

# Cygnets

## South West Area Newsletter

### Celebrating Croquet Across the Region

#### Issue 43: August 2023

Hello everyone - we're well into the season and the finals are looming – you can find the schedule for these on p3 so do pop along if you're not playing

Another full issue so put your feet up and start reading ...

### SWF AGM

Clubs will now have received the Call for Nominations and Proposals – if your committee hasn't seen these, then please contact Linda asap as **the deadline for receiving these is 8<sup>th</sup> October**. Please use the correct process. This is clearly set out in the Call. Plenty of time really but we all know how time slips by. We welcome nominations for any of the Committee positions and in particular need a League Secretary and a Development Officer.

Contact [lindawithani@hotmail.com](mailto:lindawithani@hotmail.com) with any queries.

To start us off, Stephen Custance-Baker outlines his role.

### Seeking a new League Secretary

As many of you are aware, as a result of a combination of health and personal reasons, I have been reviewing my priorities and have decided to resign as League Secretary. This is not a role that can be left vacant as it is a job that someone must do if the interclub leagues in the south west are to continue in their current form.



*Well organised!*

Stephen Custance-Baker

[webmaster@tauntoncroquet.org](mailto:webmaster@tauntoncroquet.org)

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However, it is not necessary that a single person takes on the whole task on their own. I believe that, with suitable cooperation, it could be sub-divided between three or four, each with a specific area of responsibility. For example, AC / GC / SC / Finals would be four identifiable roles.

Please think about whether you would be willing to take on part of this responsibility. I will offer support during the handover process with face-to-face and / or zoom meetings to show my successors how I do the job, though I certainly don't insist that they do it the same way. I will provide copies of, and instructions for using, all the spreadsheets and macros that I have built up over the years.

Cygnets 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](http://www.swfcroquet.org.uk)

We welcome queries, suggestions and feedback about Cygnets or any aspect of the SW croquet scene.  
Contact: [lindawithani@hotmail.com](mailto:lindawithani@hotmail.com)

## Seeking a new Development Officer

Paul goes on to describe his role

The role of the Federation Development Officer(s) is simple: they are there to help clubs with plans for growth and improvement. On occasions, they are also there to help a club facing difficulties.

Therefore, the job is very satisfying and is suited to people who like helping others. A Federation Development Officer is not expected to know all the answers but should be good at identifying where help can be found e.g. from other clubs, other FDOs and other sporting organisations such as Sport England.

A FDO will accumulate information, form networks and contribute to the continued success of croquet in the SWF. In short, it is a great job and worthy of serious consideration. Furthermore, in the SWF, you will not be alone. We already have two other development officers with years of experience.



*Making things work!*

### The responsibilities of a Federation Development Officer

FDOs should:

1. Ensure that all Member Clubs in their domain have contact details for the FDO
2. Offer assistance in relation to grants and loans to clubs for development purposes.
3. Investigate ways of initiating and developing new clubs, including offering start up equipment and assistance to CA Member Clubs (with a requirement for an annual report on the progress).
4. Offer advice and assistance to existing clubs facing closure.
5. Maintain and update a list of sources of additional funding for development purposes.
6. Ensure that clubs are aware of sources of lawn advice.
7. Be aware of the nomination procedure for the three Club Awards which are available every other year and advise clubs accordingly.
8. Be pro-active in identifying clubs with potential to become 4 or more lawn clubs and offer assistance to them in achieving this aim.
9. Support the Development Committee in identifying and suggesting initiatives to encourage juniors.
10. Encourage clubs to make full use of the CA website as a source of information.
11. Attend Federation AGMs and committee meetings and prepare reports for them.
12. Attend meetings of the Development Committee and prepare reports of activity in their Federations for consideration by the Committee.
13. Attend video conference meetings of the Funding Committee, when called upon to do so, to answer questions and to provide further information about an application for a grant or loan presented by them on behalf of a Member Club.

Contact Paul for further information: [paulwfrancis@icloud.com](mailto:paulwfrancis@icloud.com)

## Obituaries

We have recently lost two stalwart croquet players in the South West and remember them here.

### David Heffill

It is with great sadness we announce that David Heffill has passed away suddenly at his home in Ilminster *writes Keith Bryant from Dowlish Wake CC.*

David was an accomplished bridge player, founder of the local Mah-jong Club and croquet player. He was ideally positioned to attract Mah-jong players to croquet and visa versa to the benefit of both clubs.

He trained in the hospitality business and lived and worked around the world including a spell as a ski instructor in Austria. David was also an experienced Croupier.

David joined Dowlish Wake Croquet Club as a novice in 2014 and quickly got to grips with the game. He was soon a regular in our handicap league teams being a formidable opponent especially with a couple of extra turns in his pocket.

During his spell on the Club committee, he was one of the principal supporters in persuading the Committee to enter a team in the newly formed High Handicap League.

David will be remembered for some of his outrageous jump shots and his willingness to help others improve their game. Only a few days ago I overheard the striker's partner suggest she play a difficult jump shot to which she replied "I am not David Heffill you know!!"

David is sadly missed.



### Neil Morrison



We have just learned that Neil Morrison has passed away.

Neil was until November 2019, the Treasurer of the SWF and a stalwart of the Swindon Croquet Club, passed away at home with his family around him.

He will be missed greatly and we will carry tributes to him in the next issue.

## SWF League Finals schedule

Venue	Date	League	Venue	Date	League
Sidmouth	Sat 16 <sup>th</sup> Sept	AC Intermediate	Budleigh	Sat 23 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	AC Federation
Nailsea	Sat 16 <sup>th</sup> Sept	GC Level 5+	Camerton	Sat 23 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	SC (Restricted)
Cheltenham	Sun 17 <sup>th</sup> Sept	B League	Bath	Sun 24 <sup>th</sup> Sept	SC (Open)
Swindon	Sun 17 <sup>th</sup> Sept	GC Handicap			

## Has Kington Langley achieved a quadruple?

After exploring the South of the country for a couple of weeks, the annual Watford tour pitched up in the wild west at Kington Langley in Wiltshire, where they played against a joint Kington Langley / Swindon team.

For me, the day started at 8.15 when I had a call from one of the KL players to say the he had taken his wife to A&E and would not be able to make the start time. Well, we all know that when in A&E you are there for a while, so I was left frantically searching for a replacement. Eventually I found someone, but the trauma did not end there.

This player informed me that he could only play doubles, as his handicap index was one win from reducing him to 8, and he was due to play a SWF Intermediate League match the following day, and the criteria for this competition is that you have a minimum handicap of 9. We wished to play all singles in the afternoon session, so I spent most of the doubles match in which I was involved, attempting to find a player for the afternoon. After all this, it is no surprise that Watford led 3-1 at lunch time. But then Kington Langley played their wild card.

Richard M Smith (-2), who as club competition Secretary had organised this match, had recently played at the World Championships and felt he needed a rest, but being the good club member that he is, agreed to fill in for the afternoon. Kington Langley is a two-lawn club and each team had five players, so there was a requirement to triple-bank. KL used to be a 1-lawn club and in order to play league matches at that time, had acquired a set of tertiary colours, Grey and Orange against Teal and Plum.

Richard and his opponent, Simon Hathrell (-1), agreed to play Super Advanced with tertiary colours. Simon was first in and went to 1-Back leaving an immaculate diagonal spread. Richard hit, and went to 4-Back conceding a contact with a very defensive leave, which Simon could make nothing of. Once again Richard hit and completed a standard triple peel. The other games on the lawn, were John Grimshaw against Jonathan Lambton in a Level Advanced playing secondaries, and Margaret Murray against Eddie Chang in a handicap game with the primaries.

We know that this is the first-ever Super Advanced game played at Kington Langley, but here are the other questions.

- Is this the first ever Super Advanced game triple-banked?
- Is it the first ever Super Advanced game played with tertiary colours?
- Is it the first ever triple peel with tertiary colours?
- Is this the first game with a mix of Super Advanced, Level Advanced and Handicap played on the same lawn at the same time?



*Photo shows: Richard playing, John arranging, Eddie waiting.*

The match result is incidental, but on the other lawn the two Swindon players both won, so the final score was 5-4 in favour of the Kington Langley/Swindon combination.

John Grimshaw



## David Fuller – a witness statement

I am the Chris Weedon mentioned in David Fuller's recent croquet-biographical articles. It seems truly extraordinary that someone who only started being serious about AC just 15 months ago has progressed so far so quickly. At the Westerns last month, he had his handicap cut to scratch, shortly after taking a game off David Maugham in a best-of-three. He doesn't seem to have plateaued, as he is still busy taking the scalps of those with minus signs in their handicaps.

David spent much time over the winter learning the basics of triple peels. Though he has yet to achieve one in combat, he performs them regularly in practice. I told him not to stress over this, and that one will turn up soon. Like buses I guess!

It's interesting that nine months after our first practice session, the tide had turned, and David had started showing me some tricks of the trade. His rocket-ship ride is due to four things: a passion for the sport (or is it still a game?); an eye for any sport with small round spheres in it (he plays golf well); an astute mind capable of identifying and analysing a variety of options in near real-time (due to him playing chess for decades!); and a brain that soaks up information like a sponge from videos, books, watching etc. Myself, and East Dorset, wish him well

**Breaking news.** David won the A Class at our June week, and is now a minus half! Beating Jonathan Powe and Tim O'Donnell along the way. Awesome!

*Chris*

### Warm up for 2024 in a warm climate!

#### Spain in Early April 2024

Valle del Este is delighted to be hosting croquet players from the UK. This inaugural 'Golf Croquet Festival' is limited to a maximum of eight players plus partners. There will be a programme of daily tournaments based on single and doubles, handicap and level play. Players can opt to play in all the tournaments or choose to take advantage of the resort's other facilities and/or explore the other attractions of the area. The emphasis will be on enjoying good company with 'gentle' competition. For further information on the package and flights please see the attachment to this newsletter.

Note: it may only be accessible til 20<sup>th</sup> September.

For more information please email [paulwfrancis@icloud.com](mailto:paulwfrancis@icloud.com) or phone Paul on 07411 044109



## A forestalling dilemma

*Chris Frew (Bristol) poses this question for us all – do let us have your views.*

A few days ago I was playing an AC match against a wholly delightful and otherwise competent opponent, who is given to moments of confusion. His ball was in front of hoop five and he prepared to run it. He should have been running hoop seven, where his clip was correctly located.

Knowing the Laws, I withheld from forestalling, and prepared for the slight embarrassment of explaining 'end of turn' after he ran the hoop. But he blobbed it. Now feeling bad, I played an inconsequential innings. Then he attempted hoop five again; and blobbed it again. Now feeling wretched, I messed up another innings. By the time he ran hoop five at the third time of asking, I felt a complete shit in calling end of turn and explaining the game situation: which he got immediately.



We make concessions for members with Colour Vision Deficiency (CVD) and locally for another visually impaired member, but it seems to me that the sport of croquet is ignoring the elephant in the room. The Quinquennial Survey reported (from memory!) that the median age of a club croquet player is 72 and rising. Small-D dementia - moments of confusion - is a distinctly more significant problem for croquet club members, and likely to get worse.

My experience of such opponents is that shot selection, shot execution and game tactics remain unaffected. That is, shot selection may be suboptimal, shot execution may be faulty and tactics may be dubious, but they remain no worse than the rest of us. The problem is confined to running a wrong hoop (or a right hoop in the wrong direction), playing the wrong ball, or playing a croquet stroke involving a dead ball.

There is an aphorism that every problem is just an opportunity in working clothes. I think the sport of croquet has an opportunity to make itself dementia-friendly. Simply allow players to register themselves as in need of a concession, so that Law 23.3 - WHEN OPPONENT MUST NOT FORESTALL - is reversed in a match. Add those circumstances to the set in which one must forestall.

This change may be irrelevant, or seem inappropriate, to those at the summit of the game. But down here in the foothills it would lead to more people competing with more confidence for longer, and opponents with a sense of sportsmanship feel better. Further, whereas I cannot imagine how one could make football, or bridge, or darts, or pub quizzing dementia-friendly, it is possible in our sport of croquet. It's simple humanity.

And to those who think my proposal is motivated by self-interest... what was I saying?

Chris Frew (age 78)  
Bristol CC

## Budleigh Salterton Open Short Croquet Tournament

Tuesday, Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023

BSCC, Westfield Close, Budleigh Salterton, Devon EX9 6ST



Short croquet is a form of AC played on a half lawn. Perfect for beginners and experts alike.

All AC handicaps welcome

SC handicaps will be allocated to those without one

9+ timed games guaranteed

**Manager:** Chris Donovan

**Entry Fee:** £28 inclusive of tea/coffee (light lunch available on day at additional cost)

**Max entries:** 32 "first come first served"

**Closing date:** 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023

**Format:** American Blocks depending on numbers (AMD)

**Entry via club system:** <https://tinyurl.com/4rd2a8nx>



### Dress Code for League Matches

This debate got off the ground earlier this year with Bristol CC getting the ball rolling, asking if the 'predominantly whites' dress code was still appropriate and furthermore, was it discriminatory or off-putting to current and future players?

There was interest in discussing this further so the Match Secretaries and League Team Captains of our member clubs were asked for their views. This report summarises the responses. Many thanks to everyone who has replied.

29 clubs play in the Leagues and replies were received from 17 of them. Some clubs consulted all their members, not just League team members and we received a considered and interesting set of responses from probably the best part of 80 or so people.

To clarify the scope of this consultation.

- **We are only talking about SWF League matches** – we are not concerned with what dress code clubs decide to use for internal games and competitions and we have no jurisdiction over what conditions the CA imposes on tournaments.
- We can however amend our own League Rules to adopt a different dress code – such a proposal would need to be presented to our AGM for a members' vote

## **We like whites, but ...**

*All the people consulted were personally comfortable wearing whites for league matches and overall there was a strong preference to retain the whites dress code. However by definition we haven't consulted anyone who has been put off croquet or competitive*

As the above quote indicates, most respondents were happy wearing whites themselves for the sense of occasion and the investment made, but many of these also identified the drawbacks to this and would be happy with a level of change.

It was not possible to count accurately those in favour of one option over another as responses were explanatory and many of the nature '*we like whites but recognise the issues involved*' and the following figures are indicative of the number of times an option was mentioned.

<b>Dress code</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Keep whites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 9 responses were in favour of this</li><li>• This includes responses from around 6 clubs who were summarising views of their members</li></ul>
Like whites but recognise the reasons for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 22 responses clearly indicated a preference for whites</li><li>• Several of these suggested the wording '<i>predominantly white</i>' which is actually the current wording</li></ul>
Wear team colours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 32 responses clearly indicated a preference for clothing that created a team identity</li><li>• White tops and dark coloured bottoms were mentioned a lot.</li></ul>
Wear anything you like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 responses were in favour of this</li></ul>

While not explicitly stated, our League rules adopt the CA Tournament Regulations with regard to dress code in competitive play. These state that

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'unless otherwise permitted, predominantly white clothing should be worn.'</li><li>• In team events ... teams may, subject to any dress code of the host club, elect to wear other colours of clothing provided all team members (other than those wearing white) are wearing the same design.</li></ul> |
|--|

## **So where does that leave us?**

- Do nothing but interpret CA Dress Code guidelines generously e.g. allow different colours for shorts / trousers – preferably the same for each member of a team
- Add wording to our League Rules specifically stating a more relaxed version of the Dress Code
  - If we decide on this option a proposal would be need to be submitted to the AGM I line with our procedures.
  - Such a proposal may be made by any SWF member club or the SWF Committee

As one respondent put it:

*It seems to me that formally maintaining the white dress code while being relaxed about compliance leaves the choice to the individual (or to the team captain) and takes the onus off CE/SWFCC.*



## Some points of interest ...

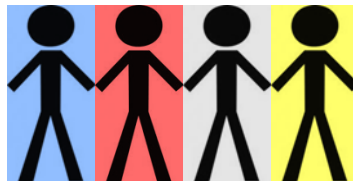
Several themes emerged from the consultation and the comments below are indicative of the issues raised

### Sense of occasion

- On go whites - in clicks the competition brain cell!
- Having some form of 'uniform' helps remind you that you are in a team event. If just in ordinary clothes, we might be more relaxed in our play. It also indicates to other club members that a serious match is taking place and not to double-bank or try to slot in a practice session.
- Matches where anything goes would lose that special feeling.
- The general sense is that we should retain a team 'look' that involves synchronising colours and potentially distinguishes us from the other team

### Consistency

- Darker trousers would be a good move in principle but it must be realised that whatever colour is chosen many variations will appear within that colour!
- Traditional Whites look good / smart but I have seen a few horrors over the years e.g. grubby, stained, crumpled, ill fitting. However, I suspect the outcome would probably have been the same whatever the colour(s) required.
- Club badges were mentioned several times as a unifying factor



### Relax the code

- Anything to broaden the appeal of Croquet
- (Wearing whites) might put off younger players who are the future of the game
- I understand that some members who do not play in matches or internal competitions find wearing of whites intimidating. It is not clear if they would participate if the whites convention was removed.
- It's hard to keep white clothes white when the weather is as it has been this year. Getting mud stains out is hard work.
- The alternative is that we wear black shirts and rebrand ourselves as the All Blacks. We could then perform a Haka before each match
- whites are neither fish nor fowl - not uniform enough to look smart but enough to make us look like a bunch of old codgers who used to look smart
- The only downside [of a change] would come if people are expected to turn out in club uniforms instead.
- If we changed to an alternative uniform, only black and/or white are thought to be practical colours, because other colours come in such a wide variety of shades. Team colours would be a 'barrier to entry' as players would need to buy these (typically with only one supplier) in addition to whatever uniform was needed for other games. Whites on the other hand are cheap and widely available.

## Cost

- Current players have invested in white clothing
- Expensive for new players – who may not stay with the game
- A 'uniform' or club strip colour would be more expensive – less easy to source in the shops
- I would like to still be able to source my own clothes from shops that make clothes that fit me.



## And finally

You must read this brilliant response from one club which shall remain nameless so as not to spoil the Christmas surprise.

*Only one member of those asked raised a concern about keeping whites clean and we are giving her a packet of Persil for Christmas!*

Left: Relaxed wet-weather gear at Hurlingham for the AC World Championship



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.**

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Tel: 01392 757672

or

Mob: 07929940893

E mail: [mlstuchfield@gmail.com](mailto:mlstuchfield@gmail.com)



## Rewilding

A lovely flock of photos this time:

Sue Custance-Baker spotted this beautiful slow worm checking out the lawns at Taunton Deane during June.



Back in a wet and cold morning on the first day of the Spring Short Croquet Tournament, this dog was quietly going about his business at Nailsea.



Exmoor captured this heron for its Facebook page while further afield this peacock put on a magnificent display for the World Championship visitors to Hurlingham.



And even further afield, Stephen Custance-Baker spotted this Spotted Thick-Knee parent and chick at Somerset West CC in South Africa. He said the birds nest in the hedge and spend their evenings under one of the lawn-side shelters.



## Hoops and Balls

Have any of you purchased the 'new' Dawson balls over the past few years? They have earned themselves the sobriquet 'humpties' apparently on account of where they are made.

We understand some clubs have experienced problems with these: variation of up to 1/32 between balls on their diameters, and on different axes of the same ball (so they weren't actually spherical).

There are instances where the CA Shop has exchanged and we understand is in dialogue with the manufacturers. They still seem to be on sale in the CA Shop.

We've contacted the other Federations and would like to know if there is any more information locally. Do let us know of your experiences and by the way, have any of you any experience of Quadway Hoops. One of the other Federations would be interested in anything you have to share.

## Reading Corner



A contribution from our American cousins this time. Rosalie wrote to tell us:

I am reading a book by Angela Thirkell in her Barsetshire series written right after WWII. The characters have just dug out their old croquet set and mended it with fresh paint and set out and revived an old croquet lawn in their garden. This is a passage from the book:

*"Is it real croquet or golf croquet?" said Charles Belton to his partner.*

*"Golf" said Grace. "We did have an old set ages ago for real croquet, with those lovely wide hoops you can't miss."*

*Charles said his people used to have one too, with a kind of triumphal arch of crossed hoops in the middle and a bell depending from them which jingled when a ball went through, and everyone was allowed to put their foot on the ball while they hit the other and everyone lost their temper..."*

I of course, thought of you when reading this, and wondered what you would think of this passage if you had just read it.

It brought to mind for me that I have an old battered croquet set out in the garage that was my grandmother's and how we used to play it with the most fun being putting your foot on the ball and knocking your opponent's away (keeping in mind that I know this is verboten with you)!

Dave Kibble replied: *Thanks Rosalie. It is an accurate description of the game from before 1900 - the rules were codified and changed to outlaw the spark shot (putting your foot on the ball) to now saying that both balls must move (then the ball you were striking was not allowed to move).*

<http://www.oxfordcroquet.com/faq/foot/>

It puts me in mind of Gateball which is popular in the Far East and enjoyed a revival at Nailsea for a few years and prompted this response on the Notts List from Stephen Mulliner:

*GC probably goes back to at least 1896 when FH Ayres produced a pamphlet about Croquet-Golf'. HF Crowther-Smith published 'How to win at Golf Croquet' in 1913.*



### 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

### Useful Links

[Croquet England's YouTube site.](#)

### 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.

#### Diary dates

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September**

Camerton & Peasedown GC Open Doubles – entries close 30<sup>th</sup> August

[moboys@talktalk.net](mailto:moboys@talktalk.net)

**NB:** Please note the telephone number given last month was incorrect, it should be:  
07929733640

**8<sup>th</sup> October**

Deadline for nominations and proposals for AGM

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November**

SWF AGM