

REPORTS FOR OBA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 11 MARCH 2015

CHAIRMAN

You should find among the other reports to this meeting plenty of evidence of progress – Sunday afternoon sessions for juniors in Oxford, the formation of new clubs in Yarnton and Kings Sutton, the performances of the county team, and the plans for two further café bridge events in Henley and Abingdon to name but a few.

Later in this meeting we plan to talk again about the potential for achieving the county's objectives by the action of volunteers and the offering of grants. Before we commence that discussion I think we should confirm that our objectives remain broadly appropriate. I invite you to familiarise yourselves with the county's detailed objectives before the meeting. These are set out at <http://www.oxfordshirebridge.co.uk/joomla/index.php/development-index>.

If you click on each of the green sub-headings you can find the detailed objectives we agreed for each of our management teams.

As chairman of the association I am a member of the Midlands Counties Working Group and I am also one of their two representatives on the National Counties Working Group. The former reviewed the Midlands inter-counties league with the assistance of the league secretaries (in our case John Slater stood in – thank you John) and will be publishing rules covering incorporating a number of changes shortly. The latter set up a small working group to consider how to encourage more people to volunteer for county roles. One of the ideas proposed was a “volunteer – get – a – volunteer” scheme, whereby existing volunteers help the chairman to find new ones. This seemed such a good idea to me that I volunteered to create a draft letter from a county chairman to existing volunteers. Whilst this is now on its way back to the group for consideration I would be grateful for your thoughts and so have copied it below. Perhaps you would agree to be guinea-pigs in a trial run – we certainly have some significant roles to fill when Stephen Brown and Sandra Nicholson step down this June.

The Treasurer's graph of income from county nights confirms that after the recovery in numbers last May through to at least July attendance has since been declining. John Slater has again come to my assistance by agreeing to chair a small working party to consider what can or should be done. The terms of reference I have agreed with him are also included at the end of this report.

Finally as always I would like to thank everyone who has worked hard for the county, both those who keep things going and those who move us forward into new areas. It is clear that where there is enthusiasm much can be achieved. To those who comment on things that don't go so well, we should say: “join the team and show us what you can do”.

Robert Procter, February 2015

Volunteer-get-a-volunteer-scheme: Proposed outline letter to existing volunteers

Dear,

I would like to enlist your help in finding volunteers to help to further duplicate bridge in our county. All I ask of you is that you introduce me to someone you know who might be able to assist and who you believe would enjoy doing so.

Before the advent of “Universal Membership” and “Pay To Play” the county's administration concentrated on running county events for competitively-minded players and selecting county representative teams. Officer posts, mostly set up to achieve just these objectives, remain largely filled by those who play for the county or in county competitions. This is something we need to change. We and the EBU now have a wider membership to serve. Amongst other things we aim to encourage newcomers into the game, to meet the needs of the social player and to provide opportunities for players at all levels to develop their skills. Our county's objectives, built around the feedback from a survey four years ago, are set out in the attached paper. The EBU too is looking at what more value can be provided for those who don't play outside their local club competitions. It would clearly help if some of the input at county level came from newcomers and social players.

I am looking for anyone who might be prepared to contribute, whether by filling a vacant officer post sometime in the future or by merely contributing to the achievement of one of our objectives.

Whilst our different officer posts require people with different skills, bridge ability is rarely relevant. The attached schedule sets out some relevant skills we look for in filling the main officer roles.

Outside the executive officer roles I am seeking people with enthusiasm for the game who wish to contribute to achieving any of our detailed objectives either within their local club, in their region or throughout the county. As with the officer posts they do not need to participate in county-level competitions and to achieve some of our objectives it would be a positive advantage if they don't do so as they will have a better understanding of what our "social" players are looking for. The sorts of activity I have in mind are things like promoting bridge in the community, establishing good relationships with unaffiliated clubs, helping beginners overcome their fear of the formality of duplicate bridge, encouraging players to explore bridge outside the confines of their local club and publicising our activities.

In summary my challenge to you is **"Please find me one other person who might be willing to give some time to some task within the county and invite them to meet me to talk about it"**.

Terms of reference for a chairman's working group on county night

Over a period of time numbers at county night had been falling. Accordingly in early 2014 OBA asked Diana Nettleton (DN) to consult and to propose modifications to the programme. There was an especial fall on 4th Tuesdays. This review was completed and the results accepted for a start in May 2014. The new programme was brought in and numbers seemed to increase.

In July 2014 the OBA Management Committee decided that the new arrangements for fourth Tuesdays were not satisfactory and should be discontinued from October. Then a modified programme was devised to cover the period to April 2015. First signs are that this has not been a total success in so far as getting numbers up and especially in attracting the county squad members to play (an aim of the original changes).

Accordingly the chairman has invited a small working group, chaired by John Slater, to consider what to do from May 2015 and the report proposals to be put to the Competitions Team.

The review should be wide ranging. It should articulate a clear purpose for county nights and what, if anything, distinguishes them from normal club nights so as to justify special treatment from the EBU for both P2P money and double points.

It should place some emphasis on the views of those of high standing nationally and/or involved in playing for the county whose views it should actively seek.

It should place emphasis on competitions wherein better players play directly against one another. This could include Swiss style events or stratified leagues.

It should consider whether every Tuesday night in Oxford should be designated as a county night. It should also consider whether some designated county nights might take place at other clubs and what conditions were required to ensure that the award of county night status to the event was appropriate. Examples might include a Swiss format or multiple teams that attract county players. Openness at least within Oxfordshire would be essential.

It should address any governance issues arising from its proposals.

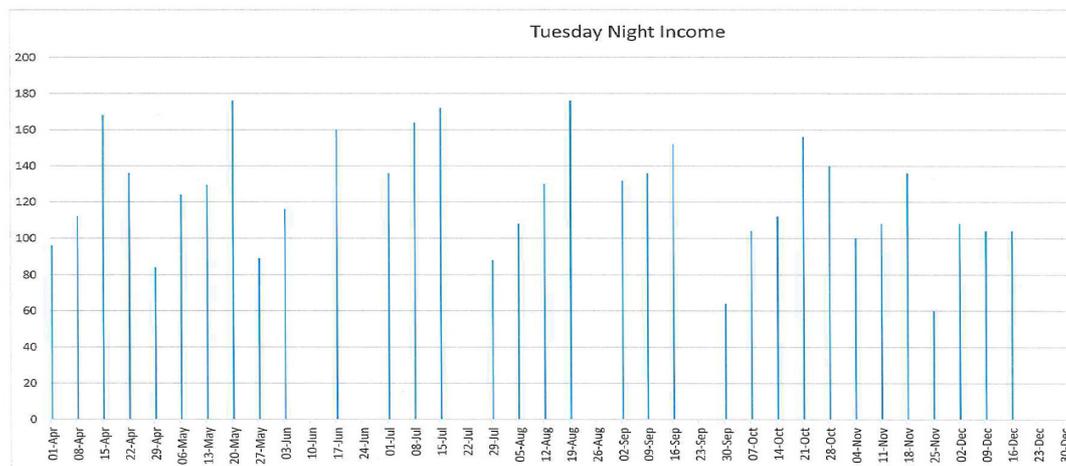
It should formally consult with DN to understand the proposals and how they addressed the problems identified. Through appropriate consultation it should understand and take into account the reasons why members of the OBA management committee voted to reverse the arrangements made by DN with the Menagerie for fourth Tuesdays. It should also consult the players on those fourth Tuesdays who broadly supported her arrangements. It should consult with the county captain and its chair of selectors about the needs of the county.

It should report to the chairman by mid-March 2015, with the intention of giving time for the Competitions Team to incorporate any recommended changes into the county night programme from May 2015.

It will conduct as much as possible of its business by email.

Membership: R Dixon, C Jones, P Litchfield, M-A Sheehy, J Slater (All have agreed to serve).

TREASURER



With just over a month to go Income streams year on year are looking fairly stable. However as you can see from the above chart, Tuesday Night income is falling and we are unlikely to attain the same levels for 2015/16 if things remain as they are.

There is currently just over £12k in the current account and £28k in the deposit account. Barclays have finally responded and have requested an additional form which is awaiting the former treasurer's signature so hopefully this issue will be resolved by the AGM.

My forecast for the year end is that our surplus will be considerably reduced due to increased spending on Junior Bridge, Education and the grant of £518 to the new bridge club in Yarnton. These costs have added £1,300 to our expenditure for the year. We should still make a surplus for the year.

Claire MacDonagh, February 2015

SECRETARY

In November 2014, we were informed that the EBU had accepted applications for affiliated club status from two newly formed clubs, Central Yarnton Bridge Club and North Oxfordshire Bridge Club. I would like to ask the Committee to confirm, for the record, that both clubs are also affiliated to OBA, and to welcome them to the Association.

Club secretaries have been contacted to request any nominations for the OBA Distinguished Service Award in 2015. So far no submissions have been received. The deadline is 31 March.

A note containing information designed to be helpful to new Management Committee members has now been prepared and is being circulated to all current members, and secretaries of affiliated clubs, together with the Agenda for this meeting.

Sandra Nicholson, February 2015

EBU SHAREHOLDERS

The EBU AGM held on 26 November was relatively uneventful. The finances of the organisation remain reasonably healthy and the proposed rise from 1 April 2015 of 1p in the EBU P2P amount (from 35p to 36p)

was accepted with minimal opposition. It was reported that: the redesign of English Bridge had been well received and would bring substantial cost savings; an online version of the EBU shop had been successfully set up at minimal cost; and the new education charity EBED was making progress in several areas, including development of a quicker way to learn bridge, and a research study into the beneficial value of bridge, both mental and social inclusion. The EBU continues to investigate ways of persuading the Government to recognise bridge as a sport, which would bring various advantages. And last but not least, Nick Smith has been reappointed to the national Selection Committee for a further two years.

Sandra Nicholson, February 2015

COMPETITIONS AND COUNTY NIGHTS

The Competitions team met on 9 Dec 2014. A copy of the notes from this meeting is given below as our report.

Stephen Brown, February 2015

<p>1. Agree the aims, composition, ethos and working methods of the group. (10 mins)</p> <p>Review all competition, agree changes to rules/by-laws. See the bylaws on the website: http://www.oxfordshirebridge.co.uk/joomla/index.php/competition-byelaws/19-play-duplicate-bridge/67-competitions-sub-committee</p> <p>We aim to meet face to face twice yearly. Meet to decide calendar around April, write report to AGM and to review around October. We should support group decisions and be respectful of others views. The person leading a particular competition should have major view in any decision making process, taking advice of other experienced members.</p>	
<p>2. Review Competitions currently run by the County and identify any changes required. (15 mins)</p> <p>a) County Pairs - 98 entries, 46 qualifiers. 10 clubs competed ranging from 2 entries at Aylesbury to 15/16 at Summertown, Oxford & Bicester. Semis at Wallingford & Oxford.</p> <p>b) Wessex League – Hugh to canvas captains of teams to poll opinions of having continuous VP scale / discrete scale. See later for other points. For info: Hugh away for most of February. Rulings. Ruling to go via Rob Dixon, Stephen to rule as usual.</p> <p>c) Presidents and Chester, although Sandra away for a month, the plan is for the website to be updated on her return. Is this agreed. Also canvas opinion of VP scale at end of competition.</p> <p>d) Tuesday nights: Attendance has been disappointing since Menagerie has be unable to run 4th Tuesday. We are suffering from shortage of scorers and TDs. Competitions were reviewed in September. Review again early April.</p> <p>e) Sunday events – good entry for Blue pointed Swiss Pairs. Problems with OBC microphone not working, computer sounding dreadful and not linking well with BridgeMates. 2 pairs failed to show. Continue to advertise and have as many Blue Pointed events as possible. Propose having a OBA scoring laptop to use at any venue. Install Jeff Smith software and purchase ScoreBridge if someone wants to score. Negotiate suitable reduction in rent! Remaining competitions are Mixed pairs, county pairs and Swiss Teams. Leave more social bridge events or events for lesser players to others at this time and focus on core membership.</p>	<p>Chris to invite director from Wallingford. Stephen to direct Oxford. Deadline 7th Jan 2015</p> <p>Hugh to poll captains in March 2015 and let them know to contact Rob for rulings in Feb.</p> <p>Sandra to canvas opinion in March and report to next meeting</p> <p>All to look for potential scorers. Request on website.</p> <p>SB to request cost of laptop from treasurer.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Listing committee members taking lead responsibility for</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Senior Pairs – Geoff Nicholas</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pro-Am -</p>	<p>Hugh to provide list</p>
<p>3. Discuss action points arising from Management Committee Meeting held 17/11/14:-</p> <p>(i) Formally agree Wessex League Rules: Formally agreed. Attached to these minutes. There are some conflicts of rules e.g. defaulting teams. Late arrival or agreeing matches. By-laws should concentrate on overlying principles and rules apply to each competition. All to be displayed on website. All rule changes to be decided / approved by this committee and check with constitution whether management committee rubber stamp.</p> <p>(ii) Discuss subs. for dual affiliated members (as in Glos and Berks&Bucks). Agreed we require no subs from players whose primary county if another.</p> <p>(iii) If affiliated clubs want to send people on <u>TD training</u>, the EBU have a "bogof" scheme: We will now be sponsoring the paid place, so clubs can send 2 people with no cost. Applications to be made via the Competitions team if support with funding is required. Agreed. We know of no one at moment.</p> <p>(iv) We would also like to offer <u>scorer training to local clubs</u>, either for Scorebridge or perhaps in future more for the free Jeff Smith software. The Competitions team were asked to consider this and see if they felt someone could be nominated as the OBA "scoring guru" who would be willing to carry out training in future for both County and club scorers. Rob Dixon willing to offer training for Jeff Smith's program.</p> <p>(v) <u>Definition of "friendly" bridge events</u>: Needs review – how to describe, who is entitled to play, what events are we going to try out on a restricted basis. Include in next review of bylaws. Leave this to social committee. We do not have time to support this at present. We request recommendation to review at next meeting for this group to formally ratify.</p> <p>(vi) <u>County Night and Competitions</u>: Restricted/regionalised events: hold further events along the lines of the recent Blewbury social teams of 4, in other parts of the county. Again need to concentrate on core competitions.</p> <p>(vii) <u>Competitions brochure</u>: Should this be on the website? If so, arrange for electronic notifications to go out, as agreed at previous meeting. We have all competitions on website. Print off current pages for competitions and make into a pdf for players with no computer access and print off for them.</p> <p>(viii) <u>Congress</u>: Need to think about how to undertake tasks previously performed by Martin Lee.</p> <p>Another committee looking at this consisting of Peter Finbow, Diana Nettleton and Claire MacDonagh.. Pauline rejoining team, Rob to direct pairs, Chris to direct teams. Stephen to invite Ian Mitchell if another needed.</p>	<p>Hugh to identify competitions, This group to decide leaders, Then ask leader to confirm rules as in bylaws or provide complete set. Look at these and identify conflicts and action this agreement</p> <p>Club training to be offered for new clubs or small clubs needing financial support. Secretary to send info to other clubs.</p> <p>Stephen To confirm staffing</p>

<p>4. Discuss University Wessex League problems</p> <p>Problems with University finding transport for away matches and cancelling at short notice. Senior member for support is Denis Talbot. In first instance Hugh to contact Denis and discuss. We considered all Univ matches to be home leaving 4 away, 3 home for other teams but had reservations.</p>	
<p>5. Changes to the bylaws (Kathy will circulate before the meeting)</p> <p>Blue pointed Swiss Pairs & Teams These were not circulated</p>	<p>Kathy to do this by end of December</p>
<p>6. Get more scorers on board</p> <p>We are all thinking of ideas. Rob Dixon to do training on Jeff Smith's program. Encourage less experienced to score when an experienced scorer is there.</p>	<p>Stephen to put info on home page of website. Secretary to send request to clubs with next meeting info</p>
<p>7. Booking venues at OBC or elsewhere for 2015-2016</p> <p>a) Clashes – decide which member liaises with OBC for Sunday evenings, Dawes league (Ian Angus) b) Problems with microphone at OBC Ditto c) Problems with OBC computer Ditto</p> <p>Suggesting Claire</p>	
<p>8. The future with Stephen moving to Kent</p> <p>Rob is happy to accept role of chief TD whilst he remains in Oxford area. He could leave in summer 2016. Consider Ian Mitchell and good at scoring. Perhaps sharing role with Rob & Ian. Stephen is willing to continue updating website, but find successor to work together next year.</p>	<p>Stephen to speak to Rob and if agreed, then Ian Mitchell</p>

WESSEX LEAGUE

- A. Matches have, in the main, been proceeding to plan with comparatively few major issues to deal with-----however, please see point E below.
- B. At the time of writing leaders of the 5 Divisions are:-
Division 1 Menagerie A
Division 2 Menagerie B
Division 3 Thame A
Division 4 Wantage B
Division 5 Oxford F
- C. Whilst problems have been few there have been issues regarding the ability of the University Team to travel to away matches. The Competitions sub-Committee has discussed various methods by which the County could possibly assist. My recommendation is that the County should be prepared to assist the University with financial assistance towards transport costs up to a maximum of £200 per year subject to the provision of evidenced invoices by the University.
- D. All Team Captains have been asked whether they prefer the “ Continuous” scoring methodology used this year or the “ Discrete” method used previously.
- E. Having been responsible for the administration of the Wessex League for the last 2 years there is one issue which I find exceptionally tiresome. Namely, the persistent failure of a few serial offending captains to update player details for matches on a timely basis. This involves needless and time-consuming chase up activity on my part. I think that more effective sanctions are required in this area.
- F. Finally, many thanks to Rob Dixon for watching the shop while I was away on holiday in New Zealand during February.

Hugh Thomson, March 2015

MEMBERSHIP

Date of download	Pay to Play	(of whom are Juniors)	Direct	(of whom are Juniors)	Dual	Teachers	Bridge for All	Anonymous	Total
28th June 2014	1330	16	97	73	0	28	39	7	1501
31st July 2014	1341	14	94	71	0	24	34	7	1500
1st September 2014	1327	15	94	71	9	24	33	7	1494
2nd October 2014	1342	15	94	72	9	25	33	7	1510
7th November 2014	1345	17	95	72	10	24	33	7	1514
19th December 2014	1320	14	96	73	10	24	55	7	1512
12th January 2015	1314	14	96	73	10	24	55	7	1506

There is not much to say.

Above is a table showing how the membership of the County Association has changed monthly since I took on the role of Membership Secretary. Not changed much !!

I have checked the entries to the County Pairs and found a few anomalies. I have checked the entries to the Presidents Cup – all OK.

At the risk of urging our club colleagues to do what they already are trying to do

- A) Please try to get an E-Mail address for new members
- B) Use EBU numbers to identify members as well as names – it helps with mis-spelling and change of name

Lastly, a person's primary county of allegiance is the one that the EBU thinks it has. To change it, tell the EBU.

Peter Briggs, February 2015

EDUCATION

Northern Towns Project (at Kings Sutton)

1. A 6 session 4 table Improvers Class has just finished.
2. This may be about to turn into a day game.
3. There is a Beginners Class in the Autumn.
4. There is also the first session of County's Advancers mentoring project starting in March (topic: 'Bidding 4441 Hands').

Step Up Bridge

1. An experimental N.G.S. banded (45% - 50%) Class planned to be held at Oxford BC last year was deferred pending OBC's approval which has now been given. However they have expressed their intention to provide teaching at this level internally in future and it may be more appropriate to consider running such an experimental course elsewhere. JP would be interested to learn of any other county or club that organises courses relevant to differing NGS grades. JP has met with Simon Barb at the EBU who is looking at the idea of developing a Structured Teaching Programme.

2. Generally we perceive a need for a County-organised education programme to supplement the teaching available through individual teachers and Clubs particularly for improvers and more advanced players. To establish what the gaps are around the county it would be helpful if all clubs that have not already done so could advise us in writing of their education strategy.

We are actively seeking help from strong players in providing teaching and/or mentoring for more advanced players. We plan to hold a small meeting to discuss what the content of such teaching should be. If anyone would like to participate in this please tell us? Cathy Rowland has indicated to RP her willingness to take a role in this.

Work on developing the education pages on the website has been delayed due to an access problem, now resolved. It is intended to publish a number of book reviews on the website. The purpose of these is to help people who want to improve their bridge to recognise what books might be helpful to their particular need. Our thanks to Ashley Cooper, Peter Briggs and Cathy Rowland for contributions. Please contact us if you would be willing to help in this regard.

Bridge Teaching Conference

This will be held on 4th July 2015 Wallingford and will be free to Oxfordshire Bridge Teachers.

Some General Thoughts and Questions

As you may have seen from the website, we believe players need to understand where they are at in their own game. Why do they play? How good are they? Are they improving? How do they judge that? Is it a matter of playing with the right partner? Do they want to improve?

Can the county help them to answer these type of questions? Should the county be doing anything to motivate players to improve?

If we could answer these questions would we be able to increase the county's chances of success at inter-county level?

Do we need more or different competitions to encourage players at intermediate levels?

Answers to JP on a postcard please!

Jonathan Price & Robert Procter, February 2015

DUPLICATE BRIDGE PROMOTION AND YOUTH

Junior Bridge Clubs

Both the Junior Bridge Clubs (Oxford & Roke) are continuing to operate on Sundays in term time. Please refer to our bridge4schools web site for up to date information.

Loughborough Junior Challenge

The OBA has at least 10 children participating at Loughborough.

The 3rd Annual Junior Congress

An open junior event is planned for March 22nd at Wallingford Bridge Club. Please pick up a flyer, or refer to our website.

Financial Support

Financial support has been provided to both the Central Yarnton Bridge Club, and Kings Sutton Bridge Club.

Unaffiliated Clubs

There has been some feedback re unaffiliated clubs operating in the OBA area. A volunteer is being sought to plan and communicate what support the OBA might provide.

Mike Fletcher, February 2015