

The

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CROQUET

Gazette

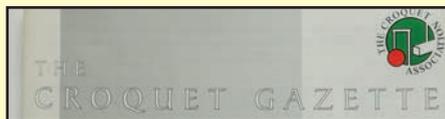


Sunset on Croquet...



From our files researched by Frances Colman

10 years ago - 2010



USA beat GB in Solomon Trophy -

... Dawson missed from hoop 3 to hoop 2 and Soo completes the triple to wild applause and of course "whooping" from the Americans as they took an unassailable 11-9 lead, winning the trophy for the first time in eighteen meetings.

USA: Rothman, Huneycutt, Soo, Stark, Grimsley, Bast

GB: Brown, Mulliner, Patel, Dawson, Burridge, Le Moignan.

~

Women's World GC Championship – at the Victorian Croquet centre, Cairnlea, Australia, was won by Alix Verge of Australia in a thrilling five-game final against Iman El Farnsawai 7-6, 5-7, 3-7, 7-6, 7-6. (*The top-placed English player was Kath Burt who qualified for the first round of the knock-out.*)

~

New hoop clamp – During the 2009 season, we had been trialling a clamp that holds a hoop at the desired width as it is driven into the ground.

We concluded it makes a real difference, both in how accurately and how quickly hoops can be set or moved – so will benefit those unsung volunteers who set the hoops at every club and tournament. . . We recommend it. *Martin French & Martin Leach.*

- 2020 comment: this clamp is available online from the CA Shop www.cashop.org.uk (see page 2 of Croquet Accessories) - *Ed.*

~

Obituary – Cedrus Atlantica Glauca – Cheltenham CC has lost one its greatest friends. The Cedar tree in the centre of the club's grounds that has offered shade to generations of croquet players was finally lowered to the ground on 26th February.

It is not known precisely when Cedrus was planted, only that a photograph in 1930 showed a young tree . . . *Eileen Magee*

~

Surbiton install an irrigation system – It's taken about a month and has entailed the burying of about half a mile of pipes, and the submersion of a vast tank beneath the car park. It's now in working order, in good time to prepare the lawns for the MacRobertson in August.

50 years ago - 1970



The New Editor - Bryan Lloyd Pratt

– see the article on page 3 opposite.

Extracts from his infamous first editorial:

... the sad fate that befell the Roehampton Club must serve as a dire warning to the C.A. of what can occur when more powerful rival interests threaten the future of our beloved sport . . . People have been so brainwashed by sociologists, technocrats and bureaucrats (gloriously horrid words for an unpleasant phenomenon) into believing that the greatest-good-for-the-greatest number is all-important, that many people have come to feel, almost subconsciously, that quality and excellence are somehow to be deplored and reprehended.

Croquet is particularly vulnerable to such qualms. Born out of privilege and luxury, it possesses still an atmosphere of disdain and exclusiveness . . . This is nothing to be ashamed of.

It may not be true. Indeed, we believe that it is, alas, now a very false picture of the modern game. . . it could be fatal to try to broaden the basis of croquet. . . Schemes for coaching, television and press coverage, and similar ventures never produce any worth-while results, and often cheapen the sport. If croquet is to survive, it must be true to itself.

~

Retiring Editor and assistant –

Associates owe an immense debt of gratitude to Mr. Baillieu and Mrs. Sundius-Smith, the retiring Editor and Assistant Editor. They have had to struggle against difficulties that would have caused lesser mortals to throw in their hands long ago. Ever since the Association left the superlative Holmesdale Press who had published the Gazette since near the beginning of this century, nothing was easy. Our grateful thanks then to Ian and Jocelyn.

~

Referees incentive – Sir, Last year I wrote offering £5 to the club which produced the most referees in ratio to their playing membership. Only two referees were passed this playing season but there are several more in the pipeline and I have requested to let the award run on to include this coming season. . . Yours truly, Elizabeth Prichard.

100 years ago - 1920



In support of the 'Either ball game' and compulsory peels –

Sir, It is devoutly to be hoped that on the termination of the present croquet season the question as to how the game is to be played in future be definitely decided. Few seem satisfied with the game as it now stands, and, since recent championship play has revealed that it has been shorn of its most interesting features, it is most important that the further decadence of the game should by legislation be forcibly prevented. . .

~

The New Law Relating to Bisques – It may be well to remind receivers of long odds, before the season commences, that the new law enables them to take their bisques and half-bisques whenever they like. Provided that judgement is used this should be a great advantage and give them at least an equal chance in Handicap Events. A fresh bisque should invariably be taken in order to make or continue or prevent a four-ball break. The danger of course will be that carelessness will come from over-confidence, and a player will consume 4 bisques on a break which should have needed only 2. D.C. Lowcock

~

Increase of Subscriptions – Dear Sir, I wish most strongly to urge that the matter of the proposed increase of subscriptions be thoroughly re-considered. If the proposal is persisted in, it will almost certainly mean the death of the Croquet Association.

Associates who want to play in the London Tournaments will perhaps pay an increased subscription, but county associates will not; and the London associates alone are not enough to keep the Association going!

A man who wants to play croquet and has no court of his own must belong to a club; therefore to a limited extent the clubs can safely raise their subscriptions. But a man can play both croquet and compete in tournaments without being an Associate; therefore the association is not in a position to put the screw on! I write not as a carping critic, but as a croquet enthusiast, who would feel very sad at disaster befalling the C.A. Yours truly, G.F. Handel Elvey.

Editorial

So much for worrying about tournament dates clashing and how to fit in all the croquet that I wanted to play this year . . . Instead I find myself in lockdown with my best pal, who I've known since schooldays, sharing each other's company at his house in Sheffield, coincidentally only a mile away from a U3A Club's croquet courts - *if only I could play!*

Preparing this Gazette has been a good diversion from the country's woe and despite very little play available to comment on, our writers have excelled themselves again. The ever reliable Stephen Mulliner reports on another fabulous AC World Championships in Australia and huge congratulations to Reg Bamford on his record-equalling fifth World AC crown - let's just think about that for a moment - FIVE!

Reg is bumped off the front cover of this issue (sorry Reg) in favour of Eugene Chang's striking but rather poignant 'Sunset on Croquet' image, and let us hope that that isn't a too accurate assessment of 2020.

Of course the Coronavirus crisis and movement restrictions hang as a dark

shadow over everything and the hastily set-up CA Task Force has been swift in offering support to clubs badly affected.

All the measures put in place by the CA are carried within these pages and, although there is a 'no croquet' near future, this evidences the help that is available.

Dave Kibble has certainly helped yet again with some really useful changes to the online Tournament Entry System and Fixtures Calendar applications, which he presents here and, escaping from our present day worries, John Harris takes a 150th anniversary visit to croquet's pivotal year of 1870.

Stay home, safe, and enjoy this Gazette!



Chris Roberts Editor

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Front cover: Alain Giraud is featured in Eugene Chang's superb sunset image from the AC World Championships in Australia in February. Hopefully this won't be our last croquet in 2020.
This Page: The Editor and Table Mountain, Cape Town, in February (photo by Frances Colman)

Next issue published to be decided
Next copy deadline to be decided

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Bryan Lloyd Pratt - Gazette Editor 1970

2020 marks the 50th anniversary of perhaps the Gazette's most controversial editor, Bryan Lloyd Pratt.

His first editorial (see opposite page) gave notice of that which was to come as told in this excerpt from the truly excellent "The History of Croquet" by D.M.C. Prichard:

"A Cambridge product, but one who had made his mark before the mainstream, was B. Lloyd Pratt. Making his debut at Buxton in 1956, within three years he gained a place in the President's Cup which he retained on and off for the next twelve years, besides representing England in New Zealand in 1963. It would take a choreographer to describe adequately Bryan's style; poised elegantly on the ball of one foot and the toe of the other, he seemed to be half floating in the air like Peter Pan on a wire.

A colourful personality, he never failed to make his presence felt both on and off the court, and when in the mood was a match

for anyone. He extracted maximum enjoyment from a tournament, whether playing, chatting or absorbed in one of his somewhat sadistic delights - watching two inept high-bisques engaged in a long struggle, although he could scarcely bring himself to remain a silent and impartial spectator.

Bryan disapproved of the democratic widening of the

croquet world, believing that the game should take place in secluded surroundings, as a microcosm of the Edwardian age in the company of one's friends and one's friends' friends; the prospect of croquet being played by the masses appalled him.

He was bitterly opposed to the croquet development scheme sponsored by the Sports Council, regarding it not only as useless but as a misuse of taxpayers' money. He ridiculed coaching lectures . . .

. . . As Editor of the Gazette he was not hesitant to express these opinions, the spokesman for the 'silent majority'.

When appointed Editor he transformed the Gazette in one stroke from its lowest ebb of technical production into a high-class journal lavishly setout, though there were some who thought that the gothic headlines and thick black obituary mourning bands were overdone.

Unfortunately the cost of such artistry was beyond the slender purse of the Association, and as he could not bring himself to lower his standards or modify the tone of his editorials, he was relieved of the editorship'.

At the height of his prowess he suddenly emigrated to South Africa and has never reappeared in England.

To those who remember him, tournaments will never seem quite the same again."



Chairman of the CA Council

Since my Gazette article in February, the hard reality of the Covid-19 Pandemic has taken over our lives.

Members of Council and the Executive Board agreed to set up a "Task Force" to manage the CA through the crisis.

Roger Staples (Chairman of the Executive Board), Ian Vincent (Hon. Secretary), Ian Burrigde (Incoming Hon. Treasurer), Mark Suter (CA Manager) and I were selected to make up the team.

The progress of the Task Force is covered in a separate article so I will restrict my comments to thanking the whole team for their superb contribution, in what was a very demanding period.

Making sense of government edicts was at times challenging.

Our main focus was looking at and implementing initiatives to support our member clubs.

~

At the time of going to press, the initial hiatus had quietened down, although the CA has been faced with some new challenges.

The first of these has been adapting to online conferencing and from a number of packages on the market and having taken advice, we selected Zoom.

For meeting of groups up to about 8 to 10 people it has proven to be an excellent way of communicating, for whereas one would spend a day going to London or Nottingham for a meeting, we can now have the meeting online from our own office and achieve the same result in two to three hours rather than having to take up a whole day.

This has created a better use of our time and has reduced the CA's meeting costs.

~

Running Council meetings online has proven to be more challenging. Zoom does not lend itself to long meetings and with up to 18 people in attendance.

Controlling the meeting can be challenging, however we have now had two Council meetings online and we are starting to get used to the new technology and the disciplines required to make it successful.

One of the big advantages of using Zoom is breaking the CA away from a very fixed meeting structure towards the principal of having shorter meetings more often and making them more task-specific.

Council has spent the last two meetings developing the CA's Marketing and Communications Strategy and developing plans on improving the efficiency of the CA.

~

Much of the Marketing and Communications Strategy has been agreed and passed onto the Executive Board and the relevant operating committee for implementation.

An improved CA website is coming on stream and I'm sure you will find it a great improvement.

Council are continuing to meet online and our next session will be developing plans relating to Information, Communication and Technology, ICT.

In my previous column I talked about the CA adopting an expansionist policy.

This is still our long term aim but with the financial implications of Covid-19 being a major consideration, the plans may have to be implemented over a longer period.

Our first consideration must be to protect the future of our existing membership.

Stay well and stay safe.

Jonathan Isaacs

The CA Coronavirus TASK FORCE



Jonathan Isaacs



Roger Staples



Mark Suter



Ian Vincent



Ian Burrigde

Chairman of the Executive Board

Looking at my notes of my February column, the view of the upcoming season was optimistic, and plans were well in place for all our competitions.

The Tournament Entry System online was launched along with the electronic Fixtures Book on 1 February, and within hours tournaments up and down the land were filling up.

The Liberal politician Joseph Chamberlain is recorded in 1886 as having said: *'In politics, there is no use in looking beyond the next fortnight.'*

Perhaps, with hindsight, the CA should have followed his advice.

Within two weeks, Covid-19 had escaped from Wuhan and the contagion was spreading around the world.

By the end of the month it had reached Europe, and by the middle of March your Board had created a Task Force to manage its effects on our competitions, tournaments and organisation (much of which is reported elsewhere in this issue).

~

I welcome Ian Burrigde to his new post as Hon. Treasurer, having formally taken over the reins from Peter Death at the end of March (see page 7).

The CA has been very nimble in its response to the current situation, and Ian quickly identified that our finances could reliably provide a contingency fund to help clubs through this crisis.

The Office has been extremely busy in refunding entry fees for cancelled tournaments. The CA Shop continues to function online, and book sales are on the up. **Separate articles detail this and more.**

As I write this, we are all in lockdown and I wish you all well; stay safe and I hope to see you on the lawns soon.

Roger Staples

Call for Nominations and Notices of Motions for the 2020 AGM

The 2020 AGM is scheduled to be held at Hurlingham on the morning of Saturday, 17 October.

Any nominations for the posts of Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary, or notice of motions to be put to the AGM, should be e-mailed to the Hon. Secretary, Dr. Ian. G. Vincent, ian.vincent@cantab.net, copied to caoffice@croquet.org.uk, by 1 June.

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

It is not expected that there will be an election for members of the Council this year, as those elected in 2019 were to serve for terms of at least two years.

Hon. Secretary, Dr. Ian. G. Vincent

Croquet and the coronavirus crisis



Croquet Association Emergency Assistance for full member clubs in financial difficulty

In the crisis created by the Covid-19 pandemic, **The Croquet Association** has formulated a scheme to assist Full Member Clubs who may find themselves in financial difficulties.

The CA has delegated authority to an “**Emergency Assistance Panel**” to determine applications for assistance.

The Panel has had funds allocated to them, and they are empowered to offer interest-free loans to clubs who find themselves unable to pay their bills between now and the end of October 2020, but who are otherwise financially viable.

The aim is to prevent the permanent closure of existing clubs, if possible.

The criteria for an offer, and an indication of the evidence that will be taken into account in relation to future viability, are set out in the ‘guidelines’,

which are on the website (*see below*) and are also available from Federation Development Officers (FDO).

A ‘standard form’ which should be used for applications and supplementary information should be attached as necessary.

When completed and endorsed by the relevant FDO, the form and additional documents should be sent to the Chairman of the Panel, which will endeavour to deal with all applications expeditiously.

John Reddish, Chairman of the Emergency Assistance Panel

reddish@btinternet.com

~

The ‘guidelines’ and ‘standard form’ can be downloaded from links in the online version of this notice (which is a CA website news item dated 29 March) – *Ed.*

Sport England Emergency Fund

Sport England, through its Club Matters website (*link below*), has issued a useful tool to help sports clubs through this coronavirus crisis.

Sport England is making up to £195 million of funding available to help the sport and physical activity sector through the ongoing coronavirus Covid-19 crisis. The package includes a £20 million ‘Community Emergency Fund’ (*link below*), which is now open for all clubs and community organisations to bid into. Grants from £300 and £10,000 are available.

The fund has been developed to help organisations meet their obligations, in particular fixed costs, which are no longer supported with revenue as a result of coronavirus, such as rent, utility costs, insurance, core staff costs, and facility or equipment hire. Wales has announced a similar programme.
- www.sportenglandclubmatters.com
- www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/our-funds/community-emergency-fund
- www.sport.wales

Lawn maintenance in lockdown

The CA surveyed all clubs on their lawn maintenance concerns during this lockdown period, and is aware of some problems. See an article by Beatrice McGlen on page 28.



Phyllis Court CC are very pleased that their Main Club grounds staff are maintaining a reduced court mowing program going during the lockdown.
(Photos by Chris Roberts and Michael Zatoureff)



Guidelines regarding behaviour by members

There have been several recent incidents of inappropriate behaviour suspected by members of the Croquet Association. Whilst these are investigated, the CA regrets that it finds it necessary to issue this reminder.

~

In all situations, both on-line and in person, CA Members are expected to act in a reasonable and courteous manner towards others.

Bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation, impersonation, defamation and causing offence to others are not acceptable. If directed at young or vulnerable/minority groups, such behaviour is even more reprehensible.

Such behaviour can bring our sport into disrepute, making it harder to secure sponsorship and recruit new players.

Players are expected to behave in a manner which is not contrary to the integrity or reputation of the sport.

This applies to all croquet-related activities from informal events,

through to international events outside the CA’s domain. In tournaments, players are expected to behave in an honourable and sportsmanlike manner and comply with CA Tournament Regulations (or other regulations relevant to the event) and all CA Policies. The disciplinary procedures outlined in the Constitution (Section 8 and Appendix 1) describe the various roles of clubs, federations, and the CA in dealing with the above issues.

It also sets out the mechanism through which any individual, club or federation member of the CA should report any inappropriate behaviour for investigation and, if deemed appropriate, sanction.

This may include warnings, exclusion of players, teams or clubs from selection or participation in certain events, or suspension or termination of membership of the Association.

Patricia Duke-Cox, Chairman of the Working Party on Impersonation and Members’ Behaviour on Social Media.

Council met on 28 March, with the implications of Coronavirus for the croquet community very much on its mind, in addition to its anticipated agenda.

The intention to make more use of online conferencing, which was noted at the end of the report of the January meeting, was fully realised, as the meeting took place entirely by means of a Zoom video-conference.

It seemed to proceed well, once we had got the hang of signalling that we wished to speak and then un-muting ourselves!

Jonathan Isaacs opened the meeting by welcoming Eugene Chang, who he had invited to present a couple of the items and provide any needed technical assistance, and saying farewell to Peter Death, who was handing over to Ian BurrIDGE as Hon. Treasurer.

We hope to be able to give Peter a more sociable send-off once normality returns.

Coronavirus Task Force

Council and the Executive Board had previously agreed by e-mail to establish a joint Coronavirus Task Force to respond to the developing situation. Its members are Jonathan Isaacs, Ian BurrIDGE, Ian Vincent, Mark Suter and Roger Staples and they have been publishing updates and a summary of the CA's response on the website.

Current indications are that relatively few clubs are in immediate financial trouble, but are likely to suffer some loss of membership and be unable to recruit. Discussion at this meeting therefore focussed on the situation that clubs and the CA might face next year.

It was agreed to get predictions from clubs as to their likely membership and subscription income this year to enable us to design a scheme for discounting subscriptions in 2021.

Website re-styling

An interim recommendation of the group set up to review use of technology by the CA was that the website should be re-styled, particularly to make it more useable on mobile devices.

Dave Kibble reported on the progress made by the team undertaking this, which had initially been rapid but had recently stalled due to higher priority work to enhance the Tournament Entry System to handle mass cancellations/postponements, withdrawals and refunds.

Accounts

Peter Death presented his last set of

accounts, for 2019, which had been examined and were approved for submission to the AGM.

Turning to 2020, he thanked the Office staff for their considerable assistance in coping with the extra workload of entry fee refunds and reported that our cash flow remained strong.

He commented that he was handing over in "interesting times" and wished his successor and colleagues on Council and the Executive Board well.

Safeguarding and Social Media Behaviour Policy

Changes to the CA's Safeguarding Policy were approved subject to drafting changes and will be published on the website and promulgated to clubs, with corresponding recommendations to their policies, in due course.

A complaint about impersonation in public comment on live streaming of the WCF AC World Championship crystallised concerns by the President about liability for defamation in such circumstances.

This incident had been investigated and resolved with an apology and reprimand, so discussion focussed on prevention.

It was accepted that comments were inevitable with social media, but it possible to exercise greater control over them if, as the CA was doing, we retained responsibility for streaming rather than relinquishing it to commercial platforms.

Guidelines were agreed which will be published in the form of a policy.

Clubs Survey report

Eugene Chang then presented the results of the club survey that he had conducted at the end of last year, which usefully complemented the quinquennial surveys of individual players that have been undertaken by Kevin Carter.

Eugene presents a resume of the survey in this Gazette on pages 20 and 21.

Marketing, Efficiency and Technology

Finally, Samir Patel introduced the interim reports of the three working groups set up after the January meeting to recommend policy in the areas of Marketing, Efficiency and Technology.

Two of the Marketing recommendations, that newsletters should be published electronically between issues of the Croquet Gazette, and that the Publishing and Marketing Committees should be combined, were agreed in principle, but at

that point the meeting was adjourned for a week, having filled the time scheduled for it.

Ian Vincent, Hon Secretary

Part 2

The March Council meeting resumed, again virtually, on 4 April.

Following e-mail discussion during the intervening week, it was agreed in principle to introduce an intermediate award to fill the gap between Diplomas and the Council Medal.

Further thought will be given to the name of the new award and the tangible form it should take.

Marketing and Communications

Discussion then resumed on the recommendations of the Marketing and Communications Working Group's report to decide policy in this area.

Two of them had been agreed before the meeting adjourned: introducing a newsletter and combining the Marketing and Publishing Committees.

To help prioritise the rest, Council members had been asked to complete a score sheet in which they were given 20 points to allocate between the recommendations that they would most like to see work start on now.

Initiatives to raise money

Initiatives to raise money came top of the list, both to plug the gap in our current finances (which existed even before Coronavirus struck) and to provide resources for promoting and developing the sport.

The best ways to do that will be the subject of a subsequent review.

It was agreed that contracting people to attract sponsorship and advertising, through a variety of media, on a commission basis was likely to be the most productive and least risky way forward.

The Executive Board was asked to progress this through its Marketing Committee.

Attracting younger players

A programme to attract younger players also scored highly, but it was agreed that this needed a three-year timescale to implement, particularly given the disruption to this season, though planning for it should start now.

Referring back to the previous discussion, such a programme might be attractive to a

Photo: The Students GC Championship of 2017 at Sheffield introduced a number of younger players to competitive play (by Chris Roberts)

sponsor in targeting a specific segment of their market.

Publicity and public relations and website re-styling

The next items covered publicity and public relations. The feeling was that we would have more success with this at a local or regional level than nationally, so it was agreed to try and engage with the Federations, offering training and support, for this.

Eugene Chang will set up a group to do this and the elected members of Council were asked to try and find what expertise was already available in their region.

There is already a project underway to re-style the CA's website, but for a year or more there has been no-one dedicated to managing its content.

Council was clear that providing content must remain the responsibility of the individual committees, as only they had the specialist knowledge of the relevant areas, but someone was needed to coordinate and drive this work.

The task could be eased by moving some of the more detailed material away from the immediately accessible part of the site to a separate "knowledge base".

Attempts to find a coordinator on a voluntary basis had been unsuccessful. It was agreed that some remuneration should be given, ideally for a post with wider responsibilities.

A group chaired by Samir Patel was asked to come up with a detailed proposal for this within the next three weeks.

Efficiency Working Group

Attention then turned to the recommendations of the Efficiency Working Group. Ian Cobbold introduced its report by noting that some of its recommendations were already in hand, or duplicated those from the other reports.

There remained, however, a need to encourage more people to volunteer to help run the sport; to review the role of and relationship with the Federations; and to benchmark what the CA itself tries to

Ian Burridge appointed as new Hon. Treasurer



I am very pleased that the Council has appointed Ian Burridge to fill the vacancy caused by Peter Death's retirement as Hon. Treasurer, with one minor exception: the confusion caused by having two Ian's in meetings!

I encourage you to support this decision by electing him to the role at the AGM in October.

Whereas Peter brought expert knowledge of the tax system, from his career in what is now HMRC, Ian brings practical experience of it from the other side of the table, having worked at Director level for a sizeable family business and as business manager of a smaller outfit.

He has a wealth of other commercial experience and recently qualified as a company secretary.

Aside from the day jobs, he is well versed in croquet administration, having

been a former member of the CA Council, Chairman of the Welsh CA, Treasurer of the World Croquet Federation and, since January, its President.

He has also found time to build a formidable playing career, in both codes of the sport, and enjoys chess, bridge and running.

Ian formally took over from Peter at the end of March, after a two-month handover, but could hardly have anticipated the circumstances in which he would do so.

He has already set a number of initiatives in train and we are grateful to both of them for their valuable advice and expertise during this exceptional period.

Ian Vincent, Hon. Secretary

~

Photo above: Ian Burridge in action at the AC World Championship in Australia in February (photo by Samir Patel).

do against the governing bodies of other sports. It had already been discovered that administration in other croquet playing countries is more devolved.

Volunteering

With regard to volunteering, it was noted that Sport England's Club Matters programme, which Dave Gunn had successfully used, contained valuable material about managing and encouraging those willing to help.

There was clearly a "chicken and egg" situation, in that an ethos of productive working would attract new people in a virtuous circle, whereas a committee that

appeared moribund would deter new blood.

Accountability and Key Performance Indicators were required, but with a light enough touch that people got some relief from their day jobs.

It was noted that the Executive Board are looking to improve communications and accountability in line with the recommendations and it will report back when it has developed its plan.

With lunch beckoning, it was agreed to adjourn the meeting again until 18 April, when the Technology Group's report would be considered.

Ian Vincent, Hon Secretary



Club Coach replies

Dear Editor,

The change of name from Club Coach to Club Level Coach, as reported by Sarah Hayes in the last issue (*Gazette 384*) seems an eminently sensible move to define the role more exactly.

But perhaps I am not alone among those who do the job, to question the limits of its responsibility implied by Sarah and to infer from her piece a criticism she surely does not intend.

Having played GC for many years I am confident my advice on its tactics and how to think ahead has helped many tyros improve their game: I have never restricted my input to coaching single shots.

As to players losing time and feeling misled by consulting their Club Coach, I am equally confident that any instructor worth the name routinely and promptly refers trainees to a better authority when the extent of his own expertise is exhausted.

Peter Lowe, Tyneside CC

Miss Elphinstone-Stone

Dear Editor,

I have noticed, each time with great pleasure, two or three recent references to Miss Elphinstone-Stone.
(*most recently in '10 years ago', Gazette 384*).

I had the great pleasure at my first CA Tournament (Southwick in, I think, 1955) of having her assigned as my partner in the Doubles. She was absolutely charming and a delight to meet and partner.

I ascertained that she was related to the Queen Mother, had travelled to Southwick from her home just North of St. John's Wood, London by bus, train and bus in her 90th year. Her long sight was failing and for long-shots I had to identify a tree or landmark at which she could aim - which she did successfully on two 25 -30 yard roquets.

At the end of the week I was approached, as an up-and-coming player, by Maurice Reckitt to partner him in a forthcoming tournament. I was not able to do so, but was nevertheless proposed by him for membership of Hurlingham. He became a life-long friend and I became his doubles partner at Hurlingham in the last few years of his playing life.

Two or three times at Southwick I roomed with Patrick Cotter and thereby were many tales to tell.

John Meacham, Hurlingham CC

How fast is your court?

Dear Editor,

I read with interest the piece relating to court speed in February's edition (*Gazette 384*) and wondered what the lawn speed was at my club, Meldreth CC in Cambridgeshire.

Hitting the ball precisely from one end of the court to the other seemed a bit tricky and the calculations complex but I found two articles about lawn speeds on the Oxford Croquet web-site that referred to a Standard Ramp Test that is much easier to carry out.

<http://www.oxfordcroquet.com/tech/lawnspd/index.asp>

<http://www.oxfordcroquet.com/tech/nel-ln/index.asp>

Meldreth's lawn has now been cut to its shortest, summer-season level and I used the above test to measure the result.

It was very gratifying to find that the speed came out at 10.5 to 11 Plummers (see the articles referred to) which equates to a good lawn with a touch of pace.

It will be interesting to see how this changes after a spell of hot dry weather.

Roger Wallbridge, Meldreth CC

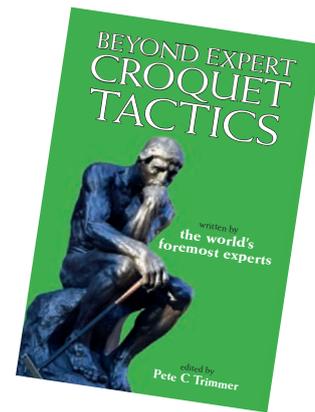
~

Thank you for your letter Roger and I'm pleased that the article inspired you to measure your lawn speed.

The links you provide give fuller details of this science than *Gazette* space allows and I commend them to readers.

Lawn speed is very important to other 'sports of touch' such as bowls and golf (putting) and green keepers for that latter particularly will often employ a stimpmeter.

Pictured here, from a couple of years ago, is a photo I took of former Roehampton greenkeeper Ben, testing the speed of one of the Club's manicured croquet courts by using a golf ball stimpmeter. – Ed



It's a wonderful book!

Dear Editor,

What a wonderful book 'Beyond Expert Croquet Tactics' is.

When I read Keith Aiton's remarks on croquet shots, (page 12 second paragraph) I was reminded of my biggest piece of advice for those trying to make their first all-round break.

It is vital, he says, that you know exactly where you want your two balls to end up - not just "somewhere near that hoop".

So I suggest, when practising breaks, after each croquet shot you MOVE the two balls to exactly where you WANTED them to be.

(a) It teaches you to think of where those places are and (b) it makes the next shot easy and so keeps your break going.

From time to time you could replay the croquet shot to try to get it more accurate, but the main thing is to get the idea of how a break flows. You soon realise how important it is to pioneer your next hoop before bothering to make the first hoop.

Dr Keith Ross, Villembits, France

~

'Beyond Expert Croquet Tactics' was recently published by the Croquet Association and is available via the CA Shop at £24.00 – www.CAShop.org.uk.

Dear Mr Editor,

A point of very minor significance: you give me a mention in "10 years ago - 2010" in the latest issue (*Gazette 384*) but my name is spelt incorrectly.

I have had my name for getting on for 89 years and I have never, ever heard of anyone called Blackhouse.

My dislike for it is irrational but existing!

Yours sincerely - **Tony Backhouse**

~

The typo in your name was all my doing, in copying out the selected article that historical researcher Frances had found – My apology to you Mr Backhouse – Ed.

More pleas to retain the Gazette in its printed paper form

Dear Editor,

You asked in the last Gazette for reactions to the proposal that the Gazette could go online. I HOPE IT WILL NOT!

Receiving dozens of emails a day as I do, an email is soon buried 'below the horizon' and forgotten.

No-one in any case reads the whole Gazette in a single sitting: the whole point is to come back to it, little and often.

I for one feel it is a completely false economy to put it entirely online, and it would in any case demand a 100% rethink of length, format, content, frequency.

At a time when croquet will be largely in abeyance, we need the Gazette as it is!

John Harris, York CC

~

Dear Editor,

You ask in your Editorial in the latest issue (*Gazette 384*) for feedback regarding the frequency of the "paper Gazette".

I agree with you 100%.

I look forward to the bi-monthly publication, which I always read "from cover to cover" over a number of days, and greatly value this as keeping me informed on all aspects of the croquet "world".

Having to sit reading it on a screen would just not be the same!

Tony Elliott

~

Dear Editor,

Like you, my copy of the Gazette gets read repeatedly; however, it does not sit on a coffee table, but in that little room where it is always at hand, so for this reason an on-screen alternative would not be suitable!

Therefore I entirely agree with you, we must retain the Gazette in printed form.

David Mumford, Woking CC

Dear Editor,

I am a recent member of Beckford Croquet Club and have found myself totally drawn into the game.

The club has lawns on which water just soaks through immediately, so we have been playing all through the winter and in that time we have only had to postpone one day's arranged play.

We have therefore been able to play croquet in the cold and on some occasions the rain.

I also write poetry and I read a poem to some of the members who said that I should send it to the Gazette.

Andy Brister, Beckford CC

The Croquet Myth

by Andy Brister (*Goldfinch60*)

On go the clothes
 Preparing for the day,
 The day when the game,
 The game is to be played.
 Pants, vest and socks
 Go on first,
 Then the thick shirt
 And the corduroy trousers,
 On goes a jumper,
 Then a thicker pullover.
 Walking socks,
 Go over the socks,
 Then the thick soled shoes,
 And the fur-lined coat,
 I am ready.

Off I go to that place,
 That place that is so meaningful,
 Meaningful to me.
 I arrive in good time
 To that lawn where the rain
 Sweeps over it,
 In the ever increasing wind.
 On go the waterproof coats
 And the waterproof trousers.
 I am ready,
 Ready to play,
 To play the game,
 The game that has taken me,
 Taken me to vibrant pleasure.

There is a rumour,
 That beacon of belief,
 That croquet can be played,
 Be played in the sun,
 Where it is so warm
 That short sleeved shirts
 And shorts are worn.
 But no,
 That rumour,
 Is surely a myth.

Mowing worries no more - bring on the sheep!

Dear Editor,

In 2020 Cheltenham Croquet Club will celebrate its 150th Anniversary.

During the latter part of the First World War, and up to World War 2, sheep were allowed to run on four of the lawns.

In addition the groundsman, then a "servant" of the club, was allowed to keep two pigs on what was then his allotment (now the practice area).

In the accompanying photo I have tried to imagine what the scene might look like today.

Klim Seabright, Cheltenham CC



Obituary

Wing Commander Bryn Lewis 1924 - 2019

Bryn Lewis was immensely proud of his service in the RAF. He was a navigator and meteorologist and towards the end of his service was with the V bomber force flying Vulcan bombers including a round the world trip.

On leaving the service he settled with his wife Jean at Bardwell, nr. Bury St Edmunds.

In the early 90s, together with Ron Rawden (1920-2011), he founded the Bury St Edmunds and District Croquet Club.

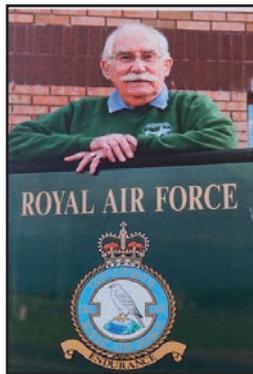
After a short founding period at the Victory Sports Ground in Bury St Edmunds, the club moved to Ravenwood Hall, an hotel just outside Bury, with matches being played at Mrs Betty van Sittart's house at Drinkstone.

Bryn's enthusiasm was responsible for bringing on a viable club.

He was very good at helping new players and encouraging them to take part in matches and attend courses.

When it became necessary to move again, Bryn and Ron, with great perseverance and persuasion, got the local council to fund the making of a pioneering all-weather court at the Victory Ground back in Bury St Edmunds.

It was unfortunate that the council



appointed a company other than the one recommended by Bryn. The EnTousCas company laid a carpet that was not the one specified and then went out of business and no redress was ever made.

The lawn had a bias and was disappointing; nevertheless we are still using it and it makes for challenging games in the winter.

We also made three grass lawns.

Bryn was an enthusiastic chairman of the club from its founding and steered it through the early years, competing successfully in EACF, National Trust and friendly matches.

Bryn represented Wales at croquet on a number of occasions making his debut in Switzerland in 1995 becoming one of the oldest players to play their first international. He was a regular for Wales in inter-CA matches against Switzerland, Canada and the Scottish CA and donated the Celtic Shield for matches between the Welsh and Scottish CAs. On the domestic front Bryn won the Trickey Trophy, the Welsh CA's handicap weekend in 2002.

Bryn and Ron left the Bury St Edmunds CC in 2002 but his influence is still visible.

John Robinette

(with Welsh CA detail from Chris Williams)

Obituary

David Collins

Sadly, I must report the passing of David Collins at the age of 84.

He served Dulwich CC; the SECF and the CA in various capacities for many years. He held a CA Diploma for his Services to Croquet and this was amply justified.

For several years he managed the CA Shop (when it was at Hurlingham) and he also looked after corporate events there for the CA.

He was named a "Coach of the Year" (on a date which others will have to recall).

His contributions to Dulwich CC and to the SECF were very considerable: as a player, a skilled property manager and maintenance engineer; coach and mentor.

David's contribution to the SECF was particularly significant and he served on the committee from 1991 to 2011 during which time, he drew up the SECF's 5-year plan for expansion in 1998 and undertook much of the work that followed.

He coached at various clubs (giving freely of his services) and ran the SECF Summer School from 1991 to 2001 with great success. He was the Federation Coaching Officer from 1993 and, in 1996, he added Development and Schools



Obituary

Patricia Hetherington 1930 - 2020

Patricia Hetherington, known to the croquet world as Pat, died on 22 January after suffering from Alzheimers Disease for around eight years.

She was a native of Leicester and was educated at Wyggeston Girls Grammar School and later the University of Edinburgh where she graduated as Master of Arts in French and German.

Following a period as a teacher Pat moved into the business of publishing a commercial journal, spent a number of years as a district councillor and was a valued member of her village community near Colchester. Pat was married to John and they had one son, Paul.

I first met Pat in the late 70's when I



sought to join the Colchester CC where Pat and her husband were enthusiastic members, holding various offices whilst winning some club trophies.

Pat was one of a rare breed who in the 70's played side-style and many croquet players will recall Pat's attention to detail, for she was not unknown to lambast a doubles partner who played a shot a short distance away from the spot she wanted it!

Pat was full Referee, CA Handicapper and was a regular competitor at CA tournaments at Wrest Park and Hunstanton, as well as travelling as far as Cheltenham where her competitive instincts came to the fore.

The club minutes record the first of Pat's successes in club competitions and later her appointment as CA tournament entries

secretary at Colchester.

She later had a number of spells as Chairman, and was particularly valued through the 80's when she almost single-handed kept the club afloat through a period when membership was low.

She was a competent bridge player and organised regular bridge evenings for members and friends, and for many years she was a trustee of the club.

On ceasing to play, Pat was elected to be President of the club and a life member.

She was a good friend and for the last ten years we have missed her presence at the Club.

It is good to record the return to the game of Pat's son Paul and there is no doubt that his mother's mentoring has had its influence!

David Haslam

~

The photo shows Pat playing with her side-style stance at Colchester, under an umbrella held by Stephen Cornelius.

1936 - 2020



to his portfolio, working tirelessly in these roles until he handed over to Michael Hague in 2001.

David was also i/c corporate events until 2010 and was an active "Godfather" to his list of clubs.

He is remembered by the members of Croquet East CC with great

affection as "The Silver Fox"; he taught a vigorous group of flamboyant young people how to play and how to lay out a lawn in Victoria Park, Stepney and they will be forever thankful for his contribution to their recreational well-being.

On a personal note, David introduced me to croquet in 2004 and (with his great friends Peter Nash and Edward Dymock) taught me to play, showing the utmost tolerance and patience. He introduced me to competitive play at the South of England Week in 2005 and at Budleigh Salterton, where he was "ever-present" and much-welcomed for 20 years. In 2011 he recruited me to become Secretary of the Federation but he should be forgiven for that. He retained his immense good humour to the end. **John Reddish**

Marketing Committee News

The COVID-19 lockdown has transformed our lives in a short space of time... in my last column I was discussing live-stream projects and National Croquet Week; sadly these are now on hold for obvious reasons, but this has afforded an opportunity for the Marketing Committee and I to progress other croquet projects.

On the communications front, **I recorded a short YouTube tutorial on the virtual meeting program Zoom**

to get more clubs embracing virtual meetings during lockdown.

Within Marketing, we've shifted our focus to explore boosting the merchandise available at the CA Shop, and new ideas such as a customised Fixtures Book.

Besides work on the **Club Survey** (see page 20), I have been privileged to lead a Working Party looking to improve Communications and Marketing within our organisation, and making recommendations to Council on key priorities for the next few years.

I am grateful to Jonathan Isaacs, Nick Parish, Brian Havill, James Hawkins and your erstwhile Editor Chris Roberts for insightful discussions.

Some of these changes will hopefully be implemented by the time we are out of lockdown - I am keen to deliver on a

monthly e-newsletter to our Members which will make cascades of news and information more frequent. Please send me your comments or suggestions.

Other exciting projects involve the WCF's recent call for open development projects - two of which are to generate **video footage** to attract more people to the sport. I recently played in the AC World Championship in Australia and did some useful croquet networking. As well as the amazing experience of commentating on the livestream of the Final to some 600+ viewers, I gained some ideas for improving the **CA's livestream setup**, and have been rewarded with some raw video footage of the event, which I'm hoping to utilise towards some useful highlights videos.

I also visited some smaller clubs in NSW and Victoria and learnt more on how they function and their interaction with the State and National Associations.

As well as cultural differences (one club used chopsticks as bisques and another used beer cooler sleeves as mallet wraps, and EVERYONE seems to wear a name badge to play even socially), I noted how successful they are at obtaining grants and hosting private events.

I'd love to see more success stories from UK clubs in this vein - please get in touch if you have any examples!

Eugene Chang, Chair, Marketing Cttee.

Have you considered leaving a gift in your will for your croquet club ?

Trying to find funds for unexpected problems can put real stress on a croquet club's finances.

Lawn weed and moss treatment
Urgent repairs
New updated equipment
The development and improvement of club facilities

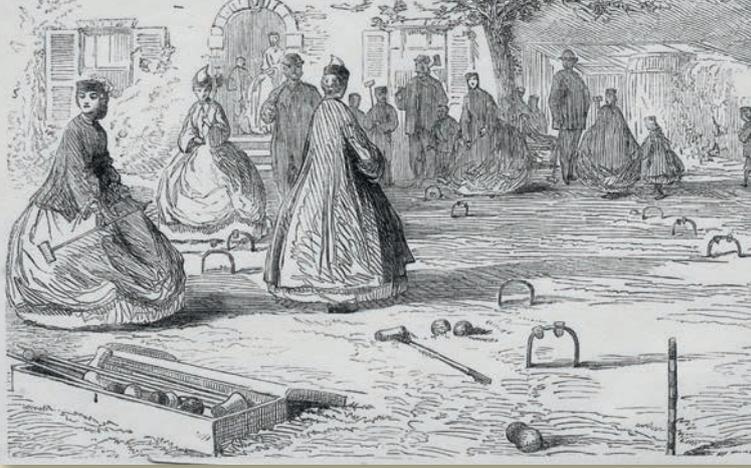
All these can put stress on the club and undermine its stability. Usually they can not simply be funded by increased membership fees. Croquet is a great game enjoyed in many ways by very different types of players and we all depend on healthy and stable clubs.

That is why leaving something in your will to your club can help members continue to enjoy playing the game we have all enjoyed so much.

It is simple to do and your club will really benefit from it.

The smallest contribution could make a massive difference.

1870 - The year that Croquet



1870

A century and a half ago this year, was a pivotal year for croquet.

It saw tournament play moving into new parts of the country; it saw a large national headquarters in place with a fine new ground at Wimbledon; perhaps even more significantly, it saw consistent national rules being agreed for the first time.

Agreeing the Rules!

In the early years of the game nobody could be sure of the rules.

The first rules we know of, by Spratt, were so basic that queries started appearing in *The Field*, one of the journals of the day, on some of the more baffling aspects.

Mayne Reid tried to put the record straight in 1863 with his pioneering book *Croquet*, coming up with no fewer than 126 rules. **Jaques** countered in 1864 with only 17. **Routledge** then entered the fray, plumping for a number in between.

Local rules proliferated, such as those issued by York manufacturers Cordeaux and Ernest with their sets. The situation was close to chaotic; nobody really knew what laws someone from elsewhere would be playing to. As a wit of the day put it:

"Clara - I tell you, Jaques says you can't Croquet. Can she, Mr de Jones?"

Ada - Routledge says I can Croquet. Can't I, Mr De Jones?"

De Jones (who has fallen a victim to Captain Mayne Reid) - Yes, you can't. No, she can. Call again next week - I've only got to the 443rd rule, ha ha!"

Walter Whitmore

At this point Walter Whitmore, the energetic but often controversial early croquet pioneer, enters the story.

As a player of cricket as well as croquet, he had seen how other sports were beginning to codify their games into agreed national rules, and how formerly purely amateur sports were starting to develop a more professional approach. He saw himself as the man to do the same for croquet.

Whitmore tackled this self-appointed task with commitment on four fronts.

In 1866 he wrote a series of articles on tactics, later gathered into book form, the first of its kind.

The following year he organised the first croquet tournament that we know of, a regional affair at Evesham and in 1868 he supported the formation of an All England Croquet Club and became its honorary secretary. And, while all this was in progress, he sought to resolve the rules problem by producing what he hoped would be a definitive code.

Supported by *The Field*, and known as the *Field Rules*, this went through two editions and, while failing to oust rival codes, won loyal support among many top players.

But, whatever his undoubted strengths and achievements, Whitmore could be argumentative, quick to take umbrage, and slow to let things go.

He rapidly fell out with the All England Club, leading a breakaway movement to form the rival National Croquet Club.

He also fell out with *The Field*, transferring his allegiance to a rival periodical to assert his views and air his grievances against a growing body of opponents.

It cannot therefore have been easy for him to propose that the breakaway National Croquet Club and the old All England might work together to produce, once and for

all, an agreed national code of rules. These were finally decided on 19 January 1870 at a conference of some two dozen leading croquet clubs held at the Charing Cross Hotel.

There were disputes over the voting arrangements, and many imperfections slipped through, but here at last for the first time was an agreed national code, which prominent clubs across the country and both rival national clubs wished to support.

Pushing North!

So which were the first national tournaments played with the new Conference Rules?

They turn out to be two often-overlooked events - the All England tournament at Cheltenham on 1-2 June 1870, a largely club affair, despite the ambitious title; closely followed by the National Croquet Club's Grand Croquet Tournament at York on 7-8 June 1870.

This enjoyed a genuinely national field, from Worcestershire and Cambridgeshire to Edinburgh and Fife. Again Whitmore is central to the York story.

He seems to have hit on the idea of expanding the National Croquet Club's influence into new territory in the north of England; early in 1870 he became patron of a new club at Huddersfield, which duly aligned itself with the National.

What better place in the north to run a tournament than York, with its historic importance and excellent new rail connections?

A steering committee of six was set up: Whitmore and Muntz from the National; two well-connected York gentlemen, who were responsible for arrangements in the city itself; and two members of nearby clubs, Castle Howard and Helmsley, who managed the entries.



The first truly nationwide tournament

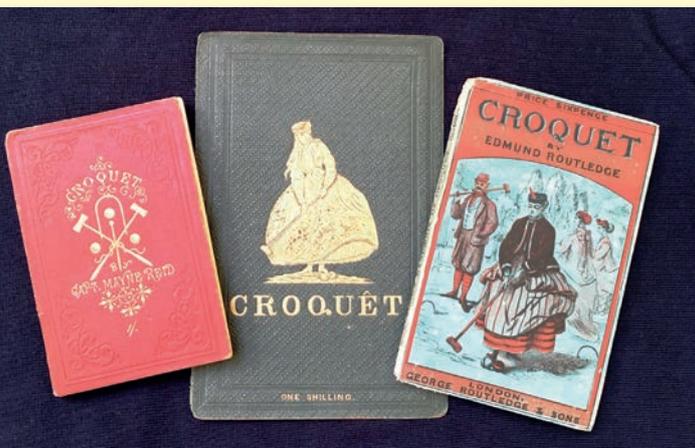
We are lucky to have several accounts of the event, which together give a good insight into how croquet tournaments were being organised at this time.

The Yorkshire Gentlemen's Cricket Club was booked, not far from the station. The pitch was marked out as six lawns, each 30 yards by 40 yards and edged with cord.

Photographs:

Top left: Croquet sets often came with the manufacturer's own set of rules.

Left: 3 competing sets of rules:
- Mayne Reid's *Croquet*, third edition of 1866
- Jaques's *Laws and Regulations*, first edition of 1864
- Routledge's *Croquet*, 1870 edition with Conference Laws.





Hoops were six inches wide.

The decision was made for the gentlemen's heats to begin on the Tuesday, and, on Wednesday, for the final gentlemen's rounds to be complemented by a ladies' tournament.

Whitmore and four other members of the steering group immediately entered.

The tournament was on.

The uncomfortable fact remained that, while some top players were members of both the National and the All England, others owed their allegiance solely to the All England.

So Whitmore turned to exaggeration to bolster his cause. He was no stranger to it; he would later claim the authorship of five Jaques parlour games, even though three of them were not his.

So the pre-tournament publicity claimed that DJ Macfie, one of the competitors, was "The Scottish Champion", even though the inaugural tournament for the Championship of Scotland was still two months into the future.

Similarly, Whitmore himself was presented as "The English Champion", the slender evidence for which centred on his performance at the Evesham tournament three years earlier, which he himself had organised and to which he had invited only regional contacts.

Whitmore was clearly looking for a grand success at York, so that is what was described in the post-match press release.

Here we may read of "a large and picturesque ... assemblage of ladies"; "gay and aristocratic attendance"; "the very best public tournament ground" players had ever seen; "beautiful workmanship" in a prize mallet and balls donated by local manufacturers; "really first class" play: "The York public may be congratulated on having so novel and interesting a match to attract them to the beautiful ground of the Yorkshire Gentlemen."

Unusually, however, we also have a spectator's viewpoint of the event, in the form of a letter to the York Herald. Here a rather different picture emerges.

Timings were nowhere near kept to, so much so that the ladies' tournament had to be abandoned and prizes decided by lot.

Attendance was modest: the correspondent noted that, when his party left before the end of play, they were the last spectators to leave the ground. Entertainment was limited: they had hoped for a brass band, but found only croquet singles, played in a way so far removed from the eight-player garden party game of the 1860s that it seemed scarcely comprehensible.

The letter may help to explain a curious aspect of the tournament.

According to the press release, Whitmore, the star billing, and Muntz "were obliged to retire at the end of the first day".

Prichard's excellent *History of Croquet* implies that Whitmore may have withdrawn in pique after getting into hot water with his own National committee by having, without authorisation, ordered emblazoned mallets as extra prizes.

Could Whitmore instead have agreed to withdraw to resolve the problem of the gentlemen's tournament over-running so badly? Or, as so often, was Whitmore looking to his own reputation, by removing the possibility of the so-called "English champion" being beaten?

He was careful to submit a piece to Land and Water praising his own performance: "Mr Whitmore's play was most brilliant ... he was in specially excellent form ... he would most likely have come off victor."

It was in fact the opponent scheduled for Whitmore's next round, the rising star Rev R Baker of Kimbolton, who won the tournament.

Be that as it may, the official PR version of events won out, with a dozen longer or shorter versions appearing word-for-word in the papers.

The strategic game – what was now being called 'scientific croquet' – had announced its presence in the north, and the Castle Howard, Helmsley and Huddersfield clubs were ready to carry the torch.

Photographs:

Top centre:
Walter Whitmore, croquet pioneer

Top right:
The National Croquet Club tournament at Highgate, 1869

Right:
Just down the road from the 1870 York tournament: a Leeds family pose with the latest croquet gear (and dog)



Meanwhile the 1870 York tournament retains its distinctive position as the first tournament played in the north of England, and the first truly nationwide tournament played anywhere in the country to agreed national rules.

At last – a proper headquarters!

Meanwhile the National was being rapidly outflanked by the All England.

This had leased a four-acre site in Wimbledon and laid out twelve lawns and outbuildings in double-quick time.

At last croquet had a fitting national headquarters, and at once the All England set about running its first tournament there, three weeks after the York event.

The lawns were as yet far from perfect, but the entry was substantial.

The Field reported that on the first day "not less than 250 persons passed the gate".

Even Whitmore set aside his differences with the All England and played, although he then marred matters by arguing against the decision of an umpire, a dispute which he continued for months.

'Tight' croquet (foot on the ball)

1870 saw many other developments. 'Tight' croquet (foot on the ball) was finally outlawed in serious croquet.

Players began to favour mallets of a weight similar to those of today.

Almost all competitive players now played with a two-handed grip.

Lawn layouts began to move closer to the modern setting.

With a single framework of laws in place, however imperfect, attention could now turn to the detail. *Continued overleaf...*





The 1870 All England tournament at Wimbledon, print with contemporary hand-colouring.

~ 1870 ~

Continued . . .

So 1870 was the key turning point – the year croquet came of age.

As a contributor to *The Field* put it, until then “croquet was yet in its infancy; now it is almost full-blown.”

John Harris, York CC

Sources: contemporary journals, books and newspapers; Prichard’s History; contemporary illustrations.

References available on request from the author at jharrisnet@gmail.com



Another print of the 1870 All England Wimbledon tournament, from *The Graphic*

2020 ~ AC Tournaments Update

The previous news article from the AC Tournament Committee was full of plans for the forthcoming season and information about new competitions and new formats for old competitions.

Just three months later and it feels as though we are on a different planet, so I am afraid that this article makes much grimmer reading. On 17 March, a message was posted on the CA website stating that “CA organised tournaments have been cancelled until the end of May”.

This included the **Peel Memorial Tournament** which has been held every year since 1898, apart from the war years 1915-18 and 1940-45.

The **AC Inter-Counties Championship**, which is a festival of croquet and a popular social gathering attracting about 140 of the country’s better players, has also fallen victim. Before the cancellation announcement, we had started discussions about possible postponement and re-formatting but there were difficulties of finding a date and a venue that could accommodate even a cut down version of the competition.

The subsequent Government announcement on 23 March, restricting travel and enforcing social distancing, meant that cancellation was inevitable.

The sharp-eyed amongst you will have noticed that the regulations concerning

eligibility to play for a County state that no-one can play for a different County if they represented another one the preceding year (apart from specific exceptions).

The cancellation of the AC Inter-Counties this year therefore opens up a loophole but, before all you county organisers rush to sign up the best players you can find, the ACTC has already spotted this and will be re-drafting the regulation so that ‘preceding year’ is qualified by saying ‘preceding year in which the event was held’.

Other regulations will also be examined for discrepancies caused by unforeseen cancellations of events.

The **AC Veterans Championship** in June has also been cancelled following representation from the host club.

Other AC tournaments run by the CA such as the **Mens and Womens Championship, the AC Opens and the AC Seniors Championship** are currently still going ahead as planned but decisions will be made on postponing, re-formatting or cancelling these, in consultation with the host clubs, if the crisis progresses beyond the end of April.

The **National Inter-Club competitions, including the All England and Short Croquet**, have all been drawn and team organisers have been told of the extensions for deadlines, where necessary, for playing their early rounds. If the government restrictions are extended beyond the end of

May then all these competitions may have to be reviewed.

Many club tournaments have been cancelled.

In order to keep up to date with tournaments you may have entered, please check the Tournament Entry System on the CA website, where cancelled tournaments are now clearly marked.

Details for claiming a refund or choosing to donate your entry fee to the host club can be found there as well.

The members of staff who usually work in the CA Office, are now working from home and they are doing a sterling job in posting news items, responding to tournament secretaries and directors, answering players’ question, dealing with refunds, handling online enquiries, etc.

Please give a thought to the amount of extra work they are coping with at present and try and find the answers to your questions on the website, or contact Tournament Secretaries or Tournament Directors directly.

Now the clocks have changed, the grass is growing and the birds are singing, we are all yearning for the company and friendship of our fellow players that we have previously taken for granted, so let’s hope we can all meet up again on the lawns very soon.

**Beatrice McGlen,
Chairman, AC Tournaments Committee**



Photo, left: Gary Bennett and Alan Clark will be just two who will be sitting out the 2020 AC Counties; pretty much like they are doing here at the 2019 event.

Right: David Maugham at the AC World Championships in February, won’t get the chance to defend his Western Championship title at East Dorset in May.

(Both images by Samir Patel)



2020 season ~ GC Tournaments Update

I don't intend to repeat the overall message that you will have read elsewhere about the impact of Coronavirus COVID-19 on this year's calendar, but it might help if I outline the key changes to the CA's programme of GC events as at the time of writing (10 April).

England v Spain Test, Inter-Clubs and Students

The 'play by' dates for the **GC Inter-Club Competitions** (Inter-Club, Murphy Shield and Federations Shield) have been adjusted in the hope that play will be possible later in the season.

This does mean that the later rounds will be on a tight schedule and therefore we ask clubs to be flexible when arranging their fixtures. Draws and dates can be found on the usual pages on the CA website.

The **GC Students' Championship**, due to be held on 18-19 April, has been postponed and reduced to one day - Sunday 20 September - still at Nottingham. There is a new entry in the website Fixtures Calendar.

The **England v Spain GC Test Match** will now not be held at Hurlingham 12-14 June. We are looking at options to re-schedule, but it is unlikely that it will be held in 2020.

English National GC Singles Championship qualifiers

Three of the eight qualifying tournaments in **The English National GC Singles Championship** (for the Ascot Cup) have been cancelled and others may fall by the wayside in the coming weeks.

When we have a better feel for the number of qualifiers, we will consider whether we should extend the criteria for those who qualify for the final at Southport on 19-20 September.

The three cancelled ENSC qualifiers are:
- Sidmouth GC Championship (25-26 April).
- East Anglian GC Championship at Colchester (9-10 May).
- Ramsgate GC Championship (13-14 June).

~

The changes to the GC A-Level, B-Level and C-Level Series tournaments are outlined in the next column by Chris Roberts.

It is very possible that further CA-organised events (and Club events) will be cancelled or postponed in the coming weeks, so please stay abreast of developments by checking the CA website.

Importantly, please only book refundable public transport tickets and accommodation that can be cancelled without penalty.

Jonathan Powe,
Chairman, GC Tournaments Committee



ABC-Level Series

The GC Level-Series competitions have been hard hit by the Coronavirus COVID-19 disruption and all of the contributing tournaments scheduled before the end of May have been either postponed until later in the season or fully cancelled.

Even before the current lockdown restrictions, most hosting clubs had followed the CA's decision to call off all competitive croquet under its own auspices until the end of May, and the remainder then fell in line in accordance with CA advice when the government restrictions instructions were announced on 23 March.

NEW! - The Tournament Entry System (TES) now allows Tournament Secretaries to postpone tournaments to a later date, and crucially to 'take all entrants to the new date', rather than cancel outright, and this may appeal to some organisers.

If you wish to consider this, please contact the Series Director (details below), who will help facilitate postponements if at all possible.

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At the time of writing (10 April), the following tournaments have been affected:

A-Level Series at: Cheltenham, Northampton, Hunstanton (all cancelled) and Wrest Park (postponed until 05/06 September) – and Pendle is an early cancellation from the June schedule.

B-Level Series at: Camerton & Peasedown, Sussex County, Watford, Ryde, Pendle, Roehampton (all cancelled), East Dorset (postponed to 08/09 August) and Wrest Park (postponed to 17 August).

C-Level Series at: Sussex County, Ryde, Phyllis Court (all cancelled), Crake Valley (postponed to 26 July) and Wrest Park (postponed to 11 August) – Guildford and Middlesbrough are early cancellations from the June and July schedules.

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By the time this Gazette reaches you, it is quite possible that further postponements and cancellations will have been

announced and the latest picture can be seen on the CA website.

There are **NEW** and very useful four Series buttons at the top of the online fixtures calendar which highlight each Series, or one can visit each of the Series own dates / results pages using these navigations:

Fixtures calendar: go to

'Tournaments' > 'Fixtures Calendar'

ABC Series Pages: go to

'Tournaments' > 'CA Events' > 'A, B, C Series'

~

How much of this croquet season we will be able to salvage remains to be seen and the GC Tournaments Committee will decide in due course if any alterations to competition arrangements are appropriate.

If this becomes necessary, any changes will be well communicated to tournament organisers and players through website announcements and confirmations in the next available Gazette issue.

To remind readers of the existing set-up:

The GC Level-Series competitions feature a large number of tournaments that are events in their own rights, and run by the hosting clubs, but have the added appeal that the results contribute to overall national competitions organised by the CA.

Under an umbrella of common competition rules covering allocation arrangements and the awarding of points for performance success, players compete against their peers at three levels below the English National Singles Championship Series: at A-Level (unrestricted), B-Level (3+) and C-Level (7+).

The A-Level Series is a straight 'points race' with rewards being earned for first to fourth place finishes accumulating to an end-of-season points total to decide the winner.

The B- and C-Level Series reward the winner of each qualifying event with a place in the respective national final tournament, with any remaining places being allocated to points gatherers.

Chris Roberts,
Director of the ABC-Level Series

Bamford wins record-equalling 5th AC World Title

experience of Dwayne McCormick (AUS) and Jeff Newcombe (AUS) but 22-year old Matthew Essick (USA) also qualified with impressive ease.

Ben Rothman (USA) is the current GC World Champion and topped Block H at the start of a quest to emulate Reg Bamford and hold both AC and GC titles simultaneously.

Knock-out rounds 1 & 2

The first knock-out round was played as best-of-three and featured comfortable wins for Bamford, Chapman, Essick, Fletcher, Hockey (AUS) and Webby while Maugham and Rothman had close three-game wins against Ian Burrige (WAL) and Galpin.

Best-of-five is now expected in the later rounds of the ACWC.

There were two swift three-game wins for Fletcher against Maugham and Bamford against Forster at opposite ends of the draw and, to many observers, that seemed a harbinger of who would contest the final.

Mulliner led Death 2-1 but superb shooting and bold play allowed Death to win the last two and qualify to meet Bamford.

Jenny Clarke (NZL) showed huge determination to do the same against Greg Bryant (NZL) and earn the right to meet Fletcher.

The other four matches all went to four games and all featured youth prevailing over experience. Wilson beat Hockey and Harry Fisher (ENG) beat Avery, but the bigger news was that Essick beat Chapman and Webby beat Rothman.

Five Quarter-Finalists under 30

For the first time in the ACWC, five of the quarter-finalists were under 30.

Fletcher and Bamford looked even more impressive on Friday with convincing three-game wins against Clarke and Death while Essick and Wilson showed great form in seeing off Webby and Fisher respectively in four games.

Nonetheless, both Webby, the 2017 Under 21 Golf Croquet World Champion, and Fisher should look back at this Championship with great pride in the standard of play that they displayed.

Semi-Final 1 Bamford v Wilson

The Bamford-Wilson semi-final started out with two easy wins for Bamford by 26tp-0 and 26tp-1 and it seemed that Wilson was going to suffer the same fate as Bamford's three earlier opponents, namely being unable to reach double figures in any game.



by Samir Patel

The 2020 AC World Championship was held at the Victorian Croquet Centre in the north-western suburbs of Melbourne from 15 to 23 February 2020.

The VCC was supported by the Ballarat Alexandra, Belmont, Essendon and Williamstown Croquet Clubs for the block stage and the Plate.

Belmont is to the west of Geelong and, like Ballarat, about an hour's drive from the VCC. Essendon and Williamstown are in the Melbourne suburbs.

The field was the strongest for several years with 15 of the world top 20, and 22 of the world top 30 taking part.

It was particularly encouraging to see an increased number of young players and there was considerable interest in seeing how far they could go.

They did not disappoint.

Block Stage

Not straightforward for big names

The blocks were played over three days from Saturday to Monday, with Tuesday

used to complete any unfinished or delayed games and to accommodate any play-offs.

Everyone had two days at VCC and one day at one of the other venues which meant that no-one could suggest that they were not familiar with the conditions when the knock-out stage began.

However, getting to the knock-out was not straightforward for some big names. The pressure to qualify and the calculation of how many and who you need to beat gives the block stage a special atmosphere and soon news was circulating of some surprises.

Robert Fletcher (AUS) was warmly welcomed back after having to miss the last two ACWCs through giving priority to building up his business with his brother Malcolm.

However, he dropped three games in Block A and trailed a resurgent and unbeaten countryman Pete Landrebe. Fletcher was fortunate that six wins were enough to qualify without the need for a play-off.

In Block B, Reg Bamford dropped a couple of games but went through in company with England's Samir Patel and James Galpin, the runner-up in the 2019 Under 21 GCWC.

Block C saw its top four seeds all qualify, headed by Mark Avery (ENG) who has enjoyed superb form for the last couple of years.

Jose Riva (ESP) was the big-name casualty in Block D where David Maugham (ENG) and three others all scored seven wins and so relegated the Spaniard who had six wins - ironically the number sufficient to allow Robert Fletcher to qualify in Block A.

Stephen Mulliner (ENG) headed Block E with eight wins from his nine games, just ahead of defending champion Paddy Chapman (NZL) and the former U21 GC world champion, Felix Webby (NZL).

In Block F, youth shone in the shape of Edward Wilson (AUS) and Logan McCorkindale (NZL).

In contrast, Block G showcased the

Photo: Live TV coverage with commentary by Chris Clarke (left).
(by Eugene Chang)



A hint of change appeared when Wilson had the first ball to 4-back in game 3 but then he put down a triple. However, a long roquet and, after pegging out only one ball, a 7-yard peg shot saved the day and he took the game 26-9.

He was also first to 4-back in game 4 but mis-approached hoop 3 in his second break. A further long roquet paved the way for his second ball to reach the peg but his diagonal spread leave was imperfect and allowed Bamford to hit a short shot and hope to get going.

Unluckily for Bamford, a court-wide take-off just trickled over the boundary and Wilson had no problems in finishing off and equalising the match score at 2-2.

The deciding game was clinical.

Bamford took advantage of the toss to play first, survived two shots from Wilson and then closed out the match 26tp-0 to reach the final for the sixth time in his career.

Semi-Final 2 Fletcher v Essick

The Fletcher-Essick match was between two players aged 26 and 21 respectively who really fancy their shooting and it was no surprise to see that the supershot opening was used in every game.

Fletcher began in typically impressive form by winning the opening game 26tp-9 in seven turns with one hoop failure repaired by good shooting and a competent delayed triple.

However, Essick (for whom the word "undaunted" could have been coined) immediately replied with his own supershot and a fifth turn triple.

Rather surprisingly, game 3 featured hooping and shooting errors by both players, but Essick emerged as the final beneficiary, winning 26-9.

In game 4, Essick had a fifth turn break to 4-back and, after Fletcher missed the lift, seemed on course for a triple and the match. However, the rover peel was straight and Essick roqueted partner rather solidly when trying to jump over it in the hoop stroke. This left a 15-yard peg-out which missed but he pegged out the striker's ball anyway.

Fletcher now missed a 12 yard "last shot" and Essick had no problem with a two yard peg shot.

Matthew Essick thereby became only the third American (after Ben Rothman and David Maloof) ever to reach the AC World Championship final.

Photo (from left): Patel, Bamford, Essick, Death, Giraud & Mulliner.

The World Championship Final Bamford v Essick

The Melbourne weather had fluctuated during the event. It was swelteringly hot on the day before the block stage began, then cooled down followed by some unwelcome rain but now rallied into the high twenties for the final with plenty of sun.

The final began a little spottily with errors from both players but Bamford eventually took game 1 by 26tp-12.

Essick chose the supershot opening in game 2 and seemed to have a triple wrapped up, when he unfortunately hit the peelee after rover. He now missed a seven yard peg-out and pegged out the striker's ball.

Bamford hit and took a ball to the peg with an excellent leave that wired Essick's ball from the peg and left him a dangerous shot of over 30 yards at Bamford's balls near hoop 1.

Essick declined the invitation to commit immediate suicide and instead played his ball to a few yards west of corner 4.

This was not ideal because it could be brought into a break but Bamford failed hoop 3 and Essick hit the peg from 20 yards to win 26-14.

Bamford prefers east boundary openings but Essick had the first break to 4-back in game 3.

However, Bamford hit the lift and equalised and, after Essick missed his lift, Bamford took the game 26tp-9 to lead 2-1.

Essick again relied on the supershot opening in game 4 but, sadly for him, he missed in turn 3 and Bamford hit in turn 4.

Bamford went to 4-back and, after Essick missed the lift, completed a delayed triple with the help of some big and impressive croquet strokes to take the game 26tp-0 and the final 3-1.

Bamford thereby claimed his fifth AC World Championship and drew level with Robert Fulford's tally.



Above: Matthew Essick with a very hampered stroke.
Below: The wonderful view from the Victoria Croquet Centre clubhouse (by Samir Patel and Eugene Chang)



Englishmen clean-sweep all four consolation events

James Death beat Felix Webby in the Salver (for the losing semi-finalists) 26-12, 26tp-19.

Stephen Mulliner beat Dominic Nunns 26-20, 26-9 in the Shield (mainly for KO second round losers).

Samir Patel beat Chris Shilling (NZL) 8-26, 26-11, 26-11 in the Bowl (for KO first round losers) and Alain Giraud beat Aiken Hakes (NZL) 26-14, 22-20 in the Plate final.

Everyone appreciated the very considerable efforts of the tournament officials, the referees and the other volunteers and the warmth of the welcome to players and spectators, both at Cairnlea and the other venues.

**Stephen Mulliner, Secretary-General,
The World Croquet Federation**





Getting Shirty with David Openshaw

New Zealand revisited

I've been to New Zealand eight times to play croquet and of course to see all round this beautiful country. It's such a great place to visit and in January I had a good reason to go back there.

The WFC Golf Croquet World Team Championships were being played there and the trophy is the Openshaw Shield, so I wanted to be there to present it!

This was the third time the Championship had been held, following the 2012 inaugural event in Johannesburg and the 2016 edition at Surbiton in west London.

Now it was to be held in Nelson, New Zealand and actually the location gave me an extra reason to go because I was born in Nelson, Lancashire and I had always felt an affinity for its namesake, besides which I have good croquet memories of the place.

In 1979 Great Britain beat Australia there on some of the fastest lawns I've played on.

In 1989 I reached the semi-final of the NZ Open before losing a close match to Bob Jackson and in 2000 Stephen Mulliner and I won the NZ Open doubles.

New Zealand & Egypt youngsters so superior

This GCWTC is for the top eight countries in the world and turned out to be frankly astonishing for the superiority of the top two teams New Zealand and Egypt.

England were beaten 12-1 by Egypt in the Semi Final and 5-1 by New Zealand in the block. And England came third!

The standard of the croquet played by New Zealand and Egypt was higher than anything I have seen before.

What was also amazing was the ages of the players. The New Zealand team of four players had an average age of 21 under the captaincy of Felix Webby, 20.

The Egyptian team were slightly older with an average of around 25.

Here in England we've been left behind in both playing standard and attracting young players to the game and just one further example was that during a pre-tournament warm-up Sweden played against a Christchurch Under-17 team. The significance of this is not the result which was evenly matched but the fact that they could actually field a team of under-17s!

You can watch a seven minute highlights package of the final with a mixture of interviews and critical shots via the SkySports video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GObSvIQ1iql> and see detailed matches on - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIRhw08e3A>

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No whites rule in NZ, so on with my 'Wellington yellow'

After these championships concluded, I thought I would come out of retirement and play in the New Zealand Open AC Championships in Wellington.

Now, you know that these articles by me are loosely based on my collection of croquet shirts and so now I've come to the important part of the article!

About 10-12 years ago Croquet New Zealand abandoned its all-white dress code and now any colour of clothing is allowed.

I had specially brought my Wellington Club yellow shirt with me but also took advantage of this policy by using my normal summer shirts and shorts to play in. All I needed in my luggage was my Trimmer mallet and I was 'good to go' as they say.

Time to relax our whites rule to attract all ages

Whilst I do like to see white at traditional venues such tennis at Wimbledon and croquet at Hurlingham, I do believe we could do with a more relaxed dress code for the majority of our croquet events.

We need to do as much as possible to attract more people to croquet of all age groups and changing the dress code would be one move to help achieve this.

I was pleased to qualify for the knock-out stage of the NZ Open and was drawn against Felix Webby who also showed he can play very good Association Croquet and beat me rather easily.

It was also great to meet up with five members of the 1979 New Zealand MacRobertson Shield team whom I played against on my first visit all those years ago.

I also visited one of my favourite cities, Christchurch, for the first time since the earthquakes and I was pleased to see that it's recovering, albeit slowly. I had time for a number of rounds of Golf (little white ball) with Jenny Clarke who had been the reserve for New Zealand in the Team Championship.

My final thought is to record that this New Zealand team was certainly the youngest ever to win a Croquet World Team Championship (and I include the AC MacRobertson Shield in this). It might be the youngest team that is the current World Team Champion in any sport, but it certainly represents an opportunity to create a new awareness of the range of ages that croquet can attract.

David Openshaw

National Junior Programme

Do you know of any UK-based young (U25) players at your club or otherwise, who would benefit from participating in a national programme?

Background

One of the CA's priority areas is to encourage younger players into competitive croquet.

In particular, we would like to develop a programme targeted at this (very broad) group, and foster a network/community amongst these players, so they can learn and support each other. The CA already organises a number of events for younger players including the AC and GC Student Championships, the AC National Schools and Junior Championships and the U25 Summer school, but we want to do more in this realm.

Youth program for 2020

I have obtained approval from across the CA to initiate a youth programme for 2020 (COVID-19 permitting), and buy-in from leading young players who wish to support this.

The initial phase is to work with U25 players who are existing members of croquet clubs, rather than directly approaching schools or youth groups.

Existing U25 members and their parent clubs are invited to get involved. The 2020 program will split participants into regional pods which self-organise to meet both physically and virtually, and work on various aspects of croquet.

Each pod will be led by a top coach with experience of coaching younger players. These regional groups will come together in a single national event to be decided, towards the end of the season. The proposed programme is not AC/GC-specific.

What next? In the first instance, I need further details of U25 members who might be interested in joining this program. I would like to know:

Name, age, club, stage of life (school, college, uni.,etc), playing ability in AC and GC, contact details. Please do obtain consent from the member (or their parent/guardian if U18) if you think they would be interested.

Please contact me,

Eugene Chang, Director,
AC Students, Schools & Junior Champs.
etychang@gmail.com

Croquet Association Grants

Winterborne Valley CC ~ 'A Phoenix in Dorset'

From the ashes of its previous venue at Kingston Maurward College rises Winterborne Valley Croquet Club.

The former Kingston Maurward CC had to leave what had been its home for a generation (34 years) when Kingston Maurward College required the court area for its own use and notice was given in February for the end of the 2019 season.

There followed a hectic spring and summer researching potential venues (some 40 of these were looked at, starting with an identification of green spaces of the right size through Google Earth).

Most were unsuitable or not available.

One court would have kept the club going but two would have improved the existing offering of one large court and one half size court.

False hope at cricket ground

Hopes ran high in July when a single lawn was marked out to the side of a private little used cricket pitch.

Croquet during the week and cricket on Sundays sounded good, but after a couple

of meetings the owner withdrew, feeling after all that the court would adversely affect the playing of cricket - even if we removed the hoops! - So we were back to square one.

Our new home

Next up was not a cricket square this time, but a football pitch.

On the way to this outcome, two EGMs had been held to choose between the alternatives found and to ensure that there was backing to maintain sufficient membership at the venue selected.

Negotiations were formally concluded in October with the Winterborne Stickland Sports and Social Club for part of their recently unused football pitch.

It is well drained (which has been tested in the recent weather!) and pretty level, with few weeds, and has been regularly mowed with a rotary mower.

The grass is good, but nevertheless needs preparation before croquet can be played.

A short spell of good weather in the autumn enabled the contractor to do some

deep tining followed by de-thatching and the laying of 40 tons of top dressing.

Unfortunately the weather did not allow for reseeded which will follow in early spring, along with weed control and fertiliser. We can hope for play to start sometime in April.

Help from CA Grants

The club has been greatly assisted with grants from the CA towards this year's projects - the springtime work on the lawns, the removal of our club sheds to the new site, and the purchase of a first class lawn mower (which is a manufacturer's demonstrator).

Teams that visited the club at Kingston Maurward commented on the poor condition of the lawn there, which was maintained by the college.

At our new location, the club will be responsible for lawn maintenance and, with local expertise, the courts will be superior to what was available in 2019.

And yes, this is in the plural - we have two full courts. Hooray!!

**Tim Dennis, Chair,
Winterborne Valley Croquet Club**

Crake Valley CC ~ A finished job in the Lake District

The September issue of the Gazette (no. 381) reported the funding story of Crake Valley CC's ambitious redevelopment plans. Further grant awards meant the demolition of the 1920s existing building commenced in the middle of the month.

Ten carefully selected local contractors were engaged, and the project was managed by two members.

All recognised the project as a Community Asset, and were flexible and co-operative.

The outcome was that just twelve weeks later the local Council issued a Completion Notice of Works.

For 2020, the South Lakes club has an increased playing area, from 2 to 3.5 full sized courts and three new builds: a clubhouse plus lawn equipment and hoop stores.

The total cost was £62,000, with 90% financed through local and nationally sourced grant applications.

Additional income was raised through fundraising, donations from local councillors, our landlord and members.

Key to our achievements is a CA Grant of £7,788, which was the catalyst for other national funding awards.

Speaking to the NW Federation

Development Officer at the outset was also most helpful.

The 'Grand' opening

We were pleased that Roger Staples and his wife, Hilary, decided to continue as planned and came across from the North East to officially open the clubhouse on 21 March (two days before movement restrictions were announced).

Due to health concerns we only had four members in attendance but it was still a wonderful afternoon.

The club will be hosting a celebration for members, guests and funders when the restrictions are lifted.

Our Next Steps

Greater footfall will enable more people to enjoy croquet socially, and attract new members to our club and the CA.

Our "Croquet for All" programme has a bowling club, two primary schools and a girl guide unit already interested in group sessions.

Additionally, we will build on our current relationships with local communities to attract more visits from similar groups, individuals and businesses, and to start that off, all the project contractors and funders



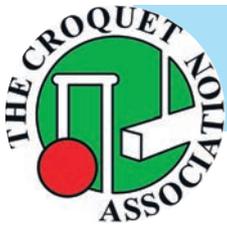
have been invited for free sessions.

Club members now have modern facilities to enjoy, and visiting players will notice a huge difference, especially when we host a new tournament in 2020 - we have been invited into the CA's GC C-Level Series, and have the privilege of hosting the first event on 25 April.

This and our traditional annual AC events are detailed on the CA website fixtures calendar.

If any CA member is visiting the lakes in 2020 please contact us to arrange a game - we are friendly up north!!

**David Cornes, Crake Valley CC
www.crakevalleycroquet.org.uk**



The first CA Survey of

The First CA Club Survey (conducted Nov/Dec 2019) was commissioned by the CA Council to assess trends and highlight issues at club level, which will feed into future policy design for the wealth and growth of the sport.

This article is a 'highlights package' only and is minus some colourful pie-charts and graphs due to space limitations here.

The full report is available as a recent news item on the CA website.

~

Council have agreed that the Club Survey should be repeated every two years to establish a time series going forward.

The response rate was: **77.6% (163 of 210 Full / Affiliate clubs)** representing **7,683** unique members.

Notes on figures:
- Numbers represent responses to this survey only – no scaling has taken place to produce national / regional estimates.

An independent check to match figures to the CA Membership Database has taken place.

- Assumption – all data submitted by clubs was 'accurate' (corrections / imputations were made where possible).
- Some numbers submitted represent best estimates, not actuals.
- Quality Assurance – critical appraisal has taken place on design / report, not on the final numbers produced.

Court numbers

Clubs were asked some general questions about their setup – how many courts they had, their ownership, how busy they were and their membership capacity.

Of the respondents, **51%** said they were a croquet-only club, **29%** shared facilities with other groups, **15%** were part of a bigger multi-sport club.

Club land was mostly owned by the local Council (**44%**), privately (**19%**), by themselves (**15%**), and by a trust / estate / charity (**10%**).

The majority of clubs have two or fewer courts, and are yet to hit membership

capacity.

Four-court clubs (previously promoted as an 'ideal' by the CA as it can thus host **13%** of respondents, whilst **12%** had five or more courts. Clubs are in regular use – with **63%** of respondents having activities on five or more days in a typical week.

Club Membership

In the Club Membership by Federation table (*below left*): NumUnique is the difference between NumPlayers and Num2ndClub – an estimate of the number of unique players by Fed / nationally, by subtracting those who are members of other clubs.

The pattern of memberships is consistent across Federations – clubs typically have a high proportion of active players, most of whom are of retirement age, and very few who belong to multiple clubs.

Around **1%** (87) of the membership is under 25.

Average club membership is **49.9**, median **43**. Budleigh Salterton is the biggest club with 260 members. Great Dunham has 1.

This works out at an average members per court as **18.1**.

Membership Recruitment

Most clubs, despite low membership wastage (numbers who leave per year, which is typically five or fewer), face recruitment issues of some sort – seeing little return on volunteer effort, low conversion to full membership, or problems reaching a younger demographic.

There are a number of recruitment initiatives from some clubs which differ from the typical 'single open-day in early season with follow-up beginners course', which could be promoted.

Clubs run a range of formal / informal structures to integrate new members, including club socials, courses, buddy / mentoring systems, Hi-Lo / Pro-Am days and beginners-only sessions.

Other novel methods include indoor carpet croquet, Fun Day Gymkhanas and one-to-one coaching.

Balance of GC and AC

The majority of clubs offer both GC and AC, with a handful of AC-only clubs and a sizeable number of GC-only clubs.

This supposed dual-code aspect at club level is not reflected in the proportions of members who play GC, AC or both, recognising that there is no single definition of a 'GC' or 'AC' player across clubs.

Nationally, **64%** of members play GC only, **13%** play AC only and **23%** play both.

The regional breakdown suggests variation at Federation level, with the North West and West Midlands having the highest proportions of AC-only players, and East Anglian and Southern having the highest proportion of GC-only players.

The North West and South East have the highest proportion of dual-code players.

Starting beginners on GC or AC?

Clubs predominantly introduce their beginners to GC, although some introduce other forms of croquet, or to both codes via a unified coaching course.

Clubs were asked about how they encourage GC-only players to take up AC.

This had a low response rate; clubs used a mixture of One-Ball and AC directly, and provided further comments – e.g. Alternate Stroke Doubles, pairing with a regular AC player and playing 14-point games.

Responses reflected a variety of attitudes of whether clubs are actively encouraging AC – some believe members should play whatever code they enjoy whilst others target those who show potential for AC.

Referees, coaches and handicappers

The number of clubs who declared themselves without any active coaches was 25, without any AC referees (including assistant referees) was 106, without GC referees was 87, and without handicappers was 31.

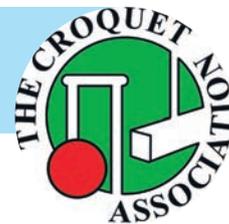
This data has not been matched to CA official figures to assess current supply.

Club Membership

Federation	Clubs	NumPlayers	%Unique	%Retired	%Active	%U25
Croquet North	7	235	94%	84%	94%	1%
East Anglian	21	1103	91%	84%	83%	1%
East Midlands	15	506	93%	78%	81%	1%
North West	13	706	94%	80%	82%	3%
South East and London	38	2069	95%	82%	84%	1%
South West	26	1658	95%	89%	86%	1%
Southern	23	1105	97%	85%	88%	1%
West Midlands	9	315	96%	87%	89%	0%
Yorkshire	11	436	97%	89%	92%	0%
Total	163	8133	94%	84%	86%	1%

Qualified Coaches and Referees

Federation	ActiveCoaches	QualCoaches	QualRefs_AC	QualRefs_GC	QualRefs_dual
Croquet North	14	11	1	2	0
East Anglian	42	27	16	9	6
East Midlands	42	28	16	10	3
North West	64	50	36	7	4
South East and London	123	92	55	46	12
South West	79	51	51	30	9
Southern	56	33	10	31	4
West Midlands	24	5	1	1	1
Yorkshire	30	25	2	2	0
Total	474	322	188	138	39



member clubs ~ by Eugene Chang

Competitive play

Most clubs run internal season-long competitions and enter Federation events, with a large number also running single-day or weekend tournaments.

Around a third of the clubs organise CA Fixtures Calendar tournaments or participate in CA national competitions.

Note that Federation singles tournaments and competitions make up an important number of competitive fixtures, which was not included in this survey.

Turning to the percentage of members who enter CA Fixtures – as a proxy of how many are competing regularly on the tournament circuit, there is some regional variation, with West Midlands and Yorkshire players having the lowest proportions of players entering CA Fixtures.

This could point to strong Federation leagues which offer competitive play.

government or companies, Ladies social or golf, Church, Mental Health, Youth Groups.

Grants - Local Authorities/Councils, Local charities/community, National Lottery, Sport England/Wales, Local Business (eg. Dev. Grant from Manchester Airport), retirement group, National Companies – WH Smith, Tesco Bags for Help, Waitrose Community Matters Fund,

Personal note from Eugene Chang: Having recently visited a number of croquet clubs in Australia (Victoria / NSW) to see what they do, I think UK croquet clubs could do more in the 'events' space – e.g. hosting birthday or hen parties. This promotes croquet in the local community, markets the sport, and is easier to run than you might realise!

Feedback

Clubs were given two open-ended questions below, which attracted a wide range of detailed responses, categorised broadly into themes below by question.

A range of responses were entered in answer to the question:

'What can CA do better for clubs?'

Promotion – CA website; Change the public perception of croquet; create common marketing materials; Raise profile (more time on national media); Schools, CCGs, U3A,, Regular media content for social media.

Communications – CA website; Gazette; Communicate changes; Better communications on CA services/what is available.

Tournaments – Promote Short Croquet; Promote competitive play; Better promotion of national events; Tips for shorter versions of AC play; Encourage formats for 3 and 2 court clubs, Register of coaches/handicapper willing to travel.

North/South divide and club isolation – CA reps contacting clubs one to one; Encourage travel to north for events; Visits from top players to isolated clubs; Eliminate the London/SE bias.

CA Services – Proactive CA Shop (eg, roadshows), Show what CA is doing for an average club member; Support for advice/central campaign for complex issues, Review club membership (of the CA) – more tiers?; Expand/Improve the tournament Entry System (TES).

Feedback for the CA

Again this free text area provided many different responses, as exemplified here:

What has the CA done for us? – A-Class/young player bias (ignoring the 'average' members); Per-capita for new/struggling clubs; Perception that public liability insurance is the only benefit of Club Membership (of the CA).

Gazette – Keep hard copy of Gazette; How to keep relevant when online only; Content relevant for regular clubs (too much focus on elite/results; Prioritise advertising/fundraising rather than scrapping.

Improve CA operations – Synch the Membership Database with other databases; Automation for clubs setting up CA Fixtures; Make CA website mobile-friendly.

Proactively address common issues – Guidance for setting initial handicap; Discrepancies/empowered to adjust handicaps before entering competitions; Advice on suitable GC/AC coaching pathway; Support for remote clubs without format coaching/mentoring; Advice for attracting younger players; Promote intermediates between GC/AC eg. Ricochet; Advice on using blowing greens, Grading system for court quality/speed.

Marketing – Whites image.

Competition – Federation leagues for larger federations; National schools competition for GC; Reduce tournament levy (penalises active tournament clubs).

Conclusions / next steps

These results were presented at the recent Council meeting. There were a wide range of results across all areas of CA activity, which has and will continue to influence Council's understanding of current issues.

This report deliberately presents results by Federation; Council representatives have access to this and to individual club feedback; I hope these results will spark further discussion and improve the way the sport is played and administered.

Credits:

Analysis and report: **Eugene Chang**. Design, input, assurance: **Frances Colman, Kevin Carter, Ian Vincent, Samir Patel, and The Marketing Committee**.

Players entering CA Fixtures Calendar tournaments

Federation	TotalMembers	EntersCAFixtures	Percentage
Croquet North	235	23	9.8%
East Anglian	1103	169	15.3%
East Midlands	506	80	15.8%
North West	706	85	12.0%
South East and London	2069	262	12.7%
South West	1658	164	9.9%
Southern	1105	109	9.9%
West Midlands	315	18	5.7%
Yorkshire	436	41	9.4%
Total	8133	951	11.7%

Marketing and external engagement

Around 120 (75%) of clubs have their own website, and 110 use local media to promote themselves.

Other methods of promotion include local fetes / fairs, PR stories with local press and regular visitor events.

Listed below are common local groups, schools and businesses that have taken part in croquet, which could be of interest for other clubs generating new ideas.

Local Target Groups - U3A, Women's Institute, Rotary, Probus, Round Table /41 Club, Scouts/Guides, Charity Fundraisers, Parkinson's Support, MENSA, Blind & Partially Sighted, Local

Club Handicappers and Appointed CA Handicappers

Federation	Clubs	wo_HCer	AC_Reg	AC_Inf	GC_Reg	GC_Inf	Both_Reg	Both_Eith	Both_Inf
Croquet North	7	0	2	0	5	0	0	0	1
East Anglian	21	4	3	0	8	1	0	1	7
East Midlands	15	6	2	0	4	1	0	0	4
North West	13	1	4	1	3	2	2	1	5
South East and	38	7	14	4	19	4	0	0	7
South West	26	2	9	1	14	1	1	1	8
Southern	23	5	9	1	15	0	0	0	2
West Midlands	9	3	4	0	1	1	0	0	1
Yorkshire	11	3	2	2	1	2	0	0	3
Total	163	31	49	9	70	12	3	3	38

Handicappers table legend:

- wo_HCer: Club without any handicapper
- AC_Reg: Registered AC handicapper
- AC_Inf: Informal AC handicapper, etc
- Both_Reg: An individual covers both codes and is CA-registered in both codes
- Both_Eith: An individual covers both codes but is CA-registered in only one of the two.
- Both_Inf: An individual covers both codes but is not CA-registered

Dave Kibble has long been the mastermind behind the multi-paged CA Website, from 'croquet relevant' design to always looking for ways to improve its offering and functionality. As far as the website is concerned, Dave is *'The Man'*. Here he takes us through his latest improvements. Thank you Dave - Ed.

Who can use the TES?

Only paid-up CA Members can use the online Tournament Entry System (TES) or can be entered into events by administrators.

Paid-up CA Members includes Standard Members, those who pay by Direct Debit (whether actually paid or not), and overseas players granted Reciprocal Rights.

Standard memberships last indefinitely but are removed by CA-admin in January if they no longer have a primary club membership, or their primary club has failed to file its number of members return.

They are also removed in April if their primary club has failed to pay its subscription.

Ease of entry and withdrawal (and new donation facility)

Premium Members pay a lower tournament entry fee than others at the time of entry but your membership type at the time of allocation determines your entry's priority.

So, even if you have entered as a Standard Member, you can still upgrade to Premium Membership to get priority allocation.

It's now easy to withdraw an online entry from a tournament, which in good times will make dealing with allocation easier for tournament secretaries.

The player and the tournament secretary now have a one-button option to withdraw an entry, however it was made.

Secretaries are alerted if there is a refund to make, and they have an action-list covering all the tournaments for which they are responsible.

A withdrawing player may choose to donate their fee to the host club or to request a refund.

Nearly £3000 donated so far by generous players will help host clubs maintain their facilities for when we start to play again.

You can track your refunds with 'View My Tournament Entries' in the TES app and clicking 'Show Withdrawals'.

Previously, withdrawal needed different actions if paid online than to the club - now the path is the same.

Tournament Secretaries have an easy mechanism to mark their tournament as cancelled and to invite players to donate

their entry fee to the host club, before waiting a couple of weeks and then processing all remaining entries as full refunds (now a one-button action). Even those Tournament Secretaries not using TES can cancel online, informing anyone viewing the online systems including the 'Coming Up' list on the home page.

The online Levy report, available to club officers and Tournament Secretaries, now includes the total of donations made by withdrawing players, as well as highlighting cancelled tournament where not all players have yet withdrawn and exercised their preference to donate or be refunded.

Keep your handicap updated (players' responsibility)

With nearly 350 online-enterable events, your recorded handicaps are used to filter the tournaments TES offers to you for entry. For example, if no AC handicap is recorded, no AC tournaments are listed; for GC Handicap 8, events that are restricted to players with handicaps below 8 are not shown.

Courses and team-entry events are not filtered, so that, for example, a GC-only club secretary can enter the AC Inter-Club on behalf of their club.

As players' handicaps change, the entry lists keep track by highlighting where their handicap has become outside the range stipulated for the event - though it is up to Managers and Secretaries to decide what, if anything, to do about it.

Maintaining your handicap online is thus very important.

To update your handicap, simply log-in and you'll see the system's record of your handicap and can click on it to update, which takes you through a set of updatable pages and finally a 'Save Changes' button. Plans are afoot to make this even easier.

The player's handicap and any event handicap restrictions have been added to the TES entry information blocks so making this clear during online entry.

Super new feature buttons – Highlight Series / grouped events

Tournaments and Courses can be grouped with a common 'tag' to identify them as part of a series. Such series have a button at the top of the online listings, which highlights those related events, making identification much easier.

This has been used already for the very popular GC A-Level, B-Level and C-Level Series.

Requests will be welcomed for groupings

that you would like to see to make your tournament selection easier and tags can also link to a page that gives common details of the series, which avoids duplication in the grouped events.

Tournament Levies

Club officers will be pleased that Tournament Levy is not now charged on reserves listed in TES, so there is no longer a need to withdraw the reserves after the event.

If a reserve played in the event, then their reserve position must be updated; if they did not play but paid (online or to the club), then they must be withdrawn and refunded, otherwise they can be ignored.

The Officiation Report from TES now includes all Fixtures Book records, not just those enterable online, which supports analysis of the changes in the fixtures program, not just participation (where it is known by TES).

TES now supports team-entries

The available options are Individual Entry, Doubles (individual entry), Team (individual entry), Club Entry, County Entry, Enter as Team.

When entering a team event, TES presents an additional field called 'Team Name' with caption 'Club (County) for which you are entering' with a drop-down selection of clubs or counties (as appropriate) that must be selected from, or a plain text box for Team (individual entry) or Enter as Team.

When entering a doubles event, you may optionally type your partner's name into the 'partner' text box. The team or partner is displayed in the tournament's entries listing and updated by editing the event entry.

Numbers, reserve lists & lunches

An overall limit on the number of entries in a tournament is now available, regardless of the number of events or number allowed into each event. Note that limits only come into play after the tournament's Allocation Date (see the Regulations). At the Allocation Date, TES allows further entries into the tournament only if it is not full (reached the specified maximum number of places).

Tournaments now carry a 'Lunch Available' setting, which if set to 'no' disables the ability in TES to request lunch and does not display the lunch requests in the tournament's entry listing. Whatever the setting, team-entry events (see above) can't specify if the team wants lunch (to remove ambiguity on whether the request is on behalf of the individual entering for the

team or for the entire team).

Those catering for the lunches will be pleased to know that the tournament listing now shows lunches more clearly and also counts the veggie options.

Outstanding requests that will be available soon include a third option for 'Reserve list' and 'Lunch Required' so the default of 'no' does not apply - it's surprising how many people don't opt to be placed on the reserve list when they enter but, having failed allocation, asked if they do!

You'll also be getting an email from the system a couple of weeks before the start reminding you of details and the options you've chosen. Tournament secretaries will be pleased that recent login is no longer enforced for most club-admin actions, which means the annoying login box doesn't pop-up every day, only once a month.

All CA committees are currently running their meetings online, mostly using Zoom, so the calendar now supports a new meeting venue 'Online' to make that clear.

Looking up Coaches, Referees & Handicappers

Do you want to know who in your region is a referee? When looking at CA or club officials, you can now group together all the types within a group to get a single list of holders (e.g. all Coaches, all club Officers, all Referees, etc.). The display contains enough information to allow a by-club or by-Federation analysis of officials - a CSV download is available.

Go via any label's 'Context' tab and select one or more qualifications to list

their holders, such as all coaches, or all referees. Previously, you could only select one type of coach or referee at a time.

Managing your own details, their visibility and security

An individual's declared primary club determines which Federation they appear in, and there are some who have not told the system which club they belong to, so the relevant Federation cannot be determined.

You can add a club membership via your personal details tab, and a 'make primary club' button in the details of your club membership.

The 'Site Search' page (linked from Members' area) has been improved to make finding things on this very comprehensive site easier.

Many people choose not to share their contact details with fellow CA members, which is irksome to people wanting to contact officials or fellow players - there are even some people who have elected to remain private but are listed as their club contact!

Your contact details are only ever visible to logged-in users, and shared only with fellow members according to your preference settings.

They are held in an encrypted form and only visible on your screen if logged-in. If someone attending a tournament feels like organising some social activities, they won't be able to contact anyone who does not share their details with fellow CA members.

So, unless you really don't want to be contacted, there's no harm in allowing fellow CA members to see your details.

Dave Kibble
CA Council elected member

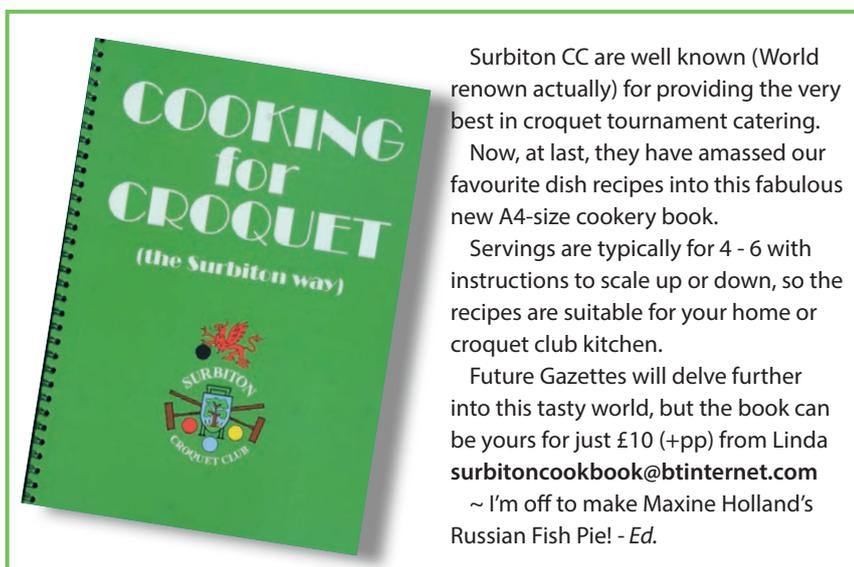
Surbiton CC are well known (World renown actually) for providing the very best in croquet tournament catering.

Now, at last, they have amassed our favourite dish recipes into this fabulous new A4-size cookery book.

Servings are typically for 4 - 6 with instructions to scale up or down, so the recipes are suitable for your home or croquet club kitchen.

Future Gazettes will delve further into this tasty world, but the book can be yours for just £10 (+pp) from Linda surbitoncookbook@btinternet.com

~ I'm off to make Maxine Holland's Russian Fish Pie! - Ed.



One to lift your spirits when you can't lift your mallet

Cheer up, croquet players.

You know what they say.

Some games you play are bad,

They can really make you mad.

Other matches make you swear and curse.

When you're chewing croquet's gristle,

Don't grumble, quietly whistle!

And don't forget to hum this little verse.

And, (*Sings*)

Always stay on the right side of the hoop.

Always follow through, but not with a scoop,

If play seems jolly rotten,

There's something you've forgotten!

And that's to stalk and remedy your swing,

When you're missing all your jumps,

Don't be silly chumps,

Just purse your lips and whistle - that's the thing!

And,

Always stay on the flat bit of the lawn,

(*Come on!*)

Make your opponent wish they'd never been born.

For croquet's quite absurd,

If a penalty's incurred.

You must never lose your cool and have a row,

Forget about your sin - give the coaching staff a grin,

Enjoy it: you may muddle through somehow!

So,

Always look for a bright end to the match,

Don't forget to play "with reasonable despatch".

Croquet's solid gold,

Played by young and old,

Men and women equally adept,

And so it's up to you,

Just swing your mallet true.

And if you're wired, they'll never intercept!

And,

Always stay on the right side of the hoop.

If you fall behind, just pause and regroup.

(*Come on everyone, cheer up!*)

Always stay on the right side of the hoop.

(*Worse things happen at the 13th hoop, you know*)

Always stay on the right side of the hoop.

(*Even Tobi Savage misses sitters sometimes*)

Always stay on the right side of the hoop.

(*Perhaps the referee won't see the divot you just dug*)

Always stay on the right side of the hoop.

(*One day this will all be over and we can play again*)

Always stay on the right side of the hoop.

(*Music fades out . . .*)

Chris Webbley, High Wycombe CC

with grateful acknowledgement to Eric Idle and

Monty Python's 'Life of Brian'

~

Thank you Chris. You are a 'silly person' - Ed.

Coach of the Year 2019 ~ IAN SHORE

Ian Shore has been playing Golf Croquet at High Wycombe Croquet Club for about 10 years, since retiring from the Royal Air Force.

His early experience saw him moving through the ranks, largely through the tournaments arranged by Richard Jenkins at Hamptworth, as well as club matches.



Southern Croquet Federation's Ian Harrison and Chris Roberts.

He then ran the seminar in a number of locations in early 2019 to help 170 referees and others who wanted to understand how the rules had changed.

Ian has also made coaching a hallmark of the High Wycombe

This experience stood him in good stead as he took part in the B-Level Series tournaments, which, rather to his surprise, led to him winning the National Final in 2015.

This success, combined with a series of courses, with Cliff Jones and at The Croquet Academy, gave him the confidence to move into the coaching field, building on his experience as a coach in another sport.

From small beginnings, Ian has built up his coaching portfolio, focusing initially on GC beginners and improvers, and he gained encouragement from working with others, particularly Richard Carline.

The introduction of the GC Rules 5th Edition late in 2018 spurred him into developing a rule changes seminar, with assistance and encouragement of

Club with the introduction of a regular Monday half-hour, preceding the regular roll-up, covering a different subject each week.

Further, motivated by Alison Maugham, he has developed a Youth Coaching programme for the club.

As Ian looks ahead, he has planned a full programme of courses at High Wycombe, teaming up with Cliff Jones and fellow coaches at the club, most notably Richard Peperell and Raouf Allim.

When asked, he says he shares his club's vision to be a croquet Centre of Excellence at High Wycombe, one in which croquet coaching (in both codes) will have a prominent place.

In recognition of his contribution to croquet coaching, Ian was selected as the Coach of the Year for 2019.

Annual Awards

The Coaching Committee are responsible for seeking nominations and making two Coaching Awards each year.

Lifetime Achievement Award

There were no nominations received and therefore no award was made.

Coach of the Year Award

Several nominations were received, and each one involved coaches at different clubs, who do all make a difference.

It was lovely to be able to read what had been achieved by all the nominees, but there could only be one award.

The CA Coaching Committee is delighted to advise that Ian Shore has been named as Coach of the Year for 2019.

Many congratulations to Ian, whose dedication is much appreciated by his many followers, both through courses and online.

I would like to share with you the circumstances surrounding Ian finding

out about his award. I reached him in his mobile, and eventually a rather weary-sounding Ian answered.

Lucky Ian and his wife were off walking in Yorkshire, and when I phoned were on their way home and standing in (and surrounded by) a larger than usual puddle – lovely!

He told me he was miserable, soaked and fed up with wading, but was then so pleased with the news that he felt he walked on the water for the rest of way.

So I send my apologies to Mrs Shore – I hope the remaining part of your walk wasn't too unbearable!

More recently Ian has been perfecting a series of pocket Q-cards for easy rules reference in various GC situations, and will be progressing those through official channels in the weeks ahead.

Once again he is coming up with something very useful – so thanks again Ian.

Sarah Hayes, on behalf of all members of the CA Coaching Committee

New Grade 3 GC Coach Stephen Custance-Baker

I asked Stephen to write a short article about the GC3 badge: "Nothing too long - just something quick for people to read to find out what you have done, what it means to you, where you'll wear your badge, whether it will change you for ever."

Over to you, Stephen:

I've been coaching both AC and GC in a casual way at Taunton Deane CC almost since I joined the club in 2008.

I never planned to become a teacher, but the great thing about coaching a sport is that the 'pupils' are there by choice and actually want to hear what you have to tell them. I get involved with coaching total beginners and high handicappers at our club and I always enjoy getting them on to the next stage in their development of basic skills.

My main interest, however, is in developing a player's tactical understanding of GC and I plan to continue my GC pods at Taunton Deane, including more for low handicappers.

I don't subscribe to the view that GC is the lesser game; I just think that it can be enjoyed by a wider range of players than AC. Its simple structure masks a complex logic that becomes more and more enjoyable with experience.

Becoming a GC3 Coach won't change what I can do or what I say, but it might influence people to listen when I enthuse about the game's tactical options.

When I play in tournaments I realise that there is still plenty for me to learn.

As to where I will wear my badge, the answer is on my hat, of course! The hat will be worn on all suitable occasions in the UK and, more particularly, when I play abroad. So far I have ventured out of Somerset from Cornwall to Kent, up to Yorkshire and across to Norfolk. I have also played in Ireland, the USA, Egypt, Austria and most recently I played in South Africa in February 2020.

**Stephen Custance-Baker,
Grade 3 Coach**



IPD (GC) Pod Coaches Workshop

For the last three years a small number of dedicated coaches and their helpers have masterminded GC coaching programmes based at their own clubs, attracting players of all abilities in their immediate region.

During this time, a wide variety of coaching material and methods has been developed and a great deal of experience gained.

In order to share those experiences a group, including Federation Coaching Officers, GC Pod Coaches and their assistants, gathered at Cheltenham CC for a workshop day on 12 March.

The proceedings began with the presentation of a bottle of bubbly to Coach of the Year Ian Shore, presented by CA Coaching Committee Chairman Sarah Hayes. Unfortunately the bottle remained unopened for the rest of the day.

Presentation and discussion topics

Delegates were asked to prepare two topics for presentation and discussion. These included:

- Getting people to attend a Pod
- Targeting Pods to a handicap range
- Clearing (Power ball) practice routines
- Innovative variations for developing skills
- Coaching aids
- Lessons to be learned from table tennis experiences in coaching
- Explaining the wrong ball rules in simple terms
- Two approaches to Game Performance and data Analysis (GPA)

Rather than relating in detail all of the content, I will focus on just two:

Clearing (Power ball) routines

Power ball in this context actually refers to clearing skills and the consequent impression of powerful play. But to avoid misleading terminology it's better to designate this as '**clearing or shooting**'.

The target, a pierced hollow plastic ball tethered via a short length of elastic and small metal stake, is placed initially at 7 yards from striker's ball.

If you hit it then place a marker one yard further away and try again.

If you miss from 7 yards go one yard nearer.

In this way you will determine your optimum distance and gain confidence all the while increasing your clearing distance.

Anyone who has noticed Ian Burridge



warm up before a match will have seen him using this equipment; the coaching refinement is the addition of the one-yard reward or penalty for success or failure.

Game Performance & Analysis (GPA)

This is a revolutionary approach to gathering data during a game and was applied by Chris and Jenny Clark to the 2019 GC Open Championship final between Reg Bamford and England Captain J-P Moberly (*pictured above*). It involves breaking the game down into basic skills and recording a player's success or otherwise. For example; positioning, shooting (clearing), hooping, blocking and so on.

The results have so far revealed that success at positioning, perhaps surprisingly for some, is the dominant skill which contributes to winning (39%), followed by clearing or shooting (24%). There are obvious 'no brainers' too, such as hooping.

Up to now GPA has been applied to a relatively small number of games but in the months ahead it is hoped to expand this and examine the results.

So how is this useful?

In the Bamford v Moberly analysis, the data clearly showed why Bamford triumphed, and why Moberly came second – giving useful feedback to both players regarding their own and their opponent's strengths and weaknesses.

In a coaching scenario, these weak areas are the key areas for targeted improvement so that a player can go away, adopt a suitable practice routine and measure their improvement.

You will undoubtedly be hearing a great deal more about this approach to game analysis and coaching, as it is being promoted in Australia and New Zealand with considerable success.

Thanks to all the delegates who attended and shared their experiences; the feedback has been excellent. Next year's workshop will be aimed towards comparison of the effectiveness of various practice routines.

Lionel Tibble,
International Performance Director (GC)
anglion@btinternet.com

IPD (AC) Squad Weekend

We were indeed very fortunate to hold the latest meet-up of the AC International Development Squad on 7 & 8 March, a couple of weeks before our current lockdown period, and Ealing CC very kindly accommodated our gathering during a period of winter lawn maintenance.

The Development Squad is a two-year programme consisting of a weekend of training days and a weekend of mentored matches each year.

Members of the previous squad intake were in attendance: Chris Coull, Andrew Dutton, Mark van Loon and Sarah Melvin.

They were joined by the 2020 squad members: Raouf Allim, Alastair Burn-Murdoch, Lorna Dewar, Phil Eardley, James Galpin, Callum Johnson, Chris Martin, Rosemary Saunders Robertson and David Warhurst. The remaining members of the 2020 squad intake are Andy Dibben and Robert Wilkinson, who were unable to attend this session.

David Maugham is the Lead Coach for the Squad, and we are indeed very fortunate to have one of the best croquet players in the world sharing his knowledge with the players. They were all extremely grateful for his practical insights into the game, and many great questions were asked as well as answered!

On Day 1, yours truly presented a short piece on **goal-setting** and the most effective way to develop skill and ability from a brain perspective.

Dave then talked us through a series of **lift and contact leaves**.

On Day 2 we looked at: **playing precision croquet, shot selection and lines of play, how to pick up breaks after missed lift shots, and finally a discussion on practice routines**.

Players went home with full brains and lots to work on; little did we know what awaited us all around the corner.

A big thank you to: David Maugham for his excellent tuition and guidance (as always), Alison Maugham, the previous AC IPD, for handing over the reins to me so thoroughly, Nigel Polhill (an Ealing resident) for helping to organise the weekend and setting out the courts, and to all the staff at Ealing who gave us such a warm welcome.

Hopefully the mentored match weekend can go ahead on August 15th/16th at Surbiton as planned.

Rich Waterman,
International Performance Director (AC),
richcroquet@gmail.com

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Presumably you are all home practising climbing the walls and doing as required to help the NHS. For all of you working within the NHS or classed as essential workers, we all applaud your work and hope you are able to keep safe.

What can you do at home with respect to coaching?

There are lots of online tutorials, and some clubs have links to videos and the like, so do please have a look around for the available material. Here are a few suggestions (*with addresses below right*).

Taunton Deane CC's website has links to both AC and GC coaching, containing all sorts of interesting articles and manuals, and I am sure there are others out there – so do let me know if you find anything useful.

Apart from clubs, there are also croquet websites, such as the **Oxford Croquet website** site containing "information concerning Association Croquet in over 700 articles, and presents coaching information intended for both complete beginners and world champions."

And don't forget the **CA website** as well. Being fit and well is a good way to make sure you are prepared to get out

Croquet in Lockdown

there (when we are able, of course), so don't become a couch potato; plan your days around doing something, perhaps a physical challenge each day!

Practice in your garden

If you have a garden – even a small patch of grass – it means you can sort of practise all sorts of things.

Having the right balls is a prerequisite, of course, but I am presuming all you clever people out there have perhaps borrowed some from your Club, or purchased some cheapies from the CA shop.

You have plenty of time on your hands, so rummage in the garage/loft/children's rooms and hook out something to use as a hoop, and do share your inventions with a photo or two for the Gazette.

Learn rules, laws and tactics

Table-top croquet sets, or perhaps a small whiteboard (with hoops/peg drawn on) will enable you to run through tactical routines; or perhaps a table-top game against yourself will appeal?

Whenever we get to play again, your

success rate will always be improved by learning a bit more about the rules/laws, and now is the ideal time to have a good read of these.

Call a referee or coach

If you don't understand something, please contact one of our qualified referees, who can be found on the CA website Members' area by following this navigation:

CA Directory > CA Officials (in the 'My CA' box).

The GC Rules and AC Laws are in the 'Play' area of the CA website, and for the latter there is even a quiz! You may have a few course notes tucked safely away in your computer files, and now would be a good opportunity to remind yourself of the course, and imagine reliving it.

Just because you aren't on a court doesn't mean this won't be of use, because imagining playing is a form of practice.

Do keep well everyone.

Sarah Hayes,
Chairman of the Coaching Committee

www.croquet.org.uk

www.oxfordcroquet.com/coach

www.tauntoncroquet.org/coaching

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What is happening to our lawns in lockdown? ~ by Beatrice McGlen

The survey of member clubs conducted on behalf of the CA Emergency Task Force

A couple of queries received by the CA very shortly after the lockdown was announced on 23 March set alarm bells ringing – what was going to happen to the nation's croquet lawns during a prolonged lockdown and would we be able to return to them once this nightmare is over?

What we needed to know was how secure clubs were in their tenure, what arrangements they usually had for lawn maintenance and whether they were already having or expecting problems with that maintenance.

By 30 March a short survey was sent to the secretary of all 216 clubs affiliated to the CA and the answers started to flood in that very day.

What is permitted during lockdown?

Within 48 hours it was clear that there was significant confusion about what was or was not permitted in relation to lawn maintenance. Police had sent a member mowing at one club home, advice from police at another club suggested it was forbidden, local authorities had furloughed ground staff, landlords had locked gates, contractors had refused to continue and club members were scared – we needed some definitive advice and we needed it quickly because the grass was growing.

A trawl of the internet revealed that the golf industry had published advice on 26 March that ground staff at golf courses were allowed to continue working, provided safe working practices were adopted in line with Government advice.

Bowls England were very helpful but they were as desperate for advice as the Croquet Association, particularly as many bowls clubs, like croquet clubs, are maintained by their own members. The Institute of Groundsmanship was also sympathetic but they did not know who could give the answers we were seeking.

Sport England and the Sport and Recreation Alliance did not answer and an enquiry via the Government website went unanswered. Finally by a circuitous route a

Percentage response by Federation



name was received from Golf England, on 31 March, for someone in Government who might be able to help, but with no contact details. A bit of fortuitous guessing at a likely email address hit the bulls eye and an answer came back the following day:

1. Contractors are permitted to work.
2. Volunteers are able to travel to clubs to maintain lawns.
3. Police had been told to review their guidance because maintenance of sports turf could not be done at home and was therefore permitted.

Of course, all of this is only permitted if safe working practices such as social distancing, washing any equipment other people have used before and after use, and hand-washing are followed.

The British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) has some useful advice, which although written specifically for golf courses, gives guidance on what is 'essential maintenance'.

www.bigga.org.uk/news-listing/bigga-appeal-to-follow-covid-19-guidance.html

The Institute of Groundsmanship has also produced some information on how to look after croquet lawns with a reduced maintenance regime. Apart from the cutting heights, which are rather long and probably more aimed at bowls greens, there is guidance on what to do in the current situation and how to bring the courts back to playing condition when this is over.

www.iog.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/interim_works_-_croquet_-_1_april_2020.pdf

Survey reveals problems being experienced by clubs

In the 10 days since the survey was circulated, 84 clubs had responded (*see the graph below left*).

Of the 132 clubs who have not responded we do not know if they have no problems or worries, or if they have shut down and don't know about re-opening.

It would be useful to hear from them.

Also if the clubs who have responded would keep us informed of any changes in circumstance whether for the better, or, heaven forbid, the worse, we can keep an eye on any trends that may be developing.

All responses should be sent to Beatrice McGlen (*contact details at end of article*).

Who looks after our lawns?

Currently lawn maintenance is divided roughly equally between members doing

their own (30%), private contractors (33%) and landlord's staff (31%). Just a few clubs employing their own groundsman (6%).

What is the scale of the problem?

A worrying 30% of clubs who responded are already having problems cutting their grass, and a further 23% expect to have problems in the next month or so.

Some clubs have reported that they have no access at all (8%). In some cases this is because they are part of a larger sports club and they therefore assume that some sort of maintenance is being continued, but in other cases clubs know that staff have been laid off or the members have been locked out by private landlords.

These clubs are in increasing danger the longer this situation lasts.

Other types of problem relate to contractors (19%) or members (17%) being unwilling or unable to work and it is hoped that the clarification from the Government helps to alleviate some of these issues.

It is recognised however that many of the volunteers who maintain clubs are over 70 and the recommendation to them is that they should not go out.

If younger club members are currently furloughed then perhaps clubs could enlist their help during this lockdown.

Staff redeployment or furloughing by local councils, sports clubs or contractors (total 21%) is a difficult problem that only has any chance of resolution by negotiation between the club and its landlord.

Some of the advice given in the first part of this article may add weight to your arguments that the social fabric of the country, including sports facilities, has been identified as key to the recovery and well-being of people in the aftermath of this crisis, and Public Health England is particularly keen that older people keep mentally and physically active.

Who owns our clubs' land?

38% Local government

20% Private Landlord

19% part of a larger sports club

12% Charity or other public body

11% Club owns its own land

The questions in the survey relating to ownership of the land and tenure were designed to find out how vulnerable clubs could be if the lockdown extended over several months, and if there were any correlations between the owners / landlords and the problems encountered.

A third of the clubs who responded have

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Covid-19 Reduced Lawn Maintenance

During the Covid-19 outbreak, most croquet clubs have been closed. It is important to maintain the courts so that they don't become paddocks.

Mowing weekly to around 6mm will help to maintain the sward. If the grass is allowed to grow too long, the sward will thin and grasses will lose their dwarf habit.

Mowing "box off" will return some nitrogen to the soil and may mean that you can reduce the fertiliser requirement to some extent. Otherwise, the normal fertiliser regime will be necessary for healthy grass and controlling weeds and moss.

This "off" period is an opportunity to rectify problem areas such as hoop approaches, dips and hollows, bare areas, etc.

Watch out for Dry Patch and if it becomes evident, treat with dry patch curative. If you have the necessary Certification, use Growth Regulator to reduce the mowing frequency.

Raking versus Scarifying

Scarifying is quite widely used on domestic lawns but this is very different from scarifying fine turf. On domestic lawns, the scarifier is being used as a rake to remove surface thatch and moss. It is not usually meant to scarify the root zone.

Domestic lawns are usually cut to between 25mm and 50mm (1" to 2"). The grasses are coarser and create far more dead matter (thatch) on the surface. Add moss to the concoction and it can create a thick carpet that smothers grass.

It is not unusual to find domestic lawns with two inches of surface thatch and moss. This acts like a sponge and prevents water from getting to the root zone, thus weakening or killing the grass. The best method of rescue for a domestic lawn with deep surface thatch is to scarify or rake to remove the dead matter and as much moss as possible.

Moss can be killed before scarifying but bear in mind that the product has to reach the whole plant and kill it by desiccation.

If the moss is very thick it may be better to scarify first, then apply moss killer and scarify afterwards once the moss has blackened. Having done this the lawn will probably have to be reseeded and often seed is spread and scarified into the surface.

Croquet lawns are very different to domestic lawns

Croquet lawns are very different because they are cut much closer, usually 4 to 6mm through the season and contain a high proportion of fine grasses. They are usually mowed once or twice a week and the clippings composted.

There should be very little surface thatch on a croquet lawn, most thatch will be below the surface of the soil.

On mature croquet lawns, there is usually 5 to 10mm which is made up of soil and dead organic matter including dead roots.

Being organic, this layer can be used as nutrition for the grass and in a healthy root zone, it is broken down into usable form by bacteria and micro-organisms. To accelerate this process, I use fertilisers that have a microbial substrate to encourage the breakdown of thatch in the root zone.

This is a far better method than scarifying which rips through the root zone damaging roots and creating bare patches.

However, raking can be very useful to remove dead moss from the surface without damaging the root zone.

For problem areas an electric rake will do the job perfectly, the Black and Decker rake costs about £70 or less.

Duncan Hector ~ (contact details; see my advert, left)

either annual rental agreements or no formal tenure at all.

These are clearly the most vulnerable if their landlords get into financial difficulty because of this crisis.

No significant correlations between owner and problems expected could be found with the clubs already experiencing problems spread across all the ownership categories. If the number of club responding increases then trends may become more apparent.

Contingency planning & help is at hand

Finally, having a contingency plan, particularly if volunteer or paid ground staff fall ill or self-isolate, is important.

29% of clubs have thought about this, and they have members willing to step in to replace contractors, or other contractors who can at least keep the grass down. One club has asked a football club if they can put their gang mowers over the lawns if all else fails.

Some have got younger family members or friends on standby.

Of the remaining 71%, about half are not expecting any problems at all so maybe do not need to think about contingencies, but that leaves a substantial proportion of clubs who do anticipate problems but have no plan in place.

*If finance is the main obstacle then please speak to your
Federation Development Officer*

Best wishes and thank you to everyone who is looking after our clubs in our enforced standstill. We all look forward to the day when we can appreciate your hard work by playing again.

Beatrice McGlen ~ beatrice@mcglen.co.uk

CA Executive Board member, on behalf of the Emergency Task Force



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The Croquet Association Website

www.croquet.org.uk

is a fabulous resource for croquet information covering: membership, news, laws & rules, coaching, who is who, and tournament details (complete with an on-line entry system).

Croquet jargon

The CA website also has a full glossary of croquet terms, jargon and acronyms that are sometimes used in Gazette reporting.

To find the glossary go to:
Advice & Technical/ Other Articles / Croquet Jargon
or use this link:

<https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tech/other/jargon>

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Digital images are preferred, but photographic prints may also be acceptable.

Please send digital jpeg or tiff format files.

Please accompany all images with a description of the subject.

If you require any material to be returned please enclose an SAE. Queries regarding the delivery of the Gazette to members should be directed to the Manager of the Croquet Association and not to the Editor.

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An early season success for Australia's David Wise v Chris Evans (Bowdon) in South Africa in February. Photo by Chris Roberts

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