



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORTS & ACCOUNTS 2021/22

Minutes of the 73rd Annual General meeting of the ECBA
held on Saturday 14 May 2022 at Barleylands

Present Paul Mollison (*Chairman*), Sue Thorburn (*Secretary*),
Linda Fleet (*Treasurer*), Pat Johnson (*Programme Secretary*),
Val Mollison (*Tournament Secretary*) and 32 others (a list is available if required)

1. Chairman's opening remarks

Paul welcomed those present and said he was pleased to see so many attendees. He had received a number of apologies (see Appendix E for a full list).

See Appendix A for the text of Paul's remarks.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes had been previously circulated and are available on the website. They were agreed as a true record.

Proposed Albert Kitchin; seconded Pat Johnson. A copy was signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Secretary's report

My role providing support to the committee is unchanged. The committee kept things ticking over during the pandemic and I acted as chairman during Paul and Val's sabbatical.

See Appendix B for full report.

5. Treasurer's report

As you can see from the accounts there is a deficit of £259 mainly due to the drop in revenue from the Essex and Herts Green Point events.

See Appendix C for the report and accounts.

6. Appointment of Examiner for 2022/23

Petra Bromfield was unanimously appointed as Examiner. .

7. Tournament Secretary's report

There has been quite a transformation to bridge since the last AGM in 2019.

The next few months will be key in working out where things go in the future particularly whether there is any appetite for Essex Competitions.

See Appendix D for the full report.

8. Election of officers

The existing committee members standing for re-election are:

Position	Nominee
Secretary	Sue Thorburn
Treasurer	Linda Fleet
Tournament Secretary	Val Mollison
Web Master	Petra Bromfield
Committee Member	Pat Johnson

Vacancies are Chairman and 4 committee roles.

Nominations are Chairman John McCoy

Committee Cath Fox, Marcia Levan-Harris, Paul Mollison, Ashley Sawyer

Proposed Peter Oake Seconded George Vede

All elected unopposed

9. Any Other Business

Future of Essex/Herts event. Limited involvement of Essex players coupled with change in EBU charging structure has prompted a review of our involvement in this event. This will be discussed by the committee.

Endorsement of comments in committee reports that the popularity of online Bridge needs to be recognised as does the apparent general reduction in interest. Several possible initiatives were raised and will be considered by the committee.

Congratulations to Cath Fox on joining the EBU board.

10. Comments from new chairman

John said he was enthusiastic about developing Bridge in Essex and plans a number of initiatives with teaching and bridge in schools being prioritised.

11. Presentation of trophies

Certificates were presented to some competition winners.

Paul then declared the meeting closed.

Appendix A Chairman's Opening Remarks

A warm welcome to the Essex Contract Bridge Association AGM for 2022. It's good to see you all after two years when we haven't been able to hold an AGM.

Firstly, thanks to you all for attending today and helping us to achieve our quorum. 46 years ago, I made a blunder by arranging to get married on Cup Final day and it seems that I am still making the same mistake.

I would like to (once again) offer my thanks to my fellow committee members, who give up a considerable amount of their spare time to make Essex Bridge run smoothly. This includes Val, Linda, Sue, Petra and Pat Johnson. Our thanks also go to the selection committee of Bernie, Brian Davies, Jon and Cath. and to Petra for the auditing of Accounts once again.

Looking around today, I see a lot of players who have come back and are helping our clubs slowly get back onto their feet. I would urge you all to continue to make the effort to turn up and keep supporting the clubs. We are probably at a turning point and the next year or so will determine whether we still have face-to-face bridge clubs to go and play at.

I would also like to say how sad I am that a number of people who we used to share Bridge with are no longer with us.

We have lost people like:

Frank Morrison,
Catriona Lovett,
Frank Tomlinson,
Chris Megahey,
Monty Krimgoltz,
John Stimson,
Winnie Godber,
Len Williams,
Yekkie Sannie-Lampsey,
Laurie Burt,
Yvonne Dias,
Gerald Falkener

and Margaret Curtis, to name but a few.

I have played against all these people and I am staggered by the number of stalwarts who are no longer with us.

During the last two years, the committee has been almost dormant, and unable to run many of the regular face-to-face competitions. Going forward, we are not rushing back to face-to-face Bridge and it is clear that the number of tournaments that we used to run will be substantially less than what went before. Online Bridge has come of age and it is a matter of open debate as to how (or if) we accommodate that in our programme.

So, this seems like a good time for me to stand down and hand over to someone more motivated than myself.

It was about 8 years ago when the ECBA held a rather stormy AGM at Mountnessing Village Hall. My predecessor, John Williams, had been in post for 4 years and had achieved a lot of good things, presiding over the period after Margaret Curtis finally agreed to take a step back from running everything. However, there was still a lot to change and, having had a sleepless night after the AGM, he resigned the next day.

One issue to confront was that we were running events at venues that a lot of people didn't like and they were being run by a Director that a lot of people didn't like. This was resolved gradually over a period of two years as we centralised on Barleylands and parted company with our former County Director. Since then, things have gone more smoothly, but I would be the first to admit that we have focussed more on the delivery of events rather than promoting Bridge in general.

So, what have we achieved over the last 8 years?

We have maintained and developed the competition programme that we inherited from the old committee. However, that has come with the cost of more and more work falling on fewer and fewer shoulders. Covid and lockdown has provided us with an opportunity to review the number of competitions that we run and do some pruning.

At the same time, we have managed to ensure that there is now more money in the ECBA bank account than when we started. There is a "war chest" of funds that could be used to promote Bridge and get more people playing the game.

Centralising the events at Barleylands has worked out successfully. By fostering a close relationship with Bernie, his club had been developing quite well and, before Covid, we were starting to see a few of his improver pairs joining in some of the Essex competitions.

Appendix B Secretary's report

My role providing support to the committee is unchanged. The committee kept things ticking over during the pandemic and I acted as chairman during Paul and Val's sabbatical.

The future of Bridge in Essex I canvassed opinion from members on how they saw bridge developing post pandemic with the increasing popularity of online Bridge. The comments will be passed on to the new committee.

Face to Face bridge in clubs Many clubs are finding it difficult to attract enough tables for Farce to Face club nights. There have been a number of closures and unaffiliations. Some of the remaining clubs are finding the cost and availability of premises means face to face sessions are not viable. Afternoon clubs are more successful. There are now 16 affiliated clubs but this may reduce further with possible mergers.

The Future We need to recognise online Bridge is here to stay and work with clubs to provide support. Online Bridge has also prompted a review of ECBA competitions.

Appendix C Treasurer's report and financial statements

Bank Balance at year end

£10,563- Barclays and Lloyds

£16,283 – Skipton

The total in the bank at 31/03/2022 is £26,846 this is compared to the balance of £25,997 at the year end 31/03/2019 when the last AGM was held.

As you can see from the accounts this year, we have a deficit of £259. (2021– £368)

In 2020/2021 we had £853 from the EBU for Universal Membership. During 2021/2022 the committee made the decision not to claim any UM until April 2023, to help clubs through post pandemic recovery.

Also, in 2020/2021 there was no income from the Essex and Herts Green Point events in July and September. In 2021/2022 £966 was received compared to £1,700 2019/2020

Independent Examiner

I would like to thank Petra Bromfield for her examination of the accounts. I would like to propose a gift for her to show our appreciation for her work over the last three years. I am pleased to say that she will continue next year.

Appendix D Tournament Secretary's Report

There has been quite a transformation to bridge since the last AGM in 2019.

Prior to the pandemic events were ticking along reasonably well, although the Switch Cup had very few entries, and events like Margaret Curtis (formerly George Curtis) or Sue Taylor, nominally Swiss events, haven't had enough teams to run a Swiss format for quite a few years. Events intended for less experienced players, such as the Really Easy Pairs or the B flight pairs had disappeared due to lack of entries.

Then the pandemic hit and online bridge entered our lives. Initially we hoped that events would just be postponed and the season of events could be finished later in the year, but that didn't happen.

Some people have asked why we didn't immediately set up regular online Essex events online. Firstly, we felt that the clubs would need funds more than the County as they have premises hire to consider, and those clubs that have gone back to face-to-face are operating with reduced numbers. Also, we didn't have any in-county capability for running sessions on BBO (unlike other some other Counties such as Suffolk), and I didn't find anyone interested in taking on such a role. The EBU got its directors approved rapidly and set up daily pairs games and 4 times a week teams league, so there was plenty of bridge available online for those who wanted it.

Over the following two years we have tried to run a few events online, especially since the advent of Realbridge which has made it easier to get people going with running events. Some have gone ahead, albeit with reduced numbers, but some events didn't get sufficient entries. The Fletcher didn't take place because not enough clubs could raise a team. This year's Championship pairs was cancelled because, although we initially had 8 pairs, 3 then dropped out leaving us short of the minimum number required to run a pairs event.

There was also virtually no interest for the Essex Leagues and the Switch Cup. We did get sufficient teams to run the Teams of 4, but that was reduced in numbers and also ran into problems with regards to face-to-face or online.

The issue we are now facing is that we have a divided community of bridge players. There are those who are adamant that they won't play online, but we also have a large number of players who have said they prefer online. Combine that with the fact that there are Green Pointed and Blue Pointed events online most weekends, there is little support for our own black-pointed events.

Hopefully things will improve now that the pandemic is beginning to ease. The next few months will be key in working out whether or not there is any appetite for Essex Competitions.

Appendix E Apologies for absence

Petra Bromfield

June Brown

Alaric Cundy

Robert Elliot

Cath Fox

Audrey Hartley

Linda Jenkins

Vaughan Jenkins

Simon Moorman

Peter Richardson

Keith Thompson