



Minutes of Council Meeting held at West Midlands Bridge Club Wednesday 27 February 2008

Present:

Colin Lang (Chairman), Darren Evetts (Secretary), Leslie Reece (Treasurer), Jon Downing (Vice-Chairman), Peter Augustus, Ann Bailey, Alan Bond, Carolyn Fisher, Stephanie Galvin, Jane Hall, Vince Hageney, Ian Hendry, David Hulston, David Jones, John Pyner, John Robbins, Chris Rowles, Stephanie Scott, Chris Shepherd, Sandra Squires, Hylda Townsend, Pip Whitehouse, Margaret Wort

Colin opened the meeting by welcoming many new attendees. It is hoped that they will continue to be a part of County affairs in the future.

1. Apologies

John Birch, Dodo Georgevic, Beryl Latham, Roy Moore, Mike Morriss, Myra Scott, Nick Woosnam, Janet Whittaker

2. Minutes of last meeting (281107)

The minutes of the last meeting were taken as read and sign.

3. Matters Arising

None

4. County Strategy – Colin Lang/Darren Evetts

Colin outlined the County Strategy Discussion Paper prepared by Colin and Darren.

County Strategy – Discussion Document

We, like many other Counties, and, indeed, some Clubs, are facing a period of decline. The County cannot and should not ignore this, but instead take action to remedy the problem.

We are one of the larger Counties in the country. We should be able to cater for all those who want to play Bridge outside of their Clubs, at whatever level. We have addressed the problem under the following 4 headings:

1. **Competition Entry and Format** - Our one recent success is the Warwickshire Pairs League with a revitalised Premier Division, but there are concerns about the other divisions. Whilst Birmingham Division I has 13 tables, and is doing well; Coventry Division I runs with 9 tables and this is with pairs who originally entered Coventry Division II. With part of this event doing well, two-fifths of it is not doing well, and we need to take action, as the table below shows.

Series	Coventry 1	Coventry 2	Birmingham 2
2006 (1)	9	2	9.5
2006 (2)	8	Closed	9
2007 (1)	9		8.5
2007 (2)	8		7.5

Our Working party (a sub – committee of the Council, which advises the County) has expressed the view that the preferred option would be to operate the WPL on one night, from one venue. They also consider it desirable to limit the size of the Premier Division by the creation of an additional Division. We feel that this advice should be taken.

It would involve Coventry I and Birmingham I being merged, but an extra Division would enable smaller numbers in each division, and result in more promotion/relegation opportunities. We believe this would stimulate further interest and provide a reason for continuing.

However, we accept that attempting to put the whole WPL into one venue on the same night may create practical problems. We intend to address the problems after a full discussion at Council and with all interested parties.

This strategy is not solely concerned with WPL. Other events also are failing to attract sufficient players to make them worthwhile. The Goodman Cup, Warwickshire Championship & Introductory Pairs, Men's and Ladies' Pairs, GolfPrint, and Garden Cities are all failing events and require significant work.

The Mixed Pairs and Frank Cup are two events that with a lot of effort can attract 12+ tables. But the effort needed to encourage players to enter is far above what it should be. We cannot any longer, it seems, rely on heats to promote the larger events and our proposal provides for 9 or 10 regular nights of Pairs and Teams events through the year.

2. Council Representation - For many years we have seen very few 'new' faces at meetings and our representation from clubs is limited to a handful of committed individuals from a minority of clubs. We have a nucleus of committee members and you may be aware of our recent initiative to invite all Clubs to update their representation and help us promote the County. We have had some positive results, but only if they attend. We now need to build upon this.

Very few people are willing to stand for office - those who do may get stuck with the job for life, it seems - which makes it difficult to recruit! We urgently need volunteers, especially for our sub-committees which are lacking the vibrance that one would expect for a County such as Warwickshire.

Without 'new blood' entering the council, jobs are done by individuals who just get on with it - no bad thing, but sometimes the transparency of decisions is lost and the appropriate consultation does not take place due to lack of personnel to make up committees. We would like to re-activate the Tournament Committee so that competitions and format can be discussed in more detail before presentation to Council.

3. Newcomers - are essential to the future of Bridge. They underpin the whole strategy. We have actively promoted participation in WPL Division 2. We have held parallel introductory and newcomer events and have demonstrated our commitment by allocating substantial sponsorship money for their events, but so far with limited success.

These events are now being restricted to 'proper' newcomers who will not have to play against those who do not collect points, but have been playing for more than 5 years. This has happened in the past and has put off some from entering. They must have a level playing field! There is no reason why we should not continue the idea of parallel events at our proposed County Pairs/Teams nights, which would provide further opportunities for them.

The larger Clubs have successful teaching and improvers groups, which are a credit to those who give time to them, but those of their members who are interested need to be encouraged to move on into Clubs and competition. Unfortunately our present Newcomer Development Officer cannot continue and we need someone involved within that area to step forward for next season.

4. County Home - This has, in fact, been 'on the agenda' for many years. Many Counties have a central location of their own, or a shared location, and we feel it adds to members' interest in events held there. The opportunity for this now exists for Warwickshire at WMBC, primarily on Wednesdays. It is geographically well situated and many of our Clubs are within a 10 mile radius.

Our initial thoughts are for 2 Weds per month - the 1st allocated to WPL and the 2nd to Pairs/Teams on a regular basis. This is not set in stone. Part of the premises at WMBC may be available to us on other nights. These are matters which remain to be discussed.

In Conclusion - There has been a great deal of speculation about what we intend to propose today, and, whilst this is no bad thing, we hope it is clear that we are looking for a comprehensive plan for County Bridge in the long term, and that this discussion paper will enable all concerned to assist the Council to reach a decision on the right way forward.

We are willing to meet personally with any Club to discuss their concerns between now and the next Council meeting on 16 April, by which time we hope decisions on the right way forward can take place.

The following points were raised:

- Wednesday evening at Moseley would be severely affected by two County nights a month; one could be acceptable.
- Daytime bridge seems to be more popular than evening bridge.
- Start time needs to be considered as people travelling from across Birmingham might have difficulty getting to WM on time.
- Suggested surveying WPL players to consider impact on moving.
- Concern expressed as to the revenue existing host clubs will lose.
- Possibility of various clubs hosting events.
- Warwickshire Introductory Pairs – Qualifier

Members were asked to indicate their support for the above strategy by a show of hands. A substantial majority of those present supported the strategy. The Executive will circulate specific proposals prior to the next meeting on 16 April. These proposals would be considered and action points agreed for implementation in September 2008.

5. Treasurer's Report – Leslie Reece

Having projected a loss of about £300 this financial year, I am pleased to say we are now looking at the potential of a small profit. Some of this is due to a major reduction in the number of teams we are sending to represent the county in other county invitation events.

Direct Debit forms are being received by members. Many ways of paying: via clubs; via EBU; via Warwickshire. From an administrative point our preferred option is paying the EBU directly.

Question of payment of club fees was raised in view of our membership secretary being ill. Clubs were asked to forward their payments to Leslie or Darren for the time being.

6. League Secretary's Report – Jon Downing

All three divisions and the knockout are going along reasonably well, with only minor hiccups along the way. Behind schedule in Division 1 are the Oldbury and Robbins teams, while in Division 2, Wernick, Harborne and Silhill should have played more matches by now. In Division 3, a Shirley team member has passed away and as yet they have not played a match since.

Whilst the University students are not proving very successful in the league, they should be congratulated on taking the Oldbury team all the way in their Handicap Cup match, finally losing by only six IMPs. One second round knockout match is still unplayed (due to holidays on both sides) but is arranged, and none of the third round matches (due to be completed by the end of the week) have as yet taken place.

It was noted that Birmingham University were facing most of their players leaving at the end of this term. Anyone able to assist at the fresher week would be appreciated – volunteers to Ann Bailey please. Dates TBC.

I would like to stress to all team captains the importance of playing your matches on time.

7. Tournament Secretary's Report – Pip Whitehouse

Garden Cities Qualifier (021207) – 4 teams competed (2 Coventry, 1 Moseley & 1 West Midlands). Winners: Coventry A. Concern was expressed over the organisation of the event.

GolfPrint (150108) – 5 teams competed – Winners: Moorhall.

Warwickshire Pairs (030208) – 31 Pairs competed – Winners: Sue Goldman & Julian Wernick, 2nd: Adrian Knight & Leslie Reece, 3rd: Tony Poole & John Robbins, 4th: Liz Fenwick & Barbara Wren. These pairs would be invited to represent Warwickshire at the Corwen. Entry fees would be sponsored by Warwickshire at a rate of: 1st = 100%, 2nd = 75%, 3rd = 50% & 4th = 25%. Concern was expressed about the choice of movement for the qualifying round. Should the aim be to play as many pairs as possible or to play as many of the boards as possible. It was agreed that playing as many boards as possible should be our aim. TDs to be notified of this.

Warwickshire Introductory Pairs (030208) – 9 pairs competed. Winners: John Nightingale & Bryan Milner. It was noted that the format for this event may not have been the best. It was agreed that a qualifying round held at clubs would likely produce more interest for a final. Agreed to reformat this event for next year.

Goodman Cup – 4 teams entered!

Charity Simultaneous Pairs (14-19 April) – 7 Clubs have agreed to hold heats (9 last year). It was noted that a drop in heats was not necessarily a negative one – people belong to many clubs and can find it difficult to avoid playing in the event twice if they're not careful! It was suggested that running a daytime heat might prove a success – Clubs with daytime sessions are asked to consider this. The question was raised as to the restriction on movements for this event: A movement list will be sent out with club packs and the movements listed are available from the Website. The movements listed are standard ones certainly found in ScoreBridge. Any concerns please contact Darren or David.

Council expressed a vote of thanks to David Jones and Lawrence Gaunt for their work in the organisation and running of this event.

8. Match/Selection Committee Report – John Robbins

John indicated that the County section in the EBU magazine is for us to report happenings both at county level and in clubs. Please provide John with the information and he will publish it – space permitting!

Oxfordshire Match Results – Dawes won 12-8, Porter lost 0-20, Markham lost 5-15

Leistershire Match Results - Dawes won 20-0, Porter won 15-5, Markham won 19-1. It was noted that many of our usual pairs for the Dawes and Porter were unavailable.

The last match of the season against Gloucestershire is on 6th April. Gloucestershire are favourites to take the Dawes leading with 110VPs compared with Warwickshire 94 and Derbyshire 82. Next season begins 18 May at WMBC against Derbyshire. Latest performance figures are:

- Dawes – Played 7/8, Won 5, Lost 2, Total 94VPs Current Rank: 2
- Porter – Played 7/8, Won 5, Lost 2, Total 94VPs Current Rank: 2
- Markham – Played 7/8, Won 3, Lost 4, Total 77VPs Current Rank: 5

Full League tables are available through the Links menu on the Warwickshire Website.

A letter was received from Dodo Georgevic resigning from the Selection Committee. Appreciation was expressed for her work on the committee over many years.

It was confirmed that the primary aim of County Team Selection was to field the strongest teams. The question was raised about the ethos of the third team. It was noted that this was raised a while ago with the League Secretary and no decision was forthcoming.

9. EBU Strategy Update – Colin Lang

It has been a quiet period, but will not remain so! During April (or sooner), EBU intend to submit revised proposals with a view to a lower P2P fee. This is to be based on further information requested from Clubs at end of last year.

The new proposals are also to include an EBU business plan, and/or similar financial information intended to satisfy the many reservations expressed on this aspect of the proposals. On 4 June there will be a Shareholders meeting, at which it is intended that a final vote will be taken. This leaves an extremely short period for considering and responding to the above material.

If any Club or member wishes to comment on it, or is persuaded to change their stance as recorded last year, please communicate this to John Pyner, Leslie Reece or myself in good time. In response to Jon Downing it was noted that our AGM will provide the opportunity of a meeting shortly before 4 June.

One of the club services offered by the EBU as part of their strategy proposals is an electronic newsletter. The first issue of 'Club Focus' should have been circulated to Club Secretaries recently, to be made available to club members. Any feedback (good, bad, or indifferent) would be welcome for inclusion in any discussion of this initiative at future EBU meetings.

10. Secretary's Report – Darren Evetts

• Correspondence:

- A letter from Barry Holloway was received resigning from the Council. Our thanks and appreciations were expressed for his service on behalf of the membership.
- Myra Scott has indicated that she is no longer able to continue as Newcomers Development Officer. We thank her for her work on Newcomers Development.

- **Midland Counties Event** - Six counties (Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire & Shropshire, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire & Herefordshire), a suggested name for this group is the Midland Circle, are in agreement to take part in the following two events. Five of the six counties (not Gloucestershire) have stopped holding their own invitation teams event.

MULTIPLE TEAMS

- The Midland Teams Challenge Bowl (Donated by Warwickshire) on Sunday June 8th (2pm) at Tarrington (between Ledbury & Hereford)
- Herefordshire (this year and then each County in turn) will Host the event and will set the cost of the event (to include Prize money) and will make arrangements for catering as they choose.
- Each of the six counties is to supply two teams (of 4). Other counties will also be invited to send a team, and Hereford as the Host County may invite teams from their own clubs.
- Herefordshire (or the host County) will provide an entry form with all details nearer the time and I will circulate to all counties.

CHAMPIONSHIP PAIRS

- The Midland Pairs Challenge Bowl (Donated by Warwickshire) on Sunday 21st September (2pm).

- Staffordshire & Shropshire (or the host County) will host the event and will set the cost of the event (to include Prize money) and will make arrangements for catering as they choose.
- Each of the six counties to provide 4 pairs. Other counties will not be invited as this is a fixed format event.
- In addition to the team trophy there will be an individual trophy (The Foster Cup) for the top pair.

It was noted that Susan Sharpe of Worcestershire has worked hard to put together these events and we appreciate her work.

- **Calendar Updates**

- Midland Counties Pairs – 21 September 2008 @ Hereford
- Midland Counties Teams – 8 June 2008 @ Staffordshire

- **Website:** Hits since May 2005 are 29535 (3141 since last meeting)

Warwickshire Pairs League – The WPL Sub-Committee have made the following amendments/additions to the rules for the February 2008 Series:

1. Including substitutes, the number of qualifying sessions for promotion and prizes will be increased from 3 to 4.
2. **Time Regulations:**
 - a. **14 Board Matches** – No board may be started after 1hr 30m has lapsed in each match.
 - b. **12 Board Matches** – No board may be started after 1hr 20m has lapsed in each match.
 - c. Any boards not played will be scored according to EBU regulations (-2imps per board for both sides – assumes both sides at fault etc). Players concerned that his or her opponents are likely to cause a time problem should inform the TD immediately.

Please note that Emails **MUST** be sent 24 hours in advance and acknowledged – no acknowledgment may result in OVPs. See Appendix IV for contact information.

***** The format of the competition may change for September 2008 it is therefore likely that more relegations will be made to allow division structure to be reorganised. *****

11. AOB

- Green Point Event – It was asked whether West Midlands could include the Warwickshire Green Point event in its Congress for 2009. It was noted that WCBA can't move this date and having the WMBC congress on the May weekend might cause it to clash with Green Point Events on the Saturday. Further investigation is needed.
- Trophies – The question of County trophies was raised. It was noted that the Flitch Trophy has not been seen for some years. Darren said that he'd tried locating trophies some years ago and this had not been located. Darren proposed presenting trophies only for some competitions as there is often difficulty in presenting them at some events.
- Council Minutes – Clubs were asked to make copies of the minutes available to their members. Minutes are also published on the Admin section of the Website.
- It was noted that at a recent event the TD was unable to locate a Psyche (or Appeal) form. TDs were asked to ensure that these forms were available. Completed forms should be sent to the Secretary or Tournament Secretary.

12. Date of next Council Meeting – Wednesday 16 April 2008 @ 7.00pm – West Midlands Bridge Club. Coffee available upon arrival.

D Evetts
February 2008