

Running Hoops

The Newsletter of Kenilworth Croquet

May 2024

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Last month's issue of Running Hoops appeared to be one of the most popular of my time as editor. This was quite a surprise, since with the late start to the playing season, and the Presentation Dinner over, there really was nothing to write about. As Jon said, "You mean you wrote thirteen pages about *nothing*?!", and that about summed it up! I'm thankful to say at last that there is something to write about this time, with the Leagues, GC and AC Competitions now in full swing and results sheets filling up steadily, not to mention the very successful Open Day we held on Sunday. Suddenly the Club is alive again.

GC Competitions
League A v B
League C
League D
League E
League F
League G
League H
League I
League J
League K
League L
League M
League N
League O
League P
League Q
League R
League S
League T
League U
League V
League W
League X
League Y
League Z



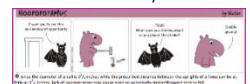
This month we welcome another member to our exclusive Running Hoops Writers' Club, Nigel Pigdon, who shot to fame in September by winning his first trophy within weeks of joining our club. Nigel poses some intriguing questions, with his article "First Impressions of a New Club", p3.

Looking through past copies of the Croquet Gazette, I was astonished to come across a fairly recent article by our own member, Adrian Morris, who apparently did a live radio interview in 2020. While this may not be news to long-standing members of the club (but was to Adrian, who had apparently forgotten all about the article!) I've reproduced it for the many new members who have joined since the Covid era, p5.



One of the many things that attracted me to croquet when I first joined the Club in 2022 was the atmosphere of fun and laughter at

the roll-up social afternoons. Croquet players have a wonderful ability to laugh at themselves, and the banter both in the clubhouse and on the lawns demonstrates the easy, relaxed relationship they have with their fellow members. I see the threads of this same relationship woven through the Croquet Gazette and the Facebook Croquet Hub, some of which are highlighted on p6, Croquet Humour, well worth reading.



Continuing the series on the history of the Honours Board, this month it's the turn of the Ladies' Trophy, the Bill Browne Trophy and the Castle Cup, p7-9.

During the winter the committee arranged for the hoops and pegs to be repainted, and this seemed like a convenient time to explain to new members how we set up the lawns for play in a very precise way. P10 explains all you need to know, and the posters are repeated on the back wall of the pavilion, with new labels for the boxes of hoops. Always take a moment to check that you are putting the right hoops in the right positions and facing the right way! And finally, Competition Time reappears for the first time this year with lots of interesting reports and match results, both home and away, with which to catch up.



Wishing everyone an idyllic croquet season in idyllic croquet sunshine!

Elizabeth

CROQUET OPEN DAY



The Open Day on Sunday 26th May was an amazing day, enjoyed just as much by members as by visitors. Last year's Open Day took place on a beautiful hot, sunny day, with lots of visitors and young children coming along to share the day with their parents, but today's success was more of a surprise. With a dire weather forecast, it was astonishing that visitors began to arrive from the start, undeterred by the forecast, and continued to arrive steadily throughout the afternoon. And despite the forecast we had a perfectly calm, sunny afternoon with only a few seconds of drizzle barely noticeable, early on.

New arrivals were quickly paired off with club members and went on to enjoy long games on the half lawns, which, with the practice lawn, can accommodate up to 36 players at one time. The visitors were fun, friendly and enthusiastic about the game, newcomers pulling off some excellent shots and impressing us all with their rapid progress.



Afterwards they enjoyed drinks and cake sitting outside in the sun, chatting with members and other visitors, and it was lovely to see them having time to relax and experience the ambience of our club. We had 21 visitors including 4 friends and family, which was slightly more than last year. The feedback was very positive: visitors said how much they had enjoyed themselves and were particularly impressed by the time and trouble members took to explain the basics of GC and chat to them generally about the club. Their impression was of a very welcoming group.



Seventeen of the visitors gave their contact details to Lynne, eight of whom have expressed a definite interest in joining the club. Lynne has passed their details to Ian for him to follow up. It would be lovely to meet them again in the near future at the social afternoons, or the Thursday morning Association Croquet sessions. Those who decide not to join will have enjoyed their experience and will be able to talk more knowledgeably and spread the word, about our club and our sport.

I joined Kenilworth Croquet club in September last year and found everyone to be extremely friendly and welcoming to the "new boy". As always joining a new group you have lots to learn, not least I turn up and get given fifteen new names of those present in quick succession but they only have to remember one. I am bad at remembering names at the best of times but I guess so many of the male members being called Phil helps. Running Hoops was a great help in this regard as not only were there updates on various activities across the club, the photos of some key members and their names helped me start to learn them and what they do in the club.



Douglas Trophy 28 Sep 2023



Secretary's Shield v Bury 11 May 24

Now the challenge with new names is common to any new group but Kenilworth Croquet also has its own unique idiosyncrasies that I guess the long standing members no longer notice. For example why the lawn nearest the clubhouse is lawn 2 (not 1 as I would have guessed), or why you start in the furthest corner from the clubhouse and not the closest. Other things to learn include the various competitions appear to be named after where the various cups came from, not what the competition is; or the hoops have a range of horizontal or vertical lines to indicate where they are supposed to go (now addressed by some clear labelling). There

are a few more things I am still pondering over, for example if you pull a card out for roll up Golf, where do the Jacks play from? It appears not always to be the same location week to week.

It's a real pleasure to be a member of Kenilworth Croquet Club. The club is very active with lots of competitions, internal and external leagues, roll up sessions etc and I have joined in many of these. Lots of people are actively doing tasks for the club and events are all well attended. Everyone is very helpful in giving advice or assistance if required, to help you improve your game and have a very enjoyable time. I would like to give a special call out to Adrian Morris who runs a starter session for new AC players on a Thursday morning. Not just assisting when you have a game but giving up his time week after week for novice players and actively mentoring you. I know that dedicated learning sessions also occur with Golf but it's the AC ones I have attended.



WMF GC League B-team v A-team 15 May 2024

Learning how to play AC better was the key reason I joined Kenilworth and I have made some good progress learning some of the complexities and nuances of that great game. I managed to win the Douglas Trophy (for high handicap AC players) at the end of last year, and this year, was invited to join the AC team to compete in the Secretary's Shield at Bury and later in a WMF League match against Broadwas, and I look forward to many years of hopefully refining and building on these skills. Indeed after the match at Broadwas, I started to learn how to do significantly curved croquet shots on their hilly lawns (literally aimed 6 feet to one side on a long "cross hill" shot). That's something you can't learn from YouTube and have to experience at first hand!

EARLY PRESS SUCCESS AND ON-LINE PUBLICITY

Adrian and Frank have been busy again this year with their reports for the local newspaper, The Courier and related website Warwickshire World, and entries on the Warwickshire County and other Facebook pages, Croquet England and Croquet Hub. This is an excellent way to keep the game and the name of our club in the public eye.

Kenilworth Croquet Club gears up for a new season

By Adrian Morris Contributor

It's not the best croquet weather, yet, but Kenilworth Croquet Club opened their lawns this week. The first session at the Crackley Lane club was an Association Croquet morning with Nigel Pigdon scoring the first official hoop of the season. The afternoon featured Golf Croquet with the normal enthusiastic, well wrapped, turn-out for these sessions.

A full season of competitive Croquet is planned with internal club competitions and home and away matches in the West Midlands Leagues. The ever-popular friendly social sessions will also continue. New players are always welcome, no dress code, you can use a club mallet, but flat soled shoes are required. Come along and give Croquet a try. If you want to find out more about Croquet, see www.ktscc.co.uk/croquet



Nigel Pigdon scores the first hoop of the season watched by fellow Association Croquet players

Send us your story

Croquet England
5d · 6

Fun for all ages at Kenilworth Tennis, Squash and Croquet Club. We hope you all have a great season.

Kenilworth Tennis, Squash and Croquet Club
4 May · 6
@croquetengland #croquetweek

Croquet season is in full swing!
Fun for all ages
Social sessions held on Monday and Thursdays.
email: croquet@ktscc.co.uk for details
All equipment supplied

A JUMP SHOT
Using a mallet, striking the brown ball to make it jump over the green ball which was blocking the hoop!

Kenilworth Tennis Squash & Croquet Club
Crackley Lane, Kenilworth CV8 2JS

Kenilworth Croquet knocked out by Bury



Kenilworth team of Nigel Pigdon, Mervyn Harvey, Philip Wood and captain Cliff Daniel

By ADRIAN MORRIS Contributor

There were some close games in this contest at Bury but Kenilworth were defeated by 6 games to 1. Having won the West Midlands Association Croquet League last year, Kenilworth qualified to compete in the National Secretary's Shield competition.

Croquet Open Day

By Frank (KTSCC) Hurst Contributor

Kenilworth Tennis, Squash and Croquet Club (KTSCC) Public Open Day. The Croquet

Association (CA) has announced 18 - 28th May as National Croquet Week for 2024. This year, the CA are partnering with the charity Dementia Carers National Croquet Week presents a great opportunity

to showcase the sport to the general public around the UK. Nationally the events comprise a mix of inter county club competitions and public open days all of which are run by individual

Croquet clubs. To help mark this occasion holding a Public Open Day. All ages are welcome. No experience is necessary.

Please wear flat soled footwear when playing on the grass. Come and see us!

philb4x4@gmail.com
Location - Kenilworth Tennis Squash Club, Crackley Lane, Kenilworth CV8 2JS. Ample free parking. <https://www.ktscc.co.uk/croquet/>



Kenilworth A beat Kenilworth B in a close fought match in the West Midlands Croquet League. The playing strength of Golf Croquet players in Kenilworth is such that this year they entered two teams. They were drawn together in the first match. Kenilworth A, last year's league winners, did not have it all their own way. The first two rounds of four singles games went two games each, but in the third round Ken A slipped into gear win all four. The final round was again 2 each. The final doubles matches were 1 each, giving Kenilworth A the victory 11 games to 7. Ken A; Phil Mander scored 4 wins, Phil Blake 3, Mervyn Harvey 2 and Philip Wood, 1. Ken B; Nick Hegan 2 wins, Nigel Pigdon 2, Pauline Harvey 1 and Cliff Daniel 1.

Kenilworth A win local derby



Cliff Daniel scoring Hoops 5
By ADRIAN MORRIS Contributor

Warwickshire County Croquet
20 March · 6

Nigel Pigdon scores the first hoop of the season as Kenilworth open their lawns with an AC session. In the afternoon social GC session the well wrapped members show their enthusiasm!



Croquet Hub

Free refreshments on offer after enjoying an introduction to an absorbing new sport for all ages, at an inclusive and very friendly club in Kenilworth. All equipment is provided and all you need is a pair of flat-soled shoes.

Kenilworth Tennis Squash & Croquet Club

NATIONAL CROQUET WEEK 2024 OPEN DAY at Crackley Lane
Sunday 26th May 2024
12 noon to 4pm
Free to take part
All ages welcome!
No experience necessary
Large car park
For further details email: philb4x4@gmail.com

New members for Kenilworth Croquet

By ADRIAN MORRIS Contributor
Published 20th May 2024, 08:54 EDT

Last weekend's Croquet Open Day on the Crackley Lane lawns was a great success. The forecast rain did not materialise but visitors made it the busiest Open Day for years. Members gave friendly introductions to the sport and after a few minutes' instruction, guests were able to enjoy a competitive game of Golf Croquet. Guests were of all ages and most were totally new to Croquet. A few had played at college and the day brought back many memories for them.

Tea and cakes were enjoyed in the afternoon sunshine. Some became members on the day and others will be returning to learn more before joining. If you missed the Open Day and want to find out more about Croquet, see www.ktscc.co.uk/croquet/ or just come along any Monday afternoon or Thursday evenings when we hold our social Golf Croquet sessions.

“Federations and clubs have worked incredibly hard to follow-up on the positive publicity [post Covid]. I have been impressed by everyone promoting our sport in such a positive and engaging way - in particular Adrian Morris of Kenilworth TSCC who delivered a fantastic radio interview.”

Adrian's Live Radio Interview Experience

Following some successful press coverage in recent weeks including a full page devoted to croquet and our own version of the Dulwich CC social distancing photograph, I decided to send the photo along with some details to our local BBC Coventry and Warwickshire radio station. They were amused by the photo and keen for me to talk to them on a local sports programme. I agreed and then doubts crept in! Could I put over the story LIVE on radio? What if I mess things up? Recognising the commonly held misconceptions about croquet, could I make things worse? They had given me no brief apart from talking about the measures we had taken to be able to open. This was of some interest, maybe, but I needed to get more across.

I spent considerable time preparing for the interview including a list of actions taken so I could rattle that off and move on to more interesting things. I gathered statistics on top players, top countries and world champions to have ready, just in case, and also added recent Inter-Counties results, as on the evening of the broadcast I would have been travelling home from Compton. None of this was needed but I didn't want to be caught out. Making notes so I was prepared, I also made notes of what I wanted to get across about our club and most importantly how listeners could contact us or get more details. I then concentrated on likely questions that would be coming my way and decided that I needed to describe GC and AC in just a few words and get across that it is a serious sport but also played socially. I was ready to mention the high tech mallets that we have these days, by way of stressing that croquet is a modern sport and was ready to push that croquet was a serious competitive sport played internationally. Other pluses I wanted to mention are that that men and women play on equal terms, we also have our handicaps to ensure an even contest and that croquet is a game for all ages with some stress on the young players but also recognising that the guile and experience of age can still compete with youthful exuberance.

Then I needed to be able to reply to the two most common comments people make when croquet is mentioned: Alice in Wonderland – In 1865, when the book was written, croquet was the sport, and so popular that Lewis Carroll would have had to include some mention of croquet. I also had the Boston



Philip Wood with his home-made mallet, and Cliff Daniel is The Man in the Mask

More media success ~ Adrian's Live Radio interview

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Countering the usual misconceptions

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have had to include some mention of croquet. I also had the Boston anecdote ready. Apparently Boston banned croquet for its association with alcohol and promiscuity! Dastardly/Vindictive – I was ready to accept this along with all other sports, for we try to win by beating the opponents in sport, and, indeed, snooker is even named after its most dastardly vindictive stroke. Come the day of the broadcast, I was nervous but preparation alongside a generous interviewer allowed a successful slot. It wasn't perfect and I didn't get all my points across but overall, a success. The club received two enquiries the following day, and there will be more to come, I hope.

Adrian Morris, Kenilworth TSCC



Kenilworth TSCC players re-create their own 'distancing photo' - Philip Wood with his home-made mallet and Cliff Daniel is 'The Man in the Mask'!

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FROM THE CROQUET GAZETTE, APRIL 2024...

In the Letters Page Klim Seabright offers some tongue-in-cheek advice to players of a certain age, some of which may ring uncomfortably close in some of our minds!

“Having reached a certain age my mind was left contemplating how I could extend my croquet playing life. I have come up with the following guidance:

- Change your objective from "winning" to "enjoying" - you will still win some games.
- Play doubles in order to have someone there to remind you that you have already run Hoop 2.

[Editor: this one resonates unfortunately with me, when I'm just congratulating myself on running my first AC hoop in half an hour, and my opponent says kindly, "Did you realise you had already run that hoop?"]

- Book a lawn as near to the "facilities" as possible - you need time to get there. [And to find a key!]
- If you play only GC, take up shorter forms of Association Croquet... you will get to sit down a lot!
- Don't forget to take your pills and also have with you a spare pair of spectacles.
- Remind the Tournament Manager that your Care Home operates a 6pm curfew.
- Forgo the 10-minute warm-up; it takes up too much energy.
- Don't take it the wrong way if someone asks you if you are ready to "Peg Out"!
- Pretend not to have a coin. That way you avoid having to bend down to pick it up."



From Facebook page Croquet Hub

IN A RECENT EMAIL FROM ALISON MAUGHAM...

HOOPOTAMUS by Victor

<p>I want you to see this as a window of opportunity</p>		<p>TISK! What were you thinking about as you played the stroke?</p>	<p>Double glazing!</p>
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◆ Since the diameter of a ball is $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches while the prescribed distance between the uprights of a hoop can be as little as $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches, lack of concentration may cause even an apparently straightforward shot to fail.

AND FROM THE UK GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER'S REVIEW OF THE WEEKEND'S FOOTBALL...

“Gabriel Jesus was a familiar combination of super slick, razor sharp feet and all the finishing precision of a croquet mallet”.

And they weren't being complimentary about croquet!

Ladies' Trophy

Player	No of Wins	Year(s)
Diane Jeffcott	2	2004-5
Pauline Dennis	2	2006-20
Amanda Haslam	2	2007-8
Stella Gill	2	2009-17
Pauline Harvey	7	2011-22
Tina Haslam	1	2014
Lynne Breedon	1	2018
Kath Spare	1	2021
Elizabeth Thomson	1	2023



Pauline Harvey, 2022 winner, with Lynne Breedon

Not to be outdone by the gentlemen, **Diane Jeffcott** introduced and made the Ladies' Trophy in 2004, in the same year as the Pindi Cup. Diane went on to win her own trophy, appropriately, for the first two years of competition, although her name doesn't reappear thereafter.

However the unarguable champion of the Ladies' Trophy is **Pauline Harvey**, who has won the trophy no less than **7 times** over a 12-year period, only interrupted during this period by **Stella Gill** and **Pauline Dennis** (2 wins each), and **Tina Haslam**.



Tina Haslam, 2014 winner, with Pauline Harvey and Irene Rogers



Pauline Dennis



Elizabeth Thomson Kath Spare

Later on, as the numbers of contestants for the Ladies' Cup grew each year, the names of some of these newcomers to the club began to appear, with **Lynne Breedon**, **Kath Spare** and **Elizabeth Thomson** each winning the trophy for the first time.

Bill Browne Trophy

Player	No of Wins	Year(s)
John Leader	2	2005-9
Peter Dennis	3	2006-8
Ray Clipson	5	2010-17
Philip Wood	2	2011-16
Nigel Haslam	1	2014
Mervyn Harvey	3	2018-23
Phil Mander	2	2019-21



In 2005, **John Leader** donated the **Bill Browne Trophy**, which he and his fiancée had won in a car rally in 1963, in memory of **Bill Browne**, and went on to become the very first winner of the trophy.

Bill Browne, with thanks to Pauline Dennis for finding the photograph



Alan Richardson presents the Bill Browne Trophy to Ray Clipson in 2015

This competition also reveals very few names – only 7 winners over a span of 18 years. The list this time is dominated by **Ray Clipson** with 5 wins, followed by **Peter Dennis** and **Mervyn Harvey** with 3 each, and **John Leader**, **Philip Wood** and **Phil Mander** with 2 wins each and **Nigel Haslam** with one win.

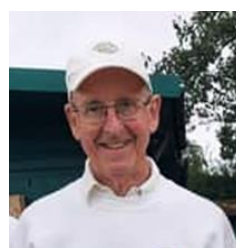


Peter Dennis



Mervyn Harvey

John Leader



Philip Wood



Philip Mander



Nigel Haslam

Player	No of Wins	Year(s)
Henry Fellows	5	2006-11
John Leader	1	2010
Adrian Morris	9	2012-23
Cliff Daniel	2	2013-21
Bill Sidebottom	1	2014



Bill Sidebottom donated the beautiful Castle Cup, which he had been gifted, to the Club, and won himself in 2014. The Castle Cup is ornately engraved and features three croquet mallets and balls, with two hoops as handles. This most recent of the AC cups, is competed by the 4 lowest handicapped AC players of the Club. Despite running for 18 years, the cup has the smallest range of winners (only 5!) for cups of similar duration.



Adrian Morris, Henry Fellows, Cliff Daniel 2009
Photograph supplied by Adrian

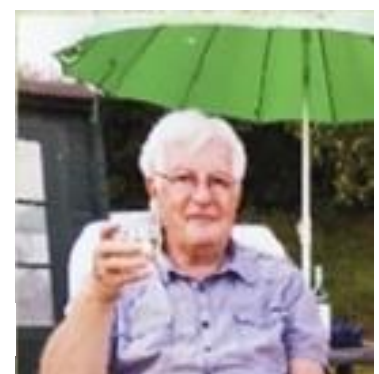
Adrian Morris holds the startling record of 9 wins in the Castle Cup in only a 12 year span, an amazing achievement. Before his time in the driving seat, **Henry Fellows** took the trophy 5 times out of 6 consecutive years.

Other players who managed to interrupt the runs of these two champions were **John Leader** in 2010, **Bill Sidebottom** in 2014 and **Cliff Daniel** in 2013 and again in 2021.

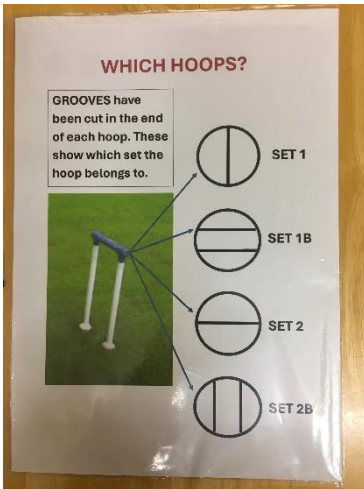


John Leader 2017

Bill Sidebottom 2014



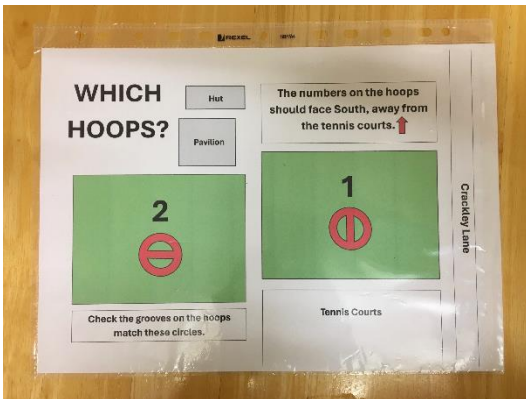
Which hoops on which lawns continues to confuse some of us, beginners and experienced alike, so I asked Philip Wood to explain it all. Every set of hoops is different. Of particular significance is the size and shape of the carrots, the spear section which goes into the lawn. For this reason the same set of hoops must be used on the same lawn throughout the playing season.



Not only that, but every single hoop is individually measured and set in position on a lawn and therefore must be placed in exactly the same position every time the lawn is set up for play. For that reason, you'll see two significant marks on each hoop. At one end of the cross bar at the top of the hoop, distinct lines have been carved to identify the set to which the hoop belongs. Sets 1 and 2 each have one line, vertical or horizontal. Sets 1B and 2B have two lines, horizontal or vertical.

At the other end of the hoop top bar, the hoop number is painted. The blue hoop is No 1, the red No 5, and the rest are numbered up to hoop 6. These numbers have a second use – they help to make sure that the hoop is inserted into its holes the correct way round.

On full lawns, the numbers should face SW, away from the tennis courts and towards the steep bank behind the croquet pavilion. On half lawns, the numbers should face NW, towards Crackley Lane, the road which runs past the Club.



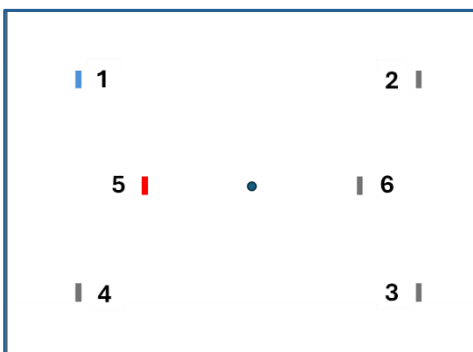
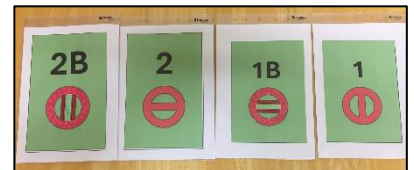
SETTING UP THE FULL LAWN

First of all, check the correct set of hoops for the lawn you are setting up.

Set 1 is used for Lawn 1, next to Crackley Lane.

Set 2 is used for Lawn 2, in front of the pavilion.

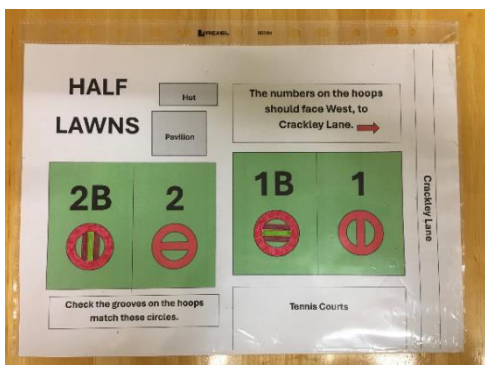
Select the set of hoops from the box showing the appropriate label.



Make sure that the correct hoop is placed in each marked position, that the painted number is facing the correct way, and use the mallet to knock the hoop firmly into the ground, tapping each end of the top bar in turn.

Please do not use any other method to insert a hoop into the ground.

Finally insert the peg into the central hole in the lawn.



FOR HALF LAWNS, FOLLOW THE SAME SYSTEM.

Hoop sets 1 and 1B are used on Lawn 1.

Sets 2 and 2B on Lawn 2.

This time, the painted numbers on the top bar end face towards Crackley Lane.

In this way, our hoops will stay firmly in the ground throughout the playing season.

GOLF CROQUET

CHARLECOTE CUP

The Charlecote Winter Cup draw was announced by Lynne Breedon by email on 5th March, ready for the opening of the lawns on 14th March and competition time finally got under way. 14 competitors were divided into 3 groups of 5, 5 and 4.

Group A	Group B	Group C
Jeff Lindsay	Lynne Breedon	Ivan Moss
Elizabeth Thomson	Gordon Henderson	Jan Phelps
Pauline Harvey	Pauline Dennis	Robert Zara
Tony Watmore	Nigel Pigdon	Bob Phelps
Alan Worrall	Val Moss	

Unfortunately after this, Jeff and Tony needed to withdraw from the competition, leaving the groups rather unbalanced, with only 3 players in Group A, but this couldn't be helped.

The successful players now go forward to the semi-finals and we wish them all success and enjoyment in their next matches. The draw for the semis is **Nigel v Elizabeth** and **Bob v Lynne**.

LEAGUES

Golf Croquet Leagues
League to end on
Sun 19 May
BLUE BLOCK
Blake, Phil
Harvey, Mervyn
Harvey, Pauline
Mander, Phil
Robertson, Ian
Wood, Philip
RED BLOCK
Breedon, Lynne
Dennis, Pauline
Henderson, Gordon
Lindsay, Jeff
Pinder, Richard
Thomson, Elizabeth
YELLOW BLOCK
Cheeseman, Mike
Spare, Kath
Watmore, Tony
Worrall, Alan
Zara, Robert

The first league of the season was intimated by Mike Cheeseman by email on 7th April. 18 members opted to play this time, and were divided into 3 groups of 6 each. I think this took some of us by surprise, and sent us rushing to book lawns to fit in the 5 matches we each had to complete, along with the Charlecote Cup games for some of us. It has been rewarding to see the lawns being so well used so early in the season.

For new members to the Club, who may feel rather apprehensive about joining in any competitive play, as I did two years ago, I would honestly recommend giving the leagues a go. They have the advantage of "playing level", which means no handicaps are used to complicate the scoring or the game, and you are grouped together with others of similar ability.

No trophies are awarded, nor any prizes: you simply play for fun and experience. It really doesn't matter whether you win or lose, but it is a great way to build up your confidence and learn lots of new tactics from watching your opponents' moves. Your opponents will know that you are new to the game and may even offer you advice as you play.

If you are interested in joining in, whether new member or seasoned player, email **Mike Cheeseman**, who organises the Leagues, and ask to be included in the next one to be set up. Mike's email address can be found in the list of members.

With thanks to Frank Hurst from KTSCC for photographs.

In order to encourage competitive play at the medium handicap levels, the WM league decided to run a new 6+ league. Our best team (ie the four players who won the WM league last year) have a handicap range of -1 to 2, and so there would have been several players in the handicap range 3 to 5 who wouldn't have played a competitive match against other clubs. The committee therefore agreed to enter a second team in the main league. The WM league agreed to this proposal, on the proviso that the two teams would play against one another in the first game of the season, to avoid any artificial result at the end of the season! So the match took place on May 15th.

The A team (Phil Blake, Phil Mander, Philip Wood and Mervyn Harvey - handicap total 4) and the B team (Nick Hegan, Pauline Harvey, Nigel Pigdon and Cliff Daniel - handicap total 17), proved that handicaps can mean very little! B's got off to a flier, winning the first two games to finish, but A's pulled back to draw that round. The second round was also drawn, as was the fourth, but, decisively, A's won all four games in the third round.



Tactics time for A-team in foreground and B-team in background?



Nick and Nigel look on as Phil B runs Hoop 1

So, going into the doubles, A's were 10-6 ahead, with B's needing to win both doubles to earn a losing bonus point. It was close, but in each case the side playing first won the golden hoop, and so, with a final score of 11-7, it finished with B's narrowly missing out on the losing bonus point.

One pleasing fact was that everyone won at least one game. All the B's increased their index points – whereas those of all but one of the A's took quite a hammering! The one was Phil Mander, stepping on the lawns for the first time this season, who won all his games!

We are now looking forward to our next match on 31st May at home against Eardisley, confident that we can hold our own in the league. We then have an away match at Himley on July 24th and Broadwas has accepted the date of August 13th for our final match of the season, which will be at home.



Mervyn, Pauline and Cliff watch as Philip Wood takes his shot.

Colchester Association Croquet Tournament 20-21st April 2023 Adrian Morris

I thoroughly enjoy travelling the country playing in the B Level AC circuit for players with handicaps of between 0 and 8. My current handicap is 3 but I have been as low as 1.5.

The Colchester Croquet club is my favourite venue for my first tournament of the year. Four manicured, lawns, excellent catering and camaraderie of fellow croquet players, old friends and new.

An early start on the Saturday enabled a brief stop for breakfast and arrival for the start of play for 9.30am. The weather was bright but very cold. The lawns were surprisingly fast, causing some rolling off the lawn to end early breaks.



There were 16 competitors in this B-level tournament, all within the handicap range of 1.5 to a much improving 6.

My first match was against an old acquaintance on the AC circuit, Alan Clark (3.5). Over the years, our handicaps have matched each other as we have gone up and back down. I was very pleased with a first win by 26 – 5.

In my second match I lost 5 – 26, to experienced player Heather Bennett (3), the

eventual runner-up in the trophy. In the third match of the day, I was also beaten, this time by the fast improving Michael Bithell, whose handicap was reduced from 6 to 5 by the end of the tournament.

Then on to my digs for the evening where I had decided to stay in student accommodation at Essex University. Very reasonable price but the room was very cell-like. I'm not sure I would like to live there for a whole academic year.

Disappointed with my two losses the previous day, I returned to the club on Sunday, feeling much more positive and more ready for battle.

I played some of the best croquet of my career and was very pleased when I won both of my matches with strong victories over Gordon Mills (3), 26-3 and Charlie Martin (1.5), 26 – 13.

The overall winner was Ged Smolskas (2.5) who had travelled from Wigan to play. Ged is originally from Latvia which is a growing croquet nation.



It was a wonderful feeling to be back on the circuit and now I can't wait for my next tournament in May at Nailsea Croquet Club near Bristol.

By virtue of winning WEST MIDLANDS AC LEAGUE in 2023 we were able to enter a team into this National Knockout Tournament, a situation not available to us for a few years. Our team comprised Cliff, Mervyn, Philip Wood, together with Nigel Pigdon, who was playing his very first competitive game of AC!

For our first round match we were drawn against BURY C C and having lost the 'virtual coin toss' online, faced the long journey up the M6! However with Mervyn kindly driving and Saturday morning traffic on the motorways proving to be light the 120 miles journey took barely 2 hours. We

were immediately impressed with the tranquillity of the location of this Lancashire Club and the warmth of the welcome of hot drinks together with plenty of toast and chocolate biscuits.

The format of the match was to play 1 doubles and 2 singles games in the morning, to be followed by 4 singles games in the afternoon.



Mervyn was paired against Bury's top player Ken Jones, the captain of the Warwickshire Team, and he received 5 bisques which, as usual, he used sparingly. Once Ken had faltered at hoop 1, Mervyn was able to execute a long break using one of his bisques when he 'blobbed' a hoop. After this he gradually extended his lead using 3-ball breaks, cleverly leaving Ken facing long roquets that he generally missed when commencing his breaks. Eventually Mervyn won 26-12, making use of all but one of his bisques, and including a 'dolly' peel!

In the other singles game Philip played Anne Alvey who, with the 5 bisques at her disposal began very confidently and soon had a substantial lead. Philip did contest the game towards the end but lost 14-17 on time.

In the doubles game Cliff played with Nigel, hoping to introduce the newcomer to the various tactics of this fascinating game. Nigel started really well managing a long roquet and a sound approach to hoop 1, which he ran well. This will no doubt have impressed the opposing pair of Tony Phillips & Chris Alvey, and probably encouraged them to play EXTREMELY CAUTIOUSLY, generally refusing to take advantage of attempting hoop approaches in the interest of keeping the visiting pair off the lawn! This tactic, commonly referred to as AUNT EMMA, is an excruciatingly dull way of playing, scoring points in one-hoop breaks, often paralysing opponents into ineffectiveness, and often results in victory by anaesthesia!! The Kenilworth pair did have 2 bisques, which necessarily could only be taken by Nigel, and eventually they had to be taken of course as the time began to run out with the home pair having a slender lead. When time had been called the visiting pair were 4 hoops behind and Cliff, in play, managed to run 1 hoop and had a potential 3 hoop break, but sadly a misjudged approach to hoop 3 brought the break to an end and the game was lost 8-11. However, even with limited time on the lawn, it was clear that Nigel has an excellent mind-set for match-play as well as a naturally straight swing (one that Cliff would dearly like to have!) so hopefully he will not be deterred from developing his skills at AC!

So the match score was 1-2 at lunch meaning that the visitors would need to win all 4 of the afternoon singles games. A fine two course lunch was provided by the hosts and feeling well

refreshed Kenilworth approached the afternoon games with genuine hope of an overall win.



However Nigel was soon facing a monumental challenge, for his opponent Anne, on her third turn, proceeded to score 11 hoops...WITHOUT USING ANY OF HER 5 BISQUES...and in her 4th turn took her second ball through 10 hoops using only 3 of her allocated 5 bisques!! ...a feat that would only rarely be achieved by a player with a handicap of 11! Thereafter Nigel tried valiantly to contest the game, and with some fine roquets and encouraging hoop-approaches, he managed to score 9 points, eventually losing 26-9.

Mervyn was paired against Tony and used his 3 full bisques sensibly to get both of his balls to 'penult', leading 20-6. Sadly he wasted his final 'half-bisque' and thereafter Tony dictated the game, using very negative tactics intent on keeping his opponent off the lawn, leaving Mervyn with very long roquet attempts whenever he started a potential break. The final score was a win for Tony 23-22.

Philip was playing Chris in his afternoon game, a game that was close throughout and also ended with a 23-22 win for Bury.

In his game v Ken, Cliff used his only full bisque to set up a slender lead of 14-12 with less than one hour of play remaining. However, he too squandered his 'half-bisque' and thereafter Ken played very shrewdly to regain the lead gradually, generally in breaks of a mere one or two hoops at a time, eventually winning 23-14.



So the overall match result was victory for Bury by the rather flattering margin of 6-1.

WMF AC LEAGUE KENILWORTH v BROADWAS Cliff Daniel

BROADWAS

Stuart Smith (4.5)
John Guy (5)
Ian Dampney (7)
David Kaner (16)

KENILWORTH

Adrian Morris (3)
Cliff Daniel (4.5)
Mervyn Harvey (8)
Nigel Pigdon (11)

Doubles: John & Stuart lost 14-16 on time to Cliff & Nigel

Singles
Ian lost 15-26 to Adrian
David won 26-11 v Mervyn
Stuart won 26-7 v Adrian
John won 26-7 v Cliff
Ian won 26-13 v Mervyn
David won 21-11 on time v Nigel

SO BROADWAS WON 5-2

This, Kenilworth's first league match of the season was very interesting for two reasons! Firstly, it was the very first team, in living memory, in which there was NO player with the Christian name of PHIL!! Secondly, it was played on lawns which were virtually impossible for a proper game of association croquet to be played!!

We are used to having to deal with the lawns at Broadwas having variable, excessive unpredictable slope issues. But to compound this challenge players had the extra problem of the lawns being SO SLOW that taking 'take-off' shots from one end of a lawn to the other was VERY DIFFICULT INDEED! In fairness we had been warned that the lawns were much slower than usual due to the limited early season cutting of the grass. However we did agree to play, knowing that rearranging the fixture would be problematic.



For the morning session there were, as usual, one doubles game and two singles. In the doubles Cliff partnered Nigel to play John Guy & Stuart Smith, with three bisques available to help them. Surprisingly, with such challenging conditions, Cliff was able to score a 7-hoop break early on in the game, and this was to prove decisive. Nigel managed to run a few hoops in small breaks and the visitors eventually won 16-14, tactically saving the threat of their final bisque until the closing stages.

Adrian, conceding 4 bisques to his opponent Ian Dampney, was able to reasonably enjoy his game since he played some good shots and maintained an early lead, eventually winning 26 – 15.

However Mervyn, playing against David Kaner, was not so fortunate. His opponent frustratingly played rather cautiously, using Aunt Emma tactics, and having a handicap of 16 (which seemed rather unfair noting his general ability), had 10 bisques that enabled him to dictate matters. David won decisively 26-11.



So, having a slender lead 2-1 at lunchtime Kenilworth only needed to win 2 of the afternoon singles games to secure overall victory in the match.



Adrian was playing Stuart, the top player from Broadwas. Sadly the game started badly with Stuart having a good break early on and Adrian, conscious of the need to try and force long 'rushes' with the lawns being so slow, made some uncharacteristic errors. Stuart won the game comfortably 26-7.

Cliff faced John and was pleased to contest the game for around 90 minutes. However John used his knowledge of the lawns to slowly but surely build a formidable lead, eventually winning by the same margin 26-7.



Mervyn was playing Ian and enjoyed his afternoon game rather more than his morning one. The game was played in a friendly spirit and Aunt Emma stayed away! The game was much more even at the start and the players were level at about 7 hoops each before Ian pulled away. His superior knowledge of the topology of the lawn proved decisive as he was able to get better positions to run hoops. Twice Mervyn was frustrated by his would-be reception ball blocking his way and he eventually lost 13-26.

Nigel was playing against David who again had 10 bisques and knew how to use them. Nigel relies on making long 'roquets' in order to set up breaks and the uncertainty of the slope of the lawn rather nullified any opportunities to score hoops. When time was called he lost 11-21, although his opponent belied his handicap of 16 by managing 3 peels!!

So disappointingly, all afternoon games were lost by the visitors and the final score was victory to Broadwas 5-2.

Croquet Scores														Tournaments	Blog	Help	Admin	
Division 2	B	C	D	G	K	L	N	S	S	W	W	Wins	Net Hoops					
Buckinghamshire		2	0	0	2	0	1	2	0	1	1	3	-12					
Cheshire	1		0	2	3	0	3	3	0	1	1	4	-2					
Dorset	3	3		1	3	1	3	3	1	3	3	7	18					
Glamorgan	3	1	2		3	2	3	3	1	2	3	8	16					
Kent	1	0	0	0		1	3	3	2	2	2	5	-2					
Lancashire	3	3	2	1	2		3	3	2	3	2	9	18					
Norfolk/Lincoln	2	0	0	0	0	0		2	1	1	1	2	-16					
Shropshire	1	0	0	0	0	0	1		0	1	0	0	-24					
Sussex	3	3	2	2	1	1	2	3		2	3	8	14					
Warwickshire	2	2	0	1	1	0	2	2	1		0	4	-8					
Wiltshire	2	2	0	0	1	1	2	3	0	3		5	-2					

Warwickshire, in recent years, have struggled to win many matches at ‘COUNTIES WEEK’ and this year matters were compounded when our top player Neal Bacon was unable to play due to arthritis in his thumbs.

The event is held over 4 days over the May Bank Holiday Weekend using the 15 lawns available at Southwick (Brighton) and Compton (Eastbourne).

It is arguably the largest festival of croquet played anywhere in the world, for it involves over 150 top players, many of whom have handicaps of ‘scratch’ or better. This year, there were 11 teams in the Second Division.



The Warwickshire team L to R: Roger Tedstone, Cliff Daniel, Andrew Gregory, Ken Jones, Peter Payne and Ian Slater

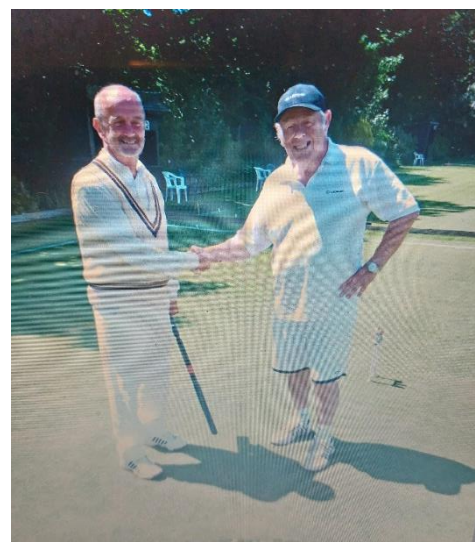
Warwickshire had 7 players in their squad, primarily from Bury, Reigate, Edgbaston and Kenilworth clubs, with handicaps ranging from 0.5 to 5, and my personal handicap being 4.5.

Our first target was to avoid winning ‘THE WOODEN SPOON’, needing to beat Shropshire, the county that seemed the weakest on paper. Warwickshire did indeed beat Shropshire although it was very close.

Warwickshire won 4 of their 10 matches and finished a very creditable 8th in the final table, with Lancashire coming first.

I was especially pleased with my personal form, in particular with my hoop running, aided undoubtedly by adopting a technique shown to me by our very own Pauline Harvey! I won 4 out of my 7 games.

Roger and I, following our unexpected victory in the game v Sussex when, with time running out, I managed a crucial 9-hoop break.



With his contingent of new players to AC, Adrian had ambitious plans for all of us to start entering competitions. We eyed him warily as he put his ideas to us early on, then went away and hoped he'd forget. He didn't. At his next meeting with us, he spelled out his plans in more detail, and we listened in silence. Despite the rising feeling of panic from my first year as a member in the Club, this time I knew that I had to make the leap to competitive play, and so Adrian's hopes have materialised, and all of us in the new contingent have agreed to jump in together to competitive play this year, and it won't matter if we win or lose, because we'll have a great time trying.

The following table shows 3 competitions which are now starting, with where relevant, the draw for groups or pairs. The Taylor Cup is a one-day event to be arranged later.

St George	Secunderabad	Bill Browne	Taylor
Bye	John Copping	John Copping	John Copping
Cliff Daniel	Cliff Daniel	Mervyn Harvey	Mervyn Harvey
	Mervyn Harvey	Tony Lester	Pauline Harvey
John Copping	Adrian Morris	Elizabeth Thomson	Jon Hodge
Nigel Pigdon	Nigel Pigdon		Tony Lester
	Philip Wood	Pauline Harvey	Elizabeth Thomson
Adrian Morris		Jon Hodge	Philip Wood
Philip Wood		Nigel Pigdon	Robert Zara
		Philip Wood	
Mervyn Harvey		Robert Zara	
Bye			

Editor After the closure of the club over winter, and the quiet start to the croquet year, I had forgotten just how busy life with Running Hoops can become, when the Club jumps into gear and croquet life begins in earnest. With a sudden rush of events towards the very end of May, holidays looming for many of us, grandchildren arriving for half term, life suddenly became pretty frantic over the past week. In particular, in this edition, I have to salute Cliff Daniel, who was competing in 4 important matches in the final weeks of May, including the 4-day Inter-Counties Championship over the Bank Holiday weekend, and somehow managed to produce reports for all 3 AC matches in the very tight deadline he faced, despite not arriving home from the Inter-Counties until 3:00am on Tuesday 28th May.

Sincere thanks are also due to the many others who have contributed to this issue, Adrian with a never-ending stream of press and on-line publications, and others for photographs, match reports, articles and suggestions; Nigel for rising to the occasion with an observant analysis of the eccentric systems used by our club; Ian for waiting to distribute Running Hoops just before he goes off on holiday; and to those who patiently (or impatiently!) answer my never-ending flood of emails requesting information.

Elizabeth
