

# Southern Croquet Federation

Annual General Meeting held on  
Thursday 16 November 2023 at 11.00am  
at Winchester Racquets and Fitness Centre

## **Present:**

**Chairman:** Peter Allan.

**Committee:** Steve Fisher, Ian Harrison, Brian Jamieson, Richard Peperell and Roy Tillcock.

**Apologies:** John Beckerleg.

**Club representatives:** Bill Hayter & James White (Basingstoke), Paul Wolff & Carol Jamieson (Blewbury), Barry Dench & Lesley Wooltorton (Bransgore), Charles Briggs, Pam Briggs and Jane Probitts (Caversham), Keith Southern & Hannes Hamann (East Dorset), Neil Stewart (Eynsham), Richard Jenkins & Janet Trueman (Hamptworth), Ian Shore (High Wycombe), Frances Colman, Paul Franklin, Andy Jones, Patricia Mulcahy, Ruth Raunkiaer & Chris Roberts (Phyllis Court), Pam Sim (Ryde), Jackie Bryant, Jean Hammond, Lesley Hunter, Gillian Pett & Norma Rayne (Thames Valley).

**Apologies:** Liz Walker (Caversham) and Nigel Clogg (High Wycombe).

## **1. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 25 November 2022**

Carol Jamieson proposed and Steve Fisher seconded approval of the 2022 AGM Minutes. Approved unanimously.

## **2. Chairman's Report for 2023**

Welcoming club members to the AGM, Peter Allan congratulated Norma Rayne (Thames Valley) on the award of a CA Diploma<sup>1</sup>. Continuing, he said that at a national level, 2024 would see Croquet England, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), taking over from the Croquet Association. Croquet relies almost exclusively on volunteer effort. Several people had offered to stand for vacant Committee posts, but volunteers were still needed for Safeguarding Officer, Development Officer, AC Handicapping Officer, and Tournament Officer posts. Of these, the one that concerned him most is the lack of a Safeguarding Officer,

He was pleased that 17 of the Federation's 24 member clubs had participated in league competitions. The new GC 10+ competition, a group of level play tournaments for players with higher handicaps, was designed to introduce less-experienced, higher handicap players to competitive croquet.

More recently, he had been approached by a team that is trying to establish a new croquet club near Farnham. They were looking at four possible locations, some of which are in the area of the SE Federation and some are in the SCF. Since federations do not operate on strict geographical boundaries, this is not expected to be a problem.

Concluding, the Chairman reminded the meeting that the main role of the Committee was to keep things running smoothly so that members of clubs could have an enjoyable year playing croquet. Generally, this meant ensuring that leagues and one-day events are organised properly and run smoothly. However, the Committee was always open to new initiatives. If members had an idea for adding a new event or league, then please do contact himself, as Chairman, or the relevant league manager. Similarly, if a club wishes to put on an event that it has not done before and you are uncertain how to go about it, the members of the Committee were a good 'first port of call' to ask questions. If one of us does not know the answer, we probably know someone who does.

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<sup>1</sup> Other recipients of 2023 CA Diplomas in SCF clubs were Tony Newport (Eynsham), Liz Kinsella (Wingrave), Margaret Skeldon (Lymington), Peter Wingent (Littleton) and Steve and Jan Bennett (Hamptworth).

### **3. Treasurer's Report, including determination of subscriptions for 2024**

Brian Jamieson explained that the Treasurer, John Beckerleg, had been indisposed since mid-September and had been unable to finalise the Accounts for the 12 months to 31 October 2023. He assured the AGM that the Federation was still financially sound. As an interim measure, he summarised the main features of the Federation's financial year.

The pattern of income and expenditure in the 12 months to 31 October 2023 had been much the same as in recent years. Income consisted largely of £25 subscriptions from 22 clubs. Tournament entry fees would be down on previous years as the Solstice in Ryde, to attract numbers, had not applied an entry fee and the AC Champion of Champions event had experienced a very small field.

Expenditure during the period consisted principally of the recurrent cost of engraving trophies and a one-off development grant of £650 to the Hartley Wintney club.

Overall, expenditure was expected to exceed income by about £500 leaving the Federation's reserves at around £5,300.

As soon as the Accounts had been finalised and examined, they will be circulated to member clubs.

In view of the adequate reserves, the Committee recommended that the subscription for member clubs for 2024 should be held at £25.

Peter Allan proposed and Chris Roberts seconded that the 2024 subscription for Full Member Clubs should remain at £25. This was agreed unanimously.

### **4. Other Officers' Reports**

#### **1. AC League Manager**

Steve Fisher said that changes introduced for 2023 had been successful. Clubs liked the ability to choose their preferred team size. Having a single submission of the results, generally by the winning team, had avoided the annoyance felt by some in the previous season.

It was important that results be submitted for games as they are played. This should be rather obvious as the online form only accepts a single venue and a single date. It is especially important for level games as the date affects a player's ranking.

It may seem obvious that results must reflect results of games of croquet. No club may claim or offer a walkover. Procedures are described in the regulations to be followed when a club fields an incomplete team.

No changes are planned for next season, though some of the phrasing of the regulations will be changed to make them clearer.

Finally, Steve Fisher said that the short croquet league still had only three participating clubs. Similarly the new C-level league. He hoped that both of these leagues would grow in 2024.

Ian Harrison expressed his dissatisfaction with the difficulty in communicating with one club regarding a fixture and was encouraged to raise such issues in future with the League Manager.

#### **2. GC League Manager**

Roy Tillcock said that, with a few minor changes, the 2023 league structure followed the pattern set the previous year. Wingrave had withdrawn from the Advantage league, but had been replaced by Littleton, who planned a second team entry. However, they discovered at short notice that their re-laid lawns would not be suitable for league play. Thanks were due to Littleton and the central division clubs for enabling one of the Littleton teams to play all their matches away. Dogmersfield, a founder member of the One Court Clubs league, unfortunately decided to disband over the winter. The biggest change of format affected the Doubles league with four withdrawals bringing the entry down to a single six team event. Both Ryde and High Wycombe reduced their entries and Winslow were unable to raise any competitive teams this year.

Despite postponements and abandonments due both to exceptional heat and wet all league games were eventually completed bar one. An end of season Open fixture unfortunately had to be defaulted because of illness and an inability to reschedule. To try to reduce the chances of a repeat he proposed to fall in line with the AC league timetable next season and use an extended season cut-off

date in mid September. If clubs could schedule their matches to finish by mid to late August, the extended period should enable any late difficulties to be resolved.

Referring to the match that had not been played, Chris Roberts said that it was unacceptable for a club to default a fixture just because they could not field their strongest team. They should be required to fulfil fixtures that had been agreed. Possible sanctions could include a ban from the following season.

Peter Allan said that the Committee would consider the issue and provide guidance designed to avoid a repeat.

Continuing, Roy Tillcock said that the influence of home advantage was generally accepted as a swings and roundabouts effect, with no easy solution. However, for next season he was proposing an adjustment to the Advantage leagues order of play which might help mitigate this perceived advantage, psychologically if nothing else.

After considerable discussion it was agreed not to proceed with any changes to the order of play in Advantage leagues.

Roy Tillcock said that there was a related home advantage problem with league finals and semi finals. Using neutral grounds for these matches was far from easy to arrange, either in advance or when the opponents are known.

After discussion, it was concluded that it would be impractical to arrange for play-offs and finals to be played on neutral venues.

Finally, Roy Tillcock said that, with permission, he had adapted an automated Advantage spreadsheet file from the NW Federation for use in Advantage leagues and had circulated it to a few team captains to trial. The file enabled accurately printed scoresheets to be produced in advance of the match with minimum effort. The software had been well received. He hoped to offer this, or similar, for use in all leagues next season.

### **3. Coaching Officer**

Introducing his report, Ian Harrison said that coaching had still not returned to the pre-Covid levels and was often *ad-hoc*. However, the Chiltern Academy and Neil Stewart at Eynsham were doing a great job offering courses at different levels. He reminded member clubs that the Federation could refund the entire fee for courses, such as refereeing and coaching, that benefitted the wider croquet community. He was retiring after several years on the Committee and wished his successor every support and success.

Ian Shore said that the Chiltern Academy programme for 2024 was now on the Fixtures Calendar on the CqE website.

### **4. Development Officer**

Peter Allan said that the CA has had a Next Generation project designed to attract children to the sport of croquet. It was considered this was most likely to be successful by concentrating on primary school children as they see croquet as ‘something fun’ rather than another sport. Secondary schools that have a teacher who is also a croquet player can be good schools to target.

He had attended meetings of the CA sport development committee, mostly online this year, with one meeting taking place face to face. The focus was very much on what activities we should concentrate on to develop the sport of croquet for the greatest benefit to players.

The Federation Focus Group Zoom meetings had continued on a mostly monthly basis. The purpose of these was to keep federations in regular contact with the latest developments in other regions. If others would like to join, he could arrange it.

Following their successful application last year for a grant to set up a new club at Hartley Wintney, the club submitted a second grant application to significantly improve the quality of their lawns. The CA grant committee have awarded just over £4000 for this purpose. In addition, the SCF granted the club £650 toward the cost of equipment for them to be able to run games on both of their lawns. Clubs considering putting in a grant application to the CA or the SCF should always contact him in advance for guidance on the processes.

Concluding, he drew attention to a growing amount of croquet material available on-line. This ranged from animations about how to play certain croquet strokes, through lessons on how to learn GC and AC (made by Ian Harrison), to videos made by international players.

## 5. AC Handicap Officer

Richard Peperell said that during the year he had worked in concert with the AC League manager and had kept an eye on two players in the leagues. In one of these cases he had thought it necessary to communicate with the club's AC handicapper. He had not found it necessary to adjust any player's AC handicap. Nor had he had been approached by any club within the SCF region for advice on AC handicapping.

## 5. Amendments to the Constitution

Brian Jamieson said that some minor amendments were needed to the SCF Constitution because of the inauguration of Croquet England in January 2024. Put simply, all references to the Croquet Association, or CA, needed to be replaced by references to Croquet England or CqE. The proposed changes were marked in red on the copy of the Constitution circulated with the AGM papers. None had any effect on the Federation's policies, rules or procedures.

Peter Allan pointed out that the CA Council would be replaced by the CqE Board of Trustees. This required further minor changes to clause 10.

The proposed changes to the Constitution, proposed by Ian Harrison, seconded by Barry Dench, were unanimously approved.

## 6. Election of Committee

Peter Allan reminded the meeting that the entire Committee had to be elected at each AGM. Nominations received by 4 November 2023 had been set out in the circulated agenda. Further nominations could be taken from the floor.

The following, having been proposed and seconded in accordance with the Constitution, were elected unanimously:

Office	Nominees	Proposer	Seconder
Chairman	Peter Allan	Brian Jamieson (Blewbury)	Steve Fisher (Blewbury)
Secretary	Andy Jones	Chris Roberts (Phyllis Court)	Brian Jamieson (Blewbury)
Treasurer	Lesley Wooltorton	John Beckerleg (Winslow)	Barry Dench (Bransgore)
Coaching Officer	Ruth Raunkiaer	Ian Shore (High Wycombe)	Ian Harrison (Winchester)
Development Officer	Peter Allan	Carol Jamieson (Blewbury)	Ruth Raunkiaer (Phyllis Court)
AC League Manager	Steve Fisher	Peter Allan (Harwell)	Roy Tillcock (Ryde)
AC Handicapper	Richard Peperell	Ian Shore (High Wycombe)	Chris Roberts (Phyllis Court)
GC League Manager	Roy Tillcock	Steve Fisher (Blewbury)	Brian Jamieson (Blewbury)
GC Handicapper	Barry Dench	Richard Jenkins (Hamptworth)	Richard Peperell (High Wycombe)
Tournament Officer	Vacant		
Webmaster	Steve Fisher	Peter Allan (Harwell)	Roy Tillcock (Ryde)
Safeguarding Officer	Barry Dench	Frances Colman (Phyllis Court)	Richard Peperell (High Wycombe)
Club Member	Jackie Bryant (Thames Valley)	Jean Hammond (Thames Valley)	Margaret Maytham (Thames Valley)
Southern Constituency representative on CqE Board of Trustees	Peter Allan	This post is not elected at the AGM.	

## 7. Prize-giving

Peter Allan announced and presented trophies to winners of the Federation's leagues and tournaments in 2023, as follows:

Competition	2023 Winner
AC Advanced A-Level	High Wycombe
AC Advanced B-Level	Blewbury
AC Advanced C-Level	Phyllis Court
AC Handicap	High Wycombe
Short Croquet	Blewbury
GC Open	East Dorset
GC B-Level	Ryde
GC Handicap	Phyllis Court
GC One Court Clubs Handicap	Caversham
GC Doubles	Wingrave
AC Champion of Champions	Chris Weedon (East Dorset)
GC Champion of Champions	Paul Cotterell (Eynsham)
Armada One-Ball	Duncan Sinclair (Blewbury)
Solstice GC Level play Doubles	Joan Grove & Jim O'Keefe (Ryde)
GC Open Champion	Steve Leonard (East Dorset)
GC 10+ Handicap	Mike Parker (Caversham)

Steve Fisher reminded Member Clubs that for consistency, the Federation, rather than clubs, should arrange all trophy engraving.

## 8. SCF Tournaments 2024

Neil Stewart said that he planned that the new GC 10+ competition would make an earlier start than in 2023. He hoped for four tournaments in the South of the region and four in the North, with eight competitors at each. He would prefer the 2024 final taking place in the South. Peter Allan thanked Neil for the effort he had put into this initiative.

The current position on all the Federation's events in 2024 was as follows:

Tournament	Date	Venue
AC Champion of Champions	13 or 20 April	Hamptworth
GC Champion of Champions	14 or 21 April	Hamptworth
Armada One -ball	June	Winchester
Solstice Doubles	2 June	Hamptworth
GC Open Champion	tbc	Phyllis Court
GC 10+ Handicap	tbc	tbc

## **9. Other business**

**9.1** Thames Valley would be re-instating their Ladies Day Level-play Doubles tournament on 14 August 2024.

**9.2** Richard Peperell drew attention to the issue of slow courts in AC matches. He proposed that the Federation should give guidance on the minimum acceptable lawn speed for fair competition, perhaps eight Plummers, as well as procedures for measuring lawn speeds and for dealing with the situation when courts were below acceptable speeds. Peter Allan said the Committee would follow up the matter with a view to dealing with the issue in time for 2024 fixtures.

## **10. Vote of thanks**

Chris Roberts expressed a vote of thanks to the Committee for their work during the year and thanked new members for coming forward to continue the work of the Federation.

The meeting concluded at 12.30.pm

**November 2023**