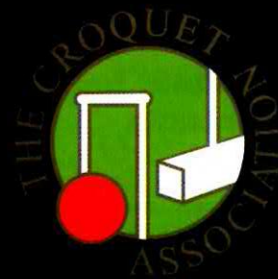


the croquet gazette



issue 279 - may 2002



a young man's game?
CA membership survey results

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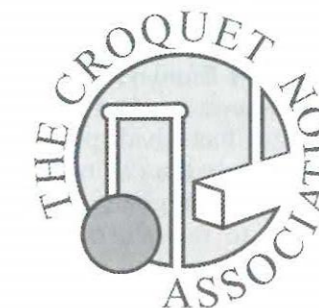
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the croquet gazette

issue 279 may 2002 £3.00



Cover photograph of Robert Fulford in play at 2001 WCF World Championship by Javier Garcia

Next Issue Published 14th July 2002

Copy Deadline 15th June 2002

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publication details

The Croquet Gazette is published six times per year, in January, March, May, July, September and November.

publication schedule

Copy should reach the Editor BEFORE the 15th of the month before publication is due, unless otherwise informed.

advertising

Full details of all advertising rates and data are available at all clubs as well as through the Editor of the Gazette and the Secretary of the CA.

specific questions and queries

Specific questions or queries should be sent direct to the Editor. Email contributions, including tournament reports, should be sent direct to the Editor, or copied to the Editor if they are being posted to the Nottingham List.

Both black and white or colour prints of photographs can be used. Slides are no longer accepted. Photocopies of pictures or print-outs of digital images cannot be used. If using digital photography please send in jpeg or tif format files. Resolution of scanned images must be at least 300 dpi. Please detail on the reverse of all photos the subject of the picture, and, if you require the photographs to be returned, please include your address on the reverse.

tournament results and reports

Emailed reports are welcomed. Attachments may be sent in Microsoft Word format, or any other PC-based word processor. Hand written reports are no longer accepted.

delivery queries

Queries regarding delivery of the Gazette to members should be directed to the Secretary of the Croquet Association and not to the Editor.

disclaimer

The opinions expressed in the Croquet Gazette are those of the editor and contributors. The Croquet Association is not responsible from statements other than those clearly defined as being made on behalf of the Croquet Association.

It was the Sunday before Easter and I was in need of some grass under my feet. I had spent the previous day chairing a Council meeting at Hurlingham when we decided to relocate our office at Cheltenham. It was an interesting debate (no, that's not code for anything else...). There were those who favoured renting an office for a while so that we would have longer to consider our ultimate destination, and there were those who thought Surbiton would be a suitable home for us. But Cheltenham won by 8 lengths (15 votes to 7) and our Vice President, Stephen Mulliner, summarised it well: the CA has indeed been fortunate to be able to consider more than one offer to host our new office from member clubs. We thank them all, and that includes the Sussex County Club at Southwick.



Our attention is now concentrated on Cheltenham and we have agreed to spend some £50,000 on a new building there. We are very grateful to the Cheltenham club for their proposal and it will be interesting to watch how well we transplant from London to the Cotswolds. Please be patient when we are on the move.

At this same Council meeting we took the opportunity to welcome David Collins and his wife, Stephanie. We thanked David for his marvellous stewardship of our commercial activities over the past two years and Vice President Alan Oldham presented him with a decanter from the CA. David, who originally volunteered to help us out on a 'caretaker' basis, understandably now wants to spend more of his time on the lawns and he has handed

the think tank

The Management Committee has formed a Working Party to consider how the CA, and the game, might change over the next several years. This WP has been named *The Think Tank* and its terms of reference are open-ended at present.

This Think Tank will consider, inter-alia :-

- 1) all forms of the game of croquet, as we know them, and their rules
- 2) new games of croquet plus Gateball, and rules
- 3) all aspects of CA administration
- 4) all forms of fund raising
- 5) communications, and particularly the use of the internet
- 6) how to encourage formation of new clubs, attract more players and encourage them to join the CA
- 7) anything else.

At present the CA operates with two salaried members of staff and one sales agent, who works on a commission basis. Also the Editor of the *Croquet Gazette* is remunerated.

over our shop to Jeff Dawson. Jeff is well qualified to advise our customers when they are choosing a garden set, mallet or instructional book. Do have a word with him when you have some money to spend.

But, to return to the day after the Council meeting: the sun was shining and I needed some early season practice. By chance what I saw when I got to Surbiton reflected many facets of the CA. There were some 18 enthusiasts being trained to be golf croquet coaches by Robert Fulford and others. Jennet Blake had organised this course and Bruce Rannie, chairman of the CA's Coaching Committee, had come down from the far north-east to help. You don't see top players and administrators helping at the grass roots in every sport - but it is typical of croquet, and long may it continue.

Also nice to see on another lawn was the CA's Secretary, Nigel Graves, trying hard to extract bisques from Janet White, his assistant in the CA office. Croquet's administration benefits enormously by having mallet-swinging staff who know very well why we are all so passionate about our sport.

Then on a distant lawn I saw the world's association croquet number one, Reg Bamford, practising. He was using his 'Swing Trainer' to good effect and was consistently hitting the peg from the north boundary. Watching that swing of his reminded me of Compton and Edrich at the Lord's crease many years ago - it all looks so natural and easy . . . Oh yes, I nearly forgot to mention, I finished second in my first game of the season - but they keep telling me that taking part is the important thing. And I must remember that in croquet every shot makes somebody happy.

Quiller

The remainder of the work is carried out by about 60, yes 60, volunteers who work on an 'expenses only' basis. Many of these members have now reached the limit of the spare time they can give to CA affairs. Consequently it is becoming difficult to find members who are willing/able to take on the more onerous of the Committee jobs and to join WPs.

I, Bryan Judson, perhaps because I am Chairman of the Management Committee, have drawn 'the short straw' and been elected to lead this Think Tank.

Instead of trying to find Council members willing to join this WP, attend committee meetings and do all the thinking, I propose to inject the first idea into the Think Tank by suggesting a new approach. I am now suggesting that all readers of this article should regard yourselves as members of this WP. As such, I invite you to WRITE to ME with your ideas for altering/improving any aspect of croquet, rather than just confining the ideas to your friends.

Please send your written suggestions to me by snail-mail or, preferably, by an attachment to an e-mail (my address is bryan.judson@btinternet.com). The following format would be helpful :-

Section 1 State which aspect your suggestion covers

Section 2 Explain what is wrong with the present situation

Section 3 Explain how your suggestion would improve matters

Alternatively, it may be appropriate to ignore Sections 2 and 3 if your idea refers to something totally new.

As mentioned in the opening sentence, this is a long-term project so there is plenty of time for you to hone your ideas.

council & committee decisions

This report is based on minutes of the Special Meeting of Council held on 23rd February 2002 and the unconfirmed minutes of the Special and Ordinary Meetings held on 23rd March 2002. Some decisions and news from recent committee meetings are also included. If you would like more information on any item, please contact the CA Secretary, Nigel Graves.

Special Meeting of Council, 23 February 2002

The only item for discussion was Relocation of the CA office due to the need to leave The Hurlingham Club by the end of June.

At the previous Council Meeting it had been agreed that this important decision should be made by Council rather than the Management Committee. Consequently the documentation was submitted by the Relocation Working Party with the knowledge of, but without any recommendation from, the Management Committee concerning the relative merits of building at Cheltenham, Southwick or Surbiton, or of renting an office elsewhere.

After considerable debate some members felt that more research was needed, specifically on the proposed size of the office (500 sq ft) and the possibility of obtaining Grant money to fund the cost of this administrative building. A motion was proposed that the CA should rent office space for up to three years at a maximum total cost of £12,000 per annum, inclusive of rates and VAT. This motion was carried by 12 votes to 10 with no abstentions.

Management Committee, 2 March 2002

Subsequently, at the Management meeting on 2 March, it was resolved that more information should be obtained and that a further Special Meeting of Council should be held at which the Management Committee would propose that Council's decision of 23 February should be rescinded and that Council should reconsider its earlier decision in the light of the additional information presented.

Special Meeting of Council, 23 March 2002

This Special Meeting was duly called for 23 March, imme-

I propose that progress reports will be published in the Gazette. All formal submissions will be presented to the Management Committee and in due course I anticipate that a more traditional WP, or several WPs, will be formed to consider how best to pursue each idea. At this stage YOU may be co-opted, if willing!

Finally please note, this project might provide ideal opportunities to explore the feasibility of working through 'virtual' committees i.e. by e-mail, thus avoiding travelling time and costs. We shall see.

diately before the routine Meeting of Council. A thorough debate took place which concluded that the CA office should be built at Cheltenham Croquet Club with building to start by 1 May. Consequent upon this decision the Relocation Working Party was expanded and now comprises Bryan Judson as Chairman, David Magee (representing CA interests), Derek Bradley (representing Cheltenham CCs interests), Roger Bray (Treasurer), Alan Oldham (Vice President) and Nigel Graves (Secretary).

Ordinary Meeting of Council, 23 March 2002

At the following Ordinary Meeting, Council approved that the Membership Committee be disbanded. Recruitment matters will become the responsibility of Marketing and subscription matters will be dealt with by Administration.

Council ratified/noted that:

1. A contract has been signed with Jeff Dawson, our new Commercial Agent.
2. Prize money of £1,000 has been offered by Stephen Mulliner and Reg Bamford for The Golf Croquet Championship, 2002.
3. Egypt may not be able to host the World Golf Croquet Championship in 2004. This would leave an opportunity for the CA to act as host.
4. The right of non-tournament Associates will be extended to include the right to play in Golf Croquet Tournaments advertised in the CA Calendar and that this class of membership should be suitably renamed. (The rationale is to recognize the paucity of Golf Croquet Tournaments at present. This decision may be readdressed when there is a significant increase in the number of these tournaments.)
5. For 2003, the Club membership subscription will be increased by the amount by which inflation has increased; there will be no change in the Individual Members subscription rate.
6. The Sport England Working Party has met with Sport England and enlisted their guidance in the preparation of a Strategy Document.

Bryan Judson, Management Committee Chairman

letters

a trophy, not a cup

Dear Editor,

Last year I was greatly honoured to be asked by David Openshaw to present the Wimbledon Trophy to the winner of the World Championship, Reg Bamford.

When the Championship was being considered in the '80s, Professor Bernard Neal was giving some thought as to a suitable trophy, he being a member of The All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club, which started life in the 1860's as The All England Croquet Club - without a club!

Times have changed and Bernard Neal thought it would be right and proper for the AELT&CC to present a cup of suitable size and stature for this competition.

He approached the then chairman, Mr R.E. Buzzer Hadingham, who immediately agreed, and directed Bernard to the vaults where the silverware was stored.

Having been invited to present this trophy in 2001, I thought that a short history of this cup should be voiced.

The Cup (for it was a Challenge Cup) came into existence in about the 1880's in a club or clubs in what was known as the Northern Circuit, and was won on the tennis court originally. By the turn of the century (that is 19th to 20th), or thereabouts, one Sidney Howard Smith (1872 - 1947) had won this challenge cup three times consecutively and therefore was allowed to keep it. (How times have changed).

S.H. Smith was a very prominent British player in his lifetime; not only did he win this magnificent cup and many others in tennis tournaments around the country, but he won the Gentlemen's Doubles Championship at Wimbledon twice, in 1902 and 1906 with Mr F.L. Riseley.

Shortly after S.H. Smith died in 1947, his family presented to Wimbledon all 16 of the cups which he had won outright. They were all pre-First World War vintage solid silver.

One of Smith's cups was selected as the mixed doubles trophy (note, not cup or challenge cup!), another of Smith's magnificent trophies was chosen by Wimbledon and offered as a trophy for the World Championship, for which it has been played several times already.

What I said at the prize-giving was that, although this started life as a Challenge Cup, it has now been presented as a Trophy, so no-one need get any ideas now!

David Godfree
Hon Secretary, Croquet
All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club

hoop design

Dear Editor

About 15 years ago a colleague in the Metallurgy Department at Newcastle University kindly made me a set of hoops when I started a (rather short-lived) university croquet club. The uprights were 3/4" in diameter, about 20" long and cylindrical except for a sharpened point. They had projecting circular disks to ensure that the hoop was set to the correct height. I found them (even) more difficult to run than normal hoops.

I put this down to three things: firstly the absence of a carrot means that the hoop is not just asking to rise out of the ground; surely a cylinder is a better shape to secure the hoop in the ground than an inverted cone, as long as it has a high enough surface area in contact with the soil. Secondly the disks help to prevent the hoop moving when hit. Thirdly, the increased diameter has two main effects: it compensates for the lost weight of the carrot and it effectively narrows the hoop from any angle but straight in front. It also penalises a player for rushing directly behind the hoop as he has to take off to a wider angle than he would with a thinner hoop. Still thicker hoops would emphasise these effects.

How about the CA Equipment Committee experimenting with a hoop whose uprights are 1" in diameter and telling us how it might affect the game?

David Appleton
Newcastle upon Tyne

jubilee celebrations

Dear Editor,

I thought you might be interested to know of the Jubilee Festival Challenge being planned by Reigate Priory Croquet Club for the 10th - 15th June as part of the Jubilee celebrations in the Reigate area.

We are hoping to attract 40 teams of four people from all walks of life in the area but principally from sports clubs, youth groups, the business community and organisations such as the Lions and Round Table. We are looking for people who are in some way familiar with croquet but are not established club players.

The tournament will be golf croquet with two, four team pools playing each evening through the week with the two winners going through to a grand final on Saturday.

The whole event is meant to be fun and light-hearted but we hope that, apart from an enjoyable Jubilee party, it will also lead to the recruitment of new players for the club.

So far things are looking promising with over 30 teams entered, publicity support received from Southern Counties Radio, sponsorship money from a leading international firm based in Reigate and a very substantial raffle prize from our local sports shop of a £500 Jaques croquet set.

If anyone reading this has experience of similar events and can offer help or advice in any way, we should be very grateful to hear from them.

Tim Hazell
Reigate Priory Croquet Club

distinctions

Dear Editor,

With regard to Smokey Eades' verse in the last Gazette (Issue 278, March 2002):

A croquet COURT's a lovesome thing, God wot,
Hoops, centre-peg and corner flags, - the lot;
But what we've trod on since the game was born
Is ofttimes called, - and rightly so - , a LAWN.

Donald Gugan
Bristol

international coaching

Dear Editor,

As you know, I am now Secretary-General of the Federation Europeene de Croquet. I am looking to find people who would be willing to coach croquet on mainland Europe, possibly even as far as Russia and Lithuania. If anyone is interested in this, could they contact me on 01453 822507 or email:-
dongaunt@compuserve.com

Let me know of any countries in which you have a specific interest or any you would not want to visit.

Please say if you would charge or require expenses paid.

Don Gaunt
Gloucestershire

hoop and roquet

Dear Editor,

I am a very new recruit to the game of croquet and read the Q & A section of issue 278 with great interest. The conclusion reached leaves me even more confused by the *Laws of Association Croquet* (sixth edition). The article states that red was far enough behind the hoop that blue must have run the hoop before hitting it. If red was live, blue has made a

roquet (law 16b). When blue comes to rest, it immediately becomes a ball in hand (Law 6 b 3) and is then an outside agency. If as suggested in the article the decision on whether the hoop has been run depends on Law 14c, then this decision appears to have been made on the basis of the position of a ball which is an outside agency. My view is that the ball should be finally at rest in hand and the hoop point should be scored

Derek Andrew
Charlwood, Surrey

This represents an interesting point of law. Although Blue was clear of the hoop when it hit Red, it came to rest not having completed the running of the hoop, so Law 6 (Ball in Hand) does not apply. As a rule of thumb, laws involving multiple occurrences (such as a hoop and a roquet) are structured in order to prevent the referee (or players) having to make decisions on balls in motion. On the rare occasions when this specific situation happens, the decision on whether Blue was momentarily through the hoop may be difficult to judge without a slow-motion action replay. In this circumstance, a referee would only consider the finishing position of the Blue. If it comes to rest still on the playing side of the hoop, the point is deemed not to be scored. Assuming Blue has already taken croquet from Red previously, the roquet on Red behind the hoop cannot be claimed. - Ed

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Chris Hudson, WCF Secretary-General, retires

The WCF, which was founded in 1986 when its membership comprised only 12 national associations, has recently undergone a major upheaval. Chris Hudson has retired and a new Secretary General has taken over the huge job of organising a very much enlarged Federation. Under Chris Hudson's stewardship it had grown to 22 members, and his home in Cheshire has been the hub upon which all revolved during the last 15 years.

Chris Hudson, has been a Founding Member of the World Croquet Federation and its Secretary General since its inception. During the autumn, the reins - and all the paraphernalia of his incredibly complex office - have been handed to the new Secretary General, Gary Fox who lives in Hobart, Tasmania. Other functions that Chris initiated and developed will be delegated to other worldwide members of the WCF.

68-year old Chris Hudson started playing croquet at the Bowdon Club near Altrincham way back in early 1970. He rapidly progressed and frequently represented his club in regional and national tournaments. He became a member of an England team which resoundingly beat their opponents in the inaugural England/Ireland International Tournament. He was later appointed Chairman and then President of Bowdon where he is still a member.

He was National Development Officer for the CA for 15 years, during which time he visited many established clubs, advised, cajoled and encouraged them, and saw his efforts rewarded by a doubling in the numbers of clubs and players in the UK. Not only did he coach many UK players, but was instrumental in establishing Association Croquet in France, Italy and Egypt, many of whose new players he coached.



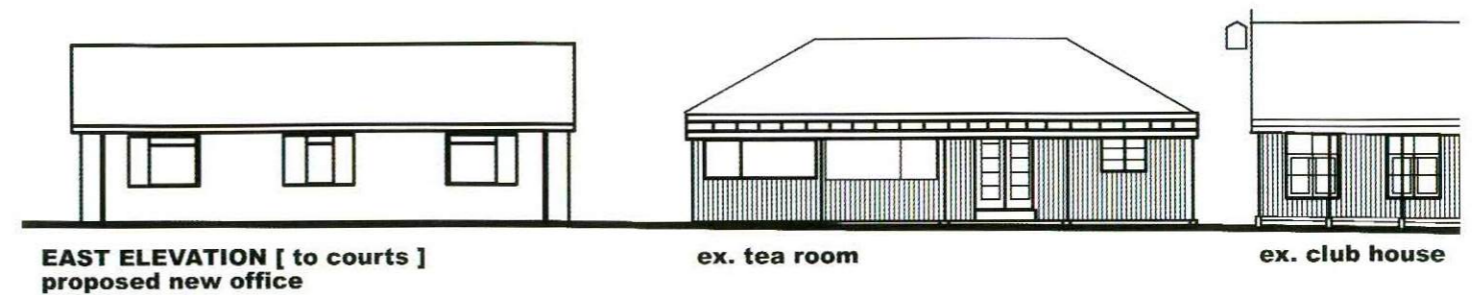
Chris and his wife receive the retirement gift from WCF President Tony Hall and John Jeffrey
 (Photo: Stoke on Trent Sentinel)

During his period of office, Chris organised World Championships in various different countries around the world, and was responsible for the development and worldwide introduction of International Rules Golf Croquet. He had the foresight to see that the Egyptian variant of the game would rekindle great interest in Golf Croquet wherever it was played.

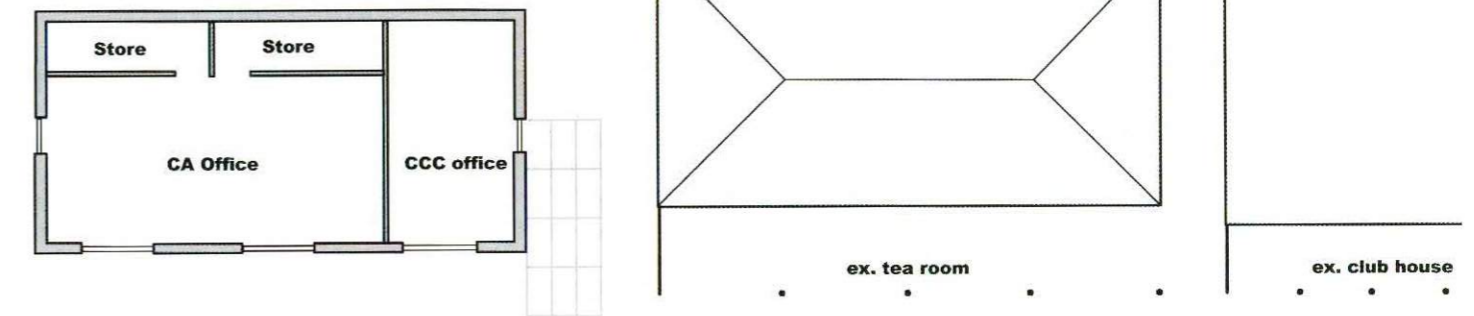
When wishing him well for the future and presenting him with a magnificent silver mounted decanter and tumblers, WCF President Tony Hall said that his work had been invaluable, and Chris, more than anyone else, was solely responsible for the success and prestige of the WCF today. He will be a very hard act to follow, and will be sorely missed by many of us.

John Jeffrey

news and information



PLAN - proposed new office



Cheltenham picked as new CA office location

As detailed in the report of CA Council meetings elsewhere in this edition, Cheltenham Croquet Club has been chosen as the location of the new office for the CA. This new arrangement will provide a brand new brick-built office for both the Croquet Association and Cheltenham Croquet Club (see plans of the proposed scheme above).

The office will be constructed in the position of the current wooden club office, alongside the Tea Room, and overlooking the newly relaid Courts 9, 10 and 11. As Cheltenham Croquet Club own the site, security of tenure should be assured. The Club does not intend to charge the CA more than a peppercorn rent for its use of the land.

Building work will be taking place during the next few months, after which time Nigel Graves will be overseeing the move from Hurlingham. In the meantime, the current office facilities will remain available.

The CA is grateful, not only to the Cheltenham Club for its support in choosing a new base for the sport, but also to both Surbiton and Southwick, whose generous offers to host the CA's headquarters were much appreciated.

European Championship

All the venues for the 2002 European Association Croquet Championship have now been finalised. The two qualifiers will be held at Ramsgate (15-16 June) and CERN, Switzerland (27-28

July). The championship will be held at Jersey (20-22 September).

Each member of the FEC is entitled to nominate one player for the championship. Applications to be considered for selection should be made to your country's association. In addition, each member of the FEC is entitled to nominate two players to enter the qualifiers. The nominees can play at whatever of the two venues suits them best (but not at both!).

Know The Game

The CA has once again collaborated with A & C Black to produce another revised edition of the best-selling *Know the Game* Croquet book. It's just published and is available now from the CA Shop, price £5 including p+p.

The CA thanks Bill Lamb for revising the text (the Golf Croquet section has been expanded), the Surbiton club for providing the venue for the new photographs to be taken, and Phil Cordingley, Gabrielle Higgins and Patrick Hort for demonstrating the strokes.

Websites

The CA has relaunched its website. The address remains the same (www.croquet.org.uk), but has been expanded and reorganised, to include among other things a much improved CA shop.

Also newly upgraded is the Oxford University Croquet site. OUCC information is still held at the old location, but the bulk of this huge and invaluable resource now resides at the address www.oxfordcroquet.com

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 Tel & Fax 01772 743859
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 The Manor House, 1 Barn Croft, Penwortham, Preston PR1 0SX

the croquet gazette - issue 279 may 2002 hoop setting

The CA's Tournament Committee policy

Don Gugan's article in the January Gazette (Issue 277) raised a number of points on hoops which have already been dealt with by the Tournament Committee and the resulting action reported under the Tournament Committees report in the same edition of the magazine. However in an attempt to clarify the position as far as the Committee are concerned the following comments are made.

There are two areas of concern regarding hoops which have been brought to the attention of the Committee during the last two years:

- General Hoop Setting
- Hoop/Ball clearances

The first of these has been dealt with by reminding Referees of Tournaments and Managers their responsibilities in this matter as defined in Appendix 1 of the Tournament Regulations. The Guidance to Clubs bidding for CA tournaments also details their responsibilities in the preparation of the courts for the event. I am also pleased to be able to inform you that Bill Arliss has offered to produce a Guidance pamphlet on Hoop Setting which is to be circulated to all clubs as soon as it has been approved. All the relevant people should then be aware of the problem and a distinct improvement is anticipated during the next season which I hope will enable us to continue to resist a move to set up a system which would require clubs to have their hoop setters attend a course to obtain a 'CA Hoop Setters Approval Qualification' before clubs are awarded CA events.

The second item of hoop clearances appears to be a rather emotive subject in some isolated instances but one that rarely appears to cause any problem to the majority of the membership.

Years ago the CA decided that it would recommend 1/8" clearance for handicap games and 1/16" for advanced games and these values are retained in the latest Tournament Regulations. However it has long been accepted that the ease/difficulty of running hoops is dependant on the type of ground into which the hoops are fixed. Recent preliminary investigations performed by the Equipment Committee in respect to the Omega hoops have identified another variable in that new powder coated hoops appear to be easier to run than the older cast iron hoops that have been in service for many years and have been hand painted over roughened surfaces. In an ideal world we should investigate these variables in detail and produce a correlation between the difficulty of running the hoop and each variable. The length and cost of such an exercise would be considerable and it is doubtful if the CA has the resources available to undertake such a programme.

The Tournament Committee also recognises that the skills needed to increase proficiency at the game of croquet include not only the ability to play shots as the roquet, hoop running and the various croquet strokes under ideal conditions but also the ability to adapt to the various variables that are inherent to the game. These variables include the court with different grass,

lawn speed and flatness, balls from different manufacturers and hoops set in different grounds, with different clearances and of different ages which have been subjected to an unspecified maintenance procedures.

Therefore to insist on a rigid ball/hoop clearance in the midst of so many uncontrollable variables appears to be inappropriate and the Committee is happy to allow the specified clearances to be adjusted by a club hosting an event if it believes that such a change will benefit the tournament. These changes however must be advertised before the event preferably in the Fixtures Calendar. For Club organised events the authority to make the change rests with the appropriate Club Committee but for CA sponsored events permission must be obtained from the Tournament Committee Director responsible for that event. The Manager cannot make the decision without the above consultation. Two examples in this years Fixtures Calendar demonstrate how this should operate. First the Veterans Championship has so many events at both handicap and advanced level it would be difficult to adjust the hoops for each game so the tournament is advertised as having 1/8" clearance for all games. The second example is at Bristol where the committee has decided to advertise the fact that Omega hoops will be used and set according to the conditions and the standard of players entering the various events.

The Appendix 1 of Tournament Regulations was revised during the latter part of the 2001 season in order to meet the schedule for the printing of the Fixtures Calendar. The Tournament Committee now recognise with hindsight that the expression in the second paragraph 'In exceptional conditions' does not clearly define the interruption intended and explained above and we shall be making a suitable alteration in the next edition of the Regulations.

Derek Trotman, Chairman Tournament Committee

The John Hobbs Mallet Reg Bamford used one, plus a "Bamford Swing Trainer" to win the World Championship

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golf croquet laws

WCF forms a GC laws working party

It may have been noted by some players that a resolution was put to the vote last year amongst WCF members that the Golf Croquet rules working party be reformed and comprise nominated representatives from the Croquet Associations of Australia, Egypt, England, New Zealand and the USA (these being the major players of the game), plus one representative from the other smaller members of the WCF. This committee has now been fully staffed and the members are:

Australia	Tony Hall
England	Bill Arliss
Egypt	Amir Ramsis
New Zealand	Roger Dunnet
USA	Jacques Fournier
Canada	Leo McBride
	(Representing all other WCF members)

My brief as the English representative will be to try to establish one set of rules that can be accepted by all the major playing countries in the world as suitable for all levels of competition. I think this will be quite possible providing we try to limit the rules to matters of play, and do not try to include all the special arrangements for very major events within the rules.

Another significant factor will be to ensure the rules are ideally suited to the players being their own referees, as the vast majority of golf croquet games are always played without referees in charge. Although this may involve changes in the structure of the rules, I am fairly certain it will not materially change the way we play the game.

To those of you who still favour the hoop-in-one-go and no jump shots, I am sorry but the new format will stay as the main choice. It has proved very popular for competition. However it is almost certain that the new international rules will include an alternative method of play as the CA Laws did in Law 15. One point I must make is that the old laws of Golf Croquet as written in the red book no longer exist officially. They were replaced completely by the new yellow book laws and in the case of hoop in one etc by law 15. These yellow books may eventually be superseded by a new set of international rules.

To ensure that a consensus view on Golf Croquet Laws is put forward to the new international committee, we have internally set up a sub committee as part of our main Laws Committee to handle the laws within the CA. This subcommittee will make recommendations to Council for the approval of any revised laws.

If any player has strong views on any of the present laws, please contact me on arliss@mistral.co.uk or 01273 728204

Bill Arliss, Chairman Golf Croquet Committee

the croquet gazette - issue 279 may 2002 surveying the world of croquet

a report on the CA's marketing activities

During my first season on the CA's Marketing Committee, I became acutely aware of the fact that there were a lot of preconceptions about Croquet and its players, but not so many facts.

To develop a sound Marketing Strategy we needed to find out a lot more about our sport. So, last autumn we developed a Market Research questionnaire which was mailed out to 2,250 croquet players in January. The response rate has been fantastic, with over 45% of the forms being returned and still more coming back every week.

The initial summary is published in this edition of the Gazette and additional copies of the article can be found on the CA Web site. The full report is being completed and will be discussed with all the Committees in the CA. Later this year we intend to publish the full report and this will be available from the CA for a small fee.

Our next task is to put this information to good use. We are embarking on a number of new initiatives including:

- ♦ The development of a membership Canvassing Kit for clubs

The idea behind this initiative is to give clubs a manual which could be used to aid their recruitment campaigns. It would include items like:-

- The Mini Carpet, Where are they? Who do we contact? How can we put them to good use?

- Recruitment Target areas i.e. U3A, Rotary, 41 Club, Tennis & Squash Clubs. Where are they? How can we contact them?

- Croquet Selling Aids. Association and Golf Croquet leaflets, generic posters for placing in the local community.

- ♦ The development of a video promoting croquet in all its forms

The intention is to produce a short film, which can be used by clubs to promote Croquet in the local community. It could be used at meetings of Rotary Clubs, WI's, local community functions, to name but a few examples. Work on this project is well under way, and the plan is to have video and CD versions available for the 2003 season.

- ♦ To improve the CA's offer to members.

The Marketing Committee is actively exploring a package of additional benefits for members. This is being done to make full membership of the CA more attractive to players of all levels.

The survey has given us a considerable amount of information concerning croquet players' interests. This is being used to develop a package which we hope to launch by the end of this year.

Jeff Dawson has now taken over the running of the CA shop. A number of new lines are being introduced and these are being announced on the CA web site as they become available. The shop is an important source of revenue for the CA with the excess profits being ploughed back into the sport at all levels.

Jonathan Isaacs, Chairman Marketing Committee

healthy, wealthy and wise

Kevin Carter reports on the results of the Survey of Croquet Players

At the end of last year members of the Marketing Committee were planning to take several initiatives. But they realised that the CA did not have a good enough understanding about its Associate Members, as well as those non-Associates who play at clubs that are themselves now full members of the CA. More information was needed before sensible marketing decisions could be taken, so a wide-ranging survey was launched with four main objectives:

1. To enable the Marketing Committee to better 'package' croquet to appeal to providers of funding (notably Sport England), sponsors, media and potential providers of benefits.
2. To help it to generate more effective recruitment aids for clubs.
3. To help understand the profile of CA Associate members vs non-members.
4. To provide the foundation for further marketing initiatives.

The study was conducted by Profundus Consulting Ltd. A mailed questionnaire, with 'Freepost' replies, was chosen as being most appropriate and cost-effective. It was sent to 1300 Associates (from the CA database) and 950 non-Associates (supplied by club secretaries of 38 clubs).

The targeted response rate was 20%, but this was comfortably exceeded as a surprising 1022 (45%) responses were received - and they were a good fit with the geographic spread of members. The Marketing Committee is most grateful to all those who responded. Overwhelmingly they supported the aims of the survey and the way in which it was conducted.

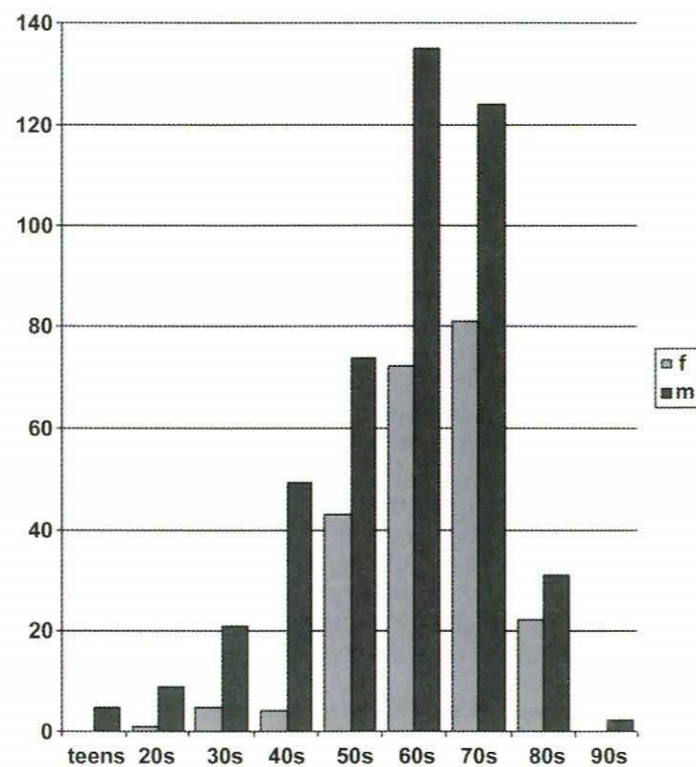
During the next few months Marketing Committee members will be discussing the full results of the survey with the chairmen and members of other CA committees. Then actions will be taken in line with the original survey objectives. In the meantime, here is a summary of some of the key findings.

profile by sex & age

66% of players are men and 34% women.

As can be seen in the first chart, players in their 60s and 70s numerically dominate croquet. The age range was from 12 to 91. The age patterns for males and females are similar, except few women take up the sport before they are 50. This result might well justify the stereotype that croquet is mainly for more active OAPs!

Many other findings reflected this age profile. Notably 71%

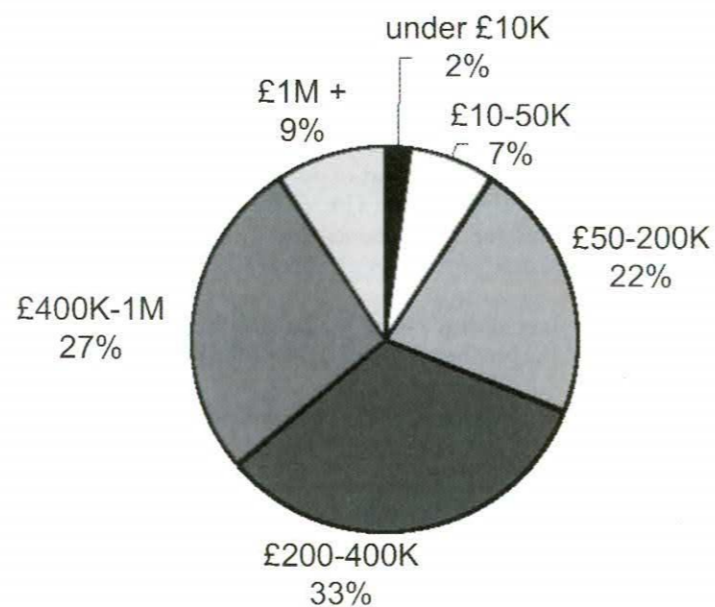


are retired. The fourth most read newspaper or magazine (after the *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph* and *Times*) was *Saga* - a magazine for the over-50s.

croquet players are comfortably off

We asked for information on income and net worth. 23% of respondents chose not to answer the income question and a

Net worth - all respondents



slightly higher proportion, 27%, chose not to answer the 'net worth' question.

47 millionaires responded!

Indeed, the 'net worth' profile of croquet is extremely high - consistent with age, occupations (dominated by qualified professionals and managers) and income.

once hooked ...

Once they join a club, players are generally hooked. The average length of membership across all club members is 10.9 years. This ties in well with an exercise undertaken by the Marketing Committee a year ago, where data from club secretaries enabled us to calculate that the average length of time a player belonged to a club was in the range eight to ten years (allowing for a few that switch clubs, this ties in very closely).

But what gets people hooked on croquet?

As the next chart shows, the single greatest factor influencing players to take up croquet is the availability of a local club. The majority of respondents cited this as a reason, and as the single greatest influence it scored twice as highly as any other factor. Closely linked to this is the availability of croquet at school, university or work - 'local' in a slightly different sense.

Consistent with the responses to another question ("What other people have you introduced to the game?"), we see that spouse/partner, other relation and friend (and to a lesser extent, workmate) are all significant influences, especially if they are taken together as "introduced by another person".

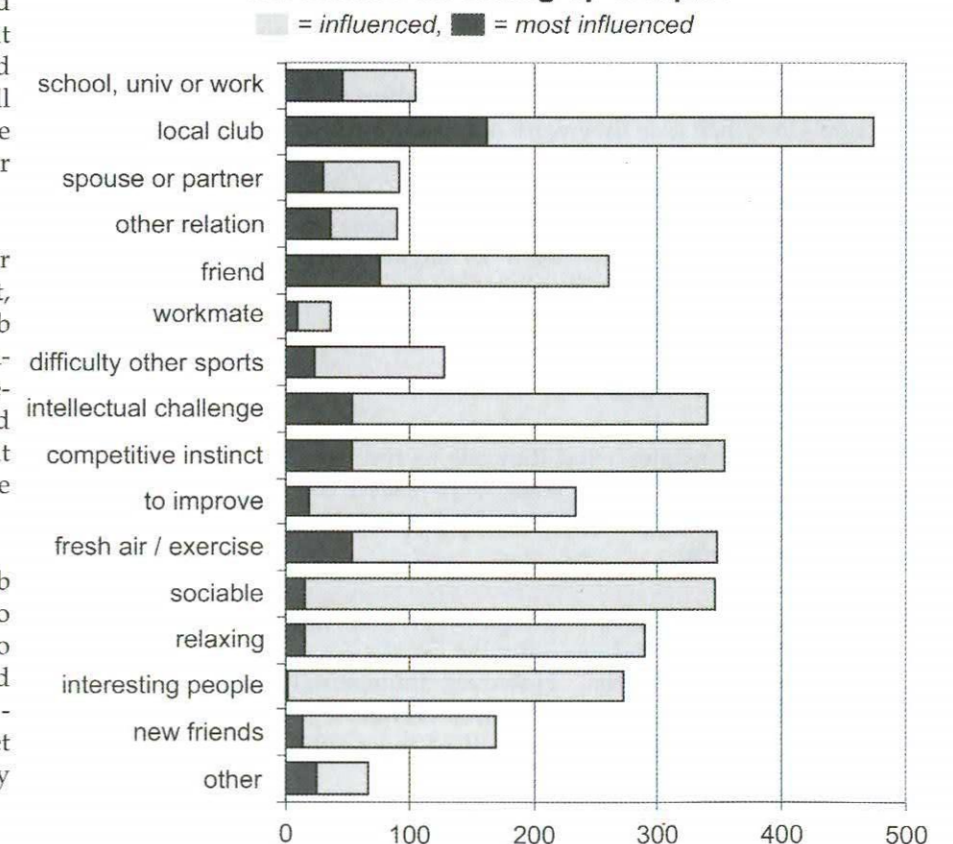
When the emphasis is put on reasons for continuing, rather than taking up, croquet, we see a shift. While having a local club remains important, it is less so - presumably once 'hooked', players are more prepared to travel. Likewise, being introduced to the sport by others is less important (except for friends: many of their friends are now in the croquet club).

The 'soft' influences are important for club members, particularly croquet's appeal to the competitive instinct and the desire to improve. Interestingly, too, 'fresh air and exercise' becomes much more important - certainly with many older players Croquet will have become the principal opportunity to enjoy an outdoor activity.

Croquet players often move on to Croquet from other sports. This was explored. In general, team sports - such as football, rugby, hockey and cricket - yield few croquet players. Neither do golf, bowls and snooker. These are sports that are generally taken up instead of, or as well as, croquet. It is the racket sports - tennis, squash and badminton - that provide many croquet players. Indeed, 37% of croquet players are ex-tennis players.

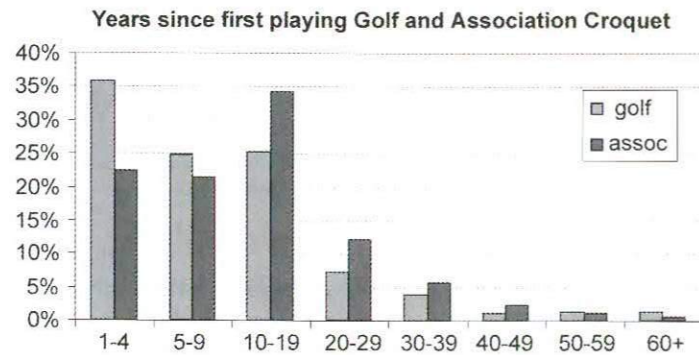
This is an important finding for recruitment planning purposes.

Influences on taking up croquet



golf croquet takes off ...

The next chart raises more questions than it answers.



In the past four years 50% more people have taken up Golf Croquet than Association. Could this be because of the greater prominence now given to this variant? One notion is that many players start with Golf and move on to Association. If that were the case, in an era of fairly stable player numbers, one would expect new recruits to balance those moving on.

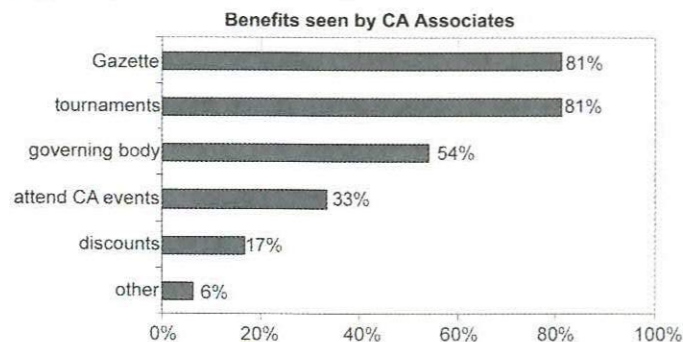
However, going back ten years and more, Association is higher. This might be because those taking up Croquet and starting with Golf either move on to Association or give up the game - in which case they were not in the survey.

In fact, further analysis shows that almost half of all players are introduced to Golf Croquet at the same time as Association and the results seem to suggest that Golf Croquet is not generally used to teach beginners before they 'move on' to Association.

the CA needs YOU

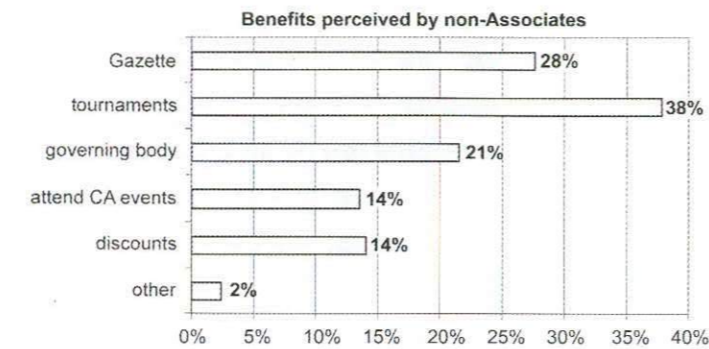
We asked CA Associates what they see as the benefits of subscribing, while non-Associates were asked for their impressions of the benefits (which, by implication, were insufficient for them).

Looking first at Associates, as can be seen below, being able to attend tournaments and receiving the Gazette are seen as the most important benefits. However, interestingly the altruistic "contributing to the running of croquet's governing body" was also cited by over half of those who sub-



scribe.

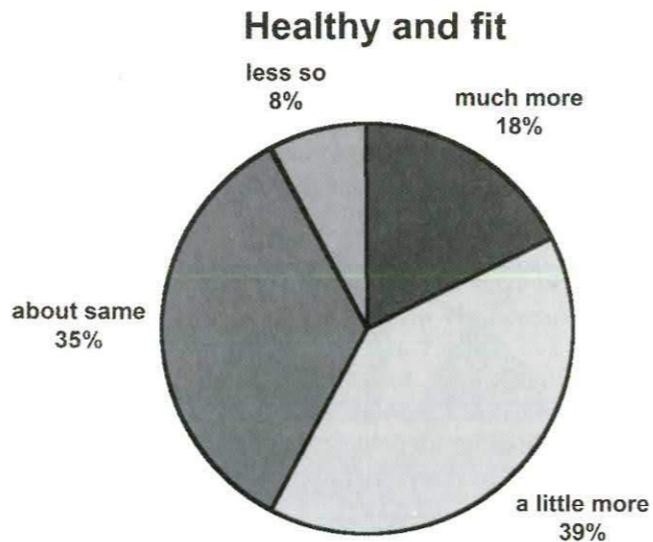
Turning to non-Associates, 43% did not answer. Some did not do so because they thought there were no benefits and some because they did not know. From a marketer's point of view these two reasons amount to the same thing: if you cannot explain the benefits you will never make the sale! Clearly, the ordinary club player, with a handicap well into



double figures, has no interest in CA tournaments, nor in reading the Gazette. There remains little incentive to pay a £26 CA subscription. This is a challenge the CA has to face up to: how to increase the benefit of CA Associate membership.

health & efficiency

One question asked respondents how healthy and fit they regard themselves relative to others of the same age. It shows that 57% think they are more healthy and only 8%



less.

So, croquet is clearly a game for the healthier and fitter (typically retired) person, but does it help to make or keep you fit? Well, yes, it certainly seems to. At least, 54% of players think so, compared to only 3% who think croquet players

coaching

coaches' training courses prove great success
by Bruce Rannie

The first Training Course for Golf Croquet Coaches took place at Surbiton Croquet Club on 23rd and 24th March 2002, and as a result, 18 players are now appointed to the new officially recognised CA Coaching Grade of "Golf Croquet Coach", signified by a Silver Coach's badge.

The course comprised three parts, as follows. The first, based on material prepared by Michael Hague for the Coach Qualification Course, was designed to show students how to teach, concentrating on the requirements for planning, preparation and communication, and was led by Jennet Blake. The second, based on the second edition of *A Guide to Golf Croquet*, prepared students to teach Golf Croquet to beginners and improvers by use of talks, demonstrations and role-playing, and was led by Daphne Gaitley and Roderick Sheen. The third, introducing students to advanced tactics and how to teach them, was led by Robert Fulford and Chris Sheen.

In addition, students were asked to prepare a written syllabus covering plans for the first two sessions of a Golf Croquet Course for eight beginners that they would deliver in their own environment - this homework, and the students' performance over the two days, was assessed by Bruce Rannie, Daphne Gaitley and Roderick Sheen, so that Coaching Awards could be correctly given.

All the participants joined in the role-playing with gusto, ensuring that the players did not assume anything about the skill of their pseudo-beginners, and that the reasons for the choice of shot were always explained, not just the mechanics of the stroke. The classroom activities went well too, although explaining faults is easier on the court than in the clubhouse.

This was the first Golf Croquet Coaches course, and lessons learnt from feedback from coaches and students will be applied to future editions, planned for other parts of the country, so that the CA can ensure that the quality of its teaching and its teachers is increased, and therefore the standard of play increases throughout the domain.

The CA appreciates all the effort put into this initiative by Jennet Blake, who with Gerald Mitchell, wrote *A Guide to Golf Croquet* on which much of the playing material is based, and Daphne Gaitley, supported by Roderick Sheen, who led the groups on the playing material. That Robert Fulford and Chris Sheen, fresh from their experiences in the WCF World Golf Croquet Championships in Florida, put so much into the demonstrations and explanations on the second day, shows the emphasis that the CA is now putting into Golf Croquet at all levels - if we get the grounding right, then the aim to beat the Egyptians and win the Worlds for England is within reach.

would be better off doing something else.

When asked a similar question about their mental agility, 64% believe their mental agility is above the norm, and 63% are confident it helps to improve or maintain their mental agility.

To support Sport England applications we also wanted to know about disabilities. 10% had suffered from a cardiovascular disease and 15% currently have other disabilities.

ten things you did not know about croquet players

1. 48% of croquet players are graduates.
2. 69% have a spouse or partner (with 12% widowed and 7% divorced or separated).
3. 41% of respondents either are or were, before retirement, qualified professionals (doctors, lawyers, teachers, accountants, etc.). Managers, both senior and middle, make up a further 25% between them.
4. With computer ownership at 70% and e-mail usage at 60%, croquet players are well above the national averages. Three-quarters of all those who surf the web look at the CA website at least occasionally.
5. 51% of respondents had played croquet "in the garden" (not necessarily their own garden), with a quarter starting in their teens.
6. 62% of all croquet players have introduced at least one friend to the sport (along with 29% who have introduced their spouse or partner, 23% a child, 15% another relation and 13% a workmate).
7. While a third of all croquet players are women, they make up only 9% of those with a handicap below four.
8. 7% of croquet players have never received any coaching. Of those that have, 88% have received club coaching and 28% have been on a CA course.
9. Over one third of all croquet players also regularly play a recognised 'mind game', such as bridge, backgammon or chess.
10. And 83% of croquet players enjoy a nice bottle of wine.

Jonathan Isaacs, Marketing Committee chairman, writes: We are most grateful to Kevin Carter for his help in compiling the survey questions and in analysing the responses. The CA is very fortunate when it can call on professional expertise from its members as in this case. The savings are considerable and it enables us to spend our budget in other ways that will benefit the sport.

continued >>

The second CA Coach Qualification Course took place at Southport and Birkdale Croquet Club on 13th and 14th April 2002. 14 players now have the yellow Coach's badge of the new officially recognised CA Coaching Grade of "Club Coach".

Bruce Rannie, Chairman of the CA Coaching Committee, who attended all sessions of the course, presented certificates and badges to the students, who represent eight clubs in the North West, Yorkshire and Croquet North areas.

The structure of the course is 25% talk and 75% participation, including two syndicate exercises, and preparation and delivery of two half-hour lessons, one teaching a skill, the other teaching some elements of tactics. The method of communication recommended relates all that is being taught to five principles on which successful Association Croquet is based, these being Accuracy, Foresight, Straightforward Shots, Exploiting Rushes, and Exploiting the Rush Line.

Although most examples used to get the teaching methods over to the students are based on Association Croquet, some based on Golf Croquet were included to show that it is the methodology of teaching that is important, not what is being taught. The key points on delivery are to involve the students by using correct questioning techniques, and to ensure that they maximise mental and physical student activity by getting them to work out the next move and play the shot, rather than the coach doing it all

The students are split into syndicates each of which is led by an experienced coach, rotating over the four half-days between groups. The Directing Staff act as facilitator, role-player and mentor as required - at Southport, these were Bob Burnett, James Hawkins and Keith Roberts.

The prepared lessons are given to other members of the syndicate, who play the roles as required for the level of student for whom that lesson is designed, and each lesson (called to a halt as the messages become clear) is constructively criticised by the others in the group, and the Directing Staff. The lesson on tactics is given twice, first using a magnetic board to Michael and part of the group, and secondly on the courts, in their original syndicates, so that students can learn the differences in technique required for delivering material in these media.

This was the second Coach Qualification Course, and lessons learnt from feedback from the one held at Surbiton last year have been incorporated to ensure all Directing Staff understand what is expected from them, and how the timings work. A repeat of this course is to be held at Cheltenham on 18th and 19th May, and the CA Coaching Committee plans to ensure these courses can be held for all aspiring coaches in other parts of the country next year, and therefore add the course to the annual CA programme to

improve playing and coaching standards throughout the domain.

The CA appreciates all the effort put into this initiative by Michael Hague, who has developed the course using his own material, together with some originally used by Don Williamson, and some prepared by Don Gaunt, and produced a lively, entertaining and thought-provoking course appreciated by all who attended. The structure of the lessons themselves is taken from the *CA Coaching Manual* and *A Guide to Golf Croquet*, also published by the CA. Thanks are due also to Bob Burnett, James Hawkins and Keith Roberts, who led the practical work, and directed the role-playing exercises and syndicate work.

The course would not have been the success it was without the catering and other support from the Southport and Birkdale Club, and the sponsorship of the North West Federation. Books were available at a discounted price courtesy of the CA Commercial Agent.

appointments

CA Club Coaches

Anne Belcher (Southport), Ray Belcher (Southport), Nora Burbridge (Tyneside), Janet Davies (Chester), Anna Giraud (Zeneca, Huddersfield), John Kennedy (Beverley), Ailsa Lines (Bowdon), Ian Lines (Bowdon), Ray Lowe (Southport), Mollie McBride (Chester), Tony Thomas (Southport), Peter Wardle (Crake Valley), Neil Williams (Crake Valley / Keswick / Kendal), Geoff Young (Bury)

The CA hopes and expects that, after attending this course, and coaching in their own clubs, keen coaches will be recommended for further qualifications, as Grade I (beginners / improvers, to Bronze level), Grade II (to Silver and Introduction to Advanced Play level), or Grade III (Gold level).

CA Golf Croquet Coaches

David Bourne (High Wycombe and Surbiton), Jo Burnaby (Winchester), Richard Clark (Royal Tunbridge Wells), Andrew Cowing (CERN (Switzerland) and Cheltenham), John Hobbs (Royal Tunbridge Wells), Ken Mason (Sussex), Pamela Mason (Sussex), Gerald Mitchell (Harwell), John Munro (Blewbury, Harwell), Paul Robertshaw (Himley Hall), Edme Robinette (Bury St Edmunds) and Chris Wright (Purley Bury)

Golf Croquet Club Coach (non-Associates):

Margaret Brown (Leighton-Linsdale), Maureen Brown (Chelmsford and Bentley), Philip Joseph (Hurlingham), Ronnie Richardson and Coralie Toogood (Chelmsford and Bentley)

In addition, recognising her achievements over the past few years in East Anglia and Yorkshire, Rosemary Longbottom is also appointed as CA Golf Croquet Coach and will receive her Silver Badge in due course.

break builder 7

The seventh Break Builder tip was written by Don Gaunt, was first published in the Gazette in the spring of 1988, and set this puzzle.

This time you are playing Black in the fourth turn, and you are prepared to use one bisque to get the break started. Yellow was put into Corner IV on the first turn. You laid a tice with Blue on the West Boundary, which Red hit on Turn 3, approached Hoop 1, but missed, bouncing past the hoop on the peg side. You shot at the double target of Red and Blue with your second ball, just clipping your partner to claim the roquet (Shot Number 0 in diagram). Now what do you do?

As always, before constructing a break using bisques, you should picture where you need the other three balls. In this case, we need a pioneer for Hoop 1, a pioneer for Hoop 2 (next-but-one, thinking ahead), and a pivot. Of these the most immediately important is a good placing for the pioneer at Hoop 1.

solution

1 - 2 With a little split-shot, put Blue into the middle, leaving Black a short rush closer to Hoop 1.

3 - 4 After the rush, take off to Yellow in Corner IV, and roquet it.

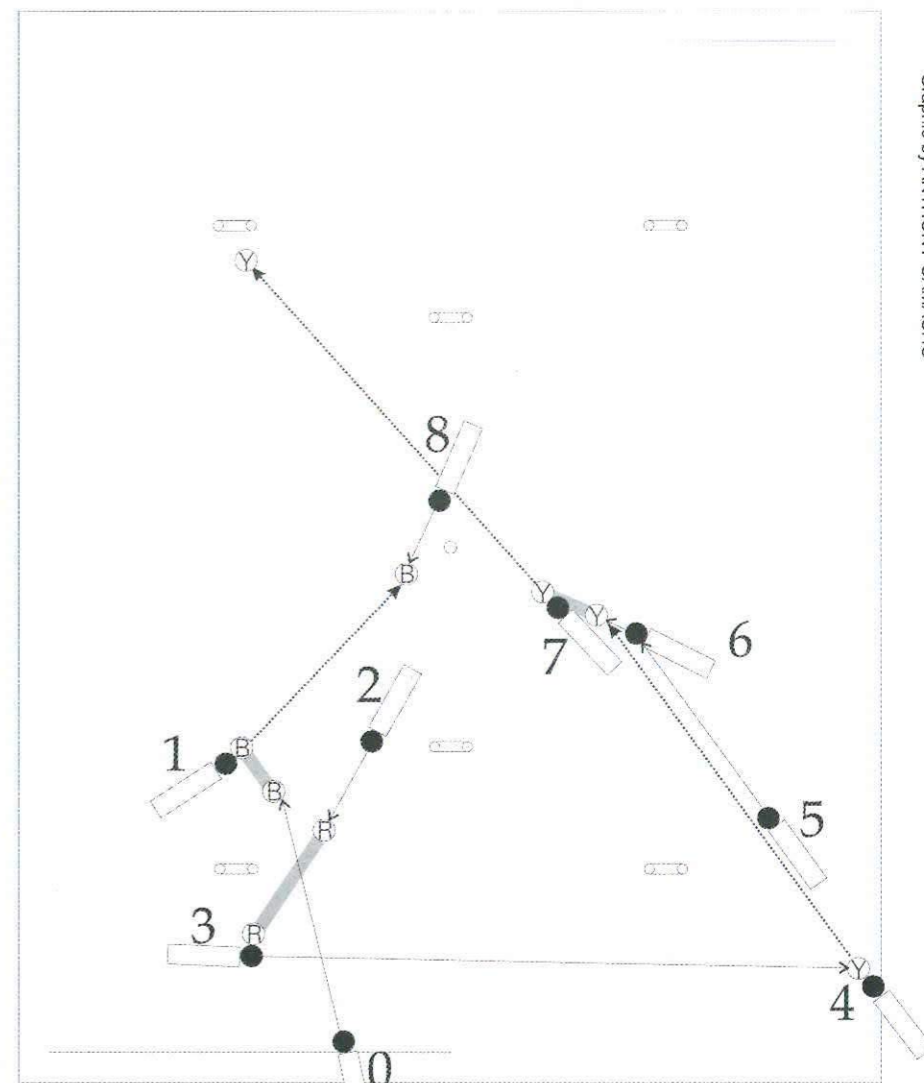
5 Croquet Yellow some two-thirds of the way towards the peg, and with the continuation shot, put Black near to it, and take a bisque.

6 - 7 Roquet Yellow, and this time, croquet it to Hoop 2, stopping Black near Blue.

8 Roquet Blue, and take off for Red at Hoop 1.

The four-ball break exists for the single bisque.

There are two temptations to be resisted. Do not run Hoop 1 before going to Yellow in Corner IV. Although it is possible to create the four-ball break from there with only one bisque, it is significantly harder. Neither think of sending Yellow all the way to Hoop 2 at the first attempt. You are going to take a bisque anyway, as you have already played all the balls, so do it in two simple shots rather than one difficult one, where hitting Blue next is less certain.



Graphic by ANTHONY CAMACHO

LOOKING FOR A NEW Mallet TO IMPROVE YOUR HANDICAP?

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Email: mike@croquetmallets.com

basic skills

1. a straight swing

Tell a beginner to pick up a mallet and swing it, and the result is often less than perfect. The ideal swing comes not from the wrists or the forearms, but from the shoulders. Achieving the action in practice calls for a far from natural series of movements.

Many new players start with a standard grip, but with one hand at the top of the mallet, and one hand much lower down. With varying degrees of severity, the likely result of this gives a swing with each arm acting independently. In its worst case, the upper arm acts as if pulling a lever and the lower arm remains static, with just the wrist bending. Any good swing consists of a pendulum action, with its centre about the shoulders.

That's all very well, but practising this with a heavy mallet often hurts the underdeveloped wrist muscles. Here's a trick to help rectify the problem.

Take this magazine and roll it up into a tube. Grip it as you would a mallet. Because of its size, you'll be forced to hold it with the hands together. Stand as you would to strike a ball.



Looking down the tube, the floor should remain visible throughout the swing

Practise this simple routine until you've found a grip which feels comfortable. Then try it out with a mallet.

Of course the impact between a real mallet and a real ball makes it much harder. This technique relies on the elbows and wrists remaining immobile and the shoulders doing all the work. Very few great swings are like that, using the elbows and wrists as shock absorbers. Perfection of style can be developed over time.

There are many bad ways to swing a mallet. The shoulder swing is a good one, in that it's the basis of almost all great swings. As a means of co-ordinating both hands, adjusting to a comfortable grip, or simply checking if your eyes stay looking at the ball, it's a routine that's worth trying.

croquet and disability

Is croquet a viable sport for disabled players? asks James Hawkins

I fondly recall a game I played several years ago. My opponent was a stroke victim who'd come to the game after his illness had stopped him playing his first sport, polo. Paralysed down one side, he was unable to play roll strokes or long roquets. Without the cushion of extra turns he'd have struggled. Against me, he had 12 bisques. As soon as the game started, he took three bisques to bring each of the other balls into play, went to peg, and crosswired me. I missed. He took a fourth bisque to put my ball back where he'd left it before my shot, went to peg again, and beat me with eight bisques standing.

History recounts the success of Monty Spencer Ell, who lost both arms at the Battle of Loos in 1915. A mallet attachment was made for him, which screwed into the stump of his arm above the elbow, allowing him to play at the highest level. Of the five times he was selected for the Surrey Cup (then the CA's selection event for the second best eight players, after the President's Cup), he notched up an impressive three second place finishings. Ell is remembered by the Spencer Ell Cup, which superseded the Surrey Cup in 1973.

Wheelchair Users

Clearly, croquet is one game which doesn't prevent the disabled from participating at any level of the sport. But one stumbling block has always been a concern for clubs - the problem of wheelchairs.

Bowls clubs had similar worries about damage to greens. The initial solution was to place boards on the surface of the grass on which to park the wheelchair. For the duration of a single end, this helped matters, but becomes inconvenient when the bowler needs to shift position. Not a workable state of affairs for the wheelchair-bound croquet player.

The British Wheelchair Sports Foundation based at Stoke Mandeville has a better idea. Many bowlers use a customised chair - the Bradshaw Bowls Buggy. The critical enhancement is the width of the tyres. Weight is sufficiently well distributed not to leave furrows in the surface of the green. Costs, though, are high. Some chairs have quick release wheels, which can be replaced with thicker ones. Again, this is a measure which is beyond the budget of many wheelchair users. More recently, clip-on wheels have been developed. These wider tyres can be fitted over the tread of a normal chair, and provide an inexpensive solution which finally enables disabled bowlers to compete with their able-bodied counterparts.

As for croquet, the alternative solution comes from Keith Smith, the former Development Officer for the CA in the Yorkshire Federation. The simple idea is to play on an artificial surface. Talks were at an advanced stage with the Sue Ryder Foundation, which operates several residential



Wide wheels allow disabled bowlers to participate on grass surfaces

homes for the disabled. Disappointingly, the plans for a carpet-on-timber croquet court fell through when permission for its installation was not granted.

With the marketing of indoor mini carpets, wheelchair croquet seems close to becoming a reality. Experiments in Yorkshire found that many wheelchair users have considerable upper body strength, making croquet an ideal sport for them. One obstacle would be problems with hampered strokes, with balls, hoops and other court equipment caught under the wheels. Navigability around hoops on the small-sized carpet would be particularly difficult, but such niggles seem easy to overcome.

Visual Impairment

Coming as something of a surprise (to me at any rate) is the range of sports catering for blind men and women. It's possible to imagine how sports such as athletics or judo could be adapted with some creativity to suit the visually impaired. What I wouldn't have expected was the number of 'accuracy' sports available to the blind.

Very few people registered as blind have no visual perception at all. But even those without any residual partial sight have the opportunity of taking part in, for example, bowls, or ten-pin bowling or archery.

Visually impaired bowls has been around in its current form since the 1950s. It's featured in each of the last two Commonwealth Games and the Paralympics. Only two adaptations from the standard laws have been necessary. A green fishing line (almost invisible to a sighted person) is placed down the centre of the playing area. Using the line, the blind participant can orient him or herself to the direction of the jack. A caller describes the placement of the jack and woods, using the clock method ('six inches away from the jack at 5 o'clock'). As for a visually unimpaired player,

success depends on judgement of pace and a highly developed sense of spatial awareness.

Visually impaired archery relies again on a sighted caller, using the same clock method to describe where previous arrows have hit the target. As with the green fishing line in bowls, competitors use a piece of apparatus to orient themselves relative to the object they wish to hit. Here it's a tactile guide brushing against the bow hand, indicating elevation and direction. Apart from that, no specialist equipment is required.

So, how far does croquet need to go to adapt for the blind player? Not far, it seems. The Canadian croquet equipment manufacturer Don Oakley has provided hoops for at least one player with deteriorating eyesight. Rather than the standard 5/8" diameter uprights, these new high visibility hoops have wires a full one inch thick. Powder coated in brilliant white as normal, they allow those with restricted, but partial, vision to continue to compete. Maybe it's not an ideal solution - one could question whether fully sighted and partially sighted players would be able to compete on equal terms (with or without bisques) if specialised equipment is used. Even so, I'm aware of at least one player - at Culcheth Croquet Club, near Warrington - with severely restricted vision, who plays without recourse to such equipment as modified hoops. A non-playing partner to act as a seeing guide seems to be the only concession which needs to be made for many visually impaired people to enjoy croquet.

A way forward for the game?

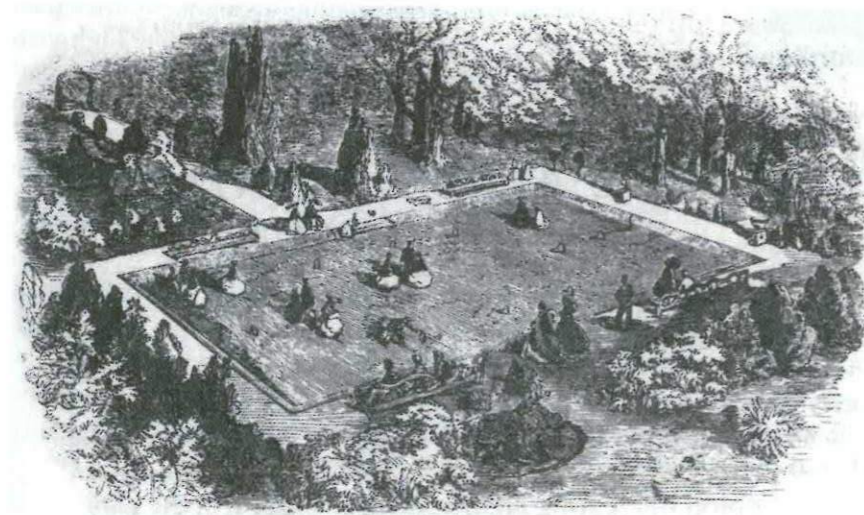
The cynic in me seems to be saying that promoting croquet to the physically or visually impaired is a surefire means of garnering wider support (either financial, political or through the media) for the game. Croquet remains cash-starved, and continues to suffer the ridicule we've always endured about the image of the game. Yes, but it's just plain wrong to suggest that a disability-friendly policy is the magic wand to turn around the fortunes of croquet and instantly give us the inroad to Lottery cash we've been longing for.

Having said that, the subject has challenged my own preconceptions about the disabled, about sport generally, and about croquet specifically. The point is not whether we can swell the membership figures for our clubs, or how many column inches in the local papers we can achieve by teaming up with charities for the disabled. The point is that, in many ways, croquet is the ideal pastime for many people who are not catered for by a host of other sports. We have the evidence that we can accommodate disabled players if we put our minds to it. Maybe it's time that we set out actively to make sure we do.

Neil Williams reviews what was on offer for the serious player in the 1860s

By 1869 the notion of a croquet "tournament" was still seen as very advanced and novel. Until two years earlier there had been only the croquet "party", a relaxed social gathering in the garden of a country house, during which croquet would be on offer to the guests, possibly as an alternative amusement to archery. The word "tournament", however, with its overtones of medieval knightly joustings, puts the emphasis on competition, with winners and losers, and the emergence at the end of a long, hard-fought day of a "Champion". A radically different concept.

Of course, these early tournaments still retained elements of the old croquet parties from which they had developed. For example, the players in the very first tournament did not apply to enter: they were invited, like guests to a party.



And they all came from that same, narrow social stratum which would have given and attended croquet parties - namely the landed gentry and members of those professions with which the squire and his family would have had regular dealings, such as clergymen and doctors. Slightly later, in an attempt to widen the circle of players, advance notice of tournaments appeared in newspapers like *The Field*. But the attempt had only very limited success because *The Field* was read exclusively by those same country gentlemen. The other limiting factor was that, apart from small, isolated pockets in Yorkshire and Scotland, "scientific" croquet - what we would now call "Association Croquet" - did not then exist north of Cheltenham.

It was, of course, only players of the new scientific game who appeared at tournaments. The average garden croquet player - there were many thousands of them - had no interest whatsoever in tournament play, which had come into existence only as a result of the efforts of one man, Walter Whitmore, supported by a few other enthusiasts. Whitmore had published his ground-breaking book *Croquet Tactics* in 1868, following up his equally ground-breaking *Croquet: Its Implements and Laws* of 1866. Taken together,

these two publications created a new kind of croquet that made tournaments possible. For the first time there was an agreed approach to the game. (They also represent one of the greatest achievements by any single individual in the entire history of sport, but that is a separate story.)

So by the 1869 season, after two years of experiment, conditions had been created in which tournament play could begin in earnest. The aspiring tournament player now for the first time had access to everything he needed: the latest thinking on implements, stroke production, tactics, and, above all, an agreed code of laws. Indeed, like most of the early tournament players, he had probably also been taught to play by Whitmore, or by one of his many pupils.

If he had played at Moreton the previous year, the new tournament player, having been used to 10-inch hoops, would have found himself having to negotiate 8-inch hoops, and the lawns would have measured 45 yards x 35 yards. His games would have lasted anything up to a whole hour, unless, like Mr. Phipps, he had the misfortune to come up against the formidable 20 year-old Walter Peel, whose final game against Phipps began at 11.21 and was over by 11.57.

A feature of these early tournaments was that they took place on rented grounds, usually cricket fields, so playing surfaces might be less than perfect. (At one tournament, the state of the ground was described as "wretched".) This was still the position in 1869, when neither of

the two leading clubs, the All England Croquet Club and its deadly rival the National Croquet Club, had a home ground. So they both had to find temporary accommodation at which to stage their "Prize Meetings". The AECC settled for the cricket field at the Crystal Palace and the NCC for the cricket field at Highgate School. Both clubs claimed that the main event in their respective tournaments was the more important, the AECC with its Open Championship Cup and the NCC with its Championship at Croquet.

Both tournaments excited great press interest, for the country was still in the grip of the croquet mania that had begun in the late 1850s. Indeed, never before or since have there been more column inches written about croquet in the daily press. It even led some people to think that croquet had a future as a spectator sport, like cricket.

First to be staged was the AECC meeting. It took place in July, when eight "grounds" were laid out on the cricket field. Play was not, however, continuous. It began on the Monday, but then stopped till Wednesday. There was a further break on the Thursday afternoon, when a club meeting was held in a marquee erected specially, and play

ended on the Friday. In addition to the championship event, there was an event open only to club members, each match in both competitions consisting of the best-of-three games. There were no events open to ladies, and there was no "Partner Prize" (mixed doubles). Furthermore, perhaps because this was a championship meeting, there appear to have been none of the usual extra attractions like a shooting-at-the-peg competition, a prize for the highest break or the popular game of chance called "Addition and Subtraction". Nor was there a military band to serenade the players and spectators with selections from Offenbach, as was usual at tournaments. In shedding these additional attractions, croquet was putting its garden party past well behind it.

The players made few if any concessions to the sporting occasion in the way of clothing, beyond perhaps removing their overcoats and possibly replacing their top hats with bowlers or sunhats. They did not leave the lawn while their opponents were in play, and might well be joined there by friends and acquaintances. All games would be conducted in the presence of an umpire on the lawn, complete with notebook to record every turn. His jobs also included moving the clips, but his main function was to act as arbiter in any disputes that might arise, including points of law. Not surprisingly, the umpire's job was not much sought after and seems often to have gone to clergymen. Beyond the umpire was the equivalent of Referee of Tournament, whose decision in any dispute not settled by the umpire was final.

In addition to the usual silver trophies, prizes were very varied at most tournaments. For example at Worthing around this time winners were in line to receive the works of Tennyson, statuettes, breakfast cruets, sealskin muffs, fans, ivory card cases, "ornaments for the drawing-room table", and the poems of Thomas Hood, illustrated by Gustav Dore.

In August 1869 came the much-hyped Highgate tournament. The grounds measured 30 yards by 25 yards. The hoops had been narrowed by two inches since Moreton to 6 inches, and all matches were best-of-five. Every newspaper covered the play; even the aristocratic *Morning Post*, which usually ignored croquet, carried a half column between the racing and the cricket on August 14. Space does not permit a detailed account of this tournament, but it did live up to its billing, with some spectacular shots and swings of fortune, including a hoop run from 23 yards (by Walter Peel); and a two-ball finish with one player (Peel again) ready to go out in his next turn when his opponent (George Muntz) hit in from 33 yards to snatch the game.

By now tournaments were rather more frequent. The Sussex County and Cheltenham clubs (both founded in this year) staged their first. Worthing, Torquay and Eastbourne also entered the lists. There were also inter-club matches

and - something we have completely lost from the croquet scene - "challenge matches" between individuals, which were used as laboratories for experiments with changes in the laws, the width of hoops and the size of grounds. For example, at his home in Oxfordshire, Chastleton House, Whitmore played Arthur Law in a best-of-five match in which the hoops for the first two games measured 6 inches, and for the final three games 5 inches.

In September at the Hall, Bushey, near Watford, on four grounds each measuring 35 by 20 yards, with 7 1/4 inch hoops the first Ladies' prize meeting was held, under the aegis of the AECC. The announcement that the "tight" croquet stroke (foot on ball) would not be allowed caused anger in the correspondence columns of *The Field*. The main event was won by Mrs Joad, whose husband, George, had won the AECC men's championship at Crystal Palace.

By 1870 the AECC had moved into its new premises at Worple Road, Wimbledon, and was able for the first time to stage a championship meeting at home. There, 12 grounds were laid out in terraces with paths between them. The hoops were reduced from 6 to 5 inches in the later stages of the competition. It was the biggest tournament ever held. On the first day of the meeting 250 spectators passed through the gates. (The highest reported attendance at a croquet tournament around this time was 400, at Torquay.) It was a remarkable occasion as it brought together the feuding members of the rival clubs, the AECC and the NCC, with Whitmore, now the most controversial figure in the world of croquet, playing in a tournament organised by his arch enemies, and J.H. Walsh, editor of *The Field*, chairman of the AECC, and one of Whitmore's bitterest opponents, as referee of the tournament. There was bound to be blood on the carpet. It was just a question of whose.

Unfortunately, one of the parties in the inevitable trouble was Walter Peel, Whitmore's cousin and star pupil. All was going well in his match against Whitmore for a place in the final until right at the end of their final game, with the score one-all. The match umpire must have been beginning to breathe more easily. It was after all the most testing situation that could be designed for an (untrained) umpire - to officiate in a crucial match involving the haughty and volatile greatest living croquet expert and the most brilliant player of the next generation.

Peel was for the peg with pink (red balls were not then used) and yellow. In rushing yellow towards the peg, he caused it to hit the peg. End of turn. Or at least it should have been, but instead of ending his turn Peel calmly pegged out his pink as well, and "won" the game and the match. Whitmore protested to the umpire, who claimed he did not see the shot in question because his back was turned at the time. Bravely he turned down Whitmore's appeal, at which point Whitmore appealed to the Referee, J.H. Walsh, his personal enemy. Walsh upheld the umpire's decision.

Whitmore immediately left the ground to send Walsh a telegram of protest - presumably because Walsh had refused further face-to-face discussion - claiming "another stroke or another game". Walsh replied by telegram that there was no going back. Besides, the final had already started.



Walter Whitmore

For weeks this celebrated row rumbled on in the press: On what grounds had Walsh upheld the umpire's decision? If his back was turned at the time, should the umpire have consulted the spectators about what had happened? Why hadn't Peel conceded the point at the time? Peel said he had offered Whitmore an extra game, but when had the offer been made? Was it true that Whitmore had "badgered" and "browbeat" the umpire, as Walsh claimed?

One thing appears to be certain: both Whitmore - under

extreme provocation - and Peel had behaved honourably. Whitmore had not bullied the umpire, but had taken the appropriate steps under the law to register his grievance; and Peel's error had not been deliberate: absent-mindedly, he had genuinely thought his rush to the peg was his croquet stroke.

The bitter taste of that championship meeting was perhaps a warning that if any sporting contest is taken too grimly, and not in a spirit of generosity, the game itself will suffer. There is a compromise that has to be reached between life-and-death seriousness and frivolity. The days of the croquet party must have seemed long ago, when any number of people could join in the play, when the rules were made up as you went along and when the game was just a light pastime for a summer afternoon outdoors in the sun...

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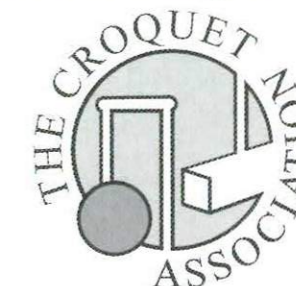
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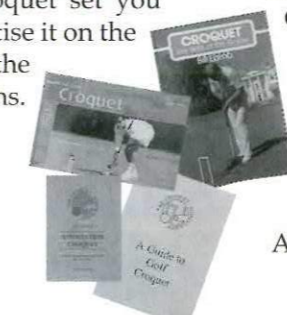


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