



# East Anglian Croquet Federation

## Minutes of the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Held on 27 March 2023 - (by Zoom)

The 37th Annual General Meeting of The East Anglian Croquet Federation was opened at 7.30 pm, via Zoom by Geoff Johnson in the chair hosted by the Webmaster Simon Hathrell.

**Present:** Geoff Johnson (Chair), Fran Lambert (Secretary), Arthur Reed (Treasurer), Jonathan Toye (Dev & Eqpt.), Terrey Sparks (Tournaments) Simon Hathrell (Webmaster), Paul Hetherington (Indoors Carpet), George Collin (Safeguarding & C.A. Rep), John Reddish, Thomas Halliday and Brian Havill (Co-opted), plus the following Club Members:

Maldon:	Chris Joslin & Neil Clark.
Wrest Park:	Richard Keighley.
L. Linslade:	Roger Stroud & Gwyn Grout
Northampton:	Paul Chard.
Peterborough:	Ian & Debbie Lines
Newport:	Alex Lake & Tim Walder

### 1. Apologies for absence:

Duncan Hector (Great Dunham), Janet Pope (Meldreth – who could not open the link), Brian Havill

### 2. Chairman's Introduction:

The Chairman (GJ) opened the meeting by welcoming everybody and advising that Zoom would now become the default for AGMs as it avoids a lot of travel. He made a plea for people not to interrupt while someone else was talking but encouraged discussion at the end of a topic provided the comments or questions were relevant to what was being discussed.

Referring to 2022 he remarked that, after a somewhat shaky start due to the Delta Covid variant, the season had proceeded normally. All leagues and competitions were successfully complete as were all club competitions. Peterborough ran out winners of the AC Handicap League, Meldreth the GC Handicap League, Enfield the GC B Level League and Watford the GC Open League.

One great success of the season was that the EACF now had a World AC Champion in Debbie Lines who won the ladies event in New Zealand. She was given a round of applause.

The EACF has worked throughout the year on elements such as handicapping and coaching and GJ was delighted to announce that a new Federation GC handicapper, Jason Carley, has been appointed. Jason is very keen on achieving consistency in handicapping between clubs and members were encouraged to contact him with any queries.

We have also worked to preserve our relationship with the CA despite the major re-organisational changes going on with the change from the CA to Croquet England. GJ was keen to emphasise the key point that the EACF works with the CA, not for it, and exists for the benefit of our members. We therefore need and encourage feedback from member clubs to help us do what they require.

Although AGM's are largely retrospective and full of the necessary reports from officers and league organisers, which may sometimes be tedious, they are nevertheless valuable in that they show to the members what the committee is actually doing with their subscriptions. It is also the members' only chance to challenge and, if necessary, change the composition of the committee.

GJ also drew the meeting's attention to George Colin's brief presentation on Safeguarding which would follow the formal business of the AGM. With the current age profile of most croquet players being towards later life, the drive to encourage younger players is on and Safeguarding is thus a very important topic and the responsibility of all clubs.

Finally, in his second capacity as manager of the GC leagues, GJ pointed out that all the leagues were now on the website and team captains could start organising their fixtures. He reminded people that the Advantage handicapping system was now the default for all EACF GC matches.

### **3. Minutes of the previous meeting:**

The draft minutes of the 2022 AGM held on 23 February 2022 had been circulated with the AGM invitation. There were no questions or comments. GJ asked if the meeting was satisfied that they represented a true record of that meeting and it was approved that he should sign them'.

### **4. Secretary's Report:**

FL presented a written report (**See Appendix 1**) which he did not propose to read out as it had already been circulated. He did, however, comment on his involvement with a new club at Much Hadham, which was physically close to him. Despite the late Queen's Jubilee celebrations and some very hot weather it had got off to a promising start and was all set to embark on its second season. He also mentioned the possibility of a new club at Wellingborough formed by those Northampton members who did not wish to move to the Roade site. FL finally advised that he had been in touch with Ipswich, another club which has had to relocate, and been told that they had lost most of their AC players whilst they were closed and would not be entering the AC league in 2023. They did hope that now they were finally at their new ground, they could rebuild their membership.

There were no questions or comments.

### **5. Treasures Report & Accounts:**

Arthur Reed presented a written report (**See Appendix 2**) supported by the finalised accounts for the year ended 31st December 2022 approved and signed off by the Hon. Examiner. There was an increase in subscription income in 2022 partly due to there being more clubs and partly due to an increase in the subscription rate. The website cost little to run and even less than it might as hosting costs are shared with Watford CC. Playing activities have broadly broken even with the exception of the indoor events which can be discussed later in the meeting. The first small development grant

was made to Leighton Linlade during the year and the accounts showed a small surplus of £234.28. There being no queries AR proposed that the accounts be adopted which was seconded by FL.

There are a few clubs in arrears with their subscriptions, about the same as last year. They will be chased.

We have recently made a grant of £500 to Maldon to assist with relocation and have received an application from Enfield for £500 to assist in the building of a pavilion to replace their temporary gazebo.

There have been five applications for subsidies from people attending referee and coaching courses.

AR asked for questions. JR pointed out that in neither of the two grant cases has an application for funds been made to the CA. The EACF could have taken comfort from the due diligence done by the CA if that had been the case. AR commented that speed was of the essence in the Maldon case and referred to TH to explain the Enfield case. TH replied that they were fully aware of how the CA worked but were still in the process of submitting their application. He was not aware of any deadlines. AR said he was happy with all the background information that had been provided.

It was agreed that subscription rates for 2024 would remain unchanged.

## **6. Development and Equipment:**

JT produced a written report (**Appendix 3**) upon which he did not feel the need to enlarge. He reported that most clubs who had loaned equipment had continued to do so with the exception of Doddington who had managed to secure a grant from their local council to enable them to buy kit. They had therefore returned the EACF loan equipment including the four new mallets that had been made by Mike Percival. The scheme works well for the clubs and is also almost self-funding, generating funds for the acquisition of further equipment.

As an aside JT advised that, on his recent trip to Botswana he had been to the Gaberone Club which had bowling greens and asked about the possibility of croquet. He agreed to discuss croquet in Africa with Debbie Lines separately. The "EACF" might also therefore become the East African Croquet Federation!

JT commented that the increase in the grant amount from £300 to £500 was a good move as EACF grants are much quicker to obtain than grants from other sources although the CA can move quickly too.

GJ commented that JT could not be out recruiting everywhere in such a big region and that the member clubs should also work on this in feeding new clubs into the system.

There were no questions.

## **7. Winter Indoor Carpet Croquet at Soham:**

PH presented a written report (**Appendix 4**) and advised that Soham has had some VIP visitors with Tom Anderson and Don Gaunt dropping by to watch play and were also honoured by a visit from competitors in the Ladies World Championships. It obviously did them some good as the winner and runner-up both played on the Soham carpet.

Tracing trophies would not be difficult this year as they were nearly all in the Maugham household!

Unfortunately, the season's events had been run at a loss this year mainly due to people dropping out at short notice. PH was to ask the committee to consider running it more like a tournament whereby you pay on entry rather than on the day. Whilst this was never going to make a lot of money due to the cost of hiring the venue, it has to be more or less break-even for the EACF to continue to run it.

With nearly all the trophies going to the Maughams, it's clearly time to tweak the rules and teams with a handicap of -4 should be asked to do four peels instead of three.

GJ asked the floor whether they were all aware of the indoor programme at Soham. TS pointed out that many more clubs were now playing in the winter which reduced the uniqueness of playing winter croquet at Soham. Alex Lake queried why there was no GC played (all the monthly sessions are AC only) to which TS replied that it had been tried but that it really didn't work as the court is too small and too fast to suit GC. JT remarked that a lady in a wheelchair from Peterborough CC showed that it was an ideal surface for anyone with mobility issues and queried whether a coaching day could be fitted into the schedule. Alex Lake said he would try to recruit more players from Newport CC next year.

## **8. Webmaster:**

The website has ticked over pretty much as usual (**Appendix 5**) but there were two incidents during the year when the server went down. On both occasions SH only became aware when someone e-mailed him. The basic problem is that the site runs a plethora of services on just 1GB of RAM and more capacity is urgently needed. This is not a problem per se but it comes at a cost. Worst case would be a doubling of cost to £60 but SH is looking around for better deals. GJ pointed out that this was less than the cost of hiring a lawn mower for a day. SH commented that he had managed to increase the site's security rating.

GJ thanked SH for all the time and effort he put in developing and managing the site.

## **9. Community Saver Account:**

GJ stated that, whereas banks and other institutions used to offer clubs and societies "Treasurer's Reserve Accounts" or savings accounts other than for individuals. these have now almost completely disappeared. Current accounts now have laughable interest rates at about 0.1%.

AR has researched the market and found that The Skipton Building Society offers a community saver account with a reasonable rate of interest. Opening requirements are tedious – they need approved signed minutes etc., but it is still better than our funds sitting around doing nothing. GJ formally

proposed that the committee should go ahead with this seconded by AR. SH asked if it was an instant access account to which AR replied that it was. AR advised that the current interest rate was 2.85% and proposed that we should move £8,000 into it. The proposal was passed with no dissenters.

#### **10. Election of Officers & Executive Committee:**

Following a statement from GJ that the three Officers were all willing to stand again, Their reappointment was agreed by the meeting. GJ then listed the Executive Members and introduced Thomas Halliday, commenting that he brought some youthful vigour to the group. There being no other nominations GJ asked the meeting if the appointment and reappointments could be taken as read and asked for any objections. There were none. The following were duly elected to form the Committee for 2023:

<b>Officers:</b>	Geoff Johnson.	(Chairman & G.C. League).
	Francis Lambert.	(Secretary).
	Arthur Reed.	(Treasurer).
<b>Executive:</b>	Jonathan Toye.	(Development & Equip. & Coaching Advice).
	Paul Hetherington.	(Indoors Carpet).
	Simon Hathrell.	(Webmaster).
	George Collin.	(Safeguarding)
	Terrey Sparks.	(A.C. League & Tournaments).
	John Reddish.	
	Thomas Halliday	

As a Federation we are allowed to have two representatives to the CA. George Collin is one and the other is vacant. GJ asked clubs to see if there was a volunteer within their ranks. JR pointed out that with the change from the CA to CE the representative posts would no longer exist. There is no pressure for the EACF to have two persons so it was agreed that GC would remain in post.

**C.A. Representative: Ex- Officio:** - George Collin; One position remains vacant.

#### **11. Examiner:**

John Noble having expressed a willingness to continue as the Hon. Examiner for the current year GJ called for objections of which there were none. He was duly elected and thanked by the Chairman for his previous year's service.

#### **12. Outdoor Programme 2023:**

GJ remarked that he had already commented on the GC programme and invited TS to do the same for AC.

As is known, the EACF is divided into three divisions and they each run their league on an autonomous basis. TS organises the play-off final between the three league winners and always tries to have the play-off on the courts of the previous winner as at least he will know where the trophy is.

He also runs both AC and CG Club Champions Days. Last year it was very difficult to get these under way but this year there are fourteen entries for the AC day to be hosted at Watford. TS would like one more in the AC Level Play and one more in the AC B Level. However, there are only ten entries for the GC day at Hunstanton which could accommodate up to twenty players. He will be chasing clubs in the near future for more entries.

TS also runs the Anderson Shield. As a B Level Advanced tournament last year it only attracted four teams. Running in Handicap Advanced format this year it has five entries and TS would like a sixth as the early rounds could then be split regionally.

The Ken Wheeler Level Play GC inter-counties competition ran really well in 2022 at Colchester with six entrants. It's going to Wrest Park this year whose four lawns means there has to be a restriction on the size of the teams. The only location where the full format can be played is Hunstanton with their five lawns. TS does not push the event until the summer season starts but he usually gets six entrants.

### **13. Any Other Business:**

FL reported that no topics had been sent to him prior to the meeting

Neil Clarke took the opportunity to thank the EACF for the grant that enabled them to move from Maldon to Hatfield Peverel

### **14. Next Meeting:**

As there was no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8,30 pm, thanking all those members for logging in.

The date for the next and 38th Annual General Meeting will be proposed towards the end of 2023.

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### **Presentation**

Immediately after the closure of the meeting George Collin presented a short session on safeguarding.

Ron Carter is the national safeguarding officer and he does not wish to be sole so a team is being put together. GC is the EACF Federation Safeguarding Officer, soon to be called Welfare Officers,

If anyone needs full information they can go to the CA website and key in safeguarding. GC encourages everyone to do this so that they have a reasonable idea of what is involved. Although most of the safeguarding information is common sense, it is as well to be familiar with the content.

Croquet is quite clean but other sports are not.

Problems might crop up more often than you think. People who are not suitable for contact with children are quite often very devious in their attempts to have themselves put in positions of trust for children.

Each club must have a safeguarding officer and, if one is not appointed, then the club chair is deemed to be the safeguarding office. GC does not think this is entirely satisfactory. In any event the CA should be informed as to who is the safeguarding officer. The EACF has thirty-five clubs but only thirteen notified safeguarding officers so clubs should ask if they need help.

Safeguarding is not only for children but also for those who need a carer. DBS checks are not often necessary and there is a flow chart on the CA website which can be used to see if any particular safeguarding issue needs one.

Finally there is a free on-line course with five modules which Safeguarding Officers will be expected to take in the future.