

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SUSSEX COUNTY CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION HELD AT THE UCKFIELD CIVIC CENTRE ON SUNDAY 15TH APRIL 2012

Present:

**Mr M Pool
Mr E Williams
Mr R J Wheeler
Mr D Galpin**

**President
Vice Chairman
Honorary Secretary
Honorary Treasurer**

And 46 members. Apologies were received from Ron Buddery, May Langmaid, Jackie Clinton, Carol Watson, Cecily and Harold Linfield, Gerry Stanford, Richard Lowe, David Howard-Houston and Liz Hoskins.

The President opened the meeting and informed members that unfortunately the Chairman was in hospital again and unable to be present. He indicated that the Chairman and the other Officers wished him to take the chair unless there were any objections. The AGM agreed to the President taking the chair.

1. Approval of minutes of AGM held on 10th April 2011

The minutes were approved as a correct record of the meeting subject to the following changes:

- In the list of apologies "Karen Prior" should be replaced with "Karen Pryor".
- In paragraph 3.6 the phrase "her partner" should be replaced with "Andrew Ryder".
- The final section should be numbered as 8.
- The paragraph that is now paragraph 8.2 should be replaced by the following:
"8.2 Sussex League - Division 1/2 Promotion/Relegation. Malcolm Pryor pointed out that the regulations for promotion and relegation between divisions 1 and 2 of the Sussex League were inconsistent with those for other divisions and wished to have recorded that there was unrest on this. Three options for removing the anomaly were discussed:
 1. 2 up 2 down for all divisions.
 2. 1 up 1 down for all divisions.
 3. Playoffs between the top two teams of one division and the bottom two of the next higher division.

On a proposal by Malcolm Pryor seconded by Piers Pennant, a straw poll was taken on the proposal that "the regulations for promotion and relegation should be made consistent across all divisions". The voting was 27 in favour and 7 against. The Vice Chairman undertook to take this forward on behalf of the AGM."

The final change recorded above was approved following a proposal from Malcolm Pryor, a discussion in which views for and against its adoption were expressed, and a vote in which a majority agreed the proposed change.

The President agreed to sign the final version of the minutes after incorporation of these changes.

Action – Martin Pool

2. Matters arising from the minutes

2.1 Regarding Paragraph 8.1, the President advised that The EBU had not yet been formally accepted for charitable status. An application was in the process of being made.

2.2 The Honorary Secretary reported on the following further matters arising:

- Paragraph 7 – The subsequent search of past minutes had found no record of an agreement on electing EBU shareholders at the AGM.
- Paragraph 8.2 – Subsequent to the AGM, the Management Committee had agreed to retain the current arrangements for promotion and relegation. Item 8 on the current meeting's agenda provided an opportunity for further discussion.
- Paragraph 8.3 – The issue of a minimum number of tables in a mixed heat had been addressed in the revision of competition rules completed later in 2011. In response to a question from the meeting, the webmaster confirmed the revised rules had been published on the web site. Dave Armstrong suggested that the rules of competition were inadequate and he was invited to suggest to the Tournament Committee how they might be improved.

Action – Dave Armstrong

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3. Chairman's Report

The President advised that the retiring Chairman had given him a copy of her report and he proposed to read it to the meeting. It is reproduced verbatim below:

"I think I just heard someone say "What! Another year and that woman doesn't show!" I am very sorry, and sad, in equal amounts not to be with you today. I have so much support from SCCBA members, thank you for all your help.

Sussex is a very successful county, we have many members working at the EBU – our own Sally Bugden is Chairman of English Bridge Union. Martin is on the Laws and Ethics Committee, and also Tournament Directors Development Committee where Joy Mayall can also be found. In addition Joy is serving on the Disciplinary Committee.

Our teams are all highly competitive, and this past year saw Sussex with success in the Metropolitan Cup. The C Team winning their section – so good luck wishes go to them in the Regional Finals.

I hope you all took part and answered our survey. We do so need your input in order to improve what we offer to you members. Thank you Joy & Yves for all your hard work.

Much goes on behind the scenes to ensure you enjoy your Bridge. My thanks to the Management Committee who put in more than you can imagine. Julia, for example who escaped while I was sick, thank you so much for all your support and so sorry you had a spell in hospital – mind that ice in future!

Eddie this year has decided that another lady Chairman is too much and is moving to the Management Committee after many years as Vice Chairman.

Dick, you have much work on your hands – thank you for helping me.

David and Andrea Galpin both work tirelessly. David, with our finances, Sussex League and Selectors Committee, and Andrea of course, with the invitation pairs.

Thank you John, for your work as Membership Secretary.

Gerry, you're doing a great job as Tournament Manager.

Mervyn – great job on the website – you work so hard.

Co-ordination Manager, Carol, does sterling work and all our news relayed to the editor of English Bridge.

Thank you, Yves for our Newsletter, keeping all in touch.

We have other committees where members give their time, although not on the Management Committee, ie the Conduct Committee, chaired by Joy Mayall who has given so much help that it's hard to put into words.

Thank you Malcolm Wright, who transports our equipment, and Helen Kent for caring for our trophies.

Now finally a word for Martin, and for fear of embarrassing him, he has helped the committee and myself far beyond the call of duty. Thank you Martin.

Finally, thank you to everyone for allowing me to be your Chairman. I wish my successor every success."

4. Honorary Treasurer's Report

4.1 Adoption of the Audited Annual Accounts. The audited accounts showed a surplus of £3552. This had been inflated by two exceptional factors. First, only one newsletter mailing had taken place when normally there would have been two. This had saved just under £3000. Second, a change of asset depreciation policy (to depreciate over five years rather than three) had reduced the previously expected charge for depreciation by more than £1500. Had the policy on depreciation over five years been introduced last year the annual charge would have been around £1200. The Honorary Treasurer invited comments and the following were made:

- Malcolm Pryor requested that the Management Committee investigate the possibility of saving money through electronic rather than paper distribution of the newsletter. By no means all members had access to e-mail but the issue of increased use of electronic communication had been included in the recent Members' Survey and would be pursued further in due course.

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- Newsletter costs could also be reduced if only one copy was sent to married couples. The practicability of this would also be explored.

The Honorary Treasurer thanked the auditor for auditing the accounts and foregoing his fee for the benefit of the SCCBA. It was proposed by John Williams and seconded by David Cross that the accounts be adopted. This was approved unanimously.

4.2 Appointment of Honorary Auditor. Following a proposal from Norman Hardy, seconded by Eddie Williams, it was unanimously agreed that Mr James Bugden be re-appointed as an independent examiner to audit the County's accounts for a further year.

4.3 Subscriptions for the Years 2012-2013 and 2013/14. The Honorary Treasurer confirmed that the increase in county P2P from 5p to 7p had been implemented for the year 2012-2013 as approved at the 2011 AGM. He added that he was also pleased to be able to report that current budget forecasts indicated that it would not be necessary to increase the P2P next year. A proposal made by Norman Hardy and seconded by Eddie Williams that there should be no increase in P2P fees for 2013/14 was carried unanimously.

5. Election of Officers

The following officers were elected unopposed

Chairman	Mrs J Mayall
Vice-Chairman	Mr G Stanford
Honorary Secretary	Mr R J Wheeler
Honorary Treasurer	Mr D Galpin
Honorary Membership Secretary	Mr E Williams
Tournament Manager	Mr G Stanford

At this point the President passed the chair to the newly elected Chairman. The Chairman paid tribute to her predecessor, outlined her background in Sussex bridge and expressed her confidence in the newly elected Management Committee. She indicated that she was happy to be contacted by members with concerns and would do her utmost to maintain and, where possible, expand the enjoyment of bridge in the County.

6. Election of a Maximum of Fourteen Committee Members

A minimum of eight and a maximum of fourteen members are allowed by the constitution on the Management Committee. The following 14 members were elected to the Management Committee unopposed:

Mr D Armstrong, Mr P Bates, Dr H Beveridge, Mr D Ellis, Mr N Hardy, Mrs A Galpin, Mrs H Kent, Mr Y Lebec, Mr R Lowe, Miss J Simpson, Mr A Southwell, Mrs C Watson, Mr J Williams and Mr M Wotton.

7. Change to Constitution

7.1 The President introduced the proposed change which was being made to bring the Schedule pursuant to Clause 10 into line with current EBU guidance. The change would also make the County's arrangements for conduct and discipline consistent with English law regarding human rights.

7.2 The president reported that he had seen two letters commenting on the detail of the new Schedule but as the current draft had already been approved by the EBU he hoped that these further changes could be taken into account subsequently. He pointed out that further changes would be necessary in due course anyway to make the County Constitution fully consistent with the EBU model. Jill Armstrong suggested changes to paragraphs 6.4 (a) and (b) that would make those provisions clearer and the President agreed to seek EBU approval of those. On this basis and on a show of hands, the proposal was approved unanimously.

7.3 Dave Armstrong observed that the EBU model contained no statement about who could complain about whom. He agreed to write clarifying his views so that they could be taken into account by those who would be preparing the further changes for approval in 2013.

Action – Dave Armstrong

8. Resolution re League Promotion/Relegation

8.1 The Chairman invited Muriel Bailey to speak in favour of the resolution. Muriel indicated that her interest in this subject had been aroused by talk by members during last year of the anomaly in the promotion and relegation between divisions 1 and 2. She had heard what happened at last year's AGM when there was a proposal by Malcolm Pryor to remove the anomaly and this had led to a straw poll resulting in a vote in

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favour of the change. She had not been at the last AGM so decided to look at the draft minutes. At that time there was no mention in the minutes of Malcolm's proposal and poll. She had asked why the draft minutes omitted the discussion and was told that Malcolm had not notified the Committee of his proposal so it was 'out of order'. There was also no mention of Malcolm's proposal in the subsequent Management Committee minutes, simply a record that a decision was taken to retain the status quo to 'protect the strength of Division 1'. This had prompted her to investigate this statement. She had obtained data regarding the spread of results of Divisions 1, 2, 3, and 4 over seven years and she had found no evidence to support a special status for Division 1. All divisions had teams at the bottom that lost most of their matches and teams at the top that won most of their matches and a spread of results in between. She therefore decided to bring a similar proposal to the AGM and had sought advice on how to do so and been told that the Constitution did not provide for Member proposals at the AGM. She pointed out that in that case Malcolm's proposal could not have been 'in order'. She had therefore drawn up a resolution, obtained the support of 20 members (the level of support required to call an Extraordinary General Meeting) and had submitted accordingly. In light of the support shown, the Officers had decided that the resolution should be put to the AGM for a formal vote. She now sought the support of the AGM for her proposal.

8.2 The Chairman then invited David Galpin to give a perspective from the League Organiser. David had organised the Sussex League since it evolved in its present form around 12 years ago. He saw it is one of the County's most popular competitions as it is regularly supported by around 50 teams each season, or over 200 of our members. It caters for players of all levels of experience and ability and it is this diversity which he believed was a primary reason why Division 1 should be looked at differently from the rest of the League. He indicated that from his personal experience, he could confirm that it is a different world in Division 1.

8.3 The question of the number of teams promoted/relegated between Divisions 1 and 2 had been looked at by both the main SCCBA Committee and by the Tournament Committee on at least 3 occasions in recent years and each time it had been decided to keep the number at one. At the end of last season there was a vacancy in Division 1 due to a team dropping out and he did then promote 2 teams from Division 2 to Division 1 so he had been mindful of the groundswell of opinion on the matter. He believed it to be significant and an argument against changing Promotion/Relegation that the team which finished next to bottom of Division 1 in 2009/10 finished runners-up in 2010/11 and, barring a big win for another team in the one outstanding match this season, this season's runners-up will also have finished in what would be a relegation place last season had a change applied then.

8.4 David went on to say that whilst the passing of Muriel's resolution would not be binding on the Management Committee, clearly it was something which it would be difficult to ignore. Therefore, it concerned him that the matter was to be voted on by members, most of whom either don't play in the League or, if they do, are not close to being directly concerned with promotion/relegation between the top 2 Divisions. Of the 21 signatories to the resolution, only 8 played in Divisions 2 or 3 during the League season just ending. The remaining signatories play at lower levels of the League and 4 don't even play in the League at all. Similarly many of those attending the AGM were not directly affected by the outcome of this resolution. He believed it was right to keep promotion/relegation between the top 2 Divisions of the League at one up/one down and urged the AGM to vote against the resolution.

8.5 The Chairman then invited Julian Mitchell to give a perspective from a Division 1 Team Captain. Julian thanked David Galpin for his continued commitment to a strong Sussex League and expressed concern that, if approved, the resolution before the AGM would tie the Organiser's hands. The success of the League very much reflected the strength of the League and that strength arose significantly from the opportunity which Division 1 provided for the best players to be subject to the strongest possible competition. Change to the promotion/relegation arrangements would weaken the top Division and make it less attractive. He felt that the resolution was based on a false premise in that the record of the potentially promoted runner-up team in Division 2 is regularly comparatively poor. Of those teams that do get promoted under the present arrangements, 50% get relegated in the following season. He recognised the strength of feeling for equality and if that was the primary aim, one up/one down should be introduced to all divisions.

8.6 The Chairman then invited any additional arguments for or against and the following points were made:

- Duncan Curtis indicated that there was a large core of stability in Division 1 and previously there had been a large gap (in ability) between that and Division 2. He believed that in recent years that gap had narrowed because two up/two down in the lower divisions had raised the overall standard. He also said that a couple of seasons ago when the league team he is in won the Championship Teams, in every round they played against Division 1 opponents (who weren't relegated) and Julian Mitchell's team who were promoted to Division 1 that year. However, that same year they failed to gain promotion from Division 3 (ending 3rd). This he contended supports the belief that there is little difference between Divisions 1 & 2 (and even the top of Div 3).

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- Malcolm Pryor pointed out that it was factually untrue that there was a significant gap in abilities between the bottom half of the first division and the top half of the second division, and other teams in the League, as shown by a) the results of head to head matches between such teams in the Championship Teams over the last few years and b) performance in national events. 1 up 1 down in fact worked to keep the standard of the first division lower than it should be by restricting the relegation of its weakest teams. There are similarities with a situation which occurred in Surrey a few years back, when more openness to look at new players and a change of selection procedures led to a significant improvement in performance in representative matches, including winning the Tollemache.
- In reference to earlier comments by David Galpin that her 20 signatures included members who currently did not play in the League, Muriel Bailey added to her earlier statement by saying that she could have obtained signatures in favour of her resolution from 20 current League players but had thought it better to obtain support from across the membership.
- Jill Armstrong believed that the large gap between Division 1 and 2 remained and that the two up/two down proposal was flawed.
- Peter Langston said that he considered over the years the stifling of progress to Division 1 had prevented players developing and had contributed to our comparatively poor Tollemache performance. He noted that the team that were runners up in Division 2 and would have been promoted under the rule proposed were Championship Teams finalists. Also the team that would have been relegated consisted of players with allegiance to other Counties.
- Andrew Southwell believed that both teams promoted from Division 2 in 2011 would survive in Division 1 in 2012. If Sussex was looking to improve its overall performance, the best way was for the best in Division 2 to play the best in Division 1. The latter was in danger of becoming a stale, closed shop.
- Dave Armstrong observed that the Constitution does not provide for this resolution procedure but promotion and relegation should be the same for all divisions.
- Mike Keeping suggested that there should be eight teams in each division and two up/ two down for all.

8.7 The Chairman checked that there were no further additional arguments and, in response to a question from the floor, confirmed that the AGM could not vote on an amended resolution because such had not been publicised in the same way as the original resolution. She also reminded members that the decision was not binding on the elected Management Committee. She then called for a show of hands which revealed 21 votes in favour, 20 against with 10 abstentions. The resolution was therefore carried by a majority of one vote. The Chairman confirmed to the AGM that she would ensure that the AGM vote would be taken into account at the next Management Committee meeting.

Action – Honorary Secretary

9. Appointment of Vice President.

The Chairman announced that the Officers and the Management Committee had great pleasure in recommending the appointment of Jackie Clinton as a Vice President of the Association. The AGM indicated its approval of this and the Chairman said that a framed certificate would be presented to Jackie at the first convenient opportunity.

10. Any Other Business.

The Chairman summarised the results of the recent Membership Survey and reported that they would be published in the newsletter and on the web site as soon as possible.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 13.40. The presentation of trophies would take place at the first interval of the afternoon session of play.

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