

## Minutes of SWF Committee Meeting 9.9.24

### 1. Present

- a. Tony Mayer, Peter Kirby, Linda Shaw, Stephen Custance-Baker, Paul Francis, Mike Rice, Brian Wilson, Andru Blewett

### 2. Apologies

- a. None

### 3. Minutes of last meeting

- a. Previously circulated and agreed as correct

### 4. Matters arising / update on actions not covered in agenda

- a. Destruction of League paper records
  - i. Stephen has completed this for his records
  - ii. **Action: Linda** to see what John G wants to do with SC Tournament records
- b. League Results Sec not able to use Apple system for League results
  - i. It has not been possible to resolve this but a way round the problem has been found
  - ii. One League Results Sec has not been able to load anything onto SWF website (but has done Rankings and Croquet Scores) – again a way round it has been found
- c. Guidance to league team captains on refereeing, handicaps etc – **Action: League Sec Jan 2025**
- d. Expenses claim has been submitted

### 5. Treasurer's Report

- a. See Appendix 1
- b. There have been 5 late entries to the Short Croquet Tournament at Budleigh, with an associated increase in income
- c. For the Judith Moore Bursary Fund, an update is needed with a new projected amount of net spend for 2023/24
  - i. Info on events planned to take place before the end of the financial year is needed. **Action: Paul and Peter**

### 6. League Secretary's Report

- a. See report Appendix 1
- b. Advance League
  - i. Late result: Bristol A won Parkstone Trophy
  - ii. There will be a change next year – Taunton Deane have decided to withdraw as they lost a key player in Jonathan Wolfe but plan to return in two years to Division 3
  - iii. Budleigh is planning to enter next year
  - iv. Stephen is discussing the impact of this on promotions and demotions with the League Results Secretary

- c. 2025
  - i. Stephen is arranging preparatory handover meeting with Gill.
  - ii. If needed, Stephen will manage the League entries once more
  - iii. One of the GC League Results Secs may be standing down, but a replacement has already volunteered.

## 7. Finals arrangements

- a. **Action: Tony** to provide lists of finalists venues and dates for Cygnet
- b. Refereeing – statement (see Appendix 3) to be sent to finalists, host clubs and for Cygnet **Action: Tony**
- c. One club has requested an independent referee for one of the finals matches.
  - i. Stephen has discussed this with other national referees, all of whom know the nominated referee and are confident in his skills.
  - ii. Agreed we would not agree to this request. **Action: Stephen** to inform the club

## 8. Short Croquet Tournaments

- a. Entry eligibility
  - i. A club from just outside the region has asked if they can enter the autumn tournament – following discussion with Stephen and Linda, because there are vacancies, they have been offered a place with no commitment to future eligibility.
  - ii. Noted that one reason they requested this is that there is little opportunity for SC play in their region
    - 1. It is hoped that they can encourage their federation to change this
  - iii. Issues to be considered
    - 1. Are the tournaments open to non-SWF members?
      - a. Yes, as long as all SWF teams wanting one have a place
      - b. They should pay a higher entry fee (not possible this year)
      - c. They are not eligible for promotion to a higher division
    - 2. Should the tournament rules make this clearer?
      - a. Probably (see forthcoming proposal to AGM)
- b. Rules
  - i. We don't have an official set of rules for the tournaments so John wrote interim ones which are on the website and will need to be ratified at the AGM. Since then, Chris Donovan has written guidelines for his club, has been in dialogue with John and is asking if they could go on our website
  - ii. Chris has written two documents: a brief guide and an aide memoire for team captains – both attached
  - iii. Agreed that the guidelines be included as an appendix with rules to be agreed at the AGM
  - iv. These guidelines will be sent to team captains on entering the event and will be available on the day **Action: John and tournament managers**

## 9. Development Report

- a. See Appendix 4
- b. Noted the team is developing really well with 5 members at the moment
- c. Ways of developing relationships with a bowls club in Stroud and with Blewbury, will be explored **Action: Paul**

- d. Winter Zoom programme – **Action: Paul** to finalise **Action: Linda** to put in Cygnet

### **10. Volunteer of the Year**

- a. Nominations circulated and discussed
- b. Agreed a structured scoring system be used to counter any bias that may be caused by conflict of interest and to aid transparency
- c. **Action: All** to submit their priorities from the 3 shortlisted candidates by Friday
- d. Noted useful lessons for next year, including clarifying criteria

### **11. Coaching Officer Report**

- a. See Appendix 5
- b. Noted some interest at national level to introduce a ‘fast track’ coach qualification
  - i. Agreed this should be resisted – the process is important and just because you can do it, doesn’t mean you can coach it
- c. Coaches course in north of the region scheduled March / April 2025

### **12. Handicapping Officer Report**

- a. Course for 2025 being developed **Action: Mike**
- b. guidance to clubs on bisque adjustment for less than full size lawns has been issued
- c. preparing guidance on handicap cards – ongoing
- d. change in league handicapping rules – proposal to AGM being drafted **Action: Mike**
- e. discussed situation outlined by Mike in the agenda papers
  - i. Agreed we do not want to insist clubs maintain their member details on CqE directory – this is up to CqE
  - ii. With regard to checking handicap cards
    - 1. **Action: Mike** will review the score cards of the club involved over the past 2 years
    - 2. **Action: Paul** will review handicap cards at the final
    - 3. **Noted Stephen** plans to do the same at another final

### **13. Win bias / home advantage: some supplementary info**

- a. Report circulated – see Appendix 6 and discussed
- b. What action does this evidence enable us to take?
  - i. Not a lot – evidence for grant applications, not using certain venues for play offs or finals
  - ii. The information will continue to be monitored

### **14. Safeguarding Officer Report**

- a. Nothing to report – **Action: Paul** to speak to potential SO

### **15. Feds Focus Group update**

- a. See Appendix 7 for correspondence between Tony and Ian Draper
- b. Since then Ian has been talking with other Feds and will produce ideas for the future development of this forum

### **16. Rep to CqE Report**

- a. Noted CqE AGM 12<sup>th</sup> Oct Zoom
- b. Noted Strategy Document published and meeting is scheduled to develop implementation and monitoring actions

### **17.AGM**

- a. Call for nominations and proposals made – and two reminders!
- b. Nominations for all committee posts except secretary and safeguarding have been received
- c. All current members who are re-standing have submitted nomination forms
- d. Other paperwork is all scheduled
- e. Proposals received so far were reviewed
  - i. **Action: Stephen** to offer suggestions to Bude on clarifying the wording on theirs
- f. More proposals re anticipated – some likely to largely administrative tidy-up rather than content-focussed

### **18.AOB**

- a. None

### **19.Dates of next meetings**

- a. 14<sup>th</sup> October – looks like this is still the best date but not all committee members can be there
- b. 24<sup>th</sup> November
- c. 5<sup>th</sup> Dec – provisional

## **Appendix 1 Treasurer's Report**

### **Summary of Expected Income & Expenditure for 2024**

I refer to the table on page 3, this shows the budget for 2024, the actual income & expenditure for the period up to September 8th, the expected income & expenditure for the full year and in the last column the difference between the expected position and the budget.

Income is forecast to be £164 higher than expected in the budget with income from subscriptions, League Entries, and Short Croquet Tournament entries broadly in line with the Budget. It is too early in the financial year to give an accurate projection of expenses, however there is currently a small overrun of Expenses of £59 for the Year to Date.

In summary the net impact is that there is a projected deficit for the year of around £187 vs the expected deficit of £293.

### **Creditors / Debtors**

There is one late entry to the Short Croquet Tournament at Budleigh, the invoice has recently been issued and we are waiting for payment. Balance Sheet

At September 8th there was £7,179 cash at Bank excluding the Judith Moore Bursary (see below), Judith Moore Bursary At September 8th there was £4,033 cash at Bank

It is anticipated that payments from the Fund of c. £1,000 will be made in the current year to support coaching projects as outlined at the AGM. It is too early to give an updated estimate.

*I can normally copy and paste this report to this document but not this time – we've all been circulated the info – Peter if you want it to go to website, please either try and send it in a different way, or I can just send the original as another doc to Alison*

*Cheers  
Linda*

## Appendix 2 League Secretary's Report

I am very grateful that Gill Wheeler has volunteered to take over as League Secretary from the AGM onwards. I will be spending some time with her this month, going through the various actions involved in the role. If required, I will be remaining as part of the team, handling the league entries and block allocations for 2025, which should be completed by the end of January. After that I will be available for consulting while Gill takes over the reins.

### Leagues 2024

All but four of the block games for this season should now have been completed. Three should be played before the deadline, but one has been allowed a very late date (September 29<sup>th</sup>) as no other date was possible and it may be needed to resolve a promotion in the Advanced League.

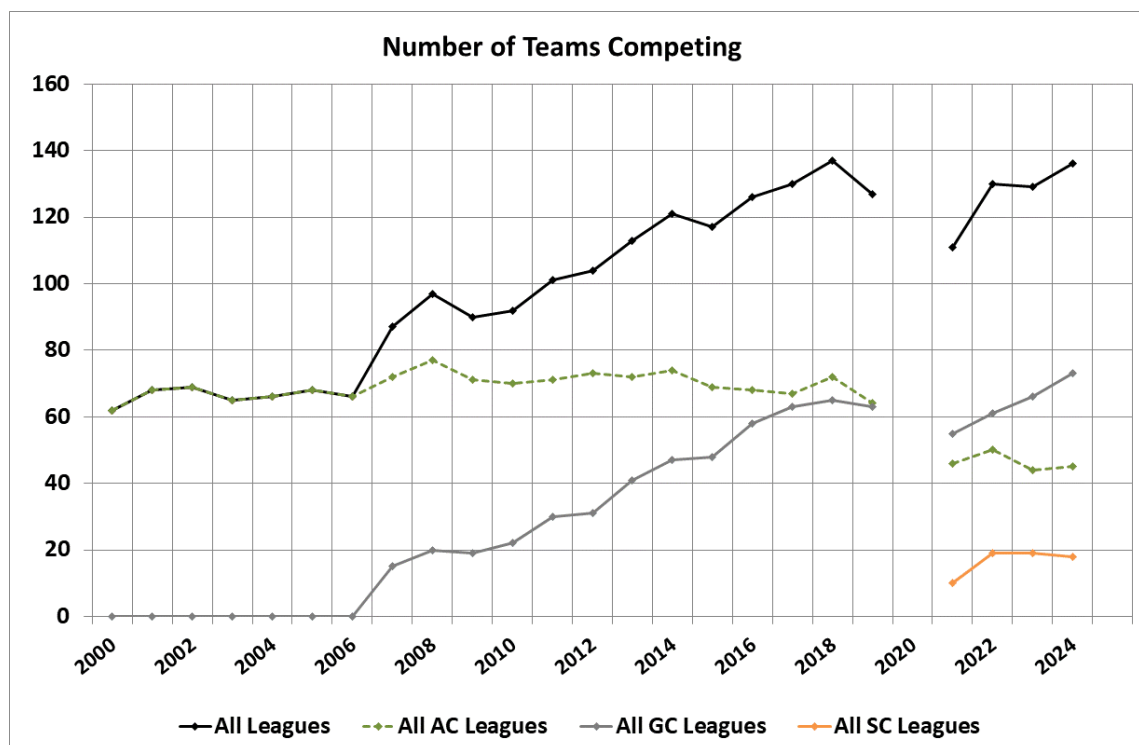
There have been five conceded games or walkovers:

Advanced Division 1	1	Taunton Deane
Short Croquet (Restricted)	1	Lym Valley
GC Level Play	1	Nailsea
GC High Handicap	2	Cornwall, Bradford on Avon A

This is fewer than in recent years.

All of the blocks have been resolved, with the exception of the Advanced Division 2, and all of the quarter-finals have been played, so the leagues are effectively on schedule.

This chart shows the trends over 25 years. The total number of teams in all leagues is now back to where it was pre-Covid. The number of AC teams seems to have stabilised at a lower level than 2019 but the GC teams have increased.



Stephen Custance-Baker

### Appendix 3 Refereeing at Finals

The SWF Committee tries to ensure that there is a qualified referee at each of the SWF League finals and this is usually achieved. Either a committee member or a member of the host club volunteers for the role. However, there have been some issues related to refereeing and I thought it appropriate to set out some guidelines. Many of the less experienced players are unfamiliar with the laws and rules and would benefit from greater involvement of the referee.

1 The appointed referee should gather the players together at the start of the match and make it clear that players should call the referee before any questionable stroke, either by themselves or by an opponent.

2 In GC finals, all players and referees, whether involved in the game or simply observers, should forestall play if a wrong ball is about to be played or has just been played. This does not apply in AC or SC finals.

3 A copy of the appropriate book of laws (AC/SC) or rules (GC) should be available for reference.

4 The appointed referee should be considered to be the Tournament Referee, but any qualified referee who is present should be invited to become a referee on call if the appointed referee is busy.

5 For the higher handicap finals (AC B League, AC Intermediate League, GC High Handicap and SC Restricted), the appointed referee should appoint themselves to be a Referee in Charge. This means that they have the right to go onto a court to oversee a stroke, even if they have not been specifically called by a player.

6 Such intervention should also cover cases where there appears to be a significant likelihood of damage to the surface of the court, or where such damage has occurred and needs expert repair.

7 Other referees, if present, should only go onto the court if requested, but may draw the attention of the referee in charge if they see that a law or rule has been infringed.

It is also considered that a useful step to improve matters is to recommend to clubs that all games, whether matches, roll-ups or friendlies, should be played according to the proper rules.

A lot of casual play, including infringement of the rules, occurs during roll-ups and leads to a rather cavalier attitude; such phrases as 'taking it too seriously' can be heard.

It is this approach that leads to many match players not knowing what the rules are.

## **Appendix 4 Development report**

### **1. Development Officer Team**

- a. We are about to become a really effective team of officers covering the whole federation. I reckon we can have an officer per two/three counties?

### **2. Club News**

- a. Re-location
- b. I'm currently in early discussions with two clubs over their potential moves.
- c. Charlton - The club's lease ends in six years and they are beginning the search for a new home probably closer to Sherborne.
- d. Winterborne Valley - Yes, again. The club is being pressurised to move their lawns to make way for a football pitch. They are exploring a move to share facilities with a local cricket club.

### **3. Completed projects**

- a. Tisbury's replacement clubhouse extension
- b. Nailsea's car park and track

### **4. Near completion**

- a. Cornwall's purchase of their site.
  - i. Crowdfunder campaign just about to end. It's raised £18k from 140 donations including several clubs. This means they will get another £10k from Sport England. With £28k already raised, this means they are almost up to the £65k purchase price.

All projects have been supported by Croquet England through grants and interest free loans

## **Appendix 5 Coaching Report**

1. Class of 24 making good progress with their portfolio of practical sessions.
2. Planning a second 'fast track' club level course for high achievers at Budleigh in October/November.
3. Promoting the 2025 course with practical days in the Central/North area.



## Appendix 6 Win bias / home advantage

This brief report summarises the findings so far in a study of the league results up to August 28<sup>th</sup> 2024. I will try to update it when the season has finished.

Definitions:

**Lawn Quality** at each club is on a scale from 1 (Excellent) to 4 (Poor). The values I have used are the averages of my own estimates and those sent to me by Paul, Linda, Tony and Peter. I would be happy to accept any further estimates and could add them easily. At present I have had at least one estimate for every club except Barnstaple and Beckford, (both of which I have guessed at 3). A very simple scale has been used because precision is impossible. Lawns vary from year to year, and within a season, and different assessors have differing opinions.

**Home Advantage** is the difference between the percentage of home matches won and away matches won. For example, if a club plays 15 home matches, winning 12 (80%) and 16 away matches, winning 8 (50%) then its Home Advantage is 30%.

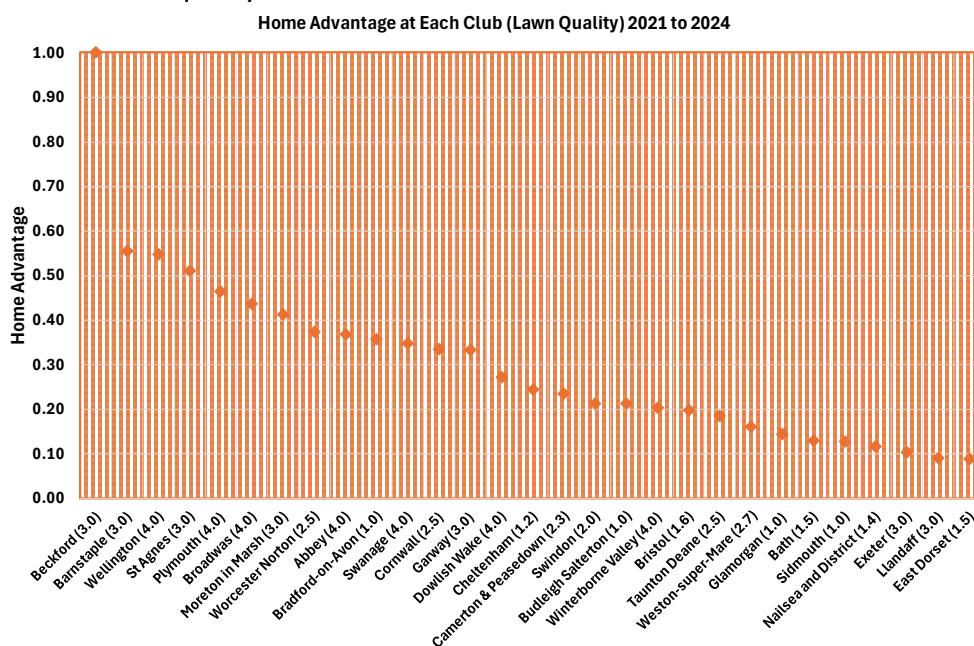
**Win Bias**, which is only calculated for handicap matches, is the percentage of handicap matches won minus the percentage of handicap matches lost. It is intended to act as a basis for discussion with a club about its handicapping policy.

This analysis could be refined in several ways but the most obvious are:

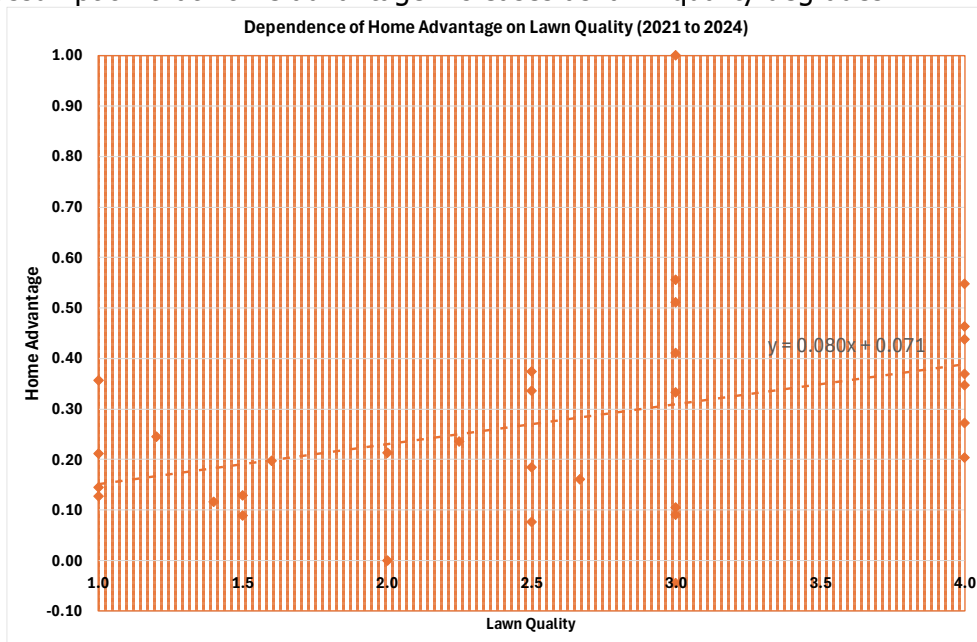
- Analysis at the level of 'games' rather than 'matches'. At present, a 20-0 win would contribute the same as a 10.5-9.5 win.
- Looking at a sequence of individual years. The sample size would be small but significant and consistent bias would show up better.

### Home Advantage

- This plot shows the home advantage for each club for their matches from 2021 to 2024. Their estimated lawn quality is shown after each club's name.



- In this chart, the clubs have been sorted by lawn quality to see whether there is any basis for the assumption that home advantage increases as lawn quality degrades.



- Although there is considerable scatter, the overall trend is for an increase in home advantage of about 8% for each one-point increase. This means that the clubs with the worst lawns (quality 4) will have approximately 24% more home advantage than those with the best lawns (quality 1)

## Appendix 7 Federations Forum

Tony wrote to Ian:

Many congratulations on your appointment to the post of Director of Development - an important and challenging role.

I gather that you have spoken recently to Paul Francis and , I understand, that he discussed the role of the Federations' Forum and some of our concerns. This is by way of a follow up and to put our concerns in writing.

The Forum meets monthly, usually on the first Monday of the month unless it is a Bank Holiday. We don't meet in December nor in June. Personally, I find this a bit too much as, frequently, there is not so much to discuss regarding 'meaty' issues. I proposed that we should move to bimonthly but this was rejected although the two 'free' months were introduced.

While, originally, the aim and the agendas dealt with strategic issues of common concern, over recent years the meetings have tended to focus on the running of Leagues and the difficulty of recruiting Federation committee members, which is a serious problem but not, necessarily, something with which other Federations can help. We understand that the original intention was for Federations to form an integral part of communications between the CqE/CA governing bodies and member clubs, especially with regard to more strategic matters.

While there have been some attempts to discuss wider issues e.g. wearing of whites, Safeguarding in all its aspects, the implications of the change from the CA to CqE, any efforts to raise this with the relevant CqE committees or Exec. seem to bear no fruit.

Prior to the last meeting, as members had nothing substantial to raise or report it was proposed by myself that it be cancelled. However, Alison Maugham pressed strongly for the meeting to take place - I imagine because of her role re Communications and as she had been invited to attend a previous meeting to talk about communications in general. Perhaps she is not necessarily the appropriate person to get involved in helping make this body function more effectively?

Under the Croquet Association, there was a more clearly defined explanation of the role of Federations but we are not aware of any such statement under Croquet England. It would be helpful if you could set out for us how you see a way ahead to ensure that the Forum fulfils its function as an avenue for two-way communication between the clubs and the overall governance.

Ian replied

Thank you for your email and good wishes. It is a challenging and important role.

I understand that the role of the forum was intended as a two way communication channel between the federations and Croquet England.

I am intending to review the effectiveness and impact in delivering this objective over the next few months.

So, I will get back to you and other members of the forum as part of that review process