



# CROQUET

GAZETTE

Issue 406 | December 2023



**AHMED EL MAHDY IS THE OVER 50  
GOLF CROQUET WORLD CHAMPION 2023**





**CROQUET  
ENGLAND**

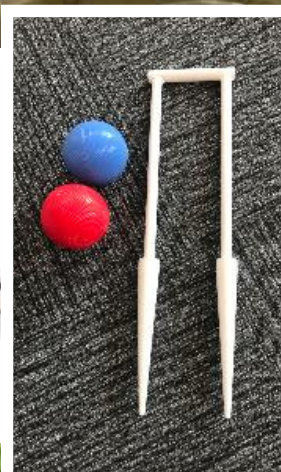
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**Croquet England**  
**Issue 406 | December 2023**



Front cover:  
 Jenny and Ahmed

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# WELCOME

**T**his issue marks the beginning of my third year with the Croquet Gazette. During that time I have set out to gather and report on the latest croquet tales and hopefully deliver a wide range of interesting articles, offering a little something for everyone to enjoy. We have yet another World Champion, as shown on the front cover. Thanks to the powers of livestreaming, many of us got the chance to watch the Over 50 Golf Croquet World Champion win the trophy. Huge congratulations to Ahmed El Mahdy from Egypt, and a big shout out to finalist Jenny Clarke who earned a silver medal at her first over 50s event. Although it's always important to report

on the championship events, it's equally important to look a little closer to home, at our local clubs. These are some of my personal favourite articles to read, finding out about local club activities and the members that make those clubs tick. Sharing these stories provides inspiration to other clubs and recognition to those who have shown passion and drive; reminding us that our sport continues to thrive at all levels. Please do get in touch with me if you have any requests for specific articles or ideas for something new for the Gazette.

**Alison Maugham**  
**Editor**  
**[editor@croquetengland.org.uk](mailto:editor@croquetengland.org.uk)**

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# HIBISCUS COLUMN

**W**hat a joy to report that the 2023 Greek AC Champion is a Hi-bisquer. Not me, but I was there to see Surbiton's Jonathan Edwards, playing off 18, edge a nail biter against Pinchbeck's Ken Knock. After gruelling hours in noontday sun, only sudden death - and that essential finger of fortune - separated two doughty fighters. Greek hoops, set in soil baked through the summer, are tough for Brits to run. Even when watered into partial submission, they caught out Hi and Lo alike. Playing off 10, Ken clung onto his quartet of bisques and his nerve through repeated failures at hoop two, then created a polished four ball break to draw level as the clock wound down. Over to Jonathan: after several knife edge exchanges, he squeaked the vital hoop. Maybe that's what you learn in the Army ....

Could it have been me? No, but I did have a much better run than I expected. Playing off a bisque base, I found that ducking and diving to give opponents the chance to squander a small allocation paid dividends. Not so against those who had none: why would they need them to kick mine into touch. Thank you to Chris Roberts (Phyllis Court) and Charles Harding (Bowdon) for showing me what I shouldn't do.

The Corfu Croquet Club, the only one

in Greece, was started by Tony Blok, a solicitor who pursued his Dutch love to the island soon after the millennium. He had the funds to establish two courts next to the cricket ground to the north of Corfu Town. After a match at Hurlingham, his opponent, Kevin Carter, handicap -0.5, proposed a Greek fixture, a suggestion Tony accepted enthusiastically, with the proviso that Kevin manage it.

In 2009, circumstances dictated that Tony be absent for a while, leaving Kevin to host the annual tournaments until 2013. Thereafter Chris Roberts and Frances Coleman took up the baton in alternate years with equal success. Now that it has four courts, Corfu can host 24 players to doubles and singles championships, with days set aside for a boat trip and a GC tournament with the members, led by irrepressible expats, Rich and Karen Quilter.

The Kontokali Bay hotel is a great base, spacious and comfortable with warm sandy seas. Of several walkable off property dinner options, the closest is the best: Bruno's beachfront taverna serves fresh fish, chunky tentacles, proper chips, retsina and ouzo. What more could anyone want? Maybe Corfu Town's Casino, one of those understated continental gaming rooms with blackjack and roulette? All four of us returned richer

to varying degrees. Fingers crossed it's still in business next year. Sadly, this was the last hurrah for Kevin (forced out of croquet by injury) and his wife, Ruth. They have been a brilliant double act, him managing the croquet, her making sure that everyone, especially non-playing partners, had whatever they needed to explore and get the most out of the island.

For the uninitiated, Pinchbeck is a south Lincolnshire village with a one lawn croquet club in its founder's garden. As its 10th anniversary approaches in 2024, this labour of love punches way above its weight: several of its 20 members have low handicaps and roving mallets. If you haven't met Corfu regulars, Gordon Mills and Charles Ostler, on the UK circuit, it's only a matter of time.

Liz Taylor-Webb is a Corfu original, out on the courts from year one; her croquet cartoons have pride of place in the clubhouse. Once upon a time, this maverick Lancastrian croquista was a protégé of L.S. Lowry. At least partly in the interests of her art, Liz developed her individual style from her mentor's way with figures by sleeping on the streets of Paris. A Christmas gift or landmark gift for croquet crazies: [liztaylorwebb@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:liztaylorwebb@yahoo.co.uk); [liztaylorwebb.co.uk](http://liztaylorwebb.co.uk)

**I Minty Clinch**

## MERTON CROQUET CLUB AT BOROUGH BIG SPORTS DAY

**5**000 residents took part in Merton's first ever Big Sports Day, an event co-delivered with over 40 sporting partner organisations in the borough. Merton Croquet Club were happy to present croquet on the lawn in front of Canons House. We believe that several hundred people of all ages and abilities tried croquet for the first time.

Merton Council's leader hailed the borough's first Big Sports Day a stunning success. Councillor Ross Garrod said: "It's been an amazing day and so good to see so many people enjoy themselves and get involved in activities. It's been a stunning success. The day shows that Merton is more than ready to be London's Borough of Sport.

"This is only the start of our journey and I hope this day acts as a springboard for more people in the borough to get involved in sport and activities whatever their age and ability."

Following the Big Sports Day, Merton Croquet Club is featured on the new Borough of Sport Activity Finder website.

**I Ann Barry**



# 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



## 30 YEARS AGO

In the December 1993 Gazette (#230)

### CROQUET IN EUROPE

The inaugural European Croquet Championship was recently staged in Italy. Held from 24th to 26th September, the Championship was played at Solbiate, near Milan, and was a great success. The title was won by Stephen Mulliner (England) who beat John Evans (Wales) in the final.

Members of the Swedish Croquet Association are showing an interest in joining the WCF. The Swedes play a Nine Wicket game at present, but plans are afoot to get a WCF party together next year to tour Sweden and play some games against local clubs to demonstrate International Rules.

## 65 YEARS AGO

In the December 1958 Gazette (#37)

### THE 1958 SEASON

There has been something of an increase in team events recently which is much to the good, for it is well for all of us, on occasion, to be playing with more regard for the success of our side than for our individual satisfaction. Chief of such contests remains the County Championship, won this year by Middlesex with a team so strong that, so long as they can continue to field it, it is difficult to see how they can be deprived of the title. Indeed, they were so good that the happy notion of pitting the Champion County against the Rest of England at Eastbourne produced a particularly close and interesting contest, won by the Rest with only a little to spare.

Next Spring is expected to see the transfer

of the C.A. office from Southampton Row, where it has been the always generously treated tenant of the Baptist Union since April 1910, to the hospitable shelter of Hurlingham, which is erecting a building specially for our use. Forty-nine years is a long period for a tenancy, and an address in central London has had its advantages.

But the Council is assured that the transfer to Thames-side will not only have economic advantages for us, but will have a considerable propaganda value too, while the singularly sympathetic welcome which the authorities at Hurlingham have always extended to our Association and the game whose fortune it exists to promote, guarantees that the happiest relations will be maintained between our new landlords and ourselves in one of the loveliest spots within the London area.

## 70 YEARS AGO

In the December 1953 Gazette (#8)

### MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING ON TUESDAY, MAY 26TH 1953

Mr. Reckitt said that he had a letter from Miss A. B. Morrison of Australia on the subject of getting Croquet represented at the Olympic Games to be held at Melbourne in the winter of 1955-56. It was agreed that this matter should be on the agenda for the October meeting of the Council.

### MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15TH 1953

Olympic Games, 1956. It was agreed that it was impracticable to seek representation.

## 90 YEARS AGO

In the December 1933 Gazette (Vol XXX)

## No. 27)

### GOLF CROQUET

The Council of the C.A. approved, at a Meeting on December 14th 1933, the following rules for Golf Croquet, which will be embodied in the Laws of Croquet and Regulations for Official Tournaments and C.A. Year Book for 1934:

### LAWS OF GOLF CROQUET

The first Official laws were listed here.

The Editorial Notes contained the following:

The promised Code for Golf Croquet appears to be published also as a supplement to the Official Laws of Croquet wherever these latter are printed. It is a first, and in that sense an experimental effort, upon which the Laws Committee is, we think, to be warmly congratulated. Simplicity and brevity have been preferred to the less wise alternatives of complex verbose definition, and there is the reasonable assumption that players are acquainted with the rudimentary principles of the games which the title unites. By adopting these Rules and no other – and they ensure a most excellent game – we shall make for harmonious agreement and be setting a uniform standard for the outside world to follow.

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

Chris Williams

Croquet England Archivist

## COLCHESTER CROQUET CLUB AUGUST 2023 BBQ

We held the CCC Community BBQ and Open Day on Sunday 13th August. Funded by Colchester City Council, the session offered an opportunity for local people to meet and try out a new activity in a lovely tranquil setting.

For once this summer, the weather was perfect – dry(!) and not too hot – and around 60 members and guests ages ranging from 2 to 92 enjoyed a lively afternoon on the four lawns. At one stage all four lawns were double-banked playing both primary and secondary colours with everyone having a try. Members were on hand to offer coaching and guests commented on how simple the rules are, and how interesting the strategy is. Many people were surprised to find that croquet isn't just about hitting balls through hoops, and the realisation that you could hit your opponent's ball away from a favourable position was met with universal approval! The youngest players were Liz's grandsons – Joe and Elliott, who got their mallets swinging nicely and played some excellent shots. It would be nice to see them again soon and if anyone else has grandchildren perhaps they'd like to come along too? It's

definitely a good age to start playing!

Several visitors expressed an interest in joining and took away membership forms, resulting in eleven new members, to date. All in all, a very enjoyable afternoon, and a huge thanks to the many members who helped out – shopping, baking, cooking, welcoming guests, manning the bar, helping in the kitchen, coaching on the lawns.

Patricia Drinkwater







**A**s we look forward to our end of year festivities, we have time to review the past year. Occupying much of Council's time has been the transition of activity to Croquet England. This change reflects a modernisation effort as part of which we have also gained charitable status (Charity Number 1202444). By the time you read this, clubs will already have affiliated to Croquet England, and many of you will already be individual associates. Croquet England's first general meeting will be in March 2024, before we return to the familiar annual meeting in October. This represents the culmination of a lot of work by volunteers within our community. However, whilst Croquet England is a new organisation, much will remain the same.

We remain committed to promoting croquet, including:

- Being the National Governing Body for the sport of croquet in England.
- Operating as a not-for-profit organisation, funded through club and tournament levies, individual subscriptions, and donations.
- Running the annual tournament calendar and associated coaching programme.
- Leading the development of a

playing infrastructure.

- Providing grants, loans, and practical assistance to new and developing clubs to enhance the facilities for the playing of croquet.
- Managing a block insurance policy, covering affiliated croquet clubs for Public, Employers and Professional Indemnity.
- Publishing materials to assist players, coaches, managers, and grounds teams.
- Publishing The Croquet Gazette and maintaining the Croquet England website.

Detailed planning for the 2024 season will be well underway, with volunteers up and down the country working at croquet clubs, federations, and Croquet England to review the season past and start planning for the season ahead. If you have any ideas, or items you think you can help with, I'm sure they'll be delighted to hear from you. And finally, if you're still thinking about a new year's resolution, why not commit to visiting a new club in 2024? With over 200 croquet clubs in England, you'll find a new club near you, with new enthusiasts to meet.

**Samir Patel, Chairman of the Board of Trustees**

## CHANNEL 5 FILMING AT RAMSGATE

**A** film crew from Channel 5 TV visited Ramsgate Croquet Club in September. They came to record for a series being televised by Channel 5 later this year, or early 2024, and is basically "A day in the life of ..... (in our case croquet)"

The series will show different aspects of life in Kent. They have filmed the stonemasons at Canterbury Cathedral, Spitfires flying at Headcorn plus several other venues.

The team were at the club for most of a fairly sunny day and filmed close up and distance aspects of play and of our members enjoying themselves. There were also some short interviews with members.

At the end of September, Channel 5 televised an earlier series entitled "Norfolk & Suffolk Country & Coast". This was a similar series filmed earlier this year and can be followed on catch up by anyone interested.

**Trevor Longman, Ramsgate Croquet Club**



# SHORT CROQUET CORNER

## SEASON ROUND-UP

The 2023 Short Croquet season concluded as usual with two big events in the SC calendar, the final of the national knockout team competition and the Viking Challenge – and this time York was host to both.

Nottingham CC, last year's runners-up in the National Short Croquet Inter-Club, had the shorter route through to the 2023 final, qualifying directly through a first-round bye and a second-round 6-5 win over Blewbury. Their opponents, York, were in good heart after defeating 2022 winners Bury 9-2 and a strong Chester side 7-4.

In a hard-fought and evenly-matched day, York put in a spirited performance, including Cathie Dance prevailing against Nottingham's Tom Dewar in a nail-biting cliff-hanger, and Wendy Robertson securing a convincing 14-0 win against the Nottingham captain. However, precise, consistent and controlled croquet from the Nottingham team saw them maintaining a narrow lead for much of the day.

By close of play they had amassed seven wins to York's six, emerging as worthy National Short Croquet champions and receiving the handsome Ranelagh Cup from CA President Patricia Duke-Cox. Congratulations, Nottingham!

The York Viking Challenge, now well established as a bookend to the SC season, attracted players from several clubs across a wide geographical area.

2022 winner Richard Sanville (Ashby) defended his title with vigour, putting up a strong performance in Indian summer weather and notching up a clutch of wins, but in the end had to settle for sharing the runner-up position with Lionel Stock (Balgreen, York and Budleigh).

The laurels went to Chris Williamson (Penrith) who played with speed, ambition and determination and proved well worthy of taking home the cup.

PHOTOGRAPH: 2023 Viking Challenge winner Chris Williamson, Penrith CC

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024

Regional Short Croquet continues to develop. The North West, South West and Yorkshire, long-standing SC strongholds, are now joined by several other Federations showing growing commitment to Short Croquet. The Academy at Southwick, the Chiltern Academy, the Northern Academy and Budleigh will all be offering Short Croquet courses designed to introduce AC and GC players alike to this engaging game.

Southport and Budleigh hold well-established Federation SC events. Several other clubs including Blewbury, Hamptworth and York will be offering Fixtures Calendar events open to anyone. Short Croquet is an inclusive form of the game in which players of any handicap meet on equal terms. You will be very welcome at any, or all, of these tournaments.

## | John Harris



## CHARITY 1-BALL 2024: CHARITY NOMINATED, GET SET FOR THE HEATS

**T**he Charity 1-ball, now well established on the croquet calendar and continuing into its eighteenth season, will be played in 2024 in support of the **British Heart Foundation**.

As is the tradition, competitors fashion their attire in the house colour of the chosen charity, so it's **RED** for '24. Visibility for the charity is the aim, so the louder the costume the better! This fun day of 1-ball play (a hybrid of AC and GC, quick to play, easy to pick up, as skilful and strategic as you can make it) is well supported by clubs nationally. Each club or federation organises their heat in any format they desire, to generate qualifiers for the regional finals at Nottingham and Surbiton. But there is always room for more players, so if your club has not previously run a heat perhaps 2024 will be the year?

All details of the competition are available at [charity1ball@gmail.com](mailto:charity1ball@gmail.com). Please be in touch if you'd like to find out more and register your interest. As you plan your club calendar for next season, timetable your heat any time before either of the regional finals, 05 May at Surbiton or 11 May at Nottingham.

To date the competition has raised £71k for various charities. 41 heats were played last year, adding a magnificent £8k to that total. With your support let's keep the virtual accumulator rising higher towards £100k.





# JANE AUSTEN COMES TO BATH CROQUET

**A** little over a year ago, a film crew gained permission to close the road adjoining our croquet lawns, to film for the television series *Bridgerton*. I had heard the series had featured croquet in an episode, and whilst Pall Mall would have been the game of the day, the same equipment of mallets, hoops and balls is used. At around the same time, I had visited the Jane Austen Society exhibition, and, at some point during that visit, the seed was sown. Why hadn't our Club thought of offering a croquet experience to the friends of the Jane Austen Festival whilst they visited Bath?

I contacted the Festival Director, Georgia Delve, to discuss the possibility of creating an additional event in their already-busy calendar. We met at the Bath lawns and shared a 'cuppa' on 31st October 2022. My idea to offer a taster session, followed by a cream tea or similar, seemed to be an experience that would sit well within the Jane Austen Society activity portfolio. The next thing on my 'to do list' was to present the idea to the club committee for their approval. The suggestion was met with general enthusiasm but also apprehension. The venture would only work if we had the backing of significant numbers of members to support our visitors, both during their croquet playing experience and for the serving of the cream teas.

Following discussion, the committee 'go ahead' was given and I was off! Confirming our inclusion in the September 2023 programme with the festival administration and moving to generate a buzz around the idea within the membership. Everyone I spoke to was very "happy to help if they were available", always a difficult response when trying to confirm numbers, but as always my enthusiastic approach didn't want to register the 'doubtfuls'.

The months rolled by as correspondence went back and forth finalising details of how many days to offer (we settled on four), thereby avoiding previously booked weekly Club days, and numbers (we decided on sixteen each session) to be accommodated on four half lawns.

The initial outline planning was in place, a team formed, and at last on 27th May the booking of tickets for all events went live to Festival Friends and we waited, with trepidation, to find out how our offer would be received by Jane Austen followers across the world.

We couldn't check numbers live as the booking system was being handled by the Jane Austen Society, so the wait continued into June. However, we were delighted and, to be honest, flabbergasted to hear on 7th June that all tickets had sold, yes completely sold out, in a matter of days!

In fact, in our initial discussions I had in passing mentioned to Georgia that we could take a capacity of thirty-two players, using eight half lawns and the Society had doubled the capacity for two of our four days to cope with demand, AMAZING!!

Now the real work started. Ensuring we had enough volunteers to provide our visitors with guidance whilst on the lawns, that we had sufficient mallets, that we could support accessibility needs, how guests would be allocated to lawns, that we could meet any dietary requirements, ensuring refreshments teams were in place each day and the sourcing and purchasing of catering supplies for 200 guests. The list went on....

My idea was to have a vintage feel for the occasion so I went hunting for bone China cups, saucers and plates - the charity shops in Bath and surrounding areas were a good source for such wares. The one thing we couldn't control was the weather so we had our fingers crossed for at least four dry days in early September.

To our delight on Sunday, 12th September, our first event took place in glorious sunshine, (temperatures hitting 26°C+) with thirty-two visitors arriving, looking resplendent, dressed in Regency costume with reticules and fans in abundance. The views across our lawns were a spectacle to behold with all

enjoying the most splendid afternoon of fun croquet.

The gentlemen played with a centre swing but the ladies, once supplied with a mallet, had to consider how to take their swing. The options of hooking up their dresses to play centre stance or to play side stance with dresses flowing. Our initial instruction and continuation into games of doubles went extremely well. Hoops were run with squeals of delight and our visitors were totally enthralled with the game. The offer of having pictures taken whilst engaged in a game proved very popular, as did posing with Bath Abbey in the background.

After an hour of lawn time a bell was rung to signal the end of play and everyone retired to the Clubhouse to partake of refreshments, to further enhance the Jane Austen experience at the Bath lawns. A further three sessions followed with continued enjoyment for all who attended.

Initial concerns of whether we had overstretched ourselves and if sufficient members would support the event were completely unfounded. In fact, after the first session suggestions were flooding in that this should be an annual event for Bath CC as members had enjoyed the occasion almost as much as the Jane Austen Festival Friends.

Our intention to offer a taste of croquet and develop awareness of the game was certainly achieved. We had given almost 200 Festival Friends an introduction to croquet and many were travelling back across the world to seek out a croquet club in their own country. The enthusiasm generated for the game was encouraging and as a bonus we may have recruited a couple of new members ourselves!

As I reflect on our experience the words of Jane Austen come to mind, "I cannot fix on the hour, or the spot, or the look or the words, which laid the foundation. It is too long ago. I was in the middle before I knew that I had begun."

**I Lynne Passfield, Bath Croquet Club**





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PROUDLY BRITISH

# THE (UNOFFICIAL) HISTORY OF CROQUET: PART 4 CROQUET AND COMMUNISM

In pre-communist Romanov Russia, only the Tsar, nobles and the professional classes played croquet, which collectively amounted to only 2% of society. The remaining population was dominated by the peasant class and so croquet was considered bourgeois by the incoming Bolsheviks.

It is therefore surprising that croquet was a favourite pastime of post-revolutionary communist leaders. Lenin is known to have been an excellent croquet player, as was Stalin, who actively promoted the sport. However, croquet was established as a proletariat pastime as early as 1917, when the Communist Croquet Club of the People (СССР) was established, featuring as its symbol the mallet, hoop and ball motif that appeared on propaganda posters such as the one shown, with the caption Croquet For All. The motif appears to have been the inspiration for the iconic hammer and sickle symbol that became widely copied by communist regimes following its adoption in Russia, but the role of croquet in establishing the most recognisable symbol of communism is not widely appreciated.

A notable feature of how croquet was played in communist Russia was the absence of handicapping, as everyone was considered to be equal under communist doctrine. This obviously benefitted the better players and score cards kept in the Kremlin official archive reveal that Stalin always won his games, although it is not known whether this was due to his opponents' abilities, or a desire to avoid a prolonged period in one of the Gulag camps where croquet was not on the curriculum.

It is therefore not so surprising that croquet was also a favourite pastime of Chairman Mao, who similarly promoted the game, as can be seen from the 1967 poster shown, which features the mallet, hoop and ball symbol adopted by the organisation of Communist Peoples Croquet (CPC) and the caption Croquet For All. However, communist China did not suffer from the same contradiction whereby croquet could be seen as an elitist sport, as there is no record of it having been played by the emperors. The terms used were similar to their Western equivalent, except that during the four years of The Great Leap Forward, jump shots were renamed leap shots.

In fact, playing croquet quickly became an important aspect of diplomacy in China, whereby matches were played at the conclusion of conferences attended by foreign dignitaries, the most famous being the games played between Chairman Mao and Ho Chi Min in 1955 (pictured) and Richard Nixon in 1972. The Nixon game was not widely reported in the Western press, as he lost 26-0.

However, one of the lesser known venues for croquet played by a communist leader is Ealing Croquet Club, when in 1961 Fidel Castro and Che Guevara attended an International Communist Party conference held at Ealing Town Hall. The only surviving record of the match is a postcard (pictured), recently discovered by the club in the local Ealing Historical Society archive.

The irony is that in England playing croquet is associated with vicarage lawns and Oxbridge quadrangles; whereas in reality it has a much more proletarian heritage, whereby Croquet For All may be a more appropriate slogan for modern-day clubs.

David Graham







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OUR CROQUET PAGE

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# LETTERS

## IMPROVING THE AC GAME

The recent article by Pete Trimmer, and the subsequent contribution from Nigel Aspinall, revive a debate which is as old as the game itself. There are no simple answers: the debate's very longevity suggests as much. It is easy to devise more difficult games, but that (history tells us) alienates the majority of players. Sports in which the rules for experts are fundamentally different from those for the average player are few and far between. Different versions of the game are also confusing for spectators – not that that seems to be a pressing concern for croquet today.

The double dead boundary proposal is an old one – indeed it was Alternative B in the Official Laws in 1913 and 1914 (Alternative A was the 'either ball' game which supplanted sequence play as 'the game' in 1920). A slightly earlier idea, of which Cyril Corbally was a leading proponent, was the four ball break barred game. There were several variants of this, but the basic idea was that (usually after the first point of a turn had been scored) one ball could no longer be roqueted. But these are just two of a wide range of ideas which have been actively promoted over the years.

These ideas fall into two broad classes: those (like the two just mentioned) which see the game as being too easy for the experts and so aim to make it more difficult; and those (like COAC) which recognise that the real issue is the lack of interaction between the players. In tennis, for example, every stroke is an interaction between the players; in top-level croquet, perhaps three or four in a game of several hundred strokes. So marked is this lack of interactivity, that it is sometimes difficult to tell that a game is actually in progress. I can still recall the unsettling experience of becoming aware of a cameraman following me around the court in the middle of a match at the World Championships at Carden Park.

When challenged, he said he thought I was 'just practising'.

But unlike the advanced and super-advanced variations, which directly ensure more opportunities for the out player to gain the innings, COAC – just like the double dead boundary – seems to do so only indirectly, by increasing the chances of errors by the in player. Achieving the goal indirectly seems to me to be a second-best. Why not simply play more – but shorter – games?

14-point advanced, for example, both eliminates much of the routine break play and makes triples more challenging; and would allow best of seven or best of nine in place of today's three or five.

**Ian Bond**

## ROYAL MAIL FLYER DISTRIBUTION

I recently completed a leaflet distribution, using the Royal Mail, of just under 10,500 to selected local postcodes for a non-croquet organisation to attract member volunteers, which has had some success.

If I can be of any assistance to clubs thinking of attracting new members in 2024, I will be happy to talk to them about my experience and advise on the process. It's something that requires advance planning (what with committees usually involved), so ideally January/February or earlier for the coming season.

In the first year, from members gained, you will likely cover distribution costs with subsequent year renewals being fairly clear funds for club running costs.

**Giles Pepperell**  
**Llanfairfechan and North Wales Croquet Club**

## CORNER SPOTS

In his letter published in the October Gazette, Andrew Killick of Middlesbrough invites reactions to his suggestion of corner spots. In fact I wrote to the Gazette a few years ago making the same suggestion and somebody responded saying "At Middlesbrough we love our corner spots" (it might even have been Andrew himself).

It is a mystery to me why we don't have them. In Association Football we don't see the referee pacing out 11 metres from the goal-line for a penalty kick. To suggest that this extra mark would assist shot-making is fanciful. Indeed the opposite might be the case, namely that a player could get a small advantage by putting the ball in the wrong place.

Could this just be the "Colonel Blimp" mentality (Will Carling once memorably put it less politely) of "we've never done it before so we mustn't change now"? So, fellow corner spotters, grab your whitewash and advance the cause.

**Stephen Parish**  
**Surbiton Croquet Club**



## LIVESTREAMING COMMENTARY

We all know what a wonderful game croquet is, crossing so many boundaries. And we all know it is (mercifully) an amateur sport almost entirely run by amateurs and volunteers....bless 'em all.

At an increasing number of the major events video recording equipment is deployed, backed up by verbal commentaries. A case in point was the recent Women's GC World Championship at Southwick. This was streamed at the time, I think, and is certainly still available on YouTube.

The cameras scrupulously followed the play on the chosen lawn, including of course the engrossing final. But – and here is my point – the accompanying verbal commentaries sometimes did not 'stick to the script' with commentators offering interesting but peripheral conversation.

My own pleasure as a viewer/listener rests very largely on the expert comments relating to the game in front of my eyes. 'What options has the next player?'; 'Why did they choose that one?'; 'What happens now that someone has played the wrong ball?'; and so on.

There can be a serious element of 'informal coaching' here which is important and valuable for we lesser brethren. In addition it's arguable that non-players casually surfing Youtube might be encouraged, by a focussed commentary, to consider joining us.

So, a very close association between the visual and verbal presentations is my plea. What do others think?"

**John Poole**

### **Response:**

*Thank you so much for watching the livestreaming this year, and for recognising the considerable volunteer effort that it takes to deliver the successful footage. I am delighted to announce that we have seen viewer numbers pass the 10k mark, so we must be doing something right.*

*Commentary is a skill; one with which not all of us are gifted and thus find it harder to master. I am always incredibly grateful to our team of commentators willing to offer their expertise, along with offering a light-hearted approach when the need arises. I personally feel that we as a team are delivering a balanced script of general discussions to serious sporting commentary, but as always I appreciate hearing the views of our listeners. I hope that your letter might encourage others to get in touch with us about the livestreaming, and to proffer their own views on what they would like to see and hear.*

**Alison Maugham**  
**Livestream Director**

## SCEPTICISM ABOUT GC ADVANTAGE RULES

I understand the point is to let higher and lower handicap players compete on equal terms.

We already have a practical solution in extra turns so why do we need the new Advantage Rules?

The extra turns could easily have been adapted further by applying a factor to increase or decrease the extra turns. The huge advantage of extra turns is the need to use one's playing skill in using them, rather than waste them.

The Advantage Rules simply gifts hoops to the higher handicap without any need to even swing a mallet, so there's no skill involved by the higher handicap.

Also, there's no incentive for the higher handicap player to improve their game. Surely the point of competitive sports is to incentivise playing a better game.

By comparison, anyone used to match-play on the golf course will appreciate that the handicap system allows lower and higher skilled players to compete, BUT not on the basis of gifting one or more holes in match-play before even one club is swung.

What is the algorithm that gifts hoops?

Is it up for review?

I have similar doubts about the merit of "deeming" a shot. Each player has a mallet in hand, a ball at their feet, just hit it, which requires skill. Deeming a shot is such a cop-out and requires no skill and can easily prolong a stalemate.

**Ian Robertson**  
**Kenilworth Croquet Club**

### **Response:**

*Ian, you are not alone in disliking Advantage - see David Haddrell's letter in the April Gazette and Martin French's in the June issue; other people are delighted to get rid of the complication of extra turns.*

*Advantage is still new and I will be proposing to the GC Rules Committee that we should review it, now we are at the end of the season. In advance of that I don't think I can add to my letter in the April issue in response to David's.*

*Of course, Advantage is in the GC Rules, which are the property of the WCF rather than the CA, and it will remain up to Tournament Managers and League Organisers to decide whether they wish to play under the Advantage Rule or the Handicap Rule with extra turns.*

**Ian Cobbold**  
**Chair of GC Rules**

# OBITUARIES

## ALFRED SAWBRIDGE

15.08.52 - 20.10.23

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Alfred Sawbridge. Alfred was a valued member of Stony Stratford Croquet Club for many years. Right from the start he wanted to get involved with helping the club improve. He became an integral part of the committee and was responsible for the lawns and upkeep of the grounds. In the early days, when money and membership were in short supply, he was the go-to person who could fix a problem or know someone who could. Alfred also took an active part in league matches and in helping new recruits learn the game. Outside croquet he enjoyed bridge and classical music. Unfortunately due to ill health over the last few years he was unable to play. The club decided to give him Honorary Membership in May 2021 for his long service. He will be sadly missed.



## PAT OXLEY 1936 - 2023

Our Club recently lost an important member when Patrick Oxley sadly died while on a long cycle ride, accompanied by his wife Judith and one of his three sons.

Pat grew up in war-torn North London, having many adventures with his two brothers and being exposed to serious garden croquet on his grandfather's lawn. He developed a passion for the sea, carrying out his national service on MTBs and joining the Merchant Navy. Subsequently working in the construction industry, he maintained a keen interest in canoeing, sailing and narrow-boating, living on the canals for a period and becoming a well-respected watersports professional.

This watersports career brought him, Judith and their yacht to live in Poole in 2000. This enabled him to continue his keen interest in Bridge and to rekindle his childhood involvement with Garden Croquet by joining East Dorset Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (EDLTCC) – known to many as Parkstone – where he fairly quickly became Chairman of the Bridge Section, started running bridge courses for beginners and soon earned a place in some of our successful croquet teams. His watersports coaching experience led to him becoming an excellent croquet coach and he soon became Chairman of the Croquet Committee. Later on, he became the Croquet Grounds Officer, helping organise many court improvement projects and being called upon whenever questions arose about the Club's old drainage and sewerage systems.

He was particularly interested in inclusivity – believing that as many croquet members as possible should learn to play both AC (his original strength) and that “new” variant, GC. He even proposed that croquet and tennis should have a single



membership category, to encourage more tennis players to take up croquet and to enhance cooperation between the sections. He was a hard-working and reliable club member, always heavily involved in occasions such as our community fireworks event. Pat will be sadly missed by his many croquet friends, all those he taught and coached over the years, and those of us who enjoyed his company on and off the croquet courts.

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# CROQUET CHRISTMAS CAPTION CONTEST

**D**avid Stranton is a Croquet Cartoonist who has kindly shared his latest work with us. As a little Christmas treat he has also agreed that we, the Croquet Community, could suggest a caption for his latest work.

Please submit your captions and the favourites will be published in the New Year within the Croquet Newsletter. If you do not receive the monthly e-mail newsletter but you would like to, please email: [communications@croquet.org.uk](mailto:communications@croquet.org.uk) and request to be added to the mailing list.



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## EXCELLENT PROGRESS TOWARDS CROQUET IN FARNHAM

**F**ormed late last year with the aim of bringing croquet to Farnham in Surrey, Farnham Croquet Club has made great strides and has now identified a site. The Club is in final negotiations with a local Social Club to share a lawn with its bowls section and, if all goes well, croquet will start in Farnham next April.

The lawn is in a beautiful part of the town in a river valley and is large enough for both Association Croquet and Golf Croquet. Farnham is a very active sporting town but has always lacked a Croquet Club. There are 55,000 residents in the two Farnham postcodes, GU9 and GU10. A large potential membership. Just a few months after setting up its website and before it even had a site, FCqC has had a tremendous response with nearly fifty Farnhamites registering their interest in playing. Once the site is confirmed, the Club will begin local marketing and recruit membership in earnest. Anybody wishing to play croquet in Farnham in 2024 should sign up now as there is likely to be big demand.

The Club is keen to attract families and younger members and members of all abilities. As well as a discounted Family Membership, there will also be an innovative “3Gen” Membership whereby three generations – grandparents, a son or daughter plus their partner and their children can all join and play together

under a single membership. Children will soon be trouncing their parents and grandparents at croquet in Farnham!

Website: <https://croquet-websites.org.uk/farnham/>

**| Andy Walker**



## NORTH LONDON DERBY

**F**inchley Victoria won the first North London Croquet Derby, held at Enfield Croquet Club, in what we hope will become an annual event. The impetus for the event was the landmark of Enfield's 30th Anniversary, for which the club has been celebrating with a series of events, from a masterclass with Robert Fulford, to a seaside visit to Compton. This year also saw the introduction of croquet to what is now Barnet Bowls and Croquet Club, bringing the number of clubs in the north of London to four.

Those four clubs – Barnet, Enfield, Finchley Victoria, and Hampstead Heath – scarcely meet one another in competition, and filled with a desire to get to know one another better, we convened on Monday 11th of September for a four-way friendly tournament, with each club facing all others in a series of shortened matches. Throughout, there was an emphasis on fun, and of building relationships between our clubs. The match between Enfield and Hampstead Heath was played as two AC and two GC games; all other matches consisted of six GC games, with a flexible mixture of singles, doubles, and single-vs-pair games, depending on availability of players.

This was the Barnet players' first time playing away from their club, and they took to the day with great gusto, beating Hampstead Heath in the first round 5-1. Despite being timed to an hour, only one GC game went to time, a highly competitive 3-2 win for Barnet, helping them to a 3-3 draw with Enfield. In the deciding round, Finchley Victoria, having drawn 3-3 with both Enfield and Hampstead Heath, swept Barnet aside 5-0, with the final game unplayed, as the day was near spent. That match win secured the overall victory and bragging rights, for this year at least.

The final games on the lawn were the two AC games between Enfield and Hampstead Heath, both sides agreeing not to stick to the original time limit, and outlasting even the managers. The results would determine the runners-up, with both teams needing two wins from two to finish second in the table. As it was, the games were shared one apiece, handing Barnet second place, with Hampstead Heath finishing third, and the hosts in fourth.



Thanks to everyone who attended and contributed to the occasion, in particular Frances Broadway, who took on the lion's share of the management at short notice. Congratulations too to Enfield's Clay Charles and Barnet's Jill Turner for each winning all three of the games they played in their first competitive outings, and many congratulations to the victorious Finchley Victoria team of Peter Marsh, Danny Cash, Simon Brown, Nick Williams, and Lindsay Redman.

One of Enfield's members said during the day “Seeing so many people here, the club looks like a real community”. So it did, and we hope very much that we will be able to repeat this enjoyable friendly tournament in years to come.



## BURY CROQUET ON TOUR - MALTA

**T**en Bury Club members spent five days in Malta, from 10th to 15th September, as guests of Malta Croquet Club. A long-awaited trip that had had to be postponed due to the pandemic.

The Malta Croquet Club is based at the magnificent Marsa Sports Club, which is also home to The Royal Malta Golf Club, Malta Cricket Club and a number of other sports clubs. It has excellent facilities, bar, restaurant and lovely outdoor swimming pool and spa. We were honoured that the Sports Club Chairman, Mr Godwin Borg, took the time to come down to the lawns to welcome us and watch some games on both days of our visit. The croquet club has two full lawns that are situated on the perimeter of the cricket grounds and the members play twice weekly, usually in the mornings.

On Monday morning we joined them at the lawns for informal friendly "acclimatisation" games to get used to both the lawns - and the heat! 31 DEGREES!!! Needless to say, some of the Bury squad were delighted to take advantage of the fabulous pool facilities!

We returned for more croquet on Wednesday morning. Following an exchange of a flag and pennant, an informal doubles competition took place. Again, because of the heat, we played games of only 9 hoops - first to 5. It was organised by club vice-

chairman and club founder Douglas McQueen. Whilst the Bury squad performed well in the heat and on unfamiliar lawns, the home side won by 3 games. However, a number of games were taken to the ninth hoop. On conclusion of play the Malta Club members kindly hosted a very pleasant and relaxing lunch in the sports club restaurant. Other days were spent sightseeing, mainly the south part of the island, and, of course, sampling the local cuisine. This was a wonderfully well-organised trip with great hosts, lovely friendly people who made us most welcome, much fun and laughter, enjoyable games of croquet and, most importantly, new friendships forged. Thank you, Malta Croquet Club!

**I Roy Spencer, Chairman, Bury Croquet Club**



## FRINTON ON SEA CROQUET - WOMEN'S CROQUET WEEKEND 7-8TH OCTOBER 2023

**T**he Frinton-on-Sea Croquet Club just hosted its first Women's Croquet Tournament at the Frinton-on-Sea Lawn Tennis Club (it's home turf).

Not one, but 3 of the country's top women players came from across the country to support the event at the weekend & provide advice. A Q&A and demonstration match on Sunday was followed by lunch in the club house & medals presented by the FOSILTA Club Chairman James Max.

There were 10 ladies competing in all, making 5 pairs, & the winning partnership was Samantha Flaherty & Margaret Kenny with an outstanding victory.

We were incredibly lucky to have Alison Maugham, Gabrielle Higgins & Annabel McDiarmid give up their free time to be with us. Their enthusiasm for the sport is infectious & we were left feeling excited & inspired for the future of croquet & the club. Club Chairman James Max commented "it was so lovely to welcome three of the nation's finest women croquet players to our club. Having only recently established croquet after an absence of 30 years, it's exciting to see such strong support and participation too. This is a game that anyone can play, it's fun and very often competitive too."

We were also joined by fellow croquet players from Colchester & members of the Frinton Tennis Club, who all took in the benefit of learning from the professionals & getting to know other local croquet players.

**I Samantha Flaherty**



## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION 2023

**T**he Meeting took place via Zoom on Saturday 7 October 2023, commencing at 10 a.m. The President, the four Executive Officers of the Association (Samir Patel; Beatrice McGlen; John Reddish and Ian Burrige) and 56 other members attended.

The President opened the meeting with a welcome to the 4th online AGM, noting that more members attend such meetings

than those previously held at a London venue. In the light of some comments about the importance of "grassroots" croquet and the contributions made by GC players, Patricia emphasised that the CA is there for all members, playing both codes, and at all levels.

The full minutes of the last AGM of the Croquet Association are available to all members on the website: [www.croquet.org.uk](http://www.croquet.org.uk)

# THE WINE CUP, AUSTRIA

**H**einz was the marvellous co-ordinator, accommodation organiser, social secretary, tour guide and tournament manager, with Martin acting as his second. Bettina was the delightful provider of lifts, breakfast, snacks, lunch and water as well as being tour guide and avid photographer - she must have done a week's worth of steps each day!

**Event:** The Wine Cup. 10th anniversary; advanced AC; 10 players: -1.5 to 4: 2 blocks.

**Location:** Wolkersdorf (just outside Vienna). Small, sprawling town, one hotel and a stream.

**Club:** two fabulous lawns; pretty little clubhouse next to large sports facility; quiet, peaceful, tranquil; no sound of cars; no sound of planes; and a stream.

**How to get there:** 30 mins train from airport to Vienna; 30 mins train to Wolkersdorf; 15 minute stroll from hotel along stream to club (or grab a lift).

**Entertainment:** Wine Houses (Heurige); Wolkersdorf Castle; fabulous local food, flowing wine...and bier; day trip into Vienna with insider knowledge sightseeing.

**Participants:** players from 6 countries: Austria – Heinz Hackl and Martin Guntner; Czech – David Hajn and Otakar Stankus; Wales – Rick Harding; Scotland – Chris Martin; Switzerland – Peter Payne; England – Richard Way, Richard Peperell and Annabel McDiarmid.

Heinz had been working on the quality of the lawns, and boy did it show. A slight breeze and 24°C on day one, 28°C on day two, really sped the lawns up, and with Martin's solid and tight hoop setting this made for challenging conditions.

Rick Harding had been placed as third seed, but he came through strongly on day one, with a triple in each of his first two games, winning his third, and by the afternoon of day 2 had secured his place in the semi-finals against Chris Martin, who himself had played steadily in his own block, winning all four of his games. Otakar beat fellow Czech David, finishing the last three hoops and peg in his final turn, showing no nerves, which brought him to the semi-finals against Annabel.

The semi-finals were best of 3, and Rick beat Chris in 2 games. Annabel took the first game in her match with a tpo, however, Otakar, playing very steadily, took a tidy game off Annabel in the

2nd. Annabel succeeded in the third and came through to meet Rick in the final.

The final was fought over. Annabel took the first, giving Rick little opportunity. Rick fought back, and took the second with a tpo.

The third was better played by both – a very tight game, with Annabel victorious by 2 points.

The plate was won by David (final against Richard Peperell), having only lost two games in the whole event.

Thanks go to Heinz, Bettina and the club for a fabulous event, and it was great to be there particularly on this occasion, as the club was celebrating 20 years of existence, and its 10th year of The Wine Cup. To celebrate, Bettina brought her home-made scrummy walnut schnapps - PHOTOGRAPH Chris Martin (not in photo): All reaching to grab our glass of deliciousness!

## I Annabel J McDiarmid



# ALL ENGLAND AC H/C FINALS CHESTER, 16-17 SEPTEMBER 2023

**A**nne Alvey from Bury Croquet Club is the 2023 CA All England AC H/C Champion in this its centennial year, joining a select group of women who have won this competition. Anne narrowly beat Gareth Hobby from Caversham Croquet Club based on their head-to-head result when Anne won 13-10 on time, both having won four of their five games. At the end of the weekend both saw their handicaps automatically reduced to 11 and 12 respectively, and additionally Gareth qualified for the CA Bronze award following his exploits in a 4th round tie.

Eight qualifiers travelled to Chester to compete in these finals where their handicaps ranged from -0.5 to 20, although six of those handicaps were 12 and above. This meant that over the weekend Bryan Harral (Wrest Park) and Simon Tuke (Ealing) faced an astonishing 141.5 bisques between them, and both still managed to win 2 of their 5 games although it was suggested that these bisques represented a serious trip hazard for spectators.

All games were played to base 10 and time limited to a challenging 2.5 hours to ensure that failing light would not be an issue and a timely close to the first day's play would be achieved. To that end the matter of time passing was a consistent discussion topic between opponents, and led also to some dramatic examples of speed croquet. For example, with under 10 minutes on the clock Simon Tuke who had at that point managed to run but one hoop took his front ball to Penult, and in his time extension turn, his second ball round to peg for a thrilling win over Clive Moncrieff (Glamorgan).

The most complete game of the weekend saw Bryan Harral hit in on the 3rd turn and take the ball to Rover setting a challenging leave, where upon Gareth Hobby using his bisques wisely took the 4th turn ball also to Rover with a similarly wide leave. Bryan narrowly missed the long hit in, and Gareth proceeded to finish on the 6th turn including his first ever Rover peel. The audience was impressed.

At the end of day one Anne Alvey led with 3 wins out of 3 but

...continued on next page



the rest of the field were close on her tail allowing them to enjoyed their Saturday night on the town in Chester mingling with the refreshed spectators from a Chester Races weekend. All seemingly survived the experience.

Sunday saw better weather but in her 4th round tie Anne lost to Sean Doherty (Ealing), and with the other results meant that the Manager's nightmare was fast becoming a reality with a potential six-way 3-wins-each tie beckoning. This seriously affected his enjoyment of the splendid lunch on offer.

And so the 5th and final round got underway. Patricia Mulcahy (Phyllis Court) won a hard fought game against Clive Moncrieff to claim her third win, as did Sean Doherty against Bryan Herral. However the key games were playing on adjacent lawns.

Here, Bernie Phillips (Guildford and Godalming) and Gareth Hobby quickly and not so successfully used their bisques and fell back to something akin to a dog-fight which Gareth narrowly won. And so the 6-way tie was averted with Gareth moving into the overall lead with 4 wins, and awaiting the outcome of Anne's game against Simon.

Anne had seemingly held her nerve and used bisques wisely and, with great determination, moved to Peg and Rover with time running out. But again the speed croquet of Simon came bubbling to the fore as he raced his first ball to the Peg but chose not to peg out Anne's ball. He quickly gained the innings and looked certain to win as he progressed a 4-ball break effortlessly to 2-Back where he inexplicably missed the short roquet on his reception ball. And time was called...

Anne overcame her nerves to hit in but, in trying to clear her opponents balls away, contrived to miss a short roquet towards

Simon's 3-Back ball and defeat loomed large... but Simon missed and the 2023 All England H/C champion was crowned. For her efforts Anne now holds the splendid trophy for the year and Bury CC a beautiful shield presented to the CA by the New Zealand Croquet Council in 1956 for the Club of the current champion.

### Robin Tasker, Tournament Manager Chester



PHOTOGRAPH Left to right: Sean Doherty, Simon Tuke, Gareth Hobby, Bernie Phillips, Anne Alvey, Bryan Herral, Patricia Mulcahy, Clive Moncrieff

## SOUTH OF ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

**G**loomy weather, forecast earlier in the week, failed to materialise and the weekend of 22-24 September provided pleasant autumn sunshine throughout. There were no new faces this year which led me to sum the numbers of previous appearances of the 18 players: 186 with David Maugham well ahead of the field at 25, almost twice that of anyone else! In addition, the four former champions present could boast 13 titles between them. Recent heavy rain had left the ground relatively soft and even freshly located hoops did not present as big a challenge as one might wish: 15 players achieved peeling finishes. Regular spectator Keith Aiton was there casting his expert eye over the action.

David Maugham began his campaign in fine style – four triples to win his first two matches without conceding a single point, only to fall to a fluent Mark Avery in a semi-final. All but one of the second-round matches were decided in straight games with Tim Wilkins and Andy Myers defeating seeds Robin Brown and David Goacher respectively. Thereafter results followed the seeding with one quarter-final being a rerun of the final of the 2023 Women's World Championship, this time won by Gabrielle Higgins in straight games. The final was contested by England's two most successful players from the 2022 MacRobertson Shield test matches, Jamie Burch and Mark Avery. Hoops reset to 1/32 of an inch or less still did not seem to give the finalists much trouble. Mark took the first +26tp in the 7th turn. In the second Jamie was first to 4-back, then Mark, having hit and stuck in hoop 1, subsequently continued to 1-back, attempted a crosswire of the opponents at hoop 1 and retired to corner 3. Jamie promptly hit partner and finished +20tp. In the decider Mark did not take croquet and Jamie finished with a turn 6 triple. Remarkably this was Jamie's first tournament since he broke his wrist in April – class indeed! This, his third consecutive win, brings Jamie to 6 wins in total edging ahead of David Maugham and Stephen Mulliner who each have 5.

In the plate, following two days of progressive Swiss, four

players qualified for the last three places of the 8-player knockout on the Sunday. Elimination was decided by seeing who could make most hoops, starting at hoop 4, in a 2-ball break starting in corner 4 while the others in contention remained in the clubhouse, out of sight of the lawn. Robin impressed by scoring 9 hoops and the peg well ahead of Debbie and Ian Lines who scraped in just ahead of Craig Oakley. From then on, the Lineses swept all before them. In her semi-final against Robin, Debbie had one ball pegged out (QPO by Robin) but came back to win by 3 and thereby meet Ian in the final. This proved to be a close game of fluctuating fortunes in which Ian was pegged out when his other clip was on rover. He then suffered several millimetric misses in his long shots allowing Debbie to prevail +2.

Jamie Burch completed triples in all the games he won and took the peeling prize. See [www.croquetscores](http://www.croquetscores) for detailed results of all matches. Thanks are due to John Crisford and his team for the excellence of the lawns and to Hilary Smith and Diane Clarke for lunches and teas respectively.

### Roger Wood



PHOTOGRAPHS: The Finalists: Mark Avery with Jamie Burch the winner; Debbie Lines receives the Sussex Union Cup from Hilary Smith

# THE LONGMAN CUP

**T**he Longman Cup final for 2023 culminated in last year's runners up, East Dorset and Fylde, who had not entered the competition for a number of years, reaching the final. Due to the location of the 2 teams, Edgbaston Croquet Club kindly agreed to host the final, providing excellent facilities and being perfect hosts for the day. Thanks to Esther and the team at Edgbaston for preparing the lawns, providing refreshments and lunch. Thanks to Neal Bacon for refereeing the match and provide excellent adjudication when called upon through the day.

The teams for the Longman cup consist of 4 players with lowest handicap of 3.5 for an individual player, with a total team handicap of at least 24. It's an excellent opportunity to play against teams throughout the country.

FYLDE: Andrew Webb (5), Phil Snowden (8) captain, Betty Bates (8), Barry Broughton (18)  
EAST DORSET: Chris Weedon (4.5) captain, Alan Jones (6), Mike Rice (7), Christine Rice (8)

## Morning Play

### DOUBLES

Andrew & Phil v. Chris & Alan

Andrew was in great form. After both Phil and Andrew had run hoop 1 early, Andrew made an excellent break taking his ball to rover. After a series of short breaks by each team, Fylde maintained a lead throughout the match winning +8 on time.

### SINGLES

#### Betty v Christine

Betty made the initial sizeable break, taking red from hoop 2 to penult. Christine fought her way back into the game and after an hour had closed the gap to 5 points. Christine, playing well, took the lead by one hoop. Another break by Betty took her yellow ball from hoop 2 to 4-back. Betty eventually got to rover with her red and regained a slender lead. Betty peeled yellow through penult with a pass roll and held on to win +2T

#### Barry v Mike

Barry made the early break and was +9 with his brown at 4-back. He took brown to rover and green to 2-back and was + 5 as time was called. Mike was in play and ran 5 hoops to tie the game resulting in the match going to golden hoop. Barry approached 2-back with green using white as the croqueted ball. Brown was positioned in Corner 1 and pink positioned at penult which was Mike's next hoop for white. Barry's full roll took green too far west of 2-back and so ended his turn by joining up. Despite the pressure of the golden hoop situation, Mike started his last turn making a long roquet with white, enabling him to take off to his partner ball and run penult, resulting in a win for East Dorset +1T, keeping the match very much alive.

## LUNCH Fylde 2 East Dorset 1

An excellent lunch was provided by the Edgbaston Club,

allowing all players the opportunity to socialise and gather their thoughts after the morning's play.

## Afternoon singles matches

### Andrew v Chris

Andrew continued his excellent form, again making an excellent first ball break to rover. Through some careful play he kept his opponent out of the game and soon finished winning +24 in around 90 minutes putting Fylde 3 - 1 up and taking pressure off the other Fylde team members.

### Phil v Mike

Mike continued to play well in the afternoon, hitting in well and making a number of good breaks. Phil made a couple of short breaks, struggling to build on some good hits to establish a big break. Mike held the lead throughout the game, Fylde going down -16, with East Dorset bringing the match score back to 2-3.

### Barry v Christine

Barry controlled the game, using his bisques well to construct good breaks. He made a rover peel with yellow but didn't get a rush towards peg and so was content to peg out his yellow ball. Barry decided he would shoot at Christine's blue and black and on the third attempt spectacularly roqueted black, which was in the jaws of hoop 5, with a 20-30 yard strike. Barry proceeded to peg out red to win the game +14 and secure the cup for Fylde.

### Betty v Alan

Betty made several short breaks to take the lead against Alan, continuing her recent good form, hitting in from distance and building a number of good breaks. She stayed in control through the match and secured the final game victory for Fylde +6.

## Final Match Result - FYLDE 5 EAST DORSET 2

A great day's play was had by all players, with games played in good spirit.

## Phil Snowden



# MEN'S & WOMEN'S

**W**ith a small but high-quality field, it started as is traditional with the doubles. As part of a trial this year, pairs could choose independently of their opponents whether to play alternate shot or normal doubles. Across the six pairs, one played normal all the time, three played alternate shot (ASD) throughout and the other two played alternate shot in most of their games.

At the end of the first day, three rounds had been played and

Beatrice McGlen and James Death were the only pair on 3/3 with a tp and a tpo (both ASD). After the fourth round on Thursday morning, there were four pairs clear, so the final round of the block was ignored, and the semi-finals randomly drawn. The semi-finals happened to be the unplayed block games and the first semi-final happened Thursday evening. Gabrielle Higgins and Harry Fisher had got stronger through the event, having suffered an early loss, and had a smooth triple to knockout the

...continued on next page



previously undefeated pair.

With just eleven entries in the Men's field, it was a Best of 3 knockout from the start. The pick of the first round was the early match on during round 4 of the doubles, Alain Giraud and Pete Trimmer enjoying the lack of time limits and took most of the day to play their match, Pete winning +4tp in the decider. The other first round matches were straightforward wins in the afternoon for Richard M Smith and Harry Fisher. Christian beat Ed Duckworth in an early quarter-final match.

With six entries in the Women's field a block followed by semi finals was the format chosen to give sufficient play over the four days of singles. Two rounds were played on Thursday, after the round of doubles. By lunchtime on Friday, with 2/3 of round 3 completed, the manager was starting to rue the idea of no time limits. Sophie McGlen and Lorna Dewar were looking to get lots of lawn time. That was pegged down at 2pm so that Lorna and Louise could play before the second doubles semi-final went on later. Lorna and Louise were then pegged down as well at 6pm so the doubles could go on. Sophie and Lorna went back on, and Lorna prevailed at 8pm.

The second doubles semi-final was won comfortably with a triple by Jenny Clarke & Christian Carter over Louise Bradforth & Rick Harding.

Meanwhile David Goacher had passed on the opportunity of early plate games while awaiting his opponent in the Men's and never got going against Pete Trimmer. James and Harry had straight game wins in their quarter-finals.

On to the Saturday and the Men's semi-finals started in the morning: James v Pete and Christian v Harry. Both had close error strewn first games with Pete and Harry winning the opening games. Harry then won the second comfortably against Christian but James came back and ran away with games 2&3 against Pete.

The Women's block was building up to a crescendo as to who

the last qualifier was going to be, as round 5 finished Jenny, Gabrielle & Beatrice had qualified but the pegged down game between Louise and Lorna became crucial as to who would get through. Lorna had a big lead over night and despite a fightback from Louise, Lorna finally pegged out to qualify for the semi-final.

Lorna's reward for qualifying was a semi-final against Gabrielle, while Jenny played Beatrice. Gabrielle was never in danger in hers and ran away with the win. Beatrice had chances against Jenny, but one too many errors cost her in the end.

The doubles finalists were given the choice of single game or best of 3 final and they chose the latter starting at about 3pm, with the instruction they would be playing until dark if necessary. Harry and Gabrielle won a close first game but were well behind after dusk in the second and not wanting to take a lift in the dark against 4back and peg. In the morning the lift was missed, and the match equalised shortly after. In the decider, Harry and Gabrielle made fewer errors and came away with the win. This left us with an early lunch and the singles finals to follow.

In the Du Pre final Alain beat Richard 2-0 to be the first to finish. Shortly afterwards the Men's final finished with Harry Fisher winning from game down to pick up his first Men's title. The consolation doubles had started on Sunday morning and finally finished with a +1 to Sophie McGlen and Robert Wilkinson over Lorna and John Davis, the four of them in fits of laughter throughout the game and all smiling when they finished. The final event to finish was the Women's. Jenny v Gabrielle was always likely to be a close match. Gabrielle had won their block game and took the first in the final as well. As the rain came down later in the match, Jenny was staging a resurgence and came through to win 2-1 and pick up the Women's title again. Thank you to all the players for helping keep the event nice and relaxed, hopefully more will enter and join us next year.

**I James Death**

## AC INTER-CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

ROEHAMPTON BEAT NOTTINGHAM TO WIN THE INTER-CLUB 5-2

**B**lewbury hosted the 2023 Interclub final, providing two immaculate lawns and a picturesque setting for the 7 players who arrived on Saturday morning.

Unfortunately, Joel Taylor was unable to escape his work commitments until lunchtime and so the match started with Nottingham leading 1-0.

Undeterred, Roehampton captain Tim Russell made a fast start in his singles game against Will Gee with a tidy break to 4b. With all the balls in standard peeling position at hoop 3, Tim decided to play the peel with pull to guarantee the rush south on his escape ball. This proved unwise as the peel was unsuccessful and the turn broke down shortly after. The rest of the game became very interactive with Tim pegging out almost 3 hours later.

That interactivity was nothing compared to the incompetence shown on the other lawn, where Harry Fisher and Mark van Loon, playing alternate strokes doubles, took on James Death and Omied Hallam, playing traditional doubles. All four players struggled to hit anything and made multiple mistakes. One spectator commented that it was "not what I was expecting in the interclub final" while another added "I've seen fewer errors in club handicap matches". Eventually, Harry and Mark snuck out as winners to give Roehampton a 2-1 lead at lunch.

The afternoon games were of a higher standard. James laid a supershot but didn't take croquet as Harry won 6th turn. Joel secured the winning point not long after with his own triple, having survived a few early false starts. Omied provided the Nottingham support with something to cheer about with a solid

win against Mark. Playing much better than in the morning, he completed three tidy breaks and hit the key shots. Tim played well to beat Nottingham captain John Davis resulting in a 5-2 win for Roehampton.

Many thanks to Blewbury for hosting and Peter Allen for presenting the trophy.



## 55TH CHAMPIONSHIP OF SURREY (AC)

**L**ast year's Championship of Surrey saw 14-15 second courts and rock-solid hoops, and despite a top-class field a complete lack of peeling turns, much to the delight of the grounds and hoop teams.

This year could not be more different. The heavens opened in the days before the event and overnight, but fortunately held off during the day. The consequent slower courts and easier hoops saw much faster games, other than in the top quarter of the draw where Tim Wilkins' drawn out win over Jon Diamond lead to one semi-final starting just as the other was finishing. However, David Maugham had to withdraw from that semi-final due to an injury caused by a mauling by a cat\*. That promoted Alain Giraud (pictured) to play Samir Patel, who had beaten Philip Eardley. Samir won the championship final +18tp +26tp.

The Plate was won by Joel Taylor who beat Tim Wilkins in the plate final.

\*It's more entertaining to leave the details to your imagination rather than to explain this. David has recovered.

**I Samir Patel**



## THE SIDMOUTH GC TEAM CHALLENGE

**S**uch is the popularity of this event, that as the CA tournament fixtures calendar goes live on 1st February, the Sidmouth GC Team Challenge is generally full within 30 minutes.

And that was the case again for the 2023 fixture, even though the usual May date had to be moved to September due to the delay in opening Sidmouth's newly laid courts this season.

Eight teams are formed consisting of three players, seeded within each team 1, 2 and 3. The teams compete in an 'all play all' format in a mixture of doubles and singles games to accumulate points. In the singles games, seeded players only compete against their equivalent seed in the opposition's team for 6 of the 7 rounds.

Although highly competitive, it is the camaraderie amongst the teams and players themselves that makes this such a special tournament. There are not many opportunities where players of all levels are brought together to compete as a team, and many wear team colours or specific outfits to build on that 'team spirit' ethos.

The tournament rules allow teams to play a 'joker' on a chosen game in a pre-drawn round. This means each team can 'bet' on the likely outcome of a win, which if achieved, gains them an extra 5 points - this can prove very valuable, as evidenced further on! Round 7 each day is also given over to the team captains to decide on who plays the singles and doubles game, not knowing what combination the opposition team will pick.

As the tournament began, the local Sidmouth team, aptly named 'The Sharks' (Philip Harris, Steve Pearson, and Paul Bradley) stayed true to previous form, and by the end of day one, were in joint third position with the team from Budleigh, 'Fun Boy Three'. This team consisted of Stuart M Smith, Peter Chadwick, and Adrian Coward. Playing off a newly acquired 8hcp, this was Adrian's first ever tournament.

'Archers Arrows', namely Nick Archer from Watford, alongside Stephen & Debra Hayns from Ryde, held second place with a very impressive first day performance. They were trailing by just 15pts, (equivalent to one doubles win), behind 'Hoop Dreams' - Lionel Tibble, Northampton, Liz Drury, Compton, and Niall Litton, Budleigh. However, every team at that point was still in

the running by the end of the first day.

As is customary, a meal was planned for the Saturday evening which really brings everyone together for a night out and a fun quiz. All players and attending partners came along, so the function room of a local pub played host to 35 people.

During the quiz, the 'Who Am I?' round caused some amusement when even Lionel's partner did not recognise him from a picture taken in 2010..... but then, he was playing AC and wearing cut-off trousers - so maybe she can be forgiven....!

On day two, the different combination of doubles pairings and subsequent singles games gave rise to many changes of fortune. 'Strangers on the Shore', (Peter Balchin, Glamorgan; Marilyn Robinson, Northampton; Mike Parry, Glamorgan) alongside 'The Saints', (Les Heard, Wrest Park; Steve Foster, Northampton; Martyn Palmer, Northampton) and 'Greatest Hits Now Hoopless', (Andrea Huxley, Guildford; Louise and Gavin Taylor, Surbiton), all found it rather hard going, but with many very close 6-7 scorelines.

'Archers Arrows' also dipped in form, accumulating less than half of their previous day's points. Whereas the 'Three Fivers' - Steve Leonard and Keith Southern, East Dorset; and Richard Jenkins, Hamptworth - managed to almost double their team's points on day two. 'The Sharks' remained constant in their performance, steadily gaining points. Their combined two days' scores resulted in a well-deserved overall 3rd place.

Starting just 25 points behind 'Hoop Dreams', 'Fun Boy Three' topped the points chart on day two, dropping points on just one doubles and two singles games. This closed the points gap between 'Fun Boy Three' and 'Hoop Dreams' to give either team the chance of winning.

The penultimate round between 'Hoop Dreams' and 'Archers Arrows' became very important in terms of where the two top performers, mentioned above, stood for the last round where they faced each other.

Firstly, in 'Fun Boy Three's' favour, Nick Archer from 'Archers Arrows' beat Lionel Tibble, 'Hoop Dreams', 7-4. In the doubles game, Archers Arrows' pair Stephen & Debra Hayns fought it out with Hoop Dreams' Liz Drury and Niall Litton, to the thirteenth hoop. A well-positioned green looked set for 'Archers



Arrows' to take the game, but as white played in to clear from a 40-degree angle by Niall Litton, it subsequently came off the green and sailed through the hoop. Sadly for 'Fun Boy Three,' this now meant that even a full match win in the last round would still see them trail by just 5pts behind 'Hoop Dreams'. With only really pride at stake now, the last round between 'Hoop Dreams' and 'Fun Boy Three' still produced two nail biting hoop 13 finishes. In the singles, 'Hoop Dreams' prevailed with Niall Litton's win over Peter Chadwick, cementing his team's overall victory. Meanwhile, Lionel and Liz, 'Hoop Dreams', fought hard to keep the 'Fun Boy Three' doubles pair, Stuart and Adrian, at bay. Despite a 6-5 lead, Lionel and Liz succumbed to Stuart and Adrian, 6-7. 'Fun Boy Three' achieved a very commendable second place. All the remaining 21 players, supporting partners, and spectating Sidmouth members congratulated 'Hoop Dreams', Lionel, Liz, and Niall on their combined efforts in winning the tournament. It is hoped that, once again, all participants had a fabulous weekend, and a big thank you to everyone for supporting the event.

**Louise Smith**  
Tournament Manager

**PHOTOGRAPHS**  
Ed Dolphin, Sidmouth Croquet Club

Adrian Coward and Louise Smith:  
First T



Fun Boy Three - Team Chat



Adrian Coward



Archers Arrows



Stu



Debbie and Steve Hayns



Strangers on the Shore



Hoop Dreams Winners



Niall Litton



All 2023 GC Team Challenge



## GC ALL-ENGLAND HANDICAP FINAL (ADVANTAGE GC) 2023

**F**ourteen finalists from the north (Ashby), south (Ryde), east (Maldon) and west (Glamorgan) and all points in between, assembled promptly at Ryde LTCC on a sunny September morning, unaware that this was about to become (at 33.2 degrees C) the hottest day of the year on the Isle of Wight.

For the first ever national Advantage final in the UK, players' handicaps ranged from 4 to 10 and their previous experience of Advantage (as opposed to extra strokes) was varied. Starting scores extended from the familiar 0: 0 to -1 : 2 and were clearly displayed on the scoring posts designed and made by Richard Carline (RoT), for use originally in SE league play. These posts remove the need for additional scoring clips to be attached to the centre peg and for an Advantage post.

All players and referees found this way of representing the starting scores to be a great improvement on the currently advised method.

Throughout the weekend's all-play-all 91 games, each of the four lawns was monitored by an experienced referee familiar with Advantage play, enabling the manager to concentrate on efficient running of the event. With no time limits initially in place, it became apparent that the very late finish on Saturday would necessitate a change of plan for the second day. Implementing a one hour time limit was easy to accomplish with the aid of the referees on each lawn.

In addition to time keeping and normal refereeing duties, some unexpected problems needed to be resolved. Although only four colours of metal scoring clips were provided it still proved possible for some players to arm themselves with the wrong colour at the start of the game. Occasionally there was confusion about the normal route around the hoops, never mind the Advantage extension, and the resulting penalty area restarts became the novelty of the day! There is undoubtedly a learning curve to keeping score in an Advantage game but it was noticeable that the majority of players were competent and needed little intervention.

By the end of day one Walter Hall (Maldon) was the only undefeated player with 7 wins, followed by four players on 5, Nigel Balchin (Glamorgan), Paul Green (Sussex), Jonathan Haslam (Dulwich) and Dee McKibbin (Phyllis Court). Many players found the extreme heat on Saturday to be more of a challenge than the competition itself and were relieved, and surprised, to find Sunday considerably cooler but with ever threatening showers.

Following a group photo-shoot, timed games commenced promptly at 9.30, but despite an apparent expedition of play almost a third of games during the day failed to finish within the allocated hour.

Unfinished Advantage games can be resolved quickly and fairly with the use of scoring scales (introduced in 2023) and players were made aware of the state of the game before their final 10 minutes and 8 shots.

Despite the change in weather Walter's winning streak continued uninterrupted on Sunday, and at lunchtime he was 3 wins clear of his nearest rivals Dee and Anne Dennis (Watford), making a close finish seem unlikely. The players had other ideas though and after suffering two consecutive 6 – 7 defeats, and with one round left to play, Walter found himself just one win ahead of Dee and two ahead of Nigel and Anne. By now the sunshine had returned and manager's serendipity decreed that Walter and Dee would play each other to reveal the final denouement. Suffice it to say Walter's magic touch returned with a 7 – 5 victory and Nigel, unbeaten in his final three games, swept into second place on points over Dee, with Anne finishing fourth.

### **I Roy Tillcock, Tournament Manager, Ryde**



Presentation



Advantage Scoring Posts

2023 All England Finalists





# GC ENGLISH NATIONAL SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP - THE ASCOT CUP

**T**he 2023 English National Singles Championship took place at Ramsgate Croquet Club on 16-17th September. It was a statistically strong field with 10 of the 16 players over 2200 D/Grade and the average D/Grade calculated at 2220.

The four block top seeds stood proud of this mark, Stephen Mulliner (2532), Euan Burrridge (2414), Jack Good (2406), and Stuart M. Smith (2373). The format as usual was all best-of-three matches in the blocks for Day one, followed by the Quarter, Semi, and main Final following suit. The only difference within the ENSC to other championship tournaments is that after the block play the knock-out rounds follow the Modified Grade Based Seeding methodology.

Blocks A and B were textbook finishes, Stephen Mulliner took top spot in A, followed by 2nd seed, Dom Aarvold; Euan Burrridge topped block B, followed by 2nd seed Ian Burrridge. Stuart M. Smith never dropped a game in Block D keeping to his top ranking, and was subsequently joined by the 3rd seed, Andy Hobbs, with progression into the knock-out Quarter finals. Andy fought two close games against Richard Bilton, finally gaining the match win by the narrowest of margins, 7/6, 7/6. Block C was very different. Three of the four players achieved 2 match wins. It was Tobi Savage (2nd block seed) that just pipped Jack Good (1st block seed) to the top spot by one net game, and Steve Leonard just missed out on qualifying also on net game difference.

The cooler and windy start to Sunday bought a change to the proceedings with Stuart M. Smith losing to Jack Good 2/0. Stephen Mulliner and Tobi Savage both executed straight forward wins over Andy Hobbs and Ian Burrridge respectively. Euan Burrridge and Dom Aarvold seemed to counter each other very effectively in their first two games, 7/3 to Dom, 7/2 to Euan - with the decider a much tighter affair. With better performances in game 3 from both players, it was some strong decisive play by Euan that pushed him ahead to a 7/5 score, and subsequent match victory.

Both Semi-Final matches featured excellent play from all competitors. Tobi Savage took the first game from Stephen Mulliner 7/5, but in true Mulliner style – by which I mean completely unfazed at being 0/1 down – Stephen calmly played on to win the next two games 7/4 and 7/6 for his place in the English National Singles Championship Final.

Euan and Jack gave us some literally 'end to end' croquet with both games ending at the 13th hoop. This extremely competitive and entertaining match ended 7/6, 7/6 to Euan.

Meanwhile, I'm delighted to report there was full participation in the Shield event which was played as 19pt games. Again, games in the Shield were closely fought, with all scores reaching 8 or 9 / 10. The Shield Final featured Stuart M. Smith v Andy Hobbs, played very much in the spirit of competitive friendly play, with Stuart just pipping Andy 10/9 on the last hoop. The Plate Blocks were also completed in full, resulting in a Lionel Tibble v Steve Leonard Final. A special element to this years' tournament was the donation by Andrea Widdison of the 'David Widdison Memorial Trophy' for the Plate consolation prize.

David was a regular player on the GC circuit during the 2014-20 period. He rose quickly up the ranks, winning a number of GC tournaments including the Northampton Open (2016); the Pendle Open (2016 & 2019); the Bury Open (2016); the GC Second Eight (2016); and the Austrian Open (2019).

His final tournament was the ENSC Final in September 2020, in which he won the Plate - it is therefore fitting that his name is now associated with this event. It was also felt by all that David would have been quite chuffed that the trophy bearing his name

was presented for the first time to his good friend, Lionel Tibble. The competitors of the main Championship Final, Stephen Mulliner and Euan Burrridge, had already crossed swords twice this season. In June, again at Ramsgate, Euan beat Stephen in the consolation match 2/0, a result repeated at the GC First Eight held at Colchester.

So, the stage was set for this to be an interesting match, and a number of players and Ramsgate members gathered to watch. Stephen made short work of game one, resulting in a 7/3 win. Game two was much closer, in which the upper hand pivoted between both players. From 5 all, Stephen took the lead scoring hoop 11. Euan responded playing tactically at 12 to gain advantage for 13, but an attempt at jawing resulted in the unfortunate finish of his ball running through the hoop by an inch, leaving no shot at 13. Stephen's first ball then took position at 13, leaving Euan no option but to fire with his only ball that could see Stephen in front of the hoop. This shot missed by the narrowest of margins leaving Stephen with a straightforward hoop run which gave him the match and Championship title.

It has been a year to remember for Stephen Mulliner. In addition to celebrating his 70th birthday, Stephen has won three of our major domestic croquet titles - The GC First Eights, The Presidents Cup (AC), and the GC English National Singles Championship (Ascot Cup).

Stephen remains as one of the top croquet players in the World and turns out one exceptional performance after another. He's a true gentleman of the sport, an ambassador for croquet, and I'm sure everyone reading this article will send their warmest congratulations to Stephen for his remarkable achievements.

**Louise Smith**



Stephen Mulliner receives  
The Ascot Cup 2023



Euan Burrridge jump shot



Lionel Tibble receives the  
David Widdison Plate



Tobi Savage jump shot

# GC ENGLISH NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP

**T**he National Doubles took a break from being held at Budleigh and moved to Nottingham this year. There was also a change in players, as well as some new pairings, including the top two seeds Jack Good & Will Gee and Jenny Clarke & Richard Bilton.

The tournament was just shy of a full entry, so wasn't able to have the usual 2 blocks of 8 on the first day. Instead, all the pairs were seeded in one block and played 7 pre-determined matches, with the top 8 progressing to the knockout.

All matches were single-banked, but, despite this, the match between Burridge & Johnson and Gee & Burridge took twice as long as the other games in round 2, so they both skipped their next matches and went straight to round 4.

Roderick & Chris Sheen played well and won 5 of their matches to finish fourth. Jack Wicks & Albie Willett came fifth and Nick Archer & Jason Carley sixth, both on four wins. Clarke and Bilton sneaked through in joint seventh, having beaten the as-yet undefeated Gee & Burridge in the last round. This also moved the latter down to third, with Savage & Macphee finishing second. Good & Gee were unbeaten after day one.

The next morning, a coin toss was used to decide that Clarke & Bilton finished eighth, and Richard & Ivor Brand came seventh, as both pairs had equal wins and net points.

In the quarter-finals, Clarke & Bilton put up a good fight against Good & Gee, but the latter hit the better shots throughout and secured the win. Archer & Carley played well to beat Gee & Burridge in two games, both at hoop 13. Wicks & Willett won at the deciding hoop in the third game against the Sheens. Savage & Macphee beat the Brands, but not without adding time to the tournament by losing the first game.

Good & Gee continued their unbeaten run into the semi-final and demolished Wicks & Willett 7-0 in game 2. Savage & Macphee had another marathon against Archer & Carley, with the first two games going to hoop 13, but lost the third 7-3.

With the manager hoping that the final would be only 2 games, and possibly the players to start with, it started to rain. Good & Gee took the first game. There was a close start to game 2, but with the light starting to fade (due to cloud cover), Archer & Carley began to lose their accuracy and allowed themselves to fall behind. Good & Gee won the match 7-5, 7-3. This was the

third GC tournament that Jack had played in July, and he'd only lost one game.

In the Shield, Clarke & Bilton got their revenge on the Sheens 7-4, having narrowly lost to them in the block 7-6, while the Brands had a bye to the final. The break probably did them good, as they won the first game. Clarke & Bilton dug in and levelled the match, but lost all their momentum in game 3, and the Brands won the Shield 7-4, 5-7, 7-2.

The plate was played as a single block. No pair won all of their games, and everyone won at least one game. Chris Roberts & Frances Colman, Arthur & Judith Rowe and Samir & Edward Patel all finished with 2 wins out of 5. John Taylor & Kevin Connolly won the Plate with 3 out of 5 wins.

## Richard Bilton



## CAIRO OPEN & ENGLAND V EGYPT TEST MATCH

**T**his year, the CA provided partial funding for 5 players to compete in the Egyptian Open and then play a 2-day Test Match against Egypt. Aston Wade (Capt.), Euan Burridge, Jamie Burch, Richard Bilton and Stu Smith made up the England team.

The event was held at three venues, Federation, which has three nice lawns running about 9.5 seconds, Gezira, a 5 minute walk away with three somewhat bumpy lawns running around 7 seconds, and Shooting Club, about a 10 minute drive away with 2 nice lawns running about 10 seconds. It is a lovely place to play croquet, with fabulous weather, friendly locals, plenty of restaurants nearby serving low-priced food and drink, and most importantly some of the highest quality croquet you will ever experience. For anyone who can hit the ball hard, it should be somewhere you aspire to play – it is to GC what St. Andrews is to golf.

With 64 players from around the world competing, the Egyptian Open had a limited amount of play with just two or three 19-point games each day over the first 3 days of block play. Aston and Euan just made the knockout in 4th place in their

blocks, whilst Richard came 3rd and Stu was unlucky to go out on nett hoops despite beating Hamy Erian. Jamie won his block with a particularly impressive 10-4 win against Moe Kareem, fresh from victory in Spain.

With some long waits between games, most players were able to take a trip to the pyramids or visit the museum, a bazaar or just walk around experiencing the buzz of Cairo. Team trips such as this help establish bonds of friendship that last years. In the first round of the main knockout, Richard lost 7-2, 7-5 to Hamy Erian, Aston lost by the same score to Mostafa Nezar, whilst Euan beat Jamie 7-3, 2-7, 7-4, only to lose to USA Mac player Stephen Morgan 7-6, 4-7, 5-7 in round 2.

With everyone other than Euan qualifying for the Plate, Richard reached the semi-final where he lost 10-9 to Saif El Yamany, whilst Aston kept the flag flying beating Saif 7-5, 7-0 in the final – a fine performance. All the team had experienced some form of illness over the six days of the event and all produced some strong performances at times.

The final of the main event saw one of the best matches I have ever seen, where Mohamed Taha beat Mohamed Nasr 7-6, 6-7,

...continued on page 28



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**WINNER**  
**10 YEARS**  
IN A ROW!



...continued from page 26

7-6, jumping hoop 13 in the decider from the boundary. A great match with a great atmosphere. Simply watching players play to this standard live, in front of a big crowd, will have been a positive experience for our players.

The Test Match started the day after the Egyptian Open and comprised 7 doubles and 10 singles. Egypt had selected a very strong side comprising Yasser Sayed, Mohamed Nasr, Mohamed Taha, Amr Alebiary and Khaled Kamal. England got off to a really good start, winning 3 doubles matches to at one stage be 3-3. Jamie and Euan beat Yasser and Khaled 2-7, 7-4, 7-2, Jamie and Aston beat Taha and Alebiary 7-5, 3-7, 7-6 and Aston and Stu beat Taha and Kamal 7-6, 3-7, 7-5.

However, when the singles started, it soon became clear, for those that didn't know beforehand, that Egypt were the dominant team. Yasser blew Jamie off the lawn 7-2, 7-0, whilst Euan was crunched up 7-2, 7-3 by Mohamed Nasr – both fabulous performances from the Egyptians. There were

many more such performances and Stu was the only player to secure an England singles win, beating Kamal 4-7, 7-3, 7-4. The final score of Egypt 13, England 4 was a fair reflection of each team's performance. It should be a positive experience for our players, with the opportunity to try out new doubles partnerships against strong opposition, and see the physical level of performance needed to compete against top Egyptians in Cairo. Just as things are different for the Egyptians when they play away in wind, rain, cold and Quadway hoops, the English players had to get used to heat, slow lawns, illness and Egyptian hoops. They will emerge from the experience as better croquet players.

Many thanks to the Egyptian Federation and their President Mohamed Raslan for their hospitality, kindness and friendship. We hope to host an England v Egypt test in the next 3 years.

**| Chris Clarke, Spectator**





# 2023 WCF OVER 50S GOLF CROQUET WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

**T**he 2023 WCF Over 50s World Championship was held in Bunbury, Western Australia, from 14-21 October, at the Moorabinda Croquet Club, with additional courts provided by the Bunbury Tennis Club (BTC).

## QUALIFYING EVENTS:

Two qualifiers took place in East and West Australia, on 26-28 September at Cairnlea, Victoria, and 9-11 October in Cambridge, WA.

Only four entrants contested the Eastern qualifier, with Penny Morrison-McGill and John Carr qualifying for the main event. The Western qualifier attracted 12 entrants; strong performances from Jeff Newcombe and Torben Bak saw them through comfortably, closely followed by Paul Christmass, with the additional three places taken by Brian Scott, Basil Ladyman and Kim Reynolds; a late withdrawal enabled Ellie Griffith (USA) also to qualify.

## OVER 50S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP – THE PLAYERS

48 players from 10 nations contested the Championship – 19 from Australia, 6 each from the USA, New Zealand and England, 4 from Egypt, 2 from Spain and Canada and 1 each from Sweden, Switzerland and Norway. Almost all players were to be found acclimatising to the warm and dry conditions with a couple of days' practice on the fast lawns at Moorabinda and BTC. The lawns were in great condition, testament to the immense amount of preparatory work put in by all the ground staff and volunteers at the clubs – and with Quadway hoops in firm ground set to cause some challenges throughout the week. Despite the travel involved, the event attracted a very strong international entry, including 2015 GC World Champion and number one seed, Egyptian world number 4 Ahmed Elmahdy. Other top seeds included Stephen Mulliner, previous AC World Champion, multiple GC world semi-finalist and long-term England stalwart, in a rich vein of form from recent victories in the English National GC Singles Championship and GC First Eight; Jenny Clarke, 2012 Women's AC World Champion and with multiple silver and bronze placings in the Women's GC World Championships, with other top players from Egypt (Omar Fahmy, Yasser Fathy), USA (Sherif Abdelwahab), local player Gary Phipps and Steve Leonard (England) rounding out the top eight ranked players.

## OPENING CEREMONY AND EVENT SUPPORT

The Championship opened with a flag parade attended by all the competitors (except one, the unfortunate Joakim Norbäck (Sweden), whose plane was turned back in mid-flight over Asia due to a bomb threat – everyone was pleased to see Joakim arrive a day or so late, safe and sound!). With players from the different countries greeting old friends and rivals, the good-natured banter hinted at the friendly and spirited competition to come, and the superb organisation by the Moorabinda club and sponsors meant a smooth start to the proceedings and continued through the week. The lawns were firm and fast, with grass cut and hoops moved and reset every couple of days; huge recognition due here to the volunteers, with 5.30am starts and several 9pm finishes, making full use of the Moorabinda floodlights to ensure play continued on track. In addition to the ground-staff and on-court referees and scorers, an army of volunteers provided an endless supply of drinks and tasty snacks for the players.

## OUT OF THE BLOCKS

A format of 8 blocks of 6, with the top 4 in each block progressing to the knockout phase and the others into the Plate. With the top players expecting to qualify comfortably, the

block stage offered the opportunity for all players to become familiar with the lawns, the challenge of the Quadway hoops and the general atmosphere of the competition. Four start times staggered through the day, no time limits and some very competitive matches leading to late finishes, all provided a huge scheduling challenge for the organisers and especially Tournament Manager Chris Clarke, who conducted the performers magnificently throughout, juggling lawn allocations, start times and floodlight malfunctions with aplomb.

In Block A, the top seed Ahmed Elmahdy made it all look very straightforward, despatching all opponents in the block without dropping a game. Similarly in Block B, Stephen Mulliner cruised comfortably to victory in each of his matches, again without dropping a game. Block C proved to be a much tighter affair, with Sherif Abdelwahab winning all 5 matches with 3 going all the way, showing his experience with several games decided at the golden hoop. In Block D another top Egyptian seed, Omar Fahmy, dropped only one game in achieving his 5 wins; this block also threw up the first surprise of the competition, with local player Brett McHardy, ranked 12 in the event, failing to master the challenging conditions and missing out on qualification to the knockout.

In Block E, Jenny Clarke (NZ) was in impressive form, another top seed easing to 5 wins with little challenge. The dominant player emerging from Block F was Steve Leonard from England with 4 wins, with the top seed in the block, Egyptian Yasser Fathy, just qualifying for the knockout phase with only 2 wins. Blocks G and H also followed expectation, with local player Gary Phipps triumphant with 5 wins in Block G and Brian Bullen emerging a close winner in Block H. A 3-way playoff in Block G settled the final places for the knockout phase.



England Players

## CHAMPIONSHIP KNOCKOUT

In the first round of the knockout most of the matches ended with predictable outcomes, although there were some notable surprises. Yasser Fathy, still struggling for form, succumbed to Hesham Elzoghby; qualifier Jeff Newcombe edged out 9th ranked fellow Aussie Peter Landrebe, and in the biggest upset of the round, after winning the first game comfortably Stephen Mulliner went down to some superb positional play from Brian Scott as darkness fell and the wind picked up.

There were no major surprises in the round of 16, with the standout matches being a very hard fought match between Torben Bak and Gary Phipps, with Gary squeaking through at hoop 13 in the third game, and the intense battle between John

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Newcombe and Kevin McGlynn, only decided in Newcombe's favour on the third golden hoop of their match.

The quarter finals Ahmed Elmahdy continued his march in the top half of the draw, with fellow Egyptian Omar Fahmy perhaps fortunate to overcome a strong Steve Leonard in two very close games. In the bottom half, Sherif Abdelwahab narrowly lost out to Jenny Clarke at the golden hoop in their third game in an extremely tight battle.

The semi-finals saw more predictable outcomes, with Ahmed Elmahdy a comfortable winner over Omar Fahmy – reaching the final without dropping a game and in ominous form. Jenny Clarke finally ended Jeff Newcombe's fine run, also in 3 games – and so we had a mouth-watering final to look forward to.

### CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL

The final drew a very healthy crowd, treated to a spectacle of fine positional play and clean hooping from Jenny Clarke, taking the first game 7-4. In the second game, Ahmed began to hit his groove, with his trademark hard-hit clearances and confident hooping from distance, taking the game 7-2. Jenny rallied again in the third, a much tighter affair, with long rotations of positional play and clearing before Ahmed emerged the stronger, to take the game. In the fourth game a pattern emerged of Jenny taking good position and Ahmed seemingly able to clear at will from all corners of the court, making it very difficult for her to achieve dominance at the hoop. Coupled with very strong hoop running, Ahmed took a stranglehold on the game, easing out to a dominant victory to secure the game and Championship, a truly worthy winner.

### THE BOWL, SHIELD AND PLATE

On Finals Day, spectators were treated to 3 excellent matches alongside the Championship, for the Bowl, Shield and Plate. In the Bowl, Stephen Mulliner had dismissed the disappointment of losing out in the Championship, to reach the final with ease, only to meet a dogged and determined Peter Landrebe (Australia) who triumphed in 2 games of sustained accurate play, with Stephen unable to recapture his earlier form.

Meanwhile, Torben Bak and Barry Jennings were slugging out the Shield final; first blood to Torben, match levelled by Barry, followed by a tense decider in which the momentum swung back and forth until Barry established a lead which he was not to lose, eventually running out a comfortable winner. Two consolation events in the Australian bag; could they make it three?

In the Plate, Brett McHardy found his form to reach the final; on the other side of the draw Norway's Steinar Olsen was flying the flag for Europe, winning through two long tight matches to clinch his place. The final could not have been closer, Steinar taking the first game 7-6 and Brett countering to win the second, again at hoop 13. Game 3 followed a similar script, going all the way

again, until Brett ran the final hoop with a brave shot from the boundary to clinch another popular local success.

Overall, a fitting end to a great event. Hugely competitive but with a very friendly atmosphere throughout, superbly organised and run – congratulations to everyone involved!

### Rick Lilley



## LIFE AS A "2023 NEWBIE" REPRESENTING ENGLAND - THE GAZETTE CATCHES UP WITH DAVID CORNES (CRAKE VALLEY), GLYNIS DAVIES (NORTHAMPTON) AND RICK LILLEY (PHYLLIS COURT).

**W**hen did you hear of your selection & how did you feel?

**David:** To represent England is, without doubt, the highlight of my croquet career. The news came 5 months before the World Over 50's GC in Australia. There was, however, no other information available except reference to the WCF website.

**Rick:** Gaining my place was much nearer the event, due to a late withdrawal; amid the excitement of "representing England", a point of contact from Croquet England to help with guidance and expectations would have been useful. Suggestions

for accommodation, travel, how to understand the typical international tournament format and what to expect when playing abroad would have been perfect. I was fortunate to be able to ask a few people about their own experiences in previous events, which helped.

**What did you get from Croquet England?**

**Rick:** There was limited information available about England attire and when we were entitled/expected to wear it – and for me a rush to acquire an England shirt in time! In the end, for the Opening Ceremony and all tournament play our established

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players used their “previously issued” personalised shirts whilst the new players were entitled to one shirt each with England written on the back.

### **What about preparation for the Womens Worlds at Sussex County earlier in 2023?**

Glynis: Most of the England Ladies benefited from the opportunity to attend a “coaching weekend” held at Cheltenham. Such a great initiative led by Rachel Gee & Ian BurrIDGE to hold structured games, inform the players what to expect with tips on how to handle player styles from different countries and how to approach your first International Tournament.



David Cornes, Matt & Ellie Griffith

### **Did you receive any other help when preparing for your international tournaments?**

Glynis: Prior to the event Chris Clarke spent time with the players - albeit at different venues, outlining what to expect and how to manage various situations as well as watching us play, giving us positive feedback and encouragement.

David: I was fortunate to have similar informal “mentoring” sessions with both Aston Wade and Stu Smith at Budleigh Salterton during the summer.

Rick: Nothing formal but plenty of encouragement and tips from experienced players & coaches. Thanks to all who shared their experience with “newbies”!

### **How did you feel on the first days’ practice in Australia?**

David: For the Over 50’s, in Bunbury, the first practice session felt similar to my first day at “big” school. I was, however, soon put at ease with the experienced players from England (Stephen Mulliner, Stephen Custance-Baker and Steve Leonard). Catching up with my close buddies from USA, Matt & Ellie Griffith, along with their colleagues, Billy, Kent & Sherif was a huge help. An England squad meal (with partners who travelled) on the 2nd evening also bonded our group.

Rick: Excited, nervous, apprehensive of Quadways set in hard ground with tight tolerances! I just wanted the event to start

and to enjoy and embrace the whole experience. Watching top players also struggling with the hoops in practice was reassuring!

### **What are the lasting memories of your tournament?**

Glynis: The entire event, at Sussex County, was such an amazing experience and I feel very privileged to have been part of the England contingent. A huge word of thanks to Linda Gavigan and her team together with the groundsman, referees, managers and catering staff. Also, Alison Maugham who did a fantastic job on the technical side organising the film crew and the commentators.

Rick: Fantastic sense of fun and camaraderie among the competitors and support from all the local club members that made it possible – making new friends! Feedback and encouragement from other experienced players was invaluable to help us grow in confidence throughout the week.

David: The incredible delivery by Rob and the members / friends of the Moorabinda Croquet Club. Also, the incredible good sporting atmosphere created by the vast majority of our competitors, in particular Kevin McGlynn from Australia.

### **How was it playing on a different continent?**

David: It is, without question, extremely difficult. Consider time difference (jetlag!), heat & humidity changes and different playing styles. People will see scores of 3-7 or 4-7, perhaps thinking, the player is on the end of a bad defeat. Most hoops in all games were keenly contested with many matches lasting over 4 hours – lots of games involving the English players went to hoop 12 or 13.

Rick: Tough but hugely enjoyable. Great to play against players from many countries, obviously with a large proportion of players from Australia & New Zealand. Although the Championship was won by Egyptian World number 4 Ahmed El Mahdy, the Plate, Shield and Bowl were all won by Aussies – perhaps a local advantage? We were also struck by the differences in refereeing (marking of balls) styles compared to the UK.

### **What can help newbies in the future?**

Glynis: Consider setting up a WhatsApp group in order to communicate and co-ordinate travel or accommodation arrangements. We all found this useful and have continued to use it to keep in touch. This is probably a ‘girlie’ thing, but be prepared to take some small gifts to exchange with your opponents. These are very much appreciated and act as a memory of the occasion. (Key rings and fridge magnets are a popular choice.) The England contingent gave the visiting competitors a personalised souvenir stick of Brighton Rock which was enthusiastically received. Above all else my advice to newbies would be to forget the nerves and enjoy the moment - you’ve earned your place!!

David: Yes, one of the Australians gifted each opponent a small cuddly toy Koala Bear. Best tip is to approach more experienced players to ask them for help. At the tournament remember you have been selected for a reason. You DO belong in that company so go out and enjoy the new challenges that come with playing against different nationalities.

Rick: A little more help and guidance on what to expect would be useful, and contacts with others who have been through the experience. Also, perhaps more coordinated press coverage leading up to and during the event, to spread the croquet word – one of our number was interviewed by his local radio station back home! Perhaps there is something we as individual players can do to help in this regard? Perhaps a few brief notes on guidance/expectations provided by Croquet England or on the website might be useful. Finally, providing some feedback of your experience may also help future representatives. Above all, be positive and enjoy the experience!

## RESPONSE TO THE "NEWBIES", PAGE 30

**O**ld style 'personalised' England shirts are no longer the official England kit as per WCF regulations. However, being predominantly white, I assume that the old shirts are still acceptable attire during an event. Information about the entitlement to receive an official England international shirt is available on the website: <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=ca/schemes/InternationalExpenses>

Anyone representing England on or after 1 January 2023 is entitled to receive (at least) one of the new England shirts. James Death in the office handles all orders and keeps a record of who has received, and is entitled to receive, shirts. Details about accommodation and local travel are normally

part of the package of information provided by the host (via a website?) I think Glynis's suggestion about contacting fellow English competitors and forming a WhatsApp group is the obvious and best way to find out about what to expect and what other people are doing about travel and accommodation. It's absolutely brilliant that the likes of Ian Burrige, Rachel Gee, Chris Clarke and others are prepared to spend time coaching groups and individual players in preparation for representative events. It's all volunteer effort and, in my view, should be seen as a massive bonus.

**| Keith Aiton, Chair of International Committee**

## GRASS ROOTS FINAL 2023

**O**n Sunday 24th September, sixteen qualifiers from ten clubs located around the country arrived at Hunstanton Croquet Club to enjoy a full day's play in the final round of the golf croquet National Grass Roots tournament.

Despite a two-hour soaking in the early morning, Hunstanton's five courts were in excellent condition for the event, and the rain gave way to a mostly sunny day with a slight south-westerly wind.

The format was level-play 13pt games, with all players split into four blocks of four, from which the top two of each block progressed to the knock-out stages.

The remaining eight players, that did not make the main knock-out, moved on to the consolation categories of the Plate & Saucer in order to keep all interested in playing. Players that fell from the main quarter-final stage proceeded to the Shield consolation round.

Most of the block winners achieved two wins apart from Nigel Owen from Block B with an impressive 100% record. As play moved on, the quarter-final round provided some very close games with most going to 7-5 or 7-6, indicating the level of competitiveness of the players.

Dee McKibbin, Michael Marcel, Graham Brooksbank, and Nigel Owen qualified to proceed on to the semi-final rounds.

Nigel Owen remained in terrific form, winning his semi-final

against Graham Brooksbank 7-4, maintaining his unbeaten status. Due to slow, determined, and careful play within the remaining semi-final, a time-limit was imposed by the manager to ensure the tournament remained on schedule – and finished in the daylight! It was Dee McKibbin that prevailed over Michael Marcel, 5-4.

As evidenced with their previous matches, the main final between Nigel Owen (Enfield) and Dee McKibbin (Phyllis Court) was a very close affair, which kept the small audience enthralled. Nigel picked up the first two hoops with Dee responding by taking the next two. From then on, until the tenth hoop, the scores went from hoop to hoop to each opponent. With the scores level at 5-5, Nigel then made the break, running a magnificent 11th hoop straight down to an untouchable position at 12. Unfortunately, Dee was unable to respond to Nigel's commanding position, which left Nigel to take the final point and win 7/5.

Janet Kendal, the club's chairman, presented the trophy, and congratulations were given to Nigel, the 2023 National Grass Roots winner!

In the subsidiary rounds the winners were: Shield - Alistair Broom (Phyllis Court); Plate - Steve Bacon (Stoney Stratford); and Saucer- Andrew Jackson (Guildford).

**| Terrey Sparks**



**PHOTOGRAPH:** Left to Right are Shield - Alistair Broom, Plate - Steve Bacon, and Saucer - Andrew Jackson



# NOTTINGHAM GC CHAMPIONSHIP

**S**everal withdrawals left a field of 8 players for the Nottingham GC weekend. In spite of a lot of rain and an atrocious weather forecast, we had some very expedient block play and all singles block games were completed before 4:30 pm on Saturday afternoon! Players chose to head home for showers and hot baths rather than attend a tournament dinner in the evening. Some excellent play from David Thirtle-Watts earned him a

place in the knock-out, joining Jack Good, Richard Bilton and Ian Burridge. With a much drier day on Sunday, both semi finals were wrapped up in 2 games, with the favourites from both match-ups (Jack Good and Richard Bilton) securing their places in the final. Jack Good won a closely fought final, earning him his second consecutive Championship Series title, after his win at Bowdon earlier in July. Congratulations Jack!

**| Rachel Gee**

# GC CHESHIRE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP

**J**ack Good was the eventual, and deserved, winner of the Croquet Association Golf Croquet Cheshire Open Championship over the last weekend, 8th and 9th July. John-Paul Moberly was runner-up, in the all-Bowdon final, which Jack won 7-5, 7-5. Both players won their respective group stage blocks. Jack had the distinction of winning every game throughout the Championship. Jack beat Euan Burridge (Nottingham) 7-5, 7-5 in one semi-final, and John-Paul beat Richard Bilton (Gainsborough) 7-5, 3-7, 7-4 in the other semi-final. Ian Burridge (Nottingham) won the Plate, with Alain Giraud (Ealing and Bowdon) in second place.



# GOLF CROQUET VETERANS CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

**A** full complement of 24 players gathered at Sussex County Club in Southwick on 18th July for this annual three-day event. Last year it was held during the hottest day ever recorded in the UK but conditions were considerably more pleasant this year and apart from being a little chilly on day 2 the weather was kind to us. Play started with two blocks of twelve players each which took a day and a half to complete. The top four players from each block went forward to the knockouts with the remaining 16 players going forward to compete for the Plate. Day 3 saw the event move into the final stages with the semi-finals being fought out between Andy Loakes v Lionel Tibble and Ian Shore v Tim Russell. Andy beat Lionel 7-4, 5-7, 7-4 and Tim beat Ian 7-5, 7-1. This set up a final between Andy Loakes from Camerton & Peasedown and Tim Russell from

Roehampton, The final was very closely fought with Tim Russell emerging as the winner 7-5, 5-7, 7-4.

The final of the Shield, for those knocked out in the quarter finals of the main event, was contested by Steve Leonard and Jayne Stevens with the latter, from Northampton, winning 6-7, 7-5, 7-5.

The Plate was won by Colin Britt from Camerton & Peasedown, beating Liz Farrow from Sussex County 10-8 in the final.

The Brooks Vase for the best performance by a player aged 75 or over went to Ian Shore from High Wycombe.

Thanks are due to Sussex County for use of their lawns which are in excellent condition and to the catering team who looked after us all so well.

**| Andrew Stewart, Manager**



# SUSSEX OPEN GC CHAMPIONSHIP

**T**he Sussex Open took place at Southwick on 9th and 10th September. The weather was hot and the sixteen competitors faced two days of stiff competition in sweltering conditions.

The field was split into four blocks of four on the first day, with an all-play-all format playing the best-of-three games.

The eight players making it through to the knockout stage, played on the second day, were: Dominic Aarvold, Steiner Olsen, Richard Brooks, Tim King, Stephen Custance-Baker, Charles Sale, Colin Britt, and Morgan Case.

Dominic and Stephen played the final and, for the second year running, Dominic prevailed, winning 7-6 7-6.

**| Roger Sutton**



# NATIONAL FOREST GC CHAMPIONSHIP

**T**he National Forest GC Championship was held at Ashby on 1st and 2nd July.

Twelve players from locations as far afield as Tyneside and Somerset competed in the National Forest GC Championship. The winner was Les Heard (Wrest Park CC)

who won all his block games and went on to beat Ashby's Mike O'Brian 7-2, 7-5 in the best-of-3 final.

In a close battle for 3rd/4th place, Andy Loakes (Camerton & Peasedown) won 7-6 against Keith Pound (Ashby).

**| Mick Haytack, Manager**

# EURO TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

**C**heltenham CC was delighted to be offered to host this exciting team event which took place 2-5 August 2023 and was run under the auspices of the World Croquet Federation.

Preparations started in earnest around 9 months beforehand with event agreements and schedules to prepare. Important people needed to be put into place – Director/Manager was Sarah Hayes, Tournament Referee was Jenny Clarke with cover by Ian Burrige if needed. The European side being completely in the reliable hands of Roberts Stafekis who, at the time, was the WCF Council European representative. Roberts liaised constantly over a long period of time and was the central contact point for teams – no small task – my unflinching gratitude to his completion of this task without complaint.

Social events were planned to include a welcome for all teams the evening before start of play. The obligatory flag procession took place with marching and waving – this went very well until one player realised he could extend the height of his flag and a “my flag is bigger than your flag” debacle ensued – much to the delight of onlookers I must add.

Free buffet and drinks consumed, exciting random draw for placings performed by the Clarkes, small gifts handed to all, amusing and engaging welcome speech by Andrew Hope as Club President delivered and the event was under way - so home to bed for all (believe that if you will) as the first tests would be played the next morning.

Ten teams assembled Day 1 – one team classed as “plus” as unable to win which was Spain. Late dropouts meant no AC player available so Richard Marriage, Klim Seabright and Debo Albertsen, all Cheltenham CC members, kindly between them filled in so all teams did not miss any rounds....and so the fun began.

England, Wales and Sweden all started the best way possible with 3-0 wins against Latvia, Germany and Switzerland respectively. Ireland and Scotland both ran out 2-1 victors over Spain + and Czechia. In round 2 Sweden again prevailed 3-0 this time over Czechia with close GC matches both going to the decider – England beat Germany 3-0 with only 2 points scored by their oppo over all 5 games. Latvia dismissed the Swiss



team 2-1 with all three matches being extremely tight. Stafekis played particularly well to beat Studerus 7/6, 7/6. The crunch match of this round being the Home Nations clash between Ireland and Scotland which Ireland won 2-1. Healy and Looney making short thrift of their opponents. Wales played Spain+ winning 2-1 albeit as a friendly.

Another clash round 3 saw Wales beat Scotland 2-1 where Wright defeated Williams in a very tight 26-21 finish. Sweden beat a determined Ireland 2-1 – Healy again performing well

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Smart gents from Latvia



to win for Ireland – the decider in this test saw Larsson coming back from 6/7 loss in the first to take the remaining two both 7/3. England took the test against the Swiss team 3-0 with solid performances from all three of the team. Germany lost their friendly against the Spain + team 0-3 which led to a delighted father and son, Jose and Filberto Cano, being in high spirits for the rest of the evening. Czechia showed what they were capable of by defeating the Latvians 2-1.

Day 2 went pretty much to form – England defeated Spain+, Czechia and Scotland – dropped first of the three points to Scotland where Wright had a well-deserved triple against Wade. Wales beat Latvia and Switzerland 3-0 but also lost closely to Sweden losing both GC elements. Sweden closed the day on 3/3 albeit one versus Spain +.

Day 3 – last of the tests and at the end of play the semi-finalists would be known – exciting stuff eh? England won all three tests against Ireland (2-1) where Healy again held his nerve to beat Burrridge (E); Sweden (3-0) where Smith took the third GC game 7/6 against Larsson – close? I'll say! And Wales (3-0) despite a thrilling fightback by Roberts in the GC only to lose 7/5 in the third to Burrridge (E). Sweden beat their other opposition Scotland (3-0) and Latvia (2-1) with Elebo (J) just pipping Steins in AC +2 on time. Home nations clash today was Ireland vs Wales and Wales scored the vital point by winning 3-0. Latvia were honours even for the day – it was their Spain+ day – losing to Sweden (2-1) but beating Scotland by the same margin. Germany were there too but not in winning form let's say.... still having a good time mind.

Saturday dawned and the four semi-finalist teams had been decided – England was to play Latvia and Wales was to play Sweden. My lovely smart Latvians were disposed of fairly quickly by the English (3-0) – Wade with a tp and Smith bossing it against an in form Zalcans to win 7/4, 7/3. The other semi was a far more tense affair Williams beat Elebo (J) +25, Burrridge (I) lost to Larsson 4/7, 7/4, 6/7 – again so very close. Roberts took the third in his GC match against Elebo (E) 7/3, 3/7, 7/3 meaning Wales had made it to the final with a 2-1 victory.

The final started relatively early – forecast wasn't the best and people had a long evening travelling home to face so around lunchtime England squared up to Wales in the final of the 2023 Euro Teams Championship. I didn't quite see what happened but Wade just squeaked past Williams +2 – blimey I should have been paying attention. The battle of the Burridges had been avoided – Euan quickly beat Roberts 7/2, 7/3 with Roberts attempting some highly entertaining shots in the effort. Ian played Smith and the first two games were even both having scores of 7/6 – so into the third all highly entertaining as you might imagine – lots of Oohs and Aahs and that just the two players! But Smith held on to win the third 7/5 to mean England were the Champs this year having won 3-0 – Wales were well deserved runners up. Sweden came in third having beaten Latvia into 4th place (2-1).

The Czechia team were my favourites - lovely chaps, very polite who all had a good time. Best dressed team for the event

went to the Latvians – smart as pins the whole time and darkly handsome to boot. Quietest (tongue in cheek) were the Irish – now there's a surprise! Altogether lovely were the Swedish players plus The Cano chaps from Spain. Person least likely to rush a ball within 4 yards of a peg? Well, that would be Aston Wade who has a new tactic of rushing his partner ball for peg out anywhere but within 4 yards of the peg – perhaps he is just trying to give his oppo a ray of hope? Who knows.

Thanks go to Ian Lines, Ian Burridge, Debbie Lines and Roberts Stafeckis for all their help and guidance from an administration point of view. Cheltenham CC catering team for lunches and teas.

Closing speeches and presentations of trophy and medals by Roberts Stafeckis as WCF VIP – see photos.

Managers award went to two players for basically astonishing shots – Larsson for a bouncing bomb from almost in the Old Bath Road to secure game three at 13th hoop to the delight of the crowd and Smith for the most astonishing placement of a ball I have seen probably this century from again almost in the Old Bath Road. Larsson received the first prize as his ball had to leave the ground – nothing more nothing less. Fantastic players both.

Personally I would like to give an enormous THANK-YOU VERY MUCHNESS to Jenny Clarke – my days that woman can work – she is an absolute marvel – Sam Cuthbert my Assistant Manager who could have done the whole thing standing on his head it turned out – all your hours spent very much appreciated – Stuart at East Glos for the Pizza and a Pint evening – Mark Suter my BBQ burger flipper and my saviours early on – Richard Marriage and Mark Oldale who assembled all the flagpoles for me.

Hope you enjoy all the photos – some are from a lovely chap who turned up from the Cheltenham Camera Club and are a lovely addition to the report.

To close – well played England – well deserved Euro Team Champions for 2023.

**| Sarah Hayes**

PHOTOGRAPHS John Clare

Sweden Third



Swiss GC at its best!



# CROQUET'S CREATURES

**W**ithin our towns and cities there are many types of 'green spaces' that provide habitats where nature sets up home. Other than our domestic back gardens, examples of these green oases include parks and cemeteries; golf courses; canal tow-paths; university campuses; and of course, croquet courts.

Croquet clubs around the UK feature in a broad range of settings; some are rural; some face the coast; and others can be surrounded by houses and busy roads; but they all provide areas of open green space for people and wildlife alike to enjoy. Many croquet players are familiar with the loud whistle of the Oyster Catcher as he announces his arrival at Sussex County Croquet Club, usually circling a few times before landing, it seems, on his favoured patch of Court 3. Cheltenham Croquet Club is home to a striking male fox who has been observed sunbathing in front of Court 1 whilst play is ongoing. Over this season whilst most of us have been thoroughly engaged in playing or managing tournaments at numerous croquet venues, Andrew Wilson has been quietly observing and photographing the other creatures enjoying our croquet spaces. Andrew has published over twenty wildlife photography books – the 'Wild About' series – and has kindly provided this excellent selection of photographs that give us a totally different perspective on what our croquet courts provide to the natural world. Here you can see: Swallows at Budleigh Salterton,

Egyptian Goose at Hurlingham, Wagtails at Roehampton, Peacock at Hurlingham, Cowslips at Wrest Park, Bees at Roehampton.

So it is good to reflect that not only is croquet good for our health, well-being, and entertainment, but it is also providing a valuable habitat for local animals, birds, insects, and plants, which supports biodiversity and our environment as a whole.

**| Louise Smith**



## ENFIELD CROQUET CLUB FUNDING

**T**his year marks 30 years of croquet in Bush Hill Park, and the club committee decided that we should have a permanent legacy for our anniversary year. For most of our history we have had little to nothing on the lawns for members. A match report from our second competitive season in 1998 records the opinion of Wrest Park's visiting AC team – "a secluded corner of Bush Hill Park [...] converted from what used to be a putting green [...] The lawns are surrounded by some fine shrubs which have been infested with a number of barbarous blackberry canes". Little has changed. The shrubs and blackberries – which are, incidentally, delicious – still remain, and the lawns are still beautifully private in feel, but there has generally been nowhere for members to congregate, save for a single shaded bench.

When visited for inter-club fixtures, we would bring out chairs, a table, and a temporary fabric gazebo, which served its purpose well enough until a rainstorm in 2022 caused the roof to collapse, prompting us to recruit the visiting Watford players to help hold up the collapsing structure with their mallets, in a vain attempt to remain dry. Clearly, the best possible legacy would be a permanent shelter. We consulted with the club's members on what form this shelter should take, and the overwhelming consensus was for a single, larger structure of about 3x3 metres.

### FUNDRAISING

Obtaining quotes early on, we knew we would need approximately £3000 to construct the pavilion, and to purchase bench seating and secure storage. While the club had enough in reserve to make a temporary outlay, other financial commitments including a new lawnmower and our irregular top dressing, meant that committing to building the pavilion required an assurance that we would be able to find the money from other sources.

We arranged a series of events to mark our anniversary year, some of which were opportunities for fundraising. In April, we were visited by Robert Fulford, who generously agreed to take time out of his preparations for the AC World Championship, leading a technical and tactical coaching masterclass for

members of all levels, while in August, we held a party, selling tickets in advance to help raise funds, and running a donation-only bar. Profits from these events – ticket sales and donations minus the cost of food, drink, and paying for coaching – would be fed back into funding the construction of the pavilion.

Separately, we launched a crowdfunding project on crowdfunder.com, including a video of the site explaining the need for a shelter. From this, we raised £1040 of donations, including Gift Aid, offering simple rewards of being named in a list of those who contributed to the shelter to be put in our storage-cum-clubhouse building, "The Hut", and signed copies of a book donated by one of our members.



We sought grant funding from both the East Anglia Croquet Federation, who contributed £500, and the Croquet Association Development Fund, who offered £1310. For these, we have to thank Jonathan Toye, the EACF's Development Officer, and the rest of the Development Grant committee, as well as John Reddish and his CA Development Grant committee, for their aid and scrutiny of the grant application. With this income, combined with the profits from our internal events, we were able to begin work.

In an unexpected windfall, the local shopping centre, Palace Gardens, was disposing of a set of benches that were of very good quality. We got in touch, and they were delighted to donate them to our club as a way of supporting local community groups.

...continued on page 38



# 2024 Ultra-Luxury Europe River Cruises



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These three benches are now secured around the lawns, including one very near the Pavilion site.

#### APPROVAL

As a club leasing our land from the council in a public park, we needed to secure approval from the council to continue with the project. We did not anticipate that this would be a problem, as we had obtained permission for erecting a metal storage shed recently. This proved to be the main block on progress, not because of any legal difficulty, but because the council has been prioritising other issues at present – Enfield Council is, like many others, in severe debt. This meant that the response took longer than it might have done a few years ago. We recommend to other clubs in our position that they begin the process of seeking approval several months in advance of the intended construction date to avoid such delays.

#### BUILDING

Enfield has three lawns in a roughly L-shaped arrangement, so we chose to position the Pavilion in the centre of that L, with a view over all three lawns. We had elected to purchase a Knutsford Pavilion from Zest Outdoor Living, with the addition of a raised floor. The site did not need any special clearing, with narrow concrete supports driven into the ground, on which a wooden floor was added. The rest of the structure was then built on top of the floor by specialist workers. In total, the building work took two days, with one further day to replace a component which had split during building, at no extra charge. The lawns were shut to members during the first day to allow the builders free access to move materials in and out of the club, but were open on the second.

#### AFTERMATH

We have since hosted our Anniversary Party, using the Pavilion as a site for serving drinks, as well as it becoming our main point of congregation on match days and during normal social activity. Members have responded very positively to this addition to our

club, and we are delighted to have improved the atmosphere of the lawns. Time was, we would finish a game, and either stand around to spectate or wander off to mark our result on the boards in The Hut. Now, we can sit back after a game, shaded from the sun by a fine wooden roof, perhaps with a freshly picked blackberry in hand.



## SCHOOLS AND JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

**N**ottingham hosted the Schools and Junior Championships over the weekend of 16 and 17 September.

#### SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS

In 2021 Winchester won the trophy unopposed. In 2022 Chilwell Comprehensive were similarly unopposed. This year the two met on the lawns, and Winchester (August Deeming, Alaric Nicoll and Tanvir Sood) beat Chilwell (Elizabeth Shelton and Declan) in both AC and Gc doubles matches.

A third school had entered, but sadly withdrew shortly before the competition, being unable to raise a team. Clearly the Schools competition needs to be revisited to make it a viable event for the future.

#### JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

Four players contested the AC Junior Championship: Sam Cuthbert (Cheltenham), Alaric Nicoll and Tanvir Sood (Winchester College) and Rees Jackman (Nottingham). Sam was making his first competitive appearance since his severe injury in New Zealand during the World Under-21 GC event, and was still too strong for the rest of the field, winning 3/3 14-point games to retain the trophy.

There were only two entrants for the GC Junior Championship: August Deeming (Winchester College) and Declan (Nottingham). August won a closely contested match 6-7, 7-5, 7-5.

There were also events involving Nottingham's own juniors at

Under-13 and Under-8, 4. Their presence with the accompanying parents and guardians made for a lively atmosphere and would have helped to show passing park users that croquet is not exclusively a pastime for old people.

Prizes were presented by Patricia Duke-Cox, CA President, who thanked the Nottingham Club for organising the event, and spoke of her keenness to get more young people involved in the sport.

**Peter Death, Manager**





# AC STUDENT CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

## EXETER UNIVERSITY EXCELS

**E**xeter University had a clean sweep at the Student Championships held at the Oxford University Association Croquet Club.

Aston Wade retained the Dudley Hamilton-Miller trophy for the Singles and, with his partner, Kieran Moore, also won the Edmund Reeve Cup for the doubles. The prizes were awarded by the CA President, Patricia Duke-Cox. All games were level advanced.

We welcomed students from Cambridge, Manchester and Reading plus, of course, Oxford. Full report to follow.

**| Dr Ian Plummer at OUACC lawns, Oxford (PHOTOGRAPH)**



## NEXT GENERATION PILOT 2023

**S**o, what is Next Generation? Next Generation relates to the Croquet Association's long-term objective to ensure more young people are recruited to play croquet at clubs.

The Next Generation plan is to introduce our sport to young children through schools and other organisations such as the Guides and Scouts.

This year saw the Croquet Association launch its Next Generation strategy via the introduction of seven clubs spread over six federations to the Next Generation pilot. This article relates the stories from three of these clubs.

What are the key principles underpinning the Next Generation programme?

1. Providing clubs with on-loan, reliable and robust kit. Also, easy to transport and carry.
2. Sufficient kit to deliver a school-based activity for up to 30 children.
3. Develop three croquet-based activities: 'Zero to Hero', Kubb (Croquet Skittles) and 'Hole in One'.
4. Focus on quick sessions with opportunities for the children to try all three activities.

5. Visit all pilot clubs to introduce them to the games/activities.

### HOW MANY CHILDREN WERE INVOLVED IN 2023?

Over 500 children took part with the majority from primary schools but, as you are about to read, several Scout and Guide groups were involved. The numbers joining clubs as junior members is still small but we firmly believe that Next Generation is an excellent way to raise awareness of our sport to children and their families.

How can my club find out more information?

We are already planning the 2024 programme and will be inviting further clubs to join this exciting initiative. The first 2024 Webinar on January 31st will be devoted to 'Next Generation 2024'.

Our 2023 clubs will be there to answer questions. For further information at this stage, please contact Paul Francis on email at [paulwfrancis@icloud.com](mailto:paulwfrancis@icloud.com)

Finally... Many thanks to the outstanding efforts of the 2023 pilot clubs and we hope you enjoy their stories.

**| Paul Francis, Development**

## RIPON SPA CC NEXT GENERATION 2023

**W**e were attracted to the idea of the 2023 NG Pilot because we had already been visiting two of our local primary schools in 2022. We felt that the extra equipment and ideas would help us to spread the croquet world to more potential players in the city and start to bring about a change in the way croquet is perceived. This, we hoped, would lead to giving all sorts of players the chance to take up croquet after a fun and exciting start.

I had already worked in three different Ripon Primary Schools in a totally different capacity, so I had a ready-made introduction to the staff.

My fellow coach and another club member made up the team which took four different activities into the schools. We made sure that a member of the school staff could guide the fourth activity with a minimum of instruction.

The Uber hoops worked well on the school playing fields which were of varying quality, but we also added three games: knocking down and collecting skittles; knocking over part-filled 1.5 litre water bottles; running large hoops as part of 'Zero to Hero' and collecting attached scoring pegs.

One highlight was the excellent way in which children responded



to simple routines and worked well together and supported each other very ably. Their enthusiasm and enjoyment were outstanding, as was their foresight into different tactical aspects of the simple games. Because we saw a large number of classes within their curriculum, our time with each group was quite limited. We will arrange to visit the schools again and build on the relationships we have made. Ideally, we would like to spend more time with smaller groups.

Sadly, weather, and other commitments, meant we were not able to hold a family day during the short time of the last half of the summer term and we will work with the schools to address

*...continued on next page*

this. We have realised that we can't rely on the schools for communication with parents so will have to create our own handouts, possibly producing smaller certificates with family day dates on them. We hope to make more contact with scouts and guide groups and approach the local secondary schools with the suggestion that croquet might be part of Duke of Edinburgh schemes.

My advice is that if you have the members' enthusiasm for the Pilot then go for it; it's very rewarding. From the scheme, we have a junior member who is very promising, and our challenge

will be finding ways in which he and his family can play through term time.

Nottingham had a very good idea of offering parents a modest subscription rate provided that they brought their child with them when they came to play. This is something we will explore along with finding the optimum time for junior club sessions without exhausting our coaches!

We had contact with an amazing 350 children!

**I Ted Flexman**

## BURY CC NEXT GENERATION 2023

**B**ury CC has a long-established record of involvement with junior players, hosting, on a regular basis each season, groups from uniformed youth organisations: Brownies, Guides, Scouts, etc. Interestingly, last year, a mother of a scout who is the local Asda Community Champion was so encouraged with what she witnessed that she suggested we apply to the Asda Foundation for a grant. With her endorsement a grant for £500 was received which was used to buy various sizes of mallets and equipment to be used at these sessions.

Following a presentation to the club by Next Generation Officer Hope Burton in March, Bury Croquet Club committee agreed to become involved in this project with 12 club members agreeing to participate in a variety of ways. These included former head teachers and youth organisation leaders.

The club already had an indoor croquet set which was used primarily at the premises of a local outreach charity for their clients. We experimented at one primary school with this in their sports hall. It did not however prove ideal, and so far the project has not proceeded, but we hope to resurrect it next year utilising the equipment provided by the CA.

The CA provided four sets of excellent equipment and we subsequently invited another local primary school, with support and endorsement of a local councillor who is a school governor, to take part. The school is literally five minutes walk from our Whitehead Park lawns. This particular school, Guardian Angels RCPS on their social media platforms, makes great emphasis of the fact that they involve their students in 'different' sporting activities involving hand-eye coordination, lateral thinking etc. Croquet, of course, being a natural contender. At the end of June, the school sent thirty year 5 pupils in two tranches, one morning and one afternoon, who thoroughly enjoyed taking part. So much

so that it was agreed that a further group of thirty new year 5 students would attend after the summer break. This took place at the end of September and was similarly regarded as a resounding success. Both events were featured on the school's social media, with over 500 views and liked by a number of people including the Mayor of Bury, resulting in good PR for the club.

The children quickly took to the rudiments and some very competitive games ensued, much whooping and fist pumping going on! It was great to hear comments from the pupils to each other "This is a fantastic game", "I love this game". There was some good potential talent shown to. All children taking part were given a fridge certificate and a larger one for the school itself. Leaflets were also taken home to show their parents/guardians what they had been doing.

We have agreed with this particular school that we will pursue things next year in the new season, and it is hoped that we can either arrange a family/staff day or include something in our National Croquet Day.

In the meantime we are continuing to target other local schools to involve them next season.

**I Roy Spencer, Chairman, Bury Croquet Club**



## LYM VALLEY (LVCC) NEXT GENERATION 2023

**N**estled along the Jurassic Coast and the rolling hills of East Devon and West Dorset, the Lym Valley Croquet Club enjoys splendid views from its dedicated main lawn within the playing fields in Uplyme. Founded in 1988, our club also has the use of two outfield lawns that we share with the Uplyme and Lyme Regis Cricket Club.

Our location benefits from being close to a busy village hall and, for walkers, a popular right-of-way that is used by locals and tourists. A high level of footfall is an asset in our plans to attract new members. We are making improvements to our main lawn and have recently added new signage. So, with the support of our committee, now is the time to fly the flag for croquet and promote the game to all age groups.

As the 2023 season got under way, we took part in the Next Generation project as it seemed a key to attracting family members, and making it clear that children would have a place in coaching sessions and other club activities. It was noted that garden croquet had seen a surge during the pandemic and that

a shift in working habits had triggered many families to leave crowded cities and escape to the country or the coast; it follows that there have been new young families moving to our neck of the woods including Lyme Regis, Axminster, Charmouth, Bridport, Seaton and many small villages in our catchment area.

Building on members contacts, we approached scout groups and schools. The scouts were particularly keen to bring their groups to our lawn and over two visits the children, scout leaders and our club members had a lot of fun.

The local primary school was pleased to have a new feature for their end of term sports week and we hosted 50 plus pupils from Years 5 and 6. The junior-style croquet kits, on loan from Croquet England, were perfect for setting up the specially designed games like Hero to Zero and a customised version of Swedish Skittles that called for mallets and balls to strike the targets – very popular!

These new kits with hoops that are easy to push into the ground are ideal for 'road-shows'. This was tested at two big summer



fetes when we set up stalls and invited parents and children to try their hand at running hoops. There were no on-the-spot recruits for new members but we felt that we were spreading the word in a positive way.

Our 2023 effort in promoting the Next Generation resulted in more than 120 children attending taster sessions on our lawns (scouts and school pupils), as well as easily 50 plus youngsters spending time at the stalls we set up at two fetes.

For 2024 we are already planning further discussions with several local schools and scout groups. Using the junior kits, we will take them on the road for school visits and events in the region. We aim to contact secondary schools to discuss the benefits of croquet for the D of E Award Scheme.

We are a small club and our members have an ethos of taking part in the day-to-day affairs of the LVCC. The Next Generation project was warmly welcomed as a good initiative for us to embrace.

Members reflect on the 2023 New Generation experience:

“These youngsters were simply out in the fresh evening air having fun. Competitiveness soon surfaced amongst them. Several, with more of a free spirit, added to the overall enjoyment “

“It gets better as the years go by. Garden croquet as a youngster in the 50’s. Trying all sorts of sports over the years. Then back to croquet, and why did I ever take a break. Marvellous that I’m now

helping future generations experience the perfect game”.

And here’s a word from Richard Godfrey, the chairman of the Lym Valley Club:

I think my experience of our activities with the scouts and primary school children could be summed up thus:

It was obvious that the preparatory games leading to the real game of croquet were very much enjoyed by at least 90% of the children. But for me the most striking observation was that a small but significant number, maybe 15% to 20%, showed real aptitude and accuracy in striking the ball almost without any instruction. How good it would be to communicate with the parents and guardians of those with natural talent to create the nucleus of a young person’s croquet club.

A Junior Club – that is a target to strive for.



## GGCC LAWN WATERING SYSTEM

**G**uildford and Godalming Croquet Club (GGCC) has 4 full-sized lawns situated on fast draining, sandy soil that we can play on all year. However, the lawns deteriorate very quickly in prolonged periods of heat and drought.

We recognised the need for a lawn watering system as long ago as 2018 but we needed time to raise funds. We also required planning permission and formal consent under the lease from our local authority landlords but experienced significant delays with the bureaucracy during, and in the aftermath of, Covid-19.

Progress required resolution of two key problems. First, GGCC has no mains electricity supply. The power authorities estimated it would cost up to £30,000 because we have no feasible neighbour off which to piggyback and our nearest mains connection is on the other side of a major road. Solar panels were ruled out due to security and shade issues from surrounding trees, leaving power by generator as the only feasible solution. The second problem was water supply. Installing a bore hole was discounted due to the cost and the red tape. As our mains water pressure is insufficient to power sprinklers the solution was a water tank and a pump.



Following a tendering process, we selected Duncan Hector who has supplied lawn watering systems to other croquet clubs. To keep costs down members provided the manual labour. Our groundsman was also on hand to operate the big trenching machine and we employed an electrician and a plumber.

Andrew Jackson had taken on the unenviable task of managing the project and he has devoted countless hours to bringing it to fruition. GGCC is indebted to him. Andrew’s right hand was Julie Tremble who focussed on securing the finances and organising

the volunteer effort. In total, 27 members (and some family members!) made up the chain gang and we are very grateful to them all.

Work commenced on 13 March 2023. Volunteers dug the bases for the water tank and generator housing, relocating several tons of soil in the process. They also dug holes for the pipe junctions and sprinkler controls as these needed to be larger than the machine-dug trenches. We had to overcome the problem of tunnelling under the concrete gutter around one of our lawns (a former bowls lawn), and we had to dig out and relocate our water standpipe.



Most equipment and materials were delivered without problem. However, our first attempt to purchase a tank of red diesel resulted in hours of wasted time as delivery drivers used the excuses that they couldn’t find us, were running late or the fuel had not been loaded onto their vehicle. Eventually we gave up and re-ordered from a more reliable (but more expensive) source. We had so much difficulty getting the hire company to collect their concrete mixer that they eventually waived the charge!

We were grateful to the generator delivery driver for his patience because it had to be loaded into our shipping container for safekeeping prior to installation and it weighed 180kg. His pneumatic trolley was tested to the limit of its capabilities. Before we could install the generator, we had to get rid of an old Toro ride-on mower which had seized up in situ and had to be winched out of the club’s grounds. Thankfully, a local salvage business broke it up and took it away at no cost.

Upon delivery, the water pipes had to be uncoiled and laid out flat to relax them otherwise it would have been impossible to lay them

and fit connections. We repurposed some old garden croquet hoops to catch down the ends of the pipes to assist with this task. Our groundsman machine-dug all the required trenches in one day, a day less than we had budgeted for. This was just as well, as the following day he tested positive for Covid. Thankfully, he didn't pass it on to any members.



We underestimated the extent of the electrical work required to install the generator, its programmer and ancillary wiring. Planning permission had restricted us to a modest, 5,300-gallon water tank so setting the programmer to deliver sufficient water to each lawn in turn, whilst also allowing time for the tank to re-fill in between each watering period was complicated.

The installation was hampered by the weather as it rained incessantly. We had taken the precaution of covering the wooden floor of the clubhouse before work started and this turned out to be an inspired decision – there was mud everywhere! Laying pipes, cutting them to size, connecting the sprinklers and electrical mechanisms was time-consuming, but several members relished this technical challenge and became quite expert. Nevertheless, we worried that mud might have compromised the pipe joints and decided not to fill in the trenches above the pipe joints until we had tested the system. This proved to be a good call as we found a number of leaks which we were then able to fix.

Despite all our planning and hard work, we experienced a series of setbacks that delayed the system being fully commissioned. Our original commissioning date was 5 April but this had to be postponed because our electrician had to re-sit an exam! A new date of 11 April was agreed but the contractor had been sent the

wrong controller, a problem he only discovered when he arrived on site to fit it. On 21 April the correct controller was fitted, the test programme was run, the sprinklers were adjusted and the experts left. By this time, warm weather had arrived but when we came to set the system going, the generator's starter jammed resulting in the generator being recalled to the supplier in west Wales. On its return, the automatic starter worked but a wiring fault caused it to jam again and so it was sent back to the supplier once more. Meanwhile, the weather got hotter and lawns got drier.



The generator returned but problems remained. We sent it back to the supplier a third time with a demand for a replacement. In October we received a new generator and we have just managed to get the system working as it should, albeit six months late. It has been a very frustrating time but on the positive side, we have learned a great deal about the system whilst trying to fix it, which should stand us in very good stead for the future.

We would like to thank Croquet England and the South East Croquet Federation for supporting the project and to the many croquet players, GGCC members and others who contributed to our crowd funding appeal.

## CA PRESIDENT'S PROGRESS 2023

**H**aving indicated at the 2022 AGM that I would like to get out and about to clubs I was delighted when asked to attend clubs at events throughout the year.

In January I received two invitations. The first was to visit Bowdon for their celebration of 150 years, the second to Cambridge University AC Club and inaugural fundraising dinner for the 1961 club.

As it turned out, both visits were made in April but in reverse order. The dinner was at Sidney Sussex and proved to be a fine meal with good company and the opportunity to renew some acquaintances. The visit to Bowdon gave me the opportunity to stay with a friend, Liz Taylor-Webb, and enjoy our reminiscences. The celebratory supper on the Friday offered many variants of Lancashire hotpots, whilst the opening of the new hut by Sally Dynevor aka Sally Webster of Coronation Street was a fine day with newcomers

visiting the club.

[images Sidney Sussex and Bowdon] A most welcome invitation came from the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club. Once they found that the CA President was a lady, I was invited to the Ladies' Dinner in May and met Rachael Blackmore, the guest speaker, who spoke of her successes being the first woman to win the Grand National and then going on to win other prestigious events.

In June I attended Cambridge University



Cuppers at Emmanuel College. The setting on the front court was magnificent and the hosts had provided Pimms and home-made scones for visitors, also inviting the gardeners who had mown the court early that morning. My husband and I enjoyed the entertainment as well as the refreshments. The result of this event was published in August's Gazette.



An invitation from the Hurlingham Club to attend the Opening ceremony of the WCF AC World Championship in July was accepted, and I enjoyed the hospitality the club is so good at making. I stayed



over for the first day of play which was of the highest calibre. On a more local level, in July I attended Southwell's Big Splash to mark the grants awarded for the new irrigation system. At the end of July I travelled to Oxford for the AC Student Championship and met young players who are our future hopes for keeping croquet alive. One of their number I was able to help improve with the facilities at the Gainsborough club, who allowed us three two-hour sessions to learn more stroke play, during August.



Early in August I went to Southwick to meet Mary Berry who opened the WCF GC Women's World Championship. It was good to see the live streaming on subsequent days when I returned home, and I congratulate those who participated in making this facility available, both on this occasion and others previously in the year. Another August visit was to York for the final of the CA Short Croquet Inter-club event. It coincided with the Races at York, so I saw many people in their finery on my rail journey.

My final visit came in September when I was at Nottingham for the Juniors and Schools weekend event. This event could do with more schools participating if we are to secure our future of the sport we all enjoy. I was delighted to meet Sam Cuthbert, who is making good progress after his accident last year and to be able to present, in person, the Spiers Trophy to him.



# ACADEMY COURSES

## THE CROQUET ACADEMY COURSES 2024



**T**he 2024 Croquet Academy programme will be run at 2 clubs to help reduce participants travel costs.

Highlights of the 2024 programme include:

- A comprehensive Coaches Training & Qualification Course for both AC & GC players developed by Paul Frances. For full details go to the Academy website [www.thecroquetacademy.com](http://www.thecroquetacademy.com)
- A one day GC Masterclass by Jonathan Powe. Jonathan is an established International GC & AC player. Following his very well received course in 2020 we have invited him back to give others the opportunity to benefit his excellent Masterclass.
- A new course for 2024 is a one day programme targeted at GC

players with little or no knowledge of the AC game. There are specific techniques in the AC game which can benefit the GC player, this course will demonstrate these techniques and provide practice routines to develop these skills. Who knows the participants may even get a taste to play AC!

- Learning Short Croquet has proven itself to be an effective way for people to start playing the AC game. This year we will be running a 4 part modular course starting in October 2024 for Beginners & Improvers. In addition in the Spring we will run a new course designed to take Short Croquet players onto full sized lawns and develop their AC skills.
- Our GC Workshops are becoming increasingly popular. On these

courses participants will be able to develop their individual skills and gain improvements to their game through video analysis, one to one coaching sessions and development of practice routines.

### Jonathan Isaacs

*\*Bookings should be made on The Croquet Academy website: [www.thecroquetacademy.com](http://www.thecroquetacademy.com)  
For booking/queries, email Secretary at: [courses@thecroquetacademy.com](mailto:courses@thecroquetacademy.com)*

*\*\*For coaching and referees Qualification Courses, course fees have been reduced by the subsidy given by Croquet England of £25 per participant. Further grants are available from some Federations on personal application to your Federation Coaching Officer*

*\*\*\*The 4 part Short Croquet Course will start on 12th October, with the second module on 16th October. The remaining two modules will be held in the spring of 2025, timings to be agreed with course participants. The cost covers the set of 4 one day modules.*

Day	Date	AC or GC	Course	Venue	Ideal Hcp	Course Leader	Cost
Wed/Thurs	6/7March	AC & GC	Coaches Teaching and Qualification Course	Southwick	See website	Paul Francis	£40**
Mon	3rd April	GC	Understanding the 6th Edition GC Rules	Southwick	n/a	Ian Cobbold	£20
Wed	10th April	GC	Beginners & Improvers Course	Southwick	n/a	Richard Carline	£40
Wed	10th April	AC	Moving on with AC (Introduction to AC on full lawns)	Southwick	n/a	Frances Low	£40
Thurs	11th April	GC	Beginners & Improvers Course	Tunbridge Wells	n/a	Richard Carline	£40
Wed	17th April	AC	AC Croquet Skills for GC Players	Southwick	10 or less	Jonathan Isaacs	£40
Wed	24th April	AC	AC It's All About the Break	Southwick	12 to 18	Clive Hayton	£40
Wed/Thurs	24/25 April	AC	Introduction and development in Advance Play	Southwick	5 to 12	Nigel Polhill	£75
Thurs	2nd May	GC	Up your Game C to B Level	Tunbridge Wells	7+	Richard Carline	£40
Wed	15th May	GC	Up your Game C to B Level	Southwick	7+	Chrissie Merrington	£40
Wed	22nd May	GC	Move up to A Level	Southwick	3+	Daphne Gaitley	£40
Wed	29th May	GC	A Masterclass with Jonathan Powe	Southwick	5 or less	Jonathan Powe	£50
Wed	5th June	GC	A one day Workshop	Southwick	3 to 10	Richard Carline	£40
Thurs	6th June	GC	A one day Workshop	Tunbridge Wells	3 to 10	Richard Carline	£40
Wed	31st July	AC	Supervised High Bisque Tournament	Southwick	14+	Frances Low	£20
Sat	12th Oct***	AC	4 part modular Short Croquet Beginners Course	Southwick	n/a	Frances Low	£50
	On demand	AC & GC	One to one Coaching Sessions	By agreement	n/a	Academy Coaches	£25 per hour

## NORTHERN CROQUET ACADEMY

**T**he eighth Northern Academy season features several new courses to meet demand, together with others that have proved particularly popular and successful. We are also delighted to welcome three new coaches to the team.

The Academy is at York, close to the station and excellent rail connections to most parts of the country. Why not get your season underway by combining a croquet course with a visit to one of the country's top tourist cities?

This year's all-new AC programme features four courses appealing to different levels of experience and handicap. 'Tips and technique for higher bisquers' is for those in the earlier stages of their croquet journey. For developing players, Sarah Hayes is offering two complementary courses, one on breaks and another on leaves. Mary Knapp's course is for players whose initial experience of Advanced Rules croquet leads them to want to know more.

The GC programme features several new courses. The ever-popular 'Classic GC skills and tactics' and 'GC skills and tactics in practice' consolidate the key principles and practice of the game.

Penny Clark's 'Moving on in GC' is a new course for developing GC players, while two complementary courses led by Dave Kibble, both new additions to the Northern Academy programme, are for experienced GC players looking to advance their game to the next level.

For aspiring coaches, both AC and GC, there is an updated Club-Level Coach training course for which a £25 subsidy, funded by Croquet England, is available for qualifying applicants.

Meanwhile, of interest to both codes is the highly-regarded 'Back to basics' on getting core technique right. There is also a one-day course to introduce GC players to the delights of Short Croquet; this also offers clubs a ready-made model to introduce this accessible and enjoyable form of AC to their members.

Most Northern Academy courses fill very quickly. Booking is open now and early booking is advised. To discuss a course in more detail, check availability or book, please contact the Northern Academy Course Secretary Debbie James at [northerncroquetacademy@gmail.com](mailto:northerncroquetacademy@gmail.com) or T: 07772 778232.

**| John Harris**



Dates 2024	Course	Course Leader	Cost
Tues 23 April	AC Tips and technique for higher <u>bisquers</u>	John Harris	£38
Weds 24 April	AC/GC Back to basics	Alan Locket	£38
Sat-Sun 27-28 April	AC/GC Become a Croquet England Club-Level Coach	James Hawkins	£70*
Tues 30 April	GC Moving on in Golf Croquet	Penny Clark	£38
Tues 7 May	AC Call THAT a four-ball break?	Sarah Hayes	£38#
Weds 8 May	AC Don't leave me this way...	Sarah Hayes	£38#
Fri 10 May	AC Next steps in Advanced AC	Mary Knapp	£38
Tues 14 May	GC Competitive Golf Croquet: strokes	Dave Kibble	£38#
Weds 15 May	GC Competitive Golf Croquet: strategy	Dave Kibble	£38#
Sat 18 May	GC Classic Golf Croquet skills and tactics	John <u>Crossland</u>	£38
Sun 19 May	GC Golf Croquet skills and tactics in practice	John <u>Crossland</u>	£38
Tues 11 June	GC/AC Learn Short Croquet in one day	John Harris	£38
* Croquet England offers subsidies towards course costs. Some Federations may be able to provide additional support.			
# £70 if booked as a pair ( <u>Hayes+Hayes</u> or <u>Kibble+Kibble</u> )			



## CHILTERN ACADEMY

**T**he Chiltern Academy is offering an extensive programme of courses in 2024 designed to appeal to a wide range of players.

If you would like to qualify as a coach or referee (either AC or GC), or learn about tournament management, there is a course for you. Similarly the programme includes courses for those who wish to improve at either AC / GC / SC. While our

'Swing Clinics with the Dr!' feature again, this year we have added a course to pass on the Dr's experience to help coaches improve players' swings.

Courses are usually bookable through the CqE website's Fixtures Calendar, when that opens for course bookings in early Jan. Places are limited so early booking is recommended.

**I Ian Shore**



Day	Date	Courses	Venue*	Ideal Handicaps	Course Leader	Cost**
Sat	20 Jan 24	Introduction to Club-Level Tournament Management Course (Bookable via CCA Manager)	Phyllis Court	NA	Chris Roberts	£5
Fri	23 Feb 24	Playing to Advantage and other GC Rules - Afternoon Seminar (Sponsored by and bookable via SWF)	(Bath)	NA	Ian Shore	£30
Sat/Sun	24/25 Feb 24	GC - Becoming a Referee Blended Learning Course (Sponsored by and bookable via SWF)	(Bath)	NA	Ian Shore	£40
Sat/Sun	9/10 Mar 24	AC - Becoming a Referee Course	High Wycombe	NA	Cliff Jones	£25
Mon	11 Mar 24	AC - Refereeing Qualification Assessment - Half Day	High Wycombe	NA	Cliff Jones	NA
Tue	12 Mar 24	One-2-One with Cliff Jones	High Wycombe	NA	Cliff Jones	£35
Tue	19 Mar 24	AC - Building Better Breaks Course	High Wycombe	AC 11 to 18	Richard Peperell	£40
Sat/Sun	23/24 Mar 24	Becoming a Coach Course	High Wycombe	NA	Rich Waterman	£25
Wed	27 Mar 24	GC - Raising Your Game to A-Level Course	High Wycombe	GC 3 to 7	Ian Shore	£40
Sat	6 Apr 24	GC - Improving Your Game for C-Level Players Course	Watford	GC 7+	Jason Carley	£40
Tue	9 Apr 24	AC - Improving your Game for Intermediate Players Course	High Wycombe	AC 6 to 14	Raouf Allim	£40
Sat	13 Apr 24	SC - Introduction to Short Croquet Course	High Wycombe	NA	Tony Elliott	£30
Sat/Sun	13/14 Apr 24	GC - Becoming a Referee Blended Learning Course	Eynsham	NA	Ian Shore	£25
Fri	19 Apr 24	GC - Firm Foundations Course	Eynsham	GC 10+	Neil Stewart	£40
Sat	20 Apr 24	AC - Building Better Breaks Course	Ealing	AC 11 to 18	Tony Elliott	£40
Tue	23 Apr 24	A Clinic with the Swing Doctor!	High Wycombe	AC 14-, GC 8-	Raouf Allim	£25
Fri	26 Apr 24	GC - Improving Your Game Course	Eynsham	GC 5 to 9	Ian Shore	£40
Sat	27 Apr 24	AC - A Day with Lionel Tibble (Openings, Leaves and Peels)	High Wycombe	AC -1 to 3	Lionel Tibble	£40
Tue	30 Apr 24	GC - Honing Your Competitive Edge Course	Hamptworth	GC 7 to 10	Ian Shore	£40
Fri	3 May 24	GC - Fun Coaching Morning! (Sponsored and bookable by HWCC)	(High Wycombe)	GC 10+	Ian Shore	£10
Tue	7 May 24	Coaching the Swing with the Swing Doctor!	High Wycombe	Qual Coach	Raouf Allim	£25
Sat	11 May 24	GC - Raising Your Game to B-Level Course	Ealing	GC 7+	Ian Shore	£40
Sat/Sun	18/19 May 24	GC - Becoming a Referee Blended Learning Course	High Wycombe	NA	Ian Shore	£25
Mon	20 May 24	GC - Referee Refresher - Afternoon Seminar	High Wycombe	NA	Ian Shore	£15
Tue	21 May 24	A Clinic with the Swing Doctor!	High Wycombe	AC 14-, GC 8-	Raouf Allim	£25
Wed	22 May 24	AC - Introduction to the Triple Peel	High Wycombe	AC 8 and better	Rich Waterman	£40
Fri	31 May 24	GC - Raising Your Game to B-Level Course	Winchester	GC 7+	Ian Shore	£40
Sat/Sun	5/6 Oct 24	AC - Becoming a Referee Weekend Course	Winchester	NA	Jeff Dawson	£25
Sat	19 Oct 24	AC - Refereeing Qualification Assessment - Half Day	Winchester	NA	Jeff Dawson	NA

\* Generally bookings are made via CA's Fixtures Calendar, unless course venue is identified with parentheses, in which case the course is booked directly as shown.

\*\* For coaching and refereeing courses, course fees have been reduced by subsidies, granted by the CA, of £25 per participant. Further grants are available from some Federations on personal application to your local Federation Coaching Officer.

Contact: Ian Shore - [manager@chilterncroquetacademy.org](mailto:manager@chilterncroquetacademy.org); 01494 718 615; 07783 322 549



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## WINTER LAWN MAINTENANCE

### Worm casts

Thanks to the wet weather, worms have been prolific. In March I decided to test a liquid product that claimed to cure casting. I applied this every month until August. It boldly claimed, "A huge reduction in worm cast production on sward surface". But, over the period, the worm casts became gradually more numerous and eventually, I had to sweep the lawn before play and mowing. I was exasperated and decided to call it a day. So, I went back to using Soil Conditioner which is more expensive but clears the casts. It isn't a 100% cure but stubborn areas can be spot-treated thus keeping the lawn free of casts. Both products are trying to do the same thing. They aim to make the soil unpleasant for worms so that they go elsewhere. One important point is that Soil Conditioner works best before significant rain of at least 15mm. I used it before a 40mm deluge and it worked very well indeed. If you are as desperate as I was, you will find an appropriate Soil Conditioner in my online shop. It is the only product I know that successfully dissuades worms. If you know of a liquid product that actually works, please let me know.

### Mowing

During winter is important to mow. Keeping the grass trimmed at a height of 8 to 10mm will cause the plants to grow sideways and thicken the sward. It will also encourage a dwarf habit in the grass plants. I don't play on my lawn in the winter but I do apply a winter liquid fertiliser mixed with soluble iron four times during the winter. This costs about £14 per application. It keeps the grass healthy and the moss at bay, ready for next season.

See my online shop at: [www.duncanhectorturfcare.co.uk](http://www.duncanhectorturfcare.co.uk)

| Duncan Hector





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

### MOVING FROM GC TO AC

For GC players, the move to AC is straightforward. Players' GC skills give them a head start in the new code. A special role of the coach is to make the transition as smooth as possible.

The core rules of AC are simple. James Hawkins sums them up in a few easy steps:

1. You have two balls, and can pick either one or the other for each turn.
2. Both balls have to score all the hoops. The clips show you where you're going.
3. You can keep your turn going by earning extra shots:
4. Run your hoop and you get another go.
5. Hit another ball and you get another two goes. The first of those is played from anywhere in contact with the ball you've just hit.
6. Both balls finish at the peg. That's it!

Everything else can be picked up as you go. The key thing is to get going, and get students enjoying earning extra shots to extend the turn, score a hoop and build a break.

The new AC coaching manual (2022) provides a gentle route into AC. It includes lots of hints and tips for coaches on not only what to coach but suggestions on how to coach each bit. Key "Introducing Association Croquet Manual for Coaches" into the Croquet England website or Google to get straight to it.

Also in the manual are a direct route from GC to AC for Golf Croquet players who know they want to try the other code – and some toe-in-the-water transition games for GC players ready to extend their repertoire beyond GC, or who just want to get the feel of break building with minimal new learning.

### BLACK BESS

Black Bess takes the same ball sequence as GC – blue, red, black, yellow – and builds onto that familiar environment a simple game that GC players can learn in a few minutes. It offers GC players a straightforward stepping stone into AC. Black Bess, developed in Yorkshire, can

be played with 2 or 4 players. The only new learning needed before players can get started is the simplest of the croquet strokes, the take-off shot, and the sequence around it: roquet > ball in hand > take-off > continuation shot. Other than that, the only technical skills required are the basic GC moves of hitting the ball, shooting at another, and hoop running.

1. As in GC, start in corner 4 and play the balls in sequence.
2. As in very basic AC, a roquet leads to ball in hand and a take-off shot, followed by a continuation shot. Balls may be roqueted once only per turn, unless a hoop is run, in which case all balls become 'live' again.
3. When a hoop is run, it counts for both the striker's ball and partner ball.
4. Finish by hitting the peg. One successful shot at peg counts for both balls.

This works as a game in its own right, and can also be used for quick relaxation to fill spare time at the end of a session.

### RICOCHET

This is even simpler than Black Bess and can be played with any number of players from 2 to 5. Only three technical skills are required, all of them very familiar to GC players: hitting the ball; shooting at another; and hoop running.

Ricochet works well as a straightforward introduction to continuation shots and offers an easy way of giving GC players experience of a simple AC-style game without croquet shots. The game is six hoops plus the peg; the game ends when the first person pegs out.

1. Start from either baulk (if necessary, explain where they are).
2. One extra shot for running a hoop in order; two extra shots for hitting (roqueting) another ball. In the first of these two extra shots, the ball must stay on the lawn (penalty: end of turn).
3. Each ball can be used once only to gain extra shots before running a hoop; all balls become 'live' again when a hoop is run and at the start of a new turn.
4. Extra shots cannot be accumulated.

The game was developed by John Riches as a coaching tool; the rules can be flexed to match the situation and students' learning to date. There is, for example, no yard line, no ball in hand,





## NEW COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

The following players have all completed all stages of their accreditation and have been added to the list of Croquet England Coaches. Congratulations to all:

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

- Adam Britton Llanidloes CC
- Richard Ellis Rottingdean CC
- Philip Extance Shrewsbury CC
- Paul Franklin Phyllis Court CC
- Philip de Glanville Bath CC
- Maureen Goodchild Beverley & East Riding CC
- Gill Williams Llanidloes CC

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

**Association Croquet – Grade 1**

- Darryl Whitehead Cheltenham CC

**Golf Croquet – Grade 1**

- Gill Hindshaw Moreton-in-Marsh CC
- Darryl Whitehead Cheltenham CC
- Naomi Whitehead Cheltenham CC

Thinking of becoming a coach? Now is the time to take the first step, by enrolling on a Coach Training Course. Places fill quickly so do not delay. All the Academies will be running these courses early in 2024, and others are expected to run too. You do not need to be a top player to be a very good coach; much more important are a warm and welcoming personality, good interpersonal skills, and a genuine interest in helping others.

There are many rewards in becoming a coach. Coaching significantly helps your own standard of play. There is also real satisfaction in helping other players improve their game.

As two of our newly qualified coaches have put it:

*“It’s good to be able to give back to our wonderful sport something of the skills and enjoyment that have already been shared with me.”*

**Gill Hindshaw, Moreton-in-Marsh CC**

*“I hope I will be able to assist many members to reach their playing potential and will wear my badge with pride.”*

**Gill Williams, Llanidloes CC**

## NEW MERIT AWARDS

Congratulations to the following:

**Association Croquet – Bronze Merit Award**

Gareth Hobby  
All England Final

Peter Rothwell  
Wrest Park Handicap

Michael Bithell  
Wrest Park Handicap

**Association Croquet – Gold Merit Award**

Toby Toller  
Mary Rose

Teddy Wilmot-Sitwell  
Challenge & Gilbey

**Golf Croquet – Bronze Merit Award**

John Watson  
Wrest Park GC C Level

Sarah Clements  
Bath GC C Level

Grenville Perry  
Ashby GC C Level

**Golf Croquet – Silver Merit Award**

Walter Hall  
GC All England

**Golf Croquet – Gold Merit Award**

Giles Pepperell  
Chester GC A Level

Rick Lilley  
Suzanne Roberts  
Memorial

*Claim your Merit Award if you qualify!*

*The Croquet England website gives full details of what standard is needed for each award. Put Merit Award into the site’s search box to get straight to it. Also on the site is the claim form.*

*This has now been simplified, covering both AC and GC Merit Awards, so claiming your Award should be straightforward.*

just a straightforward game to enjoy with minimum formality.

This is not only a good coaching game; it also works well at drop-ins to give visitors a good insight into the strategic nature of croquet. Ricochet is also a satisfying game in its own right, and has developed in Australia into a serious game played at the highest level with a strong regional and national structure to support it. My nine-year-old grandson also urges me to add: “Tell them it’s a great game for kids” – indeed kids of any age.

For two player games, throw two ‘neutral’ balls onto the lawn before starting; for three players, throw on one.

### OTHER GAMES

The new AC coaching manual contains several other games that are good for developing basic skills but are also just fun to play. All of them are very quick to learn; any of them will work well as part of a coaching session, a summer do, a work social, or in their own right as a pleasant addendum to an afternoon’s play. Ricochet and Black Bess also work well in winter play conditions, when the focus is on a game that holds strategic interest but gives a speedier exchange of players than full AC and is over before the cold reaches the bones!

### UPDATE ON THE EALING GC COACHING VIDEO

Correction: the excellent short GC coaching video mentioned in the last issue was filmed not at Enfield but at Ealing CC. It was spearheaded by TV producer Bridget Goodman and filmed by a colleague cameraman returning a favour, hence its professional quality.

The video can now be easily accessed from the home page of the Ealing CC site [www.ealingcroquet.org](http://www.ealingcroquet.org) – six minutes long and worth checking out. Alternatively, type ‘Croquet practice video’ into Google and it should come up as the first result.

PHOTOGRAPH John Harris: Back office Rail Logistics staff teambuilding. Ricochet and Black Bess can work well as part of the mix for visiting work groups and community groups.

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## WEBSITE

[www.croquetengland.org.uk](http://www.croquetengland.org.uk) and [www.croquet.org.uk](http://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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