

Croquet Victoria

Annual Report 2013/2014

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The Victorian Croquet Association – Croquet Victoria

Croquet Victoria: Supporting members to play and enjoy the sport of croquet.

The Victorian Croquet Association, trading as Croquet Victoria, is a not-for profit, volunteer State Sporting Association formed and incorporated in 1914. The Association purchased a property in North Brighton in 1948 as its headquarters and playing venue.

In 2002 the Association sold North Brighton headquarters to provide funds for a new headquarters at Cairnlea in Melbourne's Western Suburbs, to provide financial security for the future, and to fund a full time Administration Officer.

Croquet Victoria is a service provider for 2690 members belonging to 90 clubs in 13 Regional Associations throughout Victoria. The members are the shareholders.

State Council, consisting of 13 Regional Directors and 8 Committee of Management Directors administers the Association. Volunteer members and committees provide a range of services to members whose core activity is to play a range of games socially and competitively.

The key executives are mostly retirees with experience in business, club and regional administration. The services to members are training coaches and referees, organising tournaments and pennants, maintaining a handicap system, communicating with members through the Website, *Malletsports Victoria* magazine, and developing policies to ensure member protection and effective business systems.

Croquet Victoria's customers are men and women aged between 8 and 80+ who are students, people in employment, and retirees.

The Association is competing against a growing list of sports and recreational activities. Croquet's advantages are that membership is very affordable, men and women play with and against each other, and participants have four versions of the game that can be easily mastered. Croquet is a non-contact sport where the games involve hitting a stationary ball, not a moving ball, and where members can choose to play socially or competitively.

President's Report – Mike Cohn

Croquet Victoria has had another great year in elite competition. Robert Fletcher, our young champion, won the 14th WCF Association Croquet World Championship in SW London in August 2013. In doing so, Robert was:

- The first new AC World Champion in over ten years;
- The youngest ever World Champion;
- The first Australian to win an Open World Croquet Championship, and;
- The first player to proceed through a World Championship without losing a single game.

Victoria retained both the Interstate Golf Croquet Teams Championship (WCF Shield) and the Interstate Association Croquet Teams Championship (Eire Cup).

Victoria had four players (Robert Fletcher, Stephen Forster, Ken Bald and Malcolm Fletcher) in the Australian Association Croquet team competing for the MacRobertson Shield in New Zealand against England, New Zealand and USA.

Congratulations to all our leading players.

At the 2013 Annual General Meeting, Shirley Hallinan was elected as a Life Member of the Victorian Croquet Association, a well-deserved honour.

VCA is about to celebrate its centenary, having been founded on 18th June 1914. Vice-President Kenn Boal is leading a sub-committee to arrange a year of celebrations.

Club membership increased slightly, especially in Golf Croquet. However, there is a major concern that the croquet population is aging. There is a need to recruit younger players. There is a view that the use of lights could help in reaching working-age players. Such lights would permit evening play, including competitive play. Current competitions tend to be designed to suit retirees or people who have sufficient free time to allocate a whole weekend.

Croquet Victoria completed its round of Road Show visits to the regions where presentations were made on matters of Governance, Financial Management, Coaching, Refereeing, Handicapping and Tournament Management. These visits were useful to both clubs and to the Executive, bringing us closer.

A new Strategic Plan was prepared with the help of an external consultant. This has enabled further grants from Sport and Recreation Victoria.

A working group started to look into revising the VCA Constitution. A minimal change was made to the existing constitution in October 2013 to meet requirements of changes in the Incorporations Act. The working group is looking into broader issues, given that the constitution has essentially been in effect since 2005.

Another working group is looking into the apparent low level of participation in tournaments.

Brian Reither continued to be our key Tournament Manager, although several other people (Kevin Beard, John Grieve, Jim Saunders, Hamish Menzies and Eric O'Donnell) took the role in some tournaments. Early in 2014, Brian indicated that he wished to retire from the role in May 2014 after years in that role and leading the Fixtures and Tournaments Committee. He wishes to play more, and I expect that we will continue to see him at the Victorian Croquet Centre. Thank you, Brian.

Brian Foley and Eric O'Donnell oversaw the coordination of referees in Association Croquet and Golf Croquet respectively.

The Victorian Croquet Centre is a great venue for major competitions. Catering during tournaments is now managed by external companies. While there was a change in the caterer during the year, the quality of the service is improving significantly, and those using the service have been happy. Players and volunteers have been complimentary about the food served at tournaments. Linda Brushfield continues in her role as key Barperson, taking the lead role in stocking the bar and serving at functions; the arrangement is working well.

Another area needing addressing is Coaching. Over the year, nearly 100 people received training to build the numbers of Level B (for AC) and 0 (for GC) coaches using a SRV grant. We have applied for a grant to upgrade a number of coaches to Level 1, and have been advised that the grant has been successful. This seems to fit with our plans to build up the numbers of lower level coaches. VCA has set an aim for two accredited coaches per club. The responsibility for training of these coaches lies with the State Coordinator of Coaching, Adrian Masterman-Smith.

Throughout the year, I have been helped by a band of hard-working volunteers. Vice-President, Kenn Boal, brings great experience. Secretary, Jim Clement, continues with great enthusiasm and efficiency. Patrick Moore continued as Treasurer to June 2013, and was replaced by Lorraine Lacey. Our Administration Officer, Sandra Kastanaras, has continued to be the centre of all administrative matters in Croquet Victoria. Our caretaker at VCC, Lubi Bosevska, who does not have a croquet background, continues to keep the centre immaculately clean; everyone appreciates her efforts and her friendly manner. Her husband, Vengel, has taken on the role of maintaining the court lines.

Hamish Menzies and Maxine Maclachlan have been enthusiastic State Coordinators of Golf Croquet and Gateball respectively. Indeed, Maxine managed a very successful Australian Gateball Championship in October 2013. She resigned from the role in December 2013, to be replaced by Philip Brown. James Hood, Greenkeeper, has the courts in magnificent condition, and Jim Saunders continues keenly in the role of Director responsible for the Courts; he has also been invaluable in other matters concerning the VCC grounds and building. Various people, including Brian Reither, Stephen Forster, Kevin Beard, Marie Calthorpe, John Grieve, Chas Quinn and others, have ensured that the courts are ready for use. Doron

Gunzburg, Neville Pope and Ian McKee have been responsible for Handicapping. Stephen Forster, John van der Touw and Eric O'Donnell undertook the coaching of the State and Development Squads.

Our magazine, MalletSports, continues to be edited by Rosalie Newman, printed locally. It was distributed by Nance and Rudi Miller of the Kew Croquet Club until they retired in February 2013 due to ill health, when the role was taken over by Jean Deacon. The arrangement is working well.

Our website has continued to be managed by Colin Clark. Colin has been busy with work, and the role was taken over by Gareth Bushill late in March 2014.

Of course, there are many others who have made the year successful. Directors, many of whom travel far, devote much time in meetings for Croquet Victoria. Furthermore, there have been many referees and assistants, plus the members of the various sub-committees. Thank you all.

Secretary's Report – Jim Clement

In preparing to write this report, I re-read my contribution to last year's report, and can advise that more policies and Job Descriptions have been added to the website. The aim is to have all governance documents available for scrutiny and download by all members from the website. All Council resolutions that have long term implications for the association will be incorporated into policies, regulations or procedures and displayed on the website.

Governance is the word on most members' minds, and Croquet Victoria made minor amendments to its Constitution during the year to ensure that it complied with the provisions of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*, and is currently carrying out a review of its structure and Constitution.

Also in last years report, I mentioned the possibility of a new club in Wimmera and can now advise that Dimboola Croquet Club formed in late March 2013.

During the year, the association carried out a survey of members through their clubs – my thanks to the 35 clubs that took the trouble to complete the survey. My thanks also to those clubs (and regions) that are now using generic email addresses which enable various club officers to access them. It takes a large workload off both myself and Sandra when we don't have to change email contacts as officers change or go on holiday.

This year there is not a catering report, as we have moved away from the volunteer model in catering and have engaged professional to cater for all tournaments and events held at VCC.

Courts Director – Jim Saunders

This position was established by the Committee of Management (COM) during 2013, the concept being to establish a communication protocol with the Greenkeeper, James Hood, and to delegate certain courts related matters for action/resolution.

Meetings have regularly taken place with the Greenkeeper on an as needs basis. These have ensured that the courts works are overviewed and that reports are provided on a timely basis to both COM and the VCA Council. I can report that an excellent working relationship exists with the Greenkeeper. In consultation with the Greenkeeper budgets have been developed for both expenditure and work programs, and provision made for foreseeable equipment replacement. The Greenkeeper has carried out his duties in a most efficient and satisfactory manner.

The courts were cored and fertilised as advantage was taken of a short spell in tournament activity during March. Feedback from players in the GC tournaments at the beginning of April was that our complex played really well and that Cairnlea looked as good as it ever had. Most satisfying for all concerned

The initiative to purchase 100mm diameter plastic drainage pipe as court dividers has proved to be most successful. The players are universally pleased with the material and setting up/taking down is a much less demanding and time consuming exercise.

After the eventual finalisation of the insurance claims for the stolen quad bike which resulted in a satisfactory payout, a second hand Toro Workman 2110 fitted with Sun Canopy and tipping tray was purchased. This purchase has been integral to the completion of the winter renovation work on the

courts. The spray unit has been modified to fit on the tray of the Toro which ensures a much more efficient work load for our greenkeeper.

Following the installation of security cameras and titanium lock down chains for both the mower and the Toro Workman, the storage shed adjacent to the greenkeeper's shed has been joined to the alarm system. A separate isolating panel has been installed so that authorised personnel can access the storage shed and turn off the alarm without having to enter the greenkeeper's shed. In the event that the alarm on either shed is activated, the security control room is electronically notified and, if needed, a patrol will attend. To this end, locks accessible to the security company have been installed as appropriate. The toilet doors in the green keepers shed have been better secured with additional external steel doors being fitted. One should never relax, however, it does appear that the investment in added security has had the desired effect.

The light towers have been inspected by Commlec Services following concerns expressed about their efficacy. Commlec, the company that installed the towers at Essendon Croquet Club, was approached as our original installer is now out of business. The tower nearest the greenkeeper's shed was found to require the mounting bolts tightened which has been done. None of the towers was installed to normal industry standards. It is planned to inspect, adjust and remedy faults as necessary at a later date should Council so approve.

The rear car park was in need of grading and gravelling as, during last winter, the refuse vehicle went through the gravel surface when collecting waste matter. The Brimbank Council very generously responded to a request for assistance and provided a truck, tractor and manpower to clean up the whole area. Several truckloads of green keeper's waste were removed, the entire car park was graded and a truck load of new gravel was spread and rolled in readiness for next winter's wear and tear. All we had to provide was the new gravel. Our grateful thanks go to the Brimbank Council.

Following Council's decision to replace and upgrade the mower, representatives of Metro Turf and Toro Australia have been briefed on our requirements. Progress has been slow, to say the least. An offer for a second hand Toro that was not to our requirements was rejected. Subsequently, both companies have been continuing to look for a machine that would meet our needs however it is likely that we will have to wait for up to a year to obtain a suitable demonstration model. In discussion with James Hood, other short term options have been considered. Basically, whilst getting old, the current machine is running well. However the cylinders are worn and this is affecting the quality of the 'cut'. It has been decided to replace the cylinders and grind the bottom blades, thus giving us an improved operation whilst we wait for the desired replacement to come along.

Coaching – Jim Clement

Over the past year, the State Coordinator of Coaching, Adrian Masterman-Smith, and his team worked hard to accredit basic level coaches - Level B for Association Croquet and Level 0 for Golf Croquet. Funding was provided from an Sports & Recreation Victoria (SRV) grant under its "Target 1000" program, which aimed to accredit 1000 new coaches across all sports in Victoria.

Croquet held up its end, accrediting (or re-accrediting) 71 Level B Association Croquet coaches and accrediting 87 Level 0 Golf Croquet coaches.

In addition, nine Level 1 coaches were accredited and a Level 2 coach reaccredited.

In the forthcoming year, using funds provided from a grant under the SRV "Local Coaches for Local Clubs" program, we plan to accredit a further sixteen Level 1 coaches in both disciplines. This will ensure that there is at least one Level 1 coach of each discipline within each Region, with possibly two of each in both of the geographically larger regions of Gippsland and Murray Valley.

Malletsports Victoria Report – Rosalie Newman, Editor

In June 2011 I became editor of Malletsports. Hard to believe it is three years ago...the time between editions seems incredibly short and yet the time since I started seems ages ago.

I am still receiving a steady stream of articles from many clubs, all welcome additions to Malletsports and in keeping me informed in what is happening at clubs around the state. I thank everyone that has sent in articles, comments, write-ups, photos, reports and scores, they are all much appreciated.

I would still like to know your favourite or least favourite sections or suggestions on what you would like to see included.

I am still enjoying my time as Editor...I am finding it much easier to complete each edition now – either I've finally got the hang of it or practice makes perfect.

Association Croquet - Lowen Clarke, State Coordinator

A good year of trial for Puzzle Croquet and our coaching and marketing methodology. I am now confident to say, that if the organisation followed up our research and work, we could save Association Croquet.

WOMBAT SPORTS CLUB PUBLISHED !

At the beginning of this report, though, let me tell you of the major achievement of the year, from my point of view. We published two new books and ebooks based on my long standing children's character 'Sam the Tram.' And produced a pilot animation for a TV series.

As part of the stories, Sam the Tram takes kids to visit Wacka and Cracka to play Puzzle Croquet. We think this is the best entry point for malletsports, as a steppingstone to Association Croquet.



The books are 'Sam the Tram's Dance Club' and 'Melbourne with Sam the Tram' and they are available for purchase now. You can get the ebooks from the main internet bookstores and from Apple. Printed books can be bought direct from Lowen and Adrian or selected bookstores. Go to www.samthetram.com.au

The animation will find its way to a TV station in due course.

So, join in the attempt to make our sport attractive to kids, and buy a copy for your club or your favourite children.

New Malletsports Kids and Schools Programs get a Workout !

You will recall from last year, that the quality of the new croquet coaching methodology and Programs have been recognised and supported by Sports Industry Professionals and Coaching Educators.

As recognition got around, Lowen Clarke and Adrian Masterman-Smith were invited to show what we have been working on.

We were also Guest Lecturers at Victoria University, where we showed croquet, (and the croquet two ball shot !) to classes of Student Teachers and Student Physical Education Teachers.

This meant that on a larger scale, croquet was being seen as a possibility for Primary and Secondary Teachers to use as part of their classes and programs. We were able to show Teachers our new programs for Kids, which are branded for the kids as 'Wacka and Cracka, Wombat Supercoaches, Sports Fun'.

PUZZLE CROQUET TRIAL AT VICTORIAN CROQUET CENTRE

This year, with the co-operation of Croquet Victoria and their State Co-ordinator of Coaching Adrian Masterman-Smith, we were able to put Puzzle Croquet to the test. The trial was funded through the Dept of Sport and Recreation.

We had a local school come to the Victorian Croquet Centre, and over two sessions, introduced them to Puzzle Croquet. This was the first time a systematic approach at getting kids to play the two ball croquet shot in an introductory game had been attempted.

Overall, it worked well. The teachers were impressed, and the students stayed interested for the whole session. This attracted the attention of Victoria University, and we hope for more developments next year. Many thanks to the coaches involved in this experiment.

PROGRAMS READY FOR ACTIVE AFTER-SCHOOLS USE.

In addition, we have developed a malletsports program to be trialled for the Active After Schools Program.

The new Coaching Programs means Malletsports/croquet can promote into schools on a systematic and sustainable basis.

Our sport is being seen to be responding to the new curricula for children's education. The methodology is based on up to date ideas about education and child development. It is fun, activity based, leaving space for adventure, discovery, and self-determinance.

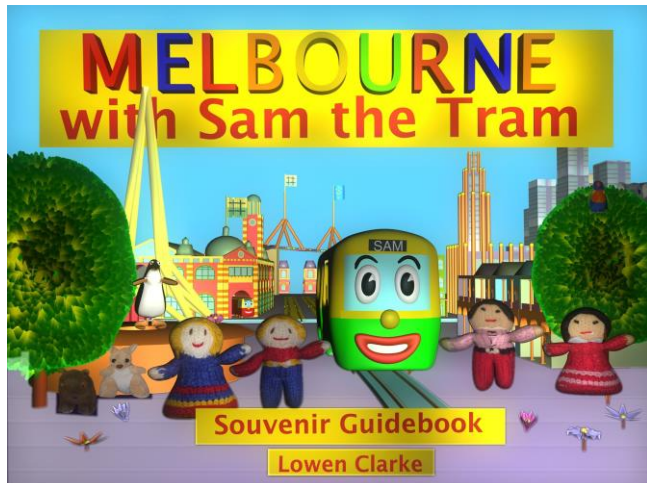
The idea here is that we can position malletsports as an introductory method for all sports to assist kids to gain skills that might be important in other sports. Malletsports is being seen as possibly a child's first introduction to target skills, and ball sports.

The programs and new methodology have been developed by Lowen Clarke and Adrian Masterman-Smith, and are the result of many years thought and research into the needs and benefits of our sport. Both have qualifications in Group and Organisation Dynamics, and are from creative backgrounds. Both are currently a Doctoral students at an arts based arts teaching and therapy institute. Lowen is a children's book author and animator.

'With the new methodology, we can position our sport as part of a child's journey to creativity, thinking and personal development', said Lowen.

The methodology is great for malletsports in general, but also has the added benefit of helping to save and promote the sport's unique two ball croquet shot. The new approach is the first time that the shot has been placed at the forefront of coaching. Traditional coaching methods have 'hidden' it from view and now fewer and fewer players play it.

The two ball croquet shot elicits responses of 'Wow !' 'Magic !' 'a Miracle !' from kids and Student teachers alike. Eyes open to the educational possibilities of it. The new approach lets the cat out of the bag. It even includes a game based solely on the croquet shot.



Wacka and Cracka's Croquet Circuit ready for prototype.

We have received a price for the prototype from Big Fish in Footscray. If VCA wanted, we can commission this to go ahead. Our goal is to have them in every playgroup setting in Victoria.

We have had interest from Bowls in an adaptation of this, and of the Two Ball Shot set up, which has been a success at many venues.

Future Outlook

The Programs are now in Draft form. We have been invited to show them to the Active After-School Community Program and the YMCA.

It is time to look at marketing. For both kids and adults.

In order to be able to create programs supporting documents, animations and picture books that clubs and coaches can use, we now need to begin to finalize some of the core work.

This entails:

- a) A round of product development trials in a variety of market situations.
- b) Research into the selection of skills/ fun based activities.
- c) Creation of equipment and written support materials.
- d) Selection of equipment materials (timber, steel, textile, foam)
- e) Costing of equipment

This will hopefully enable our sport to demonstrate its proactive approach to marketing and engagement activities and through this establish some recognition of our sport work and attract further funding.

VCA could support us in creating Wacka and Cracka picturebooks.

My efforts to save Association Croquet will continue, and I hope that one day, VCA or a croquet organisation will support the work more.

THANKS

We'd like to thank all those who have contributed to the project with support and ideas. Brunswick Malletsports Club and Williamstown Croquet Clubs have been supportive places for the project. The support we get within Malletsports is enhanced by the great support from other sports, such as Bowls, and the sports bodies, such as VicSport and the Australian Sports Commission. Croquet Victoria and the Victorian Croquet Centre were great supporters of new ideas.

Lowen Clarke B.A.(Melb.), B.Divinity, Grad. Dip. P.W., M.App.Sci.(Org.Dyn.).
Level 3 Coach, MPIO

Association Croquet Referees - Brian Foley, State Coordinator

The past season has again seen a busy program for referees with a range of state and national title tournaments held at VCA headquarters, Cairnlea together with regional and club events around the state. Referee refresher days have been undertaken in most regions and a number of referee candidates are in training.

After lengthy deliberations, in July 2013 ACA adopted a new accreditation and re-accreditation policy for referees and umpires of both association and golf croquet that now applies in all states. The essential features of the policy are:

- All referees are initially accredited for four years and require re-accreditation each four years.



- Re-accreditation requires demonstration that the official is conversant with the laws of croquet, has attended a refresher course at least each two years and has practical experience in refereeing.
- All trainee referees are required to undertake the Australian Sports Commission Introductory Level Officiating General Principles Course. All referees currently accredited are also required to complete this course as part of their re-accreditation or by March 2017.
- Referees who do not seek re-accreditation will be transferred to an “inactive list” and would not usually officiate outside their own clubs.
- All active referees are required to carry and use an Activity Card that records brief details of their refereeing activity covering officiating, refresher days, training session etc. This card should be available at re-accreditation as evidence of referee activity.
- The new Activity Card replaces a previous points-based card used in 2011 and 2012. The new card simply records referee activity and does not require a specific level of activity in any time period.

There are currently about 150 active referees in association croquet in Victoria and most are due or nearly due for re-accreditation. Over the next year the accreditation program and other referee training activities will be undertaken.

Association Croquet Selection Committee – Tricia Devlin, Chair

During this season, the Selection Committee met to select players for the two squads, Development Squad and State Team Squad, as well as the following events:

- Victorian Gold Cup
- Victorian Silver Shield
- Victorian Bronze Shield
- Victorian Women’s Invitation
- Victorian Selectors’ Invitation
- Victorian Silver Medal
- Victorian Bronze Medal
- Australian Bronze Medal
- Eire Cup

Selectors also managed several of the events.

Although many of these events allow for selection of 6 to 10 competitors, it has become necessary to reduce the numbers to 6 to 8 players because of the difficulty of finding a larger number of players wanting to enter major Victorian competitions. This is in line with the general decrease in tournament competition that has been discussed previously in Council and is a worrying trend. Due to the drop in player numbers we considered cancelling an event, but thankfully this has not been necessary.

However, those who accepted invitations, many for the first time, and came to Cairnlea to play, were encouraged by their experience. This was particularly evident at the Selectors’ Invitation, which is held at the same time as the Australian Bronze Medal, so a large group of players was present.

Also this year, we had a player who was selected for the State Team decline his selection, in spite of having signed the State Squad agreement.

We were fortunate to have another State Squad member who was willing to take his place, after the reserve was forced to withdraw due to illness in his family. The new team quickly formed around the new player and he helped the whole team to another Eire Cup victory.

This year the Selectors operated under the revised Selection Policy, which required particular attention to the section concerning conflict of interest.

We will be submitting a request for a small change in the policy with regard to adding players to the State Team Squad, to make sure that there are always enough players entitled to be selected to the State Team.

Members of the State Development Squad continue to improve under the guidance of coach Stephen Forster, and their results can be seen in invitation events as well as tournaments around the state, including the Victorian Country Regionals. The selectors are always ready to hear from clubs if they have players who may be interested in joining the squad and we depend on Regional Directors to spread the word.

Progression from the Development Squad to the State Team Squad may sometimes seem slow, but 8 men and 8 women are selected to the State Team Squad each year and from these the State Team is selected.

The Selectors are pleased that we have been able to encourage players to enter the main Victorian events and that those events have been successful.

In particular we are delighted that our Victorian State Team has once again brought home the Eire Cup.

Golf Croquet Selection Committee – Jim Saunders, Chair

The Victorian Golf Croquet (GC) Team for the Interstate Shield in August/September, 2013 was chosen last May and consisted of

MEN	WOMEN
Eric Miller – Vice Captain	Judy Wembridge – Captain
Lester Hughes	Wendy Dickson
Darren McLoughlin	Anna Miller
John van der Touw	Anne Quinn
Bob Roycroft – Reserve	Tricia Devlin – Reserve

Widely regarded as the premier GC event on the Australian calendar, the World Croquet Federation Interstate Shield in 2013 was played between teams from Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria at a variety of venues in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales. Over five days each State played a Test against each other with a Test comprising four Matches of mixed doubles and sixteen Matches of singles, with men playing men and women playing women. Each Match comprised two first to seven hoop games and to win a Match both games had to be won.

It will be recalled that Victoria won the Shield in 2012 by the absolute narrowest of margins, the last hoop in the last match on the last day, and it was expected that the going would be tougher in 2013, and it was with several states showing marked improvement. However, the Vics had a strong team and a strong band of supporters on hand together with the Team Mascot, Victor, who greatly enjoyed the competition.

Victoria won the WCF Interstate Shield for 2013 having gone through five days of hard competition undefeated. This was a really tremendous effort against the best GC players in Australia. At the presentation, it was acknowledged that the standard of Golf Croquet had improved immensely in recent years and that the States had really applied themselves in preparation for the tournament.

Your selectors have worked diligently to encourage the further improvement of top level GC in Victoria by selecting a strong State GC Squad which has been training hard under the dedicated care of its Coach, John van der Touw. In addition a State GC Development Squad, consisting of players who have the potential to develop to State level over the next few years has been working with its Coach, Eric O'Donnell. The selectors are most appreciative of the work of the State Coaches. Their efforts will further assist in improving the standard of GC in Victoria.

The Victorian Division of the ACA Bronze Medal event in April, 2014 was again complemented by two, two day, Selectors Invitation Tournaments each of twelve players who played a round robin event. The outcome for the weekend was that 32 top golf croquet players were involved in solid competition under the watchful eyes of the selectors.

The Victorian Division of the ACA Golf Croquet Bronze Medal was played over four days. John van der Touw (Monash) was successful from Darren McLoughlin (Deniliquin) by the narrowest of margins on a count back and will represent Victoria in the ACA Gold Medal in Adelaide in September. We wish John all the very best.

The Selectors Invitation Tournaments consisted of players from the GC State Squad who did not make the Bronze Medal field. The First Selectors Invitation was won by Ian Grant (Rich River) from David Wren (Essendon) and David Harrison (Kew), the Second Selectors Invitation was won by Ian Petersen (Geelong Eastern Park) from Peter Goldstraw (Sale) with Val Saunders (Geelong Belmont) in third place on a countback.

The team to represent Victoria in the Inter State Shield in Adelaide this year will be selected at the conclusion of Australian Singles & Doubles Championships to be held in mid May

I have been most fortunate to have had a very enthusiastic committee to work with this year. My grateful thanks go to Anna Miller, Lynne Roberts, Dennis Newman, Hamish Menzies and Mike Cohn, who represented VCA.

Gateball - Maxine Maclachlan, State Coordinator (retired)

Victorian Gateball Championships: 13 - 14 April 2013

The Teams and Pairs events were run concurrently with play commencing at 8:30am on Saturday and 8:00am on Sunday in what was a very demanding program.

There were 7 teams: Bilbies (Essendon, Vic), Canberra/Wagga, Kew, Queenslanders, Tamborine Mountain Raptors, Terang and Wombats (Brunswick). We were thrilled at the return of Tamborine Mountain Raptors to the Victorian Gateball Championships and the attendance of a second Queensland team, Queenslanders. The Teams Event was won by Bilbies with 5 wins. For the second year in a row Tamborine Mountain Raptors (TMR), captained by teenager David Hughes, were runners-up. They had 4 wins. Interestingly, for the most part, the winning margin for individual games was not large and there was not one game in either the Teams or Pairs events where a perfect score of 25 was achieved.

There were 17 Pairs competing, divided into 2 blocks with semis and a final. Block A had 9 pairs and Block B had 8 pairs. The winners of Block A were David Hughes & Keith McLeod (Qld) over Herman Bekker & Carol Clayton (Qld). In Block B Glen & Kristina Whitehead (Canberra) were runners-up to Alec & Maxine Maclachlan (Kew) As in 2012, captains Alec and David's young tactical minds were pitted against each other in a gripping final that could have gone either way. Alec & Maxine, in the final turn, defeated David & Keith 13 - 10.

The Championships were enjoyed by everyone and there is a real possibility of a third Queensland team entering the 2014 Victorian Championship.

Australian Gateball Championship: 11 - 13 October 2013

The event attracted teams from Queensland, New South Wales, Canberra and Victoria. We were also thrilled to be joined by overseas teams from China, Bali and Indonesia and look forward to competing against them in future events. In total 17 teams, 108 people, played in the event. We were also honoured by the attendance of Mr Gu Qiao, Secretary General of the Chinese Gateball Association.

Friday, 11th October, saw a full day of practice with allocated court times for each team. However, there was plenty of mixing as teams invited one another to play "friendlies". This helped to build relationships between the players and greatly enhanced the enjoyment of the competition. Two workshops, Growing Gateball into the Schools Community and Referees Workshop were also run on Friday.

Practice on Friday was followed, at 4pm, by the Opening Ceremony. Jim Clement, Treasurer, spoke on behalf of the Australian Croquet Association. The National Director of Gateball, Gilon Smith welcomed everyone and spoke of the build up to the World Gateball Championship being held in Japan in 2014. Gilon then introduced all the teams to delighted applause. Mr Telmo Languiller MP,

State Member for Derrimut, welcomed everyone to Brimbank and Cairnlea, particularly our international visitors. Mr Languiller encouraged us all to embrace the cultural exchange and understanding that this event, and our great sport Gateball, fosters. He was singularly impressed by the fact that Gateball teams can be made up of players from primary school age to octogenarians and regardless of gender. Mr Languiller performed the ceremonial hit through the first gate before declaring the tournament open. We enjoyed memorable and very rousing traditional Japanese drum performances from Wadaiko Rindo. The National Anthem was sung by Sebastien Harvey. Mr Mike Cohn, President of Croquet Victoria, closed the Opening Ceremony. Refreshments followed.

The competition proper was held over Saturday and Sunday, with the teams playing a round robin in two blocks followed by semi-finals and a final.

The teams were:

Block A: Bilbies (Essendon, Vic), Canberra (NSW), Dewata (Bali), Garuda Jasmine (Indonesia), Hunter Plovers (NSW), Tamborine Mountain Raptors (Qld), Terang (Vic) and Waratahs (NSW).

Block B: Badung (Bali), Broadbeach (Qld), South East Queensland Cougars, Fu Jian (China), Kew (Vic), Geruda Permata (Indonesia), Redbacks (Qld), Southport (Qld) and Wombats (Brunswick, Vic).

TM Raptors were undefeated in winning block A with 7 wins. Canberra, with 5 wins, were runners-up. In Block B, Badung was separated from Fu Jian only by net points, both sides having won 7 of their 8 games. Fu Jian defeated TM Raptors 12-11 in a very close first semi-final. In the second semi, Canberra established control early and maintained it to the end, defeating Badung 12-6.

In a stunning display of Gateball teamwork, brilliant captaincy and accurate hitting, Canberra, having found their best form for the finals, defeated Fu Jian 14-8 in the final to become 2013 Australian Gateball Champions.

At the closing ceremony I had the great pleasure of presenting the runners-up and winners medals. The event closed with afternoon tea and with the hope we would all be seeing each other again soon.

South West Games: Terang 2 - 3 November 2013

The South West Games were in their 31st Year.

There were 5 teams, Brunswick, Essendon, Kew, Terang 1 and Terang 2, competing in a round robin (we played each other twice) for the Teams Event on Saturday. Kew were winners with 6 wins and Brunswick were runners-up with 5 wins.

Two blocks of 4 pairs competed in the Pairs Event on Sunday. In the final Sue Leitinger and Adrian Masterman - Smith defeated Philip Brown and Kerry Seipolt 23 - 8.

Hugh Worrall, Patron of the games, and Sarah Wall, Ambassador for the games and former Vixens player in the Women's National Basketball League (currently playing for the Swisse Saints in the Victorian Netball League), were introduced to Gateball on Saturday. They enjoyed themselves so much they made a detour, on their way to Hamilton on Sunday, so that they could play another game. Hugh and Sarah were impressed by the skills of the players and the inclusiveness of the game.

NSW Gateball Championships: 22 - 24 November 2013

The 2013 New South Wales Gateball Championship was held at Canberra Croquet Club. The 2013 tournament broke a number of records including most days of competition (3 days rather than the previous two day format), most teams (11), most pairs (22), most competitors (66) and most matches (113).

The event attracted teams from Queensland (1), New South Wales (4), Canberra (2) and Victoria (1) and two teams from the Iwate province in Japan. Jun Nogami also attended the competition as a representative of the World Gateball Union.

Friday, 22 November saw a very busy schedule with 50 matches in the block phase of the pairs event. The top two pairs from each block advanced to the knockout phase with the final make-up of the quarter-finals including four pairs from Japan and four pairs from Australia.

Saturday morning saw the knockout rounds of the pairs event culminating in the final which pitted Alec and Maxine from Kew (Victoria) against Msashi Tanifuji and Masamichi Endo from Japan. The Japanese pair had a strong match, building an early lead and controlling the match on their way to a 16-10 victory.

The opening ceremony followed the completion of the pairs final with John Compton (President Croquet NSW) presenting the medals to the runners-up and winners. Nick Chapman (President Canberra Croquet Club) welcomed competitors to the club and opened the teams competition by hitting a ball through the ceremonial gate.

The remainder of Saturday saw the completion of half the matches in the block phase. Sunday saw the remainder of the teams group phase with the two Japanese teams (Team Iwate A and B) claiming first and second place after combining to win 17 of their 20 matches. Competition for third place was tight with Queensland Globetrotters, Canberra Blue, Wagga Wagga, Canberra Green and defending champions Kew all finishing with 6 wins from 10 matches. The Queensland Globetrotters ended up claiming third with the best net hoops.

Around sixty spectators watched the final. Team Iwate B defeated Team Iwate A 11 – 9 in the final.

Other events:

Demonstrations were held at:

Wonthaggi on 28th April 2013 with 15 people attending.

Swan Hill on 26th May 2013 with 10 people attending.

VCA Opening on 7th August 2013.

Terang - 1st March 2014 with about 10 people attending a "Give it a go" day.

Ringwood Croquet Club has purchased their own Gateball equipment with the intention of introducing Gateball to their club in 2014.

Regular Sunday practice sessions, 1- 3 pm, are now established. The first Sunday of the month is at Brunswick, second and fourth Sundays at Kew and third Sunday at Essendon.

Tournament & Fixtures Committee - Brian Reither, Chair

Once again we have had another busy year having facilitated fourteen VCA events at Cairnlea. We also hosted five very successful ACA events including the National Gateball championships.

This year I am not going to detail all these events as the results have been well documented in Malletsports, VCA web and croquetscores.com.

Unfortunately the AC Country Week Event to be played at Swan Hill had to be cancelled due to extreme heat. Next February this event will rotate back to Cobram. So plan ahead and enjoy a few days in this lovely Murray region. Disappointing that the ACA AC Handicap, GC Seniors and the Country/Metro Challenge were cancelled due to lack of entries. Also VCA AC Divisionals had only one section

The VCA calendar for the coming season is once again very busy. We will again host five major ACA events in both AC and GC. Please come to watch these events and see the top Australian players show their excellent skills and tactics.

The preparation of the Fixtures Calendar has been a difficult task due to the amount of tournaments being scheduled. This has caused many clashes. To those who agreed to modify their dates when requested, I say thank you.

As we move into a new year, the T & F Committee is to be restructured. The new structure will see the committee split into two groups, one being an administrative group and the other a tournament manager pool. I ask your support in assisting these people to run a successful program. The best way to support them is to participate in as many events possible.

As this report is my last duty as Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who have worked on the committee over the last 9 years. Thank you to all the clubs I have had the opportunity to work with. I wish you all the best with your future endeavours but remember the T&F can only assist you; it is yourselves that have to make it happen.