

Castle Morpeth Bridge Club

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at St James Community Centre, Morpeth

6.30 on Tuesday 30th May 2023

In Attendance: Janet Angel, Peter Avery, Anne Bell, Dan Benison, Kenneth Bodenham, Rosie Buxton, Tim Capron, Ann Caygill, Sue Caygill, Pauline Chapelhow, Mike Craig (Chairman), Desmond Dunleavy, David Gunn, Keith Harbour, Viv Heskett, Paul Ingoe, Jos Joures, Bob Lyon, Laura Marriot, Gary Matthews, Colin Mitchell, Christine Mordue, Brenda Mueller, Sheila Parker, Stephen Reay, Ken Reed, Ann Rooke, Helen Sadler, Freda Simpkin, Charlie Singh, Frank Springett, Ted Szymczuk, Monica Tuke, Carole Walton, Jim Wood.

1. Apologies: Eric Bell, Pauline Boardman, Anne Hauxwell, Simon Hedley, Bill Sharp.

2. Minutes of last Meeting: Held on 28th June 2022 were adopted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising: None.

4. Chairman's Report: Castle Morpeth was formed at a Special meeting on 14th December 1999, prior to that it had been a proprietary club in First Class, a business run by Jill Harrison and partners. Ron Stanners was elected Chairman, Jill Treasurer, Judy Creswick Secretary and Monica Tuke to the Committee. Laura Marriott was also present.

I became Chairman in July 2010 after Ron resigned. The club was undergoing a period of change. The EBU had introduced P2P and the club had voted to remain an Affiliated club but the new Constitution had caused problems and a disciplinary matter had been referred to NEBA. The main requirement of the Chairman was to apply large doses of oil and I was ably supported in this work by Freda and Sheena who have both stayed the course until Sheena's illness last year.

Eventually matters calmed down, we introduced a new Bridgewebs website, our new Constitution emphasized that we were a No Fear club and we encouraged a welcoming environment for new players. We did get a steady trickle of student players from the various teaching groups which has now largely stopped but we have learnt to welcome any visitors with open arms. We introduced stratified scoring which made it easier for new players to acquire their first Master Points.

About this time Frank started his Hand of the Week on our website which during lockdown became a Hand of the Day. This week we are up to hand 895, please show your appreciation for Frank's dedication.

In 2016 we applied to HMRC to become a small charity and to claim Gift Aid. This improved the clubs finances sufficiently to allow us to purchase Bridgemates which not only made it easier for scorers but with hands on the website allowed a fuller analysis of the play for those so inclined.

The club was running smoothly until unforeseen events got in the way and we had to use the rather complicated disciplinary procedure included in the EBU model constitution. It nearly led to the resignation of the Chairman and half the Committee – so if I have one piece of advice for the new Chairman it would be try to avoid having to use the disciplinary procedure.

The club has been active in NEBA inter-area competitions, initially with one team but then increased to two. It is a constant struggle for Freda to raise two teams and if we are to continue this year we will need some more players. So please let Freda know of your availability to play.

In December 2019 we planned a special Christmas Party to mark the Club's 20th Anniversary. We had always enjoyed our Christmas parties with the excellent caterer we hired and for the anniversary we also booked a small group from the Northern Symphonia who played a mixture of jazz and light music during the meal. This was my personal highlight of my time as Chairman and if all had gone according to plan I had intended to resign at the 2020 AGM when I was 80. However along comes Covid and our last club game before F2F play stopped was a Stratified Sim Pairs on 10th March 2020. This would also be the last time we played at Storey Park. We had no bridge for only two weeks and then Hristo organized an informal game on BBO on 31st March and from April we had a regular Castle Morpeth game. The starting times were a bit variable as we had no official standing with BBO and sometimes the world wide demand was too high to allow us to start.

These informal (and free) games continued until August 2020 when the EBU set up a virtual status category for clubs recognized by BBO which required changes in the way players paid. Many clubs went down the \$ payment route direct to BBO. We felt that it might be easier to retain sterling payment to the club but this did increase the accounting work load and we may have to review this in the future.

BBO had its own challenges for scorers but fortunately some clever software was produced by the bridge community allowing us to extract results to go on our website. BBO did have some advantages as we were able to run a National Open Swiss Pairs with Blue Points in March 2012 with 32 tables. None of this would have been possible without Hristo who fortunately was already a BBO

director and became our EBU virtual BBO director. Hristo also keeps the dealing machine and prepares the hands for us. Please show your appreciation of all Hristo's work for the club.

Because of lockdown restrictions we had no AGM's in 2020 & 2021, F2F bridge was restarted in July 2021 with 6 tables at this well refurbished St James Hall and has been slowly building to a maximum so far of 9½ tables. BBO continues and although initially more chose BBO the numbers are now more even

We have not held any club competitions this year but as the table numbers increase we hope to start them next year.

To come right up to date we are still waiting for a reply to our application to the Charity Commission which may take three months or even longer.

I want to thank all the current Committee Members, and all those Members who have served on the Committee during the last 13 years contributing to the smooth running of the club.

I also want to thank the Directors who keep us in control each week. To my knowledge we have trained seven directors with the EBU and the club is always ready to encourage any member who would like to train as a Director.

Finally, thank you the club members, who have supported me during my period of chairmanship. I wish the Club every success in the future with the new Chairman and Committee Members.

5. Treasurer's Report and election of Auditor: The Treasurer circulated the Income and Expenditure account for the year ended 31st March 2023 signed and certified by the auditor Norman Gray. The financial health of the CMBC remains good and there will be no increase in table fees, The Chairman pointed out that whilst Freda had been Treasurer the club funds had risen from under £5000 to over £12,000 and members showed there appreciation of her stewardship. The accounts were adopted unanimously. Norman Gray was thanked for auditing the accounts and his offer to remain auditor for next year was accepted with appreciation.

6. Items Raised by Committee: Members were asked to express their views as to whether F2F results should be merged with the BBO, or kept separate. After discussion a vote was held and those in favour of keeping the results separate were 26 for and against 3.

Members were also asked if they had a preference between Charity Sims and EBU Sims. EBU sims are charged at £2.40 per player plus the UN fee and there was a general view that members would rather donate the equivalent to charity. Sims results will continue to be merged.

7. Election of Committee Members/Trustees: Mike and Freda stepped down as Chairman and Treasurer but are eligible for re-election as Committee Members. Paul Ingoe is standing for election as Chairman and Ken Reed for Treasurer. Viv Heskett is standing for re-election as Secretary and Dan Benison was proposed and seconded by the Committee for election as Trustee and Committee Member. All the above were elected unopposed and the Chairman welcomed Paul and Ken to their new positions of Chairman and Treasurer and Dan as Trustee.

8. A Thank You to Mike and Freda from Paul: We would like to thank Mike and Freda for all of the hard work they have done for the club as Chairman and Treasurer. Mike has been Chairman for 13 years. Not only has he chaired the meetings, but he has also been chief scorer, web site administrator and director. He co-ordinated the successful implementation of on-line bridge into the club which currently has a total of 101 members.

Freda has been Treasurer since 2007. In addition, she has been teams captain for as long as we can remember, and will hopefully continue in that role. During her tenure we continue to be a very profitable charity.

When you consider that the club has been in existence for 23 years, it shows how important the roles of Mike and Freda have been to the success, of what we personally consider to be one of the most friendly clubs in the area.

Mike, Freda, have a long and happy retirement, you deserve it. Well done and a big THANK YOU from us.

10. A.O.B: Freda has mentioned that now that Covid rules no longer apply and table numbers have increased we can play for trophies again next year. The CMBC needs more players interested in playing in the inter-area competitions. Freda would like to maintain two teams; however at the moment we only have enough players for one.

Mike mentioned that the last Committee Meeting agreed with a suggestion from his wife Dorothy that St James Hall would benefit from being equipped with a defibrillator. Morpeth only has one which is situated at a distance from the hall. The proposal will be discussed with Morpeth Bridge Club and a joint proposal put to Morpeth Town Council.

Meeting Closed at 7pm