

Cygnets
South West Area Newsletter
Celebrating Croquet Across the Region
Issue 58: January 2026

Welcome to the first issue of Cygnets for 2026.

How are the New Year Resolutions going? The SWF Committee, our supporting teams and action groups are back at work, and I imagine the same is happening in all clubs as we prepare our lawns, get ready for league play and work out club competitions. And what about a spring-clean for the clubhouse?

Before we know where we are we'll be dusting off those whites and getting back into the swing (ho ho) of it all. Til then, here's an update on what's been going on. Don't forget to send us your news – others would love to hear and see what you've been up to.

Rules Working Parties

These have been set up in line with the decisions made at the AGM – see draft minutes

<https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/009-draft-minutes-AGM-2025.pdf>

They will be working on the detail of the re-wording and member clubs will be invited to comment. We will hold a Zoom in arch to run through the key changes with everyone.

We would really like more help with the AC rules changes, so please get in touch with Linda if you can help with that. lindawithani@hotmail.com

The working parties are:

- Constitution
- AC
- GC
- Refreshments
- Handicapping

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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

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

Revised Financial Policies

We have just reviewed these and the updated versions may be found on our website
<https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/swf-bursaries/>

- Development Grant
- Expenses
- Qualifications
- Qualifications Travel Grant



Club Coaches Training



The briefing session has been held but it may not be too late to enrol for this qualification course comprising four zoom sessions and a practical day at Bradford on Avon – other venues may be available if there is the demand.

The intro has been recorded so if you are interested, speak nicely to Paul who will do his best to accommodate you.

paulwfrancis@icloud.com

GC Referees' Training and Refresher sessions

Two sessions and places still available so contact Brian bwilson71e@icloud.com by 1st Feb (training) **ONE PLACE LEFT** and 18th Feb (refresher) **ROOM FOR MORE** if you'd like to take part – see Appendix 1 ffI



AC Refs training

Please get in touch if you would like to become an AC Ref and we'll see if there is sufficient demand to run this.

Clubs' Zoom Meetings

It was lovely to see these return – we kicked off with a discussion about lawn care. This is hugely complex with each club facing its own conditions. Nevertheless, there is a lot to be shared and explored and we are hoping to create an information sheet to help point clubs in the right direction. In the meantime, notes of the meeting may be found in Appendix 2.



We have two more Zooms scheduled for the spring: 10th February and 10th March. They start at 7.00pm and finish promptly at 8.00 and are friendly and lively forums for discussion and sharing ideas and experiences.

The invitations are sent to your club's contact person a week or so before the event, so look out for these.

Development support

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.

Over the past few years we have been fortunate to have been able to recruit a very experienced team to offer a range of advice and support to clubs e.g.

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



While we do have two people to continue, it would be helpful to have one or two more, and to have someone to co-ordinate the team.

Is this something you could do? It would be great to have you on the team – ideally this would be a committee role but it's not essential as long as you are prepared to work closely with the committee.

Contact Linda ffi and any requests for development support should be sent to her in the first instance lindawithani@hotmail.com

Safeguarding

A message from Chris Ham, our Safeguarding Officer



At the AGM, I requested member clubs of the SWF to let me know if they had any members or groups aged under 21, how many such members or attendees they had, their specific ages, and any standard pro forma that they issued to such participants or to their parents and carers. It would additionally be interesting to know how long clubs have been running such groups and how many of the participants had shown interest in longer term commitment to croquet.

I had a limited response, and feel that there must be more clubs involved in this area than have so far replied. It would surely be of interest not just to clubs with established youth sections, but to all clubs, as planning for the future is crucial to

development. My aim is for there to be a database of clubs already involved, as mutual exchange of information and procedures, potential standardised paperwork or online forms, the possibility of organising matches and tournaments on a local basis, to list just a few of the potential benefits, would be generally beneficial.

As I have said before, croquet is a wonderfully sociable activity as well as an absorbing sport, and while a healthy competitive spirit is abundantly obvious, so too are cooperation, hospitality and gracious manners. However, with regard to under 21 participation, there are rules and regulations to be complied with, very clearly laid out in the Croquet England guidelines, and they are something of a minefield. A database of SWF clubs with experience in this field would be hugely helpful to

other clubs contemplating links with local primary or secondary schools or youth organisations. Many clubs have connections with U3A, WI and other adult groups, and are adept at exploiting these potential avenues of recruitment, but youth recruitment requires careful observance of procedures, and I would like to be in a position which enabled me to direct clubs to sources of relevant information and experience.

So could I please ask club committee members to draw the attention of their safeguarding officer to my request and contact me in the first instance by e-mail [chrisham65@hotmail.co.uk] if you are involved in youth participation. As safeguarding officer, I really do need to have a good understanding of the extent of young members' involvement across our region and the degree to which clubs would be able and willing to share their knowledge and experience.

May I wish you all a Happy New Year, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Next Generation workshop Bath CC 29.3.26

Following the success of its two workshops in 2025, Croquet England in partnership with the SWF is running another workshop for clubs looking to establish a junior section.

If you are a player who would like to work with young people this training will equip you with skills, knowledge, behaviour management techniques and activities for working with 6 to 10-year-olds and teenagers



Bath Croquet Club has kindly agreed to host the one day course on Sunday March 29th 2026.

This workshop is free of charge but we will be unable to reimburse any travel expenses.

For further information please contact Paul Francis, his email is paulwfrancis@icloud.com

SWF on the national scene

Congratulations and good luck to the following teams playing in these national events:

The AC Inter-Club for Federation Teams (Secretary's Shield) – Garway
The GC Federations Shield (Advantage GC) – Swanage
The Short Croquet Inter-Club Competition - Bradford on Avon A

We wish you success but most important – enjoy!



Congratulations too, to Bude who have been chosen as winners of CQE Millennium Award for 2025. Added to Tisbury's award it reflects pretty well on the SWF. See Bude's press report p11

Obituary Lance Binning

Sue Norfolk, Weston Super Mare, pays this tribute:



It is with great sadness we report the passing of Lance Binning. For a great number of years Lance played for the Golf Handicap Croquet team and was a member of this team that won the Southwest Regional league final in 2019.

Latterly he captained this team plus the Level Play team. Lance's highest individual honour was to represent Somerset versus other counties in the annual national competition, our only club member ever to do so.

In recent years he has been a member of the club's committee. Lance you will be sadly missed but joyfully remembered as a colleague and a friend R.I.P.

Obituary Mark Suter

You will no doubt have learnt that Mark passed away shortly before Christmas. We asked local clubs of which he had been a member, to share their memories of him.

Kathy Wallace, Nailsea CC recalls:



Mark came back to North Somerset in the summer of 2016 to look after his terminally ill mother. It was a sad time for him and he came to Nailsea Croquet Club to find companionship and, of course, croquet, which he hadn't played for quite a while.

He was astounded at the improvements that had taken place in the Club facilities since his first visits as a child and quickly became a member. Mark threw himself into Club life and was always ready with croquet advice. He was keen to help to promote the club and spent many hours working on this using social media and the website.

By 2018, Mark had moved to Cheltenham to work in the CA (as it was then) office but he came back to play in the Nailsea Advanced Tournament. Along with other elite Nailsea players, Mark was defeated by a rapidly emerging James Galpin, aged 17, who went on to win the tournament. Mark could not have been more gracious and was genuinely delighted that a new young talent had been found. We missed him when he moved to Cheltenham."

Ed Duckworth Bristol CC:

Mark was great company whether on the lawn as a doubles partner or off the lawn in the clubhouse. I'll never forget our alternate stroke triple we completed at the Counties this year, when three times he ran impossible hoops after my hopeless approach shots. RIP Sooty.

Alison Maughan is organising a gathering at Cheltenham CC on Saturday 21st February:

This is a little invitation to join me on Saturday 21st February to remember our dear croquet family member Mark Suter. There will be some food and drinks prepared for arrivals at 1pm, then time for some storytelling and sharing of memories from 2pm. Weather dependent I hope that this will be followed by some friendly croquet.

Contact her if you're planning on going alison@alisonswebsites.co.uk;

It is always very sad to receive and publish these notices, but it is important to do so and after the previous issue of Cygnet, Kathy Wallace (Nailsea) had written in:

The obituaries were all splendid – and thorough. They evoked happy times when many of us were so much younger. My favourite bit was the image of Roger Jenkins on the ladder. Marcus is a wonderful wordsmith and writes excellent tributes. I wonder if he will write ours one day?

She ends with these words which are a great reminder: *Let people know they are valued while they're alive!*

Want to improve your playing skills?



Over the past few years the SWF has offered coaching that builds on the skills needed by clubs – coaching, refereeing, handicapping and so on, leaving the field clear for the Budleigh Academy to run coaching that develops players' skills.

Sadly, the Academy is not operating at the moment and the SWF Committee is looking at the possibility of supporting this side of things. Our resources are stretched but Paul Francis (who is on the CqE Coaching Committee) has offered to draw up an outline of what this might look like.

The Committee will be considering this at our next meeting on 22nd January – if you have any thoughts on this, please get in touch.

Individuals wishing to improve their own skills or clubs wishing to organise such training for their members, should still consult the CqE Fixtures List – and do check out the Coaching pages on the CqE website: <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/coaching>

A list of regional coaches may be found by following a fairly tortuous route in the CqE Directory and we're hoping that soon this will be more easily accessed via a link on the SWF page in the Directory. Keep your eye on this but we'll let you know when it's there.

And do see the advert on p10 from Cheltenham CC who will be running an AC Bronze level coaching course in April

Next Generation at Cheltenham

Many thanks to Naomi Whitehead for this thorough and inspiring account of her work with the next generation. The photos in this article show some of the activities that took place at Cheltenham's mini tournament in August 2025.

How do clubs run a youth initiative? This is how I have tried to do it. I have not included several events I organised for under 18s.

In 2019 after holding an evening taster event for Under 18s I formed the Under 18 group. At the beginning we met on Sunday mornings and as at that time I was not a coach I asked two club coaches if they would assist me. Two of their first Under 18s were Sam Cuthbert and Harvey Smith. I had three regular members and several who came when they could.



*One of the activities: Can you run the hoop from : 1 metre
- 2 metres - 3 metres?
A point awarded for each hoop run*



I suggested in late 2019 that the club introduced a family membership and a junior membership. That was because we had families attending the taster events and we could only offer them the adult membership at the time. I researched other clubs which already had those types of membership and then proposed these two new ones at the CCC AGM the following year, which was accepted

Welcoming young families to play croquet would be a huge bonus to the club and we hoped that the idea of a family membership would be enthusiastically taken up. However apart from one or two families who joined, at that time the new membership didn't attract many families. The membership included one adult and up to three children aged 10-17. But what happens when both parents want to join?

Last year we added an Off-Peak membership which can be another way of joining as working parents and that has encouraged a family to join with two under 18s as well.

In 2022 a local primary school visited and we welcomed 100 pupils on two mornings. From that visit we found the 'seed had been planted'. Several came along at different times to experience the

game and be part of the Under 18 group. The number varied though as they found other activities on a Sunday afternoon.

The group which now meets on Sunday afternoons has stabilised this year. This is due to the interest of a local state senior school. One of the Under 18 members has been part of the group since 2022 (she came with her primary school) and is a student at the school. Plus her mother who is a teacher also assists me when she is able to.

Last year I suggested to this mum that maybe a group of the Under 18s might enjoy playing in a 'juniors' tournament at Nottingham and I would organise coaching for the group before the tournament. The group who came in their lunch hour really enjoyed the coaching sessions which had to be short to fit in with the school timetable. The teacher drove the group of six up to Nottingham for the day and the students had the opportunity to play against other young people which they really enjoyed. This summer the Under 18 group were keen to hold their own mini tournament which I organised in August with help from three coaches including one who was also a referee. We had eight participants.



A coach watches the singles game and advises.

This summer there has been a positive rise in numbers partly due to me inviting three groups of scouts to come and have a go. Several then returned during the summer and we'll see what happens during the winter!!! Plus they brought their parents. I always organise a coach or club member to assist me with parents so that the adults enjoy the game whilst their children are coached.

SO where to start?

1. Get a group of like-minded members and form a core of potential helpers/organisers together to share ideas about how they could include youth into their club
2. Confirm how much time they could commit to this - weekly, at weekends, only in Spring and summer etc?
3. SAFEGUARDING- It is essential that one or two of the group are interested in becoming a licensed coach or apply for an enhanced DBS certificate. The licensed coach qualification is mandatory now.
4. What equipment would they need to acquire? Maybe for the youngest shorter mallets, lighter balls, rubber discs etc. With the students this year they played well with the adult mallets
5. Which groups will they visit or invite to the club? Who is the person to contact? Headteacher, Scout leader, School secretary etc. Who will contact them?

Impact for the young people



Several young people who came this year did not enjoy sport at school but really enjoyed croquet. It gave them another choice, especially when they realised that they can succeed at it. There are also young people who are looking for another way to spend their time at weekends

There are young people with special needs who really enjoy finding that they can be competitive playing croquet with their friends without disrupting the class.

There are some young people who find that they can work on their Duke of Edinburgh award in croquet helping others or learning how to play the sport properly as part of the award.

It's a family sport so they can enjoy sharing their fun with their parents and siblings

Will it be a crush? The referee is there to advise

Impact on the club

Having young people around the club is positive and enjoyable. It makes a statement that the club accepts that young people are the future and that croquet has a future.

Club members and young people can play croquet together and share in the challenges and enjoyment

We had eight who entered it and they played in two teams. It was a very close competition. All were awarded medals at the end. Parents were invited to attend the presentation at teatime.

Sam Cuthbert presented medals and also offered to play a doubles game with three of the Under 18s which took place after the presentation. We had four coaches in attendance during the day and one referee who were very much appreciated.



*Doubles play with the support of a coach who is also a referee.
Points for the winners and for the runners up.*

Naomi explains the August tournament:

This event was staged in response to requests following the Nottingham event in June. I planned a day's tournament with skills-based activities in the morning and singles and doubles in the afternoon. Every activity including the games had points awarded for the winners, the runner ups and anyone who achieved the target of the activity.

A.C COACHING COURSE
BRONZE and BEYOND
APRIL 18 and 19 Cheltenham Croquet Club
9.45- 3.45

Are you an AC Player in the handicap range 12 to 16 (flexibly applied) who wants to improve your stroke play and tactics?

This course will be held at Cheltenham CC led by Graded Coaches Adam Moliver and Darryl Whitehead .

Max 12 participants

The CE Bronze Award is given for making a 10-hoop break with bisques – and winning the game (in a tournament or inter-club fixture).

Course content will aim to develop the fundamentals of AC to help you move to Bronze and beyond. We will not cover Advanced play

By the end of the course participants will be better equipped to play a competitive AC game, develop and sustain a break and deal with giving and getting bisques.

- This course will start at 9.45 hrs and finish about 16.00 hrs each day
- Dress code: Flat-soled shoes are required, whites are not required.
- Lunch not provided,(may be available at next door tennis club)
- Tea and cake included

If there is heavy rain, day one will go ahead as a classroom session and an alternative date or dates arranged for on the lawn sessions.

Please enter by email to admoliver@btinternet.com then when place confirmed please pay online to:

Cheltenham Croquet Club: 21367544 40-17-53
with reference “BnBSURNAME”

ENTRY FEE

- £35 to non members of CCC;
- £15 to CCC Full/FarCountry1 /Student/u-18 members

Bude croquet club: 2025 Millenium Award report

Bude Croquet Club enjoyed its most successful year in 2025, a mere eight years since its formation and in only its second year of competing in the regional leagues of the Southwest Federation of Croquet Clubs.

The Handicap League team repeated its 2024 achievement of winning the southwest section unbeaten, but narrowly lost in the quarter final against eventual regional winners Swanage.

The Higher Handicap league team, having finished as runners up in 2024, topped the league this year, winning all their matches. In the quarterfinal, Swanage were overcome at Sidmouth, and Taunton were beaten in the semifinal on their own ground. The final against Broadwas from Worcestershire also took place at Taunton, and saw Bude win their first ever major trophy.

On the national circuit, Bobbo Peers and Martin French won tournaments at Broadwas and Budleigh. Martin French beat current England player Aston Wade while representing Devon, and with Andy Middleton and Bobbo Peers represented Bude in the team challenge at Sidmouth. Within the club Bobbo Peers won the Benefactor's Tournament and Most Improved Player, and Martin French the club man award for his outstanding contribution. Summer and winter series trophies were won by Tim Benson and Steve Thie, while Pete Cash crowned an excellent debut year by winning The Haig Cup (singles), with the Nelson Cup (doubles) going to Frances Hornblow and Val Langdown.

The supreme accolade came in November when Croquet England announced Bude as national winners of the biennial Millennium Award, their most prestigious trophy for achievement on and off the field of play.

This year, after major refurbishment of the lawns, Bude will be competing in four leagues as well as hosting two national tournaments, another indication of our ambitious, forward-looking plans to cement the club's growing reputation on the croquet circuit.

Left: BCC Chairman, Chris Ham, presenting the Haig Cup singles trophy to winner, Pete Cash.



Right: With the usual wind blasting the North Cornwall coast, Bude Chairman Chris Ham displays the CQE Millennium Award. Colette Ham, GC High Handicap team captain, displays the SWF trophy for winning that competition.





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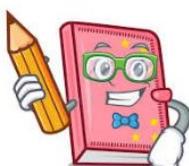
Contact: Marie Stuchfield
Mob: 07929940893
E mail: mlstuchfield@gmail.com

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 do not check for errors or omissions
- ✓ We do not send out corrected versions
- ✓ Any queries relating to adverts will be forwarded direct to the advertiser
- ✓ 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

Diary Dates



Zoom Tuesday 10th February

Zoom Tuesday 10th March

Short Croquet Tournaments

- 10th – 12th April at Nailsea
- 2nd – 4th October at Budleigh Salterton

Useful Links

General

SWF Website	www.swfcroquet.org.uk/
Croquet England	www.croquetengland.org.uk/
Croquet England Youtube	www.youtube.com/@CroquetEnglandstreams
Croquet England on Facebook	www.facebook.com/search/top?q=croquet%20england
Croquet Hub on Facebook	www.facebook.com/groups/1658937214910559
Try Croquet – an eclectic range of croquet topics	www.trycroquet.co.uk/
Hit Inn – Alison Maughan chats with some successful players	www.youtube.com/watch?v=bf5gM-cswiQ

Technical

Lawn Care CqE	www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/clubs/info#lawns
Lawn Care Duncan Hector	www.duncanhectorlurfcare.co.uk/
Tournament Management: Chris Roberts	www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V2adRweWZg&t=10s
Canva – a free poster / flyer / logo design tool	www.canva.com/en_gb/

Play

Bisques, Extra Strokes and Advantage Calculator – Brian Wainman's life-saving tool	chc.eu.pythonanywhere.com/
Oxford Croquet - coaching	www.oxfordcroquet.com/
Chris Clarke - coaching	clarkecroquet.com/
Croquet England slo-mo videos	www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/golf/refereeing/slomo
Reg Bamford – the psychology of the game	www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qw_jiBpnCug

Appendix 1 Calling all aspiring and current GC Referees

Event 1: GC - Becoming a GC Referee a blended Learning 1-Day Course

February 26th 2026 at Camerton and Peasedown Croquet Club

- Time – 9.30 to 4.30pm (or later if required)
- Closing Date for applications: 1st February ONLY ONE PLACE LEFT

Blended Learning 1-day course

- Delivered mainly on the courts but with some time in the classroom
- You'll gain a confident knowledge of the GC Rules by studying the latest WCF Refereeing Regulations and 6th Edition GC Rules booklet, plus additional guidance available on the CqE website
- The course includes a comprehensive Online GC Rules Study Pack, which candidates will be expected to have completed.

The cost

- £25/person
- Travel expenses are available for attendees who are members of SWF member clubs

Event 2 GC Referee Refresher Afternoon Seminar

February 25th 2026 at Camerton and Peasedown Croquet Club

- Time: 1.00 to 4.00pm (or later if required)
- Closing Date for applications: 18th February SPACES AVAILABLE

Half Day Refresher Seminar

- Enables qualified GC players to explore their knowledge of the GC rules through discussion and practical sessions, guided by Ian Shore, an Examining and Championship Referee as well as a member of the GC Rules Committee.
- Analysis of stroke videos will be included, as will time on the lawns (weather permitting).
- Participants will be encouraged to outline 'interesting' or 'difficult' refereeing calls, including how they proceeded with the question
- The seminar will include how and when to explain to players the reason for the decision and what shots/strokes could have been used to minimise it happening in the future
- By the end of the seminar participants will be more confident in their understanding of the GC Rules and referees will be more capable of giving consistent on-court rulings.

Directions to Camerton and Peasedown Croquet Club

- The club is only 15 minutes to the south of Bath, just off the A367
- Set your SatNav to BA2 8LD, or what3words location: shun.splat.skim
- There are a number of hotels and B/B's in the area

The cost

- £10/person
-

Who to contact

- Brian Wilson - bwilson71e@icloud.com

Both courses will be led by Ian Shore (Chiltern Academy, CqE Examining Referee) who may be assisted by other qualified GC Referees

Appendix 2 Lawn Care

Notes from SWF Zoom meeting Tuesday 13th January 2026,

Linda reminded everyone about the background and many aspects to this:

- The knowledge needed – and achieving a consensus on what should be done
- The cost – it can be expensive and again, achieving a consensus on what can / should be spent is not always easy
- The control that a club may have over what they can do to the lawns
- The time it can take to treat lawns and the impact this may have on play – sometimes over an extended period of time

Paul Francis worked hard for several years to develop easy access to professional advice. At CQE level, the Lawns Advisory Group isn't operating but Paul's relationship with Dennis Mowers is going strong. Many of you will have attended one of their roadshows and know just how valuable these are – we can look forward to another one this year, and possibly a national webinar with Dennis Mowers.

David Green talked about irrigation, damage done to the lawns from no rain and it is likely to get worse. Some of the larger clubs already have irrigation but many clubs do not. Explore how to manage this in the coming season if there is lack of rain. Some watering systems are labour intensive systems but cheaper.

How do we cope with Climate Change for the future, with extreme weather conditions resulting in long periods of little or no rainfall in the summer months of our croquet season, our lawns go brown due to stress from drought, extreme heat causing dormancy as the grass conserves water to protect the roots. This is a natural survival process for grass and the only real solution is rain/ irrigation and the lawns recover well within 2 weeks as happened last season in September

We all enjoy the playability of croquet in the summer on green grass without doubt is our favoured position, however we can also play on brown grass, accepting this changes the conventional game of croquet as the ball cannot hold the lawn and this can make the game a lottery at times and less enjoyable

There are different ways of approaching irrigation which is a huge and complex topic in itself, but it might also be helpful to think in terms of mitigating against drought conditions e.g.

- Improving water retention e.g. type of seed, use of wetting agents
- Limiting damage to lawns e.g. restricting play

Round up from Breakout Rooms

The basics

- The best advice is to aerate and tine the lawns.
- When Dennis Mowers held an event at Bristol they also did soil tests which can be helpful.
- For less established clubs looking for guidance for Lawn maintenance many variables will determine what maintenance can be done, type of club social/competitive, numbers in club, finance/cost, water availability, pressure/ flow rate, lawns ownership

- One club used council owned and maintained lawns which were shared alongside bowling lawns, good communication was essential with council for lawn maintenance and a common theme was how do we get best practice from bowling clubs?
- The importance of planning – passing on knowledge
- Stephen described the issues at Taunton, where there is no irrigation. The water pressure is too low for direct usage; the club does not own the land, so investment in a borehole is not feasible; the club's lease is uncertain, so even investment in a tank system is not currently viable.

Irrigation

- Need for watering systems.
- A rebate can be applied for from Water Companies as water used for watering the lawns does not form part of the sewage system. This can be back dated.
- Boreholes should be considered but can cost around £12,000.
- Small clubs are unlikely to ever afford automatic irrigation
- Lawn sprinkler systems have limited impact, are labour intensive and depend on an affordable water supply.
- Feedback on portable irrigation was that it was heavy on manpower/ time and required constant maintenance to achieve a level of reliability
- Wayne is currently the Project Manager of an automated sprinkler system to be installed at Bristol. It will use pop-up sprinkler heads and will cost in excess of £30,000. He has consulted Nailsea and Watford, and particularly recommends Simon Hathrell of Watford as an informed source.
- A tank system could be considered (probably costing over £8,000) but he warned about the possibility of legionella if the tanks are not fully emptied at each use.
- Wayne plans to produce a synopsis of the project in a few months and it was suggested that this could be a good Gazette article.
- Adam described the issues with the tanking system at Cheltenham in which the lawns are watered on a 4-lawn rotation, with the tanks being re-filled between. The re-filling is a very slow process.
- Cheltenham did dig a borehole some years ago but it failed to find water after repeated attempts to go deeper. The survey had indicated an 80% likelihood of success. (Such a borehole now would probably be over £12,000.)
- Martin described the system at Budleigh, which is a borehole, operating at about 7 bar (quite high). It has been operating successfully for many years, using between 120 m³ per lawn in a wet year and 300 m³ in 2025.
- The Environment Agency will be requiring all extractors from the aquifer to meet new requirements and will be reviewing certain aspects in the next year. These include sustainability, efficiency and justified use of the resource.
- Stephen described the issues at Taunton, where there is no irrigation. The water pressure is too low for direct usage; the club does not own the land, so investment in a borehole is not feasible; the club's lease is uncertain, so even investment in a tank system is not currently viable.
- Typical payback period might be in region of 10 years
- Environment Agency advising that prior renewals / permissions for water extraction will be conditional on passing 3 tests
 - Test 1: Environmental sustainability is not in question.
 - Test 2: There is continued justification of need.
 - Test 3: Water is used efficiently.
- At Cheltenham the lawns are watered on a 4-lawn rotation, with the tanks being re-filled between. The re-filling is a very slow process.

- Many problems highlighted, primarily cost of maintenance and improvement. Lawns need to be closed sometimes for lengthy period. Bore holes and water tanks worth considering but could be very expensive and subject to local regulations. Is it worth clubs getting together where there is a good local contractor (eg Camerton) to ensure such firms get sufficient work to justify a specialism? If on a water meter note that a reduced cost exists for irrigation. Worth working with local bowls, cricket and golf clubs with a view to sharing and maximising resources and knowledge.

Technical snippets

- Budleigh's system, installed at least 25 years ago, is pressurised to circa 7 bar.
- Cheltenham had drilled a borehole after being advised of an 80% chance of encountering usable volumes of water, but in the event, none was found.
- Martin Isles advised that, for borehole abstraction, suitable sub-surface permeability is essential. Budleigh's borehole is drilled down 131 feet into the Triassic age Budleigh Salterton Pebble Beds, a good permeable aquifer. During a hot/dry year, a Club on equivalent hydrogeology requires, ideally, 300 cubic metres of water per lawn per year.
- Cheltenham did dig a borehole some years ago but it failed to find water after repeated attempts to go deeper. The survey had indicated an 80% likelihood of success. (Such a borehole now would probably be over £12,000.)
- Martin described the system at Budleigh, which is a borehole, operating at about 7 bar (quite high). It has been operating successfully for many years, using between 120 m³ **per lawn** in a wet year and 300 m³ in 2025.
- The Environment Agency will be requiring all extractors from the aquifer to meet new requirements and will be reviewing certain aspects in the next year. These include sustainability, efficiency, and justified use of the resources

Information

- CQE should have some sort of information sheet for clubs to refer to but each club has different problems so a central guidance may not work.
- Help could be sought from Golf Clubs, Bowls Clubs and Cricket Clubs.
- Access to an information base at CQE would be good although it was recognised that all club sites would need an inspection of conditions,
- How to find good consultants
- There is not a one size fits all and that the guidance for Best Practice should be set against clubs' available funds to get best value maintenance for their expenditure, this could be presented in a range of up to 1k, 3 to 5k, 5 to 10k and in excess of 10k
- Access to grants
- Facebook e.g. Bowls Greenkeeping
- Share and co-operate across the region
- Any SWF guidance would need to consider hugely differing ground conditions across the region.

Group 1 feedback – reproduced in full – suggests a way forward for format and content of info sheet

Irrigation and Lawn Maintenance

Much of the information below is not widely known. It would therefore be helpful to create a Key Facts web page for easy reference, incorporating this material together with Bristol's watering system requirements document.

General Lawn Maintenance Guidance

An excellent reference is:

- Croquet Lawns: Their Construction, Maintenance and Development, by the retired Director of Consultancy Services at the Sports Turf Research Institute, which is available on the Croquet England website: <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/clubs/info#lawns>
- In addition, Duncan Hector is widely regarded as very helpful and knowledgeable <https://www.duncanhectorlawnscare.co.uk/>

Irrigation: What Clubs Have Learned

Volunteer-operated irrigation

All clubs that have relied on volunteers to move sprinklers manually have found this increasingly difficult to sustain.

Portable sprinkler systems are generally time-consuming and unpopular with volunteers. Bath trialled a “water tractor” (a self-propelled sprinkler unit). Although effective in principle, it required frequent attention and multiple passes, making it too labour-intensive for volunteers.

Built-in (pop-up) irrigation

Fixed, automatic (pop-up) sprinkler systems work well and are generally the most sustainable solution.

Water Supply and Costs

Most irrigation water supplies can be separately metered, avoiding sewage disposal charges (typically ~60% of the normal water bill).

In some cases, this discount can be claimed retrospectively, potentially covering several years.

Alternative water sources

Water can be extracted from rivers, streams, or boreholes without charge if usage is under 20 m³/day.

Bath investigated a borehole but could not proceed, as contractors were unwilling to risk striking a warm spring and causing problems for the Roman baths.

Boreholes typically cost £10–15k, offering a relatively quick payback where feasible.

Budleigh is in discussions with the Environment Agency, which has concerns about river water quality and may impose future restrictions on water abstraction.

Funding Opportunities

Many companies (e.g. waste disposal firms) have legal obligations to fund local community projects.

Most clubs are likely to be near one such organisation.

It would be worth following this up and compiling a list of potential funding sources.

Practical Constraints

Some clubs have no water supply at all.

Others have no security of tenure, making investment in irrigation unrealistic.

Impact of No Irrigation

Lawns without irrigation have suffered badly this year.

At Bath, a practice area adjacent to an irrigated lawn now has virtually no grass left, clearly demonstrating the difference irrigation makes.

Indicative Costs

Bristol has estimated an annual water budget of £1,000, though clubs with experience believe this may be optimistic.

Bath has received a quote of approximately £40,000 to install automatic irrigation for four lawns.

Summary of Club Approaches

- East Dorset: 1.6 FTE grounds staff; automatic irrigation
- Swanage: Cricket club's groundsman working for the croquet club part-time; no water on site
- Lym Valley: Volunteer maintenance; portable watering (unsatisfactory)
- Plymouth: Volunteer maintenance; portable watering (very time-consuming)
- Bath: Water tractor (too labour-intensive); seeking quotes for automatic irrigation; planning permission concerns for water tanks
- Winterbourne Valley: Manually moved portable sprinklers (unsatisfactory)
- Budleigh: Professional grounds staff; automatic irrigation; borehole
- Bristol: Volunteer-managed mowing with professional treatments; lawns suffered badly; planning automatic irrigation