

Minutes of the 29th Annual General Meeting of the South East Croquet Federation held at Surbiton Croquet Club on Sunday 29 February 2016

The following 23 Clubs were represented:

Angmering (S Vallis & D Bartle); Caterham (J Male); Canterbury (R Loram); Cheam (S Nicholas; H Clarke & I & J Cobbold)); Compton (H Smith); Dogmersfield (R Catt & J Johnston); Dulwich (A Gryce; P Newton & J Reddish); Ealing (M Sherratt); Ember (M Lambert); Hampstead Heath (R Hilditch); Littlehampton (C Merrington and P Sherwin); Merton (C Doswell & N Furse); Old College, Dulwich (C Brook); Preston (C Corker); Purley Bury (J Overell; P Hinton & J Torolo)); Ramsgate (T Longman & R Loram); Reigate Priory (M Peacock); Roehampton (A Wilkinson & D Mooney); Rottingdean (W Tennant); Royal Tunbridge Wells (J Diamond);); Surbiton (D Beck; M Pulsford; N Furse & G Noble); Sussex County (W Arliss; C Hayton & J Hoptoff); and Woking (A & B Miles).

Apologies for absence were received from:

J Isaacs (Committee/Sussex County); M Hague (Committee/Woking); R Tilcock (Ryde); K Lennon (Ivychurch); C Roberts & F Coleman (Phyllis Court); M Thompson (Guildford & Godalming) and J Cooper (West Wittering)

The minutes of the 28th AGM held on Sunday 25 January 2015 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes

The Secretary (John Reddish) reported that the Federation had become a member of the Croquet Association in accordance with the proposals advanced by the Chairman of the CA and agreed at the last AGM.

Approval of the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2015

The Treasurer (Hilary Smith) presented the accounts. She explained that the "Secretarial Expenses" of £148 were nothing to do with the Secretary but were the costs of maintaining the web site. Previous "piggy backing" on the CA site had ended and the Federation was meeting its own costs of digital communication. The accumulated cash assets of the Federation (£6,816 as at 31 December 2015) 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).

Jon Diamond (Royal Tunbridge Wells) proposed and Ian Cobbold (Cheam) seconded a proposal that the accounts should be approved. This was carried nem. con.

Annual Subscription for 2016

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

Tournament fees

In accordance with previous practice, the tournament fees fell to be increased to take account of the increase in the CA suggested rates for lawn hire. The objective remained the same – to break even after payment of those fees and the incidental expenses. Accordingly, it was proposed and accepted that the fees should be increased as follows:

AC Teams Doubles at Southwick: £37.50 (from £36)

Ladies Teams Day at Southwick: £34 (from £31)

Southern Challenge at Southwick and Surbiton: £65 (from £62)

GC Teams Day at Southwick: £20 (from £17)

The entry fee for the One Ball Teams event at Roehampton (£40) will remain the same as last year, in accordance with the host Club's requirement.

The entry fee for each league will remain the same as before: £2.50.

Chairman's report

The Chairman (Bill Arliss) emphasised that the Federation should in his view, support the CA in its tasks of maintaining the infrastructure of the game. We would remain as an independent body and would not be subservient to the national Association but we would be supportive of its activities in relation to the Laws; equipment; marketing; development and other activities that standardised and promoted the game.

The Chairman invited suggestion for further tournaments that might be considered and, if appropriate, implemented by the Committee. Trevor Longman (Ramsgate) and Jon Diamond (Royal Tunbridge Wells) suggested and discussed a Federation event similar to the All England AC and GC Handicap Tournaments, starting at Club level and moving to a Federation Finals Day. The Secretary wondered whether there would be support for a GC "C Level League" (level play for teams with handicaps restricted to, say, 8 and above). David Mooney suggested an AC SECF Club Champions Tournament. Carolyn Doswell (Merton) invited consideration of an Alternate Stroke Doubles event. Single day events would, it was said, be more popular than weekend events, though it was noted that, while this would work for GC competitions, a satisfactory single day AC competition would difficult to arrange.

Report on the further development of the SECF web site

The Webmaster (Bill Arliss) reported that there was always work to be done to improve the site. 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. Most had been but there had been an occasional lapse into separate emails.

Presentation by Mr Brian Wilson (Chairman of the CA Marketing Committee)

The Chairman invited Mr Wilson to provide information concerning National Croquet Day. He outlined the objectives (more people to play competitively; the provision of support for Clubs; the retention of members and the use of social media such as Facebook) and said the CA wanted to identify the changes needed. The media (both national and local) had to be shown a change of image. We should point out that we are nice people achieving a 2 to 3% increase in participation each year. Examples of the leaflets that had been prepared were circulated. Some Club representatives expressed dismay that there was a picture of an elite player lying on a lawn checking the line of a peel. One said that if any member of her Club got down in that way, he or she would never get up again. Others pointed out that a range of playing styles and garb had been carefully selected to demonstrate the variety of activities encompassed by the Croquet Association.

Jon Diamond (Royal Tunbridge Wells) drew attention to a BBC web site which did not (yet) have any reference to National Croquet Day.

GC Handicapping

The Chairman provided more information about the changes in the GC handicapping system. He again noted that the results of level play matches were poor predictors of the outcomes of handicap matches. The "effective handicap" trial held in 2014 and 2015 had been abandoned, despite its obvious merits. The GC Handicap Committee had recruited expert mathematicians and had piloted a new system in East Anglia. This had been rolled out for the whole country and would be used in 2016. Full details are in the Gazette and on the CA web site.

Secretary's report

The Secretary said that the Federation consisted of 44 member clubs in 2015. He would be circulating the SECF Calendar in due course and invited all Clubs with tournaments not in

the CA Fixtures Book which were open to non-members to let him have the details for inclusion.

Report on 2015 Leagues and Events

The League Organiser reported that the “failure rate” (matches not arranged or played) was again commendably low and invited acclamation for the following:

AC “A” League winners: Sussex County

AC “U” League winners: Caterham

AC “B” League winners: Caterham

GC Level League winners: Sussex County

GC Level Restricted League winners: Sussex County

GC Handicap League winners: Woking

AC Team Doubles Champions: Purley Bury

Ladies’ Team Champions: Sussex County

Golf Croquet Team Doubles Champions: Angmering

Golf Croquet Team Singles Champions: Sussex County II

The GC Southern Challenge Division One Champions: Dulwich

The GC Southern Challenge Division Two Champions: Reigate Priory

One Ball Team Event (Roehampton): Reigate Priory

Representatives of the winning Clubs collected the trophies and were applauded.

Development Officer’s report

The Development Officer (Michael Hague) was not present (because he was recovering from his recent surgery). His usual comprehensive report on the progress made by Clubs who had received grants from the Federation and/or the CA during the year was therefore not available.

However, the Secretary was able to confirm that:

the CA grant of £10,000 to Sussex County (to be spread over three years) had been paid and supplemented by the Federation (£333.33) last year. A further payment of £333.33 would be required.

Guildford and Godalming were planning to go ahead with the erection of a modest pavilion during the coming season (if they succeeded in obtaining planning permission). They were submitting an application for a grant of £5,000 to be considered by the CA Development Committee. SECF Committee approval would be sought for a further grant of £500 from the Federation.

Coaching Officer’s report

The Coaching Officer (Jonathan Isaacs) was in South Africa (again). In his absence, Janet Hoptroff (Sussex County), the Secretary of the Croquet Academy and the Coaching Officer at SCCC, reported that, in 2015, the Academy ran 18 courses with 262 participants – a 21% increase on 2014. Places on courses in 2016 had been quickly filled so that there were only 2 left. There will be 23 courses involving 38 days of coaching. All levels of play in both GC and AC will be addressed – from complete beginners through to an advanced master class. Following the success of the AC High Bisque Tournament there will be a GC High Bisque Tournament in 2016 (with coach assistance) to introduce new players to tournament play. The emphasis will be on enjoyment. The Academy wished to show players that tournament play can be fun and not over-serious. The Handicappers’ Workshop would be another new course. It was hoped that this would be particularly helpful with the introduction of the new GC handicapping system. There will also be a one-day Simple Guide to Tournament Management. This was filled within 6 days so the Academy would be running another one. It will be aimed at not only prospective Tournament Managers but also Club Competition Secretaries. It will cover the different formats for competition play.

Janet re-emphasised that bespoke coaching could and would be arranged on request for individual clubs. If a group of players wanted to go to Southwick for a tailor-made course that could be set up. Academy coaches would also come out to clubs to coach groups. Any club

seeking such a course should make contact her and she 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 2018.

Election of Auditor (Independent Examiner)

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

The 2016 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 had been maintained (to enable the play-off to take place before the end of the season) and that Woking had defeated Merton 5-4.

Carolyn Doswell (Merton) raised an issue relating to the date upon which the relevant handicap restrictions take effect and proposed a motion that the last sentence of the SECF GC Restricted League rules should be deleted ["These restrictions apply at the point that the fixture is arranged"] and replaced by: "If a selected player's handicap becomes altered outside competition ranges in the period of 7 days before a pre-arranged match, the person may still play in that match". This motion was seconded by Jon Diamond (Royal Tunbridge Wells) and carried by 14 votes to 4.

It was agreed that the previously rejected proposal for the imposition of a handicap limit of 10 (or, now, 12) should not be re-visited and that a suggestion that players with fewer than 10 games on their cards should not be permitted to take part in Handicap Leagues should not be pursued.

The meeting confirmed that a north/south divide of the participants in the GC Handicap League was to be preferred.

2016 Events

The Secretary announced that the dates for all of the 2016 events had been fixed and would be published in the Calendar. The dates were 21/22 May: AC Team Doubles (at Southwick); 18 June: One Ball Teams (Roehampton); 6 July: AC Ladies' Day (at Southwick); 2/3 July: GC Southern Challenge Division 1 (at Southwick) and GC Southern Challenge Division 2 North (at Surbiton); 9/10 July GC Southern Challenge Division 2 South (Southwick); 7 August: GC Team Doubles and Singles (at Southwick).

World Teams Tournament

Don Beck (Surbiton) protested that he had been given little time to draw attention to the Tournament which would be held at Surbiton between 15 and 21 May. He invited attendance and offers of assistance.

Other business

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 delicacies prepared from recipes published in the Guardian newspaper.