



Essex Contract Bridge Association

A constituent member of the English Bridge Union

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, 21st October 2015 starting at 19.30 at Val Mollison's house – Tekoa Lodge, Mayes Lane, Sandon, Chelmsford, CM2 7RW

Present: Paul Mollison, Linda Fleet, Margaret Curtis, Keith Thompson, Bernie Hunt, Chris Taylor, Val Mollison.

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence.** Paul Mollison welcomed those present. He accepted apologies from Nigel Bardsley, Theo Todman, Nicole Cook, Dennis Valtisiaris and Audrey Hartley.
2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday, 24th June 2015.** These had been circulated prior to the meeting and were agreed to be a correct record. Paul signed a copy of the agreed minutes.
3. **Matters arising from the minutes not already included in the agenda.**
 - a **Item 3. c. Printing and distribution of the Essex score card.**
To be covered in the secretary's report.
 - b **item 3. f Possible adoption of friendly league.**
Dennis found a volunteer to take over this if required (Tony French) but after speaking to Graham Foster again, it transpired he was surprised that anyone had thought he didn't want to continue with the organisation of the league and is happy to continue as before
 - c **Item 4. c. iv) Bidding boxes with cards that need replacing**
To be covered in the secretary's report
 - d **Item 4. a iii) Clarification of refreshment provision/finish times in programme.**
Val reported that she had put details about refreshment provision and expected finish time on the details for each competition in the program. Theo has done likewise on the website. It is was agreed that these changes should help.

4. Reports from Hon. Officers:

a. **Hon General Secretary. (Val Mollison)**

Val's report is included in full in Appendix A. The main points covered were:

i) AGM Minutes, Winter programme and County Newsletter were sent out in July. There was a mistake in the original version so a revised copy was sent to all club secretaries and most non-internet individuals, the remainder being people who were highly unlikely to go to the event concerned. Linda confirmed that there had not been any problems with players going to the wrong venue.

ii) ECBA personal scorecards have now been given to all affiliated clubs. None have yet been given to unaffiliated clubs, and in fact I have only 1000 cards left (Nicole has the rest, which is more than we originally intended to give her.

Points arising: The difficulty of compiling a list of unaffiliated clubs was discussed (Keith is making slow progress with this). Distribution of cards to these clubs would involve extra expense as these are clubs where we don't see members at events or other clubs so they would need to be posted. It was decided that the effort of getting cards distributed to these clubs outweighed the benefit to the ECBA. It was decided it would be more beneficial to send a simplified program or newsletter to those clubs where we can establish email contact. The main aim of giving something back to clubs in the ECBA has been achieved by the distribution to the affiliated clubs. The remaining cards will be used for Essex Competitions.

iii) Pat Johnson has agreed to take over the County News for the EBU magazine and the annual newsletter. She has done the most recent submission for the December Issue. She has suggested that she might expand her role to try to put information into local papers which is something Audrey said she used to do. This might be something for her to discuss with Keith to tie in with the promotion and development of bridge. Keith, Margaret and Linda all agreed that local and community publications are usually receptive to including small articles for no charge. Val expressed the view that if we want Pat to do something like this then it would be useful to co-opt her on to the committee. This is to be discussed later in the agenda

iv) The county has a new affiliated club, Beech Bridge club at Theydon Bois. Keith knows of the club and Sally Anne Huk who has set the club up.

Points arising. Keith says the club is still very small and the players quite new to bridge. It was agreed that we should send a "Really Easy" competition program to her, and perhaps to other beginners clubs and teachers who have not received the full program.

v) Val has not yet checked which of the "spare" bidding boxes have the new bidding cards in, but plans to do this before Sunday's event and swap out old bidding box cards on Sunday's event (the Fletcher)

b. Hon Treasurer. (Linda Fleet)

Linda reported that we currently have £7700 in our Barclays accounts, and £15,188 in the Skipton Account. That is net of the payment of the hotel bill for the Tollemache for which 50% of the payment for the second night will be recovered. The competitions so far this year have just about broken even taking into account the prizes. There are still some catering expenses to be paid to Bernie for tea, biscuits etc for events in July-September which are not expected to be a large amount. The entries for the Fletcher this year are up, but there are only 4 teams in the Cup for Clubs. Linda reported that so far this year we have received £1,779 in P2P fees whereas last year we had received £1,878. The Essex portion needs to be decided at this meeting. This will be discussed later in the Agenda. Linda stated that Val should receive a form from the EBU before the end of the year in which we will have to state what the Essex element of P2P will be.

c. Hon Tournament Secretary. (Nicole Cook)

Nicole was not present but had sent an email to Val to raise the question of whether or not to go ahead with the Cup for Clubs event on Sunday as there are only 4 teams. It was felt by those present (and Audrey who had spoken to Val about the email) that the competition should go ahead as clubs have put a lot of effort into trying to raise a team. Nicole's suggestion of running it as Marcia's charity event on another date or to run it on the day of the AGM would conflict with the concept of having a competition intended to attract less experienced competition players.

It was felt the problem has arisen in part because we have two extra teams in the Fletcher compared to last year. We had agreed by email consensus earlier in the year to allow Collier row to enter a team, and this year Alpha took up the invitation to enter a team. (*Note from Val: In the letter that went out with the AGM minutes etc 11 clubs were included on the invitation to enter, which is the same list as last year, but this year all 11 took up the invitation whereas in recent years not all clubs have managed to get a team together*). Margaret felt that 12 clubs is too high a percentage of clubs to allow into this competition which was designed to be a competition for the strongest clubs. It was decided to discuss this further at a future meeting.

d. Hon League Secretary. (Bernie Hunt)

Bernie reported that the new season leagues were up and running, although there had been some initial problems with the EBU's new league pages as they are not easy to find. (They are now on the "My EBU" pages which is still under "beta test" and not under the "Members area" pages, so there is no easy link from any of the main EBU pages).

e. Hon Teachers' Liaison Officer. (Keith Thompson)

Keith's report is included in full as Appendix B. The main points presented and discussed were:

- i) Since the last meeting Keith has been in touch with all the teachers he could find, all the bridge schools and almost all the affiliated clubs. He has done a lot of work on the website to make sure it is up to date, and with Theo's help has created links between pages to try to make it easier to use no matter which route used to navigate around the website.
- ii) he reported that he gets a small but regular stream of enquiries from people who he tries to point in the right direction.
- iii) he has created a stock of standard reply emails, and is considering creating an FAQ page for the most frequently asked questions
- iv) he has helped teachers with information about their holidays etc, and also with information about seminars such as those run by Marc Chawner and Bernie. These seminars are apparently proving very popular. Keith mentioned that the County Mentoring sessions have run their course for the time being and maybe something could be started for something such as team tactics. Bernie says he is considering that and is happy to do either under the County umbrella or independently.
- v) Keith has two outstanding concerns. The first is with the difficulty of getting an up-to-date list of non-affiliated clubs and whether or not the effort will be worthwhile. The second is with regards to the Pro/am and play with an expert competitions and whether or not the calendar can support both competitions being run every year.

This latter problem was discussed. Bernie suggested that criteria we use as to who is eligible could be aligned with the criteria the EBU use for eligibility for the Really Easy events which is 500 master points with no Green points (although he said that the EBU used its discretion to allow players who only had a green point (or part) from a sim pairs competition to still play as they had not played in a green point event). Keith felt that the play with an expert works better for the novices than the pro/am because they don't have to find their own expert. It was agreed that we would consider the idea of reinstating a novice pairs competition in place of the pro/am in next summer's programme now that Keith has re-established contact with the bridge teachers in Essex and to promote this via teachers and beginners clubs. Keith also suggested the idea of doing a local novice sims event and agreed to try and establish whether some of the teachers would be supportive of the idea. It was also agreed that naming the events "Really Easy" in line with the EBU, rather than "Novice", might also be helpful as these events have proved popular.

f. Hon Webmaster. (Theo Todman)

Theo did not attend the meeting but sent in a brief report by email which is included in full in Appendix C.

The main points covered were:

- i) The duties he is willing to do as webmaster include: maintaining the website, monitoring EBU events for results to report on the home page, to help with download of membership lists from the EBU, to compile the Eve Goblets calculations, produce Butler results where possible and publish results of the friendly league.
- ii) activity on the website has been fairly quiet over the summer. He has created a better resolution version of the ECBA Logo but the idea of an EBU/ECBA combination logo was dropped.
- iii) he was approached by Jill Tattersfield to ask if he wanted all her archive material. This was discussed with Paul and Margaret, who also has some archive material. He has suggested that the ECBA should consider finding an archivist. Val also has a number of "archives" of old minutes, competition programmes, newsletters etc. This has been mentioned before but nothing has been done about it.
- iv) With regards to the proposal that all counties in the ECL send out copies of hand records to their opponents for each match, Theo will load these on to the website if we send him a copy.
- v) Theo reported that a trial to get Butler results for the Friendly league final failed because Bridgewebs doesn't cope properly with teams of eight. *[Nicole has indicated that the EBU are aware of the problem and are working to resolve the problems as part of the EBUscore development].*

Following on from this Paul asked Bernie whether we will be in a position to use bridgemates for the next home ECL match. Bernie says that Nicole can do it but asked if we were OK to pay her a nominal fee (say £25 to cover time and travel expenses) to come in for an hour to set it up and check it is running OK. This was agreed.

5. Herts/Essex joint venture. (Linda Fleet)

Linda reported that the July event made a profit of £2149 and the September event made a profit of £942. Mike Minting (of Herts) suggested that £1076 be retained for deposits for venue hire and printing of entry forms for the 2016 events. Also the Hertfordshire committee has decided it would be a good idea to advertise the July weekend in the EBU magazine next year especially now that London are running their event two weeks before ours, and so have proposed retaining money to cover the advertising costs. This means that Essex has received a distribution payment of about £1100. This compare with £2100 we received last year and £1400 the year before. This is disappointing, but there were additional costs this year, including having the boards dealt by a different organisation which meant VAT was payable.

Margaret asked whether anyone had been made aware of problems with the results in the pairs event where it appeared that she had received incorrect VP scores for some of her matches, having apparently been awarded the inverse of the correct VP score for at least two matches. These were eventually corrected but Margaret wanted to know if there had been any follow up on what had gone wrong.

Linda says they hadn't received any complaints from other players about any problems. This is not an issue that can be resolved by the committee. Problems need to be raised with the directors/scorers on the day.

6. Essex portion of P2P for next year (Linda Fleet)

Linda reported that she had obtained a table of what each county sets for their P2P portion. Essex is actually very low at 4p, and the average is about 6 or 7p. In view of this Linda thought it would not be unreasonable to put it up by 1p if we wished. The competitions are not bringing in as much excess income over costs as they used to, but the ECBA is not short of cash at the moment. There was an extra expense this year of the personal score cards which was used to disperse some of the excess funds accumulated over the last couple of years.

It was decided to leave the P2P at 4p for the time being as we have sufficient funds to cover any shortfall that may occur this year and it will reviewed again next year.

7. Possible co-option of Pat Johnson to committee (Val Mollison)

Val proposed that we should co-opt Pat on to the committee because it would be useful to involve her in discussions that might involve ideas about especially helping Keith with promotion of bridge to potential new players. The creation of a position of Press Officer would need to be put to the AGM. This can be discussed closer to the time.

Everyone at the meeting was in favour of co-opting Pat onto the committee and inviting her to the next meeting.

8. Share Holder's report (MC, KT & AH)

There have been no shareholder's meetings since the last committee meeting.

Margaret asked Paul whether the issue of funding the International bridge event at Milton Keynes next year had been raised at the Chairman's meeting. Paul said it had not. Margaret expressed her concern that this event was being organised without any details of financial implications being presented to either the shareholders or the County Chairman.

No-one had any other issues they wanted raised at the next shareholders meeting in November.

9. ECL results recording (VM)

Val had originally intended that we should discuss whether there was any way we could collect more information about contracts, tricks made etc at ECL matches both home and away. Following discussions on earlier items in the agenda it was decided to delay this discussion until we establish whether we can get the bridgemate scoring to work for home matches, and to also ask Suffolk how they collect that information for their website.

10. Tournament emergency mobile phone (VM)

Val wanted to discuss the "emergency" mobile phone for players to contact the director in case of travel problems on the day of events. The intention was the Tournament Director would keep the phone, but Nicole was not interested in having the phone and expressed the view that it wasn't very useful and that the EBU one had had very little use. In addition, Val pointed out that it costs £1 per week to keep the phone going. Val had topped the phone up once with £5 which was needed to allow Val to send the once a month text needed to keep the phone active. Val accidentally left it too long to top up last time, and decided to leave it until now to reinstate it as there were no events in August/September. This was an idea that came up when Ted was directing a couple of events, but Nicole is more of the view that she has been trained to cope with late comers.

It was decided to cut our losses and not keep the phone active and to perhaps start compiling a list of contact numbers that can be used to contact someone who has not arrived on time

11. AOB

a) Margaret showed the committee a leaflet that she had been given which advertised a charity Cafe Bridge event which she had been told had proved very successful both in terms of being enjoyable to participate, and also providing a bit of publicity in the community. She suggested Keith might be interested in the idea as some kind of promotional event. Keith agreed to pass on the idea to someone who is planning to run several bridge events to raise funds for Riding for the disabled.

b) Paul made a proposal that the Tony Kelvin Memorial Teams be renamed the Sue Taylor Memorial Teams. Tony Kelvin is not a player that many people still remember, whereas Sue was someone that many players knew, and it might even bring in one or two new teams of players from outside the county who knew Sue and would like to remember her.

The consensus was that this would be a good idea and will be adopted next year . The only issue is whether the trophy can be re-engraved to reflect the change, or whether a new trophy would be required. Margaret agreed to return the trophy so that we can investigate the possibilities

12. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was set for Wednesday, 27th January to be held at Paul and Val Mollison's house.

Paul closed the meeting after saying that although someone normally thanks Val and Paul for their hospitality, this time he wanted to thank the members of the committee for giving up their time to attend the meeting.

Appendix A Secretary's report

Secretary's Report for Committee Meeting 21/10/15

- a) AGM Minutes, Winter Programme and county newsletter were sent out mid July. A mistake with the Green Point Weekend venue was spotted afterwards, and I sent revised copies of the programme to all secretaries. Email version went to all secretaries, hardcopy passed on to most. Some individuals given the revision, those that didn't receive them were people unlikely to attend the Green Point event anyway.
- b) ECBA personal scorecards have now been given to all affiliated clubs. I managed to give the last set for Clacton to someone at the Felixstowe Congress. I have not given any to any non-affiliated clubs. I need a complete list clubs we know about/have contacts for before I can work out how many cards we can afford to send.
- c) Pat Johnson has agreed to take over the County News for the EBU magazine, and the annual newsletter. She has just done her first one for the December issue. She mentioned the idea of perhaps trying to get something published in local papers to raise awareness. I have put an item on the agenda re the possibility of co-opting Pat onto the committee.
- d) I was notified in late September that we have a new affiliated club in Essex. Keith seems to know about them. I could send them copies of the programme etc, but from what Keith has said he doesn't think the members will be up to competitions yet. I will make sure they get notified of the pro/am and play with an expert competitions.
- e) I still haven't checked the bidding boxes to see which ones have good cards. I had thought this coming Sunday would have been a good opportunity to get them sorted out but Nicole doesn't seem to think they are needed, but I might take along some with bidding cards in to swap with old sets anyway.

Appendix B Education Officer's Report

ECBA EDUCATION OFFICERS REPORT (FOR 21st OCT ECBA COMMITTEE)

I've been in touch with teachers, Bridge schools and (mostly) ECBA-registered clubs. All this is now (pretty-much) up-to-date and easier to find, access and make use of. The way it works is:

- the education page provides my contact details, etc, but simply refers enquirers (unless they choose to contact me) to the "Clubs in Essex" list;
- the "Clubs in Essex" list is now in four sections (affiliated, non-affiliated, Bridge schools and teachers). You can scroll through it, or jump to the section you want;
- using the standard Bridgewebs facilities (plus a bit of tricky stuff that Theo added!) makes it much easier to update and display information in a consistent and, hopefully, easy to access way;
- having the information held in this way has made it relatively easy for me to answer enquiries about teaching, etc, but whether it's meant that some people have been able to find what they want without coming to me, I know not.

I receive enquiries (usually by e-mail) on a regular (though not too frequent) basis. Mostly it involves highlighting teachers/schools in their area and pointing them to contacts that look appropriate. Occasionally I've pointed them to Suffolk (Braintree is maybe nearer to Colchester teaching/clubs) or included some London stuff (if they commute into London). I've now got a small stock of tailored e-mails (answering various questions, like what's involved in learning Bridge) that I can use to answer queries without too much work. Maybe, in a while, I might turn some of this into a FAQ item.

I've also helped a bit (I hope) with a few queries from teachers, though I think that we have a small (but quite good and experienced) group of teachers around the County and they don't seem to need much support.

I've done nothing to facilitate Bernie's recent improver seminars, or what Marc Chawner has been doing, or with the "really easy" sessions at Barleylands (apart, maybe, from encouraging some attendance at these events). But I'm very pleased to see these initiatives and I know it's all been very well received.

I'm fairly happy that we have an up-to-date and relatively easily-maintained Education set-up on the website now, and that it compares fairly well with what other Counties do. My ongoing worries are:

- although I've updated the information on affiliated clubs, schools and teachers (all of which was quite out-of-date), the list(s) of non-affiliated clubs aren't in a consistent or up-date order. I'd hoped to do something towards this but haven't got round to it much yet. I'm not sure how much the effort will be worthwhile;
- I have doubts about the value of the Pro/Am and Play-with-an-expert competitions, especially if we run them every year. Not least how best to promote them and how to ensure that they lead to further participation. I can't say I have much in the way of any better ideas though.

Keith Thompson

Appendix C Webmaster's report

As announced previously - and agreed with Paul - I will not be attending the ECBA Committee meetings at least for the time being. I will, however, provide a status report as below. If there are any technical matters that need to be discussed face to face, I imagine I could meet up at Bernie's with the relevant Committee members before or after a bridge session.

To clarify my duties:-

1. Continue as Webmaster as long as required.
2. Update the EBU ECL results tables now I've had my access sorted.
3. Download the EBU membership spreadsheet monthly.
4. Run the Eve Goblets calculations and make the standings available after each event.

Additionally, I'll continue posting the schedule and results for the Friendly League, and maintain my "mini websites" – now "official" for Mayflower and the Monday Club – for which I've registered the domain name <http://www.essexbridgeresults.org.uk/>. I'm currently no longer webmaster for Hutton, but may become webmaster for Bernie if he gives the go-ahead (a trial Bridgewebs site is up and running).

I've handed over the competitions spreadsheet to Linda, but am happy to act as technical consultant if needed.

As for activity on the website since the last meeting, things have been fairly quiet given the time of year. However,

1. I created a new ECBA logo – just with Essex daggers and the name, and use this – with a separate EBU logo – on the website. I've not used the combined logo previously circulated.
2. I've maintained results and news items as they have arisen, including the rather dismal Metropolitan cup results from last Sunday, which I found on the Surrey website.
3. I created Butlers for various teams competitions – including for two Essex / Herts Swiss Teams. I can't use these automated routines for ECL results, as there's no available electronic data, so Paul continues with the spreadsheet.

Other issues:-

1. Jill Tattersfield asked me whether I wanted her archives and the two of us talked to Margaret at Mountnessing who also has material going back as far as 1946 to hand over. I think the ECBA needs an archivist (which would not be me).
2. The email below is about sending the ECL hands to other county Secretaries. If the hands for home and away matches are sent to me, I'll load them to the website.
3. There's no item on the agenda to discuss ECL Butlers. The trial run using data from the Friendly League finals ran into some difficulties with the upload to Bridgewebs. I don't know where the fault lies – I've left it for Bridgewebs and Nicole to resolve.