

Walter Margulies Chairman of the Westhampton Mallet Club and his wife, Harriet, taken with the English Team. Left to right - Gerald Williams, Ian Baillieu, Douglas Strachan and John Solomon.

## HURLINGHAM GOES WEST

By Douglas Strachan

**A** FINAL BELLOW from the twin engines, a few more throbbing beats from the rotor blades, and suddenly there we were - perched by helicopter on top of the Pan Am Building high above New York, at the start of one of the most fabulous croquet trips of all time.

At the invitation of the Westhampton Mallet Club of Long Island, Ian Baillieu (Captain and father confessor), John Solomon, Gerald Williams and myself had arrived, in what is surely the most dramatic of all ways to descend upon a city, to uphold the honour of Hurlingham in the New World - or more specifically, to play a return match following the visit of the Westhamptonians to London last year.

Clutching mallets (mine had collected a large gob of chewing gum from the floor of the Boeing, just to prove we'd arrived in the U. S. A. !) and not pausing to snatch a glance at the vertiginous panorama of skyscrapers falling away to tiny crevices of streets and avenues far below, we scuttled through a door and down some steps into the "Copter Club", an exclusive penthouse restaurant where we were to meet our hosts - and the Press.

Walter Margulies, the genial and distinguished President of the Mallet Club who had journeyed out to Kennedy Airport to meet us and bring us in on the helicopter, introduced us to Bill Bohner, Hal Langdon, Dave Seinerger and others over drinks; and there was the British Consul General, and journalists waiting to be put right (as all journalists are!) about croquet.

Then down in the elevators, out into a blast of heat and onto the scorching streets - vast brown canyon walls of brick and concrete rising giddily upwards on all sides - into deliciously cool air-conditioned cars, and away to Westhampton - 80 miles out on the South shore of Long Island.

The Court setting is in character identical to that produced on the front cover of the 1967 January issue of Croquet. However, the dimensions are quite different. The Court is much longer than our Court being 150 feet in place of our 105 feet, and much narrower being 55 feet in place of our 84 feet.

The boundary is marked by a thick nylon string stretched tight between pegs rather than by a painted line.

### PLAYING SURFACE

Perhaps most important of all, the grass is long - about an inch. We estimated that you have to hit a ball about five times as hard as on an English surface to make it travel the same distance. But the ground is flat, there are little if any bumps or slopes, and provided you have the strength to belt the ball hard enough, it travels very straight. In practice it is not possible to hit a ball more than about ten yards without "golfing" it. The members are expert at banging balls vast distances - if necessary the whole length of the Court - using a tremendous golf swing which would send a No. 2 iron shot a good couple of hundred yards; and they can play these shots, what is more, with an impressive accuracy of distance and direction.

### EQUIPMENT

Hoops, balls and mallets are supplied by Jaques (a prestigious, if not a lucrative export trade!) and are exactly as we know them, except that the hoops often get splayed out too wide when hammered into the grounds. The mallets of course have to be very heavy and are mostly fitted with malacca shafts, as hickory ones just can't take the punishment!

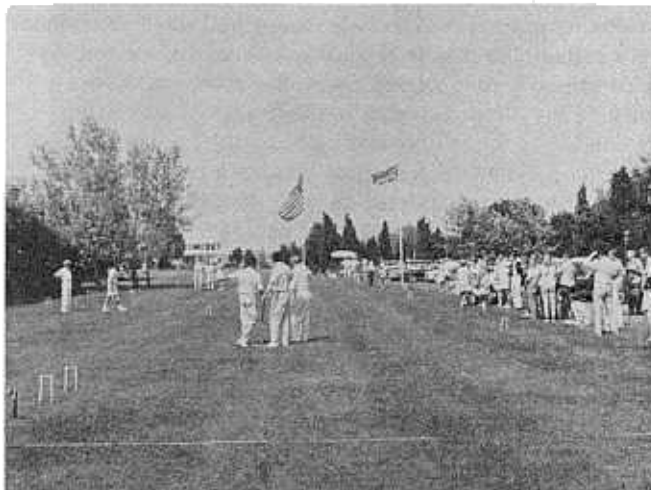
### TERMINOLOGY

Hoops become wickets, a wired ball is a wicketed ball, a rush becomes a chop shot, pegs are stakes, a break is a ladder, and so on. We rather liked the word "wicket" - after all, that is much more what the metal thing stuck in the ground looks like!

### RULES AND TACTICS

The basic sequence of roquet, croquet and continuation shot is the same as in our game. But the difference emerges in the following quite different rules, some of which change the character of the game completely:

### General View of Westhampton Mallet Club.





Mrs. Henry White serving tea to Gerald Williams, Jack Osborn, Ian Baillieu, Peter Maas.

1. The American game is a sequence game, as it used to be with us many years ago. The order of play must always be Blue, Red, Black, Yellow.
2. You are only allowed to roquet each ball once per wicket scored, no matter how many turns you have. When your ball roquets another, it is said to go dead on that ball; and if it hits it again in a subsequent turn without a wicket having been scored in the meantime, a fault is committed and your ball replaced.

What this adds up to is that you are ill-advised to roquet any ball unless either you are almost certain to make your wicket, or it is essential to break up your opponent. There is a special scoreboard on the sideline called a "deadness board", to show you which balls are dead on which - without this you could never remember. When a roquet is made a coloured wooden flap is pushed over, and it stays over until you have made your next wicket. The sweetest sound in the game is the "flap-flap" of the deadness board restoring the life of your ball as you run a wicket - particularly if you have been unfortunate enough to be "three-ball dead", the terrible fate which awaits the adventurous or unwary. If you are three-ball dead you cannot score a roquet, so that it becomes, obviously, extremely difficult to make your wicket and come alive again - especially as the other three balls must always play after yours, and it is therefore a simple matter for your opponent to keep removing you after you have played for position. Your predicament, in fact, remains entirely hopeless unless by skilful play you can peel the dead ball with its partner ball, or unless the opponent makes some fairly elementary mistake.

In other words, in the American game it is not only possible, but all too easy to find yourself in a jam, with virtually no chance of getting out of it and back into the game. The more one side dominates, the more likely it is to keep its dominance. Not for nothing do the Westhampton members point out that in the British game you can only defeat your opponent, while in the American game you can destroy him.

To be frank, we found this aspect disagreeable.

### 3. Other differences:

In the old-fashioned style, you can put your foot on your ball when taking croquet and bang the other fellow away - but beware the shot following! The first time I tried it, my continuation shot jumped clean in the air, because of the hole I had trodden my ball into.

If you play your ball off the Court, whether in a single ball shot or in the croquet stroke, not only does your turn end, but you also suffer a penalty in your next turn with that ball, under which you cannot make a wicket or score a roquet. This of course makes shooting at balls on the boundary a very hazardous business. Strangely, however, you are allowed to play your opponent's ball off the Court at any time, even in the croquet stroke. Many times we found ourselves golfed off the boundary miles from the other three balls, faced with the task of golfing back at them, trying to hit without going off!

### ADVISERS AND REFEREES

A referee is appointed to supervise the entire game and remains on the Lawn. Likewise players remain on the lawn as in golf croquet. In addition Westhampton followed the precedent set by Hurlingham in the preceding year by allowing the English players to have an adviser. So a small party of players, advisers and referees remain on the Court throughout the play. This was sensible enough because long breaks are the exception because of the slow surface and the fear of going three-ball dead.

Let it be said at once that we leaned heavily on our American advisers, whose impartiality was immaculate, and whose experience and judgment were sorely needed in times of tribulation. In addition, in the first two games played by John Solomon and myself, both of which were singles, Ian Baillieu was also allowed to advise. He had done some invaluable homework on the American game, and was able to give assistance which the American advisers could not do until they had learned the potentialities of our play.



Bill Bohner watched by Ian Baillieu

After some practice on Friday, the matches began in earnest on Saturday morning to a lowering sky and a heavy downpour. But so warm is the climate that nobody minded rain is, after all, refreshing when the temperature is around the 80° level; so we played, got soaked, and thoroughly enjoyed it. I wish I could remember more about the individual matches - but alas, the unfamiliar pattern of the game prevented me from noting down any special incidents. All I can say is that in Match 1 John beat Henry White, Westhampton's No. 2 ranked player and a well-known film producer; in Match 2 I beat Jack Osborn, a generous sportsman if ever there was one; in Match 3 John and Gerald lost to Henry White and David Seiner, and in Match 4 Ian and myself lost to Bill Bohner and Ned Prentis. This left us after lunch on Sunday with the score level at 2 - 2. Ian and Gerald then lost to Jack Osborn and Peter Maas and John and myself, in an exciting game with Walter Margulies and Heath in which we rather luckily managed to keep control and draw the series at 3 - 3 which was pronounced a most happy and equitable outcome by all present.

As far as tactics were concerned, John and myself had arrived more or less determined to prove that long breaks could be played, despite the surface and the three-ball dead rule, and on the whole I think we managed to do it. The Westhampton members were astonished to see seven, eight or nine wickets scored in one turn, and by the time we left were eagerly trying to do it too, and getting the hang of it remarkably quickly.

We played a demonstration game by British rules, using a Court of reduced size, and employing the services of Ian as commentator, with a portable loudspeaker; although again it proved possible to play breaks, the hard hitting involved was most exhausting, and I came, regretfully, to the conclusion that if the grass has to be an inch long, the British game just isn't on. Westhampton, does it have to be that long?

Now for some description of the scene. Imagine a lush green field marked out into three courts, bordered by birch trees and honeysuckle, scenting the air; three tall flagpoles, flying respectively the Stars and Stripes, the Union Jack and the Westhampton Mallet Club Crest; (usually) a very hot sun and the blue sky but with a refreshing breeze off the sea; a few yachts on the water just visible at the end of the field; a long line of parked cars, enormous in their gleaming transatlantic opulence, dwarfing a single Rolls-Royce, and in many cases flying miniature Stars and Stripes and Union Jacks on the bonnet (sorry, hood!); and last but by no means least, a large - I repeat, large - crowd, dressed a good deal more colourfully than any Hurlingham crowd but lacking nothing in expertise in spectator participation and in general enjoyment of the occasion. At one stage there were a good two hundred people watching - can we ever muster crowds like that? I shan't forget (how could I?) Dave Seiner's Carnaby Street shirt, two enormous Union Jacks joined together; models from the famous Department Store, Sak's Fifth Avenue, draping themselves decorously over the cars, one clad in a luminous orange trouser suit; Jay Rossbach's elegant red tights; and Sandy Pitofsky leaning back with characteristically sardonic smile drinking vodka out of a pop-art glass done up as a replica of a Campbell's Tomato Soup Tin.

Finally, the hospitality. This really is beyond my power to describe: our too-kind hosts outdid all the well-known

stories of American entertaining by a handsome margin. The lobster luncheon at Walter and Harriet Margulies' dream house on the water's edge, with Walter's pride and joy - an enormous and beautifully equipped boat, almost a small ship, for big game fishing - floating serenely alongside; the huge and gay cocktail party at Mr. and Mrs. Cortland Woods'; the rollicking barbecue stag party at Ned and Betty Prentis' with the biggest and most succulent steaks I have ever met, accompanied by the reading of telegrams of welcome from Hubert Humphrey, Bobby Kennedy, Nelson Rockefeller, etc. etc.; and the magnificent luncheon at my own hosts' house, Bob and Ruth Bragarnick at which a magician of an omelette-maker (one every 40 seconds) worked like lightning to satisfy the needs of an enormous and happy throng.

Westhampton, we can't thank you enough. All we can say is that it was an unforgettable experience, and that Hurlingham will do its utmost to return some of your marvellous hospitality when we welcome you here again next year. We are looking forward to it already.

#### Dave Seiner



## HURLINGHAM IN THE U.S.A; AN AMERICAN VIEW



Left to right Ned Prentis, Walter Margulies, Betty Prentis, John Solomon, Gerald Williams  
Douglas Strachan.

Walter P. Margulies, Director, Westhampton Mallet Club

**L**ET IT BE SAID at once: from this side of the Atlantic the 1967 visit of The Hurlingham Club to the United States was an occasion of unalloyed pleasure. Even the inclusive results of the croquet tournament itself was, in balance, a happy outcome, since it makes a return match in London next year imperative. The only real disappointment was the rainy weather; but not even Yankee efficiency at its most rampant can control that.

Our British guests completely captivated their hosts, their opponents, the spectators, and that most fearsome of American institutions, the press. Press coverage here is an almost infallible index of popular interest; measured by this scale, popular interest in the croquet tournament and its players has been truly impressive. The august New York Times ran no fewer than three separate articles on the matches and related activities; The Associated Press, America's leading wire service, carried two lengthy articles which appeared in virtually thousands of newspapers across the country; Sports Illustrated magazine lavished four pages of text and pictures on the tournament; and Holiday magazine has scheduled a croquet article by the Westhampton Mallet Club's own Peter Maas for autumn. Even Women's Wear Daily, a garment industry publication, discussed the matches via a description of a window display devoted to it by the elegant New York Store, Saks Fifth

The overwhelming share of the responsibility for this display of interest and affection must be borne directly by the British team. In point of fact, it is hard to see how Hurlingham and Britain could have selected better "ambassadors of good will" than they did. The Dickensian jollity of John Bull's own Ian Baillieu, Douglas Strachan's happy blend of Scots canniness and Irish wit, Gerald Williams' casual but complete urbanity (reinforced by what must surely be the most outrageous Panama hat in the English-speaking world), and John Solomon's unflinching graciousness - all combined to produce an unforgettable flowering of Anglo-American amity. (I must not forget to add that John Solomon unnecessarily but delightfully hedged his bets by bringing along his charming wife.)

Simple courtesy requires that I express here the immense debt of gratitude owed by both teams to Pan American World Airways. British and American players alike are

all busy men in their own affairs; it is most doubtful if the Hurlingham visit would have gone off so smoothly without Pan Am's unstinting and masterful handling of the myriad logistical details.

As to the croquet matches themselves, the official results are inconclusive. My personal feeling is that the differences between British and American rules did not prove so great a handicap to the individual British players as they did to the American team in London in 1967. In evidence of this argument, I cite the British victories in the singles matches this year. That the differences were to some degree a handicap, however, is shown, to my mind by the fact that American players in doubles play were able to profit by their greater familiarity with the U.S. style game. We are scheduling intensive practice under British rules, and are determined to make as game a showing as possible in London next year.

Crystal balls are invariably murky, and mine is no exception. But perhaps, in the exhilaration engendered by recent events, I may be permitted a very tentative prophecy. My prediction (and hope) is very simply that, in the fullness of time, as British and American players become more familiar with each others' rules, a truly international form of croquet may evolve. But I may be going too far too fast. . .

One American shortcoming cannot be concealed. Verdant turf of billiard-table smoothness is one of Britain's minor but very real glories; it is almost impossible to duplicate anywhere in the United States. Our courts at the Westhampton Mallet Club are not only still in their infancy; they are separated by only a few flat rods from all the rigors of the open Atlantic. The resultant vegetative rankness was an unavoidable handicap to our British visitors. However, this will balance out; American players have no opportunity to prepare themselves for the glass-like lawns of Hurlingham.

In his exceedingly gracious valediction, Douglas Strachan most generously referred to Solomon and Sheba: "Behold! The half was not told me." With all sincerity, we in America can only reply to Hurlingham with the verse following his quotation: "Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom."

## HURLINGHAM v. WESTHAMPTON MALLET CLUB

Two years ago Hurlingham's peaceful and traditional calm was slightly shaken when a challenge was received, at very short notice, from the Westhampton Mallet Club. The initial overtures indicated that there was some difference in the game as played here and in America, but the emissary from the U.S. was not of the opinion that this would be insurmountable. As a result, within a very short time, a team arrived to play croquet under our rules, and it soon became apparent that the differences were such that a serious contest was quite impossible. The game played by our visitors was similar to that played here between 1867 and about the turn of the century. It was apparent that although the U.S. has a reputation for being considerably in advance of us in many fields, on the croquet field the reverse is the case.

The word field is used advisedly, for when Hurlingham visited Westhampton for the return match last year, of which team I was able to be a member, we found that their fields were indeed just this, not only in size but in quality. An account of this match, which was played under American rules, appeared in a supplement in last year's "Croquet," and at that time, few, if any, of us thought that Westhampton could make any serious challenge under British rules for many years to come.

In the event, it was surprising to us that they have made as much headway as they have, and although no one would contend that the match was played on anything like equal terms, Westhampton had obviously made great efforts to get to grips with our game. The results appear below, but this in no way tells the full story.

I personally played Jack Osborn and I have no doubt that he would become a first class player of Association Croquet with a first class croquet brain in a very short while. They have nothing to learn from us in the art of shooting or hoop-running. They have still a lot to learn in the art of playing the variety of croquet strokes employed in 3 and 4 ball breaks. Those of us who know our game realise how little can be done in the course of half a week's practice. Nevertheless, some of them at least have achieved a good deal as was demonstrated by the enlightened questions they frequently asked from their advisers.

I think they were most surprised to find a lady in our team, but Jocelyn Sundius-Smith by her play made them realise that she was a member strictly on the score of merit.

The match was to have been played over the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, June 8th and 9th. In fact, one game was played on the Friday and Sunday's play was cancelled because this was a day of public mourning for our visitors following the tragic death of Robert Kennedy. The weather was as unfortunate as that we had experienced in Long Island in 1967, but this did not mar the remarkable bond which has grown up between the two clubs. Walter Margulies and Henry White had visited us in 1966. Ned Prentis came in 1967 and, with his charming wife Betty, introduced us to the American game on a court set up on the cricket field. We all missed Betty on this occasion, but we were glad to be able to welcome another charmer, Margaret Bohner, the wife of Bill Bohner, who was making his first visit to this country. Bill's match was an unfortunate one as he couldn't hit in, although I know him to be one of their best shots and his knowledge of our game is as advanced as any of them, as I discovered in a few minutes' knock-up on my own lawn a few days later.

The other new faces were Jack Osborn and their captain David Seiniger. We thank them all for their visit and would like to congratulate Westhampton on the choice of their distinguished ambassadors. We entertained them to dinner on the Friday night at Hurlingham and this was followed by another dinner given by our visitors in town the following night.

I think only two things are needed for Westhampton to become a serious threat to English croquet. One is an English type lawn, and I hear that they have every intention of laying one down at the earliest opportunity. The other is the formation of an American Association for the purpose of reaching agreement between the clubs on the rules of their own game as a preliminary to scrapping them altogether in favour of our own. All this will take a little time, and meanwhile it is unthinkable that these contests should not continue. It is not easy to arrange for a team from Hurlingham to travel to America. If, however, they pay us the compliment of playing our game, we should pay them the compliment of going to America. On the last occasion our fares were paid by Pan American, but on the next we shall have to fend for ourselves. But those of us who went on the last occasion enjoyed an unforgettable trip and the word will be passed around.

Friday p.m.—Mrs. Sundius-Smith beat Walter Margulies.

Saturday a.m.—John Solomon beat Jack Osborn.

Alex Karmel beat Henry White.

Robin Godby beat Bill Bohner.

Jim Townsend beat Ned Prentis.

Saturday p.m.—John Solomon and Alex Karmel beat Jack Osborn and Henry White.

Robin Godby and Jim Townsend beat Ned Prentis and David Seiniger.

Mrs. Sundius-Smith beat Bill Bohner.

JOHN SOLOMON.

## LONGMAN CUP

### AREA 1

Ellesmere v. Bowden. Winner: Bowdon 4+1 on time.

### SINGLES

Mrs. Wallwork (4½) beat Mrs. Tyldesley +10.

Mrs. Chaff (7½) beat Mrs. Cocker +13.

Nigel Martin (5) beat Mrs. Jackson +16.

### DOUBLES

Mrs. Wallwork and Mrs. Chaff beat Mrs. Tyldesley and Mrs. Jackson +4.

Nigel Martin and Peter Gelling beat Mrs. Cocker and Mrs. N. Tyldesley +2.

Hunstanton v. Wrest Park. Wrest Park walk-over.

Parsons Green v. Woking. Woking +3 to 1 and 1 unfinished.

### SINGLES

Mrs. Farlie (6) beat D. Temple Page (6½), unfinished.

Mrs. Speer (3½) beat Canon Pym (4) +6.

Mrs. Trull (7) lost to D. Moorcroft (7) -10.

### SINGLES

Mrs. Speer and Mrs. Farlie lost to Mrs. Temple Page and Canon Pym -5

Mrs. Trull and Mrs. Wills lost to D. Temple Page and D. Moorcroft -3.

Woking v. Roehampton. Woking won 4 to 1.

### SINGLES

Canon Pym (4) beat Ian Banks (1½) +8.

D. Temple-Page beat A. d'Antal (4½) +11.

D. Moorcraft (7) beat J. Sanders (5½) +12.

S. S. T.

### DOUBLES

D. Temple-Page and D. Moorcraft lost to A. d'Antal and J. Sanders -5.

Canon Pym and Mrs. Temple-Page beat Ian Banks and Mrs. Bressey +24.

Worton Hall v. Hurlingham. Hurlingham 3 to 2.

### SINGLES

A. W. Skempton (3) lost to V. J. Sexton (6) -11.

Mrs. A. W. Skempton (4) beat G. J. Reeves (8) +9.

C. B. Sanford (7) beat R. M. Ward (10) +3.

### DOUBLES

C. B. Sanford and Mrs. A. W. Skempton lost to V. J. Sexton and E. J. Reeves -17.

A. W. Skempton and B. H. Bliss beat R. M. Ward and A. Eldy +7 on time.

## THE LONGMAN CUP MATCH

### SOUTHWICK v. COMPTON

Played at Southwick on Thursday, June 13th, 1968.  
Southwick names first.

### SINGLES

H. A. Sheppard (2) lost to D. A. Harris (2½) -24.

W. J. Baverstock (6½) beat Mrs. H. Hall (5½) +9.

L. E. Brookes (5) v. Mrs. E. M. Temple (3½), unfinished.

### DOUBLES

H. A. Sheppard and W. J. Baverstock beat D. A. Harris and Mrs. H. Hall +10.

W. G. B. Scott and L. E. Brookes beat Mrs. E. M. Temple and Miss E. G. Clarke-Lens +5.

Southwick won -3-1 with one unfinished.