

# Croquet Victoria

## Annual Report 2014/2015

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The following Appointed Officers and Committees did not supply reports, despite reminders:

State Coordinator of Coaching  
State Coordinator of Golf Croquet Referees



Jim Clement  
Secretary  
23<sup>rd</sup> May 2015

## **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 2760 members belonging to 92 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, maintaining a handicap system, communicating with members through the Website, *Malletsports Victoria* magazine, and developing policies to ensure member protection and effective business systems.

The Association employs an Administrator and a part-time Administrative Assistant, whose key roles are to provide a point of contact for clubs, members and the public.

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.

The volunteer individuals and committees that provide services on behalf of Croquet Victoria are required to report to the State Council annually and this document consolidates their reports. It also includes reports from the President, Secretary and Administrator.

### **President – Mike Cohn**

Croquet Victoria had another good year in elite competition. Victoria retained the Interstate Golf Croquet Teams Championship (WCF Shield), and was runner-up for the Interstate Association Croquet Teams Championship (Eire Cup).

Victoria had seven players (Kevin Beard, Wendy Dickson, Lester Hughes, Darren McLoughlin, Anne Quinn, John van der Touw and Judy Wembridge) compete in the 11th WCF Golf Croquet World Championships in New Zealand. Jack Williams competed in the Under 21 Golf Croquet Championships.

Congratulations to all our leading play ers.

VCA celebrated its centenary, having been founded on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1914. Vice-President Kenn Boal led a sub-committee (assisted by Gwen Hamilton, Trish Watts and Sandra Kastanaras) arranging a year of celebrations. The celebrations started with cutting a cake on the day of the AGM in June 2014, and then a wider celebration at the Season Opening in August attended by many old members, past Presidents and representatives from Vicsport and the Victorian Department of Sport and Recreation. As part of celebration, VCA sponsored trips for regions to visit the Victorian Croquet Centre. All regions participated, although two were scheduled after the end of the financial year. These trips proved to be a resounding success, with many people visiting VCC for the first time. As an extension of the celebrations, Anne McKee (Ballarat Alexandra) is working on an update of the booklet about Croquet in Victoria written by Joyce Ridley in the early 1980s.

Overall membership increased, especially in Golf Croquet, which has been a financial saviour to many clubs. However, there is a major concern that the croquet population is aging. Most clubs seem to have an average age of over 70. There is a need to recruit younger players, both to maintain the sport and to ensure ongoing life within the clubs. ACA has included in its strategic plan the need to recruit working age players. Players recruited in their 60s are unlikely to progress to the more demanding game of Association Croquet, and would be very unlikely to reach elite level in that code. On the other hand, it would be difficult to recruit many new players too distant in age from their mentors, so the likely best target age for many clubs to recruit is in the 50s. Whatever is done, clubs will have to change in order to accommodate different players as well as the traditional players. Play will be needed into the evenings. Liquor licences will probably be required, as the traditional tea and coffee aren't so attractive after work. 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 has recognised that its Strategic Plan was written largely to suit the wishes of the Sport and Recreation Department. New officers there recognised that the plan was far too demanding for an association of our size. A review has been started.

Council determined that in future our Constitution should facilitate an elected Board structure for management, rather than the current two-tiered arrangement of Council and Committee of Management, and the Constitution is being reviewed.

Brian Reither retired as our key Tournament Manager in May 2014 after years of service. Thank you, Brian. He has continued to manage ACA events held at VCC. John Grieve has performed well managing VCA Association Croquet events, and chairing the Fixtures and Tournament Committees. Lorraine Gutcher, Eric O'Donnell, Jim Saunders and Jim Clement have all taken turns with managing Golf Croquet events. Kevin Beard has assisted. Phillip Brown managed Gateball. Thank you, All.

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 continues to be managed by an external company. 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 serving at functions.

Croquet Victoria obtained a grant from Sport and Recreation Victoria to train 16 Level 1 coaches. This was consistent with our stated aim of having at least one Level 1 coach in each code (AC and GC) in each region, and two in the case of geographically large regions. The responsibility for training of these coaches lay with the State Coordinator of Coaching, Adrian Masterman-Smith (who has since resigned). Despite advertising through Council and to the regions, not all places were taken up. This was disappointing.

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. Lorraine Lacey continued as Treasurer until the AGM in June 2014. As there was no person nominating for the position, John Blackler offered to take the role of Interim Treasurer. In October 2014, Brian Rowe of Brunswick Croquet Club assumed the role of Treasurer; he brought strong business experience and has adapted quickly. Jim Saunders, Gwen Hamilton, Wilma Freeman and Trish Watts have all contributed well to the Committee of Management. This Committee became the most harmonious and positive Committee of Management since I first served on it in 2007. Our Administrator, Sandra Kastanaras, has continued to be the centre of all administrative matters in Croquet Victoria. Since October 2014, she has been assisted by Joanne Reick, who works one day each week, and more when Sandra is on leave, ensuring continuity of service. 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.

John Grieve, Lorraine Gutcher and Phillip Brown have been enthusiastic State Coordinators of Association Croquet, Golf Croquet and Gateball respectively. James Hood, Greenkeeper, has the courts in magnificent condition, and Jim Saunders continues keenly in the role of Director responsible for the Courts. Brian Rowe has assisted with the management of maintenance projects on building, in particular on the installation of solar panels. 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 Victoria*, continues to be edited by Rosalie Newman, printed locally. Jean Deacon continued to ensure distribution after the magazine is printed. The arrangement is working well.

Gareth Bushill has managed the website in his usual enthusiastic manner. A lot of enhancements have been made.

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 – Jim Clement**

When you read this report, I will be entering my final year as Secretary, given that I can only serve a maximum of six consecutive years in the position. Consequently, I am on the lookout for someone who may be interested in replacing me, who I may be able to help to “hit the ground running” in June 2016.

When my predecessor, George Latham, approached me in January 2010 to nominate for the position at that years AGM, I told him that my aim would be to make the governance of Croquet Victoria more transparent to all members. This was a thing that George had not been able to do but with a much improved website and the development of other communications such as better email, I believe that I have gone a long way towards achieving that goal. All minutes, of General Meetings, Council meetings and Committee of Management meetings are available from the Croquet Victoria website, as are Policies, Procedures, Committee’s Terms of Reference, and Appointee’s Job Descriptions.

Much of this has been due to the willingness of our Webmaster, Gareth Bushill, to ensure that items we would like to make available on the website are available, and my thanks to Gareth for this. His innovations include such items as the ability of clubs to upload flyers for their tournaments to the website and the automatic notification of all clubs of the availability of the flyers. This has taken a large workload off Sandra who had to distribute these previously. I understand that Sandra & Gareth intend to develop a similar system to enable the automatic distribution of social event flyers.

The big change at VCA is the employment of an Administration Assistant. Joanne Reick works on a part-time basis one day each week, increasing to three days a week when Sandra is on leave. This means that clubs still have a point of contact during January, when Sandra normally takes her annual leave, and also means that there is not a month’s backlog when Sandra returns to work.

The Croquet Victoria centenary celebrations during the past year have been a huge success. All regions have organised visits to VCC, with a total of 817 members attending. The feedback has been very good, with the aim of making members aware of their asset being achieved. My thanks to all involved at the regions and especially to Sandra (Administrator) and Lubi (Caretaker and cleaner) at VCC for the efforts that they put in.

During the year, I received one appeal against non-selection (to the Eire Cup team) and, due to the short time frames laid down in the Selection Policy, appointed an Appeal Committee consisting of Eric Miller (Belmont) as Chair, with Dot Dickson (Essendon) and David Ross (Ringwood) as members. The Selection policy requires that an appellant lodge notice of their appeal within two days, provide the detailed grounds for the appeal within working five days and that the Appeal Committee convenes within seven days of receipt of notice of the grounds of the appeal. In this event, the Appeal Committee had considered the matter and given its decision within seven days of my receipt of the notice of intention to appeal. My thanks go to the members of the appeal committee, whom I asked to sit at short notice. I have made

provision for the appointment of members of the appeal panel, from whom Appeal Committees would be drawn, in the agenda of the June 2015 Council meeting. Further, the Selection Policy has been amended by Council to clarify the point that was the grounds of the appeal.

### **Administrator - Sandra Kastanaras**

This is the first time an Administrators Report has been included in the Annual Report.

First I would like to thank my Administration Assistant Joanne Reick who has been working alongside me one day per week since October 2014 .It was a breath of fresh air to return from my Christmas Holidays and know that I didn't return to load of catch up work on my desk. During my time off at Christmas; Joanne covered my role taking care of the functions; wages; administration of the centre and co-ordinating the bar staff and caretaker. It is pleasing to know that Croquet Victoria now have a backup plan for the office.

I am also extremely pleased to be working with the current Treasurer; Brian Rowe as the last 3 years has been very difficult for me with constantly changing of Treasurers.

I am very pleased to working with Lubi Bosevska, the current Caretaker, who has now worked with me for the last 3 years. Lubi's cleaning standards are excellent, as are her personality and manner towards members.

I was very fortunate to be part of the Centenary visits and had the pleasure meeting so many members across the regions; in particular those members that I have had contact with over the phone and by email for the last 8 years; I finally got to meet and put a face to those members.

I would hope that you will all come back and visit again. Thank you to all the kind emails expressing your gratitude hosting VCA Centenary and in particular meeting me and thanking me personally. Your kind words in emails and phone calls goes along way making me feel very privileged to be the VCA Administrator.

Clubs please continue to update the database this needs to be update; not only is this important for the new address book to be correct when it goes to print; but important for your club's invoicing to be correct.

Thank you to those clubs who have set up generic email address. Generic email address enables various office bearers to access them. By using this generic email, Croquet Victoria do not have to change email contacts details as office bearers change after your AGM or go on holidays. Please make sure your email address is update on the website as this ensures that your club receives tournament notices to your email address.

Thank you to Gareth Bushill Webmaster who worked with me; listened and sympathised with my work load making easier for me. I was driving force with changing how tournament notices are sent out to clubs.

For those members who prefer to speak to me via Skype I now have facility user name is Croquet Victoria.

Thank you to Mike Cohn, Jim Clement and the Committee of Management for your support in 2014/2015.

## **VCC Premises Hire 2014-15 – Sandra Kastanaras, Administrator**

The Victorian Croquet Centre was hired out 29 times during this financial year, for:

- 7 Christenings /1st Birthdays
- 7 Birthdays various types
- 2 Wedding
- 3 Engagements
- 3 Fundraisers and
- various other bookings.

VCA collects a minimum bar spend of \$600.00 for all function hires, which covers wages for bar staff and cleaning at the end of the function.

Premises hire income for this year was **\$18,065** compared to last year **\$20,126**.  
Bar Sales for this year was **\$31,932** compared to last year **\$31,126**.

Some functions, mainly engagement or wedding parties, showed a profit of \$2500-\$3000, although average profit ranges from \$1200-1500, is a combination of venue hire and bar takings.

The Brimbank Council usually hold a breakfast once year at our centre and approx. six meetings per year; this year we did not have any bookings from the Brimbank Council which contributed to premises hire income being lower than for the previous financial year.

VCA needs more of these type of functions where money can be made over the bar and larger groups where a extra cleaning fee and kitchen fee has now been incorporated into the terms and conditions

## **VCA Website Manager – Gareth Bushill**

### **Summary**

2014-15 was an active year for the VCA website. Many minor bugs were fixed and some major new features were developed. The website is increasing in popularity, with approximately twice as many visitors this year compared to 2013-14. This report provides more details about the new features and some statistics about website usage and activity.

### **Feature Enhancements**

The new photo gallery function was rolled out in August 2014 and has been gradually adopted. Using the latest interface, clubs and regions are able to upload photographs and feature them on their web pages directly. This replaces the previous system of emailing pictures to the webmaster and then entering data into a spreadsheet.

Tournament flyers can be uploaded to the website and appear alongside the tournament listing in the schedule. New flyers are automatically distributed by email to club and region contacts.

Victorian AC and GC player lists show referee and coaching accreditation, a feature requested by the state selectors. The lists can be sorted into handicap ranges and filtered to remove inactive players that have not had a recent index update.

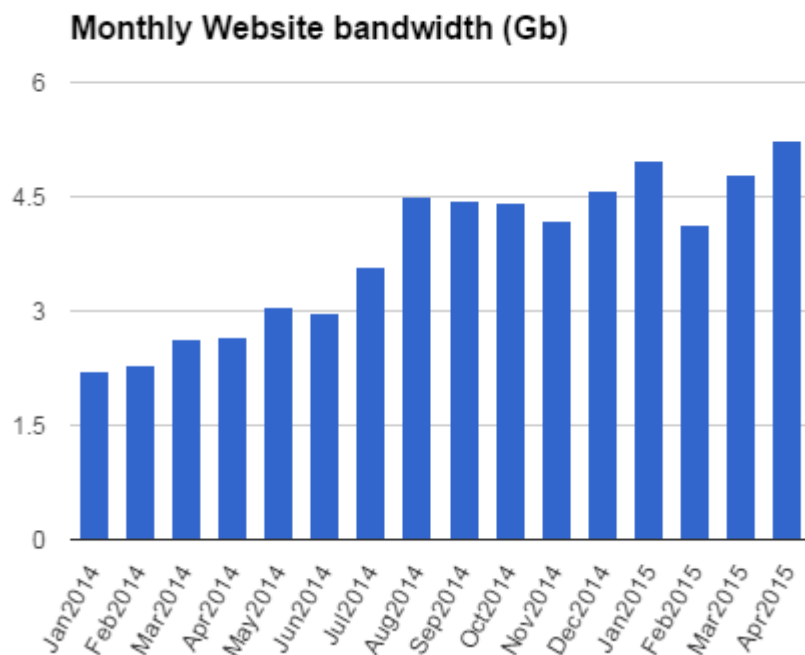
Numerous administrative features have been added. These assist with accounting and tasks such as automatically generating printable labels for the distribution of Malletsports.



A new section features historical contributions for the centenary year. All thirteen regions were invited to contribute material; six did so.

### Statistics

Website usage continues to trend steadily upwards. We increased our monthly bandwidth cap from 4Gb to 6Gb in August 2014 after rolling out the photo gallery and centenary history pages. If bandwidth usage continues to grow at the current rate we will have to increase it again in the near future.



32 clubs have updated their detailed club information using the website since 1 Jan 2015.

57 clubs have updated their membership lists using the website since 1 Jan 2015.

37 clubs and 3 regions have a total of 401 photos on display in the photo gallery.

- The most prolific club is Deniliquin, with 41 photos.
- The most prolific region is North Eastern, with 28 photos.

### **Malletsports Victoria Editor – Rosalie Newman**

Another year and I am still here! It appears that no one has become sick of me or wish to take over the editing of *Malletsports Victoria*.

I find many parts of the editing have become almost second nature by now yet I'm still nowhere near the time per issue that I was assured was all it would take. I must be too pedantic or something!

A great big thanks must go to all the wonderful people who keep the articles and photos rolling in, as without you my job would be difficult to say the least and the magazine rather boring. Please keep them coming in and let me know if there is something you would really like more of in your paper.

A couple of years ago I mentioned getting my croquet 'fix' via editing this paper as a wonky shoulder was preventing me from playing, then joy of joys last year I was able to resume playing again but it only lasted for about 8 months before breaking down in spectacular fashion

during a Challenge at Horsham. I have since undergone a shoulder reconstruction and can only flap one wing at present, but I look forward to returning to play as good as new later in the year.

*Malletsports Victoria* has moved a little closer to being available on line....I wonder how that will work.

## **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 equipment maintenance and replacement as needed. The Greenkeeper has carried out his duties in a most efficient and satisfactory manner.

The courts have been maintained in accordance with the approved work program. Feedback from players was that our complex played really well and that Cairnlea looked as good as it ever had. Most satisfying for all concerned

The installation of more comprehensive security arrangements for both the storage sheds adjacent to Court 4 has, to date, been successful in that there have been no security incidents over the last year. One should never relax, however, it does appear that the investment in added security has had the desired effect.

The rectification works on the light towers was completed early in the year under review. The towers have all been checked, the mounting bolts tightened. Access plates have been installed to facilitate inspection of the mounting mechanisms as required from time to time. The towers were not installed originally to normal industry standards, however the recent work has largely rectified any deficiencies.

A four camera system to provide better security and scrutiny for our caretakers has been installed and is operating satisfactorily. This allows the caretakers to identify any intrusion to the clubhouse from the security of their flat, a much improved arrangement. A side benefit of this investment is that VCA can, at some future time, if wished, install a further four cameras. These could be set up outside, say at the green keepers shed and would operate with the installation of an additional aerial.

Our Greenkeeper has recommended that, in order to maintain the integrity of the courts, a program of laser top dressing be instigated. As a trial, it is proposed to start with Courts 11 & 12 in October/November, 2015. The effect will be that treated courts will be out of action for 10 to 12 weeks. Should the program prove successful it is intended to do courts 1 to 4 in 2016, 5 to 7 in 2017 and 8 to 10 in 2018.

It has been decided to again allow \$20,000 in the budget for replacement of the mower. However, it is intended to use that allocation only in the event of absolute need. Our contacts in the 'mower' business tell us that, for \$20,000, we are likely to only buy something very similar to what we now have. We have, therefore, decided to increase the R&M allocation slightly with a view to maintaining what we have in the best condition possible. It should be understood that the mower continues to perform well despite its age.

In addition, it has been decided to obtain a spare set of second hand cutter heads for use when there is sand and grit on the lawns following maintenance. This will extend the life of the quality cutter heads and reduce sharpening costs.

The Greenkeeper has taken over responsibility for line marking as an addition to his current duties.

## **State Coordinator of Association Croquet – John Grieve**

In making this report I refer to the duties as outlined in the Relevant Job Description Document

- **Being the prime point of contact for AC within Croquet Victoria.**

I spent a considerable amount of time letting players, clubs, regions, and referees all know that I had accepted this position and was there to provide whatever support was thought needed. I feel it necessary for all parties to Association Croquet to have a known point of contact for queries, requests and complaints. I believe that establishing this awareness in the initial period was important.

- **Being a member of the Croquet Victoria Fixtures and Tournaments Committee Administration Group, with duties as prescribed in the T&F Committee job description**

I had been a member of this Committee prior to my appointment as Co-Ordinator of AC and continued in this role to oversee the duties as prescribed. Setting the programme for the season and following through with the management of events was the main aspect of this task. I believe the tournaments were well planned, well-spaced and well-managed.

- **In conjunction with the Chairperson of the Fixtures and Tournaments Committee, liaising with the Team Leaders of the Tournament Management Pool regarding the appointment of Tournament Managers for all VCA AC events.**

The management of events at Cairnlea and Country Week at Cobram was shared between Brian Reither and myself. This worked well in this first season as it was important to begin the transition from having Brian acting as TM in most VCA events. I have made a recommendation to Mike Cohn for the VCA to consider running a TM course for interested people from all regions to assist in this matter into the future. It is important we establish a core group of around 5 people who are trained to conduct our events from the planning to completion stage. I believe another 2-3 would be a positive way to start the implementation and broaden the base as the level of competency grows.

- **Liaising with the State Coordinator of Referees (AC) to ensure the appointment of Tournament Referees.**

I have established an excellent working relationship with Brian Foley. We worked together to ensure the events conducted by VCA were well supplied with suitable numbers of referees.

Mike Cohn was an excellent support in this regard.

- **Ensuring that Tournament Committees are provided as necessary.**

In all events under the auspices of the VCA there was a Tournament Manager, Tournament Referee and Tournament Handicapper. The support received from players and officials was first rate.

- **Providing a budget for the following years activities to the Treasurer for inclusion in the Croquet Victoria annual budget.**

I have been in contact with Brian Rowe and will continue to work with him to seek adequate funding to support the activities undertaken at Cairnlea. My main concern in the conduct of

events is to ensure the equipment provided for the players and referees is kept to a standard in keeping with the level of events at the venue. Thus I have suggested we need investment in hoops, clips, balls and timers. The standard of the hoops we currently use is below what we should expect at this level.

**General Comments:**

I have visited a number of clubs around Victoria as part of my playing and management roles. I note the enthusiasm of the people running the events and the extreme dedication of a small number at each venue. I express my thanks to the club tournament managers who go out of their way to ensure their events are well conducted. There have been many occasions I have liaised with club people to sort out issues of scheduling and tournament management.

I travel around the state as a tourist and often call in to clubs and get “a feel” for what is going on. I am saddened to note the small number of members doing an arduous amount in many of our country clubs. I really don't have any answers to how to help these clubs and members.

But be assured - if I am asked to offer an opinion, or sit and work with clubs or regions I am most happy to offer my time and whatever expertise I have.

I have enjoyed the role. I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting AC players throughout our state and playing with, and against, many of them. Our clubs are full of wonderful people.....my sadness is that there are not enough of us!!

**State Coordinator of Golf Croquet – Lorraine Gutcher**

Well, the 2014-15 year has been a steep learning curve for me, and I still have so much more to go.

I totally support the need for a group of members who could make themselves available to assist or be Tournament Managers. How to achieve this? It is still being worked on.

As part of my role I attend the meetings of the Selection Committee and the Tournaments & Fixtures Committee. This has improved my knowledge of how things work a great deal.

Over the year I have been involved in many tournaments at ACA, VCA and District level in roles of Tournament Manager, Tournament Referee and Referee.

Tournaments as a whole have been well attended and enjoyed by players.

Thanks you to all who have helped and encouraged me, without you all I would have been lost.

**State Coordinator of Gateball – Philip Brown**

Gateball has been solid in 2014-15. The 2015 state championships for Gateball were held in Cairnlea, where Canberra recorded a third victory in the Teams event while David and Gareth Hughes (from Queensland) won the pairs.

The Terang tournament was also held successfully last November. Kew won the Teams event and the pairs was won by Sue Lietinger and Adrian Masterman-Smith.

There is a new tournament being added to the schedule next year, when Maryborough will host an event over Easter. This will be the inaugural championship there and we hope it becomes a standard feature of the Gateball year.

Gateball is still played every Sunday afternoon, on a rotating basis amongst Kew, Essendon and Brunswick Croquet clubs.

The overall trajectory of Gateball is changing. A few of the older players who began when the sport was launched are drifting away from the game, which is disappointing. But I am happy to report that the game is being adopted by younger players. In general we find the younger players appreciate the shorter game time and the ability to play as one of a team of five. This allows new players to learn while not bearing the burden of being solely responsible for a team's performance. Both Brunswick and Kew fielded very young players (under 12) in their sides for the Victorian Championships.

We intend to bring more newer players into Gateball and the new tournament is greatly helpful in this regard. The quality of the strongest Gateball players in Australia is now very high, as our improving performances at World Championships attest. However, as the game is still only played by comparatively small numbers, the quality of play at the larger tournaments can be dauntingly high.

The challenge is to ensure that new players are not dis-spirited by large losses early in their careers. The Victorian Championships is played to a very high standard, but the Terang and Maryborough events will, hopefully, provide the ongoing ability for new players to experiment with our game in a friendly way.

### **State Coordinator of Association Croquet Referees - Brian Foley,**

The past season has been again busy 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 several regions. Five new referees were qualified and several candidates are in training.

Sessions dealing with the laws of croquet were given to both the State Training Squad and the State Development Squad.

Although there are currently about 140 AC referees still listed as active in Victoria, there is a downward trend in the number actually officiating that parallels the reduced numbers still playing AC. Some referees who play regularly in competitions have little chance to officiate. Others are no longer available due to advanced age while others do not wish to travel beyond their home clubs. During the past season, the main burden of refereeing for the major championships at Cairnlea fell on a small group of about six referees.

During the year, the ACA accreditation and re-accreditation process was explained at refresher training days and these form part of the accreditation system. In the next year, the accreditation program and other referee training activities will continue. As well as attracting new referee candidates, we also need to identify experienced referees who would be suitable as tutor and examining referees so that training and accreditation can be undertaken locally.

### **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.

Some of these events require selection according to ranking, in particular the Victorian Gold Cup, Silver Shield and Bronze Shields and the Australian Bronze Medal. However, the Selectors have the opportunity to invite a wider range of players into the other events. This season we have had several newer players in the Selectors' Invitation and Victorian Bronze Medal, but player numbers are still not increasing satisfactorily and selection becomes difficult. Players who accept invitations to play at Cairnlea generally enjoy the experience and we encourage clubs to put forward names of others who are interested to compete at a higher level.

The selection of the Eire Cup team resulted in one player appealing non-selection, an appeal which was not upheld by the hearing committee. An adjustment to the Selection Policy was recommended to Council when it became clear that the Policy did not give concise direction about timing for addition of players to the State Team Squad. This shortcoming had ultimately led to the player's appeal. We believe that the amendment to the Policy will clarify the requirements for adding players to the State Team Squad. The Victorian Selection Policy is constantly in use and amendments may still be needed in the future.

The members of the State Team Squad and the State Development Squad receive training from Coach, Stephen Forster and continue to improve. Many of them compete in country tournaments and can be seen at the major Victorian Croquet Centre events. We look forward to being able to select more new players to our squads as they gain more skills.

This year, our Victorian State Team was narrowly defeated 9-11 in a tight and tense finish against NSW in the Eire Cup. This was after an amazing performance in the previous 4 days, when they played a clean sweep 20-0 against Western Australia, 19-1 against Queensland, 18-2 against Tasmania and 14-6 against South Australia. We congratulate them, and thank them for their enormous efforts in training and competing to represent us. Victorian players have a great reputation as friendly and sporting as well as fierce competitors.

Thank you to the members of the Selection Committee, and to our retiring member, Marie Calthorpe, for their support.

### **Golf Croquet Selection Committee – Jim Saunders (Chair)**

The Victorian Golf Croquet (GC) Team for the Interstate Shield to be contested in Adelaide in September, 2014 was chosen last May and consisted of

MEN	WOMEN
Kevin Beard – Captain	Judy Wembridge – Vice Captain
John van der Touw – Coach	Wendy Dickson
Darren McLoughlin	Anne Quinn
Eric Miller	Tricia Devlin
Neville Pope – Non Travelling Reserve	Anna Miller – Non Travelling Reserve

Widely regarded as the premier GC event on the Australian calendar, the World Croquet Federation Interstate Shield in 2014 was played between teams from Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria at a variety of venues in Adelaide, South Australia. 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. However, the Vics fielded a strong team and, once again, prevailed.

Victoria again won the WCF Interstate Shield for 2014 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 March, 2015 was again complemented by two, two day, Selectors Invitation Tournaments each of which were conducted as round robin events. This year it was decided to invite a larger field for both Invitations with the result that outcome for the weekend was that 41 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 three days. Kevin Beard (Essendon) was successful from Darren McLoughlin (Deniliquin) and will represent Victoria in the ACA Gold Medal in Hobart in September. We wish Kevin all the very best.

The First Selectors Invitation Tournament consisted of 17 players from the GC State Squad who did not make the Bronze Medal field. The event was won by Ian Grant (Rich River) from Ian Petersen (Geelong Belmont) in the final. The Second Selectors Invitation consisted of 17 players. The final was won by John Murfett (Portland) who defeated Jim Lynch (Geelong Eastern Park).

The team to represent Victoria in the Inter State Shield in Tasmania 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, particularly for her work as committee secretary, Lynne Roberts, Dennis Newman, Lorraine Gutcher and Mike Cohn, who represented VCA.

## **State GC Team & Squads Coach – John van der Touw**

### **Golf Croquet State Team.**

As far as I am aware there had not been State team Coach for golf croquet prior to 2013. Before then the captain of the State Team was responsible for arranging practice sessions after the team had been selected in May. After discussions with previous captains (Judy Wembridge in 2013 and Kevin Beard 2014) we decided on the following system regarding team practice. The team captain and team coach would collaborate to arrange practice sessions leading up to the Interstate Shield. Once the competition started, the captain would

have sole responsibility.

Leading up to the 2014 Interstate Shield we had three weekend practice sessions: July 12/13, July 26/27 and August 9/10. These sessions consisted of

1. Competitive drills
2. Scenarios (balls played repeatedly from a preset position to evaluate tactical options)
3. Games (singles or doubles)
4. Discussions about tactics

After the second practice session I sent an email asking for feedback. I received some replies, but not enough to get a clear overall picture.

In previous years the captain and vice-captain of the State A team, which consists of players who have just missed out on selection for the State Team, have been asked to participate in the State team practice sessions. Kevin and I decided to invite all members of the State A team. This resulted in two contrasting complaints: (1) some members of the State A team complained that they had come to the practice session to play games with or against State team members and were unhappy about some of their matches consisting of State A team members only, and (2) some members of the State team felt that only the captain and vice-captain of the State A team should have been invited and that inviting the whole State A team had been detrimental to State team preparation. On the other hand, feedback from one of the State team members was "I like having the A team present. I think that they add variety to the weekend".

Some people liked the scenarios but thought the time spent on them could be shortened, and some thought they were a waste of time. Personally, I thought the scenarios were very useful. We learnt something about how to tackle the short hoops like hoop 5 and hoop 7 that we didn't know before. In an effort to make the scenarios more time efficient, I changed the way they were done in the third practice weekend.

Some also thought that doing drills at the training sessions were a waste of time as they could be done by players in their own time.

Given the concerns expressed, I believe a bit of a re-think about how the State team practice sessions are run is needed, with input from the members of the State team (after they are selected).

On a positive note, the Victorian State Team was undefeated in all five of its tests to win the Interstate Shield. The main reason for that was the high skill level and dedication of each member of the team, but I like to think that the practice sessions played an important part too.

### **Golf Croquet State Squad.**

The State GC Selectors invited 55 players to be part of the State Squad, and 38 of those accepted the invitation. A weekend training session for the Squad was held at VCA headquarters on the weekend of March 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. About 20 players attended the weekend. That was a reasonably good attendance rate – comparable with previous years, but it was disappointing that so few of the members of last year's State team attended. This was largely because a major association croquet competition was held at the same time. We had far less flexibility in choosing a date for two reasons: (1) the Golf Croquet World Championships were held in February this year and (2) there were not many weekends at Cairnlea that had not already been booked. I did not attempt to book the courts until after I received the list of people in the State Squad in early January. It would have been better to have made the booking earlier. In retrospect I realize that it was not necessary to know who was on the list before making some tentative bookings.

Here is a brief description of what was covered at the State Squad weekend.



- **Skill levels.** The importance of not only have good skills but also of *knowing* your own skill level was emphasized. Knowing how good you are helps you to make good tactical decisions and helps you see which aspects of the game you need to work on most.
- **Taking calculated risks.** Players were encouraged to be prepared to take risks. Going for a difficult shot with a large cost if it misses is sometimes a good idea and sometimes foolish. Players need to learn how to assess which it is.
- **Defensive tactics related to court boundaries.** This is relevant given that a State level player would expect make a successful seven yard clearance at least 75% of the time.
- **Cut shots.** We looked at how the outcome of a clearance is affected by how far off-centre your ball hits the target ball. We identified several situations where a well-executed cut shot could be played to good advantage, and also considered the risk involved.
- **Clearing the last ball played.** We looked at situations where a big advantage could be gained by clearing the last ball played, and at how to avoid letting your opponent gain a big advantage in such a manner. We discussed the risks associated with clearing the last played rather than dealing immediately with the next opponent ball to play.

Each of the above involved both discussion and practical sessions. We also played several doubles and singles games and did several practice drills. Towards the end of the weekend we had a short session where each player was asked to explain and demonstrate how they did jump shots.

I received quite a lot of positive feedback about the State squad weekend. The only negative comment was from someone who thought it was too much like last years.

I was impressed by the enthusiasm and skills demonstrated by the participants. The number of players knocking on the door of state selection is growing. The already difficult task of the state selectors will be even harder this year.

### **Handicap Committee – Doron Gunzburg (Chair)**

The Handicap Committee comprises Doron Gunzburg (Chair and Association Croquet Handicapper), Neville Pope (Golf Croquet Handicapper) and Ian McKee (Handicap Recorder). It is apparent from the discrepancies between the handicaps and index points recorded on AHS1 forms and those in the VCA records that the handicap recorder is not receiving AHS1 forms from all tournaments. It is essential that all tournament managers forward results to the recorder as soon as possible after the event, in order for us to maintain the integrity of the handicap system.

It is also clear that some tournament handicappers do not realise that for players on a golf croquet handicap of greater than 10, index points cannot be lost either in singles or doubles. A number of individual queries were dealt with during the year, but (apart from the issues raised above) there were no substantive matters of a systemic nature that needed resolution.

### **Tournament & Fixtures Committee – John Grieve (Chair)**

The members of the T&F Committee are John Grieve (AC Coordinator and Chairman), Lorraine Gutcher (GC Coordinator), Phillip Brown (Gateball Coordinator), Jim Saunders (Secretary) and Kerri-Ann Organ - ordinary members. The Committee met as needed to establish the structure for the events to be held under the auspices of the VCA in Association Croquet, Golf Croquet and Gateball.

Brian Reither provided a valuable overlay from his many years of experience to assist the Committee organise the calendar for Season 2014/1015. Until I had to be involved in planning

the current calendar I had no idea of the complexity of the task and how informed and organised Brian is. Brian's commitment to the work of this Committee must be recognised and applauded. As we move to the future I know I will need to call on this expertise in planning the forthcoming (and subsequent) calendars. Brian's ability to liaise with ACA, VCA Regions and clubs has made him almost irreplaceable in planning a workable program.

The support of Lorraine Gutcher and Phillip Brown has been crucial to the successful implementation of the program.

While the Committee forms an integral part of the playing aspect of the VCA it does not need to meet regularly. Its meetings are determined by need and have been most harmonious.

VCA must be aware of the complexity of the program. The Committee looks at all events to ascertain their appropriateness for the current season and negotiate with clubs to help formulate a program that spreads the events to assist players find suitable competition across the season.

Both Brian Reither and I have been in contact with regions and clubs to help them in their nomination for events in the coming season. The need to adjust dates to accommodate a growing calendar is paramount and clubs have been proactive in seeking ways to maximise the attendance at their tournaments.

Attendances at events at Cairnlea in season 2014/15 have been stable. While numbers have been reasonable there are few new players coming to play in Association Croquet events. This highlights the general downturn in people playing the game of Association croquet. The attendances at Golf Croquet events are strong and demonstrate a growing interest in the game. We continue to provide comparable events in both games. This creates a very crowded calendar at Cairnlea in the traditionally busy periods.

The Committee would be interested to hear suggestions from clubs and regions on ways to improve the planning and conduct of events right across the board. I welcome contact from any player, manager or referee who has a suggestion to make.

As time passes it is obvious we need to re-assess the tournaments conducted and consider their value to players. A number are constantly struggling for numbers - e.g. Country V Metro (AC) - and might benefit from being deleted from the calendar.

I believe the tournaments held at Cairnlea were professionally conducted and provided an enjoyable experience for those concerned. Where players have made suggestions we have listened and made adjustments accordingly

### **Marketing and Publicity Committee – Kate Patrick (Chair)**

VCA Council approved a job description for the Marketing and Publicity subcommittee at its meeting in June 2014. In August 2014 Council appointed Kate Patrick (WMCMA) and Helen Worlidge (EMCA) as members of the subcommittee. They have since been joined by Eileen Gough (Geelong CA) and Janet Richardson (MVCA). In April 2015 Council invited Heather Strano to join the subcommittee to lead VCA's involvement in the Ultimate Sport Expo at the Showgrounds in November 2015.

Under its job description, the key task of the subcommittee is to promote the sport of croquet across Victoria. We take this to include both publicising croquet activities and also assisting and supporting publicity, recruitment and development at the grassroots level.

Our activities to date have included:

- developing a plan of action for 2015/16, aligned with the VCA Strategic Plan, which was approved at the February 2015 meeting of Council
- writing a submission for a VicHealth funding round aimed at encouraging more women to play sport. This was not successful. We will be seeking feedback on the application when the successful recipients are announced.
- instituting weekly results reports to AAP of the metro Shield and Pennant competitions, leading to publication of croquet results in The Age and the Herald Sun. Thanks particularly to Lynne Roberts and Wayne Worlidge for taking responsibility for reporting these results. Reporting in the dailies has not been entirely consistent but it has happened often enough to be noticed by both members and non-members.
- sending AAP the results from competitions held at Cairnlea. These have not generally been picked up by the metro dailies but we are persisting. Thanks to Janet Richardson for taking over responsibility for sending in these results.
- developing a set of resources to help clubs in promoting and developing croquet at grassroots level. In line with our approved plan, these are being taken for discussion to meetings of seven regional associations in the period June to August.
- proposing a budget to enable pilot publicity and recruitment activities in conjunction with regions and clubs.
- initial development of a budget and plan for involvement with the Ultimate Sport Expo at the Showgrounds in November 2015
- arranging with the VCA webmaster to establish a generic email address to maintain continuity for the subcommittee - [marketing@croquetvic.asn.au](mailto:marketing@croquetvic.asn.au).

We are looking forward to engaging directly with regions and clubs and further developing our resource pack to meet their needs.

### **Investment Advisory Group – David Ross (Chair)**

The Investment Advisory Group comprises up to three members appointed by VCA Council plus the VCA Treasurer as a non-voting member. For the period from June 2014 there were two appointed members – Wendy Dickson and David Ross and the VCA Treasurer - John Blackler (to October 2014) and Brian Rowe (from October).

#### **Portfolio Valuations:**

The preserved amount of the original investment CPI indexed to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 is \$3,783,058.

The policy is that the portfolio is CPI indexed annually as at 30<sup>th</sup> June and VCA Directors at the August Council decide, following a recommendation by the treasurer, what funds from the increased portfolio valuation are available.

As at 31 March 2015, the portfolio valuation was \$4,236,834.41

As at 31 March 2014, the portfolio valuation was \$3,993,539.87.

As \$160,000 of interest and dividends was withdrawn during the year, this is an increase in the portfolio of 10.09%.

As at 30 April 2015, the portfolio valuation was \$4,198,892.71.

#### **Prime Purpose of the Portfolio:**

The portfolio continues to underwrite the administration of the VCA and the management of the Victorian Croquet Centre (VCC) at Cairnlea.

#### **Relationship with JBWere:**

We have been very fortunate to still have the advisors who started with the portfolio nine years ago. They have given excellent advice and service and the IAG always has prompt responses to enquiries and professional resources in responding to recommendations re the portfolio.