

▲ To achieve a **floorer** (that is, to down all nine pins in one throw) is a rare feat that traditionally gains the player a place on the club's roll of honour. The knack is to glance the right hand shoulder of the front pin so that the chain of events shown here follows (assuming that the thrower is right handed).

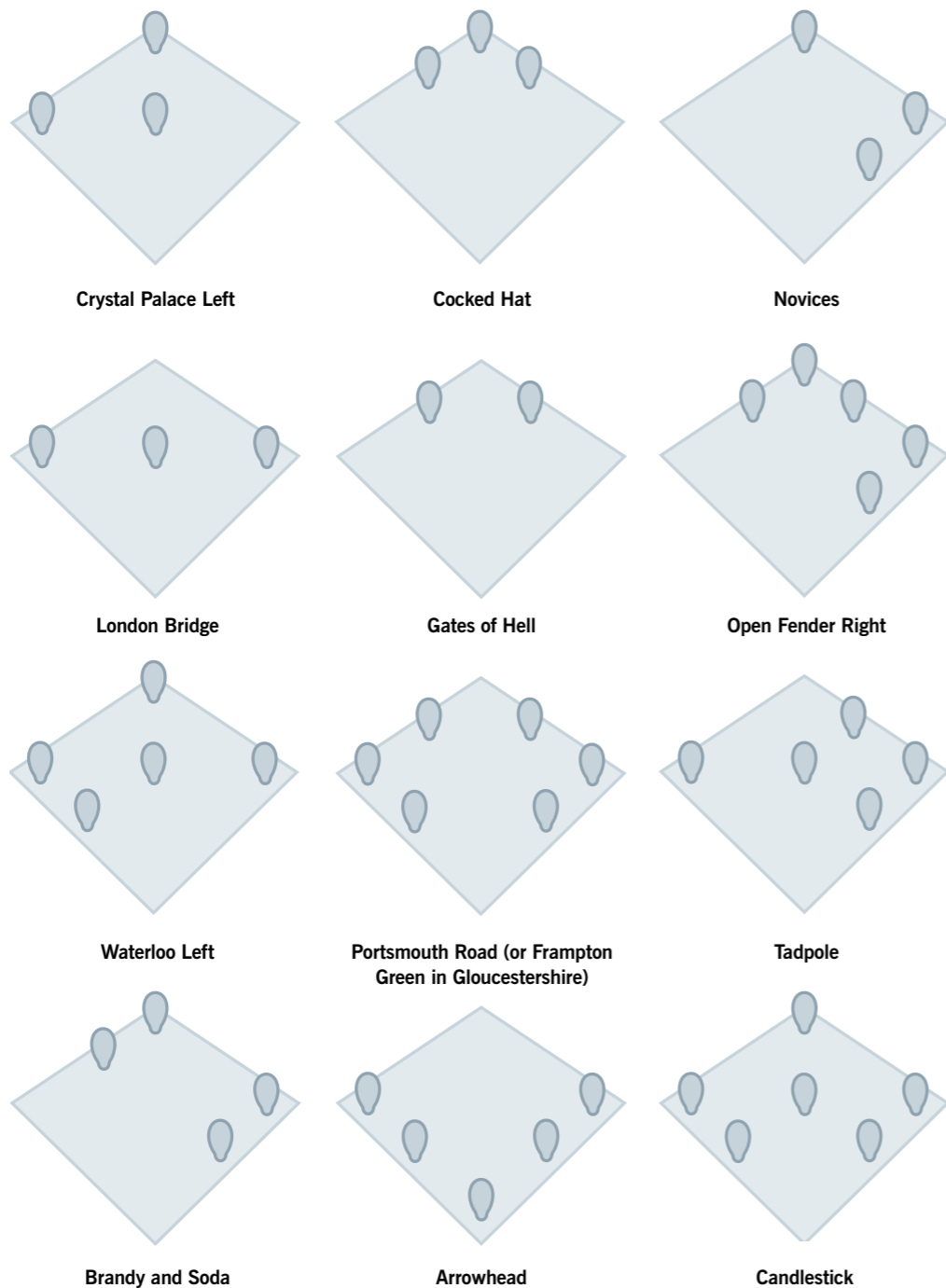
As this happens so rarely, over the years skittlers have delighted in giving names to the various 'broken frames' that occur as a result of the first throw. On this page are just a few of the names adopted in London, some of which also crop up in other parts of the country.

In each case the player has to aim precisely to have any chance of downing the remaining pins, though some are fiendishly difficult, if not impossible.

Some of the names are self explanatory, others are pure fun.

The **Waterloo** is said to be named after a London pub where this configuration was successfully downed for a winning shot.

When the front, middle and back pins are downed, in London it is called **Portsmouth Road**, denoting a through road, and in Gloucestershire **Frampton Green**, named after the green in the village of Frampton which is cut in two by a road through the middle.



▲ Down in the basement of the **Freemasons Arms, Hampstead**, and unknown to most of the drinkers above, the Tuesday night matches of the **Hampstead Lawn Billiard and Skittle Club** offer a unique glimpse of the once mighty game of London skittles. (As for the once, not quite so mighty game of lawn billiards, see page 176.)

Skittles has been played at the pub since at least the 1890s, though the current alley dates from 1936, following the Freemasons' complete reconstruction. Despite its concrete lining, however, the proximity of the River Fleet has led to it being flooded on more occasions than the skittlers would care to remember.

But they are a hardy bunch. As their membership cards state, 'Owing to the robust nature of the game, members are advised that they play at their own risk'.

The throw is, at 21 feet, quite short compared to other games. But the cheese is no plaything, and has to be thrown, full toss, with a precision that can take hours of practise, and no little skill.

At the other end, the 'stickers' (who in former times would be paid in pence and pints) have their work

cut out too. It was once calculated that in resetting all the pins during the course of a typical match, a sticker would have to lift the equivalent of two tons of wood.

Scoring is not simple either. Instead of totalling the number of pins downed in three throws, as in other skittle games, you count the number of throws needed to down all nine, up to a maximum of four throws. If any are left standing after that, you score 5. A floorer, explained opposite, scores one.

Thus the lowest score wins. It gets rather more complicated after that, but that is all the more reason to witness the game in person. That, and the sad fact that the Freemasons is now, for skittles on the London pub scene at least, very much the last chance saloon.