

## MINUTES OF THE OBA MEETING ON 31 March 28, 2008

### **PRESENT:**

Brenda Harris:	In the Chair
Mary-Ann Sheehy	Secretary
Lynne Hayes	Treasurer
Stephen Brown	Chief Tournament Director
Geoff Nicholas	President/Chester/Wessex Secretary
Clive Keep	County Pairs Secretary
Peter Baxter	EBU Shareholder

Esme Alden	Oxford
Kathy Talbot	Oxford
Richard Sills	Oxford
Peggy Manuell	Oxford
Norman Gascoyne	Wallingford
Lester Brooks	Tuesday Club
John Slater	(Observer)

### **APOLOGIES:**

Nick Smith  
Maxine Henry  
Sandra Nicholson  
Alison Nicolson  
Erica Sheppard  
John Briggs  
Alan Grunwald  
John Barlow  
David Marsh  
Ina Merriman  
Gordon Carroll

Brenda Harris took the chair and welcomed John Slater who was attending as an Observer. He had offered to stand for the post of Chairman at the forthcoming AGM.

**Minutes of previous meeting.** These were approved.

### **Matters arising:**

Stephen Brown reported that he had approached Keith Sadler to try to persuade him to continue coordinating the Oxfordshire Congress, but had been unsuccessful.

Brenda reported that at the Oxford Times Cup competition there had been no need to have two levels of bridge conventions.

Brenda reported that Alan Grunwald had accepted the post of Tournament Secretary.

Worries concerning entries to county events by non-members of the OBA were allayed by the fact that Maxine Henry (Membership Secretary) now scrutinises entries closely to ensure that this does not happen or if it does non-members are encouraged to join.

Website is now up and running.

There was a query as to what adult classes are taking place in Charlbury and Abingdon: Ina Merriman and Valerie Welch run classes respectively.

Meeting on 29 Mary with John Carter from the EBU. After some discussion it was proposed that at that meeting votes should be taken from clubs (either at the time or by email) and that the Shareholders' votes at the EBU EGM should reflect that vote. (Proposed by Stephen Brown and seconded By Kathy Talbot). Peter Baxter pointed out that the new proposals which are to be voted on at the meeting of the EBU had been published and that all clubs had received these and many had had meetings on them already.

### 3. **Officers reports:**

#### **Chairman**

There being no chairman there is no report.

#### **b. Secretary**

Nothing to report

#### **Treasurer**

As at 1<sup>st</sup> March, the current account stood at £4694.58 and the deposit account at £13,360.58. Lynne felt that the County finances were in good order at present. The EBU had not been informed in time of the membership fee increase to £4. It will be done for next year.

Brenda reported that the Andrew Robson evening would bring in a net profit of some £300. The Seniors event runs at a loss (the fee now stands at £7.50). View was that given that attendance is quite good, there is no reason to stop it.

#### **Chief Tournament Director**

Nothing to report.

#### **Match Secretary**

Oxfordshire approaches the final game of the Dawes League season next Sunday with an excellent chance of retaining the Porter Trophy (for the B-teams) and an outside chance of winning the Markham Trophy as well (for C-teams).

The home game against Worcs, formerly scheduled for June 29th 2008 has been moved to Sun July 13th so that it does not clash with the green-pointed event. I believe that Esme and OBC are happy with this change.

Six counties which used to run "invitation" events, the equivalent of the Beck Cup, have clubbed together to hold one annual event with the counties rotating as hosts. The first Midland Teams Challenge Bowl is on June 8. We have enough volunteers to send one team and possibly two (which would currently be acceptable to the organisers) but my own view is that the county should not be expected to pay the entry fee for more than one team. Some might be prepared to pay their own entry but it would be very awkward to ask one group to pay and another not to. I would welcome views but my current intention is to facilitate the entry for just one team.

**Agreed:** The county is happy to pay for a second team if one wishes to go. Travel expenses are not covered.

### **Membership Secretary**

The membership figures are as follows

Paid up members 770

Lapsed members 66

This includes Juniors, Bridge for all students and Clubs.

I mentioned to Lynn that we seem to have two levels of payment for members joining after 1st Nov. We charge dual members L3 to join after 1st Nov where as the EBU only charge new members a County fee of L1.50.

(Many people playing in the Wessex league leave it until Nov to join as dual members. )

For Newsletter 3 I asked Malcolm to insert a paragraph reminding players that for most County events they need to be members of the EBU and the County. Perhaps in the next issue we could remind Wessex league captains that players also need to be County members to play in the top divisions.

How do we know which clubs are affiliated as they do not pay a County membership fee?

**Agreed:** for the future no discount would be payable for part of a year. The full membership of £4 will be payable for anyone wishing to play in the Wessex League.

The decision as to whether to charge clubs an affiliation fee to be affiliated to the

OBA will be deferred until after the AGM.

Recognised that that Alternative Club is an anomaly. It is affiliated because it wants to play in the Wessex League but pays no fee to the EBU or the OBA.

### **Wessex League etc. Officer**

#### Report on Wessex League, Presidents Cup and Chester Cup competitions

All events are on-track and expected to finish within timeframes. No problems so far and all captains have behaved responsibly, to ensure that events have run smoothly.

### **PUBLICITY** (Brenda Harris)

Posters abandoned after Harwell Cup & Pro-Am in favour of front-page display of forthcoming events in annual April, August & December issues.

Congress advert in April EBU mag. Cost up from £170 to £180 plus vat!

April newsletter displayed on home page OBA website, hard copies issued to all clubs for players without internet access. (All done for the cost of £15.75).

Thanks to Sandra Nicholson, Nick Smith and Malcolm Simpson for their contributions to the success of the Newsletter.

### **EBU Shareholders Meeting 5 March 08** (Brenda Harris)

Draft minutes should be accessed online (not yet available 25/3/08)

TV program similar to Countdown (but bridge-based!) in the pipeline (digital channels).

Sponsorship for Juniors progressing well.

Strategy: 630 responses to club questionnaires (sent to 950 clubs) analysed.

60% remain affiliated, 20% "waiting to see", 20% would disaffiliate.

Final proposals will be sent out early April

Treasurer expects a modest surplus

Changing EBU mag to A5 will save \$15 000

Laws & Ethics: change to laws (will now allow defendants to ask "having none?" & players can look at opponent's card at any stage); psyching methods ? in public domain.

Tournament: want to eliminate failing tournaments & re-vitalize marginal ones (want to suspend Nat Newcomers for a year – ferocious criticism); Seniors venue changed next year to Birmingham (from Eastbourne & Harrogate)

### **SHAREHOLDERS MEETING 5 MARCH** (Peter Baxter)

The EBU is still working towards charitable status

2008 Law Changes will be available soon

Convention cards can be consulted at any time

Defenders will also be allowed to ask having none if partner discards- return to sanity other NBO's have always allowed this.

Premier League is reintroduced as an aid to International selection

A Charity has offered a donation of £60000 over 3 years for a youth project which must be ongoing.

Treasure reported we were heading for a surplus this year of ~ £90000 after tax

EBU establishing a Trust Fund for Youth Bridge - contributions welcome

## STRATEGY PROPOSALS

Chairman thanked all Counties and Clubs for their assistance.

There is now a 27 page document on the EBU website which contains the ' Pay to Play' scheme and the results of the Club Survey.

Counties will have to decide their own method of funding.

Club affiliation and membership fee.

The pay to play fee is now forecast to be 25-29p including the Master point fee of about 13p currently included in table money or annual subs.

Tournaments - overall successful but some ailing - Blackpool Easter congress not doing so well. I believe high costs are responsible for some of the problems - why do the 90% of us who will never win prizes have to pay around an extra 20% to fund prizes - players don't play tournament bridge for money- in America the congresses do not give prizes only a memento for winners usually a T shirt - and there are more top players in US congresses than most UK ones including UK top players. The cost per session there is \$12-16 per session depending on the level of tournament.

### **Tournament Secretary**

Invitations were sent out to 18 county organisations for the Beck Cup at the weekend of 15/16 March, and a 19th on 27th March. As of today (27th March) replies had been received from 4 - Herefordshire, Hertfordshire and Somerset will be sending teams, but Cambs and Hunts will not.

### **Education/Youth Officer**

Junior Bridge is continuing at OBC on alternate Sundays. Marryat, Melinda & I are hoping to make a big push to expand the scheme, with a launch in September 2008.

Jo Murray intends to start bridge at Oxford Community School.  
Best wishes

### **Count newsletters/prospectus**

Stephen Brown thought the prospectus for next year could be ready by mid July and that the newsletter for August could be distributed with the prospectus.

### **National Newcomers**

Many thanks to the OBC for taking on this event. 6 tables. For the future agreed that the running of this would be taken by the OBC though it would still be advertised in the OBA prospectus.

### **Officer Vacancies**

The only likely vacancy is Master Point secretary. Stephen was asked to make an announcement on Tuesday night to see if someone might volunteer. Also a list for nominations etc. would be posted on the OBA notice board. County selectors selection depends on those proposed by clubs and cannot be finalised until the AGM.

### **AGM arrangements**

Lynne Hayes would provide a list of winners and ensure trophies are present on the day. She would also email winners to ask them to attend: promising bridge and refreshments as well as the presentation on the day. The mixed pairs event takes place after the AGM. It was agreed that the trophy for this would be presented at the end of the day of the event.

### **Congress arrangements**

Lynne Hayes (with help of Kathy Talbot) will take the responsibility of coordinating this event. Geoff and Norman will help with the tables. Alan Grunwald will take the entries. An entry form will be posted on the Website; Flyers will be made available (Kathy and Lynne). The entry fee is £21 including refreshments. But this will go up to £25 including refreshments for the September Green Point Event (Brenda to note for advertising purposes). John Slater will help on the days. Stephen Brown will direct.

### **Rates for hire of Oxford Bridge Club**

Richard Sills reported that discussion had taken place within the OBC regarding the fees payable by the OBA for use of the premises. It does not propose to make an alteration for Tuesday nights but he warned that the £25 fee which is payable for the Sunday events is likely to go up (despite the fact that the OBC is aware of the OBA's help with the building of the conservatory). It was not yet clear how much the rise would be, but unlikely to be as much as £100).

### **Publication of email addresses**

Richard Sills also raised the question as to whether the prospectus could use 'at' rather than '@' for email addresses in order to reduce the potential for spam. In the end it was decided that this would defeat much of the objective of putting the email address in the prospectus in the first place.

Mary-Ann Sheehy was asked to write to all those secretaries who do not provide an email address for the prospectus, to do so.

**Date of next meeting**

12<sup>th</sup> June 2008.