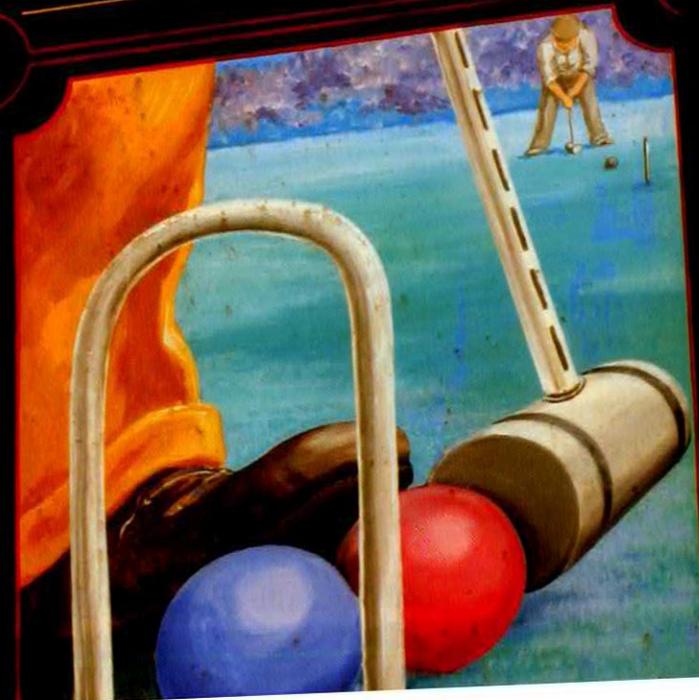


THE CROQUET GAZETTE

ISSUE 303

JUNE 2006

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Specific Questions and Queries

Specific questions or queries should be sent direct to the Editor. 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. Both black and white and coloured prints or

photographs can be used. Slides are no longer acceptable. Photocopies of pictures or print outs of digital images cannot be accepted. If using digital photography please send in jpeg or tiff format files. Please accompany all images with a description of the subject of the picture. If you require any material to be returned please enclose a SAE.

Tournament Reports & Results

Emailed reports are welcomed. Attachments may be sent in Microsoft Word format, text format. Hand written reports are no longer acceptable due to the illegibility of most.

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Queries regarding the delivery of the Gazette to members should be directed to the Secretary of the Croquet Association and not to the Editor.

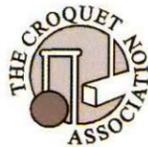
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THE CROQUET GAZETTE Chairman's Column



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Photographs in this issue are kindly supplied by: James Hawkins, John Hall, Rosemary Bradshaw, Derek Watts, John Bevington, Mark Hamilton, Ian Lines, Tim King

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It was with a mixture of sadness at his loss and thanksgiving for his life that I received the news that Alan Oldham had died, a month after travelling to view a total eclipse. His outstanding contribution to the Association is in an obituary in this issue, compiled by Stephen Mulliner, a fellow Vice-President, who is to speak at his memorial service. Although I only knew Alan in his latter years, as an administrator rather than a player, my personal memories are of someone who was exceedingly thoughtful and kind, with the interests of croquet very much at heart, which inspired his evident concern for precedent and correct procedure. Our deliberations as a Council will be much the poorer without him.

One of his many enthusiasms was for the history of the game and we now need someone, or a small group of people, to be responsible for the Association's archives, including the material that Alan himself collected. Please contact the office before 15th July if you would be interested in undertaking this on a voluntary basis.

In the interests of the accuracy he strove for, please amend the recent updates to your club handbooks to note that Surbiton won the much delayed final of last seasons Golf Croquet Inter-Club Championship and correct the winner of the 2005 Association Croquet Inter-Counties Championship to be

Editorial

For perhaps longer than I have resumed as editor I have been aware of a certain disquiet between the codes of Golf Croquet and Association Croquet. I am sure we are all more than aware that one or the other can be staunch critics of the other version of the game. It is my experience that there are some in the Association game who would defend to the last player their opinions that golf croquet is not serious game and should not be supported by the CA. Equally there are those who play Golf Croquet who walk and talk with a chip on their shoulders, looking at every given opportunity to proclaim that their version of croquet is the better form. Only recently there was a notice posted on the on the internet via the Nottingham discussion board, floating the idea that perhaps there should be a separate discussion forum for Golf Croquet. I have to say that I am against all of the above, as I think that to follow any of the courses would inevitably

Nottinghamshire, to whom I wish to extend my congratulations on retaining the title this year.



At least three clubs are playing on new lawns this season. Those at Eynsham were opened by a camera-shy David Cameron (he was reportedly advised that being pictured with a mallet would be bad for his image), whilst I had the nerve-racking privilege of running a ceremonial first hoop at Letchworth. The other one I am aware of is at Fylde, near Blackpool. Congratulations and best wishes to all these clubs on their new facilities, and to Samir and Anna (nee Noble) Patel, whose marriage at Pembroke Lodge in Richmond Park was followed the next day by a further reception at the Surbiton clubhouse, that time with Indian cuisine, attended by their families and many friends.

Invitations have come thick and fast as, in addition to what I understand is a traditional one to the Wimbledon Championships, I have been invited to attend the Service of Thanksgiving at St. Pauls for the 80th birthday of Her Majesty the Queen, our Patron. I suspect the option to dress in uniform does not include whites! *Best wishes, Ian Vincent.*

lead to the formation of breakaway groups, which as a minority sport already, would only lead to further hardships.

It is my belief that both versions, as well as any future developments of other versions need to be embraced and supported fully by the Croquet Association and all players of any variation of croquet,



as part of the same sport. I am sure some share my views and others meanwhile will not. Whatever your view I think it is time there was some open and public debate on this issue instead of confining it to committee rooms, changing rooms and cyberspace.

News & Information

Golf Croquet Coaches Course

The Golf Croquet Coaches' Qualification course is to be held at Edgbaston on 8-9th July. This course is for anyone who would like to train as a Golf Croquet coach. More coaches are needed urgently, especially from the south-west, west and north of England. Please contact Chris Bennett, whose details are in the Fixtures Calendar p.102, for an application form.

WCF Revises Wild Card Places

Following a re-assessment of the procedures for the selecting of wild card places in WCF World Championship events, the WCF Management Committee have agreed a revised process.

In future, WCF will select six (6) wild cards and be solely responsible for the choice.

To be considered for a wild card or qualifying place a player must be in good standing with his member association. This means that the player must not be under suspension or be disaffiliated by a member association or one of its affiliated members or, have been advised in writing that he/she is not eligible by a member association or one of its affiliated members.

New Lawns For Letchworth Croquet Club

report by John Hall

On Saturday 6 May Letchworth welcomed Dr Ian Vincent, Chairman of the Croquet Association, to declare open their two new lawns at a location shared with Letchworth Tennis Club. Seventy-odd members, partners and guests celebrated the occasion, and a very happy day was enjoyed by all.

Letchworth have been pursuing for some years the possibility of a move from their site at Willian Way, with undersized lawns and inadequate facilities, and are therefore delighted to be settled in their new home at last. A key factor has been the rapid expansion in membership to around sixty



Ian Vincent, Chairman of the Croquet association, presents Duncan Hector, Letchworth Club President, with his certificate for honorary life membership to the Club.

in recent years, mainly due to the popularity of golf croquet. Well-supported fundraising enabled the Club to provide about £11,000 towards the project, while £1,000 was gratefully received from the Croquet Association and another £10,000 from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (a unique charitable organisation which controls the town). Sharing a home with the Tennis Club, itself a new £2 million project only opened last year, will allow members to take advantage of the superb new clubhouse, bar and changing rooms, and is expected to boost membership further.

The Letchworth Club was formed in 1987, with tremendous support from Judy Anderson, a member of Wrest Park Club and at that time Secretary of the East Anglian Croquet Federation. Members were therefore very pleased that Judy and her husband Tom, recently made Joint Presidents of the EACF, were able to attend the inauguration. Other croquet-playing guests included Patricia Duke-Cox, Chairman of the CA Development Committee, and the EACF Chairman and Secretary, David Kitson and Terry Sparks respectively, as well as Ian Vincent himself.

Letchworth Club Chairman Andrea Carr opened proceedings on the great day, emphasising how much the Club owed to their President Duncan Hector, in particular for his organisation and preparation of the

new lawns. Duncan in turn thanked the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and the Croquet Association for their generous grants, and paid tribute to members' efforts both in fundraising and in contributing in so many ways to the success of the club. His welcome to the guests was replied to by the Heritage Foundation's Director General, Stuart Kenny, who stressed the importance of sport to the local community. Duncan was then taken aback, but delighted, to be presented with a certificate granting him honorary life membership of the Club in recognition by members of all his services to it.

The Croquet Association Chairman successfully ran the ribbon-bedecked Hoop 1, from a suitable distance, to declare open the new lawns, with cheers all round. Guests participated in a "Nearest the peg" competition, happily won by Ian Vincent himself, after which all enjoyed an excellent lunch provided by the Club's active Social Committee.

Club members, and many of the guests, were able to enjoy the lawns throughout the day, with a golf croquet tournament in the morning and an association speed croquet tournament in the afternoon. Members now look forward to welcoming other clubs to, they hope, the inappropriately named Muddy Lane, Letchworth, their new address.

Media Afternoon At Cornwall Croquet Club

report by Rosemary Bradshaw

Members of the Media braved the wet, windy weather on the afternoon of Thursday, 20th April in order to visit Cornwall Croquet Club at Porthpean. Serious croquet continues in the rain, however there were sufficient fine gaps for the visitors to enjoy a light hearted game of Golf Croquet, and watch some demonstrations of techniques and tactics employed in the more sophisticated version of this fascinating sport, Association Croquet. Social Secretaries, Jacqui Neville-Webber and Penny Rowe served afternoon tea in the very comfortable pavilion, and Howard Rosevear (President and Benefactor), Tony Backhouse (Chairman and Coach), Nigel Grant (Secretary and Coach), Tony Jennings and Rosemary Bradshaw (Publicity) represented the Club. The visitors included Jude Barrand, Jonathan Jacobs and Emily



Jonathan Jacobs (Cornish Guardian) photographs Tony Backhouse preparing to peg out.

Whitfield-Wicks (all Cornish Guardian), Jessica Cunningham and Ed Andrews (Cornwall Today), Tom Trust (BBC Radio Cornwall) and Andy and Susie Ward (St Austell Tourist Information).

Exciting Developments For Chelmsford & Bentley CC

report by David Bateson

In 1997 The Chelmsford Croquet Club relocated to Writtle College Sports Ground. In those early years the

dedication of several members saw the transformation of four disused grass tennis courts, part way converted into bowling greens, into two reasonably good, full-sized, croquet lawns. In 1999 came a merger with Bentley Croquet Club, who had lost their ground, to form the Chelmsford and Bentley Croquet Club.

Happily the leasing arrangement with the College includes provision for their groundsman to maintain the lawns and since his appointment two seasons ago the current groundsman, Peter Gray, has enthusiastically worked to make further (much appreciated) improvements to the playing surface.

With some 34 members, though at present more Golf than Association Croquet players, what the club has lacked up till now has been a clubhouse – though on a wet day the two existing small huts have provided some interesting moments! However, thanks to grants from Awards for All and the Croquet Association, all that is about to change as our new clubhouse has now arrived.

At this exciting time in its development the club would welcome new members, particularly those who would be interested in playing, or learning, Association Croquet. For further information contact the Club Secretary, Richard Lewin, on 01702 586312 or by email at rw.lewin@tiscali.co.uk.



The Nottingham Team with the Inter-Counties trophy after four days of successful play. Left to Right: Beatrice McGlen, Keith Aiton, Richard White, Patrick Hort, Dean Bennison, Gary Bennett. (Gordon Hopewell not in the picture).

New Subscription Rates

New subscription rates for 2007 have been announced. The amount before the brackets represents the non-discounted rates:

- Standard £37 (£32) per member
- Junior £ 8 (£8)
- Non-Tournament £24 (£19)
- Overseas £32 (£32)
- Composite (for two members of the household):
 - Standard £56 (£51)
 - Non-Tournament £31.50 (£26 .50)
 - Club (per capita) (£6.70)

ARCHIVIST REQUIRED

The Croquet Association is looking to appoint one (or a small group of people) to be responsible for its archives, both the existing material held in the CA office and that accumulated by the late Alan Oldham.

Anyone willing to undertake this on a voluntary basis is invited to contact the CA office to express their interest before the 15th July 2006

Handicap Association Coaching

Lesson 3: Mid-Break Tactics

by James Hawkins

Why do people always break down at the same hoops? Up in this part of the world, there's a position we call "The Southport Leave": you set up a laid break, then fail hoop 2; then you try again with your partner ball, and repeat the exercise. When the clip position is 2 & 2 against 2 & 2 after an hour and a half, you know you're in for a long, terrible game.

There's something sort of inevitable about failures at Hoop 2. The break isn't stable yet, and you've no momentum. I've not dwelt on setting up breaks in these lessons, so refer you to other previous articles in the Gazette and elsewhere. My only advice is to practise using bisques to get all four balls into play fairly quickly, because the situation should improve almost immediately once you're on to the easier stretch of the break, and you've tidied your game up.

For the purposes of this lesson, we'll skip ahead, and assume that you've managed to place the pioneers for 3 and 4 well, and that you've had no trouble dealing with those hoops. As in the last lesson, I'm supposing that all our shots throughout are perfect, so we can see the principle of what ought to happen. Next time, I'll be detailing how to rescue a poor position after you've had a string of shots which don't work; but now we'll look at the central few hoops, and consider a few tricks for making your break play easier.

The Middle Stretch

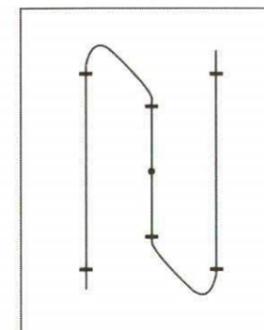
Beyond Hoop 4 there's a run of hoops (5, 6 and 1-back) which provide the opportunity for some easy scoring, and allow you to grab the break and bring it under control. It's just as well, because 2-back is by far the hardest on the lawn.

Why is that? Look at the layout of the hoops: for every hoop on the lawn, you can stand by your current hoop and see each of the next two, except for 2-back. Once you come through 6, 1-back is eight yards just in front of you, but 2-back is 19 yards behind you over your left shoulder. The awkward sharp left turn after Hoop 6 forces you to send a ball in directly the opposite direction. Your pioneer's out of position, and you're about to hit a major problem.

So here's the answer to my initial question back in Para 1. People break down early on – at Hoops 2, 3 and 4 – because they've not yet got the turn under control, or because they're not yet warmed up and happy about their shots. But people break down at 2-back because it's so much harder to get a good pioneer. Here's my top tip to get you out of trouble.

Diagram 1:

Follow this line with your finger. After every hoop you can see the next two in front of you. But after Hoop 6, 2-back disappears from sight. You're moving forwards, but sending a ball back behind you.



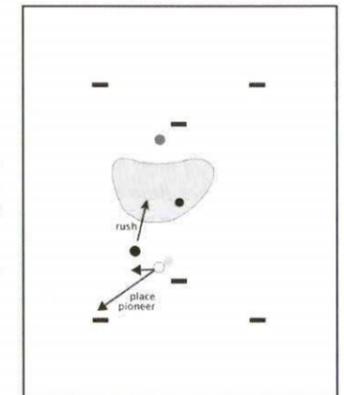
The Early Pioneer

I talked in the last lesson about placing pioneers for the corner hoops. To cut a long story short, you want to keep the pivot about three or four yards from the peg, and on your side of the lawn. Going between hoops 4, 5 and 6, where the shots are shorter, there's less need to be so diligent. Rather than the difficult business of placing the 2-back pioneer after Hoop 6, what we'll try and do is to send a ball there after Hoop 5.

Suppose I'm playing Red. I've already sent Blue as my pioneer to Hoop 6, and I've got Yellow with me at Hoop 5. Instead of putting Black (pivot) in front of me near the peg, I place it somewhere – a yard or two – to the left of Hoop 5.

Diagram 2:

Red (shown in pale grey) sends an early pioneer to 2-back. This short shot should get an accurate Yellow to the hoop, and leave Red close to Black. Rush it up short of Blue (dark grey), anywhere into the shaded area.



So, I come through Hoop 5. I hit Yellow. Now I play a little stop shot (about eight yards) to put Yellow right in front of 2-back. My Red stops just behind the Black. I can then rush Black somewhere into the shaded area. It's another stop shot / drive (probably no more than 15 yards) to send it to 1-back, and I'm on the Blue.

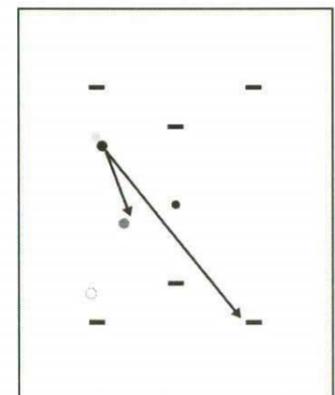
If you can do that, well done. You've now got a ball at 6 (Blue), a ball at 1-back (Black), and a ball at 2-back (Yellow). That's three hoops in the bag. After scoring Hoop 6, you can pretty much do what you like with Blue. Normally, it would become your pioneer to the next but one hoop, but that's already taken care of. Just make sure it's not left behind, and you'll be able to collect it on the way to 2-back.

The Pivot Swap

What's happened here is something you'll find useful throughout the turn when things go wrong – we've swapped pivot balls. Until Hoop 5, Black was the pivot. It then became the pioneer to 1-back, with Blue taking on the pivot role after Hoop 6. The next lesson will deal with how to use this principle to tidy up a lost position, so it's worth showing another example in action to reinforce the point.

Diagram 3a:

The standard course of action. You've got a ball ready at 2-back, and you want to get a ball to 3-back. Play a big straight drive: Black goes to 3-back, Red stops on Blue. Red rushes Blue to Yellow, and shoves it back into play as the pivot (sort of, maybe, vaguely somewhere near the peg).

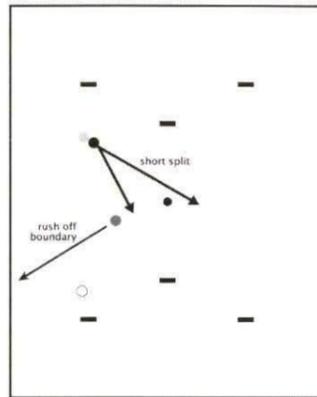


We'll fast-forward a couple of minutes from the last case. You're still playing Red, and have just come through 1-back with Black. Yellow is waiting as a 2-back pioneer at the next hoop. Blue is the pivot.

Most players would play a long shot to send Black to 3-back, with Red dropping on Blue, ready to make their way down towards Yellow. That's fine, and I'd usually do the same. What I've started doing recently, though, is to switch back between Black and Blue. So, I leave Black in the middle, and make Blue my next pioneer. I rush Blue down towards 2-back, to somewhere I can send it across to 3-back.

Diagram 3b:

The same with a pivot swap. Place the pivot ball at the peg first: Black goes to the middle, Red stops on Blue. Red rushes Blue to Yellow, but this time sends Blue to 3-back. The outcome's the same, but the shot to place the pioneer is shorter, straighter and safer.



The moral of this lesson is this. Don't get too bogged down in which ball serves which function. I've seen many games where a player starts with Black as a pivot, and plays all 12 hoops like that. You'll have no precise instructions from me on this point, as it's important that you figure things out yourself as best meets the case. But it's also important that you open your mind to the possibilities of switching the balls round in mid-break. It's often, as we'll see in the next lesson, a life saver.

The Laws Quiz

By Barry Keen, Chairman of the Laws Committee

How much do you really know? It may be useful to have your Laws book handy so you can look up the appropriate Law. Answers on page 21

Law 3

- 3.1 The peg extension must not be removed during a game. Is this correct?
- 3.2 A peg may not be straightened at any time in the game. Is this true?
- 3.3 The striker is entitled to require a hoop to be straightened and its setting to be checked at any time during a game. Is this correct?
- 3.4 The striker is entitled to lift a stationary ball at any time for the purpose of cleaning provided its position is clearly marked so that it may be replaced accurately. Is this true?
- 3.5 A clip is an outside agency when it is not attached to a hoop or the peg. Is this true?
- 3.6 The striker may play a game using more than one mallet. Is this true?

Answers on page 21

CLUB FOCUS

WREST PARK — SOMETHING OF AN INSTITUTE

by John Bevington

Players sometimes have trouble finding Wrest Park. The solution is to charter a helicopter and fly south from Bedford, following the A6 until you reach Silsoe. You can't miss it.



Looking south. The croquet lawns are between the path leading from the house and the formal canal known as the Long Water.

The earliest records of Wrest Park date from the 13th century when it was an estate held by Reginald De Grey. In the 15th century his descendant Edmund Grey was created Earl of Kent. Serious work on the gardens began after the eleventh Earl married an heiress in 1662, and the Long Water can be seen in engravings by Kip (c1705).

At that time the house in the photograph did not exist – the old house was more or less on the line of the furthest horizontal path, and the area now occupied by the croquet lawns was given over to formal gardens, fountains and mazes, outlines of which can still be seen through the turf in dry summers. The woodland gardens on either side of the canal are mainly the work of Henry, the twelfth Earl, who was created Duke of Kent by Queen Anne in 1710. His sons predeceased him and the estate passed to his granddaughter, for whom he secured the Marquisate of Grey before his death in 1740.

The present house was built in the 1830s by Thomas, Earl de Grey, the son of the marchioness's daughter and the first President of the Institute of British Architects. After the Earl's death in 1859 the estate passed through a number of relatives, was leased to the American Ambassador between 1906 and 1911, became a military hospital in the First World War and in the 1930s was sold to the Essex Timber Company. After the Second World War it was bought by the Ministry of Public Building and Works on behalf of the Government and leased to the National Institute of Agricultural Engineering.

The Institute began restoring the grounds, but also used them for experimental research. The acre and a half in front of the Long Water was at one time planted with potatoes and used for potato harvester trials. The soil is clay and, being at the bottom of a shallow slope leading down from the house, is quick to flood and slow to drain. If you dig down you will usually find a layer of

pure sand, an outcrop from the quarries a few miles north. The area was returned to grass c1959. As it was to become the site of the croquet lawns these preliminary workings of the soil may have been to our benefit.



Looking north. An experimental reversible plough (exhibited at the Festival of Britain in 1951) at work on the area now occupied by the lawns.

The croquet club was formed by staff of the NIAE in 1961 using lawns near the house, and later that year club members welded and ground the first four sets of hoops for the material cost of £4/6/1d. In 1963 the legendary D.D. Steel, châteline of the old Bedford club, visited Wrest Park and donated one of her trophies, and a few months later permission was granted to create four lawns (now six) on the present site. Within a year Wrest Park had won the Longman Cup.

In 1966 club members began entering CA tournaments when John Wheeler and Anto Davies played in the Cheltenham October weekend. The same year saw the acquisition of a 1936 Dennis mower with a 36 inch cut, which gave 30 years service before being sold to some enthusiasts for a modest profit.



John Wheeler, Vic Rees and the late Harry Green with trophies won at the Nottingham Week and the Challenge & Gilbey in 1967.

Wrest Park started holding tournaments in 1972. At that time the only club building was a small wooden shed positioned near the lawns under a large copper beech, which served as equipment store, changing and tea room. As the number of tournament entries increased it was temporarily augmented by a Portakabin on wheels, borrowed from the Institute for the weekend. The Institute was always very supportive – the club

does all its own lawn maintenance but the Institute ground staff up until recently used to dispose of all our cut grass, which for a big club is a favour beyond price.

As the members became more experienced they also became more ambitious. In 1973 Vic Rees and John Wheeler entered the Open Doubles and reached the final, only to lose to Humphrey Hicks and John Soutter. The following year Wrest Park won the Inter Club, and also entered a Bedfordshire team in the Inter Counties, finishing third equal out of six. At this time (and indeed for about ten years afterwards) membership of the club was only open to staff working at the Institute, and although this would inevitably have limited the number of players it made for a strong team spirit.

In 1976 the club broke new ground by staging the first ever advanced weekend tournament in the CA calendar, the winners being Eddie Bell and Harry Green. This year also saw Bedfordshire tie with Midland Counties for the Inter Counties, and the next year the team won the competition outright. The club briefly flirted with nine lawns for a tournament, and work began on the construction of the clubhouse.

1980 saw individual successes in CA events when Vic Rees won the Chairman's Salver and Mike Wilson won the All England Handicap, and the following year Harry Green won the Veterans'. In 1982 English Heritage took over the opening of the house and grounds to the public at weekends, but spectators were always outnumbered by players – the 1984 September handicap tournament attracted 41 entries, one of the block winners being David Goacher (5½). In those days you could find yourself, as a relative beginner, playing the likes of Colin Irwin or Phil Cordingley in a handicap tournament, which was invariably something of an education.



The Bedfordshire team at the 1983 Inter Counties. L-R: Vic Rees, Tony Dumont, Bryan Harral, Howard Bottomley, John Wheeler, Harry Green, Judy Anderson and Tom Anderson.

The 1980s also saw the club hosting CA events for the first time: the All England final in 1985 and the Peels in 1987, a year which also saw the construction of the changing room behind the clubhouse. Being situated in the middle of the park means there is neither electricity nor mains water, so lunch is an elaborate picnic taken in or out of doors. Courtside shelter is provided by the nearest tree, and it was a sad day when the magnificent holm oak next to lawn 2, a veritable bell tent, was felled in 2003.

One advantage of the setting is the opportunity to observe the local wildlife – players at last year's July tournament were able to watch four kestrel chicks whose parents had made a home

in a tree near the clubhouse.

The last fifteen years have seen an expansion in the membership, aided by the opportunity to recruit outside the Institute (by now the Silsoe Research Institute) and the ending of the restriction on the hours of play which had previously been evenings and weekends only. Most of the new members are golf croquet players - finding and developing Association players is not so easy. Nevertheless the club continues to hold its own in competition, having reached the finals of the Inter Club and Secretary's Shield in 1995 and the final of the Longman Cup in 1997. Between 1995 and 2004 Wrest Park won the Mary Rose four times and was runner-up twice.

The club has also hosted more CA events. Wrest Park is now a regular venue for the Eastern Championship, in rotation with Hunstanton and Colchester, and in recent years has also staged the Selector's Weekend, the Home Internationals, possibly the wettest ever All England final in 1998 (won by John Gibbons, then playing off 9), the golf croquet Inter Counties and last year's England qualifier for the World Championship.



Roger White in play on lawn 6 during the August tournament in 2000.

This year sees the end of an era as the Silsoe Research Institute closed on 31st March, so it is an appropriate moment to look back at the club's history and remember the early pioneers. John Wheeler and Vic Rees still live in Silsoe, and John continues to mow the lawns and played in the winning Mary Rose team in 2004. The club is now looking forward to a future as tenants of English Heritage, which has taken over the house and grounds.

'If one seeks good croquet in peaceful and beautiful surroundings, Wrest Park is the place to find it.' This recommendation by ex-CA Chairman Lt Col D.M.C. Prichard in his book *The History of Croquet* (Cassell 1981) cannot be bettered by us, so if you've never been before why not enter one of our tournaments and see for yourself. English Heritage is unlikely to let your helicopter land in the garden so you will face the same problem as visitors before you: the final approach to the lawns from the car park. We will be happy to send you detailed instructions, including essential information that can't be found on Google Earth.

The Liverpool Project : Part 1

by James Hawkins

In June 1985, I decided to become a croquet-player. I wrote to the Croquet Association, and asked for details of my local club. It turned out that I didn't have one; I could drive 25 miles north to Southport, 25 miles east to Bowdon or 25 miles south to Chester. Twenty one years later, the croquet map has filled out and there are many more clubs in the North West, but locally the picture's still pretty much the same – Liverpool remains a croquet desert.

It is perhaps surprising that there isn't, and never has been, a croquet club in Liverpool. In the game's heyday, Liverpool was bigger, richer and posher than just about anywhere else. The city had plenty of parkland to accommodate the game, but nowhere was croquet played in public. Even now, a century later, and with a population diminished from one-and-a-bit million to just shy of 450,000, there's enough green space for us remaining Scousers to rattle around in, but still no sign of croquet breaking out of the back gardens of suburbia and into the public realm.

It's hardly ever bothered me. Those who engage in the pursuit of minority sports accept a level of inconvenience which others might refuse to withstand. My playing activity has always been based on travelling to tournaments, playing league matches away, and coaching at remote clubs. I've never had a home club, so I don't miss not having one. But the last few years have seen an increasing interest from outsiders throughout Liverpool – pensioners from staunchly blue-collar Halewood to the south-east, or schoolkids from run-down Croxteth to the north. Sooner or later, that trickle of interest must swell to a flood, and Liverpool Croquet Club looks like an inevitability.

My First Approach

I contacted the Sports Development Department at the City Council in 2004. The response was dispiriting. Sports policy within the city is based around combating child obesity, and tackling social deprivation. Efforts are focused on football, swimming, tennis and boxing. Other sports – even cricket, basketball or hockey – fail to get a look-in. Something like croquet, with its middle-class, "elitist" tag is way off the development radar. Surely, there's no way forward for the game in Liverpool.

My mind changed a year ago. I was writing an article for the Croquet Gazette on the rebirth of Pendle Croquet Club. Evicted from their home of 20 years and with no means of financial support, they found a site, raised the cash, created five lawns and a clubhouse from scratch, and are now playing at their new venue. So what am I complaining about? Somehow or other, I must be able to make this happen.

The Hunt for a Site

Leafy south Liverpool quickly revealed itself as the favoured location for the new club. As the primary residential area, it possesses an endless swathe of public parkland. It occupies the point farthest from each of the neighbouring clubs, so gives the widest, as well as the most promising, catchment.

I'd ruled out private land (the Cricket Club, various tennis clubs, expensive-to-rent private sports fields) almost immediately. Nothing is surer to kill off a seedling club than to force it to compete for space with a larger, healthier rival. And with eight municipal parks in the area, there's plenty of choice for me to find the perfect site. In some ways, there's actually too much choice, and it took a long while to whittle down the options to find my preferred location.

Clarke Gardens lies on the edge of the well-to-do areas of Allerton and Woolton, and is bordered on the other side by the local crematorium and cemetery. The park is dominated by Allerton Hall, a sandstone Georgian mansion, empty since the last of the family died in the 1930s, when its ownership passed to the City Council. Latterly, it's been converted to accommodate an immense pub-restaurant (which seems to rely for most of its trade on funeral wakes from the crematorium next door).

The rest of the park comprises a woodland nature reserve, an open patch of flat grassland, and a former Pets' Corner. Rising



The buildings date from the 17th Century, but the Council can find no user for them. With no outside interest, these Grade II listed structures could remain abandoned.

costs and falling popularity caused the zoo area to close in 1999. The buildings – donkey stables and pig pens – remain, but the whole of Clarke Gardens has seen much happier days. There's a walled garden, its gates now welded shut and its confines overgrown to the point of dereliction. The huge stable block alongside dates from 1659, though there's no use for it now. It and the other outlying buildings, bird cages and animal enclosures are boarded up, their entrances chained and padlocked.

All this is an extreme embarrassment for the Council. Each structure – the Hall, the walled gardens, the stable, even the iron railings – is Grade 2 listed, preventing future alteration. Nobody wants the site, and no one visits the Gardens any more. There's parking for 80 cars, but a typical sunny Saturday afternoon will see a couple of dog walkers and a deserted park.

Liverpool Croquet Club : The Proposal

It was November when I first started asking myself the question: Am I being stupid? Here's a park which no one else wants. There's enough flat grass for at least six croquet lawns, which no one else is using. And there's a row of buildings for storage, again which no one else is using. Is this too good to be true, or have I found a ready-made croquet club, right on my doorstep? Give me a key to the padlock on the gate, and there's nothing more to be done. LCC is firmly on the map.

Of course, I've been here before. I ask the Council for help, and they say no. End of story. So this time, I've got to be more persuasive. By December I had a six-page proposal detailing exactly what I had in mind.

Initially, as a start-up club, there's no need for more than a couple of lawns. Over time, and with more members, I'd expect to bring more of the area into use. I explain the nature of the



Inside the walled garden. Development depends on whether this ruined glasshouse can be restored.

game. I talk about the demographics of possible members, and the introduction of a schools programme. I'm offering to provide sporting activity for those target groups which the Sports Development team haven't been able to attract, and – this is the crucial point – I can do it for minimal cost.

My proposal finds its way to the desk of Derek Dottie, the Park Estates Manager in the City Council's Regeneration Department. We talk on the phone. He's intrigued, and we agree to meet on-site to discuss the project.

What happens next is slightly hazy. It's a Thursday morning in the middle of February, and we're standing by ourselves in Clarke Gardens. I ask to use the park for croquet. He asks me what maintenance I want done on the lawns, and offers to have them ready by June. We shake hands, and that's it. *The Secret Garden*

Well, not entirely. In principle, he's got something I want (a spare patch of land), and I've got something he wants (a plan to use his derelict site). He's talked about peppercorn rents, and vaguely hinted at low rates for maintenance, but there are all sorts of issues to iron out.

In April, we arranged another meeting on site. The old zoo area is protected by a 10-foot high security fence, and I arrived to find Derek with a pair of bolt-cutters, shearing off the old padlock. Inside the fence, everything looks very different. From out on the (prospective) lawns, the stables looked like the perfect clubhouse. From in here, I realise I had been looking at only about a quarter of the building. Downstairs could house the biggest clubhouse in the country (with the obvious exception of Hurlingham), but there's another floor above. The laying of four indoor croquet carpets upstairs seems a profligate use of space, and, with restoration costs for the building estimated at about £450,000, it's certainly beyond the means, or the requirements, of any club.

There's a long, single-storey stone row of outhouses, now almost entirely engulfed in ivy. This is more like it, but there's

Continued on page 15

THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT

In accordance with Council's instructions I have examined the attached accounts for the Croquet Association for the year ended 31st December 2005, together with the accounting records maintained for that year. I obtained such further information as I considered necessary to assist me in my review.

Although I have not conducted an audit of the accounting records, in my opinion the attached accounts summarise and are in agreement with the accounting records and information obtained relating to that year.

Reed House Marian Hemsted
The Street Chartered Accountant
Plaxtol, Sevenoaks
Kent TN15 0QL
3rd March 2006

Comments on the 2005 Accounts

A 'reasonable' surplus of £8,500 was generated in 2005, with overall income remaining steady but with expenditure rising significantly.

The finer details on the income side show quite a mixed picture. Subscription rates were increased in 2005 and produced around 10% extra revenue – the CA is extremely grateful to both its individual and club members for their continued loyal support. But these gains were more than offset by a fall in sponsorship (including associated advertising) income. Sponsorship has been a highly fluctuating source over the years and the Marketing Committee is making a determined effort to make it more regular, at least at a modest level. The CA Shop had another excellent year, thanks to Jeff Dawson's sterling efforts, and it is pleasing to note that corporate events, organized by David Collins, continued to produce a valuable contribution. But Levy (paid by clubs for tournaments listed in the Fixtures Calendar) showed an unexpected fall.

The significant increase in expenditure is mainly attributable to grants to clubs (and federations) reaching a record high of £22,500. Nine clubs, both small and large and spread across the country, received development grants of between £1,000 and £6,000. In addition, five newly registered

Continued opposite

THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2005

	2005		2004	
	£	£	£	£
Income from:				
Subscriptions:				
Individuals		43,527		39,435
Clubs		27,052		24,568
Levies		12,665		13,556
Surplus of income from -				
Commercial activities		19,472		17,883
Tournaments		4,044		3,542
Advertising and royalties		3,634		5,238
Investments		6,913		7,416
Donations & Sponsorship (net)		473		5,967
Total Income		117,780		117,605
Expenditure on:				
Publications		19,681		19,762
Marketing & Development		6,191		6,290
International activities		1,041		696
Central administration costs:				
Staff costs		35,287		32,638
Office overheads		4,218		5,076
Depreciation of office building		2,761		2,719
Office services		5,785		4,605
Council members' travel expenses		3,214		2,160
Accountancy		450		(250)
Sundry expenses		372		2,049
Direct expenditure on Clubs & Federations				
Grants to Clubs & Federations		22,538		13,803
Legal liability insurance scheme		7,704		9,272
Total Expenditure		109,242		98,820
Surplus for the year before taxation		8,538		18,785
Provision for Corporation Tax year ended 31st December 2005	957		2,007	
adjustment for prior year	-		(437)	
	957		1,570	
Surplus for the year after taxation		7,581		17,215
Net transfer from/(to) special funds		(7,628)		(16,786)
(Deficit)/Surplus for year transferred to General Fund £		(47)		£ 429

THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2005

	Note	2005 £	2004 £
Fixed Assets	1		
Office Building at written down value		46,835	48,996
Office & Croquet equipment at written down value		3,288	-
Trophies at valuation		10,000	10,000
Investments at cost	2	18,810	18,810
		78,933	77,806
Current Assets			
Stock held for resale	1	16,997	10,962
Loans to Clubs		8,229	3,000
Debtors & prepayments	3	22,182	6,868
Cash at bank and in hand		150,830	176,482
		198,238	197,312
Current Liabilities			
Subscriptions received in advance		2,658	2,735
Creditors & accrued expenses		8,278	12,631
Provision for taxation		852	1,951
		11,788	17,317
Net current assets		186,450	179,995
Net Assets		£265,383	£ 257,801
Financed by:			
General Fund			
Balance at 1 January 2005		94,206	93,777
Surplus for the year from Income & Expenditure			429
Account retained in General Fund		(47)	
		94,159	94,206
Special Funds	4	171,224	163,595
		£265,383	£ 257,801
Dr I G Vincent	Chairman	Dr R W Bray	Treasurer

clubs benefited from the first year of operation of "starter grants" where basic croquet equipment is provided so that members of these clubs play with good standard mallets, balls and hoops.

For the past few years, the annual budget for development grants has been set at a quarter of the value of the Development Fund. This ensures that, if some or all of the cost of grants has to be met from that fund, then the programme can be continued, albeit at a tapering rate, into future years. In 2005, the cost of grants was met wholly

from revenue and, with a stream of new applications coming in, Council agreed to increase the Development Fund by transferring the bulk of the year's surplus to it, thus making more money available for grants in 2006 and beyond.

Further assistance to clubs was provided through the legal liability insurance scheme, now in its second year, and loans; three clubs took advantage of interest-free loans during the year to spread the cost of purchasing new balls.

After considerable delays, more of the

CA's reserves are being invested in government stock. The first of these transactions started in 2005 but were not completed until the new financial year (see Note 3 to the accounts).

A more comprehensive analysis of the 2005 Accounts will be distributed at the AGM in October. If you wish to receive an advance copy, please notify the CA Office and provide a stamped, addressed envelope.

Roger Bray
Treasurer

**THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS - 31 DECEMBER 2005**

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Accounting convention

The accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention.

Fixed Assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life:

Office Building 5% per annum from 1 January 2003

(the building was completed only in the last quarter of 2002)

Croquet & Office Equipment & Fittings 33% per annum

Trophies are included in the Balance Sheet at valuation.

Stock Stock is valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

2 LISTED INVESTMENTS AT COST

	2005 £	2004 £
15,409 4.125% Index Linked Treasury Stock 2030	18,810	18,810
Market value of investments at 31 December	£ 35,980	£ 32,854

3 DEBTORS & PREPAYMENTS

Debtors & Prepayments is an amount of £20,107, a payment made in December 2005 for the purchase of Government Stocks. The transaction was not completed until early January 2006.

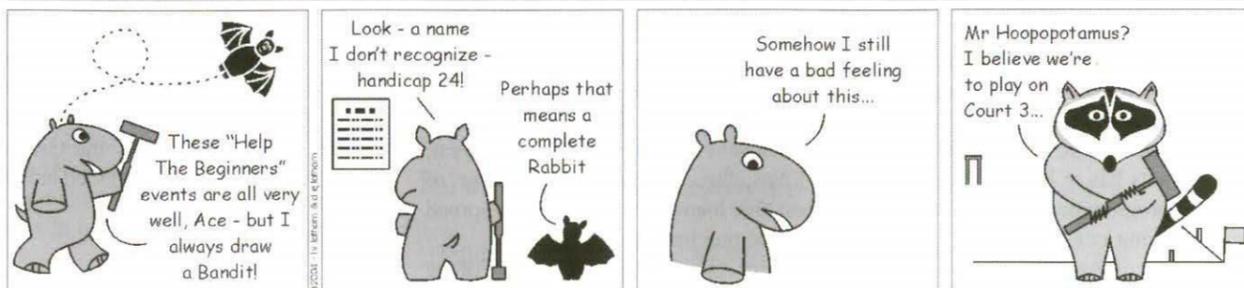
4 SPECIAL FUNDS

Fund Name	Balance 1 January 2005 £	Transfers from/(to) General Fund in year:			Balance 31 December 2005 £
		Investment Income £	Donations £	General Allocation (net) £	
New Club Fund (see below)	5,000	-	-	-	5,000
Development Fund	82,500	-	-	4,500	87,000
Benefactors Fund	29,035	1,052	223	-	30,310
International Fund	27,455	995	-	-	28,450
Duffield Bequest	19,605	859	-	-	20,464
Total Special Funds	£ 163,595	£ 2,906	£ 223	£ 4,500	£ 171,224

The New Club Fund has been set up to provide basic croquet equipment on long-term loan to newly-established clubs, provided they are members of the Croquet Association.

HOOPOTAMUS

by Victor



Tournament Round-Up

Croquet North V The Scottish Croquet Association
6th/7th May 2006 at Tyneside CC.

Report by Derek Watts

The annual match between CN and SCA consisted of 4 doubles and 16 singles played to advanced rules. Croquet North won the first two doubles and two of the first set of singles. By the end of play on the first day the SCA were 3 - 7 down. One the second day the Scots took one of the remaining doubles and although they fared better in the singles they were unable to catch the Croquet North team who won 12-8.



Players left to right back: Phil Errington, Derek Old, Sheila Watts, Martin Stephenson, David Appleton, Jim Taggart, Jamieson Walker. Foreground: Derek Watts is presented with the match trophy by Bruce Rannie.

still much work to be done on it to make it habitable (windows might be nice). But there's a third structure here which is much more interesting. It's a wooden prefabricated building, bought (by Derek) just a couple of years before the animals vacated the site. Apparently, it housed several cages of exotic birds. The internal mesh walls are still in place. The floor is inches deep in bird seed and feathers. Give me a bucket of soapy water and a spare afternoon, and this could become a palatial clubhouse for a first-year croquet club.

All this is well and good, but it's a hundred yards to the lawns. If only the playing area wasn't so far away. Well, that's all catered for too. There's a gate inside the compound which leads to the walled garden. It's hard to measure exactly, but there about 100 by 80 yards' worth of turf inside there. Do the sums: that's another six croquet lawns.

This puts the project in another league; six lawns in a field, with a remote hut, compared to six secure lawns in a walled garden, with adjoining clubhouse, and with the option of increasing to 12 by using the field.

A Reality Check

There's a downside. Of course there's a downside. The wilderness which comprises the walled area needs some serious work. For a start, it's completely overgrown. And secondly, it's on quite a severe slope. Those in themselves aren't overriding problems; no matter how bad things are, you only need to bulldoze a site once. Dig it out, terrace it and reseed it, and the lawns are ready for use. Costs have fallen recently for this sort of thing, and it's perhaps do-able for as little as £30,000.

That's all fine, but it gets worse. Right slap bang in the middle of my new Lawn 2 is a knot of twisted, rusty metal. Incredibly, this is yet another protected building. It's a Grade 2 listed Edwardian glasshouse (or what's left of it). Regulations demand that it's either restored to its original condition, or left to rot. Bizarrely, total neglect of a listed building is acceptable, but removal is illegal. The question is whether its decline has reached such a stage that it's no longer viable to restore it. So, what becomes of the site: new croquet lawn, or old ruin?

Part 2 of the quest for Liverpool Croquet Club follows in the next issue.

Manor House Mallets

The originators of carbon fibre shafted mallets now offer a truly comprehensive range, from the 'Basic' at £87.50, the well established T-series (£137.50) to the 2000 mallet at £160 (inc. head wrap). All have heads of fine hardwood with screwed and glued double faces, inlaid sight lines and a high quality finish. Sustainably managed timbers.

Hollow head with brass plate extreme end-weighting (£20 extra)

Revolutionary 2001 model £220

Mallet bags (£27) Head wraps (£7.50)

For details or discussion, contact Alan Pidcock,
Tel & Fax 01772 743859
e-mail pidcock@manorh.u-net.com
The Manor House, 1 Barn Croft, Penwortham,
Preston PR1 0SX

Ramsgate Croquet Club's Open Spring Weekend
6th/7th May 2006

report by Valerie Harding

This Advanced Level Association Tournament was held on the 6th and 7th May on the West Cliff Lawns with 14 competitors mainly from the South of England but including two from Belgium. In spite of the cold and sometimes rainy weather it was a fascinating competition with a



Valerie Harding presents the winner, Julie Hudson with her trophy.

particularly thrilling top match in the last round. It looked as though Roger Wood was about to win that game, having used the risky stratagem of pegging out his opponent Julie Hudson's first ball, leaving himself two balls to her one to make further breaks. He reached the final hoop with his second ball but was at the wrong angle to go through, so he retreated towards a baulk line, forgetting that (under Advanced Rules) Julie had a lift – rather like a free ball in snooker - which enabled Julie to play her ball onto his from that baulk line. This she did and was able to run the last hoop and peg out to win. So Julie Hudson from Parkstone, Dorset was the outright winner, having won all her matches.

It certainly showed why for top players the Advanced Rules make the game much more of a challenge – but that they make mistakes like anyone else!

In another match Chris Daniels won by 26 points with a triple – equivalent to a whitewash and 147 break rolled into one peel - in 25 minutes instead of the allotted 2½ hours.

East Anglian Open Golf Croquet 20th-21st May 2006

Report by Chris Sheen

A wet weekend didn't dampen spirits at the third East Anglian Championship. Players from Austria and Belgium made it an international event and the general standard of competition was the highest so far. It was good to see a number of new faces especially some younger ones.

That said, the two blocks of eight proved a test of stamina as well as skill. Block A was won fairly comfortably by Robert Fulford from David Hopkins, who got through on count back, but Block B was much more open. Pierre Beaudry pipped John Spiers, both of whom had the same points total just ahead of a cluster of three. Highlights of the block play included a persistent Mark Hamilton taking a game off Robert Fulford and the play of Tom Brant who has constantly improved over the years and has now become a force to reckon with.

The two semi-finals produced good games. Pierre Beaudry, who is comparatively new to the game, made his mentor Simon Carter proud in beating David Hopkins. David after a South African winter has found his form again and so Pierre's win was

no mean performance. In the other game, John Spiers gave Robert Fulford a run, taking the first game in the best-of-three, only really succumbing in the end to Robert's relentless straight hitting.



Robert Fulford in play at the East Anglian Open Golf

As the rain became more persistent, many were grateful not to be playing in the final but Pierre Beaudry put up a great show of resilience to take Robert Fulford all the way eventually losing 7-5, 7-4. Robert was a worthy winner, showing everyone the heights that have to be scaled to beat him, but Pierre is valuable addition to the golf croquet ranks.

Surbiton Speed Doubles 20th/21st May 2006

Report by Kevin Carter

The manager was absent from this year's tournament. Getting married was a reasonable excuse so we forgave Samir and his new wife, Anna Noble (George's daughter), for depriving us of his services. They more than made up for it by providing a superb curry - a sort of up-market take-away for 150 people - at the club on Saturday evening. It was great to see bus-loads of sariclad ladies from India, Tanzania, Fiji and elsewhere trying side-style croquet shots.

In the Speed Doubles tournament we had 12 pairs, playing 11 rounds of 14-point handicap doubles (Samir decided 7/26ths of the handicap difference was appropriate....) with 25 minutes each side, displayed on giant chess clocks. Team colours are encouraged and some took this a stage further - for instance we had a pair of Mexican bandits. But the plaudits for dressing up went to Chris 'Elvis' Patmore and Chris 'Elvis' Farthing, complete with wigs and a guitar [test: what is the plural of Elvis - Elvi? Elvii? Elvises? Elvses?].



In most croquet tournaments play gets better through the weekend. Not so speed doubles. Aching joints and muscles took their toll, as did beer between each round. This year's wind, rain and heavy courts made it even worse.

However, two pairs dominated the block, each winning 10 of their 11 games: Gina Lewis + Philip Eardley and Avril Machiavelli + yours truly. Gina and 'Fingers' had already thrice won this tournament, now in its 10th year. Avril is a newcomer to the game, a product from the Blewbury academy and under the expert tutelage of the Brigadier. Her 16 handicap is a travesty and she WILL win many handicap tournaments soon. You read it here first.

In the final the two pairs played against each other again and it was a real crowd pleaser. It had everything: brilliant shooting, fluky peels, referee calls for contested wiring lifts and hoop faults, a peg-out, time called. But Gina and Phil triumphed, winning the trophy for the fourth time. Then we all went home for a long soak in a hot bath.

Budleigh Salterton B Level 29th April/1st May 2006

Report by Audrey Howell

Budleigh's first tournament of the season began with a B-Class event, played to advanced rules (Handicaps 1-6). Players from around the country and abroad, as well as local members, enjoyed three days of competitive play culminating in a win for the player who had travelled the furthest. Peter Thompson who lives in Sweden and visits England for tournaments won all of his nine games, bringing down his handicap from 1.5 to 1. Following the presentation of a glass goblet, he thanked Budleigh member, Julie Horsley, for her excellent management of the event and, as a visitor, praised the Budleigh club for being one of the friendliest in the U.K. Greta Stringer (Nailsea) was runner-up - handicap reduction from 4.5 to 4. and Roy Edwards (Dorset) won the prize for the fastest game.



Budleigh Salterton veteran David Purdon congratulates winner Peter Thompson.

The Women's Open Golf Croquet Championship Ripon Spa Hotel 19th-21st May 2006

Report by Freda Vitty

Alan Oldham Memorial Trophy

For those of us who knew Alan, this event was tinged with sadness by his absence. Alan has been a staunch supporter of Golf Croquet generally, presenting its merits at every opportunity and helping to set up the rules for competitive Golf Croquet. He attended the Yorkshire Open at Ripon Spa Hotel in 1998 and saw the Egyptians play. This reinforced his belief that Golf Croquet was the way ahead for the CA. He continued to attend every Yorkshire Open since as Tournament Referee and it was while there (over an after-dinner drink) that the first ever Women's Open was discussed. He gave it his full support and it is now in its fifth year.

Alan had been due to attend for the first time as Tournament Referee, backing up his friend and colleague Evelyn Martin who was managing her first tournament. On a personal note, I met Alan at my first ever senior tournament at the Yorkshire Open in 2001, where his quiet encouragement, knowledge and wisdom helped me tremendously. It was at the same tournament in 2005, that Alan discussed with me the future of Golf Croquet and suggested I considered joining the Golf Croquet Committee. His example of enthusiasm and dedication was the main factor in my saying "yes".

Keith Smith, President of Ripon Spa Hotel Club and long time friend of Alan, spoke movingly of Alan at the presentations on the final day. He, Samantha Curry and Evelyn Martin are each contributing to buying a suitable antique trophy, which will be presented to the winner of the Women's Open and is to be known as The Alan Oldham Memorial Trophy in memory of Alan, a good friend and a lovely, lovely gentleman.



The four semi finalists: Freda Rogers, Freda Vitty, Samantha Curry and Jane Pringle.

The Fifth Yorkshire Women's Open

The fifth annual Women's Open at Ripon Spa Hotel took place from May 19th to 21st. There was an original entry of 24, but Cynthia Street had to withdraw because of injury incurred in a fall. Despite the cracked rib, she still attended and acted as one of the scorers, carrying on despite appalling weather at times. There were several familiar faces and some newcomers to the

tournament, plus entrants from Ireland. Unfortunately last year's winner, Abir Moustafa from Egypt and her colleagues were unable to attend because of visa problems.

A friendly atmosphere was maintained throughout the three playing days, despite keenly contested games. There were a number of results worthy of mention; Irene Burns playing Sam Curry in the block and losing on hoop 13 after just missing a long shot from the boundary; Margaret Williams winning all her games in the block only to lose out at the quarter final stage; Freda Vitty's excellent win over Leo Dungan from Ireland in the quarter finals (we think Leo's mind was on Munster's Rugby Union game at the time); and again Freda Vitty's semi-final against Sam Curry, which went to the 19th hoop. Sam had her black in the jaws, Freda played a jump shot with red, which sat on top of black and spun them both out of the hoop, one to the left and one to the right; Sam went for the hoop – a very acute angle, the ball being helped just through by a touch on the red.

I must mention the fact that Auckland Croquet Club in County Durham, which has only one almost-full-size lawn, sent four players to the tournament and all four were quarter-finalists, three of them getting through to the semis; a tribute to the enthusiasm and commitment of all concerned.

The weather was not kind to us and on Saturday morning the flooded lawns were given over to the ducks! Play was able to start on two of the lawns by mid-day and some hard work by the groundsman got the third in use soon after. While play was temporarily suspended, the women spent their time playing table tennis, board games, listening to music, sleeping and shopping!

The tournament had lots of coverage and we were visited by TV cameras, photographers from the local papers and a BBC radio reporter, who did live interviews with the tournament manager, Samantha Curry and myself at various points during the afternoon for an out-and-about programme for Radio York.

In preparation for this report, I talked to several participants, including one of the newcomers, Sara Stover (yes, another one!). She said she'd like to make a contribution to my report and emailed me the following: "Being a relative newcomer to golf croquet, I thought I would have a bash at the Women's Golf Croquet Open Championships at the Ripon Spa Hotel in North Yorkshire. The whole event was wonderfully organised, the Hotel couldn't have been more accommodating and whilst the rain was heavy, the camaraderie between the ladies was fabulous fun off court!! I was kindly given lots of tactical advice from so many, which I look forward to practicing for next year's event as being at the short end of the Strovers - I have a reputation to uphold!"

The final was played in light but ever so persistent rain, so unfortunately any spectators that might have been generated by all the publicity were well and truly put off. Jane Pringle got off to an unfortunate start, losing the first game to Samantha Curry 7 - 2. In the second end she got into her stride and it went down to the wire at 6 all. Sam managed to get both her balls in running position, so had the luxury of going for a long black, which she made with panache, to win her fourth out of five Women's Opens. But look out Sam, some of us are treading on your tail!

This was Evelyn Martin's first tournament in charge and she did a magnificent job, first of all in the initial organisation and then responding to the delays occasioned by the weather, rescheduling games and encouraging us to get out there and play; all with that quiet, calm authority reminiscent of the man who should have been there as tournament referee, the much missed Alan Oldham.

Bowdon Advanced Weekend 3rd/4th June 2006

report by Ian Lines

The Bowdon Advanced Weekend was won by David Maugham who beat Ian Lines in the final (+14otp, -19, -26tp, +14tp, +15tp), finishing at 7.15pm in glorious evening sunshine. The consolation Egyptian Event was won by Brian Storey, who only lost two games to David Maugham in the semi-finals.

The Bowdon lawns were excellent, with hoops set firmly to 1/32nd. Various photos can be found on the Bowdon web site at <http://www.bowdoncroquet.co.uk/>

All the main event games went according to seeding (8 seeds), except Ian Lines beating Colin Irwin in the semi-finals. Ian won the first game +1 after Colin did all three peels of a triple and pegged out one of his own and Ian's peg ball. Ian hit the 14 yard lift from A baulk and 2 balled out from 4 back.



David Maugham is presented with his trophy by Sheila Black

In the final, Ian went first every game, going 8 yards north of corner 4, David to corner 2 every game, Ian hit partner from A baulk every game! In the first game, Ian went off in corner 2 (lawns just on the fast side of medium), David to 4 back, but broke down (hampered) after hoop 1 with his second ball. Ian did the tpo leaving balls in corner 1 and 10 yards north of corner



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4. David split from east boundary to corner 1, rolled off hoop 2!, +14otp to David. In the next 4 games Ian had various rough dream leaves 3rd turn, and went round to 4 back 5th turn with diagonal spreads. In game 2 David started a tpo but broke down at 2 back after doing a death roll penult peel, leaving Ian a 7 yarder for an easy finish. In game 3 Ian had a 7th turn tp. In games 4 and 5 Ian broke down after a few hoops with the second ball, and David finished with tidy tps, Ian missing the lifts by next to nothing.

The Peterson Trophy was presented to David by club president Sheila Black, and thanks were recorded to John Saxby and his team for the magnificent catering, and to all those involved in preparing and setting the lawns.

Inter-County Championships Southwick/Compton 27th-30th May 2006

report by Sue Mackay

Nottinghamshire retained the Inter County Championship with 9 match wins out of 10. Surrey were runners-up with 7 match wins. Looking very smart in Notts County cricket sweaters and caps, the Nottinghamshire team of Richard White (captain), Keith Aiton, Gary Bennet, Dean Bennison, James Death, Gordon Hopewell, Patrick Hort and Beatrice McGlen put on an impressive performance. Going into their final match against Sussex they knew that even if they lost they would retain the championship as long as they won one game, and Keith Aiton's early triple ensured them victory.

James Death played an interesting final game on Lawn 4, winning DP DPO with all four clips on his back pocket!!

The second division was won for the second time in three years by Suffolk, with a strong team of Steve Comish (captain), Mark Avery, Phil Eardley, Sue Edwards, Chris Farthing, Martin French and Michael Percival.

Suffolk lost their first match to Middlesex but thereafter remained unbeaten with 24 games won - the highest number in either division.

Gloucestershire for the second time managed to be the only team to beat the eventual winners whilst at the same time being the only county to lose to the team which came last. This year that was newly promoted Bedfordshire, who started off with a



Martin Grainger-Brown or Warwickshire enjoying 'The Counties'.

win against Gloucestershire and then failed to win another match. Sussex, also promoted last season, played Essex after lunch on the first day. Essex had their bye in the morning, allowing their players to travel to Southwick on the Saturday. Robert Fulford was driving Jack Wicks and Paul Stephenson but forgot to pack his mallet and had to return for it, with the result that they arrived half an hour late, and the remaining three team members had to go on to separate lawns and each deem a ball. Robert didn't get much chance to play when he did arrive, as Colin Prichard misapproached 1-back and came off telling Rutger Beijderwellen he would have to do a sextuple - so he did!! Sadly this win and a subsequent straight quintuple from Rutger was not enough to save Sussex, one of the classic 'yo-yo' teams, and they were relegated along with Bedfordshire.

The third relegation place was in doubt right up until the end.

Gloucestershire, Yorkshire and Lancashire were tied on 4 match wins each, but Lancashire lost out because they only won 13 games, as opposed to Yorkshire's 14 and Gloucestershire's 15. Indeed it was the War of the Roses clash at Compton on Bank Holiday Monday, in which Yorkshire beat Lancashire 3-0, which sealed Lancashire's fate. Yorkshire had a good day at Compton despite losing their first two matches, as against Essex Andy Davies performed the first ever successful Yorkshire triple in the Counties.

Glamorgan, who have not played Sussex in the Counties since 2001 because they keep passing each other as both teams yo-yo between the first and second divisions, had their strongest team for some years and gained promotion yet again with 8 match wins. One highlight was John Evans peeling his partner through 4-back from A baulk. The final day saw a crucial match for promotion between Glamorgan and the Channel Islands, both at that point on 7 wins, as were Middlesex. Glamorgan took both games by the top two pairings to secure promotion. At third pairing they had again been reduced to playing Sue Mackay (handicap 10), but with partner Ian Burrigge's usual tactic of pegging out an opponent's ball and shepherding her round she managed to reach rover before Tony Le Moignan finally hit in and dug out a three ball break to finish. This win put the Channel Islands on the same number of match wins and the same number of games won as Middlesex, who had lost to Warwickshire in the final match. As the Channel Islands had beaten Middlesex 3-0 they earned the third promotion place. Norfolk sadly failed to win a match and were therefore awarded the wooden spoon.

It was one of the coldest Counties for many years, though apart from the occasional cloudburst and one hail storm it at least remained dry. As usual the mood was convivial and there were many light hearted moments. A squirrel tried to join in the game at one point, and at lunch time Matt Burrow and Tony Le Moignan could be seen playing golf croquet - with golf balls! There was much talk of John Prescott and his croquet playing exploits, and at the annual dinner and sing-song attended by Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Northumberland and Glamorgan on Bank Holiday Monday a verse was added to Ikley Moor - "John Prescott's on our team (with his trousers down)"

Bill Arliss pointed out at the final presentation that some 40 Southwick members are involved in running the Counties, with doubtless a similar proportion of the Compton membership, and a huge vote of thanks was given for all their hard work. Thanks were also given to Chris Williams for managing the event, which as usual proved a wonderful festival of croquet enjoyed by all.

Obituaries

Alan John Oldham

1926 - 2006

Alan Oldham, who died shortly after celebrating his 80th birthday with a trip to Egypt to see a solar eclipse, will be remembered with great fondness by his many friends in the actuarial profession and in philately, astronomy and tournament croquet. Born in 1926 to a well-to-do Manchester hat manufacturer, he displayed early signs of an acute intelligence which, although mathematically oriented, was accompanied by a retentive memory and the predisposition to acquire an encyclopaedic knowledge of the many subjects that attracted his interest. He married at the age of 37 and his three children could seek help with homework on any topic with complete confidence. Requests for help with poetry or Shakespeare would usually lead to a recital of the relevant quotation in full while those for maths and the sciences would often be accompanied by at least two alternative method of solution. The repetition of these at school unsurprisingly led to teachers treating Alan with profound, if slightly nervous, respect.

Alan's early years had been affected a bout of glandular fever which led his mother, somewhat over-cautiously, to insist that he desist from energetic games. Instead, he applied his talents to an early mastery of bridge and chess and he was soon in demand as a tutor to his prep school friends. He was educated at Wrekin College and then went up to Clare College, Cambridge, to read mathematics where his interest in astronomy deepened. However, family circumstances were soon to put paid to any thoughts of becoming a career astronomer. His father's business had not prospered during the war and his death in 1945 left the young Alan with the daunting task of selling the business and finding a remunerative career that would enable him to support a widowed mother and a sister as well as himself.

In 1946, he joined Equity & Law, the leading life assurance firm of the time with formidably high recruitment standards. He remained with the firm for 40 years, rising to Joint Actuary and Assistant General Manager. Having worked in the Lincoln's Inn office since beginning his career, this last appointment, reporting to what would now be called the chief executive, brought with it the responsibility of running the newly-opened High Wycombe office in 1974. This in turn led to the purchase of Terriers, the delightful house and garden just outside High Wycombe that was to be home to Alan and Jane for more than 30 years.

Alan discovered croquet at Cambridge and joined the Roehampton Club in London where he soon became a proficient player. Although never ascending to the highest peaks of tournament achievement, he soon made his mark as one of the ablest administrators the Croquet Association has ever had the good fortune to attract. He served on the game's governing body, the Croquet Association Council, for 40 years and, for 25 years of that time, as the Treasurer. Here his meticulous nature found ample scope for exercise. He managed the finances of the Association with such precision, that, despite the surprisingly complex affairs of such an amateur body and the lack of order in the material with which he was sometimes presented, even the advent of VAT caused few problems and the annual presentation



of the accounts was carried out with an extraordinarily effective clarity.

Alan was never a man to blow his own trumpet and the full scale of his contribution to the well-being of the Croquet Association over so many years only became apparent when he retired from the post in 1992. Despite putting in weekly hours as Treasurer that would have done credit to many part-time jobs, Alan had only ever requested the reimbursement of his postage stamps. However, when his successor was recruited, it was necessary to offer a significant although not over-generous honorarium. As is often the way with amateur organisations, the novelty of this proposed expenditure prompted a number of disapproving queries. Happily, they also provided a platform from which Alan's friends were able explain how much work the Treasurer's job involved and how great was the debt owed to him.

For Alan, retirement as Treasurer simply meant moving on to become the Croquet Association's Archivist. As such, he played a leading role in the 1997 publication of the Centenary Revision of Prichard's History of Croquet where his unrivalled knowledge of the game's history was given full play. Alan held strong views about the importance of the CA Council doing its job effectively and properly. He almost never missed a meeting and became the automatic authority on proper procedure. He also firmly believed in the importance of encouraging clubs and players by ensuring that the Croquet Association was represented at finals of national events. As a Vice-President of the Association, he put his beliefs into action and thought nothing of driving all over the country to ensure that such trophies were handed to the winners with due ceremony.

Alan's mottos might be said to be duty, precision, novelty and leading a full life. He served as one of Her Majesty's General Commissioners for Income Tax for 10 years and as Chairman of the High Wycombe Chamber of Trade. His extensive stamp collection was built up with enormous care, with every purchase being entered in a ledger with a detailed note of the reasons for the investment. When Golf Croquet, previously regarded as a form of light practice for the serious business of Association Croquet, began to emerge into the limelight as a competitive sport of equal merit, Alan took it up when into his seventies and served enthusiastically on the Golf Croquet Committee and the Golf

Croquet Laws Committee. He died leaving a full diary and, as a keen gardener and DIY enthusiast, with an extensive list of tasks he intended to carry out over the next few months. As befitted a practical north countryman, these included clearing the gutters and emptying the cess-pit.

It is said that the greatest actors leave the stage when the audience is clamouring for more. His many friends will extend great sympathy to Jane, Melanie, John and Paul for the shock and sorrow of their unexpected loss. We will also treasure the memory of a much-loved friend who reached 80 but died before becoming truly old.

Stephen Mulliner

Bob Fewtrell

Many on the croquet circuit will be very sad to hear of the death of Bob Fewtrell on the 26th May 2006, at the age of 66. The presence of Bob and his wife Faith at many tournaments was just one aspect of an extraordinarily full life, with their time divided between a house in New Zealand, their narrow boat on which they travelled the length and breadth of Britain, and their smallholding on the Isle of Wight. Their Christmas Round Robin letter was always one of the few I looked forward to, as it filled one with admiration with just how much they managed to cram in.

Bob and Faith met when he was in the merchant navy and she was a nurse. In later life they spoke of their delight at walking over Waterloo Bridge on the way to an evening at the National Theatre, in contrast to years gone by when it was often the prelude to many months apart as Bob joined a ship in the Pool of London.

Bob's heart had not been in good shape for some time. However this had been overshadowed by Faith's diagnosis with Motor Neurone Disease, which has caused a dramatic decline in her health over recent months. Despite the indomitable courage with which she has faced her illness, she was still more or less completely reliant on Bob to look after her, so his passing away is a particularly sad blow.

The thoughts of all their friends will be with Faith and her family at this very difficult time.

Simon Tuke

Ronald A. Gosden

Ronald Gosden died peacefully at his home of pancreatic cancer, on April 1st 2006, two days short of his 86th Birthday. Ron and Beryl retired to Brancaster Staithe in 1980, after his Government work in the DHSS dealing with War Pensions.

They both enjoyed walking in the countryside, bird watching and of course croquet. They joined the Hunstanton Club and entered fully into all activities serving on the committee for 20 years, as well as being chairman for 4 years. As a player Ron was very difficult to beat, he was such an excellent shot, in fact at times it was quite depressing playing against him as he always hit in. This results in the fact that all of our club trophies have R. A. Gosden engraved on them many times.

Ron was dedicated club member, nothing was too much trouble be it hoop setting, painting the club house, or coaching beginners. He was a very good coach and his pupils made rapid

progress from Golf Croquet to Association.

Ron will be remembered by members of many clubs, as he and Beryl were frequent visitors to their annual tournaments. We are proud that Ron chose Hunstanton to be his retirement club and send our condolences to Beryl and their family.

S.G. Hampson

The Laws Quiz

Answers

3.1 No. Law 3(a)(2) states that the peg extension may be temporarily removed by the striker at any time.

3.2 No. Law 3(a)(3) states that at any time during the game either player is entitled to require that a leaning peg be straightened. Please note that if a wiring lift is being claimed then the claim must be adjudicated on before the peg is adjusted.

3.3 Yes. Law 3(b)(3) states that at any time during a game the striker is entitled to require that an incorrectly aligned hoop be adjusted and that the width and height of a hoop be checked and corrected if necessary. Please note that rulings on wiring lifts, completing the running of a hoop and hoop and roquet must be adjudicated on before the hoop is adjusted.

3.4 Yes. Law 3(c)(2) states that the striker is entitled at any time during a game to remove a ball between strokes in order to wipe it, avoid interference or exchange it when it is faulty or damaged. Before removal, he must mark the position of the ball accurately and consult the adversary if it is in a critical position. Please note that if a peeling stroke is to be played the milling of the ball to be cleaned must be replaced in an identical position.

3.5 Yes. Law 3(d)(2) states that when not attached to a hoop or the peg a clip is an outside agency.

3.6 Yes. Law 3(e)(6) states that a mallet may not be exchanged for another during a turn unless it suffers accidental damage which significantly affects its use. There is nothing in the Laws forbidding the use of different mallets at the start of separate turns.

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Croquet Wedding
report by Dave Kibble

CA Webmaster Samir Patel married Anna Noble, daughter of George Noble, on Friday 19th May 2006 at Pembroke Lodge, Richmond Park. Samir was also celebrating his selection to play for England in the Home Internationals, but that was far from his mind on the day.

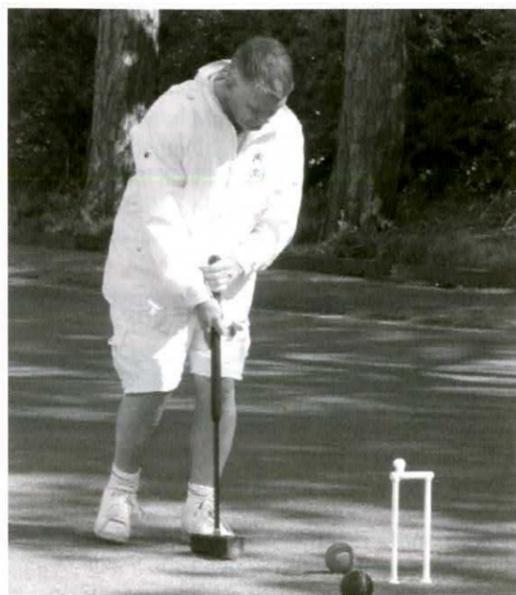
The celebration was a stylish affair in a beautiful setting. The bride looked lovely in a modern take on the traditional bridal gown, which included a train. George Noble surprised no one, but delighted all,

by producing the perfect Father-of-the-Bride speech, in which he described Samir as a smashing chap and Anna as having developed great serenity as she grew up.

Anna chose the music for the occasion - the first piece after signing the register summed up Samir's good fortune: it was the Bird-Catcher's Song (from Mozart's The Magic Flute)!

The wedding was celebrated further on Saturday at Surbiton Croquet Club with the best Indian meal I've had. The clubhouse was converted into a restaurant that quickly served about 100 people - a real tandoor produced great naan bread to accompany the 15 or so perfectly-cooked dishes.

Robert Prichard Advanced Weekend, Hunstanton 29th April/1st May 2006
report by Ian Storey



Typical Hunstanton May Bank Holiday weather - Saturday and Sunday were sunny with a fresh breeze, Monday began with drizzle then turned sunny and calm. Playing conditions were very good and Ian Vincent timed the lawns at 11 seconds, fast for early season. Further stat for anoraks - average game time was 2 hours 6 minutes. Several triples including a combination peg out, several failed triples and at least four attempted sextuples which, fortunately for the manager who had promised drinks for success, remained only attempts. In the very last game Phil Eardley overcame Ian Burrige to snatch a podium place for himself and deny the latter from winning the tournament, leaving a Noble smile on one competitor's face.

Winner: George Noble
Second: Ian Burrige
Third: Phil Eardley

Handicap Changes

Cheltenham Easter weekend

14-17th April

Colin Snowdon	4.5	to	4
Chris Donovan	8		7
Doug Taylor	8		9
Robin Smith	16		14
Louis Jacobs	10		11
Mrs Dab Wheeler	11		10

Woking Spring weekend

April

Bernard Jones	9	to	8
Geoffrey Cuttle	4		4.5
Bill Wood-Roe	7		8

Budleigh Salteerton 'B' level

29th April - 1st May

John Spiers	4	to	3.5
Mrs Greta Stringer	4.5		4
Peter Thompson	1.5		1

Colchester Handicap Weekend

1st May

CH Hemming	4	to	3.5
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Hurlingham May Weekend

29th April - 1st May

Mike Down	3	to	2.5
Mark Fawcett	2.5		2
Eugene Chang	2.5		2
Sue Davies	7		8
Peter Quinn	0.5		1

Ramsgate Spring weekend

6/7 May

Alex Jardine	2	to	2.5
Miss J Hudson	3.5		2.5

Peel Memorials

Compton 11th - 14th May

Mrs Hilary Smith	7	to	8
Mrs Liz Maltby	12		11
Tim Smith	10		11
Julian Straw	5		6

Colchester 'B' Level

13/14th May

George Woolhouse	3.5	to	4
David Haslam	4		4.5
George Winder	5		6
Steven J Woolnough	1.5		1

Wrest Park handicap weekend

19-21 May

Mike Bowse	4.5	to	5
Eric Audsley	2.5		3
George Woolhouse	4		3.5
George Collin	2		2.5

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