

THE
CROQUET
GAZETTE

JUNE/JULY 2011



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THIS IS ALL GETTING A BIT
TOO EXTREME FOR ME**



ISSUE 332

THE MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS OF THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION

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CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN JUNE 2011

Last year we hosted the World Team Championships, including the MacRobertson Shield, which gave us the opportunity to see the best Association Croquet players in the world. Many of you took advantage by travelling to the host venues to marvel at the skills on show and to watch some very close matches.

This year we are fortunate to be hosting the Bestinvest Golf Croquet World Championships at Hurlingham and Surbiton in July. I am sure that you will join me in hoping that our home-grown players will perform well in this event. We are expecting the best Golf Croquet players to be playing and I wish to encourage as many of you as possible to watch these players play the game at its highest level. These opportunities do not come round very often, so please make sure that you do not miss out.

To reach the playing standard required to be successful in these top events requires a lot of hard work, coupled with as much competition as possible. However, competition can only be made available in our amateur sport with the support of the many volunteers who support our game. It is important that we have available a supply of these officials to help make competitions run smoothly. Perhaps the most important of these officials are our referees.

Unfortunately, there is a great shortage of Golf Croquet referees in the country and it is essential that we increase the supply of qualified referees as soon as possible. How often have you played in a Federation league match where something has gone wrong and none of the players knows how to resolve the problem? An amicable resolution is usually agreed, but just think how much easier it would be if there were a qualified referee on hand to sort it all out.

Bill Arliss, the current Chairman of the Golf Croquet Laws Committee, is actively trying to improve the position by expanding the number of Examining Referees and holding training courses for new referees across the country. This year alone, he expects over fifty attendees at these training courses. This is a great start, but we need more. Therefore please consider attending a training course and taking the exam. I think you will find that this would be a great way to support the game we all love.

Barry Keen

Chairman
The Croquet Association

ISSUE 332 JUNE/JULY 2011

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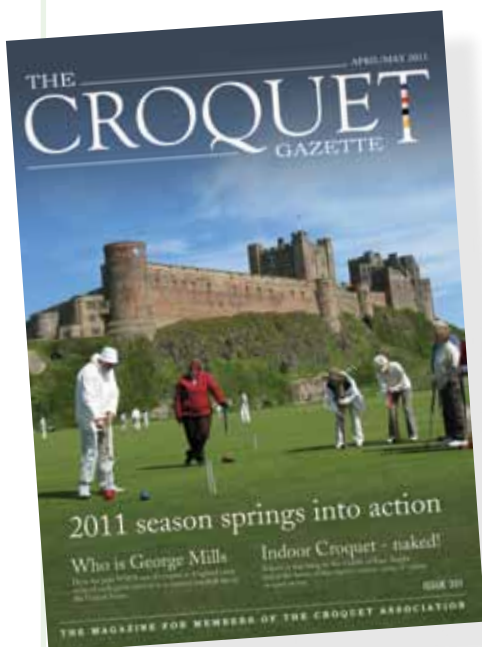
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Letters



THE MOST PICTURESQUE CROQUET LAWNS IN ENGLAND?

The photo of Bamburgh croquet club on the cover of the April/May edition reminded me of the '70s when I regularly played cricket at Bamburgh. Then I rated the club as the most picturesque ground I had played at – ahead of Worcester County ground with its cathedral and Masham with its brewery. Does Bamburgh win the prize for the most picturesque croquet lawns in England? Crake Valley, Sidmouth – any other claimants? It was at Bamburgh that I learned that there was a safe and an unsafe side to field. Newcomers fielded on the croquet lawn side, admiring the view of the castle and the crags. Veterans fielded with their backs to the castle. Why? Those on the croquet lawn side soon learned that when the ball was hit in the air towards them it promptly disappeared against the multicoloured backdrop of the crags and their vegetation. Running round in circles shouting “where is it?” was only slightly less embarrassing than the ball whistling past you to the boundary. Fortunately croquet jump-shots rarely get that high, but when playing at Bamburgh do keep an eye on the cricket unless you are totally familiar with Laws 33 and 34.

John Dawson

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL IN THE WEST COUNTRY

I thought readers might be interested in news from a small West Country club. Though we at Wellington Croquet Club have fewer than 30 members, we have just celebrated the opening of our new pavilion in the grounds of Oake Manor Golf Club. What makes us really proud is that we have achieved this without any grants from anywhere, just a number of years of saving by club members and some hard work by a few talented ones, namely club Chairman Stephen Hoole and committee member Tony Burch. The photo shows from the left, Stephen, Tony, Barbara Tracey our oldest member and past Chairman Graham Rosser by the new pavilion. What we really need now are a few younger players and a bit more publicity.

Wendy Rosser



RED HOUSE CROQUET – FUN WITH A CAGE & BELL

We feel, with great respect, that in recent years the croquet world has become somewhat ‘golf obsessed’, and rather than keeping it a secret any longer we have decided to let you all know that there is another version of our lovely game which garden lawn owners in particular might find worth looking at. Many years ago a very gregarious friend recalled the ‘bones’ of an old Victorian garden game from his days as a child before the war on his grandfather’s estate in Wales. Some sixty years later he invited a group of friends round to his home, The Red House in Bradfield, Essex, to play a somewhat experimental game of the only version of croquet he knew. The very sociable day was a remarkable success and soon a group was assembling every Monday. Now, some twenty years later, we have well established ‘Red House’ rules, no fewer than eight beautiful garden lawns in this area alone, and the game has spread far and wide to both established clubs and fellow enthusiasts. Home and away matches are great social occasions and much serious fun is had by all. As old men our skills are limited but our enthusiasm remains undiminished. It has to be said that of course we defer to the Association game, with which we hardly dare to compare ourselves. The latter’s highly structured rules demand somewhat off-putting degrees of skill and dedication, in addition to ‘billiard-table’ lawns of a size and quality which are inaccessible to most of us. Also I have to confess that, though we are polite about it, neither we nor any of our ‘converts’ can be bothered with ‘Golf’ on a regular basis. Croquet without a ‘croquet’ shot!? ‘Red House’ employs most of the skills and enough of the tactics of Association, but is more sociable, a great deal easier to understand and can

be played on almost any reasonable garden lawn. Uniquely perhaps, we use the Victorian ‘cage’, a four-legged hoop of set dimensions which is the interesting and challenging centrepiece of our game. We had one original cage, made by Jaques, at least a hundred years old, and the local blacksmith is now an expert in making them for us. In addition the historically significant, tactically very useful ‘foot-on’ croquet shot is occasionally employed. We do not, however, send the opponent’s ball into the shrubbery – an infringement of the rules, which would end the turn! We are fortunate in being able to meet at any one of several private houses – dispersing to play on as many of the local lawns as are needed on the day. We then re-assemble to ‘put the world to rights’. We therefore have no ‘Club’ or premises, but we do have an honorary co-ordinating Secretary and, as you see, refer to ourselves as ‘The Red House Croquet Players’ – into which ‘family’ any converts are welcome. Though ‘outsiders’ we have been privileged to be admitted, as a group, as Affiliate Members of the Association.

‘Hoopopotamus’ would, I am sure, enjoy having a go at the ‘cage’! I would be happy to let anyone who might be interested have a copy of Red House Rules for them to try. The garden lawn owner can at last dig out that old croquet set and enjoy using it with friends and family, playing an understandable game at home – surely a better option than sending it to the local auction for want of knowing what to do with it.

Dick Patterson

GOLF CROQUET ORIGINS

In response to a letter from Ray Hall ‘Golf Croquet Origins’ (April/May issue) enquiring about the origins of Golf Croquet, I regret I cannot offer a definitive answer. However a golfing acquaintance of mine, of the 18-hole variety that uses clubs rather than mallets, pointed me to an anonymous article he’d discovered in an old *Country Life* magazine dated Aug 25th 1901 (p254). The opening paragraph ran thus. *Some good genius, bored, as we may imagine without difficulty, by the scientific length and monotony of modern croquet, has invented a modification of the game, called croquet-golf that is amusing enough and has merits as a pastime, which croquet has not. It is not, to be sure, a classical game. It is a modern hybrid, but it passes the summer hours away without vexation of spirit that has been known to attend croquet and is not unheard of at golf.* The full text of the article suggests that Croquet-Golf and Golf Croquet are essentially one and the same, although Croquet-Golf starts from the centre of the lawn, before following the same general principles of Golf Croquet.

Brian Dawes

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Email letters to gazette@croquet.org.uk
or post to: Editor, 127 Haswell Gardens, North Shields,
Tyne & Wear, NE30 2DR

WHAT’S THAT ON MY LAWN!

Head Gardener Jason Salway could not believe his eyes when he turned up bright and early at 6.30 am for his last working day before Easter at the Phyllis Court Club in Henley-on-Thames. He is well used to dealing with worn grooves or ‘rabbit runs’ in the turf caused by croquet balls running through the hoops, but this was a different kind of ‘*Bunny Trouble*’ all together! Club members Frances Colman and Chris Roberts had arrived earlier still that morning and set up eight Chocolate Easter Bunnies for Jason and his assistant Tom to find. In just 18 months Jason and his staff have successfully raised the standard of the Phyllis Court lawns to the extent that the Club can now boast that the quality is equal to some of the best in the country. The Easter Bunnies were a thank-you to the gardeners for their sterling efforts in presenting the lawns in such wonderful condition.

Chris Roberts

JASON AND TOM WITH THE LESS DAMAGING
VERSION OF RABBITS ON THE LAWNS.
PHOTO BY CHRIS ROBERTS



News & Information



18–24 JULY 2011

With 15 of the World's top 20 GC players competing, and most of the World's top 40, the ninth GC World Championship will certainly be a feast of thrilling golf croquet. The home nations have a strong showing and England has a particularly young team, with Will Gee, Ryan Cabbie, Jacob Carr, James Goodbun and Howard Cheyne. They are joined by a few older players with longer playing careers: Robert Fulford, Rutger Beijderwellen, Marcus Evans, Ian Lines, Simon Carter and the player with the longest career of the group: Stephen Mulliner. Many of the England players play both codes of the game and four have played in MacRobertson Shield test teams. Wales is fielding the experienced David Walters, Scotland, James Hopgood, and Ireland a well-known trio: Ed Cunningham, Patsy Fitzgerald and hard-hitter Mark McInerney. But it's the Egyptians that are out in force, with three former World Champions taking part: Ahmed Nasr, Mohammed Nasr and Khaled Younis. The Championship is being staged at the Hurlingham Club and Surbiton Croquet Club, with the finals being played at Hurlingham. Spectators must have tickets to watch any match at Hurlingham. These can be pre-booked until 13 July 2011. Tickets are free to CA Members (Tournament, Non-Tournament, Life etc). Otherwise tickets are £5, or £15 for three days or more. After 13 July, tickets can only be bought at the gate for £10 per day (including CA Members) or £30 for three days or more. There will only be limited numbers of tickets available on the day, so pre-booking is advised. CA Members should contact the CA office for tickets, quoting their membership number and anyone else can buy them through the shop. Tickets will be posted out and can only be posted to a UK address.

Date	Hurlingham	Surbiton
18 July 2011	Block Play	Block Play
19 July 2011	Block Play	Block Play
20 July 2011	Block Play	Block Play
21 July 2011	Block Play & Play Offs	Block Play & Play Offs
22 July 2011	Rounds 1 & 2 Knock Out	Plate
23 July 2011	Quarter finals & Semi Finals	Plate
24 July 2011	Final, Plate Final, 3rd/4th Play Off	

Qualifying Tournament

The qualifying tournament for five places will take place at Roehampton and Surbiton Clubs on 15–16 July 2011. It was intended that the event would only take place at Roehampton, but the world wide interest was so high, that the event was expanded to take 32 players, including seven Egyptians, one of whom is a former world champion.

Under-21 Golf Croquet Tournament

This will take place at Hunstanton Croquet Club from 12–15 July 2011, and will be a showcase for the best in under-21 croquet talent. Several of the players in the main event, such as Ryan Cabbie, will be playing, along with 24 players from seven countries.

There is generous sponsorship from the main sponsor Bestinvest, along with sponsors The Hurlingham Club, Surbiton Croquet Club and Simon Carter. All the information about the event, including results etc, can be found at www.gcworlds2011.org.

NEW TOURNAMENT MEMBERS – SAVE A YEAR'S TOURNAMENT SUBSCRIPTION FEES IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS.

A new and reduced fee for tournament members is being introduced for 2012 and it takes effect from 1 August 2011. This is in line with the usual practice of allowing up to 17 months for the price of 12 months in the first year. Any new tournament member electing to pay by Direct Debit will have only £12 to pay in their first year, and the following year another reduction will apply, equal to a sum halfway between that paid in the first year and the full fee prevailing at that time. Thus a new tournament member paying £12 in 2012 will find that the following year the subscription is likely to be £24.50 in 2013 if the current level of £37 is still operating.

Tournament members get their own copy of the CA Fixtures Calendar each year along with their own copies of the Croquet Gazette which is published bi-monthly. Tournament members are also eligible for awards for their level of play, can put themselves forward for selection and annually receive discounts in the CA Shop. This offer is for a standard single tournament subscription and does not apply to dual membership, non-tournament or overseas membership. New members in these categories will still attract the club rebate offer this year, if they nominate their primary club.



CHEQUE REPLACEMENT: WHAT'S THE STORY?

Elizabeth Larsson

The Croquet Association, along with other national sports governing bodies, was invited to a seminar at the Payments Council in March about the replacement of cheques. Elizabeth Larsson, Manager of the CA, attended the seminar.

For many clubs, and the CA, the replacement of cheques is an issue that will start looming large as the deadline for their replacement approaches in 2018. As yet, nothing has been announced about the shape of the replacements, and the Payments Council is talking to a wide range of organisations to ensure that it has a full grasp of the issues.

The Payments Council (PC) was set up in 2007, specifically to develop a universally accepted replacement for cheques. It is a membership organization and all the major UK banks are full members, as is the Post Office, Paypal, and overseas banks that have a presence in this country, such as Handelsbanken. The target date for the replacement of cheques is 31 October 2018. This is still a target date: it is not set in tablets of stone in case the implementation requires longer, but a date had to be set to focus minds. The plan at present is to finalise the target date in 2016, on the basis that the alternatives are acceptable to users. There is no doubt that the use of cheques is decreasing: in 1990 some 11m cheques were written each day; by 2010, this had fallen to 3m per day. The PC is currently supporting migration where alternatives already exist and identifying the requirements for alternative methods. To give you some idea of current cheque use as far as clubs, societies and charities are concerned, some 67m cheques were written out to these groups in 2009, and 57m of these were for regular payments and the other 10m were spontaneously written. Some 16 per cent of consumers made a payment to a charity or society by cheque, so although use is declining generally, it is still significant in the clubs, societies and charity sectors.

The PC has identified the requirements of alternative methods and they must be: low cost, provide an audit trail, easy to reconcile, secure, easy to use, enable volunteers to manage from home, able to be posted (Royal Mail), not require large amounts of cash to be carried, not dependent on technology, acceptable to consumers, enable a 'store of value' for holding deposits and allow multiple authorisations. With regard to the multiple authorisations, PC members have already agreed to this. 'Store of value' holding deposits are particularly important to Croquet Clubs. Clubs holding tournaments may have to refund

members' payments for tournaments if a tournament does not go ahead, so a simple method has to allow this. While some clubs might hold on to cheques, others, including the CA, bank them, but may have to provide refunds. In looking at this list of requirements, the immediate conclusion would be that the alternative is: – a cheque! This point was made by many at the meeting, but the PC said that Britain was one of the last countries in Europe, along with Spain and France, still to use cheques. Some countries, such as the Netherlands, have not used cheques for over a decade, so the experience of these countries and their methods are being examined.

I made the point that while the PC is telling us that banks have agreed to multiple signatories, they do appear to be trying to persuade organisations to use just one signature in practice. I also pointed out that the Royal Mail was not very secure these days, with the CA having had experience of several cheques going astray. The Amateur Swimming Association also had this experience. Many clubs (and the CA) use Direct Debits, but the PC hadn't mentioned that in the discussion, so I made sure that they were aware of this. I explained that one of the alternatives to cheques for some payments is Direct Debit, but that if a cheque requires two signatures, then so do Direct Debits, and some banks—and HMRC—are expecting organisations to set up Direct Debits electronically, which of course, does not require two signatures. I quoted the CA's recent case of HMRC offering a DD mandate to be completed electronically, but providing a printed version if an organization required two signatures, only for the printed version be refused by the HMRC!

Since I attended the seminar, the Treasury Select Committee has reopened its inquiry, which could mean a reprieve for cheques. The inquiry will consider:

- trends over time in the use of cheques as a payment mechanism, including estimates of likely usage over the next five to ten years;
- the advantages and disadvantages of abolition, including the impact of abolition on particular groups in society;
- analysis of the likely costs and benefits of the abolition of cheques;
- progress in the development of suitable alternative payment mechanisms;
- and the decision to close the Cheque Guarantee Scheme and the implications for cheque usage and the future of cheques.

The Payments Council has also announced a consultation on its national payment plan. They have an informative website which is well worth a visit: www.paymentscouncil.org.uk.

Who is Sylvia?



Paul Hands recalls some of the many women he encountered in his croquet life

Ah yes, it's good to look back and recall some of the wonderful women in my (croquet) life, not that I am (or indeed ever was) a ladies-man please understand – just a player! When I first took up the game at the age of 15 one elderly lady named Beryl Matthews took me under her wing. She was very proud and spoke in what I considered a posh voice (not untypical of those playing croquet in the late 1960s) – and quite a good player too, but, as I was to find out when she once gave me a lift to another club, her driving skills were something else. We were passing through country lanes when she turned one corner rather too fast and sent a cyclist flying off the road into a ditch. She didn't react or say anything at first but instead stopped the car suddenly about two hundred yards further on, then went into reverse and sped back up the road. By that time the cyclist was just emerging from the ditch, but as we approached (too fast again) he had to leap back into said ditch and watch in horror as we reversed over his bike and mangle it nicely. As we stopped he scrambled to his feet and swore profusely – Mrs Matthews was horrified and later told me she couldn't understand his attitude (as she put it, she had, after all, gone back to see whether he was alright ... “young people today” she added, “have no respect”. I'd say that the “young” cyclist was probably in his sixties ...).

I couldn't write this and not mention Miss Winifred Allardyce – she was Cheltenham Club Secretary, indeed an extremely proud and efficient one, and she only wanted the very best people to join. On one Sunday afternoon a group of businessmen from Worcester (all in their thirties) brought their families to have a look around the club and, as they walked between the lawns their (very young) children began to run. Miss Allardyce was on them in a flash and could distinctly be overheard telling the families in her uniquely squeaky crackly voice “We don't want your sort here ...”. She then ushered them out of the club grounds. It was great to hear a while later that these very same businessmen had set up their own club in Worcester and created a trophy to play for ... naming it ‘The Allardyce Cup’ !!

It is of course an unfortunate fact of life that not everybody gets on with everybody else, even though they are perfectly nice people – and so it was with Juliet Povey and (Darth) Vida Worsley. Both reasonable players and both very competitive. There they were up on Lawn 5, the farthest away from Cheltenham's clubhouse, a grudge battle-royal ensuing. It was a boiling hot day and that, together with a scorched lawn, hardly conducive to good play

and certainly not to good temper. Every so often there was a loud query as to whether the ball had moved during a take-off; whether a shot had actually hit (mutterings of “I'm sure that went by ..”); shouldn't that shot be watched (often to “deaf ears” as the shot was played anyway...); did that ball actually go all the way through the hoop – and the general trials of two ever-vigilant adversaries frustrated at being able to hit in, but on a tricky fast lawn not make much progress (and of course playing somebody they desperately wanted to beat). Eventually (from a 10.30am start) the two ladies trudged wearily back towards the Clubhouse – Juliet announcing triumphantly to anyone within earshot “6 hours 22 minutes of absolute misery, but it was so worth it!” She offered Vida a drink, but you could tell that it was only through customary obligation. Then there was the final twist – and an “Oh, no!!” yell of sheer exasperation – as Juliet went to write up her winning score on the boards ... only to find that she and Vida were in different blocks – so shouldn't have played at all! Looking back, I think that what made me smile most was that the offer of a drink was promptly withdrawn ... yes, a happy day all round.

I must also note a triumvirate of other elderly but fantastic ladies here – Miss Rhona Allen was probably about the age I am now, so I'm quite concerned I've bracketed her as elderly, but let's pass over the sad truth and carry on ... she was a very gentle and obviously well-bred lady, yet followed the trait of a very fiery one in Miss McKean (who was still playing into her late eighties – I can see her

Miss Allardyce was on them in a flash and could distinctly be overheard telling the families in her uniquely squeaky crackly voice “We don't want your sort here ...”

now stomping about the court with tiny curled up feet let alone curled up toes; she played left-hand side style and always with the addition of her handbag over her arm, brilliant!) ... anyway, back to the gentle Rhona, who, when on Cheltenham's lawn 8, often felt compelled to keep her handbag over her left arm as she played, thus avoiding leaving it on the sidelines where “anyone could take it” as she once told the great Edgar Jackson, who replied as ever with “ab-so-lutely!”. Now Rhona was a manager's nightmare too, as she would often disappear in the middle of a game without notice or permission if she had something cooking in her oven back home, leaving a somewhat bemused opponent wondering where she'd gone. Onto Miss Gwyneth Douglas-Jones now, who was a great character too, previously a judge at Crufts and quite an accomplished artist to boot. She unfortunately had failing eyesight by the time I met her. Although she only lived a couple of hundred yards from the Club, she always drove – and you knew when

she'd arrived as you would hear the gentle thud as her car hit the flagpole in the car park ... if you know Cheltenham, you'll realise that's no mean feat, as there's a hedge in front of that flagpole!

Time to mention two other elderly ladies, but this time also great friends – Mrs (Bomber) Shackleton and Miss Dagmar Kitchen. They had been introduced to the Cheltenham Club by Lionel Ayliffe, from his legendary tennis parties at his family home. Neither was, let's say, leading light as croquet players go, but great to know nonetheless. Bomber (actually we never called her Bomber to her face) was once partnering Dick Whittington (yes, his real name) and we watchers on the sidelines remarked to him on how she put her clip on her shoe whenever she had made a hoop. "She might as well stick up her backside for all the good it does her" was his response (quite mild for Dick as I recall!). Meanwhile the lovely Miss Kitchen was partnering me in the same competition. Let's just say that we'd made a stuttering start and I had already had to peel her through hoops 1 and 2 to ensure any progress at all. I thought (and she agreed) that it would be really nice if she made hoop 3 herself. However, try as I might (doing what I'd earlier tried at hoops 1 and 2 – setting up numerous dolly rushes from within a yard of the hoop) she just couldn't get through – I'm not sure how often I found myself saying "Bad luck partner, next time ..". Eventually I decided to leave her in the jaws as surely even she couldn't fail from there. The opponents duly missed their shot and Dagmar strode (quite confidently I recall, although given she had very short legs and wore a long skirt, who's to say?) onto the lawn. At this moment there was a shout for a referee on the adjoining lawn, so I went to do that and said to Dagmar "just pop it through, make the roquet and I'll be back in a jiffy". I returned about a minute or so later and found Dagmar was back at her seat, her clip still on the top of hoop 3 – what had happened? She had run the hoop the wrong way!! ["Bad luck partner, next time .." but, as my friend Martin Murray would undoubtedly have put it, at that moment I felt the game slipping away]. Now only once were Bomber and Dagmar drawn to play each other, a game we all expected to last an awful long time, but not a bit of it – the advantage of rarely venturing to use the opponent's balls soon became apparent, and for some long spells both ladies were on the lawn at the same time, both playing and shuffling through hoops oblivious to their opponent doing exactly the same (perhaps this was a pre-cursor for the super-advanced rules – certainly neither was left sitting idly by on the sidelines – and perhaps even more fittingly, both ladies recorded the score pre-fixed with a minus!).

In 1981 I got married (quite a shock – I don't remember asking!). Penny and I had two receptions, one for family and work friends and then another in the evening for everyone at the Croquet Club. It was fantastic – a beautiful warm and sunny evening. Penny wore her wedding dress and looked great, and the Club did us proud. As we were all gathered in the tea-room, a toast was proposed "Please raise your glasses – to Paul and Sylvia..." Where the name Sylvia had come from I've still no idea but almost every present we received from club members

had "To Paul and Sylvia" written on it [yes, I was asked – but luckily I didn't know anyone by that name – phew!]. A few years later I was chosen as reserve to represent England to play Wales at Colchester, part of the Home Internationals at that time sponsored by Pimms. Penny had never tasted Pimms before and, after her first complimentary glass, remarked "it's just like normal lemonade ...", and promptly accepted another. Hmm, a couple of hours later it was time get out of our chairs to formally go and meet the Mayor of Colchester over lunch. Unfortunately Penny couldn't stand up ("perhaps there's more in this Pimms than I thought!") and I had to sort of guide her into the Clubhouse. She slept it off in the car for the entire afternoon, although when I told her I had played really well and finished my match with a text-book triple-peel she claimed that she had looked on supportively (in fact I hadn't actually played at all, something I never quite got around to telling her!!).

I always enjoyed managing tournaments, and occasionally found it might be better if a game could be re-arranged to make things go more smoothly. This brings me to mention a great elderly couple – Captain Philip Reid and his wife Louisa. Philip had many years previously survived a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp (and looked like it, poor chap) but was a keen player. Whilst Louisa didn't play she was still a real force to be reckoned with. I rang them at home one night to ask if Philip would mind changing his start time from 12 noon to 10am the next morning. Louisa answered, and I heard her call to Philip passing on my request. I could hear him in the background saying "Well, I would rather play at noon if I can ..", with Louisa snapping back at him "Don't be so stupid Philip .." and then she immediately came back to me with "Yes, Philip says that will be fine ..."

Another well-spoken lady, Sheila Soutter was always nice to converse with, and I recall her once telling of being late starting out from her home to get to Cheltenham for a tournament, speeding along the motorway and flashing at cars in the outside lane so she could get past, unfortunately once too often as the vehicle in front this time was a police car! They pulled her over ... "Did you want us to move out of the way for you madam?" [Well, yes actually].

There are many other fantastic ladies of course, all of whom I am so lucky to have met and have such fond memories – but I'll close this chapter for now to avoid (if it hasn't happened already) complete overload for the reader. I hope I haven't offended anyone by not mentioning them – in truth probably just those that I have – but I would like to pass on a comment from Norah Elvey which amused me – she had been a great lady player from yesteryear, short and wirily thin and with the most incredible side-on mallet swing I've ever seen (it seemed to change at a ninety-degree angle as it approached the ball – but it had obviously worked for her). She once sat next to me whilst we watched the incomparable Humphrey Hicks in-play, commenting on his rotund appearance "I don't know what's happened to Humphrey – he was always such a slim boy" [Humphrey was now in his seventies!].

MONTH-BY-MONTH CROQUET LAWN MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

The Lawn Company have a wealth of experience turning around the fortunes of croquet lawns whether they are managed professionally for a club or privately owned by keen croquet players in the garden at home. It is worth noting that the following should be used as a guide only, but in association with prevailing weather patterns, growing cycles, and ground and soil conditions.

OPERATION	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
Aerate	Pencil Tine	Pencil Tine	Solid Tine – two passes
Disease Watch	Red Thread	Red Thread	Red Thread & Fusarium
Fertilising	None	None	Slow Release MU – 28-3-8 if not done
Moss Control	None	None	None
Mowing	John Deere – 6 mm, 3 times per week	John Deere – 6 mm, 3 times per week	John Deere – 6 mm, 3 times per week
Pest Watch	Leatherjackets & Chafers	None	Worm Casts
Renovate	None	None	Yes – at End of Season – End of Month
Scarify	None – see Verti Cutting	Wire Reel or Verti Cut – but not if dry	Wire Reel or Verti Cut – but not if dry
Seed	Localised Areas if bare	Localised Areas if bare	None
Selective Weed Control	None	None	Yes ahead of Renovation so start of month absolute latest timings
Top Dressing	None	With seeding	None
Verti Cutting	Yes – every two weeks	Yes – every two weeks	Yes
Watering	Nightly but monitor quantity and adjust	Nightly but monitor quantity and adjust	Nightly but monitor quantity and adjust
Wetting Agent	Yes – Monthly	Yes – a must	Yes – Last Month
Additional Functions	Should not be 'Bents' appearing now	Increase watering if really dry	Remove Dew each morning with Dew Switch or Drag Brush. Keep Autumn Leaves Off!

If you require assistance call The Lawn Company on **0870 442 7475** or email Mike Seaton personally on mike@lawn.co.uk

www.lawn.co.uk www.grassclippings.co.uk

The Croquet Association Accounts

COMMENTS ON THE 2010 ACCOUNTS

2010 was a much tougher year financially for the CA compared to recent years. Nevertheless a modest surplus after taxation of £3,700 was achieved. I should add, however, that this was insufficient to protect the CA's reserves fully against the effect of inflation.

Overall income for the year was down by £4,400. It should come as no surprise that the Shop suffered greatly due to much tighter trading conditions. Sales for the year fell by 15%. Another adverse factor was the devaluation of several stock items which have proved difficult to sell. Advertising and corporate events also suffered and the surplus from all commercial activities dropped by £9,200. The only bright side of this poorer performance is that the corporation tax liability was significantly smaller!

More positively, some sources of income actually improved. Subscription income rose by £4,400. Club subscriptions in particular increased by 9%, a key element here being the increased revenue from clubs who have joined the CA over the last few years. There was also an improved performance from investment income, due mainly to transferring cash reserves to a higher interest rate deposit account. Donations also rose significantly and it is with much gratitude that I record the generosity of four donors: a bequest from the late Pat Shine, and donations from Gail and Tremaine Arkley (for archive costs) and John Spiers (for a new trophy).

Total expenditure increased by £6,400, which is comparable to the one major new cost in 2010, the MacRobertson Shield contest. At £6,600 this was well within budget. The organising committee and host clubs are to be congratulated for their financial management as well as for producing such a successful event.

Grants to clubs and federations rose by £2,600 which, inasmuch as this reflects improved facilities and growth in clubs and the regions, is one cost increase which should be welcomed. The legal liability insurance scheme for clubs cost £1,400 less; but this was partly offset by increased premiums included in office overheads following a restructuring of all the CA's insurance arrangements with a new broker.

Central administration costs account for over 60% of total expenditure and it is noteworthy that overall they were pegged at their 2009 value, with only relatively small fluctuations in individual subheadings.

The last item on the Income and Expenditure Account shows that a net total of £1,600 was transferred to the CA's special funds in 2010. The amount transferred in 2009 was skewed by a £25,500 transfer from the Benefactors' Fund to cover half the cost of the new CA Office extension. The only exceptional transfer in 2010 was £3,000 from the International Fund to help meet the cost of the MacRobertson Shield (see Note 5). A new Building Maintenance Fund has been set up for future major costs in repairing or refurbishing the CA Office; the intention is to build up this fund with regular annual contributions. In line with general policy, income from the investment of three of the special funds has been transferred to them, as have the donations to the Benefactors' Fund.

A more comprehensive commentary on the 2010 Accounts will be published on the CA website and distributed at the AGM in October.

Roger Bray

Honorary Treasurer
The Croquet Association

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2010

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

I report on the accounts of the Association for the year ended 31 December 2010, which are set out on pages 12 and 13.

Respective responsibilities of the Council and examiner

The Council is responsible for

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

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

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

Basis of examiner's statement

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

Independent examiner's statement

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

- (i) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records
 have not been met with regard to the accounting year ended 31 December 2010; or
- (ii) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2010 to be reached.

Marian Hemsted

Accountant
Reed House, The Street, Plaxtol,
Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 0QL

26 March 2011

The Croquet Association Accounts

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2010

	2010	2009
£	£	£
Income from:		
Subscriptions:		
Individuals	53,843	52,822
Clubs	41,032	37,667
Levies	14,635	15,195
Surplus (deficit) of income from –		
Commercial activities	33,511	42,696
Sponsorship		
Tournaments	2,558	4,476
Investments	4,931	3,900
Donations & Royalties	2,243	435
Total Income	<u>152,753</u>	<u>157,191</u>
Expenditure on:		
Publications	19,923	19,521
Marketing & Development	2,509	4,116
International activities	8,083	1,688
Direct expenditure on Clubs & Federations		
Grants to Clubs & Federations	22,537	19,906
Legal liability insurance scheme	4,767	6,194
Central administration costs:		
Staff costs	61,364	60,437
Office building & equipment depreciation	7,110	7,175
Office overheads	5,011	4,543
Office services	6,070	5,680
Meetings expenses	9,783	10,662
Professional fees and expenses	1,265	1,515
Sundry expenses	299	874
Direct debit and related charges	748	778
Total Expenditure	<u>149,469</u>	<u>143,089</u>
Surplus for the year before taxation	<u>3,284</u>	<u>14,102</u>
Provision for Corporation Tax		
year ended 31st December 2010	266	1,505
adjustment for prior year	(666)	(435)
	(400)	<u>1,070</u>
Surplus for the year after taxation	3,684	13,032
Net transfer from/(to) special funds	(1,617)	22,798
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year transferred to General Fund	<u>2,067</u>	<u>35,830</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2010

Fixed Assets

Office Building – net book value
Office & Croquet equipment – net book value
Trophies at valuation
Investments at cost

Current Assets

Loans to Clubs
Stock held for resale
Debtors & prepayments
Cash at bank and in hand

Current Liabilities

Receipts in advance
Creditors & accrued expenses
VAT liability
Provision for taxation

Net current assets

Net Assets

Financed by:

General Fund

Balance at 1 January 2009
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year from Income & Expenditure Account retained in General Fund

Special Funds

Signed:

B A Keen
Council Chairman

Dr R W Bray
Treasurer

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS – 31 DECEMBER 2010

Note	2010	2009
	£	£
1		
2, 3	78,960	84,265
3	804	2,690
	10,000	10,000
4	78,597	78,597
	<u>168,361</u>	<u>175,552</u>
	280	1,510
1	29,499	42,877
	9,542	4,763
	<u>120,268</u>	<u>94,894</u>
	<u>159,589</u>	<u>144,044</u>
	3,593	3,971
	11,615	6,697
	1,628	35
	(58)	1,405
	<u>16,778</u>	<u>12,108</u>
	<u>142,811</u>	<u>131,936</u>
	<u>311,172</u>	<u>307,488</u>
	138,084	102,254
	2,067	35,830
	<u>140,151</u>	<u>138,084</u>
5	<u>171,021</u>	<u>169,404</u>
	<u>311,172</u>	<u>307,488</u>

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Accounting convention

The accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention.

Fixed Assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life:

Office Building	5%
Croquet & Office Equipment & Fittings	33%

Trophies are included in the Balance Sheet at valuation.

Stock is valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

2 OFFICE LEASE

The Croquet Association is the leaseholder for the CA Office and the land on which it stands for a term of a million years.

3 BUILDING and CROQUET & OFFICE EQUIPMENT

	Building (from 2002)	Equipment (from 2005)
	£	£
Cost at 1 January 2010	106,045	13,684
Additions in year	–	363
Cost at 31 December 2010	106,045	14,047
Accumulated depreciation	(27,085)	(13,243)
Net book value at 31 December 2010	<u>78,960</u>	<u>804</u>
Net book value at 31 December 2009	<u>84,265</u>	<u>2,690</u>

4 LISTED INVESTMENTS AT COST

	2010	2009
	£	£
15,409 4.125% Index Linked Treasury Stock 2030	18,810	18,810
4,228 2.5% Index Linked Treasury Stock 2024	10,053	10,053
3,898 2.5% Index Linked Treasury Stock 2016	10,059	10,059
19,019 4.75% Treasury Stock 2020	19,850	19,850
9,344 4.75% Treasury Stock 2015	9,898	9,898
10,157 4.25% Treasury Gilt 2011	9,927	9,927
Investments at cost	<u>78,597</u>	<u>78,597</u>
Market value of investments at 31 December 2010	<u>107,979</u>	<u>102,021</u>

5 SPECIAL FUNDS

Fund Name	Balance 1 Jan 2010	Transfers from/(to) General Fund in year:			Balance 31 Dec 2010
		Investment Income	Donations	General Allocation (net)	
	£	£	£	£	£
Benefactors Fund	14,176	427	1,838	–	16,441
Development Fund	102,000	–	–	–	102,000
Duffield Bequest	21,260	890	–	–	22,150
International Fund	31,968	962	–	(3,000)	29,930
Building Maintenance Fund	–	–	–	500	500
Total Special Funds	<u>169,404</u>	<u>2,279</u>	<u>1,838</u>	<u>(2,500)</u>	<u>171,021</u>

Growth and Recruitment

Over the past few months concerns have been expressed about perceived declining levels of competitive croquet across the country. This has often been attributed to a growth in 'social croquet', which is not confined to Golf Croquet but certainly this variant represents the greater part of the rise in non-competitive play. A CA Recruitment Working Party and the CA Marketing Committee set about measuring whether this was so and determining what could and should be done about it. This is a summary of the findings, which include a change of direction for the CA in terms of its Growth and Recruitment Strategy, which was ratified by the Council in March of this year. The full text of the report is available from the CA website.

Measuring the Problem

Despite a slight increase in the number of CA tournaments advertised in the Fixture Book, the absolute numbers of people entering them has fallen over the past three years. The table shows entries, per person per event, for 2008-2010.

	2008	2009	2010
AC	3731	3530	3267
GC	495	477	507
Total	4226	4007	3774

Entries for AC tournaments have declined by an average of 12% (with entries in the lower end of competitive AC, handicap singles events, down 20% and handicap doubles down 27%). Meanwhile, entries in GC tournaments (13% of the total) have stayed roughly constant, while the number of GC players has surged.

Additionally, a survey of clubs was undertaken in both 2006 and 2010. Latest figures show that the proportion of all club players who play in any external competitions (including federation events and local leagues) is down to just 25%. This national average masks significant regional variations, from 6% in the West Midlands to 50% in the South East (though the latter unfortunately is an estimate based on incomplete data).

These statistics, along with considerable anecdotal evidence (e.g. some federations being unable to continue with local events and some competitive players being 'crowded out' of certain clubs with large numbers of social GC players) confirm that competitive croquet is in decline. Indeed, this appears to be as much a problem for GC as it is for AC.

More work needs to be done to understand fully why this is happening (for instance, the recession, with travel and accommodation costs becoming less affordable, has no doubt had some impact).

The Role of the CA

The CA does not have a Growth and Recruitment Strategy as such. It has largely been left to clubs to recruit as they see fit, and the CA has provided support. The result of this has certainly been success in terms of numbers. The chart opposite shows a compound annual growth rate of 8.75% within member clubs over the past four years, though it should be said that about half of this increase is because the number of member clubs has increased from 142 in 2006 to 182 in 2010, with much of this due to previously non-affiliated clubs joining the CA.

Nonetheless, existing clubs have grown their numbers substantially, and the majority of growth has been down to recruiting social GC players (said to be "picking the low hanging fruit"). While this has been a success of sorts – with many clubs now finding themselves on a firm financial footing – it has raised other problems, one of which is the reduction in the proportion of competitive players.

Croquet is essentially a competitive sport and the CA should concentrate on promoting competition. This is a fundamental question, which the CA Council needs to address. It might affect the CA's attitude to development grants, for instance; or it might mean that for investment in new or expanding clubs the CA should look for a 'return', in terms of additional Individual Members.

Along with a decline in the proportion of competitive croquet players, we have seen a decline in the proportion of club members choosing to join the CA as Individual Members. It is down from 45% in 2001 to 27% in 2010. The CA is greatly concerned by this, not only because of the obvious threat to its funding but also because it is unhealthy for the national body of any sport to have the support of only about a quarter of those players benefitting from its work.

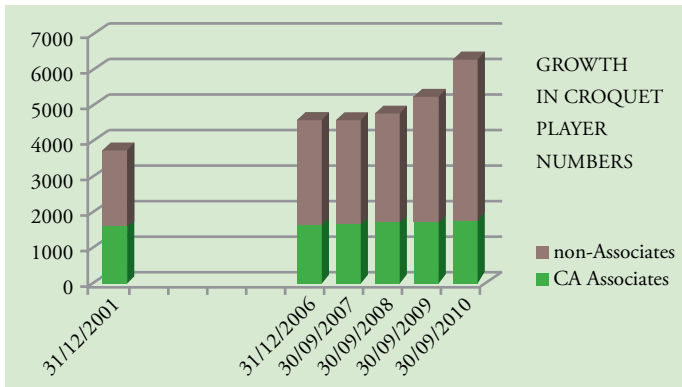
There are insufficient benefits of becoming an Individual Member and some federation representatives have passed on feedback from grass roots club players that the current fee of £37 is too high—that is, the CA fee to allow entry into tournaments might be too great a hurdle. This season the CA has taken a first step to rectify this, by improving its cut-price offer to new Tournament-playing Individual Members.

One longer term option is a rebalancing of the CA's income. For instance, the capitation fee for members of CA clubs is only £7. Based on the 2009 accounts, if this were to have been £10, then the membership subscription could have been reduced from £35 to £24, while maintaining the same total income.

There are now calls for the CA to take a lead in formulating a Growth and Recruitment Strategy, which will not only deliver increased numbers of players but also the 'right kind of players'.

in the CA

Prepared by Kevin Carter on behalf of the CA Marketing Committee and the Recruitment Working Party



who will be keen to participate in competitive croquet and to join the CA as Individual Members.

Characteristics of Croquet Players

The CA paper went on to explore the characteristics of the 'right kind of player' and to suggest where they might be found. It is not intended to be a complete blueprint of how to implement the new Growth and Recruitment Strategy. However, the strategy should influence CA Marketing, Development and Coaching, as well as how we finance our sport.

Some of the ideas explored are discussed below:

- People in their 60s and 70s dominate croquet in this country; two-thirds are retired and less than 8% of players are aged under 40. There are few who do not believe that we need to recruit more younger people to the sport, not least because younger players tend to be more competitive.
- While every support should be (and usually is) given to schools offering croquet, this is a very difficult source of new youngsters to target proactively, with a disappointing return for those clubs which put in the effort. However, there is considerable enthusiasm for the idea of introducing croquet into more universities. In those where success has been achieved in the past, the results have been spectacular. A large proportion of this country's top players first encountered croquet at either Oxford or Cambridge. In this year's Oxford 'Cuppers' (now sponsored by the CA, along with the Cambridge equivalent) 430 teams of four have entered—the largest croquet competition in history!
- Only 29% of CA Individual Members and only 10% of players with an AC ranking (a reasonable indicator of 'competitiveness') are female. Comparative figures for other major croquet-playing nations are: Australia—65% and 30%, respectively, and for the USA—45% and 15%. Attracting more females in this country will correct an under-represented segment of our market, and should be seen as a recruitment opportunity.
- Historically, croquet has appealed most to graduates and professionals. This is because, like bridge, backgammon, chess, etc., it is a 'mind game'. There is a consensus that too little emphasis is put on this and we should in future

emphasise the intellectual challenge of croquet.

- Many people take up croquet to satisfy their competitive instincts when they can no longer play other sports (especially sports for individuals, such as tennis and squash, rather than team sports). This also suggests a degree of targeting when recruiting.
- Another strand which has been investigated is the potential to do more than create a universal demand for croquet and to take advantage of it only in the areas where there are strong clubs, but to target certain geographical areas. Some early examples of research using advanced computer mapping tools has revealed certain 'croquet deserts', with no club, such as: Stoke-on-Trent / Newcastle-under-Lyme / Crewe: 450,000 population; Swansea (223,000); Great Yarmouth / Lowestoft (166,000). There are also 'arid areas', with just one or two small clubs but considerable potential, such as: Reading / Wokingham (293,000), with only the Caversham club; Slough / Maidenhead / Windsor (253,000), with only High Wycombe and Phyllis Court; Birmingham (977,000), served only by Edgbaston.

Recommendations

The Paper submitted to the CA Council in March included several recommendations, which were accepted in principle and are to be considered in more detail prior to implementation:

1. The introduction, by the federations, of more local competitions, for both AC and GC players, designed to encourage players who have previously not tried external competitions.
2. Running AC introduction courses for GC-only players.
3. Especially support recruitment of the type of croquet player who is more likely to be competitive.
4. Croquet is essentially a competitive sport and the CA should concentrate on promoting competition. This might include greater selectivity in respect of clubs which are to receive enhanced support from the CA.
5. The CA should take a lead in formulating a Growth and Recruitment Strategy, which will not only deliver increased numbers of players but also the 'right kind of player'.
6. In particular, the CA Development Committee should formulate a plan to introduce croquet into more universities, possibly working with university authorities to form new clubs which are also available to the communities local to them.
7. The CA (through PR, literature, etc.) needs to emphasise the intellectual challenge of croquet.
8. There should be a rebalancing of the Individual Member Subscription and the Capitation Fee, which would help to remove one barrier to increased competition.



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Obituary

Betty Prichard (Vice President of the CA)

Betty Prichard, a Vice-President of the Croquet Association, died in April 2011 aged 96. Betty contributed greatly to the development of croquet in the 1960s and 70s: she was a handicapper, tournament manager, examining referee and ROT. She also edited the Gazette for a time. She was particularly active in developing and holding refereeing courses in the campaign to improve standards and increase the number of qualified referees.

Betty followed her husband Colonel David Prichard into croquet after he took up the sport in 1958. She slowly started to play in tournaments (initially under the pseudonym Miss Plume). Her initial talent was such that her family called her Mrs Flump, but in time she became an A-Class player with a -1 ½ handicap and played in the Chairman's Salver on several occasions and won Mixed Doubles Championship three times. She also played for Middlesex in the Inter-Counties from 1978 to 1980, when Middlesex won each time.

Her knowledge of the laws was first class and she was a considerable help to David, when he was responsible for a complete re-write of the laws in 1972. Budleigh Salterton, Cheltenham, Parkstone, Compton, Sussex Country, Devonshire Park, Hurlingham, Hunstanton and Nottingham were tournament venues she visited for many years. In 1974 Betty and David were referees in charge of the MacRobertson Shield. Betty made a major contribution (and many hours in the British Library) to David's definitive History of Croquet, published in 1980. They had three sons, all of whom took up the game with success, particularly William who won all the major titles and played in two MacRobertson Shield Test Teams.

Elizabeth Alice Maud Prichard was born in Aberdare in 1914, one of eight children of Sir David Llewellyn, a prominent South Wales mine owner. They were a sporting family with riding and hunting an important part in their activities: indeed, her brother, Harry Llewellyn with his horse Foxhunter, was a member of the show-jumping team that secured GB's only gold medal in the 1952 Olympics. Betty was master of the Talybont Hunt at only 23, an interest she combined with fishing, which she learned on the river Usk, and she became a fly-casting judge at Glanusk.

Betty was presented at Court in 1932 to King George V and Queen Mary, dressed by Molyneux, who had only started up in business a few weeks before. In 1933 a sojourn in Paris left her fluent in French and in 1934 she went to St Hugh's College, Oxford; however she



failed Latin and took her father up on a six-month trip to Australia. With war looming she, with a couple of friends, formed a WAAF company, finding WH Smith and Boots fertile recruiting grounds. She battled with the appropriate authorities to make sure her girls were well equipped, billeted and paid. Betty ended the war as a Wing Officer (equivalent to Wing Commander). Betty knew David Prichard from hunting in the pre-war days and they became close: with David as a regular Army Officer, their combined war service meant few meetings, but he proposed by mail from India and they were married on 25 June 1946, which lasted a few weeks short of 40 years. Three sons followed and when David was invalided out of the army in 1955, they moved to Gobion near Abergavenny, where she lived for 50 years. Her energies extended beyond croquet: she was the President of Monmouthshire NSPCC, helped with riding for the disabled, was a trustee the Agatha Christie Children's Trust and organised many fundraising events for cancer charities. An avid crossworder, she used complete the Times crossword every day, but her favourite was Ximenes in the Observer which was widely regarded as the hardest and most cryptic puzzle. She qualified for the national finals of the Times Crossword competition, completing one of the finalists' crosswords in seven minutes. She was also a first-class Bridge player.

Uniquely, Betty was honoured for her services to croquet by being made a CA Vice-President, despite never having served on Council. Latterly, Betty regularly watched croquet during the Welsh Championship at Dyffryn Croquet Club in the Vale of Glamorgan. She died peacefully at The Regency House, a nursing home near Pontypool, where she was very well cared for. Betty is survived by her sons Colin and William; her husband and eldest son Robert predeceased her.

Elizabeth Williams

Coaching

By Michael Hague

Giving Away Extra Turns in Golf Croquet

I have often been asked for suggestions on the tactics to be played by the higher bisquer who has improved his handicap and, horror of horrors, has to give ETs to his oppo. What I am about to say seems to me pretty obvious, but so is riding a horse once you have learnt to ride. But if it helps anyone, here goes.

An ET is of course an additional shot with which one cannot score for one's own side (but you can score for the oppo if you cause his ball to run the hoop). The first thing to remember is when in the game oppo will look to use the ETs and then how he is likely to use them. All this is addressed more comprehensively in my book "Golf Croquet Tactics" (please excuse the plug!).

First let us remind ourselves of what the likely 'Strategic' uses of the ETs are, and the 'when'. This of course will depend on the number of ETs the oppo has. If the number is small there should not be too great a difference in the standard of play between the two players and the higher bisquer will try to stay in contact with the better player, possibly just one or two points behind, hanging on to his ETs up to the final part of the

With a fistful of ETs, the owner will want to keep one or two for the later stages of the game to deliver the killer punch to his oppo

game. Trailing a point or two in a 13-point game with two ETs remaining at hoops 8 or 9 the higher bisquer will be looking for an opportunity to use one of the ETs decisively. That is to create a good scoring opportunity and ideally at the same time depriving the lower handicap player of a hoop. He will keep one if possible for the last stages in the game, i.e. hoops 12 and 13, or at any critical time when his oppo with a score of 6 is in a position to score the seventh point, the only situation where an ET should be used purely defensively. Conversely he should use his remaining ET if he himself has a score of six and sees the opportunity to use it to win.

With a fistful of ETs, the owner will want to keep one or two for the later stages of the game to deliver the killer punch to his oppo and use his others to score whenever an opportunity occurs to employ them decisively, which of course does not occur at every hoop. Again an ET may have to be used defensively, but only to prevent an oppo from scoring a game winning hoop; otherwise they should be used to create a good hoop-running shot or better still the double whammy – hit away oppo's ball in a hoop-running position and at the same time leave his side a good chance of scoring. Four ETs, for example, used decisively should result in four points and ideally at the same time deprive the lower handicap player four scoring opportunities; so in a 13-point game the higher handicap has only three more hoops to make without the aid of ETs. The lower bisquer to win has 7 hoops to score on top of the four occasions when he was prevented from scoring, i.e. he has to create 11 scoring opportunities compared with the 3 of his oppo. Since the higher handicap player hits to the next hoop first every time oppo scores, a few scoring chances usually occur for the weaker player. Even playing level, scores by competitors of widely differing ability are rarely 7 – 0. No wonder the lower bisquers are always complaining about the handicap system!

There are many ways *how* the ETs can be used by the weaker player, particularly on the odd numbered hoops where an ET is used to nestle in the jaws, with the certainty of not only scoring in the next turn but also of getting a good position at the next-in-order even-numbered hoop. Playing first towards an even-numbered hoop such as 10 and using an ET to get a good position to score, with oppo left behind on hoop 9, should be a decisive tactic. Again creating a stop-rush or stun shot to dispatch oppo ball well away from in front of the hoop leaving striker's ball in a scoring position is the double whammy. So is hitting oppo away to protect partner ball which is ready to run the hoop. One could go on.

Well then, to what extent should the lower-handicap player modify his tactics when giving away ETs? There are a number of tips for consideration. Firstly whether in a good scoring position, nestled in the jaws of the hoop or being nicely poised to hit away an oppo ball about to score, never presume that you will be successful. By having an ET, your oppo is capable of removing you at any time with his ball preceding your well situated ball. So do not for example, having got to a good position to score, send your partner ball to the halfway line. Rather, go for position as backup in case you are robbed of your opportunity to score.

The lower-handicap must pay particular attention to denying oppo the tactical advantage of playing first when a hoop has been scored. On the odd-numbered hoops, look to get right up to the next hoop-in-order when positioning to run the hoop or nestle in the jaws so that in scoring the hoop the striker's ball is sent first to the subsequent hoop. On the even numbered, use the delayed hoop-run to set up a rush by partner to the next hoop on the ball which it has just scored. The rushed

ball will then play in sequence before the ball played first to the next hoop. Recognising that you will have to create more scoring opportunities than if you were playing level, take any chances to score and go for longer shots at hoops. Play on your strengths and exploit your superior techniques. Your hitting-in ability will probably be better than that of your oppo and is your most important advantage. Your accurate cut rushes when your balls are suitably positioned, allow for instance when faced with a nestled oppo ball, for you to cut rush striker's ball into a scoring position and send partner ball to the non-scoring side to clear the hoop on its next turn, a technique which is probably not in oppo's repertoire. Exploit oppo's weaknesses; play on his lack of consistent long hit-ins by taking more chances when going for position. What is his hoop running like? Do not presume that he will run hoops which would be easy for you. Have a ball positioned in case he misses. Is he competent at playing jump shots?

Establish early in the game your oppo's good and bad points and also how he intends to use his ETs. It is no bad thing for you if ETs are used early in the game giving you time to catch up. Be particularly aware of critical hoops when oppo has to

use an ET to save or win a game. By way of example, oppo scores hoop 10 making the score 6-4 against you and oppo has just one ET left. You hit your first ball to just a couple of yards beyond hoop 11. Oppo places a beauty right in front of the hoop. What is the shot with your second ball on the northern boundary? You know that your first ball can easily clear oppo's ball off the court. But on no account do you therefore go for position with your second ball in the knowledge that you can clear oppo from in front of the hoop with your partner ball. You have only one correct shot, long as it might be, and that is to clear with your second ball oppo's ball so nicely positioned at hoop 11. Otherwise it is too easy for oppo to hit his second ball as close to your first ball as he can and clear it with his ET leaving his partner ball an easy score to win the game.

There is an element of luck in this game. Did you really mean to score two hoops that time you scored hoops 3 and 4 in one shot? So if the score goes 7/6 or 7/5, win or lose, the handicap system has ensured a close game and there should be nothing to grouse about by either side. I am sure the Editor would welcome correspondence on other thoughts on this subject contradictory or otherwise – and so would I!



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Tournament Round-up

CHELTENHAM EASTER TOURNAMENT

22ND – 25TH APRIL

Report by Penny Crowe

April? Was this really *April* and *Easter*? With temperatures soaring into August-like figures it was no wonder players were being knocked out by the heat! And not only by the heat! In the advanced play KO both Alwen Bowker and Carol Smith upset predictions. Firstly, Alwen (2.5) knocked out Nick Saxton (0) and then added David Mundy's (-1) scalp to her card. Then Carol (1) knocked out David Foulser (-1.5). While these dramatics were taking place between Cheltenham members, away players were steadily inching their way to the final which was eventually contested between Peter Nash (Dulwich) and Strat Liddiard (Parkstone). As this was the first time both players contested a final of an open advanced play knockout, they qualified for and were awarded the Croquet Association's silver medal – well done, Strat and Peter!

Peter and Strat's match was notable for the latter's 'fluke'. After making 2-back he managed to almost wire black and blue across the peg whilst starting to set up his leave. He tried to roquet the partner ball but hit the peg, the ball rebounding off the peg to travel down the lawn and roquet yellow, the pioneer for 3-back! However, this stroke of luck did not deter Peter who went on to win the knockout, with Strat a creditable runner-up. Chris Williams ran away with the Egyptian on a score of 125. David Foulser's 112 saw him into second place, and Nick Saxton with 110 came third. Not only did Chris win the Egyptian, he also won the peeling prize.

Cheltenham's Easter Tournament has, for several years, been split between advanced play and handicap play sections. This year the format for the HC players was American Blocks. Apart from complaints of the hoops being too tight and one player using her opponent's bisques which he happily took out of the ground without realising that they were his (!), this section proceeded without problems.

The winner of Block A was Peter Moore (Nottingham) who also won the prize for the fastest game of 1 hour 35 minutes – while giving bisques! Two all-round breaks with a rover peel being the winning formula. Cheltenham's Darryl Whitehead came second, gaining his CA Bronze award. Adam Moliver was the winner of Block B with Ray Meads coming runner-up – both Cheltenham players.

Thanks must be expressed to Eileen and David Magee for, yet again, producing such excellent lunches, the lawns team for getting the courts up-to-scratch so early in the season and everyone else who provided teas and helped in the bar. No club would survive without willing helpers and in this we at Cheltenham are much blessed.

HATS OFF AT BOWDON 30TH APRIL – 2ND MAY

Report by Mike Steer

Under skies so blue you would have been forgiven for thinking you were playing in Corfu, the Bowdon May tournament got under way. With lawns which have been drying out for a month, tight hoops and a skittish wind, play was unusually challenging for a handicap tournament. Wind power increased on the second day and the sudden gusts removed quite a few hats. It also gave that playful nudge just when you finally managed to get into a nice hoop-running position. I have never seen Bowdon's lawns (not noted for their speed) quite so fast so early in the season.

So often in the past this tournament has been almost impossible to win by scratch or minus players, faced as they were by opponents with enough bisques to play a game of pick-a-stick. But this year it was different and, due to the tricky conditions, bisques were spent rather cheaply. In one three-hour game I scored just 13 hoops and won! My opponent scored 12 using 9 bisques in the process.

In this context it is not surprising that the A-class players did rather well and the event was won by Ken Cooper playing off – 0.5. In the final his opponent was David Holland, a previous winner, who started disastrously using all his bisques for just 4 hoops. You would have thought it was all over bar the shouting but what ensued was an absorbing game worthy of a final. The final score was +5 on time. The Egyptian event was won by Rupert Webb. Once again the management of the tournament was in Lorna Frost's capable hands and was kept ticking over despite most games going to time.

LETCHWORTH CC'S FIRST CA FIXTURE BOOK TOURNAMENTS

Report by Patricia Duke-Cox

Entering the CA Fixture book for the first time with a total of 5 tournaments for 2011 Letchworth Croquet Club has now 'come of age'. Formed in 1987 and having moved from its original venue, the new club site has two excellent level lawns which are a pleasure to play and a clubhouse courtesy of the tennis club. Additionally before the event the manager had offered to book dinner at two

Tournament Round-up

splendid locations, enabling visitors to meet up socially for each tournament. The first tournament was the May Midweek Association Croquet two-day event, which attracted players from Colchester, East Dorset, Northampton, Nottingham, Woodhall Spa, plus local members. Eight players played three games a day under the genial management of Duncan Hector managing a CA fixtures tournament for the first time. With handicaps ranging from 2 to 14, there was scope for all to shine, but the runaway winner was a rapidly improving player from Nottingham, Clive Goode.

Results:

1st Clive Goode 5 wins, **2nd** Patricia Duke-Cox 4 wins and beating John Lonsdale in a tie-break, **3rd** John Lonsdale.

The second tournament was the May Midweek Golf Croquet two-day event. Again run by Duncan Hector who also competed in this event, all enjoyed a happy and friendly tournament. This time players came from Hamptworth, Guildford & Godalming, Woodhall Spa and locally. Once more the HC range was extensive, ranging from 2 to 7. Six games were played each day and all met all at least once. The winner by a good margin was Mike Huxley of Guildford & Godalming who announced that this event was first class and one he will put in his diary for next year.

Results:

1st Mike Huxley 10 wins, **2nd** Peter Ross 8 wins, beating Ian Mantle in a tie break for 2nd place conceding 58 points against 65, **3rd** Ian Mantle 8 wins.

WINCHESTER CHARITY ONE-BALL

7TH – 8TH MAY

Report by Kevin Carter

Saturday saw the final of the 'Cryptorchid' Handicap event and Sunday the 'Monorchid' Advanced. This year we had about 360 players participating in 27 heats across the country, from Durham to Devon. So naturally the quality of play from heat winners in the final was very high. By noon, after three or four rounds of the Swiss, we still had three unbeaten players: Frances Colman (Phyllis Court), Steve Stuart-Mathews (Guildford & Godalming) and Tudor Jenkins (Southwick).

Tudor's very tactical play led to long games and therefore, for him, a short lunch-break. Maybe this was why he came

unstuck in the afternoon and never won another game! Meanwhile, Frances lost to Steve, who was then beaten by a resurgent Howard Cheyne (Surbiton). So, then we had about eight players on one loss and the manager set about playing them off against one another. Sara Anderson (Woking), Keith Mackenzie-Ross (Winchester), Colin Wall (Sidmouth), John Pearson (Roehampton), John Knight (Reigate) and Jonathan Lamb (Montevideo) were all contenders. Marcus Evans

(Nailsea), playing off a punitive handicap of – 10 kept his hopes alive with an all-round break and won a bottle of bubbly. Sara – who was also very bubbly – eventually emerged as the winner, with a great 7/8, sealing her victory with her own magnificent all round break against Marcus, albeit with plenty of bisques from her 18 handicap. This was a convincing first tournament win and she thoroughly deserved her engraved crystal decanter. A play-off for second and third saw Keith and Colin, respectively collect their engraved glasses.

A high quality field on Sunday included the last three winners of the Advanced Level event: Marcus Evans, Rutger Beijderwellen and Stephen Mulliner. Nick Butler was fourth seed. The format was a best-of-3 KO. Marcus, a notoriously slow starter, struggled early on (as he did last year when eventually winning the final). He scraped through to the semis against Graham Gale but was then trounced by Rutger. Meanwhile, in the other half James Tuttiett played well to beat Nick and also took a game off Stephen before succumbing to Stephen's excellent break play. So, we were treated to another Rutger-Stephen final. In the first two games complex tactical starts resulted in Stephen gaining the first break; however he broke down and Rutger finished. The second looked like a repeat after Stephen lost the plot at 5, but Rutger unaccountably blobbed an easy 4-back and Stephen finished. In the decider Rutger had an unscheduled stop at hoop 2 but Stephen missed and Rutger finished. It was a very high-class final, with Rutger especially demonstrating great touch and deserving his sixth (!) crystal decanter. What does he do with them all?

A new feature this year was a prize for the best 'B-class' player in the consolation Swiss. It was won by Tudor Jenkins, who on Sunday played even better in the afternoon than the morning. Reports from the heats showed that everybody enjoyed themselves, not least because of the "wear something pink" imperative from the chosen charity, the Breast Cancer Campaign, which benefits to the tune of £2678.



SARAH ANDERSON, WINNER OF THE WINCHESTER HANDICAP EVENT, HELD IN AID OF THE BREAST CANCER CAMPAIGN



KEN COOPER RECEIVING
THE REED CUP FROM
MARTIN GRANGER BROWN

COLCHESTER 'B' LEVEL 7TH – 8TH MAY

Report by Terrey Sparks

Run as a Flexible Swiss, in which the overall winner would be determined on a greatest percentage of wins, the Manager Colin Hemming, as can be expected, came up with a format that produced an exciting and closely contested tournament right to the end of play. Under this format, winners played winners on the same number of wins and at the end of the day the leading group consisted mainly of the lower-handicap players. In the lead was Colin on 3/3, closely followed by Ken Pickett and Nick Steiner 3/4, these were closely being chased by the pack consisting of Ian Parkinson, Ian Mantle, Mark Homan, Terry Mahoney and Terrey Sparks all on 2/3.

BUDLEIGH SALTERTON 9TH – 14TH MAY

Report by Charles Townshend

Our first major long tournament of the year opened with the Doubles competition. Thirteen pairs began their quest for the Daldry Cups in a knock-out format involving low and high handicap players in partnership. Local players did well with Elaine Norsworthy and Sam Watts reaching the final to meet Chris Donovan and Ian Friedlander (of Sidmouth), where a close result saw the latter pair winning by just two points. The Y Final (for 1st round losers) was won by Jeannette Pollock and Charles Townshend in a tight finish (just one point) against Richard and Pat Jackson of Sussex. The knockout Handicap event involved 32 players and produced a final where it was good to have two of the lower-handicapped players pitted against one another. Both finalists had their chances (plenty of them) after a start where Mike Hammelev (3.5) took both his bisques at the start to set up a break only to come to grief at the third hoop. Ed Dymock (1.5) was less accurate than usual but eventually struck form and finished a clear winner +9.

With Courts 1 and 2 out of service until June, following last year's levelling work, the numbers for the main competition were limited to 40, with players arranged in six blocks with each person matched against others of similar handicap. The Block A (all below or just above scratch) produced some good play with three triple-peels achieved and several near misses. The finalists were Cliff Jones and Alan Pidcock who met in a best-of-three

After the first game on Sunday morning things became even more confused when Ken beat Colin +4, Ian Parkinson beat Nick +2, Terry Mahoney beat Ian Mantle +6 and Terrey Sparks seeing off Mark Homan +6, resulting in Ken being in the lead on 4/5, closely followed by Ian Parkinson, Colin Hemming, Terry Mahoney and Terrey Sparks all on 3/4 of wins. After the final round of games, in which Terrey Sparks beat Ken +1, Ian Parkinson beat Terry Mahoney +4 and Colin ran out the winner over Nick +9, things became even more confused and a three way tie emerged. Terrey Sparks, Ian Parkinson and Colin Hemming all finishing on 4/5.

This resulted in the manager invoking the Nottingham Tie Break, which went for three rounds with everyone completing three hoops before breaking down. In the second round both Terrey and Ian ran two hoops; however Colin broke down at the first and was eliminated. In the third round Terrey again broke down after the second hoop, being hampered; Ian however making a poor first hoop approach was unable to recover and set up a decent approach to the second, which he blobbed, leaving Terrey Sparks the overall winner.

final on Saturday. Each had won five games out of six and had a close match, with many spectators braving the chilly NW wind to appreciate the play. Cliff took the first game +6 and seemed on course for a standard triple in the second until he failed to peel at penultimate. Alan gained the innings and was progressing well until he broke down at the ninth hoop, allowing Cliff to complete the match +12 and claim the Godfrey Turner Cup. Competition for the Woodlands Quaich saw 12 players in 2 blocks giving everyone five level games, with the block winners meeting in a best-of-three final. Nigel Amos (4) had a clean sweep of wins in Block B, closely followed by Adam Wimshurst (4.5) with four out of five. In Block C Richard Jackson (4) also managed to win all his games with no close challenger so that the final promised a tight and tense contest. Both players made some good breaks in the two games needed to give a result, and both went to the time-limit, giving Nigel victory by +3 and +4.

Mike Taylor (Sidmouth) successfully retained his hold on the J.K Brown Cup against the challenge from others in Blocks D and E, overcoming Sue Rogers in the final. The higher-handicap players in Block F battled hard, in what was sometimes an endurance test and in the end Philip Harris (Sidmouth) with six wins out of seven won the Pat Tunmer Cup just ahead of Jackie Hardcastle (Budleigh). Julie Horsley's skilled management brought events to a conclusion by teatime, with the trophies handed over to the winners by Tim Liles the Croquet Chairman. Cliff Jones thanked all at the club for the work behind the scenes that produced such a pleasant and enjoyable week and was particularly complimentary on the continuing improvement of the courts in recent years and the well-set hoops. The flag duly came down at the end of an excellent week.

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Publication Schedule

- Copy should reach the Editor before the 15th of the month before publication is due. However if you have something that you think the Editor may be willing to expand this deadline for, please contact her direct before making any assumption.
- Email contributions, including tournament reports should be sent direct to the Editor, or copied to the Editor if they are being posted to the Nottingham List. Digital images are the easiest to work with, but coloured photographic prints are also acceptable. Please send digital jpeg or tiff format files. Please accompany all images

- with a description of the subject of the picture. If you require any material to be returned please enclose an SAE. Tournament Reports & Results
- Emailed reports are welcomed. Attachments may be sent in Microsoft Word format, or text format. Handwritten reports are no longer acceptable due to the illegibility of most.
 - Queries regarding the delivery of the Gazette to members should be directed to the Manager of the Croquet Association and not to the Editor.
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