



# CROQUET

GAZETTE

Issue 398 | August 2022

## ALEX WEARS THE SAGE WOVEN CROWN AGAIN



ANOTHER FAMOUS  
CROQUET PLAYER?

JAMES MAY JOINS  
TISBURY'S FOUR DAY  
PLATINUM JUBILEE  
'EXTRAVAGANZA'

LET'S HEAR IT FOR  
THE GIRLS!

CONGRATULATIONS  
TO SPAIN ON THEIR  
WIN



# HIBISCUS COLUMN

**T**here are not many sports in which you can enter a national championship with no qualifying competitions, but croquet is one of them. Or so I believed when I took my place in the handicap singles in veterans' week (65+) at Budleigh Salterton 'Is this your first tournament?'. Several potential opponents had reviewed the handicaps: theirs hovered around +1, mine lurked on 20. They asked the question with welcoming smiles that did not say it all. Behind them, emotions ranged from disdain to resignation. Playing a hibiscus was not what they were there for. I was there because people told me that Budleigh was an unmissable. How right they were. 11 courts raised up above the sea, patches of deep blue horizon glimpsed between encircling trees. I know it can be brutal in wind and wet but this was a week from heaven. I was very glad I'd come. So was my first opponent, far from his London home and out to win. He negotiated a flawless four ball break from the off to the flag. I no longer watch such feats with bemusement, more with envy tinged with rage at my inability to complete my own. When it was my turn, I used bisques (badly) and made progress (slowly), eventually running down the clock so there was no pegging out. Not a

humiliation, no hint of victory either. Given the nature of the championship, the group verdict on Budleigh as a coffin dodger's town was somewhat ironic. As a guest of my cousin, I wasn't there to test the nightlife but tales of red wine splashed liberally over white fabric and a lady with beautiful eyes who might or might not be tempted to date the competitor from Lincolnshire suggested fun to be had. As the winners progressed on the knockout grid, the rest of us engaged in Egyptian consolation games against rivals with similar handicaps. Shamefully, I failed to research the Egypt connection but, with nothing to play for, the matches were significantly more relaxing than sightseeing in Luxor on a boiling June afternoon. Even so, my position at the bottom of the food chain was soon to be exposed. I missed a roquet - we all do. David Wise missed his. 'You're making us all silly', he said with acrimony. He was not my opponent - we were double banked - but he is Australian. No homebased player has ever been so crass as to blame me for his own mistakes; thankfully Antipodeans on six week tours of English tournaments are rare. At the end, I was accused of banditry. If only it had been him I beat... Not a coffin dodger in sight when I joined the Blewbury team for the handicap

league match against Oxford University. Their courts are set in a corner of the Parks near South Gate in the shade of venerable trees. Harry had just completed his finals in Greats, but lack of practice time didn't put him off his stroke for long enough. A very enjoyable match: a tight loss for me and ultimately a rare draw for Blewbury. Bravo, Steve and David. Thank you, Ian, for hosting that splendid lunch at Brown's Brasserie. Seafood washed down with chilled lager in effective air conditioning: what's not to love about the civilised ways of ancient institutions. There were further insights into gracious living at Phyllis Court, the exclusive club on the banks of the Thames at Henley where my mother played tennis between World Wars. I'm sure she'd still feel totally at home today. Green keeping have done an amazing job: the courts are smooth as velvet, unwaveringly true. That suited Roger, a GC -2 who has recently adopted AC and my opponent for the next element in my League learning curve. No matter how far apart I left the balls, he hit in straight as an arrow. I can't say I didn't wish he'd miss a few. Then again, if lose I must, let it be to Roger, a man who combines a hawk's eye with a winning sense of humour.

## ! Minty Clinch

# TUNNEL OF TIME

<https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=ca/gazette&Action=Issues> where past Gazettes can be found on the CA website. Currently there are scans of the Gazette back to Issue 154 from December 1979. The intention is to place all the Gazettes from 1953, when the current numbering system started, on the CA website.

## 20 YEARS AGO

The front cover of the September 2002 Gazette (#281) contained a photo of the CA's new office at Cheltenham which had recently been completed. The issue contains a long article by the late Bob Alman reporting on the newly completed National Croquet Centre in West Palm Beach, Florida. In the article Bob explains how the British-born architect, Digby Bridges, explicitly modelled the club house on Hurlingham.

## 25 YEARS AGO

The September 1997 Gazette (#251) reported that "John Jaques, manufacturers of the Eclipse ball, suffered a fire three months ago which unfortunately destroyed not only stocks of the ball, but also the machinery used to create them. After lengthy consideration Jaques have decided not to pursue production of the Eclipse ball, by attempting to replace such machinery, but will instead be replacing the Eclipse with their own solid one piece ball".

## 65 YEARS AGO

In the August 1957 Gazette (#27) NEW VARIATION: The attention of Associates is called to the fact that a new form of shortened games is to be given an extensive trial during the forthcoming season, in which each ball will start at the fifth hoop. In order to give this experiment a thorough try-out for all classes of players the Council has decided it will be played in the following C.A. events.  
August - Challenge Cups and Doubles (not Gilbey Cups).  
October - Devonshire Park, Men's and Women's Open Singles, Restricted Handicap Singles and Handicap Doubles.

## 70 YEARS AGO

September 1952 Gazette (#6) EDITORIAL NOTES: Regarding Doubles - Though Open and Handicap Doubles have figured on Tournament Programmes for many years - and, indeed, have generally been a very enjoyable event both for players and spectators - recently Doubles have too often deteriorated into long and drawn-out competitions from which neither the players, it would seem,

nor the spectators - and certainly not the managers - can derive much pleasure. Open Doubles, where, more than likely, each of the players are of low handicap and of long experience, are certainly not exempt from the complaint of being long drawn out; and this because, though each player ought to know enough about the game to be left alone, each partner seems to find it necessary to go on the court and tell her or him all about it. No doubt, for this reason, it has been found necessary in the Doubles Championship, which for many years - and as recently as 1949 - was always decided by the best of three games in the final, to restrict it to a single game. Though more singles take considerably longer than they used to before 1939, there is not the same obvious reason for this where the player is unaccompanied, and gets along as best he can without constant advice from a partner. Do we suffer from slower cerebration, or is there some other retarding cause from which players are exempt?

## ! Chris Williams, CA Archivist



The Croquet Association  
Issue 398 | August 2022



Front cover:  
**PHOTOGRAPH**  
Alex McIntyre retained the Sage Bowl at the Nottingham B Level Weekend

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# WELCOME



**A**s the summer heats up, so too has the on-court action. Tournament reports are flying in from all directions. The CA website is full of results from the year-long competitions and the shining stars of the season are beginning to emerge. With only limited space available in our bi-monthly publication, we often only report on the Championships and those dominating the top of the rankings. But believe me, there are many star players out there winning their ever so important games, using sheer determination to clinch their league match victory for the

team, or maybe sneaking a win in that all important Club Handicap Championship. Perhaps this is a good time to remind everyone of the existence of the most improved player awards which are presented by the CA every year. The call for nominations will be published in a couple of months. So keep your eyes peeled for the players dominating the club tables, the improvers who just keep learning and the high handicappers who just won't give in until their index brings them into single figures.

**| CA Editorial Team**

## NOTICE OF THE AGM

**T**he Annual General Meeting of the Croquet Association will take place via Zoom on Saturday 15 October 2022, commencing at 10am. The agenda (subject to any further amendment) will be as follows:

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 October 2021 and matters arising.
3. Annual Report from the Council (to be presented by Samir Patel, Chairman of the Council).
4. Annual Report from the Executive Board (to be presented by Beatrice McGlen, Chairman of the Board).
5. Report by the Honorary Treasurer (Ian Burridge) and approval of the Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2021.
6. Report by the Honorary Secretary

- (John Reddish).
7. The election of the President (Patricia Duke-Cox).
8. The election of the Honorary Secretary (John Reddish).
9. The election of the Honorary Treasurer (Ian Burridge).
10. The motion to elect Dr Ian Vincent as a Vice-President of the Association.
11. Appointment of the Independent Examiner.
12. Announcement of the awards for the most improved players.
13. Announcement of the Coach of the Year Award.
14. Announcement of the awards of CA Diplomas.
15. Any other business.
16. Retiring President's closing remarks.



# CHAIRMAN OF THE CA COUNCIL

**T**he realities of publishing deadlines mean that as I write this voting on the topic of the CA's future legal status is underway. But I can't encourage you to vote because by the time you read this the result of the Special General Meeting will be known.

On court, it is reassuring to see a gradual return to competitive play as we recognise it. The AC Open Championships are under way, and it was great to see – for the first time since 2019 – players from around the world travelling to be part of it. The 'annual' (i.e. for the first time since 2019) England v Spain GC match took place earlier last month – there is a detailed report in this issue so I won't spoil the result for those who don't know.

Back to CA business, The Opening Doors competition has concluded. It is great to hear about some of the initiatives underway in clubs across the country to attract a wider audience to croquet – I hope your club will be inspired to adopt some of the ideas. We are also working to increase the attractiveness of our sport to younger people. Key to this is appointment of a Next Generation Development Officer, and I encourage everyone to give Hope Bourton your support as she takes on this role.

**Samir Patel**  
Chairman of Council



## SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2023

**I**ndividual subscription rates have remained unchanged since 2018 and club subscriptions since 2020. It has been decided to increase rates for 2023 in order to offset rising costs and to provide additional funding for the organisation's activities. The new rates are shown in the tables..

**Ian Burrige**  
Hon. Treasurer

Individual Members' Subscriptions				
Category	With Paper Gazette		Paperless	
	Full	Direct Debit	Full	Direct Debit
Premium	£45.50	£40	£38.50	£33
Premium (first year)	£20	-	-	-
Supporter	£25	£19.50	£18	£12.50
Overseas (includes EU)	£50	£44.50	£43	£37.50
Under 25 Premium	£16	£16	£9	£9
Garden	£10	-	-	-

Club Subscriptions				
<i>As before, only primary club members need be counted when calculating the amount due</i>				
	adult per-capita rate		young persons' per-capita rate	
Normal	£15.50		£5	
Discounted	£10		£5	
New clubs	Year 1: Fixed at £60	Year 2: Capped at £90	Year 3: Capped at £120	with a minimum of £60 throughout
Affiliate clubs			£50	
Educational bodies			£40	



# ANOTHER FAMOUS CROQUET PLAYER

**T**homas Halliday is a 32-year-old croquet player and author of the Sunday Times Bestseller *Otherlands*. He plays at Enfield, is an unseasoned Scottish International, and winner of the 2018 All-England Handicap in AC. But why croquet? We asked Thomas what made him choose croquet as his sport, what inspired a young author to turn to the hoops and clips for their sporting kicks?

It remains the tensest sporting experience of my life. Time expired, watching my partner crawl through two hoops to take a lead for the first time, and splitting our opponents' balls to the far reaches of the lawn with a confident nod. Then, our opponents brought drama. The perfect roquet, near enough corner to corner, scarcely believable to our amateur eyes. The split shot, rush, and simple croquet to set up a three-ball break and a hoop attempt from only a metre out. My mallet was over my shoulders like a yoke, my partner was crouching behind his, and we could hardly look. When the ball jarred in the hoop, when we knew we had done just enough, when we had made the final. That's when I was hooked. That we were comprehensively routed in the final hardly matters. I'd learnt that what had been a fun distraction from undergraduate exams could be a serious competitive game. The trouble, as ever, is that life gets in the way. For a young would-be player, there are barriers to entry. Most obvious are the issues of money and time. For a long time, as a graduate student on a minimal stipend, I simply could not afford to join a club, enter tournaments, or buy a mallet, and I lived too far from clubs to make it worth the travel. For the next eight years after that final, I did not play at all. Eventually, with luck, those who want

to play will find themselves in a better position to do so. In 2018, we moved to Enfield, and so I got in touch with the local club. Every year, Enfield Croquet Club advertises a free introductory course throughout April. I had never heard of GC before joining, but took it up in earnest along with rekindling my AC. By this point, I was a research fellow at the University of Birmingham, splitting my week between my office in Birmingham and flexibly working from home in Enfield. After a few months, I also joined Edgbaston Croquet Club, which hold special weekday evening sessions intended for working members. I found myself playing AC at Edgbaston on Tuesday evenings and GC at Enfield on Thursday mornings. With the support and informal coaching of Edgbaston and Enfield members, I was able to improve rapidly in both codes, winning the AC All-England Handicap in 2018, and being the Scottish Croquet Association's most improved player in AC (2019) and GC (2021). I played for Enfield in the EACF's leagues, and in 2021, squeaked my way onto the Scotland team as a late replacement for the recent GC World Team Championships in Cadiz. I have loved every minute so far, and look forward to playing for the next fifty years. Why, then, would a younger person take up or return to croquet? Although I am now better at GC, my perhaps controversial instinct is that AC is the better game to attract younger players. There exist, in every school around the country, girls and boys who are more mathematical than sporty, children who find joy in logic puzzles and problem solving. For such children, AC is an enticing puzzle, and one which emerges even at the level of the complete beginner. By comparison,

the more interesting positional puzzles in GC emerge only at higher skill levels, where blocks, jumps, and long clearances become both opportunities and threats. There is an intrinsically nerdy side to our sport, and one that we would do well to exploit. For many, university is the first place we encountered croquet, and though Ian Plummer's success at Oxford demonstrates the possibilities, it shouldn't be solely an Oxbridge phenomenon. At the University of Birmingham, I briefly managed to get a croquet club approved, and ran a try-out session at Edgbaston, but societies require active student management, and the pandemic halted what initial momentum there was. At Enfield, without a nearby institution of tertiary education, we are endeavouring to build a relationship with local schools. Time will tell whether this strategy bears any fruit.

Often, I see croquet promoted as a great way of keeping fit, for getting out of the house, and for meeting new people. None of these is a reason for a typical twenty-something to play croquet, at a time in life when more intense exercise is possible, and where socialising and work both provide wider horizons and contact with other people. Even so, I spent eight years finding a way to return to croquet. Why? I did so for the thrill of success, the teamwork, the reward of improvement, and the puzzle of play, whether from break-building or working out the perfect angle for an in-off. It's a way of being in the sunshine, amongst greenery, a zen respite from the stresses of life. Instill those experiences early, which may only need a single unforgettable moment, and the players will find a way back.

**| Thomas Halliday**



**PHOTOGRAPHS** (left to right) **John Halliday**: World Team Championships in Cadiz in front of the clubhouse at Vista Hermosa; Stephen Wright and I (in blue) are debating what to do in our match against Wales' Ian Burridge and Mike Parry. **Charlotte Halliday**: Pembroke 1st team having just lost the final of the intercollegiate tournament in 2010.



# DO BECKFORD CROQUET CLUB HAVE THE BEST CAKES?

**A** recent article in the Daily Star has drawn to our attention that Mary Berry and husband Paul Hunnings have taken up croquet, joining Beckford Croquet Club. Both are having weekly lessons and becoming quite competitive. Mary said of croquet “I can’t tell you what pleasure it gives me. It is a terrific game”. But what we would like to know is, does Mary bake cakes for this two lawn gem in the Cotswolds and if she does, then perhaps a tournament is called for, as Mary Berry cooking could pull in a great turn out from the croquet playing world. Indeed following this article Mary and Paul may well be offered complimentary membership of many tournament hosting clubs across the country. But we wish them well as they grapple with the intricacies of our most enjoyable sport. Let’s hope they bake to it like ducks to water without cracking any pegs.



**Paul Hetherington**  
CA Marketing Director

## CROQUET TWINS

**I**t all began with a request “could someone talk about croquet?”. This to an audience at Basingstoke Discovery Centre (aka Library) on the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the publication of Alice in Wonderland in 1915. (The Dodgson family were keen croquet players). I drew the short straw and wondered how on earth I could explain AC to an audience who had never seen a croquet court, not to mention playing the game! The answer was a short video: simples! Then I realised that for our Club members with no great aspirations to croquet excellence a series of videos might help them to understand more about the game and the rules. They were never going to go on a course or even ask for coaching help: a video they can watch at home in private might be useful. So I made a series of 6 modules on Playing GC and put them on our website: [www.basingstokecroquet.co.uk](http://www.basingstokecroquet.co.uk). I was a bit surprised when I started getting messages from people I’d never heard of saying how much they’d enjoyed them. Even more so as many such people were in far-away countries – such is the power of the web. The original series was replaced when the GC rules changed in 2019 and an update is on the cards. I’ve also made a series on AC as well. Pre-pandemic, I ran a little week-long tour each year for Basingstoke members to a part of the country we wouldn’t normally visit for matches: basically a Club a day



**PHOTOGRAPH**  
Olivia Gurtata and Tim Ekelund found great joy in playing golf croquet

for four or five days with gentle, friendly croquet. I invited people from Borås Croquet Club in Sweden to join us in East Kent in 2018 and Somerset in 2019 - three or four people came over and greatly enjoyed the experience of playing on fast lawns with, or against, friendly opponents. And so the idea of “Twin Clubs” was formed. By chance another “video contact” from Australia happened to be visiting Basingstoke and we agreed a further twinning arrangement with Cooloom Croquet Club on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland. Our Swedish friends were here again in the first week of July and had an intensive programme of croquet with local Clubs and visits to places of interest. This

culminated in a meal in a local hostelry with two groups of Morris dancers performing – that really blew their minds! But a look at their website (put Borås Krocketsällskap into Google with English translation) shows great imagination and drive in promoting croquet that perhaps we can all learn from.

**I Ian Harrison**



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# FULL REPORT OXFORD CROQUET CUPPERS 2022



PHOTOGRAPHS  
Ian Plummer:  
Brasenose  
cuppers finalists:  
Gaby Ford, Chris  
Summers,  
Ben Rienecker,  
Josh Taylor,  
Inigo De La Joya,  
Dan Millard,  
Greg Simond,  
Tom Mewes

**B**efore Covid, Oxford's inter-college association croquet competition ('croquet cuppers') was regularly the largest sporting event in the university and (so far as I can tell) the largest single croquet tournament in the world. With a nine-round knockout bracket for 512 four-person teams, the maximum capacity is 2048 players, including seasoned players and absolute beginners alike.

Yet, the last time a competition of this scope could be attempted was 2019! Due to the pandemic, there was no competition in 2020 and a mere 32-team competition in 2021. It was thus absolutely terrific to be able to have cuppers attempting to return to its former glory. While lacking two years' word-of-mouth advertising, we nevertheless managed to gather together the 200 keenest teams for a substantial competition for 800 participants running over 8 weeks and in all the colleges.

As usual, there was a plethora of confused and diverse 'house rules' being imported into some of the early games, which needed early ironing out. To help with this, the OUACC committee ran a demonstration match and eight large beginners' coaching sessions for anyone who turned up, generally around 30 a session. This coaching took players all the way from the basics of single ball strokes to how to play a four ball (or even three ball) break.

Many beginners really took to the game, and the standard of cuppers games improved rapidly. We were also thrilled that, as intended, cuppers, the demo match, and the beginners' sessions all helped to boost membership of the club, where it is possible to get even more involved in association croquet and to improve rapidly.

As mentioned, there was a great deal of variety in the skill and tactical knowledge of the tournament entrants. A particular challenge, especially for the most experienced players, was navigating the unpredictable terrain of the terrible college croquet lawns. Nevertheless, the play improved rapidly as the tournament went on, and so did the lawns, with the final and semi-finals (and optionally the quarter-finals) being played on the full-sized university lawns with more sturdy hoops. At this stage, the most practiced teams started getting the clearest upper hand.

And so, we reached the final. The weather was sweltering, relieved only by a gentle and occasional breeze. Nevertheless, both teams were down in good time to warm up and discover that the lawns were faster than anything they had played before, rewarding precision and confident rushes.

Curiously, the final ended up being between two Brasenose College teams. This can be placed down to a variety of factors: in part was the problem that many colleges had croquet participation hamstrung by Covid-related marquees being deposited on their poor lawns (a fate which Brasenose partly escaped), but the most important factor was the strong croquet culture engendered in the college by last year's OUACC president. It is a useful reminder of how successful cuppers can be at encouraging croquet, by starting at the college level and working up.

The Brasenose-Brasenose nature of the final was initially disappointing to the event organisers, as we worried that there would be fewer spectators. However, this worry was soon proved foolish as large numbers of supportive Brasenose college members and their friends came down to drink Pimm's in the sun (or, at least, in the dappled shade once the heat grew intolerable) and cheer on one or other of the teams.

The teams played doubles matches, the better players on our upper lawn and the second pairs on the lower. Unlike teams from earlier in the tournament, who had shot for the first hoop or played 'Aunt Emma' tactics, the finalists immediately showed that they knew what they were doing, with both games settling swiftly into a standard opening with the first ball to the East boundary and the second as a tice on the West.

Both games had a sputtering start, with all players feeling the pressure of the final and the spectators and so missed some easy hoop runs. However, the four players of the Brasenose team that would go on to win clearly had the advantage of being able to build and maintain breaks more reliably, as well as a little more defensive savvy (e.g. pairing up on boundaries, shooting straight through opponents when unwisely paired in the middle of the lawn). This tactical prowess, picked up through coaching and diligent practice, ultimately paid dividends with victory on both lawns.

*Continued on Page 9*



# A NEW START FOR NORTHAMPTON

**N**orthampton Croquet Club was established in 1986 on an underused bowls green in Becketts Park, Northampton. After a few years the club moved to occupy 2 lawns in the grounds of a local psychiatric hospital, St Andrews. Over its 30-year tenure at St. Andrews the club grew to have 4 lawns and a membership of over 60, supporting the CA's A, B and C level GC competitions and various AC competitions as well as taking part in the Federation (EACF) leagues in both croquet codes. In 2021 the Club began the development of an unused piece of land as a new home. The land will ultimately support 4 full size lawns. In order to make a start the Club sought funding assistance to develop the first 2 lawns.

## Why did we move home?

Just before Covid hit, the Club's landlord gave them notice to quit so that they could re-develop the land they occupied. The Club then researched over 100 sites within Northamptonshire. They found 3 that looked to be the most viable and finally ended up progressing an unused piece of land in the village of Roade, 5 miles south of Northampton and 12 miles north of Milton Keynes on the A508.

## First Steps

To assess the extent of the work needed to prepare 2 level lawns of a good competition standard the Club consulted a lawn care expert and thus identified the development steps needed to accomplish their goals. One of the Club members, a retired surveyor with access to equipment to profile the area, was engaged to produce a contour map which to offer to likely contractors to establish a reasonable estimate for the levelling work required. The Club then sought quotes from developers with the necessary attributes. Articles in the Gazette from clubs who had used such resources allowed the Club to compile a list of likely developers. The quotes received were not significantly different. The Club undertook background checks by contacting those who had used these services in recent times. It became apparent that the funding needed was not insignificant. The Club gave themselves the autumn/winter of 2021 to raise the money.

## Funding

From the quotations received the Club set their funding goal at £30,000. They reviewed various approaches but found that many funders were focussed on financially assisting sports clubs returning to play post-Covid, with little money available for new developments. However, they applied to the Croquet Association for assistance and at the same time reviewed the Crowdfunder approach that Nottingham Croquet Club had used successfully to support their recent development. The Crowdfunder appeal and the application to the CA were both successful. The Crowdfunder campaign raised over £22,000 with most of the supporters coming from the croquet community. The Club wishes to give "a big thank-you" to all reading this who supported them. The CA offered a grant of £5,000. The CA requirement for a business plan to accompany the Club's grant request proved invaluable in considering the risks associated with the project and how they might be mitigated.

## The Work

The work started and was completed within 4-6 weeks in the Spring. As expected, there were delays due to Covid and related supplier issues. However, the work is now complete. The deviation in level across a 61m x 35m area (plenty of room for lawn movement between seasons) is currently a few centimetres. The Club expect some further settlement but they have plenty of residual topsoil that they can use appropriately to infill any such areas. The new grass has germinated well with no bare patches. The next aspect of the project is also underway. The Club is having water installed to the site primarily for lawn care but also to make those all important cups of tea.

## Lessons Learned

1. Knowing the scale of the job is essential and the early engagement of a lawn care professional was useful, especially when the Club could specify the seed rather than take what was on offer.
2. The land profiling enabled more accurate information to be supplied to contractors and thence to more refined quotes.
3. Project managing lawn development

without the requisite experience is very risky and potentially money down the drain.

4. Preparation of a business plan is not only a requirement for many grants but assists in understanding and preparing mitigations of the project risks especially where large sums of money are involved.
5. Publicising your requirements to the croquet community is invaluable, both to solicit their experiences and their broader support. By gathering many supporters the Club was able to demonstrate the wider impact of their project. They are grateful to the CA and the new e-mail bulletin for drawing the community's attention to their plight and plans. The hardest people to bring on board were the Club's own members. To this day some are still sceptical that they can progress to be a 4-lawn club with all the associated amenities.
6. The vast experience of other clubs in both lawn preparation and care as well as fundraising should not to be overlooked. The Club is especially grateful to Nottingham CC for their support.
7. Perhaps the most important lesson is not to lose heart when the demands of the paperwork or reticence of members seems strongest.

## Paul Chard Northampton CC



**PHOTOGRAPH** Removal of all the topsoil to get to the subsoil layer. All material moved was stored for re-use.



**PHOTOGRAPH** The topsoil (but not that containing any previous vegetative matter) was then added back maintaining the level surface. Appropriate grass seed sown to complete this phase.

All in all, the competition was a great success, excellently reminding us of how well suited cuppers can be at getting people into association croquet. To name just one example, four of the finalists went on to join the university team and win some of their games in this year's varsity match against Cambridge. Special thanks must go to those who made the event possible. The cuppers director, Will Allfrey, masterfully juggled the hundreds of disorganised players without breaking sweat, and our club coach, Ian Plummer, volunteered to run countless

coaching sessions to improve the standard of the tournament. We must also thank our sponsors who provided the treasure trove of rewards for the winners (and a bottle or two for the runners up): the Oxford Wine Company, the Oxford Artisan Distillery, and the Croquet Association. The Croquet Association has been, as always, particularly supportive and we are always keen to work together and encourage student croquet (both to find young players, and older players who will rediscover the game later in their lives).

## BURY CC TAKE PART IN RADCLIFFE FC COMMUNITY

**A**s part of Bury Croquet Club's Diversity & Inclusivity programme, the club was involved in a community action day held on 26 May 2022 at Radcliffe Football club, and organised by Growing Together Radcliffe linked with Greater Manchester Police Operation Avro. The event was opened by the High Sheriff of Greater Manchester and the police helicopter landed on the near by school playing fields, it focused on knife crime issues and recent fund raising activities to facilitate siting of bleed boxes around the borough. A number of local community groups were involved with stands inside and Bury CC along with Bury Broncos & Salford Reds rugby league teams & Radcliffe FC outside sports activities. Whilst the playing surface was not ideal for croquet we made the best of it, and it did not detract from the enjoyment of a number of participants. These included the Broncos & The Reds having a go. The game proved particularly popular with the large police contingent present as part of Operation Avro community involvement. A number of officers took part and things became very competitive - so much so that a challenge match has been arranged between Bury CC and GM Police on 9 June! On subsequent social media we were described as a very popular sport, and a police officer described us as the highlight of the event. The club was represented and instructed by Vi Richards, Richard Harvey & Roy Spencer.

**Roy Spencer, Chairman  
Bury Croquet Club**



**PHOTOGRAPH** Members of GMP and Salford Reds & Bury Broncos trying out croquet

## HARROGATE MS GROUP



**H**arrogate MS group came to Ripon Spa Croquet Club to try their hand at croquet. Everyone enjoyed the morning and were thrilled to be able to play some games too. Club coaches Ted Flexman and Roger l'Anson organised a series of fun practices and games for all participants and there was lots of laughter, shrieks and cheering when hoops were run. The morning finished with cakes and coffee... a perfect end to a lovely morning.

Andrea Widdison, who is a member of both Harrogate MS group and Ripon Spa croquet club was keen to show the group that it's possible to play if you have Multiple Sclerosis. She plays in B level GC competitions. Originally a tennis and table tennis player, after her diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis she thought she would have to give up competitive sport but then discovered she was able to play croquet.

Croquet is a very accessible sport, especially as its played on a flat surface which is great for people in wheelchairs or those with mobility issues. If you are a walking stick user than your mallet becomes your stick to help you walk and balance.

Apart from the obvious lack of mobility and balance, MS does make you very fatigued and some of the group thought it would be a good idea if someone could invent a mallet handle that could convert into a shooting stick so everyone could sit down on the lawn between shots! Any inventors out there up for the challenge?!?!





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## OPENING DOORS ON CROQUET COMPETITION

**W**ith a share of £3,000 up for grabs in our “Opening Doors on Croquet” competition the judging panel hoped to be overwhelmed with entries from clubs and to be faced with a mountain of great ideas to sift through. But to our surprise, and disappointment, only eight clubs submitted an entry, each making a bid for up to £500 in prize money. The aim of the competition was to support new initiatives to welcome new members, especially those that that will attract people from diverse groups within a club’s community. After careful deliberation by the panel six of the entries were chosen to receive a prize, which is immediately available to the winning clubs. The winners are:  
Bury Croquet Club: Introducing indoor croquet to Outreach Community Services in Radcliffe (the area in which their club is based).  
Ealing Croquet Club: Promoting “pay and play” sessions to raise awareness of croquet among the surrounding community and to attract new members.  
Edgbaston Croquet Club: Creating Saturday morning sessions for young people with a particular focus on the Guiding community.  
Penrith and North Lakes Croquet Club: Promoting and arranging focussed taster sessions for the local community.  
Sydenham Croquet Club: Promoting and arranging focussed taster sessions for the local community.  
Woodhall Spa Croquet Club: Purchase of specialist equipment and promotional material to promote croquet in local schools. Watch out for articles from each of these clubs in future editions of the Gazette or e-newsletter describing their project and setting out what they have achieved and learned.

**Paul Brown**  
Chair of the Judging Panel

## CROQUET ENGLAND THE CHARITY IS COMING

The Special General meeting last month agreed that the Croquet Association would become a registered charity under the name Croquet England. Work is now underway to make these changes with a view to a smooth transition in early 2023.

# LETTERS

## STAINLESS STEEL

I rolled up (get it?) at my club the other day to be greeted with the sight of all courts festooned with shining stainless steel new Ultra hoops... where have all the white hoops gone ...long time passing. Congratulations to our committee in finding a Mortgage Broker able to strike a deal for sets of Ultra hoops!

I love ‘em... no... I really do, they are nice and firm. However there are a couple of issues...

I am a player of a certain age who needs to visit the optician on a regular basis, if I can see my way to getting there. These hoops are not easy to see, especially in murky conditions. The solution is easy-peasy, a high visibility clip-on for the top part of the hoop.

“Members of the Jury I would respectfully submit that I will more frequently use these hoops than the heroes of A Class and therefore

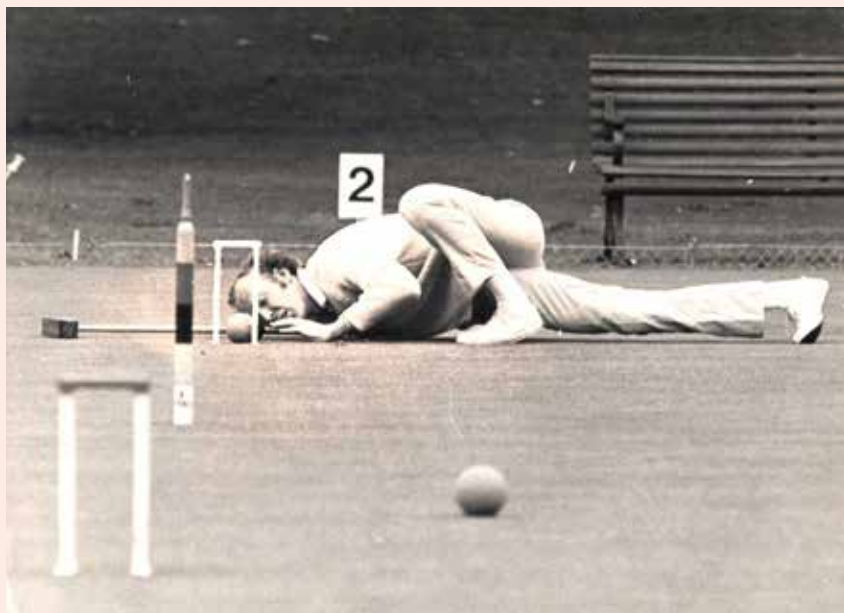
merit priority consideration”. I was speaking to one of our excellent volunteer hoop setters the other day who told me “they are a bu\*\*er! to adjust because they are so stiff”.

You know hoop setters don’t you? They arrive quietly with the Dawn Chorus...do their work and quietly leave the club to catch up with lost sleep, just as the early bird tournament players are arriving. For this we need engineering suggestions to the Editor.

So where are you now, Tal Golesworthy? Inventor of the Omega Hoop, and a valve with which he saved his own life (but that is another story). Pop down your garden to that lathe in the shed and come up with a fixture to help our hoop setters.

**Klim Seabright**  
Cheltenham Croquet Club

K A Ross lines up a shot during the croquet open championship at Hurlingham



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.



## COMPOSTABLE ECO-TOILETS

Meldreth Croquet Club is situated in the grounds of a very popular village public house, The British Queen, in Meldreth High Street. We have no access to electricity, sewerage or water but are able to use the toilets during pub opening hours. The lawn is used year round by club members and by several U3A groups in the summer months. We also play in the EACF Golf croquet league.

We are now exploring the possibility of erecting a separate outbuilding next to our clubhouse with a compostable eco-toilet which we can use when the pub facilities are unavailable. Does any club or anyone reading this email have any experience of such a set-up and can they offer any recommendations which might help our committee decide on an appropriate solution?

If you have any advice or recommendations, please contact Lin Wallbridge on email address: [rl38@myphone.coop](mailto:rl38@myphone.coop)

## THE SPECTATOR

My son came across this article in "The Spectator", 13 June 2022, which features a picture of me playing in the Open Championships at Hurlingham in 1974. The image is entitled "Getty" so I suppose they buy up interesting photos and have them available in a catalogue. For comparison I attach the original image from "The Times" and a complimentary copy of the photo which The Times sent me.

Not sure that it is of much use to the Gazette but it might be a useful addition to the croquet archives. Maybe we should send a letter to the Spectator explaining that "Keith Ross, pictured, is lining up for the penult peel during his triple, which involves taking his second ball all round whilst peeling his forward ball through its last three hoops."

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/why-the-english-love-lazy-sports>

**Dr Keith Ross**

## CRUMBLING CROQUET?

Don't get me wrong, I like to win and still do so occasionally. I think however I have got to a stage where I want more from my chosen sport than lifting the odd trophy. I should explain that I have reached the age that I would qualify for whatever comes after "Veterans" (Pre Peg Out?). I also think I now lack the concentration needed to compete with the "big persons".

I do have something of a sporting pedigree in that I captained the school cricket XI and was one of the only two state school boys to play in the Gloucestershire Schools team.

I also captained the school rugby XV when a scrum half could be 8st 8lbs "wringing wet" as my MIL\* was wont to say. I doubt that Dicky Jeeps would have the muscle weight to make it onto a modern England side?

Some of those who play AC will be familiar with the term "Sitting Out" and I seem to do more of this as the years advance. "Take up GC" I hear you say... at least I would hear you say that if I remembered to pack a spare set of hearing aid batteries. But then the knee joints would suffer with RSI wouldn't they?

Concentration is a different matter, but I compensate for this. At Sidmouth I quite enjoy waiting to see that Seagull stoop on the ice cream of the unsuspecting holiday maker walking in Station Road. I look forward to some of the best croquet bird watching at Blewbury. The rowers in training for Henley Regatta are a sight to behold. At Edgbaston I could probably nip to the Botanical Garden next door and return in time to see my opponent peg out, without them even knowing I had gone AWOL. I could spend hours admiring the neat line of conifers and the odd Oyster Catcher practicing "circuit and bumps" at Hunstanton.

So I will content myself by knowing that I will gain the occasional win but also spend time in the fresh air, exercising the brain (probably saving precious NHS resources) among some of the most pleasant surroundings which our sport can provide. I'll keep going for now though.

\* Mother-In-Law

**Klim Seabright**  
**Cheltenham Croquet Club**

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## THANK YOU FOR RECENT GAZETTES

I have been pleased to see the greater accent on Club level croquet rather than endless accounts of tournaments.

We used to have some good coaching advice (I think by David Mooney) which was good for average players – can I encourage more of that sort of thing? But a gripe: the most recent edition contains pages where

the text is virtually unreadable because it is either superimposed on a photograph – white on white in places! – or is in a pastel colour on plain white background (eg pp 4 & 18). It may look very sexy, but not easy for we frail and elderlies!

**Dr Ian Harrison**  
**Vice-Chairman**  
**Basingstoke Croquet Club**

## TISBURY'S FOUR DAY PLATINUM JUBILEE 'EXTRAVAGANZA'

**T**he finale of Tisbury's Four Day Platinum Jubilee 'extravaganza' was a "Mass Picnic" including a Classic Cars parade, hosted by 'Her Majesty the Queen', a person (photographed below), who has not been seen in Tisbury since her last masquerade on her Golden Jubilee celebration. 'The Queen' was not unlike Mrs Heather Wren, who played her role throughout the day with dignity and a light and humorous touch enhancing her evident charm as she smiled and waved to her loyal friends. 'Her Royal Highness' eventually teamed up with the legendary James May who was formally opening the new Tisbury Bowls and Croquet Club. James and his partner, Sarah, were on great form as they moved from the opening ceremony to demonstrate his expertise during a game of croquet on the beautifully manicured bowling-green-quality lawns. 'The Queen', looking quite sublime, then surprised all onlookers by taking up a croquet mallet and facing-off James before handing him her handbag and knocking her ball straight through the hoop, followed by silence then tumultuous applause and broad smiles everywhere!

The day was an immense success and was attended by huge crowds who, somewhat unexpectedly, were able to enjoy a riotous outside picnic on a table for 120 guests, untroubled by rain (which arrived moments after closing time, too late to dampen the spirits as it fell in torrents!).

**David Morley**

**PHOTOGRAPHS** James May partnering Casper Robinson en route for victory! James May opening the Club with David Morley; Swapped her walking stick for a mallet and gave her handbag to James May!



## BURY CROQUET CLUB HOST QUEEN'S JUBILEE CUP



**PHOTOGRAPHS** The 22 participants with Cllr. Shahbaz Arif; Trophy Winners & Runners up

**A**s part of a Community Cohesion development, Bury Croquet Club hosted an inaugural friendly croquet tournament for the Queen's Jubilee Bury Croquet Cup at Whitehead Park. The event was attended by Bury Council, Community Hub Managers, Community Engagement Champions who played against members of Bury Veterans Hub. Also in attendance were local ward councillors Dene Vernon, Jackie Harris & Shahbaz Arif.

Most of the competitors, many of whom had not played croquet before, quickly grasped the rudiments of the game and some competitive and close play took place. The trophy was in the end lifted by The Veterans team following a penalty shoot out. Cllr Richard Gold, cabinet member for finance and communities, said: "We were delighted to help organise this event, giving people a chance to learn a new sport and get out into the fresh air. Well done to the veterans, who fittingly lifted the trophy on the Queen's jubilee!"

Croquet Club Chairman Roy Spencer commented that the club is pleased to have worked in conjunction with Council Community team to organise this event, as it fits nicely with our "Opening Doors to Croquet" initiative. Pleased to say it was a successful well attended event which introduced croquet to a number of people who would never previously considered playing – which is the prime aim of the programme, and a number of the visitors have expressed an interest in taster sessions and visiting again. Thanks are due to a number of the club members who assisted.

**Roy Spencer, Chairman  
Bury Croquet Club, EE CUP**

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PROUDLY BRITISH

# THIRTY, NOT OUT!

**2** 022 dawned as the year our croquet club, Huddersfield, would be 30 years old.

We decided to celebrate and hold 30 events in our playing season. The height of our celebrations would be a croquetathon when we would play croquet continuously for 30 hours and raise funds for the British Heart Foundation. We decided on the dates in mid June so that there would be a full moon and near the summer solstice; we would play continuous golf croquet. We play on a crown bowling green in one of our local parks. Yes, they said, you can play on those dates but not overnight. ( The park gates are locked at 10.00pm). Brainwave; one of our members has a field next to his home and he agreed we could play all night there. So, we will play 10.00 to 22.00 in the park, 22.00 to 08.00



in Patrick's field and 10.00 to 16.00 in the park. ( Mobile phones to be used to check all were in the correct place and playing when they should be.)We bought two rechargeable LED work lights, which when mounted on poles, provided lighting at night, combined with light sticks on the top of hoops.

We wanted folk to join us because we only had 8 members to play; we decided to encourage the public to book slots on Eventbrite and donate to BHF. As the dates approached we had few bookings but high hopes of the public deciding to donate and play on the days. Why did I worry? Friday 17 June dawned warm with a hot weather warning. Councillor Cahal Burke, Deputy Mayor of Kirklees, played the first ball and scored hoop one. All our club members, both playing and social, and 8 new members



all rallied round. Folk who had been members years ago and croqueting friends from around the UK came along; 31 people joined us in all over the 2 days. Saturday dawned bright and dry but the thermostat had gone to an arctic 12C. Yorkshire Federation President, Eugene Chang played all morning on Saturday, as did Colin Rogers from East Fife. Anna Giraud, our long-time founder member, had devised a method to record hoops scored - 521 in total. Blue and Black scored 277 hoops, and blue scored the most hoops - 148. At the time of writing we have raised £965 for the British Heart Foundation. 30 hours of fun, friendship and CROQUET. What more can you ask?

**Rena Souten**  
Secretary, Huddersfield Croquet Club



## It's all in the detail

Natural turf sports surfaces come in many different forms. There are many types of grasses to suit all of these various circumstances. There are even more variations on what you will see if you dig down and look at the soil profile of what the grasses are growing in. In very many cases, that will be the natural soil that was there and in the same form it was before someone decided to put a sports pitch onto it. But a good sports turf agronomist understands the things about that profile that make for the most appropriate surface, and the healthiest grass growth, for whatever sport they are dealing with. They will also know the things to do to improve the situation if it needs it. This might mean installing drainage of an appropriate type, top dressing, fertilising etc, all of the tools available to grounds staff and sports turf contractors. There is a way of installing what

we at Agrostis consider to be the ideal method for growing healthy and vigorous sports turf. This was developed originally for golf greens but we have utilised this for very many types of sport, from croquet to rugby, with tremendous success. Of course, grass selection varies with the sport and location, and the maintenance requirements differ very widely, but the profile, down to around 18 inches, is identical in each case. Jubilee Seeds are able to advise you on what grass species would be best

suiting to your soil profile and your desired finished pitch. So, if you want the 'best' croquet lawn, we would always recommend this method of construction. You need irrigation facilities to water what is a very sandy and free-draining profile, but with that in place you can put such a lawn just about anywhere, provided you get the sunshine! **For guidance on croquet lawn maintenance and construction talk to the experts at Agrostis. T: 01359 259361 E: info@agrostis.co.uk www.agrostis.co.uk.** **For guidance on the perfect croquet lawn seed mix talk to the experts at Jubilee Seeds & Turf. T: 01531 825 299 E: sales@jubileeseeds.co.uk www.jubileeseeds.co.uk**





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# NOTTINGHAM SAGE BOWL B LEVEL 29-30 MAY

**A**lex McIntyre retained the Sage Bowl at the Nottingham B Level Weekend. Keeping with tradition Alex wore the Sage woven Crown in consecutive years having beaten Alan Clark in a, somewhat one sided, final on Sunday afternoon. The semis were much more fiercely contested between North London friends Gary Bennett and Alan and the local lads Alex and Mike Hedge. Both pretty much finished just in time or on time. It was therefore decided that the final would be a single game only. Alex certainly proved his point of not getting the trophy engraved last year. With a handicap range from 0 – 7 the weekend threw up quite a few surprise results. None more so than Alan Clark's who beat players with much better handicaps to reach the final. Other notable performers were Anthony Hardwick (Blewbury) and Peter Hanley (Nottingham). Luckily for the other 21 players, all three received deserved handicap reductions by the end of Sunday's play. Nottingham provided almost half of the 24 capacity entrants, 6 of their 9 superb lawns, well set but fair hoops, 2 generous clubhouses and a picturesque setting. The new West lawns were particularly impressive with many players opting, where possible, to play on them. A far cry from previous years where players were reluctantly told 'you're next game is on the other side'. All players appeared to leave happy, well fed and better for the experience. Personally, having had a 2 year absence from Association Croquet it is good to see it thriving, or at least it is at Nottingham.

**I Richard White**



# OVER 50s, HUNSTANTON 3-5 JUNE

**A** full entry of twenty gathered for this sociable tournament on Hunstanton's five wonderful lawns, managed in inimitable style by Celia Pearce. This event is always a coming together of friends old and new. It attracts locals and visitors from afar, keen to sample the resort's own very special flavour. One such was the eventual winner, after a thrilling double encounter in the last two games which determined who would take away the splendid Jane Neville-Rolfe salver which holds names dating back to 1988. The scoring of the tournament is run on the Hands-Irwin Egyptian system which basically means that everyone begins with 100 points and increases their tally with wins and vice versa for losses. If you beat someone with a higher tally you accrue more points so you never really know for sure who will be the victor until the final stroke has been played. In those two closing games, John Henderson was playing Gordon Mills and Charles Ostler was battling Bob Thompson. Two of the four could win the tournament depending on who beat whom. In the event Bob beat Charles and John beat Gordon (in a very close, two point finish) meaning that Bob was runner up with 144 points and John Henderson, with 146 points, took the salver home to Penrith. We give thanks for these events to all those people behind the scenes, without whom nothing would be possible. Peter, who set out the hoops every morning, Noelene for her delicious cheese scones and Janet for drawing it together and making us feel so welcome.

**I Jonathan Toye**



**PHOTOGRAPH** Presentation of the trophy by Janet Kendall to the proud winner, John Henderson

# MEN'S, WOMEN'S AND MIXED DOUBLES' CHAMPIONSHIPS

**M**anaging the Men's & Women's for the first time, I was given the most awkward entry numbers possible. 17 Men, 9 Women & 9 pairs for the mixed doubles. A big vote of thanks goes to Samir Patel for helping to sort out a format that gave people sufficient play and a fair chance of finishing the tournament.

## Wednesday

The doubles started as a 3 round strict Swiss, top 4 and ties going through to a knockout. Two wins being enough to qualify. A shock leader at the end of day 1 with John Davis and Lorna Dewar being the only unbeaten pair and 5 pairs qualified for the knockout.

## Thursday

The singles started, Draw and Process for the Women and a straight Best of 3 knockout for the Men. As always the one first round match went to three games, leaving Christian Carter waiting most of the day. He did get to play the first game of round two before close of play. The 7th and 8th seeds falling at the first opportunity, the rest of the seeds safely through to the quarters.

In the Women's there was a big first match between the top two ranked players, Gabrielle Higgins and Jenny Clarke. Gabrielle had a lot of the early play but Jenny hit in against 4back and peg, went round and pegged Gabrielle out. Gabrielle had some chances but Jenny managed to creep round with plenty of leaves and wiring, eventually winning by 4. By the end of the day, the draw was down to Jenny and Annabel McDiarmid. The one quarter final in the mixed doubles was available to be played before Christian started his singles campaign

## Friday

The process started for the women and Jenny and Annabel were drawn in the one first round game in this side, Jenny winning fairly comfortably. She then ran into Louise Bradforth who played solidly and knocked Jenny out, cheering the manager up as Jenny was looking like a major blocker. Gabrielle was through to the Process final by the end of the day and Louise was left to play Rachel Gee in the other semi final.

The other blocker, Christian, who had waited for a large part of Thursday, finished off his second round match and then played Omied in the quarters. Omied took the first, Christian equalised and the third went down to the wire, Christian edging through +3. Mark Suter beat Ian Burrige in a 5th seed v 4th seed match. Samir Patel scraped past Alain Giraud +1 in the first but more comfortably in the second. James Death overcame some resistance from Callum Johnson.

The first doubles semi final went on after tea and went all the way to time with Ian Burrige & Rachel Gee overcoming John & Lorna.

## Saturday

The remaining doubles semi final went on first with the manager hoping for a quick game between Mark & Jenny against Christian & Gabrielle. They had other ideas and Mark & Jenny won +3t.

While the doubles went the distance James Death dispatched Samir 2-0 on the next lawn and Rachel beat Louise in the Process semi final.

After lunch Mark and Christian played their semi final and Mark won 2-0 quite quickly, cheering the manager up. Finally, the tournament might finish!

In the Women's, the two finals went on after lunch and Jenny & Gabrielle came through comfortably.

The doubles finalists were given the choice of a single game final after tea or a Best of 3 with the threat of playing till dusk. They unanimously chose a single game. Rachel got round early and Ian completed the victory with a triple peel.

## Sunday

The singles had reached a final in each event. The Women were offered Best of 5 but declined and settled for 3. Mark and James played a Best of 5 in the Men's. Barring 10 minutes round lunch, it was a high quality final with few errors. James won in 4, finishing with a flourish by completing a sextuple peel. The Du Pre had a 4 player knockout on the last day with Alain and Phil Eardley winning the semi finals comfortably before Alain won the final +26tp.

The Women's nearly finished quickly but Jenny missed a return roquet on a finishing turn for 2-0 and Gabrielle equalised. She then went round 3rd turn in the decider to applause from the appreciative gallery but Jenny got in and Gabrielle failed to hit another shot. Jenny winning +17.

All events finished by 3.30pm, an early tea and prize giving where all the volunteers were thanked for giving their time and putting in all the hard work in the background so the players can turn up and enjoy themselves.

## James Death



# AC NATIONAL VETS CHAMPIONSHIP

## NATIONAL VETERANS 2022 TROPHY WINNERS

### Doubles Runners-Up Gilbert Spoons

Deborah & David Marcus

### Winners Longman Trophies (Sussex Trugs)

Jim Field & Roger Mills

### Handicap Singles Winner Meredith Cup

Jim Field

### A Block Veterans' Championship Rothwell Cup

Jim Field

### B Block Felixstowe Cup

Philip Harris

### C Block Jubilee Cup

Chris Donovan

### D Block Strickland Cup

John Coutts

### Over 75 Pidcock Trophy

Jane Babbage

**T**he tournament started at Budleigh Salterton on Monday 20 June in glorious sunshine with a disappointing 7 pairs only for the doubles.

Consequently 6 pairs played with the winners then joined by the 'bye'. Games were the full 3 hours and Jim Field and Roger Mills [Sidmouth] won by small margins to take home the unique Sussex Trugs [AKA The Longman Trophies]. The 'Y' stream was won by Deborah & David Marcus [Sussex County] who took the Gilbert Spoons. A managed Egyptian was available but no pair took the offer of additional games – too much excitement / too hot / or dare one mention 'it was the veterans after all'?

The tournament manager got home to find he had 2 withdrawals from the following day's Handicap Event and what was to have been a 'nice' 16 player 'X' and 'Y' knock-out became a straight knock-out with Egyptian games for those duly dispatched. Games were again the full 3 hours and a surprising number went to full time with, of course, the inevitable hit-in as time is called followed by a long break! However, the good weather again deterred 3rd games save for David Houston [Edinburgh] and Charlie Martin [Ramsgate]. David Wise [Norwood Club / Adelaide] made an impertinent comment about the 'cool' weather but noticeably did not play a 3rd game either.

The tournament manager went home on Tuesday night to be

called by an entrant pulling-out on the Doctor's strong advice. The Class event schedules were rearranged for the second time but nothing was printed-off!

Wednesday saw the final 4 play-off: Roger Mills [Sidmouth], Jim Field, Peter Siddall [Roehampton] and John Wells [Downham]. Lunch was taken as leisurely as the day before with much banter and, eventually, the second scheduled games started. A withdrawal due to physical inability to play on forced a quick rescheduling but play continued. Good weather prevailed and again few took the option of a 3rd game.

The tournament manager went home on Wednesday night with some trepidation – more withdrawals? Yes! A player's car had a clutch failure and the final handicap game, thankfully only an Egyptian, could not be played. Both latter withdrawals were not due to play in the Class games and the overall result of the Handicap Event was not affected.

The Class play schedules etc were printed off. Thursday morning saw Jim Field beat Peter Siddall +10 in the Handicap final, if not in his usual 'Billy the Whizz' style. So, Jim Field won his second event and took home the Meredith Cup and Peter Siddall was consoled with a bottle of wine.

Thursday 1pm the Class events started. A Block with 8 players [-1 to 1.5] playing untimed games. Several triple peels were attempted but only one was successfully completed by Duncan Hector [Great Dunham] against Alan Cottle [Sussex County]. The final game, on Saturday afternoon, as you would expect, over ran but the end result was a clean sweep of 6 wins by Jim Field with David Wise losing just the one game with 5 wins in second place. The handsome Rothwell Cup completed the full tournament set for Jim Field – the first time he has won all events in a multi-event tournament.

With the last-minute withdrawals, the B and C Blocks were reduced from 8 & 7 to 6 but all seemed quite happy with just 2 scheduled games a day – time limit 2hrs 45mins. The B Block games went smoothly and ended-up with a 3-way, circular tie between Philip Harris, Peter Nelson and Nigel Amos. A point [hoop] count resulted in 102 for Harris and 95 & 93 respectively for Nelson and Amos. Thus, the Felixstowe Trophy was taken by Philip Harris.

The C Block started Thursday afternoon but on Friday morning another withdrawal during the first game was forced by ill health. This was very disappointing to the other players in the block and it also forced a withdrawal in the A Block from two

## CA MEMBERSHIP CARD NOW AVAILABLE

**C**A members may recall that in the past a CA Membership Card was issued every year to all CA members. This was rarely required to be shown, except to prove CA membership on entry to certain clubs, such as Hurlingham, which is where the CA Office was previously located. With the CA Office now being at Cheltenham, there hasn't been a real need for the CA to continue incurring the cost of issuing paper Membership Cards. However, in view of continued security concerns, some clubs have recently become stricter about controlling entry – often requiring their own members to show Club Membership Cards on entry. Therefore, particularly when CA members wish to visit such clubs

for a major championship, it may now be useful to have a CA Membership Card again to provide proof of CA membership.

The intention is that if there is a requirement for CA members to show a CA membership card to gain access to a club where an event is being held, then this will be advertised in advance on relevant websites and in the event programme. This will include any specific requirements, such as whether the CA Membership Card has to have a photo, and whether any other form of identification is required.

Rather than incur the expense of producing thousands of paper Membership Cards, most of which would never be used, Dave Kibble has

added a new facility to the CA website to generate your own CA Membership Card.

All CA Members can now bring their CA Membership Card up on their phone (or computer) by:

1. Go to the CA Directory in the "Members' Area" and log in
2. Click "My Details" in the "My CA" box
3. Select the "Membership Card" button

It is noted that CA members can upload their own photo – otherwise you still get a Membership Card but without the photo (like the old paper card). A new upload automatically sends an email to the CA Office support address with a link for a quick visual inspection: "Please

final games on the Saturday. Fortunately, recourse to Incomplete Block procedure was not needed. The games played on, with the majority, as all Block games, going to time. To the tournament manager's slight embarrassment but greater pleasure, he won the block and took home the Queen's 70th Jubilee Cup he was presenting for 2022!

The D Block played their 6 games, 2hrs 45mins, and the winner, John Coutts, Rother Valley, only dropped one game against John Reddish: -1! To him the Strickland Cup.

The National Veterans also offers the Pidcock Trophy for the player over 75 who is best placed in the Class Event. There were several contenders this year and after careful review it was awarded to Jane Babbage [Sidmouth]. Struggling to stop his handicap going even lower John Wells determination allied with precise play, mostly, allowed him to take the Egyptian prize – the usual glass-based item sealed with a cork, actually a screw cap. Jim Field also won the 'Fastest Game' prize amidst some controversy with entrants who hadn't bothered to read the manager's detailed 'welcome and how it's going to be run notice' – 'how unusual'. The best Jim Field could manage was a pathetic 53 minutes but, the unimpressed tournament manager was true to his word and presented a glass-based prize – a jar of Tesco marmalade.

Prize giving was completed shortly after 4.30pm with John O'Gorman, Budleigh Salterton's Club Chairman, chief hoop setter, Meeter & Greeter, barman, lunch order taker, trophy organiser, CA liaison, and 'Lord High Everything Else' commented that he was noting a

Budleigh first. He had had moans that the hoops were too tight and too well set in firm position [in other words set correctly] and that the lawns were too fast [in other words – ideal]. The ongoing superb lawn maintenance by Richard Quelch, a greensman rather than a groundsman, was universally acclaimed as well as the ever-friendly reception from the host club itself.

The tournament was enjoyed by all in a friendly, leisurely but still competitive manner and all hope that a fuller entry will come back in 2023 – see you then?

**Chris Donovan  
Tournament Manager**



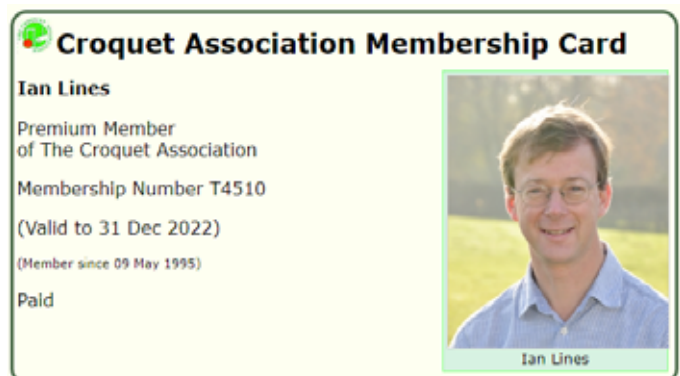
check that the new member-uploaded photo is decent, legal and reasonable" - this has to be carried out by the CA Office fairly promptly. While uploading, the member is told "Make sure that you have the legal right to publish it on the website and that it will not cause offence". Please note that this new membership card facility is to address security concerns so it is important that this facility should not be abused.

This online Membership Card could be shown on a phone to gate staff as proof of CA Membership. CA members could also print the card (just press Control-P on a computer) and show a paper copy to the gate staff. It is also possible to take a screenshot image of the card on your phone and save it on your phone (e.g. in Files on an iPhone) so that you can bring it up even when not online. On most iPhones a screen shot can be taken by pressing the Top button and the Home button at the same time, and quickly releasing both buttons. On android phones, to take a screenshot, press and hold the power and volume down button at the same time.

It is hoped that CA members who may need to provide proof of

CA membership will find this facility easy to access, and that it will help keep us all safe at major events.

**Dave Kibble and Ian Lines**



## AC HOME INTER'S 11-12 JUNE

**C**ongratulations to team England who won the 2022 AC Home Internationals.

**PHOTOGRAPH** Clockwise:

Aston Wade, David Maugham (Captain), Dominic Nunns, Nigel Polhill, Andy Myers



## SURREY WON THE AC INTER-COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

**S**urrey won the 108th Inter-County Championship at Sussex County and Compton over the Jubilee weekend. This was their 23rd outright win in the event, which was first held in 1897 and their fourth win since the current two division format was created in 1997. At one point it looked as if Surrey would win all nine matches, but they surprisingly lost their final match to Oxfordshire 3-0, who finished a creditable third. Middlesex, the holders, got off to a great start winning all three matches on the first day 3-0, but successive defeats to Surrey and Essex put them out of contention, unless Surrey slipped up, and so finished runners up. Relegated from Division 1 were Glamorgan, Gloucestershire and Suffolk. The final round produced a very exciting finish at the bottom. Whoever won the match between Glamorgan and Lancashire would stay up, and whoever lost would go down. In the end Lancashire won 3-0, though all three games were close at -8, -7 and -7. Following the withdrawal of Shropshire, Hampshire and Cheshire it was decided to run Division 2 as an 8 team event; promoting Sussex to replace Cheshire in Division 1. Somerset won all seven

matches to finish first and a probable match with the CA Women's team next year. Also promoted were Berkshire and Yorkshire. Kent finished bottom for the first time since 2016 and are now holders of the wooden spoon. The CA Select team benefited from Hampshire and Cheshire's absence and had the services of Ian Lines, David Maugham and Mike Town. Various players helped out with the other places, including Gareth Denyer (Glamorgan and Sussex qualified), over from Sydney, who was pleased to find himself partnering David Maugham. Hopefully next year Shropshire, Hampshire and Cheshire will return and we will revert to a 22 team event. The switch of the event to the Jubilee weekend did cause organiser difficulty in raising teams and some were weaker than normal. Thanks to the Sussex and Compton clubs for once again welcoming all the players and providing such good lawns and facilities.

**| Chris Williams**



## EAST MIDLANDS CHAMPIONSHIP

**T**he East Midlands Championship is a class 2 AC tournament that has been held at Nottingham for over 25 years. It usually attracts a strong entry, as it is held the weekend before the Opens, though next year the timing may have to change, as the Opens itself is scheduled to be held at Nottingham for the first time. This year there were only two test players in a field of 27, after four withdrawals in the week leading up to the event, due to illness. The new lawns laid in the autumn of 2020 on the site of the former bowling greens were in use and running at about the same, 10.5 to 11 second, speed as the established ones. Alarming reports of a slope on them were discounted as being due to the effects of the strong and gusty wind. The new Dawson balls attracted less favourable comment, as being both less spherical and softer than their predecessors.

As manager, I was held to be courageous by not imposing time limits, but the justification for the two latish evening starts was that 19 games finished with a margin of +3 or less: 4 won by +1, 9 by +2, and 6 by +3, almost all of which would have been truncated otherwise. In contrast, there were 24 tps. One game fell into both categories, with Joel Taylor completing a +1tp with a gratuitous rover peel on the opponent. James Death was undefeated in both the Draw and the Process and so retained the Hopewell Cup. He beat Alain Giraud in the final of the Draw and Nigel Polhill in that of the Process, saving the need for a play-off. Debbie Lines and Neal Bacon entertained a dwindling crowd on Sunday afternoon by contesting the final of the plate, with Debbie emerging victorious after a fine display of shooting by both players.

**| Ian Vincent**



# AC OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

**W**ell I have just had a fabulous holiday at The AC Open Championships at The Hurlingham Club.

**Atmosphere:** With fabulous weather (courtesy of Mike Town Manager), a perfect venue, and such a large number of my croquet friends (and new ones to be made) this was just what the doctor ordered (although I feel she would have agreed with me that I should have won more games – better for my health). Numbers were down this year as Eugene Chang chose to get married on the doubles weekend - but wonderful news and congratulations to both Eugene and Amy. This didn't stop the rest of us from successfully finishing off three types of beer, the cider AND the orange juice within the first few days – no mean feat as Hurlingham is not a small venue.

**Absences:** Sophie McGlen was unable to join us for the event as covid hit. But worse was to come as the singles started, when Alain Giraud needed an ambulance from his accommodation after a nasty fall – claret flowed, but all is well now, thank the Lord.

**Accents:** With the world of travel opened up again, we were blessed with players from Spain, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and America - can't really count the South Africans as they live here - and the tournament all the better for their presence.

**Anecdotes:** • In the doubles, Brian Cumming (partner Doug Grimsley) scored 25 of the 26 points himself, as he unknowingly played his partner ball, which was not spotted until later in the game. The unnamed ref did not find the doubles wrong ball rule until the game had finished.

• Joel Taylor had a fan club of three 6-8 yr olds, "this looks a good game" and clapped his hoop 4 - perhaps champions of the future.

• Drama unfolded near the beautiful lawn 6, when seemingly a member of staff was being soundly and loudly berated, over two, two minute periods, and although we couldn't quite make out the words, certainly someone was to be sacked - turns out it was a short play rehearsal!!!!

**A-class - or was it?** No – if you're asking about me. Yes – for the majority, with titans both being crushed, and achieving spectator-happy turns. As ever the lawns here were a beautiful green carpet (I overheard a spectator asking if it was real grass), and the heat sped the lawns up nicely, creating triple, sextuple and interesting play opportunities, 136 triples, 9 tpo's, 10tp, 2qp, 11sxp's (Reg B

5, Stephen M 5, James D 1). Jose Riva, of his many interesting games, played two that stand out for me, both with a New Zealand tpo. Oppo first to 4b, JR to 1b with 1 peel on oppo. Oppo misses. JR makes final two peels on oppo plus two peels on his own ball. Pegs 2 balls off, leaving his partner ball in the jaws of 3b (in one of the games), oppo for 1. JR won. Stephen Mulliner vs Jose Riva was quality. One of which - SM hit with 2nd ball, and took it to 4b. JR hit 3rd ball, and took it to 4b. SM hit and had a triple to finish. Stirling. Sadly, this writer thought Stephen was just warming up, so didn't appreciate how nicely he was playing 'til about 2b!

**And the finals:** Doubles - 15 pairs, including English and NZ Mac players, so challenges for all. I think it would be fair to say that many needed to hone their skills at touch play.

**Doubles finals:** Mulliner/ Suter beat Clarke/Giraud 26tp, 26tp, 17tp. Clinical. Plate finals Murray/Wicks beat Ormerod/Taylor 26tp.

**Singles:** 29 singles players played 8 rounds of swiss, needing 4 wins to go through to the main knockout event. Others entered the plate run as Draw and Process, and those knocked out in the first round entered one side of the plate.

**Semi-finals :** Reg Bamford beat Harry Fisher 26sxp, 26sxp, 17sxp WOW. James Death beat Jose Riva -23tp, 25tp, 26tp, 26tp. Extraordinarily both semi-finals finished within 5 minutes of each other.

**Singles final:** Impressed so far? Well how about this! The final between Reg Bamford and James Death, was near faultless. Honestly a joy to watch. The precision was spectacular and I feel I need to reach for my thesaurus for more appropriate words – here we go – it was an extravaganza of arresting and striking shots (see what I did there), and I found myself holding my breath for both players. I shan't detail the whole match, however I will just comment on the third game, which, although not the clinical game Reg wanted, showed us such determination and perseverance, on both parts. Reg was getting behind on his sextuple but continued to do whatever he could to get peels, and both 4b and penult were made posthumously. Sadly, he ran out of opportunities to get the rover peel, and pegged the one ball off. James now had contact, and pulled off a prolific series of creative (here I go again) shots, and with Reg missing the leave, James went on to win the final

19tp, -17sxp, 2, 26tp. Worthy. We had a fabulous team commentating during the week, and I would recommend both going on CroquetScores and reading the commentary for this event, and on youtube where you can listen to the live audio of the final by Chris Clarke and Stephen Mulliner. The plate was fought over by Brian Cumming and Nick Parish, the former winning 25tp, -14tp and 26. The Z knockout was won by Joel Taylor, beating Hurlingham's own Tom Coles by 15.

## I Annabel J McDiarmid

**PHOTOGRAPH Andrew Moss:**  
Stephen Mulliner



**PHOTOGRAPH Phil Hutchinson:**  
Annabel McDiarmid



**PHOTOGRAPH Andrew Moss:**  
Winner, James Death



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## NEXT GENERATION DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

**I**n 2021 the report "Improving inclusivity and diversity in croquet" was presented to Council, one of the aims in which is; "We encourage people of all ages, gender and sexual orientation into our sport". The Next Generations Group, led by Paul Francis, Chair of the Sports Development Committee, was subsequently established and has been focused on long term initiatives to attract more young people to play our sport.

We are delighted to announce that the work of this group is to be supported by a full time Development Officer, Hope Bourton, who started at the CA on 1st July. Please extend a warm welcome to Hope and encourage your club to support her work.

**Paul Brown**  
CA Executive Board - Development

Hello, my name is Hope and I have newly taken on the position of Next Generation Development Officer for the Croquet Association. My life has always revolved around sport. Growing up I was encouraged to play as many sports as

possible until I decided what I enjoyed the most. I chose netball and football and relished in the positives of participating in sport. I also love to watch sport and I am a big Aston Villa fan and follow the netball super league very closely. I am excited to transfer the skills that I have learnt playing, watching and coaching these sports into developing our sport of croquet!

I have had a busy start to the job already, visiting a few clubs and viewing their junior set-ups. I am keen to view as many clubs as possible that have a junior set up already so I can understand the work that the CA and clubs have been doing already. So, if you have a juniors' set-up that I can come to view or would like to become involved in this exciting project - send me an email at: [ngdo@croquet.org.uk](mailto:ngdo@croquet.org.uk)

Based in the CA's office in Cheltenham, I will be working under the supervision of Paul Francis, Chair of the Sports Development Committee. Paul and his Next Generation Group have given me a "Framework for Success" with clear priorities:

- To establish a national programme of opportunities for under 25s to

participate in croquet at school, university, croquet clubs and other organisations e.g. the Guides and Scouts.

- To create pathways for young people to pursue their interest in croquet through the network of croquet clubs in England.

My aim is to increase the number of under 25's in the sport and I am looking forward to working with all the clubs to move forward in achieving this!





# SHORT CROQUET CORNER



**C**oming up this season: Most Federations now run thriving Short Croquet leagues. The handicap system makes for an enjoyable day out for players of all abilities, from those taking early steps in AC to experienced players. Get involved! Meanwhile the National Short Croquet Competition is in full swing with most Federations entering teams. In the preliminary round, steady play from last year's winners Bury saw off the Yorkshire team 7-4. At the time of writing this leaves teams from the North West, East Midlands, East Anglia and Southern Federations still in contention for the very handsome cup.

For players looking to enter a Short Croquet tournament as an individual, the go-to event is the Viking Challenge Short Croquet weekend at York on 10-11 September, a friendly event which attracts players of all skill levels from a wide geographical area and offers nine games over two days. Entry is via the CA's tournament entry system, or direct to the Club.

**Looking ahead to 2023:** With club end-of-season AGMs already on the horizon, now is an excellent time for clubs that have not yet taken up Short Croquet to consider trying it, even if only for a year's trial.

For clubs that are currently GC-focused, the CA's newest free online coaching manual includes a simple, ready-made 'conversion course' from GC to this accessible and enjoyable version of AC. Go to the Coaching Resources page of the CA website and click on Introducing AC – Manual for Coaches.

For clubs with high numbers of strong AC players, the peeling requirement for low bisquers provides interesting challenges in strategic thinking and precision play.

For all clubs, using half lawns magically doubles lawn capacity. It also very helpfully spreads lawn wear. The half-way boundary can be marked by either a white line or by string, and the impact on play of the extra hoop holes is in practice negligible.

Large, well-established and successful clubs may feel they can 'get along fine'

without Short Croquet – but their success can, in some cases, be based on drawing in players that might otherwise have strengthened smaller local clubs. It falls to all of us to help to regenerate the game we love from the bottom up, and Short Croquet has a big contribution to make to this. Large clubs can be good ambassadors for AC by taking up this increasingly popular version and showing the way.

John Harris, York CC  
Coaching Committee Chair



## 2022 EUROPEAN GC CHAMPIONSHIP, 26-29 MAY

**T**he GC European Championship attracted a record number of 70 potential players for the 32 available places.

Budleigh are experienced hosts of the European Championships and alongside the courts that were in excellent condition, the flags of all competing nations were displayed along the top boundary fencing to add to the occasion. After all the allocation and selection criteria was resolved by WCF officials, the UK had 5 England players, Rachel Gee, Stephen Mulliner, Euan BurrIDGE, Aston Wade and Stuart M. Smith who were joined by 2 players representing Wales, Ian BurrIDGE and Chris Roberts, alongside Lorna Dewar for Scotland, to compete for the European Championship title. In all, players from 12 different European countries joined the impressive line-up.

The format was arranged as 4 blocks of 8 players playing in best of three matches to qualify for the knock-out stages, with the first two days all consisting of block play. The final block games were completed on Saturday morning prior to any required block play-offs for a chance of moving on to the last 16 knock-out.

Block A was topped by number 1 seed, Rachel Gee with an impressive 7 from 7 matches, and dropping only one game

to the number 2 seed, Pierre Beaudry representing Belgium. The Spaniard, Manuel Alvares-Sala came in 2nd position with 6 match wins, and after a three-way play-off, 3rd and 4th positions were taken by Pierre Beaudry (Belgium) and Tomass Friemanis from Latvia.

Block B was rather more straight forward : Andres Alvarez-Sala (Spain) won all 7 matches, followed by Stephen Mulliner with 6 match wins, and Chris Roberts (Wales) with 5 match wins. Stuart M. Smith (England) took 4th position after winning the play-off against Daniel Studerus (Switzerland).

Block C finished in exact seeding order, Jose Riva (Spain) topping the block with 7 match wins, followed by Aston Wade, 6 match wins, Mark Stephens (Ireland) 5 match wins and Ian Sexton (Switzerland) with 4 match wins.

Block D was again topped with the number 1 seed, Euan BurrIDGE (England) with 7 match wins, followed by Ian BurrIDGE (Wales) 6 match wins, Joi Elebo (Sweden) 5 match wins and the 4th spot taken by Nicolas Denizot (Spain) - 5th block seed, after a successful play off against his fellow countryman, Basilio Iglesias, 3rd seed, as both players each had 3 match wins in the block.

The remaining 16 players all progressed to the Plate tournament arranged in 4

blocks of 4 players now playing single 13pt games to qualify for the Plate knock-out.

The qualifying last 16 produced only one result away from the seeding expectations, with Ian Sexton (14th seed) beating Andres Alvarez-Sala (10th seed), 4/7, 7/3, 7/6. The remaining Quarter Finalists were : Rachel Gee, Ian BurrIDGE, Manuel Alvarez-Sala, Euan BurrIDGE, Jose Riva, Stephen Mulliner and Aston Wade.

The Quarter Finals were completed in two straight game wins for all but one match, Rachel Gee v Ian BurrIDGE went to the 3rd game with Rachel prevailing 7/5, 6/7, 7/2. Euan BurrIDGE had performed well throughout the tournament but did not manage to better Manuel Alvarez-Sala, losing 2/7, 7/6 to enter the Shield. The amiable Jose Riva prevented the reigning champion, Stephen Mulliner, progressing any further, winning 7/6, 7/4. The first game ended with Jose pulling off an extraordinary jump-shot through 13 from the boundary despite having one of Stephen's ball less than a foot south. Aston Wade took the final position in the Semi-Finals beating Ian Sexton 7/2, 7/5. Sunday brought the remaining sections of the tournament to an exciting close.

...Continued on Page 26

The Semi-Finals were both England v Spain – Rachel Gee v Manuel Alvarez-Sala and Jose Riva v Aston Wade. Whilst these were ongoing, a fine display of attacking croquet was provided in the Shield Final between Euan Burridge and Stephen Mulliner. This attracted quite a crowd with Euan displaying very strong and accurate shooting play and some huge jump shots which gave him victory by 7/3, 7/5 and 5th place overall.

Further knock-out play led to a Sweden v Ireland Bowl Final in which Mark Stephens achieved two tight wins 7/6, 7/6 against Joi Elebo. The Plate knock-out produced a final between Basilio Iglesias (Spain) and Trond Jansen (Norway). Basilio, being the 12th tournament seed against the 25th, was the favourite and duly won in two games 7/3, 7/6. Despite a well-fought battle with Rachel Gee, Manuel Alvarez-Sala lost in two straight games in the first Semi-Final, 7/5 and 7/6. Manuel caught up to 6/6 in game 2 and, after Rachel took good position at 13, succeeded in hitting from the south boundary. However, despite this excellent reply, Rachel kept control of the last hoop duel to secure her place in the Final. The second Semi-Final was a tale of two games of sharply reversed fortunes followed by a hard-fought decider. Aston Wade (England) sliced through Jose Riva in the first game by an impressive 7/0 margin but Jose rallied strongly in the second and won almost as comfortably by 7/2. The final game was always close and, appropriately, went to a nerve-racking shoot-out at the golden hoop. Aston played first to good position at 13 but Jose produced a centre-ball clearance from 25 yards. Both players then had attempts from the boundary each of which just bounced out of the hoop but Aston then made no mistake with his other ball from 3 yards to win 7/6 and set up an all-English Final. The final was played on Budleigh's court 6 which is close to the clubhouse but allows elevated viewing along the west boundary which many prefer. John O'Gorman, the Budleigh chairman, set the hoops for the final in fresh holes to ensure that they would be both tight and very firm. Aston won the toss and went ahead very quickly to lead 4/1. Rachel staged a minor recovery by scoring two hoops but could not reverse the tide and lost 7/3. Both players had displayed excellent shot selection but Rachel missed the mark on a couple of hoop shots which was enough to give her opponent a decisive advantage. Throughout the event, Aston had displayed calm decision making and a rhythmic but powerful mallet swing which regularly cleared the opponent balls to the far side of the court and often gave him a strong advantage at the next hoop. The Final concluded with another decisive 7/2 victory for Aston, earning himself and England the GC European Championship title – a second major victory less than a year after he became the 2021 British Open Champion.



# 2022 BRITISH GOLF CROQUET OPENS

**A** full entry met at Southwick for this year's GC Opens. The lawns continue to improve and the grass quality is excellent. The hoops were easier than I had expected, despite being set very narrowly (we had a few balls wedge). The club is being run well and has plans to upgrade its clubhouse in the future if planning permission is granted. We started with two days of doubles. It was good to see 4 pairs from each block qualify for the knockout rather than 2 when we last played. Both blocks went to form with the top four pairs qualifying, block A being won by the new pairing of Stephen Mulliner and Jenny Clarke, whilst block B was won by Reg Bamford and the upgraded Charles Barlow. The quarter-finals provided an upset when Callum Johnson and Euan Burridge beat Ian Burridge and Rachel Gee 6-7, 7-5, 7-5. Callum's play was improving every game and Euan plays a lot of extremely impressive powerful shots. The other upset was Aston Wade and Richard Bilton beating J-P Moberly and Tobi Savage 2-7, 7-3, 7-3. So, the top two seeds were eliminated, and it was now wide open.

The semi-finals saw Callum and Euan beat Jenny and Stephen 3-7, 7-4, 7-5 with Jenny playing worse than earlier and the boys taking full advantage. Aston and Richard beat Charles and Reg 7-3, 7-5 in the other half. With an average age under 22 years old, this was probably the youngest ever GC doubles final in England. It was an entertaining final with Callum and Euan eventually powering through the deciding game to win their first major title 4-7, 7-6, 7-1.

The singles started on day 3. In block A, Callum continued his fine form to place third from his 7th seeded position. The top 4 seeds progressed in block B, although it was won by third seed Stephen Mulliner by one net hoop over Tobi. Richard Brooks won 8 games from 7th seed to pick up plenty of handicap points. In block C, Lionel Tibble just got the better of Stu Smith to take the 4th qualifying spot and J-P won with an impressive +48 hoops despite losing to Stu. Jayne Stevens performed well to

win 3 matches. Block D saw the biggest upset with the usually highly consistent Rachel Gee failing to qualify and Tim Russell winning 5 matches to qualify in second place. Jonathan Claxton did well to win three matches. The block was won by Robert Fulford – the only player to win all 7 matches in the block stage. The last 16 had two particularly interesting matches. Tobi was tested in a tight contest with Callum, eventually prevailing 7-6, 6-7, 7-5. Tobi appears to have improved in the last three years and looks a more consistent performer. The other match was between England best two U21s, Aston Wade and Euan Burridge. Aston has a good balanced game that will make him tough to beat. Euan has enough power to keep a small country going (he jumped through hoop 6 from the south boundary in his block game against Richard Bilton), but has lapses in positional play and decision making that can allow opponents back into matches. It was an entertaining match that went to Euan 7-2, 5-7, 7-5. Both players will be looking to make deep progress at the upcoming Worlds. In the quarter finals, Jenny won 6 consecutive hoops against Reg to take game 2 7-4 from 1-4 down, but was outplayed 7-1 in the decider. Stephen won a tight match 7-6, 4-7, 7-6 against Tobi to set up a grudge match against Reg in the semi-final. In the third, and arguably strongest quarter, J-P beat Euan 6-7, 7-1, 7-2. The last two games were J-P back to his best after a poor start to the season. The final quarter was won by Robert Fulford against Ian Burridge 7-2, 4-7, 7-4. Sunday morning had a much quieter Southwick with a number of players having gone home. Reg never looked in danger during his 7-3, 7-4 win against Stephen. Throughout the event, Reg's positional play had been exceptional and his mid-pace clearance were pretty reliable as well. However, his hard shots and jumps weren't up to his normal standard and will be something he will be working on before trying to win another World Championship in a few weeks. The other semi-final took a lot longer. It was a contrast in styles. Robert Fulford

was taking position more than any other player and avoiding clearances of over 8 yards. Throughout the event, he never hit the ball harder than the average female player and relied on good positional and tactical play plus consistent 7 yard and less central gentle clearances to keep his opponents under pressure. JP countered this style quite well and played well enough to take the match to the deciding hoop before the 5-time AC World Champion prevailed 7-3, 5-7, 7-6. The average age of the semi-finalists was over 50, showing that anyone suggesting that the game is dominated by youngsters is writing off the experienced players too quickly. And so, we reached the final – a re-run of so many AC finals, the two best players of our generation Reg and Robert. For any youngsters watching, the standard of positional play was something to aspire to. The first game was won fairly comfortably by Reg 7-4 and he was first to play to 13 in the second. Rob's last ball to play to 13 hilled off Reg's ball in front of 13 and ended up running hoop 10 by 3 inches to block 13. Reg took on a 5 yard clearance that needed hitting half ball on the right, but hit half ball on the left and peeled it to lose game 2 7-6. The deciding game saw Reg take a quick 2-0 lead before Robert won 6 consecutive hoops and eventually the Championship 7-3. It was a demonstration of how to maximise performance despite a lack of power and hopefully something that shows that GC can be played by everyone, even if others are capable of hitting the ball 4 times harder. The whole event was a pleasure to watch with such a variety of styles, techniques and tactics. The event differed from NZ because the "core" GC players (50-70) still played. In NZ, this core set of players have largely stopped entering our Nationals which are filled with 80% under 25s. Croquet needs to maintain the full age range in events and the atmosphere throughout this event was excellent. Congrats to Southwick and all their volunteers. Bring on the Worlds!

**I Chris Clarke**



# ENGLAND LOSE THE 2ND ENGLAND-SPAIN TEST MATCH 12-14

**T**he Hurlingham Club hosted a long-awaited and hotly-anticipated return to international croquet between England and Spain. The Real Club de Pineda in Seville hosted the inaugural test match in 2019, and the Covid pandemic had prevented England from defending their 13-8 win in 2020 or 2021.

Hurlingham did a splendid job of matching the level of hospitality received by the English in Seville, with volunteers from the club manning the scoreboards and operating the live camera feed, streamed live to hundreds around the world, on all three days.

England, captained by J-P Moberly, selected a strong team with Tobi Savage, Stephen Mulliner, Will Gee and Jonathan Powe all having previous international experience, with the reigning GC Open Championships winner Aston Wade making a deserved GC debut. Savage and Powe withdrew and were replaced by Richard Bilton, a member of the 2020 Openshaw Shield team, and Stuart M Smith, captain of the winning 2021 GC Home Internationals team.

Although generally ranked significantly lower than their English counterparts, the Spanish team has growing international experience largely through the success of the Álvarez-Sala (Á-S) family. José Álvarez-Sala Senior, the “father” of Spanish croquet and WCF Hall of Fame inductee for his work in promoting the game, was present to watch his four sons Manuel, José, Andrés and Gonzalo once again represent their country. Basilio Iglesias played against England for the first time and Pedro Lozano was selected following a notable win at the Cheltenham GC Open earlier this year.

## ENGLAND

1. John-Paul Moberly
2. Aston Wade
3. Will Gee
4. Stephen Mulliner
5. Stuart M Smith
6. Richard Bilton

## SPAIN

1. Manuel Álvarez-Sala
2. Andrés Álvarez-Sala
3. José Álvarez-Sala
4. Gonzalo Álvarez-Sala
5. Basilio Iglesias
6. Pedro Lozano

The format was a best of 27 point test match with each player playing three singles and three doubles matches across the weekend. Against a backdrop of (initially!) magnificent weather, the Test began on Friday afternoon with two rounds of doubles giving 6 points to play for on the opening day.

Due to a delay experienced by Iglesias and Lozano, Wade and Smith were forced to use their skills in the commentary box as the others began play. Moberly & Gee, England’s no. 1 pairing, were beaten relatively comfortably by Á-S (J) & Á-S (G) 4-7 4-7 (England scores first) while Mulliner & Bilton also lost against Spain’s no. 1 pairing Á-S (M) & Á-S (A) 7-4 5-7 3-7, leaving England 0-2 down from the opening round.

Moberly & Gee found some form against Iglesias & Lozano following their late arrival and won easily 7-3 7-4 to record England’s first Test point and Wade & Smith levelled the scores with an excellent 7-5 7-6 win against Á-S (M) & Á-S (A).

Following two close games at the 13th hoop between Mulliner & Bilton and Á-S (J) & Á-S (G), the decider was more straightforward for the Spanish pairing with a 7-3 win giving Spain a lead which they extended with Iglesias & Lozano recording a strong performance to beat Wade & Smith 5-7 6-7.

## Test score at the end of Friday: England 2 Spain 4

Saturday, with slightly cooler weather providing some respite, brought two singles matches for each player and therefore 12 points to play for.

Mulliner outplayed Lozano 7-3 7-2 to record an early point for the Three Lions. This was quickly reversed by Gee losing to

Á-S (M) 4-7 6-7, with a particularly strong performance from Á-S to come back from 5-1 down in game 2. Bilton lost 6-7 in game 3 to Iglesias (including Bilton scoring hoops 10, 11 and 12 with jumps from between 2 to 5 yards in game 1) and so did Moberly to Á-S (J). Moberly was unable to block Á-S’s hoop shot from close range and Á-S took full advantage to run the 7 yard hoop. England, 3-7 down, needed some points and they duly came thanks to wins for Smith over Lozano 7-4 7-6, Gee over Á-S (A) 7-4 7-3, a very close one for Wade over Á-S (J) 7-1 6-7 7-6, Smith again this time over Iglesias 5-7 7-2 7-4 and Bilton over Á-S (G) 7-5 7-6. With the scoreboard now looking a lot more healthy from England’s perspective, they weren’t able to increase their 8-7 lead as Moberly continued his disappointing form by losing his second singles match of the day to Á-S (A) 4-7 7-5 4-7. Wade lost in 3 games thanks to a blistering spell from Á-S (M), with Á-S winning game 3 0-7 with hoop 7 from the North boundary.

The final match of the day drew a crowd as the last to finish. With Spain leading 9-8, the result of Mulliner vs Á-S (G) was the difference between finishing day 2 all square at 9-9 or Spain taking a priceless 8-10 lead into the final day. It turned into another marathon, with Á-S taking the first game 6-7, Mulliner taking the second 7-5 and the third going to hoop 13. Both players had efforts rebound off the inside wire of the hoop, however after a 10 minute battle, Mulliner prevailed to level the Test match and set up a tantalising Sunday.

## Test score at the end of Saturday: England 9 Spain 9

The Test was completed with two rounds on Sunday; the final doubles and final singles so 9 points to play for. The “ding dong” nature thus far continued as England took the lead by Mulliner & Bilton beating Iglesias & Lozano 4-7 7-5 7-3, only for Moberly & Gee to lose to Á-S (M) and Á-S (A) 6-7 5-7. In another example of Spain producing critical shots in the crucial moments, Moberly & Gee had played well in game 1 and deservedly led 6-5. Á-S (A) ran a 10 yard hoop 12 to level the game, hit the clearance of Moberly’s ball at hoop 13 and Á-S (M) ran the 7 yard hoop from the North boundary.

The final doubles match went England’s way with Wade & Smith beating Á-S (J) & Á-S (G) 3-7 7-3 7-3, meaning England led 11-10 going into the final round of singles matches.

The final round pitted each seed against their opposing number, so 1 vs 1 etc. Bilton vs Lozano was the first to finish with Bilton running hoop 4 from hoop 3 in game 2 on the way to winning 7-3 7-5 leaving England only needing two more points to win the Test. Spain had other ideas as Mulliner lost to Iglesias 6-7 7-4 3-7, and Smith lost to Á-S (G) 6-7 6-7. Moberly lost to the third Á-S brother he’d played as Á-S (M) came through another match which went the distance 5-7 7-2 6-7. England now needed to win both remaining points to avoid defeat.

Gee had narrowly lost game 1 to Á-S (J) 6-7 and game 2 also went to hoop 13. Gee, looking clear favourite for the hoop, cleared Á-S’s ball, only for his ball to have a cruel ricochet from a tight angle and knock Á-S’s other ball into the jaws of the hoop. Left with a boundary-jump-or-bust, Gee made an excellent attempt at the jump, only for the ball to rebound off the crossbar. Á-S tapped the ball through the hoop to seal a famous win for the Spanish. Wade vs Á-S (A) was tied at 1-1 when Á-S (J) beat Gee and was left unfinished.

The final score in the Test match was England 12 Spain 14, with Spain’s ability to hit big shots in crucial moments throughout the difference between the sides. Out of the 24 hoop 13s contested, Spain won 17.

The next iteration of the annual Test match will be held in Spain on 24-26th March 2023 where England will be looking to reverse this defeat.



**Congratulations to Spain for an excellent performance.**

Many thanks to The Hurlingham Club for hosting a fantastic event and subsidising the formal dinner, to the volunteers on the scoreboards and the livestream, to Tony Bingham for the

organisation on Hurlingham's end, to Jonathan Powe for the many hours of effort as Tournament Director and to Frances Colman as RoT.

**| John-Paul Moberly**

# SIDMOUTH GC OPEN SERIES TOURNAMENT, 9-10 JULY

**T**he inaugural Sidmouth GC Open, part of the Open Series, took place on 9/10th July with a full field of 16 players, including two from New Zealand and others from a broad spectrum of UK clubs.

Block A saw the top three seeds comfortably through to the main knock-out, Nick Archer (Watford), Tim Jolliff (Budleigh), and Ryan Cabble (Nailsea) with Sidmouth club member Philip Harris (6th seed) taking the fourth spot.

The top four seeds within Block B went forward to the main knock-out with Stephen Custance Baker (Taunton Deane) taking 2nd spot above Stuart M. Smith (Budleigh) on hoop difference. Topping this block was Tim Russell, (Roehampton) and in fourth spot visiting Kiwi, Helen Reeves – the only player to take a game from Tim Russell in the block play.

The main knock-out produced a whole array of differing fortunes, Helen again making her presence felt as she despatched top seed Nick Archer in the quarter finals, 7/4, 6/7, 7/5. Although performing very well in recent months, Stephen Custance Baker hadn't quite got what was needed to overcome Ryan Cabble, Ryan taking this quarter final win reasonably comfortably at 7/3, 7/4.

The other two quarter finals produced a win for Tim Jolliff over three games with Stuart M. Smith, and an epic battle between Philip Harris (2hcp) and Tim Russell (-3hcp), with Tim taking the final game as he did the first, 7/5, 5/7, 7/5.

Philip continued his excellent and consistent play in the 7/8th place play-offs, with another notable win over Nick Archer (-3). Ryan Cabble continued his progress in the semi-final, despatching Helen Reeves in two games, comfortably at 7/3, 7/3.

Meanwhile, in the other semi-final, Tim Russell faced another tense three game match with Tim Jolliff, the latter proving methodical and solid, taking the win 5/7, 7/4, 7/4.

In the consolation matches, the Bowl was won by Stephen Custance-Baker, underpinning his return to form, and the Plate block was arranged as an All-Play-All for seven players, resulting in a narrow win for Philip Blake of Kenilworth over Stephen Thornton, based upon 'who beat who' after all other factors were tied.

The main Final between Ryan Cabble and Tim Jolliff began with a powerful start from Ryan, taking the first game 7/5. Tim countered with a methodical reply that gave him the second game with a decisive 7/1 result. The deciding third game did not disappoint the local spectators with a brilliant 15-yard hoop run

from Ryan at hoop 10 and both players demonstrating some excellent jump shots - expertly caught on camera by Ed Dolphin of Sidmouth CC. An equalizer at hoop 12 bringing the score to 6 All gave Ryan some problems for 13, with neither of his balls having a clear shot or view to counter his opponent. However, a short volley of shots resulted in a 7/6 victory for Tim Jolliff, his first, and well deserved, GC Open Series title.

...

On a separate note, I would like to acknowledge Robert Archer, commandeered into service without any complaint - to help me with the scoring, as I was Manager and player! Robert is a stalwart supporter of his brother Nick, travelling the country to different tournaments and always ready to lend a helping hand, for which, on behalf of all Managers, I want to say thank you, Robert!

**I Louise Smith**

**PHOTOGRAPHS Ed Dolphin,  
Sidmouth CC**



## CHELTENHAM'S ASCOT CUP CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIER SURVIVES!

**I** will explain my title. The entry was at its full capacity of 32 with 3 reserves, but started to drop with a few weeks to go which was of no concern as we had 3 reserves. However, with just over a week to go we were down to an awkward odd number of 27 which then finished on 25! At this point I would like to thank those people who kindly offered to drop out to make the number an even 24, one of which I duly accepted. However, right up to the night before there was yet more movement of drop outs which prompted favours

being required and Graham Good saved the day by re-entering to keep the tidy number of 24, which of course led to 4 blocks of 6. This was a positive for me as it allowed me to put the top 4 through from each block instead of only the top 2 if we had an entry as large as 32? Block A was won by the top seed James Death, despite losing to young Sam Cuthbert who finished 2nd on net points. Block B was won by the undefeated 2nd seed Jack Good, followed by an inform Richard Brand. Block C was won by the undefeated Richard Brooks who

was celebrating playing his 2,000th CA ranking game this weekend. (I wonder what he did before croquet?) Lionel 'lucky' Tibble edged 2nd place on net points from Nick Saxton and Graham Good (my saviour). Block D was won by David Goacher followed by Richard Bilton (my hero) who edged ahead of Luis de Alarcon on net points. The last 16 played their best of three that evening, however only the Neil Humphreys tight win over Luis de Alarcon went to the third game. Although, despite the result of 2-0 in the other matches,

# NICK ARCHER WINS GC CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT AT WREST PARK

**S**ixteen enthusiastic croquet players managed to slip away from the celebrations marking the Queen's Platinum Jubilee to take part in an inaugural GC Championship event at Wrest Park. They included Helen Reeves from New Zealand and David "Hoppy" Hopkins from South Africa.

A grey sky and a strong breeze greeted the players as Block play commenced. In Block A, Lionel Tibble (-3) won all his games except one against Les Heard (-1) who ended with a similar record of wins. Joining them in the Quarter-Finals were Tim Crowdy (1) with 5 wins and Tim King (-2) with 4 wins, narrowly pipping Paul Durkin (0) on net hoops. Block B found Nick Archer to be on consistently good form and he topped the list with 6 wins. Chris Roberts (-2) progressed with 5 wins, an achievement equalled by Glynis Davies (2) who surprised 4 lower-handicapped opponents with the improvement in her play. Helen Reeves won 4 games to take the final place in the knockout.

A sharp shower had interrupted play on the Saturday but an overnight deluge followed by prolonged lighter rain

created a watery landscape on Sunday morning. Fortunately, the puddles disappeared within an hour and play began promptly after a certain amount of groundwork.

Helen took advantage of a slight dip in form by Lionel to beat him 5-7, 7-6, 7-3 and Glynis beat Les 7-3, 2-7, 7-5. Nick overpowered Tim King 7-3, 7-4 but Chris and Tim Crowdy had a good battle before Chris won 4-7, 7-4, 7-3.

In the Semi-Finals, Helen recovered from a shaky start against Chris to take him to the 13th hoop in two successive games but lost the decisive one. In contrast, Glynis surprised Nick by winning their first game 7-3, but Nick recovered sufficiently to win their next games 7-3, 7-5.

The Final pitched Nick against Chris for a repeat of the GC Open Final at this venue a year ago. The result was the same with Nick winning deservedly 7-6, 7-4. The playoff for 3rd and 4th places was predictably close before Helen won 7-6, 4-7, 7-5. Glynis was compensated with a handicap reduction from (2) to (1). The Plate was contested on a Block basis and it was won by Dr Ron Carter with 5 wins.

Prizes were presented to Nick and Chris and thanks expressed to Tim King as Referee of the Tournament, to Ron Carter for kindly submitting results to Croquet Scores and to the Manager and Wrest Park members for their various roles in staging the tournament.

**Richard Keighley**  
Tournament Secretary/Manager



## EUROPEAN GOLF CROQUET CLUB LEAGUE

An exciting new event open to all clubs in Europe. The event will consist of two stages: A Qualifying Stage, with group winners progressing to European Club League Finals Weekend in Madrid, Headquartered at Club de Campo Villa de Madrid 20-22 October 2023. Each Qualifying Group will consist of 4 teams of 4 players and be played on an all-play-all basis over a single weekend. In addition to finding the Champion club of Europe the event is designed to provide

the opportunity for international play to club members who might not usually get the opportunity to play abroad. All clubs are encouraged to enter, the commitment for each team is just one weekend and, if victorious, participation in the Finals Weekend. **Enter now for 2022, entries for the 2022 Qualifying Stage close on 31 July.** Entries for the 2023 Qualifying Stage must be received by 31 March 2023. If successful in 2022/2023 it is likely that a second Tier

will be offered in future years (i.e. for teams of players with a DGrade below 1900). We would ask that all clubs that are interested in participating in international play enter this competition in 2022/2023 in order that the demand for future years can be assessed. The full rules of the competition and entry form are attached, or can be found here: <https://worldcroquet.org/>

they were closely contested none more so than young Sam against the number 4 seed Richard Bilton. The father son 'Good clash' also saw young Jack prevail as did the 'local clash' of Nick Saxton over Richard Brand. The quarter finals saw James move swiftly through to face Ivor Brand in the one semi final, who had just persevered over his hero (because he does all my croquet scores for me) Richard Bilton in 3 games. The other semi final also saw a swift Jack Good waiting to play Nick Saxton who had won in 3 games over Ian Shore. Jack continued at a swift pace past Nick in 2 games to reach the final, but was made to wait as Ivor decided to make James fight over 3 games for the right to play in the final.

Therefore, I suspect the delay did not help poor Nick who lost to Ivor for the third spot or young Jack who was never quite in the first game of the final. However, the second game was a much tighter affair as Jack started to match James's powerful clearing shots and consistent hoop running proving why these two were the top seeds. So, congratulations to James who went one step further than his runner up spot in the previous Barter cup by winning this year's Ascot cup qualifier. Meanwhile, the consolation plate was being won by an impressive Jayne Humpreys who only dropped one game to local boy Edwin Bone who finished as runner up. The 'Bowl' event started Sunday and consequently had a 60min

time limit on it and was won by David Goacher who also only dropped one game to another local boy Richard Zhao who finished runner up. The shield was reduced to three players as Ian had to retire. Although, this did allow it to be run as a B of 3 event which was won by 'lucky' Lionel Tibble.

My gratitude goes to my team Richard Brand and Dawn Good ('proud mum' of Jack) for keeping the blocks moving forward over the weekend. Lastly, thank you to Cheltenham's catering team led by Naomi Whitehead and the groundsman Jim for the tight hoops, especially if you happen to be playing a green ball as I did in my semi final (lol).

**Ivor Brand, Manager**

# STEPHEN CUSTANCE-BAKER WINS THE SIDMOUTH GC A LEVEL SERIES 0+

**O**n a weekend that threatened thunderstorms and heavy rain, the croquet gods put a force field around Sidmouth and we were treated to some very pleasant weather. This was great as it complimented the very pleasant Croquet. We even had music from the Sidmouth Jazz and Blues Festival in the distance creating a party atmosphere. A full field of 16 players contested an 8 person block format with the top four progressing to the knockout stages. With competitors from Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Glamorgan, Somerset, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Devon, it made it feel like a national event.

Day one blocks were fiercely contested. However, Block A had its top two seeds qualify in first and second with Colin Britt winning 6 from 7 and only losing to second place Philip Harris who ended with 5/7. Third place in the block on net hoops was taken by Anthony Hardwicke 5/7 and fourth was Chris Jackson clocking up 4/7.

Meanwhile in block B Stephen Custance-Baker's minor setback in game one narrowly losing it 6-7 didn't dampen his spirits as he went on to win his next 6 on the spin ending with 6/7. Andrew Loakes finished impressively in second place after losing to Stephen in the last block game. Both players amassing an impressive +19 hoop difference. Steve Pearson's opening win against Stephen inspired him to go on to qualify in third with 4/7 followed by Mark Buckley who finished Fourth on Who beat whom with 4/7.

Day two. In the best of three, Quarter final, Stephen's impressive display continued by beating Chris Jackson in two straight games, 7-3, 7-1. Colin Britt battled hard to win his Quarter final against Mark Buckley 7-5, 7-6. Andrew Loakes took out the blocks surprise package Andrew Hardwicke by winning 7-4, 7-3. The final epic battle was between two Sidmouth players Steve Pearson and Philip Harris with Steve winning in three games, 5-7, 7-4, 7-5.

Meanwhile in the plate Mike Bilton and Louise Smith were finally getting into their stride. Mike won all four of his block games, Louise followed with 3/4. Third and fourth places were taken by Paul Bradley and Alison Murray with 2/4 both having a better hoop difference than others around them. They would now progress to the plate semis.

The main Knockout Semi-finals were both over in two games. Colin Britt overpowering an up until now impressive Andrew Loakes 7-2, 7-5 and Stephen Custance-Baker gaining revenge for his only loss in the tournament by beating Steve Pearson 7-5, 7-4.

Elsewhere Philip Harris finished ahead of Buckley, Jackson and Hardwicke to win the Bowl tournament and received a lovely engraved Sidmouth glass. Mike Bilton looked pleased as punch with his medal after bettering Murray, Bradley and Smith in the Final to win the Plate prize.

So, to the final.

We were lucky to witness a very solid display from both players in the Final. Stephen took an early lead in game one, but Colin started to find his range and pulled himself back into the game. Stephen's tournament form continued as he showed controlled approach play and confident hoop running to calmly see out the game 7-5. Game two followed a similar pattern with Stephen taking a 3-1 lead. Colin however was not going away and fought back to put himself in front 5-4. A tremendous jump shot from Stephen over two balls at 10 saved him from going 6-4 down on the turn and level it up at 5-5. This set an exciting finish with hoops 11 and 12 shared, and so we were off to 13. Toing and froing at 13 left us guessing but Stephen's control won out in the end and he calmly ran the Golden hoop to take the game and the tournament 7-5, 7-6.

## I Stuart M. Smith

PHOTOGRAPHS Ed Dolphin,  
Sidmouth CC



## SOUTHERN CHALLENGE, 25-26 JUNE

Starting on Saturday at Surbiton CC the teams competing were Cheam, Purley Bury, Ramsgate, Reigate Priory and Surbiton A and B

The matches were played in a rather carnival fashion because in the adjoining field there was a festival going on playing superb music from the 60's that had many competitors strutting their stuff of days long gone.

At the end of the day Surbiton B were leading but having lost to Ramsgate and Surbiton A. The shot of the day and the tournament was by Tod, h/cap 1, for Ramsgate playing Surbiton B. They were leading 6/5 and he had a clear view of the hoop from about 15 feet away until Bernard put his ball in front of the hoop. So now what? Tod studied the situation, took up his

stance and launch the ball into the air, it bounced once then flew through the hoop winning 7/5. Everyone watching were amazed, seen on T.V. but never in attendance.

Sunday sunny but windy, was highly competitive, again Surbiton had lost to Ramsgate and Surbiton A but came out winners to meet Cheam in the semi finals while Surbiton A played Ramsgate. Winners were Ramsgate and Surbiton B whose skipper, Jane Powell left Sue and Bernard to play the doubles and like a true captain threw herself to the wolves, i.e. to play Tod leaving Jo Luck to play Lynn.

Jane duly lost but Jo won so everything depending on the doubles. Mary and Pam did Ramsgate proud matching Sue and Bernard all the way to the Golden

Hoop. Various attempts failed then Sue had a chance from some 11 feet away. Quite a crowd had been watching and cheering every good shot so the pressure was on. Bernard said to Sue "you can do it", she took up her stance, took a deep breath and the ball sailed through the hoop without touching the sides. Cheers and embraces before the presentation and photos. So onward to next year at Southwick to see if Surbiton can make it three in a row. Sincere thanks were extended to Martin Burger who organised the event that went like clockwork without a hitch. Thanks were also extended to Chrissie Osmond and George Noble for the excellent food they had laid on both days.



# GABRIELLE HIGGINS WINS THE GC WOMEN'S OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP

**G**abrielle Higgins fully justified the top seeding in her first GC Fixtures Calendar tournament with a well-deserved victory at the GC Women's Open Championship in mid-June.

Higgins entered the premier Women's GC tournament with an eye on the selection process for next season's GC Women's World Championship, and she truly lived up to the expectations that her A-Class AC credentials indicated. Her strong AC skills saw her display an impressive centre-ball clearing and ball positioning ability and this more than made up for her somewhat lesser GC tactical experience, that grew immeasurably during her 21-game journey to the Women's Open title. Higgins dropped only one 'best of three' games match, and that was an early block game 1-2 defeat to experienced GC tournament player Michelle Leonard, after which she had an unblemished record.

This was the second running of the newly restored Women's Open Championship and it was pleasing to see an increased field of 16 participating at Surbiton, over the smaller number at Nottingham last year, as the event sought to establish a firm place in the Fixtures Calendar.

## Plenty of action in the block rounds

Playing 'best of threes' throughout was a new experience for some of the players and, for those having to go to a deciding game more often, the schedule certainly

provided plenty of game time. Impressing in block A alongside Higgins (Sussex County) were Michelle Leonard (Winterborne Valley), Lynn Percy (Roehampton) and Chrissy Merrington (Sussex County) who all qualified for the Championship knock-out with 6, 5, 4 and 4 match wins respectively.

Whilst in block B, second seed Liz Farrow dropped one match only and was joined in the knock-out by Ann Brooks (Colchester), Jane Pringle (Auckland) and Sophie McGlen (Oxford University) on 4, 4 and 3 match victories.

Of those missing out, the surprise was Glynis Davies (Northampton) who had been in wonderful form the previous weekend at the Wrest Park Championship Series tournament and the very game Andrea Huxley (Guildford), whom everyone felt for when she was forced to withdraw after three rounds due to her long-standing back injury.

Also catching the eye was Patricia Mulcahy (Phyllis Court) who entered as the outsider of the field with an 8 handicap, yet surprised everyone, and herself, by recording three match wins and only just missed the qualification cut.

## Glynis Davies recovers to win the Plate

On day 3, Crunchie the dog was very well behaved when left wooing the sitting-out players, such that owner Jane Powell was able to join a full-participation 8-player Plate Block as a replacement for the injured Huxley.

Glynis Davies rediscovered her form and dropped only one game of her seven, a feat matched by Beryl Hughes (Cheam), and the pair had to be separated by net hoops, which went, by a difference of 5, in Davies' favour, with Sarah Patton (Guildford) and Bridget Goodman (Ealing) only one win behind.

In the other consolation games, Merrington was classified in third place ahead of Leonard, and Pringle ended in fifth place after a well contested Bowl event.

## Higgins wins all to take the Championship

In the Championship knock-out quarter-finals, Farrow, Leonard, Merrington and Higgins progressed at the expense of Percy, Pringle, Brooks and McGlen respectively.

In the semis, Farrow needed a deciding game to get past Leonard, and Merrington put up a good fight in losing in straight games to Higgins, resulting in a final between the top two seeds, in which Higgins turned on the style to win 7-3, 7-4.

This was another highly competitive tournament, played in a convivial spirit and we look forward to another increase in the field next season when the GC Women's Open Championship returns to Nottingham.

## Frances Colman, Director GC Women's Open Championship



**PHOTOGRAPH Chris Roberts:** GC Women's Open Championship 2022 - CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER, Gabrielle Higgins with CA Chairman Samir Patel



**PHOTOGRAPH Chris Roberts:** GC Women's Open Championship 2022 - Plate winner, Glynis Davies



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# JAMES GALPIN & JONATHAN POWE WON THE ENGLISH NATIONAL GC DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP...

**A**nother full entry (16 pairs) gathered in Budleigh on a wonderfully sunny weekend for the English National GC Doubles Championship (Ranelagh Cups). The entry list was weakened slightly by the last-minute and unavoidable withdrawal of Raouf Allim and Tim Jolliff, but there was a good line-up, with a number of previous winners in the field.

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 knockout, Bowl and various play-offs. In Block A, David Cornes & Neil Fillery proved to be a very strong combination and took the top slot, winning 5/7 games and beating the top seeds (James Galpin & Jonathan Powe) along the way. It was tight for the final three qualifying places, with four pairs on 4/7 wins. Tony Butcher & Michelle Leonard took 2nd place, with Peter Balchin & Richard Carline in third. Galpin and Powe were lucky to qualify for the knockout, only scraping through after winning their final block game on the 13th hoop. Last year's winners Louise Smith & Ryan Cabble also struggled; they came 5th in the block, also with 4/7 wins, but were given the fourth slot after Neil Fillery had to pull out for family reasons.

The battle for the top four places in Block B was more straightforward. The 2021 winners, Steve Leonard & Stuart M Smith, were comfortably first with 6/7 wins, followed by Glynis Davies & Jayne Stevens, Jim Field & David Thirtle-Watts and Kevin Connolly & John Taylor who took the other three places, all with 4/7 wins.

The highlight of the day was the 15-yard jump by Ryan Cabble in the final – a remarkable shot. A couple of special mentions: first to Kevin Connolly & John Taylor (Watford) who reached the semi-finals and then won the 3rd v 4th playoff – an impressive achievement; and second to James Galpin, whose solid centre-ball clearances and consistent hoop-running marked him out as the player of the tournament.

Lionel Tibble presented the prizes and paid warm and much-deserved tribute to Budleigh for their warm hospitality and superb lawns. Many thanks to John O'Gorman (Chairman), Richard Quelch (Groundsman) and the rest of the team for doing so much before and during the weekend.

Interestingly, this is the third year in a row that the holders of the Ranelagh Cups have been beaten in the final.

**SUNDAY RESULTS: Plate Final:** Chris Sheen & Dick Strover beat Adam Wimshurst & Andrew Wimshurst 4-7, 7-3, 7-4. 7-4

**Championship: QF1:** Kevin Connolly & John Taylor beat Tony Butcher & Michelle Leonard 7-6, 3-7, 7-4

**QF2:** James Galpin & Jonathan Powe beat Glynis Davies & Jayne Stevens 7-5, 7-6

**QF3:** Jim Field & David Thirtle-Watts beat Peter Balchin & Richard Carline 3-7, 7-6, 7-2

**QF4:** Ryan Cabble & Louise Smith beat Stuart M Smith & Steve Leonard 7-4, 7-6

**SF1:** James Galpin & Jonathan Powe beat Kevin Connolly & John Taylor 7-4, 7-3

**SF2:** Ryan Cabble & Louise Smith beat Jim Field & David Thirtle-Watts 6-7, 7-4, 7-4

**3rd v 4th Playoff:** Kevin Connolly & John Taylor beat Jim Field & David Thirtle-Watts 10-7

**Final:** James Galpin & Jonathan Powe beat Ryan Cabble & Louise Smith 7-5, 7-3

All the scores are available at Croquet Scores: <https://croquetscores.com/2022/gc/english-national-doubles-championship-ranelagh-cups>



## LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE GIRLS..!

**I** have competed in the GC English National Doubles four times and I think it's safe to say that everyone - no matter how well they do - always enjoy the camaraderie alongside the competitiveness of this tournament. I think that statement is under-pinned by some of the long-standing partnerships that compete year on year in the Doubles.

The tournament was over-subscribed for 2022, and what was interesting was that there were five women competitors, two of whom teamed up as a pairing, Jayne Stevens and Glynis Davies, both of Northampton CC. I looked back for quite a few years and don't think this number of women Players has been equalled previously!

Just as impressive is that four of the five women made it to the main event Knock-

Out, with Debra Hayns and her husband Stephen from the Isle of Wight delighted at making the Plate Semi-Final above their grading expectation.

Including Jayne & Glynis, Michelle Leonard (Winterbourne Valley) had teamed up with Tony Butcher (Southchurch) and went through to the main knockout Quarter Finals alongside myself (Louise Smith, Sidmouth) and my doubles partner Ryan Cabble, (Nailsea). Ryan and I went on to the Main Final, losing to the number one seeds, Jonathan Powe and James Galpin, but that's the second year in a row we've made it to the Final of this tournament, and I note that I'm one of only three women to have been part of a Doubles pairing that have won the Ranelagh Cups:- Ryan and myself in 2021, Rachel Rowe (now Gee) with Will Gee in 2011, and Jayne Stevens with Lionel Tibble in

2017.

So, it would be great to see this trend continuing and more women taking part!

### **| Louise Smith**



# THE COACHING PAGES **JOHN HARRIS**

## COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

**T**he following six players have completed all stages of the assessment process and have been added to the CA list of coaches:

### ACCREDITED CLUB-LEVEL COACHES

(Trained to coach beginners and high handicap players at their own Clubs):

Robert Aspinall	Woodhall Spa
Chris Atkinson	Driffield
Roger l'Anson	Ripon Spa
Philip Jay	Huddersfield
James Pitt	York
Rena Souten	Huddersfield

### CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL SIX!

## FLYING THE FLAG!

**V**isual aids can really enliven a coaching session. They offer good visual reinforcement, and they can help to make the complex simple. The best coaching visual aids are often those which are already to hand – mallets, balls, hoops... and corner flags. Here are three simple ways of flying the flag in croquet coaching.

1 – In AC or GC, ask each member of the group to take a flag (any colour) and insert it into the ground in the place they think offers the best option for the next shot. Give the group plenty of time to think through the possibilities and for each person to come to a decision. When all the flags are in the ground, discuss what emerges. Many positions are possible, and each has its merits, which can be discussed non-judgementally. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? What are the opportunities and dangers? Simple discussion of this kind is a powerful way of developing all-round thinking, and is greatly aided by having flags in the ground marking actual positions.

2 – In AC, flags can be helpful to illustrate possibilities for opening shots. This can provide striking visual evidence to those in the earlier stages of the game

that there are many openings to become aware of. Gather together as many flags as the club has, two dozen if you have them. Give students a couple each and ask them to insert them into the ground into favourite opening positions. A group of flags will probably gather on the East boundary and another on the West boundary. Now give each student a couple more flags each and challenge them to find other opening positions... and, if you have enough flags, still more. By now it should be becoming visually obvious that a whole array of opening positions is possible. What about tices? What about supershot openings to lay the foundation of an attack? What about defensive openings into Corner 2 or Corner 4? What about making full use of B Baulk? Why is it not desirable to plant a flag within so many yards of the baulk lines? What determines the "safe" distance from Baulk A or Baulk B? 3 – For more strategic thinking in GC, use the four colours to represent the four primary balls. Ask the group to discuss and agree a good position for the next shot, say by Blue; one of the group then inserts the blue flag at that point, and so on to Red, Black and Yellow. Repeat with a different initial move for Blue and see how that impacts on the next decisions.

## MERIT AWARDS

Congratulations to the following, all of whom have secured AC Merit Awards in the early part of the 2022 season:

### ASSOCIATION CROQUET - BRONZE MERIT AWARD

Chris Atkinson	Heart of Yorkshire
David Fuller	East Dorset June Week
Mark Innes	Nottingham Peels
Alison Larard	Heart of Yorkshire
James Pitt	Heart of Yorkshire
Wendy Robertson	Heart of Yorkshire
Colin Spencer	Heart of Yorkshire
Andrew Whittaker	Bowdon May Handicap

### ASSOCIATION CROQUET - SILVER MERIT AWARD

David Fuller	East Dorset June Week
Guy Hewitt	Longman Cup
Stephen Wingrove	High Wycombe Handicap Weekend

### ASSOCIATION CROQUET - GOLD MERIT AWARD

Barry Holland	Surbiton Super B
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Remember to actually claim your Merit Awards. For AC players it's about reaching the standard set out on CA website. For GC players it's about winning one of the events that are listed on the same page of CA website. Type 'Croquet Association Merit Award Scheme' in Google to go straight there. There is a claim form and any CA event you are playing in has a Manager who can help you make the claim.

**PHOTOGRAPH** Flying the flag at a Northern Academy coaching course



# QUIZ SECTION

ANSWERS ARE PUBLISHED  
ON THE CA WEBSITE

## CROSSWORD

### ACROSS

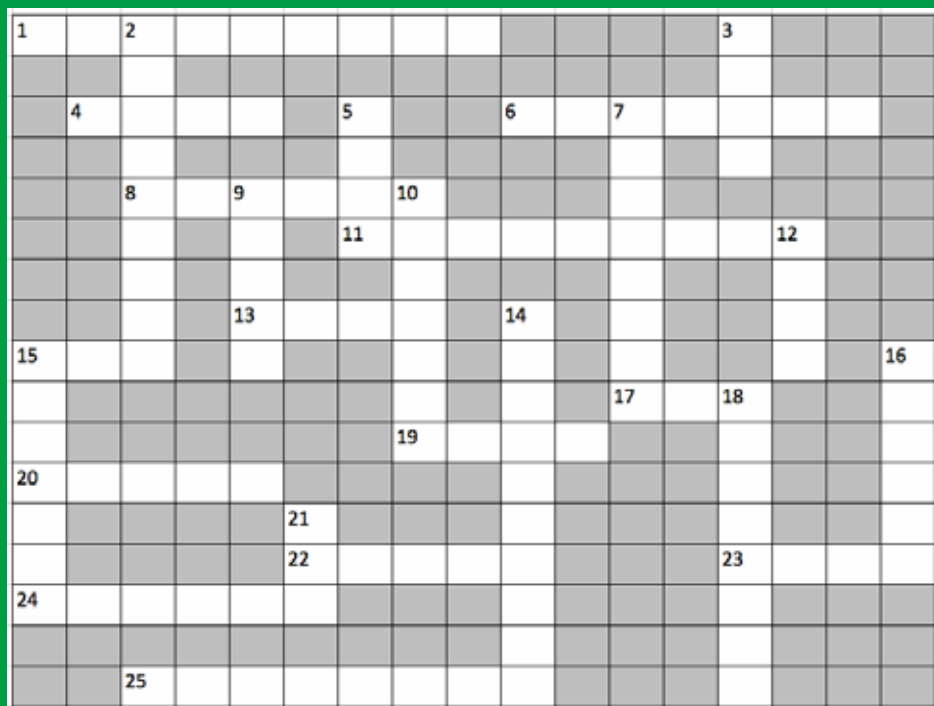
- 1 Watcher (9)
- 4 Ambush (4)
- 6 Advertise (7)
- 8 Participant (6)
- 11 Grass-cutter (9)
- 13 They call her lady (4)
- 15 Decay (3)
- 17 Spinning child's toy (3)
- 19 Firm hold (4)
- 20 Many groups of players (5)
- 22 Mistake (5)
- 23 Wedding Cake layer (4)
- 24 Coffee (6)
- 25 What you preach (8)

### DOWN

- 2 Kit (9)
- 3 Filmed (4)
- 5 Rind (4)
- 7 Rival (8)
- 9 It's a degree (5)
- 10 List the best (7)
- 12 Hurry (4)
- 14 Calculated (10)
- 15 Taking it easy (7)
- 16 Indicator (6)
- 18 Role (8)
- 21 A colourful panda (3)

## AC LAWS QUIZ

**QUESTION:** In a croquet stroke, Ray peels Yellow through hoop 1 in order and runs Hoop 1 in order with Red. During this stroke Red strikes Yellow after it has run its hoop and the balls are touching when



they come to rest. Ray picks up Red and takes croquet from Yellow. Is this correct?

## GC RULES QUIZ

**QUESTION:** Bab (Blue) and Ken (Black) are playing Ray (Red) and Yvonne (Yellow). The score is 5 -5. Bab tries to run Hoop 11 with Blue and the ball comes to rest in the jaws. Ray shoots at it with Red which hits the wire and stops on the non-playing side of the hoop at an angle.

Yellow is also behind the hoop in a good position to clear Blue. Ken shoots at Yellow which ends up in front of Hoop 12. Black finishes between the peg and Hoop 12 wired from Red.

Yvonne deems Yellow. Bab and Ken debate whether Bab should run Hoop 11, give Yellow a certain Hoop 12 and take the match to the golden hoop or whether she should deem Blue and risk being cleared by Red. What is the answer to Bab and Ken's dilemma?

## TAKING THE 'COUNTRY ROUTE' IN AC

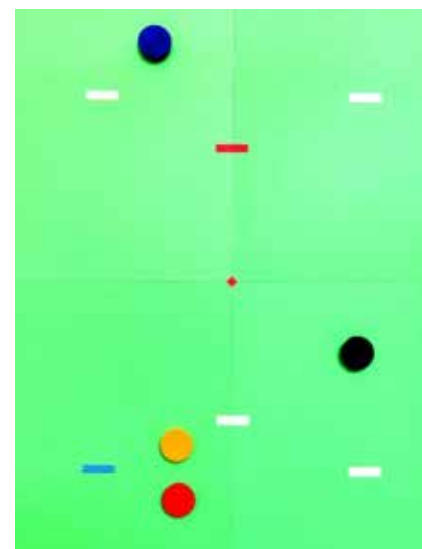
**Y**ou are behind, with a handful of bisques still standing. The clock is ticking. Red has yet to run any hoops. It's time to stamp your authority on the game.

You manage to push Blue somewhere beyond hoop 2 as a poorly placed pioneer, and Black south-east of the peg as a poorly placed pivot. Now you are faced with a long, speculative full roll from the side to hoop 1, which falls well short with both Red and partner ball. Look at the diagram. What to do? The immediate temptation for a high bisquer may well be

to use the continuation shot to place Red in front of the hoop, then take a bisque to run the hoop. Think of that as a one-star bisque: you have improved the position of one ball, Red. Think bigger. Why not use the continuation shot to improve the position of both Red and Yellow? With the continuation shot, play Red to a place that will allow you to roquet or nudge Yellow into a more favourable position ready for a good hoop approach shot. A good choice would be to send Red to a little north-east of Yellow. Then take the bisque. Now you can approach the hoop from a more favourable angle. You will be under much greater control for the hoop approach shot. You will also have a well placed reception ball. Two balls benefit: think of

it as a two-star bisque. Or think bigger still. Why not use the continuation shot to improve the position of three balls: Red, Yellow and Blue? With the continuation shot, play Red off the north boundary: aim to miss Blue, so that it remains just where it is, and for Red to finish up in a position behind Blue where it can roquet or nudge it into a more favourable pioneer position at hoop 2. In this particular case, Blue is near the yard line; it's therefore fine if Red goes off the boundary, as it will be replaced in a good position from which to address Blue. Then take the bisque. Push Blue nearer the hoop as your pioneer. Even a small improvement in the position of Blue is helpful. Then take off from Blue back down to Yellow, and set up to run hoop 1. You

have turned a bisque to correct a poor shot into a three-star bisque – three balls are now better positioned. You are also now well set up to run two hoops.



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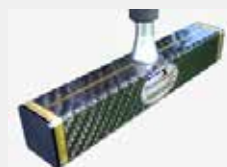
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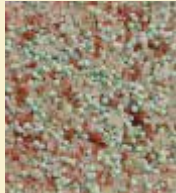
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**PPPs and DEFRA** There has been a lot of hype about PPPs (Plant Protection Products) and the need to register with DEFRA. Fortunately, these products aren't essential for croquet lawn maintenance. I no longer recommend using fungicides to control Fusarium, Dollar Spot and other fungal diseases. Spraying Soluble Iron is much lower cost and very effective. Other PPPs were Crossfire to control Leather Jackets - this has been banned and sheeting is now widely used. Lay a sheet of black polythene on the grass overnight and remove it in the morning. You should find plenty of leather jackets on the surface. Ryde Croquet Club collected 400 one night! Carbendazim was used for worm control until it was banned a few years ago. In the meantime, new methods of controlling worms have evolved and do not require the application of vermicides. The maintenance programme must address the rootzone condition and convert it into an environment that is not favoured by casting worms. Find out more on my website [Turfpedia/Turf Problems/Pests](http://Turfpedia/Turf Problems/Pests).

**Running repairs** Rabbit runs, divots and dents in the lawn are annoying but all in a day's play. These can be repaired using a 6" thin screwdriver. Use this to penetrate under the soil and gently lift it. This is similar to golf divot repairers but they are quite short and aren't as effective for our purposes. Seeding the repair is easy. Just make small holes with the screwdriver and drop 2 or 3 seeds into each hole then close the holes up. For successful germination, the seeded area must be kept moist.

**Fertiliser costs** Thanks to the international situation in Russia and Ukraine, fertiliser prices for croquet lawns have risen this year by around 30% while fertilisers for agriculture have increased by over 300%. So we are quite fortunate.

**| Duncan Hector**

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