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Issue 404 | August 2023



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**The Croquet Association
Issue 404 | August 2023**



Front cover:
OBE at Nailsea
- Terry Young,
Geoff Hughes
and Mike Chan
PHOTOGRAPH
Kathy Wallace

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WELCOME

London has hosted the WCF Association Croquet World Championship 2023. The event was a centre stage showcasing the croquet talent of 80 players from 16 countries, all competing for the most prestigious trophy in Association Croquet history. Congratulations to Robert Fulford who, with an outstanding performance throughout the entire event, lifted the trophy and became The AC World Champion 2023. Once again, we have been treated to some excellent livestreaming, ensuring that players and supporters from all around the world have been

able to enjoy the action from The Hurlingham Club. Following months of preparation, training, testing and organising, we extend our sincerest gratitude to Stephen Allen, Martin Read and Roderick Sheen who made all this possible.

The next issue of the Gazette, to be published in October, will bring you a full report from the AC Worlds 2023. Meanwhile, enjoy some tales from home and afar, discussions and innovations on a variety of croquet formats and local club news; all alongside your regular bi-monthly favourites.

| Alison Maugham, Editor



INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH ON THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CROQUET

As both a croquet player and a psychologist, one of my interests is in the psychology of croquet, and I would like to invite you to participate in an online research study on the psychological aspects of the game which is being conducted at the University of Hertfordshire. If you are interested, please email

Hayley Roscoe (hr21abl@herts.ac.uk), who will send you a link to information about the study. If, after reading the information, you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete, anonymously, some forms online, which should take between 30 minutes and 1 hour.

| David Winter



HIBISCUS COLUMN

One step forward, two steps back. Yes, for many but by no means all high bisquers, the moment comes when the house of cards collapses. I felt I was beginning to get a finger hold on the foothills, not a surge down to single figures as I've seen greater talents do, but a reasonable chance of steady progress. Then the misses began. Short roquets, easy hoops, simple shots I'd begun to take as given. Not any longer. Narrow losses, then more humiliating ones. As confidence bottomed out, I knew I had to stop following it down. No use rivals saying, 'we've all been there'. They mean well, but mostly they haven't. I'd been looking forward to AC tournaments at Tyneside and Budleigh. Time to cancel and take stock. How to identify the fatal flaw? I was already getting top class coaching at Blewbury with positive results. In golf, another game where the failure to repeat movements accurately leads to sleepless nights and blind rage, GASP - grip, aim, stance, posture - is a familiar mantra. Croquet grips are as personal as underwear, selected as the most natural way to do the job. Not correct or

incorrect, just the right fit. Aim is croquet's nightmare. Stalk, a stealthy tiger seeking the most effective approach to its prey. Cast, a flailing dervish addressing the line of attack. Once, twice, five times, eight times: will the next swing be the hit? We've all watched on tenterhooks for the beast to be unleashed, but no self-respecting tiger would risk such a delay. Should you? Again it's up to the individual but, as gamesmanship at least, aggressive multi-cast is a brilliant ploy. Stance? Feet must be level and as close to the mallet as the shot requires. Hands must follow through. Posture? The bottom must be stuck out. Thank you, Einstein. All of which took me precisely nowhere. I didn't have far to look for my light bulb moment: Duncan Sinclair was alone on the Blewbury lawns, as he almost always is. The living embodiment of practice makes perfect, he took the game up early in 2022 and became unbeatable within months. "Have you moved in?" asked one old timer, "I'm thinking of charging you rent". But it's no use practising the wrong stuff. Duncan stalks with feline intent, casts a couple of times with minimum flail, swings

smoothly and allows the weight of the mallet head to project the ball. He does not look up, he brings his hands through, he rarely misses, even at the far reaches of the court. Blewbury's resident swing coach videoed him and could find no fault. As a role model, he was perfect. Watching him thrash me, from the sidelines, provided prime study time. Back home, using one hoop on rough lawn, I did it like Duncan. I forced my hands to grip lightly, my bottom to stick out, my head to stay bowed so that I'd hear the hits rather than watch the misses. Did this pay off? Almost unbelievably, it did. In pursuit of more accessible competition, I entered some SC and GC tournaments. No victory, no disgrace so I dared to sign up for big stage AC at Budleigh in August. Fingers crossed: may I be good and lucky. By that time, I'll have seen the crème de la crème of role models in action in the World Championship finals at Hurlingham. They'll blind me with brilliance and I'll be back to the drawing board, but I wish them a wonderful tournament. May the best person I've met win.

I Minty Clinch



TUNNEL OF TIME

30 YEARS AGO

In the August 1993 Gazette (#228) NEW EUROPEAN EVENT IS BORN

The European Croquet Federation has mandated the Italian Croquet Association to organise the first "European Open" (singles), which will be held from the 24th to the 26th September at the Golf Club "Le Robinie", Solbiate Olona, north of Milan. The 9 founder members of the ECF will each have the right to designate one representative. A further 4 players will be admitted from the qualifying tournament to be held at Lesigny, east of Paris, over the weekend of the 17/18 July. Finally, 3 wild cards have been given by the organising committee to the English, Scottish and Irish Associations, since they will not be able to send any players to Lesigny.

65 YEARS AGO

In the August 1958 Gazette (#34) THE ART OF LONG SHOOTING

One of the questions which the high bisquer is, or should be, always asking

himself is how to improve his long shots. The subject cropped up at a recent Tournament and one player remarked that he recalled seeing some hints a few years ago by Dr. Wiggins on the way to improve long shooting. On browsing through old magazines, I found what I wanted in the May, 1952, C.A. Gazette. It would be interesting to know whether Dr. Wiggins would modify his list of hints which I have taken the liberty of reproducing below.

1. Contrary to general belief, tobacco does not steady the nerves and its smoke does not improve vision.
2. Reading should be reduced during a competition week and only the larger headlines of the newspapers read. This rests the visual focusing apparatus,
3. Never think, "I must hit this one." You won't. Result—Nervous Tension.
4. Avoidance of heavy manual work for forty-eight hours before and during the competition.
5. Medicinally, a pre-prandial small quantity of alcohol is helpful. Larger quantities—fatal.

75 YEARS AGO

EDITORIAL NOTES Long Games

We still are somewhat alarmed at the large number of long games that are played by competitors of minus and scratch handicap in the premier events on the Official Calendar.

It is the custom in some quarters to blame Law 44 for this kind of thing; but we have noticed players themselves dilly-dallying, going into corners to think out the next move which to spectators appears so obvious. During the Championship Meeting at Roehampton one minus player is reported to have taken 26 minutes to make a break from the first hoop to 4-back.

B.B.C. Publicity

We were glad to hear that during the recent North of England Tournament in the Pavilion Gardens, Buxton, the B.B.C. Northern Regional gave croquet some useful publicity. Miss D. D. Steel, who managed the tournament, and Mr. W. T. Bell, a prominent member of the

LIFE AS A TRUSTEE

As most are now aware the Croquet Association is being replaced by a new charitable organisation, Croquet England. The role as a Council Member for the CA will move to being a charity trustee.

The role of a charity trustee is crucial in the effective functioning and success of charities, in our case the governance of the sport of croquet. Trustees play a pivotal role in overseeing and governing the activities of the charity, and ensuring its mission and objectives are achieved while maintaining compliance with legal and ethical standards. Their work involves a range of responsibilities and requires dedication, strategic thinking, and a genuine passion for making a positive impact.

One of the primary responsibilities of a trustee is to provide strategic leadership. They work closely with fellow trustees and the management team to establish the organisation's vision, set goals, and develop strategies to achieve them. This involves analysing the charity's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and making informed decisions to maximize its impact. Trustees bring their diverse skills, expertise, and experience to the table, offering valuable insights and guidance. Financial stewardship is another crucial

aspect of a trustee's work. They are responsible for ensuring the organisation's financial sustainability and sound management of resources. Trustees oversee the budgeting process, monitor financial performance, and review financial reports to ensure funds are allocated appropriately and used effectively. They also play a key role in fundraising efforts, cultivating relationships with sponsors to secure funding for the charity's programs and initiatives.

In addition to strategic and financial responsibilities, trustees are responsible for governance and compliance. They ensure the charity operates in accordance with its constitution, legal requirements, and relevant regulations. Trustees establish and maintain robust governance structures, including policies, procedures, and risk management frameworks, to safeguard Croquet England's reputation and ensure transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, trustees act as ambassadors, promoting the organisation's mission and advocating for the sport. They represent the charity in various forums, including public events such as tournaments, meetings

with stakeholders, and networking opportunities. Trustees use their influence and networks to raise awareness about the sport of croquet, and build partnerships.

In conclusion, the work of CqE trustees is multi-faceted. They provide strategic leadership, ensure financial sustainability, uphold good governance, and act as ambassadors for the sport. Through their dedication and commitment, trustees make a significant contribution. Their work and collective efforts will hopefully play a vital role in the success and continued growth of the sport of croquet.

| Andrew Stewart



IN THIS SECTION WE ONCE AGAIN TAKE A LOOK THROUGH THE 'TUNNEL OF TIME' TO SEE WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE IN THE CROQUET WORLD IN THE PAST, AS SEEN IN THE CROQUET GAZETTE

Committee, provided the B.B.C with information on the game.

But though they put over on the air a correct and therefore valuable version of the facts given them, we understand it was somewhat marred by the introduction which said that most listeners would be inclined to connect the game of croquet with the rectory garden.

Past Gazettes can be found on the CA website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/AboutGazettes&ActionIssues>. Currently there are scans of the Gazette back to 1954, when the current numbering system started, on the CA website.

| Chris Williams, CA Archivist

JOHN PRINCE - A TRIBUTE FROM THE CA

With the passing of John Prince, croquet has lost one of the defining personalities of the last sixty years.

The loss is felt in Britain just as much as in his own country of New Zealand. We became aware of his talents as early as 1963, when he made his debut as a 16-year old player in the MacRobertson Shield series in New Zealand, beating John Solomon, then considered the best player in the world. Then for fifty years he was consistently at the peak of world croquet, and made friends across the world. All his opponents respected him for his exemplary and elegant style of play, and his friendship in both victory and defeat. Losing to him was almost as pleasurable as beating him. His many friends in Britain and around the world will remember him as one of the true giants of the game, and his lasting contribution to the progress of the sport we all love.

| Martin Murray





CHAIRMAN OF THE CA COUNCIL

Our sport is lucky when it comes to the number of people who are happy to give up their time to support activities. I've been keeping count at some recent tournaments – there's the team who arrive early in the morning to mow lawns, set up the courts, put up gazebos, and make the coffee, ready for the players to arrive. No sooner is this finished we find the lunch team arrive, followed in turn by a fresh set of volunteers who prepare tea, and a final clear-up group to put everything away at the end of the day, ready for everything to start again the next morning. Away from events, without the volunteers that look after the courts, club house, equipment, finances, recruitment, and so on, our clubs would struggle to operate. And yet, there always appears to be more to be done. The same applies to the Croquet Association (CA), with volunteers serving on various committees, covering tournament calendars, coaching, handicaps, laws, rules, development, IT and more –

including producing this magazine. Committee membership is refreshed each October, if you think there's any aspect of the CA that you could help be better than it is, please visit the committee's page for more details (<https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=ca/committees>) and get in touch. There are also vacancies for a number of other roles; please see the news pages on the CA website for details. Regarding the transition of activity to Croquet England (CqE), I'm pleased to report that things have progressed well since the last issue of the Gazette. Most visible will have been the launch of the new branding, but that understates the behind-the-scenes work to get us ready for all day-to-day activity for next year's playing season to run under the governance of Croquet England. You can find more details of the planned timeline later in this Gazette.

Samir Patel
Chairman of Council
CqE Board of Trustees



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SHORT CROQUET CORNER

Several clubs are well established as go-to venues for Federation Short Croquet, including Southport, Sussex County and Budleigh Salterton. Now more clubs are welcoming players from anywhere in the country to one-day or two-day events.

The **Blewbury** May one-day tournament was fully subscribed with several visiting players as well as home talent, and featured the full range of handicaps from maximum to mandatory peels. Many games were closely contested – the sign of a good tournament – but it was Blewbury’s own Duncan Sinclair who carried the day with an undefeated scorecard.

Blewbury’s Joe King adds: “We’re seeing the value in Short Croquet for coaching and embedding skills in a more forgiving environment as well as a good game for club afternoons when you can get in several games against a variety of opponents. Last winter’s adjustment to the handicap system is welcome and it’s great to see people improving their Short Croquet handicap accordingly.”

The **Hamptworth** one-day July tournament attracted an even more diverse field, with players from no fewer than ten different clubs across three Federations. Hamptworth’s Hugh Risebrow emerged the winner, edging ahead of runner-up Simon Ling, Reigate Priory, on hoop count.

Hamptworth’s Ann Beard adds: “We scheduled a tournament last year but received no entries at all! Not ones to give up easily we scheduled it again this year and, with a push to all our contacts, reached the full 16. To put it mildly we were delighted.” To adapt the adage, if you run it – and publicise it well enough – they will come.

The season’s focus now moves to the Midlands and North. The **2023 Inter-Club Competition** has seen five Federations represented, with last year’s winners making a sixth team.

Blewbury were granted a preliminary round pass by Colchester, but were narrowly beaten in the semi-finals 6-5 by Nottingham. In the other half of the draw, York scored a convincing 9-2 victory against 2022 winners Bury, then a semi-final 7-4 win with some close games against strong opposition from Chester. The stage is set for a Nottingham-York final and some engaging Short Croquet.

Meanwhile the two-day York Viking Challenge on 9-10 September is now in its eighth season. Like all Short Croquet tournaments, this is a relaxed event, with good gender balance, and welcomes those entering their first tournament as well as more experienced players. Why not get involved?



2023 Inter-Club finalists York are flanked by 2022 winners Bury

ASK THE PHYSIO

Dear Diana, Your article about Getting Fit to Play was very helpful. However, it leads to a follow-on question. What are your shoulder strengthening exercises?

Also, after a good croquet session the tops of my hamstrings feel sore. As a consequence, getting up from sitting also feels sore. Any ideas on counter exercises? Many thanks for any advice you can give.

Ann Evander, Frinton on Sea Croquet Club
E: ann.vander@gmail.com

Hi Ann, In answer to your question, I have designed a short weights programme which includes work on my shoulders as well as my legs.

If you are a ‘caster’, the main muscles you use are your biceps, deltoid and pectorals at the front of the shoulder and your scapula (shoulder blade) and rotator-cuff muscles, mostly at the back, which stabilise the shoulders.

So, for the muscles at the front of my shoulder (to give me some power through the swing) I do the ‘Pull Over - incline’ where I lie on the bench in the gym holding a dumbbell with both hands and I lift it over my head with slightly bent elbows. I have to do it with good control on the way and on the return. I then do ‘the reverse fly’ which is excellent for building shoulder-blade muscle strength, and, finally, biceps curls. There are lots of others I could do but I’d be there for hours!

I also include rowing in my aerobic warm up as that is also very good for the shoulder-blade muscles and, hence, shoulder stability. When I do my aquarobics class we also work on shoulder strength using the resistance of hand weights. As for the problem you are having with the top of your thighs, that is a more difficult question to answer. There are several potential causes for pain in this region. Problems with the lower back can refer pain to the top of the back of the thigh and it can also be part of sciatic pain. More locally your hamstrings do originate from your sitting bones located in your buttocks and some people do develop a hamstring tendinopathy (problem with the tendon where it inserts into the pelvis) but this is unusual. I wouldn’t want to recommend any exercises without knowing the source of the problem, so I’d suggest getting an appointment with a Chartered Physiotherapist who can examine you thoroughly before suggesting the correct exercises. Unless you bend over your mallet a lot and have very tight hamstrings, croquet doesn’t really work the hamstrings particularly hard which makes me think it might be more lower-back related. I’m sorry I can’t give you a more definitive answer, but this is where a proper assessment would be necessary. I hope that’s helpful.

Kind regards, Diana

Diana Wilson, Director of Physio on the River Ltd
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PROUDLY BRITISH

WALTER JONES WHITMORE (1831-1872)



PART THREE

Part 1 and 2 of the Walter Jones Whitmore article can be found in previous issues of The Gazette, numbers 400 (December 2022) and 401 (February 2023). These issues can be found online at croquet.org.uk/?p=ca/gazette.

CROQUET PASSION

By the early 1860s croquet parties had become very popular. Courts were set out in private gardens and on village greens and the first croquet clubs were formed. For want of any recognised authority or rule book, players could only work out their own “house rules”. Walter encountered croquet in the neighbourhood of his home. Always looking for “the next big thing”, he started playing the game and it quickly became an all-consuming passion. He set out two courts at Chastleton House and played constantly, mainly with ladies. He took upon himself a pioneering role. He published a set of rules referred to as “The Field Rules”, first in “The Field” journal in April 1866 and later in book form. In his written works, he discussed different tactics and provided hand-coloured diagrams and illustrations of different strokes.

OPEN CHAMPION

In August 1867, Walter became croquet’s first Open Champion. He designed the tournament and gave himself every advantage. The event was not announced in advance and the field of competitors was largely drawn from his friends and neighbours. Other factors worked in favour of the tournament organiser. It was played according to his own rules, on unusually small courts (20 x 15 yards) with wide hoops (8 inches). His only potentially tricky opponent was Reverend Arthur Law, who subsequently won Open Tournaments in 1870 and 1871 and played at a high level for more than 40 years. From 1867 on, Walter styled himself as “The Champion of Croquet”. One year after his victory at Evesham, his young cousin, Walter Peel (soon to become one of the major figures in the history of croquet) became the game’s first true champion, in a genuinely open tournament at Moreton-in-Marsh.

THE ALL-ENGLAND CROQUET CLUB

John Henry Walsh was an eye surgeon who became “a sports writer of vision and influence”. He managed “The Field, The Country Gentleman’s Journal”. He supported Walter’s endeavour to organise croquet and, by the end of 1868, they had set up the All-England Croquet Club and had recruited 59 paid up members, including Lord Ilchester and Lord Essex. Before Walter could find premises for the Club, he and Walsh, both forceful characters, fell out. Walter was ousted as Secretary of the AECC. After a series of acrimonious meetings of the members of the Club, which both sides, at various times,



claimed to be illegal, Walter conceded defeat (not least because Walsh had all of the money) and founded the rival National Croquet Club.

In 1869 both antagonists staged Open Championships at ad hoc venues – the All-England Club at the Crystal Palace (with 7½ inch hoops) and Walter’s National Club at Highgate School (with 6 inch hoops).

Towards the end of 1869, Walsh’s faction stole a march on Walter by acquiring a leasehold site in Wimbledon, which was to become the Club’s permanent home until 1922, when it moved from Worple Road to its present site in Church Road, on the other side of the village. Walter eventually secured “a modest ground with inferior terrain” at Marlborough Place, St. John’s Wood and organised an Open Tournament there in August 1870. It was a “dismal failure”. There were only 3 entries (Walter Peel, Arthur Law and Walter himself). Arthur Law won.

The General Conference of Croquet Clubs approved a draft code of laws in January 1870 and asked Walter to produce the finished work. Things became acrimonious, as usual. Walter fell out with S.H.C. Maddock, the Treasurer of the AECC and Horace Cox of “The Field”. He later declined to become involved in any further amendments to the laws and “confined himself to the role of elder statesman”, albeit at the age of only 40.

THE NATIONAL CROQUET CLUB

In June 1870 Walter, as Secretary of the National Croquet Club, organised a Grand Croquet Tournament in York and was himself a competitor. The Yorkshire Gentlemen’s Cricket Club was booked. The field was marked out as six courts, each 30 yards by 40 yards and edged with cord. Despite a decision that prizes would not be given at country tournaments, Walter ordered two “emblazoned mallets”. Dr Prior, an NCC Committee member, cancelled the order. Walter scratched from the tournament after winning one round. Nevertheless, he submitted a piece to “Land and Water” praising his own performance: “Mr Whitmore’s play was most brilliant ... he was in especially excellent form ... he would most likely

have come out victor”. In fact, the opponent scheduled for Walter’s next round, the rising star Reverend R Baker of Kimbolton, won the tournament. The York tournament retains its distinctive position as the first tournament played in the north of England and the first truly nationwide tournament played anywhere in the country to agreed national rules. Walter played in the tournaments that he organised on behalf of the NCC but he also entered the AECC Open Tournament, held at Wimbledon in July 1870. Almost inevitably, there was an “unpleasant incident” in the match between the Walters, Whitmore and Peel. Whitmore stormed out with his dudgeon highly elevated. His, probably justified, subsequent protest was rejected and Peel went on to win the Championship (with the 50 guinea silver Challenge Cup thrown in). This led to a fierce correspondence in “The Field” and elsewhere in which Walter accused croquet players in general, and Peel in particular, of cheating.



THE GRAND NATIONAL CROQUET CLUB

Following the amalgamation of the AECC and the NCC, Walter, undaunted, founded the Grand National Croquet Club. In 1871, they held a successful tournament in Oxford and a lavish extravaganza at Aldershot with croquet; horse racing; a cricket match (Aldershot v MCC) and a mock battle and parade involving 1,700 troops. There was a theatrical performance and a splendid ball to conclude the proceedings. Arthur Lillie beat Walter in the final, with a “crack band” playing Offenbach in the background. It was Walter’s last appearance. Walter Jones Whitmore died on 27 July 1872 of cancer of the throat, aged 41. He was a strange character, full of contradictions. He has a memorial at Chastleton Church, in the form of linenfold panelling erected by his sister, Mary. However, his “real memorial” (as the Americans would have it) is the modern game of croquet.

John Reddish

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LETTERS

TEST OF AC SKILLS

An even better test of AC skills (June gazette). " If a ball crosses a boundary then the turn ends. Exceptions: (a) the first stroke of a turn, (b) a ball in hand after a roquet. "

Logical, and simple.

Notes: In most games on grass, play stops when the ball crosses a boundary. In football, rugby and hockey the non-offending side gets a small advantage. In tennis a point may be lost. In golf a stroke-and-distance penalty applies. See Prichard's History page 175 on the double dead boundary : " this was felt to lack subtlety ". **G.N.Aspinnall**

ANYONE FOR A QUICK GAME OF A.C.?

I suggest that the ideal format could be a 14 point handicap game to Advanced Rules with full bisques allocated to each player. This game has always existed but it merits greater participation. A key croquet strategy does focus on gaining the innings and leaving the lawn with a confident plan. The shorter game is more interactive than regular handicap play and opportunities to do both these things abound. The experience of both players is very different with full bisques.

Statements in support of this game could include:

- It is a quick strategic game that all players of 3 and over will learn from.
- Both players are effectively 'scratch' and bisques need to be used wisely.
- Both players learn more about breaks and especially leaves than they do in regular handicap play.
- Games can be over as quickly as a game of G.C. - what's not to like about that!

For years now I have played this format with my fellow club member Robert P-J and we are enchanted by what it gives us. Ahead of today's game, we agreed that only a player who was behind was entitled to use a bisque and this greatly increased the complexity and the need for accurate play during the 'end game' in particular. This is exactly the kind of strategic tussle that 'improvers' should face sooner rather than later.

I believe that this game has a role to play in developing A.C.. The high bisquer quickly learns that bisques need to be used positively or else the game will be lost! This means that they become better much more quickly and they also have much more fun. Meanwhile the lower bisquer has an excellent chance and this too is important. Individuals might like to play single games of this format as a more intensive way of developing croquet strategies. However, the shorter game also lends itself to One Day tournaments and these may form a stepping stone to competitive play within clubs and the Federations. One day it might be nice to see some appear in the very busy CA Fixture Book because they offer a positive and fascinating challenge to both players.

I think that a quick game of A.C. offers a lot of benefits to 'improving players' and I hope that they and those that support their progress give some thought to trying it out. **John Bowcott, Hurlingham**

CROQUET HUMOUR

I read with appreciative interest 'The (Unofficial) History of Croquet' (Issue 402) by David Graham, but feel I should dispute his assertion that no record exists of croquet being played in Britain before the Norman Conquest.

Evidence to the contrary can be found in 'Plus 26 And All That', a work of admittedly doubtful authority which, although sadly too lengthy for inclusion in the Croquet Gazette, can nevertheless be found at laurencevlatham.wordpress.com (on the navigation menu select 'Stories I Have Tried To Write', where there is a subheading for 'Croquet').

For those interested in a different style of croquet humour, the cartoon adventures of Hoopopotamus, which used to be published in black and white in the Gazette, are now available in full colour on the same website, accompanied by explanatory notes for the non-playing reader. **Laurence Latham**

UNOFFICIAL HISTORY...

The two instalments of this article (April and June) made very interesting reading. However, as a student of the history of ancient civilisations I would like to know if this fascinating and groundbreaking account is any more than a very skilfully presented spoof which many croquet players like myself can use to amuse friends at dinner parties or use as a getup to fancy dress events. Answer please.

John Woodward, Member

Response from the Unofficial Historian:

I am glad you enjoyed the articles, and with regard to whether they are a spoof, I can confidently predict that any fact checking exercise would determine that at least 5% of the information is true. I do not describe myself as a scholar, but I have visited all of the sites referred to in the latest article. However, I would proffer a word of warning, which is that you may find that your invitations to dinner parties may become less frequent. **David Graham**

MYSTERY OF THE MISSING YELLOW



They sought it here, they sought it there, they sought that yellow ball everywhere.

Just like the Scarlet Pimpernel, Ben Rhydding's missing primary proved elusive when it disappeared from the club in the middle of last season.

AC DOUBLES

It is now reasonably well known that AC doubles games may be played either in the conventional form or, by agreement, as alternate stroke. I have heard it suggested twice in recent weeks that this means that, in the same game, one pair may play the conventional form and the other pair alternate stroke. Could you please clarify the present position and also tell us where we can find the rules which govern this? **Stephen Parish, Surbiton**

Response: As you may have read in previous Gazette editions, various proposals were put to Council in 2020 and 2021 that the Competitive Play Working Group were tasked to pick up. Such initiatives, included things like:

- Relaxation of white clothing rule for some club tournaments
- Promotion of short croquet
- Promotion of alternate stroke doubles (ASD)

At its end of 2022 season meeting, and as discussed in the December 2022 Gazette, the Association Croquet Tournament Committee (ACTC), noted the lack of progress on these matters and decided that it would look into one specific point itself:

With regard to alternate stroke doubles, should independent decisions be allowed?

At present, both pairs need to agree to play ASD. Should one pair be able to play ASD regardless of the views of the other pair? Is there any reason why one pair shouldn't play alternate stroke regardless of what the other pair does?

The ACTC has picked up the baton with regards to this specific point and is carrying out trials in three specific 2023 level play events:

- The Mixed Doubles Championships
- The Inter Club Championships
- The Mary Rose Inter Club Trophy

If the trials go well, it is envisaged that for level play doubles events at least, changes will be made to regulations in time for the 2024 season.

Feedback to date has on the whole been positive. All comments are welcome, to me and/or to the Gazette editor. **Brian Havill, Chair, ACTC**

E: brian.havill@outlook.com

The lawns, on the banks of the River Wharfe near Ilkley, were searched. No blade of grass was left unturned. The pavilion and storage shed were scoured to no avail. Members were grilled to see if anyone had any clues. Even rabbit runs in the grounds were checked out to see if the ball had gone to ground.

But the mystery was solved in June when a member of the neighbouring bowls club found it on the river bed at a nearby nature reserve.

Mike Beatham was in a canoe on the Wharfe, downstream from the club, clearing debris with warden Steve Parkes. There among the detritus and lost golf balls was the prodigal yellow. Bowler Mike had recently been trying his hand at croquet and thought it must have been from BRCC. So it is now reunited with its red partner.

"It must have been washed into the river when we were flooded," said chair Alan Ebbutt. "It's an amusing story with a good ending." **Stephanie Ferguson**

AC HANDICAPPING

I am the AC club handicapper at a small but lively one-lawn club, Caversham, and I've been doing my best to follow official guidelines. Am I alone in finding that the recommended process, namely seeing how many bisques it takes someone to do an all-round break, simply doesn't work?

Typically we have a handful of new joiners trying AC every year, and we start them with a handicap of 24, then assess them properly at the start of their second season. By that time it's fairly clear that some should stay on 24, while some ought to be 18 or so. But every single one that I've assessed fails to make an all-round break with 24 bisques. This may be partly because our lawn is imperfect. Even a scratch player can't rely on getting round every time when the lawn has unpredictable bumps and hollows. But I think there's a deeper reason. What tends to happen in these sessions is that players are forced to attempt shots that are too difficult for them. In real life, if they've placed their pioneer on 3 hopelessly short, the best strategy against another high-handicap player is probably to work out the best way of finishing the turn with a good leave. But in the handicap test, we ask them to use bisques to recover the break, and that typically takes more than one bisque per hoop on average.

So I always end up making a subjective judgement. These players will initially spend most of their time playing other high-handicap players within the club, and it's the relative handicaps that matter. But if the official process isn't working for us, is there a better way of doing it?

Michael Kay, Caversham Croquet Club

Response: Thank you for your observations on the test described for the setting of initial AC handicaps, which as the relevant handicapping CA webpage says, 'may' be used. Online visit: www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/association/handicapping/initial. There may well be factors that conspire against players being able to perform the task described well or moderately, and the description of your club courts could well be one of them.

That said, we have had no other concerns raised that have given rise to the thought that the suggested test is other than suitable for the purpose and, on the face of it at least, it has served croquet well since it was first introduced 30-40 years ago.

The important aspect of this is that we maintain a consistent measure of abilities (including through handicapping) across the domain, and it is only by all grades of handicappers following, or attempting to follow, the same procedures, such as this initial test, that we are able to strive for uniformity.

I take your point that new players or those with very high handicaps tend to play generally within their own clubs and therefore relative handicaps with their club mates will seem all that is important, but with Federations running handicap team leagues and both CA and its member clubs offering handicap tournaments, consistency is everything.

My advice is the same as that which I offered to a recently inquiring club that had only a half size court facility, and that is to seek the assistance of a neighbouring club with a more 'playable' surface for the purpose of undertaking a sample of your initial handicap assessments and then, if you cannot take all your new players on that journey, at least you will have some properly assessed players to use as a 'benchmark' with which to judge others.

I am sure that most clubs will be happy to offer the assistance of their facilities for such an exercise, especially in quiet periods.

Chris Roberts, Chairman, CA Handicap Committee

MRS HILL AND THE MAIDSTONE CONNECTION

Anyone familiar with the origins of the Croquet Association will be aware of the role played by Mrs Hill and the tournaments she arranged in Maidstone. Though the traditional story perhaps overstates Maidstone's significance, the idea for a new Association does appear to have been actively discussed at the Maidstone tournament in August 1895; and the first General Meeting of the Association, at which its officers and Committee were formally elected (though they had already been active, probably since the Ascot Heath tournament at the start of the 1896 season) took place at the Maidstone tournament the following year.

But how did Mrs Hill – a sometime Cheltenham resident – come to be organising croquet tournaments in distant Maidstone, and what was her connection with Walter Peel, Arthur Law and the other leading revivalists? The second question is easily answered. Before her marriage in 1870, Miss Clara Higgins (like Peel and Law, then in her early 20s) was a keen croquet player and, with other Cheltenham players, took part in the Oxford tournament of 1869 on Merton College cricket ground. This was won by Walter Peel, defeating Arthur Lillie in the final, and included Peel's sister among the competitors. She most likely also played in the early Cheltenham tournaments, and won the Ladies event there at the post-revival 1900 meeting. So her connection with the revivalists was of long standing. She became Mrs Hill when she married William Hill, also from the neighbourhood, in October 1870. He rose through the ranks of the Gloucestershire militia to Colonel by 1888 and was knighted (KCB) in the 1911 Coronation honours. They remained in Cheltenham, but Mrs Hill soon turned her sporting attention – as did many others – to the new game of lawn tennis.

And there the story would probably have ended, had it not been for an unfortunate sequence of events in the year her husband

was promoted to Colonel. She was by this time a well-known tennis player and, with a Miss Rooke, had entered a tournament in Nottingham but had been quickly defeated. They then decided to try their luck at Macclesfield but, fearing the comments from their Cheltenham circle were they to lose quickly again, entered under assumed names. This attracted the attention of the sporting press, who implied disingenuous motives (including pot hunting and of seeking to play at the wrong handicaps) and alleged an unpleasant commotion when their true identities were discovered. The Colonel, his wife and Miss Rooke sued for libel. The case, which was widely reported, was heard in late May 1889. They were successful, being awarded damages and costs – though not without the judge pointedly expressing the hope that they would not go into handicaps under the wrong names any more, as it was sure to lead to misunderstandings.

The court of public opinion seems to have been less favourably disposed than the jury, because by the end of the year the Hills had left Cheltenham for Tovil, then a village on the southern fringes of Maidstone, to what had been advertised as 'a first class family mansion surrounded by 16 acres of meadow, orchard, gardens, lawns and shrubberies'. It is perhaps no coincidence that the first Maidstone croquet tournament, in 1894, was held on Lock Meadows just across the Medway from Tovil (though later tournaments and the early CA AGMs were held at the newly-constructed Athletics Ground a little further north). The tournaments continued until 1905, attracting many of the best players. Mrs Hill is reported to have won her CA Silver Medal at the 1897 event, though some sources date this achievement to her later Cheltenham success in 1900.

I Ian Bond

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2024

The Subscription rates for 2024 are shown in the table below. Individual rates remain unchanged from 2023, Club rates have been increased broadly in line with inflation. As outlined in the transition timetable it is anticipated that both Clubs and Individuals will join the new CIO Croquet England.

I Ian Burridge, Hon. Treasurer

Individual 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	£17.00		£5	
Discounted	£11.00		£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	

CA TO CQE TRANSITION TIMETABLE

Planned timetable for transition of activity from the Croquet Association to Croquet England

- October 2023 – Final Croquet Association Annual General Meeting.
- November 2023 – Clubs and Federations invited to join Croquet England as Affiliates. Members of affiliated clubs become Standard Associates of Croquet England from 1 January 2024.
- December 2023 – All categories of individual subscription become available for individuals to become Associates of Croquet England from 1 January 2024.
- January 2024 – Associates of Croquet England invited to become (voting) Members of Croquet England.
- February 2024 – Croquet England Tournament Entry System opens for 2024 playing season.
- March 2024 – First Croquet England AGM.
- October 2024 – Second Croquet England AGM (and annually thereafter).

I Samir Patel

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OBITUARIES

JOHN HOBBS 1932 - 2023

We're sad to have to let you know that John Hobbs died on Tuesday 6th June 2023 in Pembury Hospital after a shortish illness.

He was born in Beccles, Suffolk in 1932 to a shoe repairer, but managed to get to Oxford University reading Physics. After this he moved into Operational Research for Metra Consulting and worked for two years in Chile, surviving an earthquake and driving up a volcano that exploded the following day. He also worked in the USA and returned to the UK, eventually becoming Operation Research Manager for Rank Hovis McDougall.

Coming back to England, in addition to his work he was also Chairman of Governors for Old Palace School in Croydon for a time, then moved to Essex. This is where he found his love of croquet, then helping set up the Newport Club lawns.

He retired at 55 and looked for a hobby, wood-working! He started making mallets and exporting many hundreds of them around the world. He then moved down to Argos Hill and Rotherfield and became a member of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Croquet Club in 1988 and a founder

member of the Mayfield Wine Society – he really loved red wine!

The mallets helped pay for a lifestyle of international travel and wine, traveling to America, Canada, Russia, China, South Africa, Egypt, Europe and returning to Chile to see all the places they couldn't see with two young kids!

Many of our club members used his mallets, which had a unique mechanism to adjust the orientation of the shaft to suit your grip and swing. Several World Champions used them to win their titles, so he must have done something right! His workshop was a wonder to behold!! He was Chairman of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Croquet Club for 3 years from 2001-4 and served on the Committee for 15 years. He was made an Honorary Member in 2020 in recognition of his long service for the club.

John was an excellent croquet player, winning several external events including the Over-75's in the National Veterans event in 2011. He retired from playing just four years ago following a stroke.

He was our coach (having qualified on the CA's first coaching course) and AC referee

for many years and all will remember his skills in these, as well as his captaining and managing teams.

A true gentleman.

| Jon Diamond



DAVID HEFFILL



It is with great sadness we announce that David Heffill has passed away suddenly at his home in Ilminster.

David was an accomplished bridge player, founder of the local Mah-jong Club and croquet player. He was ideally positioned to attract mah-jong players to croquet and vice versa to the benefit of both clubs. He trained in the hospitality business and lived and worked around the world, including a spell as a ski instructor in Austria. David was also an experienced Croupier.

David joined Dowlish Wake Croquet Club as a novice in 2014 and quickly got to grips with the game. He was soon a

regular in our handicap league teams, being a formidable opponent especially with a couple of extra turns in his pocket. During his spell on the Club committee, he was one of the principal supporters in persuading the Committee to enter a team in the newly formed High Handicap League. David will be remembered for some of his outrageous jump shots and his willingness to help others improve their game. Only a few days ago I overheard the striker's partner suggest she play a difficult jump shot to which she replied "I am not David Heffill you know!!". David is sadly missed.

| Keith Bryant, Dowlish Wake CC

CUPPERS AT CAMBRIDGE 2023

The competition this year saw 27 teams face off in a five round competition. There were four players in each team, split into pairs, so that each match consisted of two doubles games. It was a joy to see a variety of people involved: similar numbers of undergrads vs. postgrads, a broad swathe of different subjects (not too STEM-heavy this year), and though the final didn't show it, a good many women playing too. The future is bright for next year's Croquet Cuppers.

THE FINAL This year's final was staged in

Emmanuel's revered and beautiful Old Court, courtesy of the Emmanuel Master and Bursar. They were more than happy to let us play there, in no small part because both teams in the final had significant Emmanuel representation.

Emwyn, the combined Emmanuel and Selwyn team, edged into the final with some very tight first few games: after a bye in the first round, they won the next three by 3 hoops, then 2 hoops, and only 1 hoop in the Semi-Final! Goes to show that any of those three unfortunate losing teams were of Cuppers Final quality.

Meanwhile, the Emmanuel I team saw off the early competition with some convincing wins, cheerfully beating the first two teams by 14 hoops. Their 21-13 victory over Corpus Christi in the semi-final was similarly impressive, given Corpus' strong early games.

Both teams were raring to win, in sight of friends, opposing team fans, and the college porters.

PRIMARIES The primaries kicked off and all balls passed swiftly through hoop 1. After some flustering at hoop 2, Emmanuel I with blue-black took the lead; after a few shots, they reached hoop 5 and peeled! Emwyn with red-yellow managed to hit in, but in a rare turn of events, each ball ended up

CROQUET, CAKE AND COFFEE AT RIPON SPA CC



For the second year in a row Ripon Spa Croquet Club hosted a 'Croquet, Cake and Coffee' morning for Harrogate Multiple Sclerosis group.

Twelve players, including 3 wheelchair users, came to play. Everyone had a wonderful time and said that it was 'amazing fun!' Coaches Ted Flexman and Roger l'Anson and their helpers Sue l'Anson and Andrea Widdison put the players through a series of fun games with hoops of various sizes, with some players keen to 'get going' and try a game on a half size lawn. Many were surprised to discover the accessibility of the sport, with

the knowledge that a mallet can also act as a walking stick and an aide to balance. The morning ended with copious cups of coffee and many cakes. A perfect end to an excellent morning.

| Andrea Widdison



BURY CROQUET CLUB - ANNUAL NATIONAL CROQUET DAY EVENT ON SATURDAY 27 MAY

Whitehead Park was the venue for the club also celebrating its 35th anniversary.

The event, on a gloriously sunny day, was visited by the recently-installed Mayor of Bury, Cllr. Sandra Walmsley with consort James Bentley. Other visitors included Bury North MP James Daly, Elton Ward Cllr. Martin Hayes, and North Manor Ward Cllr. Liam James Dean, all of whom enjoyed a game of croquet. Club Chairman Roy Spencer said "what a fantastic day for our event and delighted to welcome so many visitors and elected representatives who played croquet in ideal conditions".

The mayor, on her Twitter page, said "We are croquet converts". An added bonus that visitors enjoyed was a fly past of the Battle of Britain

Memorial flight taking part in the ELR 1940s weekend. A number of participants signed up to take free taster sessions and others joined the club on the day.

This year, following the sad loss of a long-standing member to MND, the entrance donations and the T-shirt raffle proceeds will be donated to the MND Association.

The event was filmed by LMS video and available to view on YouTube Today in Radcliffe channel.

PHOTOGRAPHS The Mayor, Cllr. Sandra Walmsley, running a hoop. Visitors enjoying the sun whilst trying croquet. Bury North MP, James Daly, with club Chairman Roy Spencer. Mayoral Consort James Bentley tries his hand. Club members with Mayor Cllr. Sandra Walmsley and Consort James Bentley.

| Roy Spencer



wired to its partner ball.

Once out of that sticky situation, Emwyn peeled through 4, while Emmanuel I retained their lead by making 5 with both blue and black. But Emwyn wasn't done yet: after making 5 from three yards, yellow joined red and set up for a croquet shot on the next turn. But behold, on the next turn red split up blue-black: the comeback was on.

The next few shots danced around hoop 6, with both teams making some difficult hit-ins when their balls had been split up. Out from the mess rose Emwyn, with red-yellow pegging out while blue-black were on peg and 6 respectively. A very tight game ended in Emwyn taking the lead!

SECONDARIES Alongside the nail-biting primaries game, the secondaries took a more sedentary start, taking a while to make hoops 1 and 2. Emwyn's white-pink failed an ambitious peel from halfway to hoop 2, but otherwise there was not much of note.

Emmanuel I with brown-green took the lead, plodding through hoop 3 before scatter peeling through hoop 4! With white-pink still stuck at 3, they pressed on, peeling green through 5 (but 5 then failed by brown). Emwyn failed to catch up, letting brown make 5, run 6 and then take off to pink-white (from an awkward jaws croquet shot). Green-brown stayed comfortably in the lead, and after another bout of excellent

hit-ins from both teams, they finished the game with white-pink both still on hoop 4.

FINAL RESULT Emwyn vs. Emmanuel I: Primaries: 14-11; Secondaries: 6-14; Overall: 20-25.

Emmanuel I wins!

Enjoying the final were spectators from Emmanuel, friends of the teams, and committee members such as myself. Pimms alongside scones, cream and jam were provided, funded by generous support. We were especially happy that the Emmanuel gardeners dug into the scones, given that they had prepared the Emmanuel lawn only the day before.

| Joseph Steane



PARSONS GREEN CROQUET CLUB REOPENS

After being closed for 9 years, Parsons Green Sports Club finally reopened with a host of brand new club facilities in Summer 2020. Originally founded in 1885, the club has a long history and hosted a very active croquet membership. Fast forward to 2023 and Parsons Green is now a busy sports club offering a large number of tennis courts, squash courts, bowls lawn and croquet lawn, as well as a snooker room, brand new changing facilities, private members' bar and large function room for events.

Primarily, members are here for the tennis but with a growing interest in croquet there is hope again to revive the croquet section. Having already re-staked our borders to now encircle the bowls lawn, employing our new Foxy Hoops from the CA, croquet is on the rise. Couple that with the series of social events we ran last year in collaboration with Croquet & Cocktails, it's clear to see why some members are already eyeing up their next hoop over their next volley.

The club is located in South West London, close to the River Thames and a stone's throw from the Hurlingham Club. Unlike Hurlingham however, there's no long waiting list to join as a croquet member and the annual fees are very reasonable. We are currently looking for new croquet members, so now is your opportunity to join us at this friendly and inviting club. During the summer months we run weekday evening croquet sessions, followed by equally exciting sessions in the members' bar. We also organise friendly matches with some of our local croquet clubs. Plus croquet members get access to bowls, snooker and club social events too.

So the next time the sun is shining in London, come for a hit around and check out the excellent club facilities.

Access must be arranged in advance, so please drop me an email: duncan@croquetandcocktails.com

I Duncan Catterall



OBE'S AT NAILSEA CROQUET CLUB

It all started many years ago when Terry and I were "down under" in New Zealand and before the world of croquet had come into our lives.....in retrospect, how sad was that!

We had been travelling around beautiful South Island and were headed up to take the ferry crossing from Picton to Wellington when this guy seemed to appear from nowhere, stopped us in our tracks and said "I've got me OBE!"

Being a well brought-up Surrey girl, I immediately put out my hand to shake his and said, "How fabulous, and what was that for?", "OVER BLOODY EIGHTY, MATE!"

How we all laughed, little knowing that it would sow a seed for years to come. Returning home, we settled in Cleeve, a small village just south of Bristol, and saw a Croquet Open Day at NDCC being advertised, went along and were hooked. But it was a short while later that Terry was chatting to a fellow club member Ian Telfer, who very sadly is no longer with us, about the extremely long periods of sitting out during the AC games and the subject



of the 10-Shot Game, which Ian had played, came up.

It's AC rules with a couple of twists and keeps the players on their feet for the 50 mins.

A minimum of 2 shots are taken and a maximum of 10 each time a player goes on the lawn. This ensures that you can immediately get going, but once you've taken your tenth shot you leave the lawn (of course you may have broken down well before the 10th shot) remembering after the second shot you are into AC rules.

Some cunning play, with the other added twist being that with your first shot you're allowed to play "off the lawn" bringing your ball back to the boundary and playing your

second shot from there, having set up a rush. But that's your second shot and you are now back to AC rules.

Counting out loud is encouraged by both player and opponent as it can be very difficult to stop at 10 if you've just played a roquet or run a hoop! But stop you must. This keeps the game moving, is fun and not just for 'OBE's!

Terry decided he'd have a trophy made and asked for Nailsea to set aside a day in the annual calendar for this fun event. The first tournament we had was in 2015 and to add a bit of glamour we asked players to dress 1930's style....boaters, blazers, flares and plus fours all came out of the cupboards... and since then people have added their own dress code - see picture below!

We've got a faithful following of players from our local West Country clubs who catch up with each other over lunch and settle back to tea and cake at the end of the day with the presentation. All extremely relaxed - well isn't this how life ought to be when you've earned your 'OBE'!

I Libby Howard-Blood

BEN RHYDDING CROQUET CLUB - 'PIMMS AND PLAY'



Ben Rhydding Croquet Club in Yorkshire celebrated the launch of Croquet England with a special Pimms and Play afternoon on their lawns near Ilkley.

Rounding off National Croquet Week, members played GC and enjoyed Pimms and nibbles to mark the transition of the sport's governing body from The Croquet Association.

The event was also a chance to welcome newcomers to croquet from Ilkley and District U3A. BRCC runs training courses for the U3A every spring as part of their community outreach programme. The recruits were able to practise their new-found skills in fun games with more experienced players. Headed by coach Cathy O'Brien and club captain Penny Clark, the courses are very popular and have generated new club membership.

"It was nice to start off the season in good spirits, not only celebrating Croquet England's charitable status but welcoming new members", said BRCC chair Alan Ebbutt.

PHOTOGRAPH Cheers! BRCC chair Alan Ebbutt toasts Croquet England with committee member Sally Varley, who did the catering.

| Stephanie Ferguson



A NEW CLUB IN HAMPSHIRE

In April 2022 more than 40 people attended the Inaugural General Meeting of the proposed Hartley Wintney Croquet Club. They elected a Committee and made plans to create a new club at the Lucy Pygott Centre in the village, which lies between Basingstoke and Fleet. The Centre is maintained by the Parish Council and is home to the local Cricket Club. The croquet courts were to be created on the outfield.

In October 2002 the CA offered the Club a development grant of £5,000. They used this and other funds from the Parish Council to purchase a "state of the art" battery-operated, Allett mower and to pay for professional ground work. By May 2023 they were able to get the courts to the point where they were ready for play, albeit, as expected at that stage, they were very slow.

Members resolved to continue to work on the courts throughout the summer and to improve their quality significantly. They also engaged local contractors to install a high-pressure water feed and associated wide-bore hoses to enable them to water the lawns as needed.

All of the playing equipment that the club needed to get started was provided free of charge by the CA (by means of a start-up grant of hoops, mallets, balls, pegs and flags via the Development Committee) and by the Southern Croquet Federation.

Training sessions in Golf Croquet commenced at the start of June 2023. These sessions were conducted by members of the committee, who are all experienced croquet players.

Hartley Wintney Parish Council agreed that there would be zero rent in the first year and in subsequent years the rent will only be £300 per annum. The rent includes the use of the lawns and the use of the facilities in the pavilion. The pavilion and associated garage have a sophisticated alarm system which will mean that all croquet equipment can be safely stored. The whole site is secured by an electric gate. All members will be provided with a personal fob to gain access.

The Club has now started planning Phase 2 of the Project set out in their original overall Business Plan. Since they have managed to complete Phase 1, with the help of the Parish Council, the CA

and the Southern Croquet Federation, they have not yet needed to seek financial help from any other organisations. This means that they still have various other potential sources of funds to help them with Phase 2.

The Club remains confident that they will complete their Project and thus establish 2 full-size croquet courts at the Lucy Pygott Centre; establish a fully functioning, all-year-round croquet club catering for both Golf Croquet and Association Croquet that will be open to all; and provide an opportunity for everyone in the area to develop their croquet skills and enjoyment of the game in both a social and competitive context.

| Steve Airton, Chairman



THE WESTERN CHAMPIONSHIP

East Dorset Croquet Club welcomed us with open arms and a lot of sunshine as we started the knockout for The Western Championship. There were 8 players in the tournament, so with round one being the quarter finals, first congratulations must go to David Fuller. Not only was this David's first championship, it was his first Championship quarter final and to top it off, he only went and took a game off David Maugham. This proved to be Maugham's third biggest upset in the rankings, so although Maugham did go on to win the match, Fuller takes the first big win of the tournament.

This side of the quarter finals was a little bit Maugham heavy, with Alison Maugham winning 2-0 against Andy Myers to face 'the other half' in the semi-final. Mrs Maugham and Myers opted to play Super-Advanced rules, although neither player was quite prepared for the amount of interaction the two games provided. I will spare the details, but let's just say it would've kept the commentators busy if there had been any.

The other side of the knockout found Jonathan Powe beating Jeff Dawson and Duncan Reeve winning against David Kendrick. This then became the semi-final to watch, as the Maugham v Maugham semi-final predictably saw Mr Maugham through to the final with a couple of tidy TPs. Mrs Maugham found a nice glass of red wine to console herself.

Powe v Reeve gave us excellent entertainment where both players showed the onlookers what being a minus 2 player is all about. Reeve took the third game with a TP to meet Maugham in the best of 5 final, which Maugham won in three quick games. Maugham looked in control at every moment of the match, and although the second game saw Duncan close

to the finish line, Maugham's shooting just proved too good to compete with.

Since the main event had finished before 3pm, all eyes turned to the Plate final between Mrs Maugham and Jonathan Powe. In a three ball ending following Powe's ball being pegged off, it was Powe who went on to win the game with one final superb hit in and finishing turn.

■ Mrs Maugham



MIDDLESEX WON THE 108TH AC INTER COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

Held at the end of May at the Sussex County and Compton Croquet Clubs. Middlesex's triumph was their 28th title since the event was first played in 1897, but their first since 1980 in a six-player team event. Their win in 2021 was in the COVID-19 reduced event when counties played with teams of four.

Middlesex, led by Nick Parish, went into the event as the clear favourites with their squad Gavin Carter, Eugene Chang, Tom Coles, Harry Fisher, Gabrielle Higgins, Ian Lines, Nick Parish and Jose Riva featuring a combined handicap of -15.5. This year's slogan for their now-familiar team shirts appeared to have been inspired by Jose: "Hasta el rabo, todo es toro", which literally translates as "Until the tail, everything is bull", the Spanish equivalent of "It's not over until the fat lady sings". This proved to be rather appropriate.

Going into the final day Middlesex were unbeaten, but suffered a surprising 2-1 defeat in the morning to Hertfordshire, who had been strengthened by the addition of David Maugham, following the non-appearance of Cheshire in the previous year's event. This left an effective final in the last round with Berkshire, who had also only lost one match – again to Hertfordshire. The whole event came down to the final game between Gabrielle Higgins and Ian Lines of Middlesex and Joe King and Richard Huxley of Berkshire. With the match tied at 1-1, Middlesex were on peg and penult and Berkshire on 3 and 4 back when time was called, with Joe, who was for 3, with an easy start. Unfortunately, Joe mis-approached 5 from a few inches away giving Middlesex the title. This also allowed Somerset to pip both Berkshire and Hertfordshire to the runners-up spot on games won and who-beat-who.



County	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Essex	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Hertfordshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Berkshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Middlesex	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Sussex	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Gloucestershire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Wiltshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Devon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Worcestershire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Shropshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Northamptonshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Warwickshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Cheshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Yorkshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Nottinghamshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Leicestershire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Lincolnshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Derbyshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
North Yorkshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
West Yorkshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
East Yorkshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
East of England	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
West of England	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
London	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
North East	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
South East	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27																							

non-qualified players and so were ineligible for winning the division or gaining promotion. Nigel Polhill (on loan from Middlesex) was the star for Glamorgan, winning all his 8 games. Gloucestershire were third and so are also promoted to next year's division one.

At the bottom there was a welcome return to the event of Norfolk, who combined with Lincolnshire to ensure they could field a full-side. Unfortunately, they only won one match, versus Wiltshire, and so were awarded the Wooden Spoon.

It is hoped that 2024 will see a return to a full complement of 22 teams.

Lunchtime on the final day saw the formal launch of the new Croquet England.

At the closing presentation, Chris Williams announced that after 25 years of managing the event this year would be his last. Hundreds of players have benefited from his calm and organised approach, which has been hugely appreciated.



Middlesex Team

CHAMPIONSHIP OF EAST MIDLANDS 9-11 JUNE 2023

Twenty-one keen combatants arrived at the Nottingham Club early on Friday morning, welcomed by blue skies, rhododendrons still in bloom (thanks to the cold spring) and squirrels cavorting on the lawns. For those of you who haven't visited yet, the Nottingham lawns are next to a picturesque boating lake, overlooked by the University buildings. It's a lovely setting.

Thanks to the excellent work of the grounds staff, the 4 west lawns were running at a nice 11-12 Plummers, providing easy but not trivial conditions. The slightly hillier conditions on the east lawns (just two in use) were a little more challenging despite being slightly slower. Ian Vincent as Manager was controlling operations from the West Club House, where tea and the bar are now located, whilst lunch was provided in the East Club House. Many thanks are due to the Club volunteers who provided excellent meals throughout. We were extremely well fed.



This is one of the few remaining events run using the Draw & Process system. Essentially, a random Draw is made and the Process then ensures that players who meet early in the Draw, meet late in the Process, and vice-versa. A different style of seeding.

The Draw semi's were James Death versus Debbie Lines. James TPO'd Debbie who picked up a break from the leave, only to fail to run hoop 3 from a yard with all the balls. Some in and out ensued, but James eventually picked up a break by cut-rushing his partner ball from 3 yards, diagonally across Corner 1, all the way to Corner 2. Debbie wasn't sure whether, at that angle, she physically could have rushed the ball more than about 8 yards! The other semi featured Richard White versus

Ian Lines. This was their second game of the tournament and Richard pegged Ian out in both of them. In the Process, Ian won from 2b vs penult, but in the Draw semi-final both the other balls were for 4b, and although Ian got the innings once, he failed to progress and Richard had a well deserved win. Unfortunately, whilst Richard started well against James, he decided to retire, giving James a walkover to win the Draw.

In the Process the semi's were Ian Lines vs Debbie Lines and Alain Giraud vs Rick Harding. Ian went round first, Debbie hit and went to 4b too, but left a poor leave which Ian hit. He failed his TP but finished with control and Debbie missed her final lift. Alain beat first Rick in the semi's, and then Ian with a tidy, never in doubt, TP.

The winners of the Draw and Process played off for the Championship title. James won +26, but no letters. He did the Rover peel gently and ran into peelee afterwards. He tried for the combination peg-out but missed it by a few inches. Following a good scatter, Alain was unable to get going and James got the innings back to finish.

In between his Main Event games, James Death had time to complete a +11SXPO on Ian Vincent in the Plate, whilst waiting for his opponents in the main event. James finished with an all-round two-ball break.

Altogether there were 2 sextuples (both by James) and just 9 Triple Peels (James 1, Alain Giraud 4, Ian Lines 2 and Debbie Lines 2).

Our thanks to the Club for hosting such an enjoyable event, and to Ian Vincent as Manager. Definitely one to put in your diaries for next year.

Debbie Lines



AC PEELS

The 125th CA Peel Memorials were held at the Nottingham Club over 11-14 May, attracting 22 players with AC handicaps ranging from -1.5 to 20, including three playing their first Croquet Association AC tournament off 18 or 20. All games were played to three-hour time limits.

Thursday morning and evening required players to bring out their waterproofs to combat the elements; the afternoon was dry but chilly; Friday was cold and overcast but dry; and Saturday and Sunday saw rising temperatures throughout the day and shadows on the lawns in the afternoon.

Handicap Mixed Doubles: seven couples entered, three competing on Thursday morning in Round 1, the other couple having a bye.

David Brydon & Sarah Butler (h/c 12) +8T beat Omied Hallam & Pippa Hallam (h/c 7.5)

Arthur & Judith Rowe (h/c 11.5) +6T beat Rick Harding & Peggy Deller (h/c 8.5)
Bob Thompson & Patricia Duke-Cox (h/c 7.5) +7T beat Mark Lansdale & Cathy Turski (h/c 12)

Friday morning, Semi-finals

David & Sarah (h/c 12) +1T beat Roger & Debbie Watson (h/c 6.5)
Arthur & Judith (h/c 11.5) +7T beat Bob & Patricia (h/c 7.5)

Saturday afternoon, Final

Arthur & Judith Rowe (h/c 11.5) +7T beat David & Sarah (h/c 12) and were presented with the elegant and historic Lady Murray Silver Challenge Cups. Arthur and Judith decided that alternate stroke doubles would be the better format for all three of their games. David & Sarah decided to switch to alternate strokes in the final after competing conventionally in the previous rounds. This is the first time that alternate stroke has been recorded in The Peels; but perhaps not the first time that every game finished on time.

Both the Ladies' and the Men's Singles were played as a flexible swiss to base 8,



Judith and Arthur Rowe - Mixed Doubles Winners

the top four players on Saturday evening going through to Sunday's semi-finals and finals.

Six ladies and fifteen men competed for the prestigious Silver Challenge Bowls.

Ladies' Singles Semi-Finals

Patricia Duke-Cox (h/c 14) +9T beat Debbie Watson (h/c 9)

Sarah Butler (h/c 18) +4 beat Cathy Turski (h/c 16)

Ladies' Singles Final

Sarah beat Patricia by +1 with a 'golden hoop' after time had been called.

Men's Singles Semi-Finals

Arthur Rowe (h/c 2.5) +6 beat Roger Watson (h/c 3.5)

Omied Hallam (h/c -1) +14 beat Tom Dewar (h/c 18)

Third place

Tom +22 beat Roger

Arthur +1 beat Omied

Arthur (blue & black with 3.5 bisques) played an all-round break with blue on turn 4 using 2.5 bisques, leaving Omied (red and yellow) cross-pegged near hoops 5 & 6, with black and blue laid up in corner 4. Omied hit the 18-yard shot into corner 4 and started a break with yellow, only to give up after four hoops with yellow cross-wired from its pioneer at 5. He joined up in corner 3 with black near corner 4 and blue mid-lawn near 5. Arthur now used his remaining bisque to produce a cannon out of corner 3. Although not especially tidy, it got all four balls into the lawn. He started a break with black which was going well when he missed his pioneer at 4. Omied made another two hoops with yellow but stuck in 1b. Arthur's black hit the ball in the hoop and continued its break. This was



Sarah Butler and Arthur Rowe - Singles winners

going well until he stuck in penult. Red near rover missed blue & black to the north boundary, producing a wide join with yellow. Black completed running penult and rushed blue near the north boundary, engineering a rush on red to rover, but after the hoop failed to get a rush back north. Red was left near 1, an attempt was made to leave a rush to the peg from the north boundary, having placed yellow into a wired position SE of hoop 3. But instead of doing this, black ended up in the jaws of hoop 3. There was now no real way of preventing Omied from continuing his break with yellow. Arthur missed the leave, and Omied played another neat turn with red until all 4 balls were for peg. Omied had some problems with getting the peg-out to line up properly, and eventually yellow missed the peg, leaving Arthur with a 5 yarder and peg-out to win (in time) by 1. The match provided good entertainment for the spectators and some stress for the players. All as it should be. CA Vice-President Ian Vincent presented the historic and handsome trophies to the winners. Thanks were expressed to those club members who provided very enjoyable lunches and teas for all. After a very cold and wet Spring, thanks are due to groundsman Charlie Paget for once again preparing the Nottingham lawns to their usual high standard. Handicap reductions were triggered by the AHS for David Park 20 to 16 and Sarah Butler 18 to 16, however Sarah had an additional cut to 14 by the handicapper.

Bob Thompson
PHOTOGRAPHS Bob Thompson

HOME INTERNATIONALS, PENDLE AND CRAVEN CROQUET CLUB, LANCASHIRE - 20-21 MAY 2023

England: David Maugham (C), Mark van Loon, Dom Nunns, Richard M Smith, Aston Wade
Ireland: Andrew Johnston (C), Simon Williams, Sandy Greig, Brian Havill, Jane Morrison
Scotland: Sam Murray (C), Stephen Wright, Lorna Dewar, Alastair Burn-Murdoch, Andrew Symons
Wales: Angharrad Walters (Manager), Ian Burrige (C), Chris Williams, Rick Harding, Rich Waterman
England retained the Home Internationals, their 9th consecutive

win, ending the weekend on 2.5 test wins from 3. Special mentions go to captain (and team chef) David Maugham and Mark van Loon who were the only players to win all of their matches. However, there was drama aplenty, with a strong challenge from Wales and Scotland in particular, and despite England's impressive tally of match and game wins the final result was in jeopardy until the very end. Had Scotland's Alastair Burn-Murdoch and Lorna Dewar been

able to build on promising situations in the final, resuming matches in front of an excitable gallery (Winnie Murray and her scooter certainly seemed excitable anyway), versus England's pair of injured 'crocks' Richard Smith and Dom Nunns, things might have been different. As it was, the England duo did just enough to hold the Scots at bay, both matches were left unfinished by the scheduled close, and the captains agreed the test should be unfinished. This decision later came under some scrutiny from those with the full tournament regulations to hand, although the overall event result remained clear.

Scotland had some impressive match and game wins but were unable to close out any test wins in the end, despite competitive contributions from all five players and some notable scalps. Wales, fielding successful debutant Rick Harding, notched up a test win against Scotland, with the top three all registering match wins. Elsewhere they lost out 4-0 to England and finished broadly level in their unfinished rubber with Ireland.

Ireland didn't make as strong a mark in this running of the event as they had on some previous occasions. They still went away with some highlights though, including a straight games, triple-peel featuring win for Simon Williams versus Wales's Ian Burrige. Sandy Greig also pushed Dom Nunns hard in their match and was unlucky to lose out in the first game +1 after a slow burner with a tense ending.

The small but enthusiastic body of Pendle & Craven members contributed superbly to the weekend, providing bunting, a sense of occasion, five lawns - somehow crammed into the space usually reserved for four - excellent catering and bountiful afternoon teas, with special guest Eileen Magee putting in an appearance. Club chairman Paul Rigge was key to these efforts and was pleased to regularly remind the visitors that Lancashire had the warmest temperatures anywhere in the UK. A well-attended Saturday night dinner at the local Chinese restaurant was another highlight.

	Tests points	Match wins	Game wins
England	2.5	10	23
Wales	1	4	13
Scotland	0.5	5	13
Ireland	0.5	3	10

■ Dominic Nunns



NATIONAL VETERANS' TOURNAMENT

This year's tournament was well down on numbers compared with the normal full turnout for the class event and the singles handicap scraped only 10 entrants. That said, 12 withdrew from the class event and 5 from the handicap singles - due to many issues, not all age related! Plantar Fascia [Policeman's Heel] caused an in tournament withdrawal from the handicap singles and one player stoically soldiered on through the heat which had aggravated his atrial fibrillation.

However, 'twas not all gloom and doom despite all being told it would be 4 blocks of 6 and only 2 games a day for the class due to the anticipated heat and participants' age. The Met office's seaweed then determined that torrential thunderstorms were imminent and the manager advised more withdrawals - and now 3 blocks - bring your wet weather kit. This time the seaweed was accurate but, the heavy rain fell overnight and the 6 days of the tournament were very hot under, mostly, cloudless skies.

To the croquet. The manager stepped in to make a neat 16 pairs in a straightforward X & Y knockout. Most games went to the full 3 hours - clever tactical play or heat exhaustion? It was good to see some new faces, Ian Lambert and Robert Purcell [Ludlow Castle] and Andrew Killick [Middlesbrough]. And so it was that Brian Shorney [Member Everywhere] used to taking orders from the much missed Jane Hull took naturally to Andrew's directions and they won the Sussex Trugs. The Gilbert Spoons, for the 'Y', were won by David Warhurst [Budleigh] and Jonathan Toye [Downham].

With due regard to the heat and the not so young players the handicap singles ran as a Flexible SWISS which, in this case, meant a mandatory 4 games with an optional 2 games, on Tuesday and Wednesday late afternoon. Winner, of course, to be the player with the highest percentage of wins. Unfortunately, that policeman's heel caused a drop-out and

the manager stepped in [disintegrating knee notwithstanding - not really falling apart - just want the sympathy vote]. All 10 played the optional Tuesday game but Wednesday's optional game saw the 'not available' option selected by 4. Duncan Hector [Great Dunham] soon became the man to beat and come Thursday morning had 5 wins in 5 games. Cunningly the manager pitted the two 83 year olds against each other - Duncan - Shorney. Would Duncan's clean sweep be maintained, would 'I think this is my last playing season Shorney win through? Shorney won 16 - 10 but actually Duncan was unassailable and he took home the Meredith Bowl. The prize for the fastest game was won during this event when Jonathan Toye defeated Andrew Killick 26 - 0 in 1 hour.

The class event offers 4 trophies but, as one player pointed out - 'we come to play croquet so a block of 7 / 8 is preferable to blocks of 6. The more so when cost of travel and accommodation is taken into account'. One wonders if this final comment about the current cost of living is having an effect on AC tournaments this year - numbers are down generally it would seem?

The 22 entrants neatly split into blocks of 8 - 7 & 7 as for once, the handicaps neatly accorded with such a split. A class -1.5 to 1 [8], B 1.5 - 3.5 [7] and C 4 to 7 & a 14 (7).

The C Block, Jubilee Cup, saw 3 ties on 3rd equal - Jane Babbage [Sidmouth], Roger Staples [Middlesbrough] and Richard Williamson [Bristol] all on 3 wins but Jonathan Toye was the runner-up with 4 wins and the man to beat, right from the start, John Reddish [Norwich] took the trophy with 5 wins. The B Block, Felixstowe Cup curiously saw almost the same result. Again 3 were 3rd equal on 3 wins Chris Donovan [Sidmouth], Jonathan Isaacs [Sussex County] and David Houston [Edinburgh] with David Marcus [Sussex County] as the runner-up with 4 wins. The trophy was taken by Robert

...continued on page 24

Upton [Glamorgan] with 5 wins.

At Saturday lunchtime the A Class, Rothwell Challenge Cup, was looking as though the manager would have to sort out a tight block with potentially 5 of the 8 on 5 wins. But as the sun had shone hot and bright on these venerable players the Croquet Gods allowed the final games to decide the outcome and deliver a clear winner. [Phew!]. In the end David Warhurst and Duncan Hector had 4 wins, Andrew Killick and Simon Hathrell [Watford] had 5 wins but the last game to finish saw Greg Rowberry [Australia] win his sixth game and the trophy. Finally, the Pidcock Trophy, awarded for the player over 75 best placed in the blocks. Previously this has been a simple decision but this year not so straightforward. Three contenders: Roger Staples, Jonathan Isaacs and Jane Babbage all 3rd equal in their blocks. Net points -3, +18 & +18 respectively. As Jonathan was playing in the Felixstowe Cup and Jane in the Jubilee Cup the trophy went to Jonathan.

Greg thanked the Budleigh 'team' for the excellent lawns, hoop setting, catering services, including the Fish and Chip Supper on Friday and the overall management and arrangements. A happy crowd dispersed after a good week's worth of croquet. See you all, and more, in 2024...

| Chris Donavan



Brian Shorney & Andrew Killick Take the 'Sussex Trugs' for Winning the Doubles



Duncan Hector is presented with the Meredith Bowl by Jonathan Isaacs for Winning the Handicap Singles take 2



Greg Rowberry wins the A Class Rothwell Challenge Cup



Jonathan & David Warhurst Take the 'Y' Trophies - The Gilbert Spoons



Jonathan Isaacs & Chris Donovan with The Trophies



Jonathan Isaacs presents John Reddish with the Queen's Jubilee Cup



Jonathan Isaacs Wins the Pidcock Trophy - Chris Donovan Presents



Jonathan Toye takes the Glass-based Trophy from Jonathan Isaacs for the Fastest Game



Robert Upton Wins The Felixstowe Cup

ERC EUROPEAN GC CHAMPIONSHIPS

Players from 12 countries once again gathered at Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club to compete in the European Golf Croquet Championships, 2023.

The late May weather was fantastic, and bright sunshine greeted the 32 competitors. As in previous years, some players came with friends or family to enjoy the experience as part of a holiday – and a festival type atmosphere was evident throughout the entire tournament.



Aston and Rachel

The format is familiar: 4 blocks of 8 players, with the top four from each block progressing to the Last 16 and Championship knock-out. The tournament fans out into various consolation events as play unfolds, but all players have the opportunity to play on, right until 31st/32nd placings.

Block A produced the first upsets to the seeding expectations with Gerald Ehmes (5th seed) and Daniel Larsson (Sweden, 6th seed) qualifying alongside Richard Bilton (1st seed) and Ian Burrige (3rd seed).

Block B saw Aston Wade drop only one game and top the block with 7 match wins. He was joined by Manuel Alvaraz-Sala from Spain (2nd seed), and Chris Roberts (Wales, 3rd seed). Anton Kamne (Sweden) also went through from 7th seed position, with an impressive 5 match wins.

The top seeded three players from Block C produced straightforward results, Andres Alvarez-Sala (Spain 1st seed), Euan Burrige, (2nd seed) and Joi Elebo (Sweden) making the cut, leaving a three-player play-off for the fourth spot. This was won by Patricio Garay Jnr (Spain).



Chris Roberts - Wales

The Manager's nightmare began when Block D produced 5 players all with 2 wins to contest the one remaining promotion position. Stuart M. Smith had a full house of 7 match wins, followed by Nicolas Denizot (Spain) and Rachel Gee in third spot. After the play-off had put the schedule back by several hours, Ulf Saewert (Germany) took 4th place.

An image of the Championship knock-out results shows how the tournament unfolded to culminate in an all-England final and a repeat of the 2022 final, Aston Wade v Rachel Gee.

This produced a superb level of play from both competitors, watched by around 90 spectators along the elevated gallery walkway above court 6. Rachel Gee, an established top-class player, was in super form, rarely missing any of her intended moves throughout the match.

The current U21 World Champion, Aston Wade, is evidently equally skilled, but on this occasion could not counter Rachel's

calm tactical play and positional accuracy. Not to mention a beautifully executed 2 ½ yard jump over two balls at hoop 8 in game 3.

Rachel's match scores of 7-3, 6-7, 7-2 earned her the European Championship title for the third time, which was celebrated with loud applause from the watching crowd.

Congratulations Rachel!

Budleigh club members and grounds staff worked tirelessly to offer both hospitality and superb playing conditions for what is an extremely popular event at the club. Both the Friday night fish and chips supper and Saturday paella evening held for players and guests were convivial affairs – and of course, the



England Players PHOTOGRAPH Louise Smith

local Otter Ale flowed in generous measures.

Worthy of a special mention and sincere thanks is Frances Coleman for agreeing to be the tournament's referee-on-call. Frances generously gave up four days of her time to keep everyone in check, and once again, decked out in her pink hat, was seen dashing about between courts to firm up a hoop or referee potential faults.

Our ten-month-old cocker spaniel puppy, Tia, also joined us for three of the four days, whilst our daughter Erin was working as a veterinary nurse. When Tia was not off in the company of Aston (who has known her since she was a tiny pup), many of the international players enjoyed walking her through Budleigh's garden grounds. She now responds to commands in Finnish, German, and Spanish.

There were many special moments throughout the tournament. One of my personal favourites was the contest between Lars Boman and Henri Hagelberg competing for 19/20th place.

The two players opted for a best-of-three match and re-named their contest "The Finnish Grand Final". This simply underpins the great atmosphere of the ERC European Championships and the pure enjoyment of golf croquet – sometimes playing on just for the sake of it.

Consolation Results: Shield Winner, Euan Burrige (England). Bowl Winner, Patricio Garay Jnr (Spain). Plate Winner, Glenn Fauske (Norway.)

Louise Smith, Tournament Manager



PHOTOGRAPH Jayne Ellery
Winner Rachel Gee

WOMEN'S GOLF CROQUET OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

The third Women's Golf Croquet Open Championship was held at Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club on 2/4th June 2023.

Fourteen Players gathered from clubs around the UK and further afield, Clair Whyms and Yvonne Marrinan travelled from Ireland to take part.

Another international entry came from Jenny Clarke, a renowned player from New Zealand. With a D/Grade in excess of 400 points above her nearest competitor, it was certainly going to be a hard-fought tournament. ...

Another challenge came with the decision to use Quadway hoops, to give further experience to the three players representing England in the forthcoming Women's World Championships, Sue Lightbody, Diana Wilson, and Louise Smith.

It was the first experience for the majority of players in playing with Quadways, which coupled with the dry, fast court conditions, added another level of difficulty to the tournament. In Block A, much as expected, Jenny topped the group with six straight match wins 2/0. Kath Burt, (Winterborne Valley), performed the most consistently in the block against Jenny's undoubted skilful play, gaining 4 hoops in each of their two match games. Ann Brookes (Colchester) joined Jenny to progress to the knock-out stages.

In Block B, good performances from Sue Lightbody, (Dulwich), Diana Wilson, and Lynn Pearcy, (both Roehampton), dominated the results of the group. Liz Drury, (Compton), 7th block seed also played well above her grade and gained two match wins. Sue and Lynn gained promotion to the knock-out stage joining Jenny and Ann.

Arguably the best match of the tournament featuring Jenny Clarke was the Semi-Final against Lynn Pearcy. Lynn had grown in performance throughout the previous two days, demonstrating some excellent clearance and positioning skills. The New Zealand international had to work hard for the 7/4, 7/6 match victory and place in the Championship Final.

In the other Semi-Final, Sue Lightbody, who had remained solid throughout the tournament, fairly swiftly gained her place in the final, beating Ann Brookes 7/2, 7/3.

Meanwhile the Plate gave a first consolation tournament victory to Liz Drury, with a 7/4 win against Diana Wilson. Entering the tournament just for the experience, it is evident that Liz is a developing player with good potential.

The Championship Final was basically a textbook result with the two tournament top seeds playing each other, Jenny Clarke and Sue Lightbody. It was watched by the remaining players and spectators from Budleigh club. Sue adopted a very positive attitude and simply went for each chance that she created. Her positional play was excellent but fell short of Jenny's overall mastery of the game. Jenny won 2/0 in the best-of-three contest to take the Championship title.



All players



Jenny Clarke

TIM RUSSELL WINS WREST PARK GC CHAMPIONSHIP

June was bustin' out all over" as the field of 12 players gathered at Wrest Park in bright and breezy conditions to contest this Championship event.

Manager, Richard Keighley divided the players into 2 blocks of 6 with a requirement to play best of 19 point games on an all-play-all basis.

In Block A, Trophy holder Nick Archer (Watford) won all his 5 games in impressive style but Jayne Stevens (Northampton) took him to the 19th hoop in their game. Ian Burrige (Nottingham) also qualified for the knockout with 4 wins, as did Tim Crowdy (Llandoverly) with 3 wins and Jayne herself with 2 wins.

Over in Block 2, Tim Russell (Roehampton) and Les Heard (Wrest Park) had to work hard to achieve 3 wins apiece but the block winner with 4 wins was a very consistent Tony Butcher (Southchurch). The fourth qualifier was Glynis Davies (Northampton) who pipped Ross Bagni (Leighton-Linslade) with an impressive Barnes Wallis jump shot to run the golden hoop in their game.

Day 2 began with the Quarter Finals on a best of 3x 13 point games basis. Nick beat Glynis (7-5,7-5), and Les beat Tim



PHOTOGRAPH Ross Bagni depicts Les Heard (left) congratulating the winner Tim Russell

Crowdy (7-6,7-3). Tim Russell was taken to a deciding game by Ian (7-3, 4-7, 7-4) and Jayne found her best form to spring a surprise by beating Tony (7-2,7-5).

Sadly, a recurring arm injury prevented Jayne from completing her semi-final against Tim. His opponent in the Final was Les Heard, who beat Nick in the other closely contested match. (7-6,3-7,7-6) In the deciding game, Nick led

5-2 before Les won a long clearance battle to claim the 10th hoop and went on to level the scores at 6-6. From a distance, Les put his first ball through the back of the 13th hoop to sit prettily in front of it, only for Nick to follow suit with an exact-same shot but which did not block the hoop for Les.

The Final between Tim and Les was played in warm sunshine before attentive spectators. Tim just had the

edge to win 7-6,7-6. He kindly thanked Wrest Park members for staging an enjoyable tournament in well-prepared conditions and fine weather. Prizes were also presented to Tony Butcher for winning the Shield and to Mike Hills (Northampton), the Plate winner. Finishing Order: 1. Tim Russell 2. Les Heard 3. Nick Archer 4. Jayne Stevens.

| Richard Keighley

CHELTENHAM'S ASCOT CUP CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIER: IFS, BUTS AND ONLYS?

Once again I will explain my title. The entry was back to its full capacity of 32 which is great for the extra 8 players that are accepted into the tournament.

However, unlike 24 competitors it can be a big ask if the manager (me) wants to put 16 through to the knock out stages, especially if as the regulations direct there are no 'time limits'.



If, only I had remembered what a squeeze it had been pre-covid when I had tried to play the 1st round of the knock out on the Saturday night! Still, the weather was going to be sunny all weekend and the lawns were looking great. So, I thought 16 happy players after the 4 blocks of 8 was an achievable target to aim for. But, the hoops and the lawns thought not, and as the day wore on it became clear that the conditions were not conducive to quick games with many players becoming 'frustrated, irritated and despondent' almost as much as the manager when the last block game finished at 8.30pm!! Only, drastic action was going to save tomorrow's final from being played under floodlights. After a restless night, the manager had a brief conversation with his Rot (Richard Brooks) and decided not to enforce time limits, but have a player's briefing to apologise and explain the reasons behind the change of format from Bo3 13pt games to a single 19pt game for the next two knock out rounds, allowing the semi-final and final to remain as Bo3.

So, to the blocks themselves. Block A saw the top 2 seeds going though Richard Brooks (winner) and Jack Good, followed by Paul Gunn and Igacio Alesanco. Block B was won by an undefeated Simon Carter who was clearly enjoying the conditions. Local 'boy' Andrew Cowing was also enjoying his time(8.30pm finish) followed by Stephen C-Baker and Michael

Bilton(remember that name). Block C was a much tighter affair with net points being used to split the order as follows, Colin Britt, Nick Saxton, Lionel Tibble and Richard Brand. Block D saw an undefeated Dominic Aarvold march through followed closely by Tim Russell, John Taylor and Tim Crowdy.

The 16 who did not qualify for the knock out went into two consolation blocks for their final positions. These all had 60min time limits, which proved to be necessary to gain a satisfactory finish to the weekend. Tony Butcher was undefeated in the 17-24 block with Kevin Connolly finishing as runner-up. The 25-32 block was a much tighter affair with Ignacio Ariza edging it from Neil Fillery on net points.

The first round of the knock out proved to be equally tight with half the games being won by a single point! The quarter finals saw more 'top' seeds fall by the way resulting in two semi finals between Simon Carter (block winner) v Michael Bilton (4th in block) and Dominic Aarvold (block winner) v Paul Gunn (3rd in block). Both of these were won in two games setting up the final with the undefeated and probably favourite Dominic against probable underdog Michael (who only qualified out his block at the expense of the manager). The first game proved similar to the weekend's experience with a tight win 7-6 for Michael after Dominic failed an ambitious jump shot. Dominic continued to play his attacking style in the second game while Michael showed his experience by playing the conditions and won the match at a tactical 12th hoop which saw the 'Rot' having to make camp on the lawn!

Congratulations to our 'casual' Champion Michael Bilton who was this year's 26th seed!!!

Meanwhile, the Shield (positions 5-8) was being won by an undefeated John Taylor with Tim Crowdy as runner-up. Simon Carter won the 3rd/4th play off 10-4 over Paul Gunn. All results are on Croquet scores.

My gratitude goes to my team Richard Brand (assistant) and Dawn Good (croquet scores recorder) for keeping the blocks moving forward over the weekend and allowing me time to play. Also, to club member Ray Bassett who filled in on Sunday after Philip Blake tested positive for Covid. Lastly, Graham Good who once again took up his mallet to play friendly games in the 'bowl' so that no one was sat out waiting after Andrew Cowings retirement due to injury. Thank you to Cheltenham's catering team led by Pat Francis and Adam Moliver and Naomi Whitehead.

Finally, I feel it was frustrating weekend for all and appreciate the players support especially if the person who picked up my sun glasses would return them to me or the club (no questions asked).

| Ivor Brand, Manager

THE 3RD GC SPANISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP TOOK PLACE AT REAL SOCIEDAD HIPICA ESPANOLA CLUB DE CAMPO, MADRID - 12-15TH MAY 2023

The tournament is held every four years, and five players from England, Stephen Mulliner, Euan Burrridge, Stuart M. Smith, James Galpin and Callum Johnson joined a world class field of players from all corners of the globe. Participants included three former World Champions – Reg Bamford (South Africa), Ben Rothman (USA) and Stephen Mulliner (AC, England).

Arriving directly from a volunteering experience as a goat herder in El Payo, a small village on the border between Castilla y León and Extremadura, James Galpin had the slight disadvantage of having to play with a borrowed mallet. As usual, James displayed his usual laid-back attitude and prepared to enjoy the tournament.

Stuart and I made the most of our first trip abroad for over a decade and packed in many of the sights of Madrid. We also ventured along the 13-kilometre route to Cascada del Hervidero to witness the double waterfall set into a craggy landscape, accessed by a mountain trail & stone stairway.

The tournament commenced with an opening ceremony with officials from the host club and a welcome speech from Guillermo Navarro Marques, the recently elected President of the Spanish Croquet Federation (FEC). Players also enjoyed a buffet breakfast, prior to collecting their personalised tournament shirts and merchandise. The FEC are at the forefront in progressing modern tournament croquet play, with this event fully sponsored by Volvo.



England players in Spain

The Spanish had also organised a complimentary meal and wine at a Tapas Bar in the centre of Madrid on the Saturday evening. All the players attended, with any accompanying travelling partners, which added a welcome social element to enhance the sense of occasion.

The Block play was organised as 4 groups of 6 players, 19pt games. Almost all the players had to acclimatise themselves to the two courts at Real Sociedad Hipica Espanola Club de Campo, which provided some interesting challenges. Both were very quick and had been designed with a detectable fall to assist drainage. The newer Court 2 sloped from south to north so that approaches to 2, 4 and 6 needed to be delicately struck which was not really a huge issue. However, the older Court 1 had its slope from east to west. The players had to learn how much to aim off to the 'high side' when approaching hoops (it was a lot!) and more than one player saw their ball leave the west boundary when trying to approach hoop 1 gently from corner 4! Stephen Mulliner soon began referring to Court 1 as "the Palace of Fun"!

Blocks A and B went pretty much with the players' expected rankings, with the top four progressing to the last 16. Stuart M. Smith beat Euan Burrridge to the 2nd spot behind Reg Bamford in Block A, and Block B retained ranking order with Moe Karem, 1st seed, unbeaten.

Block D saw the top two seeds Ben Rothman and Stephen Mulliner joined by the 5th and 6th seeds from their block, Nicolas Denizot and Patricio Garay Jnr, (both from Spain), moving forward to the last 16. James Galpin, armed with his



James Galpin

borrowed mallet, had two close games that went to the deciding 19th hoop but failed to qualify.

Block C saw the most disruption to the seeding order for the last 16 places. Sherif Abdelwahab (USA), 3rd block seed, was in very impressive form and topped the block unbeaten, followed by Carlos Munoz (Spain), 6th block seed, with four wins. Amr Alebiary (Egypt) 1st block seed achieved 3 wins. The remaining players all had one win each, which sadly meant that Callum Johnson also dropped to the Plate. He was tied on net hoops with Gonzalo Alvarez-Sala, but Gonzalo's win over Callum in the block meant he went through.

As the tournament progressed over the weekend a change in the weather meant the temperatures were fairly cool with a strong wind at times, the latter parts of each day were certainly the warmest. I did begin to wonder why I had packed four pairs of shorts ...!



Reg Bamford v Moe Karem

The last 16 round proved decisive for the remaining England players in the main knock-out, with Euan and Stuart losing to Spaniards on their home courts, Jose Alvarez-Sala, and Andres



THE PERSONAL SERVICE

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Spanish Open Winners

Alvarez-Sala. Stephen lost in the third of the best-of-three game match to Amr Alebiary, Egypt, 5/7, 7/4, 3/7. Our players then moved to the Bowl knock-out.

Meanwhile in the Plate Blocks, James Galpin progressed to the Plate Knock-out Semi Final, but sadly fell short against



Stu and Lou

Mohammad Kamal (USA) 4/7. In an all-American Plate final, Stephen Morgan edged out Mohammad Kamal by 10/9.

Euan was unlucky in the Bowl knock-out losing to Gonzalo Alvarez-Sala in the first round 6/7. Stuart beat Patricio Garay Jnr 7/4, and Stephen cruised forward with an easy win over Blake Fields (USA) 7/1. As they were in the same half of knock-out, this then meant Stuart and Stephen faced each other in the Bowl Semi-Final.

As a spectator, I have to say this match had just about everything in terms of spectacular single ball play. Stuart went 0/2 down before changing tack to mitigate the vagaries of court 1. Playing to his strengths, Stuart began running long hoops from all over the place and forced Stephen to take any hoop chance he had - the score was soon levelled at 5/5.

As second to approach hoop 11, Stuart promoted his partner white ball deep in front of the hoop, but it travelled slightly further than planned on the fast surface, landing to give a 9 yard 40-degree angle hoop shot. Having run previous hoops during the game from similar deep angled positions, Stuart confidently took on 11 with no hesitation, gaining the lead 6/5. Play towards 12 left Stephen with a hoop shot, which he took from level with the peg, to level the scores at 6/6.

Stuart's first ball at 13 was cleared with a great shot from Stephen back at hoop 12, which placed Stuart's white on the back boundary and Stephen's green ball on the east boundary. Stuart placed another good pink in front of the hoop. Brown came up and off the back boundary. First to take on the hoop shot was the angled white ball from the back boundary. In the spirit of the game, this was a shot Stuart had to take, but contrary to the preceding play, this time the ball bounced off the wire leaving the hoop open. Green came across from the east and cleared pink. Pink came back but failed to block the Brown on the hoop shot, which was also sat on the back boundary. Stephen took a moment of composure before flying through 13 to progress to the Bowl Final.

Monday was Finals Day. The main knockout had progressed to feature two of the former world champions in the Semi Finals - Reg Bamford (South Africa) v Ben Rothman (USA) and Andres Alvarez-Sala (Spain) v Moe Karen (Egypt).

Both Semi Final matches were hugely competitive battles that went to three games, with some spectacular play on Court 2 and almost identical scores: Reg beat Ben 7/6, 4/7, 7/5 and Moe beat Andres, 7/6, 3/7, 7/5, so that the top two seeds therefore brought the tournament to a textbook conclusion by facing each other in the Championship Final.

Andres Alvarez-Sala provided some cheer for the home crowd by beating Ben Rothman 10/8 to take third place, while the Bowl Final was played between Stephen Mulliner and Nicolas Denizot. Stephen had another good game with Nicolas on Court 1, but his experience prevailed, giving Stephen the Bowl title with a game that ended 10/6.

The main Final was, surprisingly, completed in just two games with Moe Kareem just not quite finding his form until 6-1 down in the second. He then produced an extraordinary recovery, including a boundary jump through 9 and a 28 yard 10. He then won the duel at 11 and ran 12 as well to reach 6-6. However, Reg remained calm and played to 2 yards north of 13. Moe just missed with his two long clearance attempts and Reg made no mistake to take the match 7/3, 7/6, and add yet another title to his extensive collection.



Many congratulations to Reg, runner-up to Jose Riva in the 2nd Spanish Open final, and now winner of the 3rd GC Spanish Open, and our great thanks to the Spanish Players and Officials for their warm welcome and generous hospitality. I have not always been the best traveller but am now looking forward to our next adventure abroad....!

Louise Smith

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GC EUROPEAN LEAGUE



The self-appointed team captain was enthused enough by a fresh sporting adventure to enter Ealing for the Latvia heat of the new European League without first checking whether anyone else at the croquet club would even be interested. Raising teams to play away matches just a few miles from Ealing's Lammas Park home in West London can often be problematic. So it was a considerable gamble to put Ealing's name down for a tournament being staged in a distant Baltic country extremely anxious about the future intentions of their nightmare neighbours in Russia and Belarus. But Ealing not only quickly found four competitive players excited by the opportunity of playing in the inaugural Champions League of croquet, against all the odds and Dynamic Grade ratings, they qualified as one of the two teams going forward from the Latvia group stage to the grand final at Roehampton in October.

It was a great experience from start to finish. The build-up included working out the best way to reach Riga, which was via Warsaw, ensuring the precious mallets also arrived at the same destination, organising the special royal blue team shirts - with an Ealing in Europe motif - and designing pennants to present to the three other competing countries from Finland, Germany and Latvia.

The Ealing party of five, including one travelling supporter tempted by taking in the sights of old town Riga and its remarkable history, arrived in Ikšķile, around 30 kilometres outside the capital in time for the welcoming dinner attended by all four teams. The friendly but competitive atmosphere at the meal - including the suggestion that the finalists should jump into the mighty river Daugava that runs alongside Ikšķile CC's idyllic setting - put everyone in the right mood for the ensuing croquet. This sense of occasion was stoked

further when Ikšķile host Roberts Stafeckis, chiefly responsible for bringing croquet to Latvia and building a state-of-the-art clubhouse with three lawns to match, played that spine-tingling Champions League anthem before the start of play at the request of the Ealing captain. Will Roehampton follow suit? The first day ended with all four teams level on one win from two matches, setting up the best possible scenario of the two teams winning their one remaining match staying on the European croquet road to Roehampton. It was the six-handicap but fast improving Emma Bowen-Doherty who was the star of the Ealing team, scoring three long hoops in succession to clinch the decisive doubles rubber against Ikšķile. Such was the hospitality extended by the host club at the lavish barbecue on the Saturday evening, there was some doubt whether Ealing would be able to field a full team for the climax of the competition the next morning.

No surprise really when after the beers and the wines, mine host Roberts produced bottles of Latvia's national drink Riga Black Balsam which has an alcohol content of 45-per-cent and is revered by Latvians as the medicine to be taken for every ailment. One member of the Ealing team who will remain nameless - what happens on tour stays on tour - took a great liking to the special Latvian medicine and had to be carried back to the hotel unable to speak. It seemed certain Ealing would be a man/woman down against a strong side from Finland, who took their herbal liqueur rather better and were encouraging 'just one more' round of numerous Balsam toasts to our super generous hosts. Somehow all the Ealing team were present and correct at breakfast and went on to secure a memorable victory against Tolkis, the team from Finland, who must have been expecting an easy passage to Roehampton judging by the state of their opponents just a few hours earlier.

Such was the camaraderie formed over the weekend that ad hoc friendly matches took place after the end of competitive play on both days - also meaning that those foolhardy promises to jump into a river that flows very swiftly into the Baltic Sea were conveniently forgotten. Hopefully other teams will follow little Ealing's lead in travelling to beautiful Ikšķile in future editions of the European Golf Croquet League. The experience of playing croquet on foreign soil made the cost worth every penny. And it makes a refreshing change competing against names such as Silvija, Maris, Andrejs, Priska, Reinhard, and Lars rather than the same old Tom, Dick and Harry year after year on the domestic circuits. Roberts Stafeckis's ambition of further establishing the sport in Latvia by putting on regular international tournaments deserves every possible support from UK croquet players, as does Ian Burrige's grand vision of a vibrant Golf Croquet European League. Fittingly Ikšķile were the other side to qualify for the Roehampton final and it should be mentioned just in passing that Ealing's one loss was against the Germans from Hamburg.

Charles Sale



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SOUTHWELL CROQUET CLUB IRRIGATION SYSTEM

We are a relatively small Club and the facilities at the site of the lawns are quite primitive. We have a small wooden pavilion building which now houses the controls for our irrigation system and a couple of wooden storage huts adjacent to the lawns. But we also benefit from the comprehensive facilities in a large brick built pavilion about 150 meters away across the Sports Ground where we have the use of toilets, kitchen, meeting rooms and hall space. Our lawns are situated in one corner of the larger Sports Ground and they are configured as one full size and one half size or three half size lawns as required.

Last year we had a very successful Open Day which swelled our numbers to about 21 playing members and we have our own qualified coach. We play both AC and GC with a predominance of GC although through a programme of coaching more members are being introduced to AC and we intend to have some Club time dedicated to AC only play. Last year, we returned to the East Midlands Federation League after several years' absence and some of our members also chose to participate in other competition events at other Clubs in our Federation. Our success in the League has boosted the confidence of the Club as a whole and revitalised the members' interest in the game with us fielding two teams this year and even more members taking part in outside Tournaments.



Each year the condition of our lawns was becoming progressively worse as they suffered from successive summer dry spells and droughts requiring extensive winter renovation programmes at significant and barely affordable cost. The extreme effects of the last three years causing the Club to reduce the playing seasons in order to avoid exacerbating the damage by footfall. The cause of the damage was considered to be due in the greatest part by our inability to get any water on the lawns.

We therefore needed an irrigation system that would enable us to water the lawns when required but as we have a relatively small number of members living within a short distance of the lawns the system would have to be entirely automatic, remotely controlled and ideally be able to remotely monitor the condition of the lawns. Since mains water pressure would not provide sufficient flow we also needed mains power to provide power for a pump and the necessary controls.



The first step was to have a roadside water meter and supply installed and then to extend that to our lawns, some 250 meters across the playing field. This work was undertaken by Club members and help with the cost was granted by Active4Today (Newark & Sherwood District Council) and was not considered part of the irrigation project. Whilst undertaking this work we located a power distribution board in the playing field that would enable us also get the required mains power to the site of the lawns without bearing the expense of feeding from the main pavilion.

So having now got the prerequisite essential supplies available

the scope of the project was to acquire and install a totally automated watering system for the lawns with the capability for remote control and the ability to remotely monitor the state and condition of the lawns. The cost of this project being beyond the means of the Club so a 50% grant was applied for from the Croquet Association whose help and generosity is greatly appreciated. The total cost was estimated to be £7,497 and the actually cost on completion was £7,490.13, but one piece of equipment estimated to cost around £35 could not be sourced and a replacement is current being loaned until one is available which will then be funded by the Club. The funding during the implementation phase was provided in part from Club funds and in part from an interest free loan from the Vice Chairman.

An outline plan was prepared and costed prior to seeking a grant, and advice and assistance for this was provided by Duncan Hector of Duncan Hector Turf Care and Irrigation both from information on his website and from him personally. The Chair of the East Midlands Federation championed our application. Two quotes were sought: one from Duncan Hector Turf Care and one other, which was rejected on the grounds of cost.



It was decided that to keep the costs to a minimum Club Members would do the majority of the installation work, and paramount to the success of the project was the advice and expertise from Duncan Hector as well as Duncan's trenching tool. Pre-works at the site of the lawns was carried out during the two weeks starting 13th February this included the laying of power cables and installation of a base for the water tank along with taking delivery of pipework, tank and other components. The trenching and installation work started on 27th February and the system was completed and tested late on the evening of 1st March. Restoration of the ground around the lawns, trench filling etc. was largely completed the following weekend.

Although the Club has not had need to water the lawns yet we are already seeing the benefit in the attitude of members demonstrating confidence that the Club's future is now assured because prior to this, expenditure on lawn recovery was outstripping our capacity for income.

One more obstacle we had to overcome was getting broadband access to our site to enable the essential remote control of the system and the monitoring of the site. This aspect was very important to us as it would not be practical to manually activate the system on site. This was accomplished by the use of a radio extension to the WiFi system already installed in the main pavilion.

Postscript When we had completed the installation of the irrigation system and first switched it on we were gratified to witness the impressive sprays of water refreshing our lawns but imagine our disappointment when on the second switch on our RCDs tripped and shut off the power supply. It took some work to diagnose that the pump had developed an early life failure and had to be returned to the supplier. We have had considerable difficulty with supplier due to their Customer Service inadequacies but with Duncan's help we were able to source a new pump which is now installed and we are up and running again!



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Autumn Lawn Maintenance

If you are using my system, apply the fertilisers as instructed. Don't scarify, there will only be minimal thatch. Otherwise, consider switching to my unique thatch-busting programs. They reduce thatch biologically by up to 30% per annum and produce superb fast lawns with less hassle. Autumn is a good time to start the program.

Overseeding and top dressing can be done in September or early October. For top dressing, soft sand can be used, this should be available locally and can be low cost. It is round-grained so doesn't compact - don't use sharp sand. If you are levelling at the same time, use a 60 sand/40 loam mix which has more body. The seed I supply is R8 Ultrafine Ryegrass and Fescues. It is available in my online shop with free delivery (2 to 3 days).

As an experiment, I have sprayed Soluble Iron at the rate of 1kg(litre) in 50 litres per lawn each month during the summer at a cost of about £2 per application. It can be tank mixed with liquid Biofeed and Resolute wetting agent and has stopped Red Thread, which is usually a problem here. This method will also control Dollar Spot in the summer. It takes one minute to dilute the soluble iron crystals in a bucket of water using a cordless drill and paint paddle. So, it is quick, easy and low cost. Use 2.5kg (litres) to control moss and/or fusarium in October/November. This avoids the use of fungicides which are expensive and can have a detrimental effect on soil biology.

If worm casting is a problem, you must convert the root zone into an environment not favoured by casting worms. I supply a root zone conditioner for this purpose.

For more information, visit the **Turfpedia** on my website.

█ Duncan Hector

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Warm North African sunshine, Mediterranean beaches and the fascinating ruins of Carthage combine to make Tunisia an excellent autumn destination. Located on the beach in the upmarket town of La Marsa, close to the capital Tunis, The Residence has its own private beach and a **large outdoor swimming pool**. There are three excellent restaurants, a thalasso therapy spa with hammam and **indoor pool**, and an 18-hole golf links. All 170 bedrooms have a balcony.



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*4 nights for the price of 3
for midweek stays in October
2023, price from £799,
saving up to £120*

Includes entrance to the Musée Matisse

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Villa la Massa ***** Deluxe



On the banks of the Arno, this 14th century Florentine countryside residence is set in 25 acres of peaceful gardens, just 15 minutes' drive from Florence – a complimentary shuttle service operates to the Ponte Vecchio. There is a **summer swimming pool** in

the gardens, a riverside restaurant, tennis court, and a spa.

*4 nights for the price of 3 until 30 September -
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Includes entrance to the Uffizi Gallery

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Château d'Audrieu **** Superior

A listed monument, this stunning château was built in the 18th century on an estate dating back to the time of the Norman conquest and is located just outside the village of Audrieu, 15 minutes' drive from Bayeux and Caen.



The restaurant is a destination in itself. A member of Relais & Châteaux, its 29 bedrooms are classically furnished, many featuring fireplaces and family heirlooms. The English garden features a **large outdoor swimming pool**.

*4 nights for the price of 3 between 1 October - 31 December 2023,
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FOR DISCERNING TRAVELLERS

Coaching odd numbers in AC and GC

Coaching groups with even numbers of participants normally work best for several reasons, but if faced with an odd number, here are a couple of possibilities. Both of them can be adapted when coaching other numbers of students.

COACHING 5 PLAYERS IN GC

York U3A is trialling an ingenious way of playing GC with five players, and the idea recommends itself as a solution to the challenges of coaching GC with uneven numbers. Four of the five players take a ball each as usual. As soon as a hoop is run, the out-player takes the place of the person who scored the hoop. That person then stands by until the next hoop is scored, and so on.

This arrangement keeps the game flowing, making sure no-one is off strike for long. All five players are on the lawn together, meaning that any coaching discussions always include the whole group. Finally, partners are continually changing, which means that, say, a weak Red is not constantly struggling against the same strong opponent: the tables will later be turned and the strong player will become Red's partner.

A similar approach can also be applied to coaching games with three students taking two balls each. Of course, in each case the final score will not really be relevant – but that's true of most genuine coaching games. At the heart of effective coaching is not winning or losing the game in hand, but discussion of tactical options and the technical skills needed to support the tactics.

COACHING 3 PLAYERS IN AC

This novel approach, developed in New Zealand by Wendy Davidson (Canberra CC) and Brian Priestley (Christchurch CC), goes under the name Scarborough. Each of the three players has one ball – blue, red or black, played in peg colour order. The fourth ball, Yellow, is thrown onto the lawn as a 'free' ball. At the beginning of a turn, a player can pick up the fourth ball and place it anywhere she or he likes. It may, for example, be placed to give a simple rush, or placed to give a ready-made pilot, pioneer or pivot.

Each time a new turn starts, an excellent opportunity arises for group discussion, good for developing strategic thinking such as strategic use of rushes and planning ahead for a break. Any laws of AC that have not yet been learned may be ignored. The only technical skills that are essential are those already mastered, for example hitting the ball; roqueting; hoop running; one or more simple croquet shots. It is helpful to allow all players on the lawn throughout the game to encourage discussion to flow and to maximise learning.

The game can be adapted for two or four players. Two players can play with three balls to develop three-ball break skills. Alternatively, with White as a fifth ball, two players may play two balls each, or four players may play alternate stroke doubles. In each case the key thing is not the result but the learning opportunities – the quality of discussion about tactical options and shot selection that the moveable 'free' ball generates.

Coaching on smaller lawns

Coaching beginners on full lawn can make for slow progress as newcomers fluff more shots while wrestling with up to 21 yards between hoops. A judicious

application of the "magic boot" is then called for to nudge balls into more useful positions, particularly in AC where it's especially helpful to keep the flow of the game going. A ready-made solution is to coach on smaller lawns.

COACHING ON HALF LAWNS

When using half lawns for coaching, most of the space reduction comes from outside the 'central rectangle'. The more compact playing area instils greater confidence in those starting out in the game. In fact there is only a four yard reduction in the distance from hoop 1 to hoop 2 – a small variation, but psychologically telling. There is less far for the coaching group to walk between shots, leaving more time for discussion and play.

Most importantly, shots become a little more achievable, leading to greater flow in the game and a quicker understanding of basic tactics. Clubs using half lawns for initial coaching find their students tend to build their confidence quickly by making secure progress, and are then keen to go on to join the club.

COACHING ON JUST PART OF A LAWN

One club has been trialling coaching beginners using Micro-Croquet: playing with just four hoops and a peg. It needs no special setting up. Take the line through hoops 2 and 3 as the north boundary: it can be marked with a length of string, or just estimated, leaving just the two southern hoops, the two central hoops, and the peg in play. (Who introduced me to the idea? Please reveal yourself!)

Various hoop sequences are possible. Perhaps simplest is to start at hoop 1, then over to hoops 4 to 6 as usual. AC players go on to the peg; GC players have a deciding hoop.

Micro-Croquet works on part of a full lawn, or, for an even brisker coaching game, part of a half lawn. The approach appears to be popular: at the club in question a Micro-Croquet League is in full swing among those taking their early steps in the game. Players start with five bisques or extra turns; they then lose one if they win, and gain one if they lose. Interest is high and it is very helpfully giving new players confidence as they develop their experience.



Rajan Pathak helps set up for a half lawn coaching game

NEW COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

The following players have completed all stages of the qualification process and are now formally accredited as CA Coaches. Warmest congratulations to all.

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

- Michael Clarke, Compton CC
- Martin Daniels, Bromley CC
- Bob Honey, Moreton-in-Marsh CC
- Adam Newbould, Bromley CC
- Jane Sheridan, Sydenham CC
- Tim Small, Caversham CC
- Lionel Stock, York CC
- Simon Turner, Ealing CC

Would you make a good coach? Coach training courses will be advertised later this year at all the Academies. You do NOT need to be a top player to be a good coach; much more important are personal qualities – a warm and welcoming personality, good inter-personal skills, and a genuine interest in supporting and helping others.

And it's not all one way, as recently-qualified coach Richard Gardiner from Dowlish Wake CC reports: *I have to say I enjoy coaching as much as playing. It's great to see players improve!*

NEW MERIT AWARDS

Congratulations to the following:

Association Croquet

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Richard Coward High Wycombe Handicap
Neil Kingston
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Neil Pinker
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Association Croquet

– Silver Merit Award

Ed Dolphin
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Tudor Jenkins
COWhorn

– Golf Croquet – Bronze Merit Award

Ronald Gould
Ryde C-Level

Jeff Faulkner
Camerton &
Peasedown C-Level

– Golf Croquet – Silver Merit Award

Mark Hamann
East Dorset B-Level
Bernie Phillips
Wrest Park B-Level

– Golf Croquet – Gold Merit Award

Glynis Davies
Crake Valley A-Level

Remember to claim your Merit Award if you qualify! The criteria are set out on the CA website: put Croquet Association Merit Award Scheme into Google to get straight to the detail. The event Manager will be able to make the claim for you; otherwise, download a copy of the form from the CA website. The form has just been slightly simplified so claiming your Award should be straightforward.

CLUB MATTERS

In the last edition, club management of people was explored. In this article we turn our attention to club marketing. Before reading the following adapted ideas from Sport England it's worth considering the strong link between club management of people and marketing. Our members are our best ambassadors, their conversations with friends, family and colleagues are our most powerful marketing tool. In other words, deliver an outstanding experience for existing members and you are well set to achieve a successful marketing strategy.

CLUB MANAGEMENT: MARKETING

A marketing strategy is a plan of what and how your club is going to recruit and retain members

Developing a marketing strategy to manage your efforts will help you to think about what makes your club different, and how you can get the right message out to the right people. Having a plan in place helps you to concentrate on maximising opportunities for increasing sales, sponsorship, membership and participant numbers. You'll find your marketing is more likely to be successful when you've taken time to identify what you want to do and when you want to do it. In its simplest form, there are four main areas.

What is your offer?

It is important to be clear on what you are offering and to whom. This is what you are trying to 'sell' or promote to both new and existing 'customers'. Start off by thinking about who your 'customers' are. These are the people you want to attract to your club. They could include members and participants, volunteers, coaches and officials, parents, funders. Write down a list of all your customers, both existing and those you want to target in your marketing efforts. You then need to think about what you offer each of these groups of people. Think about the 4Ps of marketing and ask yourself the questions below

- Product - What is the Unique Selling Point (USP) of your club? What makes you different to others
- Price - How much does it cost for someone to be part of your club? Is this price right for your target audience? Can you offer different prices for different services or memberships?
- Promotion - Is your club well known in the local community? Do your current members promote your club on

your behalf, after all 'word of mouth' promotion is our most effective tool.

- Place - Are you easy to find? Do your facilities meet the needs of your offer? You should carry out research to make sure what you are offering is what the people you want to be part of your club are looking for. Why not explore the benefits of Survey Monkey when looking to carry out market research? For further information on Survey Monkey: www.surveymonkey.com

What do you want to achieve?

When developing a marketing plan you should identify the objectives that underpin your overall goals and club vision. These objectives should be 'SMART': Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely. A general objective from your marketing might be: "Attract more members"... ..but a SMART objective would be: "Increase our junior membership by 20% over the next three years." or "Increase annual retention rates from 85% to 95% by the end of next season."

How do you get there?

You need to develop a framework which outlines exactly what you will do and when. Think about the different options you have for reaching these people. There are lots of marketing channels to choose between such as: websites, social media, posters, newsletters, press and media.

Remember to consider any costs of marketing. These should be factored into your club's overall budget. Don't do it alone, get other volunteers involved and play to people's strengths- think of those volunteers who are social media savvy or budding/current/retired journalists.

How do you measure success?

Progress should always be monitored to ensure your efforts are not wasted. Identify how you will know that your plan has been a success. Put timescales and measures for success against each activity in your action plan. Make sure that these are realistic, and set yourself measures to make sure you are on track. Remember, don't be afraid to change tactics if it's not working.

For ideas, visit Sport England: <https://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/planning-for-your-future/marketing-inside-and-out/>

For further information, contact:
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CA WEBSITE

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

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

To find the glossary online, visit:

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

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HYPERLINKS

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The Croquet Gazette is published six times
per year usually in February, April, June,
August, October and December.

Copy should reach the Editor before 10th
of the month before publication is due.

However if you have something that you
think the Editor may be willing to expand
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the CA's Operations Manager.

The Croquet Gazette is designed and
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