



AUTUMN/WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER



What a team – how fantastic are you!

The achievements over the past months are amazing – due to huge investments of time, whether organising, providing, donating or supporting – everyone does their bit. Thank you so much. Now 25% through the year, we raced from Christmas and New Year, via Coaching, Compost turning, Garden Party, Lawn Upgrade, Starting to improve the Pétanque area, Tidying sheds to planning the future; then building a wall when the weather changed to sunshine on Easter Sunday!

Coaching generally means new members, with no exceptions this Autumn, so I would also like to specifically welcome those who have recently become members:

Steve Shortland (Veda's husband), Bob and Marion Campbell, John Hyde (Ruth's husband), Maureen Berry, Jackie Gillies and Warwick Goldsmith. Although it will be a while before they join in Club games, please show them our typical friendly support during practice sessions.

Two experienced players have transferred from other clubs: you have already met Kay Troup who lives in Bayswater and previously played at Takapuna – Kay was responsible for all the table decorations at the Pimms Party. We also note with considerable pride that one of our honorary members, Josh Freeth has now transferred to full membership status. The name may be familiar to some as he won the under 21's GC World Tournament in 2018, held in the UK. This year, whilst living in America, he will enter the World GC championship representing NZ. He plays off a handicap of -5 GC (yes minus 5!) and also represents NZ at AC. He has written an article on his experiences in America – look out for this later in the Newsletter. We may seldom see him but we will quickly become aware of

his presence when he steps out on the lawns!

We have witnessed a dramatic increase in membership over the past few years. Full members number just under 90 and our popularity has pushed us up the ranks to be one of the largest Croquet Clubs in NZ! We (your Committee) are very conscious of our obligation to you to ensure that we manage and balance player numbers – and that also extends to Twilight evenings which have become increasingly popular. Special mention of Martin and Wendy Bailey for their amazing organisational skills as they welcome any number from 15 to 40 twice a month for a lighthearted game followed by supper and lively socialising.

Digging into the history of our sport is always fascinating for me and for many others, so I'd like to share the following with you. The rather grainy photo below appeared in a book that I found in a waiting room in Takapuna. It made interesting reading and shows the grounds of 'Lochaber' - the property owned by resident and Early Settler, Ewen Alison (note the name!). His wife is shown in the role of hostess at a formal Croquet Party in 1902; you can't help noticing the amazing outfits (no stop shots for them!) but also note the round headed mallets and the fact that the group would have played Association Croquet (or a derivation).



Although Garden Croquet was played from the late 1800's, GC became recognized in NZ as a serious sport in the early part of the 21st century. Charlotte recalls the time when AC popularity started to be challenged by GC around 2010 and formal 'whites' reluctantly began to give way to more casual dress. It was not an easy transition and even today, AC (which requires great skill) is considered the superior game by many.

This leads me to mention 2025, the year in which we will celebrate the 120th anniversary of North Shore Croquet Club. Various celebrations will mark this special year so look out for advance notices and please participate wherever possible to help us make this a truly remarkable period. The last time the Club held a major celebratory year was 20 years ago in 2005 when the Centenary was marked – we still have the original advertising board for that event – also that for the 75th anniversary year held in 1980.



Enjoy your croquet.

Michelle - 021 263 7671

So What's the Hoo-Hah around Pegs and Beads??



Well, it's like this. Beads are neat, discreet and easy to use (when remembered) to keep score. Fine for playing singles when the lawn is all yours. Not so good playing double-banked doubles and totally frowned upon (actually disallowed) in formal competition.

Pegs are always used in GC competitions (clips for AC) – the brighter the better and etiquette requires that they are clearly displayed on the outside of clothing. Anyone can see the number and colour of pegs on hoops and immediately determine the score.

- for the referee they are essential
- regardless of competition or not, for spectators it's a courtesy. Simple to assess who's winning and which point the game has reached.
- Easy to differentiate between 1st and 2nd colours.

You may not be convinced to relinquish beads and that's OK – although if you are playing with me, you will know that my preference is to use pegs! (you can of course continue to use beads as well if you wish). Just remember, when the CNZ Advantage Play rules are introduced, we change from no more free turns to use during the game, to winning hoops in advance of play commencing according to handicap. Sorry but pegs have to be used! and as for not marking won hoops at all when playing – well that's just asking for trouble and many a disagreement.

If this has all been totally confusing for new members, don't despair it will all become perfectly clear in due course – if you practise!

AGM and Nominations for Committee Members

During the AGM we formally retire and re-elect those members who wish to remain in their position, and/or elect new members. This year it is with a huge sense of loss that I have accepted Carol's decision to retire from the Committee following 3 years' loyal service. As a result, we will be inviting nominations for the position of Club Captain to take over from her. Carol is investigating new territory and undertaking training to be both a Referee and a Coach; she cannot combine these two roles with that of Captain of a large and busy club. We will

miss her input at meetings but know that she will continue to take an active role in the life of NSCC as well as continuing to improve her handicap and enter competitions. We will also miss her energy and ability to turn plans into action, but hope that she won't lose the touch when needs must! She will certainly continue to be a highly valued member in our midst - and in the wider Croquet world. Thank you Carol.

New Replacement Hoop Trolleys

The photo says it all. A bespoke well-balanced, well designed trolley that accommodates: Hoops, balls, pegs, lifting lever, rubber mallet, central pin, slot for coin, gap for the weeder/hole filler. The designer and builder is retired Engineer, Brian Small who made several of these for his own club (Waipu) and for another club in Northland. Now it's our turn and we anticipate the arrival of 4 brand spanking new ones within the next month or so. This is well ahead of the planned schedule of early spring and we have been promised a very generous contribution of \$1,000 to help with the cost. Our warm appreciation to John and Wendy Schollum (and Jean Kent) for making the initial introduction to Brian. These are essential pieces of equipment to ease the burden of trailing heavy wooden trolleys to the lawns each day!



A Message from a New Member...

Hello All,

My name is Joshua Freeth, I am a proud member of the North Shore croquet club. I spent a memorable few years in Auckland studying Fine Arts and spent many a day on the North Shore teaching Croquet and hanging out with Rod eating really good sandwiches.

I have represented NZ playing croquet, winning multiple world championships. Croquet as an amateur sport with little sponsorship, does not generate a living in NZ however, and given the fact I followed my passion to study fine arts I found myself at a financially unstable loose end at the end of 2022. After not playing for two years I received an offer from croquet NZ to commentate the 2023 u21 world championships in Tauranga. Being a poor student I showed up. I met a man named Michael who was the coach of the u21 USA team. They all wore white and looked wealthy and I was interested to learn more about them. Eventually through conversation I found out you could earn money playing Croquet in the USA. I bluntly asked for a position and said take me anywhere and I'll go! Two months later I was heading to North Carolina on a one way flight to work at a small club called Cedar Creek high up in the smoky mountains.

I arrived in the middle of the night and was taken to a room which I was to share with an Argentinian Tennis pro. In the morning I woke up to the sound of garbled Spanish as he talked to his Girlfriend from Columbia. We hit it off. I also didn't mind the smell of the cannabis he smoked with his morning tea!

I learnt how to say Sir and Ma'am but found my southern hemisphere charm didn't get me as far as I thought it would. I got in trouble for not having quite the right social diplomacy that they expected. The hard part wasn't playing croquet and teaching it. I know how to do that one handed. Socially I was in a world of millionaires and billionaires, while back in my little room with the Argentinian Tennis player we would sometimes get drunk to the point where he couldn't speak English and I pretended to still understand him. One morning I walked out the door rubbing my eyes to find myself standing face to face with a bear. Once hearing this, a member told me they were just big dogs and to ignore them.

One of the members made a fortune inventing electrical outlets for special refrigerated container

ships and in common with many Americans had a love for guns. He found out I had never seen a gun let alone shot one and he took me to a private shooting range higher up in the mountains where I met fighter jet pilots and government officials while he taught me how to shoot shotguns so as not to bruise from the recoil - it was fun. I was surprised they spent just as much time cleaning their guns as shooting them. They were precision instruments to them and they were very proud of their community.

Summer turned to Autumn and the leaves fell and the people disappeared. I bought a car and learnt how to drive on the wrong side of the road. One evening I was pulled over around midnight high up on a mountain road by a police officer who seemed drugged out of his mind. After hearing my accent he stood with his hand on his holster talking to me about how good the hunting was in NZ while I kept my hands on the wheel. The car turned off automatically after a while with a beep which he flinched at. Did you f....g whistle he said? "No that was just my car". He told me never to whistle in the forest as there were *skinwalkers around and once you were lured by one into the bush you would never be seen again. He was extremely twitchy and I didn't like how he had his hand on his gun and seemingly just wanted to chat about nothing at all. There was a rustle next to the car and he pulled his gun half out the holster. It was just a black bear wandering through. He told me he loved to shoot bears and if I wanted to try it then he'd be more than happy to show me. He wrote his name on a piece of paper "deputy Kyle J....., Jackson county police department" and told me to call him. I nodded in agreement with a smile on my face, thinking I'll give that one a miss. There is money to be made here playing Croquet and some pros make up to NZ\$6000 a week. Not me though! But hey, it's been really fun to come here. I feel very lucky to be given an opportunity that was unplanned and to be honest, one which I didn't really think about before I came. Take an opportunity when you can, isn't that right? I am currently in the desert of California. I work the Winter (northern) at Mission Hills Country Club. I'm slowly learning the language of the American Croquet pro. I deeply miss NZ. Maybe one day I'll come back and make bad paintings and be poor again. One day.

Josh

{note the round headed mallet}

President's note: we'll hold Josh to that; we need to see him at NSCC for sure! After all, he was a member of the NZ 4-man team that won the World GC Team Championship in Nelson last year, beating Egypt in the final!



*In Navajo culture, a skin-walker (Navajo: yee naaldlooshii) is a type of harmful witch who has the ability to turn into, possess, or disguise themselves as an animal. Learn something new every day!

Past Members

Around 2016 Garth Cumberland, my neighbour and then President asked me to help the NSCC with a re brand of the club. In return Garth organised a membership for me for one year. Prior to that Garth and I had drunk chardonnay together each full moon. We knew each other's drinking habits but not croquet skills. Garth went on to encourage me and several of my mates to actively take up the game that same year. The club needed new members and it was Garth's enthusiasm that turned around new membership. Fast forward eight years and we organised for Garth to pay us a visit and share some memories.

Grant Alexander



New Members

Becoming a member of North Shore Croquet Club remains very desirable to many locals plus some who are happy to drive past other clubs, to join us here. So far this year we have had one group of seven new members attend the excellent coaching programme run by Greg and John R. This provides prospective members an opportunity to learn more about the game and once completed, they were offered the opportunity to join the club and participate in 4 Novice Club mornings. We look forward to this group coming along to Club games along with the group of nine who completed the course at the end of last year. Congratulations to Greg for achieving his coaching certificate. Well deserved. One aspect of NSCC which is constantly mentioned by new members is the friendliness of everyone. A really positive environment.

The Lawns On Which We Play

If you have ever wondered how the grounds get maintained read on, otherwise skip to something more exciting! We have a contract with Turf Solutions who come once a month. They answer any questions about mowers, weed management, watering etc and apply fertilizer and treatments as required. They do big tasks like the recent scarification and sanding of A and D. We have two teenagers who mow every week and do a great job. Then there are the lawn rangers who do extra mows, mark the lines, move the hoops, fill any holes, dents, and bare patches with fresh grass plugs, mow the surrounds, and line trim the edges. With climate change and El Nino weather patterns making for warmer conditions and variable rainfall with occasional heavy rain events, we are encouraging couch grass (pronounced "cooch") which has largely taken over A and D and making inroads into the other two lawns. It is more drought resistant and forms a dense thatch which keeps weeds out. However it needs regular scarification to stop the thatch getting too thick. Last winter we had problems with low lying patches affected by black mould and fungi. The sanding should address that and the drainage is being improved this month to help get excess water away more quickly. We are fortunate to have a large loosely organised team with lots of skills that get it all done, including bricklayers as was recently discovered. The garden team do their good work by stealth, watering, weeding and

composting often when no one else is around. The evidence is in the thriving native plantings. The best news is that extra hands are always welcome subject to a bit of direction and 'health and safety' where tools are involved. Sometimes it is as much fun and satisfying as playing croquet.



Scarification

Events and Functions

Garden Party

As previously advised the Garden Party (despite the challenging weather) made a profit of just over \$2500 which will go a long way to paying off the umbrella debt. This level of profit would not have been able to be achieved without the generous donations of food and alcohol to the value of approximately \$420, from many members, with Lynley topping the list supplying food to the value of \$80. The Garden Party was a resounding success and again we would like to acknowledge the support received from many members, whether mowing, gardening, setting up the lawns and the umbrella, providing flowers, making sandwiches or ironing table clothes. We would also like to thank the members, for having faith in us, and bringing friends along to participate, and give croquet a go! We

have been asked if a "Garden Party" could become an annual event!! On Saturday 16 March, it was also very exciting as Vern Coleman, (Shannon's husband) delivered a table, designed, and built by him, that will nestle around the umbrella spine. This will be a valuable addition for both club and fund-raising events, and utilises previously unused space immediately adjacent to the spine. Vern generously donated his time and some of the materials, with the balance of the costs falling under the Garden Party expenses. Once the Umbrella debt is paid, we plan to turn our attention to raising funds to replace the small shed near the entrance with a much larger one, although we are also keen to purchase another two flaps, which can be zipped to the umbrella and provide additional protection from the sun, (wind and rain!!). Next planned event is a 'Mid-Winter Christmas Dinner' – Saturday 13th July

Di and Jenny





Cruise Ship Visit

On a sun-filled blue sky day in February, NSCC welcomed 30 passengers from the cruise ship Sea Princess for a day of croquet on our lawns - food, refreshments and helpers provided by the club. Two years in the planning, with previous dates cancelled due to Covid, the lead up to the day was not without a huge effort by club members to ensure the lawns were pristine, the catering was superb and the flow from kitchen to table was seamless. All of the visitors, including tour leader Craig, were from clubs in Australia – Albury, Belmont, Glasshouse Mountain, Bribie Island, Bairnsdale, Twin Rivers, Wynnum, Wonthaggi – from Queensland, Victoria, NSW and Western Australia. Before boarding the ship only a few players knew each other, but after 2 weeks sailing from Brisbane to NZ, and playing competitive croquet in Invercargill, Dunedin, CHCH, Wellington and Rotorua, the camaraderie was obvious. Players had been paired based on individual handicaps, played 45 minute doubles games, winners vs losers making up the subsequent draws. Their day at NSCC was the final day of play, they would find out the results two days later while at sea enroute back to Brisbane. Two of the players - Elaine Berridge and Brian Rubock from Twin Rivers – are high profile players in Australia, both having competed in State tournaments.

Jim Clement from Bairnsdale, gained his accreditation as a Golf Croquet referee in 2006, and has been an active referee since, officiating at both Club, Region, State, National and International level. He is also a GC coach. From the time the players alighted from their coach until it was time to say goodbye, they had nothing but praise for our clubrooms, our lawns, the morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea, our friendly 'kiwi' nature, and most of all our WONDERFUL umbrella. The photos say it all. Huge thanks to everyone who was involved in making this event so successful. The tour guide Craig advised that the 2025 tour is already sold out and they are returning in March 2025.



Sue Alexander

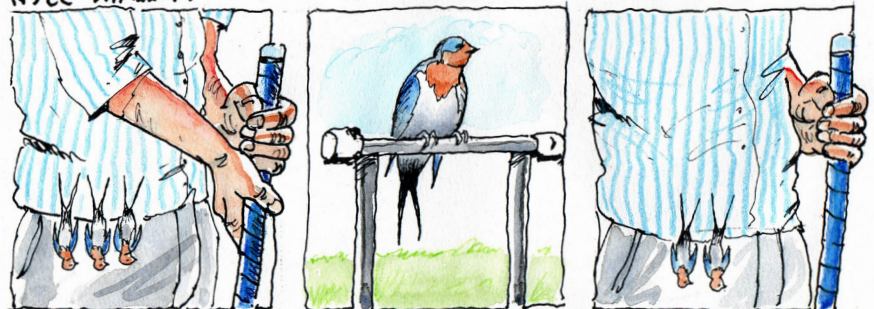


John's Cornera Poem

A Bad Day on The Lawn
When mallet shots go left and right
And the hoops become too narrow
Look up and watch the clouds go by
And find new joy in arcing swallow

J.M.S

NSCC SWALLOWS





Volunteers

Since the last newsletter in September, the club has hosted 20 private events, ranging from The Citroen Car Club, several Xmas gatherings including one lively 'Western' themed party, Warner Bros, a wedding and the hugely anticipated Cruise Ship Event. The success of all these events has relied on the willingness of club members to be 'volunteers' and help on the day - prepare the lawns and clubhouse, guide the guests through learning about

and playing Golf Croquet, packing up afterwards, at the same time ensuring everyone is 'having fun'. The feedback from guests has only ever been positive, and several groups have already re-booked for this Christmas and next year. Together with my trusted and loyal 2IC, Wendy Volkov, we would like to say a big thankyou to everyone who has volunteered. We couldn't do our job without you.

[Sue Alexander/Wendy Volkov](#)

Twilight

(1st and 3rd Wednesday evenings)

Well firstly a big shout out to the weather gods, we only had a couple of cancellations due to bad weather this twilight season. Our numbers have climbed during this season- from 15 to 40 and it is pleasing to see a lot of new faces, and also a younger cohort coming along.

It is a great opportunity for those new to the game to progress- many will go on to full membership. Our last evening was Wednesday 3rd April.

[Martin and Wendy Bailey](#)



Sundowner (Tuesday evenings)

At times the weather has been a little fickle, but one aspect remains constant, the sun keeps rising, and setting. This has given us the perfect excuse to play some interesting games, whilst enjoying the balmy summer weather at Sundowner croquet on Tuesday evenings. Followed by snacks and drinks on the veranda.

With daylight saving and cooler times now upon us, our beloved Sundowners croquet will soon be in hibernation.

Fear not, we will be back, towards the end of 2024. Until then, "cheers to the good times and great company!"

Both Twilight and Sundowners take place during the warmer months



Native Planting on Lawns C and D

The native shrubs, flax and grasses that the club purchased and planted through collaboration with Restoring Takarunga Hauraki (Restoring the Devonport Peninsula), are now well established. After planting day in August last year, we applied bark mulch delivered to us free by the managers of the grounds of the golf club next door. This has helped to suppress weeds and preserve moisture in a long, hot dry summer. To assist in the establishment of the young plants, we also watered regularly especially through dry periods. This took some time as we have over 100 plants. To see their strong growth now at the end of summer means it was time well spent! Weeding also had to be done as there



was constant encroachment from the borders of lawn and Auckland Council verges. This is an ongoing task until the plants get mature enough to handle some pressure from invasive weeds. Compost that was dug up from our pit by Shed D also came in handy. I put it around most of the plants that I thought would benefit and it has made a big difference to rates of growth. Comments made by our members are that the plantings have proven to be a success, and a welcome feature to our grounds. Not only is there less grass to mow now but as the plants grow and merge with each other, they will provide effective and attractive screening alongside the fences that border Lawns C and D. Hopefully, they will provide havens for wildlife too and act to extend existing ecological corridors in the peninsula. Thanks to Jacqueline for always answering the call to water on C, and to

Sherilyn and Janet for pitching in to help with the weeding. Also, thanks to Jenny for donating more garden stakes.

Suzanne



The Club Gardens

'To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow' said Audrey Hepburn.

True, but I agree with Lou Erikson...' Gardening requires a lot of water, most of it in the form of perspiration.' The gardening year began with Suzanne's inspiration for 2 beds of native planting and she was helped to fulfil this mammoth, on-going undertaking by many on planting day, including the sourcing of plants from R.T.H Jacqueline is her much needed 2-i-c. There is still mulch to be spread and many hands make light work, so come along to have your hand in this worthwhile project.

Lynley has included the care of the wisteria beside the front gate amongst her club house duties. If anyone would like to adopt a climber or shrub to tame or water in the summer, that would be wonderful.

Mike has done me a huge service by taking on the responsibility of tidying the edges and any stray climbers with his strimmer machine. Whoever believed in straight lines in a garden?! I don't.

The demise of the wonderful hibiscus in the Circular bed due to the persistent rain last year was a great loss. Weeding the bare soil for months was hardly inspiring. There were a few wry smiles when a central specimen (the Cycad) appeared overnight, its fronds nobly echoing the circular perimeter. It was not to be. I appreciated help from the guys, who regularly help with garden maintenance, to add

about 12 barrow loads of compost to the circular bed, released from its disguised origin behind the sheds – thanks to the digger driver. There needs to be a trailer load yet, to raise the bed height within the rustic brick surround.

Brick-laying was on my bucket list, but perhaps not on Kerry's or Mike's! We learnt a lot about cement drying too quickly on hot bricks, familiar back pain, despite physio recommendations and how to accept 'helpful advice' from off the street walkers-by!

Without the delicious sustenance from Carol and Lynley we may have wilted irrevocably. The plants are ready to go in once the compost is added and most of the twigs removed.

I hope, when time is allowed, we can present a cheerful entrance to the club.

Sherilyn



A classic example of how to turn a negative into a positive!

There we were trying to decide how best to ensure new plants don't become waterlogged during winter, when, just looking at all the wonderful brickwork in gardens all around Devonport provided the perfect inspiration for the new brick surround for the round garden, with club members providing the perfect support! Within a few days enough bricks to complete the circle twice were donated by Liz & Ross, Maggie M, myself plus Resource Recovery Devonport. With Michelle T's encouragement, Kerry and Mike C planned and executed the bricklaying the following Sunday, ably supported by Sherilyn who cleaned and colour coded all those bricks! Lynley's welcome morning tea was, as always, much enjoyed. So within about a week, this entire project has been completed at little or no cost (except maybe a few aches and pains), due once more to the enthusiasm, can do attitude and generosity of club members. Now we look



forward to the planting. Over to you Sherilyn. Thank you all!

Carol Buckingham
Club Captain



Captain News

Interclub

This enthusiastic and dedicated NSCC Division 3 (Hcps 8-14) team is made up of Jenny Sonntag, Sue, Sherilyn, Mike C, Wendy F, Wendy S, Di H, Liz & Ross, Charlotte, and Michelle T.



They have had 3 away draws visiting Henderson, Pt Chev and Orewa. This has been a good opportunity to experience playing at different locations along with meeting some interesting and equally keen croquet players! As a team they have played 59 games so far, often against strong competition, winning 333 hoops! The wins reflect

the serious practice time this team have put into this competition to achieve such fantastic results plus the tremendous camaraderie that has developed amongst the players over these past few months. The first games of the tournament were at home whilst the last is also scheduled at NSCC on Tuesday, 9 April, however this was forfeited by Carlton Club. Our thanks to Rod T for refereeing plus coaching along with Greg, Michelle for her advice and support, Rob F and team for providing superior lawns and Lynley with her clubhouse volunteers providing welcoming refreshments. As Team Manager I'm very proud of this team's achievements and look forward to next season's competition.

Tournaments

NSCC hosted the Mt Albert Friendly (Friendship Cup) in February, which, along with a masterclass by Sabri Mullaaliu (-3 Hcp) kindly organised by Rod T, proved to be an interesting and enjoyable day for players and spectators alike. Rod's assistance in scoring was very much appreciated. After a convincing win by NSCC, we look forward to the return match at MACC next year. TCC Neighbour's Challenge was held in March at Takapuna and whilst it was a draw, we came a close second on hoops won. We look forward to hosting this tournament next year but meanwhile, as Takapuna are close neighbours, we may have the opportunity of more casual friendly matches once the remedial work on their lawns is completed. As always, the Friendly competitions succeed due to the enthusiasm of the players, dedication of Rob and grounds team along with wonderful support by Lynley with clubhouse volunteers. Thank you all!





Farewell from Club Captain

Whilst it has been an interesting and challenging experience to be a member of the NSCC Committee, it has also been enormously rewarding. I'm delighted to reflect on the achievements of this Committee and have enjoyed being a part of that. The energy, friendliness, fabulous humour! and generosity of members, has made being a Club Captain a joy.

Carol Buckingham
Club Captain (2023-2024)

Dates for your Diary

- AGM (1st June)
- Swing Into Spring (September)
- Xmas Party (15 Dec)
- Mid Winter Fundraising dinner
Saturday 13th July

FootNote

Let's not forget all those who contribute articles and stories to our Newsletters and to those who work behind the scenes taking photographs, editing and publishing. Working against deadlines and chivvying authors are Linda, Wendy and Pete Burt for his technical skills in making all the text, titles and pictures fit together. Whether named or anon, we thank you all!

