Cygnet

South West Area Newsletter

Celebrating Croquet Across the Region

Issue 61: November 2026

It's been far too long since the previous issue of Cygnet – I don't quite know where the summer went – so there will now be two issues in (reasonably) quick succession. This issue covers general news and updates, the next issue will focus on league and tournaments results.

Many thanks to everyone who has submitted articles and photos and apologies for keeping you waiting for so long.

So on with the news …

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AGM proposals and nominations

All member clubs have now received the papers for our AGM on 22nd November. These are also available on our website: https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/

Each club can nominate 2 delegates but non-voting club members are welcome to attend – contact Chen if you would like to attend in that capacity secretary@swfcroquet.org.uk

Please give some thought about how you might be able to support our work.

We are delighted that Chen has joined the team as Secretary and we will continue to enjoy the excellent work of every other member – apart from Stephen who is sadly, but very understandably, standing down from his role on the committee.

Linda's term of office as Chair comes to an end in November 2027 so we are already touting for a successor – it's not a role to be taken on without some knowledge of how things work in the croquet world so if you think this could be for you, do get in touch so we can help you decide whether or not it is.

And we are still looking for someone to help with our website – do get in touch if you can give us some help with this.

U3A – opportunities for growth?

CqE is looking at developing a relationship at national level with the U3A. Many clubs already have links with local groups and it would be really helpful to learn of your experience with them. Aileen Hingston of the Yorkshire Federation is researching this, and would live to hear of your experiences and ideas.

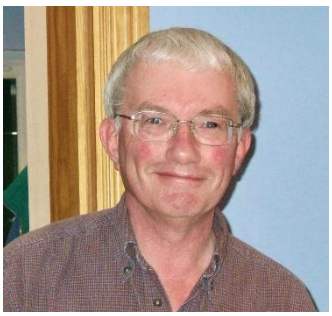
You can contact her on: aileen@amhinja.net

Cygnet 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 Cygnet or any aspect of the SW croquet scene.
Contact: lindawithani@hotmail.com

Obituary: Rob Weeks and Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club 2000-2026

A special man who gave so much to the club and its members — usually with a practical idea, a clear opinion, and that unmistakable smile.



Rob was introduced to the club in 2000 having met croquet club member Tony Bower at Woodbury Golf Club, which he had joined shortly after moving into our area. Tony clearly had the gift of persuasion because before long Rob was a very active member of both Croquet and Bowls — the latter then played on what is now lawn 11. He soon became very good at both sports. His wife Lyn who also played Bowls, volunteered for various tasks and became a key member of the team producing the much-loved Club Dinners of the time.

Rob's prowess at croquet peaked when he reached a -2 handicap and he was captain of our GC Level Play league team. He was a firm believer in skills, strategy and proper practice and he set up Winter Training sessions every Monday - come rain or shine — and knowing Rob, probably with very little sympathy for drizzle as an excuse.

Players from that era fondly remember his inspired visual aids and very practical approach: "Practice clearing a ball so many times, then blocking a ball for as many, then do the maths and establish the percentage success of each." Then came the inevitable Rob question: "Now will you believe you have a better chance of clearing a ball than trying to block it?"



The training programme ended with a match between two teams: Weeks Whackers versus the Bruisers. Of course Rob gave his team a psychological advantage — he issued us all with a white woolly hat and badge. Whether this improved our play is open to debate but it certainly improved team identity!

My memory of playing with and against him in roll-ups was that - by then he was a content handicap 2 — well, content most of the time. He was always willing, and sometimes very keen indeed to give advice. Niall remembers an occasion when Rob insisted that he take a jump shot to win a key hoop. "He was demanding and encouraging in equal measure," Niall told me — which sounds very much like Rob at his best.

Rob became Grounds/Estates Manager in 2005, managing the then groundsman. In 2014 he oversaw the development of the irrigation and watering system with sprinklers to all playing surfaces. He recruited Richard, and things started to happen. They developed a mutual respect and Rob would drop in early most mornings for a chat and was always happy to run errands. Picking up supplies from Screwfix and filling the many petrol cans — the sort of unglamorous jobs without which nothing much actually works.

From this point on major improvements began to take shape: the ground became flatter, the white lines straighter, the playing surfaces more uniform, and the grass greener. Old fences were removed and replaced by low shrubbery and the huts were repaired or replaced where necessary.

Members and visitors appreciated this and tournament players became happier as the days of loose hoops in slow, bumpy lawns faded into memory. Rob and Richard also decided it was feasible to open the lawns for winter play and what a success that proved to be. It became almost commonplace for tournament managers - in their closing remarks - to praise our hoop setters and especially Richard

for the quality and symmetry of play he was able to produce on all lawns. I remember Stephen Mulliner asking to shake him by the hand to express his admiration.

Rob's regular quiz evenings became renowned and were always a sell-out. They were fun, informative, raised much-needed funds for the club, and were reliably accompanied by bangers and mash — plus – naturally - a drink or two to help the answers along!

With the help of three others, the South West Croquet Academy was created and launched — one of the first in the UK and unique in the South West. It offered courses in all aspects of the game, from playing skills and strategy to tournament management and refereeing, with the promise of "coaching from the best". Knowing Rob, the standards were high, the expectations clear, and the room for woolly thinking rather limited.

In 2018, Rob's project management skills rose to the challenge when he became part of the Pavilion Development Group. This followed much consultation — and, it must be said, some lively debate — with members about the future of the then rather sad-looking old pavilion. Voting took place and then, in a cloud of woodworm dust, it was demolished. Rob, together with Ian Stratford and the team, designed and supervised the construction of what we have today. Their attention to detail and close control were, I am sure, appreciated by the builders — eventually! It was a great result and the Needham Pavilion was named after Gill Needham, the very generous member who paid for it.

After the sad death of his wife Lyn, Rob continued to play croquet – Alison however helpfully suggested he turn his hand to Bridge. So he moved from grass to baize, enjoying the challenge of learning the game and seeing it as a test of his intellect. He remained the same Rob: good company, with his lovely smile, and always happy to chat.

Rob served on so many committees for so long that it is hard to imagine the Minutes without his presence somewhere in them. He could be passionate in debate; his steely temperament could, on occasion, be tested beyond its limit. But he was always one to fight his corner and always for what he believed was right for the club. Happy days — and for his sins, it was Rob who persuaded me to stand for election.

As a result of who he was, how he was, and what he achieved for the club we nominated him in 2019 for a Croquet Association (now Croquet England) Diploma which they duly awarded.

In 2022, a powerful proposal was made to confer on Rob the status of Honorary Life Member, the highest accolade we can bestow. This was easily agreed. What was a little more difficult was getting Rob to accept it — though - in the end, we managed even that.

A very special man indeed: much missed, warmly remembered, and still very much part of the club. Every time we play on those lawns we are playing on a good part of his legacy — which, knowing Rob, he would probably still find a way to improve.

Many thanks to those who contributed their memories to this farewell. All the documentation mentioned is held in our club records.

Rest in Peace Rob

John O'Gorman
Club Chair 20 August 2026

Bath Celebrate 50th Anniversary

Lynne Passfield shares Bath's half-century celebrations with us – this should have appeared in June's issue so apologies for the lateness.



Members, past and present, gathered at Bath Croquet Club on 17th May to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our founding in 1976. It was a welcome opportunity to mingle with croquet friends old and new, sharing memories of exploits both on and off the lawns. We were fortunate to have past Chairmen Bob Whitaker, Roger Hayes and Andrew Willis together with our current Chair Lynne Passfield, out in force to celebrate this momentous occasion.

Our group photo, kindly captured by Maddy Alabaster, recorded members wearing the club's newly commissioned blue anniversary shirts. All teams playing in South West Federation Leagues will be wearing the shirts for their matches this year.



On arrival, everyone had received an entry into the draw to win a magnum of Louis Roederer Champagne. With great anticipation, a ticket was drawn and Velda Hall was the lucky winner.

Croquet-related activities had been set up on lawns 1 and 2 by Hester Henebury, and fierce competition ensued to hit flags, run hoops and / or balls from distance, and use 10 shots to run as many hoops as possible for both AC and GC challenges.



Our eventual winners were Carol Gorvett: the AC challenge; after a three-way final, Alan Bickley: the GC challenge; Ally Hoyland: the long roquet; Tony Curson: the long accurate rush; and Ian Morrisom: the long hoop run.

All were presented with a small prize for their enthusiastic efforts.



We eventually retired to partake of the delicious finger buffet lunch prepared by Anwen, Christine, Marion and Gill.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed a wonderful day of celebration!

Croquet Celebration & RNLI Fundraising Day: Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club

We held this day of Rollups on a pleasant dry September day. All who joined in had fun playing in either a Short Croquet Event or a mixture of Golf Croquet Rollups - some split by handicap.

We offered Association Croquet Events but sadly not enough Association Players were available to join us. The day finished with a chaotic game of Pirate Croquet.



There was a friendly, positive atmosphere with players enjoying playing *with* rather than *against* some of their League rivals.

Fundraising for the RNLI



There were collection buckets around the club, donations could be made through the Clubhouse Till or through our RNLI Fundraising page.

Two members of the Exmouth RNLI Volunteer Team joined us and were selling tickets for their Christmas Hampers Raffle. They had a go at GC ably guided by John O'Gorman and Linda Hicks. *(Who knows 2 new members??)*

Tea & Cake were available during the afternoon with donations going to the RNLI.



Money raised on the day a combination of donations and raffle ticket sales a respectable total of £554.76

Participants

There were 26 visiting players from Bude, Dowlish Wake, Exeter, Taunton and Sidmouth Croquet Clubs. Together with 57 Budleigh Members, 83 players playing in 214 games.

Thanks

We would like to thank everyone who helped make this day a success.





St Agnes Croquet Club - Car parking meshing project 2026

After a long and very hot summer we are very glad to report that the meshing has been laid along two sides of our lawns and cars are happily using it. Clearly the full test will only be seen during a long winter. But so far it is simply doing what we wanted.

The project did take longer than we had hoped. Delivery from Suregreen was very efficient. We did have to employ driver and equipment to get the 5 bulky and heavy pallets from the main road to the side of the clubhouse (see picture) as the lorry was much larger than anticipated. A warning to all to check with the supplier very carefully!

Initial laying was a bit of a learning process. The rolls are large, bulky and very tough. Trial and error, and bringing in some younger and fitter workforce, overcame this.

The mesh is laid on the grass and pinned in with hooped steel rods. Very straightforward until we met what must have been an ancient stone 'roadway' which meant we had to pre-drill before hammering in the pins. At the same time we were 'fighting' 30 degree plus sunshine for weeks after weeks. Not conducive to the older workforce of croquet members!

The extra-long periods of extreme heat also tended to buckle up the unpinned mesh, making the task more difficult, and requiring extra pins. Also, the long dry drought prevented any of the underlying grass to grow through and bind the mesh to the ground.

Now, already with the little rain of the past few weeks, the grass has grown through and, whilst still working fine for driving over, is hiding the green mesh.



Members of the most SW Club in the SW celebrate their 13th birthday on the new matting

Stroud Croquet Club

Newly established Stroud CC have been making great strides – here is an edited version of their Secretary's Report for AGM. An object lesson in the heady mix of enthusiasm and sheer hard work – we wish you every success.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our present Chair, Caroline Denny, for bringing croquet back to Stroud. … I am sure you will join me in expressing our thanks to Caroline. She has a strong and inclusive vision for croquet in Stroud and a passionate commitment to promoting wellbeing. Caroline has fought hard to secure a venue, seeing the potential in this 'neglected' bowling green and clubhouse. She continues to liaise with the District Council to ensure the club has a sustainable future and that the lawn is brought back to its former glory.

After nearly 2 years of negotiation, Stroud Croquet Club opened in April 2026, with just a handful of experienced and new players meeting on Tuesday afternoons and/or Thursday evenings. Caroline has kindly loaned her equipment to the club, enabling more players to play at any one time.



People initially found their way to the club through word of mouth, Facebook or from Caroline herself, and what a season it has been in which to learn how to play. We have benefitted from the good weather. From a personal perspective, it has been a delight to play for 3 hours on Thursday evenings (not once have I looked at the time) and the numbers gathering for croquet on Tuesday afternoons has exceeded 24 on more than one occasion.

The Stroud Croquet Club's Committee was formed in May, … A committee is essential in establishing a club. It has led to membership of Croquet England and the South West Federation, and, if we are going to be successful, it will underpin future applications for funding. We have a constitution, based on a template from Croquet England, and a calendar which we have rolled forward into 2027.

The committee … plans to continue to meet monthly during the off season. We have also planned fortnightly 'social' meetings in the club house on Tuesday afternoons. … Each committee meeting has an agenda and is closely minuted. Explicit actions are assigned and followed up. Copies of our agendas and minutes are available in a folder in the clubhouse. …

Since April membership has grown as a result of different promotional activities. Over 60 people have played, or learnt to play, golf croquet at least once, with 39 people playing at least three times and around 30 regular players across each week. … Stroud was subsequently featured in the local paper, on BBC Radio Gloucestershire and on BBC Points West. This has definitely promoted the club. … there were 19 inquiries on the club's website after the club's appearance on Points West!

We held a successful 'open day' alongside the Stroud Show on 18 July and provided a further opportunities to play croquet as a part of the Active Lifestyles' programme on Fridays through the summer, as well as on Sunday afternoons while the bands have been playing. These 'open events' have bought more members into the club.



More people have also experienced playing croquet through 'corporate' events. For example, … Brimscombe and Thrupp WI, the Painswick Pickle Ball Club and Stroud District Council to events and these have been greatly appreciated. We aim to host more of these events next season.

We are keen to promote 'Croquet for wellbeing' and, following Caroline Denny's meeting with local social prescribers, we have provisionally scheduled sessions into our calendar for next season. In addition to this, Caroline Denny has been in touch with Stroud College and the Explorer Scouts and both organisations are keen for their young people to try croquet. Young people may also be keen to learn a new sport if they are doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award. Please signpost croquet if you know of anyone in this position.

While we continue to focus on recruitment, we are now looking at planning strategically to secure the club's future and exploring possible funding streams. We currently have the opportunities to bid for funding through the Free Masons and Gloucestershire County Council's 'Thriving Communities Grant'. We will also be applying for a development grant from Croquet England, but success will be dependent on a secure lease with Stroud District Council. Furthermore, we are also exploring becoming a Community Amateur Sports Club. This status may also strengthen future bids for funding.

As you can see there is lots to do and we would welcome your support. You can help us by:

- Joining the committee;
- Supporting club sessions and open events and promoting croquet in Stroud;
- Being on our rotas for opening up, setting up the lawns or refreshments;
- Sharing your skills and expertise and contributing to club development;
- Finding and sharing funding opportunities – unfortunately we missed Aldi's funding for sports equipment in August.

Thank you for your commitment to the club.
Chiquita Henson, Secretary, October 2026

A fascinating day at Nailsea Croquet Club

All the lawns were in full use at Nailsea Croquet Club when two very different events took place alongside each other.

On two of the lawns, six new recruits were battling it out for the High Bisquers Trophy. The ages of the participants ranged from 12 to 70 but they all had to play by the same rules and on a level basis. The two school age players gave a good account of themselves, showing an excellent understanding of the game and playing their shots well. They grew in confidence as time went on and they have the ability to progress quickly. The winner of the competition was Greeshka, on debut, and only having started to play a few months ago. He won all his games and showed an impressive mastery of the methods and shots of Association Croquet. Peter Higgs, Julian Kern and

Kevin Payne were also on debut and they too demonstrated considerable skill and knowledge in winning some games.

Meanwhile, the Club's best players were playing a League Match against Cheltenham Croquet Club. Both teams included players of International standing, with James Death, number 4 in the world, the most notable example. James is well known for his expert peeling ability and his record is beyond reach. One of the many joys of croquet is that it brings together players of all ages and all abilities. It was lovely to see James giving some peeling tips to the High Bisquers and to see the Nailsea experts, Marcus and Kriss, taking genuine interest in the Nailsea newcomers – who included a son and a protégé!

The weather was glorious, the grass was playing well, the cake was delicious, and Croquet and the Nailsea Club were the winners. The fact that Cheltenham won the League Match didn't dampen any spirits and the day ended with Marcus jumping on the lawnmower and cutting the grass.

Kathy Wallace

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Diary Dates



Winter Clubs' Zooms sessions

- Tuesday 10th November
- Tuesday 8th December
- Tuesday 12th Jan 2027
- Tuesdy 9th February
- Tuesday 9th March

SWF AGM: Sunday 22nd November 10.00am

Spring SC Tournament Nailsea 9/10/11 April
Autumn SC Tournament Budleigh 1/2/3 October

Useful Links	
General	
SWF Website	www.swfcroquet.org.uk/
Croquet England	www.croquetengland.org.uk/
Croquet England Youtube	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
Try Croquet – an eclectic range of croquet topics	www.trycroquet.co.uk/
Hit Inn – Alison Maugham 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.duncanhectorturfcare.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