



Essex Contract Bridge Association

A constituent member of the English Bridge Union

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, 24th April 2013 at 7.30 pm at John Williams's house – Beightons, Bassetts Lane, Little Baddow, CM3 4DA

Present: Ted Cockle, Nicole Cook, Margaret Curtis, Audrey Hartley, Tony Philpott, Sandy Riach, Keith Thompson, Dennis Valtisiaris and John Williams.

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence:** John Williams welcomed those present and accepted apologies for absence from Nigel Bardsley, Alaric Cundy, Graham Foster and Bernie Hunt.
2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday, January 16th 2013:** 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. **New Appointment to the Selection Committee (item 2.):** John reported that the Selection Committee had invited Keith Thompson to join them and he had accepted.
 - b. **Barbara Cornell's Gift for the Helliar (item 3.a.):** John reported that he had presented Barbara Cornell's cheque to the club whose team had won the right to represent Essex in the Garden Cities Trophy. This competition had been named the Helliar in recognition of that company's sponsorship of the ECBA. But this had ceased long ago and it was felt appropriate to rename the competition as the Ray Cornell Trophy; which was agreed.
 - c. **Sub-committee Report about Website (item 3.b.):** There had been no meeting as yet. Views had been exchanged between Sandy and Ted and Sandy had simplified the home page as a result. Ted thought that the main reasons for going to our website was for information about clubs in Essex, competitions in Essex, learning bridge in Essex and the Essex calendar. Sandy warned that in his experience a too simple website didn't attract visits; Essex website had a huge number of visits per day. The most important thing was to try to keep it up to date.
4. **Reports from Hon Officers:**
 - a. **Hon General Secretary's report:** Audrey had nothing to report that was not already on the agenda. Margaret was concerned about competitions designed for our middle ranking players. The new Club Pairs Competition being held parallel to the Warboy's Competition was designed for non-squad members and she felt that to use the winners of this competition to field an extra C team in the Metropolitan Cup was not a good idea. She felt that Ardingly was too far away and the competition too strong for players as their first venture in representing Essex. Audrey explained this had been a suggestion from the Selection Committee who were keen to find more players for the C team. She stressed that the winners would be invited to form a C team for the Met. Cup. Margaret also pointed out that the Clubs Teams of Four Trophy could include a number of quite strong players, particularly from clubs not fielding a team in the Fletcher, but agreed that a majority of the strongest players in Essex did play in the Fletcher. We needed to be careful how we worded our descriptions of our competitions. She also was sorry to find the George Curtis Swiss Teams clashed with the Riviera Congress to which quite a few Essex players went. Audrey explained that it was too difficult to change this now but she would try to avoid it next year. There were quite often clashes with other events, the EBU calendar was very full, but Audrey tried to avoid clashing with events run in neighbouring counties.
 - b. **Hon Treasurer's Report:** Tony presented his accounts for the year 2012/2013. We had written off the purchase of the bridgemates and were now paying more for Directors at our Competitions consequently we had made a small loss over the year. Dennis and John said that they had been told that the EBU portion of P2P would not be going up next year. Tony and Margaret thought this not very likely. The Shareholders said that they expected the EBU portion to go up every year but they would not know by how much until the shareholders' meeting in October. Tony had said he would like to retire. He had thought it might take time to find a replacement so he had said he was willing to continue for another year. However, Linda Fleet had expressed an interest in taking over the post of Hon Treasurer immediately and Tony said he would resign at this **AGM**.

- c. **Hon Membership Secretary's Report:** Nigel was not present and had nothing to report at this meeting.
 - d. **Hon Tournament Secretary's Report:** Ted reported on the attendance at our competitions some were better attended and others were worse. In particular the Gwen Herga was so poorly attended that the Ladies were reduced to 5.5 tables and the men were 9 tables. It was suggested that they should be merged into a single section, all agreed with the exception of Nicole who wished her opposition to be recorded. Ted said he was very pleased that about 40% of entry fees were now being paid by BACs. He reported that he had had difficulties with the knock out events this year and he wished to establish much stricter measures for the future. Most teams played their matches in good time but a few matches had been played very late in the season. The final of the Premier League which should have been completed by Christmas last year was played towards the end of April. The Championship Teams of Four and the Plate would not be completed before the AGM and there was a danger that the Championship would not be played before the date set for the Pachabo for which the winners qualify. It was agreed that tighter controls needed to be employed, Ted would use the Gold Cup regulations as his model and set dates for the playing of each round
 - e. **Hon League Secretary's Report:** Bernie was not able to be present at the meeting. He emailed that there was a new system for league results to be entered into the EBU website. The Eastern Counties Leagues had been set up on the EBU website by Neil Tracy of Norfolk and E. C. matches should be entered using this. He asked if this procedure should be followed by Essex for our league matches. Ted thought that he should if he could work out how to do this. It might be possible to ask Neil for advice.
 - f. **Hon Teachers' Liaison Secretary's Report:** Alaric could not attend the meeting but reported by email. He thought that "Play with an Expert" was a huge success; the half-time tea break adding to the overall experience, and congratulated Nicole for organising a great day. However, the number of participants was disappointing; there has been a general downward trend in table numbers. The first time the event was run there were 16 tables and this had reduced to ten tables this year. He thought we should ask ourselves "why the drop off". At our last meeting we decided to change "non-expert" to "Tomorrow's Champions". He would welcome other input and he would like us to discuss this at our next meeting. One piece of good news is that Julie Lake had been invited to run a beginners course at both Maldon and Bishops Hill (Shenfield) Adult Education Colleges in September. If both courses are viable it will treble the number of such courses in the county next year. At Bishops Hill, the fee has been halved to £180, so she is hopeful of getting sufficient takers; the Maldon cost always was more reasonable. Perhaps this might improve the numbers at our non-expert events.
 - g. **Hon Schools & Youth Liaison Report:** Graham was sorry not to be at the meeting and hoped to make his report at our next Committee Meeting in June.
 - h. **Hon Webmaster's Report:** Sandy had spoken earlier about changes he was making to the Website. In addition to those changes he wished also to alter the method of renewing our subscription for the website. By the payment of an initial fee of £18 to Bridge Webs they would manage our renewal from then on. This would be a financial saving in the long run and also a saving of his time. This was agreed by the committee.
5. **AGM Agenda:** Jill Hair needed to be added to the list of Life Members and some cosmetic rearrangement of the headings was suggested. Tony's resignation and Linda's nomination needed to be added to the Agenda. Also the phrase about accounts duly audited should be changed to Accounts duly examined.
 6. **AGM Nominations for "Good Friend of Essex Bridge" Award:** Audrey had received one suggestion but it was felt that this award was primarily for nominations from clubs for recognising hard work and achievement within a club or clubs but also for work completed for the County. The individual nominated was still working hard for Essex and it was agreed to reconsider this nomination on completion of the work.
 7. **Herts/Essex joint venture:** Margaret had nothing special to report. Plans were going ahead and adverts for the event were being circulated. Audrey said she had received an email from Chris Danby asking if we wished to advertise our weekend events in English Bridge. Margaret said that they had never done so before and it was rather expensive.

8. **EBU Simultaneous Pairs:** A report had been circulated round the country that some clubs were arranging their pairs to give greater chances to the better players to gain more Master Points. Margaret said that the EBU Tournament Committee had looked into this problem sometime ago but came reluctantly to the conclusion that there was nothing they could do. It was very similar to strong players playing in a weaker club in the hope of gaining a higher percentage.
9. **Helping our less experienced players:** Simon Moorman had written to John asking how we could help our less experienced players. He had played for some years playing with weak players and getting poor results. Only when a better player took an interest in his play did he start to improve. He asked how we could do this for others. The committee felt they were taking steps to achieve this with their Play with an Expert and PRO/AM competitions and the lower divisions of the leagues were aimed at the less experienced players but these were not proving as popular as before. The Cup for Clubs which is doing very well and now the Club Pairs were aimed at the middle ranking club players. We agreed to look into how we could incorporate competitions which involved stratified games, handicap teams and teams made up of a mixture of strong and weak players.
10. **Qualifying by Membership to represent Essex:** It was agreed that the existing membership conditions in the Constitution were sufficiently comprehensive.
11. **AOB:**
- a. **The County Pairs Championship:** Sandy raised the point that originally the County Pairs, played as a one day event, consisted of heats in the afternoon, a final, a consolation final and an event for the remainder in the evening. A consolation final was only played if more than 56 pairs took part in the original heats and this only happened in the first two years of the event. Since then the numbers have reduced and it is doubtful if we will again see more than 56 pairs at this event. It was agreed that we drop reference to a 56 pairs and a Consolation Final from the description of the event and the evening will now be an all-play-all final with a consolation for the remaining players.
 - b. **Advertising on our Website:** Sandy had received a request for an advert to be placed on our website by someone looking for an ex-partner with whom he/she had lost touch. It was agreed that we would not allow adverts of this type on our website but if anyone had lost touch with a friend/partner who was a member of our Association then we would forward the searcher's details to that member and it would be up to that member to renew contact if he/she wished.
12. **Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 26th June 2013 at 7.30 pm at Audrey's home.

John closed the meeting at 10.30 pm and the committee members thanked John for his hospitality.