On Friday 23rd August our newly registered Algarve Croquet Club had a wonderful introductory cocktail party under the stars at Quinta dos Poetas. The weather and setting were just perfect.

William Weber, our Chairman, gave a short speech outlining the aims of the Algarve Croquet Club and introduced and thanked his hard working committee. Most importantly, he celebrated the opening of the Lita Gale Lawn and acknowledged the tremendous contribution that Lita had made to our sport – loud applause from the 70 or so guests greeted the announcement. He also thanked others that had provided sound advice and contributed freely, including Chris Loader who designed the club logo and Fergus Armstrong who designed and set up the club website at algarvecroquetclub.com. Martin Walsh, the Honorary Secretary and Mark Shreeve, the Honorary Treasurer elaborated on future plans. Barbara Viney, the Social Secretary and Ladies Captain, announced that training for absolute beginners was available. The Membership Secretary, Trevor Morgan, was kept busy all evening signing up new members – the club now has 75 fully signed up members. A word of thanks must go to Trevor’s three sons, Jacob, Sam and George, who worked tirelessly during the evening serving canapés and selling the many counting beads so generously made by Diane Choudhury-Walsh.

Many wandered through the lovely hotel grounds to see the two full-sized lawns. These are early days following the sad and sudden closure of our beloved Bela Romão Croquet Club. Whilst Quinta dos Poetas will be the social heart of the club, plans are well advanced to create a complex of international standard lawns and last night it was announced that a grant of 70% from within Portugal had been promised. Balancing grants are being sought and anticipated. To further encourage the sport, lawns at Castro Marim and in the central Algarve may materialise. With such a wide-ranging and enthusiastic membership, as much lawn space as possible must be sought. The club caters for both golf and association croquet and dialogue with international bodies is ongoing.

The wine and drinks flowed and excellent canapés and petiscos were bountiful. Everyone mixed in and met old friends and many made new friends. It was a typical Algarve blend of nationalities – Portuguese, British, Swedish, French and others. All looked forward to meeting again on the lawns and at future social events.