

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
NORTH WEST FEDERATION OF CROQUET CLUBS
The Meeting was held on Saturday 2nd November 2013 at 10.00 am
at Culcheth Sports & Social Club, Charnock Road, Culcheth, WA3 5SH.

The Meeting was attended by 47 people representing:

Bowdon:	John Saxby, David Walters, Brian Storey.
Bury:	Jean Hargreaves, Ken Eccles, David Barrett, Barbara Young, Paul Kenworthy, Graham Good, Andy Brandwood, Paul Rigge.
Chester:	David, Guyton, Janet Davies, Pat Clare, Alan Clare, John Dawson, Maureen Ivens.
Craig Y Don	Jack Pattenden.
Crake	Tom Griffith.
Culcheth:	Eric Charles, Alisa Charles, Keith Woodward, Anne Connop, Bob Connop.
Ellesmere:	Viv Seaman, Sue Banning, Denis Bradbury, Jean Bradbury.
Flixton:	Cath Johnson, Pauline Harcourt-Jones, Jean Mathews.
Fylde:	Betty Bates, Lee Hartley, Liz Wilson.
LLanfairfechan	Georgina Llewellyn
Pendle & Craven:	Geoff Whitaker, Maureen Whitaker, Ron Welch, Kathryn Schofield, Roger Schofield.
Salford	Frances Rollinson
Southport:	Don Williamson, Brian Lewis, Ian Goulden, Tony Thomas.
Westmorland	Jim Allcock, John Shakespeare.

IOM, Keswick, Liverpool, Nannerch, Penrith & Tattenhall had no representation.

1. Welcome by the Chairman

The NWFCC Chairman Liz Wilson started on time and welcomed such a brilliant turnout to their AGM.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Peter Wilson, Keith Roberts.

Barry Keen, Ken Cooper (Bowdon), Geoff Young (Bury), Alan Wright (Culcheth), Richard Bellwood (IOM), James Hawkins (Liverpool) & Howard Bowron (Penrith).

3. Confirmation of Minutes from the Spring Meeting – 2nd March 2013

Jean Hargreaves pointed out that the child protection details are held on the CA website not the NW Federation's as stated. The minutes of the last meeting were then approved. – proposed by Paul Kenworthy, seconded by David Barrett.

4. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

There were no matters arising from the previous Minutes not covered by today's agenda.

5. Reports from the Officers

A. Chairman – Liz Wilson.

It has been a very busy year with emails flying backward and forward on various subjects from inaccuracies in the CA Gazette to rewriting rules! Most of these subjects will be covered in the meeting and for this reason I am not going to dwell on any of them. I would just like to thank the committee for their contributions to all discussions and problems. I am lucky to have such a good team.

B. Secretary – Paul Rigge.

Your secretary didn't think he would've enjoyed his tenure in this role, but this year has been a blast. Loads of mails flying about all season, covering a whole host of issues, most of which are today giving us our busiest AGM for years. So I'll shut up so we can get on with it.

C. Treasurer – Bob Connop presented the current statement of accounts: A copy is attached - Appendix (i).

Noted that Keswick hadn't paid for two years.

Asked the general question; what should we be doing with the cash surplus.

D. Development Officer - Janet Davies

This is my last report as Development Officer; a fascinating job which I have enjoyed very much. However I have been in post for 5 years and feel that it is time that someone else took over. Also I've noticed that I've begun to make mistakes and think I'd better go before other people start noticing too! I am greatly relieved to see that there will be an excellent successor.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members and clubs in the Federation who have supported and helped me in doing this work and particularly in providing assistance to new and potential clubs. One of the reasons that this Federation is making such rapid progress is the very high level of cooperation and willingness that exists throughout the region, both to help players in other clubs generally, and to help new clubs to get off the ground.

Possible new clubs and embryo clubs and other initiatives (ie not Federation members)

Macclesfield: a group of 7 people from Macclesfield attended a special one day taster session organised for them by Bowdon last April, on the initiative of one of their number (David Lee) who hoped to set up a new club under the aegis of a Macclesfield charity called 'Activity In Retirement'.

He even found a suitable site to play, on the outfield of a cricket club in Bollington, but in the event there was not enough support to continue. David Lee himself then joined the U3A croquet group in Congleton and has been playing Association Croquet with them throughout the summer. He may attempt to form a separate group in Macclesfield later.

Congleton: This group has now been running for about 10 years. In the last 2 years 4 or 5 of them have become country members at Chester and come over once a week to play with Chester members and get the benefit of our full size lawns. This year 3 of their number have played for us in short league matches, two of them represented Chester in the Millennium Short at Fylde, and 3 of them attended Flying Circus coaching days. So their standard of play is rapidly improving. There are about 26 members at Congleton, all playing Association on their short lawns. I see no prospect at present of their joining the CA or Federation as a member club, but Chester will continue to encourage them.

Trinity School Carlisle: I was contacted two years ago by the headmaster of this inner city comprehensive school, who had played croquet at Cambridge and hoped to introduce it in the school. In the event the grounds were not in a good enough state and nothing happened. By this summer he had got 2 short lawns into reasonable condition and had bought 2 sets of equipment. Ten students started playing at the beginning of July and are keen to continue next year. They wish to play against other groups in the area and have been put in touch with Howard Bowron of Penrith who will include them in his plans for next year.

Preston: The Fylde club were contacted by representatives of the Friends of Haslam Park in Preston who were wondering if it was feasible to start a croquet club on a redundant crown green bowling green there. Liz Wilson attended a meeting with them and agreed to run a beginners' course there if they advertised it and found potential students. No more was heard.

Other development work has been with existing clubs (Nannerch, Chester, Westmorland, Crake, Tattenhall, Penrith) who will no doubt be putting in their own reports

Equipment Report

The current list of Federation Equipment and allocations was sent out with the Agenda.

At present I have no unallocated equipment at all (except my own garden croquet set which I am happy to lend to new or expanding groups or clubs, three decent Barlows & one chewed and finally two broken & repaired malletts).

It is important for club development that there is a pool of spare equipment available that the Development officer can lend to new or growing clubs (many thanks to Southport who have come to the rescue on several occasions with the loan of equipment only used at present once a year for the Festival).

The situation needs rationalising.

Note that the CA will provide new clubs (who join the CA as full members) with an equipment loan/grant but this provides only 4 malletts, 6 hoops, peg, 1 set of balls & clips, which become their property after 5 years full membership. The CA (I discover) will not normally give development grants for equipment (Penrith), saying that clubs should be building up their own reserves for this.

However Sport England's Small Grants programme will give 100% grants for equipment to clubs.

The **Federation** needs to discuss measures to ease this situation and also to rectify the problem presented by clubs who are lent Federation equipment and then continue to hold it for years. In this context it is interesting that East Anglia charge clubs an increasing rental for their federation equipment (starting at zero for the first year). I have asked Jonathan Toye for details of their hire charges. I also suggest that the Federation should invest in some more equipment as well as requesting that clubs with unused/old equipment should donate/sell it to the Federation.

After Janet's delivery, Paul thanked her on behalf of the Federation for her efforts over the last five years, the room applauded.

E. League Manager - Tony Thomas

Another successful season, another set of trophies won, with some very close finishes in most of our six leagues, but first, here are the statistics: 48 teams were scheduled to play 180 matches over 26 weeks, interweaved between 23 regional tournaments, resulting in a busy season.

We had new league rules to apply when teams could not complete a fixture or matches were abandoned. These worked well in practice and we did not have a fixture backlog at the end of the season as in previous years. In fact the number of postponed matches was halved to about 20 and re-arranged dates quickly sorted, 8 matches were decided by walkovers (4 in the Advanced League).

We took part at the request of the CA in the pilot programme for the a new Golf Croquet law. This was complicated and needed a flowchart and page of explanation to decide what happens when a player plays the wrong ball. Not surprisingly, it did not prove popular and many players had difficulty with implementation. Thank you to Alan Morton who has produced a report for the CA on our experiences in the north west. It appears the CA will be discontinuing this initiative.

So congratulations to all our league winners:

Advanced Croquet League – was not decided until the last match when Chester held onto their top position. For the first time in five years, Bonus Points were a critical factor in deciding the top position.

In the Handicap league, Bowdon St Marys took the title only losing one match during the season.

In the Midweek Handicap, Westmorland led all season and just held on in the last few matches.

In the Short Croquet league, Llanfairfechan were the runaway winners, being undefeated all season.

The Golf Croquet league was very close with Chester eventually winning by one point.

The inaugural Level Play Golf attracted four teams, Bury and Pendle had equal points but Bury gained the title on superior net games won.

I have no proposals for rule changes for 2014, however, there are motions (later in Agenda) for a proposed change in format for the Advanced League. However, next year, the CA will be implementing a new way of calculating bisques in association croquet doubles matches – it is based on indexes rather handicaps and has been used in tournament play this year. It works well and seems a fairer system.

I will be producing the 2014 League Entry Forms in the forthcoming week, please return to myself by 31 December 2013. As always please give me as much information as you can on preferred playing days, team captains, lawn unavailability, club days, etc. This really is essential information and enables an efficient process for the draft fixture list. As a result of the information received last year, there were very few changes to the draft fixture list.

My apologies for the website problems last June. The site was seriously hacked (the site averages about 1500 spam attacks per month!) and it took nearly four weeks to sort the problems out, there are still some inaccessible pages but these will be re-formatted during the Winter.

Thank you to all club secretaries for their help this year, and especially team captains who have kept me up to date throughout the year by text, phone and email. This has been the most important feature in keeping the website up to date with results and league tables.

F. Coaching Officer – Roger Scholfield

The federation carried out coaching in 2013 as follows.

Association Croquet

Beginners/Improvers Course at Culcheth by Paul Rigge

Improvers Course at Bowdon by Ken Cooper with Liz Wilson and Roger Schofield

Bronze Courses at Pendle by Don Williamson with Diana Williamson and Vincent George and at Chester by Ken Cooper with Paul Watson and John Dawson.

Silver Gilt Course at Chester by Barry Keen

Golf Croquet

All led by David Barrett; at Ellesmere with Jean Hargreaves, at Tattenhall with John Crossland and at Chester with James Hawkins.

Thank you to all the clubs that hosted them and all the coaches involved.

G. CA Representative – Peter Wilson

In addition to being NW Federation Rep in the council meetings I have joined the pool of members for disciplinary hearings and also the AC Tournaments Committee.

I was heartened as many members who I had never met introduced themselves and welcomed me to council. There were also some old friends and acquaintances to chat to. Today I am in London for my first meeting of the AC Tournaments Committee. I thought it important to be there and I am sorry to be absent from this meeting.

I expect to be made director of the AC All England Handicap Tournament. I hope this will be ratified today. I will not be trying to take on any more jobs if I can avoid it.

There is another meeting of AC Tournaments already scheduled for 2014 which will clash with our next AGM so I hope you will consider another date next year so I'm able to attend both.

Turning to the last council meeting, it was a quiet meeting with not much on the agenda. We dwelt mainly on the minutes of the previous meeting and the actions taken since then. But of course the Working Party Report was lightly touched upon.

The meeting closed and members started to disperse but there was a meeting of the Working Party Committee following on and I asked if I could sit in. They said yes!

This meeting was seeking to establish a format and direction for the three forthcoming road show events. I will skip the details of that meeting here, but I will bring them to the table at our special meeting before Huddersfield where I do have lots to say.

Meanwhile do try to read it. The constitutional stuff is irrelevant to us. It can happen in the background and nothing will change as a result of it. There is no hidden agenda in that part.

As for the remaining content, my view is that certain things will leap out at you when you read it. But exactly which things these are depends entirely on who you are. You can be a social lady occasional golf player or perhaps an international minus player hoping to be sent to New Zealand or anything in between, wealthy or impoverished. You may even consider the report through the eyes of your club and its financial structure.

Trying to understand these different views and bring them together in preparation for Huddersfield should be our aim.

I will finish with a serious question. Your answers will depend on who you are and I emphasise that this is the exact point. I suggest you all try to list as many answers as you can ahead of our meeting. Humorous, serious, light, deep, good things, bad things, outrageous things, put them all down. I am sure it will focus our minds in the right direction. You never know, you may be asked it again in a slightly different form in the future.

OK, thanks for listening, here is the question: *What would happen if the CA was to disappear?*

H. NW Festival of Croquet Manager – Keith Roberts.

At the time, I think we were all quite pleased that it had gone so well but as time passes opinions are quite likely to change.

We did ask for input from Federation members and I would like to fling open the door of opportunity for them to suggest improvements or additions.

We weren't far from being able to play Advanced singles but couldn't quite squeeze them in. Another Advanced team would have ensured no free time on the lawns allocated to Advanced play.

The big difference to face in 2014 will be the lack of catering, at least in the manner we have become used to. On the positive side, it might mean that we can squeeze lunchtimes, to accommodate say, an extra game here and there.

This event was the 19th annual tournament and the Federation was pleased to find that Southport & Birkdale Club had found additional playing surface to accommodate 12½ lawns of reasonable to good quality and of regulation, or near regulation, size.

Six teams competed in the advanced competition with 8 in the handicap, 6 in the short and 9 in the golf. 81 croquet players were playing at any one time and over 100 attended each day. Ten of the established clubs were represented along with the lawn-less Isle of Man and the newly re-formed Ellesmere.

Crake Valley was the winner in the Advanced Championship with Bowdon as Runner-up.

Southport & Birkdale was the Champion in Handicap play with Chester second.

Bury is now the holder of the Short Championship, S&B was second.

Bury also claimed the Golf Croquet trophy and, again, S&B was in second place.

The Overall Championship Trophy was won by Southport & Birkdale, Bury was second with Bowdon taking the third place on 13 points ahead of two other clubs achieving the same total. A write up on the event and all of the results were available on the North West Federation web-site within a couple of days together with loads of photographs. Well done Tony.

The Championships are run in a festival atmosphere with skills ranging from complete beginners to experienced international and county players and once again the tournament demonstrated that it is about far more than winners and trophies.

A flexible view of team participants allowed Bury, already fielding teams in each competition, to 'loan' players to three other Clubs and Fylde, a club with only 18 playing members also competing in all events, to help another team.

LLanfairfechan could not enter a team but Georgina Llewellyn was accommodated in a Crake team.

Southport's lawns continue to improve and we would like to congratulate Brian Lewis, Chairman of the Southport Club, Team Leader and general factotum. Brian, together with the Committee and Members of Southport & Birkdale, were responsible for the facilities and organisation which enabled the Championship to be the huge success that most agree it was.

That's 269 games played on 9 full and 7-half lawns (12½ courts) in two days with a minimum of 81 participants in all matches requiring 28 sets of balls/clips etc. and 16 sets of hoops. The World's biggest single venue Croquet Event? Maybe?

Your Championship Manager would like to thank the Federation Chairman and Secretary for their splendid support and communication. In addition special thanks go to Liz Wilson, Sue Hardman and Brian Lewis for their work as Event Managers which was invaluable to the efficient organisation of players and Manager alike!

Special thanks also to Peter Wilson for being the Tournament Referee. His mere presence seemed to be enough, although he did report being called upon for a wiring lift in a Short game!..

Liz Wilson, the Federation Chairman, commented on the markedly improved quality of Southport's North Lawns and noted that it was really appreciated by everybody. The hard work and investment by Southport together with the support and commitment of the Federation will ensure that the festival continues for many years to come.

Liz also praised the lunch and tea-time catering provided by Margaret Flemington and her team of helpers ... and quite rightly too, it was excellent!

Oh, and the weather was quite decent

I. Pennine Cup - Paul Rigge

To try and change our recent form, I took control and led this year's squad out at Pendle (after setting the hoops in the only rain we had all day).

This match is the last remaining fixture from the old Confederation of Northern Clubs (under Mike Evans), and as such, is always played in great spirit and this year wasn't an exception - good fun was had but the result remained the same, the North East team, lead by Charles Waterfield carried the day 6-3 and retained the trophy for the fourth successive time!

Worth noting this year - for the first time ever, all the games were played (bar one) under advanced rules.

NW Fed; Betty Bates(10), Rob Essler(1.5), Terry Vernazza(5), Peter Wilson(1.5), Andy Branwood(6) & Paul Rigge (-1)
NE Fed; Charles Waterfield(.5), Dennis Scarr(6), Malcolm Daines(6), Derek Knight(3), Derek Watts(2) & David Turner (7)

J. Child Protection Officer – Jean Hargreaves.

There have been no reports of any problems from the clubs themselves.

I have had one enquiry from a new Child Protection Officer in the area.

We now have an Umbrella organisation under the CA for having CRB checks done. Also the Portability of CRB checks is now in place but this is only possible with new checks being carried out, and at the request of the individual concerned. As far as I am aware there is no charge for Portability for volunteers.

If any club has a member, or members, who will be “coaching” an individual or group of young people under 18 years of age please contact me for further advice so that CRB checks, if required, can be carried out prior to the new season. Please can each club let me have, by email, the name of their Child Protection Officer.

The CA website will be updated shortly.

6. Arrangements (dates and locations) for NW Federation Millennium Competitions.

- a) Advanced - offers from Chester & Pendle without a date yet
- b) Handicap - Crake 17/18th May '14.
- c) Short - Fylde 31st May '14.
- d) Golf (Hcp) – offer from Pendle without a date yet.
- e) *new* Golf (Lvl) – offer from Pendle without a date yet.

Dates (& offers) must be submitted by 31st December '13

7. Federation League Rules.

- a) Golf – Wrong Ball Rule. Federation dropping the CA’s experimental rule after trialling for a season. Reports have been submitted to CA by Alan Morton about our season. CA due to discuss this December.
- b) Handicap Doubles – New method of calculating Handicap allowance for pairs next season. Tony to include method onto Captain’s match sheets.
- c) Advanced League Proposals;
 - 1) Changing squads to teams of four – Proposed D Walters (Bowdon), Seconded – none found. Motion failed.
 - 2) Introduce Double Game - Proposed J Saxby (Bowdon), Seconded B Lewis. 5 for/5 against/8abstains. Chair against. Motion failed.
 - 3) New *B* League with 3/team - Proposed D Walters (Bowdon), Seconded T Thomas. 7F/3A/8ab. Motion carried.
 - 4) After discussion; *B* class to be mixture of Double play and round of singles in rank order. Individual handicaps ≥1. Doubles pairing to be agreed between captains, Proposed P Kenworthy (Bury), Seconded J Saxby. 5F/2A/11ab. Motion carried.
 - 5) It was agreed the Bonus Point system to be continued in both ‘A’ and ‘B’ Leagues.
Tony to establish new B League, charged at same rate.

8. NW Festival – mainly covered under Southport’s report

9. Coordination

Currently we have:

5-6 April	13 th Lancashire Open Golf. Heaton Park *TBC
18-21 April	Pendle & Craven John Beech Memorial Easter Tournament
26-27 April	Southport Advanced Weekend
3-5 May	Bowdon May Handicap Weekend
17-18 May	Pendle & Craven B-Level Advanced Weekend
17-18 May	NW Millennium Handicap @ Crake *TBC
24-25 May	Southport Handicap Weekend
31 May	NW Millennium Short @ Fylde *TBC
31 May – 1 June	Bowdon Advanced Weekend
15-16 June	Pendle & Craven Advanced Weekend
28-29 June	Festival *TBC
5-6 July	Manchester Advanced Weekend Heaton Park*TBC
9-11 July	Pendle & Craven Midweek Tournament
12-17 July	Bowdon Northern Week (3adv + 3hcp)
19-20 July	Southport Super B and B-Level Advanced Weekend
26-27 July	Fylde Handicap Weekend
9-10 August	Manchester Handicap Weekend Heaton Park*TBC
15-17 August	Pendle Handicap Weekend
22-23 August	Southport Golf Handicap.
22-25 August	Bowdon North of England Championship
6-7 September	Inter Federation @ Southpor *TBC
13-14 September	Southport Advanced Weekend
20-21 September	Bowdon B-Level Advanced Weekend

10. Club Reports and Announcements (to be taken in alphabetical order).

i) Bowdon, John Saxby reports;

Good Season, We enjoyed the summer weather. Highlights; St Marys won the handicap league so will look forward to the Secretary’s Shield next year; David Walters captained Wales in Cairo and they won division 2 of the world golf

croquet team championship; Francois Garcia won the Steele Memorial bowl as the most improved female player and Ken Cooper was awarded a CA lifetime coaching award.

Coming up, we hope to have 2 lawns open at weekends, 4 on Wednesdays and at least one every other day. Each week we have our new Solomon Grundy Competition on Mondays (2 games of 18 point); Bridge on a Monday evening; Canasta on Tuesday afternoons and our all day Wednesday comp changes format from 3 games of 14 point to 4 games of 1 ball. We had 32 players last week in the pouring rain for the first one ball comp. Our annual dinner/dance is at the Cinnamon Club next door, dancing to Dominic Halpern and the Honeybees.

For recruitment next year, we have abandoned newspaper advertising and are concentrating on leafletting and taster days where punters learn 1 ball and are encouraged to come on our 6 week (one evening) beginners course

ii) **Bury, Paul Kenworthy Reports;**

2013 has been the year we celebrated our 25th anniversary. Quite an achievement and a great testament to some key members of our club. To celebrate we held a day of fun croquet, with Pims, and a fabulous cake made by Pat Carter one of our members.

I would summarise the year as successful although membership has remained stable with small increase.

The tournaments we have run have been well supported particularly the Lancashire Golf that spawned a separate B class event held at Coronation Park. We intend to repeat this B class event in 2014.

Our lawn turf has improved massively this year and thanks go to Mac Hardman for his efforts. We expect further improvements in 2014 and have budgeted accordingly.

A number of members have had great success in events. Graham Good seems to constantly feature on the web site for his achievements. Paul Rigge is very successful especially when he plays at Pendle. Andy Brandwood continues to shine. Matt Holmes has been part of a MacRobertson development squad and culminated his 2013 season by winning the Treasurers Tankard.

However the end of the season has brought some disappointing news regarding Heaton Park. Due to cuts in council funding only two lawns will be maintained. Bury Croquet Club could still continue to use the facility but it would stop 4 lawn tournaments and will increase the tension between us and the bowlers. For this reason at present we cannot confirm what events we will run in 2014 but intend to do everything possible to hold the April Lancashire Golf tournament.

However there may be some major news shortly on our adoption of a second 2 lawn site. I do not want to say too much as this proposal has not been put to the membership yet and may come to nothing.

iii) **Chester, John Dawson Reports;**

In short, another good year for Chester. Membership has remained buoyant at 91. Our weekly sessions and internal competitions have continued to enjoy good participation rates. We have fielded teams in five of the six North West Federation leagues; we are pleased to have won the golf and advanced leagues but were further down the field in the others. For the second year running we participated in the national Mary Rose and Longmans competitions but didn't make quite as much progress as last year. However, two of our members representing the North West did well in the all England Handicap competition. Coaching both internally and via the league courses has been well attended and we are confident that our levels of play continue to improve across the board. Our club and community social events have also gone well. Thanks to good maintenance work by the council our lawns have been in the best condition ever despite fairly heavy use throughout the season and we have received a number of compliments about the quality of the greens despite our distinctive slope.

Finally we would like to record our thanks to all members of the North West Federation who have managed the leagues and other competitions and have helped with coaching

iv) **Craig y Don (Llandudno), Jack Pattenden Reports;**

The club continues to progress very satisfactorily with a small increase in membership through the summer. After last Autumn's vandalism and before the season began we were able to erect a secure concrete equipment shed for safe storage of our gear which doubles up as a small shelter from the elements and a teashop for a limited number of members. Our thanks to CA and Conwy Vol.Services Council who both made significant grants towards its cost.

In contrast to last year the early months were very dry and cold giving problems for the lawn. We had no water supply which meant the playing surface became very patchy and uneven. By end of June following negotiations with the Community Centre we had our own hydrant operating adjacent to the lawn which has helped us to rectify the situation. We introduced a Golf knock-out competition, played throughout the season, for members to compete for the Challenge Cup. This proved very popular and will certainly become an annual event.

To introduce new members to competition we arranged two matches. One against Llanfairfechan, playing for the Coast Cup, in which 14 players competed in a mix of Short and Golf games. The result was 11 - 11.

We arranged a golf match against Tattenhall but this time we succumbed 12-8. The games were thoroughly enjoyed by all club members and further arrangements are intended for 2014 on a home/away basis.

In house training on both Short and Golf continues.

We keep together during the off-season with our presentation lunch held a few days ago, Table game meetings for members and friends once a fortnight and two social afternoons are in the planning for December and February

v) **Crake Valley, Tom Griffith Reports;**

On the playing side, we have done the things we usually do. We took part in the handicap league, and completed all the fixtures. In the advanced league we were a bit thwarted by the weather. We held the Cumbria Cup and Cavendish Clock, both won by Brian Storey. The Cavendish Clock was again less well attended than the Cumbria Cup, and we are

wondering (for the Clock) about shifting the emphasis more towards B class players. Our one-day Bob Vaughan Trophy again attracted a good entry from Northern clubs (Penrith, Keswick, Westmorland), and we intend to continue with that. Oh, and at the festival of Croquet we won the advanced event (with a lot of help from the Fed secretary during his brief loan spell. We hope to get him to put pen to paper on a long-term contract when the transfer window reopens in January).

In general, we have two long-term worries: membership and lawns.

Membership: I've just read Howard's Penrith report saying they picked up 12 new members at an open day. We can't get 12 people to come to an open day, let alone join the club. We do not have a large centre of population near us, but then nor do Penrith. I am pretty sure we need to play more short croquet, and start a golf croquet section. For some years we have been looking down our noses at golf croquet players. I am sure that is, and has been, a mistake.

Lawns: here the picture is more encouraging. We have cleared all our ditches, which are now working well. We think we have found all the drains (most of them, anyway). Once we have power-hosed those (in November) we will have done everything we can short of digging the lawns up and starting again, which we can't afford to do. We also now have access to a powerful scarifier, something we have not had these past ten years. In full flow, with an 8-foot-high plume of dead grass, moss and thatch spewing out ahead of it, the scarifier is a fine sight, if anyone cares to come and watch (and help pick up the debris afterwards). An inch of dead moss in a lawn gives you 28 cubic yards of stuff to be scarified out. Once you have stuffed any spare cushions, disposing of the rest is a bit of a problem.

Summary: in brief, we are a 4-lawn club with not enough members to play on 4 lawns. So since at present we are the only club in Cumbria who can host an event with 16 players, we'd like to host more tournaments than we currently do. We have put in a bid to host the Millennium handicap event. If we don't get that, then we aim to run a CA event, probably in May.

vi) Culcheth, Alan Wright Reports;

The club has had a pleasant year and although we have a small number of members, morale is high. We are fortunate in that we attracted seven new members this year. Our team entered in the Golf League as usual and also the Golf Level play league. We also took part in the Festival of Croquet at Southport.

Several of our members have taken part in other competitions and we have several internal competitions for our members, Golf singles and doubles and short croquet are run on handicap lines and we also organised an open competition. Bob Connop was pleased to receive his long awaited referee's badge.

Throughout the season we had coaching sessions on Golf Croquet led by our own club coaches and Paul Rigge came down to deliver an Association Coaching session. All sessions were well attended and proved helpful. Because of our small membership we have to seek methods other than subscriptions to augment our income. Our lawns are regularly used by U3A, the University of the Third Age and several corporate events have been organised as well as the annual Croquet and Petanque competition held between the Lions and the Rotary Club. We have also organised sessions for community groups.

Members of Ellesmere Croquet Club came to us for a Fun afternoon and enjoyed the croquet and the tea we provided. Successful social events were our Quizzes. We are fortunate that we have members who are prepared to work hard, selling tickets and organising these events.

Thanks to our fund raising efforts we were able to purchase a new bench, our third and an outdoor clock.

During the winter we play on our indoor mat and welcome members from other clubs to spend the day with us. This year we will be continuing the indoor competitions for Golf Singles and Doubles. Several of our members also regularly meet together during the winter to play cards and indoor games

vii) Ellesmere – Viv Seaman reports

At the beginning of 2010 the Croquet Club had 6 members of which only 2 were playing members. By the end of the year the membership had increased to 12 members and by 2013-20 members. This increase was due to the introduction of Golf Croquet. We are hoping to increase 2014 membership by advertising.

For the second year Members are now keenly entering the clubs Round Robin Competition. Also visiting local croquet clubs competing against them in friendly matches. We then have return visits to us. In June 2013-12 members competed in Golf Croquet at Southport, in "The Festival of Croquet".

Hopefully the members are hoping to join the NW League competitions.

At the present time we only have one playing lawn, due to moles having made themselves at home on the second lawn. Our grounds man is trying to rectify the situation for next season.

One of the advantages of Ellesmere Sports Club is that Croquet can be played during the season, 7 days a week.

viii) Flixton, Cath Johnson reports

After last years atrocious weather it was imperative that we found another venue for our group this year which had more facilities. We were welcomed into the Urmston Cricket, Tennis, Hockey and Bowls Club as their 5th section and given two "lawns".

We now have three lawns on the outer cricket field, a cubby hole with three storage cupboards, use of the clubhouse toilets and kitchen, and a car park.

Needless to say we are in heaven. More space meant more equipment and we have added a set of hoops and three new sets of balls to our stock so that we can play three lawns. We are particularly proud of buying the balls directly from China!

With all this going on we only managed to invite one club, Ellesmere, to visit us for a friendly match this year. We hope to do better next year and you are all very welcome to visit us in our new home in Urmston, now called Urmston Sports Club as its title was becoming too long.

Although we have lost some members, new ones have come along and the membership now stands at 34.

We meet over the winter for indoor games and in December we are holding a Christmas Social evening to which NWFed. clubs are welcome.

ix) Fylde, Lee Hartley reports;

Annual Dinner is tonight. We have a record attendance of 46.

We had a very successful beginners drive this year for both golf and association croquet which has seen our current membership rise to a record 31 members, though as ever we wait to see how many of the new members rejoin next season. We hope that the off season activities will keep them interested.

This year's croquet achievements:

We entered all the events at the Festival finishing joint 3rd overall. Last year we commented that it was the best ever, but this year's definitely surpassed that and the event goes from strength to strength. Again many thanks to S&BCC for efforts.

In the NW Fed we entered all the leagues but didn't manage to bag any silverware. Despite this there was individual success for Fylde members in various competitions, notably Terry Vernazza winning the Southport B level tournament in July with Liz being runner-up. Fylde members Peter and Liz Wilson and Betty Bates also made up half of the CA team that went to Dublin to contest the McWeeny trophy which was comfortably retained.

We again hosted the Millennium short and a CA handicap tournament which were both successful and we hope to make the handicap tournament a permanent fixture.

We took over the responsibility for maintaining our own lawns last year from the tennis club, and the care and attention that has been lavished on them means that they are in the best condition that they have ever been, though we are not resting on our laurels and strive to make further improvements. The result of this is that we are joint winners of the Apps Heley award with West Worthing, which is for clubs who have made the most progress with 3 or 4 lawns, and Liz was presented with the trophy at the recent AGM.

Finally, for those who don't recognise her from behind, I can confirm that it is our match captain who features on the front cover of the current edition of the Croquet Gazette.

x) Isle of Man - no report

xi) Keswick – no report

xii) Liverpool, James Hawkins reports;

Much of my 2013 has been taken up with the clubhouse refurbishment. We now have a completely refitted and redecorated interior. There are brand new changing rooms for gents and ladies, a separate shower, separate storage rooms for tennis and croquet, a fitted kitchen, a bar and cosy snug, and a larger function room.

We've left the roof until the end of the season, and a new replacement has been fitted during October, with new gutters and vandal-proof mesh. Apart from a tap in my lawnmower shed, that completes the job, and all will be ready for next season.

The lawns have improved over the season. There are two full-sized lawns, and there's the prospect of a bumpy third, if and when it's required. I did some drainage work on them over last winter, and that's helped to keep them playable without flooding, even during the downpours when there was no heatwave. The drought-affected areas have been reseeded, and that seed has now germinated. I've planned my maintenance schedule for 2014, so expect further improvement.

Membership (FINALLY!) is looking positive. My playing season didn't really get moving until August, when the clubhouse was habitable. I recruited six newcomers during the month, so have offered them the deal of next year's membership if they join now. With possible losses elsewhere, that sends me into next year with a critical mass of ten active members.

Of particular note, my recruits are (apart from two) in their late 20s/early 30s, and are keen to encourage their friends to join. I'm still only at the stage of running taster days for new players, but the lawns have been occupied more or less constantly during club days (Saturday / Sunday and Wednesday evenings).

I held one corporate event in June, with a group of 14 Norwegian croquet tourists. There's an opportunity to make this a regular fixture (direct flights from Oslo to Liverpool, and as much alcohol as they can afford to buy from me - which is a lot), and it's a possible source of much revenue. One of my new players has some professional expertise in this area, and we're working out a scheme for running corporate events throughout 2014.

In summary:

* Facilities are much improved

* I've not enough members for a league team yet, but I anticipate an aggressively competitive showing at next year's NW Festival

* I've got some helpers who share the same focus on recruitment. If we get another summer like this one, that should give some decent results.

xiii) LLanfairfechan, Anwen Lloyd Williams Reports;

Our Croquet Season began on Easter Sunday when 26 member attended, a game of coquet followed by hot cross buns with tea and coffee a very enjoyable afternoon.

LLanfairfechan was back to their winning ways when the Association Team Led by Captain Jack Pattenden won the Short League.

Group bookings were on the up again with over 480 people visiting our lawns throughout the season and even a few groups have already booked for 2014.

In May we held our Open Day, which was opened by the Mayor of LLanfairfechan, 40 people attended shame about the rain, but that did not dampen the enthusiasm of members, we held the tombola and raffle stalls in the club house and had an excellent afternoon tea provided by members.

To try and bring new members into the club the committee decided to charge £20 for this year only instead of the £45 and we had 10 new members taking up the offer, Ladies Ascot Day was held in June with a competition for best hat followed yet again by a lovely afternoon tea, this was not well attended as many members were away on holiday

We had a BBQ for Presidents Day and Captains Day, the weather was kind and both events were very well attended. In August we held an inter club competition against Craig y Don Croquet Club for the Coast Cup, this included both golf and association games and the overall score was 11-11 which meant that Craig y Don keeps the cup this year.

Another fundraising event we had was a grand summer raffle, which was organised by our club treasurer, with 3 major prizes; we made £500 which was a boost to our club funds.

Friday café will resume in November, our Presentation Lunch will be held at the Split Willow on the 9th November, and indoor croquet will resume at the leisure centre in January.

And on that note may I wish everybody a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and good luck to all teams in the league for 2014

xiv) Nannerch – no report.

xv) Pendle and Craven – Ron Welch reports;

It rained in Earby from October 2011 to March 2013. It was cold in April and May but it has been nice ever since. This strange weather took its toll on the lawn. Having consulted with a drain expert and a turf expert we are close to finishing relaying court 4. We have fitted extra drainage and levelled the surface. We have scarified, over seeded and top dressed the other 4 courts and to our relief much of the new seed as germinated. We have better grass cover now than we have had at any point in the season. In order to better deal with the next period of wet weather we are planning to replace the main drains and install a system for dealing with excess flood water as well as improving the banks which will improve the drainage and increase the playing area. The lawn has just been surveyed which will help with the levelling, the alterations to the bankings and the laying of the new drains.

None of the above should affect our programme for 2014 and as well as our usual activities we are hosting the Spencer Ell on 5- 9 September and the All England Golf Croquet Final on 20-21 September

xvi) Penrith and North Lakes, Howard Bowron Reports;

Our first Open Day in May was a great success. Twenty six people came to try croquet in a fine sunny weather. We offered our visitors the opportunity to learn more about the game over the subsequent three week. Again these were well attended and we recruited twelve new members at the end of the 'trial' period.

Prior to the Open Day we had decided to invite players from Keswick and Thursby, against whom we play friendly matches, to enter our club block competitions. This also proved very popular with seven players taking up the invitation (and paying for the privilege). They all want to enter again next year.

So it has been a very busy season at Penrith. Fortunately last Autumn we started the work to extend our lawns. This season we have had the use of two good full size lawns. Due to demand at club session these are set out as four 'short' lawns so that everyone can play. As a result we have struggled at times to provide sufficient court equipment and mallets and are in the process of fund raising with help from Cumbria County Council & the CA to buy more kit so that next year we can continue our expansion

xvii) Salford Frances Rollinson Reports;

After a damp start to the season we have enjoyed some lovely sunny days.

We have a keen group of players and although we have not interacted with other groups this year it was mainly because we felt that our lawn was too poor to share. We are however very enthusiastic and feel that 2014 will be a good year for taking us forward.

The lawn maintenance has been practically non-existent this year, despite numerous attempts and promises from the park staff to at least keep the grass cut. This has hardly been done at all and the year has somehow slipped by with no improvements.

On the plus side 'Friends of Buile Hill Park' who have now disbanded, awarded us £1000-00 which will be used towards remedial treatment for the lawn in the new year.

Annie Surtees, who has now been promoted to Head of all Parks maintenance in this area, has approached the 'Start Group' to offer them training, specifically on the use of the grass cutting machine and Green care including all verges around the lawns.

The Pavilion continues to improve and we have brewing up facilities and toilets (so it's not all bad).

Our funds are in a healthy state and we have purchased more mallets and balls ready for our new season in 2014.

xviii) Southport - Brian Lewis Reports;

Apart from play, our year has been much occupied with further lawn improvements. We continue to cut the south lawns three times a week and Colin Bridgwood has fully developed the preparation of Compost Tea, enabling us to fertilise without the need to purchase chemically based treatment.

Compost Tea also has the advantage of slowly converting some of the thatch into compost so is doubly effective. Nevertheless our century old lawns did have a lot of root constricting thatch so we recently hired a contractor to reduce this through a deep scarification followed with an application of 40 tons of top soil. We have now over seeded all five lawns.

Don Williamson has given much time before and since the Federation's Croquet Festival to improving the surface of the North Lawns, mainly through weekly mowing. They are already better than in June and at least three full lawns have stayed free of flooding, even during the recent heavy rain.

I mention all this because I know the Federation is particularly interested in the potential of having a club able to host events using ten plus lawns. Although it is unlikely we will ever be able to afford the cost of bringing them up to the standard of the south lawns we do think we can improve them year on year.

This summer most of our tournaments were played in fine weather with the NWF Festival proving particularly enjoyable for the many who participated in a full range of croquet formats, played during two days of sunshine.

We have decided to continue to provide an Air Show as an extra entertainment for the September Advanced Sandiford Salver but will not be extending it to our other tournaments due to the high cost of provision.

Due to regular local press reports many more people have been made aware of a croquet club in their town and this has helped to produce some new members. As with other clubs, we still struggle to attract younger members.

The Club was pleased to represent the North West in the Longman Inter-Club at Surbiton Thanks to the Federation for their text good wishes.

We had a good victory over Nottingham in the Saturday Semi-final but lost to a strong Woking team in the final ending up with the Runners Up Tankard. The two days were very enjoyable, played competitively but also with friendly respect between all participants. We felt fortunate to be part of an excellent finals weekend.

Finally I extend the Clubs thanks to the NWF for all the work they carry out on all our behalf's, particularly the provision and organization of the various leagues. Without their input the contact and friendly relationship between our clubs would far more difficult to achieve.

xix) Tattenhall Ruth Wrigley reports.

We started the season in May with an Open Day which was well attended and included coaching by David Barrett and purchase of mallets. A number of people recorded their interest in playing Association. However, we remain a small club of 20 members most of whom play golf croquet. Following negotiations with the Tattenhall Recreation Club it was agreed that a new croquet lawn would be developed and we obtained a grant from the Croquet Association to assist with this. Unfortunately this development has been delayed due to a building application on land adjacent to the proposed new lawn, so we are currently awaiting a decision on when work on the new lawn will commence. In the meantime we continue to fund raise and have held two very successful social events.

Members have enjoyed a good season, we have increased our skills and purchased additional equipment. We have an internal league and some members have attended the flying circus and association coaching at Chester. We hosted a very enjoyable friendly match against Craig y Don which we hope will be repeated next season.

xx) Westmorland (Levenshall) John Shakespeare reports.

Its generally been a good year for Westmorland CC. No complaints about the weather this time.

Competitively we had an excellent year with our newly formed short playing all its fixtures, our golf team coming third in their league and the highlight being our association teams performance.

3 teams playing and internal competitions meant our members were stretched and this reduced the amount of fun croquet played. This is something we need to watch.

Our main concern this year has been our membership which remains more or less static despite our efforts. We have had visits from a car club and a golf club, a successful Dallam Summer School day and a come and try it weekend at Blackwell Arts & Crafts House but no new members resulting.

Our big frustration has been that despite the valiant efforts of our development officer we have failed to get any publicity in the local press.

We have a few new ideas for next year but would welcome any suggestions from other clubs.

Here endeth my report.

11. Federation Equipment. (Janet Davies);

NWFederation Equipment assets (lent to clubs as follows): Oct 2013

According to my records the NWFed's equipment assets are held as follows. **I would be grateful if clubs could check their records and confirm these details.** Note that some equipment originally owned by Bowdon and lent to other clubs, has been formally given to the Federation and is included in the lists below. The equipment originally lent to Flixton by Bowdon was later given to them. This means that the equipment lent to Salford by Flixton, is actually the property of Flixton and should eventually be returned to them.

Bowdon	None	Keswick	None
Bury	None	Liverpool	CA start up set
Chester	None	Llanfairfechan	None
Crake Valley	None	Llandudno	CA start up set
Craig y Don		Nannerch	CA Dev Officer's Set (till end 2013) (6 hoops, 4 primary balls, peg, 4 mallets)
Culcheth	None	Pendle and Craven	None
Ellesmere	3 mallets	Penrith and North Lakes	4 mallets, 1 set hoops, 1 peg
Flixton	None	Salford	CA start up set
Fylde	None	Southport & Birkdale	None
Harlech	None	Tattenhall	Set 2ndary balls + CA start up set, 2 garden croquet mallets 5 mallets
Isle of Man	None	Westmorland	1 set primary balls 1 set 2ndary balls

I have also a 'CA Development Officer's set' to be used for demonstrations and short term loans (currently at Nannerch), and a private garden croquet set which I am happy to lend to clubs, three decent Barlows & a chewed one and finally two broken & repaired mallets.

12. County Captains.

The CA has been notified 26/10/13 that;
County Captains (Colin Irwin for Cheshire and David Openshaw for Lancashire)
Colin Irwin & Paul Rigge will continue as Managers for respective counties.

13. Trophies

The Federation's League Champions were presented with the Trophies by Liz Wilson – Federation Chair.

Advanced	Chester	John Dawson
Handicap	Bowdon St Mary's	Brian Storey
Short	Llanfairfechan	Jack Pattenden
Midweek	Westmorland	Jim Allcock
Golf - Level	Bury	Ken Eccles
Golf - Handicap	Chester	Maureen Ivens

14. Officer Elections

Chairman – Liz Wilson.	Unanimously re-elected.
Secretary – Paul Rigge.	Unanimously re-elected.
Treasurer - Bob Connop Auditor – Peter Wilson.	Both unanimously re-elected.
Coaching - Roger Schofield is standing down, however Christine Irwin is proposed by Liz Wilson, seconded Tony Thomas. Duly elected.	
Development - Janet Davies is standing down, however Ron Welch is proposed Dave Barrett, seconded Liz Wilson. Duly elected.	
CA Representative – Peter Wilson.	Unanimously re-elected.
League Mgr – Tony Thomas.	Unanimously re-elected.
Child Protection – Jean Hargreaves.	Unanimously re-elected.
Festival – Keith Roberts.	Unanimously re-elected.
Pennine – Paul Rigge.	Unanimously re-elected.

15. Any Other Business

- a) Advertising on Fed Web Site – Tony sought clarification, what was deemed a suitable policy, Croquet related.
- b) Handicaps – we seem to have cracked it but please stay on top, check cards at clubs over winter.
- c) CA Working Party Report and Future Relationship CA/Federation/Clubs/Members – A Club Conference will be held at Culcheth 1st February '14 in order to prepare a strategy for the CA's meeting in Huddersfield 15th February '14
The report (<http://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=824>)

Brian Storey (Bowdon) gave a presentation about the existence of a Croquet Association (CA) Working Party on Federations and a subsequent report published by them in March 2013.

Although a playing member of the CA he had never served on any CA Committee nor was he a Bowdon Committee member. So the observations he was to make were his personal view.

The Working Party report only came to his knowledge about two weeks prior to this AGM but contained many proposals that not only would affect individual Federations but also individual CA members.

He firstly wished to draw attention to the consultation arrangements made by the CA which to his mind were inadequate.

The CA has arranged three club conferences around England to consider feed-back from the report. Two had been arranged to take place immediately after the South West and South East Federation AGM's which would enable not only clubs to attend but also individual CA members. For the North of England though, the CA decided to have only one club conference in Huddersfield. This would attract between three and five federations (North, North West, Yorkshire and potentially East and West Midlands also).

From a travelling aspect alone this would mean that for two clubs it would require from them a six hour return journey. (Alnwick and our sister club Barmouth). The CA had indicated that due to the large numbers of clubs expected to attend, attendance would be restricted to no more than two persons per club. These would naturally and quite rightly be club committee members. He personally would be denied entry.

To implement the proposals as made, or as revised, is likely to require a change to the CA Constitution to take effect. Under Clause 30 of that Constitution, change is not possible unless 60% of the member clubs support it AND 60% of the individual associate members support it.

As an associate member of the CA for 30 years he will have a vote but will not have the advantage that clubs representatives will have had of listening to arguments for and against the proposals made, before reaching a conclusion.

Within the report are proposals to make all club members of CA member clubs, automatic full members of the CA. Whilst he personally supported this move, other proposals were perhaps more contentious.

The report included generalizations without presented evidence and seemingly unsupported findings, but did not include "options".

For example, perhaps one of the main sticking points will be the CA Working Party mantra and fixation with "Pay for play".

He paid club subscriptions to play.

Some of that is paid to the NW Federation to allow him to play in Federation matches.

He paid the CA an Individual membership to allow him to enter CA Calendar events, but not to play, save an extra entry fee to each competition which he pays, to play.

He said, It is fair to highlight that taking the 2003 levy to the CA as a starting point (£12,941) and uprating by inflation to 2012 it should now be £16,442. In 2012 it was only £12,080, an actual reduction!

So the CA is right to recognise this and make recommendations for change.

But, to suggest that all Federation matches, and, in hushed terms, potentially all internal club competitions, be subject to a levy, is a nonsense.

Imagine all the 30-50p's (could be more) collected from each player, each playing day, counted, bagged, transferred to a Club or Federation treasurer somewhere, counted, bagged, and transferred to the CA where it will be counted and bagged yet again. A bureaucratic nightmare, never mind if it is a good idea or not.

It is unclear in the report if other options to this plan were considered and rejected.

A glaringly obvious alternative would be to scrap the levy altogether and increase the CA subscription accordingly. With a proposed 7500 members that would equate to approximately £2 each. Easily collected via clubs and managed by the CA Treasurer.

He also raised the report assertion that in the future, Federations will remain autonomous and independent.

How can this be:

- if they are made to join the CA and be subservient to CA Constitution, Rules and Regulations,;
- if they have no income as proposed in this report and,
- if all all Federation matches are subject to a CA levy?

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He needed answers from a member of the Working Party to a host of questions to understand what had been considered and rejected by them and why, and the in-depth reasoning for the conclusions reached.

Unfortunately as organised, he was being denied the opportunity to listen, discuss, adopt or reject a point of view to enable him to come to a half decent decision when he does vote.

He was aware that an invitation was made to the CA to send a representative to this meeting on the same basis as those taking place in Southern England, but rejected in favour of the planned Huddersfield meeting. Talk about North of Watford, Oop North and the CA seemingly “remote from Grass Roots”!

This report was important and stressed the need of all NWF club members to read and understand it as it will have potentially far reaching and dramatic effects on the CA, Federations, Clubs and playing members.

He stressed he could not accept any questions as he had no answers.

- d) Frances Rollinson (Salford) stated; Because each club deserves it’s time under the spotlight, Club reports **must** be read at next spring meeting. (in order to get through today’s agenda, they had been dropped after a motion from the floor before item 10).

16. Date, time and location of next meetings

Spring Meeting will be on 8th March 2014 & AGM, 22nd November 2013. Both at Culcheth Sports Club.

17. Close of Meeting - Meeting closed at 12:29