

Cygnets

South West Area Newsletter

Celebrating Croquet Across the Region

Issue 40: February 2023

The first issue of Cygnets for 2023 and a few bits and pieces to see us through to the start of the season.

We've got a couple more Zooms to keep us in touch:

- ✓ 14th February – a bit of a round up of news, GC coaching corner and a discussion on retaining beginners through their early years
- ✓ 14th March – topics to be arranged – your club secretary receives all the details so ask them to keep you informed

Hope you and your lawns are all bearing up well and let's look forward to the season.

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Back to base-ics for Intermediate League?

We've picked up a few murmurings that it would be helpful and encourage more constructive play if Intermediate League games were played to a base.

Currently the League is open to players within a handicap range of 9 to 18. This means that with a base of e.g. 6 or 8, every player would have at least one or two bisques to help get them started. Or with a base 12 the bisques would only be available to the players with higher handicaps.

Let us know what you think and we can consider proposing a change to the League Rules at this year's AGM. If there's sufficient interest, we could include a bit of a discussion in our March Zoom which will be held on 14th.

PS: Advantage GC Zoom meeting

Since this meeting Roy Tillcock has informed us that

*The GCRC agreed at their meeting on Tuesday that use of the unfinished game scales is NOT an infringement of Rule 14.2 concerning reference to printed information.
This of course will make time-limited or unfinished games much simpler for players and managers.*

You can access the page here <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/golf/advantage>

Notes of the meeting may be found on our website: <https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/zoom-meetings/>

Cygnets is emailed to our club contacts who are requested to pass it on to individual club members.
It is also available shortly after publication on our website: www.swfcroquet.org.uk

We welcome queries, suggestions and feedback about Cygnets or any aspect of the SW croquet scene.
Contact: lindawithani@hotmail.com

Budleigh Salterton Croquet College – it's off the ground!

Those of you who came along to our January Zoom meeting will have enjoyed hearing some welcome news from David Warhurst of developments at Budleigh Salterton CC.

He told us about work in hand to re-start the SW Coaching Academy following a 2 – 3-year gap and they hope to be fully re-established in 2024. The aim is to develop a portfolio of courses focussing on player development skills that will be of use across AC and GC and across the handicap range.

Well, here's the update:

Following a break of two years, we are pleased to announce that croquet coaching is once again returning to Budleigh Salterton!

A new series of courses based at the club has recently been published and is now available for booking to South West Federation (SWF) members.

The courses cater to a full range of abilities for the Association, Golf and Short croquet codes. Courses are either ½ or full day depending on the topic presented. The experienced lead coaches all reside in the region. Further information is available on the [Budleigh Croquet College](#) page of the Budleigh club website, where you will also find links to book the courses described.

We very much hope there will be something that interests you here and that delegates get value from and enjoy their visit to Budleigh. Here is the 2023 College programme:

Date Time	Course title	Leader	Code	Handicap range	Duration	Cost
Sat 11 Feb 10:00	AC Openings	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 12-	3 hours	£10.00
Fri 17 Feb 10:00	Getting Into Advanced Play - Part 1	Dave Kibble	AC	AC 8 to 14	1 day	£25.00
Fri 24 Feb 10:00	Two-in-One strokes	Stephen Custance-Baker	GC	GC -1 to 5	3 hours	£13.00
Sat 25 Feb 10:00	Better break play	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 12-	3 hours	£10.00
Fri 03 Mar 10:00	Getting Into Advanced Play - Part 2	Dave Kibble	AC	AC 8 to 14	1 day	£25.00
Fri 10 Mar 10:00	Golf Croquet Mistakes	Stephen Custance-Baker	GC	GC 4 to 9	1 day	£25.00
Sun 12 Mar 10:00	3 ball endings	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 8-	3 hours	£10.00
Fri 17 Mar 10:00	Practical Competitive Golf Croquet	Dave Kibble	GC	GC 3 to 8	1 day	£25.00
Sat 18 Mar 10:00	AC shot technique	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 12+	3 hours	£10.00
Fri 24 Mar 10:00	Every Shot is Tactical	Stephen Custance-Baker	GC	GC 4 to 9	1 day	£25.00
Fri 31 Mar 09:30	An introduction to Association Croquet for GC players	Robert Moss	SC	Any GC	1/2 day	£10.00
Thu 06 Apr 10:00	AC Improver	Paul Francis	AC	AC 14+	1 day	£25.00
Tue 11 Apr 10:00	GC Improver	Paul Francis	GC	GC 7+	1 day	£25.00
Fri 14 Apr 10:00	Getting from B to A	Dave Kibble	AC	AC 0 to 6	1 day	£25.00
Fri 21 Apr 10:00	Taming the triple	Roger Mills	AC	AC 1 to 5	1 day	£20.00
Fri 28 Apr 10:00	Short Croquet 1-day Course	Stephen Custance-Baker	SC	SC 8-	1 day	£25.00
Fri 28 Apr 10:00	Advanced Peeling Workshop	Dave Kibble	AC	AC -1 to 3	1 day	£25.00
Fri 05 May 09:30	Getting maximum bang for your bisques	Roger Mills	AC	AC 8 to 18	1/2 day	£10.00
Mon 22 May 09:30	Pioneering Croquet (AC 14 to 18)	Roger Mills	AC	AC 14 to 18	1/2 day	£10.00
Fri 07 Jul 09:30	Pioneering Croquet (AC 8 to 12)	Roger Mills	AC	AC 8 to 12	1/2 day	£10.00
Fri 21 Jul 10:00	Develop your coaching skills	Roger Mills	AC / GC	AC 16-; GC 8-	1 day	£25.00
Sat 29 Jul 09:30	The 4-back peel	Duncan Reeve	AC	AC 6-	3 hours	£10.00
Fri 08 Sep 10:00	An introduction to Short Croquet	Robert Moss	SC	Any	1/2 day	£10.00

David would like to establish key areas of demand amongst players and would like to hear from you. He may be contacted on david@warhurst.org.uk

Obituary: Greta Stringer

We were really sad to learn that Greta passed away quietly on 20th December last year.

Greta was a familiar figure on the League circuit for many years. She was a member of Nailsea CC and from time to time, Bristol and Cheltenham as well.

In 2002 she won the Steel Memorial Bowl for the most improved woman player and Nailsea now awards The Greta Stringer Cup to the winner of one of the classes at an annual Nailsea Advanced Play Tournament.

People have nothing but fond memories of her. Some Nailsea members remember:

She was a good Club member as well as a good player in her day. We were involved in the club catering together. She was kind to us newcomers and was always telling us that we must enter competitions as it was the only way to learn! She decided one season that she was going to improve and entered every appropriate competition at Cheltenham and Bristol as well as Nailsea, and she did!

Violet Delmas

Greta started playing the year after me – around 1997. We played together at all levels over the years, and of course all over the South West. Looking back over my results card, the first time we had a match was July 1997 when my handicap was 18 and Greta's 24. She soon caught up and overtook me! Peter Dyke made her a club handicapper in the latter part of her membership. Greta also joined Cheltenham croquet club.

Apart from croquet (and family of course) she enjoyed water colour painting, bridge, her garden etc

Pat Long

Without Greta's kindness I wouldn't be playing croquet. She took the time to open up the (new) clubhouse on an extremely wet and dismal Saturday, made me coffee and would have got me out on the lawns if it hadn't been such awful weather.

She was so welcoming – and persuasive – that she had me signed up for lessons in no time. She also had me playing B-league the following year by telling me that I had to play as the team was one short; I was spirited off to Budleigh Salterton without having a clue as to what I was supposed to be doing Happy days and fond memories of Greta.

Brigit Clayton



I remember her as was a gentle, friendly and supportive woman who told me she had a boiled egg for breakfast every day! I missed her once she no longer came up to the club.

Linda Shaw

Photo: A 16-year-old Eugene Chang has just beaten Greta in the Final of a May Handicap Tournament at Nailsea. Eugene had a fistful of bisques but Greta was as gracious as ever in defeat.

Kathy Wallace remembers Greta's croquet career:

Greta did a huge amount for the Nailsea Club in the late 90s and the following years. Mainly recruitment and generally making people feel welcome. Many of us have said that we would never have joined/stuck around were it not for Greta. The Club was very small then, having only just acquired the Clubhouse. Greta, and a couple of others were the faces and brain and soul of the Club.

She also loved playing at Budleigh Salterton Tournaments and there were many tales of happy times on the beach and in the sea with other croquet players.

Greta also made cakes for tournaments and instigated Winter Lunches which ran for many years as a winter diversion and fund-raiser. She was a fine croquet player. She won the Ladies Rose Bowl, as winner of the Nailsea Club Ladies Competition several times and also won some of the major competitions that included men players. Greta stopped playing because of back and neck problems around 2011 but was a social member for a while. We made her a Life Member just before the Pandemic but she was in decline mentally by then and possibly never really appreciated it.

Croquet became very important to her - she said she had never been good at other sports. She had the eye of an artist and I think that helped! She once designed some beautiful Christmas cards with croquet images. They were very popular and raised funds for the Club.

We all owe her!

Save our lawn mower



Does any club need this standard Allet Elmow lawn mower? It comes with two lead acid batteries and charger. It's going free as Plymouth croquet club is having a tidy up this winter as it needs the space.

Now they have the robot they don't have a use for the big battery powered greens mower and it will go to Mower Heaven if it isn't collected soon.

Linda Lang says: "We had it working the other day but it is temperamental and will only work properly on short grass. It is the standard Allet Elmow adapted for a lead acid battery. The workings, I believe, are those based on a mobility scooter."

If any club is interested you should get in touch through their website. Plymouth-croquet.org.uk

SWF shares international success joy!



Erica Malaiperuman (Nailsea) won the consolation event at the Women's Worlds Championship in New Zealand. Many congratulations Erica

She said: *It was super fun, the whole tournament, I would do it again.*

We look forward to hearing more about it in a future Cygnet.

Erica shares some of the highlights with us:

I miss the 6 beautifully prepared lawns of Christchurch. The extra fast pace and the tough hoops. The ten-minute morning practice in the cool morning light, tossing the kiwi coins and taking those first shots. Running the hoops from right in front because that was the only way you could get through. Remembering our coaches' advice: get to know the conditions and BE PATIENT.

The pleasure of playing 3 matches a day for eight days with no need to do any 'jobs'. The expert referees who were always there when you needed them. The shots that went my way and the ones that didn't.

The lofty verdant trees in the park outside, the hot sun and cool shade. The bountiful snacks and flowing tea and coffee and the wonderfully prepared lunches.

Friendly players with different accents and expressions from around the world, Kiwis, Aussies, Yanks, the Emerald Islanders, the lassies from over the Border and the Pommies. "the reet ball is near the pig" (The red ball is near the peg!) The buzz of a well-run tournament.

I stayed with a charming croquet mad couple and had an "igg" for my breakfast, every day. When it comes down to it, it's the people you meet who make a lasting impression. I was very lucky to get the chance to go, thanks to everyone for encouraging me.

More to come ...

And we look forward to success from Louise Smith (Budleigh Salterton) in the Womens' Worlds GC Championship later this year.

SWF Grants

A timely reminder that in addition to advice from Paul Francis and his development team – Klim Seabright and Brian Wilson, the SWF is able to offer some financial support to SWF member clubs. These are:

Support for New Clubs Development Grant

... to encourage and support the establishment of new clubs or clubs which have been in existence for under 24 months.

Within this, priority will be given to new clubs more than 20 miles away from the nearest established croquet club.

If there are sufficient funds, consideration will be given to applications from more established clubs undertaking developmental work.

Qualifications Bursary

... to support the development of competitive play in the region.

- Bursaries will be available to defray the costs of attending CA qualification courses for coaches and referees.
- Bursaries may also be available to defray the costs of developing handicapping and tournament management skills.

Judith Moore Development Fund

At the AGM in 2022 it was announced that around £1,000 a year for the next three years would be used to develop the SWF coaching program.

For 2023 this will be the Referees' Training Courses we are running. Please note, there are no direct application routes for this fund.

Details of all these may be found on our website: <https://www.swfcroquet.org.uk/> and follow the funding link under the Info for Clubs tab.



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Can you help?

We never give up – we're still looking for people to help strengthen the committee and in particular we're looking for people interested in handicapping, and website development.

We're hardly doing the basics as far as handicapping is concerned – this is what we'd like it to be:

Handicapping Officer

Key role

To encourage and support the implementation of CA approved handicapping practice across the region

Principal activities

- To maintain parity of handicaps between clubs
 - This is mainly undertaken by an analysis of the previous season's AC and GC league results
- To act as a focal point for handicapping enquiries in the region
- To provide guidance to clubs on good handicapping practice
- To resolve handicap queries concerning an individual player in consultation with relevant handicappers
- Monitor the overall equivalence of handicaps between clubs
- Liaise with club, federation and CA handicappers as necessary
- Liaise with the CA Handicapping Committee

Website Caretaker

While our website is excellently maintained by Alison, none of us have the time to really take care of it and nurture and develop it.

We don't always notice when information becomes out of date and there's no way, apart from Stephen's updating of League data, that we can maintain any real sense of what's happening now.

There's so much more that could be done: promoting Zoom meetings, promoting dialogue between member clubs, getting an exciting photo library together ...

You may have other ideas and we'd love to hear them.

Anything else?

There's other ways you could help:

Perhaps we're not doing something you think we should be, perhaps you have your eye on one of the currently-filled roles – we'd like to hear from you all.

Why not have a chat with one of us and if you'd like to take it further, just write a short profile including why, what and how you'd like to help.

You'll be invited to observe a committee meeting (held by Zoom) and your application for co-option will be welcomed.

A Personal Tale: Me and Croquet - Part 1 - Getting Started

David Fuller (East Dorset), only started playing last year and has made vast strides in the game. He tells us about his story – it's well worth reading.



I bumped into Dave Kibble and Linda Shaw at Cheltenham in September at the Challenge and Gilbey event. They both beat me in the handicap section, but I decided to like them both anyway on account of being invited to join them for dinner one evening. On the back of my report of that event, Linda asked if I fancied writing something about my first year in Croquet. I can't imagine who on earth would be interested in my ramblings but, I am retired and have time on my hands, so here we go anyway.

I won't make a habit of it, but to be serious for a moment: my life changed eighteen months ago when my dear wife, Christine, succumbed to Pancreatic Cancer, leaving me somewhat clueless as to what to do with myself. Christine, always the sensible one, gave me full instructions as to how I should proceed with my life which included: 'You will have to find another partner, because you would be rubbish on your own'. Hmm, fair enough. She was always right. But more to the point for this discussion: 'You will have plenty of time to do those daft sporty pastimes that you have always wanted to do'. And so to Croquet.

At University, forty years ago (how long, you don't look that old, why thank you), I remember playing a few games of Croquet, with my three closest friends at the time, on a bumpy old lawn at one of the halls of residence - AC of course, as GC probably hadn't been invented then (no letters please!). I liked it then, and vaguely recall the odd two hoop break, and one doubles match lasting six hours, although memories are blurred due to the alcohol which was mandatory at the time.

I have always played Chess and Bridge, the strategy and tactics stuff, but also the static ball sports like Golf, Bowls, etc. I also like maths / geometry, and so this Croquet thing seemed to be right up my street! And so, sometime in April 2022, I wandered down to East Dorset Croquet Club following an introductory call with Nigel Parkins. The club members could not have been more welcoming, especially as I declared my interest in Association Croquet, for which numbers had been pretty static in recent times. Let me quickly add that I see both forms as interesting challenges, and I fully expect to play more GC in due course, but AC is what I wanted to play first off.

I was taken on to the lawn with one of the club mallets and provided with some basic instruction by Pat Oxley regarding the basics of four ball breaks and off we went. Well, I was hooked. Some things are like that aren't they? Whether its Croquet or Tiramisu, one taste and that's it. I just wanted more slightly alcoholic stuff with coffee in it.

I then had a few sessions with John Pollard, whose engineering background was clear to see in his interest with technical concerns and experiments to demonstrate such concerns. How does lawn speed affect certain shots? Side-style vs Central-style. Identifying one's standard ratio? That sort of thing. I particularly remember a light-bulb moment of hitting a croquet shot from the corner spot, the balls aligned along one side, hitting at 45 degrees, and watching the two balls drag in from their yard lines!

My first Tournament was the Bird Cup at East Dorset, a handicap tournament with full bisques. My first game was vs Jonathan Powe receiving 16 bisques having recently been cut from 16 to 14 by 'Slasher Oxley'. Easy-peasy surely! Except that I used at least half of these getting through 4 or 5

hoops. It became apparent that Reg was not telling the whole story when he recommended (on a video on YouTube) to practice playing breaks in your head. It transpires that it is much more difficult with 28 x 35 yards of grass to deal with. Nevertheless, JP was very kind to offer some advice, in fact light-bulb moment #2 (there were others, but you have probably read enough already): you can use the outside bits of the lawn! For instance, rush a ball off the lawn to allow an accurate croquet shot back into the middle. Obvious now perhaps, but then things were only starting to make sense.

Chris Weedon was asked by senior members of the club to provide some mentoring support. This came at a good time as East Dorset June Week was fast approaching....

Many thanks for this David – we look forward to hearing more from you and seeing you on the lawn.

Everyone comes to croquet from a different place – we'd love to hear your story. Whether you've been playing for ever or just started; whether you're brilliant or enjoy just puzzling out the lawn on your own - do get in touch.

Pegging out in Handicap AC and Short Croquet

A timely pre-season reminder for everyone:

A **ROVER** ball is one that has run the final (Rover) hoop.

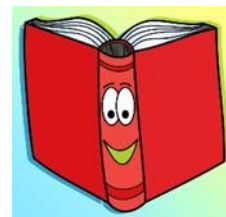
PEGGING OUT means hitting a Rover ball against the peg in such a way that it scores the peg point and is then out of the game.

- 1. Any Rover ball can peg out another Rover ball by causing it to hit the peg, either directly or by the agency of another ball.**
- 2. Any Rover ball can peg itself out if another ball has been pegged in a previous stroke or is pegged out in the same stroke.**
- 3. A non-Rover ball can never peg out another ball nor cause it to be pegged out.**
- 4. A non-Rover ball can never be pegged out.**

Reading Corner

We had two quotes to ponder just before Christmas. First:

The Swindon I knew in 2002 had a lot going for it. ... We had our own 40,000-seater croquet stadium.



Our Chair Tony was first off the mark – bear in mind he did have sight of the draft copy so it was a bit of a privileged position -

Very intrigued by the first mystery quote. All I can say from the Swindon CC viewpoint is 'If only!'

Then a follow-up email a little while later: *Found it - Jasper Fforde 'First among Sequels'*

As it is looking ahead and we do have expansion plans maybe we can get from our plan to go to 5 lawns to this wonderful stadium!!!!

And the second:

She said, 'Is there anything you can't do?'

'I can't play the saxophone, I don't know the rules of croquet, I can't remember my wife's face. My navigation is crap, I can't pole-vault, and I'm hopeless at fist-fighting.'

This was Sue Townsend 'The Woman Who Went to Bed for a Year. Eva refuses to accept the role her life has led her, and when her twins leave home, faced with a husband who is having an affair, she takes to her bed ... with amazing results. A fun read and well worth it.

Advertising in Cygnet

All adverts must be sent fully formatted in such a way as they can be easily inserted (copy and pasted) into Cygnet. We are not in a position to undertake any artwork or correct for errors or omissions.

Charges include a 2/3-line entry in the Diary Dates column in up to three subsequent issues.

Charges

Full Page: £12 Half Page: £6 Quarter Page: £3

Do get in touch

We'd love your account of matches and tournaments you play in – a personal experience is always worth sharing and a photo can paint a thousand words – so don't forget us when you're playing this year.