

**SWANAGE CROQUET CLUB
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD IN SWANAGE CONSERVATIVE CLUB
AT 10.30 a.m. ON THURSDAY 5 JANUARY 2023**

PRESENT

Greg Vaughn (Chair), Bruno Charron (Treasurer), Jill Benwell (Secretary), Sandra Allan, John Babbage, Ron Barker, Deborah Brown, Vicki Church, Robin and Virginia Claridge, Gary Coleman, Barbara Cousins, David Dean, Alan Dominy, Sally Fazekas, Sandy Garner, Alison and Laurence Gloyn-Cox, Isobel and Tony Green, Tim Hughes, Nancy King, Peter Madge, Colin Nunn, Pearl Oliver, Brenda O'Reilly, Simon Parvin, Simon Patterson, Joanna Penley, Margaret Pratt, Jane and Stephen Reading, Keith Southern, Ian Swanson, Andrew Temple, Robin Tiller, Jackie and Malcolm Todd, Roger Wilcox, Graham and Pauline Windle.

APOLOGIES

Dot Bonfield, Roy Church, Anthony and Roni Clegg, Sally Coleman, Stan Gee, Barbara Harden, Michael Joyner, William Knight, Christine Lamagni, Nick O'Connor, Jackie Temple, Lindsay and Neil Towlson, Mike Wells, Pauline Wisker.

MINUTES OF 2019 A.G.M

These were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

Robin Claridge: Do we have a record of the AGM's carried out by email in the years 2020 and 2021.

Greg: Not as such, but Pauline Windle can provide copies of all the emails sent and received if required.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

An eventful year with highs and lows

At the very least we can say 2022 was eventful. On the plus side we attracted several new members, all players enjoyed the great weather and well presented lawns. Thanks to Ron Barker and Simon Parvin for all their work on the lawns. Much appreciated. The level of play improved noticeably with several members, including new members impressing us greatly with how quickly they were becoming skilled players. Thanks to Tony Green, our club coach, who provided many players with coaching and self belief. Many members enjoyed the friendly atmosphere and opportunity to spend some time at the club exercising both body and mind. Many others also joined the club's league teams resulting in the high handicap team coming top of their league and the low handicap team topping the league and going on to win the South West final.

The less positive news is that for reasons beyond your Committee's control or understanding the Cricket Club gave our club notice, leaving us temporarily homeless. You will have already been sent lots information detailing the series of events that led to our eviction which hopefully gives you a comprehensive understanding of what happened. What some clearly do not appreciate is how hard your Committee worked throughout the year to try and find a way forward with the Cricket Club. The Committee did this without complaint and hopefully without spoiling your enjoyment of the playing year. Once we shared the Cricket club's decision many have been supportive but several have queried what the Committee were doing and why they didn't do more. The answer is your Committee did lots and explored every route they could to come to an agreement. My personal thanks to all on the Committee for all their work.

So where do we play next year. We have several options we are exploring and have enlisted the help of Swanage Town Council. We will be meeting with the Head of Tourism and the Council's Chief Executive Officer on Tuesday to discuss several options. I will not be available but Simon Parvin will take the lead for the Croquet Club. At the moment our choice of site would be Forres Field, former sports ground for Forres School, after its closure, sports ground for the Language School, also now closed, and then the Autistic School. It is not used more than twice a year, and Swanage Town Council is responsible for its upkeep.

Sandy Garner: How many lawns could it support?

Greg: Forres Field is accessed from Victoria Avenue and is set between St. George's Field and the Pitch and Putt. There is room for 4 lawns and also parking for cars. It is, at the moment, open to dog walkers, but lends itself to being fenced off.

Pearl Oliver: Is there a hut on the site?

Greg: Not at the moment, but there is a container and hard standing. It is near to utilities so we could install a clubhouse if we are given security of tenure.

Robin Tiller: It must be an expense to the Council if they have to maintain the land.

Greg: Yes, and part of our argument is that it is an expense that we would take on.

Sandra Allan: Isn't Forres Field a designated sports venue?

Greg: Yes, and that is another argument in our favour. We would be fulfilling two of the top three requirements in the Council's Strategic Plan, we would be promoting health and wellbeing and provide sports facilities for local people.

Peter Madge: Could we ask the Council for financial support?

Bruno: There are a number of roads we can go down for financial support, but none are available until we have found a site and have security of tenure.

Greg: Bruno and Keith are looking at a number of options to raise money once we have a site.

Peter Madge: It is unlikely we will be playing this year.

Greg: We could play at Bon Accord this summer if there is no other option. The Headmaster and Dorset County Council are happy for us to do so. There are no facilities, so we would probably have to hire a portalo. The Headmaster is keen for us to provide storage and w.c's.

Laurence Gloyn-Cox: What is happening to £5,000 we contributed towards the new Cricket Pavilion?

Greg: We have asked the Cricket Club to refund our money, and their Committee is meeting today to consider their response. Over the last couple of years we had noticed a tendency for the Cricket Club to 'forget' agreements made in good faith, so before handing the money over we got a signed document agreeing to four provisos. So far, not one of the agreed requirements has been fulfilled. Should their Committee refuse to refund the money we will take legal steps to acquire it, and we will also ask for other contributions to the upkeep of the pavilion and lawn maintenance equipment made in the past to be taken into account.

Robin Claridge: Do we have any indication of the sort of rent we would have to pay?

Greg: No, but we don't have a definite site at the moment. The only people who have given some indication are the Football Club. They wouldn't charge us rent, but we could use their facilities for a contribution. They are keen to have us as they want to apply for a grant to improve the sports hall, and having another sports club under their umbrella would improve their chances. They have offered part of the field to the right of the path after the car park. It could be fenced off and would probably have room for 3 lawns.

Sandy Garner: Wouldn't that put us in the same position that we were in with the Cricket Club?

Greg: Yes, and the Football Club are quite low down on our list of options.

Vicki Church: Forres Field, is that designated for sports only?

Greg: Yes, and we would provide sports facilities for the community.

Malcolm Todd: Are we happy with the return of £5,000, and have we got all our equipment back?

Greg: We didn't intend to fall out with the Cricket Club. If we get £5,000 we will move on and hope to repair relationships. We hope that they will not email our members directly in future. They misused the information they were given, they requested the Croquet Club members email addresses so that they could invite us to social events to foster a closer relationship between the two clubs, the first thing they did was to email you all to say that the Croquet Club would no longer be playing on the Cricket ground, and that they intended to start their own social croquet club under the Cricket Club umbrella. There is £10,000 fine plus a prison sentence for continued misuse of data. We will be writing to the Cricket Club asking them to delete all your email addresses.

Peter Madge: The football field is used by a huge number of dog walkers, this could be a problem.

Greg: We would only use the site if we could fence the land.

Robin Tiller: Both the Cricket Club and the Football Club received £1,000 from the Swanage Carnival.

Greg: In all fairness the Cricket Club worked hard for their money, they ran a bar for the day.

Keith Southern: There are larger pots of money we could be going for, but we have to secure a site first.

Let's all stay positive. It has been the aspiration of the Croquet Club for some time to have their own club rather than having to share another club's facilities. Perhaps this horridness will turn out to be a blessing and the incentive we needed to chase our dreams and secure our own site.

Greg Vaughn Chair

Bruno Charron proposed a vote of thanks to Greg for all the hard work he has put in to finding us a new home.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

My (Simon's) report is inevitably truncated in the light of events around the Cricket Club.

Member numbers

The Club membership was as follows:

2022 83

2021 102

While numbers appear to be down last year, 2021 was an unusually good year, perhaps the result of Covid.

Membership fees

For 2023, no decision on membership fees can be made until we know if and where we will be able to play. Fees in 2022 were £53 made up by £25 to the Cricket Club and £28 to the Croquet Club.

It is worth noting that the Cricket Club wanted to increase the fee paid by the Croquet Club to £4,000 per year. It received approximately £2,296 in 2022 and will receive £0 in 2023 so rather than increasing the payment by the Croquet Club by £1,700 they will lose the £2,296.

Ground maintenance (my other role)

Assuming we find a suitable home for the coming year, as a minimum, we will need to buy a mower similar to that which we used at the Cricket Club. New, the G34D costs £7935.00 +VAT. Used versions are advertised from time to time (none at present). This machine has a relatively heavy roller at the back which will help flatten the lawns hopefully without the need to buy a (very) expensive dedicated roller (£12,995 for a 36 inch roller).

Any ground maintenance equipment will need to be stored securely on site.

Simon Parvin. Membership Secretary

Gary Coleman: Is it worth setting fees to provide a fighting fund?

Simon: We don't need the money at the moment as we have no costs. Our initial costs would be a mower (approx. £8,000 new), ideally a roller (approx. £13,000) and a watering kit.

Greg: The Football club have offered us a roller that was gifted to them by the Cricket Club, but I would be worried about using it on Health and Safety grounds.

The Cricket Club wished to increase our contribution to £4,000 a year regardless of the number of members we had. They wanted the social membership fee to remain at £25 and the remainder to come out of our reserves. This would have resulted in depleting our reserves over 3 or 4 years. We would not lie to our membership, we would increase our fees to cover the cost of £4,000, which would result in an annual fee of £80 per head at our present level, but if the membership dropped (which we thought it might), then the income would not reach the required level. The Cricket Club suggested that the wealthier of our members could put their hands in their pockets to make up the shortfall.

Gary Coleman: Are we likely to be hamstrung by the lack of funds?

Greg: We are meeting with Swanage Town Council on Tuesday, and should have a better idea of how to proceed then.

Simon: All members will be informed to the results of the meeting, you will be kept completely in the loop.

Membership Secretary's Report be adopted: Proposed Pauline Windle, seconded Sandra Allan.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Please find attached my report for the year ending 1st November 2022. The only matter of note is that I am not in a position to propose the level of subscription for the year to come. However feel safe in the knowledge that you will all carry on being members of the SWANAGE Croquet Club until such time as we are in a position to make a proposal following the formulation of a budget.

Bruno Charron SWANAGE Croquet Club Treasurer

Treasurer's Report be adopted: Proposed Simon Parvin, seconded Pauline Windle.

MATCH SECRETARY'S REPORT

League Secretary / Match Captain

- League matches.
 - 2022 was a very good year for the club in league competitions.
 - Swanage are the 2022 South West Federation Handicap League champions, repeating a similar success in 2016. After winning their section of the league with 5 wins and 1 loss, in the regional playoffs they easily won the semi-final at home to Exeter and then, in the final against Cheltenham at a neutral venue, ran out victors by 11.5-8.5 after being level at the lunch break. Over the season 13 people played in at least one match. As champions Swanage will be invited to be the SW representative in next year's CA Federation Shield competition (a national inter-region knockout competition).
 - In only their second year in the High Handicap league the Swanage team won their section with 4 wins from 4 matches (including one 19-1 victory) but then lost in the playoff semi-final by 7.5-12.5 away to Budleigh Salterton. 9 people played in at least one match.
 - These results were based on rapid improvements by several players, resulting in more, and greater, handicap reductions than in any season that I can recall. The largest reductions were Gary Coleman by 4 (12 to 8), Nick O'Connor by 4 (9 to 5), and Helen Diconimos by 3 (12 to 9).
- Friendly matches.
 - Will be covered by Sally Fazekas in her report.
- Internal competitions.

- 20 people played in the annual Bob Oliver one-day competition with the men's trophy won by Dave Morton (first time winner) while the ladies' trophy was won for the third time (2011, 2016, 2022) by Sally Fazekas.
- Both the William Ormerod Challenge (a mixture of level and handicap play) and the Roy Smith Memorial Handicap Challenge were won by Nick O'Connor, and the Captain's Challenge (handicap doubles) was won by Ron Barker and Greg Vaughn.
- External achievements.
 - Simon Parvin won East Dorset's C-level tournament (handicaps 7+).
 - Swanage members dominated the East Dorset handicap doubles competition. Keith Southern and Simon Parvin narrowly defeated Sandra Allan and Tim Hughes in the final, while one of the beaten semi-final pairs was Nick O'Connor and William Knight.
 - East Dorset teams had a good season in the Southern Federation leagues. The A team, managed by Keith Southern, won the open league and the B team, managed by Tim Hughes, won the 3+ league.
- 2023 season.
 - The South West Federation has made some changes to the leagues available for 2023. A new level-play league restricted to handicaps 5+ has been introduced and the unrestricted level-play league has been restructured to a 2-tier structure with promotion and relegation.
 - The playing strength of the Swanage club could probably now hold its own in the 2nd division of the unrestricted league, but for 2023 the decision has been made to remain in the same leagues as in 2022, it being almost a moral obligation to defend the Handicap League championship.
 - The player pools for both the Handicap League and the High Handicap League have agreed to play all fixtures away in 2023 despite the travel involved. However if Swanage has a home fixture in the CA Federation Shield competition, East Dorset have agreed that it can be played there.
 - Advantage Croquet. It seems likely that all handicap croquet competitions will move away from the extra turns format to the Advantage Croquet format from 2024 onwards. For 2023 the presumption is that the South West Federation Handicap League will remain as extra turns, but that is not yet 100% sure. To provide club players with experience of Advantage Croquet, the committee will consider whether some of our internal competitions should use that format in 2023.

KMS 23.12.22

Funding

- Keith has been in contact with the SW Federation Development Officer for advice on how and when to obtain funding.
- The Croquet Association will give a development grant of up to £10,000 spread over 2 years.
- Sport England will also give grants provided 2 requirements are met
 1. There is security of tenure
 2. Some attempt has been made to raise funds.
- Crowdfunding has been used very successfully by some clubs, and SW Federation will be running an online seminar later this month on the subject.
- Sport England will match up to £10,000 raised by crowdfunding.

Ron Barker: What is the fee to be a member of the CA

Keith: We used to be Affiliate Members for £50 per annum, but this was being abused, so the option is no longer available. Now there is a sliding scale, 1st year £60, 2nd year £90 3rd year £120.

Gary Coleman: When will we have to change?

Keith: We are already in our third year, beyond this we will pay a per capita charge.

HANDICAP TEAM CAPTAIN'S REPORT

The South West Croquet Federation handicap league is split into four sections with the winners of each section playing in a semi final and the winners of those matches completing in the grand final for the shield.

The Swanage team won their section by winning five of the six matches having overcome some last-minute player withdrawals due to Covid. Other club members were quick to fill their places at short notice which is a reflection of the team spirit evident within the club.

Having qualified for the semi-final, the team's next challenge was against an "on form" team from Exeter who, during our pre-match conversations, were clearly feeling confident about the outcome. The match was played at Swanage and it soon became apparent that the home team had the upper hand, so much so that when the score reached 12 - 2, Exeter decided that enough was enough and conceded the match.

The team then progressed to the grand final which was held at Bath against Cheltenham Croquet Club. I am most grateful to Greg. for deputising for me as this was always going to be a tough match and which was not helped by an unfortunate mix up of player pairings, by the opposition, in the early games. At the half way point Swanage were trailing by 4 games to 6, however during the break a team talk by the acting captain helped lift their spirits and the Swanage players dug in to win the match by 11 ½ games to 8 ½ - a commendable turnaround.

I do not intend to highlight individual performances, of which there are many, as it is a team effort, and all the results are available on the club website, however it is worth noting your chairman produced consistently impressive results, so perhaps he should be re-elected, if for no other reason, than to play for the team next year!

As a direct result of this success the club has been invited to represent the South West Federation in the country wide "Federations Shield" next year which is a Croquet Association challenge between all the various Federations. This is a great accolade for Swanage Croquet Club.

In spite of the challenges facing the club next year I am delighted that your committee has decided to re-enter a team in the league giving us the opportunity to defend our title

Tony Green
Handicap team captain.

Friendlies and games

Unfortunately we were unable to play at home as the Swanage Cricket Club would not allow us to play any friendly matches at home.

We won against East Dorset, a draw at Dowlish Wake, lost at Wareham.

All the games were played in a good spirit and it gave a chance for some players to experience match play.

Thank you to all those who took part and made it so enjoyable.

The games days have been running for five years now, this gives a chance for members to play board games, crib, bridge or just have a coffee and a natter. We have between 15 and 17 people attending on a Wednesday morning from 10.30am to 1.00pm at the Swanage Conservative Club.

Sally Fazekas

AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

Proposed – to remove all reference the Cricket Club from our Constitution (see attached document).

Peter Madge: Do we have enough people present to change the Constitution?

Pauline: Yes, we have a quorum.

Vote: 40 in favour, 1 abstention, 0 against.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

To provide continuity over this difficult time, all the Committee have agreed to stand again in their present roles.

Gary Coleman has been co-opted onto the Committee to provide legal insights.

Name	Position	Proposed	Seconded
Greg Vaughn	Chair	Steve Reading	Tony Green
Pauline Windle	Vice Chair	Steve Reading	Isobel Green
Bruno Charron	Treasurer	Laurence Gloyn-Cox	Sandra Allan
Jill Benwell	Secretary	Isobel Green	R Brownridge
Simon Parvin	Membership Sec.	Laurence Gloyn-Cox	Sandra Allan
Sally Fazekas	Friendlies & games	Jane Reading	Tony Green
Keith Southern	League Secretary	Virginia Claridge	Dave Morton
Gary Coleman	Legal Advice	Sally Fazekas	Bruno Charron

All Committee members elected unanimously, no abstentions.

APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS

Tony Green has agreed to stand as the Examiner of Accounts for 2023

Our thanks to Laurence Gloyn-Cox for all the hard work he put in this year.

Proposed Pauline Windle, Seconded Vicki Church.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Robin Claridge: Should we try to recoup other expenses we helped the Cricket Club with?

Greg: They claim they never needed or asked for our help with any expenses.

Ian Swanson: Can we have a statement of our contributions to the Cricket Club?

Pauline: has made a list of all our contributions, and will ask Simon to circulate it to all members.

Sandy Garner: Our fees are very reasonable compared to other clubs.

Pauline: We hope to keep our fees low to encourage social inclusion, another plus with the Town Council.

Virginia Claridge: What sites are under consideration?

Greg: We have 5 contenders at the moment. Our first choice would be Forres Field, the other sites are King Georges' Field adjacent to the toilets, Bon Accord, the Football Club and finally Old Malt House at Langton. The developers are in negotiation with the Planning Department, so it might be some time before we got a decision one way or the other on the Old Malt House site. Two sites that we have considered and discounted are Studland Cricket Club site and Spyways Farm. The former as the owner allows access to the beach from holiday lets across the site, and the latter as it is part of a holiday complex.

We are still looking for new sites.

Pearl Oliver: Should we try to reclaim past monies given to the Cricket Club?

Greg: We would consider that route should we not get back £5,000 and decide to take the Cricket Club to the small claims court.

Once we have any concrete news to share with you Simon will send it via email. At the moment it is not possible to set fees for next year as we need some idea of what our outgoings will be before we can set a budget. Once we have a ground we can play on we will arrange an enrolment day.

We must now put this behind us and move forward in a positive way. We will no longer be restricted on our playing hours and days, it is a chance for the club to move forward.

Both Pearl Oliver and Vicki Church proposed a vote of thanks to the Committee for all their hard work.

The meeting closed at 12.05 pm

Signed:

Date: