

THE _____ December 2012 — Issue 341

CROQUET

GAZETTE

*Jenny Clarke of New Zealand
winner of the inaugural
Women's AC World Championship*



THE MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS OF THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION

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HOPOPOTAMUS

by Victor





CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN DECEMBER 2012

Firstly, let me say how delighted I am to be taking over as Chairman of the Croquet Association. Croquet has given me much enjoyment for over 30 years, and it is good to be able to put something back into the game. Many thanks to my predecessor Barry Keen for all his hard work. Like him and his predecessors, I will be trying to visit as many new clubs as I can over the year, and I am always interested to know from you what you think needs to be done to improve things.

I think we are fortunate to have a very healthy tournament scene in this country, which has helped us to dominate the world in Association Croquet over the past few years, and to give the Egyptians a good run for their money in Golf Croquet too! However, the recent survey of players, and declining numbers at our tournaments especially over the last year have shown that we have a challenge ahead of us to maintain that position. With an ageing croquet profile, and less focus in many clubs on competitive croquet than in the past, we are in danger of the game stagnating if we are not careful. I am therefore particularly interested in looking at how we can address these concerns.

At the last council meeting, we agreed a 4-point strategy for marketing. This is to (1) Target recruitment of people in their 40s and 50s, (2) Target recruitment of University Students, (3) Encourage the growth of competitive croquet, (4) Regenerate Association Croquet for the benefit of croquet as a whole. While the last point is specific to Association Croquet, the others apply equally to both disciplines. I think this is a very positive initiative to look at specific areas where we can start to make a difference. However, all the marketing committee can really do regarding recruitment is to develop the strategies and tools to help clubs in these areas. In the end, it is the clubs which must decide what is right for them, and hopefully carry these initiatives forwards.

Looking at the third point, encouraging competitive croquet, I think it is important to try to remove the barriers people face when wanting to enter their first tournaments. To this end we introduced a discount scheme for new tournament members last year, so that it is now quite cheap to join for the first year (£12 currently), with this increasing to the full rate over three years. However, this may not be enough, and I am keen to review the subscription structure. It has often been argued that tournament members pay a disproportionate amount towards the running of the CA, since almost all of what the CA spends its money on goes towards benefiting all players in all clubs, be they social players or more competitive. An obvious answer would be to reduce or do away with tournament membership altogether, but as we have to raise our income somehow, this would lead to much higher club subscription rates. In itself, that may be a fairer way to proceed, but we must be careful we do not put clubs off from becoming or remaining members of the CA; there is a distinct danger that such a change could be counterproductive. This is a difficult area, and one I am keen to debate over the coming months. Perhaps the key to any change is being clearer to the croquet population at large just what the CA does for them, and why it is worth supporting. I hope (with the support of other council members) to get a few articles in forthcoming gazettes to help provoke debate on these issues.

Jeff Dawson



Issue 341 December 2012

Front Cover: Jenny Clarke winner of the 2012 WCF Women's AC World Championship, pictured with the Charles Jones Memorial Trophy. Photo courtesy of Chris Clarke.

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Disclaimer

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the December issue of the Gazette. The domestic playing season is now complete and the committee rooms are buzzing in earnest with plans and ideas for next year already.

One of those committees is publishing, which is broadly responsible for the Gazette and Website. We have recently formed an 'Editorial Team', in order to move the Gazette forward having taken on board your comments from the survey earlier this year. The role of this team in brief is to share the load of both commissioning and obtaining items for the Gazette. We already have some members of the team, to be led by the Editor but would welcome expressions of interest from anyone who feels that they have either an area of expertise, such as proof reading or design, or simply some enthusiasm and energy and ideas to bring to the team. I have decided to end my tenure as Editor and so the Publishing Committee are looking for someone to take over the role as soon as possible. A formal advert for the position can be found on page 6. Please contact the CA office if you are interested in becoming involved or wish to know more about any of the above roles.

Whilst not everyone may have the time or inclination to become involved in the production of the Gazette, it is possible for anyone to make their wishes known regarding content. Coaching is seen to be one of the most important items and so I feel it is important that we publish specific items that players want to know about in terms of both AC and GC. I have spoken to Roger Staples chairman of coaching and he is now poised and ready to receive suggestions for future articles, so please contact him directly via his details on page 2 if there is something you would like to be included.

Something that you may well see less of in the future are tournament reports. Given the number of tournaments in the fixture calendar now it is impossible to publish them all. Another obstacle is that the Gazette is currently only six issue per year it is often difficult to keep the reports current due to the publication timetable, unlike the CA Website, which can be updated daily. The editorial team will be issuing guidelines for the 2013 season in the next issue.

In the meantime I wish you all an enjoyable Christmas and leave you with some questions in the issue poised by Klim Seabright on page 5, as well as Ailsa Lines and Beatrice McGlen on page 13. I look forward to your responses.

Gail Curry

Letters



2013 a time to celebrate

Fowey Croquet club is a small club with a playing membership of fifteen and several social members, very much enjoying a good competitive game of either Golf or Association Croquet. We play twice weekly, weather permitting, on two half-size lawns at Fowey Community College.

2013 is going to be our 10th anniversary as a club and we are thinking of ways to celebrate this occasion. A mention in the Gazette would be a good start to our programme. The photo above shows Reg Wapling, our coach at a previous themed event at Lanhydrock House in Cornwall, encouraging people to participate in croquet.

Beryl Pullon

Inactive equals inaccurate

I was informed there was an opportunity to do some croquet Coaching in India. My first thought was blimey Croquet North are taking their expansion programme a bit far, but then I realised it was from the Martin French of WCF. This however raised another question. Why were they asking me? Further thought, followed by a quick phone call to Martin and all became clear. My name is on the list of CA coaches, so I was asked.

Now given that I qualified as a coach so long ago I can't remember it and have not done any formal coaching for at least ten years, should I still be retained on a list of coaches, as I doubt I'm the only inactive person on the list?

So my question is should we just list qualified coaches regardless, or should the coaching committee have some sort of criteria for keeping an up to date register of active coaches? Perhaps a similar question needs to be asked regarding Referees?

Inactive Up North

The CA has just under 200 registered Club Coaches, 59 Golf Coaches and 216 Graded Coaches. Its membership is circa 1800, although it is estimated that there are four times as many club members. This suggests there is a Club coach for every 38 players, a Golf Coach for every 126 players, a Grade coach for every 35 players and every club has on average a Club coach and a Grade coach. However, the Federation Coaching Officers

report that clubs are regularly requesting help to coach their members, so your question is extremely pertinent. Where are the active coaches? The CA does not currently have any policy with respect to its list of coaches. It would be useful for the readership to send me their views whether the CA should be asking the registered coaches if they are still active and if not to delete them from the list. The CA Coaching Committee would then be able to have an informed discussion and recommend future policy.

Roger Staples, Coaching Committee Chairman

Handicapping Clarification?

I would like to raise the issue of differences in the way handicaps are maintained in different clubs. Some clubs seem happy to just use the AHS system to run its course and therefore players rely on their cards to alter their handicap. There are however clubs who use the AHS and also have handicappers who apply changes to players handicaps when they think it is justified.

I think the latter leads to unfairness between clubs and individuals in leagues and tournaments, as it is subjective when the Handicappers apply such changes. I am wondering if this is a common practice throughout the CA, and what training if any is given to Handicappers before they are released on the unsuspecting?

Perhaps somebody would be good enough to clarify what the handicapper is actually allowed, and not allowed to do. Also, if this is not adhered to what steps can a player take to rectify something they feel is unfair?

Confused of Merseyside

All clubs should appoint a Club Handicapper who should be proactive in setting initial handicaps; regularly monitoring members' handicaps; and, when necessary, adjusting handicaps above 12. The latter is occasionally necessary when the AHS does not adequately cope with certain situations such as fast improvers or frequent players who register few eligible games. Further details can be obtained from the CA website or your Federation Handicapper. Also, should you wish to discuss please contact me initially via brianshorney@drewassociates.co.uk.

Brian Shorney, Handicap Committee Chairman

Age Concern

There is surely an urgent need for croquet players in the UK to do something about growing old!

It is pleasing to discover that I am three years younger than the latest "median" suggested in the CA Survey, but it worries me that I am probably considered a young "whipper snapper" in my club. I am 65.

Being a member of a club which holds some of the top competitions I enjoy the privilege of seeing players from many countries. They all seem young or is this just me? I should define young. In croquet terms it is anyone from mid teens to 50 years of age. I have not conducted a proper analysis of players from other countries but would be interested to know if my assumption has any basis in fact – perhaps the CA could find out – perhaps it has?

My concern is not simply for the playing side of our sport. What can us as individuals, club members or CA members do about it?

First take a "virtual" piece of litmus paper around the various sections of your club. If it comes up "grey", instead of a clean blue

or red then be afraid be very afraid for the future of your club!

Are your lawns deserted in the evenings and at weekends?

Do all those reliable volunteers want a break from volunteering so that they can get back to playing croquet and are you struggling to find a replacement?

Do people duck into doorways when they see a member of the committee looking for a volunteer to do something?

Do you have a significant number of players who can no longer play a full game of Association?

Are GC players switching to Association simply in order to "sit down occasionally"?

I am not focusing here on the very young. Of course they should be encouraged – their energy and enthusiasm is a joy to see. I am really looking at those who generally are still of a working age. So what can we do?

What about organising a "pro/am" to which each member tries to invite a person of "working age"?

What about trying to get permission from a large employer to publicise your Open Day?

Invite those who are about to retire from other sports (Hockey, Cricket Rugby etc) to come and give it a try.

There must be other ideas out there, can we debate this issue openly?

Klim Seabright, Desperate Secretary of Cheltenham.



Clips Up The Pole

Following my suggestion for relocating pegs in Golf Croquet play, it has been put to me that the accumulation of pegs on the central 'pole' would be unmanageable - particularly in doubling up, i.e. two games at once on the same lawn, see photo above, showing typically 2 games in progress (sorry about the limited colours of my domestic pegs) showing that the total height required would be less than 6". Note that only 6 pegs are needed per 'side' as the 7th hoop would normally mean a win and no further peg!

The need for a system like this was brought home to me during a recent competition at Colchester: I was stuck way behind Hoop 11 and, in trying to get to Hoop 12, attempted to go *over* Hoop 11. Unfortunately my ball clipped a peg on the top and therefore committed a foul ball replaced, miss turn, bother.

Tony Lee

Obituary

Susan Elizabeth Edwards
1951 ~ 2012

Sue Edwards entered the world of croquet as a recovery sport because she couldn't play tennis. She was recovering from an operation from ovarian cancer. Sue was always a keen sportswoman and had taught physical education with swimming, trampolining, hockey, tennis and squash being her main sports. Subsequently she conquered the game of croquet applying the ideal of frequent practice as a way to improve and won the Steel Bowl for the most improved lady player in 1998. Sue became a first class player before illness returned. During the interim period of moderate health she had also taken up golf and was making steady progress on the fairway.

But it was as the Committee Chairman for the last six years that Sue made her major contribution to the Cheltenham Croquet Club. She made sure that the Committee dealt not only with day to day issues but also addressed the long term problems of the Club without losing sight of the needs and best interests of all club members. We admired the way in which she confronted her final illness. She was determined to live her remaining days to the full and continued to chair meetings in her usual brisk style (no nodding off when Sue was taking a meeting). Craig, her husband, said that she wanted to keep living life as normal as was possible, filled with good experiences and in this she succeeded.

She has left behind a legacy of a well-designed administrative structure, we wish she was still here to keep us moving forward.

Eileen Magee

Croquet Gazette Editor

The CA seeks a new Croquet Gazette Editor to start early in 2013. If you are interested or would like to discuss without commitment what is involved, please contact Liz Larsson (CA Manager) on 01242 242318 or orcaoffice@croquet.org.uk.

Alternatively, contact Strat Liddiard (Publishing Committee Chairman) at liddiards@doctors.org.uk

Window on the World Croquet Federation



BY MARTIN FRENCH, SECRETARY-GENERAL

The WCF Management Committee comprises 9 people, 4 of them from the UK: Keith Aiton, Ian Burrige, Stephen Mulliner and Martin French. The President is Amir Ramsis from Egypt, and the other members are from USA, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. We run the MC by email, plus weekly Skype calls.

What's been happening in September and October?

The inaugural Women's AC World Championship took place in October in Cairnlea, Australia. Congratulations to Jenny Clarke from NZ who won and was presented with the Charles Jones Memorial Trophy. Three players from England travelled to Australia, with Ailsa Lines reaching the Quarter Finals.

This event illustrates well the different thinking about how to promote croquet in different countries. USCA were against the creation of this event – they promote croquet as a sport where men and women play alongside and against each other, and felt this would undermine that. It looked like they might send one or two entrants anyway, but in the end none went. On the other hand, Australia and New Zealand both have, I'm told, more women players than men. The two countries were keen to see a Women's World Championship for AC (there is already one for GC) to help them promote the game to their typical audience. England – as so often – seemed somewhere in the middle. The CA seemed in two minds – disliking the idea of segregation, but unwilling to actually block the desires of AUS and NZL. I spoke to several of the strongest women players on the UK circuit last season: some were strongly in favour of this event, some strongly against, plus at least one who didn't have a principled view one way or the other, but just couldn't spare the leave to make a second croquet trip to Australia this year!

The inaugural GC World Team Championship will be taking place as this goes to press. The England team are playing in the 1st Division in Jo'burg for the *Openshaw International Shield* – good luck to them. Scotland and Wales play in the 2nd Division that takes place in mid-December in Cairo.

Last issue, I mentioned we were hoping that Egypt would ride to the rescue and host the scheduled 2013 GC World Championship in April, after the USA were unable to go ahead with their plans. They have, and the GCWC will be held in Cairo from 21st to 28th April, with an Under21s event the week before. Look out for more details of both events via the CA during the winter.

Our new website is at <http://www.wfcroquet.org/joomla/>. Ian Burrige (our Treasurer) has put a lot of hours into filling the broken links and improving the menus, so it is now much more usable. We're still looking for a volunteer Web Master to develop the new site further, into something really useful to croquet players around the world – please contact me if you could help.

THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 11 am at The Hurlingham Club on Saturday 20th October 2012

Present: Quiller Barrett (President), Barry Keen (Chairman of Council), Jeff Dawson (Vice-Chairman of Council), Peter Death (Chairman of the Development Committee, representing the Hon. Treasurer), Dr Ian Vincent (Hon. Secretary), Elizabeth Larsson (CA Manager) and 35 other Associates recorded in the attendance book.

1. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Roger Bray, Anna Giraud, John Handy, Andrew Hope, Colin Irwin, Sue Mackay, Ian Plummer, Stephen Mulliner, Bernard Neal, Alan Pidcock and John Solomon.

2. Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Saturday 15th October 2011.

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on the 15th October 2011 were signed as a true record of the meeting.

3. Annual Report from Council

The Chairman of Council, Barry Keen, presented the following report:

“The past twelve months started with Rachel Rowe winning the inaugural Women’s Golf Croquet World Championships in New Zealand, and, on the playing front, continued with Reg Bamford winning the Association Croquet World Championships in the spring in Australia. It has to be a champagne year when two of our members win World Championships and I am sure that you all will join me in congratulating them both. We are also in the process of planning to host the next Association Croquet World Championships based at Surbiton in 2013.

We have also carried out a survey of members in 2012. I wish to thank Kevin Carter for designing and analysing the results of it. I also thank the more than 1000 players who responded. Some of the findings are encouraging for the CA but by far the most important conclusions call for urgent action by CA committees, Federations and clubs. If the trends we can now see are not reversed, croquet in our domain will change quite dramatically in the years ahead. The increasing age profile will result in falling numbers, putting a strain on the finances of clubs and the CA. The decline in the number of younger players

threatens the continuance of the improved playing standards at the highest level, which have been so notable over the last generation. Older recruits provide valuable stability to clubs and their enjoyment of the game is a social asset for the wider community. If, however, social play is allowed to dominate, the vibrant tournament programme we now enjoy will be threatened. We need to recruit many more young and competitive players. We also need to adjust our coaching, tournament, communications and development plans to the changing needs of CA clubs and their members. I would welcome any comments and questions on this or any other topic at the end of my report

The comments from players that are published at the end of the Survey are illuminating. They show croquet players are passionate and articulate about their sport. CA committee members will be taking note of them - now is the time for action by us all.

As part of the initial response to the survey, the Marketing and Development Committees had continued to liaise over implementing the growth and recruitment strategy. The resulting actions should take place in the autumn.

This year we have also been looking at how the CA controls its budgets as well as how it allocates its reserves to the various activities. Several changes have been proposed as discussed in some detail in Jeff Dawson’s paper in the June Gazette. I will run through the main points here.

The revised budgeting procedure requires the Management Committee to take a more active role in budgeting, and brings development grants into the normal process, removing the limit on them as a proportion of the development fund. A budget for them would be set two years ahead and large grants, approved by the Management Committee, would be part of the budget unless explicitly agreed otherwise.

We have carried out a risk assessment to ascertain whether the current level of reserves is correct. The results showed that, while the overall level is about right, the distribution of the reserves to the CA’s various activities were not right. This has now been corrected. The most significant

change is that the allocation of the reserve to Development has been reduced. This is not because we wish to cut back on Development. It just reflects that Development monies in the past have come out of income. If we became dependent on reserves to support Development in the future, I am afraid that the capital would not last very long.

This means that if we continue to invest heavily in the future of the game then we must face up to the fact that subscriptions may have to increase in real terms.

We have also been considering anti-fraud measures and have taken out insurance against any such problem.

As a result of discussion of the proposal by the GC Tournaments Committee to exempt the Murphy Shield (B Class Golf Croquet Inter Club) from the requirement that players had to be Tournament Associates of the CA, it was agreed that it would be more consistent to exempt all the inter-club competitions, which could then be added to the list of membership benefits for clubs. The Chairmen of the GC and AC Tournament Committees have prepared a paper proposing the change for the next Council meeting.

It was agreed to set up a Federation Working Party to consider the following issues:

1. How best can the CA foster a close and constructive working relationship with all the constituent Federations?

2. When a club joins a Federation should that club also join the CA as an associate (full) club member? Or perhaps as an affiliate club member?

3. How can we maximise the extent to which the tournament programmes of the CA and of the Federations are complementary?

Brian Shorney had been appointed to chair this Working Party, which is due to report this autumn.

A new introductory discount scheme was introduced to help ease newcomers to the game into the Tournament scene. It is too early to judge how effective this is. As a result, the club discount scheme was closed.

I will now report on activities from specific committees.

A new edition of the GC Laws is likely to be agreed some time in 2013. It is planned

to consult CA members about various issues via the website, however the intention is to clarify the rules for the game as it was currently played, rather than to change it, so watch this space!

The ICT committee has made major enhancements to the tournament entry system, to the extent that the trial for club tournaments will continue for a further year. The IT infrastructure in the CA Office was upgraded with a file server and replacement workstations. The Committee is also embarking on a major project to replace at least part of the current membership and sales administration software, though it is early days in what is expected to be at least a two-year exercise.

The Marketing Committee has concentrated on pursuing the Growth and Recruitment initiative and on evaluating the five-yearly Survey of Players mentioned above. CA sponsorship of student events has been considerably increased and our Corporate Events Manager, Carole McLoughlin, has held a wide range of successful events, including some for those attending the Olympic Games

Moving to personalities, I am very pleased to say that the Council Medal will later be awarded to Chris Williams, for his exceptional work on the Ranking System over 20 years, his records site, and his activities as the CA Archivist.

Amir Ramsis from Egypt was appointed WCF President in 2012. I met him on a visit to London and was very impressed with his views on the direction the WCF should take.

I had the honour of representing the CA at the Queen's Diamond Jubilee service of thanksgiving at St. Paul's in June. I am told that this was mentioned on one of the TV channels - a timely reminder to the rest of the world that Croquet is a serious sport.

On a very sad note, I have to report that Pat Kennett and Nigel Graves passed away last autumn. They both gave long service to croquet and their experience and wisdom will be greatly missed.

Finally I have to report that Patricia Duke-Cox, Lawrence Whittaker and Jonathan Kirby have all retired from Council at this meeting. They have all given sterling service to Council and they will be a hard act to follow. On behalf of you all, I would like to thank them for the hard work and the dedication they showed while they served on Council. I would also like to report that John Bowcott, Brian Fisk and Bob Thompson have been elected to council. I am standing down as Chairman of Council

and Jeff Dawson has been proposed to replace me. I wish him well. This still leaves a vacancy on Council so if anyone wishes to be co-opted please contact Jeff."

Jeff Dawson, who had chaired the Management Committee, then led a discussion about the level of development grants and the implications for subscriptions. Representatives of several clubs said how much they had appreciated the grants they had received. A straw poll of those present showed no support for decreasing the level of grants and a majority in favour of increasing subscriptions to at least sustain the current level.

There were two questions about the report. Patricia Duke-Cox (Nottingham) was assured that an attempt would be made to revive the CA v CA Ireland Junior match next year. David Mumford (Woking) wanted more information about fraud insurance. Barry Keen replied that it had become an issue because of the increasing move to electronic banking, which currently lacked the safeguard of the two signatories required for cheques.

The President then thanked Barry for having chaired Council so effectively for the last two years, in particular for having concentrated on strategic aims.

4. Accounts for the Year to December 2011 and Treasurer's Report

4.1 Peter Death, on behalf of the Treasurer, Roger Bray, presented the Accounts for the Year to 31st December 2011 and read a brief report from him.

4.2 The 2011 outcome was very similar to the previous year's, with income and expenditure roughly the same, though resulting in a deficit once the effect of inflation on the CA's reserves is considered. In essence, subscription income increased by over £8,000, due not only to higher subscription rates but also to the continuing influx of new member clubs, and grants to clubs (in the form of development grants to established clubs and the provision of equipment to newly registered clubs) rose by a similar amount.

4.3 It should also be noted that in both 2010 and 2011 there was only a modest surplus of income over expenditure – insufficient to protect the CA's reserves against the effects of inflation. Thus the CA is actually digging into its reserves to maintain and even increase the level of grant aid to clubs.

4.4 For several years the CA was able to expand its grants programme on the back

of increasing profits generated by the CA Shop. That is no longer the case as, in the tough trading conditions of the last two years, the CA has effectively had to subsidize the Shop. (Note that, although the accounts show a trading profit, this does not include staff costs and general overheads.) But the Shop is a service to CA members, which is sufficient reason for continuing to support it; and, since the vast majority of sales are to non-members, it is also literally a valuable shop window for Croquet in general. The hope is also that trade will pick up again. Despite the continuing poor economic situation, so far this year turnover has increased, albeit only slightly. It is too early to say whether this will be stifled by a squeeze in profit margins but, as they say, there are hints of a recovery.

4.5 As Barry Keen had already mentioned, during the course of this year a financial risk assessment was undertaken. The CA's reserves have risen significantly in the last two decades and doubts were raised as to whether their current level was justifiable. The review showed that most of these reserves *are* needed to sustain all the CA's activities. And any notional excess is likely to be eroded if there is indeed a deficit in the current year. Again as Barry has said, the review also argued for a radical restructuring of the CA's special funds, in particular the Benefactors, Development and International Funds. The agreed changes come into effect in the current financial year and will be shown in the 2012 Accounts.

4.6 He ended his review of the CA's financial situation with a comment about next year. Like the country's economy, signs of growth remain weak. With this in mind and with the distinct possibility of a second year of deficit if activities are sustained at their present levels, Council decided to raise both individual and club subscriptions in 2013. The new rates were published in the August Gazette and have been increased in line with inflation since they were last raised in 2011. 2013 will also be the year in which the discount scheme for new tournament members comes fully into play.

4.7 His report concluded with thanks to the staff in the CA Office: Liz Larsson, Liz Budworth and Paul Hands, for their great willingness and efforts in meeting his many requests for data.

4.8 David Mumford (Woking) asked if the calculation of club subscriptions to the CA could be changed so as to omit CA Tournament Members from it, to give clubs

an incentive to encourage their members to join the CA. Mike Lambert (Ember and Surbiton) feared that small clubs would be adversely affected if this meant that club subscriptions for non-CA members had to increase. Others saw a distinction between the services the CA provided to clubs and all players, and the additional ones enjoyed by tournament players. The meeting was told that Council was actively reviewing this area.

4.9 Dave Kibble (Bristol) asked why the shop was considered to be a service to members, given that the majority of sales were to non-members. He was reminded of the difficulty of buying croquet equipment before the shop was established. David Mumford (Woking) asked about weekend opening and was told that the shop operated mainly online, with personal visits by appointment only.

4.10 The accounts were adopted on the proposal of David Kibble, seconded by Bill Arliss.

5. Election of Hon. Secretary.

There being no other nominations, Dr Ian Vincent was re-elected as Hon. Secretary.

6. Election of Hon. Treasurer.

There being no other nominations, Dr Roger Bray was re-elected as Hon. Treasurer.

7. Election of Reporting Accountant.

The Treasurer had asked that his appreciation of the work of Marian Hemsted as independent examiner should be reported to the meeting: "I never cease to be amazed at the level of detail, the comprehensiveness, diligence and energy with which she conducts her inspection. The CA continues to be served by an Independent Examiner of the highest quality - and, I would add, someone who has such a delightful sense of humour!" She was re-elected by acclamation on the proposal of Gordon Hopewell, seconded by Patricia Duke-Cox.

8. Election of Council Members

There being no other nominations, the following were declared elected to Council: John Bowcott, Jeff Dawson, Richard Hoskyns, Barry Keen and Tim King

9. Benefactors' Book.

The names in the Benefactors' Book were read as follows:

1986: Peter Alvey, Robin Ashdown Godby, Humphry Osmond Hicks, Edward M Hunt; 1988: J Bricher; 1990: Gerald

Wellington Williams; 1991: Richard Francis Rothwell; 1992: Lorn C Apps, Mrs D R M Heley, David Matthew Caradoc Prichard, Katherine Elizabeth Longman, Alan John Oldham, Tremaine Arkley; 1995: Edward Patrick Duffield, Robert David Caradoc Prichard, Derek Cecil Caporn; 1998: George Lawrence Ormerod; 2006: Alan Blenkin, John Beech; 2007: Tom Anderson, Judy Anderson, John Wheeler, Pandora Wheeler; 2008: David Maugham, Jeff Dawson; 2010: Tremaine Arkley, Patricia Shine; 2011: Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club.

The President referred to his article in the August Gazette about the benefit of legacies to the Association.

10. to 13. Presentations of awards

as detailed on pages 10 to 12 of this issue.

14. President's Closing Remarks.

Quiller Barrett addressed the meeting as follows:

"It's a tradition that the last item on the AGM agenda is President's Closing Remarks. I've no idea when it started but it does give Presidents a chance to say whatever they like. I should emphasise this comes with a warning: these remarks are solely mine and have not been agreed by Council.

One of the great benefits of being your President is that I get an opportunity to represent the CA at clubs all over the country. It enables me to chat with members and discover the different ways that clubs are meeting today's croquet challenges. Often I hear about good practices and come away impressed. I must thank our Vice-Presidents and other Council members who have also taken their turn to go out and about and present trophies at our major events.

This year, on one of these occasions, I visited Colchester for the President's Cup. Here the *crème de la crème* were playing and at as high a standard as you will see anywhere in the world. They were coping with the new Super-Advanced rules, introduced to encourage interactivity amongst the top players. I joined them at lunch when they were rabbiting on about Super-Advanced tactics. I have to admit I only understood about half of what they were saying. Never mind, it's good they are interactive off the lawns as well as on them.

Barry has already mentioned the significance of the CA Survey Report. To

remind you briefly of the key findings: five years ago 50% of players were aged 65 or more; now 50% of us are 68 or more. Of the new recruits, as many as 49% say they are non-competitive players.

In shorthand my message to clubs is that if you have room for more members please do have a recruiting drive. Target those youngsters who are under 50 and who are likely to be competitive by nature – perhaps because they have previously played physically active sports such as tennis, cricket, hockey, badminton, squash – or perhaps because they are keen on other mind games such as bridge, chess, poker, backgammon.

I'm sure many of you wrote comments at the end of the Survey questionnaire; over 400 players did this – and I have read them all. They have been edited on the website so that clubs, Federations and CA committee members can easily find the ones that are most applicable. If you haven't already done so I recommend you dip into them, they provide an invaluable guide to how the grass roots are thinking.

We must face the fact that the divide between Association and Golf croquet players is widening, and so is the polarisation between competitive and social players. Sadly a small minority express themselves on these topics with real venom and this does croquet no good at all. I urge these players to moderate their language and to respect and have some tolerance for other points of view. I know a number of club chairmen and committees face a real leadership challenge on these issues. They should not despair because I also know a lot of clubs have acted to minimise these problems. Many examples of good practice are out there and I hope our Federations and their Development Officers will help to spread the word that there are ways to heal these divisions.

I close by congratulating our GB team who have just reclaimed the Solomon Trophy in America and by thanking, on behalf of all Individual and Club members, our small office staff at Cheltenham and the volunteers who serve us so well on Council and its committees. Their work is much appreciated; without them we would grind to a halt.

May you all enjoy your croquet in 2013 – and may even more of you play competitively."

There being no further business the AGM closed at 12.09 pm.

Report of Council 20th October 2012

by Dr Ian Vincent

At the Council meeting, Barry Keen handed over to Jeff Dawson as its Chairman and Tim King was elected Vice-Chairman and to chair the Management Committee. The following new committee chairmen were elected (the others remain in post):

International: Ian Lines
Marketing: Jonathan Isaacs
Publishing: Strat Liddiard
AC Selection: Martin French
Mac Selection: David Maugham
GC Tournaments: John Bowcott

Peter Death was elected as the additional member of the Executive Committee. The other Mac selectors are Phil Cordingley, Martin French, Rob Fulford and Dave Kibble.

The importance of communication with all players, not just the enthusiasts who join and involve themselves with the CA, was emphasised in a review of the discussion at the AGM.

The requirement that members of club teams should be individual tournament members of the CA was removed for all CA club competitions, though the club itself must be a member.

A four-point marketing strategy:

- (1) Target recruitment of people in their 40s and 50s
- (2) Target recruitment of University Students
- (3) Encourage the growth of competitive croquet
- (4) Regenerate AC for the benefit of croquet as a whole was approved and working parties are to be set up to look at each area.

The chairmen of the selection committees were asked to review the selection policy in the light of the appeal panel's recommendations.

The membership statistics showed increases both in the number of individual Associates, which now stood at 1781, and that of member clubs, which had reached 196. However, there was concern about the number of tournaments cancelled this year.

As AOB, Bill Arliss asked Federation Representatives to let him know about demand for referees courses next year: please let them know if you would like one in your area.

Croquet Association Awards – AGM 2012

Most Improved Players – 2011



Quiller Barrett presents Sara Anderson with the Steel Bowl

Steel Bowl – Most Improved AC Female Player: Sara Anderson (Woking)

Sara started 2011 with a 20 handicap which had been reduced to nine by the end of the year. She won the Winchester One Ball Championship, the Woking Midsummer Handicap and Woking Club's Rosebowl and Open Handicap competitions. She was the runner-up in the Woking Spring Handicap Tournament, the Hurlingham August Class singles and the Surbiton Speed Doubles (with Jeff Dawson).

Apps Bowl – Most Improved AC Male Player: Christian Carter (Parsons Green)

Christian Carter reduced his handicap from 2 to -1.5 in only 64 games. He played and beat many stronger players over the year, and he was keen to improve his peeling skills, notching up seven tps and one qp. He came second in the A Class event during Hurlingham Week and again at the Letchworth advanced in a strong field.

Spiers Trophy – Most Improved GC Player: Will Gee (Ashby)

In 2011 Will Gee was awarded a rare full blue by Oxford University for his croquet and this crowned a list of other GC achievements, which include: winning the Ascot Cup, the Roehampton GC Championship, the Surbiton GC Championship, third place in the U-21 World GC Championship and the National Doubles Championship (with Rachel Rowe).

Coach of the Year 2011 – Frances Low

Frances started playing croquet in 1993 at Rottingdean following an illustrious career as a member of the Sussex County Cricket Club committee and quickly showed her ability with a croquet mallet. She gained her Grade 1 coaching qualification in 2002 and then progressed to Grade 2 a few years later under the guidance of Brian Teague (a former Coach of The Year). She is also an Association referee. Frances has done a considerable amount of coaching at SCCC running various internal, SECF & CA courses including coaching at The Summer School. In addition she has also coached at Rottingdean. When the Academy was formed, Frances agreed to be the administration officer. She showed her ability to structure and administer the Academy coaching courses effectively. She also demonstrated an ability as an excellent coach undoubtedly helped by her successful career as a mathematics teacher. One of her recent highlights

was to run an Academy course with her husband for a French club visiting the Academy. The course was conducted in French!

Life Time Coaching Award – Ian Lines

A member of Bowdon Croquet Club, Ian Lines is not only an A-Class player but is also a Grade 3 Coach. Although he works, he spends most of his spare time at the club and is always enthusiastic and willing to help anyone to improve their croquet. Ian helped to run the Beginners' Course at the club every year for about 15 years, including taking the lead role on a number of occasions. His patience and friendly approach over the 6-week period encourages newcomers to look forward to the following week's lesson. This is one of the most successful beginners' courses in the country and often leads to up to about 20 new members each year.

Ian has led C.A. coaching courses at Gold level and below, around the North West of England as part of the NW Federation's "Flying Circus" programme of regional coaching. In 2011, despite playing in tournaments most weekends of the year, he still found time to travel to Southport to lead a group of 16 players through a Silver course, assisted by four other experienced coaches. Ian coached and provided individual tuition to a number of players at Bowdon, most significantly in 2011 to the 14 year-old Adam Swinton who went on to win both the North West and National Finals of the All England Handicap Championship.

Council Medal – Christopher Williams

Chris Williams started working on the Association Croquet Croquet Grading System in 1992 when he worked with Stephen Mulliner entering data manually. He quickly took over the full operation of the system and has continuously improved it over the past 20 years as well as expanding the range of tournaments recorded, including the whole of the croquet world under the auspices of the WCF. He also worked to make the system user-friendly for the players in the database as well as third party users such as Selection Committees. He listens to players' requests and comments and now players can view their entire records including a graph of their grade and index movements over the years. In 2011 he formulated a similar system for the Golf Croquet rankings officer to use. He also runs the Croquet Records website and has been the Official CA Archivist since



Quiller Barrett presents Chris Williams with his Council Medal

2006. The award of the CA Council Medal is a perfect way of thanking Chris for his past 20 year period of service to the croquet world.

Diploma Nominations 2012

Mike Davis (Bristol)

Mike Davis joined the club in 1994. He briefly moved away from Bristol but the club was very pleased to see him back in 2000. From the outset he has been one of the first members to volunteer in any ground work that needed doing (eg cutting the rough grass and hedge cutting) and took charge of any work required on repairing the shelters and handrails. He also helped to repaint the clubhouse and led the research in to installing a watering system. His other contributions include looking after the BBQs at the club's annual event and serving on the committee for six years. Probably the biggest task undertaken by Mike was helping to improve Bristol's clubhouse during the closed season of 2002/2003. Many hours were spent knocking down walls, putting up the false ceiling and wallpapering – his commitment was unwavering. Sadly, Mike died in late September 2012.

Jim Wilson (Bristol)

Jim Wilson joined the club in 2000 and almost immediately started helping around the grounds and clubhouse. For over ten years he has assisted with painting, putting up new handrails by the two sets of steps, repairing the shelters and many other small but essential tasks which needed attention. He has always been a regular at the club's work days at the beginning and end of the season. Another of his skills was making cakes; his banana cake very often found its way on to the tea table at CA Tournaments and various match events. His main contribution was assisting with the improvement of Bristol's clubhouse in the autumn and winter of 2002/2003 when many hours were spent building two new changing rooms and enlarging the social area to give more room for the winter table tennis, bridge and Scrabble sessions.

Dennis Shaw (Ramsgate)

As Dennis approaches 90, he can look back with pride on nearly 30 years of service to croquet at Club, County and National level. Dennis together with his wife Eileen, started the Ramsgate Club in 1983. The Club grew rapidly, soon outstripping the two makeshift lawns in Montefiore Park. With patience and perseverance, Dennis delicately negotiated with Thanet District Council a transfer to the Club's present site in 1987; this included a substantial subsidy towards lawn and ground maintenance. The Ramsgate Club has four purpose laid lawns, an irrigation system and a fully equipped Clubhouse serving just over 100 members. In 1987, Dennis resurrected the Kent County team which has competed, every year since, in the Inter-County Championship. He captained the team for 20 years. Notwithstanding his local croquet administration commitments, Dennis served on the CA Council for 12 years, serving on the Laws, Handicap and Tournament Committees, chairing the latter for three years. With all these responsibilities, Dennis still found time to play the game, which he did to a creditable standard.

Maryse Roberts (Cheltenham Croquet Club)

Perhaps not every visitor to Cheltenham will be familiar with the name of Maryse Roberts, but they will have unknowingly benefited from Maryse's attentions as House Manager. Cheltenham Croquet Club is always busy and more so during tournaments, of which there are at least ten per annum. As house manager, Maryse had to ensure that the facilities could cope both during and after events - probably the least glamorous facet of the role of House Manager—the lonely figure doing the rounds of all the bins and huts when the prize giving is over and the crowd dispersed. Maryse coped with the World Championship at Cheltenham in 2005, ensuring that catering was provided from 7am breakfasts right through to suppers. Recruiting volunteers for catering duties is becoming harder by the year, but Maryse has devised and introduced innovative ways of making sure that a good service is delivered. Organising the annual Club spring clean is no pushover either. Husband Graham has been an immense support, especially in the remodelling of the kitchen. The Club is immensely grateful to Maryse for her long and valuable contribution.

Kathy Wallace (Nailsea & District Croquet Club)

Kathy Wallace joined Nailsea and District Croquet Club in 1998 since when she has become a skilful player through many hours of practice and competitive play. Alongside her own game she has also worked hard at coaching, encouraging and retaining new members and having been Publicity Officer for the Club, Kathy doesn't miss any opportunity to spread the word about croquet. Kathy plans, organises and manages an extensive programme of Association Croquet competitions for the Club, cajoling members to get their matches played in time for Finals Weekend which, rain or shine, is always a triumph of organisation. She also assists with Nailsea's Open calendar (providing some lovely lunches) and runs the popular B-Level Advanced Singles Weekend. This year she has taken on the role of Club Secretary which she is tackling with her usual enthusiasm and determination.

Roger Berkeley (Nottingham)

Roger Berkeley spends much time on matters for the membership. He wears many hats but probably the most noticed is in maintenance of stores to keep the club in milk, tea and coffee, bar supplies and in looking after all aspects of the pavilion. Less obviously, Roger has undertaken many official duties and is now the Club treasurer, having been a committee member for some years. He has been particularly associated with club communications and maintaining membership records, as well as encouraging and welcoming new members. He also finds time to act as treasurer for the East Midlands Federation. Despite being a long-standing AC player, Roger has been very active in the introduction of Golf Croquet to the club which has resulted in a big increase in membership. He has been instrumental in arranging coaching sessions for both newcomers and improvers and makes sure that all players feel at home in the club.

John Low (Sussex County Croquet Club)

Somebody said that behind every great woman is a great man. This is certainly the case with Frances & John Low. John Low has been a long established member of the Sussex croquet

fraternity. Apart from being an excellent croquet player John's IT, administrative and managerial talents have been a great asset to the club. John took over both the Club and Academy websites and has developed them as important information and communication centres for members, visitors of the club and students of the Academy. Through the use of technology John has acted as Tournament Secretary for SCCC and assisted his wife Frances in the administration of the Academy from its creation to the present day. John has also proven to be an excellent tournament Manager and over the years has been involved in managing tournaments at club, Federation as well as National CA level held at Southwick. His seemingly calm approach has helped make many tournaments at SCCC a huge success.

Daphne Gaitley (Sussex County Croquet Club)

Since 2002, David & Daphne Gaitley have made an outstanding contribution to the development of Sussex County Croquet Club. Daphne's proven ability as an excellent coach has not only helped SCCC develop as a competitive Croquet Club but enabled the club to develop a thriving golf croquet section. Daphne's coaching talents greatly helped in the creation and development of the Croquet Academy with Daphne being one of the lead coaches. Her talents did not end there: she was a long-established member of the SCCC Management Committee and would always lend a hand from the most menial to the more complex tasks faced by most clubs. Daphne sat on the CA Coaching Committee and was the SECF Federation Coaching Officer. Her contribution to coaching has helped to ensure that competitive croquet is alive and well in the South East.

David Gaitley (Sussex County Croquet Club)

David Gaitley's practical talents are there for all to see. David undertook the project of modernising the Sussex CCC canteen and bar. He masterminded the project from design through to final implementation and this has helped to improve SCCC's ability to act as a host club for major CA & Federation tournaments. His talent as a beer connoisseur is evident. David ran the new SCCC bar and has developed a range of beers that would be the pride of many a CAMRA pub. His building talents are also to be seen as he undertook a second major project to rescue the storage room which was on the verge of collapse. The club now has a storage facility which should last for many years. His many talents as a designer, carpenter, electrician, bar manager are all on view.

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WOMEN'S WCF WORLD ASSOCIATION CROQUET CHAMPIONSHIP

Melbourne, Australia 21-28 October

Report by Beatrice McGlen & Ailsa Lines

Southern Hemisphere women going from strength to strength, so where are we going wrong?

The issue of women-only Association Croquet events in the UK has attracted much discussion in the past. One of the unique characteristics of our sport is that men and women can compete on an equal footing and there is a strong body of opinion in this country that women-only events will inevitably lead to men-only events and so the slide down the slippery slope to a separated sport begins. Attitudes on the other side of the equator are very different and it was in response to enthusiastic pressure, particularly in Australia, that the World Croquet Federation decided to hold the inaugural Women's AC World Championship in Melbourne on 21-28th October.

My reaction to the invitation to apply for selection to the 1st Women's AC World Championship was why would I want to spend all that money travelling to the other side of the world to play in a tournament that could be to the serious detriment of the game? So, why did I end up playing in Melbourne in October? Firstly, I was rather shocked to find out in May that, despite strong interest from New Zealand and Australia, only one person from the northern hemisphere had entered this inaugural competition. Secondly, Ailsa Lines, a fellow member at Nottingham Croquet Club, was equally embarrassed by the lack of support so we decided to make enquiries about taking leave from our respective employers and then put our names forward. Despite the late entry we were both accepted and on October 20th we arrived at the Victoria Croquet Club in Melbourne to find the most splendid facility with 12 flat, fast lawns; a huge pavilion complete with showers and a commercial kitchen; floodlighting around the four central lawns; 48 players; and numerous supporting husbands, partners and family. At the opening ceremony the Australians were wearing their national blazers and tournament shirts and the New Zealanders were in their all-black kit. The three English girls improvised with Team GB Olympic shirts (since there was no representative from Scotland, Wales or Ireland we felt Team GB was appropriate). We bought these just as a bit of fun but at the opening ceremony where everyone else was dressed in their national kit we were glad we had something to identify us as part of a team.

The first day of play dawned bright and warm. We were divided into eight blocks of 6 so we played 5 single games in the first two days – the lawns were quick and the hoops required accurate play so the three hour time limit for double-banked games meant many games went to time. The bottom two people in each block went into a plate event and the remainder went forward to the knockout. However, several blocks required tie-breakers to determine the qualifiers which meant play continued under floodlights on the second day until after 10pm (a long day considering play began at 8.30 every morning). The knockout stage was best of three matches. By this time the weather in Melbourne was living up to its reputation as it had become extremely windy. The combination of fast lawns, tight hoops and a ball that never stopped moving was making life difficult and the number of games that pegged-out dropped dramatically. The climax of the competition was contested in sunshine, with mercifully no wind, by Jenny Clarke of New Zealand and Alison Sharpe of Australia, with Jenny winning the Charles Jones Memorial Trophy and becoming the first Women's AC World Champion. It was particularly fitting that Jenny won this



English entrants L to R: Ailsa Lines, Frances Ransom and Beatrice McGlen.

trophy since Charles Jones had been a personal friend who officiated at her wedding and she accepted the trophy from Charles's sister with tears in her eyes.

Full results of the Championship including consolation events can be found at <http://www.croquetscores.com/tournaments/49>

Knockout results:

Jenny Clarke (NZ) bt Jane McGill +26 +25, Kathie Grant (NZ) bt Marion McInnes +10 +9, Judy Wembridge (Aus) bt Creina Dawson (Aus) +12 +18, Margaret Melville (Aus) bt Kay Chynoweth (Aus) +1 +19, Tricia Devlin (Aus) bt Judy Evans (Aus) +2 +14, Alison Robinson (NZ) bt Ann Sharp (NZ) +9 +10, Lizzie Bassett (Aus) bt Megan Reynolds (Aus) -4 +2 +9, Rosemary Graham (Aus) bt Rosemary Newsham +12 +25, Alisa Lines (Eng) bt Kay Seary (Aus) +20 +20, Wendy Dickson Dickson (Aus) bt Kathleen Colclough (Aus) +1 -5 +3, Pauline Reid (NZ) bt Anna Miller (Aus) -1 +11 +21, Chloe Aberley (Aus) bt Pam Gentle (Aus) +22 +17, Sue Beattie (Aus) bt Heather Ross (Aus) +1 +7, Jannine Hawker (Aus) bt Marga Podnieks +26 +11, Liz McLay (NZ) bt Beatrice McGlen (Eng) -15 +2 +6, Alison Sharpe (Aus) bt Leah O'Neil (Aus) +7 +23.

Clarke bt Grant +26 +16, Melville bt Wembridge +1 -8 +5, Devlin bt Robinson +10 +1, Graham bt Bassett +8 +3, Lines bt Dickson +3 +8, Aberley bt Reid +14 +19, Hawker bt Beattie -5 +16 +21, Sharpe bt McLay -10 +24 +17. **Q-finals:** Clarke bt Melville +11 +18, Graham bt Devlin +19 +9, Aberley bt Lines +8 +7, Sharpe bt Hawker -19 +21 +21.

Semi-finals: Clarke bt Graham +3 +17, Sharpe bt Aberley +11 +16.

Final: Clarke bt Sharpe +9 +25 +26.

So has my view of Women's croquet changed? Unequivocally yes. The Australian and New Zealand women are competitive but remarkably supportive of each other. Some of the contestants had fairly high handicaps but they had been encouraged to participate and given the coaching and support of their fellow team members; consequently they nearly all performed above expectation. Talking to many of the ladies, it was apparent that they could not understand the reluctance of female players in the UK to enter the only women's event remaining in our tournament calendar and were surprised at how few female tournament players we have. Perhaps it is time to have a rethink about this.

At Nottingham we have 113 members of whom 40% are female. When those who are CA members are analysed the percentage of women drops to 26%. Looking at all the entrants to the Nottingham AC tournaments 17% of the contestants in handicap events are women and only 9% in level/advanced. In order to see if this is representative of the total croquet playing community I requested figures from Bowdon, Budleigh Salterton, Cheltenham, Hurlingham and Sussex County, as well as Nottingham. These are six of the larger clubs and they are geographically spaced round the country. The figures supplied are given in the following table:

	Nottingham	Sussex County	Cheltenham	Bowdon	Budleigh	Hurlingham	Total
Total membership	113	148	200	150		138	749
% female	40%	52%	42%	50%		40%	45%
CA members	62	65	107	69	69	64	436
% female	26%	28%	27%	27%	33%	31%	28%
AC T'ment entries	132	81		93		98	404
% female	12%	19%		16%		15%	16%
AC handicap events	53	17		43		74	187
% female	17%	37%		23%		15%	21%
AC level events	79	64		50		24	217
% female	9%	12%		10%		17%	11%

It is clear that at every stage in the development of a player we are losing proportionally more women than men. By the time you get to the highest level, the top 100 rankings in the UK contain just 5 ladies (and one of these is Australian!). Interestingly, the four women in the top 100 who learnt their croquet in the UK have all played in the mixed doubles and women's singles in the Men's and Women's Championship and in the now defunct Barlow Bowl or Longman Trophy competitions, so they have all regarded women-only events as at least a stepping stone at some time in their croquet career. Many of our advanced level tournaments now only have one or two female competitors at best. If we leave things as they are there is a serious risk that many tournaments will become men-only by default so perhaps the time has come to make a particular effort to encourage the development of women players before we lose the very feature of croquet we are trying to protect.

How can we start this process? Clubs are attracting men and women in roughly equal numbers so the problem is probably not one of recruitment. However, more than twice as many of the men become members of the CA than women. The CA could investigate why there is this discrepancy but I suspect that most people join the CA initially because they are interested in playing in tournaments and the women are not being attracted to AC tournament play. So perhaps clubs should be looking out for their members (both male and female) who are clearly getting the hang of the game and encouraging them to enter club competitions and then handicap tournaments at their home club. Some coaching sessions on the tactics of playing when conceding bisques rather than receiving them would be particularly helpful to the improving player because many people find that transition difficult to overcome. In our club, women in particular seem much more likely to stay in the 16-20 handicap range because they win their games when they have plenty of bisques but lose all their confidence, and their games, without that security blanket and so their handicap just fluctuates.

The second stage is encouraging players to enter 'away' tournaments because the experience gained by playing a variety of people in a variety of settings is essential in the learning curve. I have heard many women saying that they do not like going away on their own so they do not enter tournaments at other clubs. It is difficult to know how to overcome this. Maybe it requires two or three women within a club to decide they are going to enter a particular tournament and arrange travel and accommodation together, or maybe female club members offering accommodation to lone female visitors would help. Once you have been to a club, got familiar with the area and know a few people the apprehension

of going on your own diminishes.

The third step along the development road is playing level/advanced tournaments. Women clearly lack the confidence to take this step, particularly if they think they will be the only female playing in a competition. Building confidence is the key, so coaching is important, as is encouraging all club members to enter internal level competitions whether they are A, B, C or D class. Experience of playing without bisques, of making leaves, of different openings and learning from better players all help build that confidence. Mixed doubles is a great way to step into the world where the men dominate and there is always a shortage of women prepared to play. If every club had an internal advanced mixed doubles competition perhaps the men could encourage the women to play and this would then feed through into the tournament scene.

The final stage is national and international events. In Australia and New Zealand the women have a structure that supports them. Crucially the interstate competitions in Australia and the trans-Tasman competitions require teams containing both men and women so the development of female players is important at the higher tournament level. Introducing a requirement to have at least one woman in each of the teams in the Inter-Counties in this country could have a similar effect. In the Women's World Championship both the Australian and New Zealand teams had team kit – this instantly gives a feeling of belonging and pride of representation. The two contingents had met up as a squad prior to the tournament and received some coaching covering topics such as openings, leaves and one-ball endings. When they arrived at the tournament they already felt part of a team and they provided huge encouragement and support to each other. The English representatives were left entirely to their own devices and it was quite scary.

This inaugural Women's World Championship was a really enjoyable event, but for it to be a continuing success it will need much more support from women in the northern hemisphere. For that to happen, fundamental changes in the attitude of women in croquet are required. This is not about turning shrinking violets into strident feminists, but of fostering the belief and self-confidence that is apparent in the Antipodes so they can blossom. Hopefully the debate about the best way to keep men and women playing association croquet on an equal footing starts here....

Acknowledgements: Contributors of opinions and photographs include Ailsa Lines, Rosie News, Rosemary Newsham, Keith Aiton, Chris Clarke, Marion McInnes, Chris McGlen, Wendy Betteridge and others. Thanks also to James Death, Klim Seabright, Clive Hayton, John Saxby and Brad Grimmer for providing statistics

THE CROQUET ACADEMY 2013 PROGRAMME

By Jonathan Isaacs

The Croquet Academy at Southwick was created as a "Centre of Excellence" for croquet coaching. From its outset it has sought feedback from players attending its courses to further develop existing modules and create new ones designed to suit the current needs of competitive croquet players.

In 2012 The Academy ran 11 courses, as well as visiting many clubs to meet the specific coaching needs from the clubs concerned.

Everyone attending courses were asked to complete a course questionnaire. These were studied in detail and as a result The Academy is making a few changes for 2013.

Whilst the CA Bronze Course was very well received, feedback suggested that a more in depth course on AC Handicap play would be preferred with more time to practice techniques learnt in a supervised environment. So the Academy has developed a new course called:

The Academy Development Course in AC Handicap Play. This 3 day course expands on the CA Bronze programme incorporating more supervised practice on the techniques covered on the course. Suitable for players with a handicap range 12- 18, successful players should be in a position to consider playing Advanced Croquet the following season.

Other highlighted courses include:

The Academy Introduction and Development Course in AC Advanced Play
This proved to be a very popular course in 2012. As a result it is being re-run in 2013. Suiting players in the handicap range 6-12 it's an ideal introduction and development course in advanced play.

GC Improvers Course. For 2013 we are going to run a one-day course for GC players with a handicap of 4+. This course is specifically designed to help competitive players improve their game including jump shots, cannons, tactical play and the effective use of extra turns.

Book early as this one-day module could well be oversubscribed.

Developing your skills at One-Ball Croquet. Following requests from a number of clubs The Academy have developed this new one day course for GC players wishing to consider either the one ball format or as an introduction to Association Croquet. It is also suitable for existing higher handicap

one ball players wishing to develop their **skills**.

The full list of Academy courses for 2013 is as follows:

Dates	Course	Leader	Ideal Hcp
10 -11 April	GC Referees (CTC)	B Arliss	n/a
12 -14 April	AC Triple-Peel Course	C Jones	0-4
12-14 April	AC Academy Development Course in Handicap Play	J Isaacs	12-18
16-17 April	AC Referees Course	C Jones	n/a
19-21 April	AC Introduction and Development in Advanced Play	C Jones	6-12
20-21 April	AC Beginners Course	P Jackson	22+
20-21 April	AC Improvers Course	F Low	18-24
23-24 April	AC & GC Coaches Qualification & Training Course	C Jones	n/a
27 April	GC Improvers Course	D Gaitley	4+
28 April	Developing your Skills at One Ball Croquet	J Isaacs	n/a
18-19 July	AC Supervised High-Bisque Tournament	F Low	14+

There are 4 ways to find out more about these courses:

- On line at www.thecroquetacademy.com (includes on-line entry)
- email: courses@thecroquetacademy.com
- Read the details in the CA Fixtures Book or on the CA website.
- Speak or write to our secretary Janet Hoptroff, 111 Mallon Dene, Rustington, West Sussex BN16 2JW. Tel: 01903 859417

COACHING CORNER

By ROGER STAPLES

Congratulations to the following people who have gained Coaching awards:

Club Coaches

John Skuse, Chelmsford
David Bell, Leicester
John Lucas, Bowdon
Dennis Graham, Chester

Grade 1 Coach

Katherine Minchin, Rother Valley

Coach of the Year Nominations

Coach of the Year Nominations are invited for the Coach of the Year award 2012. The Coaching Committee wishes to ensure that suitable candidates are not overlooked through ignorance. So if you know of someone you consider worthy of this award, please send their name to me, at my address – email or postal, together with the reasons you consider them special. Nominations close on 31 January 2013.

Christmas is just around the corner. So Santa may be looking for some stocking

fillers? In the last two years there have been two excellent publications, full of illustrations showing you how you can improve your game. Both are available from the Croquet Shop. The Fixtures Book is about to be issued and it is full of tournaments and courses. Notably the Academy will be running courses that will benefit Golf players who want to learn about the niceties of Association as well as the very popular supervised Tournament for Beginners. Amongst the many tournaments, watch out for the one-ball competitions. These are exciting tournaments. The games are quick (because its one-ball) and mix the skills and tactics of Golf with the rules of Association. I commend them to you.

I wish you all the compliments of the season. May your festivities be happy ones and you return to the Croquet next year full of determination to improve your game. I am sure you will find many opportunities; if you cannot find what you are looking for then contact your Federation Coaching Officer. Contact details are available on the CA website. Alternatively, send me an e-mail.

THE ASSOCIATION EIGHTS

From 1901 until 1955 the only Croquet Association invitation event was the President's Cup (also called either the Champion or Beddow Cup) for the top eight players, at which time a second-eight event, called the Surrey Cup, was introduced.

In 1966 the Chairman's Salver was presented by J N Rivington, displacing the Surrey Cup which was then for the third-eight.

In 1973, following a bequest in his will, the Surrey Cup was renamed for (Monty) Spencer-Ell, who despite losing both arms in WWI played to a high standard and was runner-up three times. Thus there were the President's, the Chairman's and the Spencer-Ell.

The Selection events are held each year in September (the selections are usually made after the Open Championships in July). Normally there are 8 players in each, playing a double round-robin. These competitions used to run from Monday to Friday, except for the Presidents, which was Tuesday to Saturday, to allow lesser mortals to come and watch (!), hence was at that time referred to as Eights Week.

The President's Cup, Colchester 7 - 9 September

Robert Fulford wins premier event



L to R standing: Samir Patel, Keith Aiton, David Maugham, James Hopgood, Marcus Evans. Sitting: Stephen Mulliner, Robert Fulford, Paddy Chapman. Photo by Samir Patel.

Results after 14 Rounds: Robert Fulford 11, Paddy Chapman (NZ) 10, Keith Aiton 7, James Hopgood 7, David Maugham 6, Samir Patel 6, Marcus Evans 5, Stephen Mulliner 4.

The Selectors Weekend was introduced in 1986 (Ranelagh-Weightman Cup) for players who were unavailable for the Eights or who were on the verge of selection.

The Treasurer's Tankard was designated as a fourth-eight in 2001.

Trip Includes

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Laura will be accompanying the trip to arrange all of the group's needs while in Egypt.



Prices

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£1795 pp single room

Prices include Egyptair flights London - Luxor
Luxor - Cairo
Cairo- London

7 nights full board with included excursions on the Nile Cruise, 3 nights bed & breakfast in Luxor and 4 nights bed & breakfast in Cairo

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Chairman's Salver, Ramsgate, 7-10 Sept

By Richard Smith

All matches were played under super-advanced rules. Wilkinson got off to a flying start with a 7th turn TP against Williams. At the end of day one Mounfield sat on top of the leader-board on 4/4, with Richard Smith and Martin French one behind on 3.

Saturday saw another warm still day. Smith suffered his first ever OTP defeat when Robin Brown finished from the contact. This was one of four OTPs, including a win for Mounfield over Wilkinson, after the latter intentionally pegged out both balls to leave a game of 1-ball. Mounfield was looking unstoppable on 6/6 before Smith finally defeated him with another OTP. Round 7 was notable for being the first time The Goat's game was not the last to finish. The talking point in Round 8 was when French, after failing to get a rush after completing the three peels of a TPO against Smith, missed the peg by a fraction. He cornered; under super-advanced rules conceding a lift-to-position. The light was starting to go at this stage, but Smith dug out the break and managed to complete the game.

By the end of day two Mounfield was on 7, Smith 6 and French 5. Goacher was still in contention on 4, but Wilkinson and Brown had fallen behind on 3, with Williams and Chapman propping up the leader board on 2 and 1 respectively.

On the Sunday Brown attempted the only SXP, but, after breaking down and many exchanges, he eventually allowed Smith to win. There was also a return to form of Wilkinson who was unstoppable, with an awesome display of shooting, reeling off three triples in double-quick time (including his first 5th turn TP, against Miranda). Goacher fell out of contention, losing five games in a day. The last game to finish in the inky darkness again featured Martin, this time suffering an OTP reverse against Brown. On Monday the infamous Ramsgate wind arrived! This caused problems for everyone, with no TPs completed and games noticeably slower. Miranda coped better than most; others, particularly the two leaders, were suffering. Some time after Miranda had dispatched Richard, Nick eventually prevailed over Martin. After a late lunch they eventually started their crucial game. With both players failing to find their earlier form, it was about

6 o'clock before Barry Keen could make the presentation to Nick Mounfield – a worthy winner with 11 wins out of 14. The two 'promotees', Smith and Wilkinson, finished a creditable 2nd and 3rd, meaning that the three debutants took the top three places, also sharing the peeling prize with five triples each.

Results after 14 rounds: Nick Mounfield 11, Richard Smith 9, Robert Wilkinson 8, Robin Brown & Martin French 7, Miranda Chapman & Chris Williams 5, David Goacher 4.



Spencer Ell Competitors L to R: Paul Rigge, Dave Kibble, Graham Gale, Duncan Hector, Martin Murray, Ian Parkinson, Dave Nick and Mark Ormerod. Photo by Tony Thomas.

Spencer Ell, Southport, 7-11 Sept

Report by Dave Kibble

Immaculate lawns, but slow with relatively easy hoops, gave an advantage to the player with the innings, but many failed to capitalise. On the first day Kibble managed two peels of an STP, coming to grief by running into partner whilst going to another ball after penult - the crowd were disappointed that the 8-yard Irish peel was not attempted.

Kibble felt hard done by when a 2-foot cut on the peg ball hilled-off, missed and bounced off the peg, giving Rigge a ball round. After hitting back in and finishing three peels, a little promotion cannon was foiled by minor lawn imperfections and failed to leave a rush to the peg, Rigge was brave with his choice of lift and hit with his hoop-1 ball for a finishing turn - but tried five times to get a peel and finished 4-back & peg. Kibble missed but Rigge failed to finish, allowing Kibble to join up, then to peg out two balls to leave penult vs peg. Some lovely tactical play ensued with Rigge eventually running rover but having to jump over it to hit either the peg or the ball behind the peg. Unfortunately his jump was inches short and Kibble pegged out to get the +1 missing score in the set.

The main lawns were flooded on Tuesday morning so play started on the north lawns, which were hastily cut and prepared by the hard-working groundsmen. They were slow and hilly, but easy and fun. Ian Parkinson won a good three-ball ending to seal Dave Kibble's victory with two games to play. Following two losses on day one, Mark Ormerod had recovered to begin the fourth day in joint second place on six wins and with the possibility of catching the leader, Dave Kibble. However, narrow losses to Rigge (-4) and Nick (-3) put first place beyond his reach, though a tactic of resolutely eschewing peels contributed to a final run of three wins to share second place with Dave Nick. Dave Kibble won by a sufficiently large margin that a play-off was unnecessary.

Results after 14 rounds: Dave Kibble 11, Dave Nick & Mark Ormerod 9, Paul Rigge 8, Duncan Hector 7, Graham Gale & Martin Murray 5, Ian Parkinson 2.

Treasurer's Tankard, Hunstanton

7 - 11 September

Craig Oakley Won the Treasurer's Tankard

Results after 14 rounds: Craig Oakley 11, Gary Bennett 7, Cliff Jones 7, Nelson Morrow 7, Jeff Race 7, Colin Hemming 6, Strat Liddiard 6, Ian Vincent 5.

Selectors' Weekend, Nottingham

7-9 Sept

Report by Richard Huxley

The knockout stage of the Selectors' Weekend was contested by Holmes, Berthouze, Castell and Steiner, who all had 5/7 records after two days. Luc was concerned that his lift back to Sussex could be in danger were he to beat Paul, but took the risk and did so anyway +14. In the other semi-final between Matt and Nick, the start of the game was scrappy with several breaks failing to progress. But then Matt turned to a bottle of Ramsbottom Craft Brewery Ale - proprietor M. Holmes Esq (which had been on sale during the weekend) and saw a James Death type upturn in his fortunes, going on to win the semi-final +14, and then defeat Luc in the final +13.

The weekend saw only one completed TP, by Roger Wood in the first game to finish,



Richard Huxley (left) presents Matt Holmes with the Selectors' Weekend trophy. Photo by Rod Ashwell.

though he later tried to claim a "TPTP" (triple peel in three parts). In the final game to finish (maintaining his 100% record on that front, though this time not under floodlights) Rod Ashwell ran 4-back from next to hoop 1, thinking he might as well have a crack at the hoop - his other option being a retreat to corner 3; that long-distance shooting, however, wasn't enough to win the game.

Final records (Swiss & Knockout combined):

Matt Holmes 7/9, Nick Steiner 7/10, Paul Castell & Luc Berthouze 6/9, Roger Wood, Jaimie Mussi & Rod Ashwell 5/8, David Mooney 5/9, Beatrice McGlen 4/8, Frances Ransom 3/7, Richard Huxley & Martin Beacon 3/8, Derek Knight 2/8, David Brydon 1/8, Kevin Wells 1/9.

Club News

Olympic Croquet – it actually did happen in 2012!

Chris Roberts reports

And so did croquet for both ends of the age scale, from schoolboys to the over-80s!

All this and more took place at the Phyllis Court Club (Henley), which continues to balance the promotion of competitive croquet with their more traditionally-rooted social play.

But how do you go about altering a club's croquet outlook without upsetting people – hmmm... 'tricky'.

A theme of providing 'Something for Everyone' was brought into the croquet philosophy at Phyllis Court, which enjoys a splendid location on the banks of the River Thames, right on the finishing line of the famous Royal Regatta Course. But how did they actually do it?

The detail..... 'Olympic Croquet' really? Well yes, on the day of the opening ceremony, Phyllis Court staged its own Olympic event with 12 players representing the countries of their own or their parents' birth and a further four winning a lottery for the right to play 'for' England.

Olympics Croquet - Helena Fensone (Finland) won gold, ahead of John Chalfont (England) and the joint bronze medalists Dilys Earnshaw (Wales) and John Kennedy (New Zealand)



“We were really strict about qualification” said GC organiser Frances Colman, “and we had to be, because there was much clamour to play”.

Two players represented both South Africa and New Zealand alongside others from the USA, India, Finland, Ireland, Wales, Scotland and surprisingly Uganda and Shetland!

“We packed in as many Olympic references as we could” continued Frances, reporting on an opening ceremony that included the lighting of an Olympic flame and presence of real Olympic torches from not only the 2012 relay but the 1948 games as well.

Everyone played in their national colours on courts bedecked in national flags. Nobody minded, that with the handicaps ranging from 2 to 10, it was no surprise that the gold medal went to the pre-tournament favourite, Helena Fensome (2) of Finland.

She was surprised however, and actually moved to tears, when she heard her National Anthem ring out loud as she stood on the top step on a hastily arranged podium holding her flag aloft.

What fun and probably the best one of all the recently introduced events at Phyllis Court.

On a different tack. In June the Club were delighted to host schoolboys of Eton College for the finals of their AC competitions and they all enjoyed themselves on proper courts for the first time. They even attracted a small ‘crowd’ of club members who were keen to see the novelty of younger players on their turf.

Chairman Chris Roberts and Frances Colman had nurtured an association with the College following a chance visit to the Club hotel by one boy the previous year. And now the plan is to forge closer links with coaching sessions at Eton in the 2013 season. These boys will probably never join Phyllis Court, but if they continue their croquet interest at university, then hopefully some club somewhere will benefit from their membership in years to come.

Phyllis Court’s first ever CA fixtures book B-Level GC tournament was run over two days in July, and the thought is that this was possibly the first two-day event anywhere at this level(?).

16 players from 9 Clubs competed in an ‘all play all’ format that eventually saw the host’s Raymond Wood be the first to lift the newly commissioned ‘Smokey’s Cup’. The presentation was made by the great man himself, Phyllis Court President, former CA Council member and circuit regular Smokey Eades, who is still going strong and turning out for Club GC events, even though he is now well into his 90s.

One such tournament was the Club’s inaugural ‘80+ Singles’ in which semi-finalist Smokey was one of 10 competitors who enjoyed a leisurely event that was won by Rosie Richardson.



Eton College schoolboys at Phyllis Court

“We were strict about entry to this as well. One player wasn’t 80 until the two weeks later, so we made the ‘youngster’ wait until next season and now he’s champing at the bit, along with at least two others!” Laughed Chris Roberts

Phyllis Court still found time for social playing members to enjoy ‘pitch-up and play’ sessions four times a week (including one for AC), run five other GC graded day tournaments, two more for AC and eight season-long competitions. Somehow competitive games in 3 Southern Federation Leagues, one SE League, the Southern Challenge, GC Inter Club Championship and Shield, Centre Stage, All England Handicap and nine friendlies against other clubs were all squeezed in as well!



CA B-Level tournament winner Raymond Wood receives ‘Smokey’s Cup’ from Phyllis Court President Smokey Eades. All Photos by Chris Roberts.

Preparation has started early to do all of it again next season, with the addition of participation in the AC Secretary’s Shield an exciting new experience for the Club.

So if any doubters in your Club attempt to pour cold water on any of your ambitious plans, don’t listen to their “you can’t do this” or “that won’t work”, just try it and be prepared to be surprised at what you can achieve.

NATIONAL CLUB EVENTS FINALS

Longman Cup, Mary Rose & Inter-Club Surbiton & Roehampton 6 – 7 October

Report by George Noble

It is usually a delight to host the CA interclub finals as an end to our season. We have been extraordinarily lucky over recent years in that the weather has usually been decent and, in some years, almost balmy. Not so this year. Nature's response to the hosepipe ban imposed by Thames Water was the wettest summer in 100 years. We hadn't lost any tournament days through the summer – only through luck – but 31 mm of rain on the night before the tournament was excessive. We have a clay-based soil at Surbiton which is brilliant for fast(ish) lawns and firm hoops in dry weather but not good for speedy drainage. But, as ever, the collective energy and resourcefulness of the players was applied to working out what to do and nature was conquered.

Part of the solution was to send two of the Longman Cup semi-finalists (Roehampton and Northampton) to Roehampton, where there was reported to be a dry lawn, and those remaining at Surbiton relied on a combination of the mopping machine and percolation (not much evaporation and transpiration in October).

The Mary Rose final between Colchester and Hurlingham was able to start at about 10.30 and the Longman at 11.30 with 18-point games; Hurlingham beat Colchester 4-2 .

In a semi-final of the Longman Cup, Watford beat Chester 4-3. At "the other place" Roehampton beat Northampton (playing full games), leading to a Longman final between Watford and Roehampton on the now dry and sunny Surbiton lawns on the Sunday. Chester and Northampton played off for fun and third place.

Roehampton squeaked the Longman final 4 – 3. As Quiller, our benevolent and avuncular President pointed out, the Longman games showed that handicap play can be as exciting to watch as more elevated games; somehow unseen forces seem to intervene more frequently to make things go spectacularly and entertainingly wrong.

The main interest in the Nottingham B v Cheltenham Inter-club final was that Nottingham B almost succeeded in fielding an all female team of Ailsa Lines, Debbie Cornelius and Miranda Chapman. Unfortunately, Beatrice was not available so Paddy Chapman had to fill in. Another close win for Cheltenham 4 – 3 which means that



Photo caption: L to R: John Culhane, Alan Chance, Tom Coles, and Hugh Carlisle of Hurlingham celebrate their win. (Photo by Clare Benson).

Cheltenham have now won the event six times since it was restarted in 1971. There must have been something special in the air, or the beer, at Surbiton because shortly afterwards Ian Lines and Debbie announced their engagement.

THE PUBLISHING COMMITTEE:

A short report for members

The Publishing Committee is responsible for the Gazette, website, and other CA publications – we have asked each CA committee to keep you informed of their activities through these articles. Increasingly, we are becoming interested in electronic publishing and are discussing various options for online publications. It is little known that Members can read the Gazette on the CA website as soon as it is published, nor that it is available to the public six months later.

Many articles are shortened to fit into the Gazette, and we are considering publishing them in full on the website with links from the Gazette. It may be desirable to have an occasional electronic newsletter to members. Of course it would be a service that Members could opt out of.

The Gazette Editor has resigned and we are looking for a replacement. This creates an opportunity to reassess the Gazette. There is no question of it disappearing, but we are looking to fashion a more modern appearance, and to appeal to a wider readership, GC and AC, beginner and expert, young and old. This is a big challenge and, to help us achieve it, we are looking for volunteers for the newly commissioned "Editorial Team" – a group of people who support the Editor by providing information, gossip and feedback from all corners of the croquet world.

Finally if there is anyone out there who thinks they have something to contribute to the Publishing Committee we would love to hear from you.

Strat Liddiard

Chair of the Publishing Committee

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CA National Events

All England AC Handicap Finals, Ramsgate, Sept 15-16

Report by John Deeth

Charlie Martin is All England Handicap Champion

Ramsgate's lawns were in excellent shape and play in the four American blocks took up the day. Two of the four were very close, with the winner going through because of beating the other player with two wins.

The semi-finals between John Smallbone & Stephen Stuart-Matthews and between Charlie Martin & Ian Fugeman were very different affairs. Stephen had established a stranglehold on his match by the time John took his fifth shot, winning +26. Charlie came from behind to defeat Ian +1. Obviously not wanting to live so much on his nerves in the final, Charlie fairly swiftly advanced to a +16 victory over Stephen to collect the trophy presented by the Mayor of Ramsgate and the President of the CA.

Ramsgate's hospitality was faultless: Trevor managed it brilliantly, keeping us all busy all weekend; the ladies produced two superb lunches, lovely teas and plenty of coffee and, to top it off, the bar had good beer.

Final Positions 1st Charlie Martin, 2nd Stephen Stuart-Matthews, 3rd John Smallbone 4th Ian Fugeman, 5th Barry Sales, =6th Bob Thompson, Alan Morton, Paul Wolff, 9th Peter Balchin, 10th John Knight, 11th David Wedmore, 12th John Deeth, 13th Keith Huggins, 14th Alan Slade, 15th Robin Barry.

All England GC Handicap Competition Final Colchester CC 22 – 23 September

Report by Frances Colman

Ramsgate's **Tobi Savage** hit straight and true all weekend to regain the All England GC Handicap trophy that he won two years ago. The result was in doubt right up until the last of 15 rounds, when a virtual final could have seen either Savage or Simon Carter victorious.

The format was a straight 'all play all' between the 16 finalists whose handicaps ranged from Carter's 'scratch' to home hero Philip Holmes' 10. There was to be no grand final and the game order was worked out so that all players played their nearest handicapped opponent in the last round, with the hope that the tournament would still be 'alive' right to the very end.

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Competitors in the Association All England Handicap Finals. Photo by Trevor Longman.

And so it turned out! Carter dropped two games on the first day and sat in second place overnight, hoping that someone would do him a favour and take a game from the undefeated Savage. Mid Sunday morning his prayers were answered, when Robert Staddon of Letchworth beat Savage, setting up the 'prospect' at least, of a final-round 'showdown'.

Elsewhere David Whyte of Dulwich caught the eye; from the higher end of the handicap range he scored a very creditable 10 wins to finish third over all. Late replacement Pauline Donner, who was apparently 'tickled pink' to get the call-up, celebrated with an unexpected 7 victories to take her smile back to Woodhall Spa.

But as the rounds went by all eyes increasingly turned to the battle at the top where Savage's one win advantage could be equalled by Carter in their 'head to head' match. When the time came Savage got off to a flyer and was already two hoops up, before cashing in his 'extra turn' at hoop 3 and gaining hoop 4 into the bargain. After that, he didn't look back and earned the admiring praise from Carter that he had 'played beautifully throughout' after he completed a faultless 7-0 victory.

The tournament was very well hosted by Colchester CC and by Jane Collier and Ann Brooks in particular, so thank you to them. Also thanks to Colchester Chairman Dick Strover for his presentation duties (standing in for CA President Quiller Barrett who was at Hurlingham for the Ascot Cup).

Competition Director Chris Roberts also paid tribute to Frances Colman of Phyllis Court, for Refereeing and Managing the Tournament with her usual calm efficiency.

Final finishing positions (with starting handicaps in brackets):

Tobi Savage (1) 14/15, Simon Carter (0) 12/15, David Whyte (8) 10/15, Stuart Smith (1) 10/15, Colin Britt (7) 9/15, Robert Staddon (7) 9/15, Andrew Dymond (2) 7/15, Pauline Donner (8) 7/15, Steve Dennis (2) 7/15 Susan Tilbrook (5) 6/15, Martin Wroughton (4) 6/15, Farook Maik (4) 6/14, Ian Cobbold (2) 5/15, Philip Holmes (10) 5/15, Robert Laver (6) 3/15, Jean Cobbold (5) 3/14

GC Grass Roots Final, Northampton

8th September 2012

Report by Geoff Johnson

Tony Newport from Eynsham Croquet Club won the 2012 Grass Roots National Final.

Sixteen finalists from no less than eleven clubs from all over the country competed for the Grass Roots trophy, a GC competition for high handicap players, (handicap range 9 – 12). All the players had fought their way through club elimination rounds and regional finals to reach this National Final stage of the competition.

On a day that saw almost perfect weather for croquet, with warm sunshine throughout, seven rounds of progressive doubles produced four leaders who then went on to a four player knock-out stage.

Tony Newport beat David Widdeson from Bishop Monkton CC in the final by 7-2.

Tony had taken victory in the semi-finals, beating Graham Good from Bury CC by 7-4, whilst David had beaten Ian Dampney from Broadwas CC in a very tight contest, eventually prevailing 7-6.

All-in-all a very enjoyable day, and an excellent introduction for high handicappers to serious competitions!

Special thanks must go to Northampton CC who hosted us once again for this and the Centre Stage final in their usual friendly manner, and provided us with some excellent lawns in a beautiful setting!



Tony Newport of Eynsham, winner of the Grass Roots final at Northampton

GC Centre Stage Final, Northampton

9th September 2012

Report by Geoff Johnson

Philip Wood from Kenilworth Croquet Club won the 2012 Centre Stage national final.

Sixteen finalists from eight clubs from all over the country competed for the Centre Stage trophy, a GC competition for medium handicap players, (handicap range 5 – 8). All the players had fought their way through club elimination rounds to reach this final stage of the competition.

The weather was exceptionally kind to us, with warm sunshine all day, and Northampton's lawns were in fine condition for some excellent croquet to be played!

Some very competitive games in the initial league stage produced two clear leaders who then went on to contest the final.

Philip Wood from Kenilworth beat John Bradley from Camerton & Peasdown in a very tightly contested final by 7-5.

In the 3rd and 4th place play-off, John Noble from Letchworth beat Michael Wiles from Phyllis Court by 7-2.

All-in-all a very enjoyable day, played in great spirit by all concerned.

Wanted: Editorial Team Volunteers

The newly-formed Editorial Team needs volunteers – the team gathers feedback from readers around the clubs and helps define what they need; they commission tournament reporters and article authors.

Proofreaders are also needed - you can do as much or as little as you have time for, even an hour or so every few months would help.

Contact Liz Larsson (CA Manager) on 01242 242318 or caoffice@croquet.org.uk. Alternatively, contact Strat Liddiard (Publishing Committee Chairman) at liddiards@doctors.org.uk for more information.

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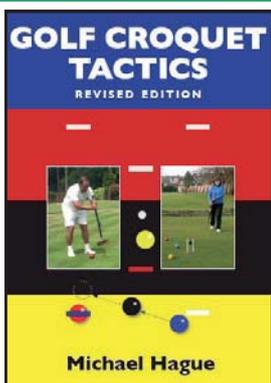
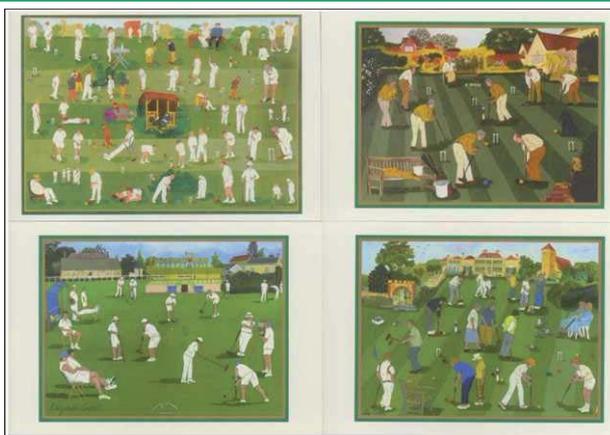
Olympic torch bearer Roger Wilcox celebrating his "run" with friends from Swanage Croquet Club. Photo by Ann Yeates.

Christmas at the CA Shop

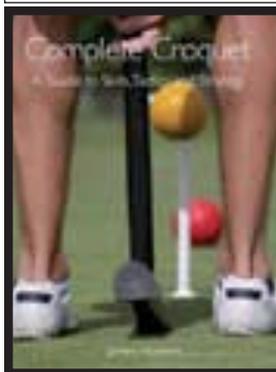


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