



# Cammeray Croquet Club



**January 2022**

<http://www.cammeray-croquet.org.au>

## Lawns re-open

The lawns reopened on 6<sup>th</sup> January; they were a little slow at first as the groundsmen could not cut them too fine until the grass had covered the sand. However, they are improving steadily, and look as though they will be in superb order – the best lawns in Sydney. We owe a great debt to the chief groundsman, Mick Stokes, who has done a great job on them.



**Mick Stokes**



**The newly-grassed area outside the clubhouse**

The trees beside the clubhouse have gone – they were interfering with the nearby lawn – but fast-growing crepe myrtle and flowering gums have replaced them, and should soon provide shade.

## Tournaments

Competitive croquet is coming to life again with the first tournaments of 2022. In late January the Selectors Squad will have Cammeray members Joanne Brown, Peter Brown, Sue Eldridge-Smith and Barbara McDonald; in early February Mike Hughes will be playing in the CNSW 3 and under singles; and the CNSW 5 and under mixed doubles will be in mid-February.

Two more events to look forward to are the Australian Open Championship and the Eire Cup, which will be held in Sydney in March. The Open Championship will be from 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March, and

Cammeray will be one of the venues for this – as well as Chatswood, Eastwood, Manly, Royal Sydney,, Cooks River and Warrawee.

The Eire Cup is the annual competition between the Australian states – Victoria, NSW, WA, Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland. Each state plays each other state in a match. New South Wales is the current champion. The matches will be played 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> March at various venues around Sydney.

If you want to see the best croquet in Australia, come along to some of these games!

## Mike Hughes

Mike Hughes is not only one of the leading AC players in NSW, he has also made a considerable contribution to administration; he has been treasurer of Cammeray Croquet Club for many years. He also heads up the AC Selection Committee for CNSW and has served on the Tournament Committee. He is also a qualified referee and has refereed many tournaments. Mike agreed to answer some questions about his career for the newsletter.

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**Mike Hughes playing in the 2020 Dixon Advisory Classic**

I was born in Sydney but my parents were quite mobile and we lived for a couple of years in each of London, back to Sydney, Adelaide then Perth, where we stayed for 5 years. They returned to Sydney but I remained in Perth for a further 4 years at Uni. I returned to Sydney in late 1967 armed with a maths degree, and no idea of what to do next.

**Actuarial career.** On the advice of one of my father's golfing friends I started work at the AMP doing actuarial exams – at that time, all by correspondence to the UK. After a couple of years I left the AMP to join a consulting firm, and stayed there for nearly 20 years. At that time there were perhaps 3 actuarial consultancies in Sydney, one of which included 2 other Cammeray members, David Stanton and Neil Hartley. I worked primarily in Life Insurance and came into regular contact with Steve Miles, also a life insurance actuary, sometimes working with him, sometimes against! Our firm of actuaries was taken over by a Canadian firm, Mercers, and moved more into Superannuation administration, so a few years later I left to work for one of my previous clients, whose General Manager was yet another Cammeray member, Bill Westwood.

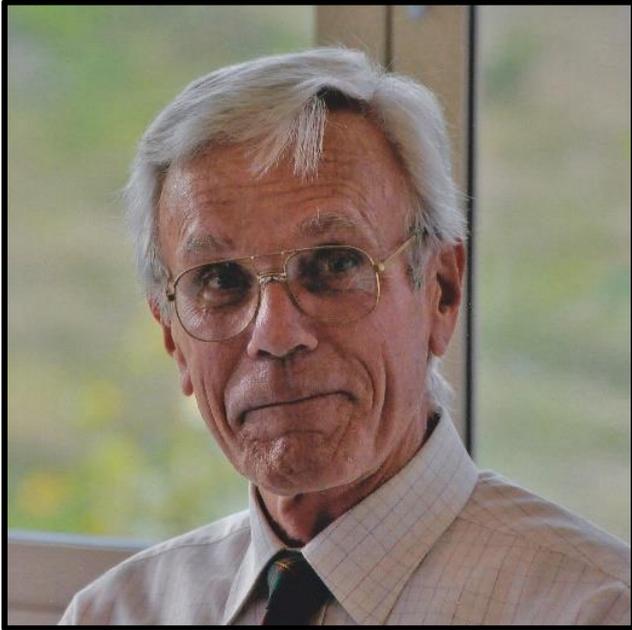
**Bridge.** In a way my actuarial job brought me into the world of bridge. I had played very sporadically at Uni, but a friend at AMP with whom I played lunchtime bridge suggested we try the real thing. The NSWBA at that time had a crop of keen young players, including Alan Walsh, Barbara McDonald and Ted Griffin. We became friends, with the common addiction of bridge (and golf, and tennis, and now croquet) and have remained so ever since. Alan and Ted in particular were very strong players and have made the Australian Open team several times. I made it once – the one event we played in was a play-off against New Zealand, in Sydney, which we lost. NSW bridge at that time was very strong, and won the interstate teams most years. I think I may be the only player to have been on the state team 3 times, and lost each time. The bridge world started seniors competition in the 1980s. When I turned 55 and became eligible, the competition was less menacing. I made the Australian Seniors team several times. Australia played by invitation in the Asian Zone championships, and I played in Macao, Philippines, China, Indonesia and Thailand over the next few years. I have also regularly played in the NSW seniors interstate team, most recently this year – 6 wins in 7 tries, with 4 different partners.

**Croquet.** After two hip replacements, in 2002 when I found I could play tennis and golf again (but not very well) I decided to retire while I could still enjoy mild sporting activities. My father had played croquet (a founding member at Warrawee) when he retired and had enjoyed it, and I suggested to Alan Walsh, Ted Griffin and another friend that we give it a go : Ted had played at Uni and we had all tried garden croquet. That rapidly led to the next addiction, croquet at Cammeray. The first lesson we had included a diagram of (I think) a four-ball break, showing where to place a ball for use in 8 or so shots time. This had immediate appeal. Our first pennants match at Cheltenham, we were greeted with “how nice, 4 young men” – I guess in croquet 60 is the new youth. At that time Canberra ran a high quality event in January which coincided with a major bridge tournament that Alan, Ted and I played in each year. Between bridge sessions we watched good players playing croquet. That was inspirational and educational. Moreover nearly all the top players were happy to answer questions and explain why they played a particular shot. You will find that remains the case – top players are happy to answer questions and give advice.

I was asked about particular triumphs – no major wins but several plate wins at state and national championships. Possibly my most memorable game was against an out-of-form Kevin Beard. I had made 9 hoops and run my second ball around and pegged it off as time expired. Kevin was on 4 and 4-back, with a lift. He perforce played the 4-ball, hit and ran it to the peg in a 3-ball break – didn't manage a peel but pegged his ball off leaving his ball where it could run 4-back, and me on the south boundary almost behind hoop 4. I shot at his ball ... and ran 4-back to win.

**What piece of advice would I give aspiring players?** Firstly, watch better players and work out why they are playing particular shots. And, if approaching a ball from a distance that you intend to rush, don't try to get too close – if you aim to be say a yard away and are a foot short or long, you will still have a fairly straight rush : if you aim to be a foot away with the same error in distance, you will have no rush at all. Importantly, play for enjoyment and enter competitions – you get to play different players and will certainly improve your game.

## Vale Doug Nicholas 1943-2022



**Doug Nicholas**

It is with sadness that we report that Doug Nicholas died earlier this month. He had been in poor health since a stroke in 2019. Our thoughts are with Sue Nicholas at this time of loss.

Doug was the first member of his family to go to University and started a cadetship in engineering with the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission with a group of fellow young engineers, whom he remained in contact with until his death. He managed to attend their most recent annual reunion lunch in December.

While Doug's career was in engineering he also had a great love of poetry. At the Intermediate Certificate, he topped his class in both English and Maths, and the Careers Advisor suggested that he consider engineering, as at that time Australia was crying out for engineers. However, he retained his love of letters all his life, with a special affinity for poetry. He ended up amassing a collection of over 300 poetry books.

After graduating and starting full time work with the WC&IC, he soon found that what he was working on was coming into conflict with his environmental leanings, which had started at primary school, when he learnt about the erosion problems NSW faced with the rabbit plague. Flood irrigation in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area was not quite in sync with his understanding of water conservation. So, he left and started an engineering business with a friend. It was not long before he moved into working for the local Council and eventually became Deputy Engineer of Campbelltown Council when it was becoming a major city. During this time he also undertook a postgraduate diploma in Environmental Studies. It was the first environmental course in Australia.

In 1977 he took on the role of Engineer at Coolah Shire Council. In Coolah, he met his second wife, Sue, after they had the lead roles in the local amateur musical production of Oklahoma. He moved to Sydney with Sue and took on various jobs with Ku-Ring-Gai Council, the Darling Harbour project and private engineering firms before starting his own engineering consultancy business, Nicholas Civil Engineering. It was while he was doing the drainage design for the Widening of the M4 project, that he designed and developed his "Ski-Jump Gross Pollution Trap", ending up in the mid-1990s with a patent and a manufacturing business. He was in his element now – running his own business and combining his environmental and engineering interests to provide a device to stop litter entering the waterways.

Doug continued his business until his retirement in about 2010. In the middle of that he took several months out to campaign, successfully, to stop the sale of the Snowy Hydro scheme in 2006. He had his 15 minutes of fame when he presented a letter to the federal parliamentarians, signed by a number of well-known Australians, calling for Snowy Hydro to remain in public ownership.

In about 2010, Doug began his retirement, which he thoroughly enjoyed with activities including bushwalking, reading poetry and, of course, playing croquet, until the last couple of years when he had the brain bleed.



**Doug and Sue watching the Dixon Classic in 2016**