

The

CROQUET

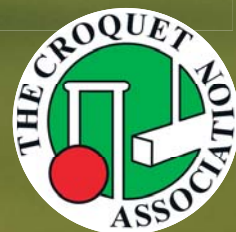
Issue 354 February 2015

Gazette

**GC World
Championship
Preview**

**Special General
Meeting:**

***CA Council look
for support from
members and clubs
for membership
changes***



From our files

researched by Frances Colman

10 years ago - 2005



Oxford Full Blue

Congratulations to Jonathan Kirby who has just been awarded an extraordinary Full Blue for croquet by the Oxford University.

The 'Blue' is awarded for sports men and women competing in the annual varsity match. There are 14 Full Blue sports and croquet is considered a Half Blue sport, but the Men's Blues Committee, comprising the captains of the Full Blue sports, may award an extraordinary Full Blue to players of any sport if their achievements are considered to be of sufficient merit. . .

At Cambridge, croquet remains a sport without any Blues status.

~

Dawson balls

The Tournament Committee has agreed to standardise on the use of Dawson International balls in future AC Championships.

Phil Cordingley, Tournament Committee.

~

Recent media coverage

Television gardener Diarmuid Gavin presented a history of 19th Century garden design on BBC2, in which he claimed that croquet was invented in 1867 by John Jacques (sic), who saw the game being played by a group of nuns in Ireland.

While that statement's accuracy is questionable on at least four counts, the feature painted the game in a much more favourable colour than we've often come to expect.

Our relationship with Diplomatic Travel continues to keep croquet fresh in the minds of the features writers of the national press. The Travel section of the Sunday Times ran an item on Prince Harry's trip to Argentina, to sharpen his polo playing skills. Below listed are "four more sports for aspiring bluebloods" – real Tennis, Rackets, Eton fives and Croquet.

Our entry includes adverts for both the CA and Diplomatic, and reads: "Although no longer a country-house preserve – the British no.2 (David Maugham) is a Mancunian skinhead known as The Beast – croquet is still an essential facet of top-notch shire life."

50 years ago - 1965



Publicity

Dear Sir.

Those of us on the periphery of the croquet world rely very much on the newspaper reports of tournaments to keep us au fait with what is going on.

Unfortunately, this season, reports have frequently been a mangled list of events and mis-spelt names, or – even worse – they have failed to appear at all. . .

Perhaps a Publicity Manager at each major tournament could relieve the Manager (of the event) of the burden and, incidentally, entertain visiting journalists from the popular press; if he could persuade them to keep croquet on the sports pages and not relegate it to the social page, he would, I think, be worthwhile.

Yours faithfully,
Christopher Miller

~

Knocking-up

Dear Sir.

Together with many associates of greater experience than myself, I was disturbed by my own club's decision to allow practice on the courts before all tournament games.

The Hurlingham Tournament is one of the most imposing in the fixture calendar, and to see most matches starting with both (in doubles, all four) players aimlessly banging balls around was a sorry and most uncroquetical display.

The Council of our Association has recently, I understand, decided against allowing knock-ups; and the innovation, besides being unsightly and time wasting, is contrary to the historic customs of the game.

It was adopted, one is told, to "save time".

Croquet, Sir, has acquired through patient experiment a balance, rhythm, and style – in short quality – that appeal to the natures of people who are likely to value the game and be of some use to the Association.

Those who are obsessed with speed will find, I fear, that they will end by degrading the game and by alienating from it its most powerful allies.

Yours faithfully,
B. Lloyd-Pratt

100 years ago - 1915



Casualties of war

In response to our invitation last month to the Hon. Secretaries of croquet clubs (*for lists of members on active service*), we have received a fairly considerable amount of information, of which the following is an extract.

Taking the casualties first, which happily appear to be only three in number, we learn from more than one source the cases of Capt. G.D.Lister and R.Y.Sidebottom, which occurred at the very outset of the war.

Capt. Lister, of the West Kent Regiment, was wounded and a prisoner of war; a letter from him, describing some of his experiences in the latter capacity was published in the "Times".

R.Y.Sidebottom was wounded at about the same time.

The third casualty is that of Capt. Sclater, of the "Bulwark" who used to play croquet at the North Hants club.

~

Payment of subscriptions (to the CA) . . .

In existing circumstances the Council makes an earnest appeal to Associates to continue their support during the present year in order that the organisation of the association may be maintained.

~

Abandonment of tournaments

Sir, May I put in a plea for those who, like myself, are prevented by age or otherwise from actively serving our country, and who are greatly dependent on croquet tournaments for means of spending their summer holidays.

If, as is foreshadowed in your current issue, all tournaments are to be abandoned this season, many of us elders will be deprived of sometimes much needed (and quite harmless) recreation.

If such abandoning would even remotely assist in subduing our enemies, I should be the last to suggest the contrary; but unless the holding of tournaments would encourage the young men to shirk, which is unthinkable, I fail to see sufficient reason for their total abandonment.

Yours obediently,
Herbert Greg.

Editorial

When I took on this editorship, it was suggested that I might find it difficult to raise sufficient content to fill the off-season issues. Not so, and with so much going on within croquet, it's been a squeeze to include just as much as I have.

The publication date of this issue has been timed in order to preview of the Golf Croquet World Championship. As this Gazette drops through your letterboxes, the New Zealand hosted tournament is about to start and with Tim King's centre pages article setting the stage beautifully, be sure to follow the fortunes of our players 'as it happens' on www.croquetcores.com.

The snag with a bi-monthly publication is that something is always unfortunately scheduled, and on this occasion it is the U21 GC Worlds which preceded the Open event.

Nailsea's Harry Dodge was touted as the pre-tournament favourite and good things were also expected from our other representative John-Paul Moberly of Durham. If you have any doubts about how your CA membership fee helps croquet, read Harry's appreciation of the CA Bursary Scheme that has so helped him and J-P, and feel 'warm' about your contribution.

At home, the big talking point is the proposed changes to CA membership arrangements and the Special General

Meeting that has been called for 28 March.

The CA Council look for your support, not only as individual members, but crucially, agreement is sought from member clubs too. Has your club discussed this and decided how to cast its important vote? Jeff Dawson makes the case for change and answers a letter on the subject in this issue.

Back on the playing front, we carry news of selections for the Women's World AC Championships and the International Pathway squads.

There is also the inspirational story of Maggie Cowman's sporting life which features a 'comeback' of a lifetime.

Thanks to those who have asked after my cat. Long-time deaf and now also blind, 20 year old Amber is coping well with her new disability and now managing both the stairs and occasional outdoor explorations with apparent ease.



Chris Roberts

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The
CROQUET
Gazette



Issue 354 February 2015

Front cover: The WCF Golf Croquet World Championship Trophy. See Tim King's preview on our centre pages (*image by Tim King*)

This page: The Editor, wrapped up warm with his 'Biggles' hat at in mid-January (*by Geoff Roberts*)
The Chairman, all smiles following his election at the CA AGM in November (*by Chris Roberts*)

Next issue published 10th Apr. 2015
Next copy deadline 20th Mar. 2015

(Please note that these dates are subject to change, so check with the CA web site)

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Chairman's Column

Slightly belated I know but welcome to 2015!

I am not especially one for New Year resolutions. However, one of the advantages of each 1 January is that we face a natural point at which to consider where we are and where we need to head.

My predecessor, Jeff Dawson, has shown great leadership in taking the opportunity to ask where is the CA and where does it need to head. This at a moment when the CA is not actually already in crisis; so much the better to address important questions with the time to consider carefully and identify the trends around us that will shape our future course.

Council has conducted thorough and mature discussions to consider the proposals that are now before the whole of the CA membership. Jeff and others have

also invested their time in travelling around the country to communicate ideas and collect reactions from the members and member clubs of the CA. This consultation has also covered the Federations, seeking to understand the impact on all levels in the structure of our sport.

Writing at this 50th anniversary of the death of Winston Churchill, we can remember words he spoke in the House of Commons: "No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." Perhaps rather a cliché but often the quote does not include the first sentence.

So, we cannot expect to be "all-wise". But the point is that we recognise ourselves as belonging to a "we" and democracy gives us a set of various tools by which to decide the best way forward for the community that we form.

I very much hope we will all be interested and willing to hear the collective voice.

Whatever we then personally feel about the outcome, I also hope our commitment endures and we know that the sport of croquet is bigger than the particular administrative mechanisms that we decide to be suitable for our current circumstances.

Please give full consideration to exercising your right to vote. Even an abstention will help us to understand whether your Council is formulating clear direction. And also think about what is important to you.

Your comments are a key resource for those who have to formulate the details of how the CA best evolves to meet new challenges.



Tim King

Proposed changes to CA subscriptions and structure

~ Your personal and club vote will count at a Special General Meeting ~

Jeff Dawson explains the proposals for you and your club

As most of you will know by now, the CA Council is proposing some significant changes to our subscriptions and membership structure. We believe this is necessary in order to safeguard croquet's future throughout the country and at all levels of play, competitive and social.

For a game such as ours to survive long term it requires constant effort towards development and publicity to attract new players. The CA has extensive programmes to achieve this, but to sustain them we need to ensure that the money available is sufficient.

All indications are that the current subscription structure relies too heavily on tournament players, while current trends are for reduced tournament play – please see the last edition of the Gazette for a more complete breakdown of the issues. It is time we took action to address this.

Following my paper in the October Gazette regarding the proposed changes, I have been consulting with the Federations and have attended some of their AGMs to discuss the issues further. While it is clear that a number of you have concerns, I believe the majority support the plans and hence Council have decided to go ahead with the proposals as put forward at that time (and re-iterated below). We have also confirmed that this will be the subject of voting at a Special General Meeting to be held at 11:15am at Hurlingham on Saturday 28 March 2015.

The resolutions being put to the vote are on the formal agenda, a summary of which is published on the opposite page of this issue and full version, including the detailed constitutional changes, on the website. Individual Members wishing to vote in advance of the meeting can either do so online, or post the ballot paper, which you can cut out, or download from the website. Member Clubs can only do so by post or by email (which must come from the club secretary, please).

Motion 1 is to allow the CA to rebalance subscriptions (increase club subscriptions while reducing individual tournament subscriptions), and will require a simple majority. Motions 2 and 3 are for changes to the CA constitution which therefore require 60% of votes cast to be in favour. The motions are phrased in the terms needed for the CA to be able to make the changes,

and as such are relatively simple. They should be viewed in the light of our overall intentions, which are as follows.

(1) We introduce a two-tier club membership system. For smaller clubs that have less than two full sized lawns, or access to their lawns only part-time, we hold membership fees at the current level (after inflation). These clubs will benefit from the other changes listed below, while not having to pay anything extra. For larger clubs we increase the fees paid per croquet playing member from the current level of £7.95 per head by up to £1 per head above inflation each year for the next five years.

(2) We make all croquet-playing club members eligible to become Individual Members of the CA with a vote at General Meetings as soon as is practicable (administration systems to handle the changes are likely to take two or three years to become fully operational). This will result in a roughly threefold increase in the CA's membership. For obvious reasons CA membership would apply only to club members for whom a "per capita" fee has been paid and thus non-playing members and members of clubs that are only Affiliate Members of the CA would be excluded. Clubs which do not wish to participate in this scheme will not be forced to do so, but this would mean that their members would lose out. Similarly, individuals may ask their clubs not to forward their details if they wish, but again this would mean they are not recognised as members.

(3) We distribute The Croquet Gazette to the enlarged membership as soon as is practicable. The best way to achieve this is under discussion.

(4) Allow the enlarged membership to enter tournaments in the CA fixtures book. We would enable this by increasing the levy payable by £5/day, while allowing tournament members a discounted entry of the same amount. Tournament members would also be given priority entry to them. This should help to ensure tournaments are fully subscribed.

(5) Once all club members are eligible to become members of the CA, we drop the system of clubs having a separate vote on CA issues, so that only individual members may vote. (Club voting was introduced because otherwise some clubs would not be properly represented, but this would no longer be the case under the new system.)

(6) Reduce other fees for tournament players over the five year period as far as is possible while balancing income.

For the scheme to succeed, I believe we will also need to ask Federations to ensure that all clubs belonging to a Federation also become members of the CA (where they are not already). We believe this is fair considering the degree to which the CA supports Federation activities. It will remain an option to join as an affiliated club only, but the fee will increase to £50 per year (from £35). It should be noted that members of affiliated clubs would not benefit from the new individual CA membership as described above. These measures will be the subject of negotiation with the individual Federations over the forthcoming year.

Throughout the five-year implementation period of this plan, the CA would monitor the effects of the changes, and may recommend that the changes are halted if necessary.

If the changes go through, the CA will be seeking the help of club secretaries in maintaining the membership details. We plan to provide an on-line membership database facility which clubs can use and which we hope will help them in maintaining their own records. Clubs which use this facility will not then need to take any further action. For clubs not using the facility, we will need secretaries to enter or amend membership details on-line once a year, or to forward these details to the CA office.

Finally, I have heard a number of concerns regarding giving the CA email addresses and other personal details. I would therefore like to reassure members that all such data is held securely, password protected, and is not shared with any other parties except as needed for our own purposes (e.g. for the distribution of the Gazette). This facility has been in use for tournament members for some time, and we have had no issues with misuse of the data. Members can, of course, opt not to provide email addresses if they prefer, but our plan will be to increasingly use electronic means of notification for any upcoming issues or votes, so that it is possible they may miss important information if they choose to do this.



Notice of Special General Meeting

A Special General Meeting of the Croquet Association will take place at the Hurlingham Club on Saturday 28 March 2015 commencing at 11.15 a.m.

Dr. I. G. Vincent, Hon. Secretary



Croquet Academy Courses sell out fast

The 'Psychology of Croquet' course appears to have hit the right note – this new offering received an avalanche of applications, so much so that Sports Psychologist Rich Waterman agreed to run a further course on 24 April, and this then became full up in just ten days!

Our mindset expert is obviously in great demand and The Academy will be endeavoring to add other such courses to next year's menu.

Stephen Mulliner's 'Advanced Course on Golf Croquet' sold out within three days of launch, proving the need for more Advanced GC coaching. The Academy is working on making more courses available for the 2016 season.

A number of CA members asked if we could run a Tournament Management Course (aimed at both AC and GC). Cliff Jones has agreed to fit in his well-developed course from 20-22 April. It is entitled **'A Guide to Successful Tournament Management'** and is a comprehensive course that covers most current formats and includes training on computer programs which attendees can use afterwards. It is restricted to a maximum of twelve places only however, so early booking is advised and attendees will be required to bring their own laptops for use during the course.

Demand for the **GC Improvers Courses** is again heavy this year and early booking is recommended to avoid disappointment.

For details of these and all 2015 Croquet Academy courses please visit www.thecroquetacademy.com, or contact The Croquet Academy Secretary Janet Hoptroff at courses@thecroquetacademy.com or 01903 859417.

The Croquet Academy

Photo above: Cliff Jones shows how on his Triple Peel course (image by Ray Hall)

AGENDA

1. Motion, proposed by the Council:

"That the approval required under clause 11(a)(ii) of the Constitution is given for the per-capita rate of club subscription to be successively raised, by up to £1 above the amount allowed by the rate of inflation, at the start of each of the five years 2016 to 2020, for all Member Clubs that have both a playing area not significantly less than 2 full sized lawns and no significant external restrictions on lawn availability from May to September."

2. Motion, proposed by the Council, which will withdraw it unless motion 1 is passed:

"That the CA should expand its membership to include all players for whom a 'per capita' fee has been paid by their club, while allowing individuals to opt out of membership (but not the fee) if so desired. Membership to include full voting rights, eligibility to play in tournaments, and direct access to the Gazette in a form to be decided. This requires the constitutional changes in Appendix A below."

3. Motion, proposed by the Council, which will withdraw it unless motions 1 and 2 are passed:

"That separate voting rights for clubs be removed. This requires the constitutional changes in Appendix B below."

Notes to the Agenda

1. This is a summary, omitting the appendices containing the detailed constitutional amendments, of the full agenda, which is published on the website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1121>. Printed copies can be requested by Home Members from the CA Office.
2. Background information about the proposed changes can be found in the article on the facing page of this, February, issue of the Gazette.
3. The first motion requires a simple majority of both Individual Members and Member Clubs voting. The other two require a 6 to 4 majority of both Individual Members and Member Clubs voting, as they amend the constitution.
4. Individual Members can vote on the website and Member Clubs can vote by sending an e-mail from their Secretary to the CA Office (caoffice@croquet.org.uk); both can also vote by post before the meeting. Such votes must arrive at the CA Office no later than first post on 18 March. Individual Members wishing to attend and vote at the meeting must bring their membership cards or other identification, and representatives of Member Clubs must bring a letter of authorisation.

Dr. I. G. Vincent, Hon. Secretary.

THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION BALLOT PAPER FOR MOTIONS PROPOSED AT 2015 SGM

The Council proposes the motions on the agenda of the Special General Meeting to be held on 28 March, 2015. If you wish to vote by post, either as an Individual Member or on behalf of a Member Club, please indicate your agreement or otherwise to these motions by placing an 'X' in the appropriate boxes, then sign and return this ballot paper to the CA Office to arrive no later than first post on 18 March.

- Motion 1: Permission to increase subscriptions of Member Clubs -
In favour: Against:
- Motion 2: Individual Membership for members of Member Clubs -
In favour: Against:
- Motion 3: Abolition of voting rights for Member Clubs -
In favour: Against:

Name of Individual Associate or Member Club:

Name of Officer (if on behalf of a Club):

Signature:



Council met in the Terrace Room at Hurlingham on Saturday 24 January, which was a crisp winter day, though the low sun in the afternoon caused the Chairman some difficulty by silhouetting members opposite against the windows. The main item of business was to consider a proposal that an SGM of the Association should be called for 11:15 am on Saturday, 28 March, also at Hurlingham, to consider motions to secure the long term future of the Association. These would be to enable subscriptions to be re-balanced by allowing an above-inflation increase in the per-capita subscriptions paid by larger clubs; to extend the individual membership of the CA to include all members of its Member Clubs; and to abolish separate voting by Member Clubs.

After considerable discussion, during which a number of amendments were proposed, the text of the motions to be put to the meeting was agreed with only minor amendments to them. The debate then turned to the question of timing, the overwhelming view being that discussion of the principle of the changes had gone on long enough and, whilst delaying the

January Council Meeting

decision until the AGM in October would allow more time for clubs to consult their members on the details, it would be unlikely to affect the outcome of the vote. However, recognising that the timescale was relatively short, it was agreed to e-mail club secretaries with details of the motions and allow them to cast their club's vote by e-mail.

The formal notice of meeting and the motions are published on page 5 of this issue, together with a ballot paper: The full text of the associated constitutional amendments is available to members at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1121>.

All that was technically just the first item in the report of the Management Committee, and with another six proposals to consider, people were concerned about their trains home. However, the second had already been covered when the budget for 2015 was agreed under the first report given by the new Treasurer, Peter Death. The next was a report from the Handicapping Committee, which had agreed that the 2014

trial GC handicapping system should be extended for another year while data was collected and analysed, and

that the experimental system for AC Doubles handicapping should be adopted, at least until a better one was proposed.

Proposals to introduce Championship Referees for GC and to play Grade 1 AC Championships under Super-Advanced Rules were quickly agreed, as was one from Ian Burrige to advertise for a volunteer to lead a Junior Action Group. His other proposal, to create a paid Development Officer post, was well received and referred back to the Management Committee to put some flesh on the bones.

The Chairman deftly referred a question about a proposed European Masters Competition to the Tournament Committees and closed the meeting at 16:15.

The Secretary had clearly found it stressful, as he delayed the journey north of the Midlands-based attendees by feeding his Oyster card into the slot intended for cardboard tickets, thus jamming the ticket barrier!

Dr. I. G. Vincent, Hon. Secretary

The CA committees have been busy

The CA's committees have had their autumn meetings (at least those that meet physically; the smaller ones conduct business by e-mail or Skype) and have reported to the Management Committee, which met on 13 December.

A lot of their work is routine, though none-the-less essential, such as organising tournaments and courses and making grants, but the following items from their reports caught our eye as being of particular interest:

Coaching - Ian Burrige has completed a very successful first season with the International Player Development Squad, and an equivalent role for GC is to be advertised shortly.

2014 saw the appointment of 19 new Examining Coaches. The year also yielded the awarding of 35 Merit Awards (twelve Bronze, eleven Silver, eight Gold and four Platinum) to CA members for playing achievement. The CA website details of the particulars of this scheme.

Juniors are reminded of the opportunities available to them under the CA Mentoring Scheme.

Development - Requests for grants seem to have fallen from their recent peak.

A small mallet has been developed in Anglia for use by juniors, special needs players using wheelchairs and the elderly.

Equipment - Exploration is continuing in to how an 'elite hoop' might be produced for top-class AC play.

GC Rules - More Examining Referees have been appointed and a new grade of Championship Referee is to be introduced.

ICT - A platform for a new CA Shop site has been selected.

Marketing - Under its new chairman, Brian Wilson, the committee is looking to progress initiatives such as: Developing AC; targeting 40-55 year-olds; targeting schools and university students; corporate opportunities; marketing the CA and assisting cubs, with the latter based on investigating how successful clubs operate.

Publishing - A group is being set up to look at use of social, alongside more traditional, media.

Handicapping - Strat Liddiard has been appointed to chair the committee, following the resignation of Martin French.

News from the Handicapping Committee is on page 22

Brian Shorney and Ian Vincent

CA Office News

Much preparation for the season ahead has been undertaken by the CA's office staff as **Manager Liz Larsson reports:**

The Fixtures Book - At the time of writing in January, the Fixtures Book was at the printer and is scheduled to be sent out at usual, at the turn of the month.

Online Entries - The Online Entry to CA Tournaments facility has been extended to three more clubs in 2015, which means that events at the following clubs can be entered through the CA's tournament entry system. All clubs have been asked if they are likely to want to join the scheme in the future so that we can gauge demand from 2016 onwards. Clubs participating include: Bowdon, Guildford & Godalming, Hurlingham, Letchworth, Nailsea, Nottingham, Roehampton, Surbiton and Wrest Park.

Clubs - The annual mailing to clubs with CA membership forms, Fixtures Book, and the usual tournament-related forms (as applicable) will be sent out to Clubs in February. Clubs should make certain that subscriptions are paid promptly to ensure continued public liability insurance.

Selections for AC Women's World Championship

Congratulations to the four English players who have been given ranking places for the WCF Women's AC World Championship:

- Miranda Chapman** (top right)
- Gabrielle Higgins** (bottom right)
- Ailsa Lines**
- Rachel Rowe**

England also gets two 'member places' and were allocated another two 'host places' for the event which takes place at Nottingham from 25 July to 1 August.

The Selection Committee has selected the following four players to fill this



allocation:

- Louise Bradforth** (top left)
- Mary Knapp**
- Annabel McDiarmid**
- Beatrice McGlen** (bottom left)

I would like to encourage the players who have not been selected for a place in the Championship to enter the Qualifying Tournament, which will be held at Nailsea on 18-20 July. There will be at least four more Championship places available via this route.

David Maugham,
Chairman CA Selection Committee

Announcements of the International Pathway squads

International Performance Director

Ian Burridge introduced the International Pathway soon after taking up his role last season. Details of the Pathway were carried in The Gazette of August 2014 (issue 351) and are now pictured diagrammatically here. The following have been invited to join various squads for the 2015 season:-

Elite and GB Squad

- Mark Avery
- Jamie Burch
- James Death
- Ed Duckworth
- Robert Fulford
- David Maugham
- Stephen Mulliner
- Samir Patel
- Pete Trimmer

GB Squad

Keith Aiton, Robin Brown, Ian Burridge, Gavin Carter, Christian Chambers, Jeff Dawson, Marcus Evans, Harry Fisher, Alain Giraud, David Goacher, Gabrielle Higgins, James Hopgood, Jonathan Kirby, Ian Lines, Nick Mounfield, Richard M Smith, David Walters, Jack Wicks, Robert Wilkinson

Development Squad

Peter Balchin, Andy Brandwood, Sarah Burrow, Eugene Chang, Howard Cheyne, Omied Hallam, James Hawkins, Tim Jolliff, Dave Kibble, Andy Myers, Mark Ormerod, Nick Parish, Nigel Polhill, Duncan Reeve, Chris Roberts, Richard H Smith, Joel Taylor, Andrew Winn.



Juniors

Coaching for Young Players

Saturday 25 April at Oxford Univ. C C

An initial AC coaching day for young players of all abilities will be held as a forerunner to the establishment of a **Junior AC Squad**. This will be held at Oxford University Croquet Club on Saturday 25 April. In the first instance, the aim is simply to get as many young players as possible together in order to better understand their needs, prior to creating a more formal framework.

If you are 25 or under and interested in attending this day, please contact Ian Burridge or Rachel Rowe (burridge.ian@googlemail.com, rachelvrowe@yahoo.co.uk).

If you would like to be involved in National Junior AC Coaching but are unable to attend on this occasion, please also register your interest now.

Finally, if there is a young player at your club who you think could benefit, would you also please get in touch.

Photographs from left: Joel Taylor, David Goacher and Alain Giraud (by Paddy Chapman and Chris Roberts)



Concern about proposed membership changes

Dear Editor,

I would like to express my opposition to the proposed changes to CA subscriptions, having read Jeff Dawson's reports in the last two editions of the Gazette with rising concern.

I find it incredible in these recessionary times with low inflation that the CA can propose a 60% increase in club subscriptions. If my club was to make such a proposition we would quite rightly lose a large proportion of our members.

Proposed benefit:

Like it or not, many croquet players have no interest in the Gazette despite its recent improved readability for the more general player. Similarly the CA is of little importance to many croquet players. The sheer fact that some clubs do not belong to the CA proves this. A slight reduction in entrance fees for tournaments will have little effect as the logistics and costs of travel far exceed entrance fees.

The concern with balancing income streams with attached costs is inappropriate. The Royal Horticultural Society makes a huge surplus on its major shows which funds its gardens and activities; your proposed methodology if applied there would reduce show prices and increase membership fees with the clear effect of reducing numbers.

The concern for the future is valid but the CA should recognise that its demographic will become more time-poor and hence local competitions will become even more attractive.

A greater emphasis on GC would also benefit the CA and those clubs who bemoan the shortage of AC players. As with cricket, changed formats can help fund the game as a whole. How many clubs are like my own, where 1/3 of members play AC but 2/3 of the internal tournaments are AC?

Danger of proposals:

There is a clear danger that some clubs will disaffiliate from the CA.

Clubs will look carefully at "active members" when paying their subscriptions and reduce numbers accordingly.

If sufficient clubs vote with their feet, then one could easily see loose associations of clubs forming outside the CA.

New clubs may choose to join the CA for initial funding benefits and then, once obtained, leave.

The proposals are clearly well-intentioned, however I neither think they are fair nor will they solve the underlying problems identified. Increasing club subscriptions by 60% is a route to decreased membership, not sustained growth. Just look at Tesco!

Ian Simpson, Sidmouth CC

Immediate Past Chairman of the CA, Jeff Dawson replies:

Dear Ian,

Many thanks for your views, which, I'm sure, echo those of a substantial number of croquet players. There are a few points I would like to make in reply.

My main issue is with the statement "...the CA is of little importance to many croquet players. The sheer fact that some clubs do not belong to the CA proves this."

The message I have been trying to get across is that I think this is very far from being the case, although, like you, many people do not realise it.

I agree current activities may be of little importance for your day-to-day game, given the work which has already been done in the past (sorting out the rules, standardising the equipment, setting up the handicap systems, etc.).

However I would point out that you could not play effectively without this work having been done, and indeed I would argue that most croquet clubs simply would not exist if it were not for the development work put in either directly by the CA, or indirectly via those who have, in turn, benefited from it.

More importantly, if we do not continue to develop the game, then I would suggest that in 10 or 20 years' time, croquet will begin to dwindle and die.

We have seen much evidence that bowls is already going this route - do we want to see croquet follow?

Secondly, a 60% increase in club fees sounds like a lot. However, it will be only an additional £5 per person per year (probably less than you spend on a round of drinks after your game), and I don't think this is too much to ensure the game continues to flourish.

Furthermore, this is not a single increase, but rather a gradual change over five years, during which time we can monitor for

the risks you have correctly identified. If too many clubs feel as you do and choose to leave the CA, then we can take action during this period to curtail the plans and hopefully stem the flow.

However, after consulting widely, I think most clubs will conclude that they would rather support the future of croquet than to desert it.

Finally, we do not have the luxury of an RHS whereby we can raise funds from the general public.

It has to come from croquet players.

We have looked, and will continue to look at advertising and sponsorship opportunities, but the fact is that we do not have sufficient numbers for most companies to be interested, and income from these sources is likely to continue to be small.

The only question, then, is how should fees to croquet players be apportioned?

If we continue to try to 'milk' the events programme, then we suffer as that dwindles, and all indications are that it will.

We have fewer active tournament players and the CA programme has been replaced in part by more federation events - and no-one wanted to use this as a revenue generating source when we consulted.

I know the concerns you raise are valid, but I believe the case for change is a strong one.

An apology

The version of the letter from Rosemary Bradshaw in the December issue (*Gazette* 353) showed a number of alterations for editorial reasons to that which was submitted by the author. In such circumstances it is, of course, my usual practice to have the altered text approved by the author, but in this case that procedure was omitted in error.

I apologise unreservedly to Rosemary for this procedural slip and am pleased to give further space to a line in her letter that she thought summed up the main point of her letter, about ways to make AC a more attractive proposition, especially for would be GC converts. Namely that perhaps One Ball could be developed as a halfway house between GC and AC, at least at club level.

Chris Roberts, Editor

Photo right: National GC B-Level Series winner Richard Raby (image by Chris Roberts)

Rotation or fixed tournament venues?

Dear Editor,

With reference to the interesting letter in the December issue (*Gazette 353*) from Nick Parish of Parsons Green CC, on the effects that rotation of tournaments between two different venues (over the years) has on the attendance at each of them. He mentioned that the Challenge and Gilbey in 2014 had a reduced attendance when it moved to Sussex Country CC at Southwick after three years at Budleigh.

This is not the only tournament to move to and fro between Southwick and Budleigh every three years. There are also the National Seniors and the National Veterans. Over the years, I have played in a number of all these tournaments when they have been at Budleigh, but only once have I been to Southwick – and much did I enjoy it!

I live at Newton Poppleford, half-way (five miles) between the Sidmouth and Budleigh clubs. Apart from the huge extra travelling and accommodation costs of going to Southwick, my total fill of tournament play is more than satisfied by entering a substantial number of the events available at both the clubs that are nearby. How lucky I am!

However, I agree with Nick Parish that it would be good to find out whether the total entry at these tournaments might be greater if each of these tournaments was always played at one venue rather than rotating between the two.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Julie Horsley, who often manages these

tournaments at both venues, as she will have details of the players entering over recent years, and where they have their club membership (Julie's contribution follows).

Do many players enter at whichever venue is host, or do most only enter at the venue closest to where they live? And what is the effect in the year of the move?

On a side issue, I notice that some clubs (including Sussex County and Budleigh) charge more for tournament entry to players from outside clubs than they do to their own members, and then bemoan the lack of outside entries. It is obvious logic that players might be keener to try out new venues, if they too could pay the lesser amount.

Peter Hills, Sidmouth CC

Dear Editor,

Further to Peter Hills's letter (above), I did forward some statistics to the AC Tournament Committee about both the Seniors' and Challenge and Gilbey. As to whether players move with a tournament when it moves location, it does appear that, with a few exceptions, local players only seem to enter the tournaments when they are on their doorstep, and therefore will not play in it again until it returns to their home club. I am only speaking for the Seniors' and C & G (I do not know what happens with the Veterans'). I hope that this helps the debate, and gets more players entering these enjoyable events.

Julie Horsley, Sidmouth CC

Lambicaps would work easily enough

Dear Editor,

Whilst undoubtedly the originator of the Lambicaps idea would be better qualified to respond (*see below*), I think there is a fairly simple solution to the specific queries raised in Vic Stilwell's letter from the December issue (*Gazette 353*).

In any such handicap match, the two players would start on the same score, but with the higher handicapper being positive and the lower handicapper being negative. In the case of reasonably close abilities you may then have the higher handicapper starting at +1 and the lower handicapper at -1, with the potential, if deemed appropriate, to go all the way to +6 and -6 for A. Duffer vs W. Champion. Whatever your starting score, you would still need to get to +7 to win. As such, each game could still potentially go to 13 hoops, and you would start as for any current game.

I am sure there are numerous other aspects for consideration, but it does seem to me that the 'Lambicaps' idea does at least mean that you not are playing 'artificial' croquet through the use of extra turns.

Chris Heath, Guildford & Godalming CC

~

Dear Editor,

Lambicaps probably have many flaws, but a maximum six-hoop start isn't one of them (*re: letter from Vic Stilwell, Gazette 353*).

A Hacker starts on somewhere between 0 and 6, and W Champion starts on minus as many points as you like.

Jonathan Lamb, Canterbury CC

Hurrah for the GC B-levels!

Dear Editor

Golf Croquet B-Level tournaments are now firmly on the CA agenda, but ten years ago they had not been heard of.

The first B-Level was run unofficially by kind permission of Cheltenham CC, although the club itself was only involved by hiring its lawns to me.

I was reminded of this when turning out old paperwork and coming across an invitation to 'GC players who have a mid-range handicap' for a tournament at Cheltenham CC on 7 June 2006.

Fourteen players took up the invitation

and, by request, the tournament was repeated more successfully in September with 24 players.

For this, David and Eileen Magee laid on a much-appreciated lunch.

It was a wonderful start for getting recognition for the competitive needs of GC players at the lower levels, and this was recognised by the CA in the following year.

Following on from the success of B-levels, it is great that C-Level tournaments are now becoming much more widespread.

**Jennet Blake,
Eynsham CC**



More letters to the Editor

Cheltenham ring catering changes

Dear Editor,

We hope that many players will apply to play in Cheltenham tournaments' in 2015.

We have always been quite proud of our hospitality but have received feedback that our catering had left something to be desired and so we have done something about it. Firstly, I must point out that the criticisms had nothing to do with the Coles or Open Championships and, returning by popular culinary demand, will be Eileen and David Magee.

For all other tournaments we will be using the professional services of Cheryl Parsons, who lectured in catering for eighteen years before starting her own business. She comes highly recommended and I am sure will provide an excellent service. We have needed to slightly raise the price. The main course (including hot choice) will be £6.50 and pudding will be £1.50 (to include coffee). I think you will also find that your tournament Manager will ask you all to eat at the same time (with some flexibility).

I am keen to have as much feed-back as possible and would therefore appreciate it if you would dine with us at least once during your visit.

Please let us know if you have any special requirements.

Have a great season.

**Klim Seabright, Club Secretary,
Cheltenham Croquet Club**

Barbara Evans 1920 – 2014



Barbara Evans, a doyenne of Bristol Croquet Club, died peacefully a fortnight after moving to a nursing home at Liss to be near her daughter. Although being increasingly disabled, she had continued living at her home, not 300 yards from the Club, and with the aid of her motorised buggy regularly visited us, proffering encouragement, advice and support.

Barbara joined the Club when the tennis courts, where she played to County standard, were sold to property developers. She had been active in the Girl Guide movement and awarded their Certificate of Merit. She had also been Treasurer of the Trefoil Guild.

So it was not surprising that she readily became involved with our committee at a time of rapid change in the administration of croquet.

The Sports Council were committed to development of sport within the boundaries of their regions. The CA responded with the formation of Federations, and Barbara happily slotted into the role of Tournament Secretary, a

Obituary

job involving liaison with the other clubs in the South-West. She remained in this post until being elected Club Chairman for three years, the regulation maximum period, and her final spell in office was as Treasurer.

On the court, Barbara at her best played off a handicap of 14, and she became a Grade 1 coach. Apart from entering Federation matches, she played in all the club competitions, with some frustrating finals, being beaten by Ray Ransom, David Goacher and Lisa Jones. But her most successful Club competition was the doubles, when in 1987, playing with club president Elena Porter, they snatched victory from Ray and Elaine Siemens.

Some years later she developed a very satisfying partnership with Donald Gugan, resulting in 'The Candlesticks' becoming a feature on her mantelpiece in 1995, 1997 and 2003, and runner-up in 2001.

The Croquet Association granted Barbara their Diploma, and when her playing days ended in 2012 the club honoured her with life membership in recognition of her years of service. But her memory will last in perpetuity, as she donated the trophy played for in the Club's B-Level CA tournament.

Clubs prosper not from the prowess of A-Class players but from the dedication of grass roots members. It is the likes of Barbara who are our lifeblood. Our condolences go to her family.

Hamish Hall, Bristol CC

Badgers are rotters

Dear Editor,

I sympathise with Winchester and their lawn problem (*letter, Gazette 353*).

Badgers are becoming a huge problem as there are far too many of them and, for some reason, they are protected.

They have managed to wreak immense damage on my lawn at home, which used to be poor, but is now decidedly duff.

Aside from that they demolished one of our chicken huts and ate the bantams inside it. Further, the local farmer claims that they have killed two of his ewes, about which I am not entirely convinced.

There are three things that may be construed as being legal that may deter these rotters. They loathe the smell of creosote and are extremely reluctant to cross corrugated iron, ugly though that may be.

Their anathema, apparently, is human pee and I have an inkling, or tinkling, that this is true. However, this would be a defence involving too many people to be efficient.

Colin Prichard, CA member but unattached

Remembering Jean

Dear Editor,

Last month's issue (*Gazette 343*) had so many poignant memories.

John Solomon – at Southwick, and his kind inscription in my copy of his book.

Alan Oldham – at Compton as his doubles partner and on other occasions.

Don Cornelius – at Hunstanton and Budleigh on his several visits.

These follow the death of my dear wife, Jean, on 24 November.

After an inauspicious beginning at Carrickmines, she returned to win the Newell Cup two years running. Her other achievements included being runner-up in Strickland.

Between 1996 and 2013 she made many friends 'on the lawn' in England, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand.

She is greatly missed.

Ian D Birdseye, Budleigh Salterton CC

Obituary

Paul Macdonald was one of the first recipients of the CA's Council Medal in 1998, when the award was established.

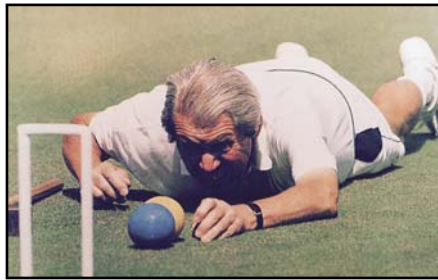
He served on the CA Council for six years from 1993 to 1999 and was given the council medal for long service to tournament play, particularly Veterans, Seniors, Peels, and the Challenge and Gilbey.

Paul Macdonald died in his 93rd year, in December, a few months after the death of his wife Pat. Both were long-standing stalwarts of croquet at Roehampton, Hurlingham and on the CA tournament circuit.

Paul served with the Fleet Air Arm in the war, and saw action in Sicily, Trinidad and South Africa, as an observer in the force's Swordfish aircraft. This involved enduring the discomfort of a cockpit open to the elements and the dangers of deck-landings on an aircraft carrier. After the war he became a civil servant and eventually rose to become Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. After the traumas of the foot and mouth outbreak, he retired and devoted his retirement to sport.

He was a county-level tennis player and became a professional tennis coach and umpire at Wimbledon. Pat was also an accomplished tennis player and she and Paul later took up croquet at the Barnes Sports Club, across the road from their home, both becoming good players.

Paul Macdonald 1921 - 2014



Of his contribution to croquet at Roehampton, Douglas Gurney writes: *'Paul and Pat joined Roehampton from the Barnes Club in the late 1970s and Paul soon became a referee, handicapper (before the days of the automatic system), coach, manager and eventually a CA tournament director. He served the club as both chairman and captain, and will particularly be remembered as a coach and manager. Many of us at the club owe any success that we may have had at the game to his teaching and encouragement.'*

As well as serving on the CA council, Paul was an active member of the Tournament and Handicap committees. Paul and Pat acted as a team, and Pat was always there to support her husband. They gave a very warm welcome to visiting teams and players, but once on the lawn were very competitive. They were a difficult pair to beat but always gave their opponents due credit. Pat could play an unorthodox but successful game playing off 4.5, and thought nothing of taking off across the lawn to her hoop, running it and then roqueting her partner ball at the other end of

the lawn. They were always willing to help and advise those learning the game, which in those days was only AC.

I knew Paul at Roehampton and later at Hurlingham where he taught me the finer points of the game. As doubles partners we did finally manage to win the CA Members' Wine Coolers event at the Hurlingham annual tournament, beating Bernard Neal, no less.

Paul had been a very good player, but even in his later years retained the ability to turn a probable loss into a win. He cheerfully passed on his skills to numerous Hurlingham members, and Richard Hoskyns reminded me that Paul had taught him the niceties of running tournaments such as the Seniors and Veterans.

Paul's human qualities overshadowed even these significant achievements. He was soft-spoken; he moved at an even pace and was always of an optimistic disposition even in the face of setbacks. He remained courteous, modest and supportive until his death.

He was a formidable teacher, a gracious opponent whether in victory or defeat, and a thoroughly nice man whose influence will be remembered by his many friends and colleagues.

Robert Pennant Jones



Nailsea and District Croquet Club have had their numbers boosted this year with the addition of three very small members, **reports Violet Delmas.**

Nailsea's next generation



From the left with their proud parents, we have Cara, born to Carly and Kriss Chambers on 5 August; Daisy, born to Alice and Richard Broad on 9 September; and Alex, born to Emma and Marcus Evans on 10 April.

To commemorate this special event, a limited edition mug was commissioned

bearing the legend 'Nailsea Croquet Club baby 2014', one for each of them displaying their name, club logo, and their limited edition

number! The mugs were presented to them by club chairman Mike Tracy at a club quiz evening when they all made a guest appearance with their parents.

It may be a few years before we see them on the lawns but they are already warmly welcomed when they visit the Club.



All was going well between Carole Jackson and Roy Tilcock at the Ryde GC Open final in the summer, until this rather neat arrangement of the balls occurred. What happened next I wonder?





The 2015 WCF Golf Croquet World Championship (GCWC) begins on 7 February in the Bay of Plenty, New Zealand, running through to 15 February. England will be represented by seven players, while defending champion Reg Bamford and large teams from Egypt and New Zealand are likely to provide the stiffest competition.

Situated on North Island, Croquet Mount Maunganui will be the headquarters of the event, providing six courts. Three other clubs, Katikati, Whakatane and Rotorua, are also participating, thereby ensuring the availability of plenty of court space to host the 80 players.

For the first time, the WCF has allocated places to the GCWC making use of the GC ranking system, and this method has provided 41 of the total entry. One effect of this new approach has been a large participation by Egypt, with 17 competitors, reflecting the strong standard of the players in that country.

English muster three of the top 20 seeds

The English contingent includes three of the top 20 seeds (using maximum grade in the calendar year of 2014): Stephen Mulliner (4th seed), William Gee (8) and Rachel Rowe (18). Rowe was not able to defend her Women's GCWC title in late 2014 and also compete in New Zealand.



She has chosen the latter as her next ambition. Furthermore, none of these three players competed in Cairo at the last GCWC, which took place in April 2013.

Mulliner, of Surbiton and Guildford, has played in the GCWC six times before, winning his block on four occasions and being a losing semi-finalist in 2000 and 2006. He will be keen to progress even further this time.

Gee, of Nottingham and Ashby, competed in 2011, and reached the first round of the knockout.

Club-mate Rowe was unsuccessful in the GCWC qualifying tournament that year, and therefore plays in her first Open GCWC this time. However, she does so as the reigning and first ever female European GC Champion.

Knock-out is first target for strong English back-up quartet

The other England entrants will have their own targets, the most obvious initial one being to qualify for the knockout, as each is outside the top 32 seeds.

Tobi Savage (Canterbury), John-Paul Moberly (Durham) and Nicholas Archer (Watford) are all relatively young and early in their croquet careers, so the GCWC is an ideal learning experience for them. As an unknown at national level, Moberly played an astounding sequence of long-range clearances to beat World Champion Reg Bamford in block play at the 2014 GC Open Championship (best of three, 13-point games), so he certainly has the underlying talent to do well.

England's final competitor Sue Lightbody (All England and Dulwich) has the opportunity to build on a solid performance at the Women's GCWC in November.

Previous winners still at the top of the seeds

Of previous GCWC winners, defending champion Bamford and Nasr brothers Ahmed (two wins) and Mohamed are all in the top ten seeds for 2015, at positions 2, 3 and 8 respectively. Khaled Younis (3 wins) maintains a very healthy world ranking of 26 but will only travel to New Zealand as the coach for the Egyptian contingent. Watch out too for Salah Hassan, who is seeded 24 but recently

English pl on The Tim King previews the



won the Over-50 GCWC. A notable absentee is Ireland's 2011 World Champion Mark McInerney who is not currently playing croquet.

Kiwi pair, World no.1 and Egyptian duo complete the top ten

In addition to the quintet mentioned so far, the top ten seeds are completed by locals Chris Clarke (5) and Duncan Dixon (10) and the Egyptians Mostafa Eissa (9), Ahmed El Mahdi (6) and Hamy Erian (1).

Erian is a graceful, undemonstrative player, who started playing at the top level of Egyptian croquet in 2011. He reached the semi-finals of the 2013 GCWC and won the Egyptian Open Golf Croquet International Championship in the same year (beating both Nasr brothers in the knockout). In the 2014 staging of the Egyptian International,



ayers take World GC World Championship

(wr28).

All the other missing players from the world top 30 are Egyptian, and there are eleven in total, with the most surprising being Sherif Nafee (wr7).

While it is also a shame not to be seeing youngsters Soha Mostafa (wr19), who would strengthen the female contingent too, and Moustafa Nezar (wr30). However, the Egyptians often seem to take a slightly different view than just considering the raw numbers within the ranking system.

Rowe and Clarke head women's challenge

Of the 74 identified competitors, ten are women. In addition to England representative Sue Lightbody, New Zealanders Jenny Clarke and Dallas Cooke, and Mona Hegazi of Egypt are four who played in the recent Women's GCWC in Cairo. Unfortunately, Women's Champion Judith Hanekom of South Africa is not available to travel. Clarke (seeded 13) joins Rowe in being the only two women inside the top 32 seeds.

If the 2006 GCWC is anything to go by, all the competitors will enjoy the hospitality and beauty of the host nation.



Ahmed took revenge in the final.

Chris Clarke has the potential to be successful in this event, playing for the first time in a home GCWC. While he protects his back by not playing many games of GC in a typical year, he has a strong record in the GCWC, reaching the quarter-finals in 2013 and losing to Ahmed Nasr on the 13th hoop of the third game in the semi-finals in 2008.

A strong event despite some some absentees

Overall, the strength of the championship looks sufficient to provide an interesting challenge to all competitors. In terms of notable absentees, England has two: Rob Fulford (at number 4 in the world rankings) and Lionel Tibble (wr23). USA and Swedish supporters will be disappointed because of the respective absence of young stars Ben Rothman (wr17) and Jonatan Andersson



Key facts for the 2015 GCWC

- This is the 11th running of the GCWC.
- First time the GCWC entry will be 80 players (joining the AC World Championship for size of entry).
- The top four players from a qualifying tournament (3 to 5 February) will compete in the main event along with the top two available players from the WCF Under-21 GCWC (1 to 5 February).
- Eleven countries will participate in this Championship, which is the lowest number since 1998.
- Of the 74 known competitors, 51 will come from the trio of New Zealand (18), Egypt (17) and Australia (16). England provide the next largest contingent with 7.
- New Zealand (two times) joins England (3) and Egypt (3) in becoming a host of multiple GCWC. Italy, USA and South Africa are the other previous hosts.

Follow the drama 'as it happens' on www.CroquetScores.com

- All the results will be updated as soon as matches are completed.
- The grids for the block games will be automatically updated.
- There will doubtless be some 'ball by ball' commentary on selected games including the final.

Golf Croquet World Champions

2015	
2013	Reg Bamford	(South Africa)
2011	Mark McLnerney	(Ireland)
2008	Ahmed Nasr	(Egypt)
2006	Mohammed Nasr	(Egypt)
2004	Ahmed Nasr	(Egypt)
1998	Khaled Younis	(Egypt)
1997	Salah Hussan	(Egypt)
1997	Kahlid Younis	(Egypt)



Photographs, clockwise from top left: Will Gee, Stephen Mulliner, Champion Reg Bamford, Rachel Rowe, John-Paul Moberly, Chris Clarke, Ahmed Nasr, Nick Archer, Sue Lightbody and Tobi Savage. (Images by Chris Roberts, Nick Cheyne, Paddy Chapman, Tim King & Rob Archer).

The available space in the last issue prevented the publication of the citations of all 19 recipients of CA diplomas that were awarded at the Association's AGM.

So here we continue to salute these very valuable people.

As a reminder, CA Diplomas recognise those club members (and not just CA Members) who have given outstanding service to croquet, and have been active in club or federation affairs over a long period.

The Diplomas have nothing to do with croquet prowess, and everything to do with help given to other members.

Bronach Reid - The Hurlingham Club

Bronach Reid is a naturally kind, gentle and caring person and those characteristics have been very apparent and influential in her croquet activities. Having played croquet for many years she was firstly on the Hurlingham Club Croquet Committee, then becoming its Chairman from 2002-2005. During this time she was influential in the South East Federation, encouraging members to play outside the club. Within the club she put much energy into recruiting new players, especially women, at a time when the number of croquet playing members was woeful, and she started the process of rebuilding the section into what it has become today. In her enthusiasm she posted notices in the wrong places in the club and was gently rebuked by the Secretary! This was all happening at a time when the AC v GC debate was at its height which required gentle handling by Bronach, especially at Hurlingham.

She has devoted much energy to teaching croquet where her personal qualities made her a popular and effective coach. Her encouragement of the low bisquers to take a more active part in club activities has raised the standards of play at the club in both games and made Hurlingham a stronger croquet club. In conclusion her "kind, gentle and caring" manner has done much to both attract people to croquet and for the reputation of the game.

Graham Rosser - Wellington C C

Graham Rosser joined Wellington Croquet Club in 1993, almost immediately playing for the Club's B-League team and captaining it from 1994 onwards: he played continuously until 2009, retaining the captaincy throughout, the team achieving a marked and consistent measure of success, thanks to his dedicated coaching, advice and encouragement and to his own steady play. Graham also took over the Chairmanship of the Club in 1994 giving it leadership, organisation and hands-on physical work, all that is inevitably entailed in running a small club. His period as Chairman ended in 2006, by which time he had served for 13 years. He was made an

Honorary Life Member in 2010.

Three highlights stand out from all that Graham did for Wellington Croquet over 17 years:- superintending the successful move of the Club in 1999 to its present location at Oake; stepping down as Chairman, turning over a thriving club, with a small but viable and enthusiastic membership and on the playing side, passing on a standard of play, largely attributable to his personal efforts, that immediately led from 2010 onwards to the club displaying enough skill and confidence to enter the South West Federation's Intermediate Competition besides continuing in the B League.

Wendy Rosser - Wellington C C

Wendy Rosser joined Wellington C.C. in 1993, soon afterwards playing for the Club's B-League Team: she played continuously until 2011. Her handicap quite rapidly went down to 12 and she soon displayed the skill, dedication and patience necessary to pass on her knowledge and understanding of the game, by giving unstintingly of her time in coaching, advising and encouraging other members, as well as setting a fine example by her own standard of play.

Wendy served as the Club's Publicity Officer for 4 years, 1995-98 followed by service as the club's Secretary for the next 13 years 1999-2011. As well as numerous tasks and responsibilities of that post, she continued to cope with the Club's publicity as before. Ever a tower of strength, both on and off the lawn, across 19 years, she was made an Honorary Life Member in 2013. Wendy has played a significant part in the recruitment and retention of members, in her match and coaching skills, and in her conscientious and detailed administration of the Club over many years. Her contribution to the continuing success of the Club has been immense.

Brian Roynon - Nailsea C C

Brian and his wife, Brenda, joined Nailsea & District Croquet Club in 2004 and quickly became members of Golf Croquet League teams. Brian also captained the B League team, combining this with mowing the lawns and maintaining the club's large

CA Diploma Awards

poster boards. After only two years, Brian became Chairman, and continued on the committee thereafter. He is responsible for club property and is often to be seen with a hammer or a paint brush, repairing or renovating buildings or equipment. Fire-extinguishers, electrical installations, lawn machinery and a myriad of other items fall under his watchful eye. He observes the need for projects, such as replacement flooring, and oversees the work of contractors. Brian also liaises with the professional lawn consultant and supervises all the work done on the lawns by the Club members as well as creating the rotas and doing much of it himself.

Brian also contributes to social occasions, being a willing shopper, delivery man, raffle organiser and compere. Along with Brenda, he organises and takes part in social visits from local groups, teaching them GC with patience and good humour.

Brian's handicaps steadily improved: he plays in the AC Federation League team and a GC League team as well as being captain of an AC Intermediate League team.

Cheryl Stephenson - Chelmsford & Bentley C C

Cheryl joined the Club in 1991, soon after its inception, and played a major part in the levelling of the lawn in Central Park - the turf removed by hand and Cheryl herself paying for a lorry load of topsoil. In the interests of the Club she subsequently studied (self-funded) and obtained an NVQ level 2 in lawn care at Writtle College, whom she persuaded to make land available to accommodate two lawns. She, with three other members, worked unstintingly on the new lawns and the Club moved there in 1997.

In 1998 with membership in decline Cheryl persuaded the Committee to introduce members who wished to play golf croquet. She has been generous with her time, has served on Committee, coached, and helps and encourages new members. She is known as the 'Fairy Godmother', as tools and equipment appear from nowhere and recompense is flatly refused.

Cheryl is the Club's "head gardener"



LOOK
HERE

(continued from the last issue)

working on the surrounds, trying to improve the standard of the lawns and organises the annual top-dressing party. She has recently produced a laser map of the lawns. In addition to all this she makes a really good knickerbocker glory and pears in red wine dessert.

Richard Stevens - Hamptworth C C

Having started playing croquet at home with a group of friends, Richard Stevens founded Hamptworth Croquet Club in the early 1980's by persuading the promoters of a new Golf Club to make room for croquet. After a false start when the original company failed, the new Golf Club owner was invited to a "croquet soiree" and he

had such a good time that two laser-levelled courts quickly appeared. Under Richard's Chairmanship and vision two more courts followed in 2010, with a striking cantilevered pavilion built between the lawns, followed by a 5th court in 2012. Now Club President, Richard has throughout been ambitious for Hamptworth and has been very much the main force in driving it forward to become a very significant venue for tournaments in southern England.

Hosting the Solomon Trophy in 2011 was a particularly proud moment for him. He has had the vision to ensure the club's succession for the future by stepping back two years ago from the day to day running of the club, whilst retaining an active interest as President.

Richard Stevens is a person of great charm and tenacity without whom Hamptworth Croquet Club would not exist. He is an excellent ambassador for croquet both at home and abroad.

Vivian Thomson - Phyllis C C

Vivian Thomson joined the Croquet Section of the Phyllis Court Club in 1999 and enjoyed it so much he decided he wanted to put something back into the sport. He joined the Committee in 2001 and set about introducing many new golf croquet competitions and tournaments, and in so doing, brought enthusiasm for competitive GC play to a club that hitherto

had seen the code only as a social pastime.

He became the Chairman of the Croquet Committee in 2002 and a year later, oversaw the provision of the Club's croquet pavilion. He successfully fought off a possible loss of one of the Section's courts to bowling, and he also took control of all league and friendly matches, increasing the number of both. Vivian encouraged Phyllis Court players to attend courses to become coaches and referees, and achieved badges for both himself.

In latter years, Vivian re-joined the Club's committee as GC handicapper and coach, and it is in the field of coaching that he has perhaps most excelled. He has encouraged many players to experience croquet beyond the gates of our club. Phyllis Court wish to recognise Vivian's contribution to both their club and all things croquet.

Julian Tonks - York C C

Julian, a founder member of York Croquet Club, joined the initial planning group in 1987 and, from the start, fulfilled a wide range of Committee roles - in turn Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Match Secretary, in fact, as he puts it, "everything except social secretary".

Regionally he has been Yorkshire Federation Secretary, Treasurer, and an active Development Officer, while nationally he has served on the CA Council and CA Development Committee (a role he particularly enjoyed) and chaired the Investment Committee.

Julian is a much loved and greatly appreciated member of York Croquet Club. He is also much respected by other players for his warmth, approachability, fairness and commitment to croquet.

David Tutt - Letchworth C C

David Tutt joined Letchworth Croquet Club in its founding year of 1987 when the club had no existing croquet players but David was a quick learner and, from the early stages, he started coaching newcomers. In 1989 the club team won the Longman Cup at its first attempt; David playing a key role in that victory.

Year in, year out, David has worked tirelessly to introduce and coach newcomers in AC and GC, with unflinching

courtesy and infinite patience. He also undertook the training of GC coaches for the East Anglian Croquet Federation.

David has embraced the recent CA guidance and, for this year's beginners' course, he coached Garden Croquet rules. At the course end, eight new members joined, all playing AC. Some existing GC members attended the course and they, too, have continued to develop their new-found AC skills.

David instigated a witty, informative club magazine "The Peeler". Visitors to the club website often check in to read back issues.

For 27 years David has been at the heart of the club, which has only two lawns but over 70 active members, and has been a major influence in its growth and continued success.

Roger Wood - C C

Roger joined the Compton Club in 1971, and served as committee member, Secretary, Vice President and Trustee.

He created and maintains the club website; expertly lays out and repairs the lawns; sets hoops for tournaments and has managed internal club competitions for 11 years.

His introduction to croquet was as an astronomer at Herstmonceux.

He has managed two test matches, a World Team Championship and annually the "South of England" since 1985, a past winner in 1977.

He and Roy Wallis started the annual Cowhorn tournament in 1978. He continues to play off scratch, captaining Sussex for an incredible 39 years. He has won the South of England Week's Class Ionides Cup for the last three years and was awarded the CA Silver Medal in 2012.

In all his roles, he demonstrates a self-effacing optimistic manner with efficiency, generosity, enthusiasm and encouragement to all: hence the respect with which he is held in our club, Sussex and the CA.

CAL ROS





Hamptworth reach 50th Winter Tournament milestone

Hamptworth reached a significant milestone in January when they celebrated the staging of their 50th handicap GC winter tournament

This is a quite phenomenal number and all the more so as it has been achieved in just six years.

Just as impressive is that nearly two hundred different players have come to Hamptworth to play croquet in the monthly winter events and even now there is on average one debutante at each tournament.

Players attend from near and far and manager extraordinaire, Richard Jenkins, champions Des George in particular because he flies in regularly to play every January or February (and sometimes both) all the way from Geneva.

The winner of the 50th tournament was Phyllis Court's Roger Goldring (7H) and the first victor, on 8 November 2009, was Roger Barnacle (3H) of Dogmersfield.

The Winter Series started when Hamptworth was a two court club but as two more lawns became available, so the tournament expanded to accommodate 16 players a time.

The popularity is again illustrated by the fact that the 50 tournaments have only been short of the maximum attendance on three occasions.

Richard has been just as successful in the summer months and he is keen to encourage other clubs to follow suit. He said: "I cannot emphasise enough, that any club with two lawns can easily stage a very successful GC tournament day in the summer, with 8 to 10 entrants. There are so many mid/high handicapped players out there who want to play competitive GC."



The Belgian Indoor Open was won once again by Samir Patel, seeing off some strong competition, including James Hopgood in the final, **reports John Swabey from Brussels.**

The format of 14-point advanced games with 80 minute time limits in the block play gave rise to only 63% of games finishing in time, but all players won at least one game.

With the carpet estimated to be running at 17 Plummers, only a few peeling turns were successful. The peeling prize (Belgian triple beer) went to Fulford, who QP'd local reporter John Swabey in his first game of the tournament. From the semi-finals onwards, the event became 'best of three' contests and Patel reached his final at the expense of Rob Fulford, while Hopgood got the better of James Death in the other semi.

The one-ball consolation event was won by Gabrielle Higgins.

As usual the hotel Chateau du Lac provided splendid service throughout, including court-side drinks, and a splendid gala dinner on Saturday night which was enlivened, not only by the traditional croquet songs, but also a party game to distribute presents (think Caspar, Melchior, Balthazar) by fast-rolling dice.

I extend an invitation to book early to avoid disappointment for next year's Belgian Indoor, or to visit us in August for our GC Open.

Disused bowling greens to be returned to original croquet use at Nottingham

Nottingham CC is celebrating some wonderful news from its City Council who have obtained a £3.2m grant from the Parks for People Lottery Fund, to restore their Highfields Park home.

The club has played in the park since it was given by Jesse Boot to the city in the 1920s and although the major part of the project is to de-silt the lake, the club should benefit from work on the pavilions, and relaying the three bowls greens as four new croquet lawns.

Nottingham City Council and other funding partners have also contributed an additional £1.3m and the announcement to return the park to its former glory marks the culmination of a five-year development journey which has included two rounds of public consultation.

The views of park users and project partners such as the University of Nottingham, the Environment Agency and the Highfields Park User Group about how the historic park and its facilities could be developed, identified a strong desire to see the park restored and improved.

The City Council's website reported Nottingham CC's Honorary Secretary Ian Vincent as saying how pleased he is that the funding will enable the disused bowling greens to be returned to their original use as croquet lawns.

Hear, hear!

Rother Valley enjoy their half lawn enterprise

Rother Valley CC, from Duncton, West Sussex, held a successful short GC tournament in late September, that saw new club Lodsworth win the team and individual events, with Tim Johnson remaining undefeated throughout.

Half lawns were employed for this singles handicapped experiment which, with handicaps halved and a time limit

of 40 minutes for 13 point games set, the intention was to give newer players an introduction to competitive play against other clubs.

Anne Sugarman reports that, West Chilmington and Lodsworth took up Rother Valley's challenge and everyone agreed that they would like to see a repeat of the tournament next season.



Wells' new Bishop is a former croquet player

Last year the Gazette ran a story on the Bishop of Bath and Wells hitting the first ball of the season at the Wells Palace Croquet Club. The then bishop, Peter Prince recreated a photograph of 24 years before when George Carey did the honours before going on to become the Archbishop of Canterbury. Club member **Nicky Davey reports** that the new bishop, the Rt Rev Peter Hancock, was installed at Wells in June and duly became the croquet club's latest president. Nicky said, "The club normally invites the bishop to open the croquet season in April, but this year he kindly came and closed the season on our last day of play in October. We were excited to hear him tell us that he had played croquet at Cambridge when he was at university".

I wonder if this former experience will see Bishop Hancock become a regular on the Wells Palace courts? – Ed.

A Golden Mallet for Lodsworth pair



Lodsworth Croquet Club added a bit of spice and fun to their last day of season with a novel event and a unique trophy to boot, **reports Alistair Proctor.**

Club member Tony Brooks designed and made the rather beautiful prize – 'Golden Mallet Award'.

The concept of the event was initiated by Lodsworth Chairman Proctor and was awarded this season to the man and lady who could run eight hoops in the least number of strokes, with the shortest time taken being used as a draw tie-breaker. The lovely trophy, which stands about nine inches high, was won by Richard Carline and Libby Driscoll, who will share possession for six months each.



More fun in the Greek sun

Phyllis Court players maintained their stranglehold on the Greek AC Championships back in October, this time with a hand on both top prizes.

Chris Roberts regained the handicap singles title from Frances Colman who won the doubles event with Hurlingham's Sudy Harrison.

A party of 19 players from six different clubs flew to Corfu for this annual end of season croquet holiday in the sun, but what a struggle some had to get there.

Unseasonal rain and high winds diverted half the field to mainland Greek airports and threw the co-managers' tournament plans into flux. The solution was to start the 14-point 'consolation event' before anyone had actually been knock-out!

That event ran right into the last day and was eventually won by Cornwall's Stephen Read who ended undefeated and won an effective 'final' against Hamptworth's Diana Stevens.

Interspersed between days off for sightseeing, the ever-popular boat trip and end of tournament gala dinner, the croquet utilised the Corfu club's much improved three courts fully most days.

Although primarily an AC tournament, the program included a couple of days when optional GC doubles with the locals was available. Phyllis Court's Joanna Iyer took the prize for 'best Brit' and craftsman Nico Vogles was 'best Corfiot', so took home one of his own hand-made mini mallet prizes.

Interest is now being sought for the 2015 AC tournament (5 - 15 October, contact Kevin Carter on 01235-524712 kevin@profundus.com).

There is also a resurgent GC tournament planned for 2015 (8 - 18 May, contact Don Beck on 01932.251178, 07913017178, Donald-beck@msn.com).



Tom captures Tony and his doppelganger

The 'draw and process' format employed for Hurlingham's internal GC handicap competition provided for an unusual photo 'opportunity' for club member Tom Wills-Sandford.

For those unfamiliar with the format, it is two knock-out grids, with different first round pairings, that run alongside each other, giving all players 'two lives'.

After pulling off this photographic trickery, Tom reported that: "Tony Bingham reached both finals of our internal Elverson Cup and it was decided he should still play himself to find the overall winner. This is a picture taken just before the final. It was a close match, but in the end Tony Bingham won."

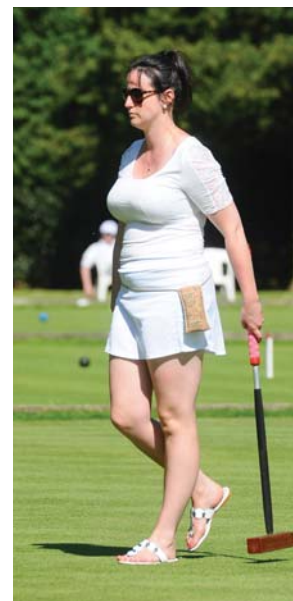
Sophie McGlen wins a close one at Cheltenham

It was a close-run thing when Sophie McGlen won the Cheltenham October handicap tournament by one and two points respectively from Cesar Miranda-Reyes and Keith Davis.

The Hands Ladder (Egyptian) scoring system was employed which gave players two games a day with the flexibility for more if required. **Manager Nick Saxton reports** that, with six lawns available, the entry was set at ten visiting players to join 14 home-based and their handicaps ranged from 20, right down to -2.

Only Michael James and the eventual top trio appeared to be in the running by Saturday afternoon, and by Sunday lunch time Davis had pulled away and was the only one undefeated.

A win in his last match would win him the tournament win, but he faced McGlen who played the four-ball break very well and pulled off a +26 victory to snatch the title by the narrowest of margins.



How the CA Bursary Scheme helps me so

by Harry Dodge



I was first introduced to the Croquet Association's Bursary Scheme when competing in the Golf Croquet British Open Championship in 2013 at Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club, where I met and had the great opportunity to

play both Reg Bamford and Stephen Mulliner for the first time.

Back then, I was ranked at 42nd in England and it was the first tournament where I could see a satisfying improvement in my play. Stephen suggested I applied for a bursary to help finance playing in more tournaments.

As I was still at school, the availability of help with my expenses was extremely attractive.

The first bursary I was granted was for the Musk's Cup (GC Selectors First Six) in 2013, held at Ryde C C on the Isle of Wight. This was fantastic as I had the opportunity to play in another prestigious event. However,

the costs were going to be expensive.

Thanks to the bursary, I was reimbursed 50% towards my travel and accommodation and this allowed me to save up to compete in more tournaments such as the Hurlingham Open.

To sum it up, **the CA Bursary Scheme has helped me to progress with my croquet development as it has enabled me to attend tournaments around the country.**

This financial support has been extremely helpful as playing in tournaments has been essential to my progression.

I have met many people through the sport and they have been wonderfully encouraging; I have been personally invited to attend tournaments, people have shared their croquet experiences with me and I have witnessed many different styles of play. I have seen the different levels of competition and I am enjoying working my way up them.

I am able to visit clubs around the country, which is not only fun but is also beneficial as it is helping me to better adapt to diverse conditions. Overall, I have learnt lots over the past four seasons, predominately from tournaments, in particular helping me with my tactics.

I was recently awarded a bursary to contribute to the expenses for the English

National Golf Croquet Championship (Ascot Cup) in September, where I reached the final. The Bursary Panel recognised that this event would be an important part of my preparation for representing England in the Under-21 Golf Croquet World Championship, which takes place in the first week of February 2015 in New Zealand.

I am extremely excited at the thought of testing myself against the best young players in the world.

I am extremely grateful for the generosity of the CA.

I hope to compete in as many national and international tournaments as possible in the coming years, constantly looking to improve my game further.

Tim King, Chairman of the Bursary Panel writes: The CA website includes full details on the Bursary Scheme, which is available to players who have the potential to reach international standard at either AC or GC but would otherwise struggle with the costs of playing in appropriate events to help developing towards this standard.

As this Gazette went to press, Harry and fellow CA Bursary recipient John-Paul Moberly, were competing in the U21 GC World Championships in New Zealand, which will be reported in the next issue.

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How to apply the GC Wrong-Ball Rule

by Martin French



In the last two Gazettes there have been letters about GC Rule 11 - Playing a Wrong Ball.

I thought it would be helpful to try to set out the way to read and apply the rule successfully in practice.

It is actually more straightforward than people often think, provided you negotiate Step 2 correctly:

Step 1 – A Wrong Ball is suspected. Stop play immediately.

Step 2 – Identify which ball was due to have played last (“the striker’s ball”) and who was due to have played it (“the striker”).

This is where most mistakes are made

– look at the last sentence of Rule 1(e): “After whichever ball was played last, the next ball in ... sequence is known as the striker’s ball, and the owner of that ball is the striker.”

Step 3 – apply Rule 11 to find the resolution:

1. if the correct striker played then Rule 11(b) applies.
2. if the partner of the correct striker played then Rule 11(c) applies.
3. if an opponent played then Rule 11(d) applies, unless ...
4. ...if an opponent (of the last person to play, and who played their own ball) played the previous turn using one of the other side’s balls then Rule 11(e) applies.

That’s the full story. Rule 11(f) limits how far back you look, when there have been multiple errors (only the final wrong ball is dealt with) and Rule 11(g) says if a correct ball in sequence is played, any previous wrong balls are condoned.

Most confusion arises when people get Step 2 wrong, often assuming that whoever hit the ball last was “the striker” – crucially, Rule 1(e) defines the striker instead as the person who was due to strike the ball that was due to be played. The last player was

ONLY the striker IF they were the owner of the next ball in sequence due to be played.

The most mind-bending part is Rule 11(e) – because it covers the one situation where this careful definition and use of “striker” and “striker’s ball” breaks down. So we end up with a long mouthful of words instead. It’s best explained with an illustration:

– Two turns before play is stopped, RaY (the owner of Red and Yellow) mistakenly plays Blue.

– Then in the last turn before play is stopped, BaBs (the owner of Black and Blue) plays Black.

– When play is stopped, it becomes clear there was no ball that BaBs could have legally played (since the “striker’s ball” after Blue would have had to be Red – but that would have left RaY playing two turns consecutively, which would clearly be wrong). So Rule 11(e) is specifically to resolve this conundrum.

– Play then continues with RaY resuming the sequence by playing the ball following Black – so RaY plays Yellow.

Martin French, Chairman, GC Rules Committee

(Inspired by an email from Gordon Smith, WCF GC Rules Cttee. Chairman)

Photo: Charles Ostler and Pauline Donner with a wrong ball (by John Cundell)

Lawn Maintenance by Duncan Hector

Moss

To prevent the production of fresh moss spores it is important to kill off any growth before the plants develop fully. The most cost-effective method is using soluble iron, which can be applied by sprayer. This method really works, but involves a lot of water and high dose rate and the right product. Moss will move into bare areas, and it loves weak undernourished sward. Over-scarification and inadequate nutrition are wonderful for moss, and it will soon thrive.

Why do lawns need nutrition?

When grass is cut and clippings removed, a large amount of Nitrates are taken from the lawn to the compost heap. For a healthy sward these need to be replaced, and this is done either by spreading granular fertiliser, or by spray. The amount of nitrogen required each year depends on the soil and grass type, and this is something that

should be calculated before devising a nutrition programme. By monitoring the results at the end of each season it is then possible to adjust the input level. For example, if growth was too vigorous the input would be reduced. But growth is also seasonal, so more nitrogen needs to be applied during periods of strong growth, which is usually in spring and early summer. Too much nitrogen will produce slow lawns and encourage thatch production, so the right balance is vital.

Why is aeration so important?

The root zone is home to millions of bacteria and micro-organisms. These are vital to the health of your lawns and, like us, they need air, water and nutrition to survive. Regular aeration using thin tines makes pathways for oxygen and water to penetrate into the root zone, so is an important part of a maintenance programme.

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I was born in Wimbledon, South London just around the corner from the hallowed tennis club we all know so well.

When I was two years old, my family moved a short distance away to Carshalton in Surrey where I spent the next eighteen years.

I was fortunate that I went to a local junior school where sport featured widely in the curriculum and then passed my 11+ to go to Wallington Girls Grammar School which continued to feed my passion for playing all sport. I played hockey, netball, badminton, tennis and cricket for the school and local club teams as a junior, then as time went on concentrated on hockey and cricket as my main interests.

An early love of cricket

From the age of 11, I played at the local ladies' cricket club in Wallington. There I was fortunate enough to have several senior county standard and two England players, who coached and supported all the junior members well. Sheila Plant and Edna Barker were top International cricketers at that time and I aspired to become as good as them and also play for my country one day. Edna was a superb batswoman and one of the best fielders in ladies cricket and she gave me some practices I could do in the garden at home to improve my skills. I often dragged my three brothers into these practice sessions but was just as happy to play alone using the house wall and a small trampoline turned on its side for catching practice.

Called-up by England

At 18, I was selected for the England U25

Ladies Cricket squad and was fortunate enough to spend several weeks touring India with that team



in my early twenties. When the letter arrived saying I had been selected to go to India I was over the moon. All that hard work had paid off and my dream was to be realised.

Playing in India

In India we played in front of crowds of several thousand - so very different to England, where if you got a few hundred spectators you were doing well! Even our practice sessions attracted an audience, which usually mainly consisted of small boys offering their services as bowlers when we were batting in the nets.

Cricket has almost a cult following in India and we met many famous Indians. I had my picture taken with a female actress whose face was on billboards wherever we went as she starred in many of the Bollywood films at that time. She was fanatical about cricket and we agreed to have a photo taken and exchanged autographs. Wonder what she did with it? I still have mine somewhere.

One of the off-the-field highlights in India was when the whole team was taken for an audience with Indira Gandhi in the grounds of her residence. It was only eclipsed by our trip to the Taj Mahal when we played in Agra. That was a truly spectacular sight and one I am looking forward to sharing with my husband John when we go there on holiday in February.

Back home, I went on to represent the full England team during a home tour by the West Indies, but my playing days were cut short by my decision to join the West Yorkshire police force. Having to work shifts and concentrate on my career left me little time to play regularly so I had to content myself with playing cricket, badminton and table tennis in the local leagues, as and when I could. I did this until, into my forties, I decided to take a further step back and do some coaching and scoring for the local youngsters teams, as a way of giving something back for the years of pleasure I had playing sport.

Things started to go wrong

This was the stage of my life when things started to go seriously wrong for me.

Whilst I was young and very fit I never ailed for anything and it was rare that I even got a cold. So it was a problem to me that, in my forties, I started to suffer with repeated chest infections. No sooner had I got rid of one than the next one followed hot on its heels.

A few years of this and using an inhaler for late onset asthma as my GP advised, my health was on the decline. As I neared the

half century mark, I had developed severe breathing problems and eventually had to leave the job I loved as I was deemed not fit enough to do it.

A new respiratory consultant had arrived at the local hospital and I asked for a referral to see her.

I got the appointment and after a series of tests she finally diagnosed

me as suffering from a congenital condition called Alpha 1 Antitrypsin Deficiency which causes COPD type symptoms.

The condition means, in layman's terms, that my liver doesn't produce an enzyme inhibitor that is there to protect one's lungs from damage in the case of infection. So every time I picked up an infection, my lung tissue was being permanently destroyed.

My lungs were at just 20%

By the time I got this diagnosis my lungs were working at less than 20% capacity and I had to use an electric buggy to get around outside the house. This was such a tremendous difference in my quality of life which had all happened in less than a ten year period.

A big decision and then the waiting

Having diagnosed the problem, I was then told that there is currently no cure for this relatively newly discovered condition, although a lot of research is currently being carried out across Europe. The only chance of a better life was to try for a lung transplant. To be honest, I was so desperate at this stage that I was never going to turn down any chance for a better life for myself and my family. So I had loads more tests, and a four day assessment



**A dr
come
by Maggie**



members who have enjoyed other sporting success

. played international cricket

at Freeman Hospital in Newcastle, and eventually they agreed to put me on the list for a transplant. My husband John and



I have been together 22 years now but only married six years ago, on 16 February 2009, the day that I was put officially on the transplant register.

I was on the waiting list for 18 months and during that time had five false alarms. This is a difficult time, especially as my health

eam
back
Cowman

was deteriorating and I began to worry that the window of opportunity for the procedure would pass me by. Things were looking grim, when we finally got call on 15 July 2010 and, with everything in favour this time, the transplant of

two replacement lungs could take place.
The transplant operation

After a seven-hour operation, I spent

four days in intensive care before I finally came round and was taken off the heart/lung machine and able to breathe on my own. John sat by my side all that time, watching me while I lay there wrapped in a material akin to bubble wrap, to keep my body supported and warm, and with tubes protruding all over. It must have been a nightmare for him, though in truth I remember nothing of it at all.

While I was in hospital my family and friends weren't allowed to visit because of the infection risk, but they did a grand job writing letters and cards which arrived on a daily basis and kept me in touch with the real world. I was black and blue and it took seven weeks before I was allowed

home for the first time. After a three-month period when contact with others was restricted to avoid any infections, the doctors then advised that exercise and fresh air were the order of the day.

A new start and finding croquet

My specialist asked what what I hoped to achieve with my life now I had my new lungs, and I had two things to tell him. The first was that I wanted to represent England again at sport and the second wish was that I would be the longest-surviving lung transplant patient that he would have!

The summer after my operation I was persuaded by my friend Gill Brent to go along to the Ripon Spa Hotel Club and have a go at golf croquet, which she had tried and loved herself. I duly gave it a try and, like so many others I have met, soon became hooked. I am very competitive by nature and I took every opportunity to both practise and play in local tournaments in my first season. The following year, I started to go with Gill to play at other events and tried to develop my game.

When at the beginning of 2014, I was offered the chance to go to the Women's GC World Championships in Cairo, I had absolutely no doubts and said yes straight away! When one gets a second chance as I have, one's outlook on life is very different and the import of taking opportunities when they arise is fully realised.

The average life expectancy of a lung transplant patient is ten years, but of course if I am going to be the longest-surviving one, I hope that I will have a bit longer!!

Overwhelmed in Cairo

Cairo was the most amazing experience for me, although I was so overwhelmed for the first couple of days that I didn't really do myself justice. It took me by surprise that I was so emotional about just being there. I was so proud to wear an England shirt again. I had some close-fought block games but my opponents were far more experienced and that was a telling factor. Not making the knock-out stage of the main Championship was a disappointment, but I was happy to play in the Plate event and gain as much experience as possible. As the days went on, I definitely played more to my potential and actually ended up winning the Plate event and had a very nice trophy to bring home.

Would I go to such an event again?

I would go tomorrow if the chance arose and I truly hope that it does again.



The future of Women's GC

One disappointment in Cairo was the lack of other English players prepared to make the trip. Sue Lightbody was the only other Englishwoman flying our flag, and we had to fend off many comments from other players and officials about the poor number of England representatives present.

I firmly believe that it's about time that the CA found a way to offer to host a future Women's GC World Championship. The event has never been held here and I think it would encourage and develop our female players if we did so.

It's now four and a half years since my operation, and I am already looking forward to the summer of 2015 and taking part in more competitive croquet. I have learnt such a lot in this short time and hopefully will continue to improve, and so create more opportunities to travel and play this game that I have come to love.

I would like to say a special thank you to Freda Vitty and Gill Brent who were persuaded to be my regular practice opponents all through the summer, and who provided wonderful support and encouragement in my preparation for Cairo.

Maggie now gives inspirational talks on her life, illness and recovery as part of the campaign to raise awareness of the NHS Organ Donor Register, details of which can be found at:

www.organdonation.nhs.uk or 0300 123 2323



Handicap arrangements for 2015

Golf Croquet handicaps will remain the same for 2015

The GC handicap system will be changing – but not for another year.

For the past decade, the GC handicap system has worked well enough for many players but it became clear that it worked poorly at the extremes of the handicap range. The system needed improving – the question was how?

In 2014, a trial system was introduced, affecting only those players with the lowest handicaps (3 or less). The purpose was to test how much the lowest handicaps needed to change and to gather data to design a better system. The Handicap Committee has now collected handicap cards from over 200 players and details of over 8,300 handicap singles games – from both the pre-trial and trial systems. We have begun the process of analysing the data to inform the design of an improved handicap system utilising the help of Croquet playing mathematicians.

The data analysis so far shows that the trial system has gone a long way to correcting the imbalance but designing a new system is going to take longer to devise than the time between now and the start of the 2015 playing season.

It has been decided to continue the trial

system for 2015, while we work out the details of a replacement system in plenty of time for 2016.

We did consider either returning to the pre-trial system, or some adjustment of the system for 2015, but decided it was better to just leave the trial system in place unchanged for a second season, continue to collect data and hopefully come to a system based on mathematical analysis and modelling.

For the time being please keep your handicap card as accurately as possible and when requested please let Martin French who is collecting the data have copies.

There will be some people who are aggrieved by the results they are getting. They are advised to talk to their CA handicapper, whose name can be found on the CA website, and if the evidence supports it, their handicaps may be adjusted.

AC Doubles Handicaps

The trial of AC doubles handicaps that has been running for two years will no longer be considered to be a trial but the norm for AC handicap doubles play.

We recognise that it is not perfect and if someone can offer a better system that is simple to implement we will consider it seriously.

Changing what 14-point AC games are worth in the handicap system

A system of allocating plus or minus 5 points to 14-point Handicap games is to be stopped in favour of plus or minus 10 points as in all other AC handicap games.

Although a few play advanced 14-point games, which will also change to a 10 point mean, most people who play 14-point games are higher handicap players. It seems unreasonable to penalise them such that they need to play and win twice as many games for a handicap change. It is amongst this group of players we find the beginners, the rapid improvers and steady improvers. We want them to find their right handicap level as quickly as they can.

Future communication

I will post information on the CA website and will write articles for the Gazette, as and when we have new information. In addition we will be asking Federations to appoint a federation handicapper for both AC and GC, (it may be the same person) and to let me know. I will then be able to communicate through them as well. Lastly the committee is keen to hear your ideas and any communication, by any route, to any of us, is welcome.

Strat Liddiard, Chair. CA Handicap Committee.



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Coaching Column

by Roger Staples

Many clubs are faced with difficult times at present due to the various austerity measures inflicted by their landlords or by local government. There is also the perception that we are a minority sport that is not very competitive. There is some truth in both of these statements but now, at the beginning of this season, we have a chance to make a difference.

All Federations are blessed with some excellent coaches who work hard within their clubs at promoting the game and encouraging thoughtful and stimulating sport. There are also a number of new clubs emerging whose members, I guess, will not have received very much tuition. They should contact their Federation Coaching Officer, or me, who can give them some advice and arrange for coaching sessions to take place.

For CA members, there is the chance to take part in one of the courses run by the Croquet Academy.

These are aimed at various levels from beginner through to those who wish to learn about the intricacies of Advanced Play. Of particular note is the Supervised High-Bisque Tournament on 13 and 14 August. This is an ideal introduction to AC tournament play, particularly for those who have completed a bronze or improvers course. Help will be on hand from experienced players who will advise on the laws and the use of bisque tactics for high-handicap players.

Other Croquet Association courses are also available at other venues such as Cheltenham, Nottingham and York; these, together with a large number of tournaments around the country, are detailed in the CA's Fixtures Book and website. There are almost certainly one or more tournaments near you. If you haven't partaken before, do take the first step this season. Tournaments are very sociable and fun, and you will find plenty of encouragement from the other competitors.

Finally, congratulations to Jon Criddle, Cheam CC, for obtaining his club coach badge. - I wish you all good fortune in the season ahead.

**Roger Staples,
Chairman,
Coaching Cttee.**



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Publication Details

The Croquet Gazette is published six times per year, usually in February, April, June, August, October and December. **Copy should reach the Editor before the 20th of the month before publication is due.** However if you have something that you think the Editor may be willing to expand this deadline for, please contact him direct.

E-mail contributions, including tournament reports should be sent direct to the Editor, or copied to the Editor if they are being posted to the Nottingham List. Digital images are preferred, but photographic prints may also be acceptable. Please send digital jpeg or tiff format files. Please accompany all images with a description of the subject. If you require any material to be returned please enclose an SAE.

Queries regarding the delivery of the Gazette to members should be directed to the Manager of the Croquet Association and not to the Editor.

The Croquet Gazette is printed by Billingham Press, Central Avenue, Billingham, Stockton on Tees.

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