

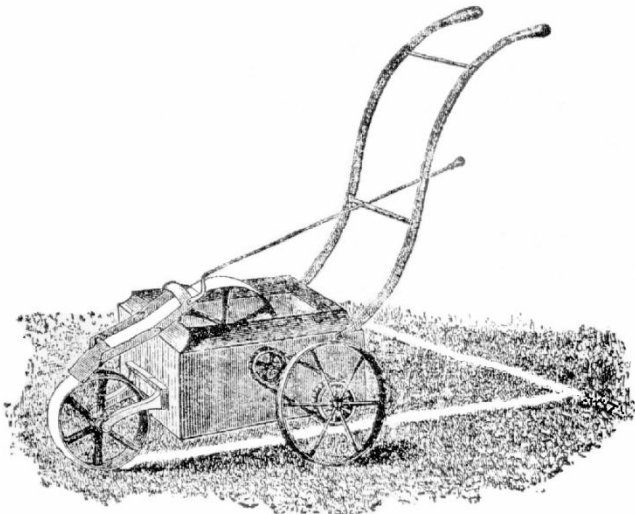
newsletter

This bumper Christmas issue has been written by the club's diarist, Outlayer, who has been given a free hand by the Editor. Outlayer does not wish to reveal his true identity but agreed to having his picture included on the condition that he was allowed to appear in disguise.



Cheltenham spurns straight path

Inspection of the lawns on a recent visit to Cheltenham revealed that their infamous line marker is still in use. It is an original "Baskerville" model, manufactured by Major West (Gamesman Accessories Ltd.) and dates from 1947. Stephen Potter, in his original review, commented: "This reliable machine imparts the standard 3" wave to lines on the most level lawns."



The Baskerville Lawn Tennis-Marker for imparting asymmetry to home courts.

We can expect to see Baskerville put out to grass again next year, as the decision of the Cheltenham club to switch from Jaques to Barlow balls is unlikely to leave sufficient funds for its immediate replacement.

Health hazards in the sandpit

Hilaire Belloc's moral to the Cautionary Tale of Franklin Hyde (Who caroused in the Dirt and was corrected by his Uncle) states that:

*"Children in ordinary Dress
May always play with Sand".*

Not, however, until they have read and understood the four page safety and data sheet provided by Hepworth Minerals and Chemicals Ltd. Anyone involved with the top dressing of the lawns should have taken note of the

recommended personal protection which includes a dust respirator, PVC gloves, chemical goggles or a face shield, and an overall or apron. Ingestion may lead to 'gastrointestinal irritation'. You will be glad to discover that the material is odourless, insoluble in water and not combustible. Should there be an 'accidental release' in the form of a spillage, you are advised to 'sweep or preferably vacuum up and collect in suitable containers for recovery or disposal'.

Croquet's raison d'être exposed

During the World Cup, Kronenbourg 1664 (a French lager) ran a series of advertisements in the press featuring intellectual conversations between a French cafe owner and Claude, one of his customers. The last one, which appeared on Monday July 13, appears below:

"Morning Claude. A glorious victory, was it not"

"Indeed. And yet were we watching the real winners?"

"Faire quoi?"

"Many would say that it was precisely those who took the early plane home who contributed most to the entertainment."

"Ah, the naive Nigerians, Craig Brown's Barmy Army, the slippery customers from Morocco, the comical little Americans."

"Yes, they played their part. But only one nation actually turned defeat into victory."

"Don't tell me . . ."

"It was England. Compare their homecoming to that of other defeated teams. The Colombians were obliged to step off the plane in bullet-proof vests. The English lads were hailed as heroes."

"Odd, that."

"On the contrary. Once again, the English were able to lose themselves in the exquisite pleasure of shared grief. How appropriate that the country which Sartre so derided should have perfectly illustrated his theory of sado-masochism."

"You mean, Greek Street, Madam Whiplash, third floor . . .?"

"Well, yes. Of course we've always known that there's nothing that the English like more than being pegged out on a croquet lawn by a dirty foreign girl in a riot skirt and bondage boots but . . ."

"What, all of them?"

"No, what I'm saying is . . ."

"Big Ron? Kevin Keegan? Sir Butch Wilkins? Sol Campbell? All pegged out on a croq . . .?"

"No, patron."

"Jimmy Hill in his St. George bow tie? The jobs in their bowler hats? Back to Bolton to be . . .?"

"No, listen."

"The Two Fat Ladies? The Girls with Attitude? Denise van Outen? Sara Cox, Jo "Be My" Guest?"

Straight out of the TFI Friday studio, down to the nearest croquet lawn, slip out of their . . . ?”

“No, patron! Not individuals. I’m talking about the English psyche - a national state of mind which luxuriates in the pain of submission, the climactic ecstasy of humiliation.”

“Tina Brown? Bill Oddie? Brian Blessed?”

“That’s it. I’ve had enough. Adieu, patron.”

Well, we managed to keep it quiet for over a hundred years, but now it seems the truth is out at last. Claude’s customer obviously needs to be reminded of the subtle distinctions between being pegged out and being pegged down, and if he was more experienced he would know that the true *“climactic ecstasy of humiliation”* only comes when you hit your balls against a wooden peg with a heavy mallet. Being pegged out is a more vicarious example of the pain/pleasure principle and pegging down merely an indication that your chosen depravity is so time-consuming as to constitute excessive self-indulgence.

One’s immediate reaction is to check whether the requirements of these continental variations are covered by the Laws, and it is heartening to see that the administrators have been both far-sighted and broad-minded. ÇA va bien! The Outline of the Game reminds us that *“continuation strokes may not be accumulated”* and mentions the arrangements for double-banking (a misprint here). Laws 5 and 9 cover the toss (black and blue is the obvious choice) and balls in hand. In Law 23 we note that *“examples of critical positions include positions in or near hoops, wired positions (an old favourite), and some positions on or near the yard line”*.

There are clear instructions on the placement of clips, giving contact (surely due for a revival), when one is entitled to a lift (Viagra, anyone?) and the all-important need to quit one’s stance under control. What can and cannot be condoned is explained in detail, but if you are concerned about the consequences of special damage you are advised to read the Guide to Limits of Claims before you begin. In cases of doubt one can always refer to the Commentary on the Laws for more detailed guidance. For example, *“The sub-law is not meant to apply to hammer or jump strokes played in an orthodox fashion which merely bruise the surface”*.

The customs of the game are not forgotten. There are notes on Expedition in Play and Advice and Aids. The Appendices deal with alternate stroke play and mandatory peeling. Intending participants should take careful note of the paragraphs on Doping in the Regulations for Tournaments, and also remember that the Manager has the right to disqualify anyone who refuses to play in flat-soled footwear, so select your bondage boots with care. These and the riot skirts should of course be white - a catalogue of specialised equipment is being considered. The section on Management of Tournaments shows you how to cater for the predilections of American and Swiss visitors (Egyptians have more exotic requirements and these are available on request).

One or two obvious amendments to the Laws need to be considered, such as rulings on the new French leaves. And there would appear to be some typographic errors in the current version of the Laws. *“Forestalling play”* should obviously read *“Stalling foreplay”*, and for

“bisque” read *“basque”* throughout, but these are bound to be corrected in the next revision. So if you want to be fully prepared for next season, practise over the winter and look out for the special attractions in the Fixtures Book. And if you are new to this sort of thing and wish to preserve your anonymity to avoid embarrassment, remember that you can always enter under an assumed name provided you have registered it and paid the appropriate fee.

Dignified departure for Dennis

New members who have had cause to step behind the small hut may have wondered what lay hidden under the rather unsavoury black tarpaulin. It sheltered one of the club’s original mowers, a 36” Dennis, serial number 11794, which left the factory on 7 April 1936 and was acquired by the club sometime in the early sixties for about £50. It was in regular use until a few years ago and covered innumerable miles in our service.



Among the machine’s features were a six-bladed cylinder and a unique stand-on plate which fitted over the rear roller and was fabricated at the Institute. The Dennis could prove a temperamental starter, but it covered the lawns in quick time and gave a good finish. Over the years, however, the efforts required to maintain it (both in expense and the many hours put in by John Wheeler and Vic Rees) became too much to bear, and it was retired from active service.

But what to do with it? Not wishing to let it simply rot away, we contacted the Hall and Duck Trust, which is an organisation devoted to the preservation of old lawnmowers. Andrew Grout, one of their representatives, arranged to come and have a look at it, which prompted John and Vic to go down the day before and see if it could be persuaded to start. They eventually succeeded, the engine bursting into life accompanied by shouts of triumph and clouds of black smoke. I gather that most of the language employed prior to this moment was of a rather coarser nature.

After some negotiation a figure of £100 was agreed, and on the morning of 28 November, the Dennis, together with various spare parts, was winched onto a trailer and driven away, taking with it our best wishes for a happy retirement.

John's joint venture a success

Those of you who missed John Wheeler at the Annual Dinner may know that he has recently had a hip operation. We have an exclusive copy of the X-ray, which shows how the health service has been able to harness traditional engineering skills in the provision of cost-effective patient care. The new joint requires only minimal user maintenance - any slack that develops is easily taken up using the flexible spanner provided. Doctor Bernard, the surgeon, is well pleased.



Spare Jaques, voulez vous?

Cheltenham, having switched to Barlow GT, are offering their old Jaques balls for sale. They are available as first or second colour sets or singly, and are of good condition, having only been used for tournaments. The cost is about £40 per set - no mention of postage and packing. If you are interested please contact Judy Anderson (01234 781783).

Newsflash..Newsflash..Newsflash

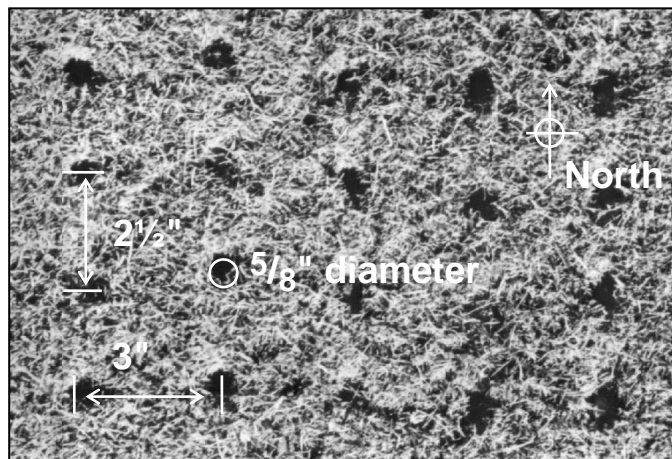
Weekday play restrictions lifted

Have you ever felt frustrated by only being able to play "in the evenings and at weekends"? The Secretary has always had to mention this restriction when sending introductory letters to persons making enquiries, and it must have put off retired people who would like to be able to play during the day.

We can now advertise play as being possible during the day on Mondays to Fridays. Our thanks for this are due to Eric Audsley, who has been talking to the Institute Secretary. There are still a few details to be sorted out (for example, the club's insurance policy), but in practical terms all anyone wanting to play during the day will have to do is sign in and out at reception at the Institute. This is a great step forward and should help us to recruit new members from groups such as the University of the Third Age.

Core business under review

My colleague Wrangler has devised a Christmas quiz to keep you all busy over the holiday. The lawns were hollow tined on Wednesday 29 October. Hollow tining removes cylindrical cores of soil (the holes are then filled with some kind of top dressing) and leaves the lawn surface looking like this:



Question 1: If the hollow-tined area includes all six lawns (each measuring 35x28 yards), together with a four foot border all around and a six foot gap between lawns, what is the total number of holes?

Question 2: If each hole is 2 1/2 inches deep, and the density of the material is assumed to be 2000kg/m³, what is the total volume and weight of the material removed? Give your answers in imperial units.

Croquet on the carpet

The East Anglian Croquet Federation have organised another indoor carpet season to be held at the Soham sports centre. There are three handicap speed doubles tournaments on Jan 16/17, Feb 13/14 and Mar6/7. This should have been publicised earlier - please accept our apologies for the late announcement. There is still time for a pair to enter for any or all of these events, and it is also possible for an individual to apply as a reserve to make up the numbers should anyone have to drop out.



The indoor carpet at Soham.

Each tournament is organised as two blocks, and each team can expect to play three games on each of the two days. Cost is £25 per team per tournament. As each game only lasts for an hour there is a fair amount of sitting out - you will have to do your share of the timekeeping, but it pays to take a good book.

The sports centre has a bar and you can order hot lunches. If you would like to enter please ring Claire Heritage (01284 764650) **as soon as possible**. Carpet play is great fun and is highly recommended.

Soham is north-east of Cambridge on the A412. Avoid the bypass and head into the town. Turn left at the war memorial just past the garage, take the second left just past the library (there is a Sports Centre sign) and follow the road.

Wassail, wassail all over the pub

For those who fancy a sing-song when the port starts going round at the Christmas Cracker lunch, Outplayer offers a modified last verse to a well-known carol:

*On the twelfth day of Christmas
my partner gave to me,*

Twelve double bankers, **(e)'leven** corner cannons

Ten breaks a-building, **nine** roquets missing

Eight bisques a-falling, **seven** refs a-judging,

Six hoops a-crushing,

Five triple peels.

Four hampered shots, **three** fine cuts,

Two perfect leaves,

And a peg-out for victory.

Variations can be introduced according to the sensibilities of the partner in question. And speaking of crackers, here are a few mottoes that slipped out:

Q. What film is croquet players' first choice this year?

A. Primary Colors

Q. Which nursery rhyme character was known for his safety play?

A. Little Jack Horner

Q. How do croquet players make the most of their savings?

A. Double banking

Q. What stroke do young girls' parents use when doing last-minute Christmas shopping?

A. The dolly rush

Benedicto benedicatur

The Annual Dinner at the Leaside Hotel was as good as ever, and thanks are due to Rod Ashwell for his organisation and to John Wheeler for an extremely generous contribution to the drinks bill. The trophies for the club's annual competitions were presented, including a new plate for the runner-up in the Steele Bowl, which was both donated and won by Howard Bottomley. Our freelance photographer, Papa Razzo, snapped this exclusive picture.



Eric Audsley and Gill Brewer exchange meaningful glances across the table, while husband Tim looks on with interest.

And finally . . .

Outplayer would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

