

The

Issue 359 December 2015

CROQUET

Gazette



**Time for
coaching**

**A wide range
of courses to
suit all levels**



From our files

researched by Frances Colman

10 years ago - 2005



Welcome to the 300th issue of the Croquet Gazette (Gail Curry, Editor) - I hope the recent articles on South Africa and the USA have encouraged more people to travel further afield. . . Closer to home I have been looking at the many websites that both clubs and federations have. It was refreshing to see that there are so many . . .

The front cover for this issue was designed and painted by Liz Taylor-Webb. Liz is a long-time member of the Bowdon Club and has been painting professionally for the last 25 years. During this time her work has been exhibited as one-woman shows in Paris, London and all parts of the UK. Her friendship with her mentor the late L. S. Lowry, with whom she studied, greatly influenced her early work . . .

~

President's Cup – was won by Keith Aiton, who celebrated with a 5th turn sextuple in the 14th round . . . Keith became the first player to have won the President's Cup (2005), Chairman's Salver (1983), and Spencer Ell Cup (2002), and at 46 he is the oldest winner of the President's Cup since 1961 when Humphrey Hicks won, aged 57. Keith is only the second winner over 40 since that time.- Eric Solomon won aged 44 in 1979.

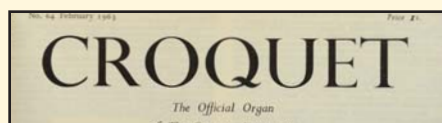
~

Golf Croquet World Championships 2006 – Following the award of wild cards to Stephen Mulliner and Ian Lines and the withdrawal of Don Beck, the following players remain on the CA's suggested wild-card list submitted to the WFC: Dick Strover, David Hopkins, Mark Hamilton, Pat Badham, Julie Hudson and Chris Clarke.

~

Obituary: Leslie Yoxall – Dr A L Yoxall, who was a life member of the Cheltenham Club, died in October at the age of 91. As a brilliant young mathematician with a Cambridge doctorate, he was one of the first to be recruited to the famous code-breaking team at Bletchley Park in 1941. At first he worked on the German naval Enigma, and devised an important technique which became known as 'yoxallismus' . . .

50 years ago - 1965



Season Review (by Maurice Reckitt)
*And thick and fast they came at last,
And more, and more and more.*

How significantly and happily true has this become of our younger generation, knocking on the door of croquet's hall of fame and indeed actually entering it. The biggest break-through of all was achieved this year when a seventeen-year-old player not only made his way into that hall but made away with one of its most coveted treasures. It can be fairly said that John Bolton's victory in the President's Cup was the event of the season. It was the more significant for having been won against some of the strongest competition forthcoming in this contest since World War II and in a company with an average age of well under thirty.

~

Steel Bowl - Miss E.Steel has kindly presented the C.A. with a Rose Bowl won by her sister D.D.Steel. It has been decided to give this to the most improved woman player of the year, and the Apps Bowl to the most improved man. The former has been awarded this year to Mrs I.Riggall, and the latter to Cmdr. G Borrett.

~

It has been decided that the **Tunbridge Wells Club** will open next year. The grounds will be at Shemford Park, Frant – a very beautiful situation – and there will be two lawns for the first year. All Associates can contribute towards the success of this club by telling anyone they know in the area that the croquet club is opening.

~

Bristol – The club had a good season both at home and away. The advent of our two young players, John Simon and Nigel Aspinall – an undergraduate of Bristol University – and the fact that William Ormerod is home again made all the difference to the standard and interest of the games.

~

CA Subs - Please remember subscriptions are due on January 1st 1966. Full subscription £2 10s. Golf Croquet, Junior, "no tournaments" £1 10s. Overseas 1gn.

100 years ago - 1915



An Urgent Call – Has just reached us from the Battlefield. For 80 more Sterilisers without a moment's delay.

The conditions which are arising are beyond belief, in fact the carnage is so colossal as to render inadequate the preparations for fighting disease made by even the most modern-equipped army.

Don't forget that in the South African war 20,000 brave soldiers died from disease caused by drinking impure water.

If you want to shorten the war, help to keep up the fitness on the firing line.

£50 will protect 700 men. When £5 or over is subscribed, the name of the donor can be painted on the sterilisers, so that the soldiers may know their kind friends.

We want to send one from "The Croquet Association of England".

Will you help us to do so?

~

Dear Sir,

May I through your columns appeal to the generosity of Associates, who, last year and this, contributed so generously to my **War Fund**. By their aid and that of other friends, I have been able to supply mittens, socks, gloves, body belts, tobacco, cigarettes, picture puzzles, etc., for various units of the British and Indian Expeditionary Forces, as well as for the wounded and Prisoners of War. The official supply of comforts is much more adequate this year, but with the approach of winter a great deal still remains to be provided, especially as we have so many more men in the various fields.

I should like to be able to send out something extra to the men during the coming months, in particular to those of the 1st Indian Field Squadron, Royal Engineers, and the 7th (service) Batt. Lincolnshire Regt., both in France.

My fund is at present very low and any contributions, however small, will be gratefully received.

I am, Sir, Yours, etc. Helen M. Metcalfe

~

Belgian Soldiers Fund – All supplies are sent direct to the front c/o the Belgian Minister of War for distribution to the Military Authorities.

Editorial

As the year draws to a close, one has the chance to reflect on the season just past and recall the progress that our sport has made in 2015.

Top of the list must be the monumental decision by members to back the Council's proposal to widen CA membership to all croquet players which will have repercussions throughout our sport.

And then we've had Miranda Chapman's fabulous victory at the Women's AC World Championships, so well hosted by Nottingham CC, and the resurgence of the Schools and Junior Championships.

Growth in these two areas is long overdue and is very welcome indeed.

We have also witnessed a tidal wave of interest in competitive play from mid-handicapped GC players, with increasing participation numbers seemingly knowing no bounds.

The Gazette has featured all these stories and much more this year, and this issue continues to bring you the varied themes that feedback suggests you all enjoy.

The focus this time is on coaching, with the welcome news of the launching of the new South-West Academy at Budleigh Salterton, which, together with the established Croquet Academy at Southwick, is offering courses to suit all standards.

As well as coaching featuring on the centre pages, International Performance Director Ian Burrige de-mystifies the top players' super-advanced AC game, which will give club players an insight as to just how much accuracy our stars are striving to achieve these days.

We also have development news, so that you can see the projects that you money funds through CA grants, the announcement of a new A-Level Series of GC tournaments, a look into the world of colour blind players and the unexpected news that Billy the Kid was a croquet player!

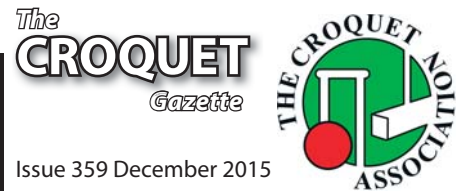
On a personal note, I had sympathy with 'Deliberators' letter last month about being the fellow who does too much, and my New Year's resolution is to assist others' croquet of course, but to actually play more myself.

The compliments of the Season to you all.



Chris Roberts

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Issue 359 December 2015

Front cover: Heralding this issue's centre page focus on coaching (*okay, so the courses offered will probably not be discussing a 'four-ball-banana peel' but they do cover pretty well everything else!*).

This page: The Editor (far right) with Mary Rose winning Surbiton team mates, Andy Dibben, Graham Brighwell and Nigel Polhill (see page 17). And the indoor bottle challenge that the CA Chairman didn't win at his home club Ashby.

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Disclaimer - The opinions expressed in the Croquet Gazette are those of the Editor and contributors. The Croquet Association is not responsible for statements other than those clearly defined as being made on behalf of the Croquet Association.

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Chairman's Column

Recently on the Nottingham List a player wrote "I have seen everybody so keen on winning . . . that I ask myself are any players actually enjoying the contest any more?"

I recognise that this could refer to various aspects of behaviour, but for me competition is about striving to win. Even if this is not always going to involve enjoyment when we make mistakes or feel we have been robbed of victory.

My mind also turns to the England wicket-keeper Jos Buttler. He is mild-mannered and gently spoken in interviews but, so often, cricket commentators use the word "brutal" to describe some of his shots on the field.

For me, "crossing the white line" and showing a determination to compete is the ultimate purpose of croquet and the Croquet Association. Yes, we should

enjoy that challenge, but I am not sure we should expect us all to show a light-hearted demeanour at all times.

However social the context when we first introduce a new person to our sport, we are adding another brick to the pyramid that peaks with the World Championships, which we support with players, officials and helpers.

One of my favourite events each year is the Bottle Challenge at Ashby Croquet Club, where our top seven players join a guest star in competing over one day for eight bottles of wine, that are the collected entry fees from everyone.

Things have become even more fun in recent years by adding an evening party that incorporates the indoor bottle challenge, an ingenious creation of host Mike O'Brian. Proper balls are hit across the carpet with proper mallets at the gap between two wine bottles.

This year, the winner left World, European, National and other outdoor champions in his wake, despite only having a GC handicap

of 8. The evening is full of hilarity but, make no mistake, the players with reputations are under pressure, and defeat leaves them dissatisfied with what went wrong.

In October, Council approved the National Croquet Day on 5 June 2016. I urge you all to consider how you intend to participate.

However fun you make your event, I am sure you will all be determined to show your serious passion for croquet.

And every element of competition you weave into your activity will be an opportunity for potential World Champions (however nascent) to take their next step towards that goal.



Tim King

The Croquet Association diploma and award recipients

Russell Barter – Cheltenham CC

Russell is one of those invaluable members who quietly goes about his business, spots a problem, and immediately does something about it. For many years now, Russell has patrolled the lawns ensuring that litter is cleared from pavilions and liaising with the club cleaner to ensure the club is in pristine condition when members and visitors arrive. He also supervises the annual spring clean.

It can almost be guaranteed that Russell's name will be at the top of any working-party list. There he will be, immaculately dressed, shovel in hand, clearing club boundaries or repainting a pavilion. Russell oversees the afternoon sessions of social Golf Croquet and is the captain/organiser for the South West Federation GC handicap team.

He persuaded Cheltenham CC to be proactive about the re-birth of GC at the club, which was last seriously played in the 1960s. Mainly through his enthusiasm, the club now has a core of about thirty GC players. He has recently attended a course for those wishing to become a coach. Russell is a quiet man with energy and enthusiasm, has made a major contribution to the club, not only with his time but also with material from his own resources.

He celebrated his 90th birthday last year.

David Haslam – Colchester CC

David Haslam joined Colchester Croquet Club in 1980, was Chairman 1997-2003 and again from 2005-2009. He served as Secretary from 2001-2003 and has been Tournament Secretary since 2013.

David has always done much more than expected of any office holder and spent many years keeping an eye on the care of the lawns.

His speed of play is legendary, following his being taught to play during his lunch hour from his work at the nearby Examination Centre! He has now moved to live near his daughters in Ely, but remains a far-country member and returns often to manage tournaments.

Bernard Jones – Woking CC

Bernard has been a member of Woking Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club since 2002, joining at a time when the club played almost 100% AC. At the same time there was an influx of new players who were keen



Diploma and Club awarded recipients: Brian Wilson (for Camerton & Peasedown), Chris Sheen, David Warhurst (for High Wycombe), Quiller Barrett (CA President), Janet Hoptroff (Coach of the Year), Brian Shorney (for Budleigh Salterton), Stephen Read and Bernard Jones (photo by Chris Williams)

to try out GC. Bernard was persuaded to become 'golf captain' and started arranging club sessions and organising handicaps. At the end of 2003, he was invited to join the committee and became secretary in 2004. He retired from that post ten years later having never missed a meeting!

Bernard worked conscientiously as secretary and also compiled three or four newsletters a year to keep the membership in touch with croquet matters. He was a peerless secretary, much appreciated by the whole membership.

He is also a qualified as a coach and has spent many hours over the years coaching both AC and GC. He encourages all beginners to appreciate the pleasure of both games and continues to be a strong member of the coaching team at Woking.

Paul Pristavec – Dyffryn CC

Paul Pristavec joined Dyffryn CC in 1988 and in the past 27 years has given inestimable service to the club. He has organised the club's fixtures for many years and has been Chairman twice.

As club Secretary since 2007, Paul is at the centre of the club's organisation which goes on without a hitch, and he has proved adept at liaising with the club's new landlords the National Trust.

He is also very generous with his time, helping lay out lawns, assist with the obligatory open days which the club has to provide as part of its lease, and he also plays in club team fixtures.

His contribution at Dyffryn has helped the club for more than a quarter of century.

Stephen Read – Fowey CC

Stephen Read joined the Fowey CC in 2003 and then the Cornwall Club a year later. He was immediately involved with the up-keep of the club machines at Cornwall and has devoted hundreds of hours to equipment and grounds maintenance and is indispensable in this regard. He is a member of the club's technical committee and has been known to make parts for mowers and other devices. Stephen is a keen photographer, can always be seen recording croquet action for posterity and, together with his wife, has produced and maintained photographic records of the club's many activities. He is keen to help with the development of new players and somehow manages to find time to play both croquet codes to good level. He continues to represent the club in Federation League matches and has entered several CA Tournaments.

Richard Sanville – Ashby CC

Richard Sanville was one of the founder members of Ashby CC and was a member of the winning Secretary's Shield team in 2010. He has been the club Treasurer for over fifteen years and has performed that rôle with the utmost efficiency. He has also designed the club website and has maintained it for around ten years, is the driving force behind the organisation and execution of the club's learn-to-play courses and, as a result of his efforts, the club has gained many new members. He is always pleasant and cheerful and is a driving force behind the success of Ashby CC.

Events 2015

Chris Sheen - Colchester CC

Chris Sheen joined Colchester CC around 1976 as a young, professional chartered accountant. He quickly established himself as a most competent player of what we now call AC. Chris was appointed Treasurer in 1983 and served with distinction for 30 years without a break. During that time, he managed the club's finances through a period when the club was struggling.

He resigned as Treasurer in 2014 and was then elected Chairman of the Club, a position he still holds. Over recent years Chris has done much to promote Golf Croquet and he is now in the ranks of the senior GC players in the country.

Fred Smith – Church Stretton CC

Fred Smith founded Church Stretton CC in 1992 by inviting anyone in the town interested in playing croquet to meet at the Long Mynd Hotel. Around fifteen people attended to hear Fred explain that the hotel lawn was available, the West Midlands Federation would loan the necessary equipment and that a Constitution could be adapted from that of another club. Fred organised a working party to get the lawn into a playable condition, persuaded the hotel to keep it mown, marked it out, and play soon started. He arranged a monthly ladder, a knock-out competition and club afternoons. By the time the hotel reclaimed the lawn for building purposes in 2005, the club had become well established. The success of the Club in its early years was entirely due to Fred's initiative, and without his enthusiasm, the now thriving Club, with its two lawns in the town park, would not exist. Fred still remains an active member.



World Champion's award puts croquet in sporting spotlight

Women's World Champion Miranda Chapman was honoured with another accolade in late October when she became the first recipient of the Amateur Sportsperson of the Year title at the Nottingham Sports Awards.

She was one of 15 category winners at a glittering ceremony at the East Midlands Conference Centre, where the great and the good of Notts sport, past and present, gathered to acknowledge the county's sporting excellence.

She told sponsors, The Nottingham Post, "It's great to have the amateur award for the first time it has been handed out, and to have a sport like croquet recognised amongst all these more mainstream sports is wonderful recognition.

Hopefully it will draw a bit more attention to the sport and get people thinking about it."

The awards night started with a Champagne Reception followed by the hosts of the night, TV presenters Gary Newbon and Emma Jesson, welcoming the hundreds of people in attendance.

After a three-course meal and other charity fundraising activities, the presentations to the year's achievers kicked off

Chapman was called up amidst the winners from more mainstream sports that included England Cricketer, Stuart Broad, and historical award winners, the 1979 Nottingham Forest European Cup winning football team.

The Nottingham Post delved into Miranda's story in their report the

following day and asked how the 29-year-old Australian born Chapman, managed her achievement whilst being the mother of two-year old son Ollie and working full-time.

She has lived in Nottingham for five years since moving across from Australia to work as a

prosthetist for Blatchford at City Hospital, helping amputees regain their mobility.

Chapman explained that it took: "A lot of dedication and hard work, motivation to find the time to get there and take time off work or take an early afternoon to go down and practice or go down on weekends.

"It's taken a lot of support from the other club members (at Nottingham CC) and my husband to help me to do this but it's been wonderful and the club was full of unpaid volunteers who put on the World Championships.

"It was good to finally to do it, and to be recognised with this award is wonderful."



England won the Home Internationals

England's impressive win in the Home Internationals slipped through the Gazette net in the summer, so here for the record is who played and how they got on.

A full list of all the game results is available as a news item on the CA website.

England: Samir Patel, David Maugham, Jack Wicks, James Hopgood and Robin Brown (photo left, by Paddy Chapman).

Wales: David Walters, Chris Williams, Ian

	(wins)	tests	matches	games
England	3	13	26	
Wales	2	8	20	
Ireland	1	3	8	
Scotland	0	4	12	

England	4 - 1	Scotland
Wales	4 - 0	Ireland
England	4 - 1	Wales
Ireland	3 - 2	Scotland
Wales	3 - 1	Scotland
England	5 - 0	Ireland

BurrIDGE, John Evans and Richard Smith.

Ireland: Simon Williams, Charlie von Schmeider, Nathaniel Healy, Evan Newell, Jane Morrison

Scotland: Duncan Reeve, Sam Murray, Campbell Morrison, Martin Murray, John Surgenor

Members reply to appeals: D.I.Y. and T.I.T.Sa.N.

Dear Editor,

In response to Sally Hunt's letter (*Gazette 358*) on 'Organized post-tournament socials', I urge Sally to take the initiative and assure her it will be as appreciated by others.

Many people like to dine communally, but few get it organised in time to include all and are probably too shy to ask 'strangers' to dinner.

For most tournaments I play in, where I am staying in a B&B, I organise a meal by e-mailing all those playing a few weeks before and then book a table at a nearby restaurant (usually as recommended by Trip Advisor). It's usually best to book for a couple more and down-size as soon as numbers are clear, because up-sizing is not so easy.

Sometimes I also put up a list for people to sign-up by end of lunch, because restaurants need notice of table size. It's also a good idea to post the name, address and a map of the restaurant's details.

It's fairly rare for anyone not staying in digs to come along – even if they are keen when staying away – and they assure me it's nothing personal.

Some clubs organise a takeaway supper in the club house (usually fish and chips or Chinese) and these are usually more popular, and the locals mostly join in, but it does need a club member to take the initiative.

Finally, I think the entry form could include a tick box for 'communal evening dining' and, without it being onerous, the tournament secretary could send one e-mail to all those who ticked the box, to get the set in touch and get themselves organised.

**Dave Kibble,
Cheltenham, Bristol
and Bygrave CCs**

It's all gone wrong since I stopped playing croquet

Dear Editor,

Since the season ended a month ago my Dyson cleaner has stopped working, the back door lock jammed and had to be replaced, the garage roof has developed a leak, the car needed servicing, and after 20 years my curtains have suddenly become threadbare.

Clearly in 'medical speak', playing croquet is protective of domestic mishaps!

Can I ask the CA to arrange all year round croquet, please?

John Dawson, Chester CC

Dear Editor,

The letter from "Deliberator" (*Gazette 358*) will have struck a chord with many long-serving club croquet players. The problem lies in a widespread failure to recognise and mitigate the damage done by T.I.T.Sa.N - a pernicious, chronic and intractable condition: The Inability To Say No.

Coaching TITSaN sufferers in the use of the negative is rarely effective. Measures to mitigate the stress caused by this response deficiency syndrome are best concentrated on reducing the likelihood that a request to the victim is even seriously considered.

"Deliberator's" best course of action is to ensure that neither his practical help nor prolonged presence at club events is encouraged. This objective can be achieved using any of the following suggestions and a little forward planning.

(1) Carefully buttered fingers: D becomes the scourge of club china, apparently incapable of washing or drying items without testing how well they bounce.

(2) The photograph collection: D carries a bulging envelope and indiscriminately seeks to share his enthusiasm for comparative views of traffic roundabouts.

(3) The distinctive sweater: D sports his oldest club sweater - the one used in the dog's basket will be the most effective.

Unfortunately, tolerating incompetence, humouring eccentricity and politely ignoring personal hygiene issues, is in the DNA of many croquet players and it is possible that none of the above will be effective.

D's only recourse therefore is a dash for freedom aboard the white-line marker, taking care that eccentricity of steering confirms his unsuitability for future recruitment in that capacity.

Peter Lowe, Tyneside CC

A letter home ~ Hurling

Compatrioti,

It is with the heaviest of hearts that we inform you of Black Wednesday Morning, a Wednesday Morning that will live for ever in the annals of UCF shame (Uruguay Croquet Federation).

Stantoni and Lambez began well by turning up at Hurlingham on time. That was as good as it got. Stantoni was valiant at Golf Croquet, holding back a throng of local players, but Lambez bombed dismally at Association and was forced to hand over the magnificent trophy



Thinking outside the

Land, labour and sand are cheap in Uruguay. The only croquet-playing country in South America, this diminutive enclave of European descendants is noted for its sun, beaches, bikinis and steak.

There is already a croquet club in the capital Montevideo (population 2m out of the country's 3m), but plans are afoot to start another one in the Southern Hemisphere's most chic seaside resort, Punta del Este.

Here, what the Uruguayans have done is to take a space 28 by 21 yards, level it as best they can, build a 15cm rim round it, line the space with plastic sheeting taped together so as to be watertight, fill it to a depth of 10cm with fine sand (seven lorry loads) and add 40,000 litres of water (two lorry loads)

The excess of water gave them the level and then they drained it gradually, moving the Mount Ararats into the Noah's flood as the water receded, using a giant rake with a steel blade like a safety razor.

Having tried it in a test box, they hoped that the sand's capillary action would retain enough water for the surface to



the Editor

Readers are reminded that the views expressed in the Letters pages of the Gazette, are those of the authors only, and not those of their clubs, unless specifically indicated.

ham lots, Uruguay not



to Hurlingham coach Mark Ormerod while smiling through denti gritati.

Later, stricken by guilt, Lambez unfurled the UCF flag and tried to roquet himself to death on it, but missed.

Many thanks to Hurlingham for having us.

Jonathan Lamb, Montevideo

Uruguay has been an observer member of the WCF for just over a year - it will be sending Lambez to Florida for the AC World Championships in April (good luck Jonathan) - Ed.

box - sand and water!

stay firm, like the beach when the tide recedes, and true enough for golf croquet using bake-painted hoops welded to underground plates.

Then they planned to keep the surface brushed or dragged and topped up, now and then, with water from a tank.

They reasoned that if the wet sand idea didn't work, it would at least give them a level base to build something else on. A week after W-day, the Uruguayans report that the surface is indeed level and reasonably firm, but can be sluggish, and the sand still tends to scuff up. Before they move on to a plan B, they are looking for something to mix with the sand so that it stays porous but holds together better.

Oil has been used for golf greens in the Middle East: does anyone have any experience of it, or other suggestions?

If so, please write to me, Jonathan Lamb, at vozinglesa@gmail.com.

Photographs, from left (1) The test box, (2) Laying the plastic sheeting and sand, (3) Water, raking and settling to a level, (4) The 'safety razor' blade

A brief encounter with croquet

Dear Editor.

I wondered if you would be interested in publishing the following article. Our club, at Stony Stratford, in North Buckinghamshire, near Milton Keynes, is set in a typical traditional English small-town sports field with cricket, bowls, tennis and football all close by.

Earlier this year a visiting Canadian couple, Andre and Meredith, who wrote the piece for their blog "Nomad newlyweds", were just out for a walk in this lovely setting around the town. They are travelling around the world; wherever life takes them.

What an amazing lifestyle!

Roy Healey,
Secretary Stony Stratford CC

~

Nomads may have the best job in the world: walking, chatting, exploring, and taking photographs just for the sake of a warm sunny spring afternoon. You never know what you will stumble upon or who you will end up meeting.

Our second day in Stony Stratford turned warm, so we set out on foot to explore our immediate neighbourhood. A few streets away we came across the Croquet Club.

When one travels, there is an unspoken vision of getting to know the locals, seeing something foreign and unknown to one's daily routine back home, and living as they do - even for an hour or two. Reflecting back on the time we spent at the croquet ground with two older croquet players, I see how Meredith and I, got to have one of those fleeting moments one hopes to encounter when travelling. The best part of these types of experiences: they are totally unexpected, utterly unplanned, and entirely free!

We stopped and watched; intrigued by a game that neither of us had seen up close at this level. "Looks easy," I thought to myself.

Immediately, we were accosted by two friendly local fellows Doug and Roy, who beamed and asked, "Want to have a go?"

Our non-threatening Canadian look and foreign accents must have delighted the small town croquet enthusiasts. Nothing

breaks up daily croquet monotony like young travellers who look lost and vulnerable to learning a new game.

We watched and chatted, slowly learning how to strike the ball with the mallet along with the basic rules of the game. Then Roy handed us a mallet and said, "Come on, let's see what you can do."

Somewhat like golf, but with a heavier wooden stick is my description. Our short practice session was interrupted by Roy who brought us each a cup of tea with milk, and persuaded us to eat a piece of homemade cake with butter.

I wondered, "How did we find ourselves in this situation?" Twenty minutes ago we were just out for a walk, and now we are deep in a croquet match, drinking tea and eating cake with ten older croquet players.

We lost track of all time, simply enjoying the game, the warm sun, and getting to know our two new friends - Doug and Roy.

A full game to seven points took roughly 40 minutes, and then as quickly as we had entered their world, we departed.

Part of me wanted to play another game of croquet, or take Roy and Doug to the pub and continue our new friendship. But life doesn't work that way. We were present in the moment, and now we are onto the next.

Walking along our now familiar path, Meredith and I eagerly chatted about having had 'one of those experiences,' the type that travellers revel and yearn for day after day, knowing they can come at any moment; The type that last and imprint on your memory for a long time.

It is hard to describe to someone that is not used to travel, someone not used to being a nomad. To see the good, trust, comfort, and sameness in others, no matter where you are in the world.

I may never want to stop travelling with my wife after a simple croquet game with tea and cake in Stony Stratford. I will always remember the afternoon we spent with two English gentleman - two generations apart from ourselves - laughing, teaching, and smiling just because . . .



Chris Hudson 1934 - 2015



Chris Hudson made an outstanding contribution to the development of croquet, contributing at all levels from club to world-wide.

He joined the Bowdon Club in 1973, and in his 42 years of membership, the Club enjoyed increasing success.

Chris became Croquet Secretary 1974-80 and committee chairman 1981 with an enthusiastic team of younger players in place, many of whom subsequently played significant parts in the CA or the game itself.

Local initiatives resulted in croquet featuring in a Granada TV documentary and the production of a coaching video.

He was elected to the CA Council in 1982, and was chairman of publicity and development until 1985 and in the same year was appointed to a part-time salaried role as CA National Development Officer.

His work over 15 years stimulated many initiatives, as Chris was always an 'ideas man' (and sometimes controversial), but his time was a golden period for the development of croquet in England.

The National Competition for Schools was introduced; Junior Championships and coaching were developed, and this resulted in the first of many finals between Robert Fulford and Chris Clarke.

The 'National Croquet Classic' for garden croquet players ran for many years and he developed with others, 'Short Croquet' which could be played on a tennis court, and indoor croquet too.

His enthusiasm extended to Golf Croquet, then an insignificant side-line in the CA orbit, which soon became a major project.

Chris was editor the Croquet Gazette from 1985 to 1992, modernising its format and widening its appeal and, with the CA Secretary, he increased the sponsorship of croquet, to the benefit of many major events.

Chris was significantly involved in the foundation of the WCF, which the

Obituaries

CA championed under Andrew Hope's chairmanship.

He was elected its first Secretary General in July 1989 and set about his new task with his usual flair.

He appealed to players worldwide to become 'Friends of the WCF' for a contribution equivalent to £100, aiming to raise a 'cushion' of £25,000, and the response ensured the future financial security of the WCF.

Concurrently Chris had linked with the GC enthusiast Syd Jones, and Sam Curry whose Ripon Spa Hotel had croquet facilities to promote International competition.

GC tapped a new seam of players who became the economic basis for many clubs and a fundamental part of the game's development.

Chris met the President of the Egyptian Croquet Federation, General Ahmed Hamroush in 1996, and this meeting proved to be a major step in GC development world-wide. Egypt joined the WCF and the first three GC World Championships, including the third at Leamington Spa, were organized and financed through Chris and the WCF.

In parallel with GC, support for the shorter 14 point croquet, was rising and by 2000 it was significant enough for Chris to stage, with the Italian CA and generous sponsorship by Peroni, a 14 point Advanced World Team Championship.

When Chris retired from the WCF in 2001, its international membership grown from 12 to 22.

He played too, and was a reliable handicap 3 who played with humour and skill against stronger opponents., regularly giving contact in advanced play, leaving 4 corner balls and threatening a quick win if he were to hit in!

Associates were impressed by that same humour, his enthusiasm, courtesy, and encouragement.

He was elected President of the Bowdon club in 1988 and an honorary life member in 1998.

Chris was a modest man who never publicised his part in any of the developments he initiated.

Thus it is probable that the full impact of his contribution to the world of croquet will never be fully recognised.

The developments in the game in his time must stand as his true monument: "*si monumentum requiris, circumspice*".

Geoff Young 1936 - 2015



GeoFF Young was a man who loved croquet and was committed to the development and expansion of its future in every form. He joined Bury CC in 1994 and soon became a valued member of the Club where he held various positions on the Committee over the years including that of Treasurer and then as Auditor.

His wife Barbara joined him at the Club a couple of years later in what was to become a trail blazing journey as a Doubles Partnership collecting AC silverware and making friends at a host of different clubs.

Geoff was Treasurer for the North West Federation for many years before being asked to become its CA Representative and it was not long before his knowledge and willingness to get involved resulted in him being elected to serve on the CA Council.

When Bury CC agreed to take a stake in the management of the Commonwealth Bowls Facility at Heaton Park in Manchester, his accountancy skills were called upon again and he soon became Treasurer.

He also managed lots of major Croquet Tournaments for the Club at Heaton Park where his creative style of management became well known and appreciated.

He enjoyed playing bridge and he was very knowledgeable about almost every subject you could mention. He loved quizzes and became quite a celebrity, twice reaching the final of the TV quiz "15 to 1".

In the last couple of years, even whilst his health was failing, Geoff still played croquet as often as he possibly could. He always strived to ensure that both present and future generations were given an opportunity to learn and play the game he loved so much. Never more so than by being immensely generous in his support for the creation of high quality lawns at Bury CC's new home in Whitehead Park. His stewardship of croquet financial accounts and the legacy of a new croquet facility are a testament to his loyalty and commitment to Bury. He will be greatly missed.

David Barrett. President. Bury CC

Addressing the problems of the 'Colour Blind'

Martin French looks at what can be done to help sufferers of Colour Vision Deficiency

Ted Sisterson wrote to the Gazette (letters page, issue 357) about the problems for croquet players who were 'colour blind'. We quickly received a dozen responses to a request for comments – so Council established a small group to work out what could be done to help. In this first of two articles, I aim to explain the problem and what croquet might be able to do.

'Colour blindness', sometimes now called Colour Vision Deficiency, or CVD, is caused by a defect in the cones in the retina that sense the three primary colours.

About one in twelve of the male population is affected. The defect is inherited and there is little that can be done to alleviate it.

There are several kinds of CVD but for the majority of those affected the problem in croquet terms is that red, brown and green all look very similar.

The pictures (above, left, right, below) tell a thousand words.

This is a set of new Dawson balls and CA clips and what they look like to the majority of people with CVD

I have no colour vision problem and didn't really 'get' what the problems were – I imagined my son and others with CVD saw some colours, just differently to me. As soon as I saw these photos (originally from the Fylde CC website), the penny dropped.

You'll notice that the first colours still work well enough, but that playing with – or even sharing the lawn with – second colours brings a real risk of confusion.

At a recent tournament, four of the 24 entrants had CVD – so this is not something that should be ignored.

What might be done to help?

Perhaps the first thing people will think of is 'find better colours for the second colour balls'.

We have set up a panel of eight croquet players with CVD to advise our working group. Unfortunately, the panel confirms there is no alternative set of four colours that would work for all those with CVD.

We could consider striped, chequered or spotted balls. Painting stripes or spots onto balls is problematic and doesn't last. It is doubtful that the ball makers could produce self-coloured solid balls

with such markings – and even if they could, it would take a decade and be very expensive to phase out the current second colours for new style ones. So clubs will be delighted we have discounted trying to change the balls!

Most promising instead is to try to ensure that players with CVD are, whenever possible, allocated first colours. This will require a few changes



to the Tournament Regulations and the goodwill of managers to add this to the things they have to worry about.

In parallel, we need to ensure the manager knows who has a CVD problem – a question might be added to the tournament entry form (as we do already for 'lunches?'), or it could be added to the player profile held on the CA database and made visible by the Directory and on on-line entries.

Both AC and GC have existing rules/laws about asking your opponent about the state of the game. At present, this doesn't expressly include 'what colour is that ball there?' or 'is that our red or their

brown?' This can be fixed.

Questions have been raised too about how harshly AC Law 26 penalises a wrong ball – these have been referred to the AC Laws Committee.

Finally, we could quite easily do something to help CVD players distinguish the red, brown and green clips in AC, for while they can often be distinguished from close to, it can be very hard for someone with CVD to tell them apart from a distance.

In an ideal world, it would be nice to make first and second colour clips different sizes or shapes – but at the least we could help players distinguish them in some way, for example by adding a white line or dots to some of the clips – the Equipment Committee is looking into this.

Scoring clips in GC are easier to solve – we only need a distinct clip colour per side, not per ball. So if we always used yellow clips for the red and yellow side, and green for the green and brown side, there would be less opportunity for confusion.

These are the ideas currently being worked through with the relevant committees and tested on our panel. My second article we will be able to announce what has been approved.

With better understanding of the issue and the help of managers and club equipment officers, we can go a long way to helping croquet players with CVD.

Martin French (below at the GC Open)
CA Council CVD working party



The GC Tournaments committee is pleased to announce a further refinement to their Singles Competitions for 2016, with the introduction of a new and exciting third Series of tournaments.

Encouraged by the success of last season's English National Singles Championship (ENSC) qualifying tournaments and the continued popularity of the B-Level Series, the committee has decided to group together those tournaments that bridge the gap into a new A-Level Series for the forthcoming season.

Last winter's bold decision to reduce the number of ENSC qualifier tournaments had the desired effect, in that all but one of the eight events that remained saw an increase in the quality of players participating (judged by their relative ranking positions).

Add to this, the fact that the B-Level Series was even more hotly contested than the previous record year and has now become an established conveyor belt producing players ready to step up to unrestricted 'open' events, there was a clear need for something in the middle.

Hence the birth of the new A-Level Series.

ENSC Qualifiers

Starting at the top, the ENSC (aka. Ascot Cup) qualifiers will see one change, with the well performing Sidmouth Open replacing the Yorkshire Open for 2016, and, as this will follow on just a week after the strongest event at Surbiton in April, the Series will begin with a big bang!

ENSC Qualifiers (Open)

16-17 Apr	Surbiton
23-24 Apr	Sidmouth
14-15 May	Colchester
4-5 Jun	Cheltenham
11-12 Jun	Ramsgate
2-3 Jul	Ashby
16-17 Jul	Nottingham
23-24 Jul	Lancashire (Bury)
17-18 Sep	FINAL (Hurlingham)

NEW A-Level Series

The new A-level Series pulls in all the other open events that were ENSC qualifiers until the 2015 reorganisation: the tournaments at East Dorset, Ryde, Sussex County, and the Wiltshire Open at Hamptworth.

With one swoop this brings them a focussed identity, which ought to help them also attract full and stronger fields.

They will be joined by the Woking Open, which although played on weekdays has been attracting good quality fields for some time, and two brand new tournaments at Northampton and Pendle.

The GC Tournaments Committee monitor quality of the entries of all open tournaments and, together with other factors, such as geography, are able to decide on changes to Series line-ups.

With the end of season weekends already chock-a-block with croquet finals, fitting in yet another one was impossible, so it was decided that the A-Level Series will be decided by points gathered from first to fourth placed finishes in the Series' seven events.

It is the word 'Series' that seems to have been the magic touch with the B-Levels Series. Players have been enjoying the camaraderie that soon built up between 'tournament regulars' who revelled on that circuit.

So replicating that Series style was an obvious choice for the GC Tournaments Committee, and it was an easy decision to adopt the descriptive A-Level Series as the competition title.

A-Level Series (Open)

7-8 May	Northampton
6-7 Jun	Woking
18-19 Jun	Pendle
24-25 Jun	Wiltshire (Hamptworth)
9-10 July	Ryde
16-17 July	East Dorset
10-11 Sep	Sussex Co.

B-Level Series

The 2015 B-Level Series was a huge success and saw full or oversubscribed fields at 15 of its 18 tournaments, and only didn't achieve a 'full-house' because three events increased the size of their maximum fields to accommodate overflows!

Even with the loss of some regulars, who no longer qualify for its handicap 3 to 8 restriction, it's difficult to imagine that the popularity of the B-Level Series will do anything other than improve still further in 2016. The roster increases by one more tournament in 2016, with the inclusion of Budleigh-Salterton as a 19th qualifier for the end of season National final, which they will also host.

There is now a growing list of other clubs wanting to join the B-Level Series and these will also be listed as stand-alone events in the CA fixtures book.

Dealing with these requests for inclusion will be tough for the GC tournaments committee in the years ahead, but dealing with success is a happy problem to have!

Chris Roberts, Director A-Level Series and B-Level Series

Richard Hoskyns, Director ENSC

B-Level Series (h'cap 3-8)

7-8 May	Sussex Co.
9 May	Watford
18 May	Wrest Park
1 Jun	Ealing
8 Jun	Northampton
18 Jun	Leighton-Linslade
25 Jun	Colchester
2 Jul	Hunstanton
9-10 Jul	Bury
13 Jul	Nottingham
14 Jul	Bath
16 Jul	Middlesbrough
30-31 Jul	Hamptworth
6 Aug	Guildford
12-13 Aug	Phyllis Court
20 Aug	Ashby
20-21 Aug	Budleigh
27-28 Aug	Hurlingham
6 Sep	Edgbaston
8-9 Oct	FINAL (Budleigh)



Likely to be attracted to the three series of tournaments (from far left): ENSC - Simon Carter (Dulwich) and Nelson Morrow (Hurlingham); A-Level - Stuart Peters will be at home at Ryde; B-Level - Andrea Huxley (Guildford), is an 'ever present' at Phyllis Court
All images by Chris Roberts

Croquet Inter-Club Championship and Shield

Grass Roots re-booted for 2016 as Centre Stage reaches the end of the road

In view of the success of recently introduced tournaments at B and C level over the last three years, it has become necessary to completely overhaul the Grass Roots and Centre Stage competitions.

These two initiatives were introduced some two decades ago, to tempt newer and inexperienced players into tournament play. Since their inception, it has been found necessary to reflect changes as the game of golf croquet has progressed.

For 2016 the Grass Roots format will be drastically altered. The initial club round will still remain, instead of leading to area rounds and a final, a higher number of club qualifiers straight to a larger National Final at Nottingham in September.

Due to the success of the recently introduced B-Level Series, the Centre Stage will be discontinued. It is hoped that all clubs will support the changes to the Grass Roots by entering and encouraging participation from players with 9+ handicaps, and at the same time highlight the B-Level Series of tournaments to their 3 - 8 handicappers.

Terrey Sparks, Grass Roots Director

2015 review Milford wins Grass Roots; Newport takes last Centre Stage

Tony Newport (Eynsham) and David Milford (Camerton & Peasedown) were the winners of the 2015 Centre Stage and Grass Roots competitions (*pictured below*).

Played at the Ashby Club and managed by Eileen Buxton, the two finals tournaments were the culmination of season long competitions, *reports Terry Sparks*.

In the Grass Roots (for handicaps 9+) Milford beat Hazel Clarke (Cheam) and Derek Deadman (Bury) in the semis and final. And in the what turned out to be the last ever final of the Centre Stage (for handicaps 5-8) the following day, Newport beat Margaret Eccles (Bury) in the semis and Roger Goldring (Phyllis Court) in the final.

East Midlands rule the Inter-Club Competitions

Ashby won their third GC Inter-Club Championship title when they won four of the first five completed rubbers of the final against Surbiton, *reports Tim King*.

This was the two teams' first meeting in a final to be played at Cheltenham as the neutral venue, which ended up being up being ideal because this allowed for the co-location of the Inter-Club Murphy Shield final between Nottingham and Phyllis Court

Ashby were pleasantly surprised to discover that Surbiton were without one of their most regular stars, Stephen Mulliner, but this was balanced by the absence of Rachel Rowe from their own ranks.

At lunch Ashby were 2-0 up thanks to Tim King eventually being seeing off Nelson Morrow's spirited comeback from 1-6 down in their second game of their rubber, and David Bell also beating Nick Cheyne in straight games.

Surbiton played with more authority in the doubles, where Will Gee and Mike O'Brian won a close first game, but the Londoners' Howard Cheyne and Samir Patel took the second by a comfortable margin.

The remaining game of that match was then put on hold in favour of lunch, which was apparently what Surbiton needed, and soon they were 1-0 up in three of the afternoon rubbers.

Patel secured their first point in quick time when he beat O'Brian in two games.

Gee and Howard Cheyne were also playing briskly, and the former turned his rubber around in three games to score the next point and leave Ashby one short of victory.

This came moments later when Morrow, finding everything against him, succumbed to Bell, giving Ashby the match and title.

Championship Director John Bowcott made the presentation to Ashby (*below*), who were supported by several members who had made the journey down the M5 from the Midlands, including Ray and Chris Mounfield, who had played in earlier rounds along with Rachel Rowe.

Nottingham were just too strong for Phyllis Court and won the Inter-Club (Murphy) Shield final for the first time, *writes Chris Roberts*.

For Phyllis Court, this was 'the big one' – the first time they had reached any National Final – and it is quite an achievement for the club from Henley-on-Thames, which has a large social playing membership but relatively meagre resources when it comes to competitive play. Nottingham, on the other hand, are used to such limelight, and this time it was the occasion for their 'supporting cast' to take to the centre stage.

Nottingham fielded rising AC star Omiad Hallam (GC handicap 2) as their number one player, and there was much interest in seeing him take on the relatively unfamiliar GC game.

He took a while to get to grips tactically, but together with partner Chris Jackson (3) they squeaked the first game of the doubles, but then lost their way in the second, when out-thought and out-manoeuvred by the experienced Frances Colman (3) and National B-Level Series stalwart Roger Goldring (3). By the decider Hallam had 'sussed it out' and, with first-ball accuracy, drew first blood for Nottingham.

Phyllis Court's Raymond Wood (4) beat Bob Thompson (4) and Nottingham captain Cathy Turski (4) got the better of a game Mary Gaynor (4) to give her side at 2-1 lead.

Hallam, Jackson and Turski all won their first afternoon games, to put Phyllis Court under tremendous pressure. There was no dampening the friendly banter and obvious pleasure that Hallam and Colman were having in the second game of their contest, which Hallam won with an excellent shot to position from the jaws of 12.

The match point came moments later when Jackson beat Goldring, before dead rubber victories followed for Thompson and Wood. John Bowcott presented the Murphy Shield to Nottingham (*below*) and the supporters of the vanquished the invited the victors to share their champagne.



Coaching cou

Courses offered by The Croquet Academy (Sussex County CC, Southwick)



The Croquet Academy has completed another record year with 263 people attending 18 courses.

Since its inception eight years ago, the Academy has been run by an enthusiastic group of highly qualified and experienced coaches and volunteers who have always given freely of their time to help players develop their skills and improve their game.

Several of our Coaches have received CA Coaching Awards, the most recent being Daphne Gaitley (CA Lifetime Coaching Award 2013) and Janet Hoptroff (CA Coach of the Year 2014).

Special thanks must go to Cliff Jones who has been the Senior Coach for the last eight years and who has developed an excellent set of manuals to accompany the Academy's courses. You only have to look at his manuals to realize the time and devotion he has given to croquet coaching.

The Academy has always looked for feedback on its courses and has used this information to widen and extend its offering over the years.

2015 saw the introduction of a course on the psychological approach to the game. Run by eminent sports psychologist Rich Waterman, the course proved so popular that a second one was organized and was also fully attended.

The Academy is fortunate that Rich has agreed to take time out from his busy schedule to run another course in 2016.

Two other innovations in 2015 were the introduction of a higher level GC Course lead by Stephen Mulliner, and the development of one day follow-up courses.

Dates	Course	Cost	Ideal Hcp	Leader
15 Apr	Croquet Psychology – Get the mindset edge	£55	n/a	Rich Waterman
16-18 Apr	AC Triple Peel	£85	4 or less	Cliff Jones
20-21 Apr	AC Beginners and Improvers	£55	18+	Cliff Jones
22-24 Apr	AC Laws and Referees	£45	n/a	Cliff Jones
23-24 Apr	AC Intro and Development in Advanced Play	£55	6-14	Luc Berthouze
25 Apr	Club Handicappers Workshop	£40	n/a	Cliff Jones
25 Apr	GC Beginners & High Handicappers	£40	10-12	Daphne Gaitley
27-28 Apr	AC Development in Handicap Play	£55	12-18	Clive Hayton
12 May	GC Advanced Play	£40	4 & under	Daphne Gaitley
17-18 May	AC & GC Coaches Training Course (CTC)	£50	n/a	Daphne Gaitley
25 May	GC Improvers	£40	4-9	Janet Hoptroff
4 Jun	GC Championship Masterclass	£45	4 or less	Martin French
23 June	AC Beginners & Improvers – follow-up	£40	18+	Steve Lewendon
24 June	GC High Bisque Tournament	£30	10+	Jonathan Isaacs
1-2 Aug	AC High Bisque Tournament (incl. Special Event for very high bisquers – coach assisted)	£26	14-20	Frances Low
		£40	22+	
21-22 Sep	AC & GC Coaches Training Course (Higher Grades) (CTC)	£50		Cliff Jones

Both innovations were well attended and have been built into the 2016 programme.

In 2016, The Croquet Academy, whilst offering a number of tried and tested courses, will be introducing the following:

(1) A One day Handicappers Workshop

This course is designed to train club handicappers how to assess members' handicaps both initially and on an ongoing basis. This course is suitable for existing and aspiring club handicappers.

(2) Three levels of GC Coaching Courses

GC Advanced Play - handicap 4 & below.
GC Improvers - handicap 4 to 9.
GC Beginners and High Handicappers - handicap 10+.

(3) GC Coach-Assisted High Bisque Tournament

An ideal one-day introduction to GC tournament play. Coaching will be given before and after each game.

(4) GC Championship Masterclass

This special one day Masterclass is aimed at helping low handicap GC players wishing to start or improve their performance in Championship events.

(5) Higher Grade Coaches Training Course

This course is aimed at AC and GC Coaches who wish to coach at a level above Club Coach. The course is also ideal for existing Higher Grade Coaches who wish to refresh and improve their existing skills.

Full information on Becoming a Coach and the Coach Qualification Process can be found on the CA website <http://www.croquet.org.uk> or in the CA Fixtures Calendar.

You can enter on line at www.thecroquetacademy.com and if you wish to discuss details further contact Janet Hoptroff at courses@thecroquetacademy.com or by phone on 01903 859417.

**Jonathan Isaacs,
Chairman, The Croquet Academy**



ourses for 2016

Courses offered by The South West Croquet Academy (Budleigh-Salterton CC)

Dates	Course	CA member	Non-member	Lead Coach
1-3 March	AC Laws and Referees	£75	£90	Cliff Jones
10 March	The Psychology of Winning	£38	£50	Dr Stewart Cotterill
11 March	Leading your team to success	£80	£90	Dr Stewart Cotterill
12 & 13 Mar	Learn how to be a coach (AC and GC)	£50	£60	Cliff Jones
15-17 Mar	Advance your AC play	£105	£130	Cliff Jones
5 & 6 April	So you call THAT a 4 ball break?	£70	£85	Sarah Hayes
7 & 8 April	TP or not TP? Now that is the question!	£70	£85	Sarah Hayes
14 & 15 Apr	Winning ways to get you to B-class (AC)	£70	£85	Dave Kibble
19 April	Play better Golf Croquet	£35	£45	Ros Key-Pugh & Mo Boys
20 April	Play better Golf Croquet	£35	£45	Ros Key-Pugh & Mo Boys
25 & 26 Apr	Getting from B to A (AC)	£70	£85	Dave Kibble
28 & 29 Apr	Beyond basic Association Croquet	£70	£85	Cliff Jones
30 April	Golf Croquet Rules	£25	£30	Cliff Jones
12 May	Advanced Golf Croquet	£35	£45	Stephen Mulliner
27 May	Coaching Clinic (AC and GC)	£35	£45	Dave Kibble
1 June	Advanced Golf Croquet	£35	£45	Lionel Tibble
2 June	Advanced Golf Croquet	£35	£45	Lionel Tibble
6 June	Practical Competitive Golf Croquet	£35	£45	Dave Kibble
7 June	Practical Competitive Golf Croquet	£35	£45	Dave Kibble
16 June	Out-thinking the Opposition	£80	£90	Dr Stewart Cotterill
17 June	Sports Psychology for Coaches	£80	£90	Dr Stewart Cotterill

In May of this year, Budleigh Salterton CC decided to launch a new venture – the South West Croquet Academy (SWCA). There were several reasons for this. Apart from wishing to see the standard of croquet improve in the South West, the income generated would help to offset the costs of an impending and extensive building maintenance programme. In addition, it was hoped that the exposure generated by the SWCA would attract even more tournament players to the Club, once they had experienced the excellent facilities on offer – particularly the top quality lawns.

A Working Group of four club officers was formed, with the remit to have the SWCA operational in March 2016. Apart from routinely reporting progress to the Club's General Committee, the Working Group was allowed to operate autonomously.

It was quickly decided that the SWCA should take a new approach to coaching by inviting some of the best coaches, players and experts to lead the great majority of our courses and workshops. The take-up from the people we invited was incredible

and, throughout this project, we have been delighted at the level of enthusiastic support for the SWCA's concept: 'Learn from the Best!'

We have tried to develop a broad mix of courses for our inaugural year which would be suited to the needs of most players, from near-beginners to very low handicap players.

We have now arrived at what we think is a well-balanced combination of AC, GC and Sports Psychology courses and workshops presented by (in no particular order) Sarah Hayes, Ros Key-Pugh and Mo Boys, Lionel Tibble, Dr Stewart Cotterill, Dave Kibble, Stephen Mulliner and Cliff Jones.

I suspect that many of you will be very familiar with most of these names, but Stewart Cotterill may well be a stranger. Dr Cotterill is in fact one of the leading sports psychologists in the country and has worked during the last fifteen years with the English cricket team, several rugby and other sports clubs, as well as many athletes at national and international level.

The SWCA has its own dedicated website



at www.southwestcroquetacademy.co.uk and you can see our full range of courses there and also in the 2016 CA Fixtures Calendar. The website has been designed so that you can enrol on a course with ease and pay securely.

Budleigh CC has recently started to use a local five-star delicatessen to provide catering and so we think that delegates on our courses will be delighted to be offered great food as well as top courses given by top coaches. Feedback to date suggests there is considerable support for this new venture and we are delighted that Dave Kibble, the newly-appointed Chairman of the CA's Coaching Committee, has agreed to officially open the SWCA in March.

Photos (clockwise) Rich Waterman, Cliff Jones, Sarah Hayes, Lionel Tibble, and a class at Southwick (by Ray Hall and Chris Roberts)





AC Super-Advanced

International Performance Director Ian Burridge, de-mystifies the expert players' game



This article is intended as an introduction to super advanced play, covering the rule variations and basic tactical options. There is nothing unduly difficult about the super advanced game and for most players the tactical variations and greater interactivity offered, will make for a more enjoyable game, even at a non-expert level.

The Rule Variations

The first stroke of the game must either hit a hoop (or go through it), the peg or leave the court (otherwise the opponent has the option to ask for it to be placed by the first player on a baulk line).

The other change is the addition of an extra lift at hoop 4. This leads to consequential changes that running hoop 4 and 1-back on your first break concedes a contact and running hoop 4, 1-back and 4-back on your first break concedes a free placement/lift to position (the opponent can pick up their ball and play it from wherever they want on the lawn, including within the yard line area).

Conceptually, the changes are probably easiest thought about, as only affecting the first turn in which each player runs hoop 4 (as set out in the previous paragraph), After a player has run hoop 4 for the first time, subsequent turns play exactly as a normal advanced game, with the only exception that if there is a breakdown between 4 and 1-back a lift is conceded (NB there is no reason to intentionally stop between 4 and

1-back on the second break, as making both still only concedes a lift).

If any ball (including the striker's) has been pegged out in the game the maximum penalty becomes contact and not a lift to position (e.g. after a TPO).

Remember, if you are in doubt at any point you can always ask your opponent or a referee.

The Opening

The rule change to the first turn of the game means that a 'Supershot' opening cannot be played except by attempting to deflect it off hoop 5. Even if the attempt to hit hoop 5 is successful the Supershot ball is likely to end up far less favourably placed than in a normal advanced game. For most players, particularly those new to super advanced, this renders the Supershot opening effectively unplayable.

First Break Strategies

When you get your first break you have a new tactical decision to make, there are three essential strategies: conceding contact; two lifts; or attempting a sextuple (although if you are new to super-advanced this is unlikely to be for you!).

Contact

Taking your first break to 4-back and conceding contact is probably the most popular option at the present time, particularly if either you or your opponent is a good shot. With the opponent clips on 1 and 1 a good contact leave is to place your hoop 1 ball in corner II (after 1-back), place the opponent balls 1 or 2 yards N and W or corner IV (after 3-back) and hit your 4-back ball into corner III at the end of the turn.

Generally, contact leaves will see the opponents balls left together diagonally across a non-lift corner.

Two Lifts

This strategy can be implemented by taking the first break to either hoop 6 or 1-back. The plan is then to play a second break with the same ball resulting in clips on 1 and 4-back so it is important at the end of your first break to ensure that you leave the rush for the correct ball - don't go on autopilot and leave a rush for the hoop 1 ball! Whether deciding to stop at 6 or 1-back, a Diagonal Spread is a good leave to aim for and often easier to make than in a normal advanced game. This is because the middle hoops, which you are making prior to attempting the leave, are more in the

vicinity of the peg, where the critical ball needs to be placed (NB if stopping at 1-back it is important to make sure that this ball will rush to 1-back).

As the out-player facing one of these leaves, it should be noted that the shot from A baulk at the ball by the peg missing into Corner 3 is an attractive defensive option, particularly if the opponent has stopped at 1-back.

Sextuple

Playing a break to 1-back, conceding a lift and then attempting a sextuple with the hoop 1 ball is an expert tactic.

Lift to position

Conceding a lift to position by taking the first break beyond 4-back is unattractive, as not only does it concede a good opportunity to your opponent, you also concede the advantage of having had the first break. Getting to 4-back first is a significant advantage, given all the extra opportunities you will have to regain the innings should you lose it. Making it easy for your opponent to peg you out, conceding only a contact, nullifies this advantage.

What if your opponent has already made a break?

With the opponent having made a break to 6 or 1-back it is reasonable to still make your decisions as per the previous sections. However if your opponent has already made a break to 4-back, this does tend to force your hand a bit more. If you are a competent 'tripler' then a TPO becomes more attractive than in a normal advanced game, as the penalty remains the same (i.e. contact for the opponent), but many games are lost by breaking down attempting this manoeuvre. POP tactics (peeling the opponent) offer a further alternative.

Conceding two lifts, rather than contact, becomes more preferable in this scenario, forcing the opponent to hit a lift to regain the innings, rather than conceding it to them with a contact when they are potentially one break away from winning.

A follow-up article will appear in the next edition looking at the tactical options available in more detail.



Right: Even experts like Jonathan Kirby have to plan. Top: Ian Burridge with the Development Squad at Cheltenham (Chris Roberts)

The Coaching Column

by Dave Kibble, *Coaching Committee Chairman*



It's been over a decade since I sat on the Coaching Committee, so in this issue I'd like to introduce myself and the direction I'd like to see coaching take.

But first we should thank my predecessor Roger Staples who has done much to improve croquet coaching – his initiatives will be sustained and enhanced. Of course he would have achieved much less without the help of the Federation Coaching Officers, Committee members, and coaches around the country whose support I hope to enjoy too.

I started playing croquet in 1992 and quickly became obsessed with the fascinating game: practising several times a week, and playing well over a hundred tournament games a year. I believe I was the first person to play in all four Eights, sadly in the wrong order, and the first person to hold all four CA Merit Awards (in the right order). As an active Examining Coach, I train and qualify coaches, and run courses in both GC and AC, sometimes internationally.

Building on Ian BurrIDGE's great success with Pods, with which I urge developing B-Class players to register, we will do something similar for GC and for higher

handicaps.

We want to get coaches and players more easily connected to help players fulfil their potential. We want coaches to have access to more support, to share materials and the experience to grow together. We will build on the great work done and planned at the Academies in the South by working with them to define a package that will make it easier for more northerly clubs to become centres of coaching excellence, by sharing experiences and coaching materials.

We will improve our recommendations to club coaches on getting people started, and improve the materials available to support coaches. Finally, I hope we can develop better skills coaching around the country.

I offer hearty congratulations to Alison Girdlestone, who obtained her Bronze Merit Award early in September and then her Silver six weeks later, whilst playing for the CA against the Irish CA – I'm sure that's the first of many international representations for her.

(See Alison's article on Sponsorship below).

On the facing page is a coaching article

from Ian BurrIDGE on the Super-Advanced game.

This doesn't mark an abandonment of the grass-roots but helps players moving through the B-Class to be less taken by surprise when they first encounter these rules. The aim is to encourage players to try this more interactive form of play before they are obliged to do so in higher level tournaments.

'Coach of the Year' Your nominations please

Each year the CA recognises as Coach of the Year, a coach who has provided outstanding service. If you have been assisted by an outstanding coach and know they've helped many others too, please recommend them for this award, by sending a citation outlining their croquet coaching contribution to the Coaching Committee Chairman, Dave Kibble before the closing date, 10 January. DaveKibble@gmail.com

Newcomers to the sport of croquet are often told all they need is 'a pair of flat shoes' to get started, and it's true. The equipment is provided, the lawns are laid out and the mallets are sat waiting for eager new members in the club house. Not only is the first session usually free, but the initial training less than a weekly grocery shop. Even the full membership at most clubs would not be much more than a nice bottle of Rioja each week, making croquet incredibly affordable and accessible to people with a passion for a sport with a social yet competitive streak.

But, what happens when a beginner gets better?

What happens when the player wants to get even better than that?

I have been in exactly this situation. With the assistance of my handicap committee and a few good wins, my handicap dropped from 20 to 5 in a season. I started the season playing for my club's B-League team and finished the season playing for Croquet Association (UK)



Making a break with Sponsorship by Alison Girdlestone



against Croquet Association of Ireland.

The extra costs involved in achieving my success - tournaments, coaching, travel and accommodation - with the exception of my trusty mallet which was generously provided by my dad, would not have been

achievable without receiving financial sponsorship. I am very lucky to have been encouraged to be better by not just my family and friends, but also clients of my own business. One client in particular is

Maciek Kawecki, co-owner of **Greenleaf Innovations Ltd and Subsidence Management Ltd.**, www.greenleafinnovations.co.uk

Maciek, who has also sponsored other local sports teams and individuals, has a passion for helping people reach their sporting potential, alongside running the companies which provide building repairs and maintenance for sports facilities. Greenleaf Innovations Ltd specialises in energy efficient buildings, subsidence remediation and repair, soil rehydration, anti-heave

measures and root barriers.

I would encourage any newcomer to our sport, who would like to travel and improve, to consider the obtaining sponsorship and I am very happy to discuss how to approach the subject with local companies.

CA grants aid extra facility for Bury and . . .

Last year Bury Croquet Club successfully secured an additional new facility at Whitehead Park on a 25 year lease agreement and earlier this year, opened it as a new venue for croquet in Bury.

It is an extra facility to our home premises at Coronation Park, Radcliffe, which have been oversubscribed for some time, **reports David Barrett.**

Our members are extremely keen players, who work hard in the Club and play as often as possible on the two lawns available at Coronation Park, but, as we enter ten teams in the North West Federation Leagues, this results in very little lawn space left for casual play or practice.

Unfortunately, Coronation Park has no suitable land for us to expand.

Heaton Park, where we had a joint tenancy, had management difficulties and Manchester City Council increased their charges 18 months ago to such a degree that we would be losing money almost every time we played there.

These problems meant that it had not been practical for the Club to actively encourage new members for some considerable time.

After much searching and negotiations, it was decided that three croquet lawns could be constructed at Whitehead Park, Bury.

Whitehead Park

The facility is owned by Bury Council who insist that all Clubs are self-managed.

It had formerly been a Crown Green Bowling Club, is complete with a large pavilion and is fully fenced on all sides.



We took over early last year, thanks to a support grant of £24,650 from Viridor-Credits and additional members' donations.

A centrally located pathway was removed and the two existing greens were joined together to make a single surface area that now accommodates the full sized croquet courts.

Architects were appointed and have drawn up plans to entirely re-develop and modernise the whole pavilion for an estimated cost of about £120,000.

Whitehead Park is located within a highly populated area of Bury and is a 'Green Flag Park' (which is a scheme that recognises and rewards the best green spaces in the country).

The pavilion will be of great use in attracting new members, especially as we intend to offer indoor as well as outdoor croquet during the winter months!

Initially the cost proved prohibitive when we submitted full grants applications to both Viridor-Credits and Sport England.

So it was decided that work should be

prioritised and split into three different projects to be completed as soon as finances became available.

The CA were most supportive of this action and gave us a Grant of £5,000 towards the first project. Our members also responded fantastically with donations from a private trust fund and their own personal donations. This has enabled our contractors to complete the essential re-construction and provision of new changing rooms, toilets with ramp access, and a garage for a ride-

on mower, which all ran to nearly £38,000. There is still a long way to go to achieve a totally re-developed and modernised pavilion laid out to our architect's plans. However the essentials are now in place.

We have a Community Room, which will come in to use in time, but unfortunately this section of the pavilion hasn't yet been re-wired, etc.

Bury CC is now actively seeking additional funding from Sport England and many other sources, in the belief that the collateral support given to us by the Croquet Association's Grant will prove to be a worthy cause for others to fund as well.

On the 11 July we held our first CA Tournament on the new Whitehead Park lawns, and I am delighted to report that all three lawns were put to good use at the Bury (Whitehead Park) GC B- Tournament.

All players said that the lawns were great shape and wonderful to play on, plus Bury's reputation for good food was certainly maintained by Jean H and her helpers.

. . . a court improvement machine for Penrith

With help from a CA grant, Penrith & North Lakes Croquet Club has recently acquired a well-used but fully functioning lawn improvement machine, **reports Howard Bowron.** It is called the Auto Greensman and combines

the functions of slitting, tining, raking and brushing, in one compact machine.

These machines were built by Sisis in the 1970s and they also make a similar but larger machine called the Auto Turfman.

Having a working width of just 12 inches the Greensman is only really suitable for clubs like ours with only one or two lawns, little storage space and modest funds.

Our machine cost £350; and they are regularly sold on eBay at similar prices.

One word of caution however, is that these older machines lack modern safety features and they require a level of ongoing maintenance that anyone familiar with agricultural machines will recognise.

So how well does it work?

So far we have hollow-tined one lawn, and used the 'chisel' blades and rotary slitter to aerate another; in both cases the machine penetrates about two inches into the turf.

The rake attachment has a working width of 27 inches and was useful for clearing leaves and twigs off the lawn in autumn, but was less able to gather the cores after tining which is always the worst part of the job!

A brush attachment was originally sold by Sisis but this is no longer with our machine.

So we have made our own by bolting two 18-inch pvc brush-heads to the rake and have used this with some success to clear worm casts prior to mowing.

The utility of the machine lies



Lambton's All England win earns Watford the 'Handicap Double'

Jonathan Lambton won the All England AC Handicap and can sit his trophy alongside the GC version won by his Watford club mate Alan Clark (*as reported in the last Gazette 357*).

John Dawson reports that the eight finalists with handicaps ranging from 2.5 to 16 converged on Chester CC from as far afield as Penrith and Guildford.

Lambton, playing off 16, was the only player to achieve three wins in day one and was pursued by Nathan Baker (9, Fylde), Paul Wolff (2.5, Blewbury) and Julie Sheahan (12, Merton) one win behind.

Lambton proved unstoppable though and won his two Sunday games despite two wobbles when dealing with a three ball ending against Baker and having to score a golden hoop for victory after time against Steve Fisher (14, Harwell).

He ended undefeated with very solid medium distance roquets and both hoop approaches and running under control showing considerable nerve and finesse. However it was his skilful use of bisques which proved decisive.

Colin Irwin, a CA Vice President, presented the trophy and manager Manager Elmyr Hughes reported the final positions as follows: Jonathan Lambton (Watford) 5 wins, Nathan Baker (Fylde) 4 wins, Paul Wolff (Blewbury) 3 wins, Steve Fisher (Harwell), Julie Sheahan (Merton), John Henderson (Penrith) all 2 wins, Peter Aspinall (Wrest Park and Letchworth) and Ian Fugeman (Guildford) both 1 win.

in having a full set of attachments, which ours otherwise does. All in all, it's a useful 'all rounder' - if you can find one in good condition, complete with accessories.

The foibles of old Briggs and Stratton engines also come with the package.



AC round-up

Woking, Surbiton and Reigate win inter-club titles

Woking became the **Inter-Club AC Champions** when they scored a narrow 4-3 win over Cheltenham as the highlight of 'finals weekend' at Surbiton.

Jeff Dawson and Mike Town were undefeated in their games with the former scoring triple peels in a morning doubles rubber and afternoon singles. Robert Wilkinson was the only other triple-peeler in his afternoon singles win for Cheltenham.

Both teams featured very strong line-ups indeed and each included a player from this season's Women's World Championship – Sarah Hayes for Cheltenham and Annabel McDiarmid for Woking (*photo top right, with the fabulous Beddow Cup - see page 23*).

In the second tier competition, the **Mary Rose Cup** (for players with handicaps of 0+, and a team total of 4+), Surbiton (*right*) beat Wrest Park 4-2.

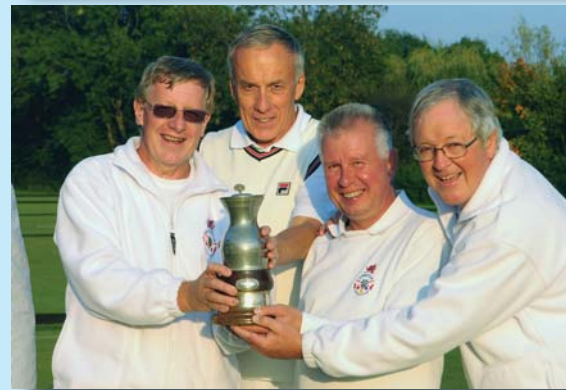
Graham Brightwell the star turn in winning both his singles. Nigel Polhill and Chris Roberts reversed their morning doubles defeat to beat the same opponents in the afternoon singles rubbers.

In the third tier **Longman Cup** (for players with handicaps between 3.5 and 20, and team total of 24+), which is played under handicap rules, the 2015 Champions are Reigate (*right*). The Longman rewards its semi-finalists too by staging that round on day one of 'finals weekend' before the final and third place match the following day. Reigate sneaked past High Wycombe 4-3 in the semis to face Watford, who had an easier time in their semi with a 6-1 win over Bowdon.

In the final, Reigate's Neil Coote won both his singles rubbers, as his team improved on their 2-1 half-time lead to win 5-2.

The routes to the finals and games results details are all available on the CA web site.

Photographs by Elizabeth Larsson, Don Beck, Andrew Gray and Ian Vincent.



Oxford University win Secretary's Shield

The final of the **Secretary's Shield** featured the same two finalists as 2014: holders Bowdon and Oxford University. The difference this year was that Oxford (*above*) turned up with a full team and won!

This competition is for the previous season's winners of each regional Federation's handicap league: Oxford were

the toast of the Southern Federation and Bowdon the North-West.

Bowdon's vastly experienced Alan Mayne leveled the match at 3-3 with one result to come but Oxford's Mark van Loon kept his cool after missing an initial peg-out attempt, to secured his team the title.

Full results details are on the CA web site.

In a California memorabilia shop in 2010, collector Randy Guijarro bought a 4-by-5-inch tintype (top picture) for just \$2. After enlarging the image, he saw what looked to be a familiar figure - Billy the Kid - playing croquet with his gang known as The Regulators.



The enlargement the figure that Guijarro believes to be Billy the Kid, is seen leaning on a croquet mallet.

While croquet wasn't known as a popular sport in the American Wild West, it was hugely popular in England during the 1860s. It is possible that Billy the Kid and his friends

Guijarro also thought he recognized the Kid's best friends Tom O'Folliard and Charlie Bowdre in the photo.

As the gravity of the discovery began to set in, Guijarro initiated a chain of events that would lead him on a painstaking journey to verify the photograph's authenticity.

In 1880, William H. Bonne - better known by his nickname Billy the Kid - posed for a travelling photographer in Fort Sumner, New Mexico (right).

Roughly a year later, lawman Pat Garrett shot and killed the infamous outlaw, and later identified him in the picture (left) before publishing it in his book, a first-hand account titled *The Authentic Life of Billy, the Kid*.

The tintype remained in the possession of a single family for over 100 years. Although other pictures of him may exist, this has been the only recognized photograph of Billy the Kid with full provenance and authenticity for 130 years. In 2011 the tintype sold for \$2.3

Billy the Kid was a croquet pioneer!

Research leads to a history re-write of the famous out-law

were introduced to the game by Billy's boss and mentor, Englishman John Tunstall.

By late 1877, 17-year-old Billy the Kid had killed a man in Arizona, and worked on various ranches in New Mexico rustling cattle and horses. Tunstall, a burgeoning cattle rancher, needed more muscle to challenge the cattle monopoly that Irishmen Lawrence Murphy and Frank Dolan controlled in Lincoln County. It was while working for Tunstall that Billy befriended the gang that would later become known as The Regulators.

All of the above is taken from the National Geographic Channel website, and whilst this is the extent of the croquet related information, readers may like to read the whole story at <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/galleries/billy-the-kid-new-evidence/at/billy-the-kid-new-evidence14-2100466/>



million to billionaire William Koch, making it one of the highest priced photos in history.

Tom Banfield's contribution in the most recent Gazette (*Issue 358, p23*) sheds fascinating and useful light on the social context of croquet in 1862.

However, it may be worth reviewing the rise and fall of croquet participation in that period and the way in which the then rules were developed.

The best sources for this are two major books: D. M. C. Prichard, *The History of Croquet* (Cassell, 1981) and D.H. Drazin, *Croquet: A Bibliography* (Oak Knoll Press, 2000). Many players have copies of Prichard, which is now out of print although copies are available on-line; used copies of Drazin are also available on line, but a revised and expanded version is also available on CD from the publisher for \$100.

From its introduction to England in the 1850s, croquet was played as a garden party entertainment. Even though gardens suitable to purpose were not the exclusive

Croquet in 1862

preserve of the aristocracy, the upper-crust ambience was much satirised by Punch and by Lewis Carroll.

In the absence of agreed rules, croquet was played generally to local rules, much as garden croquet is now, though some players sought more competitive and formally organised games. From 1865 clubs were formed (Worthing, quickly followed by others) and rules proliferated.

Spratt's rules of 1853 were of limited use, but more comprehensive rules were published from 1862. The Jaques rules of 1864 sold well and went through several editions, as did Routledge's *Handbook of Croquet*. Similar volumes were published in the USA from 1865 onwards.

In other words, there is no doubting the popularity of croquet in the mid-1860s and sales of 30,000 or more, as claimed by

Jaques, testify to this.

Rules published by The Field in 1866, and mostly written by Walter Jones Whitmore, became more or less accepted in serious croquet. However it was not until twenty-five clubs and the then two rival governing bodies, the All England Croquet Club and National Croquet Club held a conference in October 1869, that a universal set of laws was drawn up. Even then it took two more conferences to agree a final code in 1872, which became known as became known as The Conference Laws.

Regrettably this was also the zenith of croquet's popularity, for soon afterwards Lawn Tennis swept the country and put croquet in the doldrums for decades.

It was the Conference Laws which finally abolished 'tight croquet' (*putting a foot on a ball*), however much that may be to this day remain familiar from Punch cartoons.

Ray Hall, Sussex County CC

Getting shirty with David Openshaw

I have had no cause to ask my wife Jacqueline why she needs so many shoes. But recently she turned the tables on this famous or infamous question.

We were trying to make some space in our wardrobes and sort out some of our old clothes. Suddenly Jacqueline said to me: "Well just how many shirts does a croquet player need?"

Well the answer turns out to be 42 (which coincidentally, this is also the answer to the Ultimate Question of meaning of Life, the Universe, and Everything, as any Hitchhiker fans will know.

Before I get rid of some of this collection, I wanted to remind myself of the memories associated with them. This seemed just right for a short series of articles in the Gazette.

I do agree that 42 shirts is quite a lot.

Five different Mitsubishi sponsored events, five shirts from different years at the Resort at the Mountain Championship in Oregon, the Counties, MacRobertson Shields, World Championships (both AC and GC) and other sponsored events all mounts up.

Plus of course, I have a few plain white long sleeved shirts to combat the sun or the cold. Two shirts stand out because they are coloured.

Bombay Gin sponsored the Solomon trophy match (GB v USA) at Roehampton in 1990, promoting Bombay Sapphire, so the GB team wore the sponsor's dark blue shirts (*centre photo*), which were not really sapphire blue, but never mind.

My other coloured shirt is bright yellow (*below*) and was given to me by a member of the Wellington croquet Club in NZ. I must say I quite like coloured shirts as long as the overall look is smart.

In 1986 I was lucky enough to be invited



to play in Florida by Jack Osborn who was President of the US Croquet Association (USCA) and did so much for both US and International croquet.

Each year in the 1980s the USCA held an annual International Challenge match which was a mixture of USCA rules and Association Croquet rules. In 1986 this event was held at the prestigious Palm Beach Polo Club and I have the shirt (*right*) to prove it.



The 1986 version of the International Challenge was between US and an International Champions team. In the three previous years, the US had played South Africa (1983), Scotland (1984), and Ireland (1985). These events had certainly provided an impetus for these countries for further international play. For example the Carter Trophy between Ireland and the US was started in 1986.

The International Champions team was made up of the champions from a number of countries. Myself from England, Tom Barlow from South Africa, Debbie Prentis (Canada), John Young (Bermuda) and Bill Spalding (Scotland). Unfortunately the champions from NZ and Australia were unable to take part but Charles Barlow from South Africa was our sixth player in the team.

Palm Beach Polo Club was the main base for the USCA in Florida at the time. It hosts international polo, and has golf and tennis facilities and two croquet lawns. A year later the USCA moved its headquarters to Florida from New York and set up at the nearby PGA Club which provided five croquet lawns.

These International Challenge events were extremely helpful in developing international croquet, introducing AC to more Americans and providing a challenge

for the international players to use their skills in a game with US rules. They also played a part in paving the way for the formation of the World Croquet Federation.

US rules are an interesting variant of AC. The main difference is that deadness continues from turn to turn. This means, for example, if you are playing red and you roquet yellow, blue and black, but do not make your next hoop, you cannot make roquets with red in any future turn until it has made its hoop.

Other differences are that your turn ends if you roquet a ball off the lawn and balls are not replaced on the yard line. It proved difficult for international players to adjust to a game where you continually felt ill at ease with the right tactics and also to get used to the different skills involved. This version of the game is a more social version and is typically played with an hour and a half time limit and continues to be the most popular variation in the US.

Finally, I was also wearing my Palm Beach Polo shirt (*below*) in the final of a tournament against Bob Kroeger (US). Does anyone know where this event was played? (*Answer on page 23*)



The inner game of croquet ~ Dr Peter Honey

Croquet, like golf and snooker, is a still-ball game and, psychologically, still-ball games are the most demanding simply because they provide ample time to think.

This is not in itself a problem, except when we succumb to thinking negatively with a detrimental effect on our skills.

A game of AC provides two different sorts of thinking time; when you are in-play and when your opponent is in-play.

When you are in-play, it is tempting to conduct a judgemental self-commentary, reproaching yourself for shots that don't work out as you wished.

When your opponent is in-play, particularly if he/she succeeds in setting up a four-ball break and running lots of hoops, you can easily think yourself into a slough of despond such that, when you are next in-play, you are tense, agitated and feeling defeatist.

The advice usually offered is replace negative thinking with positive thinking. But what exactly does this entail?

Let's look briefly at two simple models before considering what positive thinking involves.

The first model:

From incompetence to competence

The first model describes the stages we move through as we progress from incompetence to competence. These are:

(1) Unconscious incompetence: This is the equivalent of 'ignorance is bliss' where you underestimate the skills involved.

(2) Conscious incompetence: Where, having started to play croquet, you begin to appreciate the considerable skills involved and how much you have to learn in order to play well.

(3) Conscious competence: Where, having developed your croquet playing skills, you are dependent on deliberate thought processes in order to execute those skills.

(4) Unconscious competence: Where the skills are 'effortless' and your thinking is freed up to concentrate on tactics rather than skills.

Moderately good croquet players tend to oscillate between stages 2 and 3. Top players oscillate between stages 3 and 4 and, when playing at their best, experience periods of superior play often referred to as 'flow' (stage 4).

The aim is to learn how to achieve, and sustain, periods of unconscious competence.

The second model:

Thoughts, feelings and performance

The second model describes the sequence you go through hundreds of times during a game.

It is the sequence we all use when processing information from the outside world. In chronological order:

(1) Your appraisal of the situation. - A croquet example might be when your opponent has left both your balls well away from any others and a long hit-in is required in order to gain the innings.

(2) Your thoughts. - You could choose to think positively, *'I'll take careful aim. I've a better than 50/50 chance of hitting that ball'*.



On the other hand, you could choose to think negatively, *'That's a long way away. I'll never manage to hit that'*.

(3) Your emotional response. - If you chose to think positively, you'd feel calm and self-confident. If you chose to think negatively, it is likely that you'd feel anxious and defeatist. For the purposes of this example, let's assume you chose to think negatively.

(4) Your performance. - You fail to roquet the ball you were aiming at.

(5) Your thoughts *after* taking action. - *'Just as I expected, I messed it up'*.

Stages 2 and 3 in this sequence happen in split seconds, so fast in fact that most people are unaware that their thoughts have preceded their feelings; but your feelings are *always* a consequence of your thoughts.

You can choose what you think about any

situation.

Even though we all acquire ingrained thought-patterns that seem 'automatic', situations themselves are powerless to dictate what you should or shouldn't think about them.

The aim is to gain control over your thoughts and replace unproductive negative thoughts with more productive ones that will help, not hinder, your performance.

Being realistic

So far we have divided thoughts into two categories, negative and positive, but this is an over-simplification. Imagine a continuum;

Negative ----- Positive thinking

Clearly, a continuum like this has many subcategories (shades of grey) between the two poles. Keeping it simple, we could split the continuum in two:

Negative ----- Neutral ----- Positive thinking

Neutral thinking is neither negative nor positive.

The problem is the invitation to replace negative thoughts with positive ones, i.e. to zoom from one end to the other of the first continuum is totally unrealistic.

You'd be kidding yourself, the equivalent of seeing a world distorted by rose-coloured spectacles.

The answer is to practice choosing thoughts that are neutral i.e. not negative, but not unrealistically positive either. For example, when faced with a long roquet, instead of allowing yourself to think *'That's a long way. I'll never manage to hit that'*, you'd choose to think: *'That's a long way. I have a 50/50 chance of hitting that'*.

This has the merit of being realistic and not-negative – just what we want to help us keep calm, take careful aim and swing a straight mallet.

Conclusion

Choosing realistic, productive thoughts during a croquet game comes with no guarantees. It will, however, make it *more likely* that you will perform competently. Since a game of croquet is never over until it's over, there is never a time to give in to despair. Your thoughts are the key to not doing so.

Positive thinking is *not* the opposite of negative thinking; the opposite of negative thinking is not thinking negatively!

Dr Peter Honey is a chartered psychologist and a member of Roehampton Croquet Club

Conquering Dry Patch

Dry Patch creates dead, dried-out patches on a croquet lawn and this dryness causes the earth to contract and become bumpy.

So perfectly accurate shots become unintentional jump shots, which can be very annoying for players. It can be treated by the application of a special curative. But unless you catch it at the very early stages, it could take weeks for the grass to grow back, especially mid-season, and it may not fully recover until the end of the season. So where Dry Patch is a recurring problem, a preventative programme of treatment needs to be employed.

What is Dry Patch?

Under certain conditions, soil can become water repellent resulting in changes to hydrological behaviour, nutrient uptake and plant growth. Soil water repellency has been recognized in most parts of the world and has been observed in all soil types from sand to clay. Although water repellency in soil has several possible origins, numerous researchers agree that it is caused by an organic coating on the soil particles.

When does it occur?

Water repellency is influenced by season and soil water content.

In most cases, repellency decreases during wet autumn and winter months and is most severe during dry periods in spring and summer. Research has shown that patches of soil can become water repellent to a depth of up to 16.5cm, thus forming blocks of repellent soil which are surrounded by normal wettable soil.

Rain and irrigation are not absorbed through the surface of a dry patch or from the water table below.

How can it be prevented?

Slitting or tining doesn't cure water repellency and, in my experience, most wetting agents don't do the trick either. The simple answer is to use a methyl-capped triblock copolymer soil surfactant. What???

Check it out on my website using the Maintenance/Dry Patch tabs or contact me for more information.

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Croquet on BBC1 Question of Sport

Croquet got a brief airing on National TV in early October, *reports Jordan Waters*. During the summer, Oxford University Croquet Club was approached by the BBC, who were interested in using croquet for the long-running quiz show, A Question of Sport.

We were asked to help with the filming of their famous 'mystery guest' segment,

which has been a staple of the show for over 40 years.

Being all too delighted with the prospect of getting croquet onto prime-time TV, along with the chance to meet a famous sportsperson, I jumped at the opportunity.

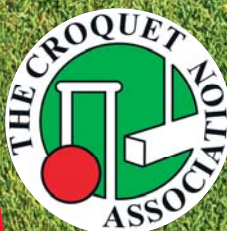
The 'mystery guest' was Oxford local Martin Keown, the former England and Arsenal footballer who is now a regular Match of the Day pundit.

We began filming on the morning of 8 July, and mock-played a game between myself and Martin.

This was accompanied with a variety of deliberately out of focus shots and views panning across the scenery; the whole process taking about two hours.

All credit must go to the BBC film editors, who produced a top quality short film involving plenty of action shots of croquet strokes. The episode was later aired on BBC1 on the 7 October, and was available on BBC iPlayer for a further seven days afterwards.

Photographs by Dave Spicer.



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Lost and found ~ the history of the Beddow Cup

By CA Archivist Chris Williams

The Beddow Cup was donated by AE Beddow and first awarded to the winner of a competition, the Champion Cup, between the ten best players invited to compete by the Croquet Association.

The cup became the personal property of Miss DD Steel after she won it for the fourth time in 1933. Trevor Williams, the President of the Association at the time, donated a new trophy for the event and since then the event has been known as the President's Cup.

After Miss Steel's death in 1965 at the age of 80 the Beddow Cup was sold and vanished from sight.

In 1978 Tom Anderson, a member of Wrest Park, saw an advert in the local paper offering a croquet trophy for sale. After seeing the cup and making enquiries of the CA its true identity was established. Tom and Judy Anderson and John Wheeler bought it between them, thus saving one of the sport's trophies from being melted down for scrap.

They presented the cup to the CA in 2007 and it has since then been used for the Inter-Club Championship (see page 17).

The cup is hallmarked as being made by Mappin Brothers of Sheffield (now Mappin and Webb) in 1901.

'Getting Shirty' answer

The answer to David Openshaw's venue question is the Toronto Cricket Skating and Curling Club. Apparently the cricket sight screen is the clue!

(I'm not sure how that clue works David? - Ed)

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

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