

Cygnnet

South West Area Newsletter

Celebrating Croquet Across the Region

Issue 53: April 2025

Here we are at last – fine weather means an early start to the season for many we hope. Time to get back into the swing of things before those matches start in earnest – including of course, what will be for many a keenly awaited start to Short Croquet play with the three-day tournament at Nailsea.

This takes place from Friday 11th April through to close of play around 5.00 on Sunday 13th. Even if you're not playing, do drop by for a warm welcome (maybe a cup of tea and a piece of cake?) and watch some keenly fought play.

Before you read the rest of the news, please heed our call:

Help!



We are so fortunate in the South West to have such an active croquet scene – so many players in nearly 40 clubs supporting those clubs, playing in our leagues, coming to our Zooms, taking part in our courses and reading Cygnnet.

This is the result of a lot of hard work by everyone involved, and often requires very specialist skills.

And we're calling on you now to help us out in some very specific ways so please send this out to anyone you know who you think has the skills and time to get involved.

Treasurer

Peter has undertaken this role with thoroughness and patience since 2020 and has indicated his intention to stand down from this. We are looking for a replacement now so there is time to shadow Peter and take on the role in a well-manged way.

An idea of the kind of work this involves may be found in the Treasurer's Report to AGM



Additionally, we have discovered a liability for Corporation Tax so ideally you will be confident in working with HMRC.

Please contact Peter to discuss further Kirby.peter@yahoo.co.uk

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

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Do you know anything about Corporation Tax?

We have recently become aware of our need to file tax returns in respect of a potential liability to pay Corporation Tax.



So we do urgently need advice and guidance on this from someone who

- ✓ Understands Corporation Tax in the context of a sports federation which is an Unincorporated Organisation
- ✓ Understands the difference between Mutual and non-Mutual trading
- ✓ Is, or can recommend a specialist tax consultant

If you think you can help, please contact Peter who can brief you about the situation.

Kirby.peter@yahoo.co.uk

Reviewing our constitution and policies

Yes, this is a very niche area of interest – a huge turn off for many but so essential when things go wrong.

Following the AGM we received some feedback about how this is managed with particular reference to managing proposals and we'd like to explore this with interested people– particularly if you have experience in drafting such documents.



We also have a number of policies which we try and review regularly, and we have just embarked on taking a broader look at this in the context of all the CqE policies and how they might apply to us.

If this interests you, please get in touch with Linda lindawithani@hotmail.com

Secretary



We're still looking for someone who can take on the Secretary's role. There is an opportunity to establish a secretarial / admin team and thanks at this point to Margaret Murray (Kington Langley CC) who undertook to take notes at the winter Zoom meetings – it was a real help and so efficiently and willingly done.

And there's more:

- ✓ Minute taker at our bi-monthly Committee meetings – all held by Zoom so no need to travel – and you can do it in your PJs!
- ✓ Dealing with general enquiries
- ✓ Editing Cygnet

1-4-U

If you're interested in finding out more – get in touch or look out for Linda at the Short Croquet Tournament at Nailsea.

Thank You Tony



In recognition of serving his term as Chair, Brian Wilson (SW Rep to CqE) presents Tony Mayer with a drop of his favourite tippie.

Tony has been a member of the SWF Committee since November 2019 and continues to serve, being part of the Development Team.

Thanks for all your work Tony – keep it up!

Development Officers in the South West Federation

We are pleased to announce significant changes in how the SWF wishes to help all its clubs' development.

The federation covers a large geographic area and consists of 40 plus clubs, an impossible task for one development officer to ensure the federation has close contact with every club.

Fortunately, we have been able to recruit a very experienced group of SWF present and past committee members to enable the SWF better serve its clubs.

The development team consists of Andru Blewett, Paul Francis, Tony Mayer, Klim Seabright and Brian Wilson. Please see the following table to identify your club's development officer:

Andru Blewett	Paul Francis	Tony Mayer	Klim Seabright	Brian Wilson
Barnstaple	Bradford on Avon	Bath	Bristol	Abbey
Bude	Budleigh Salterton	Glamorgan	Broadwas	Camerton and Peasedown
Cornwall	East Dorset	Kington Langley	Cheltenham	Charlton
Exeter	Llandaff	Nailsea	Garway	Dowlish Wake
Fowey	Llandoverly	Swindon	Moreton in Marsh	Montacute
Plymouth	Lym Valley	Weston super Mare	Worcester Norton	Palace Wells
St. Agnes	Mumbles			Swanage
	Sidmouth			Tisbury
	Taunton Deane			Wareham
	Wellington			
	Winterborne Valley			

Your development officer (DO) will be there to assist and advise your club on grant/loan applications to Croquet England plus other sources of funding e.g. Crowdfunding

In addition, your DO is your first point of contact with regards to a wide range of croquet related issues, for example:

- Lawn management
- Handicapping
- Coaching
- Refereeing
- Playing equipment
- Recruitment and retention

As a team of DOs we won't hold all the answers to your questions but will point you in the right direction e.g. expert, company/organisation, another club, or all three.

Your DO will be in touch soon to introduce themselves and have an initial discussion to learn about your current and future needs.

WCF Advantage Scoring Trial Approved

You may have already read about this trial, if not, do read on and consider whether your club would like to participate in the trial.

Please note that the SWF fully supports this – anything that makes the scoring easier has got to be a good thing – we will not be including GC Handicap League Play in the trial.

We have all spent a lot of time getting to grips with the previous system and now is not the moment to try something different.

We hope the trial will help inform our decisions about next year's Leagues and would be interested to hear from any SWF clubs who decide to take part in the trial.

Roy Tillcock writes:

I have now received approval from WCF for this trial to take place.

Participation in the trial is optional. If a club wishes to take part please read the Terms of Reference – see Appendix 1.

I must receive a contact name and email address of a lead person (called the Trial Officer) to whom I will forward official trial documentation explaining the use of Target Scores in Advantage games.

The trial uses the 2024/25 Version of the Starting Scores table (handicaps -6 to 14) adapted for Target Scores use.

Responses to the three questions in the Terms of Reference should be sent to me by the Trial Officer at the end of the season. Participating players are encouraged to send individual feedback to the WCF Advantage email address at any time.

Roy Tillcock, Chair AGCOC advantagegc@worldcroquet.org

Brian Wainman's Bisque Calculator – an update

Following Brian's item in the previous issue of Cygnet, the possibility of developing an app rather than using a website was raised and put to Brian. He replies:

With regards to online/offline, I get this a lot in my job which is a data manager for clinical trials. The people running the trial always want to get participants to complete questionnaires when they are offline, and then upload when they are connected.

It really just adds lots of cost (clever programming and more management etc) and is never used. Remote internet connection is only ever going to get better, but the real problem is keeping the offline App up to date.

If the user downloads it and then never connects to update it, it can get out of date and the user will use an out-of-date version. After all, there are the paper documents, which will always be available for dead battery, offline etc.

We have a little list ... are you on it?

There is an amazing resource on the CqE website – the Members' Directory.

This is a tool for

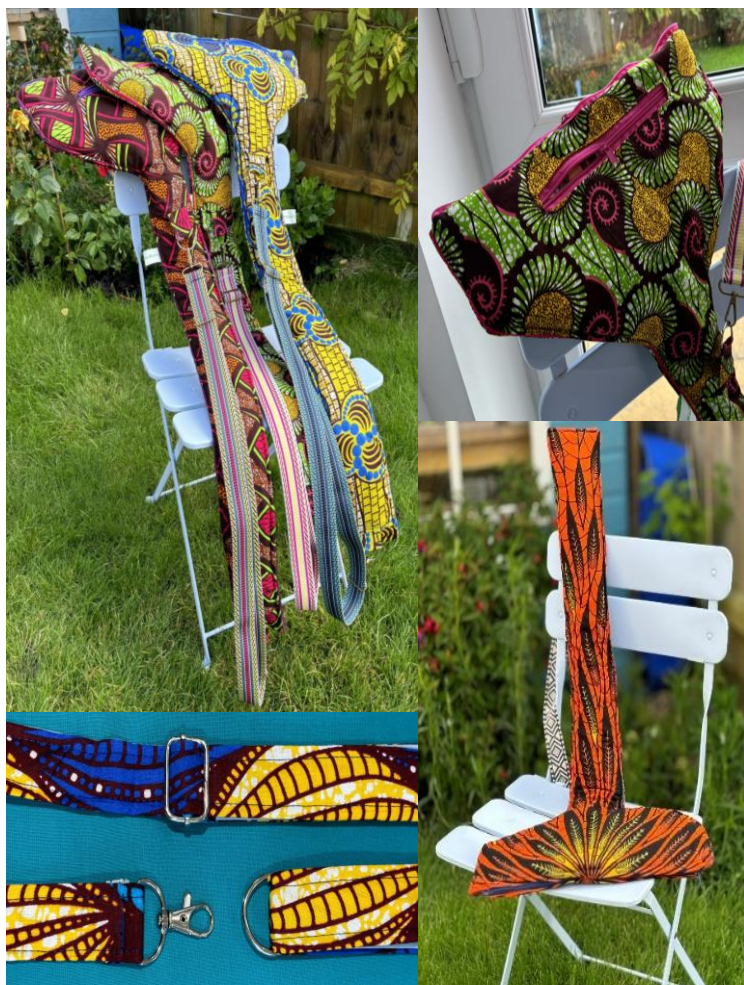
- individual members
 - to keep their personal details and handicaps up to date – and to share them as broadly or narrowly as they chose
 - to contact members across the country
- clubs
 - to record their membership details and payments
 - to list their officers and key people: handicappers, welfare officers etc
 - to find out useful information e.g. handicap range at a glance
- the SWF
 - to identify in one easy step all the handicappers, coaches, welfare officers and so on, so we can send information relevant to their role direct to their inbox



But not every club uses this to its full potential, or even at all, so this is a call out urging you to check it out and get using it!

You'll find the help button worth clicking:

<https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=members/directory/help&pup=y>



Custom Made Croquet Mallet Bags starting at £55.00

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thelimegreenwarthog@gmail.com

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

Take Ten*

Sir Bobby Charlton was once asked why he thought continental footballers were better than English Footballers.

"That's easy" he replied "Continental players practice the skills, English footballers just want to play Five Aside".



It is often the case that members arrive at their croquet club and head straight for corner 4 (GC) or set up a four ball break (AC).

Perhaps your club could set up "ten time" i.e. You could go onto the court 10 minutes before the official start time but only to practice a skill?

Let's make 2025 "Ten Time" Your handicap will thank you for it!

Klim Seabright, Coach

*Apologies to Dave Brubeck

CqE: Player Pathway

Are you following the progress of this CqE initiative? This is a brief summary of the webinar a few weeks ago and you can keep up to date by keeping an eye on the CqE website.



Ian BurrIDGE led a discussion on CqE's proposed Player Pathway which had been sent to all clubs and federations for comment. Around 30 people attended the webinar and the key points for me were:

- ✓ The consensus was that it is a good idea
- ✓ Changes need to be made to the design – colour etc
- ✓ Changes could be made to make it a more efficient web-based tool
- ✓ That Levels 1 and 2 could be merged as there is a lot of overlap
- ✓ Quite a bit of discussion about how difficult it can be to find out information
 - CqE website difficult to negotiate
 - You don't know what you don't know
 - How do you get croquet players to read anything!
- ✓ It's fine encouraging people to enter tournaments, but what if they don't get a place for some reason
 - Use of D grades doesn't make it easy sometimes
- ✓ Hopefully reference will be made to the work of clubs and federations with beginners and the earlier stages of player development

Clubs will be invited to trial the scheme later this year with a view to introducing it fully in 2026 including any identified modifications.

CqE: Action for AC

Another initiative from CqE – this time to revitalise AC. Led by Debbie Lines, a working group is considering ways of reversing the demise of this form of play. An interesting webinar was held recently which demonstrated just how personally and fervently some players tackle this.

It struck me that action can be taken on a number of fronts:

- ✓ Recruitment - acknowledging the different AC / GC mindsets and targeting recruitment appropriately - overcoming the public perception! It's a myth that AC is for everyone - it's not!
- ✓ Coaching - a really difficult one to have some sort of structure that meets the needs of beginners / improvers who develop at different rates
- ✓ Inclusion - most clubs are looking for good club members (not just players) who will help with the running of the club in some way, so a good mentoring programme and getting other members involved in this is crucial
- ✓ Development - particularly over the first 2-3 years so people can find their level and get addicted to the club! It would be lovely to have clear pointers to videos that demonstrate different stages of play and tactics - the Oxford site is really good for this but would anyone have the time to reference other really good sources?
- ✓ A series of class tournaments as with GC. I think Federations are good at offering the first 'out of club' match experience and a set of class AC tournaments could take that on a step further?

Debbie would love to hear your suggestions and you can contact her

Debbie.lines@croquetengland.org.uk



HOOPS OF FORTUNE



SUPPORT THE 2025 GC OPEN SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP PRIZE FUND!

FUNDS ARE BEING RAISED TO BUILD AND BOOST AN EXCITING PRIZE POT FOR THE

2025 GC OPEN SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP,

ATTRACTING THE WORLD'S TOP GC PLAYERS AND MAKING THIS

A TRULY ELITE AND THRILLING TOURNAMENT!

THE AIM IS TO ELEVATE THE COMPETITION AND SHOWCASE WORLD-CLASS CROQUET AT ITS BEST.

YOUR DONATION—BIG OR SMALL—WILL HELP CREATE AN EVENT THAT

PLAYERS AND SPECTATORS WON'T FORGET!

EVERY CONTRIBUTION BRINGS US CLOSER TO THIS GOAL.

JOIN IN BY USING THE LINK BELOW OR SCAN THE QR CODE ABOVE.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/2025-gc-open-singles-championship-prize-pot>

THANK YOU

How d'you do?

Pages 16 – 18 of the February 2025 Croquet Gazette are well worth your consideration if you're thinking of applying for funding or trying to improve aspects of how your club operates.

Beatrice McGlen, outgoing CqE CEO, reminds us of the key headings to think about when considering this:

- Club Structure and Management
- Duty of Care and Welfare
- Playing Facilities and Coaching Programme
- Knowing Your Club and Community



Then Robert Fulford, CqE Treasurer, revisits compliance checks for CASCs (Community Amateur Sports Clubs). This is the legal structure many clubs have adopted, so do take a moment to check you're still operating in accordance with these.



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Summary of SWF League Rule Changes 2024

No apologies for publishing this again



- **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.

Diary Dates



Short Croquet Tournaments

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

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

Advertising in Cygnet

We accept adverts relating to croquet in the South West.

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.

When appropriate, e.g. forthcoming event, charges include a 2/3-line entry in the Diary Dates column the subsequent issue.

Free advertising may be given when it is of direct benefit to SWF clubs and when there is no charge for the event or equipment.

Charges

Full Page: £12 Half Page: £6 Quarter Page: £3

Appendix 1

ADVANTAGE GC TRIAL OF TARGET SCORES TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

In an Advantage game each player is set a fixed (and usually different) target number of hoops needed to win. Using the current published Starting Scores Method, each player's starting score is adjusted (referenced by the Table of Starting Scores) so that they are both set the same winning score of 7 (or 4, or 10 depending on the variant).

For most games, the stronger player is required to start with a negative score. Many players have found the use of negative values challenging. They are also put off by the loss of the conventional 'sum of scores to hoop number' relationship. As a result, a significant number of players are known to have been discouraged from playing Advantage.

An alternative Target Scores Method, that eliminates both of these difficulties, has been developed under which the score starts at 0: 0, and all scores are expressed as positive numbers.

To reflect players' differences in their handicaps / DGrades, players/sides are given target scores (i.e. the score they need to achieve to win) by reference to a Table of Target Scores. It is important to understand that the Target Scores Method has no effect on a game's outcome or the tactical challenge posed to the players – it is simply an alternative scoring method avoiding negative values.

Trial Purpose

To evaluate the effectiveness of this alternative Target Scores Method, the WCF (AGCOC) has commissioned this trial.

Trial

During the trial an event organiser (tournament manager etc) will have the option to score all games in their event using the Target Scores Method.

Trial Methodology

The Chair AGCOC is to invite appropriate organisations to participate in the trial. Those who wish to do so are to receive full documentation describing the suggested way to employ Target Scores in their games.

A trial condition is that each organisation defines a specific person to be their Trial Officer. All participating players are to be invited by the Trial Officer to mail individual feedback to advantagegc@worldcroquet.org at any time during the trial.

The WCF would particularly appreciate feedback related to the trial's How to Play instructions. The trial is expected to start on 1 Apr 25. After six months of trial experience, participating Trial Officers are to be asked to provide feedback to AGCOC by answering three questions.

1. Did experienced Advantage players generally find Target Scores Method easier, similar to, or more difficult to use than Starting Scores Method?

2. Was it generally easier, similar to, or more difficult to teach new players to score using Target Scores Method when compared with Starting Scores Method?

3. Which would you prefer to use for scoring Advantage games: Target Scores Method or Starting Scores Method?

The feedback received from players and Trial Officers is to be collated, analysed and reported to AGCOC.

My thanks in advance to all trial participants. If you need any further clarification please get back to me.

Roy Tillcock
Chair AGCOC
advantagegc@worldcroquet.org