



CROQUET

GAZETTE

Issue 409 | June 2024



'THE BOY FROM BOLTON' - THE STORY
OF CROQUET KID JACK GOOD



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Issue 409 | June 2024



Front cover:
 The Boy from Bolton -
 The Story of Croquet
 Kid Jack Good

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Croquet England
Old Bath Road
Cheltenham GL53 7DF
E: editor@croquetengland.org.uk
W: www.croquetengland.org.uk

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WELCOME

It's celebrations all around in Croquet England, starting with the fabulous news that His Majesty King Charles III has accepted the patronage of Croquet England. Our president Patricia Duke-Cox writes more about this exciting news below.

The club teams have started their campaigns to win the local leagues and inter-club championships. I would encourage any new players out there to sign up for their team, travel to other clubs and see more from the world of

Croquet. Visiting other clubs not only gives players experience of different playing conditions but also helps them gain exposure to competitive play, alongside meeting more people and making new friends. Now that we are coming into summertime, don't forget to invite your friends and family down to the lawns to share the joy of our sport.

Alison Maugham
Editor
editor@croquetengland.org.uk



CROQUET ENGLAND RECEIVES CONTINUED ROYAL PATRONAGE

It was very pleasing to learn on the anniversary of the accession of King Charles III and Queen Camilla that the King was delighted to accept the patronage of Croquet England. After the death of Queen Elizabeth II, a letter of condolence had been sent by your President and that was acknowledged. We had been informed that a review would take place and not to approach the Palace directly. However, with the change of status from

the Croquet Association to becoming a charitable incorporated organisation in the new guise of Croquet England, a second letter was sent advising the King of this significant change. The confirmation of continued patronage by the Monarch is a great honour that started with King George V in 1906 and maintained by Edward VIII, George VI and then Elizabeth II.

Patricia Duke-Cox
President, Croquet England



HIBISCUS COLUMN

My dark Easter Sunday ended in a hospital bed in the mountainous wilds of north-eastern Italy. If you're in a position to choose, I'd recommend a clinic in Milan. Incarceration left many bleak hours to regret the April croquet I was missing: the creative 4-ball breaks I was about to make; the tournaments I planned to enter and; a very distant third, familiar club complaints demanding solutions. Croquet re-entry day, six weeks later, threw me in at the deep end with one of the most insistent: the roll-up conundrum.

I'm a graduate of advanced roll-up tactics. In my teens, my mother bought a house in Bath overlooking Lansdown Tennis Club. On Tuesday and Thursday evenings, she'd check the players from her bedroom window. A men's four on court, ignoring the protocol that allowed one short set before a change of partners. Others sitting around hoping to join in. Worth a game? If so, my mother, scrambling into a white tennis dress, was with them within minutes. Or not...

Small croquet clubs celebrate low handicappers, tournament winners and fast improvers but they need people out there having fun. GC roll-ups are their bread and butter, the cement that binds

members into friends and persuades them to renew next year. Any who are still on speaking terms....

At my two-court club, those who want to play in a roll up - two AC, two GC every week - must sign up on the website calendar. No problem with AC, where there is space for all, but enjoying full capacity GC sessions - 16 on two courts - requires common sense and good will. On my re-entry, I went looking for them. The auguries were promising: the sun shone, the grass looked wonderful and a dozen players were there for the 13.30 start. But who should play with who? As everyone demands better partners than themselves, chance must decide. The secretary spins the giant rubber dice and allocates two fours to court one and one to court two.

There is a shout of protest from a man who has started a singles with his mate fifteen minutes early and now demands the right to finish it. 'The rules say first come, first served', he insists. Useless to point out that rules are for playing GC, not deciding who plays with who. Normally among the politest and most generous of regulars, he complies, but with very bad grace.

Then the late comers turn up. First a four who start their game, followed by number 17, the ex-chairman who gets off his bike and sits calmly on the bench. Knowing his turn will come, he doesn't look cross or impatient but that doesn't stop the uninformed jumping on his bandwagon. 'Someone who didn't sign up must be playing in his place. They should pay a guest fee as a fine'. This chorus from those who contribute as little as possible to the club's rota of volunteers of the lone non-signee who helps selflessly with admin and catering.

Can these be mature adults out for a fun afternoon? Or a bunch of egotists trying to rule the playground? Is it really an outrage to sit for a few minutes so that games can finish, creating a wider pool for follow-ups? Could it be that the tension of fuming and fretting inhibits a smooth swing...?

Could it be that there is a foolproof system out there waiting to be implemented? I'm told that picking a number on arrival to establish a pecking order is a good way forward. All enlightenment welcome...

Minty Clinch
Minty@mintyclinch.com

SHORT CROQUET CORNER

WHAT IS A GOOD WAY OF DIGGING A BALL OUT OF A CORNER?

If you plan to invest bisesques to set up a break, the time to fetch a ball from a corner and include it in your four-ball break set-up is now. With bisesques, no paired balls, and all four balls isolated, shoot at the corner ball, however far away, planning to take a biseque if you miss. Then simply send the corner ball to pilot, pioneer or pivot position, with your own ball finishing within easy reach of one of the remaining two balls. You then go on to set up the rest of the balls so as to start a break with all four balls in play. If bisesques are not available, you need to wait until you are for that hoop before picking up the fourth ball. Thinking of the corner ball as a pilot is fraught with difficulty. Instead, the secret is to think of the corner ball as a misplaced pivot.

With a corner ball lodged in, say, Corner 3, prepare for the pick-up well beforehand, when you are at hoop 1. Use the standard manoeuvre of sending the hoop 1 reception ball to the next hoop but one as a pioneer, with your own ball finishing within easy reach of the pilot at hoop 2. This shot is easier if, when emerging from hoop 1, you are able to engineer a rush north, nearer hoop 2 but down the west boundary: it makes the croquet shot shorter and a bit straighter, so more straightforward to manage.

As you prepare to run hoop 2, it's helpful if, again, you can place the reception ball to engineer a rush along the boundary. Don't worry if the rush doesn't come off; any advance across the lawn along the north boundary, however small, makes the next shot that bit easier.

The knack now is a croquet shot that provides a pioneer at the

next hoop but one, hoop 4, with your own ball finishing within reach of the corner ball.

The picture shows Niki Dance, playing Red (just visible behind corner ball Blue), ready to drive Blue from corner 3 to pivot position, landing near Yellow which is already at hoop 3. The corner ball becomes a good pivot and you have a well-laid four ball break.

John Harris



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



25 YEARS AGO

In the May 1999 Gazette (#261)

GOLF CROQUET IN 1999 AND THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The World Croquet Federation has introduced a new set of rules and the CA have adopted them for the coming season so that players can use the rules and make comments upon them.

The Golf Croquet World Championships held at Leamington last year considerably raised the interest in golf croquet in England and gave great impetus to the introduction of what is now known as the WCF rules for this format of the game. Although the CA has for many years played a very active and leading role in the development of the rules for Association Croquet, we have paid little attention to the rules for golf croquet although we publish such rules in our 'little red book'. This has led to the setting up of a working party by the World Croquet Federation (WCF) to formulate a new set of rules for golf croquet.

Why did the CA decide to go along this pathway? I believe the answer is very simple. If we want golf croquet to grow and prosper in this country and I believe that must be our aim, good competition at national and international level must be possible and this can only be done with one set of rules.

Bill Arliss (CA Chairman)

35 YEARS AGO

In the May 1989 Gazette (#203)

1989 SOHAM INDOOR WEEKEND

The world's by first indoor open croquet tournament took place at Soham Sports Centre on 14th and 15th January. Twelve players had been invited and despite three of these being unavailable, the field was still strong with 8 of the top 11 players competing. The players were separated into 4 top seeds who were to play the winners of 4 lower seeds vs 4 non-seeds.

The tournament was voted a success and everybody expressed their hope that this would become an annual event. The venue, Soham Sports Centre,

was excellent in virtually every aspect. However, the incredible 'hilliness' of the carpet did detract somewhat from the standard of play, with some strokes curling more than a yard.

Chris Clarke

40 YEARS AGO

In the June 1984 Gazette (#175)

FROM THE AGM MINUTES

(1) The Motion by Dr R.F. Wheeler "That Council's decision of 29th October 1983 to seek sponsorship for Golf Croquet be reversed and that Council be debarred from making any further attempts to attract sponsorship or publicity for that game without obtaining the explicit authority of the Croquet Association's members at a General Meeting'. The motion was discussed at some length. Before the vote was taken L.Wharrad asked the President to confirm that members of the Council were able to vote. The President stated that this already had been agreed. The motion was adopted, 36 votes to 34.

(II) Motion by Dr R.F. Wheeler: "That the official name of Golf Croquet be changed to Hoop Golf and that this name be used in all documents issued by The Croquet Association and in any correspondence or negotiations with potential sponsors". Dr.Wheeler was asked if he was prepared to alter the wording or withdraw the motion, He said he was not prepared to do this. After further discussion, the vote was taken and the motion defeated, 40 to 16.

65 YEARS AGO

In the June 1959 Gazette (#39)

NEW HOME SWEET HOME

This is literally an epoch-making month for our Association since before it is over we are due to enter upon our new tenancy at Hurlingham. Those associates who were members of county teams will already have had opportunity to inspect the attractive offices we are to occupy at the club, built especially for our use. For others it must suffice now to say that these look out over a lawn towards the rose pergola, and include not only

the "secretariat" but a delightful room large enough to accommodate the best-attended of the Council's committees, the walls of both rooms being decorated in very pleasant pastel shades.

Hurlingham has truly done croquet players proud, and they in their turn will surely be proud to bring their friends to see how handsomely they are accommodated. If we remain there as long as we have so happily done as guests of the Baptist Union at Southampton Row, our successors will see Croquet flourishing well into the twenty-first century.

70 YEARS AGO

In the June 1954 Gazette (#3)

The Council recently found another—though more metaphorical—way of "keeping the flag flying." This was by participation in the National Playing Fields Association's week at Harrods Stores shortly before the Croquet season opened. A (very) small court was laid out, equipment of every sort was available, and owing to the energy and enterprise of Miss Daisy Lintern and Mr. John Solomon, the attendance of experienced players was arranged for throughout the week to answer inquiries and engender interest. Features of the week were the keenness shown by many young folk attending the exhibition, and the genuine and friendly curiosity of many of the famous stars representing other games, about what our players had to show. Like most forms of "publicity" this experiment involved a good deal of selfless effort from those who represented the Association on this occasion, and our members may well be grateful to them.

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

I am delighted to be able to report that following the review of patronages by the senior members of the Royal Family, His Majesty King Charles III has accepted the patronage of Croquet England. This follows in a long tradition including Queen Elizabeth II, King George VI, Edward VIII and King George V, who became croquet's first royal patron on Sept 6th 1906.

The croquet season is well underway. It is the first as Croquet England, but everything looks to have gone to plan so it should operate and feel very much as it did before. Wherever you're playing, you'll find numerous volunteers, some working behind the scenes, to make everything run to plan. Do remember to thank them, and to look out for any areas in which you may be able to help in the future. Whilst all sports depend on such volunteers, a review of Croquet England has identified over-dependence, particularly in some key roles. There are other themes too, including a need to continue recruitment, attract players from a broader demographic, and to look at sustainability. The Trustees are working to have this strategy published ahead of our AGM in October, as a foundation for future development over the next five years.

Paul Francis has stepped down as Development Director. Paul has driven the webinar programme and been a driving influence behind the Next Generation Strategy from the outset. He has been replaced by Ian Draper, and we wish him well in this role. John Reddish has decided to stand down as Secretary of the Croquet England CIO. He will continue in the role until after October's AGM. News about filling this role will appear on the website. I'd like to thank John for his contributions, particularly to the establishment and mobilisation of Croquet England. National Croquet Week will have happened by the time you read this, but not as I'm writing. Please send in your stories about how it went at your club. It will be great to hear about successes and to think about how we can improve it for next year.

Samir Patel, Chairman of the Board of Trustees



THE BOY FROM BOLTON

The Bolton News has been following the progress of Jack Good since he was 14 years old. Three years later, 'The Boy from Bolton' smashes through the croquet season like a pro. It's about time we caught up with the Croquet kid from Bolton and get the full story.

IN THE BEGINNING

In an interview with Graham Good, Jack's croquet playing father, Graham told me that I was the first person to coach a young Jack aged just 11. We played on the practice lawn at Bowdon Croquet Club during the Peterson Cup tournament in 2017. Everyone who watched Jack strike the ball said he showed natural ability, it was only time that would stand in the way of this youngster's journey from the practice lawn to the championship lawn. Graham continues "Jack has been knocking croquet balls around various croquet clubs since he was 7, mainly to stave off boredom while his dad was playing in tournaments. He started showing more consistency in 2018 and just after Alison's coaching, played for the Bowdon short lawn teams aged 11. 2018 saw Sarah Hayes coaching Jack AC at Cheltenham, when he joined in a club coaching session. The following year saw Ian Burrigge teach Jack how to do a jump shot – if you watch Jack's

jump it is pure Burrigge!

A JOURNEY TO THE TOP

After the event was moved due to Covid, Jack unexpectedly played in the GC Open in 2020 (aged 14) where he won the plate. The following year he won the 3rd Eight, his first 'Ascot' and finished runner up in the Ascot final.

The 2022 Golf Croquet World Championship saw Jack make his way through the block stages into the Knockout, winning 5 out of 7 matches. It was great to see this young chap fighting it out at the Worlds. Not only did he show great maturity in his play, he then showed incredible dedication to the sport by spending much of the tournament volunteering with the livestreaming crew so the rest of the world could come along for the ride. Jack is pictured giving a press interview with fellow player Nelson Morrow, sharing his passion for the sport and encouraging the next generation of players.

In May 2023 he decided to try advanced AC and played in his first tournament. Although still concentrating on GC where he won 2 'Ascots' and the GC National Doubles, he also managed to win 4 AC tournaments (B & A Class).

...continued on next page

...continued from page 6

His season culminated in winning the plate in the Northern Championship followed by winning the Selectors. In under 5 months his +614 change in AC DGrade was the highest ever annual increase in world croquet history!

Also in 2023, Jack achieved his Silver Merit Award at the Bowdon AC Handicap and his Gold Merit Award at the Edgbaston 'Tompkinson' Shield.

THE PERFECT GAME

Jack's latest tournament win came in May 2024, claiming the Nailsea Heat of the English National Golf Croquet Singles Championship. This earns him a place in the Championship final later in the year. During the tournament Jack performed what is known as 'The Perfect Game'.

In game 2 of the semi final against Tim Joliff. Jack ran hoop 1 down to 2, then placed his other ball so he could run 3 (taking a slight glance so he was onside). Having won 3 and 4. He ran 5 down to 6, then placed his other ball all ready (onside) for 7. Tim then cleared Jack's ball at 6 but he ran it from peg high and did 7 from the boundary!

The future

I look forward to watching Jack's continued progress in both codes of Croquet. On 21st June, Jack will be taking his last A-Level at Rivington & Blackrod and will also be turning 18. Happy Birthday Jack and good luck for your exams.

Alison Maugham



PHOTOGRAPH Clockwise: Jack Good (vs M Nezar 2022 GCWC) Ray Hall; Jack & Nelson Morrow, 2022 GC World Championship; Jack playing in the Chester Open Championship; Jack aged 14, image from theboltonnews.co.uk

JACK'S SILVERWARE:

AC -

- Reed Cup - Bowdon CA Handicap
- Sage Bowl - Nottingham CA 'B' Level
- Yorkshire White Rose - York CA Open
- Tompkinson Shield - Edgbaston CA Open
- Northern Championship - Bowdon CA Championship (Plate)
- CA Selectors Weekend
- Bowdon 'Silver Box' - Hcp
- Bowdon 'C' Class
- Bury Advanced

GC -

- Cheshire Open
- Nottingham Open
- CA Doubles
- NWFed Doubles
- Bury LPG

[The large box is the Bowdon Poppy Roquet Competition.]



DENNIS AND SISIS: PROUD PARTNERS WITH CROQUET ENGLAND

Dennis and SISIS, esteemed brands under the Howardson Group, are thrilled to announce their official partnership with Croquet England. This partnership marks a significant milestone in the ongoing commitment of Dennis and SISIS to provide top-tier solutions for sports turf maintenance.

Croquet England, the national governing body for croquet in England, is dedicated to promoting and developing the sport across the country. With a rich heritage and a growing community of enthusiasts, Croquet England sets the benchmark for excellence in croquet standards and facilities.

The Howardson Group, the parent company of Dennis and SISIS, boasts a rich legacy in designing and manufacturing high-quality machinery for the professional grounds care market. Under the brands Dennis, SISIS, Syn-Pro, Lloyds, and Hunter Grinders, the company has consistently delivered cutting-edge solutions tailored to the unique needs of organisations ranging from local authorities to schools, to the highest-level professional sports clubs and facilities around the world.

Roger Moore, Head of Marketing for the Howardson Group, expressed his excitement about the partnership, stating, "We are thrilled to join forces with Croquet England. We are passionate about sports turf maintenance, and this partnership allows us to support an organisation that shares our dedication to excellence. We are eager to provide our expertise and top-of-the-line equipment to assist Croquet England members in achieving their maintenance goals."

Dennis and SISIS are renowned for their expertise in sports turf maintenance, offering a comprehensive range of products designed to tackle every task and surface. Beyond equipment, the company's sports turf seminars have become a staple in the industry, attracting professionals and volunteers alike for over twenty years. These seminars serve as a testament to Dennis and SISIS's commitment to knowledge-sharing and empowering individuals in the field of grounds maintenance.

As the partnership unfolds, both parties look forward to collaborating closely to enhance the playing experience for croquet enthusiasts across the nation. With shared values of excellence and innovation, this partnership promises to raise the



bar for sports turf maintenance in the realm of croquet. Further information about the range of maintenance products available can be found by visiting www.dennisuk.com / www.sisis.com.

For more news, reviews and insightful views, you can follow Dennis on Twitter @DennisMowers and SISIS @SISISMachinery. You can like the Facebook page – www.facebook.com/DennisMowersUK and www.facebook.com/SISISMachinery. You can also view the latest Dennis and SISIS videos by visiting www.youtube.com/DennisMowers and www.youtube.com/SISISMachinery.



ANNE AT THE ALL-ENGLAND

My road to the All-England AC Handicap Finals started when an email from our club's tournament manager dropped into my inbox, asking if I wanted to play in the North West's qualifying round.

For someone who normally only plays in the Federation's league matches, with the occasional foray further afield for Longman Cup and Secretary's Shield ties, this was an unexpected opportunity. After a bit of thought and a healthy dose of "You've got to be in it to win it", I decided to accept.

The qualifier was played on a bright sunny day (we do get them sometimes in Manchester) and having beaten the other competitors, including my husband Chris, I found myself heading to Chester for the finals weekend. I let Chris come along as my chauffeur, cheerleader and referee.

The tournament manager at Chester, Robin Tasker, ensured my fellow competitors and I knew what to expect for the weekend and sent us through the draw for our opening matches. This helped settle my nerves as I like to know what's going on (my husband says I'm a control freak). It also helped me get to grips with the idea of playing someone with a handicap of -1 in the opening round!

Although the title All-England is intimidating, I thoroughly enjoyed playing in my first national tournament as a solo player. The finalists ranged from experienced players to "newbies" like me and it was an incredibly friendly experience. Stories were swapped about our various matches and routes to the final over the excellent lunches provided by the host club.

For anyone unsure of whether to enter competitions I can thoroughly recommend throwing caution to the wind and going for it. It's a great opportunity to meet players from different federations, to watch their tactics and techniques, to learn from them and most importantly to have fun playing croquet.

| Anne Alvey, DB Mallets

Our Croquet England partners are committed to helping us grow our sport and encourage our players. Anne from DB mallets shares her own croquet experiences with us.



SCHOOLS AND JUNIORS TOURNAMENTS 2024

JULY 7TH NOTTINGHAM 9.30AM

All Schools are invited to apply for the schools trophy that will be contested by a GC doubles team from each school.

The junior tournament will be held in 3 age bands

- Under 18 Singles
- Under 13 Doubles
- Under 11 Doubles

All games will be played under the Golf Croquet code.

Applications for all events should be made to Ellen Gee the Nottingham Club secretary by 30th June
Email: geem447@aol.com
Lunch available for participants and supporters if booked.
Entry is free.



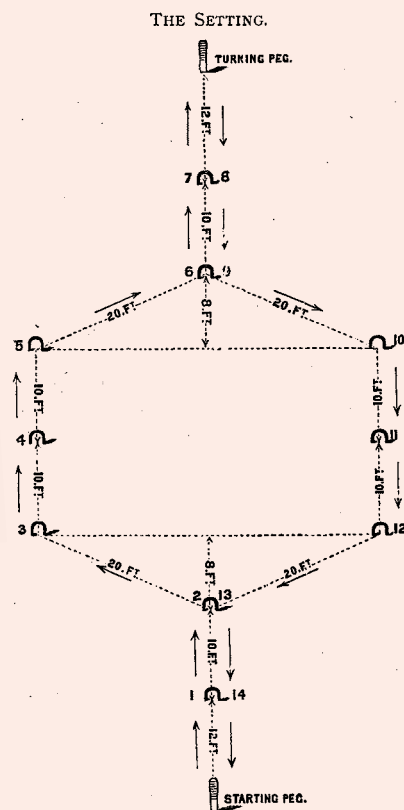
LETTERS

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

THE LAWS OF CROQUET.

BY
ARTHUR LILLIE,
CHAMPION, GRAND NATIONAL CROQUET CLUB, 1872, AND WINNER OF
THE ALL COMERS' PRIZE, 1871.

LONDON:
JAQUES & SON 162, HATTON GARDEN.



DOUBLE BANKING HISTORY

Here's a small piece of history on double banking. I guess if most people were asked to guess when double banking first arrived, they would not imagine it was quite such an old idea!

It helps, to make sense of this description, to know that it is in the context of the original 'out and back' ten hoop/two peg setting. That was ideal for double banking, as the hoops were laid out rather like a single track funicular with a passing section in the middle. Our modern setting is far less well adapted.

From London Society, 1866:

"The game of eight unquestionably takes too long to play... Where there is only one ground, and more than four desire to play, we have found it a good plan to divide the candidates into two sets, one set commencing at the starting and winning stick, the other at the turning stick, so that what is the starting stick to one party is the turning stick to the other. The two games go on simultaneously: the two sets of players interfere scarcely at all with each other. Occasionally a ball belonging to the other game lies in the way of a stroke, when it must be taken up while the stroke is made; or the striker in one game has perhaps to wait a moment, while the striker in the other game makes his stroke. But this does not happen often; and the slight inconvenience resulting from it is far outweighed by the increased excitement attending the shorter game."

Ian Bond

GC HANDICAPS

During 2022 for a couple of months I played exceptionally well (or my opponents were having a bad time) and my handicap moved from 3 to 2. However, over the following few weeks my points index moved back to the h/c 3 range, where I remained throughout 2023.

This has meant that when I lose, I have an extra 2 points deducted for each game and my opponent gains an extra 2 points on their index, neither truly reflecting the handicap I should be playing to i.e.3.

I have heard the argument that it could mean that a player could move between one handicap and another every time they play in a match if their index is on the trigger point of two h/c levels. I would ask so what? If my handicap changes at the end of a match, the next match I play will be against a different team.

The right handicap is even more important when playing to advantage rules, as you could be giving away an extra hoop before you have even tossed the coin at the start of play.

If the handicap committee are glued to the current position of my index having to move from that of a 2 handicap to a 4 handicap before I can play as a 3 handicap, at least agree that at the start of each season a person's handicap is adjusted to reflect their current index.

Frustrated
Sheffield
(Brian Cave)

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of Luxury Awaits

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WHO ARE UNIWORLD



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THE (UNOFFICIAL) HISTORY OF CROQUET: PART 7 CROQUET AND MYTHOLOGY

The principles linking croquet to ancient religions are long established, so much so that courses studying the relationship between croquet and mythology have recently been added to the curriculum of several of the newer universities.

The relationship can be traced back to the ancient Mesopotamian religions practised between 6000BC and 400AD. The surviving records explain the connection between religion and cosmology, and modern scholars have now established that the layout of the croquet court was a physical representation of the seven heavens, symbolised by its six hoops and a peg. The participants in the game also represent the perpetual battle between good and evil, as seen in the bas-relief from the temple of Ninurta at Kalhu depicting a contest between the mallet-wielding Sun God and the Chaos Monster (Fig.4). The Chaos Monster was a formidable opponent, particularly when executing its signature shot, hitting in from the boundary to ricochet off each of the other balls to send them to the four corners of the court.

A similar concept can be found in medieval European representations of the seven heavens, as depicted in a wood carving from 1475 (Fig.1) showing seven celestial bodies consisting of the five classical planets known in antiquity - Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn - in addition to the Sun and Moon. The pattern is a slightly distorted version of the layout of a croquet court, with the sun in the position of the centre peg and the moon at hoop six. In the short game, it was the golden hoop which represented the sun. There is also evidence that playing croquet was adopted in medieval monasteries to instruct novice monks in the metaphysical concepts of the seven heavens, in which the hoops represented gateways into each of the seven levels. In Greek mythology, each gateway is opened by an old man in the guise of Krocus (Crocus), god of croquet. The monks also carried a string of beads to help them keep track of the score, which is thought to have been the origin of rosary beads. The concept of heaven comprising seven levels also features prominently in Islamic religion, so that the symbolism surrounding croquet may be seen as a unifying force in the medieval world. The pattern of the hoops and peg in croquet could also refer to the seven levels of the underworld, also known as The Gates of Hell, in order to instruct the monks in the different forms of punishment that may be encountered by deviating from the path of virtue.

The medieval game also included symbolic elements that have been retained in its modern equivalent, namely the colour of the primary and secondary balls, as double banking seems to have been the norm in antiquity. The secondary colours represented the four seasons, as is the case today, but the order of play for the primary colours appears to have been different, with play starting with yellow, representing sunrise, followed by blue for daytime, red for sunset and black for night time.

The concept of the hoops in croquet representing gateways into heaven's seven levels is also a feature of oriental mythology, in particular the Japanese Shinto religion, in which the gateways (Torii) have a distinctive double bar across the top. A larger version is also used to mark the entrance to shrines. The shrine would have a gong to summon worshippers, hung from a Torii in the form of a croquet ball running the hoop (Fig.2). The keeper of the gateways is typically depicted as an old man resting on a croquet mallet (Fig.3).

In Japan, croquet was typically played by Geishas, entertainers trained in the Japanese performing arts, due to the fact that it was the only sport that could be played wearing a kimono. The game was closely linked to tea ceremonies (Chashitsu), which usually took place in a tea room opening onto a croquet lawn (Fig.5).

The concept of croquet as a form of religious instruction relating to the workings of the cosmos is common throughout western and oriental cultures, but the question remains as to who in the modern game would merit the sobriquet of Chaos Monster.

I David Graham



Fig 1. Seven Heavens Woodcut



Fig 2. Shinto Torii and Gong



Fig 3. Shinto Gate Keeper



Fig 5. Geisha Croquet Players



Fig 4. Sun God .v. Chaos Monster

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CQE WOMEN V SUFFOLK COUNTY

Early in February 2024, I received an email from Annabel McDiarmid inviting and encouraging women AC players to make themselves available for selection for the CqE Women's AC team. For about the last 4 years a women's AC team has played the winners of the second division Inter-County AC competition. Last year's winners were Suffolk County. The idea of this event was to encourage more female AC players to compete and to offer an opportunity for development for fast improving higher handicap players.

I came to croquet late in life, 3 years ago starting with GC and 6 months later starting AC. I've been lucky enough to have Tim Russell at Roehampton Club to encourage and teach a group of us over the last 2.5 years.

Last year I was selected to play in the Women's World GC Championships, so very much concentrated my efforts on improving my GC play and tactics. But this year I was determined to get my AC handicap down. I ended last season on 9 and over the winter months managed to get it down to 6. So, when I got the email from Annabel, I jumped at the opportunity to learn more and improve my game and was fortunate to be selected.

My fellow team mates were Debbie Lines, Annabel McDiarmid, Beatrice McGlen, Alison Maugham and Sophie McGlen with Gabrielle Higgins as non-playing captain - all of whom had much lower handicaps and years of experience than me! Wow! What a line up! Suffolk County had an equally varied team from Mark Avery (-2.5) and Philip Eardley (-2) to less experienced players like Hugh Gilbert (7) and Ken Knock (8). The Suffolk team were completed with the addition of Paul Hetherington (2) and Albie Willett (4).

The match was held at Surbiton Croquet Club on April 20th & 21st. The first day was doubles, playing one game and all play all. We had the option of playing alternate stroke doubles (ASD) or "normal doubles" and most selected ASD to reflect the development side of the event. I was paired initially with Debbie, but she had to miss the first day because of a heavy cold, so I was switched to play with Annabel.

I found it was a really good opportunity to play with an experienced player as it exposes you to different styles of play. In level advanced play I have learnt to use the diagonal spread but have never done in practice an NSL, OSL or MSL, all of which we did at some point or another. Annabel was patient and explained everything as we went along. We had time to discuss the pros and cons of varying lines of play and between sessions of play on the lawn there was plenty of time to chat more over tactics.

In the evening we went to a local Italian for more food (after a wonderful lunch at Surbiton) and a chance to socialise. Everyone was very friendly and welcoming.

The following day we played singles against our opposite number, but a best of 3 match to expose us to a more "test match" format. I was double banked on the same lawn as Debbie, and, somehow, she was able to keep an eye on my game whilst playing her own! She gave me lots of useful feedback and nuances of wiring lift rules that I wasn't so clear about and was very encouraging.

I'm delighted to say that I won 4 out of 5 of my games and the Women's team prevailed 10-5!

I'd like to encourage any women out there who might be considering applying next year to go for it. There was a great team spirit and lots of helpful guidance so nothing to be afraid of! The atmosphere was very much one of encouragement and learning and I found it a very positive experience. Thank you CqE Women's AC team!

| Diana Wilson



THE COLES CHAMPIONSHIP

The Coles Championship, held at Cheltenham Croquet Club every May Bank Holiday, is regarded as one of the most prestigious in the UK Croquet calendar, and the wonderful Silver Trophy awaiting the winner certainly reflected that claim.

The Main Event was a fully seeded draw, best of three knockout, Advanced rules, or Super Advanced on player agreement. A Consolation flexible Swiss ran in parallel for those unfortunate enough to be knocked out.

Arriving early on the first day, I was greeted by the view of the main eight lawns looking in great condition and with a host of club members and ground staff, led by Jim Blenkinsop, mowing, swishing and generally getting everything in tip top shape. I can confirm that the lawns played very well indeed.

A high-quality field was led by Reg Bamford, David Maugham, and last year's winner, David Goacher. The standard of play was excellent throughout and, personally, I was very pleased to see my first live sextuple! In fact I saw my first FIVE!... you wait for ages then five come along together.

The first round went to seeding, although Dave Kibble needed a TPO to get past Robert Dodds 2-1, and the Lorna Dewar / Louise Bradforth was a marathon decided on time after a nine-hour struggle. I had to feel for Reg who was waiting to play the winner for just over six and a half hours, after completing a TP and an SXP in not much more than two hours.

The second round was a tighter affair in the bottom half of the draw, with our reigning champion David 'The Goat' Goacher butting horns with our Tournament Manager, Mark Suter, eventually winning the third game. I was very pleased to take a game off David Maugham, and did have chances for the winner, but David's experience told in the end winning 2-1. I have so much to learn!

Reg carried on serenely with another SXP then TP against Louise, who had the cheek to win the opening in the first game and go round! Sadly for Louise, Reg hit the lift and that was it. Don't poke the bear! Duncan Reeve beat Dave Kibble 2-0, although I was concerned to see a +2tp. I had one of those two weeks ago and got an ear-bashing from James Death that I didn't peg an oppo ball out first for a +1tp. I didn't know that was a thing, but apparently it is an important thing. Duncan, what went wrong? Into the semis, and the weather was glorious on the Sunday afternoon! Reg, against Duncan, had another SXP and then slipped up with a simple +19. Duncan later advised that he had set a sextuple leave himself in one of the games, only to see Reg hit the Tea Lady shot three-quarter-ball.

In the other semi, playing Super Advanced, DavidM against DavidG, DavidM was of course completely aware of this +1tp thing and won the first game with that score after being 2 and 2 vs peg and peg, much to the amusement of the gallery. Don't poke the Goat either, because DavidG won the last two to move into the final.

The final was able to start at midday on Monday and so was declared to be best of three, Super Advanced. It was a pity that there was no video, as I am sure that most of us could learn a thing or two from Reg's two SXPs to take the trophy. That was 5 SXPs out of 8 for the tournament. The conditions were not particularly punishing, but even so, quality stuff. Congratulations Reg.

The rest of us were battling it out in the Consolation Event, in which Duncan Reeve defeated Dave Kibble +11 in the play-off. What a great event! I will certainly make this a regular on my calendar. Many thanks to the ladies who provided such excellent lunches and teas and making the sound of the lunch bell a highlight of the day. Many thanks also to the many club members ensuring the great playing conditions. Finally thanks to Mark Suter for keeping us all so well organised.

| David Fuller



Plate Winner Duncan Reeve



Runner-Up David Goacher



Winner Reg Bamford

GOLF CROQUET OPEN SERIES - CHELTENHAM - BARTER CUP

Top seed James Death receives the trophy in the sunshine for the second year running! Once again, it was decided to put four through from each of the blocks of 8, which would keep 50% of the entry eagerly involved in the main knock out while the other 50% went into the consolation knock out. To avoid 'time issues' the first two rounds of the knock out were a single 19 point game, leaving the semi final and final as best of three 13 point games. (Which I believe continues to work well) The final was a feast of entertainment with the ever improving young Sam Cuthbert coming through a 3 hour epic battle against Nick Archer in his semi-final (2-1) to face James in the final who had dispatched a resilient Colin Britt in 2 games. The unusually large crowd began to grow as Sam took the first game 7-5 and the fan base started to believe that there could be an upset on the cards. Game 2 was tight to the point that the 10th hoop took 20mins due to excellent clearing by both players. The next 2 hoops were exchanged leaving James first up to the 13th, but he stuck it on the back of the hoop (school boy error) advantage Sam as he put a good ball in at a slight angle, followed by the next 2 balls into good running positions. James had no option but to tap across the back of the hoop in the hope it would block Sam's clear run through. The anticipation built as the crowd wondered whether Sam could run through or would be forced to take a jump shot to win? Unfortunately, he chose to run through but caught the near wire and bounced away. The crowd sighed as James neatly jumped his own ball to take the match into a decider. This was too much for the crowd and it quickly evaporated as did Sam's resistance, leaving James to do the double winning 7-2. Nick Archer took the creditable 3rd place over Colin Britt.

Meanwhile in the consolation knock out Richard Thompson was steadily working his way through his opposition (just) to the final to face the eventual winner Tim Jolliff 10-8. John Taylor secured 3rd place over Stephen Custance-Baker.

Although the weather looks ominous here, it turned out to be excellent throughout the weekend and all the blocks set off in anticipation of greatness on the Saturday. I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who helped to set up the lawns etc. especially Cheltenham's groundsman Jim Blenkinsop who can be seen here in green, as the competitors arrive often oblivious to the efforts that have gone on before to make a perfect weekend of croquet!!! Block A was won by the undefeated top seed James Death, followed by Richard Brand, Neil Fillery and a surprised Neil Humphreys by a net

point. Block B was won by Sam Cuthbert who only dropped one game to Ivor Brand who also qualified, with Nick Archer and Timothy Brooker. Block C was won by David Goacher who also only dropped one game to David Kibble who also qualified, followed by John Carrington and Paul Gunn. Block D saw the top seeds go through, but in reverse order, Colin Britt, Martin French, Lionel Tibble and Christopher Roberts. (All results are on Croquet Scores)

My thanks go to all in blocks A&B who kept to time and made it an enjoyable weekend, (blocks C&D I will be reviewing) but especially to my brother for his assistance in keeping the challenging format moving forwards and Debbo Cuthbert who was happy (?) enough to fill in CS as the weekend progressed. Lastly, Frances Colman who was invaluable as an experienced referee on hand which meant that the other referees could play uninterrupted.

I Ivor Brand (manager)



SIDMOUTH GC CHAMPIONSHIP - ENSC QUALIFIER 2024

Timed to perfection, the incessant wet weather over the last few months gave way to a warm Spring weekend for the competitors to enjoy the Sidmouth GC Championship.

As usual, the first of the English National Singles Championship qualifiers attracted a strong field including three members from the Openshaw Shield Squad, (Jamie Burch, Stuart M. Smith, and Nick Archer), alongside a field of renowned players.

The Sidmouth Championship is one of four in the series of eight tournaments that play with a best-of-three match formula. Heat finalists qualify for the English National Singles Championship Final, which will be held later this season in Nottingham.

Play began with Stephen Mulliner dominating Block A with three match wins, dropping only one game 6/7 to Dom Aarvold.

Simon Carter was in tremendous form throughout the weekend and started with an upset to the seedings of Block B, taking

the 1st position above Jamie Burch. Simon's full house of 3 match wins was also equalled in Block D by Nick Archer. In this block, Neil Fillery, also on great form, came in 2nd place after a prolonged four-hour battle with top seed, Ian Burridge.

The top two seeds of Block C, Stuart M. Smith and Steve Leonard, are regular combatants, with this match going to three games and finally decided on hoop 13. Despite Steve's win, Stu took 1st spot in the group, with Steve also qualifying in second place.

After a long day of play on Saturday, some of the players enjoyed a convivial meal at the Anchor pub in Sidmouth, before re-grouping next morning for the main Championship knock-out, with the Plate knock-out mirroring the same format structure.

Three of the four Quarter Final matches went to three games, whilst Stephen Mulliner enjoyed the break after his 2/0 win over Jamie Burch. Nick Archer took out Steve Leonard, 2/1 to meet

...continued on next page

...continued from page 16

Stephen in the Semis, whilst Stuart M. Smith and Simon Carter relegated Neil Fillery and Tim Russell respectively to the Bowl consolation round.

Meanwhile in the Plate, Andy Loakes, Ian Burrige, Richard Brooks, and Louise Smith progressed on to the Plate Semi-Finals, opting for best-of-three matches. Ian took a comfortable win over Andy 2/0, whilst Richard and Louise tussled for a place in the Plate Final, with Richard eventually going forward 2/1.

The Plate Final was a really tight performance from both players, reflected in the two 7/6 game scores - with Ian Burrige on the winning end of hoop 13 each time. Congratulations were given by the Sidmouth spectators and a small prize was presented to Ian who was unbeaten on the Sunday.

The withdrawal of Jamie Burch gave Steve Leonard a bye to the Bowl Final. Neil Fillery and Tim Russell had a long 19pt game, with Neil ultimately prevailing 10/9. The Bowl Final was a much swifter affair, with Steve attaining a comfortable 10/4 win.

The main Championship Semi-Finals commenced around noon. Stephen Mulliner was drawn to play Nick Archer, whilst Stuart M. Smith and Simon Carter were the other pairing. Nick and Simon took the first games against their respective opponents attaining the same scorelines 7/4, with good touch and positional play.

Stephen and Stu both responded strongly, each winning their second games, pushing both Semi-Finals to a deciding third game.

Despite the final game scoreline of 2/7, Simon Carter put in a great performance but was unable to counter Stuart M. Smith's strong centre ball clearance ability. Meanwhile, a mighty battle was developing between Stephen Mulliner and Nick Archer. Stephen lost some control over a few clearances with Nick taking full advantage each time. The final score was 7/6 to Nick, giving him a well earned place alongside Stu in the Final.

I think it would be fair to say that game 1 of the Championship Final was a masterclass of croquet which was enjoyed by a considerable crowd that had gathered for the occasion. During the latter stages of the tournament, Stuart M. Smith had found his rhythm and Nick Archer realised there was simply no safe place on the court. Nick responded superbly, but with Stu running long range hoops and clearing virtually everything in sight, it was soon over at hoop 10, score 7/3 to Stu.

Game 2 started just as strongly with Stu quickly 2/1 ahead. Hoop 4 proved pivotal in each players' fortunes as Nick's yellow ball stuck in the jaws. Eager to take a commanding lead and leave yellow helpless for hoop 5, Stu attempted a jump with blue. This didn't get the desired height and dragged yellow through, equalling the score to 2/2, and giving Nick first approach to hoop 5. At this point Nick capitalised on the situation and was soon 4/2 ahead.

A strong run of play from both competitors culminated in a 6/5 scoreline to Nick Archer. With Nick out of position at hoop 12, Stu took advantage to flick off yellow with black to hoop 13, before levelling the score to 6/6. Black's position off the back boundary wasn't runnable but proved a useful clearing ball. After a short volley of play, and with both players having had a shot at 13, it was Stu that ran the winning hoop from about 4 yards to take the Sidmouth GC Championship title for the second time.

Amanda Haste had recently returned to the area and presented the Championship tournament trophy that bears her name. Many thanks are given to the Sidmouth grounds team and volunteers for preparing the courts and the firm setting of the Quadway hoops supplied by Croquet England. Also special thanks to the many members and players that remained to watch and support the finalists in the Spring sunshine.

■ Louise Smith



NAILSEA GC CHAMPIONSHIP, MAY 2024

A warm welcome was extended to all players at the GC English National Championship qualifier held at Nailsea Croquet Club for the first time, on 4-5th May.

Nailsea attracted a first-class field of 16 players with an average D/Grade of 2219. It was selected as one of the venues to play a best-of-three match format within the block stages which is providing much valued match practice ahead of the main National Final in September.

With such a highly competitive collection of players, an upset to the seeded rankings occurred in each block.

Top tournament seed Stephen Mulliner (Surbiton) predictably topped Block A, but was joined by 3rd block seed Tim Jolliff (Budleigh), qualifying for the championship knock-out above Dom Aarvold (Bristol) on net hoops – even though Dom had beaten Stephen 2/1 earlier that morning.

Steve Leonard (East Dorset), 2nd seed in Block B, upset the apple cart by achieving three match wins, relegating top block seed Marcus Evans (Nailsea) into second place. Similarly in Block D, 2nd block seed Richard Bilton (Gainsborough) pushed Stuart M. Smith (Budleigh), 1st block seed, into second spot. Block C saw the biggest changes with John Taylor (Watford), ranked 14th from the 16 players overall, coming second in his block to qualify (from 4th block seed position) on net games above Ian Burrige, 2nd block seed, alongside Jack Good (Bowdon), 1st block seed.

In the Quarter Finals of the championship knock-out, Steve Leonard's winning run was brought to a halt by Tim Jolliff with a straight 2/0 win. The remaining Quarter Finals all ran to 3 games, with Marcus Evans taking out Stephen Mulliner, Richard Bilton overcoming John Taylor; and a curve on the court catching out Stuart M. Smith on the approach to hoop 13 in game three, which cost him the match after an excellent jump shot by Jack Good, 4/7, 7/5, 6/7.

Jack's strong but considered play led him to victory in the first of the Semi Finals against Tim Jolliff, resulting in two contrasting scorelines of 7/6, 7/0. Marcus Evans and Richard Bilton had a much tighter three games, with Richard ultimately successful, 7/4, 6/7, 7/4.

The Bowl again saw the on-form John Taylor defeat Stephen Mulliner for a place in the Final where he faced Stuart M. Smith

after his 10/4 win against Steve Leonard. The best-of-three match Bowl Final saw Stuart victorious with a 2/1 win.

The consolation plate knock-out commenced with 7 players, with the majority of games giving some really tight results. It was concluded with Stephen Custance-Baker beating Colin Britt 5/7, 7/1, 7/5 to win the Plate Medal which had been commissioned especially for the occasion.

The championship finalists Richard Bilton and Jack Good gave the remaining players and several club spectators a real example of GC croquet at its best. Both players were clearing superbly and countering the other's moves on every occasion. Jack won the first game with the narrowest of victories, 7/6, and game two looked like it was going all the way to 13 as well. Faced with Jack having a commanding position at 12, Richard attempted a hoop run from the north boundary that just skipped past the hoop. In the next rotation, this same ball, now on the south boundary, had the merest glimpse of Jack's ball in position that was guarded by his partner ball. Richard showed great composure getting the clearance on target with a resulting round of applause from the spectators. Nevertheless, Jack continued to consider every move, and manipulated the hoop until he was ready to sweep to victory in game 2, 7/5.

David Hunt, the outgoing treasurer of Nailsea Croquet Club, had generously provided the winner's trophy, and was at the tournament in person to make the presentations. Sincere thanks to all for the preparation of the courts and scrumptious homemade cakes on offer each day!

Louise Smith



GC CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES - COLCHESTER

Colchester provided excellent courts for this championship, with the grass cut short, their pace caught out players throughout the weekend. For some reason, despite its excellent facilities and being only 45 minutes from the M25, Colchester often struggles to attract players to its tournaments. On this occasion the event was full, with Filiberto Cano making the trip from Madrid to join the 15 UK based players, who were divided into four all play all, best of three blocks.

The event started with Colchester youngster Albie Willett beating 2nd seed, and the eventual winner, Jamie Burch, a result that secured him a place in the knockout, despite a subsequent loss to Ian Burrige. Third seed Euan Burrige qualified from his block without dropping a game, along with Nick Archer. In form John Taylor took a game off top seed Robert Fulford, before going down 2-1 and eventually missing out on the second qualifying berth, alongside Robert, to Tony Butcher. Sam Murray provided something of an upset beating England Internationals Tobi Savage and Richard Bilton to win the final block, with Richard's victory over Tobi securing him second place.

In the knockout Robert Fulford failed to maintain his form from the previous day and went down easily to Nick Archer. The match of the round was Tony Butcher playing superbly to take Euan Burrige to the golden hoop in both games, before losing

them both. Richard completed a very easy victory over Albie and Jamie Burch was always on top against Sam Murray. Euan retained his unbeaten record, seeing off Richard in one semi final. The other went to three when Nick managed to win the second game from a very unpromising position 5-6 down. Jamie ran out a convincing winner in the third. The final was a short snappy affair with Jamie, who was runner-up last year, running out victorious, running hoop 11 from the boundary to win game 1 and hoop 13 from the boundary to win game 2.

In the consolation events Sam Murray beat Robert Fulford in the final of the Bowl, Ian Burrige beat Tobi Savage to win the Plate and Filiberto Cano took the Shield back to Spain, having beaten David Thirtle-Watts in the final.

Ian Burrige



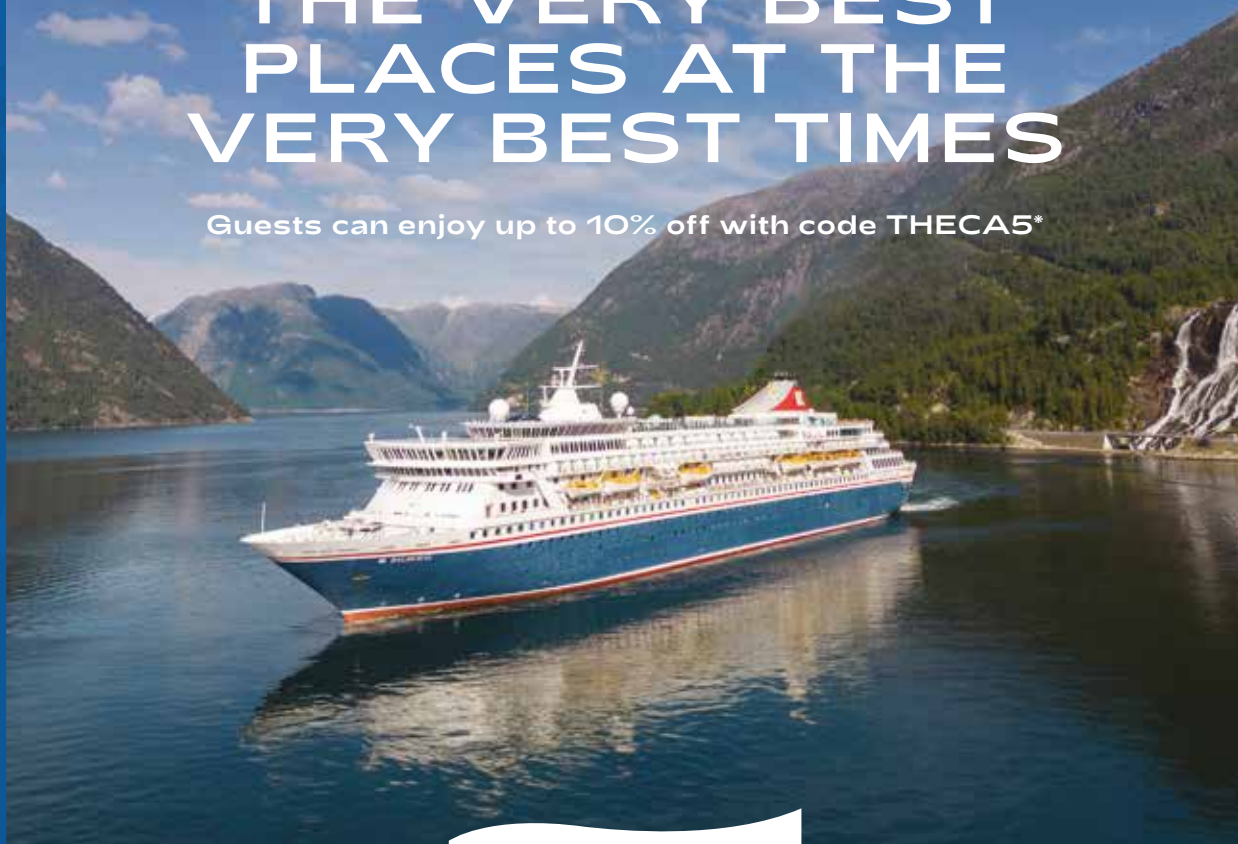


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CROQUET AROUND THE WORLD

This may not be the highest croquet court in the world but it is quite high. Situated in the grounds of the Wildflower Hall in Mashobra, near Shimla in Himachal Pradesh, India. The elevation is 2,515 metres (8,236 feet). The snow, visible on and beyond the boundary, and the rather damp conditions generally, prevented play during my visit but subscribers may be assured that equipment is available to residents. And the view from the rooms at the rear is magnificent.

| John Reddish



GRATEFUL THANKS

On behalf of everyone in croquet I would like to acknowledge the generous bequest that we have recently received from the estate of Eleanor Rushby. Eleanor's husband Jeff, who died in 2020, was a keen member of Sussex County and Caterham Croquet Clubs. Eleanor did not play croquet herself and as far as we know her only foray into the croquet world was when she and Jeff stepped in to fill an unexpected space in a trip by Sussex County Croquet Club to Carrickmines Croquet Club in Dublin many years ago. Eleanor also made a substantial bequest to Sussex County Croquet Club which will make a significant contribution to their fundraising efforts for the work on their pavilions.

Eleanor's bequest was made to The Croquet Association. The CA still exists while its affairs are tidied up and it was therefore possible to transfer the money to Croquet England. However, this will not always be the case and we therefore ask anyone who may have already made provision for leaving a legacy in their will to the CA to update it to Croquet England to avoid any possible problems in the future.

Did you know that under current Inheritance Tax rules, gifts to registered charities are exempt from inheritance tax? Now that Croquet England is a registered charity (No. 1202444), by including a charitable bequest in your Will, you will not only be supporting a sport you care about but you could also potentially be reducing the tax burden for your family or other beneficiaries. By bequeathing a fixed amount, or a more inflation-proof



percentage, your generosity could create a win-win situation whereby both your loved ones and croquet would benefit. If you would like any further information on this then please contact Robert Fulford, Croquet England's Treasurer. Croquet England will be considering carefully how to make the best use of the legacy from Eleanor Rushby, bearing in mind the overall strategy and priorities that the Board of Trustees is developing over the next few months. Once again, I would like to convey our grateful thanks to Eleanor and Jeff Rushby.

| **Beatrice McGlen**
CEO, Croquet England



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CROQUET AROUND THE WORLD - MAY 24

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



Is this the Future of the Croquet Lawn?

Spain is leading the charge once again, this time into the realm of artificial croquet lawns. This February, the A La Par Foundation Sports Club (www.alapar.org) became the first club with an artificial grass court approved by the Spanish Croquet Federation (FEC), enabling it to host federation tournaments for the first time. The club is located in the Fuencarral-El Pardo district, in the North of Madrid, and has more than 60 players enjoying this facility which opened in June 2023.

The World Croquet Federation (WCF) has been working with the FEC on this project to better understand how artificial croquet lawns perform. One of the main problems they have come up against is trying to make the hoops perform as if they were in grass: the hoops are anchored within a concrete socket, which makes them respond very differently from being set in a lawn. Both the WCF and FEC are interested in how this lawn performs over time and how this example can contribute to best practice for other clubs should they wish to build an artificial lawn.

Most people will agree that one of the appeals of croquet is playing on a beautiful lawn (or the ability to complain about the lawn) but do the benefits of artificial lawns start to offset this? Artificial lawns are perfectly flat, have consistency in lawn speed and crucially need less maintenance. The initial construction cost will be high but if clubs can benefit from very low ongoing maintenance costs, this option could be a viable solution for many clubs. Of course, it does not score well in the sustainability

argument but in areas of the world where demands on water are strained, eliminating this demand could well be argued as a net benefit.

Do you know of any other artificial croquet lawns? Let us know, so the WCF can start to understand their long term performance better.

4,000 Spectators for Croquet

Since 1983, St John's College and the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, USA have been facing off for an annual croquet match in a friendly-but-fierce rivalry for the Annapolis Cup. Victory brings bragging rights as the best croquet team in town. St John's is a liberal arts college while the US Naval Academy is military focused, two opposing ideologies located across the street from each other. Once a year, each April, the Johnnies and the Seamen put aside their differences and come together to see whose balls will peg out first.

This year's victory went to the Johnnies, who continued their winning performance to take them to 32 wins, surpassing that of the Seamen who have only finished first 8 times. It's not quite the 99% success rate I had seen advertised but it's still pretty good for the Johnnies.

The event attracts over 4,000 spectators from students to locals with many local businesses sponsoring the event. It's a big event in the Annapolis calendar and many people get dressed up to enjoy the day. Definitely one to look out for next year.

| Duncan Catterall



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CALLING ALL COACHES!

As part of the transition to Croquet England, a straightforward Code of Conduct for Coaches is now in place:

Anyone within Croquet England who is providing coaching should:

- Encourage participation in croquet.
- Be open, honest, respectful and trustworthy.
- Behave appropriately.
- All qualified coaches should maintain their qualification.
- Check that they are insured. See Insurance – Guidance for Coaches (croquet.org.uk)

The Code of Conduct draws on UK Coaching's Code of Practice for Sports Coaches, which provides full details of what is expected of all sports coaches. Our Code of Conduct is on the Croquet England website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?pup=y&p=games/coaching/CodeOfConductForCoaches>

It's deliberately simple and uncontroversial. If you are unable to support it, please let me know by emailing me at jharrisnet@gmail.com when I will arrange for your name to be removed from the list of Croquet England approved coaches.

STOP THE CLOCK

Here is a straightforward simplified AC game which can be understood in a matter of moments. It offers a fun way to practise basic shots and moves.

- 4 players, alternate stroke doubles.
- A 20-minute game, suited to evenly matched pairs of any ability, and using such shots and strategy as the players have already mastered.
- A timer or smartphone is needed to keep accurate time.

The aim is to score the most points in 10 minutes using the fewest bisques. There is no peg-out: very fast pairs can simply continue with hoop 7 onwards.

1. Start with each ball one yard from the peg at N, S, E and W.
2. Score two points for each hoop scored in order. Deduct one point for each bisque used.
3. Opponents sit out, count bisques used, and keep time. Play stops immediately on the stroke of 10 minutes. The balls are reset a yard from the peg and the roles are reversed.

This works well as a fast, competitive game. 'Pro-am' alternate shot pairings are good for coaching and for bringing recent recruits into the heart of the club. The game also works well as a fun, relaxed social occasion-cum-competition when personnel move round as in a whist drive.

A variation is for each side to play two shorter innings. Reset the balls a yard from the peg. The incoming side goes for its next hoop in order.

ENCOURAGING TOURNAMENT PLAY

A pleasurable aspect of the role of the coach is to offer gentle encouragement to players to try competitive croquet. Some will want only to play socially and have little ambition to develop their competitive play. Others will need scant prompting, actively



PHOTOGRAPH John Harris

A welcoming smile from Tournament Manager Sandra Cornes at a Crake Valley CC all-comers alternate stroke handicap tournament

seeking out tournaments as a way of meeting other players and improving their game. In between are players who may over time become responsive to the idea of enrolling for a tournament.

The key is gradual encouragement. First the coach must create the conditions within which competitive croquet starts to seem attractive. This can come through gentle mentions from the coach and other players, club talk about tournaments that people have enjoyed, and notices on the club board about events in the club and within easy reach.

Many will feel they're 'not ready' or 'not good enough', but gradually they may become willing to consider it. Club competitions are the obvious starting point. If there isn't a club competition suited to a group of players, why not set one up?

For events further afield, players who have not yet travelled to a tournament will need reassurance from the coach that they can be assured of a warm welcome and that everyone will want to help them feel at home. Handicap tournaments give everyone a fair chance of doing justice to their ability so these are good ones to look for first.

Signing up for a tournament away can be a big step for first timers. Can you, or another club member, sign up too? The company will be appreciated, travelling together smooths the way, and a familiar face is always welcome. Even better, can the coach encourage a small group from the club to enrol and enjoy the tournament together?

Once a club member has expressed an interest, there is plenty to talk about, all of which helps build the relationship. How will you both get there – is train feasible, or will it need to be car? If car, what is the route, the timing, the parking arrangements? If train, what is the timing, and the best way of then getting to the ground? Will accommodation be needed, and, if so, what arrangements are called for?

If croquet etiquette is an area of weakness, a tournament

NEW COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

The following players have passed all stages of the accreditation process at the appropriate level and have been added to the Croquet England List of Coaches.

Congratulations to all.

- Morgan Case (Sussex County CC) – GC Grade 2 Coach
- Mark Green (Roehampton CC) – Club-Level Coach
- Gabrielle Higgins (Sussex County CC) – AC Grade 3 Coach
- Chrissie Merrington (Sussex County CC) – GC Grade 2 Coach
- Nigel Polhill (Hurlingham CC) – AC Grade 3 Coach
- Lionel Stock (York CC) – AC Grade 1 Coach
- Mike Tumath (Roehampton CC) – Club-Level Coach
- Roger Watson (Nottingham CC) – AC Grade 1 Coach

Club-Level Coaches are accredited to coach beginners and high handicap players at their own Clubs. Graded Coaches are authorised to coach outside their own Clubs at the appropriate level – Bronze/C-Level for Grade 1 Coaches, Silver/B-Level for Grade 2 Coaches, and Gold/A-Level for Grade 3 Coaches. Coaching others is rewarding for the coach, not only helping the person being coached but also helping to develop the coach's own game. It's also a great way of putting something back into the game. To find out more enter "Become a Coach" into the Croquet England website. The page sets out further details of the personal qualities, requirements and expectations looked for at each level and a full account of the qualification process.

provides a coach with an ideal opportunity to chat over the basics. The Croquet England website has a helpful page on the subject: to get straight to it, go to the Search box on the home page and key in 'etiquette'. The site also has good guidance for players attending a tournament for the first time: key 'first tournament' into the Search box.

Now the coach has an important role in helping the first timer prepare for the event itself. Will whites be the order of the day, or will the venue be flexible? British weather being what it is, what about waterproofs, extra layers, sunhat, spare socks, suntan lotion, paracetamol? Is the tournament newcomer equipped with the range of croquet necessities – handicap card, pen, coin? If needs be, can the club lend a mallet, a timer, a divot repairer, lawn markers?

The coach can also helpfully encourage the first timer to take a water bottle and plenty of food: lunch, and lots of small things to eat – snacks, energy bars, nuts, bananas to keep up energy levels. It can be a long day.

NEW MERIT AWARD WINNERS

Congratulations to the following:

Association Croquet: Bronze Merit Award

- Geoff Barrett - Cheltenham Easter Handicap
- Tom Dewar - Nottingham Annual Tournament
- Louise McElarney - Bowdon May Handicap
- Mark Oldale - Cheltenham Easter Handicap
- Chris Williamson - John Beech Memorial

Association Croquet: Silver Merit Award

- Philip Jay - Bowdon May Handicap
- Mark Oldale - Cheltenham Easter Handicap

Association Croquet: Gold Merit Award

- Chris Roberts - Hurlingham May Weekend
- Jordan Waters - ARK Handicap

Golf Croquet: Bronze Merit Award

- John Lang - Budleigh C Level
- Michael Marcel - Sussex County B Level
- Nigel Owen - Grass Roots

Golf Croquet: Silver Merit Award

- Douglas Shand - Sussex County B Level
- Trevor Smith - Budleigh B Level

Golf Croquet: Gold Merit Award

- Richard Gardiner - East Dorset A Level

Remember to claim your Merit Award if you qualify for one! For an AC Merit Award it's about achieving a break of given length in a Fixtures Calendar game that you go on to win; for GC it's about winning one of the many qualifying tournaments. The details are on Croquet England website: 'Croquet England Merit Award Scheme' in Google. The Manager of the event will be able to make the claim for you, or alternatively you can download a copy of the form yourself from the Croquet England website. The form covers both AC and GC Awards and, once filled in, simply needs to be forwarded direct to the Croquet England Office.

But the single most important thing a coach can do is calm nerves, boost confidence and encourage enjoyment. After all, the prime reason we play this intricate, absorbing game is for pleasure!

GC REFEREES

Richard Carline (Sussex County) has been appointed an Examining Referee.

Jackie Bryant (Thames Valley), Simon Bryant (Thames Valley), Tim Small (Caversham) and Art Wardle (Bransgore) have qualified as GC Referees.

Congratulations to them all.

| Ian Cobbold

OBITUARIES BRIAN SHORNEY CBE

Brian Shorney died suddenly and unexpectedly on the 7th of February. Brian had a distinguished career in the public service with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) and with the diplomatic service.

He was on the CA Council from 2010 to 2019. For the first 6 years he was the South West Federation Representative on Council. He was Chairman of Council from 2016 to 2018 and Chairman of the Handicap Committee from 2011 to 2014. He was born into a farming family near Abergavenny and studied agriculture at the University of Aberystwyth. He joined the MAFF farm advisory service where the policy was to send new entrants as far as possible from home. Brian therefore began his career in March (Cambridgeshire) and then Norfolk. He married his childhood sweetheart, Christine, in 1961 and they had three children. In the 1970s the advisory service added Farm Business Management advice and Brian was promoted to the new unit at Aberystwyth. I was in the same unit and we both lived with our families in the village of Llanrhystud. To understand how Brian and I acquired our addiction to croquet, we need a brief diversion into the little known history of Trawsgoed Croquet Club.

The regional (this was well before the idea of devolution) HQ of the advisory service in Wales was Trawsgoed Hall – a large country house some 8 miles to the east of Aberystwyth. It had been “acquired” by the government in 1947 to house specialists in agricultural science and husbandry and it was attached to an experimental husbandry farm. There was a large and hilly lawn divided by paths and a fountain into four. We found some croquet equipment and more hoops and mallets were made by the machinery advisers. We could happily have settled into social croquet with our own rules but someone

had the brilliant idea of contacting the Croquet Association, based in distant Hurlingham. This happily coincided with the CA’s development policy of increasing the number of clubs and Liz Neal was sent from Wimbledon to West Wales to help us. She arranged for us to attend a coaching course at Bisham Abbey led by Bernard Neal. This was also remarkable because Bernard was a busy academic, chairman of the CA council and a top player and yet willing to give up two days to coach beginners. Liz also sent the Prichard family en masse from Gobion Manor to play an encouraging friendly.

We remained keen. We played friendlies with West Midlands clubs and, in 1973, we dared to enter the Longman Cup. We got to the semi-final, losing to Stourbridge. After those heights, Brian and I moved away; the club lost its ambition and faded away. I believe that the only remaining relic of the club is some very large hoop clips which can still be seen at Surbiton CC.

Brian’s next move was a plum posting to be the agricultural attaché at the British High Commission in Canberra where he did two tours. He took his mallet but croquet in Canberra was in the hands of some formidable ladies and he found it difficult to fit in. He found consolation in his alternative passion of rugby refereeing until his return to Blighty and croquet. He was appointed regional head of MAFF in the South West where he became a member of Kington Langley Croquet Club, and later a member of both Budleigh Salterton and Cheltenham. He took early retirement and was awarded his CBE. He then went on to found Drew Associates, an agricultural policy consultancy with a special interest in helping EU candidate countries in eastern Europe.

Brian and Christine later moved to Hereford where he became a member at Eardisley and also held various positions in the West Midlands Croquet Federation.

It was typical of Brian’s generosity and commitment that he was still willing to serve and assist croquet clubs right up until the end of his life.

Brian was buried in the churchyard of Llanwenarth where he and Christine had once been members of the choir. He leaves Christine, his children Mark, Jane, and Clare, and six grandchildren.

I George Noble



ROGER STROUD 1943-2024

It is with sadness that we, at Leighton Linslade Croquet Club (LLCC), announce the passing of Roger Stroud.

Roger was a well-known and respected member of LLCC, having joined the club in 2007. He took no time at all to become part of the committee and a competitive croquet player. His talent took him to competitions, local, regional and national, representing his club and the County of Bedfordshire. One frequently-repeated story tells of a competition in Camerton and Peasedown. Several club members were participating, with some choosing to rent a house for the duration. Sadly, fellow players discovered that they rarely had

any hot water due to Roger’s propensity for a long hot bath after a day of play.

Roger was active in croquet, tennis and walking right up to late 2023. He played in and lead the croquet club team to a splendid victory in the East Anglian Federation 3+ league trophy on 2023 as well as qualifying as a match referee. Every member of LLCC has benefited from Roger’s patient and supportive guidance in honing whatever degree of talent they possess.

Roger will be very sadly missed, and we are lucky to continue to play croquet with his wife, Caroline, under the watchful eye of his dog Moti.

I Gwyn Grout, Chair of Leighton Linslade Croquet Club



CROQUET PLAYER QUICK QUESTIONS

Name: Keith Aiton. **Home Club:** Nottingham Croquet Club
Potted playing history – from first picking up a mallet to current play - including what influenced you to start:

I first picked up a mallet aged about 10. An old school friend of my mother's came to stay and suggested we buy a garden set, so we did. The rules in the box were very similar to US rules, with sequence and deadness. We probably played a bit each summer for a few years. Then I was lucky enough to go to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and saw real croquet for the first time. I didn't play seriously in my first year but got hooked in my second. My partner and I made it to the semi-final of Cuppers. Richard Hilditch was two years ahead of me at Sidney Sussex, and he inspired me to go find my local club back home in Nottingham. The first day I went to the club happened to be the finals day of the annual tournament in 1980. I remember seeing Geoffrey Taylor from Cheltenham beat George Noble in the A class play-off.

Three years later I got to the final of the Open Championship, losing to Nigel Aspinall, and won the Chairman's Salver. I then played pretty much continuously for the next 30 years or so. In 2005, after a mallet change, I went from 69th in the rankings to 4th and won the President's Cup. The next year I played in the MacRobertson Shield in Australia. I played again in 2010 as captain, managing to score the winning point to make sure Great Britain retained the trophy.

Your finest or proudest achievement and shot: I've always been attracted to opportunities to display skill, two examples, which I believe are still unique, being a triple peel I completed on the third turn of a game at an Oxford tournament in 1988, and an octuple peel I completed in a Solomon Trophy test match at Heaton Park in 2008.

Mallets? The first mallet I owned was a Solomon mallet by

Jaques. In 2005 I bought a mallet from Alan Pidcock, which took me to a new level.

Is there anything else you'd like to add? I started to develop an annoying tremor around 2010, so, having played with an Irish grip since 1985, I tried playing standard grip again and even Solomon grip to see if that made a difference. Raouf Allim suggested that playing left-handed could be a fix, and that has helped. However, I think I would need to invest quite a lot of time to develop enough power to play back at the elite level, so for the last six years or so I have just played in the Inter Counties.

Interview by Giles Pepperell



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LAWN MAINTENANCE MATTERS

Lawn speed is very important. If the grass is too long, it will be difficult to play long shots and the subtleties of the game are lost such as delicate placement in GC or long accurate rushes in AC. It is easy to measure lawn speed using my Lawn Speed App on your phone (see my website). On flat lawns mow at 5mm, on undulating lawns increase the cut height to stop balls wandering. If you are using my Lawn Care system, keep to the schedule if possible but pause the programme if the grass is stressed due to drought.

Turfpedia. Refer to the Turfpedia on my website, it includes the answers to every lawn maintenance question I have been asked over the last 15 years. Weeds, fungal diseases, moss, worms, leather jackets, bird damage, mower settings, rolling, levelling, dry patch, RABBIT RUNS, DEFRA regulations..... If a topic isn't covered in the Turfpedia, I will add it in immediately. The website is up to date and is a valuable resource for clubs to use freely as and when required.

I killed my lawn. On September 1st I killed the Gt Dunham Croquet Club lawn and reseeded on September 2nd. Normal club play continued until mid October without a break. Interested? See my website for full details of this project.

Brilliant mower. Brilliant mowers are built for me during the winter months by Shane of Ready Set Mow. The capacity of the clipping box has been increased and an upgrade kit has been made available to all existing owners free of charge. If you haven't ordered the upgrade yet, please get in touch. The Brilliant mower produces a superb quality of cut suitable for lawns up to world championship standard at half the cost of equivalent mowers.

Interview by Duncan Hector

GRANDSENS CROQUET LAUNCHES LIKE A ROCKET! ONE OF OUR NEWEST CROQUET CLUBS GETS OFF TO A FLYING START IN RURAL CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The 'Bluebell villages' of Great Gransden, Little Gransden and Waresley sit in rural Cambridgeshire between St Neots and Cambridge. Our new croquet club is one of 13 new croquet clubs launching this year and has been established as a part of the Gransden Bowls and Croquet Club. The Club is located on the picturesque green behind the 'Reading Room' in Great Gransden. After trialling croquet last year and testing that it could be played alongside bowls, we launched the Club in earnest in April with a very well attended Open Day. Through targeted local advertising and a pitch at the local Farmers Market, we fired up strong local interest. We have more than doubled our initial recruitment target and we are on course to have a membership of over 50, many of whom are playing croquet for the first time, including families.

Whilst this surge of interest has led to some management challenges for the new Club, the enthusiasm and obvious enjoyment brought by the new members has been really inspiring. Two short beginners' courses have been held successfully and we are planning further training and some friendly matches this summer. The new Club has a few advantages – a beautiful setting, overlooking the village park and next to the new multi-use games area - a well- equipped Club House - and a small but dedicated group of bowlers who have kept the lawn in shape for many years, defending it against the extreme changes in our weather. As well as repairing the damage done by the local crows and jackdaws!

We have been lucky to find a nationally recognised coach, Cliff Jones, living locally who has given valuable advice and practical help on the start-up plan. Having sufficient mallets of a suitable size and quality has proved a challenge – and a quick trip to eBay was needed to find another set of general purpose mallets! The support of the team at Croquet England has also been invaluable. We hope to learn from the experience of other croquet clubs as we develop the Club this season.

Our ethos for the new Club is one that embraces casual to competitive play, all ages and abilities, with a strong social commitment to the local community and regular social events for Club members and their families. Making new friends and keeping active, trying out a new sport and helping combat ill health and loneliness are some of the outcomes we want to support. The speed with which this rocket has taken off may have been a bit of a surprise, but there is strong promise that croquet will become a permanent fixture for our villages.

| Sarah and the Gransden Croquet Development team



2024 CHARITY 1-BALL

The Charity 1-ball competition has drawn the croquet community together once again in 2024. 46 clubs from Lyme Regis in the west to Frinton in the east, from Southwick in the south to Balgreen in Scotland played a heat in support of this year's nominated charity, the British Heart Foundation. The outfits were a colourful red, customised for the cold weather heats and hot weather finals (and everything in between).

Enthusiasm for the two regional finals was unabated, with many competitors and their supporters travelling long distances to Surbiton and Nottingham. The Surbiton Final comprised a large field of 46 competitors, while another 18 came to Nottingham to compete for the title. Congratulations to David Long of Blewbury CC and Peter Bell of Bristol CC, winners at Surbiton and Nottingham respectively. Both high bisquers and dual code players who held their nerve and played with steady control to secure their wins. Special mention for the runners-up, Richard Coward from High Wycombe CC and Rick Harding from Nottingham CC who competed hard to produce entertaining finals. The host clubs treated everyone to a grand day - play on fine lawns, tournament management of the tricky Swiss, delicious catering and sunny weather!

At the time of writing, the total sum of donations stands at £7,759 (which will rise as the final sums are received and Gift Aid applied). A record-breaking year for this competition. Your fund-raising ways were inventive with cake bakes, lunches, Xmas sales, donation buckets. Carrickmines in Ireland raised another €170 for a local charity.

Well done to everyone - organisers of heats, club teams who put on the regional finals, and especially you - the players and supporters who made a donation. THANK YOU!

| Debbie James



Peter Bell (Bristol) receives winner's trophy. Nottingham finalists: Arthur Rowe (Ashby), Roger Staples (M'bro), Jane Cursitor (Bristol), Rick Harding (N'ham), Philip Jay (Huddersfield).

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CONTACTS

Mark Suter

Operations Manager

Croquet England
Old Bath Road, Cheltenham
GL53 7DF • T: 01242 242318

office@croquetengland.org.uk



Patricia Duke-Cox

President

patricia.duke-cox@croquetengland.org.uk



Samir Patel

Chair of the Board of Trustees

samir.patel@croquetengland.org.uk



Beatrice McGlen

Chief Executive Officer

beatrice.mcglenn@croquetengland.org.uk



Robert Fulford

Treasurer

robert.fulford@croquetengland.org.uk



John Reddish

Secretary

john.reddish@croquetengland.org.uk



Ron Carter

National Safeguarding Officer

safeguarding@croquetengland.org.uk



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>

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Sport Development - Jonathan Toye

jonathan.toye@croquetengland.org.uk

Funding - John Reddish

john.reddish@croquetengland.org.uk

Handicap - Christopher Roberts

christopher.roberts@croquetengland.org.uk

IT - Andy Dibben

andy.dibben@croquetengland.org.uk

International - Keith Aiton

keith.aiton@croquetengland.org.uk

AC Laws - Peter Death

peter.death@croquetengland.org.uk

GC Rules - Ian Cobbold

ian.cobbold@croquetengland.org.uk

Marketing - Annabel McDiarmid

annabel.mcdiarmid@croquetengland.org.uk

AC Selection - Ian Lines

ian.lines@croquetengland.org.uk

GC Selection - Chris Clarke

chris.clarke@croquetengland.org.uk

AC Tournaments - Brian Havill

brian.havill@croquetengland.org.uk

GC Tournaments - Richard Bilton

richard.bilton@croquetengland.org.uk

Coaching - John Harris

john.harris@croquetengland.org.uk

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Chief Executive Officer - Beatrice McGlen

beatrice.mcglenn@croquetengland.org.uk

Development - Ian Draper

ian.draper@croquetengland.org.uk

Marketing & Communications - Paul Hetherington

paul.hetherington@croquetengland.org.uk

Infrastructure & IT - Andy Dibben

andy.dibben@croquetengland.org.uk

Performance & Competitive Play - David Openshaw

david.openshaw@croquetengland.org.uk

Governance and Standards - Gabrielle Higgins

gabrielle.higgins@croquetengland.org.uk

Coaching & Grass Roots - Rich Waterman

rich.waterman@croquetengland.org.uk

Treasurer - Robert Fulford

robert.fulford@croquetengland.org.uk

Operations Manager - Mark Suter

office@croquetengland.org.uk

Secretary to the Executive - Paul Brown

paul.brown@croquetengland.org.uk

TRUSTEES

Peter Michael Allan

peter.allan@croquetengland.org.uk

George Collin

george.collin@croquetengland.org.uk

Carol Driver

carol.driver@croquetengland.org.uk

Samir Patel

samir.patel@croquetengland.org.uk

Andrew Stewart

andrew.stewart@croquetengland.org.uk

Robin Tasker

robin.tasker@croquetengland.org.uk

Brian Wilson

brian.wilson@croquetengland.org.uk

Tim King

tim.king@croquetengland.org.uk

Stuart M Smith

stuart.smith@croquetengland.org.uk

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.

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