

Hello there,

My name is Jean Whitlam. I am a member of the English Bridge Union which I joined in 1976. When I became chairman of Exeter Bridge Club in 2009, I started regularly logging on to the EBU website. A habit which continues to this day.

I decided to look further into the activities of the EBU when it was suggested I was mischief making when I queried our financial situation. I browsed through old minutes, financial statements, magazine articles and even logged on to the Companies House register. I have made a list of several things which I had never previously known and which, quite honestly, I am deeply concerned about.

Whilst I am more than happy to acknowledge that the English Bridge Union has worked hard to provide the members with many things which are used daily, I feel there is an urgent need for change. I know not everyone will agree with me but some, perhaps, may reconsider when facts are placed before them.

1/ The English Bridge Union was started in the late 30's, was inactive during the war and then restarted in 1946. In the mid 80's it had sufficient funds to buy and furnish the premises currently used at Aylesbury, later extending them. In the 1993 December issue of our magazine, we were told that £ 95,000 had been invested in Eurobonds. Cash was kept in a Barclay's Business Premium Account and a Robert Fleming Deposit Account. Short-term surplus funds were invested through Barclays in the money market. Where this money went is unclear.

2/ Our Union was running side by side with The English Bridge Union Limited, a company started in 1946 and registered at Companies House.

3/ The two entities had become as one at a meeting in January 2005. Once the company had control, it only took them four years to discuss and bring in P2P or UMS. Four years later they applied for charity status, which was refused on the basis that too much of the money raised by the members was being spent on too few of them. Charitable status is of no benefit to the numerous small clubs but would be beneficial to the Company. I understand they spent in the region of £40,000 on this failed attempt. They later spent over £180,000 in a failed endeavour to get bridge recognized as a sport. Beneficial to the company but to their small clubs, not all that helpful.

I suggest you read the AGM minutes of the limited company in October 2001 which, in my opinion, gives an indication that the Company needed more funding from the English Bridge Union which was querying how it spent the memberships money. (see link below)

<https://www.ebu.co.uk/documents/minutes-and-reports/agm/2001/3-october.pdf>

If you would like a copy of the other things I have learned, I will be pleased to let you see them. Every one of them is available to read on the EBU webpage.

Jean

PAIN IN THE NECK BUT

NOT RUNNING SCARED



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CHAPTER 1

Board meeting.

Thursday 18th January 2024

*The board discussed refusal of membership and confirmed that in the following circumstances it would be expected to use the power to **expel or refuse** membership to someone:*

- 1. A person seeks to join the EBU, having indicated that their aim is to work to undermine the organisation, perhaps with the aim of setting up a rival body.*
- 2. A member who is going to be subject to a disciplinary case leaves the EBU before the disciplinary case has concluded.*
- 3. A member who is suspended or who resigns after having caused the EBU to spend money on legal fees which have not been recovered.*
- 4. A person has been a member of another National Bridge Organisation and has been expelled from it.*

One must ask why our Board of Directors are so afraid of being challenged?



CHAPTER 2

Paul Gibbons suggested that to prepare for any ambitions to become a charity in the future, we should look at changing the wording around competitions, for example, the Sim Pairs and other competitions should have explicit wording that these are events raising funds for Internationals. The Board agreed that this should be made clearer.

You may not be aware that you cannot obtain charity status if a member-funded company such as the EBU spends most of the money raised for the benefit of just a handful of members, in this case, the international players. They tried it in 2014 but had to settle for the tuition side of the EBU and EBED was formed. Of course, UMS (Universal Membership) has resulted in the EBU having 50,000+ members, albeit a compulsory membership for the majority. These members provided £622,543, just under half of the turnover of £1,282,442. The cost of these services, £89,022. These figures were taken from the accounts for the year ended March 2022.

When saying the competitions are run to finance the internationals, it does require the members to support these competitions. As you must be a member of the EBU to play in any of their competitions it is safe to say the bulk of the EBU finances comes from their membership. It is merely split into different sections on their profit and loss account, i.e Membership dues (UMS), competitions plus the addition of **money raised to fund the internationals**. Of course, there is still the problem of the huge number of members against a very small number of internationals.

UMS is allegedly what the clubs collect by way of membership dues for membership of the EBU. Change this to pay per board and have voluntary membership and the company would no longer be member funded. In the meantime, until the new idea is up and running, they will keep on with UMS.

At the meeting it was noted, ***we have a UMS fee set by the shareholders at the AGM (currently 44p to rise to 45p in April) and for some time we have had a policy of charging 36-72 boards at double rate and giving a 1/3 discount for sessions of 14 boards or fewer. Currently a club submitting for a session is paying from 2.75p/board to just under 0.8p/board. Being able to charge fractional pence per board is an issue for some of our processing systems, but an alternative which works easily is charging a flat rate (say 23p) plus 1p/board.***

Clever possible solution but difficult. Looking at the EBU pie charts for y.e.2023, membership is £567,100 and Comps £420,500. In 4 years, keeping the 23p as UMS and increasing the amount per board played, on the figures shown the membership funds would be half of the amount raised by the competitions. Could work!!