



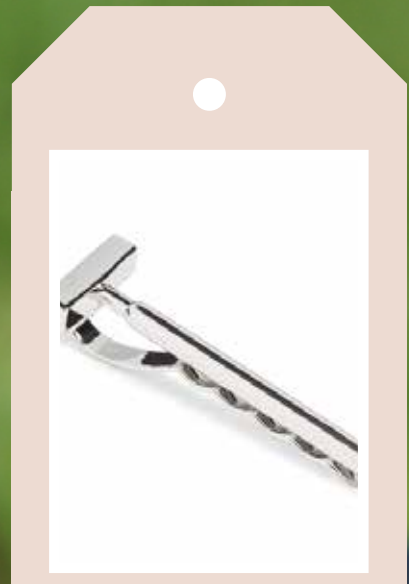
CROQUET

GAZETTE

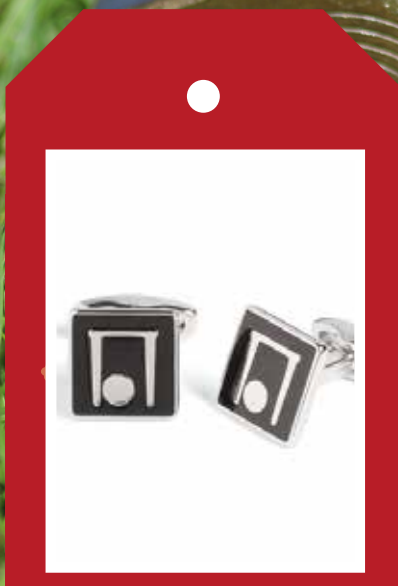
Issue 407 | February 2024



**THE CROQUET ENGLAND MISSION:
MORE PEOPLE, PLAYING MORE CROQUET,
IN MORE PLACES**



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Croquet England
Issue 407 | February 2024



Front cover:
 Visitors enjoying a game of croquet at the National Trust
PHOTOGRAPH David Levenson © National Trust

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WELCOME

Welcome to the first Croquet Gazette of 2024. As always, I hope to be able to bring you an interesting, informative, and sometimes even amusing publication. Before I divulge any spoilers, I open this year's welcome speech with a huge thank you to those who help me make it happen. To all of the contributors, the readers, committee members and board members, and most of all, the proofreaders, thank you! Producing the Gazette takes significant time, and often a fair amount of energy from lots of people. I must commend

my proofreaders for their patience and passion which helps deliver this treat to you, our readers. In this issue, we have lots of information regarding the year ahead and changes from within Croquet England. The tournament reports will be back in full swing from April. Until then, we are treated with news from around the world and our regular features.

Alison Maugham
Editor
editor@croquetengland.org.uk



MORE PEOPLE, PLAYING MORE CROQUET, IN MORE PLACES

The mantra of Croquet England is one that is simple and clear: we would like to see more people, playing more croquet, in more places. I became the Communications Support Officer for Croquet England in August 2023. In the last few months I have been working hard to strengthen our internal and external relationships and I thought I would share some of the things I have been up to behind the scenes.

SUPPORTING CLUBS AND PLAYERS

Croquet England governs a sport that can only exist because of its players and their clubs. I believe it is vital to recognise and celebrate the people that make this happen. We should congratulate their achievements, ensure they are always supported and

encouraged to generate growth in their clubs, and value the passion they hold for our sport. Not all players play the same code of croquet; not everyone plays competitively, or non-competitively, but we do our best to help all clubs thrive.

I have been working with clubs recently to create marketing material unique to their clubs; promote tournaments, drive press releases for positive activity and show appreciation for those who deserve a little spotlight. A new club has formed recently, even before they had a 'home'; I was delighted to be able to introduce them to the relevant committees and federation so that they could gather the requisite support to form a club and negotiate a new home which they will share with a bowls club. Whether your club wishes to promote

...continued on page 8



HIBISCUS COLUMN

'Do you believe in God?' Heads turned as the awkward question hung in the hot Corfu air on the final day of the 2023 tournament. She who asked it was Liz Wilson, Chairman of Fylde Croquet Club, but not an obvious religious torch bearer. It was addressed to me, a refugee from eleven years in a strict Catholic boarding school, with all the baggage that implies. Want to guilt trip me? Don't bother: it's a given. But she didn't. 'Raise your mallet to heaven', she advised. She'd seen me throwing away a shed load of chances with jawsed balls over the previous ten days. Now she was generously trying to save me from technical malpractice. Trickily, this particular obeisance is definitely mallet only; raising head, even eyes, is instant denial.

On Blewbury's velvet turf, I progressed; the spin generated by a slightly elevated mallet head propelled balls through hoops that would have snagged them previously. I dared to imagine a Damascene moment when I would expect to hoop rather than fear I wouldn't, surely a tipping point between progressive and perennial wannabe. Never 100%, of course. I too have watched minus handicappers butchering sitters, usually clocking up a loss in the process. For them a tiny blip, for high-bisquers another insidious seed of

doubt. Or not....

Over coffee at Wycombe's only one day tournament to survive the pre-Christmas monsoons, I asked my rivals when they expected to reach this level of semi-certainty. With the exception of Richard Peperell, close to scratch, they had handicaps between 11 and 24. As they were totally baffled by the question, I should have realised they'd never addressed it. Which left me to learn the hard way that it may be better not to dream....

The rout began with Kenny (24), who started playing in July. 'Piece of cake', Richard said to me encouragingly. 'No idea how to build a break. Didn't win a game last time out'. Maybe he hasn't stopped for a hot meal or a night's sleep since, but he is a fast learner. Less than an hour later, he was contentedly pegging out. 'Finally came together in the last couple of weeks', he said with justifiable pleasure. As he raised the winner's bottle in the afternoon, he remained unbeaten. It was some consolation that my first failure was my worst. No more peg outs, much more lawn time, one game in which the tipping point showed signs of life. Richard and I were equal as the clock called a halt, leaving me with three bisques that could no longer be played. A four hoop break to peg without them

felt better, though the golden hoop put an abrupt end to promise.

Time to wish everyone under the new brand umbrella, Croquet England, a very happy New Year and to plan the 2024 campaign. Dark midwinter is the time to think towards that currently unimaginable day when courts are no longer under water. High-bisquers generally select one of two approaches. Either they practise at home until they're almost unbeatable before they test their skills off properly or they make it up as they go along. The home guys are the ones who rock up and invade your experimental four ball break on your pre-booked court as of right. 'Would you like to play?' I routinely ask, stifling irritation. 'I'd rather practise', is the hasty response, a desire that ends the moment a better player turns up looking for a game. Is this generous behaviour for a man of the cloth, even a retired one? The freer spirits are magnificently represented by Patricia Mulcahy from Phyllis Court and High Wycombe. From the outset, she drove round southern England to play in CA GC tournaments, reducing her handicap in line with her gathering expertise. She has already won a National Championship and played for Ireland. Now she's out on the AC circuit, playing off 20. Be very afraid...

I Minty Clinch

TOURNAMENT REGULATIONS 2024

The Tournament Regulations for the 2024 playing season are expected to contain the following principal changes, effective from February 2024:

- C1(b)(3). Cord boundaries are not to be used for Golf Croquet Championships.
- C1(b)(7). Tournament Levy updated from £6 per day to £7 per day.
- Conversion of text and definitions from Croquet Association to Croquet England terminology. As part of this, C2(b) now defines British and English (and variants) as reserved words in the titles of events.
- C3. New preamble text to better define how doubles pairs are treated when dealing with entries.
- C3(a)(2)(A). Modified so that the two reserved Under-25 Places are allocated to the best two Under-25 players who would not otherwise be allocated a place.
- C3(a)(3). The reductions in Dynamic Grade for allocation purposes in GC events has been redefined.
- F2(g). New regulation for determining placings in complete or incomplete Advantage GC Blocks.
- L1(a)(3). The AC Tournament Committee is conducting a trial, applicable to the 2024 season, which permits Alternate Stroke Doubles to be played by only one side of a game or match.
- P1(c). The provision for players to compete under an Assumed Name has been removed.
- P2(b)(2). Removal of the reference to "a significant amount"

in the prohibition on Tournament Officials making or placing bets on an event.

- P4(f). New regulation to require the use of scoring clips in GC.
- R(e). New regulation to cover situations appeals against a decision by a Tournament Referee who was acting as a referee on request when no Deputy Tournament Referee has been appointed.
- T3(a). Minimum time limits for GC, unless advertised in advance, are now 50 minutes for a 13-point game and 70 minutes for a 19-point game.
- T3(a). Reducing time limits for GC matches has been removed. Where time limits are required for matches, each game should use the same time limit. Unused time from any game in a match is carried forward to the next.
- The final regulations will be presented to the Executive for review and approval on 25 January. Publishing deadlines mean that this article has been written in advance of that date, so whilst it is anticipated they will be approved, by the time you read this there may be some further updates.

You will be able to read the latest version on the Croquet England subscribers' website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/regulations>. As well as further updates, the published version includes details of other changes made for clarity.

I Samir Patel, AC Tournaments Committee

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



26 YEARS AGO

In the January 1998 Gazette (#253)

THE NEW JAUQUES BALLS

Jaques failed to meet the mid-October date they gave for sending their new balls to the CA for testing. Chris Jaques has spoken of a two-month delay, which almost certainly means that the earliest time for any testing will be into 1998. In the meantime, the Barlow GT balls have been re-tested and re-certified. The expectation is that the CA has sufficient Eclipse balls to cover CA events in 1998. A final decision will be made by the Tournament Committee.

CONFIRMATION OF NEW GUINNESS RECORD FOR CROQUET

The Crake Valley club are pleased to announce to the croquet world that the Guinness Organisation have finally accepted the result of the 24hour croquet match against Belsay Hall in June 1997 as an official Guinness and World record, and they have a certificate to prove it. The citation reads: "On 21-22 June 1997 a team from Crake Valley Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club played a team from Belsay Hall and scored 372 hoops between them in 24 hours."

40 YEARS AGO

In the Spring 1984 Gazette (#174)

CHANGING CUSTOMS BY S.S. TOWNSEND

During the Veterans Tournament at Eastbourne last summer, some of which

was featured in a Channel 4 programme, I was asked by the TV producer present what changes I had noticed during the 30 or more years that I had been playing croquet.

DRESS

As an indication of the different image of players on the courts today compared with that of a generation ago, it was not until I had been playing croquet for five years that I bought my first pair of white flannel trousers, and even then because of my participation in a parents versus school cricket match rather than for croquet wear. In the early nineteen fifties only a minority of players in fact wore white, and it is no exaggeration to have to admit that too many players come on to the courts dressed in a slovenly manner. It is I think only in the last few years that the principle of wearing whites has become fully accepted, David Openshaw, our Captain in the recent successful Test series, will forgive me when I recall that on his first appearance at Hurlingham in 1975 he played in what appeared to be boy scout buff-coloured shorts.

ON BUYING DRINKS FOR THE LOSER

In view of today's widespread habit of a winner offering to buy a drink for the loser it may surprise many to learn of the relatively recent growth of the custom. In the middle nineteen fifties when I was particularly active on the courts and won more games than lost, I cannot recall offering a drink to the loser. Had the custom been in vogue I could hardly fail to have been aware of it, and I certainly

do not remember being invited to a drink when I lost a game. I can only assume that like Topsy it just grewed.

90 YEARS AGO

In the March 10th Gazette (#745 Vol XXXI No. 1)

EDITORIAL NOTES

The Laws for Golf-Croquet have already produced a query or two, which is rather what we expected when pointing out that they aimed at brevity in preference to verbose definitions. "East yard-line" is the one measured from the boundary connecting corners iii and iv, the right-hand border of the diagram (Year Book, p. 37), East being always to the right of any map or plan if regarded correct way up. Our note at the foot of the letter from Mr. B. H. Wiggins defends a form of the game which excludes the harmful practice of jumping while maintaining the principles of Croquet, with regard to points scored by peels in so far as they are reasonable applicable.

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

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO GC PEGS - 'HOOP TOPPERS'

For competitive Golf Croquet, it is essential that the score is recorded as the game progresses, and in a way which is observable by spectators as well as the players. That has traditionally been served by clothes pegs or similar clips. The players load up their pockets or hems of clothing with enough clips for the game which can be as many as 10 pegs/clips. Surely there is a better method.

Well, the answer is yes. Andrew Dutton has developed sets of Hoop Run Indicators - 'Hoop Toppers'. These are pushed onto the top of each hoop as part of the lawn preparation. They hold onto the hoop firmly to avoid the risk of them being knocked off when a ball impacts on the hoop. They each have three sets of blue, red, green and pink blades folded in like a penknife. There is a small tab on each blade to allow them to be raised. When a hoop is scored, the appropriate coloured blade is raised and rotated to

a predetermined position where it meets a stop. For the first ball to run the hoop, say black, the blue blade would be raised to the vertical position. When the hoop is run a second time, say red, the red blade would be raised and rotated to the horizontal position. For Advantage GC and 19 pt GC, the hoop may be run a third time. In that case the appropriate colour blade is raised and rotated to the intermediate position between the other two blades. The green and pink blades are used for the secondary colours. The Hoop Toppers have been trialled at a number of clubs during their winter season. If any other clubs would like to trial them, please contact Andrew Dutton. It should be noted that the Golf Croquet Rules Committee considered the following at their meeting on 12th Jan 2024. Hoop Run Indicator. The committee was asked to consider whether a device could be attached to the hoops throughout a game which would be used to indicate



when a hoop had been run. The committee decided that the device could be used but that it would be an Outside Agency when attached to a hoop, unlike a normal scoring clip (Rule 4.1.1 (c)).

Andrew Dutton
dutton08@btinternet.com



Welcome to Croquet England! That simple statement represents the enactment of the decision taken at the Special General Meeting on 18 July 2022, which authorised an application to the Charity Commission to form Croquet England as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. You will be able to read more about the process and history in a separate article in this issue by John Reddish. By the time you read this, you will have become an associate of Croquet England and, unless you've asked for a change, in the same category as you were a member of the Croquet Association. For example, a Standard Member of the Croquet Association will have become a Standard Associate of Croquet England. A number of people have expressed concern about the change of terminology from 'member' to 'associate'. I'd like to reassure you that this isn't some underhand plot to deprive you of anything. In fact, we have done everything we can to ensure as little change to benefits as possible. The change arises from the Charity Commission provisions around who can participate in formal governance of a Charity (e.g. attending and voting at general meetings, vote in elections and so on), and in particular, specific legal declarations that have to be made. We know from consultation, conversation and attendance at CA general meetings that many of you don't want to get involved in that side of things. That's absolutely fine. Indeed, just wanting to play croquet is something

to be encouraged – our sport is nothing without people playing it. However, I hope that many of you will want to take an active part in the administration of our sport and will opt to become voting members of Croquet England. Everyone should have received an email or letter setting out the process, conditions and so on, and the necessary declaration for you to sign up to become a voting member. If you missed that email, then the information can be found at: <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=members> Looking forward, we have appointed Robert Fulford as our new Treasurer. As we welcome him to the role, I'd like to also thank Ian Burrige for his work as Treasurer over four years and in support of the transition to Croquet England. Gabrielle Higgins has been appointed as the Executive Director for Standards and Governance, replacing Roger Staples who has retired after many years in that and comparable predecessor roles. I'll close with the words of our President, Patricia Duke-Cox, at the final meeting of the Croquet Association Council in December 2023:

"The Croquet Association has achieved much since its formation in 1896. In that time, Croquet has blossomed worldwide and has enjoyed royal patronage in the domain since 1910. Congratulations are due to many and the future as Croquet England is in good hands."

Samir Patel, Chairman of the Board of Trustees

CROQUET ENGLAND - A CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

Croquet England is now fully-fledged as the replacement of the Croquet Association (CA) as the National Governing Body of Croquet. This is a summary of how and why the CA decided to make this change. It will inform those who don't know and remind those who should know because they were, of course, kept fully informed as the process evolved. And evolution it was. Certainly not revolution. It took nearly 17 years.

2006 Charitable status became potentially attainable for croquet when "the advancement of amateur sport" became a charitable object under the Charities Act 2006.

2007 The CA Council appointed a Working Party to consider the experience of other sporting bodies and the pros and cons of other organisational structures which might run alongside charitable status. They then decided not to pursue the matter because a majority, guided by the then Treasurer, took the view that there would be no clear net financial benefit to the CA in attaining charitable status. It was also suggested there would be cost implications in regularising the organisational requirements.

2012 The Council gave further consideration to charitable status. They discovered that the Charity Commission had yet to publish

...continued on next page

SHORT CROQUET CORNER

THE CORNER 3 CANNON

You are for hoop 3 with Red. You have no pilot at hoop 3 and no pioneer at hoop 4, but a ball (say Blue) is already on the corner spot in corner 3. What are the options?

A Bronze solution is to take off to corner 3, then take off from Blue to a hoop-running position. This should earn you one hoop, but further progress will normally be hard.

A more exacting Silver solution is to take off to corner 3 as before, then play a slightly-split drive from the corner. Put your own ball in a hoop-running position as before, and place Blue to give an onward rush down to hoop 4 after running the hoop. This is tricky to get right, but satisfying if it comes off.

A Gold solution is to use the corner ball to lay a break. Plan ahead to try and rush another ball (say Yellow) into corner 3. This will give you three balls in the same corner – a corner cannon. Yellow will be the centrepiece of the cannon as it is the roqueted ball, so place it on the yard line touching Blue. Best is to place it touching east-west: it makes the cannon marginally easier. You can now temporarily remove Blue.

Place your own ball, Red, touching Yellow to point Yellow directly towards hoop 4. Finally place Blue to also touch Yellow, at right angles to the other two balls, pointing to the right between hoop 2 and corner 2.

Aim a firm and confident swing between peg and hoop 5. You should find you have a good pilot at hoop 3 and a well-placed pioneer at hoop 4.

The size and proportions of Short Croquet lawns make this shot easier and more reliable than on a full lawn, and well worth a few minutes' practice to get the angles and strength right ahead of a game.

A well-executed corner cannon can be decisive in handing you the initiative, so it may pay to invest a bisque to get that initial

rush into the corner to set one up. The key thing is to avoid knocking the corner ball out of position: it needs to stay where it is. You need to finish up with three balls in the corner, giving the possibility of a well-laid break for one bisque.

| **John Harris**



PHOTOGRAPH:
Mary Knapp sets up
a Corner 3 cannon

their guidance on the interpretation of the charitable purpose of “advancement of amateur sport”. Enquiries had been made about this and there was concern about the reply which hinted that the Commission was minded to make a very narrow interpretation that would exclude advancement of any specific sport. The legal advice was to the effect that the CA should proceed with setting up a separate charitable trust or company to receive donations and legacies. This was not done, in part because the Charity Commission had again delayed their promised guidance.

2013 The regulations for Charitable Incorporated Organisations finally came into force. The then Secretary, Dr. Ian Vincent, presented a comprehensive paper entitled “Becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation”. He explained that a number of tax advantages would accrue and that charities are often able to raise funds from the public, grant-making trusts and local government more easily than non-charitable bodies. A working party was appointed. No progress was made before the CA turned its attention to the fundamental reforms of membership and governance eventually implemented in 2019.

2020 The new, reconstructed CA Council revisited the 2013 paper and concluded that the benefits of incorporation and charitable status clearly outweighed the disadvantages and that the administrative costs would be small because much of the necessary work had already been done. It was resolved to request the Secretary (Ian Vincent) and the Treasurer (Ian Burridge) to come up with a detailed recommendation, taking advice as they felt necessary.

2021 On 7 May the Vincent/Burridge paper was presented to the

Council, including a summary of the advice they had received from the solicitors recommended by the Sport and Recreational Alliance. The Council agreed that the CA should incorporate and, in addition, should seek charitable status. It was also agreed that the existing membership should be consulted before any decisions were made. This consultation was launched in September and took place over a period of several months. Questions were posed and answered.

2022 At the Special General Meeting on 18 July, the members voted, by a large majority (182 for and 18 against), in favour of conversion to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. It was accepted that this move to a new, more robust legal structure would allow the organisation, to be called Croquet England, to act in its own name. It would be more easily recognised by third parties. Together with charitable status, this would open more avenues for improved commercial deals, sponsorship, and fund-raising. The formal application to the Charity Commission (including the draft Constitution) was submitted by the Chairman and the Secretary in August 2022.

2023 The Charity Commission finally approved the application on 22 March and Croquet England came into being as a Registered Charity in England & Wales numbered 1202444. At the CA AGM in October the members resolved that the CA should be dissolved by the Officers after all the necessary steps had been taken to transfer all of the assets and liabilities to Croquet England and when they considered it prudent to do so.

| **John Reddish**
Secretary, Croquet England

...continued from page 3: More people, playing more croquet, in more places

Whether your club wishes to promote championship level tournaments or a unique coffee morning inviting local communities to be involved, all activity is equally important. We are grateful to you for encouraging more people to be involved.



THE THREE BIG P'S, PRESS, PRODUCERS AND PRESENTERS

Not in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine I would have a job which required writing press releases; and if you have ever seen a first draft of any of my work, you would understand why! However, I can confidently say that ensuring my punctuation is correct, is not something the fabulous people at the BBC are worried about. Not only do they just want to hear our news, they would like to help us shout about it too. When I plucked up the courage to ask a London presenter why they hadn't mentioned croquet in their broadcasts before, the answer was simply because they didn't know about it.

Well, now they do, and at least twice a month every month, they get a little update from me about more croquet. Having spent four months asking very politely if we might have an interview here and there, or a little shout out on the morning show, in January the unexpected happened and they contacted me. I am proud to tell you all that I was asked for our forward calendar so that the BBC radio show could schedule our major events into their planning and offer support to our sport.

Building our social media presence and website content has been another interesting, challenging and finally successful way to enhance our relationships. And before I move on, let me thank all of you who have liked, shared, followed and commented on the messages we have sent out. Not only has this enabled us to create a wider following with whom to share our croquet news, but it has helped us make new friends too.

WHAT DO WE WANT? MORE CROQUET! WHERE DO WE WANT IT? EVERYWHERE!

If you are subscribed to the monthly newsletter you will be aware that we have been very fortunate to have made friends with the National Trust. Believe it or not, this friendship was formed with the help of social media. The National Trust shared some content about their Summer of Play offer, which included putting out croquet sets for their visitors, naturally Croquet England 'loved' it, and a new friendship was born.

The National Trust has collaborated with us to produce our lovely new 'Play Croquet' flyers, which have already been distributed to over 40 Croquet Clubs, Sports facilities and a handful of National Trust properties. Additionally, they will be helping us make a noise about National Croquet Week through joint social media stories. With Croquet England's new Garden Membership, we are encouraging people to play croquet in many more places. Sport doesn't have to start at a club or be played at a club. We want people to pick up a mallet wherever they can with their friends and family. So why not play in the garden, or indeed, a

very pretty garden in the grounds of a beautiful National Trust property?



WE CAN'T THANK THEM ENOUGH FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND FRIENDSHIP

Here's a note from the National Trust themselves. "Many of the places in the care of the National Trust are rich in sporting history. With the Trust's fundamental connection to nature and the outdoors, and as home to informal children's games and organised sporting events, these places continue to share these sporting legacies, woven into their stories and collections.

The National Trust has a special role in the story of croquet.

The rules were codified at Chastleton House and Gardens in Oxfordshire, by Walter Whitmore Jones in 1866. Jones was born and lived at Chastleton before it came into the Trust's care, and he had a passion for inventing games.

Elsewhere there's a set of tapestries at Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire that depict winged infants engaged in a variety of games, including croquet. Croquet is also shown as a part of an allegorical panel by Rex Whistler at Dorneywood, Buckinghamshire. Although the garden pictured in the larger panel is imaginary, the walled croquet lawn shown is real and still in use. And for those who had no space for a croquet lawn in their garden, or perhaps for bad weather, an indoor version of croquet was devised. An example of 'parlour croquet' can be found at Calke Abbey in Derbyshire.

Today, many of the places in the National Trust's care offer visitors the chance to enjoy a game of croquet with magnificent backdrops during the warmer months of the year.

Some you might like to try with friends and family include: Wimpole Estate in Cambridgeshire, Ickworth Estate in Suffolk, Blickling Estate in Norfolk, Paycocke's House and Garden in Essex, Greenway in Devon, Dudmaston in Shropshire, Berrington Hall in Herefordshire, Newark Park in Gloucestershire, Standen House and Garden in West Sussex. For more information on where to play, you can search 'croquet' on the National Trust's website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk."

If you would like some marketing or communications support for your club, if you have an idea for promotions or sponsorship or would like some of the new flyers to hand out at your own club, please do get in touch with me at:

alison.maugham@croquetengland.org.uk.

Alison Maugham
Communications Support Officer, Gazette Editor



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PROUDLY BRITISH

THE (UNOFFICIAL) HISTORY OF CROQUET: PART 5 CROQVET OMNIBVS

The phrase Croquet For All may sound contemporary, but its use dates back to the 12th century. Croquet arrived in Britain during the Norman conquest (see The Unofficial History of Croquet: Croquet Gazette - April 2023) and was played almost exclusively by the barons. The foremost exponent of the game was Simon of Tewksbury (1116-1180), who was granted lands by Henry I in Gloucestershire and around the village of Ealing, to the west of London. In fact, Simon was so enamoured with the sport that he adopted Croquet Omnibus as his family motto, also incorporating croquet emblems on his coat of arms. This can be seen in a later illustration of 'The Knight' in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, which is clearly intended to represent Simon of Tewksbury, such was his enduring fame (Fig. 1). Simon was a participant in the Second Crusade (1145-1149) and spent much of his time in the impressive fortification of Krak des Chevaliers in Syria, which had been occupied by the Knights Hospitaller in 1142, and where Simon continued his passion for croquet. Fig. 6 shows a plan of the castle with three croquet courts marked with the letter K. The prominence that the game established in the daily lives of the knights can be gauged from contemporary accounts which refer to its nickname as Kroc des Chevaliers, a reference to the ancient Greek god of croquet, Krocus.

On his return from the crusades, Simon divided his time between his estates in Gloucestershire and Ealing, occasionally visiting court, but spending most of his time hunting and playing croquet. It was Simon who laid down most of the laws that still apply to the modern game.

He was buried in a side chapel in Tewksbury Abbey, where his tomb can be seen sporting the emblems of his principal passion, croquet (Fig. 2), including the oldest surviving example of a medieval mallet. His helmet still sits on the tomb (Fig. 5) and his shield hangs on the wall above (Fig. 3), both embellished with the emblem of a hare running a hoop on a laurel wreath, from which the term rabbit run originates. It is mainly due to the influence of Simon of Tewksbury that croquet maintained its popularity amongst the nobility during the medieval period (Fig. 4), whereas it is bowls that appears to have been the game of choice lower down the social scale. This can be attributed to the divisions existing between Anglo Saxon and Norman society. The different approach inherent in each of these competitive games might be the result of the contrasting approach to combat at the time of the Norman conquest, whereby bowls is played from an essentially static position compared to the more dynamic tactics involved in croquet, similar to the contrast between the Saxon shield wall and the more mobile Norman cavalry. The social divide continued right up to the period of the English Civil War, when bowls was favoured by the parliamentarians, whilst croquet maintained its support amongst the royalists. The bowls, which were slightly larger than their modern equivalent, were called roundheads, which is where the term originated. However, bowls also became popular amongst royalists beyond the influence of London, which is why it became known as crown bowls in the north. Simon of Tewksbury, like most of the nobility, adopted the chivalric principal of supporting the poor by supplying them with bread on saints' days, which in his case was dispensed from his croquet lawns at Ealing. This was called Lammas bread, from the old English for loaf-mass, which gave its name to Lammas Park in Ealing, where croquet is still played today.

| David Graham



Fig 1.



Fig 2.



Fig 3.

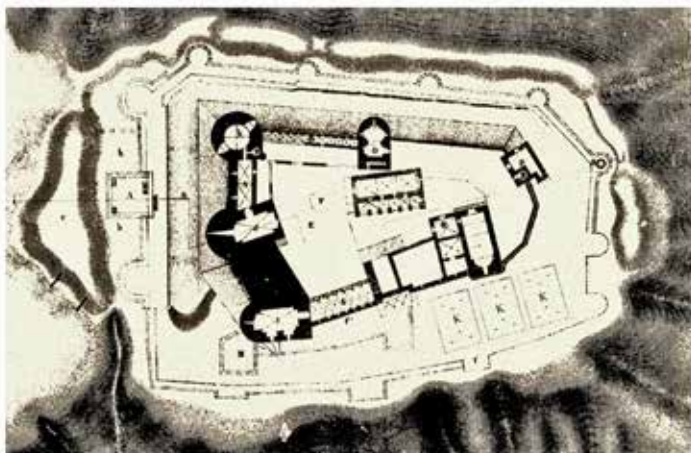


Fig 6.



Fig 5.



Fig 4.

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SCAN TO HEAD TO
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Readers are reminded that the views expressed in the Letters pages of The Gazette are those of the authors only, and not of those of their clubs, unless specifically indicated.

LETTERS

CROQUET & COMMUNISM

Readers may have raised an eyebrow or a smile looking at the photograph of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara playing croquet in Lammas Park, Ealing (1961) in the recent article "Croquet & Communism". If you felt that Castro's stance was all wrong - you would be right. The photograph is, of course, a hoax. It was made up from a Wakefield's post card of Lammas Park on which the figures of Castro and Guevara have been superimposed.

The figures were from a photograph taken in Cuba by Ernesto Korda, Castro's official photographer.

The shadows in the 2 photos don't match. The caption on the hoax postcard is in a font not used by Wakefield's. Lammas Park itself has a long association with croquet dating back to the 19th C. But, in 1940 the park was home to 3 bowling greens with no provision for croquet. And, it wasn't until 1988 with the formation of the present Ealing CC that one of the greens was converted to croquet. Today croquet has taken over all 3 greens.

I attach the original Korda photograph showing the 'croquet players' now equipped with golf clubs with which they look entirely more comfortable.

The photo is from a series of golfing shots taken as a tongue in cheek response to a promotional article showing Eisenhower playing a golf. I am unsure as to the history of the hoax, but suspect it appeared at the beginning of April. I am grateful to friends in Ealing History Group for interesting snippets of information.

Peter Mathews, Driffield CC

Response:

The letter from Peter Mathews regarding my latest Unofficial History of Croquet article, Croquet and Communism, is correct in so much as a hoax is involved, but the irony is that it is the story about Eisenhower that is the hoax. He was actually playing croquet, but his publicity advisor persuaded him to pose playing golf, as it would resonate better with the voters, particularly in states such as Texas where they think playing croquet is effete. So Fidel and Che had originally been photographed playing croquet when the story broke, but were persuaded to pose with golf clubs to counter the fake publicity about Eisenhower. They even managed to pose in exactly the same configuration as in the original croquet photo to make it look authentic. However, the golf playing photograph was hastily arranged and was therefore taken by an assistant to Ernesto Korda, who was unavailable, which explains why it looks like it was taken on a slope.

There also seems to have been some confusion regarding whether it was croquet that Fidel Castro originally intended to be photographed playing at Ealing, involving a misunderstanding about whether he was meant to play golf or golf croquet. The bowls club that hosted the croquet match was more sympathetic to the communist cause than the more conservative Ealing Golf Club, which also helps to explain the choice of venue.

David Graham, Ealing Croquet Club

EXPEDITION IN PLAY

Thank you for re-publishing my letter from 1963 (Issue 405 Tunnel of Time, 'Thanks to Managers').

You will not be surprised to know that I fully concur with Ivor Brand when he advocates in the same issue (Issue 405 Letters, 'AI or Human') that we should "let the manager do their job and thank them for doing it". Perhaps this will be an eternal truth.

However, I write on another matter which I fear has got much worse since being raised. The Editorial Notes from 1948 (Issue 404 Tunnel of Time, 'Long Games') raised the alarm about slow play, citing an example of a player taking 26 minutes to play a break to 4-back.

That alarm clearly went unheeded. We read that it was "custom in some quarters to blame law 44" (an optional lift at 4-back, for those without a vintage laws book to hand). Today, the same quarters will no doubt blame law 40 (super-advanced play). The reality is that breaks of such epic length have become commonplace. Players are not ready to play at the start of their turn. Dilly-dallying abounds. Worse, they are condoned by the latest laws which propose that a referee – after several warnings – might impose a 'penalty' which would permit such a break to 4-back to take 32 minutes! This trend will render our game unwatchable and unplayable.

I plea for players to return to 'playing with reasonable despatch'. If they can't do that, perhaps the Manager needs to be given power of immediate sanction. And we should thank them for doing it.

A Player

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MATCHES

In the light of the International Cricket Council's announcement that transgender women are to be barred from playing in international women's matches, I am wondering if either the World Croquet Federation (or Croquet England with regard to UK competitions) are proposing to address this contentious issue.

Gill Brent

Response:

Croquet England is very aware that this is a contentious issue. The World Croquet Federation initiated a review of its gender policy at the beginning of this year for world-class events. Once that review is completed, Croquet England will review its own policy for domestic tournaments.

**Beatrice McGlen
Chief Executive Officer, Croquet England**

DELETERIOUS EFFECT OF USE OF RANKING TO DECIDE ENTRY TO GC C-LEVEL TOURNAMENT

I write to ask Croquet England to abandon the rule that when the GC C-level tournament is oversubscribed places are allocated on the basis of ranking rather than the usual and well-tryed maxim of "first-come, first-served". Apart from the perceived unfairness of this rule, it is preventing new and less-experienced players from taking part, as they are the very players least likely to have a high ranking. It is a deleterious effect in direct opposition to the spirit of the C-level which should be, and used to be, to encourage newer and less-experienced players to enter a national tournament.

It has also had a deleterious effect at my local East Midlands Federation. The Federation had three GC divisions with game times for Div. 3 set at 30 min deliberately to encourage older and/or less-fit players to take part in competitive matches. This has worked well for more than ten years. However, at the last AGM, the Federation changed the time limit to 45 min, because 30 min games are excluded from the ranking process. There was so much very vocal, heated and even tearful, opposition to this change (none of the teams currently playing in the division wanted it) that it was decided to create yet another league, separate from the other leagues/divisions and with a 30 min time limit like the former Div. 3. This proliferation of leagues/divisions - we have also created a fifth, Advantage GC, league - may fail as clubs' current problems of finding teams will be worsened by the increase in the number of matches. In any case, we are sending out quite the wrong message to our older and/or less-fit members. The majority of members in my club, like the majority in most clubs, are elderly. Most are active and still keen to take part in competitive play, but the prospect of five or six rounds of 45 min, plus often a 3 to 4 hour round trip to an away venue making a nearly ten-hour day, is just too much.

Ralph Timms, Dunston Croquet Club

Response:

The method of 'first come, first served' is not the usual way to allocate places into tournaments. People who are ill, away from home, or are for some other reason unable to enter straightaway, are at a disadvantage when trying to get into events. The purpose of tournaments in the fixture calendar having allocation dates, is to give everyone a fair chance to enter. All allocation dates are at least 2 weeks after the fixtures go live.

Other methods, such as by handicap or ballot, are also unfair, as there is no way for all entrants to know the allocation is done fairly.

Dynamic Grades are available for everyone to see on the AC and GC International Grading Systems, so everyone can see all entrants' grades and whether they are likely to get in.

In my experience, 30 minutes is not long enough for a game of GC at any level, and I would be surprised if many games finished before the time elapsed. This is why games require a minimum of 40 minutes, and must be a contest of at least best of 13 hoops, to be eligible to be ranked. Having a time limit of less than this changes the game entirely, and it is not a proper contest.

Richard Bilton

**Chair Golf Croquet Tournament Committee
WCF GC Ranking Officer**

A NOTE FROM THE SELECTION COMMITTEES

For the avoidance of doubt, raising a complaint or offering opinions on contentious matters will have no bearing on any players' prospects of selection. The Selectors would like to reassure everyone that great care is taken to select only on the basis of the criteria set out in the selection policy, which makes clear all decisions will be free, fair and rational.

**Chris Clarke, Chair of GC Selectors and Ian Lines,
Chair of AC Selectors**

GC RULES

Since the major changes made to the GC Rules for the 5th and 6th Editions there has been a problem with the definition of the end of a turn e.g. "Rule 6.1.3 Subject to Rule 6.1.4, a turn ends when all balls moved by a stroke have stopped or have left the court, or when a stroke is declared to have been played".

As written, Rule 6.1.3 is only subject to Rule 6.1.4 if players forestall before "all balls moved by a stroke have stopped or have left the court, or when a stroke is declared to have been played". in which case the turn continues and a replay can take place.

Rule 6.1.3 is not subject to Rule 6.1.4 if players forestall (to bring attention to an offside ball, an interference or 'wrong ball') after the turn has ended and before the next stroke is played.

As Rule 6.1.3 has ended the turn, the next turn starts and any Rule that offers replays by way of restitution no longer applies under the current wording.

All that is needed to fix this problem is a simple ruling to the effect that Rule 6.1.3 should be read as if it said: Subject to Rule 6.1.4 applying before the next stroke, a turn ends when all balls moved by a stroke have stopped or have left the court, or when a stroke is declared to have been played.

I have been told that such a ruling won't be made before the 7th Edition because I am the only person that has expressed this view publicly. It seems an obvious necessity to me and the fix is so straightforward surely it should be done now?

Nick Harris

Response:

The GC Rules are owned by the World Croquet Federation (WCF).

In the past, when it was considered essential to clarify a rule, our GC Rules Committee has authorised Official Rulings (OR) or proposed to the WCF that it should do so. No ORs have been required for the latest, 6th, Edition of the GC Rules. The matter raised by Nick Harris has been considered by the members of the GC Rules Committee at his request more than once. Each time the committee has concluded that there is insufficient evidence to justify issuing a clarifying OR. The matter will be considered again when the WCF proposes to prepare a 7th Edition of the GC Rules.

Ian Cobbold, Chair, GC Rules Committee

GC ADVANTAGE RULES

Just a brief note to say how much I completely agree with Ian Robertson of Kenilworth re GC advantage rules. He has said exactly what I have said many times, and so have many other players have expressed similar views. While I am in complaining mood, PLEASE will those with too little to do, STOP changing laws/rules each season. I just sort one thing out then it changes. Penalties for playing the wrong ball should stand, after all the player should keep their mind on what they are doing, not call for YET another change.

Ros Pimlott Bowdon Croquet Club

MOST IMPROVED PLAYER AWARDS 2023

DAVID FULLER - MOST IMPROVED MALE ASSOCIATION CROQUET PLAYER, APPS MEMORIAL BOWL

David Fuller, of the East Dorset Club at Poole, has had an extraordinary first two seasons in the sport and has been recognised for his quite remarkable progress and will be presented with the Apps Memorial Bowl which is an annual prize dating back to 1960.

In his first season in 2022, Fuller's handicap tumbled from 14 to 4 and this year (his second season), his progress and achievements have been even more remarkable.

His handicap has plummeted from 4 to minus 1, which is an almost unprecedented swift reduction at such a good standard, and his results have taken him to ranking positions just outside the UK top 50 and World top 100.

East Dorset Chairman Jonathan Powe, who nominated Fuller for the award, told of the player's hugely impressive tactical development during the year in which, to his credit, he has made a real effort to play against the best players by entering high-level events in order to gain experience, learn from others and develop his game.

Fuller just missed out in the qualifying event for a place in the AC World Championships this year but his win in the prestigious national AC Third Eight selection event two months later was a massive achievement. Fuller is now a top-class player, his progress has been extraordinary, and his title of the Most Improved Male AC player 2023 is fully deserved.

DOM AARVOLD, MOST IMPROVED MALE GOLF CROQUET PLAYER, SPIERS TROPHY

Dom Aarvold of the Bristol Club is the Most Improved Male Golf Croquet Player of 2023.

Aarvold has enjoyed a terrific season and he arrived at croquet's top table in some style when he beat the current England captain, Aston Wade, in the semi-finals of a Championship Series tournament at Sidmouth in July. He finished runner-up in a second Championship Series tournament at Cheltenham and finished in a creditable number 2 position in Croquet England's Second Eight selection event, before retaining the Sussex County Open Series title that he had won last year. He began the season with a handicap of 1 and improved that by four steps to end the year at the high mark of minus 3. Aarvold improved his UK and World rankings along the way, adding 219 grade

points to his tally by the end the season elevating him to being the number 23 player in the UK and 92 in the World. Dom Aarvold beat nine other nominees to the Most Improved Player title and in the coming weeks will be presented with the beautiful hand-turned wooden Spiers Trophy.

GABRIELLE HIGGINS, MOST IMPROVED FEMALE ASSOCIATION CROQUET PLAYER, STEEL BOWL

Gabrielle Higgins, of the Sussex County Club at Southwick, has been one of the top female players in the world, for some time, but this season she improved her play to scale a new height of personal achievement, and currently sits as the number two female player in the world. Her international ranking grade jumped a

Gabrielle Higgins will be presented with her third Glass 'Steel Bowl', a trophy with history back to 1965, which commemorates a female croquet great of yesteryear, Miss D.D.Steel (1884-1965).

LIZ DRURY, MOST IMPROVED FEMALE GOLF CROQUET PLAYER, COLMAN TROPHY

Liz Drury, of the Compton Club in Eastbourne, has had an extraordinary rise to prominence in a very short time, and has risen from social player to World Championship competitor in under three years. She started playing croquet at Compton in 2021 and, after an initial introduction, was given a starting handicap of 10, a mark that she reduced to 6 by the end of last year.

Drury decided that the only way to improve further was to travel to tournaments in any location where she could get a starting place, if they seemed at the time to be way beyond her level.

First up was the East Dorset Women's Open, at which she won four games against higher ranked opponents and then she really went for it and entered the British Women's Open at Budleigh Salterton in Devon. She finished a creditable fifth at the prestigious events and then, improving all the time, she came runner-up at the Colchester Women's Open, which was just the confidence boost needed for the 'big one' as she entered the qualifying event of the 2023 Women's World GC Championship!

Although she was now pushing her limits even further, at least the venue was familiar as it was

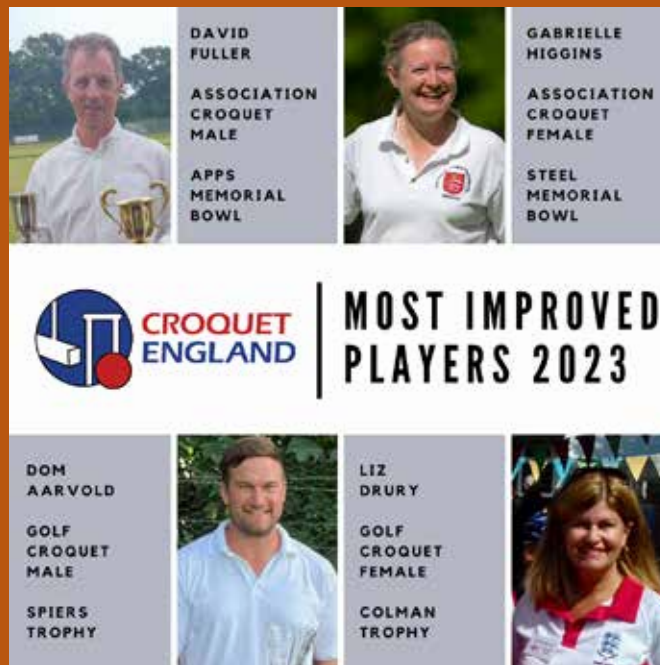
hosted by her own club in Eastbourne. Drury won six of her first phase block games and six 'best of three' matches in the qualifying block stage and secured a converted place for the World Championship Finals along the coast at Southwick, near Brighton.

Surprised to even be in the main event, Drury beat some vastly more experienced overseas players and qualified again for the KO stage before she eventually lost to Gabrielle Higgins, the number five woman player in the world.

Drury ended the season as statistically the most improved (male and female) player in the world, and by some margin.

In the coming weeks Croquet England will present Drury with the splendid Colman Trophy, which is a bronze sculpture featuring a full-sized croquet ball jumping over another ball in a hoop.

Christopher Roberts
Chair of Handicap Committee



ALTERNATE STROKE DOUBLES (ASD)

As you may have read in previous Gazette editions, various proposals were put to Council in late 2020 and early 2021. The proposals were supported by Council who asked the Competitive Play Working Group (CPWG) to seek to implement the proposals or seek trials where certain matters needed to be tested prior to implementation. For example, it was thought that the CPWG may approach Federations to test out proposals.

Initiatives included things like:

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

The chair of the CPWG attended a meeting of the Association Croquet Tournament Committee (ACTC) in April 2021 and discussed the proposals. At this meeting, the ACTC suggested that one way of seeing ASD played more was allowing each pair to make an independent decision as to whether to play conventionally or ASD. It was agreed that the CPWG would consider this and seek agreement of Federations to trial it. At its end of 2022 season meeting, and as discussed in the December 2022 Gazette, the Association Croquet Tournament Committee (ACTC) noted the lack of progress on all these matters and decided that it would look into one specific point itself:

- With regard to alternate stroke doubles, should independent decisions be allowed?
 - Prior to the 2023 season, both pairs needed to agree to play ASD.
 - Should one pair be able to play ASD regardless of the views of the other pair? Is there any reason why one pair shouldn't play alternate stroke regardless of what the other pair does?

The ACTC agreed to pick up the batten with regards to this specific point and in 2023 trials took place in three specific level play events:

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

The trials went well and with the agreement of the Handicap Committee, it has been decided that for the 2024 season the trial will be extended to all AC doubles events. The tournament regulations have been amended accordingly.

It is envisaged that if trials go well, regulations will be changed permanently in time for the 2025 season.

All comments are welcome, to me and/or to the Gazette editor.

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

NATIONAL CROQUET WEEK 18-28 MAY 2024

This year we are partnering with the charity Dementia Carers. The week culminates in the Association Croquet Inter-Counties tournament on the south coast and in the build-up to that we will be nationally calling on the public to back a county. Each county has a separate Facebook page which will carry messages and info from the team, but also details of events going on in and around the respective counties. This model will enable a second big shout-out to pull in the public around the Golf Croquet Inter-Counties too.

In parallel to pushing club events we will be looking to draw garden croquet players into the fold via our garden membership scheme and this will be part of the national publicity mix. We need all of you and our clubs to get involved, arrange events to welcome the public, and play on the inter-county rivalry. If your county is not competing then it makes a great call for new players to come forward, so that in future years you too can compete at the top table and put your neighbours to the metaphorical sword.

Clubs are encouraged to try new ideas during National Croquet Week, e.g. invite schools/local interest or U3A groups/local companies to do a team building/intro session, or run fundraiser pay/play sessions.

Dementia Carers provides support to carers of people affected by dementia. There are nearly one million unpaid carers who look after friends and relatives with little recognition or respite. Recent research has shown that nine in ten dementia carers are reaching crisis points. They face daily and unpredictable challenges, whilst coping with unimaginable changes to their relationships.

Dementia Carers long-term ambition is to ensure that no dementia carer feels overwhelmed or alone. Ensuring carers get the right information and support as soon as they want it, and for as long as they need it. Carers can call a free Carer Support Line on 0800 652 1102 and speak to a specialist to receive in-depth support with issues they are finding difficult. Carers can also access online support through a Virtual Carers Centre which has a wealth of resources covering the many questions people often have when caring for someone with dementia.



**DEMENTIA
CARERS COUNT**

Supporting Family Carers



BUDLEIGH SALTERTON 23-24 SEPTEMBER WE

Tim O'Donnell (Hamptworth) won the Hutchinson Cup for the A Class at the Budleigh Salterton September weekend winning four out of his five games. David Marsh (Wrest Park) was runner-up on 3 wins.

In the B Class for the Meredith Bowl there was a three-way tie on four wins among Nigel Amos (Budleigh), Andrew Thomas (Sidmouth) and Dom Aarvold (Bristol). The manager (Chris Williams) decided on a 2 ball longest-break play-off where the players start from corner four with a dolly-rush to hoop 4. Andrew made the most hoops and so was declared winner.

In the C Class for the Stransham Bowl Ed Dolphin (Sidmouth) and Chris Weedon (East Dorset) tied on four wins, but Ed was declared the winner since he had beaten Chris.

Chris Williams

PHOTOGRAPH Tim O'Donnell receiving the Hutchinson Cup from John O'Gorman, the Budleigh Salterton Club Chairman



AC EIGHTS

It was predictable that the proximity of the AC Tier 1 World Team Championship (aka the MacRobertson Shield) in November 2022 and the AC singles World Championship in July 2023 would create leave pressures for the best home players. It was therefore pleasing that half the victorious English team (James Death, Harry Fisher and Samir Patel) were still available for selection. They were joined by Stephen Mulliner, in his 45th appearance since 1978, Debbie Lines, the recently-crowned Women's AC World Champion and her husband Ian, both former MacRobertson players, and two AC stalwarts in the shape of Robin Brown and David Goacher.

The President's Cup has become rather southern focussed in recent years and it was good to see it return to Bowdon for the first time since 2014. Bizarrely, it was played in extraordinarily warm and humid weather which was quite tiring to play in and unlike anything one might normally associate with the environs of Manchester.

While it might have been expected that the three Mac players would dominate the event, events turned out a little differently. Mulliner was the only player unbeaten on day 1, which included defeats of both Patel and Death. Death followed with 3/4 and then came Brown and Patel on 2/4. Fisher, a definite favourite, could only manage 1/3 with a game pegged down.

On day 2, Mulliner dropped a game to Ian Lines but added another three wins including defeats of Fisher and Patel while Death lost to Brown and Patel dropped back. Fisher staged a strong recovery with four wins on the day including his pegged-down game. The halfway scores were therefore Mulliner 7, Death 6, Fisher 5, Patel 4, Debbie Lines 3, Brown and Goacher 2 and Ian Lines 1 (with his game against Goacher pegged down).

In professional golf, day 3 is known as "moving day" and generally defines who is in contention for the final round. The effect is more marked in the modern President's Cup because there are only two games scheduled for day 4. Rounds 9 and 10 produced two wins for each of the three leaders while Patel lost twice and dropped out of the race. Round 11 featured another win for Death and a very significant win for Fisher against Mulliner by the narrow margin of 3. The scores were now Mulliner and Death on 9 wins and Fisher on 8.

Round 12 provided another win for Fisher (who had won 8/9 in the last two days) to reach 9/12 and featured the most dramatic game so far when Death completed a TPO against Mulliner in

THE 2023 PRESIDENT'S CUP - BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

the gloaming. After some initial fencing, Mulliner hit a 33 yard roquet but misapproached hoop 3 and seemed to have missed his chance of salvation. He hit again and reached hoop 5 but then missed a long roquet. Death then failed to approach hoop 5 off Mulliner's ball with a plausible 3-ball break in prospect and decamped to a position on the east boundary that was intended to be wired from Mulliner's ball. Except that it wasn't wired and Mulliner seized the chance to hit, play a half-court approach to hoop 5, run it and take over the break and finish. Now the scores were Mulliner on 10 and Death and Fisher on 9.



In Round 13, Mulliner beat Brown +17 and Fisher beat Death +17tp to move to 11 and 10 wins respectively to end Death's victory hopes. Now all depended on the final round. Fisher had a quick +17tp against Debbie Lines to finish on 11/14, a great recovery from 1/3 on day 1, and kept alive his hopes of a play-off if Goacher could beat Mulliner.

This vital game had no shortage of interest. Goacher had played generally very solidly throughout and his score of 4/12 at that stage did not really do him justice. He hit first and went to 4-b. Mulliner hit and embarked on a TPO which included a rare feature which was unnoticed by both players but hilariously evident to the gallery, namely missing out 3-back after completing the peels! Goacher played a superb contact turn which unexpectedly ended at 1-back with his ball in the jaws, one of Mulliner's balls 10 yards south of 1-back and the other ball south of 2-back. Mulliner missed his shot at Goacher's

...continued on next page

ball in the hoop and Goacher ran 1-back to the south boundary and played another excellent 2-ball break which later became a 3-ball break.

At this point, Fisher's play-off hopes were high but, sadly for him and Goacher, rover proved a bridge too far and this threw Mulliner a lifeline. After some manoeuvring by Mulliner near hoop 4 with the intention of peeling the backward ball and so avoiding a super-advanced lift shot, Goacher decided to play his ball from corner 1 to the middle of the east boundary. This proved unwise because Mulliner now played the backward ball, ran hoop 4 and rushed to Goacher's ball. A series of stop-shots and rushes allows him to develop a 3-ball break and take the game and the trophy for the sixth time in his career – and a mere 31 years since his fifth win in 1992!

Ian Lines then beat Goacher in their pegged-down game so that the final scores were:

Mulliner 12, Fisher 11, Death 9, Patel 7, both Lines 5, Goacher 4 and Brown 3.

The players expressed their warm appreciation for the excellent and generous catering by the Bowdon ladies and to Alan Mayne and his colleagues for preparing and mowing the courts during the event.



CHAIRMAN'S SALVER

The thick green thatch of the Chairman's sword lay wet at Southport fair. A delayed start whilst the quadways were struck by players arriving there. Dewar and Kibble out on lawn 4... lunch time is over and still they play more. A warning to managers budding to try, to control an 8, even when dry. When to peg down? One turn away, but time is not waiting and 3 more to play! Oh boy though its humid and sticky as sin, all thoughts of a social with the Tankard lot binned. One game behind with clothes stuck to t'chest a swifter is downed in the Fisherman's Rest.

Day two starts hot, with thunder-a-rumbling, the players play on with minimal grumbling. More alacrity now as we're used to the speed and have realised the hoops, by the soft ground, are freed. So triple away, in the peace of the day and off home to shower at the end of play.

Day three arrives, Hallam is out of the blocks, a 35min game c'mon pull up yer socks! Dewar and Harding duel at dawn – unfinished business pegged down on a lawn. Rumbling restarts as morning wears on, the thunder of planes from times long gone. Loudhailer announces the start of a show, wings dipping and diving like mallets below. The throb of two Merlins are heard in the sky, as a Spitfire and Hurricane are seen to pass by. A spectacular sight and a Lancaster too, the last one around, remember the view. Now tighten your guts and block up your ears as the Typhoons roar by, exploding spears.

AC EIGHTS



8 O'clock sharp is the order for Sunday. Must get games played 'fore the blue turns to grey. Second is close Hopgood, Hallam, McDiarmid and Wade, the latter prevails as the rest start to fade.

16 triples in all, two of them straight, three go to Kibble and with them the plate. This time a salver for first place renown, a worthy winner, the toast of the town.

I Rupert Ursus

SPENCER ELL

Taking place in the second week of September, the Eights is often associated with less than ideal weather conditions. Strong winds and rain are not uncommon, especially at some coastal venues. What no-one expected this year was a heat wave! Whilst this may have kept temperatures pleasant at the 3 eights in the Northwest, at Nailsea it was sweltering.

While everyone else was scrabbling for hats and sunscreen, manager Sarah Hayes duly arrived with bottles of water for all, a printed schedule of all the rounds with space for entering the scores, and a plan for keeping things moving. So whenever 3 games in a round had finished, the fourth game would be given half an hour's notice before being pegged down. This met with unanimous approval.

Lawn conditions were reasonable. Two of the lawns were a little heavier, to the extent that Sarah decided to bring along

AC EIGHTS

'Big Bertha' (her heavier mallet) from the second day onwards – quite possibly a shrewd move. However, it was the rock solid hoops (set by David Hunt and his team) which confounded most players, as evidenced by just 6 TPs being scored throughout the entire event. They were undoubtedly the most challenging hoops I faced during the season. Only Jack Wicks and David Fuller seemed completely unfazed by them. (David still being a relative newbie to the game, I think he just didn't realise that they were supposed to be difficult!), Out on the croquet lawns, David Warhurst was having a miserable time (though he never showed it) and John Davis was faring little better. Wixy and Fuller soon proved to be the ones to watch; though Jeff Dawson was snapping at their heels, having rediscovered his past form. Sarah, Rob Wilkinson and I had to content ourselves with being in the middle pack. Play was interrupted mid-morning on day 4 by the promised

...continued on next page

thunderstorm. Within minutes, all the lawns were unplayable. While most of us ran for the cover of the main club house, David Warhurst and Sarah dived into the pavilion on the far side of the lawns since it was closer. It was scary enough in the club house when the loudest thunderclaps were heard. I believe it was much worse in the pavilion. What no-one thought to do was to rescue the papers pinned to the notice board outside. The storm itself lasted 45 minutes and the surface water began to recede soon afterwards. Marcus had had the bright idea of preparing lunch a little earlier, providing us the opportunity to savour that while the lawns dried out in the warm sunshine. Additionally, Wixy retrieved the sodden papers from the noticeboard and valiantly attempted to dry them out in the oven. At the beginning of day 5, it was still mathematically possible for any one of 3 players to win. David Fuller eventually triumphed, winning 12 of his 14 games. 11 wins for Wixy and 10 for Jeff could easily have been top scores in other years. A huge thanks to all the effort from various members of Nailsea CC. Well maintained lawns, excellent catering and a flow of casual spectators. And especially to Marcus for ensuring that

there was always a supply of beer and wine, and for setting those damned hoops!

| Nigel Polhill



AC EIGHTS

PENDLE & CRAVEN CROQUET CLUB - 7-11 SEPTEMBER TREASURER'S TANKARD 2023

AM or PM that is the Question? With Rigge's promise of lawns at 12+ Plummers, as the only Southerner I left London's sweltering metropolis for the 4 hour drive from SW London to Pendle with a tiger in my tank and the promise of slightly cooler conditions. It was hot, windows down all the way stuff and it pretty much stayed that way for our full 5 days of croquet.

I'd never been to North Lancashire before, or not that I can recall, but with beautiful rolling hills, competitive croquet played in the best of spirits and a very warm welcome from everyone I encountered, I'm glad I have now. Pendle & Craven Croquet Club did everything they could to make our time there as enjoyable as possible and they over-achieved.

After a quiet night in, at our comfy Airbnb in Barnoldswick, pronounced "Barlick" as I was politely corrected, we made the 10 minutes' drive to the club for Day 1 as the sun's rays lifted the early mist slowly off the valley floor. "Full of Eastern promise" as the TV ad would say.

It was definitely sun cream weather, hot and humid.

The hoops were set tight and with the lawns averaging 7 Plummers conditions were certainly challenging. It did not take long before complaints of bad backs and wrists were muttered, eyebrows were being raised and the regulations consulted. As it transpired, it was very unfortunate and bad luck that the club's mower, fresh back from a full service and cassette replacement, broke down on the eve of the tournament.

It was only day 1 but Neil was calmly going about his business, unfazed, playing with control, recording his first triple in his first match and putting his marker down early on. With some other notable performances, there was still all to play for.

On a personal note, I'd never played AC at night before but as darkness descended and in the glare of the clubhouse floodlights, managed to somehow find the black ball and win my pegged down and only game.

With the weather getting even warmer, Day 2 started with Andrew, Mike, Paul, Beatrice and Clive picking up wins in hot pursuit but with slow conditions, games were having to be pegged down to preserve the schedule. The sight of Manager Beatrice "she who must be obeyed" McGlen making her way over to our lawn with markers and pad in hand, struck fear into even the hardest of us all! "Can you just not give us 30 minutes, I'll skip lunch?" "No", came the firm response as you packed up your bag and made off to your next lawn.

Meanwhile in recording another triple and ending the day with 6 wins from 6 matches, Neil was firmly in the hot seat.

With a number of us in the dreaded 5:1 club including Alex 'Headphones' McIntyre or just plain 'Phones' to his mates, the chasing pack were in danger of starting to look a little distant. We've no idea what he was really listening to but he's definitely Wixie's No 1 Fan.

With the club's mower out of action the cavalry was required and they came, daily, riding over the hills with mower in hand. Local legends that worked tirelessly over lunch and long after dark to save the day. We can't thank them enough.

With lawn speeds improving both day to day and from morning to afternoon, a.m. and p.m. quickly took on another meaning for me: 'Ante Mow' and 'Post Mow'!

In the meantime, over the weekend and into Monday, the club's mower was fixed and rivalry ensued on the improving lawns.

With 12 Matches finishing +4 or less, I can't recall a match without croquet being taken.

With 12 wins and 3 tp's congratulations rightly go to Neil Adams the thoroughly deserved winner of this year's Tankard. He took everything in his stride as he marched confidently through the field, losing only two matches and by the end had recorded 14 tp's for the season in which he made his first. Congrats also go to Andrew Killick as runner-up and Beatrice McGlen in third place having fought back excellently.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Paul, Libby & Leigh Dixon, Eileen & David Magee and the whole team at Pendle & Craven Croquet Club whose hospitality and devotion to the cause was and will always be legendary. With kind permission from Andrew Killick I shall leave you with his verse (next page across) which sums up our experience far better than I can.

| Guy Hewitt



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THE SELECTORS

The Selectors was held at the Colchester club this year. The format for the 16 players was the revised one developed by Mike Town and Andrew Gregory last year. An initial 4 rounds of Swiss results in 5 players on 3 or 4 wins and 6 players on 2 wins. In the 5th round the 6 players on 2 wins have a playoff and the 3 winners join the 5 for an 8 person knockout. The other players play further Swiss games and are joined by the first round losers of the knockout. Having had my arm twisted to be manager as well as one of the players, I looked for one of the other players to volunteer to write the tournament report. No response, so I provided a blank piece of paper and asked that players make a note of any interesting events that happened during the various games and I would collate into an event report.

Obviously the competition was very boring as there was very little written on the paper at the end of the event!

The first 2 rounds were uneventful. Although conditions were not too difficult there were few significant breaks with many games going to time (3 hr time limit) or finishing just before time. Round 3 saw the first convincing performances where Cliff Jones did a Triple Peel on Charlie Martin but still lost the game and Keith Ross beat Nick Steiner in 3 turns (ball to 4back, second ball to peg, pegout).

In round 5, having already qualified for the knockout, Jack Good attempted a Sextuple against Rob Essler but only managed a still very creditable 4 peels.

Jack was however now moving into top gear, doing a TP against Duncan Hector in round 1 of the knockout and another against Andy Dibben in the semifinal. In the other half of the draw, Jonathan Wolfe scraped a +1 on time win against Martin Murray and then a more convincing +21 win against Keith Ross to meet Jack in the Final.

The final saw another convincing win, +23, for Jack. A very well deserved winner and confirmation of his "hot favourite" status for the Selectors in Nick Parish's Eights Week Sweepstake. Andy Dibben beat Keith Ross in the 3rd/4th place playoff. Jack admitted afterwards that he has a great incentive this year to win lots of matches as next year he will be 18 and have to buy alcoholic drinks for all the losers!

AC EIGHTS

Thanks to the Colchester club for lawn preparation, keeping us well fed and providing a happy, relaxed atmosphere for the event.

| Andy Dibben



AN ODE TO THE TANKARD

Thursday

The Treasurer's Tankard has started,
And each to his lawn has departed.
The rivalry's hot
As we plan the next shot,
But post-match, the talk is light-hearted!

The weather is fine for a change,
Which in Lancashire seems a bit
strange.

We trust the new mower
Will cut the grass lower,
To bring distant balls within range.

Friday

On the second day, till about 4,
The temperature rose more and more.
Some, pegging down games,
(Though I won't mention names)
Gave the manager headaches galore!

But now we are all up to date,

And Neil is leading this Eight.
He's won 6 out of 6,
Just like last year's Jack Wicks;
So, who can his triumph frustrate?

Saturday

The caterers served us cold meat
On day 3 in exceptional heat;
And while we were wilting
And fortunes were tilting,
Iced lollies arrived at each seat.

We are grateful to Eileen and Clive
Who would often be summoned and
strive
To referee shots
From some difficult spots
As we struggled to keep breaks alive.

Sunday

The mower is broken AGAIN,
With a half-mown lawn 2 – what a pain!
It's the fan belt. Paul Rigge
Is NOT dancing a jig,

But at least we have not yet got rain.

I spoke too soon: lightning and thunder
Might tear all our schedules asunder.
Ah, Neil's lost a game!
But he leads just the same,
And the rest of us watch him with
wonder.

Monday

So now we approach the conclusion,
With pegged down games causing
confusion.
But by now it is clear
Who the winner is here:
Yes, Neil has won games in profusion.

I won't list the others by name –
Say who's 2nd or 3rd in the frame.
It's the friendship and fun,
Though we may blob hoop1.
What a wonderful, maddening game!

| Andrew Killick

SOLOMON TROPHY 2023

The 25th holding of the bilateral Test Match between Great Britain and the USA (excluding the first Test Match in 1985 which predated the donation of a trophy by John Solomon in 1987) was hosted by Sarasota County Croquet Club in Florida, on the west coast of the state from 9 to 12 November. The weather was excellent and varied from warm to very warm and sunny with only the early sunset reminding us that it was actually winter! Both the home and visiting teams were very warmly welcomed by the club members who had generously given up normal use of their courts for almost a fortnight to accommodate both the Test Match and the US Open Championship which followed almost immediately. SCCC is now a seven-court municipal club, open to all and therefore unusual in the USA where most croquet courts are located in country clubs. The club's ethos is to keep retired citizens physically active and socially involved and therefore enjoys the full support and co-operation of both Sarasota County and the City of Venice. Remarkably, three courts had been created only in the last two months by turfing carried out by the professional ground staff of the City of Venice Parks Department. The expert maintenance of the new courts provided very acceptable surfaces running at about 10 seconds.

It has been traditional to begin a Solomon Trophy match held in America with a one-day President's Match played to US Six-wicket Rules. This is a fundamentally defensive game and it was sensibly decided to play the three doubles and six singles matches using the 14 point variant with a one-hour time-limit and as two games rather than as best of three. The British team had done some homework in the run-up to the trip but, inevitably, committed errors arising from inexperience with a 9 inch line and deadness (not to mention "last deadness") and various other details (such as the fact that peeling an opponent through a "deadness clearing hoop" also clears the deadness of the striker's ball – so it is possible to roquet and croquet all three balls twice between the same two hoops!). The visitors were not wholly unsuccessful but the final score of 13-5 to the hosts was a fair comment on the play.

And so onto the Test Match itself. This is a 21 point event with six players in each team in which each doubles pair plays all three of the opposing doubles pairs and each player plays two singles matches. The order of battle is two rounds of three doubles matches, one round of six "reverse" singles matches (i.e. 1 plays 2, 3 plays 4 etc), a final round of three doubles matches and a final round of six singles matches in team seeding order. The American team consisted of its 2022 MacRobertson Shield team with one change, namely Matthew Essick (also the captain), Tom Balding, Ben Rothman, Zack Watson, Stephen Morgan and the "rookie", Kyle Maloof (son of David Maloof, the 2016 AC World Championship runner-up).

Day 1 of the Test Match started brightly for the British team. In the first round of doubles, Debbie Lines and Gabrielle Higgins beat Ben Rothman and Stephen Morgan in three games with steady play being rewarded with +26 scores in games 1 and 3. Stephen Mulliner and Aston Wade prevailed by +2 in game 3 against Matthew Essick and Zack Watson. Wade had celebrated his GB debut with a good TP in game 1 which was then matched by an Essick TP in game 2. However, hopes of a British clean sweep evaporated with two TPs from Tom Balding, partnering Kyle Maloof, against Alain Giraud and Mark van Loon.

The second round of doubles was started after lunch but only one match could be completed before the light became too poor at shortly after 5 p.m. The US team upped their game and made it 2-2 when Morgan & Rothman beat Mulliner & Wade in two games without the visitors scoring a hoop. Morgan had not been at his best in the opening match but regained his mojo with two competent breaks which allowed Rothman to complete two equally competent delayed triple peels. The US also won the first

games of the other two matches and so ended the day somewhat happier than they had been at lunchtime.

The day 2 singles were shared 3-3. Mulliner dropped the opening game to a TP by Balding but took the second with his own TP and then the match by completing a TPO and extracting a good break from hoop 4 in the decider. Even better, in the sense that it was somewhat more unexpected, was Giraud's three game win against Essick with TPs from each player and then a solid +17 win for Giraud.



Debbie and Gabrielle

Rothman and Watson beat Higgins and Lines respectively in straight but competitive games. In particular, Higgins looked the clear favourite to take the first game against Rothman with a TP but had to endure the frustration of a totally uncooperative peelee and eventually lost -1TP! Wade created excellent chances in both his games against Morgan but sadly lost -5, -3.

Attention then focussed on the match between van Loon and Maloof, both of whom were making their international team debuts (if one regards Mark's 2023 Home International appearance as somewhat domestic). At about 3 p.m., van Loon embarked on a delayed TP which was going well until just after he peeled penult before approaching 4-back. At this stage, it looked likely that the two unfinished doubles matches would be soon underway. Unfortunately, the rush to 4-back turned into a rush to the middle of the east boundary and the long approach



Both teams

left a difficult angled hoop which was failed. This brought Maloof back into the game and he also began a TP to snatch a victory and give USA a 6-4 lead. However, his straight rover peel refused to co-operate and he had to surrender the innings. The innings changed hands more than once after that until van Loon made contact with a long roquet with a bit of help from an adjacent hoop and completed a +2 win. This tied the Test Match score at 5-5 and, as it was by then too late to play the doubles matches, that became the overnight scoreline as well. Day 3 began with the third round of doubles and ended with the completion of the two unfinished second round doubles matches. Unfortunately for the British team, it was a blank day and the Test Match score ended with the USA leading 10-5. Lines & Higgins could only manage one hoop in each game against Essick & Watson while the other two matches went to three games. Mulliner & Wade did not take croquet against Balding and Maloof in the decider after the former hit on turn 3. Giraud & van Loon at least got going in their third game but lost -13.



The two unfinished Round 2 doubles matches then resumed. Maloof demonstrated that he had put the frustration of his narrow singles loss to van Loon behind him by completing a straight TP to defeat Lines & Higgins and extend the USA lead to 9-5. This left British hopes resting on Giraud & van Loon who were one game down to Essick & Watson. With Giraud and Watson both on 4-back, van Loon hit a superb lift shot down the east boundary and had all the balls for a standard TP. He peeled Black successfully through 4-back with a good rush south but it found a slope and curved to finish behind his Blue. He made accidental contact with Black when in his stance and testing what he could do with the result that a fault was declared. Essick made no mistake in capitalizing on this break to complete his own TP and give the USA a 10-5 lead. The final day gave Great Britain the challenge of winning all six singles matches in order to retain the Solomon Trophy and deny the USA their third victory in the event. It was well known that GB had overcome a big deficit on the final day in the past so there was no complacency in the American camp although all were itching to be the one who scored the winning point. In the end, it was Zack Watson who took USA over the winning



line by completing two swift TPs against a luckless no-croquet Gabrielle Higgins. He did so just in advance of Tom Balding who did the same to Alain Giraud. Debbie Lines looked like taking the first game against Ben Rothman for most of the time but lost -8 and was unable to score in the second. There was some British cheer in wins for Aston Wade and Stephen Mulliner. Aston beat Kyle Maloof +10TP, +20TP to crown an impressive international team debut. Stephen lost his first game to a TP by Matthew Essick but responded with a fifth turn TP in game 2 and his first ever “no roquet” finish after being pegged out when for penult in game 3. The last match to finish was between Mark van Loon and Stephen Morgan. Mark won the first, lost the second but was first to 4-b in the decider. However, Stephen hit the lift and won +17tp in two more turns to give the USA a final winning score of 14-7.

The USA team were very worthy winners and, with an age range from 25 to 40, look well set to perform strongly in the MacRobertson Shield in the next few years. The Great Britain team was unable to field any of the England 2022 MacRobertson Shield players owing to leave pressures but fought hard and displayed great camaraderie. The scoreline could easily have been 13-8 or even 12-9 if one or two things had gone the other way.

The trophy was handed by Debbie to Matthew in a closing ceremony where everyone who spoke paid very warm tributes to the ground staff and the Sarasota club members, led by John Goldener, the club President, and his wife, Ellen, who masterminded the excellent catering provided for the players and guests. The enthusiasm and friendliness of all who came to watch made it an extremely pleasant and rewarding trip. Great Britain can look forward to trying to recover the Solomon Trophy at the next encounter due to be held at Budleigh Salterton in 2025.

Stephen Mulliner



HUNSTANTON GC CHAMPIONSHIP

Block A saw all but 2 games go to seeding, one of which was Alex Lake beating Peter Haydon in the last round for a place in the knockout. Richard Bilton came out on top, winning all of his games, despite a couple of close 7-6s. The top 4 seeds in Block B qualified for the knockout, but top seed Simon Carter lost 7-6 to his number 2 and 3 (Tim Russell and Michael Bilton) and came second behind Russell, who won all of his games. The quarter-finals were played on Saturday afternoon, and saw Russell thrash Lake 7-1, 7-3 and Carter demolished Stephen Custance-Baker 7-2, 7-1. R Bilton comfortably beat David Thirtle-Watts 7-4, 7-3. The other match was considerably closer as M Bilton took the first game against Tony Butcher 7-4, and looked in control to take the second, but Butcher pinched it at 13. Butcher maintained the momentum going into the third and prevailed 7-3. The next day, Russell picked up where he left off and effortlessly beat Butcher 7-4, 7-2. Carter took the initial lead against Bilton but couldn't extend it by more than a hoop or two. Bilton took the game to hoop 13, where the game got very messy. Both players missed easy jumps for the game, but Bilton didn't make the same mistake twice and took game 1. He also took the first two hoops in the next game and maintained the lead. Carter produced some good shots to keep the match going, but in the end, Bilton won 7-6. 7-4. Bilton looked in control at the start of the final, until Russell ran hoop 2 from slightly East of hoop 5. The game remained competitive, but Russell had the more accurate clearances and took the game. Bilton kept fighting in game 2 and asked a few questions of Russell, but he wasn't hitting as many as

usual. Russell had the response to most of the crucial shots, which enabled him to emerge victorious 7-4, 7-4. Apart from a close first game, M Bilton had no trouble against Lake, and won 7-6, 7-2. Custance-Baker and Thirtle-Watts were much more closely matched, and it seemed to be anybody's match going into game 3. In the end, Custance-Baker won 7-4, 6-7, 7-0. Despite a very competitive match, Custance-Baker went on to beat M Bilton 7-3, 7-5 to win the Shield. The Plate started on Sunday to allow the quarter-finals to single bank, and was played as a single block with 13pt games. Peter Haydon came out as comfortable winner, only dropping 5 hoops across the three games. The weather was much better than at the Open tournament in May, which was very windy and cold, and the Hunstanton club was as welcoming and hospitable as ever.

Richard Bilton

Tim Russell



GC TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

SERIES COMPETITIONS: There are now more GC fixtures in the calendar than ever before, including a total of 86 Series tournaments across 5 tiers. See below for Series venues and dates.

The Championship Series welcomed the Cheshire Open GC Championship in 2023 held at Bowdon, and we hope players will continue to show support for this northern venue. The Series sees a new tournament at Nailsea in 2024, which is taking the place of the Cheltenham Championship. The best-of-three match format used throughout the tournaments at Sidmouth, Colchester, Ramsgate and Bowdon in 2023 proved popular, so they will continue using this format in 2024. This is to provide more competitive matches between the top players and enable other players to become more familiar with the format. Top players are encouraged to enter the Championships at these venues. The new Nailsea Championship will also join them, but the other three events in the Series will still be using single game blocks for those who prefer them. Players who would like to play in the Championship Series Final, the English National Singles Championship (Ascot Cup), one of the three major events in English Croquet, are reminded that they should make themselves available by 17 August 2024*.

In the hierarchy of the Series competitions, the Championship Series is followed by the Open Series (unrestricted), the A-Level Series (0+), the B-Level Series (3+) and the C-Level Series (7+), with the latter three all culminating in their own National Finals.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS: The premier Golf Croquet tournament, the GC Open Championship is getting stronger every year and it is hoped that this will continue. All good AC and GC players are encouraged to enter both the Open Singles and Doubles, which will be held 25-30 June 2024 at Sussex CCC. Also, the GC National Doubles Championship is moving back to the coast for 2024 and will be at Budleigh on 27-28 July. The GC Women's Open Championship is now a 16-player tournament over 2 days. It is being held at Nottingham on 8-9 June 2024 and is a great opportunity for female players to compete against each other in a Championship format. The GC Veterans' (Over 60) Championship will be at Sussex CCC on 23-25 July. This now also includes the Brooks Vase, a trophy for the best placed player who is over 75. Unfortunately, due to lack of entries in recent years, the GC Under 25 Open Championship will not be held in 2024. We hope expressions of renewed interest will lead the resurrection of this event in the future.

SELECTION AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS: Some of the international events that were held abroad in 2023 will move back to the UK for 2024. The GC Home Internationals is being hosted by Wales but will be held at Nailsea on 20-21 July 2024, availability closes on 10 April 2024*. The England v Spain Test Match will be held 21-23 June at Roehampton with a strong contingent of players expected from Spain. The GC European Championship is being held at Sussex CCC this year on 16-19 May, so it does not clash with the AC Inter-Counties. The GC Women's European Championship is being held at Compton on 1-4 August 2024. Players wanting to

play in this event should also consider the GC Women's Open Championship.

The GC Eights will be on the usual bank holiday weekend, 24-26 August. The First and Second Eights will be jointly hosted by Budleigh, with the Third Eight being played at Nailsea. Players are encouraged to make themselves available for these events*, availability closes on 1 July and selections will be announced by 15 July.

The next GC World Championship will be held at Chesapeake Bay CC, Virginia, USA on 18-26 October 2024. This is also the last season before the upcoming GC World Team Championship, which will be held 17-23 February 2025 at the Northern Tasmanian Croquet Centre, Australia.

Other Individual Competitions

The GC All-England Handicap competition begins with a club round, followed by an area final stage, before culminating in a National Final, and will continue with Advantage GC. For more details on the event and how to submit entries, see the 'All-England' page via the 'Croquet England Events' page on the website.

It has been decided to retire the GC Grass Roots Competition as the rise of the C-Level Series now provides multiple opportunities for players to enter the tournament circuit. Any suggestions of other competitions that would help new players get into the game would be greatly appreciated.

Team Competitions

The GC Inter-Counties will be held on 17-18 August, and the two divisions will switch venues this year – Division 1 will be at Sussex CCC and Division 2 at Cheltenham. Division 1 will comprise 12 teams and there are currently 6 teams in Division 2, new County teams are most welcome to join. County Organisers are reminded that teams must be entered on the website by 11 March and payment received by 13 July.

For the GC Inter-Club Championship, GC Murphy Inter-Club Shield and GC Federations Shield, clubs are reminded to submit their entries by 4 March 2024. The draws will be published on or before 11 March. The Federations Shield will now be played using Advantage GC.

Enjoy your Croquet

The GC programme is very busy, but we are confident that

these events will satisfy the increasing demand for high quality, competitive croquet and provide additional opportunities for the growing number of GC players at all levels. Lots of tournaments and competitions to look forward to in 2024.

*Players wishing to make themselves available for selection events should do so via the 'Availability' page in the 'Members' area of the CE website.

Richard Bilton
Chair, GC Tournament Committee

WHO TO CONTACT

Richard Bilton	GC Open Championships, GC Eights
Andrea Huxley	GC Veterans' Championship, GC All-England Handicap
Jonathan Powe	Championship Series, National Doubles Championship, GC Inter-Counties, GC Inter-Club Championship, GC Inter-Club Murphy Shield, GC Home Internationals, England vs Spain Test
Chris Roberts	Open Series, A-Level Series, B-Level Series, C-Level Series
Louise Smith	Women's GC Open Championship
Lionel Tibble	Federations Shield

Championship Series	
Tournament	Date
Sidmouth	20-21 April
Nailsea (NEW)	04-05 May
East Anglia (Colchester)	11-12 May
Wrest Park	01-02 June
Ramsgate	15-16 June
Cheshire (Bowdon)	06-07 July
Nottingham	13-14 July
Hunstanton	10-11 Aug
FINAL at Nottingham	21-22 Sep

A-Level Series	
Tournament	Date
Phyllis Court/High Wycombe	06-07 April
Wrest Park	20-21 April
East Dorset	27-28 April
Bury	04-05 May
Hamptworth	25-26 May
Sidmouth	01-02 June
Pendle	08-09 June
Crake Valley	15-16 June
Woking	15-16 June
Watford	29-30 June
Hunstanton	13-14 July
Ashby	20-21 July
Colchester	20-21 July
Chester	03-04 Aug
Guildford	16-17 Aug
FINAL at Sidmouth	28-29 Sep

B-Level Series	
Tournament	Date
Budleigh Salterton	13 April
Sussex County	28 April
Watford	06 May
Camerton & Peasedown	07 May
Pendle	11 May
Wrest Park	15 May
East Dorset	18-19 May
Bury	19 May
Woking	12 June
Ealing	13 June
Crake Valley	14 June
Colchester	16 June
Cheltenham	19 June
Hunstanton	22 June
Hamptworth	22-23 June
Bath	04 July
Compton	06 July
Nottingham	10 July
Broadwas	31 July
Guildford	03 Aug
Ashby	10 Aug
Phyllis Court/Blewbury	10-11 Aug
Sidmouth	11 Aug
Nailsea	13 Aug
FINAL at East Dorset	21-22 Sep

C-Level Series	
Tournament	Date
Budleigh Salterton	14 April
Phyllis Court	24 April
Watford	26 April
Sussex County	28 April
Peterborough	14 May
Chester	18 May
Wrest Park	22 May
Roehampton	06 June
Camerton & Peasedown	11 June
Ealing	12 June
Crake Valley	13 June
Woking	13 June
Colchester	22 June
Hunstanton	23 June
Surbiton (NEW)	23 June
Swindon	28 June
East Dorset (NEW)	29 June
Compton	07 July
Nottingham	11 July
Bury	17 July
Cheltenham	22 July
Bath	25 July
Broadwas	01 Aug
Guildford	04 Aug
Ashby	09 Aug
Hamptworth	10 Aug
Sidmouth	10 Aug
FINAL at Watford	28-29 Sep

Open Series	
Tournament	Date
Cheltenham	13-14 April
Surbiton	27-28 April
Hunstanton	18-19 May
Woking	10-11 June
Roehampton	15-16 June
Ashby	29-30 June
Sidmouth	06-07 July
Hamptworth	13-14 July
East Dorset	20-21 July
Budleigh Salterton	03-04 Aug
Watford	31-01 Sep
Sussex	07-08 Sep

Rick Lilley took up Golf Croquet in 2019 and won the GC 3rd National Eight (Suzanne Roberts Memorial Trophy) in 2023, having been runner-up in 2022, and also competed in the 2023 WCF Over 50s GC World Championships in Australia, reaching the knockout stage and losing to the eventual winner, former GC World Champion, top seed and world number 4, Ahmed Elmahdy.

International Performance Development Squad (IPDS):

The IPDS for GC was set up in 2016 to mirror the development approach already successful in AC, with the aim to develop promising players towards maximising their potential, to help aspiring international players gain the skills to graduate to the England squad, and to provide a collective focus on playing at the top international level. International Performance Director (GC) Lionel Tibble (CA Coach of the Year 2021) has led the group since its inception, strongly supported by Rachel Gee (recently named CA Coach of the Year for 2023); both deserve huge credit for giving so much time and energy to make the program such a success.

Croquet – a new challenge: I fell into croquet essentially by accident. In 2019 I had just joined the Phyllis Court members’ club and was walking back to the car park with my new parking permit. Passing the croquet courts, I stopped for a few minutes to watch, thinking, I’d quite like to have a go at that sometime. Suddenly a chap came running across the court, asked if I was interested in playing and having nodded, told me there was one place left on the last training course for the year, which started at 9am the following day – he’d see me then. I duly turned up and within a few short weeks was well and truly hooked. Chris Roberts has a lot to answer for!

Joining the IPDS – a coaching revelation: Having progressed through a few C-level and B-level tournaments despite the disruption of Covid-19, and being fortunate to make the National C and B-level Finals in 2020 and 2021 respectively, also reaching the All England Handicap Final in 2021 and testing myself in a couple of A-level tournaments along the way, I was astounded to receive an email from Lionel Tibble early in 2022, inviting me to join the IPDS. Further communication followed from Lionel and Rachel Gee, lead coach for the squad, outlining what we could expect from the weekends scheduled for 2022 – coaching, practice sessions, assessments and more.

Feeling excited and terrified in equal measure, I arrived at the first session at Wrest Park on a cold, unsettled, April weekend; was I up to this? As one of the new members of the squad, there were already a few familiar names around the table, most of whose handicap and ranking far out-shone mine. Nonetheless, with a diverse group of players ranging from 16 to 60s, Lionel and Rachel soon put everyone at ease, teasing out where everyone was on their croquet journey and gaining an understanding of individual goals and aspirations amongst the squad. After running through the aims and program for the weekend and beyond, it was out onto the lawns for the first practical sessions, where we were joined by other experienced players including championship referee Tim King and England captain John-Paul (JP) Moberly. In subsequent sessions, we also had other England players such as Will Gee and Aston Wade join us.

With the accumulated international experience around us on the lawns, it was immediately apparent how much we had to learn about tactics – and instead of just thinking about the next shot or next hoop, realising how important it is to think several rotations ahead, and start planning the next hoop or two, even before this one is won or lost.

Starting with the coin toss, we moved systematically around the lawn from Hoop 1 to Hoop 13, analysing the positioning of every ball and the shot options open, working through the potential consequences of every choice - we spent almost half an hour on Hoop 1 alone! And golf croquet is a simple game?? This session was nothing less than a revelation, with realisation dawning that the precise positioning of every single ball and every shot should be considered and measured both to gain advantage and also to influence the thinking and behaviour of the opponent. Dominate the hoop, yes; but, for example, at the corner hoops, also defend on the shorter boundary side to limit how far your opponent can

clear you. When to attempt the hoop and when to clear? The choice could depend on the strength of your opponent, your own confidence on the day – or indeed the score.

During these initial sessions, the differing styles and approaches of top players became very evident – Rachel’s mathematical, percentage-driven approach and smooth hooping; the accurate, hard-hitting games of Will and JP and the thoughtful, disruptive style of the inimitable Mr T himself. Having the chance to experience these styles in a coaching environment was invaluable and stimulated a huge amount of discussion about how best to meet and counter the different approaches. These discussions continued long into the evening over dinner at a local hostelry, before returning for another day of similar challenge and revelation after which the squad returned home to reflect on the weekend and process the tips gleaned.



2018



2019

Performance Analysis – a predictor of success: The next session in September 2022 began with a round-up of squad members’ experiences and successes over the season – leading into a discussion as to what we thought had been factors leading to success (or lack thereof...). The direction of this discussion soon became clear, as we were introduced to the Cowing Performance Analysis (CPA), a disarmingly simple but powerful exercise devised by Andrew Cowing, whereby a game is watched by observers scoring each stroke as a binary success/failure according to intent vs outcome (positioning, clearing under and over 7 yards, hoop running, jawsing, blocking, jumping and so on). This simple approach provides a strong understanding of the more and less common strokes in a game and how well a player has executed them, and if repeated at regular intervals can also give a real insight into where a player has improved or still needs to work on their game. One very clear message from use of the CPA was the critical importance of positioning, with a clear correlation between good positioning and a winning outcome; sustained accurate clearing at 7 yards was also highly correlated with success.

Practise Routines: Having gained some insight into our strengths and weaknesses, it was then on to practice routines intended to address some of these, such as hoop running from 1 yard, 2 yards, 3 yards etc; clearing at short distances, moving out to longer ones until determining critical distances where one can expect 50% of one’s shots to be successful – this in turn aids decision making when faced with choices in a real game. For those of us less enamoured with practice, we were able to take away ideas for more interesting and varied routines which nonetheless still test critical positioning, hooping and clearing etc and also provide measurable feedback on improvement.

Mentored Matches: Armed with all this new-found knowledge, it was back to the lawns to test ourselves against the best. A masterpiece of scheduling by Rachel enabled us to play various combinations of singles and doubles matches with or against international players and members of the Elite Squad – and with Quadway hoops to boot, a new experience for many of us. This was another fantastic experience, being able to play competitively but also pause the game to discuss options and shot choices as we went along, with Lionel, Rachel and the other England and Elite players on hand. Where else is it possible to receive this level of coaching and immediate feedback from elite players?

2023 – Building on the knowledge: Returning to the IPDS in 2023 were those of us who joined in 2022, and a new intake of enthusiastic and rapidly improving players. A similar program to the previous year introduced the new members to the deep tactical coaching and discussions, and a season of applying the new knowledge led the 2022 intake to asking many new questions about how to build further on these experiences.



2021



2023

A repeat of the Cowing Performance Analysis allowed us to assess progress from last year, reinforcing the key findings and areas to work on improving; how could any of us have forgotten those lessons and the importance of practice??

We were also challenged on our technical skills, such as ability to execute a (legal) stop shot with only a finger's width separating the balls – with Raouf Allim (a previous graduate of the IPDS) demonstrating with ease. Next, onto jump shot technique, where Will Gee and Aston Wade demonstrated a “straightforward!?” flat 3-4 yard jump shot, before moving on to sharing the technique to succeed in the full 7 yard “from the boundary” attempt. With their guidance and encouragement most in the group did achieve success in a surprisingly short time – adding another option to the arsenal and marking another level of confidence in taking on such shots.

Playing the lawn as well as the opponent: In discussing real game challenges, it was perhaps inevitable for players to share their experiences of variable court conditions encountered during a season around the UK, and also on courts abroad. This led to a really productive discussion with Lionel, Rachel and the Elite Squad players about how to adapt to different conditions and styles of opponents. Obviously the varied UK weather has a fundamental part to play; during a typical season most of us might expect to encounter baked, parched, super-fast conditions, as well as wet, slow courts. Humps and dips are always a good excuse for missing a hoop or a clearance....or are they? For example, would you be as confident in jawsing a ball on a lumpy hard, fast lawn as on a slow, level green one? When should you perhaps consider changing your shot choice to cope with the

prevailing conditions? Is your opponent coping better with the speed or condition of the lawn than you are? The take home message from these discussions was that you really should be taking court conditions and opponent skills into account and sometimes adapting your play accordingly. These considerations really came home to me in playing in the WCF Over 50s GC World Championship in Australia in October last year. Playing on hard, fast courts against a range of nationalities and styles (including the very hard-hitting Egyptians), with Quadway hoops set to 1/32”, even the best players were failing hoops from relatively short distances - and running hoops or jawsing from an angle was extremely difficult. These conditions led to many competitors playing in more close positional shots than might be typical; in turn less jawsing and fewer jump shots were generally evident. Those of the England contingent present who had been through the IPDS experience all agreed that it had given us a wider appreciation of how best to counter the different conditions and opponent playing styles.

A cautionary note: The opportunity to benefit from the level and intensity of coaching and experience in the IPDS is unparalleled. A note of caution, however; as with all coaching, one needs to be prepared to take a backward step in results when trying to assimilate so much new information or apply significant changes to one's game. Several members of the squad found that their game and results suffered in the short term, until the new tactical approaches became embedded and spontaneous, and the confidence and results returned; it's important to be patient to gain the improvements that surely come from the squad coaching.

What did I gain from the IPDS? Firstly, I found playing in the squad gave me a huge boost in confidence. Confidence in my shot choices, confidence in taking on top players and a belief that I could compete with the best and not to be over-awed when facing international players. A huge sense of camaraderie also developed in the group, which carried through to meeting the same players in competition and finding that squad members were always supportive of each other, willing each other to do well and celebrating each other's successes. Several players also observed that those benefiting from the IPDS experience appear well represented in the latter stages of many competitions – for example all four semi-finalists in the 2023 3rd Eight were current members of the IPDS.

Participation in the IPDS has been a fantastic experience for me and many other alumni of the program. With access to the best coaches and players in the country, all at the top of their game and willing to spend their time passing on their knowledge and experience, this has truly been an experience to covet and treasure for the rest of my croquet career – challenging, demanding and hugely rewarding. I and many others are immensely grateful for the opportunity, and indebted to Lionel, Rachel and all those involved in supporting this program so generously with your time, knowledge, patience and humour – thank you!

| Rick Lilley

FOOTNOTE:

Thank you to all of the Elite players who, from day one of the scheme, have contributed so much in sharing their experience and giving their time to help the Development Squad reach their playing goals, it is greatly appreciated.

We are always hoping for experienced top players to help out with the squad particularly for the Mentored Match Weekend so if you're keen to contribute and available please get in touch.

From day 1 Rachel has been a great lead coach, always helpful, always practical and above all inspiring all around her. Sadly having to step down now, Rachel will be sorely missed.

This means that the position of deputy and Lead Coach is available to any top player willing to pick up the baton.

If you can help out in any way big or small, please e mail me at anglion@btinternet.com

The relevant dates for 2024 are.

- IPDS GC weekend at Wrest Park 6th and 7th April
- IPDS GC Mentored Match weekend at Wrest Park 31st August and 1st September

| Lionel Tibble, IPDG GC Director

CROQUET AROUND THE WORLD

Croquet around the world is a new feature for 2024 highlighting fun and interesting things that have happened in the world of croquet. We will showcase clubs, organisations and individuals who are getting more people playing croquet, in more places.

MORE CROQUET IN MADRID

On the 27th October, 120 croquet players assembled at the Club de Campo Villa de Madrid for a knock about to celebrate the opening of three new croquet lawns. In addition to their existing lawn, this brings them to a total of four, making it one of the largest croquet clubs in Spain. Not least by lawn count but also membership, at a staggering 300 croquet members. Lawn booking must have been a challenge before the new lawns. The club has also benefitted from the additional of a croquet chalet to provide toilets and catering services to players. With 120 players competing in a social tournament across the opening weekend, the kettle in the new chalet must have been on a near constant boil.

The turnout of the weekend and the investment made by Club de Campo Villa de Madrid is a clear demonstration of the growing popularity and support croquet is getting in Spain. Many new clubs are opening all across the country thanks to the support and tireless work of the Spanish Croquet Federation. Dr. José Luis Álvarez-Sala who has been leading the federation has now stepped up to become president of the World Croquet Federation. Hopefully his experience in Spain can help build croquet more extensively across the world to get more people playing in more places.

The Club de Campo, located in the heart of the city of Madrid, is one of Spain's premier sports facilities. It offers internationally-renowned golf courses that have hosted important competitions, such as the Spanish Open, as well as an equestrian centre, hockey pitches, and tennis courts. Currently, it has around 34,500 members and over 300 croquet-federated players.



A CELEBRITY ON THE LAWNS!

Back in November, Croquet Mexico hosted Gerrit Cole, pitcher for the New York Yankees, at their club for a day of play, coaching and the usual excellent hospitality that Croquet Mexico always provides. Cole is a four-time major-league baseball all-star and holds the record for the highest single-season strikeout rate in major-league baseball history. He decided to visit the club during his off season before the baseball season restarts in March. Rick Zazueta, Founder of Croquet México, said that Gerrit was a real class act, spoke a little Spanish and was an absolute joy to be around.

Hopefully Gerrit is now eager to get back out on the lawns and play more croquet, maybe he will bring the whole squad next time.

The Croquet Mexico Club is located in Valle de Guadalupe, in the heart of Mexico Wine Country, Baja California, and is ninety miles from San Diego, California. The club has one lawn and a beautifully-designed club house that sits elegantly in the landscape. Inside there is ample entertaining space where the club loves to show off their great hospitality. They even have their own line of wine!

Find the club at: www.croquet.mx
Socials: [croquetmexico](https://www.facebook.com/croquetmexico)

LOOKING AHEAD

Sugar Beach International Croquet Cup 2024

Look out for this GC tournament, featuring several top-level players, being held in Mauritius from the 25th – 27th January. It is being hosted at Sugar Beach, a 5* hotel with croquet lawns overlooking the Indian Ocean. It's great to see new events like this raising the profile of the sport.

Live streaming links and scores will be posted via www.croquetandcocktails.com/Mauritius

Midsummer GC Mixed Doubles Tournament in Latvia

Taking place from the 21st – 23rd June, this is your opportunity to experience the combination of Croquet and the Midsummer traditions in Latvia during the longest day of the year! The tournament will feature 24 teams. Individuals can apply and will be paired up.

Initial registration of interest deadline: 14th February. For more details and to register, contact Roberts Stafeckis via: latvijaskroquets@gmail.com

If you have a story you would like featured, please email: duncan.catterall@croquetengland.org.uk



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CROQUET ELEVENSES

Not everyone is willing to brave the lawns in winter but they do miss the regular social interaction, served mainly by the Roll Up/Mix-In type activities.

Fellow club member Peter Petrie and I came up with "Eleveneses", the idea being that members gather once a month for a cup of coffee and a chat. We scheduled this for Mondays knowing that most people attend the afternoon Roll Up on that day, so only one journey for most.

How could we make it a bit more interesting? We thought about a guest speaker but we had no budget? So, we set out on a search for interesting people from among the membership.

To date we have found: An expert on left handedness. - A fast jet pilot who rose to a very high rank (no pun intended!) - A sculptress - A qualified astronaut - A writer who specialises in Cotswold villages - A mechanical engineer - A Fellow of IAM Roadsmart - A very experienced hot air balloon pilot - An expert on Greek mythology. This gave us more than enough speakers for 2023/24 and also to make a start on the 2024/25 Eleveneses list. We needed to make a small charge to cover electricity, and managed to find volunteers to 'sponsor' the coffee, so no charge for that.

On the day of the first Eleveneses, Peter and I set out the room and waited - would anyone turn up? They did. 35 members have attended each of the November and December meetings; they arrived around 10.30, picked up their cuppa and chatted away; with a good mix of GC and AC members present.



The speaker starts at 11 and finishes at noon. The brave then head to the lawns and the others head home. The feedback has been very positive and it's a great opportunity to communicate with members. Not all clubs have a room available but, lurking in the membership lists will surely be someone with a link to a nearby facility?

| Klim Seabright, Cheltenham Croquet Club

NEWPORT CC - IRRIGATION SYSTEM NOV 2023

Newport Croquet Club has three lawns and a club house. The club was created in 1984 on land used for spoil from the widening of the M11. The club has about 70 members with 7 or 8 playing only AC, 15 playing AC and GC and 45 or so playing GC only. The club enters national and federation competitions and is involved in the CA (now CqE) Next Generation initiative. We hope to start visiting schools in the spring term.

The lawns drain well and we play through the winter whatever the weather, but in recent years with the long, dry, hot summers and no automatic or pressured watering system, the limp sprinkler at the end of a hose failed to keep the lawns sufficiently watered. The committee discussed a watering system several times during the last 15 years but having gained funds from an unexpected bequest, and benefitted from Covid recovery grants we had some cash available. We took advice from Duncan Hector and visited Ipswich CC who had recently installed one of Duncan's systems. The Club applied for a grant of £5,000 from the CA to help with the cost of installation of a system budgeted at £10,120. Over-budgeting on sundry costs (concrete mainly) meant that the total cost was only £9,239, half of which was provided by the CA: £4,619. The club also received £500 from the East Anglia Croquet Federation and £1,000 from a local sports charity. The club had received an anonymous donation, thought to be a bequest, of £2,500 earlier in the year which meant we were able to cover nearly the entire cost without dipping into reserves. The first task was to install the water tank. A group of 6 members spent a morning digging out space for a 9 square metre concrete slab before mixing, pouring and levelling concrete for it. The tank was delivered. At this point we realised we didn't have an easy way to get it inside the fence of the club and had to 'roll' it over the 6ft fence. Several hundred meters of plastic pipe turned up on the same day which we carefully unrolled and pegged out (with croquet hoops) to straighten and flatten it.

On a Monday in early October 2023, Duncan arrived with his trenching machine on the back of a trailer and all the rest of the components we needed. A bevy of members turned up and work commenced. Trenching turned out to be relatively straightforward with only a couple of runs where more effort was required.

The volunteers worked through until Wednesday afternoon when we had 'the big switch on'. inevitably the first button push didn't work. After a bit of fiddling, sprinkler number 1 popped up and shot out a jet of water much to everyone's excitement.

The installation of the slab took 6 people half a day. The 6 to 8 people worked for 3 days (with plenty of breaks and short days) to complete the job. It was straightforward with Duncan's guidance as to what went where and how to put it together. It is achievable by club members. Trenching is hard work and 2-3 able bodied people are needed to do that.

Though the cost seemed considerable when compared to the income of the club and reserves built up, the availability of the grant from the CA made it possible. Duncan's advice and the visit to Ipswich reassured us that the work involved was achievable by members and gave us confidence to proceed. Other clubs should be reassured that it is not difficult and that funds are available. Given the amount it has rained since we did the installation, it hasn't given us any benefits yet but the expectation is that we can have green, smooth, consistent lawns throughout next and future summers, however hot or dry they turn out to be.

| Matthew Hardy, Secretary



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CHARLTON HORETHORNE CROQUET CLUB

The club has 45 members with everyone playing Golf Croquet and about a third of members also playing Association. Most members live within 2 to 3 miles of the village. We only have space for one lawn which is less than full size. We have a small clubhouse but no power or water. The lawn was laid in 2012 and was showing its age in the form of various bumps, hollows and slopes particularly at one end. The committee thought that the time had come to try to improve the quality of the playing surface. After talking to contractors and doing some research, it became clear that top dressing alone would not solve our problems, and some turf would need to be lifted so that the level could be built up underneath before replacing the turf. The total cost of the work was £4,554. We had to think again. The club did not have enough funds to pay for the project. We needed to raise money from other sources. At this point, we were running out of time if we were going to be able to do the work before the winter. The committee were very keen to complete the work in the Autumn of 2023. Some fundraising options, such as a parish council donation, were not available to us because of the short time period remaining on our lease. We needed to raise over £2,000. We asked for help from members, raising £785 and we applied to the CA for a grant to cover the remainder. We were given a grant of

£1,000 plus an interest-free loan of £600 which gave us a small surplus in case of unexpected costs. What should we have done differently? First, we should have started the project earlier so that we had more time. This would have given us more options when we realised that our initial plan needed to be changed and more work and funds were needed. We should also have contacted the CA (now CqE) at an earlier stage. We had assumed that it would be difficult to obtain a grant for such a small club. In the event, we were given a lot of help and advice plus the money that we needed in the form of a grant and loan. The work on the lawn has been completed and we are looking forward to playing again next spring. During the grant application process, the CA Funding Committee talked to us about the possibility of finding a location to set up a larger club with room for 2 lawns and a clubhouse. Their view, when agreeing to our grant, was that it would enable us to keep the club going, with an acceptable lawn quality, until such time as we can find a suitable location for a larger club. We will have access to help and information from our Development Officers and other clubs who have gone through a similar process. Obviously, this is a large undertaking but we will be discussing the initial steps at our AGM in March 2024.

| Jill Hanson, Secretary, Charlton Croquet Club



THE FUNDING COMMITTEE - THE FIRST 3 YEARS

The CA Funding Committee (now re-incarnated as the CqE Funding Committee) is 3 years old. It was created in 2021 to relieve the CA Development Committee of the burden of determining applications for funding, freeing them to devise and innovate. In their first 3 years, the new Committee awarded grants amounting in total to £90,408 (an average of £30,136 per year). 22 different clubs have had the benefit of such awards. Two clubs were each awarded two grants (in different years) because their major projects were undertaken in different phases. The range of the grants was from £990 to £5,000. The Committee has the power to award up to £10,000 but they have a self-imposed limit of £5,000 (which they may extend in exceptional circumstances) to ensure a reasonably wide annual distribution of the available funds.

The projects included:

- the erection of four new club houses (variety of shapes/sizes)
- the installation of four irrigation systems
- the creation of two toilet facilities (one with a car park and the other with a kitchen)
- the addition of two extensions to existing buildings
- the purchase of two lawn mowers (for clubs that previously did not have such equipment)
- the production of a new croquet court at an existing tennis club
- the initiation and continuation of two new courts at an existing

cricket club

- the origination of new courts on two new sites (after forced re-locations)
- the levelling of three courts (major work and not just maintenance)
- the acquisition of a shelter
- the procurement of a storage shed
- the unearthing of a thesaurus for the use of the Chair

The Committee also made 5 interest-free loans to clubs (repayable in 2 instalments over a period of 5 years) totaling £17,600. The criteria for the offer of a loan are, unsurprisingly, less stringent than those for a grant. Any expenditure by an affiliated club which will probably result in an increase in future subscriptions to CqE, is eligible for sympathetic consideration. If your club is feeling disadvantaged, underprivileged or needful, you should speak to your Federation Development Officer and/or email the Chair of the Committee because help may be forthcoming.

The CqE Committee for 2024 is: John Reddish (Chair(man)); Ian Burridge (CqE Treasurer) Jonathan Toye (Chair of the CqE Sport Development Committee); Sarah Andrew (Funding Consultant and Secretary to the Committee), and George Noble (Lawns Expert and Person of Great Experience) - all acting with the benefit of liaison with the CqE Director of Development, Paul Francis.

| John Reddish

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Book a Spring coaching course now! What better way to start the season than with some coaching? Most clubs will be offering coaching for improvers as well as beginners, and now is the time to get your name on the 'definites' list. Some Federations may also run development sessions.

The Academies all offer a range of courses in both AC and GC appealing to a wide range of abilities and handicaps. Places on these have already been filing fast; get in touch with your nearest one now (High Wycombe, Southwick, York) to see what's left.

COACHING UNDER 18s

From 2024 onwards, all coaches coaching under 18-year-olds need to be licensed by Croquet England.

In this context, 'coaching' is to be distinguished from 'introducing newcomers'. 'Introducing newcomers' – guiding first-timers on some of the basics – needs no special licence. Once U18 players look to improve their skills, 'introducing newcomers' transitions into 'coaching', triggering the need for the coaches involved to be licensed. For younger children such coaching may be in the form of fun games rather than more formal skills-coaching. The examples below are to help determine whether a licensed coach is required or not:

- **Introducing Newcomers (Does NOT require a Licensed Coach):**
 - Club Open day
 - Croquet taster event for U18s
 - A Next Generation croquet session at a school
 - A Next Generation Event at a croquet club
 - Family member taking child to club to play croquet
- **Coaching (Does require a Licensed Coach):**
 - Regular sessions for one or more U18s. These may be weekly, monthly etc.
 - U18s mixed coaching / tournament event

This approach allows U18s to be introduced to croquet without the need for a licence.

To obtain a licence to coach U18s, a coach must:

- Complete the certified child safeguarding training. This is a free three-hour online module, Safeguarding in Sport v4 by Hi-Speed Training, with final e-Certificate.
- Hold an Enhanced DBS Certificate, registered with DBS Update Service. To coach U18s in regulated activity* the Certificate should include the child barred list check
- Sign up to the Coaches' Code of Conduct (see below).
- Be entered in the register of Licensed Coaches, available via the website to all who belong to Croquet England.

All lead coaches of U18s need a Coaching Licence. This applies whether the 'coaching' (as opposed to 'introducing newcomers') is being delivered at a club or elsewhere, for example at a school.

Once licensed, such coaches can ask unlicensed club members to assist them in their U18s coaching sessions as Coaching Assistants. There are two important aspects of this procedure:

- Coaching Assistants must operate at all times under the direction of a Licensed Coach and also must stay within their sight when coaching U18s.
- If Coaching Assistants support U18s coaching in regulated activity* they will need the appropriate Enhanced DBS Certificate, registered with the DBS Update Service.

PHOTOGRAPH James Hawkins leads a coaching session at the Northern Academy



Can a qualified coach, without a Licence, be asked to support a Licensed Coach in an U18s coaching session? They certainly can, but such a supporting coach, however well experienced and qualified, must then work within the constraints associated with a Coaching Assistant.

THE ROLE OF COACHING ASSISTANT

No special qualifications or clearances are needed to be a Coaching Assistant. Indeed there are no specific experience requirements for the role other than being enthusiastic about croquet, being able to explain how the game is played, having good interpersonal skills, and wanting to help others. A Coaching Assistant:

1. Wishes to introduce new players to croquet
2. Is able to work with others to communicate the rudiments of the game
3. Has no specific training or guidance, beyond that given to all Croquet England Associates
4. Is capable of taking up to two complete beginners at a time to introduce them to the game (either AC or GC) over a short time period (e.g. 30 minutes)
5. Is able to demonstrate basic elements of croquet such as swing, hoop running, how a hoop point is gained, and the format of a game
6. Is able to inform beginners how they will be able to continue to play croquet within their club
7. If instructing U18s, does not do so for regulated activity*
8. Does not need to hold a Croquet England U18s Coaching Licence.
9. Always works within the oversight of a coach with an U18s Coaching Licence, and, whenever with any U18, must always remain within sight of the licensed coach

*Regulated activity is defined as Frequently: if carried out once a week or more; Intensely: on 4 or more days in any 30-day period; Overnight: a trip involving an overnight stay. (See Safeguarding-requirement-for-DBS-enhanced-certificate.pdf (croquetengland.org.uk) or speak to the NSO for further details)

WHAT CAN A COACH DO WHEN IT'S RAINING?

Serious croquet continues regardless of the weather – but beginners and improvers will usually want to come indoors during drenching rain. A well-prepared coach therefore needs a group of wet-weather fillers that can be pulled out as required. A magnetic board marked out with hoop positions and coloured counters is an excellent aid on these occasions. A table croquet

set is a good alternative, particularly if it is large and robust enough: the table-top set from Townsend Croquet works well. A flipchart with coloured pens has more limited use but can be handy. If your club has none of these, one or more of them suggest themselves as a worthwhile investment.

Meanwhile here are half-a-dozen simple starter ideas to help get a collection of wet-weather fillers underway.

Any questions?

This simple approach works at any level. Simply ask what they're not clear about or what they'd like to discuss, and the questions should flow. A good approach is to throw the question open to the whole group for responses: even when a perfect answer arrives, it's good to bounce it on to another student: 'Do you agree?'

'Anything to add?'

When the questions dry up, ask simple questions to revisit and reinforce recent learning. Again, this can work at any level, from straightforward reinforcement of the basics to detailed discussion of knotty choices in play.

Show and tell

A basic option is to take to the whiteboard yourself and explain something to the group, for example the GC offside rule, the AC yard line rule, GC Advantage play, some helpful AC opening tactics.

A more productive option can be to ask a volunteer to talk through what they understand, then ask another person in the group to do exactly the same, and let the discussion unfold from there. This is not only more participatory, it also gives you a clear insight into levels of understanding among group members.

Errors and faults

Many players, even more experienced ones, can be hazy about some of the finer print on errors and faults. Sections 23-29 of the yellow Seventh Edition AC Laws provide a ready-made source of questions, demonstrations and discussion, as do sections 10 and 11 of the 2022 GC Rules...

The key thing here is not to try and cover too much in one go: focus on one short paragraph or section at a time. Keep it simple, keep it light, and get discussion flowing so that everyone is involved.

Swing training

Have mallet, will swing, and a coach standing directly in line is well placed to comment on whether there is any deviation from straight. Students can also self-coach by standing astride a line on the floor and swinging along it.

The Hawkins Tube gives even more accurate feedback on swing straightness: ask students to take a cardboard tube, or failing that a rolled-up copy of the Croquet Gazette or sheet of paper; hold it as if it's a mallet; swing along a line on the floor; and ask students to check to see that, at every point of the swing, they can look down through the hole in the middle and see the line on the floor.

Next move

This needs either a whiteboard with magnetic counters in the four colours, or a table croquet set. In AC, ask each member of the group in turn to play the first four shots of a game. How can the next player get from that starting point to a well laid four-ball break, using bisques? Is there a simpler way? Is there a way using fewer bisques? Is there a way using only easy shots? In GC, Michael Hague's classic book *Golf Croquet Tactics* has a large number of ready-made scenarios: what choices are there for the next shot? Each scenario should lead to good discussion about the pros and cons of each option.

Remember: this is not an exercise in guessing what's in the coach's head.

Remember too: the 'perfect' shot which requires landing accurately on a given blade of grass will be unachievable by all but expert players. Take each contribution positively and with respect, however basic, and allow the discussion of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to flow from the students.

So you think you know the Laws and Rules

The Croquet England website contains two sets of more advanced Laws and Rules questions for more experienced players. To reach them simply go to the Coaching Resources page of the website, scroll down to AC or GC as appropriate, and the quizzes are there at the bottom of each list.

The questions come up in random order which keeps discussion lively. Even if everyone knows the answer it's a good wet-weather opportunity to reinforce good knowledge.

Do you have other simple approaches to wet-weather fillers? If so please be in touch.

NEW COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

Congratulations to the following players, all of whom have either achieved their first coaching badge or who have upgraded their coaching qualifications:

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

- Matt Cook Caterham CC
- Jen Johnston Eardisley CC
- Tony Johnston Eardisley CC
- David Veal Bath CC

New Graded Coaches (authorised to coach skills and tactics to the appropriate level throughout the country):

Association Croquet – Grade 1

- Ian Shore – High Wycombe CC

Golf Croquet – Grade 1

- Roger Staples – Middlesbrough CC

Golf Croquet – Grade 2

- Debbie Lines – Peterborough CC
- Ian Lines – Peterborough CC

Association Croquet – Grade 3

- **Debbie Lines – Peterborough CC**

THINKING OF BECOMING A COACH?

If so, now is the time to act. Coaching is at the heart of the game, bringing on newcomers and more experienced players alike – and coaches also find that, as well as being enjoyable and satisfying, it benefits their own game too.

Several coach training courses are being offered this spring, including at all the Academies. These fill quickly so book your place now. Croquet England offers a £25 subsidy towards course costs for CqE members taking a course for the first time, and many Federations also offer financial support.

A recently qualified Club-Level Coach reports:

"I have really enjoyed this process, and I believe it has hugely improved my own understanding and playing of the game. I believe the standard of our club play has also improved as a result."

Adam Britton, Llanidloes CC

RACHEL GEE

2023 COACH OF THE YEAR

Youngest Recipient: Her nomination for Coach of the Year was a great surprise to Rachel and she is delighted to have won this prestigious award. As she reflected, “it’s nice to receive recognition from my fellow croquet players and coaches”. Checking our records, Rachel is the youngest recipient of the award.

A familiar start? Playing croquet in the back garden with her dad was the start of Rachel’s impressive croquet career. Rachel then chose croquet as her physical activity component for her Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. This experience encouraged her to join Ashby Croquet Club where she and her dad received great support and encouragement from the late Derek Buxton. From our conversation, it is clear that Rachel is very grateful to the role that Ashby and Derek Buxton played in her development.

The beginning of Rachel’s coaching story: Whilst studying for her Mathematics degree at the University of Warwick, Rachel joined Nottingham Croquet Club to develop her AC play. However, by this stage of her career, Rachel’s prowess in GC was evident to her fellow members. Consequently, she was asked to run sessions for the club’s GC improvers. Straight from the outset of her coaching involvement, Rachel has focused on the development of players’ tactical skills and knowledge (more on this later).

Take off: Rachel acknowledges that her coaching “really took off” when Lionel Tibble asked her to get involved with preparing for the GC Development Squad. She reflected on her own experiences and conversations with coaches and opponents, “what frustrated me was the feedback after a game, ‘in this situation you needed to...’, but this was rarely followed up with an explanation of why?” Learning from others and being influenced by her own experiences and mathematical background, Rachel centres her coaching around the following:

- Understanding of critical distances for successful outcomes use practice to ascertain these for hoop running and clearances
- Using Cowing Performance Analysis to analyse your style of play and highlight areas for improvement to give maximum benefit
- Embedding practice routines
- Analysis of games to discuss better outcomes based on a player’s strengths and weaknesses
- Considering the probabilities of successful outcomes based on the individual player’s skills and experience
- Practice makes perfect!

Major influences: It was Derek Buxton who encouraged Rachel to successfully apply for the first under 21 England team in the mid 2000s. It was here that her team mates (all male) encouraged Rachel to have another go at developing her AC. Rachel acknowledges that she was very fortunate to have such great support from experienced AC players at Nottingham. In addition, over the last six years she has practised and worked with Ian Burrigde on a range of practice routines, which she personally uses and regularly shares with groups she coaches. Finally, without Lionel Tibble’s ‘gentle’ arm twisting Rachel believes she might have not begun coaching at such an early stage in her croquet career.

Coaching to help us improve: Rachel reflected that Lionel’s invitation coincided with a dip in her performances. Coaching



was a great help in helping Rachel to move forward with her performances. Rachel believes that coaching helps you to reflect on your own practice and helps to solidify what you are doing well as well as “forcing you to take your own advice”, she observes.

Hope for all of us: Rachel is a big fan of doing the basics well and the power of focused practice routines. “Get these right and you can become a top 50 in the world player!”

Know your numbers and reflect: Reflect on changes in your critical distances for hoop running and clearances based on tournament results. After a long day of competition, do a quick reflect on what went well (eg. why did I win/lose that game) and what needs to be improved. For example, ‘at hoop 2 did I play the correct shot, should I have used a ‘snuggle’ (hamper) instead of a clearance. If the answer is ‘yes’, then incorporate ‘snuggles’ into your next practice routine so you are continually working on slightly expanding your repertoire of shots available to you during competition

A warm fuzzy feeling! Rachel is sure that coaching is a great opportunity that all players should consider. “Give it a go, it’s good for your own game and a perfect way to meet new people. The players I coach are always very appreciative and it’s great to see their progress and, nice to think you have made a contribution to their development. Equally important is the fact that you are giving something back to your club and after all, it’s how our clubs grow.”

Exciting times: At the time of our meeting, Rachel was heavily pregnant with her and Will’s first child and we ended our chat with her plans for 2024, which are heavily influenced by the arrival of their daughter, Katie Gee. Maternity leave extending over the summer should give Rachel the opportunity to play (and practise) more at her club but less tournaments are planned. She is sure that there will be many volunteers to push a pram! I feel sure that in a few years that the youngest Gee will join the rest of the Rowe and Gee families on a croquet court.

| Paul Francis

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■ Duncan Hector

CROQUET PLAYER QUICK QUESTIONS

Name: Debbie Lines. **Home Club:** Peterborough Croquet Club. **Other Clubs:** None (apparently).
Potted playing history – from first picking up a mallet to current play - including what influenced you to start:

My family started playing croquet at a hotel in Cromer, Norfolk when I was just six years old. The same families came back year after year to play a hard-fought tournament, the rules were not quite the same, being closer to American 6-wicket rules with rotation and deadness, but it taught me the basic skills. When I was 18 the hotel closed and my brother Stephen, Dad and I entered the Hunstanton Week. It turned out we all had already reached about handicap 7, although we didn't really know what a 'break' was! From then on, with a bit of practice, I quickly learnt to play breaks and soon Triple Peels even.

Your finest or proudest achievement and shot:

Representing Great Britain at my sport has been my proudest achievement and I have been privileged to do this several times now. In 1996 I was on the GB winning MacRobertson Shield team. More recently I captained the 2023 GB Solomon Trophy team, although sadly we didn't win.

Mallets - Please tell us about your mallet and why you chose it (maker, etc., no detail too small, shaft/head materials, head weight, dimensions, one piece handle, grip material, etc.). What mallets have you had before? Do you have different mallets for AC and GC or lawn types/conditions?

I absolutely love my new Trimmer mallet. It replaced my old wooden shafted Percival two years ago and I immediately started running hoops better and hitting in more often. The confidence this gave me spread throughout my game and I make fewer errors now, mainly due to a stronger mental attitude. I thought changing mallets would take some time, as my stop shots were

so much better with my old mallet, but it took about an hour to work out the differences and adapt my break play accordingly.



PHOTOGRAPH Sarah Patton:
Debbie Lines at the Women's GC Worlds

There are many styles, but what is your approach to stalking and a smooth swing?

I cast, but then ground the mallet before hitting. I find this gives me much better pace control.

What is your top tip for a good tournament performance?

Turn up practised and relaxed.

What is the one other piece of kit you're never without?

I like a short-peaked hat. I find the typical long brim of a baseball cap too long, as I lift my head too quickly to see what's happening. The short peak helps shade my eyes but I don't look up until I've finished my swing. Feel free to expand this list.

What is your best suggestion for development in either code?

The decline of AC is really worrying. Too many clubs seem to run their recruitment and coaching aimed at GC with some vague hope that people will transfer over to AC later. We really need clubs to devote more time to AC recruitment and coaching. If you recruit AC players first, nearly all of these people will end up playing GC as well, but it just doesn't work the other way around. I also think that we should look at how we structure recruitment and coaching. We expect our volunteers to do it for free, but in almost every other sport, its normal to pay to be taught how to play. We ought to be charging for beginners coaching courses. This would give the volunteer some small recompense for their time (and so more likely to do it) and make our sport look more professional.

I'd like to see more clubs actively aiming their recruiting efforts

at early retirees, although I'm not sure how! 50 and 60 year olds have the energy and fitness to actually help run a club, and would provide the volunteer effort that so many clubs are now finding difficult to resource. Maybe we should be actively trying to convert people from other sports as they get too old and unfit during their 40s? The competitive spirit needs an outlet, and as people find tennis, football, rugby, etc. is beyond them, maybe croquet should be positioned as a good alternative.

Who do you enjoy playing against and why?

I mostly play A class croquet rather than handicap. I find handicap play frustrating, because if the players use their bisques badly, I want to leap onto the lawn and start coaching. On the other hand, if they use them well, I don't get any play at all but just pull out the bisques!

| Interview by Giles Pepperell



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DB MALLETS CHANGES HANDS

After 17 years, David Barrett has decided to step back and the sales, production and assembly of the popular composite DB mallets has passed to All England winner Anne Alvey and her husband Chris.

Both Anne and Chris started playing a version of Association Croquet as teenagers at Cober Hill (near Scarborough), as part of their summer holiday. Only really playing one week a year until they met in later life and married. Anne had known David for

years and he encouraged them to visit Bury Croquet club and both joined soon after.

Playing for the club using DB mallets which, unsurprisingly, many of the members do; Anne originally started using the SP1 bought for her daughter's birthday, before moving up to the SP6 she plays with currently. Bought when red, blue and yellow heads were available, it is somewhat striking; unfortunately, the company that provided the coloured version of the composite used for the heads

didn't survive the pandemic. So now customers can have the mallet heads in any colour they want, as long as it's black (to quote Henry Ford). Anne has her AC Bronze Award and was the first female winner of the Millennium Handicap Tournament and the first player to retain it for 2 years; and is the current All England AC champion.

Chris started with the SP7 and has gained his Grade 1 coaching, AC referee qualification and his AC Silver Award since becoming a club member, and currently captains Bury Caesars who have won the Northwest Federation League for the last 2 seasons.

"I have always loved the DB mallets, in particular the SP6" Anne says, "I'm glad I managed to get one of the coloured heads as it is so different. We're on the lookout for a company that can supply the colours again for our manufacturer, but the cost is currently very prohibitive".

"We feel very privileged that David has asked us to take over the business and hope that we can provide the same level of care and personal service that he has always offered. The mallets are great and we're proud that we are able to keep producing them for the croquet community".

"Chris loves coaching and has said that he can hear when a player miss-hits a ball with a DB by the noise it makes, making it easy to identify that someone he isn't watching has lifted their head up. I think it's because it makes him look like he has eyes in the back of his head, which I'm pretty sure he had when he was a lecturer!"

Chris and Anne can be contacted on: **07714 765181** and **07775 680828** or Email: dbmallets@gmail.com and New Website: www.dbmallets.co.uk

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WEBSITE

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

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

To find the glossary online, visit:

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

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

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HYPERLINKS

If you are reading the Gazette and would like to make use of the hyperlinks, visit the online gazette on Croquet England's website at: www.croquet.org.uk/?p=press/gazette

PUBLICATIONS

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Copy should reach the Editor before 10th of the month before publication is due. However if you have something that you think the Editor may be willing to expand this deadline for contact them directly.

Email contributions, including tournament reports should be sent direct to the Editor (editor@croquetengland.org.uk), or copied to the Editor if they are being posted to the Nottingham List.

Digital images are preferred, but photographic prints may be accepted. Please send digital jpeg or tiff format files and accompany all images with a description of the subject. If you require any material to be returned, please enclose a SAE.

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With its sizeable 46cm cut, large 65-litre capacity grass bag and self-propelled drive it will get you around a more substantial lawn quickly and with minimal effort.



£489.99
INC VAT
WER21HW4



Webb Supreme 53cm (21'') Self Propelled Petrol Lawn Mower

The largest lawnmower in the 'Supreme' range, Self-propelled, 4-in-1 capability and a premium Briggs & Stratton EXi725 Series™ engine.

...environmentally friendly



£89.99
INC VAT
WEH30



Webb Classic 30cm (12'') 'Autoset' Sidewheel Lawn Mower

This traditional hand-push lawnmower is an environmentally-friendly way to cut the grass and offers hassle-free maintenance.

... lush healthy lawn



£349.99
INC VAT
WEPS400



Webb Classic 40cm (16'') Petrol Lawn Scarifier & Raker

Say goodbye to tired-looking lawns! With a 40cm working width and powered by a robust 212cc Webb petrol engine, this machine is perfect for medium to large lawns.

...garden party ready



£49.99
INC VAT
WEELT650



Webb Classic Electric 650W 29cm (11'') Line Trimmer & Edger

Add the finishing touches to your garden. Features include a telescopic shaft and an adjustable head for excellent comfort and versatility.

LAWNMOWERS | HEDGE TRIMMERS | LINE TRIMMERS | GARDEN BLOWERS | CHAINSAWS | TILLERS



Designed to
PERFORM

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Offer ends: 31st March 2024

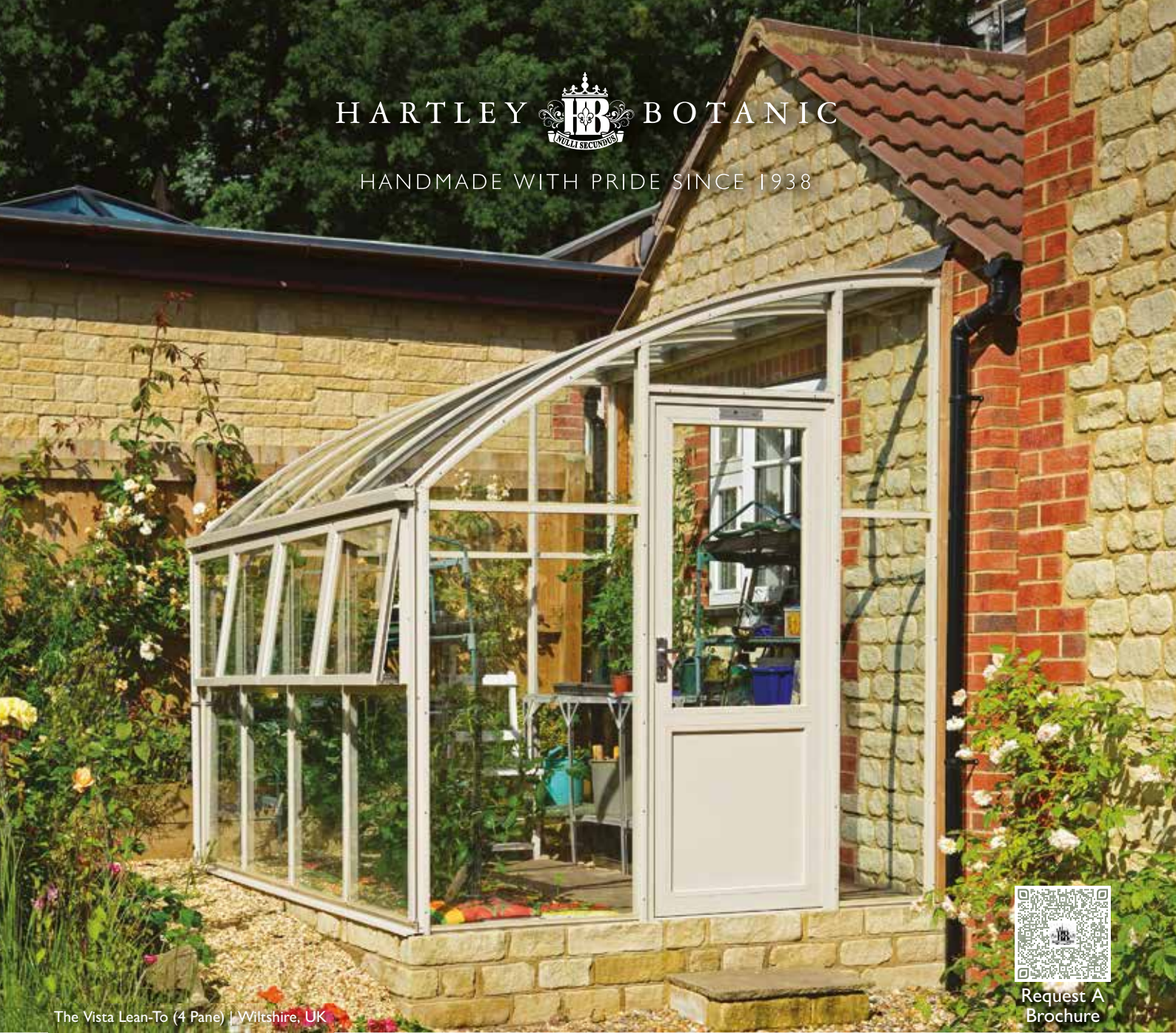
Classic

Supreme

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