

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Cheltenham Bridge Club on Sunday May 12th 2019 at 1:30 pm. The President (Patrick Shields) was in the chair and 40 members attended.

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from 15 members.

2. Approval of the minutes of the 2018 AGM

The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. President's Report

I must welcome many old faces here today but also some new faces to this AGM, and declare that you are all most welcome, both to the meeting and to the bridge game which follows. I know there are a number fishing for partners, so don't run off too quickly at the end if you are able to play.

I wanted to start this session by reminding us all that the GCBA is entirely a volunteer run organisation, and without those who have put some much time and effort over the past year into support of the game, we would not be able to enjoy the game as much as we do in this county. From the committee, the major contribution over the year has been Jim Simons, who stepped in at short notice to take over when we lost our Treasurer early last summer, on condition that we found him a replacement (which we have), and he has done a splendid job in organising the finances for us, of which you will soon hear more. Two background players I want to mention this year – these are Patrick Phair who is the chief proof reader for the County Newsletter and without whom it would contain many more mistakes; and Roger Williams who has been keeping the GCBA presence on Facebook alive for the past couple of years. There are of course many more that I dare not list for fear of forgetting one, so our collective thanks must go to those I have named and to all the others who have contributed.

It might be appropriate at this point to mention two major contributors to the GCBA whom we have lost in the past year – both played in this event last May but have since died – they are Derek Rue & Ian Constable. We are sorry to have lost them. I can also report – and this is very recent – that Ivor Hoskins who used to be a regular with the GCBA died last week, at the age of 92.

In terms of major events over the past year, there are four things I would highlight. Number one is the successful raising of over £800 for the Sue Ryder Hospice from the Cotswold Cup in February – and a lot of thanks to Allan & Judy Sanis for their contributions to making that happen. Number two is that the County team has had a lot of narrow misses this year – one place out of qualifying for the final of the Tollemache Cup, and second place in each division in the Midlands Counties League. Well done to them, and maybe next year? Number three is to say that four of that county team played in, and won, Division Two of the English Premier League last autumn and will play this year against the top teams in Division One; we wish them well. And finally number four is that we had our first “friendly” inter-county match this year against Avon; we've always been very friendly with Avon and a number of their players come to our Monday night games, but this was friendly in the sense that we had teams at three levels – congress players, regular club players who don't play congresses, and newcomers to the game – in three separate teams and they all enjoyed it.

That was mostly about the high end of county performance, but the role of the County is to support all Bridge players in the county and this we do try to do. We have continued the practice of supporting the county's club financially – this year helping Stroud get its new Monday afternoon game going. We are very pleased to have two new clubs to list as affiliated to the GCBA this year – Tudor Bridge Club from Chipping Sodbury and the South Cotswolds Club from Tetbury. We are constantly looking for ways to help promote bridge and bridge clubs across the county, so any thoughts you have would be most welcome. One of our more club oriented events is the Cleverly Teams League, and I'd like to break off for a minute to allow Richard Harris, who has been running

the Cleverly Teams League for the past few years, the chance to say a few words about that, before I finish off.

Cleverly League Report

As most of you know, the Cleverly League is a County-wide Teams League where you can play in the informal surroundings of your own homes of Clubs. I understand it all started in the late 1970s as a Business League and rapidly expanded to 5 or 6 Divisions with 7/8 teams in each at its peak. This included Leyhill Prison who, understandably, only played Home matches!

However, with more and more Bridge available in clubs, numbers began to decline and GCBA eventually took over the running. I am not sure when, but David Hauser kept it going very successfully on behalf of the County for a good few years until I took it over two years ago.

One of the biggest issues is travel, and we tried to solve this by disbanding the Division Structure, apart from the First Division, and introducing regions. With such a large geographical area to cover the structure has to be flexible and in 2017/18 we were able to increase the overall number of teams taking part, grouping into a NW, NE and S Region. Sadly, for various reasons entry for 2018/19 reduced again and we regrouped to N and S Regions whilst retaining the First Division, of course.

One of the main jobs of the organiser is to prepare a schedule of fixtures for the season and allow Captains to organise precise dates and venues. This can only be done once entries are finalised and Teams allocated to Divisions, allowing Captains to have plenty of time to arrange matches over the autumn and winter. The dates when matches were played seems to have been more of a problem for the Regions than the First Division and one match was never played.

Congratulations to Wanderers, captained by Mike Lewis, for once again winning Division 1 in what looks like a very close finish. Congratulations, too, to North Cotswolds, captained by Ian Sidgwick and Acolytes (from Stroud area) captained by Mike James. These two teams will be promoted to the First Division; both were runners-up the previous year so well deserved. The bottom two teams from the First Division will be reabsorbed into the Regional Pool of teams. It remains to be seen how entries hold up next season; we hope to have newcomers from the south.

We do hope all have enjoyed the Team format of this competition and please do everything you can to encourage others to join in. Team Bridge is, after all, the usual format for Inter Club, Inter County and International Bridge. Many players in the smaller Clubs only ever experience Duplicate Pairs and know nothing of the excitement and different tactics of Teams Bridge.

President's Report contd.

I will mention now two aspects of county activity that might provoke some feedback. The first is that we are continuing our efforts with Youth Bridge – we have only a very small number of enthusiastic participants but are developing a new approach to take to schools in the hope of building that up. If you know of any youngsters who might want to learn, do get them in touch with us. The second is that – in conformance to the new practices at CBC – the variety of catering on Monday nights has become more limited. I don't want to delay things with a long debate, but if you have views on this do catch me and pass them on.

Feedback on those is welcome in slow time, but there are two topics on which I did want more immediate feedback. One is the question of engraving of trophies; some of our trophies have been around so long that the engraving space is all used up and we are faced with buying a new base or replacing the trophy, and that has made us ask – when we have all the winners' names on the honours boards, why do we also engrave them on the trophies? What do you think?

And the second immediate issue is whether it is a good use of your time listening first to me, and in due course to Jim as Treasurer, talking for as long as I have. The constitution does say we have to have reports, and indeed this report is the only record we will retain as part of the history of the

GCBA, so it is worth creating. It's just whether distributing it in advance and answering questions on the day would be preferred. What do you think?

It only remains now for me to say, that it has been a pleasure to serve the county over the past year. One aspect of that service is representing the players and clubs in the county to the EBU. We do this by engaging with EBU-central and other counties on thinking about the future of the game, and planning how to promote the game best – but we are rarely used by the clubs or the members of the county as a voice with the EBU, so if you do have any issues you wish to raise in those circles – I am the person to tell.

Thank you all for listening.

Matters arising

Paul Denning showed some of the trophies to the members, including the County Knock-out trophy dating back to 1939, which have no space for new names. The consensus among those present was that there are ways to expand the engraving space, and that we should continue to have the trophies engraved.

It was also felt by those present that the President's and Treasurer's Reports should continue to be read out at the AGM.

4. Treasurers Report and Adoption of the Accounts for 2018-19

Members will recall that at the last AGM we were unable to present an audited set of accounts. I promised that we would in due course post a set on the members area of the website. We had some difficulty doing that, although they are now there. Because you may not have seen that, I have put two comparison years on the accounts in front to you. However, after several years of treasurers only lasting for one year, these comparisons are not very meaningful, as different treasurers have adopted different approaches towards year end provisions.

This year we have handed out the accounts for the Cheltenham Congress and the Ross-on- Wye Green Point Event alongside the main accounts. These events are held jointly with Cheltenham Bridge Club and Herefordshire County Bridge Association respectively. Accordingly the GCBA's accounts include 50% of the surplus as income, and 50% of the bank balance as an asset. These subsidiary accounts have not been audited, but have been reconciled with the bank statements.

The committee has agreed a number of simplifications to our practices and the accounts. Some of these changes make the year-by-year comparisons even worse, looking backwards, but should ensure that they will be a more useful comparison in future years. I have written some fairly extensive notes for my successor to help ensure that happens. These are the principle changes:

We closed our deposit account, which earned only trifling income and was a potential source of error. In future years there will be no entry in the accounts for bank interest or the deposit account as an asset.

We abandoned the cash box, accounting for which is always error prone. Now any cash received is banked immediately, so no cash appears in the accounts, apart from the £20 float kept in the office. (This float has not to have been accounted for in the previous two years.)

We have agreed and documented a policy for the financial aspects of representative events. They are now handled similarly, although not all identically. In line with this unification, we have decided to abandon the Tollemache accounting category and treat it in the accounts in the same way as the Corwen, Pachabo and Garden Cities. So the entry fee goes under "Entry Fees Payable" and the expenses under "Travel Expenses". In future years there will be no separate entry for Tollemache.

The entry fees for the Corwen Trophy and Pachabo Cup used to be regarded as prizes for the County Pairs and Knockout respectively, and as such were accrued into the old year's accounts although they were generally not paid until the new Financial year. However this has not been done consistently, and so we have abandoned this practise, and shall now account for them when they are paid in the new year. This inflates the surplus for 2018-19 by £401 compared with previous and subsequent years. Now the only routine Provision in the accounts is for the March monthly settlement with Cheltenham Bridge Club, though this year there are a couple of other small ones.

We have also agreed a change to the way we account for the Cotswold Cup, and this would apply to any other charitable event. Since the entire surplus is donated to charity, it used not to appear in the accounts at all. Now I have drawn out the donation we make to Sue Ryder and the charitable contributions people make as separate items, with the entry fees and expenses (catering, rent prizes, etc) being included under the same headings as for all our other events. Whilst this adds two items to the accounts, it actually simplifies the accounting. I should point out that although we paid £100 rent to Cheltenham Bridge Club for this event, they also made a donation of £100 to Sue Ryder, so the charity benefited by £100 more than the £756.40 that appears in our accounts.

We have four bank accounts, our main current account and one each for our three joint ventures: the Congress run jointly with Cheltenham Bridge Club, the Ross-on-Wye Green Point event run jointly with Herefordshire, and Youth bridge jointly subsidised with Cheltenham Bridge Club. During 2017-18 some invoices were settled from the wrong bank accounts and this was not corrected until the financial year just ended. This resulted in Loans to other bank accounts being recorded in the 2018 accounts. Two have been repaid, but the Congress one has not yet been.

At last year's AGM, members voted to introduce a dual approval system for our bank accounts, amid warnings that it would be complicated to set up. I started on this in September 2018, and completed it last month.

For some years we have been making a large surplus, which is inappropriate for a non-profit organisation. In fact it has become clear to both GCBA and Cheltenham Bridge Club that the deal we struck when we stopped renting the entire building on a Monday evening was too generous to us. The deal has now been renegotiated. At least in the short term, we intend to keep our table money at its present level, which I estimate will mean that we shall approximately break even, barring other cost increases.

Two questions arose from the accounts:

- It was confirmed that the "Trophies" entry on the Balance Sheet referred to their collective value as an asset. Jim noted that they were valued some time ago, so the figure may not be accurate.
- It was confirmed that our current surplus is sufficient to cope if expenditure increases due to, for example, Gloucestershire qualifying for the Tollemache finals.

5. Election of the Auditor for the season 2018-2019

Chris Coleman was proposed by Patrick Shields, second by Val Constable, and elected unanimously.

6. Election of Officers and Officials

The following were elected unopposed:

President	Patrick Shields
Secretary	Andrew Bull
Treasurer	Mike Wignall

7. Election of Committee Members

Patrick noted that Paul Denning and Anne Swannell were stepping down, due to having served 6 consecutive years on the council, the maximum allowed by the constitution.

Ian Sidgwick, Roger Williams, Richard Butland, Richard Harris and Peter Waggett were elected unopposed.

8. Any Other Business

- It was suggested that the numbers playing on Monday evenings have declined recently. Patrick reported that, though the numbers were down on those from 5-10 years ago, they have periodically risen and declined to a similar extent before that, and that they were good compared to those at other counties. He invited suggestions for ways to improve the numbers, noting that we have held handicap events and Swiss events to try to dispel the idea that they are for elite players only.
- There had been a disappointing turn-out at the Ace of Clubs final, with clubs not encouraging players who had qualified at their heats to compete. The event being aimed at non-expert club players, it was suggested that we could re-define the expert level.
- It was suggested that slow play and the consequent late finishes on Mondays were putting people off. Patrick noted that we have to strike a balance, but it was agreed that we should aim to finish by a set time, and that a countdown clock for each round might help. It was suggested that it would sometimes be possible to stagger the break (to avoid long queues).

9. Presentation of trophies and prizes for the 2018-19 season

The trophies were presented by Betty Harris. The season's events and winners were as follows:

Event	Winners
Steve Darke Trophy (C)	Patrick Shields & Derek Rue
Summer Individual (C)	Joe Angseesing
Summer Teams (C)	Allan Sanis
Geoffrey Paterson VL (C)	Roger Schofield
Mens Pairs (C)	Roger Jackson & Peter Waggett
Ladies Pairs (C)	Anne Swannell & Wendy Angseesing
Cotswold Cup (C)	Philip & Kate Morgan
Bredon Vale	Thribb BC
Mixed Pairs (C)	John Cuncer & Suzy Lawson
Flitch (C)	Paul Archer & Sarah Watson
Everett Cup (C)	Bryony Youngs & Patrick Shields, Simon & Caroline Hartley
Ace of Clubs (C)	Michael Cornelius & Lesley Mitchell
Leonard Cup (C)	Linda Nandlal & Sue Adlard
Winter Pairs (C)	Mike Wignall & Patrick Shields
Teams of eight	Cheltenham BC
County Individual (C)	Paul Denning
County Pairs (C)	Tony Hill & Alan Wearmouth
Rank Xerox (S)	Thribb BC
Winter Teams (C)	Richard Butland, Garry Watson, Diana Nettleton & Alekzander Lishkov
Spring Pairs	Ashok Kwatra & Mike Wignall
Spring Teams	Alan Wearmouth, Tony Hill, Peter Waggett & Mark Rogers
League Division 1 (C)	Tony Letts, David Jones, Duncan Cairns & Peter Shelley

League Division 2 (C)	Jim Simons, Patrick Phair, Nigel Edmondson, John Arblaster & Mel Barlow
County Knock-out (C)	Keith Stanley, Garry Watson, Alan Wearmouth, Paul Denning & Richard Plackett
Cleverley Cup (C)	Wanderers