

The John Prescott Files

Mail Online

Prescott working hard - at playing croquet

By SIMON WALTERS & JONATHAN OLIVER, Mail On Sunday

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'Good shot!' Prescott's party enjoy their game.

John Prescott's credibility as Deputy Prime Minister has suffered another huge blow with the disclosure that he was playing croquet at his official country mansion as Tony Blair jetted to America, leaving him in charge of the Government.

See more pictures of Prez at play [by clicking here](#)

Astonishing photographs show how Mr Prescott - shamed after a steamy affair with his Whitehall diary secretary - relaxed with aides on the manicured lawns of Dorneywood while officials claimed he was running the country from his Whitehall office.

The pictures were taken on Thursday afternoon, shortly after Mr Blair left Downing Street to fly to the US for a summit with George Bush - leaving the Premiership in the hands of his deputy.

But instead of concentrating on matters of state, Mr Prescott drove straight to his grace-and-favour residence in Buckinghamshire to stroll the 200-acre grounds, take refreshments and enjoy a game of croquet with political aides and civil servants.

The disclosure is certain to add to the pressure on Mr Blair to dismiss Mr Prescott, now seen as a laughing stock and a political liability to an already beleaguered Prime Minister. Labour backbenchers will be horrified that Mr Prescott chose to flaunt his stately home by playing croquet - a game they associate with effete toffs.

Mr Blair returned from Washington early yesterday, only to fly off for an eight-day Italian holiday - once again leaving his deputy in charge.

Mr Blair has already come under intense criticism for refusing to dismiss Mr Prescott after details of his scandalous affair with diary secretary Tracey Temple were revealed by The Mail on Sunday last month.

It led Mr Prescott to lose his sprawling Whitehall department in a Cabinet reshuffle. But the Prime Minister's decision to allow him to retain the Deputy Premiership along with his two grace-and-favour houses - he conducted his affair with Miss Temple at his Admiralty House apartment - caused uproar and led to Whitehall rumours that his deputy 'had something' on Mr Blair.

This was further fuelled when it emerged that Mr Blair tried to force Mr Prescott to give up Dorneywood, but Mr Prescott had adamantly refused.

His decision to go there the moment the Prime Minister left the country was seen in Whitehall as a deliberate act of defiance.

Mr Blair's plane left for Washington at 2pm on Thursday. Yet by 3.45pm, by which time Mr Blair had not long left British airspace, Mr Prescott was seen leading his guests on a tour of Dorneywood's pristine gardens, in full view of passing cars and ramblers in the roads bordering the grounds.



Mr John Prescott
Deputy Prime Minister's Office
26 Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2WH

12th March 2007

Dear Mr Prescott,

On behalf of Dundonald Croquet Club I would like to invite you to officially open our new club lawn on Saturday 26th May 2007.

Dundonald Croquet Club was established in 2002 among four friends playing in each others gardens. By this summer we expect our club to exceed thirty members; with our average age around twenty-five. Last year we procured a small piece of ground and spent the summer working the land to allow the planting of a croquet lawn. The lawn is now well established and we are spending our time nurturing the grass and enhancing the surrounding area. I have enclosed some photographs showing the progress of our work for your reference.

We are planning to open the lawn on the 26th May. The day's events will include the official opening, a Golf Croquet competition and plenty of food and drink. We would be honoured if you would accept our invitation to attend the day and officially open the club for us.

If you should you have any queries on any of the above feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Mr John Prescott
Deputy Prime Minister's Office
26 Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2WH

10th April 2007

Dear Mr Prescott,

REQUEST TO OPEN DUNDONALD CROQUET CLUB LAWN: 26th MAY 2007

I refer to my previous letter dated 12th March to which I have received no response (copy attached for your ease of reference).

I would like to reiterate our invitation for you to attend the Opening Day for Dundonald Croquet Club and officially declare our lawn open on Saturday 26th May 2007.

Dundonald is a very close knit community and you can expect a very warm reception. Our members would be most honoured to have such a prominent individual in attendance supporting our club.

I look forward to hearing from you and respectfully ask that a timely response is given to allow us to make alternative arrangements.

Yours sincerely,



DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

26 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2WH

Tel: 020 7944 8623
Fax: 020 7944 8621

Dundonald Croquet Club

16 April 2007

Dear Mr Easton

The Deputy Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your kind invitation to attend the Opening Day for Dundonald Croquet Club and declare the lawn open on May 26th 2007.

Unfortunately, on this particular occasion the Deputy Prime Minister must regrettably decline the invitation as he will be overseas. Please accept his apologies.

The Deputy Prime Minister has asked me to send his best wishes for the day.

LYNN ROTHWELL
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Website: www.dpm.gov.uk
Email: john.prescott@dpm.gsi.gov.uk



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Croquet's dark side

By Finlo Rohrer
BBC News Magazine

The angry press coverage of John Prescott's game of croquet puts the spotlight on a game struggling with its identity.

Some of the coverage of the deputy prime minister's distinctive choice in recreation has centred on its reputation as a sport for toffs, juxtaposing this with the working class origins of the former ship steward and MP for Hull East.

But as much as the world of croquet is fighting hard to shed its image as a sport of the posh, there is a darker side to the stereotyping of the hoops-and-mallets game, a belief that it is a uniquely "vicious" pastime.

One correspondent to the Daily Telegraph describes it as "one of the most self-serving, unsporting games ever played, requiring ruthless meanness and ungenerosity of spirit towards one's opponents".

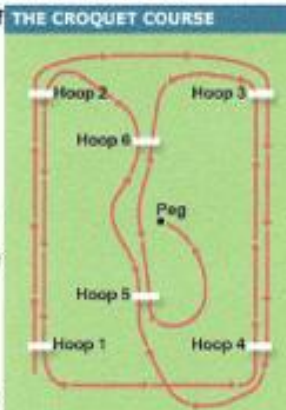
Another correspondent, in the Times, recalls an episode where the Archdeacon of Oakham was quite insistent that it was "a vicious game".

For the uninitiated observer there is no escaping the observation that a major part of the game seems to involve bashing other people's balls off the pitch.

Association Croquet, the most commonly played competitive version of the game, is played with four coloured balls, either in singles or doubles form. A side wins when it manages to get all of its balls through the six hoops on the court twice, in a specified route, and on to a peg in the centre.

A major element is the roquet, when you strike somebody else's ball, you get a chance to blast it out of the way, and another shot as a bonus.

Klim Seabright, secretary of the Croquet Association, the sport's equivalent of the FA, says the sport is working to



Players must get their balls through six hoops twice and then onto a peg

“ Why shouldn't croquet players be admired as well for the vicious tactics they employ to win on the croquet court?”

James Hawkins
Croquet World Online

In today's Magazine



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themselves?



heavy floods?



they now?



back together?



models



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