

♣♦ BOOKHAM AFTERNOON BRIDGE CLUB ♥♠

Draft Minutes of 52nd AGM held on 17 October 2022 at Old Barn Hall, Bookham

1. Welcome from Chairman: Neil Higgins welcomed 55 members to the AGM.
2. Apologies received: 43 members sent in apologies. Kate Castree requested email or paper submission of apologies to aid her making an accurate record.
3. 51st AGM minutes: These were previously circulated to members. No questions arose. Acceptance proposed by Pauline Zeronian, seconded by Angela Reid. Unanimous vote in favour of acceptance. Neil signed.
4. Matters Arising: None.
5. Chairman's Report: (Neil) I ended my report at the last AGM thanking those of you who had returned to playing face to face bridge and I expressed a hope that this would slowly encourage others to make they own return. I will now start this report by repeating this thanks to all of you who have come back to playing face to face bridge and to those who have encouraged others to return and, in several cases, to bring new visitors along.

In March we decided to stop our Monday online bridge sessions and to restart face to face for both our weekly sessions albeit with protocols in place to protect us all. Table numbers understandably were initially low but have gradually improved as we all learnt to live with Covid. I am delighted that we are now regularly on Thursdays needing to run two sections. Monday table numbers are still running just below the 15.5 required for two sections but, fingers crossed, we may get there soon.

You will soon be hearing from Kate, our membership secretary, who will provide more details, but as we had anticipated, there were more than 40 members from 2019 who did not renew their membership last year. We have continued to attract new members so that we currently have just under 190 although we do anticipate maybe around another 30 or so, who have not yet returned to playing face to face or have only played once, not renewing this November. This would still mean that we still have a flourishing club with around 160 members which compares extremely well with most other bridge clubs, some of whom have had to close completely through lack of numbers.

So, I thank you once again by coming back and ensuring the long term future of Bookham Afternoon Bridge Club.

Also, in March we had another memorable and enjoyable Masterclass session with Andrew Robson. I am sure that all of you who attended took away at least one worthwhile tip and I am delighted that he will be coming to us again in March 2024. The profit from this event together with an additional fund raising event in June meant that we raised over £1,600 for the Barn Hall and their village week fundraising. We are so lucky to have this hall and to have Roger and Rob who put out and clear away tables for us. But, more importantly this coming winter, it is a comfortable and warm environment to play bridge in. Yes, we do need to keep some ventilation to keep us safe, but we will also endeavour to keep the temperatures up - and, as I frequently mention, - 'Bring layers'.

Further fundraising Charity SIMS events once again supported both Children in Need and Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People plus raised funds for Ukraine

which meant that throughout the year we raised over £2,900 for all charitable causes. Once again, a fantastic achievement and one that our Club should be very proud of.

One big change during the year has been the move to collecting payments using the contactless card reader. I think that most members would agree that this has been a much simpler way to pay for table money and certainly has helped Sue tremendously with her accounting. We did have the hiatus following the assertion that we were running a den of iniquity involving gambling. I was delighted that, with help from the Gambling Commission and the Financial Conduct Authority that we succeeded, where the EBU had previously failed, to get the ban lifted. However, and more on this later during the Treasurer's report, Square has now thrown yet another challenge our way, for which we will be proposing a solution to our membership.

The fact that we have such a smoothly run club is thanks to so many of our members. Many of you take time at the start of a session to help set up or to help at the end putting away boards and everything else required during the afternoon. Thank you to you all who help.

We owe a big vote of thanks to Alice Harper and her teams of duplimators who ensure that we have pre dealt boards ready for every session. Alice took over this daunting role a year ago from Sandra and I know that this has given her a few sleepless nights worrying about the challenges she faced particularly the Charity SIMS events. Thank you, Alice.

Thank you also to Marilyn Clarke who has been leading and co-ordinating our team of essential directors and scorers. We are so fortunate to have so many members who are willing to help in this way but of course we should welcome more volunteers to join our team to lighten the workload of others. We can provide training for anyone who wishes to direct or score a session so, if you are interested, then please let Marilyn know.

A few months ago, we started using a new scoring system - this still interacted with our existing bridgemates so there were no costs associated with this. In fact, there has been a cost saving since this new system, which is offered by the EBU, is free. There have been a few hiccups along the way, and we are acting as one of the test clubs for the EBU trialling use of a new "Two Section" model.

We are so fortunate to have our own informative website which keeps us all updated with club news. This would not be possible without the time and contributions of both Ron Rutstein, who has led this for so many years, and now with the help of Miranda Moore. Thank you both and I urge everyone to regularly look at the site. I mentioned earlier that we anticipate our membership falling further. One side effect of this is that there are fewer members to draw upon to act as hosts. Last week we unusually were not able to provide a host, and this sadly meant that one member, who came along looking for a game, had to return home as there was no one left to pair her up with. So a plea from me, and I appreciate that some of you will only come along if your regular partner is coming so do not make use of the host system and also that many of you drive some distance or do not drive yourself, but do all consider putting your name forward to act as spare partner - if we all did this once then it would only come round again every 18 months! - The spare partner list is on the side table and there are plenty of slots for the rest of this year.

This now only leaves me to pass on my biggest vote of thanks and that is to your committee. We have been so lucky to have such a stable committee for some time now and they all work so hard setting up the sessions, collecting your table monies and clearing up afterwards. More importantly they have acted as a team supporting me, and at times controlling and challenging some of my wackier, I would say innovative, ideas and I am extremely grateful to them all. We shall be coming onto the election of officers later, but I should like to take this opportunity to personally thank four members who, having all served on the committee for five years or more, will not be standing again. So, Alice Harper, Carol Newton, Julie Kamieniecka and Steve Leach, on behalf of not only me but also from all Club members, thank you for your help and support whilst I have been Chairman.

Now a spoiler, just to keep you interested and awake throughout the rest of this meeting, under AOB we will be announcing the format of our Christmas Event being held, as you might anticipate, in December. We have not been able to hold this since 2019 but feel that now it is safe to reintroduce this so you will be the first to hear what we have planned.

I am sure that I will have failed to mention someone who I should have highlighted and thanked so if I have, I apologise - no slight was intended.

I shall finish by once again thanking you all for coming back to play in the Barn Hall and ensuring that Bookham Afternoon Bridge Club continues to flourish and finally to thank you all for maintaining the ethos of the club as "a club which continues to be somewhere people want to come because they can have a good game of bridge , played according to EBU rules in a friendly, non-threatening atmosphere."

6. Secretary's Report: (Kate) Since our last AGM we have received the sad news that three members have died: Mary Street, David Golder, and Audrey Randall.

Two very long standing members, Jean and Peter Higgins have moved to Dorset to be near family and there has been a number of other resignations. The passing years takes their toll and ill health has been the main factor in a number of cases.

However, it is most encouraging to report that in the past year 13 visitors have successfully pursued membership, taking our total to 189. There are 11 applicants completing further visits before they submit their formal application. Currently we have 22 vacancies and no waiting list.

Clearly, we are well down on our pre-pandemic membership of 211 which includes one honorary member, Jean Suckling. Following our last AGM, Neil made a huge effort to contact members who rarely attended. As a result, quite a number decided that it was time to reconsider whether they wished to retain their membership. So the current number of 189 is probably a more realistic reflection of our membership base, although there remain many members who have not returned since the pandemic.

Since reopening we have had a very encouraging number of visitors, some attending without partners. We are therefore very grateful to those members who have done duty as Spare partner, some several times. At this time of transition for our club we need new members to provide the seed corn for our continued existence. The Spare partner facility is a vital part of our club life.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks for the invaluable help and support which the committee has provided, especially to those who are stepping down after several

years' service. I wish them continued enjoyment as members of the Club, free of the duties which they have fulfilled so conscientiously.

7. Treasurer's Report: (Sue) On the accounts for the year 1.9.21 to 31.8.22

In the year from September 2021 we have moved from online bridge back to face to face, the first session being on Thursday 23rd September. On Monday 14th March we stopped playing online and resumed face to face on Mondays.

Our costs increased with the return to face to face as we had not paid any rent during the year of the pandemic. We now pay for the tea to be served at both sessions. We were lucky that Emma was available to join us again from March when we resumed Monday face to face. During the pandemic you may recall we were recipients of the government's furlough scheme and the last payment of this was received in September 2021.

When we returned to face to face we implemented various payment methods and finally we adopted contactless payments using the provider Square. My thanks to Richard Skeet for his help with Neil in establishing which provider to use and how to do it. A small fee is charged for using this, though more on this when I talk about the coming year.

We would like to thank members and visitors for embracing the contactless payment of table money, and a big thank you to the committee who have been at the sharp end when hiccups have been encountered with the system. Collecting table money this way has helped our admin considerably, especially with the closure of the high street branches making it increasingly difficult to deposit cash.

The number of people returning to play face to face has increased over the course of the year but has still not returned to the numbers we had pre-Covid. We had up to 27 tables in the February before the pandemic.

We have purchased a laptop for the duplimating of the cards.

Our accounts for the year show a loss of £571. Despite this loss we have the funds available to replace expensive equipment as necessary and will be carrying out the service of our duplimating machines to ensure they continue to function efficiently. Rising running costs together with the reduced membership and attendance mean that we need to raise subscriptions for 2021/22 to £15 and table money to £3 for members and £4 for visitors. Square will shortly change their charges and are to introduce a 25p/transaction cost, which means more of your money will go to Square and not into the club's coffers. We are therefore going to introduce a voucher system - members may buy a book of 10 vouchers for £27 which means each session will cost £2.70 and not £3 with less going to Square.

We held several charity events including the Andrew Robson day. All raised funds and we made payments totalling £2,929 to Children in Need, QEF, The Barn Hall and Ukraine. Thank you all for your generosity.

The accounts have been independently reviewed by Chris Pullan. Our thanks to him for doing this.

Following Sue's report, Neil reminded members that we are returning to the pre-pandemic level of subs and are reintroducing the Christmas party, which is free to members.

He advised that Horsham Bridge Club have successfully used the proposed system of vouchers - one to be torn off each week and handed in at the table.

Questions from the floor:

Method of payment of subs? - can be by cash, cheque, online or using Square.

Method of payment for vouchers? - online not permitted as it involves additional administration, neither is cash because of banking difficulty.

Could we switch provider of contactless service? - we have purchased the machine, the 25p/transaction is for all clients and it is likely other providers may follow with a similar charge. Square have reduced their % fees. If we do not pay for individual sessions we should not be worse off than before their price change.

Will we break even next year? - based on current membership and an average of 16 tables per session we should. The prepared budget is based on these assumptions.

Chris Pullan drew members' attention to the 15% rent rise from 1.1.23 and it was confirmed that such rises in running costs have been included in the club's budget.

Forgotten vouchers? - no allowance will be made - either a voucher must be handed in ( borrow one from a friend or partner) or £3 paid that day.

Trevor Gaskell stated that members should be mindful to help the committee in running the club and should, therefore, support the scheme.

Neil reiterated that from 1.11.22 the table money will be £3 for members, £4 for visitors and that members can buy 10 vouchers for £27.

Acceptance of 2021/22 Accounts was unanimous having been proposed by Jerry Broers and seconded by Trevor Gaskell.

Acceptance of the Chairman's, Secretary's and Treasurer's reports was unanimous having been proposed by Martin Kent and Brian Glicksman.

8. Election of Officers and Committee Members: Neil thanked the four outgoing committee members - Alice, Julie, Steve and Carol. A list of the proposed new committee of 10, including proposers and seconders, was previously made available to members. Nobody insisted in individual election. Acceptance of the new committee was unanimous having been proposed by Pauline Norman and Margaret Main. The new committee members of Jerry Broers, Adrian Filkins, Angela Duke and Jill Pattison were introduced.
9. Election of Hon. Examiner: Neil thanked Chris Pullan for his previous work. Unanimous acceptance of re-election having been proposed by Marilyn Clarke and Miranda Moore.

10. Resolutions/Proposals: None

11. AOB: Christmas Party

Neil explained that the committee had concluded that given the changed demographic in the club, the old format had become less popular and we have decided to refresh the event. It will be free to members with a maximum of 80 places. A partner is not needed. There will be 24 standard boards of duplicate bridge with Masterpoints being awarded as normal. We will play 12 boards before a 2 course hot lunch with drinks and tea/coffee after. A raffle will be held in aid of The Grange - all members to bring a prize they would like to win! £5 cash please or £5.25 if using contactless for tickets. 12 more boards in the afternoon. There will be some surprises too.

12. Presentation of Trophies:

These are all based on face to face results since our return which is for 70% of a year. The number of sessions was adjusted accordingly to qualify - 18/25 for individual and

14/20 for pairs.

Anniversary Plate to Steve Lock with 57.82%

Queen's Jubilee Cup to Alick Fraser and Steve Lock with 57.69% ( Neil noted that Steve was the top individual and pair player during online bridge so was pleased he won the face to face competition despite pipping at the last minute Neil and Lawrence Penney into 3rd place behind Betty Attwood and Sandra Cape).

Chairman's Cup (Handicap competition) - Jill Pattison and Bill Archer ( for the second year running).

Gordon Jenner Cup (best individual improvement comparing face to face result with pre-pandemic results) - Paul Mullarkey with in increase of 5.3%.

Paul proposed a vote of thanks for Neil for his hard work over the year.

Neil thanked the members for attending and the meeting closed at 11.50 and was followed by a duplicate bridge session in the afternoon.