

A Polesden Surprise

It was a pleasant enough day in August as I wandered along the path by Polesden Lacey's beautiful rose garden. Looking over the hedges I saw an amazing sight. Groups of men and women wielding sticks and hitting coloured balls, one player concentrating very

I ventured down the steps just as the games were ending. Some players were making their way to a circle of chairs and remnants of what had been a picnic. Others crowded round a man who was busy adding up figures. I subsequently learned that he was



hard while trying to get the ball through a white arch, of which there were many. This was new to me and looked like fun. I had to find out more.

David Snow, the organiser who, after deliberations and double checking, was to announce the winners of what had been an all day competition.

People were very friendly to me and pleased to answer my many questions. The game was croquet, the sticks are mallets and the white arches are hoops. The post in the middle is called a centre peg and one form of the game is finished when a



players hits the peg with both balls and "pegs out". In another form of the game, the balls played follow the colours on the peg.

I learned a lot. This group of

players had been playing in an Association Croquet tournament and were part of a much larger group belonging to Bookham u3a. Other u3a groups and visitors also use the lawns, which are mowed and maintained by the much appreciated Polesden gardeners. A white lining rota of u3a members ensure that lawns are well marked. "When does the season end?" I asked and was told that this year they were going to play an extra week to bring it up to the end of September and that after a rainy season this had been a much welcomed bonus. I think I might sign up when the new season begins in April next year. They told me I can try it out first to see if I would like it. Beautiful venue, great game, lovely people, looks good to me!

Oh, and as for the winners of the competition, I did hear their names announced. Frank Cross, followed by his wife Val as runner up. First time a married couple have won apparently. She seemed rather excited.....

Ivor Escarels