

## **The White Lining Machine**

If you've walked near or played on the croquet lawns at Polesden Lacey, you may have pondered on the mechanism which lays the white lines. There's a story behind the machine that rolls out the paint to make those lines (and it isn't the machine's fault that they sometimes aren't quite straight!) I've wondered, as I held the smooth wooden handles, about the people who, down the generations, have gripped those same handles. So I traced it back to Val Shelton, a very long standing member and committee member of the croquet group and she told me the story.

Val's family had a tennis court at their holiday home in Felpham, a village on the south coast between Littlehampton and Bognor. White lines were required and the machine in question was bought, probably from Gamage's store\* and certainly before 1939. In those days distemper was used for the lines, which obviously washed away very easily during rain. The tennis court was turned into chicken runs for the war effort.

Val inherited the machine in the late 80s and it eventually found a home in Martin Pulsford's garage; he in turn donated it to Bookham U3A's croquet group and it still resides at Polesden where it is wheeled out every week by croquet group members.

It is essentially an open trough with metal wheels which transfers the special paint to the grass as you walk behind pushing it. There are laser models available which I'm sure make perfect lines but there's something very satisfying about still using the human touch, albeit with the odd wobble.

\*(There are fascinating facts and photos if you put Gamage's store into your search engine and it may bring back a lot of memories for some!)

Produced by Val Cross (with thanks to Val Shelton for her input) in 2018, and updated May 2022.