

CROQUET

GAZETTE

Issue 416 | August 2025





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**CROQUET
ENGLAND**

Croquet Gazette Online
Issue 416 | August 2025



Front cover:
Jack and Lucy Martin (Nottingham)
Schools, Clubs & Juniors
Championship 2025
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WELCOME

Now the Gazette has been available online for a few months, I am excited to be able to share some statistics. Of our 8,000 strong membership, we print and deliver around 2,500 copies, some of which are delivered to clubs and libraries. Our reports tell us that an additional two thousand members are reading the Gazette online, which I hope means that we have now created a much more accessible magazine.

With the addition of the new Croquet Gazette Online, both issues so far since its inception in May 2025, have received over three thousand views. It is not surprising that there are more readers for our online only magazine, as this is available to all croquet fans, not just our Croquet England members.

I would like to thank all those who regularly contribute to the Gazette, the story tellers, committee members, letter writers and proof-readers. Please consider joining them by sending in your club news, on and off court memories and suggestions of what you would like to see.

Alison

Alison Maugham
Editor
editor@croquetengland.org.uk

MAC CENTENARY



Back left to right : Phil Cordingley*, Martin Murray*, Nigel Aspinall*, David Openshaw*, Mike Hann, Colin Irwin*
Front: Mary Knapp, Andrew Hope*, Keith Aiton*, Elaine Phillimore, Mike Pattison
*Past MacRobertson Shield Players

First held in the UK in 1925, the Australia/England test match was contested at the Roehampton Club on 26-27 June 1925. The trophy was donated by Australian Sir Macpherson Robertson and won by England team 6-0 in this first-ever test. 100 years later, the MacRobertson Shield now sees Australia, England, New Zealand and the USA compete for the World Team Championship title.

Unfortunately, COVID interrupted the planned schedule for the event, which is rotated around the countries every four years, so the centenary tournament will be held next year in England. To celebrate the centenary of this prestigious event, a dinner was held at the Roehampton Club.

We are delighted to announce that the 2026 England Team, the current World Team Champions from 2022, will be sponsored by Alliance Witan. Croquet England is looking forward to hosting the MacRobertson shield and our Antipodean and American friends.

HIBISCUS COLUMN



MINTY CLINCH
Travelling Croquet
Journalist

Telling the Croquet
stories as they unfold

Imagine country house gardens between the world wars, lawns meticulously cut by mowers drawn by ponies. With eligible men in short supply following the Somme and Spanish flu, posh girls in flapper frocks welcomed the vicar and the doctor to cucumber sandwiches and croquet. Unlike the ambiance, the game was unrelentingly vicious. After a roquet, you put your foot on your striker ball to rocket the oppo into the herbaceous border. Or the fishpond.

Recently, Croquet England searched the archives for a hybrid that might persuade newcomers to pursue AC rather than, or at worst as well as, GC. And there it was. A century later, they've called it KWIK, a name that I'm told must be written in cursive script, making it illegible but not easily confused with a global tyre replacement brand. It reminds Americans of 6 wicket; for Brits, it combines elements from both

disciplines into a contest that ends on the hour. By then, a winning pair should have pegged out, after getting two balls through six hoops.

The rules ensure that no-one sits court-side watching others create four ball breaks, the most common deterrent for potential AC recruits. The balls are hit in colour order, starting with blue one yard in front of hoop one. Go through to progress to hoop 2; miss and your ball is off the court until your next turn, when the starting distance is reduced to 18 inches. In any turn, the player can roquet and croquet the other three balls once, but no more, even if they run a hoop. The striker's ball doesn't have to move the croquet ball in a take-off; nor does the oppo ball have to stay on the lawn, though using a foot to propel it is forbidden: far too crude for our regulated age.

As a post-war child, I played by these rules, giving up the game for the next 59 years, when we moved into Bath in 1960. A year later, the Croquet Association published the first edition of *The Laws of Association Croquet*; the 7th edition, which came out in 2021, fine-tuned its dense content into the international format used today.

In May, 2025, the KWIK command

from CqE arrived at Blewbury CC. Eager to please, the Committee got together for a workshop to learn how to do it, then invited villagers and members to take part in complementary tutored games. The response was underwhelming, but the tactics required to use the rules profitably gradually triggered interest. What it wasn't was quick...after 90 minutes, one ball pegged out, but the other three were still fighting it out for hoop 2.

Useful? Enjoyable? We Blewburians are not quitters, so I'll give you an update after our inaugural in-house pairs tournament, on August Bank Holiday Monday. Given a stretch of turf, six lengths of bent metal and a striped pole, how many variants can you play? Pirates for starters. And then.....

Although Wimbledon has long gone, thoughts may linger on medical timeout variants. One distinguished low handicapper smiled broadly as she recalled a croquet match against Jonathan Toye, Norfolk's celebrated one armed, one legged victim of a motorcycle accident. "He couldn't hit a thing", she explained, "then he asked me if I'd mind if we stopped the clock so he could change the sock on his artificial leg. When he came back, he couldn't miss". What next, Novak?

STORMS BERT AND EOWYN LEAVE EYNSHAM CROQUET CLUB UNDERWATER



By Roger Booth

Eynsham Croquet Club had only just completed its scheduled end-of-season maintenance in September 2024 when disaster struck. In October

2024, Storm Bert, followed closely by Storm Eowyn, brought torrential rain and caused the River Windrush to burst its banks, flooding the club's courts under 1 metre of water.

The flooding, driven by a high water table and prolonged heavy rainfall, destroyed the club's recent reseeding and fertiliser work. As the courts began to dry, further storms re-flooded the site, halting early recovery efforts.

The courts remained closed until April 2025, when club members began the initial clean-up and restoration.

However, the damage was too extensive for volunteers alone to resolve.

The club is especially grateful to Sport England, whose £6,000 Flood Relief Fund grant made it possible to bring in expert assistance and begin meaningful repairs. The club sought professional support from Elite Sports Turf Ltd, specialists in high-end sports surface renovation. Their work

Continued on page 5

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

by Samir Patel
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Dear Esteemed Members of Croquet England,

In the quiet corners of our beloved country, where sunlight filters through ancient oaks and dew-kissed grass awaits, a game stirs—a game that transcends mere sport. Croquet—the name itself conjures images of mallets and hoops. But this isn't just a pastime; it's a symphony of strategy, camaraderie, and the eternal green woven into the fabric of England's green heart.

OK, OK, that's enough of AI-generated content! For now, we should be reassured that Croquet England is led by human beings rather than an artificial chat-bot. The heart of this is the Board of Trustees, supported by the Executive, an army of other volunteers and a small number of remunerated roles.

We are currently seeking to strengthen the diversity, expertise, and experience of the Board of Trustees with both appointed Independent Non-Executive Trustees and Elected Trustees. INET applications will have closed by the time you read this, but I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all members to participate in the process for Elected Trustees. You may wish to stand for election or encourage others to do so, and I hope that everyone in contested constituencies will consider the candidates and cast their vote. Further details can be found on the subscribers' website (www.croquet.org.uk).

As well as these appointments, the trustees are developing action plans to align with the Croquet England Strategy. This will add targets, specific actions and priorities to the aspirations already published. Expect to hear more about this around the AGM in October, details of which will be published on our subscribers' website at the appropriate time.

And finally, I wish you all well on the courts this summer. May your shots be true, and may the sun always shine on your game.



Samir Patel competing at the Men's & Women's Championship 2025, by Rob Edlin-White

RECOVERY NOW UNDERWAY THANKS TO GRANT FROM SPORT ENGLAND

included drill seeding, fertilisation, and over six tons of top dressing, all focused on restoring a safe and level playing surface.

Thanks to these combined efforts, Eynsham Croquet Club was able to resume competitive play in May, participating in various Southern Croquet Federation leagues, even as further work continues to ensure lasting improvements.

"It was devastating to see all our September maintenance washed away," said Roger Booth, the Club's

amateur volunteer groundsman for the past 5 years. "We're incredibly grateful to our members, Elite Sports Turf, and Sport England. Thanks to their support, we've not only started to recover — we're playing again."

The club remains committed to restoring the courts to the high-quality standard expected by both local and visiting players, with ongoing

improvements planned throughout the season.



TUNNEL OF TIME

Past Gazettes can be found on the Croquet England website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=ca/gazette&Action=Issues>. Currently there are searchable scans of the Gazette back to 1953.



CHRIS WILLIAMS
Croquet England
Archivist

AKA 'Statto'
Keeper of Croquet
Statistics, visit
croquetrecords.com

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.

70 YEARS AGO

In the September 1955 Gazette (#14)

Notes by Rover

Rover offers his respectful congratulations to Miss Lydia Elphinstone-Stone on the attainment of her ninetieth birthday on August 23rd, an occasion duly—and appropriately—celebrated during the tournament at Brighton, of which famous club this lady is now a member. For sixty of these ninety years Miss Elphinstone-Stone has been a tournament player, joining the Association on its foundation and winning her Silver Medal in 1896. She must now be our senior associate, though run close for this distinction by the (very youthful) winner of the Women's Championship in 1899, a certain Miss Lily Gower. What is even more to the point is that Miss Elphinstone-Stone is still an active and formidable competitor at our tournaments, enjoying her games and often winning them. Our honoured nonagenarian is not the sole example of her age to prove that Croquet is not only among the happiest of outdoor games, but that one at which such happiness lasts longest.

Letters

THE SUPPLEMENTARY COLOURS

Dear Sir,

With reference to "Notes by Rover" on page 4 of June Croquet, apart from the fact that dark balls versus light balls appears to be the natural

selection green more nearly resembles blue and brown black. Pink suggests red and remaining colour to match yellow is white. Further, some clips are painted green with a blue line across the top and in a similar manner for the other colours.

In New Zealand some Clubs have a white ring round each ball for double banking, In Australasia most Clubs have double banking on Club days. In Brisbane one Club sometimes has three sets of fours with the same colours on each lawn. It means noting all the time the position of the balls in your game. It is better than having to sit out awaiting a vacant lawn!

Yours faithfully, W. B. C. Paynter
(Auckland, New Zealand)

60 YEARS AGO

In the September 1965 Gazette (#83)

Notes by Rover

No Blacklegs

The Hurlingham delegate at the 1963 Club Conference bemoaned the virtual non-existence of the white trouser except on state occasions, but his words do not seem to have had any considerable effect. Far too many players still appear at tournaments looking as though they are on their way to paint a boat. Why this should be so is a little mysterious—croquet after all is a game, not an extended afternoon tea-party, and it is normal to dress up for games, even those that are not energetic. Part of the trouble may be the weather: in the rain even the sleekest of players is apt to look like a coastguard on a motor-cycling holiday. But whites can of course be worn underneath, and the water-proofing discarded as soon as possible, despite the comment of a player at a tournament early this season that "he did not want to get his whites wet or dirty". When asked if he wanted to get the smart suit that he was wearing wet or dirty, he replied that he had never looked at the matter in that light before....

Whites, like enterprising play, help to make croquet more attractive to the spectator. Rover feels that there may well be a connection between these two qualities. Indeed, if some statistician will make a survey of them, he undertakes to eat his very elegant hat if no appreciable correlation is discovered.

100 YEARS AGO

In the August 1st, 1925 Gazette (No. 507 Vol XXII. (No. 18))

Editorial Notes

ENGLAND won the second Test Match and with it the rubber. This, perhaps, was not unexpected, the old country having no difficulty in finding four players of almost equal experience, while our visitors at a considerable disadvantage have not been able to bring with them their strongest representative team. In Mr. J. C. Windsor, who for his recent successes has now added a fine win in the Cheltenham Championship Cup, Australia has one player at least in this country who ranks among the very best, and both he and Mr. W. T. McCleery did well to win games respectively from Miss D. D. Steel and Mr. P. D. Mathews.

Those of us who were at Cheltenham must have been impressed by the keen interest. Taken by large numbers of spectators who provided a gallery considerably larger than that at Roehampton; but the weather on this second occasion was much more favourable, ideal summer conditions prevailing throughout. It would be difficult to imagine a more delightful setting than the famous Cheltenham Club, in the beauty of its surroundings perhaps second to none in the Kingdom. The lawns were in superb condition and reflected the greatest credit on those locally responsible. From every point of view the second Test was a great success.

Note – the report of the Test said that there were some two hundred and fifty spectators.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO CROQUET ENGLAND'S CONSTITUTION

By Gabrielle Higgins
Secretary of Croquet England

The Board of Trustees will be proposing changes to Croquet England's Constitution at this year's AGM. Constitutional changes don't excite everybody. But the Constitution is the foundational document setting out the basis on which CqE operates: why it exists, what purposes it can spend its money on, how the Trustees who make the decisions are appointed, how decisions are made, how members are involved and so on. So the Board of Trustees are keen that members know what changes are proposed, and have the opportunity to raise any concerns before the papers go out in September for the AGM.

The full text of the Constitution, with the proposed changes marked and an explanation of why each is being proposed, can be found at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=3958>. Many proposed changes are minor, for example to reflect current methods of electronic voting as opposed to casting votes by post or email. The most significant are:

- Clause 11 (General meetings of members)
 - o Remove the requirement to elect trustees at AGMs, as our practice is to elect in advance to allow more people to vote.
 - o Add a provision for charity trustees who are not members of CqE to attend and speak at general meetings (but not vote), given the intention to appoint independent trustees to strengthen the Board and benefit from external expertise. The Trustees considered requiring independent trustees to become members, but concluded that they should not be required to pay for the privilege of volunteering their services.
 - o Similarly, add an express provision for non-members to attend and speak with the Chair's permission (but not vote), to ensure subscribers who have not registered as voting members can attend the AGM if they wish.
- Clause 12 (Charity trustees)
 - o Enshrine the decision made since the constitution was first adopted that there should be six elected trustees and no more than five appointed trustees, to ensure there is a majority of elected trustees.
- Clause 13 (Appointment of charity trustees): Replacement of the clause in its entirety.
 - o Make more use of the Charity Commission's model wording.

- o Simplify the provisions for appointment of trustees to a single power for the Trustees as a whole to make appointments (in place of three provisions, two exercisable by the elected trustees only for specific purposes and one exercisable by the Trustees as a whole for any purpose).
- o Ensure that all trustees, both elected and appointed, have term limits.
- o Ensure that Election Rules for electing trustees are no less stringent than the Charity Commission model.

Insignificant proposed changes to clauses 5 (Application of income and property), 6 (Benefits and payments to charity trustees and connected persons), and 28 (Amendment of the constitution), principally to bring CqE's Constitution closer into line with the new Charity Commission model constitution, require Charity Commission consent; an application has been submitted but no response received as yet.

The original Charity Commission model as at the date when our constitution was first drafted, and the updated one on the Charity Commission website now, can be accessed from the online version of this article in the news items at croquet.org.uk.

In addition to the changes to the Constitution, the Trustees propose changes to the appointment arrangements for Officers and members of the Executive, dealt with in the Standing Orders. This was prompted by the need to change the arrangements for appointment of the CEO from an annual appointment to a permanent one in view of the recruitment for an employed CEO. Reviewing the arrangements, the Trustees resolved to move away from annual appointments immediately after the AGM for all Officers (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer as well as CEO) and members of the Executive, in favour of three-yearly appointments, with a maximum of three terms for the Chair and members of the Executive, to seek greater levels of continuity.

The revised Standing Orders can be found at <https://www.croquetengland.org.uk/governance-matters/>. The revisions do not become permanent unless approved at a second Board meeting, and they will be considered again, together with any feedback on the proposed Constitutional changes, at the meeting on 18 September. If you have any comments, please do email me by 11 September at gabrielle.higgins@croquetengland.org.uk.

AN OLDER OPPONENT

The letter from Chris Williams about the oldest player (June 2025) prompted me to dig out my personal tournament notes, which show that on the last day of the Cheltenham May Handicap Weekend 2005 one of my opponents was Maisie Peebles, aged 96 years 90 days.

However, since Maisie was then still a regular competitor, I have no reason to believe this would have been her last tournament. Indeed, David Magee's fascinating and informative book 'The History of the Cheltenham Croquet Club' indicates she was still playing throughout the 2006 season, so this too may well have included official fixtures.

Perhaps the date of Maisie's last competitive match could be gleaned from the Club's tournament records?

Laurence Latham

OLDEST PLAYER FOLLOW-UP

With reference to Chris Williams' letter in the June 2025 edition I feel that I ought to report that Cyril Ratcliffe is not the oldest male player as my late father-in-law, Willie Drake (not actually William Drake as the Rankings List has him) played his last ranking tournament on 20 July 2019 at four days past his 96th birthday. He played 13 matches in the two days and won the last of them! He played 67 reported games that year including four Open and Championship tournaments at Pendle and Cheltenham. I suspect that he wasn't the oldest male player but I think that he will have been the oldest male tournament player. Very much missed.

Regards
Stuart Smith

I KNOW WE'VE CROQUET AT HURLINGHAM

Richard Andrews and Stephen Allen's article in the June edition of the Gazette gives 1899 as the earliest known reference to croquet at Hurlingham. In fact, it was one of the founding objects of the club, which were agreed at a general meeting of its members on 25 July 1868. As reported in the Morning Post two days later, these were to be 'pigeon shooting, croquet, 5 o'clock teas, picnic suppers and other aristocratic amusements'. Quite how seriously the croquet was taken is not clear, though this has the flavour of recreation rather than of the 'scientific game' for which the contemporary All England Club was being established at Wimbledon only a few miles away.

The late 1860s were the peak of the early croquet boom. Many clubs abandoned the game during the 1870s as popular enthusiasm switched to lawn tennis. Hurlingham was probably among them, presumably adding this new game to its offering, but it is perhaps best known for becoming a major centre for polo. A number of English clubs assert croquet continuity with this early period, but only two - Budleigh Salterton and Oxford University - can do so with firm evidence to support their claim. The latter is the oldest surviving club established specifically for croquet (though it later admitted lawn tennis to its objects). One of its founders, Mark Pattison, declined the vice-Chancellorship of the University to do so.

Ian Bond

USE OF LASER IN CROQUET

When the laser was invented in 1960 it was described as a solution looking for a problem. In the 65 years since its invention it has found many applications in many areas of life. However not until now has it found its way into croquet (as far as I am aware).

A laser pointer (less than £10) is about the size and shape of a fountain pen and emits a beam of laser light, they are sometimes used for pointing at the screen when people are presenting a talk or lecture.

The beam of light is absolutely straight, no ifs, no buts. It is not

affected by wind nor does it sag and have to be kept tight. Therefore it makes it an ideal accessory to croquet.

It can be strapped on to your mallet and when doing practice swings, because you can see the dot of light, it provides an indication as to how straight your swing is (or if you have a crooked swing how repeatable your swing is).

It can be used as an aid to adjudicate on a wiring lift; place a ball against the hoop or peg and then attempt to shine the beam of laser light between the three balls halfway up the ball. If

it is possible to shine the laser onto the two balls in play at the same time there is no lift. If the third (middle) ball obscures the beam then there is a lift. The dot of laser light can be seen even in bright sunshine.

Finally the same technique can be used to determine if a ball has run a hoop. If the laser beam can touch both legs of the hoop (and is not touching the ball) then the ball has run the hoop. If the ball obscures the beam and the two legs cannot be illuminated at the same time then the hoop has not been run.

Philip Taylor

SCHOOLS, CLUBS, AND JUNIORS TOURNAMENT

By Ian Draper and Vicky Baldwin

The Croquet England schools, clubs, and juniors tournament took place on June 21st and 22nd at Nottingham Croquet Club this year. The club kindly gave access to all its lawns to the juniors for the weekend, including four clubs (Cheltenham, Bath's Under 18 Academy, Woking and Nottingham).

An exciting atmosphere prevailed throughout the weekend as 10 teams competed in the competition to win the team Trophy. After a tough battle, Nottingham was successful in winning the tournament, and Bath Academy team won the Consolation Plate.

Junior event competitions were held in the under-18, under-14, and under-11 categories, with representatives across the different clubs competing.

Declan McPhee won the under-18 event. Alfie Baldwin won the under-14 event and Millie Draper won the under-11 event.

Alongside the matches, a series of fun events for the six and seven-year-olds took place with great interaction across the clubs. The highlight being a competition to devise an obstacle course and challenge the other youngsters to complete it.



The buzz of activity, excitement, and competitive spirit among the young people across all the Nottingham lawns is an important image for the future of Croquet. It offers an image of a sport that is inclusive and available to everyone in the community. One of the noticeable differences from other tournaments is the supporters, including parents and

grandparents. Virtually all the children had keen supporters attending who offered encouragement and praise throughout the weekend.

It's not an easy task to arrange a tournament for young people due to the many other commitments they all have in their lives. It is also a significant demand on parents who make the effort to bring their children to such an event. However, seeing the joy and engagement across the weekend makes all the effort worthwhile.

My hope is that we will be able to run a series of junior events next year and significantly raise the profile of Croquet amongst young people.

Vicky Baldwin, the parent of one of the competitors, went among the children asking for their thoughts and opinions about the events of the weekend, including highlights, their most challenging opponents and best shots.

The quotes below are evidence of just how much fun and learning took place over the weekend. They also



Continued on page 10

SCHOOLS, CLUBS AND JUNIORS CONTINUED

demonstrate how much the juniors enjoyed having the opportunity to play opponents from other clubs.

What was the highlight of the tournament?

“Playing against other people, like with different backgrounds and playing people who have played for different amounts of times and winning!” (Liliana, 12 years, Bath Academy)

“The highlight of the tournament for me was running through the tactics after the match with the ref. It really helped build skills, even though the match was finished.” (Frances, 13 years)

“It probably has been just playing so many people, and I think it’s just been a really good opportunity.” (Hanna, 12 years, Bath Academy)

“The obstacle courses, because you got to knock things over.” (Bethany, 6 years)

What was your best shot?

“My shot to win me and Declan the semi-final because it was quite far away and at a bit of an angle.” (Alfie, 11 years)

“My best shot when we were playing a game was when I hit the black really hard and it bounced away quite far, and it was really exciting.” (Ivy, 7 years)

“I was at the boundary at the top, and I hit it all the way into the hoop at the bottom and got it through. So, it was a full pitch length.” (Luis, 15 years, Bath Academy)

“My jump shot in the third round, and I went through the hoop.” (Millie, 10 years)

Who was your toughest opponent and why?

“Frances and Mark – Frances, when I played doubles against her, she was a really good player. Mark is also really accurate. The first time I played doubles against him, we lost, but then today I played against him and won.” (Hanna, 12 years, Bath Academy)



Photographs by Rob Edlin-White

Page 9 top
Mark Kenny 12, & Simon Kenny 6 (Woking) v Luis Zarate & Teddy Sherwood (Bath Academy). Sizing up the competition!

Page 9 bottom
Luis and teddy (Bath Academy) v Elizabeth Thomson & Ben Constance (Cheltenham)

Above
Simon Kenny 6, Bethany Draper 6, and Ivy Baldwin 6,
Celebrating Victory (after designing and completing the obstacle course for under 7 year olds)

Right
Alfie Baldwin & Declan McFee from Nottingham winning the Schools' and Clubs' event.



NORTH WEST FEDERATION: FESTIVAL OF CROQUET



By Robin Tasker
Festival Manager

Since 1994 Clubs from the North West Federation have gathered together at the Southport and Birkdale Croquet Club for a weekend Festival of Croquet. Over those years, aside from more Clubs being represented as more people have taken up the game, very little has changed. The weekend is all about playing croquet and catching up with friends from across the North West croquet community. A great deal of croquet is played and there's a lot of chat!

The 2025 Festival was no different although glorious sunshine across the weekend did add to the occasion and while umbrellas were required, it was for the right reason. And of course, the Festival Manager had promised such wonderful weather back in November, so it shouldn't have been a surprise. As for the 2026 edition, well we shall see...

The North West Federation spans a large geographic area from the North Wales coast through Lancashire to the far reaches of Cumberland and Westmorland. And while league matches are played between teams through the season, the Festival represents an opportunity for us all to get together.

The Festival invites all Clubs within the North West Federation to enter a team in each of the five all-play-all events that run simultaneously across the weekend. The size of a team in each event varies and Clubs are allowed to swap players in and out as they choose, to maximise the opportunity for their members to come to the Festival. Some come for just one day, while others make a weekend of it and enjoy the summer delights of Southport, and – it is rumoured – partake in refreshment.

In all, ten Clubs were present for the weekend, and together played 134 games of croquet running 2229 hoops across the eleven courts that Southport had so expertly prepared for the Festival. The schedule for all fixtures had been circulated prior to the weekend in an attempt to minimise the level of - shall we say – chaos, that is the first 45 minutes of Day 1 as people arrive; meet and greet their friends; establish where

their Club has set up camp; unload and unpack their chairs, umbrellas and other essentials; and start to flex their croquet muscles ahead of the exertions of the coming days.

Now to accommodate such a packed schedule with any hope of finishing by mid-afternoon on Sunday, the Laws and Rules of Croquet have been somewhat adjusted. Specifically, games end when time is called with no extra strokes / extension period or continuation of a break in progress, with draws being allowed. And for this reason, none of the games played at the Festival qualify for an individuals handicap card: after all this is a Festival of Croquet which, while being – probably - intensely competitive is, first and foremost, an enjoyable celebration of the game, and of croquet in the North West of England.

And so to the action.



The GC competitions were in their own ways very different.

In the Level Play competition Llanfairfechan, Pendle and Chester were always in the mix, although Chester only narrowly so with some close wins, a defeat to Pendle and then an untimely draw in their penultimate fixture which took them out of contention. To this point Llanfairfechan were undefeated, but a loss to Chester coupled with a win for Pendle in the final round would have given Pendle the

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FESTIVAL OF CROQUET CONTINUED

title. It was not to be; while Pendle were victorious, Llanfairfechan hung on for a 10-9 victory and with it to become the undefeated Festival LP GC champions.



Meanwhile the HC (Advantage) GC competition was a far tighter affair with Fylde pulling away on the Sunday to win the event, while below them five teams – Southport, Crake, Llanfairfechan, Chester and Westmorland - tied on points and were separated only by hoops scored, and then within a range of five hoops in total. It was tense, exciting stuff! But, on this evidence, it would seem that the Advantage system delivered exactly what a handicap system is designed to do. Allegedly.

The AC competitions had attracted fewer teams in each of the three events, and so for the HC Full-Lawn and the Short Lawn events, this allowed each fixture to comprise a singles and a doubles game between teams. While this undoubtedly added to the fixture schedule it also introduced a little more busyness to the courts where all games were played as double-banked affairs.

In the HC AC event – restricted to 18-point, 2½ hour games – there was a great deal of endeavour in swelteringly hot conditions with the majority of games timed out and surprisingly no draws, although a few low scoring epics. Notably Bowdon and Bury fought out a doubles game, that ended 6-4 in Bowdon's favour...! However, by the fifth and final round, four Clubs – Bowdon, Crake, Fylde and Llanfairfechan - remained in contention with the outcome likely to go to a countback. And as the teams wilted in the heat, they all conspired to win only one of their two games and then only by the odd point or two, which left Bowdon as the HC AC Festival Champions, although only by a +3 hoop count difference from Crake.

The Short Lawn AC event fared rather better, possibly as it was run as a full handicap event where peg-outs were much more in evidence, although the other games tended to be low scoring tense affairs often separated by a single hoop. This added considerably to the tension – and the anxiety levels - as with all games across the Festival when time was called the games finished. But, throughout, the Crake team played with assurance, losing only one of their ten fixtures to win the event and leave Southport and Llanfairfechan trailing in their wake.

The final event was Advanced AC where four teams – Bowdon, Bury, Fylde and Crake - of two players had entered. And, so to occupy their weekend on the Saturday, there was a double-banked all-play-all doubles competition, and on the Sunday, to get their full attention, the teams were split into two groups of four with each group playing triple-banked, 14-point all-play-all games time restricted to 75 minutes. And because of the opportunity for chaos and confusion, the Festival Manager thoughtfully moved the event to the main Southport court in front of the Pavilion, for all to watch and enjoy. There was also the consideration that this afforded the players better and more direct access to the bar.

The Saturday doubles competition soared from the sublime of a rapid and comprehensive Bowdon victory over Fylde, to a rather more prosaic 5-5 draw between Bury and Crake! But by the end of the day Fylde had a narrow advantage. And so to the Sunday singles where, surprisingly, the players coped admirably with the mayhem of triple-banking, although getting to grips with the colours and pairings of the tertiary ball set did cause a certain amount of confusion. A particular highlight – at least for spectators – was watching an episode of speed croquet: 6 hoops down with less than 5 minutes on the clock led to a controlled hit-and-jog break of perseverance and perspiration that sadly fell one hoop short. But the glory went to Fylde who maintained and improved their lead to become the Advanced AC Festival Champions.

And so, by mid-afternoon on Sunday all was complete, the scores were in and the spreadsheet had done its work. With everyone gathered in the sunshine in front of the Southport pavilion, John Haslam, the Chairman of the North West Federation, thanked the Southport Club for once more hosting the event, and announced the overall winner of the 2025 Festival and presented the trophy to the delighted Crake team.

Courts were cleared, farewells said and another Festival was done and dusted, and so until 2026....



SHORT CROQUET FOCUS

by John Harris, Croquet England Coaching Committee

FROM AC TO SC

AC players trying Short Croquet for the first time will find the transition straightforward. The game is, in essence, 14-point AC played on half lawns, with four simple variations to normal play.

Firstly, Short Croquet is a full bisque game. Games are not played with bisque difference: if both players are entitled to bisques, both receive them. Nor is the game played to a base. This has a subtle impact on strategy as it encourages both players to set up a break. An interesting variation on full bisque allocation is to play with 70% of the full number: this has been shown to reduce the chance of the first player "in" using all his or her bisques to go round twice and peg out, leaving oppo nursing a 14:6 defeat. 70% bisques evens up the odds nicely, giving both players a fair chance of success.

Secondly, a small change to the wiring rule allows for the proportionately bigger impact of lawn furniture on the smaller lawn. In Short Croquet both partner balls must have a clear sight of each other, otherwise one or both are entitled to a lift. Balls can still be wired from opposition balls without penalty, but it's important to check towards the end of a turn that ball placing won't gift oppo a lift.

Thirdly, Short Croquet has its own handicapping system and card. The most able players need to fit in one, two or more peels, an intriguing challenge with only 12 hoop points to be scored. This has a significant impact on the strategy of both players. Pegging out an opposition ball when oppo still has



Roehampton members Elaine Phillimore and David Openshaw reconfirm the law on pegging out at the Hamptworth Short Croquet tournament.
(Photo: John Harris)

mandatory peels to complete is not a valid strategy: it simply cancels the remaining mandatory peels.

Finally, Short Croquet is played to handicap AC rules. The main impact is to restrict how peg points are scored. A striker's ball with its clip on peg is free to peg out any other rover balls. However, Law 43 makes it clear that a ball that is first to peg may not simply peg itself out: either partner ball needs also to be on peg, or, as in the photo, an opposition ball needs to be on peg, then pegged out first. Only in these situations is the striker's ball entitled to peg itself out if it chooses.

EAST MIDLANDS CHAMPIONSHIP

By Ian Vincent

The East Midlands (AC) Championship was played at Nottingham from 27-29th June, in the second of this year's June heatwaves. As only four lawns were available, entries were restricted to 20, all with handicaps of scratch or below. 12 were visitors and 8 locals. Conditions appeared slightly more testing than usual, with some long games and only 10 tps (one straight).

There were no higher peeling turns, though not for want of trying by one of the players.

Debbie Lines won the finals of both the Draw, beating Lorna Dewar, and Process, beating Omied Hallam, to take the Hopewell Cup without the need for a play-off. The plate was won by Dave Kibble, who beat Ian Lines in the final.



MEN'S & WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

By Annabel McDiarmid

It's Sunday, fifth and final day of the AC Men's & Women's Championship ...

The morning drinks order is three instant black coffees, one instant white with sugar, a black cafetière, a diet coke, and a pint of bitter....now whose would that be?

James, ever confident in his managerial duties, predicts that the finals will finish in daylight. Yours truly, glancing upward, inwardly notes that daylight had lingered till 10pm the previous evening.

Heather and Jack stride off the lawns together, their match freshly concluded. "Who won?" comes the inevitable question. Heather quips "I'll give you three guesses!" The laughter ripples through the clubhouse.

Chris, juggling the clash with the US Open Golf, barely has time to catch his breath between matches, but notes of Jenny "She's one of the few players in the world who knows how to make a break out of this", as he watches his wife's latest on-lawn antics.

Beatrice mused, "Every club should have an 18-year-old to run about assisting with everything" (Jack); proving his worth, he dashed through the drizzle to take Annabel her raincoat. Samir, observing, added, "Every club should have an 18-year-old." Jack quips, "Callum's shoes are utterly unbelievable", unfortunately no further information provided. Random.

And then there are the squirrels, a peculiar entertainment of their own throughout the event, darting among players who occasionally find themselves distracted enough to chase them.

Rick settles back with a pint of Badger, "now THAT is a thing of beauty," he declares. It's unclear whether his comment refers to his liquid refreshment or Samir's impeccably executed series of shots.

Mark praises the club's hospitality: "wonderful people, excellent lawns, and exceptionally well looked after by the club and its members." "The west lawns are fabulous," notes Samir "looking forward to the East lawns being ready and of similar quality."

Lorna beams. "Proud to be a Nottingham Croquet Club member - phenomenal team of volunteers and Charlie, of course".

Jane delights in Lorna's cheesecake from Saturday, deeming it excellent, while Sophie, for her part, declares the smoked salmon sandwiches to have been her favourite.



A sigh from a spectator, "Nottingham Croquet Club in the sunshine with a G&T - what's not to like?"

Jenny, appreciating the challenge of Quadway hoops and Invictus balls, was delighted to once more raise the Women's trophy.

Debbie revelled in nostalgia. "OMG, 38 years since I last won the mixed doubles title, and barely played in-between." And Ian could hardly believe his own victory, as he carried off the consolation event trophy.

The final match had everything a spectator could wish for - oohs, aahs, and gripping moments that kept the crowd on edge. The atmosphere was electric, the players focused, and the Nottingham Croquet Club grounds bathed in golden afternoon light. Spectators shared a little bewilderment "I didn't understand what James was doing there," one said, shaking his head, "and I'm not going to copy it!" But, no surprise, James Death knew exactly what he was doing with a tpo and a pop, and proudly accepted the title of 2025 Men's Champion.

"Would everyone now please pay their bar bill?" quipped E John; to which he earned a round of laughter - not quite what he was looking for.

With camaraderie, great competition, and good humour, the event had been a roaring success - one for the books, another chapter in the storied tradition of croquet at Nottingham.

See croquetscores.com for the full results.

ASSOCIATION CROQUET OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

THE 2025 OPEN SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP

The Croquet England Association Croquet Open Singles Championship was held under the scorching sun during the third heatwave of the summer, with temperatures soaring to 30 degrees to test the skill and endurance of even the most seasoned players.

The championship began with the jamboree "Burrige Swiss" format, where players had up to six games and needed to win at least three to qualify for the knockout stage. This format ensured that all players faced opponents of similar average strength. The favourites safely navigated this stage, but special mention goes to Euan Burrige, Neil Adams, Jack Good, Nick Parish, and Mark Suter, who all qualified in the quickest possible way by winning their first three games. Robert Fulford also breezed through this stage, but we've come to expect that from the six-time World Champion.

As the knockout rounds commenced, the small amount of rain that had fallen on Sunday had completely dried out, leading to extremely testing conditions with court speeds over 12 seconds on all courts as play started. The early rounds saw some upsets, with Sam Murray defeating Nick Parish, Euan Burrige overcoming Gabrielle Higgins, and David Fuller beating Samir Patel +1(22-21) in game 3.

The quarter-finals showcased contrasting performances. Robert Fulford and James Death were in dominant form, completing four triple peels between them to defeat Sam Murray and Euan Burrige, respectively. Mark Avery triumphed over Stephen Mulliner in a three-game match that was both interactive and entertaining.

In the semi-finals, Jenny Clarke recovered from a close loss to David Fuller in the first game to demonstrate tight break play in difficult conditions, winning the next two games convincingly. This victory made her the first woman to compete in the Open Championship Singles Final since Hope Rotherham in 1966.

Robert won the first game of the final with an impressive triple peel, taking advantage of Jenny's missed shot after 1-back. The second game was much more interactive, featuring a pegged-out finish that spanned almost four hours and 53 turns. In the end, Robert's experience and skill secured him a +17 victory, earning his 12th Open Championship title.

Robert also claimed the Solomon Peeling trophy with seven triple peels during the event. A new award for the best performance by a player with a handicap of -1 or higher was

won by Euan Burrige, with Lorna Dewar as the runner-up. The Association Plate was won by Omed Hallam, who defeated Joe King in the final.

And finally, congratulations to the Surbiton Croquet Club and its team of volunteers for putting on an excellent event.

CROQUET ENGLAND ASSOCIATION CROQUET OPEN DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP

The Croquet England Association Croquet Open Doubles Championship held under the scorching sun with temperatures soaring to 30 degrees, was a true test of skill, strategy, and endurance.

The tournament began in hot conditions, with an unbroken blue sky. The courts were firm and dry, running at 12 seconds, which led to some initial play being slow and cautious. Time limits were required to conclude one of the opening matches as sunset approached.

The third quarter of the tournament proved to be the most closely contested. Both of the first-round best-of-three matches went the distance, a trend that continued into the quarter-finals, with Sophie McGlen and Nick Parish finally +1t(15-14) triumph over third seeds Ian Burrige and Chris Clarke as the light faded.

Some overnight rain softened the conditions slightly for the morning of the semi-final day. It started with a 3.5-hour first game. Samir Patel and James Death found themselves for peg alone for almost two hours, during which they found many ways to narrowly miss the peg or a roquet, Sophie and Nick couldn't continue their trend and lost -3. Game two was much more clinical from James and Samir: +25tp. The other semi-final was won by fourth seeds Jenny Clarke and Stephen Mulliner over first seeds Mark Avery and Jamie Burch, who could not repeat their unbeaten performance in the 2022 MacRobertson Shield.

The final started late in the afternoon. With all four players also participating in the Singles, it seemed there might be an enforced return to an integrated schedule. However, James Death and Samir Patel ran out convincing winners with scores of +23 and +17 to claim their fifth title.

The plate was won by Alison Maugham and Nigel Polhill, with a +4(23-19) +23 win over Mike Town and David Warhurst.

AC HOME INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

By Angharrad Walters

The format for the AC Home Internationals is a round robin set of Test matches, each consisting of 5 matches of "Best of 3" games played between each country. The players assembled on the Saturday morning in fine weather, but with a weather forecast promising some rain in the afternoon. The manager (Angharrad Walters) had been warned in advance that 3 of the Irish team would have to leave at 4pm on Sunday to catch their flight home from Bristol Airport. Hence she was keen to get play started as soon as possible.

The first round of matches saw England v Ireland and Scotland v Wales. Ireland started strongly, with their top 3 of Andrew Johnston, Danny Johnston and Simon Williams beating David Maugham, Stephen Mulliner and Gabrielle Higgins respectively, with only Gabrielle managing to win a game for England. Lower down the order, Aston Wade beat Sandy Greig 2-0 and debutant Jack Good beat Jane Morrison 2-1.

Wales started well against Scotland, with 3 of their team (Angharrad Walters, Ian Burrige and Chris Williams) all winning the first game. However the pendulum swung back in Scotland's favour and only Chris managed to end up with a match win. Rick Harding succumbed in two to Andrew Symons. The match between Dayal Gunasekera and David Warhurst was pegged down after the Test was decided, with David leading 1-0.

The weather changed over lunchtime and the frequent bursts of very heavy rain resulting in all the lawns being flooded. Play was suspended and the manager's stress level rose! Eventually the rain began to ease & Jack Good volunteered to use the BowDry to aid the natural drainage. Play eventually resumed around 4pm, Lawns 5 & 6 were still unplayable, so, as no Budleigh members came out to play, Lawns 2 & 8 were brought into use to keep play moving along.

Round 2 saw England v Scotland and Ireland v Wales. In the late afternoon / early evening, Stephen Mulliner beat Alastair Burn-Murdoch and Andrew Johnston beat Angharrad Walters, all four games +26TP!

Thanks to Budleigh having organised a delivery of Paella to the club for the Tournament Dinner, play was able to continue until 8pm.

In the morning, rather than moving to start the 3rd round as has been customary in recent years, the manager decided to continue round 2 until the tests were resolved. Aston & Jack continued their good form, beating Lorna Dewar & David Warhurst, to secure the Test win, so Duncan Reeve v David Maugham and Gabrielle Higgins v Andrew Symons were suspended to allow the 3rd round to start.

Meanwhile, Ireland had despatched Wales, with only Rick & Dayal managing to win a game. Dayal's match with Jane was suspended, with Dayal leading 1-0 to allow the 3rd round to start.

The final round started with Ireland in the metaphorical driving seat. If they could beat Scotland, then they would be undisputed winners. England had to beat Wales & hope that Scotland could upset Ireland's progress.

Duncan quickly beat Andrew Johnston, but Danny & Simon both won to give Ireland the advantage. At this point, they had to leave to catch their flights, leaving Sandy & Jane playing against Lorna & David Warhurst respectively. Lorna controlled her match, only allowing Sandy a single hoop point, to bring the Test score level at 2-2. David Warhurst won the first game, but then Jane won the 2nd.

Meanwhile, England had taken a 2-0 lead against Wales, with David Maugham beating Angharrad 2-0 and Stephen beating Ian 2-1. Rick beat Gabrielle to make it 2-1, leaving Aston v Chris and Jack v Dayal to decide the test. The manager took the opportunity to resume some of the suspended matches, with Duncan taking the 3rd game v David M and Gabrielle doing the same against Andrew S.

Jack's & Aston's matches both went into the deciding 3rd game. Jack eventually pegged out to win the point which decided the Test in England's favour. Chris Williams then finished his match with Aston to make the Test score 3-2.

It all now hinged on the outcome of Jane v David W on Lawn 1. If Jane could win the 3rd game, Ireland would win, but if David won, then the outcome was less clear & the manager was busy reading & re-reading the tie-break regulations.

Eventually, around 6.30pm, David prevailed, leaving England, Ireland & Scotland tied on 2 Test wins. The number of Match wins (7) placed Scotland in third place, but England & Ireland were still tied with 9 each. Game wins was the deciding factor, with England's 21 just pipping Ireland's 20.

Finally, Angharrad presented the trophy to England's captain, David Maugham. On behalf of all the teams, David thanked the members at Budleigh for hosting the event, in particular, for the lawn preparation & hoop setting, the catering & bar, and for organising the Tournament Dinner.

GC HOME INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

ENGLAND TRIUMPHS AT BALGREEN

By Louise Smith

Over the weekend of 19–20 July, the 2025 Golf Croquet Home Internationals took place at Balgreen Croquet Club in Edinburgh, as Scotland took its turn to host this prestigious event. Four top players from each home nation - England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland - gathered to compete in this fiercely contested annual team championship.

DAY ONE: ENGLAND TAKES EARLY CONTROL

On a grey Saturday morning, England opened their campaign against hosts Scotland. The English team - Euan Burrridge, J.P. Moberly (Captain), Sam Cuthbert, and Stuart M. Smith - delivered an emphatic performance, winning all six matches and conceding just one game across the entire test. Scotland's team comprised Martin Murray, Mark Shanks, Stefan Colling, and Rosemary Saunders Robertson.

Meanwhile, Wales and Ireland played out a closely fought draw. Both nations won two singles matches: Ian Burrridge and Arthur Rowe for Wales; Simon Williams and Sandy Greig for Ireland. The doubles were evenly matched too, with both tests ending one game apiece. Highlights included tight matches between Angharrad Walters & Arthur Rowe (Wales) and Simon Williams & Charlie Von Schmieder (Ireland) 7/3, 2/7, and another split between Ian Burrridge & Sarah Melvin (Wales) and Sandy Greig & Jane Morrison (Ireland) 2/7. 7/6.

RAIN AND RESILIENCE

As the rain set in during the afternoon, conditions worsened but the competition remained spirited. Scotland recorded their first individual match victory when Rosemary Saunders Robertson edged out Wales's Arthur Rowe in a hard fought 2–1 contest (2/7, 7/4, 7/6). In the doubles, Shanks & Colling (Scotland) split the match against Walters & Rowe in another nail-biter (7/6, 6/7). Nevertheless, Wales secured the overall test 3–1.

England continued to dominate, defeating Ireland in five straight matches. The final match between Sam Cuthbert and Sandy Greig was cut short due to worsening weather, with Greig leading 7/5. It was held over to be completed, if necessary, on the final day.

DAY TWO: CLEAR SKIES AND FINAL CLASHES

Contrary to forecasts, Sunday brought much-improved weather. In the final round of matches, Scotland earned another win thanks to Mark Shanks, who defeated Charlie Von Schmieder (Ireland) in a three-game battle (4/7, 7/3, 7/5). One of the doubles was also tied, but Ireland still claimed the test comfortably, 4–1.



Sam Cuthbert, Stu M Smith, JP Moberly & Euan Burrridge

The decisive clash came between England and Wales. England were in unstoppable form once again, winning all four singles matches 2-0. The doubles match between Moberly & Cuthbert and Walters & Rowe ended in a draw (7/4, 5/7), but the test finished as a 5–0 whitewash in England's favour.

STANDOUT PERFORMANCES

Among the English players, Euan Burrridge and Stuart M. Smith - both experienced internationals - played as a doubles pair for the first time and impressed by winning all their matches without dropping a single game. Sam Cuthbert, earning his first England cap, was another standout, contributing significantly to the team's overall victory.

In a return to his role as England's Captain, J.P. Moberly led with both skill and spirit. He kept the squad focused despite Saturday's grim weather and ensured Balgreen's volunteers were individually named and thanked for providing excellent lunches and an exceptionally welcoming atmosphere for players and visitors alike.

CONGRATULATIONS

Well done to all the teams for a competitive and good-natured event - and congratulations to England, once again the GC Home Internationals winners.

GC ENGLISH NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

By Louise Smith

The picturesque Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club played host to the 2025 GC English National Doubles Championship over the weekend of 26–27 July. Despite the recent hot weather, Budleigh's eleven courts were a vibrant green and once again expertly prepared by the dedicated grounds team for this ever-popular event.

A strong field of 32 players from across the country made up 16 competitive pairs, including defending champions James Death and Sam Cuthbert. They were joined by a host of familiar names and several exciting new partnerships, notably Tim Russell with Dom Aarvold, and Richard Broad with Andrew Wimshurst.

BLOCK PLAY

The block stages unfolded largely in line with expectations, although there were some tightly contested matches. In Block B, the top four seeded pairs progressed to the knockout stages - though the fourth spot was snatched by Broad and Wimshurst (4th seeds), who edged out Ivor and Richard Brand (6th seeds) by a single net hoop.



Louise Smith

Block A proved even closer. The final qualifying place came down to a decisive match between Diana Wilson & Louise Smith (4th seeds) and Chris Roberts & Frances Colman (5th seeds). Despite the difference in D-Grades, the latter have a good track record of defeating higher-graded partnerships – and prevailed once again, taking the game 7–5 and securing their place in the Championship knock-out.

CHAMPIONSHIP KNOCKOUT

The quarter-finals saw three relatively quick results. Death & Cuthbert swept past Broad & Wimshurst 7–2, 7–3, while Stuart M. Smith & Steve Leonard despatched Lionel Tibble & Sue Lightbody 7–5, 7–4. Russell & Aarvold were similarly dominant against Roberts & Colman, winning 7–3, 7–4. The standout match came from Tim Jolliff & Raouf Allim against Neil Fillery & Stephen Custance-Baker. After a nail-biting second game, which went to the 13th hoop, Fillery & Custance-Baker regained momentum to take the decider 7–3 and book their semi-final place.

PLATE KNOCKOUT

The Plate competition offered plenty of interest and action-packed contests. Wilson and L. Smith held off a spirited late charge from Peter Balchin & Michelle Leonard to win 10–8 and progress to the semi-finals. Peter Chadwick and Niall Litton found form late in the tournament to defeat Ivor & Richard Brand, sending the Brands into the Saucer consolation—which they subsequently won.

The Plate Semi Finals saw Rick Lilley & Roger Goldring overturn an early loss to beat Chadwick and Litton in a three-game battle, 4-7, 7-1, 7-6. Meanwhile Wilson and L. Smith faced Chris & Roderick Sheen, coming back from a game down to win 6–7, 7–5, 7–5.

The Plate Final was an all-action encounter. Wilson & L. Smith dominated game one 7–3 but found themselves 4–6 down to Lilley and Goldring in game two. In a tightly worked comeback, they played to their individual strengths to ensure the win 7–6, clinching the well-deserved Plate title.

SHIELD COMPETITION

The Shield, contested by the losing Championship quarter-finalists, was won by Jolliff and Allim. They overcame Roberts & Colman (7–6, 7–2) before defeating Tibble & Lightbody 10–8.

Continued on page 19

GC ENGLISH NATIONAL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP 2025 CONTINUED



Winners: Dom Aarvold & Tim Russell

CHAMPIONSHIP SEMI-FINALS

In the Championship semi-finals, top seeds Death & Cuthbert were in imperious form, despatching S.M. Smith & Leonard in a display that scarcely saw a missed hoop or clearance.

The second semi-final offered contrasting styles and notable momentum shifts. Russell & Aarvold blitzed game one before Fillery & Custance-Baker adapted their tactics to win game two on the 13th hoop. The decider was a tense affair, but Russell & Aarvold maintained their composure to close it out 7–5 and reach their first English National Doubles Final.

THE CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL

As the sun began to lower over Budleigh, a good crowd gathered to witness what would become a memorable final. The standard of play was electric from the outset, featuring pinpoint clearances, bold jump shots (notably from Aarvold and Cuthbert), and a crowd-pleasing double clearance by Death.

Game one was neck-and-neck, with Russell & Aarvold edging it 7–6. Death & Cuthbert responded emphatically in game two with a powerful 7–3 victory. The deciding game was filled with tension and drama, culminating in two long-range clearance attempts at hoop 12. When both missed, Russell and Aarvold seized the opportunity to run the hoop and claim a 7–5 win.

NEW CHAMPIONS!

Congratulations to Tim Russell and Dom Aarvold, the new GC English National Doubles Champions—a well-earned title following a weekend of outstanding play and composure under pressure from both players.

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks go to the exceptional teams at Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club, whose tireless efforts ensured another first-class event. A special mention to James Galpin, who travelled from Nailsea each day to support me with on-the-day management, and to every player who contributed to the event's fantastic atmosphere -competitive, warm, and thoroughly enjoyable.

NAILSEA & DISTRICT GC CHAMPIONSHIP (ENSC QUALIFIER)

By Louise Smith

The weekend of 5th–6th July saw Nailsea & District Croquet Club host the GC Open Championship, an official qualifier for the English National Singles Championship (ENSC). A full field of 16 players took part, including two visitors from Seville - one of whom, Luis de Alarcon, went on to win the Plate and take the medal back to Spain.

The tight hoops and dry courts created demanding playing conditions throughout the weekend. In the block stages, the only significant upset came in Block C, where under-25 player Joshua Wise (Bristol CC) secured two wins from three matches to finish second, behind fellow Bristol player Dom Aarvold.

Stuart M. Smith and David Goacher both dominated their blocks, each achieving three straight 2–0 wins. In Block B, Lionel Tibble came out on top despite dropping one game to Louise Smith.

Unfortunately, David Goacher had to withdraw before the main knockout stage, which led to a reshuffle in Block D, allowing Patrick Coulter to advance in his place.

As the knockout rounds unfolded, the court surface conditions introduced a fair amount of unpredictability. Lionel Tibble was pushed to three games in both his quarter-final against Richard Brand and semi-final against Dom Aarvold. Dom emerged victorious to claim his place in the Championship Final. He was joined by Joshua Wise, who reached the final with two 2–0 wins over Colin Britt and Stephen

Custance-Baker in the quarters and semis, respectively.

In the final, Dom's experience showed through. With calm, consistent, and methodical play, he secured a decisive 7–2, 7–1 victory over Joshua to claim his first Championship Series title.

Congratulations to Dom Aarvold on his impressive win, which secures his place in the GC English National Singles Final at The Hurlingham Club this September. This victory also earns him one of the new Diamond Awards under the revised GC Merit Award Scheme.



NEW GC REFEREES

By Ian Cobbold, Chair of Golf Croquet Rules Committee

Congratulations to the following who have qualified as GC Referees so far this year.

GC CHAMPIONSHIP REFEREE

Jason Carley, Watford Cassiobury

GC REFEREE

Ed Dolphin, Sidmouth

John Duplock, Budleigh Salterton

Martin Emmett, Chichester & Fishbourne

Hilary Green, Winterbourne Valley

Simon Hathrell, Watford Cassiobury

Desmond Jarrett, Dulwich

Daniel Latimer, East Dorset

Trevor Longman, Ramsgate

Ashley Lupin, Canterbury

Charlie Martin, Ramsgate

Julie Sheahan, Merton

Alan Smith, West Chilmington

David Veal, Bath

TOURNAMENT ENTRY SYSTEM (TES) UPGRADE

A recent upgrade to the Tournament Entry System now means that players will be notified if they are about to enter two events which clash in the diary. The new feature will also display a warning if a player enters an event which coincides with a potential clash, with a date for which they have previously made themselves available for.

BURY CROQUET - TAKING CROQUET TO THE COMMUNITY

By Roy Spencer

The Bury CC gazebo has been busy this summer being seen at community events - spreading the croquet message.



7th June - **Greater Manchester Police Community Fun Day** at Whitefield, Bury. In addition to emergency vehicles and police horses there were a number of other stalls including birds of prey, plus of course croquet. Quite a few children enjoyed running hoops being photographed



by proud parents, some being put up on social media. The GMP mascot PC Cub (pictured) also visited the stand.



3rd July - We were invited to participate in the **Bury College staff end of term wellbeing event**. Staff members were invited to pre-book the activities they wished to take part in. Other activities included archery and golf driving (small white ball – not croquet). Both sessions of croquet were fully attended and follow up taster sessions booked.

5th July - **Glad2BeeRad Family Festival**, Close Park Radcliffe, organised by Bury Council in conjunction with BEE Network (GMP Transport). The theme of the festival was movement, activities included a climbing wall, cycling, gymnastics, athletics and beat the goalie (when the goalie wasn't playing croquet!). Again hoop running was enjoyed by many participating children.

In addition to these community events, on 21st June the club hosted a visit organised by the local twinning association with their 20+ guests from Schorndorf, Germany, who not only enjoyed their first experience of croquet but particularly relished scones, strawberries and cream!

Bury CC Chair Roy Spencer commented that whilst attending these public events is hard work and requires commitment and support from club members, it is a rewarding way of spreading the croquet message, and it's great to see so many children enjoying running hoops along with overcoming the common misconceptions about the sport. It is also satisfying that the club was directly invited to participate in the events by the respective organisers (at no cost), demonstrating the benefit of the club's previous community outreach activities. All visitors to the club stalls at these events took away the CqE "A Quick Guide" and club leaflets.

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BY RUTH RAUNKIAER

ruth.raunkiaer@croquetengland.org.uk
Chair of Coaching Committee

NEW MERIT AWARD WINNERS

Congratulations to the following:

ASSOCIATION CROQUET – GOLD AWARDS

Adam Swinton – Surbiton Easter
Advanced
Euan Burrige – Bowdon Advanced
Weekend
Gediminas Smolskas, Surbiton
Summer Handicap

ASSOCIATION CROQUET – SILVER AWARDS

David Prescott, Secretary's Shield
Philip Snowden, Heart of Yorkshire

ASSOCIATION CROQUET – BRONZE AWARDS

Alan Dix, Bowdon May Handicap
David Prescott, Secretary's Shield
Patricia Mulcahy, Budleigh Spring
Week
Deborah James, Heart of Yorkshire
James Moir, Heart of Yorkshire
Malcolm Tingle, Heart of Yorkshire
Libby Dixon, Midweek AC

GOLF CROQUET – DIAMOND AWARDS

James Death, Cheltenham Open Series
Lionel Tibble, Wrest Park Open Series
Tim O'Donnell, East Dorset GC Open

WELCOME TO THE COACHING PAGES SURVEY OF ALL COACHES

Thank you to the majority of coaches who have now responded to the survey. If you haven't yet done so, please don't delay any longer. We need to have your confirmation that you are still active as a coach, in order for you to remain on the Croquet England Register of Coaches – and hence be covered by the CqE Professional Indemnity Insurance. So far this year, 71 coaches have been removed from the Register as they were now longer active. The survey really only takes less than two minutes to complete – so please do it now, if you haven't already done so.

We are very much looking forward to sharing the results of this survey with all coaches. We can already see that many coaches are looking for more online resources, so we will make sure we communicate where these are to be found to all coaches (see below for information on the new AC Coaching Manual for Beginners). Perhaps not surprisingly, most coaches coach only at their primary club, and much coaching is ad hoc, 1-2-1, and for beginners. Perhaps more surprising is the fact that (so far) 32% of coaches coach primarily AC, while another 27% coach both AC and GC. More interesting details to come once all have responded and we can analyse the results in detail.

COACHING CHILDREN SAFELY

Are you involved with coaching children or introducing children to croquet? Many interesting initiatives appear to be taking place around the country – some stand-alone, some part of the Next Generation Initiative. If your club is working on encouraging children to play croquet, both the Coaching Committee and the Sports Development Committee would very much like to hear about your experiences.

Please review the updated policy and guidance on the webpage 'Coaching Children safely' <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/coaching/u18>. If you have any questions about this, please contact either the Coaching Committee or the National safeguarding Officer.

CURRENT COACHING COMMITTEE WORK

One of the major current projects for the Coaching Committee is the revision of all four Coaching Manuals – AC for Beginners and Improvers, and GC for Beginners and Improvers. This is an ongoing and time-consuming project, but we are very pleased to have finalised the AC Coaching Manual for Beginners, see below for information on this.

At this time of year, approving Provisional Club-Level Coaches to earn their yellow badges as Club-Level Coaches is another time-consuming, but pleasant job. Provisional CLCs must carry out five coaching sessions and send in session logs, describing what they have coached, to whom (e.g. what handicap level), and what their reflections on the sessions are, in order to qualify. The session logs are reviewed in detail, to verify that they comply with the requirements. The write-ups show that much very good coaching is taking place across the country, with many interesting and useful observations.

As mentioned above, the web page 'Coaching Children Safely' has also finally been updated, after much work over many months, also involving the National Safeguarding Officer, the Trustees and the Executive. We are very pleased that we are now able to give clear advice to any croquet player or coach working with children.

The next Coaching Committee meeting is in November, but much work takes place in between meetings, by email and by Zoom, as needed.

WELCOME TO THE NEW ASSOCIATION CROQUET COACHING MANUAL: BEGINNERS

Association Croquet is at heart a very simple game – James Hawkins has reduced the core rules to a few short bullet points – and this new coaching manual makes introducing it to newcomers a straightforward and enjoyable experience.

It includes a ready-made coaching course for first-timers, set out as six sessions but easily adaptable to more or fewer sessions as required. It not only shows what to coach, but suggests how to coach it; includes helpful tips for coaches and students; sidelines jargon; and offers simple ways of using visual aids to make learning straightforward.

It also includes a special section on introducing AC to GC players. Their existing skills give them a head start in the game, so the new Manual offers an accelerated route into AC for GC converters that has been tried and tested.

At the end are sixteen fun games, practice games and coaching games. Some of these can be used with any group (including children and workplace groups) to boost skills and confidence; some are specifically to smooth the transition from GC to AC; others are for players in the early stages of their AC journey to help them develop their skills and strategy. The accent throughout is on keeping it simple and enjoyable so that students want to come back for more.

This new manual has been updated and expanded by John Harris from his *Introducing Association Croquet: Manual for Coaches (2022)* and now replaces the earlier version. It is planned as the first of four complementary coaching manuals: a volume for AC improvers is in progress, as are two parallel GC volumes for beginners and improvers.

Association Croquet Coaching Manual: Beginners is freely downloadable from the Croquet England website. Simply click on the home page Coaching button, then onto AC Coaching Resources to get straight to it. The CqE Office is arranging for printed copies to be available at cost for anyone who wants one. It is warmly commended by the Croquet England Coaching Committee to anyone coaching this engaging and rewarding game.



John Harris and Anna Giraud compare an early proof copy of the new AC Coaching Manual: Beginners with the online version

NEW MERIT AWARD WINNERS

GOLF CROQUET – GOLD AWARDS

Leslie Heard, Wrest Park A-Level
Colin Groves, Woking A-Level
Konstantin Yuditsev, Watford A-Level

GOLF CROQUET – SILVER AWARDS

John Duplock, Budleigh B-Level
Stephen Webb, Watford B-Level
Jo-Ann Hughes, Pendle B-Level
Peter Adams, Wrest Park B-Level
Richard Platt, Woking B-Level
Michael Pudney, Colchester B-Level
Ken Knock, Hunstanton B-Level
Richard Barkey, Ealing B-Level
Peter Kirby, Bath B-Level

GOLF CROQUET – BRONZE AWARDS

Claire Herring, Budleigh C-Level
Ian Prince, Sussex County C-Level
Sandy Grievson, Chester C-Level
Ray Hodgson, Wrest Park C-Level
Dee McKibbin, Woking C-Level
Gillian Baverstock, Hunstanton C-Level
Sue Custance-Baker, Swindon C-Level
Paul Stroud, Surbiton C-Level

NEW COACH QUALIFICATIONS

NEW CLUB-LEVEL COACHES

The following have passed all stages of the Club-Level Coach qualification process and have been upgraded to Club-Level Coach status on the register of Croquet England Coaches. Congratulations!

Roger Baddeley, Nailsea
Andrew Beaumont, Nottingham
David Boxell, Hunstanton
Sarah Butler, Nottingham
Paul Chard, Northampton
Kerry Dadson, Chester
Tom Dewar, Nottingham
John Duplock, Budleigh Salterton
David Kaner, Broadwas
Roger Steeper, Nottingham
Jordan Waters, Merton
Graham Withrington, Merton

Club-Level Coaches hold a key position at the heart of the game, introducing new players to the game and helping high handicappers improve both their practical and tactical skills.

Club-Level Coaches are qualified to coach AC and GC to beginners and high handicap players at their own clubs.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS SOUGHT

Is there something you would like us to write about on the Coaching Pages? Is there something you would like to write about? We are always happy to receive suggestions and contributions on any coaching subject. Please contact me at ruth.raunkiaer@croquetengland.org.uk.

CHARITY 1-BALL 2025: THE FINAL RESULT

By Debbie James



Add 45 clubs from England, Scotland and Ireland; mix in a touch of Forget-Me-Not blue for the nominated charity, Alzheimer's Society; combine club heats, cake bakes, raffles, lunches and Christmas events to produce 53 finalists for Surbiton and 16 for Nottingham; and the result is another vintage year for a competition that celebrates all that is good in our croquet community.

Well done to all who organised a club heat. I had a list of planned heats...and then clubs surprised me with more. The donations kept flooding in, many of them quite substantial. Every donation is valued, big or small, and gift aiding adds an extra boost. Carrickmines in Ireland raised a magnificent 650 euros for a local dementia charity, and sent two players all the way to Surbiton to contest the southern final.



Heats were played from March to May and the weather was kind. The outfits were splendid and the cake was good!

Congratulations to Ken Knock from Pinchbeck CC (OB6), winner at Nottingham against Philip Thompson (OB20) from Bowdon CC.

And to Ludolph van Hasselt (OB2.5) of Hurlingham CC who prevailed at Surbiton in a closely contested final round against Nick Archer (OB-2) of Watford CC. The result couldn't have been closer, 13-12!

My thanks to the host clubs Nottingham and Surbiton for the use of their fine lawns for the finals, and the support of their members. Special mention to Nick Parish and Bob Thompson for their excellent tournament management.

But the real winner in all of this is Alzheimer's Society, doing very valuable work in researching a devastating illness.

With everyone's fantastic support we have raised more than ever this year, a magnificent £8,759.35 (excluding gift aid of £737.38).

The accumulator for the Charity 1-ball after 19 years of competition now stands at £91k. Together, let's keep pushing for £100k and do it all again next year.



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These heads can be fitted with any of the carbon fibre shafts and are available in 10" and 11" head lengths and a base weight of 2lbs 15ozs (1332g) adjustable from (1280g to 1370g)

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MICHAEL@CROQUETMALLETSCO.UK

TRYING YOUR NEW MALLET AND CLUB VISITS

by Chris Alvey, dbmallets@gmail.com, Sponsors of the Townsend Club Award

Trying new mallets isn't always easy. Most of the manufacturers, us included, don't have a shop or outlet where you can see them. We're happy for people to come to the house and look at the demo models and have a swing at our indoor hoop, (although our living room is a little small). Where possible we can assemble them on the same day for customers to take away. But where we don't have stock, or a custom length of shaft is required, this isn't always possible. As we are based in the Northwest this can potentially be an arduous journey.

People have journeyed to Bury Croquet Club and tried them there on our lawns, but again this is a long way for anyone not local to us. Having a friendly player at your club who will let you try their mallet is a great way of finding out what works for you but

unless there is a range of different mallets across your club members you may be missing out on a mallet that could be better for your style of play.

This year we have been invited to take mallets out to three clubs and been able to talk people through their options from within our range. On two of the visits, I've been able to provide coaching to the club's members, ranging from stroke play to stop shots, avoiding crushes to jump shots.

The advantage of a club visit is that we can take a range of head lengths and weights and people can have a go in an environment they are used to playing in. We enjoy visiting clubs and meeting new players; and if we can help in any way with coaching then it can only help to grow and improve the sport.



An advertisement for 'Mallets' featuring a blue mallet. The text includes: 'HIGH TECH, AEROSPACE TECHNOLOGY INSPIRED CROQUET MALLET. EACH FITTED WITH THE EXCLUSIVE POWERFLEX SHAFT', '3 DAYS FROM PAYMENT TO DISPATCH', and 'MALLET FROM £248'. Contact information at the bottom includes phone numbers (07714) 765 181 or (07775) 680 828, email dbmallets@gmail.com, and website www.dbmallets.co.uk.

SUSSEX COUNTY LAUNCHES THE SOUTHWICK APPEAL

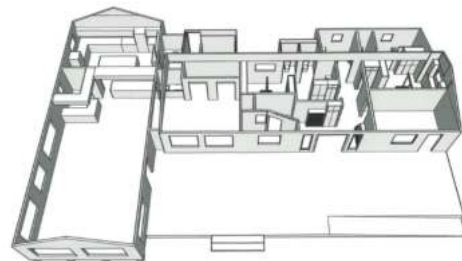
Have you played in a tournament or match at Southwick? Improved your game through a course at The Croquet Academy? Watched live streaming of the GC

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS FROM SOUTHWICK?

After nearly 125 years on its current site, Sussex County CC offers outstanding facilities for playing croquet for members and the many visitors who compete in local, national and international tournaments every year. If the answer to any of the above is yes, please read on to find out how you can help us make Southwick even better.

While our lawns are world class, the current wooden buildings are over a century old. Access and use can be particularly difficult for players and visitors with physical challenges, and poor insulation makes it cold for members to enjoy in winter.

As many of you will be aware, we have been planning to upgrade our facilities for some years, and we now have planning permission to do so with work commencing in October 2025. This will improve the look, functionality, accessibility and energy rating of the buildings. Our aim is to retain the historic nature of the site while providing a modern, accessible club house with facilities that are appropriate for one of England's leading clubs and a world-leading croquet venue. The work is being phased. Phase 1 will be the modernisation of the canteen with a new link to the other building. This will give more space and better views over the lawns. Phase 2 will be the modernisation of the changing rooms.



We have applied for grants from Sport England and Croquet England and will be launching a CrowdFunding appeal during late July / August. We already have the majority of the funds required for Phase 1 of the project but we need the support of the croquet community to complete the project.

YOUR SUPPORT

We know that Southwick is held in great affection by many of you and we're often complimented on the warm and friendly welcome extended to everyone who comes to Southwick.

As we launch our fundraising appeal we hope that our many friends in the croquet world will extend the hand of friendship - having first put that hand into their pocket!

Donations can be made via the forthcoming CrowdFunding page at <https://crowdfunder.co.uk/p/Sussexcountycroquet-clubhousemodernisation> or if you would prefer to make a direct contribution please contact Clive Hayton clive.hayton@btinternet.com.

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WEBSITE

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

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

To find the glossary online, visit:

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

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

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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.

Digital images are preferred, but photographic prints can be acceptable. Please send digital jpeg or tiff format files and accompany all images with a description of the subject.

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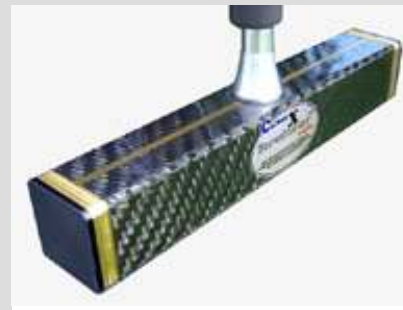
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George Wood Hybrid
Croquet Mallet

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