



Running Hoops

The Newsletter of Kenilworth Croquet

Aug 2025

Contents

Editorial.....1

Club News

Ladies' Day.....2

Wells Cup.....3

Doubles Fun Day.....5

Features

Story of Marj.....7

Worrall-Phelps.....8

Unusual Incident.....9

Is the ball In or Out?.....10

Competition Time

GC

All-England..... 11

Friendly v Worcs-Norton ...12

Ken A v Broadwas.....13

Ken B v Himley.....14

Ken A v Eardisley.....16

6+ v Himley.....17

July Level.....18

AC

Ken v Broadwas.....19

Taylor Cup21

Douglas Cup.....22

Fellows Salver.....23

I recently spent a whole day washing and ironing my Whites ready for a competition the next day, only to learn that they weren't required after all. (Well not quite a whole day, but the gentlemen might be impressed.) I've always felt there was something special about wearing or watching others all in Whites, whether for croquet, tennis or cricket!

Thinking back to recent Gazettes, I realised the subject of Whites seems to have come up several times. It started with Minty Cinch in the June issue when she argued, "The dress code isn't helpful. White is too stark to flatter the average 60+ croquista, emphasising avoirdupois and scrawniness in equal measure. Victorians who ordained it for croquet, cricket and tennis couldn't imagine a world in which players might have to do their own laundry. Do you step out of the shower into the whites, tempting fate re breakfast spillage? Or do you fold the garments you've slaved over into a bag to change into at the club, risking unsightly creases at point of use?"

This is certainly a risk, as Nick found out one morning when he dropped Hoop 2 into holes full of water, and his white jumper was sprayed with mud. (I recall rinsing it for him in the kitchen sink to make life easier for Liz when he took it home!) On another occasion, Robert had mud spattered over his white trousers from the leaf clearing roller, but I didn't offer to wash those.

Next, in the recent August Gazette, the topic appeared again, in Tunnel of Time, 60 years ago, with some interesting similes:

"The Hurlingham delegate at the 1963 Club Conference bemoaned the virtual non-existence of the white trouser except on state occasions, but his words do not seem to have had any considerable effect. Far too many players still appear at tournaments looking as though they are on their way to paint a boat.... Part of the trouble may be the weather: in the rain even the sleekest of players is apt to look like a coastguard on a motor-cycling holiday.... Whites, like enterprising play, help to make croquet more attractive to the spectator."

I was very excited the first time I wore Whites, Ladies Day, August 2022, my first year of croquet. Suddenly I belonged; I was a real croquet player, one of "them". I believe it fosters a strong sense of cohesion, and I've always thought the same when I've seen a group of cricketers on a village green. They're set apart from the straggle of spectators around the field, in a world of their own. Enjoying a picnic recently in the Leek Wootton Memorial Park, I watched a wonderful day of Junior County Cricket teams in competition. They and their coaches were immaculate in their Whites and their pride showed in their excited faces. I hope we never lose this same sense of belonging in our own club, and wear our Whites with pride and excitement at the day ahead.

Elizabeth

LADIES' DAY 3rd AUGUST 2025

LYNNE BREEDON

Competitors H/cap (revised)

Alison Watmore (8)	Lynne Breedon (6)
Kath Spare (8)	Pauline Dennis (6)
Sue Hulme (8)	Elizabeth Thomson (5)
Val Moss (8)	

The annual Ladies competition was held on Sunday 3rd August when 7 enthusiastic ladies gathered at 9.30am, resplendent in their whites, so we could begin playing promptly at 10.00am.

There was a possibility of rain from lunchtime so we were all keen to get playing. We did have some uninvited visitors as 3 mole hills had appeared overnight and despite flattening the hills to discourage them, one was particularly persistent as the one hill was active all day. Fortunately it was not in a spot to disrupt our games.



This year we welcomed one of our newest members Sue Hulme. Sue only joined the club a few months ago and had never played in a croquet competition before. Being the friendly bunch we are, we endeavoured to give Sue some tips and advice but stressed that we were all there to have an enjoyable day of croquet interspersed with plenty of tea, biscuits and some very tasty dropped scones made by Val Moss, and of course time to chat and socialise.

We played on both lawns and it was lovely to see the ladies concentrating on their shots and acknowledging when their opponent had made a good shot too. The games were gradually being completed and as the day wore on the sun came out and although we had a few spots of rain the weather was ideal for croquet.



There were many very close games and at the end of the afternoon, only one hoop separated the top two competitors. Val was declared the worthy winner, winning 5 of her 6 games, which was an excellent result, followed by Kath,

runner-up, winning 4 of her games. Many congratulations, Val – and lovely to have a new name on the trophy this year.



The day ended earlier than expected mainly due to our keeping the games moving along. It was a lovely, relaxed day with lots of laughter and I hope that everyone will want to play again next year and that we can encourage more of the ladies to come and enjoy the experience.



THE WELLS CUP, GC CROQUET CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY ADRIAN MORRIS

First round

Phil Blake (1)	2 - 0	Nigel Pigdon (8)
Nick Hegan (4)	2 - 1	Pauline Harvey (5)
Phil Mander (3)	2 - 1	Philip Wood (6)
Mervyn Harvey (2)	2 - 1	Ian Robertson (7)

Second Round

Nick Hegan	2 - 1	Phil Blake
Mervyn Harvey	2 - 0	Phil Mander

FINAL

Mervyn Harvey	2 - 0	Nick Hegan
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Eight members entered this competition, notably one lady (was this a first?) and 7 men! After a number of qualifying games over recent weeks, the top four players, Phil Blake, Nick Hegan, Phil Mander and Mervyn Harvey, competed for the final day of the Wells Cup on Saturday, 2nd August. The Wells Cup is the Kenilworth Golf Croquet Club Championship trophy, and is played level.



Semi Finals



The first match of the day was the semi-final between Mervyn and Phil Mander. The games were very closely fought, both going all the way to the Golden Hoop, which could have gone either way, but Mervyn was the first to score, winning both games 7-6, 7-6.

In the second semi-final, Phil Blake, the favourite, playing Nick, started well to win the first game 7-4. However, Nick fought back to take the next two games, 7-6 and 7-5, once again, both very close games.



Mervyn Harvey



The shot of the day occurred at what seemed to be a pivotal moment in the match between Phil B and Nick. Phil was a game up, but trailing 5 – 6 in the second game. Nick's Black was in the jaws of hoop 12; Phil's Yellow was about 5 foot in front and slightly angled, and his Red even further away. He tried a jump shot with Yellow, but it hit the hoop and did not disturb Black. It did not seem to matter what Nick did with Blue, which was on the far side of the hoop, and he ended up hitting it close to Red. Phil

then hit one of the best jump shots I have seen at the club, with his red ball, which sailed over Black without touching the sides of the hoop, and ended up in the hut shelter because of the angle.

As Black was still firmly in the jaws, the best Nick could do was to hit it towards hoop 11, effectively giving Phil the first opportunity to get a ball on the far side of hoop 13 - which he did, but it was not as close to the hoop as he would have liked. Nick hit a good Blue, and Phil was faced with a 30 yard shot to get Red anywhere near the Golden Hoop. Nick had the upper hand, and was able to engineer an opportunity to run the hoop. So, despite the hampered shot with Black, Nick was able to take the match to a decider, which he won.



The Final

The first game of the final saw Nick slow off the blocks allowing Mervyn to win 7-1. Again, Nick had to fight back. In the second game, at the final and deciding hoop of the game, he failed to clear Mervyn's ball from in front of the hoop giving Mervyn the game and the championship.

Mervyn has now won the trophy three times and continues to improve. He stated after the game that he was very pleased to take the trophy but that all the games had been very closely fought.



The winning shot of the match.

DOUBLES DAY 24th AUGUST

LYNNE BREEDON



Messing about



Behaving



Bottle half empty

Sunday dawned sunny and bright with no rain in the forecast so we were set fair for another fun packed croquet filled day. Imagine my horror when I approached lawn 1 to see that our recent uninvited visitor Mr Badger had decided to visit us again overnight. Once again he'd made quite a large hole and scattered soil. The only saving grace, on inspection, was that it was on the boundary line and so wasn't going to impede play too much.



After some quick repairs to both the badger's hole and to several repairs where the crows had pecked we were set to start our day. Both lawns played well and thanks to the irrigation system they have remained green during this hot, dry summer.



There were 7 teams rather than the usual 8 due to illness but this did enable each pair to have a rest during the day which as it was quite hot was appreciated by everyone. There were several very close games and the scoresheet was eagerly checked after each round.





Quite often this tournament has not finished till 6.00pm but this year the day flowed well and we'd finished by 5.00pm. As usual there were a few hoops which seemed to take an age to run but the day was not rushed.

It was lovely to see everyone chatting, enjoying plenty of drinks and food in between games.



The top 3 pairs were very close when the scores were totalled. The winners with 34 points were Phil Blake and Tony Breedon, 2nd place with 32 points were Val and Ivan Moss and 3rd with 31 points were Robert Zara and Tony Watmore.

The Doubles Fun Day as it started out was intended as a one off event but I think this is the 6th one that's been held and it's now a regular event in the calendar due to popular demand. Thank you everyone for making yesterday such an enjoyable day.

What's an editor to do? You give the winners a choice of 3 photos. Lynne and Tony pick No1, Phil and Sandy opt for No2 and Val and Ivan prefer No3. Phil B then says No4. So you print them all!

THE STORY OF MARJ – PART 1 (by special request of the Running Hoops editor)

One of the consequences of coming home after being away for a few months is that there is a lot of post to sort through. Ours includes printed copies of the Croquet Gazette, which I get because I pay to be a Tournament Member, but they tend to be full of lengthy tournament reports, and so are tossed into a pile to read when I have nothing better to do, or to help me get to sleep.

On top of the random pile was the February 2025 edition, and the first thing that caught my eye was a poem from the "President's Poetry Collection". Poetry – whatever next? Well I suppose it was mildly amusing, and at least it didn't go on for page after page, like the tournament reports. I next picked up the December 2024 edition, and there was another poem – "Corfig" by Jonathan Toye (well known in AC circles). The first line was "Twas Corfig and the waves did roll", which correctly followed the iambic tetrameter of Jabberwocky, but the fourth line was "and tasty was the Sophienosh", which isn't right. It's tetrameter again, and should be trimeter. I mean – such an error is up there with crush shots and double-taps – things you just don't do.

The April edition had just landed on the mat, and so I rushed to see if this plague of poetry had continued. Yes – there on page 8 was another! This is it in its entirety:

Dear Marj

The lawn is green, the hoops are white,
It is indeed a splendid sight
My opponent's good, his name is Jack
His turn to play, with black.
"Now where are we, Jack, what's the score?"
"Buck up old girl, I've won all four"
His ball is square in front of five...
It's through, oh Saints Alive!
It's running on, oh fiddlesticks,
In just one shot, it's now through six
"How can that be? Upon my soul,
We've got no middle pole.
I'll fetch it", and off I trot.
"You'll have to retake that shot."
"Sorry, not per law two-three,
You'll find that's six to me!"

Is he right?
Carol Lewis

Who is Marj, and who is Carol Lewis? At least it sticks pretty closely to three tetrameter and one trimeter.

So, I did some research, sent my findings as a "Letter to the Editor" – and it was printed on page 9 of the June edition:

THE MYSTERY OF WHO IS "MARJ" AND WHAT CLUB "CAROL LEWIS" PLAYS AT?

My research indicates that Marj was an irreverent Aussie whose column, "Marj gives simple answers to GC question!", appeared in a small number of club croquet publications in the middle of the last decade. Her *raison d'être* was to get GC rules better known. They were much more complicated in those days, and the rule referred to in the poem is now 2.5 but was 2.3 back then. I never met her myself, but I understand that her manner was similar to that of Dame Edna Everage. Some say that she never existed, and nor did the letter-writers. I think they base that view on letters coming from the likes of Willy Jumpit and Norma Sears. In fact, a letter from R Descartes took this a step further when he wrote "I don't believe you exist. The names at the bottom of the letters seem to me to be made up, and so I don't think the writers exist either. Come to think of it, I'm not sure that even I exist." Pretty damning evidence, but I prefer to keep an open mind, and hope that one day our paths will cross.

Mervyn Harvey, Kenilworth

Part 2 - the prequel, will be in the next Running Hoops

WORRALL-PHELPS ANNUAL WINE CHALLENGE 2025

Bob Phelps

This year's Worrall-Phelps Annual Wine Challenge took place on 12th August. For those of you not familiar with this prestigious event, it's a bit like the annual Boat Race in as much it is always competed for between the same players - Alan Worrall and Bob Phelps - but the resemblance ends there as neither Alan nor Bob were bright enough to even contemplate going to Oxford or Cambridge.

The inaugural event took place in 2023 when Alan challenged Bob to a match under Charlccote Cup rules i.e. no jump shots. Alan had been knocked out of the Charlccote Cup in the semi-final whilst Bob went on to win it. Alan wanted to see how it would have turned out had he won his semi-final and faced Bob in the final. So the challenge was born, the prize being a bottle of wine donated by Alan.

Sadly for Alan, he was beaten in both 2023 and 2024, whilst Bob also went on to retain the Charlccote Cup.

This year's challenge took place in sweltering temperatures. It was a closely

contested match, played in a great spirit, punctuated by tea breaks, cakes and ice creams, Bob was victorious by 2 games to 1, 7-3, 3-7, 7-3.

Magnanimous as ever, Alan provided the wine for both the victor and the runner-up. The prizes were presented by Bob and Jan's granddaughter Felicity, who incidentally received some coaching from Mervyn. During the coaching Mervyn asked Felicity if she knew how old the croquet world champion was. 'Eighty,' she replied, 'He's my granddad!' Full marks, Felicity, you're in Bob's will!

Alan and Bob look forward to resuming the challenge in 2026.



UNUSUAL INCIDENT IN THE ASSOCIATION CROQUET MATCH v BROADWAS



In the morning singles, Nigel was playing against Stuart Smith from Broadwas.

Nigel was playing Blue and Black – as can be seen from this photo early in his break.

All was going well until approaching Hoop 4, when unnoticed by Nigel, Stuart, or any spectator, at some point Nigel switched to using Yellow, an obvious Wrong Ball.

Play then continued with Yellow roqueting Red and attempting to run Hoop 4. He failed to run the hoop leaving Red and Yellow near Hoop 4 and Blue and Black together near the peg.

Stuart, having watched Nigel end his turn with Yellow, and seeing Blue near Black, immediately roqueted Black with Blue! He then spotted something was amiss!



Some discussion took place and Adrian, a referee, spectating on the other lawn, was called on to adjudicate.

Before Adrian explains his decision, would you like to consider how **you** would decide the issue?

Adrian – over to you...

This is where it gets interesting/embarrassing!

If the wrong ball had been spotted during Nigel's turn, it would have been clear. The balls would have been replaced to where the first wrong ball was played and the turn would end.

However, Stuart then played a stroke and "condoned" the wrong ball so my adjudication was that he was at fault and Blue and Black were replaced and his turn ended. This gave Nigel the advantage even though he was the first to play a wrong ball.

BUT, my adjudication was wrong! The limit of claims for a wrong ball is the first stroke of opponent's turn playing a correct ball!

So, the correct adjudication should have been for Nigel to replace his balls where his first wrong ball was played, and Stuart would start his turn.

Apologies to all and another lesson learnt about rushed decisions. Luckily, Stuart won the game so little damage done but embarrassing for me!

HOW DIFFICULT CAN IT BE TO AGREE IF A BALL HAS GONE OFF THE LAWN OR NOT (AC LAWS)?



When the 2 players fail to reach agreement, Mervyn is called upon to adjudicate.



Mallets are used to mark the line, and one player gets down to serious business....



....watched by an audience of curious spectators, who eventually lose interest and disperse.



Still with no agreement, Mervyn reappears, now carrying the steel bar from the equipment hut...



...and announces his decision, which is finally accepted by both opponents. Whew!

COMPETITION TIME

ALL-ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIP FIRST ROUND 29th JUNE ROBERT ZARA

Competitors Handicap

Phil Mander	(2)	Tony Watmore	(7)	Robert Zara	(10)
Ian Robertson	(3)	Jon Hodge	(9)		

The first round of this competition is always at club level and so was played on our own lawns in Kenilworth on 29th June, with four competitors of widely varying handicaps, playing all-play-all. The competition was played to Advantage handicap rules, which calculates how many hoops each competitor must score to win.

Results:

Robert Zara (10)	beat Jon Hodge	7-3	Ian Robertson (3)	beat Tony Watmore	10-5
	beat Phil Mander	5-4		beat Phil Mander	7-4
	beat Ian Robertson	5-5			
			Jon Hodge (9)	beat Ian Robertson	7-3
Tony Watmore (7)	beat Robert Zara	7-5	Phil Mander (2)	beat Tony Watmore	11-3
	beat Jon Hodge	8-5			

Robert Zara, the only player to win 3 games, was declared the winner and went forward to the next round.

SECOND ROUND HELD AT ASHBY CROQUET CLUB 26th JULY

ROBERT ZARA



Very pleased to report that Kenilworth came out on top in today's competition! There were five other competitors, from Ashby, Derby and Pinchbeck (Lincolnshire) with handicaps ranging from 5 to 11. We played under Advantage rules, giving me one or two hoops against a couple of the opponents, level against two and conceding a hoop against one. I won 4 matches, losing one against an 8 handicapper on the golden



hoop. I think that a couple of the others each won three matches, so possibly one or more of them may also get through to the final. The picture shows me receiving my prize - an Ashby croquet club mug!

I believe the National Final is at Peasedown in Bath in September and I will make sure that I am available to attend.

Editor

Huge Congratulations to Robert for reaching this stage in the All-England Championship. What an achievement! Amazing that the Kenilworth Croquet Club name should appear (hopefully) on the list of finalists. We wish Robert a very enjoyable experience at the national event, and look forward to hearing all about his day, in our final Running Hoops of the year.

FRIENDLY v WORCESTER NORTON 25TH JULY LYNNE BREEDON

Competitors

Lynne Breedon
David Hands

Tony Breedon
Julie Roberts

Alan Worrall
Richard Pinder

Jaspal Jheeta
Alan Hulme



We first played Worcester Norton in a friendly at Kenilworth last summer which as I recall was a very pleasant day with plenty of conversation between games and during tea. Worcester were very keen for us to visit them this year and Pauline duly liaised with Chris Dunn their captain and the 25th July was put on the calendar. Worcester are a small club with 26 members but hope to recruit via U3A.

Friday dawned bright and sunny and gradually the temperature rose during the day. I believe it reached 27 during the afternoon. Alan Hulme kindly offered to drive from Kenilworth, so 5 of us travelled together. The 3 remaining members of the team were coming from Stratford. They did well to arrive on time as Ragley Hall was holding a Game Fair and the traffic was moving slowly.

The croquet club adjoins the cricket club and are also close to the Shooting Club and salvos of gunfire were heard at various times during the day. Despite this, it is a lovely location.

On arrival we were greeted by Jenny who was stand in captain for Chris Dunn who had back and leg issues. We were made very welcome and were quickly offered drinks, hot and cold after our



journeys. They have 2 lawns, an upper and lower, both not quite full sized. They are situated on the site of some old barracks and the wall which runs the length of the ground is listed, as is the house which adjoins the club.

The lawns themselves are extremely challenging and Worcester are the first to say how difficult they are to play. There was very little grass, rock hard as they don't have a watering system, they just rely on the rain for water and there are slopes to negotiate too. It was not easy to place a ball in a specific spot as it was impossible to say where it would eventually stop. However, despite all the challenges each pair played 4 games and the final score was Kenilworth 12 games, Worcester 4.

The score really wasn't important though as Worcester had 2 very new ladies who had only been playing a few weeks and were very nervous. By the end of the afternoon they were both smiling and said how much they'd enjoyed the afternoon and thanked us for giving them some tips and being "kind and friendly" to them. We finally finished just after 5pm and then had a light tea of savouries and cake which we all enjoyed.

Jenny thanked us for a lovely day and said what a friendly club we were and how much they had enjoyed themselves. I said we looked forward to hosting them at Kenilworth next year. We arrived back in Kenilworth around 7pm after a very enjoyable day and lawns that tested our tactical skills.

WMF GC MATCH KENILWORTH A v BROADWAS AT KENILWORTH 25TH JULY

PHILIP WOOD

Kenilworth Team		H/cap	
Philip Wood (Captain)	3	Phil Mander	2
Phil Blake	-1	Mervyn Harvey	2



Broadwas have great strength in depth, and this did not look like their best team, with handicaps of 2,3,3,4, while our handicaps were -1,2,2,3. Hence our shock at being defeated 4-0 in the first round of singles. No excuses!

In the second round of singles we won two games and another went to 6-7. The fourth game in this round was between Phil Mander and Billy Cooke, a rapidly improving new player. They were delayed by playing behind another game which was rather slow, and, bizarrely, decided to agree a draw at 5-5 before all other games were finished.

It was decided to continue with the rest of the match. Kenilworth won the next round of singles 3-1 and our hopes rose. But we lost the last round of singles 1-3, so that even when we had won both doubles games we still lost the match by 8 to 9.

The drawn game led to an exchange of emails between WMF officials and the captains because there is no provision for drawn games in GC. I have captained this team since 2011 and nothing like this has happened before. Their captain and I are in full agreement that, presented with that fait accompli, the only thing we can do is accept that game as scoring 0.5 to 0.5.

There were two games which we lost 6-7. Had we won one of those we would have won the match. Mervyn Harvey won 3 games. Phil Mander scored '1.5' and Phil Blake and Phil Wood scored one game each.

Playing conditions were good, though the lawns have been rather slow recently. They were an agreeable team and we all enjoyed cake and tea to finish the day.

WMF GC MATCH KENILWORTH B v HIMLEY AT HOME 30th JULY Pauline Harvey



Once again, the weather was set fair for our match against Himley. We arrived at the lawns while they were still being cut, as car park resurfacing and rain the previous day had delayed the mowing. Everyone was impressed with the lush state of the grass, as our new watering system had paid great dividends in the recent hot dry spell.

Our team was: Nick Hegan, Ian Robertson, Pauline Harvey and Richard Pinder, and Himley, in seeding order: Paul, Austin, Dave and Dawn. The format of a WMF league game is that all four players play the four opponents in a prescribed order, with the lowest handicap home player first playing the opposition's highest handicap player, and finishing with all the players playing their handicap counterparts in the last round.



We know the Himley players well and were expecting a close match. However, we romped to a 4-0 lead after the first round, with Pauline and Richard pitted against Paul and Austin respectively, both winning 7-6, perhaps because Paul and Austin took time to adjust to the difference between our lawns and their parched home turf, or maybe our players just played well above their handicap!



The second round achieved three good wins in Kenilworth's favour, with only one loss to Austin, who had recovered good form, being able to shoot hoops from seemingly any distance. His form continued in the third round, the last before lunch, so that the score at lunchtime was 10-2. Victory to Kenilworth was thus assured. Although the scores on paper were convincing in the third round, Ian said that he had a worrying period against Paul, who crept back to 5-4, after Ian had been ahead 5-1, but Paul's jump shots failed him three times, and Ian then drove on

without losing another hoop, winning 7-4.

The last singles round gave some very strange results. Perhaps some felt energized after their lunch, and others felt as though they needed a post-prandial nap! Paul recovered his



hoop-running skills, which, added to his clearing ability, with shots like an Exocet missile, resulted in his first win. Ian, however, after listening to advice on how to deal with Austin's fantastic hoop-running ability, managed to keep him from having a view of the hoops and achieved an amazing 7-0 win. So, Ian, and Pauline, who played a steady, careful game, but with a couple of good jump shots, and aided in her earlier game against Paul, by his missile guidance system failing on occasions, both won all their singles games.

With the match result assured, we had to decide the pairings for the doubles. In a WM league game, whilst the captain chooses the pairings, perhaps based on form on the day, or whether one win or two are needed for a good result, the rules decree that the total handicaps of each pair determines who plays whom.

We decided that Nick would play with Pauline, giving a total handicap of 5, and Ian would play with Richard, giving a total handicap of 10. Himley's chosen pairings gave the same total handicaps, with their top two players pairing up. Ian and Richard achieved a win fairly quickly, with a decisive 7-4 victory, but Nick and Pauline had to battle hard, with the score ebbing and flowing, never more than one apart, until Nick hit a perfect length to the Golden Hoop, which the opposition wasn't able to clear, and which gave him a relatively easy winning hoop on his next turn. The final score was thus 14-4 to Kenilworth. As usual, we finished with a splendid tea!



WMF GC KENILWORTH A v EARDISLEY AT HOME, TUESDAY 5 AUGUST PHILIP WOOD

Result: Kenilworth 15 – 3 Eardisley

Team: Philip Wood (Captain)
Phil Blake
Mervyn Harvey
Phil Mander

Eardisley arrived in good time on a fine day for our fourth and last match of the season. The lawns were looking good and green thanks to our watering system which was much used during the recent hot weather. However the strong growth of grass has made them quite slow, and not uniformly slow. The mole or moles have been active again and we had some repair work to do.



The visitors had two players with plenty of GC experience, and two who were mainly AC players getting to know the niceties of the GC game. Eardisley's handicaps of 2,5,6 and 7 were a good deal higher than ours (0,2,2,3) and this soon began to tell.

Tony Johnston, their captain, won three of his singles games, but their other players failed to score against their stronger opponents.

Mervyn Harvey starred with 4 singles games won, whilst Phil Blake, Phil Mander and Phil Wood won three singles games each. We also won the two doubles games at the end.

The match finished with the usual tea and cake and good conversation. Eardisley have good, well levelled lawns, but are envious of our watering system and large pool of low handicap GC players.

WMF6+ LEAGUE MATCH HIMLEY V KENILWORTH – AUGUST 13TH TONY WATMORE



The Kenilworth team of Tony Watmore, Robert Zara, Jeff Lyndsey and Richard Pinder set off for Himley, attempting to build on the momentum of the success of their opening win against Edgbaston, on what was going to be a very hot day.

The team arrived to be rather taken aback by the state of Himley's lawns which to put it mildly were in a shocking state. They had not been watered for at least 4 weeks and the lawns were baked rock hard with hardly a blade of green grass. There were almost no long runs of hoops and jump shots were impossible. Even trying to play a nudge shot of a few inches to the hoop could see the ball running several yards away. Even stop shots were difficult. It was all a bit of a lottery and it didn't get any better as the

midday sun baked the lawns even further. Most games took a long time to play as players struggled to get the ball through the hoops

As Robert said, "It was like crazy golf", and Jeff said, "it would have been easier to play on the club car park". I think we all agreed that we would struggle to take up the hobby of croquet if our lawns were like that – although credit must go to Himley for persisting with such lawns.

I attach a couple of photos and Kenilworth members should be grateful for the investment in the sprinkler system that we have.

This is in no way sour grapes because Kenilworth came out victorious with the narrowest of wins – both teams having won 8 matches each but with Kenilworth winning based on the number of hoops won – being 98-95. It really could not have been much closer.

Special mention should go to Jeff Lyndsey for winning 4 of his 5 matches, and WMF6+ debutant Richard Pinder who won 3 of his 5 matches. Robert and Tony brought up the rear only winning 1 match each.

[On a personal note my confidence in making shots fell to pieces early on, as standard shots drifted past the hoops]

On Himley's side Terry Wood - the ever young nonagenarian - continued to be a thorn in Kenilworth's side winning 4 of his 5 matches.



Onwards and upwards as Kenilworth host Himley for the return match – which hopefully will be played on grass!!

JULY LEVEL CUP 16TH AUGUST ELIZABETH THOMSON

The July Level Cup is often played on the same day as the Wells Cup, the Golf Croquet Championship, as it was originally intended to be for higher handicap players, while the lower handicap players competed on the other court. Sadly this year, only four members opted to try for this attractive little trophy, but hopefully with more publicity, more members might be attracted to this little competition.

Competitors	Handicap	Results
Pauline Dennis	8	Tony Watmore beat Elizabeth Thomson 7-5, 7-2
Elizabeth Thomson	7	Alan Worrall beat Pauline Dennis 7-4, 7-3
Tony Watmore	7	Final
Alan Worrall	6	Alan Worrall beat Tony Watmore 7-5, 7-6



The four contestants met early on a chillier than normal Saturday morning in August. On Lawn 2, Elizabeth won the toss and went in to an early lead, with the score at 4-2 after Hoop 6. However, after that, Tony settled in to the game and, finding his form, took the next 4 hoops, reversing the score to lead by 6-4. Elizabeth managed to interrupt the run with the 11th hoop, but Tony came back to take the winning hoop at 7-5.

As the other two contestants were still playing, they went straight back on for the next game after a quick drink. This time Tony, by now really on form, and demonstrating his very skilful golf-stance jump shot, ran the hoops with

determination, winning the game by 7 hoops to 2, and the match.

Meanwhile on Lawn 1, Alan and Pauline were still playing their first game, more closely fought than the Lawn 2 semi-final, with fine shots and strong defences from both players. Alan took the first game 7-3 eventually, and in the second game, still closely fought, managed to take the second game by 7-4 and win his place in the afternoon final.

The Final

This was a fiercely fought match between the two men, which was reflected in the final scores, with Alan just having the edge and managing to win the first game by 7-5, followed by the second game with a tense Golden Hoop triumph. Matches don't come much closer than that!



Congratulations to Alan, and to Runner-up Tony.



Our final match of the season was a home match v Broadwas, the winners of the League in 2024 and we were hoping to claim a 3rd league win to give us a chance of winning the league this year.

Proceedings started a little late, understandably, with the visitors having had a very long journey and with the weather initially being rainy and unsettled. The morning, as usual, comprised one doubles game and two singles games.

In one singles game Mervyn faced Ian Dampney with both players having a handicap of 7 they each received just one bisque. Mervyn was

pleased to make a good start but thereafter was disappointed with his general standard of play. He mis-hit a number of attempted roquets and those hit cleanly seemed to have not been stalked well so often missed their target. With Mervyn, uncharacteristically, failing to run hoops well it was difficult for him to stop Ian building up a sizeable lead as he became more familiar with the lawns. Eventually Ian won 26-14.

In the other singles game Nigel faced Stuart Smith, the top player on paper from Broadwas, and by his own admission he struggled to make headway despite having 4.5 bisques at his disposal. He was pleased however to run a couple of quite angled hoops using his trusty technique for 'jump' shots! He also did set up a 'four-ball' break but then squandered the opportunity it offered. Eventually Stuart started playing to the standard he was capable of, and when time was up he won comfortably 21-15.



In the doubles game Pauline & Cliff faced John Guy & David Kaner and had 4.5 bisques compared with the 2 bisques received by their opponents. Both pairs elected to play using 'alternate strokes' which has the distinct advantage of keeping both players 'warmed up' as they are actively involved in every turn. Pauline has a handicap of 16 as opposed to Cliff's 5 but at times she showed greater self-belief with roquets and hoop-running, resulting in the home pair gaining a reasonable lead at the half-way stage. In particular Pauline confidently ran 'two back' from distance using 'opponents' ball as she did so. Also Cliff, as often happens, was missing attempted roquets, but Pauline was able to help him adjust the direction of his intended line and as a consequence at least two quite long roquets were made. This allowed the home pair to extend their lead. Both pairs were reluctant to use their bisques until the later stages and when all bisques had been used Pauline & Cliff were able to protect their lead, eventually winning 17-7 when the 3¼ hours had been used up.

So at lunch Kenilworth trailed 1-2 and needed to win three of the afternoon singles games in order to win the match overall.

Mervyn was paired against John and received 2 bisques, which he would usually keep until the closing stages of a game. However he used them early on to avoid giving John an easy start that was likely to enable his opponent to make a substantial break. Now playing much better than during his morning game, Mervyn was able to keep slightly ahead as they reached the half-way stage of their game.



He then pulled further ahead thanks partly to a couple of excellent 'croquet' shots when approaching hoops from a distance. Attempting to complete the game at the 'peg out' his front ball narrowly missed the peg and he then chose to peg out the back ball and wait for another chance to peg out the other ball. After half a dozen opportunities he was able to make a medium length roquet that allowed him to complete victory 26-17 with 10 minutes to spare.

Nigel faced Ian in his afternoon game and was rather frustrated at repeatedly missing 'shortish' roquets that he would generally expect to make. However he cheerfully battled on for the 3hr 15mins allowed and was pleased at one point to 'peel' one of his balls through a hoop – a feat that is always satisfying! Ian maintained a high standard of play and fully deserved to win 23-13.



Pauline faced David in her afternoon game and had to decide how to make the best use of her ten bisques! It is quite difficult for players fairly new to AC to plan ahead, possibly taking a couple of bisques to set up a 'four ball break'....or perhaps to keep bisques for emergencies when mistakes arise. Here Pauline felt she chose opportune moments to take the bisques but then was let down by poor execution of her shots. However she did have some satisfaction with two successful peels of partner ball, one of which needed a jump shot when the front ball stopped in the jaws of a hoop! When all of her bisques had been used up, possibly too early for it is always useful to keep one bisque as a potential threat, she finished her turn with an error that allowed David to capitalise and

dictate the closing stages of the game. He eventually won 26-14.

Cliff was playing Stuart, the top player from Broadwas, in his afternoon game and in the early part of the game progress was slow for both players. At one point there was much debate - involving players and spectators(!) - as to whether one of Cliff's balls was off or on the lawn after a croquet shot near hoop 1. The decision did not affect the game hugely but soon afterwards Cliff managed to put together a couple of reasonable breaks and gradually forge ahead. Quite late in the game, he then made a tactical error by allowing Stuart to hit in with his green ball that had not yet even run hoop 1.



This inspired Stuart to claw his way back into the game. Cliff was offered a lifeline when Stuart sportingly declared that he had played a foul shot hitting the striker's ball twice in one stroke. However he did not make the best use of this. Then, with barely 2 minutes left on the clock, Stuart started what proved to be his final turn. With several spectators watching, he proceeded to run 7 hoops with clinical accuracy to take the lead by a single hoop. When Cliff missed the roquet on his last turn Stuart had clinched a fully deserved victory 21-20.

So the final score in the match was a win for Broadwas by 5 games to 2.

TAYLOR CUP 15th AUGUST ELIZABETH THOMSON

Finalists	H/cap, revised	Results		
Mervyn Harvey	(1½)	Mervyn	7 – 6	Pauline
Nigel Pigdon	(1)	Mervyn	14 – 7	Nigel
Pauline Harvey	(4)	Mervyn	14 – 4	Elizabeth
Elizabeth Thomson	(5)	Pauline	11 – 8	Nigel
		Nigel	9 – 8	Elizabeth
		Elizabeth	12 – 5	Pauline



After the preliminary rounds of this competition had been played out, 4 players qualified for the final, held on Friday, 15th August, in fierce sunshine and temperatures in the mid-20s. Both Mervyn and Nigel had played a long match the previous morning, but were still ready to start the next day's competition at 9:30am sharp, the agreed starting time.

In the **first round** of the competition, Mervyn and Pauline fought a very close game, with Mervyn emerging as the winner by only a 7-6 margin.

On lawn 2a, Nigel and Elizabeth were equally close throughout, with the score fluctuating

from one side to the next, then drawing level until Nigel managed to snatch the winning hoop in the dying moments of the game, to win 9-8.

In the **second round** of games, Mervyn and Nigel took on each other on Lawn 2a, but this time Mervyn managed to pull clear with a 14-7 victory, while Pauline and Elizabeth met on the other half lawn. This time, Pauline struggled unusually with her roquet shots, allowing Elizabeth the opportunity to draw ahead to a 12-5 victory.

After a quick lunch, sitting in the welcome shade by the pavilion, the players were quickly back on to the lawns for the **third and final round**. On lawn 2a again, Mervyn had little difficulty against Elizabeth, who struggled to hit in with her balls spaced widely apart, and won easily 14-4.

Meanwhile on 2b, Pauline took on Nigel, and having recovered her form, pulled steadily ahead until at time, she led by 11 hoops to 8.

Congratulations to Mervyn for his decisive win of the Taylor Cup, his fourth victory in this trophy. Congratulations also, to the other three finalists, who were each very pleased with their single win of the day, a very close end result overall.

And thanks especially to Mervyn for his superb organisation of the various stages of this competition.

DOUGLAS TROPHY 23rd AUGUST

ELIZABETH THOMSON



Players	Handicap
Tony Lester	(7)
Mike Taylor	(9)
Elizabeth Thomson	(7)
Robert Zara	(9)

The Douglas Trophy was played as usual, with four players of limited experience, and a completely new venture for Mike, playing in his first year of learning the ropes of Association Croquet. Mike has made excellent progress and shown a natural talent for the game, rapidly learning how to set up and play a break, and demonstrating accuracy in his strokes, rolls and hoop running.

Tony was returning to Association Croquet this year, after missing most or all of last year's play



due to very heavy responsibilities at work. It was great to have Tony back on Thursday mornings again, and to see his previous formidable skills gradually returning.

The Douglas Trophy is played on half lawns, known as Short Croquet, with a few small differences in some of the Laws, from games played on full lawns. Half lawns enable newer players to learn the tactics more easily, without needing to make such long shots as are needed on a full lawn.

We were in luck with the weather, a perfect cooler day with some patches of sunshine, but without the burning heat of earlier summer matches. The format was all-play-all, and Adrian came along to help us get set up and started. He was then on hand to help Tony and Mike, who were playing each other in the first round, with any initial problems they might incur, before he had to leave.

On the other half lawn, Robert and Elizabeth fought a very close game, very evenly matched, with neither managing to peg out and the final scores only two hoops apart.

After two rounds, we settled to eat our packed lunches, apart from Tony, who had forgotten to bring his. He refused Elizabeth's offer of one of her sandwiches but accepted with alacrity, a slice of her iced banana loaf.

The final round saw Robert taking on Mike, with Elizabeth and Tony on the other half lawn. Sadly, we must have been concentrating so much on our games, that we totally forgot to take any photographs of the day, a strange omission by Elizabeth, who rarely misses an opportunity.

At the end of the day, Elizabeth emerged as the winner, winning all 3 of her games, very closely followed by Robert, who won two of his three games and finished only 4 hoops behind in the total score of the day's play! Congratulations to all players, and especially to Mike for entering his first competition within a few months of starting to learn the basics of AC, as a total beginner.

FELLOWS SALVER 26th AUGUST**ELIZABETH THOMSON****Players Handicaps (Revised)**

Mervyn Harvey	(1)
Jon Hodge	(7)
Nigel Pigdon	(2)
Elizabeth Thomson	(8.5)
Philip Wood	(2)
Robert Zara	(12.5)

Round One

Mervyn	26 – 22	Robert
Philip	19 – 18	Elizabeth
Nigel	19 – 16	Jon

Round Two

Philip	23 – 20	Mervyn
Nigel	21 – 18	Elizabeth
Jon	26 – 11	Robert

Round Three

Philip	24 – 17	Nigel
Jon	26 – 25	Mervyn



Last year's winner, Nigel Pigdon, presents the Fellows Salver to this year's winner, Philip Wood.

In good weather for playing a full day of AC croquet, warm and pleasant but with a strong breeze, six players met to enjoy a full day's competition for the Fellows Salver, which was won last year by Nigel Pigdon. After taking time to clear some of the heavy carpet of Autumn leaves, play started promptly on time. Handicaps ranged from 2 to 12.5 and in the first round, the strongest players were paired with the higher handicapped players.



Not surprisingly, considering the wide difference in bisques allocated, the less experienced players were each able to put on a good performance, using their bisques carefully, to finish with respectable scores, and congratulate each other for finishing within 4 hoops of the victors, Mervyn, Philip and Nigel.

In the second round, Philip managed a narrow victory against Mervyn; Nigel a similar win against Elizabeth, despite her generous bisque allowance; and Jon managed to peg out against Robert.

At this stage, Robert needed to leave for a Bridge engagement, and Elizabeth was happy to watch the final matches in Round 3, between Nigel and Philip on Lawn 1, and Mervyn and Jon on Lawn 2.

On Lawn 2, a very even match resulted in the closest score of the day, 26-25, in Jon's favour.

Mervyn made an excellent start and was the first to reach peg. When Jon got his first ball there, he opted not to peg Mervyn out and instead, used a carefully preserved bisque to make a good break to take his second ball to peg, and tried a longish peg peel, but failed. He used his last bisque to have another attempt, which also failed.

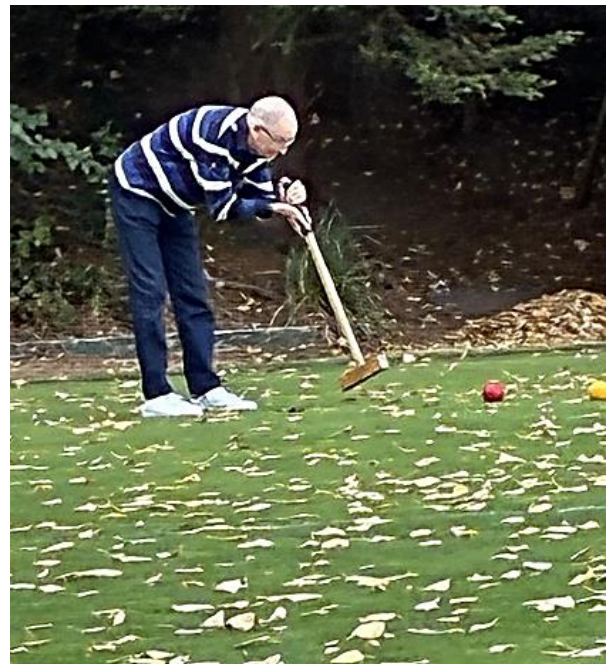


Mervyn's second ball was still on hoop 5, but over the next 20 minutes he steadily gained more hoops, aiming to leave Jon's balls split, but occasionally he did leave Jon another opportunity to attempt the peel.

Eventually, Jon pegged out his back ball, and with time up Mervyn made Rover, and had a reasonable effort at a peg peel, leaving the front ball a foot from the peg. He needed to peg out his back ball to draw level. Jon's ball was about 8 yards from peg, but he finally hit peg, and won 26-25. Matches don't often provide as much excitement as this match did!



On Lawn 1, Philip and Nigel each had two bisques to use. Philip gained an early lead by using one bisque early on and soon after, took one ball round to peg.



However Nigel then used one of his bisques, to take one of his balls round to peg to even the score. This allowed Nigel to peg out Philip's Rover ball, leaving him with only one ball to play and still needing to run two hoops and peg out. However Nigel had left Philip's ball 5 yards in front of its hoop, Penult. Philip played a brilliant shot to run the hoop and followed shortly after with Rover. However a careless roquet shot towards the peg resulted in Nigel's ball hitting the peg, so was removed from the lawn and the match ended with Philip 8 points ahead, and a final score of **25-17**, to win the Fellows Salver for the fourth time since its inception in 2014.

Congratulations to Philip and to Runner Up, Nigel, and thanks to Tournament Director, Mervyn, for organising a very happy day of Association Croquet for us all.

Editor: I am currently on holiday in Kniveton in Derbyshire, with shared responsibility for looking after two dogs and two cats. With the wonderful aid of modern communication, it has been possible to complete another Running Hoops, away from home. After this holiday, I will soon be away again, this time to Australia, and I hope to be able to put together much of the final Running Hoops of the year, usually distributed at the end of October, from the other hemisphere. Please continue to email me with match reports or events I have missed, or information I may like to include in the newsletter. And photographs!

I'm a great lover of photographs or images, to enliven an article or series of match or other reports. If team captains or tournament directors are busy with organisation, try to nominate a willing photographer, who would be prepared to gather the team together for a quick photograph, or ask an observer, who might like to capture some of the action on the court.

And once again, many thanks to all those who have taken the time to write and submit match reports, information, photographs and one-off articles of general interest; to Ian, who once again is setting off on holiday, as I struggle to send him a last minute copy of Running Hoops before he locks his computer away for holiday. And of course, we look forward to hearing more research into the mysterious Marj, who has made it on to the pages of the prestigious Croquet Gazette.

Wishing you all a lovely Autumn season of Croquet.

Elizabeth
