



Essex Contract Bridge Association

A constituent member of the English Bridge Union

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, 5th November 2014 starting at 19.30 at Audrey Hartley's house – 168 Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, CM1 4HF

MINUTES

Present: T Cockle, A Cundy, L Fleet, A Hartley, B Hunt, P Mollison, V Mollison, T Philpott, G Randall, K Thompson and D Valtisariis

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence:** Audrey Hartley took the chair for the start of the meeting, she welcomed all those present and accepted apologies for absence from N Bardsley, M Curtis and S Riach.
2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday, June 25th 2014:** These had been circulated prior to the meeting and were agreed to be a correct record. Audrey welcomed Paul Mollison and Val Mollison as co-opted members of the ECBA Committee and handed over to Paul as the new Chairman.
3. **Matters arising from the minutes not already included in the agenda.**
 - a. **Item 3. b. The Super League:**

Audrey reported that the Saxons had entered the Super league again. They were currently lying 5th out of 7 teams. The previous night's match had produced a very poor result.
 - b. **Item 3. c. The Future of the Selection Committee:** Audrey reported that John Williams who had been invited to Chair the Selection Committee had, after much thought, declined the invitation. The current Chairman, Ian Moss, wished to resign at the end of March and the Committee needed to appoint a replacement. The Chairman agreed to talk with Ian Moss and investigate potential successors. His suggestion that Chris Taylor could be a possible successor was fully supported by the Committee. It was agreed that if the Chairman of the Selection Committee was not already a member of the ECBA Committee he/she should be co-opted to it.
 - c. **Item 7. Schools' Liaison**

Officer Advert: Audrey reported that this advert has been on the website for some time but the Committee had received no response to it.
4. **Reports from Hon. Officers:**
 - a. **Hon. General Secretary:**

Audrey presented some research she had undertaken into the times of travel to, and distance from, a number of competition venues in the central Essex area for all members and also for those entering our competitions. Although she has the figures, she did not include the venues nearer the boundaries of Essex in her report as these venues are used for other reasons. She had used the postcodes for the 113 postcode regions in the EBU's "Essex" which includes the Greater London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest. Dividing Essex into 5 regions of NW, NE, Central, SW and SE, it is clear that most of our members live in the SE, Central and SW in that order but that 15% of members from the SW and Central regions had entered our competitions as opposed to only 10% from the NE and SE regions. We have very few members living in the NE.

She had investigated the distances and travel times needed to travel to Barleylands, Danbury, Mountnessing, Romford and Stock by using the postcodes in each region.

Using the mean and standard deviation for these distributions she expected 5/6 of ECBA members would be able to reach each venue in less than 45 minutes and be less than 26.2 miles from them. She then looked at the percentage of members and competitors that fell in these categories for each venue. All venues satisfied or were very close to this criteria with Mountnessing being the best, followed by Stock, Romford, Barleylands and Danbury being the worst.

She then looked at how well the regions are serviced by the different venues. Clearly the Central area is served well by all venues and both Northern regions are poorly served. Taking the figures for the time to reach each venue, Mountnessing served the SW, SE and Central areas best followed by Romford, Barleylands, Stock and Danbury. The Northern regions were best served by Danbury, then Stock, Mountnessing and Romford, with Barleylands being the poorest.

- b. **Hon. Treasurer's Report:** Linda Fleet reported that the current bank balances were £6,986 at Barclay's bank and £15,060 at Skipton Building Society. She'd found a fraudulent Direct Debit from O₂ on the competitions entry bank account but Barclays were very quick and repaid the money.
- In the County News circulated by Paul it was announced that the £3 per student that we currently receive is to be discontinued from 01/04/16 – We received £162 for 2013/14. Also the prizes for the Corwen and Pachebo are to be discontinued from 2015 and the entry fees reduced.
- We had agreed to reimburse some of the expenses for the Saxons TGR team should any team member need this and so far I have only reimbursed one person.
- Several profitable competitions have been held since last meeting including Pro/Am - £128, Warboys/Club Pairs - £145, Summer Seniors - £83 and Fletcher/Cup for clubs - £160. Basically, these competitions do not have a big value prize. I would like included in the next meeting a proposal that the prize structure be overhauled and related to a % of the entry fee.
- Our receipts from P2P for the first seven months have been £1,878 (it was £2,393 in 2013) which is a 27% drop. Although as discussed at last meeting this is probably a reflection of the drop in numbers at the smaller clubs such as Hutton & St Edith's and also the drop from 5p to 4p in the Essex part. Hopefully with Clacton and Burnham now affiliated the numbers will come back up: although these figures don't include anything yet from Burnham and Alaric has agreed to investigate this.
- c. **Hon. Tournament Secretary:** Ted Cockle presented a breakdown of the competitions held so far this year. Numbers were very similar to the previous year, some slightly up, others slightly down. He was very keen to get competitors to pay in advance as he disliked asking the director to take money on the day. He had found £1 per person surcharge for paying on the day was an insufficient deterrent. He would like to increase the surcharge. It was agreed to ask £5 per pair and £10 per team to be paid by people paying on the day. This should be implemented in the new season from April.
- Last year he had indicated a wish to resign but John had persuaded him to continue in office. However, he now wished to announce that he would definitely resign at the end of March
- d. **Hon. League Secretary:** Bernie said that all was going well with the leagues. The new method of entry into the EBU website was working successfully. Audrey complained that the League results were not on the website. She was told that they were on the EBU website but that they were not yet on the ECBA website. It was agreed that Bernie would ask Sandy Riach to make the necessary links to the EBU site so that the results could be accessed from our website.
- There was some discussion concerning the timing of the League Knockout Competition. When this started the draw was made in September but autumn is very congested with early rounds of a great many competitions and it was felt that a draw made later in the season would work better. It was agreed that the draw would be made at the beginning of January timed to finish before the AGM.
- Earlier in the year Bernie had asked for Committee approval to apply for Barleylands to be one of the centres for the Portland Pairs. He was pleased to announce that this had been accepted. The Committee congratulated him on his success.
- e. **Hon. Teachers' Liaison Officer:** Alaric Cundy said that he would circulate the non-expert players for our "Play with an Expert" Competition in the New Year. In the past Nicole had organised the "experts" but she was no longer on the Committee. Bernie volunteered to co-ordinate the experts with the non-experts. Ted said that he thought it was better to put the pairs together as the non-expert names came in rather than leave it to the week before the event. Last year we had a record entry of 20 tables and Bernie said that there would have to be an upper limit of 24 tables as we were using Barleylands. Alaric said that the Essex teaching area on the website had been revamped and he thought the presentation was much better. He also announced that he too wished to resign at the end of March.
- f. **Hon. Webmaster:** Sandy Riach was not present and had nothing to report.
5. **County working group report:** Dennis Valtisaris reported that the first Eastern Regional Working Group had been attended by representatives from all Eastern Counties where it was agreed that three topics should be prepared and discussed at the next meeting. Though several members were not able to attend the next meeting it was agreed that it should be held and the three papers were so well received when the reports were forwarded to the EBU that they formed the basis for the next meeting of the National Regional Working Group.
- Audrey proposed that John Williams continue to represent this Committee on the ECWG and the NCWG and that he be co-opted to the Committee by virtue of this position. This was agreed.
6. **Share Holder's report:** Audrey reported that the EBU's VAT reclaim had not yet received a second hearing. This should take place towards the end of the year.

The shareholders did not yet know what the next EBU P2P charge was likely to be. It hadn't been announced and the Shareholders meeting was not until 26th November.

There have been suggestions that the April Shareholders meeting should be scrapped. The Board are taking over more and more of the decisions of the running of the EBU. The shareholders feel that their input into the EBU organisation is being marginalised.

There were some new awards being considered by the EBU for counties and clubs and an information pack would be issued shortly. There was a suggestion that there should be one for club growth. Margaret thought it would be difficult to compare clubs as there were several different types of clubs. Some owned their own premises and could play all week throughout the day, some rented premises for the session only and some had restrictions on size.

7. **Report from the Succession Committee:** Tony Philpott said that he had not done anything in the last year as he had been moving house but with the number of resignations just received something needed to be considered. He asked Audrey to meet with him to discuss this.
8. **Letter from LMBA re: proposed changes to their County Congress:** Paul Mollison had received a letter from the LMBA saying that their members wished to change their arrangements for their Green Pointed events. They would like to hold a County Congress in early Summer, either the last weekend in June or the first weekend in July. Linda said that the suggested date had been moved now to the second weekend in July and this was too near to the Herts/Essex joint July weekend and players would not wish to go to two such events which were so close together. Linda said that Hertfordshire had not received a letter but when they heard of it they had objected strongly to the proposal. It was agreed that Audrey would write formally to the EBU about this
9. **Herts/Essex joint venture.** Linda Fleet reported that the July event had made a profit of £3,033 and the September event had made a profit of £1,197. Mike Minting has proposed a distribution of £2,100 (The distribution had been £1,415 in 2013).
There is a problem with the venue in Ware for September 2015 – She and Mike Minting were in the process of finding a new venue
Both Mike and Gary Conrad who is Herts Tournament Director are happy to have Nichole on the team especially in the light of her recent promotion to Senior Congress Tournament Director.
10. **Written Complaint:** Audrey had received two letters of complaint, one concerning the Seniors' Daytime Pairs that was held in July and the other about the Club Teams of Eight. She had circulated these prior to the meeting. She had received several communications from the complainant. He had received explanations about his second complaint and now wished to withdraw it but he still wished to continue with his first complaint. The Committee agreed that there were some problems that needed to be addressed and that discussion with the people involved should be enough to sort the problem. It was agreed that Paul would write to the complainant.
11. **The survey:** It was pointed out that most of the Committee were expecting to discuss the survey questions at this meeting and a number of members had questions they would have liked included. However, we were where we were! The survey had been sent out and received a very good response. It was agreed that the results would be sent to all who had received the original questionnaire and that they should also be published on the website. There were several comments submitted under "Any other comments". Audrey wished to draw attention to four of these.
 - a. *"There must be some way we could play events at our clubs that are scored across Essex. The same boards and maybe stratified."*
Something like this had been tried before: the David Bostin Simultaneous Pairs and the Summer Club Pairs were two such competitions but over time they had died. But it might be worth looking at.
 - b. *"Need quick access from major routes regardless of co-ordinates. Low cost events for competition virgins (or near virgins)."* Certainly her research showed that venues close to major routes made journey times shorter even when the mileage was longer.
 - c. *"I should appreciate a facility for finding teammates"*. It was agreed by the Committee that a request could be made to the Tournament Secretary that a pair would like to play but needed another pair. It was common practice at national tournaments.
 - d. *"My regular partner belongs to another county and I don't really have a suitable partner to play in Essex events."* This is a problem but there

are only two competitions in our calendar that are exclusively for ECBA members and they are the Championship Pairs and the Championship Teams of Four. Our Blue pointed events, the George Curtis Swiss Teams of Four in June and the Swiss Pairs in January are open to all EBU members. For other Essex events there is associate membership available.

12. **Setting up a "Review Subcommittee" for the Event Calendar:** Paul wished to set up a Review Subcommittee of the Chairman, the General Secretary and the Tournament Secretary to check through the programme of events before it was submitted to the full Committee and before it was published. Audrey explained that informally this had been the process since she had been Secretary. In the past she had always sent a copy of the programme and newsletter to John and sometimes to Ted. This last programme was not checked in this way because of the general hiatus caused by John's resignation. She said she was happy to continue with that in a more formal arrangement but it was agreed that the subcommittee should have different members if any of the above officers were related.
13. **Provision of Tea/Coffee/Biscuits at ECBA event:** Ted had done this in the past but last year he had only agreed to continue being the Tournament Secretary if he could be relieved of this chore. Paul and Val had been doing this for a few competitions and did not wish to continue. No one on the Committee was prepared to take on this task. Paul said that Bernie had offered to organise the refreshments for our competitions and its transportation to the venue. Bernie said he was able to buy in bulk and that he would be happy if he could charge 25p per head. Dennis was concerned that Bernie was proposing to charge the players but Paul explained that the ECBA would pay for this.
14. **Proposed venue for Essex home match v. Norfolk in 2015:** Paul said that he wished to revisit this item which had been agreed at the last Committee meeting. He felt that if Norfolk were not prepared to find a venue for their home matches that was more conveniently accessible for Essex players then he felt we should feel free to continue using Barleylands for our venue. Audrey said she had not yet written to Norfolk as this season's match arrangements had already been made. She thought it would be appropriate to mention it when the next season's matches were arranged. There was strong feeling that we should be accommodating.
15. **AOB**
 - a. **Setting up a sub-committee to identify alternatives to Navestock Side:** Paul and Val said that though the caretakers at Navestock Side Village Hall had said that the electrical problem had been sorted the lights were still flickering when there was a power surge as the villagers started using more power. The Committee needed to investigate if there were other premises of similar size that would better suit our larger competitions. There was a new school near Tilbury and the Anglo European School at Ingatestone that might suit our requirements and members of the Committee said that they would look into other venues that might be appropriate.
 - b. **Provision of "B Flight" events:** This was thought to be a good idea. We already hold the Club Teams of Four and the Club Pairs which could be considered as B flight events though they were not specifically labelled as such. Several competitions were considered alongside which a B flight competition could be held. It was thought that a pairs' event would be best for our first attempt and it was decided that a parallel event with our Championship Pairs would be ideal. It was sufficiently far away to give time for advertising the event and the style of competition was more appropriate.
 - c. **Letter from Ian Payn:** Ian Payn, Vice Chairman of the EBU, had written about the intention of the EBU to host the European Championships in the autumn of 2015. The EBU was asking if counties would be willing to sponsor this venture. The Committee agreed that they were not interested in sponsoring this event.
16. **Date of next meeting:** The next meeting would be on Wednesday, 28th January 2015 at Audrey's home.

Paul closed the meeting at 11.00 pm and the Committee thanked Audrey for her hospitality.