

GLoucestershire County Bridge Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Cheltenham Bridge Club on Sunday May 13th 2018 at 1:30 pm. The President (Jim Simons) was in the chair and 43 members attended.

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from 13 members.

2. Approval of the minutes of the 2017 AGM

The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. President's Report

The GCBA doesn't run itself, and I'd like to start by thanking all those who play a big part in running it. David Simons is retiring from the committee this year, having been a hard-working secretary. James Hastie has bravely accepted the Treasurership after two successive treasurers who were only in post for a year, which has made it a very tricky baton to pick up. I'd like to thank Anne Swannell for her wonderful catering for all our competitions, and Richard Butland who has been running our Representative Events subcommittee which apart from the sometimes thankless task of selection has also been organising training events for our squad. Ro Kaye has been organising a youth programme that is model for what other counties might do. Judy Sanis has been doing our publicity. Alan Wearmouth has done the bulk of the work on the Green Point Event, along with people from Herefordshire, and Anne Swannell, Roger Schofield, Pauline Sanderson and John Skjonnemand have organised the Cheltenham Congress. Then all our other committee members, Peter Swales, Peter Waggett, Ashok Kwatra, Richard Harris and Tony Hill have helped with running the GCBA in a variety of ways, along with people on various subcommittees. On behalf of you all, I offer my thanks to all of them.

Looking back over the year, we once again had a successful Green Point event, and, just a week ago, the Congress. It is my impression that these events have been getting better and better in recent years. This is due to our own organisers, and to the excellent team of directors that we have had, but also in part to the technology in use nowadays, which makes the scoring of these big events so much slicker.

Last year we had a useful discussion about supporting the development of bridge across the county by providing financial assistance to clubs, and the meeting voted in favour of doing so. During the year the committee decided to support two clubs in this way. Gloucester Bridge Club has been in a poor way for some years, struggling to attract players. They now have an active committee who have embarked on a modernisation project, and they are now giving lessons. We felt that Gloucester, as a city, really ought to have a thriving Bridge Club, and we wanted to help bring that about. The other club we supported was Winchcombe. Again it was a modernisation project, and they wanted to support a local learners' group. These are the sort of project we want to support – making the bridge scene across the county more attractive, and getting more people into the game.

We decided this year that it was time to refresh the Cleverly League, which, for those who don't know, is a teams-of- four league played over the season in people's houses. Richard Harris stepped up to be the coordinator, and we decided to regionalise the competition, as people had said they were reluctant to travel all across the county, and the league had become rather concentrated around Stroud. We ended up with 6 teams in a county-wide division 1, and another 18 teams playing in regional divisions. I played in it with my wife, who is a fairly inexperienced player, and we had a great time. I recommend it.

Patrick Shields, with some support from David Simons and myself, has been working hard on strategy, both ours and also the EBU's, as their five-year strategy is due for renewal. This latter part we have been doing through Midland County Working Groups. The EBU set up a number of these

regional working groups a few years ago, and the Midland and Northern ones are the ones that have survived by proving useful to their members. We get a lot of lively conversations there!

David Simons led us through a comparison of our constitution with the EBU's model county constitution, with the intention of finding any differences, and either changing them or satisfying ourselves that the differences were deliberate, and that we were happy to keep them. We found no difference that bothered us, but we found one case where the constitutions agreed that bothered us! The constitution says that we have a two-person rule for signing cheques and so on. So far as I know we have never done that, and I can go back to when I was Treasurer in the eighties. We have always trusted our Treasurers to implement the committee's decisions. I don't know whether the constitution has always had a two-person rule, but I suspect not. My suspicion is that we incorporated it accidentally when we imported some paragraphs from the model constitution a few years ago. Anyway this is not a satisfactory situation. I'd like now to have a conversation about it and take advice from the assembled membership. As I see it we have two options. One is the change the constitution to reflect what we have always done, and if that is what we choose, we'll put forward a motion at next years' AGM to make the change. The other option is to change our practice to what the constitution says. I understand that it is now possible to implement two-person procedures in on-line banking, although experience with our various bankers over the years suggests that that would not be straightforward. There may be other options. Over to the meeting for a discussion.

(Jim also reported the sad news of the death of Ted Hill, who had supported bridge in Gloucestershire for many years as player, director and GCBA committee member).

Matters arising

There was a brief discussion, as suggested, of the two-signature rule for signing cheques.

- Patrick Phair noted that he has observed such a two-person procedure for online banking, and it has worked efficiently. James Hastie agreed with this point.
- Val Constable suggested that the two-signature rule could be adopted for cheques above a certain value.
- Patrick Shields said he supported the rule.
- James Hastie noted that (as Treasurer) he'd only had to cash one cheque recently.

Jim noted the general support for changing our practice, and suggested that this should be a decision for the next committee, who will report back to the next AGM.

4. Adoption of the Accounts for 2017-18

It was noted that the accounts have not yet been audited, but that they would be, and will be put online.

The Treasurer presented his report, in which the main points were:

- The association has had another successful year financially
- Being new in the post, he'd found that some of the collective knowledge of experienced Treasurers was in danger of being lost, and was pleased to say that Jim Simons will act as Assistant Treasurer next year to try to prevent this.
- He would prefer the weekly invoices and receipts to be sent to him in soft copy.

Two questions arose from the accounts:

- It was confirmed that the Congress surplus was from the 2017 event.
- It was confirmed that the funds to be sent to Stroud for Director training would be in the next account.

5. Election of the Auditor for the season 2018-2019

Chris Coleman was proposed by Jim Simons, second by Val Constable, and elected unanimously.

6. Election of Officers and Officials

The following were elected unopposed:

President	Patrick Shields
Secretary	Andrew Bull
Treasurer	James Hastie

7. Election of Committee Members

Paul Denning, Richard Harris, Anne Swannell and Peter Waggett were elected without a vote. Jim noted that there was space for two more Ordinary Members, but there were no volunteers.

8. A report on the GCBA strategy and the progress made so far

Patrick presented his report on this issue. The main points were as follows:

- The county organisation has a responsibility to non-bridge players - promoting the game, providing lessons etc. This is hardly done outside Cheltenham
- Most of the activities were focused on the top end (10-20%) of players.
- We were trying to improve the balance, concentrating on the following five points:
 1. Ensuring there were enough events, and enough variety of events. One successful venture was the increase in the Cleverly Teams League
 2. Maintaining and improving the quality of bridge through county training. There is a friendly match scheduled against Avon in August, and we hope to expand this to other counties. Also, county team members have offered to speak to clubs.
 3. Services have been provided to clubs, including financial support, helping clubs to arrange events - scope for more variety of events?
 4. Publicising the game to non-players - this hasn't yet got underway, and need to be balanced with similar work done by the EBU.
 5. Teaching - this has just got started by creating a directory, so people can find bridge lessons as required. Checking on the Internet, a search for such training in local areas tends to give no useful results.
- We will be reaching out to unknown bridge clubs (he had heard about 3 such clubs that he hadn't heard of before in the previous 24 hours), and helping struggling clubs (as the EBU had been doing with success in Yorkshire).

At this point the topic was opened up for ideas and questions from the floor:

- It was suggested that there had been problems with the Ace of Clubs heat at Cheltenham Bridge Club, where it clashed with the individual, some members didn't realise it was taking place, and (in some people's view) too many masters playing. Jim noted that the way the heats were organised was designed to make it easier for the heats to be run. It was agreed that more notice (and, especially, reminders) would be given in future.
- It was confirmed that Patrick, with David Simons, is chiefly responsible for the strategy.
- Members were asked to write down the names of any obscure clubs they knew of, so that a fuller list could be gathered.
- It was noted that at Tewkesbury (and probably elsewhere) that the membership of the clubs was "maturing", and that this needed to be combatted. They also noted that they had difficulty accommodating players who had had Beginners' training, but were not yet ready for full Duplicate sessions. Various clubs had problems accommodating Gentle Bridge - this was something that the GCBA could support.
- Clubs were asked to ensure that there was reference to training on their web pages.
- It was noted that there are various U3A clubs which would like volunteers to teach beginners to play. Patrick offered to send a message to all Gloucestershire U3A groups, suggesting that they contact GCBA if they would like help in this or other areas.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Presentation of trophies and prizes for the 2017-18 season

The trophies were presented by Jim Simons. The season's events and winners were as follows:

Event	Winners
Steve Darke Trophy (C)	Mike Lewis & Malcolm Green
Summer Individual (C)	Joe & Wendy Angseesing
Summer Teams (C)	Richard Harris, Tricia Gilham & Mark Rogers
Geoffrey Paterson VL (C)	Ashok Kwatra
Mens Pairs (C)	Paul Denning & Kanwar Rahim
Ladies Pairs (C)	Mary Jones & Cynthia Moore
Cotswold Cup (C)	Enid Castle & Sybil Davies, Roger Williams & Anne Swannell, Paul Lilley & Peter Swales
Bredon Vale	Gloucester BC
Mixed Pairs (C)	Ashok Kwatra & Laura Polito
Flitch (C)	Joe & Wendy Angseesing
Everett Cup (C)	Allan & Judy Sanis, David & Ruth Martel
Ace of Clubs (C)	Steve Betteley & Kristian Cole
Leonard Cup (C)	Robert Moore & Mary Portman
Winter Pairs (C)	Roy Collard & Pam Pearce
Teams of eight	Cheltenham BC
County Individual (C)	Ian Constable
County Pairs (C)	Patrick Shields & Mark Rogers
Rank Xerox (S)	Cheltenham BC
Winter Teams (C)	Alan Wearmouth, Tony Hill, Peter Waggett & Mark Rogers
League Division 1 (C)	Joe Angseesing, Richard Chamberlain, Richard Butland, Paul Denning & Garry Watson
League Division 2 (C)	Mike Lewis & Malcolm Green, John Cuncer & Nicky Ferguson, Anne Swannell & Roger Williams
County Knock-out (C)	Richard Chamberlain, Diana Nettleton, Patrick Shields, Keith Stanley, Garry Watson & Alan Wearmouth
Cleverly Cup (C)	Wanderers: Mike Lewis & Malcolm Green, David & Ruth Martel, Anne Swannell & Roger Williams