



CROQUET

GAZETTE

Issue 403 | June 2023

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Issue 403 | June 2023**



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Beyond the
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Photography by
Croquet Players.
PHOTOGRAPH
Celeste Gee, Ealing
CC – “The Wild and
the Cultivated”.

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WELCOME

Now that the season is in full swing, familiar phrases are heard echoing around the lawns: “keep your head down”; “follow through”; “don’t forget the slope at hoop 2” and the old favourite “that hilled off”. This is also the time of year when the newcomers begin to shine. It becomes obvious who will be the next contender for the club handicap title, and who will be the one mowing the lawns and left to lock up.

It’s also the time to take a look at those rotas, because by now a few gaps might be appearing for little helpers. Do you have hidden talents which could be put to use at the club? Are you a keen gardener who could take on a challenging wildflower border? Perhaps you are a secret baker, or

even candlestick maker. Could you help with the preparations of the open day or create some new bisques holders ready for the end-of-year competitions? Whatever your hidden talents may be, please do consider sharing them with your croquet community. In this edition, we celebrate some of those hidden talents, as we feature photography from three of our very own CA members. We all know that pictures speak a thousand words, so if you have some pictures which tell a story from your croquet adventures, please do share them with us. After all, who doesn’t enjoy the memories sparked by a great photo album?

| CA Editorial Team

BOWDON 150TH ANNIVERSARY

In late April 2023 Bowdon Croquet Club celebrated the 150th anniversary of its establishment in 1873, thus making it the seventh oldest croquet club of continuing existence in the world. Sticking with that claim, it is acknowledged that many clubs were formed earlier than 1873 but have since become defunct. The founding fathers of the club were all Cotton Magnates who lived locally. Originally it was a Croquet and Bowls Club with shared access to the available lawns. Slowly, with the increasing popularity of lawn tennis (where have we heard that before), lawn space became a premium bit of real estate, so much so that by 1910 one lawn remained as a shared space for both sports. In 1911 an adjoining field was rented and the croquet section of the club moved and developed four lawns, built a new clubhouse, dropped the Bowls title and became self-governing.

With over 100 members it remains a strong club. The celebrations themselves consisted of a dinner in the clubhouse, exactly on the date of formation, with a packed out clubhouse of members and guests

and guest of honour Patricia Duke-Cox, President of The Croquet Association.

The dinner itself consisted of wonderfully diverse dishes prepared by the members themselves followed by a speech by Club President, Brian Storey incorporating a short history of the club and citations of notable members past and present. The following day, with an introduction by Patricia Duke-Cox, further celebrations took place with the official opening of a new club summer house by special guest, Sally Dynevor MBE, star of ITV’s Coronation Street and a local resident.

To complete the day, members and guests were treated to an exhibition match of GC between Club Secretary, Angharrad Walters and Club Wizz Kid, Jack Good which was much appreciated, to the accompaniment of many cakes and sandwiches.

All in all a wonderful couple of days to celebrate not only the “Queen of Games” but also its local heritage. The only thing left now is to live long enough to celebrate the bi-centennial!

**| Brian Storey, President
Bowdon Croquet Club**



HIBISCUS COLUMN

I'm going to lose this thing', my opponent muttered as I cleared a hoop to make it 6-6 in a GC league match. This was news to me. Throughout our advantage game - 9 hoops for him, 6 for me - I'd been trailing, humiliatingly out-played by a superior opponent. He'd won 5 of the first 6 before the gods relented, but 6-5 to him did seem pretty terminal. Not a thought I'd share... but when he said the L word, my spirits rose. As did my fortunes. Thank you, Reg...

...that's Bamford, of course. Like Boris, he doesn't need a surname. Since I took up a mallet in 2019, people have spoken of 'the greatest player who ever lived' in reverential tones. 'Reg stalks every shot, even if it's 3 inches', I learned with mounting resentment. As Reg graced Blewbury Croquet Club when it opened its current courts 20 years ago, I was stalking the same turf when this nugget emerged. In my mind, he was an ancient Briton, not quite as venerable as W G Grace, but certainly not a commanding South African with a glass of red wine in hand. And a lovely white shirt miraculously unstained when he raised it to his lips. As a multiple world champion in his mid-40s back in 2012, he shared his thoughts on winning (The Mental Game, YouTube).

Intimidating dress tactics came near the top of the list; he'd put on his blazer in the car park for the 50m stroll to the changing room where he'd take it off and hang it up. Did it help that the car was a Ferrari? He shook his head unconvincingly...

Early in the worst April of the 21st century, my forest of bisques was reduced by two. Cheltenham, of course, my lucky track where encouragement creates self-belief. Four wins out of five and I received a handicap reduction that has been weighing on me heavily ever since. Of the various problems attached to it, the most depressing is how much I'd like to hang onto it, ideally reduce it. Infuriatingly, this inhibits my ability to play to it. How I despise my idiot mind games...

Opponents with handicaps between 12 and 18 fall into two categories. First, there are the naturals who announce they first picked up a mallet a couple of months ago. A tiny percentage of them are telling the truth; be aware that the remainder are editing out a lot of distant sunlit afternoons under dreaming spires

Then there are the GC converts. 'How AC players hate us', said Rick from Phyllis Court with a wolfish grin. With a GC handicap of +1, he was effortlessly if charmingly taking me apart at the time. Double banked, his legendary pal Roger

(GC -1) was meting out similar treatment to my colleague. Switching disciplines requires a tactical reboot, but confidently running hoops from several metres and hitting in from many more reduces the need for pinpoint accuracy in other departments. Hatred? Certainly not; but admiration and envy are never far away... The antidote? Practice and more practice, at home and away. Courses can be great, but pick with care. I made an abortive 280-mile round day trip to Budleigh for one that was undersubscribed three days before its due date, only to find that local marketing had added six very inexperienced students. Vaut le voyage? Absolument pas.

On the other hand, Tony Elliott's course at Ealing Croquet Club, tucked into a leafy corner of Lammas Park, was a winner. I met Tony in 2022 when he was helping Cliff Jones at Newport and he brought the maestro's clarity of purpose to a tightly-structured day that covered all the skills and provided rewarding scenarios to use them in.

With such thoughts in mind, I'm heading to Newcastle for the 3-day Tyneside tournament in late May. A Boudicca foray for an ancient Briton? Or a fool's errand? Time and Hibiscus will tell...

I Minty Clinch



TUNNEL OF TIME

100 YEARS AGO

In the 31st May 1923 Gazette Letters to the Editor

TIDYING UP

In your notes on page 77 of the Gazette dated May 24th you rightly comment on the indifference of departing players about leaving the clips and balls ready for new arrivals and a fresh match. Another point is that one departing player frequently has a clip in his pocket, and, unless the newcomers are on the spot at once it is hard to identify the "klip "-tomaniac.

When using the Editorial "we" I presume that you refer to London tournaments when speaking of such indifference. I make a point of tidying up any lawn on which I have been competing, but then I confine my play to the "provinces" and the home counties.

A parallel lack of breeding is the leaving of empty glasses, plates and teatrays after the food has been consumed. People who do such things would be the first to throw stones (metaphorically) at trippers who litter a common with papers and bags. I

return to the tea-room or tent any plates, etc., which I have taken out on loan, but in doing so I have occasionally been rebuked for doing "servants" work. My contention is that those members of the C.A. whose social position is above suspicion need not be afraid of compromising themselves by returning empty vessels.

Yours truly, J.A. McMordie

40 YEARS AGO

In the July 1983 Gazette (#170) Letters to the Editor

LESS FORMALITY

Surely the time has come for the Croquet Association to move out of the Victorian Era into the Second Elizabethan Age, by using Christian names for all players and giving our wives an identity of their own rather than their husband's initials. I have recently enjoyed a very pleasant week playing in the Budleigh Salterton Tournament, where although over 30 of the 50 entrants were from other clubs, most of us were soon on Christian name terms. But the report in the Gazette will

doubtless appear in the traditional less personal form. For many years at the Sidmouth Club all members, old and new, have quite naturally used each others' first names, and this has resulted in a very friendly club with newcomers almost queuing to join more this season and others on the waiting list. I would suggest that the publicity the Croquet Association is seeking and the image and popularity of the game might be enhanced if we adopted the practice common to most other sports of using players' Christian names in all reports.

Reg A. Pierce (Sidmouth)

Golf Croquet Cups 1983 Harrow Oak 7-8 May

The continuing low entry for this event may reflect a reluctance on the part of players to submit to this ultimate test of the mallet, hoops, balls, and ankles. Their fears are unfounded as Association Croquet is a splendid preparation for the game. Indeed each of the six entrants for this year's championship has, at some

WHO WORKS IN THE CA OFFICE AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

We're a dedicated team of three hard-working individuals committed to serving our community and the general public to the very best of our abilities with all things Croquet.

The CA Office and Shop are located on the beautiful grounds of Cheltenham Croquet Club.

Utilising our bespoke-built online database, we manage 220 clubs and 6,500 individual members, and we create and manage the annual fixtures calendar and Tournament Entry System. We are the central hub for CA official communications to all clubs and individuals.

We also manage and run the Croquet Association Online Shop, selling equipment to clubs and croquet-playing individuals within our community, and Garden Croquet sets and garden equipment to the general public.

TIP: When making a shop purchase online, if you're a CA member listed in the CA database, you can avail of your member discount rate by signing in to the shop website using the same email address that's listed on your record in the CA database, before making your purchase.

If you ever have any difficulty with this process, please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be more than happy to help.

IN THIS SECTION WE ONCE AGAIN TAKE A LOOK THROUGH THE 'TUNNEL OF TIME' TO SEE WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE IN THE CROQUET WORLD IN THE PAST, AS SEEN IN THE CROQUET GAZETTE

time or another, expressed an interest in the Association game. The standard of play attained heights which are unlikely to be surpassed in any other Golf Croquet event to be held this year. Martin Murray, in winning the singles, made a point of coming from behind in all but his last game when, driven on by frenzied applause from a contingent of spectators specially rushed in from Colchester, and undazzled by his opponent's apparel, he ran out the 7-3 winner over Adrian Palmer.

Past Gazettes can be found on the CA website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?page=gazette&Action=issues>. Currently there are scans of the Gazette back to 1954, when the current numbering system started, on the CA website.

| Chris Williams, CA Archivist

Shop Member Discount Rates:

- Standard Member 2%
- Garden Member 2%
- Premium Member 10%

MEET THE TEAM



Mark Suter – CA Operations Manager

Mark has been playing Croquet (predominantly AC) for a little over 40 years. He's played at International level and represented South Africa, Ireland, and more recently England and Great Britain. Mark has a background in Business and Marketing, running his own businesses in the property and financial sectors located in South Africa and Ireland respectively. Before taking up employment with the CA, for 15 years, he consulted with small to medium-sized businesses in the USA, Ireland and the UK, helping them improve their online presence.

Mark reports to and sits on the Executive Board. He also sits on the Membership Secretariat and Marketing Committee. He is responsible for staff management and all CA Office and Shop processes and procedures. During his last five years in post, he has made some significant changes streamlining all of the Office and Shop processes including open planning the office workspace making it a more spacious and work-friendly environment.



James Death – Full-Time Admin and Shop Assistant

James is a valuable member of The Croquet Association Office team, where he works as a full-time administrator and online shop assistant. With a lifelong passion for croquet, James has been playing the sport since before he could walk, representing club, county, and country for many years. He was even part of the victorious MacRobertson Shield team last November, showcasing his skill and dedication to the sport.

Before joining the office in May 2021, James worked in a customer-oriented

business for 20 years, gaining invaluable experience in providing excellent customer service. As the first point of contact on the phone, James is always ready to answer or forward queries as required, and his expertise in the shop allows him to help customers find the right mallet for them.

In addition to his customer-facing duties, James plays a critical role in the office's behind-the-scenes operations. He deals with editing the fixtures calendar on TES and processing refunds as players withdraw from events. He is also the planner for the transportation of the CA's Quadway hoops and trophies around the country, a task that requires excellent organizational skills and attention to detail.

With his vast experience and knowledge of the sport, combined with his friendly and approachable demeanour, James is a valuable asset to The Croquet Association Office team. His dedication to the sport and his work is evident in all that he does, and he is a pleasure to work with.



Mandy Rastelli – Part-Time Admin and Shop Assistant

Mandy is a valued member of The Croquet Association Office team, where she has been working as a part-time administrator and online shop assistant since August 2019. Her dedication and attention to detail are evident in her work, where she manages the online shop orders and maintains the shop with great care.

Outside of work, Mandy enjoys spending time with her family. She is married and has a son and grandson, whom she loves to spend time with. In her free time, she enjoys Salsa dancing, gardening, and going to the gym. With her friendly and approachable personality, Mandy is a pleasure to work with and is always happy to assist colleagues and customers alike. Her enthusiasm for her work and hobbies is contagious, and she is an asset to The Croquet Association Office team.

CA Office & Shop

T: 01242 233555

E: sales@croquet.org.uk



CHAIRMAN OF THE CA COUNCIL

The first recorded discussion about incorporation took place in a CA Council meeting in 2007. That concluded that the regulations in force at the time would not offer sufficient benefit to the CA. When the topic was revisited in 2020, it was clear that the benefits would be much more substantial. Crucially, the establishment of a precedent of “advancement of amateur sport” as a charitable objective of many organisations, provided us with a route to both incorporation and charitable status.

At the Special General Meeting in July 2022, you voted to approve an application to the Charity Commission for the formation of Croquet England as a new Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This was achieved on 22 March 2023 when the Charity Commission approved our application, and the Croquet England CIO came into existence (Charity Number 1202444).

Both the Croquet Association and Croquet England will exist as separate entities for some time, running in tandem during a transition period. To simplify administration and governance, our intention is to keep the membership of the Croquet England Board of Trustees aligned with the members of the CA Council, and similarly for the Croquet England Executive and CA Executive Board.

During this period, these groups and the numerous other volunteers who support our sport will be working to prepare the CIO to start operations. This begins with opening bank accounts, setting up the processes with HMRC, changing contracts, transferring CA assets, writing and adapting policies, registering with Sport England and many other tasks too numerous to list here.

You will remain a member of the Croquet Association, (which is not a charity nor becoming a charity) for the remainder of this year. The 2023 coaching and tournament programme will continue as part of the Croquet Association’s activities.

Our intent is to have Croquet England operational and ready for all day-to-day activity for next year’s playing season and beyond. This will include you all being invited to join Croquet England from 1st January 2024. Further details will follow later in the year.

Samir Patel
Chairman of Council



CLUB MATTERS

This is the first of our regular articles on club management based on Sport England’s ‘Club Matters’ programme. The aim is to encourage clubs to regularly address these questions and consider plans of action to ensure clubs go from strength to strength.

We don’t profess to know all the answers and would welcome examples of best practice to include in future articles. This month’s focus is on a club’s relationship with its members and participants. Our intention is not to preach but just ask questions to prompt you to think a little deeper about how your club could do better.

Club Management: People

- Your members (players and participants) are the reason your club exists, and volunteers are the life-blood of all clubs.
- Understanding and managing these

people is vital for a healthy and vibrant club.

- Here are four questions your club’s committee might wish to consider:
 1. When were members asked for feedback on their wants and needs?
 2. Does your club understand what your volunteers want and need from the club? Do you know what is important to them and why are they volunteering?
 3. We don’t currently ask for feedback or actively seek to understand our members. We make assumptions about our members’ wants and needs.
 4. Does your club understand what your members (players & participants) want and need from your club? Do you know what is important to them?
- Why not add all, or some, of these questions to your next committee meeting agenda?
- If your assessments of the questions are positive, many congratulations

on your club’s relationships with its members. Please take the time to share your successes with us (see end of article).

- On the other hand, if you feel there is room for improvement, please contact us to discuss how we might be able to help you with ideas and suggestions.

Sport England: Club Matters

Alternatively why not visit Sport England’s ‘Club Matters’ where you will find practical ideas to start your plan to recruit and energise volunteers.

Sport England’s resources for clubs:
<https://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/volunteer-development/recruiting-volunteers/>

For more information on Club Matters and/or help with club management of people, please contact:

Paul Francis, Chair of Sport Development Committee
Phone: 07411044109
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WEST MIDLANDS Edgbaston, Shirley, Solihull, Tettenhall
WEST SUSSEX Goring by Sea, Worthing
WILTSHIRE Salisbury, Swindon, Trowbridge, Warminster
WORCESTERSHIRE Redditch
YORKSHIRE Barnsley, Beverley, Bingley, Bridlington, Brough, Burley in Wharfedale, Cottingham, Filey, Harrogate, Ilkley, Ossett, Ripon, Scarborough, Sheffield, Swanland, Whitby

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PILOT AND TWO PIONEERS IN **SHORT CROQUET**

Where might the fourth ball be in a Short Croquet four-ball break? The classic position – helpfully placed as a pivot in the central rectangle, for your own ball to return to between hoops – is always good for making the trickier croquet shots shorter, simpler and more accurate. However the lawn dimensions in Short Croquet lend themselves well to another option: pilot and two pioneers. This can work at any point of the break, but can be a particularly attractive and straightforward alternative for the last three hoops. As you emerge from hoop 3 and send the reception ball down to hoop 5, it can be helpful as you approach the ball in the middle to then nudge it towards hoop 6 as a second or forward pioneer. Much depends on exactly where the fourth ball lies. Ideal is somewhere a little south of hoop 6 and not too far to the east of it. This, then, is a good position to try and nudge the pivot into earlier in the break, as you emerge from hoop 2. Then, after running hoop 3, send the reception ball down to hoop 5 as usual, and land your own ball so as to rush or nudge the pivot ball the short distance needed for it to do duty as a pioneer at hoop 6. If the pivot doesn't land close enough to your ideal hoop 6 pioneer position, you can immediately nudge it a second time, edging it into an improved position by playing a thicker take-off as you head on down to hoop 4. The rest of the break from here is easy, playing only simple shots to run hoops 4, 5 and 6 in turn. There's a caveat. If your partner ball is on peg, and you're looking to peg out both balls in this turn, it's important to run hoop 6 with the help of an opposition ball. Winding backwards, therefore,

if your pivot ball happens to be your partner ball, you'll want to keep it there as a pivot, by continuing the four-ball break in the conventional way and making sure before you run hoop 6 that your pivot, your partner ball, is conveniently placed for the peg-out. This means reserving the 'pilot and two pioneers' option for when the pivot is an opposition ball.

John Harris
York CC



Competitors in the Yorkshire Short Croquet Tournament

GET FIT TO PLAY!

As a croquet player do you consider yourself a sportsperson? It strikes me that just because the sport is not particularly energetic, many of us rock up to play without a second thought to our physical fitness to play and without any preparation.

I have been a physiotherapist for 43 years and run my own clinic for 30 years. I was recently lucky enough to get a place in the Women's World GC Championships in August. It got me thinking about what I needed to do to get match fit. I don't mean what aspects of croquet I needed to improve on but what I could do to get my body ready for the job! It occurs to me that croquet players don't regard themselves as athletes, but I think they should.

Like many croquet players, I suffer from arthritis, and I've had both ankles fused (I no longer have any movement in my ankles). There are lots of aspects to fitness – flexibility, muscular strength, aerobic fitness, a good firm 'core', balance, co-ordination and stamina to name but a few. Most sports players nowadays work on all aspects of fitness to improve their overall performance so why not croquet players?

Because I have arthritis I know it's especially important for me to strengthen the muscles around my leg joints so those joints are better supported. In order to improve my swing, I've devised a strengthening programme for my shoulders to give me more power in the stroke. I'm also going to aqua classes which are especially good for core strength and aerobic fitness, particularly if you go in the deep end of the pool and wear a flotation belt. Many local swimming pools run these classes and they are perfect for those with hip, knee or ankle arthritis as they give you a really good work out without you having to take weight through your arthritic joints. Pilates classes are also excellent for developing a good core strength.

In managing arthritis it's also important to keep within a healthy weight. More weight through your arthritic joints is not going to help your pain.

I've also noticed that croquet players don't seem to warm up or prepare in any way for their matches. If your muscles are warmed up they function better and you are less likely to pull a muscle. Taking a brisk walk to your club or cycling there is a good way to warm up. This can be followed by some simple exercises to loosen up your shoulders, neck and upper back followed by some practice swings of your mallet – before you even touch a ball. Before setting out for a match and after your morning shower, I'd also recommend doing some specific exercises for any problem areas you may have. For example, for your lower or upper back, knees or hips – take those joints through a full range of movement to get rid of any stiffness. Stretch any tight muscles you suffer from. Those with a sedentary job often have tight hip flexors and pectoral (chest) muscles.

None of these things are complicated but you'd be surprised to see how much difference they can make to overall performance, which after all is what we all want – don't we?

Diana Wilson

Diana has kindly offered to respond to any questions that croquet players may have. If you would like to submit a question for either a private discussion, or indeed for publishing in the Gazette, Ask The Physio style, please email: editor@croquet.org.uk.

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PROUDLY BRITISH



CHARITY ONE-BALL CHAMPIONSHIP REGIONAL FINALS 6TH TO 7TH MAY

While no financial or player records were broken this year, because of a damp April, we saw quite exceptional enthusiasm for the two Regional Finals, at Nottingham and Surbiton.

Some feared that Saturday's Nottingham clash with the Coronation would result in lower numbers willing to travel for this final aimed at players in the Midlands and North. The fears



proved unfounded, as eighteen turned out for the all-day Swiss. Last year's competition was dominated by Mark Innes (Nottingham, handicap 12) and Cathie Dance (York, 14). While they figured strongly again, they did not have it so easy, with challenges from Lucy Closs (Downham, 20), Charles Ostler (Pinchbeck, 2) and Richard Sanville (Ashby, 11). In the end, Mark ran out the clear winner, with 6 wins from 7 matches, making him the first ever back-to-back winner of a COB final. He now has two engraved crystal decanters! There was a three-way tie for second, all on 5/7, which was resolved with a spectator-friendly shoot-out at the peg, won by Richard. Sunday's Regional Final at Surbiton was inevitably larger, with more heats run by the Southern Clubs. 35 players enjoyed the club's hospitality.

After lunch we had seven contenders: Michael Durtnall (East Dorset, 18), was unbeaten; and on 4/5 were Diana Wilson (Roehampton, 5; hoping to improve on last year's runner-up spot), Keith Eaton (St Albans, 20), Joel Taylor (Roehampton, -6; the 2021 winner), Mark Ormerod (Dulwich, -5), Charles Briggs (Caversham, 14) and Kate Sander (Tunbridge Wells, 17.5). The manager's job was to play them off against each other for a tea-time final.

Diana fell to the seemingly unbeatable Michael, and Keith (who over lunchtime called in his family to come and support him) found that his 8.5 bisques were not enough to counter Joel's shooting. And then there were five. Michael, too, tripped up against Joel, but stayed in the contest, since he still had only one loss. However, Mark knocked out Kate, who found you cannot underestimate a minus-player's ability to hit in and establish a break, even in one-ball. Meanwhile, Charles, now really firing, won again. The semi-finals were between Mark and Michael, which Mark won, and between Joel and Charles, which went to the wire before Joel prevailed.

This left a keenly anticipated final between Joel, playing off -6, and Mark, playing off -5, the latter relishing the unusual experience of receiving a half-bisque. After a lengthy tactical opening won by Joel, he made a rare error, letting in Mark, who proceeded to make a six-hoop break. Joel then hit in across the court and embarked upon a lengthy break. Most of the other players had stopped to watch this fascinating duel and marvelled

at the skills on show. Joel's break was up to seven hoops and he had only to run the last three with a controlled break to win. There was a debate in the crowd as to how odds-on he was to finish that turn ("2-1 on? I would take that"), but maybe the pressure got to him, because he unaccountably blobbed penult. Aided by his half bisque, Mark took position in front of his hoop, but Joel hit it and finished. What a cracking final!

In both finals, about half of all players were solely or predominately GC players, who enjoyed this sojourn into AC, and many did well, figuring prominently in the reports above. When the reckoning was done, we recorded 41 heats this year, in which 436 players participated. Both figures suffered from the weather, with three heats cancelled and lower player numbers in many more. The final amount raised was £7103, plus £974 of Gift Aid. All of this will go to UNHCR (except for the contribution from the Carrickmines heat, which will instead go to an Irish charity). These figures bring the total raised for various charities by this competition to a little over £72,000.

Thank you to everybody who helped to make this year's Charity One-Ball Championship a great success: heat organisers, the club teams who put on the two regional finals and above all the players who made donations.



PHOTOGRAPHS Top left: Joel Taylor, having received his prize from Tea Lady', Ruth Carter; Top right: Cathie (right), who modelled a donated Nottingham Forest Football Club shirt, featuring our charity of the year, UNHCR; Above: Adrienne Sakin wonders what she has to do to beat Keith Eaton; Inset: Lower, Mark (possibly overcome with emotion?), the winner!

Kevin Carter

From Debbie James: Thank you Kevin! The wider croquet community would like to express its thanks to Kevin Carter for his role as national organiser of the Charity OB. Kevin initiated the competition in 2007, since when he has been instrumental in raising around 70k for various charities. A magnificent achievement! Kevin has been a superb manager and organiser of the event and of the regional finals, generous with his time, inclusive in his approach and generally charming to us all. Well done Kevin, yours are very big boots to fill.



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LETTERS

DAWSON TOURNAMENT BALLS

From regular recent discussions with the CA shop, it seems that not only are the Dawson Tournament Balls out of stock, but there seems to be no idea when they might be back in stock. I have also heard that the recent batch of Dawson balls have not been up to their previous standard. We have been offered the Sunshiny Balls, which I understand have been accredited for tournament play, but such is the price of any set of balls, I would not like to leap into a purchase without first finding out what other Clubs think of them.

If your Club has experience of Sunshiny Balls and Dawson Balls I would love to know how you feel they compare. The Gazette might not be the appropriate discussion forum, so perhaps any Club with views on the ball quality would email me.

Steve Bennett
Chair
Hamptworth
E: scbennett54@outlook.com

STRANGE ENCOUNTER WITH DOUBLE BANKING

The Tunnel of Time article – 50 years ago (Issue 401) has reminded me of my first and somewhat strange encounter with double banking.

It was at the Woking American Handicap Singles Tournament of June 1974, where it was not so much the secondary colours which were a memorable experience, but rather the mental rotation of the lawn through 180° for the players involved, specifically intended to eliminate the possible frustration of a chasing break. This meant the hoop running order for those double banked was effectively 3, 4, 1, 2, Penult, Rover, 3bk, 4bk, 1bk, 2bk, 5, 6, Peg.

Was this innovation widely adopted in the early years of double banking or was it merely a local experiment? I ask because I don't remember encountering it again.

On returning to my home club, Bristol, my description of the proceedings was met with no little degree of consternation and I believe it was some considerable time before the committee ventured beyond the use of primary colours.

Thankfully, I see that 17 years ago I compiled notes on my visits to Woking, where I first came across a number of notable characters in 1973 and a year later enjoyed my first tournament success, the four block winners progressing to a knock-out, where I played Collin Southern in the final. Unfortunately, you only have my word for it because the trophy, which had previously been described in the Fixture List (perhaps a little unwisely) as 'a valuable silver challenge cup', had apparently been misappropriated a couple of years earlier and the event was not reported in the Croquet Gazette.

Laurence V Latham

'ONE BACK CLUB'

After considerable thought I have decided to form a 'One Back Club*', not that I have anything against the 'hoop seven' preferers. There are two reasons for this:

Firstly I can't get out of my head that, on running said hoop, the ghost of dance expert Len Goodman will leap from behind a bush shouting "SEVEN".

Secondly I think the slight quirkiness of our sport makes it that little bit different from other sports. I hear someone in the background muttering "you are quirky enough already"!

I also really like 'Penult' and 'Rover' ...long may they remain. Introducing newcomers to our sport gives me a great opportunity to invent a different explanation for the origins of 'Rover' each time ...such fun!

Perhaps, in cricket, a second run should be 'one back'? The final end in bowls could be 'nine back'?

What other sports have phrases which would mean absolutely nothing to strangers? Answers on a postcard (you remember them) to the Editor please.

We do have permission to use the 'old' terms at present, but the day will come (when playing a youngster, around 30 or 40 in croquet terms) who will want to know what we mean by 'four back'.

Klim Seabright
Cheltenham Croquet Club

*Perhaps the CA could form a One Back Club. Those joining would buy a pin badge with proceeds going to a CA charity?



MEMORIES

One of the amazing things about Croquet is its ability to keep a person young, not just because of the physical activity that is involved in playing, but because the sport requires the cogs to keep turning at every moment.

I am always so grateful to croquet for giving my mum the opportunity of physical activity, friendships and the mental exercise that is so important in life. Alongside this, I also believe that a well-maintained sense of humour is key to a person's health, and so I must thank David Graham, the author of the 'The (Unofficial) History of Croquet' from issue 402.

When I visited my mum recently, the first thing she just 'had' to tell me about was an article from her Croquet Gazette, which she proudly presented to me alongside her souvenir copy of the Bayeux Tapestry, from a visit in her youth. It was so lovely to hear of mum having such fun with her friends, as they read and enjoyed their magazine together, being amused by the lighter side of the sport.

Thank you for the memory this day created for me and mum, we laughed so much, and for bringing back the memory mum had of her trip to the Bayeux Tapestry itself.

Lydia Jones' Daughter

ADVANTAGE GC - NOT FOR EVERYONE?

The purpose of any handicap system is to allow someone to play a sport competitively with players of other abilities, such that all players have a roughly equal chance of winning. In GC, the Extra Stroke system does this quite well.

Now some federations are considering a move to Advantage GC for their league matches – but this seems rather poor at dealing with players with any spread of abilities.

As a minus player, I was recording about 100 handicap games a year before moving to Cornwall, mainly at Ipswich CC but also in EACF leagues, and enjoyed the challenge of giving away large numbers of Extra Strokes! I have given away 24 Extra Strokes against a 20 handicap player on several occasions. And the basic handicap system worked pretty well for both players in these games. Several times in local leagues opponents said they welcomed the chance to play against a minus player.

But Advantage GC is not recommended where there is a wide range of handicaps playing – as the CA notes state.

For a minus player to have to make 11 hoops before any player from handicaps 6 to 20 has to make 5 hoops seems daft. And clearly there is a world of difference between a 6 and a 20 handicap player, which Advantage GC ignores in such cases. If such a game were played it could take ages, which doesn't fit well with federation league match formats. And trying to apply a time limit to an Advantage GC game looks very complex too.

A handicap system that only works for a narrow band of fairly similar abilities doesn't seem much of a handicap system.

Everyone benefits from as wide a range of players and skills playing competitively together in local leagues and club competitions. Moving to Advantage GC could mean only players in the middle ranges would be likely to play. And that would be a pity.

Martin French

THE (UNOFFICIAL) HISTORY OF CROQUET: PART 2

The game of croquet originated in ancient Egypt and spread to Europe in the Greco-Roman period during the 1st century BC (see *The Unofficial History of Croquet: Croquet Gazette* - April 2023), but it also developed in other civilizations independent of any contact with European culture, notably in Central and South America and parts of Asia.

However, croquet does not appear to have been played by the general populace in these cultures and was instead reserved for the deity or priesthood. This is particularly notable at Hampi, capital of the 14th century Vijayanagara Empire, situated in modern-day central India. The Crocus Temple, named after its carvings depicting crocus flowers, in the south-east corner of the ancient city, is interesting due to the similarity of its layout to a croquet court. This connection is reinforced by descriptions of its religious ceremonies, in which the priests would follow a prescribed route, passing through six pavilions in the sequence numbered on the plan (Fig. 1), before entering the shrine. The location of the pavilions exactly matches the layout of the hoops in a game of croquet, with the shrine occupying the position of the peg. There is also a description of a longer ceremony in which the procession also passed through the pavilions in reverse before approaching the shrine.

The sequence resulted in either six or twelve pavilions being visited before entering the shrine at the end, which resonates with the importance placed by ancient civilizations on mathematics, and in particular the prime numbers seven and thirteen, which were thought to impart magical powers, hence the association with the deity. The pavilion entrances have architraves resembling croquet hoops (Fig. 2), which are also flanked by figures holding mallets. In fact, croquet was considered to be the game of the gods, as depicted in a carving of Shiva playing croquet in the Brihadishvara Temple in Thanjavur, South India (Fig. 3).

The question of whether croquet developed independently in India or was influenced by contact with ancient cultures in Europe is unresolved, but no such ambiguity surrounds civilizations in the Americas prior to the arrival of Spanish and Portuguese conquistadores in the 16th century.

There is evidence of croquet having been played by the Incas, as indicated by the ceramic bottle depicting a croquet player (Fig. 4), one of several discovered at Machu Picchu in Peru. It is now thought that the central terrace in the 15th century citadel may have been a croquet court, as its dimensions exactly replicate the proportions of croquet courts known to have existed elsewhere in the Americas. However, it is the Zapotec civilization of Central America which displays the best preserved examples of croquet courts, notably the great court at Monte Albán in Oaxaca, central Mexico, which until recently was simply described as a ball court, but is now known to have been dedicated to playing croquet.

This was discovered following the analysis of charcoal found just below the surface, which puzzled archaeologists until the pattern was identified as being that of a croquet court (Fig 5). It is now believed that the hoops and peg were burnt at the end of a game in which priests competed against captives of war, possibly with an inbuilt advantage of heavier mallets such as the one depicted in the figurine from Monte Albán of a seated deity with croquet balls and a hoop completing the ensemble (Fig 6). The court has now been set out showing the position of the hoops and peg.

There seems little doubt that croquet was a game associated with the deity in ancient civilizations and may not have been played outside of the priesthood. However, what does seem to be a common theme is that playing croquet will be available in the afterlife.

I David Graham

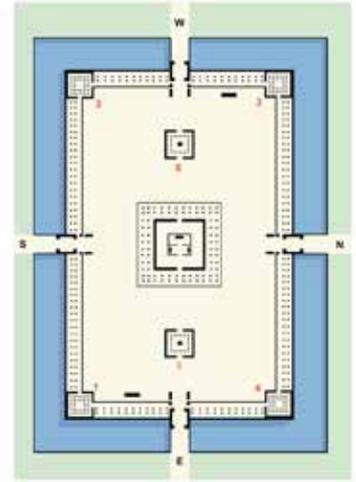


Fig. 1: Crocus Temple Plan - Hampi



Fig 2: Pavilion - Crocus Temple



Fig 3: Shiva - Thanjavur Temple



Fig. 6: Zapotec Figurine



Fig. 5: Croquet Court - Monte Alban



Fig. 4: Inca Figurine

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OBITUARIES

DIANA KEMP 1935 - 2023

We have been given the sad news of the death of our immediate past Chair, Di Kemp.

Over 30 years ago she got together a group of fellow WI members to play croquet in her back garden and this was the origin of our club.

As interest and expertise grew, she badgered and cajoled Winslow Town Council into making available a plot of land at the corner of the sports field and building a small store. This is where we still play nearly 30 years later.

She coached many of us, mostly with patience but sometimes with exasperation, encouraged us to play friendly and league

matches and made sure we had the confidence to join in competitions such as Ladies' Day at Thames Valley. She also introduced inventive club competitions which we still play each year.

When she passed the role of chair to me, she continued playing with as much focus and skill as ever, while keeping me on my toes. She made sure some of the original members with mobility and sight problems got to play once a week on a short lawn and continued to encourage us all to learn and improve.

In 2017, she was awarded a Croquet Association Diploma for her long service to the club and her contribution to the



game. She chose to receive it among all her friends at the Club Christmas Lunch and we have never seen her happier.

| Winslow Croquet Club

DAVID WICKS 30.1.23



David was a late entrant to the game of croquet having previously enjoyed both rugby and cricket. However, once he started he was very eager to make progress. He was a keen member of Ipswich Croquet Club, playing in the local league, and becoming an active committee member, as well as being a valuable part of the Croquet Association Marketing Committee. Having run a business and laid a croquet lawn at

his home, David was ideally placed to take on the role of project manager for the lawns when the club was seeking new premises. Unfortunately, he had to step down due to ill health.

He really enjoyed entering tournaments and meeting new players which he also had the opportunity to do at the Inter Counties.

David was a multi-talented man - a furniture designer, wine connoisseur, chef restaurateur, garden designer and family man. **Celia Pearce**

FREDA VITTY 02.03.41 - 09.04.23

Freda was born in Crook, County Durham. She attended Wolsingham Grammar school leaving in 1959 and went to work for a well-known bookmaker in Newcastle where she was involved in setting up or sorting out branches. There followed a change of career and she trained as a Probation Officer. She worked initially for Northumbria Probation Service and spent many years in Sunderland, making good friends and where she was much appreciated by colleagues for her calm approach to difficult customers!

In 1982, she transferred to Durham Probation Service and moved house to Chilton, where she remained until forced to go into hospital in March this year. She worked in the Durham team, and then as the Crown Court liaison officer where she was well respected by Judges and those appearing before them. When clearing some of her possessions, her good friends Jenny & Margaret came across a heartfelt letter of appreciation written to her by a prisoner not long before her ill health forced early retirement in 1990.

Freda enjoyed sport, following tennis and football in particular. She also had a great love of literature, poetry and the theatre especially the Royal Shakespeare productions in Newcastle and Stratford upon Avon. It was on one of her many visits to the theatre that she experienced a catastrophic rupture of her oesophagus. This resulted in a very long period of

recovery and an end to her career. Freda loved her garden, which was very large. She enjoyed having more time to spend in it during retirement.. She took up voluntary work with the Durham Blind Society, where she was an active participant in reading the 'Talking Newspaper', and soon in recording and editing of it too!

In 2001, Freda was encouraged by a friend to take up croquet. She joined Auckland Croquet Club in 2001 and became hooked on Golf Croquet. Encouraged by Syd Jones, Derek Old and Samantha Thompson nee Curry, Freda entered Croquet North tournaments, the Yorkshire Open and the Black Sheep at Ripon Spa and was soon travelling to tournaments all over the country. Freda played a very determined game and would never fear the reputation of her opponent. She knew right from wrong and would not take nonsense on or off the court. Freda played in the 1st WCF Women's Worlds in Cairo 2005, then in Dublin 2007 and New Zealand in 2011 - Rachel Gee said "Freda and I were unlikely travel companions... Freda looked after me, sorting out antihistamines and making sure I had a sandwich packed for a mid-match snack during the final of the Women's Worlds..."

Freda was a committee member at Auckland CC organising and running many club tournaments, she went on to manage the All England Handicap



series and was instrumental in bringing together a northern team to compete in the Inter Counties. She was an energetic and diligent member of GC Tournament Committee drawing proper attention to the need to give access to competitive GC to players across all regions of the country. Freda was always willing to make a contribution without seeking to have her name in lights. A prime example being her contribution to the 2011 World GC Championship at Hurlingham. She spent many hours in the official's office, supporting Tournament Manager Tim King with all the tasks that can send even the most sanguine Manager to the edge. Many players up and down the country will remember Freda fondly, she was sometimes loud, forthright and had an opinion on everything but she was always willing to help new players and encourage more experienced players to enter competitions, giving support and guidance freely. She will be sorely missed especially by those in her own club in Bishop Auckland.

STRAT LIDDIARD

Strat Liddiard contributed much to croquet, both as a player, representing Scotland and Dorset and as a member of the CA Council for a total of 11 years. He took up the game in 1988, and his first world-ranking games were played in 1989. He was a member of the East Dorset Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club, popularly known as Parkstone. He won the Parkstone May Weekend in 1992, the Parkstone A Class in 1992 and the Scottish Masters in 1996. He was also selected to play in the Spencer Ell three times from 1992 to 1994 and was runner-up in 1993. He made it to the final of the Association Plate in 1995, the consolation event in the British Open.

Strat represented Scotland in the Home Internationals seven times between 1994 and 2008.

He also represented Scotland in the 1995 World Championships in Fontenay-le-Comte. He played for Dorset in the Inter County Championship and was a member of the 1996 winning team. He also was a member of the 1991 Mary Rose winning Parkstone team.

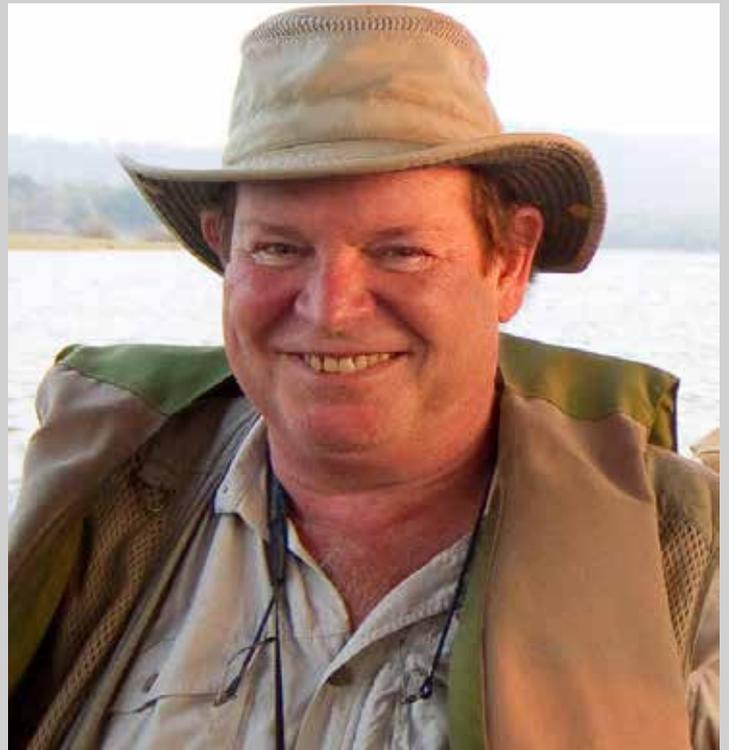
Strat was selected to play in the 1995 Chairman's Salver but suffered a heart attack two weeks before the event – and although he remained a keen player, his playing didn't really recover to the standard he wanted to be.

Strat combined playing with a major contribution to the administration of the game. He was a member of CA Council for 11 years over two spells - 1993 - 1997 and 2012 - 2019. He chaired the Equipment Committee from 1994 to 1997, was a member of the Handicap Committee, 2014 – 2018, Publishing committee from 2012 – 2016, and the Investment Committee from 2016 – 2019. Strat's contributions were thoughtful and he was a source of good advice and comment, helping to shape CA policies, never losing sight of the aims of the association and its service to its members.

George Stratton Liddiard was born in Madras (now Chennai) in 1950, the second son of Rockley and Agnes Liddiard. He grew up in Madras, and as a small child, caught polio, along with elder brother Ernest. Strat only survived due to the use of an iron lung, adult-sized, for there were no children's sizes in Madras, stuffed with cotton wool and wadding to make it effective. Sadly, his elder brother died, leaving Strat as an only child. He commuted to England for his schooling at various boarding schools, taking long flights with stopovers, which he found exciting. After school at Malvern College, he studied medicine at Westminster, and qualified as a GP, a calling he frequently described as a privilege, not merely a job. Through medicine, he met his wife, Shelagh, who became a consultant anaesthetist, and they had a daughter, Zoe, who survives him with her husband Mark and their daughter Cordelia.

Strat became a GP in the Poole area and he and Shelagh lived at Knoll Hill Cottage in Corfe Mullen, a 1960s rebuild on the site of an earlier Dorset longhouse. When the East Dorset Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club held an open day, Shelagh and Strat went along to try it out – croquet hooked Strat, although Shelagh went on to prefer golf.

Although Strat was a keen player, he was endlessly curious, and developed a wide range of interests: he was a keen sailor, wildlife photographer, cook (especially curries) and his wine knowledge was prodigious. He was an excellent artist, taking and passing



a course in botanical illustration, producing exquisite paintings of plants and flowers. He was no less talented a model-maker and woodworker, producing beautiful inlaid woodwork. He and Shelagh were kind, welcoming and generous hosts, as those lucky enough to stay at Knoll Hill Cottage for croquet tournaments will attest. Arriving in the evening, as the light was fading, with a warm glow coming from the windows, delightful smells from a curry being cooked, lots of chatter and glass of Gewurztraminer pressed into your hand on arrival will be a happy memory for his wide circle of croquet friends. Conversation was wide-ranging and Strat's was robust with wide-ranging debates around the dinner-table.

Sadly, Shelagh died in 2011 from cancer, but Strat was still the proud father at Zoe's wedding one week after Shelagh's funeral. Strat was proud of Zoe and her achievements, he had a high regard for his son-in-law Mark, and doted on grand-daughter Cordelia.

In 2017 Strat met Jane, a friend of his Australian cousins. This was to be a very happy period until the end of his life. They planned to spend winters in Toowoomba in Queensland, and summers at Knoll Hill Cottage. The pandemic, however, stalled their plans. In 2019 Strat and Jane were in Toowoomba for the winter, but could not return to the UK due to world-wide lockdowns. Strat had rediscovered his Christian faith, and with typical zest, started to study theology through distance learning at the University of Canberra. They became enthusiastic members of their local church, St James, and sang in the choir.

Through the pandemic he continued his studies and considered joining the Anglican priesthood. His health, however declined with continued heart and joint problems, although a new knee alleviated some of these.

They planned to return to the UK in the summer of 2023, the first time since 2019, but he did not recover from a fall and died on 6 April 2023. For his many friends in the croquet world, he will be very much-missed.



EALING TOURNAMENT APRIL '23

In the end, Robin Brown and Alain Giraud played a tie break to determine who would win the event as they both had the same win percentage; the player who scored the most hoops on a two-ball break would be the overall winner. Robin found himself hampered after hoop one and Alain was hampered after running 1-back. Robin won. Confused? Read on!

On the Friday an intrepid band of "setteruperers" braved the chill winds and rain to mow the lawns, paint the lines, set the Ultra hoops and check all the many other things that need to be checked before a tournament. I was particularly happy that Ealing had recently acquired its own mower to help with lawn prep (they're going to be a venue for the World Championships in July) as otherwise we'd have been on lawns that had been cut to 'fluffy' by the contractor a few days earlier. One of the joys of playing at Ealing in early Spring is the knowledge that the lawns are never going to be flooded; there have even been years where we've had 12 second lawns for the April tournament! The forecast this year was looking miserable for the weekend but fingers were crossed.

A full entry of 13 players arrived on a cold and overcast Saturday (already an improvement on a forecast promising heavy rain). This year there were 6 first-time entrants to the tournament, which is run as a Swiss, with the aim of maximising the number of games played to help clear the croquet cobwebs at the beginning of the season. Over the weekend there were 43 games played with some players managing 8 games in total.

Robin Brown and Joel Taylor set the early pace. Robin brushed off his cobwebs with a qpo and qp whilst Joel, Alain and Mark van Loon contributed to the tp tally - much to the disappointment of the hoop setter.

Sunday brought blue skies and a chance of sunburn. Alain and Joel both dropped their very first games of the event in the morning, Robin had already dropped a game to Andy Myers on

the Saturday, so the final games of the day found Alain, Joel and Robin all in the running, having lost one game each. Robin beat Joel with another qp and Alain beat Mark van Loon, with Mark not taking croquet.

With Robin and Alain tied and, as there was no time to fit another game in, a two ball break tie break was played, starting from hoop 4 with a rush from corner 4. Robin managed to make 10 hoops and Alain made 4, so Robin was the winner.

Thanks were made to those who helped with running the event, but I would particularly like to thank Simon Turner, who came out in the wind and rain to paint lines and mow the lawns, which helped make such a difference to the enjoyment of those who were playing.

| Alain Giraud



2022 SECRETARY'S SHIELD FINAL CHESTER 4 - 3 NEWPORT

And so Chester won the re-arranged 2022 edition of the CA Secretary's Shield competition beating Newport (Essex) 4-3 on a warm and mostly sunny day at the end of April.

The first attempt to play this game at a neutral venue in Nottingham had been washed out in October with Chester leading 2-1 at lunchtime. Although by the competition rules Chester could have claimed the trophy, the team felt a replayed match to be more appropriate, and Newport graciously agreed to the match being played at Chester.

The replayed final was hard fought and although Chester again led 2-1 at lunch thankfully the rainstorm that had wrecked the match at Nottingham was not repeated.

The afternoon matches were shared 2-2 to give Chester the narrowest of victories, and to win this National competition for

the first time since 1980. This was a highly competitive match played with great spirit but both teams would probably agree that the scones, jam and cream at lunchtime were the real stars of the show.

The detailed results are as follows:

Morning Session

Robin Tasker (4) and David Boyd (5) beat Fran Lambert (9) and Andrew Gregory (1.5) +9 T

David Guyton (5) lost to John Richardson (16) -1 T

Richard Smith(-1) beat Dan Neale (0.5) +20

Afternoon Session

Richard beat Andrew +15 T

Robin lost to Dan -1 GH

David G beat Fran +14T

David B lost to John -16

| Robin Tasker



PHOTOGRAPHS The winning Chester team, from the left Richard Smith, Robin Tasker, David Guyton and David Boyd.

EALING CROQUET CLUB - FINAL REPORT

PROJECT TO PURCHASE MOWER & STORAGE



In the Autumn of 2022 Ealing Croquet Club (ECC) found itself without a lawn maintenance contractor, following a series of disputes over reliability and quality of service. Rather than setting us back though, we

saw this as an opportunity to change the way we managed our lawns and at the same time become more self-sufficient, with the flexibility to prepare courts for tournaments, matches and community events that we had not had before.

We found a specialist partner who could provide lawn renovation services and an on-going lawn treatment programme and who, in the short term, could also mow the lawns for us.

To get the flexibility we needed though, using a contractor was quickly deemed to be prohibitively expensive and so a central part of our plan was to purchase our own mower.

ECC has around 80 members, which include a solid contingent of AC players. Our three courts reside on Edwardian bowling greens overlooked by a vintage wooden bowling pavilion in a picturesque public park. We host national C and B level GC tournaments, an annual AC Advanced tournament, and this year we are a satellite venue for the AC World Championships. We're also hosting the inaugural SECF Short Croquet tournament in October.

With such responsibilities we knew we needed a reliable and flexible solution!

We trawled the market, speaking to several suppliers and to people we knew at other clubs, including viewing a state-of-the-art electric mower recently purchased by East Dorset Tennis and Croquet club.

We drew up a short list of options:

Dennis FT510: petrol, 20", 10 blades, cartridge-based – c £6.4k
Infinicut FX22: electric, 22", 11 blades, fixed head, cartridge-based – c £11.3k

BFCM-Brilliant Fine Cut Mower 24" (Reconditioned mower via Duncan Hector) – c £3.4k

The club's Board of Trustees discussed the short list and ultimately it came down to price: we decided to go with the Duncan Hector offering!

We then needed to think about storage. Our quaint, wooden Edwardian pavilion wouldn't be suitable to store petrol, wouldn't meet the security requirements of our insurance policy and, in any case, didn't have doors wide enough to accommodate the 24" mower!

More trawling of the market ensued resulting in a decision to purchase a 2 metre x 2 metre metal "Expandastore" container from a company called Extraspace. It's worth mentioning here that both Duncan Hector and James Alchin-Gadd at Extraspace were extremely helpful and ensured that it was easy for us to do business with them. We were now all set!

The container was delivered to our door and erected by the partner of one of our members and his son. An additional secure padlock was added to keep the insurers happy. Duncan delivered the mower to us on the 5th of February and showed a group of excited Ealing members the ropes: how to set the cutting height; how to adjust the blades; how to start it; how to stop it; and importantly, how to mow the lawns! Adoption by the members since then has been gradual but we now have a small Grounds team and a mowing rota. If we can achieve total self-sufficiency in the coming months then the saving to the club will be significant: c £5k per annum, we estimate. As ever though, we rely on volunteers from the membership.

Now, two months after taking delivery, the decision to buy our own mower has started to pay dividends.

Ealing CC hosted a Winter Tournament on the 26th of February. This was managed by long-standing ECC member Bridget Goodman, who says: "Our lawns have always had good drainage and I wanted to offer a winter 'jumps allowed'

tournament that would count towards the rankings, and being able to have the courts mowed on the eve of the tournament made a huge difference. We believe Ealing is now unique in its ability to offer ranking tournaments on fast lawns in the middle of winter! And we are already planning to do more!"

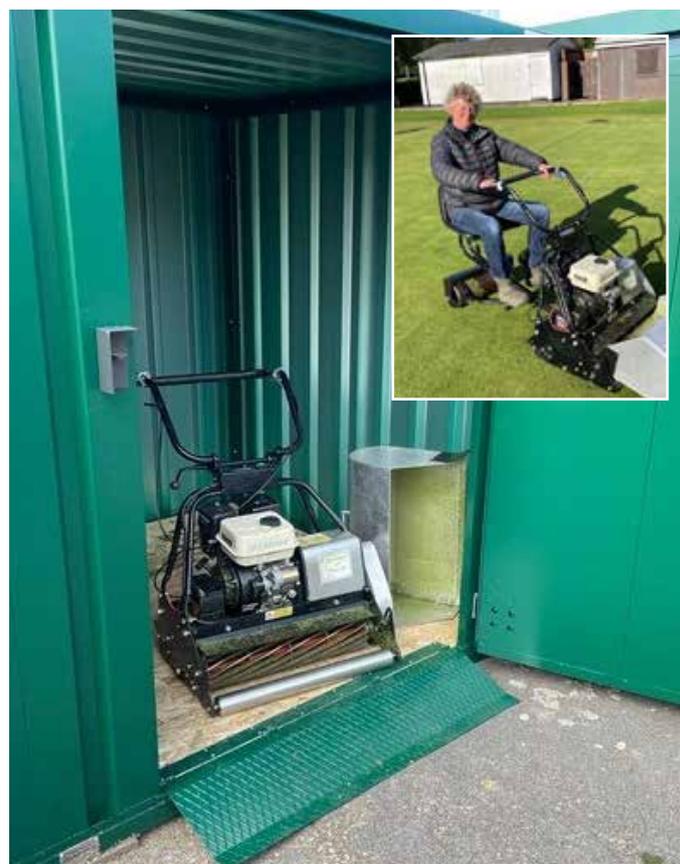
Ealing is the venue for the traditional season-opening AC Advanced Tournament at the beginning of April. This year's edition was preceded by horribly wet weather. Our contractor had mowed the lawns in the week leading up to the tournament but, due to the weather, had opted to keep the grass a bit too long for tournament manager Alain Giraud's liking!

While Alain and Nigel Polhill (another friend of ECC) got to work setting the hoops, our Groundsperson vowed to do his best to mow the lawns despite the persistent rain; the mower then proceeded to take the wet grass in its stride.

On the Saturday, the first day of the tournament, conditions were still damp, but the lawns were playing pretty well. Tony Elliott, Ealing's very own AC Championship Referee and Grade 2 coach, commented: "Thanks for the work on the lawns; the "A" class players seemed happy with them, especially when the sun speeded them up a bit more on Sunday afternoon".

The success of the tournament is testament to the Edwardian bowling greens' legendary drainage, coupled with our new-found ability to mow the lawns at a moment's notice.

Ealing is a small club with annual membership revenue of c £13k. A single item of expenditure of over £5,000 is a big thing and the approval process was long and thorough. This is where the SECF and CA came to our aid. We'd heard at the SECF AGM that grants were available to help smaller clubs like ours and so our Treasurer, Lindy Jordan, went to work! Many thanks to Mike Akester and John Reddish for their help and advice and to the CA Funding Committee for agreeing to joint-fund these purchases. The total cost of the project was £5,459 of which £2,730 was awarded to us by the Funding Committee – an invaluable contribution for which we are extremely grateful.



A BETTER TEST OF AC SKILLS

The general idea of competitions, whether individual games, local tournaments, or international championships, is to establish who is the better player of a particular game. However, in most sports, including croquet, elements of randomness mean that the (truly) better player will not always win – shots can hill on or off; one player might miss 3 shots by very little whilst the other misses two shots by a lot and happen to just snick their 3rd shot, and so on.

For some time now, there has been discussion between top-level AC players about the best method of avoiding many games lacking interaction, with success/failure coming down to just one of two critical shots in easy conditions. This has resulted in super-advanced play in the UK, with differing perspectives on its worth (some players much prefer it, others think it is not a worthwhile complication).

There is now a new variation, which is arguably considerably more mentally and physically challenging than the standard game, known as Colour-Order AC (COAC), which has just had its first trial-by-competition. Invented by Howard Sosin, and with fine-tuning developed and checked with the help of Paddy Chapman and Ben Rothman, most of the game is unchanged: players can choose which of their balls to play each turn, and which ball to roquet first. Roquets, croquets and continuations after hoops all as-usual, with one key alteration in rules: following the initial roquet at the start of a turn, and after running each hoop, the remaining two balls can only be roqueted in colour order: blue (U), red (R), black (K), yellow (Y), U,R,K,Y, etc. For instance, if the striker were to play U and roquet K at the start of their turn, they are not entitled to roquet R on that turn until they have used Y (or run a hoop), because after K comes Y (and after Y comes U but that is the striker's ball, so after using Y, R is the next ball that U could roquet). Suppose that having taken croquet from K, U then roquets Y and takes croquet from it, landing in front of U's hoop. They need not use R, they could just run their hoop, and then roquet any of the 3 other balls. If they now roqueted Y again, then they could approach their next hoop, or go to R ... but there would be little point in going (from Y) to K, as they would not yet be allowed to roquet it, without having used R.

Initially, it might seem that this variation would be an annoying game to play, with fewer options for which balls to play, and

thus, with such constraints, require less flexible thinking. However, this intuition (if your initial impression is similar to what my guess had been) turns out to be misplaced. Establishing breaks, correcting errors in play and finding ways to construct controlled leaves all become more interesting, because the choices that one makes prior to making a hoop (e.g., which ball they place as a pioneer for the next) will affect their likely choices for which ball to aim for after their current hoop.

The first tournament under the new rules was held at the NCC in Florida for 4 days from 23-26th March 2023. The players were, alphabetically, Mark Avery, Jamie Burch, Stephen Forster, Danny Huneycutt, Ben Rothman and (myself) Pete Trimmer.

Prior to the event, there were 2.5 days of in-person preparation for the players, getting used to the new tactics. Howard, Ben and Paddy had already poured countless hours into writing 150 pages of a book on the tactics of the new game, showing how some of the standard leaves, TPs, and so-on, could be achieved, and how the usual (old) tactics might sensibly be altered in response to the new rules.

Opening theory becomes interesting again because if U were to lay a supershot (for instance) and R shot at it and missed to near b-baulk, although K could easily roquet R, it could not then roquet U, as it has not used Y (which is not even in the game!). This means that R can even be used as a deliberate 'shield' from K hitting U, and 3-ball breaks are more challenging as roqueting R after a hoop means that U cannot be used before making the next hoop on that turn. Likewise, the tactics of pegged-out endgames also tend to be more interactive, and differ depending on whether the single ball is just before (or just after) the remaining peg-ball in the sequence.

With highly accurate play, standard TPs can appear little more difficult than with usual AC play, but one small error, or failing to get one of the desired peels as intended can lead to considerable complications with trying to re-jig the break to arrange the next peel attempt. For example, in my first game of the competition, my opponent, Ben Rothman, was doing very well on a standard TP, and had peelee just in front of rover already when making 3-back (following a failed peel-attempt). However, he then staggered through 3-back and couldn't hit his reception ball (K). He managed to hit Y instead, knocking it to the position

marked by the X in Figure 1. Under normal AC, this would be no problem – he would usually just take off back to K, rush that up the lawn and send it to penult, making 4-b off U – finishing would still be all-but guaranteed. But in COAC, having hit Y, he couldn't roquet K until he used U, so what should he do?

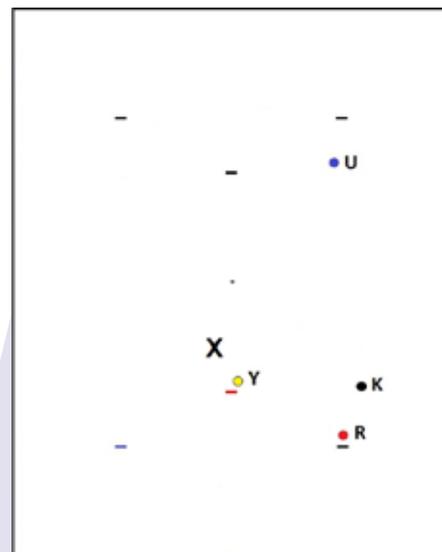


Figure 1: R runs 3-back by a couple of inches and can't hit K; instead K roquets Y (for rover) to position X; what should R do now?

There are various options. He could ignore K for the moment, pass-roll Y to penult as a pioneer going to U and make 4-b. But that would mean making penult off his partner ball that he wants to peel at rover. He could take off to U, rush that south of K and send it toward penult, getting a rush on K to 4-back ... but that is also difficult. Instead, Ben rolled Y to north of 4-back, rushed U east of 4-back and sent U toward penult whilst landing in front of 4-b. I think this was the best line of play – but note that it means that after 4-b, hitting Y now means that he won't adjust the position of K until after penult. This is a simple example of how getting the balls out of colour order can influence things.

Delayed TPs are certainly more challenging than with usual AC, and although sextuples are certainly possible with COAC, there has not yet been a successful attempt – the closest so far being an attempt by Jamie Burch, where he got 4 peels (and had the colour orientation well-set for the penult-peel before 4-back) before blobbing 3-back. The turn was an exciting one to watch due to the complications of COAC meaning, for instance, that having jawssed peelee at 2-back, Jamie needed to bombard it through the hoop in a croquet stroke whilst getting a rush on it to his



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next hoop. Interesting complications of bombards, reverse rushes, and so-on, come quickly to the fore with COAC. There are small additional rule changes for COAC not mentioned here. For more info, and/or the book (which is freely available), contact Ben (croquetpro@gmail.com) or Paddy (paddy_nzer@hotmail.com). Howard is also creating some instructional videos from the event, which should soon be available.

The lawns at NCC were impeccable – flat, even-paced (around 11s) and although the hoops were nicely set, the ground was still somewhat soft from the winter, so the conditions were ideal for controlled breaks. Although numerous games finished with TPs, it was also clear that in more challenging conditions, far less would be managed than in usual AC games.

The competition started with an all-play-all American block, with ties resolved first by number of TPs. Jamie had won his first three games but then lost to Ben (who was the only other undefeated player at that point, thus securing Ben's place in the final) and Jamie then to Mark. Meanwhile, Stephen beat Ben, resulting in Stephen, Mark and Jamie each on 3 wins. Stephen had achieved more TPs (3 of them), so progressed to meet Ben



in the final. The final turned out to be very high quality, with Ben doing a TPO and keeping both his balls on the lawn for a fascinating end-game using the COAC rules. The stroke play lived up to expectations, with each player managing 5-hoop 2-ball breaks, before Stephen reeled in a very worthy win, +2. Howard has a video of the final (commentated by Howard, Jamie and myself, with occasional comments by others, including the players), which should serve as a nice introduction for players who are interested in seeing it in action. Congratulations to Stephen for the win – and to Howard for inventing and hosting such a success-

ful competition. Whether COAC will become a commonly played game, only time will tell. But I've no doubt that when players have got used to the rules, I would be less likely to beat a better player in COAC than I would in normal AC (and vice versa) – in that sense, it is a better overall test of skill than normal AC (or super-advanced), and is also (at least at present!) more interesting to watch. Look out for Croquet Innovations @croquetinnovations7467 on YouTube for videos of COAC.

Pete Trimmer

THE COLES CUP 2023

The Coles Cup, held at the Cheltenham Croquet Club 29 April - 1 May, was a prestigious event featuring 16 entries with 4 players ranked in the top 20 in the world, including the world number 2, Reg Bamford.

The main event was a fully seeded draw with a best-of-three knockout followed by a flexible Swiss, as the consolation event, for those knocked out of the main event. Super Advanced rules were an option if both players agreed. The lawns were playing mainly true with an easy pace apart from a couple of boundaries which spat your ball off if you got too close.

The tournament saw some exceptional play and some memorable moments.

On the morning of day two, Louise Bradforth completed her first Triple Peel of the season by peeling rover at hoop 5. Later in day two, in the main event, a match was played on lawn 8, (the show lawn) by two of the most experienced players in the world and a comedy of errors ensued. Playing super advanced, player one went around first and set up a tea lady (sextuple leave). The second player, knowing what the gallery knew, proceeded to walk past smiling at them with a huge grin on his face. He then took a six-yard lift shot from A Baulk and missed, instead of choosing a six-inch lift shot from B Baulk. Player one then walked over to player two and reminded him of the six-inch lift shot he should have taken, the gallery was in stitches.

In the main event, David Goacher (seeded 9) played exceptionally well throughout the whole tournament. His shooting was on target and his break play was flawless. He knocked out the number one seed, Reg Bamford, in the quarter-final +26TP, -24TP, +20TP and then went on to beat James Death (seeded 4) in the semi-final +16TP, +26TP. The final ended in glorious sunshine and David, the GOAT, Goacher lived up to his nickname and continued his excellent

form by beating an in-form David Maugham +24TP, -22TP, +17TP, to become the Coles Cup champion.

Lorna Dewar won the consolation event with 100% wins and also completed her first triple peel of the season when she beat Louise Bradforth +21TP.

Overall, the event was a great success, finishing at a civilised time of 5:30 pm on the Bank Holiday Monday evening. Pat Francis and her team provided excellent lunches and teas throughout which went down very well with all. The players, officials, and organisers all enjoyed the competition, and it was a pleasure to see such high-quality play from the participants. The Coles Cup was a testament to the skill and dedication of the players and is known as one of the most prestigious events held in the Croquet calendar each year.



David Maugham The Coles Runner Up



The GOAT

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CA WOMEN VS...

So little is known of this event by so many. I aim to apprise you of some detail.

In 2015 England held the second Women's AC World Championship in Nottingham – a fabulous event, all who participated would agree. Pre-2015 it was rare that I would have to share the ladies changing rooms at a tournament, but this event was to make waves. We had fabulous team building and coaching sessions, with many women attending (most of whom I had never met), and friendships were made. This seemed to encourage more women to enter tournaments further afield, and I started having to wait for the loo to become free. Honestly, it was marvellous. A change for the good.

So what else could we do to encourage and keep the motivation and interest strong? The CA Women vs Winner of AC Inter-Counties 2nd Division was born. Not an event for only the top women players, but aimed at those developing their game.

The winning team of the 2nd division is contacted, and this event is explained to them: they select a date and location, playing as a team in match conditions, first day best of 3 doubles, second day best of 3 singles. Players are listed in ranking order (where possible, otherwise handicap), pairs are decided on and numbered to determine who plays who. Singles is 1 v 1, 2 v 2 etc. The county team is also encouraged to play host as most of the women's side will have had to travel to the venue; so perhaps organise a meal out for all.

In the meantime, women wishing to play in this event must declare their availability for selection on the CA site. There is a cut-off date, after which all who declared availability are advised who has been selected.

Memories of past events. The very first event was against Lancashire – Counties players will probably be aware that Lancashire are proud to be 50/50 men/women... this became a problem, as the women (myself included) wanted to play... well, for the women. Lancashire



Sophie McGlen



Louise Bradforth & Lorna Dewar

had to scabble around to find other players. Another exclusive for me was (this year) watching David Goacher RUN after the ball, as playing alternate stroke doubles he seemed to feel obliged to retrieve the ball for partner! Third memory is of one of the great evenings out when one of our ladies (no name for fear of reprisal) announced "I worked in a strip club once", to which the retort from Jonathan Powe was "I thought you might have" - she had been decorating there! We have had strong opposing teams and weaker, we have been thrashed and we have thrashed – all while lessons were being learned.

This year we played Somerset at Nailsea. A very strong team, which we nearly matched. In no particular order: Marcus Evans, Ed Duckworth, David Goacher, Kristian Chambers, Roger Tribe and Jim Field vs Gabrielle Higgins, Louise Bradforth, Angharrad Walters, Lorna Dewar, Sophie McGlen and Annabel McDiarmid. It was close on every measure: 4-5 in matches, 10-11 in games and 452-453 in hoops. They beat us by one hoop, one game, one match. It was extremely enjoyable, made even more so by the pinball and pizza evening on the Saturday night at Ed's.

Hmmm, actually, bit of coaching for you

now... I won't say who, but as he was going round having made 4back, putting a ball to Rover, Ed (oops!) decided for some reason to approach hoop 6 and NOT penult. Only as he looked up to see where his 1back pioneer was did he think "something's odd here", and stood there, in the rain, flummoxed. "I've made more hoops than this haven't I?". Louise (oppo) joined him on the lawn – "What's the problem?". Long discussion. He looked very perplexed, forefinger on chin. With one shot left he was able to run away, but, oh my! Lesson: he was thinking about an email for work! DON'T listen to that inner voice, DON'T allow yourself to get distracted. FOCUS! Or you could look like a duck in the rain.

Honestly, it's not about the winning (although everything goes in the rankings and on handicap cards), it really is about the development of players, and I really would encourage MORE WOMEN to make themselves available, please. As mentioned before, this is not just an event for the top players. If you want to improve to minus, then this event is for you.

Pictures are of Lovely Leaves and Unusual Openings.

| Annabel J McDiarmid

29TH APRIL - 1ST MAY

HURLINGHAM MAY WEEKEND

This year's event threw up a few management challenges, mostly before the start of play. 36 players in four graded blocks (two of 10, two of 8). That's the plan! The first person dropped out 5 days

beforehand. No problem as he was the reserve. The next one dropped out on Wednesday, and I was still trying desperately trying to recruit a 36th player when another one dropped out on Thursday morning. Accepting that I

wasn't likely to find 2 more players who had yet to arrange their bank holiday weekends, I amended the schedule on my spreadsheet to facilitate a cross-block game between blocks C & D; these being the blocks with a player short. Neat

solution, order restored! At 6.30pm on Friday I was sitting in the pub with Alain Giraud when my mobile phone rang. Yes – you’ve guessed it! Now block B was down to 9 players and I could do nothing but reorganise the spreadsheet once again to introduce a bye in that block. (I should note at this point that all those who pulled out had genuine reasons for doing so). Fortunately, the management briefing on Saturday morning didn’t confuse too many people and everyone coped admirably with the rearranged formats.

Despite all this, the tournament ran smoothly throughout the 3 days. There were a few other management distractions, though. Most players in blocks C and D were late starting round 2 since they were still waiting on lunches in the bar. Hurlingham catering can be quite busy when the sun comes out on a bank holiday weekend. Despite that, time was made up somewhere and no-one finished excessively late. Further incident was provided on Saturday afternoon by 2 elderly GC players who believed they had booked lawn 6. Thankfully they realised that the Sports Office must have made a mistake, and were happy to double bank with the casual players on lawn 5. Later in the weekend, a young child threw a spare primary ball across lawn 1. Mark Ormerod, mallet in hand, politely marched across to ask him to desist. Sadly, I didn’t get that photo. As for the on-lawn action: Andrew Johnston triumphed in block A; 7 out of 8 of his wins involving a TP. Despite

beating Andrew in the last round, Alain Giraud could only secure the runner-up slot after dropping 2 previous games. In total, there were 19 TPs scored by players in block A. However, Tudor Jenkins (in block B) scored the only quad of the weekend – a QPO against Peter Siddall. Sadly for Tudor, he could only content himself with being runner-up this year after Jordan Waters secured his seventh win of the weekend in a tense finish at the end of the final round. Simon Tuke and Gordon Mills ran away with blocks C and D respectively, being the only undefeated players across all the blocks.

The grounds staff deserve a big round of thanks. They could be seen busy beavering away before the start of play every morning. Several visiting players were very complimentary about lawns, especially on the cricket pitch. I think it’s safe to say that they are in good shape for the forthcoming World Championship.

The full list of block winners and runners-up:

Winner	Runner-Up
Block A: Andrew Johnston (Ireland)	Alain Giraud (Ealing)
Block B: Jordan Waters (Merton)	Tudor Jenkins (Sussex County)
Block C: Simon Tuke (Ealing)	Alan Clark (High Wycombe)
Block D: Gordon Mills (Pinchbeck)	Stephen Wingrove (Purley Bury)

| Nigel Polhill



Synchronised lawn mowing



Nigel Polhill & Andrew Johnston

EAST ANGLIAN GC CHAMPIONSHIP

The East Anglian GC Champs at Colchester became one of 4 “Elite” GC weekends designed to attract a stronger entry this year. The format was changed from single game blocks of 8 to best of 3 blocks of 4 in an attempt to generate more matchplay and replicate formats used in World Championships. The field was suitably strong with three quarter of entrants graded over 2250. In block A, top seed Harry Fisher lost 6-7, 7-3, 6-7 to Mark Avery and after losing to Rachel Gee in three in round 2 was eliminated. Rachel beat Mark fairly easily to win the block. Ignacio Gross Ariza was fourth, kindly filling in for an injured Dom Nunns. Stephen Mulliner won block B with 3 wins, continuing his good form from the Spain match and a subsequent demolition of Aston Wade in an Inter-club fixture. Tobi Savage produced a much better standard of play than his performance in Spain, using split standard grip for his positional strokes. Nick Archer took third from Sam Murray.

Block C saw a strong performance from Jamie Burch, fresh from his heroics in Australia, to win all three matches in straight games. Aston Wade took second very narrowly 7-6 in the decider against Albie Willett who showed plenty of potential that just needs a bit more experience to be able to convert leads. Ian Burrige was fourth. Richard Bilton won 3 matches in block D with the sort of consistency that eluded him early last season and Euan Burrige was second. Tim Jolliff came third and Tony Butcher fourth. In the quarter-finals, Tobi beat Rachel in a highly competitive match, Jamie destroyed Euan 7-2, 7-2, Richard pipped Aston 7-6 in the third and Stephen easily beat Mark 7-2, 7-3. In the semis, Jamie lost his first game of the event 7-2 to Tobi, but recovered to win the next two 7-6, 7-4. Stephen beat Richard in three. In the final, Stephen produced his best form of the event and Jamie had a couple of patches where his form dipped which was enough to allow

Stephen his first win of this event 7-1, 5-7, 7-4. The Bowl was won by Euan, Shield by Tony, Plate by Albie, Z by Nick and wooden spoon by Ignacio, meaning half the field went home with a prize thanks to our generous manager Ian. The lawns were nice and tightly mown and the Atkins hoop provided sufficient challenge for this early season event. Many thanks to Colchester for providing their facilities not only for this event but also the Elite training day held directly prior to the Championship and to everyone involved in the transportation and setting of the hoops.

| Chris Clarke



ENGLAND WIN THE ANNUAL TEST MATCH VS SPAIN: 18-8

England reclaimed bragging rights over Spain with a comfortable 18-8 victory in the third annual Test match. The Real Club de la Puerta de Hierro, a stylish members country club on the outskirts of Madrid, played host to a competitive contest, where an England team, bruised from a shock Spain victory at Hurlingham in the 2022 event, was looking to make their Dgrade superiority count. The Spanish, who in the space of a few years have garnered a reputation for extremely welcoming and generous hospitality, didn't disappoint and laid on a splendid opening ceremony dinner. There was particular cause for celebration for the retiring President of the Spanish Croquet Federation. José Alvarez-Sala has led and overseen a transformation in Spanish croquet, with the list of clubs, courts and members continually growing ever larger. Their passion for the game has started to spill over onto the international scene, with Spain contesting Tier 1 of the 2025 GC World Team Championship (Openshaw Shield) and their top players making inroads to the serious stages of World Championships. Destino Croquet, a newly formed company by the Alvarez-Salas, are creating tournaments to rival any in the current croquet calendar – watch this space! We wish José well in his off-the-lawn retirement and will look with a keen interest how Spanish croquet continues to evolve under his successor, Guillermo Navarro.

Spain fielded an unchanged team from Hurlingham, with the usual suspects the four Alvarez-Sala brothers, Manuel, José (junior), Andrés and Gonzalo playing as numbers 1, 2, 3 and 5 respectively. Basilio Iglesias and Pedro Lozano lined up as numbers 4 and 6.

A new GC Selection Committee led to a different England side this year, with Tobi Savage, Rachel Gee and Euan Burrridge all coming in to the team. They joined John-Paul Moberly, Aston Wade and Stephen Mulliner.

The event was again a best of 27 matches Test, with 3 rounds of singles and doubles for each player. Friday saw the Test commence with two rounds of doubles. The Spanish opted for unchanged pairings: A-Ss M & A, A-Ss J & G and Iglesias & Lozano, with the English changing things up by forming three new partnerships: Moberly & Wade, Mulliner & Gee and Savage & Burrridge.

England made a blistering start. By the end of the second doubles round, England had assumed a 6-0 lead. All three new pairings worked well, and the team were able to take advantage of the superbly flat and fast lawns by producing high quality positional and short boundary clearance play.

England won eight consecutive Test points before the Spanish got on the scoreboard. Resuming early on Saturday morning at 1-1, following a late Friday finish which couldn't be completed due to light, A-S A played brilliantly in the first singles round to beat Moberly 7-2 in the third game. From that point onwards,

the Test was fairly even, with points being scored by both sides. A-S M beat Savage 2-1 in a very close see-sawing match, while Mulliner and Burrridge beat Lozano and Iglesias 2-1 respectively. Saturday morning saw arguably the two best sequences of English singles play. Burrridge, 5-6 down in game 3 vs A-S G, found himself with striker's ball in corner 3 with both his opponent's balls in front of hoop 12 ready to win the match. Burrridge played a sequence of perfect strokes; firstly running hoop 12 from corner 3 to level the game at 6-6, then clearing A-S G's ball at hoop 13, before then running the golden hoop from the boundary to win the game and match. Wade had a similarly close contest vs A-S A. After running hoop 11 from the North boundary to go 6-5 up in game 3, Wade had first approach to hoop 13. Following a series of clearances and then missed hoop attempts by both players, Wade was left with a do-or-die boundary shot at hoop 13 for the game and match. With both of A-S A's balls in front of the hoop, Wade nailed the 7 yard hoop and quietened the partisan crowd a little. Gee also came through a close contest vs Lozano 2-1.

Further wins came for England as Wade beat A-S M 2-0, Mulliner beat A-S G 2-0, following two wins for Spain as A-S J beat Savage 2-0 and Iglesias beat Gee 2-1. With the Test score at 13-4, Moberly scored the Test winning point by beating A-S J 2-0 to give England an unassailable 14-4 lead.

The third and final doubles round saw Spain win overall 2-1, with a mix of good play and a little good luck to allow Moberly & Wade beat A-S M & A 2-0 – in game 1, at hoop 13, A-S M snicked his clearance on Moberly's ball, putting it into the jaws from 3 yards at an almost impossible angle!

There was one final round of singles to play on Sunday morning, which pitted seeds 1 vs 1, 2 vs 2 etc. The two best Spanish players in the event, A-S A and A-S J both won their matches 2-0 against Savage and Wade respectively, with A-S J doing particularly well to come back from 3-6 down in game 1. England had a 2-0 win of their own, with Mulliner beating Iglesias. Mulliner was pleased to reverse the result from the same match at Hurlingham last year! Burrridge beat Lozano 2-1, which was paused temporarily for the closing ceremony and speeches to take place. To finish, Moberly played the final game of his singles match vs A-S M. Level at 1-1, Moberly edged a close contest 7-6. Gee vs A-S G was left tied at 1-1, with 26 of the total 27 games completed.

We thank the Spanish Croquet Federation and the Real Club de la Puerta de Hierro for their hospitality. We look forward to next Test match in Roehampton in 2024!

Full results can be found on Croquet Scores:

<https://croquetscores.com/2023/gc/3rd-england-spain-test-match/england-vs-spain>

John-Paul Moberly, Real Club de la Puerta de Hierro





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EAST DORSET GC WOMEN'S OPEN 2023

Due to the ongoing grounds work the East Dorset Women's GC Tournament was restricted to just 3 lawns and therefore 12 players. This did not stop players from Ramsgate, Colchester, Northampton, Sidmouth, Roehampton, Compton, Winterborne Valley and 3 home players travelling into deepest Dorset for what proved to be a weekend of very competitive croquet.

There were two blocks of 6 playing 19 point games on the Saturday.

Block A saw Glynis Davies (Northampton) top the group with 5 wins, although she was given a scare in the first game by Liz Drury (Compton) winning 10-9. Liz played way better than her ranking and handicap suggested throughout the weekend, finishing in 3rd group position with 3 wins only missing out on 2nd place to last year's winner Lynn Pearcy on 1 net hoop difference.



PHOTOGRAPH
Louise Smith on her way to winning The Final

Marion Nagle (East Dorset) was another who belied her ranking, taking the 4th group position, also on 3 wins, with the scalp of Lynn with an impressive 10-7 victory.

Block B was topped by Christina Rice (Ramsgate), last year's runner up, with a clean sweep of 5 wins from her 5 games, closely followed by Louise Smith (Sidmouth) on 4 wins.

Sandra Allan (East Dorset) finished 3rd ahead of Kath Burt (Winterborne Valley) who took the 4th spot ahead of her club mate Isabel van Millingen by just 1 net hoop difference.

Sunday KO pitted the unbeaten Glynis against Kath. Glynis stormed off into a commanding 5-0 lead but Kath used all her vast experience to gradually eat into Glynis's lead and pegged her back, with Kath eventually winning 10-7. Louise started slowly against Liz who was competing in her first serious level play tournament, with Liz taking a 2-0 lead. Louise soon found her form and ran out a comfortable 10-2 winner, but the scoreline did not do justice to Liz, who played some excellent croquet. Sandra Allan surprised last year's winner by beating Lynn 10-8, giving the host club East Dorset a player in the semi-final.

Marion Nagle again played way above expectations and took Christina to the final hoop but then unfortunately peeled Christina's ball through the 19th hoop from the boundary to give Christina victory.

The semi-finals were Bo3 13 point games. Louise beat Kath 7-5 7-3. Kath's experience could not match Louise's hard hitting and Louise was now finding her hoop running form, Louise went through to the final to meet Christina, who won a very closely fought contest 4-7 7-6 7-5 against Sandra.

The final saw last year's runner up, Christina, up against Louise. It was a tight affair with not a lot between the players. One memorable shot by Christina saw her run hoop 9 cleanly from corner 4, but eventually Louise managed to win the first game 7-4. In the 2nd game, although Christina was doing nothing wrong, Louise started to find her range and with a few successful jump shots gradually got on top and won 7-3.

Congratulations to Louise Smith for winning East Dorset Women's GC 2023 and commiserations go to Christina, as she has now been runner up for the last 2 years.

Ann Brooks put a forgettable day, losing all 5 games on the Saturday, behind her by returning on Sunday winning all her 5 games and winning the Plate.

Good luck to Glynis & Louise who will be competing in the Women's GC World Championships in August and also to Christina, Ann & Lynn who will be trying to reach the same competition through the qualifying tournament a week earlier.

| Steve Leonard

NEW GC REFEREES

Congratulations to the following members who have recently qualified as GC Referees -

Euan Burrige	(Nottingham)
Penny Clark	(Ben Rhydding)
Andy Dixon	(Nottingham)
Andrew Fall	(Compton)
Ted Flexman	(Ripon Spa)
Michael Franklin	(Ripon Spa)
David Houston	(Edinburgh Meadows)
Derek Johnson	(Tyneside)

Don Morton	(Backworth)
Cathy Turski	(Nottingham)
John Young	(Nottingham)
Mark Green	(Roehampton)
Charlotte Oades	(Roehampton)
Howard Railton	(Roehampton)
Andrew Wilson	(Roehampton)
Diana Wilson	(Roehampton)

| Ian Cobbold

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FOR DISCERNING TRAVELLERS

SIDMOUTH GC CHAMPIONSHIP

The Sidmouth GC Championship was held at Budleigh Salterton on 22nd /23rd April. As ever, the first of the ENSC qualifying tournaments attracted a strong field with an average player grade (from the ranking system) of just above 2200 and was fully subscribed with five reserves.



The tournament was selected to run using the same format as the English National Singles Championship Final (Ascot Cup), to give players more exposure to playing best-of-three matches. Quadway hoops were also supplied from Cheltenham for the event. The four blocks of four players started their first matches on Saturday morning in relatively good, bright, dry conditions, but this was to change drastically by early afternoon.

In the opening matches of round one there were quite a few upsets: Louise Smith (4th seed) in Block A, beat Steve Leonard (2nd seed) in two straight games. Similarly, in Block D, Ryan Cabble (4th seed) beat the 2nd seed from the block, Tim Jolliff.

In Block C, both top seeds, Jonathan Powe (1st seed) and Ian Burrige (2nd seed) were defeated by Tim Russell (3rd seed) and Dominic Aarvold (4th seed), respectively: 1-2 and 0-2.

It was only in Block B that both top seeds Stuart M. Smith (1st seed) and Lionel Tibble (2nd seed) maintained order – both winning their opening matches 2-0 against Raouf Allim and Sue Lightbody. Most of round two and all of round three were played in torrential rain which was testing for even the hardiest of croquet players.

Aston Wade (1st seed) in Block A fought



a tight match with Steve Leonard but prevailed with two 7-6 wins to take the match in round two.

Euan Burrige (1st seed) in Block D suffered his first loss in the Block matches, dropping a game to Tim Jolliff, but came back to win the match on the golden hoop in game three : 7-3 , 2-7, 7-6.

As Block play came to a close, most players were, by this time, soaked to the skin. Aston Wade, Stuart M. Smith, and Euan Burrige won their respective Blocks, with surprise 4th seed Dominic Aarvold coming out on top in Block C. They were joined by Louise Smith, Lionel Tibble, Tim Russell, and Ryan Cabble progressing to the main knock-out.

Periods of heavy rain returned on Sunday. The quarter-final results went much as expected, but the on-form Dominic prevailed in a tight match with Lionel Tibble, 7-3, 6-7, 7-6, to reach the semi-finals where he would face Aston Wade.



The other semi-final featured Stuart M. Smith and Euan Burrige. After one game apiece, probably one of the most ambitious shots of the tournament occurred in game three. At 6-6, Euan's red ball settled in front of hoop 13, wired from both Stuart's balls that were around hoop 12. Stuart placed the black wide and south of the 13th hoop, whilst Euan set up another 13th hoop shot with his yellow. Stuart aimed at black with blue, with the intention of flicking off black at an angle to clear Euan's wired red. This unusual gambit almost paid off with blue missing red by the narrowest of margins – but 10 out of 10 for ingenuity! Euan proceeded to run hoop 13 ending a closely fought game to progress to the final.

Meanwhile, Aston had a tough time with Dominic who continued his excellent performance with two impressive straight wins, 7-4, 7-4.

Louise's form also continued as she beat Tim Russell 10-6 to gain a place in the Shield final against Lionel Tibble. Facing her old mentor from Northampton Croquet Club is always a challenge, and Lionel deservedly won the Bowl with his

usual relaxed finesse.

An 'all play all' Plate consolation block was underway for the remaining players. After four rounds, the awful weather was taking its toll on all the participants. By this point, the East Dorset pair, Steve



Leonard, and Jonathan Powe were level at 4 wins each, and faced each other in round five. The remaining players agreed this could be the deciding match for the Plate prize, as a warm drink was, at that point of the day, very appealing. And so, all other games were abandoned whilst Steve and Jonathan played on. The Plate 'final' result was 7-4 to Steve.

The main final, Euan Burrige v Dominic Aarvold, was played at a fairly fast pace. This was Dominic's first championship-level tournament final, and his first encounter with Euan.

A combination of Euan's experience, powerful clearances, and hoop running dominated game one, which finished 7-3. Dominic held composure and rallied in game two with some good tactical and hoop running play, but Euan remained in control and won the game 7-5 to take the championship title.

Congratulations to Euan, and a huge thank you to the players for their stoic play in the rain. Sidmouth Croquet Club also extend their thanks once again to their neighbours at Budleigh for hosting the tournament, and in particular John O'Gorman, Tim Spores and the hoop setting team. Sidmouth's newly laid courts will be reopening in time for the next planned CA fixtures.

| Louise Smith



PHOTOGRAPHS
Jayne Ellery, BSCC

SURBITON GC CHAMPIONSHIP

A weekend of closely fought matches without a drop of rain to be seen - jolly hard work or maximum pleasure? On Friday the lawns were waterlogged and unplayable with gloomy grey skies and the threat of storms on their way. But this didn't deter the 24 players from home and away facing the prospect of a possible 17 matches with all the usual enthusiasm and anticipation. Fortunately, they were rewarded by damp but playable lawns, blue skies and Surbiton's usual hearty welcome. This year we were delighted to welcome players from Spain (Nico Denziot and the Garay family) and Steinar Olsen from Norway.



The first day set off with four blocks in a play-all format. Most of the games were close, with a time limit needing to set with one, and 15 of the 60 games being determined at the golden hoop (only 15 games were settled with a score of 3 or less). The top 4 players went onto the Knockout Round which is where the pressure really started. 5 out of the 8 duels needed all three games to name a winner and 7 of the 21 games used the golden hoop.



Any thoughts of continuing into the sunset hours were set aside as just about everyone seemed quite frazzled by the physical and mental effort expended. Luckily the forecast of storms on day two had disappeared so a late night was replaced by an early start the next day. The Plate saw the remaining 8 players tussle over 7 rounds of play before a winner could be declared. The players from Spain are certainly



a group to watch out for. All made it through into the knockout round with Leticia Gonzalez de la Bastida, Patricio Jnr Garay and Nico Denziot making it through to the finals. Patricio Garay (Snr) and Jacobo Garay were knocked out by their son and mother.



PHOTOGRAPHS

Dave Evans and Leticia Gonzalez de la Bastida

But in the end, it was Lionel Tibble (Roehampton) who was victorious beating Nico Denziot (Real Club Purta de Hierro RCPH) on the golden hoop after a gruelling battle with Lionel's astute positioning ultimately triumphant over the hard hitting play from Spain's Nico. But then all the post block games were hard won affairs. The final battles shaped up as follows:

Plate winner: Steinar Olsen (Norway)
Shield: Tim Russell (Roehampton) beat Leticia Gonzalez de la Bastida (RCPH Spain) 7/1, 7/1.

Bowl: Patricio Jnr Garay (RCPH Spain) beat Richard Brooks (Sussex County) 5/7, 7/4, 7/1.

Trophy: Lionel Tibble (Northampton) beat Nico Denziot (RCPH Spain) 7/5, 6/7, 7/6.

For this tournament, we tried out the new GC Open Series 2 day 24 player prescribed format and accompanying spreadsheet. A few false starts showed we were early adopters but four versions later the automation worked a treat with players organised by DGrade into striped-seeding block play followed by 3-4 rounds of best of three games.

I understand the need for creating consistency and certainty for players entering a series of tournaments such as the GC Championship Open Series, but there are many other variables, often unexpected, that require the format to be flexible and the manager to use their discretion (and sometimes their creativity - within the regulations, of course).

For example: this format dictates that the top four players from the four blocks play best of three games in the following 4 rounds (potentially 17 games over the two days). During this weekend this would not have been possible if the weather had not been kind, and had the threatened storms materialized, nor without an extra early start by all the players on day two, or if not all 6 lawns had been playable after the previous days waterlogging.

Personally, I am not convinced that this format suits a field of closely matched players entailing long games with periods of extended concentration, games earlier in the season before people's stamina has been revitalised, or this time of year when the cold evenings make it much more tiring.



Over this weekend some players went straight from one opponent to the next barely catching their breath in between. In fact, two players had to retire hurt and a further two considered pulling out due to injury - quite an attrition rate. You have to ask "what outcome do you want for the players who have entered?" For me the outcome should be one where everyone has enjoyed their games and has had the opportunity to play their best and do themselves proud. I, for one, am not convinced that this format does that.

Maxine Holland
Tournament Manager

REIGATE PRIORY MARKS 100 YEARS WITH DAWN-TO-DUSK GC RELAY

Club member Geoff Gunton got up early for a unique event to mark the club's centenary.

It seemed a good idea at the time, but when my alarm went off at 0500 on Sunday 5 March, the prospect of starting a game of Golf Croquet at dawn did not seem quite as attractive as when the chairman's email canvassing support landed in my inbox. But arriving at the club to find bacon and egg butties being prepared for the game's early stages suddenly made it worthwhile.



The game gets underway in the early dawn cold

I had signed up to be one of four players to kick off the first of a series of events this year to mark Reigate Priory Croquet Club's Centenary, which fell the following day, on 6 March. Members had submitted ideas for how to celebrate this landmark in our history, and this was one of them: a continuous game of GC, starting as the sun rose at 0637 and not stopping until it set at 1748.



The Sun shone once for five minutes

In all, 30 members took part during those 11 hours and 11 minutes, but it was only we early-risers who got the game under way by playing out of Corner 4 on the dot

of dawn. The game was non-stop from then onwards.

Its format was simple: one continuous game of level-play doubles between two teams – the Blue-Blacks and the Red-Yellows. An order of play set out when each of us was to start, who we should take over from, when we should finish and who we should hand over to. In all, 28 changes took place, all on time, apart from one that was affected by traffic and parking delays.

It was not a best-of-13 contest. Play continued from Hoop 12 to restart with Hoop 1 and a score board was kept updated after each round of 12 Hoops had been played. Two time-lapse cameras captured the action for posterity and a few of their several thousand images are shown on this page.

Our hope was for each team to score at least 100 hoops across the day, in line with our Centenary theme. After the first three rounds, the Red-Yellows were slightly ahead, but by 1130 the Blue-Blacks had opened up a lead of 18 hoops, after eight rounds had been played. Then the gap gradually closed until, in the very last round of the day, the Red-Yellows pulled ahead, finishing the day after 19 rounds with 115 hoops against the Blue-Blacks' 113. Our goal had been met.



Near the end

For the final couple of hours, the club's top AC players – World No 3 Jamie Burch and World No 217 Chris O'Byrne – took part, bringing their hard-hitting style into play. And the quote of the day was

from Jamie – "It's getting dark – I can't see the hoop" – whereupon he ran Hoop 7 cleanly from the north boundary to way beyond the peg.

Spectators who came to watch these final rounds were rewarded with tea, cake and a welcome bottle of Glühwein that magically appeared late in the day. And for those who took part, a souvenir Club Centenary mug to take home. It was a unique event that caught the imagination not only of established and new club members, but also of BBC Radio Surrey, which invited club chairman John Bristow onto its Breakfast Show the day before. He spoke about the event, the club and of croquet's attraction to players of all ages and issued an invitation to listeners: "We have the prettiest and best lawn in the south of England and we welcome members at any time."



Final four players (inc. Jamie Burch and Chris O'Byrne) with the final score

He did not say whether the times he had in mind would include 0637 on a regular basis. I think we should leave that for another 100 years.



Some other representatives of each team

COMBATTING SNUGLING FAULTLESSLY

Snuggling can be a very effective tactic in Golf Croquet. By snuggling I mean playing up behind, or (less good) in front of, an opponent's ball to prevent them having an effective stroke with that ball. The result is, hopefully, two balls very close to one another – that is certainly the objective of the move as any stroke played with the snuggled ball then risks a fault. Certainly, if the gap between the balls (technical term: the

Initial Separation (IS)) is less than 4 mm, there is a risk of a Crush Fault. This risk increases the smaller the gap between the balls (the IS). Why 4 mm? High speed photography has shown that it takes a finite amount of time for the mallet to transfer its energy to the ball. That time is approximately 1 millisecond. Given the speed of a medium strength stroke (say 10 mph), that means that the mallet and ball remain in contact

for 4.47 mm. Counter-intuitively, the slower the stroke the longer the contact time. If, during that time in contact, the ball also hits another object (ball/hoop/peg), then a Crush Fault has occurred (i.e. the ball is being crushed between the mallet and the other object). The standard method to avoid the risk is to play the ball at an angle from the line joining the centres of the two balls. The question that then arises is what angle will be sufficient to avoid the



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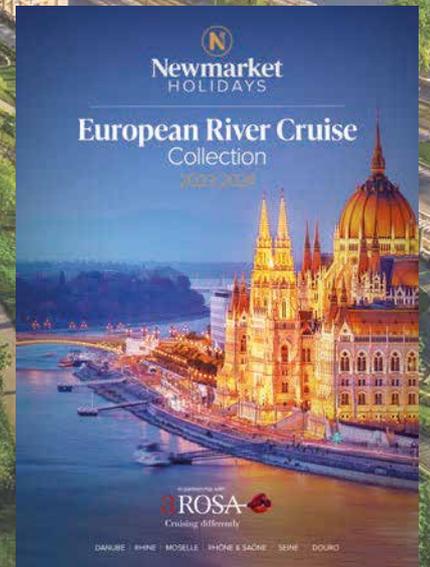
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Crush Fault?

In the past referees have needed to judge this angle. However, some simple trigonometry removes the need for that judgement by providing the following table (IS = Initial Separation, AA = Aiming Angle of mallet):

IS mm	AA degrees	
	Accurate	Rounded
0.1	87.3	85
0.5	81.6	80
1.0	74.3	75
2.0	58.9	60
3.0	40.6	40
4.0	0.0	0

This indicates that, for example, for a gap between the balls of 2 mm the mallet must be played at least 58.9 degrees away from the line between the ball centres to achieve a contact distance of at least 4 mm, and thus avoid a Crush Fault.

As a judgement of the Aiming Angle (AA) is dependent on the player's / referee's eye, the values in the table have been rounded to convenience, so, in this case, to 60 degrees.

Thus, if a stroke, involving two balls separated by 2 mm, is played at less than 60 degrees it should be called a Fault. If the separation is 1 mm, the necessary angle is 75 degrees.

As there is a direct relationship between the Initial Separation (IS) and the legal Aiming Angle (AA) of the mallet, the following table has been produced to help players and referees, when the balls are close together (IS up to 4 mm) and are played gently, or indeed when played firmly with the IS up to 2 mm:

SHORT-RANGE CLEARANCE DECISION TABLE B
 Played gently (i.e. One, or both, balls move less than 60 cm)
 OR played firmly with small Initial Separations (up to 2 mm)

Aiming Angle (degrees)	Initial Separation				
	Under 1 mm	1 mm	2 mm	3 mm	4 mm
Greater than 85					
Greater than 75		Almost		always	Clean
Greater than 60					
Greater than 45		Almost			
Otherwise		always a Fault			Judgement Required

When judging close-range balls being played, players and referees must keep in mind that croquet balls can do surprising things! While not removing the need for such open-mindedness, Table B above is designed to give players greater confidence when playing a snugged ball at the necessary angle to avoid a Crush Fault. The Table also serves as guidance for referees when ruling in such situations, reinforcing consistent decisions.

The table, and further guidance, is available on the CA website here: <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=/games/>

[golf/refereeing/Rule11Guidance](#)

Ian Shore
Member of GC Rules Committee)



Two close balls shown with plant label to identify balls are not touching but with less than 1 mm Initial Separation - so will need to be played at a very acute angle (greater than 85 degrees) to be sure of not Faulting.

PHOTOGRAPH Ian Shore



Two close balls together with mallet playing at 50 degrees (a classic Fault!). These balls are clearer, but sadly I do not have a high definition picture.

PHOTOGRAPH Begona Elzaburu

OPENING DOORS ON CROQUET



PHOTOGRAPH 1. Mayor of Bury running hoops; 2. Pat Lomas runs a hoop; 3. Rachel Krafft (2nd from left) receiving the cheque from club members

Bury Hospice Community Coordinator Rachel Krafft visited Bury Croquet Club at their Whitehead Park lawns, on Tuesday 9th May, to be presented with a cheque from the club for £732.75 raised at their Hospice Day event at Coronation Park, Radcliffe. The annual event was held on 22nd April and, whilst a gloomy weather forecast and morning affected attendance on the day, it turned out to be quite a pleasant afternoon weather-wise and visitors attending had an enjoyable

time trying croquet and supporting the stalls. A number booked free taster sessions. Guests included The Mayor of Bury, Cllr. Shaheena Haroon who tried and enjoyed running hoops, Pat Lomas from Bury Hospice who also showed an aptitude for the game, and Tina Harrison MBE, chair of Together Radcliffe Group. A videographer from 'Today in Radcliffe' also called by and produced an excellent video including overhead drone shots of the action - this can be seen on YouTube

channel Today in Radcliffe. Rachel thanked the club's members for their efforts and ongoing support of the hospice. The croquet club next open day will be held on Saturday 27th May 11am – 4pm at Whitehead Park, Elton, Bury as part of National Croquet Day. Admission is free with a voluntary donation to MND Association.

Roy Spencer

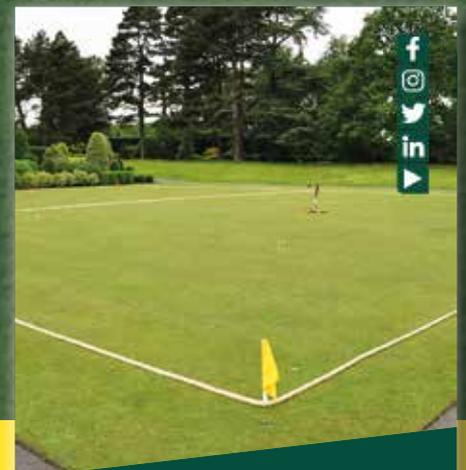


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Irrigation - I have been busy with four irrigation systems installed during the off-season at Letchworth, Southwell, Ipswich and Guildford. It has been enjoyable working with different people each time. There is huge enthusiasm at club level to improve lawns. Each installation has its own challenges. Guildford was unusual; because there was no mains electricity and, for planning reasons, they had to have a small tank. A programmable diesel generator was the solution. It switches on and off several times overnight allowing the tank to refill twice, irrigating three lawns and a bowling green in the process.

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Thatch produces spongy, slow lawns - Thatch is dead organic material in the top layer of soil. If there is too much thatch the lawn will become spongy and slow to play on. This reduces the enjoyment of the game. My Biogran fertiliser has a bacterial substrate and also contains mycorrhizal fungi and seaweed. Thatch is broken down biologically by about 30% per annum until it reaches 5mm or so. At that level, it becomes stable with breakdown equalling production. This has been proved at numerous clubs around the country where I have done annual thatch audits.

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| Duncan Hector

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THE COACHING PAGES JOHN HARRIS

“PWD, mate!” Playing with despatch

Coaching games are not subject to time limits for each stroke, because a key aspect of coaching is to discuss the possibilities for the next shot and look at the pros and cons of each. Even in tournaments and competitive matches it is not normally necessary to resort to the rule book.

However few things are more frustrating than competing against a slow player, particularly in a timed game with the clock ticking and points to score. All croquet players of good intent should therefore try to honour the Rules and Laws and play “with reasonable despatch”, and coaches have an important role to play in helping players transition out of the generous timeframes of a coaching environment and into the need for brisk, decisive match play.

For tournaments and competitive play, the Laws and Rules give clear hints as to what this means in practice. GC Rule 16.3 allows for up to a minute per shot. AC Law 63.5 seeks to be less prescriptive, but allows referees to impose a time limit of five minutes per turn, extended by three minutes for each point scored. This will normally mean that considerably less than a minute per stroke is available in AC, including thinking time – much less during a break.

Obviously, there will be exceptional situations when this guidance needs to be put aside, such as when another game takes precedence in double-banking, or when a referee is called. Otherwise, it’s a case of PWD – play with despatch.

Coaches will need to gently tell their students that the official word on time limits is not there to encourage players to use the full time allocation. It is, for example, unacceptable to slow down towards the end of a timed game to preserve a winning position. All stages of a game need to go “with reasonable despatch”.

So how might coaches approach this rather delicate subject? Ted Flexman of Ripon Spa CC offers ten ways forward, all of them practical tips and routines that help achieve a “get on with it” approach to the game.

1. Keep an eye on the whole lawn, quickly assessing the position of all four balls.
2. As you walk to the spot from which you will approach your strike ball in line with your objective, be already making up your mind what you will play.
3. Arrive at your strike position and play that shot. Don’t change your mind; trust your instinct.
4. Indecision and changes of mind lead to poor strokes.
5. Think ahead. Before the last shot was played, you should already have a plan as to how to play this shot, now. The plan may well have to be altered as a result of what happened in the last shot, but it is much better than no plan!
6. The brain is a wonderful thing. It can consider, analyse and decide, and do all this at micro-processor speed. Trust it.
7. The majority of shots we play in GC are pretty obvious: position for hoop, run hoop, deal with the next ball to play, remove a danger ball, take advantage of a poorly placed ball, take or keep control of the hoop approach area. In AC too, a lot of moves follow set patterns of decision making. Make a choice and play the shot.
8. In doubles, long discussion is unsettling and counterproductive. Don’t be always telling your partner what to do; instead ask “What do you think?” Then support their plan of action. They’ll play their own idea better rather than a complicated alternative of yours. Quick and firm decisions make the game flow.
9. If you have stored up a little time, then that can be used on a very complicated position, but not for too long: keep it brief.
10. And keep it light and friendly. “PWD, mate!”

NEW COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

Warmest congratulations to two new Examining Coaches:

- Paul Francis, Bath
- Rich Waterman, High Wycombe

They are the latest to join a small group of players empowered to assess new coaches and recommend them for formal appointment. Both Paul and Rich hold Grade 2 Coach status in both AC and GC, both have long experience of coaching and assessment, and are already proving to be very welcome additions to the CA Examining Coach team.

Congratulations to the following newly-qualified Coaches:

Club-Level Coaches:

Ruth Ranukiaer, Phyllis Court

Grade 1 AC coaches:

Tim Brewer, Wrest Park

Neil Fillery, Taunton Deane

Andrew Hobbs, Dulwich

Mary Knapp, Surbiton

Grade 1 GC Coaches:

Edwin Bone, Eynsham

Tim Brewer, Wrest Park

Penny Clark, Ben Rhydding

Neil Fillery, Taunton Deane

Andrew Hobbs, Dulwich

Richard Gardiner, Dowlish Wake

David Pitman, Dulwich

Neil Stewart, Eynsham

Grade 2 AC Coaches:

Neil Coote, Reigate Priory

Grade 2 GC Coaches:

Neil Coote, Reigate Priory

Good coaching is at the very heart of developing the game, inspiring enthusiasm for croquet, and raising standards of play. More than this, coaching others, and accessing coaching materials, both help directly to develop and improve your own game.

There is always a need for coaches at all levels. A quick glance at the lists above shows a particular need for more women coaches. If your club does not yet have a

qualified coach, could it be you who will step up to the plate?

Club-Level Coaches do not need to have mastered croquet to the highest level. Much more important are a warm and welcoming personality, good interpersonal skills, and a genuine interest in supporting and helping others.

There is now a helpful summary on the CA website of the qualities and experience looked for in gaining CA recognition as a coach: click on the large Coaching button on the CA website homepage, scroll to Framework for CA Coaching Qualifications. This offers a general picture of what makes an ideal croquet coach. Some coaches may not fulfil all the criteria listed, but they may nevertheless make excellent coaches.

Many players have a lot to offer, and the croquet world needs you! Club-Level Coach training courses are normally held at the start of the season, and fill quickly, so its a good time to express interest and find out more.

Croquet is a great problem-solving game. Frequently, of course, the problems can be ones we have caused for ourselves by our previous shot! The key is to decide how to solve the problem before you arrive at your stance. You can then concentrate purely on where you want the ball to go and playing it there.

So... encourage those you are coaching to decide briskly and play promptly. If referees need to be called in, they have a range of powers at their disposal to deal with slow play, so show your students how to be on the right side of the spirit of this wonderful game of ours, and make a habit of modelling brisk and decisive

play. A player may sometimes be disappointed not to have thought long enough to arrive at the perfect move, but playing at a reasonable pace brings its own satisfactions – and will be greatly appreciated by everyone else!

***Play with decision;
Play without delay;
Play with despatch
– it's fairer for your
opponent, and far
better for you.
"PWD, mate!"***

MERIT AWARDS

Congratulations to the following Merit Award winners. Some players have now claimed their awards from 2022; others have all started the 2023 season with winning ways:

AC Gold Award

Neil Adams, Colchester B Level

AC Silver Award

Hugh Manson, Latham Cup, Bristol

GC Silver Award

Edwin Bone, Ryde B Level

John Low, SCCC B Level

Martin Strange, Budleigh B Level

GC Bronze Award

Alastair Broom, Budleigh C Level

Paul Green, SCCC C Level

Philip Tremble, Nottingham GC C Level

GC Merit Awards are gained by

winning an eligible tournament. The CA website has the list: put Croquet Association Merit Awards into Google to get to it. All organisers of these tournaments have the details of the full conditions and how to claim. AC Merit Awards are earned through break play in a single turn: 10 hoops with bisques (Bronze), 12 hoops without bisques (Silver), triple peel (Gold), sextuple peel (Platinum). An award can be gained at any full lawn tournament in the Fixtures Calendar, provided you win the game in question. If you qualify for a Merit Award, and haven't already claimed at that level, the form is easily downloadable from the CA website. Go for it – and good luck!



All smiles: Three proud AC Bronze Award winners at the Heart of Yorkshire Tournament

CA DIPLOMAS AND AWARDS

The CA Diploma is a certificate that the CA President signs and awards to club members who have given outstanding service to croquet life and have been active in their club or federation over a long period. The Diplomas have nothing to do with croquet prowess and everything to do with the help given to other members. The nominee doesn't even have to be a CA member or croquet player to receive the award.

More than three hundred club members have been honoured with a CA Diploma over the years, the full citations are published on the website, with a summary in the Gazette.

Some clubs are reluctant to single out an individual for the award, but experience shows that not only the person but the whole club membership is delighted when the award is made, and of course, they already know how much the member does for the club. Nominations must be made by a club or federation officer before the end of July with a short citation (up to 300 words) and a passport-style photograph sent by email to the CA Office. Some clubs nominate a handful of their volunteers every year, others make one or two occasionally.

When the award is confirmed, the CA Office asks the nominator who should inform the CA Diploma winner and when the award should be presented - some clubs and federations like to make it a surprise and award the certificate themselves at an occasion other than the CA's AGM, such as their Federation's AGM. Full details of the process are on the CA website - search for 'diplomas'.

Beyond the CA Diploma are two major Council awards made rarely: the Council Medal, which is awarded in recognition of outstanding services to croquet, and the Bernard Neal Award for exceptional services to croquet.

There are a range of other individual awards, mainly for coaching and playing achievements. These include the merit awards for milestone achievements in playing success, the most improved player in AC and GC (for each of two genders), the nomination of a Coach of the Year, and occasional lifetime achievement in coaching. The Merit Award Scheme encourages enterprising play and skills development. The Merit Awards for achievement in Association Croquet have been established for many years and the scheme has recently been extended to Golf Croquet. The AC Merit Awards start with a Bronze for a break of ten or more hoop points using bisques, if needed, and the GC Merit Awards are for the first win of the appropriate Series Tournament or Series National Final.

The biennial Club Awards recognise clubs that have made exceptional progress in providing a good playing environment over the previous two years and include an award of a certificate and £250 to the club. The Townsend Award, Apps Heley Award, and Millennium Club Award are each given to the club that has made the most progress – which award depends on the club size, measured by the number of courts it controls. To apply for any of the Club Awards contact your Federation Development Officer.

Details of the application and nomination processes, as well as past awards made, can be found on the CA website.

ULTRA HOOPS ARE THE FUTURE



www.croquetassociationshop.org.uk

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CA WEBSITE

www.croquetengland.org.uk and
www.croquet.org.uk are fabulous resources
for croquet information covering membership,
news, laws & rules, coaching, who's who, and
tournament details with an online entry system.

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

To find the glossary online, visit:

AC <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/tech/jargon>
GC <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/golf/gcJargon>

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CA website at: www.croquet.org.uk/?p=press/gazette

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PUBLICATIONS

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Email contributions, including tournament
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the CA's Operations Manager.

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BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

The beautiful image which has been chosen to brighten the cover of our gazette this month shows a bright yellow Dandelion in the foreground, croquet players behind and in the background of the Lammas Park Pavilion, home to Ealing Croquet Club. The striking images of winning croquet players, pristine lawns, club day activity and shiny trophies are often featured, but this time the image itself is the winning shot.

This image became the inspiration for this article to celebrate some hidden talents of our Croquet players. There are many who bake, cook, garden and paint. Some talents may stem from hobbies and others from careers, but often we forget that there is more to the 'CP' beyond the border of the Croquet Club. Introducing some of our Croquet playing photographers who have allowed us to share their other passion with you, injecting a little lightness and brightness into our croquet world.



SARAH PATTON

I have been taking photographs for over 50 years and have specialised in natural history photography as ecology is my hobby and was my career. I am currently working towards a Royal Photographic Society distinction and enjoy the Society's workshops and online courses. I am not a fan of over-editing with software, preferring to keep the final image looking like what I saw!

Images are titled: 'Into the Cosmos', 'Wool Carder Bee' and 'Poppies'.

CELESTE GEE

Celeste Gee was the winner of the #NatureBringsJoy photography competition run by The Joy Club (www.thejoyclub.com) with her image 'The Wild and the Cultivated', featured on our Gazette front cover.

Gary, from Gary Lintern Photography chose the photo and said "It's an interesting angle, often called a 'worm's eye view', showing the point of view presumably of a small animal looking up at people. The depth of field is well-chosen to draw attention to the foreground, and keeps an air of mystery about the background. For me, it shows the relationship of nature to humans."

Celeste has shared two more of her images, 'The Borrowers play croquet' and 'Puddles make the world flip round'.

Images are titled: 'Puddles make the world flip round', 'The Wild and the Cultivated' (Front cover), and 'The Borrowers play croquet'.



LIZ FARROW

I started photography about the same time as croquet (when I retired). I like landscape and street photography in particular but also like pictures of flowers and I do some documentary photography around the lives of people living in Romania. I use an Olympus OMD 1 Mk 2 camera as well as my iPhone.

Images are: 'Water lily', 'One evening in the New Forest' while at a croquet weekend and 'Icelandic sunset'.



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