

Briter Bridge Club 2

Annual General Meeting Tuesday 5th September 2023

At 6.30pm at Parklanglely Club

Agenda

- 1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Minutes and Matters Arising from AGM 2022**
- 3. Chairman's Report**
- 4. Financial Report, and Audited Accounts (please see separate document)**
Membership subscription and table money for 2023 - 2024
- 5. Technical Report**
- 6. Membership Report**
- 7. Election of Committee for 2023– 2024**
Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Technical Director, Membership Secretary
- 8. Consideration of issues relating to morning, afternoon and evening sessions**
Including points raised by members
- 9. Annual Meal**
- 10. Bridge Weekends**
- 11. Margaret Burrell Memorial Cup Competition**
- 12. Any Other Business**

Annual General Meeting Tuesday 27th September 2022

at 6.30pm at Parklangley Club

Draft Minutes

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

The meeting was attended by 25 members: Richard Ockenden, Irene Ockenden, Jenny Davis, Diana Letchford, Sheila Tutt, Andrea Hixson, Joan Evans, Angela Hughes, Pauline Boatwright, Susan Lee, Tris Barker, Walter Million, Margaret Styles, Nga Lim, Julia Booth-Brockbanks, Janis Fancett, Suzanne Foster, Sue Langley, Anthony Perkins, Jenny Salisbury, Tim Burrell, Ann Close, Colin Blount, Stuart Bell, Janet Bell.

Apologies were received from 12 members: Jan Titcombe, Luke Titcombe, Maggie McDowall, Kate Mitchell, Susan Hughes, Sheila Weymouth, Reidun Stockwell, Derek Chadwick, Duncan Bell, Pat Carter, Caroline Ashcroft, Pat Hunt

Minutes and Matters Arising from AGM 2021

The minutes were accepted as a true record. There were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

2. Chairman's Report

Tim presented his report, highlighting the challenges the club has faced since face to face play has resumed. We have not been covering our weekly costs with the average of 4 to 5 tables in the afternoon and 2 to 3 in the evening. Tim thanked Janet for her efforts to keep the evening sessions running by contacting regular members each week and arranging pairings, where appropriate. We need more members to ensure our long term sustainability. Tim and Colin have started running trial tuition sessions for beginners/improvers on Tuesday mornings at 11am, attracting about seven people per session and they are going well.

The committee considered the issue of refreshments in the room, at a recent meeting. Although Covid rules have now been relaxed and we could reinstate the teas/coffees and biscuits we used to have pre-pandemic, many members have not been enthusiastic about their resumption as it would need organisation and a rota of volunteers to make it happen. Also the bridge sessions run more efficiently without people getting up to fetch refreshments and congregating around the table. Drinks are available at reasonable prices at the bar, with free chilled water. Or members can bring their own. Tim proposed to the meeting that we continue without refreshments and this was agreed by the members. A vote of thanks was extended to Ann, who has been the chief organiser, buying the supplies, including bringing fresh milk each week, since the start of Briter Bridge Club 2 ten years ago, until Covid interrupted play.

Tim thanked his fellow committee members for all they have done over the past year to keep the club going.

3. Financial Report and Accounts.

Colin presented the accounts, audited and signed by Nigel Marshall. Nigel has now stepped down from the role. Stuart Bell has volunteered to take over and this was agreed by the meeting.

It is very clear that, since resuming face to face play, we have not been covering our costs with the current membership subscription and table money. Our balance a year ago was around £2800; it is now down to c £1450 and will continue to deplete unless attendance figures increase. The tuition sessions are bringing in some income (currently at £5 per person; we are charged an additional £8 for the room) and it is to be hoped that, in time, some of these students will progress to playing at our club sessions.

As Treasurer, Colin indicated that we should aim to return to a balance closer to £3000; we use technology and maintenance/repair costs need to be allowed for and possibly updating of our scoring system. (There are better systems than our Bridgemates, that are easier to use.). Also, we might expect further increases to our room rent, given the hikes in energy costs.

Colin proposed that membership subscriptions should increase to £10 per annum and that table money should increase by £1 to £4. A member suggested £5 and this was supported by others and agreed by a 'show of hands' majority. The visitors' rate would rise to £6.

4. Technical Report

Jan, our technical director was unable to attend owing to illness, but her report was very clear and the issues regarding our current technical systems were noted by the meeting. Tim highlighted the request for more volunteers to operate the dealing machine.

5. Membership Report

Ann reported that at the end of the 2021-2022 club year, we had 63 paid-up members. We need more members who attend regularly to ensure the sustainability of the club and Tim and Colin have already referred to the tuition sessions which it is hoped will increase attendance in the future.

6. Election of Committee for 2022– 2023

There have been no additional nominations and the current committee members have all indicated their willingness to continue. So the committee for 2022-2023 comprises

Chairman – Tim Burrell, Secretary – Janet Bell, Treasurer – Colin Blount, Technical Director – JanTitcombe, Membership Secretary – Ann Close

7. Consideration of issues regarding resumption of club sessions at Parklangley
Dealt with above.

8. Beginners tuition sessions

These have started on a trial basis since the beginning of September and are being run by Tim and Colin on Tuesday mornings from 11am to 1pm. An average of 7 people have turned up each time, so far. After half an hour of tuition on a particular topic, the students play some of the cards used on the previous Tuesday evening, with guidance and analysis

by Tim and Colin. Other members who would be willing to help at these sessions will be very much welcomed.

9. Annual Meal

About thirty members (and a few former members who are no longer able to attend bridge sessions) enjoyed a delicious lunch in June, with wine provided by the club.

It was agreed that next year we should hold an evening dinner in June (when it will still be reasonably light at the end of the meal).

10. Bridge Weekends

There have been two bridge weekends at The Ardington Hotel in Worthing since the last AGM. Both were very well organised by Susan Hughes and our thanks are due to her for all her hard work. Our first ever weekend took place over the first weekend in October 2021 with 26 players attending – we even had a surprise visit from Elvis and friends! The second event, in May this year, was arranged at relatively short notice, when the hotel offered us a very good deal; 24 players attended and we were treated to a wonderful Mozart aria by an elegantly dressed bass singer.

We are holding a provisional booking for a further bridge weekend in October 2023 at The Burlington Hotel in Folkestone (which is used regularly by Slams, another local club). Susan is again liaising with the hotel. The cost per person will be £235 per person (with no single supplements). We are looking for expressions of interest as soon as possible so that, if the event appears viable, we can pay the non-refundable £1000 deposit; individual deposits of £50 will then become payable by the end of 2022.

11. Margaret Burrell Memorial Cup Competition

Stuart Bell is the winner of the competition for 2021-2022 and Tim presented the Cup to him. The committee considers it to be appropriate to introduce a handicap system to enable a range of names to appear on the trophy over the years, with winners barred from entering the competition the following year. There is a system for doing this on the Bridgewebs site and Jan will provide further details.

12. Any Other Business

A vote of thanks was proposed to the committee and endorsed by the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

Janet Bell – Secretary
3rd October 2022

Chairman's Report September 2023

Establishment of the club

The club has now completed its eleventh year and we have slowly got back to a degree of normality following the difficult COVID period. As the Treasurer will report we have a reasonable balance helped by the establishment of our beginners and improvers sessions.

Use of the Bar

As I write this report a difficult situation has arisen with the Park Langley Club. They are saying that if you are not a member you cannot purchase alcohol at the bar from 1st September. For the last ten years the situation has been that as long as one member of BBC2 (and that's me) was a member then the rest could use the bar. I have written to the management protesting and offering some suggestions as to a way forward. By the time the AGM takes place I may have had chance to meet the management and I will be able to make further announcements at the AGM itself.

Beginners' sessions

These have proved very successful. During the year we have had three 14 week courses. Beginners then go on to take part in improver sessions where duplicate bridge is played under guidance. Thanks must go to Colin for running these sessions ably helped when necessary by Stuart. Several of our students who have been through this process now play in the afternoon or evening.

Table and Membership fees

Our last AGM agreed that table money should be £5 for members and £6 for non-members and an annual membership fee of £10. Colin will be proposing a way forward when he goes through the accounts with you.

Social event

Given that COVID restrictions are over we were able to hold our annual meal again this year. On the 29th June the Langley Club again provided us with an excellent dinner which was appreciated by all who attended. It was great to see some of our trainee members attending.

Competition

It was good that we were able to play again enough times to be able to award the cup again this year and I'm delighted to announce that Jane Hall and Julia Booth-Brockbanks were this year's joint winners. Congratulations to them. The committee decided to award it jointly as it was so close at the top.

Thanks

Finally I would like to offer thanks to all the Committee for the hard work they have done during the year; to Colin in keeping the accounts straight; to Jan for keeping us all informed by the web site and helping us with our technical problems; to Janet for her secretarial support and all the hard work she has put in to try to keep the evening sessions viable; and to Ann for maintaining our membership and attendance records for the year.

Treasurer Report: AGM 5th September 2023

Financial position to July 31st 2023

2022/23 accounts audited by Stuart Bell on August 16/17/18th 2023. Signed accounts are attached.

- Bank balance at August 1st 2022 £1,417.79
- Bank Balance at July 31st 2023 £5,357.12 (inc £800 Folkestone deposits)
- Need to reserve further £400 to cover possible Folkestone weekend extras
- Working balance approx £4,150

Background to Financial position

Revenues exceeded forecast due to:

- Higher than anticipated Afternoon attendance (Average 5.5 tables)
- Higher than anticipated Evening attendance (Average 2.5 tables)
- Success of the Morning Beginner sessions (Average 6 attendees)
- Success of the Morning Practice sessions (Average 8 attendees)
- Operating costs having remained stable

Proposals for 2023/24

It is expected that these levels of attendance will be maintaining through 2023/24 which will enable:

- Reduction in session Table Money and Visitor fees
- Incentive to attend multiple sessions (targeting Evening attendance)
- Capital investment in technology
- Capital investment in equipment e.g. drinks tables, bidding cards e etc.
- Retaining a reserve of approx £3000

Other information

- Stotesbury Room rental to rise (5%) to £105 per day from August 2023
- Average weekly income required to cover all operational cost is approx £145 AGM

Approvals requested

- Audited accounts
- New fee structure
- Technology investment

Colin Blount

Treasurer

18th August 2023

TECHNICAL REPORT 2022/2023

We need 4 types of software which all need to talk to each other and be as easy as possible to use.

1. Website software which enables:

- The Committee to display and share results, keep records of members and players, communicate with members and market the club to others
- members to communicate with each other

The current Bridgewebs website is used by the majority of bridge clubs in the UK, is reasonably priced, relatively robust and easy to use. There have been no outages or security scares during the last year, it still meets our requirements and our main concern - that it is a "one man band" - seems to have been partly addressed by the owner taking on some staff last year. All requests for assistance have been dealt with very quickly and all problems resolved over the last year.

2. Scoring software which calculates the scores and enables them to be displayed on the website. This is currently PairsScorer which was developed by and freely available from Jeff Smith who subsequently sold it to the EBU, who have developed it further. The EBU make their version available free to affiliated clubs or sell a licence to non affiliated clubs. The version we use currently still serves our needs, works with the website and the Bridgemates and some (but fewer) members have backup copies on their laptops. There is always the possibility that this will cease to be the case. There are alternatives

<https://www.bridgemate.co.uk/product/scoring-programs/list-of-scoring-programs-supporting-bridgemate/> but because they would involve retraining and additional expense with no perceivable benefits we have decided in the past to accept the risk. The alternatives to Bridgemates that we are researching also all accept this software.

3. Bridgemate software and associated hardware which allows players to record their scores and view results as they play. The software is the most difficult to use and learn, the tablets are not easy to read, the support from the suppliers is non existent and there are now better solutions available. One of our hand sets is playing up but repeated requests for advice have been ignored. We have fewer members who are able to set up games. We have therefore decided to explore the use of cheap non bespoke tablets to replace the Bridgemates. I have put a longer report as an annex but summarised the gist is that the 3 main contenders (ArcScorer, BridgePal and BridgeTabs) all use basic tablets, a basic laptop and a basic router and do not rely on wifi or mobile networks until the scores are uploaded to the website. The differences are in the layout of the screens, the amount of support, the number of other users, the cost of the licence fee. The unknowns are how easy they are to set up, which ones members find give them the most enjoyable game and how long the tablets can be used before needing to be charged and how long they take to charge. The Committee believes the way forward would be to buy the basic kit and then have free trials of the software to see which systems are the most user friendly to set up and use.

4. Software and hardware that deals the hands and uploads the details to the website. Both still work well. Volunteers to keep the dealing machine and organise the hands are always welcome. It is the easiest software to use and the dealing machine works very quickly. We have purchased an additional laptop so that those with Apple kit can now assist. You do need space to house the machine and cards and be able to transport the cases.

So the issues that members need to agree or note are:

- Agree the purchase of the basic kit for alternative scoring systems and trial the associated software
- Support the committee in the final decision on a replacement system which will have been trialled with members and pupils
- Continue to take the known risks of using the current website, scoring system and dealing machine
- Volunteers to house and use the dealing machine and to learn how to set up scoring for a session once we have a more user friendly system in place

Jan Titcombe

September 2023

ANNEX TO TECHNICAL REPORT ON ELECTRONIC SCORING SYSTEMS

There are 4 main methods:

- Using bespoke handsets such as Bridgemates. We know the disadvantages and want to upgrade to something easier to use and read and with better support.
- Using basic tablets or phones, laptop and router but not requiring wifi or mobile access until uploading results to website. Tablet or phone is linked to table. Examples are Arcscorer, BridgePal and Bridgetab. All 3 can be used with a wide range of scoring software including our present one and are compatible with our website. If we moved to new premises without wifi in the future the kit would still work although uploading results would be delayed until the scorer got home.
- Using tablets or smartphones with wifi or mobile access. No need for router or laptop. Tablet or phone linked to players. (Brian, IBEScore)
- Replacing cards, boxes etc and playing face to face but using tablets or phones to bid and play rather than just using for scoring. (LoveBridge)

Brian and IBEScore both use the same software, which currently doesn't allow lead cards to be recorded and which either rely on sufficient players having either smart phones or tablets or would result in the club having to buy more expensive tablets (but not a laptop or router). Some members have used Brian and found it to be very easy, others have not liked it. Cheaper capital outlay but more expensive running costs. If we moved in the future to premises without wifi we would be reliant on members' mobile accounts as well as their kit. The lack of leads is the show stopper.

LoveBridge is increasingly being used for international competitions but not for many local clubs yet. It is probably the way bridge will be played in the future. Any equipment acquired now could probably be used with this system so when our dealing machine and boxes need to be replaced it should be considered then.

Meanwhile I have focused on Arcscorer, BridgePal and BridgeTab. They are all fairly similar. Brief highlights below. Much more detail on their websites.

ARCSCORER

<https://www.arcscorer.com/> New kid on the block?

You have the option to get own kit and just pay annual licence fee (£149 software plus support) or select from a range of bespoke packages including tablets, chargers, carrying boxes all set up (from £1300 incl first years licence) etc with or without laptop. Additional tablets £70 each. Their testing has shown that the tablets they supply use 25-30% of their charge during an average three hour session. The re-charge time for this is around 80 minutes. option to enter lead. Can find 2 UK clubs using, reviews mixed.

BRIDGEPAL

BridgePal <https://mirgo2.co.uk/bridgepal/> Used at over 80 UK clubs including Slams with tablets and Chislehurst with phones. The tablets are much easier to use, phones can be acquired more cheaply but almost as difficult to read as bridgemates. Developed by a local bridge player (known to me). There is no licence charge for downloading or using and support is free but limited. The website is clear and easy to follow. Although no formal support I believe it would be more helpful than that of Bridgemate who still have not responded to my latest query. The developers are always helpful on other matters when I have contacted them but not in the first flush of youth however the widespread use means that there is a user forum.

BRIDGETABS

<http://bridgetab.com/> Used at Wimborne and Christchurch Bridge Clubs. The layout and amount of information on the tablets is even clearer than that on BridgePal. There is a small licence fee (about £7 per tablet per year) and an optional support charge (an existing user has offered to help set up so as to avoid this). The website and documentation is much less helpful and if I had not been so impressed with using the actual product I would not have pursued further. They also offer free trial and a service which provides the tablets ready set up and cost includes training.

MEMBERSHIP AS OF 20TH JULY 2023

We currently have: 60 members and
33 Visitors, of whom 29 are student

We have been getting between 5 and 7 tables most Tuesday afternoons, but are still struggling to keep the evening sessions afloat.

Tim and Colin have been teaching both beginners and improvers on a Tuesday morning, which has been a great success.

As the students progress it is expected that the majority will eventually apply to become full members. In fact there are already a few who will be applying this coming year.

I think we owe a big "Thank you" to both Tim and Colin for their time and patience in setting up this new venture.

Ann Close (Membership Secretary)