



Running Hoops

The Newsletter of Kenilworth Croquet

March 2025

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It's as exciting as ever when March comes round and Lynne finally invites us to return to the croquet lawns after an absence of nearly five months. I'm sure I would not be the only one to take a short stroll during the winter to take a wistful glance at the deserted lawns and darkened pavilion. But the great day finally arrived, and there we all were, barely



recognisable under the layers of clothing on what must have been about the coldest Monday afternoon of the year!

However, this did not mean that we had no contact with our croquet friends after the lawns closed in October. It was lovely to hear of informal gatherings of members during this time, socially, in various activities including pétanque and Bridge, in Club and WMF Committee meetings, and in



regular coffee and cake mornings in the bar, with some tactics coaching in Association Croquet thrown in for good measure.



As ever, much work goes on in the club during the winter months to maintain standards both in the lawns and in the premises we often take for granted. We should all appreciate the valuable contribution volunteers make, to enable us all to enjoy the excellent facilities we have, and to help keep the membership fee at a level affordable for everyone. We might also consider how we, too, could contribute in some way.

Unusually, the popular Presentation Dinner this year followed the reopening of the lawns in March. Once again, a large turnout of members and friends enjoyed a very happy evening with an excellent 2 or 3 course meal at the Kenilworth Golf Club.



When I finally got round to reading the December copy of the Croquet Gazette, over half-way through January, when I'd recovered from a lovely (and hectic) month-long visit of my son's family from Australia, I was astonished to find the names of two of our well-known members in print, though I gather they themselves were equally astonished to learn about it. Our club is also named, which can only be positive news for us, having Kenilworth [Croquet Club] printed in a widely-read national publication. Read p12 to find out who shone this month!



Even more astonishing to find, was a press article on a well-known television celebrity. Read the article p13 to find out how they are spending their free time in retirement. So find some time to sit down and enjoy another copy of Running Hoops. Wishing you all a lovely summer of croquet, coffee and companionship. And cake! Because no one does cakes better than croquet players!

Elizabeth

AND THEY'RE OFF! OPENING OF THE LAWNS, 10TH MARCH 2025!

On Monday afternoon, the long-awaited day arrived – bitterly cold after a glorious few days of warm sunshine, when we dreamed that Winter was over and Spring had arrived at last. Nevertheless, a happy band of over a dozen faithfuls gathered for the big day, clad in warm jackets, hats, gloves and scarves. We started playing on half lawns on Lawn 2, but as the temperature continued to fall and the numbers dwindled after the first games, we switched to the full lawn for the remaining 8 hardy members. We enjoyed a coffee break in the warmth of the pavilion, admiring the new mugs Lynne had purchased, and enjoyed catching up with members we hadn't seen for some time, before taking to the lawn again for a final game. The lawns still have some way to go to reach competitive standard, but were firm and dry underfoot and will soon thicken up when the warmer weather arrives and the grass starts to grow in earnest.



And on Thursday, it was the turn of the AC players in their weekly morning session. In contrast to the chill of the Monday sessions, the Thursday sessions have been held in glorious sunshine, initially on half lawns on Lawn 2, then on both full lawns at the end of the month, to accommodate the 8 enthusiasts who turned up, this time including Pauline and Mervyn Harvey, now returned from their winter in Florida.



The annual Presentation Dinner attracted 46 members and friends and was again a wonderful evening, thanks to the hard work of Alison Chamberlain, Ian Robertson, Lynne and the Committee. The two or three course meal was outstanding in its presentation and flavour, with generous portions, and very much appreciated by all. The service was admirable, efficient and discreet.



Table 5 with
Phil Mander and Lucy
Jon Hodge and Nicola
Adrian Morris
Nigel and Alison Pigdon
and Elizabeth Thomson

Table 6 with
Anne Langley
Philip Wood
Mike and Linda
Cheeseman
Jeff and Carolyn
Lindsay
Judith Brickwood
and Vicky Deasley



Table 4 with
Julie Roberts
Alison and Mark
Chamberlain
Pauline and Mervyn
Harvey
Ivan and Val Moss
and David Hands

Table 3 with
 Jan Hinds
 Simon Hegan
 Nick and Liz Hegan
 Pauline Dennis
 Tony and Linda
 Breedon



Table 2 with
 Lynn O'Connor
 Richard Pinder
 Terry and Jo Winters
 Phil and Sandy Blake
 Jaspal and Satnam
 Jheeta

Table 1 with
 Gordon and Jean
 Henderson
 Ian and Caroline
 Robertson
 Andy and Pam
 Cartwright
 and Ted Curtis



The Formal Part of the Evening

Address by Lynne Breedon, Club Chair

Lynne greeted the diners and thanked Kenilworth Golf Club and the catering staff for a very pleasant meal. She expressed her gratitude to Alison Chamberlain for her generous offer to take on the organisation of the evening, a massive task for a new member.

Lynne announced that Mike Cheeseman would be the first recipient of the new Gold Award, a new plate to be awarded annually for significant contribution to the club, in appreciation for all the years he has run the very popular leagues.

With club membership up to 63, both the GC and AC social sessions had been very well attended; the club run 6 GC and 6 AC competitions, all well supported, along with the Leagues, popular Doubles Fun Days and finally the Kenilworth Festival. Teams entered the WMF leagues in both Golf Croquet and Association Croquet, and the new 6+ league team, captained by Tony Watmore, will meet Eardisley in the final on April 25th.

Pauline Harvey arranged 6 Friendly matches against local clubs, giving new members a gently introduction to competing against other clubs. Mervyn and Pauline also now have 41 members in the U3A croquet group they started, with a waiting list of 11, a wonderful way of raising the profile of croquet in Kenilworth.

Elizabeth was thanked for her efforts with Running Hoops and presented with a gift in appreciation, which the birds in her garden are now making the most of.



Mike Cheeseman was the first recipient of a new award to be presented annually to someone for outstanding service to the club. Mike has been running the Leagues for many years. For many beginners, including myself, the Leagues have been an introduction to competitive play, the first tentative steps towards further play in Club competitions and trophies, and have remained popular throughout their existence.

The second award was a surprise token of thanks to Elizabeth for her work in editing the Club newsletter, Running Hoops. If Elizabeth hadn't been so stunned, she might have plucked up enough courage to make a brief reminder to all, that the newsletter is not the work of one person, but of a combination of willing volunteers and those press-ganged into contributing articles of information, of interest and entertainment; reports of work parties, competitions and other news from around the club and croquet world.





The array of trophies, open to all. We are very lucky to have such an active club. Several of the trophies have restricted entry, allowing high handicappers, or nervous new members, a chance to try competitive play without the fear of having to take on one of the club's top players!

Lynne began with the presentation of the Golf Croquet trophies.



Phil Blake accepts the Kenilworth Cup...



... and the Pindi Cup...



...and the Wells Cup, the Golf Croquet Championship trophy.

This is believed to be the first time in the history of the club that those three cups have been won by the same person!



Pauline Dennis was the proud winner of the Ladies' Trophy for a second time.



Pauline Harvey arrived home from spending the winter in Florida, just in time to accept the July Level Trophy.

The evening then moved on to the presentation of the Association Croquet trophies. Adrian briefly explained the difference between Association and Golf Croquet. AC is growing in popularity in Kenilworth, with 15 members now enjoying this more tactical version of the game.

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Adrian Morris was presented with the Castle Cup, the club's AC Championship, before taking over the commentary of the AC presentations.



Mervyn Harvey also returned from Florida just in time to collect his own prize, the Secunderabad trophy.



After winning the Douglas Cup last year, 3 weeks after joining the club, Nigel Pigdon went from strength to strength this year, not only winning the Fellows Salver (left) from a field of 8 competitors, but taking the St George Cup from his mentor, Adrian (with the help of a few bisques!)



And finally, Elizabeth was presented with the Douglas Trophy, a competition reserved for high handicappers.



Missing from the Presentation Dinner was Bob Phelps, who will be presented with the Charlecote Cup when he returns from holiday.



And with the presentations over, guests dispersed to chat or take their own photographs, including this merry group of Thursday morning AC players. We were surprised that Adrian didn't produce his portable lawn at the table, for us to discuss tactics while we ate.

Special thanks are due to Alison Chamberlain for taking over the organisation of the Presentation Dinner, in her first year as a member of the club; to Ian Robertson, who guided her and helped with some of the duties; to Lynne and the Committee, Adrian, and to all who all played a part in the evening.

The event has been voted a very happy occasion by all whom I have encountered and I know I will be looking forward very much to the same occasion next year.

IT'S A SHORT STEP FROM GC TO AC

For new, and existing members, who may not know the difference between Golf Croquet and Association Croquet, Adrian often sums it up as 'AC is to GC, as chess is to draughts. Same playing area, same equipment, very different games.'

However, in the December issue of the Croquet Gazette, one writer summed it up as this:

Experience in GC gives players a head start in learning AC, making it enjoyable for them to explore the other code and for coaches to introduce them to it. AC is at heart a very simple game. James Hawkins sums up the key points as follows:

- 1 You have two balls, and can pick either one or the other for each turn.
- 2 Both balls have to score all the hoops. The clips show you where you're going.
- 3 You can keep your turn going by earning extra shots: Run your hoop and you get another go. Hit another ball and you get another two goes. The first of those is played from anywhere in contact with the ball you've just hit.
- 4 Finish at the peg.

That's it!

Players who would like to find out more, should speak to **Mervyn Harvey** or **Adrian Morris**.

LEAF CLEARING DAY, 16TH NOVEMBER 2024

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We were lucky with weather when 13 of us turned up to help with the first leaf-clearing day of the winter season: cold, yes, but dry, the most important feature. It is certainly much easier to rake dry leaves from the steep banks than rotting wet ones. By the time I arrived (a bit late as usual) the teams were well organised and working in neat rows, spaced evenly along the length of our considerable banks. It was nice to see several of our newer members out helping along with the seasoned leaf-clearers. The atmosphere was calm and pleasant as ever, and the finished result, extremely gratifying.

While the sturdy members worked outside, Pauline Dennis was organising cleaning of the pavilion, washing all the windows while Elizabeth tackled the floors aided by Vicky, who had cleared out lots of rubbish the week before, and Lynne, who had been clearing out cupboards and replacing old mugs with some stylish new ones. The interior is much improved but still needs some attention, the floor in particular, which will need to be tackled at some time in the future.

However, the overall result inside and out was very rewarding, and hopefully most of the leaves had already been stripped from the branches by the strong winds of Autumn and will make for less work later on. Lynne expressed her gratitude to all the helpers by email and thanked Pauline for keeping us going with her delicious fruit cake, muffins and biscuits. Well done, everyone!





Wondered why the floor always seemed to be a bit spongy?



Uncovered, a bit of a mess.



Floor joists strengthened and supported



New boards fitted and sealed up



New vinyl floor covering laid and walls painted



Just what has that cat been hiding behind its grin all this time?



A large hole in the wall - Aha !



One of the pictures kindly donated by Peter Moody "nearly" covers the hole.

LETTER FROM AMERICA Mervyn Harvey

Pauline and Mervyn are members of our club, playing both codes of the game. Such is their enthusiasm for the game that they have invested in a home in Florida, where they are members of the nearby Sarasota Croquet Club, and can play and compete all year round!



Before I launch into croquet, stateside, I thought it might be worth saying something about keeping things in perspective. If you are a 10 handicap, and in a club where your best player is a 3, you will no doubt regard them as an expert, especially if you haven't seen the real experts play. Everything is relative.

Our US croquet club has about 250 members, but, like KCC, a fair proportion don't want to play competitively. Those who play in tournaments are split into "Flights" (aka "blocks") of typically eight people, at around the same level of ability. So – doing well in our Flight means that we beat some others of a similar standard to ours.

Let's start with two GC tournaments that we took part in. The first took place not long after we arrived at the club, and neither of us had sufficiently adjusted to the speed of the lawns to think we could do well, and so we didn't enter. In fact, I was going to help the Tournament Director, as organising 56 players on 7 lawns is quite a lot of work. However, someone at my level (third eight) pulled out the night before the start, and I was persuaded to play. I finished fourth, and so my index points hardly changed.

Ah – "index points". Did you know that everyone who has ever played in a tournament involving players from another club has a world ranking? Mine is 1115 (out of 3942), and Pauline is not far behind – at 1216. BUT she is 209th best women (out of 1513), and actually in the top 40 of women in the UK. Internal games do not count, and so when I was beaten by Phil, Phil, or even Phil – in the club GC leagues, the result went on my card but not World Rankings. When I lost to Nigel in the West Midlands League, it did – because that competition includes other clubs.

Back in the USSR USA – Pauline had been playing well and so entered our main GC tournament. I didn't play, as I wanted to concentrate on being Tournament Director, under the watchful guidance of the Chair of our tournament committee. There were 45 entrants, and Pauline was in the second eight. She won 5 of her 7 matches, and 6 of those 7 had handicaps better than hers. At the end of the main tournament, she was tied with 2 others on number of wins. If that event had taken place at KCC she would have been placed second, having the second highest net hoops of those three. However, the long-standing tournament regulations said that there should be a play-off between second and third, for the right to play the one with most net hoops. The Tournament Director (aka, me) had to break the news to Pauline. Sadly, she lost a close fought contest, but still finished a very creditable third.

We have also both played in three American Rules tournaments (aka "6 wicket"). Please google if you want to know the detail, but it is based on AC. The possible explanations why an American felt the need to invent a new game include (a) the game played in the rest of the world was not complicated enough for those with superior brain-power, and (b) he wanted a game that was only played in the US, so that the US team would be world champions. I'll leave you to decide which is more likely, but bear in mind that the "World Series" baseball final is always played between two US teams!

Anyway, in the tournament played in December, Pauline won 4 of the 6 block games in third eight, and lost in the semi final of the knock-out stage to the eventual winner. In the second eight, I won 3 games in the blocks, and was beaten finalist in the knockout. We have just finished 5 consecutive days play in the singles and doubles of the club championships, where disappointingly few entered, possibly because playing throughout the day for 5 days is a bit much for some! Anyway, we both did rather better, as Pauline was runner up in her singles group and I won mine, and we both won our respective doubles blocks.



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Here we are with our doubles trophies, somewhat resembling pith helmets, as my partner Rusty is demonstrating.



Peter Dyke Ruby Shield (AC) , Nailsea

The only format that didn't involve repeat matches was two classes of 5. The players in the low handicap class were competing for the Peter Dyke Ruby Shield which was commissioned to mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of Nailsea Croquet Club by Peter. Their handicaps were all 2 or 2.5, apart from Erica Malaiperuman who had gone down to 1.5 after entry, so remained eligible to play. Chris Donovan, **Adrian Morris** and Robert Upton all had 3 wins.

Neil Morrison Trophy (AC), Swindon



L to R: Alan Braunton, Philip de Glanville, Andy Evason, Kathy Wallace, Mervyn Harvey and Richard Coward

The first tournament for the Neil Morrison Memorial Trophy was held over the August Bank Holiday weekend. Neil was a keen AC player and excellent coach and it is fitting that the Trophy in his name is for AC players of handicaps 7 and above – a group for whom Neil's coaching helped most. In fact there are very few tournaments specifically designed for this group of AC players to engage in Level Play using the so- called 'Advanced' rules. This first tournament involved 6 players with five rounds so that all played all. It is gratifying that this first playing of the Trophy attracted players from Bath, Blewbury, Bristol/Nailsea, **Kenilworth** and High Wycombe as well as from Swindon. The tournament opened on Saturday in a torrential downpour. Standing water made Court 1 unplayable and court 2 was just about usable and so, double banking on Court 3 took place as this was relatively unscathed. The heavy rain made arduous work as it took a lot of energy to move a ball any distance. Consequently, all the first-round games went to time. However, by the afternoon with drying conditions we were able to use all three courts and avoid double banking. Some differential drying left the lawns a little bumpy which created a different challenge to the players. Fortunately, the second day was dry albeit with a very strong wind – again another challenge! [See photograph, p14!]



“When Dame Mary Berry broke her hip while gardening, doctors told her she could be dead in four years unless she started exercising.

Now, four years on from the injury, these pictures show how the chef is still going strong, thanks to her pursuit of croquet.

Despite joking that she’s ‘pretty useless at the sport’, Dame Mary, who turns 90 this month, was spotted enjoying a game with friends, close to her home in Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. Wearing a white padded jacket and comfortable trousers, the former Bake Off star was a picture of concentration, as she wielded her mallet.

She has previously told how she took up the genteel sport with her husband, Paul Hunnings, 92, who is, she admits, ‘better than me’.

Dame Mary described how the couple took lessons with ‘a lovely Finnish lady’ and that it was a ‘great joy’ to find a hobby they could enjoy together.

‘Croquet is perfect for people our age’, she said. ‘We play for two hours and he says he’s knackered at the end, but after a bit of a zizz he perks up again.’

Dame Mary was picking sweet peas in her garden in August 2021, when she tripped. She had to wait three and a half hours for an ambulance to arrive and had surgery for a broken hip at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading.

She said the following year, ‘My GP told me, “You’ve two options. You could sit in a chair and do no exercise and quite probably be dead in four years, or you can set to, walk (uphill too!) and do everything you can, and it’ll take 18 months for a full recovery.” And gosh she was right!’ I’ve exercised and had lots of physio and it’s not quite normal yet, but it will be.

Dame Mary recently also revealed that she plays tennis every week – as long as it’s sunny.

As her former Great British Bake Off presenter, Mel Giedroyc said: ‘She’s not a sweet old lady she’s as tough as old boots.’”

NEVER MIND THE WEATHER!

The 1954 Season by Maurice B. Reckitt

THERE have been two exceptional features of the past season, one very pleasant, the other very much the reverse. To get the unpleasant subject over first, let us be content to put on record that 1954 gave us the chilliest and most sunless, if not actually the wettest, summer for half a century. "Everyone complains about the weather," said Mark Twain, "but no one ever does anything about it."

Yet croquet players come nearer to "doing something about it" than the devotees of most games, for they play in conditions which drive cricketers and tennis players into the pavilion. The gloomy report "rain stopped play" is one that has very seldom to be recorded of our tournaments.

Notes from the Clubs

We hear at BUDLEIGH SALTERTON in late October, Croquet was still being played. The motto of the players being "If we can't play in summer, we'll play in winter."



The flooded lawns where Mervyn played at Swindon, p12.

COMPETITION TIME

The launch of the first competition of the season is as usual, the 'Winter Cup' known as the Charlecote Cup, first played on the lawns at Charlecote House.

A larger number than previously has signed up for this competition and three groups have been drawn as shown.

Group A

Tony Watmore
Pauline Dennis
Jeff Lindsay
Gordon Henderson

Group B

Val Moss
Jon Hodge
Elizabeth Thomson
Alan Worrall

Group C

Jaspal Jheeta
Pauline Harvey
Bob Phelps
Robert Zara

The sheets have been put up in the clubhouse noticeboard. Contact details can be found on the Membership List (25/09/2024).

All games should be played by 18th May.

Games are to be played Level and scores should not be recorded on handicap cards.

No Jump shots allowed.

Song of the Croquet Player

I'm not a divot-digger, I'm a divot-digger's mate;
I've watched him digging divots from morning until late
And when he's digging divots, balls are flying everywhere
He says, "I beg your pardon. Do you think I should repair?"
I say, "Yes, repair quickly to a lawn that isn't ours
We're not here digging trenches, or planting some wildflowers."
But still he goes on digging, handing headaches out to worms,
I say, "Do, please, be careful and stay above the grass,
You'll give the worms concussion: just think how much they'll squirm,
It isn't fun when you can't tell your brain-box from your ass-
ociated parts.

So please desist from divoting,
Be careful with your pivoting,
Your play would be more riveting
If you keep off the grass."

Colin Whyles
4 November 2024

Editor: And with these wise words, we finish the first edition of Running Hoops in 2025. Special thanks to Nick and Mervyn for their contributions to this issue. Until Lynne's speech at the Presentation Dinner, I was unaware that the length of my Running Hoops was a source of humour, and somewhat of an endurance test! Perhaps the best advice is to settle down with a large coffee and even larger cake, armchair loaded with cushions, footrest... Hopefully everyone will find some items of interest to read and enjoy. For new members, I'd be delighted to hear your first impressions of our club, and for all other members, please send any item, of interest to croquet players, that you read elsewhere, or photographs that you hold of our club or players, or of other clubs where you may have played as a competitor or visitor. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes to all our readers, new and regular. Elizabeth
