

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION

1 APRIL 2014- 31 MARCH 2015

The English Bridge Union is the governing body for duplicate bridge in England representing communities of bridge players at club, county and national level. It is funded by members for members and provides the infrastructure and development of the game in England. All monies are re-invested into our national game.

This annual report provides an insight in to the work that we do to support our clubs, counties and members and will be of interest to those individuals and organisations that, in turn, provide us with support to develop the game.

I would like to thank all of the volunteers that make up our national team - the Directors of the Board and all the members of its standing and sub committees. And the dedicated team of staff under our General Manager, Barry Capal, at Aylesbury.

A full list of national volunteers and staff can be found on the EBU website at <http://www.ebu.co.uk/biographies/ebu>

The statutory annual report and accounts will be able to be viewed on our website www.ebu.co.uk shortly after the EBU's Annual General Meeting on 25th November 2015.

The Board

The Board is made up of eight directors elected by the shareholders, who are the representatives of our counties, and up to two appointed by the Board. The directors receive no remuneration for the work they undertake. They have legal and financial responsibilities as set out in the Company's Act 2006.

Each director takes responsibility for one or more aspects of the EBU's business. This responsibility includes budgetary control, delivering strategic objectives and regular reporting on the work of the department and committee associated with it. For the year 2014-15 the responsibilities were as follows:

Chairman: Jeremy Dhondy

Vice-Chairman: Ian Payn

Treasurer: Andrew Petrie

Tournament Committee Chairman: Ian Payn

Board Director responsible for facilitating the strategic plan: Jerry Cope

Board Director responsible for staff development: Jerry Cope

Board Director Responsible for Education: Rob Lawy

Board Director Responsible for the County Working Group: Darren Evetts

Board Director responsible for legal matters: Anthony Golding

Editorial Board Chairman: Jeremy Dhondy

Tournament Directors Development Group Chairman: Heather Dhondy

Board Director responsible for Bridge Great Britain: Heather Dhondy

Board Director responsible for European and World duplicate bridge affairs: Jeremy Dhondy

Board Director responsible for the European Champions Cup: Heather Dhondy

Board Director responsible for Awards: Ron Millet

Board Director Responsible for the All Party Parliamentary Group: Ron Millet

We continue with our efforts to reclaim VAT on entry fees. We are grateful to David Ewart for his great assistance in representing us on a pro bono basis. We have also invoked the process of judicial review concerning Sport England's refusal to recognise us as a sport. Any success here will not be based on popular definitions of sport but on whether Sport England has correctly applied the law.

We have continued our programme to update our bye laws and articles. We have discussed reform to our standing committees and will introduce suggested changes to them at the AGM.

During the last year the board have reviewed awards. We have introduced a new player award called the diamond award aimed at our most successful players and presented the first two to Nicola Smith and Tony Forrester.

Vice Presidents

Sadly, during the year, two of our Vice Presidents died (Tony Priday and Hylde Townsend). We are grateful to both of them for their long and outstanding service. The board propose to introduce a Tony Priday Award (for outstanding contribution) at the 2015 AGM.

Finance

As a not-for-profit members' organisation which does not distribute any surplus but retains it to invest in the future of the game, we are generally cautious with our budgets, putting into them all costs which we think realistically might occur. This usually means we beat the budget and this is true again this year. The 2014/15 outturn is very satisfactory showing a profit of £42.8K against a budget loss of £15K. This has come about mainly through:

- A tight control of costs by all budget holders
- Not using temporary staff to cover maternity leave
- Savings in the postage for English Bridge associated with a reduced size
- Not needing to use a £10K contingency fund set aside for playing accommodation costs at EBU congresses

The strength of our cash reserves, which now stand at over £700K, means that the time is right to invest further in the development of the game and to assist our members, clubs and counties to do the same. The Board will be announcing details at the 2015 AGM and these will be available on the EBU website.

Clubs and Club Services

15 clubs affiliated during the period April 2014 –March 2015 and the Club Liaison Officer undertook a programme of visits across the country. A number of clubs have used the gift aid claim process and documentation has been made available on the EBU website to assist

this process. Plans to take over the software provided by Jeff Smith are advanced and will come into practice in October 2015. The software will be renamed EBUScore and will be available free to all affiliated clubs.

South Bucks Bridge Centre was generously donated to the charity EBED by Laurie Champliss during the year and the EBU are taking some responsibility for its management.

We experimented with online club play and have come to an agreement with Bridge Club Live where they have become our first online affiliated club.

Education and development

Most education activities are now run by the charity, English Bridge and Education. Full detail can be seen in their annual report.

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Bridge

The group is now chaired by Baroness Henig who has been supportive to Bridge and the EBU. Bob Blackman MP, who has been particularly helpful and vocal in our campaign for the recognition as bridge as a sport. Meetings of the group address the development and awareness of the benefits of bridge (particularly for young people and for senior citizens) and the promotion of enjoyment of the game, and bridge events, with the legislatures of other countries.

This year the APPG have hosted two visits from schools that play bridge and/or minibridge. These outings are great fun and the school pupils and their teachers visit the Lord Speaker in her office, tour the Houses of Parliament and then play bridge in the River Room and are treated to tea at the end of a long afternoon. The children demonstrate without doubt the benefits of playing bridge at school.

International Success

England's representation in international duplicate bridge competitions is an important part of the EBU's activities as a national bridge organisation. Successes at international level help to raise public awareness of English bridge and to attract new players to the game. Our participation in international events provides us with an international profile in the bridge world and it also brings more influence within the European Bridge League (EBL) and the World Bridge Federation (WBF).

The Selection Committee, made up of seven elected and two ex officio members and chaired by Andy Bowles, is responsible for selecting the teams to represent us internationally. It has been a very good year for England at international level, with medals in all three categories at the European Championships (the first time that any country has achieved this), and wins in two of the five Home Internationals:

- **Open**

The Open team won the Bronze Medal in the European Championships, qualifying for the Bermuda Bowl for the second time in succession.

- **Women**

The Women's team continued their run of medal-winning performances with the Silver Medal at the European Championships, qualifying once again for the Venice Cup.

- Seniors

The Senior team won the Gold Medal at the European Championships, qualifying for the D'Orsi Bowl.

- Juniors

The Junior teams again won both the Junior Camrose and the Peggy Bayer trophies. Tom Paske and Graeme Robertson won a Bronze Medal at the European Youth Pairs.

Junior squads

The Selection Committee is also responsible for the junior squads which provide training for young players. Through the hard work of squad leaders Alan Shillitoe, Michael Byrne and Sarah O'Connor, supported by a number of top players who provide coaching and mentoring, the junior squad system continues to bring young players into the game and to prepare successive generations of players for national and international competition.

This year a new U15 squad was formed, in order to prepare a team for the new U15 category at the 2015 European Championships. Under Sarah O'Connor's able leadership a sizeable pool of players has been identified, and preparations for the Europeans are well advanced.

We have been making plans to hold our first international championship in England for some years, the European Champions Cup.

Regulation

The Laws and Ethics Committee (L&E), made up of seven elected individual members of the EBU under the chairmanship of Tim Rees, is responsible for the regulation of the game in England.

Updated regulations were published in August 2013, including a revised White Book and a new Blue Book. These are smaller than their predecessors and written in plainer English. Both publications are available electronically, free, from the website and will be updated annually. Only very minor amendments were made in August 2014.

The L&E hears cases of both a technical and disciplinary nature. During the last year, there have been three appeals to the National Authority, which is the final step for appealing a Director's ruling. One of these cases was rejected due to lack of merit, and the deposit retained. The other two cases were heard, with one being successful.

Disciplinary problems over the last year have been down on previous years. By coincidence, two cases the L&E prosecuted this year were both caused by players walking out of EBU events without notice having received a Director's ruling with which they disagreed. There have been several other problems raised by individuals relating to club/county bridge, but the L&E encourages these issues to be dealt with at a local level, which has successfully happened in this year's cases. The L&E provides advice on model disciplinary regulations for clubs, counties and jointly run events.

Appeals from tournaments are reviewed by the L&E so that they can offer advice and ensure the consistency of decisions. An annual booklet of the major decisions is published

and is available electronically from the EBU website. Appeals are reviewed and comments published in the minutes of their meetings.

There is a panel of referees appointed by the L&E who hear appeals at tournaments and act as telephone referees in knock out events, on a voluntary basis. They are also called upon from time to time to give rulings from club and county events.

Tournaments and Competitions

This year saw the introduction of the Player of the Year Championship. It awards place-points to those ranking highly in a range of our toughest pairs and teams events, to provide an extra challenge of interest to our top players.

Other changes introduced in the last year, in response to the paper that Gordon Rainsford presented last year to the board, are that the Autumn Congress now has a slightly different format than any of our other congresses, adding some variety to the calendar; and it has been decided that from 2016 the National Pairs will offer a number of regional finals around the country for qualification to the national final, open to all EBU members without any need to qualify in clubs. Discussion was also had regarding the moving of the Summer Congress from Brighton to another venue. This change will take place in 2016.

Blue-Pointed Holidays have not attracted as much interest as had been hoped and will stop after the final one in 2015 at Chilworth Manor. However we are still keen to provide events for less experienced players, aiming to bridge the gap between clubs and congresses. With that in mind we have been running Really Easy Afternoons four times a year at some of our congresses, and at the same time clubs around the country have run satellite events, playing the same hands and scoring them all together nationally.

Bridge Overseas Ltd continue to source venues for our tournaments at prices we would not be able to negotiate for ourselves, many of them free, helping us to minimise price increases. They also negotiate and arrange accommodation for our members, but there is no obligation to use their services and members are free to look for other offers if they wish.

Numbers at many of our competitions continue to decline despite our best efforts, but our Bridge Overseas congresses abroad, like the ones in Montenegro and Lanzarote during the year, continue to attract good numbers and make a healthy contribution to the Competitions Department's budget. It was decided last year that the committee should have fewer meetings, and more of its work has been done this year via email.

Tournament Directors Development Group

This subcommittee of the Board deals with the appraisal, promotion, development and management of the EBU's active tournament directors. It is chaired by Board Director, Heather Dhondy. This year the TDDG ran a highly successful TD training weekend, and has seen six new trainees join the panel. Nicole Cooke and Phil Godfrey are promoted to Senior Congress TDs and James Vickers and Colin Simcox to "A" TDs. The group continues its work of recruiting and training new tournament directors to continue the excellent service provided at our national tournaments.

The County Working Group

The EBU County Working Group was set up by the Board to focus on County development, the key objectives of which include communications and relationships with Counties, Clubs, Members, and potential Members. The National County Working Group will explore development opportunities and make recommendations to the Board on ways forward.

It is made up of representatives from the five Regional County Working Groups (Eastern, Metropolitan, Midlands, Northern and Western). Each Regional County Working Group is made up of Counties, based primarily on the Inter-County League Groups. Guernsey, Isle of Man, and Jersey are, for geographical reasons, outside of the Regional Groups, but have each been contacted by the Group Chairman, and invited to send a representative to the National Meetings, or to communicate directly with him on any matters they would like to raise.

The meetings held so far have been very positive, and the indication is that this structure has excellent potential, due in no small part to the support, commitment and dedication of those members who have agreed to represent their County, and Region, in engaging in this process. I hope that as many members as possible will make their views known to their Club, and County, so that we can all participate in shaping the future of Bridge in England

English Bridge

The Editorial Board for English Bridge is a subcommittee of the Board chaired by EBU Board Chairman Jeremy Dhondy. During 2014-15 we have further developed the archive of past magazines on our website going back to 1945. Our current magazine is available online to members. We have successfully introduced a new size magazine which makes significant postal savings. The online version of the magazine now includes video footage. We will be appointing a new editor in the coming year.

EBU Headquarters at Aylesbury

We have a full time staff equivalent of around eighteen, serving over 54000 members through the provision of tournaments, education, regulation, international support, club and membership support services including a shop providing bridge books and supplies and communications including Club Management Focus, Events Focus and Appeals Focus. It has been, as usual, a busy year with the following notable developments:

- ***Success in the Media***

In early 2015 we applied for leave to go to Judicial Review concerning Sport England's refusal to consider bridge being regarded as a sport. We were turned down after written submissions but received approval for an oral hearing at which Mr Justice Mostyn decided that the review should be held. This decision generated a huge amount of media interest, with numerous officials, board members, staff, and members appearing on television and radio. The case was reported in all major newspapers, and on many news networks in the UK and overseas. The coverage of the case was mostly fair, and certainly positive in relation to the benefits and enjoyment that can come from playing bridge. Our print monitoring service estimated that in the week of the case the print and online reports had a value of

£1.48m (i.e. that would be the cost of paying for the equivalent level of exposure) – this excludes the coverage on television and radio. There was also media coverage of the VAT appeal and this will proceed further in the coming year.

- **Diary**

The diary will be printed by the same company as for the last version. Due to an increased number of members opting out of receiving a copy we will be able to make savings on the cost of delivery.

General Meetings and Shareholdings

The EBU is a company limited by shares. Our shareholders do not get any financial remuneration, their shareholdings and voting rights are based on the number of members their county has. There are two shareholder meetings a year, one of which is an annual general meeting. This report will be presented to the shareholders for discussion at the Annual General Meeting on 25th November 2015.

For full details of our constitution and structure please see the EBU's Articles and Bye Laws available on the EBU's website www.ebu.co.uk.

Jeremy Dhondy

Chairman

For and on behalf of the Board of the English Bridge Union

Staff Members and National Volunteers 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015

Details of the directors, committee members and staff can be found at <http://www.ebu.co.uk/biographies/ebu>. In addition we are grateful for the assistance of

Honorary Counsel

David Ewart QC

Pro Bono Advisor

Stephen Barnfield

Disciplinary Panel (this group hears and decides on cases that are prosecuted by the Laws & Ethics Committee)

Joy Mayall, Kath Nelson, William Nicolle, Alan Oddie, Jackie Pye, Paul Roberts, Ed Scerri, Paddy Seligman, Geoff Smith, Jeff Smith, Keith Stanley, John Williams, Norman Innis

Awards Panel (this group scrutinises applications from counties for the Dimmie Fleming award and makes recommendations to the EBU Board)

Margaret Curtis, Philip Mason, Jeff Morris