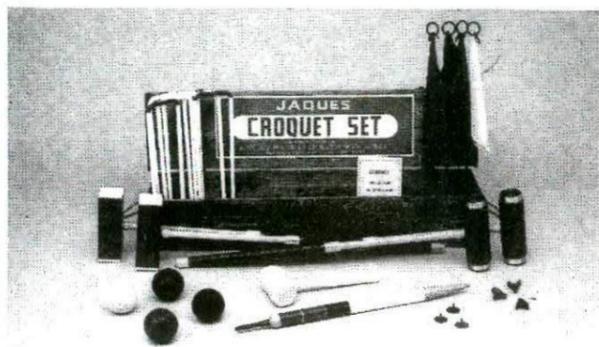


The Croquet Gazette

Issue 267 May 2000



George Noble Celebrates The Millennium In Style at Surbiton



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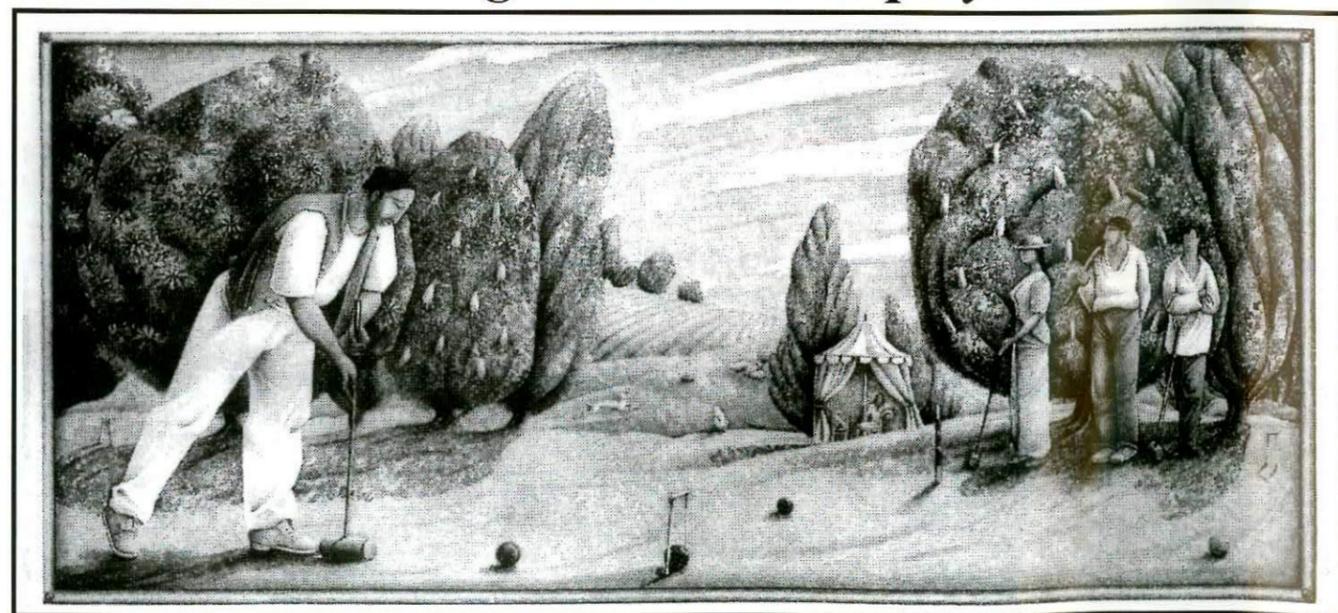
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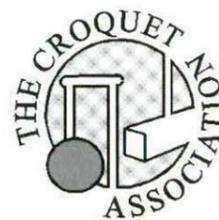
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Tournament Results & Reports

Tournament results should be reported on the new tournament return sheet. These have been issued in a bid to make the reporting of events and the administration of the rankings easier. Please ensure that the forms are used and that all relevant details are submitted.

Tournament reports should be written and sent to the editor within FOURTEEN DAYS of the completion of a tournament. Failure to comply with this guideline will result in reports failing to be published. Hand written reports are no longer be accepted.

Delivery Queries

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THE CROQUET GAZETTE



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Front Cover: George Noble at play in the Surbiton Frostbite Tournament on New Years Day. Photo by Gina Lewis.

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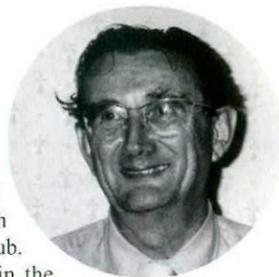
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CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



I am writing this column with a heavy heart as it is only a couple of days since I learned of the sudden death of a colleague and friend, Ian Maugham. Ian was a tireless worker for croquet both in the South West Federation and for the Cheltenham Croquet Club. We met on many occasions, often with me as Ian's partner in the MacWeeney England versus Ireland matches and in the Intercounties for Gloucestershire, both of which he organised. He was a "rough diamond" who would usually call a spade a ***** spade! but the amount of work that he put into croquet was huge. He will be greatly missed.

It was a somewhat happier occasion for me at the Council meeting on 24 March to ask the Secretary Nigel Graves to read a congratulatory message from our Patron the Queen to the victorious MacRobertson team. As chairman, I was delighted to add the congratulations of Council to the Captain David Openshaw.

Also at that meeting we said an official farewell to the previous Secretary, Paul Campion. Although Paul has actually been gone a couple of months this was the first occasion on which we were able to present him with a leaving present. Actually it was only part of the present since he had chosen a massive set of books on music and musicians which was far too heavy to bring in total. I wish him every happiness for the future. I also observed that Paul has joined my wife, Faith and Peter Darby in appearing on the quiz program 15-1.

Many of you who are club secretaries and committee members will recall a questionnaire from Hamish Hall regarding members, number of lawns etc. He also asked for comments on a number of topics. I would like to assure you that the information has not just been filed in a dusty drawer somewhere. These things do take time, often more time that we would wish, but that's the penalty of a volunteer organisation. However, Hamish and I will be going through carefully the results of his survey and seeing what improvements we can make to our Association as a result - bear with us! Finally, you will have seen that an advert was placed for a commercial agent due to the illness of Brian Macmillan. Although I am delighted to hear that Brian is making steady progress we still need to fill this post. At the moment however, David Collins is filling the gap for us so I am able to report that it is "business as usual" on the commercial side. So now is the time to get that new mallet, or buy that copy of "Plus One on Time" that you were always promising yourself!

Don Gaunt

Mr. D.L Gaunt,
Chairman,
The Council of The Croquet Association

Please convey my warm congratulations to the members of the Great Britain Croquet Team in winning the MacRobertson Shield during the competition held in Christchurch, New Zealand recently.

As patron of The Croquet Association, I much appreciate the message of loyal greetings which they have sent, and I am delighted to learn of their continued success in the prestigious competition between Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

ELIZABETH R.

25th February, 2000

Letters



Cornish croquet - an update

Dear Editor

Last July you were kind enough to publish a letter giving a resume of the efforts of the Cornwall Croquet club to promote croquet in Cornwall. Plans are advancing at two locations, albeit slowly. However at one the ground was levelled and prepared last year and should be grassed this spring. The expertise and equipment of the adjacent golf course will hopefully result in a well-maintained lawn.

The Club was represented at several tournaments in the West of England with members featuring in the prizes. With a full lawn to play on it is hoped that a real effort to encourage playing members will result in further successes.

As mention in the previous article, (July '99) I am lucky enough to have my own short lawn, near Falmouth. About a dozen croquet players took up my offer to play here and provided us with useful game experience. I would like to thank them and apologise to the members who called when I was not available. Again this summer we would welcome anyone on holiday in Cornwall who would like to call in to play. (01326 250344 email medco@globalnet.co.uk) Malcolm Hooper

All England Championship

Dear Editor

I have arranged with the secretary of the CA for entries to this championship to be accepted up



David Nicholson, (right) winner of the novice trophy at the Parkstone club last season, with Les Butler. (Photo by Tom Weston.)

until the 1st of June. The reason for this is quite simple. we wish to increase entries to this long established competition.

The Tournament committee took on board all the comments made by last year's area finalists. The question of 'bandits' has been addressed. This year, club handicappers will be asked to confirm corrections of the handicap. Additionally, we have given clubs discretion on following the 'full bisque' ruling at the preliminary stage. Both Surbiton and Parkstone have agreed to host area finals, in addition to last year's venues. Clearly we will require more entries if these venues are to be confirmed.

So if your Tournament secretary hasn't entered your club, it's not too late.

Hamish Hall
National All England Manager

International Laws Revision Committee on the draft they published on 28th February. This resulted from several years of discussions, culminating in meetings held during the MacRobertson Shield series. Inevitably, the messages sent to the list concerned details of the wording or one of a few points of principle still at issue. The ILRC were grateful for the comments made and the text was revised where they were felt to have merit.

I hope that, by the time this is printed, the final text will have been agreed and that he is pleased with the outcome.

Ian Vincent, Chairman, CALC.

Croquet in Barbados

Dear Editor

We went to Barbados on holiday recently and, naturally, asked if there was any croquet on the island. "Contact the yacht club" they told me. My contact was Doug Alleyne who invited me to play on the Thursday afternoon at 4pm - it gets dark at 6pm!

As the picture enclosed shows, we made a 'mature' group - the collective ages being over 400yrs for the five of us - and I am a young kid at 67!

Charles in the red shirt is 93 and has been spending 6 months in Toronto and 6 months in



The 'Barbados Seniors' after play.

E-mail - not always great

Dear Editor,

I have just unsubscribed from what purported to be an international discussion about the next version of the Laws. I had thought that I might be able to make an intelligent contribution. However, ploughing through loads of drivel, mostly from Australia, I find the amount of e-mail I have received is mostly a waste of time.

Let them write the Laws and I will apply them.

Andrew Bennet

I am sorry that Andrew was disenchanted with the croquet-laws@nottingham.ac.uk mailing list, but the list was set up specifically to provide a channel for comments to be made to the

Barbados for the last thirty years. It seems to have been very good for his health. The game was played to Barbados rules. Each player has a plain and striped ball the same colour - no taking croquet - roquet each ball twice in the course of a break - two hoops is spectacular under these circumstances! Six hoops to a game and many obscure dead ball rules.

My biggest problem was remembering whose turn it was with which ball.

The yacht club is a wonderful old building and my host Doug Alleyne made me most welcome.

Apparently, croquet was played many, many years ago by the original sugar planters - particularly for money!

Tony Doughty

1999 CA Survey

Dear Editor
 May I use the Gazette to thank all those club officials who responded to the shortened club survey, which I sent out last November.

85% of clubs responded, and their replies enabled me to prepare a summary for Council. Please see the Chairman's Column for the official comment on what you told us!

Hamish Hall

Ah memories

Dear Editor
 I read with interest your interview in Issue 266 March 2000 with William Ormerod. I fear his recall is slightly astray. He recalled Arthur Ross coming to stay on more than one occasion..... with his chatty chain smoking wife Lena..... Chatty, I will accept! Chain smoking, no!!

In all the years I knew her, I can never recall my stepmother-in-law smoking. Arthur, yes. In the early days, Arthur used to advance on the croquet lawn smoking a pipe but it was legendary that, when he hit a shot or was about to undertake a vital innings, he would hurl his pipe in any direction. Lena used to go around and collect these pipes - he had a whole swag of them in his bag - a task she did not enjoy. Arthur was then put under some pressure by her to stop smoking, which he did and, by the time he got to England on his visit, he was eating blackballs instead. I know because, during tournaments, it was my job to go and buy blackballs for him.

I was also interested to read of the Rev. Handel Elvey whom I knew during my visit in 1948/49. His father was a minor composer of church anthems in the Victorian period and the Rev. Elvey told me that his father christened him George Frederic Handel Elvey in the hope that some of his musicianship would rub off on his son. Alas, as Handel said, he was tone deaf!

Ashley Heenan

New Zealand

Compton Club History

Dear Editor
 Some of your readers may be interested to hear that a history of Compton Croquet club has been published. Compton, which was founded in 1898, is one of the oldest croquet clubs in the country. Managed to survive the 1939-45 war although Eastbourne became an evacuation area and resident membership shrank to nine.

Copies of the history may be obtained from me at 79 Saffrons Court, Eastbourne BN21 1DZ for £3.50 including postage.

James Kellaway

~ OBITUARY ~

Ian Maugham

Ian Maugham died suddenly in March 2000. He was looking forward to retirement which would enable him to play more often the game he loved, and he was relishing his son David's magnificent win in the decisive rubber against New Zealand in the MacRobertson Shield. His friends and colleagues at the Cheltenham Club and in the rest of the croquet world have been left in a state of shock.

After an early career in the Army, Ian moved into the field of Information Technology and was an acknowledged expert in payroll systems. A colleague commented he was able to solve a problem in minutes which might have taken someone else a few hours, and this helps to explain his skill at managing tournaments, which he did so effortlessly. He managed several Cheltenham club and open tournaments, including the Coles Championship, and had also managed the Mens and Womens Championships.

Ian had many varied interests, and an unusual one was steam railways. Few people in the croquet world knew that he was a keen supporter of the Severn Valley Railway, and a fellow enthusiast described him as a walking encyclopaedia on steam locomotives.

Ian was educated at Lord Williams School, Thame. He was twice President of the Old Thameans Association, and led a campaign for substantial improvements in the school's sports facilities.

Croquet was a major interest in his life for 20 years, and his first introduction to the game was a beginners course at Bowdon. It was obviously a very good course as another beginner was Colin Irwin, who of course went on to represent Great Britain in the MacRobertson Shield.

CAN YOU GUESS WHO THIS YOUNG MAN IS? FIND OUT ON PAGE 9 WHERE HE IS 'TALKING CROQUET' WITH NEIL WILLIAMS.



Ian enjoying the camaraderie of John Halsam and the atmosphere of the Inter-Counties. (Photo by Frances Ransom)

Characteristically, Ian was soon a member of the Bowdon Committee, and played a role in the club improvements which were then taking place. Although a change of job meant a move to Cheltenham in 1982, Ian regularly played in the Northern Championships and maintained a strong Bowdon connection; his awkward questions at their AGM were legendary!

While at Bowdon Ian also helped the East Riding Club at Hull in the early stages of its development. After his move he continued to help by managing their tournaments, and was the designated manager for this year's July event.

At Cheltenham Ian was immediately involved in the newly formed South West Federation as Treasurer. He soon became the Regional Development Officer and thereby a member of the CA Development Committee. He also joined the committee of Cheltenham Club in 1984, and took on the task of dealing with equipment, covering hoops and other court furniture and ensuring that balls of tournament quality were available each season. He was also very active in the joint running of courses and examinations for referees.

Ian was the organiser of the Gloucestershire team for the Inter-County Championship, and had for many years organised the CA team to play CA Ireland, establishing this as an annual fixture.

Ian was an A-class player who was a clear threat in Advanced Play to all, as both Robert Fulford and Colin Irwin discovered to their cost several years ago. His somewhat idiosyncratic single-ball style enabled him to hit with great power and accuracy, and he had a very complete understanding of tactics and strategy. If an overawed opponent had made tactical errors, Ian would often quietly offer advice and help after the game.

Those near to him will have been comforted by the huge attendance at the crematorium service, which was a tribute to Ian's popularity in all the varied aspects of his life.

He will be sorely missed in the world of croquet.

Bernard Neal

COACHING PAGES

The intention of these pages is to publish articles or snippets that should interest most players, whether beginner or experienced, whether association, short or golf aficionados. I would not presume to find material that is "new" to our top quality internationals, but I hope to persuade some of these players to pass on tips that are helpful to those who would seek to emulate them.

Over the past ten or fifteen years, The Croquet Gazette has run articles and hints from all kinds of source - I will seek to republish some of the best of these, with permission from and credit to the original contributor. I will also use the Page to bring information about and ask for reaction to the initiatives the Coaching Committee is bringing to all parts of the country.

BEGINNERS' SPOT

I am pleased to introduce JOHN BEVINGTON, who has penned the item about the time to take the bisque - letters to the column commenting, suggesting ideas, contributing, arguing, are all welcome, so please keep them coming.

Slave to the Rhythm, or The Proactive Bisque

by John Bevington

A turn usually starts with a roquet, followed by a croquet stroke which then leads to another roquet or a hoop stroke. If you miss the roquet or stick in the hoop your turn will end and you can only continue by taking a bisque. Taking a bisque when you have stuck in a hoop usually makes sense, but taking a bisque after missing a roquet often merely gets you out of trouble instead of allowing you to develop a break. The trap that beginners fall into is that they feel that they cannot take a bisque until the present turn is exhausted, i.e. until they have roqueted all the balls. If an easy or even a slightly risky roquet is available they take it. If the roquet is missed, well, then the turn is over and they might consider a bisque. If they hit then the turn isn't over, so there is no immediate need to consider taking a bisque. This is the reactive approach to bisques, and a lot of bisques taken in this way are wasted.

Any article like this has to make some assumptions. You know the theory of the four-ball break and you occasionally make two or three hoops before something goes wrong. You know where the balls ought to be. You also know about those made-to-measure roquets called rushes and how useful they are because they allow you to take croquet from where you want to be rather than from where you happen to be, and you appreciate that the easiest rush is a straight rush. If your rushes aren't very good then you need to practise them, which is well worth doing because better rushes lead to easier croquet strokes.

The ideal roquet is a straight rush. If the first stroke of a bisque turn is to be a roquet, then that roquet should therefore be a straight rush. It follows that the last stroke of the previous turn should be one that leaves your ball in position for the straight rush. If you are playing a break and all is going well, then the last croquet stroke should put you in position for the straight rush anyway, and you simply take it as the next stroke in the turn. But if the croquet stroke leaves you with a rush in the wrong direction, or in the right direction but yards away rather than just two or three feet, do you take the roquet? You probably do. You say to yourself: "I know I'm not in the right position but I should be able to/can hit this, and if I do I can carry on". Understandable, but inadvisable. You may miss, but even if you hit you will be taking croquet from somewhere other than where you wanted to. The break is getting out of control.

Don't take that roquet. Play the last shot to give you the straight rush you wanted in the first place, and then take the

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bisque. This proactive approach to bisques has several advantages. The last shot to give you the rush is a single ball stroke, which is relatively easy to control. The bisque is being taken from the best possible position. You have corrected the error immediately so you have not lost your rhythm. Don't just take my word for it. In his book Croquet, written in 1966, John Solomon wrote: "This kind of thing happens time and again, and a little thought before you take your last shot will often show you a way to make more of your bisques than just one hoop".

OTHER GAMES TO TRY

Coaching 2000 brings some alternative games that can help to keep the interest running in a session for beginners and recent newcomers. They were originally collected by the CA of Ireland, for use indoors in a small space, or outdoors on small courts. Some of them are ideal for playing when there are several people wanting to join in, and there is not very much time to wait a turn in a full game. We will be publishing the variations over the next few issues, acknowledging the CAI Handbook of 1994, where the collection first appeared.

This issue includes a game that requires use of the croquet stroke, and a shooting game. Other issues will include team games for many players, and competitive practice routines for one or two players.

CLOCK CROQUET

Clock Croquet was described as a new game in the CAI Handbook in 1994, designed to include some of the complexities of Association Croquet, without long turns and using a much smaller area. For outdoor play, a court 14 yards square was recommended, with a centre peg and four hoops each facing the centre of a boundary line and 3 yards from the peg. Indoors, it was possible to reduce the dimensions. Four players take part, each playing for himself, with the balls being played in the blue, red, black, yellow sequence. The simplest way to decide order of play is for all four to shoot towards the peg, the nearest playing first and so on (hitting the peg is no advantage if the ball bounces well away afterwards). This is equivalent to the "lag" in 9-ball pool, and nearest the bull in darts.

Each ball has four corresponding clips, with one clip placed on the crown of each hoop at the start of the game. A clip on top of the hoop indicates that the hoop is "out", or to be run away from the peg. Then the clip is moved to the hoop upright, which means the hoop is now "in", or to be run towards the peg. Finally the clip goes onto the peg itself.

The object of the game is to run all the hoops, both outwards and inwards, and then to remove all four clips by hitting the peg four times, giving the twelve points of the clock. You cannot score a peg point until all four clips are on the peg. You start within one foot of the peg, and may run any hoop first. Then you have to proceed either clockwise or anticlockwise for the rest of your turn, until you reach a hoop with no clip of yours on it, unless all your other clips are already on the peg.

Normal roquet, croquet, boundary and fault rules apply. You may peel any other ball through any of its hoops, or "unpeel" a peg ball through any hoop, moving its clip back to the upright. You may "unrun" any hoop outwards once more, without gaining a continuation shot, also moving a corresponding clip from the peg.

Once all four clips are on the peg, you may score peg points, but you cannot take a continuation shot after a peg hit, unless the ball hits another ball not previously roqueted in the same turn. The first player to remove all four clips is the winner.

The CAI Handbook suggested a few tactical hints, but as the game was new, the efficacy of some was untried. Outright conspiracy by three players against the fourth is prohibited, but use of defensive tactics to limit the next player's chances is

permissible. If the opponent is for three "in-hoops" and the peg, then unpeeling the middle hoop will stymie him. If he has three or four clips on the peg, then a double "unpeel" on the same hoop is the only really effective defence. If you are well ahead however, it may be politic to retire to a corner to prevent "unpeeling". If you cannot make two hoops or more at the beginning, it is not worth making any, rather wait for a better opportunity to set up a decent break. You can still be done harm by having your ball peeled through one hoop in both directions, leaving you with three "out" and one "peg", requiring at least two breaks to finish. Under these circumstances, do not start the next break at the middle hoop, because you will have to stop at the no-clip hoop before making all three. Similarly, if you are three "out" and one "in", do not start at the middle out hoop, or the sole in hoop.

The skills that are apparently needed are controlled break-building, similar to short croquet, as well as awareness of the position of others. The sequence of play seems to be important as in Golf Croquet, but the disadvantage is that it is always any three onto the fourth, whereas Golf has teams when there are four players. The other disadvantage is that the recommended court is not a standard size or layout, which requires a different set-up in an outdoor club. It would be interesting to see whether using hoops one to four on a short court would be as effective; "out" would be running hoops forward, "in" would be running them back. Why not give it a go, and let us know at Coaching 2000 how you get on.

PIRATES

This is a shooting game for at least four players – with careful use of balls of the same colour, as many as wish to can play. It was described in the CAI Handbook of 1994, but the game was established for many years by then. The object is to be the first to amass a number of points, usually a multiple of ten plus one, or possibly fifteen or twenty-five depending on the time available. If time runs out before there is a clear

winner, then ensuring each player is allowed the same number of turns is the equitable way to finish.

Each player keeps the same ball, and the turns are taken in the sequence blue, red, black, yellow, green, pink, brown, white, second blue, and so on, so you need to know both who you play after, and where your ball is. The simplest way to decide order of play is for all players to shoot towards the peg, the nearest playing first and so on (hitting the peg is no advantage if the ball bounces well away afterwards). This is equivalent to the "lag" in 9-ball pool, and nearest the bull in darts. Players can even join in after the game is in progress, taking the next available colour, and the appropriate place in the sequence.

You can play with all players starting either from zero, or from a given equal number, which is usually calculated by dividing half of the target score by the number of players and taking the next whole number (a target of 31 with 8 players gives each player two to start). You score points by running a hoop, or stealing points from other players.

Each player hits his ball onto the court from either baulk line – it's better to play this game on a full-sized court otherwise everybody's always too close together. In this first turn, any hoop run adds one to the player's total, but it is not permitted to "steal" even if another ball is hit, nor is any continuation shot taken. From the second cycle onwards, the turn for any player consists of a roquet, which gives a further shot from where the ball stops rolling, or running any hoop in any direction, which does not give a continuation shot, or taking position. If a ball roqueted owns any points, then they are stolen and added to the player's own score; only the odd points up to nine are stolen, as a ball at ten, twenty or so on remains at or falls back to that milestone.

The tactics of the game are various – hiding in front of a hoop away from others may get you off to a scoring start, but a long roquet is always possible to take such points away. Using ball after ball to make progress across the court, even if such balls have no score to steal, heading away from the pack, and finishing with a hoop point, is another effective ploy. The game is fast and furious, aggressive without being unfriendly, as the unexpected balls steal carefully amassed scores, so that the chasing pack changes quarry before a milestone can be reached. Long roquets, and even cut-rushes, although it is the back ball that matters, are the skilled shots that make progress. Making a long hoop at least adds to the total, but where the ball finishes may be disadvantageous.

An example of a turn was quoted in the CAI Handbook of 1994, which shows the skills possible. Blue (2 points) hits Red (2 points), becoming 4, putting Red back to zero, and earning a continuation shot from where it stops. Blue hits Green (0 points) taking no points but earning the extra stroke. Blue then hits Pink (11 points), taking only the odd one, moving Pink back to 10. Blue then hits White (8 points, stuck in a hoop), which has been the target from the beginning, moving up to 13 by taking White's 8; White gets the one point from being peeled through its hoop. Finally Blue runs a hoop going onto 14, of which ten are secure, but the turn ends there. If the hoop run is the same one White was peeled through, then White has to wait for Red, Black and the rest of the cycle to play before getting its chance to steal Blue's pirate gains.

Pirates is a great way to finish a coaching or practice session, or to allow all participants time on the lawn after any official matches have concluded. It may be a good icebreaker for a "Come and Try It" Day, once the basic stance and swing has been taught, and after a few rounds of Golf Croquet, because any number can play, and the demonstrators actually swing a mallet in earnest.

Please let us know at Coaching 2000 whether either of these games is useful in your club sessions.

TALKING CROQUET

By Neil Williams

Many readers of the Gazette may not know any details about the careers or views of some of the people who have made a significant contribution to the game, in whatever shape or form. Our chances of seeing them, let alone talking to them, are necessarily few. It is hoped these conversations will bring them a little closer, so that we may benefit from their advice or experience.

No.6 David Openshaw

David Openshaw is one of the relatively new breed of croquet players who are at home in California or Palm Beach; Christchurch, New Zealand; Milan or Surbiton. If it's Maytime, it must be Sonoma.

When we met - at the end of February, 2000 - David had hardly had time to get over the return flight from New Zealand, where the Great Britain team under his captaincy had successfully defended the MacRobertson Shield. It wasn't surprising, then, that this Test series ran through our conversation. In David's view it was "the most intense croquet you can ever play....The tension on those last 2 or 3 days was really immense. We learnt a lot about ourselves." Still, despite this recent and overwhelming NZ experience, our talk did range more widely, from the domestic, British scene to how the game is developing in the USA.

The MacRob was always likely to have figured in a big way in talking to David Openshaw, for it has played quite a part in his life. The stats so far are: played in 6 series, 5 as captain, winning the Shield 4 times - 1982, 1990, 1993 and 2000 - and losing twice - 1979 and 1986. In terms of success rate and durability, it is a captaincy record unlikely to be broken. The unvarnished, proud fact is that David Openshaw is Great Britain's most successful current Sports Captain. IN ANY SPORT. Nasser Hussain? Alan Shearer? Matt Dawson? No contest.

"I've always had a very optimistic outlook, and a very positive outlook on games and sports. I keep thinking I'm going to win even if the law of averages is against me. I have my own law of averages that says that if I'm doing well, I'll continue to do well; and if I'm not doing well, it's time I started doing well."

His background provides us with a few clues to that success and to his buoyant outlook. He was born, 53 years ago, in Nelson, East Lancashire. And before going any further may I, another Lancastrian, be permitted to observe that



David, pictured right, showing his early sporting prowess.



5 - yes, 5 - of the 6 members of the GB MacRobertson team in 2000 have strong North West connexions. So much for croquet being a game for southern softies. When you want a team to take on the rest of the world, you know where to look: Oop North.

At Nelson Grammar School David played soccer and first team cricket. More important, he played chess for the school team from the age of 12 against the 18-year-old intellectual power-houses of the urban Grammar Schools.

"In the first season, I think I didn't win any games. So I came home rather disheartened, but my mum gave me a cuddle and told me I was improving. I got a lot of confidence from my mother, who kept telling me - probably when I came home from those chess defeats - that I could do anything I wanted to do."

The encouragement worked. From Nelson G.S. he went on to captain the Oxford University chess team. That was in addition to reading Physics, and playing croquet a few times for fun on sunny afternoons at his College, Wadham. Not until much later when he'd left did he discover there had been a College croquet team. It reminds David of Edgar Jackson's remark, that the most difficult thing about croquet is discovering it in the first place.

And after Oxford? A Business course at Bradford University. Then work in the automotive industry in London. Still no croquet - not, that is, until he read a piece in a newspaper about Bernard Neal winning the Opens. The CA phone number was given. He rang and was put in touch with his nearest club, Harrow. He joined, and his croquet career was launched. It was 1970 and he was 24.

David sees himself as a slow learner in comparison to many other



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top players. If it hadn't been for three members at Harrow - Graham Martin (who taught him to play), Eric Solomon and John Ruddock - he might have given up early on. But they formed a little group who were keen to improve. Which they did - enough to win the Longman Cup.

"That was really what cemented my interest. Without the group I probably wouldn't have stayed with it - that and the tournaments at Wrest Park. I really enjoyed the croquet there and the social side, with John Rose, Eddie Bell, Barry Keene and John Wheeler. Then I had my first sight of Advanced play at Hurlingham in 1974, when I saw Nigel Aspinall play John Prince in the MacRobertson. I couldn't understand what on earth was going on. Soon after that I joined Roehampton. Nigel Aspinall was there and Dudley Hamilton-Miller.

Two years' hard work at Roehampton followed, as a result of which he made the transition from handicap 3 to A class:

"I really worked hard. I practised three evenings a week on my own and at weekends. And that's what helped. Most good players have had a period of time when they've played and practised really hard. I improved enough to play in the Hurlingham week and then the Opens and went on from there." His record includes 3 wins in the Opens: 1979, 1981 and 1985.

What and how does he practise now? On the technical side he finds playing 3-ball breaks both relaxing and useful; he also believes in working on the "little" shots: approaching hoop 2 from corner 2; hoop 1 from the boundary; hampered shots around the hoop; little jump shots; split peels.



David pictured at the Open Championship with New Zealander Joe Hogan.

Two of the most interesting observations he makes on practice relate to confidence and belief:

"There is a school of thought that says you get your confidence by believing in yourself. That is something I work on. You can practise this without going to the club. If you focus on some shots - just sit down and think about croquet for a bit and rehearse some shots in your mind. The other thing I do is connected to this. Over the years I've collected a number of reports about my games - my wins in the Opens, for example. And I've made little notes about particular games in which I've done well, and particular shots. I re-read these before events. When I went to New Zealand I took with me about 15 sheets. And I did read them. It helps to have a vivid memory of your successes.

"One of the things we did before the tour was organise a team meeting to discuss our personal objectives, which we wrote down and took with us. On the tour every evening we went through the day and looked again at our objectives. I also think it's useful to remember the lift shots you've hit. I remember one against William Prichard in the 1985 Open Final. When I come to similar situations, I remember that shot."

I suggest that the 10-yard shot he hit in the crucial Doubles in the last New Zealand Test - a shot described by his partner, Stephen Mulliner, as the best 10-yarder David will ever hit - must now be added to the list.

"It was a critical shot. We could take either a 10-yard shot or a 28-yard one with which we would have joined up if we'd missed. But it would have left our opponents with a 6-yard shot to the peg. We both agreed it was better to take the bull by the horns. Instead of relying on

our opponents to miss something, it's much better for us to hit something. It was a pressure shot, but I did fancy taking it. Stephen was very happy about it, too. I just stroked it very nicely and hit it in the centre."

If that was a pressure shot, what about the final singles on the last day of the Test, with New Zealand and Great Britain all square? Even croquet players back home in the English winter, receiving the daily reports on the net, 10,000 miles away, could feel the tension. You will remember the position: David Maugham against Toby Garrison, one game all, the lawns glassy, the temperature in the 80s, David sluicing his sweaty hands with the iced water from the drinks trolley, the crowd gathering as all the other matches finished. The stuff of sporting fiction. David's win with a Triple when, as David Openshaw put it, "so much was riding on it" is surely one of the great croquet victories of all time. "His TP finish in the last game was absolutely fantastic. And absolutely the right thing to do because Toby Garrison was shooting so well."

I wonder what had been the captain's role that day. It must have been hard not to be playing.

"All through the series it's part typical sports captaincy, but since we had no manager or coach you have to take on those roles as well. You're also ambassador for the CA, talking at functions, thanking all those people who've put effort into organisation and administration."

On the last day the nearest parallel might be the Ryder Cup captaincy, chasing from match to match to boost morale and spread the news.



David with Jerry Guest in 1989, winners of the New Zealand South Island Championships.

"Well, each of the players had different requirements. Some wanted you to come along and talk to them, and tell them what was happening in the other matches. And some of them were quite happy to be on their own. Most wanted to know what was going on and how we were doing. So I was circulating between the matches, but particularly helping one or two players who wanted to have someone to talk to during play. Of course I would much rather have been playing, but someone had to do the other jobs. I like playing when it's really tense. That's often when my best comes out - not always, but often."

I ask how it feels to come home after one of the most spectacular croquet achievements to almost complete indifference in the media.

"It is a bit frustrating. Kate Hoey, the Sports Minister, did send congratulations. Most of the team are quite interested in sport in general and would like to feel that we have something to say about how we come to be the best team in the world when many other of our national sports teams aren't." I ask what they might have said, given the chance.

"One of things that is probably unrecognised unless you analyse it is how different the CA is from many other organising bodies. It's made up mostly of players - people who are actually playing the game. Over the last 15 years there have been a lot of young people involved on the Council, including taking on the Chairmanship. That has been one of the factors in building a strong GB team. People like Steve Mulliner and Colin Irwin, Andrew Hope and Martin Murray have been Chairmen of Council, and they've all played in the MacRobertson. I was Chairman of Selectors from 82 to 86, when I was in my mid-30s. Now we have



David in action playing a half-jump, during the President's Cup in 1983. Picture by Peter Alvey.

Chris Clarke as Chairman, and he's 28. It's a very different situation from any other sport. If you have players in key positions they really want the best team to be out there. So they make more effort to get on with whoever is chosen. There really is a better system in the CA.

"Another factor is there's always been focus on how we can improve the team. When I started playing there were only the big three events - the Opens, the Men's and the President's. Now we have best of three weekends in the four Regional Championships, and we have the Home Internationals. So the top players play each other a tremendous amount during a season. It helps to bring people on. If you look at cricket, the game is split between 18 teams and the top players rarely play together. These three things really have helped us: player-selectors, player-administrators and an extensive range of A class events."

On wider croquet issues such as this one, David has clear, far-sighted views. He commented with regret on how much more active the NZ Sports Council is in developing Juniors - and, in passing, mentioned the new version of croquet, called Kiwi Croquet, the NZCC are developing currently for young people. It is one of a number of sports being redeveloped for juniors. "They want to develop kids' confidence, sporting skills, ball skills and enjoyment in sports."

He sees work with schools as essential if we are to find a new generation of players who can challenge New Zealand, where there is a deep pool of youngsters who are developing well. In David's view, if you want more top players you will have to look to the schools and universities. But if your aim is to increase club membership, you must look to the older generation. He supports the development of Golf croquet to attract new players, and the promotion of the game through demonstrations in shopping malls, using the indoor mats. "Look at Southwick, if you want a successful example."

We discuss David's role in CA fund-raising. He works as a member of Tony Fathers' Marketing Committee on sponsorship for major tournaments, and is currently preparing a proposal to put to the Sports Council to help fund the World Championships at Hurlingham in 2001.

Another interest is the development of croquet in the USA., where he plays regularly.

"It's been a great pleasure to see their game develop over the last 15 years, and to see them in the MacRobertson [where they won their first Test this time. Did they return home to media silence, I wonder.] There's a full programme of events, both US rules and Association rules, and it's still growing."

He talks of one of his favourite events, the Sonoma Cutrer, played in the wine district of California.: "You get crowds of 1500 people, and they've raised nearly \$1M for a charity called Make A Wish, for youngsters with serious health problems."

He would go on about the US, but I have two more questions I'm determined to fit in. First, the question asked of all interviewees: If you

could change anything in croquet, what would it be?

Without hesitation: "I'd like to see more of our top tournaments played on faster lawns. The watering system hasn't helped this. I love fast lawns, and the Christchurch lawns were fast this year. [He thinks they are the best in the world.] With faster lawns the comment you hear that croquet is too easy for top players - too many +26TPs - would soon go away. Faster lawns and firmer hoops, please."

To back this up, David recalls a shot by a New Zealand player in the Tests:

"He was about 3 yards from 2-back. He hit it very hard and it bounced off the hoop past Rover and up towards the peg. You would never get that kind of bounce in most situations here. If you hit the hoop at all in New Zealand it was so much more difficult."

For my last question, I ask him to name his player of the MacRobertson series 2000.

"John Prince played very impressively. He won all his singles. Toby Garrison was an extremely good shot. [Warning: he's only 21 and could be around for some time to come.] Brian Wislang and Steve Jones both came back to score victories after potentially demoralising losses the previous day. But we played well. The pressure was on us. David Maugham's victory when everything was riding on it was fantastic. And Stephen Mulliner's win over Bob Jackson on the final day was very good. It was the second time he's played Jackson on the final day at Christchurch and beaten him..."

Not surprisingly, in the end, David does not settle for any single player in any of the four teams. How could he? Every individual member of the winning GB team - Robert Fulford, Chris Clarke, David Maugham, Stephen Mulliner, Colin Irwin and David Openshaw himself - played their socks off in the most demanding croquet arena in the world. And the spirit in which they played stayed high and optimistic. It seems to me they got the right captain, too. The Openshaw law of averages was given the most searching test it is ever likely to be given. And it held true right to the end. Just.



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CA COUNCIL & COMMITTEES TASKS FOR 2000

For quite a long time many of those involved with administering croquet recognized that having a Council of more than twenty discussing the details of committee reports is perhaps not the most effective way to manage our affairs. The national governing bodies of other sports have been taking steps to improve their efficiency and the CA Council of 1999 decided it was time to grasp the nettle too. After discussion and some amendments it accepted the Constitution Working Party recommendations and these were put into effect in October last year.

There is now a much stronger emphasis on delegation from Council to committees, and with this, accountability. Committees report to a nine-person Management Committee leaving Council itself to deal mainly with matters of policy.

Revised terms of reference for all our committees are being agreed that take into account, for example, the responsibilities across a number of them for golf croquet including coaching, laws, international relations and selection.

Don Gaunt, Chairman of Council, has asked all committee chairmen to list their objectives for 2000 so that by the end of the year everyone will be able to see what has been achieved and what may remain to be completed.

Council wishes to operate in as open a manner as possible so here are the most important specific tasks for 2000 from those chairmen who have so far completed their lists. If you would like to comment on any of these objectives please contact the relevant chairman.

Quiller Barrett,
Chairman Management Committee

EXECUTIVE

Chairman: Don Gaunt

Objectives have been agreed but as these concern staff they are confidential.

HANDICAP CO-ORDINATION

Chairman: Douglas Gurney

- 1 Examine the status and regulations concerning club handicappers.
- 2 Ensure there is reliable data at the CA Office regarding all CA players including those on the Handicapper list.
- 3 Standardize Short Croquet handicaps.
- 4 Liaise with the Golf Croquet Committee regarding handicaps in singles and doubles.
- 5 Analyse the make-up of handicaps and find any drift.
- 6 Standardize CA handicaps with those overseas.

INTERNATIONAL

Chairman: David Openshaw

- 1 Increase our influence on the WCF. Develop stronger links with NZCC, ACA and USCA and with individual members of the WCF management committee.
- 2 Prepare a successful bid to hold the association croquet World Championship in 2001.
- 3 Achieve changes to the format of the MacRobertson Shield.
- 4 Develop our playing strength at the top level. Specifically develop players with the potential to play in the MacRobertson Shield 2003.

LAWS

Chairman: Ian Vincent

- 1 To draft and agree a new edition of the Laws of Association Croquet, and an initial version of the Official Rulings on the Laws of Croquet, in collaboration with the other members of the International Laws Meeting.
- 2 To publish these, in collaboration with the Marketing Committee.
- 3 To publicise the changes to, and respond to queries from, players and referees.
- 4 To revise the existing examination questions in the light of the changes.
- 5 To train and examine assistant referees.
- 6 To prepare materials for training and examining assistant referees as referees or championship referees.
- 7 To assist the Golf Croquet committee in the development of Laws for Golf Croquet.
- 8 To review the Regulations for Tournaments in the light of current practice and requirements of other committees.

MAGAZINE

Chairman: Bruce Rannie

- 1 Improve the level of performance relating to the publication schedule.
- 2 Investigate, propose changes and implement upgrades to the hardware and software used by the Editor and other contributors. The aim of this is to streamline the receipt and preparation of material for The Gazette, including reports and features, thus releasing time currently allocated to typesetting to tasks more appropriate towards searching for or commissioning contributions.

MANAGEMENT

Chairman: Quiller Barrett

- 1 Monitor that other committees are carrying out agreed policies and objectives as efficiently as possible. Improve communications as a priority.
- 2 Identify problem areas, accountability and assist other committees to take corrective actions.
- 3 Finalize terms of reference for all committees.
- 4 Review effectiveness of the CWP recommendations concerning Council and its committees.
- 5 Review the performance of all committees against their stated objectives.

MARKETING

Chairman: Tony Fathers

- 1 Develop croquet as a serious sport.
- 2 Achieve a national target of 700 new club players of croquet. It is expected that the Childline activities will produce 500 new club players, and our Oldie magazine activities will produce 200 new club players. From the new club players we expect to recruit 100 new individual associate members for the CA over a period of two to three years.
- 3 Recruit individual associate members for the CA.
- 4 Improve and develop the revenue earning activities of the CA.
- 5 Improve and develop the working relationship between CA committees and clubs.

MEMBERSHIP

Chairman: Paul Campion

- 1 To review present classifications of membership of both Clubs and Individuals.
- 2 To decide the membership benefits for Clubs and Individuals.
- 3 To determine the subscriptions of Member Clubs and Individual Associates for 2001.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS . . .

At its March 2000 meeting Council decided that a summary of its most significant decisions should be published in the Gazette. This will replace the extracts from the Minutes that Alan Oldham has been contributing to the magazine for some time, for which work he was thanked.

The first of these summaries, for the March 2000 meeting, is based on unconfirmed Minutes. Decisions from the Council meetings held in October and December 1999, and from recent committee meetings, have also been included. If you would like further information on any item, please contact the CA Secretary, Nigel Graves.

Council, 25 March 2000

Golf Croquet Laws

The newly drafted Laws of Golf Croquet and Regulations for Tournaments were approved and are being published for use in the 2000 season.

Association Croquet Laws

Council adopted, as a matter of principle, the substance of the revised laws agreed by the International Laws Revision Committee. It authorized the Laws Committee to approve and publish the final agreed text, to come into force within the domain on 1st January 2001. Council thanked Stephen Mulliner for the long hours he had devoted to helping with the revision work.

Association Croquet Tournament Regulations

The Management Committee was authorized to approve publication of the proposed revised Regulations, prior to their formal adoption by Council. This will enable the Regulations to be published in the autumn; they will come into effect on 1st January 2001.

Dissent by Council and Committee members

New guidelines for Council and Committee members who dissent from majority decisions were approved.

Committees, January to March 2000

Equipment

Management Committee confirmed its willingness to consider applications for grants and loans to support the design and development of croquet equipment likely to raise standards.

Handicap

Club handicappers now have discretion to set or alter handicaps above 8, instead of 12.

The lowest handicap (now -2) will become -3 for a trial period of one year, followed by a review.

International

The CA is preparing formal resolutions to alter the constitution of the WCF for submission to the next AGM of that body.

CA members taking part in the MacRobertson Shield and impecunious/junior players of potential who are selected for international events will have the highest priority for funding assistance from the CA.

Tournament

Nigel Graves will compile and edit the 2001 edition of the *Fixtures Book*.

Council, 11 December 1999

Finance

The proposed budget for 2000 was ratified and it was noted that the Treasurer's forecast for 2001 envisaged a static position in respect of subscriptions, a modest growth in levy, substantial growth in commercial income, a reduction in net income from tournaments and some increase in equipment expenditure.

CA Grants, Awards and Diplomas

There are new policies concerning Grants and Awards. A change in the conditions for the Apps-Heley Award and an additional award scheme for clubs was agreed. A new CA Diploma, awarded to those who make

a significant contribution to croquet at club level, is being introduced in 2000.

Golf Croquet

A golf croquet selection sub-committee has been set up comprising the Chairman of the CA's main Selection Committee and four other members nominated by the Golf Croquet Committee. In its first year the Chairman of the main Selection Committee will chair it.

International

Council agreed proposals to be made by the CA at a MacRobertson Shield meeting to be held in February 2000. They concern the title of the event, recognition by the World Croquet Federation that the Shield is the Croquet World Team Championships and that the event should be opened up to other countries in addition to Australia, Gt Britain, New Zealand and USA.

The CA will bid to hold the 2005 WCF Association Croquet World Championships in Gt Britain.

Magazine

Council concluded that the distribution of the May issue of The Croquet Gazette to non-Associate members was not cost-effective and would cease.

Expenditure of up to £1,000 on IT equipment for use by the Editor was agreed.

Membership

The criteria for Full Member Club membership of the CA were ratified. Clubs must: (i) have regular access to at least one half-sized lawn; (ii) have at least eight playing members; (iii) have been visited and approved by an officer of the relevant Federation; (iv) be resident in the domain, Scotland or the Republic of Ireland - in the latter two cases the approval of the relevant country's Association is required.

Council, 16 October 1999

Selection

The Selection Committee is able to co-opt others to enable it to select players for Ladies events. Current and future notes of the deliberations of the Committee may be made publicly available without reference to Council or the Management Committee.

International

The CA will bid to host the WCF Association Croquet World Championships in 2001 as part of the CA Opens at Hurlingham.

Membership

Approval was given to a proposal to join with the charity Childline in a membership drive for clubs in 2000.

Quiller Barrett

Chairman, Management Committee

The John Hobbs Mallet

Reg Bamford won the Opens with his

Hold the handle at whatever angle suits your style, then if the head is out of line you can twist it and lock it tight, so all shots go as accurately as you are capable of achieving.

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CA NEWS

CROQUET AND THE INTERNET

As more and more of our members get connected to the Internet, they will no doubt want to use the very inexpensive and quick facilities it offers for sending electronic mail. The CA purchased the Domain name 'croquet' some two years ago and this allows us to generate a series of email addresses based on this name and these addresses will continue to be valid even if the recipients for the messages change. Keeping up with the email addresses of all the committee members of the CA can be very difficult especially when addresses are changed to get a better deal from the Internet Service Provider (ISP). We simply have to tell our ISP who we want the messages to be sent to and it can be more than one person.

Below are the new addresses we have generated; please use them whenever appropriate, it helps our office and the various committees deal with matters much quicker.

webmaster@croquet.org.uk

This will go to our manager of our web site and the CA office. It should be used for changes to Club and Federation data that is on our web site and on our office database and of course any messages related to the CA web site itself.

news@croquet.org.uk

This will go to the News Editor of our web site, the Editor of the Gazette, the Webmaster and the CA office. Any item of news, whether major or minor event can be sent to this address including your tournament reports for the Gazette. Regret photos will still have to go the slow way via the post at present.

results@croquet.org.uk

This should be used to report results for the Association and Golf Inter-club competitions, the Mary Rose, Longman and Secretary's Shield. It will go to the Manager of the competition, the Gazette Editor, the Web Site News Editor plus the ranking officers. Please remember that for both Inter-club competitions and the Mary Rose, the full results should be included for ranking purposes.

laws@croquet.org.uk

This may be used for any constructive comments or queries on the laws of either Association or Golf croquet and will go to the Chairmen of our Laws and Golf Croquet Committees.

golfpens@croquet.org.uk

This goes to the CA office and the Tournament Director of our new Open Golf Championship

caoffice@croquet.org.uk

Of course we must not forget this one, that has

been in use for some time and just goes to the CA office.

Our Web Site has now been in operation for just over a year. I would like to thank all those who have made very kind remarks about our site. I would also thank those who have made constructive criticism, this can only help us improve our site.

As some of you will have seen, our News Desk on the site came into proper use during the 'Mac' with daily reports from New Zealand. This was due to the efforts of Dave Kibble who has taken on the job of News Desk Editor; so please help David by sending in those news@croquet emails.

We endeavour to keep our site as up to date as possible and try to make any necessary alterations within one or two days of receipt. However we must have your input first so don't forget to let us know promptly when you make changes. Some clubs have published their subscription rates on our site. Tell the Web Masters know if they need to be updated for 2000

We know some members who are totally computer oriented would like to do everything croquet-wise via the net. Whilst technically most of it is very feasible, there are considerable practical and commercial problems involved, particularly when it comes to handling cash for subs and tournament entries. We also recognise that the majority of our members are not Internet users at present and as long as some of you are not connected to the net we shall continue to provide the normal postal service for all information so as you are not disadvantaged in any way.

Bill Arliss, Webmaster

Childline

By the time you read this National Croquet day may have passed, and hopefully it was very successful for everyone concerned.

Childline Chairman Esther Rantzen made time in her busy schedule to visit Roehampton for a photo opportunity which we hope will result in useful publicity for the Childline/Croquet initiative.

I must publicly praise Woking for their 'fun croquet day' organised for July 1st. Entry by programme (£1) gets around the problem of those mean minded citizens who think 50 pence is enough; and - presumably - does not stop a Childline collection as well. With Croquet Gymkhana, Golf Croquet and an exhibition match between Robert Fulford and Jeff Dawson, it does indeed sound like a fun day.

SAGA Magazine

Yes, in answer to your question. I have written to SAGA and have received a perfectly civil letter back. In it the Editor says "we shall shortly be making our selection for the next issue and hope you will be successful". Fair enough; you can imagine the size of SAGA's post bag.

In a sense it does not matter whether my

letter gets in or not - as long as one or more letters praising croquet is published. About six weeks ago I wrote to The Times on one of the socio-political issues of the day. The letter was not published. Four weeks later an almost identical letter from another reader got printed. remain convinced - from brief experience 20 years ago of magazine publishing - that my letter helped the letter page editor decide that the point being made was worth ventilating.

Back to croquet and SAGA. One letter from one person can be ignored. 40 letters cannot be ignored. So go on, write to SAGA, Middlebury Square, Folkstone, Kent CT20 1AZ.

Tony Fathers

Chairman, Marketing Committee

Golf Croquet Report

This year will see the World Championships staged by the WCF in Cairo during October and we hope to see strong representation from the UK. The total number of places that will be allotted to the CA is not yet defined and on past experience has increased as the event gets nearer as some other countries find they cannot raise a representative.

This year all our players will be selected by the newly formed Golf Croquet Selection Committee under the Chairmanship of Chris Clarke and with committee members, David Hopkins, Sam Curry, Tom Weston and myself. With the very limited number of games last year, it does not appear that a reasonable selection can be made until the end of June when the new Opens will have been played and all the heats for the national championship will have been completed. The Selection committee agreed that a selection criteria of playing in at least two ranking tournaments, one of which must be the Opens or the national championship, be adopted.

As published earlier, the mechanism for running a ranking system has been put in place and will be run on a similar basis to the Association ranking system. All golf croquet games at fixtures listed in the fixtures book and played to CA laws (not the alternative game) or WCF rules will be eligible for the ranking system. It is unlikely that ranking places will have a major significance for the coming season as we shall not have collected sufficient data but the system will become established for use in future years.

Bill Arliss

Chairman, Golf Croquet Committee

Laws Revision

On Saturday, 25th March, the AGM of the Australian Croquet Association and, some twelve hours later, our own Council approved the substance of the laws proposed by the International Laws Revision Committee, leaving their respective laws committees to agree the final text. New Zealand and the USA are expected to follow suit within the next few months. The

revised laws will come into force in Australia on 1st September and on 1st January, 2001, here. The text will be published on the CA Web site (<http://www.croquet.org.uk>) and printed copies will be available later this year (when revised tournament regulations, see below, have been agreed). Seminars for referees will be arranged for the autumn and an article outlining the changes from a player's perspective is planned for a future issue of the Gazette.

Revision of Tournament Regulations

Council also authorised the submission of a revised set of Tournament Regulations for approval at a subsequent meeting. Part of this is a tidying up operation, to bring them into line with changes, e.g. of membership categories and handicapping procedures, since they were last printed some ten years ago, but the following changes are also contemplated:

- Deletion of regulation which defines professionals and allows them to be excluded from events, on the grounds that it has not been invoked since it was introduced. (2(b)).
- Revision of the doping regulation, in line with current Sport England recommendations. (2(c)).
- To make disqualification, e.g. for lateness, practising without permission and for playing off the wrong handicap, discretionary rather than mandatory. (5(j), 22).
- Remove net points as a means of determining the winner of American Blocks. (15).
- Add definitions of Progressive, Flexible and Egyptian Swiss formats.
- Change the dates for notifying calendar fixtures. (18).
- Come into line with the new General Conditions as regards hoops and opening and closing dates. (19).
- Allow entries to be accepted without pre-payment (21).

Further changes may also be proposed by the disciplinary working party.

If you wish to make any comments on these proposals, or wish to suggest other changes, please contact me, either directly or via the CA Office, no later than the end of May.

Ian Vincent, Chairman, CA Laws Committee.

Development News

C.A. Grants & Loans

BEVERLEY. The club have been given a £500 grant to assist in the provision of a lawnside pavilion.

CHESTER. Chester have been awarded a grant of £500 towards the cost of developing three full sized lawns on a more level site, subject to their application for a lottery grant for the project under the Awards for All scheme being granted.

CHELTENHAM. Cheltenham are aiming to proceed with one of three options depending on the response of Sport England to their revised lottery application and success in raising additional finance. It has been agreed that the club will be given a £500 grant and a substantial loan, conditional on one of the three options being implemented.

SCHOOLS GRANTS.

Grants of £150 have been approved for the schools programmes of the following clubs:-

Pendle, Ramsgate, Medway & Woodhall Spa. £100 has been granted to Ripon.

Continued on page 21

THE WOODHALL SPA YOUTH INITIATIVE

REPORT BY PATRICIA DUKE-COX

The Woodhall Spa Croquet Club has made a determined effort to introduce the game of croquet to local youngsters. Initially juniors were children or grandchildren of existing club members. Help in the form of grants for equipment and publicity were considered essential for this operation and the co-operation of park managers and school teachers was another highly desirable option.

External Help

Luckily in 1999 a grant was received under the "Awards for All" scheme of £2,250 for storage premises and equipment. In addition grants of £125 from the CA and £250 from Lincolnshire County Council were received. Additional items of equipment, including smaller mallets than the standard sizes, were purchased with this money and have been well used in the youth programmes which have catered for the age range 5 - 17 years. Additional equipment is being purchased again this year.

Targetting of Youngsters

The Club sought youngsters from the immediate locality, holiday visitors and schools. The local press and information sources e.g. Library, Tourist Information Centre, caravan parks and public notice boards were used to advertise the sessions.

Amenities

Locally the club used ground at a Caravan and Country Park on the outskirts of the village which already had a very basic croquet area. Using the Club's own equipment Saturday morning sessions were held from 10 to 12 and holidaymakers arriving on the site could see the activity as it was beside the main driveway into the complex. About 20 children benefitted from these sessions, the small number possibly due to timing but the £1 fee for the two hours might also have had an impact on this figure.



Youth session at Bainland Country Park, with Tony Whiley & Pam Overton.

The current year will see the sessions being held between 2.00-4.00pm. Five Club members helped with these sessions held between May and September. Those local children who did attend regularly progressed well. Aged between 5 and 17 years, a youngster received a certificate of attendance with a digital photograph of himself on it. It is hoped some of the local children might become members in due course, but holidaymakers could only sample the delights of the game, but might return to it elsewhere or bring others along on return visits to this Park.

The other initiatives involve schools. It has become apparent that for this to work well a member of staff is pivotal to its success. All schools in

the area received a letter informing them that the club was willing to go in and offer croquet as an activity, either during lunchtimes, after school or on activity days but it is obvious the personal approach and co-operation of someone working on the premises brings results.

The local Prep. school took advantage of three sessions on a Monday evening when 5 boys, aged between 9 and 12 years, were introduced to the basics of short croquet by two club members, building on the knowledge already given them by a competent master within school. These sessions were at the end of the summer term which ended early in July. The Club intends to return early in the summer term as this proved inadequate time to achieve very much.

A local secondary school, which offered croquet during an activity day in 1998, has the advantage that two club members work there. These members were able to offer croquet sessions during lunchtime once a week over about 10 weeks and eventually had 36 pupils who learned Golf Croquet and held a competition at the end of the season. Additionally, five pupils began to learn the rudiments of Short Croquet. The ages of the pupils ranged from 11 to 14 years. The sport was again offered for the activity day in 1999 when four club members helped teach 28 pupils the game of Golf Croquet and finished with a competition. It is good to report that some of these pupils were requesting that the croquet activity begin again early in the Spring term, (which it did) well before the Club sessions were scheduled!

Another Club member, who teaches at a grammar school, has also been able to borrow equipment from the Federation. Twice weekly sessions of Short Croquet were offered to pupils, mainly from Year 7 and aged 11 or 12 years. More than a dozen attended, ten of them for more than four weeks (eight sessions). This master is hoping to be able to enter them for a schools competition this year.

Publicity

The aim of the Club's press secretary is to have some coverage of events each week. Local papers have had the following headlines as a result of the activities:- "Croquet Club takes sport to the schools"; "Plenty of action at Croquet Club".

Targets Achieved

Summing up, Woodhall Spa CC was able to introduce some form of croquet to 141 children aged between 5 years and 17 years during 1999. The aim during 2000 will be to extend this number and already more positive moves are being made to reach the local primary school. Apart from the venture in the country park, all sessions have been free to the pupils participating. Although no new junior members have yet been recruited as a direct result of last year's programme, it is hoped that new youth groups will form and grow over the forthcoming years. Watch this space for more information on how we grow!

Manor House Mallets

The originators of carbon fibre shafted mallets now offer a truly comprehensive range, from the 'basic' at £70, through the well established R- and T- series (£100/115) to the new 2000 mallet at £132.50 (inc. head wrap). all types have heads of fine timber with screwed and glued double faces, inlaid sight lines and a high quality finish. Grips are included, sizes are to your requirements, and despatch is within a few days or sooner! This year we have improved mallet bags (£25) and new quilted head wraps (£7.50), which make excellent presents.

Discuss your requirements with Alan Pidcock,

☎ 01772 743859, e-mail pidcock@manorh.u-net.com

The Manor House, 1 Barn Croft, Penwortham, Preston PR1 0SX

MACROBERTSON SHIELD 2000 CAPTAIN'S REPORT

David Openshaw writes on his most recent
MacRobertson exertions

Well we just made it. I am known for enjoying close matches but this was something else! The most intense croquet I have ever played.

After four weeks of continuous croquet (including a week at the New Zealand Opens) we won the MacRobertson Shield by the narrowest of margins. David Maugham completed a triple in his third game against Toby Garrison to give us a 11-10 win against New Zealand.

The closeness of the match is demonstrated by how evenly spread were the individual results. In each test match every player plays in five matches, three doubles and two singles. No player won all five of his matches, only one player John Prince(NZ) won four. Yet every player on both teams won at least one game.

We started the event as favourites. But we knew that we would have to perform well. Before leaving for New Zealand we set out some specific objectives both for the team and as individuals.

We won the first two test matches extremely convincingly beating Australia 20-1 and USA 19-2. One of our key objectives had been to get a good start in our first match against Australia. We were particularly pleased to win all our doubles matches (18 in all) in these two tests. In fact before the USA match we set ourselves a new specific objective of remaining unbeaten in the doubles.



That winning moment any team captain treasures, David holds aloft the MacRobertson Shield. (Photo by Chris Irwin).

We had been pleased with our play in the first two weeks. We also felt good that we had beaten Australia and USA much more convincingly than New Zealand. However we also knew that this counted for nothing in the end. Both Great Britain and New Zealand had won two matches and so entered the third test match level. Effectively making it the final.

We expected our strength in doubles to show in the final test against New Zealand but it didn't. We also expected that the faster lawns would favour us but that was not the case. Since the start of the tournament the watering system had not been used and gradually the lawns were returning to the pace and firmness I had experienced at the same venue in 1979 and 1990. However it was the New Zealanders who adapted more quickly and we who found hoop running more difficult. All this made the match very close. As in any sporting contest when the favourites are in danger of losing then the pressure is really on them.

On day one we went behind 2-1 in the doubles. These were the first doubles matches we had lost. But on day two we looked as though we would get ahead. Colin Irwin and David Maugham had quick wins and Chris Clarke and I had both won our first match and I was well ahead in the second. But the New Zealanders fought back well to score 2-2 on the day. This fight back was crucial as I feel if we had gone ahead on the second day we would have won the whole match in more convincing

fashion. On days three and four we did get our noses in front winning the doubles on day three 2-1 and the singles on day four 3-1 giving us an 8-6 lead. But day 5 saw another great fightback by New Zealand. They won the first two doubles to level at 8-8. But when it really mattered we won the third doubles in the late afternoon +1 in the third game.

On the final day we needed two wins from four matches with our top four players playing. For much of the day we appeared in control even though three of the matches had gone to a third game. But within quick succession Robert and Chris were beaten in those third games having at one stage looked like winning them. In between those two losses Stephen had beaten Bob Jackson in two straight games. This left everything on the last match. I did at this stage have to admit to myself that we might lose the Shield. Toby Garrison was ahead in this final game but David had one ball on four back so was always in contention. David took his chance and played such a great triple peel break under immense pressure to secure victory for us.

Reflecting on the event a few weeks later I have two main thoughts. Firstly a pride that when it really mattered we had found something extra. I guess this is what you expect from the favourites. Secondly I wondered how it had been so close and was there anything in our preparation for the match which we should have done differently. I do believe the major reason for the closeness was the strong performance from the whole of the New Zealand team. They did play above themselves throughout the match. We continued to believe in ourselves but they kept coming back at us. But sport is full of instances when the favourites lose and my overriding feeling is of great satisfaction that we had the spirit and skill to see off their challenge.

I was pleased to see the USA team do so well this year and beat Australia for third place in another exceptionally close match. I have played for Great Britain against the USA many times since our first test match in 1985. It has been good to see the continuing improvement in their standard.

I would like to thank all the people from the NZCC and the Canterbury Association and the Christchurch clubs who put so much effort into the organisation of the event. It was an excellently organised contest and an extremely enjoyable one in which to play. The United Club at Christchurch is an exceptional venue for the MacRobertson Shield particularly when the lawns are fast. In fact if I had to choose one venue for the event this would be the one.

The play was conducted with great sportsmanship throughout and the event really lived up to its new name The Croquet World Series for the MacRobertson Shield. It was great to see that all four teams were virtually at full strength. This says much for the continuing attraction of playing in the MacRobertson Shield given the commitment

The Wild Rover

An Ode to Today's Game (with apologies to W S Gilbert)

I am the very pattern of a Croquet Player (Tournament)
I win trophies that are silver and others that are ornament.
I meet players near perfection and others reprehensible
From Tunbridge Wells to Hurlingham in order hardly sensible.
I'm very well acquainted too with matters handicapped
I understand the Rule Book, both the good and incompatible.
I always call the referee when games get acrimonious
And treat him with all deference, however sanctimonious.
I'm very good at standard leaves (and not so standard too!)
But rarely do I get to use them, two-back's my Waterloo.
I dress in whites exclusively, with minimal adorn-a-ment
I am the very model of a Croquet Player (Tournament)

of time involved.

The next MacRobertson Shield in 2003 will be the first ever played in the USA. I expect both Australia and New Zealand will benefit from their excellent junior development programmes. We can also expect the USA to continue their improvement. We will need to develop some new talent of our own for the 2003 event. We cannot rely on old timers like Robert, David and Chris for ever!

We may also see some new teams in the MacRobertson Shield as the four organising countries are all committed to encouraging other countries to take part. Work is ongoing to look at various formats which might be possible and to liaise with countries who might wish to participate. The World Croquet Federation has agreed to recognise the event as the premier international team event. So I look forward to another exciting MacRobertson Shield in 2003.

WHAT IS AN 'AUNT EMMA' TYPE PLAYER?

By Rob Edlin White

To quote from Miller & Thorp ("Croquet and how to play it", Faber & Faber, 1966): "Unfortunately, the game has to put up with a considerable number of silly people who believe that 'Safety first' is a praiseworthy principle; that the fewer risks that are taken, the better. Such 'players' are known as Aunt Emma players and they are accurately described, in a phrase of Keating's, as 'old women of both sexes'."

"Aunt Emma does not try to pick up breaks: indeed it is doubtful whether she would even recognise one. Her policy is to make one hoop at a time with her partner ball, and then to lay up, leaving the opponent's balls as far apart as possible. This excruciatingly dull way of playing often paralyses the opponent into ineffectiveness, and results in victory by anaesthesia."... "more often than not she is an extremely good shot, and her taking off has to be seen to be believed. This makes her difficult to beat, and not surprisingly so, since she is utterly absorbed in winning the game and is not at all perturbed by the gruesome tactics she employs."

Miller & Thorp note that Aunt Emma's are good shots. In my experience they suddenly become A-class shots as soon as I get the innings and some kind of leave. If they have the innings, they never attempt any kind of shot. They also seem to be good at long roll approaches to distant hoops.

Miller and Thorp continue "A beginner should not worry in the least if he (or she presumably - Rob)" is beaten by Aunt Emma early in his career. Provided he resolves not to follow in her execrable footsteps, he will very soon be too good for her, and, what is more important, he will learn to play subtle and interesting croquet, while she will merely carry on with her merciless mission of bludgeoning her opponents to death."

Maurice Reckitt says, in the Foreword to the same book: "I think there is a stronger 'case for the defence' than these authors have thought fit to make out, but this can only be conceded if the case for the attack is understood and applied on every appropriate occasion, and in emphasising this they are undoubtedly right".

Cotter says, in "Tackle Croquet this way" (Stanley Paul, 1960): "Your object is to get on with the game. Whatever happens, don't become an Aunt Emma player. This mythical person symbolizes the player that is content to make one hoop at a time from his own ball and then to take off to the opponent's balls to 'separate' them, returning to 'mother' to start the dreary process all over again. Rather than play like this, be content to lose game after game in an honest endeavour to make a break. Your reward will come, for you will eventually become a Croquet player enjoying the rights of man to express intelligence: while the Aunt Emma player will still be wallowing in chaos and old night."

The phrase 'back to mother', used in tactical advice to beginners by some of these players, says it all. Let's flee from the big bad world where unexpected and dangerous things can happen, to the safe comforting

succour of an ample bosom reminding me of my childhood.

Solomon says (in "Croquet", Batsford, 1966): "do not bring your partner ball into the court until you have established or nearly established a three-ball break. This is likely to be the only piece of defensive play I shall ever advocate. It is not playing 'Aunt Emma' to do this; it is merely prudent. It is being Aunt Emma to leave your partner ball on the boundary after you have established a break. Croquet is a difficult enough game with four balls and there is no point in making it even more so by allowing yourself only three. Far too many players play every game in a defensive instead of an attacking frame of mind."

The Aunt Emma style Solomon refers to is slightly less defensive than some; he refers to a player who plays a 3 ball break using opponent's balls with 'mother' safely away on a boundary to retreat to if anything goes wrong.

McCullough & Mulliner ("The World of Croquet", Crowood, 1987) have this to say: "... 'Fortune favours the brave' should be the motto of all croquet players. We urge you to adopt an attacking philosophy. Those of you who are prepared to lose some games in the early part of your croquet careers, in order to test your skills to the limit (and thus to extend them), will be richly rewarded later on."

"Unfortunately, too many players take the view that their main objective should be to prevent their opponents from making any progress. This 'play safe' strategy inhibits them from experimentation in game situations and retards the development of their skills, to say nothing of increasing the tedium of the games they play. Proponents of this 'Aunt Emma' defensive school of thought are left wondering why their early success against fellow beginners who experiment evaporates, and why they cannot beat single handicap players in handicap games."

According to A.E. Gill, in "Croquet, the complete guide" (Heinemann Kingswood, 1988): "There is a croquet expression whose origin is also obscure - the 'Aunt Emma player'. The hallmark of such a player is cowardly tactics ... and indeed an article on 'Cowardly Tactics' appears in Arthur Lillie's book 'Croquet up to date' under the pseudonym of 'Aunt Emma'. 'Croquet up to Date' was published in 1900, just in time for the Edwardian rebirth of interest in the game, and clearly the expression, even at that early date, was used in its current meaning of a thoroughly irritating player, whose play may be effective but is also selfish, and generally boring for his or her opponent. Lillie gives no explanation of it" (the origin of the term - Rob) "and obviously assumes that his readers are familiar with it. No-one in the croquet world knows what the origin of the expression is, but believe I may have discovered it."

Gill goes on to suggest it refers to an Emma Clutton-Brock (nee Hill) who married an uncle of the Victorian croquet pioneer, Walter Jones Whitmore. She had a weakness for port, and was

for various reasons rather disliked by the Whitmore Jones family.

Later in the book, Gill goes on to say: "Don't ever be afraid to experiment and take chances. If you don't, you'll never advance. At worst, if you are too conservative, you run the risk of becoming an 'Aunt Emma' player. These people are the bane of croquet courts, with their timid but viperish technique of keeping their own balls together, but taking off to split up the opponent's balls, then returning to home base to crawl towards a hoop, which they will only run if it is utterly safe, when the whole boring process is repeated. The average game of croquet may last two and a half to three and a half hours. Aunt Emma can stretch it out far longer, and in any case makes one hour seem like three. It is not even as if his style of play carries any particular advantage, because if he comes up against a passably good regular player, who can create breaks he can be outmanoeuvred and vanquished'.

Readers who have got this far may be somewhat relieved to know that I think I have exhausted the references to Aunt Emma in my limited croquet library; Lamb, Reckitt, Nicky Smith, Pritchard and Peel seem not to comment. Gaunt's 'Plus One on Time' appears somewhat more cautious in places, but he does not recommend Aunt Emma style tactics. I do not have the Lillie book referred to by A.E. Gill above.

I once played an Aunt Emma who, when for penult and penult and well ahead in a timed game, refused to attempt to leave any ball near penult. Repeatedly I would take the 26 yard cross court shot at partner, or wide join, he would split me up as widely as possible, and with his last croquet stroke try a 20+ yard take-off for position in front of penult, fail to get position and retreat to partner in the middle of the North boundary. He wouldn't even attempt to lay up with a rush to penult; he would do 3 yard wide joins on the North boundary, presumably in case I hit in, though the game was so tedious by now that my shooting was getting worse and worse, and I was wondering why I'd taken a day off work to be in a tournament when I'd rather be at work.

Some have said that Aunt Emmas drive people away from the game. If it weren't for the advice of the authors above I might have been driven away on that occasion or one or two others like it. Thankfully, I have persisted long enough to improve to a level where if do hit in, I have some chance of building a break or making a powerful leave, even from the very negative positions this sort of player leaves. I take the view that while my handicap is no better than 10, virtually every game should be treated as an opportunity to improve, not to win at all costs. I hope others will be encouraged to persist by the advice from the writers quoted above.

Finally, I hope no-one who is or suspects they are an Aunt Emma will take any offence at these quotes and comments, but rather resolve to strike an appropriate balance between prudent and enterprising play, for the benefit of their own game and the game as a whole.

EDITORIAL

It is becoming clear that many readers do not read the information published for their benefit on page 3 of every issue. So at this early stage in the season I thought I might just give a gentle reminder to those of you who have not read, or failed to understand my northern ramblings. Reminder number 1 is that a deadline is the last available date that I will consider copy for publication. It is not the first, nor is it the date you should be aiming for when sending me your copy. The deadline never changes, it is always the 10th day of the month prior to publication and it applies to everyone (yes even including officials). The only way to even think about sending me something to arrive on or later than that date is to contact me directly to see if I will accept your excuses. This is not me being inflexible, arrogant editor, this is me being practical and trying the only way I know to keep the Gazette to the schedule it should be on.

Reminder number two is to all of those people who either send contributions to the office or material other than contributions to me. Please save on everyone's time and efforts by addressing your copy to the correct person. Contributions to the Gazette come to me (address on page 3 of the Gazette) and any other correspondence goes to Nigel at the CA Office (address on page 3 also).

During the winter I was pleased to be sent copies of two croquet newsletters. The first was a very impressive 'LawnTalk' the newsletter of the Northampton Club, edited by Brian Porteous. The second, was a copy of SWAN, the South West Federation Newsletter, now edited by Sue Mackay. Both publications are full of the short type of informative articles the Gazette has been so lacking in recent years, so we know the information is out there, just make sure it gets passed on.

Gail Curry

LOOKING FOR A NEW MALLET TO IMPROVE YOUR HANDICAP? CHOOSE AN MCP MALLET from a wide range of sizes and weights, fitted with a traditional wooden shaft or the increasingly popular lightweight carbon fibre tube with its amazing strength & torsional rigidity. A range of grips and quality mallet bags are also available. Alterations and repairs undertaken to any mallet, please ring for a quotation.
Contact Mike Percival, Gosbeck House, Gosbeck, Ipswich, Suffolk IP6 9RZ. **Tel: 01449760480**
Email: mike@croquetmallets.com

CA NEWS

Continued from page 17

LOTTERY NEWS - Good news/ Bad news Cheltenham's large capital lottery application failed, though the club is submitting a revised bid.

The application by Chester was as a part of a major city sports bid. Unfortunately, this failed, but Chester have made an independent application under the Awards for All scheme.

Great news from Pendle. Their application for an Awards for All grant of £2000 for a mini-carpet and £500 for equipment succeeded. Perhaps it will encourage other clubs to apply for mini-carpet support.

Lottery Success and Failure.

There have been sufficient results from club lottery applications to provide some initial guidance. Key issues are:-

The impact on the local community seems to be the most important issue. 'Community' means young people (including schoolchildren), ethnic groups, women and the disadvantaged. The basis of the success of Pendle and Woodhall Spa were their schools development programmes. Local circumstances will affect the approach. Applications for lawnmowers and general repairs have been rejected.

It is necessary to demonstrate financial need and the financial contribution being made by the club. The response will depend on the views and reaction of local Sport England officials and decisions will therefore vary across the country. Read the documentation carefully, especially the section on the objectives of Sport England.

Sport England contacts are listed on the C.A. website and were published in the September issue of the Gazette.

C.A. CLUB AWARDS

A NEW MILLENNIUM TROPHY.

A new Millennium Club Award has been established to go alongside the Townsend Club Award and the Apps Heley Club Award. With revisions to the two existing awards, there is an award to cover all the clubs in the land, large and small.

All three awards will be made biennially and in the same year, starting in the year 2000. Each award will have a trophy to be held for two years, together with an inscribed plaque to keep and a cash award of £100.

The Townsend Club Award is open to clubs with 2 lawns or less.

The Apps Heley Club Award is open to clubs with 3 or 4 lawns.

The Millennium Club Award is open to clubs with 5 lawns or more.

Details of the basis on which the awards will be

made are in the 2000 Registered Club Handbook and on the C.A. website.

Bill Sidebottom, Chairman Development Committee

Handicap Regulations

There have recently been a number of changes to the Handicap regulations.

At the end of last season the previous Handicap Committee decided to drop the separate doubles handicap limit of 17. This means that players with a handicap of 20 - 18 play off their singles handicap.

At the last council meeting approval was given for the range of responsibility for club handicappers to be increased. Previously they dealt with handicaps down to 12, as from the start of this season they will have responsibility to include players of handicap 8. The handicap regulations stay the same. We hope that this will help at club level particularly where clubs do not have CA handicappers.

The committee intend to review the status and role of handicappers, but this will take time and require Council approval. This measure is a provisional change made so that it could come into force for the year 2000. The Automatic Handicapping System has been in place for some time and is, on the whole, working well. Should you have any views on the handicapping system the committee will always be pleased to hear them.

Council also approved that for the period of 1 year, after which it will be reviewed, the lowest handicap should be -3 rather than -2. The additional trigger points will be 2800 and 3050.

CA v The Irish CA

Following the untimely death of Ian Maugham, David Kibble has kindly offered to act as organiser. Associates who wish to play should send their entries to him at: 21 Grove Avenue, Coombe Dingle, Bristol BS9 2RP

Douglas Gurney, Chairman Handicap Co-ordination Committee



Pip Calvert, Ian Burn & Peter Cole with the first sod cut from the new lawns.

CLUB NEWS

New Lawns for The Rother Valley Club

BY PIP CALVERT

The Croquet Club at Fittleworth, founded by Canon Peter Cole and fellow enthusiasts in the old rectory gardens in 1994, is moving to a new location at Duncton 2.5 miles south of the picturesque medieval town of Petworth in West Sussex, overlooking the beautiful South Downs. The move was prompted by the limit of scope of the 1.5 lawns available on the recreation ground at Fittleworth, to which they moved in 1995, and which had an unacceptable slope leading to cries of "unfair advantage" from visiting teams. However the ground served the club well in its early years and thanks must be given to the Fittleworth Sports Association which allowed them to use the ground rent free and cut the lawn weekly to boot.

The new grounds were discovered by two of the younger members who decided to get married at Duncton Catholic Church which adjoins a now disused football and cricket pitch with an imposing pavilion. Thank you Carole and Rupert Burne!

Planning started early in 1999 to secure funds. Thanks to grants from the CA, Sussex County Playing Fields Association, Chichester District Council and the Millennium Festival Awards For All, backed up by a low interest loan from the Playing Fields Association and interest free loans from members, tenders were invited and contracts placed by mid 1999. By September work had almost been completed when 75mm of torrential rain fell in the week 19 - 26 Sept, causing drastic flooding of the prepared lawns.

Fingers are now fervently crossed that all will be ready for the grand opening towards the end of May, when Bill Arliss and John Solomon will cut the tape and play a demonstration game.



The new lawns in March of this year.

TOURNAMENT REPORTS & RESULTS

Soham indoor tournament 15 - 16 January 2000

Report by Mike Percival

There were 41 players from 14 teams drawn from 10 clubs playing over two days.

Several new faces graced us with their presence; looking somewhat apprehensive but once into the swing soon enjoyed themselves considerably. One delightful young lady (Samantha handicap 5) from South Africa was seen to dance a short ballet sequence when a tricky shot succeeded, much to the delight of us all. The croquet was made a little more interesting around the south east corner, where the floor boards under that section of carpet had risen enough to create a depression to the east of the hoop 4, causing most players great difficulty in gaining position for running the hoop. The results were close with Ipswich just gaining the lead from Northampton on aggregate by 1 point. A very spirited effort was also made by the Colchester Y team of Mary Clary and Ann Lee both of whom are new to indoor croquet, they were able to notch up 4 x. 6 wins.

Results X Group.

1st. Ipswich. Saturday. Peter Allnut & Mike Percival. 2 wins, 1 draw
Sunday. Philip Eardley & Celia Steward. 2 wins, 1 loss

2nd. Northampton Sat & Sun. Lionel Tibble & Nick Evans. 4 wins, 1 loss, 1 draw
Y Group

1st. Downham Market. Saturday. Andrew & Justin Davies. 3 wins, 1 loss

Sunday. Justin Davies & Jonathan Toye. 2 wins
2nd. St. Albans Saturday. Charles Collins & David Kitson. 1 win, 2 losses

Sunday. David Kitson & Mike Gardener. 3 wins

It was decided to have a play off between Ipswich and Downham Market, which Ipswich won +9 to take the Lawrence Trophy. As always we all had a great time with wonderful company and some light relief.

One criticism that has been voiced on several occasions is the inevitable wait between games, so a suggestion has been put forward that all X teams should play on one day and all Y teams play the other. This would allow 6 games per team to be played with a maximum wait of 1st hours. Comments were asked for and the majority of players voted for the idea. This will

be the format for a trial period during the February tournament. Votes will be asked for again after this to gauge the reaction. If the trial results are favourable the format will be adopted for future events. One inevitable consequence would be that the X teams would not meet the Y teams.

It has been suggested that a team from Belgium would like to compete against us during the March Tournament. We await further details. On behalf of us all, I would like to thank all the staff at the Ross Peers Sports Centre for their help and cooperation, and finally I would like to thank all of the participants for making the weekend such an enjoyable event.

Southwick Open Weekend 8 - 9 April 2000

Report by Richard Hilditch

The first open weekend of the year saw a full house playing to excellent weather on lawns that were not too bad for the time of year. We had 32 players and may have had more if the test team had not clashed a celebration party with the tournament. The first round saw two of the seeds, Robin Brown and Andrew Symons falling to Peter Pullin and Bill Arliss respectively. The other two seeds Jeff Dawson and Dave Kibble progressed more comfortably with Jeff getting a couple of TPs on the first day. At the end of Saturday as we went home to lick our wounds (from the sunburn that is), we had Jeff Dawson playing David Parkins and Lionel Tibble playing Kibble in the two semi-finals.

Dawson beat Parkins in two, although he was by no means out classed. Meanwhile Kibble had taken the first game from Tibble on Saturday evening. Their second game proved close with Tibble coming through by +3 and then going on to win the third game to set up a 3 game final with the favourite. The first game went to Dawson although he had failed on a triple after penult to let Tibble get a ball round. However, this just increased Lionel's determination and through steady if unspectacular play he was able to win the next two games to claim the salver and a significant scalp. Sadly (as is so common these days) the salver was not present to be claimed, perhaps we should introduce a CA-wide penalty for unreturned trophies, in this case the guilty party was a member of the CA Council,



Lionel Tibble, winner and loser over consecutive weekends.

Chris Clarke.

After his rapid exit from the main event, Robin Brown was sweeping everyone before him in the Swiss before falling to Dave Kibble by the maximum score of 26 in his ninth game. I suspect that the wind of the second day (still without a cloud in the sky) may have sapped his strength a little. Those of you who play in this type of tournament will recognise that there are often two players without a win playing deep into the Sunday afternoon to try and avoid the nominal wooden spoon, in this case it was Christine Osmond and Anne Stephens. They both managed to avoid defeat by agreeing a draw with all four balls for the peg as time expired. As a friendly manager, I could only agree with their decision!

GB v Ireland Carrickmines 15 - 16 April

Report by David Openshaw

Following the success of Ireland last season when they beat USA and won the home internationals the CA proposed that a full test match between Ireland and GB should take place this season. GB fielded four of their MacRobertson Shield players together with two of their strongest young players. The match was extremely close. But by winning the final two games to finish (wins by Fulford and Clarke) GB won the match 5-4.

Full results were-

Doubles

S.Williams & R.McInerney lost to R.Fulford & M.Burrow -12,+25TP,-4

E.Cunningham & M.McInerney beat D.Maugham & D.Openshaw +17,-26,+9TPO

F.Rogerson & R.Rogerson lost to C.Clarke & K.Chambers +3,-14,-21

Singles

Edward Cunningham lost to Robert Fulford

-26tp, +16tp, -18

Ronan McInerney bt

David Maugham +18tp, +16

Simon Williams lost to

Chris Clarke

+26, -24, -8

Mark McInerney bt

David Openshaw

+15, +14tp

Fred Rogerson lost to

Matthew Burrow -26tp, -13

Ronan Rogerson bt

Kristian Chambers +17, +26

Winchester One-Ball Championships 15-16 April 2000

Report by Kevin Carter

Winchester attracted a record entry for the seventh renewal. In fact, it was full before the fixture book appeared, owing to early bookings by the regulars and some judicious direct marketing. Among the entries was Roger White, visiting from New Zealand.

The first day's handicap event is always played in good spirit. With handicaps ranging from -1st to 24 and treacherous conditions, some expected the conditions to suit low bisquers. However, at lunchtime, it was Jack Davies, playing off a generous 4, who was at the head of affairs, with Gerald Mitchell, a 16-bisquer and recent golf croquet convert from the small Blewbury club snapping at his heels.

In the afternoon session of the swiss, Gerald beat Jack, then went on to win the event, with a fine 7 out of 8 score. A three-way tie for second was resolved by a complex formula in favour of Jack, ahead of late finisher Claire Heritage and Kevin Carter.

Despite rain the courts were playing fast and hoop approaches were difficult. More importantly, the hoops were set both with - let's say - a 'not overgenerous' gap and very solidly in the ground. Lengthy breaks were few and far between.

It is rare in the history of the championship that the advanced level event has been won by somebody who had not played in the previous day's handicap. And so it was this year. Tony Mrozinski, the third seed, discovered that the hoops had to be treated with respect. His bullying style was punished by John Cosier and Tony crashed out 2-0 in the first round of the knockout. Likewise, local ace Ken Smith was eliminated by an in-form David Mooney.

As the five-round best-of-three knock-out progressed, the quality of play lifted noticeably. Bill Arliss, playing out of his skin, took a game off the first seed, Lionel Tibble and only lost the third by a point. Yours truly had a 1-0 and 7-point lead snatched away by Dave Kibble and

Nelson Morrow played well for a place in the semi-final.

However, it was a Tibble - Kibble final that began at 4.30. The Egyptian consolation event, won by Tony Fathers, was ended and attention turned to the battle of the big shooters.

In the first game Lionel took an early lead, but Dave drew level after 4-back, stuffing Lionel's ball hoop-high on the east boundary, but blobbed penult. Lionel aimed at a third of a ball from 12 yards and hit it as if there were no doubt in his mind that he would, then finished the game.

The second game began with a shooting battle for hoop 1. There seemed to be nowhere

on the court to hide from the other's shooting, but neither managed a good enough approach. Eventually Dave prevailed and took a lead that Lionel never pegged back.

The final game was a tense affair and again full of superb shooting and many long hoops. Lionel took what looked like a decisive 4-back to 1-back lead before Dave hit in and finished with an excellent, controlled 7-point break.

One-ball is increasingly being seen as a winter game, with club events being held in many locations, including, Surbiton, Cheltenham, Colchester, Southwick and Budleigh. Its popularity is reflected in both the quality and quantity of players in the Winchester Championships each Spring.

NEW ASSOCIATES

Dr T Andrews

Mrs R Carter

Mrs L Frost

Mrs K Holland

Mr T Hopkins

Mr P Millson

Mr D Nicholson

Mrs S Pace

Mr T Pace

Mrs E Robinson

Dr D Wilson

Mr R Delves

Mr D Kitson

Mr E Martin

Mrs M Stewart

Dr R Wood

Mrs H Cowing

Miss M Devereux

M B Goodman

Mr R Martin

Mrs E McDonald

Mr D Sheppard

Mr A Ward

Mrs B Watson

Mrs J Willmott

Mr C Willmott

Ms L Dungan

Mrs E McGowan

Mr N Polhill

Mr D Tester

Miss J Williams

Oxford University

Hunstanton CC

Surbiton CC

Bowdon CC

Worcester Norton

Letchworth CC

South Africa

East Dorset CC

Phyllis Court CC

Zenmet CC

Pendle CC

St Albans CC

Ashby CC

BurnhamonCrouch

Zenmet CC

Worcester Norton

Hurlingham

Cheltenham CC

Tyneside CC

Exeter CC

All Eng LT & CC

Bristol

Compton CC

Compton CC

Carrickmines Club

Woking

Ealing

Medway

HANDICAP CHANGES

February 2000

A Ahmed 7 to 3.5

CAN YOU HELP?

These photos were found in the depths of the editorial archives, but alas without any information to say who the subjects are. Does anyone have any information that might be helpful?



