



# newsletter



The line-up at the September tournament: Standing L-R: Sally Marsh, Bryan Harral, Eric Audsley, Colin McKenzie, David Marsh, George Collin, Geoff Strutt. Seated: Geoff Johnson, John Hall, Jordan Waters, Barry Keen, John Bevington, Phillippine Geissler, John Pollard, Heather Bennett. In front: Seb and Lara Marsh, and Sanaa Hallam holding Talitha. Photo by John Wheeler.

## Handicap tournament 14-16 September

The last CA tournament to be held on the old lawns turned out in many ways to be a mixture of old and new. It was run as an Egyptian by manager Geoff Strutt, who spent most of his time sitting in the pavilion filling in an array of figures on numerous cards and charts.



Managers meeting: Geoff Strutt confers with Eric Audsley (the array of coloured pens was **not** essential to Geoff's data analysis). Photo by John Wheeler.

We saw the return of CA Chairman Barry Keen, who was a block winner in the first two tournaments held at

Wrest Park in 1972. Now playing off 6 he won 10 of his 11 games, conceding on average a mere 7 points in each one. His only loss was to Jordan Waters from Letchworth, playing in his first tournament, who won 9 from 10 (four by the maximum margin) and played with a skill and confidence that belied his handicap of 20.

When all the calculations had been completed it was Jordan who emerged the winner with a rank of 70, just ahead of Barry the Bandit on 68, and his handicap was summarily reduced to 14.



John Pollard's elegant and effective side style.

Another player in her first tournament was Phillipine Geissler, who arrived with partner Sanaa Hallam and their two month-old daughter Talitha. Phillipine managed two wins and, having watched any amount of A class play, was not afraid to attempt bold manoeuvres and wired leaves. Talitha decided at an early stage that croquet had little to offer as a spectator sport, and contented herself with tours of the park, regular meals and plenty of sleep.

Among the other visitors were ex-club members John Pollard and Colin McKenzie. Colin had brought with him an old Wrest Park All England competition draw from 1983 and a membership list from 1984, which included himself as well as Eric Audsley, George Collin and Bryan Harral, all playing as keenly as ever nearly thirty years on.

There was champagne all round at the prizegiving, and Barry made a nice speech. We can only hope that the first tournament on the new lawns goes as well as the last one on the old.



A few words from the CA Chairman. L-R Geoff Strutt, Jordan Waters, John Pollard, Barry Keen, Heather Bennett, Eric Audsley, Colin McKenzie and Bryan Harral.

	H'cp	Wins	Rank
Jordan Waters	20	9/10	70
Barry Keen	6	10/11	68
John Hall	6	6/9	58
Colin McKenzie	7	6/10	56
George Collin	1½	5/10	53=
David Marsh	2	5/11	53=
Eric Audsley	1	4/9	48
John Pollard	9	4/8	47
Heather Bennett	14	3/10	46
Geoff Johnson	7	2/7	41
John Bevington	1	3/10	40
Phillippine Geissler	20	2/8	38
Bryan Harral	1	2/10	32

## Advanced tournament

### 11-12 August

Robert Wilkinson won the tournament, as he did last year, with six wins from seven games. Steve Comish was runner-up with five from seven, ahead of five players on four wins. There were 17 entries with handicaps ranging from -1½ to 6, so manager Rod Ashwell imposed three-hour time limits to keep things moving (a fact not noticed by one pair in the opening round until only five minutes remained). Richard Smith got off to a good start by beating Steve Comish +17TP, which stung Steve into winning his next two games with TPs, his opponents scoring three points between them. Richard's next game against George Collin went to time as a result of both players' preoccupation with peeling manoeuvres, George eventually winning +3.

Defending champion Robert Wilkinson began with two wins but was brought up short by Jon Palin who won impressively +23. Robert then beat Richard Smith +26 in a repeat of the unfinished Eastern Championship Plate final and completed TPs either side of beating Steve Comish, his nearest challenger.

All this and continuous warm sunshine, which had us worried when the gas fridge failed to work, but it somehow seemed to cure itself without apparent human intervention. God moves in a mysterious way....

Robert Wilkinson 6/7 2TPs  
 Steve Comish 5/7 2 TPs  
 Richard Smith 4/6 2 TPs  
 George Collin, Jon Palin, Harry Fisher & Nick Steiner 4/6  
 Ian Mantle 3/6  
 David Marsh 3/7  
 Nigel Hames-Keward, Rod Ashwell, George Woolhouse & John Bevington 2/5  
 Philip Windred 2/6  
 Terry Mahoney 2/7  
 Amanda Hames-Keward 1/5  
 John Hall 0/5

## Match results

### Beds & Herts League v St Albans (away)

**4 August** **Lost 1-3**

Bryan Harral (½) and Peter Aspinall (20) beat Terry Mahoney (2) and Heather Bennet (14) +15

Tim Brewer (3½) lost to Thomas Cullie (14) -15

Bryan Harral and Tim Brewer lost to Terry Mahoney and Thomas Cullie -2T

Peter Aspinall lost to Heather Bennet -1T

*Report by Bryan Harral*

A team of three this time because St Albans has only one lawn, so doubles and singles both morning and afternoon. In the morning Bryan and Peter managed a win but Tim lost to Thomas, a rising star at St Albans. The trick shot of the match was Tim getting in front of hoop three from near the peg by going through the hoop backwards! So the score was 1-1 at lunch. After lunch Tim unfortunately lost his form and the doubles went to St Albans. Yet another draw was in prospect. Peter and Heather were all-square when time was called but Heather had position and collected the golden hoop.

## **Beds & Herts League v Northampton (away) 17 August Lost 2-4**

Bryan Harral (½) and Tom Brewer (20) lost to Nick Evans (3) and Jane Evans (20) -1T

Ray Pearcy (14) and Peter Aspinall (20) beat Richard Cain (12) and Owen Bryce (12) +13

Bryan Harral beat Nick Evans +1

Ray Pearcy lost to Richard Cain -5T

Peter Aspinall lost to Owen Bryce -6

Tom Brewer lost to Jane Evans -18T

*Report by Bryan Harral*

This was Tom Brewer's first match and he was unlucky to find himself on the famous sloping lawns of Northampton. Bryan and Tom lost to amazing shooting by Nick Evans who seemed to be able to allow for the effect of the slope in any direction. Luckily Ray Pearcy had been persuaded to come out of semi-retirement and he and Peter won their game convincingly, and so the score was 1-1 at lunch. In the singles, Bryan managed to beat Nick at last, but Ray, Peter and Tom needed a few more bisques to beat their opponents. Why did we lose? It was the slope, of course!

Four draws and two losses mean we won the bananas this year, but I am grateful to everyone who played. Win, lose or draw I have enjoyed the matches and your company.

### **EACF Beds & Herts League player records**

	Doubles			Singles		
	P	W	L	P	W	L
Bryan Harral	7	3	4	5	4	1
Peter Aspinall	5	4	1	5	0	5
David Morris	3	2	1	3	1	2
Cliff Hayes	2	2	0	2	1	1
Tim Brewer	2	1	1	2	0	2
Tom Brewer	1	0	1	1	0	1
David Marsh	1	0	1	1	1	0
Geoff Strutt	1	0	1	1	1	0
John Bevington	1	1	0	1	0	1
Ray Pearcy	1	1	0	1	0	1

## **Inter Club v Nottingham B (away) 22 September Lost 1-6**

Bryan Harral (1) and Rod Ashwell (-½) lost to Paddy Chapman (-2½) and Miranda Chapman (-1½) -26

George Collin (1½) lost to Richard Huxley (0) -5

John Bevington (1) lost to Ailsa Lines (-½) -11

Bryan Harral lost to Paddy Chapman -11TP

Rod Ashwell lost to Miranda Chapman -19

George Collin lost to Ailsa Lines -24

John Bevington beat Richard Huxley +17

It may have been the B team but it was certainly A class, and the result was rather to be expected. The sun shone and the lawns had held up well to rain the day before. In the doubles Bryan hit the tice but then slightly overdid the take-off to the opponents on the East

boundary, and that was that. George came off worst in a tight pegged-out ending against Richard, and even though John eventually managed to get a ball round Ailsa hit in when it mattered, so we were 0-3 down at lunch.

Rather than eat at the club we were treated to an excellent lunch at a nearby pub. Byan and Rod did at least get some play in their singles but were overcome by Paddy's TP and Miranda's accuracy. George was unable to hit in, and it was left to John to prevent the whitewash when he had a straightforward finish from 4-back and peg after Richard failed to get through 4-back off his partner ball. Never mind, it was fun while it lasted.

## **EACF AC Leagues playoff 22 September**

This event is played between the winners of the three Leagues (Beds & Herts, Essex & Suffolk, Northern) to determine which team goes through to represent the Federation in next year's Secretary's Shield. As the Northern league was not contested this year it came down to a match between Enfield (B&H) and Colchester North (E&S). There was some discussion as to the format of the event as an odd number of matches was needed to force a result, and it turned out that both Leagues used different rules for their own competitions. It was eventually agreed to use the format for the Longman Cup but without that competition's restrictions on individual or gross handicaps.

Tim Brewer kindly acted as host for the day, the weather was kind, and Enfield eventually ran out the winners 5-2. There is a full report on the Enfield club's website.

## **Dr John Lake**

*An appreciation by Vic Rees*

Dr Lake, who passed away in early September, provided the inspiration for the croquet club, and it is a sad irony that his death should have occurred at the conclusion of the club's residence within the park. He joined the National Institute of Agricultural Engineering, later to become the Silsoe Research Institute, around 1960, and shortly afterwards presented the Sports and Social Committee with a croquet set, thus igniting the interest in the game which persists to this day. The set arrived in a large pinewood box containing six wire hoops, four boxwood balls, four mallets with boxwood heads and a set of clips, and in 1961 it was bought by the newly-constituted Wrest Park Croquet Club for the sum of £7/10 (a copy of the receipt appeared in the February 2011 newsletter).

The first croquet lawn was marked out on one of the lawns immediately south of the Mansion under the guidance of Major Bromley-Fox, who was listed on the Social noticeboard as Umpire and Coach. He organised croquet lessons in the lunch hour with the aid of a postage stamp sized book of laws which he would consult frequently and make pronouncements on tactics, stroke play and the etiquette of the game. In a matter of weeks some of his pupils had improved so much that he was easily beaten.

During the winter of 1961-2 the wire hoops were replaced with four sets of tournament hoops made by club members at a cost of £4/6/1. In 1963 the club constitution was approved and the NIAE granted

permission for the creation of four lawns on the current site, and the following year Wrest Park won the Longman Cup, beating Parsons Green 3-2 at Hurlingham.

Club members in the early days included Sue Abrahams (later Mrs Matthews), George Carpenter, Joe Clark, Anto Davies, Major Bromley-Fox, Harry Green, Paddy Groak, Tom Marchant, Len Mousley, Vic Rees and Miss

Eira Vanstone. Joe, Anto, Tom and Vic made up the victorious 1964 Longman Cup team.

Dr Lake was at one time Chairman of the Sports and Social Committee. He never played croquet himself, but his initial contribution was the key factor in the establishment of the club.



*The horizontal spread. Robert Wilkinson lines up the rover peel in his game against John Bevington at the August tournament.*

**John Bevington**

**29 September 2012**