

MINUTES OF
WESTON SUPER MARE CROQUET CLUB ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 12th February 2025

Present At meeting: Jan Scotchmer, James Doulton, Graham and Mary Cole, Lance Binning, Gordon and Pat Taylor, Iris Hogg, Jim Brown, Steve Brace, Pauline McAllister, Anne Meakin, Jenny Orme, Mike and Linda Dudley, Brian and Glenys Robinson, Michael Low, Donald Sutherland, Dick Tyas, Garry Searle, Geoff Wright.

Apologies for absence were received from: Terry Allen, Olivia Davies, Beryl Hepple, Dave Channing, Maureen Brace, Julia Jago, Jon Knowler, Mick and Penny Nicholson, Peter Nisbet, Sue and Doug Norfolk, Cindy and Gordon Stanley, Jeanette and John Stuchbery.

Minutes of last AGM – the minutes were agreed.

Matters arising. - There were no matters arising.

Chairman's Report – James Doulton

In this report I will try to summarise the events of 2024 and to highlight the achievements of the club and its members. I will also give my view of the future – this year and beyond.

I was honoured to be elected as Chairman of the Committee last year. In the constitution, it is the Committee's job to run the club. My role is mostly to draw out the common ground between the diverse viewpoints of the Committee Members and to confirm our agreements. My leadership style is focussed on encouraging alternative views so that the Committee makes the best decisions. Your suggestions, comments, and positive criticisms are always welcome, and together we can make this an even better club. To this end, we continued our policy of transparency by publishing abridged minutes of Committee Meetings to all members.

My first year as Chairman has been helped greatly by the guidance that I have had from Jan and Pauline, who have done a lot to ensure that the year has run smoothly and that nothing has been forgotten. This has been particularly important since I was recalled to work 3 days a week from July. I am still averaging 3 days a week at work but the task is nearing completion and I should be free before the season opens. I also owe Gordon because we were lawn mowing team before I went back to work.

2024 Summary

Over the winter 2023/24, we kept one lawn (lawn 2) open and this worked reasonably well for those hardy members who tried it until we had serious flooding in November 2023. One club member helped our landlord's team to unblock the drains by wading into the Rhyne and supervising their work. It appears that the drains had been partially blocked by council dredging of the rhyne. We (I mean our club) had inadvertently contributed to the lawn drain getting blocked by dumping grass cuttings in the ditches behind the marquee over the years. Clearing this drain allowed the lawns to drain.

Our 2024 season made a slow start, caused by further heavy rain and flooding which delayed the preparation of the lawns. I have been in touch with our landlord about the drains that run through our land from the postbox to the mound near our pavilion and then under our car park and into the rhyne. These often overflow during storms and it was this that delayed our start. Our landlord intends to replace them as part of the future site work as part of the sale. (More on that later)

The rest of 2024 can be broadly characterised as a quiet year of gentle progress:

- We have continued to attract new members.
- We have maintained and improved our grounds with Saturday working parties.
- We have improved the social side of the club.
- We have had a bit of a renaissance in Association Croquet participation.
- We entered 5 teams into various Southwest Federation leagues and entered 2 AC tournaments, winning

our group at Budleigh Salterton in October.

- We have continued to host events for other organisations. Although we were very unlucky when the Bleadon WI Summer 'Party' for 60 people had to be cancelled due to extreme weather, but they have promised to visit us this year.
- We have held 9 internal competitions throughout the season.
- Mike Dudley trialled the Advantage Handicap system in the Saturday morning Mixed Doubles.

2024 Internal Competitions

Internal competitions were well supported but poor weather caused some delays and the season was over before we could schedule The Morgan/ Williams trophy. We also did not hold the High Handicap Challenge this year.

The results were as follows:

Daphne Holland Shield	Maureen Brace, second Dave Channing (Presidents Cup)
Daphne Holland Plate	Steve Brace, second Jon Knowler
High Handicap Challenge	<i>cancelled</i>
Gents Day	Dave Channing, second James Doulton
Ladies Day	Pauline McAllister
Saturday Pairs	Jan Scotchmer and Graham Cole, second Pat & Gordon Taylor
Mixed Pairs	Maureen and Steve Brace, second Lyn & Mike Dudley
AC Tim Kelly	Jeanette and John Stuchbery, second Jan Scotchmer & James Doulton
AC Mixed Singles	Doug Norfolk, second Mike Dudley
SC Roger Buckley	Jon Knowler, second John Stuchbery
Morgan/Williams Trophy	<i>cancelled</i>
The Reds, Whites and Blues	Whites

2024 External Competitions & Leagues

AC B League	SWF	Jan's Team	2 nd
GC Level Play League	SWF-North	Lance's Team	
GC Handicap League	SWF-Central	Jan's Team	1 st =
GC Handicap League	SWF-Central	Lance's Team	
GC High Handicap League	SWF-NW	Pauline's Team	

Jan's Short Croquet team did well in their group in the Spring SC Tournament at Nailsea

Jan's Short Croquet team won their league in the Autumn SC Tournament at Budleigh Salterton

We have entered teams for all the same competitions and leagues in 2025 and we have added a team for the AC Intermediate League too.

Note: all handicap GC games will use the Advantage System. This has been updated by World Croquet for this season and this has addressed most of our concerns. Other federations have been running it for some years and it should now be relatively easy to pick up.

2024 Social Events

2024 saw the return of Mary Cole and Glenys Robinson's running of club social events for members, their families and friends with 4 large set piece meals. These were held in, or in front of, the marquee and all of them were sold out with more than 34 attendees at each. The events were:

- A Ploughman's Lunch in May
- A Cream Tea in June
- A Fish & Chips Lunch with a visit from an Ice Cream Van in August
- A Harvest Lunch in September

Also, Mary Cole held Friday evening Fish & Chips evenings on most fine Fridays. If you've not been, they start with roll-up style croquet from about 4:30pm to 6pm and then a courier (i.e. Mary) collects people's orders from a local chip shop for them to enjoy in the marquee. Mary & Graham also provided a sweet, cleared up and did the dishes.

Site Purchase

You may have been surprised to read in the Cygnet magazine, from the South-West Federation, that our club is looking for a new venue that we can share with a bowls club – I was very surprised because I had been in the Zoom meeting! What actually happened was that each club had to say what they were hoping for in this new year, and I said we were hoping that we would actually get the purchase of our site completed. That prompted another attendee to recommend that we merge with a bowls club, like they had. Someone else questioned how that would work with croquet hoops etc and their conversation went off on a tangent. Somehow, that got turned into us looking for a new venue. I have informed Cygnet of the mistake. So just to set the record straight: we are not looking for a new venue!

So how is it going? As you will remember, in 2023 our landlord agreed to the sale of our site to the Nisbet Trust and was very keen to progress at speed. However, it turned out that there were complications that his advisers raised that were expected to delay the sale until 2024. Last year we found out that the sale of our plot was also tied to the sale of another much larger parcel, due to him having purchased them at the same time. Logistically, he needs to sell that large plot first. In order to get the highest price for that plot, he is waiting for some studies and surveys which will bolster the planning permission that he already has. Since the General Election and autumn budget, the rules covering farms and agricultural land have changed and this has upset the land market and has had an impact on the sale, as I understand it. However, Alistair has confirmed that he is still very keen to sell our site, as agreed, just as soon as he can. But in the meantime we are in a bit of limbo.

But the story is not all doom and gloom - I know that our landlord has been successful in selling some other parts of his business recently and this gives me a bit more confidence that our sale might actually make progress this year.

Lawns

This winter, the lawns have been in a reasonable condition and been playable throughout the winter. Mike has been keeping the grass under control using the hand mower, and as a result they are not cut as short as during the season but they are playable, just a bit slower.

The lawns are not perfect and in particular we are monitoring the flatness levels but haven't made any interventions or expensive treatments to change them. The nature of such changes are that they take many months to settle down so the end of the season is the best time to do anything like that. We will have to decide what to do, or not, later in the year.

Due to shortages in the mowing teams, exacerbated by my going back to work, we supplemented our own volunteers with paid support from Pauline's son. He is no longer available for this year. We had looked to go back to using Ian Steward again this year but he has given up his business and now he is a groundsman in the council team. Currently, we have 5 volunteers for this season, which is not really enough. We would like more Monday morning volunteers who could empty the mowing boxes and take the grass to the compost heap. This would save a lot of time for the mowers and make the job easier for all, so if you can drive a wheel barrow then please speak to Mike.

2024 Working Parties

In 2024 we started a renewed effort to improve the appearance of the club. Maureen & Steve painted the 3 players refuge huts earlier in the year. Then we organised working parties on Saturday mornings once the Mixed Doubles had finished. There were regularly 8 to 12 members who spent the morning gardening every Saturday, clearing brambles, cutting the long grass around the pavilion and around the car park, cutting the hedges, trimming trees, clearing the under-growth behind the marquee, sorting through the sheds and generally making the grounds look cared for. The workers were rewarded with bacon butties that Mary Cole prepared for them. Most of the usual helpers were involved.

Graham Cole also provided a lot of wood that he made into fence panels to go along the boundary at the back of the marquee, from the white-lining shed right up to the generator. This was a lot of work with Graham, Mary, Brian and Geoffrey forming the backbone of the fence team.

This year, we are going to restart the working parties as soon as the weather allows. Graham has a number of projects that he is planning. Plus we need to make up new equipment and props for the Advantage handicap system.

Separately from the working parties and Mike's mowing teams, we want to encourage members to volunteer to do small jobs regularly and reliably. For example, emptying the bins, sweeping the pavilion, strimming around the pavilion once a fortnight, painting a set of hoops, washing balls. Graham and Jan have a long list of small jobs that need someone to own them. We will be looking for members to take on something at the start of the season, so please think about how you could help the club – every little helps!

Machinery

Graham has also been looking after the machinery throughout the year. He set up the ATCO mowers at the beginning of the season but both suffered blade damage towards the end of the season. Graham stripped them and sent the cylinders and blades away for regrinding. They will be back in the next week. Currently he has fitted his own spare cylinder in one of the mowers, in case it is needed. Apart from that damage, the mowers just need an engine service before the cutting season starts.

The big tractor is unavailable because it recently lost its blade drive belt. Graham has obtained a replacement which he will fit when the weather warms up. The small tractor will just need a battery charge and then it could be used to cut the lawns ready for laying out.

Graham has overhauled the white-lining machine and thoroughly removed all of the hardened paint, and he has modified its paint tank to improve its operation. He also plans to modify its targeting to improve the accuracy of the lines.

Thanks

There are lots of people who deserve a big Thank You:

- Our thanks to Mike Dudley for not only mustering his band of lawn helpers but then filling-in all the gaps in rotas, doing the weed and feed, sharing the outfield duty with Lance, and many other lawn related things.
- Thanks to Mike, Gordon Taylor & Dave Channing for lawn cutting.
- Thank you, Jeanette, Glenys and Pauline, for white lining.
- Thank you, Graham, for maintaining the generator, tractors and mowers and for leading the Saturday working parties.
- Thank you to the Saturday Working Parties - Geoff, Jan, Brian, Mary & Graham, Sue & Doug, Pat & Gordon, Jeanette & John, Lin & Mike.
- Thank you, Lin, for monitoring and cleaning the Exec Loo.
- Thank you, Steve, for being our Data Administrator, for managing our website and Facebook page and for running the bonus ball competition to raise club funds.
- Thank you, Mary and Glenys, supported by Graham and Brian, for organising and running the club social events throughout the summer.
- Thank you, Mary and Graham, for organising and running the Friday Fish & Chips.
- Thank you, Mike Dudley, for running the Saturday Morning Mixed Pairs and for introducing us to the Advantage Handicap system.
- Thank you, Pauline, for emptying the bins and sweeping the pavilion.
- As she is stepping down, this is the right time to thank Pauline for all of her work as Secretary, which is the most demanding job on the committee. She has done a lot more than just recording minutes and sending hundreds of messages. She has been a great support and has worked tirelessly to keep the club

running in so many ways.

- I also want to thank the rest of the Committee, that is Jan, Graham, Brian and Lance for what they have done for the club as well as for what they have done on the Committee.

In my opinion, 2024 was a good year for the club and I think that 2025 is looking like being another.

Treasurer's Report – Jan Scotchmer

I have been Treasurer for a year so this is my first Treasurer's Report.

Overview

At the last AGM, due to the overall depleted funds, we decided not to use external contractors to mow the lawns. Instead, Mike Dudley got together with some other volunteers and set up a rota to mow the lawns. This worked well until one member of the team could not mow any more. At this point we realized that we had saved quite a lot of money so decided to pay Simon McAllister to come in once a fortnight to mow. This whole process saved us over £1000

The mower repair invoice for over £1000 from 2023 was paid in January 2024. We have continued to do the weed and feed treatment ourselves and have also purchased the last 2 sets of canopies for the marquee, at a cost of £532, as the company was discontinuing this line.

We did not increase the subscription in 2024 but continuing the reduction in our reliance on external contractors has helped us to boost our funds. So financially we are in a much better position than we were last year. However, we may need to contract out some work this year.

2024 Accounts

I have prepared a spreadsheet of all of the club's bank transactions throughout 2024 and I have reconciled these and confirmed that our outgoings were supported with paperwork to justify their payment. As yet we have not had our accounts checked but once that has occurred, they can be signed off.

I have generated a summary (appended to these minutes) that shows that the club's bank balance at the end of the year was £13,020. which is £4484 higher than at the start of the year. This is a very significant improvement over the previous few years when we have run at a deficit. Currently, as the club account stands at about £13000, we are considering possibly getting some help with the mowing, but have yet to identify a suitable contractor.

We saved a about £5000 by doing our own weed and feed instead of employing Avon Sportsground maintenance. The improvement is down to the Lawns Maintenance Team, organised by Mike Dudley. However, we did say previously that we would look to employing Avon again after 3 years, so we may ask them back this year.

In 2024 Steve Brace continued to run the bonus ball and should be congratulated in raising £1767.

2025 Projection

We have decided to keep the same number of Golf croquet teams but have increased our AC teams by one Intermediate team.

Nothing as yet has come from the landlord's suggestion that we should be paying VAT on the rent. That would increase our cost by £400 per year.

We are not expecting any other rent changes this year as it is unlikely that the site purchase by the Nisbet family will start soon.

We may need to get in Avon Sportsground maintenance which will be c. £5000 and also contract a person to mow at about £1500 (once a fortnight).

Last year, we sorted through the secondary balls and decided that we needed 1 more set which we purchased. We also need another set of primary balls for our AC matches costing about £400.

When the sale of the land goes forward, we will need money in the bank to make improvements, move sheds, building a new pavilion and so on.

With these possible extra expenditures, we will see our funds depleted again, so we will have to keep an eye on our funds to keep them in reasonable order.

Proposal for 2025

I propose that we do not change the membership subscription this year but keep it at £200 for Ordinary members. I would however like to discuss the Associate member's fee. I feel that 2/3rd of our subscription is too much to pay. Nobody has been attracted by this. An Associate member plays mainly at their primary club and would only visit us now and again. I would therefore like to propose that we reduce the charge to 50% of our subscription for this year.

We will retain the idea of a late season joining discount for **new** members. The discount will remain a monthly reduction of £30 for each full month after April, i.e. joining in May will cost new members £170. This also applies to returning members whose membership has lapsed for a year or more. Membership subscriptions are due on the 1st April and membership will lapse for any member that has not paid by the end of April.

We will charge £5 fee for training sessions for new players.

We will maintain the £4 fee on friends and family visitors to only come 3 times in any one year. This 3 times does not include Fun Days, Open Days or other club events.

Election of Officers and Committee

The Committee for 2025 proposed en bloc by Garry Searle: seconded by Jim Brown.

Chair	James Doulton
Secretary	Sue Norfolk
Treasurer	Jan Scotchmer
Members rep	Lance Binning
Machinery	Graham Cole
Continuity	Brian Robinson

All were elected unanimously

Note: Pauline McAllister will continue as Fixtures Secretary and Safeguarding Officer.

AOB

Proposal from Terry Allen that certain volunteers who give a lot of time and save the Club much money should be financially rewarded by having a free subscription. It was pointed out that this has been suggested before and rejected by the Committee.

There followed member's input:

- James Doulton: I could name at least twelve volunteers who have significantly contributed to the Club in 2024 and could be considered.
- Pat Taylor: said that volunteers who did a lot for the Club should be recognised.
- Mary Cole suggested a meal at Michaelangelo's.
- Don Sutherland said that volunteers get their reward from the appreciation of members and the Club.

A vote was taken and the proposal that some volunteers get financial reward, such as free membership, was defeated unanimously.

The meeting closed at 3.05.

Signed.....

Date.....

Account Summary for 2024

Income

Membership	£	8,510.00
Christmas	£	540.00
Green Fees	£	646.00
	£	9,696.00

Fund Raising	Funday	£	-
Fund Raising	Gifts	£	350.00
Fund Raising	Bonus Ball	£	1,767.00
Fund Raising	Whist	£	412.00
Fund Raising	Socials	£	- (3)
		£	2,529.00

Total Income **£ 12,225.00**

Expenditure

Grounds	Insurance	£	546.39
Christmas		£	100.00
Grounds	Rent	£	2,000.00
Grounds	Water	£	81.00
Fees	CA & SWF	£	787.40
Admin & Misc	General	£	709.57
		£	4,224.36

Maintenance	Fuel	£	146.25
Maintenance	Lawns	£	721.97
Maintenance	Mowers	£	1,473.01 (1)
Maintenance	Equipment	£	473.92
Maintenance	Structures	£	700.50 (2)
		£	3,515.65

Total Expenditure **£ 7,740.01**

Excess Receipts **£ 4,484.99**

Bank Reconciliation

31/12/2023	Balance	£	8,535.78
31/12/2024	Balance	£	13,020.77
	Difference	£	4,484.99

Notes:

- (1) This includes £1060.78 spent on mower maintenance in 2023 that was only invoiced in January 2024.
- (2) This was mainly for marquee canopies
- (3) Funds of £240.07 were received in 2025