



## Essex Contract Bridge Association

A constituent member of the English Bridge Union

**Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, 27th January 2016 starting at 19.30 at Val Mollison's house – Tekoa Lodge, Mayes Lane, Sandon, Chelmsford, CM2 7RW**

**Present:** Paul Mollison, Linda Fleet, Margaret Curtis, Keith Thompson, Bernie Hunt, Chris Taylor, Dennis Valtisiaris, Audrey Hartley, Val Mollison

### **1. Welcome and apologies for absence.**

Paul Mollison welcomed those present. He accepted apologies from Nigel Bardsley, Theo Todman, Nicole Cook, and Pat Johnson.

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday, 21st October 2015.**

These had been circulated prior to the meeting. Val said that she had made one small correction to the minutes that had been circulated. The limit of the number of master points earned to qualify for the Really Easy competition was changed from 500 to 5000. Bernie confirmed that 5000 is the correct figure. This version was agreed to be a correct record. Paul will sign a corrected copy of the agreed minutes.

### **3. Matters arising from the minutes not already included in the agenda.**

#### **a Item 4. c. iv) Bidding boxes with cards that need replacing**

Nicole now has all the new bidding cards in her boxes. She has some boxes with old cards. Val has all old cards in the boxes she stores as spares for events like the Fletcher and the occasional county match held at Thornwood Common. Although Nicole still has some old sets in her boxes Nicole has enough new sets to cover most events, except perhaps the Cornell and Fletcher. Nicole says she can tell which are new sets and which are old sets by the type of box they are in (different bottoms) and so she can make sure she uses the new sets for most events. Val suggested we don't buy any more sets unless Nicole lets us know that she needs more.

#### **b. Item 5.f (v) Bridgemate scoring for ECL matches**

Bernie said that Nicole successfully got the bridgemates scoring the last home match, but it had not been possible to get the Butler scoring automatically from the results. Val reported that there had been some email correspondence involving Nicole which said that the EBU are aware of the shortcomings of the scoring software and Bridgewebs with regards to coping with teams of more than four players. They are working with the software developers to resolve a number of issues. Nicole is in communication with the panel which is involved with this. It was agreed we should ask Nicole to keep us informed of any developments.

**c Item 11.b Changes to Trophy to reflect renaming of "The Tony Kelvin Memorial" to "Sue Taylor Memorial"**

Margaret had returned the Trophy to Val and Paul but as yet Val and Paul have not discussed the problem with the engravers, so this item is outstanding. As the event has been held as the "Tony Kelvin" this year, we discussed whether we should wait until after this year's AGM to alter the trophy, but it was agreed it would be OK to get the changes made before the AGM

Keith mentioned that the new Essex affiliated club mentioned in the minutes of the last meeting didn't take off and sadly no longer exists.

Keith noted that there was another matter arising from the previous meeting with regards to which clubs should be invited to play in the Fletcher next year. Margaret said that the list of clubs to be invited has traditionally been agreed by the committee and was intended to include those clubs considered to be the strongest. Val said that this year she had sent the invite to the same list of clubs as Audrey invited the previous year. Later we had a request to include Collier Row in the Fletcher which the committee agreed to. It was agreed that the list of clubs to be invited would be discussed at the next meeting to give us chance to consider each club in turn.

**4. Reports from Hon. Officers:**

**a. Hon General Secretary. (Val Mollison)**

Val reported that all but one of the dates for next season's ECL matches have been agreed. The remaining date is for the match against Suffolk. The match is not due to be played until Feb/March 2017. The dates already organised will be given to Chris Taylor and the selection committee. Val will chase up Suffolk to get a date as soon as possible..

Margaret asked if everyone had been notified about Dick Green's death. Val said she had circulated a message to all the committee members and that a notice had gone on the website. As someone who had been a member of the ECBA for nearly 60 years, Chairman for 26 years and Vice President for the last 6 years, she wanted to formally mark our sadness at his loss in the minutes. Margaret is liaising with others who knew Dick and with Pat Johnson with regards to writing an In Memoriam article, which Margaret thought would likely be included in the main body of English Bridge as Dick had been a prominent figure in the bridge community.

Val told the committee about the email from the organiser of the Metropolitan Cup, Steve Foster, who has now stepped down from organising this event saying that a new organiser was being sought from 2016 onwards. As yet, Val has not heard of any other organiser coming forward so there are doubts as to whether the event was likely to run this year. Margaret says that Essex has run this event in the past, but also stated that the event doesn't have the importance or interest for players it once had with so many other congresses and events within the home counties region. Running the event is a major undertaking and the committee does not feel we have the resources to take this on, especially since Essex has struggled to field a team for the last few years.

Val reported that she is still waiting for contact from Little Baddow Village Hall regarding the booking for the Seniors in March. Val has contacted Barbara Cornell who has assured us the hall has been booked, and the on-line availability calendar on their website show a bridge day has been booked for that date but Val is concerned that she has not received any paperwork associated with the booking. *[The day after the meeting Val received a phone call from the caretaker who confirmed the booking and the paperwork has now been received]*

Val also mentioned that for the last couple of events she has compiled a list of players who have played in recent years but not booked this year in order for Paul to send out a reminder email to those players. This seems to have prompted an extra one or two tables for those events, so will continue to do this for future events.

Val has also continued to produce "Coming Up" events flyers for each as Audrey did.

**b. Hon Treasurer. (Linda Fleet)**

Linda reported that we currently have £10,364 in our Barclays accounts (compared with £10,978 at the same time last year), and £15,188 in the Skipton Account (no change from last year). The Tony Kelvin, Mixed Pairs and Swiss Pairs events were well attended and made a profit, which compensated for the losses on the Fletcher and Autumn Seniors events. These were less well attended and incurred high refreshment costs. There are still some unpaid refreshment costs for the Barleylands competitions and some unpaid P2P fees which have been estimated on the distributed worksheet.

Linda mentioned that the P2P for the Tony Kelvin had not gone through even though P2P for later events have. Bernie is in the process of trying to sort this out. *[Audrey mentioned the problem with the masterpoints for the Mixed pairs being issued at the wrong scale. This appears to be due to some software scoring problem. Bernie says that he has sent through the corrected masterpoints manually and they should be corrected soon]*

The notable drop in numbers for the 3 seniors events in 2015 was discussed. The hall hire for these events is higher than for other events, and also the catering costs increase each year. The dates for Wimbledon were changed last year which meant that the summer seniors clashed with the second week (Men's Quarter finals?) which may account for a drop in that event. Val will try to avoid the clash in the 2016 summer programme. Paul and Val will try sending an email targeted to players from previous years who haven't entered this year to see whether that results in more entries. Although there was an overall profit on the events run over the last 3 months, the catered events are making a loss and the un-catered events are making a profit. The question of whether to raise entry fees for these catered events will be discussed at the next committee meeting before the next competition programme goes out.

The P2P income so far this year is £2,354 compared with £2,425 by this time last year which indicated that the P2P income is levelling off. Previous years the income had been dropping mainly because of the reduction in the Essex portion and the loss of a couple of affiliated clubs.

Linda stated that she will be ordering the prizes for the AGM. Previously we agreed to continue with the Boots vouchers. Val mentioned she had received a request to get M&S vouchers for future prizes as they offer more flexibility in what they can be used for. After a brief discussion the committee voted and the majority were in favour of getting M&S vouchers with a couple of abstentions. This year the cost of prize vouchers will be £1158, including the league prizes, down from £1500 because of the changes made to the prize structure to reflect the decrease in entries.

Linda says that she can prepare the envelopes with the prizes for the AGM as she did last year but she won't be at the AGM to give them out as she has a holiday booked. The question arose as to who was organising the trophies this year. Val gave out the trophies last year on Ted's behalf and has the list of which trophy belongs to which competition and the list of who received which trophy. Val agreed to collect the trophies and arrange the engraving and organise the trophies for the AGM this year. Linda will give the prize envelopes to Val for distribution at the AGM

Val raised a query about the discrepancy between the number of teams in the South East and West Essex Leagues and the number of teams who have paid according to the entries spreadsheet that is online. Bernie said that two teams have unfortunately pulled out this season due to unforeseen circumstances, but that still left a difference in numbers. Bernie agreed to chase up those teams who haven't paid.

**c. Hon Tournament Secretary. (Nicole Cook)**

Nicole was not present but had sent an email to Val to say she had nothing to report.

Paul took this opportunity to raise the issue of Nicole's role. He is of the opinion that the correct title for Nicole would be Chief Tournament Director, as she is responsible for arranging directors and all arrangements for the successful running of events on the day, a job which she does well, but that other jobs that Ted used to do are now spread around other members of the committee which seems to work well as those jobs fit well with other committee member responsibilities. Linda says it is definitely easier for the entries to be handled by the treasurer as this facilitates reconciliation with the accounts. Val will keep this item on future agendas under the title of Chief Tournament Director.

**d. Hon League Secretary. (Bernie Hunt)**

Bernie reported that Goodmayes Billinge had dropped out of the West Essex League this year, but they hope to return next year. Also Hadleigh Castle has dropped out of the SE Essex league for health reasons. It is unclear whether they will be able to return next year. Bernie suggested that if the number of teams drops next year then he may have to change to two divisions. An alternative of having the bottom division playing home and away matches was suggested and that division could be canvassed to see which option they prefer.

The league cup draw has been sent out. There have not been many replies, so Bernie expects the first round to be no more than 8 teams. It was agreed that more than 6 weeks would be allowed for each round to allow for holidays.

**e. Hon Education Officer. (Keith Thompson)**

i) Keith says he now has the website information set up and only occasional amendments are required.

ii) He reported that he gets a small but regular stream of enquiries from people. He tends to tell them how to find the information on the website, rather than providing them with a list by email, which seems to work well.

iii) He reported that we have one new teacher in Essex, Marcia Levan-Harris, who has just finished her course and is planning to do some teaching and to help running bridge on some cruises.

iv) Keith says that emails have been sent to bridge teachers, clubs and individuals for the play with an expert and that the entries are starting to come in. It looks like it is going to be viable but that he hopes there will be a few more entries. Paul says he is about to do the email to experts, but we generally get a good response so does not anticipate a shortage of experts.

The criteria for classing a player as non-expert was discussed. It was agreed that the purpose of the event was to encourage new players to consider playing in competitions in the future,

beginning with the Really Easy events, the B flight events and eventually the regular trophy events. Therefore the non-experts should be players that have not already played in the Essex trophy events, although some discretion could be allowed (e.g. a player who helped us out by agreeing to play at the last minute in the Swiss pairs so that we had an even number). Originally the limit used to be based on the number of years a person had been playing, but it was agreed that this might not be the best criteria and now that all players who play at affiliated clubs are automatically members of the EBU they automatically get master points registered. This means that master points have become a better guide to the experience a player has. The EBU sets a maximum of 5000 master points as a guideline for the Really Easy events with some discretion allowed. It was agreed that anyone with less than 5000 master points should definitely be accepted and that discretion could be used for players with up to 10000 master points

**f. Hon Webmaster. (Theo Todman)**

Theo did not attend the meeting but sent in a brief report by email raising the following points:

a) He requested that there should be a committee member or members who should proof read the website info so that typos, omissions and other errors can be corrected before they cause a problem/complaint

b) He does not have time at the moment to help with developing a system to automatically update mailing lists but says that Marc Chawner may be able to help or offer advice.

c) There is an outstanding issue with getting automatic Butler results for ECL matches. This was covered in point 3 b) of these minutes

*This was not discussed in the meeting, but Val told Theo she would pass on the message about proof reading of the website.*

**g. Selection Committee Chairman's (Chris Taylor)**

Chris circulated extracts from the selection committee meeting minutes for discussion. The following points were discussed:

a) Peter Oake has indicated that he wants to step down as A Team Captain although he will continue until the end of 2016. Chris asked for guidance on the procedure for finding a replacement. Margaret said the captain has been appointed by the committee in the past. A couple of possible names were discussed but it was agreed that it would be best for the committee members should have a bit more time to think of possible candidates, find out if the individuals were interested and discuss further at the next meeting.

b) The committee discussed whether to try and restart the single day Warboys competition as an invitation event again this year, or whether to hold a series of Butler pairs or teams events instead. It was agreed that the selection committee would discuss the options further to decide which format they would find most useful for selection purposes and present suggestions at the next committee meeting.

**5. Herts/Essex joint venture. (Linda Fleet)**

Linda reported that the venue had been booked for both July and September this year. Mike Minting is planning to get the entry form/brochures for the July event printed next month ready for distribution.

Gary Conrad has asked permission to select his own team of directors which has been agreed.

Mike Minting is also going to put an ad in the EBU magazine because of the London green point event being held the week before ours. Linda did not know the exact cost but Mike Minting held back funds after last year's events to cover the cost.

## **6. Shareholders Report (Margaret Curtis/Audrey Hartley/Keith Thompson)**

Margaret reported on further developments regarding the proposal to change the Laws and Ethics, Tournament and Selection committees from being selected by the shareholders to being appointed by the board. Whilst the members of the Laws and Ethics and Tournament committees seemed happy for the change to take place, members of the Selection committee were not happy. They produced a document which spelled out their objections and reasons which was circulated to the shareholders.

A vote (written not show of hands) was held on the proposal. The result was marginally in favour, but according to the Articles of Association of the EBU a 75% majority is required in order for the change to be allowed. The majority achieved was insufficient and so the board is intending to come back to the next meeting with an amended proposal. It is likely that the change to the selection committee will be dropped. If the Laws and Ethics and Tournament committees are to change then a new proposal will have to be presented and voted on.

## **7. Funding for Lady Milne Trial entrants**

Paul received an email from Ray Clarke, which was circulated at the time to all committee members, with a request for the ECBA to help with the expenses of two players who wanted to enter the Lady Milne Trials. It was agreed at the time that it should be discussed at the committee meeting.

Paul started by stating that he thought Ray's offer to match any funds that the ECBA was prepared to contribute was very generous of him.

However no-one on the committee was in favour of providing funding. Participants in the Lady Milne are not actually representing the county. Members of the committee agreed that Paul should respond to Ray Clarke expressing the view that the committee does not feel that it should be providing funding for "long shots" to have a go. Possibly requests to fund juniors or players with a real chance of being selected for a national team could be considered in future, but even then the idea of funding players in an event where they are not representing the county is not necessarily how the ECBA should be using the money raised from the members.

## **8. Proposal to fund monthly Teaching Seminars (Paul Mollison)**

Paul said that he feels that over the last few years a big gap has developed between club players and competition players making it hard for new players to get to the point where they feel they can play in the competitions. He suggested that using some of the spare funds or

development funds to pay for seminars aimed at serious improvers who might be helped to gain the interest and confidence to enter competitions.

Marc Chawner and Paul Spencer have recently done some very popular seminars at Thorpe Bay and Paul Mollison suggested we fund a number of seminars by Marc and Paul and ask clubs to nominate pairs to attend seminars with their places paid for from the development fund.

The committee agreed this was a good idea. Various suggestions about targeting different levels of players, from improvers up to county squad level, how many free seminars individuals could attend etc were discussed. It was agreed that Paul Mollison would work with Marc and Bernie to agree costs and organise an initial trial of about 3 seminars. Paul will try to get the clubs involved in suggesting players to attend.

## **9. Review of Directors Fees Structure**

Audrey provided everyone with a copy of a paper that Nicole Cook had presented to the committee in June 2012 and we also have a copy of the EBU standard rates from April 2013. Confusion arose because of the different ways that Ian Mitchell and Matthew Johnson invoiced us for the Fletcher and Swiss Pairs respectively. This seems to be partly because Ian was scoring/assisting for the Fletcher, whereas Matthew was in charge of the Swiss pairs. Also Ian used Nicole's simplified payment structure which in effect included the set up/take down costs that Matthew itemised separately.

## **10. AOB**

a) Paul said that Marc Chawner has agreed to help with developing a procedure to merge details of new members from the EBU membership lists without losing information, in particular up-to-date email addresses, that we have added manually.

b) Margaret said she has a lot of old trophies at home and wanted to know what the committee wants to do with them. Some apparently have some value. Val mentioned that she also has a few, and Bernie also has a few old league trophies for divisions no longer active. It was agreed that to begin with Margaret would list the trophies she has and we would compile a complete list of currently unused trophies to discuss at a later date.

c) Val wanted to check the arrangements for catering for the play with an expert. Last year Ted bought a selection of finger food from M&S, rather than the big spread that was originally provided for the first event. Linda agreed to organise something similar either from M&S or Sainsbury's, using the costs that Ted incurred last year as a guide to what to spend this year.

d) Audrey asked if Bernie could circulate something to the clubs to try and get more teams for the leagues. Val said that she has the secretaries email list set up already if Bernie could provide some details to send out, probably around June/July to allow individuals to find team mates.

## **11. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was set for Wednesday, 27th April to be held at Paul and Val Mollison's house.

Paul closed the meeting. Chris, on behalf of the of the committee, thanked Val and Paul for their hospitality,