



**CROQUET NORTH---([www.croquetnorth.org.uk](http://www.croquetnorth.org.uk))**

### **Secretary's Report for 2022**

2022 saw the return of croquet play to something like pre-covid levels. Membership of all eight clubs is now about 280 with some players being members of more than one club. *(This compares with about 230 for seven clubs recorded in 2020)*. There is a strong preference for golf croquet and few take up association croquet.

The GC League consisted of teams entirely from CN clubs and did not this year include Ripon to form a Northern League. The 6 teams in Div 1 played level games and the 6 teams in Div 2 (for players with a handicap of 6 or higher) played for the first time under the advantage handicap system. Durham just managed to better Bamburgh to win Div 1 and one of Alnmouth's two Div 2 teams won the other to win Div 2. *(Durham will therefore be invited to represent CN in the CA GC Federation Shield next year)*

Clubs have expressed concerns with the use of the GC advantage handicap system but game results were close and issues about 'fairness' seemed to be driven more from the disparity in player handicaps. The system is to be further considered for next season.

AC competitions—— East Pennine League matches were between Tyneside, Middlesbrough and York on a home and away basis. The results this year were so close that the rules to determine the winner had to be refined. Middlesbrough were declared the winner and will represent CN in the Secretary's Shield next year.

The CN AC League was played between York, Middlesbrough and 2 teams from Tyneside. York was the only club to win all their matches.

AC Championships— Andrew Killick won the Advanced Singles. Phil Errington won the Handicap Singles. Phil Errington and Derek Johnson won the Handicap Doubles.

The Pennine Cup was played for the first time since 2017. The match was played at Pendle and won by the North West.

***and from club reports—***

**Alnmouth -**

A very successful open charity event at the beginning of the year raised £1,200 for the Alzheimers Society and contributed to increasing the membership by 25% to 53.

Between 25-30 members played at the club twice per week during the season. A fourth, slightly smaller and rougher play area has now been provided to accommodate additional players..

One team entered the CN GC Div 1 League and two teams entered the Div 2 League. Some 19 players took part. In future the club would prefer to play without a handicapping system; more detailed comments have been sent to the GC League Manager. The club won the Alice Fleck Trophy at the CN GC Team Event at Bamburgh for a second year.

**Auckland.—**

Member numbers (12 max) remain low despite efforts to increase interest, but the few playing members continue to enjoy their croquet at Chilton despite restrictions and difficulties. Currently only one lawn is suitable for croquet.

Club members participated in most CN events with Jane Pringle and Marcia Henderson participating in many CA events further afield. Jane was runner up in the Greek Open in Corfu.

**Backworth—** Have 31 primary members with a further 6 members from other clubs and 5 social members. The year has concentrated on club competitions and friendly play at other clubs, namely Belsay and Ripon. A team was entered for the first time into the GC Team event at Bamburgh. Three members participated in the CN Turner Goblet. (Tony McCann won)

**Bamburgh** -Club membership numbers have dropped a little to 43.

A third lawn introduced last year is now a permanent feature. Grass cutting with the addition of rolling is used in the maintenance of the lawns and myxomatosis keeps the rabbits at bay. The annual GC team event was again successful, after some late adjustments to accommodate cancellations and additions.

Comments about the advantage handicap system have been sent to the GC League Manager but in general the club are not in favour of any handicap system. There remains interest in AC play but making progress has proved difficult.

**Belsay Hall**—Membership is currently 50, a little down on last year but still healthy.

The Head Gardener at Belsay left in July and we are both hoping and expecting that his replacement in September will continue lawn maintenance to recently improved expectations.

Most play is now GC based with both club play and competitions well supported. Friendly and competitive AC play is now limited to Wednesday afternoons. All external club competitions are GC mainly via the CN League but also via the CA Murphy Shield, the CA GC inter-club and the GC Team event at Bamburgh. The CN GC Progressive Doubles at Belsay remains popular.

**Croquet Durham**—Efforts were made to increase membership numbers, but with limited success. Currently membership stands at 21.

The club represented CN in the GC Federation Shield losing to Enfield at Ashby and played Belsay in the first round of the Murphy Shield.

Peter Tymms managed the CN GC Turner Goblet Singles at Durham for a second year. Tony McCann won with Nigel Martin the runner-up. Tony had a busy and successful season away from his home clubs (Backworth and Durham), winning the A level tournament at Bury and taking part in a qualifying tournament for the world championships.

The club is not keen on the new GC Advantage handicap system when used for time limited games.

**Middlesbrough**—Membership is currently 28.

At the beginning of the season the provision of a secure area for toilets and a supply of hot water was a welcome addition to facilities, but there is serious concern about the condition of the lawns now that the council has reduced maintenance. Duncan Hector (the CA's lawn expert) has visited and has recommended lawn treatments, but storage of chemicals is a problem.

**Tyneside**—Membership is 42 and attendance at club sessions is encouraging—high for GC and satisfactory for AC. All regular competitions ran including the hosting of the CA AC Mid-week handicap and CA Advanced. The club again entered the Mary Rose and the Longman Cup.

Maintenance of lawns and the costs involved are major issues. Lawns are now cut twice weekly in high season and some club members have worked hard to apply treatments and to prevent dry out in hot weather. The lawns are now good but the costs of employing a contractor for the more significant work are high and has presented the club with a heavy financial burden.

*David Millener— 5th Jan 2023*