

# CROQUET GAZETTE

Issue 410 | August 2024



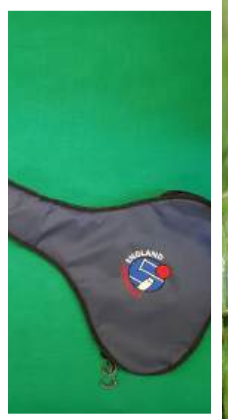




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Croquet England  
Issue 410 | August 2024



Front cover:  
Schools & Juniors Championship  
by Rob Edlin-White

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# WELCOME

A question that I have asked in the past, and one that others have asked of me, is "Who is Croquet England?"

The answer is simple, we are Croquet England. Readers of this magazine, players and subscribers, supporters and followers. All of us. We are the volunteers who make the tea, mow the lawns, plant the flower beds and play the game. We are all responsible for the development and improvement of our sport and how it operates.

This leads me to the Croquet Gazette, which is an official publication of Croquet England. The Croquet Gazette has a responsibility to publish the reports from our Championships, for inspiration to our aspiring players and for those of us who are avid followers of our sport. We should be proud of our top players, acknowledge and congratulate their achievements, and thank them for the time and resource they have dedicated to not only improving their own ability, but furthering the public recognition of our sport through their performance on the international stage. We publish official notices to ensure our membership are informed of organisational news and events, announce those who have most improved and those who have earned diplomas and special awards.

This issue contains a variety of inspirational articles for clubs and players, news from abroad, as well as reports on different formats and competitions. All this in addition to the championship reports, the regular coaching tips, a look into the past and our 'Hibiscus' player report on the present. This will be alongside advertisements and articles from our partners and sponsors, whose welcome investments helps us to keep this publication going for all to enjoy.

However, as Croquet England, we should ensure that our magazine contains what we want to read about. If you have any ideas for new articles or regular features, or would like to see something different, please submit your content to me by email. We need you, our readers, to guide us. After all, it's your magazine.

Alison Maugham  
Editor

[editor@croquetengland.org.uk](mailto:editor@croquetengland.org.uk)

## GRANDSEN CROQUET - BROWNIES

Sarah Severn

Gransden Croquet ran a very successful evening for their local Brownies in July, as part of their launch year and outreach to other local community groups. The Brownies were highly enthusiastic, full of energy and we received great feedback from parents and the local school afterwards. This is a small club, but we had a lot of support from the Brownie leaders and our members who were keen to demonstrate that croquet is accessible.



# HIBISCUS COLUMN

by Minty Clinch

So where does it come from, this determination to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory? I was there in spirit with Rory McIlroy at Pinehurst for the climax of the US Open in June. All the hard work was done, impressively long putts rolled in, just four holes to play. Behind him, the crowds yelled for muscleman DeChambeau as he magically extricated himself from tee shots blasted into the rough.

Then Rory remembered that he hadn't won a major in ten years. After his first missed tiddler - almost a gimme for me and I'm a lousy putter - he groped his way to the final green. A one metre putt for par would have won - or at least forced a play off. The ball stayed up. After hearing the roar for Bryson's win following a phenomenal up and down from a bunker on the 18th, the normally sanguine Rory signed his card and left the course. That's how much it hurt.

The atmosphere was less frenzied when the 2024 One Ball Armada Trophy was fought out at the swish Winchester Racquets and Fitness Club. The prize is a mounted silver

ashtray - yes, really - so there was nothing huge at stake, especially as it requires polishing. But I still wanted it. In the first game, I had the eventual winner three hoops behind as I reached rover. And blew it. The day's pattern was established. Hoping to complete a game against a seasoned and wily opponent on the same turn, I accepted his suggestion to throw away my last bisque. Three missed pegs later, he was home. Yes, I finished last.

Which begs the question whether competitiveness is an ally or a curse. Both I suppose, though I don't know because I admit to an unseemly and ill-concealed desire to win. At least I'm more honest than the hordes who say, 'I don't care because I'm not at all competitive'. True for the very small minority who play for the gossip and fresh air of a roll up. False for the masses whose smiles barely conceal their steely intent. Don't be fooled. You can see it in their eyes. As I embarked on yet another campaign to do better, I adopted **TOP** as my mantra.

**Technique:** 'Accelerate the mallet into the follow through', advised Peter Allan. 'Taking it back too far gives

more time to twist it off the true line'. Yes it does and this can be practised on any old patch of roughly mown grass with a couple of balls and a hoop. I'm no longer astonished when I hit in from 3 or 4 metres several times in a row. It's a start.

**Outlook:** if you don't know your opponent, give yourself time to find out if he plays to his handicap. Is he prone to error? If so, what kind? If you launch into a four ball break you may not have the skills or the bisques to sustain, you'll have a hopeless deficit with over two hours on the clock. Inheriting a promising layout when an opponent falters is a freebie. Deploying bisques astutely to build a cheap break is a golden opportunity. Be aware that a minus handicapper may not give you capitalisation time before he's on the peg...

**Peeling:** two hoops for one is very encouraging and much easier than you think. Others are surprised when hi-bisquers do it and usually call for a handicap reduction. Practice it, perfect it and give it a go.

And think of me foolishly heading for the National Singles at Budleigh. Mad or merely over the top?

## ON 20 MAY 2024 THE CQE FUNDING COMMITTEE DECIDED TO AWARD BURSARIES UNDER THE CQE SCHEME FOR 2024 TO:

by John Reddish  
Chair of Funding Committee

Richard Bilton (Gainsborough)  
Jack Good (Bowdon)  
Thomas Halliday (Enfield)  
Callum Johnson (York)  
Giles Pepperell (Llanfairfechan)  
Kim Taylor (Enfield)  
Aston Wade (Hurlingham)

The total amount of these awards was £3,950.

The scheme was formulated in 2021 to provide financial support for potential international players of both Association and Golf Croquet. It is primarily intended to assist players under the age of 25 who wish to take part in tournaments and other challenging croquet activities to sustain and improve their performance and require assistance with the costs involved. Preference is given to applicants who are under 25 but older players may also apply for and receive awards.

A Bursary is a grant to a successful applicant rather than reimbursement of a proportion of the expenses incurred by him or her.



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# TUNNEL OF TIME

by Chris Williams  
Croquet England Archivist

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.

35 YEARS AGO

In the August 1989 Gazette (#204)

PRESIDENT'S CLOSING ADDRESS at the AGM

The President (John Solomon) closed the meeting by informing associates of tremendous progress during the last five years. He referred to what was the first sensible article on croquet by the National Press which appeared in the Daily Telegraph and brought over 1500 enquiries about the game and through it our own approach to the sport became more professional. Our 5 year plan had had a more decisive impact on the Association than anything that had happened in the last 122 years of its history, resulting in a large increase in both members and clubs.

The support and immensely beneficial help received from the Sports Council has made it possible for us to put forward, implement and achieve many programmes which have been of great benefit to croquet, i.e. Development of Regional Federations. Implementation of a National Coaching Scheme. Schools and competitions. National Garden Competition. Also for attracting sponsors for many events, not only the main ones, but many others.

He said we must look to the future as times become harder. The Sports Council grant may disappear, sponsors may become more difficult to find. We had been fortunate this year in obtaining sponsorship from Continental Airlines for the first official World Croquet Championship. This followed on from the formation of the World Croquet Federation, which was holding its inaugural

meeting at Hurlingham before the Championship. He will have the honour of chairing this first meeting.

85 YEARS AGO

In the 12 August 1939 Gazette (VOL XXXVI No 18)

Editorial Notes

The Game Televised

On July 27th - and for the second time - croquet received far-reaching publicity by being televised at Roehampton Club. For the sake of those who were not able to actually see, and to hear, how the game was treated and explained we propose to give a short account of what happened.

Assisted by Mr E. G. Heathcote we were privileged to give a running commentary on the game. While Mr. Heathcote showed with a mallet and ball, the order in which each point had to be made we expounded the significance of the 26 points. Then the equipment of the game was exhibited; and after a large round hoop and a small striped ball (as a sample of what croquet hoops and balls are in the mind of the masses), we contrasted these absurdities with the standard hoop and ball emphasizing the fact that there is only one-eighth of an inch margin for error.

Mr. Heathcote then played a four-ball break - or enough of it to show the method by which it is made. The programme concluded with examples, by the same player, of various strokes, such as the stop-shot, the roll, the pass-roll etc. In the quarter of an hour that was allowed we believe it was fifteen minutes well spend in showing to the world that croquet is really a game - and a very skilful game.

100 YEARS AGO

In the 9 August 1924 Gazette (Vol XXI No. 19)

Editorial Notes

The question (if it be a question) of "Sunday play" having been recently raised in the Gazette, we feel bound to state clearly the Association's position in the matter. The C.A. Authorities do not sanction a continuance of their own Headquarters tournaments on Sundays; much less do they compel or even expect their competitors to take part in any Sunday play. As to what may occasionally be done in local tournaments by mutual consent, this surely is not a matter in which the C.A. Authorities can be expected to intervene, even were it possible to know beforehand that Sunday play is in contemplation. We are told that objection has been taken to the advertised words, "and following days," but we see no reason why this expression should necessarily be assumed to include any Sunday. Altogether, there seems to be no reasonable ground for complaint.

We notice that a large percentage of players arrive at tournaments with mysterious canvas bags, which at first sight suggest camping out. On the latter being opened the "minus" chair is revealed. We are told that the correct etiquette for the gentleman player, who is drawn against a lady opponent on Monday morning, is to unpack and fit her chair together beside the court, at the same time politely remarking that the process is superfluous as she is sure not to require it! So now we know all about it.

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

# AN INTERVIEW WITH TOBI SAVAGE

by Giles Pepperell

## NAME

Tobi Savage

## HOME CLUB

Ramsgate Croquet Club

## OTHER CLUBS

South Ockendon Croquet Club

## POTTED PLAYING HISTORY – FROM FIRST PICKING UP A Mallet TO CURRENT PLAY - INCLUDING WHAT INFLUENCED YOU TO START.

In 2003, Ramsgate Croquet Club approached my Scout Group for volunteers to ball-boy an International Tournament they were hosting. All volunteers were given the chance to try the game. I played until I turned 18, and then took a break for a few years. When I turned 21, I rejoined and started competing nationally in 2010. I played my first World Championship in 2013, and have gone on to represent England in a multitude of international events.

## YOUR FINEST OR PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT AND SHOT.

Proudest Achievement is representing my country in the pinnacle event in GC, the World Team Championship, and winning Bronze. My favourite shot has to be the peg jump at Rotorua in the 2015 World Championship to run hoop 12 and win that game - my wife Emma was sat courtside with a video camera, and the footage is published on YouTube! [https://youtu.be/caNRdq8u9Ok?si=4M\\_gQkulsLuhABTX](https://youtu.be/caNRdq8u9Ok?si=4M_gQkulsLuhABTX)

## PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR Mallet AND WHY YOU CHOSE IT?

After having flitted about between club mallets and mallets kindly lent to me by club members, my first mallet was a D-end Pidcock. I enjoyed using this mallet, but outgrew it. Next up was a Fenwick Elliott Mallet, which again I really enjoyed using, but it had a few manufacturing issues, which resulted in them having a propensity to self-destruct. My current mallet, which I acquired in 2016, is a PFC Hoop Maker. It has a heavy, metal

head with brass end faces. From the floor to the tip it is 46.5 inches, and it weighs 3lb 12.144oz altogether (yes, you read that right!). It is probably one of the longest and heaviest mallets in the world (which is great because nobody ever accidentally picks it up mistaking it for theirs!). It has an airline shaft, which is simply a big thread in the middle of the shaft, which works really well. As it is so long, an airline shaft is pretty much essential for me! I tend to travel to events by either train or motorcycle (Suzuki GSX1250 if anyone is interested, which I absolutely love). The handle has an oval shaped grip, with grip tape from top to bottom. I only use one mallet for both codes and for all lawn types etc - though I do have another PFC Mallet which I will probably use for AC (when I get to play AC that is...).

## THERE ARE MANY STYLES, BUT WHAT IS YOUR APPROACH TO STALKING AND A SMOOTH SWING?

My style is probably one of the most



Tobi Savage v Moe Karem  
2022 GC World Championship  
by Ray Hall

unique ones on the circuit. I play with a Solomon grip, and have a big backswing and a long follow-through, which ends with my hands above my



Euan Burridge, Tobi Savage, J-P Moberly, Rachel Gee  
by Tony Elkin





England Golf Croquet Team 2024  
Jamie Burch, Stuart M Smith, J-P Moberly, Euan Burrridge, Aston Wade & Tobi Savage

head. I try to ensure that the swing is as smooth and straight as possible (which is aided by such a ridiculously heavy mallet), but the key part of a swing technique that often gets overlooked is to ensure that the mallet strikes the ball absolutely square on, and as centrally as possible. I have focussed more on this aspect of my technique lately, and my consistency has improved. Ball-striking is hugely important, and players should put more emphasis on getting this bit right. Coupled with an emphasis on ball striking, my stalk starts with identifying a point on the very back of Strikers Ball that aims through the middle and at my target, and from there I stalk and cast with a view to hitting that specific point on Strikers Ball with my mallet.

#### **WHAT IS YOUR TOP TIP FOR A GOOD TOURNAMENT PERFORMANCE?**

Enjoy it! I find I do better if I'm having a nice time. I prefer playing as part of a team, so I tend to do well in doubles and team events. Try to maintain concentration across all strokes. Shots that seem trivial can go wrong just as

much as a 30-odd yard clearance can if you don't focus fully on the task at hand!

#### **WHAT IS THE ONE OTHER PIECE OF KIT YOU'RE NEVER WITHOUT?**

I very often play with sunglasses so they are crucial, but for me it's got to be headphones! I play with bone conduction headphones. Metal music is my choice, ranging from melodic death metal to symphonic metal. I don't listen to anything in particular to suit a mood, I just have one massive playlist on shuffle. I choose to use bone conduction earphones so that I can still hear what is going on around me, including people talking to me on court and other sounds that may act as a distraction, so as to not be perceived as gaining an unfair advantage.

#### **WHAT IS YOUR BEST SUGGESTION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN EITHER CODE?**

Play both! Different aspects of either code will complement the other one, regardless of the level you play either code at. I am an international GC player, but playing B-class AC develops

parts of my croquet that are invaluable to my GC game. Also, if you have any footage of your gameplay (from things like Livestreams) watch them and assess the tactical choices that were available for any given scenario, and try to work out if there may have been any other or better choices.

#### **WHO DO YOU ENJOY PLAYING AGAINST AND WHY?**

Specifically, Reg Bamford, but I tend to enjoy matches where I have played against strong players, provided I have played well. I am not fussed about taking a defeat if I know I have played well (but obviously I'm delighted to win if it happens!). Usually playing against strong opponents brings out the best in my play. Every time I have played Reg, we have had terrific matches, with a highlight for me being a round 16 match in the Opens that ended 7-6, 6-7, 6-7. It was a really high-quality, high-octane match, which came right down to the wire!

# CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Samir Patel  
Chair of the Board of Trustees

The establishment of Croquet England as a registered charity gives us a firm foundation upon which to build for the future. There is, of course, much to celebrate. The number of both clubs and players is increasing; as is the amount of competitive play at all levels of the sport, from internal club competitions, through to regional, national, and international tournaments. The trustees have been developing a strategy for the next five years. This has several themes.

The first of these continues our drive to have more people playing more croquet in more places. This includes supporting the creation of new clubs and the development of existing ones. We will increase membership across all categories, growing both principal games (AC and GC) as versions of the same sport of Croquet.

We will support our volunteers, who have been and will continue to be essential to the smooth running of our sport – from the myriad of roles at each of your clubs, through to those working as part of a Croquet England committee or board, including increasing the number of qualified coaches, referees and managers.

As part of this, we need to increase the diversity of people involved. By removing barriers, real or perceived, how many more members might we recruit? If existing members feel more included, how many more volunteers will come forward when there is a job that needs doing? And by ensuring equity of treatment in our sport to all players,

regardless of age, gender, background, or disability (visible or not), we encourage all to participate. And it's also simply the right thing to do.

In all cases, we must ensure that the safety of all is paramount. It is easy to consider physical safety (e.g. not being hit by fast moving croquet balls), but we must consider safeguarding of all, particularly children and adults at risk of harm. This includes the welfare of our volunteers who are, and will continue to be, the lifeblood of our sport. Our volunteer charter and codes of conduct cover our policies for this. Whilst disagreement is an inevitable part of the debate necessary to find the best way to develop our sport, we can and must disagree with respect and positive intent. Abuse, neglect, bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation, impersonation, defamation and intentionally causing offence to others are not acceptable. Croquet England is committed to creating a culture of zero tolerance to such behaviour.

Finally, we need to ensure that we have the funds available to support and invest in our plans for sustainable growth. This includes adapting to the changes of heavier rainfall and pressures for renewable power. We will need to reduce our reliance on lone heroes, with robust plans for continuity, and build towards being a fundable organisation through complying with the standards of relevant external bodies.

Croquet is enjoyable, healthy, accessible, and open to all. Our strategy will inspire a new generation of players to appreciate these benefits and support the growth of our sport.

## CAMBRIDGE CUPPERS 2024

by Jinheum Park

This year's Cuppers had 31 teams playing in a knock-out format, a slight increase from 27 teams last year. Players with a wide range of skill levels enjoyed croquet in the sun, carving out their precious time to revise for exams. The final was played between Peterhouse 1st IV and Caius MCR on 18 June 2024, at Corpus Christi College Sports Ground, with Pimm's and scones served in a traditional way. Four players in each team were split into two pairs, resulting in two doubles matches. They played a very tight match, with Peterhouse 1st IV securing the victory by 13-12 (breakdowns of 10-2 and 3-10). The match went smoothly under the

refereeing of Simon Hathrell (Watford Croquet Club), and Patricia Duke-Cox, President of Croquet England, graced us with her presence to award the trophy to the winners. We appreciate continued support by Croquet England.

As a side note, we are trying to locate the "Luard Cup", which used to be awarded to Cambridge Cuppers winners, at least until the 1970s. The latest information is that Simon Hathrell (Corpus Christi, then) held the cup until 1980 after winning the Cuppers in 1979, after which we do not have any clue about its whereabouts. If anyone of the readers could provide us with any information (secretary@cucroquet.uk), it would be

much appreciated.

Winner: Peterhouse 1st IV (Freddie Follows\*, Sumedh Kampli, Oliver Holdsworth, and Teodoro D'Agostino)

Runner-up: Caius MCR (Daniel Heathcote\*, Thomas O'Hara, Ashley Hoblyn, Declan Noble)

\*Captain





# COMPTON CROQUET CLUB 125TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION & OPEN DAY

by David Williams

Compton Croquet Club held their 125th Anniversary at the Saffrons on Saturday 11th May. This well established and successful club has been at the Saffrons since 1906 and the well attended event was opened by the Mayoress of Eastbourne in glorious summer weather. Saffrons was at its best in the sunny weather and the buzz of afternoon summer visitors could be felt with the croquet and cricket being played on these glorious grounds.

Our 5 lawns were extremely busy with members and potential new members playing social games and trying out their skills at croquet. Previous members and existing members watched on as the visitors tried their newly found skills including the Mayoress who showed great potential scoring several hoops despite never playing before.

Various stalls of pot plants, cake stalls and the sounds of a band made it an occasion to remember and close to £1000 was raised for the club funds.



This is the time that we welcome new members to the club and over 20 potential members will be trying the "taster programme" of 3 free trial afternoons with our club coaches. Anybody who has any interest in joining the programme should contact Jill Manton at [comptonccmembership@gmail.com](mailto:comptonccmembership@gmail.com)



## NEW MAYOR'S FIRST PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

by Roy Spencer

Only days after his inauguration, the new Mayor of Bury Cllr. Khalid Hussain undertook his first public engagement running hoops at Bury Croquet Club, Whitehead Park on Saturday 25th May.

The Mayor accompanied by Mayoress Mrs Carol Bernstein were welcomed by Club Chairman Roy Spencer on the club's open day celebrating National Croquet Week.

The Mayor and Mayoress chatted with a number of other visitors to the event and club members before trying

their hand at running hoops - which they thoroughly enjoyed.

Other visitors included local ward Councillors Dene Vernon, Jackie Harris and Shahbaz Arif along with councillors from neighbouring wards and Bury North MP James Daly.

Club Chairman Roy Spencer stated that "We are honoured and delighted to have welcomed the Mayor and Mayoress on their first official engagement. We are also pleased to welcome a good number of visitors, (including one from Arizona), some of whom have signed up for taster sessions". Any one not able to attend



the event but would like to try the sport should visit [www.burycroquet.com](http://www.burycroquet.com).

Pictured: The Mayor & Mayoress with Club Chairman Roy Spencer and President David Barrett.

(Picture: Ian Saunders - Bury Croquet Club)

## WIRING IN SHORT CROQUET

I was surprised to discover recently that it is possible to wire yourself in Short Croquet in order to obtain a Lift (it was done to me). If your opponent has moved either of your balls in their previous turn, simply play your other ball into a position wired from it. If your opponent does not remove the wiring in their next turn, then you are entitled to a Lift on re-entering the lawn.

Reading the Laws (A6.7 Wiring Lift), I have had this interpretation confirmed by both a Referee and contributors on the Facebook Croquet Hub page.

Clearly, in Short Croquet, every time you start a turn, it's essential that you recall whether you moved either of your opponent's balls to their current position in your previous turn and, if so, check to see whether they are now wired. If so, your Opponent will be entitled to a Lift unless you remove the wiring.

Chris Southworth, Worcester Norton CC

### Response:

There is really nothing surprising in this. The same is true in AC. If BaB (Black & Blue) are responsible for the position of R, it is open to RaY (Red & Yellow) to play Y to a position which is wired from R (SC). If BaB are also wired from R, then in AC playing Y to a wired position will also entitle R to a lift if BaB don't take action to leave R a shot. It is simply a tactic which has always been available.

Peter Death, Chair of AC Laws Committee

## COACHING TIP - WHERE DO YOU WANT EACH BALL TO END UP?

My coaching tip to help beginners understand and make breaks is worth repeating:

Before each croquet shot you ask "Where do you want each ball to end up?" and after each croquet shot you move the balls to those exact spots and so take your continuation. This not only teaches how important it is to know exactly where you want the two balls to end up, but it corrects the inevitable errors when the balls don't do what they are told. If necessary you can retake the croquet shot to try to be more accurate.

High bisquers fail with breaks and therefore squander bisques when their croquet shots leave them short, (so they miss the next roquet or hoop) or leave the pioneer short or too long and so make the next hoop too difficult.

The big advantage of this tip is that beginners see how a break works and have the pleasure of going all round (remember that you can adjust the balls even for your hoop approaches so you always have easy hoops!)

And it works too when you are practising for your first triple, or your first sextuple, though you might have to adjust your rushed balls as well as your croquet shots.

Dr Keith Ross

## GC HANDICAPS - CONTINUED

I refer to Brian Cave's letter ('GC Handicaps', Croquet Gazette June 2024) concerning the idiosyncrasies of the current 'New System' handicapping system. There is a further problem with the system relating to the index points gained for winning or losing games.

For example, recently as a handicap 4 I lost a game against a handicap 8, therefore losing 16 index points. Then in a subsequent match I beat the same person, but gained only 4 index points. Thus in order to correct the loss I have to beat the same player (or player with the same handicap) four times in order to restore my index points to what they were. This really is not fair and much too extreme a penalty for losing a game.

Furthermore, the system takes no account of the size of the win; thus I could have lost 6-7 - which can easily happen if one loses the toss and has an unlucky stroke or two - and then won four games 7-0, with no benefit. A related problem is that in matches one often finds that the higher handicap players are better than their handicap would suggest, because they have not played many matches and their clubs do not spend enough effort on handicapping correctly. And what is the point of handicaps 18-20? No player in our club ever plays in an East Midlands league match with a handicap higher than 14 and I've never met a player with handicap over 16.

I suggest that a fair system would be one that requires no more than two wins against a player with the same handicap one lost to to restore one's index points and it should also take account of the winning or losing margin. I think that with a little thought most experienced players could come up with a fairer system, so I hope the Handicap Committee will take note and amend the current system which I conclude is not fit for purpose.

Ralph Timms, Dunston Croquet Club



Croquet England is proud to be working with partners who care about the development and success of our sport and our community. We are grateful for their support and welcome their expertise, which we can share with you.



## GC TO AC – EASY WHEN YOU DE-MYSTIFY IT

by Chris Alvey, DB Mallets

If, like a lot of clubs, GC is seen as the gateway to attracting more players, then AC is often seen as its grumpier, more complicated brother. The rule book is thick, you hear the words “what you should have done...” a lot more than you’d like, and you may need a good book while the in-player goes around the lawn.

However, with so many of the skills and shots being transferable between the two codes why is AC considered more difficult? In the main, the club's golf players that give it a go with me, can generally run hoops from further away than I can and showing them how to improve their stop shots and clearances helps to ultimately improve their GC play. The coaching committee have done a great job re-writing the manual for AC coaches and there is a wealth of videos on YouTube with players demonstrating strokes.



Giving AC a try can bring something new to your game, even if it’s just experiencing a different method of coaching. When they suggest moving your feet slightly or lifting your bottom hand up and it improves your swing. The reminder that stalking the ball for all shots will give you the consistency that may have dropped from your day-to-day play. Rules can be drip fed into the learning, you don’t need to have read and absorbed the Laws before play commences. We all have that one rule we have fallen foul of because we didn’t know, but once told we won’t make the same mistake in the future.

Yes, it’s the grumpy brother of the 2 codes. But you can pacify it with tea, biscuits and the willingness to just get out there and give it a go. Perseverance pays off and as a coach that has been beaten in internal and national tournaments by players he coached, I take that as a source of pride... even if it means that my wife is the big winner in the family, and I get to carry her tea and biscuits for her.



## AUTUMN MAINTENANCE

### SEEDING BARE PATCHES

by Duncan Hector | [www.duncanhectorturfcare.co.uk](http://www.duncanhectorturfcare.co.uk)

A good time to seed bare patches is from August through to early September. For this, the BMS Seed Slotter is ideal and can be purchased on Amazon for £108. It's intentionally heavy and the best method is to thrust it down from a foot or two above the surface. Depending on how hard the ground is, you should achieve a good pattern of slots about 8 to 10 mm deep. The amount of power can be easily adjusted to get the best results. If the ground is too hard, you may need to water the area first to soften it, which will also help the seeds to germinate.

Then spread the seed by hand over the patch and brush into the slots. It is important to keep the seed moist until well established. Using this technique, the lawn can remain in use with minimal disruption to the playing surface. There is no need to stop play - walking on the germinating seeds helps consolidate the seedlings in the root zone.

You can mow as usual but raise the mower slightly by pressing down on the handlebar over the reseeded patches to allow the seedlings to grow and establish.

### TOP DRESSING

Top dressing should be carried out in early October if club activities allow. Soft sand with rounded granules is ideal - don't use sharp sand. The advantage of using pure sand is that it flows better than a soil/sand mix and doesn't clump when damp. Allow two to four tonnes per lawn. A 12-foot aluminium ladder makes a good lute for top dressing. There is a video in the Turfpedia on my website under the Turf Maintenance/Top Dressing tabs.

### TURFPEDIA

See the Turfpedia on my website. It covers every aspect of Croquet Lawn Maintenance.

**Duncan Hector  
Turf Care**

## DENNIS & SISIS PARTNER WITH CROQUET ENGLAND FOR LAWN MAINTENANCE SEMINAR

Dennis and SISIS, in association with Croquet England, recently hosted a highly informative Croquet Lawn/Court Maintenance One-Day Seminar at the Bristol Croquet Club. The event attracted croquet enthusiasts and lawn care professionals eager to enhance their knowledge and skills in maintaining croquet lawns to the highest standards.

The day began with registrations and refreshments, followed by an introduction and welcome from Robert Jack of Dennis and SISIS. Robert emphasised the importance of thorough lawn maintenance and the value of the seminar's hands-on approach.

Stuart Yarwood from DLF led the first session by focusing on evaluating and preparing croquet lawns. Participants gained insights into understanding the lawn's condition beneath the surface. This presentation particularly struck a chord with attendee Martin Pollard, who said, "We really enjoyed the day and learned a lot from it, with the key takeaway for us being that we are not doing enough analysis of what's underneath the surface."

Following a refreshment break, Robert Jack discussed how to get the best performance from your mower. This session covered the intricacies of mower maintenance and operation. Attendee Simon Clay commented, "The whole day was really helpful from the initial lectures on lawn management to the practical session on lawnmower maintenance – it was a revelation."

After a complimentary lunch, attendees moved to the lawn for practical demonstrations. These demonstrations covered essential lawn care techniques, including aeration, scarification, brushing, and mowing. The hands-on nature of this session allowed participants to see the equipment in action and understand its application. Attendee Tim Martin said, "Whilst I knew a bit about grass cutting, aeration and treatments, the day brought the whole thing together and also filled many gaps!"

Stuart then presented on End of Season Renovation of a Croquet Lawn/Court, providing tips and strategies for maintaining lawn quality and health during the off-season. This session emphasised the importance of seasonal care to ensure year-round playability and lawn longevity.

The day concluded with a 'Turf Clinic'—a Q&A session where attendees could ask specific questions and receive expert advice from the presenters. This interactive session offered tailored solutions and clarified any remaining doubts. Martin Pollard said, "The instructors knew their stuff and were excellent."

The seminar was a resounding success, with participants leaving with a wealth of knowledge and practical tips to implement in their lawn maintenance routines. Dennis and SISIS, in collaboration with Croquet England, look forward to hosting more such events in the future to continue supporting the croquet community and promoting excellence in lawn care.



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





# Mark Avery wins GC Championship tournament at Wrest Park

by Richard Keighley

An unseasonal chilly wind greeted the field of 14 players for this tournament in the National series. Manager Richard Keighley took advantage of the standard format template for this number of players, and this created a single block with each player required to play seven opponents on a random basis.

Tim Russell (Roehampton) won all his games, closely followed by Nick Archer (Watford) with 6 wins and Lionel Tibble (Northampton) with 5 wins. All 5 players who had recorded 4 wins each also proceeded to the main knockout.

Day 2 was a warm and gloriously sunny day for croquet. In the quarter-finals, Nick Archer beat his Watford clubmate John Taylor (7-5,7-5) and Lionel Tibble beat Andy Sherwood (Ashby) (7-2,7-5). Mark Avery beat Helen Reeves, a welcome visitor from New Zealand, by a scoreline of (7-1, 7-2) but Glynis Davies (Northampton) made Tim Russell work hard to progress, losing (4-7, 7-5, 3-7).

Nick Archer, a previous winner of this tournament, won his semi-final against Lionel Tibble (7-4,7-6) and he was joined in the Final by Mark Avery who beat Tim Russell, also a previous winner (7-1, 7-5). Nick was hoping to repeat his block game win over Mark (7-5).

Nick and Mark, the top seeds both with handicaps of -3, provided a fitting final for the keen group of spectators. Mark won the 1st game on the golden hoop. Fortunes then fluctuated. Nick gained the upper hand in the 2nd game and won it (7-2). In the decider, it was Mark's turn to exercise superiority. Both players had shown their clearance skills but Mark's ability to clear balls to distant boundaries proved decisive (7-3). In the play off for 3rd and 4th places, Lionel beat Tim (7-5, 4-7, 7-4)

6 players contested the Plate, with Les Heard (Wrest Park)



remaining undefeated with 5 wins and edging out David Thirtle-Watts (Hunstanton) with 4 wins.

At the presentation, the Manager was keen to pay tribute to George Collin, the groundsman with surprising plumbing skills, and his fellow members who had defied the fickle weather to produce such good playing conditions. He also thanked Robert Fletcher (Watford) for acting as scorer for the tournament and Mike Bilton (Gainsborough) for being R-o-T.

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

At Lepton Croquet club we have many members who are mature, so I was very surprised to welcome a new member who is 90 years old. Bill is fit and well and is picking up the tactics extremely easily. He has never played Golf Croquet before and is not a sporty person generally, so he and I are very pleased that he is playing and enjoying the company of other like-minded people. Bill is accompanied by his wife, Jenny, who has taken to the sport equally well. It is so good to have a sport which is played by all ages and abilities on an even basis. Good for your health and mental well-being, keeping the brain and body going a bit longer. I know many members of clubs around the country are still playing well into their later years, so I think you should never give up until you really have to, it would be such a shame to think, "I am too old now." Perhaps you are never too old for a new adventure.

Image: Bill.

Margaret Wood (Chairman Lepton Croquet Club)



# Sidmouth GC 'A' Level Series 0+

by Louise Smith

Players were greeted with glorious sunshine as they arrived in Devon for the Sidmouth GC 'A' Level Series 0+ tournament, 1st-2nd June.



The format followed the Series standard, two blocks of 8 competitors, 7 rounds on day 1, followed by the top 4 players from each block progressing to the knock-out stages. The quarter, semi, and main final stages were played as best-of-three matches (13pt games).



As play got underway it was clear that Helena Jansson, Phyllis Court (5th seed in Block A), was in terrific form, as she brought in win after win, losing only one game to Roehampton's Diana Wilson (1st Block A seed), 4-7. Richard Gardiner (Dowlsh Wake) and Louise Smith (Budleigh) performed to their block seeding finishing 2nd and 3rd respectively. Diana Wilson found herself on the wrong end of two 6-7 results, giving her the 4th qualifying place from the block stages.

Block B also had some "topsy turvy" seeding results with 7th seed Steve Pearson, (Sidmouth), and 8th seed Michelle Leonard, (East Dorset), stepping up to take the 3rd and 4th

places overall in the block. Alongside Steve Pearson, fellow Sidmouth player Philip Harris made the knock-out stage by achieving 6 wins in the block, taking 2nd position on net hoops. Rapid improver Andy Dochniak, 1st block seed, from East Dorset topped block B, also gaining 6 wins.

Helena Jansson continued her winning run beating Michelle Leonard 7-3, 7-5 in the first quarter final match. Louise Smith followed suit, also winning her quarter final 7-5, 7-0 against Philip Harris. Richard Gardiner had a tight match with Steve Pearson, eventually winning 7-6, 7-5. The positions attained in the block stages pitched Diana Wilson against Andy Dochniak, with the latter moving forward to the semi-final after a match win of 7-6, 7-3.

Both semi-finals went to three games, but it was the two on-form block winners that prevailed - Helena beat Louise 2-1 and Andy beat Richard 2-1 – moving forward to face each other in the main event final.

Meanwhile, Diana Wilson remained composed after a first game loss in the consolation Bowl, and went on to prevail over Philip Harris, winning the match 2-1.

The Plate was run as a knock-out mirroring the main event. After an unhappy day 1 in the block stages, Peter Balchin, (Glamorgan), regained some of his old form and marched into the Plate final against Tim Spores (Budleigh). Three very competitive games resulted in the match win, and Plate prize for Peter.

The tournament main final attracted a crowd of spectators from players and members happy to sit in the warm sunshine and support the finalist players. Andy Dochniak made short work of game 1, beating Helena Jansson 7-3. Game 2 saw Helena rally, and this proved a much tighter affair. It was eventually decided on the 13th hoop with Andy taking a confident hoop shot to secure the match and the tournament victory.





# The S.A.S. win the Sidmouth GC Team Challenge!



by Louise Smith

The Sidmouth GC Team Challenge has become one of the most popular events on the tournament calendar, bringing together players of different abilities from all over the UK to compete in a competitive, lively format.

This year, we welcomed a new team from Chester, the 'North Stars' which consisted of David W. Boyd, Tom Grievson and Martyn Seal. The northern chaps had heard of this entertaining event and headed south to try the format for themselves! They joined the field of players taking part with handicaps ranging from 8 to -3.

Local players of the 'Sidmouth Sharks', Philip Harris & Steve Pearson, were joined by Keith Southern from East Dorset and kept their mid-range handicap spread of players. This has consistently proved a strong strategy with the Sharks achieving 3rd place in 2023 and being runners-up in 2022.

Steve and Debra Hayns from Ryde in the Isle of Wight were joined by Rick Lilley from Phyllis Court - team name: 'Hammered'. The Hammers put in a great performance on Day 1, winning all their doubles games, to end with a 15-point lead over the S.A.S. (Stuart M. Smith, Adrian Coward and Sue Lightbody). The combinations of play on Day 2 saw team 'Hammered' drop a little, to finish in 4th place overall.

Lionel Tibble (Northampton) brought in a new team called the 'Mallet Marauders' - consisting of developing players Liz Drury (Compton) and Peter Tofield (Northampton). The marauders were highly competitive with almost identical scores achieved on both days. They landed a very well-deserved 3rd place at the close of the event.

Adrian Coward (Budleigh) made his tournament debut at the team challenge late in 2023, so was very keen to join forces again with Stuart M. Smith. Also joining this pair was Sue Lightbody, previously from Dulwich, but having moved to Sidmouth last year. They formed the S.A.S. team, which had both the highest and lowest ranked players of the tournament.

The S.A.S. proved the most consistent team, achieving exactly the same points on both days. For those unfamiliar with the format, 15 points are awarded for a Doubles win and 10 points for a Singles win. Players are seeded within their teams so that all players only meet their equivalent seed from the opposing team when the singles games are played. Each team also has a Joker which is used to 'bet' on a particular game in a pre-drawn round, a win on that 'bet' gains an extra 5 points.

As in previous years, the combined total scores meant that all rested on the last couple of rounds on Day 2. The final round 7 saw the S.A.S. gain a full suite of points beating the North Stars in both Singles and Doubles matches. This led them on to victory over the Sharks, 250 points to 220. Congratulations, Stu, Adrian and Sue!



Combined with a meal and table quiz on the Saturday evening attended by 28 players and partners, a great time was had by all, helped along with brilliant sunshine and a lot of laughs!

# THE SATURDAY SUMMER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION SINGLES for the SURBITON SILVER SALVER

by Adrian Coles, Secretary, Surbiton CC

Have you ever thought of the links between Stonehenge and Croquet? Look at the stones at that famous historic site – many are arranged in the form of two uprights with a large stone across, surely the venue for some prehistoric croquet match played with mammoth mallets and huge, carefully rounded, boulders?

Surbiton tournament organiser extraordinaire Max Holland says that her youthful mid-year visits to Stonehenge were the inspiration for her idea of organising an early-morning croquet celebration of the solstice at Surbiton, although she denies that she had dreamily imagined some mythical match taking place between previously unrecorded giants.

The first event was held in 2020 on the Saturday closest to the summer solstice - the longest day of the year - and the occasion has now become a regular and much-loved feature of the Surbiton calendar. This year we gathered on 22 June, a couple of days after the solstice, but close enough. The tournament is first advertised within the club in March and at that stage, mid-June seems ages away. However, in the week before the tournament it slowly dawns\* on everyone just how early a 5 am start is! "Why did I enter?" is the common theme of everyone's silent and somewhat sleepy thoughts.

The sun rose at 4:43, with many players already there for the scheduled start time. Coffee is eagerly gulped down as the day gets under way. Sadly, the hoops at Surbiton do not align with the rising sun's rays, so instead of organising some early morning sun-worshipping rituals, Max gave a brief rundown on how the tournament would run. Players were divided into two blocks: the Sun and the Rise. Each player had five GC matches, level play. (No one can work out Advantage at that time of day!) At the end of the leagues the winner of one group plays the winner of the other for

the Surbiton Silver Salver. There is also a third-place match for the two second placed competitors.

We come now to a major disincentive to playing winning croquet at the event! The final and third-place play-off are played in front of an appreciative audience – all of those who failed to achieve such heights. But the audience is not only cheering on the excellent shots one would expect to see in a final but are also tucking into the magnificent breakfast cooked by Max and her husband Barry. By now it's about 9:30 in the morning and after over four hours of croquet, muesli, yoghurt and roasted nectarines are much appreciated. The cooked breakfast of sausages, bacon, eggs and bread rolls that follows is even more eagerly consumed. There's even a choice of ketchups. Quite how the finalists concentrated on their games with the aroma of bacon and egg drifting across the lawn is beyond the understanding of the author (who has never reached the final!). But the two competitors did the occasion proud with Angus McFarlane emerging as a worthy winner – fully deserving the trophy and his 10:30 breakfast.

Are we thinking of any changes for next year? Not really, but one wag suggested adding a trophy for the player who can say – faster than anyone else – "Saturday Summer Solstice Celebration Singles for the Surbiton Silver Salver", without hesitation, deviation or repetition!

\*I'm grateful to Edward Patel for pointing out the opportunity to use this pun. Edward played in the tournament, showing much more dedication to early morning croquet than his Dad, Croquet England Chair, Samir Patel! (In fairness, Samir tells me that he had been hoping to play but a combination of air traffic control and BA ensured he didn't arrive home until after midnight the night before. Samir makes a fair point when he says that "a 4 am alarm would have left me even more bleary-eyed than the others!")





# Association Croquet Open Championships 2024

by Samir Patel

## DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP

The Open Doubles started with a deluge, meaning that no sooner had players finished their 10-minute warm-up than play was suspended for an hour. Once resumed, the quality of play left something to be desired with no games finished before lunch. And in one game, only seven hoops had been scored. Fortunately play improved significantly from there in most matches.

The match of the round was Reg Bamford & Mark Suter against David Goacher & David Fuller. Reg and Mark were fourth seeds and clear favourites but, whilst Reg had an early ball to four-back in game one, Mark was having an off-day and couldn't get a break started. The two Davids were both resilient and persistent, but it seemed that both sides were better at hitting-in than they were at break play. The first game finally finished some time after the four-hour time limit was reached, with a 22-18 win for the Davids. Reg and Mark fought back with a 21-17 win of their own in game two after a further three hours. By now it was getting late, but David Fuller and Mark Suter exchanged early breaks in the decider. With time approaching, David Goacher embarked on what could have been a winning TP but wisely decided to have a safe break to the peg. The crowd had expected at least one peel on the way and (with what was clearly going to be less than five minutes left on the clock), pegging out his own ball. However, after discussion they opted to leave all four balls on the court with a reverse diagonal spread. With only a couple of minutes left, Reg took his time over his lift, hit the shot, and completed a TP for a -4t +4t +5tp win.

The semi-finals were one-sided affairs, with 3-0 wins for James Death & Samir Patel over Bamford & Suter and Jenny Clarke & Stephen Mulliner over Joel Taylor & Robert Wilkinson. Both winning pairs were playing Alternate Stroke (ASD). James & Samir had played that option for all matches, with Jenny and Stephen starting in the semi-final.

Both pairs continued ASD in the final. James and Samir had first opportunity but missed a rush after hoop one. Stephen hit a 6-yard shot to pick up a break, but missed his own rush before 1-back. From there James and Samir had the run of the match, with five unanswered breaks to take game 1 +20tp, game 2 fifth turn +26tp and first break in the third game. Jenny and Stephen were heard to remark that their new game plan was for James and Samir to not take croquet again, but then embarked on a TPO which would have conceded a contact! However, that never got started, so they settled for a break to 4-back. Samir hit, and what would have been a winning TP was well underway before a mis-approached 3-back brought that to an end. However, the favour was returned when Stephen managed to get striker's ball back into hoop five in the croquet stroke after running rover, leaving Jenny to try to make a roquet through the jaws of the hoop. That failed; giving James and Samir their second opportunity to finish, which they took +20tp +26tp +4.



This win was James and Samir's fourth Open Doubles title.

## QUALIFICATION SWISS

The Qualification Stage of the Open Singles Championship began with four drawn rounds leading into two rounds of Swiss, with an expectation of a seventh "lucky loser" round for some. Three wins were required for qualification. The drawn rounds are optimised to ensure as equal a set of opponents as possible for each player, with a range of average opponent grades of just +/- 19 grade points. This is well within the range of statistical noise in the ranking system.

Robert Fulford was an unsurprising first qualifier, winning all four games, swiftly followed by Samir Patel. The next wave of qualifiers included Gabrielle Higgins and Jack Good, both of whom won their first three games to secure qualification.

Far more players were, of course, left needing more wins. This included some of the pre-tournament favourites Reg Bamford, Jenny Clarke, James Death, and Stephen Mulliner, although it wasn't clear who were more concerned – those favourites or the others who didn't want to face them!

In the final analysis, all those named above qualified. Ed Duckworth who was beaten by Robert Wilkinson +17 in the final round was the highest graded player to miss the cut.

Particularly impressive were the debutants – in addition to Jack Good, David Fuller and Matt Smith outperformed their grades to qualify for the knockout stage.

## SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP KNOCKOUT

Conditions for the knockout saw good playing conditions. The rain from earlier in the event had passed, meaning the lawns dried out and sped up each day, reaching 11.5 seconds by the final. The lawns were being cut each day, leading to some of the best grass texture seen for a major event at Cheltenham for many years. Quadway hoops were re-set for the knockout.

The first round of the knockout saw most of the seeds progress through to the quarter final, other than Robert Wilkinson defeating eighth seed David Goacher +17 +26tp. However, Robert then ran into Robert Fulford who steamrolled a +26sxp +25sxp +21tp win.

Match of the quarter-finals was undoubtedly Gabrielle Higgins v Reg Bamford. Reg took an early lead with a +26sxp win in the first, but an error in game 2 saw Gabrielle level the match +5tp. Two error free games were shared, leading to a decider in which Gabrielle held her composure to win late into the evening (-26sxp +5tp -26sxp +26tp +11tp), also proving that out-peeling and out-scoring your opponent isn't necessarily sufficient to win a match!

On-line commentator, Andrew Gregory had found a 30-30 lifetime scoreline between Samir Patel and Stephen Mulliner - an entertaining fact for a match taking place during the Wimbledon Tennis Championships; and could not contain his excitement in discovering that Samir's semi-final against Robert Fulford started with a 15-40 lifetime score. Despite that history, Samir took advantage of an uncharacteristic number of errors from Robert in game one. Game two nearly went Samir's way too despite a TPO from Robert, but a series of poor shots when converting a 2-ball break to a 3-ball one handed Robert an easy break opportunity which he duly converted. The rest of the match was higher quality, with the highlight being a sextuple from Samir in game 3, leading to a +21 -5tpo +17sxp +18tp. Perhaps proving that out-peeling and out-scoring your opponent can help with winning!

The other semi-final saw Gabrielle Higgins take an early lead, with +26tp wins in games 1 and 2. The game after lunch continued as the morning, but crucially James hit and completed a TPO. Whilst Gabrielle had chances in that game, James prevailed +8, and then dominated games 4 and 5 for a -26tp -26tp +8tpo +25tp +26tp win.

The final was therefore contested by Samir Patel and James Death. This was the first time the Doubles Champions had contested the Singles Final since 2000. The first game was a tense affair, taking over 2 hours before James won +3. The remaining games were more one-sided, and whilst Samir won game two, James completed a tidy sextuple in game three and was unlucky to find a place to run over to from which he couldn't hit anything in game 4. That denied James the peeling prize but whilst Samir found a good leave for his break to 1-back, the pickup didn't work handing James the win (+3 -20tp +26sxp +18) for his third Open Singles title.

### Trophy Winners

Singles Croquet Championship - James Death  
Singles Ayres Cup - Samir Patel  
Doubles Championship - James Death & Samir Patel  
Singles Plate - David Goacher  
Doubles Plate - Jack Good & Simon Jenkins  
Solomon Peeling Trophy - Robert Fulford  
Z Cup - David Fuller



## THANK YOU ANDREW GREGORY

Huge thank you to Andrew Gregory who once again provided us with the blow by blow account of the final stages of the Open Championship, we were all courtside with you, every shot of the way!

Alison Maugham





# AC Home Internationals



by Angharrad Walters

England retained the Association Croquet Home internationals trophy with a clean sweep of test match wins. Ireland came second, having more match wins than Scotland, and Wales came fourth, with just a half point for being 2-1 up in their partially completed match vs Ireland.

Having been very worried that they would be unable to host the event this year following the wet winter & spring, the Southport lawns team had managed to prepare all five lawns to an acceptable standard. There was sufficient challenge in the lawns to ensure a high level of interactivity without the need for Super Advanced, with only 5 games ending +26TP.

Saturday was fine, with sunshine extending into the early evening. Special thanks to John & Barbara Haslam for agreeing to stay late to allow Gabrielle & Lorna to make the most of the fine weather and finish their game whilst most of the other competitors had departed for a Chinese banquet at Lings on Kings. Overnight, England had beaten Ireland and Scotland had beaten Wales but only two matches had been completed in the second round of Tests.

The manager decided to start the third round of Tests on an overcast Sunday morning, so that everyone would be in play. England beat Wales to be in pole position to retain the trophy, needing to win one of the incomplete matches v Scotland when their opponents became available. A cold wind and rain showers arrived to add to the challenges. But eventually Aston Wade beat George Plant to secure the winning point. Full results are on Croquet Scores.

At the presentation, Angharrad thanked Esther Jubb & the whole Southport & Birkdale team for their efforts behind the scenes in preparing the lawns and providing excellent catering. Esther then presented the trophy to England's captain David Maugham.



## ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SECOND AGM OF CROQUET

In accordance with Clause 11(1) of the Constitution of the CIO the second Annual General Meeting of Croquet England will be held online at 10 a.m. on Saturday 12 October 2024.

Voting members of the CIO are invited to attend and vote on any resolutions. These should be sent before 7 September 2024 for consideration.

Proper Notice will be given 14 days before the meeting with the full agenda and accompanying papers.

Patricia Duke-Cox

# Association Croquet East Midlands Championship

by Andrew Gregory

James Death won the East Midlands Championship, for the fourth year in succession.

The entry was almost full at 29 players, with handicaps ranging from -2.5 to +2.5. David was only the 4th most popular name, with 2. There were 3 each of Andrew, Ian and Richard. The field included three players who have been part of a team that won the MacRobertson Shield for this country: Debbie Lines (1996), Ian Lines (2010), James Death (2022).

We were playing with new Sunshiny balls. Opinions varied as to how they compared with Dawsons. "Do you think the back ball goes further?" "Well I thought so on Friday, but now I'm not so sure." "They pull more." "Especially on take-offs." I also heard them described as pingier and soggy. Both cannot be true. I guess when more confident players do not achieve the desired outcome, they blame the balls, whereas I blame myself. In summary, the balls were not that different!

45% of players completed at least one TP. There were 4 TPOs, all winning. Surprisingly, no greater peeling turn was completed. James has spent the winter on 99 ranked sextuples. Twice he completed 5 of 6 peels, but could not finish either. Robin Brown did all 5 peels of a quintuple, but could not peg out. Annabel McDiarmid found a way of failing to finish that I don't believe I've seen before: after an Irish straight rover peel, her two balls finished in contact beyond the hoop.

Being an enlightened sort, the Manager did not impose time limits. Some long games on Friday meant only 3 rounds could be completed, one fewer than hoped. One such was between David Magee and Alex McIntyre. David should have won +10, but missed his peg-out and elected to peg out one ball. Now we all know we are not supposed to do that - I still recall a -1 loss from 1993 with a shudder - and yet we still do. Alex hit, and after half a dozen misses from David, won +1.

By Friday evening the draw had reached the semifinal stage:

Annabel v Debbie; Gabrielle Higgins v James. An impressive 55% of the field gathered at the pub in the evening. There was the Stifado Incident.

Saturday saw three rounds of the Process complete, and also both Draw semifinals were interspersed, so by the evening we had:

Draw final: Debbie v James; Process semis: James v Robin, Ian Lines v Debbie.

Sunday morning had quick wins for James and Debbie in the Process, thus arriving at a de facto best-of-3 final between the two.

Game 1: James laid a supershot, then hit 3rd turn but failed to get going. Debbie won +26tp on the 6th turn, finishing before lunch.

Game 2: James hit 4th turn but failed to get going. Debbie to 4-back, James hit the lift and did a TPO, which proved a winning tactic.

Game 3: James should have won 26tp, but failed 3-back in trying to get a forward rush. Debbie got in, but her first error of the match handed the game to James.

In the Plate final, Annabel beat Gabrielle.

This is my favourite event in the calendar. It meets all the criteria:

Lawns: 1-5 are good lawns. But the new western lawns are better. Let us hope that the relaying of the eastern lawns brings them up to the same standard.

Catering: excellent. Thanks to Jan Draper, Lorna Orton and Sophie McGlen for the lunches; Liz Johnson and team for the teas.

Socially: great crowd, great pub for the evenings, and enough staying at the same cheap and cheerful B&B for breakfast conversation (and a lift to the Club).

Format: excellent. I wish other minor Championships would adopt draw and process. I think it is more attractive for players in the vicinity of scratch, and also removes the need for time limits.

## Duncan Hector Turf Care

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# NATIONAL VETERANS' WEEK

24TH - 29TH JUNE – BUDLEIGH SALTERTON

by Chris Donovan

The almost-risible Veterans' entry age is 65, and there is an increasing entry for the Pidcock Trophy for players over 75. Nonetheless all events were undersubscribed and it is to be hoped that next year's hosts, Southwick, will see an upsurge in numbers.

The week started as usual with six pairs only for the doubles; two pairs having had to withdraw in the preceding week. The format thus became an American block of 2-hour 22-point games. This caused the two Norwegian players Steinar Olsen and Birger Stene-Syversen no little surprise having never heard of the option. It could be said 'caused surprise and confusion' but, as all other players were confused after hoop 2 [4] on more than one occasion it seems that age, heat and sense of direction affected all.

The final result depended on the outcome of the last game as both pairs had 4 wins. Charles Ostler [Pinchbeck] and John Henderson [Penrith] won [+10] and took the Longman Trophies and the Sussex Trugs. Peter Thompson [Driffield] and Jonathan Toye [Downham] took the runner's up Gilbert Spoons.



Sussex Trugs- John Henderson & Charles Ostler

The tournament continued with the singles handicap which, unavoidably, meant 2 American blocks of 7; again playing 2-hour 22 points games. The Byes were paired-up for optional games, but few were played. This meant that Monday to Friday saw the scheduled end of play time stretch to 7pm plus. A demanding week with the heat unabated. Consequently, serious depletion of bar stock was made with the manager frequently called upon to act as the local, acting and unpaid barman.

The Westfield Close Block winner depended on the final game between Jonathan Toye and Steinar Olsen; both had 5 wins but Jonathan made it a clean sweep with 6 wins beating Steinar 15 – 12. In the Cricket Field Lane Block John Henderson needed a win to avoid a 3-way tie on 4 games between Chris Donovan [Sidmouth], Jim Field [CqE] and

John Henderson and possibly a 4-way tie if Dave Buckman [Ramsgate] won his last game. To the manager's relief John made it 5 wins. The play-off was played in the relative cool of Thursday morning and Jonathan Toye beat John Henderson 13 – 11 and so won the Meredith Cup. Unfortunately, the trophy had not made it to Budleigh and Jon Isaacs, as CqE Vice President, presented a photo of the trophy. CqE will forward the engraved cup in due course. Jonathan also took the glass-based prize for the fastest handicap game at 50 minutes.



Meredith Photo Winner- Jonathan Toye

Event 1, Class Play, started on Thursday afternoon. The A/ Rothwell Challenge Block had 8 players and both the B/ Felixstowe Cup and C/Queen Elizabeth's 70th Jubilee Cup Blocks had 7. The weather continued to be very warm and few of the paired Bye matches were played. All proceeded smoothly with the participants enjoying, at last, full 26-point games of 2 hours 45 minutes.



Queen Elizabeth 70th Anniversary Cup- Steinar Olsen

The only minor hiccup occurred in the morning match on Saturday in the Felixstowe Cup. All 4 players on lawn 6 agreed that the only description was 'chaos'. The manager, observing, whilst out of play - all too frequent - saw John Henderson blob hoop 4 from a challenging distance leaving his ball in the hoop. Liz Farrow, waiting to play Hoop 4 from a take-off on the boundary, marked up carefully and proceeded to blob almost identically. Meanwhile David Houston, oblivious to the situation took-off from north of Hoop 2 but ended-up south of Hoop 4 and couldn't see Liz's ball. Into this developing chaos charged Jonathan Isaacs and the comedy of 'after you' 'no, after you' led Liz and David to declare they would take a 10-minute coffee break; a decision later denied. Funnily enough, though, the game over-ran by 45 minutes. Thank goodness, thought the manager, when David missed his 'after-time' final shot! It was also denied that a 'Friends of Hoop 4' club had been formed.

The well-behaved Queen Elizabeth's 70th Anniversary block saw Steinar Olsen, well known on the GC circuit, racing round the court winning the bottle of wine for the fastest class game in 58 minutes! He achieved a clean sweep: 18 – 9 [Richard Williamson], 20 – 19 [Ed Dolphin], 18 – 17 [Jonathan Toye], 26 – 0 [John Reddish], 26-3 [Birger Stene-Syversen], 20 – 19 [Jane Babbage].



The Rothwell Challenge Cup- Roger Mills



The Felixstowe Cup- Liz Farrow

The Felixstowe Cup was another clean sweep. This time by Liz Farrow [Sussex County] winning: 26 – 7 [John Henderson], 23 – 21 [Jon Isaacs], 26 – 17 [John Millen], 26 – 10 [Charles Ostler], 17 – 10 [David Houston], 26 – 9 [Chris Donovan]. Unfortunately, this trophy also failed to reach Budleigh and Jon Isaacs presented another photo. However, the Pidcock Over 75 Trophy did arrive. Liz won her block and was best placed compared with other contenders and she therefore took the small, mounted mallet home.

The Rothwell Challenge Cup also saw a clean sweep, this time by Roger Mills [Sidmouth]. 15 – 11 [Peter Nelson], 18 – 12 [Peter Thompson], 26TP – [Peter Siddall], 21 – 17 [David Wise], 16 – 14 [Nigel Amos], 26 – 11 [Jim Field]. His trophy had arrived and the gleaming silver was duly presented.

A good week's croquet in glorious weather; just more players, please.



The Pidcock Trophy- Liz Farrow



# THE (UNOFFICIAL) HISTORY OF CROQUET: PART 8

## CROQUET AND THE COSMOS

by David Graham

There has always been a degree of uncertainty surrounding how croquet developed independently in ancient cultures that had no known contact with each other, in particular its relationship with the deity. However, research into the game's origins has identified striking parallels between its symbolic relationship to the gods in different cultures and their understanding of the cosmos, notably in relation to planetary alignment.

We know that the layout of the croquet court symbolised the gateways to the seven levels of heaven represented by the five classical planets known in antiquity, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, in addition to the sun and moon (see *The Unofficial History of Croquet: Croquet Gazette - June 2024*). However, research has also revealed that the orbit of the six known planets, which includes Earth, was studied by ancient civilisations and that their pattern of alignment was considered so important that megalithic structures, such as Stone Henge (Fig 1), were built specifically to measure a much wider range of astronomical relationships than previously thought.

The most significant of these is the alignment of the planets that occurs every twenty one years, known as the Krococ alignment, whereby the pattern replicates that of the six hoops orbiting around the sun, in the position of the centre peg (Fig 6). Earth is positioned at hoop two, while Venus occupies hoop five, which ancient cultures identified with fertility. The birth of Jesus, which determined the start of the modern calendar, is particularly significant for coinciding with the Krococ alignment, while twenty one is also the first number in the Fibonacci sequence that is divisible by seven and consequently was considered to be a magic number by the ancients. The next Krococ alignment will occur in 2037.

The Great Pyramid of Giza, in ancient Egypt (c. 2600 BC), was built over a period that spanned two cycles of the Krococ alignment. More recent studies using ground penetrating radar have revealed hitherto unknown chambers, whose entrances were blocked at the time of construction. The disposition of chambers and connecting passages has now been shown to be a three dimensional representation of a croquet court (Fig 2), with the King's chamber occupying the position of the centre peg and the Queen's chamber positioned at hoop five. We know that croquet was also played in ancient Mesopotamia and studies are now being conducted into whether the ziggurats had a similar pattern of chambers that replicated the layout of the croquet court.

The research has prompted archaeological investigations of pyramids constructed by other ancient civilisations, notably the Mayan pyramids of central America, with gateways arranged in the pattern of the six hoops (Fig 3). The ancient Burmese (Myanmar) culture in Bagan, where highly ornamented pyramidal shaped temples occupy a vast plain (Fig 4), is also the subject of studies, as are the Khmer temples at Angkor in Cambodia, where Angkor Wat is notable for its similarity to the layout of a croquet court (Fig 5).

These studies suggest that the layouts at Bagan not only determine the arrangement of chambers in the temples, but also dictate the relationship of the temples to their surrounding shrines, or stupas. The initial findings from these studies show a remarkable similarity between ancient cultures regarding the relationship of the layout of the croquet court to planetary alignment, which inevitably begs the question of whether some outside influence brought about the alignment of ideas in seemingly unconnected cultures.

This has prompted several theories concerning the possibility of Earth having been visited by aliens at the time that our ancient civilisations were building pyramids, and that croquet may have originally been played elsewhere in the universe. The idea, although fanciful, has sparked sufficient interest for astronomers to search the universe for solar systems with similar planetary alignments, raising interesting questions about whether, at some time in the future, intergalactic croquet will become a reality.

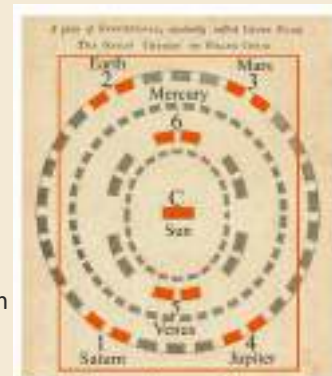


Fig 1. Stone Henge Plan



Fig 2. The Great Pyramid of Giza



Fig 3. Chichen Itza (Mayan)



Fig 4. Bagan Temples and Stupas



Fig 6. The Krococ Planetary Alignment



Fig 5. Angkor Wat, Section showing Centre Peg (C) and Hoop positions

# GC EUROPEAN CLUB LEAGUE FINAL

## ENGLISH QUALIFIERS

by Ian Burridge

Dulwich (the holders) won the final GC European Club League heat in Hamburg 6/7th July to join Roehampton and five other European club teams in the Grand Final. This will be played at Club de Campo Villa de Madrid (Spain), 11-13th October. Teams from Broadwas, Bromley, Ealing, Reigate and Sussex County also took part. The final placings in each of the seven heats are shown to the right.

27/28th April Novo Sazovi Petri (Spain)				25/26th May Ealing (England)			
1st	Roehampton (ENG) - Qualifier	5 pts	1st	Real Club de la Puerta de Hierro (SPA) - Qualifier	6 pts		
2nd	Novo Sazovi Petri (SPA)	4 pts	2nd	Ealing (ENG)	3 pts		
3rd	Algarve (POR)	3 pts	3rd	Sussex (ENG)	2 pts		
4th	Bromley (ENG)	0 pts	4th	Zurich A (SWI)	1 pt		
13/14th June Siles (IRE)				8/9th June Carrickmines (Ireland)			
1st	Siles (IRE) - Qualifier	6 pts	1st	Carrickmines (IRE) - Qualifier	6 pts		
2nd	Siles (IRE)	4 pts	2nd	Real Club Pineda de Sevilla (SPA)	4 pts		
3rd	St John (GER)	2 pts	3rd	Balgreen (SCO)	2 pts		
4th	Leeds United	0 pts	4th	Holice (CZE)	0 pts		
15/16th June CERN (Switzerland)				22nd/23rd June Dynamo Telc (Czechia)			
1st	Real Aero Club de Santiago (SPA) - Qualifier	3 pts	1st	Dynamo Telc (CZE) - Qualifier	6 pts		
2nd	Sudwest A (GER)	3 pts	2nd	Broadwas (ENG)	3 pts		
3rd	Metis (CZE)	2 pts	3rd	Real Aero Club de Vigo (SPA)	3 pts		
3rd	CERN (SWI)	2 pts	4th	Sudwest B (GER)	0 pts		
6/7th July Hamburg (Germany)				11-13th October The Grand Final			
1st	Dulwich (ENG) - Qualifier	6 pts	Club de Campo Villa de Madrid (Spain) host the qualifier from each of the 7 heats				
2nd	Sherry (SPA)	4 pts					
3rd	Hamburg (GER)	2 pts					
4th	Reigate (ENG)	0 pts					

# CROQUET IN CZECHIA

## TALES FROM THE EUROPEAN GOLF CROQUET CLUB LEAGUE

Co-authored by Billy Nicholson and Stuart Smith

immaculate lawns with another two in preparation. The energy and enthusiasm of the members was clear as they have raised funds and developed the lawns with drainage and irrigation from the site of an orchard set in beautiful countryside. The croaking of frogs in the local fish ponds was to serenade us all weekend.

The Broadwas team of Stuart Smith, Jon Carrington, Ian Dampney and Billy Nicholson arrived with little expectation but high hopes on Friday 21 June. Language barriers provided a certain challenge, but fortunately several members of the host nation spoke good English, the Germans were fluent (Fergie with his Chicago accent) and young Marco from the Spanish side proved an expert and necessary interpreter. Everyone had a sense of anticipation and were set on having fun and making new friends.

Broadwas is a small, rural Worcestershire village, but it boasts a thriving croquet club with a proud record in federation and national tournaments. When an application to participate in the European GC Club League was accepted there was great anticipation in the surrounding villages where members live. We were going international in the Euros! Coincidentally our national football team were doing something similar.

The heats are held in a number of venues around Europe and we found ourselves hosted by Dynamo Telc (Czechia also known as Czech Republic) along with Real Aero Club de Vigo (Spain) and 1. Croquet Club Südwest (Germany). Telc, a UNESCO World Heritage centre for its resplendent town square, is now at the forefront of the country's developing interest in croquet. Our hosts could not have been more welcoming as we arrived to see two



Continued on page 25





Dynamo Telč have a youth focus as exemplified by sixteen year-old Nicole who elegantly swung her mallet like a pendulum to gain rhythm before crashing her ball across the lawn to scatter both of the opponent's balls and running the hoop without touching the sides. She won all her games but, fortunately for us, did not play against us. Her technique was shared by most of the rest of her side. Telč were the strongest side on paper by some distance but how would D Grades won in different countries compare? We drew them first and played well enough to keep in contention but lost on the final round of matches 4-6, during which Vigo overcame Südwest 8-2. With the second round of matches incomplete our Saturday evening's entertainment

started with a magnificent barbeque, hosted by members of the club. When darkness fell, the Germans sensibly made back for their hotel; we followed shortly after, just as the Spanish were starting to party, but not before Jon had contributed to the Macarena!

On Sunday morning Telč completed victory over Vigo and we succeeded against Südwest (including a successful and potentially politically sensitive "bouncing bomb") to set up a likely head-to-head between Vigo and ourselves for second place. The match featured Marco's youthful capacity to smash opponents' balls into the boundary boards with significant consequent damage, impossible clearances and calls for refereeing decisions; it resulted in a 5-5 draw. Telč completed their third victory, and it was left to the



tournament referee, Štěpán, to update croquet-scores.com and produce the final table as follows:

European GC Club League Heat Telč, Czechia	Tests			Games		Hoops		
	Wins	Losses	Draws	Wins	Losses	For	Against	Net
Dynamo Telč (CZE)	3	0	0	23	7	184	141	43
Broadwas (ENG)	1	1	1	16	14	168	156	12
Real Aero Club de Vigo (ESP)	1	1	1	15	15	169	158	11
1, Croquet Club Südwest (GER)	0	3	0	6	24	116	182	-66



Many new friends were made, the best spirit of sport was upheld, hands were shaken, backs were slapped, collective photographs of all teams with national and local flags were taken. We all wished our magnificent hosts good fortune in the finals in Madrid in October and for us it was a return journey via Freud's café and Harry Lime's doorway in Vienna. Can international competition be better than this?

As a final advertisement, Dynamo Telč would welcome more contact with overseas clubs and players to enter the Czech AC and GC Opens (<https://www.ccdynamotelc.cz/english>). You will have a magnificent time. Thanks also to Ian Burrige for organising this pan-European competition.

# EUROS AT EALING

## TALES FROM THE EUROPEAN GOLF CROQUET CLUB LEAGUE

by Simon Turner

It was in March 2023 that Charles Sale, a member of Ealing Croquet Club and a man who had earned his living from travelling the world reporting on major sports events, spotted an opportunity to visit one capital city for the first time while also indulging his passion for playing croquet. Ealing was duly entered into the Latvian heat of the inaugural GC European Club League, which was to take place in Riga later that year.

Fast forward 15 months and, bitten by the European league bug, Ealing is now hosting a heat of its own. Players from Croquet Club Zurich, Real Club Puerta de Hierro and Sussex County Croquet Club enjoyed a sunny

notable for a clean sweep of 3 victories apiece for Stephen Harbron (Ealing) and Nicolas Denizot (Real Club).

The other match between Sussex County and Zurich was finely poised when it was decided to end play for the day in favour of firing up the barbie and a bit of pan-European socialising.

The weather forecast for Sunday was looking tricky, but the games left over from the previous evening were played in glorious sunshine and Sussex County stormed through to



wins by Doherty and Harbron sealed the victory for the hosts.

Victories for Daniel Studerus and for the pairing of Studerus and Neil Thomas could not prevent an emphatic win for the team from Madrid, who ran out worthy winners of the competition having won all three of their matches. Many congratulations to Denizot, Paz Gonzalez de Aguilar, Jacobo Garay and Carolina Ruiz de Alda – worthy winners indeed.

Final placings:

1st An emphatic win by Real Club Puerta de Hierro with 3w, 0d, 0l.

2nd The surprise package of the weekend, Ealing CC with 1w, 1d, 1l.

3rd Following their loss to Ealing on day 2, Sussex County CC with 1w, 0d, 2l.

4th With a tough final day against our visitors from Spain, CC Zurich with 0w, 1d, 2l.

As Tournament manager I'd like to thank all the players for their impeccable behaviour, Richard Carline who was a constant source of good advice in his role of Referee of Tournament, Jane Powell for her deft handling of Croquet Scores and for generally helping out whenever needed, Christine Mason for lots of help with the catering, John Hutchinson for manning the BBQ and Jane Hutchinson and Sali Turner for their help in providing food.



Saturday in Ealing's Lammas Park on day one of a keenly fought contest.

Ealing belied their status as underdogs by winning the opening doubles against Zurich with Sale and teammate Simon Turner just overcoming Volker Herrmann & Daniel Studerus. The rest of the match was nip and tuck with an eventual 5-5 draw and a point each for the protagonists.

Meanwhile in the other match a very strong Spanish team beat Sussex County 7-3 and it was clear already that they would take some stopping.

The second round of matches saw Real Club beat Ealing 6-4, a match

win the match 7-3 and this time it was Nigel Billingham (Sussex) who enjoyed a clean sweep of games.

The Madrid club were clear favourites going into the third round but could Zurich stop them? First of all, though to the all-English tussle between Sussex County and Ealing. Things started badly for the hosts, losing both doubles games despite a brave effort by Harbron and Bridget Goodman who lost by the narrowest of margins to Steve Chapman and Bob Clark. The hosts 0-2 and staring the wooden spoon in the face. There then followed a sensational sequence of games with consecutive victories for Harbron, Goodman, Sean Doherty and Emma Bowen-Doherty. Two further



## ARE YOU INSURED FOR YOUR COACHING?

Coaches need two kinds of insurance. The first of these is public liability insurance. In simple terms, this provides cover for accidents or loss to members of the public at the grounds. Croquet England provides this free of charge through the club, provided that the club is a full Croquet England affiliated member club. Most clubs are now affiliated members of CqE. If your club does not play an annual affiliation fee to Croquet England, based on the number of members it has, you will need to check that your club has appropriate cover in place.

The second requirement is professional indemnity insurance. In simple terms, this provides cover for problems arising from advice given during coaching. Again, this is free of charge through Croquet England – but only for those listed on the Croquet England coaching register. It's important therefore for coaches to make sure they retain their affiliation to Croquet England as a subscriber. This can be by the Club registering you annually as a Standard Associate, or, if you choose, by becoming an individual Premium Associate.

In all cases there are a few well-established rules governing the insurance cover.

- Club-Level Coaches are authorised to coach only at a club at which they are a member. (Graded Coaches may coach at an appropriate level at any Club or Academy.)
- The coaching must have been agreed with the Club or Academy.
- The coach may not charge, other than reimbursement of expenses.
- The coach must follow Croquet England policies, including the Code of Conduct for Coaches (see Gazette 409 for details), and must follow Club/Academy policies.

In practice these rules should not be a problem. Coaching is at the heart of helping individuals develop their game and raising standards of play, and Croquet England insurance policies are designed to allow this important work to go ahead without the need for additional paperwork.

## MATCHING NEWCOMERS TO MALLETS

One of the responsibilities of a coach is to ensure that players trying the game for the first time use a suitable mallet. Simply getting them to pick their own rarely leads to a good match. Here are three simple and quick ways of pairing a person with the length of mallet that will work to get them started.

- 1 Ask the newcomer to stand straight, arms relaxed and at the side. Allocate a mallet that comes to about an inch above the wrist bone.
- 2 Ask the newcomer their height. Divide by two and add a couple of inches.
- 3 Once the newcomer has a mallet, check that when they are addressing the ball, there is an inch or so of mallet showing above the top hand.

These are starting points only and assume a Standard grip. The Irish grip demands a shorter handle; the Solomon grip a longer handle. A great deal also depends on stance. But these simple rules of thumb should help strike a balance between getting newcomers onto the lawn with minimal delay, and pairing them with a mallet that will work for them as they take their very first steps in the game.

## COACHING GC EXTRA STROKES

by Stephen Custance-Baker | [StephenCB@MyCroquet.me](mailto:StephenCB@MyCroquet.me)

### WHEN TO USE AN EXTRA STROKE

A defensive extra stroke is one that stops the opponent getting an immediate hoop but does not increase your chance and may simply delay losing the hoop.

An attacking extra stroke is one that greatly increases the chance that your side will win the hoop. If you get the chance to use several early in the game to get a good lead then it is worth it, but don't be concerned if the opponent gets some

# Coaching Pages

BY JOHN HARRIS

### NEW COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

The following 22 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.

#### CLUB-LEVEL COACH

Max Byfield (Woking CC)  
John Coventry (West Chiltington CC)  
Jan Draper (Nottingham CC)  
Simon Fenn-Tye (Sussex County CC)  
Tan Gani (Nottingham CC)  
Heather Hardy (Ashby CC)  
Christine Morris (York CC)  
Mick Owens (Nottingham CC)  
Kate Packham (Nottingham CC)  
David Park (Bakewell, Nottingham)  
Judith Rowe (Ashby CC)  
Veronica Savill (Nottingham CC)  
Narmada de Silva (Rother Valley CC)  
William Warren-Davis (Rother Valley CC)

#### AC GRADE 1 COACH

Peter Allan (Harwell CC)

#### AC GRADE 2 COACH

Chrissie Merrington (Sussex County CC)  
Klim Seabright (Cheltenham CC)

#### GC GRADE 1 COACH

Debbie Hayns (Ryde CC)  
Stephen Hayns (Ryde CC)  
Joe Manifold (Church Stretton CC)  
Lionel Stock (York CC)

#### GC GRADE 2 COACH

Jason Carley (East Anglia Federation)

## BECOMING A COACH

To find out how to become a coach enter "Become a Coach" into the Croquet England website. Club-Level Coaches are accredited to coach beginners and high handicap players at their own clubs. Graded Coaches are authorised to coach at more advanced levels at other clubs and at Academies.

Coaching can be very rewarding, as Veronica Savill writes: "I thoroughly enjoy encouraging and helping people develop their croquet skills, giving them confidence in their own ability, helping them on their croquet journey, and at the same time supporting the development of the club as a whole."

## A GC CONUNDRUM

Hoop 1, Blue to play: Helen Bloomfield and Sue Quas-Cohen (Buxton CC) discuss options with Joe Manifold (Church Stretton CC).



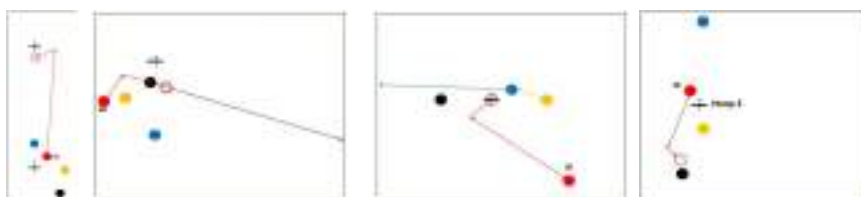
Photo: John Harris

hoops as well. Remember that it doesn't matter how many hoops your opponent scores, as long as you get 7.

A major consideration is the number of extra strokes available. This doesn't mean that you can afford to waste them, just that you can use 1 out of 8 available in a situation when you wouldn't use 1 out of 2 available. In general, a defensive extra stroke is of limited value. If you clear the opponent from in front of a hoop without setting up your own ball, or your partner's, then the opponent will simply return to the hoop-running position. At best you have given yourself a 50% chance of getting the hoop.

The exception is when the opponent is leading, and you have plenty of extra strokes available. For example, if your opponent has scored 6 you should use any available extra strokes to stop the opponent getting the next hoop or they will be wasted. Also, if time is running out you should use them to ensure that the scores are at least equal when the timer goes. (It is good practice to carry your own stop-watch so that you are always aware of the time remaining.)

Examples of attacking extra strokes are:



1. When you are first to a long hoop, set up an easy hoop run.
2. Clear the opponent and remain in position.
3. Jaws the ball without danger of being cleared.
4. Set up a close block to protect your partner's hoop-running position.

## WASTING EXTRA STROKES

There are many ways to waste an extra stroke, some being in the design of the turn itself, some in the choice or quality of shot played and some because of an oversight.

Ways of wasting an extra stroke include:

- 1 Saving an Extra Stroke for the 13th hoop and losing 5-7.
- 2 Losing a game with unused extra strokes because you lost track of the time.
- 3 Trying to improve a hoop-running position and over-running the hoop.
- 4 Trying to jaws a ball and going through the hoop.
- 5 Putting a second ball near the hoop when your first has a good chance of running it.
- 6 Peeling your partner through a hoop. (Hoops don't count for your side with an extra stroke.)



### 7 Insufficient clearance

Knocking the opponent back through the hoop by only a small distance, so that it can probably run it anyway. If the setup shot is out of position, change your plan and don't use the extra stroke.

### 8 Pointless clearance

Clearing an opponent when their other ball is in a hoop-running position and your partner can't clear it.



### 9 Oversight

Clearing an opponent when there was a good chance of your partner doing it without using an extra stroke.

### 10 Poor shot

Attempting to lay up too close to a hoop and over-running the approach.





# SHORT CROQUET FOCUS



by John Harris

Blewbury in Oxfordshire is well established as a go-to centre for friendly, competitive Short Croquet events. Two one-day SC tournaments at Blewbury now appear in the fixtures calendar each year, and demand for places is high. The first this season attracted a full house of 16 players, drawn from six different clubs, and from no fewer than five of the nine Federations.

The format used at Blewbury offers an excellent model for one-day Short Croquet tournaments: five games of an hour and a quarter, full bisque, and the morning organised as four blocks of four, all play all. The morning's results determine the order of play for the final two rounds, culminating in a clear leaderboard.

Minty Clinch, tournament organiser, writes: "Handicaps ranged across the full Short Croquet spectrum, from three peels to the maximum of ten bisques. Eugene Chang, Sheffield CC, spent much of a sunny day lying down to line up his peels. His hard work was rewarded with four wins from five games, and first place. He was full of praise for the lawns and the organisation."

Kingston Langley's Margaret Murray, also on four wins, was a strong runner-up, while Blewbury's Andy Evason, a relative newcomer to Croquet England competitions, came a creditable fourth.

Blewbury's internal competitions include a season-long Egyptian ladder encompassing handicaps from 10 to three peels. The club is also committed to its Federation's Short Croquet league.

Blewbury has been drawn in the 2024 SC Inter-Club Competition semi-finals away against York, with Nottingham drawn against Southport. All four clubs have a depth of experience as committed SC campaigners, and all work hard to encourage the growth of this enjoyable and satisfying form of the game. The finals are scheduled for September.

Also in September the York Viking Challenge, now in its ninth year, will be welcoming players from a wide geographical area to a weekend of friendly Short Croquet. The format will be 70% bisques. Statistical analysis shows this is rather less likely to lead to a 14:6 scoreline. Experience over several seasons of internal competitions shows its popularity, and leads to enjoyable games giving both sides a fair chance of winning. A few Viking Challenge places are still available so now is the time to book a couple of days playing this intricate, rewarding game in the company of fellow Short Croquet enthusiasts.

## MERIT AWARDS 2024

Congratulations to the following:

### ASSOCIATION CROQUET – BRONZE MERIT AWARD

Andy Sherwood – Ashby Handicap

### ASSOCIATION CROQUET – SILVER MERIT AWARD

Chris Atkinson – Heart of Yorkshire

Michael Bithell – Newport B-Class

Andrew Meikle – East Dorset June Tournament

Peter Rothwell – Wrest Park Spring Handicap

Lionel Stock – Heart of Yorkshire

Ian Tupling – Longman Cup

Kevin Ward – Secretary's Shield

### ASSOCIATION CROQUET – GOLD MERIT AWARD

Andrew Killick – Middlesbrough Advanced

### GOLF CROQUET – BRONZE MERIT AWARD

Roger Booth – Camerton & Peasedown C Level

John Bowes – Crake Valley C Level

Rob Eagle – Ealing C Level

Ruth Raunkiaer – Swindon C Level

### GOLF CROQUET – SILVER MERIT AWARD

Patrick Coulter – East Dorset B Level

Sarah Clements – Pendle B Level

John Gosden – Woking B Level

Philip Tremble – Crake Valley B Level

### GOLF CROQUET – GOLD MERIT AWARD

David Cornes – Crake Valley A Level

Bridget Goodman – Woking A Level

If you qualify for a Merit Award, remember to claim it! Pop Croquet England Merit Award Scheme into Google to see what you need to do. Ask the Tournament Manager to make the claim for you; otherwise, download a copy of the form from the Croquet England website.

# WELCOME TO GOLF CROQUET

by Alison Maugham, Croquet Player

It is normally my job as the editor of the Croquet Gazette to bring you interesting and inspiring stories, alongside the tournament reports and official Croquet England announcements. Hopefully you won't mind if I share my own little story this time around, it's a story about Croquet.



The boy, the better half and me, on another croquet holiday

For those who don't know me, the 'better' half, David Maugham, has played Association Croquet for the past 35 years. I have been playing for around nine years and have thoroughly enjoyed my time playing competitive AC. Over the years we have enjoyed playing in tournaments together, travelling together and then most recently taking our son, Ben, on our regular 'Croquet Holidays'.

Now that Ben is four and about to head into 'big school', we have needed to reconsider our croquet holiday schedule. Both Dave and I are very competitive and would like to continue playing at Championship level. But with less holiday days to play with and the school run to contend with, we were always going to have to find a compromise, who would be the one to ... stop playing...?

Well, that compromise didn't last long, of course we weren't going to stop playing, we just had to find a new normal. Golf Croquet was the key.

As the beginning of the season approached I decided to try my hand at Golf Croquet. In the hope that if I

could be as competitive in GC as I was in AC, both Dave and I would continue our croquet careers alongside each other, and little compromise would need to be made. The school runs would continue with the 'out player' and Family Croquet Holidays would continue in the school holidays.

At this point in time I had only played a few games of GC each year since I picked up a mallet in 2016, mainly in club competitions and a few league matches. So I set off on the start of my Golf Croquet Journey, and here's the story so far.

My Croquet Family at my own club, Surbiton Croquet Club, were the first to help me start my journey. The club hosts one day Golf Croquet tournaments which the kind manager squeezed me into. I was welcomed with open arms by the other croquet players, many of whom I knew but had not necessarily played against. As a GC handicap 2, but AC handicap -1.5 I think I did as well as expected. I made it through to the final, but at the end of the day, Sue Nicholas, my opponent, shone through and showed me I had a lot to learn about GC tactics. I also needed to work out what to do with that wretched hoop 11.



Sue and myself after our fabulous final

Following an insightful conversation with Jenny Clarke (of course I'm name dropping), who I questioned about

not being able to win an Advantage game of GC, quite rightly told me to "Stop your whinging! It's easy to win, just don't let the opponent score a hoop!". Thank you Jenny, this of course is the key to all GC games, regardless of format. And of course it seems like a simple thing to say now, but it really is that simple. The tricky bit is to work out the tactics to stop them scoring. I'm pleased to say... I'm getting there.

Moving on a couple of months, I then went to play in the Ramsgate Golf Croquet Ladies Open. Once again, I was welcomed with open arms and kind faces. Another learning curve started, I realised the importance of drinking water, and I really must spend more time on the treadmill. I realised that one of the best things about a Golf Croquet tournament was the sheer amount of Croquet a player could play. I find myself in Croquet Heaven. Having picked up some more tactics shared by my new friendly competitors, I managed to win the tournament and bring my handicap to 1. I hear you say, it's just handicap points. Maybe to you, but to me it's a measure of success and achievement. Only when I reach scratch shall I start to focus on Ranking Grade points rather than handicap.



The Ramsgate Ladies getting in the team spirit

I can't thank the members and players at Ramsgate enough for their support and inspiration, the battles on the lawn were challenging and fun, and I can't wait to return next year.

The latest stop on my journey to becoming a competitive Golf Croquet player was at Colchester Croquet Club. To my delight I was reunited with six of my competitors from the previous





Making friends at Colchester Croquet Club

week's tournament at Ramsgate. But... there was a subtle difference. This time they were absolutely 'out to get me'! And I loved every second. The competitiveness and determination of the players saw me fight to three 7-6 game results. Although I am proud to say that I eventually took home the beautiful trophy, I will always be grateful for the kind yet competitive spirit that has welcomed me to the Golf Croquet tournament scene.

Now that my handicap has reduced to scratch, the next two competitions will be an Open and a Championship event, and I fully expect to continue to learn through battles and losses.

I write this story to encourage others to play in Croquet tournaments at other clubs as well as at home. Meet friends, learn from them, compete against them and enjoy every second of your Croquet journey.

## NATIONAL SCHOOLS & JUNIORS TOURNAMENT 2024

by Ian Draper

On the 7th July, Nottingham hosted the Schools and Juniors tournament for Croquet England. Two schools entered and Chilwell school beat Winchester by 2 games to 0. This might be the first time the schools tournament has been won by a comprehensive school.

The juniors were split into 3 age groups for the first time. The under 18 event was won by Declan McPhee, the under 13 event by Lucy Martin and the under 11 event by Talitha Hallam.

We had a wide age range represented and ran an unofficial competition for the under 7s. I was delighted such a range of ages were playing and the scene across the 4 west lawns at Nottingham was very different from the normal croquet image.

Next year the school event will be widened to include clubs entering their under 18 members and there will be under 14



and under 11 events. To avoid the date falling outside some schools' terms it will be moved to 21st and 22nd June. Next year we want a record entry at Nottingham so schools, clubs and all players under 18 get that date in your diary for 2025.

In the meantime, can I request clubs promote junior development and do everything they can to support a full age range of under 18 year olds to regularly learn and play croquet.





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# BRIAN SHORNEY MEMORIAL DAY

by Tony Johnston

Eardisley Tennis and Croquet Club held a Memorial Day for Brian Shorney C.B.E. on Sunday 21st July. Members of the club felt very strongly that they should commemorate the enormous contribution Brian made to the development of the club. Not only did he pass on his encyclopaedic knowledge of croquet but, as a former Chairman of the Croquet Association, he guided us through our expansion from a one to a two lawn club.

Brian's family were guests of honour on the day. Christine Shorney with her daughter, Clare, son Mark and his wife Dorinda were present. Messages of support were received from Llanidloes, Garway, the West Midlands Federation and numerous friends of Brian.

Christine, helped by her son Mark, planted a favourite shrub of Brian's, Viburnum Kilimanjaro, in his memory. There was a plaque with the shrub to mark the occasion and the club presented the family with a photo book of Brian playing on the lawns at Eardisley and presenting the trophies at our club's annual dinners. The weather was kind on the day and everyone fittingly enjoyed numerous games of croquet and a delicious afternoon tea.



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# Jonathan Wolfe

by Tim Jolliff

It is with great regret that we report the sad death of a member of our club. Tim Jolliff remembers his friend Jonathan.

Dr Jonathan Wolfe passed away during the night of Saturday May 25th after a successful day's play at the AC inter-counties tournament. He was 72.

Jonathan went to school at Loughborough Grammar and then did an undergraduate degree at Cambridge, followed by a PhD in Genetics at Oxford. He was married to Amy and they had three children. He was a very energetic man, with always a lot going on, smallholding, beekeeping, gardening, shepherding and looking after grandchildren.

He had two croquet careers, first

learning the game at Cambridge playing with his three close friends from Corpus Christi. His 'stag do' was a week long croquet tour with his friends where lots of croquet was played, curries consumed and beer drunk.

He reappeared in the croquet rankings in 2009 after a substantial gap away from the game and first played in Taunton Deane's advanced team in 2012, becoming a stalwart of the team. Jonathan was primarily an AC player who played what GC he did 'for shooting practice'.

He was very good at AC reaching handicap -0.5 and playing 567 advanced singles games on the ranking list. He reached a world ranking of 179, played in the Treasurer's Tankard and for Somerset. He won some tournaments, including



Bristol B level, the veterans (twice), and the Edgbaston Tompkinson Shield.

He had a remarkable memory of the games he played in and often in the journey back from a match his teammates would be treated to a blow-by-blow account of his games.

During Covid we started playing croquet each week in my garden, sledging each other's play with great humour whilst we sipped beer from the sidelines. He was a close friend, and I will miss him tremendously.

# Colin Hubert Llewellyn Prichard

1949 – 2024

by William Prichard

Colin died suddenly on 30th June, his 47th wedding anniversary. He was the second son of David and Betty Prichard, a well-respected and influential couple in the croquet world for many decades. They and their three sons all became minus handicap players and were all selected to play in at least one of the Croquet Association's selection events.

Colin was born in Middlesex, but aged seven his family moved to Monmouthshire. He was educated at Highfield School and Wellington College. Colin started work in The City with Leopold Joseph, then described as a Merchant Bank. He worked in various City companies for the next 35 years, living in London, Kent and Sussex. Colin was a Government Gilt specialist for some years until Big Bang, when the system became too automated. He switched to the Option market and stockbroking. Finally, he worked with Blackadders in Dundee. This he did from Sussex and later from Somerset as an investment expert for their clients, often commuting weekly to Dundee.

Colin started to play croquet at an early age at home on a 6/7 sized croquet lawn, converted by his father

from an Olympic Games gold medal winner's show jumping arena. With fierce sibling rivalry, he developed quickly. He played in his first tournament at Cheltenham in 1963 aged 13, in the Easter weekend handicap tournament.

Colin was a good player with an elegant left-handed grip. His chop spiltis were the envy of many. By 1970 he had become an established A class player and started entering the top events such as The Open Championship at Hurlingham, in which he played for several years. He was invited to play in the Spencer Ell Cup in 1973 and then the Chairman's Salver four times from 1973 to 1982, winning in 1975. The pinnacle of his career was being invited to play for the President's Cup in 1976 and 1979. It was in the former that he famously beat Nigel Aspinall, Britain's No1, thus ending Nigel's run of 24 consecutive game wins in the Event. Colin also beat Nigel, the Open Champion for the previous three years, in the 1985 Open Championship in two straight games. Throughout his career, he loved winning but never resented losing, preferring a drink and a good chat afterwards with his victor.

1976 was Colin's most successful season. Whilst recovering from



Hepatitis for most of the summer he was on sick leave from work. Indeed, he played so much that, fearing his Employer would smell a rat, he played under a Nom de Plume "Eamon Holiday". In those days the Daily Telegraph reported the croquet results on its sports pages. He won the Mixed Doubles Championship with his mother and the South of England Championship at Devonshire Park. He was also runner-up in the Men's Championship.

Colin earned 17 caps for Wales in the Home Internationals and other representative matches. In 1980, he was Wales No1 at the inauguration of the event, thus earning the honour of being able to wear 1 on his shirt. He also played more than 20 years for Middlesex and Sussex in the Inter Counties Championships at Hurlingham and Southwick.

He leaves his wife Jane and their three daughters Claire, Ella and Lydia and two grandchildren.

# Roger Quiller Barrett

1935 - 2024

by Nigel Polhill

I first met Quiller when I joined Ealing Croquet Club some 25 years ago. He was very helpful and soon became my first croquet mentor. He once appeared on the lawns while I was practising my 4-ball break and said 'You do know that the pivot ball doesn't have to be glued to the peg?' As my game developed, he encouraged me to join Surbiton CC in addition to Ealing so that I might encounter a greater depth of opponent. And he was on hand to take my photograph when I won my first tournament, the Surbiton Easter handicap, in 2003. Until the end, he still followed my croquet career with interest.

In the world of croquet, we will fondly remember Quiller as a kindly person of average playing ability who always encouraged others, and who ultimately became a very fair minded chairman, and later president, of the Croquet Association. I will leave it to those better qualified to detail his contribution to our sport in his executive capacity. I do know that, as in all things, when called upon to present a trophy he did his research beforehand. There would always be some accompanying anecdote or interesting historical fact about the trophy or the venue.

It is no surprise to me that Quiller excelled in this role. He had a history of involvement in a variety of organisations. I remember him telling me shortly after he stepped down as CA Chairman that, for the first time in 25 years, he was no longer on the committee of anything. Therein lies the question to which I don't fully know the answer: Did Quiller regard croquet as his primary interest?

Quiller moved from Ealing to Berkhamstead in 2003 and joined Watford CC. It was there that we were participating in a handicap tournament when he asked me if I'd like to join the poker school. A space at the table had become vacant since one of his colleagues was being treated for throat cancer. I was never a good poker player, and the

meticulously kept handwritten ledger will attest to that, but I gained a good set of friends and a far greater insight into Quiller's life. The school consisted of half a dozen of Quiller's former RAF chums. They had stuck together over the years, partly through common interests in gliding and hot air ballooning. Yes - Quiller flew both balloons and gliders! That was one of many surprises, the first being that I had to get used to him being called Roger. I'm unsure when he adopted his middle name as his preferred moniker. No doubt there are some organisations out there who know him as Roger and others, like ours, who will always think of him as Quiller.

He was a vice president of the British Gliding Association, a balloonist, and a keen member of the Chiltern Photographic Society. The walls of his flat were adorned with a fascinating collection of photographs, many taken on his travels to foreign climes. Other interests included local history, wine appreciation, and bridge which he played 2 or 3 times a week with fellow members of Watford CC.

His main career was in publishing, but in recent years he worked part time in the Citizens Advice Bureau. He was always a good listener. No doubt this helped tremendously when advising those with debt or other problems.

The poker school would meet every couple of months or so, most of us taking it in turns to host. Quiller very much enjoyed his food and wine. For him, it was less about the cards and more about the opportunity to meet for dinner with friends. We all regarded the highlight of each year as



our trip to Wadenhoe when Malcolm's wife, Jean, would prepare a hearty feast. It was there that I was introduced to Quiller's favourite wine, Chateau Musar (from the Bekaa Valley). Malcolm and Jean's cottage was also the setting that Quiller chose for the accompanying photo of the poker school. Of course, there were no selfie sticks back in 2005. This was carefully framed using a tripod mounted camera on a timer setting, with Quiller having to run around to the front and position himself within 30 seconds.

In recent years, after the poker school disbanded, Quiller and I would occasionally meet for lunch. He invariably picked the venue and always chose the wine!

Quiller was a humanist and had explicitly expressed a wish for no memorial service or other fuss. It is possible, however, that the family may arrange an informal celebration of his life later this year. He would not have a problem with anyone raising a casual glass in his memory and I, for one, will be doing just that.

Quiller was elected President of the Croquet Association in 2009. He was a passionate advocate for improved governance of our sport, seeking to modernise the arrangements that had evolved from those put in place two centuries previously. He oversaw improved transparency in elections, a drive to ensuring committee minutes were available to members, an improved governance structure (a smaller council of up to 12 members), and increased visibility of our governing body at major events. As president when I was first elected, and subsequently as chair, I valued his calm reason, diplomacy and focus on achieving the right outcome for our sport. He was keen to stand down "before becoming a nuisance". That, of course, was never the case, but I think he saw the path to incorporation as the charity Croquet England, as the right time to stand down. It will be a significant part of his legacy for our sport. Samir Patel



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[www.croquetengland.org.uk](http://www.croquetengland.org.uk) and [www.croquet.org.uk](http://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.

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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## PUBLICATIONS

The Croquet Gazette is published six times per year usually in February, April, June, August, October and December.

Copy should reach the Editor ([editor@croquetengland.org.uk](mailto:editor@croquetengland.org.uk)) 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, or copied to the Editor if they are being posted to the Nottingham List.

Digital images are preferred, but photographic prints can be acceptable. Please send digital jpeg or tiff format files and accompany all images with a description of the subject.

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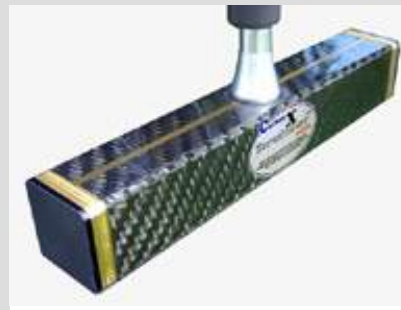
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