



newsletter

WREST PARK WIN THE MARY ROSE

Kentish man clinches victory by beating man of Kent in tense decider

What a difference a year makes. After missing out in last year's final the team bounced back to win the trophy when Medway's David Tester missed a short roquet approaching 4-back, leaving his ball in baulk and conceding a lift. John Bevington, for rover and peg, took advantage of the unforced error to finish and win the match by four games to three.



Ben Ashwell, John Wheeler, John Bevington and George Collin with the Mary Rose tankard. Photo by Howard Bottomley.

Mary Rose Final vs Medway at Cheltenham 5 October Won 4-3

Wrest Park	Medway	WP score
John Wheeler (1½)	David Parkins (1)	+10
Ben Ashwell (1½)	Paul Miles (2)	
George Collin (2)	David Tester (3½)	-3
John Bevington (2½)	Rodney Parkins (4½)	-7
John Wheeler (1½)	David Parkins (1)	+6
Ben Ashwell (1½)	Paul Miles (2)	+2
George Collin (2)	Rodney Parkins (4½)	-7
John Bevington (2½)	David Tester (3½)	+8

John Bevington recalls the final stages:

We were 2-1 down after the morning session, having won the doubles but lost the two singles, which, on paper, we should have won. In my case it came down to two failures at 1-back and slow but steady play by Rodney, who came

through after five hours or so. Time only for a very late reheated lunch before going out again to play David.



With the morning dew still thick on the ground, the new pairing of youth and experience have their first on-court discussion. Photo by Rod Ashwell.

An early break to 3-back steadied the nerves, but the game then got rather bogged down. The other games were still in the balance, and there was a heart-stopping moment when Ben had a go at a penultimate peel which went awry, but he recovered the situation and went on to win after Paul pegged a ball out for no apparent reason. This was followed by John Wheeler's win against David Parkins, but Rodney finally put paid to George to leave us at 3-3. I then managed to get the other ball round to peg, and with partner now for rover laid up in corner 4 with David's blue, for 4-back, near rover (George, quite correctly, said I should have left it by the peg). David took the lift with black, grazed blue, and picked up a good break. Where would it end?



Doubles all round: David Parkins and Paul Miles shake hands after losing to John and Ben. Photo by Rod Ashwell.

We were all resigned to his going round to the peg, possibly pegging me out. I never saw what happened

before 4-back but vaguely remember someone saying "He's missed it". I walked onto the lawn and David and I passed each other without a word, but his expression said it all. Red, for peg, was between peg and penultimate, blue was south-west of penultimate, black was on B-baulk and I had a lift. In other words, if you mess it up from here....

Shortly afterwards I was aware of a lot of noise coming from the pavilion. I looked up briefly, and the first to emerge was David. We shook hands. If anyone knew how he felt, I did. What a relief!

So the club gets its name on the trophy for the third time. We have been winners or runners-up five times in the past eight years, which isn't a bad record.

	Winner	Runner-up
1989	Bristol	Wrest Park
1995	Wrest Park	Nottingham
1998	Nottingham	Wrest Park
1999	Wrest Park	Sussex County
2001	Bowdon	Wrest Park
2002	Wrest Park	Medway

The Kentish man? I was born on the west side of the river Medway, a few miles from our opposition's club.



Dinner at the North Hall Hotel. L-R: Howard, Enid, John W, John B, Judy, Tom, Ben, Rod, George. Photo by Rod Ashwell.

Advanced Tournament

17-18 August

Twenty players with handicaps ranging from -1 to 7 assembled for some fun in the sun, which beat down on both days resulting in tricky conditions on fast lawns. Management by Jon Watson, catering by Howard and Enid Bottomley with assistance from Frankie and Jack. Jon and Howard provided the showpiece on Sunday morning, when, playing Paul Miles and John Wheeler respectively, they both completed triples on lawn 2, the only ones of the weekend. The manager won the tournament, being undefeated after four wins which included the scalps of runners-up Nick Evans (5/6) and Paul Miles (5/7). Next up were Paul Salisbury and John Bevington, both with four wins out of six. Paul Miles took the Lamb points prize with a net gain of 40.

Match results

B&H League vs Watford 1 September

**Away
Won 4-2**

Wrest Park	Letchworth	WP score
John Bevington (2½)	Robert Bateson (9)	+9
Ben Marchant (18)	David Drazin (10)	
David Woolley (7)	Arthur Reed (4)	-2T
Peter Newman (12)	Adam Huby (11)	
John Bevington (2½)	Arthur Reed (4)	+6
David Woolley (7)	Robert Bateson (9)	-2T
Peter Newman (12)	David Drazin (10)	+2T
Ben Marchant (18)	Adam Huby (11)	+8T

A glorious day and a fine win to finish our campaign in the league. Ben's play in the doubles grew in confidence as the game progressed and he finished things off in style. Robert had pegged John out and left himself and David close by hoop 6. Ben, for peg, then hit in from corner 1. After lunch Ben and Peter won again, and John, after being hampered following an Irish peel at penult, finally won when Arthur failed a speculative 4-back.

Wrest Park finished as league runners-up by virtue of having beaten Letchworth, who also had seven points, and this improvement over last season's dismal showing is largely due to the performances of Bryan Harral and Peter Newman, who turned out regularly and were both unbeaten in their singles matches. Thanks to everyone who turned out for the team and provided teas for home games. Any eagle-eyed reader who has correctly spotted that there has been neither result nor report for our match against St Albans is referred to the result of the Longman Cup match in the last issue - this also doubled as our league fixture, so we lost two for the price of one.

	Doubles			Singles		
	P	W	L	P	W	L
Bryan Harral	3	1	2	5	5	0
Peter Newman	4	1	3	4	4	0
George Collin	2	0	2	4	1	3
John Martin	3	0	3	3	1	2
John Bevington	1	1	0	4	2	2
Ben Marchant	2	1	1	3	1	2
David Woolley	2	0	2	1	0	1
Eric Audsley	1	0	1	1	1	0
John Wheeler	1	0	1	1	1	0
Ben Ashwell	1	0	1			

The final league table was as follows:

	P	W	D	L	Pts
St Albans	6	4	2	0	10
Wrest Park	6	3	1	2	7
Letchworth	6	3	1	2	7
Enfield	6	2	2	2	6
Meldreth	6	2	1	3	5
Colworth	6	1	2	3	4
Watford	6	1	1	4	3

Mary Rose vs Nottingham 7 September

Away
Won 5-2

Wrest Park	Nottingham	WP score
George Collin (1½)	Beatrice McGlen (1)	-5
John Wheeler (1½)	John Filsak (2½)	
Ben Ashwell (2)	David Brydon (3½)	+6
John Bevington (2½)	Dean Bennison (3)	+5
George Collin (1½)	John Filsak (2½)	+16
John Wheeler (1½)	Beatrice McGlen (1)	-4
Ben Ashwell (2)	Dean Bennison (3)	+10
John Bevington (2½)	David Brydon (3½)	+3

The team booked their ticket to the final at Cheltenham for the second year in a row with this win, played in a mixture of sunshine and showers. John and Dean had to settle for the remains of lunch after a long struggle (including John's playing a wrong ball which went unnoticed by himself and his opponent). After lunch the top two singles split, so the match was still in the balance until Ben clinched it with his second win. John B was pegged out in his singles but hit the last lift and took off to David's other ball waiting near rover to finish.

All England Area Final 31 August-1 September

The winners were Mark Homan (Watford), David Kitson (St Albans) and Derek? David? Buxton (Ashby and District) who go forward to the national final at Nailsea on 14-15 September.

CA Selectors Weekend 6-8 September

This was the first time the club has hosted a CA selection event. With no rain of any consequence having fallen for weeks the lawns were as fast as they have ever been, and the fine weather held through the weekend, with just an occasional light shower on Saturday. Testing conditions for the sixteen players, among whom was our own Howard Bottomley. The manager was Kevin Carter, the format being a flexible Swiss with the four having the highest win percentage on the Saturday night going into a knockout on the final day

Friday started with Martin Granger-Brown and Richard Smith playing out a four-hour epic. Howard was progressing well until losing to Nelson Morrow in the last game of the day. On Saturday Howard continued his run, and the top four at the end of the day were Howard, Martin, Andy Cowing and Duncan Hector (a late replacement for Pauline Healy).

The knockout stage on Sunday saw Martin win easily against Duncan and Howard victorious over Andy. The final was played after lunch as a single game, as Kevin felt that there was unlikely to be enough time for a best of three. It turned out to be something of an anti-climax, as Martin went to 4-back after Howard failed a jump shot going for hoop 2. Howard missed the lift, Martin went to peg with one peel, and, after another miss, made the remaining hoops and set up a rush to the peg. Howard had a tight last shot which bounced off a hoop, and that was it. Vic Rees, Jon Watson and others who turned up to watch found that they had missed all the action. It was a shame we couldn't have managed a home win,

but Martin was a deserved and popular winner and made a fine sight as he cycled away laden down with bag, mallet, and the Ranelagh-Weightman Cup.



John Wheeler presents Martin Granger-Brown with the cup. The shadowy figure in the background is George Collin.

Handicap tournament 13-15 September

This year's tournament was brought forward a week to try and attract more custom (to little effect - a few weeks before there were only 12 entries, half being our own members, and this in spite of an advert on the CA website). We then had an enquiry from Chris Daniels who said he would enter if his girlfriend could play as well: "Her handicap is 24. Would that be all right?" We decided that, yes, it would be all right.

So there we were - Friday the 13th, 13 players, Egyptian format details copied off the Oxford website, the requisite cards - and no manager. The first round draw was easy enough; the six home players were paired with visitors and Ian Mantle, who arrived late, became the first bye.

Appropriately, given the date, the bloodletting began early as John Bevington plucked out the first of 22 bisques and saw Julie Hudson overcome some early nerves (it was her first ever tournament) to win +12. George Collin, at 1½ the lowest handicap, lost to George Woolhouse by the maximum margin in his first game and scored a single point in the next. Both Julie and Chris were unbeaten at the end of the first day, which turned out sunny and warm.

Saturday was cloudy, cooler and windy. In the last game to finish before lunch Peter Newman grabbed the vital point by hitting in and making rover in a sudden death finish when both he and John Bevington were for peg and rover. The highlight of the day was Tom Anderson's win by +18 on time against Ben Ashwell, who, goaded by this unusual result, then went out and finished off Ian Mantle with a straight double peel. Julie lost her first game of the tournament to Chris, as did Chris to Peter Newman. Ben Marchant, having had the morning off to play hockey, returned to notch up two more wins to add to two from the previous day. At the bottom of the ladder George Collin, John Bevington and Robert Staddon had one win each.

The first round on Sunday put the issue beyond doubt when Julie beat Peter Newman, but Ben Marchant and

Tom Anderson kept the pressure on, Tom squeezing past Colin McKenzie by one on time. Ben Ashwell decided that the report would need more material and performed a passable impersonation of Lazarus in his game against John Bevington. Against rover and penult, with the opponent balls in corners 1 and 2, he was for 4-back and 4 playing the last turn, needing to get to peg and peel 4-back to win. He made 4 and two-balled up the middle, surviving a moment at 5 when his ball just scraped through, picked up the 2nd corner ball and boosted through 1-back from an angle and distance he probably would not care to repeat. He then picked up the 1st corner ball, made 2-back off another stop shot approach, got round to peg and attempted the peel, which failed. John shot at partner and missed, and Ben set up a rush to 4-back for the partner ball. John missed the shot, and Ben finished +1T. He repeated the scoreline against Colin in his next game.

	H'cp	P	W	Rating
Julie Hudson	24	8	7	225
Tom Anderson	3	8	6	219
Ben Ashwell	2	8	5	211
Ben Marchant	18	7	5	210
George Woolhouse	6	8	5	207
Chris Daniels	10	8	5	205
Peter Newman	12	7	4	205
Colin McKenzie	8	8	4	200
Ken Pickett	6	8	3	193
Ian Mantle	3½	8	3	188
George Collin	1½	8	2	184
John Bevington	2	8	1	177
Robert Staddon	9	8	1	176

Craft Fair 24-26 August

Reasonable crowds and fine weather meant that we did good business over the weekend, but there were wide variations between the days. Takings were: Saturday £23, Sunday £79 and Monday £37, making £139 in total. Many thanks to all who helped.

Club Competitions

Steel Cup (Advanced) **Winner: Eric Audsley**
Runner-up: Howard Bottomley

Archer Cup (Handicap) **Winner: David Woolley**
Runner-up: Ben Ashwell

Ashwell Cup (All England h'cap) **Winner: Ben Ashwell**
Runner-up: George Collin

B level Cup **Winner: Ben Ashwell**
Runner-up: Bryan Harral

14 point advanced **Winner: Howard Bottomley**
Runners-up: Eric Audsley and John Bevington

De Grey Plate (14 pt h'cap) **Winner: Ben Marchant**
Runner-up: Elaine Newman

Golf Croquet **Winner: Eric Audsley**
Runner-up: Una Pengelly

The Steel Cup was decided in the dark on Thursday 19 September. After Eric had pegged Howard out the innings changed hands several times. Only a faint rustle as the ball passed over the turf gave any indication as to

its whereabouts, and neutral observers had to come on to indicate the target. Eventually Howard missed for the last time and Eric pegged out to win +3. David Woolley won the Archer Cup on 3 October, some good long roquets allowing him to husband his bisques to good effect, and at the same time Howard made sure of the 14 point trophy by winning both semi-finals.

The High Bisque league

Report by organiser Peter Newman

This year we tried to get more people with handicaps of 18 and over playing competitively on a regular basis. Until now we have had the de Grey Plate competition, which is a two-life knockout. If you lost your first round games that was it for the season.

Various ideas were proposed, and in the end we decided to try to get a block played across the season – i.e. all-play-all – and, in case this was difficult for some to complete, a friendly league where anyone in the group could play anyone else as often as they liked, with a point for playing and a further two if you won. In the case of a tie, points margin would be used to decide ranking. All games would be played to the same format as the Plate, 14 point handicap to base 12, and results would count towards handicap cards, with plus or minus 5 index points.

The block, with 9 players in the group, would constitute 36 games if completed. In fact only 13 (36%) were recorded, and so it is not very meaningful to talk about overall rankings.

Elaine completed all her 8 games, and won 7, so she clearly scores well above the rest. Next came Gordon, with 2 wins from 5, and no others played more than three games or won more than one.

	P	W
Elaine Newman	8	7
Gordon Sampson	5	2
Michael Holford	3	1
John Martin	2	1
Martin Foss	2	1
Ben Marchant	2	1
Peter Cox	2	0
Mary Russell	1	0
Bob Barker	1	0

All these games also counted for the league, but if any pair played more than once only the first counted for the block. In all 22 games were recorded, with the following results:

	P	W	Pts	Margin	%win
Elaine Newman	12	9	30	+62	75
Gordon Sampson	11	5	21	-11	45
John Martin	7	5	17	+14	71
Michael Holford	4	1	6	-14	25
Martin Foss	3	1	5	-8	33
Ben Marchant	2	1	4	+3	50
Peter Cox	2	0	2	-13	0
Mary Russell	2	0	2	-23	0
Bob Barker	1	0	1	-10	0

Again Elaine came out on top, but closely followed by Gordon and John. Although John had a higher win percentage than Gordon, the latter was ahead in the league because of the number of games played – intended to reward the most active players.

While this has achieved the result of more competitive play, there is still room for other suggestions. One is for a course of coaching for the high bisque players, which could also involve some of the golf croquet players who would like to know more about the Association game. Other ideas could include a regular session for high bisquers, perhaps one afternoon and evening or at the weekend, with the opportunity to come and play whoever is there without the necessity to arrange it in advance. This would help build confidence and experience. If one or two stronger players were also around, it could also give them experience of playing stronger players to improve their game, and allow some advice and guidance if desired.

On the format of competitions, there are some interesting ideas on scoring for this type of game in the September Gazette (“Wild Wednesday”, p12), where winners score the hoop difference plus say 20 points, while losers score the number of hoops made. For example, a 14-2 result would give the winner 20+14-2 or 32 points, and the loser 2, but 14-13 would give 21-13. This again gives points to both winners and losers, and reflects the closeness of the result better than a straight win/lose point system.

Any comments on these ideas, the competitions run this year, or any other suggestions that are not anatomically dangerous would be welcomed.

Council Medal awarded to Judy Anderson

The Council of The Croquet Association has awarded its Council Medal to Judy Anderson, who is retiring from Council in October. Judy is only the fourth person to receive this Medal, which demonstrates the scale of her outstanding services to the game.

CA Vice President, Lionel Wharrad, said “I do not know of a more deserving recipient. Her contribution to the game over the past 20 years has been immense”. And Quiller Barrett, Chairman of Council, added “Judy is one of those people who have their feet firmly on the ground and knows just how to give really practical help to clubs and croquet players. I am sure there are hundreds of club members who will want to congratulate Judy and thank her for everything she has done to develop croquet so successfully, particularly in East Anglia”.

And so say all of us. The medal was presented by Alan Oldham at Newport Croquet Club on October 28 during the play-off for the winners of the EACF Leagues.



The CA Council medal (rather more than life-size).

2002 Annual Dinner

The annual dinner will be at the Leaside Hotel, Villa Road, Luton on Friday November 22nd, 7.30 for 8pm. To get to the hotel, drive down Villa Road (see map) and continue down the private road which leads to the hotel car park. Please ring Rod Ashwell (01 582 504536) if you wish to attend the dinner, and let him know your preferences for starter and main course from the attached menu. Don't leave it too late, as places are limited.

And while we are on the subject of food and drink.....

Tournament catering in 2003 - human resources manager vacancy offered

Owing to Judy Anderson's indisposition the arrangements for catering at tournaments this year have been done on an ad-hoc basis. Catering involves buying the food and other supplies and organising teams of two to turn up each day to prepare, serve and wash up for lunch and prepare sandwiches and lay out biscuits and cake for tea. The profits from catering are an important contribution to club funds

Howard Bottomley has offered to continue to buy the food, and **we are looking for someone to take on the job of organising the helpers**. This involves keeping a list of potential volunteers and ringing round to ensure that we are covered for each day. There will be 13 days for which we need helpers in 2003. Please call Howard if you would like the job.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who helped keep us and our visitors fed and watered during the season, namely Eric's parents, Howard's family, Sheila Beal, Mary Russell, Dorothy Craggs, Joan Miller, Eileen Palmer, Veronica Richardson, Pamela Cleathero, Margaret Brown, Gillian Bennett, Elaine and Peter Newman, Irene Davis, Linda Potton, Diana Phelps and Valerie Jefferson. We must apologise for having occasionally neglected the normal rewards this year.

2002 Christmas Cracker

This seasonal fun tournament is scheduled for Sunday 15th December. Four one-hour games starting at 9.30 sharp, with a break for mince pies and liquid refreshment, followed by a meal in the pavilion at about 2pm. Open to **all** members, the format will cater for players at all levels, so if you are interested in playing, cooking, drinking or all three, please contact the manager, Rod Ashwell (01582 504536).

New CA office address and phone

The CA have moved in to their new office at Cheltenham. The address is c/o Cheltenham Croquet Club, Old Bath Road, Cheltenham GL53 7DF, and the new telephone number is 01242 242318. The email address is unchanged (caoffice@croquet.org.uk).

Chastleton House

This fine old house, located off the A436 just east of Stow-on-the-Wold, was in continuous ownership by the Jones family for over four hundred years and is now in the care of the National Trust. I finally managed to visit it the day before the Mary Rose final. This took a little doing - you have to book your ticket in advance, and getting to the house involves walking across a field.

Apart from the obvious recommendations of old furniture, plasterwork ceilings and tapestries galore the house also has a place in the history of croquet. Walter Whitmore Jones (1831-1872), an eccentric member of the family who later changed his name to Jones Whitmore, was the first person to formalise the rules of croquet and won the first championship at Evesham in 1867. The National Trust have put up a plaque to mark his contribution to the game.



The commemorative plaque next to the steps leading to the lawn.

If you are visiting and ask the staff nicely they are quite happy for you to borrow a mallet and balls, and you can play on the same lawn where modern croquet began a hundred and forty-odd years ago.

A message from the groundsman

The lawns have already had a light scarification and an application of moss killer (ferrous sulphate in solution) to

all the lawns. There is still work to do: more vigorous scarification, vertidrainage and top dressing some of the lawns with a quantity of sand.

The timing of these operations depends on the state of the lawns and the prevailing weather. Although we are more mechanised than we used to be these activities still require considerable amounts of labour, so please lend a hand if you possibly can. We will be in touch!

John Bevington

25 October 2002

P.S.

There is a presentation ceremony for the trophies for all the club competitions at the annual dinner. If you are the current holder of a trophy for one of the club competitions (including the Pro-Am) and are **not** coming to the Annual Dinner, can you please make arrangements to give the trophy to someone who is.