



**Minutes of Council Meeting held at West Midlands Bridge Club
Wednesday 18 April 2007**

Present:

Jon Downing (Chairman), Darren Evetts (Secretary), Colin Lang (Vice-Chairman), Leslie Reece (Treasurer), Carolyn Fisher, Myra Scott, Alan Pagett, Hylda Townsend, Jane Hall, Stephanie Galvin, Pip Whitehouse, Barry Holloway, Nick Woosnam, John Robbins

1. Apologies

John Pyner, Beryl Latham, Ann Bailey

2. Minutes of last meeting (280207)

The minutes were amended ('Greswold' should be spelt 'Greswolde'), agreed and signed.

3. Matters Arising

County MDAG (Membership Development Action Group) – Colin presented the following report:

'I attended with Myra Scott. Also present were 2 reps each from Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, Berks/Bucks + Sally Bugden (Vice Chair EBU) and John Carter (a Board member) primarily responsible for this initiative.

This was the first of a series of meetings intended to be held through the year with other groups of County reps, and then to collate views on Membership. Stated objectives:

- (1) 'To consult the Counties and undertake research as to how they perceive their roles within the structure of Duplicate Bridge, with particular regard to sustaining and growing their membership.'*
- (2) 'To investigate the needs of the Counties, and how the EBU can assist in achieving membership development in their area.'*

Meeting began with welcome by John Carter who then spoke on a table of County Membership Statistics which had been prepared showing "percentage of peak" in the last 5 years (copy available). This showed Warwickshire with below average loss of membership - the implication for many other counties being quite serious. One of his main concerns was that many individuals who pass through BFA were not becoming EBU members.

Sally Bugden spoke on the "Findings from Club Research" (copy available) having visited many clubs for this purpose. I suggested that the percentage of Club members joining EBU was nearer 30% than her finding of 44%. It was not known how many belonged to more than one Club, or how many of each Club were EBU members

She referred to Bad Behaviour as "devastating" and emphasized the importance of the BB@B protocol. Whilst no-one queried this initiative, was enough being done at Club level? The protocol was criticised for not mentioning ethics or sportsmanship, which might help reduce the problem, and should also form part of the learning process.

Further wide - ranging discussion was summarised in John Carter's notes of the meeting (copy available) under 3 headings:

- Membership sources - training, motivation, newcomers and improvers' initiatives, including the creation of subsidised new clubs for them, also the idea of creating a separate beginners Master points scale, to be converted when they were ready to move on, also separate section of EBU Magazine*
- Interaction between Counties and EBU - Communications are patchy, to put it mildly! Membership records are inaccurate. Cost of advertising in EBU Magazine might be reviewed to be of more use. Local Sponsorship. Communications Officer to be appointed. May be able to assist with local press release. Conflict resolution. Falling off of attendance at both and EBU County events indicates common problem.*
- Suggestions from the Counties - new 'associated' clubs and terms? Affiliation and fees. Universal membership. Possible disaffiliation. Need for much reduced EBU subscription. Non-members see nothing in it for them, as things stand.*

The meeting lasted 4 hours, and covered every aspect of falling membership, but very few new ideas. County reps were far from unanimous in the views and priorities expressed, which was one of the most interesting aspects of the meeting.'

Myra noted that a number of people learn to play bridge with no intention of joining a bridge club. She indicated that it was useful to be able to discuss matters with other Counties.

4. Treasurer's Report – Leslie Reece

There are still a number of payments to be made but he was certain his estimates would show a surplus of approximately £800 (last year we were about even).

Membership is down slightly at 840 members (850 last year).

Concern was expressed about the increase in charges being made by clubs for hosting county events. One club was charging far more than others for County matches. Leslie would compile a list of charges for discussion.

There was discussion as to the rate TDs were being paid for the Warwickshire Pairs League. This led to further discussion about TD payments. It was agreed that the basic rate for TDs would be increased to £30 per session from 1st April 2007 plus a £5 excessive travel allowance (if the TD is not running an event at his or her local club). The rate per session for a TD in the WPL (Swiss Style Divisions only) would be £35 per session, plus a £5 excessive travel allowance, back dated to the start of the second series (Feb 2007).

5. EBU Shareholders Report – John Pyner

No meeting held since last Council meeting.

6. League Secretary's Report – Leslie Reece

The league is progressing well with the exception that the Birmingham University team in Division 4 has withdrawn.

The Handicap is also progressing well (further ahead this year than in past years). The new handicap system seems to be working well.

7. Tournament Secretary's Report – Pip Whitehouse

Simultaneous Pairs (11-17 April) – No problems reports at the nine participating clubs.

Goodman Cup Final due to take place on 29 April.

Foster Cups – 29 April – Problems in getting 8 pairs from the Warwickshire Pairs Final – some people are not responding to invitations and other are just not available.

Corwen – Winners & Runners Up are competing, 4th declined and the 3rd not yet confirmed!

8. Match/Selection Committee Report – John Robbins

'The 2006-2007 Midlands Inter-Counties League finished with fair results for Warwickshire. In the last match of the Dawes competition, we suffered a 3-17 loss against Leicestershire, which coupled with a Staffs win over Worcs of 18-2, just pushed the county down a place. . The net result was 1. Leicestershire (113 VP), 2. Oxfordshire (101 VP), 3 Staffordshire (88 VP), 4. Warwickshire (86 VP after 5 wins out of 8 matches). The best performances came from David Jones, Mike Butler, Michael Allen, Roger Bryant, Steve Green, Glyn Preece and Peter Heatherington, Susan Stockdale and David Cropper. Welcome newcomers this last year in the Dawes team were Dave Cropper and Susan Stockdale, currently playing with the England Ladies team, and Rafal Langowski. It was a very sad loss to Warwickshire when Mike Allen passed away after a long illness. He had been one of the counties' strongest players for many years.

The Porter team also finished with 5 wins out of 8 but a better average to close in 3rd place, with the best performances from Adrian Knight & Leslie Reece, and Mike Morriss & Nick Woosnam. The plaudits go to the Markham team, with 7 wins out of 8, and an average of 16/20 VPs, resulting in 1st place and the trophy. Overall best performances came from Paul Cotterill & Tony Cundy, David Hulston & Julian Wernick, Jon Downing & Liam Johnstone, Chris & Rob Evans, and John Pyner & Vic Garrod. Noteworthy newcomers were Moseley's Ali Imam and Abul Mostafa. A Markham team will now participate in a new national final against the winners of the Northern, Eastern, South-Western and London counties on July 20th at the Mickleover Court Hotel, Derby. We wish them a repeat performance.

The 2007-2008 season starts away against Nottinghamshire on Sunday 20th May.

The first of the summer's county invitation events was the Beck Cup at Oxford, but Warwickshire failed to make impact against strong Surrey and London sides. The Herefordshire Swiss Teams will be on Sunday 20th May at Tarrington Village Hall. I shall be negotiating with players to participate in this event.

9. Secretary's Report – Darren Evetts

Correspondence:

Shirley BC – Change of Secretary to Mr John Davies, 7 Woodbury Grove, Solihull, B91 3AX, Tel 0121 704 1785

Sutton BC – Will not be able to offer their premises for Green Point events after this year. They wished us every success in the future. Our thanks to Sutton for hosting this event for four years and particular thanks to Ann Bailey and her team for organising the catering.

Calendar Updates - Ladies' and Men's Pairs – 10 May 2007 @ Moseley – Entries needed!

2007/8 Programme:

Garden Cities – reverting to a Sunday (2nd December)

County matches – John Robbins to look at moving December's County match to Coventry.

Rules – Amended for Warwickshire Pairs (single session event) and Introductory Pairs (less than 3 years playing experience added)

Please check the calendar – particularly County matches. John Robbins to liaise with clubs re matches. Clubs have been circulated. The Draft will be published on the Website.

Website: Summary of hits since May 2005:

18 Jan 06 – 5964

19 Apr 06 - 8500

15 Nov 06 – 14348

18 Apr 07 - 19146

Midland Counties Congress

Nothing to Report

10. Newcomers Development Officer's Report – Myra Scott

Partner Teacher Scheme - First training sessions have taken place. It is accepted that the single proposed scheme may not fit all situations and the EBU is keen to support teachers generally. This initiative is closely linked to the drive for universal membership. Longer term developments will be clarified in due course.

I am meeting some of the teachers at Rugby Club in May to see how they organise their classes and assist students to move from beginners to improvers to players.

I am planning a meeting of interested teachers in September, to help us all support each other.

11. Green Point Event – Sunday 13 May 2007 – Sutton Coldfield Bridge Club

Proceeding as expected. 12 entries to date (one more than at this time last year). Last year we had 34 Teams.

Wine prizes would be awarded to the highest scoring (IMPS) team per round (only one prize per team)

12. AGM

Jon Downing would be retiring and Colin Lang would be taking on the Chairmanship. Jon Downing would stand as Vice-Chairman. Jon would also take over as League Secretary. We do not have a Youth Officer. All other officers were happy to continue.

Non-Representative members were happy to stand. Alan Pagett would stand as a non-representative member.

It was noted that a number of our clubs are not represented at Council Meetings. It was agreed to write to clubs inviting them to send a representative.

13. AoB

Colin expressed concern about numbers attending events and made the following proposal:

Cock O' the County – Prize Money of £100 to be shared by winning pair, £50 for second, £50 for highest pair below National Master (not being one of the above) and £50 for highest pair below Star Master (or with less than 4 years playing experience) again not being one of the above. It is hoped that this will generate more of an interest in the event across the board and widen participation for

the AGM and County matters. The total cost would be £250. (An additional £200 to the County based on last years figures).

Colin has a potential Sponsor, who would be prepared to cover the above difference - anonymously at this stage, no strings attached. However, looking beyond they would be interested in becoming official sponsors to the County for the 07/08 season, subject to approval of their Board, and any further queries - their name to appear as such on our programme and website, and a link provided to their website. He is not expecting they will want involvement in individual events.

The meeting thanked Colin and supported his proposal. It was agreed that a sponsor for the Warwickshire Pairs League might provide an incentive for more pairs to enter the competition whilst at the same time giving a potential sponsor maximum exposure across the County. Colin to investigate further with a view to having something in place for 2007/8 season.

14. Date of Next Meeting

Council - Wednesday 13 June 2007 @ 7.00pm – West Midlands Bridge Club. Coffee available upon arrival.

D Evetts
April 2007