

**James Wyse-Member of Carrickmines Croquet & Lawn Tennis Club—2004-- Introduction to
Croquet in 1968**

I entered Trinity College in 1968 to study for a 4 year BBS degree—Bachelor of Business Studies and got my degree in 1972.

On my first day entering TCD from College Green through Front Square in late September 1968—(the very first student I met on entering that gate was Bob Mullally from Newbridge looking for the same class) looking for my first 2 lectures starting at 10.00 a.m. in a pre-fab classroom on Statistics from Paddy Lyons and Economics from Prof. Loudon Ryan—I found the pre-fab on the left hand side of the 1937 Postgraduate Reading Room building at the back of the Provost's Garden called Fellows Garden (now called Fellows Square). The Berkeley Library (main college library) had just been opened a few years before at the top of the Fellows Garden.

The pre-fab rooms were to the right of the Long Room where the Book of Kells was kept (now the main entrance to the famous book). You entered the Long Room from the new Berkeley Library square then. To the right of the pre-fab rooms was the Croquet Lawn now called the Fellows Square, a lovely large grassy lawn which also houses the New Arts & Social Science Building where most of the college lecture theatres are now located. The current Croquet Lawn is located in the New Square area in front of the Berkeley Library.

The mallets and balls were kept in a long wooden box in the Fellows Garden in the porch of a beautiful small granite stone building (2 photos attached) called the Magnetic Observatory built in the 1830's—the building was in the form of a classical Grecian Doric Temple Folly. To facilitate the construction of Trinity's new Arts & Social Science Building, the Magnetic Observatory was gifted to UCD in the mid 1970's, where it was rebuilt stone-by-stone in the Birch Walk Arboretum area of Belfield Campus between the Belgrove Student Residences and UCD Oakmount Crèche accessed off the Roebuck Road Gate to UCD or the Owenstown Entrance off Fosters Avenue . In UCD it houses the O'Kane Centre for Film Studies at The Observatory.

I watched students—mainly English Public School boys on UK grants (had loads of money for sherry and beer) play this game called Croquet. I borrowed the mallet and balls many times with my English flat mate Howard Shaw and made up our own rules trying to hit balls through the various hoops! I thought Howard being English would know the rules but alas was as ignorant as me! Howard was a member with his wife Anne of CC<C for a few years in the late 2000's and now plays his tennis in Gorey, Co. Wexford.

There was no wooden boundary fence then to keep the ball within the play area! We learned how to send your opponents ball to the other end of the vast lawn well outside the 33 metre diagonal court by placing your ball touching your opponents ball—then putting your foot on your ball and swinging the mallet to hit your ball without it moving but sending your opponents ball 100 yards away!

When we finished our game, we would put the equipment back in the wooden box under the Marino style Folly that was the Magnetic Observatory beside the court.

Two years later in 1970, I was picked to play on a TCD boys' team to play a girls' team in Trinity Hall in Upper Rathmines, off Palmerstown Road. The croquet court was located inside the main entrance gate in the right hand field (Students Residences building now). We played for a beautiful Porcelain Trophy—a traditional bedside Peeing Pot—very colourful with a wonderful hand painted mural and inscription inside the floor of the pot showing two workmen down there with the caption around

them saying—"Hold on up there—we are working down here"—very funny and a trophy everyone wanted to win !!

There was so much cheating going on to win that trophy—our team didn't win as we were too preoccupied trying to shift the girls on the Trinity Hall team—which also ended in failure!--they laughed at our best !

I never played again till Brendan Bohn, Patrick White and the late John O'Grady sponsored me to join Carrickmines C & LTC in 2004. Simon Williams spotted me in June 2004 trying my hand and eye coordination on the club courts and thought he might make something of my limited talent. He asked me to be his partner in the Stonebrook Cup competition (2 Silver cups) at the annual club championships in the first week of August 2004. After some practice at Association croquet (it was a few years later before I heard of Golf Croquet) and getting my eye in and much more importantly, obeying Simon's instructions—such as—I want you to hit their ball here or there so as to leave their ball over there and your ball in front of the hoop and go through the hoop---I was able to do that quite a few times such that we ended up winning the Stonebrook Cup beating the English and World Champion and his partner in the final. My handicap was 20 which seemed to be very useful to Simon who made 95% of the hoops in all our games!

I remember our winning speeches—we both spoke—with me telling everyone I never played the game before and this was my first competition—the English and World Champion Robert Fulford Was a little miffed and accused Simon of using a Springer (me) on a false handicap off 20!! I bought off his silence with a few pints of Guinness!

As the championships occur during the RDS horse show week every year—and I have been heavily involved in the RDS show since 1983, I haven't had the time to play in this event since—what a pity—a potential great croquet career wasted but I did beat the great Fred Rogerson, a Carrickmines Croquet Legend with about 130 Croquet Caps for Ireland, in a game of golf croquet a few years later off a very decent handicap and still living off the memory of that and the Stonebrook Cup win with my regular tennis partners every Monday evening—John Fitzpatrick, Martin Kinirons and Patrick White.

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VIEW FROM FELLOWS' SQUARE, (1870S?); INCLUDES PROVOST'S HOUSE AND GARDENS, MAGNETIC OBSERVATORY, THE REAR OF THE PUBLIC THEATRE, STUDENTS LOUNGING ON THE LAWN, ARCHERY TARGET, SEVERAL TREES (TCD MUN MC 157/14)

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VIEW OF THE PROVOST'S GARDEN AND MAGNETIC OBSERVATORY FROM FELLOWS' SQUARE, 1892 (TCD MUN MC 162/13)