

Minutes of Meeting of the Oxfordshire Bridge Association Management Committee on Thursday 1st April 2004.

Present:

Keith Sadler	Chairman
Allan Wilson	Treasurer
Mary-Ann Sheehy	Secretary
Jean Squires	Membership Secretary
Brenda Harris	Publicity Officer
Gordon Carroll	Abingdon
Norman Gascoyne	Wallingford
Ina Merriman	Witney
Frank Harris	Oxford
Kris Krzmierzak	Summertown
Peggy Mannuel	Oxford
John Simpson	Oxford
Sandra Nicholson	Oxford

Apologies:

Bill McCarthy	Tournament Secretary
Ron Brown	President and Chester Cup Secretary
Nick Smith	Match Secretary
Stephen Brown	Chief Tournament Director
Maxine Henry	Oxford
Erika Sheppard	Summertown
Geoff Nicholas	Aylesbury
Ged Pfeiffer	Oxford University
Brian Claridge	Wessex League Secretary
Sandra Claridge	EBU Rep

Terry Collier (EBU General Manager) was welcomed to the meeting by Peter Stephenson (Chairman Oxford Bridge Club) and Keith Sadler.

Terry Collier joined the meeting for two reasons:

- First to respond to OBC's request for him to provide advice and support in gaining grants to support the purchase of Banbury Road premises;
- Second As part of EBU policy to attend a number of County Meetings, to outline the EBU's development plan and to help to support Terry's vision for bridge in the future.

Terry said that historically the EBU had devoted itself to raising money through fund raising rather than generating it through activities. Currently membership is down in reality by some 1000 members. There is a need to re-structure the EBU centrally and that a plan for the future was needed which should be unobjectionable in nature - rather a sort of wish-list but which provides a basis for the future. Hence the Development Plan.

This plan outlined three main aims:

First: Double membership in 5 years.

Currently one third of club members are members of the EBU.

The EBU offers currently for membership:

- a. six magazines a year
- b. national and county events, and
- c. an opportunity for members' voices to be heard.

About 6000 of the current 28,000 actually attend the national/county events.

So additional inducements might be

- d. events of new kind which would attract a different kind of membership (eg in conjunction with national trust and which would be available to non-members) (Possibility of one to be held in Blenheim for which Terry seeks our help)
- d. Master classes (as per Klinger) Plans for Andrew Robson and the Hackett Family to run these throughout the country over the next two years
- e. EBU Mag (available to non-members at £2.50)
- f. Free diary
- g. 10% discount from Bridge shop.

Second: Have presence in 1000 schools in 5 years (at present 170).

Third Other items

10% discount for Bridge Holidays abroad

10% discount for Ambassador Theatre Group

Have a look at Master Point Scheme – see if it can be improved

Get away from penny pinching.

Possibility of National Bridge Centre in Kettering which would also be run as conference centre/EBU headquarters/Hotel. Needs funding and support

Terry said that analysis suggested that decline in membership mainly age related but also not sufficient inducements to join EBU. He pointed out that Bridge for All has been a financial disaster as few convert to EBU members.

Terry then left.

Agenda

1. Minutes of last meeting. These were approved subject to minor amendments.
2. Chairman's Report:
 - a. Pro-Am competition went well – 42 pairs – congratulations to the winners: Maxine Henry and Elwyn Jones
 - b. Proposal that the County purchase two Pewter Trophies at a cost of £60 each for Pro/Am. Approved.
 - c. Meeting had taken place prior to Management Meeting with the OBC where Peter Stevenson reported on the current status of negotiations with University College over the premises of the OBC. These were going satisfactorily.
 - d. Proposal to organise an event for newcomers – teams of 4 (Bill happy to organise). Hoped that most fixtures would run in parallel with Wessex

- League.
 - e. Swiss Teams Event for 2006 agreed by EBU but we do not yet know when.
 - f. Oxford again to host a weekend of Camrose (through good offices of Sandra Claridge). Huge success last time. Very much hope we get the England match.
3. Treasurer's report.
- g. Will do the end of year accounts shortly.
 - h. The sub-committee on expenses to report at the AGM.
 - i. 23 March (County night) Table money to go for Fit for Life Charity. But not sure about the Oxford's share. (John Simpson raised the point that whereas the table money has increased the county's contribution to Oxford has not and wondered whether it would).
4. Membership Secretary: membership down on last year.
5. Tournament Secretary (in absentia) – report tabled: No semifinals for County pairs.... Too many withdrawals. Beck Cup at the time of writing there were 4 counties (Derbyshire, Herts. Middlesex, Berks & Bucks) who had accepted and Surrey & Glos declined. 2 or 3 teams for Oxfordshire will be invited. Bill suggested that a Director should be appointed 2 or 3 weeks in advance and should then be made responsible for all arrangements and afterwards copy result to Richard Lonsdale and Bill for award of Master points. Entries for other county events low. The Proposal re Director for the Beck was proposed by Gordon Carroll and seconded by Peggy Mannuell. The proposal carried.
6. Tournament Committee report: This had met and made the following recommendations:
- j. Wessex League;
 - i. Top 3 divisions remain at 8 teams and as the numbers in the league fluctuate, 4th and 5th division change in number, being equal or if an odd number remaining, division 5 be the one that is 9 teams.
 - ii. All new teams must enter in the bottom division.
 - iii. After 3 years, the tournament committee review the number in the top three divisions and change if the total number is consistently different to 40.

This matter was considered and following a proposal by John Simpson, seconded by Gordon Carroll, the recommendation was accepted unanimously.

- k. The Premiership: The proposal which will be brought up at the AGM is as follows:
 - i. To start from September 2004 and be awarded at following AGM
 - ii. To include the following events with a maximum of 200 points: President's Cup, County Pairs, Tuesday Pairs ladder (concluding in that
 - iii. To include the following events with a maximum of 100 points: Mens, Ladies, Mixed, Swiss, Teams Ladder (concluding in that competition year), Beck Cup Heat
 - iv. To include the following events with a maximum of 50 points: Tuesday Championship Play-off, Chester Cup, OBA Simultaneous

pairs

- v. The Flich winners to receive the maximum of 25 points or the points awarded by their mixed Pairs position.
- vi. Only players in the top half of the competition to receive points.
- vii. Assuming top of 100, 8 award to be made, each 70% of the previous: 100-, 70-, 49, 34, 24, 17, 12, 8. 6.
Tied places to share appropriate points, working to all decimal places, rounded finally to nearest whole number, halves being rounded up. Events with a maximum of 200 receive double these, with 50 receive half these points.
- viii. The person with the most points in all these events to be declared the winner and receive a prize and trophy.
- ix. If there is a tie for first place then the person receiving the most wins is to be the winner, if not split on this, then the most seconds, if not split on this then the most thirds etc. down to most eighths. If not split on this, remains tied.

Following discussion, it was suggested by the Chairman that this proposal should be posted on the web-site and brought as a recommendation to the AGM by the Management Committee. It was further suggested that any members who would like to either discuss the new Premiership, or make suggestions about changes to the proposals could contact either Nick Smith or Stephen Brown.

- i. Also reported was the matter of two players who had inadvertently played a system in the Swiss Pairs, which was not acceptable at the level, played. They had therefore been disqualified.

7. Match Secretary's Report was read out as follows:

The County 'A' team finished 4th in the Dawes League
The County 'B' team finished 3rd in the Porter Trophy
The County 'C' team finished 1st in the Markham Trophy in its 1st year.
Congratulations to them.
Congratulations also to Keith, John, Gilian and Hazel for winning the GolfPrint Trophy from a national field of 100 teams.
Thanks to Esme for another year of excellent teas for county matches, especially with the increased numbers

8. President's and Chester Cup Secretary reported as follows (in his absence)

Presidents - one finalist (Geoff Nicholas) is known.
The other semi-final had, unfortunately, to be called off just before the agreed date due to illness of two players in one of the teams. The match is now scheduled for 16th April which does allow time for the final to be played before the Pachabo Cup dates.
Chester Cup - Majority of matches have now been completed and at this time no problems are foreseen in completion of the competition by end April at the latest.

Additionally, Ron Brown reported that he had informed the Chairman, Mike Fletcher that he would be resigning from his post of President and Chester Cup Secretary with effect from the June 2004 AGM.

9. EBU Delegates report of the last EBU meetings is attached :

10. Publicity officer:

Reported that the Bid for Life Summertown had raised £90, Wantage £50 and Oxford £60 which was very satisfying. We were too late for the draw.

11. AGM – 14th June. Notices to go. Very Important to get copy of key for cupboard in order that trophies are not locked in. Mementoes. Suggested that engraved glass would be an appropriate memento. Keith and Esme will make inquiries.

12. Prospectus for 2004-5: A request that it goes out earlier this year. Membership Secretary and Chairman willing to ensure that it goes out by mail.

13. AOB

Duplimate machine: Still great interest but it transpires that at the moment those used by the EBU are not entirely satisfactory. Wait until a better model is introduced.

Date of Next Meeting: 14 June 2004.

Appendix:

21/1/04 Special General Meeting & EBU Council Meeting: Report from Brenda Harris.

The Special General meeting was convened in order to seek approval for Byelaw changes, the first being a constitutional reform to provide for the creation of a single entity. This was passed, 44 in favour, 1 against & 2 abstentions. The second Bye-Law changes concerned the new arrangements for the Selection committee to take effect, in particular the introduction of limited voting rights for those appointed to the committee in connection with Youth Selection matters. In addition 2 other amendments in the same section of the Bye-Laws was proposed in order to bring them into line with what has happened in practice since the devolution of the BBL. These were passed, 49 in favour, 3 against.

Matters arising from Board of Directors meeting:

- a) Re provision of a National Bridge Centre, a possible site is in Kettering where the Executive & Max Bavin inspected a building offering 23,000 sq. ft. (to serve as a conference/bridge centre). Additional land is available for a hotel to be built.
- b) Re Development Plan, the General Manager was very pleased with the support from clubs that had been visited since its launch. It was also agreed that greater communication between the Board & Counties should be encouraged. To this end the General Manager would offer County Secretaries the opportunity of a Board member or the General Manager attending an early meeting of their association.
- c) It was decided that all EBU members should receive EBU diaries free. To minimise costs, it was decided to combine the yearbook with the diary at a cost of £11,700 (approx. 16cm x 9cm. in size), a classic example of "improvement equals deterioration"?

Treasurers Report: Bridge Shop, Membership & BfA are currently £29,000 behind budget. English Bridge (mag) not doing well financially but advertising sales for Dec. & Feb. issues are up by 10%. Membership Dec 2003 is down 1,000 from Dec. 2002. Competitions are doing well.

Constitutional Reform: creating a single entity. Peter Stocken & Philip Mason submitted a paper detailing the relationships between the counties, the Board & the 3 main sub-committees in this move which basically will not change and describing the necessity for a single entity in the light of today's world where company law is infinitely more complex and all organisations are bound by a plethora of regulations emanating both from our government & the EU, rendering them vulnerable to litigation from every source. At the moment the Board & its own sub-committees like the Editorial Board are the only ones protected in law behind the ring-fence of limited liability. Surely members of the Union's 3 committees, members of Council & the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, the Treasurer & the Secretary when acting as officers of the Executive Committee of the Union require the same provision? It is a compelling argument in my view. The paper also details exactly how the new company will operate. A representative of Hammonds (EBU solicitors) was invited to attend this session to answer questions from those present. Queries revolved around the accountability of sub-committees. We were told that sub-committees will be responsible to the Board and that their reports can be submitted to the Board or to the members as we determine, details of which to be enshrined in the articles of association in accordance with company law. In this instance members = shareholders; Vice-Presidents can attend but not vote.

Topic for Discussion: Master Points.

Master Points originated in 1956; its purpose was twofold: to reflect achievement and to serve as a source of income for the EBU. However over the decades, some ranks are less credible than they used to be, inflation has devalued the currency, e.g. over 10% are life members or above. A genuine ranking system needs to be introduced instead of altering the present one, ideally we need one based on ALL results bad as well as good so that ranking goes up & down as in golf/chess. The system will then reflect ALL performances instead of adding success on to success e.g. at the Young Chelsea Club % ranking fluctuates (? input from CASS which has just been released to clubs). It was suggested that a proper ranking system would damage the Master Points system. It was acknowledged that for newcomers, Master Points provide a source of pride in achievement and act as an incentive to progress. Green & Gold point allocations were discussed such as the introduction of a lower Green Point rank e.g. 10 GPs = Tournament Master instead of current 25. It was suggested that a handicap system be introduced and that MPs awarded at Sim pairs be capped.

A delegate related with horror her recent discovery that some clubs do not pay the EBU for MPs for periods of 18 months and chided the Treasurer for not cracking down on them.

Another delegate was astounded that in this electronic age, we are having to chop up bits of paper, having no way of down-loading master point certificates. CASS downloads solely to Colin Porch (EBU MP's administrator) This delegate also said that the MP certificates no longer state that points have to be sent to the EBU at its address! The General Manager replied that 400 clubs were using CASS which was sent out at Xmas and that he hopes an interface can be provided for other systems so that MPs can be registered electronically. (Another delegate mentioned that a club in Sussex wants to support its county by paying its subs and playing in its events but does not want to pay the EBU subs nor receive its magazine.)

Topic for next meeting: Bridge for All

Minutes of Selection Committee: Youth Development: Members of the new Youth Squad Development Team (YSdT) had resigned – In the appointment of co-opted Youth representatives, Council had incorporated in its terms of reference the proposal that co-opted members should have voting rights but Bye-Laws were not yet in place to permit voting rights of co-opted members nor for a formally appointed body to replace the disbanded Youth Working Party. In the circumstances, precedent indicated that the 2 Youth representatives invited to attend the meeting could only be given votes if a unanimous vote in favour was reached by the voting committee members actually present and entitled to vote. Regrettably unanimity was not reached.

Tournament Committee Minutes presented by its chairman: Thanks to the generosity of Helen Shapiro, widow of the late Boris Shapiro in providing sponsorship of £3,000 per annum for 10 years, the Spring Foursomes have been re-named "Spring Foursomes for the Boris Shapiro Trophy". It was a condition that the money be used to enhance prizes and that pre-duplimated boards would be used.

The World Bridge Federation has proposed to increase the qualification age for Seniors events from 55 to 60 by annual increments over the next 5 years. The Tournament Committee has decided to leave it at 55. It did consider, however, that the age of 65 is too young for Veterans events and agreed to change it to 70 without incremental changes so that this change will come into effect for the 2004/05

season.

Thirteen venues had been found for the National Newcomers pairs. Concern was expressed at the high entry fee of £5 per pair for this event, a view not shared by the chairman.

Laws & Ethics Committee Minutes: Thanks were expressed to David Stevenson for his work on the White Book, the final version of which will be published on the EBU website shortly.

Re the Revoke law, mention was made of 1 trick transferred if the side won the revoke trick or any subsequent trick.

Mention was made that in January 2006 new laws are likely to be introduced that will necessitate changes to the White Book.

Proposals to approve changes to county constitutions: Counties have still not had changes approved by the EBU. The General Manager lamented Gerard Faulkner's departure from this field.

Meeting closed at 4.10 pm.