Bridge Great Britain:

Outgoing Chairman's Report, 2014-15

This is by way of a valedictory message.

I was elected as Scottish Representative to Bridge Great Britain in 1999 when the organisation was established and have served on the Committee for 15 years.

The period has seen major changes to all of BGB's activities. As a traditionalist by nature I have not been entirely happy with many of these.

The Camrose Series has changed radically since 1999.

Change was forced upon us by the fact that Scotland and Wales could now send teams to European and World events, and were thus anxious to cut both time and expense. The new format has freed up three weekends and, in our view, increased overall interest in the event. We have settled on 6 teams meeting each other twice over two weekends, and this seems to have bedded in well. Since the changes were introduced I have attended every Camrose weekend but one (which clashed with a family wedding), so that I could get reactions from players and organisers, and listen to their many helpful suggestions for improvement. Of late complaints about the format have greatly reduced, and perhaps my absence, leaving them with no ear to bend, will not be a serious loss.

Other changes seemed less necessary. One of my regrets is my inability to persuade the Committee that we should not change the rule about ties. There have been several tied Camroses over the decades, and the joint winners have always shared the Trophy. The new WBF scale will make it even less likely that a tie will be split, but I would still like to see the procedure for splitting ties removed from the regulations.

I have attended the Lady Milne only when selected for the Scottish team to avoid the sense of being a spectre at the feast when I was not selected. The new format for that event was a less radical change, and it too seems to be working well.

I have not managed to attend the Junior Camrose/Peggy Bayer as often as I would have wished because there were clashes with Scottish Senior Trials. Reports suggest that the events are played in as good a spirit as ever and continue to be a good advertisement for Youth Bridge.

The Senior Camrose in Dublin in May will be the eighth, and for the first time Bernard Teltscher, the sponsor without whose assistance the event would not have got off the ground, will not participate. Northern Ireland hosted the 2014 event and invited Bernard to bring the sixth team. The Irish Senior Team won the 2014 event.

2015 results:

Congratulations to **Ireland** on winning the Camrose Trophy
Wales on winning the Lady Milne Trophy
England on winning the Junior Camrose and Peggy Bayer Trophies

The Gold Cup

This was put out to tender in 2012.

The successful bid came from Sandra Claridge. It has resulted in a cut in expenses, mainly from what we paid our Secretary. Which means there has been a small profit, which is split equally between the EBU, SBU and WBU. We are unable to reverse the general trend of falling numbers in all competitions

Moving the Final from Peebles has had a mixed reception, and the Final stages surely lost something when there was no ready-made live audience in a special venue. I hope that the move to Eastbourne will restore some of the magic once the professionals get used to the idea.

I should record my strong preference for the event being run under the auspices of BGB. The EBU may be able to run it quite efficiently, but the event would surely be lost in the plethora of events organised by Aylesbury. There are already too many players who associate the Gold Cup with the English Bridge Union. It is one of the functions of BGB to ensure that it remains a truly British event.

The EBU has taken back its Silver Plate, and receives a proportion of the entry money to run that. I believe that Welsh teams are eligible to play in the Silver Plate, but Scotland has its own event. I do not believe that Scotland needs any money to defray expenses, but it is possible that some future Scots may disagree.

The Simultaneous Pairs

One of my least successful rearguard actions. When the EBL recognised England, Scotland and Wales as separate NBOs we offered assurances that there would be funding to pay for the national teams of all three countries. This funding was supposed to come from the British Simultaneous Pairs. For four years the profits were divided equally, then the EBU took 60% and Scotland and Wales received 20% each. Finally the EBU insisted that payments should be disbursed on the basis of the total original entry, giving them the lion's share of 80%. My suggestion that the profits be allocated according to need (number of days spent by teams abroad) rather than input was never taken seriously. The EBU insisted on taking over the running of the Simultaneous Pairs, now renamed the British Pairs. In my view we should first have tried to negotiate a better deal with Anna Gudge. As time passed the SBU were persuaded that someone else would be better able to negotiate terms with the EBU and I was sidelined. I believe that the takeover was rushed. Several Scottish Clubs had difficulty in signing up for the first event, and may have lost interest as a result.

For two years the EBU made the generous promise that the SBU and WBU would receive £10,000 per annum from the new Simultaneous Pairs. That time has run out and the new regime will probably be disastrous for both Scotland and Wales: very few of their clubs seem to participate now. I hope that England has managed to increase its income sufficiently to justify the change.

Meantime Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland introduced Celtic Simultaneous Pairs to try to make up the expected gap in income. The EBU seemed to take exception to this and have discouraged their clubs from participating. It is disappointing that the BGB website publishes various purely English events but completely ignores the Celtic ones. I hope that will change.

I would like to thank all those who have worked with me over the years, in particular Sandra Claridge. I hope that the new Committee will treat her with the respect she deserves as long as she is prepared to continue in her role.

I should also thank Jeremy Dhondy for creating and updating the website. Perhaps I shall now find time to research the gaps in Camrose history as I promised to do.

Bridge Great Britain is responsible for organising the Camrose series and the Gold Cup. Its other important role is to act as a channel of communication between the Home Unions. I am sure the new Committee will take these responsibilities as seriously as I have done, and wish them well.

Liz McGowan