

Cygnnet
South West Area Newsletter
Celebrating Croquet Across the Region
Issue 52: Feb 2025

Hello everyone

Lots to engage your interest in these pages, so read on and enjoy!

Advantage GC

Our Zoom workshop on how the GC handicap leagues will work this year will be on Tuesday 11th February at 7.00pm.

Your club secretaries and GC handicap League captains should have received their invitations by the time you read this, together with a briefing paper which may be found in a separate attachment.

The workshop is open to all and particularly to those who will be playing in those teams so ask your team captain to send you the link or contact me:

lindawithani@hotmail.com

You can also check out the WCF guidance here:

<https://worldcroquet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/How-to-play-Advantage-GC-Complete-2024-25-revision-Dec-24-v2.pdf>

Summary of SWF League Rule Changes 2024

Thanks to Dave Kibble (Bristol CC) who has compiled this summary of League Rule changes resulting from our 2024 AGM which have been checked and approved by Gill Wheeler, our League Secretary.

This note outlines changes to the League Rules decided at the 2024 AGM. The updated Rules, reflecting the 2024 AGM decisions, are available on the SWF website alongside the AGM minutes (in draft), which record the voting, and the full details of the motions.

To address issues caused by years of minor amendments, the League Rules have been restructured, reformatted, disambiguated, harmonised, and reworded to improve clarity but with no deliberate changes to their original intended meaning.

Straightforward changes include:

- The playing area is now referred to as a court, rather than a lawn
- "Croquet England handicapper" is now "National handicapper"
- "Fixture" is the date of a match, with "Match" meaning the actual play

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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

Changes to All Rules



- **Warm-up Time:** Previously "up to 10 minutes", the warm-up period is now "at least 10 minutes". This also implies that the visitors should arrive in good time to allow for this warm up before the agreed start time.
- **Match Referee:** A match referee must be identified before play begins. If no qualified referee is present, an experienced player should be selected.
- **Play-Off Venues:** Play-offs (but not finals) can be held at a mutually agreed neutral club to avoid overnight stays if the two clubs are more than two hours apart. See Appendix "Alternative Play-Off Venue" for details.

AC Level Play League

- **New Entrants Placement:** The SWF League Secretary may now place new entrants into a division appropriate to their skill level, rather than defaulting them to the bottom division. (This rule does not apply to the GC league, where a Premier block place must be earned by winning a Regional block, and new entrants cannot be placed directly into the Premier block.)

GC Leagues

- **Advantage Play:** Advantage Play will now be used for all handicap matches. Separate guidance on this will be published following the Zoom meeting on 11th February.
 - Meanwhile, the WCF has published an extended starting scores chart, and a useful presentation on the system is available <https://worldcroquet.org/advantagegc/>
- **Pairing of Opponents:** Rule 9a improved to avoid unnecessary waiting when players and lawns are available, but a team captain is still in play: "It is recommended that, to avoid unnecessary delay, the captains agree on the players for the current round and the next."
- **Wrong Ball forestalling:** Appendix 4. The GC Rules specify that all players and referees are responsible for forestalling play in any game where a wrong ball is about to be played or has been played. A non-playing captain shall be treated as a playing member of the team. The home team captain should ensure that spectators who are neither referees nor players do not forestall, but they may alert an appropriate person to watch for a wrong ball if they believe that the play is out of sequence.

SWF League Rules for Reference

<https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/golf-croquet-league-rules/>
<https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/association-croquet-league-rules/>
<https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/short-croquet-league-rules/>

Handicapping update

Mike Rice, our handicapping Officer, gives us this update:

GC – AC Conversion

About 16 months ago we wrote to CqE Handicapping Committee, we were concerned that good GC players were starting to also play AC on inflated handicaps and then not playing many games so AHS wasn't kicking in.

The discussion document that the Handicapping Committee then produced has now been approved by the Executive.

Its contents are now included on the CqE website, see below, and I'm told it will appear as an article in the February Croquet Gazette



My thoughts are that they are still quite generous but it's a big improvement from nothing.

<https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/association/handicapping/initial>

The conversion table - GC to AC – now reads:

GC Class Level of play	GC Handicap Range	AC Initial Handicap	AC Initial Index
Championship / Open	Minus handicaps	11	1200
A-Level	0 - 3 inclusive	14	1100
B-Level	4 - 6 inclusive	18	1000
C-Level & D-Level	7 - 12 inclusive	22	900
All other players	14 and above	24	850

The Table is structured to recognise distinct "step changes" in playing abilities for both disciplines (Based on Class Level for GC & Standardised Index levels for AC).

The aim is to show transparency of how the handicap is set and to give assurances of a "fairer" playing field. The principle structure of the table is for different levels of GC players to start AC at different (but consistent & appropriate) levels.

Handicap Cards

I have believed for a while that handicap cards should be more than a list of the games you have played. They should be more ordered and informative so that they can easily be reviewed by any handicapper and possibly opposing captains in league matches. This is all part of our overall approach by SWF Committee to minimise the number of issues that we receive on handicapping.

I have therefore worked to improve the guidance on completing handicap cards which I submitted to the CqE Handicapping Committee. Chris Williams (Glamorgan CC) is a member of this committee and replied:

"I like these and would be happy to replace the ones on the website with these"

You can find the new versions in Appendix 2, there is now one for GC and one for AC. These are the main changes:

- A line for name of competition or tournament.
 - Existing instructions say "could" we would like it to be "should".
 - We feel that this gives the card some order rather than just a list of names and numbers
- A line to highlight a handicap change with sign off by handicapper.
 - Current guidelines say make a notation in the margins. This will make the checking of a card a lot easier.
- For AC replace showing result as +5 with 26-21
- On GC the column headed H/L when completing card either A or E or L will be written
- With a GC Advantage Timed game circle the winning score.
- Stop using any handicap cards without a date column

Just how many do I have?

And neatly following on, a timely reminder about Brian Wainman's (Plymouth CC) invaluable website – all you need to know to calculate your bisques, extra strokes and Advantage starting scores. He explains:

Back in February 2022 I developed a simple to use website which calculates the number of bisques / extra strokes / change in index for all GC/AC/Short/1 Ball games and their variations. It allows the user to select all the different game lengths (GC: 7pt, 13pt & 19pt. AC: 14pt, 18pt, 22pt & 26pt), singles/doubles and different lawn sizes etc.

Basically, everything except run the hoop for you!



I have now updated it with GC Advantage 2024/25 – The website shows the starting score, how many hoops to run, how many clips to add to the advantage post/centre peg, as well as the scoring scale.

The idea is that any player can use the website (on their smartphone) just before they start their game without the need for all the tables/rules in the law books. Just select the type of Croquet (AC/GC etc) which resets the handicap ranges, then choose the players' handicaps, and press calculate to get your answer. I'm always interested to receive feedback by email from players, and I am happy to add other popular variations if required.

My website just replaces the need for the 15 page Roy Tillcock document on the WCF website. Once players understand the fact that they might have to get more or less hoops than 7 to win, my website can take over.

Includes unfinished game hoop ratios and clip information.

It has all the unfinished game hoop ratios and all the clip information too. I have been in contact with Roy Tillcock (who invented Advantage)



Use the QR Code or the website direct:
<https://chc.eu.pythonanywhere.com>
Contact me via email:
wanderingwainmans@blueyonder.co.uk

Welfare Officer's Update

Chris Ham introduces himself and reminds us of the importance of this area of club management.

As I move inexorably through my late seventies I am rather relieved when I look back on life to find that I have very few regrets.

There is one however: I really wish I had discovered croquet much earlier than I did. I was introduced to the game by an old friend, sadly no longer with us, who I met in my football playing days. In the pub one evening, he happened to casually mention that he had started playing croquet at Bude, some 20 miles from where we live, and that he thought I would like the game and would be a competent player. So I gave it a go, and the rest, as they say, is history.



When I started, Bude was a very small club with very limited facilities, but a beautiful setting and enthusiastic and committed members. My wife and I were warmly welcomed and everybody was generous in sharing their skills and knowledge of the game. I was impressed, and I was hooked.

Six years later, and things are very different. We now have a club house, a massively increased membership, qualified coaches and referees, a successful first year of two teams in South West Federation league competition, and the future looks bright. Fortunately, we still have the ambiance of those early days and I massively treasure the friendships formed at the club.

Which brings me round to the topic of welfare. When I was asked if I would join the SWF committee and consider the welfare role, I did not have to think too hard or too long before accepting. I no longer use the phrase 'Well that's not cricket': I now say 'Well that's not croquet'. What a delightful sport we have: invariably polite, sociable, and amicable, but implacably competitive on the lawn. And yet, all this must not be taken for granted and we must be on our guard.

In a past role, I served on the disciplinary committee of a county Football Association. Despite the fact that I had played for 35 years, I was amazed at the awfulness of some of the characters who appeared before us.

There were instances of all sorts of abuse, some of which were just appalling. And then the Internet and Facebook appeared: post-match vitriol and abuse exploded! Whole new avenues of abuse appeared. We live in strange times, but croquet offers a stress relieving sanctuary which we should all strive to maintain.

There is a mountain of information on the Croquet England website about Welfare. I would urge all members to have a browse. It is quite obvious that, due to the average age and social background of the typical croquet player and the non- contact nature of the game, that abuse is a rarity. There is a key phrase in the section entitled 'Welfare and Well-being Guidance': 'we all have a duty to care for each other'.

I would like this to be the cornerstone of every club's welfare policy and every player's attitude.

I hope to write about more specific aspects of welfare in future editions, but this one is merely intended to introduce myself to the general membership.

I would like to send out a reminder that every member club should have a welfare officer to whom any concerns should initially be addressed. If a solution cannot be found, or the situation is deemed serious, please do not hesitate to involve me.

Any local 1-day GC Tournaments?

Keith Bryant (Dowlish Wake CC) asks:

I have for several years regularly entered 5 or 6 of the B level series singles tournaments for players with a handicap of 3 and above.

Croquet England have now decided to change the B level series to players with a handicap of 4 and above which means I am no longer able to enter. The alternative is the 0 and above series which are all two day events which does not suit me.

I am wondering if any clubs in the SW run or are considering running any one-day level play tournaments suitable for a 3-handicap player. If so I would like to hear from you. I am sure there must be many players in a similar position to me.

Please let Keith know: keithandkate1@gmail.com



1-4-U Why not promote your event in Cygnet?
Advertising rates are available on application.
lindawithani@hotmail.com

Budleigh Croquet College 2025 Programme



A new series of courses for 2025 has recently been published and is now available for booking to South West Federation members.

The courses cater to a full range of abilities for the Association, Golf and Short croquet codes. Courses are either ½ or full day depending on the topic presented. The experienced lead coaches all reside in the region and will be well known to many. Further information is available on the [Budleigh Croquet College](#) page of the Budleigh club website, where you will also find links to book the courses described.

We very much hope there will be something that interests you here and that delegates get value from and enjoy their visit to Budleigh. Here is the 2025 College programme:

Date	Code	Course title	Leader	Code	Handicap range	Duration	Price
Tue 18 Feb 10:00	SCB1	Golf Croquet Mistakes	Stephen Custance-Baker	GC	GC 4 to 9	1 day	£25.00
Tue 11 March 10:00	SCB2	Every Shot is Tactical	Stephen Custance-Baker	GC	GC 4 to 9	1 day	£25.00
Tue 18 March 10:00	PF1	GC Improver	Paul Francis	GC	GC 8+	1 day	£25.00
Thu 20 March 10:00	DK1	Practical Competitive Association Croquet	Dave Kibble	AC	AC 6 to 14	1 day	£25.00
Tue 01 April 10:00	PF2	GC Improver	Paul Francis	GC	GC 8+	1 day	£25.00
Sat 05 April 10:00	DR1	Workshop: AC Openings	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 12-	3 hours	£10.00
Tue 08 April 10:00	DK2	Practical Competitive Golf Croquet	Dave Kibble	GC	GC 3 to 8	1 day	£25.00
Sat 12 April 10:00	DR2	Masterclass: AC shot technique	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 12+	3 hours	£10.00
Tue 15 April 10:00	SCB3	The Thinking Sport	Stephen Custance-Baker	GC	GC 4 to 9	1 day	£25.00
Thu 17 April 10:00	TJ1	Peeling in Short Croquet	Tim Jolliff	SC	SC 3 to 2P	1 day	£25.00
Sat 26 April 10:00	DR3	Masterclass: Better break play	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 12-	3 hours	£10.00
Fri 02 May 10:00	PF3	GC Improver	Paul Francis	GC	GC 8+	1 day	£25.00

Any inquiries should be directed to David Warhurst (toursec@budleighcroquet.org)

Resolutions

Our first Zoom meeting of the year got us all thinking about what we are aiming to do to improve our clubs this year. It's probably time to take a check on how far we've progressed since then so here's a reminder of some of what we considered.

Recruitment

Many of us are struggling with this – is there anything in this list you haven't considered yet, or anything you could adapt to meet your situation?

- Articles in press. Drop-in Days. Courts open in the winter.
- U3A can provide new members also Corporate or Taster Days – Taunton Deane include U3A in club sessions
- Bath is setting up an Academy involving 10 Secondary Schools in the area.
- Emphasize the importance of understanding what croquet is about for potential recruits and the need for a club-wide responsibility in attracting and retaining members.
- Word of mouth
- Right age
- Good club members
- Website



Coaching and retention

Ok, they've done the Beginners' Course – how do we keep them hooked?

- Agnostic croquet – ask Nailsea CC!
- One ball
- Two ball match play
- Buddying
- Charging for initial sessions, many clubs do charge but it is deducted from the membership fee when they join.

Involving members

There's more to a croquet club than playing croquet!

- Involving people in a range of club activities
- Cheltenham have tried compiling a list of small jobs to get members involved. Having a Mentor or Buddy system was good for a club of about 260 members.
- Active members required, it's the whole club's responsibility.

Handicapping

Let's play fair!

- Waiting for the new handicapping system.
- Checking cards at the start of the season and should handicapping be the responsibility of a committee rather than one person.

Lawns and infrastructure

Let's keep the facilities in good order

- Weston Super Mare are looking for an alternative venue, possibly sharing with a Bowls Club.
- Bristol reported they have new structures being installed for better viewing of the courts; they also now have a mower but need volunteers to use it.
- Bude have ongoing problems but have plenty of new members.
- Swanage are on the playing field of a Primary School and have no security of tenure to apply for grants, club facilities are needed.
- Wellington has tenure problems.

AC/GC

Balance is everything

- using the One Ball to encourage more AC play also Short Croquet.
- Bristol have a reduction in AC members so considering roll up sessions for Short Croquet.
- Plymouth have not entered any leagues this year as members unsure about Advantage GC.
- Taunton hold one day competitions and find them very well attended besides the usual longer club competitions.

1-4-U

*Do keep us updated on **your** progress*
lindawithani@hotmail.com

Artificial Creativity

You may have seen examples of this in the December Gazette. These are croquet images created by Dave Kibble (Bristol CC) with a little help from ChatGPT.

Who do you think was the inspirational the third party in each of these? Answers **on p xx**

A



B



C





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with the dimensions of your mallet (height including the head of your mallet) and mallet head shape. I can then give you a choice of wax print fabric material. I will buy it and make your bag! The overall cost will depend on the material chosen.

Further details from: Brian Wainman at the Plymouth Croquet Club

Please can I ask for a £25.00 deposit

Moreton in Marsh Opens Their Doors

Christine McCormick takes us through the process and wants to "thank everyone in the croquet world for their support allowing us to achieve a wonderful result."

During September 2023 we hit our Crowdfunding target raising £26,909.00. After deductions by Spacehive, £25,178.31 was paid into our bank. A great success, after months of hard work fund raising by all club members. It was not only a clubhouse, but also a water supply, electricity and a biodigester. Reaching this total, in the set time was thanks to a huge donation from a non-member, who believed in what we wanted to achieve.

We hit several snags, building regs increased specification on the clubhouse base, having to provide a tree and soil surveyors report, increasing costs while the price of building materials was escalating. Reaching our dream, ordering our preferred clubhouse was becoming a struggle.

Gill Hindshaw, our club captain, encouraged all club members to raise further funds, sponsor a window, door, or floor - again members pulled together. This further sum allowed us to place an order following removal of a door, window, and veranda to reduce costs.

November 2023 the order for our Clubhouse was placed and erected. A clubhouse with no facilities, water or heating, after two years sitting outside on garden furniture this was luxury.

Spring 2024 - several members started the fit out, insulation, boarding and first electrical fit. During necessary work, and problems with Thames Water, it was evident we were over budget. Further fund raising needed, an open day, BBQ and Quiz Night helped get our club on a more stable state.



Photo: Kristina Morgan gets to grips with the electricity cables

Summer 2024 – A clubhouse but no water, and ongoing problems with Thames Water. Regardless, we enjoyed SWF league games with other clubs, local Brownies, Beavers and WI groups. Being able to provide shelter, table and chairs, tea and coffee, all very normal to every club we have visited over the past three years.

October 20th - we invited our benefactors, local charities, councillors and other groups who supported us to join Club Members to the opening of our clubhouse. In honour of his generous contribution we asked our benefactor to cut the ribbon and officially name our clubhouse,

The Buchanan Pavilion.



It was a momentous day and the celebration enjoyed by everyone.



The Official Opening

Gill Hindshaw (Club Captain), Christine McCormick (Secretary), Doreen Exton (Chairperson now Club President), Jo Brooks (Club Member involved in setting up Moreton Croquet Club), Aerron Buchanan (benefactor *extraordinaire*)

Honours for Bath CC

Bath continues to celebrate the achievements of its members as the New Year's honours list is published, *writes Lynne Passfield, Chair of Bath CC.*

Timothy Cantell (Bath) received an MBE for services to heritage and to the environment in the New Years Honours List. He works part-time for Design West on the review of upcoming development schemes in the South West and he is a trustee of the UK-wide heritage charity SAVE, that he helped to start.

Earlier roles include the Civic Trust and Royal Society of Arts nationally, while closer to home Bath Preservation Trust and – currently – the Bear Flat Association.

This picture shows that Timothy has winning ways on the Croquet lawn too when receiving his cup, together with Martin Alabaster, having won the alternate stroke doubles.



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Diary Dates



Zoom Tuesday 11th February – Fundraising and promotion
Zoom Tuesday 11th March – Handicapping

Short Croquet Tournaments

- 11th – 13th April at Nailsea
- 3rd – 5th Oct at Budleigh Salterton

Finals – dates and venues		
Date	League	Venue
Saturday 20 th Sept	GC Level Play 5+	Bristol CC
Sunday 21 st Sept	SC Open	Kington Langley CC
Sunday 21 st Sept	GC Handicap	Nailsea CC
Saturday 27 th Sept	AC Intermediate	Camerton & Peasedown CC
Saturday 27 th Sept	AC Federation	Sidmouth CC
Saturday 27 th Sept	AC Intermediate	Camerton & Peasedown CC
Sunday 28 th Sept	GC High Handicap	Taunton Deane CC

Useful Links	
Bisques, Extra Strokes and Advantage Calculator – Brian Wainman's life-saving tool	chc.eu.pythonanywhere.com/
Croquet England	www.croquetengland.org.uk/
Croquet England Youtube channel	www.youtube.com/@CroquetEngland/streams
Croquet England on Facebook	www.facebook.com/search/top?q=croquet%20england
Croquet Hub on Facebook	www.facebook.com/groups/1658937214910559
Croquet England slo-mo videos	www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/golf/refereeing/slomo
Oxford Croquet - coaching	www.oxfordcroquet.com/
Chris Clarke - coaching	clarkecroquet.com/
Reg Bamford – the psychology of the game	www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qw_jiBpnCug
Hit Inn – Alison Maugham chats with some successful players	www.youtube.com/watch?v=bf5gM-cswiQ
Canva – a free poster / flyer / logo design tool	www.canva.com/en_gb/
Try Croquet – an eclectic selection on a range of croquet topics	www.trycroquet.co.uk/
Tournament Management: Chris Roberts	www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V2adRweWZg&t=10s

Answers to Artificial Creativity on p9: A – Cubism B – Miro, C Esher

1-4-U We'd love to hear your account of matches, tournaments or other events that you run or take part in – a personal experience is worth sharing and a photo can paint a thousand words – so don't forget us when you're playing this year.
lindawithani@hotmail.com

Appendix 1

How to fill out your AC handicap card

Starting handicap in this example is 16

Your opponent's handicap

Name of competition or tournament

Result.e.g. 26-9 for win to you or 9-26 for loss to you

Your new index

H for handicap L for level play

Change to your index

Date	OPPONENT		NAME		INDEX	
	Name	H'ca	H/L	Result	+/-	New
					Backward	1056
	<u>South West Fed Lge v South Bay</u>					
5/7/24	Brian Jones	12	H	26-9	+10	1086
5/7/24	John Shuttleworth	8	H	15-23	-10	1076
	<u>CqE Longman Cup v Reading</u>					
10/7/24	Mary Smith	3.5	H	26-24	+10	1086
10/7/24	Robert Armstrong	0	H	20-8	+10	1096
	<u>West Dorset Smith Cup</u>					
17/7/24	David Lyons	12	L	26-12	+12	1108
	CHANGED TO 14 Mike Rice					
	<u>West Dors B Block</u>					
31/7/24	Stephen C...	4	H	9-18	-10	1098

Change of handicap clearly identified and signed off by appropriate handicapper

Handicap does not go back to 16 until you drop right back to 1050

How to fill out your GC handicap card

Starting handicap in this example is a 7

Date	OPPONENT		H'cap	H/L	Result	INDEX	
	Name					Change	New
	<u>South West Hcap Lge v South Bay</u>					B/forward	1376
5/7/24	Brian Jones		12	L	7-6	+10	1386
5/7/24	John Shuttleworth		8	E	5-7	-10	1376
	<u>CqE Inter-Club v Reading</u>						
10/7/24	Robert Armstrong		0	A	7-2	+10	1386
10/7/24	Mary Smith		10	A	6-6	+10	1396
	<u>West Dorset Harvey Cup</u>						
17/7/24	David Lyons		14	L	7-6	+4	1400
	CHANGED TO 6 Mike Rice						
	<u>West Dorset B Bloc</u>						
31/7/24	Stephen Cutler		4	A	3-2	-10	1390