the basis of team handicaps, it looked like Kent, Dorset, Sussex and Somerset (the 2019 winners) would be the teams to watch.

At the halfway stage things appeared to be running reasonably to form with Sussex on 5/6 wins and Dorset, Kent, Somerset and Nottinghamshire close behind on 4/6.

There were some important top-of-the-table clashes in the final five rounds which caused a bit of a shuffle at the top, but in the end it was (in order) Kent, Sussex, Dorset and Somerset in positions 1-4 for the final knockout matches.

Close behind was the CA Select team who had punched above their weight in the final few rounds, only missing out on fourth place by a whisker.

In the semi-finals, Kent (Pierre Beaudry -4, Simon Carter -4 and Mark Daley -3) beat Somerset (James Galpin -4, Stephen Custance-Baker -1 and Colin Britt -1) with

relative ease 3-0.

Meanwhile Dorset (Jonathan Powe -4, Steve Leonard -3, David Kendrick -2 (Sun) and Dave Trimmer -2 (Sat)) were matching that score line, beating Sussex (Pete Dowd -3, Richard Brooks -2 and Liz Farrow -1) 3-0.

The Final - Dorset v Kent

In their block match played that morning, Kent had beaten Dorset 2-1, but in the final Dorset managed to turn the tables.

With the match poised at 1-1, and the final game between David Kendrick and Mark Daley on the 12th hoop, David ran the hoop from eight yards to win the game 7-5 and the match 2-1.

Dorset last won the Championship in 2004 when William Ormerod was a member of the team, so it was fitting that they should get their hands back on the Cup so soon after his passing.

Top 5 individual performers were (in order): Pierre Beaudry (Kent) 11/13; Jonathan Smith (Hants) 7/9; Steve Leonard (Dorset), James Galpin (Somerset) and Les Heard (Northants) all on 10/13.

Many thanks to hosting clubs Southwick (Division 1) and Cheltenham (Division 2) for the use of their excellent courts and for all their work beforehand to prepare for both events.

Jonathan Powe

Herts win Division 2 at Cheltenham

Hertfordshire were undefeated in winning the GC Inter-Counties Division 2 title at Cheltenham in August, **reports manager Ivor Brand.**

It truly was a remarkable leap of faith that this event remained planned – and it eventually was given the seal of approval.

Covid-19 had tried its best to upset normal life, but fortunately the powers at the CA with the help of the Cheltenham CC were able to put on this ever-growing event. The expansion from six to eight teams meant that a large club like Cheltenham was an ideal location, especially in terms of geography.

The Saturday morning saw the lush green lawns occupied to capacity by players eager to get back to play, despite the social distancing and the format having changed from previous years to incorporate the extra teams.

It was still an all-play-all block, but this time each county first played a doubles and two singles, before playing another four

singles in handicap order. The result was therefore derived from a 'best of seven rubbers' and worked well, albeit with lunch being taken 'on the move'.

After three rounds only Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire were unbeaten and, with their head-to-head match at the end of day 1, only one team was going to go home happy. This match was bound to be a close contest with each county having two -2 handicapped players to call upon, and it ended in five of the seven games going to the 12th or 13th hoops!

Hertfordshire got the crucial win and, led by John Noble, they continued their winning ways into Sunday; and they fully deserve the championship title after completing their program undefeated, just that one win ahead of Roger Goldring's Oxfordshire.

It is a shame that neither county will get their promotion this year due to the impact of Covid-19.

New entrants county of Devon will clearly be one to watch for next year as they finished a commendable third.

I believe that despite Covid-19 this event

was a great success and that all counties had a positive and enjoyable experience despite the social distancing. My lasting memory this year has to be seeing the Oxfordshire team, including Gazette editor Chris Roberts, consistently 'sitting down' enjoying the leisurely pace of life as it should be! I look forward to seeing you all again next year.

Finishing order: Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire, Devon, Berkshire, Leicestershire, Gloucestershire, Buckinghamshire, CA Select. **Ivor Brand**

Photographs: Winning captains - Steve Leonard (Dorset, above) and John Noble (Hertfordshire). Images by Chris Roberts.



The GC Inter-County Championships had a rather different feel this year; and it wasn't all about Covid-19, reports Jonathan Powe

To start with, Division 2 had grown to eight teams with the addition of the Devon team plus a CA Select team which forced a move from Compton to the larger capacity venue of Cheltenham.

Meanwhile, due to the understandable limit on numbers at Southwick, the Division 1 counties were restricted to teams of three, which meant a change to the format.

But perhaps the most striking change was the absence of the excellent catering and bar facilities at both venues.

Although this meant that the afternoon sessions started rather more promptly than in previous years, it certainly had an effect on the 'festival' atmosphere that is such a feature of the Championships.

However, spirits were not dampened too greatly and there was some excellent croquet played at both venues.

The AC British Open Championship

~ by Samir Patel ~



Paddy Chapman won his first AC Open Singles Championship title at an event that was a little different.

The first Autumn AC Open

For much of the year, it was looking unlikely that this Championship would take place at all. In the run-up to the original allocation, government guidance about appropriate COVID precautions was changing on a weekly basis, which made planning the event impossible.

The final nail was the announcement that the earliest possible date for the opening of accommodation and restaurants would be during the event.

That's not quite how it was phrased, but the postponement was inevitable.

The new autumn window of opportunity was for a shorter duration – six days rather than nine – and with the reduced daylight hours the Doubles Championship had to be cancelled, but the 130th (and 75th consecutive) AC Open Championship took place on a new date.

It had a rather different feel

The entry was just 26 players, as a result of some players being unavailable on the new dates, and others choosing avoid Coronavirus transmission risks.

The need for all players to be away from the club before volunteers arrived for clear-up activities meant that play often finished quite early in the evenings. Social distancing meant that no spectators were permitted and catering (and beer) was very much a 'bring-your-own' affair.

Opening qualifying Swiss 'Three losses and you are out!'

The event started with the usual qualifying Swiss, but this year it was reduced to seven rounds and with 16 places available in the knockout, this meant that just three losses would mean elimination.

The champions from 2020 and 2019, James Death and David Maugham respectively, won swift qualification and were joined by Harry Fisher with four wins from their first four games.

Those who had dropped a game then became acutely aware that whilst reduced, the field was stronger than usual (the average was around 100 grade points better), with the last three World Champions still in contention.

The final two rounds were, as always, nervy affairs. Paddy Chapman and Mark Suter were the only two to complete peeling turns and many games had single-digit score lines, leading to a lot of "if only..." stories. James Galpin, Mark Ormerod and Mark van Loon took the final three places, leaving Christian Carter, Sarah Hayes and Chris O'Byrne just missing out.

Knock-out Round 1 - big up sets!

The knockout started with two upsets; Reg Bamford and Jamie Burch, the top two seeds, lost in straight games to Jonathan Powe (+10tp +19tp) and Samir Patel (+12tpo +12tpo) respectively.

Quarters-finals & Semis A peeling fest

Neither Powe nor Patel could repeat their feats in the quarter-finals and lost to Fisher (+24tp, +26tp) and Maugham (-4, +17tp, +3tp). In the other quarters, Mark Avery got past Stephen Mulliner (+17tp, +5) and Chapman did likewise against Death (+26tp, -6qpo, +16tp).

In the semis, Fisher capitalised on a few uncharacteristic errors by Avery to secure his place in the final (+24tp, +17tp) taking with him an impressive unbeaten run (ten wins from ten games and eight of those with TPs). The other semi-final saw good quality peeling turns from both players, with Chapman beating Maugham (+17qp, -25sxp, +19qp).

The Final Fisher v Chapman

The final was played as a best-of-five contest which sent the virtual audience scurrying to the record books, to emerge with the conclusion that this was the 'youngest' Open Final since Reg Bamford v Robert Fulford in 1999, but not a new all-time record, which is still held by the 1991 Fulford v Chris Clarke match.

GAME 1 - Fisher had the early play but,

after his first break, he was TPO'd by Chapman with a POP on his other ball through hoop 1. Fisher's approach to hoop 2 from corner 1 was seven yards short and, after failing the hoop, Chapman took control of the three-ball ending. However, an error after 2-back, gave Fisher an opportunity which he took to win +6otp.

GAME 2 – The second game followed a similar path to the first, but Chapman failed to approach hoop 3 on his first break, giving Fisher a shot which he hit to finish.

+24tp and 2-0 to Fisher.

GAMES 3 and 4 – Both continued to follow suit. Fisher had the first break, Chapman started a TPO and, like in game 1, completed both of them. The slow courts meant that none of Fisher's approaches to hoop 2 from corner 1 could get close.

However, unlike game 1, Chapman played these three-ball games without error and he levelled the match with two wins +12tpo and +12tpo

GAME 5 - With the match tied at 2-2, this was the decider, and it broke the trend of the match. This time Chapman had the first opportunity from the opening.

Fisher couldn't quite get his TPO started and instead took his first break to hoop 6, conceding a lift leave.

Chapman 'snicked' this shot (*Samir Patel's photo captured the moment!*), and from that crucial roquet, completed his triple peel +21tp. He won the match 3-2 and with it, his first AC Open Championship title.

The Plate

The Plate event was run as a single game 'draw and process' and saw Duncan Reeve and Mark Ormerod win each half respectively, before the latter won the play-off +13.

And finally...

Tournament Manager David Maugham (*below*) announced that he was retiring as Manager of the AC Open Championships.

This was his twelfth championship (the first being 2004), meaning he's spent 105 days encouraging players to read the board (or perhaps just despairing when they didn't). Oh, and playing at the same time.

Thank you, Dave.

Samir Patel



The 1st Eight The President's Cup

Paddy Chapman completed AC 'The Double' (adding the President's cup to his British Open title) in sunny weather on the beautiful Hurlingham courts that positively demanded peeling at every opportunity, **writes Stephen Mulliner.**

A new record of 11 sextuples was set by the field - Paddy Chapman scored 4 (in his first five games), Robert Fulford also got 4, Stephen Mulliner 2 and Jose Riva 1).

In addition to the sextuples, there were one quintuple, four quadruples, two QPOs, one OQP, 12 triples and seven TPOs.

The 18 games without "letters" were mainly the product of failed sextuples and the favoured sextuple leave was a tight cross-peg with the in-player's balls on the west boundary.

Chapman set the pace with a dominant and unbeaten display in the first seven rounds and opened up a two game advantage over Fulford and Mulliner.

James Death raised the hopes of the trailing pack in round 8 by inflicting Chapman's first loss by +4 and this was followed by Fulford's flawless fifth turn sextuple against him in round 9.

So, at Saturday lunchtime, Chapman (on 7/9), Fulford and Mulliner (both on 6/8 with their own round 8 game pegged down) were on theoretically equal terms.

Round 10 saw all three win again but round 11 featured a close and crucial win for Chapman against Mulliner.

Round 12 had drama. It showed that Death has no favourites when he beat Fulford +6tpo and Christian Carter came very close to beating Chapman in a two-ball ending. However, very close means not quite, and that made a lot of difference to the overnight position of Chapman on 10/12 and Fulford and Mulliner on 8/11.

Fulford won the pegged-down game against Mulliner at the start of play on Sunday to reach 9/12 but had to rely on Chapman losing to Riva or Giraud to keep his hopes alive.

The Chapman v Riva game in round 13 was very close but Chapman took it +7 and then completed a rock-solid quadruple peel to beat Giraud in round 14 and clinch the title for the second time.

Finishing Order: Paddy Chapman (12 wins), Robert Fulford (11), Stephen Mulliner (9), Jose Riva (6), James Death (6), Christian Carter (5), Mark Avery (4), Alain Giraud (3).

The 2nd Eight The Chairman's Salver

Samir Patel romped away with the Chairman's Salver this year, dropping only one game in 14, **writes Chris Roberts** (looking in from afar).

Remarkably, Patel completed a triple peel (or one on his opponent) in eleven of his 13 victories and ended up with a positive net hoops score of 187.

Trailing in his wake, the rest of the field were fairly tightly bunched in the final count with young James Galpin tied for second place with Ian Burridge on eight wins, one ahead of Robin Brown, who got the only game off Patel.

Finishing Order: Samir Patel (13 wins), James Galpin (8), Ian Burridge (8), Robin Brown (7), Duncan Reeve (7), Sam Murray (6), Ian Lines (4), Jonathan Powe (3)



The 3rd Eight The Spencer Ell

Pete Trimmer had it all his own way at the Spencer Ell this year, **writes Nick Parish** (The full version of this edited report is on the CA website - Ed).

Before the Spencer Ell started, it appeared that there could be only one winner. As it turned out, there were two!

Off the field the very clear winner was East Dorset CC member David Harrison-Wood, who set hoops which were unyielding at 1/32" clearance (or less - at least one wedge was successfully claimed), and not to be trifled with from any distance.

Allied to heavy conditions - court 3 was timed at eight seconds despite the delightful sunny weather - which ruled out some court-length shots for some players, and you had a recipe for plenty of clangs, blobs, swearing and mallet-smashing, and rather fewer controlled breaks starting at hoop 1 and finished with a controlled leave.

As a result only three triple peels were completed, fewer than any other selection event this year, and the fewest in 'the Ell' for over 15 years; and there were no easy victories, with no +26s and indeed only two games won by more than +20.

On the field, almost anyone could beat anyone, but the almost was key, because although many got close, very few people could beat Pete Trimmer, who romped away to the trophy.

Although he only finished two games clear of runner-up Mark Ormerod, two of his three defeats (one to Ormerod and two to Nick Parish) came in his final two games after his victory was assured with a day to spare, and he may have eased off a little.

Parish and Paul Rigge shared third place, but none of the other players were outclassed.

Eugene Chang's slow start of one win in his first six games meant his four straight wins in the middle were ultimately to no avail, while Callum Johnson showed huge potential for the future and was fully at home at this level.

Trimmer entertained by laying up for sextuple peels throughout, and managed to peel 1b 16 times during the event, although the difficult conditions meant the closest he got to completing one was in his very first game when he got as far as a straight rover peel to finish before breaking down.

Despite this he still claimed two of the three TPs (the other being a Parish TPO).

continued in column 3, page 21 (opposite)

The 4th Eight The Treasurer's Tankard

Ian Vincent ended a long wait for an Eights victory with this Tankard win, writes **Chris O'Byrne**.

For a beachfront location, Southport was eerily quiet, due to Covid, which luckily made for easy parking for the eight players.

The lawns measured about 9.5 seconds throughout, and were in good condition, but a smattering of hills made gentle shots and long hit-ins a bit of a lottery. The hoops were reset each morning to 1/16, but the amount of recent rain meant they weren't able to put up much resistance.

On the first day, the biggest surprise was to find out there was no rain forecast, despite the rumours we'd all heard about Southport's record for wet tournaments.

There were no major upsets, but with one eye on future weather, another on the long distance we'd all travelled, and a third(!) on potentially disruptive Covid-related restrictions coming into effect on the Monday, we managed to get ahead of the schedule by comfortably squeezing a fourth game in, and the world was a happy place!

It was not a feat we managed to repeat, as some key games suddenly slowed right down, meaning we were resigned to three games per day from that point on.

The surprise package came in the form of Lorna Dewar, who was a world away from the old trope of a golfer trying their hand at AC, by combining the expected brilliant hitting and hoop-running with superb croquet strokes and a really good tactical understanding of the game - the two AC Handicappers present had no power over her 2.5 handicap, but it'll come racing down either way!

The result was in the balance until the last day when Ian Vincent came through for victory, having only dropped two games throughout the five days, and he confirming his top-spot with a 26TP.

Don and Diana Williamson and their team of volunteers ensured the most important aspects were dealt with, getting the lawns mown every morning and providing a steady supply of ales for all present. They also arranged a fish & chips dinner hosted outside the club and throughout were brilliant hosts.

Finishing order: Ian Vincent (12 wins), Chris Coull (11), Chris O'Byrne (10), Lorner Dewar (8), Paul Castell (7), Tom Weston (4), Peter Moore (2), Roger Staples (2)

'The 5th Eight' The Selectors' Weekend

Phil Eardley won the Selector's Weekend (the fifth tier behind the 'Eights') this year hosted by Wrest Park CC, reports **Rich Waterman**.

This was a particularly strong field for this tournament, unusually four of the 16 players having a handicap of -1.

The first round of matches in the two blocks resulted in a surprising three triple-peels from the eight matches, but, unfortunately, we only managed another three TPs in the remainder of the event.

By the end of Day 1, Block A had a clear leader with Eardley on three wins out of three, and Block B had undefeated two leaders in Rich Waterman and David Marsh.

Eardley pulled further clear in Block A on Day 2 and maintaining his 100% record, while Block B became a little more complicated with both David Marsh and Rich Waterman suffering an unexpected loss but still leading the way.

At the start of Day 2 we had one more round of block matches to play. Eardley and Marsh had already qualified and both Debbie Lines and Waterman knew that a final win would also see them through to the semis. Those working out other permutations need not have bothered, when Lines inflicted the first defeat on Eardley (+23) and Waterman did likewise to David Marsh (+24TP), meaning the top four seeds had qualified.

John Bevington from the host club very kindly cut Lawn 1 before the semi-finals which made a big difference to the conditions. At this point I should extend a big thankyou to the host club for looking after us so well, and to Cliff Jones for managing the tournament with his usual grace and efficiency.

Eardley continued with his excellent play in his semi and prevailed +12, and in the other Lines played the better croquet, but Waterman hit pretty much everything and won +9.

In the 3rd/4th place play-off, Debbie Lines went on to win +9 against David Marsh..

The final was a somewhat scrappy affair until Eardley's excellent play from the previous days kicked in and he deservedly went on to win by +12.

We also had an opportunity to make a socially distanced presentation to Sophie McGlen - the winner of the Steel Memorial Bowl for the Most Improved Female AC player of 2019.

Selectors' Weekend Finishing Order:

*K-O: 1.Eardley, 2.Waterman, 3. Lines, 4. Marsh.
Block A: Phil Eardley (6 wins), Debbie Lines (5), Jonathan Wolff (4), Rod Ashwell (4), David Warhurst (3), Cliff Jones (2), Dave Gunn (2), Sophie McGlen (2)*

Block B: Rich Waterman (6), David Marsh (5), Bryan Harral (5), Beatrice McGlen (5), Neal Bacon (3), Neil Coote (2), Andy Dibben (1), Brian Havill(1)



Spencer Ell continued . . .

One of the things you'll never hear a croquet player say is "I'm really looking forward to the trophy presentation".

However this time was the exception, as we were very lucky to have Marion Ormerod, widow of William Ormerod, available to present the trophy to local boy Trimmer, who fittingly had learned much of his croquet from William. The presentation was an extremely emotional affair, and one we were privileged to be present for.

Spencer Ell Finishing Order: Peter Trimmer (11 wins), Mark Ormerod (9), Nick Parish (8), Paul Rigge (8), Eugene Chang (6), Callum Johnson (6), Phil Cordingley (4), Mike Town (4).



Photographs of the 2020 Eights winners:

- (1) **Paddy Chapman** (here showing off the Open Championship Cup, see page 19)
- (2) **Samir Patel**, Chairman's champ (archive pic)
- (3) **Pete Trimmer** and the Spencer Ell Eight
- (4) **Ian Vincent** in Tankard action
- (5) **Phil Eardley** with the Selectors W/E Cup

Photos by (in order): Samir Patel, Chris Roberts, Nick Parish, Tony Thomas and Rod Ashwell.

The South of England Championship

David Maugham won the AC South of England Championship at Compton on the last weekend in September, *reports Roger Wood* (in this heavily edited text; the full version is on the CA website news item dated 1 October). -

This was never going to be a normal year was it?

Having already cancelled tournaments earlier in the summer, and with uncertainties occasioned by changes in government guidelines, even a week beforehand, it seemed 'touch and go' as to whether we would be able to proceed.

Without access to the clubhouse, players could often be seen huddled in any sheltered spot or retreating to their cars, but best protected was nine-month-old Ben Maugham, either in his own tent or riding on mother Alison's back while she made a break!

Newcomers were Chris Coull, Harry Fisher, Tudor Jenkins and Ian Vincent, with Paul Castell, James Death and Tim Wilkins returning after gaps of ten or more years.

After two rounds of the Championship, seven of the eight seeds had won through to the quarter-finals. Sixth seed Robin Brown fell to an in-form but unseeded Tim Wilkins, who then went on to defeat the defending champion Mark Avery before himself losing to Dominic Nunns.

In the other half of the draw David Maugham dispatched fourth seed James Death (who went on to win the Plate) and top seed Jamie Burch in straight games.

A comprehensive description of the final is on the CA website, but in summary, Maugham completed the win over Nunns +19, -3tp, +24, with the middle game being his only loss of the weekend.

~

This was the last of the four scheduled AC Regional Championships of the year and only the second to survive the Covid-19 disruption, following Ian Burrige's victory at the Eastern (see *Gazette 387*).

The 2020 Northern, Western, and both Mens and Womens (Grade 1) events were all cancelled, and at Grade 2 level, Robert Fulford won the Surrey (*Gazette 387*) as the East Midlands fell by the wayside – Ed.

David Maugham and admiring socially distanced audience at The Open (Photo by Samir Patel)



Coaching ~ Sarah Hayes reports

Recent Coaching Qualifications

AC Grade 1 Coach

Andrew Smith Bears CC & Cheltenham CC

Club Level Coach

Wendy Wu Cheltenham CC

Sarah Hayes,
Coaching Committee Chair

Andy Smith has been coaching unofficially for some time tutoring his son Harvey and has done a tremendous job. He completed the theory part of the coaching course with me over several weeks via Zoom, as reported in an earlier Gazette.

He has now completed all his extra sessions by assisting with many beginners sessions and taking some sections of the schedule solo. He has a calm method of delivery and also ensures there is an element of fun at the same time as getting across the session message.

Wendy Wu (left) is a knowledgeable croquet player with a bubbly personality, who also completed the Zoom theory and



additional coaching through taster sessions and beginners' lessons. Everyone enjoyed Wendy's company during the sessions, and she was extremely capable in her delivery and presentation. (Photo by Samir Patel)

~

Congratulations to both Andy and Wendy. They both found the Zoom weekly sessions particularly helpful, as this meant they could arrange dates and times to suit rather than having to attend a course involving travel and accommodation.

We covered just one topic each time and so took some weeks to cover the full syllabus.

Perhaps this is the way forward; Zoom first and then meeting up with Examining Coaches on the lawns after that? **SH**

AC Merit Award

Bronze Merit Award

Clive Grimley Sussex County CC

Clive Grimley completed the necessary task of running ten hoops with bisques and winning the game.

He achieved this against Roger Mills in the Gilbey Goblets Handicap event, which is a part of the CA's historic Challenge & Gilbey Tournament, at Southwick in September.

Sarah Hayes,
Coaching Committee Chair

Break Building without Bisques

There may not have been much on-court coaching this season but I have adapted a one-day course I have given several times on "Break Building without Bisques", for 8-14 handicaps as a 4 x 40 minute Zoom session course. The topics covered are:

1 - What to do when you 'hit-in', in a situation where all the balls are on yard lines (especially to create guarded leaves for one of your hoops).

2 - From a guarded leave; what to do in the various situations that you are left in, when your opponent misses his/her shot.

3 - What to do if you 'hit-in' with one ball away from the yard lines.

4 - What to do if you 'hit-in' with two balls away from the yard lines.

5 - What to do if all the balls are 'in court' (usually when opponent breaks down in the middle of a four-ball break).

We had seven course participants and the feedback was particularly good.

Richard Jackson,
Coaching Officer, South West Federation

~

The CA Coaching Committee applauds this sort of initiative and asks readers if other on-line offerings are available?

Any such Zoom presentations could receive a mention within the Coaching Pages of the Gazette, so please do send me all the information.

Please remember to utilise your Federations' Newsletters, websites, and mail-outs, to advertise and spread the word about coaching opportunities – Please also update your Federation Coaching Officer.

Sarah Hayes

Obituary

Fylde Croquet Club President, Martin Bradshaw died suddenly on 16 August.

Martin, a Founder member in 1986, was Club Chair for nine years and President since 2018. He was also active in the local community at Lytham and served as Commodore of the Yacht Club.

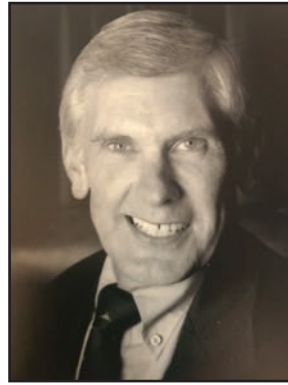
As the club's first match captain, he was instrumental in moving Fylde to competitive play in the North West by entering a team in the Short League.

Martin then became a qualified coach and the club today has much to be grateful for in terms of skill development and the variety of leagues, tournaments and competitions that it now hosts or takes part in.

He was well known at other North West



Martin Bradshaw 1944 - 2020



clubs, and sported a unique look in his shorts and long white socks. Martin showed unfailing loyalty to Fylde CC from its beginnings at Fairhaven Lake to its present location at South Shore Tennis Club.

He captained Fylde to their greatest achievement in 2007 when the club team won the Longman Cup, and then went one better, leading Fylde to a successful defence of the title



the following year.

In the 81 year history of the Longman Cup, only four clubs had previously achieved the distinction of back-to-back wins in this prestigious competition.

Having contracted polio at the age of seven, Martin fought against its effects all his life, travelling extensively and taking part in challenging activities until recent years.

He was a true gentleman, known for his dedication and exceptional skill in playing croquet.

He will be greatly missed, particularly for his great sense of humour both in everyday company and in his unprepared after dinner speeches which had everyone in stitches.

Shelagh Fagen

Have you considered leaving a gift in your will for your croquet club ?

Trying to find funds for unexpected problems can put real stress on a croquet club's finances.

Lawn weed and moss treatment
Urgent repairs
New updated equipment
The development and improvement of club facilities

All these can put stress on the club and undermine its stability.
Usually they can not simply be funded by increased membership fees.
Croquet is a great game enjoyed in many ways by very different types of players and we all depend on healthy and stable clubs.

That is why leaving something in your will to your club can help members continue to enjoy playing the game we have all enjoyed so much.

It is simple to do and your club will really benefit from it.

The smallest contribution could make a massive difference.

Your club chairman will be happy to give you more information.

I hope that you have enjoyed some much-needed time on the croquet lawns over the summer, just in time before the local lockdowns have come in force. After the initial national lockdown eased, I managed to visit Pendle, York, Edgbaston, Southwick, Parkstone and Watford clubs, which I'm delighted about - being able to play tournament croquet has been a real boost to my mental wellbeing these last months!

Newsletter and new Croquet jewellery line

It's been a busy four months since the marketing team reported on the #BackToCroquet campaign. We have been looking internally during this period, with the launch of a monthly electronic CA Newsletter to all CA members which has now seen four issues.

We have also launched an exciting CA jewellery line, well in time for Christmas, thanks to the hard work of Annabel McDiarmid and her team.

We continue to work on new ideas for CA merchandise; suggestions of blankets, mugs, car stickers, etc. have been gratefully received and we will be investigating all these over the winter.

I have assumed the role of interim editor of the CA Newsletter for now and am

learning on the job - it's been very exciting to design and shape how this new communication medium works, and what its scope should be, fitting in with existing media such as the Gazette and CA website.

Chris Roberts (your Gazette editor) and I have spent lots of time on the phone to each other over this period and I'm delighted with how the Newsletter project has gone so far. We have had exceptional engagement from CA members, with high delivery and email open rates (something only tech nerds like myself seem to get excited about).

Chris and I are always on the lookout for stories to promote all that is good in croquet, so please drop us a line if you have something you would like to share, or if you have any comments or suggestions on how we can improve what we're doing.

CA Webinars

Another thing that has taken up my time are the CA Webinars. We have held one a month since April, on topics ranging from marketing your club, to inclusivity and diversity in Croquet. All have been well attended, with excellent speakers.

The CA Webinars are typically held on the last Saturday morning of each month, and I'm still lining up speakers for the winter

editions. If you would like to watch any of the previous webinars, please drop me a line - they are unlisted on YouTube but are available to the croquet community.

Paul Hetherington

I am stepping down from the CA Executive Board to be replaced by Paul Hetherington (see Gazette 387), who has heaps of marketing and communications experience from his day job, and lots of fabulous ideas.

I wish him every success in his new role, and look forward to working with him as I will continue to work on the fantastic Marketing Committee and with social media contributors.

Seventeen junior players, nine members of the Junior Programme Task Force and a crew of parents, teachers and local club members, gathered at Watford CC for an energetic schedule of croquet exercises and matches.

Participants were aged from 10 to 22 and Taskforce members aged 19 to 60+, and there was a buzz from the first hit to the final presentation.

Smartly attired in the newly-commissioned CA U25 Squad kit (*modelled by Daniel Gott below*) and with CA caps and ball-markers sponsored by Mark at the CA Office, we were set for a cracking event.

The CA's revived Junior Programme started midway through lockdown, aiming to build a network of young players, create a safe environment for support and learning, and organise activities led by top young players and coaches.

Zoom calls, Regional and National meet-ups

Fortnightly Zoom calls focussed on team-building activities and introducing key croquet drills, with 'breakout rooms' a key feature of replicating small-group dynamics, building rapport and celebrating croquet successes.

As lockdown eased, programme participants and the Taskforce arranged regional meet-ups at Pendle, Wrest Park, Cheltenham, Dulwich and Edgbaston which gave that vital face-to-face connection and precious lawn time.

The National meet-up at Watford was a finale for the 2020 Programme, and provided everyone with the opportunity to compete in a team event, with additional incentives by merging the event with the CA AC Schools and Juniors Championships.

We split into three teams and spent the



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Michael Percival

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Junior Weekend unveils Stars of the Future



first day playing 'ProAm' style doubles matches in GC and 14-point AC, and also completing cross-code exercises such as peg shoot-outs, clearance drills and 2-ball breaks. Within the AC matches, pairings choose between traditional doubles, alternate stroke doubles, or the pro playing the croquet strokes only, creating some fascinating breaks.

There was some excellent quality in the exercises; **Todd Ballantyne-Morris** hit 8/8 at the peg from the boundary and **Sam Cuthbert** completed 53 continuous back/forth hoop runs.

Taskforce members also got stuck in with valuable team points on offer - **Daniel Gott** led the way with a 14 hoop 2-ball break, although other Taskforce were somewhat outscored by their junior counterparts!

The Junior Championships

Sunday saw the players alternate rounds of knock-out GC and AC singles to contest the Juniors Championships in each code.

The best AC turn was by **Harvey Smith**, who had just been pegged out by **Aston Wade**, finish next turn by hitting a 20-yard roquet into corner 3 with his hoop 1 ball and digging out a 3-ball break, whilst in GC, **Ellie Ross** (who relocated from NZ to UK during lockdown just in time to join the Junior Programme) demonstrated her international quality with a series of clinical victories, characterised by solid hooping and positional play.

Those knocked out continued to enjoy themselves, with Irish speed croquet, further ProAm doubles and spontaneous friendlies. The parents and teachers on the sidelines were no slouches at croquet either, filling in as needed to provide some welcome coaching.

In the AC singles final, **Albie Willett** put in a nerveless timed-turn to hit in and turn a

2-hoop deficit into a 5-point lead, pegged-out his front ball leaving the other three balls in corners and a near-impossible task for 2015 winner **Eden Rogers**.

Meanwhile, in the GC singles final, rapid improver **Aston Wade** (five wins and one second place finish in six CA calendar tournaments, both AC and GC) defeated **Ellie Ross** in straight games 7-4, 7-4, to claim a sixth trophy* for the year for a warm send-off to start his degree at Exeter University. He will be a strong addition to Budleigh Salterton and Sidmouth CCs.

* The CA GC Juniors Champion received the Musk's Cup for Golf Croquet, which served as the trophy for the GC First Eight until 2020, when it was retired in favour of the Ricki Savage Memorial Trophy. The GC Tournaments Committee re-purposed the trophy with the blessing of original donor Chris Sheen, who is delighted to see it being used to encourage younger players.

The Schools Championships

The Schools Championship was won by **Farlingaye** for the sixth year in a row (!), and the team event was won by Daniel Gott (captain, TF), Will Mellor, Albie Willett, Sam Cuthbert, Todd Ballantyne-Morris, Will Hollman, Cosmo Denny, Rich Waterman (TF), Ian Shore (TF) and Eugene Chang (TF).

The trophies were presented via elbow-bump by CA President Quiller Barrett,

who delivered a fantastic speech and thanked the indefatigable Simon Hathrell and his local Watford members for their tireless work facilitating and supporting the event throughout the somewhat torrid weather conditions, and without running water/electricity.

~

Handicap reductions

Aston Wade (AC) 3.5 to 1, (GC) 2 to 0
Albie Willett (AC) 8 to 5
Harvey Smith (GC) 8 to 4

~

Results

AC Schools Championship:

Farlingaye School beat Bradfield College

AC Juniors Championship:

Albie Willett beat Eden Rogers

GC Juniors Championship:

Aston Wade beat Ellie Ross

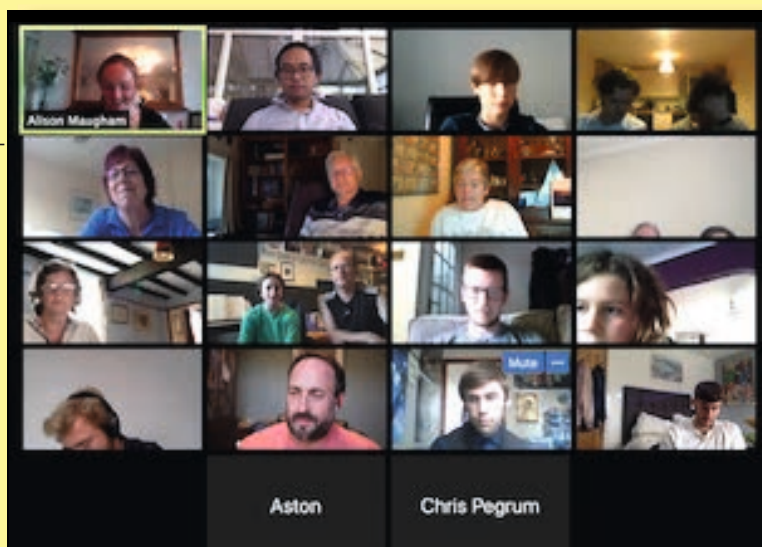
~

If you know any young players who could join the Junior Programme for 2021, please contact me.

Eugene Chang,

Junior Programme co-ordinator

etychang@gmail.com



A-Level Series (unrestricted)

As the GC Championship Series culminated in the English National Singles Championship finals tournament (see page 14), the second tier of the quartet of GC Series competitions, the A-Level Series, which is decided by a straight points race, also came to a grand finale, **writes Chris Roberts.**

It was wide open going into September, with two tournaments to play, and the first was the re-arranged **Wrest Park A-Level** (postponed from lockdown May) where a full 16-player field was easily filled again, rewarding organiser Richard Keighley for his ambition.

Stephen Custance-Baker, John Noble and Les Heard all reached the semis fairly comfortably 10-6 apiece, as the real drama of the quarter-finals was of a domestic nature with Paul Durkin defeating Jane Tewson 10-9 (and he is presumably still doing all the washing up as penance in their household!).

Heard then beat favourite Noble in straight games and Durkin played exceptionally well to beat Custance-Baker to reach the final; there, Heard won 7-5, 6-7, 7-5.

This meant that the A-Level Series title would be decided at the **Sussex Open** (with 10 points the winner's reward as usual).

Stuart M Smith lead on 16 Series points, ahead of Steve Leonard on 10, and Durkin (on 6), who was also in the field, also had a mathematical chance.

However, Smith had a shocker and failed to get out of his block



and so was out of the points, leaving the door open for Leonard.

He made hard work of it, needing 19th hoop victories to get past locals Liz Farrow and Roger Sutton before upping his game considerably to defeat Lionel Tibble in straight games in his semi.

In the other half of the draw, young Ellie Ross (just re-located from New Zealand) announced her arrival by defeating Jon Diamond and Colin Britt 10-1 and 10-2 respectively and then Richard Brooks 7-6, 7-4 in her semi.

And there was no holding Ross in the final either which she wrapped up 7-6, 7-2.

That was some debut at this level in the UK for Ross and she looks set fair to be the beacon for young female talent to follow next year and beyond.

This is such an exciting time for GC, and indeed AC too, with younger players now coming through in both games to challenge the establishment.

Leonard's loss in that final to Ross was crucial, for he only picked up 6 Series points to tie with Smith on 16.

Stuart M Smith retained the A-Level Series title

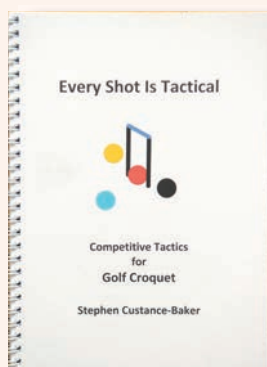
thanks to the tie-break rule of having won a Series tournament (at Hamptworth), whereas Leonard's points had all come from 'placed' finishes.

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Director of The Croquet Academy
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Dr Ian Harrison, Basingstoke, SCF Coaching Officer

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Robert Moss, Budleigh Salterton

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Photographs (this page) - National A-Level Series (from top):

- Stuart M Smith, Champion again.
- Paul Durkin (left), who was in with a mathematical title shout.
- Steve Leonard (right), pipped for share of the title by the tie-break rule.

Photographs (opposite page) - National B & C-Level Series (from top):

- Jack Good, the B-Level Series winner with Manager Frances Colman.
- Lynn Percy, who was beaten into second place by just one hoop.
- Gavin Taylor, who also tied on wins with the winner but ended third.
- David Cornes, here at the B-Level Final but he also took on the C-Level Final Manager/Referee rolls at short notice (thank you for that David).
- Duncan Catterall (top, far right) who ran away with that C-Level Final.

All images by Chris Roberts (except Catterall, by a Colchester member)

B-Level Series (3+)

The 2020 B-Level Champion is 14-year-old Jack Good who kept a cool head that belied his youth, and the National Final was an absolute cracker!



Andrew Fall won the last qualifying tournament at Hurlingham just a fortnight before London neighbours Roehampton hosted the season finale with a full field of 16, comprising seven qualifying tournament winners and the nine leaders of the 'points accumulation' secondary qualifying route.

Hamptworth's Aston Wade, the winner of two qualifying tournaments, was the most notable absentee from the Finals but the rest of the field were fairly seasoned B-Levelers, with a few having come off last season's C-Level progress conveyor belt, and all were keen to make their mark.

Off to a Good lead

Good got off to a great start in the all-play-all tournament, winning his first three games, a feat only matched by Dianne Browne (Phyllis Court) and Phil Davies (Reigate). By contrast Michelle Leonard (Winterborne Park) had lost three times, but she then 'turned up', beat Good, and went on an unbeaten run to be in contention until deep into the second day.

Overnight, Good shared the lead with Lynn Percy (Roehampton), on 6 wins from 8 games, one ahead of Leonard and Mark Buckley (Leicester).

Gavin Taylor (Surbiton) was a further win behind but had a super day 2 to come right into the mix, as Good stumbled, allowing Percy to establish a one win lead by the end of round 12 (of 15).

Three could win going into last round

Good had to win their head-to-head game in round 13, and he did 7-5, but he then lost to Buckley in his next game and

Pearcy went down to Taylor, who now had all the momentum.

Taylor led by one win going into the last round, with Good and Percy one adrift but, as the top seeds, Good was to face Taylor and Percy looked favourite to win her last game against Charles Sale (Ealing). Manager Frances Colman delayed the start of the crucial games so that they started at the same time, and then the off-court 'who beat whom' and net hoops calculations started!

It couldn't have been closer

Taylor had a shot to win at hoop 13, missed, and lost to Good 7-6, by which time we'd worked out Percy needed to win 7-4 for the title. She won, but only by 7-6.

Jack Good won the B-Level Series final and national title by one hoop from Percy and a few more from Taylor, after all three tied on game wins.

Chris Roberts



C-Level Series (7+)

Duncan Catterall (High Wycombe) dominated the C-Level Series National Finals held at Colchester in mid-September, **reports manager David Cornes.**



Nine players had qualified from just five of the original 21 qualifying tournaments that survived the much disrupted season but Michael Rice nor Sudy Harrison, who won the last two events, were able to take up their places, so Ed Hogbin came in as a helpful tenth player as everyone started the weekend with high hopes,

However, Catterall beat all before him in the initial all-play-all block stage to reach the semi-finals where he was joined by Terry Collis (Wrest Park), Rick Lilley (Phyllis Court) and Frank Sharps (Crake Valley).

Sunday lunchtime saw two closely-fought 19-point semis, in the first of which Sharps, at 85 years of age, showed great stamina and skill, but just not quite enough hoop runs, and lost to Catterall 6-10.

The other semi was closer than the 10-5 score suggests, as Collis got past Lilley.

Catterall cruised through the first game of the best-of-three final 7-2 against Collis but the second game went to the 13th hoop before Catterall sealed the game, match and C-Level Series title. He was undefeated throughout, dropped his handicap from 6 to 4, and is without doubt destined for higher-ranked tournaments.

The 3rd and 4th places were evenly contested, first game 7-3 to Sharps, second 7-4 to Lilley, and then the players agreed to share 3rd place rather than play a third game in the extreme heat of the day.

Colchester host Dick Strover, thanked David Cornes on behalf of Series Director Chris Roberts for undertaking Manager and Referee duties at very short notice. Duncan Catterall was then presented with the C-Level Series trophy and all players were commended on their play and sportsmanship.

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The Vital Statistics of a Croquet Lawn

This year I installed irrigation for my croquet lawn. There are four pop-up sprinklers sited halfway down each boundary.

Each sprinkler on the East and West boundaries sprays from corner to corner with a radius of 19 yards. The North and South sprinklers also spray corner to corner with a radius of 15 yards.

I set the spray time to start at 1am to reduce evaporation and the system can be controlled remotely by an app on my phone. It was very dry in May and again in August.

The irrigation system was used 24 times between May and September at the rate of 4.9 cu metres each time, so, the total usage for the year was 118 cu metres which cost £195.

In return, the lawn has played really well all year and has looked fantastic. There has been no drought damage.

This has shown me that irrigation probably pays for itself in reduced repair costs and improved playing quality for members.

From 1 May to 9 September, I mowed 34 times which took 23 hours and removed 67 boxes of grass clippings. A further three hours were spent applying fertiliser.

I levelled the lawn a year ago and removed 100 metres of fairy rings. The trenches were two feet deep and 85 tonnes of infected soil were removed, I spread bicarbonate of soda into the trenches before filling with fresh soil. The fairy rings haven't returned but I have had random toadstools appearing.

This year I have done two laser surveys of my lawn, which have shown that, the part that was infilled last year in the levelling process has de-compacted; which I wasn't expecting.

This autumn I have been fine-tuning the levels by top dressing, guided by the rotary laser.

Duncan Hector ~ (contact details; see my advert, left)

Memories of William Ormerod by Peter Trimmer (Part 2)

Continued from September Gazette 387 . .

~

When coaching tactics, William would typically ask a question about a situation where there were at least two good options and then, on receiving an answer, add additional information to see if the answer would change.

For instance, he set up blue and black near corner 1 with a rush to hoop 1, with red between hoop 2 and the west boundary and yellow between hoop 3 and the east boundary..

"If all balls are for hoop 1, what would you do as Red and Yellow?" he asked.

If someone said they would probably shoot, he would reply with something like, "What if it were windy, or they had missed their last three shots, or what would happen if the balls were in slightly different places, or the lawn conditions were different or how it would depend on various player skills.

It was a good method of finding the general bounds on whether to shoot or not

(and what option to take in different circumstances).

~

William maintained that the style of play didn't matter (even whether it was centre or side-style), so long as one's shoulders were square to the shot – that, he said, was the reason for stalking the ball (though I never really did figure out how he managed it with his style!).

He said that the hands should hold the mallet like holding a small bird: firm but not squeezing it tightly, and the swing should come from the shoulders, even for gentle strokes. Above all, he insisted that players should keep their head down (to keep it still and thus maintain consistency) and the follow-through was crucial.

~

As well as being a helpful and patient coach, William examined me for becoming a referee.

I felt confident until the last of his practical tests.

He called Tim Haste over and had a few

words in his ear, before placing a ball in a hoop (just a fraction off the wire and at an angle, so it was a very tough one to judge).

He explained that the scenario was of a doubles game, with Tim as his partner.

Then the antics started; Tim was running around him, correcting the mallet line, changing his body position, trying to move William's feet and so on, while William was changing his grip on the mallet, bending his legs and wagging the mallet, nearly playing the stoke and then holding back at the last moment.

It finished with an amazingly well coordinated piece of timing, with Tim stepping back just as William played a powerful, single-handed stroke, whilst standing on one foot! (The stroke was 'clean', but I learned that I should have already intervened to say that the doubles partner should be well clear of striker before the stroke was played.)

To be continued . . .

William Ormerod (1937 - 2020) was a world renowned GB international croquet player.

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CA Contacts

Mark Suter

Manager

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



Quiller Barrett

President

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



Jonathan Isaacs

Chairman of Council

Meers Farm, The Hollow,
West Chilton, West Sussex
RH20 2QA 01798 812028
jonathanisaacs@btinternet.com



Samir Patel

Vice-Chairman of Council

7 Kilmorey Gardens
St.Margarets, Twickenham
TW1 1PU 020 8892 2172
croquet@patel500.co.uk



Beatrice McGlen

Chairman of Executive Board

Pasture Farm
Upton, Retford
Nottinghamshire
DN22 0RA 01777 248187
beatrice@mcglen.co.uk



Ian Burridge

Hon. Treasurer

Church Farm, Church Street
Foston, Lincs., NG23 2LG
01400 283157
burridge.ian@googlemail.com



Dr. Ian Vincent

Hon. Secretary

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



Voting members of CA Council

North West

John Dawson

01244 675929
johngdawson@onetel.com

North East & Yorkshire

Vacancy

East & West Midlands

Patricia Duke-Cox

01526 354878
duke-cox@hotmail.co.uk

East Anglia

Brian Havill

01707 873269
brian.havill@outlook.com

East Anglia

Rich Waterman

01206 331334
rwaterman@hotmail.com

Southern

Frances Colman

07774 639061
frances@luxtersfarm.com

South East

Ian Cobbold

020 8642 0533
ianmobbold@hotmail.com

South East

Jonathan Isaacs

01798 812028
jonathanisaacs@btinternet.com

South East

Samir Patel

020 8892 2172
croquet@patel500.co.uk

South West

Dave Kibble

07976 732934
DaveKibble@gmail.com

South West

Peter Nelson

01395 578487
peter@nelson01.eclipse.co.uk

South West

Klim Seabright

01242 512933
klimseabright@gmail.com

CA Committee Chairmen

Executive Board

Beatrice McGlen

beatrice@mcglen.co.uk

AC Laws

Roger Staples

staplessteeples@live.co.uk

AC Selection

Sam Murray

mr_sam_murray@yahoo.co.uk

AC Tournament

Brian Havill

brian.havill@outlook.com

GC Rules

Stephen Mulliner

smulliner@gmail.com

GC Selection

Lionel Tibble

anglion@btinternet.com

GC Tournament

Jonathan Powe

jonathanpowe56@gmail.com

Handicap

Frances Colman

frances@luxtersfarm.com

Coaching

Sarah Hayes

burrowsarah5@googlemail.com

Development

John Reddish

reddish@btinternet.com

Equipment

Dave Trimmer

davetrimmer@talktalk.net

ICT

Tim King

tmk@ntlworld.com

International

Ian Lines

ian.lines@atkingglobal.com

Marketing & Publishing

Eugene Chang

etychang@gmail.com

Executive Board members

Chairman

Beatrice McGlen

01777 248187
beatrice@mcglen.co.uk

Performance

Chris Alvey

0714 765181
chrispahire@hotmail.com

Development

Paul Brown

07826 742463
p_h_brown@icloud.com

Marketing & Communications

Paul Hetherington

01733 708579
paulhether65@outlook.com

Infrastructure

Tim King

01827 703620
tmk@ntlworld.com

Standards

Roger Staples

07778 841625
staplessteeples@live.co.uk

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www.croquet.org.uk

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The CA website also has a full glossary of croquet terms, jargon and acronyms that are sometimes used in Gazette reporting. To find the glossary go to:

[Advice & Technical/ Other Articles /Croquet Jargon](https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tech/Advice%20and%20Technical/Other%20Articles/Croquet%20Jargon) or use this link:

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Digital images are preferred, but photographic prints may also be acceptable.

Please send digital jpeg or tiff format files.

Please accompany all images with a description of the subject.

If you require any material to be returned please enclose an SAE. Queries regarding the delivery of the Gazette to members should be directed to the Manager of the Croquet Association and not to the Editor.

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