



CROQUET

GAZETTE

Issue 408 | April 2024



**CROQUET: A BEAUTIFUL SPORT
PLAYED IN BEAUTIFUL LOCATIONS**



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Croquet England
Issue 408 | April 2024



Front cover:
Croquet: A beautiful sport played in beautiful locations: Pendle & Craven Croquet Club
PHOTOGRAPH Ian Longstaff

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WELCOME

For many clubs the doors will have already opened for the 2024 season and the roll ups commenced. Players will be making themselves available for teams and the fixtures planning will have begun. Some of our more competitive peers will have already checked out the rankings to find out what they need to achieve to return to the top of the tables. Let's remember to thank the folk who will be preparing the lawns, organising club fixtures and planning the volunteer rotas. From the club members supporting the grass roots of croquet through to the champions of our sport, we all have an

important role to play which continues to drive our sport forward.

There are 14 new clubs this season. If you are part of one of those clubs, congratulations on beginning your croquet journey and welcome to the family.

We all know that croquet is a sport which requires strategy, skill, technique and precision; but let's not forget it also helps to have a sense of humour. Wishing you and your clubs a great year of Croquet.

Alison Maugham
Editor
editor@croquetengland.org.uk



AC Best of the West: L to R, Aston Wade, Duncan Reeve, Dave Kibble, Chris Williams

BUDLEIGH BEST IN THE WEST

GC - Best in the West: Since the first post Covid get-together, the 'Best in the West' has evolved into two tournaments for the lowest ranked GC and AC players within the South-West region to have a pre-season warm-up. The fixture date was arranged quite early this year to allow James Galpin to participate before being re-called to duty - any day now, James will be joining the Argus currently docked in Cyprus.

Two 'on the day' withdrawals from the GC tournament were quickly filled by Neil Fillery and the Manager, Louise Smith, who joined Jonathan Powe, Steve Leonard, Stu Smith, Dom Aarvold and Stephen Custance Baker. As ever, the light-hearted atmosphere coupled with the first sunny day in weeks made for an enjoyable day. Both Neil and Louise held their own, with 3 and 2 wins respectively; Stephen C-B was not quite so fortunate with no wins and 5 of his 7 games ending 4/7.

...continued on page 4



HIBISCUS COLUMN

Will your Damascene moment ever come? Maybe, maybe not, but just because it hasn't, it doesn't mean it won't. Think Jonathan Edwards, Champion of Greece in 2023 following his victory in the country's only AC tournament in Corfu in October. And now Block-Singles Champion of Western Province in South Africa, following a win at the Somerset West Club in Constantia outside Cape Town in February. With big silver to match.

When Johnny played in South Africa in 2023, he lost every game, triggering a raise to 18, the index he played off in Corfu. In South Africa, that was reduced to 14 by the tournament organiser, then to 12 by fellow competitor, Chris Roberts, from Phyllis Court. 'I put it down to the quality of the sunshine and the wine', said author Kitty Carruthers, who introduced husband Johnny to croquet nearly 20 years ago. 'Suddenly he's not missing much; he's creating four ball breaks; he's outpacing his mentor!'

Is this good news for us tortoises stuck in the teens behind predatory hares? Maybe, maybe not. At tournaments, we're haunted by Steve or Nigel or Jim who 'took up' croquet six weeks ago and clicked in at once. Or had a minus GC handicap which

has translated into AC magic. Or was in the croquet team at an ancient university alongside Stephen Mulliner 40 years ago. Likely enough, they live very near a croquet club and have six hours a day to spend on court.

Anything else? Ah yes, the patience and tenacity to practice on their own. Some like it, others not, but all agree it is the golden key. AC generates obsession because it requires rapid re-evaluation of a wide range of options every time you leave your chair. Ergo, there are a hell of a lot of areas in which practice makes a real difference.

The starting point is an honest appraisal of your skill set so you know what might be possible. Identify strengths, pin point weaknesses, and eliminate the need to use them. Stuck in the jaws? Nail the hoop approach until every hoop shot is unmissably short and straight. Errant 10ft roquets? Fine tune those take offs to reduce them to under 4ft. Wild pioneers? Drive or roll until reception balls are snuggled up to their hoops. Dial in every shot until the sequence is bombproof. Repeat and repeat. Never stop believing that the light-bulb moment is just around the corner... that it will flicker, but it won't die.

In matches, get a move on. Everyone hates those players who run down the clock by staring into an infinity of indecision - that's cheating, by the way, but referees find it too ephemeral to call. I've never seen a hint of a penalty warning, even when time is short and deliberation deliberate. That's not to eliminate planning time altogether. Even if you follow your opponent's play meticulously - denying yourself a cup of coffee or a chat with the other double-banker currently sitting next to you - you may not know exactly which ball is where when your turn starts. With eight balls on court, identifying distant colours while squinting into the sun isn't 100%.

A purposeful check clarifies which of your quiverful of strategies might pay the highest reward. Easy pickings first; otherwise, sabotage. Wait patiently for that game-swing gift, an established break that you can adapt and use. That's the time to deploy bisques ahead of panic to create space and arrange the balls in the right places, much easier when they're left in the open rather than tucked into corners. Enjoying sun, vintage wine and glittering prizes is not a given. The hard yards come first.

! Minty Clinch

...Best of the West from page 4

James and Stu were the early contenders: however, partnered with Kiwi Paul Kaiser, James was fresh from winning the New Zealand Open Doubles, and had also just competed in the NZ GC Open Singles, NZ AC Open Singles, and NZ AC Open Doubles. After a long, wet winter in the UK, it was certainly felt by us all that James had the advantage of being 'match ready'! He even kept the NZ vibe going dressed in shorts! Steve, Jonathan, and Dom all had similar results and achieved 4 wins each; a game lost at the 13th put Stu into 2nd spot. Warm congratulations to James who deservedly claimed this year's title. The Best in the West trophy was filled with chocolates which were customarily shared amongst the players.

AC - Best in the West: The AC Best in the West event, held on Sunday 3rd March, ended up with a convenient 4 competitors, with even the organiser David Warhurst disappearing off to warmer climes!

Chris Williams, Dave Kibble, Aston Wade and Duncan Reeve enjoyed a relatively

warm and sunny day, with Dave exposing his legs to the Spring sunshine and Duncan having to take off his thermals. A highlight of the day was Liz Williams' excellent hot lunch.

A point of note was Chris hitting a long lift shot down the East boundary of lawn 7, demonstrating that the lawn levelling efforts are showing good results. This shot was previously 'impossible' to hit, with the ball hilling off by 3 feet.

The croquet was as interactive as might be expected for pre-season, with Duncan scraping 3 wins to retain the AC Best in The West trophy for a second year.

A special thank you is given to Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club and volunteers for generously providing 6 immaculately prepared courts over the weekend. It was also fantastic to see members come along on both days to spectate and support the Players.

GC – Louise Smith
AC – Duncan Reeve

GC Best of the West, James Galpin





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

TUNNEL OF TIME

55 YEARS AGO

In the April 1969 Gazette (#105)

CA NOTES

Scotland has formed The Scottish Croquet Committee to deal with all matters in Scotland; elsewhere you will see their Constitution, Their enthusiasm and determination really to get Clubs and Tournaments and croquet going well North of the Border is most encouraging.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The 1968 season saw the publication of the second edition of the Laws Book, as a result of a desire expressed by Associates at the A.G.M, in 1967. This edition incorporates all the many amendments which had become necessary since the first edition was published in 1961, Such was the demand, particularly from overseas, that a second reprint was necessary.

A sad feature of the 1969 season will be the absence of any Calendar Fixtures at Roehampton. It is to be hoped that this is only temporary, and that when the rebuilding programme is completed there will be a change of heart. It would indeed be tragic if Roehampton, with its courts second to none and once the headquarters of Croquet, were to vanish for ever from the Calendar. In the meantime, other Clubs have generously come to the rescue. Cheltenham take the Peels, Budleigh Salterton the Challenge and Gilbeys, and Southwick the Men's and Women's Championships.

65 YEARS AGO

In the April 1959 Gazette (#38)

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL 1958-59

Plans are well advanced for moving the C.A. office from Southampton Row to the Hurlingham Club. It is anticipated that the move will take place during June.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS FOR 1959

Observant readers of this journal will have noticed that the Council has decided to embark on an ambitious re-draft of

the Laws, not with any idea of making substantial alterations in their purport, but rather with the main purpose of a clarification which after many years of piece-meal amendments is now felt to be desirable. It is further proposed to re-order the whole code with the double aim of (a) making its sequence more logical and the matters to which the Laws relate more rapidly discoverable, and (b) to assist those taking up the game to arrive at an understanding of its essential features more easily than they can do at present.

NOTES FROM THE CLUBS

BRISTOL

The end of last season looked like being the end of the club too. First we were refused a renewal permit for our pavilion on account of its rather dilapidated state and then we were threatened with a £40 p.a. increase in the rent of the ground. However, all is well now and after doing up the pavilion at a cost less than at first expected—thanks to the ability and co-operation of our groundsman, Tom Rees—and after some correspondence with the owners (the City Corporation) of the ground we have now got another three years' permit for the pavilion and another three years' lease of the ground at an increase of £15 p.a. Our appearance on Television last September seemed to give interest—and surprise—to many viewers; a film of some shots taken on our ground was shown first and then came a live interview with one of our members.

70 YEARS AGO

In the April 1954 Gazette (#1)

GOLF CROQUET

"Let's have a round of Golf." In Croquet parlance this means a game of Golf Croquet and a very good game it is to fill in a spare half-hour or more at the end of a day's work or play. Golf Croquet enables beginners especially to learn how to take up their stance; how to hold their mallet; how to hit their own ball properly; how to run hoops; and how to shoot Straight. It is an excellent preliminary to taking up Association Croquet. It is also good practice in running hoops and shooting for

experienced Croquet players.

"To biff or not to biff" is one of the most important slogans. For instance: - If after making a hoop the next player makes a perfect approach to the next hoop and gets certain position, it is no good just rolling up (the odds against a stymie from a long distance are tremendous) the opponents should shoot and try to knock the ball away.

When knocking a ball out of position an effort should be made to hit it off the lawn and at the same time to stay near with a stop shot; it becomes rather a boring game if everyone plays poky shots, not moving the ball more than a yard or two. In such a case it might take 20 minutes to make a point!

NOTES FROM THE CLUBS

It is interesting to hear that the DULWICH Club has a membership of over forty who are all keen supporters of Golf Croquet.

90 YEARS AGO

In the April 21st, 1934 Gazette (#746, Vol XXXI (no. 2))

GOLF CROQUET AT COSTEBELLE

To Costebelle belongs the distinction of promoting, on March 23rd, the first Golf-Croquet Competition in Europe under the new Laws (it is, of course, possible and indeed likely that several have taken place "down under").

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

**Chris Williams
Croquet England Archivist**



As the days lengthen and warm, the attention of all Croquet players turns to the start of the playing season. The annual calendar was published on 1 February this year, with 311 tournaments to choose from. Your club and federation are likely to be arranging more, so there's plenty of choice.

If you've not played in a tournament before, be reassured that there's nothing to worry about. You can be assured of a warm welcome at any tournament. But if you're nervous, my advice is to go with one of your fellow club members; that way you can be confident of at least one friendly face and have someone to chat to whilst travelling.

When you go back to your club – or travel to another - you'll notice all sorts of things that have been done over the winter. Please remember to thank the volunteers who have been working on the courts, painting sheds and fences, planting gardens, tidying club houses and planning for the season ahead.

Turning to the work of the Board of Trustees, I'm pleased to report that 448 associates (at the time of writing) have taken up the opportunity to become voting members of Croquet England. They will have had a vote at the first general meeting of Croquet England on 16 March and met a charity commission requirement for our first general meeting to be held within 18 months of their approval of our application. It also completes the mobilisation phase of our transition to Croquet England CIO. A report of the AGM will have been published by the time this Gazette arrives.

The next AGM will be held in October, after which we will return to a schedule more appropriate for something described as "annual".

The next focus of the Trustees will be in two areas. First, to finalise the strategy for Croquet England to prioritise our activities over the years ahead. Second, we will look to the next steps in our drive to become compliant with Sport England's Code of Sports Governance. This incorporates established practices and research findings from multiple sports, large and small. Each of these changes are small, but collectively they will improve how we govern and run our sport and open opportunities for other forms of support from Sport England.

Samir Patel, Chairman of the Board of Trustees

MARKETING MATTERS

Having been Chairman of the Marketing Committee for just over a year, I thought you'd like an update on what we've been up to and where we see ourselves going forward.

Our team consists of Paul Hetherington (Director of Marketing), Alison Maugham, Mark Suter, Duncan Catterall and myself.

In the last quarter of 2023 Alison took on the part-time role of Communications Support for Croquet England, and we in Marketing have been able to support her in a number of projects. Mainly the new leaflets which have proved so successful that they are now on their third print run, the first two having been funded by advertising.

The committee are often in frequent discussion to make decisions on features, photography and content for the Gazette. Our aim is to bring to you a Gazette which has something for everyone, from tournament reports through to grass roots activities and what's happening around the world.

With thanks to Paul Francis (Sports Development), we were asked to join a Croquet England webinar to discuss National Croquet Week, where we introduced many ideas for club celebrations along with a demonstration of using the online graphics tool Canva.com.

If you have looked at the Croquet England YouTube site, you will

...continued on next page

SHORT CROQUET CORNER

2024 TOURNAMENTS

Another Short Croquet season beckons so now is the time to plan your tournaments for 2024. Several Federations run their own tournaments and are well worth checking out.

There are delights too in visiting a new croquet ground and meeting players from further afield. A one-day mid-week tournament will be held at Hamptworth, near Salisbury, on 3 July. For weekend one-day tournaments try Blewbury, Oxfordshire (11 May or 3 August) or Newport, Essex (7 July). The York Viking Challenge is a two-day opportunity to play several games over a weekend (7-8 September).

All these offer a relaxed, enjoyable experience and a warm welcome to players of any handicap. To enter, visit the Fixtures Calendar on the Croquet England website or contact the club.

HALF BISQUES IN SHORT CROQUET

Short Croquet handicapping moves in one-bisque steps from 10 bisques down to 4, but then in half-bisque steps below that, from 3½ to scratch, when compulsory peels come into play. Even if you yourself don't have a half bisque, there may well be occasions when you face someone with one, so it's good to be aware of what they can do.

Half bisques work like full bisques, giving an extra turn with the same striker's ball, but with one important restriction: no point may be scored for any ball.

A half bisque comes into its own in three situations. Most powerfully, when setting up a break, if you know you will need invest two bisques, use the half bisque first. You'll run no hoops while setting up, giving it the power of a full bisque.

A half bisque can also tidy up a leave. You'll run no more hoops in that turn; investing one may mean the difference between an easy hit-in for your opponent and a challenging situation costing him or her a bisque to retrieve.

And a half bisque can be a useful 'get out of jail' card if you break down in a situation favourable to your opponent and have no full bisques left to rescue things.

One quirk of the Laws: no point can be scored for any ball. If an opponent has stuck in the hoop, you can peel it through using a half bisque. It won't score, and will end up on the wrong side of the hoop... frustrating for the opponent, satisfying for you.

| John Harris

Some of the competitors at the York Viking Challenge



...continued from page 6

have seen the large number of livestreaming videos we have. In 2024 we are starting to collate all of this "information", making it more useful going forward. I now have in place a team of people helping me on this. It will take some time, but this will eventually provide us with clips for promotional videos, social media campaigns and press communications, short demonstrations of shots for coaching material and content for things we haven't even thought of yet.

We very much see ourselves at the core of More People, Playing More Croquet in More Places, and would like to support clubs wherever possible. However, like most clubs and their members, we are volunteers who are looking to expand our sub-teams. Do you have any of the following: any marketing background, an interest in promotion or design, photography or writing, or just keen to help us?

Our current needs are for:

Journalist/s. Could you follow and report on the major tournaments, the stories behind the play and the player rankings?

- Golf Croquet Championship Series
- Inter-County preparations and stories
- Association Croquet Regional Championships
- Inter-club Croquet Tournaments

Photographer/s. Have you an eagle eye? Can you help us build our library of photos where the pictures show the whole story of croquet, not just about the person wearing white holding a trophy. If this has sparked your interest in getting more involved with us and Croquet England, then I would be keen to hear from you on annabel.mcdiarmid@croquetengland.org.uk

| Annabel McDiarmid

LEAFLETS FOR CLUBS

MARKETING@CROQUETENGLAND.ORG.UK

NEW!



“TITAN OF THE THAMES” (AND A DECENT CROQUET PLAYER)

Who was the longest serving President of the Croquet Association? If this was a question at your typical croquet club quiz evening it is probable that few points would be scored. Yet the answer is one of the outstanding sportsmen and sports administrators of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who could also boast of a string of achievements in the wider world of politics and public administration. William Grenfell was born in 1855 and died in 1945. He was President of the CA from 1908 to 1933 and is the subject of a new book*, which explores his remarkable life. Grenfell was born into a comfortably off family that in the hundred years before his birth had made its money in tin and copper mining and smelting. His background meant he could devote his early life to sporting achievement both during and following an education at Harrow and Balliol, Oxford.

Deep breath! By the time he was 35 he had climbed the Matterhorn by three different routes, rowed in the famous tied Boat Race of 1877 and in the winning Oxford crew of the following year, become an MP, travelled to Sudan as a war correspondent for the Daily Telegraph, rowed across the English Channel, won the Amateur Punting Championship three years running, become an accomplished fencer, and twice swum across the pool at Niagara Falls!

And in his 50s he organised an Olympic Games. The 1908 Olympics were scheduled for Rome, but in 1906 Vesuvius erupted to its most destructive extent since the 17th century. Such was the effect on Italy that Rome gave up the games. At two years' notice Grenfell, already Chairman of the British Olympic Association, became the lead organiser that brought the (very successful) games to London. Not content with this he became President of the Lawn Tennis Association in 1907 (until 1926), of the Amateur Fencing Association in 1911 (until 1926), of the MCC in 1911-12, of the Amateur Wrestling Association in 1920 (until 1933) and of the Amateur Athletic Association in 1930 (until 1936). He was President or Chairman of dozens of other bodies. One might ask how he had time to be involved in the CA. The answer is – he didn't, but the CA didn't mind! The book records that Lord Desborough (Grenfell was ennobled in 1905) rarely played competitively, although his country house, Taplow Court near Maidenhead, had a croquet lawn. At the 1919 CA AGM the Chairman told the meeting that he had received a letter from the President saying that he couldn't come to the AGM. Apologising, Desborough went on: "I think that you should have an active and working President... So the time has come for me to retire graciously... So that you may elect a more fit and proper President."

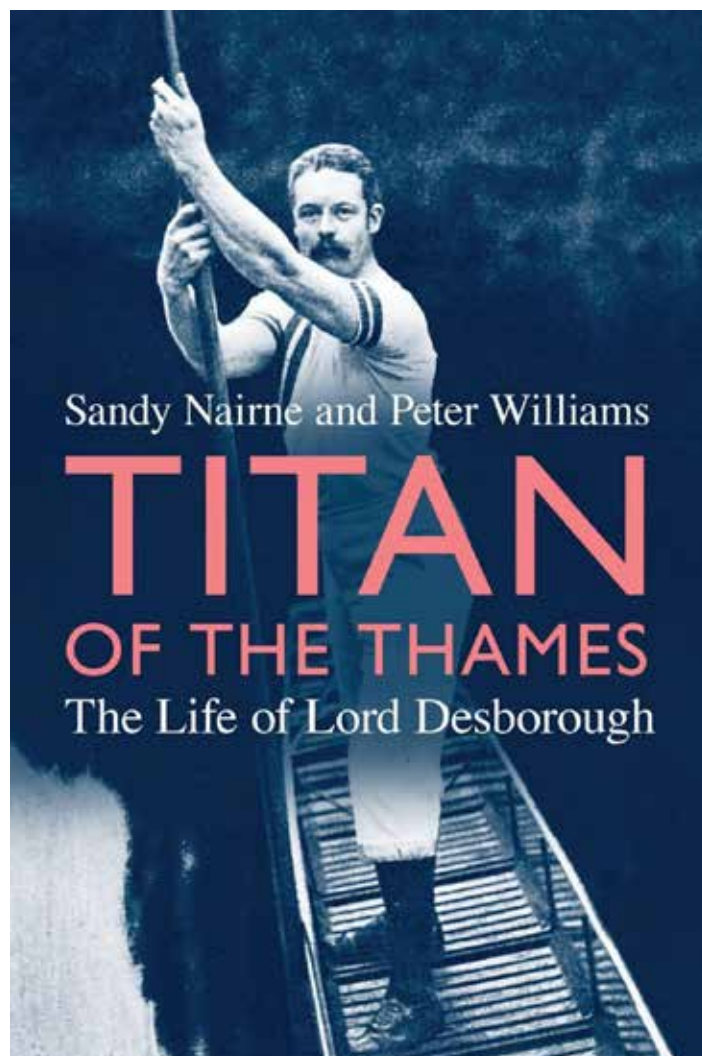
The Chairman declared to those attending "you will all agree with me that is a proposition to which we cannot give our assent ("hear, hear")... In the world of sport his name is a name to conjure with, and he makes a most admirable Chairman at any meeting... and I hope you will unanimously refuse to accept his resignation."

The meeting agreed and Desborough remained as President for another eleven years.

This is a book that fully matches its subject's achievements. Researched from numerous sources, and full of remarkable detail, it provides a compelling narrative covering the life of a man who epitomised the Victorian amateur sporting ethos, along with an outstanding devotion to public service.

***Titan of the Thames: The Life of Lord Desborough**, Sandy Nairne and Peter Williams, published in February 2024 by Unbound, £25. **Full disclosure:** I have known Peter Williams for many years both as a friend and work colleague.

**Adrian Coles, Hon Secretary,
Surbiton CC
(writing in a personal capacity)**



CHOOSING YOUR NEW CROQUET MALLET

Why do we recommend trying before buying? As suggested by Croquet England, trying as many mallets as you can at your club, including those of members who are happy to help you do your research, is a great way of working out which height and head length works best for you.

Although weight can play a factor in your mallet choice, the material that the end faces are made of means that a lighter mallet can give you the same shot distance as its heavier counterpart.

Players will have questions about the mallets, what they are made of, the suitability for the code of croquet they play, the benefits of a lighter mallet over a heavier one and vice versa. How does the grip they use affect the height of the mallet they should purchase? What is the benefit of an 11" head over a 10" head? All valid questions and when you are spending money on a new mallet, they are quite rightly ones you should ask; you wouldn't buy a new car without doing your research first.

We find that it's better to have a conversation, be it by phone or email, to ensure that we are providing the best mallet from our range for each and every customer. So far this year the 11" SP6 is what most people are ordering. We'd rather people be happy with the mallet and don't feel they've made a mistake by rushing a web order or buying on spec alone. Our mallets won't be what every player wants, and we don't want anyone spending their hard-earned money on something they aren't 100% sure of.

We like to think that we have kept the method that David used successfully for over 17 years. In the words of one of our new customers "Thanks for all your help when I ordered, it was refreshingly good old fashioned customer service!"

| Chris Alvey, DB Mallets



OPENING OUR 'VIRTUAL' DOORS ON CROQUET

INTRODUCING THE CROQUET HUB

Croquet England is proud to announce the opening of the Croquet hub. We are the governing body of Croquet and it is important we lead by example. Following the 'Opening Doors' initiative from our Sports Development Committee, where clubs have been encouraged to open their doors to the local communities and welcome newcomers to the sport, Croquet England has opened the virtual doors to our sport using the social media platform of Facebook.

The public Facebook group has already welcomed over 170 people to the conversation. Many of these new members to the group are existing players, but show a wide range of ability, competitiveness, and location. Players have been encouraged to talk about their

experiences, find new clubs to play at and even share pictures of their rainbow glazed lawns.

Although it has been an immediate success and a delight to see our community connecting and encouraging each other, this is also a place for the public to find out more about our sport. In the past we have received requests to find out more about croquet equipment. From intriguing kit found at the bottom of the family garden shed to enquiries of second-hand mallets, often there has been a need to ask the community for some help. Many of us are now members of private WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups and croquet email forums, but now there is a way for the outside world to connect with us.

Not everyone is active on social media which should be appreciated and respected. This is not a replacement for any of our Croquet England communications, merely a new channel to open up the conversation. We will continue to strive for more people, playing more croquet, in more places. Please come along and help us open the doors on Croquet at facebook.com/groups/croquethub.

The front cover image (and the one in this article) was shared with us by a Croquet hub member from Pendle & Craven Croquet Club. PHOTOGRAPH Ian Longstaff.

Alison Maugham
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LETTERS

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



TIMED HANDICAP GAMES

On the Oxford website Ian Plummer discusses handicapping, and makes the point that timed games are unfair to lower handicapped players as little time may be left after all the opponent's bisques have been taken.

To even things up a bit, I suggest that a handicap game that is won on time is treated as a shortened game (i.e. a game of less than 26 points) that has completed but in which too many bisques have been given. Therefore an allowance for points earned from those excess bisques should be subtracted from the bisque receiver's score.

The correct number of bisques in a shortened game is simply the number in a full game reduced in proportion to the number of hoops actually played (as applied in Schedule I: Schedule of Bisques in the Laws).

The value of a bisque, on average, is theoretically 26 points divided by handicap.

This gives a player a roughly even chance against a scratch player who is expected to make two all-round breaks without bisques (see "Croquet" by J.W. Solomon, p.76).

Applying both these factors, if a player of handicap H receives B bisques and wins a game on time with a score P (giving a "shortage" S of 26 minus P), then the points to be deducted are Shortage times Bisques Received divided by Handicap; i.e. the adjusted score $P' = P - S \times B/H$.

A fraction of a point to deduct can be ignored, but then perhaps the benefit of a resulting tie should be given to the bisque giver (winning "Plus Zero on Time").

Rick Davis
Nottingham Croquet Club

CREAKING CROQUET!

Having reached a certain age...I am from the age when steel combs, gallons of Brylcreem and a DA* were de rigueur... Friday nights were spent in the local Milk Bar....my mind was left contemplating how I could extend my croquet playing life. I have come up with the following guidance:

- Change your objective from "winning" to "enjoying" - you will still win some games.
- Play lots of doubles in order to have someone there to remind you that you have already run Hoop 2.
- Book a lawn as near to the "facilities" as possible - you need time to get there.
- Persuade the Tournament Manager that you suffer from Godfrey Syndrome, and you therefore need to leave the lawn for "talking therapy" every 30 minutes. The Tournament Manager will be too young to remember Godfrey in Dad's Army.
- Check your eyesight regularly... it's free for people of 'a certain age'.
- If you play only GC take up shorter forms of Association Croquet... you will get to sit down a lot - at least I seem to!
- Don't forget to take your pills and, also have with you a spare pair of spectacles.
- Remind the Manager that your Care Home operates a 6pm curfew.
- Attend your roll up/mix in so at least you get to speak to someone each week.
- Forgo the 10-minute warm-up; it takes up too much energy.
- Don't take it the wrong way if someone asks you if you are ready to "Peg Out"!
- Before you chance heavy roll shots, make sure you have given sufficient time for your knee/hip replacement to settle properly(?) WD40 could prove handy (not to be taken internally).
- Pretend to not have a coin. That way you avoid having to bend down to pick it up.

*Don't ask!

Klim Seabright

Your Next Chapter
of Luxury Awaits

EXPLORE
MORE BELOW:



UNIWORLD
BOUTIQUE RIVER CRUISES

EMBRACE THE ELEGANCE of a Luxury River Cruise



WHO ARE UNIWORLD



Uniworld redefines all-inclusive luxury on the world's rivers, boasting an award-winning fleet of floating boutique hotels. Each unique ship reflects its journey's destinations with one-of-a-kind lavish interiors and an average of just 120 guests. Enjoy bespoke experiences, gourmet dining, and unlimited fine-wines, ensuring every voyage is as exquisite as the unfolding landscapes you're exploring.

WHERE DO WE SAIL



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THE (UNOFFICIAL) HISTORY OF CROQUET: PART 6 CROQUET AND MYSTICISM

There has always been a close link between mysticism and mathematics, particularly the number seven, which ancients associated with having magical powers, hence the seven levels of consciousness and the seven colours of the rainbow. So, it is not surprising that croquet, which was played by the gods in ancient Greece, should incorporate the number seven prominently in all its forms, from setting out the playing court and its constituent dimensions to the number of hoops and peg.

Temples dedicated to the god of croquet, Krocus (Crocus), incorporated proportions that replicated those of the croquet court, combined with those of the golden section (Fig. 1). The principal façade had seven spaces between the columns, whilst other dimensions were based on multiples of seven, as in the setting out of a modern croquet court (28 x 35 yds). The height and width were exactly half that of the court, or a quarter of its area, symbolising the four balls. The eight roundels above the columns represent the primary and secondary colours and were originally painted to match, while the Tympanum typically displayed heroic groups of figures playing croquet (Fig. 2). The Frieze would also contain croquet playing figures, such as in the example which shows the participants sitting out during a game of mixed doubles (Fig. 3). The whole would normally be topped by a gilded figure of Krocus. The ancient Greek croquet courts normally had tiered seating along their long sides, unlike the more familiar amphitheatres where plays were performed. This arrangement was copied in the English parliament, whereas it is the amphitheatre that is more common in legislative chambers in modern democracies. It was Homer who commented that spectators facing each other tended to result in more rowdy crowd behaviour, not unlike our own parliament. The number seven also features prominently in ancient depictions of the human form, notably in Vitruvian Man, a drawing by the Italian Renaissance artist and croquet player Leonardo da Vinci, which was influenced by the proportional theories of the Roman architect Vitruvius. There are several versions, but the most interesting is one that superimposes the layout of a croquet court onto the figure with outstretched limbs contained within a circle (Fig. 4), in which the central axis of hoops and peg correspond to the man's vital organs. The heart and brain are aligned with the peg and hoop six respectively, whilst hoop five is traditionally associated with fertility in ancient cultures.

There is no evidence that croquet was played in Britain prior to the Norman conquest, but the proportions incorporated into Vitruvian Man appear to have been understood as early as the Iron Age, as can be seen in the group of wood henges that survive near the village of Thornborough in North Yorkshire (Fig. 6). The central axis is aligned with magnetic north, with the centre circle occupying the position of the peg in a game of croquet, or the heart in depictions of ancient man. The alignment of axes linking the hoop positions also links up with other Neolithic sites around Britain and locations as far away as Brittany and the Shetland Isles. A recently completed study of Saxon England by Oxford University using aerial photography and ground penetrating radar has identified an intriguing pattern of settlements matching the position of the hoops and peg on a croquet court, with Oxford corresponding to Hoop 5, with its central axis aligned with Thornborough (Fig. 5). The pattern is also interesting because it may have been important in astrology, in particular, its alignment with the thirteenth sign of the zodiac, Crocos, god of croquet (Fig. 7). The precursors of the calendar we use today also derived from the dimensions of the croquet court, principally the numbers seven and thirteen, signifying the days of the week and four seasons of thirteen weeks, replicated in the scores in the short and long versions of the game, so that every day of our lives is linked to playing croquet.

I David Graham

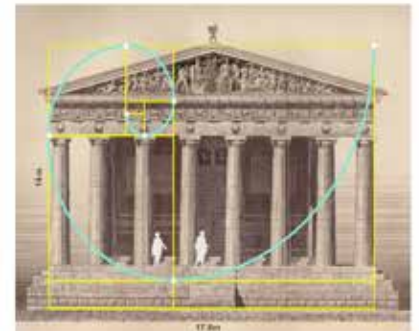


Fig 1. Temple of Krocus



Fig 2. Tympanum



Fig 3. Frieze

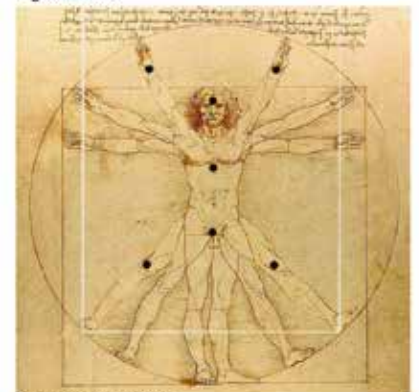


Fig 4. Vitruvian Man




Fig 7. Crocos Zodiac Sign



Fig 6. Thornborough



Fig 5. Saxon England



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BISQUES, BREAKS & BEYOND

Roger Mills is a leading coach in the South West, and has published two books about playing AC, *Getting Maximum Bang For Your Bisques* and *Taming The Triple*. His third book, *Bisques, Breaks and Beyond*, has just been published and I asked him to tell me why he had written the books. This is what he told me...



My love of croquet started 12 years ago when I moved to Sidmouth, and it quickly became an obsession. In the first two years I was mad keen to learn, and attended every coaching course I could. Then I fell into my second obsession - coaching - and I began studying and researching it.

I read coaching books from other sports (golf, cricket, rugby) and explored how people learn. I followed international coaches on their websites. And I sought out coaching courses run by leading coaches, not so much to improve my own game, but because I wanted to learn how they coached.

But it was the formation of the South West Croquet Academy at Budleigh in 2015 that would ultimately lead to me writing my books. Top UK coaches came to the SWCA to deliver AC coaching courses for low handicap players, which left room for me to present courses for AC players with handicaps 7-18. This was a very formative period for me, and I used it to define my own coaching beliefs and style.

I really hated seeing C and D-Class players struggling to improve their game. And I noticed that often these players, despite having attended technically excellent courses, would shortly afterwards be playing in exactly the same way as before the course!

Three main reasons struck me for the coaching not being effective. First, it hadn't changed players' thinking, so they stayed with their old ways of playing. Second, players seemed overwhelmed by the number of concepts and rules thrown at them. Third, the coaching advice was quickly forgotten; it hadn't been 'sticky'. Ultimately, if coaching doesn't improve a player's game, everybody's time - the coach's and the attendees' - has been wasted!

There had to be a better way of coaching these players. So I worked on solutions to these three problems, and had very encouraging results when I tested them in my SWCA courses. The key ideas were, firstly, to use a gentle barrage of questions to lead the players' thinking to where I wanted it to be; secondly, to simplify the improvement process by getting players to focus only

on the few things that would make a big difference to their game (usually only three!); and thirdly, to use new ways of approaching 4-ball breaks with very simple rules (usually only three!) that could be easily remembered in a game.

Part of the solution to the 'sticky' problem was writing comprehensive course manuals running to c.50 pages. Players liked them, and often suggested I should publish them. Then along came the pandemic and lockdown, and it was a great opportunity to turn my coaching manuals into books to share my ideas with a much wider audience.

My first book was about how to use bisques effectively. Every player I coached complained of wasting bisques, but the available resources only offered general guidelines. I felt there had to be a simple set of rules that could be used, and I managed to find it. So, that was my first book, *Getting Maximum Bang For Your Bisques*, sorted!

My second book came from my view that triple peels were seen as the province of A-Class players. Why should they have all the fun? I completed my first triple when my handicap was 6, and saw no reason for B-Class players not to attempt them. But available resources seemed to be written for A-class players with superior shot skills to B-Class players. I could never get beyond page 25 of Wylie; it was too complex. So I wrote *Taming The Triple* to simplify the triple for novice peelers and enable them to share in the fun!

Originally, I had planned a third book to follow on from *Maximum Bang*, covering building and running 4-ball breaks without bisques. But my thinking had developed and I had learned much from writing *Taming The Triple*. So, instead of writing an entirely new book, I decided to rewrite *Maximum Bang* and combine it with the core content from the planned third book. And this is now *Bisques, Breaks and Beyond*.

The reason I became a coach was to give something back and help players improve and get more enjoyment from the game we love. The books are a big part of that.

The books are available from the Croquet England Shop: www.croquetengland.org.uk/shop

Roger Mills



DENNIS AND SISIS: PROUD PARTNERS WITH CROQUET ENGLAND

Dennis and SISIS, esteemed brands under the Howardson Group, are thrilled to announce their official partnership with Croquet England. This partnership marks a significant milestone in the ongoing commitment of Dennis and SISIS to provide top-tier solutions for sports turf maintenance.

Croquet England, the national governing body for croquet in England, is dedicated to promoting and developing the sport across the country. With a rich heritage and a growing community of enthusiasts, Croquet England sets the benchmark for excellence in croquet standards and facilities.

The Howardson Group, the parent company of Dennis and SISIS, boasts a rich legacy in designing and manufacturing high-quality machinery for the professional grounds care market. Under the brands Dennis, SISIS, Syn-Pro, Lloyds, and Hunter Grinders, the company has consistently delivered cutting-edge solutions tailored to the unique needs of organisations ranging from local authorities to schools, to the highest-level professional sports clubs and facilities around the world.

Roger Moore, Head of Marketing for the Howardson Group, expressed his excitement about the partnership, stating, "We are thrilled to join forces with Croquet England. We are passionate about sports turf maintenance, and this partnership allows us to support an organisation that shares our dedication to excellence. We are eager to provide our expertise and top-of-the-line equipment to assist Croquet England members in achieving their maintenance goals."

Dennis and SISIS are renowned for their expertise in sports turf maintenance, offering a comprehensive range of products designed to tackle every task and surface. Beyond equipment, the company's sports turf seminars have become a staple in the industry, attracting professionals and volunteers alike for over twenty years. These seminars serve as a testament to Dennis and SISIS's commitment to knowledge-sharing and empowering individuals in the field of grounds maintenance.

As the partnership unfolds, both parties look forward to collaborating closely to enhance the playing experience for croquet enthusiasts across the nation. With shared values of excellence and innovation, this partnership promises to raise the



bar for sports turf maintenance in the realm of croquet.

Further information about the range of maintenance products available can be found by visiting www.dennisuk.com / www.sisis.com.

For more news, reviews and insightful views, you can follow Dennis on Twitter @DennisMowers and SISIS @SISISMachinery. You can like the Facebook page – www.facebook.com/DennisMowersUK and www.facebook.com/SISISMachinery. You can also view the latest Dennis and SISIS videos by visiting www.youtube.com/DennisMowers and www.youtube.com/SISISMachinery.



CROQUET MAKES IT TO THE BIG SCREEN IN MAURITIUS

Croquet has landed in Mauritius and in a big way. At the end of January, 16 players from around the world headed out to Mauritius for the inaugural Sugar Beach International Croquet Cup. The destination was a spectacle in its own right, but the players certainly put on a show to top it with some incredible croquet across 2 days of competition. All live streamed on YouTube.



You've heard of destination weddings, well now we have destination croquet. The competition was held at the beautiful 5* Sugar Beach Resort, set on the white sands of the Mauritian western coast. Boasting 2 croquet lawns located in front of a grand plantation style building and directly beside the beach, surrounded by palm trees. These lawns are certainly in the running for the most beautiful croquet lawns in the world. And if the backdrop to the lawns wasn't enough, the resort's countless amenities certainly topped it all off.

The competition welcomed players from Spain, New Zealand, South Africa, UK, Latvia and Mauritius. Featuring some of the world's top players. Despite the Mauritian players not having any official ranking, their play was excellent and gave a few of the top players a run for their money.

With players flying in through the start of the week, it all officially kicked off with the Wednesday night welcome dinner for players and their partners. It was a great dinner allowing everyone to get to know each other over some top quality food and several bottles of wine at the Patio restaurant. With the competition not starting until Friday, the group took the opportunity to continue the evening at the Buddha Bar located between the main pool and the beach for a cocktail along with live music and excellent company.

Thursday saw a couple of sore heads take on friendly singles and doubles games before lunch. The Mauritian players made a late arrival, taking the term fashionably late quite literally, as they wowed the group in their matching blue Dodo patterned kit. Mauritius being the island where the Dodo originated. Quick to show us excellent Mauritian hospitality, they ordered a big round of beers for everyone before lunch. Post lunch, excitement rapidly started building as the backdrop started to more closely resemble the PGA Tour than croquet, with crews erecting a big screen, grandstand seating, TV cameras and production tent for the live streaming. Following the afternoon session, with the sun still shining (although the sun does seem to shine most of the time in Mauritius) and practice complete, everyone disappeared for some relaxation and a quick dip in the pool before rejoining at the Buddha Bar for some cocktail menu research before the doubles competition on Friday.

Friday's doubles competition was played as a round robin with players allocated a partner based on highest and lowest rankings being paired which made for a very evenly matched field and a lot of close games. All covered by the live stream



and projected onto the big screen for players and spectators to see while a live band provided some great music throughout the day. If you didn't catch the live stream, do not worry because it is still on YouTube, link at the end of the article. By the end of the day, the scores were so close it left 3 teams on the same number of wins and 2 on the same net hoops but it was Roberts Stafekis & Ana García Zamarreño who managed to take the win on who beat who. The blazing sun had made for a beautiful but tiring day on the lawns, so after the final games, the tournament manager ran off to collect a crate of ice cold beers, delivered to players on the lawns as they finished their



Mauritian players in their Dodo themed croquet kit.

final matches.

After a refresh in the pool, Friday evening brought a change of attire and attitude to croquet, as the players were invited to a private reception with the hotel CEO and executive group. All were excited to meet the players and treated them like sports stars with an open bar, delicious canapes and a lovely evening meal as the sun set over the ocean.

Live streaming and the band's great tunes resumed early on Saturday morning for the start of the singles 16 player knockout competition with the quarter finals closing the morning session. Jenny Clarke made quick work of her quarter final match while Pedro and Roberts battled in their game, Pedro coming out on top and sending himself through to the semis. Guy Scurfield edged past an impressive Paul Gunn. The battle for the fourth spot saw Martin Gill's big hitting style make consistently impressive cross court clearances and a couple of exciting jumps against Neil McHardy's more tactical short game. In the end, Neil just scraped through to take the win.

Post lunch, the semi-finals for the plate and competition started off with beautiful sunshine casting palm tree shadows across the lawns as the spectators looked out over the beach and across the ocean on another amazing day of play. The big screen, cameras, live band and grandstand seating provided an awesome atmosphere, giving the fans (yes, we had Mauritian croquet fans) a real show with all the replays and close-ups of impressive hoop running and great jump shots too. The first semi-final saw Guy Scurfield battle with Neil McHardy, each winning hoops in turn to take them to 6-6 with Guy getting first approach to the tie break hoop. After a nail biting miss from

...continued on next page



Roberts celebrating his final win in the doubles

Guy, he managed to stay in control sending Neil off to the far boundary to tee himself up for a short tap in to take him through to the final. Jenny Clarke and Pedro Lozano had an equally close game, also going to 6-6 but not before the heavens opened, significantly slowing the speed of play. The sudden downpour started to leave puddles on the lawn as the players



Players and partners at the Lounge bar enjoying some cocktails

made their approach to hoop 13. Pedro was very unlucky here as both his balls hit puddles leaving Jenny with the only ball on the right side of the hoop, leaving her to run a good hoop to take the win 7-6.

More rain caused a temporary suspension of play and it was at this moment that Mauritian National News chose to turn up, expecting to film a final, instead they got to see a small lake forming in the corner of lawn 2. Luckily, Guy and Duncan (Tournament Manager) gave them a great interview which should get Mauritians making croquet their national sport by the time we return next year.

Luckily with the lawns being beside the beach, the drainage was speedy and with the helping of some Mauritian sunshine, the lawns were playable only 30 minutes after the rain stopped. Now everyone was eager to watch the final between Guy and Jenny. The spectators re-assembled, the big screen flashed back into life, the commentator treated himself to a cocktail and the players entered the lawn to a round of applause, all cameras



Jenny Clarke receives her trophy on the stage

trained on them. Guy took the first hoop, Jenny taking the second as they both won alternating hoops. Jenny forcing Guy into several tricky positions but Guy showing his confidence,

running long hoops and hitting some big clearances. But at hoop 9, Jenny's experience paid off as her continued consistency allowed her to break sequence, taking her 5-4 up and putting her ahead for the first time in the game. Guy responded with an excellent approach up to hoop 10, Jenny looking to clear but couldn't quite do it, the pressure must have got to Guy as he missed a 3 foot hoop leaving his ball off at an angle. Feeling that he needed to take back control, Guy used his angled ball to attempt a jaws position, it looked good until his ball suddenly wobbled and was left sitting on the right hand upright. Jenny, having been cleared over to the centre peg, saw an opportunity and adopted some of Guy's confidence, going for a long distance in off. She hit it perfectly and slipped through the hoop with such power and grace that half the crowd didn't even realise what had happened. Probably the best shot of the whole tournament and a cracking move to take herself up to 6-4 at a very critical moment. Guy put in a lovely approach to 11 but Jenny cleared and cleared again, leaving Guy struggling to get back into the game. Jenny with 2 balls in front of the hoop and Guy on the boundary, Guy decided that a last ditch mega shot from the boundary (we love to see it) was his best option. Sadly, it didn't quite pay off, edging the side of the hoop and leaving Jenny to run through to win 7-4. It really was a top quality final and the crowd loved it. The plate final saw Peter Haydon and Carmen Pérez Noguerras battle it out over 13 hoops with Peter from Dulwich Croquet Club taking the win.

For the prize giving, the crew put up a stage and all the players came up to receive their medals to great fanfare and applause in an impressive spectacle that all croquet competitions should aim for in the future. Congratulations to all the players for their amazing play and for providing a lovely, exciting atmosphere for everyone. As a final send off, the hotel treated everyone to a delightful 3 course beachfront dinner at their Citronella restaurant followed by a generous selection of drinks at the Buddha Bar for a final toast to round off the week. At the bar, hotel guests who had been watching came over and congratulated the players and the winners, making them feel like true sports stars. Many of them now keen to give croquet a go, even the hotel staff were asking for tips. I think we can be sure that croquet is definitely not going to suffer the same fate as the Dodo here in Mauritius and looks to be a growing sport. Mauritius is soon to join the WCF, so look out for some players at the next world championships. Hopefully they can bring the great atmosphere that they provided over the week, with the big screen and band too.

Live stream from the competition can be found via the link below, as well as further information and sign up form for anyone interested in participating next year:

www.croquetandcocktails.com/events/Mauritius

**Alternatively, drop Duncan an email:
duncan@croquetandcocktails.com**



The players from left to right: Duncan Catterall (Tournament Manager), Roberts Stafeckis, Ana García Zamarreño, Pedro Lozano, Jenny Clarke, Carmen Pérez Noguerras, Fernando Soto, Paul Gunn, Peter Haydon, Martin Gill, Neil McHardy, Samuel Brousse de Gersigny, Remi Brousse de Gersigny, Henry Piat, Guy Scurfield and Jérémie Brousse de Gersigny.

CHRISTOPHER ROBIN 2024

The 9th edition of this event, FKA The Presidents Selection (given I am no longer 'el presidente').

Playing for prizes, but most importantly:

- The Christopher Robin Cup (so named because my father won the cup at a gymkhana, riding the horse Christopher Robin, in 1945...)
- The Croquet Butter Dish – for the Plate – as it sounds, a butter dish with some croquet rules on the top...

We have been so lucky with this event, sometimes a little rain, this year, one day either side of the weekend, the ground was frozen and we wouldn't have played! So, it continues...

A fabulous weekend, some new (*) visitors and home players in the event this year.

Home	Visitors
Guy	Debbie *
Pierre	Ian *
Jonny	Lionel
Duncan *	Andy
Des *	Dom *
Pete	Tobi

In the end the weather cold, but overcast and little wind, so all in all good, but chilly playing conditions. The lawns in exceptional state, considering the recent conditions.

SATURDAY: As usual, we started with 6 games cross block, visitors' vs Dulwich. It soon became clear the visitors meant business – with at one point, only Pierre and Jonny in plus net hoop territory.

Towards the end of the blocks it was very clear for the home side who would go through in the top 3, Jonny (unbeaten) Pierre and Guy, with 3 Dulwich players fighting for 4th place with no wins, and therefore, to be decided by best least negative net hoops – in the end Des prevailed by -1.

The visitor block was very tight as well, Tobi, Lionel and Ian the top 3 and 4th decided by 1 net hoop again, and Debbie making it through...

Then the fun really begins – Inter block qtrs, BO3 7pt games, with the alternative start (i.e. trying to remove the first shot advantage). Played in almost total darkness, semi finalists emerged for Sunday.

Jonny vs Des	4-1	4-0
Pierre vs Guy	4-0	4-3
Tobi vs Debbie	4-1	4-3
Ian vs Lionel	4-2	2-4 4-3

The evening spent at my house, with c25-30 people coming along to enjoy chilli, wine and good company. Supplemented by the surprise (for me at least) appearance of a birthday cake (from Derke – thank you) for me... Amazing...

SUNDAY: Slightly more normal proceedings here, semi-finals, BO3 13 pt games. Both matches very close and both coming down to hoop 13 in game 3.

Pierre vs Jonny	7-4	4-7	6-7
Ian vs Tobi	6-7	7-6	4-7

Next came the 3rd/4th play off – it was decided a shoot out to hoop 11 from the boundary would be fun for those eating lunch....5 shots each, then sudden death if needed. Ian won

3-1 and was heard remarking "why didn't I go for all those long hoops earlier". Just as well for the rest of us possibly...

The plate was a straight knock out, single 13 pt games until the final - between Lionel and Dom. They decided to do a BO3 13pt match – and after getting to 1-1 realising time was getting away from them... so played a 7pt final game – Dom prevailed, winning 4-2...

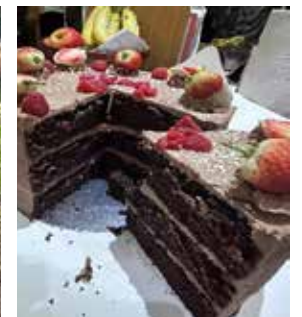
A phenomenal BBQ for lunch (thanks to Andy and Simon for their work there) got everyone ready for the Final...

The Battle of the Beards...

- Game 1 – close until halfway and then Tobi rather ran away with it.
- Game 2 – Tobi runs out to a 5.2 lead, and looks in complete control, then Jonny stepped up a gear and won the next 5 hoops, Tobi not getting a look in...
- Game 3 – nip and tuck between the two. Great play on both sides. Tobi gets out to 6-4... Nerves are jangling. Jonny wins hoop 11, plays the long game at 12, and, in the end, gets his reward with a great clearance and flick off to the boundary in front of 13... Tobi of course clears! Jonny runs hoop 12 therefore now banking on clearing at 13. Tobi's first ball (blue) positioned well – Jonny went to clear with red, however it was a somewhat uncharacteristically wild shot and missed. Tobi sent black deep of 13. Jonny's 2nd attempt missed by a very, very small margin... allowing Tobi to run hoop 13 with blue... a surprisingly quick finish to a tough final...

All this watched by a great crowd in the clubhouse, much support for the home team, slightly less for the visitors! Thanks to everyone for taking part, and to the club and members for giving up a weekend's play. A fantastic event.

I Guy Scurfield



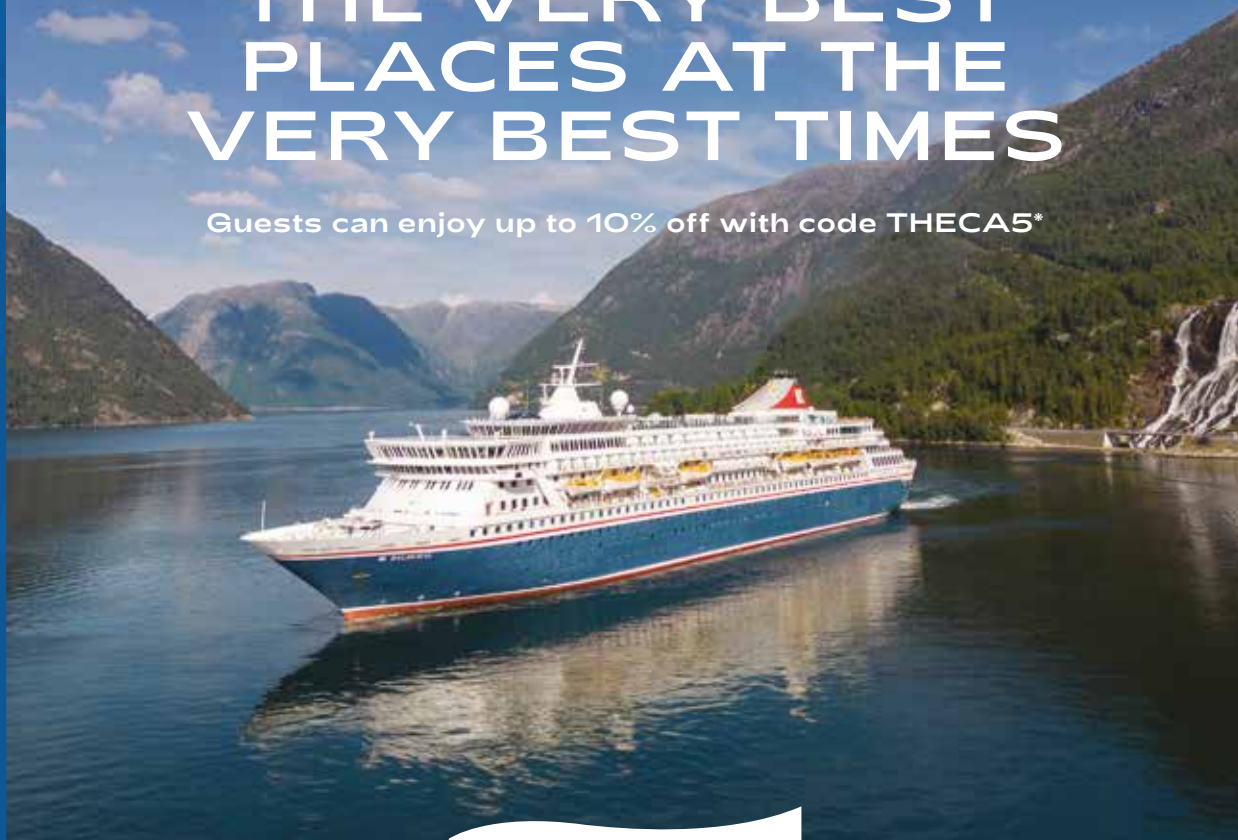


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SWISS TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT

WHAT FORMAT TO USE FOR MY TOURNAMENT?

The grumbles most often heard about tournament organisation are:

1. My game finished quickly and I had to wait ages for another
2. My game went to time and I was not allowed a break before starting the next
3. I enjoy tournaments but am no longer able to play so many games in a day
4. With the manager also playing, game scheduling was a bit disorganised

So, it is not surprising that the next most common comment is "We can't get anyone to manage our tournament"!

The Flexible Swiss event is a way of addressing the first 3 issues. It is best suited for the less formal tournaments that make up the bulk of the entries in Croquet England's tournament event calendar or for internal club events.

For those of you not familiar with the term, it basically means that an entrant can play as many games as they want with the winner being the person with the best win %. This is normally subject to having played a minimum number of games. For a short, weekend, tournament it is often the case that several players have the same win % - the winner is then determined by the person with the best quality of wins.

Whilst addressing the first 3 comments, a Flexible Swiss does make the manager's job more difficult. This is especially the case when determining who is the winner when multiple players have the same win %. This is why I developed my Swiss Tournament Management Spreadsheet program. After setting up the event and the list of players, the program does all the work of scheduling games, allocating courts, calculating ranking positions and applying the tournament rules of scheduling winners against winners.

Whilst the manager can take full control of how the program is used, it has been used successfully in a number of tournaments where players have entered their own results, indicated when they are ready for another game and the system does all the scheduling of games between available players. All the manager has to do is to announce the winner at the end of the event. They also have to correct any incorrectly entered results but, maybe surprisingly, this has not proved to be necessary very often!

The program and user guides can be downloaded from the WCF website. A new version V7.1 is now available. No knowledge of Excel Spreadsheets is

needed to operate the program. After set-up, all data entry is done by Command buttons and selecting items from drop-down list: <https://worldcroquet.org/swiss-tournament-management-spreadsheet>

It is a macro enabled Excel spreadsheet that requires a licensed copy of Excel to run. When downloading, most antivirus software will warn you about the macros and ask you for additional confirmation before downloading it.

The program consists of 2 main screens – examples below. The first is the only screen needed to manage the event. It is used by the manager/players to enter results, indicate readiness for another game and for scheduling games. Help text and prompts are provided to assist players to self-manage game scheduling and result entry. The second screen displays the state of the event in the format of block results in ranking order and is automatically updated as results are entered.

For the more advanced user, there is a full set of manual scheduling options available. For example, where a manager runs a Flexible Swiss format for most of the event but then wants to select the top 4 for a semi-final and final on the last afternoon.

Note: the program does not currently handle the new advantage GC rules where a winner (for a game going to time) can have a hoop score lower than the loser and block positions are calculated on % of the maximum number of hoops achieved when players have the same win %.

Andy Dibben
andy.dibben@croquetengland.org.uk

Event Management – Ranking and Game Status

	Andy	Nick	Mary	Bob	Victoria	George	Mike	Peter	Philip	Games Played	Games Won	Net Hoops	Win Grouping % Wins	GP 1 Wins	Other Wins	Ranking
Andy										3	3	43	100%	1		1
Nick										3	3	31	100%	1		3
Mary	-10									3	2	5	67%	2		2
Bob										3	1	-2	33%	4		4
Victoria										3	1	-26	33%	4		5
George	-12	-7								4	1	-33	25%	5		6
Mike	-21	-19								3	0	-48	0%	6		7
Peter										2	1	15	50%	3		8
Philip										2	1	15	50%	3		9

2 players not yet reached threshold of 3 games

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CROQUET AROUND THE WORLD

Croquet around the world is a new feature for 2024 highlighting fun and interesting things that have happened in the world of croquet. We will showcase clubs, organisations and individuals who are getting more people playing croquet, in more places. If you have a story you would like featured, please email: duncan.catterall@croquetengland.org.uk

BIENVENIDO SEVILLA

Welcome Sevilla to the world of croquet. That's right, yet another club opens in Spain as the sport continues to grow here at a rapid pace. Zaudin Croquet Club opens as part of the Zaudin Golf Club, with the lawns nestled between the golf course and a lake. It's a beautiful club and with 3 brand new laser levelled lawns, approved and accredited by the Spanish Croquet Federation, it's a great place to play too.

The club has been established by Pedro Lozano, A top player in Spain, who is keen to get more people playing croquet. Just what we like to hear! Their opening weekend saw many croquet players from around the area gather there for their inaugural competition, followed by drinks and dinner at the club house. Since then, many other sports players from the club have given croquet a try and its great to see so many new people taking up the sport.

The club will be playing host to the 4th Camino de Santiago tournament later this year that has previously hosted top international and Spanish players. One to look out for. If you are interested in visiting Zaudin Croquet Club, please email Africa Romero: croquetexperience@gmail.com



CROQUET COME TO CORFU

The Management Committee of the WCF have recently agreed that Corfu, one of the Greek islands, meets the requirements to join the WCF as a Recognised Croquet Organisation (RCO).

The Corfu club has been established for many years. It has four lawns, and regularly hosts tournaments open to visitors, both in GC and AC. The thriving club has an active membership who play mainly GC and One Ball, with just a small amount of AC played.

Heading out to Corfu anytime soon, why not pay them a visit or look out for their next Greek Open? Visit their website for more information at: <https://corfucroquet.club/>



LOOKING AHEAD

Fletcher Sharpe Invitational

Is this the biggest prize pool of any competition to date? \$15,000 Australia Dollars to be precise. This year sees the Inaugural Fletcher Sharpe Invitational take place in Sydney Australia from the 25-28th April and open to under 35s. Register your interest by emailing admin@ucaevents.org

IV Camino de Santiago

Now in its fourth year, the Camino de Santiago croquet competition will return from the 13-15th September and hosted at a new location of the aforementioned Zaudin Croquet Club. The competition has hosted top international players such as Reg Bamford, Moe Karem, Hany Erian Nagy and John-Paul Moberly, as well as most of the top Spanish players too. Register your interest for the event by emailing Jose at: j.alvarez-sala@spaincroquetland.com

I Duncan Catterall

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WHAT DOES THE WELL-PREPARED COACH TAKE TO THE LAWN?

We can't take everything, but a simple checklist helps. Here are ten starter ideas for your coaching kit list.

List of names

Obvious, but key. People coming to your coaching session need to know they are expected and that they have a place in the group. More than that, an early task of the coach is to bring the group together by helping people feel comfortable and an important part of it. For coaching where strangers come together – for example introductory courses – it's good to have one detail about each individual that you can use to establish rapport: if you know their address, for example, it might be something as basic as remarking on the length of their journey here. Welcoming individuals in this way, and introducing them to each other, gets any group off to a good start while establishing the coach at the outset as well organised and with the interests of the students at heart.

Crib cards

All coaching sessions, be they long or short, need planning, with clear details of what, when and how. If you are working from the GC Coaching Manual or from *Introducing Association Croquet: Manual for Coaches*, it may be appropriate to print out the relevant section and hold the printout on a clipboard. A neater solution is to use crib cards, short hand-written cards that remind the coach of the plan and key coaching and discussion points. These unobtrusive aids allow the coach to retain good eye contact with the group while reassuring both coach and students that the session is well organised and on track.

Extra balls

Most coaching sessions need extra balls, and the time to get them out is before the students arrive. Running out of balls and interrupting the session to get more does not inspire confidence! I usually assume that, as a minimum, I'll need double the number of balls that there are students – so, 8 students, 16 balls. Very occasionally more are needed, for example individual practice on AC hoop approach shots returning to a yard-line ball and round again. If the ball stock doesn't stretch that far, use pairs playing alternate stroke. A useful informal preliminary to any coaching session is for early arrivals to 'knock a ball or two around' in any way they find helpful, so even if the activities you are planning do not need all the balls you get out, they will still prove useful while people are gathering.

Mallet

Another obvious point, but bringing your own mallet makes for a much smoother session than continuously borrowing one from a student. It's likely to bring questions about when to buy one's own, the cost, what to look for, etc. It's also an excellent visual aid, for example to show the central strike line through a hoop by laying it down, head touching the two wires.

Coin

Another obvious item, but, at a time when cash is on its way out, it needs pre-planning. An old half-crown or penny makes for a good talking point and is satisfyingly chunky. Otherwise I tend to go for a modern 10p, a low-value coin making no statement which is just large enough for the purpose.

**PHOTOGRAPH John Harris**

All smiles after a well-planned coaching session

Watch

Another obvious item, but well-planned coaching needs timings for each section, and the coach needs a clear handle on the rhythm and pace of each part of the session. Even so, the clock should not always be king: it's important to 'read the room' and make adjustments flexibly in response. If students are fully engaged on individual practice on new learning and need five more minutes to become confident, spend the five minutes. If, on another topic, your time estimate was too generous, move on. Be particularly conscious of time as the coaching session nears its end. If the session is due to finish at say 5pm, it's pleasing for everyone if it does just that – not earlier ('we weren't given the full time'), not later ('they kept us waiting before we could go'). Move into a standard end-of-session routine in good time: bring in the hoops and balls; recap learning with simple question and answer; any questions; look ahead to next session; final praise and depart. This will all take several minutes, so be alert at 4.45pm, and at 4.50 move confidently into your end-of-session routine to bring things to a satisfying conclusion on time.

Divot repairer

Very small and light – something to get out and do the job there and then if a lawn is damaged. There is generally no need for recriminations: a swift repair, done immediately, is usually sufficient to make the point.

Laws or Rules

Coaches don't need to be qualified referees, but they do need to know where to look to resolve knotty issues. For most purposes at lower levels the Basic Laws or Basic Rules will be sufficient, and the slimness of each may encourage those in the earlier stages of their croquet journey to a deeper exploration of them. The full Laws and full Rules can be daunting but are an essential resource to consult if necessary: even if a good coach isn't secure on the detail, he or she will need to be familiar enough with the new edition to be able to find the right section reasonably quickly.

Pen and pad

All sorts of things can crop up: a promise to forward something to one of the students; a note to self about next week, or about next time round; and so on. It inspires confidence in the students if this too is well organised. I like to have a pencil and a small A6 pad to hand to jot down anything that comes up. They will slip into a pocket and won't get in the way of a smooth coaching session.

A game

A suitable game makes an enjoyable end to a coaching session; if you conclude with one, you'll need to call time. For those in the very earliest stages of learning AC, have ready a simple game that is well within the students' capabilities at that point, for example Push to the Peg, Pirates or Ricochet. If it's a close and competitive game it's good to give a two-minute warning and a one-minute warning, with, for the sake of fairness, an eye on the watch. My personal preference in a coaching situation is for time-limited games with beginners to end in a draw, but that takes some luck as well as careful management!

In conclusion

My own preference is to use half lawns wherever possible for coaching: the distances are shorter; there are twice as many hoops per full lawn for individual practice; circulating during individual practice is much easier; and group management is rather simpler. Other things to consider taking to the lawn include your favourite visual aids – I myself am a particular enthusiast for bisque sticks and flags in coaching; a few lawn markers; and food and drink – coaching is thirsty and hungry work!

BECOMING A GRADE 2 COACH

Experienced Grade 1 Coaches looking to upgrade their qualification to become a Grade 2 Coach will be pleased to know that the procedure has been simplified. What's needed now is a recommendation to the Coaching Committee from an Examining Coach, a Federation Coaching Officer or an Academy Coordinator.

The recommendation should outline and affirm the strengths of the candidate at this level, and should support the recommendation with details of the candidate's track record of successful coaching experience at the appropriate level.

General requirements include holding a current Grade 1 coaching qualification in the appropriate code, and playing – or having played – at handicap 6 (AC) or handicap 3 (GC) or lower. Prospective Grade 2 Coaches will also need very good inter-personal skills and a genuine desire to support other players as they develop and grow.

The full requirements and expectations are on the Croquet England website: go to the Become a Coach page for the basic information. The bottom half of the page has links to the Framework for Croquet England Coaching Qualifications, which sets out the standards in detail for each level of Croquet England coach.

NEW COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

The following players have passed all stages of the accreditation process at the appropriate level and have been added to the Croquet England List of Coaches. Congratulations to all.

- James Hawkins (Pendle CC) - GC Grade 2 Coach
- Debra Hayns (Ryde CC) – Club-Level Coach
- Stephen Hayns (Ryde CC) – Club-Level Coach
- Lindy Jordan (Ealing CC) – Club-Level Coach
- Richard Peperell (High Wycombe CC) – AC Grade 1 Coach
- Ian Shore (High Wycombe CC) – Examining Coach

Club-Level Coaches are accredited to coach beginners and high handicap players at their own Clubs. Graded Coaches are authorised to coach outside their own Clubs at the appropriate level – Bronze/C-Level for Grade 1 Coaches, Silver/B-Level for Grade 2 Coaches, and Gold/A-Level for Grade 3 Coaches. Coaching others is a terrific way to put something back into the game. It is also very rewarding for the coach, and helps develop the coach's own game as well as that of the person being coached. To find out more enter "Become a Coach" into the Croquet England website. The page sets out further details of the personal qualities looked for and the requirements, expectations and qualification process at each level.

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LAWN MAINTENANCE

Mowing: It is normal to mow croquet lawns at least twice a week. For flat lawns the optimum cut height is 5mm, on undulating lawns it is often necessary to increase the height to reduce ball wandering. If the mower is not cutting cleanly, it is a sign that the bottom blade (bedknife) should be adjusted to obtain a clean scissor action with the cylinder. Mower settings are explained in the Turfpedia on my website under the Machinery/Mower setting tabs.

Fertilising: If you are using granular fertiliser, apply before rain is expected and let it settle in overnight. It is best to mow "box off" until the fertiliser has dissipated. Apply granular fertilisers before rain is expected, after play, and let it settle in overnight.

New Low-Cost Fertiliser £35: For clubs that have a very tight budget, I have introduced a low-cost fertiliser. This will keep your lawn ticking over but doesn't have the virtues of my Organic and Thatch Busting products. You will find more details on my website. **Weeds:** If you have a lot of weeds, you will have to spray with a boom sprayer or knapsack. Use a systemic weedkiller for lawns – NOT a total weedkiller. When the lawn has few weeds, you can keep it that way by using a penknife or Weedol hand applicator.

Red Thread, Dollar Spot etc: All fungal diseases can be controlled easily using Soluble Iron. It kills the fungus on the leaf; the sooner you catch it the better.

Dry Patch: This manifests itself as dry areas where the grass is starved of moisture and then dies. The condition is fully explained in the Turfpedia on my website under the Turf Problems/Dry Patch tabs. It is very easy to cure and, once cured, its return can be prevented.

| Duncan Hector

OBITUARIES

PETER COLE 1927-2024

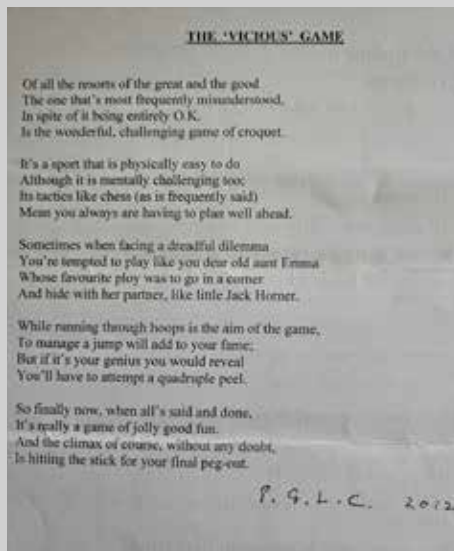
It cannot be often that these pages record the death of somebody who has founded a croquet club. Rother Valley Croquet Club are sad to announce the death of their founder, and Club President, Peter Cole.

Peter was born in 1927 and, after graduating from Pembroke College Cambridge, he trained for ministry as an Anglican priest. His work took him to Zimbabwe but, on his return to England, after serving in parishes in Hampshire, he and his wife Marion settled in Sussex. We don't know exactly when Peter first became interested in croquet but, in retirement, he decided that the best way to get a good game was to start a croquet club.

At the time the Coles were living in Fittleworth, and it was through the pages of the local parish magazine that the proposed club was advertised. Soon a group of nine members began playing in the grounds of a local residence, encouraged by Peter in the belief that croquet was a serious game and not just a bit of casual fun. Peter was a keen chess-player and his competitive instincts were encouraged by croquet's tactical nature.

A club of this nature might easily have struggled on until failing for lack of members, but Peter's enthusiasm and determination that the game should be taken seriously meant that it began to flourish and grow; moving first to Fittleworth recreation ground and then to its current location in Duncton where it became the Rother Valley Croquet Club.

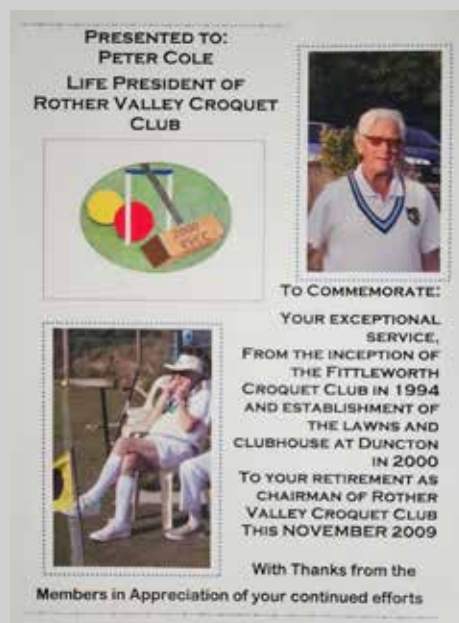
As well as being the ideal committee man, Peter was regularly seen playing, often



representing the club in matches. On the RVCC honours board his name features nine times between 2000 and 2013, as well as once for golf croquet. In this he was often partnered by Marion. With the passing of the years Peter was able to play less and less, but it was entirely fitting that after he ceased to be its chairman, the club should appoint him to be its president, and he remained a faithful supporter of all the club events he could get to.

Those who played with or against Peter will remember his cheerful approach to the game. His play was carefully thought out, often cautious but then all of a sudden successfully enterprising. He was always impeccably turned out, and his unfailing courtesy made it a pleasure to be in his company. We say farewell to the clergyman who proved that croquet is not just a game for the vicarage lawn.

I Andrew Brooke



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CROQUET PLAYER QUICK QUESTIONS

Name: Rachel Gee. Home Club: Nottingham Croquet Club. Other Clubs: Ashby Croquet Club.
Potted playing history – from first picking up a mallet to current play - including what influenced you to start:

I started playing croquet with my Dad in our back garden with a garden croquet set when I was a teenager. At the time, I was working towards my Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) Award; this ended up being the catalyst for joining Ashby Croquet Club. As, upon leaving secondary school, I stopped playing for the school netball team and needed a new “physical recreation” activity for the DoE Award; so, I joined a croquet club.

After joining Ashby Croquet Club, Derek Buxton took my Dad and me under his wing, coaching us and encouraging us to enter league matches and tournaments. Once I started playing competitive croquet I was hooked! My first big event was travelling to Ireland and playing for the England U21 squad against the Irish U21s. The rest of the England U21 squad were predominantly AC players and encouraged me to learn to play AC as well as GC, so I joined Nottingham Croquet Club the following summer to get access to AC coaching, advice and support from the players at that club. I spent large amounts of my University summer holidays playing and practising croquet - both Association and Golf.



In 2010, after graduating from University, I took a job in Nottingham and still live only a few miles from Nottingham Croquet Club! I have been predominantly a GC player for the last decade or so, but still dabble with an occasional AC event now and then. I won the 2011 Women’s Golf Croquet World Championships in New Zealand and was a Silver Medallist in the 2023 Women’s Golf Croquet World Championships.

I turned my attention to predominantly AC for a couple of seasons in the run up to the AC Women’s Worlds being held at Nottingham CC in 2015; getting down to an AC -1 and reaching the quarter finals in that event. I represented England in the 2016 Openshaw Shield. Shortly afterwards, Lionel Tibble started his role as the CA Golf Croquet International Performance Director and I took on a supporting coaching role with the Golf Croquet Development Squad; providing tactical advice, support and guidance for aspiring players going through the squad. During my playing career, I have also served on a range of different CA committees. I won the 2019 and 2020 English National Singles Championships and the 2014, 2018 and 2023 European Golf Croquet Championships.

Your finest or proudest achievement and shot: Tricky one – a few standing out for me:

1. Wearing an England shirt for the first time. Even after 10+ years playing for my country this one still doesn’t get old.
2. My first big tournament win was the Women’s Worlds 2011, no big fancy shot to win this one, just a 2 to 3 foot jump shot, but winning a WCF Gold Medal has to make it to the list!
3. Playing for England at home in the 2016 Openshaw Shield
4. More of a combo of shots to swing a big match; playing Aston Wade in the 2023 European Championship final (after losing the same final match-up in 2022) – a great rush on partner ball from hoop 7 to hoop 8 giving myself a 5 yard jump shot at hoop 8 over his other ball in position to be able to run the hoop and take the lead to 6-2 in the 3rd game, the best of 3.

Mallets? My Dad bought my first croquet mallet for me (and he bought a very similar spec’d mallet with a slightly longer shaft for himself), a square headed wooden Pidcock with a carbon fibre shaft. I played with this (GC and AC) for 10+ years.

I tried out a few other mallets and decided to swap to a lighter (2lb 8oz) square headed Trimmer Carbon Fibre mallet in 2017 and haven’t looked back. The Trimmer mallet is better for shooting, which has helped my GC game, but on the rare occasions that I do play AC need to remind myself I don’t have the same stop shot ratio that I used to have!!

There are many styles, but what is your approach to stalking and a smooth swing? For me, most of the success of the shot is down to the stalk and orientation/position of your body before taking the shot. I generally have a pretty straight swing so don’t try to analyse or break it down, in my experience when you start trying to do this it all goes downhill!

What is your top tip for a good tournament performance? Regular review and analysis of games, performance and decision making - what went well, what didn’t go well and what needs to be added/amended to your practice sessions to help resolve and improve.

Don’t be afraid to ask better players for their advice, either on particular situations faced on a lawn, their tips for improving or playing particular shots etc.

What is the one other piece of kit you're never without? White baseball hat, sunglasses and a bag of chocolate buttons!

What is your best suggestion for development in either code? Playing the other code. Playing AC has opened my eyes to a large range of alternative shot options in GC, some of which can be hoop-winning almost immediately (particularly if oppo hasn’t seen the option available). Playing GC has given me a much better understanding of my % success rate for any given shot (running longer hoops, various length roquets etc.) which has given me the confidence to be much more aggressive with my break pick-up lines and shooting shot selections in AC.

Who do you enjoy playing against and why? A mixture of players. One of my favourite tournaments to enter is the European GC Championships, as there are a lovely range of players who don’t regularly play on the UK tournament circuit; however I do also really enjoy playing against the best players in the country for really tough tight competitive matches where you need to bring your A game to have a chance of winning.

| Interview by Giles Pepperell

ROTHER VALLEY CROQUET CLUB'S SUMMER LEAGUE BOOSTS COMPETITIVE PLAY

Nestled in the South Downs National Park at Duncton, south of Petworth Rother Valley Croquet Club has an idyllic vista, well-tended lawns and a membership who play both AC and, more often, GC. Like many other clubs, we're blessed with newer members enjoying golf croquet at roll-ups and with friends, but slower to throw themselves into competitions. This wasn't due to a wish for sociability alone - plenty were keen to attend coaching sessions - if only we could do more to encourage enjoyable competitive play. Encouraged by AC players who'd reshaped a club competition to boost participation, we devised an event to deliver two objectives: many members participating, and many singles games played. Building inclusivity and experience, if you will. And so, the RVCC Summer League (SL) was born.

There was a decent amount of discussion on the SL design. The ultimate format probably benefitted from its lead "architect" having a vivid imagination, unfettered by extensive orthodox competition experience. This rejected seeding entrants, time-limits, knockout stages, whites... all credit to more experienced colleagues accepting that this would be something new and different, and to all the participants seeing it was a real-time experiment when things didn't always go to plan, and having fun despite/because of this.

The SL entrants came from the full range of club members: some in their first year through to those who'd joined when the club was in its infancy, handicaps from 2 to 12+, and a fair proportion for the first time using the competition paraphernalia of score-clips, and calculating advantage scores. We successfully de-mystified competition play, saw very close games, handicap shifts as cards filled up, and members from across the club meeting on the lawns. It was particularly helpful that some of our low handicap players participated, as the newbies enjoyed playing against those of a far better standard than they usually met at roll-ups, and doubtless benefitted from some coaching on the Q.T. too. The general view from those taking part was that the way we chose the winner was not uppermost in people's minds; they wanted to win each game they played, and knew there was another game to come, as captured in my favourite quote "I've lost every game so far, but am still enjoying it". We did have a trophy to award - to Tony Hubbard for the best score from those with at least 10 SL games on their handicap card. Plus, an honourable mention to Chris Bamford - the person playing the most games.

Overall, 40 entrants, many new to competition play, played 216 games in the two-month window, along the way de-mystifying the dark art of completing handicap cards, almost loving using score-clips, and even joining the teams playing late-season friendlies. Mission accomplished!

We look forward to seeing more sign up to play in competitions this season, and encourage other clubs to run something similar.

Join the fun

- find us online at www.rothervalleycroquet.co.uk
- add a SL competition to your club schedule
- email rothervalleycroquet@outlook.com for a "how to" guide.

| Narmada de Silva



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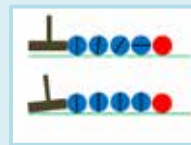
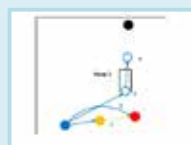
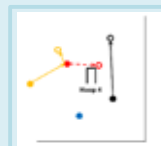


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WEBSITE

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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HYPERLINKS

If you are reading the Gazette and would like to make use of the hyperlinks, visit the online gazette on Croquet England's website at: www.croquet.org.uk/?p=press/gazette

PUBLICATIONS

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Copy should reach the Editor before 10th of the month before publication is due. However if you have something that you think the Editor may be willing to expand this deadline for contact them directly.

Email contributions, including tournament reports should be sent direct to the Editor (editor@croquetengland.org.uk), or copied to the Editor if they are being posted to the Nottingham List.

Digital images are preferred, but photographic prints may be accepted. Please send digital jpeg or tiff format files and accompany all images with a description of the subject. If you require any material to be returned, please enclose a SAE.

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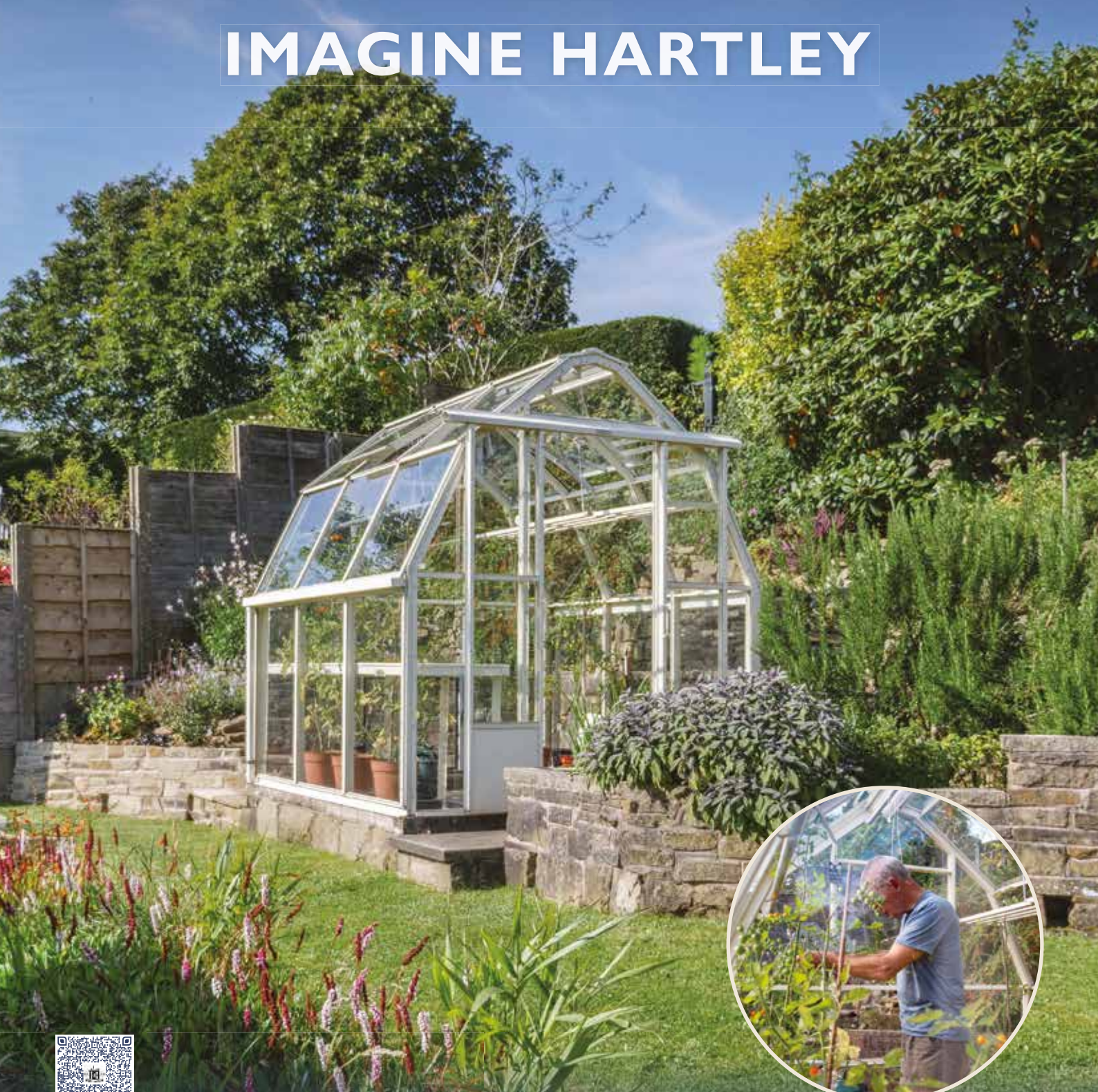
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