

Minutes of the 28th Annual General Meeting of the South East Croquet Federation held at Surbiton Croquet Club on Sunday 25 January 2015

The following 24 Clubs were represented:

Caterham (J Male); **Canterbury** (R Loram); **Cheam** (H Clarke and B Hughes); **Compton** (H Smith); **Dulwich** (P Newton & J Reddish); **Ealing** (M Sherratt); **Ember** (M Lambert); **Guildford & Godalming** (M Thompson); **Hampstead Heath** (R Hilditch); **Littlehampton** (C Merrington and P Sherwin); **Lodsworth** (R Carline & T Johnson); **Merton** (C Doswell); **Old College, Dulwich** (R & C Brook); **Purley Bury** (J Overell); **Ramsgate** (T Longman); **Reigate Priory** (M Peacock); **Roehampton** (P Siddall & D Mooney); **Rother Valley** (A & A Sugarman); **Royal Tunbridge Wells** (M Belcham); **Surbiton** (M Pulsford & G Noble); **Sussex County** (W Arliss & E Farrow); **West Chiltington** (A Sugerman); **Woking** (M Hague; M Town and E Mackenzie-Gray) and **Worthing** (E Farrow)..

Apologies for absence were received from:

J Isaacs (Committee/Sussex County); S Vallis (Angmering); J Johnston (Dogmersfield); R Tilcock (Ryde); K Lennon (Ivychurch); L Gavigan (Chichester & Fishbourne)

The minutes of the 27th AGM held on Sunday 16 February 2014 were approved as a true and accurate record, subject to them being properly headed "The minutes of the 27th AGM" instead of "The minutes of the 26th AGM".

Matters arising from the minutes

The Chairman (Bill Arliss) drew attention to the trophies on display. He explained a revised plan for them. The trophies should, he said, be returned to him by the holders at or before the next AGM. They would then be presented (or re-presented) to the winners; retained for engraving and returned by the start of the season.



Approval of the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2014

The Treasurer (Hilary Smith) presented the accounts and invited questions about their contents. The accumulated cash assets of the Federation (£6,587 as at 31 December 2014) would, she said, continue to be distributed by way of development grants and loans to members of the Federation as the Committee thought appropriate.

The Treasurer expressed her thanks to Clive Hayton (Sussex County) for undertaking the duties of Auditor (Independent Examiner) following the sad death of Graham Thompson (Compton).

R Hilditch (Hampstead Heath) proposed and M Peacock (Reigate Priory) seconded a proposal that the accounts should be approved. This was carried *nem. con.*

Annual Subscription for 2015

The Treasurer's proposal that the annual subscription rate should be maintained at £10 was approved *nem. con.*

Report on the further development of the SECF web site

The Webmaster (Bill Arliss) reported that information about member clubs probably needed to be updated and asked all Club Secretaries to respond to his forthcoming missive. He reiterated that the reporting of League results via the site was favoured. The League Organiser (Richard Hilditch) echoed the Webmaster's plea that all results should be reported via the site to avoid occurrences such as that when both participating teams reported separately by email that they had lost the same match. This was a repeat of the anecdote recited at the 27th AGM but it resulted in similar amusement.

It was agreed that the Regulations would be changed to specify that responsibility for reporting the match result would lie with the home team. The League Organiser added that such reports should be made within one week of the match rather than accumulated until the end of the season.

GC Handicapping

The Chairman provided even more information about the changes in the GC handicapping system. He noted that the results of level play matches were poor predictors of the outcomes

of handicap matches. The “effective handicap” trial held in 2014 would be extended. This had been agreed at a recent meeting of the CA Council. The GC Handicap Committee had another new Chairman and expert mathematicians had been recruited further to examine their algorithms. It was felt that more data were required before a permanent change could be justified even though results collected by the Chairman suggested that many low handicappers still had a win percentage of between 70% and 90%. Others had been harder hit by the trial but none had a win percentage of less than 50%.

Proposal that the Federation should become a member of the Croquet Association

After a wide-ranging discussion of the arguments for and against the proposition, it was agreed that the Committee should make an application for the Federation to become a member of the Croquet Association in accordance with the proposal advanced by the immediate past Chairman of the Croquet Association in his recent paper dealing with reforms.

Report on 2014 Leagues and Events

The League Organiser invited acclamation for the following:

AC “A” League winners: **Woking**
AC “U” League winners: **Reigate Priory A**
AC “B” League winners: **Caterham**
GC Level League winners: **Sussex County**
GC Level Restricted League winners: **Canterbury**
GC Handicap League winners: **Sussex County**

AC Team Doubles Champions: **Ramsgate**
Ladies’ Team Champions: **Woking**
Golf Croquet Team Doubles Champions: **Cheam**
Golf Croquet Team Singles Champions: **Sussex County II**
The GC Southern Challenge Division One Champions: **Dulwich**
The GC Southern Challenge Division Two Champions: **Caterham**

Representatives of the winning Clubs collected the trophies and were applauded and photographed, some more than once.



Development Officer’s report

The Development Officer (Michael Hague) reported on the progress made by Clubs who had received grants from the Federation and/or the CA during the year.

A grant of £10,000 to Sussex County (to be spread over three years) was approved by the CA Development Committee and then by the Management Committee. Work on phase 1 was undertaken in September 2014. Lawns 1, 2 and 3 were stripped, verti-drained, harrowed, laser levelled and seeded. Work was completed on Friday 26 September 2014 and the grass grew with the aid of a large blanket. Refurbishment of lawns 4, 5 and 6 is due to be started in August 2015.

Another CA development grant was awarded to Guildford and Godalming for the creation of three new lawns to add to the surviving 4th lawn. The process of construction began in early August 2014 and was completed satisfactorily thanks to the considerable efforts of Club members and their chosen contractors. The Club hope to start using the lawns at the beginning of the coming season. They will then make plans to construct a modest pavilion in the footprint of the defunct bowling club pavilion.

Caterham completed the installation of a new toilet. This was in use for the last few weeks of the season. It did not improve the croquet but it made everybody feel a little more relaxed when playing. Work on two new lawns was also completed. Members were looking forward to using the two new lawns (and the toilet) in April with the local council completing the landscaping at no cost to the Club.

The new club at Lodsworth had a great start in their first season. The Club was officially opened on 10 May 2014 by Steven Mulliner and now has 70 members of whom 45 are playing members. The club is looking to maintain the momentum of its development and is raising funds to build a small pavilion adjacent to their court in 2015.

Preston (Brighton) have a long term project to add a third lawn by reviving an old croquet lawn in the atmospheric grounds of the adjacent, council-owned manor house.

Cheam have a plan to install automatic watering at a cost of £10,000. They had a CA grant of £1,000 and would raise the required balance. They would be looking for a supplement from the SECF in due course.

Reigate Priory is close to submitting an application for a CA grant for the much needed addition of two courts to its present single 7/8th sized lawn - a £39,000 project. The Club is confident that their fund raising will be successful but the lease for the new location on land belonging to the Reigate Rugby club has yet to be formalised.

There has been bad news from Crawley in recent years but there is now "a glimmer of light". The £4m restoration of Worth Park, in which the club is situated, is nearly complete. The Council is anxious to raise public awareness of its new flagship and is offering the Croquet Club participation in their many events being held this year in the park. The Club hopes that it will benefit from the publicity promised and thereby strengthen its membership.

The major new development at Medway has been abandoned. The Club found a possible new location in East Malling but decided that the cost of using it was too much. They have now negotiated with the new owners of their present sports club at Ditton to remain on a year to year basis while the long search for a better location continues.

The Development Officer issued his usual plea for any equipment found to be surplus to requirements (however insignificant or dilapidated) to be donated to the Federation for onward transmission to the needy.

Coaching Officer's report

The Coaching Officer (Jonathan Isaacs) was in South Africa. The Secretary summarised his report.

The Academy had another "record year" with 217 entries attending group courses – an increase of 12% on last year. In addition to the group coaching, the Academy trialled winter one to one and small group coaching. This was very successful and would be offered as part of the Academy's activities for 2015.

There had been two notable successes in 2014. It had been necessary to run 4 GC Improvers Courses with 3 of them being fully subscribed and to run 2 Coaches' Qualification Courses, both of which were over-subscribed. One day courses were proving to be more popular. The Supervised AC High Bisque Tournament had a record entry. The AC Beginners and Improvers one day follow up course was successful and would be repeated in 2015. There would also be a one day GC Improvers follow-up course.

Four new courses had been introduced in 2015: a one day GC Advanced Play Course; a one day Psychology Course; a one day GC Improvers Follow-up Course and a one day AC Break Building without Bisesques course.

It was re-emphasised that bespoke coaching could and would be arranged on request. Any club seeking such a course should make contact with Jonathan Isaacs and he would endeavour to get suitably qualified coaches to meet their requirements.

Election of Officers and Committee for 2015-16

The following persons offered themselves for election and were not opposed.

Chairman: **Bill Arliss** (Sussex County)

Secretary: **John Reddish** (Dulwich)

Treasurer: **Hilary Smith** (Compton)

Committee members: **Michael Hague** (Woking); **Richard Hilditch** (Hampstead Heath); **Jonathan Isaacs** (Sussex County); **Roger Loram** (Canterbury and Ramsgate) and **George Noble** (Surbiton).

The elected SECF CA Representative **David Mooney** (Roehampton) is also a member of the Committee. An election takes place every 3 years. If necessary, this will be arranged before the CA AGM in October 2015.

Election of Auditor (Independent Examiner)

The Treasurer proposed **Clive Hayton** (Sussex County) as an appropriately qualified candidate and the meeting approved his appointment by acclamation.

The 2015 League Rules

The League Organiser (Richard Hilditch) reported that, in 2015, the mid-September deadline for the completion of matches in the GC Handicap League would be maintained (to enable the play-off to take place before the end of the season).

Sussex County had protested that they should not have come second in the GC Restricted Level League. They had an arguable case because they had won 4 out of 4 matches (2 x 5-2 and 2 x 4-3) whereas the League winner (Canterbury) won only 3 matches (2 x 5-2 and 1 x 4-3) and had a walk over. On a proper application of the rules Canterbury had a higher win percentage (67% against 64%) when their walk over was added in (at an averaged score). Sussex had reluctantly accepted that this was the appropriate solution and did not wish to suggest that, if this happened again, there should be a play-off.

Carolyn Doswell (Merton) raised the issue as to whether there should be a play off when three teams ended the season on exactly the same number of points and with exactly the same points difference (as had happened in the GC Handicap League). The League Organiser pointed out that this had never happened before so he had taken executive action and weighted the value of the wins by reference to the records of the teams defeated so as to separate the otherwise equal teams. A proposal that the Regulations should be amended to provide that where 2 or more teams could not be separated by matches won; "who beat whom" and "games difference" there should be a play-off was carried by 14 votes to 6.

2015 Events

The Secretary announced that the dates for all but one of the 2015 events had been fixed and would be published in the Calendar in due course. The dates were 16/17 May: AC Team Doubles (at Southwick); 27/28 June GC Southern Challenge Division 2 (at Surbiton); 1 July: AC Ladies' Day (at Southwick); 4/5 July: GC Southern Challenge Division 1 (at Southwick); 2

August: GC Team Doubles and Singles (at Southwick). The date for the One-ball Teams event (at Roehampton) would be announced when it had been fixed. Eight clubs indicated that they might wish to enter this proposed competition. David Mooney agreed to inform the Secretary as soon as matters had been finalised by the Roehampton committee.

Other business

The Treasurer (Hilary Smith) drew attention to new Food Safety Regulations which might have implications for those selling food to players and guests at their clubs.

Trevor Longman (Ramsgate) similarly drew attention to the fact that qualifications were required if anyone proposed to undertake spraying (of their Club's lawns). George Noble confirmed that spraying without having passed the relevant tests was illegal and that the so-called "grandfather" permission (granted to all those who were old and had been spraying for many years) had been withdrawn with effect from 15 October 2014.

There being no further business, the meeting closed and Club members' representatives moved furniture and partook of an excellent lunch prepared and served by George Noble and his team of Surbiton members. This included Scottish delicacies to mark the fact that a certain Scottish poet, plagiarist and national icon was born on 25 January 1759.