



CROQUET

GAZETTE

Issue 405 | October 2023



CROQUET WORLD CHAMPIONS

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**The Croquet Association
Issue 405 | October 2023**



Front cover:
Croquet World
Champions
PHOTOGRAPH
Chris Roberts

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WELCOME

The end of our summer season has passed, but still there are stories to be told. In this issue we have reports from two World Championships, international and national events, as well as grass root stories. As always, it has been fantastic to hear from so many readers. Your letters are always valued and welcomed. Recently, our social media channels have been filled with croquet news from

across the UK. Player interviews have aired on local radio stations, Regional TV sports news visited Bowdon Croquet Club and town newspapers have been supporting their local croquet teams. This hive of activity clearly suggests that our sport is garnering more attention. We really are seeing "More people, playing more croquet in more places".

| Alison Maugham, Editor

PHOTOGRAPH December winners
dress code of course essential



INDOOR SPEED CROQUET

This winter the indoor speed croquet is back in Soham one weekend each month from November through to March. Follow this link to see event details <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/soham-2>

All events at Soham are a variant of short association croquet doubles with timers. Half games are played with a maximum of 25 minutes per team. Players are welcome to enter with a partner

or solo and we will match you to a partner, except for the day of progressive doubles, where you get to play with a number of players at the opposite end of the handicap spectrum. This is an event suitable for players of all abilities. Last year the handicaps ranged from -2.5 to 24 and the events are great fun which also help to keep participants fit.

| Paul Hetherington



HIBISCUS COLUMN

There is nothing so frustrating as jawsing a hoop, the brutal crunch that means you're toast. It happens to the best. I watched an England player setting up a 'must do' first hoop peel in a short croquet final against a man with five bisques. His mishit simple roquet segued into an awkward hoop shot. Ouch. All too soon, the score was 14-0. For lesser mortals, a jaw is another bisque wasted. Cliff Jones smiled wolfishly. 'You're getting through them nicely', he said, whiskers twitching. When I had, he demonstrated how it should be done. Hitching his stick to his belt, he rushed with pinpoint accuracy, creating hoops that were impossible to miss. Relaxed, graceful, awesome. And gracious words for the loser. Pure class. Of course you can complain about hoops being set too narrow. On occasion you may be right. Hoops accidentally switched between lawns at High Wycombe triggered a revolution - I'm sure you get the picture. So, it may be worth a try. Reg Bamford clearly thought so in his bid to reach the World Championship (WC) quarter finals against England's Alain Giraud. In such contests, hoops have a clearance of 1/32nd of an inch. If they were set in concrete at that width

they would be literally impossible to run, in rubber not so difficult. Or so I'm told. Ergo the wetter the turf, the lesser the challenge - which should have favoured WC contenders in rain soaked July. Newly qualified referee, Simon Hathrell, was on controversy red alert when called on to officiate games involving Robert Fulford, James Death and Reg Bamford on adjacent courts at the Roehampton Club. Before long Reg was raising his mallet. The hoops were too narrow. They were checked and they weren't. OK the balls must be too wide. As apparently can be the case. They were changed, but the replacements refused to do the multiple WC champ any favours. From 2-1 up, he lost 2-3. For the record, I made it down to Budleigh for the Gilbey Goblet, my confidence largely restored by imitating Duncan Reeve's swing. Bisques galore didn't save me against very low handicappers but, for the most part, I lost to opposition expertise rather than missed roquets and jawsing hoops. On his home ground, David Warhurst started the charge that would lead to victory with an enjoyable game against me. It was also a pleasure to play the evergreen Brian Shoney and to watch the

gains Theodore 'Teddy' Wilmot-Sitwell, last year's Oxford captain, has made now he has the time to put in the hard hours. In April, he was 8, now he's scratch, playing with the poise and power that will put him among the minuses soon. Sadly I have a word of warning for high bisquers everywhere. Given my lack of experience, I've played a fairly wide variety of opponents without the need to say 'how many do I have left' every time I signal for a bisque. They disappear in what has become a familiar rhythm and the thought that anyone might sneak out extra ones never crossed my mind. Why would they bother, especially when playing impeccably? Naive or what? When I repeatedly questioned bisque-drain, the reply was 'I'm a mathematician. I'd never get that wrong'. Well, we can all count to 14... My word against his but, by the time you try to prove it, it's far too late. In the afternoon, I may have insulted the genial Jim Field by keeping a check on his faultless bisque counting. When the familiar rhythm returned, I stopped but I'll be more aware in the future...

I Minty Clinch

TUNNEL OF TIME

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

45 YEARS AGO

In the Winter 1978 Gazette (#150)

1978 IN RETROSPECT

Congratulations to Oxford University upon their first victory against Cambridge after several weeks of careful preparation. The growing popularity of weekend tournaments; a record entry of 31 clubs in the Longman Cup culminating in a clean-sweep victory for Walsall; the first appearance of Northern Counties in the Counties meeting (won by a strong Middlesex team); reports from Clubs of triple peels being attempted for the first time — all these are clear signs of the game's well-being. Thus, we may go forward into 1979 with assurance and eager anticipation of the arrival of April when it will be time once more to recall those words of Sherlock Holmes: 'Come, Watson! The game's afoot!'

70 YEARS AGO

In the October 1963 Gazette (#70)

THANKS TO MANAGERS

Dear Sir, While attending a number of

tournaments during the last few years, I have been forcibly struck by the responsible, onerous and thankless tasks that fall on our managers. We players, one and all, owe them a great measure of grateful thanks for their devoted services. They work long hours and get no games. Without them how could tournaments be run? They are in charge. It is up to others to back them up by punctuality at the time they are called to be ready to play and to accept their decisions without needless criticism. Non-compliance with these simple points is too often evident and adds to their managerial burdens—frequently without rhyme or reason. After all, good manners and courtesy are essential in every sport and especially in croquet, as managers are so hard to enlist.

Yours faithfully, A PLAYER

115 YEARS AGO

In the October 22nd, 1908 Gazette

LETTERS – CENTRE PLAY

Dear Sir, I have reduced my bisques and improved(?) my play by assiduously practising the above style, but I'm not

happy about it. Is it a game at all, swinging a heavy piece of wood mechanically between one's feet and hardly using a muscle in the act? Supposing everyone played in this style, what a style it would be at a large croquet tournament; nothing but pendulums swinging, swinging, just waiting until they are straight before hitting the ball! No, there's something rotten about it, and I'm going back to my old bisques and my old style, the side-stroke, and shall always have the joy of feeling I hit the ball, not that deadly, monotonous, leaden-weighted, heavy-headed, up-and-down, perpetual-swinging old mallet head of mine.

Yours faithfully, "THREE BISQUES"

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

I Chris Williams, CA Archivist

CROQUET AND LIFE: SOME PARALLELS



There are lots of reasons why I love playing croquet: the lawns tend to be in beautiful settings; the satisfying 'thwack' as a mallet hits a ball; intriguing tactics: quaint etiquettes; civilised people; no gender discrimination; no ageism; a game uncorrupted by drugs or money; a game that assumes people are trustworthy and honest; a game where the outcome is uncertain and it is often possible to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

I'm also struck by the many parallels between playing croquet and living life. In essence, life is all about making choices – preferably informed choices - about what to do for the best and that's exactly what croquet entails. Since croquet is a still-ball game, each turn starts with four stationary balls and with time to decide which ball to play and what to do with it, you have time to weigh up the pros and cons of different courses of action. One of the best bits of advice I was ever given is to think not so much about what you'd gain from an action, but what you'd give away if it wasn't successful. When you look back on a game, just like looking back over your life, you can often identify a couple of pivotal decisions; the critical points that made all the difference.

There are many striking similarities between the situations that arise during a croquet game and living your life. Here are some examples:

The start. The order of play in croquet is determined by the flick of a coin. This moment is unique; it is the only time during the game when you are powerless to determine the outcome and, while the coin is airborne, nothing has gone either right or wrong. As soon as the coin hits the ground and comes to rest, this unique moment vanishes.

The start of your life is much the same as the start of a game of croquet. You are powerless to choose your gender, your skin colour, your dispositions or your parents. You are born into a situation not of your making. You aren't even invited to call heads or tails! Fortunately, both in croquet and in life, powerlessness is very temporary. Soon there are decisions to be made, all of which have consequences.

It's up to you. In a singles game (doubles gets a mention later) when you are 'in play' (as opposed to watching your opponent taking a turn) you are alone on the lawn. It is just you, your mallet, four balls, six hoops and a peg. You are responsible for all your decisions and your actions. In a very real sense, you are playing against yourself and every mistake you make is a self-inflicted wound.

Life is much the same. Despite 'no man being an island' there is a limit to the extent that other people can help you. There comes a time when, after heeding advice and support from others, it's up to you. Blaming other people or 'circumstances beyond your control' is tempting but futile. Accepting that you are responsible for yourself is something many people fail to grasp. They assume that someone – God, the government, their doctor, their parents, a partner – will look after them. This breeds dependency and vulnerability. It is far safer to assume that 'if it's to be, it's up to me'.

Opportunities. A game of croquet provides one opportunity after another. In life armed, not with a mallet but with your knowledge and skills, opportunities tend to present themselves less clearly. Events do not come conveniently labelled, 'Hey, look at me, I'm an opportunity'. Sometimes opportunities are regarded as problems that need fixing rather than opportunities that need exploiting. When problems (i.e. the difference between what you've got and what you want) are treated as opportunities, the likelihood of success increases.

In life, as in croquet, it is best to wean yourself off problems and to train yourself to 'think opportunities'.

Staying focused. Croquet, played well, demands your undivided attention. Each shot – perhaps hundreds of them during a typical game – needs to be executed carefully. Being totally focused in



this way has been described as 'flow', a mental state where you are fully immersed with your emotions totally aligned to the task at hand.

In life, the ability to focus and concentrate on what you are doing, without being distracted, is a major asset. Staying engrossed in a task, perhaps for long periods of time, is an accomplishment – particularly in an era when smart phones and noise are so intrusive. It is easier to stay focused if you are undertaking a task voluntarily, because you want to rather than because you must. Often, tasks that you initially undertake grudgingly, without enthusiasm, can gradually reveal themselves to be beneficial and your initial reluctance can give way to increased willingness. Clearly, the more you indulge in activities you want to do, the easier it is to stay focused and be fulfilled. Sadly, many people spend too much of their waking lives doing things they don't want to do. Fortunately playing croquet is not one of them

Competition. Croquet is a competitive sport; someone wins and someone loses. Quite undeservedly, croquet is popularly believed to be viciously competitive, probably because players often move their opponent's balls to unfavourable positions. However, purely negative play is rarely a winning strategy. Competition causes you to strive harder than you otherwise would. Competing with

someone doing their best to win puts you on your mettle. The whole of life is competitive. There is no point in pretending otherwise as, regrettably, some sports days at primary schools contrive to do. You compete to attract attention, for air space, for a university place, for a job, for promotion, for market share, for a life partner – it is all competitive.

Risk – benefit analysis. Weighing up risks vs. benefits is a constant during a game of croquet. Decisions about which ball to play, and what to do with it, are largely based on an assessment of risks and benefits. Life is one decision after another. Each decision you make requires you to weigh up risks and benefits. Sometimes this is tortuous when, for example, you are faced with a dilemma and called upon to choose between equally unfavourable options (often referred to as being 'between a rock and a hard place') and sometimes the best way ahead is obvious: a no-brainer. Once your decision is made, right or wrong, you have to go for it with total confidence. Half-hearted actions can easily result in a correct decision going awry and confident actions might mean escaping the consequences of a poor decision. In life, as in croquet, sound decisions, followed by confident execution, is everything. Trying something different. Sometimes a croquet game gets stuck, with both players repeating the same manoeuvre without making progress. This is when it is appropriate to try something different to break the equilibrium, to alter the pattern that is failing to deliver. It requires courage to do something different. Much the same happens in life. Often we get stuck in a comfort zone knowing that we could do something different, but we procrastinate for fear of the unknown. Somehow the known, even if it is unsatisfactory, is less scary. Change, we convince ourselves, might make matters worse: better the devil you know. The odd thing is that change is remarkably easy once you have made up your mind to do it! Deciding, really deciding, to make a change is the difficult part. Once the decision to change has been made, implementing it is relatively easy.

Mistakes. During a croquet game, mistakes are inevitable. You might fail to hit the ball you are aiming at, you might get stuck in the hoop you are trying to run, despite your best efforts you might place balls in careless positions making it hard for you to make progress, you might hit your ball off the lawn....and so on. At any moment a self-inflicted error can occur.

Mistakes are inevitable in life too. Everyone makes mistakes, it's part of being human. Of course, the gravity of mistakes varies. Small mistakes are easily corrected and have manageable, perhaps trifling, consequences. Big mistakes ('below the waterline') are far more troublesome and often have catastrophic consequences.

The good thing about all mistakes, large or small, is that they provide superb learning opportunities. Inside every mistake

there are lessons waiting to get out. You are more likely to be motivated to review mistakes, particularly recurring ones, and to work out what to do to avoid repeating them in future. Successes on the other hand are more likely to be celebrated without feeling the need to identify the ingredients of success so that they can be understood, replicated and built upon. The important thing about mistakes is to learn from them and use them as a platform to continuously improve.

Etiquette. Despite its poor image (people who don't play croquet invariably think it's a vicious game) croquet is a civilised game played between consenting adults. All the laws and processes assume people are honest and can be trusted to behave properly. The underlying assumption is that people can be trusted to be self-regulating and, if necessary, that they will invite a third party to monitor a shot that might be dodgy.

Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world; some people are not trustworthy and some are selfish and rude. Despite this, the best policy is to err of the side of assuming people are honest – even though sometimes we'll be disappointed. There are two compelling reasons for this. Firstly, the assumption that people are honest and trustworthy does not, alas, guarantee they always will be but it makes it more likely. Behaviour breeds behaviour. Secondly, assuming people are honest is better for you than the alternative. To operate on the assumption that people are dishonest and 'out to get you' is paranoid and injurious to your health and wellbeing.

Partners. In croquet sometimes you play doubles. The need to confer with a partner is an added complication over playing a singles game where you only have to agree with yourself! Partners fundamentally alter the experience of playing because, to some extent, you feel beholden to your partner. Your performance is no longer your own, it is shared with someone else having a vested interest in what you do and vice versa. Mistakes, in particular, are emotionally more troublesome; when you err, you tend to feel apologetic and when your partner errs, you can easily start blaming them for messing things up. Neither apologising nor blaming changes anything – in fact they usually make matters worse. Partners also bring many advantages. You have someone to share successes with, someone with whom to review the progress of the game and to discuss the pros and cons of different tactics. Playing with a more experienced partner can be especially rewarding as they urge you to be more ambitious than you might otherwise be and provide tactical guidance. Much the same applies to partners in life; they both complicate and enhance experiences. Just as in croquet, choosing the right partners makes a vast difference to the balanced score card. The trick is to select partners who add value to your life.

Dr Peter Honey www.peterhoney.org

SHEFFIELD CC - WI LINK

WI and Walkley Orchids WI held their own 'tournaments' and are planning a match against each other next year. From these sessions a number of WI members have joined Sheffield Croquet Club as social playing members and a couple more intend joining next year. The whole venture has been a great success.

In order to attract new members and widen participation with minority groups, Sheffield Croquet Club have had a fruitful partnership this year with the SYFWI. Members of WI groups in the local area were encouraged to participate in 'pay and play' sessions with equipment and coaching provided by club members. Following this, Wadsley



PHOTOGRAPH Jayne Spaven: Walkley Orchids WI



PHOTOGRAPH Mick Derrick: Wadsley WI with the Secretary of Sheffield Croquet Club

CHAIRMAN OF THE CA COUNCIL

This time last year, I wrote having just watched the online streaming of the Golf Croquet World Championship final, which Matthew Essick won against Robert Fulford. Twelve months on, and I had the pleasure of watching the same two players contest the Association Croquet World Championship final at Hurlingham. It was another great match by both players, this time won by Robert Fulford for the sixth time.

As always with such events, the volunteers who helped make this event and the 300+ others listed in the fixtures calendar happen are too numerous to list. The same applies to those involved in live streaming of events – something which continues to develop and improve with each iteration. The Women’s Golf Croquet World Championship final has set a new benchmark with 8,500 views either on the day or in the following 2 weeks.

By the time you read this, we will be near the end of this year’s playing season, and various committees and clubs will be planning next year’s events. Others will be doing all sorts of winter jobs at clubs; if you can spare some time then please offer to help – it will be appreciated.

Planning for the transition to Croquet England continues. You may have begun to see the new logo on some products available from the shop, and will start seeing it on other material as it starts to be used on new print runs to replace previous stock as it runs out. Finally, my thanks to Peter Nelson and Patrica Duke-Cox who stand down as members of Council in October, and welcome to Tim King and Stuart Smith who have been elected in the East and West Midlands, and South West respectively.

Samir Patel
Chairman of Council
CqE Board of Trustees



SHORT CROQUET CORNER

Short Croquet lends itself perfectly to club-level competitive play and is a particularly attractive option for club competitions; drawing in those in the earlier stage of their croquet development as well as more experienced players.

York CC, with 80 AC players playing both Short Croquet and full lawn AC, will next season be running eleven club competitions: five short lawn, five full lawn, and one ‘anything goes’.

The five short lawn competitions are the High Bisquers Mallet, for new players still on maximum bisques, played as two parallel leagues with a decider on Finals Day; the Julian Tonks Trophy aimed at developing players; the Crayke Cup, a simple knockout competition with entries welcome from players of all handicaps; the Club Doubles, a light-hearted one-day event with high bisquers paired with low bisquers randomly on the day; and, new for 2024, a one-day tournament.

The ‘anything goes’ competition, the Twenty20, simply encourages Club members to play AC or SC friendlies against as many different opponents during the season as they can. Anyone reaching 20 shares the cup. Short lawn or full lawn, win or lose, 14 point or 26 point or something in between, they all count towards the target of 20 different opponents.

Experience in Club competitions suggests that standard bisque allocations in Short Croquet tend to the generous. This can readily lead to a scoreline of 14:6, with the first person to secure a good break very likely to win the game.

Currently being trialled at York is a proposal from Alan Locket, Beverley CC, whose detailed statistical analyses indicate that playing with 70% of normal bisque allocation can provide a fairer, more balanced game. Trials in 2022 worked well, helping to even up the challenge by making for more closely-fought games. With 70% bisques, play is about more than securing the first break,

and offers both players a fairer chance of winning. Club members have continued the arrangement for a second season and the trial continues.

Playing from a base would seem to be another possible way of countering the 14:6 scoreline. Alternatively, designating ‘penalty hoops’, as in Advanced AC, would seem to offer a practical way forward. If any club has experimented with either of these approaches, or come up with another solution, please be in touch with how it has worked in practice.

John Harris



PHOTOGRAPH Jill Hogg introduces two newcomers to Short Croquet

THE MCWEENEY 2023

The McWeeny is, with the exception of Covid, an annual contest between the Croquet Association of Ireland and the Croquet Association of level advanced Association Croquet. Since 2019 the trophy has resided at the Carrickmines Club, but all that changed this year as the match took place amid a stormy weekend in Southport. The first round of doubles saw Ireland move into a 2-1 lead in this competition between two teams of six. But the tables turned quickly, as England won the first set of singles 5-1. A second round of doubles was played out through driving rain and wind but finally saw a 3-0 for England, leaving just two wins required to seal the match. It had looked like being just 2-1 until England Captain Paul Hetherington hit a last gasp shot, with partner in the box and Ireland on penult and peg, managing to seal a win +4, a lesson in making sure that if balls are in the middle of the lawn to leave them wired. After a great night out at a local Chinese restaurant, the teams returned in the morning in better weather. Brian Medley and Paul Hetherington soon put England within one win of winning the trophy before Roger Staples made the winning peg out, in partnership with Jack Good. The third set of doubles finally going to England 3-0. The final round of singles saw England win 4-2. The CA team were Nigel Matthews 4/5, Jack Good 3/5, Brian Medley 4/5, Mike Sandler 3/5, Paul Hetherington 4/5 and Roger Staples 5/5. Event organiser, and usual CA captain, Brian Havill 1/5 also contributed playing for Ireland. Nigel Matthews was awarded the Maugham Cup for best player, due to the quality of opponents he defeated during the match.

This really is a great fun representative match and I would encourage any members to put their names forward for selection, as the idea is to match the handicaps of the two teams. A task that generally works well, as the trophy now records 17 wins apiece.



Most of the competitors with the trophy

RPCC CENTENARY TOURNAMENT 2 SEPTEMBER 2023

The celebrations of Reigate Priory Croquet Club's centenary continue! As we only have a single lawn (not quite full size at that) it is difficult for us to hold home league matches and impossible to hold a conventional tournament. Nevertheless, we wanted to invite as many other players as possible to our lawn in our centenary year, so our committee came up with the idea of a hybrid tournament with both short croquet and golf croquet played on half lawns by the same teams of two.

Despite this being unprecedented (as far as we know) and there are as yet no published rules for a doubles form of short croquet, we pressed on undaunted to plan the event. We started by devising an order of play involving eight teams playing four matches each, two in each code, with a fairly relaxed timetable giving, we hoped, plenty of time for refreshments and socialising between rounds.

A scoring system giving equal weight to each code had to be thought up, but that proved easily solved. We opted for the handicap form of golf so that the winning team scored exactly seven hoops scoring 2 points each, thereby matching the number of hoop points scored by the winning team in short croquet. In short croquet each player has bisques but low handicap players are required to make compulsory peels. In the absence of guidance on how to adapt this to doubles play we came up with the idea of allocating a negative handicap to peelers (so -1 for a one peel player and so on) and then working out the average for the team (rounded to the half bisque above). In the event, no team finished up with a negative handicap, which made things easier. We calculated the bisque allocation and extra turns due in advance to avoid arguments on the day (a successful play!).

Then we set about inviting nearby clubs to take part. Our committee drew up a first list of seven, and members who visited other clubs asked whether their hosts might be interested, so that in the end we invited eleven from whom we managed to attract the seven that we needed without having to put in more than one team ourselves. We decided not to charge an entry fee – it was intended to be a party after all – but we would offer our guests

lunch and the usual refreshments for a small charge. Almost all accepted. Entrants would also get one of our much admired and coveted centenary mugs!

The day dawned bright and sunny, which was just as well as we don't have adequate indoor space for 16 people to have lunch in wet weather! Several club members were there early to set up the lawns, seating, tables and decorations for the day and our guests started arriving early too. All the visitors arrived so our reserve team was stood down and play commenced on time. We had allowed 90 minutes for each game which was more than enough for all the GC games, but several of the SC games went to the wire. Only two had to be timed out, one of which was in the last round when timing wasn't really an issue – possibly the players had had enough anyway!

Two rounds were completed by lunch time, at which point there were just two unbeaten teams, the home team and our neighbours Caterham. Lunch was an enjoyable social interlude taken at a long table alongside the lawn – our catering team did us proud, especially with the specially centenary decorated dishes! The remaining two rounds followed with an interval for tea and cake (also centenary decorated) which delayed the final round somewhat. The home team failed to finish their third match, thereby dropping some potentially valuable points, but Caterham came to grief in their final match leaving Reigate the winners by just two points. Overall, the results were very close with six of the eight teams finishing within 8 points of the winners.

| SJL



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PROUDLY BRITISH

THE (UNOFFICIAL) HISTORY OF CROQUET: PART 3

CROQVET MAXIMVS

The relationship between croquet and the deity in ancient civilisations has been conclusively established by research carried out at the croquet court sites now known to have existed in the ancient world (see *The Unofficial History of Croquet: Croquet Gazette* - June 2023), but these are in general small in scale. This cannot be said of the Nazca Lines, a group of geoglyphs in the Nazca Desert in southern Peru, which feature a combination of straight lines and figures that can only be seen from the air and were undoubtedly meant to be viewed by the gods, so it is significant that one of the giant figures depicts a monkey god playing croquet (Fig. 1). We know that croquet was considered to be the favourite game of the gods in Ancient Greece and references to it appear in several Greek myths. There was a god of croquet named Krocus (Crocus), who was also associated with longevity, possibly a reference to the length of the game, and several figurines depicting the ancient winged god holding a mallet and ball have been discovered at temple sites dedicated to him (Fig. 2). The Greeks played two versions, which were almost identical to those played today. They were called short and long croquet, the latter being described by Homer as lasting several hours and consequently not popular as a spectator sport. Temples dedicated to Krocus always incorporated the figures seven and thirteen in their dimensions, notably the number of spaces between the columns on the short and long sides of the temple, another reference to

the different versions played. The most famous Greek myth involving croquet describes the ancient Cretan labyrinth at Knossos. A surviving mosaic from the palace of King Minos depicts the layout of the labyrinth, which includes seven chambers arranged in the pattern of the hoops and peg on a croquet court (Fig 4). The connection between croquet and the labyrinth is further reinforced by the discovery of a bronze figurine depicting the Minotaur holding a mallet and ball (Fig. 3). The myth describes seven Athenian youths and seven maidens being sent to be devoured by the Minotaur each year, before he was slayed by Theseus. The Romans were avid croquet players. Its status can be deduced from the number of courts that existed at Hadrian's Villa, near Tivoli. These are now known to have been grass courts, which involved a high level of maintenance, hence their status. However, it was the Romans who elevated croquet to a spectator sport in huge arenas, notably in games played between gladiators (Fig 5). These could be quite violent, as disputes over faults often resulted in a fight to the death. There were also strict rules around timing, and games that went over time usually resulted in wild animals being released into the arena to determine the outcome. The large crowds attracted by gladiatorial croquet may not return to the modern game, but clubs could still improve their prospects by installing a shrine dedicated to Krocus.

I David Graham



Fig. 1: Nazca Lines



Fig. 2: Krocus Figurine



Fig. 3: Minotaur - Bronze 520-500BC



Fig. 4: Labyrinth Mosaic



Fig. 5: Roman Croquet Arena



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LETTERS

GC HOOP 13 RULES

Playing recently in a Federation GC Level League (best of 3) match against two different opponents on the same day, each of my six games went to hoop 13. In each case the winner was the player who managed to tuck a ball behind the hoop, effectively wired from all others. So the games, the match and possibly the league may depend on unassailable hoop approach strokes. Would it not be preferable to change the rules so that an "open" hoop was the decider? I would suggest either hoop 2 or hoop 10 at the discretion of the player who loses hoop 12.

Ian Harrison, Basingstoke Croquet Club

IN SEARCH OF THE MYTHICAL 'SEVENTH HOOP'

A letter in the July Gazette referred to Len Goodman and croquets 'seventh hoop'. Somewhat bewildered I decided to investigate further, and I must admit, it's all very confusing.

Having spent several hours counting and recounting the number of hoops on our local lawns (both backwards and forwards), from left to right (and back) and from top to bottom (and back again), I remain pretty certain that there are only six hoops on a standard croquet lawn.

So perhaps the seventh hoop isn't visible to the naked eye? To check further, I repeated the exercise wearing polarising sunglasses with no success, and then I tried waving my mallet around aimlessly to see if I hit anything (an approach I also use in play, hence my high handicap), but again with no success.

So where oh where is this mythical hoop? I know that the six hoops are logically named 1-6 in the order they are played. And the same logic is repeated going around the same hoops in reverse starting again at hoop 1 (back). But what about the seventh hoop? Perhaps it's not on our lawns?

Eureka, of course, I've found it. A seventh 'hoop' does occur, in American '9-Wicket Backyard Croquet'! So, with that mystery solved, I am now off in search of the mythical 'second peg'. Wish me luck. **Chris Southworth, Worcester Norton Croquet Club**

A.I. OR HUMAN I?

Well maybe the title is a little excessive, but at least it has got your attention, and who knows where the world is heading?

It has been a while since I was moved enough to make a comment in this forum, however having read Maxine Holland's Surbiton GC Championship tournament report (p31 in the June issue), about her recent experience as the manager for this event, I can only concur whole-heartedly, that while I accept that formats and regulations are useful, they should be treated only as guidelines to help the manager run a 'successful' tournament in any way they see fit (even if this means 'bending' the said guidelines). Only the human brain can be 'flexible' enough to make any necessary changes to a tournament that has had some unforeseen interruptions. The most common of which would be the weather, or 'slow play', resulting in delays and players waiting around for their next game. Players are human individuals and should be expected to be treated as such, who knows what will happen today let alone tomorrow?

Personally, I believe life is more invigorating with a little change. Do we really want or need all tournaments on a circuit to be identical for the sake of consistency? We cannot control all the variables (especially the weather) no matter how hard we try or would like to. Life needs to have variety and that includes challenges, which may put some of us outside of our 'comfort zone'.

So, in conclusion, let the manager do their job and thank them for doing it at all. **Ivor Brand**

NOM DE CROQUET

I understand that it is no longer possible to register an alternative name (Nom de Croquet). Ah well, another tradition bites the dust.

I can't remember who gave me an explanation of the rule but I think it was the late lamented Nigel Graves. Before the 1960/70s it was not possible to play in a tournament at the weekend. If you were keen to play in such a Tournament then you had to skive off work (I don't think Nigel would have said "skive"). But this presented risks.

The problem with not registering a Nom de Croquet dated back to the halcyon days when tournament reports appeared regularly in the "heavies". That was good news if the CA had such a thing as a "marketing committee" in those Times (who doesn't like a pun?)... but bad news if your boss started each day with a flick through the aforementioned papers.

If hauled before the boss for an explanation, you could only reasonably expect to get away with "doppelganger/twin/cousin" as an alibi a few times before receiving whatever preceded the forerunner of the P45.

The great and the good at the CA came up with a stroke of genius – register an alternative "Nom de Croquet". Could we do the same* as a contribution to the CA charity efforts?

A fellow member of my hockey club raised funds for Children in Need by changing his name by Deed Poll to Sydney Harbour-Bridge.

Juan Bach (Klim Seabright), Cheltenham Hockey Club

*P.S. the office said "Please NOOOOOO!... it would blow all the valves in the computer and the feathers would wither on the quill".

CORNER SPOTS

I know of two clubs in England (Middlesbrough and Braithwaite near Keswick) which mark the four corner spots one yard in from each boundary line. The aim is threefold: to save time, to save backs from lots of stooping down to measure accurately from each boundary, and to avoid disputes when a player thinks an opponent hasn't measured the yards with sufficient care. I put forward this idea in the Gazette a few years ago. No one wrote back in support, and one correspondent suggested it might be against the laws of the game to have any extra marks on the lawn that might assist shot-making.

Since then one well-known player said to me at a tournament that it seemed an excellent idea. Then at the recent World Championship x was taking a long time re-measuring a corner ball which y had placed (I don't know who the players were) and a frustrated bystander commented that a corner spot marked on the lawn would have solved the problem much more swiftly. So may I commend the idea once again, and may we hear some reactions? If any reader thinks it is a good (or bad) idea but does nothing to make their view known, the idea will once again fade into obscurity!

Andrew Killick, Middlesbrough Croquet Club

LIVESTREAMING CROQUET

I have been enjoying the live streaming of the major championships of our sport. This has been accompanied by some excellent commentary and good post-match interviews. But there is a problem; it is difficult to see what is going on. Is it the camera equipment? Presumably we would require a massive financial input to set up enough cameras to give good all-round coverage? Is it the colour or size of the "primaries" set against the green grass? Is it the tendency of the recently most favoured hoops to be difficult to see? Powder coating white hoops each year though is quite expensive. Perhaps the CA Equipment Group could take a look at this and run some experiments? Could we pinch an idea from cricket wherein the bails light up when moved from their housing? Maybe it would be possible to set the camera in such a way that a "tracker" could be used (a bit like that which is being used in golf)? The televising of hockey had the green/white colour problem. It seems to have solved the problem with the combination of a blue field and white ball. Most serious hockey is now played on an artificial surface. If I was a TV producer, would the current colours put me off engaging with our sport?

Klim Seabright, Cheltenham Croquet Club

The ICT Director replies: *Klim is right when he indicates that budget and manpower are probably the 2 key limiting factors when livestreaming events. From the great work fronted by Alison and Eugene last year some additional equipment was purchased for this year's streaming which has expanded the number of cameras that we can use. The current set-up now requires 4 people to operate/commentate and a fairly large hatchback car to transport it all. In addition, most clubs do not have a suitable, secure, location to store the equipment and so a significant amount of effort is needed to set it up each day. With limited budget, using volunteers has enabled us to stream multiple events rather than having to procure significant extra funding to professionally stream just one. We therefore think we are now at about the optimum position without a step change increase in budget but are always willing to consider new ideas. Klim also makes some interesting observations on croquet equipment. This is outside the scope of the streaming team but the costs of making any extensive changes to playing equipment are likely to be prohibitive.*

Second response

As editor, and also main livestream organiser, I would like to add: I am always hopeful that one day we will have enough viewers to encourage a professional production company to assist us in broadcasting our sport, but until then, we are always looking for new ideas and volunteers, so would welcome your assistance.

Alison Maugham

LESSONS SURELY NEED TO BE LEARNT!

On Friday 21, July I drove from Leamington Spa to Southport....a journey that took me over 5 hours and booked into a modest guest house for 2 nights ... eagerly looking forward to a weekend of croquet at a B level tournament. On Saturday 22nd July ... at around 9.15 am, with torrential rain falling ... I duly arrived at the club ... to find no-one about! I immediately checked on line ... and discovered that the tournament had indeed been cancelled! Fortunately I rescued the situation by having an unplanned weekend there as a tourist before returning home on the Sunday ... and the rain kindly abated! Naturally I made some phone calls on Monday... to discover: The tournament had been cancelled on 13 July due to lack of support (only 3 entrants!).

A refund of tournament fee had been activated soon afterwards (not yet seen by me)An email had been sent to me notifying me of cancellation....AN EMAIL THAT NEVER ARRIVED!

So ... it seems to me that: A. Any croquet player entering a tournament should check the status of the tournament before travelling. B. Any email sent to alert players of cancellation of a tournament should include a request for the recipient to acknowledge receipt of the email. C. A courtesy phone call/text to reinforce the message would be sensible.

My trip cost me in excess of £200 and I would have been very pleased to have received a small token of compensation from Southport Croquet Club. Such a gesture would undoubtedly have encouraged me to enter a future tournament at this club.

Cliff Daniel

Editor's response: *It is so unfortunate that this has happened and I know the club in question, and the tournament committee have been informed and are constantly working on ways to improve their systems, so feedback is always welcome The club were also very saddened by your experience and I know have corresponded with you directly. It is unfortunate that you did not receive the cancellation email, which leads me to believe that you may not have received an event email either. The usual experience of a player about to attend a tournament is to receive information about the event in the weeks or days leading up to the event, so if no correspondence was received it would be a good idea to just call and check with the tournament manager before setting off. These confirmation emails usually include additional information such as tournament format and club information, which is also important for any player of a tournament to understand. Finally, the return of funds into your bank account may have helped as an indicator that the tournament was cancelled, which is part of the automatic cancellation system of the Tournament Entry System. Thank you for sharing your experience with us and I hope you enjoy your future tournaments. Alison Maugham*

CROQUET STREAMING

For anyone who missed the AC World Championship Final livestream it is available on YouTube along with many of the qualifying heats.

The final was gripping with the USA's Mathew Essick looking almost invincible in the first 2 games, so the fifth game turned into croquet's equivalent of a penalty shoot-out. Croquet's nearest thing to an emotional roller coaster. Recommended viewing. The volunteer production team deserves a huge thank you - the livestreaming is much more professional now and was easy to watch. The knowledgeable commentary team, (including our Club Secretary "Wixy" Wicks) was excellent. Personally I preferred the commentators who didn't say what they would have done but others may disagree. It was a nice touch to include a USA player Tom Balding in the Final commentary team. Sorry this guy had to be disappointed. Well done on a wonderful job.

Ian Cumming, Colchester

THE OVERLAP ON TOUR LIVE: PUNDITS PLAY CROQUET AT BURY CC

Bury Croquet Club recently welcomed 3 former international footballers and well-known football pundits, Gary Neville, Jamie Carragher & Roy Keane to their Whitehead Park, Bury lawns to film the final episode of a four part series “The Overlap On Tour Live”.

The famous trio were joined by ‘Handsome’ Bob O’Donovan, an old teammate of Roy Keane who flew from Ireland to take part in the programme. Gary Neville lived across the road from the croquet lawns and played bowls there with his grandfather & father when it was a bowling club.

None of them had played croquet before and were given some basic coaching by Club Chairman Roy Spencer with assistance from other club members. The foursome then played a competitive game wearing appropriate club colours and croquet attire.

Roy Spencer said that it was a great thrill for the club to welcome these highly talented sportsmen to the club. “Initially it was a little daunting when I was asked to referee the game but it was played in a great and competitive spirit. However I did learn what it’s like to be an international football referee when a disputed decision resulted in all four of them making their feelings known – up close and personal!”

The programme, which is one of Sky TV’s most popular shows, was aired on 5 July on Sky Max and Sky Showcase. Also available on Sky on Demand on Now TV, it gave quite extensive coverage-of the game of croquet – albeit a rather unusual one! Following the game, Gary, Jamie & Roy then went on to appear in the live sell out show at the Manchester Apollo at which the filming at Whitehead Park was featured.

For further information or photographs please contact:
Roy Spencer, Chairman, Bury Croquet Club, M: 07816 644 925



MERTON CC DEVELOPMENT

In 2022, despite the best efforts of members and the maintenance team with a hose and sprinkler, Merton Croquet Club had to end the season early and play league matches away as the drought left barely a blade of grass on our lawn. This season, despite the hottest June on record, we are enjoying our green lawn.

During the winter, thanks to club fundraising and saving, and a generous grant from the Croquet Association, we were able to install an irrigation system.

The lawn has been complimented by visiting teams and was admired by the Mayor of Merton and local councillors and other prospective members who attended our Open Day.

We are grateful for the advice and encouragement we have received from the Croquet Association and Merton Council and the ground staff in carrying out this project.

We look forward to many future seasons of croquet on our much improved lawn.

I Julie Sheahan, Merton Croquet Club

From bare ground to lush lawn: July 2022



July 2023



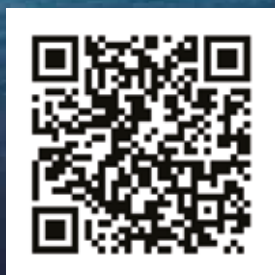
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OBITUARIES

NEIL MORRISON 1942 - 2023

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Neil Morrison, a stalwart of the Swindon Croquet Club and the former Treasurer of the South West Federation.

Neil had been an ever-present figure at the Croquet Club since he joined in 2005. In fact, most days would find Neil at the Club, always dressed in whites, carrying out a wide variety of tasks in maintaining the courts. He was usually to be seen constantly smoking and was renowned for his sweet tooth to the extent that he took coffee in his sugar rather than the reverse! Before joining Swindon, Neil had also played at Phyllis Court and Blewbury, indulging in his passion for AC, although of course, he was also a very adept GC player. At Swindon, he became an integral part of the committee; taking on various roles throughout the years including being the overall green keeper, setting up the Club's website and becoming its treasurer. His greatest and lasting contribution was his skill in raising funds from grants amounting to some £140,000 for new lawns, club house and equipment stores when the Borough Council handed over maintenance responsibility to the Club. As an architect, he provided the designs for the new buildings. For his services to the Swindon Croquet Club, he was presented with the Pride of Swindon award in 2011 and, in 2013, he received the CA Diploma for his services to croquet.

Neil was an excellent coach for beginners and improvers, as well as the more established players. Many of us recall about Neil being 'on our shoulder' when we decided whether to clear a ball or go for the hoop and having chosen the wrong option, one would look around to see Neil sitting outside the clubhouse with a

cup of coffee and a cigarette and he'd be shaking his head and smiling.

From the day he joined, Neil was deeply involved in the Club's 'Taking Croquet to the Community' and believed strongly in this part of the Club's ethos as well as its competitive role. More recently, he led the negotiations with the Borough Council for our planned further expansion with an additional two lawns and ancillary facilities as part of the exciting development of the Moredon Sports Hub for cricket, cycling, croquet and football. He was always adept at ferreting out opportunities for the club's and his own ambitions for us.

At the regional level, he was a well-known and respected figure. In 2018, he was persuaded to take on the Treasurer role at the South West Federation for a few years to help the Federation fill this vacancy. Our fondest memories of Neil will be as a good friend associated with his passion for and commitment to croquet.

| Tony Mayer



JOHN DAWSON 1945 - 2023

We are sad to report the death of John Dawson on 8 July 2023 a few weeks before his 78th birthday. He was one of probably quite a large cohort of people who took up croquet after retiring, having been an active sportsman in his earlier years.

He joined Chester Croquet Club in 2002, was elected to the committee in 2004 and served as secretary from November 2013 until stepping down due to ill health in 2022.

While secretary of Chester Croquet Club he was elected by the North West Federation as the regional representative on the CA Council, in November 2016, becoming Chairman of the Publishing Committee and a member of the Tournament and Marketing Committees in 2017. He became Chairman of the CA Management Committee in 2018 and was appointed Vice-Chairman of the CA Council in May 2019. In these roles he was deeply involved in the CA's working groups on organisation and governance which resulted in the recent reorganisation and current changes in charitable legal status. He led the CA's participation in the very successful CountryFile Live events at Blenheim in 2018, and Castle Howard in 2019. More recently during 2020 and 2021 he took a leading role in developing and promulgating the CA's policies on child safeguarding. After five very busy years, he relinquished his role as NW Federation representative in November 2021.

In between all these activities John took part in many NW Federation league matches and competitions, inter-counties competitions and national tournaments, for association croquet, and succeeded in reducing his AC handicap to 3.

He also enjoyed international croquet hospitality and played casual games at several Melbourne clubs during his many visits to Australia. In 2020 he enjoyed watching an English croquet team at a tournament in Cairnlea, Victoria.

John was born in Newcastle under Lyme in 1945, attended a local grammar school, graduated in classics at Cambridge and went on to take a post graduate course at Oxford. After graduation

he joined ICI and spent the whole of his career in personnel management at Billingham, Severnside, Northern Ireland and in Hong Kong, and latterly at Runcorn when he and his family came to live in Chester. Following diagnosis of prostate cancer he took early retirement in 2001, but treatment over 20 years proved remarkably effective before fading over the past eighteen months.

Throughout his retirement he was continually involved in a wide range of activities. He served as a JP for several years and with his wife, Ann, he was a part-time assistant warden at Youth Holiday Association hostels where he enjoyed leading country walks. In addition to croquet, he was a keen bridge player and bird watcher, also a frequent concert and theatre goer, and continued to be a keen follower of cricket which was his earlier sport. He was well travelled, always curious and well informed, and always ready to debate anything with anybody. His wife, Ann, died in 2012, and they had two daughters, Alice, a solicitor in London who is married with two sons, and Clare in Melbourne, Australia, also married with two sons. Chester Croquet Club is sad to lose such a keen and active member who will be remembered widely for his energy, enthusiasm and good humour. And our sympathies go to all his family and friends.

| Chester Croquet Club



LIZ NEAL 9 AUGUST 1922 - 13 JUNE 2023

One of the minor drawbacks of living to a great age after making an important contribution to the development of a sport or other activity is that your name and what you achieved may not be familiar to current participants. It is therefore very fitting that the croquet world should be able to mark the passing of Liz Neal at the age of 100 with a proper appreciation of the significance of her role as CA Development Officer between 1970 and 1976 as well as her other contributions to the game as a player and an active club member. Liz was born in 1922 and was brought up in Suffolk. She joined the WAAF during the war and then trained as a secretary and met her husband, Bernard, at Cambridge University. Bernard became a distinguished professor of engineering and Liz and Bernard moved first to Swansea and then to Wimbledon in the course of his career before moving to Cheltenham when Bernard retired in 1982.

Liz became a good Association Croquet player and an active member of Cheltenham Croquet Club. She was a mainstay of the Cheltenham catering operation although, when she was teamed with Bernard, would sometimes have to chivy him along because of his pleasure in chatting about croquet to those who needed feeding! The Neals lived in Moat Cottage in Leckhampton and over the years generously accommodated an army of croquet players from all over the world. Liz was always the most patient and welcoming of hostesses and the couple were held in deep affection by all their many friends in croquet.

In 1969, the Croquet Association started discussions with the Sports Council to secure grant support for a Development Scheme. This came to fruition in 1970 and ran in its initial form until 1976. However, it needed to be implemented by enthusiastic and committed individuals and the croquet world owes a huge debt of gratitude to Liz and Barbara Meachem who stepped forward to be the first Development Officers – Liz covering the south and Barbara the north. Barbara stepped down in 1973 but Liz carried on as the national Development Officer until 1976. The role entailed considerable travel to give croquet demonstrations and provide the impetus for the establishment of new clubs and the bringing of unregistered clubs into the fold. They organised courses for coaches and referees and persuaded established local players to provide ongoing coaching for newcomers. The modern Federation system can trace its beginnings in the encouragement Liz and Barbara gave to clusters of local clubs to provide each other with support. Above all, Liz and Barbara were convinced that personal contact was the key ingredient and put that principle into practice with great



energy, commitment and reliability.

Liz served as the sole CA Development Officer from 1974 to 1976 and her last report can be found in the December 1976 Croquet Gazette. The number of registered clubs rose from 75 in 1971 to 125 in 1976 and this is perhaps the greatest memorial to the success of her work in the front line of croquet development. Liz was also a versatile artist whose talents spanned painting, textiles, silver-smithing and later on, as her eyesight deteriorated, pottery. When even that became problematic, she turned to her imagination and began composing children's stories and dictating them. She was determined to reach her century and was very proud to have received a card from the late Queen. Given this combination of talent and determination, it is no surprise that Liz made such a success of her croquet development role and underlines the good fortune of English croquet in obtaining the services of such a capable individual for such an important task.

I Stephen Mullner

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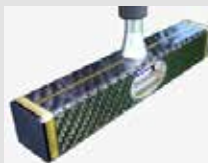
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WATFORD ON TOUR: CAN WE CLAIM A NUMBER OF FIRSTS?

After exploring the South of the country for a couple of weeks, the annual Watford tour pitched up in the wild west at Kington Langley in Wiltshire, where they played against a joint Kington Langley/Swindon team.

For me, the day started at 8.15am, when I had a call from one of the KL players to say that he had taken his wife to A&E, and would not be able to make the start time. Well, we all know that when in A&E you are there for a while, so I was left frantically searching for a replacement. Eventually I found someone, but the trauma did not end there. This player informed me that he could only play doubles, as his handicap index was one win from reducing him to 8, and he was due to play a SWF Intermediate League match the following day, and the criteria for this competition is that you have a minimum handicap of 9. We wished to play all singles in the afternoon session, so I spent most of the doubles match in which I was involved, attempting to find a player for the afternoon.

After all this, it is no surprise that Watford led 3-1 at lunch time. But then Kington Langley played their wild card.

Richard M Smith (-2), who as Club Competition Secretary had organised this match, had recently played at the World Championships and felt he needed a rest, but being the good club member that he is, agreed to fill in for the afternoon. Kington Langley is a two-lawn club and each team had five players, so there was a requirement to triple-bank. KL used to be a 1-lawn club and in order to play league matches at that time, had acquired a set of tertiary colours, Grey and Orange against Teal and Plum.

Richard and his opponent, Simon Hathrell (-1), agreed to play Super Advanced with tertiary colours. Simon was first in and went to 1-Back leaving an immaculate diagonal spread. Richard hit, and went to 4-Back conceding a contact with a very defensive leave, which Simon could make nothing of. Once again Richard hit and completed a standard triple peel. The other games on the lawn, were John Grimshaw against Jonathan Lambton in a Level

Advanced playing secondaries, and Margaret Murray against Eddie Chang in a handicap game with the primaries. We know that this is the first-ever Super Advanced game played at Kington Langley, but here are the other questions.

Is this the first ever Super Advanced game triple-banked?

Is it the first ever Super Advanced game played with tertiary colours?

Is it the first ever triple peel with tertiary colours?

Is this the first game with a mix of Super Advanced, Level Advanced and Handicap played on the same lawn at the same time?

The match result is incidental, but on the other lawn the two Swindon players both won, so the final score was 5-4 in favour of the Kington Langley/Swindon combination.

John Grimshaw



Richard playing, John arranging, Eddie waiting.

RAMSGATE CROQUET CLUB INVITES JUNIORS FROM LOCAL SCHOOL

Students from St Laurence CE Junior Academy took a trip out to #TryCroquet at Ramsgate Croquet Club. The day was reported such a success that members of the croquet club have been asked to visit one of the school's premises in term time as the sport provides a different hand-eye coordination exercise.

An excellent article published in the education section of The Isle of Thanet News online is both exciting and inspiring, stating: "The activities were meticulously organised, ensuring that each child had the opportunity fully to engage in the game. The volunteers at the club were praised for their warmth, friendliness, and helpfulness, making the event even more memorable for the students."

Read the full article: <https://theisleofthanetnews.com/2023/07/09/st-laurence-junior-academy-pupils-excel-at-ramsgate-croquet-club/>



OPENING DOORS ON CROQUET



From Sussex we have received an inspirational example of a member of West Chiltington Croquet Club reaching out to his local community to encourage people to try croquet

who might not otherwise have had an opportunity to do so. This article received coverage in the local media:

| **Paul Brown, Director of Development**

ACCESSIBLE CROQUET IS A HIT WITH RESIDENTS AT STORRINGTON CARE HOME

Residents from Care South's Sussexdown residential care home in Storrington learnt how to play wheelchair croquet thanks to a lesson from local croquet player, John Coventry.

Starting with the basic rules, residents from Sussexdown were taught the best croquet techniques in the home's extensive and beautifully manicured gardens. The lesson was made accessible for all, as each resident was taught to play seated in wheelchairs. After some practice and a lot of balls hit, residents joined in with a friendly introductory game.

Activities assistant, Pauline, was given the suggestion of wheelchair croquet by her father, Canon Peter Cole. Peter enjoys croquet and plays in a wheelchair due to his mobility.

He recommended his friend and West Chiltington Croquet Club member, John Coventry, teach the residents of the home how to play. The activity will now take place weekly at Sussexdown.

John Coventry said: "It was a great opportunity to come to Sussexdown and teach something I am so passionate about. Croquet is a game that can be enjoyed by anyone, and we are thrilled to be coming into the home every Thursday afternoon to take part in some friendly competition. Residents and staff established a new type of accessible croquet so that everyone can get involved. It is a wonderful activity."

John grew to love the sport back at the local vicarage and later joined Bowdon Croquet Club in Cheshire, where he was a member for about 15 years, before moving to Sussex and has

now been playing at West Chiltington Croquet Club since 2018. Canon Peter Cole, who also attended the lesson of croquet, and his wife, Marian, were gifted a croquet set by parishioners when they moved from Folkestone to a new parish. They moved to a village in West Sussex called Fittleworth, but there wasn't a croquet club there. Peter put something in the local magazine and the local community were interested, which is when everyone began playing at the old Rectory Garden in Fittleworth. When that expanded, the Rother Valley Croquet Club was formed in Duncton, and it went on to thrive, with a current membership of over one hundred members.

Pauline Dando, Activities Assistant at Sussexdown, commented: "After a long, cold and wet winter, residents were longing to get out and enjoy the lovely gardens. With a newly purchased croquet set, I suggested that we get a specialist to come and show residents how to play and have a friendly introductory game. Everyone loved getting involved and learning from John who did a wonderful job teaching the basics to residents in our care. As mole heaps and long grass do not make for an easy game, Gary, the gardener here, did a great job preparing the lawn ready for the activity to take place."

One of the participating residents added: "What a wonderful activity this was. I love getting the chance to learn something new and I had so much fun participating in a new sport, and I loved it too."

| **Jonathan Isaacs**



TEAM COLOURS

I have been sent this picture by John Haslam of Southport, where in 2001 he organised eight teams of 3, in primary and secondary colours in a fun tournament.

The brown team won, and John himself is the chap in 'that hat'. I could recognise one or two players, but who else can you see? Readers are asked if they can name the players. The winner will receive the honour of having their name published.

Answers to: editor@croquet.org.uk



THE CHALLENGE & GILBEY 2023 AT BUDLEIGH CROQUET CLUB

This year the Challenge part was most apposite for the manager. The much-reduced entry saw just 14 entrants for the handicap event, the Gilbey Goblet, and only 23 for the Class event of whom 11 had handicaps in the range scratch to minus 2.

Thus, it was, on a grey Thursday, that the 14 players gathered to play a flexible Swiss of a minimum of 5 rounds; base 6. The manager fully expecting 6 and hopefully 7 rounds, but the weather depressed spirits and only the 5 rounds were played. Linda Shaw 16 [Bristol] succumbed to a heavy cold and spent Thursday night re-inspecting lunch and the manager played in her stead on Friday. Come 4pm Friday and, inevitably, there was a 3-way tie between David Warhurst -1 [Budleigh], David Fuller -0.5 [East Dorset] and Roger Staples 5 [Middlesborough]. Suffice it to say that not all had played the same opponents and, after agreement by all three, David Warhurst emerged the winner by a narrow margin.

Post event the manager mooted on more games, maybe 18 pointers, to reduce the multi-tie risk, but this met with negative responses. The 2 days for each event is a 'challenge' in itself and a limited field with 'incorrect' numbers further limits options. Personally, I dislike single life knock-out; it may get an unarguable winner, but half the entry is playing to no avail after the first game. I wish the 2024 manager a better structured entry!

Thursday evening saw the print of the class blocks and discovery of a further withdrawal by a handicap 1 player, with Covid, and a very poorly Linda unable to play. Frantic phone calls and obliging 'Sidmouthians' enabled the semblance of sensible block play to proceed.

The Stevenson Cup saw a block of 14, 11, 7 & 6 play three full games on Saturday and three 14pt games on Sunday, which was an arrangement rather well received. Brian Shorney 14 [Universal Member], refusing to retire gracefully, came second with 4 wins. Ed Dolphin 6 [Sidmouth] lost one game, to Shorney, and took the Stevenson Cup home.

The Reckitt Cup was played for by a block of 6 with Colin Walls 3.5 [Sidmouth] re-appearing in the CA tournament arena and commanding a strong lead from the start. Walls lost his last match to David Houston 4 [Edinburgh] which gave Houston his only win. Erica Malaiperunam 2.5 [Nailsea] and Chris Donovan 3 [Sidmouth] entertained the spectators on lawn 7 with Donovan making a strong come-back after an indifferent start and pegging-out Malaiperunam's ball from adjacent Hoop 1. Red and black on 4 Back and a good leave. The rush was messed-up and Malaiperunam played an accurate game with long roquets, canny placements and successfully ran all three hoops to peg – a splendid win. Walls took the trophy with 5 wins and a handicap

reduction.

The Council Cup was also a block of 6 with handicaps. Is there a general trend for lower handicaps in CA tournaments? It was noticeable in both the Vets and Seniors. Comparing 2013 with 2023 there is a significant difference:

2013		2023	
Nigel Amos	2.5	David Warhurst	-1
Adam Wimshurst	2.5	Jim Field	-1
Chris Donovan	2.5	Chris Roberts	-0.5
Mike Taylor	4	Teddy Wilmot-Sitwell	0
Roy Edwards	4	Nigel Amos	1
Adam Moliver	5	Philip Harris	1.5
David Clarke	6		

Teddy Wilmot-Sitwell 0 [Winterbourne Valley] achieved his first triple peel against Chris Roberts -0.5 [Phyllis Court], +16TP. He duly received his bottle of wine offered for such. Well done! This was the only triple peel in the block and the last game threatened another circular 3-way tie. The manager buried his head and the sand and Warhurst lost to Jim Field -1. The three-way tie disappeared with Jim Field now having a clean sweep of 5 wins and he took the Council Cup.

The A Block of 6, 1 x -2, 3 x -1.5 and 2 x -1 played untimed games and saw a plethora of triple peels: Duncan Reeve -2 [Budleigh] and Jeff Dawson -1.5 [East Dorset] achieving 3, Dave Kibble -1.5 [Bristol] 2 and Tim Russell -1 [Roehampton] 1. Chris Williams -1.5 [Glamorgan] managed the Fastest Game – 55 minutes and was presented, with some hesitancy as Chris is a budding, Level 1 'Master of Wine', with a bottle of Malbec. However, this trivial award was outshone by far as he carried home the Roehampton Cup. He won 4 games, as had Jeff Dawson, but was victorious on 'who beat whom'.

Peter Nelson, Vice-Chairman CA Council, presented the trophies with thanks to Budleigh, David Warhurst's administrative support and particularly thanked their outstanding groundsman – Richard Quelch who presented the lawns in excellent condition. He thanked Bob Whittaker, Referee of the Tournament, for his many years of service to croquet, particularly as a referee, from which Bob is retiring as an active participant. Many will be grateful for his coaching skills and he will still be seen 'on the circuit' with his fund of stories and detailed knowledge of the laws.

Peter Nelson concluded his remarks lamenting the small entry and noting how difficult it can make management – 'what do we do to encourage a return to over-subscribed events?'

Chris Donovan, Manager



PHOTOGRAPH Bob Whittaker

Teddy Wilmot-Sitwell - 1st Triple Peel, David Warhurst - Gilbey Goblet, Jim Field - Council Cup, Chris Williams - Roehampton Cup, Colin Walls - Reckitt Cup, Ed Dolphin - Stevenson Cup



2023 C&G Bob's Last Refereeing Decision

Trophy Disposal:
Gilbey Goblet - David Warhurst

Roehampton Cup - Chris Williams

Council Cup - Jim Field

Reckitt Cup - Colin Walls

Stevenson Cup - Ed Dolphin

2023 AC WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

The 18th AC World Championship was held in London at seven clubs – Hurlingham (HQ), Dulwich, Ealing, Roehampton, Surbiton, Woking and the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (Wimbledon). All of the venues had made extra efforts to achieve fast lawns and both Hurlingham and Roehampton were running around 13 seconds at peak.

With 80 players split into the usual 8 blocks of 10, there were far more surprises than in past years. Three of the qualifiers, each ranked 9th in their respective blocks, managed to qualify for the knockout – Euan Burrirdge, Mark Ormerod and Robert Wilkinson, a very fine performance from each.

In Block A, number 1 seed Robert Fletcher won all 9 games with Ben Rothman just 1 win behind.

In Block B, Robert Fulford and Debbie Lines both achieved 8 wins with Marcus Evans and Stephen Morgan on 7. Stephen looked in very good form. Jenny Clarke was a number 2 seed who failed to qualify with 5 wins.

In Block C, Reg Bamford won all 9 games, with 5 tps, a quadruple, a sextuple and most surprisingly 2 tpos. The move towards a tpo after a 1-back leave with two balls being pegged out was a surprise to me since I had expected this event to involve many sextuples in the later stages. Dwayne McCormick came second with 7 wins and Blake Fields did well to qualify from 8th seed position.

In Block D, Mark Avery and Zack Watson both cruised through with 8 wins and third seed, Stephen Forster surprisingly only managed 3 wins failing to qualify.

In Block E, Matthew Essick overcame a couple of early losses to qualify top with Andrew Johnston on 7 wins. Number 2 seed Christian Carter failed to qualify with only 3 wins, whilst Ed Duckworth won an exciting play-off game +1 against Kevin Beard.

In Block F, Stephen Mulliner topped the block with 8 wins, one ahead of Harry Fisher and Aston Wade who performed well from 7th seed.

Block G had James Death, David Maugham and Tom Balding all on 7 wins with Stuart Lawrence completing the qualifiers in a play-off against Dom Nunns. James had two sextuples.

In the last block, top seed Logan McCorkindale was in all sorts of trouble on 2/6 after day 2, but thanks to a Riva quadruple against Dave Kibble, made in through to a play-off and was relieved to make the knockout. The block was won by Mark van Loon on 8 wins, with Jose Riva just one behind. Euan Burrirdge, who was graded 1744 at the start of July won 6 games to make the knockout – an astonishing performance.

The first round of the knockout was split between Hurlingham, Roehampton and Surbiton, with each location providing different challenges. It was noticeable that the players on the front lawns at Hurlingham were making speed errors as the lawns were much faster than normal. The Ultra hoops however caused little problem, so once players had adjusted to the lawn speed, conditions were still fairly easy.

The first round was played best of 3 and notable results in the top half of the draw were Andrew Johnston coming from behind to beat David Maugham +1 in the decider and Gabrielle Higgins beating Marcus Evans.

In the bottom half, Reg Bamford and Aston Wade had a thrilling first game. Aston went to 4-back, Reg hit and went to 1-back and after the long shot was missed completed a tpo with two peels on partner and pegged two balls out to leave it 3-b vs 1. Aston made 1 and 2 in the same turn, but then the game proceeded with a series of 1 hoop turns until Aston was in front of penult and Reg in front of rover. Reg ran rover and went 11 yards east of the peg. Aston ran penult by about 4 feet and



PHOTOGRAPH Alex Lake

hit Reg's ball, rolled up short to rover but smashed through a long angled hoop, only to miss his subsequent 5-6 yarder. Reg dribbled up to the peg, missing, but wiring himself from Aston who missed the peg from near C3 to lose -1. Reg won the second +26tp.

Thomas Balding had a close win against Stephen Mulliner, coming back from game down to win the last two games +30tp and +5tpo in a game where he deliberately pegged out his ball about 15 minutes after the tpo when he was on hoop 2 against Stephen on hoop 1 – the timing of this pegout was strange because he had already given Stephen the contact, the squeeze, and a couple of other opportunities before turning the game into a 2-ball contest. The pegged out ending drew a crowd of around 50 spectators and Tom's hitting eventually prevailed.

Stephen Morgan had a high quality win +17tp, -26tp, +26tp against Ben Rothman who was one of the more unfortunate players in the event to find an opponent on top form. The last match in the bottom half was Robert Fulford against Blake Fields. Blake started strongly with a 6th turn +26tp, but Robert responded in kind to level. In the third, Blake looked likely to win when finishing with a straight double peel. The peelee went down in front of rover and the striker's ball finished in the jaws of penult. It looked easy, but Blake did not manage to run the hoop and Robert took full advantage of his lifeline to win +5tp

The last 16, played as best of 5, was split between the front



PHOTOGRAPH Jeff Soo:
Matthew Essick

lawns at Hurlingham and the four lawns at Roehampton. In the top half at Hurlingham, Matthew Essick went two games up against Andrew Johnston before attempting a sextuple in the third which broke down at 4-b and penult. Andrew took advantage to take the game, but Matthew won a good quality fourth game +17tp.

At Roehampton, Alain Giraud beat Reg Bamford +18tp, -26tp, -3tp, +17tp, +26tp. Reg appeared to have stopped doing sextuples and by removing this key weapon, he became more vulnerable to good shooting from his opponents.

Tom Balding had a straight games win against Harry Fisher, including three triples, but Harry had good chances to take two of the games. Logan McCorkindale beat James Death in a match that had five triples and Robert Fulford beat the in-form Stephen Morgan in four games.

The quarter-finals onwards were played on the front lawns at Hurlingham and the Ultra hoops were replaced by Quadways. It made a significant difference. Robert Fletcher played Jose Riva and it was an error-strewn match. There were hoop errors, speed errors and mental errors, with Jose forgetting a contact at one stage that would have given him an easy four ball break to win game 2. In all the world championships I played, I always lost when I played as poorly as either of these two players did, so in the end Robert Fletcher was somewhat fortunate to reach the semi-final +4, +14, -3tp, +2tp.

In the second quarter, Matthew Essick comfortably beat Mark Avery who was suffering from a cold. However, it wasn't a dominant performance, with Matthew struggling at the start of game 1, with clips on h3 and h4.

The third quarter produced a slight upset with Tom Balding



PHOTOGRAPH Alex Lake:
Robert Fletcher & Gavin Carter

winning in straight games against Alain Giraud +17, +17, +17tp. Tom's shooting was better, but the lawn speed combined with the Quadways made tripling trickier than earlier in the event.

In the final quarter, Robert Fulford beat Logan McCorkindale +17, +15tp, +17tp despite failing three hoops that he said would normally have gone through.

At this stage my own view was that Matthew Essick was playing the best and that Fulford was strong favourite to beat Balding. The first semi saw Essick round to 4-b 4th turn, but Fletcher hit the lift and went to 1-b. Essick took on a long jump shot over hoop 1 and hit partner to much applause. From here, he

finished to win the first +20tp 6th turn. Fletcher had the first break to 4-b in game 2, 6th turn after two missed shots from Essick who then hit the lift and went to 4-b himself. Fletcher hit the lift but was hampered after h1 and missed a long roquet. Essick hit a 16 yarder and finished +16tp. The third game was won 6th turn by Matthew with rain starting halfway through the game that took the edge off playing conditions for the remainder of the event. It was the first time Fletcher had lost a match 3-0. In the other semi-final, play was less impressive. Balding had good opportunities to win 3-0, but lost the first by 5 and won the second by 19 before a catastrophic straight rover peel allowed Fulford to take the third +3tp with some good play. From here, Fulford completed a 5th turn win to move into his 9th AC World final (next best is 6).

I canvassed the players and spectators prior to the final and it was difficult to find anyone who thought Essick wasn't the favourite. Fulford supporters were given hope when he hit a 17 yarder third turn of game 1 and went to 4-b following a supershot opening. Essick hit the lift from C3 and won +17tp 6th turn – a fine start to the final.

Game 2 saw a supershot from Essick and Fulford decided to take the game into his own hands and shot firmly at it from the end of A-Baulk, but missed to 3 yards E of C2. Essick surprisingly missed his 10 yarder and Fulford hit and went to 4-b 4th turn, but left the ball at the peg, an open 12 yarder. Essick hit, but immediately took off into the edge of h2 and had to hit another 13 yarder, which he did, but was unable to get going and joined partner. Fulford missed a long shot and Essick went to 4-b, albeit with a bit of difficulty which meant he didn't get a leave and had to split up. Fulford missed a shot joining up and Essick hit in again and made a leave. Rob missed his second bonus shot of the game and Matthew finished +17tp.

Game 3 was another supershot from Fulford and Essick surprisingly went just N of C4, giving Fulford a 13 yarder which he duly hit and went to 4-b with a defensive spread. Once again, Essick hit the lift, but this time, instead of going to 4-b and allowing Fulford to miss, he went to 1-b. Would it be a sextuple attempt or a tpo? The last successful sextuple peel in a World final was 18 years ago. After the long shot was missed, Essick peeled 1-b after h2 and went all out for the sextuple which became increasingly delayed until it reached an stp. After Irish-peeling 4-b, Essick could only hit the peelee and went to peg giving contact with a good leave – his peg ball in C2, his penult ball mid E boundary, Fulford's 4-b ball in C4 and his h1 ball about 4 yards N of C1. Many players would have attempted a speculative attempt to pick up a break, but Fulford simply played his 4-b ball, took off from C2 moving it 2 yards E and laid a wired rush from the penult ball to h1 from near C1. Essick came onto the lawn, looked at the leave, shook his head and knew he had a suicidal 29+ yarder or he could corner and potentially lose the game without taking a shot. He quite reasonably cornered his penult ball to C4 and Fulford finished +4tp.

Game 4 started with a 14y supershot from Essick and Fulford played a few yards E of it. Instead of shooting firmly at one of the balls, Essick dribbled at his partner ball and went a few yards past it giving a perfect double to Fulford who went to 4-b. Essick missed the lift from C3 and Fulford equalised at 2-2 with a 6th turn +26tp.

The decider started, like all the others, with a supershot. Essick played 15 yards N of C4 and Fulford shot from 4 feet W of C3, missing to 5 yards N of C4. Once again, I was surprised with Essick's line of play as he opted to take the 19 yarder at partner from A-Baulk rather than a 13 yarder at the supershot or even the long double from B-Baulk. He missed and Fulford took his 10 yarder up the E boundary, hit and went to 4-b. Essick missed the lift from C3 and Fulford made h1 and hit a short return roquet only to find h1 slightly in the way of rolling to his h2 pioneer. He considered going to the ball in C4, but in the end played a good roll sending a ball to h3 and obtaining a 4 yard rush to h2, which he missed. Essick hit from h3 and after

picking up a break started on a delayed tpo. Would we see two balls off or a traditional 2 v 1 ending? After a delayed double peel to finish Essick completed the tpo and left his h1 ball in C4 and the peg ball in C1. Fulford took his contact in C4, split a ball to h3 and hit a 6 yarder at the ball in C1. His roll to h2 finished with a 5 foot fairly straight hoop, but the front ball had gone off the N boundary by a few inches. Essick hit his 8 yarder and left Fulford near C1 and laid up near C3. Fulford considered shooting since h3 was in the way of a perfect rush to h1, but opted to go into C4. After a few more turns where Rob moved corners and Matthew made the odd hoop, Essick laid up near C3 and Fulford moved from C1 to C2. Essick made 3, rolled up to h4 and played a good long hoop, made 5, rushed to 6 with good control, but took too much wire when running h6 and now had a cut-rush to C2 for a match winning C2 cannon. He tried the cut, missed the 7-8 foot roquet and Fulford calmly hit his 9 yarder and finished on a 3-ball break to win his 6th AC World Championship.

It was an exciting match that kept about 100 spectators and almost 500 online viewers spellbound. There is little doubt that Matthew will learn from the experience as the title gradually slipped from his fingers, but he can console himself with the thought that he lost to a tactical great who took consistently good lines of play and has now won his 6th title, 21 years after winning his 5th – a remarkable achievement. I don't think Rob will view this as one of his best wins – he could easily have lost to Fields, Balding and Essick, but it may be the win that gives him the most satisfaction – well done Rob!

The Shield was won by James Death, the Bowl by Debbie Lines (a fine performance), the Plate by Robin Brown, the Manager's Invitation by Sandy Greig, the Z by Brian Cumming and the Fantasy Competition by Simon Jenkins – congratulations to them all.

Finally, many thanks to all 7 clubs and their members, the Organising Committee led by Hugh Carlisle KC, the referees, our manager Mike Town and his deputies, the groundstaff, Stephen Allen and his many helpers on the livestream which set new standards in professionalism, David Openshaw the Tournament Director, the caterers, Andrew Gregory for his usual excellent text commentary, but most of all the players who

made this another fabulous World Championship. I hope to be at the next event in October 2025 in America.

Chris Clarke

PHOTOGRAPH Jeff Soo:
Robert Fullford Winning Shot



NORTH OF ENGLAND AC CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

1 6 players from 2.5 to -2 met at Bowdon for the North of England Championship. We were promised storms and torrential downpours by the Met Office but thankfully having its own micro-climate, Bowdon experienced very little of this, and the lawns were great to play on, with not a puddle in sight from the purely overnight rain. Play went smoothly with very few timers going off, and there was a lovely friendly feel to the event - but I always get that at Bowdon.

Stephen Wright, was playing well, and had a very good start, beating both Debbie Lines and me, Annabel McDiarmid, 2-0, which took him through to the semi-finals.

Alain Giraud, Ian Lines and Joel Taylor also secured their places in the semis with 2-0 wins.

Ian and Alain won their matches and went through to play in the best of five final on the third day. Unfortunately, Alain's shooting let him down on a couple of occasions, and Ian,

playing solidly, took full advantage winning the North of England Championship 2023 by 3-1.

Meanwhile Debbie Lines was trying to secure a complete Lines win, playing in the final of the plate against Jack Good. There was a certain amount of interaction, however, Jack WAS too good and won +17.

Another success in the tournament came from Mike Sandler with a TP – his fourth ever, his previous one having been completed in 2011. Well done Mike.

Angharrad pulled out a minor miracle, providing lunches on all three days, and managing to play all her matches. The event was ably managed by Ian Lines, assisted by Debbie, with the words "more than my life's worth" muttered by each of them on separate occasions when the other needed consulting and were unavailable. Thank you Bowdon.

Annabel J McDiarmid

THE NATIONAL SENIORS' TOURNAMENT AT BUDLEIGH SALTERTON 10-15 JULY 2023

The 2023 Seniors' Tournament was a challenging event; foremost for the decidedly reduced number of entrants and secondly a reduced number affected by 9 class

entrant withdrawals. Injuries and medical problems to the fore – Consultant's secretary 'No you cannot re-book, if you don't come, you'll not get another appointment this year!' So, a bijou



PHOTOGRAPH Chris Roberts: Left to Right
 Jim Field: Trevor Williams Senior Championship Cup,
 Neil Adams: Colin Hemmings Cup,
 Neil Fillery: Quiller Cup,
 Chris Donovan: Ansorena Cup,
 Peter Thompson: Doubles Cup [Bob Thompson departed],
 Jane Babbage: Nigel Graves Trophy,
 Richard Williamson: Holding the wine for the Y Stream Doubles

event which, with the weather deciding to be unhelpful with torrential rain for most of Friday, was probably a blessing in disguise.

Informative emails were sent; twice each time, once by 'normal' email and again by gmail, 'cos if any addressee isn't going to get a key email it will be a gmail user [it happens over and over]. Amazingly therefore 21 players, joined by the manager, turned-up on Monday to play an 11 pair X & Y Doubles.

Managers will appreciate the frustration of such an uneven number and it highlights the question of event scheduling. The Veterans and the Seniors have been played as one event following conclusion of another. This means accommodation need only be booked for the event(s) entered and, of course, it makes management considerably easier than the alternative. This is practised by Nottingham in their August event when very active management enables all events, single life doubles knockout, handicap singles and class events, to start altogether. [Discuss]

Anyway, I digress. The doubles went ahead with only the issue of alternate stroke play when agreement was not universal – tournament regulations however are clear. Games at 2 hours 45 minutes went mostly to time as the usual safety at any cost discussions were well rehearsed between partners on the lawn, as though they had never seen the state of the game before their turn arrived. Jane Babbage [Sidmouth] and Richard Williamson [Bristol] played well but were knocked into the Y stream by Tim Russell [Roehampton] and Neil Fillery [Taunton Deane] who went on to contest the X Final. Babbage and Williamson won the Y and took home the glass-based trophies. Bob Thompson [Nottingham] and Peter Thompson [Driffield] won the X and the accompanying CA Trophy Cups. The Handicap singles, also at 2 hours 45 minutes, was contested by 14 players over a Fixed SWISS. Somewhat slicker in the organisation this year as the manager was finally inculcated into the art of the WCF SWISS computer programme – thanks Barry. There was, however, a fault in the system which became apparent when a player remarked, somewhat aggrievedly, that not only had he had to play 'X' but had been also double-banked three times with 'X'; 'X' not known for celerity of play. Regardless of this drama Fillery, playing by entry rather than manager's plea to make-up numbers, was determined to retain the Quiller Cup which he did by winning all 6 handicap games – well done!

Came Thursday afternoon and, throughout the week, the forecast for Friday had not improved. A block of 7 and three blocks of 6 to be played. It was decided to play two games on the Thursday early and late afternoon rather than just the one scheduled. All got the change message bar one. This gave Charlie Martin [Ramsgate] cellist, pianist and keyboard Maestro time to rehearse his programme which was to accompany the Fish'n Chips evening get together. Friday arrived and players set forth, one or two setting fifth thinking play would start later as the extra game yesterday had been the Friday morning's scheduled game – still with me? Most games finished but Babbage v Peter Death [Nottingham] refused to play with 18 minutes to go merely because a 3 inch deep lake was taking-up the southwest corner. Frances Colman [Phyllis Court] and Geraldine O'Rourke [Carrick Mines] wet, bedraggled, chilled to the bone sought refuge and respite with a peg down. The kind hearted manager acquiesced and Chris Roberts [Phyllis Court] was dispatched to complete the peg down sheet! Games abandoned. A few venturesome souls returned at 4pm and played a couple of A Block games for which that kind-hearted manager was most grateful in that they materially helped to avoid the necessity to work out an incomplete block result the following day. [I mean have you actually read, and more importantly, understood the calculation thereof? Makes Schrödinger's cat conundrum look facile by comparison.] Saturday was bright with light, brief showers and the spectre of violent thunderstorms and torrential rain happily disappeared. The Nigel Graves trophy saw Andre Machell [Watford] and Colman on 3 wins but Babbage took the trophy home after her final 4th win.

The de Ansorena block had 3 in second place with 3 wins: Fillery, Robert Moss [Budleigh Salterton] and Charles Ostler [Pinchbeck] and, much to his surprise Chris Donovan took home the trophy with 4 wins.

The Colin Hemming's Cup is, I regret to say, an embarrassment to me, the manager. One game was not played and there was a complete misunderstanding, the game was 'made-up' and finishing as prize-giving started when all, otherwise, seemed 'clear'. Thus it was, that Nigel Amos [Budleigh Salterton], Barry Holland [Surbiton] and Peter Thompson were on 3 wins with Neil Adams [Westmorland] on 4 wins. Neil was presented with the cup; mention being made of his two triple peels. Then the manager was advised that Peter Thompson's late win against Martin meant that he too was on 4 wins and, what's more, he was the one player to have beaten Neil. I can only apologise again to both for the misunderstanding.

The A Class on untimed games progressed in remarkably good order given the main play day, Friday, was effectively a washout. The manager was relieved not to have to express an opinion on that cat as Jim Field was a clear winner with 6 games won out of 7.

The trophies were presented by Peter Nelson [Sidmouth] Vice Chairman of Council. He thanked Budleigh Salterton for their continued excellent support in organisation and facilities and particularly noted the first-class lawns – arguably the best in the country – certainly outside of 2 certain London clubs - the players agreed.

Will climate change threaten green lawns, to the delight of elite players, dismay of the not so elite; will the cost of living once again return to acceptable levels and encourage entrance to longer tournaments; will the final year in Budleigh for the Veterans and Seniors see a return to full take-up before it moves elsewhere – well it might if you sign-up! See you in 2024.

| Chris Donovan

THE 17TH WCF WOMEN'S GOLF CROQUET WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

The 17th WCF Women's Golf Croquet World Championship took place on the south coast of England this year at Compton Croquet Club (Qualifier, 3-5 August) and Southwick Croquet Club (Championship event, 7-14 August) and was another triumph of friendship and sport development among women croquet players.



PHOTOGRAPH Chris Roberts: WCF Women's GC World Championship, England players; (l to r) (Back row) Jayne Stevens, Sue Lightbody, Louise Smith, Rachel Gee, Lynn Percy, Liz Drury; (Front row) Diana Wilson, Gabrielle Higgins, Debbie Lines, Liz Farrow, Glynis Davies

THE QUALIFIER

The qualifier started with two blocks of 10 players, with the top 5 from each event progressing into a new qualification block, and the remaining 10 players competing for the consolation Plate. This was a really good format, giving international visitors and other slower starters sufficient time to play themselves into the event, and then a fresh start competing for four qualification places in the championship. 3 Americans, 1 kiwi, 1 Australian, 5 English, 9 Spaniards and 1 player from Ireland. Strong performances throughout this event saw Bev Cardo and Paz Gonzales through on 7 wins, while the final two places were taken by Liz Drury (playing in only her third croquet tournament!) and the very impressive Lynn Percy, both representing England. In the consolation block, the sole



PHOTOGRAPH Chris Roberts

Australian representative Karen Bisley won the Plate with 7/9 wins and strong net points.

The 56-player championship event featured players from 17 countries and was another triumph of friendship and sport development among women croquet players.

The championship

On 6th August players arrived in Southwick to familiarize themselves with the surroundings of this premier English croquet venue and practice on the tournament lawns. They were not disappointed! The lawns were in fabulous condition, with Quadway hoops which were set to a very high consistency throughout the week.

The Opening Ceremony welcomed the players with a flag parade and, to the delight of many baking fans, with Dame Mary Berry, as guest of honor. Dame Mary proved to be a very gracious guest, posing for many photographs and cutting the cake provided by a very brave club member! Southwick organized their season and maintenance this year to be in peak condition for this event. The lawns were generally very flat and had a measure of speed. It was also excellent to see that the venue provided a private prayer facility for the Egyptian ladies. While it would have been good to see the hoops moved more frequently, the hoops were very consistently set throughout the week and head greenskeeper Steve



PHOTOGRAPH Sarah Patton: Jamie Gumbrell

Chapman should be congratulated for this achievement.

THE PLAYERS

The event saw multiple world champions seeking to win the 2023 title. Past Women's Golf Croquet World Champions included the pre-event favorite Soha Moustafa (Egypt), 2014 winner Judith Hanekom (South Africa), Rachel Gee (England, 2011), and Women's AC world champions Debbie Lines (England, current world champion, looking to be the first player to simultaneously hold the title for both codes), and Jenny Clarke (NZ, 2012).

The 13 Egyptian ladies added excitement to the event, and were well supported by Egyptian croquet president Mohamed Raslan, among a contingent of family and playing support. At least one player from another croquet powerhouse wistfully admired the team environment in the Egyptian camp – with all the players supporting each other strongly. This was mirrored in the smaller, but no less vocal, USA team, led by Cheryl Bromley, who has also done fantastic work promoting croquet international among women including building an international online coaching network. The Egyptians are always a delight to compete with – their on-lawn manners are impeccable and their enthusiasm and friendliness are unrivalled.



PHOTOGRAPH Chris Roberts: WCF Women's GC World Championship, Mary Berry with WCF & CA officers

The Australian challenge was led by 22 year old Jamie Gumbrell. Jamie's mum (Karen) won the qualification Plate event, and her brother Ethan is also a strong developing player. Jamie had competed in two U21 and two open world championships before and had had a very strong year in Australia, winning several women's events and placing very highly in Open GC events.

While 56 players competed in the event, two hangers-on joined in – Rachel Gee and Latvia's Silvija Freimane are both expecting babies before the end of this year. It was good to see the volunteers support both players by chasing around the boundaries replacing balls in their games.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The tone of an event is very strongly influenced by the manager. The manager provides instruction to players about expectations for the event, organizes and attempts to maintain the schedule, and has to deal with any issues. Mike Town is an outstanding tournament manager. He was very well prepared, listened very calmly to all suggestions, and greeted every challenge with a quiet demeanor and gentle smile. Due to Mike's experience and organization, the event ran incredibly smoothly and had a very positive comfortable feel throughout.

The commentary for the women's worlds built on the outstanding advances made this year in the British Open (AC) and Association Croquet World Championships. Many hours were generously volunteered by people to operate the cameras, the mixing desk and the microphones, to produce an excellent record from the event, and a valuable coaching aid for players looking back on their recorded performances. Chris Clarke provided many hours of expert commentary, with many others contributing with their own knowledge and interpretation of the play. The next step for live streaming will be multiple streams, however this increases both cost and worker hours. Alison Maugham must again be thanked for an incredible job of tracking down volunteers, coordinating the whole streaming effort, and feeding and watering those volunteers leaving us feeling appreciated and very positive about the whole experience.

The refereeing for this event was also leagues above previous offerings for consistency and quality of refereeing. Ian Cobbald led a highly capable team who again gave very many hours and careful attention during the week of the tournament.

The preliminary blocks

Block play featured 8 blocks of 7 players with the top 4 entering the main event, and the others competing for the Plate. The top players were all expected to progress to the knockout, so this phase of play provided them with the opportunity to warm up into the event, get comfortable with the Quadway hoops, and perhaps make a strong psychological statement to their peers. Top seed Soho Moustafa (EGY) qualified dropping a single game to tenacious English player Diana Wilson who has had a very strong season. Diana's well-balanced solid body position and positive hoop running have seen her go from strength to strength this season. In Block B, English qualifier Lynn Piercy placed second in her block, while top English AC player Gabrielle Higgins overcame some shaky form to also place second in qualifying in block C. Block D's notable match was a 7-6 7-6 win in the AC heavyweight match between Jenny Clarke (NZ) and Debbie Lines (Eng). A fortuitous in-off of a clearance shot at hoop 11 turned the second game around and showed how luck can play a major role in golf croquet. Block E was turned on its head when experienced Egyptian player Abeer Moustafa failed to qualify from number 2 seed position, while 6th seeded Spanish qualifier Paz Gonzales de Aguilar made the knockout. Block F also saw Liz Drury (ENG) qualify for a world championship knockout in only her fourth tournament. As with the recent Association Croquet World Championship, the experienced gained in the qualification tournament has been

very evident from the number of qualifiers earning places in the main event knockout stages.

Meanwhile, Block G saw the second high-profile casualty, another Egyptian, Maha Eldardiri, fail to qualify, and another 6-ranked player, English player Glynis Davies, into the knockout. Also qualifying was Aussie Virginia Arney – by her own admission, Virginia lacks the power to effectively clear opponent balls, however her positional play throughout the event was outstanding.

Ties on match wins for qualification spots were resolved by playoffs, and the manager was very nearly in time trouble with

PHOTOGRAPH Sarah Patton:
Soha Mostafa && Rachel Gee Semi-Final



a 5-player tie looking possible. In the end however, there were just 3 playoffs. Block B saw kiwi veteran Dallas Cooke eliminate Egyptian Ghada Karam. In Block C, NZ teenager Jessica Bullen was the unlucky player in a 3-way tie for two spots, with Spain's Susan Romero and Egyptian Perihan Elwy making their way into the knockout. Block D had three players competing for just one knockout spot. South African Sylvia Short knocked out Scot Kathy Brown, but was beaten in two games by Kate McLoughlin as the Australian took 4th position in Block D.

THE CHAMPIONSHIP KNOCKOUT

The Championship knockout began with 32 players, and by the end of the day there were only 8 left in the main event. The first two rounds largely went to ranking, with the main exception being Virginia Arney continuing her precision-play march into her first world championship quarter final. 4 Egyptians made the quarter finals, plus Gee, Clarke, and two Australians, Arney and Jamie Gumbrell. The match of the round of 16 was an all Egyptian affair, with Maram Nabil narrowly surviving a strong test from Peri Elwy, the latter who had survived a very shaky start to the event to reach the knockout. In the other all-Egyptian match it was the winner who left the lawn in tears – Soha had defeated her best friend and her reaction was beautiful.

People who lost in Round 1 moved into the Bowl consolation knockout event, while those eliminated in Round 2 were invited enter the Shield consolation knockout. Non-qualifiers for the main event started the Plate competition with 4 preliminary blocks. The quarter finals saw the top players rise to the top, with Rachel Gee putting in an incredibly strong performance both positionally and with excellent clearances to beat Jenny Clarke in straight games. Jamie Gumbrell dispatched the event second seed in straight games with an ominous display of concentration, while Soha Moustafa stopped Virginia Arney's run and Poulina Salib won the all-Egyptian battle.

This set up a dream semi-final of Soha Moustafa vs Rachel Gee. Had the knockout been seeded by a Seeding Committee, this would have likely be the event final, and it lived up to everything that had been promised. Rachel took the first two games, with Soha still failing to find anything like her dominating form of 2018. On the verge of leaving the event, Soha took on

another gear to take the match into a 5th game decider. At 5-2 up, it seemed the momentum Soha had built would carry her forward, but Rachel fought back, winning the next 4 hoops. Soha's delight at an excellent jump through hoop 12 was lovely to see, but Rachel played well in the battle for hoop 13 to seal her place in the final.

In the second semifinal Jamie Gumbrell again played very strongly and comfortably progressed with another 3-0 win.

THE FINAL

Finals day saw Jamie Gumbrell take on 2011 champion Rachel Gee. The main question-mark over pre-match favorite Rachel was the potential for fatigue from Rachel's epic match the day before in combination with her pregnancy. A two-time European champion, Rachel has played at a very high level in many national and international open events, and is a leading coach in the UK. Jamie had played very consistently, but this was her first world championship final, and she lacked the power of Rachel in her clearances.

In the end, it was Jamie's show – her concentration and accuracy were simply stunning. Positionally, both players were very capable and effective, however Jamie had the edge clearing, though not as far as Rachel. Shot after shot was hit, punctuated by a huge clearing battle at hoop 12 in game 2 where it seemed impossible to anyone to make the hoop as 15 yard clearances were hit centrally ball after ball. Jamie eventually prevailed to take a 2-0 lead as Rachel's shooting was less assured than in earlier rounds. Game three perhaps showed how hard it can be to take the final steps when the



PHOTOGRAPH Chris Roberts: Judith Hanekom (SA) – Winner of The Bowl, Jamie Gumbrell – Winner of the WCF GC Women's World Championship, Peri Elwy (EGY) – Winner of The Shield, Jessica Bullen (NZ) – Winner of The Plate

winning post is to near, and Rachel clawed a game back while Jamie missed several hoops and uncharacteristically missed a few clearances. Could Jamie regain her form and retake control of the match in game 4 ... absolutely! She returned to her

metronomic best, hitting clearance after clearance, and running hoops very strongly.

Throughout the event Jamie also demonstrated very strong jump strokes, using almost the same technique as her normal shooting. The key to Jamie's performance was an exceptional level of concentration and swing consistency. She showed little emotion until the moment of victory – winning game 4 7-2 to become the second Australian (after Alix Verge, who was very enthusiastically supporting Jamie through social media) to win the Women's Golf Croquet World Championship. Commiserations to Rachel, who had an excellent tournament, unfortunately not being able to find her top form in the final. In the prize-giving, before giving a very gracious victory speech, Jamie was thrust into the spotlight and asked to sum up her feelings for the day. "Disbelief". Many people saw her performance as incredible, peaking for the final match of the event.

CONSOLATION EVENTS

There were 3 consolation events in progress on finals day in a very international competition. The Plate event saw the youngest player in the event, NZ's Jessica Bullen, take the silverware over Cheryl Bromley (USA) after an excellent event. The Bowl knockout was won by popular South African former champion Judith Hanekom against Kate McLoughlin (Aust). The Shield event was the most closely contested consolation final with WCF Secretary-General, England's Debbie Lines comfortably taking the first game, while Peri Elwy took Egypt's only trophy home winning the last two games 7-6, 7-6.

Women's GC World Championships

The atmosphere of the event was very warm and welcoming throughout, though all matches were fiercely competitive. An unfortunate decision to charge spectators might have reduced the number of supporters at the event, however the event was well supported and watched by a worldwide audience who appreciated the commentaries and clear information provided by the manager through CroquetScores. Thanks to Croquet England for streaming the event, all games from which are hosted on YouTube and are well worth watching.

Commiserations to those who didn't perform to their hopes or expectations, but many thanks to Southwick croquet club, the manager and his team, the caterers, lawns people, streaming crew, referees and other officials and all the volunteers who made this event possible. And congratulations to the players, their coaches and supporters for demonstrating the very positive place this event holds in the international croquet calendar.

Jenny Clarke

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE WON THE GC INTER-COUNTIES (DIV 1)

Nottinghamshire (Ian Burrige, James Death, Rachel Gee, Will Gee) won Division 1 of the GC Inter-County Championship at Cheltenham on 19-20 August for the third successive year, winning all 11 of their matches and dropping only 3 of their 33 games over the course of the weekend.

The punters had thought that Yorkshire (Richard Bilton, Callum Johnson, Richard M Smith, Stuart Smith, Robert Wilkinson) or Somerset (Dominic Aarvold, Ryan Cabble, Stephen Custance-Baker, Marcus Evans, David Goacher, Tim Jolliff) might give Notts a run for their money. Sadly, Yorkshire faded early, losing 2 of their first 3 matches (to Dorset and Middlesex) and ended up in 4th place on 6/11. Somerset (up from Div 2) were beaten by Yorkshire 0-3 in their first match, which put them on the back foot, but they rallied well until late afternoon on Saturday, when they were beaten 1-2 in the crucial tie against Notts. They

finished in 2nd on 8/11 having lost their final match against Hertfordshire (Nick Archer, Jason Carley, Kevin Connolly, John Noble, John Taylor). Herts had a strong weekend, ending up 3rd on 7/11.

At the foot of the table, four teams (Sussex, Middlesex, Hampshire and Surrey) were battling to stay out of the relegation zone in their final few matches on Sunday. Following some tense games, it was Sussex and Middlesex (both 4/11) who managed to stay up, leaving Hampshire (2/11) and Surrey (1/11) in the bottom two slots. They will join Division 2 in 2024. The GC Inter-County Cup was presented to Nottinghamshire by Brian Gardner (Cheltenham CC). Cheltenham CC and their team of helpers were warmly thanked by Ian Burrige for all their efforts before and during the event, and for their excellent hospitality.

The Divisions swap locations next year, so Div 1 will be at

Sussex CCC and Div 2 will be at Cheltenham.

The final table is below and the detailed results can be found on Croquet Scores here:

Div 1 Block: <https://croquetscores.com/2023/gc/inter-county-championship-blocks/division-1>

Div 1 Matches: <https://croquetscores.com/2023/gc/inter-county-championship-tests/division-1>

| Jonathan Powe



Division 1	Wins	Losses	Net Games
Nottinghamshire	11	0	27
Somerset	8	3	11
Hertfordshire	7	4	7
Yorkshire	6	5	9
Essex	6	5	7
Dorset	6	5	1
Devon	6	5	-1
Northamptonshire	5	6	-5
Sussex	4	7	-9
Middlesex	4	7	-13
Hampshire	2	9	-11
Surrey	1	10	-23

STUART M SMITH WON THE DORSET OPEN GC CHAMPIONSHIP (OPEN SERIES) 22-23 JULY 2023

The Dorset GC Open had more of an international flavour this year. It was delightful to see Manuel Marcos Fal and Luis de Alarcon, who flew in from Spain for the weekend, and also Helen Reeves (New Zealand), who joined us for a warm-up event prior to the Women's GC World Championship in the following month. Unfortunately, we were unable to offer decent weather, at least not on the Saturday which was truly awful. It started bucketing it down at about midday and didn't stop until long after the final block game finished at 7.45pm. Very challenging for the players, all of whom were completely soaked by mid-afternoon. They did very well to stick with it. As usual, sixteen entrants were split into two blocks of eight, which produced eight quarter-finalists for the Knockout and eight for the Plate.

Block A was reasonably straightforward and ran largely to form, although Helen Reeves just missed out on a place in the knockout to Paul Gunn, losing to him in her final block game. The other three qualifiers were Stuart M Smith (7/7 wins), Steve Leonard (5/7) and David Goacher (4/7). Andy Dochniak (h'cap 6, no DGrade) deserves a special mention for stepping in at the last moment when someone withdrew on Friday morning, and for winning two of his block games (plus a further two in the plate the next day).

Block B was quite tight for much of the day. Jonathan Powe (7/7) and Tim O'Donnell (5/7) both qualified reasonably comfortably, but four other players (Stephen Custance-Baker, Gary Brennan, Diana Wilson and Manuel Marcos Fal) all finished on 3/7, with Stephen and Diana going through on net hoops.

In the knockout, Stuart M Smith and Stephen Custance-Baker both looked strong on their way to the final and it was Stuart who prevailed in the final match (his fourth appearance in a Dorset Open final), beating Stephen 7-2, 5-7, 7-3 to take the cup for the first time.

Helen Reeves' form rallied on Sunday (perhaps the warm, sunny weather helped). She won five games in a row to take the Plate, beating Louise Smith 7-2 in the final.

Good luck to Helen and Diana at the Women's GC Worlds (Sussex CCC, 7-14 Aug).

KEY RESULTS:

Plate Final: Helen Reeves beat Louise Smith 7-2
Championship:

QF1: Stuart M Smith beat Diana Wilson 4-7, 7-2, 7-5

QF2: David Goacher beat Tim O'Donnell 7-2, 4-7, 7-4

QF3: Stephen Custance-Baker beat Steve Leonard 7-4, 7-5

QF4: Jonathan Powe beat Paul Gunn 7-2, 7-6

5th/6th Playoff (Bowl Final): Tim O'Donnell beat Steve Leonard 7-4, 7-2

SF1: Stuart M Smith beat David Goacher 7-4, 7-6

SF2: Stephen Custance-Baker beat Jonathan Powe 7-6, 7-5

Final: Stuart M Smith beat Stephen Custance-Baker 7-2, 5-7, 7-3

Full results on Croquet Scores here: <https://croquetscores.com/2023/gc/dorset-open-championship-open-series>

| Jonathan Powe





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KENT Broadstairs, Canterbury, Dover, Dunton Green, Hawkhurst, Southborough, Tonbridge, Westgate-on-Sea
LANCASHIRE Burscough, Garstang, Lancaster, Leyland, Poulton-le-Fylde, Thornton-Cleveleys
LEICESTERSHIRE Market Harborough, Melton Mowbray, Quorn
LINCOLNSHIRE Woodhall Spa
LONDON Croydon, Harrow, Isleworth, Oakwood, Upper Norwood
GREATER MANCHESTER Bramhall, Didsbury, Failsworth, Standish
MERSEYSIDE Huyton, Maghull
NORFOLK Harleston, Norwich
NORTHUMBERLAND Hexham
OXFORDSHIRE Chipping Norton, Henley-on-Thames
RUTLAND Oakham
SHROPSHIRE Market Drayton
SOMERSET Bath, Clevedon, Taunton
STAFFORDSHIRE Lichfield, Stafford
SUFFOLK Beccles, Ipswich, Martlesham Heath
SURREY Bagshot, Banstead, Chipstead, Cobham, Purley, Virginia Water, Walton-on-Thames, Warlingham, Weybridge, Woking
TYNE AND WEAR Gosforth, South Shields, Sunderland, Whitley Bay
WARWICKSHIRE Nuneaton, Rugby, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Studley
WEST MIDLANDS Edgbaston, Shirley, Solihull, Tettenhall
WEST SUSSEX Goring by Sea, Haywards Heath, Worthing
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INTER-COUNTY GC DIVISION 2 CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

Hope to see you all next year at a more relaxed event' was how I signed off last year. Well, it certainly was all I hoped for including promotion, which means I believe it's 'time off' for me. So, in the words of Woody Allen from the film Bananas, 'so long suckers'. Actually, the six teams, I believe, had a wonderful time on Southwick's lawns, bathed in sunshine all weekend, and even managed to see the second half of the 'lioness's' world cup final live, thanks to a catering alteration by the Southwick team.

This year's winners were the 3 counties (a combined team of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire). The picture shows the proud captain, David Bell, holding the shield (for the regulation 5 secs) with Philip Blake and Noel Gill (missing were Paul Williams and Mark Buckley). In fact, there were 3 counties that finished equal 1st on number of wins and had to be separated on net games. Buckinghamshire led by Ian Shore (Rot) gained 2nd, while Gloucestershire gained 3rd led by Richard Brand. This, of course, now means that these two counties have gained promotion to Division One next year. Congratulations to both counties on serving their time in Division Two!!!

Unfortunately, with only 6 teams this year there was less time on court, but it did allow for us to use a 'stop clock' time limit of one hour. This meant that the clock could be stopped if the double-bank game was contesting the same hoop, without affecting your game. I believe this worked well with only one game going to time and interestingly creating a lot of tight games going to the 13th hoop, which is always good entertainment for the crowd!!! Overall, it was so tight that, by

the last round, strangely only the pre-tournament favourites, Oxfordshire, were out of the running. Indeed, looking at the match results over half were won in the deciding game of which nearly half were by a single hoop! This supports the theory that every hoop really does matter, especially if it's the 13th. So, well done to the heroes that made the difference and thank you to their opponents for making it a 'tight' game.

Finally, as it seems appropriate, I will sign off with the words of a legendary South West weatherman when I was growing up who used to end his weather report with 'good night and tight lines'

I Ivor Brand (Happy Manager)



RAMSGATE GC OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

The championship was played over a glorious weekend in mid-June and, with rock hard lawns running at 12 Plummers, the hoops were very firm and rejected anything that was not extremely accurate. There was a very high standard field, including four England GC internationals, Tobi Savage, Stephen Mulliner, Richard Bilton and Euan BurrIDGE, plus Reg Bamford and our illustrious CA Council Chairman Samir Patel, who had not played a game of GC so far this year.

There were also 2 Spanish players, Ignacio Gross Ariza, who now works in London and plays at Surbiton and his father Ignacio Gross Alesanco, who flew in especially for the event. Ramsgate was one of the four venues to trial the 4 blocks of 4 players all playing best of 3 games, similar to the GC Eights competitions. However, only 5 of the 12 block matches went to the third game and all blocks went to seeding, except that Ryan Cabble overcame Andrew Hobbs in block A. Ryan also took the first of 3 games off Reg Bamford, so deserved his place in the quarter-finals. The blocks easily finished on the first day.

The second day was somewhat different, however, with such class players each match went to three (mainly) very long games, meaning that the semi-finals could not start before 2.30 in the afternoon. In the quarters Bamford beat Archer, Savage beat BurrIDGE, Bilton beat Patel and Cabble beat Mulliner.

Whilst Ramsgate had been basking in the sunshine, the rest of the country had been experiencing intense thunderstorms over the weekend and these were due to arrive in Ramsgate by about 6 to 7pm. Reluctantly therefore, and with agreement of the players, the manager imposed time limits for the semis, based on the formula given in the Tournament Regulations. Each semi, however went to 2 games only, with all games finishing on time except for one between Bamford and Savage, Reg got his revenge on Tobi following the RCC 2022 final and Richard Bilton beat Ryan Cabble in the other semi.

After a very short break for tea and the renowned Ramsgate ladies' cakes, the final started about 4.30, where Bamford beat

Bilton in 2 straight but very challenging games, 7-3, 7-3; the final finished and we were able to make the presentations just before the storms arrived.

ROUND-UP

There was no official third place, as both players were worn out and wished to watch the final. The plate was won by Ignacio Gross Alesanco, who promised to return from Spain in 2024 and to improve his English in the meantime. Euan BurrIDGE won the losing quarter finalist shield, surprisingly shaped like a bottle of wine.

Thanks to the other competitors not named who helped to make the weekend such a great tournament, Tony Butcher (Southchurch), Albie Willett (Colchester) and Charlie Martin, Christina Rice and Tod Ballantine (Ramsgate). Hopefully this class of competition will inspire all players to enter challenging events and more senior players to never give up.

I Trevor Longman



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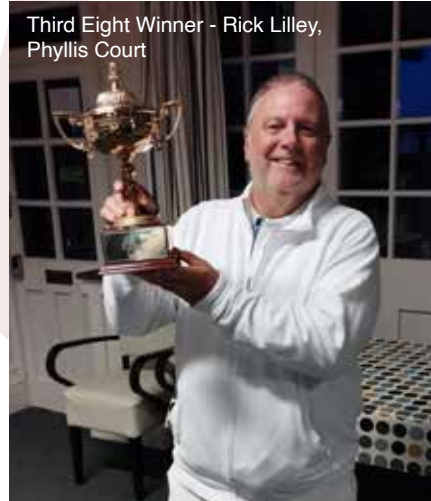


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GC FIRST EIGHT AT COLCHESTER



PHOTOGRAPH Keith Aiton:
Stephen Mulliner in play at
Colchester



Third Eight Winner - Rick Lilley,
Phyllis Court



Second Eight Group, Front row: Ian Burrige, Stephen
Custance-Baker, Paul Gunn, Tony Butcher, Andrew
Hobbs; Back row: Dom Aarvold, Lionel Tibble, Mike
Bilton.

Colchester provided the venue and the weather which, apart from one fairly wet period on Sunday morning, was quite pleasantly hot during the frequent sunny intervals. The field was such that close matches were to be expected and this proved to be the case. 77% of games ended 7-4, 7-5 or 7-6, providing an interesting contrast with the 56% for the Second Eight. The seeding order was Stephen Mulliner, Jamie Burch, Stuart M Smith, Aston Wade (holder), Euan Burrige, Richard Bilton, Tobi Savage and Callum Johnson. The three main playing styles were represented. Mulliner was the sole Irish exponent but there were three Solomon grippers on display – Burch, with a smooth swing and formidable accuracy, together with Burrige and Savage who are capable of hitting with great power and have an enthusiasm for long-range jumps. The other four players use the standard grip, have an efficient jump stroke and can easily clear the opponent to the far end of the court. In round 1, Bilton started strongly with a convincing 7-4, 7-2 defeat of Johnson. but the other three matches were very tight. Savage beat Smith 7-6, 7-6, Burrige beat Burch 7-5, 7-6, and Mulliner beat Wade also 7-5, 7-6 from 4-6 down, getting his revenge for the reverse situation at the British Open a couple of years ago. Johnson wasn't having the best start, as Wade then beat him 7-3, 7-3. Savage beat Burrige 7-5, 6-7, 7-5 and Mulliner beat Bilton 7-4, 7-6. Burch lost the first game to Smith but recovered to win 6-7, 7-4, 7-2. The last match of the first day saw Johnson find his form and beat Burrige 7-4, 7-4, and Wade beat Savage 7-3, 7-6. In his match against Burch, Bilton ran hoop 7 off the South boundary and Burch played a brilliant positional shot to wired from both opponent balls, but Bilton played a jump over hoop 7 which ran hoop 8. Despite this, Burch prevailed 7-6,

7-5. Mulliner beat Smith 7-1, 6-7, 7-2 to become the only player with three wins, followed by Burch, Savage and Wade on two. The next morning, Burrige ended Mulliner's run by winning 7-4, 7-5. The other matches all went to three games. Johnson beat Smith 3-4, 4-7, 7-2, Wade beat Burch 7-5, 5-7, 7-5 and Savage beat Bilton 5-7, 7-6, 7-6, resisting a comeback from 2-6 in game 3. In round 5, Bilton again found himself 2-6 behind, but fought back and beat Burrige 7-6, 5-7, 7-3. Savage beat Johnson 7-4, 5-7, 7-5, Burch beat Mulliner 7-4, 7-6 and Wade beat Smith 7-3, 7-5 to take the lead with four wins. In round 6, Burch beat Johnson 7-4, 7-5 and Bilton had a close 7-6, 7-5 win against Wade. Smith broke his duck with a good win against Burrige 7-6, 4-7, 7-5, and Mulliner beat Savage 7-4, 5-7, 7-5 to avoid the opposite outcome of his efforts on day 1. Day 2 therefore ended with four players on four wins (Burch, Mulliner, Savage and Wade) and Bilton just behind on three wins and with a chance of qualifying for the knockout if he won in Round 7 and any of the other three matches went his way. Burch had the best net game score and had the comfort of knowing he was assured of qualification. Bilton succeeded in beating Smith 7-4, 4-7, 7-4 and secured his place in the knockout due to Burch, who had finished top in the block having unexpectedly demolished Savage 7-2, 7-2 and ended his hopes in this year's tournament. Even though he knew he couldn't qualify, Burrige defeated Wade 7-3, 7-6 to knock him just below Bilton in the block. Mulliner had no problem overcoming Johnson with a swift 7-4, 7-3 win. Mulliner and Bilton had a typically competitive semi-final in which Bilton was unlucky to clear Mulliner's ball into a hoop scoring position on two occasions when each game was delicately balanced. In game 1, Mulliner had a

good first ball to 13 but Bilton cleared it from south of 12. Both players then failed boundary attempts before Mulliner took his second chance from 3 yards. Mulliner unexpectedly missed a chance to go 4-0 ahead, but Bilton capitalised and went on to level 3-3. The game was still anybody's at 5-5, but a missed clearance from Bilton allowed Mulliner to run down to 12 with control and go on to win 7-6, 7-5. Burch made a slow start against Wade and lost the first game 7-2. Game 2 was very tight and Burch only survived by running 13 from the boundary. In game 3, Burch played into close position at 6 but Wade produced an excellent power clearance through the back of the hoop to send Burch's ball well away while taking position himself! The game was evenly balanced up to hoop 8 with some superb play from both players. The match finally turned when Burch cleared well in front of 9 and went on to take the last three hoops to win 7-4. Burch and Mulliner had met in the final of the East Anglian Championship in May when Mulliner won in three, however, Burch had won their block match 2-0, so nobody had any clue who would prevail. Yet again, Burch made a slow start and lost 7-2 in the first game. He then upped his game and led 5-3 in the second but failed hoop 9 and allowed Mulliner to recover to 4-5. The battle for 10 ended after Mulliner cleared Burch's Y to the west boundary and left his own K with fairly straight 8-yard position at 11. Burch fired at B in front of 10 with Y but missed, and Mulliner ran 10. Burch played for position at 11 with R, but didn't get the block on K. Mulliner then ran 11 to 3 yards north of the peg to lead 6-5. Burch played a great shot from near corner 3 to get Y in good position at 12, but was open to K and, after Mulliner played B into position, Burch played an excellent long-range block with R to hide K from Y. Mulliner then attempted to clear Y with a jump over R, but hit it slightly left with the result that it missed both balls and ran 12

...continued on page 34



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WINNER
10 YEARS
IN A ROW!

to end the match 7-2, 7-5! Burch looked in reasonable control of the game at 5-4 up, but Mulliner scored three hoops in a row with just 4 shots! This was Mulliner's third victory in the First Eight after wins in 2015 and 2019, though this is the first time his name is on the Ricki Savage Memorial trophy.

Thanks are due to Colchester for the use of their courts, to the club members who turned out to remove the morning dew and to Richard Bilton who managed the event with his customary efficiency.

GC SECOND EIGHT AT RAMSGATE

Only one brief, and mercifully light, shower dampened the friendly, yet highly competitive atmosphere over the bank-holiday weekend. Helped in a very significant part by the excellent Ramsgate Croquet Club and the tireless Trevor Longman, Charlie Martin and others who were on hand throughout the tournament meticulously setting hoops to one thirty-second every morning following cutting (yes, the lawns were cut each day!) and firming, checking and resetting hoops throughout the day between games. Well done Ramsgate, you are setting standards.

This year, the players who competed in the Second Eight (Kate Jones Memorial) were Ian Burrridge, Lionel Tibble, Dom Aarvold, Stephen Custance-Baker, Andrew Hobbs, Tony Butcher, Paul Gunn and Mike Bilton. Five of the eight players were previous or current members of the International Performance Development squad.

Burrridge comfortably saw off all comers in the block with an only slightly less impressive Dom Aarvold heading up the rest of the field. Some results were not at all indicative of the quality of play, middle-ball 7-yard-plus clearances were a strong feature of Tony Butcher and Paul Gunn's play (or they at least seemed to hit everything against me!).

In the first game of the semi-final between Aarvold and Tibble, Aarvold had first ball in position 18 inches in front of hoop 1 and only slightly short. A quarter-ball clearance gave Tibble an in-off and the remaining 2 balls were played to hoop 2 from corner 4. However, this fortunate run of the ball was not enough for Tibble and Aarvold won 7-3, 7-6. Meanwhile, in the other semi, Hobbs was elusively chasing his best form and finding it on most occasions, but not enough to worry Burrridge, who came through comfortably 7-5, 7-3.

The final saw Aarvold come back to win 7-6 in the second game to keep things in the balance but then fade slightly in the third. Congratulations to Ian Burrridge who won 7-3, 6-7, 7-2, and well done all players. Thank-you for making it a splendid event and 3 days of good croquet fun.

GC THIRD EIGHT AT BUDLEIGH SALTERTON

Last year, the First and Second Eights were held at Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club. This year, they hosted the GC Third Eight (Suzanne Roberts Memorial) and once again provided a warm welcome and superb playing courts. The eight competitors – Diana Wilson, Giles Pepperell, Kim Taylor, Louise Smith, David Cornes, Rick Lilley, Marc Colson and Sandra Cornes – were subject to mixed fortunes that seemed to match the variable weather conditions of the bank holiday weekend.

Top seed Wilson dropped her opening game to Smith, but subsequently rallied to win the match 2-1. Wilson's great form continued throughout the weekend, winning six of her seven block matches, succumbing only to Pepperell over three games.

Sandra Cornes, who had taken a place due to a late withdrawal, also fared well during the tournament. Cornes expressed that she could not match the clearance skills of her opponents and opted for a positional game that she executed very well throughout. Her three match victories meant she only missed out on the knockout stage on net games (to her husband David Cornes).

As the block play unfolded, the players seemed very evenly matched, with the tournament still pretty much wide open to those that could still qualify for the knockout, alongside the on-form Wilson. Taylor put in a solid performance with 5 wins from 7 matches, which included victory in the block stage over Lilley, an epic contest that was to be repeated in the knockout.

David Cornes entered the final block round with three match wins already, but lost 2-0 to Smith. However, his better net games ensured him a place in the knockout. From being 6-4 up, an accidental promotion of her opponent's ball at hoop 13 in game 3 (not recommended), meant that Smith lost her match to Lilley, helping his win count rise at the expense of her own.

Despite Pepperell's victories over Wilson and Taylor, he never quite found his form to sustain further match wins to add to his tally. Colson also ended the block stage strongly, but his three match wins weren't quite enough on net games to progress. Wilson, first placed in the block, faced David Cornes in the semi-final. This match proved to be a high drama affair with all three games ending at hoop 13. At one game all, and approaching hoop 13 in the third game, both played up the court and straight through the back of the hoop, with Wilson's shot landing just inches in front of the hoop. However, a short clearance battle ensued with Cornes taking his opportunity to run the hoop from just shy of the boundary. This

gave Cornes the match win and his place in the Final.

Meanwhile, Taylor, having previously beaten Lilley in the block, began another closely fought battle as second and third in the block competed in the other semi-final. After losing game one 4-7, Taylor responded in game two to win 7-5, but seemed to have run out of steam as game three closed in. The third game ended 7-3 to Lilley, which earned him a place in the final with David Cornes. With all matches being very long and competitive on the third day, the main final did not commence until nearing 5pm. Lilley, seemingly confident in game one, took a three-hoop early lead, which Cornes countered well, but still resulting in game one going 7-4 to Lilley. In game two, fortunes reversed – Cornes played consistently, with a good display of hoop running, as shown in his previous semi-final match, and won game two 7-5. With the fading daylight, game three ensued as a tight affair that turned abruptly on hoop 10. A single mistake on a clearance shot gave Lilley a 6-4 lead after Cornes promoted his opponent's ball through the hoop and conceded first approach to hoop 11. This was the decisive point in the game. After a short battle at hoop 11, and with his opponent's ball in the jaws, Cornes was left with just two jump shot attempts to keep the match alive. An off-target bouncing bomb from the north boundary left Lilley free to run the hoop.

After being runner-up last year, Lilley put in another good performance to this time win the title. It is also worth mentioning that all four players in the knockout – Wilson, Taylor, Lilley and Cornes – are current International Performance Development Squad members. In the consolation Bowl, Colson beat Cornes 2-0, securing victory in the second game once more on hoop 13.

Huge thanks go to the Budleigh Salterton Chair, John O'Gorman, the ground staff, volunteers and spectators for the making the tournament a very enjoyable success.

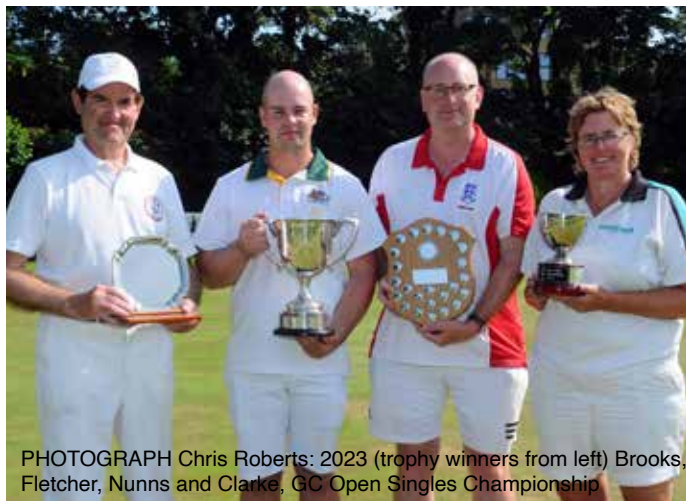
Stephen Mulliner (First Eight)
Lionel Tibble (Second Eight)
Louise Smith (Third Eight)
Edited: Richard Bilton



Second Eight Winner - Ian Burrridge

THE GOLF CROQUET OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sussex County Croquet Club was the venue for the 2023 GC British Open Championships, and the combination of a long, dry spell (apart from the sudden thunder storm the night before) and Quadway hoops presented challenging conditions until late in the afternoon when the hoops became a little less formidable. 16 pairs contested the Doubles Championship, with the top four from two single-game blocks of eight progressing to the best-of-three knockout. The Singles Championship also followed its normal format of 32 players divided into four blocks of eight, with the top four from each proceeding to the knockout. All matches were best-of-3.



PHOTOGRAPH Chris Roberts: 2023 (trophy winners from left) Brooks, Fletcher, Nunns and Clarke, GC Open Singles Championship

DOUBLES

In Block A, Robert Fletcher (AUS) and local player Dominic Nunns formed a strong partnership and won 6 out of 7 games, beating last year's winners but losing 4-7 to Richard Bilton and Stuart M Smith despite being 3-0 ahead. They came third behind Euan Burrige and Callum Johnson in second, both on 5 wins, and were followed by Lionel Tibble and Jayne Stevens with 4 wins.

Block B saw the top four seeds qualify, albeit with fourth seeds Pierre Beaudry and Jonathan Claxton finishing second with 6 wins. They beat second seeds Aston Wade and Tobi Savage as well as third seeds Jonathan Powe and Tim Russell, both of whom also lost another game and finished with 4 and 3 wins, respectively. Stephen Mulliner and Jenny Clarke (NZ) were unbeaten.

All the matches in the quarter-final went to 2 games, including the tie between tournament seeds 3 and 4, Burrige and Johnson vs Wade and Savage, in which the former prevailed 7-5, 7-5. The other 3 matches all had a close game and a comfortable one, as Fletcher and Nunns won their second game against Powe and Russell 7-0, Bilton and Smith won their second against Beaudry and Claxton 7-2, and Mulliner and Clarke continued their winning streak with a 7-1 against Tibble and Stevens.

Fletcher and Nunns had to work hard to overturn a 3-6 deficit in the first game of their semi-final against Bilton and Smith, and went on to win the match 7-6, 7-5. Mulliner and Clarke had lost to the 2022 champions, Burrige and Johnson, at the same stage last year but turned the tables this time with a 4-7, 7-3, 7-6 win.

The final was another close contest with Fletcher and Nunns taking the first game. Mulliner and Clarke equalised decisively. However, in the final game, Fletcher and Nunns were the better shots, deservedly winning 7-6, 4-7, 7-3.

Bilton and Smith won a close 3rd/4th playoff against Burrige and Johnson 10-9. Wade and Savage beat Tibble and Stevens,

and then Powe and Russell to win the Shield in straight games. Ryan Cabble and Louise Smith jointly topped the Plate block with Jason Carley and John Taylor, both on 3 wins, and the previous National Doubles winners went on to win the Plate final 10-8.

SINGLES

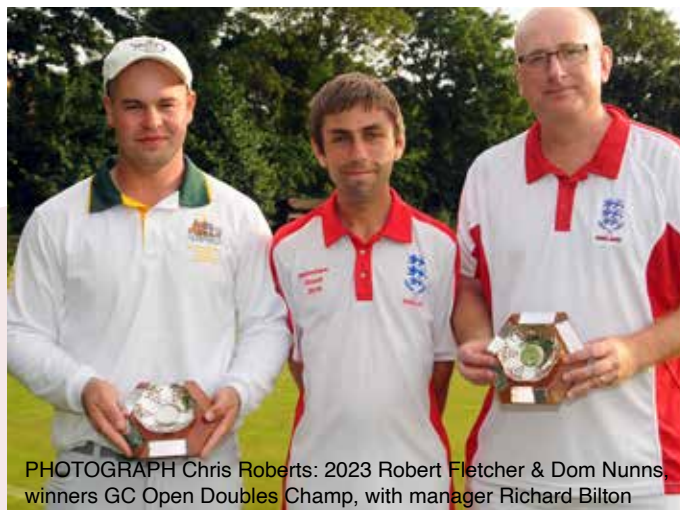
Block Stage

Block A was won comfortably by Reg Bamford (ZAF) with 7 wins, albeit with a game dropped to each of Mark Avery, who finished second with 6 wins, and Richard Bilton, who came fourth with 4 wins after a 3-way play-off with Lionel Tibble and Chris Roberts (WAL), who came third.

In Block B, fresh from their doubles triumph, Robert Fletcher (AUS) served notice of his intentions by not dropping a game and only going past hoop 10 twice, while Dominic Nunns came second with 6 wins. They were followed by Tobi Savage with 5 wins and Dominic Aarvold, a relative newcomer from Bristol, with 3 wins.

Block C did not go with the form book in that the top two seeds Aston Wade and Euan Burrige came third and second to Callum Johnson who was in impressive form, especially in his 7-0 win over Wade, and finished unbeaten in matches. Ian Burrige (WAL) at one point was convinced that he had failed to qualify but made the most of his opportunity by beating Stephen Custance-Baker in the final block match, and then again in a play-off to take fourth place.

In Block D, Stephen Mulliner won all 7 matches, including a win over his doubles partner. He dropped games only to Stuart M Smith and Jenny Clarke (NZ), who had 6 and 5 wins respectively. Despite losing their match in the block, Simon Carter won a tight play-off game against Ryan Cabble to take fourth place.



PHOTOGRAPH Chris Roberts: 2023 Robert Fletcher & Dom Nunns, winners GC Open Doubles Champ, with manager Richard Bilton

KNOCKOUT

The knockout draw was conducted using Modified Grade Based Seeding, which allocates the four block winners as seeds 1 to 4 and the block seconds as seeds 5 to 8. The block thirds were drawn randomly to meet seeds 5 to 8 and the block fourths to meet seeds 1 to 4, avoiding block clashes. Despite some close matches that could have gone either way, or some surprise results, including Carter taking a game off Bamford, all but one of the round 1 matches went as seeded. This exception was a very tight 7-6, 6-7, 7-6 win for Wade (third in Block C) over Smith (second in Block D). Avery overcame Savage and Nunns beat Clarke, both in 3 games. The other first round matches were relatively comfortable, with E Burrige beating Roberts, Johnson won his match against Aarvold, Mulliner came out on

top against I Burridge, and Fletcher continued his unbeaten run with a win against Bilton.

Bamford faced a battle to get past Nunns whose highly individual style combines great accuracy with considerable power. Unsurprisingly, it went the distance but Bamford had a clear edge in games 1 and 3 and duly won 7-3, 6-7, 7-4.

Doubles partners Burridge and Johnson had met in Block B where Johnson won 7-3, 4-7, 7-3, but the tables were turned this time however, as Burridge prevailed by 7-3, 2-7, 7-4.

Mulliner and Avery had met in the East Anglian Championship in May where Mulliner had won 7-2, 7-3. Avery's GC tactics are steadily improving and Mulliner had to call on his positional experience to overcome Avery's excellent single-ball skills and win 7-4, 7-5. Wade fought hard to match Fletcher's clearing and hooping skills but Fletcher always had the edge and won 7-4, 7-4.

Burridge had a chance to take the first game against Bamford 7-6, but didn't manage to take it. However, he came back and won the second game 7-5. It was 2-2 in game 3 when Burridge suffered a bad contact caused by a hole in a vital clearance.

This misfortune handed Bamford a great chance to take control of the game, which he did not squander and he soon ran out a 7-2 winner. The other semi-final was a hard-fought and lengthy affair in which Fletcher's excellent clearing was finally enough to get him past Mulliner's determination and experience by 7-5, 7-5.

Even though there might normally have been enough time, owing to the challenging conditions and length of the semi-finals the final was kept as a best-of-three match. The opening game was simply extraordinary. Fletcher hit around 90% of all his clearances with the result that Bamford never had a hoop opportunity and lost 7-0 for the first time in his career. A 6-yard jump over two balls to make hoop 4 was a particular high point. Game 2 was much closer, as Fletcher showed he was human with his clearing percentage falling down into the 70s. The spectators were starting to wonder if Bamford would

even score a point as he fell 0-2 behind. He changed his game and played more tactically, and recovered to reach 2-3, but Fletcher produced an 8-yard jump to score hoop 6 and lead 4-2, which then became 5-3. Bamford fought back to 5-6 but, after a lengthy battle at hoop 12, Fletcher clinched game, match and title with a 4-yard angled hoop. The GC British Open had been won without dropping a game before, by Bamford back in 2018, but Fletcher certainly created history in this truly impressive performance.

CONSOLATION EVENTS

Wade had made plans for the Saturday evening and decided not to rush back to play in the Shield, giving Avery a bye to the final. Johnson took the first game against Nunns 7-5, which included running hoop 9 from the boundary and sailing through hoop 10 as well. However, Nunns returned the favour in the next two games to win 5-7, 7-5, 7-5. He then went on to beat a cold Avery 7-2, 7-6 to win the Shield.

Carter gave Clarke a bye to the second round of the Bowl, while the other three first round matches all went to three games.

Roberts overcame Aarvold 7-3, 5-7, 7-5, Burridge beat Savage 7-6, 3-7, 7-3, and Smith outlasted Bilton 7-3, 3-7, 7-5. Clarke had no issue overcoming Roberts in two games 7-2, 7-5, but Smith had quite a battle with Burridge and just came out on top 7-6, 3-7, 7-5. Clarke vs Smith was a very competitive affair, and despite losing the second game 2-7, Clarke took the match 7-6, 2-7, 7-5 to win the Bowl.

Andrew Hobbs (ZAF) and Stephen Custance-Baker both won all their games in their respective Plate blocks. However, they both lost 7-10 in the semi-final against Richard Brooks and Morgan Case respectively (Brooks having lost his block game to Custance-Baker, and Case his to Hobbs). Brooks then ploughed on and beat Case 7-3, 7-5 to win the Plate for the third time.

All results for both the Doubles and the Singles are available on Croquet Scores.

NATIONAL FOREST GC AT ASHBY, 26-27 AUGUST 2023

This was Ashby's fourth National Forest Zero-Plus GC Doubles tournament. This year it attracted eight pairs from several North-East and Midlands counties, with combined handicaps ranging from 2 to 13.

Play started in two blocks of 4. Initially, each match comprised two games, on three lawns, with no time limit. The first round saw the top-ranked pairs win their matches, then the heavens opened, play stopped and we watched standing water form on Lawns 1 and 2. The manager became concerned that play might have to be abandoned, but in less than an hour the match on Lawn 3 resumed, followed a while later by those on 1 and 2. So Saturday's scheduled play was completed as planned.

On Sunday morning both semi-finals, best of three 13 point games, went to the third game, Christine Wood and Mike O'Brian beating Alison Murray and Paul Williams in one and Judith and Arthur Rowe overcoming the Buckley brothers in the other.

Sunday afternoon's final, also best of 3, saw the top seeded Christine/Mike duo take the closely fought first game with Christine's heroic jump shot at hoop 12. The Rows didn't manage to regain their form in the second game which finished 7-1. Christine and Mike were very worthy winners and were presented with the trophy (a beautifully unique piece, designed and made by Mike!).

The two Leicester pairs played a 19-point game which secured third place for Alison and Paul, and a very close Plate competition was awarded to Jane Pringle and Jane Bailey after a series of 13-point games.

Of the 16 competitors, eleven have played in previous years and hope to meet opponents from other clubs in next year's event.

Ray Mounfield

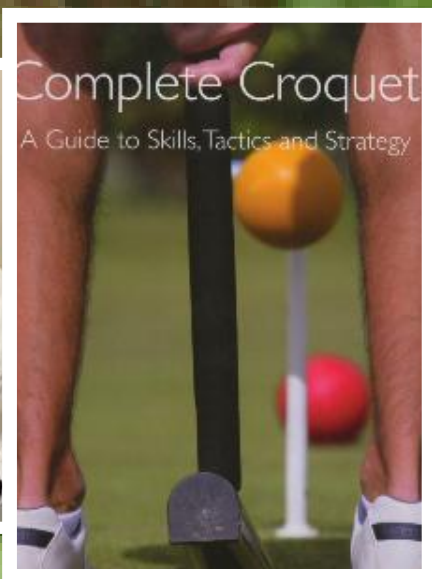


Mike O'Brian, Ray Mounfield (Manager), Christine Wood



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PIRATE INVASION AT DOWNHAM CROQUET CLUB

The peaceful grounds of Stow Hall gardens, home to Downham Croquet Club, were recently taken over by a horde of fearsome, swashbuckling pirates, with many a 'Pieces of Eight!' and 'Shiver me Timbers!' to be heard around the lawns. Club member, Elizabeth Jarred, produced suitable headgear for all the young visitors to don, as well as encouraging them to come up with their own designs. A fine day was had perfecting the art of nicking

points off rivals, topped off with large amounts of tea, fizz and cake. Elizabeth has also introduced a Junior Bursary scheme to encourage younger players, and Sophia Weatherall, the first of the bursary holders, was judged best-dressed pirate. She enjoyed her day. She summed up the game as "A game of luck, really good fun. You hit the right ball and plunder the points."

| Jonathan Toye



CHELTENHAM HIGH BISQUE AC AND HIGH HANDICAP GC AUGUST 14-15

The long-established Cheltenham AC High Bisque (14 and above) tournament was this year run in parallel with a similar GC event. Adam Moliver managed the AC event and Makis Aperghis the GC. We were both aided by CA coaches. One couple had a partner in each event and said the joint event had encouraged them to attend. Although the two events were arranged somewhat differently both had elements of coaching and games. For some this was their first experience of tournament play with double-banking and timed games. The AC event was run as two blocks. On day one there were three 18-point games played to a base of 5. The first two in each block went on to semi-finals and finals of 26 points on day two. The successful players did not have coaching other than a general lunchtime chat for all entrants. The weaker players meanwhile had some one-to-one sessions with a CA coach and some group sessions and supervised games.

Two people gained the Bronze award (uncoached) including David Park who, having won all his games, won the final against Colin Spencer. David plays at Nottingham and so a Notts player has won this two years in a row. The new GC tournament for handicaps 10 and above ran on similar lines. On day 1, a simulated tournament was held, with players playing three 50-minute handicap games in the morning in blocks. The winners of each block entered a knockout competition (semi-finals, finals, 3rd place) in the afternoon. Similarly for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th placed players in the blocks. Handicap cards were not updated. Coaching was provided in two 20-minute morning and lunchtime classroom sessions and also while playing and individually in the intervals between play. On day 2, the same format was adopted, but for a real tournament. Coaching was again provided in two 20-minute morning and lunchtime classroom sessions and the players were individually briefed after their block games. Handicap cards

were updated. The winners and runners-up in each block participated in knockouts as on Day 1 but without individual coaching. Those who were placed 3rd and 4th in their blocks also participated in knockouts, but with intensive on-the-lawn coaching and no handicap card updating. The overall GC winner was Simon Bryant of Thames Valley, with Roy Hemming of Cheltenham as the runner-up. Both these events are an effective way to introduce high handicap players to tournament play in an enjoyable manner.



David Park Winner and Colin Spencer AC Finalist and no handicap card updating.

| Adam Moliver and Makis Aperghis

ATTRACTING YOUNGER PLAYERS

The Club has for some time had an interest in looking for opportunities for young people to play our wonderful sport. Most recently, one of our members, Carole Lawther, undertook to canvass specific interest amongst local schools and youth organisations. She used the typical response of, "Send us a poster and we will display it" as just a starting point. The result was two positive engagements. Fifteen teenage students from a local school accompanied by a teacher came to a 'Try Croquet' session last month, followed the next day by a group of Guides. Each 2-hour session comprised a welcome, who were then split into fours to choose their mallets and receive some simple briefing and practice on stance,

grip and the basic strokes of approach, hoop running and clearance. Time for an hour's game of doubles, on four half-lawns with coaching, encouragement (and occasional restraint of youthful over-enthusiasm!) from a club member assigned to each group. At the end-of-session round-ups over crisps and drinks, both sets of young people said that they had enjoyed themselves. They have been invited to come back and this is currently in hand. Carole firmly believes that it is the shared social aspect that is especially important to many teenagers, which is why we are seeking to attract people in a group. Behind-the-scenes preparation included seeking committed volunteers from amongst club members and Club's safeguarding officer, DBS checks were



arranged. We are hopeful for a new generation of players and will continue to do what we can to bring the fun and appeal of croquet to them all.

**| Chris Webbley,
High Wycombe Croquet Club**

CLUB MATTERS - HEALTH CHECK TOOL

In recent articles on Club Matters, we have focused on 'people' and 'marketing'. In this article, we introduce you to Sport England's latest diagnostic tool. You will note that the first two series of questions on 'governance' and 'welfare and safeguarding' are hot topics for all croquet clubs.

This tool takes about 15 minutes to complete and perhaps could be completed at your next management meeting? Before the meeting why not log in using the following link to set it up as an agenda item?

<https://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/mod/ Diagnose/view.php?id=9445>

Here is more information from Sport England;
Overview of the Health Check Tool

The Club Matters Health Check Tool is a self-assessment tool designed to support anyone that runs community sports clubs, groups and organisations.

The interactive, and diagnostic, tool is designed to help you to understand your strengths and identify any areas for development to ensure you are providing a safe environment, whilst meeting your legal requirements.

The tool is particularly useful if; you are looking to start a club or

organisation, want to check your current processes across five operational areas, or want to identify key areas of development. Benefits of using the Health Check Tool

- It will get you thinking about how your organisation performs and whether there is any room for development.
- It can help you check that you are providing a safe environment for all and operating in a way that meets your legal requirements.
- It can help you to understand if you are likely to meet the minimum requirements of public funders such as Sport England.
- Exploring core operational areas
- The tool includes a series of questions, grouped into five key areas, that connect to the learning areas on Club Matters:
 - Governance.
 - Welfare and Safeguarding.
 - Financial Management.
 - Workforce (Volunteers and paid staff)
 - Facility Development (Hired and leased facilities)

Paul Francis
Chair of Sports Development Committee

POEM - ANYONE FOR CROQUET?

I attended a friend's funeral recently which was remarkable for the variety of content – music, reminiscences and lots of poems – she was an avid reader of the genre. So I thought what about a poem about croquet? The attached is the result which might cause some harmless amusement! **Ian Harrison**

ANYONE FOR CROQUET?

It's all a lot of balls really
Blue, red, black, yellow:
Or green, pink, brown and white.
And you'd better remember which you're playing
Or you'll be in serious trouble – right?

Hoops are tricky too –
Just a mil or two of clearance
So line up carefully and smoothly swing
And you'll sail through -
Unless you fluff it!

Bandits are a perennial problem -
Those whose handicaps are wrong -
Bisques or extra strokes resented
Especially when they say
"Aren't I playing well today"?

And mallets are not what they were –
No hickory and ash these days
It's carbon fibre, peripherally weighted –
That makes your ball travel fast and straight.

When it's down to the final hurdle -
Golden hoop or pegging out
Keep your nerve and do it slowly
And you'll deserve the victory shout..

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his Coaching Column focuses on tips, ideas and resources for coaching beginners and high handicappers.

ONLINE COACHING RESOURCES ON VIDEO

Full games with commentary are easily found online, as are shorts covering a particular technical point, but for coaches looking for material to help players in the earlier stages of their croquet journey the range is much more limited. Check these out:

- Basingstoke CC has nine AC and nine GC videos by Ian Harrison, typically around 30 minutes each. They move at pace but provide helpful reminders for those seeking video revision. Go to the Basingstoke CC website, then navigate to either the Golf Croquet section or the Association Croquet section.
- A professionally produced 6-minute video, showing four simple GC practice routines filmed at Enfield, is on the Ealing CC website. Navigate to the Watch and Learn section of the website and scroll down to Four Practice Routines.

MORE ON MICROCROQUET

MicroCroquet is being developed at Church Stretton CC under the enthusiastic guidance of Joe Manifold and team. It's an innovative way of giving new AC players an opportunity for playing simple games purposefully: in Church Stretton's words, it's "an early and gentle experience of playing AC competitively. It's short and fun and designed to give everyone some games whilst learning the basics."

Only four hoops are needed, of which three plus the peg must be run with each ball, making for a short 8-point game. The line through hoops 3 and 4 is treated as a boundary.

Like most clubs where Short Croquet is well established, the Church Stretton lawns are set up for both full lawn and half lawn; MicroCroquet uses the half lawns, so the playing area is only around a third of a full-size lawn.

There are no new rules to learn: MicroCroquet is simply very short AC played on a favourably compact playing area, making it easier to hit in and set up a successful sequence of shots. Normal rules for handicap games apply. Time limit is an hour, deliberately generous to encourage games to reach peg out.

The club has gone further and uses MicroCroquet as an easy-access club competition. Anyone in the club can play, but winners can only be players with AC handicaps 22 or 24, who have not entered another AC competition, and who have not won this one before. More experienced players are welcome to take part to help new players learn and develop.

The club uses a simple handicap system unique to MicroCroquet, entirely separate from other croquet handicapping. All players start with five bisques, or 7 if they are in their first season. One bisque is lost for every game won, and one bisque gained for every game lost. This dynamic system is very easily understood and has led to good commitment from club members.

AC is, at heart, a very simple game – James Hawkins has distilled the rules into a handful of short bullet points – and MicroCroquet has all the signs of being an excellent way of building enjoyment and success into the playing experience of new members.

HINTS AND TIPS FOR NEW STARTERS

On or off?

The Laws and Rules provide the complete text, but the detail can befuddle new starters. Coaches can ask new players to see the white line as the bottom course of a brick wall. If the wall would get in the way of any part of the ball, the ball is out.

Through or not through?

Again, the Laws and Rules give the definitive version, but it's easier to picture the legendary "crisp £20 note" being eased down the playing side of the hoop. If the banknote's journey to the bottom would clear the ball without bending, the ball is through.

Yard line questions

New AC players are often unsure which balls to bring onto the yard line. The rules are very simple. Opposition balls, and partner ball, always come back onto the yard line the moment they cross it, every time, before the next shot is played.

Only the striker's ball is allowed to remain inside the yard line, and it does so only when the player has a continuation shot. In other words, if the striker's ball comes to rest inside the yard line area after a croquet stroke, or after running a hoop, it stays there ready for the next shot. If however no continuation stroke is owing, it's end of turn, and the ball comes immediately back onto the yard line.

Marking a ball

The instinct of newcomers is to remove a ball to be marked, then put in a marker at the place where they estimate the ball was sitting. Then the process is reversed: the marker comes out, and the ball is placed where they estimate the marker to have been. Errors can easily creep in at each stage, and even though a difference of a few millimetres may make little difference in many situations, the impact can become quite profound the closer the ball is to a hoop.

A special role of a coach is to gently model for new players how to use the nearest hoop or the peg as a point of reference. Standing directly above the ball, let them see you mark the edge of the ball, directly on the straight line from the middle of the ball to the near hoop wire or to the middle of the peg.

In a critical position, for example when a ball is positioned ready to run an angled hoop, two markers are called for, each leading to a different reference point. In the photo, each wire of the nearby hoop serves as a reference point, leading to a very accurate way of recording the ball position.



Marking a ball in a critical position: the orange marker leads to the left wire, the red marker to the right wire

NEW COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

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

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

- Tim Barzycki, Pinchbeck CC
- Anne Clarke, Ben Rhydding CC
- Robert Grunwell, Brodsworth Hall CC
- Dee McKibbin, Phyllis Court CC
- Karen Newbould, Bromley CC

Have you considered becoming a coach? Good coaching is NOT about being a top player; personal qualities are much more important – good inter-personal skills, a warm and welcoming personality, and a genuine interest in helping other players and supporting them in their development. Coach training courses will be run at all the Academies and booking for them will open soon.

There are real satisfactions in coaching. As recently qualified coach Dee McKibbin from Phyllis Court CC says: ***I shall be wearing my coaching badge with pride and can't wait to pass on the passion of croquet to many new club members.***

NEW MERIT AWARDS

Congratulations to the following:

Association Croquet – Bronze Merit Award

Margaret Crossland
Secretary's Shield

David Park
Cheltenham High
Bisquers

Kevin Ward
Cheltenham High
Bisquers

Association Croquet – Gold Merit Award

David Fuller
World Championship
Qualifier

Jack Good
Tompkinson Shield

Guy Hewitt
World Championship
Qualifier

Alex McIntyre
Wrest Park A&B Level

Association Croquet – Platinum Merit Award

Rick Harding
Cavendish Clock

Golf Croquet – Bronze Merit Award

Patrick Coulter
Sidmouth GC C-Level

Helen Essa
Ealing C Series

Andrew Jackson
Hamptworth GC C-Level

Peter Martell
Swindon GC C-Level

Fraser Wilkes
Guildford & Godalming
C-level

Golf Croquet – Silver Merit Award

Andy Jones
Ryde B-Level

Stephen Pearson
Sidmouth GC B-Level

Giles Pepperell
Nottingham GC B-Level

Julie Tremble
Colchester B-Level

Naomi Whitehead
Cheltenham GC B-Level

Golf Croquet – Gold Merit Award

Andy Dochniak
East Dorset GC 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.

NOMINATIONS ARE INVITED FOR COACH OF THE YEAR 2023 & THE LIFETIME COACHING AWARD

COACH OF THE YEAR 2023

We are looking for an established coach who has made a significant contribution to coaching our sport. Someone who is dedicated, enthusiastic and has helped players improve. A coach who always seems to go that 'extra mile'.

THE LIFETIME COACHING AWARD

This award is for that someone really special who has made a significant contribution to coaching our sport over a long period of time.

The Coaching Committee will be considering all nominations at their next meeting. If you know of a coach you consider worthy of either of these awards, please send their name, together with a suitable citation, by email to: paulwfrancis@icloud.com
Nominations close on 31st October 2023.

Paul Francis
CA Coaching Committee
paulwfrancis@icloud.com

The Coach of the Year and the Lifetime Coaching Award are prestigious awards that are made to CA Graded Coaches who have shown a significant and above normal contribution to coaching.

GUIDANCE CRITERIA INCLUDE:

- Has shown dedication, innovation and enthusiasm in expanding knowledge and skills of the game.
- Carries an endorsement from Federation Officials, National/ International players, or club committees.
- Has a significant length of service as a coach.
- Has made a particular contribution within the relevant playing season.
- Is recognised as helping individual players, a group of players or a team to achieve significant success.
- Has led a successful re-organisation or development of coaching that has reached a number of players.
- Has dedicated significant time and expertise to producing a widely used CA coaching asset, such as a manual or technique.
- The Lifetime Coaching Award is awarded only once to anyone, whereas Coach of the Year may be awarded again after at least five years have passed.
- The Lifetime Coaching Award encompasses additionally:
 - A sustained contribution over a number of years.
 - The candidate is widely recognised as having made a significant contribution to coaching in the domain throughout that time.

These criteria are for guidance and the candidate would not necessarily have to fulfil all of them.





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Email: duncan@duncanhectorturfcare.co.uk

Call me 01328 700 537 or 07710 601584

Online Lawn Care Shop - Credit given

Winter Maintenance

Mowing: Increase the height of cut to 8 to 10mm and trim as necessary depending on growth. It is important to mow during the winter even if you don't play. Regular trimming improves the sward density, encourages a dwarf habit and will create a better surface for next season. At times this may not be possible if the weather is too wet.

Soluble Iron: The product I supply is easy to dilute in water, there is no need to use hot water. It takes one minute to dilute using a paint paddle and cordless drill. There is a video showing this on my website. Use Soluble Iron for treating moss, fusarium, dollar spot or any fungal disease. Moss should be treated in October/ November. It may be hard to spot in gloomy winter weather, so a close inspection is worthwhile. It costs about £2 for a full-size lawn. I find it more effective than fungicides.

Worm Casts: If worm casts are a problem you must address the rootzone condition and convert it into an environment that is not favoured by casting worms. The objective isn't to kill worms, just to persuade them to go elsewhere. The most economical approach is to incorporate a root zone conditioner into the annual maintenance programme. See my website at www.duncanhectorturfcare.co.uk

Nutrition: If you are playing through the winter, I recommend a liquid or granular winter fertiliser. Liquid is low cost and treats a full-size lawn four times during the winter for about £48. For next season, my unique thatch-busting fertiliser programmes start in April. My new slow-release BIOGRAN is proving popular. It has a broad spectrum of bacteria, mycorrhizae and seaweed. Check out my website for details.

Mowers: I will have a number of Brilliant Mowers available in March. Reserve now, pay on delivery.

| Duncan Hector



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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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CA website at: www.croquet.org.uk/?p=press/gazette

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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.
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