

THE

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CROQUET

GAZETTE



Reg Bamford Retains WCF World Championship

THE MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS OF THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION

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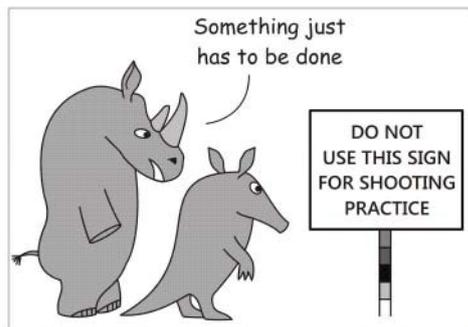
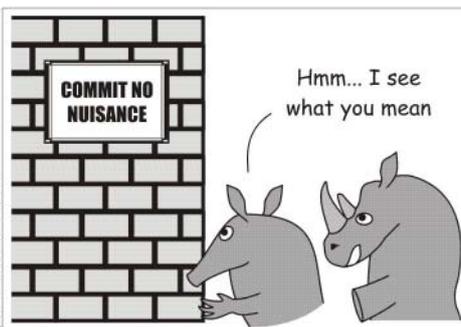
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HOPOPOTAMUS

by Victor



THE CROQUET GAZETTE



Issue 338 June 2012

Front Cover: Reg Bamford completes pegging out to win the 2012 World Championship with Liz Fleming (ROT) observing. Photo by Elizabeth Larsson

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Disclaimer

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Chairman's Column

In my last column I invited you to tell the CA what more it could do to help the Federations. This time I would like to talk about what the CA does for its member clubs and the non-CA members in the clubs, as I hear these club members say that they do not know what the CA does for them. I would also like to include some personal thoughts as to how the CA might change its membership structure in the future.



The most obvious financial advantage to being a member club of the CA is that all clubs receive Public Liability insurance through a central insurance policy. All member clubs also receive publicity on the web through their contact listing on the CA website as well as recommendations from the CA office to old-fashioned telephone queries.

Each year the CA provides a five-figure sum to finance the development of croquet-playing facilities in England and Wales which has led to a significant increase in the number of clubs over the last few years. It has also led to a significant improvement in the quality of the facilities in existing clubs. At the moment, clubs around the country are feeling the pressure from the cuts in local authority spending and the CA is helping several clubs under threat to move to more affordable sites. The CA also provides expert advice to clubs for the improvement and care of their playing surfaces. While any given individual member of a club might not benefit directly from this development expenditure, the help from the CA is an essential part of keeping croquet-playing facilities available.

All club members receive coaching from their club coaches, but do they know where the coaches obtained their coaching skills? The answer is that they have all received training from the CA and have been assessed as suitable for carrying out their coaching duties. In addition, they all use the CA Coaching Manual to develop their courses. The CA promotes coaching courses around the country as required to meet the demands of players.

All players know that the game is played using the Laws (Association and Golf) which are international and used throughout the World. The CA has played a major part in the development of these Laws and it continues to monitor the application of the current versions with the aim of making improvements if players require it. The application of the Laws is carried out by Referees. The CA regularly runs Referee training courses and carries out examinations to ensure that you can call for a Referee with confidence.

The CA organises many tournaments as well as co-ordinating the tournament scene. While most of these competitions are only available to full members of the CA, the CA does provide National competitions, such as the All-England and the Longman Cup, for ordinary club members and they give an excellent introduction to the national tournament scene. The CA also organises major international events which provide the opportunity for club members to see the best croquet players in the world in action.

Finally I would like to mention the services provided by the CA shop. These services are available to the general public so club members may feel that they have no need to support the CA as they can use the shop anyway. This view ignores the fact that without the existence of the CA, the shop would not be there.

All of the above services are only made possible by the existence of the CA which has to be funded from its membership. The current method of raising funds means that club members are not full members of the CA and are unable to play in CA tournaments. I believe that this is an undesirable part of the current funding arrangements and it would be preferable for all croquet players to be members of the CA. This could easily be done by abolishing the various classes of CA membership and making all club members full members of the CA. Unfortunately this would lead to a considerable increase in the club member capitation fee and consequently club membership fees, which is likely to be

unacceptable to a considerable number of clubs.

We could go some way to balancing the income by replacing the paper edition of Croquet Gazette for all members with an on-line version. If members still wanted to receive a hard copy through the post then an additional Gazette subscription could be used. We could also increase the CA levy paid by tournament players to ensure that those who play more, pay more. Even if we went down these routes, we would still have to increase the club capitation fee to balance the books, although the new level might be more acceptable to clubs.

I must emphasise that these thoughts are personal and do not reflect any intention by the CA to make these changes. However, I would like to invite members to write to the Gazette and give their views on my suggestions and perhaps put some other ideas forward.

Barry Keen

Editorial



Welcome to the June issue of the Gazette. Sadly the promisingly warm early Spring weather seems to have taken a bit of a nose dive with events here being victims of cold and flooding, so I hope that things improve as we move into summer. Thankfully the 13th WCF AC World Championships in Australia had no such problems and Reg Bamford of South Africa successfully retained the Wimbledon Cup to add his name to the trophy for a fourth time. A report of the event is included in this issue, but I would like to take the opportunity to offer congratulations to Marcus Evans and Samir Patel of England and James Hopgood of Scotland who all performed well and beyond expectation.

Whilst on the subject of expectation, I think it is fair to say that the recently completed 2012 survey of croquet players has raised some encouraging findings, but there are others calling for urgent action from CA Committees, Federations and Clubs. Kevin Carter has provided a summary report within this issue, whilst the full report is available on the CA Website. I know that the Publishing Committee have read the report, as well as comments members made,

and we shall be working towards taking the actions requested. I'm sure that within the next few months other committees will share their comments or action plans with readers.

An event that grows annually beyond expectation is the Winchester Charity One-ball Championship, which started life as a weekend event and over time has grown to hold heats nationally, each year breaking records to raise money for breast cancer research or another worthwhile charity. This year has been no exception, with 358 players taking part and more than £3,000 being raised, so a big thank you to everyone who participated or contributed.

Gail Curry

Letters

Taking on authorities

I was very upset to read Derek Watts's letter in the previous issue about the threat of closure hanging over the Tyneside club, where I have spent many happy hours over the years and I think the only solution is to 'MAKEAFUSS'.

York Council gave us notice in winter 2010 that they would no longer maintain the two croquet lawns and the two bowling greens after 2011. We united with the bowlers and contacted the local paper (press picture 'looking sad' on a wet Monday morning) and the ward Councillors. We wrote to every member of the Council and talked to the relevant officials. One of the bowlers made a strong case for us at two Council committee meetings and at the full Council Budget meeting. At that meeting one of the ward Councillors whose grandfather had played

bowls at the club spoke strongly in our favour and with good support turned the whole meeting round. We are now, incredibly, in a situation where the Council proposes to improve the grounds to Green Flag standards!

I know York is much smaller than Tyneside and our greens are in a well known location, but we did prove that closure can be avoided.

Julian Tonks

A Different Approach

We at Southport have gone through the same problems as Tyneside are facing. Sefton Council are doing exactly the same by raising the costs of all sports that use their grounds and parks this year, with a further rise in 2013. Unlike Tyneside we pay rent for our club house but are independent with regards to paying water, electricity, gas, etc. Apart from a lawn licence fee we paid a small amount to the Council for ground maintenance and it is this cost that is increasing to an amount that will prove to be beyond our means.

We found out which council administrators were responsible for Parks Management, and also the manager in charge of contracts. (English Landscapes hold the contract for all Sefton's ground maintenance). We asked for a meeting so we could propose a money saving solution for our lawns. They quickly responded to this. We asked what the Council response would be to us taking full responsibility for all our lawn maintenance, they came back to us with a figure of £22,000 a year! (We do have a potential eleven lawns although they only keep five up to playing standard). After

more meetings we were offered a nominal rent of £1 or £2 if we released them from all maintenance, so that's what we have done.

We researched possible grants and obtained £300 from the Duchy of Lancaster, and £3,000 from the Croquet Association specifically for the purchase of a second hand reconditioned sit-on mower and a pedestrian mower as a back up. Without the grant we could not have afforded the pedestrian and the sit-on would have had to be a much older model. If we had only two or three lawns we would have purchased just a pedestrian mower. The sit-on eleven-blade John Deere mower cost just over £4,000. The Croquet Association grant will only pay half of the cost, so that left £1,000 towards a reconditioned Dennis self-drive pedestrian mower which we bought for £2,000 with scarifying and vertical cutting cassettes. The cost to the Club for the two was £3,000.

The next problem is covering the cost of lawn treatments so we entered this into our annual expenditure plus the cost of employing someone for three or four hours a week to ride or walk up and down with the mowers at £12 an hour. At appropriate times of the year he will also deal with weed control, moss, reseeding, etc. We have already been able to reduce this employment cost because several members have volunteered to use the sit-on mower on a rota for an early weekly cut. Six members means once every six week so no hardship. We then pay for the second (Friday) cut. We have been able to cover the cost of all this without increasing the membership subscription for this year. Without the grant we would have had to dig into our reserves and increase subs next year. On the positive side, we now have the equipment, so in future years we only have to budget for annual service, mainly to the cutting blades.

What we did

- ◆ Negotiated with Council Officials with regard to maintaining our own lawns.
- ◆ Searched eBay for second hand green mowers.
- ◆ Researched and applied for possible grants.
- ◆ Costed out the annual expenditure, excluding grants.
- ◆ Put the proposals to the Membership.
- ◆ Asked members if they new of a reliable person to work on our lawns on a weekly basis for a

hourly rate to be negotiated.

- ◆ Asked for volunteers to help with lawn maintenance not covered by the groundsman.
- ◆ Obtained lawn maintenance advice from several sources. Local golf groundsmen have freely given advice on lawns and equipment.
- ◆ Made sure we had secure storage for the equipment.
- ◆ Purchased the mowers. Problem is that the CA only hands over the grant on receipt of the invoices, so initial capital is needed.
- ◆ Trained all volunteers in safety and basic maintenance of the equipment.

We are fortunate in having a member who is knowledgeable on general lawn care and through help from golf club groundsmen, is also well briefed on mower use and maintenance

As you will appreciate, this has involved a lot of research, negotiation and hard work. We had one member dealing with the Council, another researching equipment and the Treasurer worked on obtaining the grant. I realize most of this may be of no use to you unless you go for maintaining your own lawns and, if you decide to, can convince the Council of the savings they will make. Let me know if we can be of help, based on our experience over the last six months. Best of luck with whatever you decide to do.

Brian Lewis

Comments and Observations

In response to the headline on the CA web site referring to "Ominous Trends" for croquet. I would like to make the following observations. It is fairly obvious that for the long term health of the sport we need to introduce more young people. The CA's recent survey shows that nearly half of today's players started playing croquet at home when they were youngsters.

Old people - the great advantage of old people is that most of them know lots of young people and have a potentially enormous influence in those young people's lives and interests. Grandchildren, nieces, nephews, great nieces and great-nephews. Those young people each know a huge number of other young people because they all go to school. This is a fantastic potential market. They use Twitter, Facebook and other social media, they do it now and they will continue doing it in the future. Page 25 and 26 of the report shows that a huge

number of us started playing croquet at home as youngsters. In my experience every kid loves hitting balls with a mallet - they can't get enough of it. They don't need a huge croquet lawn, just a back garden, school playing field or public park. If it has slopes, bumps, a tree and rose bushes so much the better.

CA membership - If the CA included all its levy paying members into the fold it would have around 7,000 members instead of 1,000. This could be done tomorrow at no cost and think of the marketing opportunities. I know that in my business we wouldn't leave 6000 customers to stew in their own juice with barely no contact—yet that is what the CA is doing and its eyes are fully open. A big opportunity?

Social media - How many youngsters do those 7000 people know? If each only knew one kid, that would be 7,000 kids. If they were of school age, each kid would know say 30 others. The total audience which could be reached in a matter of days at absolutely no cost whatever would be 210,000 and as it went viral the numbers could be into millions. Twitter and Facebook make it possible to get things moving exponentially and within hours. The CA is clamouring for competitive players. What would happen if you advertised (through these kids) the prize of a free iPad or the latest iPhone for winning some croquet competition on the school playing field?

Garden Croquet - I understand that in Edwardian times gardens resounded with the sound of mallet on ball and I am keen to bring that back. Last year I started my own club at Bygrave offering Garden Croquet using CA Garden Croquet rules (see www.BygraveCroquetClub.org.uk) These rules are great because they can be learnt in a few minutes. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that if you hit another ball you get another go, a croquet shot and a continuation. So my beginners start playing a doubles game within just 10 minutes. Strategy? They learn that as they go along. All they need is enough strategy to beat their opponent who is usually their own standard. Everyone learns AC in a simplified form. At this club GC means Garden Croquet. With youngsters I play a very simple game in which each player runs the hoops in order gaining a free shot when they run a hoop. I use a handicap system in which I might have to run 18 hoops before they run 6. This works really well and they can measure their improvement. There are lots of variations that kids enjoy and the

CA's (potential) 7,000 members should be introducing this to their young relatives. If kids are attracted to croquet through competition (as outlined above) some will want to play competitive versions of the proper game as they grow up and when they get to University they will swell the ranks of the Cuppers.

Where to play? The problem with croquet is that you need a large area of bowling green quality grass. Proper croquet lawns are in limited supply. Garden Croquet doesn't have such restrictions, in fact the space available is almost limitless. There are back gardens everywhere, countless acres of playing fields and public parks waiting for someone to push in some hoops and start playing croquet. You don't need a big area and if it has slopes and other hazards it makes the game even more fun.

Latent spores - All croquet lawns have thousands of latent Red Thread spores lazing around waiting for the right conditions to occur. As soon as the nitrogen level falls too low—BINGO and you have Red Thread. There are millions of kids just waiting to

hear about croquet and eager to win prizes. Kids will even compete for worthless paper stars, badges etc. These are our future players—these are our future University students—these are our future!

Ominous trends - What headlines might we see if these ideas were activated? Or would we be better to continue as we are?
Duncan Hector

Thank you all

I am most grateful for the many cards and good wishes I received from many people following Barbara's death. She was 90 and had not been well for the last couple of years and died very peacefully in Worthing Hospital, having been very well looked after by the excellent nursing staff.

Thank you all very much.

John Solomon

Club News



Southchurch Park CC a day on the mat

L to R Back Row: Laura, Bert, Angela, Shirley, Ken, Sylvia, Myriam, Joan & Alan. Front row: Hilary, Pete, Val, Iris, June, Louise & Alan kneeling. Photo by Louise Cornelius

Southchurch Park CC, a small yet tenacious club by Alan Stivey

Southchurch Park Croquet Club was formed in 2001 by our now retired chairlady, Mrs Iris Freeman. On returning from Australia, where golf croquet is very popular, Iris found that the nearest club was at Chelmsford, which she joined. But after a year of travelling between Southend and Chelmsford, Iris decided that this was not ideal and that a club was needed nearer home in Southend-on-Sea. So the hard work began. An application for a lottery grant, an approach made to the local council for somewhere to play, and a slot on local radio, thus Southchurch Park Croquet Club was born. Members began to join. Many original members are still with the club, and one of our founders has just celebrated her 80th birthday! That's dedication for you.

Southchurch Park was our home for five years. Being a

local park, we had our ups and downs with dog walkers and young footballers to name just a few. Although we had to share the public toilets and made our guests tea on a camping stove, we did have our own clubhouse and we had some great times. Sadly, the clubhouse was vandalised and had to be demolished, but members stepped in at very short notice and our equipment was given several new temporary homes.

Our luck changed when we found a great venue at our local university sports ground. We had to share with the football section, but we had two good courts. There was a great clubhouse, and on match days we had someone who worked for the university to come in and supply toasted sandwiches, chips and rolls etc: very popular with our visitors! We supplied our own shed for storage and spent five very happy years there. In 2010 we were told that our contract would not be renewed, as the whole of the ground was to be given over to football.

Determined to keep the club going, our new chairlady Mrs Louise Cornelius, managed to find a new venue at a local football centre. We share now with footballers and a children's day centre, but arrange our league matches for the school holidays so that we can use the clubhouse. We have had two break-ins, but luckily the thieves were not interested in croquet equipment.

We organised a family day last year, to show our families what we get up to three times a week and to let them have a go, providing sandwiches, cakes, tea etc. This was very popular and we are already being asked if we will have another one this year and yes, we will, weather permitting. For the last three years we have held an autumn quiz, which has helped boost our funds, so that when needed we can buy new equipment.

We are a very friendly club, both on and off the courts. Each year between twelve and eighteen members go on holiday together, hopefully we can usually find somewhere with a croquet court. Each December we have a Christmas dinner for members past and present. We try very hard to make new members feel welcome, and, friendly as we are, it does not mean we are not competitive. We run several internal competitions for our members, as well as league and friendly matches.

Perhaps our best kept secret up to now, and something that keeps our club going and why it is so popular, is that we are one of

the only clubs in Essex, if not in the South East, that has indoor mats. This means we can play all year, a great way to keep fit in those winter months. Ideally we would like to have a ground of our own, but the space we would need is hard to find in Southend. We may keep being moved, but we won't be beaten. We will keep playing regardless.



Members of Jarrow CC gather one year on. Photo by Peter Wallace.

Jarrow U3A CC one year on by Peter Wallace

In April 2011 the Jarrow Croquet Club was finally put on a firm footing. From April to June we were offered various playing venues that were totally unsuitable for the game to be played properly. However after many consultations with South Tyneside Council, we were offered a bowling green in Colthard Park, Cleadon, as the bowling club had disbanded. We joined the Croquet Association and Croquet North. We received a grant from the CA and the U3A for the essential equipment and with the added comfort of a pavilion, a year later we have 20 regular members and the prospect of more.

The club is proving to be very popular and is going from strength to strength and this season we are running competitions for the first time. We are primarily Golf Croquet but Association is to be introduced and, who knows, we may even enter the Longman Cup in future.

Oxford University CuppersIt's big! by Will Gee

Cuppers is a generic term for inter collegiate competition at Oxford University. Croquet Cuppers is run as a straight knockout competition over the eight weeks of summer term, each match consisting of two level association doubles matches. Last year 430 teams of four entered Association Croquet Cuppers at Oxford University, double the previous record. This year the number of entries has grown further to 504 teams:- over 2000 players. To our knowledge, this not only makes Oxford Cuppers the largest Croquet competition in the world but also the largest sporting event at Oxford University in terms of participants. In addition to organising the competition, the OU Croquet Club also runs free coaching that runs



Dr Ian Plummer coaching Oxford students in preparation for play. Photo by Will Gee

parallel with Cuppers, spearheaded by Ian Plummer. This course rapidly covers the basics of croquet and by the end of the course those who have been to all four sessions have a good understanding of the game. Many of the Cuppers entrants join the club and each year a group of the most dedicated recruits become committee members. These core members are driven to improve by the hope of doing well in the Student Championships held in Oxford every June and by the prospects of obtaining a Half Blue for taking part in Varsity against Cambridge with a handicap of 6 or below. Extraordinary progress is routine at the club, with committee members normally attaining single figure handicap ability within two years.



New College vs Jesus College (Jesus in white shirts). Photo by Ian Plummer.

What is it that attracts so many participants to Cuppers? It is certainly a combination of many factors, but arguably the main three are awareness, ease and cost. Croquet is everywhere in Oxford, with most Colleges having grass within their college on which Croquet or Bowls are the only games permitted. As College is where students work, sleep and eat, arranging to have a game is simple. Once one group is seen playing on the lawn more groups will follow. The free entry to Cuppers and free coaching appeal to

the “why not?” mentality. Since last year, the CA has provided a fourth incentive by sponsoring Cuppers, the money being used to buy champagne for the finalists. This is why over 70 students braved the rain to come to the first coaching session at the University lawns. Even the wet weeks of April and May did not stop players turning up for coaching at subsequent sessions.

There are problems associated with converting students into fully-fledged Croquet players however. Even before term ends, exam revision confines most players to the library, and after term ends students become scattered across the country. At home they are either unaware of local clubs or have no one to play with. One solution to this problem may be to introduce more C-level tournaments between July and September, these tournaments being advertised to University croquet clubs. Similarly, when students leave University they may lose all contact with croquet for several years. However I would anticipate that these players might still return to the game at a later point in their lives.

Report from Council

Council met on Saturday, 24th March, at the Hurlingham Club, with bright sunshine outside. Bernard Neal, the immediate past President, was congratulated on reaching his 90th Birthday and Colin Irwin, a Vice-President, on having narrowly survived a heart attack during a game in Florida.

Formal business included the approval of the 2011 accounts, which showed a lower surplus, of £3K (implying an adjusted deficit of £5.5K) than anticipated, due to reductions in valuation of slow moving stock, requested by the Marian Hempsted, the Independent Examiner. The budget for 2012 was confirmed, which envisaged an adjusted deficit of £12K in the general fund, despite using the £6K of interest accumulated in the Duffield Bequest fund, and a similar deficit was predicted for 2013 unless subscription rates were raised. It was agreed to do so, for both clubs and individuals, broadly in line with inflation.

The revision of the proposed Reserves Policy, requested by the January meeting, had been completed and the outcome was agreed. The Benefactor's fund will be abolished and the Development and International Funds reduced to £65K and £10K respectively, concentrating all the capital not identified for specific use into the General Fund, which should simplify the accounts. It was emphasised that the introduction of the Reserves Policy was not intended to reduce spending on Development Grants, but separate proposals about Budgeting Policy triggered a review of strategy in this area, recognising that demand for grants currently exceeded what could comfortably be provided out of current levels of income.

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The chairmen of the tournament committees were asked to prepare a paper proposing that players in all the inter-club team competitions should be exempted from the requirement that they be Tournament Members of the CA. Currently the exemption just applies to the Longman, Secretary's and Murphy events, which was thought to be anomalous.

It was reported that Frances Low will be given the Coach of the Year award and Ian Lines a Lifetime Coaching award. Chris Williams is to be awarded the Council Medal for his exceptional efforts in connection with the ranking system, croquet records site and as archivist.

ICT developments reported included enhancements to the login, tournament entry and survey facilities on the website, on which David Kibble was congratulated, and replacement of workstations in the CA Office.

Progress against the strategic objectives set last year was reviewed, with no serious causes of concern.

The Chairman, Barry Keen, thanked Patricia Duke-Cox and Jonathan Kirby for their valuable contribution to Council. He will represent the Association at the service of thanksgiving for the diamond jubilee of our Patron before he himself retires from office in October.

Ian Vincent, Hon. Secretary.

Coaching

COACHING CORNER

by Roger Staples

I've just returned from a tournament which had a number of high bisquers playing. We were blessed with some good weather, but the players were not always aware of the etiquette and finesse of some of the Laws.

When you are double banked on a lawn it is necessary to be aware of the other game and how it is progressing. Remember to give way whenever you can. It makes a good impression. The other players will respond and show just as much courtesy to you, especially when there is a break in progress. Sometimes, it isn't obvious that they are about to shoot across the lawn, but if a break is in progress, then a croquet shot that is about to put a pioneer at Hoop 4 after running Hoop 2 will be going across the lawn! Don't forget to carry some markers with you. It can be quite embarrassing to hit a ball from the other game and not be sure as to the true position of it when it needs to be replaced.

Then there is the subject of Faults in playing strokes. Mishitting a ball by accidentally hitting the strikers ball with the bevel of the mallet in open court is annoying but not a Fault. However, in and around a hoop or peg it is a Fault. Law 28(a)(6) states *“a fault is committed if, during the striking period, the striker strikes the strikers ball with any part of the mallet other*



than the face of the head, either (A) deliberately; or (B) accidentally in a stroke which requires special care because of the proximity of a hoop or the peg or another ball". Easily done when the ball has only just run a hoop and not travelled very far. We are all 'referees' when it comes to playing our sport and if there isn't a Referee immediately available then Faults should be admitted and turn ends. If a shot is hampered, ask your opponent to watch and adjudicate. Better still, ask for a Referee to come over and adjudicate. A bisque may be used of course to continue the break if a Fault has occurred.

I have received a few enquiries recently about "how to become a coach". The CA website and the Fixtures Book (p123) both describe the process. There are several coach training courses organised around the country and your Federation Coaching Officer can organise one in your area. Help is available from the Croquet Academy. Once you have completed the necessary formalities then send your completed application form to the Chairman of the Coaching Committee and if you are a CA member then your name will be added to the list of approved coaches. Congratulations to the following who recently qualified as coaches:

Club Coach

- Geoff Gunton, Reigate Priory
- Malcolm Beaver, Budleigh Salterton
- Bob Donald, Budleigh Salterton
- Mike Hammond, Budleigh Salterton
- Tim Liles, Budleigh Salterton
- Jack Smith, Budleigh Salterton
- Robert Tait, Budleigh Salterton
- Adam Wimshurst, Budleigh Salterton

Grade 1 Association

- Tony Bower, Budleigh Salterton
- Chris Donovan, Budleigh Salterton
- Adam Moliver, Cheltenham
- Klim Seabright, Cheltenham

Grade 2 Association

- Nigel Polhill, Ealing
- Jolyon Creasy, Tunbridge Wells
- Jonathan Isaacs, Sussex County
- Richard Jackson, Sussex County

Golf Croquet Skills

by Dave Kibble

Golf Croquet offers an almost endless range of possibilities that can keep the mind fully occupied, whilst a single stroke can achieve only one or two things (run the hoop, clear oppo, take position, block oppo, or promote partner). Which is right, and exactly how to play it, needs consideration of where the balls are now, what is most likely to succeed for you and what oppo might do next.



◆ Having decided on the right shot, a key skill is to play it well, which though obvious, is not easy. First, make sure that you know it is the right shot, there is no room for doubt in this game.

It really doesn't matter if it has a low chance of success: when you know it's right, you can play it with confidence and will do it as well as is possible—no one could do more. Before you play it, visualise in your mind exactly what is going to happen, where the balls will end up, how they will get there, what it will sound like, what it will feel like when that happens. Remember how well you did it in your last few practice sessions. Then concentrate on what you are doing—be sure you see the mallet strike your ball.

◆ When playing a positional shot, look for a play that has a big margin around success—if you under-hit or over-hit slightly, will it still be a good shot? Often, the ideal spot is not the place to aim for: aim for the middle of the range where your shot could end up that still achieves the desired result—and choose a shot where that range is biggest. For example, if you opt to block a ball, the closer to the ball you are trying to block the larger is the target area. Of course, if you are trying to block as well as taking position there's a different ideal aiming point than if you are only trying to block. Generally, play along a line at a sharp angle to the line you are trying to block—if you play directly across the blocking line, you have a much smaller margin for error than if you play almost along it. Also, the nearer you go to the ball you are trying to block, the greater your margin (but if you go too close, you risk them being able to use your ball as ammunition—to avoid that, stay over a yard away).

◆ Clearing a ball some distance whilst holding position is a vital skill: if you can keep your balls near the hoop and send oppo to the other side of the lawn, you should win the hoop. Many people think holding position has something to do with playing a stop-shot action—let's dispel that myth: a smooth swing with follow-through is always right unless there is a danger that the mallet will catch up with your ball after it hits something nearby (causing a double tap fault). Holding position is determined only by precisely hitting the middle of the other ball and how much your ball is rolling—the harder you hit, the further your ball skids and so will stop on impact—the harder you hit, the further oppo goes and the less chance they have of gaining control.

◆ Returning to the idea of what is most likely to succeed for you; when selecting the right shot, you must be realistic and base your decision on self-knowledge, gained from practice sessions. Top players are good on hitting clearances—at lower levels, attempts often "clear" both balls. Outside the top few, attempting the hoop is often a better option than attempting to clear. Sometimes it's possible to clear an oppo to a distant boundary and for you to go off the boundary in front of the hoop, not quite as useful as clear and hold but much better than clearing both balls. You need to know how your usual clearance attempt varies with the initial distance between balls—practise 1-foot, 2-foot, etc.—aim for centre ball and for your ball to stop (hit hard). Please don't practise missing, practise hitting—increase the distance only when you are near 100%.

◆ Taking better position is often stronger than attempting a low-chance hoop—know from your practice what sort of hoops you almost always run (sticking in the hoop is usually OK) and those you are quite likely to bounce off (usually not OK). Taking position rather than attempting to run the hoop is a strong tactical option, not an expression of weakness. Be realistic and fight off those over-optimistic urges to be rash. It feels great when it comes off, but if most of the time it does not work then there is a more-likely-to-win option.

◆ When faced with an angled hoop it can be difficult to know where to aim: it is best to visualise the ball going through

the hoop and to follow that path. A routine to fall back on, as with everything, is to aim at the centre of the area of success. For running a hoop, the extremes are skimming the near wire and centre-ball on the middle of the far wire. Stand back from the ball and sight the line of each of those extremes—place one foot on each so moving your head above one foot sees the ball edge skim the near wire, and above the other foot sees the ball centre in line with the far wire centre—then, looking only at your ball, walk up and strike through the ball with a smooth follow-through action (so the ball is rolling, not skidding, when it gets to the hoop). You'll never fail an angled hoop again.

◆ Practice is repeating the same stroke several times so you get better at it—playing lots of “friendly” games is not practising. Practice allows you to develop a routine so that in a match you can focus on the routine and rise above the tension. Practice allows you to know what you can do—what you are best at—so you can judge properly the relative chances of success for different strokes in each turn. Practice builds your confidence.

◆ In practice, friendlies, and matches always pursue your routine; every stroke, every time, no matter how trivial: visualise, grip, stance, stalk, watch, and follow-through.

◆ The key skills to practise for Golf Croquet are: stop-clear from one to four feet (centre ball to send it 20+ yards), run one-foot odd numbered hoop cleanly up to next one, taking position from distance (e.g. hoop 1 from corner IV), jump shots. Practise to improve, to know your abilities and to build your confidence—and enter tournaments to accelerate your improvement.

The Croquet Academy – The first five years

by Jonathan Isaacs

In 2007 the idea of creating a Croquet Academy as “a centre of excellence” for croquet coaching was agreed following discussions between the Croquet Association (CA), the South East Croquet Federation (SECF) and Sussex County Croquet Club (SCCC). For many years SCCC has had a tradition as a coaching centre running courses on behalf of the South East Croquet Federation as well as the Summer School. It was felt that by using the extra resources of the CA, the SCCC coaching organisation would be ideal as a centre of excellence for croquet coaching. It ticked a number of boxes: it had an established pool of experienced qualified coaches, a sizeable number of lawns, a suitable meeting room and catering infrastructure and above all a desire to raise the standard of coaching to new heights.



The Academy formed its first committee in the autumn of 2007 with representatives of the CA, the SECF and some coaches forming the committee. An initial programme was developed covering both Association and Golf Croquet and the first series of courses were run in 2008.

From the outset the Academy sought to improve. Courses included feedback questionnaires which were analysed by committee members and from these changes and improvements

made. The feedback showed a need for more specialised courses and for more detailed accompanying manuals. As a result, a number of new courses have been developed including a two-day Golf Croquet Improvers Course, a three-day Triple Peel Course, an Introduction and Development Course in Advanced Play and a Guide to Successful Tournament Management. All of these courses have been successful and are helping players and managers to improve their performance.

The Academy has appealed to a wide audience for its standard courses. Attendees have come from the far corners of the UK and Eire as well as many European countries including Switzerland, Austria and Sweden. One intrepid croquet player even came over from the USA. In addition the Academy developed tailor-made courses not only for a number of UK based clubs but also for Norway and France. The latter course was conducted in French!

In 2012 the Academy has piloted an Introduction to Association Croquet Course for Golf Croquet Players. The recent CA survey has shown a need for such a course and there is evidence to suggest that the disciplines of Association Croquet can help to improve the performance level of Golf Croquet players. A complete set of comprehensive manuals has been developed to accompany each course. Apart from giving details of course content they also



Participants and coaches gather at an Academy Course. Photo by Jonathan Isaacs

give attendees a number of practice routines to act as a follow up to each course.

Another interesting innovation has been the introduction of a Supervised Tournament for high bisquers. A number of beginners and improvers expressed some trepidation at the thought of entering the tournament scene. This tournament was designed to give them a chance to make that early step in a sheltered, friendly environment with coaches available to advise players during or after each game. In 2012 the Academy will be running the third such tournament.

Looking forward, the Academy is already planning the 2013 programme. This will include a three-day development course in AC handicap play. Feedback from the CA Bronze course has suggested that there is a need for a more comprehensive course perfecting the basics and taking players forward towards single handicap play. A number of attendees on the CA Bronze Course felt the need for extra time to improve their knowledge and skill in items such as break management, leaves, the use of cannons,

picking up the fourth ball and effective use of bisques. The Introduction and Development Course in Advanced Play will be extended from two to three days to give attendees more time in perfecting the basics and gaining confidence with the setting up of leaves and peels.

From its birth in 2007 the Academy has moved a long way in developing a true centre of excellence for both Association and Golf Croquet. None of this would have been possible without the true dedication of the coaches, some of whom have travelled long distances, and all of whom have given freely of their time for the love of our sport.

Laws

You are the Referee

by Ian Vincent and Bill Arliss

This is the first of a series of articles inspired by a suggestion from the late David Purdon and the football series "You are the Ref". It is intended to be of interest to all players, rather than a specialist column for trained referees (who should know the answers already!) Remember that in the absence of an external referee, the players are joint referees of their own game, and for many club games the only person they can call on to provide an independent judgement may be another player.

Some apparently similar situations may occur in both Golf and Association Croquet, but because the laws of the two games are not the same, the decisions may differ significantly, as in the problem posed in this issue.

Situation:

Ian was asked about this, as it relates to Association Croquet, twice in the same week. The players agree that the player of Blue has just committed a fault (such as a double tap, under Law 28 in AC or 13 in GC) but are not sure what should happen next. They are aware that any points scored in the stroke are cancelled and that the adversary (non-offender, in this case Ray, the player of Red and Yellow) has an option of whether any balls moved are left as they are or are put back to where they were before the stroke

was played, but does that decision have to be made before or after the player of Blue and Black (Bab) decides to take a bisque (or extra turn)? If Ray knows that he is going to play next, he may prefer them to be put back, but not if Bab is going to have another go at the stroke she just played.

Association Croquet Decision:

Ray has to decide whether the balls should be replaced or not before Bab has to decide whether or not to take a bisque. This is spelt out in Law 37(h). (You wouldn't have found it by just looking under Law 28 because it is a handicap game, and Parts 1 and 2 of the Laws only cover level play). The principle is that the fault is remedied as part of the turn in which it was committed and only then does the player with bisques have to decide whether to use one to play the next turn, or let her opponent play.

Golf Croquet Decision:

Although it is not spelt out, it makes sense for Bab to decide first whether or not to take an extra turn, because only if she does not does Ray have a choice of whether the balls are replaced or not. Again you need to look at the handicap Law 16(f), which states "When a player decides to play an additional turn after committing a striking fault, Law 13(b)1 does not apply and the balls are replaced in the position they occupied before the fault was committed". (Law 13(b)1 gives the opponent the choice of replacing or leaving balls where they lie after a fault.). Note that Bab's decision is irrevocable either way, as Law 16(f) goes on to say that if Bab decides to take an extra turn after committing a striking fault, then once the balls have been replaced she loses her right to change her mind and not take one after all, and ends with the general rule that once she has indicated that she does not want to take an extra turn then she cannot change her mind and take one. (These provisions avoid the need to mark the position where the balls ended up, and much waste of time, if Bab were indecisive!)

Future Issues:

We are sure that there are many situations like the above which regularly cause puzzlement amongst many players and could be helped with a simple clarification. Please email your ideas for future columns in this series to either of us (using the addresses given on the inside front cover).

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2012 CA Survey Report

OMINOUS TRENDS - The 2012 Survey of Croquet Players

Report by Kevin Carter

The Survey of Croquet Players conducted by the CA Marketing Committee this year includes some encouraging news but also reveals some ominous trends which require action by the CA, Federations and clubs

This was the third quinquennial survey of croquet players. **The objectives of the 2012 survey included:**

- a refreshing of the data in the 2002 and 2007 surveys, for on-going use, to attract sponsors and serve as a foundation for strategy and plans;
- to measure what has changed in the last five years and to identify trends;
- to explore growth and recruitment issues, and hence to support another major initiative being developed by the CA;
- to focus on what its Associate members want from the CA - both to satisfy existing Associates and to obtain clues of how to increase membership numbers.

Questionnaires were sent out with Fixture Books and an online version was also made available on the CA website. In order to ensure a good response from Non-associates, as well as CA Members, club secretaries were asked to seek respondents from among their members.

By 4th March (when the online response mechanism was closed), **708 online responses** had been received and **312 paper responses** were entered into the database. **Of this total of 1020 responses 527 had been logged from Associates and a further 404 were from Non-associates.**

This response was very satisfactory; it **provided a very robust sample.**

Unlike in the two previous surveys, respondents were asked their geographic location by CA Federation. This enabled comparisons to be made between Federations. By analysing certain responses it

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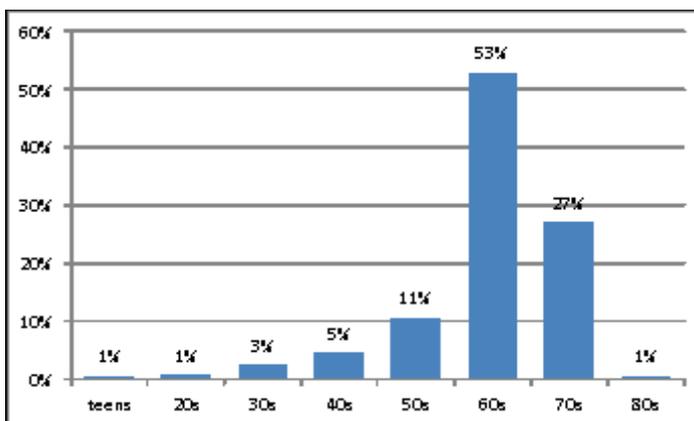
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was also possible to classify respondents as Competitive / Non-competitive and Predominately AC / Predominately GC. These too enabled interesting comparisons to be made.

Key Findings

The key finding from this survey came as a result of profiling recruits to croquet over the past five years (defined as joining a club for the first time in the last five years). **We have seen a major demographic shift.** Their age distribution is shown below:



81% of all new recruits are over 60 and the median age is 65. This is a huge worry.

In the 2007 survey we found the median age for all croquet players was 65 (i.e. half are below it and half above). Given that all of those who were recruited to croquet before 2007 have since aged five years and that many of the older ones have died or ceased playing in the intervening period, **we needed new, younger blood. We did not get it. Instead, the median age of all croquet players has now risen to 68.**

Taking the samples in 2007 and 2012 to predict the total number of players in croquet in each age band, we found that the number of under-50s dropped 26% - in just these five years! Indeed the under-30s almost halved, from 121 to 66 (out of 6110 members of clubs).

Of the new recruits, **we find that 49% are Non-competitive Players and 23% Competitive Players** (the remainder indeterminate). **62% are Predominately GC Players and 20% Predominately AC Players.**

If these trends are continued - if the next five years is like the last five, and then we have another five years of the same, and another - we can build a picture of what English croquet will look like in the future.

It seems that the trickle of players leaving the game increases for players in their 60s, and it becomes a flood for those in their 70s; **few croquet players remain in the game beyond their early 80s** (though some stay on to help out and socialise).

In 25 years most of today's players in their 50s will no longer be in the game, and almost none of those now in their 60s or older.

Continued on Page 16

The Croquet Association Accounts

Comments on the 2011 Accounts

Total income and total expenditure in 2011 differed little from the previous year, but this masks significant changes in several individual items in the Income & Expenditure Account.

Thus subscription income rose by £8,200 (rounded to the nearest £100), mainly due to increased subscription rates. Contributions from individual members grew by just over 6%, in line with expectations, but club subscriptions rose by nearly 12%, a result considerably affected by the influx of new clubs over recent years. Council is extremely grateful to all members for this magnificent support.

This extra revenue was counterbalanced by a £2,000 fall in levies (on entries to club tournaments advertised in the Fixtures Book), the £3,100 net cost of hosting the Bestinvest GC World Championship – despite the very generous sponsorship which enabled the CA to hold the event – and £2,000 less from donations.

On the expenditure side, grants increased by £7,800 to a record £30,200 (net after the generous return of the previous year's grant to Budleigh Salterton). This included 10 equipment grants to new clubs and 7 development grants. The extra cost was, however, largely offset by savings in international activities, where the 2010 figure included £6,800 for hosting the MacRobertson Shield. The Gazette also cost £2,100 less due to the relatively short-lived trial using an external publisher. It is also notable that total administration costs rose by only 0.5%, despite a £1,500 increase in the cost of meetings, due to increased room hire charges and travel expenses.

The CA's estimated tax liability remained low largely as a consequence of continuing difficult trading conditions. The Shop's turnover actually increased by around 8%, but squeezed profit margins and stock revaluations led to a fall of £1,700 in net revenue from this source

Overall the year's activities generated a modest surplus after tax of £3,000, slightly smaller than the previous year. This was again insufficient to protect the CA's reserves against erosion from inflation, but I suggest that there is no cause for concern here. Indeed, the CA has effectively used a small part of its relatively strong reserves to provide a record level of grant aid to clubs, thereby supporting development across the country and investing in the future of croquet.

The Notes show that one of the CA's investments in government stock matured during the year. It was decided to delay reinvestment for the present, but £50,000 was placed in a one-year fixed term deposit account with a reasonable interest rate in current market conditions.

Apart from transferring income attributable to the invested special funds and strengthening the newly established Building Maintenance Fund, the accounts show no substantial movements between the general and special funds. In a year of exceptional expenditure on grants, there is a case for meeting part of that cost from the Development Fund. Council has, however, been reviewing the CA's reserves policy and any adjustment to the Development Fund has been deferred to 2012 when there is likely to be a substantial restructuring of the special funds.

A more detailed commentary on the 2011 Accounts will be published on the CA website and distributed at the AGM in October.

Roger Bray
Honorary Treasurer

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

Independent Examiner's report to the Council of the Croquet Association

I report on the accounts of the Association for the year ended 31 December 2011.

Respective responsibilities of the Council and Examiner

The Council is responsible for

- maintaining proper accounting records,
- maintaining adequate systems of internal control and
- preparing the accounts.

The Association's constitution requires that an independent examination is carried out and it is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Council. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Association and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the Council concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (i) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records have not been met with regard to the accounting year ended 31 December 2011; or
- (ii) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2011 to be reached.

Marian Hemsted
Accountant

Reed House, The Street, Plaxtol,
Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 0QL
24th March, 2012

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

	2011	2010
£	£	£
Income from:		
Subscriptions:		
Individuals	57,183	53,843
Clubs	45,868	41,032
Levies	12,612	14,635
Surplus (deficit) of income from -		
Commercial activities	32,876	33,511
Sponsored events	(3,131)	-
Tournaments	2,164	2,558
Investments	5,766	4,931
Donations & Royalties	174	2,243
Total Income	153,512	152,753
Expenditure on:		
Publications	17,827	19,923
Marketing & Development	3,627	2,509
International activities	1,251	8,083
Direct expenditure on Clubs & Federations		
Grants to Clubs & Federations	30,329	22,537
Legal liability insurance scheme	5,307	4,767
Central administration costs:		
Staff costs	61,378	61,364
Office building & equipment depreciation	6,172	7,110
Office overheads	4,179	5,011
Office services	6,838	6,070
Meetings expenses	11,297	9,783
Professional fees and expenses	840	1,265
Sundry expenses	604	299
Direct debit and related charges	837	748
Total Expenditure	150,486	149,469
Surplus for the year before taxation	3,026	3,284
Provision for Corporation Tax		
year ended 31st December 2011	-	266
adjustment for prior year	(14)	(666)
	(14)	(400)
Surplus for the year after taxation	3,040	3,684
Net transfer from/(to) special funds	(3,523)	(1,617)
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year transferred		
(from)/to General Fund	<u>(483)</u>	<u>2,067</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2011

	Note
Fixed Assets	1
Office Building - net book value	2,3
Office & Croquet equipment- net book value	3
Trophies at valuation	
Investments at cost	4
Current Assets	
Loans to Clubs	-
Stock held for resale	1 30,
Debtors & prepayments	9
Cash at bank and in hand	147,
VAT reclaimable	
	188,
Current Liabilities	
Receipts in advance	3,
Creditors & accrued expenses	24,
VAT liability	
Provision for taxation	(
	27,
Net current assets	
Net Assets	
<i>Financed by:</i>	
General Fund	
Balance at 1 January 2010	
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year from Income & Expenditure	
Amount (deducted from)/retained in General Fund	
Special Funds	5
B A Keen	
Chairman of Council	
R W Bray	
Treasurer	

Continued from page 12

This means that only a few hundred of today's players will remain and any others will have to be recruited in the meantime. **If the number of new recruits below middle age remains very low - as it was over the past five years - then croquet will be very different in 2037 compared to today.**

For one thing, **the pool of under-50s, which today contains most elite players which fill our national teams will have shrunk considerably.**

Over the past five years 80% of all new recruits were in their 60s or 70s. On average they will play croquet for a decade or so. This is considerably less than in the recent past, when almost a third in any snapshot had played for over twenty years and a sizeable minority for over forty.

Given the much shorter period for which most players will in future remain in the game, the rate of recruitment will have to roughly double from today's rate just to maintain similar total numbers; if it remains at the same rate then total numbers in 25 years will decline considerably.

As the ratio of Non-competitors to Competitive continues to grow and the ratio of Predominately GC players to Predominately AC players also does so, we shall see **a considerable fall in tournament and league entries and GC will dominate croquet.**

All of these things will happen if the trends continue. In fact, there is reason to believe they could worsen still further:

- Most new players are introduced to the game by friends and relations - like-minded people. So, an older playing population is more likely to recruit even more older players.
- Falling numbers of players in many clubs will damage their finances and their ability to maintain facilities, leading to closures and in some cases players having no alternative club.
- If tournament and league entries fall then there will be fewer tournaments and leagues, and so the necessity for long-distance travel will be greater, leading to fewer entries still.
- Now that AC and GC are roughly equally balanced in English croquet, we know that AC is being crowded out of some GC-oriented clubs. When GC is three times greater than AC we shall see a substantial fall in clubs offering any AC, meaning that many who prefer this variant will give up the game.

Turning to the effect on the CA, **a smaller number of players overall, along with an ever-decreasing proportion who are competitive and become Associates will put a strain on CA finances.** Its current model will be unsustainable in well under 25 years and it will have to change to survive.

Trends can be reversed. The most important is the demographic trend towards recruiting older people into croquet. **If the CA can restore its ability to recruit the younger - definitely under 50 and ideally those of university or school age - then this alone will provide a solid platform. If the CA can additionally orient its recruitment towards more competitive players then its stated *raison d'être* - to promote competitive croquet - will be fulfilled.**

Other Important Findings

Sex ratio

The proportion of females in croquet is trending downwards - 34% in 2002, 29% in 2007 and 27% in 2012. This is despite the fact that almost half of the still growing subset of GC players are female.

Federations

Overall, there are no great differences between the Federations.

The SE Fed is slightly more competitive, while East Anglia and the North have the least competitiveness.

Comparatively, the SW and NW Feds are AC strongholds, while GC has a greater foothold in the South, E Midlands and Yorks & Humberside.

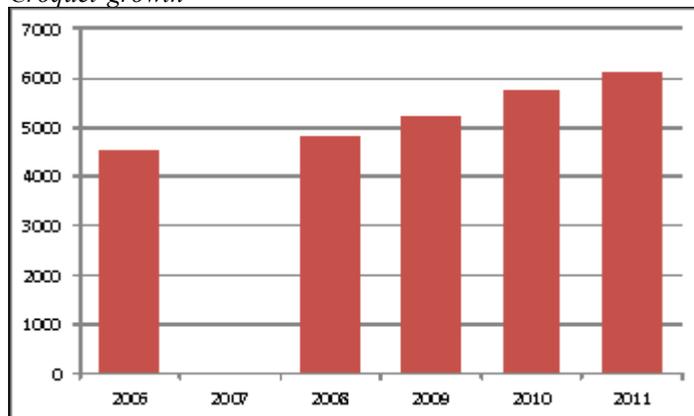
The NW fed has a greater proportion of females than elsewhere.

Education, employment and income

Each of our surveys has asked a variety of questions in this category. As usual, we have had many objections to our asking, largely on the grounds of their 'maintaining elitism'. However, **the main reason these questions are included is to establish data which will impress advertisers and sponsors. This data could be used rather more than it has been in the past:**

- 55% of respondents are graduates (a little lower for Non-competitive players and for Predominately GC Players).
- Three-quarters are retired and most of the rest are in full-time or part-time employment.
- 47% of all Associates are, or were before retirement, qualified professionals.
- The average household income of those in full-time employment is £67,000; the average household income of retired players is £37,000.

Croquet growth



Since 2007 the number of Member Clubs has increased from 142 to 185. This is because more clubs previously outside of the CA have become members and also because of some new clubs.

The number of members of CA Member clubs has increased 34% over the past five years, to 6,110. The increased number of clubs is one reason; another is successful recruiting, albeit concentrating on social players, mainly of GC.

Turning to **CA Individual Members** ('Associates'), we find a rather less spectacular increase: 1,640 at the time of the 2007 survey and 1,751 now - **a rise of 7% over the five years.**

Given this rise in the number of club players, allied to a much shallower rise in the number of Individual Members, **the ratio of CA Members to club members has been falling steadily. In 2002 it stood at 45%; by 2007 it had dropped to 36% and it is now 29%.**

This should be a cause of concern to the CA, with little over a quarter of players choosing to belong to their national association and every prospect of a continuing drop.

Types of croquet played

Respondents were asked how frequently they played various types of croquet: AC handicap, GC, Doubles, Matches, Tournaments, etc. Results were compared to those for the same question in 2007:

- **Among Associates the most popular variant, AC Handicap, has now almost been matched by GC** after the former has dropped back slightly and the latter has surged forward.
- **Friendlies are very popular among both Associates and Non-associates.**
- **Not many Non-associates play in tournaments within their own region** - only 3% frequently and another 12% occasionally. These statistics do not support the Feds' contention that they organise lots of local tournaments for clubs' more competitive Non-associates.
- **Only 16% of Associates play frequently in CA Fixture Book tournaments outside of their region.**

Opinions

Sixteen questions were put to respondents to see how much they agreed or disagreed with various issues, many relating to CA policies. One set was to do with growth and recruitment issues:

- Overwhelmingly, respondents say the CA is right to promote competitive croquet more strongly than social play.
- We had an immense agreement that the CA need not concern itself with promoting non-competitive or social croquet; this is the job of the clubs.
- Another very strong result told us that the CA should concentrate on recruiting likely competitive players.

These last two results were rerun for Non-competitive players only. Results show that such players often feel they don't need the CA to take a hand in what they want out of croquet.

- Most players want croquet to grow substantially.

Overall, these results do provide a mandate to the CA to formulate an aggressive Growth and Recruitment Strategy which concentrates on recruiting into the game more people who are likely to play competitively.

- Two questions addressed social croquet stifling competitive play. The results show that there is evidence of social croquet stifling competitive play, but it might not be as strong as anecdotal evidence suggests.
- When asked whether **the CA should run coaching courses to introduce AC to GC players**, we saw a very positive response, and surprisingly this was almost as great for Predominately GC Players as for others.

A further set of questions addressed financial issues:

- One addressed club finances and results suggest that the finances of many clubs remain precarious and the first priority is to get in more members.
- The next showed that over half of respondents thought that CA funds should be strengthened in order that they can be used for development and recruitment.
- Over 50% of respondents are prepared to pay more for croquet - club subscriptions, tournament fees, etc. [In commercial surveys any suggestion of price increases is generally met with a clamour of dissent. 50% should be seen as a huge positive.]
- CA Individual Tournament Membership is seen as good value.
- CA Club membership of the CA ('Capitation Fee') is seen as good value.

These responses taken together demonstrate considerable price inelasticity in croquet. They suggest that the CA should raise more and spend more.

Lastly, three-quarters of respondents (including almost half being Non-associates) felt **the CA should be concerned that little over a quarter of all players joined as Individual Members.**

The full report of the survey can be found at <http://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=662>

Window on the World Croquet Federation



By Martin French, Secretary-General

Last issue, I gave an introduction to the World Croquet Federation – now in its 23rd year - and explained the basic set-up: 30 national associations form the Council, with the larger ones having voting powers, and the day-to-day activity controlled by a Management Committee.

What's been happening in March and April?

Our main focus has been the final preparations for the 13th WCF Association Croquet World Championship, which took place at 10 venues in Adelaide between 28th April and 6th May. The actual events are staged by a host nation, who provide the tournament director, manager, referee and a large organising committee. So in this case, the Australian Croquet Association bid to host the event which was staged in Adelaide by the South Australian Croquet Association. Once the event is set-up, the WCF's role is to:

- ◆ decide how many entrants each country is entitled to
- ◆ accept the entries and get from each person their entry fee, biography and photo for the programme
- ◆ choose some "wild card" entries – to ensure anyone with a realistic chance of winning the event can get a place
- ◆ make sure the trophy and medals get to the venue in time

◆ ensure the right regulations are agreed and deal with any necessary changes requested by the host.

Everything else is done by the host country (or in this case, the state of South Australia) and the actual venues and their volunteers.

The event went really well, with few problems reported – despite the complications of using 10 different venues in and around the city of Adelaide. Many congratulations to Reg Bamford (South Africa, but living in Surrey) who retained the trophy – the magnificent Wimbledon Cup. This trophy was presented by the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club to the CA for the first WCF Association Croquet World Championship in London in 1989. In turn, the CA has generously made indefinite loan of the trophy to the WCF for subsequent world championships.

What else has been happening? We've been working on the inaugural Women's AC World Championship, which will be held in Cairnlea, Australia this October. We're also preparing the first GC World Team Championship. The GC WTC has attracted 16 entries, an ideal number to fill two divisions, each of 8 teams of 4 players. The 1st Division (which includes England) will play in Jo'burg at the end of November, and the 2nd Division (which includes Wales and Scotland) will play in Cairo in early December. David Openshaw has kindly offered to donate a trophy for the 1st Division, which will come to sit alongside the MacRobertson Shield as the croquet world's top team events.

I hope next time to be able to tell you about our new website – but then I've been hoping that for some months now, so you never know!

45%. I hope that the scale of these figures shows the continued commitment that the CA has to the development of the game across the country.

Recent demand for development aid has grown significantly, partly because of local authority council cut-backs, and the resulting need for clubs on council grounds to take action either to move location or to take over grounds maintenance for themselves. We believe it is essential for the CA to put resources into helping clubs in this situation, so that the facilities across the country do not suffer. It should be said, however, that we can only help with one-off capital costs, and not the ongoing running costs. Because of this support, the current year's development budget is higher than it has ever been. It is now at a level which necessitates using some of the reserves we have accumulated for this purpose, as we will be unable to meet the demand entirely out of income for the year.

Clearly, providing grants on this scale has a cost associated with it to our members. One of the debates we are expecting to have soon is a review of the scale of grants, and their implication to membership cost. However, the recent survey of croquet players has shown, unusually for any organisation, that most members regard subscriptions (both individual and club) as very good value for money, and furthermore they see the CA's commitment to development of the game as important. The debate is therefore likely to centre on whether we should be aiming at increasing the scale of funds for development rather than reducing them (which implies increasing subscriptions for clubs and/or individual members to pay for them). We would like to hold a debate on this topic at the next AGM in October, to help guide the CA Council's deliberations.

Inside Council

Using the Croquet Association's resources

By Jeff Dawson, Vice Chairman

A few issues have been debated (and in some cases continue to be debated) by the CA Council, regarding how the CA's resources are allocated and used. This article aims to let you know about these debates, and hopefully will give you an insight as to how we view some of these issues.



Development grants

Those of you who study the CA's accounts will have noticed that grants to Clubs and Federations account for one of the largest items of expenditure – over £30,000 in 2011. Over the last 11 years we have made 140 awards, at a total cost of about £225,000. We view these grants as one of the most effective ways to develop croquet in this country, to improve club facilities and thus to promote competition around the country. It is hard to find a more effective way of developing the game than to put resources into helping enthusiasts to develop their own facilities on a local level. Partly as a result of these grants, the number of full member clubs over the last 9 years has grown from 118 to 171, an increase of about

International Funds

The CA Council have also agreed to an increased budget to support our teams playing overseas, and to help fund international events we hold here. Until now, players who play in the MacRobertson Shield (Association Croquet's premier team event) have had all transport and accommodation costs paid for them. However, for any other team event (such as the Solomon Trophy, played between GB and the USA) players have had no financial support, and similarly players who enter a tournament as an individual (e.g. the world championships) get no financial support.

This has been amended firstly to bring Golf Croquet onto a par with Association, in that we will fund players entering their recently introduced premier team event on the same basis as for the MacRobertson Shield. Secondly, we will be helping with travel costs only for some of the other top-class team events. There is no planned change to help fund individuals in the world championships, although it should be noted that there are bursary funds available in cases of need (see below).

This change has been made with the backdrop of increasingly tough international competition, and the loss by the GB team on the last two occasions in the Solomon Trophy. We won the recent MacRobertson shield, but the feeling was that this could easily have gone the other way. We believe that if we are to stay at the forefront of croquet, we need to support our top players, so that they can get the experience they need to help win these major events. This view was supported by a recent survey of the top players, which showed that many (particularly of the younger, up and coming players) are discouraged from playing in events like the Solomon Trophy because of the high costs associated with

doing so. Being the world leaders in these competitions helps to foster national pride in the game, and gives us all a boost.

The increase in funding necessary for these additional commitments is a relatively modest £2,500 per year.

The CA's Reserves.

We have recently undertaken a review of the reserves held by the CA, and an assessment of what we really need. Reserves are necessary for many reasons, mainly to do with potential risks the organisation may face, such as fraud, theft, or a major catastrophe such as losing the office and shop through fire. While much of this will be covered by insurance, it is necessary to hold reserves to enable us to remain active until the insurance pays out! We have concluded that the reserves we held against these potential risks were probably too low, and have set a higher target figure which should ensure we can weather any major hiccup.

However, at the same time we have taken the view that the reserves held in the development fund (currently some £102K) are higher than they need to be. This is because until recently, all grants have been funded out of income, and indeed on a long-term basis it is important that they should be, since any reserve will not last forever. The reserves are therefore there to act as a buffer to see us over particularly difficult times when we need to spend more than usual on development support – exactly as is the case due to local authority council cutbacks at the moment. On this basis, we feel a reserve of £65K should be more than adequate.

It should be stressed that in planning to re-balance the reserves, there is no intent to reduce our commitment to providing this type of grant in the future, and indeed as has already been said, we will be reviewing soon whether to increase available funds.

We have also agreed that we can reduce the amount held in the international fund. Again, this is because in practice costs must be met out of income, and with the increasing number of international events being held, expenditure has become more regular and predictable. The plan is to reduce the fund to £10K, which should be ample to cover the peaks and troughs of spending over the new 4-year cycle.

CA DIPLOMAS

Nominations, by clubs or federations, of people who have performed exceptional service are invited for the award of a CA Diplomas. Diplomas were first awarded in 2000 and are intended primarily to recognise the work done by the many volunteers who do so much “behind the scenes” to provide the facilities, service and organisation that we all enjoy, but so easily take for granted.

Nominations should be sent to the CA Office by 1st August, together with a short (approx 100 words) citation that will be published when the awards are made. Diplomas are normally presented at the AGM (which this year is at Hurlingham on 20th October), but arrangements can be made to present them locally if the recipient is unable to be there.

Ian Vincent, Hon. Secretary

Finally, in the interests of clarity, we propose to discontinue the separate benefactor's fund. Instead, funds received from our benefactors will be put immediately into the appropriate fund depending on the benefactor's wishes (usually development, but sometimes international or elsewhere). This should help to keep clear just what funds are available in each area.

I hope this gives you a better view of what goes on with the CA's money. We would be very interested to hear your views on any of these issues, so please feed back your comments to any member of council, or perhaps in a letter to the Gazette.

Background on development grant allocation

As it is relevant to this article, it would be useful to provide some additional information on development grants and how they are allocated. So, who are the Development Committee? Some are members of Council, including particularly the CA Treasurer, Roger Bray, and the current Chairman of Development, Peter Death. But the majority of the committee are Federation Development Officers (FDOs), the people who work with the clubs in their Federations and are the first point of contact for clubs looking for assistance. If you want to find out who your FDO is, look under ‘Clubs and Federations’ on the CA website www.croquet.org.uk, where all the contact details are available. They meet in London twice a year during the close season, and can be in contact by e-mail at other times.

There are two main sorts of Development aid:

New Club grants. When a new club first joins the CA, we are able to let them have a start-up kit of hoops for one lawn, one set of balls and four mallets. If the club remains a member of the CA for 5 years, the kit passes into their ownership: before that, it remains the property of the local Federation, and reverts to the Federation if the club does not survive.

Development Grants: Where an established club wants to make improvements, such as relaying its lawns, upgrading its pavilion or installing an irrigation system – to give just 3 examples of projects we have supported recently – the Development Committee can consider grant assistance if certain conditions are met.

1. Grant aid from the CA will never be more than 50% of the cost of the project.
2. We will not assist with running costs of a club, or with items which the club should have made provision for. So if you need to buy a mower for the first time because your landlord has stopped providing mowing services, we can help, but if you want to replace the mower you have been using for years, we won't.
3. There are upper limits on the size of grant that can be awarded, determined by the number of full-sized courts that the applicant club has, or will have if the project is to increase the number of lawns. The limit is £1,000 for clubs with fewer than 2 courts, and £5,000 for others. Exceptionally, a grant of up to £10,000 may be available to enable a club with 4 or more lawns to be developed in an area where there is a need.
4. We don't make awards where the work has been carried out before the grant application is approved.
5. We look for the club to have some security of tenure at its premises, and for the club constitution to make it clear that in the event of the club folding up, the assets

will stay within the croquet world, at CA or Federation level.

6. Grants are normally repayable if the recipient club ceases to be a member of the CA within 10 years.

The CA may be able to make a loan to a club instead of, or to supplement a grant. These are usually interest-free, and the repayment period can be negotiated, although 3 to 5 years is typical. The CA usually requires personal guarantees from individuals connected with the club, to protect its position if the club is unable to repay the loan.

Application forms can be downloaded from the CA website via CA Information, Downloads and Forms. The form has guidance notes attached, but the first step for any potential applicant is to contact the FDO for advice.

Background on Bursary fund

The Croquet Association (CA) provides bursaries to support

the expenses of members who aspire to or have achieved International standard at Association Croquet or Golf Croquet and wish to participate in events of that standard. The aim of the fund is to encourage the development of our international players by reducing the financial obstacle for those who could not otherwise play. The fund is primarily aimed at junior development, but it is also available to others who meet the criteria.

Players must apply for funds in advance of the spend, and the maximum grant per player is £500 (which must be no more than 50% of the total expense incurred).

In recent years, the CA has budgeted around £2K each year for this purpose, but the fund is in practice under-used. This may be because not enough people are aware of its existence, or perhaps because no-one likes to admit they need financial help. Pleased don't be shy in making an application if you think it would make a difference to you. Full details together with an application form are available on the CA website www.croquet.org.uk (look under CA information, downloads and forms).

The 13th WCF Association Croquet World Championship

28th APRIL TO 6th MAY 2012, ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

Report by James Hopgood

Reg Bamford Retains World Title

Held across ten separate venues, with nine countries represented, fifty participants from Australasia, and held in a country with a reputation for interesting refereeing decisions, I had some prior apprehension about how enjoyable the 13th World AC Championship in Adelaide would be. In particular, I was afraid the social aspect would be lacking with players split over multiple venues, some of which were just two lawns, and that it would be difficult to keep up-to-date with results in other matches. I also assumed there would be hours wasted travelling between venues within the busy central business district (CBD), that it would be sweltering hot and uncomfortable, and that at the end of the day everyone would scarp home tired with no evening gatherings.

Fortunately, it's difficult to estimate just how misplaced that apprehension was. This was one of the best organised and most enjoyable Croquet tournaments I've played in. The fact that there were at most a dozen players at each venue meant that, in general, the club volunteers looked after us extremely well, providing very good and reasonably priced breakfasts, lunches and teas, resetting the hoops after each game, and facilitating splendid banter between all those present. This gave a very pleasant atmosphere indeed. The provision of breakfast was particularly important for those of us struggling to get up at half six in time for 7:45am practice.

Organised transport from the South Adelaide Croquet Association (HQ) to the venues made getting around a breeze; being autumn in Australia, the weather was comfortable throughout; and the refereeing was excellent with relatively little incident. Of



Runner-up Robert Fletcher of Australia with Amir Ramis, President of the WCF and Reg Bamford of South Africa, 2012 World Champion, with the Wimbledon Cup. Photo by Leo Nikora.

particular delight was the live reporting of all results via Tim Murphy's croquetscores.com website which was available in all the club pavilions. Bearing in mind that blocks were divided across various venues, usually composed of a mini-block of four at one two-lawn venue and the other six at a three-lawn venue, this made keeping track of all the results straightforward at all times. This is all in contrast to some previous world championship venues where players were arguably exploited by exorbitant food and drink prices, and, while having most matches at one venue sounds great, the separation of four or five lawns meant one had no better idea what was going on than being spread out by several miles.

The event began with an opening ceremony on Friday 27th May, which involved the carrying of country flags, player introductions, a welcoming performance from local indigenous Australian dancers, and a number of speeches. The players' meeting followed afterwards and then, in the evening, a Cocktail Party hosted by the Mayor of Adelaide at his Town Hall; this was a splendid venue and, unlike an equivalent event in the UK, the wine



James Hopgood of Scotland has a sweep shot watched. Photo by James Houser JR.

and canapés were not served sparingly. Thus began a sequence of entertaining social events, including a superb BBQ co-hosted by Robert Fenwick Elliott and Chris and Mark Prater at Robert's house in South Adelaide; a BBQ buffet at HQ following the knock-out draw; and a pub-quiz after the first round of the knock-out stage. Finally, the official tournament dinner was held on the final Saturday evening after the semi-finals at a hotel a short walk from the CBD with its numerous bars and clubs. Usually, HQ was a base to which most players would return at the end of play to get updates on what really happened in the various upsets, have a few beers, check email, and decide what to do on the odd evening that lacked an organised event.

Playing conditions were relatively straightforward, with a few interestingly paced lawns at a couple of venues, but generally easy hoops and flat lawns were the name of the day. While the block results were roughly in line with the rankings, with the exception of a couple of surprise non-qualifiers, the main event saw the seeds drop like flies (although Adelaide was generally free of flies, unlike other parts of Australia). This, in part, was likely due to the equalising factor that easy conditions bring, and the fact that the first round was a best-of-three, meaning that some upsets were always quite likely. Nevertheless, these factors opened up the draw considerably which pleased some of us at least!

The second round onwards consisted of best-of-five matches, with the real surprises being Simon Hockey, an Australian former Mac player who plays relatively infrequently, beating James Death in five games with three triple peels, and Marcus Evans putting on a very fine display by beating Robert Fulford in five games with a fourth-turn quintuple in the last game; Marcus hit the super-shot ball that Robert had played and two-balled around to 2b, and then finished with an interesting and slightly eventful break. Both Robert and Marcus played extremely well, with Marcus playing aggressively to take on the number two player in the world.

The quarter-finals were played at the North Adelaide club, perhaps best known for being the home club of a certain "JR", but nevertheless a very nice club indeed, with four lawns, a very spacious pavilion, and friendly club members. Marcus continued with his excellent form to beat an in-form Malcolm Fletcher in straight games. Malcolm, one of Chris Clarke's "top picks" in his preview in the April Gazette (see Issue 337), had a few good chances, but perhaps



Marcus Evans shooting on his way to the semi-final. Photo by Samir Patel.

was overly aggressive in his play, and Marcus executed each win with a well-controlled triple peel. Stephen Forster had a winning chance in the last game of his match against world number one Reg Bamford, requiring a delayed TP, at which he had shown complete competence in his previous games. This came to grief very early on however, and Reg completed a sextuple to win the match 3-2 in fine style. That said, Stephen recently told me he was playing with Rosie Graham's mallet, so did pretty well overall without using his own mallet! Samir Patel put up some resistance to Robert Fletcher, the world number three, but Robert won through in the end. And we won't talk about the other quarter-final between Hopgood and Hockey, other than to say experience is a necessary part of the process in getting better – and to remind improvers of the importance of being able to approach hoop one from a yard away.

The semi-finals and finals were both played at the SA Headquarters on Hutt Road, and conditions were relatively easy after some substantial rain earlier in the week. This meant that the games were somewhat of a shooting contest. Marcus got off to an excellent start against Robert Fletcher with a 26tp win, but will be disappointed with how the rest of the match went, given he had an excellent chance in the second game. Robert delivered a strong performance winning the next three games. Nevertheless, Marcus had an excellent tournament and will be extremely pleased with a very well deserved semi-final place. Reg had an easier semi-final draw against Simon Hockey, and slipped in a couple of SXPs, which also did wonders for my score in Chris Clarke's fantasy league where entrants "bought" a number of players within a given budget and scored points from wins, peeling turns, and final placing in the tournament. The league title for my team of Bamford, Patel, Hopgood, Evans, McIntosh, and Crashley was never in doubt.

HQ provided a mini-grandstand to host spectators, of which there were a reasonable number for the semi-finals, perhaps forty or so. But the final saw an excellent turn-out, with reports of there being at least two-hundred and fifty spectators at one point. The semi-finals and finals were recorded in High-Definition by James Temlett with an excellent commentary from Chris Clarke and are available online; links to these recordings can be found from the CA website.

To get a true appreciation for the standard of play in the final between Reg Bamford and Robert Fletcher, one really has to watch these videos. In each of the games in the final, the super-shot opening was used, although it wasn't until the fifth game that a ball was hit third-turn with a break to 3b and a fifth turn



Chris Clarke commenting on the final which was recorded on HQ Video. Photo by Samir Patel.

finish. Reg sometimes stops at 3b in order to discourage the TPO, which Robert had successfully completed with a POP in the first game, and there is no point laying for a sextuple third turn. While Reg twice laid up for a sextuple, Robert hit the “tea-lady” both times, and set leaves that encouraged Reg to lift the 1b ball, which he duly did. There were no errors in break play in the final, and Reg only had one pick-up error in the first game after the TPO; now being for hoop 2 with a contact, the opponent’s peg ball in corner 4, and the hoop 1 ball in corner 1, Bamford played the split shot from corner 4 sending the object ball towards hoop 2 going to the ball in corner 1, with the intention of rolling off hoop 2, sending the opponent’s hoop 1 ball to hoop 3. Unfortunately, the striker’s ball went off the south boundary about six yards from Robert’s hoop 1 ball, and from this position Robert finished. Reg’s shooting towards the end of the match was slightly better than Robert’s, in which he hit several lift shots well, and this was what won him the match - 12tpo, +17tp, -26tp, +17tp, +26qp.

Both Reg and Robert played very well, and I expect that Robert will certainly become World Champion in future years. In the meantime, many congratulations to Reg Bamford who wins his fourth World Championship. One final aspect that made the tournament so much fun is the camaraderie between all the players, partners, and many of the volunteers; all the players have a mutual respect for one another and simply seem to enjoy each other’s

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Mark Avery, Winner of the Plate event at the World Championships. Photo by Leo Nikora.

company; it was a pleasure to spend over two weeks amongst friends, old and new. Overall, the tournament was extremely well organised, exceeded my expectations hugely, and I for one look forward to my next tournament in Australia. Well done Adelaide, and well done Reg.

Results of the last 32 knockout:

Round 1: Reg Bamford (SA) bt Hamish McIntosh (NZ) +26tp +26tp, Ian Dumergue (Aus) bt J Dawson (Eng) -24 +20 +4, Stephen Forster (Aus) bt Michael Wright (NZ) +26tp +26, Miranda Chapman (Aus) bt R Beijderwellen (Eng) +17 +7OTP, Simon Hockey (Aus) bt Paddy Chapman (NZ) +26tp -7 +26tp, James Death (Eng) bt Brian Cumming (Can) +26sxp +17, James Hopgood (Sco) bt Peter Landrebe (Aus) +26tp -26tp +26tp, Alan Walsh (Aus) bt David Maugham (Eng) +17 -24tp +26, Robert Fletcher (Aus) bt Chris Shilling (NZ) +26tp +26tp, Harley Watts (Aus) bt Paul Skinley (NZ) +17, -12tp +17, Samir Patel (Eng) bt Martin Clarke +7tp +17tp, Harps Taurangi (NZ) bt Stephen Mulliner (Eng) +17tp +6, Malcolm Fletcher (Aus) bt Aaron Westerby (NZ) -4tp +17tp +26tp, Jenny Clarke (NZ) bt Ian Lines (Eng) +11 +6, Marcus Evans (Eng) bt David Openshaw (Eng) +3tp 26tp, Robert Fulford (Eng) bt Tim O’Leary (Aus) +17tp +16sxp.

Round 2: Bamford bt Dumergue +26sxp +13 +17tp, Forster bt Richardson -3 +26 +17tp +12tp, Hockey bt Death +13tp +5 tp -17tp -26tp +26tp, Hopgood bt Walsh +26 +24tp +15tp, R Fletcher bt Watts +26tp +26tp -26tp +1, Patel bt Taurangi -7tp +16tp +7tp +25tp, M Fletcher bt J Clarke -26tp +17tp +17tp -26tp +17tp, Evans bt Fulford -26tp +20tp -26sxp +3tp +25qnp.

Quarter-finals: Bamford bt Forster +26tp -20tp +21 -17tp +17sxp, Hockey bt Hopgood +19 +7tp -4 -17 +17, R Fletcher bt Patel +26tp +16 -10tp +24tp, Evans bt M Fletcher +26tp +3tp +7tp.

Semi-finals: Bamford bt Hockey +17sxp +26sxp -20tp +26tp, R Fletcher bt Evans -26tp +16tp +26tp +26tp.

Final: Bamford bt Fletcher -12tpo +17tp -26tp +17tp +26qp

Plate Event Knockout:

Keith Aiton (Eng) bt Alan Honey (Aus) +26tp +26tp, Mark Avery (Eng) bt Stephen Richards (Aus) +26tp +6, Trevor Bassett (Aus) bt Stuart Lawrence (USA) -17 +6tp +6tpo, Bruce Fleming (Aus) bt Chris Percival-Smith (Can) +26tp +6.

Semi-final: Avery bt Aiton -5 +17tp +26tp, Bassett bt Fleming +22tp +26tp.

Final: Avery bt Bassett -12tpo +26tp +26tp

Tournament Round-Up

Surbiton Easter Handicap 6-7 April

Report by Samir Patel

Mike Lambert Wins Surbiton Easter Handicap

Four players were unbeaten at the start of day 2. The lawns were in excellent condition, running at around 11 seconds in bright and dry, but chilly, weather. However, all four managed to find themselves on the losing side of one of the day's matches leaving four players still in contention at tea. They were paired up on lawn 2 to provide the closing entertainment for the assembled crowd.

Gary Bennett (0.5) took an early ball to rover against John Reynolds (11), but John used his bisques well to complete a 12-hoop break, the rover peel, and to peg Gary out. By this stage, it had been worked out that while John could tie for the lead, he would lose out in the tie-break, so attention turned to the other match, between Mike Lambert (11) and Margaret Hampson (10).

This was a tight affair which finished, as is the best tradition of handicap play, as dusk started to fall with a +1(t) scoreline in Mike's favour.

Surbiton Easter Advanced 8-9 April

Report by Kevin Carter

Rutger Beijderwollen beats a strong field

Six World Championship Contenders were among 26 players who enjoyed easy conditions (43% of scores had 'letters') and the usual fine food and drink of Surbiton on Easter Sunday and Monday. In the flexible Swiss there were plenty of games for those who wanted them and who played fast enough - even James managed to get in eight....

The first day saw Rutger, Mark, James, Marcus Evans and a resurgent David Openshaw performing as expected, near the head of the leader board. However, the trophy holder, Samir Patel, initially disappointed and Jamie Burch - not in the Worlds squad - was clearly there for the long game, planning a later peak: possibly to win the Reigate Club Championship later in the season. Having said that, Jamie had the unusual distinction of either winning with a TP or losing to one in all of his nine games by the end of the event.

The sensation of the tournament was not among these names. Sam Murray, a fast improver from the Surbiton Club, needed

persuading to enter off his 3 handicap. He won his first three games - becoming the only unbeaten player overnight - then put in a faultless display to beat the manager, so he was then pitched against the best available. David Openshaw beat him, then he lost narrowly to Dick Knapp. In the last game of the tournament Sam played Rutger who put down an SXP, letting Sam in. He went round, Rutger missed the lift and a really major upset was on the cards. Rutger scrambled a win but it needed all his concentration and skill to overcome Sam and hence secure the trophy.

Pendle & Craven 6-9 April, John Beech Easter Tournament

Report by Paul Rigge

Bury member Andy Brandwood becomes the Champion, still less than a year since he took up our sport, continuing Bury Croquet Club's reputation in this event and solidifying all he learnt in last year's CA All England, where he was the beaten finalist.

This year, in a successful attempt to attract a full field, two parallel competitions were contested; the traditional 'base 8 full handicap aka The John Beech' & a new 'level play advanced' event were held.



John's Widow, Kathleen, presenting the JB Trophy to the new Champion Andy. Photo by Paul Rigge.

Andy overpowered all before him to maintain a clean sheet and achieved 100% win rate to lift the overall title.

This five lawn club sits on the Pennines, between Yorkshire & Lancashire with teams playing in leagues for both Federations. Given its location, visitors always expect the worst of the weather at this time of year, indeed, in previous years, snow and its clearing has been known, as has rain coming at you seemingly from the ground! Not so this time, Good Friday through to Easter Sunday remained dry and pleasant, I won't go as far as to say warm although some 'leggings' were removed on Sunday. Monday's forecast was for rain, lots of it, but, with the exception of a quick light shower, that too was dry.

There also seemed to be a catering battle going on between the various 'dinner ladies', with both Lancs & Yorks trying to outdo each other in both quality and quantity throughout the weekend, as soon as one meal was cleared, various fancies were laid out for grazing tea, including Easter Eggs. This is not a venue that subscribes to any campaign against obesity, you have been advised.

Some seventy Handicap games and thirty Advanced were played during the tournament.

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One highlight was seeing Alice Fleck (Tyneside), back after her troubles in recent years, galloping round Sunday evening like a school-girl waving a hockey stick, to take the fastest game title. Asked to explain this behaviour she said "I thought we wouldn't have time for a full game before the Tournament Dinner". Her second break included a Rover Peel prior to the winning peg out.

Colchester Advanced Weekend 21-22 April

Report by Martin French

Usually run by Rob Fulford, this season-opener for many in East Anglia was going to be cancelled this year, as Rob - and others - would be on their way to Adelaide for the AC World Championship. Martin French stepped in and offered to manage the event, and 5 or 6 entrants were expected so an all-play-all was planned. In the end, 13 showed up, so the format switched to an Egyptian. The flexibility of this helped deal with Rob Fulford departing for the airport on Saturday afternoon, Jack Wicks having family commitments on the Sunday, and Martin Leach leaving early to hear his wife sing at Snape concert hall also on the Sunday.

The croquet was typically early-season – good in parts, rather more errors than you'd expect, and people struggling with the pace on lawns that looked like they should be easy (but turned out to have quite variable pace).

Nick Mounfield won the Egyptian – and so the Lexden Cup – winning all his games. Debbie Cornelius came second and saw her handicap improve to -1. Rob Fulford produced a trade-mark Sextuple against Ian Lines but then made Colin Hemming's croquet year by losing to him in the next game – ideal preparation for Adelaide! Colin texted his wife immediately. Ian Lines managed three Triple Peels and came third in the event.

The weather was better than forecast or feared, and only a couple of showers dampened proceedings. Susan Fulford kindly cooked the lunches on Saturday, before leaving for the airport, and Martin Leach did the lunches on Sunday before leaving for Snape. My thanks to them both.

Surbiton Golf Croquet Weekend 21-22 April

Report by Don Beck

Perhaps it was the weather, or perhaps it was the performance of the finalists last year. Whatever the reason the entry was down to 17 this year. However the quality of the field made this possibly the toughest weekend Open of the season. Fourteen players were scratch or 1 handicap.

An uncertain weather forecast and 17 players led to 2 blocks, each playing all the players in the opposite block. After 4 rounds the likely contenders were showing their form, but only Howard Cheyne was undefeated. Over the remaining 5 rounds some surprising trends developed. Andrew Dymond announced his arrival on the circuit by beating Howard, Ryan Cabble and James Death. He was the first to qualify for the semi-finals, quickly followed by Howard. John Spiers made it through directly, James making up the numbers by beating Lionel Tibble and Ryan in a 3-way decider. Three of the four top seeds Stephen Mulliner, Ryan, and Pierre Beaudry perished.

In the semis, Howard beat John and James came from behind to beat Andrew.

So the two players in the best form contested a best of 5 final, James winning his first major Golf Croquet event 3-1.

Our thanks to Malcolm Bigg and Chris Roberts for their on-court refereeing of the final. John took 3rd place by beating Andrew.



Play in progress at Surbiton. Photo by Don Beck.

The following handicap adjustments were made: James Death 1 to 0, Andrew Dymond 4 to 2.

Parsons Green Advanced Weekend 28-29 April

Report by Nick Harris

The inaugural Parsons Green Advanced Weekend kicked off on exactly the same day as the World Championships, but perhaps unsurprisingly, that was where the comparison ended. There were no sextuples. There was no cast of 80 players from 10 countries – just the 9 Brits (although I suppose you could count the two embittered Yorkshiremen as a separate nation). There was no Aboriginal dancing, which was probably just as well, since seeing the inhabitants of Fulham prance about scantily clad might have put the players off their breakfast. And most notably, the 23 degree temperatures and bright sunshine over in Adelaide were replaced all weekend by leaden skies and rain varying from dribbling to driving and back again. Undaunted, a capacity field had assembled and while it didn't feel as though the winner would come from outside the four minus players, it was a good spread of players such that you felt that any player could beat any other on the right day.

And so it proved, with the upsets beginning in round 1 as Alain Giraud upset Nigel Polhill in the all-Ealing clash, while Christian Carter dispatched Patrick Hort. After day one, manager, secretary and your correspondent Nick Parish had added the role of overnight leader to his portfolio, taking full advantage of playing on home turf to finish with 4 wins out of 4, including 3 TPs (more than he'd managed in the past three seasons combined). Hot on his heels and the only other unbeaten player was Alain on 3/3, having taken full advantage of Patrick's generosity – having completed the peels of a straight triple, Patrick missed the pegout by this much and Alain took full advantage to win +1.

Lunch was expertly provided by player/chef Eugene Chang, who wants to know if it's the first time a genuine Chinese lunch has been served at a croquet tournament. The delicious smells off Taiwanese pork floating across the lawns were certainly enough to distract many of the players. Conversation at lunch largely centred on the recent CA survey. It was eventually agreed that

the solution to croquet's recruitment problems was for the BBC to commission a series of Strictly...Croquet, hosted by Ann Widdecombe, David Goacher and Nelson Morrow.

On day two Nick and Alain faced each other, and Alain held his nerve at the critical moment to hit his last shot after time had been called and win +1T to become the only unbeaten player. He could still be overhauled by Nick, but only if Alain were to lose his last game to Bob Stephens, and Nick could defeat Patrick. Both games hung in the balance for a while, with Bob putting up a tremendous fight, but in the end Alain didn't and Nick couldn't and Alain was the champion. Having defeated three of the four players with lower handicaps, it was clearly a thoroughly deserved win, and



Finalists Ryan Cabble and William Ormerod coped with the weather in very different ways during the final. Photo by Robin Wooton.

just went to prove that any feelings at the start as to where the winner might come from had been rather misplaced.

Overall, a great success despite the atrocious weather, and one we will repeat next year.

Sidmouth Golf Croquet Weekend 28-29 April

Report by Helen Pryor

Sixteen high ranking golf croquet players from all over the country competed for the Haste Cup in Sidmouth on a wet and windy weekend. The players, with handicaps ranging from scratch to five came to Sidmouth from as far afield as Dyffryn, Worcester and Sussex, to play in this important Croquet Association tournament, which is a qualifying round for the prestigious Ascot Cup played at the Hurlingham Club in September. This was played in two American blocks 'all play all', with everyone playing seven 19-point games.

The weather on Saturday was cold, windy and, at times, wet. By the end of the day six of the seven rounds had been played.

During Saturday night the wind and the heavy rain pounded the ground resulting in only one court (out of four) being fit to play for use on Sunday. This caused a problem and the Tournament Manager, Helen Pryor, made the decision that only the matches that were vital for getting to the semi-finals would be played. Then the semi-finals were shortened to one 19 point game instead of the 'best of three' 13 point games. Ryan Cabble (Nailsea, aged 19) beat Nicholas Cheyne (Surbiton) 10-7 and William Ormerod (East Dorset & Swanage) beat Richard Brooks (Sussex CCC) 8-7. The latter game was very close and was decided by a 'Golden Hoop'.

The Final - the 'best of three' 13 point games between Ryan

Cabble and William Ormerod was very exciting. Many of the other players stayed to watch this in not very good conditions. William won the first game in record time 7-4: Ryan easily won the second game 7-5; but the final game was a real fight and lasted almost as long as the 2 previous games put together. Eventually Ryan won the game 7-5, the match 2-1, and the tournament. Ryan was presented with the Haste Cup by the Croquet Club chairman, Elaine Woodward, and the runner-up William received a bottle of wine.

A mention must be made of the sterling work of Philip Harris who spent most of the tournament on his knees in the rain adjusting the hoops which, because of the rather damp conditions, kept being knocked out of alignment. Thanks also to the Tournament Secretary, Derek Powell, and Referee, Ian Friedlander.



Derek Johnson on his way to victory at Middlesbrough (photo by Charles Waterfield)

Middlesbrough Handicap 4-5 May

Report by Charles Waterfield

Derek Johnson wins Middlesbrough Handicap

Eight people, from Bury and Belsay as well as Middlesbrough, braved some biting cold conditions (mainly on the first day). Three excellent lawns meant that double-banking was minimised and also involved players equitably. Handicaps ranged from 18 down to 4½.

As in previous years we used an 18-point format with two-hour time-limits; four rounds on Saturday and three on Sunday. Even with hoops tightened further for the second day, only two games went to time (both involving an 'Aunt' Emma).

Final positions were decided on the 'who beat who' basis, with Dave Turner and Derek Johnson on 6 wins each, which pushed Dave Turner into runner-up place.

To add to his trophy, Derek will be receiving a significant reduction to his 18 handicap!

The Coles Championship, Cheltenham 5-7 May

Report by David Magee

In the absence of the present, could the past meet the future?

This year some of the regular participants in the Coles Championship had deserted the event in favour of another championship that was taking place in one of our former colonies in the Antipodes. Amongst those missing was Reg Bamford so

the wonder was; in the absence of the leviathan, which minnow would have the chance to swim to glory. Thus there was a rather small, select band who gathered at Cheltenham over the May Bank Holiday, braving the wintry conditions and all hoping to have their name engraved on the trophy.

The awful weather did its best to prevent any sparkling play. Indeed most players had to wear so many layers to keep the strong, cold, north-easterly wind at bay that they found it difficult to get any freedom of swing at all. As a result play was slow and the tea bell rang out with nearly half of the first round matches still in progress. Very few triples were attempted and even fewer succeeded. The limited spells of brightness on the first day were brought about by Martin Murray's straight games win over Lionel Tibble in a very respectable time. Lionel then salved his frustration somewhat with triple peels in his first two games in the consolation event.

Sunday could almost have been described as a decent day with neither wind nor rain and play moved along at a brisker pace. Dave Kibble attempted to warm the hearts of the spectators (can you have a singular hoard?) and embarked on a tpo in his second game against Kristian Chambers. Whilst the peels were completed with relative ease, the subsequent period of tactical play proved more difficult and so Kristian moved through to a semi-final meeting with Martin Murray. In the bottom half of the draw Nick Butler was the survivor of a dour struggle with Dave Mundy and Dom Nunns had a surprisingly easy victory over Robert Wilkinson.

Martin's win over Kristian was also surprisingly one-sided but the same could not be said of the match between Nick and Dom. The third game had to be held over until Monday morning and proved to be an enthralling encounter and a most welcome distraction to the lashing rain. Some amazing shooting and some unfortunate lapses in concentration led to all four clips ending up on the peg and kept the spectator on the edge of my cushion.

Dom was successful in the end and so, as my title ponders, the past had indeed come to meet the future. Dom was playing in only his second advanced-play tournament and, at the age of thirty five, was not even born when Martin had become an established member of the MacRobertson Shield team. But whose name would be engraved on the cup? Martin had never won the Coles and Dom had not had much chance to win anything. A coach would prefer that a beginner watched neither player as their styles are certainly idiosyncratic and non-standard. Both players adopt a low crouch at address and Martin's lunging stroke is well known but far fewer people will have witnessed Dom's manoeuvres in his stalking. Prior to taking up his stance he violently throws his mallet into a near vertical salute which makes one worry about the long term health of his back. But no one can question the shooting prowess of either player and roquets abounded, especially as there was enough frailty in the play to give opportunities for the innings to change hands. Dom is still enough of a tyro not to realise that you need to take all of your waterproof clothing to all events and so he quickly became a somewhat bedraggled figure in the unrelenting rain. But his shooting skills and his ability to run hoops proved resilient to anything the weather could throw at him and, despite a late start, we finished in time for an early tea.

Bowdon handicap 5-7 May

Report by Mike Steer.

Barry Keen wins the Reed Cup again (After 33 years)

The Bowdon May Handicap tournament took place on three dry but decidedly chilly days. However there was nothing dry or



Barry Keen (left) is presented with the Reed Cup by John Saxby. Photo by Mike Steer.

chilly about the croquet which ensued.

With handicaps ranging from -1.5 to +20, there was bound to be some heat generated. No less than ten games returned a score of +26 and unlike last year, the very low handicap players had a hard time of it except when they played each other. Dave Walters (-1.5) played Mike Sandler (1) in a match which wouldn't have looked out of place in an advanced tournament, with Mike winning +12tpo.

Barry Keen's progress was relentless with only one lost game in nine, ironically, to Ross Pilot whom he subsequently beat +23 in the final.

It is always nice to have someone of significance to present the trophy and who better than the CA Chairman. In the event it was thought that Barry presenting the trophy to himself was a tad too bizarre so the honour went to the club Hon. Secretary, John Saxby.

The Egyptian event was won by Janet Davies of Chester. Andrew Kenyon (Bowdon) gained his Bronze Award. Barry's handicap went down to 9 and Mike Steer's to 4.

Barry's name was last engraved on the Reed Cup in 1979 after winning a tournament which was played in August of that year.

Lorna Frost's management was, as usual, good natured and highly efficient making for a most enjoyable tournament.



Opening day of the season at Cornwall CC, April 29th - a northeast gale, continuous heavy rain, and temperatures between 4C & 7C! Photo by David Edwards.

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