

President's Report 1993-1994

I am delighted that for the first time we have been able to produce an annual report. I would like to thank all those responsible, particularly our Junior Vice-President, Robin Potter. As all committees and some officers have had the opportunity to contribute I will not try to cover everything myself.

This year has been dominated by the occupation and development of our Headquarters at Tempe. At the same time there has been continued progress over a wide range of activities.

The beginning of the year saw a significant changeover in officers and committees. A lot of experience was lost and the new incumbents, myself included, found themselves on a steep learning curve. I would like to thank all officers, committee members and delegates for the effort they gave to their jobs over the year and for the help given to those who needed it. One lesson I learnt was how much distilled wisdom is included in our handbook. I urge everyone who has custody of a copy to keep it up to date.

At Tempe we have incurred major expenses in four areas: rejuvenation of the lawns, installation of the watering system, construction of six shelter sheds and creation of "The CPA Room". We have also broken new ground in employing a part time Assistant Secretary. The Management Committee have done an excellent job of setting up systems, signs and equipment to make us properly operational and we have been able to play most of the CPA events here. I have been delighted to arrive on a number of occasions to see the courts covered with players. But there are still many things to be done. We must maximise the use of our headquarters so that we may maximise the income from it. I would like to see a fourth lawn developed to assist this process. And we should set up a library and a shop in the CPA Room.

The year saw us continue our successes in competition. Our team again came second in the Interstate Cup. Mark Kobelt won the Australian Mens Singles from Robert Fulford. Lorraine LeBlang won the Morrison Trophy at the Australian Championships. We were represented in the Australian team at the Trans Tasman event by Blaise Northey who also represented Australia at the World Championships in England. At home, Mark Kobelt and Mark Prater played each other in the finals of both the NSW Open and the NSW Mens, with honours shared, Chris Prater won the NSW Womens and Barrie Chambers and Mark Prater won the NSW Doubles. Congratulations to all!

Kevin Brereton continues to promote our game positively. During the year he brought Robert Fulford out to Australia to launch the new Advantage mallet and for a coaching and promotional tour of the Eastern States. Promotions of this type are of great value to our sport as the publicity generated is attractive to the media and creates a good image.

Two new clubs have been welcomed to our ranks during the year, Orange City and Holroyd, and we lost Gosford City RSL. There are a number of inquiries about formation of new clubs being investigated and from the first few club affiliations

processed I note a healthy number of new members. For our clubs to remain vital we must recruit new players constantly. Advertising is important. Most clubs which have a healthy recruitment program do some advertising and I commend the concept to all clubs. The mere location of a club on a busy thoroughfare seems enough to generate a steady stream of enquiries from prospective new members. The very least a club should do is to have a prominent (and, I hope, tasteful!) sign at their courts with a contact telephone number.

During the year I have taken opportunities to travel and I would like to thank our Senior Vice-President, John Castle, for acting in my absence. I played in the New Zealand Open and then watched the Trans-Tasman event. I played in San Francisco, watched some of the Sonoma-Cutrer World Singles Championship and played in Canada in the Victoria Open. I also played in the Victorian Open in Melbourne and the Australian Championships in Adelaide. At all of these locations I was able to observe some things which they do better than us and some things we do better. I have and will continue to pass on to our various officers and committees ideas and procedures that may be useful. In this respect I would like to thank both Victoria and South Australia for ideas about headquarters. (Some to be copied and some avoided!)

The administration of our Association remains a difficult area. We have employed Mrs Lee Harris for five hours a week but are asking her to do things which cannot be done in that amount of time. John White, who has been a marvellous Secretary, is standing down due to pressure of work after two hard years and I note there are no nominations to take his place. The amount of time needed to do the job is significant and some skills are needed. There seem to be only three ways to solve this problem: find someone to do the job on an honorary basis, pay someone to do it, or pay for it to be done on a contract basis. If we cannot find a suitably skilled honorary then employment of an Executive Director will cost something, even with a fifty percent subsidy from the State Government. Even if we find a suitably skilled honorary with time available I think we will need to extend the hours of work for which we are paying Mrs Harris. Contract administration is feasible, gives continuity, would require a lot of changes and the costs are rather indeterminate. Is there someone out there who has computer skills, can write good letters, can attend meetings and who has plenty of spare time?

The experiment of basing the Tournament Committee outside Sydney appears to have been successful. Thank you Wendy Davidson and your committee. The challenge for the next year is to maximise the use of headquarters and arrange a program that will provide opportunities to promote croquet. The idea that we should have **NSW Croquet Week**, combining all our championships into one time period and thus making it attractive for interstate players to enter, has my full support. Both Victoria and Queensland use this format for their championships with great success.

I have now visited thirty-seven of the fifty-six clubs in NSW and hope to visit the others before too long. I would like to thank them all for the welcome I have received. Indeed, my prime thought is the incredibly good work being done by all concerned in our sport, at club level, at Association level and, by many NSW members, at National level. I would like to conclude with particular thanks to the Executive, members of all Committees and Council. Thank you all. The last year has been most enjoyable.

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This year we have continued to make significant progress in the administration and development of our sport.

Since the end of the Australian Championships in March I have visited forty of the fifty-seven affiliated clubs in NSW (including all 37 in the country) and eight groups which I hope will affiliate soon. Three things emerge clearly. Clubs fall into three categories, those supported by their local council, those supported by a "big brother" (golf or bowling club), and those which are independent. The independent clubs are usually strong, perhaps because of the strong commitment needed by their members. Clubs with a prominent position, a big sign (good advertising) and an entry in the telephone book starting with the word "croquet" have few problems recruiting new members... they ring asking to learn! And our game is alive and well in the country. I found two clubs that have been playing for years with almost no contact with other players: Moonan Croquet Club and Coutts Crossing Croquet Club.

Both Grenfell Croquet Club and St Andrews Croquet Club at Scone have affiliated for the first time this year. Welcome! I enjoyed my visits to them and hope they take full advantage of all we can offer. This is now spelt out in Appendix 1 of the Handbook.

The progress we have made in administration is due to a lot of hard work and dedicated service from a large number of volunteers. On behalf of you all I would like to thank them all. Our appointed officers have all continued to play a vital but usually unseen role. I would particularly like to thank Ian Cunliffe, our Honorary Solicitor, for responding rapidly with valuable and wise advice whenever I have asked. The Executive have each contributed well and it has been a pleasure to be part of the team. Their wise counsel has sustained me whenever difficulties have arisen. We welcomed Nerida Taylor as Secretary during the year to fill the vacancy and she has picked up the reins quickly and efficiently. John Hanscomb and his computer are managing our records better than ever and Croquet Notes is becoming established. Lois Chambers produces a Newsletter which is known as an informative and authoritative publication. After many years as Archivist and Librarian, preceded by an enormous amount of secretarial work, Annabelle Cresswell is standing down. I would like to thank her again for her contribution. And, as I discovered on my visits, Keith Rienits has been doing an excellent job of encouraging new groups to form clubs and affiliate.

Our new Sydney based Tournament Committee has learnt the ropes quickly and is now avoiding most of the traps for the unwary. Their task is certainly an intellectual challenge! The Referees Committee continues to provide the organisation and training structure needed and the Examining Referees continue to foster their recruits with a minimum of trauma. The Laws Committee has accomplished much with the initiatives in Double Banking and stand alone Golf Croquet Laws. We are already receiving requests for the latter from other administrations. The Handicap Committee must be doing a magnificent job because the subject is rarely raised in NSW whereas I have often been asked to take sides in other states and countries! The Coaching Committee and Regional Coordinators have been active and I would like to thank Chris Prater, who is standing down as the State Coaching Director, for her work over the years. The Social Committee, with some help from the Planning Committee, arranged an excellent Christmas Luncheon and is preparing for NSW Croquet Week.

The expanding functions of our central office are leading to efficiencies which may not be apparent but which are very real. We are finding better and easier ways of doing many of the routine tasks. The re-publication of our handbook in the smaller format seems to be a great success, with requests for extra copies. Lee Harris, our

Administrative Assistant, is becoming busier and busier as the public face of our organisation. I would like to thank her for the excellent way she has faced an often ill-defined set of tasks. With greater efficiency there is more activity and the extra administrative activity seems to be inducing more and hopefully better play.

With two top players not available this year the Selectors chose a team with some new faces. The women did better than the men in the Interstate Cup and we dropped to fourth but were certainly buoyed by the women's performances. Congratulations to Terry Regan who retained the Mollison Trophy for NSW. Mark Prater was selected to play in the Sonoma-Cutrer World Singles Championship which, on its tenth anniversary, finally achieved official recognition by becoming a USCA sanctioned tournament. Congratulations also to Barrie Chambers who won the Canberra Australia Day Tournament against a field with selected competitors from all States except Western Australia. At home Mark Kobelt, as NSW Open Champion, and Mark Prater, as English Gold Medal winner, shared the honours after fighting out the finals.

In the competitive field we are delighted to be conducting the Trans-Tasman Open in Newcastle from 4 to 10 December 1995 and I hope that as many clubs as possible will take the opportunity to come to watch a day or two by bus or coach. (Our Gold medal was to have been deferred but has now been reinstated to its original dates of 18, 19, 25 and 26 November 1995.)

We successfully conducted the first NSW Golf Croquet competitions and found the new comprehensive laws allow enjoyable and competitive play.

The Management Committee has continued to play a key role in keeping our headquarters at Tempe in the best condition. The courts are playing very well, with our greenkeeper, Frank Dempsey, keeping a keen eye on them. The surrounds have been much improved by attention from Mosman club. The Management Committee has introduced a self-help luncheon on the last day of most competitions, an enjoyable and appropriate way to celebrate and commiserate. The Tempe Leagues Club has been going through problems of lack of profitability, with trading being reduced to Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, but I am hopeful that at least one other organisation will join the Marrickville Soccer Club and ourselves in rescuing it. If the worst comes to the worst we may have a period of sole occupation before someone else takes over. In the long term I do not think we want to operate the club and I think there will always be someone else willing to do so. We may, however, be asked to pay a little more for our presence. I would still like to see the fourth lawn constructed and some lights installed, but we should probably wait until the viability of the leagues club is resolved. Until we have a fourth lawn we cannot conduct an International event at our headquarters. Also, the Tournament Committee advises me that the fourth lawn would make their task much easier.

Once again Kevin Brereton and Ex-Act Crafts brought World Champion Robert Fulford to Australia for a series of promotional tours and I would like to thank him for the good publicity he obtained for our sport. They also visited many centres in NSW and left an excellent impression everywhere.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to our publishers, for communication is at the heart of organisation: John Hanscomb for the Year Book and Croquet Notes, Robin Potter for the Annual Report, Lois Chambers for Council Minutes and the Newsletter and the Tournament Committee for the Closing Date Calendar.

Finally, thanks to all members of Council for their guidance and support throughout

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In this my third and last year as President I am pleased to report that croquet is progressing well in New South Wales. Our Association is strong and very well supported by a large number of competent volunteers. Our headquarters at Tempe is well established and the host Leagues Club is now healthy. We now have fifty nine affiliated clubs and I am aware of another twenty one groups or clubs that play croquet but are not affiliated. We have expanded the number of competitions so that for much of the year there are two streams of competitions for players to choose from, one at our headquarters and the other at a number of the larger and more competitive clubs. In competition we remain consistently in the top three states in Australia.

During the year I completed my programme of visits and have now been to every affiliated NSW club (and to many in other states and countries!). I also visited the other twenty one to persuade them to affiliate. May I record my appreciation to all who made me so welcome and who extended such extraordinary hospitality. My waistline will never recover. Only Lithgow was in difficulties and with 'Tony Graham's help together with efforts by Orange City and Hazelbrook clubs it is on the way back to viability. A hearty welcome to new clubs Woolgoolga, Casino, Muswellbrook, Nelson Bay and West Wyalong. To continue to progress we need to recruit more players and establish more clubs and I have made this point during my visits. I would like to applaud the efforts of our New Clubs Formation Officer, Keith Rienits, who has also been to a large number of groups, and with assistance from Victoria has produced a Croquet Start Up Kit to assist new clubs. At present our membership stands at about 1750 and I believe that we need to grow to about 2500 before we can progress to a more effective administrative basis by employing a full time Executive Director. In the meantime may I record my appreciation of the the efforts made by our administrative assistant Lee Harris. Almost all sports have full time staff now and this should be a high priority objective.

If we can find volunteers with sufficient energy and drive there are fertile fields for expansion in NSW. The Western suburbs of Sydney have few clubs and the South coast of NSW even fewer. The demographic profile of our population, with more people retiring early and greater numbers of younger retirees, offers wide scope to expand our sport among the group who are most likely to respond. Resources available for recreation in the community are growing and we should ensure that we meet the call to provide the necessity facilities. Our game provides a large percentage of the characteristics needed for excellent recreation and a relief from the pressures of the modern world.

During the last few months I have visited the United States and England to play, referee and watch croquet. There are many lessons to be learnt from those countries. In England most games are untimed and this seems to speed play as defensive tactics are self defeating. Almost without exception their tournament managers provide more croquet per player per day than we do and most players take full advantage of the opportunities. Rarely are there referees who are not also players. Indeed the tournament manager is usually one of the players. For two years now I have been honoured to be invited to be tournament referee at the "World Singles Championship" at Sonoma Cutrer in California and the experience has made me realise the intricacies and difficulties of "on-the-court" refereeing or, to give it the name becoming common overseas, "umpiring". New Zealand has for many years been qualifying players as umpires before asking them to do the exam to become a referee and this system is a good one. Many people can gain the knowledge to become a referee, but not all have the tact, sensitivity and wisdom to be good umpires.

Our host club, the Tempe Leagues Club, has been taken over by the Canterbury and District Soccer Football Association and is now being properly managed. I am sure that it will gradually return to profitability. I have resigned as the director of the Leagues Club representing the CPA and wish to thank the directors of the Leagues Club for their efforts in keeping the Leagues Club alive and their assistance to the CPA. May I thank Harry Taylor for taking over from me and wish him and the Leagues Club every success in the future. Our two organisations are clearly very compatible. The basic agreement between us has withstood a testing time and may I thank those who thought it out more than three years ago. May I also thank the Management Committee who have kept our headquarters operating so well. Thanks also to Frank Dempsey, our greenkeeper, for providing such good courts and to Mosman club for their attention to the gardening of the surrounds. I still urge Council to approve the creation of a fourth lawn (agreed to by the Leagues Club two years ago) as I believe that will significantly cement our tenure. It will also make Tempe capable of conducting international events.

Administratively we have been well served. Fay Stove has taken up the reins as Secretary and our Minutes Secretary and Records Officer continue their excellent service. The Tournament Committee continue to solve the impossible on a monthly basis. The Coaching Committee, Referees Committee, Handicap Committee, Laws Committee, Social Committee, and Panel of Examining Referees continue to operate well with excellent support from all our appointed officers. I have always said that communication is supremely important and we are well served by our publications: Croquet Newsletter, Croquet Notes, The CPA Yearbook and the CPA Handbook. A special thank you to the editors and to our Gazette Correspondent. I am delighted that Warren Porter has accepted duty as Public Relations Officer. Thank you also to our Public Officer, Trophies Officer, Assistant Treasurer, Marketing Officer, Archivist, Librarian, to our new Property Officer, Jim Merson, and to Elaine Goggin who keeps us in touch with the NSW sporting community.

I am most grateful that The Honourable Gordon Samuels AC, Governor of New South Wales granted patronage to our Association soon after assuming duty. Our association with Government House by exposure of croquet on open days continued through the year and I would like to thank those concerned. It was well received.

I was distressed to hear that Life Member Win Dickinson, has been in poor health and has had a leg amputated. I wish her a speedy recovery and return to the courts.

A special thanks to National Park Croquet Club for their fine conduct of the Trans Tasman International last December. Well done!

Mark Kobelt had an outstandingly successful year. He won the NSW Gold Medal, Open Singles and Mens Singles and the Canberra Australia Day Tournament and was selected to represent Australia in the Trans Tasman Open against New Zealand. Unfortunately he was injured towards the end of the Australian Championships. Rosemary Graham won the NSW Womens Singles (and recently reached a semi-final of the British Open Doubles with Keith Aiton - congratulations Rosemary!). Greg Burnes and Steve Harden from Tamworth won the NSW Open Doubles. Pat Roach won the Eva Short Womens Trophy. Congratulations all!

In January this year we hosted Japanese Gateball players at Tempe for two enjoyable days which also made money for the CPA. I hope this initiative can be extended.

Finally my special thanks to the other members of the Executive and to Council. They have made my time as President both enjoyable and rewarding.

Col. Tony HALL, OBE. President.