

Cygnnet

South West Area Newsletter

Celebrating Croquet Across the Region

Issue 45: December 2023



It's time for the final issue of the year – not too much to tax the brain I hope and certainly a change from those awful Christmas cracker jokes – I hope.

So, the season's greetings to you all and here's to a Happy Croquet New Year.

A bit of business: AGM

Thanks to everyone who attended and contributed so constructively. The draft minutes are now on the SWF website <https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2023-draft-AGM-mins.pdf>

The key points are

- **League results must be submitted electronically** from 2024
 - See Appendix 1 ffi
- **Some changes to League Rules** – check on the website for these and ensure Team Captains are looking at the current version
- The committee was re-elected with the addition of Mike Rice as Handicapping Officer
 - See Appendix 2 for a lovely flyer to put on your club noticeboard

And please note that the 2024 AGM is scheduled for 24th November – a change to that discussed at the AGM in order to better accommodate the League entry deadlines.

What do you think?

While we're on the topic – we started holding on-line AGMs during Covid and members have indicated this is their preferred method since then. If you feel that there are good reasons for returning to an in-person meeting, do let us know.

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Cygnnet is emailed to our club contacts who are requested to pass it on to individual club members. It is also available shortly after publication on our website: www.swfcroquet.org.uk






We welcome queries, suggestions and feedback about Cygnnet or any aspect of the SW croquet scene. Contact: lindawithani@hotmail.com

Welcome to the team

A very warm welcome (especially from Stephen) to the following who have offered to be League Results Secretaries from 2024.

This is part of the succession planning as Stephen will be resigning from the role of League Secretary at our next AGM.

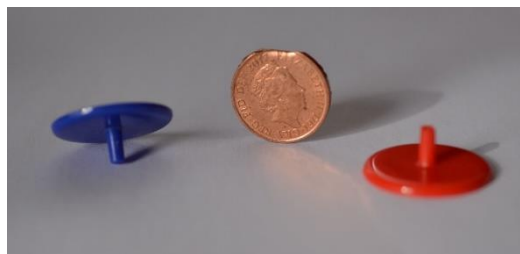
Stephen remains the main point of contact until the start of the 2024 season but thereafter the League Results Secretaries will be your first point of call. Their contact details are on the bottom of the Results Sheets but here's what they look like in case you haven't already come across them:

<p>David Warhurst: (Budleigh) Advanced Leagues</p>  A portrait of David Warhurst, a man with glasses and a yellow cap, smiling. He is wearing a white polo shirt.	<p>Gill Wheeler: (Kington Langley) AC Handicap and SC Leagues</p>  A portrait of Gill Wheeler, a woman with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue patterned top.	
<p>Dom Aarvold: (Bristol) GC Level Play Leagues</p>  A portrait of Dom Aarvold, a man with short brown hair and a beard, smiling. He is wearing a white polo shirt.	<p>Wendy White (Swindon): GC Handicap League</p>  A portrait of Wendy White, an older woman with short white hair and glasses, wearing a light blue and white patterned turtleneck sweater.	<p>Nigel Wulcko (C&P): GC High Handicap League</p>  A portrait of Nigel Wulcko, a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue jacket with a pink stripe.

Spot the difference: ball markers and coins!!!!

The lawns manager at Budleigh Salterton handed their Chair, John O’Gorman, this 1p coin one morning during the Open SC tournament. It had just gone through the mower, was very sharp and needed careful handling.

John created this image to share with Cygnet readers as an example of what happens if you try and decapitate the Queen. Luckily on this occasion there was no major damage done, but it could have caused the need for significant and costly repair to the mower – and possibly to players carefully adjusting their croquet arrangements or brushing aside the worm casts (the later not a problem at Budleigh, obviously!



Obituaries

Pat Oxley 1936 - 2023

Our Club (East Dorset CC) recently lost an important member when Patrick Oxley sadly died while on a long cycle ride, accompanied by his wife Judith and one of his 3 sons.

Pat grew up in war-torn North London, having many adventures with his 2 brothers and being exposed to serious garden croquet on his grandfather’s lawn. He developed a passion for the sea, carrying out his national service on MTBs and joining the Merchant Navy. Subsequently working in the construction industry, he maintained a keen interest in canoeing, sailing, and narrow-boating, living on the canals for a period and becoming a well-respected water sports professional.

This water sports career brought him, Judith, and their yacht to live in Poole in 2000. This enabled him to continue his keen interest in Bridge and to rekindle his childhood involvement with Garden Croquet by joining East Dorset Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (EDLTCC) – known to many as *Parkstone* – where he fairly quickly became Chairman of the Bridge Section, started running bridge courses for beginners and soon earned a place in some of our successful croquet teams.

His water sports coaching experience led to him becoming an excellent croquet coach and he soon became Chairman of the Croquet Committee. Later on he became the Croquet Grounds Officer, helping organise many court improvement projects and being called upon whenever questions arose about the Club’s old drainage and sewerage systems.



He was particularly interested in inclusivity – believing that as many croquet members as possible should learn to play both AC (his original strength) and that “new” variant, GC. He even proposed that Croquet and Tennis should have a single membership category, to encourage more tennis players to take up croquet and to enhance cooperation between the Sections. He was a hard-working and reliable Club member, always heavily involved in occasions such as our community fireworks event.

Pat will be sadly missed by his many croquet friends, all those he taught and coached over the years and those of us who enjoyed his company on and off the croquet courts.

Margaret Peña

Margaret was a long-standing member of Bristol Croquet Club, beginning her croquet career in 1985. She gave up playing the game a few years ago but continued to take an interest in the activities of the club.

Richard Williamson remembers her:

My own recollection is that Margaret won several trophies in various tournaments across the South West (her name was on several trophies I've won; but I can't recall which ones). She had a lovely, graceful, style and was an accomplished player, combining a competitive streak with a delightfully relaxed approach to the game. Always a lady and supportive of junior members.

And Jill Hathaway recalls:

I remember Margaret telling me that when she was our Club's Match Secretary she really enjoyed meeting and greeting the visiting teams and getting the equipment out ready for the matches.

One of her other hobbies was looking after her beautiful garden - an activity which unfortunately had to be curtailed gradually over the last few years because of Parkinson's Disease. She also enjoyed playing Bridge and Scrabble.

She will be missed.

SWF Autumn Short Croquet Team Tournament: Budleigh Salterton 6th – 8th Oct 2023

Another weekend of enjoyable croquet when our annual Autumn tournament took place at Budleigh Salterton, this time in glorious sunshine, probably one of the finest week-ends of the year. I am very grateful for the immaculate lawns provided by the club and to Chris Donovan for his management over the weekend.

This year, after the usual withdrawals and additions, we had 26 teams taking part. Only one team had to resort to a guest, although another was a player short who had been hospitalised the day before.

Division 1

Once again, a very strong line-up in the top division, with seven of the players having to do peels. Glamorgan were the defending champions, but they were hampered by being the team with only three players, so they had effectively lost four games before they started. However, they played very well and were in contention going in to the last round.

At this stage, Taunton Terriers were three games ahead, but sitting out, so they were needing 2-2 draws in the other matches to win without a shoot-out. All teams were in contention at this stage, three being on six wins and one on five. Taunton partly got their wish, when Kington Langley Bruins and Glamorgan drew 2-2.

So close was the competition, that eight of the ten matches scored 2-2, but Nailsea Trendlewood's 4-0 win over Sidmouth Fortfield in the final round proved decisive and enabled them to win the trophy without the need for a play-off. For Sidmouth Fortfield, this left them bottom and they were the relegated team.

Nailsea Trendlewood	10	Kington Langley Bruins	7
Taunton Terriers	9	Sidmouth Fortfield	6
Glamorgan	8		

Special mentions to:

- Scott Berry (Taunton Terriers) and Richard Smith (Kington Langley Bruins) won all 4 games.
- Paul Arbos (Nailsea Trendlewood) won the 3 games that he played, having a walk-over in his fourth due to the Glamorgan player absence.
 - Note Paul also won all his games in Division 1 last year.

Division 2

A very strange first two rounds saw Bristol Allsorts win 4-0 in the first round against Bristol Blues, only to lose the second round by the same score, while Bristol Blues won their second round match 4-0. Meanwhile Kington Langley Aardvarks were calmly gathering the wins and sat two clear after two rounds.

Over the next two rounds the inconsistencies continued amongst the other team whilst the Aardvarks, having sat out the third round, picked up another three wins to put themselves into a very strong position. Going in to the last round they were two clear of Bristol Blues, but the Blues had no more matches to play.

This left Camerton and Peasedown A as the closest challengers, with Budleigh Salterton Roquets and Bristol Allsorts one further behind. Kington Langley duly picked up three points to confirm their title, at the same time causing Budleigh Salterton Roquets to be relegated.

Kington Langley Aardvarks	12	Camerton & Peasedown	7
Bristol Allsorts	8	Budleigh Salterton Roquets	6
Bristol Blues	7		

- John Grimshaw (Kington Langley Aardvarks) won all four games.

Division 3

Bath Salts dominated this division from Round 1. They kicked off with a 3-1 win and did not drop another game until the final round, finishing with 14 wins out of 16 games. The interest towards the end was in the relegation battle.

Taunton Terriers were bottom of the standings after three rounds with only three wins, but they ended with a flourish, gaining seven wins in the last two rounds. Budleigh Salterton Mallets looked to be in trouble going into the last round with only six wins and having to sit out. They had been consistent with two wins in each round until they met Bath in Round 4.

However, Exeter were having a torrid time, and met the rampant Terriers in the last round, losing 4-0 and were therefore relegated. Cornwall saved themselves by taking a game from each of the in-form teams, Bath and Taunton in the last two rounds.

Bath Salts	14	Cornwall	6
Taunton Terriers	10	Exeter	4
Budleigh Salterton Mallets	6		

- Peter Miles, David Prescott and Andy Wagstaff (all Bath Salts) won all four games.

Division 4

There were two surprising results in Round 5 leading to a close and exciting finish. After four rounds, Sidmouth Blackmore had ten wins but had to sit out the last round. East Dorset and Budleigh Salterton Rushes were both on seven and were playing each other. A 4-0 win for either would see them champions, a 3-1 win for either would require a shoot-out, a 2-2 draw would give Blackmore the title. It went down to the wire. With three wins in the bag for East Dorset, the last game was crucial and when time was up, East Dorset had won 12-11 to win the trophy.

The other match was just as crucial. All seemed lost for Sidmouth Connaught with only two wins at this stage, and Nailsea on six, but they beat Nailsea 4-0 to earn a shoot-out, incidentally the only one of the week-end. One Nailsea player had already departed, leaving them with three shooters only. Nevertheless, their last shooter tied the score after all players had shot, and then won the sudden death point. So, Connaught were still relegated despite their last round heroic effort.

East Dorset	11	Nailsea Avening	6
Sidmouth Blackmore	10	Sidmouth Connaught	6
Budleigh Salterton Rushes	7		

- Vince Kill (East Dorset) won all four games.

Division 5

There were six teams in this division this year, so we had an all-play-all in five rounds.

The final round of the competition was somewhat disrupted when one player had to leave due to a medical emergency, and having travelled together, three others had to leave also. However, the competition still had an exciting finish.

After three rounds, there were two teams with seven wins and three teams on six. After the next round Bath Buns had ten wins, Camerton and Peasedown B and Nailsea Avening, nine and Bradford on Avon, eight. Bradford on Avon won 4-0 and Camerton and Peasedown won 3-1 to both get to twelve, but Bath Buns kept their nerve to win 3-1 and pip the others by one game.

Bath Buns	13	Nailsea Avening	10
Camerton and Peasedown B	12	Lym Valley B	8
Bradford on Avon	12	Lym Valley A	5

- Simon Dunk (Camerton and Peasedown B) won all five games
- Lynne Passfield and Tony Jackson (both Bath Buns) won all four games that they played.

Where there's muck ...



Spotted in our local garden centre:

So that's one way of making the best of all those pesky worms!



Beautifully crafted mallets from South Africa,
made with South African Aluminium or
carbon shaft

- end weighted,
- ex-stock or bespoke.

You choose.

From £155 inc postage.

A delight to play with.

Contact: Marie Stuchfield

Tel: 01392 757672

or

Mob: 07929940893

E mail: mlstuchfield@gmail.com



Croquet in a construction site!

Tony Mayer shares some of the trials and tribulations experienced by Swindon CC this year.

Since May, Swindon Croquet Club has been surrounded by a major construction site. This is part of a £6.3 million development of the Moredon Sports Fields in Swindon into a revamped Sports Hub to cater for football, cycling, cricket and, of course, croquet.



Cycle track under construction

The re-development will provide for an all-weather football pitch with floodlights, a brand-new sports pavilion and a very large area to be devoted to closed road cycling with landscaping and environmental areas including ponds for wildlife. There will also be new cricket strips as well as grass football pitches. Swindon Borough Council has provided the funding with large grants from

the Football Association, the British Cycling Union and Sports England and through the sale of some adjoining land for housing.



The new all-weather football pitch with floodlights

So, what does croquet get out of this? We shall expand from 3 to 5 lawns as a tenant of the Council. More than 10 years ago we were able to raise funds to provide security fencing, a new clubhouse, new machine sheds and equipment and having our existing lawns re-laid but we are left entirely to our own devices to provide the funds for extending the fencing and developing the new area into playable croquet lawns so we face a major challenge. One possible positive is that with the glow from the football pitch floodlights and the cycle track lights, we may be able to play a little later in the autumn and winter!

While all the construction work has been going on – hopefully it should be finished by the start of the 2024 season – this year has been extremely difficult. The car park next to the Club has been used as the site for matériel, heavy construction plant and suchlike. This has necessitated using the car park of the Garden Centre opposite which entails a 500m walk across a very busy industrial estate road and the field (the housing site), finally negotiating a track which is currently ankle-deep in mud from the construction. To add to this, we always have an eye on the clock as the Garden Centre closes its gates (especially early on Sundays) and no one wants to have their cars locked in for the night.



The new pavilion very close to our lawns

However, once everything has been completed, we can look forward to the future challenge of our expanded site and all that this entails. Wish us luck!

Champion of Champions

Basically, the Champion of Champions is contested by Budleigh, Sidmouth, Taunton Dean & Exeter.

Winners of each clubs' internal competitions (GC Singles, GC Doubles, AC Singles, AC Doubles and SC) then go on to compete against each other in like a main interclub final.

The Champion of Champions Tournament took place at Budleigh Salterton on 30th September. In this tournament, which has now been run for 3 years. Participants come from neighbouring clubs, Budleigh, Exeter, Sidmouth and Taunton Deane. They have won their respective club's internal competitions: AC and GC Singles, AC and GC Doubles, and Short Croquet.

In total, 40 players were involved. The weather was reasonably kind to us – a bit cold and windy at times but at least it stayed dry.

Many thanks to Louise Smith who managed the event with her usual efficiency. It ran like clockwork throughout the day. Some of the competitions were quite clear cut but both GC competitions were very close, being decided on hoop difference. We finished at around 5.00 pm, when the winners – congratulations to them all - were presented with their very impressive medals.

The winners and runners up were as follows:

- AC Singles
 - Winner – Duncan Reeve (Budleigh)
 - Runner Up – Neil Fillery (Taunton Deane)
- AC Doubles
 - Winners – Adam Wimshurst and Scylla Blackwell (Exeter)
 - Runners Up – Alison Maddaford and Brian Rogers (Budleigh)
- SC
 - Winner – Ian Friedlander (Sidmouth)
 - Runner Up – Colin Lovell (Exeter)
- GC Singles
 - Winner – Louise Smith (Sidmouth)
 - Runner Up – Peter Chadwick (Budleigh)
- GC Doubles
 - Winners – Linda Hicks and John O’Gorman (Budleigh)
 - Runners Up – Steve Beer and Neil Warner (Taunton Deane)



Linda Hicks
Budleigh CC

Reading corner



One quiet evening, recovering from a day's play at Budleigh, I came across the Hygge Dictionary. Hygge (don't ask me how to pronounce it – maybe like the Swedish Muppet Chef would) might be defined as that quality of cosiness and sense of well being that makes you feel contented.

Anyway, this dictionary lists all sorts of words you didn't realise you needed and it got me wondering if we need something similar in croquet.

Do share your suggestions and here's a few Hygge words to put you in the mood:

Hyggeekrog: The nook or corner of a favourite room when you can have a hyggelig time

Hyggebukser: That pair of pants you'd never wear when out, but are so comfortable that they are your favourite

Unhyggeligt: The opposite of hygge, for example, walking through a dark wood at midnight and you hear a wolf calling.



Now it's over to you while you're enjoying some hygge moments of your own.

Advertising in Cygnet

All adverts must be sent fully formatted in such a way as they can be easily inserted (copy and pasted) into Cygnet. We are not in a position to undertake any artwork or correct for errors or omissions.

Charges include a 2/3-line entry in the Diary Dates column in up to three subsequent issues.

Charges

Full Page: £12 Half Page: £6 Quarter Page: £3

Do get in touch

We'd love your account of matches and tournaments you play in – a personal experience is always worth sharing and a photo can paint a thousand words – so don't forget us when you're playing this year.

Send them to: lindawithani@hotmail.com

Appendix 1

League Results and Handicapping : notes from December Zoom meeting

Reporting League Results

Clubs were informed at the AGM that from 2024 all League results must be submitted electronically and be fully and accurately completed: photos of handwritten forms will not be acceptable.

Where are the results sheets and how do I access them?

The results sheets are to be found on our website: <https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/> and there is a big green button on the first page which takes you to the forms

- Download the correct form for your League and in the format that is best for you

How do I complete and submit the forms?

- Make sure you have the correct version for your League
- If there are divisions in your League, complete the 'Block' box with the correct division number / letter
- Complete
 - Venue
 - Date
 - Home team
 - Away team
- Enter players names and handicaps – first and second name each time they play – no abbreviations or initials anywhere on the form
- Complete hoop score columns
- Complete 'Games' column
 - Ensure the + and – net points are in the right column for each game
 - If you have the tech skills – the format for these can be changed to 'text' which makes it easier
 - Complete the 'Match Score' boxes at the top of the column
- The referee's box is so there is someone to contact in the event of a query
 - If there is no referee, you could enter the home team captain's details
- Agree the completed sheet with the opponents' team captain
- Submit the form to the person named at the bottom
 - This will be the League Results Secretary for your League – a really welcome addition to the team supporting Stephen in his League Secretary role

Questions answered:

- In doubles games, the names of both players should be included

Stephen is very happy to receive 'dummy' returns during the winter so the system can be tested and any problems ironed out.

Handicapping

General

Mike outlined the responsibilities of club handicappers as set out by Croquet England <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/association/handicapping/ClubHandicappers> adding it is good practice at the annual check to

- Initial the annual check has been done on the running record **and** on the front page
- Take a close look at those players who play a lot of friendlies or doubles where the result is not entered – are they still playing off the correct handicap?
- Ensure the correct handicap is entered onto the Croquet England members' data base – it is the player's responsibility to do this

Leagues

- If all players could bring their handicap cards to all matches and place them where both team captains can see them and check if necessary this can only be helpful and avoid later queries
 - It was noted that some players keep on-line records only
- Cards should be completed after each game or at least at the end of the day
- Queries / issues should be dealt with as soon as possible and the Federation Handicapper should be contacted as soon as possible – though this might not be possible on the day
- The consequences of playing off a wrong handicap are set out in the League Rules

Questions answered

- The Croquet England coaching committee has given consideration as to whether or not results should be counter-signed by the opponent as is required in some countries. This is not happening here (yet ...)
- At Tournaments, the Organising Body or Tournament Manager are required to appoint a Tournament Handicapper <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/regulations#H>

Note: Detailed instructions for completing the Results Sheets are available on the website <https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/results-forms/>

Appendix 2

South West Federation Committee

This may be found as an attachment to the email sent to clubs. If you would like it to be sent to you, please email lindawithani@hotmail.com