



## MINUTES OF THE SURREY COUNTY BRIDGE ASSOCIATION AGM



held on Sunday, 4th July 2021

**ATTENDANCE:** 20 members were present online. Although the quorum is 30, these members have to be present in one location which is not possible in the current circumstances.

**APOLOGIES:** There were 119 apologies.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS YEAR:** The Minutes of the 2020 AGM were accepted. Sue Osborne pointed out she did not say that Oxshott and Claygate could come together, she did not envisage this ever happening. The Minutes of the last meeting should be amended to remove this statement and then put back on the website.

**Proposer:** Ian Lewis

**Secunder:** John Manches

**MATTERS ARISING:** We have a new Communications Officer, Sue Brough, and a new Development Officer, Tony Cherrett.

**CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS and ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021:** Tim Warren said that as our Treasurer could not attend he would combine everything together. The last year began at the same time as Covid and we had to take a lot of steps in the dark. He showed graphs of the figures displaying charity events and the surplus we made this year. He said that he would like to focus on the drop in income and expenditure, the costs were considerably lower because of people playing online bridge. The Green Point event has very high fixed costs so we are exposed to falling numbers. In the past we have built up big reserves to cover this risk. But with online bridge there is less risk and another advantage is that no-one needs to transport equipment or put up tables, etc. This year we made a considerable surplus. Under Trevor's stewardship we raised £7,700 at the beginning of last year for England's first major Covid competition for the NHS, and over the year we raised £10,000 for charity. Unfortunately there was a disappointing turnout for the December's Sim Pairs and June looked to be going the same way so that is cancelled. There was a dramatic drop in the people playing bridge – previously there had been 18,000 a month but now about 8,000. However, more and more people were making the switch to online bridge in the first quarter of this year although it has been dropping off since then because of the relaxation of restrictions, etc. In teams Trevor organised the leagues and the cup which included free entry, and the numbers were up 50% but there were no entries for the Novice League which was unfortunate. Online bridge enabled new things including an experimental match for Surrey against Yorkshire called the Hills and Dales in March. The reaction to this was very positive and there is a return match planned for September when it is hoped to bring in new people.

**Re Schools Bridge,** before Covid there were 16 schools playing bridge but unfortunately now only 4. However, there is a minor positive as the juniors are playing online. We did try and get an Under 25 match with Yorkshire but they were not able to field a team, whereas in Surrey we do have a lot of youngsters who play.

Tim gave a big thank you to the Committee. He said that things didn't happen without a lot of hard work and a big thank you to Roger Routledge who has decided to retire having organised the leagues in previous years, and a welcome to David Burch who has now stepped in to organise this.

For future county events we believe that online bridge is likely to be the norm, but we will try hybrid events so that people who want to play face to face can play the same boards as those playing online –

obviously face to face will be considerably more expensive. The big thing is what we call bridge development which is bringing new people in to play and helping people to play better and bring them into county events. The EBU have also got similar ideas so we are working with them and want to encourage the lower NGS players. Last year we had a free event for the Under 9s which worked well. We are wondering about running an interclub event for NGS 9 and below, something like NICKO. We are also thinking about inviting those who have earned the most Master Points last year to come and play in a face to face event.

We are very conscious that a number of clubs are struggling and would be grateful if you could please let them know we are here to help.

Sue Osborne asked if anyone had any information as to when clubs will recommence. David Burch said that he is intending to re-open Woking as soon as possible.

Sue Osborne said Oxshott Bridge Club had sent a survey, the result of which was a large majority are returning face to face on September 1<sup>st</sup>. She also said there was a difficult situation at Claygate and did not know what was going to happen there.

Trevor said he had tried to keep in touch with clubs and had personally rang some. He was encouraged by some but others were not doing anything. He said that several clubs in Surrey were not viable and had not got a long term future.

Amanda Dowling said that Godalming had a membership of 90 with a waiting list of 5 or 6. They had all worked very hard and had spent hours showing members how to go on BBO and BCL but many people were keen to get back to face to face. They will probably combine with Guildford Duplicate and Tudor, and the three clubs will combine to run an additional weekly online session.

Ian Lewis said he had looked at a number of clubs and he said 20% were not coming back until it was a safer environment but 80% were itching to come back. Camberley and Yateley & Hawley are considering something similar to Guildford and Godalming carrying on with online sessions. Between the two clubs they are planning face to face sessions – one in the afternoon and two in the evening. He has also tried to persuade them to play RealBridge but most people prefer other platforms.

Tim said that he was fearful Chobham was not going to restart but the Chairman is emailing members to see what the response is.

Ian Lewis suggested that Chobham is closer to other clubs and it might be feasible to get the clubs to work online together. He said regarding teams, this was the best form of bridge. He thought something like the chairmen's lunch would be a good idea so that the chairmen and the right people could all talk together.

John Manches asked whether it was possible to have shorter sessions online. He preferred to see people face to face and could talk to them. Ian Lewis said that the EBU run 12 board sessions. You can play 12 boards, or even 14 or 16, at a Club's discretion in an 18 board session. Trevor said it was much better on RealBridge when you can talk to people, although face to face is where we get social reaction in our clubs.

Derek Rutherford said he was a member of East Horsley Bridge Club. They have also sent out emails to members regarding getting back to face to face. At the moment they only have about 8 to 10 tables online on a club night which is down considerably from before. He feels face to face is the only way where you can invite a partner, improve your game and give him competition which is why he joined the club in the first place. He felt the community should be encouraged to return to playing face to face.

David Burch said that people were happy to travel a mile or two to see friends at a bridge club but not to travel for leagues as there was no social connection. However, Ian Lewis said he liked travelling to matches and meeting people.

Trevor said that regarding face to face it takes a good hour to set the room up, then play bridge and at the end, with the help of one or two people who stay to help, to clear up. Then there is the expense of paying for the venue and caterer. We would need more support from attendees to help get this organised.

Regarding the accounts, Trevor said that the Treasurer had done a sterling job in rationalising the accounting. Sue Osborne pointed out that there were a few words missing from the balance sheet – Gail was asked to correct this.

John Manches asked what happened in 2016/2017 when there was a large surplus. Jeffrey reminded us that in that year attendance at both our Green Point event and our normal events was very good.

Tim said that in the light of face to face the financial picture is difficult to predict in the future. Now that we have experience of 20/21 and online bridge, we are going to be in an easier financial environment than in the past. This is why we can justify using our reserves to fund bridge development. We do not need to have £30k of reserves any more.

Geoff Williams pointed out that in hybrid competitions there are still the same outgoings for hiring premises as there will be fewer people playing face to face. Trevor said that we will still try it unless it is going to be prohibitively expensive.

Proposer: Geoff Williams                      Seconder: David Burch

**ELECTION OF AUDITOR:** Sue Preston was appointed during the year and she is very happy to continue in this position.

Proposer: Sue Osborne                      Seconder: Ian Lewis

**ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Trevor said that usually the committee resigns and then are elected. If this were to happen the vote to elect the committee would not be valid as we have not got a quorum. However, as the people here have said they are prepared to support the committee in those particular roles we will have a vote.

Proposer: John Manches                      Seconder: Jonathan Prizeman

**AOB**

Amanda Dowling asked when clubs were thinking of re-opening: Oxshott September 1<sup>st</sup>, Camberley October, Woking 21<sup>st</sup> July, Byfleet 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 3 Counties July 20, Grayshott, Petersfield and Bourne no plans, and if Chobham re-opened it would be October.

Geoff Williams pointed out that in 2016/17 there was a good attendance at the GP weekend. Trevor said that the Spectrum costs £4000 to hire, it costs a lot of money to hire equipment from the EBU and nearly £1000 to move this and back again so it is a major commitment. We are exposed to the number of people who come to the events – one year we made a profit of £2000 and another year we made a loss of £50. Amanda Dowling said she enjoyed playing face to face going to the Spectrum but would not play online.

Trevor said that we are finding many counties are using RealBridge for their green point events. It is good to see their names, have a chat and the alerting is as it is face to face. You can join this from anywhere and can get round more counties. William Clennell said that he preferred to play face to face and that lots of young people feel the same. Derek Rutherford had made a good point about meeting people and

finding partners. Ian said that face to face is definitely the way forward but what would we have done during the last 18 months without online bridge.

Trevor thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.