

The

Issue 355 April 2015

CROQUET

Gazette



**History is made:
All club players
to get
CA Membership**



From our files

researched by Frances Colman

10 years ago - 2005



Klim Seabright, the **new Administrative Secretary of the CA**, should now be settled in to the office in Cheltenham. On behalf of the readers we wish him a long and happy tenure in the post.

~

Croquet on TV – Viewers of ITV's Midsomer Murders will have seen an intriguing choice of murder weapon in an episode screened in March. The victim was staked out with a set of hoops. Vicious indeed.

~

Congratulations to the Editor, James Hawkins, who has been awarded the title of **Coach of the Year 2004**. . . he is to date, the only holder of all five CA coaching badges, having qualified as CA Club coach, GC coach, and AC coach at Grades 1, 2 & 3.

~

An Expensive Defeat – (Roger Croston spotted this passage in a Daily Telegraph obituary) . . . "Major-General Sir James Eyre enjoyed a game of croquet and was not the sort of man to refuse a sporting wager. On one occasion (in 1966) in Singapore, the stakes started at half a crown a hoop and doubled with every successive hoop. Eyre lost £64 on the final hoop to his opponent.

This opponent, dismayed at taking such a large sum off a friend, but confident that there wasn't a restaurant on the island whose prices would make a big dent in his winnings, said to Eyre, "Dinner is on me Jim. You order the best one that money can buy". Eyre planned the dinner like a military exercise. Caviar was flown in from one country; the best claret from another; and, when the reckoning was made, Eyre's friend discovered to his chagrin that he was out of pocket!"

~

Change of Editor - Well, this is it, three and a half years, 27 issues and now my last few paragraphs as editor of the Gazette. . . I hand over – or rather back – to Gail Curry, who assumes the role starting with the next edition. Those of you who were around . . . will remember Gail's previous stint (as editor) for seven years. I wish her all the best. James (Hawkins)

50 years ago - 1965



Miss D.D. Steel – The death of Dorothy Dyne Steel on January 22nd in her 81st year has deprived our game of one of the most notable figures and formidable players that croquet has ever known. From 1922, in which she won the Beddow Cup on the first appearance in the competition, right down to the outbreak of the war in 1939, she was probably the most infallible 'machine for victory' in the history of the game. To be drawn against Miss Steel at this time elicited the same gasp of dismay as did a similar fate in drawing Humphrey Hicks in the late nineteen-forties or does drawing John Solomon today... We shall not see her like again. M.B.R. (Maurice B. Reckitt)

~

The Council desire to set on record their sincere appreciation of the great services rendered to the Croquet Association by **Brigadier Stokes-Roberts** as Chairman and member of the publicity committee during the last ten years

~

Dear Sir, (*updating readers on his writing of the **History of Croquet***)...This has been completed down to 1950, and runs to about 700 pages. My desire is to take the work to about 1967, which year has special significance in being the centenary of the tournament recognised as the first 'Open Championship'. It will also mark the 70th anniversary of the formal foundation of the Croquet Association, and seems to suggest a suitable termination of the work. When I shall be able to reach this point I cannot at present foresee – or even whether I shall survive to do so. If not, the task will be finished by another hand. The typescript is stored in a series of files in the CA office... Maurice B. Reckitt.

(*Reckitt's work is still stored at the CA office, and may be viewed by members on appointment. I have just finished reading 'The History of Croquet' by D.M.C. Prichard, which though unconnected with Reckitt's writings, is inspired by them, says the author. It is a fascinating account of the origins of our sport, through its golden, turbulent and resurgent periods. It's available on Ebay and I highly recommend it – Ed.*)

100 years ago - 1915



The C.A. Gazette will, for the present, be issued approximately at monthly intervals. (*It had hitherto been a weekly publication.*)

~

CA Fixtures 1915 - The Council have decided to make no preparations for carrying out the usual Association meetings as long as the war conditions prevail. They hope, however, that circumstances may arise which will enable some tournaments to be held during a part of the season.

~

Croquet players and the war -

We regret to read last week that Capt. R.Y. Sidebottom, who was reported wounded and missing shortly after the outbreak of the war, is now unofficially reported killed. Capt. Sidebottom joined the Lancashire Fusiliers in 1901 and obtained his captaincy last July.

Rev.F.B.N. Norman-Lee, S.C.F., has been Chaplain to the Forces for more than 31 years. He is at present on duty with the Home Defence Forces, Southern Command.

E.J.Hassard is second lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery, at present stationed at Ipswich,

Miss M.A.L.Christie, a former Associate, has been nursing French soldiers in the military hospital at Vichy for the last three months.

~

Dear Sir, (*re: the refunding subscriptions*) . . . Croquet players are, I suppose, chiefly recruited from a class who can afford once in a while to give something for nothing, but this year has been so very exceptional, and there are so many demands which the same class of people will think more deserving of consideration, . . . a satisfactory way out might be in adopting Mr.Turpin – undertaking to keep down expenditure to the irreducible minimum and to hand over any surplus to one of the War Funds. I am, dear sir, Yours faithfully, D.M.Stevenson.

~

Laws and regulations – The Official laws of Croquet and Regulations for Prize Meetings for 1915, can be obtained from Mr.Horace Cox, Windsor House, Brea's Buildings, London, E.C. Price 6d.

Editorial

The cover of this Gazette heralds the news that all club players are to get CA Membership. Congratulations to Jeff Dawson and others who have worked so tirelessly to make this happen.

This is perhaps the biggest shake-up in the history of the CA organisationally, and it augers well, I think, for those in charge of promoting our sport. To have a likely membership close on 7,000 soon, ought to make potential sponsors and advertisers pay us a little more attention than hitherto.

Soon some tough decisions will have to be made about what form the Gazette takes in the future and there are those who believe that an 'on-line' version of this magazine is the way to go. Hmmm. . .

As you will read in Ian Vincent's reports of the SGM and Council meeting there are, of course, financial consequences to our soon to be greatly enlarged membership.

Not the least of these is the cost of Gazette production and delivery to all.

Obviously there would be huge savings to be made if the 'on-line' argument wins the day.

But at what cost I ask?

Do we really think that all our new members (never mind our existing ones) are going to sit at a screen and read 24 pages?

What chance is there that important announcements will be absorbed by more than a handful of the most diligent readers?

Our newsagents have shelf upon shelf of magazines covering every conceivable interest - proof surely of the printed medium's growing, rather than diminishing, popularity despite the supposed 'on-line' age. Let us embrace new technology by all means, but not at the cost of distancing ourselves from those we are trying to reach.

Golly that soap box was high!

Since my last editorial, I have enjoyed playing in South Africa, at Surbiton and Roehampton. It was an absolute pleasure to be asked to speak at the latter's annual dinner, and I thank them for the privilege and a wonderful evening.

Ps. Old Amber the cat, now eats only roast chicken.



Chris Roberts

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The
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Gazette



Issue 355 April 2015

Front cover: 'All in favour' - The CA SGM votes mean CA membership for all players, including these from Cheltenham, Chester, Hamptworth, Phyllis Court and Surbiton. **This page:** The Editor posing above Franchhoek, South Africa, in February and the Chairman addressing the CA SGM in March (photographs by Frances Colman, Alan Clare, Julie Kaye and Chris Roberts)

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Chairman's Column

We have had many significant events during this off season but I had other thoughts when first contemplating writing this column.

I had been wondering if we would be basking in the glow of World Championship success for England, with the U21 version being the more likely candidate.

The irony for my theme, is that these hopes were finally dashed when the evergreen (but hardly youthful!) Stephen Mulliner lost in the semi-final of the main event.

You can read elsewhere in this edition of the Gazette how Harry Dodge, John-Paul Moberly, Will Gee, Rachel Rowe and Tobi Savage tested their (varying degrees of) youth in New Zealand. But even before they had their chance, the CA considered the issue of developing our younger players at the January meeting of Council.

These discussions reminded me of

having interviewed Judith Hanekom after she won the Women's Golf Croquet World Championship last November.

She mentioned beginning her croquet as a teenager alongside Reg Bamford and Charles Barlow in South Africa.

Many readers will perhaps not recognise Charles's name. He now lives in London but is too busy to have been able to play croquet for most of the past 20 years.

In 2012 and 2013, he played the Open GC Doubles Championship with Reg. They won both times.

Charles was impressive. He had a smooth, consistent stroke; Reg directed the required result and Charles provided the shot. Judith, Reg and Charles demonstrate two features of playing croquet when we are young.

Firstly, we grasp the skills so much more easily and enduringly at that age, and secondly, young players thrive on the challenge of playing with their peers.

I was delighted that Council approved the proposal from our International Performance Director, Ian Burrige, to create a Junior Action Group.

This gives us a focal point for identifying

and implementing mechanisms by which we attract and nurture young players.

We subsequently appointed Marcus Evans to lead the group. He started playing when he was young and this experience is an excellent starting point.

The competition is clear. Australia and New Zealand have produced a generation of young players who are currently achieving better results than ours.

On the other hand, Egyptian youth fell just short in the final of the GC World Championship; experience can be a vital factor in winning tight matches.

There is still plenty of time for our current young players to build on their physical abilities by developing the mental edge that is a vital part of becoming a champion.



Tim King

Members and Clubs vote in historic changes

~ All three motions are carried at the Special General Meeting ~

A report by Honorary Secretary Ian Vincent

The Special General Meeting of the Croquet Association held at the Hurlingham Club on Saturday 28 March, was attended by 46 Individual Members, who included the authorised representatives of nine Member Clubs which had not already voted.

Although the weather for the day was reliably forecasted as blustery (the doors to the terrace were rattling), there was less confidence in predicting the tone and length of the discussion.

In fact the meeting took an hour and a quarter, although there nearly wasn't any discussion at all, as immediately after Jeff Dawson had introduced **the first motion**, Roger Staples proposed that it should be voted on immediately.

However, a motion that 'the question now be put' was roundly defeated after the Chairman of Council, Tim King, said that the Council wanted to hear the views of the membership, to guide it in its future deliberations.

Most of those who spoke were in favour of the principle of the proposed change, to allow Council to increase the percapita subscription rate, for all but small clubs, by up to £1 a year above inflation for each of the next five years.

But some voiced doubts about the details of its implementation.

Although the stated aim was to rebalance, rather than increase the CA's income, several people felt that the money raised should be used to develop the game, rather than reduce the subscriptions of tournament members, many of whom retained their membership

to support the game, despite having ceased to play in tournaments.

When it came to the vote, the motion was passed comfortably, with 200 individuals in favour and 24 against, and 80 clubs in favour with 11 against.

That allowed the meeting to progress to **the second motion**, which was to entitle all club members to membership of the Association.



Unlike the first motion, this would not take immediate effect, as a number of detailed decisions need to be taken about implementation and administrative systems, both human and computer, require changing.

In the absence of other points or queries, the President introduced the topic of whether the Gazette should be distributed in paper and/or electronic form to the enlarged membership, which was one of the issues yet to be decided.

A vigorous debate ensued, but the straw poll taken at the end of it showed a clear consensus amongst those present for providing both options.

The second motion, which needed a six to four majority, easily attained it, with fractionally higher support than the first one.

After Jeff Dawson had emphasised that the Council would still consult with clubs, **the third motion**, to remove their voting rights once the second motion took effect, was also passed, though with a slightly smaller majority.

The Chairman of Council then thanked the President for chairing the meeting and Jeff Dawson for his work in getting the changes through.

He reiterated the point that Council will continue to listen to the Association's members and saw itself as being on a journey which had begun rather than finished.

He thanked members who had taken the trouble to attend the meeting and noted that valuable points had been made about the Gazette and Tournament Membership.

The dependence of the sport on voluntary effort at all levels had been mentioned earlier (one of our problems is that, compared to other sports, we all keep playing for too long, so have less time to put something back into the game), and he cited the example of Samir Patel, who has just been co-opted to the WCF's Management Committee.

In closing the meeting the President thanked the tellers, David and Eileen Magee; Jeff Dawson, and Ian Vincent for having drafted the motions.

All Federations vote

I was very pleased to announce to the March Council Meeting that my understanding is that all nine of the current Federations have resolved to join the Croquet Association as Member Federations, when the changes to the constitution to allow that take effect at the AGM this October.

When the Federations were set up in the 1980s, the then Sports Council insisted that they should be totally independent of the national governing



to join the CA

body, and follow their regional boundaries, to be eligible for funding.

That historical anomaly has now been removed, and the Council pays tribute to the success of – and the enormous contribution to – the development of croquet made by the Federations, and looks forward to working more closely with them in future.

Ian Vincent, Honorary Secretary

Council meeting immediately set up an Implementation Group

March Council meeting is quick to act upon SGM decisions

Council met in the afternoon, following the SGM at Hurlingham.

Club subscriptions and MCIP

Arising from the SGM, Council decided to implement the first step of the permitted escalating increase in the per-capita club subscription rate.

As a result, the subscription is expected to rise by about £1.10 (depending on the April RPI figure) to £9.50 from January 2016.

It also established a Membership Changes Implementation Group, consisting of Jeff Dawson (who will chair it), Peter Death, Liz Larsson, Ian Vincent and Peter Wilson, to manage the implementation of the agreed changes. This group has power to establish sub-groups for specific issues, and is to report to the Management Committee.

Hon. Treasurer's report

Peter Death, the Hon. Treasurer, reported that he had agreed the 2014 accounts with Marian Hemsted, the Independent Examiner, which Council unanimously approved for submission to the AGM.

They showed a deficit in the general fund of £1,500, which the Treasurer felt was a healthy outcome, given that the costs of sending the MacRobertson Shield team to New Zealand had been accounted for in that year.

The Lawn and Ball Hire rate will increase from £30 to £31 next season (2016), pending a full review.

Surprise for Hon. Secretary

After concluding my Hon. Secretary's report, I was both astonished and gratified when the Chairman rose to announce that I was to be awarded the Council Medal, and handed me a sheet of tributes from Council Members.



the Junior Action Group, and that proposals for a paid Development Officer and National (or even World?) Croquet Day were being worked up.
Ian Vincent,
Honorary Secretary

Sad losses for Croquet

On a sadder note, Council expressed its condolences to Colin Irwin on the sudden death of his wife Christine (an obituary for her will appear in the June Gazette) and to the family and friends at the Bowdon Club of John Saxby, its late Secretary.

The Association had been well represented at the funeral of John Solomon.

New for Golf Croquet

Consideration then turned to the report of the Management Committee.

Three motions concerning Golf Croquet were passed:

(1) to trial refinements to the GC handicapping system in all games played in the East Anglian Federation during the 2015 season;

(2) to trial the use of 'sequence umpires', who would have limited powers to intervene to prevent or stop play after wrong ball errors;

(3) to establish a classification for championships.

Progress in other areas too

Other items were for information, though the committee's Chairman highlighted the benefits of the online tournament entry system, and took an action to review it to reduce any barriers to wider take-up.

He was also pleased to report that Marcus Evans had been appointed as leader of

Call for Nominations and Notices of Motions for the 2015 AGM

The 2015 AGM will be held at Hurlingham on the morning of Saturday, 17 October

Nominations for the posts of Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary, membership of Council, or motions to be put to the AGM, should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Dr. I. G. Vincent, 21, Cedar Avenue, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 2HA, or to ian.vincent@cantab.net, by 1 June.

Nominations should give the name of the candidate together with those of the proposer and seconder, and state that the consent of the candidate has been obtained.

There are expected to be seven vacancies on Council. The four retiring members (John Bowcott, Jeff Dawson, Richard Hoskyns and Tim King), together with two who were co-opted during the year (Dave Kibble and Brian Wilson), have stated that they are willing to serve again and so do not need to be nominated, so at least one additional nomination is required to fill the vacancies.

Tournament Regulations Changes for 2015

The Croquet Association's Tournament Regulations for 2015 have been published

The changes for the 2015 season, which became effective on 1 March, are:

H2(b) - Tournament Handicapper has an additional duty to check players' handicap cards at the start of each event. This is in advance of further changes planned for 2016 to add further rigour and consistency to the role of the Tournament Handicapper and use, and enforcement, of handicap cards for all players in all types of event

L4 - The Handicap Doubles Variation, which was previously an annual trial, has become permanent.

P1(a) - Eligibility to compete in CA fixtures now includes an explicit reference to the WCF regulation on reciprocity.

R - This has been updated to bring the terminology and references in this regulation into line with the latest GC Rules.

T2(a) - This has been modified to cover the situation where a player plays a wrong ball as time expires. An omitted reference to a full bisque has been restored in T2(b)

Appendix 4 - Super-Advanced is now a standard condition for all Class 1 Singles Championships.

The full regulations can be found on the CA website at <http://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/regulations.html>

Samir Patel (below),

CA Tournaments Committees



Apart from the usual delight of awarding most improved player awards (*see below*), this winter the Handicap Committee has been busy in a number of other areas.

Golf Croquet handicapping

We have been looking at the matter of GC handicapping in much depth.

It has not been possible to introduce a new system throughout England this year and the current system will prevail for one more year.

We have studied the results of more than 800 GC games, both level and handicap.

An analysis has been undertaken by croquet players with mathematical skills, and the East Anglian Croquet Federation has agreed to trial a new system for this year. This is described on page 11.

Hopefully we will be able to recommend a system for 2016 that is robust, easy to use and covers all games and all handicaps.

Checking of handicap cards at tournaments

A more vigilant approach

It has become clear while studying the handicap cards, that these contain lots of mistakes: confused or wrong data entry, incorrect mathematics and people playing with wrong handicaps.

Therefore we intend to be more vigilant.

We have asked directors of CA tournaments to appoint a Handicapper for each tournament and they will expect to see every handicap card on the first day of the tournament.

Players will be expected to bring their properly completed cards (or electronic records) to every tournament.

In due course we hope to see results signed off by the opponent as in (*18 hole, 'small ball'*) golf.

At the moment there are no sanctions

Lots of changes on the AC & GC handicaps front

planned but if needed we will introduce penalties.

Clearly we cannot tell clubs what to do in their own internal and non-CA events but we hope that players will see the benefits of a little more rigour, and it will become the norm across all contests.

New design handicap cards on their way

New design for handicap cards on the way for 2016

One area where a problem might be seen is where there is an event with an upper limit to the permitted handicap. e.g. players may enter with a handicap of 24 but must play off 18.

This seems to me to penalise the long bisquer and should not count toward calculating handicaps BUT please enter them on your cards with the addition of N/Q (non-qualifying) in the index column.

To make matters clear, in the future the Handicap cards will have been redesigned by Lionel Tibble and the new card will be ready for use in 2016.

I hope we can introduce a Handicap App in the future - Would anyone like to design this?

Is your handicap listed correctly on the CA website?

Many handicaps on the CA website are wrong.

Please will you check your handicap on your CA website personal profile, and e-mail the office with corrections and when changes occur.

The correct information helps managers

to allocate players to the right class for tournaments.

Shorter AC games now also worth 10 points

Shorter AC games are now worth plus or minus 10 points

We have decided to end the experiment of playing 14 point association croquet games for a gain or loss of only 5 points.

Many people were unhappy with the + or - 5 points and said so.

Others thought it should stay.

We took the view that a game is the unit of contest, be it a time limited 26 point game or a 14 point game or indeed any other variation of contest that AC players enjoy.

Therefore the value of the contest should be the same: plus or minus 10 points or pro rata in level games.

Previous trial AC doubles bisque calculation is fully adopted

Further to that reported in the last issue (*Gazette 354, page 22*), the new AC doubles handicapping calculation system that was in place as an experiment last season, will continue as an experiment.

The Handicap Committee voted to make it the norm.

That requires changes in the AC laws and because we are linked to the International Laws Committee it will need to go before them. They require more rigorous evidence than that which the CA can supply, therefore the change is on hold.

Any views on this or any other matter will be most welcome.

Obviously we cannot satisfy everyone but we will listen.

Enjoy your croquet in 2015.

Strat Liddiard, Chairman of and on behalf of the CA Handicap Committee

Moberly and Anderson are the most improved

The Handicap Committee has the pleasure of announcing the awards for the most improved players each year. The awards for 2014 go to John-Paul Moberly of Durham (left) and Woking's Ian Anderson (right) for GC and AC respectively.

Moberly burst onto the scene at the GC Open and topped a great year by winning the Shield event at the Under 21 GC Worlds. Anderson's good progress, sees him equal that of wife Sara, who won the most improved female accolade in 2011.

(Images by Chris Roberts and Sara Anderson)





Amongst the cream of UK GC players - clockwise from top left: Stephen Mulliner, Reg Bamford, Lionel Tibble and Will Gee (images by Chris Robetts)



Stronger fields expected for top-flight GC Tournaments

The top-flight GC tournaments have all undergone some change for 2015.

At the **Open Championships**, the Singles and the Doubles are re-united in a six-day event at Southwick in June.

Elsewhere the qualification process for the **English National Singles Championship (Ascot Cup)** now rewards only the finalists of the remaining eight qualifier events, with others having to rely on their rankings.

It is hoped that this should produce stronger competition in the nominated 'qualifier tournaments' and an excellent field for the final to be held at Nottingham in September.

The two Selection Events have also received much Committee attention over the winter. In both cases the intention is to improve the 'player experience' and produce a compelling challenge that will attract more top players

The Musk's Cup (for the first eight) is to be held at Roehampton over the three-day Bank Holiday weekend in August. All play

will be single banked and the matches will be best-of-three 13-point games throughout. Following seven all-play-all matches, four players will progress to the knockout stage.

The Kate Jones Memorial (for the second eight) is to be held at Hamptworth earlier in August. All the players will play each other twice in 13-point games and here too single banking is anticipated.

It is hoped that the new formats for the two 'Eights' will prove to be attractive. If they work, they will not only be very well worth winning in their own right, but also help prepare younger players for the international challenges that should lie ahead of them.

At all levels of the game the CA aims to provide something suitable.

This article focuses on the top level, but we do continue to monitor the needs and aspirations of other groups.

I am certain that there will be something different to write about before too long!

John Bowcott
Chairman GC Tournament Committee

The CA's committees report to its Management Committee, which last met on 7 March.

A collation of their reports is available to CA members on the website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1204>.

A lot of their work is routine, though nonetheless essential, such as organising tournaments, courses and making grants, but the following items from their reports caught our eye as being of particular interest:

Coaching

(1) Marcus Evans has been appointed to lead a Junior Action Team.

(2) A golf croquet coaching manual has been published and is available on the website at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1218>

(3) Peter Dyke (Nailsea) is to be given a Lifetime Coaching Award and Janet Hoptroff (Sussex County) the Coach of the Year Award as detailed on pages 18 & 19.

(4) Members are reminded of the opportunities available to them to gain a Merit Award. See the CA website for details of the scheme.

Development

The CA received a record number of

More news from our busy committees

applications for Club Awards which are given every other year.

The latest winners are detailed on page 14.

Equipment

The Equipment Committee has currently parked activity on the 'Elite Hoop' concept, and instead is focused on production issues with polyurethane balls.

GC Rules

(1) 'Sequence Umpires' are to be tried in the final stages of some events to stop play in the event of wrong ball errors and help compile statistics about when they occur.

(2) An initial batch of 18 Championship Referees have been appointed.

(3) An Examining Referees Handbook has been published.

Handicapping

Please see the separate article on page 6 (opposite) and there is also news of the East Anglia Federation GC handicap experiment on page 11.

Information & Communications Technology (ICT)

The CA website and e-mail systems have been moved to new software and servers at our internet service provider, TGIS.

Marketing

Plans for a National Croquet Day are being developed.

Publishing

Ian Burrige has agreed to take on the role of commissioning editor for a new book on advanced tactics.

Tournaments

(1) Organisers of tournaments (CA Directors or club Tournament Secs.) are reminded that they

should always appoint a Tournament Handicapper.

(2) The minimum age for the AC Veterans' event is now 60.

(3) A classification for GC Championships has been agreed.

Ian Vincent,
Hon. Secretary and
Brian Shorney (right)
CA Vice Chairman





Are our veterans not too young?

Dear Editor,

Earlier this year I became engrossed in a fascinating newspaper article on the subject of ageing.

Being 81, I naturally took an interest and was pleased to read that today people are living a good deal longer than their forebears. It suggested that, with good medical care, many more people will live into their nineties than formerly and the number of centenarians is increasing so fast that additional staff are having to be employed at Buckingham Palace, in the department which sends birthday cards to citizens celebrating their hundredth birthday.

The article went on to say that the Government is also taking steps to deal with this phenomenon. The pension age is being increased because pensioners are living longer, returns from annuities are decreasing because of more years of payments and every year the NHS needs more money to fund medical treatment for increasing numbers of older people.

Immediately after breakfast on the morning of my reading the article, the CA Fixtures Calendar arrived. I opened it with a view to finding which tournaments and competitions were available for the older player. Sadly, there were none. It seems the CA is living in the distant past, so as far as the ages of its members is concerned.

For example the National Veterans Championship has a minimum age of 60.

Today that is young as far as octogenarians are concerned. In any case a player in their 60s is probably playing as well as ever and the deterioration in play

which affects older players is still many years away.

Last summer one of our lady members, a competent player who in no way looks elderly, told me she had been playing in a veterans tournament with the same 60-year restriction. I was amazed and to some extent thought it unfair. And, even worse, the Seniors Championship has a minimum age of 50.

I don't know for how long these two competitions have been around, but suspect it is for many years. This would first be when 50-60 year-olds looked elderly and presumably were experiencing an age-related decline in their playing proficiency. I have a photograph of my grandfather in his 50s who with his white hair looked an old man. There are today, an increasing number of association croquet players over the age of 80. At my club I regularly play with three others and, in external matches, it is not uncommon to come across other players of this age.

Sadly, it does happen that one's play usually begins to deteriorate with old age. This happened in my case and to others whom I know. So it could be argued there should be special competitions held for these CA members, who we could call genuine veterans or seniors.

Might I suggest therefore, that the CA should now recognise this ageing phenomenon in line with H.M. The Queen, the Government, life assurance companies and the NHS, and amend the age qualifications accordingly.

My suggestions would be that the Veterans should have a minimum age of 80 and Seniors should be of state pension age which is 65, rising to 66 and 67. The definition of a Senior is that he or she is a pensioner and in no way should it be someone aged 50.

There might also be merit in the CA analysing the ages of its members.

Brian G Bucknall, Phyllis Court CC

Dear Editor,

I thought I had found an economical solution to the cost of mowing at the Taunton Deane Croquet Club when my two-year-old grandson Tom discovered this in our shed. However, 'lawning', as he called it, did not occupy his interest for long enough to give a measurable result.

**Stephen Custance-Baker,
Taunton Deane CC**



Letters to

Richard Hoskyns replies:

As Director of the AC Veterans and Seniors Championships, I thought I ought to respond to Brian Bucknall's letter suggesting that the Veterans should have a minimum age of 80 and the Seniors 65.

It is true that with the present average age of croquet players probably more than half qualify for the Veterans with its present minimum age of 60, and the vast majority qualify for the Seniors.

In the past, well before I became a Veteran, which was 12 years ago, the Veterans had a minimum age of 60; Paul Macdonald increased this to 65 because the tournament had become too popular.

It also had an Over-70s Championship. I believe Paul did think of having an Over-80s but I do not think there were ever enough entries to justify him doing so.

It must be remembered that Championships are level play, and to hold a worthwhile championship you need a reasonable number of players with similar handicaps.

A few years ago, I did a survey of the players' ages and found that the average was about 74, and I therefore persuaded the Tournament Committee to change the Over-70s Championship to an Over-75s.

Unfortunately a year or two later, the entries to the Veterans dropped sharply, and they remain much reduced.

We have tried to find out why this happened but have not been able to determine any particular reason.

It coincided with the recession but that was not the main reason.

I think that there are more tournaments within easy reach of players nowadays, so that they do not have to travel long distances.

The Veterans and Seniors at present swap between Sussex County and Budleigh Salterton; both are right in the South, which makes it a long trip for those living in the North, and both tournaments last six days, making accommodation expensive.

We still get a number of over 80s in the Veterans. I know there were at least three over 80 last year and quite a number in their late 70s.

I would be quite happy to hold an event for Over 80s, if there were sufficient entries, but it would doubtless have to be a handicap event.

**Richard Hoskyns,
Director, AC Veterans and Seniors**

No return to unfair handicap games

Dear Editor,

My GC handicap is 7 and I am pleased that the new GC trial handicap system is to continue. Handicap games in GC should enable players of different ability to have equal chances of winning. Equal means 50/50 which was certainly not the case before the trial was introduced.

In conversation I receive the view that low handicap players used to win nearly all their matches against high handicap players, and surely this shows that the system was at fault and in need of urgent reform.

I play handicap games in internal

tournaments and in leagues and I accept that low handicap players may expect to win games against people like me but I reject it. Looking at it from another angle, imagine the thrill I have, if I win a handicap game against a scratch player!

Whatever pressure the low handicap players put on the Handicap Committee to bring back something similar to the 2013 system, it must be rigorously resisted.

I look forward to the Handicap Committee's deliberations and wish them well.

Richard Mills, Bath CC

Come to glorious Budleigh

Dear Editor

I am glad that Nick Parish (Gazette 353) reckoned that Budleigh was a lovely venue when he made his one visit some years ago.

If he can manage to leave the South East to come to this 'remote geographic location' once again he would be able to enjoy the results of our considerable effort and expenditure (£50,000 pa.) on our ten courts over recent years and, perhaps, be moved to return on more occasions.

Every year we are happy to welcome players from the length and breadth of the UK who are keen to come and enjoy our excellent facilities.

Our May and August tournaments regularly draw in very strong entries, with the A class for the Championship trophy in August regularly contested by 14 players.

As the club's Tournament Secretary since 2008, I enjoy the winter days after the fixture book is circulated. It always prompts a cheering spate of entries for the new season, both from our regular visitors and a steady flow of newcomers.

In recent years we have had the pleasure of hosting the European GC Championships on several occasions, with competitors coming from locations that could well be considered really remote. We look forward to their return this year (28 to 31 May).

Last year we saw that the GC Veterans was so much in demand that a waiting list was in operation for their visit in July.

Figures since 2005, show entries for our two main AC tournaments at, or near, capacity, and very little variation over the years.

When visitors are here, they frequently

give us glowing tributes, especially about the playing conditions, with many even going so far as to say that they are the 'best set of courts in the country'.

The biennial visit of the CA's Men's, Women's and Mixed Doubles AC Championships to Budleigh is always keenly anticipated by our members. They provide us with a chance to present top class croquet to media outlets in this part of the country and raise the profile of our sport among those who still utter the tired chestnut of 'a vicious game' and speak of shrubberies and the like!

I suspect that for many of the top players there is considerable opportunity in the season to play in prestigious tournaments, but when they may not have unlimited time at their disposal, hard choices may have to be made.

It would be interesting to see what would happen to the attendance at the Open Championships if they were to be held in Budleigh for a change. Now there is an idea!

As we have no wish to move Budleigh from its present delightful setting in an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty', we will remain here and offer as a service to the whole croquet world; excellent courts, a spacious clubhouse, well stocked bar, catering and ample parking on site. We have hotels, B&Bs, and really good restaurants and pubs within easy reach.

We, who are fortunate to live here and play here, take pleasure in these good things and are very happy to share them with others.

Charles Townshend, Tournament Secretary, Budleigh Salterton CC

Lovely Bela Romao

Dear Editor,

The Gazette is getting to be a dangerous publication! My wife saw the advert for the Bela Romao Club on the back page and thought it would be nice to spend a significant anniversary there – so here is a little of our experiences.

Most people who fly into Faro head west to the beaches; if you go the other way, you are in largely undeveloped Algarve, where people still fish and farm for a living.

In 2007, Lita Gale and Sarah Byrne bought a pretty run-down patch of ground with an old farm house and set about turning it into a remarkable centre. The farm house was gutted and very tastefully renovated and is now guest accommodation that can sleep four, with a two-person studio cottage attached. All mod cons are present, including a very private swimming pool and a flat roof on the house where you can worship the sun in total seclusion.

Lita and Sarah built a brand new house for themselves which they turned into the Bela Romao Croquet and Country Club a couple of years ago. It must have cost serious money as it is beautifully landscaped with yet another swimming pool and a large croquet area – built up some 10 feet above the original ground level. The Croquet Club functions at weekends and its members seem to be mainly British ex-pats.

At other times guests have complete run of the facilities, and when we made our visit we were the only guests there. Sarah is a private chef by profession and her meals would not be out of place in a Michelin starred restaurant. It was absolutely amazing to be waited on hand and foot.

The croquet lawn is very well maintained, pretty level and I have played on far worse here in the UK. When we visited in February, the speed was around 12 Plummers and I suspect it would get a bit quicker in summer. The one problem – which I hope they will sort out soon – is the lack of proper court boundaries. At the moment it is too big – and it's not often you hear that!

I gather it gets a little warm in summer, but in our winter it was wonderful to be able to play in the pleasant sunshine.

We flew by EasyJet from Gatwick to Faro. Bela Romao is about 15 miles east of the airport and about a 25-minute drive.

Ian Harrison, Basingstoke CC and Winchester CC

Dab was a sheep farmer's daughter brought up in Aldbrough, East Yorkshire and from a young age had a flair for maths.

At Malet Lambert High School in Hull, she excelled at maths and was school captain for hockey and cricket and also played tennis.

She was Senior Prefect and in her final report, her form teacher wrote: "... she will give invaluable service wherever she goes", and that was Dab throughout her life.

In 1945, Dab went to Manchester University to read Mathematics and continued to play cricket.

She taught first at Middlesbrough High School, before moving to Beverley High School for Girls and going home at weekends to help with the milking on the farm.

At Beverley, Dab met and married Roger Wheeler through their shared interest in Mathematics and she continued to play hockey for Hull and East Yorkshire.

In 1961 they moved to Leicester, where Roger had relocated to teach mathematics at Leicester University.

Obituary

Dorothy Anne 'Dab' Wheeler 1927 – 2015



It was on a Maths trip from Leicester to Egypt that the Wheelers discovered croquet in Cairo and, on their return, they searched out Nottingham Croquet Club.

On Roger's retirement they moved to Gloucestershire and joined Cheltenham CC, where Dab very quickly became the Tournament Secretary, remaining so for some 21 years.

She and Roger managed complex tournaments, using their mathematical skills to resolve difficult organisational problems.

Dab also coached beginners and played a major part in the club's catering – her bread and butter pudding is still spoken of with reverence.

In later life, they both became Vice Presidents of the Club, continuing to take a strong interest in its affairs.

Dab was a very good croquet player too. She played in the Ladies' Eights on several occasions and her name is engraved on some of the country's silver trophies.

In her Cotswold village of Brimpsfield, Dab was a strong player in the W.I., the Garden Society, the Village Hall and the Cirencester Science & Technology Group.

She was enthusiastic about so many things, was immensely kind and generous, and very loyal to her many friends and the organisations to which she belonged.

Space only permits a thumbnail sketch of this remarkable woman: she was my hero in so many ways.

Eileen Magee, Cheltenham CC

John Saxby was a man of many parts and the sum of the parts added up to one very special person for us at Bowdon Croquet Club.

Joining the club in 1996, he soon became a valued member of the committee taking up the position of Honorary Secretary in 2004 – a position held until his recent illness.

He filled the post exceptionally well, exhibiting many skills including a great ability with words to write sensitive letters to those who were ill or bereaved, along with letters of complaint or objection to various officials.

John's hard work as Secretary and innovator was recognised in 2010, when he was awarded a CA Diploma.

He was a great innovator and ideas man – our Wednesday competition was one of his 'mad ideas' based upon the fact that his wife could turn up for golf on a Tuesday and be guaranteed a game.

He was correct in thinking that this could also work for croquet, and now, each week 20 to 40 players enjoy taking

Obituary

John Saxby 1942 – 2015



part. The idea was further developed with several other competitions including the imaginatively titled Solomon Grundy Competition to take place on Mondays.

John was also renowned for his catering during the June Advanced Weekend each year. He liked good food and so visitors

had to have the best.

It is only now that he is absent that many members are realising just how much John did for the club. He was there most days and undertook so many roles.

He was fierce in safeguarding every aspect of the club, taking pride in the appearance of the lawns, grounds, clubhouse and particularly the way we were perceived in the neighbourhood.

As a player John accurately described himself as understanding fully the tactics of croquet but lacking in the practical ability to carry out the shots like the better players. On the lawn, he always opted to play with the blue ball because of his love for Manchester City and would greatly enjoy aiming at the red ball with the cry "smite the evil red".

John, we will all miss you greatly and we will remember and honour your rallying cry to your team when things were not going well "Bravely on Bowdon, bravely on".

Lorna Frost, Alan Mayne, Sylvia Steer, Bowdon CC

Christine Irwin

It is with great sorrow that the Bowdon Croquet Club reports the death of its

distinguished CA member Christine Irwin who died suddenly on 14 March, whilst on holiday in Florida.

We extend our deepest sympathy to

her husband Colin.

An obituary will be published in the next issue of the Gazette.

Martin Granger Brown, Bowdon CC

East Anglian Federation to trial a new GC handicap system

As you will recall, a revised GC handicap system was introduced last season that gave all low-handicap players two handicaps: their Actual Handicap and a lower Effective Handicap to use in handicap games.

This met with little enthusiasm and in some cases outright hostility.

Consequently, the CA Handicap Committee was instructed to take a fresh look at the situation to see if an improved handicap system could be created which was simple, fair to all players, and would include all GC singles games.

Attempts to develop the trial system were unsatisfactory and it was decided instead to call in a panel of experienced players who had an analytical mathematics and statistics background: Rob Fulford, Jonathan Kirby and James Hopgood.

A huge volume of data (8,300 handicap GC singles games) was assembled by Martin French and considered by the panel.

After several months of deliberation a new handicap system has been devised.

It is not radical, and looks and operates like a sensible handicap system should,

albeit with an expanded range of GC handicaps and new trigger points.

The Effective Handicap mechanism has been dropped. The new system is correlated at the low-handicap end with the CGS Ranking system.

In many ways, the resulting system looks and is expected to operate much like the AC automatic handicap system, which has been quite stable for 25 years.

The new system was recently put before the CA Council who decided it had merit.

Rather than introduce it nationally at very short notice, it was decided that first it should be trialled to check it was fit for purpose and worked as anticipated.

The East Anglian Croquet Federation has kindly agreed to trial the system for 2015, and that trial was rolled out at the end of March. The trial will be monitored and results collected at the end of the season, so an analysis can confirm the system is operating properly.

The CA Council decided that the rest of the country will continue with the 2014 system for one more year.

If the EACF trial is satisfactory, the new

system will roll out nationally in 2016.

Moving to the new system is simple for the majority of players, who keep their current handicap but with a new index.

The handicap range has been extended at both extremes, so beginners might in future start as high as 16 and most low handicap players end up somewhere between their old Actual and Effective handicaps.

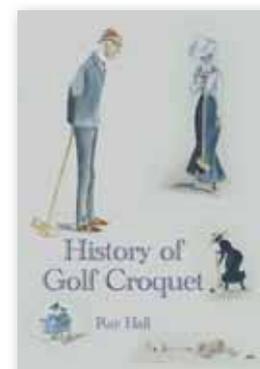
Full details of the new system can be found on the EACF website http://www.angliacroquet.co.uk/2015/GCtrial/new_system.php

There are special rules to be applied if players from the two systems meet in competitions - however, research shows this only applies to a minority of players.

The organisers of all CA Calendar Fixtures that include handicap GC play have been contacted and made aware of these special rules.

We will report back at the end of the season on the analysis of the results of this new system.

**Strat Liddiard
Chairman, CA
Handicap Committee**



The *History of Golf Croquet* covers much of the initial emergence of the game, and is available from Sussex County Croquet Club.

The first publication, which uses a name related to GC, is a leaflet by the Ayres company in 1896, followed by a descriptive article in *The Graphic* in 1897.

Both call their game Croquet-Golf and make use of tennis doubles courts; the first use of Golf-Croquet is in an American publication of 1900, whose game is nearer to Golf and uses any piece of ground.

Croquet-Golf appeared again in an article in *The Graphic* in 1901, to describe a game that is recognisably GC. However, I had missed a follow-up article in *The Girls Realm* in June 1902, which was sent to me recently by Roger Bray.

This was "Croquet Golf - a new game which will prove popular with Girls this summer" and was written by Gladys Beattie Crozier. There is no hyphen in the title but, not only is it the same game as described in *The Graphic*, it refers to "a game originated, I believe, last summer".

In a lightly-veiled narrative, the author describes how she and friends were too late to join an on-going tournament at a garden party and instead extracted the rules for

A new light on early golf croquet rules by Ray Hall

their own tournament.

In addition she describes the advantages of steeplechasing (jumping) as well as stymieing one's opponent's ball.

Further golfing lore appears as dormie, which, one suspects to be a mishearing of dormie, unless any historian of Golf can put us right. All of this is illustrated with very acceptable photographs.

The major feature is the list of rules which seem to be the first time that any such had appeared in print. Work will continue to compare them with other early rules. In the following, bear in mind the two-peg setting:

Rules for croquet-golf (c1902)

(1) The ground shall be laid out as for croquet, except that the two centre hoops shall be placed so as to be played at right angles to, instead of in the alignment of, the sticks.

(2) The players shall draw lots for choice of balls, blue and black belonging to one player, and red and yellow to the other.

(3) The order of playing shall be as in

croquet, viz. blue, red, black, yellow. The game shall commence from one stick, not more than one mallet's length distant from it.

(4) The object of the game is for a player to "make" the larger number of hoops and sticks in a round; a hoop or stick is "made" when one of the player's balls goes through the former, or hits the latter, in proper order.

(5) No player may play a ball on towards the next hoop or stick intentionally, until the one which is being played for has been "made".

(6) If a player in the act of striking his ball hits or touches any other ball first, it shall be counted as a "foul", and his opponent shall have the option of replacing the balls moved, or not. A hoop or stick cannot be "made" off a "foul".

(7) No player shall strike his ball until his opponent's ball has come to rest.

(8) If a player plays his opponent's ball by mistake, it shall be left to the option of the opponent whether such a ball be brought back, or whether the opponent shall play the player's ball instead.

Ray Hall, Sussex County CC

GC World G U21 Cham



Egypt regained the GC World Championship when Ahmed El Mahdi (circle photo) won his first title, in New Zealand in February. Stephen Mulliner (above right) was undoubtedly England's top performer with a semi-final achievement, whilst others had mixed fortunes.

Belgian representative and Dulwich member Pierre Baudry (above left) tells *The Gazette* how he saw it:

I arrived four days ahead of the competition to try to shed the jetlag, and that turned out to be a bit short!

I shared accommodation with Sue Lightbody, but she had fractured an ankle three days before flying. She was told she could be okay and she heard what she wanted to hear. Unfortunately it became clear after two days practice that standing and walking all day, let alone a week, wouldn't be possible and so sadly she had to withdraw at the last minute.

On the first day of the tournament we travelled to Katikati; Nick Archer (Watford) played in my group and Sue came to support us. Durham's J-P Moberly was there too as we shared the lawns with his block.

The lawns were of variable speed and variable standards but the hoops were well set. Moberly showed us how to run them but lost narrowly to Mohamed Karem; Archer struggled with the heat, hoops and jetlag and I lost my first match.

Meanwhile South Africa's reigning World Champion Reg Bamford warmed up with a merciless destruction of Archibald Zimonyi, the only Swedish player who made the trip.

Archibald deserves a mention here. In my nine years on the circuit, nobody has ever been more deserving of The Wooden Spoon as he won one game only, having played 19 games in the blocks, with some of them close. This is neither mocking nor patronising; lesser mortals would have gone for a trip round the beautiful coast of the North Island rather than subject

themselves to further humiliation in The Plate. **Bravo!**

At the end of the first day, I was reminded

of the very tight hoops set in the summer clay at Dulwich for a tournament.

When I remarked on the challenge they offered, the setter told me of Sir Thomas Beecham conducting some Ballet music at a pace. Putting his baton down he commented "that should make the buggers hop".

Well the Atkins' Quadway hoops made me hop and I didn't like it. I don't know if Beecham added anything to the ballet in question but I know that Atkins' quadways remove more from the game than they add.

I was told that I should get used to them and that they were the best way to bring the hard hitter back to the field...

When you remove the possibility of running angled hoops even at a medium pace, you don't bring anyone back to the field, you drive them away by creating a new boring pit pat game. I know that the cognoscenti will fire this down with words like 'trivial' and 'ordinary' and I don't care, they are wrong. Harder is not more interesting in this case - it will make the GC boringly unattractive.

But I digress; my second day was in Rotorua and I travelled there by car with Australia's Bernie Pfitzner. We had played a 2h 40min two game match the day before and ended up in the club bar with the winner's beer.

Rotorua must be unique - two hot spots could be clearly seen steaming in the middle of the lawns, still covered with dew, and with the hot springs just a few yards away; a whiff of sulphur hung in the air.

My first match was a grudge match with Mohamed Nasr which I lost 2-7, 2-7 and this was about right. Ireland's Patsy Fitzgerald muttered 'exhibition croquet' and I don't think he meant me.

This was also my first encounter with Hamy Erian, the brilliant young Egyptian. He is the only player I've met who is unrecognisable on the lawn. His face closes to the outside world, even his walk seems different. His concentration is total.

Nick Archer recorded his first victory of the tournament against Martin Clarke of Australia. While Rachel Rowe and Will Gee (both Ashby and Nottingham), and Stephen

Mulliner (Surbiton) progressed steadily in the groups, Tobi Savage (Ramsgate), Archer, Moberly and I struggled on.

Moberly carried on punching above his weight, I lost to Archer who was now on a roll, and Savage had his 0.08 minutes of fame jumping over the peg for hoop 12.

He also discovered that his newly wedded wife had butter fingers, with her camera, although she claims that discovering the true extent of a husband's talent is far more precious than holding onto a trifling camera!

The first round of the knockout was brutal as usual and all the young hopes apart from Erian and Jared Keeman were outplayed.

In the next round Chris Clarke dispatched Mohamed Nasr, but Jenny Clarke was undone by Bamford. Mulliner continued his campaign by defeating Keeman in three, then the other Nasr brother Ahmed (the 2013 runner-up) in his quarter-final.

I watched as Bamford lost his quarters match to El Mahdi and that is where I became convinced that Atkins' hoops were not good for the game.

Mulliner's run ended at the hands of El Mahdi in three closely fought, best-of-five, semi-final games.

In the other semi, Erian beat Clarke in five games to end the dream of a third non-Egyptian champion and this led to an impromptu celebration by the whole Egyptian team.

New Zealander Nelson Morrow (of Hurlingham and Surbiton, *photo below left*) had meanwhile taken charge of The Plate.

His Plate final against Ed Cunningham of Ireland was dramatic, as Nelson should have wrapped it up in the second game but fluffed it; Ed had his chance in the third and missed. Well done Nelson.

The final of the main event, El Mahdi versus Erian, was well reported on croquetscores.com, a brilliant website which kept all players and managers informed throughout the tournament.

Ahmed El Mahdi won his first World Championship victory 4-7, 5-7, 7-4, 7-4, 7-5 and congratulations to him.

Many thanks again to all the organisers and volunteers who made it so memorable.



C Open and Championships

Durham's John-Paul Moberly and Harry Dodge of Budleigh flew England's flag at the 2015 WCF Under 21s Golf Croquet Championships at the United Club, Christchurch, New Zealand, earlier in the year.

Harry takes up the tale of the event...

The opening ceremony commenced the Championship on Saturday 31 January, with welcomes from tournament manager Gordon Smith, and speeches from director Jenny Clarke, WCF President Amir Ramsis and Croquet Canterbury President Lyn Dawson.

The event had attracted 28 players: two Australians (Jack Williams and Ned Wilson), four Egyptians (Karim Ghamri, Nadine El Menofui, Marwan El Sabarouti and Mahetab Abu El Soud), two Englishmen (John-Paul Moberly and Harry Dodge) and 20 players from host nation New Zealand (with ages ranging from 13 to 20).

We started out in four blocks of seven players and spent the first three days completing a 'best of three' matches.

The conditions at United were challenging. The weather varied, with some days over 30°C, and others with strong winds. The lawns were very fast, with little grass to slow the balls and the Atkins hoops, set to 1/32nd, were like rocks in the ground!

The results of Block A reflected ranking positions and Dodge finished in first place, after a big match against El Sabarouti in the third game, where he had to run hoop 13 from the boundary after being 6-4 down.

In Block B, New Zealander Josh Freeth did extremely well to win every match when ranked third, and Block C was won by its top seed Ghamri, who was also undefeated.

Finally in Block D, another New Zealander, Felix Webby, had a great start and ended on 100%, including victory over our other Englishman Moberly, who was runner-up.

As usual, those finishing outside the top

four in each block went into the Plate event, and there were Bowl and Shield events for players who were eliminated from the championship knock-out in the first round and quarter-finals respectively.

Manager Gordon Smith explained that an all-important coin toss would dictate which blocks played against one another in the knock-out (A and B against C or D). Before tossing the coin, Gordon said "if it lands on heads, Block A will play Block C" but the coin landed on tails which most would assume meant A plays D. Astonishingly the coin was tossed a second time and it landed on heads, therefore A played C. The re-tossing of the coin resulted in an uneven knock-out draw, where the top half of the block was stronger than the bottom; the top half contained the highest ranked player of the tournament, both qualifying Egyptians and generally New Zealand's more experienced players, whereas the bottom half contained seven New Zealanders and Moberly.

In the first round of the knock-out, Dodge had a long match against the very accurate Kiwi Shaun Theobald before prevailing, and Moberly beat his countryman Liam Reeves.

In the quarter-finals, it was unfortunate that El Sabarouti had to play Ghamri, as these were two of the strongest players at the tournament. The former won in two games and duly became Egypt's last hope to take the trophy home as they did in 2011.

Dodge got off to a flyer, was soon 3-0 up against Edmund Fordyce, held that lead to victory and then wrapped up the match 7-5 in the second game. But Moberly fell 6-7, 4-7 to Joshua Freeth, and Felix Webby beat Hemi McLaren 7-6, 7-5. So the semis pitted the two New Zealanders against each other and the last Egyptian taking on the remaining Englishman.

Harry said: "I had the opportunity to play



Marwan El Sabarouti again and I was pleased with my performance, particularly the long hoop run, in the first, to win 7-4.

In the next game Marwan's excellent shot ability earned him a 4-7 victory and the crowd became much more involved in game three, with a place in the final at stake. I scored hoop 9 from being 6-2 down and got in near proximity to hoop 10 but not in running position. Several shots later, the hoop was mine at 6-4 down. Marwan played into some nice positions and I wasn't able to clear as well as I had done previously. When he played into the jaws of 11 from an angled three-yard position, I had a five yard jump to stay in the match, but I hit the hoop's top left corner and that was it. Marwan deserved his victory after such a solid performance."

In the other semi, Freeth beat Webby in two straight games, setting up a strong and interesting final between contrasting styles; El Sabarouti v Freeth – aggressive vs defensive. After a long battle, the home club member Freeth was a worthy winner 5-7, 7-6, 7-6.

Moberly didn't lose again and won the Shield, Lachlan Hughes took the Bowl, and Logan McCorkindale won the Plate.

Overall, this was a good tournament and it was a fantastic experience to be hosted at a club which provided such challenging conditions. It is reassuring to see New Zealand bring

on so many youngsters into our sport, whilst it was great that Australia and Egypt were also part of this Championship.

A big thank you goes out to all those whose efforts made the event as successful as it was.

**Harry Dodge,
Budleigh CC**



The CA Club Awards 2015

By Jonathan Isaacs, Chairman of the Development Committee

The CA has announced the winners of its Club Awards for 2015

These biennial awards recognise a club's progress over a two year period.

Townsend Award

This award is for clubs with fewer than three lawns, and the winner is **High Wycombe CC** who fought off a very strong challenge from no fewer than nine other clubs.

The committee would also like to commend Bishop Monkton, Cheam, Norwich & Ipswich for their submissions.

In the two years 2013 and 2014 **High Wycombe CC** has:

- Survived 2013 on one half lawn and weekly visits to the Ealing Club, having lost their playing facility in 2012.
- Nearly doubled its membership in spite of all these problems at the club.
- Created and completed two new laser-levelled lawns of a high standard during 2013, having obtained funding from Sport England, Wycombe District Council & the CA.
- Developed its coaching capability through attendance at Academy Coaching courses.
- Maintained participation in Federation Leagues, despite not having a home base in 2013. and increased member entry into Federation-run AC & GC tournaments.
- Played most of their Federation matches on the new facility in 2014 and run a full set of AC & GC internal competitions in 2013 in spite of the lack of facilities.
- Taken on a 25 year lease at its new location and established its own lawn maintenance team lead by a professional green-keeper which has replaced the former council service.
- Developed a strong ethos of competitive play in both AC & GC.
- Created plans for its own permanent club house which have been approved in concept by the local council.

Apps Heley Award

This award is for clubs with three or four lawns, and has been given jointly to **Swindon CC** and **Camerton and Peasedown CC**.

In the two years 2013 and 2014 **Swindon CC** has:

- Been awarded a grant by Sport England Inspired Fund for the second year running. This is allowing them to relay their existing lawns and create a new third lawn to a very high standard, with a fully enclosed security fence, enabling them to better protect their investment.
- Obtained another grant from the CA and a Sport England Small Grant, enabling them to purchase new mowing, line marking and general lawn maintenance equipment, so that the club can do its own maintenance to a higher standard than experienced from the Council.
- Created a facility that can now host external tournaments.
- Also been able, thanks to the grant from the Sport England Inspired Fund, to purchase a new club room with full electrical and drainage facilities; the club have provided additional funds to equip the room. This is the first time in the club's 28 year history that it has had proper facilities.
- Obtained the Sport England Clubmark accreditation. This is a major credit to the club and signifies the care for its members and the community at large.

In the two years 2013 & 2014 **Camerton and Peasedown CC** has:

- Increased its membership from 37 to 55 despite losing members when they moved from Lansdown to the present site.
- Implemented successful GC Beginners Courses each Spring.
- Reached the finals of the Grass Roots,

Centre Stage and All England GC Handicap Competitions.

- Entered three SWF Leagues and reached the final of the handicap league in 2013.
- Successfully developed more competitive play and in 2014 created a nucleus

of AC players who are already entering external tournaments.

- Run beginners' and improvers' coaching courses for other clubs in the South West.
- Installed an Eco toilet at ground level, granting older and disabled members a facility without having to navigate 30 steep steps to the cricket pavilion, following the completion of drainage work that enabled winter play at the club.
- Both grown their membership and reached out into the community since the formation of the club.

Millennium Award

This award is for clubs with five or more lawns, and the winner this year is **Budleigh Salterton CC**.

In the two years 2012 and 2013 **Budleigh Salterton CC** has:

- Increased its coaching team from four to thirteen coaches.
- Invested £88,000 over the two years on lawn improvements; their lawns are now among the best in the country.
- Installed two new huts ensuring shelter from sun and rain. The huts and grounds work has been done from club funds and not from the legacy they received in 2011.
- Completed a comprehensive review of all aspects of club management and produced a Croquet Development Plan to address the issues identified.
- Introduced short lawn croquet to assist beginners to play AC.
- Fostered a more competitive approach to GC.
- Trialled winter play in 2012 before making it the norm in 2013.
- Hosted many top CA events and the European Golf Croquet Championship.

Each award winner receives an inscribed plaque and a cheque for £250.

They will also hold the associated trophy for two years (or one year each in the case of Swindon CC and Camerton & Peasedown).

The trophies will be presented at the CA AGM in October.

The next round of awards will be made in February 2017 and applications will be invited in the autumn of 2016.



At the beginning of this year, I took my girlfriend to a screening in Leicester Square of *The Theory of Everything*, a film about Stephen and Jane Hawking.

The screening was for cast members and entry was free, so that appealed to my Yorkshire genes. It was the first film I've seen that when the credits roll everyone remains seated and silent. For as members of the cast and crew they were waiting to see their names!

Mine was towards the end of the list with the title 'Croquet Consultant'.

When the applause ended, as everyone congratulated themselves on a good job well done, the lights came up. The director James Marsh and screen-writer Anthony McCarten said a few words about how the film had been critically acclaimed at the Toronto Film Festival and that it looked promising it would be well received when it was officially released.

They then read out a letter from Jane Hawking, on whose books the film was based. What was clear from her letter was that she and Stephen had a relationship with the film crew that was close to being family, and that Felicity Jones and Eddie Redmayne had portrayed Jane and Stephen so well they had found it hard to distinguish memory from fiction. Initially one could tell that there was a sense of relief that they felt that they had been accurately portrayed but then, beyond that, that they were proud to have been played by people they admired.

When I first met Eddie Redmayne it was at Ealing's lawns in September 2013.

He was accompanied by the director, the cinematographer, Benoit, First and Second Assistants, his movement coach, Alex, and a few others.

We spent much of our time working on how Stephen would have held the mallet or placed the balls as the motor neurone disease gradually took hold of his body.

Eddie and Alex had visited a hospice for people with the disease, in order to learn as much as they could about its effects and they had worked extremely hard to copy the body and hand shapes, as well as the effort and frustration that came with it.

When talking with James and Benoit we worked through how they would like to film the scenes (there were two croquet scenes but one didn't make it into the film).

For the scene with Eddie and Felicity the

The Theory of Everything

By Alain Giraud

'You know how it is, one minute you are telling film stars all about croquet and the next thing they want you to play the feet of a genius...'

Alain Giraud agreed to tell *The Gazette* about how he helped to make a box office hit!

script indicated that Stephen went round and finished in one turn keeping Jane off the lawn and out of play. It was decided that a four ball break would be too complicated and longwinded and so we discussed a two ball break.



When I demonstrated what I meant, they realised that this would work well with the violence, frustration and exclusion they wanted to show.

James later described this as one of the best scenes in the film.

The other scene, that didn't make the edit, was very different.

It took place at night and involved a drunken croquet party with a lawn strewn with travel cases, armour, lampshades, champagne glasses and arm chairs, as Stephen watches his friends and their girlfriends play what started out as croquet but then became a bit more freestyle.

It included a moment where a ball flew towards Stephen lying on the ground that with (CGI) computer graphics, changed into a fiery ball and became the universe. This is replaced in the film by a scene where

he sees the fire through the holes in his jumper! Who knows, maybe the drunken croquet scene will be included in 'Deleted Scenes' on the DVD?

Preparation took three days, meeting on different days with Eddie, Felicity (a whole day of croquet and I'm not sure if she even hits a ball on screen) and the friends at the drunken party. Filming took two days on location a few weeks later at St John's, Cambridge, where a small army was catered for with fantastic buffet breakfasts and lunches. We were chauffeured around by private car or mini-bus except for the director who preferred a bicycle!

Each of the croquet scenes took a day.

The wide shots in the Eddie and Felicity scene, took most of the morning and then I took over as body-double for the close up shots.

Yes, I played Stephen Hawking's feet!

On the third day, I was able to roam around and watch as they started the preparations for the May Ball scene and observed the filming of the transformation of Stephen from 'the fall' to 'speeding along in a motorised wheelchair'.

The whole experience was fantastic. Everyone involved was very positive and I'd certainly do it again. Maybe next time I'll be able to persuade the Art Department to use proper hoops and shorter grass. But anyway hopefully this film will help to move croquet a little further away from Alice in Wonderland.

Eddie Redmayne won an Oscar, a Golden Globe and a Bafta amongst others; Felicity Jones was nominated for an Oscar, and a Bafta amongst others, and the film itself was Oscar nominated and won a Bafta.

Alain Giraud, Ealing CC

~

Not content with his burgeoning film career, Alain in action for real early this season, when he managed and won Ealing's AC Advanced weekend tournament. He is pictured here with the spoils.

*The centre page picture is a 'still' of the croquet scene in *The Theory of Everything*, with stars Felicity Jones and Eddie Redmayne.*





Snow stops play . . .

Nobody told this snowman that there would be no croquet at Bowdon CC. He'd clearly not seen the club's website which declared in late January: "There will be no Wednesday one-ball tomorrow."

However, at Northampton CC they just don't know when enough is enough! Janet Carpenter is pictured here trying to continue on the same day, when two inches of snow fell during her game.

"Where's the white ball?"

(Photographs by Dave Holland and Lionel Tibble)

. . . but not at Barnstaple

We find it a bit too chilly in the winter at Barnstaple, so for some years we have organised indoor play, writes Irene Fane.

We use 'croquet for leisure' hoops on an indoor bowling green at the town leisure centre, on a court measuring 110 by 60 feet.

This is large enough to allow triple banked games, with a set of striped balls providing the third set. Winter play has seen increasing membership, is contributing to club funds and maintains an all-year-round contact between members.

Avery tops SA again

Mark Avery was again the class act at South Africa's Southern Cape AC Championships in February which attracted, as usual, over twenty UK players.

Avery (below) won the Open Singles main event with a final victory over David Openshaw at the lovely Somerset West Club, about fifty minutes from Cape Town.

Host Judith Hanekom and Surbiton's George Noble had topped the two blocks but both lost out in the semis to the opposite block runners-up.

Avery also won the handicap knock-out event, beating Hanekom in the final, and he completed a hat-trick of titles when he piloted partner Johnathan Edwards (Surbiton) to victory in the handicap doubles.

Liz Wilson (Fylde and Pendle), Sylvia Drayer (Somerset West) won the Restricted Singles B and C events respectively, but mention should be made of Howard Bowron (Penrith) who was undefeated in his B block games but couldn't stay for the play-off.

Hurlingham's Richard Hoskyns won the a very competitive Veterans handicap, Johannesburg's Christine Wakeham the Restricted Handicap Singles block event and Jim Field (Bath) took the handicap knock-out plate.

Noble won most games without winning an event (so won a silver tray!) and Phyllis Court's Frances Colman won the Charity 14-point despite a nasty fall over a string boundary.

Space limitation prevents me giving further details of this cracking tournament, which is just as well

as I don't want to relieve the costly forgetting of two bisques against Dave Mundy (who is sure to remind me, at least every now and then).

**Chris Roberts,
Phyllis Court CC**



FEC launch new European Croquet Masters

Are you a croquet tourist? A series of Europe-wide tournaments now make up a new competition called the 2015 European Croquet Masters, in which there are both 'country' and 'individual' elements, writes John Swaby.

The Background - Several continental European clubs were keen to arrange some sort of league. Given that most of them are the only club in their country, this developed into an inter-country idea, for which we arrived at the inspired name of European Masters.

The Concept - The most successful player from country A playing in a given Open wins points for their country in the Country Masters, regardless of whether it is GC or AC. In addition, all players win points for themselves in the relevant individual Masters (GC or AC). You are not selected by your country and are not required to enter several Opens, but if you want the individual title that would probably help - especially as the minimum of 1 point is only available when you play in an Open outside your country.

The Countries taking part -

So far there are 12 countries participating, covering 13 Opens: Austria, Belgium, England, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Scotland, Spain and Switzerland

are running a Masters event in either or both GC and AC. Czech Republic and Wales are participating countries, without having nominated a tournament.

The European Championships which are run by the FEC will also generate points.

Which tournaments are involved?

To see the latest list and all the rules etc. please visit www.eurocroquet.com.

www.eurocroquet.com/european-masters. The designated English events are detailed below.

Who pays for it all? - Each participating country runs its own Open(s) as usual but has agreed to pay 10 euro for their best-placed player in each nominated Masters event.

If your country is not participating, you can still earn individual points by paying 10 euro extra at each Masters event.

Where will the results be available?

The website www.eurocroquet.com/european-masters.

Ian Lines, Chairman of the CA International Committee, writes:

In England, the CA support the European Masters concept in order to encourage players to travel internationally, and have designated that the following events will count towards the Masters scoring system:

GC - The Sussex Open Championship
(12-13 September - Sussex County CC)

AC - The South of England Championship
(25-27 September - Compton CC)





Oakham's helping hand

Pupils from Oakham School have been visiting Tixover House Care Home every Friday during term time to play croquet with the residents. They have teamed up with a local care home to support National Care Home Open Day (Friday 20 July).

Together, they are showcasing how school pupils can connect with dementia patients by playing croquet with them. Oakham's website tells the whole story, of which this is just part:

'Croquet, the game that took England by storm in the 1860s, is a surprise 'hit' for helping patients who suffer from dementia. It helps to improve the lives of patients, and their caregivers, in a range of different ways - mentally, physically and socially.

Elaine Elsey, Activities Coordinator from Tixover House Care Home, describes how for one of her residents "it takes her back to her old life. She becomes fiercely competitive and full of life. Playing croquet is one of the few things that she is able to remember."

"What the pupils are doing is astounding," says Elaine.

"We have all noticed a difference in the residents who take part. It makes them smile. At that moment, it gives them joy. It really is remarkable to watch residents who don't normally take part, have a go."

Initially, residents were brought into Oakham's sports hall to play. Now, "it is better for the residents that the School comes to us, as it means more people can benefit - either by watching or taking part in the activity in their own 'comfort zone'."

Headmaster Nigel Lashbrook, said "Not only is it something that we, as a School, are proud to be able to offer to our local community, but it's also an incredibly rewarding experience for our pupils.

They learn how to communicate and to connect with people who have different needs. It teaches them valuable life skills such as patience and understanding. In many ways, everyone benefits - which is why voluntary action programmes such as this are so very important."

(Photograph courtesy of Alan Walters, Rutland & Stamford Mercury)

It's Radio Caroline!

Caroline Denny (*above*), of The Bears CC, did a great job in promoting croquet to a huge audience when she appeared on Simon Mayo's BBC Radio 2 Drivetime on 27 February.

The evening show is one of the Beeb's most popular, and it regularly attracts in the region of eight million listeners, timed as it is, for commuters' rush-hour drive home.

Getting on such a prestigious show was a real coup for Caroline and indeed croquet, and it resulted from her selection to represent Belgium in the WCF Women's AC World Championship in Nottingham (June).

She spoke well about that event and croquet in general during the show's regular slot that champions listeners' participation in sports outside the mainstream.

However, this was not croquet's first appearance in this section of the Radio 2 show.

Tobi Savage paved the way, when he too gave an interview on the same show before heading off to the GC World's in 2013.

Who is going to be next on?

~

Do please keep Gazette readers updated if you or your club get into the media spotlight, be it a national or just as importantly a local level, as other clubs will value ideas and learn from your experiences - Ed

... and BBC 1 for John

John Timberlake featured in a programme called 'Can You Cure My Cancer', broadcast on BBC1 on 10 February.

John is a long-standing member of Reigate Priory Croquet Club, and one of the founders three years ago of the Cheam Croquet and Bowls Club.

The programme followed patients who had taken part in clinical trials run by the Institute of Cancer Research and Royal Marsden Hospital. John was noted as a super-responder, whose life has been extended by a number of years as a result of the experimental treatment he received for prostate cancer.

Fergus Walsh, the BBC presenter, had interviewed John at length for the programme, and had discovered that John played croquet, including twice for England as mentioned in the programme. Fergus said he had played croquet at university, and suggested they had a game. So the pair played half a dozen hoops in front of a cameraman and producer at Cheam.

Fergus played very well, given that it was many years since he had touched a mallet, and an honourable draw was declared, while extracts from the footage appeared in several places in the programme.

Ian Cobbold, Cheam C&BC

Photos by Sylvia Timberlake and Jean Cobbold

Croquet to showcase at the

ROYAL THREE COUNTIES SHOW

Santander

Broadwas Croquet Club have been offered a fantastic opportunity to bring croquet to a wider audience - at the Three Counties Show at Malvern, Worcestershire (12 - 14 June).

They are looking to work with neighbouring clubs and Federations to ensure this Croquet Experience attracts lots of visitors and potential new members.

The management of the Three Counties Show want to run an inter-active croquet lawn within the Sports Village inviting visitors to have-a-go!

Over three the show, some 90,000 visitors from the Midlands, Bristol, Oxfordshire and Wales will pass through

the turnstiles, so it is certainly an opportunity not to be missed.

Working together with other clubs, we hope to generate interest in playing croquet, by inviting show-goers to visit their local club to find out more.

So participating clubs will have the opportunity to promote their own club..

The CA Office and Marketing Team will be involved and so this is a golden marketing opportunity for clubs from the surrounding area. Time is of the essence however, and clubs wishing to support and join in should please contact Chris Croft (Secretary, Broadwas Sports Association) on 01886 821664 or ccroft@globalnet.co.uk.

The Coaching Page by Roger Staples

As I write, the season is about to start, the daffodils are in bloom and the lawn has received its first cut of the year. So let play commence!

I congratulate the following on achieving coaching badges:

Grade 1 Coach - Les Bowker (Cheltenham), Roger Mills (Sidmouth) and John Harris (York).

Club Coach - Richard Godfrey (Lym

Valley), Stephen Custance-Baker (Taunton Deane), Darryl Whitehead, and Michael James (both Cheltenham).

Golf Coach - Yvonne Cunnane (Great Bedwyn), Steve Fisher (Harwell), Richard Jenkins (Hamptworth), Joan Grove, Pamela Sim and Richard Harris (all Ryde).

I wish you all good fortune this season.

**Roger Staples, Chairman,
Coaching Committee**

Learning from recently improved players

In an attempt to search for one of croquet's elixirs, 'how to improve one's play and reduce one's handicap', I called upon the experiences of some of croquet's most recently improved players.

The most common thread that ran through their experiences, for both the GC and AC players, had been the amount of time and commitment they devoted to practise.

Here is a summary of that which these improvers attributed to their improvement:

i. A swing trainer was bought and practised with endlessly to perfect the swing of one improver. Having suffered defeat at their hands personally, I can testify that their hitting in was too good!

ii. Several improvers called upon an experienced club player or/ coach to mentor their progress. One player reported that he would recall some ten commandments to help him build and improve a break in the AC game. A new goal was set each time he practised, such as if he was capable of running three hoops in a break, he would then re-set his goal to run four hoops in the next break.

iii. Valuable experience had been gained by attending coaching courses, either at home clubs or the CA's Academy.

iv. As they improved their play, the need to increase their level of concentration, especially during competitive matches, was reported.

v. When playing 'out of their comfort zone' in terms of taking on stiffer opposition, they all accepted that they would likely be second best, but would gain valuable experience for future games.

vi. If, during a game, a particular line of play hadn't delivered the desired results, then at least one improver said that they would return home and re-read some of their croquet books, to see where and why that approach had gone wrong. The pages

of John Riches' book on error correction have been well thumbed.

vii. By learning the laws/rules of the game, valuable knowledge has been gained, helping to prevent problems developing during games.

viii. Taking the opportunity to watch top players go about their work on court, had been very useful indeed.

ix. A streak of stubbornness can come in useful at times, and this had been especially required by most players to overcome some sticking moments whilst learning the game.

x. After gaining experience & confidence, one improver reported that he would go and assist beginners, meaning that he would have to go back to basics and practise the fundamentals before giving that instruction.

xi. Being both self-critical and competitive had helped several players and the willingness to go back and start again, had led to overall improvement and error reduction.

There are several well-known quotes attributed to the legendary golfer Gary Player, that can be applied to most activities, including croquet. Here are two:

"Simply by making the effort to start something, you will be miles ahead of almost everyone else."

"The harder I practise, the luckier I get."

Hopefully, you will be able to put some of the above tips into practise and then see an improvement in your own game. Who knows, you may even reduce your handicap too!

Many thanks to the rapid improvers who shared their experiences with me: Nick Mounfield, Omied Hallam, Will Gee, Francois Garcia, Nick Archer and Sara Anderson.

**Bob Thompson, Coaching Officer,
East Midlands Federation**

A Lifetime Coaching Award for Peter Dyke

Peter Dyke was introduced to croquet in his youth, but took the sport up more seriously in 1981, when he was instrumental in the formation from scratch, of the Nailsea & District Croquet Club.

He was the club's first Chairman and has remained a member of the committee ever since, mostly as tournament and fixtures secretary.

In addition to these responsibilities, he has been a central figure in the club's coaching programme for all this time.

He has run open days, courses for both beginners and improvers, and he has assisted with CA coaching courses too.

He has also been the main driving force behind Nailsea's long-running and highly successful junior coaching programme.

Until taking early retirement in the late 1990s, Peter was a maths teacher at Nailsea Comprehensive School, and always encouraged his pupils to come along and try croquet.

This led to several successes in the National Schools' Croquet Championship, and produced several players who went on to international standard, most notably Kriss Chambers (*pictured below at the AC Worlds*), Marcus Evans, Ryan Cabble, and Harry Dodge.

All those players and many more, owe their success to Peter's enthusiasm and patient coaching, which he continues to provide to this day.

His tireless and selfless commitment to passing on his knowledge via coaching, has benefited many hundreds of croquet players over the years and his contribution to croquet coaching at Nailsea and in the South West Federation is incalculable.

There can be no more fitting recipient of the Lifetime Coaching Award.

**Roger Staples,
Coaching Committee Chairman**



The Coach of the Year is Janet Hoptroff

Following an illustrious career with the BBC, where her role included handling many high-profile entertainment and political figures, Janet discovered the world of croquet.

Starting at Earnley, she joined the Littlehampton club. Having attended Academy coaching courses she became a club coach and rapidly built a good reputation and competitive environment within her own club.

Her achievements were spotted by the Croquet Academy, and when she joined Sussex County Croquet Club to improve and experience more competitive play, she was invited to join the Academy team to help and then take over the administration work as secretary.

It soon became apparent that Janet was an extremely talented administrator who demonstrated exceptional interpersonal skills.

She became a fully qualified Golf Croquet Coach in 2013 and took on the role of Head of Coaching at SCCC as well as becoming a valued coach at the Academy.

Janet transformed the coaching environment at Southwick and her efforts led to much higher retention figures amongst new recruits and, more importantly, she created a much more competitive environment within the club.

However, Janet's biggest achievement has been her selfless commitment to the growth of the Academy. Her eye for detail has been a major contribution in its success, helping to create a professionally run organization which is a true centre of excellence for croquet coaching. This is reflected in the fact that, during her tenure, course attendance has doubled.

Roger Staples, Coaching Committee Chairman

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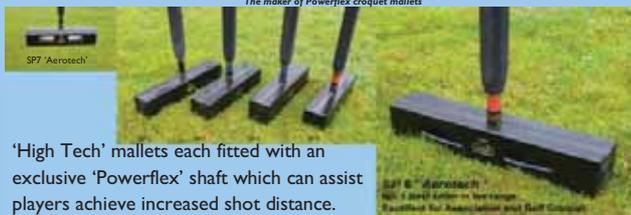
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For details or discussion, contact Alan Pidcock
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I do not know about you, but I find the action of mowing very thought-provoking; whether it is the steady rhythm of the walk or the fact that there is very little else to distract one, but I find the gentle rumble of the mower engine immediately sets thoughts tumbling out.

And I have had an AWFUL lot of time to think in the last six months.

Initially, thoughts full of frustration and self-doubt, but more lately, an acceptance of the facts and a more positive use of hindsight.

Two and a half years ago, following the successful re-laying of our top four courts, the Committee of the Cheltenham CC agreed in principle to complete its five-year development plan with the renovation of the front four courts. Once again the **Croquet Association was most generous in providing a grant of £5,000**, leaving the Club to find some £11,000 from its reserves.

With the finances in place the Club was in a position to seek tenders for the work and, remembering my own advice from 2012 (Gazette Issue 336), I set about the task.

Contract agreed, the work was scheduled to start early on the morning of Tuesday 2 September 2013. The contractor had said that he wanted me to be there at 7am to make sure that the heavy machinery had access to the grounds. The arrived at 10.30 and the plant arrived at 11.30!

I decided to do something different this time with regard to the seed that I used. I was persuaded to use rye grass this time, and it certainly did germinate quickly. What I really liked was using seed coated with its own fertilizer. This meant that there was no need to apply any pre-germination fertilizer to the ground, and this meant in turn that the grass was able to out-compete the weeds and coarse grasses, and thus



One man went to mow

David Magee shares the downside of major lawn renovations prior to last season's Open Championship

dominate the sward. I would certainly recommend this method.

But then it started to rain.

With hindsight, the alarm bells should have sounded a cautionary note when the contractor said that there was nothing more that could be done, and that they would review the situation in the Spring.

But no, I was lulled into a false sense of security as I watched the grass grow. I even got the contractor's agreement to our cutting and feeding the grass without prejudice to the contract.

In the New Year, I refocused on the grass and it had really grown, but the ground was still too soft to take the mower, so there was nothing to do but sit back and hope the rate of growth slowed. But then, of course, there were no frosts, and the grass continued to grow apace.

In April, when at last the ground began to harden, the contractor returned to over-seed, which meant that we lost another two weeks; I really started to fret.

We got on to the courts in May, and the mowing started in earnest as we attacked the grass with vigour, in the hope that the situation could be salvaged.

Young grass is sappy, tender and easily damaged. It does not take kindly to such savage treatment, but at the forefront of my mind was that we had to have the courts ready for the Open Championships in July.

We eventually got down to 5mm two days before the Championship, and got our first real look at the surface – it was very patchy and 'clumpy' looking.

Reality really kicked in when the Manager of the Opens decided that he could not use the new lawns at all! - You may imagine what was going through my mind.

At the end of the Championship, we were able to take stock and approach the situation with a lot more TLC, raise the height of cut to relieve stress, and the grass was given a good 'body-building' feed.

The whole surface was gently verti-cut to clean out the sward, and we tip-toed off to let the grass lick its wounds and start a process of recovery.

This year I am now mowing in a much more relaxed frame of mind, and I leave you with my final thought.

You cannot beat nature – you must work with it and, in so doing, you must hope for the best, but plan for the worst.

Downloadable lawns advice from the CA website

In 1999 the late John Beech edited a booklet entitled "Croquet lawns their establishment, improvement and maintenance", which was followed in 2004, by John co-editing a second edition with Jeff Perris, an agronomist with the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI).

Both versions were published by the CA.

In the 1990s the CA set up a Lawns Advisory Group, with representatives from each Federation. They attended a course run by the STRI and were provided with a CD giving the course content and advice for their use within the Federations.

The Lawns Advisory Group is now defunct and so it was agreed at the Development Committee, that a new version of the lawns booklet should be written, giving the latest information but recognising that this will need to be updated within a year or two.

It was decided that this new booklet should be in electronic form downloadable from the CA website and it has now been completed. The author, Jeff Perris, will review the content in a year's time and effect any changes that are required.

It is hoped that this latest version will be of interest and use to all those who are involved in the care of croquet lawns.

This very useful booklet can be downloaded from the CA website – from the home page, press the 'Technical and Articles' button, then 'Advice for Clubs' and see under the 'Lawns' heading.

Alternatively the direct link is <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=1220>.

Bob Whitaker,
Development Committee



New Lawns at Guildford & Godalming

In October 2013 the future of Guildford & Godalming Croquet Club looked grim when without any intimation we were given one month's notice by the board of our multi-sports club to vacate our four lawns.

The brutal announcement was a shock but we quickly rallied and, with advice from the CA, the support of both Sport Godalming and Sport Guildford, the legal expertise and negotiating skills of Stephen Mulliner, and the backing of Guildford Borough Council (the landowner), we set about securing the future as a four-lawn club.

After months of negotiation we managed to gain security of tenure at the same location, though the price was high.

We had to release the great majority of three of our lawns to mini-rugby at the end of summer 2014, start to create two new lawns on rough ground in August and also bring the neglected bowling green up to a playable standard before the end of the 2014 competitive season.

Members readily undertook work on the bowling green, so that we had two lawns on which to play our late season fixtures and which could also be used during the winter.

However, constructing new lawns to the standard required for play in 2015 necessitated the employment of a specialist contractor.

In the previous two years we had invested heavily in lawn improvement and our funds were low, so we had to find both a suitable contractor and the means to finance the work.

By then it was June and time was short.

But the croquet network came into its own, enabled us to shortlist recommended contractors, and then to select a small but experienced family firm, who were prepared to pencil in our booking whilst we set about raising the money.

We submitted successful grant applications to the Croquet Association (£3.5k), Surrey County Playing Fields Association (£1k) and the South East

Croquet Federation (£350) and the balance was met by offers of loans and donations from members.

To begin the process, members used their own domestic mowers to cut and remove as much vegetation as possible.

Our contractor sprayed the entire area with glyphosate to further reduce the volume, and later striped the turf, then laser-leveled and seeded the 2000 square metre area.

The soil was in a good, workable state and everything went smoothly with all in one 13-hour day.

The weather had been ideal and rain five days after seeding ensured good conditions for germination, but then prolonged dry weather set in.

With no irrigation facility and low water pressure from our sole standpipe, we had to use two oscillating sprinklers, moved regularly throughout the day every day or two for several weeks, to ensure good germination and survival of the seedlings.

Arthur Lindley had taken the lead on all the work required and by this stage he seemed to be all but living at the club. Thanks to his hard work and diligence, by the end of September germination and growth were good and light rotary mowing commenced.

The grass, currently protected from rabbit incursion by electric fencing, continues to thicken and grow and we look forward to playing on the new lawns later this year.

Under our new lease, a previous restriction on the erection of any building has been removed and it seems that we can now reasonably plan for a modest wooden clubhouse on the footprint of the former ramshackle bowls shelter.

We can also dream of a loo closer than two rugby pitches' distance!

Jennifer Fugeman,

Secretary, Guildford & Godalming CC

Photographs by Ian Fugeman and Arthur Lindley, show turf removal, laser leveling, seeding and successful germination under water sprinklers.



Ask the Ref

This is a new and hopefully regular column, for which readers are invited to submit their questions. 'Graham from London' Asks the Ref:

1. Time is called in an AC handicap game during Player A's turn. The score is tied when Player A finishes her turn, and she realises that her opponent's bisques are suspended during 'overtime'. Player B begins to play the final turn and makes no progress; then plays the last stroke of her turn and realises the game will be decided by a golden hoop. She then asks to use a bisque because she believes her bisques are re-instated after her extra turn.

What should happen next Ref?

Player B cannot use a bisque at this point, but can after her following turn(s) if Player A doesn't score the deciding point first. The situation is covered by tournament regulation T2(b)(1): "No half-bisque or bisque may be played at the end of either of the two turns which comprise the extension period. If play continues after the end of the extension period under (a)(3) above, any half-bisque or bisques may then be played."

2. In an AC handicap game, a player takes off across the lawn and ends up woefully short of his partner ball. He then uses the continuation shot to move closer to the target and then plays again without asking to use a bisque. Instantly he realises he wasn't entitled to the additional shot, and had been confused into thinking he was playing that last shot as the continuation after the take-off. The player offers to replace the ball to where it was before his last shot.

What should happen next Ref?

This is covered by Law 37(d)(1): "At the conclusion of a turn the striker must give a clear and prompt indication of his intention before playing a half-bisque or bisque to which he is entitled. If he fails to do so but continues to play, no half-bisque or bisque is played and Law 25 applies. However, if the error is rectified, the striker may then play a half-bisque or bisque." So the player did the right thing by putting the ball back ("rectifying the error"), but then could, but did not have to, take a bisque.



The Bears CC v Bristol CC ~ a Snooker match!

It is often said that snooker was invented by croquet players for something to do in the winter. Whatever the truth of that it's a nice story, as is this coming together of the two sports, as Richard Danby of The Bears Croquet Club reports:

For the last ten years, The Bears CC (formerly The Bear of Rodborough CC) has run an internal club Snooker Section who meet up for an evening every fortnight during the winter and play a 'turn-up-and-play' handicap Egyptian tournament.

On 21 February, The Bears hosted their first inter-club snooker match with a home fixture against Bristol Croquet Club – for the Misspent Youth Trophy. Bristol fielded an impressive squad of four A-Class croquet players – so we hoped their snooker ability did not match their croquet prowess. We began to get concerned when they turned up not only with their own cues, but with their own spare cues too!

I should say a little about how our

'calibrated' - which can be summarised thus. The number of shots taken to pot all six colours off their spots is used as a basis to calculate the player's handicap and index. Thereafter handicaps are maintained automatically under the system closely based on croquet's AHS. The handicap difference provides the 'head start' for the higher handicap player. In the event of any 'bandits' developing, they can quickly be reined in by a re-calibration. The system seems to work extremely well, with many games going to a 'black ball finish'. I am happy to provide more information on this, should anybody be interested.

The snooker is played at our house – where we only have one table. So to give as much table-time as possible to all players, we play with 15, 10, or 6 reds depending on how many club members turn up. Handicaps difference is adjusted prorata à la shortened croquet games.

Getting back to The Bears v Bristol match,

handicapping system works. It's a system that we developed ourselves, where players are initially

this was held in two sessions and at half time, The Bears were 0-4 down. I should point out that Bristol's aggregate croquet handicap was -6, and The Bears' was +31½ - not sure how relevant this is, but I am grasping at straws!

We adjourned for tea, and many thanks to Rosemary Danby, Deidre Moss and Robert Moss (no relation) for organising a fantastic tea for all of us. At this point we decided to deploy our secret offensive weapon: Robert Moss's heavily laced home-made chocolate cake.

At the resumption, The Bears remembered how to play the game and took the session 4-2. So Bristol won the day 4-6, With Bristol's Richard Smith taking the highest break prize with 25.

In the sartorial elegance stakes, I think it's fair to so say that The Bears won convincingly.

Richard Danby, The Bears CC

Photograph left to right: Bristol CC: Robert Wilkinson, David Goacher (captain), Richard Smith, Pete Trimmer – and The Bears CC: Richard Danby (captain), Richard Way, Matthew Jackson, Stephen Moss, Howard Spellman.



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Clever new hoop found in Uruguay

Croquet is alive and roqueting in Uruguay, thanks to Jonathan Lamb, who has established a club on an Astroturf pitch in Montevideo.

We visited Uruguay last November and Jonathan, who is resident in the country for part of each year, invited us to play croquet with him in Montevideo.

He started the club on a football pitch located on the banks of the River Plate and then it moved eastwards to a court behind the Rambla, which runs alongside the river on the southern side of the city.

After that plot was sold, the club moved back to the football pitch, which by then had a smart new Astroturf surface! In order to overcome the problem of fixing croquet hoops into a hard surface, Jonathan has designed hoops with pins on the base that secure the hoops to the Astroturf.

The problem of securing the hoop when firm shots are being played has been overcome by the addition of second bar on the top, which allows the hoop to be held firmly by a non-striker's hand whilst the striker plays the firm shot.

There are about half a dozen regular club members from various countries - England, Australia, Germany and, of course, Uruguay - who meet on Saturday mornings for a few games of golf croquet and a tournament is held on a day in November for the British Society, which usually attracts around 24 players.

Should anyone be visiting Montevideo and wish to play croquet, the members will give you a warm welcome and, if you are fortunate, take you to a local café for the best chivito (steak sandwich) that we found during our stay in Uruguay.

Contact Jonathan Lamb at vozinglesa@gmail.com.

**Linda and Julian Sheraton-Davis,
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