

The

Issue 349 April 2014

CROQUET

Gazette



AC in South Africa



GC Handicaps



**Atkins Quadway
hoop**



**Sport Relief
24 hours**



From our files researched by Frances Colman

100 years ago - 1914



Sir,

One of the events played at Eastbourne was limited to scratch players and under. There are now 61 players of that class, but there are also 277 players handicapped at ½ to 2½, the majority of whom have no chance in any of the big open events.

Is it not time we had four classes – A, B, C and D – and the B Class to be from ½ to 2½ bisques? Under the present conditions one must either play a hopeless game against the cracks, or decline to enter.

When the balls were bad and the lawns were bad one had an outside chance, but not now.

Yours faithfully,
H. Fowler

~

Sir,

Mr. Brigstoke's letter in your last issue is good reading, and perhaps we shall hear less rot talked in future about the "prestige of the game" and "popularising croquet with the non-playing (and non-paying) public". After all, of the men that play croquet nine-tenths play because increasing years and waist, or other infirmities, incapacitate them from more energetic games they have hitherto enjoyed.

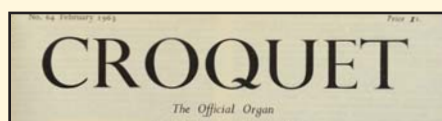
A game of croquet is more interesting than, say, scoring at a cricket match. The latter occupation, interesting and useful as it is, certainly lacks, sometimes, the element of competition. And they enjoy a game in which they can compete on more or less equal terms with their wives and others.

If there is need to popularise the game, I suggest a variation shown me by "a promising young amateur" of my acquaintance. It consists in placing a ball on the top of one peg and with it hitting on the volley one peg at the opposite end. To make it really popular I would suggest an unlimited "sweep" with side bets, and perhaps fancy costume.

Then the non-playing public will fall in – once. Meanwhile most of us will go on playing merely for the pleasure of a good game.

Yours faithfully,
E.W. Moore, Christ's Hospital.

50 years ago - 1964



It was in 1954, almost entirely on the initiative of Mr Brackenbury, the long-established "Croquet Association Gazette" was transformed into the elegant new periodical which then took its place.

Credit for the typographical aspect of the emergent CROQUET was due to the late Roger de Wesselow, who devoted much time and expert knowledge to producing the "new look".

In its early years it was energetically "promoted" by Mr Brackenbury, who saw it through the press, in addition to making a number of valuable literary contributions to its pages.

When he resigned this duty six years ago, the unglamorous task of getting the journal out was taken over by Mr S.S. Townsend. . .

. . . Mr Townsend having now come to feel that duties of a more important kind will prevent him from continuing with this task, the Council has appointed one of the most notable members of the younger generation, Mr P.J.M. Fidler, to succeed him (as Editor) . . .

. . . Mr Fidler will assume this honorary post. He is the sixth to occupy this position in respect of the Association's periodicals since the inception of the Gazette in 1905.

~

The following extract is taken from a New Zealand paper (*and was subsequently carried in the Gazette*):-

Indoor croquet played on a carpet, was demonstrated by two enthusiastic English croquet test players last night.

They were Dr W. Ormerod, of Waikato Hospital, and Mr D.W. Curtis, a schoolteacher at St. Paul's.

The demonstration was given to an interested group of spectators at the home of the president of the South Auckland Croquet association, Mrs J. Church.

"Although indoor croquet is a popular game in England, it has not caught on here yet" said Dr Ormerod. . .

. . . Dr Ormerod came out to New Zealand in January with the British croquet team with the intention of probably settling in the country. In April he assumed his present position at Waikato Hospital.

10 years ago - 2004



This issue of the Gazette – no 290 in the current series that started in 1954 – is actually the 1260th.

That is an awful lot of history!

Looking back at earlier issues, from Volume 1 No 1 to the present day, remarkably the only tidal changes that strike the eye are trends in literary style and format that have nothing to do with croquet or the Croquet Association.

In the beginning, the 'official organ' of the Association was every inch an official record.

Reflecting the literary standards and mores of the Edwardian era. . .

~

The MGM Assurance 6th WCF World Golf Croquet Championships will be held at Sussex County (Southwick) and Compton (Eastbourne) from 20 June to 27 June.

64 competitors from around the world will be playing.

This includes for the first time competitors from Sweden and Austria.

In addition there will be a strong entry from Egypt including reigning champion Khalid Younis.

~

We are delighted that Bellingham wines have decided to enter into an agreement to sponsor English Croquet.

The initial contract will last for 12 months from April 2004 with Bellingham's generous donation to help the CA's development projects particularly at club level.

~

The CA is pleased to announce that The Men's Championship will be sponsored in a five year deal by Simon Carter.

Simon Carter is a designer of men's clothing and accessories, sold in leading stores throughout the world.

There will be a prize of £500 for the winner, and refreshments/champagne will be provided at the closing ceremony.

All contestants in the event will be provided with shirts at this year's event which will be held at Hurlingham from June 10th to 13th.

Editorial

This Gazette is a real mixed bag, with news of the CA's Club Conferences, 24 hour croquet for Sport Relief, World and European Championship previews, and a close look at the new challenging Atkins Quadway hoop.

We also have a breakdown of the recent shake-up in GC handicap arrangements, and offer you a 'rip out and pin up' poster detailing handicap play 'extra turn' calculations, for your Club notice board.

In search of some actual croquet to report on, we look to South Africa where I was fortunate enough to visit six weeks ago. CA members won pretty well every event, even if I didn't, and what a fabulous time we had in that exciting country. In the words of Arnie, "I'll be back!"

I am cross with myself for delaying my tournament entry applications and missing out on three choice events, but highlight in these pages three historic tournaments that

warrant a closer look. I will be at the Peel Memorials in May and the Challenge and Gilbey later in the year; why don't you join me and be a part of croquet's rich history.

Before signing off, I have an apology to make to Ian Vincent, who wrote our lead article on the MacRobertson Shield for the last issue. I was horrified when I realised, too late, that I had omitted Ian's credit line from the piece, and although I am grateful that he said that he hadn't noticed and didn't mind, I do know that that is just what a generous gentleman would say.



Chris Roberts

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Chairman's Column

As many of you will know, I have spent a great deal of time over the winter months looking at the issues raised by the Federation Working Party report, going to the club conferences and speaking to many of you to try to get your views. As well as the feedback at the conferences, I have also received many letters and emails.

Many thanks to all of you who have taken time out to consider the issues, and who have let me have your views.

I have written an article which appears on page 5 summarising the feedback so far. As is to be expected, the issue closest to most people's hearts is around the money paid to the CA. It is obvious that we still need to do a lot of work to ensure that club members understand and appreciate the work the CA does behind the scenes to help croquet for the ordinary club player.

As I have processed all your feedback, it seems clear to me that people tend to fall into one of two camps.

Those from the bigger clubs, typically paying £100+ for their club subscriptions, tell me that increasing the amount clubs pay to the CA is right, and they don't see any problem in doing so – often advocating

a 'big bang' approach: let's do it and get the job done.

However, those in the second camp tend to come from small clubs, often paying £50 or less for their annual subscriptions. To them any increase will be very difficult, and would mean that a disproportionate amount of their subscription goes to the CA.

For them, their clubs often have a fragile existence, with many social members who are not involved in any kind of external competition, and the benefit they see from the CA (or even their Federation) is limited.

They may well opt to leave the CA rather than pay significantly more – indeed for many it is already viewed as borderline whether they belong or not.

I've heard some say 'well, so what if the smaller, non-competitive clubs leave the CA?' However, I do believe that we need to support croquet in all its forms.

I have also been doing some research into what clubs charge their members, and I have been surprised by how little many clubs charge. It seems that something like 20% of the CA's club subscription revenue comes from clubs who charge less than £50 a year for their membership.

It is clear to me that whatever changes we introduce, we must be careful to consider all types of club that we represent – and failure to do so could ultimately be counter-productive.

I do worry, though, about clubs that

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Front cover (Clockwise from pink): Mark Avery, Peter Balchin, Sport Relief and an Atkins hoop (by Chris Roberts x2, Pendle & Craven CC, P & G Roberts)

This page: The Editor roasting at Somerset West CC, near Cape Town in February and the Chairman at the CA Council meeting in late March (by Frances Colman and Liz Larsson)

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Contents

- 4 Official news & Club Conferences
- 6 Letters to the Editor
- 8 Obituary & 24 hour charity croquet
- 10 Britons in South Africa
- 11 AC World Teams Champs (tier 2.1+)
- 12 GC Handicap changes & poster
- 14 Historic CA Tournaments
- 15 Lawn care & advertisements
- 16 GC Rules changes & EuroGC
- 18 News shorts & Atkins Quadway hoop
- 20 Crazy croquet players & coaching
- 22 As well as croquet, I . . .
- 23 CA contacts

charge too little for their membership.

Would it not be better to take the plunge, and ask members to pay a little more in order to give yourselves some financial security against future increases in rent or lawn maintenance costs?

To pay less than £50 a year for a sport which requires ground maintenance really is exceptionally cheap – only about £2 a week, even if you only count the summer months.

At this level I really think a few pounds more is affordable by even the poorest of members.

Many of the clubs which have had to increase their subscriptions significantly (due mostly to council charge increases), have been pleased to see that actually most members have been happy to pay the increased amounts.

Food for thought, perhaps?



Jeff Dawson

Tournament Regulations News

The CA's Tournament Committees are pleased to publish the Tournament Regulations for the 2014 season.

The regulations begin with a summary of principal changes from last year's regulations; however these are the changes that are likely to affect more players:

Players are now required to bring to the manager's attention any condition which may make a court unfit to play. The manager retains the final say about whether a lawn is fit for play, but the need to consider the views of the host club when doing so is now explicit within the regulations.

Players are expected to bring a completed handicap card to all tournaments (whether handicap or level play). Sanctions against players who are unable to substantiate their handicap available to the Tournament Handicapper are now specified. Players should note that this applies to all events, whether played under conditions for handicap play or not.

Standard time limits (i.e. that apply unless event conditions state otherwise) for best-of-five AC matches have been defined as 3, 5½, 7½, 9 and 10½ hours. Meanwhile, the GC time limit regulation has been modified for clarity and to bring terminology in line with equivalent AC regulation.

Tolerances on hoop settings have been changed to -50%, +0 from specified width. All approved variations to laws have been collated within a new Regulation L. At the same time, the Super Advanced variation has been made available to all advanced games (with agreement of both players) unless event conditions state otherwise. The Trial Handicap Doubles Variation has been extended to all games in 2014, but the Trial GC Wrong Ball Law removed.

The full regulations can be found on the CA website at <http://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/regulations.html>.

Samir Patel
CA Tournament Committees

Handicapping

AC Handicap Doubles

The limited trial in 2013 of basing the bisque allocation on the players' indices has been extended for 2014 and is mandatory for all such events in the Fixtures Calendar.

Managers of Federation and Club events are also encouraged to use this method.

The calculations can be helped by reference to a bisque allocation table on the CA website.

GC Handicaps

Changes have been made for 2014 involving an extension of the range down to -3 and the introduction of handicap adjustments for players below 4.

Full details have been circulated to Federations and Clubs and can be found on the CA Website.

There is also an explanatory article and tables showing all on the centre pages 12 & 13 of this Gazette.

Brian Shorney,
Charmain of Handicap Committee

CA Council March meeting

Roger Bray gave his last Hon. Treasurer's report to Council. The Independent Examiner had approved the 2013 accounts, which show a surplus of about £11,500, though that comes down to about £5,800 after adjustment for exceptional factors, depreciation and inflation. However, the budget for 2014 and projection for 2015 are both for adjusted losses of about £7,500, so it was agreed to increase the subscriptions of both clubs and individual associates to fully reflect inflation over the last two years, but leave the rate of tournament levy unchanged, before the effect of any restructuring proposals. The lawn and ball hire rate is to be reviewed by the Management Committee in July, once data collected from clubs has been analysed.

Decisions taken following discussion of the Hon. Secretary's report should result in minutes of Council and its committees being confirmed closer to the date of their meetings, and published generally to Individual Associates on the CA's website.

The main item of business was consideration of a paper prepared by the Chairman, Jeff Dawson, following the discussion at the club conferences of the Federation Working Party's report.

The first section summarised the views expressed, though it was recognised that there was inevitably some divergence of opinion. Section B contained a number of recommendations, and the final section some notes concerning them.

The first recommendation, that constitutional amendments should be proposed to the CA's AGM in October to enable Federations to become members



of the CA, was agreed. Discussions with Federations are to continue to see if there is sufficient support to make this just a first step in combining the Federations and the CA into a single federated organisation, or to require their member clubs to be at least affiliate members of the CA. The issue of possible boundary changes will also be dealt with separately.

However, a decision on the proposal to ask the AGM for permission to increase the

per-capita rate for club membership of the CA above inflation, in a series of four annual increments, leading to all club members becoming individual non-tournament members of the CA, was deferred to a special Council meeting in July. This with a view to then calling a Special General Meeting in the Spring of 2015 after further consultation. More detailed financial analysis is needed to model the effects of possible proposals that would get closer to the objective of all club members being able to play in tournaments, and receiving at least some paper copies of the Gazette. A significant issue is how to accommodate the wide range of clubs with different sizes and subscription levels. It was agreed that if all club members did become members of the CA, then clubs themselves would no longer need voting rights.

The other significant topic resulted in a decision to advertise for an International Performance Director, to develop and drive a programme designed to ensure improved (initially) AC performance on the international stage in the short, medium and long term.

Ian Vincent, Hon. Secretary

CA Clubs Conferences Summary

Jeff Dawson reports

As most of you will know, three club conferences were held around the country over the winter months, to discuss the proposals in the Federation Working Party Report. These were very successful, and a lot of useful information was gathered and discussed.

I have also had feedback from a number of individuals and clubs writing directly to me. I apologise if you have written and not had a response from me, but please be assured that all your views are being considered.

As is to be expected, we have heard a lot of differing opinions over this consultation, many of which directly contradict each other. Interestingly, the tone of the three conferences also differed from one another, with some issues being supported by one but not the other two. As promised, here is a summary of the main points which have come out of all this feedback so far.

The first issue discussed was whether federations should become non-fee paying (and non-voting) members of the CA. Once explained, there was no significant opposition to this idea, although some were concerned about what would happen if a federation decided not to join, or later resigned. Interestingly a significant minority felt that this did not go far enough, and we should seek to integrate the federations more completely with the CA.

The second issue was that of boundary changes between the federations. There was some support for this idea, although this was by no means universal. This is likely to come down to a relatively lengthy process of negotiation with the federations involved around specific proposals. It was suggested that the larger federations could be allowed more than one representative

on council.

There is currently a lack of clarity about whether clubs can belong to, or at least play in, the leagues of, multiple federations or one outside their area (they can if the federation allows it, and most do).

As is to be expected, the issues relating to fee changes provoked the most discussion and disagreements. The idea of one payment point for clubs, presented in the right way, makes sense to most people, provided that it is clear that the CA is not controlling income for the federations.

However the Northern conference in particular had a majority against a single payment point on the grounds that it just added to the necessary administration. There was general support for clubs having to belong to the CA if they join a federation, although unsurprisingly this view was not shared by some.

Most people (at the conferences) accepted that there should be a shift towards club members paying more, with a small number objecting. However, many thought that we must recognise that not all clubs are the same, and some smaller clubs may not be able to support significant increases in subscriptions. It was pointed out that for some clubs increasing the per capita cost would make the CA subscription a disproportionately high percentage of their membership subscriptions.

There was quite strong opposition to any form of 'pay to play', and especially to 'taxing' federation league events, although the meeting in the SE was more supportive of this concept. Trying to bring non-fixtures book events into the fixtures book fold had wider support, although it was not clear how this might be achieved.

Several made the point that we should try

to shift tournament income onto a greater levy, so that it is paid according to the number of tournaments entered. However this could only be achieved if we found a way to stop clubs opting out for their tournaments. It was suggested that clubs were less likely to opt out if tournaments were not restricted to CA tournament members.

While a significant minority felt we should make one big change to the fee structure, most felt that any change should be gradual, so that clubs can adjust their finances accordingly.

Widening CA membership to include all club members was generally welcomed. However, some felt that sending the Gazette to all club members was a waste of money, as many will have no interest in it.

There was a minority that questioned the meaning and value of CA membership for social players and argued against this proposal on 'freedom of choice' grounds.

The idea of providing publications (Gazette, fixtures book, directory) electronically by default, with printed copies available at cost, was suggested at all the conferences.

Many thanks to all of you who have taken time out to consider these issues, and to let us have your opinions. Please keep your ideas coming – it is not too late to make your views known.

Our job is now to try to distil the common ground out of the views put forward, and the CA Council will be discussing this in the coming months and hopefully formulating some proposals for further discussion and voting at the next AGM in October.

Jeff Dawson

Chairman of the Croquet Association

Call for Nominations and Notices of Motions for the 2014 AGM

The 2014 AGM will be held at Hurlingham on the morning of Saturday 18th October.

Any nominations for the posts of Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary, membership of Council, or motions to be put to the AGM, should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Dr. I. G. Vincent, 21, Cedar Avenue, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 2HA, or e-mailed to ian.vincent@cantab.net, by 1st June.

Nominations should give the name of the candidate, together with those of the proposer and seconder, and state that the consent of the candidate has been obtained.

Roger Bray, the current Hon. Treasurer, is retiring. Council have nominated Peter Death to succeed him.

There are expected to be six vacancies on Council.

The four retiring members (Bill Arliss, David Kibble, David Maugham and Roger Staples) have stated that they are willing to serve again, and so do not need to be nominated. Robin Brown, who was co-opted, has not so indicated, and Barry Keen has given notice of resignation, so at least two additional nominations are required to fill the vacancies.

Ian Vincent - CA Honorary Secretary

We are not best pleased with Kevin Carter's pop at social GC

Dear Editor,

Even the most eminent of editors knows that the cutting-edge design of his publication and its well-honed and trenchant prose count as nothing compared with the vibrancy of its readers' correspondence, the lifeblood of every magazine and bell-weather of popularity.

The sentiments expressed in letter columns are often profound, uplifting, entertaining and enlightening but without a doubt it is when they are controversial that response (and circulation) is most reliably boosted.

Subscribers are propelled to take up pen or activate keyboard by letters which are ill-informed, arrogant, prejudiced, ill-judged or downright crass - and how much greater is the response potential when all of these are exhibited by a single reader's contribution?

That from Kevin Carter in *The Gazette (issue 348)* must surely provide us with the answer.

It is difficult to decide where to start in reply to Mr Carter's sorry rant of closely integrated bile and ignorance.

So I will not waste energy stating the obvious or confronting the unsustainable.

Let it suffice to hope he is not disabled by his distorted vision, progressively isolated by his meanness of spirit or ultimately devoured by his bitter rancour.

Peter Lowe, Tyneside CC

Dear Editor

As a new member of the Croquet Association, I opened my copy of *The Croquet Gazette (issue 348)* with great enthusiasm seeking to quench my thirst for all things Croquet.

Then I reached the Letters to the Editor page and, as a golf croquet player, find myself being called "a pervasive weed which should be eradicated,..."

As you can imagine my enthusiasm quickly diminished to be replaced with indignation and fury at this insult and desire to end my very existence!

I am told that croquet is played by gentlemen (and gentlewomen) but I find Mr Carter's voiced desires not very gentlemanly. I assume that as a member playing competitively, that I am not part of the derogatory "Pat and Chat" class referred to by Mr Carter, and our Chairman Jeff Dawson, but it should be pointed out that there are vastly more Association Croquet players (due to numbers) who only play socially at their club.

As a new player who came to the game through the Golf Croquet route, and has not had a chance to move to play Association - would I be likely to do so? Probably yes.

But probably not if Mr Carter's views and sentiments were prevalent.

Is there a lot of resentment in the membership against golf croquet?

If so why?

Patrick R Knight, Camerton & Peasedown

Dear Editor,

I shall ignore the appalling letter from Kevin Carter (*issue 348*) describing GC as 'a pervasive weed which should be eradicated' and comment on the sensible views put forward by Martin French and Jeff Dawson in the same issue.

I am the typical new recruit and took up croquet in my early 60s when the tennis elbow got too painful.

GC was the easy and fun way to begin playing. Having then seen the Egyptians play, I was convinced I could never play like that; but when it is played like that, GC is a very exciting game.

I play my fellow grey panthers in the SWF leagues and this season I hope to play twelve league matches - it is very competitive, it is fun and it is sociable.

Being a member of a small club it is 'all hands on deck', so I am now learning to appreciate the intricacies of the other game.

Belonging to a small club, recruitment is crucial, so join us for an hour or two and discover the fun of croquet - there will be time for coaching manuals later.

And don't forget that the 'pat and chatters' pay their subs too!

The way forward for the CA finances must be not to rely on the competitive elite but on every player, grey or not. Whatever game we prefer, we are in the same boat and there are no watertight compartments.

It is unlikely my club will recruit any younger members - too many grey heads on the lawn.

But, vast numbers of young things congregate at universities (Google states that 495,596 students enrolled in 2013).

That's where the new elite players must come from.

Ulf Greder, Kingston Mauward CC

Dear Editor,

All I can say is that I am glad that Kevin Carter is not a member of our croquet club with such a derogative attitude to Golf Croquet.

The facts are, that many clubs would have closed were it not for the golf croquet players that keep them going and especially ours as we play 52 weeks of the year.

Marian Holland, Stony Stratford CC

Dear Editor,

Martin French's well-balanced article in the last *Gazette (issue 348)* was a pleasure to read, especially after having read the provocative and intemperate contribution from Kevin Carter.

However, it is salutary for us all to see in print much of what is felt as an undercurrent in many clubs, i.e. the lack of understanding of AC and GC players for each other's version of the game, which is often felt as unfriendliness.

And it hurts!

Martin French is surely right when he suggests that the internet is responsible for attracting young games players, and I hope he will pursue the investigations he suggests.

As a GC veteran who started by playing AC, I wish that croquet players could overcome all the current infighting and work together to promote both AC and GC as great competitive games, each in its own right, but also as valid social games which enhance the health and well-being of so many of us, young or old.

Jennet Blake,

Nottingham CC & Eynsham CC



Photographs from top:

- (1) New players learn the game at Chester; will they eventually play competitively or just socially, and does it matter? (Image by Pat & Alan Clare)
- (2) Oxford University Cuppers players get to grips with AC (Ian Plummer)
- (3) There's no competition more intense than brotherly rivalry; Nick scores a GC hoop for the Cheyne boys team against the brothers Brand (Rod Cheyne)
- (4) Seriously competitive AC stuff; Kriss Chambers at the World Championships at Surbiton (Chris Roberts)

Reduce GC Tournaments to encourage AC growth and save CA finances

Dear Editor,

In the last edition of The Croquet Gazette Jeff Dawson painted a rather gloomy picture of future CA funding.

This is because most of the income received by the CA comes from Association croquet (AC) players whose numbers are falling.

Evidently Golf croquet (GC) players contribute significantly less.

In the last edition the national decline of bowls was mentioned with some bowling greens being converted into croquet lawns.

It is suggested this decline is for the same reason as the decline in the number of AC players. The cause is socio-economic. Many golf clubs, too, are experiencing a decline in membership.

Forty years ago when I took up AC my wife didn't work so it was relatively easy to find time to play croquet at week-ends. Most people taking up AC in those days came to it in middle age and were in a similar position to me.

Today, most wives work. So week-ends are occupied in household duties, shopping and time with the children.

Thus there is little time to play croquet.

So fewer people take up croquet in middle age. Hence a decline in AC numbers.

People taking up croquet today are mostly the retired and most play GC.

This is certainly true at my club.

Only a small number, usually the better GC players, eventually take up AC.

The reason is because GC is a much easier game to learn and play proficiently.

So what is to be done about falling revenues?

One answer is to try to persuade more GC players to take up AC.

It is my theory that AC players are happy to play a succession of friendly games with each other but it is less so with GC players.

GC players need the stimulus of a competition or tournament to give some spice to their games. To satisfy this need clubs arrange frequent tournaments. This means a GC player has little spare time left to undertake AC training.

Reducing the number of tournaments and competitions would mean some GC players would then become bored and have time and the inclination to learn to play AC.

As a significant amount of CA spend is helping to develop new clubs, maybe the CA should insist on a new club having some AC players before funding is agreed.

Otherwise we are in the ludicrous situation of AC players' money being used to encourage GC which is driving out AC. Sounds like CA suicide!

A third suggestion is to increase the club levy for all players but to give a discount for CA members. Many of these will be AC players anyway.

The club levy could be based on handicaps: for example, AC players with handicap 16 or higher and GC players with handicaps 8 or higher could be excluded in the membership count on the grounds they are less likely to use CA services.

It would be sad to close down individual membership since many of us are loyal CA members.

All will agree it is important to support the CA financially. But maybe the CA should take on board how to encourage growth of AC.

If it can achieve that aim future funding should be secure.

Brian G Bucknall, Phyllis Court CC

It's C+R or C+C, 'Simples'

Dear Editor,

Nick Parish takes a long time to point out (*in issue 348*) that the target width of one croquet ball firing at another is two croquet balls wide, whereas all you need to imagine is a croquet ball (C) firing at a snooker ball (R) and vice versa.

Because the chances of one ball hitting the other are the same whichever one is firing, this rules out both formulas 2C+R and 2R+C, and leaves us only with C+R, or in the case of two croquet balls, C+C.

Edward Dymock, Dulwich CC

We were shocked and saddened to hear of the tragic death of Michael Poole who, together with his wife Ann, was on holiday in New Zealand visiting her son. On what should have been a lovely summer day at the end of February, Michael was standing in the sea when a huge wave knocked him over and he drowned.

Michael graduated from Queen's College, Cambridge with a degree in Natural Sciences and then went to Pembroke College, Oxford where he obtained a D Phil in Chemistry. His career was divided between university research projects and computer development. After working at Oxford developing the NHS computer system, he moved to Ferranti and then INMOS in Bristol where he played an important part in developing the computer language OCCAM.

There is a long history of croquet in his family. His great grandparents had a purpose-built croquet lawn in their garden and Michael was introduced to it as a child, but he didn't take up the sport, as we know it, until much later.

He was a hardy soul and never let inclement weather interrupt his game. As a new player I suggested that we should cancel a friendly game because there was a torrential thunderstorm in progress. He simply said, "We have waterproofs".

Peter Dyke, of Nailsea, remembers playing when darkness fell but Michael was still keen to continue, even though distant balls couldn't be seen without the aid of a white-clad opponent standing behind the target.

Michael was a founder member of the Nailsea club in 1981.

Although he had never played competitive croquet before, he soon

Obituary

Michael Poole

1938 - 2014



developed a passion for the game and worked tirelessly to help the new club get established. He was the author of the club's constitution which has served them well for 33 years with no major changes being needed and was also club treasurer in his time.

Michael's practical skills were invaluable, and demonstrated fully when the new club had found a suitable piece of land but had no playing equipment. They purchased some old balls and a few mallets from Bristol CC, but could not afford to buy hoops, so Michael made some!

He made trolleys to carry the equipment, racks for the mallets, a lawn-side shelter and shutters for the summer house which are still in use today.

Peter Dyke remembers Michael being very competitive and he quickly became one of the top players at the club, representing Nailsea in the inaugural South West Croquet Federation (SWCF) League final in 1985 and again in 1989.

After moving to Kent, where he was a

member of Ramsgate and Canterbury, he moved to Stroud and joined both the Bear of Rodborough and Cheltenham clubs, where he again became an inventive and enthusiastic member. Whenever Michael saw a need, he quietly came up with a solution but without making any fuss about it. At The Bear, he made an extraction tool for lifting hoops which is still in regular use and a beautiful wooden casket out of piece of Cheltenham's famous cedar tree, in which to house one of The Bear's very fragile glass trophies.

Away from the club scene, Michael served as treasurer for the SWCF committee for seven years.

A return move to Kent in 2007 gave Michael and Ann the opportunity to re-join Ramsgate and Canterbury and Michael became AC Captain of the latter in 2010 and treasurer in 2013.

He was so fond of his new club that he arranged for a party of Bears to have a weekend of friendly games at Canterbury and with the usual Poole hospitality, hosted a meal for all competitors at his home on the first night and a pub meal for everyone on the second.

Michael was a dedicated, industrious and reliable member of every club to which he belonged. He regularly entered B Level tournaments on his own, and handicap doubles tournaments with Ann.

He was a truly lovely, gentle man: highly intelligent but always quiet and modest. Those of us who had the pleasure of knowing him are the richer for it and bereft by his tragic loss.

Our love and sympathy go to Ann and their family. We have lost a good friend, but they have lost so much more.

Robert Moss, Bear of Rodborough CC

Club Subscriptions

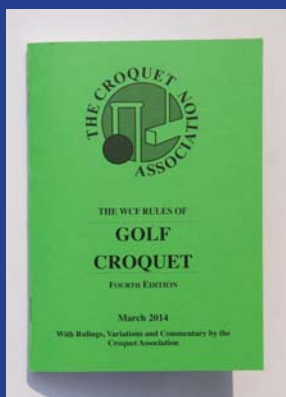
These are coming in fast, and the deadline is 1 May; this is particularly important for those clubs that rely on the renewal of their public liability insurance, which is available free with full CA Membership.

Merit Awards

Some of you may have noticed from the Fixtures Book that the Merit Awards are now being administered by the CA Office.

Players who qualify for the awards should use the forms in the 2014 Fixtures book, or download from the CA Website (see the 'Downloads and Forms' page).

CA Office News



Club Questionnaires

Many thanks to those of you who have been returning the questionnaires about club rental and costs of lawn maintenance. Once they have all been returned and analysed, they will provide valuable information to the CA's Development Committee. The findings will be published in the Gazette in due course.

CA Shop

The CA Shop has plenty of the new GC rules in stock, as well as mallets and wet weather gear. It is open from 9am – 5pm, Monday to Thursday, and 4.30pm on Fridays.

Liz Larsson - CA Manager

24 hour croquet for Sport Relief



Was it the Ides of March or the Rite of Spring which brought four players to the lawns at Pendle on the first day of spring?

Neither, it was Sport Relief!

As part of a club recruitment and retention plan, it was decided to engage in a twenty-four hour croquet marathon; **report Roger Schofield & Garry Wilson of Pendle and Craven CC.**

Our main purpose, unashamedly, was to promote the club and raise the club's profile in our catchment area.

We reasoned that we just couldn't arrange a match and expect publicity, but that Sport Relief would give us the platform we wanted and more importantly, it was for a really good cause.

Our angle with the press was two-fold. First, it was for Sport Relief but from a unique sport, and secondly and more interesting for the press as it turned out, it was four 'oldies' who were undertaking this challenge.

We succeeded in getting a half page article with photograph in the Lancashire Evening Telegraph, The Craven Herald, The Barnoldswick Times and The Nelson Leader.

I know that you can't wait to hear about the match so on with the report.

Chairman of The North West Croquet Federation (NWCFF) Liz Wilson (2.5) and Chairman of Pendle and Craven Roger Schofield (2) took on Secretary of the NWCFF Paul Rigge (-1) and Garry Wilson (12) (pictured below right at 'time').

The game was AC, not handicap and not advanced!

In order to make it last 24 hours we increased the hoop points by 48 times to 1152, plus 2 peg points, so a potential 1154 point game!

At 'time', Liz and Roger were leading 260 - 204 which sounds convincing enough but at daybreak they were 120 points in front, so

the Paul/Garry combo were making quite a comeback and things might have been very different with more time.

Kathleen Beech, widow of founding secretary John Beech, sounded the bell for play to commence at noon on Friday.

However, it was 1.15pm before the Paul/Garry team ran its first hoop. The latter offered a good excuse that the court had been laid out specifically for the benefit of spectators sitting in front of the club house, anything was in its normal place and certainly not at right angles to the fences or even the cut of the grass.

Darkness fell around 7pm and halogen floodlights then illuminated proceedings. We had arranged to hire the lights from the Skipton branch of SHC Ltd, an equipment and plant hire company, but they would have none of it and allowed us free use – thanks, Johnny!

Once the layers of clothing had doubled, and even tripled, the drop in temperature became a strange incentive for play to



speed up and our scoring rate increased. We are all convinced that Liz never missed a hit in, or rush for the first nine hours. The fact that we could no longer see beyond the edges of the court may have helped our productivity, or it may have been because Roger's wife Kathryn arrived with the evening meal.

By 11:30pm our steady flow of visitors totally dried up as the night rolled into the early hours. Our weather log showed a drop in temperature to two degrees and sometimes below, with rain alternating between spring shower and like stair rods.

When hail arrived and turned the court white whilst Garry was in play; he was heard to mutter, "If I have any more bright ideas, just remind me of tonight!"

The Gods of croquet were certainly testing our stamina and as dawn broke they relented and a beautiful still, bright morning unfurled. It's amazing how much a roquet echoes at 5.30am!

Throughout the night the play was mixed. Liz made the biggest break of 19 hoops and Paul the next most sizeable at 15, peeling



partner ball through its next three hoops but unfortunately in the wrong direction. We put it down to disorientation, fatigue and sheer bloody mindedness. Later Roger made a 17 hoop break but Paul countered with another of 17 hoops plus 2 peels on partner ball and a 21 point break with 3 peels on Garry's ball, in the right direction this time. Paul's break was never bettered.

At 7:15am Garry's wife Audrey arrived with bacon sandwiches and she was our first visitor on Saturday, and started a large run of spectators from around 10:30.

Our newest recruit, social member Ken Tennant (below left) called time at 12 noon.

Mental fatigue now partnered the physical tiredness (centre?) as Liz asked what to do with her last stroke. Roger told her to, "Stick it in a corner", so she went for corner four which was already occupied by Paul's ball. Rather than capitalize on the fatigue induced error and in the true spirit of Sport Relief, Garry and Paul declared their shot, thus ending the game.

We raised in excess of £800 for Sport Relief and you can still donate via <http://my.sportrelief.com/sponsor/24hourcroque>

We have since been told that our score of 464 points scored in 24 hours may be a new world record, taking over from the previous record of 402 set in June 2000 at Crake Valley...unless you know better!

As a club, we do not expect a queue for membership, but we do believe that this exercise will have put us front and centre in our community and may just have intrigued some sufficiently to drop in and try our wonderful game.



2014 Southern Cape AC Championships
Chris Roberts reports

BRITS ABROAD ~ South Africa

CA Members find out of season success in the Rainbow Nation



It was British success all the way at the inaugural Southern Cape AC Championships, where **Mark Avery** took the Open Singles top prize and other CA members scooped most of the other event titles too.

Only host and manager Judith Hanekom prevented a British clean sweep at Somerset West CC, about half an hour's ride from Cape Town, where it was such a pleasure to be in warm climes in mid-February.

'Warm' doesn't really do it justice though – it was very hot indeed, and truly scorching one day when the on-court temperature was recorded as 42 degrees, which was too much for two visiting players who actually had to concede games.

The Open Singles was run as a ten-player block of single games with the top two progressing to a best-of-three games final at the end of the week.

Big gun **Avery, from Ipswich**, lost only one of his block games to **Cheltenham's Dave Mundy**, and met **Lionel Tibble of Northampton** in that final, the latter also only having lost once in the round-robin to Avery himself. **Woking's Mike Town** missed out by one victory, losing as he did to both

the finalists.

Avery took a tight first game of the final +3 but suffered a -26 reverse in the second, before wrapping up victory +21 in the decider.

In the B Class singles, **Richard Stevens of Hamptworth** beat **Bury's Graham Saunders** +6 in the final, after the pair won through by winning their respective blocks of four.

Saunders sneaked home +1 in the final of the Restricted Handicap Singles against **Carol Steinberg from Bowdon**.

The Championships actually kicked off with the first round of the Open Handicap knock-out where all the fancied names progressed, save Hanekom who fell to a delighted **Chris Roberts (Phyllis Court)**, playing his most pressured game to date.

Hanekom went on to dominate the Plate event, beating South Africa-based **Scotsman Tony Whateley** in the final.

In the main knock-out, Roberts went out in the very next round to an in-form **Jonathan Toye (Downham)** who progressed all the way to the final, impressively accounting for Woking's Mike Town +22 in his semi.

Town had taken-out the class act Avery +26 in the previous round while, in the other half of the draw, Tibble swept through to the final at the expense of **Phyllis Court's Frances Colman** in his semi.

Colman had a good week with several good wins, resulting in a reduction of her handicap to 7.

In the handicap final at the end of the week, Toye couldn't live with Tibble's accuracy and the latter won comfortably.

The Handicap Doubles ended unusually with Hanekom having to play un-partnered when Richard Stevens took ill and, despite hampering the progress of her opponents for a couple of hours, the bisques and very steady play of **Kitty Carruthers (Surbiton)** and experienced pilot Mundy saw them home easily +17.

This was a shame for the host and for Stevens who, like Carruthers and

Mundy, had been undefeated in their block games, and a closer final had been in prospect.

A well supported One-Ball event saw **Hurlingham's Bob Stephens** make a good fist of the final against Avery, whom he had beaten in the block round, but he eventually succumbed to the top dog.

The other Brits in attendance were **Anne Stephens (Hurlingham), Andrew Wise (Bristol), Audrey Porter (Guildford), Chris Evans (Bowdon), Chris Osmond and Jonathan Edwards (both Surbiton), Paul Swaffield and Jean Ackerman (both Nottingham)**.

All the visitors enjoyed wonderful hospitality from Somerset West members and some were similarly entertained with more games, by hosts **Carole Jackson and David Hopkins**,

on the superbly manicured lawns at the neighbouring Helderberg Village Croquet Club.

This was your reporter's first very visit to South Africa and, after such a fabulous time, it certainly won't be his last.

Footnote – **Lionel Tibble's** good week at this event echoed his even greater achievement this winter, when back in November he won a hat-trick of titles at the **South African National Championships**.

For the record he won the AC Open Handicap Singles and both the GC Open and Handicap Singles events.

Photographs, clockwise from top left: (1) Richard Stevens pegs out in the B-Class, (2) Carole Jackson at Helderberg Village (3) Open winner Mark Avery with manager Judith Hanekom (4) Handicap winner and Open finalist, Lionel Tibble with a corner 4 'not quite' cannon to drive (5) All the winners (images by Chris Roberts)



2014 Western Province AC & GC Championships

Carole Jackson reports

The British were to the fore at South Africa's 2014 Western Province Championships.

Compton's Carole Jackson was undefeated to take the AC title and **David Openshaw of Roehampton** was edged out in a close GC final.

Helderberg Village CC in Somerset West, near Cape Town was the venue for both tournaments, held in March, and first up was the **GC Championships**, sponsored by Warwick Health.

Carole Jackson and **David Hopkins**, who are both Compton members and play in several UK tournaments every year, won the GC Open Doubles at this, their South African home club.

In the Open Singles, Openshaw edged out Jackson in the first semi-final and Neil McHardy of Cape Town club Kelvin Grove beat the host's Peter Dreyer in the other and looked towards securing a third consecutive title.

A brilliant stroke to the golden hoop gave Openshaw the first game before McHardy came from 2-4 down to take the second 7-5.

In the decider, McHardy produced some excellent approach shots to take 6-4 lead and completed a well-deserved victory with a spectacular jump shot on hoop 11.

South African players won the restricted events.

The **AC Championships** followed fairly soon after and the British definitely had the upper hand in this code.

The Jackson / Hopkins duo lost out to Silvia and Peter Dreyer on a very tight point count-out in the Open Doubles and then lined up against each other in the final of the Open Singles, where Jackson's victory gave her the Merle Simkins Trophy.

Scotsman Tony Whateley wondered why he had brought the Veterans Trophy back, as he walked away with it for the second year running, and **Graham Saunders from Bury** played extremely well to end up sharing the Scottish Salver with Hopkins for the most wins without actually winning an event.

Silvia Dreyer won the B class and main plate events, got a handicap cut from 10 to 7 and celebrated selection to represent South Africa in the Womens GC Championship late in the year.



AC World Team Championship 2014

Tiers 2.1 & 2.2/3 preview

by Stephen Mulliner, Secretary-General

Tier 1

This is better known as the MacRobertson Shield and was won by New Zealand in January 2014, thereby ending Great Britain's run of seven consecutive series wins since 1990.

Tier 2.1

Carrickmines Croquet & Lawn Tennis Club, Dublin will host this tournament from Monday 12 May to Saturday 18 May.

It features three of the 2010 teams, namely Ireland (hosts), South Africa, and Wales (holders). Jersey have been replaced by Scotland, the 2010 Tier 2.2. winners. The teams have been announced and are printed below.

The format is an all-play-all block, with each Test Match consisting of two best-of-three doubles and four best-of-three singles played over two days. If a Test is tied at 3-3, a third round of one doubles and two singles will be played, all consisting of a single game, to determine the winner.

Based on team average grades, Ireland (2,157) and Wales (2,188) have an edge over Scotland (2,060) and South Africa (2,079). A betting man would expect to see the hosts and the holders battling for the title in the final round.

Tier 2.2/3

The third competition is a merger of Tier 2.2 and Tier 3, and will consist of seven teams, namely Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Norway, Spain and Sweden.

It will be held at Sussex County C C, Southwick, near Brighton from Sunday 11 May to Friday 16 May.

The format is also an all-play-all block, with each Test Match consisting of two doubles and eight singles, all as single games. In order to complete the competition in six days with one round per day, the order of play will use the 'Jamboree' arrangement that was used successfully in the 2010 Tier 3 competition. A match between two teams is not played as a continuous process, but is split up and interleaved with other matches. This allows an odd number of teams with an even number of players to complete an all-play-all in the same number of rounds as the number of teams.

At the time of going to press not all the teams have yet been submitted, which makes it difficult to pick winners at this stage. However, it is expected to be close!



Ireland

Simon Williams (pictured)
Danny Johnston (Captain)
Patsy Fitzgerald
Nathaniel Healy

Wales

Ian Burrige (Captain)
David Walters
Chris Williams (pictured)
Garry McElwain

Scotland

Duncan Reeve
Martin Murray (C) (pictured)
David Magee
Campbell Morrison

South Africa

Reg Bamford (Captain)
Nick Harvey
Victor Dladla (pictured)
Judith Hanekom

GC Handicap System Changes for 2014 – Bill Arliss

'Minus' Handicaps introduced

It has been obvious for some time that the lower end of the GC Handicap scale was far too cramped with players of a very wide range of playing abilities all sharing a 0 handicap.

To overcome this problem, three new lower handicap levels have been introduced for 2014.

-1, -2 and -3.

It is not anticipated that the lowest will be required but it was considered that the scale should effectively be open ended and therefore details for the -3 handicap level have been issued.

The introduction of the new handicap levels will not cause a major disturbance to the present system other than extend the points interchange matrix which is used for level play (see the table below).

The present matrix printed on all handicap cards is still fully valid but a new extended matrix has to be used where players on the new minus handicaps are involved.

The Handicap Committee have selected those players who they feel should immediately be moved to the new lower handicaps and have sent each player details of their starting handicap and index for the 2014 season.

Players with an index in excess of 1200 who have not received a notification should contact the Handicap Committee.

'Effective Handicaps' introduced for handicap play

The reasons for this second change to the handicapping system are not quite so obvious.

There have been some indications from the Southern Hemisphere, where more of their lower handicappers actually play handicap games, that there was bias in favour of the low handicapped players in this style of game.

There was insufficient evidence in the UK to indicate a major problem but when a number of lower handicapped players' cards were studied (as a basis for the implementation of the new 'minus' levels described above), it was realised that there was indeed a significant advantage being given to players with handicaps of 3 and under, when they play handicap games.

Bluntly, they were not giving away sufficient extra turns for a fair contest.

Those few low handicap players who have actually been playing handicap games as well as level play games, had managed to build up a significant handicap index well above the maximum trigger point.

Once such a player reached a 0 handicap there could be no corrective action from the Automatic Handicapping System (AHS) because there were no lower steps to which they could descend.

From the results we saw, it was estimated

that a present 0 handicap player should possibly give another four extra turns to a higher handicapped opponent to produce a fair contest.

It would appear that the only way we could resolve the matter, would be to modify the way level play produced a handicap value for extra turn calculations in handicap play.

In essence we asked ourselves:

How many extra turns should the low handicap players be giving higher handicappers to give a fair game?

The solution was in fact very simple, and it is by the use of, what can be described as, an "Effective Handicap" for players with a handicap of 3 and below.

The chart below shows the new 'Effective Handicaps' that have been introduced for extra turn calculations for handicap play.

Only handicap games involving players(s) with handicaps of 3 and below will be affected.

After all handicap games, players will still exchange the normal 10 points.

For Level play, all the present systems will remain as last season (other than the introduction of the new minus handicaps).

After all Level games, players will still consult the points interchange matrix in order to see the points exchange values.

The extended points interchange matrix to cover the new minus players is also shown here.

Balancing act for CA appointed handicappers

One side effect of this change is that it will be much more difficult now, for a player to reach a handicap of 0 purely from playing handicap games.

Such players are now quite likely (in the initial stages) to loose quite a number of games if they continue playing off of 0.

CA appointed Handicappers have been instructed that they may make manual changes in these circumstances, so that there is not a long transition time whilst the system sorts itself out.

Typically a 0 handicap

player, who got to that status mainly through handicap games on the old system, is likely to rise to a 2 with the effective handicap system in place. Once balanced out on the 2 level, the new system will give that player exactly the same number of extra turns as he or she played off on the old system as a 0.

By monitoring the handicap cards of low handicap players who play handicap games at the end of the current season, we should be able to collect the information needed to see the effect of these new arrangements.

Index points exchanged in level play games

		Winner's Handicap															
		-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Loser's Handicap	-3	10	7	4	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	-2	14	10	6	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	-1	18	14	10	6	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	19	18	14	10	6	4	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	1	19	19	18	14	10	7	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
	2	19	19	19	16	13	10	7	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	1
	3	20	19	19	18	15	13	10	8	7	6	5	4	4	3	3	2
	4	20	19	19	19	17	15	12	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	4	3
	5	20	19	19	19	17	16	13	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	4
	6	20	20	19	19	18	16	14	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
	7	20	20	19	19	18	17	15	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
	8	20	20	20	19	19	17	16	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6
	9	20	20	20	19	19	18	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7
10	20	20	20	19	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	
11	20	20	20	19	19	19	17	16	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	
12	20	20	20	19	19	19	18	17	16	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	



THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION

The CA Handicapping Committee have made a change to the method of calculating 'extra turns' for GOLF CROQUET handicap games.

It has been realised that players with low handicaps were simply not giving away sufficient additional shots in handicap games to give a fair contest.

The CA Handicapping Committee have therefore adjusted this balance by increasing the bias against the lower handicap players. This only effects players with handicaps of 3 and below.

This ruling covers all GC Handicap games, be they club internal affairs, Federation Leagues, or National Tournaments and Competitions organised by the CA .

The table below should be used to calculate extra turns with immediate effect (Feb 2013).

Actual Handicap	'Effective Handicap' for calculation of extra turns in handicap play
-2	-6
-1	-5
0	-4
1	-2
2	0
3	2
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9
10	10
11	11
12	12

Please display this chart on your club notice board and be sure that a copy is available court side at every competitive GOLF CROQUET handicap game.

Write your name in CA history at these historic tournaments in 2014

The Peel Memorials
First played in 1898

Nottingham
15-18 May

The Challenge & Gilbey
First played in 1900

Sussex County (Southwick)
28-31 August

South of England Week
107th Tournament

Compton (Eastbourne)
22-27 September

This time last year, the Gazette carried an explanation of the CA's tournaments structure and laid out the hierarchy of AC Championships, cutting through the sometimes confusingly named events.

Chris Roberts now takes a look three of the most historic, but sadly less well known tournaments, and hopes to encourage you to consider an entry to each one.

Perhaps it's due to an over exposure to the lists of gold-painted names on the mahogany honours boards of old rugby clubs during my childhood upbringing, in the company of old men in blazers; that causes me to have to admit that I have an over-fondness for remembering the past.

For what is achievement, but a passing success, if it is not referenced in a catalogue of former glories and those that are still to come?

Croquet has a golden history, yet three of the CA's oldest tournaments are mere shadows of their former selves – from the days when the names of Sir Henry Mildmay, Mrs Compton-Lundie and the doubles pairing of Lord Tollemache & Sir Gerald Burke, Baronet, were engraved on magnificent trophies.

This is a great shame, because collectively the three tournaments account for 337 years of croquet history, but to most people their names will be a mystery today.

It is good to see then that the **Challenge & Gilbey** (first played in 1900) is in pretty good shape and holding its own, with over forty players taking part at Budleigh Salterton last season, from as far afield as Tyneside and Scotland.

The tournament consists of two events, the Challenge Cups for advanced and level play singles in four classes, and the Gilbey Goblet for handicap singles.

Mark Ormerod (Dulwich and Hurlingham) won the Challenge Cup A-Class event in



Dogmersfield and Hamptworth respectively, hold the Men's and Women's singles titles, and East Dorset's Roger Hesketh and Jane Matthews have a grip on the mixed doubles crown.

Like the Challenge and Gilbey, the winners of The Peels take home some beautiful (and very large) silver trophies that

2013 and Quiller Barrett took the Gilbey Goblet back to Watford.

The 2014 tournament will again be managed by Julie Horsley, but has moved on to Sussex County CC at Southwick between 28-31 August, where another good sized entry will be expected.

Faring less well these days is the **Peel Memorials** (first played in 1898) and the poor fields attracted over recent years are a very far cry from its heyday.

The Gazette reported that the 1912 tournament attracted no less than 179 individual entries, but nowadays barely ten percent of that number has been entering.

Having played in the last three tournaments, I can testify that the Peels could be a lovely event if only it got a bit more support.



Being a three-sectioned handicap affair, there is good capacity for most skill levels and it is a surprise that entries have not been more forthcoming.

Winchester pair Roger Barnacle and Rita Nunn, who are also members of

would grace the finest of mantelpieces.

I'll be at Nottingham for the 2014 Peels between 15-18 May and I can't recommend the tournament enough if you have a leaning for a piece of croquet history.

The 107th South of England Week is a title that says all about the longevity of the third of the CA historic tournaments being preview here, but again this is one that has struggled in the popularity stakes in recent years.

Eastbourne club, Compton is again hosting this from 22-27 September, and with four separate events encompassing handicap and level-play singles, and handicap doubles, there is something to attract most skill levels at this tournament.

Georgeen Hemming, Graham Pegley and Roger Wood all secured two event titles in 2013, but will they face your challenge in this summer?

The Gazette article referred to earlier, tells of huge fields of players who used to grace this historic tournament in years gone by and it would be so good to see an upward trend in participation being reported by manager Colin Hemming later in the year.

Full details of all these great tournaments are on pages 48-50 of the blue fixtures book and CA website. Enter on-line or send you entry forms to the CA Office without delay and don't miss a chance to be part of croquet's rich history.

~ ~ ~

Photographs, from top left: Edmund Longland, John McMordie and DD Steel in 1937. Rita Nunn and Roger Barnacle - Peels winners in 2013 (images by Lt Col Leahy and Chris Roberts).

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Lawn Care

Five seasonal tips by Duncan Hector

Granular fertilisers

Ensure that your club isn't using a product that incorporates a weed killer. Toxic granules can easily transfer onto balls and then onto hands. Apply the fertiliser after play has finished for the day so that it has a full night and probably some dew in the morning.

You should then be able to use the lawns normally although there is bound to be some "pick-up" on the balls. It is best to water-in or apply before rain is expected.

Mow "box off" until the fertiliser has dissipated into the sward.

Liquid fertilisers

The advantage of liquid fertiliser is that it is absorbed quickly by the leaf (usually within an hour). So watering in isn't necessary. Another bonus is that there is no "pick-up" on the balls.

It is best to spray at cool periods of the day and don't spray if the grass is stressed.

Growth Regulator – Primo Maxx

This retards leaf growth, reduces mowing by up to 50% and produces a stronger sward.

It encourages lateral growth thus thickening the sward and increases root growth which strengthens the plant and enhances drought resistance.

It is best applied in a tank mix with a liquid fertiliser.

Weed killer

Systemic weed killers should be sprayed at times when the plants are growing strongly.

The product is absorbed by the leaf and translocated through the plant to the roots through the vascular system.

It will usually be absorbed by the plants within an hour or so and you should then be able to use the lawn for play – but check the label!

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Going Green with the New GC Rules

Martin French highlights the changes

As you will have read in the last two Gazettes, the World Croquet Federation (WCF) has approved a new version of the GC Rules and the CA Council has approved them for use in England.

The CA's GC Rules Committee has added a few rulings and some commentary to help either explain the rules or direct how to apply them in England.

The 4th edition Rule Book (green cover) is now available from the CA shop (£ 4.00 including postage) and the rules themselves can be found on the CA website.

While the WCF set out to make major improvements in the rules, because of the lack of agreement between the representatives on the committee, the changes are rather fewer than hoped.

In many ways the new 4th Edition is largely a tidied-up 3rd Edition, with the old rulings and commentary integrated into the main body of the text.

Most of the time, players will not notice a difference – so it's important to highlight the situations where changes do apply.

So what are the changes in the new edition?

Rule 1 – Outline of the Game

There are minor wording changes which mostly address some situations not previously covered.

Time limits are now introduced but several alternative solutions are described – so we have included those preferred as Appendix A, which reproduces the CA Tournament Regulation on time limits for

GC games.

The sequence for second colours is now described.

Rule 2 – The Court and Rule 3 – Equipment

These rules have been revised in consultation with the International Laws Committee (which governs AC Laws).

Future editions of the AC Laws will use this wording which will then be common to both games.

There are also minor changes to tolerances.

Rule 4 – Accessories

There are only minor changes.

Rule 5 – The Start

There are minor additions and previous rulings are incorporated into the rule.

Rule 6 – The Turn

There are additions to deal with situations where two players play more or less simultaneously.

Rule 7 – Scoring a Point

A commentary has been added which allows a ball replaced in a hoop after a subsequent fault to score from that position later.

Keeping score is now also mentioned.

Rule 8 – Advice

A previous ruling which offered protection against incorrect information supplied by an opponent is now incorporated in the rule.

Two new rules dealing with advice from an opponent or spectator have been added.

Rule 9 – Interference

Two previous rulings are now incorporated in the rule. Rule 9(j) has been added to allow emergency lifting of a ball to avoid collision by a double-banking ball without incurring a non-striking fault.

Rule 10 – Offside Ball

The old Halfway Law has been renamed. The changes and expansion to incorporate previous rulings aid clarity.

Rule 11 – Playing a Wrong Ball

Unfortunately, although the rule has been expanded and re-written, it is not really fixed nor is it very much clearer.

The lack of international agreement prevented a better job being done.

Note that the CA's 2013 trial Wrong Ball law is NOT being carried forward.

The new rule 11 is more complete than the old, though. It now revolves around the definition from rule 1(e) that the next ball due to be played is the "striker's ball", and its owner is the "striker". Much of rule 11 now deals with what happens when

either someone other than the striker plays - or a ball other than the striker's ball is played. Then (e) justifies a player who plays their own ball, having failed to notice that an opponent has just played one of the other side's balls; (f) deals with multiple wrong ball plays; (g) is where a ball is played in correct sequence after previous out of sequence play, thereby condoning the previous errors; and (h) lists the few circumstances when a player or referee should forestall.

A major concern has been the inability of the international community to agree on a method that would prevent 'gifted' hoops in all cases, without conferring the 'gifted hoop' to the other side – this is often a consequence of errors condoned under 11(g).

The CA has created a simplified diagrammatic summary of the new Wrong Ball rule, and this has been added in colour as the centre pages of the rules booklet.

An A4 poster version will be available from the CA website.

Rule 12 – Non-Striking Faults

Previous rulings have been incorporated into the rule.

Rule 13 – Striking Faults

A commentary has been added to clarify when the period in which a striking fault may be committed ends. This now takes the same approach as in AC.

Also, moving or shaking a ball at rest by hitting a hoop or the peg has been returned to the list of faults.

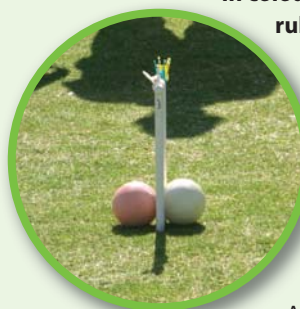
Rule 14 – Etiquette

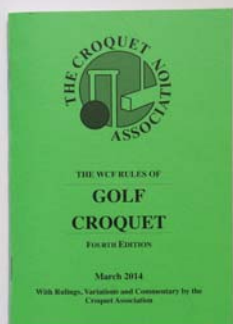
New wording makes it clearer that the list of unacceptable behaviours is not exhaustive. The list has been extended and in parts re-written. Of note:

Rule 14(a)(8) attempts to quantify "reasonable despatch" and introduces a 1 minute time limit for each stroke, with flexibility allowed for hold-ups in play. The CA does not want to see strokes being routinely timed, so a commentary has been added that it is only persistent and exceptionally slow play that should be penalised.

Rule 14(a)(13) is intended to penalise players who try to hide lawn damage they have caused.

Rule 14(a)(14) The CA has decided NOT to implement this rule which restricts smoking and drinking alcohol during a game. This is a matter for clubs, managers and tournament regulations, not for the rules.





The final parts of the rule have been expanded and describe how to deal with unacceptable play, whether or not a referee is available.

Rule 15 – Refereeing

This rule has been greatly reduced because there now exist the approved WCF Refereeing Regulations which the CA has adopted as Part R of its Tournament Regulations. It is therefore unnecessary to repeat the text in the rules. This also means the same approach to refereeing applies to AC and GC.

Rule 16 – Handicaps

The CA has not adopted the WCF version. The WCF text incorporated a number of new provisions which the CA's Handicap Committee did not feel were warranted and failed to deal with the real problems identified in handicap GC play.

There is no competitive international handicap play anyway and the Rules invited national associations to make their own schemes – which is what the CA has done.

Consequently, an abbreviated rule 16 is included, and all the details of the working of the CA's Automatic Handicap System may be found on the CA website page GolfCroquet/Handicapping.

See also Bill Arliss' center pages article in this Gazette.

Martin French

Chairman, GC Rules Committee

Photographs: Centre - "Let's call a referee for this one!" (image by John Bevington)

Left - Ian Norris scores a point at Hunstanton. Below - good etiquette from Lionel Tibble and Tony Forbes at Cheltenham (both Chris Roberts)



EuroGC

Stephen Mulliner looks back at previous European Golf Croquet Championships and previews the 2014 tournament to be held at Surbiton on Thursday 29 May to Sunday 1 June.



The European Golf Croquet Championship, popularly abbreviated to the 'EuroGC', was inaugurated in 1999, some six years after the establishment of the annual EuroAC.

The first winner was the later GC World Champion, Mark McInerney of Ireland, who successfully defended his title four years later in 2003.

Another four years was to pass before Stephen Mulliner became the first English winner, at Budleigh in 2007, defeating



Andrea Pravettoni of Italy in the final.

Burgeoning continental interest led to another event in 2009, where Mulliner repeated McInerney's feat in retaining his title, this time holding off a strong challenge from Jonatan Andersson of Sweden.

Surbiton hosts the event the following year and when Sweden gained revenge with Simon Carlsson's victory they thereby achieved the first continental victory in a major international event.

Carlsson played superb GC throughout, and defeated Mulliner after a marathon third game 13th hoop battle.

A crowded international calendar delayed the sixth holding of EuroGC until 2013, when Mulliner became the first triple winner, again at Budleigh, in an all-English final with John Spiers.

The Federation Europeenne de Croquet (FEC) members then decided that it made more sense to hold the EuroGC annually and the EuroAC at intervals, rather than the other way round.

So the EuroGC returns to Surbiton this year, and will be held from Thursday 29 May to Sunday 1 June.

It has attracted huge interest, with 48 applications for the 32 places available.

Nine FEC Members are represented, namely England, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Switzerland and Wales.

England have a strong squad headed by Stephen Mulliner, the Women's GC

World Champion Rachel Rowe and Howard Cheyne.

The main competition is expected from Sweden, with Andersson and Carlsson being bolstered by Anders Moldin

But Latvia's fast-improving Normunds Zelcans, and Norway's Roar Michalsen, will also be formidable opponents.



Photographs clockwise from top: (1) Stephen Mulliner (2) Howard Cheyne (3) Rachel Rowe (4) Jonatan Andersson (images by Chris Roberts, Robert Thomson and Howard Cheyne)

Good news stories from around the country

Bear nets photo win for Robert

'*Stalking the ball*' is the first step to good shot aiming and it is also the title of Robert Moss' winning image in the Bear of Rodborough's croquet photographic competition.

It is one of a series of images featuring the bear learning the game, and Robert says that he is hoping to produce a calendar once he has 12 photographs and the bear has learnt enough!

Gazette editor Chris Roberts was delighted to be asked to independently judge the entries and complemented Robert on his camera work.

Chris said "I was impressed with the photographer's use of an infinity background and his minimising of the shadows. I look forward to seeing a photo of the bear's jump shot later in the year - good luck with that Robert!"



Wally & Joy take Cedars crown

The Centre picture shows Wally James and Joy Arnett (in blue) winning in the annual croquet competition at Cedars Retirement Village in Chorleywood, Hertfordshire.

The striker is actually your editor's mother Pat Roberts, who like most of the residents had never played croquet before moving to the village.

Cedars are looking forward to seeing a repeat of last season's good numbers enjoying social GC on a regular basis this summer.

They have one small court, at the rear of main mansion house at the centre of the estate.

Is that a tricky angled hoop that you have scored there mother? Well done you. The Cedars Championship, and nothing less this year please...

Nice hoop Charlie!

Nailsea's Kathy Wallace sent in this sequence of her grandson Charlie, aged 22 months at the time. She says that they illustrate the latest initiative in Nailsea's youth policy!

But that Bob Whitaker thinks Charlie, who is now four, ought to be peeling by now!



Bakewell enjoy the indoor life

Bakewell Croquet Club has found its own solution to playing through the winter, as **Alan Reeves reports.**

A new fitness club, Born2move, has recently opened with a good sized area of astroturf and for a few hours on a Saturday afternoon, they kindly allow us to set out our reasonably solid and almost immovable hoops.

These were designed and

manufactured 'in house' by two shy and retiring qualified mechanical engineers David Peters and Alan Reeves.

We have the chance to play for a couple of hours or so and therefore play a series of short, timed games.



It's not quite the real thing but at least it gives us some practice in tactics and getting balls going in a chosen direction.

It has been good fun and keeps members in touch throughout the off season.

Pictured here from the left are Chairman Peter Blackburn, David Peters, Billie Reeves, Viv Blackburn and Alan Reeves.



The Atkins Quadway Hoop

Paddy Chapman shares his thoughts on the challenging new hoop that breaks away from traditional design

The Atkins Quadway hoop was developed by Ray Atkins of Christchurch, New Zealand.

The idea behind the hoops was that they should hold the ground firmly to provide a challenge in a variety of different lawn conditions and also be easy to set to different widths to allow anyone from beginners to internationals to play using the same equipment.

Their first major outing was at the 2013 New Zealand Open. The lawn conditions that were provided in Christchurch during the event, combined with the unique characteristics of the Atkins hoops provided the most challenging playing conditions I had ever encountered, and were well-received for rewarding skilful break play over shooting. Indeed, there were only a handful of TPs completed in the nine days of the event, and even an all-round break was a very rare and satisfying achievement. While the speedy, clay-based Christchurch lawns played a massive part in this, the Atkins Quadway hoops also contributed a lot to the challenging conditions. Even when used at other, less-challenging venues, I do believe they are more difficult to run from an angle – a characteristic which rewards accurate break play and hoop approaches.

Following their success at the NZ Open, it was agreed that they would be used for the 2014 MacRobertson Shield. This event provided almost every lawn characteristic imaginable – from flooded to lightning fast, clay-based to sand-based, and throughout the whole event the Atkins hoops stood up very well. When combined with clay-

based lawns, there were some very long days indeed; but even in the sand-based lawns there were very few error-free games. The hoops



themselves have square tapered carrots, and are made entirely from high-quality stainless-steel.

The uprights are unpainted, which I believe contributes to their tendency to grip and reject the ball more than traditional hoops. There is also a theory that the square carrots tend to add to the difficulty of running them from an angle, due to the flat face of the carrot resisting movement within the ground.

The hoop is made of three separate parts that connect together – two uprights and a crown. These attach via a screw on each side of the top of the crown, and each upright can be seated into the crown in two different orientations, allowing for four different width settings. This means that clubs can use just one set of hoops per lawn, and the hoops can be set either for normal club play or international play simply by rotating the uprights to a wider or narrower setting. The shape of the carrots also makes them very easy to reset if necessary – something that is a weakness of finned hoops.

I think that many clubs UK clubs could benefit from the use of Atkins hoops, as it would be an easy way to increase interactivity between top players, whilst maintaining the ability to be adjusted to a normal width for club use.

~ Paddy Chapman was runner-up in last year's AC World Championships and a member of the New Zealand team that won the MacRobertson Shield in January. He lives in the UK and is a member of Nottingham CC ~

Corner photos clockwise: The new hoop posed a challenge for the best - Chris Clarke, David Maugham and Paddy Chapman (all images by Pamela & Graeme Roberts and Paddy Chapman)



Crazy Croquet Players!

An Outsider's View by Ivanna Leave, in Saneville, CA

I went to watch something called 'croquet' the other day; I'd heard that it was a mentally challenging game.

As I arrived, one player asked another, "How about a one-ball game?"

"Yes, good idea!" said the other. But they played with two balls.

A friendly local explained the basics. "First, you need a 'Roquet', then comes the 'Croquet', from which the game takes its name. 'R before C, R-C' I thought – before realising that the mnemonic 'croquet is arsey' is confusing, because C comes before R in croquet.

Two more players walked past. 'Game of golf?' asked one. 'OK' said the other, but they went onto a court instead. My local interpreter 'explained' that their game was called Golf Croquet because, although it's not golf, they aren't allowed to take croquet.

I shook my head to clear the muzzy feeling; this was more challenging than I'd expected. I was instructed not to bother watching one man, as he was playing his aunt, Emma. I was amazed; he must have been approaching retirement age, and Emma only looked about 20.

Instead, I was told that I should watch an expert on a break. 'I didn't come here to watch people having a break', I thought, 'I came to see them play.'

"Watch that guy!" The local pointed. The man hit one ball onto another, in a hoop. "Oh, a failed jump shot" he lamented. 'Not just failed', I thought; 'he didn't even get one foot off the ground!' Another man was supposedly 'taking off', but again, I could see that his feet were firmly planted.

Yet another, called William, had a 'lift' – but this time it turned out that rather than levitation, they were referring to car trouble; apparently William had broken down earlier, after repeatedly failing to drive straight; some kind of trouble with loose brakes.

I heard a lot of back-to-front talk about speed. "On a fast lawn, the balls are hit more

slowly; on a slow lawn, the balls stop more quickly. A lot of the players were said to be 'rushing', but they looked pretty slow to me.

A couple of people commented that it's best not to hurry when you're rushing, but I'm sure that the old saying is correct: 'it's best not to rush when you're in a hurry.'

Apparently both players are referees of their game, but one guy called for a referee, and his opponent couldn't even be bothered to go onto the lawn.

Another guy went out and declared that he'd hit his ball with a bevel. It had looked awfully like he'd hit it with his mallet, so I asked the local again. He explained that it was called a bevel because, if he'd been using a different, less modern, mallet, it would have had a bevelled edge, and then he would have hit the ball with the bevel.

'Not if the hypothetical older mallet had been wider!' I thought.

I remain alarmed by some of the conversations. I was told that a lot of the best players are always stalking! I'd noticed there weren't many young ladies – and the number of people stalking also explained why 'Emma' was later introduced to me as 'Molly'.

Also, I was told that all the players there were handicapped.

I couldn't tell by looking, so I think they must have been nutters. The players with smaller handicaps tend to be better (of course!) though that hardly seems fair. Other things simply amazed me.

Apparently they have carrots under all the hoops! I couldn't see any protruding, and was told that they'd all been knocked into the ground that morning with a rubber mallet. One guy said that it can sometimes be difficult to get the carrots out, especially if they've recently been knocked into hard ground.

"How often do you plant?" I asked. "Hardly ever," he replied, "I only get a plant about once a season!"

It hardly seemed worth the bother. I tried asking about the seeds, but he switched topic to who the best players are, and how they keep having fights (or, as he put it, 'it depends how often they get knocked out!'). I didn't actually witness any violence whilst there, but I heard how brutal the players could be.

I was informed that one guy, who looked entirely mellow and calm, was 'naturally aggressive' and that he'd enjoyed hitting a tea-lady only the previous day.

There were plenty of references to animals, particularly crocodiles, and I read a gruesome commentary on the club wall. One man (referred to as The Beast) did a 'death roll', clubbing one of the Bunny's balls into the 'jaws', where it would then be peeled, ready for Rover.

I saw a man sitting out, referred to as 'Cruncher', was sitting down, waiting for his opponent to take his 'bisques'. They should have used 'biscuits', I thought – with a name like Cruncher, the opposition would then be encouraged to take them while they had the chance.

Apparently the opposition kept wanting 'big full rolls', interspersed with occasional split half-rolls, so biscuits would help reduce that need too.

"Ah," said the local, "that man is about

to try a straight peel through 4-back."

Apparently the hoop was called 4-back 'because' it was hoop 3, backwards. "Yes, of course!" I replied, rolling my eyes.

I was more confounded by the word 'straight', though. It looked pretty angled to me, and he didn't line the

balls up quite straight at the hoop.

Then he didn't line his mallet up straight towards the hoop either, and the ball went in an arc (on a slight hill) before bouncing through, also at an angle. 'That was a perfect straight peel!' the local chortled, while the player then knocked his own ball through the hoop.

The insanity of croquet players was again confirmed when someone quietly confided in me that William (the guy who'd broken down with brake trouble after a terrible drive) was obsessed with leaves. "Good leaves are often worth brakes", William winked at me as he walked past, "but sometimes, having brakes can actually spoil the fun!" This was despite William having only a small handicap!

I'd heard quite enough; these people were not only crazy but dangerous.

I bade my farewell and headed towards my car.

"What, so soon?" the local called.

"But you haven't seen anyone peg out yet!"



Stephen Mulliner tending his carrots

Coaching Column *by Roger Staples*

As I write this the season is about to start, high pressure has returned to the British Isles and the sun is quite warm during the daylight hours.

I hope the winter floods have not affected you too badly, although clearly there are some clubs who will have a lot of work to do to get their lawns into good condition again. I wish you well.

Some double banking may well be necessary and this reminds me of a tournament which had a number of high bisquers playing.

We were blessed with some good weather, but the players were not always aware of the etiquette and finesse of some of the laws.

When you are double banked on a lawn it is necessary to be aware of the other game and how it is progressing.

Remember to give way whenever you can - it makes a good impression.

The other players will respond and show just as much courtesy to you, especially when there is a break in progress.

Sometimes it isn't obvious that they are about to shoot across the lawn, but if a break is in progress, then a croquet shot that is about to put a pioneer at hoop 4 after running hoop 2 will be going across the lawn!

Don't forget to carry some markers with you. It can be quite embarrassing to inadvertently hit a ball from the other game and not be sure as to the true position of it when it needs to be replaced.

Then there is the subject of faults in playing strokes.

Mishitting a ball by accidentally hitting the striker's ball with the bevel of the mallet in open court is annoying but not necessarily a fault; however, in and

around a hoop or peg it is a fault.

Law 28(a)(6) states "a fault is committed if, during the striking period, the striker strikes the strikers ball with any part of the mallet other than the face of the head, either (A) deliberately; or (B) accidentally in a stroke which requires special care

because of the proximity of a hoop or the peg or another ball". Easily done when the ball has only just run a hoop and not travelled very far. We are all 'referees'

when it comes to playing our sport and faults should of course be admitted.

If a shot is hampered, ask your opponent to watch and adjudicate, or better still, ask for an independent referee adjudicate. Good etiquette says: always accept their decision. Don't forget that a bisque may be used to continue the break after a fault.

I have received some enquiries recently about how to become a coach.

The CA website describes the latest process. The Fixtures Book is out of date.

There are several coach training courses around the country and your Federation Coaching Officer can organise one in your area. Help is also available from the Croquet Academy.

Once you have completed the necessary formalities then send your completed application form to the Chairman of the Coaching Committee and, if you are a CA member, your name will be added to the list of approved coaches.

I congratulate Brian Wilson (Camerton & Peasedown) and David Owen, (Lansdown) who recently qualified as club coaches.

Martin Lester and Michael Hague double bank at Woking, and a referee judges a hampered shot at the MacRobertson Shield (images by Chris Roberts, and Pamela and Graeme Roberts (NZ))



New Examining Coach role

The CA has decided to formalise the process of examining coaches.

To that end, we have created the position of Examining Coach, *writes Roger Staples.*

There are many long-established and excellent coaches around the domain who would be able to fulfil this role.

From the beginning of the 2014 season, prospective graded coaches need to be assessed by an Examining Coach, and Club Coaches are required to have their application endorsed by an Examining Coach.

The criteria required to be an Examining Coach are:

1. To be a CA Associate.
2. To be of suitable Graded Coach standard, and have held that qualification for a minimum of three years (i.e. to be a Grade 2 or 3 AC Coach or a Golf Coach).
3. To be recognised by the croquet community as a respected, active and outstanding coach of suitable experience.
4. To act as an impartial judge of coaching ability. This duty carries with it an obligation to perform and behave with accuracy, consistency, objectivity and the highest sense of integrity, in order to preserve and encourage confidence on the professionalism and integrity of coaching; officials must also display ethical behaviour.

The Role of the Examining Coach is to carry out Assessments, using the CA approved examining process, of prospective coaches, and to recommend the candidate for a particular coach qualification.

The Examining Coach can only assess candidates of a lesser or equal standard (i.e. a Grade 2 AC Coach cannot assess a Golf Coach or a Grade 3 Coach).

The Examining Coach should report the results of any Assessment promptly to the candidate and the CA Coaching Committee Chairman.

To become an Examining Coach, the candidate must meet the criteria set out above, and the application must be endorsed by the relevant Federation Coaching Officer.

The applicant should apply to the CA Coaching Committee Chairman. Once the appointment is confirmed by the Coaching Committee, the nominee's name will be added to the CA's list of Examining Coaches.

In the first of a series, the Gazette looks at CA members who have enjoyed other sporting success

As well as croquet, I Ice Skate

Diana Stevens

was a world class ice figure skater, coach and most recently was an international judge at the Sochi Winter Olympics.

As husband and fellow Hamptworth croquet player **Richard Stevens** tells us, Diana is also 'a very brave lady'.

Should start by detailing Diana's ice skating career, which began of course as a competitor.

She enjoyed a very successful career and reached the very top echelons of her sport.

Diana won the British Championship twice, was fourth at the European Championships, eleventh in the Worlds and competed at the 1964 Olympics.

She is still the reigning Commonwealth Games Champion!

Diana then became a coach for 15 years at Southampton and Basingstoke and produced many a fine skater, some of whom made the ice a lifelong profession.

She has also had two spells as a judge, one prior to her coaching career and, during this first period, amongst the skaters she judged was John Curry at the Europeans.

It was here that Eastern bloc politics became apparent, when the Russian judge was so overwhelmed by the occasion, and the Briton's performance, that he forgot his orders and placed Curry first.

As he stood up to leave the judging room, he said to Diana 'you won't be seeing me again!'

Diana decided to return to judging after her time coaching but found that she had to endure the demeaning process of passing all the tests at the lowest grades and gradually work her way up to international standards again.

She saw the process through and, finally, she again attended the World Championships and Olympics as a judge, decades after appearing as a competitor.

That is the potted history of Diana's skating career, but more interesting still are some of her reminiscences: they all show one aspect of her character that is not immediately obvious, and that is her bravery.

When Diana competed at the Winter Olympics in 1964 she decided to take a ride



Diana Stevens – croquet player and . . . ice skater, coach, judge and a very brave lady indeed.

as brakeman on the bobsleigh of Tony Nash, the British gold medal winner.

She did suffer failure of nerve though, and admits to being so frightened that she was unable to apply the brakes when told to, and thus took our gold medallist into the straw bales at the end of the track!

Diana's bravery has shown through on her travels abroad too, and back then there were no cosy package tours for her; for this young woman the life of an international skater was one of discovery.

On a trip to South Africa in apartheid days, she found that no one would speak to her, including the staff, because she had been booked into a Boer hotel.

Similarly in Toronto, a French-Canadian regime would not communicate.

After a flight to Iceland she was left alone in an apartment with no food or nearby shops and was then expected to judge at seven the next morning.

And in Russia, on a flight courtesy of Aeroflot, she was obliged to select a seat from a row of stackable chairs, which lacked any form of safety belts at all!

A trip to Dresden, where the memory of the British wartime bombing was still raw, was very memorable indeed as it involved crossing the Berlin Wall at 'Check-point Charlie', with machine guns surveying the walk across 'no-mans land'.

For the mounting of a train on the eastern side, Diana was surrounded by armed guards, before the whole train was searched

under and over by German Shepherd dogs.

There was a requirement by the armed guards for all fresh food to be thrown out of the window once the train had started, so that the locals at the destination would remain ignorant that such luxuries were so readily available in the West.

One mistake during that trip was to nip off the train to buy a sandwich, only to see the train leave the station – Diana had no ticket and no passport with her!

Fortunately all ended well as the train had only gone to change its wheels for the Russian gauge and returned in due course.

That would have been quite enough excitement for one trip, one might have thought, but wait...

What was Diana's chosen music for her exhibition performance in Dresden?

'From Russia with Love!'

The most recent example of Diana's bravery was in 2012 in Nice, when she was approached by the Ukrainian judge to misrepresent the scores.

Diana took the matter, via the referee, all the way to a court hearing in Frankfurt and thence to an appeal in Lausanne.

Afterwards she enquired when there had last been a similar inquiry, and was told that this was the first in 130 years of skating history!

Please contact the editor if you know of a CA member who has enjoyed success in another sporting arena.

Meriel is still playing at 96!

December's Gazette (issue 347) told of Ramsgate's Dennis Shaw continuing with his croquet despite his advanced years, and this prompted Brian Wilson to write:

Further to the recent story about the mere "stripling" of 92 who is still playing croquet – at Camerton and Peasedown CC we have a lady who is doing likewise at 96!

Meriel Westwater was introduced to Croquet when she was eight and now, 88 years later, one cannot keep her away from her croquet.

Now do not think this lady is a 'pushover' – as even though she is now a bit on the 'frail side', she can still hit her ball a long way, and is to be feared when a GC game is a 'close quarter' combat.



Unsuspecting players can often be seen looking at Meriel addressing her ball some distance away from the target, and be forgiven for thinking "She'll never hit my ball or score the hoop from there" – but all too often they see their ball roqueted away, or the distant hoop being scored!

To make matters worse, Meriel has a lovely winning smile, and an innocent look that seems to say "Oh I am sorry – did I do that"!

Meriel takes part in all club tournaments, even those taking place in the winter, when it is cold and damp, as our photo shows.

Is Meriel the oldest person who regularly plays croquet?

Whatever the answer, she is surely an excellent advertisement for croquet as a sport to keep one active in one's later years.

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