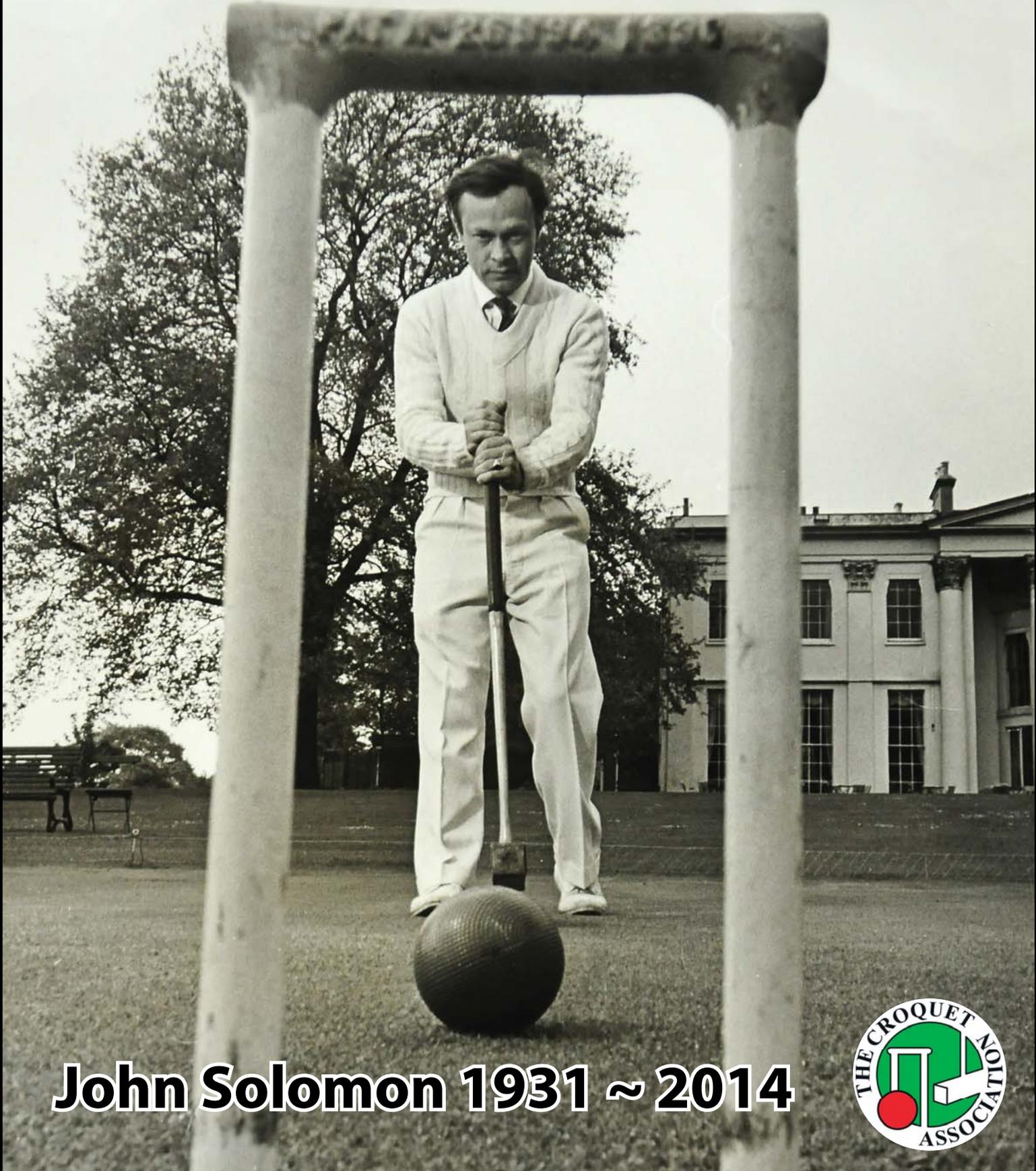


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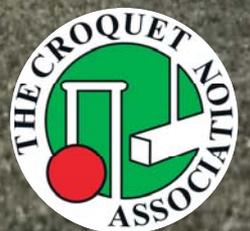
Issue 353 December 2014

CROQUET

Gazette



John Solomon 1931 ~ 2014



From our files

researched by Frances Colman

10 years ago - 2004



Battle of the Sexes?

On reading through some old issues of the Gazette from the 70s and 80s, I frequently came across names of players whom I have met and played against on the tournament circuit recently. But very rarely did I see any ladies who were playing then and are still playing now.

Is it because men can play to a high standard for a longer period of time? Or is it, as I suspect, that when a couple decide to start a family, the women gives up all her pleasurable pursuits to look after the children, while the man just carries on with his chosen hobby regardless.

I wonder if, since women are more emancipated, we may see some of our present lady players still competing in twenty years time?

I sincerely hope so.

Tom Weston, Bournemouth

~

No More Jargon

Having been out of tournament play for some time, and having complained in somewhat less than temperate terms some years ago about jargon, may I request a brief, clear explanation of 'Tea Lady' and then plead for its excision from future reports?

Furthermore, may I again complain about jargon?

We should be demystifying the terminology, which has quite enough officially contained in the laws to cause information overload for anyone wishing to take up croquet.

Andrew Bennett, Brighton

~

After nine years of effort, sometimes busy, sometimes frantic and sometimes despairingly lethargic, **Cornwall Croquet Club** is now almost in operation.

We have, at Porthpean, on the seaward side of St. Austell, one lawn in working order, and another levelled and seeded for next season.

We lack playing equipment. . . but at last we have a lawn, a pavilion of sorts, one set of hoops, a peg and clips, and three second-hand balls. . .

50 years ago - 1964



Notes by Rover.

Congratulations to John Solomon on winning the Championship once more.

His play throughout the week was worthy of a champion, and particularly memorable was his three-ball triple in the semi-final which was a sheer joy to watch, and will long remain in the minds of all who saw it.

John is fast following in Humphrey Hicks' footsteps in his appetite for winning major trophies: he now holds all three concurrently, as Humphrey did in 1948.

~

Sir,

As an ex-boy player, whose years of croquet have been cut down to a very few, owing to Army service and knee trouble, I would like to welcome all the young men who are playing croquet today, and only wish that they would bring in young girls; croquet being a game for all ages and both sexes.

After the last war, there was a trickle of youngsters starting with Solomon, and a few years later with the Ormerod brothers, Jesson, Dibley, Lloyd-Pratt and Meacham. Now there is a welcome torrent headed by Bolton, Thorp, Fidler, Strachan and Laurenson, who have all advanced very rapidly at the game.

I hope that they bring with them the spirit of adventure which to me is croquet in its glory. . . there is too much ultra safety first tactics amongst our leading players. . .

G F Stone, Major

~

Dear Sir,

With regard to well established tournaments which are now being held for the benefit of those players who have other interests during the week, and overlap other official tournaments, could not special tournaments be held over the week-end for these players?

Take, for example, the Gilbey Cup which started this season on a Friday. Players at the official Budleigh Salterton tournament either had to retire on Thursday evening or forgo entering for the Gilbey Cup.

This is an intolerable innovation
W B C Paynter

100 years ago - 1914



Buckingham Palace

On 6th August I appealed to the nation to assist me in founding a National Fund to prevent and alleviate military and civil distress arising in consequence of the war (*see 2014 Gazette 351*).

Today I am happy to say that the Fund has reached the splendid total of three million pounds.

I wish to take this opportunity of thanking once more the many thousands of generous subscribers who have helped me achieve this grand result. . .

The sum which has already been raised is magnificent, and I am confident that the generous British public will continue to do their utmost to alleviate the distress which war inevitably brings in its train.

Edward

(*His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales*)

~

Dear Sir,

I think it is much to the credit of club committees that croquet tournaments have, with a few exceptions, been abandoned: and I know for a fact that where they have been shifted into so-called "club" fixtures, most of the members have refrained from entering as a protest.

When one knows that our brave troops are shedding their blood within a couple of hours of our coast, and are fighting for our existence, I think that members might refrain from indulging in public pleasure competitions.

Yours faithfully, S.K.

~

Sir,

I entirely agree with every word of Lady Julian Parr's letter. . . (*see 2014 Gazette 352*).

How anyone calling themselves British can think or talk of playing croquet tournaments while our kith and kin are fighting in this terrific struggle is incomprehensible.

If, indeed, they have "nothing else to do" it is a terrible confession of futility, which perhaps should stir us to pity rather than indignation.

Yours truly,

B.M. Gatehouse

Editorial

John Solomon adorns the cover of this issue in which we pay tribute to the greatest player of his generation, and perhaps all time.

I never saw John play, but then, nor did I ever see W G Grace, Stanley Matthews or Fangio; true sporting legends all and equals beside whom John now surely sits.

The wonderful eulogy read at his funeral by Stephen Mulliner, is reproduced in full on our centre pages along with John's quite phenomenal record of croquet achievements (for which I thank CA Archivist Chris Williams).

Elsewhere in this issue, we salute South Africa's Judith Hanekom and her success in winning the Women's Golf Croquet World Championship in Cairo. How good as well, to learn from new CA Chairman Tim King, that Egypt has returned to a safe and comfortable place in which to play croquet.

Tim was elected to his post at the CA AGM in November and Ian Vincent's report on the proceedings is carried here, along with the first half of a host of citations for the recipients of CA Diplomas.

These are fabulously important people, many of whom you will never have heard of but they are the 'do-ers' at clubs like yours.

It's not the pixies who make everything tick, it's these good people; and without them and their like, our sport just doesn't function - 'Chapeau' to you all.

Talking of hats, I also wear another one, that of the Chairman of the Southern Croquet Federation, and a couple of weeks ago, I was pleased to welcome Jeff Dawson, to our AGM at Winchester.

Jeff had offered to attend federation AGMs to explain the CA's plans for changes to membership arrangements and he details those in his latest article overleaf.

Since preparing my last editorial, I have visited the very hospitable Croquet Club of Corfu again, managed to regain the Greek AC Handicap title and enjoyed a lovely croquet holiday with friends old and new.

I have also been to Hamptworth where I was honoured to present their annual awards and I've attended three croquet AGMs and four other meetings. As well as all that, my 20 year old cat has gone blind.

This close-season is as busy as the Summer!



Chris Roberts

Chris Roberts Editor
49 Ancastle Green, Henley on Thames, Oxon. RG9 ITS
07973 787710 gazette@croquet.org.uk



Issue 353 December 2014

Front cover: John Solomon, photographed in the 1950s at Hurlingham.

This page: The Editor, happy with his nice hat in Corfu (by Sheila Watts)

The Chairman showing off his Solomon grip at Surbiton (by Chris Roberts)

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Chairman's Column

I had prepared in good time a different version of this, my first column. And then we heard the sad news of the death of John Solomon.

Others will write with greater personal knowledge and more detail on the contribution that this great man made to croquet.

But it would be remiss of me not to reinforce the message that one of our heroes has departed from us.

My own connections with John are small but I think illustrate the extent to which he influenced our sport.

I first heard the news of his death via social media from a friend in South Africa.

John not only changed croquet in England but also took many steps to nurture the international scene, where he was also well loved.

John Solomon is of course famed for his eponymous grip; I adopted it early in my

playing career, and while I fail by a long way to demonstrate his skills levels, I cannot now imagine personally feeling comfortable with any other grip.

Clearly, John made significant technical contributions to the sport.

My final perspective would be the one of the man who still loved croquet enough to watch even when his poor eyesight made this difficult for him.

He would sit near the clubhouse at Southwick and pass comment, to the frequent amusement of those sitting nearby.

And at the end of the tournament he was always willing to give winners the thrill of receiving a trophy from someone all of us would wish to emulate, even in the smallest ways possible.

It is a privilege to have witnessed this and not just have to read about him in books.

Now I begin to serve as the latest of those who have followed John as Chairman of Council.

Unfortunately, I will make mistakes along the way. However, I am determined to learn to honour his memory while serving you by

ensuring that in the evolving croquet scene it both stays true to our traditions but is also viable in the age in which we live.

Life goes on and the new is inevitable, as shown when I was privileged to watch Judith Hanekom from South Africa become the latest Women's Golf Croquet World Champion towards the end of November.

It was sad for the CA to lose Rachel Rowe as the title holder, but I am sure John would have been impressed to see a female player exhibiting such brave play, and delighted to know that croquet is producing such vibrant international events.

John Solomon, we salute your memory.



Tim King



Croquet Association Membership ~ The Case for Change ~

by Jeff Dawson

As most of you will know, we are hoping to hold a **Special General Meeting**

next year (*provisionally set for Saturday 28 March*) to consider changes to the CA subscriptions and membership structure.

I have put a number of articles into the Gazette over the past year discussing why change is needed, but now seems an appropriate time to recap on why Council is making these proposals.

After all, we will be asking members to vote on allowing a modest increase to club subscriptions, and you need to be convinced that this is in the best interests of croquet in the UK.

Although I have now stepped down as Chairman, Council has asked me to continue considering all your comments and to present the proposals for change.

Why the CA exists

Firstly, I'd like to review what the Croquet Association is, and why it exists. Human nature being what it is, most people only tend to join as individuals when they have to, in order to play in tournaments. This has led to the general perception that the CA is for tournament players, and has little relevance to club players.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The CA creates the framework necessary for us all to enjoy the game we love.

It established and maintains the rules we play by, and the handicap systems we use.

It tests and helps in the development of the equipment, it runs coaching programmes, and provides coaching material for less formal coaching.

It trains and tests referees.

It ensures the availability of equipment through its shop.

All of these things are necessary for the game to flourish. We also provide the infrastructure for clubs to run tournaments, which I believe promote good play at all levels of the game.

Developing croquet

Even if you have never played in a tournament or gone on a coaching course, and have no wish to do so, the chances are that your game has benefited either through informal coaching or more

indirectly from watching those who have.

Over and above this, the CA has an ongoing programme of developing croquet.

It does this through publicity (albeit that this has been harder to achieve in recent years), and working closely with the federations to identify new opportunities that we can fund to provide new clubs and/or better facilities. Likewise we can help clubs that have run into difficulties (for example because of increased council rents).

An ongoing programme such as this is essential for the long-term health of the game.

We put about a quarter of our income (about £30,000) into the development programme every year.

It is, of course, true that one of the CA's aims is to promote competitive play, and we provide the structure for a tournament programme.

However, we can only do this by ensuring first that we have a sound base from which to build. It is also true that tournament players undoubtedly benefit more from the CA's activities than purely social players, if only because they tend to be far more active. It is therefore right and proper that they should pay a greater amount towards the upkeep of the game.

Who pays for it?

In the September 2013 Gazette, I analysed where the CA's income comes from, and where we spend it. I showed that 57% of the CA's income (excluding commercial activities and donations) comes from tournament players, even without including what they pay through their club subscriptions.

Yet the CA spends only 18% of its income on tournament related activities (38% if you consider the Gazette to be only for tournament players). Individually, an average tournament member contributes about £55/yr through club subscriptions, individual CA membership and tournament levies, compared to about £8 other club members contribute – i.e. they pay about seven times as much.

Yet as we've seen, the majority of CA spend goes **not on tournaments** but on

general infrastructure and of course our development programme.

Concern for the future

Council is particularly concerned about what is likely to happen in future years.

All the signs we can see from our surveys of players, as well as feedback from clubs and Federations, show that the croquet landscape has changed significantly over the last ten or more years.

It continues to change. We have fewer players who are interested in playing in tournaments away from their home club, and a growth of social players or those who play in Federation leagues only.

At the moment, the CA's finances have not been too badly affected. This is due in part to the loyalty of our individual members, many of whom continue to pay for membership long after they have ceased to be active tournament players.

However, we cannot expect this to continue.

Council anticipates that tournament-related revenue will begin to show a more marked decline if these trends continue, so action needs to be taken now if the CA is to continue to develop our sport, both to address the financial issues, and to try to reverse this trend.

Changes?

The current proposals for change were described in last month's Gazette. In summary, we are asking for the 'per capita' club subscriptions to rise by £1 per year above inflation over five years, while keeping them at the current levels for the smaller clubs.

We will also aim to reduce individual member subscriptions and/or levies so that tournament players are not paying more overall than they do now.

What about 'ordinary' club members?

At the same time as Council asks for your approval for the subscription increases, we think it is right and proper that we should recognise the contribution that ordinary club members are making to the game.

The CA needs to review what it does for clubs and the ordinary club member, and ensure it is kept relevant to them.

I know that Brian Wilson, who has recently





Awards deadlines are looming!

CA Office news by CA Manager, Liz Larsson

taken over the chair of the Marketing Committee, is keen to consult with clubs and Federations to get feedback on how we can better do this (contact Brian on 07970 922867 or email: brian@europaassociates.co.uk).

I also think it is important to ensure that club members have a voice in what we do.

Therefore we are proposing that they should become eligible for the privileges of membership, including voting rights and the right to enter tournaments.

You may well ask why the Council has not acted before to increase club subscriptions gradually over time.

The answer is that we are bound, by our constitution, to limit any increases in club subscriptions by no more than the rate of inflation. It requires agreement from our members to raise them any more than this.

I think there is now a very clear case that we should act to do so gradually over the next few years. The rate has been held steady at this level (after taking into account inflation) for the last twenty years, during which time many things have changed, including the CA introducing additional benefits to clubs such as the public liability insurance scheme.

However, it is always difficult to get people to agree to an increase in what they have to pay. That's why it is vital that all individual members and clubs who support the proposals make sure they vote in their favour when the time comes.

Make your vote count

In the next issue of the Gazette, I will lay out the exact proposals for voting. Individual and Member Club representatives will be able to vote online or by post if they are unable to come to the meeting where the issues will be discussed.

In the meantime, please continue to pass your comments back to me and thank you to those who have already done so.

I can assure you that although it is difficult to reply to everyone, all your views are being taken into account by Council in weighing up the options for change.

Club Awards

The Croquet Association has a series of Club Awards which are awarded to clubs which have enhanced their facilities. The awards are considered by the Development Committee and **the deadline for nominations is the 31 January 2015.**

The CA Club Awards are given at the CA AGM and, besides a certificate, a cheque for £250 is given to the club.

The CA makes awards biennially, in three categories, to clubs that have made exceptional progress in providing a good playing environment over the previous two years:

The Townsend Award is given every two years to a club with one or two lawns that has, in the opinion of the Development Committee, made exceptional progress in providing a good playing environment over the previous two years.

The Apps Heley Award is given every two years to the club with three or four lawns that has made most progress at a national or local level in the last two years.

The Millennium Club Award is given every two years to the club with five or more courts that has made most progress at national or local level in any of two of the previous three years.

To apply for any of the Awards, please download the Application Forms here: <http://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=/ca/download.html>

Coaching Award

Each year the CA recognises a coach who has, in the opinion of the CA Coaching Committee, provided outstanding service to croquet.

This award is called '**Coach of the Year**'.

Please send nominations to the CA Coaching Committee Chairman.

The closing date is 10th January 2015.

Nominations should be accompanied with a citation outlining the nominee's contribution to Croquet Coaching and a supporting statement from the Federation Coaching Officer.

These will be considered at the February Committee Meeting.

The Fixtures Book

The Fixtures book will be sent out to members, as in previous years, at the end of January/beginning of February, along with membership and handicap cards.

Clubs will be sent their copies, accompanied by membership renewal requests in early February.

Crowther Smith prints sale to aid Southwick lawns fund

Horace Crowther Smith (1873–1959) was a prolific sports illustrator and editor, as well as an excellent croquet player, **writes Ray Hall.**

He won the Champion Cup in 1914 (predecessor of the President's Cup).

He became the third editor of the Gazette (1937–1954), is also known for the first major book on golf croquet (1913), and possibly invented the game as we know it.

Before becoming editor of the Gazette, he edited various sports magazines and sold cartoons for publication.

Sussex County C C owns a total of eight of the originals including this self portrait and that of John Solomon on page 13.

They are available as A4 framed prints in

black frames with cream mounts and can be purchased for £16 each, or £90 for the set of eight prints, including UK postage.



Other frames, personal collection and overseas prices are available on application.

These prints would make an excellent Christmas present and can be viewed on line at **www.sussexcountycroquetclub.org.uk/** then follow the 'prints' icon.

All proceeds from the sale will go towards the club's ambitious plan to relay their lawns at Southwick, following more than 114

years of consistent use.

To order: Contact Peter Pullin on 01273 567215 or frogshole@talktalk.net.

Popular venues are key to maximizing tournament entries

Dear Editor,

In the August edition (*Gazette 351*), you said that the AC Men's Championship at Budleigh was relatively well supported with 14 entrants. Although the field was indeed 14 people, it was far from healthy. In the past ten years, the average field for the Men's has been just over 21 players, so 14 is more than a third below average – and the smallest field for the championship since 1976. That is worrying, not healthy.

In most contexts, poor attendance at croquet events can be very difficult to solve, but in this case, however, an easy solution is in reach. In the past ten years the Men's has alternated between Cheltenham and Budleigh. The average field at Cheltenham has been just over 24, the average at Budleigh just over 16.

That is a substantial difference – the field is 33% bigger when the event is held at Cheltenham, something the CA must not

ignore. The Women's Championship (just three entrants this year – the lowest since 1882!) is also better attended when it is held at Cheltenham, although the effect in that event is much more marginal.

I thought Budleigh was a lovely venue on my only visit there some years ago, and it is very unfortunate that its remote geographic location makes it less popular among players for some events. However it is surely more important that championships are well supported than that they are held at any particular club. The huge difference in attendance between the two venues cannot be ignored by the CA.

I understand that Cheltenham does not want to hold the Championships every year, and particularly not in years when it hosts the Open Championships. In that case, why not look at other venues? Hurlingham, Surbiton and Nottingham are three venues that could be considered; there may be

others.

While it is clubs' responsibility to bid for events, the CA could assist by encouraging clubs to bid and making it clear that it will be receptive to new bids to host the Men's and Women's. Perhaps, as compensation, the CA could look at holding other events at Budleigh more often.

It was reported that the Challenge & Gilbey was not well supported when it moved from Budleigh to Southwick this year – could that be held at Budleigh annually to improve attendance?

Overall, I think it is essential that events are held in venues that maximise attendance.

The most important thing is to get players playing croquet, and not to support any particular club, however lovely a venue it may be.

Nick Parish, Parsons Green CC

In praise of William

Dear Editor,

The front cover of the last issue (*Gazette 352*) showed an action shot of William Ormerod during a recent competition.

Apart from his very long association with croquet and the very high levels he has reached, there is another aspect that perhaps is not so well known is his keenness to help promote the game especially to newcomers. He was instrumental in getting the Swanage Croquet Club up and running by helping improve the skills of all our newcomers to the game.

Following a visit to friends in Sidmouth, we visited the delightful cricket club sea-front ground to find that, outside the boundaries, were many people playing croquet. Never before had we seen the game played and, during a break in the cricket, we went to see what was going on.

One gentleman was on the lawn and he picked his ball up walked to the edge stood on one ball and proceeded to hid the other some distance. Meanwhile his companion was doing the crossword puzzle!

At that time we realised that Swanage Cricket Club ground was not in use from Monday to Friday most weeks and we could perhaps play croquet on their outfield.

I persuaded the club's committee to allow this and Tom Yeates, our volunteer groundsman, agreed to cut and keep two lawns ready for play.

Knowing nothing about croquet, I purchased the book 'How to play Croquet' and found the contents helpful. I was then told that in the nearby village of Corfe Castle lived an international player and I should contact him.. I duly telephoned William and explained that we were going to embark on playing croquet, and my lack of knowledge but had bought the book. He told me the book had been written by his father many years earlier! William who was a member at the East Dorset club, offered to get some of their members to come and help us start playing. Tom Weston brought a group over and off we went.

Today we have over a hundred members, all of whom started out as beginners.

Throughout our first ten years, William has often played on club days and the games become coaching session with advice and playing tips generously given to partners and opponents alike.

All this has resulted in a very friendly club with beginners and mature players all having enjoyable games together.

Thank you William.

Wendy and Roy Smith, Swanage CC



Lambicaps have a major flaw

Dear Editor,

If I understand Jonathan Lamb's GC handicapping proposals correctly (*Gazette 532*), then a six-hoop start would be the maximum difference possible in a normal 13-point game, otherwise A Hacker would have got to seven hoops before they started, and would have already won the game.

Also, assuming that the difference between W Champion and A Hacker was six hoops, would the match start at hoop 7, and, if so, from where?

Vic Stilwell, Hamptworth CC

A more attractive AC game is needed . . .

Dear Editor,

With reference to Julie Horsley's letter (*Gazette 351*), I feel the lack of mid to high handicappers entering CA-listed AC tournaments is partly a due to new members of clubs mainly playing GC.

Many would like to try AC but are put off by the length of three-hour games and the long periods of sitting-out they observe when watching tournaments, and particularly A-class games. Additionally, AC takes longer to pick up than GC which is seen as a friendly social game, whereas AC is seen as a solitary experience.

Unless clubs introduce more 'friendly, interactive and speedier' forms of AC such as alternate stroke doubles, one-ball or 14-point on small lawns, this decline will continue. Do club committees actively encourage members to enter tournaments?

My own entry to the scene (now on the decline due to age-related decrepitude) was initiated in 2005 when Patricia Duke Cox (then a CA Development Officer), came down to Cornwall to open our new pavilion.

She explained the CA Fixture Book to me, including the fact that even as a 20 handicap player I would be welcome to try some tournaments. I certainly found this to be true and the ensuing years of tournament play have been, and continue to be, a most enjoyable phase of my life.

But as Julie says there are now very few like me, now an 11 handicap, playing in the D and E classes. I play both GC and AC and it seems to me, that unless we adapt there will be stagnation, for as throughout history, 'the times they are a-changing'.

Rosemary Bradshaw, Fowey, Budleigh Salterton and Cornwall CCs.

From our files intrigue

Dear Editor,

Frances Colman's articles from old Gazettes are intriguing. I seem to remember that the issues for 1914 and 1915 still carried surprising and unexpected advertisements for holidays in Menton, on the Côte d'Azur!

John Lindsay, Hurlingham CC

. . . How about this idea then?

Dear Editor, Association Croquet is a lovely game that I have now enjoyed greatly for nigh on 15 years. The traditional pattern for matches and club play is for 26-point games lasting, with time limits, three to four hours, during much of which you may be doing nothing other than sitting and waiting for your turn.

Most people looking for sporting opportunities now seem to want something that lasts a shorter time and much more continual involvement.

Cricket has faced this problem and come up with Twenty-20. I think croquet needs to do the same, and some friends and I at Nailsea have been trying out a version we call ten-shot croquet, the rules and rationale of which I share below. Try it and see what you think.

Ian Telfer, Nailsea CC

~ The ten-shot game ~

The aim of this variation is to provide a more flexible format which keeps both players involved for more of the game and can be played fairly for any chosen length of time.

The fundamental change is to add two laws to the game.

1. No turn shall consist of more than ten shots or fewer than two.

2. If the first shot does not make a roquet and finishes between the yard line and the boundary, the second is played from where it stops, (it is not put on the yard line as would normally happen).

In every other situation the rules are those of existing AC.

The purpose of the minimum of two shots is to ensure that each player can get started with their turn. It also emphasises the importance of setting up rushes.

The game can be declared finished after any time that occurs when both players have had the same number of turns.

This not only provides a flexible length of game but also eliminates the advantage that slow players can have in games with relatively short time limits.

In 14-point trial games, most lasted around an hour or less, and scores were much closer than usual, giving a little more tension to the end of the game.

Games can be treated like sets in tennis and can be played singly or in multiples which can help overcome the situation that one bad miss loses the whole match.

One other advantage we have found is that you have to be more imaginative in your play.

The pattern in conventional games is to set up a four ball break and then execute it to the best of your ability. Once the break is established you need only concentrate on carrying out a much practised routine.

With this version of the game, there is not much opportunity to use practised routines and you are constantly being faced with unusual situations.

Handicapping still provides a problem. In our trial games we have allowed bisques to be used to continue a turn but not allowed them to increase the total number of shots in a turn beyond ten.

Some people felt that calculating bisques as for a regular 14-point game gave too many bisques for this variation.

The only problem we have encountered is remembering to count the number of shots in your turn. Certainly to start with it helps considerably if (a) you count the number of the shot out loud as you take it and (b) the non-player makes the effort to count as well.

Dear Editor,

I wonder if anyone has drawn your attention to two items in the last edition which appeared on facing pages.

Were you perhaps posing to illustrate Mr. Paynters 1914 letter.

**Don Rutherford,
High Wycombe and Phyllis Court CCs**

Oh jolly well spotted gentlemen. Look though, I'm off the court awaiting my turn, and not being a slow-coach, you cheeky chaps! - Ed

Dear Editor

I loved your picture in the Gazette. Was this by any chance linked with Frances Colman's published archive letter find about the speed of the game?

**Richard Harris,
Ryde CC**





Badgers find chafer bug larder beneath Winchester's courts

Dear Editor,

Disaster has struck Winchester CC in the form of a family of badgers who have moved in nearby and decimated the lawns by digging up the turf looking for food.

All the local wise heads tell us it's the dry summer which has reduced the supply of their usual food and they have come looking for worms, bugs and anything else that wiggles, which apparently thrive about two inches below the surface.

Our badgers have found chafer bugs and keep coming back.

Unfortunately there's nothing we can do about them because they are a protected species, otherwise I might take my shotgun and give them a sore backside! But 'no can do', and there are heavy fines if you even give them a headache.

We have tried blocking-up where we think they come in our grounds, but they always find alternative entry routes.

One wonders if repairs are worthwhile because we could do a lot of work and then find the little devils dig it all up again.

So how can we deter them? Has anyone out there got any good ideas? We would be most grateful for any good suggestions.

Ivor Nunn, Winchester CC

More letters to the Editor

Right ball, wrong ball or no ball at all?

Dear Editor,

Oh dear! I see that that last issue (*Gazette* 325) had another query about GC wrong-ball rules.

I was playing at Hunstanton recently when the partner of the opposition striker played a ball when it was not his turn.

Quite correctly, someone quoted the rule book and said: 'rule 11c – wrong ball'.

However, rule 1e says that the owner of the next ball in sequence is the striker:

Surely then, there can, by definition, be only one striker.

So, if anyone else hits a ball, he cannot actually be called a 'striker' and therefore cannot commit any sort of hitting fault.

So, was a wrong ball played or no ball actually played at all - i.e. a non-striking fault requiring the appropriate penalty?

Tony Lee, Norwich CC

I think Tony may be confused and think a Wrong Ball is a 'fault'.

It is not.

Wrong balls are a kind of 'error' covered by rule 11, while non-striking faults are covered by rule 12 and striking faults by rule 13.

Three situations - three rules.

He is quite right that "if anyone else hits a ball, he cannot actually be called a 'striker' and therefore cannot commit any sort of hitting fault".

So this is exactly why the wrong ball errors are covered separately in rule 11.

To look at the case Tony describes, it seems to be doubles. Let's work through how the rules should be applied.

For simplicity, let's say Tony and his partner are playing Black and Blue, the 'Opposition Striker' is the owner of Red and the 'Partner of the Opposition Striker' is the owner of Yellow.

So if Blue was the previous ball played, Red is now due to be played as the striker's ball and the owner of Red is 'the striker' as defined by Rule 1(e). Let us call the owner of Red the 'Opposition Striker'.

However, Tony tells us that the 'Partner of the Opposition Striker' played instead. This is a wrong ball under rule 11(c) – not a 'fault'.

But which ball did he play? Tony doesn't say.

If the 'Partner of the Opposition Striker' had played his own ball, Yellow, then rule 11(c) (1) would apply: The balls would be replaced without penalty and now the 'Opposition Striker' would play Red correctly.

Alternatively, if the 'Partner of the Opposition Striker' had played any ball other than his own (i.e. Red, Black or Blue) then Rule 11(c)(2) would apply to impose the Full Penalty: Tony and his partner would then choose whether to have all the balls replaced or left where they lie, and would then re-start the sequence with whichever of their balls they chose.

Martin French and the GC Rules Committee

Dear Editor

Martin French writes in the last issue (*Gazette* 352) on GC wrong ball rules that: 'Many better brains than mine have so far failed to find a solution that works in all situations.'

And with the fiasco of the new rules introduced in 2013 and then dropped, fresh in our memory, new brains are needed.

I suggest the Gazette ask the readership to write the new wrong ball rules.

When is a right ball a wrong ball?

How complicated does it have to be?

How should that be written so that every club player understood?

Maybe the Rules Committee could offer a prize for the best suggestion?

Ulf Greder, Kingston Maurward CC

I have a lot of sympathy with Ulf's frustration.

However, lots of work over many years by experienced GC players in the CA and 5 other countries including USA, Australia, New Zealand and Egypt, has shown it is easy to come up with "simple" solutions – but in every case so far found there will be at least one situation that can arise which produces an undesirable outcome.

I haven't been involved in GC Rules until a year ago, so have no personal investment in either the 3rd Edition version, the 2013 Trial Wrong Ball law which Ulf mentions, or the new 4th Edition text – my role has been to get the new international text published in a form which the CA could use.

I am very happy to receive any suggested solutions to the long-standing "Wrong Ball problem", and also would be pleased to raise any workable ones with the International Committee.

Martin French and the GC Rules Committee

Alan Oldham remembered

The description of Alan Oldham's bench in the October *Gazette* 352 brought back many memories of Alan and of his contribution to Golf Croquet at a time when it was still often thought of as the poor relation of AC. It has given me the encouragement to add a personal tribute to Alan.



Words cannot do justice to describe all that GC owes to Alan Oldham. He worked quietly behind the scenes, helping, advising, always ready to share his wisdom. I first met him as a fellow member of the GC Committee and he became a wise and always-available friend. When I had problems, he supported me and gave me the strength to believe that I was doing the right thing and that it was necessary to do it.

His encouragement to me meant that the Guide to Golf Croquet came to fruition, that GC Coaching got off the ground and that I ran the first B class tournament unofficially at Cheltenham in 2004. I appreciated that he would often attend events personally to show his endorsement and I am sure that others have equally memorable recollections.

Alan supported the development of GC in the north of England and regularly refereed the Yorkshire Open, and was to officiate at the Ripon Spa Women's Open the year he died, which would have given it extra stature. He will be sadly missed because he was such an extremely fair and knowledgeable referee. He provided great input when new GC Rules were created, which was a mammoth task. As with all new versions of the rules, his efforts were often unappreciated by players but he bore unjustified criticism stoically.

I doubt that the majority of CA players are aware of Alan's contribution but there are many of us who benefited from his wisdom and advice and admired his support for Bill Arliss in developing this form of croquet.

We have been able to build on the foundations which Alan helped to lay, so that GC has now taken its place as an equal partner with AC. I am sure Alan foresaw this outcome and I am sorry that he is not here to celebrate its success.

Jennet Blake, Nottingham & Eynsham

Obituaries

Donald Cornelius

Donald Cornelius, a well known croquet player and father of Mac-player Debbie Lines, has died.

He had been ill for the past year with heart conditions but was also recently diagnosed with lung cancer, and he died peacefully at home in his sleep in front of the TV and in no pain.

Donald took up croquet in 1972 on a family holiday to Cromer in Norfolk, where an American-like version of the game was played.

He and his family played every year thereafter, until in 1985 he, his daughter and son all entered the Association Croquet week at Hunstanton.

Armed with the laws and no idea that breaks existed, they had a fabulous time thanks to the warm welcome they received from the club and other players.

Now interested in AC, Donald was one of the founding members of Newport Croquet Club in the late 1980's.



He was very involved with croquet in East Anglia and was Chairman of the Federation from 1990 to 1996. Moving to near Hunstanton in 2004, he continued to enjoy croquet until about three years ago.

His lowest handicap was 2.5 and he was immensely pleased to play for Kent in the Inter Counties a few times, and also to represent England CA against Switzerland in 1996 and 97.

Donald had a long career in the city of London as a stockbroker, finishing his career as a partner with James Capel. He was a founder member of ACTA (Association of Chartists and Technical Analysts) - now STA (Society of Technical Analysts) - and became a Freeman of the City of London. He will be much missed by all his family and friends.

**Debbie Lines,
Peterborough CC & Nottingham CC**

Joan Jackson

Joan Jackson died on the 22th August 2014 at her home in Cheltenham.

She was born in 1923 in India, daughter of Sir Arthur and Lady Griffin.

Sir Arthur was the chief engineer of India Railways.

At 11 Joan was sent home to boarding school and only saw her mother during summer holidays.

At the age of 17 she joined The Women's Auxiliary Service and drove canteen vans around Burma providing the soldiers with tea, home-made cakes, essentials such as toothpaste as well as a pretty face.

After the war Joan worked for Harrods and for Dulux.

Joan married Edgar in 1957.

They lived in Thirlstaine Road, Cheltenham, only a few hundred yards from

the Croquet Club.

They both became heavily involved in the club and were both responsible for dragging the Club and UK Croquet into the 20th century.

One of their most important contributions was the introduction of a licensed bar!

A number of members will have very fond memories of playing snooker at Joan and Edgar's house in the 70s and 80s.

Joan was a very keen gardener and this gave her a lot of pleasure in her later years.

My memory of Joan will always be of a true lady who was completely devoid of airs and graces.

Joan is survived by her children, Hermione and Gildart and grandchildren Christopher, Rory and Piper.

Andrew Hope, Cheltenham CC

Durham looking are for pastures new

Croquet Durham have had a great year. In addition to winning the GC Inter Club (Murphy) Shield - see page 17 - they also won the Croquet North Federation League with a 100% record. However they do now

have a cloud hanging over them because 2014 will be the last on their current lawns as they are being built on.

They are considering alternative sites, and say they will definitely be back next year!



The AGM was held in the Terrace Room at Hurlingham on Saturday 18 October, a very warm, but windy, day, as we discovered when the papers laid out on the chairs before the meeting suddenly flew round the room!

The attendance of 64, plus the President, Quiller Barrett, was similar to last year. The Chairman of Council, Jeff Dawson, gave its annual report in two parts, with an opportunity for questions and discussion after each.

The first part covered the general work of Council and its committees, focusing on:

- * Our narrow loss to New Zealand in the MacRobertson Shield and the appointment of Ian Burrige as International Performance Director to help us develop the top players of the future;
- * The introduction of the new edition of the golf croquet rules and trial of some changes to the handicap system;
- * The work done by Liz Larsson in the

CA office and shop, with Steve Mowbray replacing Liz Budworth, following her retirement, and Fiona Knee taking over from Jaimie Mussi.

* The retirement of Roger Bray as Hon. Treasurer, and the selection of Peter Death to succeed him.

Jeff himself was retiring after a busy two-year stint, and was thanked for being a very effective and consultative Chairman, along with David Maugham, Peter Death and Jonathan Isaacs, who had been chairing principal committees.

The second part of Jeff's report, outlined the position with the structural changes that had been extensively discussed following the report of the Federation Working Party.

The first phase, enabling federations to become members of the CA, was being voted on at this meeting.

Consultations about other changes, such as closer integration of federations, widening of the individual membership base (and consequent removal of club voting), and increases in subscription rates, had taken longer than he had expected, but he still hoped to bring proposals to a Special General Meeting in March, 2015.

Several helpful points were made in the subsequent discussion.

Roger Bray briefly commented on the 2013 accounts, the last set he would introduce, pointing out that that the surplus shown was artificially high, as the costs of the test tour were being charged to 2014.

He also noted that turnover was considerably higher, at about a third of a million pounds, than the income

and expenditure shown, as figures for the shop and tournaments were shown net rather than gross. The adjusted surplus shown by the management accounts was 2% of turnover, which looked a lot more reasonable.

Both sets of constitutional changes were passed with majorities comfortably above the 6-4 majority required, by both member clubs and individual associates, who will henceforth be known as individual members.

There were no contested elections and **the proposal that Roger Bray be elected a Vice-President (after 22 years as Hon. Treasurer and 39 years on Council) was overwhelmingly endorsed.**

He was presented with a copy of Robert Kanigel's book 'The man who knew infinity', which is to be rebound in a presentation binding, as a token of thanks for his outstanding contribution (photo top left).

The Steel Bowl for the most improved female AC player in 2013 was presented to Caroline Denny (Bear of Rodborough) and the Apps Bowl for the most improved male AC player in 2013 to Harry Fisher (Oxford University). The Spiers Trophy for the most improved GC player in 2013 had already

The CA Council Reports by Ian Vincen

CA Diplomas recognise those club members (and not just CA Members) who have given outstanding service to croquet, and have been active in club or federation affairs over a long period. The Diplomas have nothing to do with croquet prowess, and everything to do with help given to other members.

Brian Bucknall – Phyllis Court C C

Brian Bucknall has been at the heart of Phyllis Court Croquet for 37 years. He was co-opted on to the Croquet committee in 1977, elected to serve the following year, and became its chairman two years after that. He looked after AC competitions and social events for more than five years and, after a brief respite, returned to the committee in 1992 as Secretary, again looking after all things AC.

He then took on the Chairman's role for another three years in 1998, and saw membership numbers reach then record

levels. At that same year's AGM, Phyllis Court doyen 'Smokey' Eades recognised Brian's contribution over the previous 21 years, probably not reckoning on his near doubling of that service in the seasons to come. Two further five-year stints as AC organiser followed in 2002 and 2009 and, although AC numbers have dwindled in later years, he has been unwavering in his championing of the code. He has devoted countless hours to coaching AC beginners and improvers over many years, often at the expense of his own on-court playing time.

Eileen Buxton – Ashby C C

Eileen is a long-standing member who despite problems with her health is always bright and cheerful. She has been on the Ashby committee for many years, including a few years as Chairman. She has been a major contributor to the East Midland Federation committee for well over ten years, and is currently the Chairman.



Brian Bucknall, Richard Stevens, Quiller Barrett, Daphne Gaitley (Coaching Award), Bronach Reid,

AGM and meeting

t, Honorary Secretary

been presented to Harry Dodge (Budleigh Salterton), for the second year running and Daphne

Gaitley was given a Lifetime Coaching Award. Diplomas were awarded to Brian Bucknall (Phyllis Court), Eileen Buxton (Ashby), Colin Gregory (Letchworth); Roger Hayes (Bath); Julie Horsley (Sidmouth); Derek Humphrey (Northampton); Phillip Joseph (Hurlingham); Jeremy Marshall (Kingston Maurward); Alan Reeves (Bakewell); Bronach Reid (Hurlingham); Graham Rosser (Wellington); Wendy Rosser (Wellington); Brian Roynon (Nailsea); Cheryl Stephenson (Chelmsford and Bentley); Richard Stevens (Hamptworth); Vivian Thomson (Phyllis Court); Julian Tonks (York); David Tutt (Letchworth) and Roger Wood (Compton).

The President, Quiller Barrett, in his closing address, welcomed Ian Burrigde's initiatives and expressed the personal view that, in his experience with governing bodies of other sports, there was a huge disconnect between croquet's and its players, which was both embarrassing and unhelpful. He hoped that the structural reorganisation championed by Jeff Dawson would help towards remedying that, and urged those present to spell out the benefits of change and encourage their clubs to vote on the issues.

The Council Meeting

The Council meeting in the afternoon started by co-opting Brian Wilson, to chair the Marketing Committee, and Dave Kibble.

It elected Tim King as Chairman and Brian Shorney as Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Management Committee. Jonathan Isaacs was elected to chair the Development Committee; Martin French*, Handicap; Roger Bray, Investment; Jeff Dawson, AC Laws; and Brian Fisk, AC Tournaments. The other chairmen were unchanged and Roger Staples joined the Executive Committee.

The main items of discussion were about ball manufacture; GC handicapping, where a proposal was referred back to the committee for further consideration; and the proposed structural changes.

In the light of the vote at the AGM, it was agreed that Jeff Dawson should write to the federations asking them to join the CA. Indications from his consultations with them so far were that most would be willing to do so, but several did not want closer integration. Other points to emerge were that most of them were:

- * Not convinced that a single point of payment for clubs would give much advantage;
- * Happy with the idea that their member clubs should be required to join the CA, at least as affiliate members, but were less sure that their clubs would be;
- * Supportive of broadening the membership base and willing to accept



some rise in club subscriptions to finance that, and the wider distribution of the Gazette, though they differed in details of how these should be implemented;

* Not in a position at this stage to comment on proposals further in the future.

Although there were concerns about the timetable being tight, there was also a reluctance to lose momentum. Therefore, it was agreed that Jeff should put proposals to the December meeting of the Management Committee, for discussion at the January Council meeting, publication in the February Gazette, and a vote at a Special General Meeting at the end of March.

The full minutes, including the Chairman's report from Council and the President's closing address, are available to CA Members at <http://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1081> ~ *Since the meeting, Martin French has resigned the chairmanship of the Handicap Committee and, at the time of going to press, the post is still vacant.

Diploma Awards



Colin Gregory, Roger Wood, David Tutt
Cheryl Stephenson, Sylvia Thomson (for Vivian)

She is a qualified GC coach, and at both Ashby and other East Midlands clubs she has worked tirelessly to help numerous players to improve their game. In short, she would be a worthy recipient of a CA Diploma.

Colin Gregory – Letchworth C C

Colin Gregory has been an exemplary club secretary for Letchworth Croquet Club since 2009, and is invaluable to the committee by keeping an eye on future deadlines and events, as well as calmly resolving many issues before they become crises. He communicates well with club members via a regular newsletter, and has produced an informative booklet for new members to help them in their first few months.

Colin has, for many years, organised a series of Fun Doubles GC tournaments for club members and local community groups, which have become keenly contested highlights of the club calendar, raising

thousands of pounds for the club and involving both AC and GC players. These sessions involve up to 28 players on just two lawns several times a year and, by careful seeding, provide a great way to get inexperienced players feeling comfortable with a gently competitive format.

Colin is also an enthusiastic supporter and player in the inter-club matches, and provides a warm welcome for visiting teams. His efforts are an essential component in fostering an enthusiastic and welcoming environment within the club, and his organisational support has enabled the club to develop efficiently and effectively.

~

Diploma citations continue in alphabetical order on page 14 but unfortunately space prevents the publication of all 19 being carried in this one issue. Those remaining are being held over until the next issue (with apologies for those missing out this time - Ed)

John Solomon 1931~



John Solomon's life was celebrated at his funeral held near Worthing on Tuesday 4th November. The service was attended by croquet players from all over the country, and amongst the tributes was this from Stephen Mulliner.

A tribute to John from the croquet world should be one of simple gratitude. He emerged on the tournament croquet scene in 1948 when Croquet could be said to be hanging by a thread. Affected by the social changes brought about by the war, the restrictions of rationing and the loss of many clubs and about half of the Croquet Association's membership, it seemed to be a game almost exclusively for old people and doomed to fizzle out in the next decade or so. Fortunately for Croquet, John appeared and, aided by youth and exceptional ability, did much to keep the flame alive for the next fifteen years.

John made such rapid progress in his first two seasons and gave such a clear

indication of his potential that, when a vacancy arose, the selectors were inspired to ask him to join the England team for the 1950/51 Test series in New Zealand. This was despite the fact that he was only 18 at the time and had never played in a championship or won a major event. However, the decision proved to be a resounding success and John not only played extremely well in the Test

Matches but won the New Zealand Open Championship and Doubles Championship for good measure.

He returned home to begin a croquet career that, spurred on by his rivalry with Patrick Cotter and Humphrey Hicks, dominated the English game for over twenty years.

He amassed ten Open Championships, ten Men's Championships, ten Doubles Championships, nine President's Cups, four Champion of Champions victories, a Mixed Doubles Championship and two New Zealand Open and Doubles Championships, a total of 48 championship titles. It remains an extraordinary tally. He also represented England or Great Britain in the MacRobertson Shield on five occasions from 1950 to 1974. However, it is not for John's many successes that croquet players should be indebted to him. Instead, what mattered more was the manner in which he achieved his success and how he was willing to use the legendary status that his success brought him to promote Croquet.

Top sportsmen in any discipline are frequently idiosyncratic. Not all play their sport in a way that catches the eye and persuades the casual onlooker to stay and watch. John Solomon's special talent was to make croquet look easy, rhythmic and elegant. He was really good to watch and it was clear that some came to the major events to watch John Solomon play croquet rather than to watch croquet as such.

When the media could be persuaded to take an interest in croquet and see John in action, they could not fail to be impressed by the sheer quality of the man and his performance. Croquet might not be able to avoid the impression that it was a game

suitable for the elderly but, with John Solomon on court, it was obvious that it was also a game of great skill and precision and one for all ages. He was not content just to reel off the wins. He particularly enjoyed pushing the boundaries by trying new openings and tactics. Some of his feats still reverberate today - the three-ball triple

against Cotter in 1964, the jump over rover to hit the peg and beat Aspinall in 1969 and, perhaps most remarkable of all, his single-handed win in the 1972 Open Doubles Championship where he peeled the absent Cotter's ball through all 12 hoops - twice.

John Prince, another croquet legend who met John in New Zealand in 1963, said that the Solomon effect was to give the spectator the impression that they were watching a virtuoso playing a favourite piece of music, and that John was to croquet what Roger Federer is to tennis. The

resemblance to Federer is particularly apt in another important aspect of competition - demeanour on court and sportsmanship.

In play, John never lost his self-control, let alone his temper, and always treated the twin impostors of defeat and victory just the same. Like Dudley Hamilton-Miller, a slight pursing of the lips or, *in extremis*,



solomon - 2014

half-raising an eyebrow would be the only visible reaction to some misfortune. It was tellingly said of John that if you observed him walking off the court with his opponent you would have no inkling of the result. He was simply the consummate sportsman.

English croquet has always been fortunate that its best players generally feel an

obligation to put something back into the game.

John was no exception and threw himself into croquet administration and promotion.

He became Chairman of Council at the age of 30 and, later in life, served as President of the Croquet Association for 22 years from 1982 to 2004.

His legendary status drew many invitations from outside the UK and his visits to croquet clubs in the Channel Islands, France, Ireland, Italy,

South Africa, Switzerland and the USA were greatly appreciated; they played an important part in encouraging the game, and sometimes in assisting the birth of organised croquet.

In particular, he led the Hurlingham team that travelled to the USA in 1967 to play the Westhampton Mallet Club. He met the

late Jack Osborn, the founder of the US Croquet Association, and Jack expressly acknowledged the impact of John's strong advice that the most important first step in establishing a national croquet body was to develop a single, agreed set of rules.

From that flowed the formation of the USCA in 1981, the involvement of American players in international croquet, the first Test between the USA and Great Britain at Nottingham in 1985, the establishment in 1988 of the Solomon Trophy for annual competition between Great Britain and the USA, and the admission of the USA to the MacRobertson Shield in 1993.

As the senior international croquet statesman, John made a truly great contribution which fully complemented his illustrious playing career.

Now, in 2014, we can look back at a game established in almost 30 countries throughout the world, and a succession of champions who have followed in John's footsteps over the last 50 years. Nigel Aspinall, Keith Wylie, Robert Fulford, Reg Bamford and Robert Fletcher are the names that spring immediately to mind.

But it is very uncertain what the present position would have been and whether any of them would have become players and champions had the young John Solomon not taken up the game almost 70 years ago and played it so expertly and beautifully.

On behalf of the Croquet Association, the European Croquet Federation and the World Croquet Federation and, indeed, on behalf of all croquet players enjoying the game today all over the world, I close with just two words addressed to John himself. Thank you.

Stephen Mulliner, Vice President of the Croquet Association and Secretary General of the World Croquet Federation.

Photographs, clockwise from top left:

- (1) The youthful John Solomon.
- (2) With the Open Championship trophy in the 1950s.
- (3) Characterized by Horace Crowther Smith showing the eponymous Solomon grip.
- (4) With the winning 2013 Great Britain Solomon Trophy team.
- (5) In the back row far left, 'playing up' two years for Charterhouse School cricket 1st XV lead by England Captain Peter May.
- (6) Solomon the liveryman.
- (7) Posing for a publicity shoot at Hurlingham.

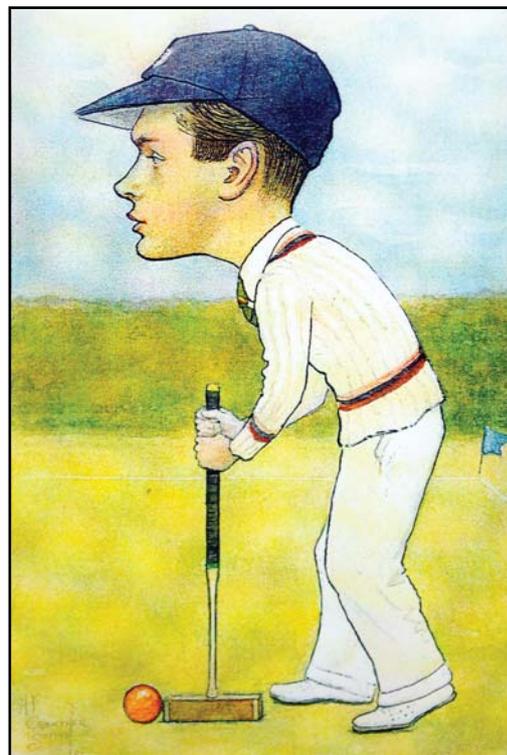


John Solomon dominated English croquet in the 1950s and 1960s

He won the President's Cup nine times (1955, 57, 58, 59, 62, 63, 64, 68, 71). The Open Championship ten times (1953, 56, 59, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68). The Men's Championship ten times (51, 53, 58, 59, 60, 62, 64, 65, 71, 72). He also won the New Zealand Open Championship twice (1951, 63).

He represented England and latterly Great Britain in five MacRobertson Shield tournaments, winning on four occasions.

He served on the Council of the Croquet Association between 1952 and 2004, serving as Chairman (1962 to 1964), Vice President (1976 to 1982) and President (1982 to 2004). In 2006 John Solomon was inducted into the World Croquet Federation Hall of Fame.



Roger Hayes – Bath C C

Roger Hayes joined Bath Croquet Club in 1996, having honed his considerable croquet skills at Woking Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, where he had been a committee member. He was elected to the Bath Croquet Club Committee in 2004, replacing Bob Whitaker as Chairman in 2006, a post he has held since. With others he has been instrumental in the Club's long-running and still ongoing lease negotiations with the Bath Recreation Ground Trust, which are of critical importance to the future of the Club.

His enthusiasm for the game and how it is played at the Club continues undiminished, and in his role as Chairman he has always held the interests of the Club above all else, emphasising the importance of good coaching and encouraging competitive play, both in AC and GC. He has been the Club's AC handicapper for some years, and is now a CA handicapper. He is also currently Chairman of the South West Federation.

Julie Horsley – Sidmouth C C

Julie Horsley has been a member of Sidmouth Croquet Club since 2007, prior to which she was a member of Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club for 14 years. Whilst at Budleigh she served on the committee from 1999 until 2005, and was secretary from 1999 to 2003.

For the last eight years she has been an outstanding secretary of the South West Federation, a role which she now seeks to relinquish.

In addition to these roles Julie has managed CA tournaments for the last eleven years. On average she manages six such events per year, mostly in the south and west but also further afield.

She manages with great efficiency, charm and – when required – with a firm hand. She is invariably asked back, and is under constant pressure to take on more such commitments. In addition Julie manages

CA Diploma Awards *continued*

some of Sidmouth's internal events, as well as being an active playing participant and referee. She acts as mentor and adviser to other club members who take on tournament management duties.

Derek Humphrey – Northampton C C

In his early life, during World War II, Derek took a liking to croquet without any instruction. He therefore devised a unique method of play, whereby he placed the top of the mallet handle firmly in his right armpit to keep good control.

Later he was conscripted as a Bevan Boy for the coalmines.

After retirement in 1992, and with no further play in the meantime, he joined the Northampton club, only to find nobody placed the mallet under the armpit. Changing his stance, he emerged as a good player, reaching a handicap of zero and going on to win a range of our trophies.

However, the justification for nominating him for the CA Diploma lies in his years of quiet service, organising club events and handling as many as thirty visiting groups for evening events each summer, bringing in considerable funds. He has regularly handled a paintbrush or hammer, and remains a cheerful and encouraging adviser and player.

Phillip Joseph – The Hurlingham Club

Philip Joseph, a retired successful bookseller, became Chairman of Croquet at the Hurlingham Club in 2005. During his three-year tenure, he oversaw and encouraged a considerable growth in the number of members taking part in both Golf and Association croquet.

Not content with his significant achievement at Hurlingham, Philip also

established a croquet club in Hyde Park, which attracted a new set of players to the game. Unfortunately bureaucratic problems led to the demise of the club, but a few of its members went on to succeed in national tournaments.

Jeremy Marshall – Kingston Maurward

Jeremy Marshall has been Chairman of the Kingston Maurward Croquet Club, Dorchester since 1992. He was elected when the Club was in debt, threatened with closure, and struggling with fewer than 20 members. Today, 22 years later, KMCC is thriving with some 50 members.

Any Chairman needs a good committee and Jeremy has always created a good atmosphere, and been very approachable. He has steered the Club with energy and enthusiasm through various stages of development (one example: the erection of a small Club House). He has also set handicaps, programmed events, organised coaching sessions and scheduled league matches within the South West Federation.

At all times Jeremy is bright and cheerful and leads by example. He is generous with his time, always ready to give help and advice to new and existing members on their game. He sets keen hoops, organises Club Fun Days and fundraising events for the Public, Local Organisations, and Wedding Parties.

It is through Jeremy's guidance and drive that Kingston Maurward has become a successful and friendly Croquet Club.

Alan Reeves – Bakewell C C

Alan approached the District Council, who managed Bakewell Recreation Ground, to discuss the possible formation of the Club, and the provision of space for two half-size lawns. The Council were not at all helpful, and it was only after Alan contacted his MP that progress was made and the embryonic Croquet Club provided with the lawns.

Alan contacted the Federation of East Midlands Croquet Clubs for assistance in borrowing hoops, mallets and balls, as well as the provision of coaching. He applied to "Sport for All" for a grant; this was successful, and enabled the purchase of hoops and mallets for the Club. With the Club attracting more members, Alan successfully applied to the District Council for two full-size lawns. These had to be located within the cricket outfield, and this met ongoing and somewhat irrational resistance from the cricket club. Alan was instrumental in addressing and resolving these issues. The club is now in its tenth year, with nearly 40 members. It would certainly not be so successful without Alan's vision and persistence, despite all the opposition over the years.

The citations for the other recipients (as listed in the AGM report) will be carried in the next issue of the Gazette in February.



From the perspective of most croquet players, the WCF's main role is being responsible for the holding of no fewer than eight different World Championships.

Six are singles events – the main and women's championships in both AC and GC and, in GC only, Under 21 and Over 50 events. The other two are the AC and GC World Teams Championship.

Apart from the two premier singles events, the ACWC and GCWC, which are intended to be held every two years, the rest are held every four years.

2014 has been a busy year with three events to administer and 2015 will see another three, namely the Under 21 GCWC and main GCWC in New Zealand in February and the Women's ACWC in England in July.

The administration of such events begins many months in advance and, this year, there has been added interest in the first implementation of the new rankings-based allocation system for world championship places. This was approved by the WCF in December 2013 and, happily, it has worked really well. It has made the allocation process much simpler and easier to manage, especially when dealing with the inevitable handful of withdrawals.

I reported on the AC WTC events held in Carrickmines and Southwick in May 2014 in

Window on the WCF

by Stephen Mulliner,
Secretary-General

the June Gazette.

Tim King was recruited to manage the Women's GCWC held in Cairo in November (see his report on the opposite page).

Many congratulations are due to Judith Hanekom of South Africa who, despite a poor start, battled her way through the knock-out to defeat four top Egyptian players and then take the title in a gripping five game final against Jenny Clarke of New Zealand.

South Africa now has the honour of providing the holders of both the GCWC and the Women's GCWC.

The other 2014 event was the second holding of the Over 50 GCWC which returned to Cairo in October. 36 players took part with half coming from overseas. The climate, the hospitality and the Egyptian Croquet Federation lawns were all excellent and five of the visitors qualified for the knock-out. There their luck ran out and the last eight were all home players.

Salah Hassan, a former double world champion in 1997 and 2000, returned

to near his best form to reach the final and then defeat the hard-hitting Hazem Mahmoud to take the title.

The other main WCF activities are development and communication with WCF Members. The Management Committee has set up a Development Sub-Committee, chaired by Gabrielle Higgins, with a remit to overhaul how the WCF can provide support for the development activities of the smaller and newer Members.

The WCF is not set up or resourced to evangelise croquet in countries where it is not played but can play an effective role in ensuring that new Members have easy access to helpful materials and advice.

In Europe, where the physical distances are reasonable, the WCF continues to organise coaching trips and organised coaches to travel to Germany, Latvia and Switzerland this year.

Communication with WCF Members is e-mail based and the Council has voted on twelve issues in the course of 2014.

Belgium has upgraded its membership from Observer to Associate and we are delighted to welcome Uruguay as a new Observer Member.



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Tel: 01772 743859 Email: pidcock@manorh.plus.com



Hanekom wins Women's GC Worlds



Manager Tim King reports from Cairo

Croquet in Cairo is different. Whether it is the call to prayer ringing out across the city, playing under floodlights, the lack of rain, ball boys and referees for every game, spectator friendly court configurations, or the enthusiastic Egyptian support for local players, the Women's World Championship had all this and more.

In light of recent political instability in Egypt, the Championship took place six months later than originally planned. This resulted in the country appearing much more at peace and with a general optimism about the way forward for everyone.

Unfortunately, England only contributed two players to the event (a poor contrast with nine all the way from New Zealand and the twelve who competed in the first Championship, which was in 2005, also in Cairo). In particular, Rachel Rowe did not return to defend her title, although as a busy young professional with bigger fish to fry (she is playing in the open GC World Championship in New Zealand in March), her decision was understandable.

Of the two England players, Sue Lightbody got into the groove without too many problems and played to her seeding by finishing second in her block. In contrast, though, Margaret Cowman (below), fell just short and thus went into the Plate, where she played very well to win the Plate block and had no problems in the semi-final.

Meanwhile, Sue did her part in the first round of the Championship knockout but then had to battle both an upset stomach and former Women's World Champion Iman El Faransawi.

One player really who suffered from unexpectedly

poor results during the block play was Judith Hanekom from South Africa. This performance, and her subsequent draw, led to a series of six matches against Egyptians.

She lost the first two (in the block) but then won through the knock-out against Manal Ali Mohsen (fifth seed), Marwa Moustafa (third place in 2011 and third seed), Iman El Faransawi (runner-up twice in addition to her title in 2007) and Abeer Moustafa (eighth seed) in order.

She was definitely getting better but, in contrast, Jenny Clarke of New Zealand, had only dropped two games in twenty (with no match defeats) and was looking imperious.

The final day of the Championship began with English success when Margaret Cowman won the Plate in three tight games. She has an inspiring story, as she has taken on croquet among various other sports since having a lung transplant.

After that, Egyptians won both the Bowl and the Shield but were absent from the Championship final between Clarke and Hanekom. The full commentary of the final is available on the CA website, and I summarise here.

Despite some big swings of luck with the peeling of an opponent ball on ten occasions, the overall battle was engendered by some excellent placement by Clarke, while Hanekom ran her hoops calmly and hit an impressive percentage of her shots from 14 yards and beyond.

Clarke had her chances and will be bitterly disappointed to end runner-up again, but Hanekom didn't crack under pressure and made new admirers through the bravery, skill and determination that she showed.

Cairo is definitely safe now and a fantastic place to visit to play croquet. WCF President, Amir Ramsis will always be very welcoming to any CA member who is interested to see how the game works in Egypt.



National GC B-L

Raby wins in last

Having won three qualifiers during the season, Worcester's Richard Raby was the favourite for this season's National B-Level Final, and he didn't disappoint.

Finals manager John Bowcott reports that twenty players, who had qualified at nominated club events, turned up at Hamptworth full of enthusiasm on the second Saturday morning of October. The weather for the weekend was a cause for concern for the manager, but in fact the most important parts of the schedule were completed in reasonable comfort.

Two blocks of ten were completed just before lunch on Sunday, and with the top two only to qualify for the knock-out it had been a tough haul. Leighton-Linslade's David Ball topped one block with eight wins, and Richard Raby (Worcester) edged out Mike Huxley (Guildford) from the second slot by virtue of his 7-6 win in their match.



The other block produced runaway leaders in Kath Wright (Long Eaton Park) and Les Heard (Northampton) with eight wins each, and again it was the head to head match, that Wright had won 7-6, that decided precedence as they both qualified.

Under potential pressure from both the weather and the light each semi-final was settled with one 19-point game. Heard beat Ball 10-3, and Raby overcame Wright 10-6.

2015 GC B-Level Series

The GC B-Level Series which leads to the National Final, has proved a great success since its introduction two years ago.

From a starting position of the grouping together a dozen existing tournaments at nine venues in 2013, The Series program has expanded as enthusiasm for the competition has grown.

The 2015 roster of tournaments now shows no less than 18 events hosted by 18 different clubs spread between all regions.

Joining The Series this season are Ealing, Northampton, Bath and Hurlingham, with the latter being one of four two-day events.

After two years at Hamptworth, the National Final moves to Hunstanton.

Level Series Final

hoop cliffhanger

The Final and the 3rd/4th place match were played as a 'best of three', whilst the non-qualifiers enthusiastically embraced plans to play in two reconstructed blocks (taking forward their existing results) in order to play for the 'other places'. However, soon after the end of the Final the weather really did close in, and even the most stalwart was willing to accept the end of the proceedings. Wright lost the first game of the 3rd/4th play-off, but bounced back to get the better of Ball by 4-7, 7-4, 7-4.

The final was even closer, with Raby taking the first game 7-2, Heard recovering to win the second 5-7 and, just as in the first National B-level Final last season, the final went all the way to the last hoop. Raby was the first to approach,



and took the chance that this presented with great calmness to win the title.

Throughout the two days the general standard of play was very high, and in the knockout rounds it was spectacularly so!

Very well done to all of the participants.

Thanks are due to Hamptworth not only for the excellent facilities but also for the constant attention to detail of Richard Jenkins and Janet Trueman. To them in particular the manager is most grateful.

es dates announced

| | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| May 2 & 3 | Sussex |
| May 11 | Watford |
| May 20 | Wrest Park |
| June 3 | Ealing (NEW) |
| June 10 | Northampton (NEW) |
| June 20 | Leighton-Linslade |
| June 27 | Colchester |
| July 4 | Hunstanton |
| July 9 | Bath (NEW) |
| July 11 | Bury |
| July 15 | Nottingham |
| July 18 | Middlesborough |
| July 25 & 26 | Hamptworth |
| Aug. 8 | Guildford |
| Aug. 14 & 15 | Phyllis Court |
| Aug. 22 | Ashby |
| Aug. 29 & 30 | Hurlingham (NEW) |
| Sep. 8 | Edgbaston |
| Oct. 10 & 11 | Hunstanton (Final) |

GC Inter-Club Championship

Dulwich are the top dogs again



Dulwich retained their National Inter-Club Championship title but were kept on their toes by a Watford team, some of whom were 'stepping-up' from winning the second-tier Shield competition last season, **reports John Bowcott.**

Indeed it was Watford who made a rapid start when Nick Archer and the fast-improving Jason Carley beat the more experienced Simon Carter and Pierre Beaudry in two straight doubles games.

Guy Scurfield hit back for Dulwich with a two-game singles win over Ian Parkinson, but Watford's Steve Dennis edged his singles rubber over Andrew Dymond on the 13th hoop of the deciding game.

Watford must have been the happier team at lunch but, after the excellent meal prepared by Woking Club members, it was Dulwich that came out the stronger for the decisive afternoon singles.

Carter and Beaudry avenged their morning defeat in two high quality ties against Carley and Archer respectively, in front of a burgeoning crowd.

The adjacent lawn also provided much entertainment with the morning singles being reversed. Scurfield won again and Dymond had success too as the 5-2 match victory was wrapped up.

Well done to all the players for an enthralling final and many thanks to Woking for being such splendid hosts.

Durham win Murphy Shield at first try

Croquet Durham is a small club in the north east of England. We only formed in 2008, and have less than 30 members, few of whom have played outside our region, **reports Chairman Roger Carpenter.**

So this year we decided that we would expand our horizons and entered the 'Murphy Shield'.

(This is the CA's second tier Inter-Club Competition, in which teams may field one player who has a handicap of 2, and the combined total of all four players' handicaps must not exceed 12 - ed)

Our first match was a local derby against Tyneside, which we were winning 4-2 when the rain arrived and we agreed to half the last game. At home again in the next round we beat a strong Ashby side 6-1, and then faced Kenilworth on the neutral Sheffield U3A ground. We coped better with that ground's slope, and worked into a winning 4-2 lead, but then disaster struck when our number one player Brian Johnson won

his match and lowered his handicap to 1, thereby making himself ineligible for the semi-finals!

A close on four hour doubles rubber

gave us a 3-0 lead at Nottingham, and Nigel Martin's afternoon singles win to secured our place in the national final. Coincidentally Nottingham was the venue for that final against Sussex County, where Martin and Andrew Carpenter



won their morning singles, but the doubles was lost, with Robert Wootton playing brilliantly for Sussex. Carol Brady won her afternoon singles, but both Carpenters lost, tying the score at 3-3 and leaving the fate of the trophy on the result of the remaining rubber between Martin and Sussex' David King.

At 2-5 down it didn't look good for Durham, but then Martin fought back and won at the 13th - we were the National Inter-Club (Murphy) Shield Champions!



107th South of England Week at Eastbourne

Thanks to a welcome sprinkling of late entries joining the band of regulars, the 107th South of England Week at Eastbourne was able to go ahead, after earlier fears of cancellation due to lack of support, **writes Roger Wood.**

Manager Colin Hemming deftly rearranged formats to give everyone plenty of games, and his own good play was rewarded when he emerged the clear winner of the A class singles (*top photo*).

Compton's Graham Pegley continued to impress with his consistent shooting, winning him the Devonshire Park Salver (*middle photo*) for the second year running, allowing him to add the handicap doubles with John Williams.

Another local, Richard Platt, playing in his first tournament, showed great promise in taking the Luard Cup, and John Swabey, who was visiting from Belgium, won the handicap singles (*bottom photo*).

The combination of fine croquet weather, excellent catering and competitive play make this a most enjoyable annual occasion, and it is to be hoped that more enthusiasts will be attracted to Eastbourne in future years to join in.

**With its classed and handicapped events,
The South of England Week is suitable for ALL playing standards
How about you in 2015?**

The 2014 winners

- Advanced Singles A (for the Ionides Cup) Colin Hemming
- Advanced Singles B (Devonshire Park Salver) Graham Pegley
- Advanced Singles C (Luard Cup) Richard Platt
- Consolation Singles (Brittain Porringer) Roger Wood
- Handicap Singles (Devonshire Park Cup) John Swabey
- Handicap Doubles X (Anna Millns Salvors) Graham Pegley & John Williams
- Handicap Doubles Y (Gilbert Spoons) John Swabey & Hilary Smith



The AC & GC All E are for everyone –

That is way above my level surely?

Not so! - The clue is in the title, they are for HANDICAP play and open to pretty well ALL standards, so please do consider an entry from your club.

All you need is four players to contest an eliminator at your own club ground for one of them to qualify and be on the way. . .who knows, perhaps even to the National Final!

It couldn't be easier to get involved and give your club players the opportunity to write their names in croquet's history books.

Now it is the season of Club AGMs and time to ask your club to consider an entry to either or both of the AC or GC events.

Full details will appear in the 2015 fixtures book and so ask your Secretary to look out for the entry forms that accompany the copy that goes to his/her address.

The GC competition has seen an increase in participation in the last three years but the historic AC event has seen a decline in entries, which is a great shame.

Traveling to far off places is often seen as a hurdle these days but Area Finals are geographically spread to minimize such difficulty.

It is possible that your AGM took a

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England Handicaps and that means YOU

decision several years ago not to enter the All England(s) and perhaps the possibility is even not discussed any more. But as time has passed you may now have new members who have never heard of the All England competitions and who would enjoy the challenge.

Both competitions have been won in the past by players of all handicap grades but improving players often do particularly well.

Recently some changes to the entry conditions were made which even allowed individual players (who perhaps couldn't muster a 'gang of four' from their own club) to enter under certain circumstances.

If you are keen and find yourself in that boat, please call either of the competition directors whose details follow below.

Please ask your club to include a possible entry as an AGM agenda item and we hope that we can welcome YOU into the 2015 All England Handicap Competitions.

Peter Wilson, Director (AC)

01253 735266 peter@palnet.co.uk

Chris Roberts, Director (GC)

079 7378 7710 info@kickphoto.co.uk

'Ark' the herald . .

(it's a Carole!) ~ "I'll get my coat" (Ed)

Surbiton's end of season advanced handicap tournament The Ark, was won this year by Carole McLoughlin (handicap 10) of Ealing, who beat an impressive field of 19, **reports Martin Berger.**

With two courts out of action for long-term maintenance, the tournament was soon full this year, helped by a substantial entry from Scotland. The visitors played well on court conditions that were described as fairly comfortable, though there was a wet spell on the Saturday that was thought by some, to give less discomfort to the Scots!

At the end of day one, Janice and Hamish Duguid (5 and 9 respectively) were undefeated on three wins, along with McLoughlin who then beat both in turn on day two to win the event.

Alan Wilson (3) managed a triple peel in his final game and achieved a cut to 2.5.

He had already achieved his gold award but said this was his first TP from a leave, rather than an easy position following an opponent's breakdown. So well done him!

AC Inter-Club Championship picture parade

Colchester retain their top AC title



Bowdon win the second tier Longman . . .



. . . and the Secretary's Shield too!



Nottingham win the third ranked Mary Rose for the fourth time



Photographs: CA President Quiller Barrett hands over the silverware at the Club finals day, Nottingham enjoy some mood lighting and CA Secretary Ian Vincent presents his cup with runners up Oxford Uni joining in.
(By Samir Patel and David Brydon)

| Championship | Play | Handicap Restrictions |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Inter-Club Mary Rose | Level Advanced Level Advanced | None Players with handicaps of 0 or greater Teams must have a gross handicap of at least 4 |
| Longman | Handicap | Players with handicap between 3.5 and 20 Teams must have a gross handicap of at least 24 |
| Secretary's | Handicap | Players with a maximum handicap of 20 Teams to have won their Federation title the previous season |

Coaching Corner

Roger Staples asked top New Zealand coach Jenny Clarke
"What to do when my form declines?"

This can be a coach's dilemma and when it raised on the Nottingham Board discussion forum earlier this year, Jenny Clarke offered some sage advice .

Jenny is the current Women's AC World Champion, runner-up at the recent Women's GC Worlds and a top NZ coach.

Here she shares her contribution with the Gazette.

Having had a lot of experiences of patches of bad play, I think I can probably comment with some ideas of what might be useful.

Before we start, ask yourself the following questions, and think gently about the answers, for the most recent period when you experienced a bad patch:

- * Did you have a precise aiming point?
- * Had you stalked every ball from a few yards back?
- * Did you see your mallet hit the ball?
- * Did you follow through in the direction of your target?
- * Did you play a bad shot, or series of shots, at some stage and then dwell on them as the game progressed?

Having had a bit of honest reflection, perhaps remembering some things you should be doing, is a good start. The next thing to think about is why things went wrong: crosswind, 'the yips', someone annoying you before the game, quality of the grass, something about your mallet – these are all distractions. Now is the time to put them aside, as it's not their fault!

I also tend to reject helpful players who offer up excuses for me – blaming bad play on something random doesn't fix the problem. Asking yourself the aforementioned questions and going back to basics goes a long way towards making you functional, even during the worst bad spells.

The basics are, to me:

1. Aim. Go back

about four yards and get in line with where you want to hit your ball. Preferably choose a blade of grass where you want to aim, or a spot just behind a target ball if you are aiming at a ball (or a blade of grass an inch through a hoop you want to run – I find if I aim at the middle of the jaws of a hoop it too often ends up there!). It's at four yards back where I get ready for a shot – and this includes gripping your mallet with your hands where they're going to be when you hit your ball. When your game is off and you're feeling frustrated, this is one of the first things to go.

2. Stalk your ball. Walk up to it in line with where you're aiming. Have your mallet ready to strike the ball, and focus on your ball and the point you're aiming at. Starting from so far back feels strange at first, but I find the main benefit is that I more often than not arrive with my feet at the right distance from the ball. Starting from way back also helps to line things up accurately. Since you have already taken aim and have your grip ready, you should be relaxed and concentrating on hitting the ball by the time you arrive at your final stance. If something is wrong, or your head is full of negative thoughts, it's no problem – acknowledge them, set them aside, and go back to step 1.

3. Watch the mallet hit the ball. When you swing, the most crucial point is to see your mallet hit the striker's ball. Whenever I play a rubbish shot I try to ask myself, "Did you see your mallet hit the ball?". If your answer is "I think so" – it's probably a no! This is basically my cue, whereas others use "keep your shoulders still", "keep your head still", "keep your eyes over the ball", "keep your head down"... – if you watch your mallet hit the ball, most people find their body parts stay in the right place.

4. Keep your body still when hitting the ball. Of course you have to move your arms, pivoting mostly at the shoulders. Also you can have a bit of flexing at your knees, but beware that too much movement is something that can let you down big time, when you're feeling nervous (I speak from experience!). Rehearsing the stroke is good

for getting both your balance and your timing right. Are there any pro golfers who don't rehearse every stroke? One of the key errors likely to cause a bad stroke is rushing it. Make a controlled practice stroke part of your routine. I'd say avoid excessive body movement, but in a big roll stroke in particular, your body is going to need to be able to move quite a lot. By rehearsing the shot you can try to make sure you are still going to be balanced as your centre of gravity moves.

5. Follow through deliberately in the direction of your aim. I told a beginner this last week – she was playing wafly little shots that dribbled left or right of her target. I asked her to follow through as though her mallet was the thing that had to hit her target. She responded with three consecutive centre ball contacts! Again, feeling 'off your game' can often result in more and more 'pokey' play, where you prod at the striker's ball. Learn to follow through smoothly and in the direction of your aim. If someone were to photograph you at the finish of your swing, you'd hope that the mallet was reasonably high off the ground, and the shaft and head were pointing directly at your target.

So, when you're having a bad patch, think about these five points: aim from about four yards, stalk, see your mallet hit your ball, keep your body relatively still, follow through in the direction of aim. You might miss more than you want to, but you'll hit a lot more than you would otherwise!

Good luck! ~ **Jenny Clarke**

~
Congratulations to the following who have all earned their Club Coaches badges since my last column:

Colin Walls (Sidmouth), Frank Collins (Caterham), John Harris (York), Tom Banfield (Middlesbrough), David Brydon (Nott'ham), Jean Cobbold (Cheam), Dr Charles Corker (Hassocks), Hester Henebury (Bath) and Dennis Crossland (Sheffield).

~ **Roger Staples**



Photographs - Top: The author Jenny Clarke can juggle croquet balls as well as hit them straight! (by P and G Roberts)
Left: David Ball stalks and takes aim. Right: Oliver Rice displays a really full follow through (both by Chris Roberts)

The Croquet Academy at Southwick has announced its 2015 programme, which includes four new courses.

GC Advanced Play, led by Stephen Mulliner. This course is ideal for GC players aspiring to play in A & B level tournaments, and is the next stage after the GC Improvers Course. Content will include the mental approach and essential sports psychology; basic and advanced playing techniques and associated practice routines; the principles of GC tactics, and understanding the tactical decision tree.

Croquet Psychology – Get The Mindset Edge, led by Rich Waterman. Rich is a croquet player and practising Sports Psychologist, and this course is ideal for AC and GC players who want to improve their performance in competitive play. 80% of sports performance is mental. Content includes preparing for a match, managing emotional states in play, focus, maximising your chance of shot success, dealing with bad shots, becoming a more effective competitor, how to model the best players, and how to improve your game when you aren't even on the lawns.

Croquet Academy Courses for 2015

GC Improvers Follow-up Course, led by Daphne Gaitley. The demand for GC coaching is improving, and feedback from the 2014 courses identified a need for a follow-up course for the GC Improvers Courses run in April and May. This will be a one-day course run in June, and is open to all players who have attended a GC Improvers Course.

AC Break-Building Without Bisques,

led by Richard Jackson. This course is ideal for those AC players who want to improve their skills at converting a hit-in into a three and then a four-ball break without using bisques. The course is designed for those who have attended a Development Course in Handicap Play or a Bronze Course, and is a useful prelude to Advanced play.

A full list of courses is detailed below.

To book: www.thecroquetacademy.com or complete the application form in the CA's Fixtures Calendar.

| Date | Course | Lead Coach | CA member | non-member |
|-----------|---|------------|-----------|------------|
| 14-15 Apr | AC & GC Coaches qualification | C Jones | £35 | £45 |
| 14-15 Apr | AC Improvers | F Low | £35 | £45 |
| 18-19 Apr | GC Rules & Referees qualification | C Jones | £35 | £45 |
| 18-19 Apr | AC Intro & development in advanced play | N Polhill | £47 | £57 |
| 20 Apr | GC Improvers | D Gaitley | £20 | £30 |
| 20-21 Apr | AC Beginners | K Minchin | £35 | £45 |
| 22 Apr | Croquet Psychology - <i>get the mindset edge</i> - | R Waterman | £25 | £35 |
| 25-27 Apr | AC Triple Peel | C Jones | £70 | £80 |
| 28-29 Apr | AC Development in handicap play | F Low | £35 | £45 |
| 30 Apr | GC Advanced play | S Mulliner | £25 | £35 |
| 6 May | GC Improvers | J Hoptruff | £20 | £30 |
| 12-13 May | GC Coaches qualification | D Gaitley | £35 | £45 |
| 5 June | GC Improvers follow-up | D Gaitley | £20 | £30 |
| 10 June | AC Break Building Without Bisques | R Jackson | £20 | £30 |
| 24 June | AC Beginners & improvers follow-up | F Low | £20 | £30 |
| 13-14 Aug | AC High Bisque Tournament (<i>with special supervised event for very high bisquers</i>) | F Low | £26 | £36 |

A Year of Lawn Maintenance

by Duncan Hector

In the last 12 months I have been involved in supplying nutrition for 20 croquet clubs with 48 croquet lawns.

These vary from small one-lawn clubs to large four and five-lawn clubs. This is a large pool of lawns, and provides a valuable way of comparing programmes and soil conditions. For 'Do it Yourself' clubs the cost of maintenance is usually a major factor, and annual programmes have cost as little as £185 to £500 per lawn.

At the higher end, clubs are using Growth Regulator, Worm and Leather Jacket control, moss killer, liquid biofeeds and sophisticated water management products to counteract dry patch.

Equipment and storage facilities are also a limiting factor for many. The best set-up is to have a lawn tractor such as a Countax, which can be used to tow a boom sprayer and a sarrell spiker. For mowing, an integrated grooming reel will help lawn speed, and pick up dead organic material from the surface – an example would be the Allett Tournament mower.

The control of thatch is very important, and in recent times it has been fashionable to beat the hell out of the grass with scarifiers. However, a different method can be used, and a non-disturbance approach is promoted by the Sports Turf Research Institute. Thatch is dead organic material, and it can be used by the grass plant as nutrition; to do this, the organic matter has to be converted into a usable form by composting it in situ.

This composting is done by bacteria and micro-organisms and, just like us, they need supplies of oxygen and water to be active.

So, aeration is very important. The best method is using thin tines on a monthly basis when the ground is soft enough, and the sarrell spiker is ideal for the purpose.

Duncan Hector

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Playing croquet for twenty-four hours non-stop – how difficult would that be? Camerton and Peasedown committee member Patrick Knight decided to find out and to raise funds for his club's development at the same time.

Brian Wilson takes up the tale:

On Thursday 9 October, it was a clear night and a full moon shone down on Camerton and Peasedown's 24 hour croquet marathon.

Golf croquet doubles would be the order of the day (and night) and Patrick Knight intended to play right through with ever changing partners and opponents.

The marathon started at 1pm and was

Day and Knight ~ 24 hours ~ of croquet madness

straightforward enough, until the arrival of evening signalled the provision of a set of floodlights to aid the continuation of play.

Skills were tested under this new and strange environment as, despite the lights, the darker balls still became 'invisible' and we realised that we should have foreseen the need for fluorescent white lines!

The weather was fine at the start and the rain kept away during the night, but it did get colder and colder.

Players were noticed pulling on extra layers with each game and several handmade beanie hats came to the fore.

As dawn broke, the sun illuminated the woods that border the club's four lawns and the rolling Somerset countryside – it really was a beautiful sight.

Yet the players kept their minds on the game in hand and soon enough 'full English' breakfast was sizzling away thanks to a busy band of stalwarts who pitched up to support the event.

This was typical of the members of this



sociable club, 30 of whom made it on to the court at some stage.

It was one heck of an experience, especially for those who had been willing to play with Patrick at two in the morning!

Hero Patrick played in 29 consecutive games, only allowing himself occasional very short comfort breaks, and at the end of the twenty-four hours he was exhausted.

He had enjoyed himself, however, as had all involved.

On top of that, Patrick actually won 70% of his games, and the event, that was his brainchild and one for which he made all the arrangements, had raised £1,032 for the club. *Well done Patrick, you are a star!*

Focus on the EACF

Ipswich beat Northampton 10-6 in the East Anglian Federation Level Play Final, **reports Terrey Sparks.**

In the absence of the League Manager Jason Carley, who was absent with other playing commitments, this final was managed by Terrey Sparks, Federation Tournament Organiser, and hosted for the first time at Chelmsford & Bentley CC.

The finalists were winners of the Federation's two area leagues and fielded very evenly matched teams with the same aggregate handicap of just 4.

At lunch there was nothing between them at 4-4, but the break favoured Ipswich who won the third round to nil for an 8-4 lead, which meant that they only had to half the fourth round to make that lead unassailable.

Northampton lost the next game to finish but were not going to give up the fight that easily and quickly picked off the next two, leaving the score 9-6. So if they could win the remaining singles rubber, they could take the match to the doubles round to decide.

That game between David Crawford and Peter Stansfield was, understandably, a rather tense affair and after a slow start the former had his nose in front at 5-4 but with both his opponents' balls in hoop-running positions and his own miles away. Crawford hit a 30 yard shot, aimed at clearing



Stansfield, but unexpectedly ran hoop 10 giving him a 6-4 lead from which the Northampton man could not recover. Game, match and cup to Ipswich (above).

~

In the EACF's Handicap League Final, Hunstanton (below) beat Maldon Pavilion 12-6, and St Albans (bottom) won a three-sided AC Final to retain their title ahead of Colchester South and Peterborough.



Help the 'The Bears'

The Bear of Rodborough CC is the latest in a list of clubs which have been forced to find new premises., **writes Robert Moss.**

They were given notice to quit at the end of 2014 by The Bear of Rodborough Hotel which is embarking on a building development which will encroach onto the croquet lawn.

It is unlikely the club will have a new venue ready to play for some time and in order to keep members together during the interim; they would be delighted to receive invitations from other clubs for friendly games or matches. The club is putting together a programme of visits for the 2015 season including day trips to nearby clubs and weekend visits to those further afield.

Groups of 2-16 players with handicaps ranging from 1-24 could be organised.

The club will continue to enter leagues but will play all their games as away matches until a new lawn is found.

The Bear of Rodborough Croquet Club was so named because of its relationship with the hotel, but as they have now left, the club has been rebranded 'The Bears' which they thought this more appropriate than 'The Bear Croquet Club' which could have resulted in some unusual requests for membership!

To help The Bears, please contact Robert Moss on robert.moss444@btinternet.com

Bowdon remember with roquets for a poppy

Inspired by the Tower of London poppy installation, Bowdon CC ran a very enjoyable Charity Roquet Tournament in early November in aid of the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

The weekend event took place at the conclusion of the club's One-Ball tournament that day, and resulted in a tie between Alan Mayne and Sylvia Steer.

Each scored 13 roquets from 24 attempts at different distances, and the tie was later resolved in Alan's favour when he won a play-off 6-5.

Thirty-three members answered the call to enter by making a donation to the appeal, and then attempted to roquet a ball at seven, 14 and 21 yards.

Together with additional contributions, Bowdon were pleased to raise a total of £225 for this worthy charity.

A report from Bowdon's website tells that the trophy for the event, consists of one of the ceramic poppies currently on display at the Tower of London, and will not be available for presentation to the first winner until about the end of February.

It is presented to Bowdon Croquet Club to mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I.

'A tribute to the fallen, honouring not only those of the British Commonwealth, their comrades-in-arms from Belgium, France and many other allied nations, who willingly made the supreme sacrifice in that and other conflicts since then.'

Ivor is still seeing off younger pretenders

Belated congratulations are due to Ivor Nunn of Winchester CC who, at 89 years young, won the Hamptworth high bisquers tournament (for handicaps 16+) back in the summer.

Ivor was far too modest to mention it to me on the couple of occasions that I've seen him since then (writes editor Chris Roberts).

So now that I've found out, for the record at last, here he is, pictured receiving his prize from the host club's Diana Stevens.



CA Officers

Elizabeth Larsson

Manager

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



Dr. Ian Vincent

Hon. Secretary

21 Cedar Avenue, Beeston
Nottingham NG9 2HA
0115 925 3664
ian.vincent@cantab.net



Quiller Barrett

President

10 Frost House, Chesham Rd
Berkhamsted
HP4 3AY
quiller3@gmail.com



Dr Tim King

Chairman of Council

17 Hospital Street
Tamworth B79 7EE
01827 703620
tmk@ntlworld.com



Brian Shorney

Vice-Chairman of Council

Cagebrook Mill, Clehonger
Hereford HR2 9TQ
01981 250521
brian@shorney.net



Peter Death

Hon. Treasurer

252 Hockley Road, Hockley
Tamworth, Stafs. B77 5EZ
01827 251738
peter.j.death@gmail.com



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CA Council Committee Chairmen

Executive

Tim King tmk@ntlworld.com

Management

Brian Shorney brian@shorney.net

AC Laws

Jeff Dawson jeff.p.dawson@gmail.com

AC Selection

David Maugham dmaugham@gmail.com

AC Tournament

Brian Fisk master@brianfisk.net

GC Rules

Martin French martin.french@btinternet.com

GC Selection

Stephen Mulliner snmulliner@goolemail.com

GC Tournament

John Bowcott bowcott@hotmail.com

Handicap

Vacant

Coaching

Roger Staples staplessteeples@live.co.uk

Development

Johnathan Isaacs johnathanisaacs@btinternet.com

Equipment

Martin French martin.french@btinternet.com

ICT

Ian Vincent ian.vincent@cantab.net

International

Ian Lines ian.lines@atkingglobal.com

Investment

Roger Bray brayrw@tiscali.co.uk

Marketing

Brian Wilson brian@europaassociates.co.uk

Publishing

Strat Liddiard liddiards@doctors.org.uk

CA Federation Representatives on Council

Croquet North

01642 712551

Charles Waterfield

cwaterfield@btinternet.com

North West

01253 735266

Peter Wilson

peter@palnet.co.uk

Yorkshire

01484 716663

Anna Giraud

eag@giraudnet.co.uk

East Midlands

01623 558650

Bob Thompson

robert_thompson9@sky.com

W.Midlands & Wales

01743 243532

Brian Christmas

bchristmas60@gmail.com

East Anglia

01553 770390

Terrey Sparks

tds3elm@aol.com

Southern

01794 322209

Brian Fisk

master@brianfisk.net

South West

01249-783012

Brian Shorney

brian@shorney.net

London & South-East

020 8789 7707

David Mooney

adavidmooney@sky.com

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