

## **The Minutes of the 37<sup>TH</sup> Annual General Meeting of the South East Federation held on Saturday 18th November, 2023.**

**Committee members present were:** Andrew Stewart (Chair), David King (Treasurer), Jon Diamond (Webmaster), John Low (League & Tournament Organiser), Richard Carline (Coaching & Safeguarding Officer), Mike Akester (Development Officer), Carol Driver (CA Council Rep), George Noble and Bob Clark (co-opted committee member).

**The following clubs were represented:** Andrew Stewart (Committee Member/West Worthing), Frank Collins (Caterham), Phil Cordingley (Hampstead Heath), Frances Low (Rottingdean), Elizabeth Swinton (Cheam), Simon Ling (Reigate Priory), David King (Committee Member/SCCC), Richard Carline (Committee Member/SCCC), Jenny Lugton (Cheam), Colin Helps (Cheam), Anne Alecock (The Croquetteers), Bob Clark (Committee Member/Littlehampton), Robyn Clark (Littlehampton), Penny Hinton (Purley Bury), Chris, Spencer, Geoff Gunton (Cheam), Jacky Waite (Cheam), Jon Diamond (Committee Member/Tunbridge Wells), Richard Andrews (Hurlingham), George Noble (Committee Member/Surbiton), Trevor Longman (Ramsgate), Carol Driver (Committee Member/Purley Bury) Douglas Shand (Rother Valley), Andrea Huxley (Guildford & Godalming), Jean Cobbold (Cheam), Ian Cobbold (Cheam), Paul Newton (Dulwich), Susan Kilby (SCCC), Clive Hayton (SCCC), Andy Dibben (Surbiton), John Low (Committee Member/SCCC), Simon Tuke (Ealing), Tony Elliot (Ealing), Des Jarrett (Dulwich), Neil Coote (Reigate Priory), Mike Akester (Committee Member/Hove Beach), Simon Charrington (Ember), Janet Overell (Purley Bury).

**Apologies** for absence were received from Hilary Bird (Guildford & Godalming), Henry Bryant (Canterbury), Angela Mc Millan (Worthing).

**Minutes of the last AGM** held by Zoom on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2022 were adopted with no objections.

**Election of officers for 2023** The Chairman: Andrew Stewart (West Worthing), and Treasurer: David King (Southwick) were re-elected unopposed. The post of Secretary is vacant at present.

**Committee** During the year Bob Clark (Littlehampton) was co-opted onto the committee with the intention that he would take over the organisation of tournaments from John Low who would continue as League Organiser. Along with these, Mike Akester (Hove Beach) Development Officer, Richard Carline (SCCC) Coaching & Safeguarding Officer, Jon Diamond (Royal Tunbridge Wells) Web Master and George Noble were all elected/re-elected unopposed.

Andrew Stewart, Carol Driver and Samir Patel will continue as members of the Committee by virtue of Clause 7 of the Constitution. The Chair explained to the meeting that all three have become Trustees of Croquet England CIO. However the Board of Croquet England has voted to change the way it is constituted reducing the number of elected trustees to six with

another five members being independent/appointed. The basis on which the six elected members are chosen is at present under consideration but it seems certain the new constituencies will move away from the boundaries of the Federations. Therefore we will not have a Trustee directly representing us although of course we will be able to invite a future trustee to join our committee. No doubt this will be a topic for our next AGM.

The Chair went on to say that David King and George Noble have indicated that they intend to stand down at the next AGM in 2024. All Clubs therefore need to consider if they have members who could join the Federation Committee and take on roles such as Treasurer as this will be vital if the Federation is to continue operating.

**Amending the Constitution of the Federation.** The Chair advised the meeting that Croquet England CIO (CqE) is taking over from the Croquet Association as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024. The Federation will be able to become an affiliate member of CqE. He proposed the motion to change our affiliation to CqE and amend the references in our constitution from the Croquet Association to Croquet England CIO. This was agreed by the meeting unopposed.

Clubs were reminded that they will have to amend their constitutions as necessary.

**Rebranding of the Federation** The suggestion had been made that Federations should take the opportunity of the introduction of Croquet England to modernise themselves by changing their names to something the public could associate with. Croquet North has already done this and others are considering the change. There are two possible options. Firstly change our name completely which would mean changing the constitution, bank accounts etc or keeping the existing name and branding ourselves Croquet South East. We have already dipped out toe into this change by naming our Facebook page Croquet South East. The committee was recommending the second option of a rebranding. This was supported unopposed by the meeting.

**Treasurer's Report** which was given by David King is attached together with the final accounts. These were accepted unopposed.

**Appointment of Independent Examiner.** Clive Hayton was thanked for his work in examining the Federation Accounts and he confirmed that he would continue in this role for a another year.

**Fixing the rate of the annual subscription for 2024.** The committee had decided that the annual subscription charge should remain the same at £15pa.

**The amount of tournament and league fees for 2024:** The Committee has agreed that the fees for League entries will remain at £3 per entry. As regards Tournament Fees these will be reviewed once we know the lawn hire fees for 2024.

**Chairman's Report** . A copy of the report is attached. This was accepted by the meeting.

**Webmaster's Report:** Jon Diamond reported that the website is going well. Items of news or events from clubs are always welcome and will be added to the website when received. He also picks up news from clubs who have RSS feeds from their sites. Accurate statistical information on the use of the website is not readily available but it would seem from a show

of hands at the meeting that clubs are viewing the information on the site when they require information

As far as the Facebook page is concerned we only have 18 followers at present which is low. More followers would be welcome as our page would then become better known. Jon asked for clubs to ask for players and friends to visit the page and become followers.

#### **Development Officer's Report:**

Mike Akester report attached.

#### **Coaching Officer/Safeguarding Officer's Report:**

Copy of the report is attached.

It was also confirmed that Advantage GC for handicap play has now been adopted by WCF and CqE. Therefore although trials are underway of changes to the system these would have to be approved by these organisations rules committees before being brought into use generally.

**League/Tournament Organiser's Report:** Copy of report attached. John Low also mentioned that there would be league tables on the SECF website next year that would be updated frequently showing the relative position of the clubs in the various leagues.

Several motions were put forward to make changes to tournaments and leagues run by the Federation based on the results of a survey of clubs undertaken this year as follows:

1. **to recast the AC Teams Competition as a single day of 14pt handicap on full lawns** with the same rules as the AC B League. The last few year's have seen the number of teams taking part reduce and we hope this may provide a better inducement for more clubs and members to take part. **Supported by the meeting unopposed.**
2. **to drop the Women's AC competition.** Put simply, there are far fewer players of AC in the Federation, and far fewer of them again are women; there are even fewer younger players. It has become a struggle to find sufficient players to make teams from mixed clubs, let alone a single club; the current manager has decided she does not wish to take on that work again (because of the struggle to find participants) so this seems the appropriate moment to call time, albeit reluctantly, on a competition which we know a lot of women players have enjoyed in the past. **Rejected by the meeting. 72% against 28% in favour. This tournament to be on offer for a further season.**
3. **to drop the One-Ball competition.** If fewer members are playing AC, even fewer have ever played one ball. This is the youngest of the Federation tournaments, starting only in 2018 and has only been played in 3 of the last 5 seasons. There is no market for this form of croquet and I suspect it will not be missed. **This motion was withdrawn as there were suggestions that**

**Tunbridge Wells might be willing to run a tournament at a different time of the year.**

4. **to drop both the AC A league and the GC level league.** Both these leagues are attracting only a small number of club entries and it is anecdotally clear that those clubs taking part for the most part have great difficulty raising a team when they do enter. A class players in both formats have a wealth of CA tournaments to attend and are understandably reluctant to find time to enter Federation events as well. As a result the teams end up having players in them who are outside the optimum handicap range and this in turn may take those players away from the Federation leagues to which they are more suited. By concentrating of leagues and competitions in the B-D class range the Federation can offer a choice of competition which those players might not otherwise have. **Dropping the AC A League supported by 94% to 6%. Drooping the GC Level League supported by 72% to 28%.**
5. **to recast the Southern Challenges as two geographically delineated B/C class competitions with a playoff between the winners of each competition.** You may know that the Southern Challenge was originally started as an invitation event by the Sussex County Croquet Club. At some point it was passed over to the Federation and expanded into the current 3 events. There have been some preliminary discussions with Sussex about returning the Division 1 Challenge to them to run in its original form and it is our understanding that they would be willing to do so. As a Federation event it doesn't really fit any more as more than half the teams entering are not from this Federation at all. Passing it on will allow the Federation to concentrate on increasing the number of teams and players in our two B/C class challenges. It is proposed to rename the events and one proposal so far is the Croquet South East Challenge North/South. **Motion supported by 89% to 11%.**

The suggestion was also put forward that the Federation should make efforts to support the development of mini one day jamborees at geographically well-located clubs in the area. We recognise that a lot of players don't want to travel very far for competition. We have two major locations for our competitions: Sussex County and Surbiton. The Federation believes there is room for more local jamborees to be organised in strategically placed clubs. Last season Dulwich organised one such jamboree and it was by all accounts a great success. The Federation proposes to support other clubs to do the same. **We would therefore welcome Clubs putting forward proposals to the committee.**

**The Report by the South East Constituency Representative(s) of the Council of the Croquet Association:**

Carol and Andrew reported that the main focus of the Council has been the incorporation and the change to a charity. However this is now coming to fruition and the focus will move to considering the strategy of CqE over the next three years or so. Views of clubs and members would be welcome.

**Other Business:**

David King asked clubs to consider whether or not they could raise a team for tournaments before making an entry to save withdrawals at a later date.

David also asked clubs to circulate SECF newsletters to their members as we are finding that there a number that do not know about tournaments that are being run until after it was too late to enter a team.

The Chairman closed the meeting.