

## **Annual Report of Council given by its Chairman Jeff Dawson to the AGM in Oct 2013**

Another year has flown by, and I'm pleased to say the CA remains strong. Roger will go through the accounts shortly, but I believe they remain sound, and we are able to continue to give away significant amounts in grants to clubs to aid in the development of the game. The number of clubs belonging to the CA has grown slightly, with 8 new clubs joining but 2 reducing their membership level from full member to associate. However, the number of tournament playing members has fallen slightly, after several years of growth.

When looking to see why the two clubs reduced their membership, it was largely because they don't enter a lot of competitions, and they thought it hard to justify paying the subscriptions. However, I think there is an element of false economy there, which I want to warn you about. It is possible to pick up public liability insurance from the web at around £70, and I know one of the clubs did this. However, when we asked more closely about this insurance, it transpires that it does not cover croquet activities! It would also not cover teams visiting other clubs. I think the deal we offer clubs on the insurance remains excellent value, and provides proper cover which you will not find elsewhere without spending £200 or more a year. A letter has gone out to club secretaries with this information.

The past year was a bit strange for council, because the bad weather caused us to have to cancel the usual January meeting, and even when we met in March it was difficult for everyone to attend because of snow. However, we have been able to move forward on a number of initiatives, thanks to the sterling work of the many committees which do all the real work for us all.

Last year we reported on the results of the membership survey, and this year we have been taking action to address some of the concerns raised. The marketing committee have had working groups looking at

- (1) Targeting recruitment of people in their 40s and 50s,
- (2) Targeting recruitment of University Students,
- (3) Encouraging the growth of competitive croquet,
- (4) Regenerating Association Croquet for the benefit of croquet as a whole.

The latter has already led to the publishing of a paper on the regeneration of AC, but these are ongoing initiatives, which I believe are very important to the future health of our game. Some of this has also fed into the Federation Working party report, of which more later.

We have been looking for some time at the possibility of the CA gaining charitable status, or perhaps establishing a separate charitable trust to handle donations. The law was changed a few years ago in favour of sports organisations, but the new law is unclear in many respects, and is largely untested. We continue to investigate the possibilities it opens up, but this is an activity likely to take some time before we see concrete results.

Also affected by changes in the law has been the issue of child protection. We have updated our advice on this, and now provide a service to members to get Disclosure and Barring Service clearance through the CA's Child Protection officer.

Many of you will be aware there has been activity with the GC laws committee too. This year we trialled a new wrong-ball law at our top level events. The acting chairman of the committee tells me that the reaction has been mixed, suggesting some important lessons about how to introduce changes to our laws. For the moment, we have yet to convince the international community that the proposed changes are worthwhile, and there has been some pressure from the WCF rules committee to bring out a revised version of the laws soon, which would not include this revision. This is an ongoing discussion, so it is not clear at this point exactly when a new set of laws might be agreed. I know Bill Arliss, who had been driving this forward from our end, has become very frustrated at the process, and eventually decided

to step down as chairman of GC laws in consequence, although he continues to serve on the committee. I would like to thank Bill for the effort he has put into all this over many years.

Talking of people stepping down, I would also like to thank Paul Hands for his contribution in the running of the CA shop. He has unfortunately had to retire recently due to ill health. Paul ran the shop for 2 years, and helped the office with other aspects of their work as well. He has been replaced by Jaimie Mussi, a Cheltenham member who has been playing croquet for a few years so brings good experience to the role. I wish him well in the position, and hope it works out for him.

Of course this year we were involved in running the AC World Championships at Surbiton, Roehampton, Hurlingham and Woking. I believe this was a great success, and we had many positive reports from those taking part. This was due in no small measure to the effort and sponsorship provided by the 4 clubs involved, and I would like to thank them all for their efforts. In particular the success was due the unstinting dedication of George Noble at Surbiton in both helping to organise things beforehand, and in preparing the Surbiton lawns to be a real challenge for the final stages. Due to the clubs involved waiving the usual lawn fees, and some minor sponsorship from third parties, the event will have ended up breaking even, so that the underwriting provided by the CA was not in fact required.

A particular change this year has been the disbanding of the Lawns advisory group which has served us for many years, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank its members. The written guidelines are being updated by an independent consultant, and lawns advice will continue to be given through the Federation Development officers.

There are many other activities which have been going on, which include looking at some constitutional changes which appear later on the agenda, amending the CA's selection policy, mainly in the area of the appeals procedure, trials of new hoops by the equipment committee, the trial of the new AC doubles handicapping system, and many others that I haven't time to list.

Retiring this year from the council will be Geoff Young and John Handy. I would like to thank them both for their contributions over many years.