

Welsh CA 2001

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The year 2000 was very much a mixed bag for Welsh croquet. The highlight of the year was obviously the Welsh triumph in the inaugural WCF World 14 point Championship in Italy, whilst low points included Wales finishing bottom in the Home Internationals for the second year in a row.

On the administrative scene John Grimshaw stood down as Secretary after 14 years in the job. John has taken over officially as the Treasurer, though he did virtually all the work in that role anyway.

On the playing side apart from the above mentioned Wales travelled to Ireland for the first time and played a full International as well as a B international. Unfortunately the Irish were too strong for us and won both matches. However we gained our revenge when we beat the Irish in the final in Italy. The only other inter association match played last year was against Scotland at Dyffryn and for the second time in a row the match ended in a draw. Bryn Lewis has most kindly donated a magnificent trophy, named the Celtic Shield, for future Wales Scotland matches.

On the singles front Ian Burrige came back to form at the right time winning the Welsh Championship for the fourth time.

On the representative front Chris Williams played at Sonoma Cutrer and was unlucky to finish bottom of a very strong block, which included the two eventual finalists as well as the New Zealand captain and the winner of last years President's Cup. Our representatives at the European Championships in Jersey were Tony Mrozinski and Chris Williams. Tony finished fourth, whilst Chris won his block before being knocked out at the quarter final stage.

One of the qualifying events should have been held at Dyffryn. However it was cancelled due to lack of entries. Each country is entitled to send two players to the qualifiers so it was surprising that England could not find any. We are going to have another attempt at holding a qualifier again this year and this time we are going to make an attempt at getting more entries.

2001 sees the first WCF association singles tournament for four years in London. Unfortunately Wales has been awarded only one automatic place. The WCF's reason is

that we do not have any players in the top 50 in the world. On the inter CA match front Wales will be travelling to Switzerland in September. We are now 3-2 up in the series between the countries having won the last three. The planned visit by Canada in 2001 will not now take place but the Canadians are planning a trip to the UK in 2002.

In 2001 (June 1-3) Dyffryn Croquet Club will be holding a weekend handicap tournament which will be open to all members of the Welsh CA. Entry fee is 15 pounds. The Welsh CA and Dyffryn Croquet club have agreed that one third of the entry fee will go to the Welsh CA. This ratio is virtually the same as the levy paid by clubs to the CA. Please enter as soon as possible we would like as many non Dyffryn Welsh CA members to play as possible.

At last year's AGM, held during the Welsh Championship it was decided to increase the annual fee to 10 pounds for those players who play in Welsh CA events and to leave the fee at 5 pounds for those who do not.

Dates to note for 2001

June 1-3 Handicap tournament (Dyffryn) £15
June 16-17 Home Internationals (Carrickmines)
July 14-15 European Qualifier (Dyffryn) £12
July 27-29 Welsh Championship (Dyffryn) £20
Sep 15-16 Swiss CA v Welsh CA (Geneva)
Sep 21-23 European Championship (Jersey)

Please let Chris Williams know of your availability for any of the above events. It makes selections a lot easier if we know who is available rather than having to chase round. Send entry fees and annual subscription to Chris Williams. Do it now before you forget.

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Sonoma Cutrer 2000

David Maugham won the 2000 World Croquet Championship at Sonoma Cutrer winery in California in front of a crowd of at least 1500 people beating Johnny Osborn of Florida in the final.

Johnny who had finished fourth in his block had to battle right through another six games in the ladder beating such leading players as Chris Clarke, Reg Bamford, and Ed Cunningham on the way.

The tournament format used at Sonoma is very different from that played in the UK in that the four block winners are known as medallists and proceed into another block known as the medallist block.

The winner of the medallist block then plays in the final against the winner of the ladder. The second and third players enter the ladder at the quarter final stage whilst the fourth medallist enters at the fifth level.

Everyone else, apart from the last player in the blocks, enters the ladder in a round based on their finishing position in the blocks. Since Johnny finished fourth in his block he entered the ladder at the second stage. Prior to 2000 only four players from each block entered the ladder stage. However it was decided in 2000 to increase the number of qualifiers to six and to start play a day earlier by dispensing with the warm up competition.

The weather at Sonoma Cutrer, which is in the Sonoma Valley about an hour north of San Francisco, can be quite variable in May and this year was no exception. Heavy rain was the order of the day on the first day, though the weather got gradually better each day and was up to the nineties by the finals day.

Among the many attractions at the Sonoma Cutrer tournament are the social events arranged during the week which include barbecues and a formal tournament dinner. On one of our nights off a number of us travelled over to Bodega Bay on the coast for dinner at the Tides Wharf restaurant. Bodega Bay was used as the location for the famous Hitchcock film 'The Birds'.

For the last two years all of the players flying from London to San Francisco have flown first class as guests of British Airways, who are one of the event sponsors. This year Peter Payne of Switzerland

and myself had the first class cabin to ourselves on the outward journey.

The final of the tournament is played at lunchtime prior to the main event – the auction. This year the auction raised just over one million dollars for children's charities. Most of the lots auctioned are bottles of rare wine, some of which go for thirty or forty thousand dollars. In all there are about 60 lots which take two to three hours to auction. All of the people attending the lunch pay a lot of money for a ticket and all are dressed in white. One of the Welsh CA members, Mike Llewellyn-Williams, who now lives and works in San Francisco, came up and introduced himself to me during the auction.

European Championship 2000

The 2000 European Championships held in Jersey and sponsored by HSBC bank were won for the sixth time by Stephen Mulliner, who defeated 20 year old local player Matthew Burrow in a very exciting final that went to three games.

Paul Duckworth of Jersey finished third when he beat Tony Mrozinski of Wales in the third place play off.

In the early round blocks Chris Williams won all his games to finish top of the block, whilst Tony finished second in his behind Matthew Burrow. Chris lost his quarter final to Paul Duckworth after having been game up and break up. Tony lost two close games in the semi final against Mulliner, having earlier beaten Tony Le Moignan of Jersey in three.

For the first time the Jersey Croquet club held a pro-am golf croquet tournament after play one evening. Most of the amateurs were employees of the local bank sponsors HSBC. The tournament was a great success with all concerned, especially for HSBC's senior manager who won partnered by Charlie von Schmieder of Ireland.

Ireland v Wales (by Dai Morgan)

Ireland

RM Ronan McInerney @ 1

MM Mark McInerney @ 2

RR Ronan Rogerson @ 3

MS Michael O'Shaughnessy @ 4

Wales

LP Lewis Palmer @ 1

WP William Prichard @ 2

JE John Evans @ 3

DM Deiniol Morgan @ 4

1st doubles games

MM & RR v LP & WP

RM & MS v JE & DM

Despite early breaks to 4-back from Prichard & Evans Wales went down in both games. Palmer & Morgan were unable to get going.

Singles

Palmer lost in straight games (inc a triple) to the ferocious shooting. McInerney Junior. Morgan lost the decider to Rogerson and Evans came from one down to beat O'Shaughnessy. William Prichard achieved the heroic failure par excellence in his game against McInerney senior. In the first game he embarked on a TPO, made all the peels etc but rushed the peelee 3-4 yards beyond the peg, the front ball missed but he pegged himself off. McInerney finished from the contact. In the second game Prichard set off on another TPO, made all the peels, conscious of his earlier error he took stock of the situation after running rover and said later. "The peelee was completely wired from the peg so I just concentrated on the weight". Unfortunately he rushed the ball on to the peg. McInerney finished from the contact.

Sunday morning.

Ireland were now 3.5 - 1.5 up. Play was slightly late starting and there might have been grounds for a Welsh revival. The two teams had drunk the bar dry the previous night before going out to eat and the Irish hangover coefficient was higher than the Welsh. The Irish, however, had a trump card to play in the form of Michael O'Shaughnessy's identical twin brother. I've yet to find out his name but in partnering RM he achieved a 5th turn delayed triple. There was doubt about the identity of the player - some maintained that it was indeed Michael but the general feeling was that a man who had been unable to communicate only 12 hours previously could not have achieved such a feat. This

debate continued throughout the remainder of the day. In the other doubles match Evans & Morgan came from behind after a failed MM triple.

Sunday PM

Palmer embarked on a TPO and, funnily enough, came to grief by playing the wrong ball, after half an hour of debate about where the fault had occurred RM took the game. Palmer took the second in convincing fashion. In the third Ronan failed a 5th turn triple but held on to win. Prichard lost to MM in two rather scrappy games. Scrappy is not the word for the game between Morgan and O'Shaughnessy - Morgan taking the decider. In the remaining game the Irish had another tactical ploy to gain an advantage. Rogerson managed to break his mallet probably in the hope that it might lull his opponent into a false sense of security which worked in the first game- Rogerson sneaking it by four. In the second Rogerson took off Evans' forward ball but lost. Should he have pegged out his peg ball when 4-back v.6? In the last game, oh no!, another Welsh TPO, yes it did come to grief but not fatally. A onetime possible scoreline of 8.5-1.5 was repaired to a slightly more respectable 6.5-3.5.

Welsh CA v Scottish CA

The Welsh and Scottish CA teams tied 10-10 in their two day match at Dyffryn Gardens after having been tied 5-5 at the end of the first day. Both teams greatly enjoyed the match as well as the barbecue at Chez Williams on the Saturday evening. In future the teams will be playing for the Celtic Shield which has kindly been donated by Bryn Lewis.

Day 1

Williams & Butt beat Appleton & Smith 22-15

Trickey & Lewis lost to Kirby & Walker 12-23

Chris Williams beat David Appleton +23, +15

Adrian Trickey lost to Jonathan Kirby -24, -4

Bryn Lewis drew with Malcolm Smith -1T, 22-16

Eric Butt drew with Jamieson Walker -4T, 23-5

Day 2

Williams & Butt beat Kirby & Walker +24

Trickey & Lewis lost to Appleton & Smith -16

Chris Williams drew with Jonathan Kirby -17, +15

Adrian Trickey beat David Appleton 23-16, +25

Bryn Lewis lost to Jamieson Walker 13-16, 8-9

Eric Butt drew with Malcolm Smith +14, 22-23

Welsh Championship 2000

Ian Burridge won the Welsh Championship for the first time for five years when he defeated Sam Tudor in straight games in the final at Dyffryn Gardens.

Burridge, who had only finished third in his block, having lost to Tony Mrozinski and Dai Morgan, beat defending Champion Chris Williams in the single game quarter final, and Tony Mrozinski 2-0 in the semi final. Cambridge University student Sam, appearing in his first Welsh Championship, defeated John Evans in straight games in the other semi final.

Ian Burridge has now won the Welsh Championship four times. William Prichard, who was not playing this year, has won three times. Other winners have been Chris Williams twice, and Tony Mrozinski once.

The lawns at Dyffryn were quite quick this year - they were measured at 11 seconds on Friday and Sunday. On Saturday afternoon, when they were at their fastest, they may have reached 12 seconds.

Block A

1 Sam Tudor	4 wins
2 Chris Williams	4 wins
3 John Evans	4 wins

Block B

1 Tony Mrozinski	5 wins
2 Dai Morgan	4 wins
3 Ian Burridge	3 wins

Quarter Finals

Burridge beat Williams	+23
Evans beat Morgan	+15

Semi Finals

Tudor beat Evans	+13, +17
Burridge beat Mrozinski	+26tp, +15

Final

Home Internationals 2000

England regained the Home Internationals title in 2000 crushing the previous winners Ireland 4-1 in the deciding final match at Southport. Wales finished bottom for the second year in a row when they lost 3-2 to Scotland in the final match, both countries having lost to England and Ireland.

The Welsh team of William Prichard, Ian Burridge, Tony Mrozinski, Chris Williams and Lewis Palmer appeared off form with all the players having had little play in the lead up to the event. In the first match Wales lost to Ireland 3-1 with one match halved. Ian Burridge, playing at two had a quick win over Ronan McInerney, whilst Tony(one), William(three) and Chris(four) all lost in two games. Lewis Palmer at five took the second game of Ronan Rogerson before the match was halted.

Wales put up little resistance to England going 4-0 down quite quickly. William fought back well to take the second game off Colin Irwin before darkness fell at the end of the first day and the match was eventually halved.

On Sunday morning Wales looked at one point as if they were in with a chance of winning at least four matches against Scotland. However good fightbacks from Ian Bond against William Prichard and Malcolm O'Connell against Tony Mrozinski saw Scotland through to a 3-2 win.

The Home Internationals in 2001 are going to be held in Ireland at Carrickmines for the first time. It is going to be tough for Wales to get back to their usual finishing position of second or even to win the event, because of the recent resurgence of Irish croquet. However Wales should be capable of beating Scotland. The last 2 matches have been 3-2 to Scotland and could easily have gone the other way.

Welsh CA Website

Answers to all your Welsh croquet questions, such who played when and where and who won what can be answered at the Welsh CA website at

<http://www.butedock.demon.co.uk/>

The site contains all past Welsh croquet results in team and individual events.

WCF World 14 point Team Championship

Wales became the first WCF World 14 point Champions when they defeated Ireland 2-1 in an exciting final at Le Robinie Golf Club in Italy. The Welsh team of Chris Williams, Ian Burrige and John Evans won 2-1 against the Irish team of Fred Rogerson, Evan Newell and Patsy Fitzgerald.

Ten countries entered the event and were divided into two all play all blocks of five. Each match in the block consisted of three best of three 14 point games with a time limit of an hour and a quarter for each game. Players were numbered from one to three (the order being freely decided by the team captain) and played their opposite number.

The top three countries in each block went straight into the quarter finals whilst the fourth placed team played the fifth in the other block to decide the remaining quarter finalists. Positions in the blocks were decided on number of best of three matches won and not on the number of countries beaten.

As Peter Payne said in one of his daily reports : "Two of the lawns at Le Robinie are of excellent quality; flat, apart from the odd wicked boundary, of a decent speed and made of the greenest and most even grass you'll ever experience. The third lawn is, well, not quite like the other two... in any respect!"

Wales got off to a great start beating Egypt 3-0 in the first match. However the second day was not so good when we lost 2-1 to England though we did gain a point. The remaining matches saw a 3-0 win over Spain and a 2-1 defeat of Australia - Ian lost to the unbeaten Tony Hall on the 'field'.

The final block standings were

Group A

1st Wales (9 wins), 2nd Egypt (6), 3rd England (5 wins, -12 net points), 4th Spain (5, -49) and 5th Australia (5, -81).

Group B

1st Ireland (8 wins, +85 net points) 2nd Switzerland (8, +74) 3rd Scotland (8, +30), 4th Italy (6, +75), 5th Germany (0, -264).

After the first day the lawn numbers were switched each day so that player 3 did not always have to play on the rather rough lawn 3. However since the captains could choose the order of play a number of countries decided to have a 'field' specialist. John became our field specialist after we had all had match on it.

The first round went according to plan, with Italy ousting Australia 2-1 and Spain defeating Germany 3-0. In the quarter finals, Switzerland got the better of England 2-1

while Scotland survived the Egyptian threat, winning 2-1 also. Both group winners also booked their places in the semi-finals, Wales beating local favourites Italy 2-1 and Ireland performing the same feat against Spain. The match against Italy saw Chris drop his first game in the tournament when he lost the second game against Donati without even taking croquet.

In the Semi Finals Wales defeated Switzerland 2-1. At one time it looked as if the Swiss may overturn the form book as Peter Payne and Ian Sexton took the opening games against Ian Burrige and John Evans respectively and Norman Eatough failed to finish against Chris Williams who took the chance to win by 2 as time was called. Chris took the second game to make put Wales one up. John Evans and Ian Sexton had a real battle on the field with Ian taking the second game by 2 on time having hit in right across the lawn on more than one occasion. Peter should have won the second game against Ian, but unaccountably froze whilst in a finishing turn to let Ian in. Peter had chances in the third but Ian's greater determination saw Wales through to the final against Ireland, who had comfortably beaten Scotland in the other semi final.

In the final it was decided to double bank two of the games on one lawn and so not to have to use the field. It was also decided not to have time limits in the final which as it turned out greatly added to the excitement. Wales got off to a great start by taking all three of the opening games though not without a scare or two. For the first time Chris's tactics of going to rover and conceding a lift saw him pegged out by Fred Rogerson. However an across the lawn hit in and some good hoop approaches saw Chris through. Ian dropped the second games against Evan Newell but quickly won the third to put Wales one up before the other two matches had finished their second games. The second game between Chris and Fred was similar to the first but this time Chris could not finish off after being pegged out. Patsy Fitzgerald took game two and set up an exciting finish. Ireland had to win both of the remaining games to take the title. The lack of time limits had allowed a number of pegged out endings in the final to be played to conclusion. In fact all of the games were finished within an hour and a half - only fifteen minutes longer than the earlier limits.

For long periods of the final games it looked as if Fred and John were going to win thus giving the title to Wales. However things quickly turned round when Chris pegged Fred out and John stuck in rover conceding a lift with a ball in baulk. Patsy made no mistake to put the match to 1-1. Meanwhile some cat and mouse play with Chris on peg and four and Fred on four was ended when Fred hit in from some twenty five yards with only a sliver of a ball to

be seen. Nerves then got to Fred as he twice failed to approach hoop 4. Chris decided to go for broke and nearly came unstuck as he rushed from corner 2 to hoop 5 and ended up with a difficult take off to Fred's ball at 4 - hoop 5 was in the way. A longish hoop approach led to a subsequent awkward hoop which was run to great applause. The final two hoops felt much harder than they looked but were completed to thunderous applause and great relief of the rest of the Welsh team and supporters.

As Peter Payne said in his final report: "In the end however, it was Chris who, with nerves of steel, made a final faultless break and pegged out +3, offering the "Princes of Wales" the World Title, and himself the trophy for "Best Player", a most deserved win - both of them!"

Peter concluded his report with "The Italian flair for making sure that everyone enjoyed themselves was once again in evidence at the Championship Dinner on Saturday evening. The local politicians, who had so generously supported the event, were present, as were the Spanish and Egyptian Consuls. Speeches were kept mercifully short and all the participants received medals for their efforts. The oldest (Tony Hall - Australia) and youngest (Juan Ojeda - Spain) participants were also rewarded with enormous trophies. The meal, as ever, was excellent and the dancing continued into the early hours of Sunday morning. The Italians must be commended for organising such a fantastic tournament which was, I'm certain, enjoyed by everybody; players, spectators and even the organisers themselves, who somehow found time to socialise with the visitors despite working such long hours to make everything happen."

WALES v IRELAND 'B' INTERNATIONAL

Report by Sue Mackay

The B team conferred Welsh status on Annabel Palmer (0) by virtue of her marriage to Lewis and played her as a late replacement for Tal Golesworthy. Other members of the team were John Grimshaw (2), James Mackay (3.5) and Kevin Ham (8).

Each day started with a doubles followed by two rounds of singles. On the Saturday John and James lost by 7 to Patsy Fitzgerald (1) and Nathaniel Healy (5), but Annabel and Kevin scraped home +1 on time against Robert Barklie (1) and Dernan O'Toole (6). In the first round of singles only John Grimshaw managed a win against Nathaniel. James was on a finishing turn against Dernan when he had a mental aberration after rushing a ball off the boundary and played the wrong ball from the croquet shot. Dernan took full advantage.

James also featured in what was universally acknowledged as the most exciting game of the weekend during the second round of singles. Robert Barklie pegged James out and himself when he was for 4-back and James was for Hoop 6. James kept hitting in and making hoops in a spectacular game of one ball until he was positioned in front of rover and Robert was for the peg. Robert then hit a dead weight shot from A baulk which trickled nicely on to the peg, and he doubtless heaved a huge sigh of relief. Meanwhile John had beaten Dernan and Annabel had beaten Nathaniel, leaving the scores at the end of the first day at Ireland 6 Wales 4.

At the Chinese restaurant on the Saturday evening Kevin partook liberally of Irish hospitality and treated everyone to an enthusiastic if not very musical rendering of the Welsh national anthem. Most of the serious drinking was done by the A team, however, which perhaps explains why the B team were the only ones in sight at the official start of play on Sunday. Patsy Fitzgerald had aggravated an injury on the Saturday and was unable to play again, so his place on the Sunday was taken by Michael Burke.

This time it was John and James who won their doubles, with Kevin and Annabel losing by 5 on time. Annabel was the only Welsh player to win in the third round of singles, but both she and John won in the fourth round. John did the three peels of a triple against Michael but failed to run rover. The final score was thus Ireland 12 Wales 8.

Report by Sue Mackay (who wasn't there!) compiled from notes put together by John, James and Kevin on the ferry home, although Kevin apparently snored loudly most of the way.