

THE ONLY MAGAZINE FOR THE BOWLS & BOWLING ENTHUSIAST

# UNIQUE

## DORSET BOWLS

September 2019

### BIG BOWLS LORD GERALD'S SECRET WEAPON

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by Lady Garden

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# Bowls Like A Bull

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**We asked bowls and interior design expert Craven Ars-Likka to find out just what makes Gerald, Lord Garden, tick. You may be surprised by the answers ...**

by Craven Ars-Likka  
Photos: Hulton Picha-Galry



Gerald, Lord Garden of Goathill (or to be more properly formal Gerald, 12th Duke of Maidenhead) is a middle aged man in a hurry. The hereditary peer, former member of the House of Lords (*"I blame Lionel Blair and his wretched Labour reforms"*) horticulturalist, patron, Chairman of the Dorset Steam Rally, organist and founder member of *Spaniels Ears* (the briefly successful Bradpole skiffle group) is anything but retiring, though even close friends find him something of an enigma. *"You are as likely to find him at home playing with his organ, or poking around in his wife's famous nooks and crannies as you are out and about on the county circuits"*, long-standing friend and biographer Raymond "Squashy" Hope-Bucktooth says. *"And of course, he's famously devoted to his bowls, a late passion but a serious one"*.

In this happy regard, Squashy comes quickly to

the point, for it is to learn more about Lord Garden and his prowess on the crown greens of the county that we have come to the busy metropolis of Puncknowle where the Duke regularly *"plies his trade"* as part of the highly successful Puncknowle Crown Green Bowling team.

## A surprising turn

For a man perhaps better known for his indoor pursuits - he once undertook an intensive course in horizontal jogging with the missing presumed absent Professor Thrupiece in 2004 but suffered a serious spontaneous spasm - his interest in outdoor sport is perhaps surprising. Further, since he came to it only in later life without ever having shown much interest in the bowls he inherited from his late father the 11th Duke, many have wondered what suddenly drew him to a strenuous sport generally associated with the young and vigorous. Opinions are divided. *"Was it push or pull I wonder?"*, opines teammate Bill Archer-Hebdon-Lloyd. *"There's no doubt that once Lady Garden had started to invite the Goathill Ladies Circle to sherry and a heavy finger buffet on the first and last Tuesdays of the month, he was looking for an excuse to make himself scarce - if you see what I mean, but a man of his skills and influence had a wide variety of opportunities open to him. I know that he toyed with the Fabric and Felts Club (Corfe Mullen) and made inquiries about casual work at Stringbonefellows (Rhyme Intrinsic) but in the end he seemed to be drawn to bowls and then discovered he had a rather remarkable aptitude*



Two of Lord and Lady Garden's pets - Gin [LEFT] and Tonic [RIGHT] - "two children who never left home"

for it."

Lord Garden joined the Puncknowle Crown Green Bowling team in 2015 and by early 2016 was Club Captain.

Did the wealthy aristocrat's money, title and powerful connections in any way influence the Playing Committee's decision? Ask any one of those involved and the answer will be a resounding No! *"The fact that he was a peer of the realm and distantly related to the Royal Family had nothing to do with it"* says then Club Secretary Roland Minute-Scribbler. *"Nor could his offer to rebuild the pavillion, pay for all the kit and relay the greens be thought to have influenced us in any way. He became Captain on merit on the unexpected retirement of the previous incumbent (Harold Hicks-Majorie-Peters 1976-2016) following our discovery that Harold had inappropriately touched a changing room bath mat in 1986"*. (No charges were ever brought and the source of the information leaked to the Committee was never identified [Ed].)

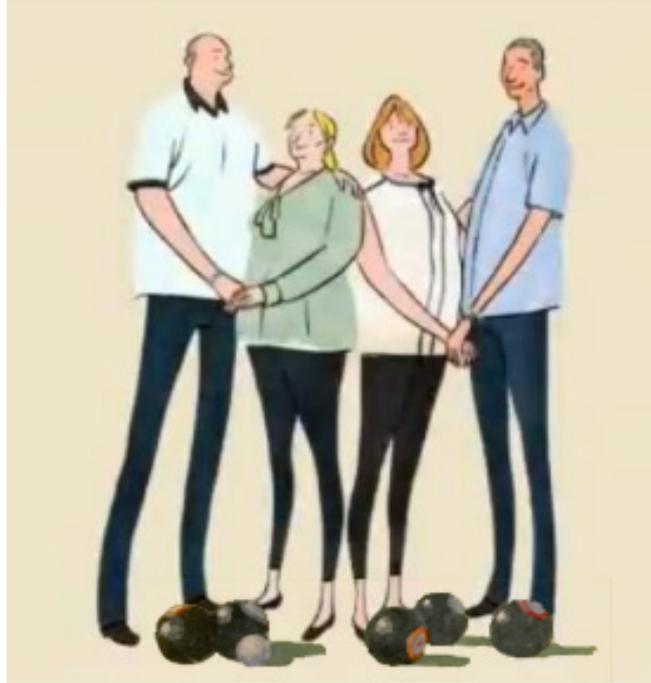
Other team members say that Lord Gerald's record in all competitions speaks for itself, with his strikes against tight heads rivalling those of any other player. An "ace" when it comes to placing a back-marker, whatever end he's playing, he's usually "up" and frequently "in" for at least two. When under pressure, his wide balls with opposite bias can seriously disrupt the opposition's strategy and he can work with the crown to devastating effect. (*Aficionados of bowls will understand the terminology.*)

## A Social Animal

Away from the greens, Gerald is famously gregarious, pharasitically traditional and unfailingly generous in spirit if not in practice. Indeed he is generally regarded as the embodiment of old style hospitality and the equally old adage that *"a gentleman should be first to the bar and last to his wallet"* - so much so, in fact, that rumour has it that it was with Lord Gerald in mind that the great P G Wodehouse coined the fine descriptive phrase that *"His Lordship was the world's leading exponent of the one way trouser pocket"*. A moment's historical reflection makes obvious, however, that this could not be the case; rather it was of the 11th Duke that the famous novelist wrote. *"Still the apple doesn't fall far from the tree"*, Raymond "Squashy" Hope-Bucktooth observes, *"and if the cap fits ..."*. As though to emphasise the point, during our visit, Gerald twice declares a *"Captain's Round"* which means, according to Club tradition, that the drinks are on him. However, on both occasions, drinks having been served, Gerald - in a fine display of super-animated pantomime pocket patting - mimes a credulous inability to find his credit cards, three of which he assures us have been eaten by *Hercule* and *Poirot* his two delightfully inquisitive Belgian Malinois. *"Chalk it up to the House"*, he bellows to the amusement of all save the Club Treasurer - a man who looks several decades older than his 45 years.

## Neice, the Hon Lady Bassett-Lowke is a well-known food writer





Lord Garden with his nephew Algernon; Members of the Puncknowle Mixed Crown Green Bowls Team

## A Family Man

Coming as he does from a large family (his father the late 11th Duke of Maidenhead had eight brothers and four sisters though Gerald was his only issue), Lord Garden is conscious of his obligations to both kith and kin and here, according to neice The Hon Lady Juniper Bassett-Lowke - the well known food-writer - he is *"fastidious if a little inattentive"*. *"I would like to say that Gerald is fond of his family and that even though he rarely sees most of them, he does get his secretary to send Christmas cards ... Yes I would like to say that ... but if this is on the record in any way then I can't, because he doesn't ... but it would be nice if he did"*.

In Gerald's defence, he is, of course, a busy man: juggling multiple commitments and trying always to give time and space to his first and greatest love - his ever expanding organ. Coming as he does from a gender famous for its inability to multitask, this is no great surprise but Gerald is neither better than worse than any other ageing white upper class male - he is, for example, as a stranger to Clinton Cards on the Goathill High Street, whilst mention of Threadboys Burgers, Threadbucks Coffee and Threadstones Booksellers mean nothing to the *"belted Earl"* - though he has heard of Threadbonemeals (Lady Garden had a *"do"* there once) and he did

famously inquire about casual work at Stringbonefellows the Dorset *"niteclub"*. His interest was, however, short-lived; whilst he admired the pluck of the female hostesses, he couldn't get on with the spelling.

So there we have it: a social animal who is generous up until the point of parting with actual monies, an assiduous offerer of *"assistance bar any actual help"* and a family man who runs shy of any event that involves relatives. As his prep school dormitory companion composer Adinsell Threadbone put it when asked to describe Lord Garden: *"Gerald is rather like a piece of music by Sir Edward Elgar"*. *"The Enigma?"*, his interlocutor inquired, *"No, I was thinking of Caractacus"*.

## A Certain Incident

Here we touch upon a tricky matter: mention the name Gerald, Lord Garden, in some circles and an unnerving hush is likely to descend upon the assembled company; for there is a *"bad smell"* in Gerald's past that is almost never spoken of but remains a potential stain on his otherwise blameless character. Few outside a closed and very loyal circle of friends know the truth of the matter, though rumour has continued to circulate and doubtless the whole matter has been blown



The Hon Lady Bassett-Lowke and friend in the Puncknowle Club's Pavillion Tea Rooms. "They will receive a fair review."

wholly out of proportion.

*"Few outside a closed and very loyal circle of friends know the truth of the matter, though rumour has continued to circulate and doubtless the whole matter has been blown out of all proportion", says loyal friend and alleged witness Humphry Barclay-Toad. "All I will say is that we were very young at the time and most of us needed the money though Gerald didn't of course. We paid out a great deal in compensation ("hush money" - The Sydling St Nicholas Sun) and both the person in question and her Xoloitzcuintli made a full recovery. In any event Ziggy was more responsible than Gerald - it was his rubberised thingy". In any event, it was a long time ago and there the matter should end" ("Fat Chance", Ron Nasty, Editor, The Sydling St Nicholas Sun).*

## Bowls, Bowlers and Bowling

We cannot, of course, end our wide-ranging survey of the life of Gerald, Lord Garden on such a sour and downbeat note; so, remembering that it is with his bowls that readers of *Unique Dorset Bowls* will be most concerned, let us leave him at peace with himself, his bowls and his organ.

*"Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to play away, polish my bowls and head home to finger my organ", he has said on more than one occasion (though never within earshot of Lady Garden). In the end: it's a simple enough hope for a simple life from a simple man. Ave Gerald. We salute you!*

GERALD, LORD GARDEN OF GOATHILL, 12th DUKE OF MAIDENHEAD

### KEY FACTS:

**BORN** 12 June 1934 to Hereward, 11th Duke of Maidenhead and Sibyl Brasse-Nek (marriage dissolved 1935)

**STAR SIGN** Capricorn

**MARRIED** Hester Nicely-Pointy, 14 September 1962

**ISSUE** None so far but the increasing size of his organ has caused some friction

**HOME** Goathill Hall

**HEIR** The Hon Lady Juniper Bassett-Lowke

**PREVIOUS RELATIONSHIPS** associated briefly with Trixie Osmington (sister of singer Ziggy), Tilda Rice-Swinton (parliamentary secretary), Pamela Pamela-Pamela (socialite), Xenia Inifothemoni (Love Island Contestant)

**INTERESTS** All things organ, bowls, horticulture (occasional), steam rallies, defunct popular skiffle groups of the 1950s

**FAVOURITE CAR** 1959 Maserati 3500GT

**FAVOURITE FABRIC** Organdy

**FAVOURITE DRINK** Organic Gin with Organic Tonic

**FAVOURITE VEGETABLE** Puncknowle Bowls Club Secretary Roland Minute-Scribbler

Designers Charles and Maurice MacPro with unidentified "client" in happier times

