

THE CROQUET GAZETTE

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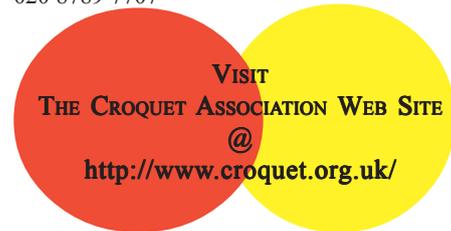
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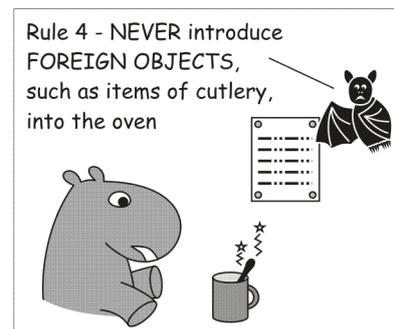
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HOOPOTAMUS

by Victor



THE CROQUET GAZETTE



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Disclaimer

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Chairman's Column

By the time you read this you will all have received the Fixtures Book for 2011. This year I will be spending more time than usual working out which tournaments I will be entering. As I said in my last column, I intend to visit as many clubs as I can while I am Chairman, and I believe that the best way is to enjoy the warm welcome visitors always receive at tournaments. I am looking forward to meeting lots of new faces, as well as players I have not seen for many years.



In my last column I encouraged players to aim for the top competitions. This time I would like to discuss the opportunities that croquet provides for people who are less fortunate than ourselves.

Over the years, there have been players who have learnt to play one handed using various techniques to produce the range of croquet shots required to play the game, reaching single figure handicaps. They have trained themselves and are able to compete very successfully on equal terms.

However, it is possible for croquet in its various formats to be enjoyed by players with a wide range of disabilities. While I was a member of the Development Committee, I discovered how much help organised croquet already offers to them. Special tournaments have been designed to meet their capabilities. Clubs have arrangements with Residential Homes for their residents to visit them, to enjoy an afternoon playing croquet adapted to meet their needs. One proposal, which unfortunately did not come to fruition, was to provide a croquet lawn at a home for the partially sighted.

The letter in the last Gazette discussing the design of mallets for wheelchair use demonstrates how ways are being investigated to help potential players (although I feel that with our current spate of wet summers there are probably several groundsmen worrying about the effect of the wheels on their precious lawns!). You will also have read in the Gazette last autumn about how croquet could help people suffering from the various forms of dementia.

The common theme running through all these initiatives is the pleasure croquet can give to people who are unable to take part in more active sports. I would therefore like to encourage you and your club to look sympathetically at any requests for help from organisations involved with people with disabilities. I know that our Development Officers are always there to facilitate and encourage such activities, so do seek their help if you need it.

Barry Keen

Letters

No significant advantage

At the recent meeting of the Handicap Committee we considered the point raised by Rosemary Gugan in her letter in the August 2010 Gazette.

The fact that the handicap scale is non-linear at both the upper and lower ends might appear to give rise to some anomalies, but the solution offered by Mrs Gugan that “any step below scratch should be a 2 bisque value to the high bisquer” could lead to some curious results. Consider, for example, a game between players with handicaps of 1 and -1/2 (two notional steps below scratch); the minus player would have to concede 5 bisques, which few would consider fair. Perhaps this particular example could be countered by producing a definition of “high bisquer”, but this would be arbitrary and liable to produce other anomalies.

The notional meaning of a player’s handicap is the number of bisques he or she requires on average to complete two all round breaks; it follows that when playing a minus player the high bisquer already gains a slight theoretical advantage. Few minus players would wish to see this increased.

The AHS has been in operation for around 20 years now, and little evidence has emerged in that time of any class of players being significantly advantaged or disadvantaged. Unless and until such evidence does emerge your Committee believes it best not to tinker with the system.

Nigel Graves

Chairman, Handicap Committee

Hoop Running - Hard or Soft?

I note that William Ormerod (CG 329) advises that ‘... a quiet, rhythmical, steady and controlled stroke as being one more likely to succeed when running a hoop.’ Earlier in the letter he criticized hard hitting. I suggest that the strength of the stroke is largely irrelevant but that two things do matter:

1. accuracy
2. the ball needs to be rolling forward on approach to a hoop. At short distances this



means striking the ball somewhat into the ground when making a hard shot to induce the forward spin immediately and avoid the non-spinning ‘skid’ mode which occurs for a considerable distance with the hard shot. A non-rolling ball has a reduced chance of clearing a hoop. I have suggested this to several players of higher calibre than myself and they have reported success.

Tony Lee

Six Members of Bristol Croquet Club asked to ‘Invitation’ Events - Is this a record?

The club was represented in each of the Croquet Association 2010 ‘Invitation’ events, a record for Bristol and may be the first time any club has achieved this.

The photo above shows those members who played in the events (from left to right): Richard Smith (Treasurer’s Tankard), Ed Duckworth (President’s Cup), Martin Murray (Spencer Ell), Dave Kibble (Spencer Ell), Richard Williamson (Selectors Weekend) and David Goacher (Chairman’s Salver).

Lesley Reed

Managing your anxieties

At times, our worries and anxieties can overwhelm us. In addition, our worries can distort our perception of what is reality and what is not. As a result, this may interfere with your sport of croquet. Here is a brief list of techniques that a croquet player can use to help gain a better perspective on things during their anxious

moments.

Sometimes we get stressed out when everything happens all at once. When this happens, a person should take a deep breath and try to find something to do for a few minutes to get their mind off of the problem. A person could read the newspaper, listen to some music or do an activity that will give them a fresh perspective on things. This is a great technique to use right before your next event.

Remember that our fearful thoughts are exaggerated and can make the problem worse. A good way to manage your worry is to challenge your negative thinking with positive statements and realistic thinking. When encountering thoughts that make you fearful or anxious, challenge those thoughts by asking yourself questions that will maintain objectivity and common sense.

Remember that all the worrying in the world will not change anything. Most of what we worry about never comes true. Instead of worrying about something that probably won’t happen, concentrate on what you are able to do.

Another technique that is very helpful is to have a small notebook of positive statements that you can carry around with you. Whenever you come across an affirmation that makes you feel good, write it down in a small notebook that you can carry around with you. Whenever you feel stressed before your event, open up your small notebook and read those statements. This will help to manage your negative thinking.

In every anxiety-related situation you experience, begin to learn what works, what

doesn't work, and what you need to improve on in managing your fears and anxieties. For instance, you have a lot of anxiety before your event and you decide to take a walk to help you feel better. The next time you feel anxious you can remind yourself that you got through it the last time by taking a walk. This will give you the confidence to manage your anxiety the next time around.

Take advantage of the help that is available around you. If possible, talk to a professional who can help you manage your fears and anxieties. They will be able to provide you with additional advice and insights on how to deal with your current problem. By talking to a professional, a person will be helping themselves in the long run because they will become better able to deal with their problems in the future. Remember that it never hurts to ask for help.

It is not easy to deal with all of our fears and worries. When your fears and anxieties have the best of you, try to calm down and then get the facts of the situation. The key is to take it slow. All you can do is to do your best each day, hope for the best, and when something does happen, take it in stride. Take it one step at a time and things will work out.

For additional information go to:
<http://www.managingfear.com/>
Stan Popovich

Congratulations

Cheltenham Croquet Club would like to congratulate members: Richard Thompson, Martin Murray, Dave Mundy, Kevin Ham, Dave Foulser, Klim Seabright, Alwen Bowker and Les Bowker. Who are all ranked above **MARTINA NAVRATALOVA** (1578) in the World Rankings for Golf Croquet!
Klim Seabright

A question of accessibility

I and others who have played golf croquet for some time have become involved with the encouragement and informal coaching of new club members and those with limited experience of the game.

My club supports the view that our input could be improved and the overall standard of play more efficiently raised if some of us were trained in the rules, tactics and techniques of golf croquet and our coaching methods tested and officially approved. Accordingly, sponsorship was offered for my attendance at a CA course leading to the award of a Yellow Coaching Badge.

Unfortunately I am not eligible to join this course which requires participants to have "a good understanding of the game of croquet in its various forms" (I have little knowledge of the rules and tactics of association croquet). Moreover I am told the course is designed to improve candidates' generic communication and teaching skills (I have attended many such training events) rather than to enhance and test the practical competencies I seek to develop in coaching golf.

It seems that here the CA are 1) putting the cart before the horse - for a prerequisite of learning to impart knowledge would seem to be the acquiring of the knowledge to impart and 2) missing a trick as the development of coaching skills to accommodate the growing popularity of golf croquet and of the number of its experienced adherents with no interest in the association code would surely reap considerable benefits to recruitment and national levels of ability.

Peter Lowe (Tyneside)

Dear Mr Lowe,

Thank you for your letter to the Editor of the Gazette. A Coach Training Course (CTC) of the kind to be held at Middlesbrough on 9-10 April is designed to enable participants to teach what they know. It will inevitably enhance your croquet knowledge but improving your own play is not the main aim of this course. Candidates will be shown how to plan their lessons and the various things to look out for which are specific to the teaching of croquet. My understanding from the organisers of this particular course is that, while they would like a broad knowledge of all forms of the game, your "understanding" of another code does not have to be sufficient for you to teach it: a knowledge of the general principles would suffice.

Croquet North needs coaches in AC, in GC and in both. They are working towards meeting these needs by running a common course. After the course you will be able to demonstrate your capabilities by coaching in your own club. Provided that the club is satisfied, a Yellow Club Coach Badge will be issued. You would not be expected to coach AC if your interest is primarily in GC.

If you wish to enrol on a CTC which concentrates on GC, there is one at Ashby and District CC on 16-17 April. To improve your own knowledge and skills, try a GC Improvers' Course such as the one at the

Croquet Academy. The CA tries to provide courses to meet all needs, provided that there is sufficient demand. Sometimes individuals have to travel some distance to participate, but that tends to be the case with minority activities such as ours.

Lawrence Whittaker

Chairman, CA Coaching Committee

Czech out Golf Croquet abroad

Last year we were fortunate to visit Czechoslovakia and play in the Mill Cup, the major Czech golf croquet tournament. The weekend event is held in September at Stary Mlyn (The Old Mill) at Brezcova near Karlovy Vary (KV) and managed by the owner, Miroslav Pazdora.

The Hotel is set in a steep wooded valley at the head of the village. The picturesque buildings were once the local water driven timber mill, powered by the swiftly flowing Tepla which runs alongside the grounds. There are 36 rooms and sporting facilities include two croquet courts, a tennis court, and a petanque court. The Prosper Golf Resort with a Gary Player designed championship course is only 2 km away at Celadna. A further four courses are within a 30 km radius.

The croquet lawns are approximately 2/3 size and are well surfaced. Uniquely, they are intentionally crowned to facilitate drainage. The contours are regular with the centre rising to 20cms. This brings an exciting dimension of difficulty to the game. The block format was one 13 point game which was limited to half an hour plus 2 shots with each ball. The semifinals and finals were unlimited 19 point games. WCF rules are observed. The Mill Cup, the biggest prize in golf croquet, is an enormous gold embossed porcelain vessel some 4 feet high. Even the winner's facsimile is nearly a foot high and accompanied by a porcelain tea set.

KV is the famous old spa town once known as Karlsbad, a former haunt of European royalty and a place where croquet was well established a hundred years ago. The architecture is remarkable and the spa facilities are comprehensive. One hour away is the magical town of Marianske Lazne (Marienbad), where Goethe fell deeply in love and Chopin composed wonderful music. 2 hours to the North is the amazing historic city of Prague. It is all a world apart and I recommend it.

For information contact
info@hotelstarymlyn.cz

Carole Jackson

Golf Croquet

The Golf Croquet Laws for the 2011 Season

by Bill Arliss

Chairman GC Laws Committee

The present laws book was issued in 2008 following the revision of the WCF GC Rules in 2007. The main change in this edition was the removal of the penalties for playing out of sequence with your own ball which had been a severe penalty in the previous edition. There also were a number of other small changes which we hoped would make the laws easier to use. It was certainly our intention that the 2008 edition would be good for at least five years as we knew many of our players were rather tired of the number of changes since the first edition in 2000. Unfortunately it is the kind of price one has to pay when a set of laws are effectively developed from scratch. To a very large extent I believe we have now succeeded in producing a fairly stable set of laws but as time goes on we have found a small number of weaknesses where the laws simply do not cover situations that have arisen in normal competitive play. Our colleagues in Australia and New Zealand were extremely keen to issue yet another edition of the laws but our approach has been that any such deficiencies should be covered by formal rulings that can be publicised by simple inserts to the laws books. I am pleased to say that the WCF Rules committee have now adopted a formal procedure for issuing rulings which makes it easy for the CA to keep fully inline with international practice and the first set of international rulings have now been issued.

Just one final point that must be made is that these rulings do not change the present laws but simply clarify the existing words to meet normal situations. The rulings have the same standing as the laws of the game.

To help all our players prepare for the 2011 season, we have prepared a short summary of the various rulings as given below and will also make available on our web site a small print file to produce suitable inserts for all your law books.

The present laws have one weakness right at the beginning of each game, they do not define when the game had actually started. Thus if the first player damaged the lawn or played the wrong ball, one was tempted to ask had the game actually started and should penalties be awarded. This problem is clarified by ruling 5.1 below. Unfortunately having given this ruling one has to decide what happens to the balls after such an error in play and this has to lead to additional rulings to clarify the situation.

5.1 A game starts when a player strikes or attempts to strike a ball with the intention of starting the game.

5.2 Balls are outside agencies until they are played into the game in accordance with law 5. If it is noticed that a wrong ball has been played before all four balls have been played into the game, the game reverts to its state after the last turn played correctly in sequence.

5.3 If the striker commits a non-striking fault before the ball is played in one of the first four turns of the game, the ball remains an outside agency until it is played from the starting area in a later turn.

5.4 If the striker commits a striking fault in one of the first four turns, the ball has been played into the game irrespective of whether the opponent chooses to leave it where it stopped or to have it replaced in the position it occupied in the starting area before the fault was committed.

It should be noted that 5.1 does not use the term 'striker' or 'striker's ball' but simply a player and a ball. Thus if it is the wrong player or the wrong ball or an illegal shot, the game has started and all the laws apply. Ruling 5.2 ensures that all balls have to be played into the game before any wrong ball penalties start to be applied.

The next ruling results from questions raised by at least two of our players. Everybody has accepted that if a player whilst casting over his ball accidentally touches the ball, then he has taken his shot and cannot go back and try again. What has not been covered in the past is what happens if accidental contact is made with a ball other than the striker's ball. Some have argued that if the other ball was touched before contact was made with the striker's ball, then a wrong ball had been played. Although the intent was definitely to play the striker's ball, the present wording of law 6 about accidental contact with the striker's ball being a shot could be taken to imply that accidental contact with another ball was also a shot. This position is now clarified by the ruling

6.1 If a player whilst preparing to strike a ball, makes accidental contact with another ball, not the striker's ball, and before making contact with the ball he intends to strike, the accidental contact is a non-striking fault and not the playing of a wrong ball.

There is no doubt that many will say "but what happens if the accidental contact is made with the other ball after the mallet has made contact with the striker's ball as it will then become a striking fault and quite likely it will be difficult to determine whether the accidental contact was before or after contact with the striker's ball". Quite correct but really of no consequence as the penalty is identical; no hoop scored, turn ends and the opponent may have all balls put back where they were or left as they finished.

The problem of a player acting on false information provided by his opponent has been looked at and a limit of claims has been imposed on such a situation as it would be very impractical to go back too far. Ruling 8.1 reads:

8.1 If a player acts on incorrect information given by the opponent and it is discovered before that player plays the same ball again, the player shall have the choice of a replay or allowing the play to stand, including any points scored in order.

One situation which has caused problems in Australia is where two players try to play their turns at the same time. It's not likely to happen when all players in one game are clustered around a single hoop but is more likely when players are scattered around the lawn and are possibly double banking. This has resulted in rulings 9.1 and 9.2 below.

9.1 When two sides play simultaneously or nearly simultaneously, so that two balls are in motion at the same time, the striker is deemed to have played first irrespective of the actual order in which the two strokes were played and the other side commits a non-striking fault. If the commission of the fault affects the outcome of the striker's play, the striker may choose to have all balls affected by the fault replaced in the positions they occupied before either stroke was played and to replay the turn. If the striker's ball runs a hoop in order or causes another ball so to do after being affected by the fault, the striker may choose to waive the fault and score the point and, in that case, the other side does not lose its next turn.

9.2 When both players of a side play simultaneously or nearly simultaneously so that two balls are in motion at the same time the striker's play stands and the partner has committed a non striking fault. No replay is permitted.

One question that has only been raised this year is the status of clips used for scoring. I am sure there are many who will claim they are part of the game and must be treated as such. However if one reads law 4, clips used for scoring are defined as an accessory and law 9 defines all accessories as outside agencies. There is no special mention of clips actually mounted on hoops and thus clips must be outside agencies at all times. A situation therefore can arise when a player jumps a ball through a hoop and in doing so makes contact with a clip left on the crown or upright of the hoop. Under law 9 the ball has been deflected by an outside agency and therefore cannot score a hoop point. As this can easily be avoided by removal of the clips before attempting a jump, the following ruling has been issued.

9.3 Scoring clips, whether on the ground or on a hoop, are outside agencies (Law 9(d)). As such they should be removed before a stroke is played if the ball is likely to hit the clip. If the clip is not removed and the ball does hit it then the ball stays where it has stopped, there is no replay, and no point is scored in that turn. If a clip which is dropped after the striker has played is hit by a moving ball then Rule 9(f) applies.

If an outside agency, other than a scoring clip, is in place before a stroke is played, and the outside agency is hit by a moving ball, then Rule 9(f) does not apply. The opponent has the choice of leaving the moving ball where it stopped or of placing it where the opponent felt it would have stopped if there had been no interference. In particular no replay is permitted.

Two problems with the halfway law which have been recognised by the CA Laws Committee for some time have now been formally recognised by international rulings. The first may not appear obvious until you look at it in a particular context. Say for example blue clears red from hoop 2 and puts red in front of hoop 3 which leaves black with an easy shot for hoop 2. Red's owner not fancying a 14 yard clearance, deliberately steps on another ball, commits a non striking fault and thus misses his turn and black runs the hoop. Red then claims he is not offside as he has not had a chance to move his ball and his opponent put him in his position. Ruling 10.1 prevents a player from benefiting from a deliberate fault. Playing off an opponent's ball towards the next hoop is a regular tactic if you cannot remove your opponent's ball from a scoring position. Effectively what the ruling is saying is that if your ball is in contact with an opponent's ball, you have to move the opponent's ball when you play your shot in order to claim your ball reached its position as a result of contact with an opponent's ball. This is the type of shot that should be watched by a referee if the contact is not likely to be very obvious.

10.1 The exemption under Law 10(b)(2) shall not apply to a ball whose owner misses a turn in that position because of a non-striking fault.

10.2 The exemption under Law 10(b)(3) does not result from a ball being played away from an opponent ball with which it was in contact

10.3 Reference to the play of the owner of an offside ball in Rule 10(c)(2), includes play by the partner in a doubles game and play of either of the owner's balls in a singles game.

The final ruling in this issue covers the right of a referee to

intervene in a game when he is not actually in charge of the game. The present laws allow a 'spectator referee' to intervene without being asked by the players if he sees or hears that play is not being lawfully continued after a fault has been committed or he hears one player giving incorrect information to an opponent on the laws. The 2008 laws also allowed a referee to intervene if he hears a player trying to claim a hoop point when the hoop has been run out of order. Our own Laws Committee were not too happy with the introduction of this last condition as it allowed referees to choose the point at which they intervened and thus give the next player the advantage by being the first to approach the next correct hoop in order. The following ruling limits the time at which a referee can now intervene for an out of order hoop.

15.1 A referee should only intervene under Law 15(b)(4)(iii) if he is personally watching the game and is able to stop play immediately after the stroke in which a hoop is incorrectly run.

Golf Croquet Handicapping

The CA Handicap Committee was reformed this year under the chairmanship of Nigel Graves and had its first meeting in London on Jan 15 when all existing handicap procedures and the supporting documentation were reviewed. It was agreed that the coverage for Golf Croquet needed very urgent attention and that both CA and Club handicappers must be appointed specifically for Golf Croquet and that the powers and duties of each of the handicappers be modelled along the lines set out for the Association Croquet Handicappers.

Full details of the terms of reference for each grade of GC Handicapper will be issued in due course but the purpose of this article is a plea for those players who feel they would like to become involved as CA Handicappers. It is the committee's intention that CA Handicappers will be appointed in all of the major clubs around the country and that sufficient appointments will be made to ensure there is a reasonable coverage in every Federation. I would therefore ask players who are interested to contact me by either phone or email and let me have a brief résumé of their experience. I will coordinate all the replies which will then be considered by the Handicap Committee. We would most certainly like to get some appointments made before the start of the new season.

For players to be considered as CA Handicappers, they should have been actively engaged in the national GC tournament circuit for several seasons and have a good knowledge of the playing abilities of the lower handicap levels. It is not expected that their own handicaps will be greater than 4. In addition the player must also be involved either as a player or a manager of regular handicap play GC events. It should be remembered that outside the All England Handicap, almost all GC handicap play is at Federation level. The main aim of the CA Handicappers will be to ensure the playing standards set at national levels are reflected consistently around the country.

As part of the new initiative for Golf Croquet handicapping, all clubs whose players participate in either handicap or level play events outside their club, will shortly be asked to nominate one or more of their members to act as a Club Handicapper. This will be a club appointment and all we will ask is that their names be registered

with the CA when requested. We are fully aware that in many of the larger clubs, there are already many players doing an excellent job in setting and monitoring handicaps and we see no need for any change in the way they work, simply that they are identified to the outside world. The reason for registration is that we wish to identify those clubs where suitable provisions are not made for handicapping players. It is these few cases which can bring the handicap system into disrepute. The local CA Handicapper will be able to help considerably in the task of setting up a handicap function in these clubs by accurately handicapping a few of their players which will provide ideal benchmarks for allocation of further handicaps within the club. .

Bill Arliss

01273 728204 or bill.arliss@ntlworld.com

Golf Croquet Refereeing

by Bill Arliss

Chairman GC Laws Committee

Since the idea of referees specifically for Golf Croquet was first mooted in 2000 and the training and examination system was set up, 74 players have been accredited as qualified CA Golf Croquet Referees. Whilst this is very pleasing for the GC players it is not a matter on which we can stand still as the popularity of competitive GC is increasing, especially at Federation level. In order to maintain a good standard of training and examination we have to build a much larger network of examining referees around the country. At present we only have three registered examining referees with a possible two coming on board next year. This is not sufficient if we are to run separate training and qualification courses; which is the ideal way. With the present limited number of examiners, there is too much travel involved and training/qualification courses have to be packed into a single day to be financially viable. Providing the player only has to operate in his/her local area, then the commitment is not too great. To be considered a player needs a very good understanding of the laws of GC and normally should be a regular GC player so that they are aware of all the routine problems. We already have produced a DVD to help with the practical side of the training and have prepared a manual to help with the theoretical side.

We are therefore looking for further volunteers around the country to take on this task and I would be pleased to discuss the matter with any player who would like to consider taking on this role.

Despite the above problems we are still making plans for this year and so far we have two courses arranged. On Wednesday 20 April our first course will be run at Southwick and on Sunday 22 May a course will be run at Bowdon. Full details will be published in the Fixtures Book and online on the CA web site. Generally because of the limited training/examining capability we do not arrange courses on spec but ask that either large clubs or Federations determine the need for a course and take on the organisation. The course tutor will then be arranged by the GC Laws Committee Chairman.

Club News

Northampton Croquet Club, a retrospective as we approach our Silver Jubilee

by Owen Bryce

This year will see the 25th anniversary of the formation of the Northampton Croquet Club. It was the brainchild of May Jack aided by Audrey Billingham; both still members, although one now permanently resides in New Zealand.

I half jokingly suggested to the principal of Denman College that they hold a croquet weekend. He informed me that they had one coming up and so it was that I met Chris Hudson, then development officer for the Croquet Association.

On learning that I had just moved to Northampton he astonishingly said he'd helped to start a club there only a few weeks earlier.

The club met in Becket's Park, a council run amenity in the heart of the town. At that time our lawns consisted of what had been a bowling green, which gave us two three-quarter size courts, though they overlapped in one corner!

As with so many clubs operating in Council parks or leisure centres car parking was hard to find, and chargeable, the hoops, balls and mallets were not up standard, we were restricted to limited afternoon play and we had to pay by the hour.

Furthermore play often depended on the groundsman's lunch and whether he could be found at all and you were lucky if the toilet was open or useable.

From those early days one must mention two stalwart members: Bert Dickens, who gave us guidance though he eventually resorted to Aunt Emma style, and John Anstey, who did a tremendous amount for the club. John knew the people at St. Andrew's Hospital and suggested the use of their excellent grounds. The idea was put to the members with, it has to be said, some opposition, mainly based on having to increase annual membership fees from £5 to £45. Wow!!

The motion was carried and, in 1992, two courts were set up and permission given by the Hospital to erect a hut for our equipment. The advantages were obvious. We could now play every day, summer or winter but not before the Sunday morning chapel service. We now had two full sized courts, there were no green fees and car parking and the use of the toilets were free.

Subsequently we were able to erect a new equipment shed and convert the other into the clubhouse. The hospital kindly laid on electricity and water, the latter negotiated by Lionel Tibble together with a generous contribution. Lionel is now our top player, one of the top fifty in the Country, and also ex-chairman. A couple of years later the hospital allowed us two extra courts and another equipment hut.

The agreement negotiated between John Anstey and the hospital provided for the maintenance of the lawns, regular mowing, rolling and white lining. John also kindly donated the clock overlooking the courts. During the winter months scarifying, lawn dressing, and all that goes with those tasks, are handled by the excellent groundstaff.

Membership increased to the half century figure until a



St Andrews Hospital home of Northampton CC

couple of years back when age, illness, moving away or abroad took its toll, though newer members came in, helped, one tends to think, by our own more recent interest in golf croquet. For the first twenty years we only played Association or, for less adept members, what used to be called 'Short Croquet'.

Since having four courts we have annually hosted CA Open events, two handicap and one advanced, and a one-ball weekend. These have attracted many of the country's best players on a regular basis. Furthermore because the courts are in such excellent condition throughout the winter months a few members from other clubs have joined for the chance of winter play.

We have also hosted Longman Cup and County events, the Grass Roots and Centre Stage finals.

'What about the slope?' I hear some of you say. Well, it's true, we do have a slope. But it is consistent and it's right to say that all the courts are the same. It can vary with different conditions such as long wet or long dry periods. But don't they all?

To our members the slope is part of the game and we have certainly got used to it: to our regular visitors, Keith Aiton, Dean Bennison, David Mundy, John Spiers, Paul Swaffield, Richard White, it's a 'challenge', but one that accomplished players readily adapt to.

Northampton is centrally situated and the venue just has to be one of the finest in the country.

Thanks to the CA we got there in the end!

by Derek Knight

Secretary, Beverley Croquet Club

Beverley Croquet Club is located in the East Riding of Yorkshire at Rowley Manor Country House Hotel, near Little Weighton. We use the hotel grounds by a gentleman's agreement, for free, as long as we maintain them.

In December 2009 the hotel informed us that the storage shed we used would no longer be available as they required the space for other purposes with immediate effect. As a temporary measure all our equipment was sent to members' garages throughout Beverley.

The committee looked at various options but the only sensible way forward was to have our own dedicated space. The quotes we received seemed to be beyond the reach of our small club. The late Mike Evans and our unofficial groundsman John Kennedy approached Julian Tonks, the Yorkshire Federation



The new shed at Beverley installed and working to purpose.

Representative at the time, and an application was made to the CA for a 50% grant.

Immediate success so we all thought it would be up and running by April. Just to make sure, we checked if planning permission was required for a small hut. Unfortunately, as we are in a conservation area, it was. Plans in triplicate of floor plan and location would be required. After several rounds of communication we were eventually granted planning permission which was a great relief as the base had already been laid by an over enthusiastic contractor.

The hut was due to arrive in mid July. The contractor arrived, without our knowledge, and put the hut up facing the wrong way. By early August the hut was installed correctly and all our equipment is now safely stored.

Our little pavilion, funded by the CA, now seems most spacious when we entertain away teams. We have a lot of organising to do yet but, for our small club, the facility is invaluable. We would like to think that we can now expand and attract new members to our improved facilities.

Many thanks to the CA.

Development at Dulwich

by Simon Whiteley

Dulwich Sports Club (DSC) traces its history to 1867 with the formation of a cricket club, and croquet has been played since 1912. Until 1972 these and other sports (tennis, squash, hockey and formerly bowls) existed separately, albeit with a shared agreement on ground leased from the Dulwich Estate.

At that date Dulwich Sports Club Ltd was formed and a new brick pavilion with two additional squash courts, changing rooms and a bar was erected. Within DSC the sports sections organise membership autonomously but most day to day expenditure is made by DSC, as well as major investment and strategic decisions. DSC is financially stable but not wealthy and rents its ground on quasi-commercial terms. All sections emphasise the competitive nature of their sports, with teams in the upper end of their respective regional leagues and with active coaching and junior programmes. DSC prioritises maintaining good playing facilities in its investment decisions.

History and Background

We now have three full size croquet courts, two of which

were created in about 1912 and subsequently extended to full size, the second extended as recently as the early 1990s. The third court is a former bowls green. However, the courts were showing their age. They appeared not to have been re-laid since they were built, and now had significant rolls and a thick layer of thatch. The second court extension had never been properly joined in with the existing surface and was inconsistent in pace. The ex-bowling green had been on a minimal maintenance regime for some years. The relationship with the grounds contractors was not as good as it should be, giving little hope that the courts would spontaneously improve.

Ever since existing members could remember, Croquet had used a wooden hut as its base, but it was getting beyond economic repair. Four years ago DSC refurbished space in the adjacent brick building and we now share a modern kitchen, WC and changing facilities and have a secure equipment room.

The club was founded to play Association Croquet, but from the mid-1940s until the mid-80s, only Golf Croquet was played and for much of that period only by ladies. The membership was ageing and dwindling such that many trophies were not contested in the later 1980s but Stephen Badger (subsequently CA Chairman) had joined and managed to restart Association Croquet. With a small influx of AC players, by the mid-90s membership had recovered to around 30.

We had a good programme of club competitions - mostly one and two day AC tournaments with a few visitors, as well as participation in some SECF leagues, and the All England (AC), but there was little GC competitive play and we did not enter competitions for higher-handicap players because of the difficulty we had in raising suitable teams.

At the start of 2007 membership was down to 22 with some Golf Croquet players (including Simon Carter and Pierre Beaudry) who wished also to play AC. This was insufficient to remain viable and was unbalanced as to handicap and gender. The loss of a few key members could have resulted in the closure of the croquet section, as had happened to the bowls section some years earlier. Though DSC had always been supportive of croquet and we made a higher than proportional contribution to the DSC management effort, we were clearly not contributing as much financially as other sections and were vulnerable to a change in attitude or to more straitened financial circumstances. If we did not increase our membership, the money spent on maintaining our courts could come under scrutiny.

Improving the courts and equipment

This began in the Autumn of 2006, when DSC agreed at short notice to fund the re-laying of one croquet court as an ancillary project to major cricket square renovations. By using the same contractor the cost of transporting machinery to the site was already covered and significantly reduced the cost. Play began on the court in June 2007, with a true surface, though slower than we would have liked.

Discussions with the maintenance contractor revealed that we had differing understandings of what was required to produce a quality surface. The contractors, commonly enough, had a bias towards a nice looking rich green sward, which was too slow for comfortable play. On our side, we were not good at explaining what we wanted and providing feedback. A visit from George Noble, the SECF courts adviser, confirmed that we had a suitable grass mixture, and what height we should be cutting to - this was better but still not right. The turning point came with George's suggestion of

regular "verticutting" to cut the lateral grass growth. By the end of the wet 2008 season the court was as fast as we wanted - approximately 10 seconds or more - and golf croquet games were noticeably longer on this court than on our slower courts. We finally had one court we could be proud of.

Planning to re-lay the other 1912 court began in the summer of 2007, in the hope that the work would be done in the autumn. It had quickly become apparent that having two principal courts with very different surfaces was unsatisfactory - having started we needed to continue. This one would be a larger project, in part because it would be done on a stand-alone basis, but also because the court was in a worse state. However, the estimate from the specialist contractor kept increasing and the start date was delayed, to the point that we decided to delay the project by a year. This would give us more time to confirm the estimate and to raise the funds.

Membership had now increased (see below) and the courts were visibly being used more. For these reasons, the DSC Council agreed to fund half the cost but the croquet section needed to raise the balance of nearly £3,000. The bulk of this came from two sources: donations and grants

Member donations were made under Gift Aid, since DSC is registered as a Community Amateur Sports Club. The appeal for donations was made to the longer-standing members, who would benefit most from having consistent court surfaces and we raised £1,300 from this small core of members

Grants: Dulwich is in the outer part of the London Borough of Southwark, a relatively deprived inner-city borough. Southwark's primary focus for sports development was under-18s and ethnic minorities, and on the most popular sports such as football and cricket. A dry-run on an "Awards for All" grant application was also not encouraging. To make a successful application for one of these grants we would need a bigger pool of members to support a proper youth or outreach programme - something for later.

The only plausible source of grants was therefore from within the croquet world. With advice from Michael Hague, the SECF Development Officer, we succeeded in our applications totalling £1,000 from the CA and the SECF. Together with some money set aside some years earlier, we had the money we needed for 50% of the cost.

The work was completed in 4 days in early September 2008 by a very professional team from the specialist ground renovation contractor. Initial germination was slow, because a dry spell followed immediately after the reseeding, and sprinkler watering led to some "wash-out" (clumping of the seed giving rise to bare patches). A long cold winter did not help, but some Spring overseeding and heavy watering in early May meant that we could begin play on the lawn in mid-June, albeit a little patchy in places.

By the end of the season, it became apparent that there were two distinct areas to the lawn, corresponding to the original lawn and the 1990's extension - grass growth was much poorer on the extension. The reason for this has proved to be a puzzle. Professionally examined soil samples have confirmed that there is no difference in the immediate surface (3") or in the root zone (down to 9") between the two areas. The light levels and surrounding vegetation are similar, as are the drainage levels.

During the 2010 season, additional watering to the extension has delivered a more uniform surface, which is playing pretty consistently with the rest of the lawn, but there is still a visual difference. The probable cause is in a different sub-surface (ie

below 9" depth) construction which gives better drainage to the root zone. To address this, during this year's Autumn renovations we will be inserting water-retentive material as part of the solid tining and top-dressing. This should reduce the need for differential watering and feeding.

As of mid-September 2010, we now had two high quality flat and even paced lawns, well maintained by experienced contractors. We are now turning our attention to our third lawn - an ex bowls green. We now need to improve its playing surface - it is both level and well-constructed, but the grass surface has become spongy from under-maintenance for 8 of the last 10 years. We will try to improve this with an aggressive programme of autumn scarifying over the next few years - it has already improved with two successive hard scarifys. If this does not work well enough, we will need to strip and reseed - with more money to raise!

Lessons learned from 2008 lawn re-laying

On the whole, given the vagaries of British weather, the re-laying went well. The practical issues we had were twofold:

1. Our maintenance contractors were slow to recognise that the initial seed had not taken particularly well - and we were slow to tell them what we thought. When we did they were pretty responsive.

2. Lawns built in two stages pose additional risks, stemming from different underlying construction methods and materials, which (obviously) won't be changed by a simple strip and re-seed. We probably should have paid more attention to the differences in the surface that we saw before the work was done (although it may still have been attributed to the amount of thatch build-up in the original lawn, rather than to what we now know). Whether we would have ended up with a different plan is impossible to say, but we might have recognised the problem sooner than we did.

Croquet East: 21st Century Croquet Pioneers

by Miranda Garrett

A delightful March afternoon of chilled white wine and whimsical thought led me to have the rather marvellous notion that it might be jolly nice to start my own croquet club in Bethnal Green's Victoria Park in East London.

A bit of research later and I discovered an article in a 1868 edition of Harpers Bazaar defining croquet thus: 'contact and competition between the sexes sublimated into an elegant, highly formalized ritual, occurring in a deceptively wholesome garden setting, amidst a display of finery and manners. Fashion sets the tone for gentle titillation...an exquisite game, at which the stakes are soft glances and wreathing smiles, and where hearts are lost and won'.

This sounded right up my street...for too long had croquet been the reserve of the old and dowdy. It was time to bring back the fashion, the finery and the titillation and to reclaim the 'exquisite game' for the younger generation! I was to be a pioneer, pushing



Croquet East Logo

the boundaries of the game in the 21st century and having a whole lot of mallet-wielding fun in the process.

Naturally, I emailed the CA forthwith, outlining my ingenious scheme to make croquet the official sport of the young and trendy East London professional. I mentioned the one teensy flaw in my fledgling plan - I did rather feel that the fact that my club would be lacking croquet equipment of any description would be a distinct disadvantage when attempting to attract members.

Luckily, my missive received a reply within 24 hours from the extremely helpful Michael Hague, Development Officer of the South East Croquet Federation. He assured me that my equipment-less state could be easily remedied...within days I was a card-carrying member of both the CA and the SECF. Within weeks, two sets of equipment, one from each organisation, were winging their way towards my London flat (many thanks again chaps).



A truly open AGM, with Miranda at the helm

Our first AGM was a roaring Pimms-fuelled success. We decided that due to the impoverished nature of the majority of our members annual membership fees would be kept low and we would ask additionally only for a very reasonable £1 donation per game played. The following Officers were voted in:

Chairperson/Croquet Queen: Miranda Felicity Caroline Garrett (me)
 Secretary/Master of the Mallets: John 'Scott' Croly
 Treasurer/Baron of the Balls: Timothy Alexander Morton Garrett
 Creative Director/Club Troubadour: Matthew Alexander Witt

Croquet East, London's most stylish croquet club, was officially formed. A splendid result!



Ready to take on croquet

Fortunately, Michael had also pointed out the second, and previously overlooked, teensy flaw in my otherwise brilliant plan: the majority of my members would have no idea how to play croquet. Again, he assured me that this minor detail could be easily rectified and swiftly roped in David Collins, dashing silver fox and croquet coach extraordinaire from Dulwich Croquet Club, to teach us how to play.

It cannot be denied that this must have been a tough assignment for David: he may have been slightly frustrated by the hysterics which ensued every time he chastised players for 'tickling the balls', as well as by the short attention-spans of the Croquet-Easters. It seems that wandering off mid-game to refill a glass of Pimms, gobble a cucumber sandwich, or discuss the jaunty angle of a fellow player's miniature straw boater is *not* good croquet etiquette: such efforts were met with increasingly exasperated cries of 'YOU MUST BE READY TO PLAY!' However, despite these obstacles, David did a marvellous job and, two coaching sessions later, sixteen East-Londoners had graduated from a comprehensive crash course in Golf Croquet.



David Collins: he got us there in the end

That was several months ago, and since then, Croquet East has gone from strength to strength. We now have a strong core of 30 regular players and paid annual members, as well as 155 more casual members in our Facebook group, and 306 people following us on Twitter. Rain or shine, every two weeks throughout the season we have dressed in our best and set up for a game in Victoria Park. Successful inter-club tournaments this season have included, the 'Jack Trodd Doubles Cup' (won, much to the chagrin of Jack Trodd, by Tim Garrett and Shane Wilson), the 'Jolly Delightful Croquet Tournament' (won by Claire Julia and Wayne Durack) and 'Come and Tickle My Balls' (winners still a subject of debate, due to some arguably underhand tactics on the lawn).

On the 30th of October, we honoured the success of our first season with the Halloween-themed fancy-dress tournament 'Creepy Cobweb Croquet' and a post-game End of Season Extravaganza. We have a lot to celebrate:

We have a beautiful new website, www.croqueteast.co.uk, made by the excellent design studio Good Designer.

We have produced promotional material illustrated by up-and-coming artists and photographers.

We have inspired numerous musical tributes and now have regular 'Displays of Rhyme and Eloquence', where members can showcase their croquet-themed musical efforts, at our events.

We managed to harangue Jaques London into donating another set of equipment and have developed our own patented system for smashing hoop-holes into rock-solid public park land.

We have acquired our own beautiful bunting-strewn portable 'Crozebo' (yes, that's a portmanteau of croquet and gazebo).

We have been asked to coach at corporate events and private parties.

We were invited to attend the music festival End of The Road, where in a single weekend, a crack team of four coaches taught over 300 festival-revellers to bash balls through hoops, despite having to continuously fight peacocks off our lawn.

We will not be resting on our laurels: plotting is already underway for next season and I'm fairly confident that by the end of 2011, the croquet mallet will be the new must-have accessory for the young London hipster. Most importantly, we will continue to inspire the youth of today with our passion for all things croquet-related. We will attempt to badger Tower Hamlets Parks and Open Spaces into providing us with our own dedicated (and hopefully, flat) lawn. We hope to lure David back to teach us the CA rules and to compete in some CA and Federation Golf Croquet tournaments. We want to hold even bigger and better events and, after our success at End of the Road, we plan to dominate the 2011 festival circuit. Personally, I plan to both perfect my signature chip shot and continue to expand my collection of vintage Edwardian croquet frocks.

I would like to invite the more established clubs to step up their image: Croquet East is raising the bar!

The Surbiton Irrigation System

Report by George Noble

Photos by Mike Lambert

It is a truth universally acknowledged that it doesn't rain much in the South of England. We therefore saved up for years for an irrigation system with a view not to produce lush and stripey lawns, although that can be a legitimate objective, but to achieve more control over the way in which our grass grows and therefore to improve lawn quality.

Grass is a simple plant and it will grow well if given warmth, air, water, food and light - like most of us. Good quality lawn grasses are choosier about these inputs and lawn management is about the good grass getting what it wants. Our problem was that we could sow posh grass seed; feed and spray to prevent disease and all to no effect without water. Feed and sprays need to be washed in, and seed won't germinate unless the soil is warm and moist. Our autumn 2009 lawn renovation work involved the usual scarification, reseeding, aeration and feeding but with no effect for six weeks because it didn't rain. And in the summer, we sprayed feed and plant protection chemicals when wind speeds are low, for good environmental reasons, but low wind speed usually means high pressure and no rain. So we wanted it to rain according to our requirements, rather than at the whim of Pluvius.

At the beginning of 2009, we felt that we had enough cash in the bank to get some precise costings, on the understanding that it might be a year or two before we could proceed. We obtained estimates from three suppliers and the one from Rainmaker of Littlehampton was the most attractive, both because it was the most reasonable at about £33 000 and because we knew that they had done good work for other clubs. Further fund raising was essential but we were quickly turned down by Sport England, the National lottery and corporate sponsors such as banks, bookies and waste disposers.



Insetting the channels of the pipework around the lawns

Fortunately, our own CA Development Committee was more sympathetic and quickly awarded us a major development grant of £5 000 topped up with a helpful £500 from the South East Federation. We could now afford to go ahead but with no contingency and the knowledge that we would end up with, at best, zero cash in the bank. We could have waited until our cash reserves built up further but we had, by now, been awarded the final round of MacRobertson Shield Test Matches and we were fretful about lawn quality. Now the club members came up trumps and one in particular made the difference which enabled us to decide at the end of 2009 to proceed.

Rainmaker were commissioned and agreed to start in February 2010. Our ground is leased from our Local Authority and we are required to tell them about proposed major investment. That was done in November 2009 and, after some provocation, we received a reply in January that we would require planning permission for the overground tank. (Our contractors told us that this was the first time that a local authority had behaved in this way). We were thus only a few weeks away from the planned start of work and yet had to embark on the planning process. At this point, another very kind member popped up and offered to pay for an underground tank. This was perfect because we had always been bothered about the potential intrusiveness of an overground tank.



Capping off the tank, left to right, John Dawson, Graham Brightwell, George Noble.



The underground tank, a substantial beast

So work began under the most appalling conditions imaginable. A cold, wet, dank February, lightened only by the perpetual smiles of the Rainmakers as they installed the pipework, up to their navels in freezing water.

At the same time, we had to install the underground tank. We decided to put it in the car park, because it was accessible and because we thought that it was free from services such as water, electricity and sewerage pipes (that turned out to be true). Our local friends, Coyne Construction, dug the hole, a tank was delivered from Peterlee, Durham, and a crane was hired to drop it into the hole. Not as easy as it sounds because, if you drop a tank into a hole, you lower it on straps and, when you pull the straps out, it tilts the tank to one side. Further despair. At this point, we sent for the club building surveyor, Julian Sheraton-Davis. He plunged into the hole, thought about the problem and straightened the tank. So, after further shovelling, plumbing and concreting, we had an irrigation system and it worked! And, at the same time, we dug metre deep holes in the mud and filled them with concrete for the flagpoles.

We also decided on a money saving wheeze concerning the water supply. Water is expensive in South East England, at about £0.80 per cubic metre, and, if the global warming experts are right, it



The club labourers on a vry muddy site, George Noble, Graham Brightwell, Mike Lambert, Bob Osmond.



Job done and the system in action

is likely to be in short supply in the future. Water flows in a tributary of the Thames past our lawns, on its way to Hurlingham, and we discovered from the Environment Agency that we could extract 20 cubic metres a day without the need of a licence. Our Contractor installed the necessary additional pipework and pump which unfortunately then didn't work. But after several months of thought and trial, amid much denial by the pump supplier, the pump was replaced and all is now well. We pumped 767 cu metres this summer, even with the problems.

As for the grass quality, it is certainly much improved because of the timeliness of operations and the opportunity we have to provide near optimal growing conditions. The finer grasses are flourishing and we are learning to avoid the temptation to overwater; a path which leads to the evil and unwanted annual meadow grass.

Our grateful thanks to the CA for the grant, without which nothing would have happened, club members for their financial and emotional support, the sodden and mud caked members who, through thought and toil, installed the tank and flagpoles and our contractors, whose commitment and professionalism was astonishing. And after all that money and effort, there is nothing to see.

Budleigh Salterton lawn improvements

Report by Charles Townshend

Photo by Ivor Meredith

The courts at Budleigh have been receiving lots of attention in recent years to improve the playing conditions for club members and our many visitors. In 2008 we had Courts 3 and 4 laser levelled and reseeded during September but poor weather conditions meant that there was poor germination and reseeded was required to achieve decent grass cover. We feel that they are now reaching a good standard and have benefited greatly from early top dressing this autumn. With the four other courts that had been improved in earlier years we feel that these two are satisfactory and should give us good service in 2011.

At the end of 2009 we consulted the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) over problems we had encountered with the dollar spot fungus. They advised us to obtain equipment for regular aeration of the lawns throughout the season and suggested some



The lawns at Budleigh resting under December frost

modification to the fertiliser mix that we had been using. With ten courts and a bowling green to maintain we felt obliged to purchase an aerator that could be attached to our small tractor and were able to use it at appropriate points throughout the 2010 season. (This treatment, decent weather and rapid fungicide spraying when needed ensured that we had little trouble with dollar spot during the times of maximum risk.)

Last winter we decided that two of the remaining courts must be tackled since Courts 1 and 2 had become increasingly challenging, especially in dry conditions, and needed urgent attention to give a decent level surface for play. We were just able to meet the deadline for the February meeting of the Development Committee at which our hasty grant application was considered. We were encouraged by their positive response but recognised that they rightly would need more detail before they could offer any money! However we were able to plan for action and trust that they would have the funds available to assist us when their November meeting took place.

In mid August (following hard on the heels of our August Tournament) we saw the arrival of the contractors who set to work to strip off the surface of the two lawns and produce a level surface suitable for seeding. The weather this time was helpful and we saw the first green shoots appearing in just over a week and rapidly establishing the beginnings of a good even sward. With plenty of good growing time in the autumn things are looking promising for next year in spite of the early arrival of serious winter!

Meanwhile we had considered the various questions raised by the Development Committee and were able to respond to them in time for their meeting. We were delighted that they were able to award us a very generous grant of £3500 which matches the £3450 that we have raised from members' donations and some fund raising efforts. We are left still £1000 short which we are covering from reserve funds pending further schemes to replace this safety cushion.

No chance to relax yet, however. Is there ever? Our Grounds Committee has been looking at the state of Court 7, our main show lawn in front of the Clubhouse. Beneath the grass lies the hard compacted foundation of the tennis court that was in use until the 1970s. This has meant that drainage has been poor and hoop-setting and adjusting can be tricky if not almost impossible (I speak with feeling!) Some awkward levels around one or two hoops and a sloping north boundary make it less than satisfactory

for the really important games that we have to stage and we want to remedy this properly and as soon as possible.

We are very grateful for the CA financial support for this recent work and for that carried out in past years and remain, as a club with a long and proud history, committed to providing playing conditions that will be worthy of the many important events we have the pleasure of hosting.

Roehampton Croquet Club is 110

by Peter Siddall



The splendid new pavilion at Roehampton

The 2010 season marked a memorable year for croquet at Roehampton Club which included: increasing membership, record levels of activity on its four lawns, new coaching and development programmes, the opening of its new pavilion, hosting the MacRobertson Shield as well as six CA open tournaments. This article is a celebration of these achievements, which we hope will interest and encourage others.

Brief History

The record states that Roehampton Club was founded in 1901 “essentially as a polo club” and shortly afterwards leased 57 acres of “rough farmland”. There were three polo grounds and other equestrian activities, the last of which ceased in 1958.

A nine hole golf course was opened in 1904 which quickly became 18 holes and today is the nearest one to central London. Tennis was introduced in 1911 and today, with 29 courts, has become the most popular sport amongst the Club’s 5,000 members. Other sports include squash and swimming together with fitness, bridge and art. In 1934, the *Tatler* and *Bystander* magazine observed that “People don’t put on their best dresses to go to Roehampton - they go to play games”. And so it remains today.

Croquet was extremely popular at the Club from its earliest days. The Croquet Association, founded in 1896, set up its headquarters there in 1902 and remained until 1958. Interestingly, the CA’s lease required the Club to provide no less than 12 (later 14) “greens”. At the time these were said to be “emerald green, free of weeds and with turf of unrivalled quality”. The Open Championship was held at Roehampton Club regularly from 1904 onwards.

Croquet enjoyed many years of success during which celebrated members, including former multiple champions Nigel Aspinall and David Openshaw, achieved both national and international honours in the sport. Croquet declined in popularity during the later part of the 20th century. For several years after 1986, croquet lawns at Roehampton were reduced to only three.



Play in progress on a club day

The number of playing members also fell dangerously low and the viability of the section was in question, especially by the burgeoning tennis fraternity which coveted croquet’s “emerald greens”.

Recovery

In recent years this decline has been reversed and active playing members now number well over 100. This growth was attributable to two main factors: firstly, the growing popularity of golf croquet has enabled potential new recruits quickly to pick up the basics and to enjoy playing the game; secondly, a successful recruitment campaign amongst existing Club members which attracted many former golfers, who found that their putting skills were useful. One of the benefits of being part of a multi-sports Club is that people introduce their friends and readily transfer their sporting rivalries from tennis and golf to croquet. In this way the croquet section has inherited some promising new talent, together with their established social networks.

Croquet is played all the year round at Roehampton and the twice-weekly Club mornings on Mondays and Wednesdays are well attended, often with 32 players on the lawns. This has led to increased demands for coaching and development, firstly for golf croquet and then for the “proper game”. During the winter season of 2010/11 our specialist coaches, David Openshaw and David Mooney, are fully occupied with the demands of members. Most importantly, their services are greatly appreciated.

Although Golf croquet is very popular, we have found little difficulty in persuading newcomers to commit themselves to the arduous task of learning and practising Association Croquet. All members are encouraged to participate in a variety of internal tournaments of GC, AC and One Ball, and entries are at record levels.

The contribution of existing croquet members to this success story has been very considerable. Inspired by our captain Jean Oades, everyone has been most welcoming; many have given their time to coach and support newcomers, for example by playing alternate stroke doubles. Understandably, these developments have put a strain on the facilities and ground staff. We have found that using half lawns has created additional capacity during the winter months. We are now applying to the Board of Directors for an additional half lawn nearby, to be dedicated to coaching and development.

Rebuilding

In response to the increased membership and in anticipation of hosting the MacRobertson Shield matches in 2010, the Club Board supported our application to replace the rather dilapidated old pavilion with a new, enlarged one on the same site. The design

was based on the previous version, which had worked well, but with more lockers, enhanced views of the lawns, simple catering facilities, a toilet and broadband connection. The construction is of French Oak with a slate-look roof with fully opening glass doors onto the front veranda.

The construction programme over-ran and the finishing touches were still being applied as the MacRobertson teams arrived for their first practice session. But it was the perfect occasion for such an inauguration! The new pavilion has been much admired and the additional facilities have been greatly appreciated by both croquet members and visitors.



Australia and USA line up at Roehampton before doing battle in the MacRobertson Shield

Hosting the MacRob

Roehampton Club first hosted the MacRobertson Shield in 1925 and August 2010 was the fifth occasion in this competition's 85 year history. The matches between Australia and the United States took place on five sunny days. The play was exciting and inspiring for all spectators; for some the triple peels were educational, for others they were incomprehensible.

The atmosphere was festive and sociable throughout. The teams each brought their supporters and everyone enjoyed mingling and getting to know each other. The Americans surprised us by choosing to travel by the No. 265 bus and the Australians deployed their crocodile mascot and wallaby flag.

We were impressed by the internet ball-by-ball commentary; firstly by the dedication of the reporters and secondly by the realisation that out there "in the ether" people were actually following every word. Such is the power and reach of the MacRob!

One of the greatest benefits was the camaraderie and teamwork that the whole event generated amongst all the Clubs and helpers that took part. It was a huge endeavour on the part of the organisers that brought the croquet world together and left us with feelings of pride and goodwill. This is clearly what old Macpherson himself had in mind back in 1925.

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The View from the Bar

A Summary of discussion topics from the Nottingham List by Nick Parish

A quiet couple of months on the list. In fact, December was the quietest month for over five years, and while January livened up a bit, this was largely due to the re-opening, yet again, of the question of whether it is harder to play on fast lawns. This was a pretty one-sided debate, so I'll summarise briefly. One vocal contributor from Australia thinks it isn't, all the other contributors think it is. You decide.

A rare Golf Croquet debate opened with the news that the 2011 International Polo Club Palm Beach Golf Croquet Invitational will feature Egyptian balls. While not a prestigious tournament in historic or ranking terms, that tournament does boast a total purse of \$8,000 (\$5,000 to the winner), likely to be the highest in all competitions in 2011. So for this to become the first major tournament outside Egypt to use Egyptian balls is potentially an important precedent. The balls were described succinctly as "neat, different, interesting and very ugly". They are slightly smaller than normal balls and have a huge energy transfer – so rushes/clearances are much more effective. On the other hand, they also make it much easier to damage or break a mallet, with several instances cited, and also cause much more jarring of the wrists. There was also considerable concern on the list about having different sets of equipment for Golf Croquet and Association Croquet, which risks making the two games much less fungible and could open an "us and them" mentality. It is probably worth adding that no-one seems to see the Egyptian balls as suitable for Association Croquet.

One topic that crops up with surprising regularity given how rarely it arises is Advanced Handicap croquet. The idea of this is to accustom improving middle bisquers to the idea of lifts, but still allowing them the bisques that they tend to need. The difficulty is that when your opponent has bisques, the normal lift leaves are no longer good strategy, and that renders the leave that is eventually taken very artificial – which means that neither player gets the real experience of the Advanced game, where lifts are very important and learning what the standard lift leaves are is essential. I have seen numerous attempts to fix this problem, none of them convincing, but to my mind Steve Woolnough has come up with the perfect solution. The outplayer can take his lift as usual, but after a lift is conceded, a bisque only allows you to re-take the last shot – not to play from where the balls finished. This solution suddenly restores the importance of making a good leave, and so brings the standard leaves back into play, but still gives the high bisquer the opportunity of taking a bisque.

A discussion of the importance of making leaves, and being able to make a good leave where necessary in preference to a risky attempt at a break soon led to a series of anecdotes about, and tributes to, one of croquet's great characters, William Ormerod (who I should add, in case anyone gets the wrong idea, is still very much with us). As anyone who has played against him can attest, William is delightful to play against, but has never been one to adopt the more aggressive tactics of the modern game. The discussion began with William's seminal quote, "A leave is as good as an all-round break, dear boy", and continued from there, in a very good natured

spirit. It was alleged that William had been observed to interrupt his break unprovoked because an opportunity for a really good leave presented itself. But my favourite anecdote came from Phil Cordingley, who was once passing a lawn where William was in play but had been interrupted by the double bankers. "Morning William", said Phil. "How are you?". "I'm very well thanks", replied William. "Seem to have a bit of a break here". Pause. "Rather spoils the game if you ask me".

To subscribe to the list, go to <http://nottingham-lists.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/croquet>. You can receive emails individually or as a daily digest.

Report from Council

Summary of January Council Meeting

by Ian Vincent, Hon Sec

Council met on 22nd January at Hurlingham. In opening the meeting, the Chairman, Barry Keen, announced with regret the resignation of Cliff Jones as the SW Federation Representative on Council and paid tribute to his contribution in the fields of tournament management, coaching and refereeing over the years.

The Hon. Treasurer, Roger Bray, reported that he expected the 2010 accounts to show an overall surplus of about £5K, but this included investment income and was needed to compensate for the effects of inflation. A similar budget was agreed for 2011.

To increase openness and accountability, it was agreed that minutes, reports (including a summary of the management accounts) and agreed policy documents of Council and its committees should be published to Associates on the website, normally within four weeks of the meeting. Discussion papers should continue to be restricted to members of the committee and Council.

The bursary scheme for Juniors is to be extended for a further two years.

David Collins has retired from his role of organising croquet events for commercial organisations on behalf of the CA and was thanked for doing so.

A number of motions proposed by the International Committee, resulting from a long period of consultation and discussion, were passed, the main ones being:

"that Council agrees to the handover of the MacRobertson Shield to the WCF, provided that agreement is reached with the ACA, NZCC, USCA and the WCF to a mechanism for the ACA, CA, NZCC and the USCA to retain control of the MacRobertson Shield regulations with a form of supermajority voting."

"that Council agrees that in future, as long as the MacRobertson Shield continues to be part of a wider World Team Championship, the team entered in the MacRobertson Shield by the CA shall represent England rather than Great Britain."

Guidelines for handling conflicts of interest for people involved both with the CA and the WCF were agreed.

Draft objectives for the next few years were discussed and it is hoped that more specific proposals for financial strategy and increasing the amount of competitive play will be brought to the March meeting.

Finally, it was agreed that loyal greetings should be sent on the occasion of our Patron's Diamond Jubilee and the 2012 AC Inter-Counties named in her honour.

Obituary

Ramsay Bettinson

Ramsay, who died in January aged 85, was one of a small group of enthusiasts (led by John Davis) involved in creating the first club independent of ICI's Norton Hall in the mid-1980s. This was briefly at the airport and then at Ormesby Hall. In those early days of croquet in the North East, Ramsay (by then retired from ICI Billingham) frequently played for the club all over the North - as long as official commitments to the Ramblers Association allowed. Ten years later there was a move to Prissick Park; again Ramsay and his wife Barbara were tireless in support. Ramsay continued to look after lawn-mowing and help with equipment; whilst Barbara provided catering on match days. The Bettinsons were both awarded CA Diplomas in 2006. Health problems reduced his involvement in competitive croquet in recent years, but Ramsay and Barbara persuaded their local Methodist Hall to allow its use for weekly carpet croquet over wintertime and continued to support Middlesbrough Club (as honorary members) after it moved to Albert Park. Ramsay will be remembered by many, across the region, as a true 'gentle man'.

Charles Waterfield

Coaching

Croquet Academy Courses for 2011

by Jonathan Isaacs

Following another successful year the Croquet Academy has announced its 2011 programme which include two new courses. Bill Arliss will be running a one day Masterclass based on his book "The Tactics of Golf Croquet" and the first 3 day Triple Peel course originally planned for last August will be run in April.

The numbers attending Bill Arliss's "Masterclass" will be limited so you are advised to book early to avoid disappointment. The course will include a copy of his new book "The Tactics of Golf Croquet".

The Triple Peel Course has been moved from last August as a course of this nature requires considerable follow up practice sessions. It was felt that running the course at the beginning of the season was more sensible than in August. Ideal for B class Association Croquet players, this will be a detailed 3 day course designed to give an in depth understanding of the triple peel with plenty of supervised practice.

In 2010 the Academy ran its first supervised Association Croquet Tournament where newcomers to the tournament scene were given some advice and support. Those attending found this most useful and as a coach it was very encouraging to see the competitors growing in confidence as the tournament progressed. The Academy have decided to run a similar tournament in 2011 which is highly recommended as a gentle start to tournament play.

Details of all courses including prices can be seen on the Croquet Academy website www.thecroquetacademy.org.uk or in the CA's 2011 Fixture Book. You can book on line or by contacting

the Academy Administrator (John Low) at the following address:
34 Eley Drive, Rottingdean, East Sussex BN2 7FH. Tel: 01273 388910.

2011 Dates	Courses	Ideal Handicap range
2/3 April	AC Silver Course	6-10
2/3 April	AC Bronze Course	12-18
2/3/4 April	AC Triple Peel Course	0-4
9/10 April	AC Gold Course	0-4
9/10 April	AC Improvers Course	18+
14 May	The Tactics of Golf Croquet	2-8
14/15 May	AC Beginners Course	Novices
8 June	GC Beginners Course	Novices
2/3 July	GC Improvers Course	4+
22/23/24/25 July	AC Summer School	16+
11/12 August	AC Supervised High Bisque Tournament	16+

News & Information

Message from Marketing

The rebate scheme which earns a club £10 for each new CA Associate has been extended for another year. Clubs are reminded that anyone joining the CA for the first time and listing that club will earn it a £10 reduction on the capitation fee the following year. This applies to Junior as well as Tournament and Non-Tournament members. Help the family of CA members grow and benefit your club as well.

Patricia Duke-Cox

News from the Office

Fixtures Book

The Fixtures Book was published on time and posted to members on 25 January 2011, along with membership cards and handicap cards.

Online Entry

Online entry and payment is available for most CA Tournaments and this year, and as a trial, this facility has been extended to Bowdon Club Tournaments. Members entering Bowdon Tournaments and paying by cheque should send their entries to the **Bowdon Club Tournament Secretary** as detailed in the Fixtures Book, but online entry will allow those who prefer to enter and pay online to do so.

Clubs

The annual mailing to clubs with CA membership forms, Fixtures Book, and the usual tournament-related forms (as applicable) will be sent out to Clubs in February.

Longman Club Team Cup

The Longman Cup is one of the most popular CA Inter-Club Competitions and is played largely by our mid-handicap range of players. It attracts well over 30 entries each year. Club Teams that get through the early rounds enjoy two days play on first class lawns at one of the leading clubs in the country. It involves playing the final, the semi-final and a 3rd/4th place playoff. After all this hard work by so many only the Club that wins the final has a trophy to take back to their Club and

display for the following year. The Tournament Committee has therefore decided that from 2011 three trophies will be awarded, the existing Longman Cup itself for the Winners, a new Longman Shield for the Second Place and a new Longman Tankard for the Third Place. The latter two will also be engraved trophies to keep for the year.

The competition name will be slightly changed to take account of these extra trophies; it will in future be The Longman Inter-Club Trophies.



The 2011 Bestinvest Golf Croquet World Championship is taking place from July 18-24 at Hurlingham & Surbiton. A dedicated website has been launched at: www.gcworlds2011.org
Spectator Arrangements

Spectators are very welcome but if you intend to watch some of the matches at Hurlingham you are strongly advised to pre-book your tickets via the CA Office as only a very limited number will be available on the day. There is also a limit on total attendance so if you plan to visit on the final two days you are recommended to book early to avoid disappointment. There are beneficial terms for CA members and their guests providing they pre-book.

At Surbiton there will not be a charge for entry for spectators but if you are planning to take a large party you are advised to forewarn the club to ensure there is adequate catering.

Volunteers

In order to make the event run well we need help, especially in the following areas:

- * Referees
- * Scorers
- * Minibus Drivers - you must have D1 permission on your licence (standard on licences granted pre-1997) and have held a licence at least 2 years

If you are willing to volunteer for a minimum period of one complete day then please send an email to gcworlds@spiersfamily.org and advise:

- * which days you are available,
- * which venue suits you and
- * the roles for which you are qualified.

We will be offering subsistence during the day and free entrance but not travelling expenses.

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In Conversation With...

A Series of interviews with some of the people who we associate with croquet

In conversation with Dennis Moorcraft

by Eileen Magee

We are sitting in the conservatory of Dennis Moorcraft's present home a firm roquet's distance from the Cheltenham Croquet Club and a dolly rush away from where the remarkable Maisie Peebles lived until she died aged 98. From the conservatory windows one can see an array of special plants – Dennis's great passion. He says that had it not been for the arrival of croquet in his life, he would have retired to Devon as there are many more great gardens in that County. We talk about how it all started.

I was born on 14th August 1921 (*club note made that he will be 90 this year, although I think he intends to celebrate it in Norway*) in Faversham in Kent to a non-playing croquet family. After leaving grammar school in Gillingham, I spent 5 years in the navy during the war which was a pretty awful time really. I came home on VE day having been abroad for 4 whole years without a break. After only one day I got recalled by the Admiralty, much to my annoyance, and was sent to Norway in a destroyer with two other officers. The Germans had just surrendered in Norway and we sent over a small military force to help the Norwegians get rid of the Germans. There were tens of thousands of Russian prisoners of war and many German naval and military bases – a big logistical problem in getting them out of the country. I have a letter from King Håkon thanking me for helping to liberate Norway. This was where I met Ingeborg and she came across to England and we were married in October 1945.

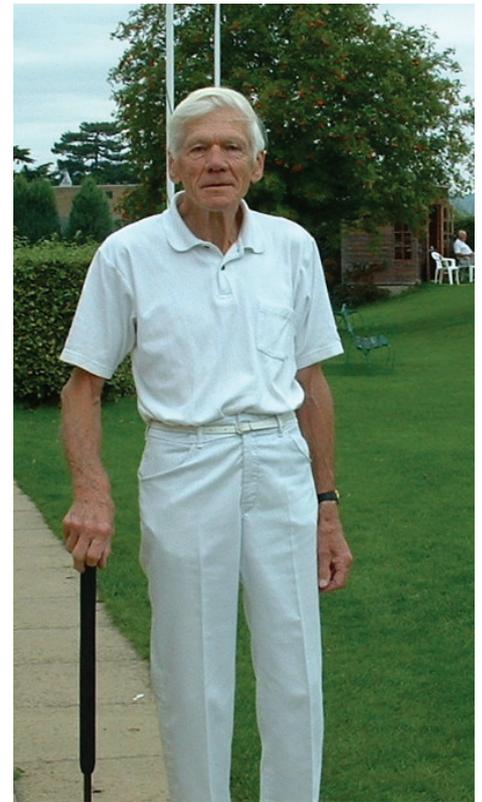
After I was demobbed from the Navy I would have liked to emigrate to Norway but you had to stay where the jobs were. We moved to Blackheath in London and I became an Inspector of Taxes living opposite the Bishop of Woolwich, John Robinson, who became famous when he gave evidence in the Lady Chatterley trial.

(He was pro Chatterley!). We had a big garden and the Bishop's son came to play with my son. I bought a pre-war Jacques croquet set from a junk shop, mallets, wire hoops and 3 balls. We hadn't a clue what to do, but the Bishop's son said his family played and he demonstrated their method – foot on the ball stuff, didn't matter really they had a lot of fun.

In 1963 I was moved up to Southport for five years and walking in Victoria Park one day we saw two old ladies playing croquet and I remember there was some sort of a clubhouse. We got talking and that was that. We joined the Club which only had about fifteen members and we had a great time. One of the members was a Miss Schofield formerly from Buxton who had been a Ladies champion before the war. But she went over to Billiards from croquet! I decided that if I wanted to play croquet, I ought to play it properly so I got a book out of the library – Cotter's book 'Play Croquet This Way'. It's a great book and I recommend it to any beginner. It explained the rules, the four-ball break, even triples in simple terms. One of the things I find in modern croquet is too much reliance on coaching. Coaching is necessary of course to iron out problems but you need to teach yourself as well as being coached. Really, croquet hasn't changed all that much, although there were no sextuples then. I got my handicap reduced to 10 or thereabouts in the first year, we didn't muck about in those days. Next year we started visiting Cheltenham as they had just started holding weekend tournaments. Edgar Jackson was the main man behind it. Although I think that Hunstanton was the first Club to have a weekend tournament, Edgar made them popular and Cheltenham held five weekend events a year.

After our Cheltenham B and B closed down, we bought a tiny, tiny cottage in Guiting Power in 1968. I was moved back to London and we lived at Guildford and went to Guiting Power at weekends, playing at Cheltenham and joining as country members. Whilst living at Guildford I joined the Woking club and played there during the week during the evenings but mostly playing at Cheltenham.

Then at the beginning of the seventies,



Dennis at Cheltenham

life changed drastically for me because Ingeborg had a very bad motor accident, was almost killed and spent four months in hospital on the danger list. She did make a fantastic recovery and still managed to play croquet but she couldn't walk very well which was why in 1975/76 we moved from Guildford into London, Kensington so I didn't have to travel so much. By that time I had been promoted to Under Secretary to the Inland Revenue in Somerset House. We didn't play much croquet for about five years.

But then at 60, I finally retired and couldn't leave quickly enough, there was so much I wanted to do besides croquet. We had sold the tiny cottage at Guiting Power and had bought a big place in Buckland near Broadway with about 6 acres of land. We visited at weekends and finally retired there in 1981. I really enjoyed myself then, planting about 200 trees, an orchard and a big garden. I had always been keen on gardening and it is like everything else, I sincerely believe you can learn anything from books. I have a colossal library upstairs. I simply like rare plants.

Eventually we moved into Cheltenham because Ingeborg wanted to be among people and nearer the shops and so we got a house here and developed a garden laying about 10,000 bricks – my other skill.

In 2000 Ingeborg sadly died having

seen in the Millennium. I stuck it out for about three years but the house was too big and the garden was getting a bit much for me and I moved into this very much smaller house and garden.

About the time I retired in 1981 Peggy Lodge, chairman of Cheltenham Croquet Club had a stroke and I was told by Col Wheeler to get on the Committee quickly and take the chair and you did what you were told in those days. When I first knew Cheltenham things were completely different to what they are now. It was the same with the other big clubs, there would be some well known players there and there was quite a stiff sort of attitude, generally calling people Mr this and Miss that, not Christian names all the time. Also you didn't necessarily get accepted as a member if your face didn't fit. In that regard the changes in croquet are absolutely wonderful, it's a completely democratic open game these days.

The first of my two main achievements whilst on Committee was to get the Club on a firm financial footing. The club had been almost bankrupt with not enough members and the prospect of big repairs looming. The other was re-instating the Gloucestershire Counties team and we actually won it when I was captain. The Counties was great fun in those days with a wider range of players. Today there are many more A-class players and the standard has gone up. But I think it is a good institution.

I ask Dennis about Ingeborg playing in the Counties.

We were playing in the Counties one year and Bill Lamb had introduced Yorkshire as a new county and they were a man short. He said that Norway was fairly near

Yorkshire and no one seemed to mind so Ingeborg played doubles with Bill Lamb off a handicap of 12.

What was your lowest handicap?

Minus a half, and I played in the Spencer Ell once. It is now five.

One of the noticeable features of your game has always been the simplicity of each turn. You walk on the lawn having decided what to do, address the ball, take one practice swing and strike the ball which usually does what you intend.

I have always made up my mind quickly. The biggest compliment I have ever been paid was from someone watching the Opens who said to me "you play like Reg Bamford except much worse". Someone else said quite recently that the best thing about my croquet career was that I was still playing it.

When did you start managing tournaments Dennis?

It was probably before I retired and still living at Guildford. I had played at Budleigh Salterton with Col Cave as manager and I agreed to manage the Club's week's tournament if I was allowed to play as well – that's not too difficult if you have an assistant to write things down whilst you are on the lawn and I managed there for 5 years. When I started managing at Budleigh there were no such things as blocks, all the classes were draw and process and the handicap was X and Y. So you could be really unlucky and be out of the tournament by Wednesday morning. Even more difficult if you were a married couple. There were ructions sometimes when a certain husband wanted to go home on Wednesday but his wife didn't because she was still winning. It was still the case that the day's play could not over-run as players had to be back at

their B and Bs for their evening meal which was at a fixed time. Double banking was not yet allowed and to finish a tournament on Saturday was quite an achievement. They allowed me to make some changes for future years introducing classes in blocks and eventually permitting double banking.

I have also managed at Colchester, Parkstone, Southwick and of course at Cheltenham, week tournaments as well as weekends. But I always tried not to manage anywhere for more than 5 years running so that if they got fed up with me, it was easy for them to change. I started the Over Fifties event here at Cheltenham and this has been copied all over the country. The demand is so great that we have to have two here and they both have waiting lists. In retrospect I think I made a mistake, it should have been Over Seventies. I once managed what I think of as a perfect tournament at Southwick. I encouraged the club to arrange for 32 entries, 8 blocks of 4 people each playing three games. You then had a position in your block. The players then went into a seeded knockout so that block winners didn't meet until a later stage. As you were knocked out you went into a Swiss. So therefore in four days you had blocks, a knockout and a Swiss. The other change in management is that there are so many more managers now. When I started Clubs were desperate for managers and they preferred someone from outside the club – perhaps feeling they had more authority.

I also succeeded in getting the Over 65's in the Veterans changed to the Over 70s, perhaps it is time the age limit should go up even further.

What do you think has been lost or has disappeared from croquet over the passage of time?

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Well not very much really. When I started it really was an elitist sport, probably originating from the country house game played between the wars with people putting up players and knowing everyone who was on the circuit. There are many more players around today and many more tournaments to choose from although I miss the many overseas visitors we used to have who came over and travelled round all the week events. It does seem at Cheltenham that more and more local players fill our tournaments.

Who are the people that made most impression on you Dennis?

I remember **John Solomon** playing his famous coup at Hurlingham when Cotter his partner didn't turn up. He beat the A-class Irish players, mother and son, by deeming the partner ball. I also met **Daisy Lintern** from Roehampton, a very respected manager and an unlikely looking Ladies Champion. When I knew her she was getting on in age and on one occasion she offered to drive me from Roehampton to Hurlingham. I was told afterwards that you never accepted a lift from Daisy. I could understand why.

At Cheltenham, I remember **Col Wheeler** particularly. He was your typical army colonel but a great character. When he left the Army he used to hunt but as he didn't ride he followed the hunt on a motor bike instead of a horse. He was lawns manager and worked extremely hard indeed, quietly financing those lawn operations that the club could not afford at that time. He

liked to play doubles and would never consider making a hoop until he had got his partner round to 4back. Consequently he sometimes never made a hoop which didn't bother him a bit although it probably worried some of his partners. There was a late flowering romance when after a long period of admiration he eventually married Kitty Sessions.

Edgar Jackson was a great manager, he did not like timed games and kept very detailed notes on how long various classes of games took. He was one of the pioneers of the block system and many other clubs copied him.

Paul Hands invented what some people still insist on calling an Egyptian instead of a Hands. This system meant that you could continue to play until the end of a tournament instead of being knocked out by Wednesday. I have known Paul Hands since he started as a boy of 14. He is a wonderful chap. After he had been at the club a few days, Col Wheeler caught him lining up the balls along the west boundary aiming at the peg and hitting it every time, knocking it out of the ground. Col Wheeler put a new byelaw above the club house door saying that members were forbidden to practice shooting at the peg.

I came across **Humphrey Hicks** who Prichard says in his book sat at the side of the court doing a piece of embroidery. When I knew him it was knitting, Ingeborg thought that he was knitting a handkerchief it seemed that sort of shape.

Probably the greatest player around

in my early days was **Nigel Aspinall**. He won the All England playing off a handicap of -5 - including beating me in the Area Final at Woking.

Two people particularly stand out, **Betty and David Prichard**. They played a great part in developing the game across the country and in helping some of the smaller clubs. They were country members of Cheltenham and they started training for referees at residential weekends. We were very short of referees then maybe only having one or two in a tournament.

Isobel (Soss) Roe of Cheltenham started playing as a schoolgirl with her father in the Channel Islands. She never married and was a great support to me whilst I was chairman, doing all those jobs that no one else wanted to do. No one knew much about her background until after she was tragically killed in a traffic accident, it was learnt that she had been Ladies skiing champion for Britain for 3 years before the war. She also played County Hockey and Tennis. She adopted a Ronnie O'Sullivan approach to croquet, changing from centre to side style if the game wasn't going well. She also had a stock of mallets by the side of the court which she changed from turn to turn if playing badly.

Outstanding in their contribution to croquet and to the Cheltenham Club are **Dab and Roger Wheeler**. Their interest, commitment and development of the game and the Cheltenham Club over such a long period of time is truly remarkable.

Now you live nearer the club will you be playing more or less croquet?

I shall play mostly friendlies, there are several over eighties at the club and more coming into that group all the time. I intended to run an over eighties event this year but two or three of my star players were unfit. I shall continue to play in one or two weekend tournaments here plus the July Week and I retired from management last year.

Dennis will not be twiddling his thumbs. He is still very involved with the plant world and indeed it is as much his contribution as anything else which earned the Cheltenham Club a Bronze Certificate this year from the Cheltenham in Bloom committee.

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The Croquet Association

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Cheltenham GL53 7DF

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Merit Awards 2010

Congratulations to all those who qualified for Merit Awards in 2010. Particular congratulations to Mark Fitzsimons and Sam Murray for achieving their Bronze and Silver Awards in the same year, (Mark's against the same opponent in the same tournament), to Christian Carter for doing the same with Silver and Gold, and to Kevin Carter on getting Platinum. We shall all have to try harder next year as only 43 new awards were achieved as against 60 last year.

John Handy, Scheme Administrator

16 Bronze Awards

Sara Anderson	Woking Autumn Wknd	5-Sep
John Bateson	Sussex County	13-Jun
Christopher Cockroft	Woking Spring Wknd	24-Apr
Sue Cooper	Bowdon Wknd	3-May
Mark Fitzsimons	Secretary's Shield at	22-May
Paul Francis	Cheltenham Weekend	3-Oct
Dave Gunn	Budleigh Salterton Hcap	5-Sep
Jackie Hardcastle	Budleigh Salterton Hcap	5-Sep
Philip Harris	Sidmouth Handicap	19-Sep
Brian McCausland	All England H'cap	5-Sep
Carole McLoughlin	Surbiton Easter H'ap	3-Apr
Sam Murray	Surbiton Easter H'cap	2-Apr
Nancy Temple	Veterans' Championship	20-Jun
Ian Theakstone	All England H'cap	4-Sep
John Thirlwell	Cheltenham Easter	5-Apr
Keith Thorley	Sidmouth Handicap	17-Sep

18 Silver Awards

Christian Carter	Hurlingham	3-Aug
Mark Fitzsimons	Secretary's Shield	22-May
Clive Goode	Nottingham H'cap	21-Aug
Andrew Gray	Longman Cup	3-Oct
Janet Guthrie	Bowdon Wknd	3-May
Omid Hallam	Nottingham	24-Jul
David Holland	Bowdon Northern Week	20-Jul
Matthew Holmes	Pendle & Craven	3-Apr
Peter Moore	Nottingham	19-Jul
Sam Murray	Sussex County	3-May
Elaine Norsworthy	Budleigh Salterton H'cap	22-May
Sean Sheridan	Bath Autumn Salver	22-Aug
Doug Sinclair	Cheltenham Over Fifties'	19-Aug
Ian Slater	Edgbaston	30-Aug
Richard Way	Nottingham	19-Jul
Ron Welch	Pendle & Craven	30-Aug
Tony Whateley	Tyneside Midweek	9-Jun
Richard Williamson	Cheltenham Advanced	22-May

8 Gold Awards

Christian Carter	Hurlingham	5-Aug
Rob Edlin-White	Nottingham B-Level	5-Jun
Alan Edwards	Hamptworth B-Level	20-Jun
Richard Griffiths	Europeans, Jersey	17-Sep
Nicholas Harvey	World Team C'ship	17-Aug
Gabrielle Higgins	Women's Championship	13-Jun
Martyn Prins	Bowdon Northern Week	20-Jul
Thomas Whiteley	Northampton Open	8-May

1 Platinum Award

Kevin Carter	Surbiton Advanced H'cap	9-Oct
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Editorial



February might still be too early for players to be thinking of playing, so I am appealing to readers to consider the usually unpredictable month of February, to put pen to paper or fingers to keyboards to send in contributions, as I'm afraid the Editorial desk is now as empty as it has ever been. I will be writing to various committees and individuals to solicit copy for the April issue, but if you are one of the people who often thinks, "Oh I should reply to that article", or that you have an idea that you wish to share, then now is the time. Starting with the next issue you will see I hope a distinct new and improved style to the Gazette, and it would be good to fill it with some fresh material to match the fresh new look. Items such as the 'In conversation with' can be done by anyone. Eileen Magee has started the ball rolling, but there is no reason why someone else couldn't take up the mantle in a future issue. All of the interviews that have been published in previous Gazettes have been interesting and we learn so much that we would otherwise not know about people and the game. I would also like to resurrect the former feature of 'Club Focus', which is basically a page to tell everyone about your club, old or new. What makes your club different? Why should people come to your tournaments? It's been some time since I chased for contributions so I'm hoping to find you all in a receptive mood.

Gail Curry, Editor

Purley Bury Croquet Club's 20th Anniversary

By Ron & Audrey Sherwin

On October 22 around 70 members of the club gathered at a local hotel for a lavish lunch to celebrate our anniversary, where an extensive exhibition of photographs covering the club's history was the focus of attention and discussion. Such is the club's popularity that with only two lawns at its disposal membership has had to be restricted during the last two years. It is very much a "do it yourself" club, where almost all the work is done by the members.

The club came into being in 1990 when a small group of interested people acquired the use of an area large enough for one and a half lawns situated between the existing tennis and bowling clubs, but with no buildings of its own, and little idea how to play croquet! Since then the club has come on by leaps and bounds. The members designed and built the pavilion, including a small kitchen, and later added an equipment chalet and a shed in the grounds. In 1995 the club took possession of the adjacent allotment and extended the half lawn, since when our two lawns have been in constant use every season.

Members themselves built retaining walls on three sides of the ground, and have created attractive wall gardens. In 2005 we raised money to have a toilet built on to the pavilion, and since then we have no longer needed to rely on the friendly neighbouring bowling club for this facility.

The club competes annually in various leagues and tournaments, and over the years has had a number of successes, as well as having internal competitions for all levels of play.

As a thriving club we hope to continue for many more years enjoying both association and golf croquet.

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05



John Jaques II won a place in sporting history and a Gold Medal for introducing Croquet into England at the Great Exhibition in 1851. His display there attracted such wide attention that the game speedily became the vogue and over the years has developed into the absorbing sport enjoyed by so many world-wide.

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