



CROQUET

GAZETTE

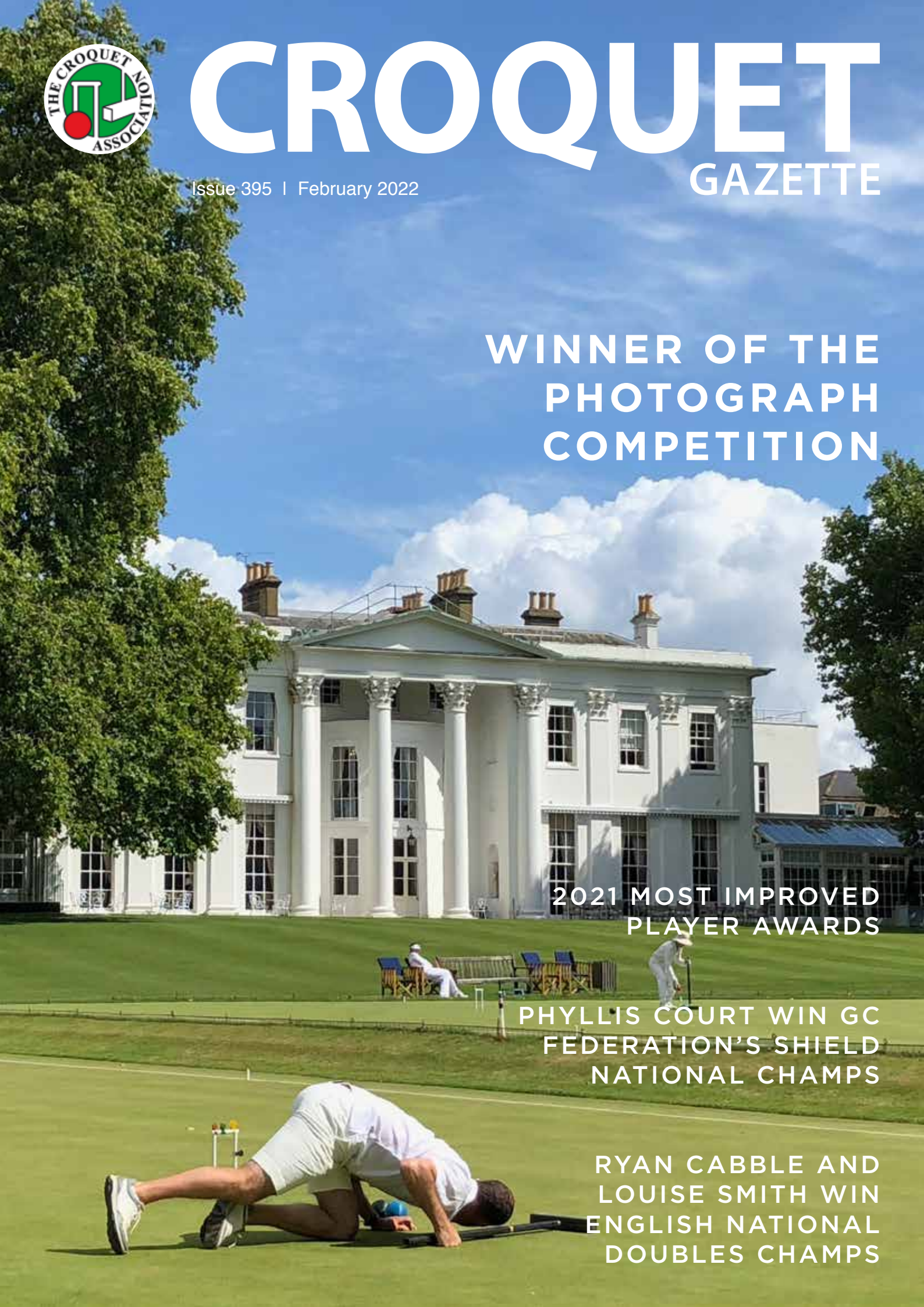
Issue 395 | February 2022

WINNER OF THE
PHOTOGRAPH
COMPETITION

2021 MOST IMPROVED
PLAYER AWARDS

PHYLLIS COURT WIN GC
FEDERATION'S SHIELD
NATIONAL CHAMPS

RYAN CABLE AND
LOUISE SMITH WIN
ENGLISH NATIONAL
DOUBLES CHAMPS





NEW

HIBISCUS COLUMN

The Uffington Three arrived at Blewbury Croquet Club (BCC) on a July afternoon in 2019. Men in white, a fold in the Berkshire downs, two of the finest courts in southern England. Peter Allan, then one of England's most rapid improvers, joined us for what we later identified as a four ball break His four ball break.

Would it ever be our turn? It never was...

'Have you played before?', Paul Wolff, the chairman, enquired politely over Prosecco in the sun. We lied of course.

Rare is the person with the integrity to admit to previous on a croquet court. Membership of Oxbridge teams? Too long ago to count. I played a garden variant of AC with my mother, competitive, experienced, wily. She said I should never whinge when I got beat. In that, I had plenty of practice.

One day when I was 15, I built my first irretrievable winning position. My mother stalked off. We never played again. A life lesson...

When we signed up at Blewbury in late summer 2019, we received generous expert coaching from Joe King, now chairman of the club. He taught strokes and tactics, of which he is a master. For Carol, the most competitive among us, choosing GC was a no brainer. Why watch from the sidelines when you could taste blood? Sandy, more attuned to nuance, kept a foot in both camps, adapting the strokes to both formats. I leaned towards AC, far closer to my distant memories, even though the rules have been revolutionised since.

If ever there was a socially distanced game, it is AC, but Covid Year Zero rules remained frustratingly illogical until liberation day, 29th March, 2020. Time for a travel journalist forced into semi retirement by a pandemic to hit the road. Over the next five months, I did courses with James Hawkins in York and Cliff Jones in High Wycombe. I entered AC, GC and one ball tournaments at East Dorset, Southwick, Wycombe and Hurlingham as well as Blewbury. The instruction emphasised the need to negotiate 12 hoops in one turn by

constructing a four ball break. The competitions revealed how far I was from achieving it - even with a bunch of bisques.

As I usually had to falsify my handicap to meet entry requirements, then defend this to organisers who didn't want their events despoiled by beginners, my lies improved more rapidly than my game. Shafts of light? An AC time out victory over a comedian in pink crocs and a (genuine) England shirt. 3rd out of 8 in an informal November GC tournament. And, nearly always, kindness, advice and patience from organisers and players more skilled than me.

Thank you all but be aware that I've taken note of the following dictum from Cliff Jones: 'If you always do what you always did, you'll always get what you always got'. As I put in bleak midwinter practice sessions on Blewbury's magical turf, I plan to be armed and dangerous by the Ides of March. And I'll still have that forest of bisques.....

I Minty Clinch



The Croquet Association
Issue 395 | February 2022



Front cover: Winner of the Photograph competition **PHOTOGRAPH** Liz Farrow (Sussex County)

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WELCOME

Croquet Players up and down the country will be thumbing (scrolling) the fixtures book and getting excited about the season ahead. Some of you might be looking forward to winning the weekly club handicap roll-up and others hoping to lift the silverware currently occupying a rival champion's mantelpiece. Whatever your goals are this year, good luck and play well!

This issue is packed with stories from far

and wide, a closer look at the successes of our Spanish friends, some tournament reports from last season and a little more of our sports history to help inspire and motivate for the anticipated calendar ahead.

The April edition of the Gazette will be taking a closer look at who plays this sport we love so much and what we are doing to encourage more people to come and join us.

CA Editorial Team



Does your club have a scheme to become more welcoming but could do with some financial support to get it off the ground?

The Croquet Association would like to support new initiatives for welcoming newcomers, especially those that that will attract people from diverse groups within your community to join your club. So it has launched a competition in which clubs could win a share of £3,000 with a prize of up to £500. If you have an idea that could do with a financial kick-start, then why not submit an entry? For example, you may be planning regular sessions for university students or school pupils; or engaging with local faith or community groups to arrange taster days; or making access easier for people with disabilities; or changing your website so it has a more inclusive image; or buying a new promotional banner for

your club. Maybe you plan a scheme to make all new members, from wherever they arrive, feel more included and welcome.

But whatever you plan, the prize must be spent on an initiative to make your club more welcoming. The deadline for applications is 31st May 2022. The purpose of this competition is to encourage new initiatives, so prizes will not be given for any initiative with expenditure or commitments made before 2022 (even though we know some clubs have already done great things). Applications will be judged on merit and in competition with other applications and payments will be made soon after the winners are selected. For further details of the competition, please contact the Chair of your Federation or Paul Brown, Director for Development at: p_h_brown@icloud.com

2022 SURVEY OF CROQUET PLAYERS



Every croquet player is different – we play for different reasons, we play in different places, we have different goals, and we have different opinions. Some of us having been playing for a few weeks, others for a few decades, some only play at one place, and others travel across the World. Whatever sort of croquet player you are, you matter when it comes to shaping the future of our sport and the Croquet Association would like to understand you and what you want from the game. Every 5 years, since 2002, the CA has

conducted a survey of croquet players. This is not just an anonymous survey of CA members but of ALL club members and, if we can reach them, croquet players who are not within the formal structure of the game. Every player is an essential part of the whole croquet scene. In order to try and reach those outside the CA and affiliated clubs, if you know of any groups who play regularly, either at a club that is not connected to a Federation, or elsewhere, please would you send details of a contact person as soon as possible to: croquetengland@gmail.com and we

will do our best to include them. Further details of the survey will be sent directly to all CA members and to other club members via their club secretary in mid-March. With all the upheaval in the last couple of years this is an important time for croquet. We have seen an upsurge in interest and we really want to make sure we are going in the right direction. Your answers will be completely anonymous but they will help guide the CA and clubs. So, we are hoping for a huge response to this survey!



I concluded my last column by thanking everyone who took the time to respond to the recent consultation on the future legal status of the Croquet Association. Council has now had an opportunity to consider and analyse your feedback, and you may have seen via the New Year's Eve Newsletter that we have published the first set of responses on our website. That covered questions about charitable status. The second set will cover incorporation options and the third, currently planned for the end of February, voting models. We need to do more work before we can confirm the timing of the next steps.

Most important of these will be the Special General Meeting necessary to gain your approval for the new legal structure. In parallel, Council is examining Sport England's new Code of Governance for National Governing Bodies. Where practical, we will use the opportunity arising from incorporation to update our working practices to reflect this guidance. Returning to on-court activities, I hope

that 2022 is the start of a return to a normal playing season. There's a full calendar planned, with events ranging from beginners' coaching through to World Championships. The online calendar will be open for entries by the time you read this. I'd like to thank all the volunteers who have worked over the winter months to prepare everything for the year ahead. You can find the calendar by clicking the Compete button on the homepage of the CA website.

Whether you are a regular or occasional tournament player, you will find something in the calendar for you. If it would be your first ever tournament and it feels a bit daunting, remember that everyone is there to enjoy themselves. Most will be more than happy to help inexperienced players become accustomed. You can also consider entering a tournament with a friend from your club. It may feel daunting, but less so with a familiar face.

Samir Patel
Chairman of Council

It can be difficult to calculate the speed of a lawn using the traditional method which requires a ball to be hit precisely from the South boundary to land exactly on the North boundary. The number of seconds elapsed equals the speed in Plummers. However, it is easy to hit a ball a little short of the far boundary. The table below enables you to find the Plummer speed for any distance between 28 and 35 yards.

1. Hit a ball from the South boundary in a northerly direction so that it stops on the north boundary or up to 7 yards short (level with hoop 2 or 3).
2. Time how long the ball takes to stop – or use an audio recorder on your

phone to record the sound of the hit and call "Stop" when the ball stops.

3. Replay the audio and time the delay between hit and stop.
4. Measure how far ball travelled (Hoop 2 is 28 yards and the North boundary is 35 yards).
5. Use this chart to read the Plummer Speed. If the ball stopped in 10 seconds and stopped at 31 yards, look down the 10 second column and you will find the speed on the 31 yard line which is 10.6 Plummers.
6. Less than 8 is unplayable. 8 to 9 = Slow. 10 = Normal. 11/12 = Fast, 13+ = Very fast

Yards	Seconds					
	8	9	10	11	12	13
28	8.9	10.1	11.2	12.3		
29	8.8	9.9	11.0	12.1		
30	8.6	9.7	10.8	11.9	13.0	
31	8.5	9.6	10.6	11.7	12.8	
32	8.4	9.4	10.5	11.5	12.5	
33	8.2	9.3	10.3	11.3	12.4	
34	8.1	9.1	10.1	11.2	12.2	
35	8.0	9.0	10.0	11.0	12.0	13.0

Duncan Hector
Website source: <https://www.duncanhector.club.co.uk/lawn-speed-calculator.html>



The WCF is pleased to share a new Handicap Calculator tool, created with our thanks by Brian Wainman.

It can be accessed via the WCF website Global Resources page: <https://worldcroquet.org/croquet-information/global-resources/> or by following this link: <https://chc.eu.pythonanywhere.com/>

We believe that this will work in most Member countries, but it does assume that you are using the same handicapping system as in the UK. Assuming it works in your region, we invite you to share this with your Members.

Debbie Lines
WCF Secretary-General

A NOTE FROM THE DEVELOPER:

I have developed a simple to use website which calculates the number of bisques / extra strokes / change in index for all GC/AC/Short/1 Ball games and their variations. It allows the user to select all the different game lengths (GC: 7pt, 13pt & 19pt. AC: 14pt, 18pt, 22pt & 26pt), singles/doubles (Yes, it even calculates the extra strokes for GC Doubles) as well as handicap/level (Yes, it calculates the change in index for level games), different lawn sizes and other variations like GC Advantage and AC York Variable Base.

The idea is that any player can use the website (on their smartphone) just before they start their game to get the right bisques / extra strokes without the need

for all the tables/rules in the law books. It doesn't need any instructions to use, but just select the type of Croquet first (AC/GC etc) as this resets the handicap ranges, select the players' handicaps, and then press calculate to get your answer. I'd be really interested to receive feedback by email from players and I am happy to add other popular variations if required.

Brian Wainman
Plymouth Croquet Club
wanderingwainmans@blueyonder.co.uk



Peterborough Croquet Club is pleased to announce a significant grant from Awards for All to enable the purchase of two special croquet friendly wheelchairs and appropriate mallets to enable wheelchair users to enjoy the croquet facilities in Central Park. The special wheelchairs were designed with bowls lawns in mind and are also brilliant for croquet. The award follows a visit during last July's tournament from a wheelchair user who was keen to learn to play after a short

trial on a practice court and an hour of observing the competition. Attention to the existence of these sporty wheelchairs was thanks to Jonathan Toye, the Regional Development Officer playing in the aforementioned tournament. In 2022 the Club look forward to welcoming several keen sporty wheelchair users to learn to play croquet.

PHOTOGRAPH <https://www.bushhillbowls.co.uk/store/bowls-royce-bowls-wheelchair/>



Croquet Handicap Calculator

Select type of Croquet: AC 14 Point

Select lawn size: Full Lawn

Select type of game: HCP Singles - Match

Select your handicap: -3

Select opponent's handicap: -3

Calculate

Press the button to calculate the bisques/extra strokes and index change

ENTERING A TOURNAMENT

If you want to enter a tournament, there is a wide variety to choose from in the CA's Fixtures Calendar that you can find on the CA website by following this navigation: Home > Compete > Fixtures Calendar, or online readers can use this direct link: <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/caCalendar>

Whether you're looking for a local, level play or handicap tournament, or even a national championship, you'll find something here to suit you.

The (i) icon in each entry will show you more details about the event.

If you're not sure how to use the Fixtures Calendar or want advice about the right type of event to enter, ask a friendly club member for advice.

You will see two 'Entry Dates' for most tournaments. The first is the 'Allocation Date' which, as it implies, is when places are allocated to entrants. If you're entering a popular event, it's best to do so before that allocation date.

Once you've found a tournament you like, entering is easiest through the online Tournament Entry System – just click the "Enter and Pay Online" link (which is the icon with the little red 'plus sign') and follow the instructions. While mentioning icons, the 'small group of people' icon, allows you to see the names of everyone who has entered so far.

When you enter, you'll be asked to confirm your details (e.g. your handicap), and you can pay by card.

You'll almost always also be asked whether you would like lunch. When offered this is highly recommended. It's not only convenient, but usually delicious. You'll also play better knowing that your money is helping to support the host club rather than the local supermarket.

YOUR FIRST TOURNAMENT?

If this is your first ever tournament, look for an event in your local area and in the right handicap range (there's no need to go to the expense of travelling to the other end of the country).

Also, let the host club's Tournament Secretary (their contact details will be in the Calendar entry) know that it's your first

tournament, or if it's the first time you'll be visiting the host club.

Most clubs offer a 'buddy scheme' which will arrange for someone who will help you finding your way around the club, and generally show you how things work. Even if there is no such scheme, the Tournament Manager will be able to help, but will appreciate advance notice!

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE TOURNAMENT IS FULL?

The default process for dealing with tournament entries is set out in CA Tournament Regulation C3, viewable with this navigation: Home > Compete > Tournament Regulation (and scroll down to C3) or this direct link: <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/regulations#C3>

This is summarised in the table below.

WITHDRAWALS, DONATIONS AND REFUNDS

If you have to withdraw, you can edit your entry yourself. It is always a courtesy to email the host club's Tournament Secretary to highlight that you have withdrawn, so that he/she can act accordingly and quickly to find a replacement player.

Withdrawals may trigger a refund of your entry fee (centrally administered by the CA Office staff), and maybe subject to a £5 admin charge, principally to off-set banking transaction charges.

When withdrawing, many players choose to donate their entry fee to the host club, which is obviously much appreciated, and there is an option to donate.

Automatic full refunds are made to players who do not get allocated playing places in the tournament, and for those sitting on the reserve list (see below). Refunds are delayed until after the date of the tournament, because there is always a chance of a late call-up to a playing place.

Samir Patel

Step	What Happens (Tournament Regulation Reference in brackets)	Regulation Reference			
Before the Allocation Date	Any entries made before the allocation date are collected and treated equally. This is why we recommend entering before the Allocation Date.	C3(a)(1)			
On the Allocation Date	If the event is oversubscribed, entrants will be split into three groups:	C3(a)(2)			
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>The Tournament Manager, whoever won trophies when the event was last held, and two Under-25 Members (C3a2A)</td> <td>All CA members, and members of other international croquet associations (who are entitled to 'reciprocal rights' under the World Croquet Federation's Statutes) (C3a2B)</td> <td>Anyone else (C3a2C)</td> </tr> </table>	The Tournament Manager, whoever won trophies when the event was last held, and two Under-25 Members (C3a2A)	All CA members, and members of other international croquet associations (who are entitled to 'reciprocal rights' under the World Croquet Federation's Statutes) (C3a2B)	Anyone else (C3a2C)	
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Everyone in this group is accepted	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>For Championship events, entries are accepted based on their world ranking. (C3a3A)</td> <td>For other level play events, entries are accepted by ranking, unless something else is specified in the event conditions. (C3a3B)</td> <td>For handicap events, entries are accepted at random ('by ballot'). (C3a3C)</td> </tr> </table>	For Championship events, entries are accepted based on their world ranking. (C3a3A)	For other level play events, entries are accepted by ranking, unless something else is specified in the event conditions. (C3a3B)	For handicap events, entries are accepted at random ('by ballot'). (C3a3C)	C3(a)(3)
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If the event was not full on the Allocation date, then all entrants are accepted.		C3(a)(4)			
After the Allocation Date	Accept all additional entries in the order of receipt, until the event is full.	C3(a)(5)			
Reserve Lists for Oversubscribed events	Once the event is full, the host may choose to start a waiting list, from which places are filled in order. Be sure to 'tick' the <i>(I am happy to be on the)</i> "Reserve List" box, when completing your online entry.	C3(b)			

Selection Events may be a mystery for some, particularly those relatively new to the tournament scene.

What are they? Who are they aimed at? And how do you make yourself available for selection?

Here, the chairmen of the Selection Committees, Sam Murray (AC) and Lionel Tibble (GC) explain all:

Providing the Covid improvements are sustained and the infection rates continue to go in the right direction, it is likely that selections for domestic events will be unaffected, so if you are contemplating making yourselves available for any selection event then please do so as you would under normal circumstances.

PLEASE DO MAKE YOURSELVES AVAILABLE FOR SELECTION

Players who are uncertain that they have the requisite experience or playing standard for a selection event are strongly encouraged to make themselves available.

They may well be **selected**, and there will be no negative view taken of those who are not.

Selection events can provide a valuable step forward in a croquet player's development, and they provide an experience somewhat different to other tournaments.

As chairmen of the two selection committees, we are always available to discuss with individual players what they need to do to improve their chances of selection.

WHAT ABOUT INTERNATIONAL EVENTS?

Players should register their availability for such events, and any changes will be communicated as soon as possible.

HOW TO REGISTER YOUR AVAILABILITY

This really couldn't be easier to do. Visit the CA website* and follow this navigation: Home > Members > Register your availability for selection events > Update [your name]'s availability. Then select 'yes' for the events of your choice.

*Online readers can use this direct link: <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=members/availability&RFB=y>

Each event is listed with a 'cut-off' date and 'selection' date; the former is the deadline for you to register your availability and the latter is the date that the Selectors will make their decision.

If you return to the 'Register your availability for selection events' page, you can click on the title of each event to see a list of players who have already registered their availability.

WHAT IS THE SELECTION POLICY?

For invitation events (the AC Eights and Selectors' Weekend, the AC Women's Sixes, and the GC Eights), the relevant selection committee (AC or GC) will look at each player's record in ranking games in the year leading up to the selection date.

It is therefore important to note that a player will get into an invitation event on the basis of a strong year, irrespective of past performances, so players without an established pedigree, but aiming to improve, are strongly encouraged to make themselves available.

Selectors will take particular note of wins against stronger players and winning events.

Players will increase their chances of selection if they don't only play in events in their local area. Players are generally encouraged to enter events where they are uncertain that they are strong enough – a couple of upsets against stronger players will get the attention of the selectors!

In conclusion, please do make yourselves "Available for Selection"!

CRAKE VALLEY CELEBRATES ITS 125 YEAR ANNIVERSARY IN 2022

Crake Valley Croquet Club history is now available. This 108-page booklet contains a fascinating account of the trials and tribulations of the Club since its inception in 1897 to the present day.

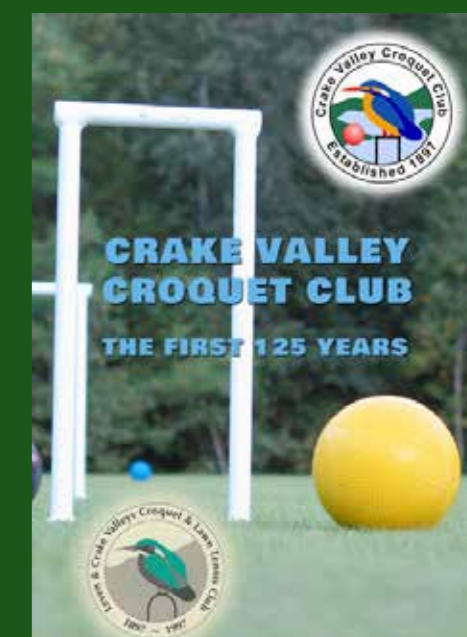
It will be of interest not only to croquet players but also to followers of local history and to anyone concerned with sports club management.

To order your copy, please complete the form at: <https://crakevalleycroquet.org.uk/cvcc-history-order>.

Please enter your name, email and full mailing address. The cost is £13.95 (incl. P&P). Payment preferably by BACS at the time of order.

Please quote Ref: Book & your surname.
Account: Crake Valley Croquet Club
Sort code: 01-00-61
Account number: 20681569

Alternatively, send a cheque payable to: Crake Valley Croquet Club to the Club's address at: A5092 (opp. Crakeside Business Park), Greenodd, Ulverston LA12 7RT.





LLANIDLOES CROQUET CLUB & THE RENOVATION OF CROQUET LAWN

Llanidloes Croquet Club has had a £2,175 grant approved by the Croquet Association towards the cost of renovation of its lawns.

Once upon a time in a small town in Mid-Wales a chance comment one Saturday morning in late 2018 about the disused grass tennis courts resulted in several months of research to see if croquet could be played there.

There was a meeting with the under-used Tennis Club and a poster and Facebook campaign to gauge local interest. Contact was made with Sue MacKay (a former Welsh International player) and Brian Shorney (a stalwart and past Chairman of the Croquet Association). Brian travelled to Llanidloes to meet with me to discuss how we should go about forming a croquet club.

With Brian's advice ringing in my ears, a committee of four was formed. As complete novices and in an area that was described as a "croquet desert", the enthusiastic committee set to work. We opened our doors to the public in April 2019 on the tennis club's extremely neglected grass courts. The area was more than enough for one full size lawn but not quite enough for two. We had the use of the tennis clubhouse. The CA supplied some equipment and Sue MacKay's club supplied some old, round-headed mallets to start us off.

Brian enlisted the help of Tony and Jen Johnston from Eardisley Croquet Club. Tony instructed over 40 people in the basics of golf croquet at our open day. It attracted a lot of interest and we enrolled 42 members. The journey to become a successful club had begun in earnest. As beginners, we decided to concentrate on Golf Croquet until we gained experience and had a decent surface to play on. We joined the West Midlands Federation and had three coaching sessions from Paul Robertshaw. Because of the state of the grass some of the proposed instruction was impossible.



We played at Eardisley three times on their immaculately tended lawns. We learnt a great deal from the members and enjoyed the benefit of playing on proper courts. We also played at Llandovery and Aberdovey. We could not invite clubs back to play on our rough grass or make progress as a club so we decided us to apply for funding to renovate the lawns. It was difficult to get advice locally and, although we are in close proximity to both a Bowls Club and Cricket Club, they seemed rather reluctant to pass on their green keeper's knowledge. A recommended product supplier gave advice and a newly formed groundworks contractor gave us a quote to carry out the hard work, which included removing four buried concrete posts that had supported the tennis nets. Half the cost of the work was covered by the Croquet Association and the rest by a founder member.

It proved to be a very difficult and frustrating time for lawn renovation. The very wet and cold early months in 2020 delayed the groundwork of scarifying, aerating etc. and then the long dry spell delayed the sowing of the seed. The weather continued to be unkind to us resulting in some bare patches and some weeds and it was too wet to mow for some time. This left us with a motley looking surface. We were getting too much advice, often conflicting. Properly qualified croquet lawn specialists were non-existent in our area so we were had to wait for work to be done when it really needed doing immediately. We then abandoned the contractor and a working party of six club volunteers took on the renovation. We cut the grass and reseeded the patches, only to have our efforts washed away in torrential rain. We also had an infestation of leatherjackets to deal with.

Covid-19 both helped and hindered. Lockdown gave the grass the time to establish but continued concern kept the greater number of members away. A few of us watched the Croquet Association Webinar on lawn management and consequently sought the advice of Duncan Hector. Under the management of one



of our members, Hugh Griffiths, 2021 has seen a drastic improvement of our lawn and the grass has really come into its own. So much so that we have had successful visits from Eardisley, Llandovery and Aberdyfi and, to top it all, the final of the inaugural Welsh Croquet Association Golf Croquet Club Competition was held at Llanidloes on 11th September.

We have 35 members this year, some of whom are very competitive. However, to participate in league matches in Wales or the West Midlands Federation means journeys of well over two hours. We did send two teams to the heats of the WCA Golf Croquet Club Competition held at Llanfairfechan, which was a journey of two and a half hours each way. Having only really had one full season to hone our skills, the two teams acquitted themselves very well against two well established clubs.

We also participated in the CA Charity week raising money for the British Heart Foundation by organising 'have a go for charity' sessions and we now also host sessions for other organisations like the WI. This is the difference that having a healthy manicured lawn to play on has made to our club.

We are ambitious to achieve so much more with the continued help, advice, and guidance at all levels from the Croquet Association. We appreciate that although the initial project is complete, looking after our main asset is a continuing exercise and a yearly maintenance programme has been devised.

I am proud of what has been accomplished in the past two years and know that the club is now well established with a strong and growing membership base and with lots of ideas for the future.

Janet Crisp
Secretary and Treasurer
Llanidloes CC
E: llanicroquetclub@gmail.co.uk
www.llanicroquet.co.uk



LUDLOW CASTLE CROQUET CLUB



In July 2021 the CA Funding Committee offered Ludlow Castle CC a grant of £2,000, as requested, towards the total cost of £7,300 for a Dennis FT510 mower (£6,500) and a verticutter cassette (£1,300) to replace an aged Allett mower that was damaged beyond flood repairs. The Funding Committee do not normally provide funds for the replacement of equipment because they draw a distinction between maintenance and development. Clubs are expected to make provision from their own resources to meet foreseeable costs, such as mowers. However, in this case the Committee concluded that the circumstances were exceptional and that they could properly treat the acquisition of new equipment as part of a wider development programme. The club was only formed six years ago. There are practically no members with prior experience of croquet. It has depended on the involvement and contribution from members, particularly for lawn creation, maintenance, upkeep and mowing.

The club is formally a sub-section of tennis, which is part of the Ludlow Castle Bowling and Tennis Club. Some years ago the Bowls and Tennis Club acquired additional land in the Linney adjacent to the tennis courts which was left unused and was essentially rough pasture, infested with weeds and very unsightly. A very small group of people took the initiative to begin to mow part of the area and to play croquet informally. In 2015, the Croquet Club was formed and a steering committee created to develop its activities. It has full use of the facilities of the clubhouse with its social area, kitchen and changing facilities. In that autumn part of the land was ploughed and levelled and a new lawn created to provide two courts, smaller than full size. The work of looking after the lawns and surrounding areas is carried out by club members. Whilst the courts have been significantly improved, they are dominated by coarse grasses on a soil categorized as silty loam which is difficult to cultivate into a seed bed. The season is typically lasts from March until October.

At the end of 2020 a survey of all members was conducted and our priorities were informed by the findings. The club set the strategic goal to improve standards by increasing both competitive play and also making significant court improvements. Although we don't have recognised coaches, more experienced members took this on for both AC and GC. In addition, formal coaching was provided for AC by Brian Christmas and Brian Shorney, West Midlands Federation. Brian also ran introductions to both One Ball Croquet and Short Croquet. Handicaps were also reviewed for all AC players and these are now regularly used in club play. As at September 2021, the club had 37 active members and a further dozen other members. In the last two years, it has been difficult to engage members in any interclub play because of geography and reluctance to travel. Duncan Hector undertook a survey in April 2018, funded by the CA. He identified the need for major expenditure on re-leveling the lawns, an outcome way beyond affordability. Since then we have been following a three year lawn improvement programme. This is seen as a key strand of our strategy together with effective mowing undertaken three times a week. Actions have included using the results of the laser survey: undertaking top dressing following Letchworth CC approach; mowing throughout the winter to limit coarse grasses and lateral growth; filling the deeper indentations and doing selective over-seeding and rolling the courts. They are divided into two, so that four can be played on. This was particularly important during lockdown. The commitment by members has avoided the cost of contracting out mowing and developing a positive atmosphere in the club. It also illustrates the determination of members to establish a viable club. The club was affected by two major and extensive floods which submerged the lawns under nearly one metre of water, torrenting through the club, damaging the lawns and equipment. see Croquet Gazette Issue 390, Feb 2021, page 16. Both the river Teme and the Corve are within a few hundred yards of the club.

The Environment Agency provides a flood warning service but in January 2021 the flooding occurred very rapidly and before the warning was received. The submerging of our old mowers under water and deposits of silt damaged our principal mower to the extent that it was no longer fit for purpose and a significantly better replacement machine was needed. The playing speed of the lawns in 2020 would have been designated by the CA as "unfit for play", however cutting the grass to a lower level has shown the lawns can be further improved. The machine of choice was a Dennis mower with a ten bladed cylinder which can deliver a lower cut. The system of cassettes, slotted in to replace the cylinder, also allows the use of a verticutter, which controls thatch, lateral growth and the ingress of unwanted species such as annual meadow grass. It was clear from our approaches to funding bodies that many of them put an emphasis on responding to social and community issues, particularly where deprivation and exclusion are factors. This makes it difficult for a croquet application, even though the club has engaged with the local community by making the lawns and coaching available for people with learning difficulties and early onset dementia. The funding bodies are also very keen on matched funding. There was disappointment in the rejection by Sports England of an application for a grant specifically to address flood damage to grounds and facilities, as equipment was not covered in its definition of "facilities". There was full support from club members and following the consideration of risk, the club decided to spread the cost between grants and loans so as to reduce the repayment burden. The new mower has been used since July and the verticutter since September 2021. There has already been major improvement to the lawns which is really appreciated by members and visitors. Play continued until the end of October. This represents the most significant step forward for the club and it is already paying dividends.

John Aitken, Chairman
Ludlow Castle Croquet Club



LETTERS

READERS ARE REMINDED THAT THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THE LETTERS PAGES OF THE GAZETTE ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHORS ONLY, AND NOT THOSE OF THEIR CLUBS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY INDICATED.

ALLOCATION DATES

Further to my letter that appeared in the November issue of the magazine and the response received I feel I must reply to the points raised regarding allocation dates.

1) I think that early allocation dates would make it much easier for people with commitments be it work, family etc to enter tournaments they wish to. I am lucky enough to be very flexible with regard when I play but not everyone is in the same situation. This is completely the opposite of your statement.

2) I am afraid that even in these strange times there is plenty of accommodation where there are

financial penalties for either cancelling or last minute reservations.

Just checking a very well known chain of hotels I use, to book a room with free cancellation in one instance was 70% more expensive than booking at a standard rate.

Booking a few weeks in advance as opposed to booking 3/4 months in advance can cost 100/200% more.

It may be easier with some people to cancel without penalty at the moment but hopefully these circumstances will not last forever.

**Steve Hayns
Ryde CC**

PLAYING CROQUET ON EQUAL TERMS

I am going to play devil's advocate in response to the letters regarding men and women playing croquet on equal terms.

I will clarify from the outset that I can only speak on this matter regarding GC tournaments, and yes, at a certain level, women and men do compete equally. There are given results to prove this, for example :

In 2019, both the GC B-Level (3+) Series and C-Level (7+) Series Finals were won by female competitors, against 16 opponents, 12 and 10 players in each respective event final were male.

However, competitive GC is a different prospect at the top level of the game. As a first example of this difference, I could personally name only two women that are capable of jumping a hoop from the boundary - quite a common requirement when facing quality opposition.

Players that regularly compete in GC Open or Championship tournaments face opponents with strong shot and clearance abilities that don't just move your ball five yards - their play is that powerful your ball will be in the car-park.

You only have to look at the England Squad over the last four or five years to see how the use of strength of shot has grown, and is currently emulated and executed with deadly accuracy by some of our youngest and upcoming GC stars.

There are some very talented female players that are exceptions to this point. Again, in 2019, Rachel Gee won the English National Singles Championship, but in general it is

hard for the majority of women players to compete with the power of play in high class GC events. The male competitors are not simply hitting the ball hard and hoping the opponent is out of the way, this is coupled with excellent tactics and hoop running abilities. Therefore, as a female player, if you don't have the strength to play a continued level of power strokes, it is a real challenge in stamina to gain a tournament win.

Therefore, as much as we would like to think that women and men compete equally in croquet, this could be considered an aspiration and not the norm when it comes to the pinnacle of the highest level tournaments.

With regards to some of the other comments made in the recent correspondence, women's croquet tournaments should not be seen as just an opportunity for a bit of time away from "him indoors"! It would also be wrong to view women's croquet tournaments as "a jolly day out with the girls" for that somewhat trivializes the point.

We should therefore applaud the move to host women's only GC tournaments and this follows the current trend in raising the profiles of other women's sporting events, such as women's football and rugby.

There is a selection of women's GC croquet tournaments scheduled for next season which should prove both exciting and extremely competitive. It is hoped that such events may encourage more women to participate in tournament play and grow in ability and talent.

These tournaments will lay the foundations for our best female players to compete in the GC Womens Worlds Championship that the UK will host in 2023.

Louise Smith

GC ENGLISH NATIONAL DOUBLES 2021

We awaited for the latest Gazette 394 to arrive with interest, but were disappointed that still no feature has been done on the above event!

We have stuff about Choirs and Marmalade, adverts for Wealth Management, Funerals and Wills - but nothing on the GC English National Doubles which is prestigious enough to feature on the Honours page of the CA website!

Louise Smith

RESPONSE:

The editorial team would like to assure our readership that we have a future plan of our top croquet events. Our aim will be to report on these events in a timely manner according to our publication dates. We also hope that some of the events will produce their own editorial content for the Gazette, rather than using the same material as the Croquet Association website.

MARMALADE AWARDS

The letter in the latest Gazette about Marmalade Awards caught my attention.

Dalemain is close to our club in Penrith so a croquet themed marmalade competition is of interest. I will certainly be encouraging our members to enter 'The Triple Peel'

competition. I also wondered if the Marmalade Festival on 14th May, when the winners are announced, might be an opportunity to also promote our croquet club. The Festival attracts a lot of local visitors.

Howard Bowron

SPRING SEASON 2022

Now that spring is on the horizon I am sure that all keen tournament players are applying linseed oil to their Pidcocks and whitening their daps in readiness for a full season in 2022.

Clubs and the CA will benefit from their share of entry fees. There is another way in which croquet clubs can be supported, and that is by booking in for lunch where provided.

This often brings much welcomed additional income to a club. Perhaps the Handicap Committee can be persuaded to add to its "most improved award" categories by initiating a "much improved waistline" award? See you at the weigh in come September.

**Klim Seabright
Cheltenham Croquet Club**

NO SEXISM PLEASE, WE'RE BISQUERS

I hesitate to enter the debate instigated by my fellow Ealing members, as I clearly do not have what is termed "lived experience" of the issue.

However, I was struck by an interview I recently heard with a young female cricketer, who said that she was initially put off playing by the term "batsman". (Words like bowler and fielder are of course gender-neutral; the only other exception I can think of is Third Man. I'm presuming that Fine Leg is not intended as a qualitative

judgement.)

I had thought the change to "batter" was an unnecessary nod to political correctness. Evidently I was wrong.

The conclusion I must draw is that I am unqualified to comment, but that anything that creates a potential barrier to anyone participating in our game is to be avoided if at all possible.

**Simon Tuke
Ealing CC**

THE PAST IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY; THEY DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY THERE - L.P. HARTLEY

I was intrigued by Pete Trimmer's ancient recollections of Sidmouth Croquet Club and far be it for me to cast nasturtiums, as Mrs Malaprop might say, on his recall.

My, how things change! Early season and no play and, obviously no cricket match but, not only is the bar open, gasp, astonishment, but Mr & Mrs Curmudgeon are taking tea; I wonder

where that came from? However, the basic message is pertinent. I would hope Sidmouth's Cricket, Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club would, today, meet the expectations of any casual visitor let alone one wishing to join.

**Chris Donovan
Chair
Sidmouth Croquet Club**



CHILTERN ACADEMY COURSES

Following a very successful 2021, the Chiltern Academy, based at High Wycombe Croquet Club, has launched its Spring Programme for 2022. Again the programme covers AC and GC, with early priority being given to delivering more opportunities for players to become coaches and referees. We are also running a one day Tournament Management course for those who wish to run Club-Level Tournaments. The very popular 'Swing Clinic with the Doctor' series is returning, providing the opportunity to have your swing analysed with advice on how you can achieve better consistency. The GC Courses will each include a session highlighting the key changes being introduced by the upcoming 6th Edition of the GC Rules. Places are limited, to ensure that everyone can get personal attention from the coaches, so early booking is highly recommended. Booking/payment is via the Fixtures Calendar on the CA website, i.e. using the same system as for tournaments (opening for entries 1 Feb).

CHILTERN CROQUET ACADEMY - COURSE PROGRAMME SPRING 2022

Day	Date	Courses (at High Wycombe CC unless stated)	Ideal Handicaps	Course Leader	Cost*
Sat	12 Feb 22	Introduction to Club-Level Tournament Management Course	NA	Chris Roberts	£50/£40
Sat/Sun	5-6 Mar 22	Becoming a Coach Weekend Course (CTC/CQC)	NA	Cliff Jones	£45/£35
Sat/Sun	19-20 Mar 22	GC 5+ Improver Weekend Course (at Ealing CC)	GC 5+	Ian Shore	£70/£60
Sat/Sun	26-27 Mar 22	Becoming an AC Referee Weekend Course	NA	Jeff Dawson	£25/£15
Sat/Sun	2-3 Apr 22	Becoming a GC Referee Weekend Course	NA	Ian Cobbold	£25/£15
Tue	5 Apr 22	Swing Clinic with the Doctor (1hr sessions)	NA	Raouf Allim	£25/£20
Sat	9 Apr 22	AC Referee Exam - Half-Day	NA	Jeff Dawson	£Nil
Tue	12 Apr 22	AC 12-Hoop Breaks and Rover Peels Course	AC 6-12	Raouf Allim	£50/£40
Sat/Sun	30 Apr-1 May 22	GC B-Level (3+) Improver Weekend Course (at Watford CC)	GC 3+	Ian Shore	£70/£60
Tue	10 May 22	AC - Improving AC Strokes Course	AC 8-14	Raouf Allim	£50/£40
Mon	16 May 22	GC 5+ Improver Course (at Hamptworth CC)	GC 5+	Ian Shore	£50/£40
Tue	17 May 22	GC Tactics Improver Course (at Winchester CC)	GC 3+	Ian Shore	£50/£40
Tue	24 May 22	GC First Course	GC 10+	Ian Shore	£40/£30

* For coaching and refereeing courses, course fees have been reduced by subsidies, granted by the CA, of £25 per participant. Further grants are available from some Federations on personal application to your local Federation Coaching Officer. All bookings via CA website Fixtures Calendar Contact: Ian Shore - info@chilterncroquetacademy.org 01494 718615; 07783322549 v3.0



NORTHERN ACADEMY COURSES

The sixth Northern Croquet Academy season features a number of new courses to meet demand, balanced with courses that have proved particularly successful and popular. The Academy is at York, close to the station and excellent rail connections to most parts of the country: why not start the season by combining a croquet course with a visit to one of the country's top tourist cities? New this year for AC players is 'Bisques and Breaks for Higher Bisquers', and, for players looking to move into move into Advanced Rules croquet, 'An Introduction to Advanced Play: Towards the Triple Peel'. GC players are well catered for with the ever-popular 'Classic GC Skills and Tactics' and, for those looking to advance their game, 'GC Strategy'. Meanwhile, courses of interest to both codes include the highly-regarded 'Back to Basics' on getting core technique right; a tried and tested day by Cliff Jones on achieving consistent stroke play; and personal slots on any of three days of 'One-to-One coaching with Cliff on any aspect of technique, mindset or tactics. There is also a one-day course to

introduce GC players to the delights of Short Croquet, and this should also interest clubs seeking a ready-made model to introduce this accessible and enjoyable form of AC to their members. For aspiring coaches, both AC and GC, the Northern Academy programme includes a revised Coach Training course. Subsidies of £25, funded by the CA, are available for qualifying applicants. Most courses filled early last year and

application levels for all 2022 courses are expected to be high. Booking is open now and early booking is advised. To discuss a course in more detail, check availability or book, please contact the Northern Croquet Academy courses secretary Debbie James at: northerncroquetacademy@gmail.com or Telephone: 07772 778232.

John Harris

The Northern Croquet Academy – 2022 Courses

Dates	Course	Course Leader	Cost *
Fri-Sat 1-2 April	GC/AC One-to-One with Cliff Jones	Cliff Jones	POA
Sun 3 April	GC/AC Perfecting basic stroke play	Cliff Jones	£38/£33
Tues 5 April	GC/AC One-to-One with Cliff Jones	Cliff Jones	POA
Wed-Thu 6-7 April	AC Intro to Advanced Play: towards triple peel	Cliff Jones	£70/£60
Sat-Sun 9-10 April	GC/AC Become a CA Club Level coach	James Hawkins	£70/£60
Sun 24 April	AC Become a CA Graded AC Coach	Roger Staples	£38/£33
Wed 4 May	GC/AC Back to Basics	Alan Locket	£38/£33
Sat 7 May	GC Classic Golf Croquet skills and tactics	John Crossland	£38/£33
Sun 8 May	GC Golf Croquet strategy	John Crossland	£38/£33
Wed 11 May	AC Bisques and breaks for higher bisquers	John Harris	£38/£33
Wed 8 June	GC/AC Learn Short Croquet in one day	John Harris	£38/£33

* The costs shown are for Ordinary members / Premium members of the Croquet Association To check availability, discuss a course or reserve a place, please contact Debbie James on 07772 778232 For more information please visit www.northerncroquetacademy.org



SOUTHWICK ACADEMY COURSES

The Croquet Academy is planning to be back in full action for the 2022 season. Entering its 15th year of operation the Academy Team have planned a range of courses to suit players of all abilities, all aimed at helping to make one a better player. New innovations for 2022 include:

An introduction to AC using Short Croquet

Short croquet is an ideal way to start playing Association Croquet (AC). It is played on half sized lawns which makes it far easier to pick up and practice the techniques involved in this fascinating game.

Croquet Mindset Mastery onDemand – Via online modules

Attitude of mind is a vital component in improving your performance. This course, created by a leading mindset practitioner, enables you to study the course at a speed to suit yourself. The online course will be supported by live on line Q & A sessions.

Hub club coaching

The Academy has planned to set up two new Hubs at Guildford & Godalming and Tunbridge Wells where Academy Coaches will come to the hub to lead the courses. The purpose is to reduce participants' travel by offering some of the more popular courses.

These Federation courses will be in addition to the comprehensive programme at Southwick. Full details of all courses and entry procedure can be found online at www.thecroquetacademy.com

The Croquet Academy - Southwick

Date	Course	Ideal hcp
6th April	GC Beginners & Improvers Course	9+
11/12 April	Coaches Qualifications Courses AC & GC	n/a
19th April	AC for Beginners (Short Croquet)	n/a
20th April	GC Up your Game (C to B level)	7+
22nd April	GC Move up A level	3-7
27th April	GC A level Development course (Going beyond the A player)	3 or less
28th April	GC Referees Rules 6th Edition (By Zoom)	n/a
10/11th May	AC - A chance to advance	5-10
25th May	AC Its all about the break	10-20
31st May	AC Beginners follow up Course in short croquet	n/a
17th Aug	AC High Bisque supervised Tournament	14+
From 15th March	Develop your mindset (A series of downloadable modules by subscription)	n/a

Hub Club Courses to be run at Guildford & Godalming, Tunbridge Wells and Southwick

	Southwick	Guildford & Godalming	Tunbridge Wells
GC Beginners to Improvers Course	6 April	18 May	5 May
GC Up your GC Game (C to B level) 7+ Hcp	20 April	8 June	9 June
GC Workshop	12 July	4 July	7 July
GC One to One's	16 Aug	10 Aug	11 Aug

LIZ FARROW WINS INAUGURAL CA PHOTO COMPETITION

The inaugural CA Photo competition was run over Autumn 2021 following a call in the Gazette (Issue 392), and attracted a strong set of submissions. These ranged from stunning croquet backdrops and foolhardy croquet players in wet

weather, to action shots capturing the raw emotion(s) of the photo subject. There was even a bear.

The judging panel of Chris Roberts, Samir Patel and Eugene Chang argued long and hard, before settling on a top three:





1850s

Mayne Reid

THOMAS MAYNE REID (1818-1883)

**PART ONE
OF THREE**

to prevent the spread of the sport. It had been "restricted to the lawn of the lordly mansion" but he trusted that it would escape to the "paddock and the village green".

NORTHERN IRISH ORIGINS

Thomas Mayne Reid was born into a Scottish-Irish family in Ballyronee, a small village in County Down. He was the son of the Reverend Thomas Mayne Reid, who was a senior clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. His father wanted him to become a Presbyterian minister and so, in September 1834, Reid enrolled at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution. Although he stayed there for four years, he did not complete his studies or receive a degree.

THE DEEP SOUTH

In December 1839, aged 21, Reid boarded the Dumfriesshire, to make the Atlantic crossing to New Orleans. He arrived in January 1840. Shortly afterwards, he found a job as a clerk for a corn merchant. He stayed in New Orleans for six months. It is said that he left his position for refusing to whip slaves. He later used Louisiana as the setting of one of his best-selling books, an anti-slavery novel entitled *The Quadroon* (published, in three volumes, in 1856). From New Orleans, Reid travelled to Tennessee. On a plantation near Nashville, he tutored the children of Dr Peyton Robertson. Twenty years later, he made mid-Tennessee the setting for his novel *The Wild Huntress* (1861). Following Dr. Robertson's death, Reid founded a short-lived, private school in Nashville. In 1841 he found work as a clerk for a provisions dealer in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Although he later claimed to have made several trips to the American West during this period, the evidence for such journeys is sketchy. Life in the "wild west" provided the background for many of his novels but whether he experienced this, or merely read the many popular, contemporary accounts, is a matter of conjecture.

PENNSYLVANIA

In late 1842, Reid arrived in Pittsburgh, where he settled briefly and wrote both prose and poetry for the Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle, under the nom de plume, "The Poor Scholar". His earliest work was a series of epic poems called *Scenes in the West Indies*.

In early 1843, Reid moved to Philadelphia, where he remained for three years. During this time he worked as a journalist and, from time to time, had poetry published in Godey's Lady's Book, Graham's Magazine, the Ladies National Magazine, using the same pen name. It was in Philadelphia that he met Edgar Allan Poe and the two became drinking companions for a time. Poe later called Reid "a colossal but most picturesque liar".

OFF TO WAR

When the Mexican-American War began in the spring of 1846, Reid was working as a correspondent for the New York Herald in Newport, Rhode Island. On 23 November 1846, aged 28, he joined the First New York Volunteer Infantry, as a Second Lieutenant. In January 1847 the regiment left New York by ship. They camped for several weeks at Lobos Island before taking part in Major General Winfield Scott's invasion of Central Mexico, which began on 9 March 1847, at Vera Cruz. Using the pseudonym "Ecolier", Reid was a correspondent for the New York newspaper, Spirit of the Times, which published his "Sketches by a Skirmisher".

Reid was involved in the victory at the battle of Churubusco on 20 August 1847 and was with his regiment at the storming of Chapultepec, where he was severely wounded in the hip on 13 September 1847, while leading a charge. He was afterwards promoted to the rank of First Lieutenant for bravery in battle. Although he called himself, and is often listed as, "Captain" Reid, his rank is shown, in Heitman's definitive "Historical Register and Dictionary of the U.S. Army", only as Lieutenant. It is gratifying to be able to correct Colonel Prichard in this instance. In his peerless "History of Croquet" (1981), he noted that Reid "served in the US Army in the Mexican War in 1846, hence his rank of captain".

Reid resigned his commission on 5 May 1848. In the winter of 1848-49 he lived (apparently in sin) in the valley of the Mac-o-chee, in Ohio. While there, he wrote *Love's Martyr*, his first play, which was performed at the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, for five nights in October 1848. His "War Life", (an account of his army service), was published on 27 June 1849. He also wrote "The Rifle Rangers" in Ohio, which was published in 1850.

**...TO BE CONTINUED
IN THE NEXT ISSUE.**

FRINTON-ON-SEA CC



We are pleased to confirm that the Croquet Club is gaining momentum with a very enthusiastic group. They appeared in force at the AGM in October adorned in their branded clothing and appear to have been very well received within the wider club, with a few tennis players also showing signs of interest. We expect Croquet to gain further traction with the introduction of the new lawn. **EXISTING LAWN** This has been used all summer and, with a break during October for renovation and re-seeding, is back in action again. The regular Wednesday afternoon club slot is still being attended but by smaller numbers. **NEW LAWN** We had several frustrating setbacks, not least because thick clay was sitting just below the surface which did not show up in the test hole. Consequently, we found ourselves having to acquire an additional 100 tonnes of topsoil. Due to the site geography, it was not possible to deliver the soil close to the required area and the cost of shifting it was significant. By coincidence, the neighbouring cricket club had 100 tonnes of the required product spare and in conjunction with volunteers, plant hire and help from the local aggregates company, we made large savings. However, we had to wait for a slot from the laser levelling company who also seeded, fertilised and extended our existing irrigation network to the croquet lawn. A green hue appeared late October but the lawn hadn't got the good start we had planned for. The weather has been mild until recently and we can only hope that the early spring will bring some good weather to help the lawn further establish itself. **PROJECT COSTS** The total cost of our project was £10,123.28. This included the laser survey (£300); top soil (£1,800); ground plant hire and labour (£488); seed and fertilizer (£498.08); the extension of the irrigation system, additional ground levelling and spreading of the root zone (£5,737.20). Funded by a CA Development Grant of £3,087; donations of £4,787 (including the Gift Aid) and £2,161.28 from the Tennis Club funds. **MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS** We currently have 18 members, 13 play regularly. The others are CA members of other clubs who play at Frinton when here on holiday. **BRANDED CLOTHING** The club piloted this with great success. Bought at £18 (depending on number of logos) and sold at £25. This resulted in a profit/donation to the club of approximately £90 on the shirts ordered. **COACHING** During the year coaching has been undertaken by Rich Waterman and has been very successful in creating a cohort of competency in regular attendees of the Wednesday afternoon club afternoons. Coaching also included a visit to Colchester Croquet club to give players the experience of a full size lawn. On the few occasions that Rich Waterman was not available, coaching was undertaken by Richard Everett, John and Susie Anderson. **COMPETITIONS** No formal internal or external entry competitions have been run this year. Plans however exist for at least two club competitions next year. **DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBERSHIP DRIVE** Plans for a membership drive (with new lawn) are in place for 2022 sessions.

Martin Tinsley
mtinsley@btconnect.com
07977 251495

STONY STRATFORD CC

Little did we know back in January 2020 what a rollercoaster year we would have. But through all the fear and depression our little club has seen how adversity brings out the best in people. There is hope for humanity yet. We entered our first lockdown reluctantly, but the sun was shining and we could go for lovely walks in our "city" parks. We missed playing croquet and the social contact but we were optimistic it would soon be over. The summer came and back we went to seeing our club friends, at a social distance of course. Everyone was happy. Things would get back to normal. Not so! Fate was against us. Autumn came and brought gale force winds which destroyed our gazebos, our only shelter as we could not use the club house. Numbers playing dwindled as the winter crept in. Luckily we applied and managed to get an Emergency Appeal Fund grant from Milton Keynes Community Foundation and they were kind enough to give us enough money to build a permanent veranda for our members to shelter under. The grant is awarded to relieve hardship caused directly or indirectly by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is a blessing to have such an organisation to help charitable causes in these hard times and we will be forever grateful to them. Then we were hit again, this time by flood. The river Ouse burst its banks on Christmas Eve and, as a Christmas present, flooded the entire club, lawns and clubhouse up to around three feet deep. Once the water receded we were left with debris and silt everywhere. Thanks to our brilliant members who came in their droves to help, we quickly managed to clean up the area. Unfortunately our clubhouse carpet was ruined and 2 of our lawn mowers did not take kindly to their time as submarines. Once again however, the kindness of others was our saviour. A local letting agency, Prestige Estates, generously donated new carpet tiles to replace the ones that had been ruined. Also a lawn mower repair specialist let his apprentice work on bringing our lawn mowers back to life for a marginal fee. So although these last twelve months have been difficult and trying, they have also shown that generosity and helpfulness still abound in this country and we do still have the "Dunkirk Spirit". I, for one, now truly believe that every cloud has a silver lining.

Jackie Hikal
Secretary
Stony Stratford croquet Club



‘THE MAC’

The Mac – or MacRobertson International Croquet Shield – is the premier team event for Association Croquet. It takes place roughly every four years between England, Australia, New Zealand and USA. The next edition takes place in November 2022 in Melbourne (fingers crossed and masks on).

Our team will be: Mark Avery, Jamie Burch, Christian Carter, James Death, Harry Fisher and captain Samir Patel. Many congratulations to them!

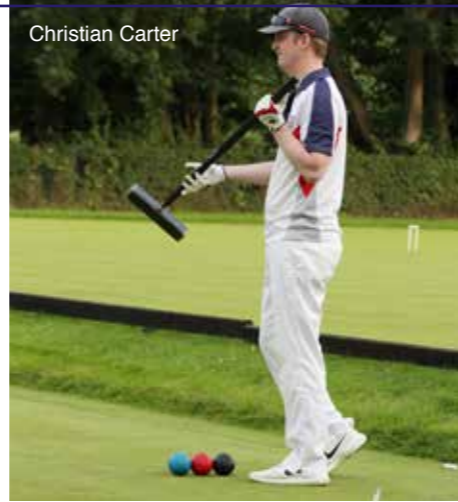
The team has a lot of experience, with Jamie, James and Samir having played the last two Macs, and Mark in four earlier events, whilst this will be the first time for Christian and Harry.

I'm lucky as the AC IPD (international Performance Director) to help organise some preparation events for the team, relying on several people especially Keith Aiton, the coach, and other top level players including the wider Mac squad. I also help organise a Development squad for aspiring international players, so it is quite inspiring that Christian and Harry were part of the first development squad back in 2014.

Phil Eardley
AC International Performance Director



James Death



Christian Carter



Samir Patel



Harry Fisher



Jamie Burch



Mark Avery

ACTC END OF YEAR

At its end of year meeting, the AC Tournament Committee (ACTC) discussed various matters including:

- The CA's Short Croquet Inter Club Competition,
- A couple of the matters put forward at the beginning of 2021 by the Competitive Play Working Group

SHORT CROQUET

In 2022, the Short Croquet Inter Club Competition is to follow the format that has been successful in the Secretary's Shield

Each Federation will be invited to enter a team. The holders may also enter. In line with the other CA inter club events, a knockout competition will then be held over the course of the season.

COMPETITIVE PLAY WORKING GROUP (CPWG)

Introduction of AC B level and C level Series

The gradual introduction of such Series in GC has proved successful and the CPWG proposed similar series should be established in AC.

2022 will see both a B Series (0+) and a C Series (7+) introduced. Initially at least, we do not intend to hold finals but there will be recognition for best performance over the year; most improved player; etc.

Please email me if you would be interested in holding an event at your club

SUPER ADVANCED / ADVANCED

The CPWG asked that in the lead up to the WCF's November 2022 World Team Championships (the MacRobertson Shield) and the WCF's July 2023 World Championships, we play more of the format played in WCF events i.e. advanced rather than super advanced.

The ACTC has agreed that super advanced will not be mandated in any CA events in 2022. This means that super advanced will only be played when both players agree to play super advanced. This will result in many more matches being played as advanced, particularly at events where Mac players are in attendance.

Brian Havill
Chair of ACTC
brian.havill@outlook.com

CROQUET COURT FANTASY



LEVENS HALL

I concur with much that Klim Seabright writes when inviting Gazette readers to share their own Fantasy Court. I've played at a few of his chosen venues and considering their merits conclude that we have their equal without need to travel outside my home county of Cumbria.

My own club, near Penrith, affords players a panoramic view of the Pennine Hills. Like Sidmouth CC we share the ground with the cricket club, but here there is no possibility of being hit on the head by a cricket ball on match days. This is because the approach to hoop 2 on Lawn 1 is also the approach to the cricket crease, which makes concurrent play of croquet and cricket impractical. Should, however, another mishap occur the North West air ambulance helicopter is stationed reassuringly nearby and provides frequent aerial distraction for the croquet outplayer.

Aerial distraction is also a feature for players at both Keswick and Braithwaite croquet clubs. The magnificent backdrop of Skiddaw amplifies both the bravery of hang glider pilots and the arresting, although thankfully brief, disturbance from military jets flying at low level. Both these clubs also enjoy the company of adjoining tennis courts, although I must admit East Dorset CC is unmatched for the welcome distraction provided by nubile tennis players parading on the way to and from their courts.

In the south of the County our two clubs are also the stuff of fantasy. The eponymous river runs alongside the south boundary of courts 1 and 4 at Crake Valley CC. Being at a lower level it is somewhat disconcerting to be observed playing by cows enjoying an elevated vantage point in the field along the eastern boundary. The pastoral setting is outstanding, as is the fish and chip lunch from the local chippy.

Last, but by no means least, the courts within the grounds of Levens Hall enjoy a setting unmatched elsewhere. Players at Westmorland CC enjoy the spectacle of an adjacent garden created 300 years ago, and now considered unique of its type. Some of the monolithic yew topiary sculptures are as old as the garden itself. What player can fail to be inspired by the precision and inventiveness of these totems?

To the best of my knowledge Klim has yet to grace our courts, but to him and others we give a warm welcome to visitors wanting to share our fantasy.

Howard Bowron

SHORT CROQUET CORNER

Will 2022 be the year you try Short Croquet? SC games last typically an hour or an hour and a quarter, and offer engaging croquet at all skill levels.

LEARN THE GAME!

If you are an AC player, SC needs no introduction: it's simply 14-point AC on a half-sized lawn. There is a trivial adjustment to the wiring rule, and a simpler handicap system, but in all other respects AC players are good to go.

If you are a GC player looking to broaden your experience of croquet, each of the Academies is running one-day introductory sessions this year that build on your GC skills and give you a fast-track route into this fast-growing format of the game. Look out for courses at the Chiltern Academy in April, at the Northern Academy in June, and, at Southwick, a one-day course in May with an opportunity to follow up a few weeks later.

GET INVOLVED!

Meanwhile 2022 sees another increase in SC in the Fixtures Calendar. The two premier events remain the Viking Challenge Short Croquet Weekend at York on 10-11 September, and the SC Inter-Club Competition, a season-long knockout with one Club team per Federation which culminates the following weekend. But other SC fixtures are also now appearing in the CA Calendar: check out what Blewbury and Hamptworth have to offer. Several Federations are also now developing a flourishing SC scene. Why not get involved? There is always a prime focus on enjoyment at SC events and you will be very welcome.

OPENING TACTICS IN SC

Experienced AC players tackling SC for the first time often ask whether special opening tactics are needed. The short answer is no. All the common AC opening moves can be used to good effect: East boundary, West boundary, tice to the West beyond hoop 1, Duffer tice, Corner 4, Corner 2, and so on. The shorter SC games offer the perfect context for experimenting with different openings and seeing how best they can be made to work. The key thing to remember is that the smaller lawn makes it easier for your opponent to hit in, so think carefully about how accurate a shot your opponent is and how likely to hit in over given distances. The smaller lawn also means that SC offers a great opportunity to experienced AC players to sharpen tactical skills and precision in shot placing.

John Harris



PHOTOGRAPH First shot of the new season – Fiona Crompton gets in some SC practice with James Pitt and David Young



THE SPANISH BOOM: GC IN SPAIN

In the past years, GC in Spain has seen an incredible increase in the number of lawns, clubs, and people playing.

By the end of 2015, there were around 300 players and, when 2021 finished, there were more than 1900. There are surely many reasons that have collaborated in this success and we will try to briefly analyse them.

Unlike some other countries, croquet was introduced in Spain through the higher social classes. Spain has almost 500 golf clubs of which a high percentage are private, with its members having a medium and high economic status. Golf clubs have realised that it is a good business to build croquet lawns. In those clubs, they already have the machinery and the personnel that knows how to take care of a 'green', so it does not complicate their organisation and the increase in cost is relatively low compared to the benefits they get from the rental of the lawns and organisation of tournaments.

Croquet has allowed clubs to offer another activity and maintain the membership fees of older members by preventing them

from leaving the club. At the same time, in certain clubs, croquet has helped to decongest golf courses.

For sure, one of the reasons of this boom has also been how easy it is to learn GC. In only a few hours, you can already enjoy GC, while in other sports you may need many hours of lessons. Also, it is not just a game of precision and concentration, but also a strategic game, making it even more interesting. We hope that in the future GC players will start being interested in AC, but for the moment we do not have enough lawns and double banking is necessary.

Our climate too is helping this development because we can play all year round. When it is raining, we see that less people play, but the activity never stops, especially between those that like competing.

The social component of croquet is also essential, at least in Spain. Croquet is not just croquet! It is a great plan to meet other people, and have fun outdoors. It is a good idea to organise cocktails after the tournaments so that people socialise. Promotion within beginners is necessary

too to help their development. It is important to help them meet other players because their usual friends often do not play and when you start, you often do with just one or two friends and that is not enough to continue playing. There are surely many ways to do so, but a couple of efficient ways are the organisation of tournaments and leagues where they can meet other players of their level and the creation of groups by level using social networks or similar forms of communication.

Increasing the number of tournaments organised is a very good way to motivate different players to get better (more than 150 were organised this year in Spain). In many cases, the more players compete, the more they want to compete. But different players require different types of tournaments. Many beginners do not dare play individual games so it is better to organise them in a system of doubles where everyone plays with and against everyone else of the group. That system (called in Spain "American Doubles") enables people to meet other players and therefore increases the number of games

played. As for the more experienced players, they often prefer to compete in individual games since they already have the confidence to do so, and they require games where they can progress in their Dgrades. For the top players it is different. They are usually more concerned choosing what type of tournaments to play because now that there is no index, they don't want to unnecessarily risk their Dgrade anymore since the Spanish Croquet Federation (FEC) selects the players that represent Spain in international competitions by Dgrade. For them, an extra incentive is that the FEC helps them financially to participate. The further the country is, the more help they will receive. In any case, all types of tournaments must be organised. Another type of tournament that has had a great success with our players is one where teams of different clubs compete to be the best club in Spain (Cup of Spain). In it, players from all over Spain meet and we all have dinner together. This year, we had to organise a Tier 2 because of the increasing number of clubs that wanted to participate. Next year also a Tier 3 will be

probably necessary (with the consequent difficulties to find a venue that can accommodate simultaneously so many players during those days).

But we believe that this growth is only the beginning. In 2020, the FEC made the decision to professionalise its management and develop a Strategic Plan for 2020-2025 whose main objective is the promotion of croquet at the national level. This Plan includes the mission, the vision of the Spanish Croquet Federation, its objectives, and the most appropriate way to achieve them. It is basically about structuring and planning the future growth of croquet in Spain.

We also have a communication agency that helps in the execution of the marketing plan and dissemination of croquet news, giving a lot of importance to the ranking so that people care about it. Our website is constantly updated so that the players are well informed. We also include videos and interviews of players and organisers.

At the same time, we have a Spanish Academy of Croquet to form teachers, trainers and referees. This Academy helps

in the diffusion of the rules. But all this without the selfless work of a reduced number of people would not be possible. Therefore, they too are responsible for part of this boom.

In Spain, we mainly have lawns in private clubs, but lately we have seen more and more lawns constructed in hotels or other facilities that are open to the public. So now, if you are travelling and are not a member, you can play in Almeria (Valle del Este Croquet Club), Marbella (Villa Padierna Racquet Club), Cadiz (Real Club de Golf Novo Sancti Petri, Villanueva Golf and Croquet Club, Sherry Golf Jerez, El Rosalejo Croquet Club, and La Fuensanta Croquet Club), in Huelva (Club Isla Canela Golf) and in the North of Spain in Asturias (Somio Club de Croquet). You can also go to the sunny Canary Islands and play in the Tenerife Club de Croquet!

So, if you want to enjoy croquet with a great climate in a friendly environment and wonderful food, come and enjoy playing in Spain!

Begoña Elizaburu
José Luis Álvarez-Sala



PHOTOGRAPH 4th GC Cup of Spain (Real Club Puerta de Hierro, Madrid)-teams (15.11.2019)



PHOTOGRAPH 14th GC Spanish Championship Tier 4-D (Club de Campo, Madrid)-a game (02.06.2021)



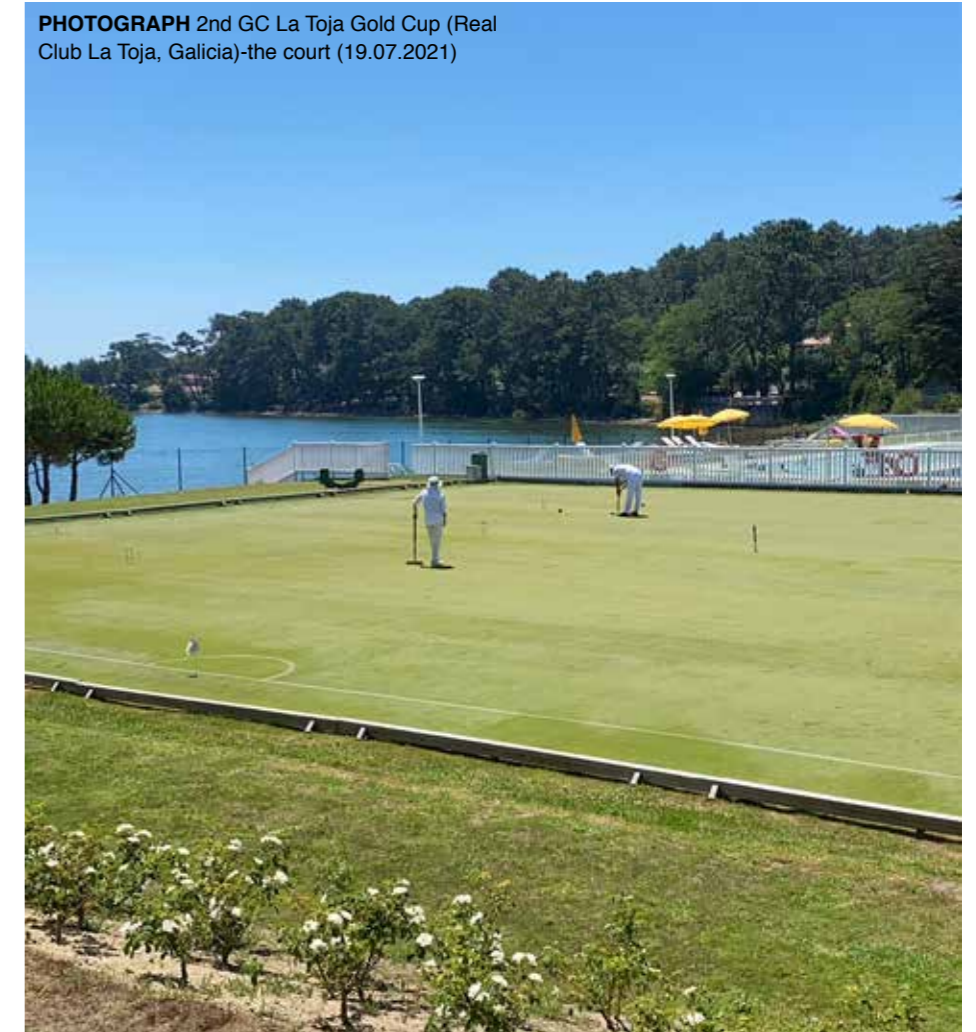
PHOTOGRAPH 13th GC Spanish Championship (Real Club Sancti Petri, Cadiz)-a game (27.06.2021)



PHOTOGRAPH 4th GC Spanish President's Cup (Club de Campo, Madrid)-the final (09.05.2021).



PHOTOGRAPH 5th GC Cup of Spain (Real Sociedad Hipica Española, Madrid)-the final (13.6.2021)



PHOTOGRAPH 2nd GC La Toja Gold Cup (Real Club La Toja, Galicia)-the court (19.07.2021)

ENGLISH NATIONAL GC DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP

As in many of the previous years, there were a couple of last-minute changes to the entry for the English National GC Doubles Championship with Sandra Cornes and Neil Fillery joining the line-up, but it was very encouraging to see a full entry (16 pairs) and a rather stronger field than we have had in recent years. Four of the pairs were previous winners of the Ranelagh Cup; Ivor & Richard Brand (1997, 1999), Chris & Roddy Sheen (2000, 2001, 2002), Jonathan Powe & Stephen Custance-Baker (2019) and Stuart M Smith & Steve Leonard (2020), and the top 6 pairs all had average grades above 2000. Also in the line-up was Ryan Cabble & Louise Smith who – although the 11th

seed based on grades - had performed extremely well in the GC Open Doubles, reaching the semi-finals before being beaten by the eventual winners (Bamford & Bilton). Alongside the Sheens and the Brands were two other family teams: Jack & Graham Good and David & Sandra Cornes. The format for the event was pretty standard – two all-play-all qualifying blocks on Saturday (7 rounds) followed by best-of-3 quarters, semis and final on Sunday alongside the Plate and Bowl. In Block A, Tim Russell & Neil Fillery proved to be a very strong combination and took the top slot, losing only one of their 7 games and beating the top seeds (Lionel Tibble & James Goodbun) fairly convincingly along the way. The other three quarter-final places

went to Tibble & Goodbun with 5/7 wins, David Warhurst & Duncan Reeve (5/7) and Powe & Custance-Baker (4/7). The battle for the top four places in Block B was much tighter and came down to the last round of games. In the end, Jack & Graham Good (5/7) claimed first place due to their higher net hoop score, with Cabble & L Smith (5/7), SM Smith & Leonard (5/7) and Tim Jolliff & Raouf Allim (4/7) taking the other three slots. Sunday was a long day for some! The Plate ran smoothly and was concluded by mid-afternoon with an impressive win for David & Sandra Cornes who beat last year's Plate winners (Philip Harris & Stephen Pearson) in the

WON BY RYAN CABBLE AND LOUISE SMITH

final. In contrast, the knockout featured some very long matches, in particular for Cabble & L Smith, who beat Warhurst & Reeve (7-6, 6-7, 7-1) in the quarters before embarking on a 4-hour tussle with Jolliff & Allim in the semi, which they eventually won (7-6, 6-7, 7-5). In the other half, SM Smith and Leonard had a very tight battle with Tibble & Goodbun, winning at the 13th hoop in the third game, before beating Jack & Graham Good 2-0 in the semi to set up an intriguing husband v. wife battle for the title. It was clear that Ryan & Louise were very tired after their long semi-final and the first game of the final went to Stuart & Steve fairly easily (7-3). But Ryan & Louise found a second wind and quickly took a lead in the second game, displaying the strong teamwork and steady, thoughtful play that had featured in their previous matches. They took the second 7-4 and carried their form into the third, again applying pressure on Stuart & Steve from

the start before winning 7-4. Having been the strongest pair throughout the weekend, they fully deserved to get their hands on the Ranelagh Cups and we look forward to seeing more of them in future Doubles Championships. In the Bowl (for losing quarter-finalists), Tim Russell & Neil Fillery continued to punch above their weight and ran out winners, beating Tibble & Goodbun 10-9 in the final. Budleigh received warm praise from everyone for their wonderful hospitality and superb lawns (they seem to get better every year). Many thanks to John O'Gorman and his team who did so much before and during the weekend. Key results are below. All the scores are available via Croquet Scores here: <https://croquetscores.com/2021/gc/english-national-doubles-championship-ranelagh-cups>

PLATE FINAL:
David & Sandra Cornes beat Philip Harris & Stephen Pearson 7-4

BOWL FINAL:
Tim Russell & Neil Fillery beat Lionel Tibble & James Goodbun 10-9

CHAMPIONSHIP:
QF1: Tim Jolliff & Raouf Allim beat Tim Russell & Neil Fillery 7-4, 7-5
QF2: Ryan Cabble & Louise Smith beat David Warhurst & Duncan Reeve 7-6, 6-7, 7-1
QF3: Stuart M Smith & Steve Leonard beat Lionel Tibble & James Goodbun 7-3, 6-7, 7-6
QF4: Jack Good & Graham Good beat Jonathan Powe & Stephen Custance-Baker 7-5, 3-7, 7-4
SF1: Ryan Cabble & Louise Smith beat Tim Jolliff & Raouf Allim 7-6, 6-7, 7-5
SF2: Stuart M Smith & Steve Leonard beat Jack Good & Graham Good 7-3, 7-5
FINAL:
Ryan Cabble & Louise Smith beat Stuart M Smith & Steve Leonard 3-7, 7-4, 7-4



INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE : 2022 GOLF CROQUET WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

30TH JULY - 7TH AUGUST 2022

The 2022 GC WCF world championships will take place at Sussex CC between 30th July and 7th August 2022 preceded by the qualifier at Compton CC 25th to 28th July. Aspiring England competitors should make their availability known via the on line availability system before entries

close on the 3rd March. Apart from the allocation of Membership and Ranking places, a number of additional places can be contested for via the qualifier allowing unsuccessful applicants another chance to take part. In addition, the GC Selection Committee is entitled to nominate an available player for a Wild Card Place who, in their opinion, satisfies the criterion set out in paragraph

2.1.1 of Appendix 3 of the WCF Sports Regulations, namely is a young player or a player showing exceptional promise of future development. If you are a young developing player this may be your opportunity so don't get left out!

L Tibble
Chairman GC selectors

GC FEDERATIONS SHIELD NATIONAL FINAL

Phyllis Court are the National Team Handicap Champions thanks to a Hollywood style comeback in the final of the GC Federations Shield competition.

The Henley side trailed Sussex County for the entire match and had appeared sunk by mid-afternoon at 0-3 down, but came back in dramatic fashion to win 4-3 in an exhilarating finish.

A late start due to the Sussex team's traveling delays, made way for an equally slow start on the Phyllis Court courts that are now showing much improvement and which had been presented in splendid condition for this prestigious match.

Only the doubles rubber was completed before the lunch interval and Phyllis Court's Roger Goldring (handicap -2) and Raghu Iyer (3) were defeated 4-7, 4-7 by the Sussex pair Tony Jolly (2) and David King (3), who both displayed accurate clearing skills in addition to using their greater number of extra turns to good effect.

Unusually the morning singles rubbers took longer that the doubles with the players handicaps providing two excellent tight contests that had to be suspended for lunch at one game apiece.

The host's Ian Norris (-2) was evenly matched by the visitors Roger Sutton (-1) with scores of 7-5, 5-7, and likewise Phyllis Court's captain Chris Roberts (-2) was held by Linda Gavigan (7) who's intelligent use of her nine extra turns, left the pair tied 7-5, 4-7.

A decision was made to start afresh with the afternoon program of head to head singles matches and only return to the unfinished morning games if the overall

team match result was dependent on them.

SUSSEX COUNTY TAKE A COMMANDING LEAD

So, Phyllis Court trailed 0-1 in completed matches going into the second session and by half past three, the prospects for a home victory were looking grim, when their semi-final hero Goldring (-2) fell to Jolly (2) 6-7, 4-7, and was followed shortly afterwards by Norris (-2) who faded after a bright start against Sussex captain King (3), 7-6, 4-7, 3-7.

With the team match score at 0-3, Sussex needed just one of the other two matches still in progress for victory and they came very close indeed, but for a life-saving seven-yard hoop score from the boundary by Phyllis Court's Iyer (3) at the last hoop of his second game against Gavigan (7). Gavigan had beaten Iyer in their first game without taking any of her four extra turns and was in good form all day but perhaps had the wind taken from her sails by Iyer's dramatic score and the Phyllis Court man finally got his side on the scoreboard 5-7, 7-6, 7-3.

There was drama to on other court too, where Roberts (-2) had to pull out all the stops to contend with Sutton (-1) and succeeded with a string of very long-distance clearances, including a monster 23-yarder to hit a half ball target to turn the first game.

PHYLLIS COURT COME-BACK SETS-UP DECIDER GAME

Roberts eventually prevailed 7-5, 7-6,

HOLLYWOOD STYLE COME-BACK EARNS PHYLLIS COURT NATIONAL HANDICAP TITLE

bringing the team match score back to 2-3, meaning that all then hinged on the resumption of the two suspended morning singles rubbers, and these were started straight away.

Norris (-2) blew away Sutton (-1) more easily than the Sussex player's performance thus far had suggested likely, and with the team match score now tied at 3-3, all eyes fell on the Roberts (-2) versus Gavigan (7) encounter, and the 'picket fence' of nine extra turn sticks that the Phyllis Court man had to overcome.

Gavigan again used her extra turns cleverly and she forced Roberts into two well-executed jump shot scores as he kept her lead in check, as her handicap advantage unwound.

Again, Roberts' long-distance clearances were on song and were enough to make-up for some below par hoop running attempts.

Gavigan's extra turns finally expired with an untypical error at hoop 10, and with the score 5-5, the more experienced Henley player was able to control the game with a no risks patient approach, to an eventual and much relived finish 7-5.

With the team match settled at 4-3, there were compliments all round from competition Director Frances Colman, who commiserated with Sussex who had come so close, and congratulated her own club team, as she presented the GC Federations Shield to National Handicap Champions, Phyllis Court.

I Chris Roberts



PHOTOGRAPHS Chris Roberts

2021 GC 2ND & 3RD EIGHTS

There were 'firsts' at both the GC 2nd and 3rd Eights back in August where close competition was the order of the three-day weekend tournaments held side by side at Sussex County CC's Southwick ground. Raouf Allim (High Wycombe) became the first player to successfully retain the 2nd Eight Kate Jones Memorial Trophy and Jack Good (Bowdon) was the first winner of the new 3rd Eight tournament and the Suzanne Roberts Memorial Trophy. 'Close competition' doesn't really convey the fierceness of the contests sufficiently because the 2nd Eight block went into the last round of seven, with all eight players in with a mathematical chance of making the cut for the knockout.

Nick Archer (Watford) and Stuart M Smith (Sidmouth) were way out in front but four others had to be separated by a single game win each when all tied on match

wins – Lionel Tibble (Northampton) and Allim sneaked through at the expense of Steve Leonard (Winterborne Valley) and Tim Jolliff (Taunton).

In the semis, Smith got past Tibble in straight games and Allim upped his game to defeat the hitherto unbeaten Archer in three, and then with his tail up, Allim maintained his momentum to beat Smith 7-6, 7-3.

The 3rd Eight block was more straight forward with John Noble (Letchworth) on top unscathed, followed by young Jack Good (Bowdon) who's only loss was to the Hertfordshire captain, and behind them Stephen Wright (Eynsham) and Jonathan Claxton (Dulwich) were one match win clear.

Claxton got the first game off Noble but that was all in the semis and good sailed past Wright in straight games to set up a splendid final that see-sawed one way and

then the other.

Good took the first game 7-4, Noble the second 3-7 and the third went to last hoop where Good got the crucial score after much interaction.

The strength of the 3rd Eight and those players who missed out on selection, sees the GC Tournament Committee looking closely at the likely introduction of a 4th tier event before long.

FINISHING ORDERS:

2nd Eight - Raouf Allim, Stuart M Smith, Nick Archer, Lionel Tibble, Tim Jolliff, Steve Leonard, Chris Roberts, Guy Scurfield.

3rd Eight – Jack Good, John Noble, Stephen Wright & Jonathan Claxton, Tim King, Richard Brookes, Liz Farrow, Louise Smith.

I Chris Roberts



PHOTOGRAPH Phyllis Court ~ GC Federations Shield National Champions: Raghu Iyer, Chris Roberts, Ian Norris and Roger Goldring, with Frances Colman (Competition Director).

HANDICAP COMMITTEE PHOTOGRAPHS

Chris Roberts

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE AWARDS FOR MOST IMPROVED PLAYERS OF 2021

The CA Handicap Committee is pleased to announce and congratulate the recipients of 2021 Most Improved Player Awards.

- GC Female (The Colman Trophy) - Glynis Davies
- GC Male (The Spiers Trophy) - Jack Good & Aston Wade (jointly)
- AC Female (The Steel Memorial Bowl) - Heather Bennett
- AC Male (The Apps Memorial Bowl) - Neal Bacon

The CA Handicap Committee decided on the unusual step of awarding the 2021 Spiers Trophy jointly this season, in recognition of the very impressive improvements shown by the two recipients whom, on this occasion, the committee could not separate.

It is most pleasing to note that both players are under 20 years of age and without doubt have promising futures ahead of them.

The Handicap Committee are keen that in coming to this joint-award decision, that it is recognised as highly unusual and indeed unique for a GC Most Improved Player Award.

The AC Awards have been made jointly twice before in 1966 and 1978.

Here is a link to the previous award recipients lists -

<https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/tournaments/MostImproved>

Frances Colman
Chairman, CA Handicap Committee



Glynis Davies



Jack Good



Neal Bacon



Heather Bennett



Aston Wade

MOST IMPROVED PLAYER AWARDS - NEW COLMAN TROPHY

The newest trophy in the CA collection is the strikingly impressive Colman Trophy, which has been commissioned and gifted to the Croquet Association by Frances Colman.

As the Chairman of the CA Handicap Committee, which is charged with deciding the annual awards to the Most Improved Players, Frances wanted to give parity for GC alongside AC, with the provision of a new dedicated trophy for GC female players.

After seeking approval for the award, Frances approached accomplished sculpture artist Allan Henderson, himself a fellow croquet player at her club, Phyllis Court in Henley, and he came up with the unique and bespoke design of one ball jumping over another mid-hoop. Frances loved the concept from the beginning and together with Allan, honed the full-sized design that would be cast in bronze and mounted on a shaped and carved wooden base with engraved lettering.

Allan researched and located the Morris-Singer Art Foundry in Hampshire, who are very experienced in bronze castings. He visited them on a number of occasions before he and Frances attended together to oversee the works from the assembly



The Colman Trophy, with wooden base

stage onwards, and particularly the process of patination undertaken by Graham Branch, which gave the piece muted colour and texture.

It was fascinating to watch the craftsmen in action and to see the piece come to life, from the mouldings of a real Hopewell hoop and Dawson Ball, through the bare bronze casting, to the fabulous finished piece complete with its deliberately light weathered appearance.

Frances introduced Allan to master wood-carver Colin Mantripp of the Lillyfee Studio in South Buckinghamshire and Allan directed the design of the wooden base that he wanted.

Colin Mantripp is a descendent of Rodin no-less, and the quality of his work is outstanding; he made the base from bur-oak and burr-walnut with suggestion of grass in the carving as Allan had designed

The finished piece is truly outstanding and is a wonderful gift for the CA. It has since been playfully suggested that what we need now is a trophy for the best trophy!

Chris Roberts



Foundry - Graham Branch, Frances Colman & Allan Henderson



Graham Branch applies the patination process

PRESENTATIONS OF THE AWARDS FOR THE MOST IMPROVED PLAYERS OF 2021



PHOTOGRAPHS Clockwise above: Aston Wade, MIP award - The Spiers Trophy; Neal Bacon, MIP award presentation (with Frances Colman) - The Apps Memorial Bowl; Glynis Davies, MIP award presentation (with Frances Colman) - The Colman Trophy

The Trophy presentations to the Most Improved Players of 2021 were undertaken under the watchful eye of President Quiller Barrett.

In a break from the previous practice of presenting these awards after some delay at the following year's AGM, the trophies are now presented at a time of the recipient's choosing soon after the period of their achievement. As Chairman of the Handicap Committee (which decides the awards), I was asked by the President to make three of the presentations on his behalf either side of Christmas when gathering concerns altered his plans to attend. In mid-December, I was delighted to meet with award winners Glynis Davies and Neal Bacon at the splendid Rushton Hall Hotel near Kettering where, in the presence of their families and some club representatives, they were presented with the new Colman Trophy (GC female) and Apps Memorial Bowl (AC male) respectively. Moving on to the presentation of the Spiers Trophy for the Most Improved GC Male player, this was always going to be logistically challenging when it was

announced that it had been awarded jointly in 2021 and a plan is in place for the President to attend an early/ mid-season tournament at which both Aston Wade and Jack Good will be participating. In order that both players can have physical possession of the trophy for half the time, the second part of the plan involved me enjoying a lovely winter morning drive to the Cotswolds to meet up with Aston at his parents' new home, not far from the historically croquet important Chastleton House, days before he headed back to his Exeter University studies. Aston will pass the trophy on to Jack at the aforementioned formal Presidential presentation later in the year. This just now leaves the presentation of the Steel Memorial Bowl, for the Most improved Female AC player, to Heather Bennett, and the President will undertake that one personally, most likely at a Letchworth Croquet Club winter tournament in the coming weeks.

Frances Colman
Chairman, CA Handicap Committee

THE COACHING PAGES SARAH HAYES

COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

The following people have all been added to the CA List of Coaches – congratulations to all. These hardy souls all completed their assessments late in the season.

Accredited Club-Level Coaches (trained to coach beginners and high handicap players at their own Clubs)

Martin Beacon	Nottingham CC
Simon Clay	Worcester Norton CC
Sue Drew	Winterborne Valley CC
Ellen Gee	Nottingham CC
Julia Green	Phyllis Court CC
Andrew Higgins	Budleigh Salterton CC
Michael Kay	Caversham CC
David Milford	Camerton & Peasedown CC
Anthony Myers	Taunton Deane CC
Lynne Passfield	Bath CC
Tony Peperell	High Wycombe CC
Geoff Scutt	Bude CC
Debbie Watson	Nottingham CC

Qualified Coaches (qualified to coach skills and tactics at an appropriate level throughout the country)

GOLF CROQUET – GRADE 1

Carol Driver	Purley Bury CC
Brian Havill	Watford (Cassiobury) CC
Barry Holland	Surbiton CC
David King	Sussex County CC
Avril Rangoni-Machiavelli	Blewbury CC
Julie Tremble	Guildford & Godalming CC

GOLF CROQUET – GRADE 2

Ron Carter	Ealing CC
Richard Carline	Sussex County CC

ASSOCIATION CROQUET – GRADE 1

Ron Carter	Ealing CC
Carol Driver	Purley Bury CC
Barry Holland	Surbiton CC

ASSOCIATION CROQUET – GRADE 2

Richard Forman	Nottingham CC
Avril Rangoni-Machiavelli	Blewbury CC
Brian Havill	Watford (Cassiobury) CC

In addition, Richard Harding (Southport & Birkdale CC), who has recently returned to croquet, has been re-accredited as a Graded Coach in both AC and GC at both Grade 1 and Grade 2. Welcome back!

COACHING COURSES IN 2022

Joining a coaching course at one of the Academies is a great way to start the season. The Chiltern, Northern and Southwick Academies all have enticing programmes of courses appealing to both GC and AC players, and at levels from those newly started in croquet through to players now working on Advanced Rules.

If you are looking to put something back into the game and are a clear thinker, a good communicator and know the game, what about becoming a coach? Coaching not only helps others, it's also an excellent way of helping you improve your own game. The Northern and Southwick Academies have coach training and coach qualification courses at the very start of their 2022 programmes in April, and the Chiltern Academy is looking to do the same.

But, with all coaching courses, be quick: booking is already open and some courses are already fully subscribed and have a waiting list. Check out direct with the various Academies to see what is still available.

SUBSIDIES

Subsidies of up to £25 per head are available from the CA for registered CA members, to help towards the cost of a CA-approved course leading to a qualification as a CA Coach.

For full details of who is eligible, which courses qualify for this support, what the subsidy is and is not designed to cover, how claims should be made, how the different coaching grades are defined, and what minimum standard is required at each level, key Croquet Association Become a Coach into Google.

This will point you directly to the page Become a Coach or Upgrade your Coaching Qualification. The page is newly updated and hopefully will answer any questions you may have. Some Federations now offer additional support, so contact your Federation direct to see whether they are able to help.

ALL CHANGE!

It's the end of an era for the Coaching Pages: this is Sarah Hayes's last column. It brings to a close several years of lively, entertaining and informative coaching material. For everything you have given us, Sarah, thank you very much – great work!

The baton now passes to John Harris who takes over as Chair of the CA Coaching Committee. John is a Grade 1 Coach, chair of York CC, Co-ordinator of the Northern Academy and occasional contributor of articles about the history of croquet.

Sarah's enthusiasm, energy and commitment mean she will be a hard act to follow, so if you have suggestions or ideas for future Coaching Pages please let John know at: jharrisnet@gmail.com.

MERIT AWARDS

The final of the Secretary's Shield led to three Merit Awards being won. Many congratulations to the following recipients:

ASSOCIATION CROQUET

Bronze

Roger Bowman	St Albans CC
Mark Simmerson	Sheffield CC
Stuart Stafford	St Albans CC

Don't forget to claim your Merit Awards. The standard you need to reach is set out on the CA website. Search 'Croquet Association Merit Award Scheme' in Google to get straight to it. Any CA event you are playing in will have a Manager who will be able to make the claim for you. Let us all hope for a full season's play in 2022.

LIONEL TIBBLE COACH OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Lionel Tibble, Coach of the Year. Lionel is a Grade 3 Coach at both AC and GC, a handicapper in both codes, a referee, a tireless worker for Northampton Croquet club, and much else – but it his work as GC International Performance Director and with young people that has made him the unanimous choice for Coach of the Year.

There is far more to the IPD role than appears on the surface, and Lionel, year after year, quietly goes about all the organisation with no fuss whatsoever. His work with the GC development squad is straight out of the top drawer and he is continually looking for ways to improve and develop coaching generally.

There used to be just AC Pods – Lionel has made sure that there are now GC Pods too. This ensures the development of GC to a higher level across the country. Summer School for the under 25's is fast becoming the event of the year for the young people in croquet – they really enjoy the opportunity to meet others. Lionel organises everything, ensuring everyone knows they are welcome to attend, and caters for beginners and A-Class players with ages ranging from 11 years old and upwards.

More generally, Lionel has an impressive work ethic, approaching his coaching and development work with deep commitment. He makes a real difference; he not only talks about it but delivers too, and to a very high standard. His course attendees warm to his enthusiasm and want to improve. Lionel has a depth of experience and expertise that he shares freely and willingly.

As one of the young people Lionel has worked with, Sam Cuthbert, says: "It has been a privilege to be able to experience coaching from Lionel at both his summer school and through the GC IPDS events. His insights and coaching have helped me to develop my A-Class GC play. As well as this, he has been able to help develop my advanced AC tactics. Personally, I believe that Lionel is a brilliant coach and mentor because he makes things understandable and also good fun. I am lucky to have been able to learn from him."

Lionel is that all-to-rare combination of an excellent player (he represented England in the 2016 GC Worlds) and an excellent coach, able to encourage and nurture not only practical croquet skills but also confidence, independence and self-belief in those he mentors.

In summary – Lionel is a fabulous coach who simply does what he does quietly behind the scenes – an excellent IPDG and a very nice chap to boot!

INTERVIEW - LIONEL TIBBLE

For those of you who haven't come across Lionel, I hope his answers to the usual questions will give you a bit of an insight into the man behind the International Performance Development Group and many other aspects of croquet coaching and development:



1. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO RECEIVE THE COTY 2021 AWARD?

For me the COTY 2021 award is more about recognising the effort, ongoing enthusiasm and sacrifices all those associated with the IPDG GC scheme have made and continue to make. Special mentions must go to Rachel Gee without whom I would be lost. And to all the Elite players who surrender their free time and, at considerable expense, involve themselves with the Development Squad, Elite Squad and Pod activities. I'm indebted to all the parents of the younger players attending the Under 25s annual Summer school who ferry their protégés to and from the venue each year. Thanks to Ian Shore, Eugene Chang and Daniel Gott for their unstinting help and whose enthusiasm for coaching is inspirational. It means a great deal to me and, I'm sure, to all these folk that their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

2. WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR 2022?

My plans for 2022 are centred around a single priority. As many of you may have heard, my home club, Northampton Croquet Club, is relocating to an exciting new venue in the village of Roade not far from Northampton. Our funding appeal 'Take off to Roade' is launched and 2022 will be a busy time for me working alongside the NCC committee and volunteers to establish two new lawns and the usual facilities, as well as boosting our membership numbers. More generally I hope to find time to get back into playing more AC as I find I'm beginning to relish the opportunity for a sit-down during games!

3. GC WORLDS YEAR COMING UP - EXTRA WORK FOR YOU? ANYONE FOR US TO LOOK OUT FOR? WINNER WILL BE...??

I'm certainly looking forward to seeing our up-and-coming GC players testing their mettle on the international stage. Watch out for the Kiwi star Edmund Fordyce currently ranked #6 in the World Rankings, and also the exceptional talents of our own Euan Burrige, Aston Wade and Jack Good. However, my money for the title will be between the two Egyptian players Mo Kareem and Mostafa Nezar.

4. ZOOM!! HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT USING THIS FOR COURSES?

In April 2021 the IPD squad had to resort to a collective zoom meeting due to Covid, and it served its limited purpose well, but it can never take the place of being together on the courts. Relatively short, well planned Zoom presentations or discussions can make a significant contribution towards realising goals but face to face interaction cannot be beaten.

5. NICE COLD BEER OR CHAMPAGNE TO CELEBRATE?

I will be part of the group invited to present the most improved lady GC player award to fellow club player, Glynis Davies, at a 'champagne afternoon tea' (if that's not a contradiction in terms) at Rushton Hall, a local hotel and spa, so plan to celebrate this award with the group at that time.

6. WILL YOU STILL TALK TO US MERE MINIONS?

No of course not! Only kidding. We must talk and exchange ideas constantly - yes it can be tedious sometimes, but the best way to get things done is for a group of enthusiastic volunteers to exchange ideas, building on the synergy which such a group can generate.

Many thanks to Lionel who will be presented with a suitable bottle of something special at a CA GC or AC event early in 2022 – and many congratulations again.



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Fertiliser supply 2022 - Fertiliser prices have surged and are likely to be volatile for some time to come. This is a major problem for farmers and the NFU predicts acute shortages this spring. Croquet clubs would therefore be wise to move quickly to ensure supply. My online shop is open 24/7 or you can contact me by phone or email for a quotation.

Spring maintenance - Low Nitrogen fertiliser can be applied in February and or March. Too much N can be damaging to grass when the days are short. Nitrogen causes the cells to enlarge which is fine if the cell walls thicken at the same time. But cell wall thickening is dependent on photosynthesis without which the cells explode like balloons. The damaged grass is then likely to be attacked by fungal disease which has an easy route into the plant through the open wounds. Moss can be controlled by spraying Soluble Iron. The Crystals are mixed quickly in water using a paint paddle and a cordless drill. See the video on my website. Iron can easily damage sprayers. Use a good quality Soluble Iron and run plenty of clean water through after spraying so that no iron is left in the pump or pipes as this could re-crystallise and block the sprayer.

Brilliant Mower 2022 - The 2022 version of this mower is now available (see website) - cost £3119. It has a 14 bladed cylinder producing a superb fast surface with over 200 cuts per metre, optional trailing seat and retro fittable grooming rake. Domestic mowers such as the Allett Buckingham have only 73 cuts per metre and cost a lot more. The nearest Allett equivalent is the Tournament costing over £7000 which also boasts over 200 cuts per metre but cannot have a trailing seat.

Duncan Hector

OBITUARIES

ALICE FLECK (NEE JONES)

25-05-1934 - 20-10-2020



Alice was integral in the formation of Tyneside Croquet Club along with her then husband Syd Jones in 1983. She has always had a smile and happy disposition seeing the funny side to most situations. Playing croquet for Alice was always a fun time and she encouraged others to share in her enjoyment of the game. Playing for the club teams, travelling to other national and local clubs for tournaments

ensured she got the competitive element in her games and was always a popular visitor when she arrived at venues.

Alice also enjoyed jazz music and combined the two interests to the full and when she and Syd parted company, she met Derek Fleck who played in a local jazz band and they eventually married so she had a dream life with both of her main interests. Alice joined Belsay Hall Croquet Club and latterly Backworth Hall Croquet Club so she ensured plenty of croquet.

Sadly, Derek passed away a few years ago, then Alice's health declined and she passed away during the pandemic. Alice will be sadly missed at all the local clubs and many national clubs where her cheerful smile often lit up the tournaments.

Derek Watts

JOHN FITZPATRICK

1942 - 2021



Many croquet clubs in the North East of the UK, in particular Middlesbrough, were very sad on hearing that John (Fitz) passed away in October from cancer.

Years ago John had discovered that some of his ICI friends were members of a Mbro club, then recently relocated in Prissick Sports Ground and he joined in 1999. The club soon moved to

Albert Park. John was an active member for over twenty two years.

He regularly organised one of two teams that took part in the Croquet North league, as well as serving on the CN committee, regularly putting together its annual pre-season newsletter with entry forms for a whole variety of competitions.

Auckland CC appreciated his help in securing their move to Chilton (near Ferryhill).

He was also keen on carpet croquet played in Norton in the 'off season' and away at Cober Hill (near Scarborough) in late autumn.

**Charles Waterfield
Club Secretary**



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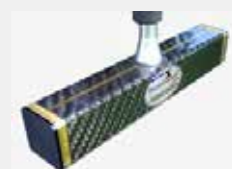
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CA WEBSITE

www.croquet.org.uk is a fabulous resource for croquet information covering membership, news, laws & rules, coaching, who's who, and tournament details with an online entry system.

Croquet jargon The website also has a full glossary of croquet terms, jargon and acronyms that are sometimes used in Gazette reporting.

To find the glossary online, visit:

AC <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/tech/jargon>

GC <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/golf/gcJargon>

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Email contributions, including tournament reports should be sent direct to the Editor, or copied to the Editor if they are being posted to the Nottingham List.

Digital images are preferred, but photographic prints can be acceptable.

Please send digital jpeg or tiff format files and accompany all images with a description of the subject. If you require any material to be returned, please enclose a SAE.

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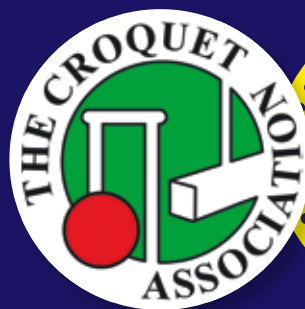
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