



# Essex Contract Bridge Association

A constituent member of the English Bridge Union

**Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015 starting at 19.30 at Val Mollison's house – Tekoa Lodge, Mayes Lane, Sandon, Chelmsford, CM2 7RW**

## MINUTES

**Present:** T Cockle, L Fleet, A Hartley, B Hunt, P Mollison, V Mollison, T. Todman, C. Taylor, D Valtisiaris and T Philpott.

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence:** Paul Mollison welcomed those present. He accepted apologies from N Bardsley, M. Curtis, A. Cundy, K. Thompson, G. Randall. .
2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday, 29th January, 2015:** These had been circulated prior to the meeting and were agreed to be a correct record.
3. **Matters arising from the minutes not already included in the agenda.**
  - a. **Item 3. a. The LMBA's change of date for their Congress:** The proposed change of the LMBA's Congress to one week before the Herts/Essex weekend in July had been agreed by the EBU's Tournament Committee. This matter will be raised by Margaret and Audrey at the next shareholder's meeting on 13th May 2015. Audrey reported that Margaret has collected together various documents to support our position, and has contacted Herts to get their input. Audrey requested that Paul forward copies of any correspondence he has on the matter to Margaret
  - b. **Item 3.c. Venue for Norfolk Match:** Audrey reported that, as explained in an email circulated earlier, Norfolk had agreed to hold their next home match against us in Roydon near Diss and so in accordance with the decision at the last meeting, Audrey has booked Thornwood Common for our home match against them.
  - c. **Item 4. b. iii. Design of Essex Score Card:** Audrey presented the latest draft of her design for the outside of the proposed Essex score card. The design was approved after one minor change. The card should have room for boards 1-40 inside, and then we could print our own inserts on paper for boards 41-49 when needed. A discussion took place about whether to have them printed on coloured card or in coloured ink. It was decided that that black and red logo was already quite distinctive and that it looks crisper on white, so it was decided to go with black and red print on white. It was decided to order 35,000 cards to allow for: a) 1000 cards to be sent to each affiliated club; b) a smaller quantity to be sent to unaffiliated clubs as a promotional gesture to re-establish contact with those clubs who disaffiliated on the introduction of P2P by the EBU and any other clubs that Alaric knows of through teacher liaison; c) the remainder to be used in Essex events (estimated at about 1000+ per year).
4. **Reports from Hon. Officers:**
  - a. **Hon. General Secretary:** Audrey presented a report covering the following;
    - i) **Pair's League.** A few of the regular players in the Pairs League have asked the Committee to reconsider the holding of this competition. The event has not taken off in the way originally hoped; The plan was that there would be enough pairs to have two divisions of 10 pairs, whereas the last time it was held it was down to 9 pairs. We confirmed that the County does not want to run events of interest to so few players and the event should be discontinued, but could possibly be reinstated at a later date if there is a significant increase in interest.
    - ii) **The National Pairs Heat.** The National Pairs Heat run by Essex will be discontinued as the EBU is introducing changes to the event. This will affect the Eve Goblets points. There will be a heat at Barleylands which will be an EBU heat with the expectation that people from outside Essex will take part and similarly Essex players may well take part in a heat at a different venue. The Eve Goblets were set up to reward players for performance in Essex competitions and so it will not be appropriate to award points for performance in what will now be an EBU event. The trophy for best performance by an Essex pair in the National Pairs will not be affected
    - iii) **Summer Programme.** Summer competition venues have all been booked, and where appropriate Impulse Catering booked. The Summer Programme has been circulated to Club Secretaries (hard copy and email) and to Essex members without access to the internet (hard copies). Club Secretaries were asked to circulate the electronic version to those of their members with internet access and to pin the hard copy on their notice board. A covering

letter was included giving information about the AGM, the agenda, special resolutions and nominations for next year's Committee. Audrey also included an invitation to all clubs to enter their members for the Club Pairs event on June 21<sup>st</sup>. In addition to the Summer Programme halls have been booked for the Seniors' Daytime Pairs Competition in the Autumn as this needs to be slotted in when the hall is available on a Wednesday and The Cornell trophy has been booked at Mountnessing. Impulse Catering has been booked for both.

**iv) Flyers.** Audrey has prepared flyers for most of the competitions since the last Committee meeting. It is not known if there has been any noticeable improvement in numbers. Possibly some of the 10 pairs that entered the B-Flight competition may have been inspired to take part by the fliers!

This last point led to a discussion on how to expand our list of email addresses, particularly for members who are currently regular competition players. We need to ask clubs to ask their members if we can have their email addresses, possibly collect emails from players at events such as the really easy events, and possibly use email addresses that can be identified via the Essex website (which may not be on the list supplied by the EBU)

**b. Hon. Treasurer's Report:** Linda Fleet reported that our current bank balances stood at: Barclays - £8,385 and Skipton - £15,188.

- i) The majority of the spring competitions made a profit with the exception of Play with an Expert and the Spring Seniors (the least popular of the three Seniors Daytime Competitions). The entry for the latter were up on last year, and the venue cost was reasonable, but the cost of the food caused the event to make a loss.
- ii) Linda reported that although there were still some expenses to come in for the Championship Pairs (P2P, deals and refreshment costs) over the year our excess of income over expenditure from our competitions is approximately £3300 including £2,100 from the Green Pointed Events, and £1200 from Essex Competitions.
- iii) P2P receipts for the year were £2,863 compared with £3,731 in 2014, which is a 23% drop. This is because of a drop in attendances at clubs. The decision on whether to change the Essex portion of the P2P is not due until later in the year. [Subsequent discussion highlighted the fact that the Essex portion of the P2P had been reduced for the year just finished, but it had already been decided not to reduce it next year. The EBU is proposing to increase their element in October and Audrey said that clubs have already been informed]
- iv) The Accounts have gone to Michael Vandome for examination. He is willing to continue in this role and willing to change his title to Independent Examiner. Linda has bought him some wine to show our appreciation.
- v) Entries for the Essex/Herts weekend in July have already started coming in. Linda reported that Mike Minting had done a good job of making the Entry Form very striking..
- vi) Linda stated that the portion of mentoring costs being paid by Essex (half) has been paid for by money transferred to the Development Fund and that there is enough money for another year. It needs to be decided whether there is going to be an ongoing need for funding for another set of people or more development of existing attendees.

**c. Hon. Tournament Secretary:** Ted Cockle presented a summary of the entries for all competitions (except leagues) over the past year with comparisons for the previous 6 years.

- i) Some competitions were up, some down. The biggest drop was the *Play with an Expert*, but this was in part because a restriction has been placed on the maximum number of times a non-expert can play in the event, but also because it was held on Mother's day and because last year there was a big drive to get non-experts to enter the event. He mentioned that an expert playing at that event said he liked playing a shorter event which is finished in an afternoon. Bernie and Audrey also said that some people had expressed interest in shorter events - possibly 24 or 32 boards with a short break. A trial of this could be considered for a future event. To be discussed further
- ii) The number of competitors paying entry fees by bank transfer is now over half.
- iii) Ted expects to have all the cups (except for the League) engraved before the AGM except possibly the Men's Eve Goblet. He has produced a list of cups with a space to record who took each cup to aid with collecting back all the cups next year. All the knockouts have been competed except for the final of the teams of 4 and this will be played before the AGM. If not the team who cancels the match will forfeit the match.
- iv) Ted reported that he had noticed that having replaced all the bidding cards in the bidding boxes a couple of years ago that a number of the boxes now had old grubby cards in them. Paul and Val mentioned that this could be because those boxes normally used in the County matches were taken to a couple of events

(Fletcher and Cornell) and these could easily have been mixed up so some of the newer ones are probably in the County set. Val will look through these to check and swap back. Ted suggested that we could replace the remainder of the sets. Bernie suggested getting the new plastic cards (the ones that don't wear off) which last longer.

Audrey reported that she had received a couple of complaints in relation to the Championship Pairs. One was related to the late arrivals and the delays caused by this. And the other was to do with the fact that in the qualifying session there were 32 boards in play when each pair only got to play 24 boards, leading to the possibility that some pairs did not get to play a fair share of decisive boards and therefore reducing the fairness of the qualification for the final. Ted replied that he had left the movement to the discretion of the director (in this case an out of county director). He had been supplied with 2 sets of boards, so he could have run two sections, or he could have used an appendix Mitchell, but hadn't done so. In future we should ask the director of this event to use such a movement if we have a similar number of tables at the event.

v) Ted had already submitted a proposal that the committee agree a set of rules for late entries. On occasion, the start of an event has been delayed to allow for late arrivals, and in one case waiting for a pair who were not coming because of illness but the director had not been informed. Sometimes late arrivals can easily be accommodated, but in others it affects the number of tables and therefore the movement. Turning people away is not ideal, and a monetary fine would be hard to implement which leaves the option of fining imps or matchpoints. Ted suggested imposing imps or matchpoints for anyone arriving late unless the director has been notified that they are stuck in traffic or similar (getting the time wrong/leaving late will not be acceptable reasons to avoid a fine). It was pointed out that this could be difficult without a contact number and it was agreed that a cheap mobile phone should be purchased as a dedicated phone for this purpose. Linda agreed to buy one ASAP so that the number could be printed on the new scorecards, as well as advertised on the website. This corresponds with normal practice in EBU events. We agreed to more lenient for events such as Play with an Expert.

d. **Hon. League Secretary:** Bernie reported that all but 3 matches in the leagues are complete and the others are expected to be played before the AGM. However, there is a potential problem next year because a number of teams may drop out and so a decision will need to be made about how many divisions and teams per division depending on the total number of teams. It is possible that there could be as few as 17 teams which would make 3 divisions impractical. 6 was felt to be the lowest number of teams in a division, at least in the higher divisions. One possibility is smaller divisions with each team playing the others home and away. If the number of teams per division is reduced, then the "2 up, 2 down" might need changing. Various arrangements for 17, 18 and 19 teams were discussed. Val mentioned that someone in West Essex had asked whether the boundary between West and South East could be redrawn to provide a better balance between the two parts of the county, but it was felt that there were not any teams that geographically could be considered to be candidates to switch over. Dennis suggested a ballot of existing teams to see which options the teams would prefer. Bernie agreed to do this so that we can discuss this further at the June committee meeting.

Paul asked about the situation with master points for last season. Bernie has said that the EBU is refusing to accept master points on a spreadsheet even though we were not using the online system last year. He needs to find a way of submitting them as a fake "event". Ted says he set up an individual event for the knockout competitions last year. Bernie to continue trying to resolve this.

Bernie reported that the mentoring scheme attracts about 15/16 regulars, with 5 or 6 mentors. He feels it has had benefits as a few players have now joined the C squad. The sessions were advertised on the website to see whether any more would be interested, but although one or two came along to try, not many new players were interested, and as a consequence he can't see the sessions continuing indefinitely. Audrey asked if more of those attending could be encouraged to enter a team in the league. Bernie said that most already were in the league, but it would be possible to persuade the others.

- e. **Hon. Teachers' Liaison Officer:** Alaric Cundy was not present and had not sent a report.
- f. **Hon. Webmaster:** Before Theo began Paul Mollison, supported by the rest of the committee, said he wanted to express his appreciation of the fantastic job, and the amount of work, he has done on the website so far.

Theo then proceeded to raise various points from his notes that he had circulated earlier.

i) He has completed most of the changes to the ECBA website except for on-going maintenance. This involved generally tidying up, correcting errors, standardising fonts and adding hyperlinks to aid navigation. He said that feedback had in general been positive, with a few complaints which he has addressed where possible. He has added a page to report the progress of Essex teams in National Knockout competitions (NICKO, Gold Cup etc). There are a number of outstanding items

- 1) The Learn Bridge page - awaiting input from Alaric's replacement as Education Officer.
- 2) Similarly for the Youth Bridge page
- 3) Listing team members of Essex League and Knock out competition teams which would help teams requiring stand-ins to work out who they might be able to approach. The committee agreed that this would be a good idea. Bernie will update Theo with those that he knows.
- 4) an agreement on guidelines as to what the cut-off is for congratulatory remarks published on the website. It was agreed that Theo could use his judgement as to what should be published, and that highlighting good performances by less experienced pairs is a good idea. It was also agreed that naming non-Essex partners of Essex players would be better.

ii) He mentioned that he sometimes gets contacted about issues relating to the organisation of the interclub "friendly" league. Dennis suggested that although this was an initiative not started by the committee, it is a worthwhile competition which provides the opportunity to develop interest in teams event among a new set of players and perhaps the ECBA should adopt it to ensure its survival. He suggested that Alaric should be approached to get involved with the running of this as his club was one of the first to take part in this competition. Audrey agreed to approach Alaric.

iii) he has produced routines to calculate Butler/cross-IMP scores for large team events to be used to help the county selection committee. He feels that whether these should be published should be discussed. It was agreed that Cross-IMP would be better if possible, but county matches are currently put into a spreadsheet to calculate Butler scores. There is a plan to try using bridge mates for the next home county match which could might allow us to calculate cross-imps. That leaves an issue with away matches. One possibility is to take a computer along (as did Cambridge University at our last match). This will be discussed further if and when the bridgemate scoring has been implemented.

iv) He has taken over responsibility for the Eve Goblet calculations and has developed a set of routines which partially automates this. These routines require a certain amount of IT specialist knowledge to maintain. Theo has no intention of stepping down from the job in the foreseeable future, but he wants the committee to be aware that it might be necessary to revert to manual calculations should a new Webmaster take over in future.

v) He has also developed the possibility of running mini-websites for clubs that don't have them which shows session results, club details, results history and individual/partnership ladders with the option for individuals to opt out. He would like to promote this more widely in the near future if there are no objections from the committee.

#### g. **Chair of Selection Committee**

Chris Taylor circulated notes before the meeting. Two issues are covered elsewhere in the minutes. Other points include:

i) He reported that timing of making Team selections is difficult because of the need to know dates of County Matches before sending out availability forms which leaves a tight schedule with some players not returning their form before the team selections were being discussed. He would like advice on whether county match dates could be decided sooner. This was not discussed in detail in the meeting. Audrey has indicated that one or two of the contacts in the other counties are notoriously slow. To be discussed in future meeting when the new Eastern Counties League Organiser (Jill Tattersfield) will be in place.

ii) Up until now Chair of selectors has jointly chosen the squads but has had little input into choosing the actual teams other than joint selection with A squad captain of Met Cup and Tollemache teams. He suggested that the

chair of the selection committee should have more input into choosing members of the teams, and that This was not discussed in any detail.

iii) Due in part to the fact that the date of the Metropolitan Cup clashes with the overseas congress, it will be a struggle to field an A team consisting of mainly A team players as there are only 3 A squad pairs and 3 A squad individuals available. This would mean that B squad players would be required (linked to Warboys results) to complete the team. Either we only enter B and C teams. or we promote players up the squads and enter weakened teams throughout. The view of the committee is that it would not be fair to field the 3 A team pairs that are available in the B team. Bernie mentioned that Maureen had said she might struggle to get a C team out anyway although we might be able to introduce some pairs from the mentoring sessions. It was decided that by not fielding an A team, then that should help to leave enough players to fill the B and C teams.

**5. Eastern Counties Working Group:** Dennis Valtisariis said that there was not much new to report. He reported that at the last meeting there was growing frustration and concern about how little attention the EBU is paying to the recommendations that the working groups are making. Bernard Eccleston will be asking for feedback on this at the next National Working Group meeting. The next Eastern Counties group meeting is scheduled for July and Dennis regrets he will not be able to attend as he will be out of the country. Paul mentioned that he had very recently spoken to John who has indicated he does not want to continue as a representative. This means there will be no representative at the meeting unless we appoint someone to attend as a new representative or stand-in. It was agreed that this would be considered at the next committee meeting in June. Dennis will inform us of the date when he knows it. Audrey said that she understands that reports from the county working groups are due to be presented at the next Shareholder's meeting.

**6. Share Holder's report:** Audrey said that the next shareholder's meeting is to be held on 13th May. There has been a proposal circulated to the shareholders for that meeting that she and Margaret consider controversial. The proposal is to change the way that members of the subcommittees are selected (Tournament Committee, Laws and Ethics Committee, Selection Committee for teams representing England). Currently these are elected by the shareholders. The proposal is that in future they are appointed by the board. The committee agreed to support Audrey and Margaret in their objection to this proposal. There is another proposal to have a separate committee for Disciplinary matters to reduce the load on the Laws and Ethics Committee. This latter proposal is supported by Audrey and Margaret and the committee agreed with this also.

## **7. AGM:**

### **a) Nominations to the Committee**

The following nominations to the committee have been received:

<b>Position</b>	<b>Nominee</b>	<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Seconder</b>
Hon Chairman	Paul Mollison	Audrey Hartley	Theo Todman
Hon Secretary	Val Mollison	Audrey Hartley	Brian Davies
Hon Treasurer	Linda Fleet	Dennis Valtisariis	Margaret Curtis
Hon Tournament Secretary	Sue Taylor	Dennis Valtisariis	Theo Todman
Hon League Secretary	Bernie Hunt	Val Mollison	Ted Cockle
Hon Membership Secretary	Nigel Bardsley	Margaret Curtis	Ted Cockle
Hon Education Officer	Keith Thompson	Paul Mollison	Val Mollison

Hon Web Master	Theo Todman	Sue Taylor	Chris Taylor
Hon Committee Member	Dennis Valtisaris	Chris Taylor	Linda Fleet
Hon Committee Member	Audrey Hartley	Tony Philpott	Alison Spencer

Audrey said that she would like to stay on the committee for one more year as she hopes that her length of experience on the committee would provide some continuity in knowledge in the light of a number of long term members leaving the committee.

**b) Changes to the constitution.** Audrey said that two changes should be proposed at the AGM.

The first is to replace "Teacher Liaison" and "Youth Liaison" with "Education Officer". which reflects the combination of these roles and with the EBU's creation of the EBED charity. Suggested wording as follows:

*3.1 The management of the Association shall be vested in the following:*

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <i>a. Hon Chairman (who acts as the chairman of the committee)</i> | <i>f. Hon League Secretary</i>  |
| <i>b. Hon Secretary</i>  | <i>g. Hon Education Officer</i> |
| <i>c. Hon Treasurer</i>  | <i>h. Hon Web-master</i>        |
| <i>d. Hon Membership Secretary</i>                                 | <i>i. Two elected members</i>   |
| <i>e. Hon Tournament Secretary</i>                                 |                                 |

Audrey suggested we make it clear to Keith that his role in relation to schools is that of liaison with any bridge teachers involved with schools, not actually setting up teaching in schools.

The second change is to rectify omission of reference to President and Vice President within the Life members paragraph. Audrey suggested the following wording:

**5. PRESIDENT, VICE-PRESIDENT AND LIFE MEMBERS**

*The Committee of the Association may honour long standing members for their services to the Association by electing them as the President, Vice-President or as a Life Member of the Association. The President and Vice-President may attend Committee Meetings but have no voting rights. A Life Member of the Association shall be given a sum each year, equal to the direct membership of the EBU enabling the member to join the EBU as a full member by this method, if necessary. These apply only to those members continuing with full membership of the Association.*

It was agreed that both these changes should be proposed at the AGM.

**c) Agenda for the AGM**

Audrey presented the Agenda for the AGM as follows:

1. Welcome by the Hon. Chairman
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the last AGM
4. Matters arising
5. Report by the Hon. General Secretary
6. Report by the Hon. Treasurer
7. Appointment of the Independent Examiner for 2015 - 2016
8. Report by the Hon. Tournament Secretary
9. Report by the Hon. League Secretary
10. Alterations to the Constitution – see below
11. Special resolution: For the 2015-16 season onwards, all small/medium (eg up to 20 tables) Sunday ECBA bridge events be held at Barleylands. Proposer: Paul Mollison, Seconders: Chris Taylor and Val Mollison.

12. Election of Officers and Committee members for 2015 – 2016
13. Special Resolution re Thanks proposed by John Williams, seconded by Albert Kitchen and Alison Spencer.
14. AOB

Details of the proposals to be included as addenda to the Agenda

The agreed agenda should now be posted on the website.

#### **d) Presentation of Prizes**

Audrey suggested that we revert to presenting trophies and prizes at the end of the meeting rather than just reading out the winners as last year. It was decided that we should present the trophies, and read out the names of runners up etc, but that vouchers would be given to the recipients separately rather than formally presented.

- 8. Review of the Prize Structure:** Linda presented a draft list of what the prizes would be for various competitions based on the new criteria suggested at the last meeting, compared with current prizes. These changes will not affect this year's prizes, but changes need to be made to competition details on the website. Linda's list was agreed with a few adjustments to: make sure team prizes were a multiple of £4; similar events with similar entry fees have similar prizes. Linda will circulate a revised list.
- 9. Herts/Essex joint venture.** Linda Fleet said that there is not much the report. A few entries have already come in. Linda has sent information to clubs in Kent and Suffolk.
- 10. AOB**
  - a) Hand Records for County Matches:** It was agreed that hand records for home matches could be posted on the website.
  - b) Qualification for entry in the Club Pairs:** This had been discussed at length via email. It was agreed that although the original intention was that Club Pairs would not be open to C squad players, the fact that winners of the event now join the C team for the Metropolitan Cup has changed the situation. The majority felt that effectively eliminating the winners from playing in the event in future years would gradually reduce the number of players eligible to enter and also gradually weaken the field leading to the possibility of players in the Metropolitan Cup C team finding themselves out of their depth. [Although Audrey has pointed out that a single appearance in the Metropolitan Cup would mean a player would be considered to be a C squad player]. It was agreed by a majority of the committee to allow C squad players to enter the Club Pairs competition. Theo will post the changes on the website. Audrey will also inform the club secretaries.
  - c) Combine AGM and Event :** Dennis suggested considering having the AGM on the same day as a single session event to perhaps help increase attendance at the AGM. This was discussed briefly with the idea we might consider it for the future.
  - d) Po Shing Lee:** Dennis also informed the committee of the sad news of the death of former committee member Po Shing Lee, at the age of 44. Val asked Dennis for information about Po to include in an In Memoriam entry in the EBU news.
  - e)** Paul also expressed the committee's appreciation to Tony Philpott for his approximately 40 years of service on the committee.
- 11. Date of next meeting:** The next meeting would be on Wednesday, 24th June 2015 at the Mollison's home.

Paul closed the meeting at 10.30 pm and the Committee thanked Val and Paul for their hospitality.