

THE CROQUET GAZETTE

ISSUE 307

FEBRUARY 2007



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The Croquet Association

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HOOPS - Omega, Aldridge, Townsend and Jaques
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The CA and Holiday Property Bond

by Brian Kitching, member of the CA Marketing Committee

With the publication in our magazine today of the first of three adverts for HPB it is time for me to update the article written for Issue 299, announcing the co-operative arrangement made between the CA and HPB.

In the October 2005 article I had explained that I had been a member of the Holiday Property Bond for some years and knew that both organisations wanted to increase their memberships. It was an obvious step to seek to bring HPB and the CA together. My colleagues on the Marketing Committee agreed and negotiations were opened with HPB, finally concluding as follows:

1. I would contribute a specially written separate article to each of the house journals – it is important here to note that Bond Magazine reaches a much wider audience than the Croquet Gazette: to some 50,000 existing or potential Bondholders.

Those articles were published.

2. HPB to purchase new equipment as necessary from the CA Shop.

The first such, a new croquet set, was supplied for the bond site of La Gomera, Canary Islands..



Visitors to La Gomera, enjoy a game of croquet earlier last month.

3. HPB to place CA designed promotional material in its croquet sets, bags and boxes.

These comprise a laminated double sided A4 instruction leaflet to enable holiday makers to play Golf Croquet – a partial illustration of the leaflet is shown here.

4. HPB to make a contribution to the CA for each new investor originating from our ranks.

To be ongoing.

5. HPB to provide some sponsorship for the Mitsubishi World Association Croquet Championship held at Cheltenham in August 2005.

Which they did.

In 2006 the CA played host to a senior HPB Director at the Opens at Cheltenham, after which the Bond's intention was confirmed to pay for a series of three full-page advertisements in the Gazette – one in every other issue (starting with today's) - and then, depending on whether the Bond appeals to readers of the Gazette, to further cement the tie by sponsoring a competition.

Don't forget, if you do decide to contact HPB then please remember to mention the Croquet Association.

today gives further details of the "Mitsubishi Motors European Team Championship".

Main Event Dates & Times

The event will take place from 9.30 hrs Thursday 28 June to 13.00hrs Sunday July 1 2007.

Teams wanting a late start on Thursday can ask for one but this cannot be guaranteed at this stage.

Coaching

There will be opportunity for coaching on Wednesday and Sunday afternoon for those that request it.

Team Format

Teams of three players: Each Match to consist of two Association Croquet matches (single games) and one Golf Croquet match (Best of three games, 13 point).

Event Format

The event will have a qualifying stage (probably 5 or 6 matches) followed by a Knock out Stage. There will also be a plate competition for teams not in the main Knock Out. The final will take place on Sunday Morning.

Event Conditions

Play will be from 09.30hrs until dusk (about 21.00hrs). It is expected that three rounds per day will be played for each team. The exact format of the competition will depend on the number of entries. Double Banking will be used.

Spectators will be more than welcome and there should be plenty of quality play to watch and enjoy.

The Queen impressed with MacRobertson Shield Win

Klim Seabright, Secretary of the Croquet Association, wrote to Her Majesty the Queen, as our Patron, to inform her of the success of the team. Her Majesty was "impressed to learn of the teams' recent achievement in Australia" and sends her warm best wishes (as Patron) to all members.

Samir Patel won the Belgian Indoor Open

Report by Abdul Ahmad

Croquet is a game that involves accuracy, determination, co-ordination, dedication, willingness, commitment and most of all, a passion for the game. The last of these qualities was surely the determining factor in attracting 10 players from far flung places such as England, Holland and Austria to come and join their Belgian hosts and play in this year's tournament.

The Argentine Suite at the Chateau du Lac Hotel was the venue for the contest. Two undersized lawns were set on its psychedelic carpet illuminated with artificial light. The lawn speed was crudely measured at 14 on the Plummer scale. The hidden traps under the carpet, unforgiving hoops, unpredictable ball travels and a demanding two day schedule set a stern test for the competitors.

The tournament attracted a number of spectators from the Brussels Croquet Club and a large contingent came from Germany to watch the whole event.

Colin Hemmings and Alex Jardine

won their respective blocks at the end of the first day's play. Samir Patel and Richard Dickson would join them on the second day to decide the title. The other players would be engaged in a one-ball consolation event.

The ten players, their partners, the visitors from Germany and members of the Brussels Croquet Club enjoyed the great hospitality of the hotel at the Grand 12th Night Dinner on first night. The magnificent banquet, free-flowing red and white wine, short speeches and the challenging dinner game soon soothed the stresses caused by the day's punishing play in testing conditions.

On the second day, Samir Patel retained his Belgian Indoor Open Title with an impressive display of accurate hitting and constructive play. He beat Alex Jardine +25 in the Semi-Finals.

Richard Dickson had played well to reach the final. He had narrowly failed to complete a straight triple at block stages; and, a standard triple in beating Colin Hemmings +18 the semi final.

The final was a closely contested affair. Samir had a flawless start and endured dogged pressure from Richard during the middle game impasse in which both players were tested by the extreme playing conditions and won by +16.

The whole two days was admirably managed by Alan Morris and together with the superb catering by Bob Appel's "4 Ladies" left the competitors looking forward to the next year's tournament.

Results

- Final (26-point advanced) Samir Patel beat Richard Dickson +16
- Semi-finals (26-point advanced) Samir Patel beat Alex Jardine +25
- Richard Dickson beat Colin Hemming +18



SECF summer school in session last season

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CA Contacts

Secretary
Klim Seabright
The Croquet Association, c/o Cheltenham Croquet Club, Old Bath Road, Cheltenham, GL53 7DF
01242 - 242318
caoffice@croquet.org.uk

President
Bernard Neal
41 Asquith Road, Cheltenham
GL53 7EJ
01242 - 510624
bernard.neal@tesco.net

Chairman of Council
Jonathan Isaacs
Meers Fram, The Hollow, West Chiltoning, West Sussex, RH20 2QA
0179 -817326
jonathanisaacs@btinternet.com

Treasurer
Dr Roger Bray
Street Cottage, Polstead Hill, Polstead, Colchester, Essex CO6 5AH
01206 - 263405
rwbay@tiscali.co.uk

Gazette Editor
Gail Curry
135 Acklam Road, Thornaby, Stockton on Tees TS17 7JT Tel: 01642 - 640880
gazette@croquet.org.uk

Press Officer
Rebecca Hopkins
ENS Limited, 42 Fullerton Road, London SW18 1BX
020 - 88713865
rebecca@ensltd.com

Tournament Committee
Nigel Graves
Flat 4, 8 Warham Road, South Croydon, Surrey, CR2 6LA
020 8688 0676 (h)
nigel.graves@blueyonder.co.uk

Marketing Committee
Jeff Dawson
Wildcroft, 112 Potters Lane, Send, Woking GU23 7AL
jeff.p.dawson@gmail.com

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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.

International Committee
Phil Cordingley
1 Milbro Court, 35 Anson Road, London N7 0RB
020 - 76093040
phil.cordingley@gmail.com

Laws Committee
Ian Vincent
29 Thoresby Road, Bramcote Hills, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 3EN
0115 - 9253664
ian.vincent@cantab.net

Equipment Committee
Alan Pidcock
The Manor House, 1 Barncroft, Penwortham, Preston PR1 0SX
01772 - 743859
pidcock@manorh.u-net.com

Coaching Committee
Cliff Jones
2 Gronau Close, Honiton, Devon, EX144 2YT
01404 41261
cliffjones@fraggles.wanadoo.co.uk

Golf Croquet Committee
Bill Arliss
30 Hove Park Villas, Hove BN3 6HG
01273 - 728204
bill.arliss@ntlworld.com

Selection Committee
Assoc: Dave Kibble, 21, Grove Avenue, Coombe Dingle, Bristol BS9 2RP Tel: 0117 - 9079377
DaveKibble@iee.org

Development Committee
Barry Keen
20 Grove Park, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 8QA
01565 632420
barry.keen1 @ntlworld.com

Management Committee
Patricia Duke-Cox
171 Witham Road, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln, LN10 6RB
01526 - 354878
Duke-cox@hotmail.co.uk

Handicap Committee
Ian Parkinson
Bluebell Cottage, 105 Flaunden, Herts, HP3 0WP
01442 - 831580

Publishing Committee
Derek Trotman
3 High Stobhill, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2TT
01670 518228
derek.trotman7@virgin.net

Regional Reps on Council

East Midlands
Lawrence Whittaker
0116 - 2707396
flwhittaker2@waitrose.com

East Anglia
Arthur Reed
01923 - 445714
arthur.reed1@ntlworld.com

Yorkshire
Julian Tonks
01904 - 791254
julian.tonks@btopenworld.com

London & South East
David Mooney
020 - 8789 7707
davidmooney@aol.com

North West
Barry Keen

Croquet North
Charles Waterfield
01642 - 712551
cwaterfield@btinternet.com

South West
Cliff Jones

Southern
Pat Kennett
01794 322209
pat@elterwater.plus.com

West Midlands
Esther Jones
0121 455 6426 cbej@btinternet.com

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THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION WEB
SITE @
<http://www.croquet.org.uk/>



Issue 307 February 2007

Front Cover: Roger Schofield in play during the New Years Day Tournament at Pendle & Craven.

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The majority of "volunteer" work within the CA Committees is conducted during the winter season whilst the many of us have hung up our mallets for a well-earned rest.

During this period plans are made and implemented to help support Croquet in our domain.

A considerable amount of this work is fairly routine, for example the annual creation and publication of the Fixtures Calendar, improvements to our website and the review of grant applications are three tasks that immediately spring to mind.

In addition to this we tackle a number of specific projects.

On November 8th The Charities Act 2006 was enacted. This could have a significant benefit for Croquet in our domain. As such we are asking Council to approve the appointment of a working party to consider the implications of this act on our sport and to recommend to Council what action the CA should take in light of these new provisions.

We would be very grateful if there are any Lawyers or Accountants who could offer

Editorial

Here we go again, long cold days and nights. Not a winter of discontent, as I think we have much to celebrate, not least the MacRobertson Shield win, but also some very good performances from players in overseas tournaments. Chris Clarke and Jenny Williams, last season's emigr'ees to New Zealand, won the New Zealand Open Doubles, and Chris then went on to win an apparently thrilling singles title against AJ Reid, an up-and-coming player of NZ. Meanwhile Stephen Mulliner won the Y event and Ian Lines the Z.

I am fairly certain there are plenty of other players enjoying playing in other parts of the Southern hemisphere, while the rest of us await the return of Spring and our own season. The arrival of the fixtures book, is I am sure a welcome reminder that this is not too far away.

For those wishing to improve their playing there is a good selection of coaching

some help us during our deliberations. Could they contact me on the address shown in the Gazette?

Evidence suggests that Golf Croquet has grown in popularity especially as a social sport at club level. The CA needs to consider the implications of this on the sport in general, what it needs to do to support this growth whilst at the same time developing Association Croquet in harmony with its other variants.

A working party was set up last autumn to consider this project and will have presented a paper to Council by the time this edition is published.

I hope this gives you a flavour of some of the CA's current activities. The Committees are working on their various objectives and we will do doubt be sharing these with you in future editions of the Gazette.

Your views are very important to us and with this in mind we sent out a survey with the fixtures calendar which we hope you have completed. The results of this exercise are important to us in helping to determine the future direction of the CA.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a happy playing season in 2007 & I hope to have the opportunity to meet many of our members during my term of office.

Jonathan Isaacs



courses, which can be a of great help, particularly early in the season to get you thinking in a positive way - and probably much more useful than a new mallet (but don't tell the manufacturers I said so).

The details of the Golf Croquet Coaching courses are on page 5 of this issue of the Gazette, as they were not published in the Fixtures Book.

Gail Curry
Editor

News & Information Contd.

New permanent indoor court in Austria

Report by Heinz Hackl

Normally, we are used to long and cold winters in Austria - that's perfect for winter sports like skiing but not at all for croquet!

When a new and quite enthusiastic member, Gerhard Obermayer, asked me "what will we do in winter?" I had to answer "tactical training, tactical training and tactical training!". That dialog was in early summer. Then he showed me his "old joiner's workshop" next to his house. When his Company (he is a window maker) moved to an industrial area, this workshop isn't used any more.

Gerhard promised to adapt it for croquet - and he really did it! He bought a special grass carpet, we welded special hoops with a plate on the bottom, he changed the old windows to new ones with extra-low energy glass, made a new facade with perfect insulation, had installed a special blower heating system, made an extra entrance from the rear with an extra staircase and installed a special safety lock system. So each member got his own safety key which is also used to switch on the lights; i.e. we can play whenever we want!

A few weeks ago there was the "official" opening celebration. We all had been excited to try the first strokes - the court is much smaller (12.5 x 10 m), the surface very, very fast (even much faster than Surbiton in summer), there is a special obstacle in the middle - a pillar 40 x 40 cm. We called it "the big peg" which is in fact a bit off-centre and integrated it into the court.

The real challenge are the hoops. Though we got some very useful advise from Kevin Carter, Mike Town, Stephen Mulliner, et al. Gerhard used against all advice some PU-glue and screws to fix the hoops. Though the gap is 3 mm they are not difficult - they are cruel and unforgiving!

Anyway, it is great fun and we can keep on playing. As this court forces one to play very precisely, I am sure it will be helpful



Gerhard Obermayer and Heinz Hackl (chairman of the club) cutting the ribbon

for the next summer season.

This indoor court is situated in Wolkersdorf (about 15 km north of Vienna) close to our outdoor court and in walking distance of the town centre and railway station.

Thanks to Roswitha and Gerhard who invested a lot of money and effort we are in the lucky position to be able to play our favourite sports the whole year. Just as tennis became an all season sport, now we have the same opportunity.

If croquet-players visit Vienna within the next few months, please do contact us - we are looking forward to some exciting matches.

And maybe there will be an International tournament next winter....

Mitsubishi Motors European Team Championship details announced

The World Croquet Federation (WCF) in conjunction with the Fédération Européenne de Croquet (FEC) and with the grateful assistance of the sponsors Mitsubishi Motors, and the Cheltenham Croquet Club, England,

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.

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Revolutionary 2001 model £220

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For details or discussion, contact Alan Pidcock,
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The John Hobbs Mallet

The mallet that adjusts to your grip.

You set the handle to whatever angle best suits your style of grip and swing.

Optional curved bottom to 12" heads
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Tel: 01892 852072 email Hobbsmall@aol.com

What's Behind The Advertising Of A New Mallet in 2007

By Gail Curry

I was intrigued when I received a request for the advertising of a new mallet just before Christmas, so I decided to go and find out more from David Barrett, the man behind the product.

On a cold and blustery day in January when the Television News was showing trees blown down and pictures of huge waves crashing over the promenade at Blackpool, I asked the question

'Why do you do it, why did you start manufacturing croquet mallets ?

'Design, Simple Uncomplicated Design Requirements, born out of necessity' says David.

'Throughout my life I have been involved in the design and manufacture of furniture for the home and I found that immediately I started to play croquet I became fascinated with the design elements of all the various types of mallets in use. Fortunately for me I started my Club Croquet at Bury, where John Beech had just formed the Bury Croquet Club. It really was fortunate because not only did John start to teach me the game in our first meeting he also agreed to alter the design and construction of the 'shop-bought' garden croquet mallet that I'd taken with me.

John of course had his own business, 'Woodlands Croquet' and over the years he was always willing to make an 'exclusive' model for me which satisfied my personal requirements. This arrangement worked perfectly for me, right up to the time when John stopped producing at 'Woodlands' just over a couple years ago. It was about that same time that I started to suffer from extreme pain in my wrists every time I played a croquet shot and that's why it all started because in my mind, I JUST HAD TO PLAY CROQUET no matter what !! It was painful, but I just had to play through the pain – barrier, OR DID I ???

I thought about various things that might help but each time my thoughts kept coming back to Mallet Design as a possible answer, but how?. I spent months researching and scouring the whole country for something that would help. It was then I got lucky, I came across 'POWERFLEX' a lightweight material that is currently being used world-wide by N.A.T.O. forces. 'POWERFLEX' has since proved to be ideal for croquet mallet shafts because it enables most people to hit balls further with less effort and there is less jarring through the handle.

My luck continued when Alan Pidcock heard of my work and agreed to fit his renowned Foam Handle Grip onto my 'POWERFLEX' shafts. Perfect, that made that part of the mallet complete'.

'So now you have a shaft but no head, how did you decide on what to use?'

'Again its back to history, I first stated playing croquet over twenty years ago and in those early days I used to buy a new mallet almost every single year. John Beech made most of them, as I've indicated, but one of the others that stuck in my mind as being very robust and trouble free was by Jack Shotton. Jack had used a solid composite head which was round, with the bottom chopped off. So I rang Jack and whilst confirming he was no longer producing mallets, he did set me off in the right direction of sourcing the high tech' modern day composites that I eventually found and now use.

The 'POWERFLEX' range proved to be highly successful when I started production at the beginning of last year, the majority having a 60mm dia round composite head. Thankfully many buyers have expressed an improvement in their game as a result of their playing with one of the new mallets and just for the record, I no longer get pain in my wrists either.

'For 2007 the model range has been revised and extended so as to include not only a 60mm dia' Round Head but also an all new 'Square Head' Design.

The so called 'Square ' design is in fact rectangular, as its face is 60mm wide x 50mm high (2.25"x 2") but as everyone who I've shown it to called it 'square', that's its name until I can come up with something better.

Each of the designs have what I feel are Clean , Simple and Easy to Maintain features.'

'You've told me about 'POWERFLEX' why have you also now used the ' db Mallets' Logo ?

'That's because I decided to offer an alternative construction for those players who prefer the well documented benefits of a CARBON FIBRE shaft combined with a firm handle grip.

Obviously I couldn't use the same name as my other products as the materials in the shaft are very different.

By designing the CARBON FIBRE shaft from a 25mm(1") dia Round Tube, which incidentally, is much wider than most of the other tubes in use, I have been able to include a fully integrated anti slip handle grip that is actually moulded into the carbon itself. This makes it a firm 'all weather' grip that I believe will suit many players, however, for those who prefer things a little softer to the touch, I am also offering to fit rubber handle grips to the CARBON FIBRE as an alternative.'

So that's it is it ? the full reason for advertising ?

'Well not quite, customers also now get a choice of having their mallet made either with adjustable and removable shafts or glued in a fixed position.

By the way, if you are going to report this interview in detail, please mention that to celebrate the start of my second year producing mallets I'm doing a one off 'Springtime Offer' of 'ANY model or design at one single price : £120 Each (Plus P+P) '

'Well, if that's not a commercial I don't know what is, but I did ask. So finally, is this going to become your full time job?'

'No, never, I retired early from work so that I could spend more time doing the things that I enjoy. Mallet making is an enjoyable and enthralling pastime and that's why I'd like to sell a few, but its not half as good as actually playing croquet. That's what its really all about!!'

New & Information

2nd WCF Women's World Golf Croquet Championship 2007

The World Croquet Federation have released details of the allocations for nomination for each member for the forthcoming, "2nd WCF Women's World Golf Croquet Championship" to be held in Dublin, Ireland, 3rd to 9th September 2007.

Based primarily on the performances in the last World Championship and protected places for Full and Associate member associations, the allocations are as follows:

Nominations and proposals for Wild Cards will only be accepted for players in good standing with his or her member association. This means that the player shall not be under suspension or be disaffiliated by a member association or one of its affiliated members or, have been advised in writing that they are not eligible by a member association or one of its affiliated members.

The main centre will be at Carrickmines Croquet & Lawn Tennis Club with two additional lawns at Herbert Park Croquet Club, by kind permission of both Clubs, giving a total of six lawns for the event.

There will be an expected entry of 40 players from around the world in the main event. A flexible progressive Swiss plate event will also be played.

"How about some winter practice in the comfort of your own home or garage?"

Pierre Beaudry gave me the idea of using tennis balls and now I can keep my swing practised over the winter.

The first requirement is to buy the stay for a plastic downpipe and the second for some tennis balls. The 'hoop' can be screwed to pieces of wood in such a way that it maintains a rigid shape and allows balls to collect behind it when played gently. For harder shots, a box with crumpled paper behind the hoop will trap the balls.

GOLF CROQUET
COACHING COURSES

Omitted from Fixtures Calendar 2007

For : Beginners and improvers

Open to : Associates, and any player who is a member of a club affiliated to any Federation

Content : includes basic strokes, hoop running and tactics

Arranged by : The Croquet Association

Venues and dates: (a) Nailsea CC, 8 May (Closing date 27 April)

(b) Surbiton CC, 8 May

(c) Eynsham CC, 6 June (Closing date 30 May)

(d) Colchester CC, 23 May (Closing date 13 May)

(e) Woodhall Spa CC, 5 May (Closing date 28 April)

Managers: (a) Jean Eburne, 3 Nore Gardens, Portishead, Bristol BS20 7HL

(Tel: 01275 848300 Email: jeaneburne@aol.com

(b) Michael Hague, Homewood House, Pond Road, Woking GU22

0JT (Tel: 01483 776190 Email: mj.hague@virgin.net

(c) Jennet Blake, 10 Queen's Lane, Eynsham, Witney OX29 4HL

(Tel: 01865 882838

Email: jennet@themitchellshouse.com)

(d) Valerie Rigg, 30 Orchard Gardens, Ipswich Road, Colchester

CO4 0EB (Tel: 01206 864861)

(e) Patricia Duke-Cox, 171 Witham Road, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln

LN10 6BB (Tel: 01526 354878

Email: duke-cox@hotmail.co.uk)

Entry fees: £10 cheques made payable to 'The Croquet Association'

Golf Croquet Training for Coaches (Calendar p 103)

Please note that the course at Cheltenham has been changed to March 17/18 2007



Converting the tennis balls to croquet balls is the fiddly part. A small hole is drilled in the ball which can then be filled with fine, dry sand. This can take up to 10 minutes per ball, but may be helped by the use of a small funnel such as the cut-off end of a small inhaler, but more cunning methods could be adopted to speed up the process. The ball must be totally filled and the hole sealed with a small piece of Bluetack. Surprisingly, filling the tennis ball with sand gives the right feel to the shot and the balls run remarkably true to line."

Jennet Blake

Fowey Croquet Club

By Rosemary Bradshaw

The Fowey Club is small and informal, playing at present on a rather rough half size lawn in the Lower Tea Garden of the Fowey Hotel; this is a most beautiful location overlooking the Fowey River Estuary in South Cornwall. 2007 will see us enter the competitive croquet scene as we are going to partake in the South West Federation B League, playing our home matches by kind permission of the Cornwall Club 8 miles away at Porthpean. We hope you will wish us luck and thought you might like to share our Song, which was written by David Edwards and performed by him and our 'Singing Treasurer' Bill Price, to a Gilbert and Sullivan tune (they cannot remember which one!) recently at a Club Winter Supper Party.



Betty Stone (from Bath and visiting Fowey for her 'Special Birthday'), Stephen Read (FCC member), Reg Wapling (FCC member) and Tony King (visitor from Fowey).

Fowey Croquet Song

We are the two Fowey croquet players,
And as you see we've got the balls (Hold up red & blue e.g.)
We try to fire then through the furniture (Both take "shots", then hold up hoop)
The fascination never palls.

(One "player" takes a shot – short pause)

"I think you've missed"
"Oh yes I've missed" (tetchy)
"You know you've missed"
"I know I've missed – (More tetchy)
"But I'm sure the damned hoop moved"

We know he's missed, (Unison)
We're sure he missed,
Agreed he missed,
We know he missed –
But we know the damned hoop moved!

We are the two Fowey croquet players,
And we're playing in a match.
Our opponents are ahead of us.
They'll be mighty hard to catch.

"I'll take a bisque" (Positive)
"You'll take a bisque?" (Amazed & querying)
"I'll take a bisque" (Still positive)
"That's quite a risk!"
(takes "shot" – short pause –)
"Oh dear I fear that I have missed"

We are the two Fowey croquet players,
And this match just can't be lost!
We'll fire the last shot in our armoury,
We have to win at any cost!

"Another bisque!" (Aggressive)
"We're out of bisques" (Very deadpan)
"You can't mean this!" (McEnroe style)
"We're out of bisques". (Emphatic & deadpan)
(Short pause)
"Well that's our final chance we've missed!" (Unison)

Back to the Clubhouse not discouraged
We'll live to fight another day.
It was that plantain by hoop number one
Which did send our balls astray.

It was the lawn
That bumpy lawn
That did us down
That dreadful lawn
It was the lawn that did us down! (Unison)

Unlucky day! (Unison)
They went astray,
They curved away
Often astray,

(pause) Despite our perfect play!!

Croquet Winter Blues and how to avoid them by Francois Garcia

This has been my first year of Croquet and as the season drew to a close my heart began to sink. The thought of several months of nothing began to pervade as I wondered what would or could take its place during the winter. I am not sure how many types there are of people who play croquet but it has certainly become a passion with me. I am not the fair weather type person, but playing on an extremely cold winter's day doesn't inspire me. It would have to be mild, as swinging a mallet with thick gloves on could prove difficult. I would also want to consider the grass. So in the first week I did feel seriously bereft. Am I the only person who feels/felt this way?

However our Croquet Club, Bowdon in Cheshire, has a variety of ways of keeping the club spirit alive during the winter non playing season. First of all every week on a Tuesday and now also on a Wednesday, between the hours of one and five o'clock we play Canasta, quite a quaint but ever so exciting game of cards. Canasta cards are not easily purchased except at John Lewis, which shows how few people must play.

Tuesday is the more popular of the days and one of the members, a Mrs Jean Teare comes in early every Tuesday and makes a different home-made soup. As there could, and have been,

points. As the person living nearest to the field, I volunteered to move the sprinklers every 8 hours for several days. Ten o'clock at night was a pleasure, especially when the moon was rising over Wytham Hill, but 4 am in the morning was a struggle, though the dawn sunrise was rewarding.

The grass grew and so did the weeds. We started to mow and a mole tunnelled over 30 yards in 24 hours but Yellow Pages produced an efficient mole-catcher. Despite our optimism, we were not going to be able to play on the new courts that year, but the odd ball hit across the dew in September showed that they were remarkably level and the rabbit fence was removed.



David Cameron cutting the tape to open the courts, which are behind him.

Planning started for a Grand Opening on May 1st 2006. The Southern Federation helped us to buy a line marker, Brian Hitchins made up the ball boards and our local MP, David Cameron, agreed to perform the opening ceremony. Alan Oldham promised to come and volunteered his services in case the MP failed to materialise—a typically generous gesture. On the day, he was sadly missed as he had died three days earlier. May 1st was a fair-weather day and we had a good number of visitors for whom tea and croquet games were provided. David Cameron was a disappointment as another village activity had nobbled him first and the press besieged him for his views on John Prescott's misdemeanours. With us, he wanted minimum publicity and refused to be photographed with a mallet. The result was a failure of any publicity in the local press and thus a lost opportunity for gaining new members.



The courts flooded, end of November 2006

We have played all summer this year (2006) on the new courts with both Golf and Association croquet and managed to avoid the cost of irrigation. By the autumn the grass had thickened up well but, due to the continuously erratic wet weather, we had missed any window for top-dressing the new courts. This was fortunate as the whole field was completely flooded for two days at the end of November.

We have been very fortunate over the last 2 years in having help from so many people including our own members who do the mowing, local and family members who helped in the initial construction and CA members like Ian Plummer and George Noble who have advised us on construction and maintenance. We are indebted to them all. For me, it is a dream come true because we have 2 full-size, high quality courts, 4 half-size field courts, space for 2 more courts eventually, access to the cricket pavilion and we are easily reached from the A40. We hope to host activities such as coaching courses for the CA as well as holding 2-court competitions within the Federation. Our next undertaking is to increase membership so that we can afford all the necessary expenses of maintaining our facilities to a high standard.

Obituary

Dr. E. C Owen

Ted Owen died on Thursday 2nd November 2006. Ted was ninety one years old and died suddenly from complications following knee replacement surgery. He had been in a great deal of pain for a long time with severe osteo-arthritis. In his younger days he had been a distinguished research chemist and was involved in the development of terylene. Ted was well known in South West Croquet circles. He and Esme, his wife of over sixty years, have been members of the Sidmouth Club since 1985 and both have achieved plenty of success in competition within the club and outside. Ted will be remembered with great affection by his friends. A small man with a big heart, he was famous for his speed around the court—his approach was reminiscent of a terrier after a rabbit—total concentration and surprised disbelief if a hoop should have the temerity to interrupt his break.

We said goodbye to Ted with a humanist funeral held at the club pavilion, exactly as he had requested. A large number of his family and friends were present. He will be greatly missed by all of us.

David Temple, Chairman, Sidmouth Croquet Club

Eynsham Croquet Club moves to new ground

By Jennet Blake, Chairperson of Eynsham CC

When I retired I had a dream that one day I might have a croquet club on my doorstep. The dream has materialised, but in the ten years of becoming reality, there have been nightmarish interludes. So how did it all work out?

The first stage was to get permission to use the local playing field and we paid rent for an open-access area which we used several times a week. The local Council mowed the grass erratically and we kept our equipment in a metal cupboard in a disabled toilet. We crept up from 20 to 40 members, but play was often interrupted by the arrival of louts with footballs so we were always looking for a better place to play. This came when the local Cricket Club offered us 2 acres of the field they were starting to rent from the trustees of a village charity. Members agreed that we should accept the offer, but it took over 6 months to sort out the lease and we had missed the autumn opportunity for laying the new courts. However, we mowed down part of the area to provide 4 half-size field courts, at least as good as those we had used on the playing field.



Preparation of the courts showing laser levelling equipment, with receptor above grader behind tractor which receives instructions.

Once we had decided to move, we started to apply for grants and to obtain estimates for 2 new courts. An initial Lottery grant of £5,000 allowed us to accept an estimate which would produce courts levelled by laser and eventually a further grant of £5,000 from our District Council meant that we could buy a good mower with two interchangeable cassettes, one 5-bladed for the field courts and one 9-bladed for the new courts.

As we had missed an autumn preparation of the courts, we expected to go ahead in the spring. The weather did not cooperate and the ground did not dry sufficiently until almost the end of

May. Everything was so protracted that we nearly lost our Lottery grant. The time was extended twice and the courts were eventually finished two days before the final deadline which was the end of May. We were fortunate that our terrain meant that we did not need to put in a drainage system so that the Lottery grant was



The equipment hut with adjacent toilet facilities in the floods.

almost sufficient for laying the two courts.

Our field is in the valley of the Evenlode where it meets the Thames and is liable to flooding so our hut had to be raised above ground level. We were indebted to much local help in laying the base and to the Croquet Association who gave us the cost of an expensive hut. This had to be especially secure as it would hold the mower and we could not afford any vandalism. Later, with the Cricket Club, we purchased a half-share of a large container to store a second-hand ride-on mower and other items of equipment.



The Chairman plays the first ball on the new courts. anti-rabbit fence shown with plastic bags to deter deer.

Once the courts were prepared, we erected a rabbit-proof fence and as June progressed we watched with bated breath for signs of germination only to face disappointment as it was very erratic and weeds were growing faster than the grass. At the end of July the contractor returned and re-sowed the whole area, and then the dry weather started! Irrigation was urgently needed and local help came and moled in 200 metres of pipe to give 4 take-off



Jean Teare in action at Bowdon, serving her wonderful soup.

up to 20 people arriving between 12.15 to 12.30, this is no mean feat. Not only that, Jean's cooking is of Cordon Bleu style and we are blessed with names like Leek Potato and Onion, Bacon and Lentil, Carrot and Coriander, as well as Scotch Broth, Mushroom etc etc. She even gives us toasted crusty bread to have with it and will never accept any recompense as says she does it for love, and that is true as her soups are lovely and tasty. As an important part of our institution Jean makes the start of the Tuesday session jolly as we all sit round our long table supping our bowls of soup and chatting.

Come one o'clock it is Canasta time and depending on how many people, tables of four are played. Usually canasta is played with a partner, but you can play singly with two, three, or five players. Maybe more, I would have to look at the rules. Vague



Colin Wild of Bowdon in full flow, AKA 'Nausea Bagwash'

ideas of St Mary Mead and Miss Marple do come to mind as I sit and play, as we are a comfortable lot of highly entertaining beings, male and female usually approximately balanced.

Half way through is afternoon tea and biscuits and how I

wish I drank tea, but of all things British, tea is something I dislike the taste of, so it is coffee or water for me. Our Canasta has developed certain words, which come up during the course of the afternoon, 'Nausea Bagwash' being one of them, no clues for what that means, nor for 'Give me Bone', but 'Hubris' is another begotten word. In case you don't know what it means I have looked up the dictionary definition which is: arrogant pride or presumption. The Latin, tempus fugit also gets mentioned several times or is that 'Tempers Fudge It' if you get my drift. Sometimes it is like learning a dictionary just being there. I am not sure which is more fun, playing or listening to the play. The play however is very serious and although we have no bad losers, winning is the name of the game.

Another way of getting through the dreary winter is Pam's Youth Club. Now Pam, bless her cotton socks, would I am sure, not tell me off when I say she is not in her first flush of youth, although mentally she might be. This is a fortnightly event on a Friday which starts approximately eight-ish and closes when the pubs shut. Pam set it up I gather, some years ago, and is another very caring lady who brings food and jollity to the evening. We play shove twopence, (on a shove halfpenny board), it being the nearest coin we have. Pool on a very nice pool table, donated by Richard a year or two ago, chat and drink at the bar, with maybe some canasta if anyone wants to play. Now that we are half way through the bleak midwinter, I feel a little cheerier and look forward to playing this year, hoping we will have as good a summer as last year. I don't know how other clubs get through the winter but maybe this article might generate clubs who do nothing into action. Maybe they already do things we might like to know about!

I wasn't born with a silver spoon nor a great talent but what I was blessed with, was common sense and persistence, and as I play this year, I am sure there will be several Nausea Bagwash expletives coming out of me, even though it is not my saying but in the words of Calvin Coolidge, 13th President of the USA., "Nothing can take the place of persistence". I will be a really good croquet player eventually and to this end I thought the full quote would be helpful for others who have just started.

"Nothing can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than the unsuccessful man with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded Genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination are omnipotent. The slogan 'press on' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

Swanage Croquet, How it began by Roy Smith

The idea to start playing croquet at the Swanage Cricket Club evolved when my wife Wendy and I visited Sidmouth, and as I am a cricket lover, went to the local cricket ground to see if a game was in progress. There was a colt's match being played and we watched for a while but could not help noticing, around outside the boundary, there were people playing croquet. We went over to see what all these people were doing and sat and watched. We did not understand what was happening but everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves, and most of those playing were of the senior age group!

The thought then occurred to us that the Swanage Cricket

Club outfield is not in use most weekday afternoons and this would be an activity that the same age group in Swanage could play. The local U3A group were looking to expand its scope of activities so contact was made and there was a small response of about 10 people.

The Cricket Club realised that if this activity were more widely advertised, it might make the playing of croquet a viable proposition. The result of this advertising produced 40 responses to an Open Day.

Equipment had to be found and with some searching four sets were located and kindly lent to the club. Our volunteer groundsman, Tom Yeates, produced two lawns on the cricket outfield and we were now up and running, albeit with little idea of how to play.



Play in progress at Swanage

Local knowledge informed us that there was an English International player in the locality and with a little research we established contact with William Ormerod who managed to put us in touch with the East Dorset Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club. They were extremely helpful, and really got us under way, with personal involvement from Tom Weston and several other members.

Progress continued for the rest of the season and 27 people became regulars playing right up to the end of October when the weather broke. (Some members we keen to let Santa know they would like a mallet in their stocking and he arranged this with Jeff Dawson.)

2006 started with us playing on two full sized lawns on the Cricket outfield and we purchased championship hoops, balls and some additional mallets. Again we had an Open Day in the first week of the season and as word had got around the town we doubled our membership. There is now a need to create a third lawn to ensure that everyone who turns up for play gets at least three games during the afternoon as play is restricted to Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. Play does take place on some Saturdays when cricket is not being played on the ground. More equipment will be purchased and hopefully our mowers can be upgraded to help with the additional time that will be needed to cut the lawns. Also as we get to grips with lawn preparation, turf improvement will be embarked upon to improve the quality of the playing surface. (However, there is only so much that can be

done to make the surface imitate those manicured lawns of the top clubs.)

Golf Croquet is played and as this is a very sociable game, everyone enjoys mixing with other people and getting some gentle exercise.

2007 will possibly be a plateau for us and our membership will probably be limited to 60-65 as this is all we think we can cope with, with our resources and time available for play, as we do have to dovetail our use of the ground with the demands of a very active Cricket Club. Much will depend on the members playing their part in all the activities involved in the setting up and the usual club administration work ensuring that all runs smoothly with no one being over burdened.

With the lovely setting that embraces the Swanage Cricket Club (see the internet for pictures) players will find time for a very friendly and enjoyable few hours there and if you are coming to Swanage for any reason do make contact. (01929 421086)

Wendy and Roy Smith

Reminiscent Roquets

THE CHANGING FACE OF GOLF CROQUET
by Bob Prichard

The 1984 issues of the Gazette give some interesting insights into how Golf Croquet was viewed at that time.

The Spring issue commented that 'on 29th October 1983, Council considered a report by the Sponsorship Committee and decided by 16 votes to 7 to accept the unanimous recommendation of the committee that it should be authorised to proceed with negotiations with a view to securing sponsorship of a televised Golf Croquet tournament. It is understood that a motion will be proposed at the AGM on 7th April 1984 to reverse that decision.'

The Sponsorship Committee report discussed the issue of televising croquet and considered that 'viewed objectively, Golf Croquet is astonishingly well suited to entertainment television... An aggressively played game takes under 25 minutes and the game is easy to film as the action concentrates around a single hoop at a time... We believe that it is the only form of the game that is likely to be a (televised) success.' Counter arguments were put forward in its report – for example, 'promotion of Golf Croquet will waste time and money on a game we do not wish to expand', to which it responded 'there is no intention of spending a penny of CA money on Golf Croquet'. A contributor to this issue wrote: 'Golf Croquet is a game few of us play or wish to play, and it would probably be indulged in by even fewer had not some misguided donor given the CA those accursed Golf Croquet cups that have to be competed for every year... I am not denying that experts playing Golf Croquet are able to exhibit considerable skill and subtlety, but it is still a relatively foolish game and the CA should not be giving it publicity, much less hoping that it will be featured on television. The only thing that will achieve is a reinforcement, in an all too obvious way, of every ill-digested notion associated with the word 'croquet' that prevails in the population at large, and the image of 'croquet' will be fixed for

Just who is Jonathan Isaacs, Chairman of the Croquet Association?

Born in Bath in 1947, Jonathan was educated at Monkton Combe School & Bradford University after attending a preparatory school in Weston super Mare where John Cleese was one of his teachers.

He joined Unigate as a Management Trainee & quickly progressed to hold various senior positions in Marketing & General Management. In 1983 he was largely instrumental in creating a Food Sales & Marketing Company which became a leader supplier in the Pate & Dairy markets.

Jonathan was a keen sportsman enjoying Rowing, Rugby, Golf & Shooting before taking up Croquet as the result of a Summer School activity programme covering Croquet at Millfield School in 1986.

Following a business move to West Sussex, Jonathan became a member of West Sussex County Croquet Club in 1986.

He joined the Croquet Association Council in 2000 and was appointed Chairman of the Marketing Committee. In 2004 he was appointed Chairman of the Management Committee.

On his appointment to Chairman of Council in October I discussed his plans for his period in office.

Apart from continuing the role as Croquet's governing body Jonathan feels strongly that we need to manage the changes that are taking place with the growth of Golf Croquet creating a number of opportunities & possibly some threats if not handled carefully. From some countries he has been receiving reports that Golf Croquet has become the dominant variant in a number of clubs, but mainly on a social level. Association Croquet in some instances very rarely being played.

In these countries Golf Croquet has saved a number of clubs from extinction. He has instigated a survey in the UK through the Federations to gauge the current position in our Domain. He then plans to open the debate to ensure that the CA is structured to manage the growth of Golf Croquet effectively but to also ensure that Association Croquet continues to have a healthy future.

During the past 4 years the CA has managed to invest considerably more money in Clubs, supporting new start ups as well as improvements to large & small clubs. Jonathan believes that this increase in support must continue.

To achieve this the CA needs to continue to increase its



Jonathan Isaacs (left) with Bill Arliss at Soutwick.

income by obtaining more sponsorship but above all by getting the Croquet playing community at all levels to support the CA by joining as club and individual members.

A new incentive scheme is being implemented to encourage clubs to sign up both Tournament & Non tournament members into the CA.

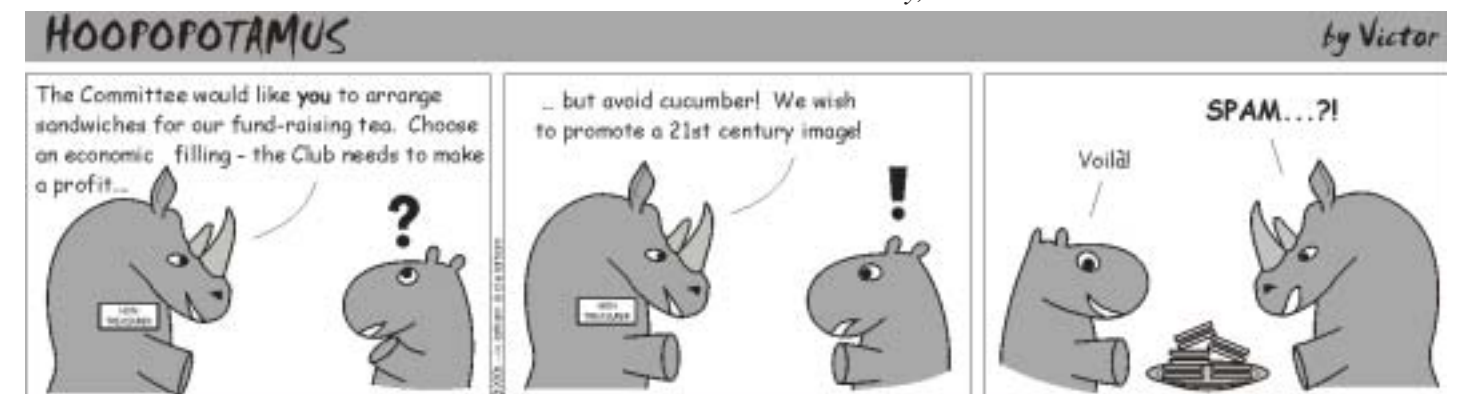
At top level Jonathan believes we must do more to attract younger members into the game to ensure that we can continue to be a leading country on the International scene.

To achieve this he believes that more needs to be done with Elite coaching as well as ensuring that PR activities promote the fortune of our younger players through the media. He firmly believes we need to try and create "Cool for youngsters" image of the sport.

In the administration area of the CA, Jonathan is encouraging the development of online entry for CA tournaments. Trials are under way and if successful a roll-out programme will be developed over the next two years.

Jonathan's parting comment was "It maybe a dream but wouldn't it be marvellous if we could log onto the CA web site, see which tournaments have spare places & sign up on the spot without having to complete manual entry forms, stamped addressed envelopes & then waiting for several weeks before we know whether we have been accepted."

Gail Curry, Editor.



association. **West Midlands & Wales**

Golf Croquet league with four teams playing home and away matches.

South West

Singles Competition in 2006 and again in 2007. Team Competition in 2006 with 10 teams – should be more in 2007.

East Anglia

A handicap league with 16 teams split into 4 sections to minimise travel but with playoff at the end of the season. A singles h/c(24 players) and a double h/c (16players) day tournament, also using the large mat to run two indoor weekend doubles tournaments. Level play league being considered for next year.

London & South East

One handicap league with 16 teams, One level play league with 7 teams, One day handicap single and doubles, 18 teams last year.

Croquet North

One level play league with five teams, running for eight years, One day progressive doubles, Single competition level play over 2 days, One day doubles handicap, Level play league.

Yorkshire

No organised Federation activity.

East Midlands

One level play league with 10 teams (formerly was handicap but clubs opted for level play this year), possible changes will be discussed this month. League may be split geographically or by quality with play offs at the end of season. Astro-turf tournament played in March on 3 three-quarter courts. Lincoln Cup doubles event played at Lincoln Castle mid-May. Format pairs young with experienced players

Southern

One level play doubles league with 7 teams running for six years, annual one day level play cup competition, 16 pairs last season.

The Golf Croquet Committee has now handed over the responsibility for Golf Croquet coaching to the CA's Coaching Committee. This committee has a properly structured approach to the training and qualification of coaches and I am sure our GC players will benefit from this change. The requirement of coaching specifically for GC is fully recognised and I am sure the new Coaching Chairman, Cliff Jones, will give it his full support.



Tim King in play during the European Championships in Italy

A further item of integration within the CA standing committees is that the Handicap Committee now takes on responsibility for handicapping of both Association and Golf Croquet. Such integration ensures that both formats of the sport are considered on an equal basis which can only be good for the

game as a whole.

The international scene is also growing with many of the European associations running open events which are well supported by our own players. Specifically I would mention Italy, Germany, Ireland and Belgium which now have well established open events. I am pleased to report that in the Italian event we had six English players with the title being taken by Tim King with myself as runner-up.

The WCF Golf Croquet Rules Committee is continuing their review of the rules and whilst good progress is being made, there is no likelihood of a new version being ready for our 2007 season, so all next year's play will be to the 'silver book' laws. One point I would make is that the review will not dramatically change the way the game is played but just tidy up a few points and make the wording easier to understand and implement. This time round we hope to make the draft wording available on our web site for all players to comment upon.



Stephen Mulliner assesses a hoop during his match with Reg Bamford at the Golf Croquet Opens.

Looking forward to the next season, we have a considerable increase in our programme. However with the additional events a few inevitable clashes are bound to occur although we have done our best to avoid such clashes. Three new club events are scheduled with Sidmouth in April, closely followed by Roehampton at the beginning of May and Ryde on the Isle of Wight in July. The new CA sponsored event will be the Veterans which I have mentioned earlier and I do ask the older brigade to give this event your best support.

We have made further developments in qualification for the Ascot Cup which is our National Championship. The local heats have now been dispensed with and places will be allocated to the semi-finalists from the previous year, the highest placed player in the top four of eleven listed tournaments who has not previously gained a place, with the remainder of places allocated as wild cards by the GC Selection Committee. Two places will in fact be allocated in the Open Championship from the top eight players. Particular note will be taken by the Selectors of a player's performance in the Opens.

Whilst most of the GC programme is open to the full range of GC players, we have not forgotten those who have not yet made it to the minus handicaps and a number of events with handicaps limited to 0 or greater are now planned and are listed in the Fixtures Book.

the next fifty years'. (The writer has a valid point here; nearly all the press coverage surrounding John Prescott's dalliance with the game reinforced those 'ill-disguised notions'. But does anyone expect a fair press – on any subject? Would it have made any difference if Golf Croquet had died out by now?)

At the AGM in April 1984, the motion that the decision to seek sponsorship be reversed was adopted by 36 votes to 34. A letter in the August issue commented: 'if this comparatively puerile game must be played to obtain money or television coverage, then the only logical name for it is... Hoopball, which compares with Basketball and Baseball in that the name bears a true relation to the game'.

Attitudes have certainly changed over the last 23 years, though there are still members who view Golf Croquet with disdain – a similar attitude to letters that have appeared in Radio Times throughout its long history along the lines of 'I don't like this programme, so it should not be broadcast'. However, many 'A' class CA players have discovered there is quite a skill in playing the game well and this has been a key factor in its increasing acceptability.

'I am not denying that experts playing Golf Croquet are able to exhibit considerable skill and subtlety'

It would be nice to think there might be no more disparaging articles and comments; Association Croquet, Golf Croquet, One-Ball Croquet are all enjoyable games with a common core, but differing requirements in temperament and tactics.

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SOME RECOLLECTIONS

by JOHN SOLOMON



I first met Humphrey Hicks, briefly, very early on in my croquet career when I entered my first tournament at the age of 15 in 1947. (Are there any others out there who played in tournaments at that time or am I the longest playing player?) I had occasionally hit a ball around in the garden at home since I was 5, knowing nothing of the game, but that summer had watched my mother at a tournament at Roehampton and when there was a free court I tried some of the strokes and entered the tournament a couple of weeks later and was given a handicap of 15.

The Turketine Tray was a small event at Roehampton (they had 7 courts in a row at that time) at the same time as the Presidents Cup. I was playing on court 7 and Humphrey finished his game and strode down the bank and sat on the bench at the north end of my court. I came down to the 2nd hoop but could not make it and sat down beside him. I said "Mr. Hicks, you are making me very nervous". "Don't worry" said Humphrey, "I am making your opponent much more nervous."

In another round of that event I played Sir Gerald Burke, a useful player from Carrickmines. I got hoop bound after the 2nd but hit the pioneer at 3 and the same thing happened after 2 back and I hit the ball at 3 back. As I was pegging out my opponent walked away to the clubhouse, which I thought was a bit unusual. With hindsight I know how he felt. I won the event and was brought down to 10.

"Don't worry" said Humphrey, "I am making your opponent much more nervous."

In the following Easter holidays I went to the club a few times and Edward Carlisle, a very charming man, no relation of Hugh and Veronica at Hurlingham, said "Come on Solomon" (very formal in those days) "I'll teach you to play a 4 ball break". I bridled (I had won an event, hadn't I?) but being a well brought-up lad I duly went on the court. He put a ball at 2 and another at the peg and gave me a dolly rush to 1. I made the hoop and was about to hit black when he said "What are you going to do?" "Hit black" I said. "And then what?" "Send it to 3 and get near yellow". "Fine, but if you hit it here, the peg will be in the way for sending it to 3 and if you hit it here, the pivot ball will be in the way". (I didn't even know it was called the pivot ball). Good thinking, I thought. I duly did that, roqueted yellow and lined up for the take off to red at 2. "What are you going to do?" "Go to red". "Where, exactly?" "Well, I'll try to get near it". "Yes, but remember that red is a yard to the left of 2 so if you go to the hoop you'll be hitting red away from the hoop. Make sure you go just past red." Good thinking, I thought and we continued similarly until the 6th hoop when he said "You've got it". It was the only lesson I ever had and I was eternally grateful.

THE LAST CORINTHIAN

by Dorothy Rush

“It matters not who won or lost but how you played the game.”

He wasn't a prig. He certainly wasn't a public school prig, steeped in the noble traditions of fair play and all that twaddle. He wasn't even of that generation of grammar school prigs who were force-fed with said noble traditions and clung gamely to those tenets, whatever the evidence to the contrary that private and public squalor threw up. He was just the (surprisingly idealistic) product of - if you'll pardon the ugly expression - a bog-standard inner-city comprehensive.

But he was also a croquet player; one who believed in the essential decency of the game's self-regulating ethos. Football and rugby were riddled with every kind of corrupt practice: Get your retaliation in first! For God's sake! Cricket, once the source and example of decent behaviour, was about to allow the questioning of umpires' decisions. It made his blood run cold. Croquet, on the contrary, demanded the highest level of personal honesty. What mattered was how you played the game; and having played it, how you dealt with success or failure. Neither triumphalism in victory nor bad grace in defeat had any place in croquet. As for cheating....

Didn't he care about winning, then? Well, no....not that you'd notice. There was satisfaction in a well-crafted break, a sextuple achieved, or an artistic leave, but joy lay more in the art than in any consequent victory. He would applaud with genuine enthusiasm an opponent's triumph and appear truly disappointed if a gallant effort resulted in failure. In short, he was that rare beast, an amateur and a gentleman.

One aspect of modern croquet that our hero despised - though in a forgiving way, you may be sure - was the tendency of the better players to practise. He found no fault with John Solomon's suggestion that one should practise while in match play; indeed such tactics might add an edge to an otherwise unremarkable break. That an A-class player would take himself off alone to a lawn and perform triples and sextuples until he could do them in his sleep smacked of a professionalism that had no place in croquet.

You'll be wondering how this amiable simpleton ever managed to win a game of croquet at any level, let alone the championships that he had tucked into his ample waistband. It really is simple: He had an enormous natural talent for croquet, way beyond most of his contemporaries. He really did not need to practise, a fact which led one disgruntled opponent to mutter darkly, "It's all very well for him: he was born with a silver mallet in his mouth." An interesting image, hinting at a childhood of endless hot summers spent playing on the lawn of Daddy's stately pile in the shires. Not quite the council house in Leeds whose tatty piece of lawn was deprived of sun by a great gasholder and where the future croquet champion scored fantasy goals for a fantasy United. Croquet came years later at university. One of the few benefits of his time there, he often thought. Certainly more useful than the indifferent degree in Eng. Lit. that he gained through

regular attendance and the faithful reproduction of the wisdom of the lecturers who set and marked the final exams. Certainly more satisfying than his piffling little job at Cheyenne Publishing, editing the barely literate novellas of the Wild West, churned out by men who'd never held a colt 45 let alone ridden the Texas range.

Even so, for all his native talent, how the blazes did he get here?

'Here' being lawn 8 at Cheltenham and the fifth and deciding game of the World Championship final against the holder for the last six years. 'Here' being 3 back and rover with only a 18 inch cut roquet required to move yellow slightly to the optimum position for the peel while going to black just north west of 3 back. Just the merest touch needed.

He stood back and cleaned his glasses.

Winning the first two games had been easy. A pair of effortless triples, performed nervelessly and with no thought for anything but the pure pleasure of the act. "Better than sex," he thought, relaxing into his chair as oppo took the third with a graceful sextuple. When oppo won the fourth game in like manner, the eternal amateur found only joy in it. This was turning out to be a very fine match indeed. He played the fourth turn of game five with yellow, rushing black's duffer tice to within a foot of hoop 1.

It was then that he realised that winning this game would make him champion of the world.

He had agreed to join the representatives of England at the World Championships only because they were to be held at Cheltenham, his home club now that Cheyenne Publishing had moved out of London - possibly so that they could claim to be based 'out West'. He had approached the task responsibly, without sacrificing of his Corinthian principles. Never too serious but mindful that 'England expects', he moved steadily through each succeeding round until only Bamford stood between him and glory. Even then it did not occur to him to seek that glory, until that first roquet of that final game.

His glasses spotless and his heart pounding, he stalked red with unaccustomed care, drew back his mallet, hesitated a bare second, swung....and missed yellow by a whisker. At once he raised his finger to indicate that red had knicked yellow. Bamford, who had begun to rise from his chair, sank back ruefully but without suspicion. None of the spectators had been watching closely enough to notice what he had done. He bent to place red for the peel.

Completion of the break was a formality, though by penult he was in torment and sweating freely. Blue waited at rover; yellow a yard from the peg. He ran penult with a dolly rush forward. Like an automaton he played the rush then stood, red ball in hand, for a long time. As minutes passed the spectators became restless and Bamford, who had resigned himself to the inevitable, stood up to get a better look at what was taking place on the lawn. At this, his opponent woke from his trance and bent to take croquet.

Placing black a yard and a half from the south boundary, he approached rover off blue and ran the hoop hard to the boundary. The return, which he played with his usual relaxed stroke, missed by an inch and ran a foot past. Smiling broadly, he extended his arms in a gesture of mock despair and surrendered the lawn to his opponent. He was to have one more shot before Bamford took the game, the match and the World Championship.

The Last Corinthian played for many more years.

But only for love. Never for glory.

GOLF CROQUET REVIEW 2006 AND LOOKING FORWARD TO 2007

Report by Bill Arliss

Chairman of Golf Croquet Committee

We started quite early this year with a "Winter Warm Up" in February at the Surbiton club for those players who were going out to New Zealand for the GC World Championship. The event attracted three of our World Championship players and a further seven of our senior players. The weather was extremely kind and produced just the kind of workout we had hoped for resulting in a win for Stephen Mulliner. In March competition moved to new Zealand for the World Championships. This was possibly our most successful World Championship to date with Stephen Mulliner gaining a third place and a further six of the English squad in the top 30.

And so into our home season. For the first time in several years we did not have any new events on our calendar and it was generally a process of consolidation. All of the club tournaments



Reg Bamford jumps out of trouble and into the points at the Golf croquet Opens.

filled all offered places and we had the best ever entries for the Open Championship and the Golf Croquet Inter Club. Reg Bamford won his third Open title beating Stephen Mulliner in the final, sweet revenge for his loss to Stephen in the Worlds. The only competition which showed a drop was the Inter Counties with just eight teams playing. However I would say the standard of this event has improved considerably over recent years and the winning Kent team was very strong. I am sure this competition will expand in the fairly near future just like its Association counterpart. In the Selectors Weekend, John Spiers was the clear winner whilst Ivor Brand had a massive struggle against Roy Ware in the final match to claim the Ascot Cup.

This was the second season for the latest edition of the Golf Croquet laws. I think the only problem area that remains is the wrong ball law. I know it is not too popular amongst many players and I personally do not feel that it has done much to stop the playing of a wrong ball but believe we must try to make it work for at least two more seasons before we consider making any radical changes. Perhaps a rewording of the law itself without change of

intent may be a goodly step forward.

Only one GC referees course was held last year and that was at Hurlingham where four new referees were qualified. We hope to run more courses this coming year and two are already arranged at Bristol and Phylis Court in April 2007. The impetus to arrange further courses must come from either the Federations or major clubs and I would ask any of them to get in touch with me if they feel a course would be beneficial in their area.

On a very low note I have to report the loss of one of Golf Croquet's keenest supporters during the season. As many of you will already know Alan Oldham died suddenly in April. Alan had been a member of the Golf Croquet Committee since 2000 and had chaired it for one year. He was deeply involved in laws of GC and helped tremendously in all aspects of the development of this format of the game. He will be sadly missed. Whilst Golf Croquet became one of Alan's major interests in recent years, his overall contribution to croquet generally and the Croquet Association in particular is literally phenomenal and the CA want to recognise this with a memorial trophy. I am very pleased to let everyone know that this will be the trophy for a brand new Golf Croquet event, the Golf Croquet Veterans Championship. This will be held at Southwick on 1/3 Aug 2007 and Alan's wife Jane has accepted our invitation to present the trophy to the first winner. For the purpose of this competition, we are considering anyone over 60 on 1 Jan 2007 a Veteran. If the event is over subscribed we propose to award places on a basis of age, oldest taking the priority of course!



John Moore attempts to perform the precision demanded by partner Chris Sheen at the National Doubles event

Golf Croquet events are also on the increases within our Federations. My own Federation, the SE, started a new level-play Golf Croquet league last year and I felt it would be of interest to you all to know what is happening in the rest of the country.

North West

Golf Croquet league, 8 teams, NW team championship over one weekend, which includes golf, short, handicap and level