

# Cygnnet

## South West Area Newsletter

### Celebrating Croquet Across the Region

#### Issue 46: February 2024



Although only a few lucky people have been playing our wonderful game during the winter, much has been going on behind the scenes: AGMs, committee meetings, arranging League games and club competitions, lawn-care planning and activities, renewing memberships, planning recruitment drives ... I'm sure you could add much more to this.

Several of these topics have been covered in our off-season Zoom meetings and notes of the key meetings may be found on our website so do check it out to remind yourself of some key points. <https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/zoom-meetings/>

If you've come across any really good ideas since then, we'd love to hear from you and share them through Cygnnet.

### Have you checked your handicaps?

Mike Rice is our Handicapping Officer and gives us this timely reminder:

It is an important winter duty of Club Handicappers to check the handicaps of all your playing members before the new season begins. Croquet England's guidelines include the following:



*"At a minimum the Club Handicapper should check and sign off every club member's card at least once a year before the main season starts."*

The SWF committee are planning to put the following proposal forward for a vote at the next AGM:

*"For league matches (except Advanced League) all captains should present the handicap cards of their team before the start of the match This will give the opposing captain an opportunity to inspect."*

Whilst this is not a league rule for 2024 it is certainly helpful and good practice for it to be done this season. Let's get into good habits early!

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

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

## AC Referees' Course

Dave Kibble, Examining Referee, will lead this two-day AC Referee Course and examination which is provisionally scheduled for mid-March at Bristol Croquet Club. The course will develop your knowledge of the Laws and your ability to apply them to a competitive game. There will be a mix of time on the lawns for the practical aspects and indoors sessions.



Separate notification will be sent to clubs but if you are interested, please contact Paul:

[paulwfrancis@icloud.com](mailto:paulwfrancis@icloud.com)

In the meantime, this gives you an idea of what is involved:

The course is designed for those wishing to qualify as a Referee. Players who want to increase their knowledge of the Laws are encouraged to take the Assistant Referee examination as it is not onerous and helps the learning experience. Details of the qualification process can be found on the Croquet England website

<https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=/games/association/refereeing#BecomingAReferee>

Participants are expected to have a working knowledge of the AC Laws and will be expected to complete a small amount of preparatory material before the course.

The fee will be £30 which must be paid in advance. You will be sent an invoice for this. Those completing the course satisfactorily will be able to claim towards travel costs from the SWF Qualifications Bursary and a claim form will be sent to you after the event.

There is time to qualify up to six Assistant Referees and a separate, mutually convenient, half-day examination will be arranged for those who wish to qualify as Full Referee or if there is not time to complete all Assistant Referee examinations on the day.

## Planning your tournament entries?



The Croquet England Fixtures Calendar is open for booking from 1<sup>st</sup> February so why not get planning your holiday breaks around some of those clubs you've never visited before – they'd love to see you. But if you don't want to go too far from home, there's plenty on offer more locally as well, so do take a look. Remember you'll need to log in to see it all.

<https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/caCalendar>

You might be a bit nervous if this is your first foray into Tournament World, so why not go with a (more experienced) chum? Anyway, here are some useful tips and reminders to get you in the mood.

- ✓ Read everything you're sent and be sure you understand it
  - In particular look out for any last-minute changes
- ✓ Arrive in good time to get settled and listen carefully to the Manager's briefing
- ✓ Know what the catering arrangements are
- ✓ Don't be afraid to ask for advice – everyone was a first-timer once

But don't be intimidated into doing something you're not sure about – always check with the Manager

## Safeguarding in the SWF

Andru Blewett, our Safeguarding Officer, reminds us of our responsibilities with regard to both children and adults:

All member clubs of the South West Federation should now have a member nominated as your Welfare/Safeguarding Officer. If no member has offered to cover this role Croquet England takes the default position that the Club Chair fulfils the role.

Last year on-line training was rolled out for Child Safeguarding with further training for Adults at Risk to follow. In January Beatrice McGlen, CEO of Croquet England wrote to all Federation and Club Welfare/Safeguarding Officers giving details of the process to undertake this second phase.



**I hope that most of you in this role have by now completed all this training.**

With the transition to Croquet England complete with a new website, Safeguarding guidance and other information has been significantly updated and improved.

If you would like some reminders about safeguarding, check out the guides on the website at [Welfare Matters - Croquet England](#). By clicking on the coloured croquet balls, you will see easy-to-follow steps and links to some short videos and other documents. Croquet England's adult safeguarding policy and procedures can be found at [Welfare Policies - Croquet England](#), along with all its other welfare related policies and procedures, including child safeguarding documents.

## Player Dress Code



The wearing of whites in competitive play has been a hot topic (for some) for a while and last year the South West Federation of Croquet Clubs received a request from a member club to review the requirement to wear whites in League Play.

Consultation with member clubs indicated a significant preference for wearing whites – sense of occasion, enhancing performance etc – alongside a clear understanding that this may be seen as off-putting or discriminatory for others. See Cygnet Issue 43 August 2023 <https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/cygnet-newsletters/>

Unless otherwise stated, the SWF follows CA (now CqE) Tournament Regulations which states: "... unless otherwise permitted, predominantly white clothing should be worn." Team colours are also permitted. <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/regulations>

The SWF is making use of this discretionary power and is not insisting on 'predominantly white' clothing at SWF events viz all League Play and the two Short Croquet Tournaments. However it is up to clubs to decide what dress code to require their teams to follow, and club teams should abide by their club's ruling.



## Charity One-Ball

I hope you've all got this in your diaries anyway, but Debbie James is administrator for this year's Charity 1 Ball series and has asked us to bring this to your attention.

The Charity 1-ball supported by Croquet England, is now well established on the croquet calendar and continuing into its eighteenth season. It will be played in 2024 in support of the British Heart Foundation. As is the tradition, competitors fashion their attire in the house colour of the chosen charity, so it's RED for '24. Visibility for the charity is the aim, so the louder the costume the better!



This fun day of 1-ball play (a hybrid of AC and GC, quick to play, easy to pick up, as skilful and strategic as you can make it) is well supported by clubs nationally. Each club or federation organises their heat in any format they desire, to generate qualifiers for the regional finals at Nottingham and Surbiton. But there is always room for more players, so if your club has not previously run a heat perhaps 2024 will be the year?

If you need any more information please feel free to contact this email address - [charity1ball@gmail.com](mailto:charity1ball@gmail.com) Please get in touch if you'd like to find out more and register your interest. As you plan your club calendar for next season, timetable your heat anytime before either of the regional finals, 05 May at Surbiton or 11 May at Nottingham.

### *A bit of background information:*

This competition happens solely as a volunteer project with all clubs hosting heats and finals (Surbiton and Nottingham) doing so at no charge.

To date the competition has raised £71k for various charities. 41 heats were played last year, adding a magnificent £8k to that total. With your support let's keep the virtual accumulator rising higher towards £100k.

Debbie James, who is Chair of York CC, on the CqE Sports Development Committee and Course Secretary for the Northern Croquet Academy has taken over the administration of the event from Kevin Carter who instigated the competition 18 years ago, and who stepped down after the 2023 competition.

Monies raised are paid direct into York CC account, then transferred by the Treasurer direct to the nominated charity. All monies are accounted for transparently in this way.



## ***Budleigh Croquet College 2024 Programme***



A new series of courses for 2024 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 2024 College programme:

Date Time	Course title	Leader	Code	Handicap range	Duration	Price
Wed 21 February 10:00	<a href="#">GC Improver</a>	Paul Francis	GC	GC 7+	1 day	£25.00
Fri 01 March 10:00	<a href="#">Golf Croquet Mistakes</a>	Stephen Custance-Baker	GC	GC 4 to 9	1 day	£25.00
Mon 11 March 10:00	<a href="#">Masterclass: How to beat a minus handicap player</a>	Tim Jolliff	GC	GC 0 to 4	3 hours	£13.00
Fri 15 March 10:00	<a href="#">Every Shot is Tactical</a>	Stephen Custance-Baker	GC	GC 4 to 9	1 day	£25.00
Sat 16 March 10:00	<a href="#">Workshop: AC Openings</a>	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 12-	3 hours	£10.00
Fri 22 March 10:00	<a href="#">GC Improver</a>	Paul Francis	GC	GC 7+	1 day	£25.00
Sat 23 March 10:00	<a href="#">Masterclass: Better break play</a>	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 12-	3 hours	£10.00
Fri 05 April 10:00	<a href="#">Short Croquet 1-day Course</a>	Stephen Custance-Baker	SC	SC 8-	1 day	£25.00
Sat 06 April 10:00	<a href="#">Workshop: 3 ball endings</a>	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 8-	3 hours	£10.00
Fri 12 April 10:00	<a href="#">Five-shot thinking</a>	Stephen Custance-Baker	GC	GC 2 to 7	3 hours	£13.00
Fri 12 April 10:00	<a href="#">Mastering 3 &amp; 4 Ball Breaks</a>	Roger Mills	AC	AC 7 to 16	1 day	£20.00
Wed 17 April 10:00	<a href="#">Masterclass: How to beat a minus handicap player</a>	Tim Jolliff	GC	GC 0 to 4	3 hours	£13.00
Sat 20 April 10:00	<a href="#">Masterclass: AC shot technique</a>	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 12+	3 hours	£10.00
Wed 24 April 10:00	<a href="#">Taming the triple</a>	Roger Mills	AC	AC 1 to 5	1 day	£20.00
Fri 26 April 10:00	<a href="#">Mastering 3-ball breaks</a>	Roger Mills	AC	AC 7 to 14	1/2 day	£10.00
Fri 03 May 10:00	<a href="#">Advanced Peeling Workshop</a>	Dave Kibble	AC	AC -1 to 3	1 day	£25.00
Fri 17 May 10:00	<a href="#">Getting maximum bang for your bisques</a>	Roger Mills	AC	AC 8 to 18	1/2 day	£10.00
Thu 23 May 10:00	<a href="#">Practical Competitive Golf Croquet</a>	Dave Kibble	GC	GC 3 to 8	1 day	£25.00
Fri 31 May 10:00	<a href="#">Taming the triple</a>	Roger Mills	AC	AC 1 to 5	1 day	£20.00
Sat 13 July 10:00	<a href="#">Masterclass: The 4-back peel</a>	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 6-	3 hours	£10.00

Any inquiries should be directed to David Warhurst ([toursec@budleighcroquet.org](mailto:toursec@budleighcroquet.org))

## Federations' Forum



*Tony Mayer, Chair of the SWF, reports on the background of this Forum and some recent discussions.*

There are nine federations of croquet clubs within Croquet England. They are: Croquet North in the north-east, Yorkshire, the North West, East Midlands, East Anglia, West Midlands, Croquet South East, Southern, and our own South West.

A few years ago, it was felt that there would be benefit in the Federations coming together in an informal discussion group to discuss matters of common concern, exchange views and best practice, learning from each other and collectively raising matters of concern and making representations to the Executive Board.

The Chairs and other representatives from all the Federations now meet regularly on the first Monday of the month (except for July, August and December). Initially, the Forum was convened by Paul Brown who continued to act in this capacity until his recent retirement from the Boards. Now the Forum is convened by our own Paul Francis as a member of the Croquet England Executive Board. Both Pauls are able to relay key 'take away' messages from our discussions to the Board.

Recently we have instituted a system of rotating chairs with the note-taker from one meeting then becoming the chair of the next session. Before each meeting, each Federation sends in a brief report of its activities often raising key questions which sets the agenda.

From time to time, the Forum has also held discussions with the President, the Chief Executive Officer and the National Safeguarding Officer as well as with other expert guests.

When comparing notes, the SWF, which has one of the largest memberships and covers the largest geographical region, is usually in the vanguard of new developments. For instance, our monthly Zoom meetings for clubs and their members and our lead in developing 'hybrid' coaching courses are two examples of SWF being in the lead nationally.

Over the past couple of years, the Forum has dealt with a wide variety of topics.

Naturally, the change from the CA to Croquet England and the implications for clubs and the Federations has been an almost constant agenda item. We have also covered the registration of trusts, the problems of recruiting people to serve on Federation committees, the decline of AC and how to reverse it, recruitment especially the Next Generation initiative (led by Paul Francis), handicapping (including the fairness of 'cross-over' handicaps between AC and GC raised by SWF), coaching (especially the SWF 'hybrid' schemes), and dress codes (again a SWF topic). Of course, Advantage GC, recruitment and safeguarding have tended to be constant themes. Recently, the Forum has raised the issue of data sharing between the 'centre' and the Federations as well as whether central subscriptions e.g. for Microsoft Teams, can be extended to the Federations.

All in all, the Forum provides a valuable place for the exchange of views and ideas from across the country, many of which will feed into actions at both the national and regional level.





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### **Swindon CC Grows and Grows**

Swindon Croquet Club has secured an extension to its Swindon Borough Council lease which means that their ambitious expansion plan can go ahead. As part of the Council's £6.3m Moredon Sporting Hub development, the club has been allocated an area of land to enable expansion from the existing three full lawns to five. So now it's all systems go!

There is much to be done, including erection of perimeter fencing, procurement of additional balls and hoops, levelling of ground and preparation of smooth lawn surfaces, along with installation of a storage unit and a players' shelter.



The Club has well established links with various community groups who regularly enjoy the facilities and the creation of the two additional lawns means that other community groups will also be accommodated and enjoy croquet sessions. Equipment, free tuition, and refreshments are always provided and a warm welcome is guaranteed.

Club Chair Clive Smith said:

"There is a lot of work ahead but this is certainly an exciting time for the club as we will be able to welcome new community groups and, of course, we are keen to attract new members. Croquet

provides gentle exercise, mental stimulation, and it's a competitive game but the emphasis at our club is always on enjoyment in a friendly, welcoming atmosphere. The Sporting Hub development at Moredon means our club will be far more visible and will attract far more interest from the Swindon community – it's all positive and very exciting!"

Having five lawns will provide other significant benefits, such as facilitating all-year-round play and the ability to host major national croquet tournaments - which will raise the club's profile.

Colin Bailey carried out sterling work in securing the lease extension and Steve Hares has offered to make trolleys to carry the additional hoops. This is typical of the willingness of members to contribute to the wellbeing of the club as time consuming tasks such as grass cutting, line painting, providing refreshments, clubhouse cleaning, general maintenance etc are all done 'in house', thereby enabling the club to thrive."



## Reading Corner

A little bit of 'a la recherche' this time and an up-to-date reflection from Debbie Lines.

This article from the Croquet Gazette in October 1992 – that's 30 years ago! – illustrates just how long this debate has been going, albeit with the greater awareness we have now of gender issues.

Debbie Cornelius (now Debbie Lines and current Women's AC World Champion) argues that croquet is a sport that women and men can play on equal terms and that special events are not needed. I asked her if her views had changed:

"Yes, my views have changed regarding Women's only events. This is almost entirely because of lawn speed and equipment.

Back in the 90's we almost always used to play on faster lawns. Most clubs didn't have sprinkler systems and we just seemed blessed with less rain, so lawns averaged around 12 Plummers. Also, the old Jaques balls were easier for big rolls, Dawsons don't roll as easily and therefore require more upper body strength.

As a result, the strength advantage enjoyed by most men was negligible and rarely of any significance in terms of who would win the game. These days, with lawns averaging 10 seconds at best, this is not the case.

I still believe our sport can and should be played mixed, and that we can compete on equal terms, at all except the very elite levels. For instance, let's say you are an AC 1 handicap, playing in a B level tournament (and there are now many of these), does it matter if you have that handicap because you are strong, old, tall, short, gifted, or because of how much you practice?





There are so many reasons why someone could get to that level and enjoy playing, and whether you are male or female is irrelevant.

But to get to say -2.5, now that gets tricky. I lose games sometimes because I don't have the strength to play a cut-rush the length of the lawn, or roll two balls to a boundary to make a good leave, or play the Hogan roll to pick up a standard TP. Over a season, I probably lose 2 or 3 games each year because of this - it's not a lot, but it adds up when trying to be the best."

She added: "Good luck! I suspect you may find this subject quite lively 😊"

Many thanks Debbie for bringing us up to speed with your thinking. Do let us have your views and experiences of this – whatever your gender.

### **The Back Page**

<b>Useful Links</b>	
Croquet England	<a href="https://www.croquet.org.uk/">https://www.croquet.org.uk/</a>
Croquet England Youtube channel	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/@CroquetEngland/streams">https://www.youtube.com/@CroquetEngland/streams</a>
Oxford Croquet - coaching	<a href="http://www.oxfordcroquet.com/">http://www.oxfordcroquet.com/</a>
Chris Clarke - coaching	<a href="https://clarkecroquet.com/">https://clarkecroquet.com/</a>
Reg Bamford – the psychology of it	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qw_jiBpnCug">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qw_jiBpnCug</a>
Hit Inn – Alison Maugham chats with the Croquetratti	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bf5gM-cswiQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bf5gM-cswiQ</a>

### **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](mailto:lindawithani@hotmail.com)