

THE

February 2012

# CROQUET

GAZETTE



## CA Contacts

**Manager**  
Elizabeth Larsson  
The Croquet Association, c/o Cheltenham Croquet Club, Old Bath Road, Cheltenham, GL53 7DF  
01242 - 242318  
caoffice@croquet.org.uk

**Hon. Secretary**  
Dr. Ian Vincent,  
21, Cedar Avenue, Beeston,  
Nottingham NG9 2HA  
Tel: 0115 925 3664  
E-mail: ian.vincent@cantab.net

**President**  
Quiller Barrett  
10 Frost House, Chesham Road, Berkhamsted  
Hertfordshire  
HP4 3AY  
quiller3@gmail.com

**Chairman of Council**  
Barry Keen  
20 Grove Park  
Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 8QA  
01565 632420  
barry.keen1@ntlworld.com

**Vice-Chairman of Council**  
Jeff Dawson, Wildcroft, 112 Potters Lane,  
Send, Woking, Surrey GU23 7AL,  
01483 770400,  
jeff.p.dawson@gmail.com

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

## CA Council Committee Chairmen

**ACLaws**  
Ian Vincent ian.vincent@cantab.net

**AC Selection**  
David Maugham dmaugham@ntlworld.com

**AC Tournament**  
David Maugham dmaugham@ntlworld.com

**Coaching**  
Roger Staples  
roger@staplessteeples.orangehome.co.uk

**Development**  
Peter Death peter.j.death@gmail.com

**Equipment**  
Alan Pidcock pidcock@manorh.plus.com

**Executive**  
Barry Keen barry.keen1@ntlworld.com

**GC Laws**  
Bill Arliss bill.arliss@ntlworld.com

**GC Selection**  
Stephen Mulliner snmulliner@googlemail.com

**GC Tournament**  
Tim King tmktmk@ntlworld.com

**Handicap**  
Brian Shorney  
brianshorney@drewassociates.co.uk

**ICT**  
Ian Vincent ian.vincent@cantab.net

**International**  
Jonathan Kirby pjkirby@googlemail.com

**Management**  
Jeff Dawson jeff.p.dawson@gmail.com

**Marketing**  
Lawrence Whittaker flwhittaker2@waitrose.com

**Investment**  
Peter Death peter.j.death@gmail.com

**Publishing**  
Charles Waterfield cwaterfield@btinternet.com

## CA Federation Representatives on Council

Croquet North - Charles Waterfield  
01642 712551

North West - Geoff Young  
gandyoung@btopenworld.com

Yorkshire - Anna Giraud  
01484 716663 eag@giraudnet.co.uk

East Midlands - Lawrence Whittaker  
0116 270 7396

West Midlands & Wales - John Handy  
01788 810572

East Anglia - Terrey Sparks  
tds3elm@aol.com

Southern - Brian Fisk  
master@brianfisk.net

South West - Brian Shorney  
Home: 01249-783012 Work: 01249-782760  
brianshorney@drewassociates.co.uk

London & South East - David Mooney  
020 8789 7707

**Gazette Editor**  
Gail Curry  
127 Haswell Gardens, North Shields, Tyne &  
Wear NE30 2DR Tel: 0191 2579045  
gazette@croquet.org.uk

## Publication details

**Gazette Editor**  
Gail Curry  
127 Haswell Gardens, North Shields, Tyne &  
Wear NE30 2DR Tel: 0191 2579045  
gazette@croquet.org.uk

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

### Publication Schedule

Copy should reach the Editor before the 15th of the month before publication is due.

However if you have something that you think

the Editor may be willing to expand this deadline for, please contact her direct before making any assumption.

Email contributions, including tournament reports should be sent direct to the Editor, or copied to the Editor if they are being posted to the Nottingham List. Digital images are the easiest to work with, but coloured photographic prints are also acceptable.

Please send digital 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 an SAE.

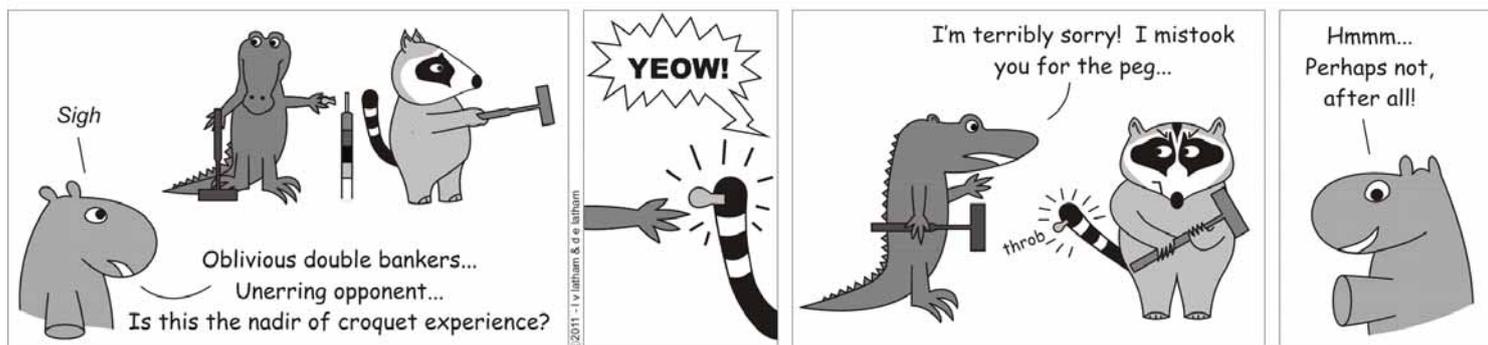
**Tournament Reports & Results**  
Emailed reports are welcomed. Attachments may be sent in Microsoft Word format, or text format. Handwritten reports are no longer acceptable due to the illegibility of most.

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

The Croquet Gazette is printed by Billingham Press, Central Avenue, Billingham, Stockton on Tees.

## HOOPOTAMUS

by Victor



## THE CROQUET GAZETTE



Issue 336 February 2012

Front Cover: Carol Steinberg in play during the Bowdon Centenary celebrations. Photo by Mike Steer.

Next Issue Published 15th April 2012  
Copy Deadline 17th March 2012

**Disclaimer**

The opinions expressed in the Croquet Gazette are those of the Editor and contributors. The Croquet Association is not responsible for statements other than those clearly defined as being made on behalf of the Croquet Association.

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**Chairman's Column**

**Y**ou will probably have seen on the CA website that we have suffered the sad loss of two experienced Council members at the end of 2011. Both Nigel Graves and Pat Kennett put a lot of time into the administration of the game as well as being active players. We will also be losing Patricia Duke-Cox in October, as she will not be seeking re-election. The loss of these very experienced members of Council will leave a large hole to fill. Fortunately we still have a reasonable pool of expertise amongst our existing Council members, but we do need to recruit new members to pick up the reins. If you can afford a little of your time, and are interested in any of the varied aspects of administering our game, then why not put yourself forward for election?



As in any activity involving a wide range of people, I often hear players complaining about the way the CA runs one particular aspect or another. If you feel you can do better, then why not come on board and make things happen. New blood is essential to prevent our game stagnating. Please contact me if you wish to have further information as to what is involved in serving on Council, wish to volunteer yourself, or maybe suggest someone else.

When you read this you will have received the new Fixtures Book and no doubt are well into planning your season. However, for every one of you who is a member of the CA, there are two more club members who are not, and therefore do not play in Fixture Book events. I am often told that this is because it costs too much to join the CA merely to play in one tournament. You will be aware that anybody can play in their first tournament without joining the CA, but did you know that players can now play in as many tournaments as they wish in their first year of CA membership for only £12? This is because the first year's CA subscription has been reduced by two thirds to make it easier for players to catch the tournament bug. Why not persuade some of your club members to take up this offer and enter tournaments this year? Tell them that they have very little to lose because, if they decide that the tournament scene is not for them, they can resign at the end of the year. However, I am confident that most players will enjoy playing in tournaments and will continue their membership. And just so we do not scare them away too soon the second year's subscription has a one third discount!

Finally, I would like to congratulate Rachel Rowe on becoming UK's first Women's Golf Croquet World Champion. She defeated probably the best female Association Player in the world in the final. This victory should show to the doubters that Golf Croquet can be a very competitive game, as I can assure them that, at this level, the game is far from just a social exercise. By the way, Rachel was helped on her way by the awarding of CA grants from a fund set up to help young players participate in major competitions, as well as benefitting from the CA mentoring scheme, where up-and-coming players receive help and encouragement from top players. However, in the end it was Rachel's dedication to the game that led her to play so well and be successful. Well done!

Barry Keen

## Editorial



Welcome to the February issue and thoughts of a new season beginning. Some players will already have sent off their tournament entries, but before a ball is hit in competition I know that there are a whole host of preparations both for clubs and individuals. The Ipswich Club are preparing to move to a new venue. Bowdon have just finished celebrating their centenary. Elsewhere in this issue, you will find several articles on positive changes and improvement to clubs, as well as activities within clubs. For those who prefer something a little more challenging, we have some technical articles, which should help to sharpen minds on some of the finer parts of the game. For those who prefer something a little less advanced, we have the first part of a two part piece of croquet fiction, so a good cross-section of contributions.

As the Chairman has touched on in his Column, croquet is a sport driven mostly by unpaid members and players and if we all simply turned up only to play, then within a short period of time the sport would inevitably deteriorate.....no rules updated, no lawns cut, no ranking system, no coaching courses to name a few. If you don't have time to volunteer for Council at national level, then surely you do have time to go along to your own club and offer to make a contribution—whether it's cleaning the windows, baking a cake or painting hoops or perhaps sending a contribution to the Gazette. I wish you all a successful and enjoyable season. Let's make 2012 a team effort!

*Gail Curry*

## Letters

### The ideal game to incorporate croquet and organisations

During 2011, I have taken over the role of running croquet events at The Hurlingham Club for business corporations. The sessions have all been part of the package that Hurlingham offers to companies for a day of fun and food, boozing and bonding. The 15 different occasions, using the four lawns on the cricket pitch area of Hurlingham, have varied in numbers between 15 and 76 people (I kid you not), quite a challenge but somehow it works.

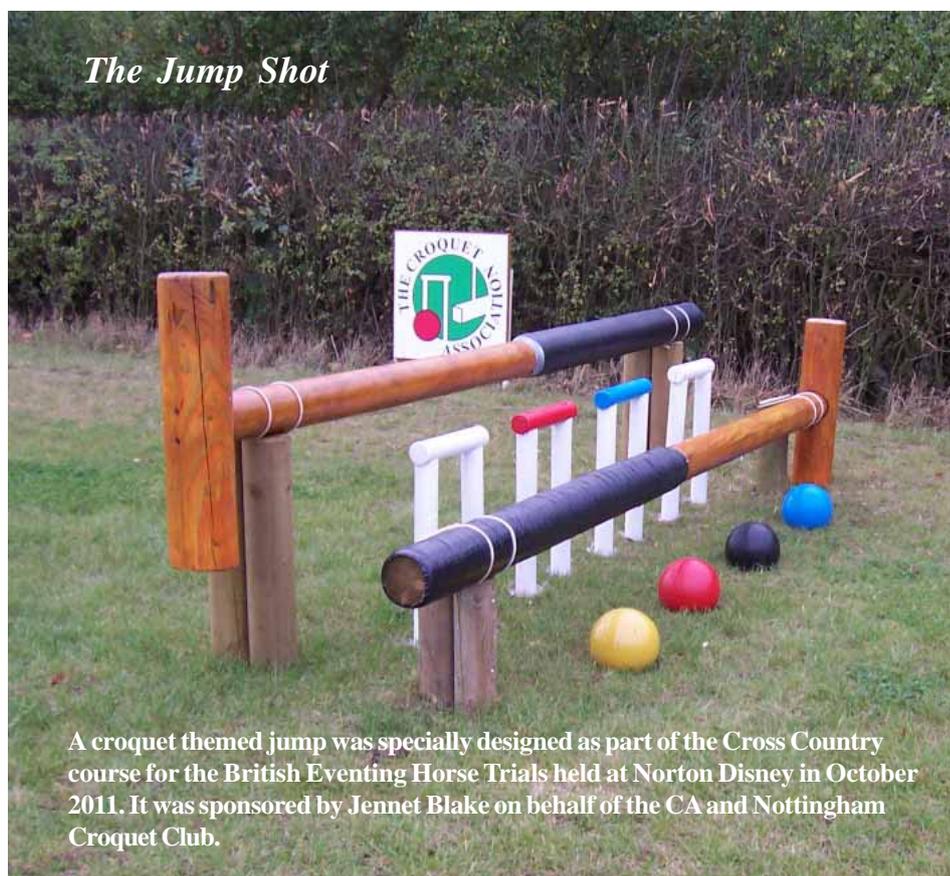
Organisations use the day either for their own staff as a thank you, or as a day to take out the clients. So no need for detailed explanation of the finer arts of stroke making, they just want to get going on the important competitive element that croquet brings to their day at Hurlingham. Most like a couple of hours of play in pairs, with some form of final winners from a playoff, and soon pick up the variety of shots in a short golf croquet game, particularly the clearing of opponents'

balls. The croquet is really the fun part between cream teas and/or barbecues, with Pimms on tap whilst playing.

Thanks must go to Dave Collins who set up this format so successfully in past years and of course the staff at Hurlingham who are a dream to liaise with, particularly Paul Blythin, Events Manager, and the ground staff. Many companies make this their annual event and of course recommend the day to others.

In addition to Hurlingham, the CA have been approached by a number of other organisations, and we have used facilities in both the centre of London and in Oxford for events. These look to be expanding in 2012 with companies involved in pre-Olympics in London. As one company say to their visitors, croquet is a quintessential part of Britain.... Our game is indeed suitable for many different environments and a wide range of people.

*'Croquet Carole'  
Carole McLoughlin  
CA Corporate Events Manager*



### The Jump Shot

A croquet themed jump was specially designed as part of the Cross Country course for the British Eventing Horse Trials held at Norton Disney in October 2011. It was sponsored by Jennet Blake on behalf of the CA and Nottingham Croquet Club.



fig.1

### An improved design of hoop-lifter

The vertical-lift hoop-lifter described in Issue No. 329 has proved to be useful at Letchworth although some Club members (including myself) would prefer not to have had to bend down to use it. An alternative has therefore been designed for operation when standing upright, requiring no bending down at all! (Fig.1). Providing a vertical lift through downward pressure on a handle at waist height, it has the additional advantage over the earlier design of being adjustable for all usual heights of hoop above the ground, rather than offering just five, stepwise starting positions.



fig.2

Attached to a base-plate is a vertical pillar, topped with a hinged handle, the distal end of which projects, as a quadrant,

about two inches in diameter from the fulcrum, where it is grooved in the centre to accommodate a chord. The chord is a nylon rope/wire combination, the nylon rope part of which is attached at its free end to a cleat near the proximal end of the handle (to adjust the effective length of the chord) (Fig. 2)



fig.3

whilst the wire part is attached to a wooden hook to fit the hoop.

In use, the base is slid within the hoop with the handle raised above the horizontal, the chord is adjusted in length to engage the hook firmly in the top of the hoop and then secured in the cleat, and the handle is pushed down. Once the lifter is adjusted for the first hoop of a set on a lawn, no further adjustment is normally required for the remainder.

The details of design are a matter of personal choice. In this case the wooden hook is held loosely in position within a simple guide and the wire is kept in place by two eye hooks (Fig. 3) as well as a small staple near the distal end of the lever. Red markers indicate the average effective set-up. The attachment of the wire to the wooden hook is made by dividing the hook vertically, equally into two, cutting out a space in each half (with a router) to accommodate the wire together with a thimble attached to its end, and drilling a hole horizontally near the base of the hook to take a short metal rod that is passed through the thimble; each end of the hole is then sealed by a wooden plug.

*John S. Alabaster*

## New Coaches in 2011

Congratulations to the following players who qualified as coaches in 2011.

### CA ASSOCIATES

#### Club Coach

Peter Blackburn, Bakewell  
 Philip Chau, East Dorset  
 Pauline Donner, Woodhall Spa  
 Janet Hoptroff, Littlehampton  
 Derek Johnson, Belsay Hall  
 Alison Larard, York  
 John Munt, Preston-Brighton LTCC  
 Roger Price, Bransgore  
 Dennis Scarr, Middlesbrough  
 Catherine Turski, Nottingham  
 David Turner, Tyneside  
 Robin Wootton, Littlehampton  
 Margaret Wood, Lepton & Huddersfield

#### Golf Coach

David Turner, Tyneside  
 Bob Potter, Woodhall Spa  
 Anna Giraud, Huddersfield

#### Grade 1 Association

John Dixon, Sidmouth  
 Roger Hesketh, East Dorset  
 Pat Jackson, SCCC  
 Richard Jackson, SCCC  
 Terry Mathews, East Dorset  
 Patrick Oxley, East Dorset  
 Dennis Scarr, Middlesbrough  
 Michael Taylor, Sidmouth  
 Nancy Temple, Sidmouth  
 David Williams, East Dorset

#### Grade 2 Association

John Crowe, East Dorset

### NON-ASSOCIATES

#### Club Coach

Mari Bebbington, North Hykeham  
 Ann Bradley, Darley Dale  
 Dorothy Evans, Bakewell  
 Betty King, Norwich  
 Jean Peters, Bakewell

## Obituaries

### Pat Kennett 1944-2011

Pat Kennett died on 16 December 2011 four years after first being diagnosed with multiple myeloma. Pat had been a CA Council member since 2005 and made her mark as chairman of the Development Committee and a member of the Management Committee for the last three years.

Pat was born in Bournemouth (then in Hampshire) the daughter of a Yorkshire schoolmaster who was sadly killed while navigating a Lancaster bomber back from a raid on Berlin before she was born. Pat's mother remarried to another serviceman and as a result Pat's childhood was spent partly in Germany and partly in Hong Kong. She failed to achieve her potential, having moved between various schools, and ended up as a secretary. Later in life she obtained a law degree from Birmingham University and her last job before she retired was teaching law to undergraduates at Southampton Institute.

Pat generally avoided sport for much of her life. Perhaps this was related to the fact that she went through most of her life with an undiagnosed hole in her heart. This was finally closed with an ASD three years ago. She broke with her avoidance of sport in 1997 when she joined Littleton Croquet Club (near Winchester). She had hoped that it was something we could do together. Unfortunately, I improved much faster than she did, which made it difficult to play in tournaments together. We did, for several years, play in the August Budleigh Salterton week where we made many friends. More recently we were both to be seen at the Parkstone June Tournament where I was the manager. Her final tournament was the Irish Opens in Carrickmines in 2011, where she and I were runners up in the doubles despite her spending three nights in hospital. Pat always enjoyed her croquet, especially the regular mix-ins at Littleton, and eventually used her teaching skills to become a coach and then to help train further coaches. She also qualified as an assistant referee and was often seen performing her duties at tournaments. She took a great pride in her handicap and her decline in playing ability throughout her illness was a source of great disappointment.

Life changed somewhat when in August 2005 we moved to Wiltshire very near to the Hamptworth Club. Typically, we exchanged contracts on our purchase while playing in the Jersey Opens. Here she had an opportunity to engage in one of her other great loves—gardening. She was very proud of her RHS certificate of Merit. Sadly, the work on the garden remains unfinished as the chemotherapy and ultimately the cancer made life very difficult for her. We knew in July 2011 that her time was coming to an end but she carried on bravely as best she could. Finally, early in September she decided to give up all her commitments and I quote from her resignation e-mail "But I am content—I've had a pretty good life." The rest of her time was spent planning her own funeral and putting her affairs in order. This included embroidering a green silk covering for her coffin. Those who attended will appreciate her hard work. One person who attended said it was the best funeral he had ever been to. She was buried at the Woodland Burial site at Hinton near Christchurch in Dorset.



I know her work for the CA, the Southern Croquet Federation and for her clubs was valued by all who came into contact with her. Many people are better croquet players having been coached by her. She will be sadly missed by her two daughters, her two grandchildren, her mother and of course by myself. I am proud to have known Pat and to have been married to her.

*Brian Fisk*



*Dr Parker (nearer the camera) having tea with the late Bob Carder at Parkstone.*

### Dr C A Parker 1919 - 2011

My father, Dr CA Parker, usually known as Allen, died on 20 November 2011, aged 91. He was a member of the Parkstone Club and remained a social member until his death. He was a member of the CA for many years from the early 1970s. He played in CA tournaments at Parkstone, Budleigh Salterton, Ryde, Southwick and Devonshire Park frequently, and also at Cheltenham, winning various trophies over the years. He contributed a number of articles to the *Gazette*, and was a referee. I think his handicap

## News & Information

reached 1.5, but then began to increase.

Dr CA Parker was born on 19 February 1920. After graduating from University College London, he worked for what became the Royal Naval Scientific Service. He published around 100 scientific papers, wrote a book, and was well known internationally for his work on photoluminescence and its use in analytical chemistry. His full title was CA Parker CBE DSc PhD FRSC. He was awarded a CBE upon retirement in 1980.

He leaves a widow, Joan, and a son David, both of whom have been members of the CA. His daughter, Pat Parker, remains a playing member of Parkstone and a CA member.

*David Parker*

### Dr Bernard Weitz, OBE 1919 - 2011

**B**ernard trained and practised as a Veterinary Surgeon and he then progressed to research in bacteriology and also on the immunology of tropical diseases. He played a significant part in research into sleeping sickness and in the establishment of vaccination programmes.

In 1967 he became the Director of the National Institute in Dairying at Reading—something that led to his interest in croquet—he played at Caversham and Phyllis Court Croquet Clubs and then built his own croquet lawn. In 1977, Bernard was appointed Chief Scientist at the Ministry of Agriculture with responsibility for scientific research in all agricultural activities in the UK. I once remember him giving me his views about various very senior politicians who he advised directly. I could not possibly tell your readers what he said about them, save that it was insightful and very dry!

Besides croquet Bernard's main interest was music. His parents, wife, children and grandchildren all shared his love of music. Together with his wife, Betty, he played in croquet tournaments at Hurlingham, Woking, Southwick and Cheltenham and once won the Spencer Ell Cup. Bernard was a member at Cheltenham Croquet Club for 35 years and was Membership Secretary for 15 years. Bernard had a "wicked" sense of humour and all enjoyed sharing a croquet lawn with him. He will be sadly missed.

*Klim Seabright*

*Hon Sec Cheltenham Croquet Club*

### Golf Croquet holiday in Corfu

**A few places remain for our holiday in Corfu combining a nine day stay at the fabulous Kontokali Bay Hotel with participation in a golf croquet tournament open to players of all abilities.**

**To be held from 13th to 22 May 2012.**

**Further information from Ian Cobbold  
0208 642 0533 or**

**ianmccobbold@hotmail.com**



### Election of Federation Representatives to Council

Clubs in the regions covered by the South East and London, Yorkshire, East Midlands, North West and Southern Federations are hereby notified that an election of a member of the Croquet Association to represent them on its Council is due to be held this year, for a three year term commencing from the AGM in October. Existing representatives are eligible for re-election. The elections are organised by the respective Federations, which should be contacted for further information if the club is not a member of it.

*Ian Vincent,*

*Hon. Secretary, Croquet Association*

### New President of the World Croquet Federation

Amir Ramsis has been elected as the new President of the WCF. His four year term formally starts on 1 January 2012. At the same date, Mike Orgill (USA) and Chris Wakeham (SA) join the Management Committee and Rhys Thomas (USA) retires. Many thanks to Rhys for his hard work for the WCF, including leading the Hall of Fame committee. Congratulations to Amir, Mike and Chris.

*Martin French*

*Secretary-General, WCF*

### Croquet Academy Courses for 2012

**T**he Croquet Academy has published an exciting programme of courses for 2012, covering both Association and Golf Croquet. In 2011 the Academy ran its first three day Triple Peel course. The course was highly successful as has been demonstrated by the progress of those that attended. We have decided to run the course again in 2012—our advice is to book early to avoid disappointment, as numbers will be restricted.

Three new courses are being introduced in 2012—a Guide to Successful Tournament Management, a Development Course in Advanced Play and an Introduction to Association Croquet for Golf Croquet Players.

A guide to Successful Tournament Management will be led by one of Croquet's leading tournament Managers, Cliff Jones. The course will be suitable for potential and existing managers wishing to manage Association or Golf Croquet Tournaments. The course will cover various tournament formats, techniques in running a good tournament and software systems to assist the Manager. Attendees should bring their own laptops/notebooks.

The Development Course in Advanced Play is aimed at association players wishing to move forward to advanced play or people wishing to improve their advanced play skills. The course is most suitable for players with an association handicap between 6 and 12.

An Introduction to Association Croquet for Golf Croquet Players is designed for existing golf croquet players who want to learn and to practise the basics of Association Croquet. The course will include croquet strokes, controlled hoop running, playing breaks and using bisques. Persons attending this course could also come to the Supervised High Bisque Tournament in August,

where they can experience an introduction to association tournament play with coaches at hand to help them on their way.

The full list of courses being run by the Academy is shown in the chart below. Details of all courses including prices can be seen on the Croquet Academy website [www.thecroquetacademy.org.uk](http://www.thecroquetacademy.org.uk) or in the CA's 2012 Fixture Book. You can book on line or by contacting the Entries Secretary (John Low) at the following address: 34 Eley Drive, Rottingdean, East Sussex BN2 7FH. Tel: 01273 388910.

Dates	Course
H'cap range	Manager
20 - 22 April	AC Silver Course
6-11	Nigel Polehill
21/22 April	AC Bronze Course
12-18	Frances Low
21/22 April	AC Triple Peel Course
4 or less	Cliff Jones
25/26 April	A Guide to Successful Tournament Management
N/A	Cliff Jones
28/29 April	AC Improvers Course
18+	Daphne Gaitley
28/29 April	Introduction to Association Croquet
20+	Pat Jackson
28/29 April	Development Course in Advanced Play
6-12	Cliff Jones
19/20 May	GC Improvers Course
4+	Daphne Gaitley
19/20 May	Introduction to AC for GC Players
Any GC	Jonathan Isaacs
7/8 August	Supervised High Bisque Tournament
14+	Frances Low

### Percival Mallets

Hand crafted wooden mallets with Carbon or Ash shafts, any weight, length or size made to your own specifications. Adjustable weight range +/- 2 ozs, variety of grips and peripheral weighting available. Mallets altered, repaired and upgraded.

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07780677943 or

[Michael@croquetmallets.co.uk](mailto:Michael@croquetmallets.co.uk)

[www.croquetmallets.co.uk](http://www.croquetmallets.co.uk)

## Report from Council

### Report of Council Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2012

Barry Keen, the Chairman of Council, opened the meeting by asking us to stand in memory of Nigel Graves and Pat Kennett, former members of Council who had died since the previous meeting. A glass trophy in memory of Nigel is to be presented by the CA as a trophy for an event in the Seniors.

The main business was financial. Roger Bray, the Honorary Treasurer, gave his forecast for the outcome for 2011, which was for a surplus of approximately £6,700. However, he also showed an adjusted figure to assist Council in preparing budgets for future years, which showed a deficit of the order of £1,300, after smoothing the cost of international events, ignoring the allowance for building depreciation, including a provision for building maintenance and deducting the amount required to protect the value of the CA's reserves against inflation.

A budget for 2012 was agreed, which was for an adjusted deficit of £11,300. This was largely due to increases agreed in the expenditure on international events and development grants. The former was partly to fund our team for the new World GC team championship, a GC equivalent of the MacRobertson Shield, but also to pay travel costs for teams competing in GB v USA and GB v Ireland matches, with the aim of strengthening our teams by reducing any financial bar to availability. There has been a strong increase in demand for development grants, partly due to a number of clubs being forced to relocate or take on lawn maintenance (thus requiring capital equipment) due to local authority cutbacks, and partly due to a number of clubs in the south and east wishing to install irrigation.

Council then agreed a policy for deciding on the level of reserves to be held by the Association, but referred back the schedule proposing the actual amounts as being unduly cautious. However, even if the figures are reduced by allowing some overlap between the categories, it seems unlikely that a large windfall will become available for a one-off increase in expenditure or reduction in income.

The staff in the CA Office: Liz Larsson, Liz Budworth, Liz Parsons and Paul Hands (who has replaced her) were thanked for their work during a particularly demanding year, due to the exceptional number of international events.

The Management Committee reported that a bid was being prepared to stage an AC individual World Championship in 2013, either to coincide with the Opens or in early August. If successful, it was hoped that arrangements would be finalised by mid-summer.

The Council Meeting was followed by the inaugural meeting of the Federation Working Party, which has been tasked with reviewing all aspects of the working relationship between the CA and the Federations, with a view to identifying any weaknesses and proposing, where appropriate, improvements to the existing structure.

*Ian Vincent,*  
*Hon. Secretary*

## In Conversation With...

*A Series of interviews with some of the people who we associate with croquet.*

### ***Rachel Rowe, 2011 WCF Women's World Golf Croquet Champion, Interviewed by Dr Tim King, her Croquet Association Mentor***



***Tim King interviewed new Women's Golf Croquet World Champion, Rachel Rowe by e-mail, starting just after her return from New Zealand.***

***R***achel, very many congratulations for your success. Unfortunately we have not been able to meet up since you got home. But in my own mind you have a big smile all the way across your face. Here we are ten days after you won the World Championship. Has it sunk in yet? How do you feel?

Being back in England, seeing and being congratulated by croquet players, friends and colleagues from home has helped it sink in! I was in a rather good mood for a good few days after the tournament finished. But a 30+ hour journey to get back to the UK put a stop to that!

*Well, that is understandable. And I am sure your employer is not yet willing to accept any less work from you, just because you want time to concentrate on croquet! But I am interested in the longer term impact of your success. First, though, let us start at the beginning. How did you start croquet?*

About eight years ago, my Dad bought a garden croquet set for my Aunty's housewarming present. After trying it out we got one for ourselves. We spent a couple of years playing Association Croquet in the back garden. Although, on a significantly smaller lawn, and with the normal obstacles you find in garden croquet, it's not the same game at all! We felt as though we had made good progress in the garden, and I was hoping to count croquet as part of my Duke of Edinburgh Award, so we joined Ashby Croquet Club in 2005.

*I am glad to know the Patron of the CA made sure her husband recognized croquet as a sport! What kept you at croquet once you had been successful with your Duke of Edinburgh Award, which was Gold if I remember correctly?*

The great thing about the Gold Award was that you needed to keep going with your hobbies for between 12 and 18 months. This gave me plenty of chance to become used to playing on full-size lawns, to get to know the people at Ashby and to start being involved in competitions.

At that time, Ashby only had two lawns, so quite often I ended up starting to play Golf Croquet doubles on club nights due to lawn space. Being new to Golf Croquet, this was an ideal way to learn as I got to play with various better players in the club giving advice and playing against a complete range of other players.

Due to an aggressive approach at going round the lawn to

get my GC handicap, I started at an old 6 (the highest handicap at the time), which was great as I got bisques against almost everybody, and three bisques when playing my Dad! Healthy competition (especially against family) has always been a big motivator for me!

*You remind me of when I started at Ashby. I had previously played a bit of Association Croquet and looked across somewhat askance at those playing Golf Croquet, unsure that I would find it interesting. But slowly I got drawn in. How do you view your own progress through Golf Croquet? Was there some point at which your attitude suddenly changed? Or have you just found things have happened for you?*

I have obviously had a decent amount of luck. But I definitely think my croquet has got much better in the past couple of years. I have had a lot more experience playing against top players and playing doubles with Will Gee has taught me a lot in terms of tactics and how I play. All of this has been really useful and is going to continue to be really valuable.

*Hmmm! Not sure about "luck" being quite the right word. I have watched you develop as a determined young lady, who is willing to work hard to improve. How quickly did you find yourself making progress?*

When I started playing GC I found it easy to pick up, although this was probably helped by having played a bit of AC before, so I had most of the basic strokes.

I felt as though I was making much more progress when starting to learn GC, whereas with AC I didn't feel as though I was getting anywhere until I could play a four-ball break with any sort of consistency. This made me much keener to play GC in the first couple of years.

*So what happened once you realized that you could set tougher competitive targets than just your Dad (who I hasten to add works very hard at his AC and continues to make good progress)?*

My first major Golf Croquet event was the inaugural U21 match v Ireland in 2007. I hadn't been playing Golf Croquet for long at that point, so was very pleased to be selected! I was encouraged by the other members of the team to pick up AC again. After a bit of coaching and practice, I entered and won my first handicap AC tournament later that year. I spent a couple of years playing both AC and GC and think both my games have improved due to playing the other.

*I am glad to hear that you see the mutual benefits of playing both versions. That is one of my strong personal beliefs. So presumably you now had the full croquet bug?*

Yes! Having had most of my holiday off work this year based around various competitions, I think it's safe to say I have the bug! A couple of years ago it wasn't so noticeable, as I had more free time and was probably playing a comparable amount, but at a more local level.

*So you needed to make the transition from local events to playing further afield?*

Aside from the U21 events, my first non-local experience of competitive Golf Croquet was playing for the Ashby Inter-Club team in 2009. I spent all of the season playing at the comfortable #4 seed, giving me a gentle introduction to playing nationally. I continued to play at #3 and #4 for all of 2009 and 2010, and Ashby won the Inter-Club final in 2010, our third straight final against Surbiton.

In 2009, I went to Cairo with two of the other English juniors to play in the inaugural World U21 Championship. Both the boys were ranked above me, but I ended up thirteenth, and as the second ranked female. Playing in Egypt was very different to England, providing lots of challenges but definitely being a good experience for improving my croquet.

*By this stage you were at Warwick University, which must have had some impact on your availability to play. But you did not let this get in the way of your progress?*

After having a croquet-lite early season in 2010 due to University finals, I wanted to play lots of croquet in 2011! Heading into 2011 there were lots of things I wanted to do—needless to say, I didn't get them all.

I wanted to be undisputed England #1 woman, and I was really happy I didn't drop a game in winning the Women's at Ripon in May.

I got a place in the World Championship Qualification Tournament and had some good wins but lacked the consistency that I needed to qualify for the main Championship.

Will Gee and I won the National GC Doubles and I swapped into the #2 spot in the Ashby Inter-Club team. I learnt loads about the game, including my own play from being the less experienced partner in this doubles pair, and when I went to New Zealand I was more confident about my abilities. I found myself having to think less about what I was going to do.

*Clearly, overall a journey of continual progress but how prepared did you actually feel for your first senior World Championship?*

I made myself go and practise about four lunch times during the couple of weeks leading up to the tournament, so I didn't have a big break between the end of the season and the Worlds. Aside from my own play during practice, I didn't really worry too much when approaching the tournament, mainly because I didn't really know what to expect in terms of the quality of play. Having been at Hurlingham watching the final stages of the World Championship, I thought it would be best not to think about it! The lawns were pretty true so it didn't take me long to get back into the swing of it and I was really pleased with how I played overall during the week especially as I had never played such a long croquet tournament before. It was great that four of the six English players got through to the knock-out, and rather unfortunate two of us got drawn against each other. There were rather a few "upsets" in my half of the draw, that lots of people brought to my attention. But I tried to concentrate on just the next match.

*I could see that your fan club might get excited about certain results in your half of the draw. But I always had faith you would*



26th Nov 2011: Rachel Rowe won the 4th WCF Women's World Golf Croquet Championship. Photo by Helena Fensome

*know that each match had to be played on its own merits.*

Even within matches I had to play several completely different games depending on the opponent, the hoops and the weather, and I would have lost some of them if I hadn't adapted. The semi was my first ever best of five, although it didn't quite prepare me for how mentally draining the final would be. I felt it was an achievement in its own right, especially at 2-1 down, to still "keep my head" in the five-and-a-half hour match. The English team and photographers (plus various other supporters) were fabulous at providing moral support, drink and food as needed!

*So, we have done a tour of your background. But what about the future? Do you feel expectations from being only the fourth English croquet World Champion? Examples such as already people on the Nottingham Board making reference to your playing style and your opponents will always know who you are now!*

I do not really feel any expectations, although it would be great to win the Women's again at some point, perhaps even being the first to win it twice. I don't think there is anything wrong with your opponents knowing who you are; there aren't many young female croquet players, so I was half-way there before!

*And what about AC? What plans have you got for playing both versions of our sport?*

I didn't play that much AC in 2011, so am hoping to get back into that next season as well. With no three-week trip to New Zealand in 2012, I am going to have more holiday off work to spare, so am hoping to enter some more competitions around the UK this year, both GC and some Advanced AC.

*Rachel, thank you and, once again, congratulations on your achievement. I suggest to all those you meet at AC as well as GC not to underestimate your determination and desire to succeed. I wish you well with your ongoing croquet adventures!*

## Croquet Fiction

### Reflections on Croquet in Wonderland

by Laurence Latham

#### The Thin Lady

“Ow! That hurt!” I complained, instinctively clutching at my head.

“Can’t be helped,” retorted the tall, thin lady who was standing right in front of me. “I have to hit you in order to finish the game.”

Completely disorientated and thoroughly confused, I regarded the strange looking woman cautiously. She was wearing a multicoloured outfit topped off with a pointed hat in a combination which, although I am no fashion expert, I doubt would have curried much favour among traditional costume designers.

“I’m sorry, but I don’t believe we’ve met,” I stammered.

“You must be a first-timer, then. I’m Peg. Perhaps I hit you a little hard; I don’t get that much practice with real beginners these days,” she explained, her tone becoming somewhat more conciliatory. “We’ll probably meet more often as you improve. There’s no need to worry, though,” she added hastily, observing my lack of enthusiasm. “As time goes by, you’ll hardly notice the hitting, I promise.”

“But what am I supposed to do now?” I asked, almost without thinking.

“Well, obviously, once a game is finished you have to play through to the beginning.”

I stared at her uncomprehendingly. “Don’t you mean once a game is started you have to play through to the finish?”

“That’s in Advanced Play only, so called because the players advance, of course. Beginners do it the other way round. It’s a concession I worked hard to obtain; you ought to be grateful.”

“It sounds awfully complicated,” I complained.

“Rubbish. How many times does a novice usually play before even reaching me, if the game has to start at the beginning? Lots. And what happens when someone does eventually turn up? We have a horrid emotional scene while they explain how they’ve been missing me. This way, with me hitting you, is both easier and better.”

“Well, now that it’s done, where do I go next?”

“You’re not really supposed to seek advice except from your doubles partner,” Peg reminded me, “but as you’re a complete novice I’ll overlook it. I wonder where she’s got to.”

She glanced about her apprehensively. “Actually, I don’t agree with some of these restrictions myself,” she confided in a low voice. “I have thought of forming a splinter group, but it might be a bit risky for someone like me. Be that as it may, I strongly recommend that in future you read the rules first and play afterwards.”

“Where I come from, we usually play first and read the rules afterwards, quite often in the middle of the court,” I ventured. Peg was unimpressed.

“Go through the red door,” she instructed *sotto voce*,

whilst indicating the direction with a surreptitious nod.

As I watched her walk away, she suddenly turned her head, smiled and called back, “Oh, and mind you beware of the dog.”

#### The Dog

Before long I was standing in front of a most impressive red door, which looked for all the world as if it were designed to keep people out, especially riffraff. Summoning up courage, I gave a tentative knock. From behind the door there came an ominous growl and I hovered uncertainly.

“No good knocking,” said a voice. “That’ll get you nowhere. If you want to come through you’ll have to open it.”

Nervously I turned the handle and pushed at the door, which swung just far enough to allow a dog to stick its head out.

“What do *you* want?” it snapped.

“I want to go through,” I began, before really grasping the absurdity of the situation. “But... you’re talking to me!”

“Of course I’m talking to you,” growled the dog. “There’s no-one else here.”

“No, I mean, you’re talking and...”

The creature fixed me with an impatient stare. “I’m talking because I’m quite sane, thank you; if I was mad, I’d probably be barking. Anyhow, that’s enough chat, here comes your partner. Take your lead from her - I don’t have one, as you will doubtless have noticed.”

A young lady was making her way hurriedly across the grass.

“I’m so sorry,” she said, slightly out of breath. “I ought to have been here, but everything seems to have become terribly muddled. I can’t think what’s caused it. Still, I see you’ve reached Rover.”

The dog pricked its ears.

“So, this is *Rover*,” I acknowledged, hoping to mollify the hound by affording him some recognition. “But he won’t let me through.”

“I know exactly how to sort him out,” countered the young lady, producing a sticklike object from an implausibly deep pocket. She waved to a distant figure before expertly hurling the item in his direction. Rover, who had been watching intently, took off after it like a rocket.

The distant figure quickly picked up the fallen bisque and stuck it in the ground before the dog could reach it. Rover skidded to a halt and stood there wagging his tail.

“That should keep him occupied for a minute,” declared my newfound helper. “Come on, now, through you go. I’ll be right behind you.” She gestured anxiously.

“What if he comes back and stops you?” I postulated unhappily.

“If he does, he’ll find himself with a clip round the ear.” Her confidence spurred me to action and, although still completely mystified, I proceeded without question.

#### The Foreign Gentleman

Once beyond Rover’s domain, we paused to collect ourselves.

“Look,” I explained apologetically, “I’m terribly confused. I don’t fully understand what’s going on. Who exactly are you?”

“I’m your doubles partner, of course,” replied the girl.

“Yes, but, I mean, what’s your name?”

There was a certain hesitation. "That's not quite so easy, now you come to mention it. I think it's... Celia, but I'm afraid I'm rather mixed up myself."

"If you think it's Celia and you're mixed up, perhaps it's really Alice," I suggested in a rare moment of inspiration.

"I do believe you're right! Yes, of course it's Alice. How stupid of me. Thank you. And may I enquire as to your own name?"

"I'm sorry, I'm..." I began, before instantly experiencing another wave of bewilderment. "Oh dear! Would you believe I can't remember, either? This is absolutely ridiculous; I could swear I was about to tell you." I thought hard. "L, I *know* it begins with L..."

"First or last?" enquired Alice.

"Both, I think."

"That's remarkably useful," she enthused. "Less to learn when you're very young."

"Indeed," I retorted, pleased to be able to pick up on the conversational rhythm. "And handy for initialling notes to friends and business folk alike."

We had been walking for a few more minutes when I noticed that we were approaching another door. It was similar in appearance to the one where we had met the dog, save for being white.

"See how you get on here," encouraged Alice. "Remember, though, no knocking."

I marched up to the door and threw it open, fully intending to stride through, only to find my way blocked by someone standing on the threshold.

"Aha! Not so fast, if you please, monsieur," the man exclaimed in what I thought sounded like a French accent. "You are in the big hurry, I dare to say, but first we must attend the paperwork most important, non?"

"Er, well, yes, of course," I blustered, my encounter with Rover still fresh in my mind. "What do you want me to do?"

"I have here your pass, monsieur, and to go, you have first, please, to sign."

"Of course," I smiled, fumbling unsuccessfully for something with which to write.

Seeing my predicament, the foreign gentleman made sympathetic tutting noises before proffering a very fine looking fountain pen with a gold nib.

"Here, monsieur, allow me to hire you mine."

"Um, thank you," I said, trying my best to sound polite. "But I think you mean *lend*, don't you?"

"Oh, non, monsieur, I mean hire. It will be only ten euros and it can be added to your bar tab, if you wish."

"No," I answered firmly, "I don't wish. Ten euros is extortionate!"

"I think not, mon ami," smiled the guardian of the white door. "After all, I am offering you - how would you say in English? - the pen ultimate."

Before I could argue any further, Alice poked her head around the door. "Quickly," she urged. "Give him what he wants or else we'll never get back to the start."

I signed the paper with the forcibly hired pen and we hurried off.

### The Spy

It was not too long before we found ourselves at another

white door, which was standing slightly ajar. It looked rather dark inside, and everything lay very still and quiet.

"Perhaps there's no-one here this time," I suggested hopefully.

"Maybe not, but we can't be too careful," murmured Alice. "All right, here we go."

I was on the point of relaxing when instead I nearly jumped out of my skin. Lurking in the shadows, I suddenly spotted a gruff-looking fellow wearing a dark hat and heavy raincoat with an upturned collar.

"Who are you?" I blurted out, before I could stop myself.

"None of your business." The voice was deep and stern.

Alice appeared at my shoulder. "It's all right," she whispered. "He's nothing to do with us. Just pretend you haven't seen him."

Nonetheless, it was too late. The man moved out from his shady alcove to stand in our way.

"But you have seen me, haven't you?" he breathed threateningly.

"Well, not very well," I objected, trying to play down the situation.

"Was that well or not well?" growled the man. He threw out a hand. "Handicap Cards," he demanded.

Alice and I produced our cards with subservient swiftness and the man snatched them brusquely. He was out of the deep shadow now, and I could see the word *Spy* repeated again and again, running around the brim of his hat. He caught the direction of my gaze.

"Disregard that," he warned, menacingly. He studied our cards carefully for several seconds, grunting at Alice's and sneering at mine. Finally, he tossed them back. "*Bona Fide C Class*, double banked. Lucky for you. There's an A game coming through here any time soon; make sure you stay out of the way. Right?"

I was terrified Alice was about to argue and for once tried to take the lead in getting us moving.

"One more thing," interrupted Spyhat ominously, and my heart sank. "Couldn't give us a light, could you?"

My pulse was racing again. "I - I'm afraid I haven't any matches," I apologized, and swallowed hard.

"What? Do you take me for a fool?" The man moved closer and caught hold of my collar with both hands, while studying me intently from behind his dark glasses. "You're in a tournament, aren't you?"

"Y-y-yes," I quavered.

"Then you must have matches, mustn't you?" His voice was slow and deliberate. "You can't play in a tournament without matches, now can you?"

"No intimidation of beginners!" yelled Alice suddenly. To my amazement, Spyhat let go of my collar, made a superficial attempt at smoothing my rumpled shirt, and stood back.

"Young lady's right, of course," he smiled. "Sorry about that, sir. Got a bit carried away; it's the job, you know, arranging contacts. I'm used to dealing with a completely different bloc. Some of them can be difficult. Tell you what, you can pick up some matches next door but one. It's quite some distance but you can't miss it; place with the blue door. Pleasure to meet you both, I'm sure."

With that he was gone and we were left outside, shaken but not stirred. I turned to Alice.

"What's this place where we can get matches?" I enquired. She looked at me quizzically, "That'll be the

twobackonists, of course. Shall we go?"

### A Hat and a Rabbit

Without further ado, we reached the blue door, only to find it locked, barred and bolted, and with a *Closed* sign hanging on the inside of its window.

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Alice. "That's that for the time being, then; we'll have to come back later. Never mind, at least we can go and sit down for a while."

We made our way to a row of chairs, empty save for one occupied by an odd-looking character in a top hat. He gave Alice a cursory nod, but as I made to sit down, he really stirred into life.

"That's someone's chair," he protested loudly.

"But there's nobody sitting here," I objected, taking a good look round to make certain there were no other potential claimants in the vicinity.

"I didn't say there was," he retorted. "I was merely pointing out that it belongs to someone. Please, do sit down."

"Thank you." As I was making myself comfortable, I couldn't help noticing that his hat bore a large label which I could only assume was a price tag. Having by this time noticed that Alice had a tendency to deal with all the strange folk we were meeting in quite a forward way, yet without causing offence, I determined to follow suit.

"Why does it say ten and six on your hat?" I enquired boldly.

"It doesn't any more. Read it again, slowly and carefully."

"Ten - s - six - d," I enunciated the constituent parts. "That's ten shillings and sixpence, surely. Do you sell them?"

"I *am* a hatter and I *do* sell them," he confirmed, looking a little exasperated. "But that is definitely not a price tag - a hat of this quality and style costs a good deal more than that these days, I can promise you. If you really must know, it's there to remind me of my handicap: Ten for Singles, Six for Doubles. I'm better at doing what I'm told than telling what I do, you understand."

I assured him that I did. Before we could continue our conversation, however, we were interrupted by the sound of panting as an apprehensive figure rushed past.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" it cried. "I'm awfully late. I've never got used to these horrible nine thirty starts. I must find the Manager at once, but I'm going to be in terrible trouble."

"Who was that?" I asked Alice.

"That was the White Rabbit," she explained. "It's quite complicated really; he's played for by beginners somewhere else in the winter and only plays himself here."

"Only plays himself?" I queried. "What's the point of that?"

"That's not what I meant. This is the only event in which he competes. Don't be so pedantic." She brooded for several seconds before continuing. "Actually, this must be the only place he *can* play, for I'm sure it's totally unlike any other."

"It certainly is very odd," I agreed, suddenly aware that I had begun to take it all for granted. "But *you* seem to know your way around. Have you played here before?"

"Perhaps I did once, a long time ago," she pondered. "Yes, I suppose I must have done, because some things are rather familiar, and yet," she faltered, "I'm sure it wasn't quite like this."

I turned once more to the Hatter.

"Are you here to play or watch?" I enquired, trying to sound convivial.

"I'm here to call Time," came the reply. "I was asked because I know Time quite well."

"But this isn't a timed game," I pointed out.

"Then don't stop when I call," snapped the Hatter. "Anyway, you might want Time for something else. What if you needed to tie your shoelace, for example? What would you do then, if there was no Time? You don't always bother to think things through, do you? You really ought to be more appreciative towards people who are trying to help."

I felt it better not to prolong the interchange and so sat quietly until a few moments later, when Alice tugged on my sleeve.

"Up you get," she encouraged. "We have to play again. The twobackonist is open now."

### Matches and Pipes

The blue door was indeed standing wide open, and we went straight inside.

"Good morning, madam. Good morning, sir." We were greeted by an amiable-looking man in thick rimmed glasses. "What may I do for you?"

Alice indicated that I should do the talking, so, without further ado, I requested a box of matches.

"*Danger, Safety or Safety Gone Mad?*" enquired the twobackonist.

"Er... *Safety* would be best, I should think."

"Good choice. Very wise," smiled the shopkeeper. "The others wouldn't be much good to you. *Danger* are inclined to ignite by themselves in your pocket, and *Safety Gone Mad* have no heads, so *they* won't light at all." He pushed a box of *Safety* across the counter. "That will be six and fourpence three farthings; should I add it to your bar tab?"

"Yes, please," I confirmed, realizing that I carried no change, "but I don't think we can put farthings on."

"No problem, sir; let's call it thirty two pence, shall we?"

It was at that moment that I noticed a large sign above the counter which read "No Smoking".

"Isn't that a little detrimental to business?" I asked, nodding in the direction of the warning.

"Goodness me, no, sir. We don't cater for *smokers* here. Don't want to encourage anything like that these days, do we? Most unhealthy. We limit ourselves to matches and pipes."

"Pipes?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Water pipes, gas pipes, drainpipes and stovepipes - in our outfitting department - exhaust pipes, downpipes and half-pipes, which are very popular among our snowboarding clientele." He was edging forward and waving his arms with growing excitement and I stepped back, instinctively. My foot sank into something soft and there came a horrible wailing screech.

"Not forgetting bagpipes," he finished triumphantly.

"Let's get out of here," I exclaimed, urging Alice in the direction of the door.

"By the way," the twobackonist called after us, "if you see the Chimneyopotamus, tell him his fluepipes have arrived."

"The whatawhatamus?" I asked incredulously, as we strode away from the shop, failing to believe my ears.

"The Chimneyopotamus," corrected Alice. "I've not come across him yet, myself, but I've heard he's started to take an interest in croquet and may be organizing a barbecue later. The only trouble is his unfortunate tendency to go round getting everything dirty, so most people try their best to keep him away. It's absolutely

necessary but an awful shame, because he's said to be quite friendly, in his own way."

"He sounds rather interesting," I mused. "Could you tell me a bit more about him, please?"

"That's easy. There's a poem which explains it all; if I remember rightly, it goes like this.." And as we walked, Alice began her recitation:

Beware the Chimney-potamus,  
He has such sooty paws,  
But loves to climb on furniture,  
Like beds and chests of drawers.

He leaves a trail of small black prints  
In patterns quite bizarre,  
On table, chair and writing desk,  
Yes, even escritoire.

He makes investigation close  
Of alcoves, niches, nooks;  
And tends to stroll on bookcase shelves  
He finds devoid of books.

Exploring in the kitchen, bold,  
He's nimbler than you'd think;  
Prints lead across the draining board,  
A few are in the sink.

His mouth displays a friendly smile  
Beneath a massive nose;  
The little ears atop his head  
Offset his chunky toes.

He walks about on hefty feet,  
With body rather plump;  
His two hind legs each half support  
A more than ample rump.

And at the back he swings a tail  
With bristles like a brush,  
Which could be used to clean a flue,  
Or two, were there a rush.

Beware the Chimney-potamus,  
Be sure he stays outdoors,  
For if he gets inside your house  
He'll blacken all the floors.

"It's a pity about the dirt and mess," I acknowledged, realizing the rhyme was at an end, "but thank you for telling me. I must say I'm rather hoping we might meet him after all."

*To be continued in the next issue.....*

## Referees Appointed in 2011

### Congratulation to the following players who qualified as referees in 2011.

Name	Referee
K M H Aiton	Referee (AC)
D A Bell	Referee (GC)
L J Buckingham	Referee (GC)
T M Burt	Referee (GC)
K E Burt	Referee (GC)
P Castell	Referee (AC)
I M Cobbold	Referee (GC)
F E Colman	Referee (GC)
D A Cornelius	Referee (AC)
J B Crossland	Referee (GC)
J G Dawson	Assistant Referee (AC)
P Duke-Cox	Referee (GC)
M T Evans	Championship Ref (AC)
M J Finnigan	Referee (AC)
M R French	Examining Ref (GC)
J K Guy	Referee (GC)
A T Hall	Referee (GC)
E S Hughes	Assistant Referee (AC)
B A Keen	Examining Ref (GC)
	Referee (GC)
R L Key-Pugh	Referee (GC)
T M King	Referee (GC)
A R Morton	Referee (GC)
P B Pollock	Referee (AC)
C C T Roberts	Referee (GC)
P F Ross	Referee (GC)
T D Sparks	Referee (GC)
M A Stephenson	Referee (AC)
B J Storey	Referee (AC)
M A J Taylor	Referee (AC)
J D Temple	Assistant Referee (AC)
I G Vincent	Referee (GC)
T Weston	Referee (GC)
J D Williamson	Referee (GC)
A A Wilson	Referee (AC)
R A Wood	Referee (AC)
J D Wood	Referee (AC)
	Referee (GC)

## Merit Awards 2011

Congratulations to the following players who qualified for CA Merit awards in 2011.

15 Bronze Awards	7 Silver Awards
Ann Brookes	Veronica Carlisle
Douglas Cossey	Alan Clark
Stephen Harbron	Geoff Gunton
Joanna Healing	Stephen Harbron
Peter Nelson	Arthur Lindley
John Pearson	John Lucas
Peter Petrie	Timothy Race
Duncan Reeves	Brian Stephens
John Reynolds	Andrew Wise
Stuart Smith	<b>5 Gold Awards</b>
Brian Stephens	Anthony Dix
Adam Swinton	Sanaa Hallam
Mike Tracy	David Mumford
Darryl Whitehead	Craig Oakley
Paul Wolff	Alan Wilson

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Email: [caoffice@croquet.org.uk](mailto:caoffice@croquet.org.uk)

# Lawn Renovation at Cheltenham

## BENT OR RYE – WHAT THE FESCUE ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

*Lawns Manager David Magee shares the experience of major lawns renovations*

During a game of croquet do you ever spend time considering the surface on which you are playing? No, I do not mean moan about the unevenness of the ground just after you have failed your approach to the hoop; I mean that vast expanse of green stuff that makes up the surface of the court.

Like all those club members who have a responsibility for the courts, I spend a lot of my time worrying about the surface – how to improve the levels, how to promote a more even coverage of the green stuff, whilst severely discouraging the unwelcome weeds and moss. But when Cheltenham Croquet Club admitted its inability to maintain the current surfaces to an acceptable standard and therefore start anew, I became exposed to a whole new world of GRASS and its associated lexicon. In recounting my experience, I want to share with you my journey of discovery and thereby reduce your own learning-curve if you ever have to tread this path.

In 2002 Derek Bradley, my predecessor as lawns manager, oversaw the major operation of re-turfing courts 9 and 10 and the creation of a full-size court 11. Since then we have struggled in vain to keep a comparable standard on our other courts. In 2009 the Committee, recognising the Club's inability to improve the state of the courts with our current resources of manpower and machinery, decided to replace the surface of our top four courts furthest from the club house. The advantage of replacing all four at once is in producing one large, flat playing surface on which we can then position the four courts. The disadvantage is that, if it all goes wrong, we would be short of courts for the season that follows the renovation. But who starts off thinking of failure! Of course, such a venture was not going to be cheap and, even though we had decided on the much less expensive option of seed rather than turf, it soon became obvious that the Club would have to budget £20,000 for the work. It also became obvious quite quickly that sponsors were going to be few and far between, but fortunately the Croquet Association's Development Committee awarded us a major grant of £5,000 which enabled the project to go ahead.

Right then; all clear to go. Go where? Who is going to do this work? Scouring the adverts in the back of the Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG) magazine reveals a handful of firms that seem capable and confident, but how to choose? *First piece of advice; seek out a neighbouring club (does not have to be croquet) that has had similar work done recently and check as to how satisfied they were with the final result. Second piece of advice; spend some time in drawing up a detailed specification so that you really know what it is you want done. All the companies will be keen to quote for the work but they will all quote for what THEY think you want.* I was brought up sharply when talking to one of the IOG's experts who was about to go over to Ireland to become involved with a £250,000 claim which centred around

whether or not certain work had been specified in detail in a contract.

But let's get to the heart of the matter – the GRASS. You may think that grass is grass, but unfortunately life is not that simple. Traditionally croquet courts have been constructed with a mixture of fine-bladed grasses called Bents and Fescues. It is all a matter of preference but I am of the mind that there is nothing better than a surface made up of different cultivars of Browntop and Velvet Bents. They will produce a thick, compact sward of drought and disease resistant grass that is fast and even-paced. Unfortunately they can take up to two seasons to fully establish, so they had to be discounted at the outset. Bents also require intensive husbandry to keep the thatch at bay so will not be candidates of choice unless clubs have the machinery to cope with this unwanted side-effect. Not so many years ago the words 'perennial rye grass' and 'fine turf' did not sit together, but recent developments have changed the picture significantly and George Noble and Duncan Hector swear by the species. Rye grasses are hard wearing and germinate very quickly but, unfortunately for us at Cheltenham, they do not like acid soil, so ours with a pH of 4.8 – 5.0 is a totally unsuitable medium. *Third piece of advice – you do know the pH of your soil don't you? If not, your fertilizer company will obtain a soil analysis for you at modest cost if not for free. Fourth piece of advice - buy the best seed that you can afford, having read the STRI Turfgrass Seed catalogue, along with the brochures of the major seed houses to help you decide which cultivars should best suit you.* This leisurely activity happily saw me through the winter of 2009/10 and hopefully ensured that I picked the best Fescue cultivars to suit our ground.

Spring 2010 arrives and though the renovation work is still 4 months away, the pace is increasing. The preferred contractor, AVONMORE Associates, has been selected and I begin to worry that I have started something I cannot control. Suddenly it is the August Bank Holiday tournament and my management concerns are overshadowed by the thought that the start of the renovation is imminent.

Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> August. The contractor arrives at 6.50am! I know he said he wanted to get a good start but this ridiculous. Fortunately the weather is fine and the forecast is un-seasonally good. The contractor starts to work with a will, stripping off the surface and, nerves jangling, I begin to doubt my sanity as vast tracts of turf are demolished.



*Work begins, no going back now!*

But it is obvious it is not going to be finished today. Even with the prodigious amount of spoil that has been removed we have only got half the surface off at the end of day. It is 8.30 pm and they have virtually finished the first pass but we will have to go down another 30mm to get rid of the buried fibrous matter. *Fifth piece of advice. Think well in advance as to what you are going to do with the spoil. Removing just 1cm off the surface of one court gives you 10 tons (a lorry load) of spoil. If you have the space to deposit the spoil around you club's grounds all well and good. If not, you will have to budget serious money to have the spoil dumped in landfill. You may well find that a local golf club will be happy to take it and thus limit your expense to that of transportation.* The work continues apace throughout the next two days and by Friday, the surface is clean and the contractor starts work on defining the levels and re-siting the irrigation heads. Replacing the current irrigation heads with ones having 360 degrees of coverage will both reduce the number required and have the added benefit of much more room to move the courts around within the playing area, especially east to west.



Though days then go by with seemingly little progress, I am learning not to fret—AVONMORE have done this many times before and they are projecting an air of confidence. All becomes clear at the end of the week when the contractor's brand-new laser grader



*The ground levelled and fertilized*

arrives. The manufacturer had apparently been loath to lose it before the end of the IOG exhibition at Windsor. A fascinating if rather long drawn-out process as the grader, under the control of the sensors mounted atop its structure, gently shifts tons of earth around to establish a flat table. I had not realised our soil was so fine and, on Saturday, the wind picks up, changes direction and our neighbours are not going to be best pleased as we start to lose quite a lot of soil to their houses and gardens. I wonder if I can ask for it back?

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September. The area is level, the seed is in and the fertilizer applied. Whoopee!!



*Repairing fox damage*

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup>, drat! AVONMORE finished so late last night that I did not have time to erect the electric fence to protect the area from our 'friendly' foxes - and have the foxes taken full advantage! It takes two of the contractors most of the day to manually rake out the mess that the foxes made. I put the fence up on Thursday but Friday reveals that the foxes have somehow got under the fence and made a bit of a mess. Another day of raking, but this time by Muggins rather than the Contractor.

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup>. The repairs to the fence seem to have worked. There is no sign at all of activity by the foxes so I can depart for Eastbourne with a happy heart.

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup>. I return from Eastbourne to find that we have good strong germination.



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Must already be 60 – 70 % cover and the weather continues to be set fair. So I can depart on holiday leaving the irrigation and feeding programme in the safe hands of others. *Last piece of advice: the grass will repay you a thousand fold for each piece of TLC that you provide. Obviously the plant will need feeding but water is just as important and this is the tricky bit. The ground must be kept moist but not wet and a little applied frequently is a lot better than a soaking all in one go and much, much better than none at all.*

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October. The lawns are cut for the first time and look at the coverage!



Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November. The lawns have been cut for the second time which will encourage the grass to put out more tillers whilst there is still enough warmth in the ground for continued growth.

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November. AVONMORE have cut the lawns for the third and final time and handed the lawns over to the Club. Now the worry really starts! By the time you read this article, Spring will hopefully have arrived, the grass will be beginning to grow again and we will be able to start the final round of work to bring the courts in to play.

## Technical Matters

### Hitting in

by David Appleton

Having hurt my wrist, I couldn't play today and I was bored, so I resorted to some calculations instead. I imagined myself practising hitting a single ball in corner II from the end of B-baulk. I imagined I took  $n$  shots, a large number, and made  $r$  roquets, so that I could calculate my probability of hitting that width of target ( $k = 1$ ) at that length as  $P(13,1) = r/n$ .

I would like to calculate from that the probability of hitting other shots: one interesting one is from the same spot at two touching balls on the west boundary in corner II ( $k = 1\frac{1}{2}$ ). It is easier to hit that than two corner balls on the north boundary but it probably won't yield a cannon whereas the alternative almost always will. I will also look at a perfect double at 13 yards ( $k = 2$ ) and different lengths ( $l$  yards) of shot. So I have to make some assumptions; I won't try to justify them except to say that while they are almost certainly wrong they don't seem too stupid. Firstly I assume that an individual's angular error doesn't depend on the length of shot, though I'm pretty sure mine increases the harder I hit; and secondly I assume it has a logistic distribution. This is similar to the better known Gaussian distribution but much more tractable mathematically.

The first thing to do is calculate  $j(l,k) = (1 - P(13,1)) / (1 + P(13,1))$  all raised to the power  $13k/l$ . Then  $P(l,k) = (1 - j(l,k)) / (1 + j(l,k))$ . That wasn't too bad now, was it? Even an old-fashioned calculator can take care of that; some of you can probably do it on your phones. [Anyone wishing the derivation of this formula please get in touch with the author, **not** the editor. Ed]

Here are some results. Of course  $P(13,2)$  is also  $P(6\frac{1}{2},1)$

P(13,1)	P(13,1½)	P(13,2)	P(8,1)	P(18,1)
0.3	0.43	0.55	0.46	0.22
0.4	0.56	0.69	0.60	0.30
0.5	0.68	0.80	0.71	0.38
0.6	0.78	0.88	0.81	0.46
0.7	0.86	0.94	0.88	0.56

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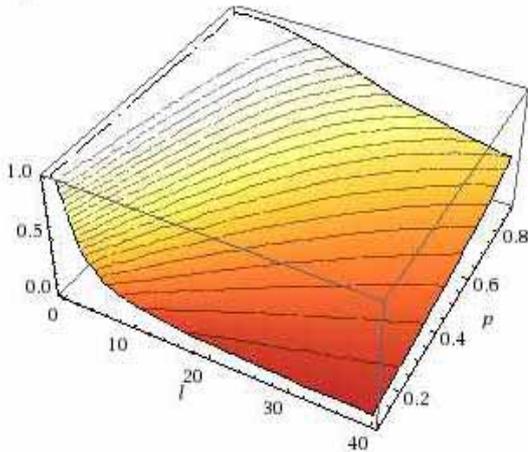
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Naturally there could be discussion, such as the error is a combination of the player and the lawn, you might not have the same probabilities in practice as in a match, and so on, but the numbers can inform your choice of shot, both what you might take on and what you might leave your opponent.

3D plot:



Graph showing the probability of hitting as a function of length (l) and probability of hitting a ball at 13 yards (p). Contour lines are shown.

I know some of you are more interested in the probabilities of hitting doubles with gaps between the balls. That's a bit more complicated, but if my wrist doesn't get better ...

Oh, all right. If you don't aim at the middle of a target it gets tedious to do the calculations on a calculator – and I no longer have access to the computing facilities I once had – but the symmetric case is easy enough. Suppose there is a gap of greater than the width of a ball between the two balls you are aiming at and you shoot at the middle of the gap. Call the probability of hitting  $Q(l, g)$  where  $g$  is the gap in ball diameters. For  $g > 1$ ,  $Q(l, g) = P(l, 2 + \frac{1}{2}(g-1)) - P(l, \frac{1}{2}(g-1))$ , in other words the probability of getting the ball within the target area but not going through the gap.

P(13,1)	P(13,2½)	P(13,½)	Q(13,2)
0.3	0.65	0.15	0.50
0.4	0.79	0.21	0.58
0.5	0.88	0.27	0.61
0.6	0.94	0.33	0.61
0.7	0.97	0.41	0.57

These numbers make sense. If you are a good shot you have

a good chance of hitting the gap and you certainly shouldn't aim there, but if you are a poor shot aim for the middle. That's at 13 yards.

At 8 yards it is even more obvious.

P(13,1)	P(8,1)	P(8,2½)	P(8,½)	Q(8,2)
0.3	0.46	0.85	0.25	0.60
0.4	0.60	0.94	0.33	0.61
0.5	0.71	0.98	0.42	0.56
0.6	0.81	0.99	0.51	0.48
0.7	0.88	1.00	0.61	0.39

But not at 18 yards.

P(13,1)	P(18,1)	P(18,2½)	P(18,½)	Q(18,2)
0.3	0.22	0.51	0.11	0.40
0.4	0.30	0.64	0.15	0.49
0.5	0.38	0.76	0.20	0.55
0.6	0.46	0.85	0.25	0.60
0.7	0.56	0.92	0.30	0.62

Oh, dear, I'm actually getting interested in this. It really is necessary now to compare these probabilities with those for aiming at one of the balls. In fact it isn't hard. Imagine you are aiming at the right hand ball. If there was yet another ball to its right the same distance away as the one to the left then we would have symmetry again. Take away the middle ball. You are now aiming at the centre of the gap and that is the situation we have just dealt with. We can therefore write the new probability as  $P\phi(l, g) = P(l, 1) + \frac{1}{2}Q(l, 2g+1) = P(l, 1) + \frac{1}{2}\{P(l, 2+g) - P(l, g)\}$ .

P(13,1)	½P(13,4)	½P(13,2)	P'(13,2)
0.3	0.43	0.28	0.45
0.4	0.47	0.34	0.53
0.5	0.49	0.40	0.59
0.6	0.50	0.44	0.66
0.7	0.50	0.47	0.73

At 8 yards

P(13,1)	P(8,1)	½P(8,4)	½P(8,2)	P'(8,2)
0.3	0.46	0.48	0.38	0.56
0.4	0.60	0.49	0.44	0.65
0.5	0.71	0.50	0.47	0.74
0.6	0.81	0.50	0.49	0.82
0.7	0.88	0.50	0.50	0.88

And at 18 yards

P(13,1)	P(18,1)	½P(18,4)	½P(18,2)	P'(18,2)
0.3	0.22	0.36	0.21	0.37
0.4	0.30	0.42	0.27	0.45
0.5	0.38	0.46	0.33	0.51
0.6	0.46	0.48	0.38	0.56
0.7	0.56	0.49	0.42	0.63

What conclusions should we come to? If you hit the 13-yard shot less than half of the time you would be advised to shoot at the middle of 13 yard (or longer) doubles with a gap of two balls; if you are better than that, choose a ball at 13 yards, but the gap at 18

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yards. At 8 yards choose a ball unless you hit fewer than one in three 13-yard shots.

One final technicality. If you hit 55% of your 13-yard single ball shots it is not optimal for you to aim at the gap of a two-ball gapped double. The gap offers you a probability of 0.61, one of the balls 0.65, but shooting at the inner edge of one of the balls increases it to 0.66. Not a huge gain, and possibly dependent on the distribution we have chosen, but of some slight theoretical interest.

Yes. Thank you for asking. I've taken some anti-inflammatories and my wrist is much better. I'm off to hit some balls to clear my head which has somehow become rather woozy.

An implementation of these equations, written by Campbell Morrison, appears on the Scottish Croquet Association website <http://www.scottishcroquet.org.uk/roquet/> which also gives access to a rather more succinct version of this article, which is however the original.

## Club News

### Bowdon Centenary 1911 - 2011

By Mike Steer

The Bowdon Bowling & Croquet Club was founded in 1873, but with the introduction of the new game of Lawn Tennis in 1875 the popularity of croquet began to wane. Tennis didn't arrive at Bowdon until well into the 1880's but by the turn of the century croquet was down to one court and in 1909 the name of the club was changed to the Bowdon Bowling & Lawn Tennis Club. The writing was on the wall for croquet.

It was at this point that croquet enthusiasts decided to form their own club and so it came about that a meeting was held on March 28<sup>th</sup> 1911.

The first entry in the minute book is as follows:

*At a meeting at Hill End Bowdon on Tuesday March 28<sup>th</sup> 1911 – it was proposed by Mrs. Duggan that a Croquet Club be*

*formed and the ground on the North and North East sides of the Assembly Rooms on the Firs – which would shortly be available – should be taken for the purpose. It was decided to ask people to join as Playing members Entrance fee £1-1s and Subscription of £1-5s or as Honorary (non playing) members Subscription 10/6 without Entrance fee and also to subscribe to a capital fund for the purpose of laying out the ground and providing a Pavilion etc. .... A circular was drawn up and a list of names agreed to – to whom it should be sent.*

I am tickled by this last sentence. In those days you had to be invited to join Bowdon. As Basil Fawlty would put it: "No riff-raff."

Another meeting was held in April and the minutes record - *The replies to the circulars were dealt with and it was found that 75 had accepted to join as Playing members and 26 as Hon. Members and the sum of £187-16s had been promised to its Capital Fund. It was therefore decided unaminously (sic) that the club be formed, the ground taken and the work of laying out be put in hand as soon as possible.*

What strikes me as odd about this, at a time when croquet was becoming less popular, is the extraordinarily good response these early pioneers got to their circular. Perhaps people were so flattered to be on the 'A' list that they couldn't bring themselves to refuse. Another factor was that it was mostly the ladies who wanted their own club. Of the people we know who replied to the circular, 4 out of 5 were female and this ratio persisted for those joining in the next few years.

The first open tournament, complete with silver cups, was held in 1913 which was remarkably soon for such a new club. This was repeated in 1914, just months before the war. During the war the Assembly Rooms mentioned above became a Red Cross hospital and various things were tried at Bowdon as part of the war effort. The clubhouse became accommodation for nurses. Wounded soldiers had access to the terrace and one of the lawns. By 1917 sheep were grazed on the lawns and later goats were kept for their milk. At the end of the war Bowdon emerged intact whereas, sadly, nearly 20 other clubs around the country never re-opened.

The story of the intervening years is far beyond the scope of this article except to say there have been various ups and downs. The club has been down to a handful of members at



Participants in the Bowdon Centenary celebrations



Mrs. H. F. Cavan-Irving playing in the tournament at Bowdon in 1914

times but has undergone some remarkable revivals notably in the 1970s and 80s. Today it is thriving and the clubhouse has just been completely renovated, rewired and (tastefully) double-glazed.

To mark the centenary, a day of vintage croquet was held. Colin and Chris Irwin laid out lawns 1 & 2 in the 9 hoop, 2 peg setting and lawns 3 & 4 in the 6 hoop, 2 peg setting. They even managed to rustle up a vintage peg and several very old mallets similar to the one being used by Mrs. Cavan-Irving in the photo.

As hoped, most people made the effort and turned up in some sort of period costume. The weather wasn't quite vintage at first, but one group did brave the elements to picnic by the side of the lawns. The sun shone more steadily as the day wore on.

Interestingly, those of you with an iPad can download a croquet game with the 9 hoop setting. I have played this and it felt very strange to be playing it for real. I am not surprised the layout was abandoned in favour of the current set up as there is an awful lot of ironwork and four of the hoops are only run in one direction.

Later in the day, Alan Mayne organised a sort of cross-country croquet game which generated a lot of laughter.

The day was rounded off in the clubhouse with a glass of bubbly, canapés, a lot of chatter and the distinct feeling that one had taken part in a memorable occasion. I think those Bowdon pioneers would have approved.

## Cross Channel Croquet

*Le story by Caroline Denny*

There was mention of the French Croquet club Catenay in the Spring 2011 Gazette and I thought members might be interested to know the history of this club and how the Waldron Club, helped them start.

Waldron is a small but active village in East Sussex best known for its excellent pub The Star Inn and the Cricket Club was founded in 1757, making it one of the oldest known. A Waldron resident Mrs Gill Temple is the chairperson of the Twinning Association of the local town Heathfield. They are twinned with the French town Forges-les-Eaux situated about 40 miles south of Dieppe. In May 2003 Gill received a letter from the Mayor of Forges asking if anyone in Heathfield could help with the setting up of a cricket club in the nearby French village of Catenay. Very quickly another letter was received saying that actually it was help with a croquet club that was required. It was owner of a campsite in Catenay, Monsieur Claude Gilbert, who was keen to establish a croquet club but could not find any rules in French and there seemed to be no help available in France.

Well it just so happened that Gill was a founder member of the Waldron Croquet Club that had been set up two years previously. Waldron now has 20 members. A visit to Catenay was soon arranged and three Waldron members went to Catenay in July that year and advised on preparing the lawn, the mallets, balls, hoops and a start with the rules, together with a Jaques catalogue. They were using some strange acrylic mallets.

Such was the success of this visit and, with Mr Gilbert's enthusiasm, the Waldron club were invited to come and play against Catenay in August 2004. A marvellous time was had despite few members being able to speak each other's language. Fortunately Gill is fluent in French. This offer was reciprocated by Waldron in August 05 when 6 members of the French club came to Waldron for the weekend and competed for the first time for the Anglo-French Challenge cup. This has now become an annual exchange with about 8 people visiting each time. The members are always accommodated in the host team's private houses or with supportive residents of both villages (in France this includes a large chateau for one lucky couple). There is always a formal dinner on the Saturday night, after the first round of matches in the afternoon (no bisques - what are they?), time to explore on Sunday morning and then more matches in the afternoon. Sometimes in France more time is spent eating and drinking than playing, but that is the French way. Equipment has been given to help Catenay develop and they now have some very keen youngsters. The founder member Laurent has hand-made some excellent Lignum Vitae mallets. There are still no complete croquet rules in French which can cause a few problems .... Any offers?

In 2009 Waldron introduced Catenay to Southwick by inviting them to watch a tournament. Later that year four members crossed the Channel for a coaching course. The club have become more competitive over the years and are keen to improve and really enjoyed the course. However it was a draw in Waldron in 2010 after six doubles matches, so the cup sits in Catenay having been awarded on away advantage. Apart from one member at Waldron neither club plays in any other matches, has handicaps or referees etc, but just love playing for the fun of it and the good village life it encourages. Sadly my father, the oldest member, Pieter Gray, who played and won his doubles match with me passed away on

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August 31<sup>st</sup> aged 83, but I will continue to play and am ever grateful he introduced me to the game. In 2011 Waldron returned to Catenay and lost 7-1. The two youngest, (one a qualified baker who worked the Sunday morning shift 5-11am before his resounding victory) played exceptionally well - at one stage running 8 hoops. The French now look to coming to England and playing in Croquet Association tournaments. Watch out!

On our visit this summer Monsieur Gilbert showed me an amazing collection of over 400 postcards he had been given by an old lady in the village. They are all of people playing croquet in the



early 1900s and before; mainly in France, on the beach, at school, in the parks and in convalescent homes after the war. They will be exhibited in France and then Monsieur Gilbert would like to offer them to England. Any ideas? carodenny@hotmail.com

## CA Survey

The CA is surveying its members this spring, once again, but this year members have the option to complete the survey online. The CA undertook comprehensive surveys of croquet players in 2002 and 2007. These have proved to be very useful as they have helped the CA to:

1. Take into account more easily and fully the needs and desires of members.
2. Promote croquet more effectively and increase recruitment.
3. Obtain financial backing more easily; for instance, lottery grants.
4. Obtain sponsorship.

The survey is now being repeated a further five years on. Some of the questions are identical to those in previous surveys because the CA wishes to measure changes over time. Others are completely new, exploring areas of importance or interest to the CA and its members.

Individual members will have been sent the paper form with their annual membership cards and club secretaries will have been sent copies to give to club members who are not members of the CA. For the online version members should go to the CA website homepage ([www.croquet.org.uk](http://www.croquet.org.uk)) and click on the link. Members should complete one only.

The professional marketing services company conducting this research for the CA operates under the Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society. This means that responses will be handled with the utmost integrity. The completed questionnaire will be used only to compile statistics and then destroyed.

A summary of the results will be published in the Gazette.

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John Jaques II won a place in sporting history and a Gold Medal for introducing Croquet into England at the Great Exhibition in 1851. His display there attracted such wide attention that the game speedily became the vogue and over the years has developed into the absorbing sport enjoyed by so many world-wide.

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