

CROQUET GAZETTE

Issue 412 | December 2024



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**CROQUET
ENGLAND**

Croquet England
Issue 412 | December 2024



Front cover:
Croquet for Wellbeing, Gediminas
Smolskas, Ryde's Youth Championship,
Ian Vincent BEM

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WELCOME

In December 2021 I became the Editor of our beloved Croquet Gazette. In the last three years I hope that I have helped the Gazette evolve into a magazine that you can enjoy a variety of stories, find inspiration and hopefully help you feel part of our Croquet Community.

I would like to say thank you so much to the proof readers who work tirelessly in the background, the volunteers who write tournament reports and the committees who ensure we have the latest information our clubs and players need to thrive.

Since we took back the production of the Gazette you have come forward with your welcome opinions and suggestions about what you would like to see in your Croquet Magazine. This has influenced a change in the type and style of article that now appears in each issue. Of course we must always strive for bigger and better, so further changes can be expected.

I would like to make a special thank you to those of you who have sent such kind messages of support and encouragement, letting me know that you are enjoying the Gazette and your appreciation of the work from all the volunteers that help create it.

Alison Maugham
Editor
editor@croquetengland.org.uk

BERNARD NEAL AWARD 2024

The Bernard Neal Award was instituted in March 2020 in recognition of exceptional services to croquet.

This award has been titled so that in years to come members can be reminded of the many outstanding contributions to the sport made by Bernard Neal who died in 2016. He was President of The Croquet Association from 2004-2009. There are strict eligibility criteria to be met for this award.

JOHN REDDISH

John Reddish was President of the Dulwich Sports Club for 17 years until 2014 and was Secretary of the South East Federation from 2010 to 2020.

In 2018 he was elected as the Representative of the Federation on the Croquet Association's Council.

He served, for a year, on the Council and the Management Committee. In 2019 he did not stand for re-election but retained an interest in CA affairs and was appointed as Chairman of the Development Committee in October 2019. In 2020 he became the first Chairman of the new Funding Committee.

In 2021 he became Honorary Secretary of the CA, later to take on the role of Honorary Secretary to Croquet England. He had a key role in forming the Charity and converting to Croquet England, giving untold hours of his time and legal expertise that are much appreciated with this Bernard Neal Award.



HIBISCUS COLUMN

by Minty Clinch

I've heard of people sleeping with golf clubs, but not as yet with a croquet mallet, though it would be an easier bedfellow. One of the joys of the game is that you can learn it with no capital outlay beyond your subscription. As soon as you sign up, you put on your sneakers, take your pick from a range of club mallets and dive into free coaching. Shortly afterwards, you wake from a dream about a four ball break. Or maybe a nightmare. Hollow eyes in a gaunt face brushing its teeth in the mirror confirm the reality. Yes, it's addiction.

So it's time to buy a mallet. The best ones, by global acclamation, are made from carbon fibre and kevlar by Dave Trimmer. His website announces 'Due to high demand, orders placed now will be fulfilled in June 2025'. Eight months away. When I ordered mine in 2021, it was three. As a -1 handicapper, Dave occasionally takes time out to play at the top table, along with his much more extrovert brother, Pete (-2). I assume this conjures a mate's wait for the likes of England captain, Samir Patel, who endorses the brand with a model with a long curved handle to reduce wrist strain.

Few make the pilgrimage to Penult, the Gillingham house that contains

Dave's highly sophisticated workshop, so he takes orders by phone from clients who know almost nothing of what they want or need. Head length: 10 inches is a safe starting point; 12 and over provides greater pendulum potential for experts. Shaft length: as you definitely don't want a handle punching you in the stomach on certain shots, take your grip into account. If in doubt, order long - 36 inches +. To emphasise the blindingly obvious, shafts can be cut down, but not extended.

At any croquet gathering, there will be rows of Trimmers, readily identifiable by dark gold-flecked heads attached to shafts by thick brass rings. Owners are generally happy to hand them over for a few shots, even a game if time allows. Trial and error are great pointers, so borrow lots before you make the final call. When you do, pay extra to pick your mallet out in a crowd by having your initials engraved on the brass band.

Also ask for an airline shaft. Breaking your mallet in two creates a deadly weapon with a solid head attached to a much more wieldy handle so no chance of hand luggage, but at least you can pack it in a suitcase when travelling to international tournaments. Never imagine this will never happen: more from Hibiscus soon.

Of course there are many other mallet options, almost all of them cheaper, some of them equally fit for purpose. Arguably wood is more sympathetic; certainly it's more traditional. The number 2 spot in the 2024 rankings goes to Don Oakley, a Canadian timber merchant who chanced on a need for oak mallets as well as kitchen cabinets in the 1990s. Third and fourth are Kiwis, the aggressive Terminator nylon/fibre glass design and the elegant and highly prolific Wood Mallets.

And so to hollow metal heads, represented in fifth place by the appealingly named PFC Hoop Maker from New South Wales. In theory, eliminating wind resistance makes it easier to swing straight in blustery conditions, the new norm in the climate change era. The Hoop Maker promises a lot more than that, its holes creating a percussion chamber that makes a ball hit at 80% travel the same distance as one hit at 100% by any other mallet. As hitting softly is demonstrably more accurate, it eagerly claims win, win.

Not convinced? Dr Ian Plummer tells me I could easily make my own: oxfordcroquet.com.

Duncan Hector Turf Care

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Croquet Player
Turf Specialist



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.

55 YEARS AGO

In the January 1970 Gazette (#109)

CONFERENCE OF CLUBS 22nd
November, 1969

Mr. Christopher Jaques gave an interesting talk on the manufacture of Croquet equipment. He said that lignum vitae, the hardest and heaviest wood for mallets is in short supply and that good Boxwood is unobtainable. A mahogany coloured wood called Rockwood is the only possible substitute. Round mallets are more liable to cracking than square ones. Man-made materials would be four times as expensive as wood. 50% of shafts are made of hickory which is also in short supply. Dagami, a boxwood-coloured wood from Cuba, is pliable and equally good. There is only a small demand for steel shafts. Mallets should never be oiled; they should be kept in an even temperature. A wax polish and varnish are beneficial.

60 YEARS AGO

In the December 1964 Gazette (#78)

The 1964 SEASON – A Retrospect by
Maurice B. Reckitt

Readers of this journal will no doubt be thrilled to know that they are now "with it". "Croquet," we read, in no less a periodical than the Daily Telegraph "has suddenly become an 'in' game." Having got in, as all Associates well know, the great thing is to stay in, and with the invigorating attention now being given to the game, both in the Press and over the air, there seems a good chance that we shall, and make not a break but a breakthrough to the consciousness of the public. "Sales of croquet sets this summer," we read in the article from which quotation has already been

made, "have been the best for many a year;" the game is no longer "known as the ugly duckling of British sport." We should think not indeed! When a group of ITV men descended on Devonshire Park recently they button-holed everyone available to ask, almost indignantly, why so fine a game was not being represented at the Olympic Games (they were partly reassured when informed of the existence of the MacRobertson Trophy and this country's acquisition thereof). This was by no means the first time that a croquet broadcast has been given this season, and a still more imposing team arrived from Broadcasting House later in the fortnight.

Chairman's Report of Council
Meetings 1964

Commenting on the difficulty of obtaining Managers for C.A. Tournaments, the Chairman referred to a letter he had received from the Manager of the Championship stating that he would not be prepared to manage this Tournament again owing to the rudeness to which he had been subjected by 4 of the top players. The Chairman deplored such conduct and warned of the considerable difficulty which would be experienced in finding Managers if it were allowed to continue. He thanked Maj. Dibley and Mr. Roper for their great services in managing so many tournaments.

70 YEARS AGO

In the December 1954 Gazette (#8)

The 1954 Season by Maurice B.
Reckitt

THERE have been two exceptional features of the past season, one very pleasant, the other very much the reverse. To get the unpleasant subject over first, let us be content to put on record that 1954 gave us the chilliest and most sunless, if not actually the wettest, summer for half a century. "Everyone complains about the weather," said Mark Twain, "but no one ever does anything about it." Yet croquet players come nearer to "doing something about it" than the

devotees of most games, for they play in conditions which drive cricketers and tennis players into the pavilion. The gloomy report "rain stopped play" is one that has very seldom to be recorded of our tournaments.

Yet we all felt disappointed that the weather should show itself at its worst in a summer honoured by the visit of so distinguished a player as Mr. Arthur Ross. Naturally we wished our New Zealand friends to see our croquet settings at their best. But no one took the weather more philosophically than Mr. and Mrs. Ross, nor did it seem in the least to abate the zest and the interest they showed in all they saw wherever they went. We shall all hope, however, that the team their dominion is, as we expect, to send us in 1956 will not have so surly a reception from the weather.

Notes from the Clubs

We hear at BUDLEIGH SALTERTON in late October, Croquet was still being played. The motto of the players being "If we can't play in summer, we'll play in winter."

100 YEARS AGO

In the 2nd December 1924 Gazette
No. 489 (VOL XXI No.28)

VISIT OF THE AUSTRALIANS

In response to an invitation of the Council of the C.A. an Australian Team will visit England in 1925, and will consist of four players. Three Test Matches will be played at Roehampton, Cheltenham and Bedford, the match at Roehampton being fixed for Saturday, June 27th. The dates of the other Test Matches (if more than three are decided on) will be announced, and further particulars given in due course.

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.

LITHUANIAN CROQUET PRODIGY

GEDIMINAS SMOLSKAS WAS INTERVIEWED FOR CROQUET GAZETTE BY BURY CLUB CHAIRMAN ROY SPENCER

Followers of the Croquet England Facebook page won't fail to have noticed a new name frequently appearing as a tournament winner this season – Gediminas Smolskas, better known as Ged.

Who is he and where does he come from? 37-year-old Ged is a member of Bury Croquet Club. Originally from Lithuania, he has lived in England for seven years and only took up croquet in 2020 during lockdown.

So how did the now Wigan resident become involved in croquet? Simply out for a walk in Coronation Park Radcliffe with wife Gabi, they saw two Bury Croquet Club members practising. Whilst not allowed in the ground due to Covid regulations, they watched for a little while and became interested and took away details, then researched the sport on the internet.



When play became possible after lockdown, Ged and Gabi joined Bury Croquet Club and attended coaching sessions with club AC coach Chris Alvey. It soon became clear that he had an aptitude for the game, particularly AC. He took part in club sessions and internal leagues, and also subsequently played in the club's Longman Cup and Mary Rose teams, with ongoing coaching from Chris Alvey and also Paul Rigge.



He then started to become involved in tournaments and this season has been traveling the country with wife Gabi resulting in winning 9 tournaments and achieving a zero handicap. His AC world ranking is 180 and England 87th.

He has an attacking style of play and stated that he was pleased to end the season beating a minus 1.5 opponent.

When asked how he found the time to take part in so many tournaments around the country Ged stated by

sacrificing anything else – just working and playing croquet, and my wife comes with me otherwise I wouldn't spend any time with her! Effervescent Gabi also acts as driver after a long day of croquet, advisor and encourager.

Regarding work, Ged feels that his job as a land surveyor (which involves measuring and angles) helps with his croquet as they are an important aspect of the game.

Croquet is not a sport played in his home country, except in gardens at parties. Ged played American pool for 10 years, and snooker – again a croquet connection.

Ged's favourite players are Reg Bamford and Matthew Essick, and one day hopes to play in the USA with the ultimate ambition of wearing a CqE England shirt! In the meantime, his plans for the 2025 season are to play 'A' class tournaments and win more trophies.



Ged being presented with the Honeygrove Cup

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

by Samir Patel
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Having recently published our strategy for Croquet in England to inspire players in a safe, inclusive, and diverse community, the Board of Trustees is now moving towards developing more detailed work in each of the seven areas. These groups will look at the work already being implemented by volunteers within Croquet England and in Clubs and Federations, building on these to identify more detailed plans. This will include determining the relative priorities for each, the targets we wish to reach and how we will monitor our progress.

Each group will be trustee-led, but we are looking for knowledgeable and passionate individuals from across our community to support this work. If you have ideas, knowledge of these areas and want to help us drive the development of Croquet, please contact me (samir.patel@croquetengland.org.uk).

- Play: More people playing more people in more places.
- Coaching and Tournament Officials: Supporting Roles that grow and sustain our sport.
- Safety: Ensuring everyone can enjoy croquet in a safe environment
- Inclusion: Actively encouraging more people from diverse backgrounds and identities.
- Wellbeing: A sport that is accessible and enjoyable at any age.
- Funding Growth: Securing more money to grow all levels of our sport.
- Sustainability: Responding to the challenges of climate change.



The trustees set completion of this work as one of our objectives for the coming year. The others are:

- Establishing Trustee Elections as business as usual. Our constitution sets out the role of an Electoral Commission to define the number of constituencies and their boundaries, and the procedures and timetable for elections. A group, independent of the Trustees, has been working on this, and the Trustees wish to ensure that implementation is mature so that elections are held no later than the next AGM.
- Improve succession planning – We are aware that we have a number of individuals in important roles who will be difficult to replace, and there are examples of one person having to be replaced by several. We are obviously delighted by the commitment shown but recognising that no-one can remain in a role forever, need to look at improving our resilience.
- Working towards Compliance with Tier 3 of Sport England's Code of Governance. This code incorporates established practices and research findings from multiple sports, large and small. Each of these changes are small, but collectively they will improve how we govern and run our sport and open opportunities for other forms of support from Sport England.

CHARITY ONE-BALL 2025

CALLING ALL CLUBS
WILL YOU PLAY A HEAT OF THE CHARITY 1-BALL IN 2025?

46 clubs together in 2024 raised the magnificent sum of £8288.51 for the British Heart Foundation.



In 2025 we are playing for the Alzheimer's Society, wearing something blue, and sending heat winners to either regional Final at Surbiton or Nottingham on 17 May.

Want to know more?

Contact: Debbie James



CROQUET IN THE COMMUNITY - MOVE WELL, LIVE WELL

From the Croquet Community

Surbiton CC is located within the Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames (RBK) and we have been enthusiastic supporters of Kingston Council's Move Well, Live Well initiative. The Council has been bringing together "clubs, groups, classes and activities to help" citizens "stay active and connected."

Connections are being formed both on-line and in person. Our picture shows Surbiton Treasurer Cliff Hunter and Secretary Adrian Coles extolling the virtues of croquet and Surbiton CC at a Move Well, Live Well event, held in Kingston's historic Guildhall at the end of October 2024.

There were three significant benefits of taking part. First, over a dozen people gave us email addresses or phone numbers so we could forward details of our open day and introductory courses next spring.

As importantly, we had useful and rewarding conversations with our co-exhibitors. We swapped ideas with a local bowls club on attracting new members. We discussed with the local refugee council how those seeking to become more culturally aware might benefit from an introduction to croquet. And we spoke to the local hospice on whether we could put on an event for their staff at some stage. We chatted to most of the more than 20 exhibitors at some stage.

Finally, we strengthened our relationship with the local authority. We already knew the event organiser, RBK's



Physical Activity, Exercise and Sports Development Support Officer, having welcomed him with a special two-hour introduction to croquet earlier in the summer. We now look forward to working with him next year. We already know that RBK will be helping us to publicise our open day next year, and we expect other initiatives as the relationship develops.

All in all Cliff and Adrian said that they couldn't have spent three hours with the local Council more productively or enjoyably!

CROQUET ENGLAND BENEFACTORS

From Patricia Duke-Cox

The names of Benefactors to the Croquet Association used to be read out at the AGM. The practice was changed to make it more relevant to current members by reading the names for the previous 25 years and thanking them for their philanthropy. In 2021 it was agreed that the names should be published in the Gazette and still related to the previous 25 years and would reach a wider audience if printed. With a recent handsome bequest in 2024 it is time to thank all those who have given kindly to what is now Croquet England.

2006

Alan Blenkin
John Beech

2007

Tom Anderson
Judy Anderson
John Wheeler
Pandora Wheeler

2008

David Maugham
Jeff Dawson

2010

Tremaine Arkley
Patricia Shine

2011

Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club

2014

Patricia Duke-Cox

2016

Bernard Neal

2019

Alec Coleman

2020

Brian Shorney

2024

Eleanor Rushby

GC OFFICIAL RULINGS

by Stephen Mulliner | Chairman, WCF GCRC

The WCF Golf Croquet Rules Committee has issued the following Official Rulings in accordance with WCF Statute 133.5.4. They take effect from 7 October 2024.

OR 6.2.1 – START OF THE STRIKING PERIOD

In Rule 6.2.1, the words “apparent intent” are to be interpreted as if they were a Glossary term with the following definition:

APPARENT INTENT

A player takes a stance with apparent intent to play a stroke when a referee or other observer might reasonably conclude that the stroke about to be played could be played from that stance.

Commentary

The words “when a player has taken a stance with apparent intent to play a stroke” refer to the impression given by the stance and not to the player’s state of mind. A player who takes a stance, which appears to a referee or other observer to be a stance from which they can reasonably play their next stroke, has started the striking period. A statement or series of statements from the player that they do not yet intend to play their stroke will not prevent the striking period from starting.

If the player contacts with a ball in a practice swing after the striking period has started, they will play a stroke and possibly commit a fault. Prior to the occurrence of any such contact, the player remains entitled under Rule 6.2.2 to quit the stance under control and then restart the process of playing the stroke.

OR 8.4.4 – OFFSIDE DIRECTION

In Rule 8.4.4, the words “after all balls moved by the stroke are replaced and any points scored by the stroke are cancelled” should be interpreted as if they read: “in which case all balls moved by the stroke are replaced, any points scored by the stroke are cancelled and play continues by the offside owner replaying the stroke in accordance with the offside direction.”

Commentary

This Ruling confirms that, if an offside opponent exercises their right to give or repeat an offside direction, the next stroke in the game is a replay of the offside owner’s last stroke from the designated penalty area. The offside opponent is also entitled to let the offside owner’s stroke stand and, in that case, the next stroke in the game is played by the offside opponent.

OR 12.1.2 – OVERLAPPING PLAY

In Rule 12.1.2(b), the words “the non-striking side is to lose its next stroke (see Rule 6.3.7)” are to be interpreted as if they read: “the unlawful stroke is not replayed and the striker’s side plays the next stroke in the game with the partner ball of the ball played in the lawful stroke.”

Commentary

This confirms that the non-striking side loses only the stroke that it played prematurely and clarifies what happens next.

CHILDREN'S CROQUET SET!

Introducing the perfect way to get your kids outdoors and active – the Children's Croquet Set! This delightful set is designed to bring hours of fun and excitement to your little ones, all while they learn the classic game of Croquet.

Why Choose Our Children's Croquet Set?

- Engaging and Educational: Croquet is not just a game; it's a fantastic way for children to develop hand-eye coordination, strategic thinking, and social skills.
- High-Quality Materials: This Croquet set is crafted with care from durable materials that ensure long-lasting play.
- Complete Set: The set includes everything your child needs to start playing right away – mallets, balls, hoops, and more.
- Perfect for All Ages: Whether your child is a beginner or has some experience, this set is suitable for kids of all ages.

Special Offer – Limited Stock! We are excited to offer the Children's Croquet Set at a special discounted price of £197, down from £264. This is a limited-time offer, so don't miss out on the chance to bring this wonderful game into your home. Plus, it would make a perfect Christmas present!

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<https://www.croquetengland.org.uk/product/childrens-croquet-set/>



GOLF CROQUET RULES 6TH EDITION

It is pleasing to read that the WCF Golf Croquet Rules Committee have issued an Official Ruling on Rule 8.4.4 that realigns 8.4.4 with the general understanding that an offside opponent can immediately require a replay if an offside ball is played either without waiting for or having ignored an offside direction.

When the WCF published the 6th Edition of the Rules, the subtle changes to 8.4.4, which altered the meaning radically, went unnoticed. Those changes, if applied as written, meant that the offside owner would lose the outcome of their stroke without a replay. The Official Ruling re-establishes the original intentions of 8.4.4.

Nick Harris

Response to GC Rules 6th Edition:

I am grateful to Nick Harris for raising the need for an amendment to Rule 8.4.4 with Croquet England and the WCF. The Official Rulings can be found on page 9.

Ian Cobbold
Chair of the GC Rules Committee

DOUBLE L BANKING

Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens is in the care of English Heritage. From April to October each year, the members of Belsay Hall Croquet Club are privileged to don their whites (an EH stipulation) and play on two lawns, tended by the EH gardeners. We are on display at all times to those visiting the property who pass by. The scene is one befitting our English Heritage.

As treasurer of BHCC, in common with club treasurers up and down the land, I recently received a letter from Lloyds Bank informing me that as of January 2025, they would be ending our free banking and imposing a monthly fee (£4.25) plus charges of 92p per cheque. On contacting the Lloyds Business Department to plead our case that we are a tiny club with low turnover and few transactions, I was told that this was a business decision but that I could register a complaint if I wished – I did so. Being located within the EH property, all our lawn maintenance is carried out by their gardeners, so our membership subscription is just £30 each year – about £20 of this goes to CqE and our local Federation - leaving just £10 per member to cover the running expenses of the club. The effect of the charges will be to absorb about 15% of the club's residual income in 2025, and what is to stop Lloyds ramping up the charges each year if they feel they have got away with it this time! Needless to say, my complaint has been rejected.

Lloyds Bank continues to offer free banking to charities but not to their affiliated clubs. This will not only affect croquet clubs but thousands of clubs, societies and organisations who need a bank account to show sound governance whilst supporting the communities in which they operate.

What should I do? Use our reserves to cover the fees? Change banks? Increase our membership fees to cover the extra costs? Take my complaint to the Financial Ombudsman?

Are there any club treasurers out there who can give me advice and guidance?

Alan Mundy,
Treasurer, Belsay Hall Croquet Club

AN AGEING CROQUET PLAYER'S LAMENT

by Dr Peter Honey

Oh, I used to be able to see the balls clear and sharp, and know what colour they were. Now they are fuzzy things that vanish completely in shady areas and when I'm blinded by the sun.

Chorus: Oh, it's a shame, it just isn't the same!

Oh, I can recall a time when I remembered which balls were mine, which hoop to run next, and when to take a lift. Now I'm dependent on kind opponents (and alas there aren't too many of those) giving me gentle reminders.

Chorus: Oh, it's a shame, it just isn't the same!

Oh, I used to hit a croquet ball straight and true. Now I can only hit-in if my opponent makes an error and leaves me with a fortuitous one-yard roquet. Oh, and speaking of one-yard roquets: I sometimes get over excited and miss those too.

Chorus: Oh, it's a shame, it just isn't the same!

Oh, I used to be able to run narrow hoops with aplomb, sometimes even at tricky angles. Now I often blob hoops, consoling myself that the ball actually went through, but then rolled back again.

Chorus: Oh, it's a shame, it just isn't the same!

Oh, I can remember when a croquet court, measuring 35 by 28 yards, seemed a manageable space. Now, staggering from one baulk line to the other is a real challenge. I can also recall when bending to retrieve my ball, and bring it back onto the yard line, was effortless. Now I pretend to be distracted and wait for someone to do it for me.

LETTERS CONTINUED

Chorus: Oh, it's a shame, it just isn't the same!

Oh, I can remember when judging angles and doing split-rolls was a pleasure. Now the whole manoeuvre is in the lap of the gods. I can even recall when rushing a ball the length of the court gave me a real thrill, and even a time when cut-rushes weren't hazardous. Now, completely missing a one-yard rush, let alone a cut-rush, is a common occurrence.

Chorus: Oh, it's a shame, it just isn't the same!

Oh, I can recall when I used to resent being the out-player, sitting for long periods watching my opponents setting up four-ball breaks, doing triple-peels and the like. Now I relish the long rest with nothing to worry about except, should I get another turn, how I'm going to get up out of this chair?

Chorus: Oh, it's a shame, it just isn't the same!

Oh, I can remember when pegging out was a joyous moment of triumph. Now the expression 'pegging out' has taken on a whole new meaning.

Chorus: Oh, it's a shame, it just isn't the same!

EFFICIENT HOOP CHECKING

Having on occasion been a tournament referee and been expected to check the courts before the start of an event, I decided that I needed something to speed up the early morning hoop-checking process. The gauge I came up with is most useful when Quadway hoops are being used, but it can be used on any hoop where the wire size doesn't exceed 11/16" diameter. The reason it is most useful with Quadways is because it provides a quick check that all the hoops on a court have been adjusted to the same top setting. It's unlikely that you'll be able to see the markings on the square carrots once hoops are set to the correct depth. Using the gauge again at half-ball height will indicate how parallel and uniform the hoops on a court have been set.

My first attempt at making the gauge was with a piece of 20-gauge stainless steel which of course was strong and hard-wearing but took a long time to produce by hand. Then I thought 3D printing might be the answer to producing a lightweight gauge that could easily fit inside a rule book. Not having a 3D printer myself, I found a fellow club member who was willing to have a go. His second attempt proved successful at getting the dimensional accuracy required, although as he explained there were difficulties in producing the uniform gradually increasing radius needed. The curved profile has a series of short flats which needed hand blending to obtain a smooth finish. This was easily rectified and the 2mm thick plastic gauge shown in the photograph has proved very useful.

The measurements were determined from a standard ball size of 3 and 5/8" and range from plus 1/64" at one end of the curved profile to plus 9/64" at the other. The datum point is taken from the centre of the semicircular recess when located against the hoop wire, as shown in the photo.

Richard Brooks (SCCC)

Acknowledgements and thanks to Jim Mander for the 3D printing and to Morgan Case for the photograph.



CLUB REPRESENTATION

In 2024 I opted to downgrade my club subscription to a non-playing member and I would like to know if I would have been eligible, if selected, to represent my club in inter-club matches. Is there or should there be a rule which, for example, allows representation only if the club pays Levy for that player to Croquet England? The reason for this question is that I believe there is or at least has been some representation outside the spirit of the sport and I think there should be some general agreement on this matter.

Edward Dymock

Thank you for raising this issue. As a non-playing member, you would not be eligible to represent your club in inter-club matches. The first condition in the AC and GC conditions sets out the eligibility criteria for our inter-club events: "These competitions are open only to Croquet England Affiliated clubs. The players must be Individual Associates of Croquet England, and playing members of the clubs they are representing."

There is no rule which restricts players to representing only their primary club (which is the club that pays levy for them to Croquet England), and indeed the second condition currently recognises that some people will be members of, and may represent, more than one club. It states: "An individual may play for the same or different clubs in different competitions during a season, but in any one competition may not play for more than one team."

Jonathan Powe, Tournaments Committee

LETTERS CONTINUED

EXTRA STROKES

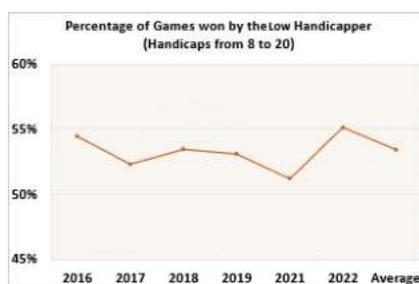
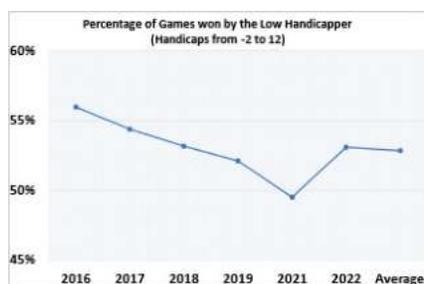
I submitted an article to the August edition of the Croquet Gazette on Coaching GC Extra Strokes. I considered it to be an important topic because, although I know that not everyone will agree with me, I have come to the conclusion that Advantage GC is unlikely to last very long. There are various reasons for this opinion, but the main ones are that it is only appropriate when the players' handicaps are reasonably similar, and unusable when they are not. This means that when AGC is appropriate, you may as well play level, otherwise stick to Extra Strokes GC.

I think that the added tactical requirement of using your extra strokes efficiently or of learning to play against them adds a positive factor to the GC game.

Those who argue against extra strokes often say that it makes the game too difficult for beginners to learn, but the same argument could be applied to handicap AC. Why not give the higher handicapper some hoops to start with because bisques are too complicated? Obviously this suggestion would be dismissed because the bisques are there to help the player create 4-ball breaks. In Handicap GC the extra strokes are there to help the player to win hoops; just giving them the hoops is not the same.

Another argument I have heard against Extra Strokes GC is that it's biased towards the low handicappers so, when the question of converting to AGC was discussed in the South West Federation last year, I addressed the issue of bias with some analysis of the SWF league results.

We have two GC Handicap leagues with different handicap limits. One has no minimum handicap and a maximum of 12, the other has a minimum of 8 and no maximum. I analysed the results for the years 2016 to 2022, (excluding 2020 when the leagues were not played). This gave me a total of 6,645 singles games, not including draws.



As these two graphs show, there is a fairly consistent bias of about 3% in favour of the low handicapper. If, therefore, coaching in the use of extra strokes was improved only slightly, it could be expected that this bias would be removed.

Stephen Custance-Baker

Response to Extra Strokes:

Following the SCF Advantage trial in 2021 a modified table of Starting Scores has been in use unchanged for three seasons.

In addition to league play in most of the UK Federations Advantage has been adopted internationally and is now the preferred form of handicap play in England, Australia and New Zealand.

The most convincing reason for this is its simplicity and immediate relevance to level play by changing only the starting score. Rule 20 (Extra strokes) requires three and a half pages to describe a very different game.

Advantage tournament and league play worldwide is witness to a very usable game between players of different abilities. Should the need arise managers now have a simple, and above all, fair method of resolving timed handicap games.

The latest 2024/25 version in response to feedback and experience has been agreed by GC Rules and forwarded to the WCF for approval and publication on its website.

This new version has taken the opportunity to strengthen the algorithm by using two years' of SCF Advantage results. Some 40% of such games (those with wider handicap differences) are affected by revised starting scores and, significantly, starting scores are now included for all games across the complete -6 to 20 handicap range.

The latest documentation is always available on the WCF and CqE websites. The latter includes excellent additional teaching material developed by Ian Shore which should be essential reading for coaches and players unfamiliar with the game.

Feedback is welcome via advantagegc@worldcroquet.org or by contacting me directly.

Roy Tillcock

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A SPECIAL PRESENTATION FOR A SPECIAL PERSON

by Patricia Duke-Cox and Beatrice McGlen



Ian Vincent is the Special Person who was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to croquet this year.

Although it was announced in the 2024 New Year Honours that Ian was to become a Medallist of the Order of the British Empire, it took a while for the award to be made tangible. He was invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace on a very wet afternoon in May (the day before the then Prime Minister got soaked when announcing the election), but these medals are presented locally. He was offered a date in April, but had planned to be abroad on holiday, so the first available opportunity was in late September.

The celebration began with Ian's guests who joined him for lunch at a French restaurant in the city. This enabled our President, Patricia Duke-Cox and our Chief Executive, Beatrice McGlen, both also members of the Nottingham Club, to meet his personal guests before the formal presentation.

Along with three other recipients (two for services to local communities and one to the NHS), we all attended a ceremony at Nottingham's Council House. On arrival we were welcomed and offered light refreshments. We had an opportunity to chat to the other recipients and their guests and were able to admire the splendid displays of silverware held at the Council House and then inspect the medals to be awarded to the four candidates.

Permission to take photographs was given but a professional photographer was also present and willing to take group photos, some of which we have added to this report.

The medals were presented by the Lord-Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, Professor Veronica Pickering, who was supported by her deputies, who read the citations, her administrator and a couple of military cadets, and the proceedings concluded with tea and cakes.

It was a lovely ceremony and an honour to share Ian's special moment.



WATFORD (CASSIOBURY) CROQUET CLUB LAWN IRRIGATION PROJECT

by Kevin Currie
Trustee Watford (Cassiobury) Croquet Club

For a number of years the Club had been considering the need to install a watering system to the 4 lawns located in Cassiobury Park, on land leased from Watford Borough Council (WBC). In 2022, the Trustees decided to embark on the scheme, having accumulated sufficient funds and with the prospect of fundraising to meet the projected cost of £36,000.

By way of background, the Club was established in 1936, with two lawns, which are located close to the club pavilion. Lawns 3 & 4 were previously tennis courts and were levelled in 2017 with funds provided by WBC, as part of a lottery grant awarded to Cassiobury Park. In 2019, we became a registered Charity (CIO). The pavilion, which is leased from WBC, was built in 2021, has kitchen and toilet facilities. We currently have 68 members, playing both codes of croquet, ranging from beginners to players with considerable experience with UK rankings. One of our members is part of the England training squad.

As a Club we have supported and hosted the various national competitions run by Croquet England and have been winners of the Murphy Shield in 2021, 2018, 2017 and 2013, the Mary Rose in 2017 and the Longman Cup in 2001. We are active participants of the EACF, entering numerous teams in East Anglian leagues. Four members of our Club sit on the EACF Committee.

The main objective of the project was to improve the lawn quality in the summer months by making sure the lawns are adequately watered in order that patches of grass do not dry out and die, particularly along the northern boundaries of lawns 1 & 2, which are affected by large trees in the park. Ultimately, improving the quality of the lawns will allow the Club to support a higher level of Croquet England tournaments than we are currently able to do. Furthermore, we wish to increase the Club's membership by improving the lawn quality and encourage a wider community involvement.

At the outset of the project, two Trustees volunteered to investigate fundraising. Several nearby Croquet Clubs were contacted to 'pick their brains', on how they went about raising funds for their projects. Newport and Northampton were particularly helpful, as was Beatrice McGlen, who all freely shared their experiences and offered great advice. We approached Croquet England, through Jonathan Toyne, our Federation Development Officer, who supported our application for a grant in February this year. This was considered and we were granted £5,000 towards the project. We also considered a Crowdfunding approach, which potentially could have included match funding from Sport England. Ultimately, we did not need to use Crowdfunding as, following an update to members in the January newsletter, two members kindly offered donations of

£15,000 towards capital projects, which are enhanced by claiming Gift Aid. These donations, as well as the grant, enabled us to move ahead with the project, knowing that 66% of the projected costs were covered, leaving the Club with a healthy balance sheet upon completion.

During the summer and Autumn of 2022, we began investigating the feasibility and options for an automatic irrigation system. We discovered that the local golf and bowls clubs were using boreholes instead of mains water, which would be the preferable option on environmental grounds and likely to be the cheaper way forward in the long term, despite the initial higher capital cost. Advice from several clubs, who already had sprinkler systems installed, was much appreciated.

The next stage was to obtain written confirmation from both Affinity Water and the Environmental Agency, that they had no objections to the use of a borehole and the expected water consumption would not require an Extraction License. In June 2023 a hydrogeological survey was commissioned. The report was promising, indicating there was an ample supply of water at an expected depth of 20 to 25 meters. This gave us the confidence to invite tenders from a number of borehole contractors. A few months later we selected Smith & Webb, a local contractor.

During this time, we had been talking to WBC and the Parks management team, about our plans. However, shortly before we intended to proceed, we were advised that the installation of an automatic irrigation system would be subject to formal planning permission from WBC, albeit it was on land owned by the council.

In December 2023, we submitted an application for planning permission, which was in turn published by the Council. This led to some local residents making formal objections on the grounds that the pop-up sprinklers would be noisy and that the trees could be potentially damaged by digging trenches for the pipework. As a consequence, the scheme had to be put before a full Council planning meeting for consideration.

This meeting took place on 8th February, with both the Club and the objectors making a short presentation at the meeting. We were able to make the case that the Council itself installed the automatic system at the nearby Bowls Club in the park and no complaints were received regarding noise. At the meeting the Councilors were mindful to approve our scheme, however the Planning Officer, wanted a time restriction, to appease the local residents. Two days later, we received written planning approval, albeit with a couple of further stipulations. We had to provide a Tree Protection Plan and confirmation that there is adequate noise protection for the borehole pump located underground.

Continued on page 16

WATFORD DEVELOPMENT CONTINUED

Accordingly, a Tree Protection Plan was developed, to satisfy the Parks Tree Manager and we also submitted evidence to demonstrate that the borehole pump is inaudible, however formal approval required a formal Discharge of Conditions application which takes a further 6 weeks to complete. We eventually received acceptance on 15th April and work could finally proceed.

After several delays, Smith & Webb started the drilling operation on 30th May. The early progress was quite slow, due to the layers of gravel and flint below the top surface. The expected chalk strata was reached after 9 meters and finally the water table located at a depth of 14 meters, which was a great relief to the Trustees. This was consistent with the predicted hydrogeological survey and drilling continued to a depth of 45/50 meters, at which point a 5" diameter plastic pipe was inserted into the borehole and the manhole pit prepared. The water supply was tested and confirmed we have suitable flow rates and pressure to install the appropriate model of pump, two weeks after drilling started. At the beginning of July the contractors installed the borehole pump and at their recommendation a 100 liter pressure vessel within the pavilion, which would enable the Club to control the pressure to the sprinklers, thus avoiding any pressure surges.

The next phase of the project was to lay a pipework 'ring main' around the four courts. For this, Simon Hatherell spent many hours designing the layout of the irrigation pipework and the sprinkler coverage to cover all parts of the courts. At this stage the Club decided on a DIY approach to reduce the costs. The appropriate amount of pipework, connectors and 16 Rainbird sprinkler heads were ordered and delivered. The only question was whether we hire in a trenching machine to dig the trenches ourselves, Ultimately, sense prevailed, and we opted to hire with an operator, who completed the work in one day on 10th July.

With the help of volunteers from the club, the pipework was laid, joints tightened and connected to the sprinkler heads, which had their own pits dug separately. After Simon had wired up the heads, we were ready to connect and test the water flow and adjust the distribution to the lawns. In the last two weeks of July members have been backfilling the trenches and there remains an amount of spoil to be disposed of, at which time we will apply a mix of topsoil and grass seed.

In the meantime, the automatic sprinkler system had been programmed to water the courts every evening for a minimum of one hour each and we are operational.

Finally, a big thank you to Croquet England and East Anglia Croquet Federation for their generous grants, but also to Club members for their subscriptions, participation in Croquet England tournaments and those who made donations along with Gift Aid.



Experiences from this project

- Keep members informed.
- Register for Gift Aid if a CIO. Start talking to the local authorities at the earliest. Be prepared for long waits to get an answer.
- Get to know your Planning Officer and be prepared for Planning surprises!
- Make an allowance for contingencies and legal fees.
- Talk to other clubs and take advice.
- Definitely use an operative to dig the trenches.

BUDLEIGH SALTERTON WEEKEND TOURNAMENT

IN PICTURES

by Klim Seabright



RICHARD GETS THE LAWNS TO THE STANDARD OF A SNOOKER TABLE CLOTH



NIGEL, A MEMBER OF THE HOOP SETTING TEAM, CHECKS FOR ACCURACY



END OF DAY 1



WE ARE READY TO GO



THE HOOP TEAM CAN GROW THEIR OWN CARROTS!



CHAIRMAN RAY VIRR AND CHRIS PREPARE THE TROPHY PRESENTATION



PLAYERS ENJOYING THE FINAL



--- AAANDREST!



MANAGER CHRIS WILLIAMS ENSURES THAT "THERE'S A WELCOME IN THE (BUDLEIGH) HILLSIDE"

South of England Championship 2024

by Nigel Matthews

The appeal of playing croquet on the Sunshine Coast in September drew an international field this year, with players from England, Scotland and New Zealand competing for the prestigious South of England AC Championship. Once again Compton CC were exemplary hosts, providing beautiful lawns, sumptuous lunches and even ensured two days of warm sunshine. A bit of rain overnight did catch out a couple of players who hadn't realised that sitting on wet seats would lead to a final day of soggy bottoms.

The Championship knockouts were hard fought, with Jamie Burch and Mark Avery, the two highest ranked players, meeting in the final. Played as best of 3, the crowd were excited at the prospect of some high quality croquet. The first game lasted 3 hours. Hmm. But then their form returned for two exciting games, one with a two-ball ending from hoops 1&2 respectively. Jamie won through with a highly impressive 11 hoop break to peg out and duly won the trophy 2-1.

The plate was won by Nigel Polhill (always good to have a Nigel winning) beating Sam Murray in the final, which finished after everyone else had gone home.

This was my first South of England Championship and I'll definitely be back next year.

Photos below:

Winner Jamie Burch | Mark Avery, Runner-up | Nigel Polhill, Plate Winner | Sam Murray, Plate Runner-up | Aaron Westerby



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LONGMAN CUP FINAL

by Chris Weedon

East Dorset beat Southport 4-3, to win the Longman Cup for the first time since 2005

Venue: Northampton Croquet Club

Weather: Beautiful, but getting cloudier during the day

Courts: Good. Neither too fast nor too slow

In the doubles, Chris and Mike started to fall behind early on, and the gap only increased throughout the game. Neither player strung a break together, despite some good hitting in, followed by a lack of consolidation!

John won convincingly, using his bisques well. Sadly, Peter barely scored, though this was to change in his second game!

Christine went 16-1 down to Eddie, but pulled back to win +1 in an extraordinary recovery. That gave East Dorset a 2-1 lead at lunch.

John continued his morning form, and again used his bisques really well, and won his second game of the day.

Christine was starting to catch up in her game, but lost out -6 to Peter, who had clearly had Shredded Wheat for lunch after his morning defeat.

Mike was 16-1 down to Eddie, as Christine had been to him in the morning. But he also came out on top, also winning on time. It was the good news that East Dorset wanted... they had won the Cup after two years of coming second.

Chris had been behind in his game from the start, but playing better than he did in the morning, and twice brought the scores level. Indeed with a couple of minutes to go he was 1up. However Bill hit in and scored 2 hoops and sent a ball to each corner... game over! Time for tea and cakes.

Thanks are due to:

Southport, for being worthy and sporting opponents. It could have gone either way.

Paul Shard, from Northampton CC for managing the game in all aspects

Lionel Tibble, for refereeing wisely

The ladies, whoever they were, for baking the cakes.

and Hilary, who continues to manage the Longman year after year.

Teams:

East Dorset:

Chris Weedon (capt) 4

Christine Rice 6

Mike Rice 6

John Freeman 16

Southport:

Bill Nicholl (capt) 7

Peter Williams 9

Eddie Green 10

David Venables 10



Playing Split Croquet Strokes Without Pull

by Pete Trimmer

When playing a croquet stroke, the direction of the croqueted ball is usually 'pulled' (from how they were lined-up) slightly toward the direction of the striker's ball. Despite having played A-class AC for over 30 years, it only recently occurred to me that it's possible to play a split croquet stroke without any pull.

The amount of pull depends on many factors (the angle of split, amount of roll, type of balls, milling orientation, temperature, and so on). Most player's beliefs about pull seem to be based on trying things out and finding what works, rather than really understanding what is going on.

Here, I take a somewhat unusual route into the subject, by starting with the more complex topic of cannons. This may seem a strange choice, but bear with me!

Figure 1a shows a 3-ball cannon, with the balls in a perfectly straight line (pointing due north) ... on a perfectly flat lawn. If the striker's ball (blue) is then struck with the mallet toward the north east (diagonally up and right on the page), which direction will the most northerly ball (black) travel? Think it through before reading on.

Given that the black is bound to travel generally northward, there are 3 possibilities: perfectly north (dead straight), north and slightly east (right a bit), or north and slightly west (left a bit).

I asked numerous players this question at the British Opens this year, and was somewhat surprised to receive all 3 answers. However, the vast majority of players answered that the black would travel very slightly in the direction of the mallet strike – slightly east of due north in this case.

That was also the reply of a 6 time world champion, so you are in good company if that was your answer.

The truth – a surprise to many – is that the ball will travel north and slightly west; the opposite lateral movement to the 'normal' pull of a croquet stroke.

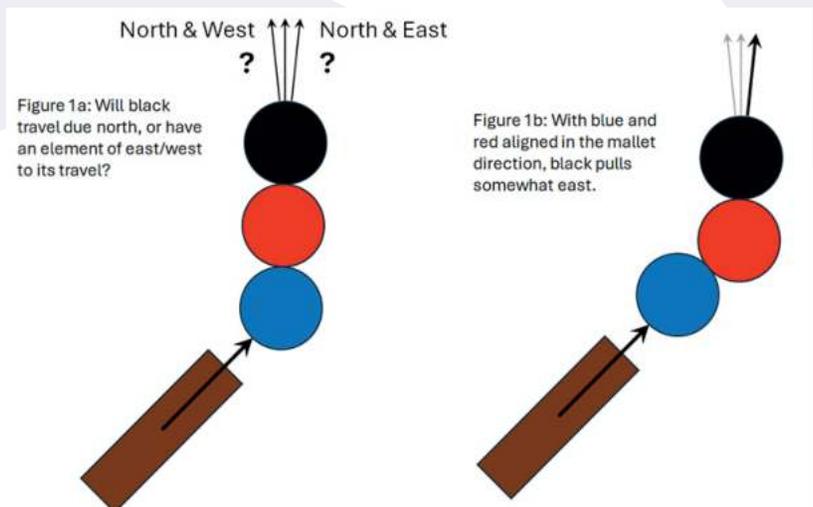
Many relative experts reading this may initially doubt my assertion. "Surely," they reason, "the strikers ball pulls red slightly east of due north, so red must then also pull black a little east!?" I previously believed that logic, until I tried it numerous times (and in both directions, in case of a hill).

As blue is struck north-east, it imparts an anti-clockwise spin on red, along with the northward impulse. That anticlockwise spin is then converted to a clockwise spin on black (again along with a northward impulse force). (Think of them as cogs, if that helps.) As the black starts to move northward, the clockwise spin becomes angled (the front of the ball spinning toward the east) and drives the black somewhat west. (Note that this is the opposite effect of an aerofoil effect – if the ball were just spinning in air, it would move the other way! Here, we're talking about the effect of the spin getting carried into driving it along the grass.) The northward side of the ball (moving right due to rotation in the vertical axis) starts to move down toward the grass, so the clockwise vertical rotation gets converted into driving the ball west somewhat.

Having understood that, we can use the same logic to think about a simple croquet stroke: without black being involved, the blue puts anticlockwise spin on the red, so as it travels north, the ball gets driven somewhat east; this is the essence of how pull occurs.

Now consider Figure 1b: the blue has been moved 45° around red. Now, blue is being struck directly into red, so doesn't invoke spin on red initially. Thus, the effect on black is to be pulled somewhat east of due north.

This means that there is a position for blue, somewhere between the positions of Figs 1a and 1b, where the 'spin effect' (of



Continued on page 21

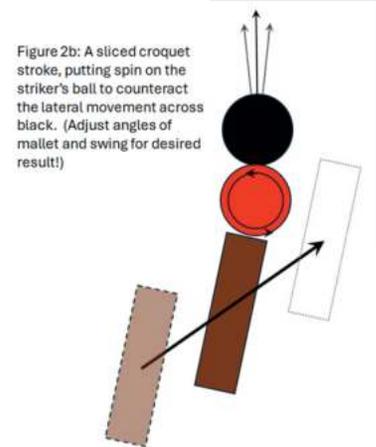
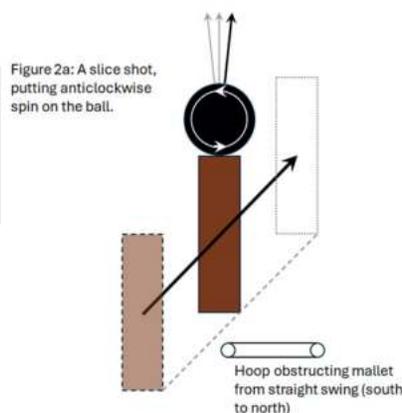
CONTINUED...

blue turning red and thus turning black) and the 'drag effect' (of red on black – much like the pull of a normal croquet stroke) cancel out; black would then travel due north, despite red splitting off that line.

So much for cannons – perhaps interesting, but rarely of real value! However, (for armchair croquet players, at least!) this shows the potential for being able to play split croquet strokes without pull, by putting spin on the striker's ball (ie. making the mallet act like the blue ball in the 3-ball cannon).

Methods of putting sideways spin on the striker's ball are well known; eg. many players make use of the sweep shot to get out of trouble when close to a hoop. Another useful stroke, less used, is the slice (Figure 2a). The aim with the slice is not usually to put spin on the ball, but to be able to have a good swing at the ball (whilst avoiding the hoop) – to do so well, you need to account for the spin that the mallet will inevitably put on the ball (this draws the ball slightly in the direction the mallet is moving, rather than perfectly perpendicular to the mallet face).

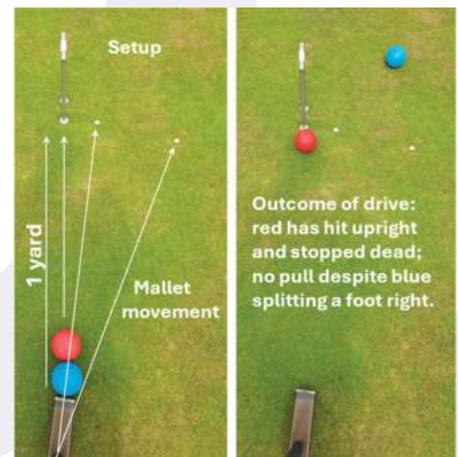
The general scheme is shown in Fig 2b. For there to be zero pull, the rotational speed of the ball must match the lateral speed of the striker's ball – much like the relative speed of a wheel rolling on a road is zero at the very bottom of the wheel (and if the wheel is rolling at a constant speed, then the wheel presses directly downwards rather than pushing forward or back). However, this part of the theory is not of much use in estimating anything about angles; the rotation imparted for a particular set of angles will depend on your mallet face – so at this point, it's back to empirically finding what works for you. (Note that this stroke is less risky with a wide mallet head; it's easy to bevel by accident). For an indication of effect size, a result with my mallet is shown in Fig 3.



Even if not deliberately making use of slice (to reduce/cancel pull, etc), this shows that being consistent with how one strikes the ball (i.e., without slicing it slightly by accident), will help to keep the amount of pull consistent.

Finally, I should note that I've laid this out as though the dynamics are simple. In reality, there are many complications; for instance, with most croquet strokes, the croqueted ball starts by rotating backwards very briefly, due to the front of the striker's ball moving downwards. This means that (even when playing without slice) the pull direction is, very momentarily, reversed. When playing a powerful full- or pass-roll, this may be what leads to 'reverse pull' (identified by Reg Bamford some years ago).

Figure 3: mallet pointing half a mallet length (5.5 inches) right of the upright, mallet swinging through a line toward a point 19 inches right of the upright.



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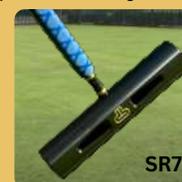
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Neil Morrison Trophy

A SUMMER REPORT FROM SWINDON

by Tony Mayer
Tournament Manager, Swindon C C

The first tournament for the Neil Morrison Memorial Trophy was held over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

Neil was a keen AC player and excellent coach and it is fitting that the Trophy in his name is for AC players of handicaps 7 and above – a group for whom Neil’s coaching helped most.

In fact there are very few tournaments specifically designed for this group of AC players to engage in Level Play using the so-called ‘Advanced’ rules.

This first tournament involved 6 players with five rounds so that all played all. It is gratifying that this first playing of the Trophy attracted players from Bath, Blewbury, Bristol/Nailsea, Kenilworth and High Wycombe as well as from Swindon

The tournament opened on Saturday in a torrential downpour. Standing water made Court 1 unplayable and court 2 was just about usable and so, double banking on Court 3 took place as this was relatively unscathed. The heavy rain made arduous work as it took a lot of energy to move a ball any distance. Consequently, all the first-round games went to time.



However, by the afternoon with drying conditions we were able to use all three courts and avoid double banking. Some differential drying left the lawns a little bumpy which created a different challenge to the players. Fortunately, the second day was dry albeit with a very strong wind – again another challenge!

It soon became evident that Andy Evason from Blewbury was the favourite as he played some excellent croquet creating lengthy breaks usually including peels. The early prediction of his success was borne out as he remained undefeated throughout the tournament often winning by significant margins. So not only did Andy win all his games but he ended up with a hoop difference of plus 50 – a really impressive achievement.

There was a close fight for second place with Mervyn Harvey and Phil de Glanville tied on 3 wins each with Mervyn having a good positive hoop difference to become runner-up.



L to R: Alan Braunton, Philip de Glanville, Andy Evason, Kathy Wallace, Mervyn Harvey and Richard Coward

Lynette, Neil’s daughter came on the afternoon of the second day to present the cup to the winner. One should note that with Andy’s impressive and rapid progress it is unlikely that he will be able to defend the Trophy in 2025 as his handicap will be much too low by then!

Despite the conditions on the first day, we saw some excellent play and close finishes over the two days which is a reflection of the standard achieved by all participants.

We are all now looking forward to 2025 for this to become a well established feature of the Croquet England calendar.

CROQUET REPORTERS WANTED

From Alison Maugham, Editor, editor@croquetengland.org.uk

I would like to welcome a fresh approach to our reporting in the Gazette. Can you help me?

Do you have experience in writing, are you a good story teller, a follower of the championship players or keen to share news and ideas from the grass roots of our community? In our Gazette there should be something for everyone, which means I need the voice of everyone to help me. Email me or call me for a chat if you are interested, 07766 720 830.

"Class" Advanced Tournaments

A SPRING REPORT FROM NAILSEA

by Kathy Wallace

The Nailsea May and June Tournaments are both run as "Class" Advanced tournaments so that we can attract a wide range of handicaps but avoid matches between players of disparate abilities. The range in May is 2+. And in June, it's 0-8. We particularly encourage entries from players who are just beginning to play with Advanced Rules and don't want to face experienced B Class opposition. In the past we have had the full complement of 16, with 8 in each of the classes and the split being around the 3.5 mark. This year, we were disappointed with a meagre 10 entries with a gap between 2.5 and 6.

The only format that didn't involve repeat matches was two classes of 5. The players in the low handicap class were competing for the Peter Dyke Ruby Shield which was commissioned to mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of Nailsea Croquet Club by Peter. Their handicaps were all 2 or 2.5, apart from Erica Malaiperuman who had gone down to 1.5 after entry, so remained eligible to play. The higher handicap class had three 6s, a 9 and an 11. The 9 was Alex Lake from Newport. He had been 12 on entry and had been propositioned by the manager on the new Croquet Hub Facebook page. Alex had played his Club handicapper in the preceding few days and been reduced. The 11 was Geoff Barrett, a new player from Bristol who had an AHS reduction to 11 before the event. The trophy on offer here was the Michael Poole Cup – named in memory of Michael Poole who was also a founder member of Nailsea.



With 5 in each class, the format was "all play all". The two players who were sitting out played a friendly match and this system seemed to work well, in that no-one complained or decided not to play. Alex beat a 2.5 who was delighted that the match didn't go on his card.

In the Peter Dyke Ruby Shield, Erica won all 4 matches and took the shield home. Erica is the second Nailsea lady to get her name on it after Pat Long in 2022. She also forced a handicap reduction to 2. Chris Donovan, Adrian Morris and Robert Upton all had 3 wins. Going into the final round of the Michael Poole Cup, Geoff Barrett was on 3 wins and Kathy Wallace was on 2 wins. As manager, Kathy had her eye on a potential tie-break to entertain the crowd. Alex did his bit by beating Geoff so Geoff remained on 3 wins. After a dire couple of hours, Kathy made a late comeback to try to overcome Mike Salisbury (Bristol), but Mike played a brilliant last turn to win +1T. Thus Kathy stayed on 2 wins and Geoff won the cup. Alex Lake and Mike Salisbury also had 2 wins.

Robert Upton won the prize for the fastest win and also for the greatest number of peg-outs. Geoff Barrett took the prize for the biggest upset, exchanging 15 points with Kathy. As he had taken 16 points from her the previous week in a club match, she now regards him as a Number 31 bus.

The weather was kind after all the rain in the preceding weeks. The Nailsea hoops were fair and consistent but few would describe them as kind. One of the new players has claimed that he is suffering from PTSD after his encounter with them but he can gaze at the cup to help his recovery. I have promised Alex a prize for his win against a 2.5 in the friendly, provided he comes to another Nailsea tournament to claim it.

The lawns were in good condition and had been expertly mowed; they played beautifully, allowing successful long range roquets and accurate hoop approaches. Although we didn't provide lunches, refreshments were available all day from a helpful band of volunteers and the cakes were as splendid as ever. Time limits of 2h 45min and a relatively short break for lunch kept us all reasonably alert and active to the end!

It was lovely to achieve one of the objectives and have two very new players playing so successfully in an Advanced tournament. However, where are all the players between 2.5 and 12? Apart from three 6s, in the initial entry list, we had none. There is a similar pattern at tournaments, around the country. It's sad to think that it's part of the general decline in AC numbers, particularly amongst new players.

2024 AC Inter-Club Final

NOTTINGHAM V ROEHAMPTON

by Tim Russell

The 2024 season came to a close as Roehampton beat Nottingham 4-3 in a tight match to retain the AC InterClub trophy for the third year.

Roehampton scores first

Harry Fisher and Christian Carter lost to James Death and Omied Hallam -25 TP (D)

Mark van Loon beat Lorna Dewar +11

Joel Taylor beat Rick Harding +25TP

Harry Fisher lost to James Death -26TP

Christian Carter lost to Omied Hallam -24

Mark van Loon beat Rick Harding +26

Joel Taylor beat Lorna Dewar +6TP

The match was played at Blewbury - slightly delayed by Joel Taylor forgetting his watch/alarm was on US time rather than UK time (he had flown back from the States the day before). Most games were one sided with Nottingham's 1&2 James and Omied in good form. The doubles match saw Roehampton make a poor approach to hoop 2 followed by a missed angled hoop. James made no mistake with a trademark quick triple, although he added to the excitement by putting balls unintentionally in hoops. Just a modest irritation for a man of his talents. In his singles match he hit fourth turn, Harry missed the lift and James finished, though again with one or two balls erring into tricky positions. On Blewbury's evenly paced lawns, missed lift shots often cost games and James got his revenge on Harry, having lost by the same score last year to Harry.

Omied won his match without trying a triple. Christian missed fourth shot and the lift, but hit after Omied failed to finish. An ambitious attempt to get behind a ball on the North boundary to make hoop 3 failed and Omied finished.

The only close games in the match involved Lorna Dewar. In her first match against Mark van Loon, both players made hoop 1 with one ball before Mark took a ball to 4 back. Lorna missed the lift and Mark looked to have his triple under control until he overhit his ball beyond rover whilst approaching penultimate. His attempt at rushing to a peeling position at rover left too angled a hoop which he sensibly declined, but his leave was not particularly tidy and Lorna hit the lift. Mark had peeled her hoop 2 ball through one hoop during his turn and Lorna set off on her turn with bystanders rather puzzled by her line of play. It soon became clear to all, except Lorna, that she thought she was on a finishing triple peel turn. And she played it perfectly! Mark intervened as her yellow ball hit the peg and she started to remove the (non) pegged out red from the lawn justifiably pleased with her excellent turn. Then the dawning realisation of a 'senior moment'! Bad luck Lorna.



In her second match she took advantage of a short approach to hoop 2 by Joel who retreated to corner 4. An excellent hit in by Lorna saw her get round to 4 back. Joel missed the lift and Lorna set off on the second ball, but never got her partner ball into peeling position. As she neared the end of her break, her positioning became less tidy. She ran an excellent 45 degree angled penultimate but left herself a 5 yard roquet after penultimate which she missed into baulk. Joel made no mistake getting his ball round, Lorna missed the lift and Joel finished with a triple which contained some shots a couple of Mac players thought far too ambitious, but his non-playing captain had no such doubts!

'What time is it' Joel Taylor

A close match that could have gone either way.

Many thanks to Joe King for setting the hoops and to Blewbury for hosting the final for the second year running.

2024 GC Inter-Club Final

BOWDON V NOTTINGHAM

by Ian Burrige
Captain, Nottingham

This match was played on Saturday September 28th at Bowdon. Ian Burrige gave the visitors a good start with victory over Nigel Matthews. When Lorna Dewar followed this up with a close 7-6 7-6 victory over Angharrad Walters the visitors, who had certainly begun as underdogs, probably became slight favourites to win the match. Jack Good and J-P Moberly won the doubles in straight games to set up what was likely to be a close finish in the afternoon.

After lunch James Death and Euan Burrige both quickly went game up but at the bottom Bowdon's fortunes had reversed with both Angharrad and Nigel winning their opening afternoon games. James sealed his match against Jack in straight games to give Nottingham a 3-1 lead with all the other matches going to a third. Ian and Euan were both ahead throughout their deciders with Euan clinching the title for Nottingham, before Ian also won with Nigel claiming a consolation win for the hosts.

Nottingham won 5-2.

Croquet England Vice President Colin Irwin presented the trophy. It is Nottingham's 4th success in the event.



Photo of Nottingham's winning team James Death, Lorna Dewar, Ian Burrige and Euan Burrige. Presented by Colin Irwin.

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GC English National Singles Championship

by Richard Bilton

The English National Singles Championship was back at Nottingham this year, where the lawns and hoops were very well prepared, and both stood up well to the tremendous amount of rain on Saturday night and Sunday. Jack Good, fresh from his victory at the GC First Eight a few weeks earlier, was strong favourite. Some matches were closer than expected, but he came through them all nonetheless, and became the English National Singles Champion.

In the first round of block play, Good's match against Dominic Aarvold was extremely close as each game went to hoop 13, and he did well to win. Lionel Tibble and David Thirtle-Watts also went to three games, but Tibble won an easy third game. Another match unexpectedly went to three games, as Tony Butcher took the middle game against Stephen Mulliner. Ian Burridge had no difficulty in winning against Mike Bilton. Stuart Smith has a habit of not starting well, and lost the first game against Andrew Hobbs, before winning the next two. Nick Archer came through a tough match against Richard Brooks. Block D was by far the youngest, with three players under 30. Their first round did not take long, as the first game in both matches was won 7-0. In fact, as they were on the same court, and only one side was using clips, there were 16 hoops scored on that court before a clip was used. Richard Bilton lost 2 hoops at the start of game 2, but still scored 7 hoops in a row twice against Louise Smith. Callum Johnson lost 3 hoops to Albie Willett.

Block D went straight into the next round, but this took considerably longer. L Smith took advantage of Willett's unexpected misses in game 1, and played well to come through the subsequent closer games. The length of this match held up the other and R Bilton didn't get going against Johnson. Good took an easy first game against Tibble, and came back from behind to win game 2. Aarvold comfortably beat Thirtle-Watts in 2. S Smith was in form against Archer, and Brooks didn't provide much challenge to Hobbs. The match between Butcher and M Bilton was a similar story, but with the seeds the other way around. Mulliner had a good long battle with an in-form Burridge, and eventually came through at the deciding hoop in game 3.

In the final round, Good had his fifth hoop 13 of the day, but beat Thirtle-Watts in 2. Aarvold did the same in beating Tibble to reach the knockout, and Archer replicated that scoreline against Hobbs to get through. S Smith repeated his round 2 performance against Brooks. Johnson was the only player to have not lost a game all day after beating L Smith. Willett could have got through if he hadn't let the first game against R Bilton slip, as he then took game 2, but his form dipped and he lost game 3. Burridge had a convincing win over Butcher to progress to the knockout. After his first two matches took three long games, Mulliner comfortably beat M Bilton in 2, although was still last to finish.

Players arrived at the club on Sunday expecting the lawns to be littered with puddles after the downpour on Saturday night. To their surprise, there was only a small section of the south boundary with a slight squelch. The rest of the lawns held up well in the light rain in the morning. It wasn't until the heavy rain later in the day that led to standing water on all courts.

In the quarter-finals, the match between Good and Burridge was the quickest, not only because it was the only match of the round that didn't go to three games, but because Good won 7-4, 7-0. Although Johnson and Archer did go to three games, none of their games went past hoop 10. Johnson was brilliant in game 2, but Archer was very solid and won 7-3, 2-7, 7-3. Aarvold was arguably the better player in his match, finishing with better net hoops, but Mulliner narrowly pinched it 7-6, 3-7, 7-6. Every game between Smith and Bilton was close, one way or another. Smith was middling everything in game 3 and Bilton found himself 6-2 down, and noticeably changed his approach and shot at everything – including running hoop 10 from hoop 9 – and managed to get a shot at hoop 13 from the boundary, but missed and Smith won 7-5, 6-7, 7-6.

Archer's momentum continued to swing into the semi-finals, as he lost the first game to Mulliner but dominated the next. Both played well in game 3, but Mulliner's tenacity won him the match 7-3, 2-7, 7-5. Good followed up his first round win with another comfortable result. He was tested in the first game, but not in the second, and beat Smith 7-5, 7-2.

It was at this point that the heavens opened, and very playable conditions soon became underwater. Fortunately, the weather forecast was correct and it only last around half an hour. Once it eased off, players took turns to brush the water off the court. Puddles kept reappearing even once the final had started, but the final continued while players used their mallets to sweep the water off the boundary.

It looked like the final was going to follow a similar pattern for Good after he took the first game without difficulty. The second game was much closer as the players kept alternating hoops, but Mulliner's experience showed as he gained and maintained a lead throughout. However, he was unable to sustain that level of consistency and found himself 6-4 down in game 3. He earned a shot at hoop 11 after effecting a miss from Good, but only ran it by a foot. However, even with all the rain, positional shots were still being overhit, and Good over approached hoop 12. A few rotations later, and Mulliner opted to play in rather than shoot at Good's significantly angled hoop shot. Not necessarily always a bad choice, but it was in this case, as Good calmly sent his ball through and won the match 7-3, 5-7, 7-5 to become the newest winner of the Ascot Cup.

Continued on page 27

CONTINUED...

Johnson and Aarvold competed in the Bowl, which was a very close encounter in the first two games, but Johnson ran away with it in the third to win 7-6, 6-7, 7-2. In the plate, Bilton met rival Thirtle-Watts, who was again victorious. Hobbs played well to beat Willett, as did Butcher in beating Tibble. Smith had a really close win over Brooks. This meant



Winner of the David Widdison Memorial trophy, Tony Butcher

the top two seeds of the A-Level Final met in the next round, and it was Butcher that came out on top against Smith. Hobbs made his way to the final in beating Thirtle-Watts. The final was surprisingly one-sided, and it was Butcher that came through with a convincing 7-4, 7-2 result to win the David Widdison Memorial trophy.



Winner Jack Good, presented by Ian Vincent

CORFIG

Twas Corfig and the waves did roll
so snugly on the beachipoo
All cosy was the kontikoo
and tasty was the Sophienosh

But underneath this calm extere
there lurks a green expanse of fear
where those in white attempt to clear
a hoop or two or curl up in a corner near
in mortified abjection

Meanwhile
the mänge in smooth supere
arranges matches there or here
oh everywhere
and over there's the clear blue sea
that sparkles tantalisingly
and brings us pelty nights of storm
as well as Corfigdays of norm
in baking heat

And we have tried
sometimes prevailed
more often failed quite dismally
(but generally enjoyed ourselves)
as hoops jump out
and balls breathe in
dodging all that we can throw at them

In Corfig
where the gulls do call so glibly
on the thermipoo
all friendly is the welcomal
and we'll be back
you can be sure

Jonathan Toye
Corfu tournament,
October 2024
(with thanks to
Lewis Carroll)



Sidmouth GC Open Series

6-7 JULY 2024

by Louise Smith

As 'flaming June' passed by on the south-west coast, July began overcast and unsettled. Such were the conditions for the Sidmouth GC Open Series Tournament held on 6/7th of the month.

A full field of players travelled from distant clubs to compete, including Bude, Phyllis Court, East Dorset, and Hunstanton, plus a contingent of three from Roehampton.

As strong winds blew in off the coast, top ranked Stuart M. Smith, (Budleigh), dropped his first block game to New Zealander, Helen Reeves. Helen's relaxed style of play did not hide the fact that she was in terrific form as she went on to win every game in her block.



Photo Credit : Richard Gardiner, Dowlish Wake

Block A's 2nd and 3rd seeds, Neil Fillery, (Taunton Deane), and Martin French, (Bude), did not fair quite so well, gaining just 2 wins apiece. Local players, Louise Smith, (Budleigh) and Phillip Harris, (Sidmouth) gave good performances above their ranked placings, gaining 4 wins each - with Philip just ahead on net hoops. They joined Helen in the knock-out stages along with Stuart, who had gathered a further 6 block game wins.

Tim Russell, (Roehampton), was another player in great form and went unbeaten throughout the block stages in Block B. Steve Leonard had been the top ranked seed in the block, and came in at 2nd position with 5 wins, having also dropped a game to Rick Lilley (Phyllis Court). Stephen Custance-Baker found himself on the wrong side of three 6/7 losses, attaining 3 games wins overall. This meant Diana Wilson, (Roehampton), and Rick Lilley went forward to the knock-out stages, with 4 wins each.

Heavy rain showers were due to set in from late morning on Sunday, so the main Quarter finals were reduced to a single 19pt game to ensure the tournament would finish before the weather soaked the courts.

Helen Reeves continued her unbeaten run and despatched Rick Lilley fairly swiftly, 10/5. An upset in the 2nd Quarter final saw Philip Harris beat Steve Leonard 10/8. Diana Wilson lost out to Stuart M. Smith 6/10, whilst Louise Smith and Tim Russell battled in a tight game. Louise has had some excellent results lately against higher ranked players, and despite Tim's early 2 hoop lead she equalised and took the lead herself by 2 hoops. Tim went from the jaws of hoop 17 to the jaws of hoop 18 to level the score. On the deciding 19th hoop Louise wired her ball which secured her the game win and a place in next phase of the knock-out.

Louise's 'prize' was to face her husband Stuart M. Smith in the Semi-final, whilst Philip Harris was to play Helen Reeves.

Intermittent heavy rain-showers now accompanied the rest of the day, making the courts somewhat slower than usual. The higher ranked players prevailed in the Semi-finals, with Helen and Stuart beating their respective opponents 2/0, and the stage was set for the main tournament final.

Games in the Shield led to a Steve Leonard v Tim Russell final, having overcome Rick Lilley and Diana Wilson respectively. Steve and Tim bravely opted for a best-of-three match which was nip and tuck throughout the first two games 7/5 and 5/7. The third game saw Steve Leonard stretch ahead to win 7/3.

The Plate event was run as a knock-out. Lynn Pearcy, (Roehampton), gained her first game win of the tournament, beating visiting Australian player David Wise, 10/8. Despite being the lowest seed in the tournament, Patrick Coulter, (Budleigh), played some very competitive games throughout, and made the Plate final after wins against David Thirtle-Watts, (Hunstanton) and Richard Gardiner, (Dowlish Wake). Despite the close game results in the final, the experience of Neil Fillery, (Taunton Deane) was evident, and earned him the Plate title win 7/6, 7/5.

The inclement weather conditions led to some players opting to watch the main final rather than play on for positional places. They were joined by some hardy club members eager to spectate and support the finalists.

Good and bad luck befell both Stuart and Helen – each having cut their respective opposition balls into the jaws during game one, which ended with a win at the 13th hoop for Stuart. Helen continued in her very competent, easy style of play, whilst Stuart deployed his centre-ball hitting expertise. The Final result was a 2/0 victory to Stuart, having taken the 2nd game 7/3, and he retains the trophy and tournament winner's title for the second consecutive year.

Wiltshire GC Open Series

13-14 JULY 2024

Janet Trueman (Hamptworth CC)

12 players, ranging from handicap -4 to 2 arrived at Hamptworth to start this two day tournament and thankfully the weather was (for once!) on our side. The Manager (Richard Jenkins) had divided the players into two blocks on day one, playing five 19 point games. In Block A Stuart M Smith (Budleigh) emerged having won all five games, followed by Louise Smith (Budleigh) on four wins, dropping just one game to husband, Stuart. Richard Gardiner (Dowlish Wake) on three wins was joined by Ian Shore (High Wycombe) on two wins to go forward to the next day's main knock out. In Block B Steve Leonard (East Dorset) won all five of his games and with Hamptworth's Tim O'Donnell winning three games, this left three players each with two wins to be sorted on net hoops, with Neil Humphries (Chichester) and Stephen Custance-Baker (Taunton) going through.



The players at Hamptworth Croquet Club

For the second day, the manager chose the format of best of three 13 point games for the main knock out, resulting in Stuart Smith beating Neil Humphreys (7/4;6/7;7/5) while Richard Gardiner overcame Tim O'Donnell (7/6;7/2). Louise Smith knocked out Stephen Custance-Baker (7/2;7/4) and Steve Leonard triumphed over Ian Shore (7/6; 2/7;7/3).

Meanwhile, in the Shield competition, Tim O'Donnell beat Neil Humphreys (7/5) and went on to meet Ian Shore, who had won over Stephen Custance-Baker (7/3). Ian then went on to beat Tim for the Shield in a 19 point game (10/8).

Jon Carrington (Broadwas) won the Plate against Les Heard (Wrest Park) (7/5;7/2) having overcome David Russell (Chichester) (7/3;7/6) to meet Les who had beaten Lynn Percy (Roehampton) on an uncharacteristic off-day (7/6;7/3).

Back in the main knock out, the semi-finals saw some very tight and exciting games from all qualifiers. Stuart Smith squeaked a win over Richard Gardiner (7/6; 4/7; 7/6) with Richard losing the final game on hoop 13 by peeling Stuart's red ball through. Meanwhile, in the other semi-final Steve Leonard was tussling with Louise to win a very tight match (6/7; 7/6;7/5).



Winner, Steve Leonard

So with spectators narrowly denied a husband/wife final, it was left to Stuart to face good friend and regular combatant, Steve, in the final with Steve emerging triumphant (7/3; 2/7; 7/4) thus providing Steve with his first win in a final against Stuart and denying Stuart the opportunity of his third Wiltshire Cup win.

Unfortunately the Manager (and his assistant!) spent the weekend trying to physically distance themselves from players as they struggled against the onset of a feverish cough and cold, This meant they avoided joining the Saturday evening meal for players at the local Indian restaurant. Fortunately, Steve Hayns (Ryde) who had come to Hamptworth to watch the tournament, very kindly stepped in to act as tournament referee. Louise Smith did a sterling job introducing the Croquet Scores programme to Hamptworth via a "tethered link" so hopefully we will manage to input results direct ourselves in the future. Many thanks to all players, congratulations to Steve Leonard and special thanks to Louise, Steve Hayns - and the gazebo working party.

Budleigh Salterton GC Open Series

3-4 AUGUST 2024

by Tim Russell

Sixteen players gathered to play the Budleigh GC Open on what turned out to be a rare rain-free weekend this summer.

Block A proved to be very competitive with four players finishing on 5 wins. Top seed, Tim Russell, headed the block, but after losing two tight games to fellow qualifiers Jon Carrington and Colin Britt. In the latter game Colin raced into a 4-0 lead before Tim came back to lead 6-4. Colin ran 11 well and was control of 12 with Tim concentrating on getting a good first ball to 13. That was achieved but the hoop shot was poor and Colin later threaded his ball through Tim's two intended blockers to win 7-6. Defending champion, Andy Loakes, wasn't on his form of last year although he did win the Plate knockout on the Sunday with a tremendous Barnes Wallis at the deciding hoop. Relative newcomer Andy Dochniak joined Tim, Colin and Jon in the quarter-finals, but it would be remiss not to mention the bottom ranked player, Budleigh's Pat Coulter, who although he only won 2 out of 7 showed his fast improving credentials by not losing any game by a wider margin of 7-5. He will be a scratch player fairly soon.

Block B ran closer to seeding, with Lionel Tibble (6/7), Tim Jolliff (5/7) and Martin French (5/7) all going through. Stephen Custance-Baker took the last spot with 3 wins and a net hoop score of -2, deserving of his place as the only player in the block to take a game off Lionel Tibble.

In the quarter-finals all matches went with seeding in straight games with Tim R beating Stephen 7-3, 7-2; Tim J beating Colin 7-2, 7-5; Martin beating Jon in a tight battle 7-5, 7-6 and Lionel beating Andy D 7-3, 7-5. The semi-finals were tighter contests with Tim J beating the other Tim 4-7, 7-5, 7-5. Tim had a chance for a 4-2 lead in the second game but missed a relatively easy jump in front of 6 with his oppo's next ball to 7 in the jaws. Tim J took control of the third game up 5-1, but TR came back to run hoop 11 well down to the side of 12. Two good positional shots followed before Tim J managed to get a block on his other ball from the North boundary. A fine shot as his other ball could be cleared to the East boundary with an angle down to the golden hoop.



Photo
Finalists Martin French and Tim Jolliff

Martin French overcame Lionel in another very tight match with a good display of clearing and hoop running to win the match at the golden hoop in the third 7-6, 4-7, 7-6 with Lionel playing well, but finding too many of his clearances weren't centre ball.

It having looked like there might be an early finish after the quarter finals, Budleigh's crowd of supporters were entertained to a lengthy battle between Tim and Martin. With a mix of fine and some poor shots (one unnamed player took four shots at hoop 4 and missed them all), it was a closely contested battle. Martin won the first at the golden hoop, putting his first ball down to the North boundary and running the hoop from there. Tim came back to win the second game 7-4 and most of the audience would have put their houses on the final game being both long and likely to be decided at the golden hoop. It was eventually scored at close to 6:45 by Martin who put a better positional shot in two yards straight in front from near the halfway point on the East boundary. It was his first final since 2016 and it was good to see him back after shoulder problems kept him out of the game for several years.

Many thanks to Budleigh for hosting such a pleasant tournament and for reintroducing a food offering.

NEWLY QUALIFIED GC REFEREES

From Ian Cobbold

Congratulations to Kathy Brown, Mark Shanks and Alan Wilson who qualified at a Referees Qualification course run in Edinburgh at the request of the Scottish Croquet Association with support from the WCF. All three are Croquet England subscribers based in Scotland and Mark is a member of Surbiton.

GC 'A' Level Series 0+ Championship

2024 FINAL

by Louise Smith

Sixteen finalists gathered at Sidmouth Croquet Club for the GC 'A' Level Series 0+ National Final on the 28/29th September. With the courts closed just 24 hours prior to the tournament due to torrential rain, it was apparent the weather conditions needed careful monitoring from the outset.

Fortunately, Saturday dawned bright and dry, and the blocks began with the top two seeds, Tony Butcher, (Southchurch), and Louise Smith, (Budleigh), bagging a couple of early wins. As the day progressed, Richard Gardiner, (Dowlish Wake), and Konstantin Yudinsev, (Sussex County), strode ahead, topping their respective blocks with 7 and 6 wins respectively. Block A had a wider range of scores, with Paul Gunn, (Wingrave), and Tony Butcher achieving 5 wins apiece, whilst three other competitors struggled with just 1 win each.

Block B was much tighter, with Andy Dochniak, (East Dorset), Louise Smith, and Bernie Phillips, (Guildford), all on 4 wins, and three other players attaining respectable 3 wins each. Having made good time to complete the blocks, and with the prospect of having to curtail the format on Sunday due to yellow rain and wind warnings, it was agreed to shorten and run the first round of the knock-out stages on Saturday.

The only real surprise was Block B winner Konstantin Yudinsev losing to Block B's fourth placed Mike Bilton, (Gainsborough), 2/7. Mike joined Louise Smith, Andy Dochniak and Richard Gardiner for Sunday's Semi Finals.

The first Plate Knock-Out round had some very competitive scores, with Ross Bagni (Leighton Linlade) moving forward to play Geoff Johnson (Watford), and Andy Jones (Phyllis Court) gaining a Plate Semi Final place with Sarah Clements, (Chester).

Despite a slight reprieve on the forecast rain which was now due at lunchtime, all players faced challenging windy conditions on Sunday morning. The co-Managers gave the Players the choice of format, and nevertheless, all remaining competitors opted for best-of-three game matches.

The strong prevailing gale made it very difficult for players to keep a steady swing, and the courts were showered with seafoam spray - like snowflakes - whipped up by the relentless wind.

Louise Smith took the first game from Mike Bilton, but never really got going in game 2. The third deciding game looked like a set win for Louise, but Mike fought back and ran a winning 13th hoop from an angled back boundary position. Richard Gardiner, unbeaten up to this point, also lost game 1 of the Semi Final to Andy Dochniak 3/7, but came back to take the remaining two games, and the match win 7/5, 7/6.

The Plate Semi Final results promoted Ross Bagni and Andy Jones to the Plate Final. Meanwhile the two remaining players in the Saucer played a 'final' of their own, with David Boxell, (Hunstanton), beating Tony McCann, (Backworth), 2/0.

Several brave spectators wrapped up and came along to watch the main National Final unfold. Mike seemed to find an extra gear, but Richard kept pace with some super long clearance and hoop running shots. Overall, it appeared that Mike's longer experience prevailed, but only just – with the final results 7/6, 7/6.

The tournament was concluded just in time before torrential rain fell for the remainder of the afternoon. Croquet England Trustee for the South-West, Stuart M. Smith, attended to present the trophies to the worthy winners. Thanks were given to co-Managers Louise Smith and Phillip Harris for their responsive approach in giving competitors as much play as possible, and ensuring the tournament reached a conclusion. Sidmouth Croquet Club grounds staff and volunteers were also commended for the marvellous job they did with the courts - removing any surface water on Saturday, and even mowing first thing on Sunday morning.

Many Congratulations to Mike Bilton, 2024 GC 'A' Level Series 0+ National winner!



Photo : Left - Ross Bagni Plate Winner, Right- Mike Bilton National Final Winner

Murphy Shield 2024

WINNERS - SUSSEX COUNTY CROQUET CLUB

by Brian Aiken

Congratulations to our Murphy Shield Team on their victory over Chester in the final, played at a neutral venue, Wrest Park in Bedfordshire, on Sunday 6th October 2024.

The Murphy Shield is a national knock out GC Competition organised by Croquet England and was established in 2010. Twenty clubs entered the competition this year and, although coming close in 2014 when we lost a very even match to Durham, SCCC have never won the competition before.

Each team is made up of four players who must have an aggregate handicap of at least 8. The restrictions are that the competition is for players with a handicap of 2 and above, although one player in the team may have a handicap of 1.

In each fixture there are six individual singles matches and one doubles match (all best of three games).

Because of shifting handicaps of our squad throughout the season, making some players no longer eligible to take part, we have called upon a variety of players to represent us from the first round right through to the final. Fortunately, we seem to have been always able to field a strong team for each match which shows the depth of quality players within the Club. In addition to our winning finalists Simon Ancell, Vincent L'Estrange, David Dickens and David King, other players who represented us in the earlier rounds were Brian Aikens, Simon Fenn-Tye, and Konstantin Yudintsev.

The earlier rounds were regional and, in our path to the final, we had had wins against Cheam, Surbiton and Guildford.

Waiting for us in the final were Chester who had battled through against Ashby, Durham and Watford.

In the morning's play there were some very hard fought games with each individual match having one 7-6 scoreline. However, things went well for us and we went into the lunch break with a 2-1 lead meaning that, in the afternoon's play, we needed to win two of the remaining four individual singles matches to clinch the match.

Vincent came up with the first of the required two wins and Simon scored the winning hoop in his three set match to bring the Murphy Shield to SCCC for the first time in its fourteen year history. The final score was SCCC 4.5 Chester 2.5.

The trophy was presented by George Collin who represented Wrest Park in hosting the match as well as representing Croquet England in his capacity as Trustee.

Thank you to Chester for a very enjoyable match and well done to our history making team.



GC All England Handicap Final

Andrea Huxley
Director of GC AEH and manager

The Final weekend for the GC All England Handicap began in cool, but sunny, weather at Guildford and Godalming CC. 14 players gathered together with hopes of taking home the trophy after hard fought games spread over the two days.

This was the second year that the competition was played to Advantage rules, so the players were accustomed to the use of starting scores and having the correct number of pegs needed for the hoops they must score. We were fortunate to have a referee for each lawn to help players and to monitor timing. Many thanks go to Richard Carline (ROT),

Peter Adams, Andrew Jackson and Mike Huxley for giving up their time to act as referees.

Competitors had handicaps ranging from 2 to 12, so starting scores were often challenging for the lower handicapped players. The most extreme was Ray Ore (Cheam) playing off 2 against Sandra Guildford (Woking) playing off 12 – starting score -4 to +2! A win to Sandra followed!

At the end of day one all players had won at least two games. John Richmond (Cheam) and Sandra were both on 4 wins and Fiona Hancock (Kington Langley), John Picken (Ashby), Patricia Mulcahy (Phyllis Court) and Richard Perkins (GGCC) were all on 5 wins out of 7. The tournament was still wide open.

Continued on next page...

GC ALL ENGLAND CONTINUED

On day two players arrived in good time for a prompt start – there was work to be done! By lunch time 3 games had been played and Cliff Hunter (Surbiton) and Sandra had each won all 3 games.

The leader board was then showing two players on 7 wins (John Picken and Sandra) with Patricia, Gareth Hobby (Caversham), Richard and Cliff each on 6 wins. Still all to play for.

In fact, with the ups and downs of Advantage croquet, nothing is to be taken for granted. As the players went into the final game, Sandra and Richard were both on 8 wins and Cliff, Patricia and Fiona were all on 7 wins. There was still time for a surprise winner.

However, Sandra held her nerve to get the ninth win (result 7-6) while Richard lost out in his last game (result 6-7).

Patricia, Cliff and Richard all ended on 8 wins and the manager – with the help of a trusty calculator and Mike Huxley (the score keeper) - did the maths to find the final order of the day:

1st Sandra Guildford
2nd Patricia Mulcahy
3rd Cliff Hunter
4th Richard Perkins
There then followed 6 players all on 7 wins.

What a close call!



DO OTHER FEDERATIONS HOLD A GC REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT?

by Chris Roberts

The Southern Croquet Federation (SCF) held an inaugural SCF Championship single-day tournament as a trial in 2023 and, encouraged by the interest from players and particularly spectators at the host venue of Phyllis Court, repeated with another very successful event in 2024.

The tournament is for the top eight ranked players who are full members of a SCF member club, and the second edition of the Southern Croquet Federation Golf Croquet Championship drew in most of the best players based in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

The top seed was UK top 20 player Tim O'Donnell (Hamptworth), who started as slight favourite ahead of holder, Steve Leonard (East Dorset and England) and Chris Roberts (Phyllis Court and Wales).

O'Donnell lost an early game of the seven-round 'all play all' tournament and when Roberts was beaten by old adversary, and former Phyllis Court player, Raouf Allim in round two, the event was blown wide open.

Roberts had beaten clubmate and bottom seed Rick Lilley easily 7-1 in the first round and it looked like being a long day for the latter, but he then went on an unbeaten run of four impressive victories, including taking the scalps of O'Donnell and Leonard.

With two rounds to play, Leonard was in the 'box seat' with only one loss with O'Donnell, Roberts and Lilley hoping to pull the leader back into the chasing pack.

Roberts ended O'Donnell's hopes in the penultimate round, but Leonard held his lead and defeated O'Donnell 7-4 in the last round, to put his name on the newly inaugurated trophy for a second time.

The event had attracted a good-sized spectator gallery from the Phyllis Court faithful who lined the South and East sides of the courts, which had been fenced off as a safety measure for this and the visit of four international players in Nottingham's Inter-Club Championship team due the following day.

This tournament was easy to organise and would be good to see other Federations replicate. The key for logistics and keeping the playing quality high, is limiting the field to eight, which allows for an 'all play all' seven games block, hosting by a two-court venue (available in all Federations) and likely an enjoyable spectacle for spectators.

Finishing order: Steve Leonard (East Dorset, 6 wins), Chris Roberts (Phyllis Court, 5), Rick Lilley (Phyllis Court, 5), Tim O'Donnell (Hamptworth, 4), Duncan Catterall (High Wycombe, 3), Raouf Allim (High Wycombe, 2), Jonathan Smith (Ryde, 2), Paul Gunn (Wingrave, 1)

England vs Spain Test Match

21ST - 23RD JUNE 2024

by Duncan Catterall

Hosted at the Roehampton Club, the organisers were a little worried about this year's questionable summer weather. The Roehampton GC Open, held the week before, had seen sideways rain forcing players to shelter at multiple points across the weekend. Luckily it seems, the Spanish did their best and managed to squeeze some Mediterranean sun into their hand luggage.



Jose Riva and Juan Ojeda play Euan Burrridge and Jamie Birch in a doubles match

With the sun shining, the live stream cameras powered up and lawns running incredibly quickly (13 seconds), the players were eager to get started. Captaining the team from England was JP Moberly, along with Aston Wade, Euan Burrridge, Jamie Birch, Stuart Smith and Tobi Savage. Leading the Spanish team was Andres Alvarez-Sala, accompanied by his brother Manuel Alvarez-Sala, Juan Ojeda, Patricio Garay, Nicolas Denizot and Spanish Number 1: Jose "Pepe" Riva.

This was the fourth Test match between England and Spain, each side winning the Test match while away, indicating that, if the pattern continued, Spain should win this year.



Jamie and Pepe congratulate each other after a closely fought game with Pepe winning 7-5, 7-6

Day 1 kicked off with a day of doubles matches and with the stats against them, England pulled together to take an early lead with all 3 pairs winning their first doubles match. England were 3 up but it became clear the Spaniards were just warming up, because after lunch, the visitors pulled their socks up and won 2 out of 3 doubles matches ending the day with England 4 - 2 up, with all to play for across the next two days. Maybe a bit prematurely, the England team decided that after all their hard work, they needed a drink at the bar. With an internet outage at the club putting all the card readers out of action, they managed to rack up a bar tab far higher than their lead in the Test.

Day 2 was all singles matches and England's preparations the night before seemed to be paying off, as they won 4 of 6 singles matches in the morning session, followed by a further 3 in the afternoon. At the end of day 2 England were ahead 11 - 7 and Spain the statistical favourites had a lot of catching up to do. But not before the Test match dinner that evening, kindly hosted by Roehampton Club, who also kindly covered the evening's drinks bill, much to



Patricio and Nicolas feeling hopeful after they drew level 1-1 with Jamie and Euan

the teams' delight.

The England team, feeling quietly confident at the start of Day 3, stormed out the gates of the morning session to win all 3 doubles matches and seal their 3rd Test victory against Spain before the day had even ended.

The Test ended with England winning 17 matches to 10. A special mention to Jose Riva for not dropping a singles game all weekend and to Juan who played the whole 3 days with a different mallet having broken his the week before! Well done to all the players for providing excellent play across the weekend.

With a total of 745 hoops run, 6000 viewers on the live

Continued on page 35

ENGLAND VS SPAIN CONTINUED



JP Moberly (team captain) receives the test match trophy for England.

stream, lots of enthusiastic supporters and a very hard working organisational team, the Test match was once again a great success and will continue to be a hotly anticipated fixture of the international croquet calendar.

If you want to watch back any of the action from the Test, find it on the Croquet England Youtube:

www.youtube.com/@CroquetEngland/streams

Special thanks to all the people who helped make the Test such a success and to the event sponsor:

Sugar Beach International Croquet Cup 2025

Returning for its second year in April 2025, the International Croquet Cup will see 24 players enjoy a fun competition balanced with time to enjoy the incredible Sugar Beach Hotel set on the western coast of Mauritius. Featuring players dinners, sunset cocktail parties, all inclusive 5* accommodation and lawns overlooking the Indian Ocean. With a range of handicaps participating, this is a fun and social tournament held on arguably the most beautiful croquet lawns in the world. Register your interest to attend via the link: www.croquetandcocktails.com/events/Mauritius

Thanks to the organisers, officials and team at Roehampton: Lynn Percy, Mike Pattison, Tim Russell, Jonathan Powe, Francis Coleman and Chris Roberts

Thanks to the Live Stream Crew:

Stephen Allen, Roderick Sheen, Ludolph van Hasselt, Nick Yates and Duncan Catterall

Thanks to the Live Stream Commentators:

Jenny Clarke, Chris Clarke, Chris Roberts and Tim Russell

Inaugural R.L.T.C.C Youth Croquet Championship

Debbie & Stephen Hayns
Ryde Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club

Being two recently certified under 18 Licensed coaches we were eager to try to introduce the fun of Croquet to a younger age range, but how to attract their interest was the question!

A conversation with Ryde Junior Tennis Lead Coach Carrie Bateman revealed that a few junior tennis members had shown an interest in playing Croquet after their tennis session had finished. Given the opportunity to get on a court with some mallets and balls, they seemed to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. Trying to build on this, it was decided to hold an inaugural Croquet event for members of the junior tennis section age range 8 to 16.

The idea was put forward to hold a small Croquet Tournament for those interested hoping to get 6 – 8 players.

An invitation for juniors (aged 8 to 16) to take part was circulated to and to our surprise the interest was so great that we had to limit the numbers to 16 so a manageable competition could be held.

The date selected was Friday 6th September. The signs did not look good with heavy rain on the Thursday carrying on into Friday. By 4pm the rain had cleared, the lawns inspected and the go ahead given. Despite the weather, a full compliment of 16 duly arrived and battle commenced!



A format had been devised that involved three short games with points able to be scored win or lose. This meant interest was maintained and the result in doubt until the end of the last Game.

In a thrilling finish Angela Voong pipped Kingsley Hang by 21 points to 20 to become Ryde Lawn Tennis & Croquet Clubs first ever Youth Croquet Champion. More importantly, 16 youngsters were seen to thoroughly enjoy the experience with much laughter on the lawns.

After a BBQ for the players provided by the club, and despite light fading, several juniors returned to the lawns to carry on the fun which hopefully is a good sign of things to come.

After much positive feedback plans are already being discussed to hopefully take the interest forward into 2025.

LAUGHTER ACROSS THE LAWNS

A 'CROQUET FOR WELLBEING' PILOT HAS BEEN HERALDED A RESOUNDING SUCCESS.



The sound of laughter ringing around the Pendle & Craven Croquet Club was a sure-fire sign that this summer's ground-breaking Wellbeing initiative was working just as intended. The club hosted a weekly run of drop-in sessions in partnership with NHS Social Prescribers who were able to introduce their clients to the sport.

"It was all by referral" explains Project Lead Ian Longstaff. "We wanted to offer something different to local people who were struggling for whatever reason, be it with isolation, their mental health or people just wanting to socialise and enjoy something new."

And enjoy it they certainly did. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive as numbers swelled week on week and sailed way past the original proposal to near enough double the target, with 23 participants overall. According to the NHS prescribers the scheme ticked many boxes, not only the learning of croquet itself but also just in the fact of getting out of the house and doing some gentle exercise in the fresh air: "Steps by stealth" as someone christened it.

According to James Smith, Lead Social Prescriber, 'Croquet for Wellbeing' is the most successful project that he and his team have ever been involved in. "The welcome from the club, the sessions and the feedback from clients were all amazing. It's like everyone has fallen in love with Croquet!"

Looking at the actual results, it's hard to disagree with that sentiment. Of the various questions posed on the concluding questionnaire, there isn't an average rating that's less than 9 out of 10. Wellbeing scores are also up by an average of 1.6 points, ending up at 8.1 out of ten and being positive for 76% of respondents, with over half recording jumps of 2, 3 and even 4 points out of ten. When asked specifically whether the group had helped with their Wellbeing goals, the answers were equally split between 'Yes' and 'Very Much So'. It all makes heart-warming reading for Ian, who himself was on the books of the same social prescribers a couple of years ago. "The stats are astounding really," he says, "but it's the change in the people themselves that you can visibly see, that's what I will take from it and treasure."

The people themselves ranged from age 27 to 83 and were split 65/35 male/female. They came for a whole variety of

reasons. Some of them made it the focus of their week, others made it a spur to get back onto public transport and in one case, a client made it along to all ten sessions despite hardly having left the house for a year due to crippling anxiety.

"It's when you put the back stories together with the results that you really get an idea of what this has meant to people" says Club Chairman Sharon De Maine. "We are delighted to have been able to integrate into the community like this, something the Club has been working on this year."



The other knock-on benefit for Pendle & Craven has been the unexpected boost to membership. At the conclusion of the scheme, nearly half the participants had put their names down for follow-on coaching with Club Coach Cathy O'Brien and by the end of that, five new members had joined up for 2025.

New members include Michael Moore, who says "I never thought in a million years that I'd enjoy Croquet so much but I think it's absolutely brilliant!" Others say that they just find it "so relaxing" and describe how once you're out on the lawns everything else just seems to "fade away".

However for Ian, such things are merely the icing on the cake. "'Croquet For Wellbeing' isn't a coaching course and it isn't a membership drive either. If you tried to run it like that I don't think it would work, as it would all be too much pressure. For me, looking out for the people comes first and the Croquet is kind of a conduit for all the good stuff to happen."



THE CROQUET ENGLAND MEDAL FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE

AWARDED FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO THE WORK OF CROQUET ENGLAND AND/OR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CROQUET WITHIN ITS DOMAIN.

BEATRICE MCGLEN

Beatrice McGlen began her croquet playing career in the 1980s, at the Coal Technical and Scientific Research Establishment at Bretby in the East Midlands Federation. She joined the Nottingham Croquet Club in 1990 and became its Chairman in 2017. Under her leadership, the club completed an ambitious project to re-lay three former bowls greens as croquet lawns and renovate its pavilions, financed at least in part by the money she raised through numerous grant applications and crowdfunding. She also did much to promote community engagement, such as her "Hoops for Health" programme, resulting in the club being presented with the Sport and Recreation Alliance's national club award for inclusivity and diversity. Women's croquet has been another of her passions, representing England abroad in several events in recent years and encouraging her peers to do so.



She volunteered for election to the Council of the Croquet Association in 2016, serving on several committees before becoming Chairman of its Executive Board in 2020. She then oversaw its transformation into the Executive of Croquet England, acquiring the title of Chief Executive Officer. She continues in that role by driving forward change and modernisation within the organisation both professionally and confidently.

IAN BURRIDGE

Ian Burridge took up the sport in 1988, rapidly rising to become a world-class player in Association and later Golf Croquet. Born in Aberdare, he has represented Wales in team and individual events since 1990, and Great Britain in the 1996 MacRobertson Shield and six Solomon Trophies, captaining the team in 2009. His international focus culminated in him becoming President of the World Croquet Federation from 2019 to 2023, having previously served as its Treasurer from 2010 to 2013.



An expert tactician, he has long been willing to share his insight through coaching and was named Coach of the Year

for 2015. He created the International Performance Director role to establish a sustainable pathway for talented players to reach international standard, two members of his first AC Development Squad went on to be members of the successful 2022 England MacRobertson Shield team. In addition to creating the course material for the AC Development Squad, Ian also prepared lesson plans for AC coaching pods around the country. In 2023 he published a book "Golf Croquet for Tournament Players".

As a member of the Croquet Association Council in the mid-1990s, he was Chairman of the Selection Committee and an active member of the Tournament Committee, notably conceptualising and managing the CA Centenary Tournament in 1997, the largest post-war croquet event. In 2009 he created the Burridge Swiss concept which has been used ever since for the qualification stage of the AC Open Championship. He returned to Council in 2020 to serve as Treasurer of both the Croquet Association and Croquet England, working with solicitors as the transition to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation was explored and then realised. He was a member of the Covid Taskforce and identified the need for the Membership Secretariat, which he chaired.

SAMIR PATEL

Samir Patel learned croquet at Oxford University and brought home the MacRobertson Shield in 2022, captaining the England team for the third time. He is the current holder of the President's Cup.



In addition to an illustrious playing career, he has contributed greatly to the administration of the sport. For many years he has maintained the Tournament Regulations with the Tournament Committees, supported and developed the website, and has been a member of the IT and International Committees.

He represented the South-East Federation on the Croquet Association's Council and became its Chairman in 2021, driving its transition into the Board of Trustees of Croquet England with meetings characterised by good preparation and wise counsel.

On a yet broader canvas, he has served as a member of the World Croquet Federation's Management Committee and this year is his 10th serving on it.

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.



“I NEED A 3LB Mallet” ... WHY?

by Chris Alvey, DB Mallets

Over the last 11 months producing DB Mallets, I have lost count of the number of times we have been asked for a 3lb mallet. It always seems to be on the list of requirements that people have. I understand the different head lengths people have got used to, although adapting to playing with a longer head if you use a standard grip is fairly straightforward (though not so easy for those using Solomon grip). Obviously, the overall height from the ground varies based on a player's height, the grip used and their own personal playing style.

But why 3lbs? The only thing in common I can find with players that have requested this, is that they are using a wooden club mallet. When mallets were made of wood and had the lead weights in the head, 3lbs seems to have been the “standard” weight.

But technology has moved on so much and you can achieve the same distances with a composite or aluminium mallet of a lighter weight, which will help achieve better stop shots and fatigue the player so much less.

There will always be a market for a heavier mallet, one of my team utilises the extra weight in his mallet to compensate for a long-standing injury; and as his handicap is half of mine who am I to say it's wrong. But you open yourself up to so many more manufacturers' products if you don't restrict your search by the weight you think you need.

We have one mallet in the range that just hits the 3lb mark which is the one I use. I bought it as I liked the way it played. If I'm honest I only weighed it recently because we started selling the model again and I needed the details for the website.

My advice would be to look at all your options, forget the weight, concentrate on what works for you and getting the right height and head length... unless of course you're going to use it for some demolition work in the off-season!



WINTER MAINTENANCE

by Duncan Hector, www.duncanhectorturfcare.co.uk

**Duncan Hector
Turf Care**

MOWING

The summer cut height is 5mm to 7mm. In winter, set the cut height to 8 to 10 mm. Mowing every few weeks in the winter is important. It helps to thicken the sward, encourages a dwarf habit and discourages coarse grasses.

FERTILISING

It is a good idea to fertilise with a low input of nitrogen during winter months. I supply granular winter fertiliser that also contains iron for moss control. However, liquid fertiliser costs less at around £12.50 per lawn and can be mixed with soluble iron for moss control.

MOSS

Moss produces spores twice a year so should be treated in Spring and Autumn to kill the moss and prevent new spores from ripening. It doesn't have a vascular system and the roots have no function except to hold onto the ground, so re-growth is caused by spores in the soil, not from roots. Soluble Iron controls moss but must contact all of the leaf. For this reason it is best to mow before treating and use plenty of water in the mix. I recommend 2.5kg of Soluble Iron per lawn in 50 litres of water but 100 litres would help the product reach more of the plant.

FUNGAL DISEASES

Red Thread, Fusarium, Dollar Spot etc. All of these diseases can be controlled by spraying Soluble Iron. This avoids the use of fungicides which are expensive and can be detrimental to the microbial life in the rootzone. They also require Pesticide Certification and Registration. It is important to spray as soon as there are signs of attack because the iron will kill the fungus on the leaf. Once it has broken into the plant, it is too late. Use the same dilution as for moss ie 2.5kg (litres) in 50 litres of water.

Visit www.duncanhectorturfcare for fertilisers, Iron etc. and the Turfpedia knowledge base.

WINTER PLAY SURVEY RESULTS

by George Collin

If someone wants to take up a sport, whether for social or health reasons, but not just for a few months in the summer, what can croquet offer? The following is a brief summary of winter activity at the clubs that are members of the East Anglian Croquet Federation. 37 clubs, with a total of 77 courts, membership 1115? Bear in mind that some clubs are also members of adjoining Federations and some players are members of more than one club. 28 clubs responded to the survey. Those that didn't are chiefly the smaller ones, based on the Federation membership statistics (August 2023). Nevertheless, I believe it gives a reasonable snapshot of activity, as at February 2024 (a mild but wet winter so far).

All the clubs have courts available for at least five months, the norm is seven – April to October. Thirteen clubs offer some play outdoors throughout the year, involving 23 of their 39 courts. These thirteen clubs represent about 650 players, of whom about 250 (40%) take advantage of the opportunity to play regularly over the winter (ranging from 20% to 80% of their membership). No-one expects to play if the ground is frozen or waterlogged. No-one expects to use the summer hoop positions. So winter play involves adjustments, such as reduced size and giving each court time to rest in rotation. And of course, the cutting height is raised (8mm is common). Some comment that the lawns used in the winter are just as good in the following summer as the others.

Golf Croquet is the most frequent winter activity – both level-play and handicap/advantage, a mixture of social and competitive play, singles and doubles. Sometimes the Rules are adapted, e.g. “no jump-shots”. The logical combination is “a hoop only scores if you run it in a single stroke”. (These were the rules under the “Old Laws” of Golf Croquet). Very little full 26 point Association Croquet is

played, but plenty of 14 point, Short Croquet and AC One-ball.

Of the clubs that don't offer winter play, many have only one court. However, this doesn't prevent Meldreth and Unity (Sudbury) from managing it. Few of the clubs with at least two courts have a fundamental objection to winter play – a couple more are hoping to introduce it. The usual reason is that the landlord doesn't allow it and/or doesn't maintain the lawns from November to March. In most such cases the landlord is the Local Authority. This is a shame – lawns benefit from being maintained and cut over the winter, especially with climate change. One appreciates the cost of labour and the difficulty of scheduling work with fewer hours of daylight and unpredictable weather. However, the point is surely that they want to provide sporting and leisure facilities, so why not in the winter? or at least for an extended season? Have they fully woken up to climate change?

It's worth mentioning that Bury St Edmunds have an outdoor all-weather artificial court. Also the monthly weekends on the indoor carpet at Soham.

Many clubs offer indoor activities, whether or not they also play outdoors – lunches, coffee-mornings, cards, dominoes, talks, quizzes etc. These are all good ways of keeping the club going.

One point of this survey is to provide some useful facts when applying for funding, whether at a local or national level. Another is to be able to offer croquet to educational establishments for more than just one term (and for keen students to be able to continue into the autumn and beyond). Croquet is not just a summer game. It can be an all-year-round sport for all abilities.



High grade aluminium headed mallets are fitted with long lasting Tufnol or Copolymer (black) end caps which are easily replaced if damaged.

The heads are very hard anodized and are available in natural, light grey and black.

They have been thoroughly tested and provide an accurate, reliable and peripherally weighted mallet.

These heads can be fitted with any of the carbon fibre shafts and are available in 10" and 11" head lengths and a base weight of 2lbs 15ozs (1332g) adjustable from (1305g to 1390g)

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CROQUET IN THE COMMUNITY

by Adrian Coles, Secretary, Surbiton Croquet Club

At Surbiton we know we are lucky. We have seven lawns, a clubhouse with kitchen, dining facilities, changing rooms, Wi-Fi and TV. We could sit back and enjoy what we have. But we very much endorse the Croquet England vision: “more people playing more croquet in more places”. We’ve therefore encouraged, in lots of different ways, more people to play more croquet at Surbiton.

OPEN DAYS

At the end of May we held our first open day since before covid. We publicised the day with shop window posters and local magazine articles and adverts, with Instagram, Facebook and NextDoor, and with free mentions on local radio. But most importantly we encouraged our members to publicise the event through their local community WhatsApp groups, and other clubs and associations of which they were members. We offered free coaching, tea and coffee, and sweets for the children (available only with parental consent, of course).

Before the heavens opened in mid afternoon, more than a dozen visitors had signed up to our introductory courses – six weeks of tuition for £30, deductible from the first-year membership fees if they chose to join. And for those who didn’t sign up - mostly younger families - they nevertheless told us that they had enjoyed their visit to the club and that we had removed some of the mysteries and misconceptions about the sport.

We’ve also been able to participate in what might be called “external” open days. We’ve strengthened our relationship with the local Council, and we were invited this summer to take part in their “Olympic Sports Day”. Many local sports clubs had stands at the local sports arena, and we were able to set up a few hoops and explain the sport to visitors and our co-exhibitors. Similarly, last year we took part in the local Scouts’ Bank Holiday festival that featured, among others, beer tents and children’s games, inflatable slides and

trampolines. We attracted over 100 players and offered a prize for the individual who could hit a ball through three hoops in the smallest number of shots.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Moving back to home territory, we don’t offer pay and play. We exist for our members and members have priority. However, our lawns are most intensively used in the mornings and less so on some weekends and evenings. Accordingly, we accept bookings from organised groups who want an introduction to the game.

A recent Saturday afternoon event with a local Women’s Institute was typical. They brought a group of 20 and we provided five lawns, along with an experienced player to guide play on each lawn. We have found that 15 minutes concentrating on the basic techniques of holding a mallet and hitting balls followed by three or four 30–40-minute games of GC is a successful formula.

be ironed out, confidence grows, a few good shots are played, and by the end of the afternoon we had enjoyed three full games. We’re also lucky that we have a qualified coach available who wanders across all the lawns and offers his expertise where it is most needed.

Refreshments are, of course, needed to sustain play for an entire afternoon. The WI members brought a wide selection of homemade cakes which were consumed with tea and coffee by players and coaches alike, halfway through the session under the shade of the marquee we have in the summer. We used the interlude to thank our guests for coming and explain what the club is all about and how they could join.

In a note afterwards the organiser on their side said how much her members had enjoyed the event, mentioned that “some of our ladies found skills they did not know they possessed” and suggested we make it an annual event.



The progress made by our guests in a single afternoon was remarkable. The group I was looking after were so daunted to begin with that once I had explained the hoop order they were certain that they would never be able to reach hoop four. On their first hits they couldn’t get the ball past halfway to hoop one. But initial mistakes can

This year we’ve also held get-togethers for members of local churches. The ladies’ group from a local church enjoyed their time with us so much that the gentlemen’s equivalent booked an afternoon with us too. Others we’ve welcomed recently include other WIs, a local LGBTQ+ group, a humanist society,

Continued on page 41

CONTINUED...

and a group of retired doctors. Before covid an initiative we ran with u3a resulted ten new members joining the club. We have also hosted an occasional schools tournament, although generally we find it difficult to attract new younger members.

We rent our grounds on favourable terms from Kingston Council, and although it's not part of the terms of the lease, we feel it important to be part of the local community and to share our passion for the sport with that community. Furthermore, all these activities are consistent with our status as a Community Amateur Sports Club. Of course, we make a small charge for this type of gathering, which gives us a useful contribution to club funds.

As well as community groups we attract commercial entities looking to put an event on for their staff. For these evenings we offer the same introductory coaching, but also add

full catering up to a two or three course meal. Fees are determined by the duration of the event and the level of catering supplied. In recent times we've entertained staff from a variety of firms, from local companies to multinationals, and members of City Livery Companies.

THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT

Of course, the one huge requirement to put on any of these events is volunteers. We have no paid staff so, depending on the event, we need volunteer coaches, cooks and chefs, someone to put out all the lawns and pull them at the end of the day, someone to look after the clubhouse and make the tea and coffee, and look after the food the WIs, for example, bring. We're very lucky to have plenty of members who are happy to help. Their reward? Afterwards, knowing that the club house is tidy, and the final hoop is back in the equipment hut, volunteers chat about the day



and relax in the evening sunshine with a glass of wine.

Is what Surbiton does to encourage "croquet in the community" special, or typical of other clubs? Perhaps we're behind what others do? To some extent we're in trial-and-error mode and experimenting, especially with external events. Other clubs, I'm sure, offer similar activities as well as initiatives we at Surbiton have never thought of. It would be great if this article stimulated an exchange of ideas. Readers – over to you!

Cook's Corner Crumble

Fruity & festive



The most popular dessert on any menu is always the "crumble pudding" over the years chefs have added different twists and served in many ways. It must be one of the easiest recipes you can make, your "go to" if time is short. Perfect with creamy custard, cream or ice-cream.



Chef's tips

Try topping the cooked apples with 4 TBS mincemeat or a scattering of fresh cranberries and serve with brandy custard (add 2TBS of brandy to your custard) to get that festive flavour.

Ingredients

350 Plain Flour
170 Butter/hard Stork block
115 Golden Caster Sugar

Method

Cover the bottom of your dish with fruit, this can be fresh or frozen. If using apples of pears, peel and bring them to boil to soften before adding to dish.

Topping

20g Demerara Sugar or Flaked Almonds

Cover the fruit with 100g of sugar this will provide a juicy base to the crumble.

The flour, fat and sugar are crumbed together by hand or in a mixer until you have a nice crumble mixture.

Base

Enough fruit to give you a good covering on the bottom of your dish.
100 grams of Caster Sugar

Tip the mixture onto the fruit and add your preferred topping, sugar or almonds. At this stage the dessert can sit in the fridge until you are ready to cook.

Bake in the oven at 170c until you have a golden top, usually about 40 mins.

EARLY CROQUET AND THE RAILWAYS

by Ian Bond

Three of the earliest recorded croquet tournaments are those which were held at Evesham in 1867, at Moreton-in-Marsh in 1868 and at Oxford (on the Merton College cricket ground) in 1869. All are associated with Walter Jones Whitmore of Chastleton House, three miles south east of Moreton-in-Marsh: he won the first (commonly but mistakenly referred to as the first Open Championship) and organised the other two, both won by Walter Peel. The Oxford tournament was held under the auspices of the recently-formed National Croquet Club, in which Whitmore was the driving force. Peel also won the NCC tournament at Highgate later that season.

A less obvious, but perhaps equally important, connection between these tournaments is that all three venues were served by the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway – as was Chipping Norton Junction at Kingham, later to become the home of the Fourshire Club, which held official tournaments there between 1908 and 1914. The line offered six trains each day in both directions, with connections from Oxford to Reading, Southampton and London (Paddington and Victoria). Evesham was also directly accessible from the line's Stratford-upon-Avon branch, and Cheltenham by changing at Abbots Wood Junction.

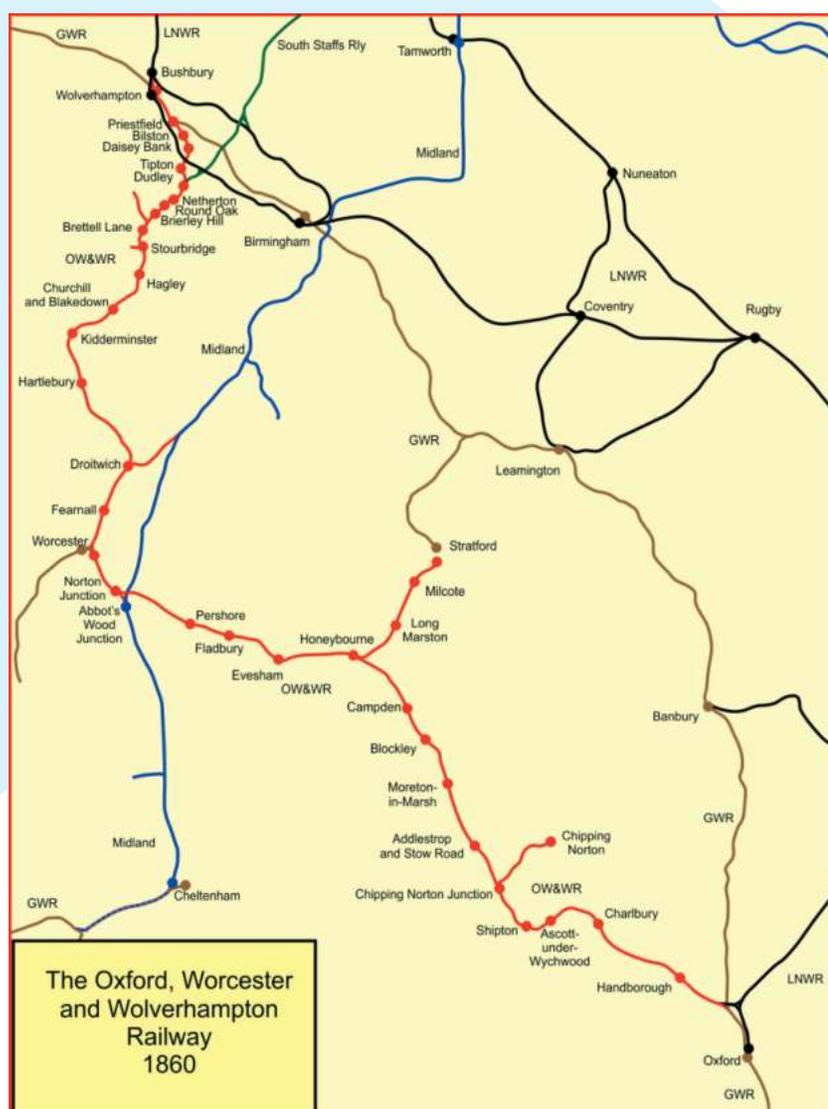
A line offering even more extensive croquet connections was the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway. In the early years of tournament croquet, it linked Wimbledon and Sydenham (Crystal Palace – the venue for the All England Croquet Club's first Open Championship in 1869) in London to Portsmouth, Chichester, Worthing, Brighton (Sussex County 1 at Brighton Pavilion) and Eastbourne on the south coast. In the years immediately before the Great War, it linked no fewer than 17 tournament venues: Epsom, Redhill, Purley and Croydon in south London; Horsham and East Grinstead in mid-Sussex; and Portsmouth (with ferry access to

Ryde), Chichester, Bognor, West Worthing, Shoreham (Sussex County 2 at Southwick), Lewes (Southdown), Eastbourne (Devonshire Park and Compton), Bexhill and St Leonards (South Saxons) on the south coast. Together, these accounted for a fifth of tournament venues at the time. This accessibility must also have contributed to the success of the Sussex Union in the inter-war years.

Today we give little thought to travelling to tournaments, but accessibility of venues would have been an important consideration in the early days of tournament croquet. The reliability, safety, cheapness and comfort of railway travel must have helped attract players to tournaments away from home. These in turn were key drivers of standardisation and codification of the rules of play for many sports in the third quarter of

the nineteenth century – and of the creation of national associations and governing bodies, many of which still exist.

In croquet, the process of standardisation had begun in 1866 with the drafting of the Field code. It was continued with the Conference Code of 1870, which was then revised annually until 1873. But if serious croquet players accepted the need for codification, they did not take so readily to centralisation: the newly-formed AECC's attempts to impose itself on older clubs and on what had begun as a consensual process among equals ended in failure and it turned its attention elsewhere. The Conference Code, however, survived. It was revived, largely unchanged, by the United All England Croquet Association when it published its first unifying code in the spring of 1897.



THE (UNOFFICIAL) HISTORY OF CROQUET: PART 10

CROQUET AND SURREALISM

by David Graham

There are numerous examples of paintings depicting croquet being played in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, but the game's significance in surrealist art in the early 20th-century is generally overlooked. The reason why many of the most important modernist works of art depicting croquet are not better known is that they are rarely displayed in public galleries, but are hidden away in the private collections belonging to the wealthy international croquet playing set.

These works were often painted by the most famous of the modernist movement artists, many of whom were enthusiastic croquet players, and command prices in the millions whenever they come onto the market. However, perhaps the most interesting aspect of these paintings is not their value, but the insight they give into the artist's temperament, including their expressions of frustration with the game that the modern player can easily relate to.

The most famous of these painting is *The Croquet Player* - 1910 by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), painted while on vacation in Cadaques, an example of Analytic cubism using monochrome and neutral colours, in which the mallet and hoops form a prominent part in the composition (Fig. 1). He was surrounded by a coterie of writers and poets who shared his passion for croquet, one of whom was André Breton, who often expressed the more surrealistic aspects of croquet in his poems, albeit using heavily disguised symbolism.

Perhaps the most evocative expression of the more negative aspects of playing croquet is portrayed in *Les joueurs de croquet* - 1954 by René Magritte (1898-1967), in which one player sits out while watching his opponent peg out at dusk, with a full moon and a flight of umbrellas drifting across the night sky. Magritte was not an accomplished croquet player and the rigid form of the seated figure exactly expresses his frustration with the game (Fig. 5).

Another artist who felt the need to express his frustration with the game was Edvard Munch (1863-1944). He painted several versions of *The Scream*, but perhaps the most poignant of these is one painted in 1905, depicting the reaction of a player who has just wired his ball by getting stuck in the hoop, a scene familiar to many players (Fig. 2). Munch struggled with his mental health, but the crucial part played by croquet in generating his feeling of emptiness and his increasingly impulsive behaviour has only recently been analysed, following the discovery of letters he wrote to friends complaining about the game.

Max Ernst (1891-1976), an obsessive croquet player, painted *Der Goldene Reifen* (French: *Le cereau doré*) in 1937, which must be one of the most vivid expressions of frustration at getting stuck in the golden hoop (Fig. 4).

Salvador Dali (1904-1989) was a more accomplished croquet player and his depictions of the game's frustrations were more humorous. The length of the game is brilliantly expressed in *El jugador de croquet* - 1931, which notably incorporates his melting clocks, an unconscious symbol of the relativity of space and time and the collapse of our notions of a fixed cosmic order, something many players will have contemplated while sitting out and watching their opponent run all of the hoops in a single break (Fig. 3).

The depictions of croquet in post-modernist pop-art tend to avoid the negative aspects of the game expressed by the surrealists, as in *The Croquet Player* - 1962, by Andy Warhol (1928-1987), a self-portrait of the artist playing croquet (Fig. 6).

The latest croquet artwork is by the street artist, Banksy, depicting a croquet playing monkey exercising a jump shot (Fig. 7), which mysteriously appeared on the pavilion at Ealing Croquet Club, along with a spate of other works by the artist across London. The identity of Banksy remains a mystery, but the indications are that he is a keen croquet player and may well be a member at one of the London clubs under another name.



Fig 1. Pablo Picasso 1910

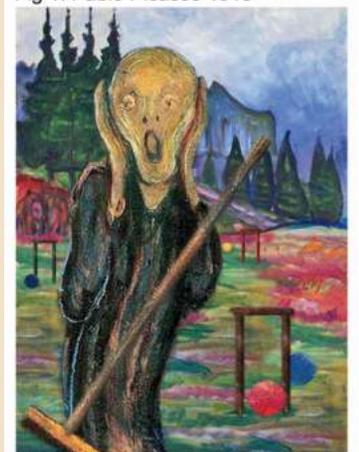


Fig 2. Edvard Munch 1905



Fig 3. Salvador Dali 1931



Fig 7. Banksy 2024



Fig 6. Andy Warhol 1962



Fig 5. René Magritte 1954



Fig 4. Max Ernst 1937

SMALL CLUB, BIG HEART - CHEAM CBC

by Brian Maddocks

12 years ago Cheam Croquet and Bowls Club was born, inheriting the beautiful bowls lawn in Cheam Park which was under threat of closure.

Since its inception, the club has enjoyed a very strong culture of member ownership. We currently have a 14-strong team of volunteer mowers (almost every member fit and strong enough to handle our large Allett mower), and the vast majority of members contribute in some way, whether in other aspects of lawn maintenance, clubhouse cleaning, building maintenance, match catering, coaching, organising social events, regular newsletters, running internal competitions or managing teams for league matches and tournaments.

Most of that is probably true of most other clubs of course, and we are always willing to learn from other clubs' good ideas, but a couple of things that seem to work particularly well for us that may be of interest to others are as follows.

We continually hear from other clubs (including much larger ones), that they struggle to raise teams for matches

and tournaments, whereas we typically have to practice squad rotation to give everyone a fair share of games and were able in 2024 to enter separate teams of 7 or 8 players for both the SECF South East Challenge and the new Southern Challenge Premier Division weekend. The idea of representing the club is instilled into most members from a very early stage, friendly matches are arranged to give people a taste of match experience to those nervous about taking the plunge and potential team members for each match are personally contacted about their available dates, usually before dates are fixed.

Similarly, the vast majority of members take part in our internal competitions, with new members strongly encouraged to try out our high handicap GC singles event and our two doubles events. With only one lawn, we are rather forced to make most of our competitions like small-scale tournaments, with several ½ day blocks, followed by a ½ day knockout finals stage. This works really well though, as the knockout stages become quite an event, with most participants (and even those

not involved) spectating (and sometimes being offered cake). Our level doubles GC event where the highest handicappers are paired with the club's top players is particularly successful at building a sense of community and encouraging people to play with those they wouldn't normally meet on the lawn.

Finally, as well as regular social events like the annual club meal, barbecues, quizzes, "Christmas cracker", a croquet skills gymkhana and other ad hoc jollity, we run an extensive "Winter Wanderings" programme during our lawn closure period in January and February. This offers a mixture of walks, games, theatre visits and cinema live screenings, ten pin bowling, museum outings, croquet videos and restaurant meals. Even bell ringing, a hindu temple and folk dancing have appeared on the menu! All these social events of course foster a greater sense of everyone-knows-everyone else, which is so conducive to a happy club atmosphere.

We hope some of that is helpful for other clubs and would love to hear from others who have good ideas we could usefully copy too.



Academy Courses

Croquet Academy at Sussex County Croquet Club

Day	D	M	Code	Description	Course Lead	Cost
Mon-Tues	24-25	Mar	AC/GC	Coaches Training & Qualification Course	Paul Francis	65*
Wed	26	Mar	GC	Coaches Workshop**	Richard Carline	
Mon	31 7, 14	Mar Apr	AC	Introduction and development in Handicap Play	Clive Hayton	60
Sat	5	Apr	AC	Learn to play Short Croquet in a day	Frances Low	40
Sat	5	Apr	GC	Improve your GC skills to A Level Grade	Morgan Case	40
Tues	8	Apr	GC	GC Workshop	Richard Carline	40
Wed	9	Apr	GC	Beginners and Improvers	Daphne Gaitley	40
Wed	16	Apr	GC	Understanding GC Rules	Richard Carline	20
Wed	16, 23, 30	Apr	AC	Introduction and development in Advanced Play	Alan Cottle	60
Tues	29 6, 13	Apr May	AC	Triple Peel Course	Gabrielle Higgins	60
Wed	14	May	GC	Up your game C to B Level	Chrissie Merrington	40
Wed	4	Jun	GC	GC Workshop	Richard Carline	40
Fri	25	Jul	GC	Masterclass - The Thinking Sport	Stephen Custance-Baker	50
Wed	30	Jul	AC	Supervised High Bisque Tournament	Frances Low	20
			GC/AC	One to One Coaching	Academy Coach	25 ph

* This course may be subject to Croquet England and Federation subsidies. Terms and conditions apply. See Croquet Academy Website for details

** Open to all Qualified coaches, there is no fee but please register as places will be limited. Lunch will be available at attendees own cost.

To apply or obtain further information for courses go to www.thecroquetacademy.com

Highlights of the 2025 programme include:

·A comprehensive Coaches Training & Qualification Course for both AC & GC players developed by Paul Francis. For full details go to the Academy website www.thecroquetacademy.com

·A modular AC Triple Peel Course led by Gabrielle Higgins, currently the highest ranked woman AC Player in the UK and second highest in the world.

·A one-day GC Masterclass by Stephen Custance-Baker. This Masterclass is based on Stephen's latest book – Golf Croquet - The Thinking Sport

·A comprehensive series of GC courses to suit players of all grades from complete beginners to Elite class.

·In the Spring we will run a course designed to take Short Croquet players onto full sized lawns and develop their AC skills.

·For those who would like a taster session on Short Croquet we are introducing a one day introduction course titled Learn Short Croquet in a day.

·Our GC Workshops have become very popular. On these courses participants will be able to develop their individual skills and gain improvements to their game through video analysis, one to one coaching sessions and development of practice routines.

Academy Courses

Chiltern Academy at High Wycombe (unless stated otherwise)

Day	D	M	Code	Description	Course Lead*	Cost**
Sat	18	Jan	AC/GC	Introduction to Club-Level Tournament Management Course	Chris Roberts Phyllis Court	10
Sat	15	Feb	GC	Referee Refresher Afternoon Course (Sponsored by SWCF)	Ian Shore (Bath)	TBD
Sun	16	Feb	GC	Becoming a Referee Blended Learning 1-Day Course (Sponsored by SWCF)	Ian Shore (Bath)	TBD
Sat	15	Mar	AC/GC	A Workshop for Coaches with the Swing Doctor	Dr Raouf Allim	35
Sat/Sun	22-23	Mar	AC	Introduction to the Triple Peel 2-Day Course	Nigel Polhill Ealing	60
Sat	29	Mar	AC	Introduction to AC for GC Players Course	Tony Elliott Surbiton	40
Sat/Sun	29-30	Mar	AC/GC	Becoming a Club-Level Coach Weekend Course	Rich Waterman	25
Tues	8	Apr	AC/GC	A Clinic with the Swing Doctor!	Dr Raouf Allim	30
Sat	12	Apr	GC	Becoming a Referee Blended Learning 1-Day Course	Ian Shore Watford	25
Sat	26	Apr	GC	Workshop for Coaches on Skills Assessment	Ian Shore	10
Tues	29	Apr	GC	Advanced Improver Course	Jason Carley	40
Sat	10	May	AC	Improving your Game for Intermediate Players Course	Dr Raouf Allim	40
Sat	17	May	GC	Intermediate Improver Course	Jason Carley Ealing	40
Tues	20	May	AC/GC	A Clinic with the Swing Doctor!	Dr Raouf Allim	30
Fri	23	May	GC	Advanced Improver Course	Ian Shore Eynsham	40
Sat	31	May	AC	Building Better Breaks Course	Richard Peperell	40
Fri	6	Jun	GC	Becoming a Referee Blended Learning 1-Day Course	Ian Shore Winchester	25
Wed	11	Jun	GC	Basic Improver Course	Neil Stewart Eynsham	40

* Generally bookings are made via Croquet England's Fixtures Calendar, unless course venue is identified with parentheses, in which case the course is booked directly as shown.

** For coaching and refereeing courses, course fees have been reduced by subsidies, granted by Croquet England, of £25 per participant. Further grants are available from some Federations on personal application to your local Federation Coaching Officer.

The Chiltern Academy's 2025 spring season, in addition to our usual coaching, refereeing and tournament management courses, offers players of all abilities, and in both codes, the opportunity to improve by learning from a range of experienced qualified coaches.

We also continue to offer the very popular 'Clinics with the Swing Doctor!'. For a second year, Dr Raouf Allim is also providing coaches with the opportunity to learn how to coach better swings with a special 'Workshop for Coaches with the Swing Doctor'.

New for this year is the chance for coaches to learn how to use the GC Skills Assessment process that is being developed to assist players to improve through SMART metrics.

Courses are usually bookable through the Croquet England website's Fixtures Calendar, when that opens for course bookings in early Jan. The exception is the Introduction to Tournament Management course; due to its early date, booking for this course can be made direct with Academy's Course Secretary. Places are limited for all courses so early booking is recommended.

Any queries can be addressed to our course secretary, Ruth Raunkiaer, by email at coursesecretary@chilterncroquetacademy.org.uk, or via mobile on 07779 233 236.



Academy Courses

Northern Academy at York

Day	D	M	Code	Description	Course Lead	Cost
Wed	23	Apr	GC	GC Tips And Technique	Penny Clark	40
Sat-Sun	26-27	Apr	AC/GC	Become a Croquet England Club-Level Coach	James Hawkins	75*
Tues	29	Apr	AC	Winning Ways (1) to a Single Figure Handicap	Dave Kibble	40#
Wed	30	Apr	AC	Winning Ways (2) to a Single Figure Handicap	Dave Kibble	40#
Tues	6	May	AC	Moving On In Advanced AC	Mary Knapp	40
Wed	7	May	AC/GC	Back to Basics	Alan Locket	40
Sat	10	May	GC	Classic Golf Croquet Skills and Tactics	John Crossland	40#
Sun	11	May	GC	Golf Croquet Skills and Tactics in Practice	John Crossland	40#
Wed	14	May	AC	Short Croquet Tactics	Stephen Custance-Baker	40
Thur	15	May	GC	Every Shot Is Tactical	Stephen Custance-Baker	40#
Fri	16	May	GC	GC Improvers Development Day	Stephen Custance-Baker	40#
Tues	3	Jun	AC/GC	Learn Short Croquet in One Day	John Harris	40

* Croquet England offers subsidies towards course costs. Some Federations may be able to provide additional support.

£75 if booked as a pair (Kibble+Kibble or Crossland+Crossland or Custance-Baker+Custance-Baker)

The ninth Northern Academy season features several new courses to meet demand, together with others that have proved particularly popular and successful. We are also delighted to welcome new coaches to the team.

The Academy is at York, close to the station and excellent rail connections to most parts of the country. Why not get your season underway with a croquet course at one of the country's top tourist cities?

This year's all-new AC programme features four courses appealing to different levels of experience and handicap. 'Short Croquet Tactics' is for developing AC and SC players, while Dave Kibble offers more established players two complementary courses covering "everything that really matters to give you the competitive edge you need". Mary Knapp's course is for players with a little experience of Advanced Rules croquet who now want to develop their skills.

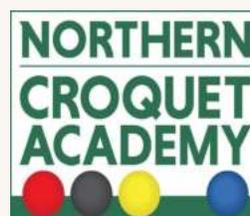
The GC programme features several new courses. The ever-popular 'Classic GC Skills and Tactics' and 'GC Skills and Tactics in Practice' consolidate the key principles and practice of the game. Penny Clark's 'GC Tips and Technique' appeals to developing GC players, while two complementary courses led by Stephen Custance-Baker, both new additions to the Northern Academy programme, are for more experienced GC players looking to advance their game to the next level.

For aspiring coaches, both GC and AC, there is an updated Club-Level Coach training course for which a £25 subsidy, funded by Croquet England, is available for qualifying applicants.

Meanwhile, of interest to both codes is the highly-regarded 'Back to Basics' on getting core technique right. There is also a one-day course to introduce GC players to the delights of Short Croquet; this also offers clubs a ready-made model to introduce this accessible and enjoyable form of AC to their members.

Most Northern Academy courses fill very quickly. Booking is open now via the Academy website www.northerncroquetacademy.org – use the menu tabs 'How to apply' and '2025 courses'. Early booking is advised. To discuss a course in more detail please contact the Northern Academy Course Secretary Debbie James at northerncroquetacademy@gmail.com or 07772 778232.

John Harris





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USING AN IMAGINARY BALL

by Stephen Custance-Baker | StephenCB@MyCroquet.me

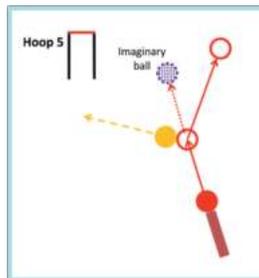
The Imaginary Ball is an extremely useful concept whenever a target is to be struck off-centre. The essential concept is that it is easier to aim at the centre of a target than at a position to one side of the centre. If you 'place' an imaginary ball overlapping the target ball and fix its centre in your mind, it's possible, with practice, to aim at that centre and ignore the actual target ball.

I'll illustrate three uses of this idea, all of which are equally applicable to AC and GC: the cut rush, clearance from a hoop and running a hoop.

THE CUT RUSH

This is the most common application of an imaginary ball and will occur many times in a game.

In this case, Yellow is to be cut so that it finishes in front of hoop 5. In GC this would be so that it could run hoop 5 on its next turn; in AC it would be so that Red could take croquet from a simple position in front of its hoop. The actual stroke is the same for both.

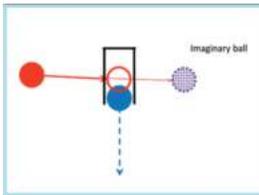


To identify the correct position for the imaginary ball, picture where you would place a ball, touching Yellow, so that you could hit it in the desired direction. Your imaginary ball must then be placed beyond the target ball, but along the same line from Red. If there is any imperfection on the surface exactly along this line, then it can be used as your imaginary target.

When playing the stroke, try to ignore the Yellow ball completely and aim at the middle of the imaginary ball. It is important to avoid the passing thought 'I must hit Yellow to the left', particularly during the final swing.

HOOP CLEARANCE

It's easy to allow the mallet to swing in a curve in an attempt to 'steer' the target ball in the direction you want it to go. One very frequent version of this is when the opponent's ball is in the jaws and your ball is behind the hoop but in a very angled position to one side. You need to play your ball straight across the back of the target ball so that it is driven cleanly back through the hoop. Steering will result in the mallet swinging in a curve towards the direction that the target ball is to go, and your ball will hit the near upright of the hoop, with little or no effect on the target ball.

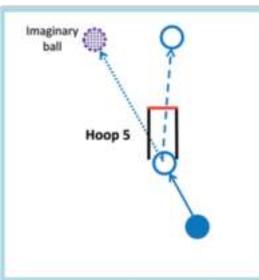


You can avoid this by using an imaginary ball. 'Place' it beyond the hoop and overlapping the target ball by a small amount. Now forget the hoop and forget the target ball; play your stroke firmly towards the imaginary ball and, if you have placed it correctly, you will get exactly the impact you need on the target ball.

HOOP RUNNING

In this situation, the idea of the imaginary ball allows the player to ignore the hoop itself during the final swing and increases the likelihood of a clean hoop run.

The first step is to identify the perfect line for running the hoop, which is as close as possible to the near upright, without touching it. Then place an imaginary ball behind the hoop, by a yard or two, exactly on the line through the perfect position in the jaws. The player plays straight at the imaginary ball as though to clear or roquet it, which results in a firm, rather than tentative, hoop shot.



As with the cut rush, the brain must accept that it is the imaginary ball that is to be 'roqueted' or 'cleared', rather than the hoop that is to be run. This thought, if kept clearly in the mind through the whole stroke, will give a clean strike in the right direction.

Coaching Pages

BY JOHN HARRIS

BECOME A CROQUET ENGLAND COACH!

Have you considered becoming a Croquet Coach? The time to enrol on a Club-Level Coach training course is now.

Becoming an effective Club-Level Coach is not about having a low handicap. Indeed, fresh memories of one's own early learning in the game help coaches appreciate the situation faced by those beginning their croquet journey.

Much more important is a warm, welcoming personality. A good coach will be ready to meet students where they are at, and help, support and encourage them to develop their skills and understanding.

The Coach Training Course is in three parts: a preliminary pack to help orientate prospective Club-Level Coaches; a two-day course led by an experienced Examining Coach; and, to follow, five coaching sessions at the candidate's 'home' club.

All three Academies are running Club-Level Coach courses in the spring, and bookings are open now. Croquet England offers subsidies towards course costs, as do many Federations.



Coaching new coaches: James Hawkins passes on tips and tricks of the trade at a Coach Training Course (photo: John Harris)

NEWLY QUALIFIED COACHES

The following nine 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 them all.

NEW CLUB-LEVEL COACHES

Lynn Beedle, Ramsgate CC
Sue Evans, Compton CC
Robert Gregory, Ramsgate CC
Cliff Hunter, Surbiton CC
Tony McCann, Durham CC
Sue Payne, Ramsgate CC
Martin Robb, Dunstan CC
John Sayce, Mumbles CC

NEW GRADE 1 GC COACHES

Peter Allan, Blewbury CC

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. To find out how to become a coach enter "Become a Coach" into the Croquet England website.

BECOMING A COACH

Qualified coaches benefit from free Croquet England insurance. Not only that, but coaching others is rewarding for the coaches themselves – and also helps them develop their own game. As a newly-qualified Club-Level Coach writes:

"I'm very much looking forward to getting more involved in improving my game and the playing skills of those at the club."

Sue Evans, Compton CC

IT'S A SHORT STEP FROM GC TO AC

Experience in GC gives players a head start in learning AC, making it enjoyable for them to explore the other code and for coaches to introduce them to it.

AC is at heart a very simple game. James Hawkins sums up the key points as follows:

- 1 You have two balls, and can pick either one or the other for each turn.
- 2 Both balls have to score all the hoops. The clips show you where you're going.
- 3 You can keep your turn going by earning extra shots:
 - Run your hoop and you get another go.
 - Hit another ball and you get another two goes.
 - The first of those is played from anywhere in contact with the ball you've just hit.
- 4 Finish at the peg.

That's it!

A simple first step is for GC players to understand that the game is about building a break; all the other balls can be used to help. Set up a simple scenario with Black in a hoop-running position, Red nearby and to play. The GC player will think, "Danger: how can I remove Black?" The AC player will think, "Opportunity: how can I use Black to help me run the hoop?"

Now introduce the core AC sequence of roquet - croquet - continuation, using the simplest croquet shot, the take-off, to get Red into hoop-running position. With these minimal tools it's perfectly possible to go on to play a very simple game of AC, with perhaps a straightforward target at this early stage of first to three hoops. All other rules and moves can wait until later.

The go-to guide for coaches looking for a tried and tested way of introducing AC to GC players is *Introducing Association Croquet – Manual for Coaches*. It's freely downloadable from the CqE website: key the title and Croquet England into Google to get straight to it. A special section for coaching GC converters starts at p26.

Klim Seabright, Cheltenham CC, has run a number of GC2AC courses and offers several helpful tips to pass on to coaches:

- Short Croquet makes the coaching much easier and leads more quickly to success. If half lawns are not available, work towards shorter versions of the game
- Underline what both codes have in common, even though they may have different names, eg rush/clearance.
- Put new skills in the context of a game, ideally alternate stroke doubles. Change students around so they gain experience across a range of shots.
- Use bisques to help students achieve success as quickly as possible.
- Build confidence: say you enjoy coaching GC players because they already know so much, for example running hoops, judging distances.
- Have measures in place for students to judge self-improvement. This may simply be the number of bisques needed to set up a break or maintain one.
- Try to adapt your coaching style to the person before you.
- Remind students that, if they feel they are stagnating or going backwards, they may ask for a short one-to-one session with a coach.

SHORT CROQUET FOCUS



Sue Longcroft (right) receives the 2024 Viking Challenge trophy from event manager Fiona Crompton (Photo: John Harris)

SC SEASON FINALE

While Sue Longcroft (see photo) was securing a long-awaited victory in the Viking Challenge at York, further south Nottingham were battling Blewbury in the final of the National Short Croquet Competition.

Blewbury had already notched up a comprehensive semi-final win over York, who had themselves significantly outgunned the 2022 winners Bury. Blewbury's Joe King played a captain's innings by winning all his games. Strong performances by Brian Jamieson and Steve Fisher contributed to a convincing 8-3 Blewbury victory and a well deserved place in the national final.

Nottingham meanwhile had had a much more nail-biting day in their semi-final, drawing 8-8 against a strong Southport team of Gail Moors, Bill Nicholl, Eileen Rossiter and Tony Thomas. It had already been determined that in the event of a draw the deciding factor would be hoops run, enabling Nottingham to go on the next day to take on Blewbury in the final.

This National Final match too could have gone either way, with only one game between the two sides as they went into the last round. This however proved decisive with Nottingham winning three of the four games and notching up a final score of 7-4. Nottingham's David Park won each of his games during the day which helped his club take home the handsome Ranelagh Trophy for a second successive year.

SC FOR LOWER HANDICAPPERS

Short Croquet holds many enticing prospects for experienced AC players. The smaller lawn places a high premium on precision play at the lawn edges. The shorter distances mean leaves need additional thought and care. Meanwhile the more exacting Short Croquet wiring rule provides an intriguing extra challenge.

For players with mandatory peels, these need careful pre-planning, not least because there are fewer hoops within which to work in the number required.

Two experienced players might experiment by taking a leaf out of the Advanced rulebook for 14-point games and agree to playing with hoop 3 as a lift hoop (Law 52.3) or lifts/contacts at hoops 3 and 4 (Law 52.4). Alternatively an 18-point or 26-point format makes for a rewarding game, with or without the usual Advanced penalty hoops.

Above all, we play for pleasure, and as well as being excellent practice in precision AC play, Short Croquet is fun – at all levels!

NEW MERIT AWARDS

Congratulations to the following:

ASSOCIATION CROQUET – BRONZE MERIT AWARD

Colin Carver - All-England Final
Brian Jamieson - All-England Final

ASSOCIATION CROQUET – SILVER MERIT AWARD

Raghu Iyer - Roehampton End of Season Handicap

ASSOCIATION CROQUET – GOLD MERIT AWARD

Charlie Martin - Budleigh Summer Tournament
Peter Rothwell - Wrest Park Handicap

GOLF CROQUET – BRONZE MERIT AWARD

Janet Sherwood - Ashby C Level

GOLF CROQUET – SILVER MERIT AWARD

Philip Tremble - Crake Valley B Level

GOLF CROQUET – GOLD MERIT AWARD

Michael Bilton - A Level Final

If you qualify for a Merit Award, remember to claim it! To see the standard to reach enter Croquet England Merit Award Scheme into Google to get straight to it. All CqE events have a Manager, and yours will be able to make the claim for you; otherwise, download a copy of the form from the CqE website. The form covers both AC and GC Merit Awards so claiming your Award should be straightforward.

GRAHAM WALLIN

NOVEMBER 1938 TO OCTOBER 2024

by Bob Ellis

I first met Graham on the well-kept lawns at Ramsgate C.C. some 20 years ago while being introduced to the sport at an open evening.

I noticed Graham on an adjacent lawn as he stood out simply because of his enthusiasm and energy for the game and, after a few visits to the club, I decided to join. During my first months as a member I discovered that my next goal was to become as good a player as Graham due to his time spent in conveying his love of the game towards all players both established and new.

I later found where these commendable traits originated. Graham joined the Merchant Navy at the age of 15 when he joined the MN training vessel, HMS Conway moored in the Menai Strait, Anglesey. He progressed to become a Master Mariner and served as Captain/Pilot on hovercraft and SeaCats on the cross-channel routes out of Pegwell Bay, Ramsgate, and Dover.

He also obtained a CAA pilot's licence and spent his middle career flying cargo planes, mainly in Africa. Graham was the first, and possibly the only person, to have a Foreign Going Master Mariner Certificate (meaning he could Captain any boat/ship in the world) and an Air Transport Pilot Licence. As an airline pilot, he was involved in at least one troop lift from Aden during the conflict in 1967.

Graham met Margaret in Jersey, where his parents lived, and the pair were married in December 1965 at the island's Trinity Parish Church. They moved to Ramsgate in 1975, when Graham started his career with Hoverlloyd; he soon progressed to Captain, a role he held for 20 years.

After retirement, Graham began volunteering as a driver, taking people to hospital, and became a member of

Graham on the Hovercraft flight deck at Pegwell Bay



Winning the Southern Challenge-Graham [wearing hat] with 3 of Ramsgate (former) juniors who all went on to represent England at GC – Tobi Savage, James Goodbun and David Dray.

Ramsgate Croquet Club. He soon became involved in inter-club and CA competitions and also became a GC referee. Ramsgate have always enjoyed team involvement in country-wide competitions, so along with our team of James Goodbun, Tobi Savage, David Dray, Captain Graham and myself, we succeeded and failed but thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, although one year we did win the Southern Challenge at Sussex CC. The pinnacle for Graham was his appointment to referee at the World Championship some years ago at the Hurlingham Club.

Graham won many trophies at inter-county, club level, etc, along the way, but the list of good friends and acquaintances far outweigh all his trophies.

He and Margaret bought a holiday home in South Africa where, for many years, they would spend January and February each year. Graham became a member in Fish Hoek croquet club in Cape Town and played in many tournaments in SA.

Graham is survived by his wife Margaret, his older sister, sons David and Fraser, grandson Jake and wider family.

RIP BARBARA YOUNG

by Roy Spencer

Long-standing member of Bury Croquet Club, Barbara Young died on 6th November 2024 following a long-term illness.

Barbara joined the club in its very early days, an extremely keen and determined AC player, well-known throughout the North West Federation. She took part in many tournaments around the country and abroad, and particularly enjoyed visiting Nottingham CC.

A popular, well-liked and respected member, she played a very active part in the running of Bury CC holding a number of committee positions including Chairman, and always encouraged and advised players. In 2023 she was appointed as an Honorary Vice-President of the club in recognition of her work, involvement and dedication.

Despite difficulties brought on by her illness she was determined to keep playing croquet, often in pain, whenever she possibly could, and amazed members only recently when after a period in hospital she turned up at the club to play! She would say "It's alright, my mallet knows what to do"!



GORDON ALBERT MILLS

1956 - 2024

by Ken Knock

Gordon and Helen Mills from Weston both died in a car accident on 16 September while travelling through the Loire Valley in France on their way to St Gervais NR Chamonix from Angouleme for the Circuit des Ramparts.

Born in 1956 to Jack & Mieke Mills, Gordon grew up in Long Sutton, Lincolnshire, with his late sister, Alison. He went on to study Rural Land Management at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester and later qualified as a Chartered Surveyor. Eventually following his father to become a partner in Hix and Son, Land Agents at Holbeach. In 2005 Gordon left Hix and Son to start Lincs Home Condition Reports focusing on Energy Performance Certification before finally retiring at the end of 2023.

Gordon was an enthusiastic croquet player and active club member taking part in most of the Pinchbeck club events and at Great Dunham where he was also a member, relishing in the weekly competition with other members from Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. He started playing Association Croquet six years ago and, encouraged by club members, rapidly improved to take part in many tournaments around the county with notable success in the past two years in B level tournaments. In 2023 he won two tournaments at the London Hurlingham Club.

This year Gordon took part in many events including the Longman Trophy, Mary Rose Trophy, Winter indoor trophies at Soham and the EACF league as well as tournaments at Colchester, Hurlingham, Nottingham, Peterborough, Edgbaston and Hunstanton.

Partnered by myself, also from The Pinchbeck Croquet Club, Gordon was the two times doubles Greek Open Association Croquet Champion in 2021 and 2023, that takes place each year in Corfu.

Gordon loved meeting people and the friendly spirit of croquet competition. He encouraged new players to improve their skills and tactics and introduced several friends including myself to croquet. Last autumn he qualified as club coach aiming to develop club members and encourage AC. At Pinchbeck, Gordon helped with the club



heats of the National Charity one-ball competition, and was the inspiration behind this year's crazy croquet day and barbecue held to celebrate the clubs tenth anniversary.

Before taking up croquet Gordon was an enthusiastic sailor, squash and table tennis player. He and Helen loved to travel and spent many weeks each year away recently visiting France, Spain, Holland, North Africa, Vietnam and Thailand. As a yachtsman he enjoyed sailing holidays chartering yachts with friends which he sailed as a qualified day skipper. Frequent trips to St Gervais gave both Helen and Gordon many weeks of skiing and alpine walks.

When not traveling Gordon had a wide range of interests that included his classic cars. He and Helen had a large garden that included space for their small herd of red deer and outdoor pizza oven used to entertain their many friends and family. It was also home to his much-loved Siamese cat Monty and a few chickens. In the quieter moments Gordon enjoyed reading, painting and drawing and always looked forward to the daily Wordle puzzle.

Gordon leaves a son and daughter, Sophia and Patrick and was a proud Opa of his granddaughter Lyra, also step son Patrick and daughter Charlotte and step grandchildren Nelly and Lennox.

Gordon and Helen were close friends that I had known for many years.

JOHN PRESCOTT MP 1938 – 2024

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS BAD PUBLICITY.

When Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott was photographed playing croquet in 2006, all the stereotypical comments about croquet being for toffs were headline news. What could have been a PR disaster for croquet turned out to be a sensation. Tony Blair said "he could smell out condescension, a slight, an air of superiority or a snub at a thousand paces" and he wasn't cowed by the media over a game of croquet. May he enjoy his croquet in peace now.

Photo from Southport Croquet Flickr, Prescott trying out his new Pidock mallet



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WEBSITE

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

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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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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