

# **GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY BRIDGE ASSOCIATION**

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting** held via Zoom on Sunday June 6th 2021 at 6:00 pm. The President (Patrick Shields) was in the chair and 45 members attended.

## **1. Approval of the minutes of the 2019 AGM**

The minutes were approved unanimously.

## **2. President's Report**

The President's Report (see Appendix A) had been placed on the GCBA webpages before the AGM for members to consider in their own time, and was not read out at the AGM.

Patrick noted that, in this exceptional year, the EBU and GCBA have taken the chance to help clubs out, and that in some clubs more duplicate is being played online now than was being played face-to-face before the pandemic. Thus online bridge has proved very popular, but lacks the community aspect of face-to-face bridge, and it remains to be seen what the balance between the two will be once face-to-face bridge resumes. GCBA will be supporting both forms as appropriate.

Patrick was thanked for his efforts in supporting online bridge.

## **3. Treasurers Report and Adoption of the Accounts for 2020-21**

This report (see Appendix B) had also been placed online before the AGM and was not read out. Mike noted that this had been a difficult year for bridge organisation, but that, surprisingly, GCBA had in fact made a small profit. Mike was thanked for his work.

The accounts were approved unanimously.

## **4. Election of the Auditor for the season 2018-2019**

Patrick reported that Chris Coleman is happy to continue as auditor, and he was elected unanimously.

## **5. Election of Officers and Officials**

Patrick was obliged to stand down as President having completed 3 years in the role, and he thanked the committee for their support and work over the last 3 years.

Similarly, Andrew was obliged to stand down as Secretary.

Ian Sidgwick was elected unopposed as the new President.

Paul Denning was elected as the new Vice-President, following an election.

Patrick Shields was elected unopposed as the new Secretary.

Mike Wignall was elected unopposed to continue as Treasurer

## **6. Election of Committee Members**

Peter Waggett was obliged to stand down having served 6 years on the committee.

Following an election, the following members were elected/re-elected to the committee: Andrew Bull, Richard Butland, Jan Kinane, Hylary Kingham, Nigel Mortimer, Roger Williams.

## 7. Any Other Business

- It was suggested that clubs should check whether their Bridge Mates and Duplimates need to be serviced following the long break, and Cheltenham Bridge Club confirmed that they had been doing so.
- Paul Denning reported that we had nearly matched the attendance of the Welsh Bridge Union's AGM held earlier on the same day.
- Sally Lindner of Chipping Camden asked if we had advice for clubs on re-opening. There is some general advice on the GCBA and EBU webpages, though this will depend on future Government guidelines. It was noted that some clubs will be keen to meet up sooner than others, depending on whether they have been operating online.
- It was suggested that we should consult with GCBA members as to whether they would prefer to play face-to-face or to continue playing online. Richard Butland noted that he has plans underway to survey those playing in the Midlands Counties League along these lines, and that we were intending to extend this survey.
- The idea of combined online/face-to-face events was raised. Patrick replied that this can be done, but there could be issues if most of the players were opting to play in one or the other (e.g. depending on the weather).
- It was noted that the extra ability to play at different clubs is a benefit of online play, and that the online game is more attractive to young players.

## 8. Winners of the events of the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons

### Winners for 2019-20

Event	Winners
Steve Darke Trophy (C)	Kate & Philip Morgan
Summer Pairs (C)	Joe Angseesing
Summer Teams (C)	John Cuncer/Mark Rogers
Geoffrey Paterson VL (C)	Mike Wignall
Mens Pairs (C)	Tony Letts & Allan Sanis
Ladies Pairs (C)	Val Constable & Alison Pritchard
Cotswold Cup (C)	Enid Castle & Sybil Davies, Doug Quine & Patrick Shields
Bredon Vale	EDF BC
Mixed Pairs (C)	Anne Swannell & Steve Sasanow
Flitch (C)	Joe & Wendy Angseesing
Everett Cup (C)	Stan & Andrea Powell, Linda Barratt & Steve Tedd
Ace of Clubs (C)	-- cancelled --
Leonard Cup (C)	-- cancelled --
Winter Pairs (C)	Joe Angseesing & Ben Ritacca
County Individual (C)	-- cancelled --
County Pairs (C)	-- cancelled --
Rank Xerox (S)	Gloucester BC
Autumn Pairs	John Cuncer & Mark Rogers
Winter Teams (C)	Tony Hill, Alan Wearmouth, Mark Rogers & Peter Waggett
Open Handicap Pairs	Elizabeth Freeman & Peggy Phillips
Stanley Swiss Teams	Roy Collard & Pam Pearce, Ben Ritacca & Mike Wignall
Spring Pairs	-- cancelled --
Spring Teams	Roy Collard, Val Constable, Steve Evens, Patrick Phair
League Division 1 (C)	Alan Wearmouth & Tony Hill, David Jones & Peter Shelley
League Division 2 (C)	Alison Pritchard & David Atthey, Kanwar Rahim & James Wells
County Knock-out (C)	Cancelled (unfinished)
Cleverley Cup (C)	(D1) Stroud M (North) EDF Glevum (South) Tudor

## Winners for 2020-21 (online)

<b>Event</b>	<b>Winners</b>
Swiss Teams 1	David Jones, Marc Smith, Peter Shelley, Trevor Ward, John Hassett
Swiss Teams 2	Patrick Shields & Dan McIntosh, Diane & Filip Kurbalija
Swiss Teams 3	Stefan Lindfors & Rob Lawy, Harry & Sally Anoyrkatis
Swiss Teams 4	Patrick Shields, Daniel McIntosh, Diane & Filip Kurbalija, BJ O'Brien
Swiss Teams 5	Paul Denning, Richard Butland, Joe Angseesing, Andrew Kambites, Rob Stevens, Richard Plackett
Swiss Teams 6	Patrick Shields, Daniel McIntosh, Diane & Filip Kurbalija, BJ O'Brien
Swiss Teams 7	Patrick Shields, Daniel McIntosh, Diane & Filip Kurbalija, Martin Kane
9-High Swiss Pairs 1	Hylary Kingham & John Polhill
9-High Swiss Pairs 2	Hylary Kingham & John Polhill
9-High Swiss Pairs 3	Richard Williams & Janet Miles
9-High Swiss Pairs 4	Val & Gordon Atkinson
9-High Swiss Pairs 5	Pauline Mussi & Jonathan Bailey
9-High Swiss Pairs 6	Richard Williams & Janet Miles
9-High Swiss Pairs 7	John Polhill & Hugh Wilkinson
9-High Swiss Pairs 8	John Polhill & Hugh Wilkinson
League Division 1 (C)	Patrick Shields, Garry Watson, Ollie Burgess, Diana Nettleton
League Division 2 (C)	Mike Lewis, Malcolm Green, Nicky Ferguson, Tom Jarman, Alison Nicolson
League Division 3	Lesley Harrison, Martin McWilliam, Paul Lilley, Peter Swales
Cleverly Teams League	(D1) Stroud (Swiss equal first) Gloucester B and Southam S
Autumn Pairs League	Peter Shelley & Trevor Ward (on split tie)
Spring Pairs League	Dan McIntosh & Filip Kurbalija
County Pairs	Patrick Phair & Patrick Shields
County Knock-Out	Patrick Shields & Dan McIntosh, Richard Chamberlain & Garry Watson
Summer Pairs 1	Peter Waggett & Richard Butland
Summer Pairs 2 & 3	Ben Ritacca & Peter Waggett
Christmas Handicap Pairs	Paul Gunning & Karen Monaghan; Terry Britton & Geoff Bent
Easter Handicap Pairs	Derek Boreham & Patrick Shields

Again, these had been published online prior to the AGM.

## Appendix A: President's Report

With no AGM last year – by common consent – and given we've never had a year like the past year, there is rather a lot of ground to cover in this report, and I will have to strike a balance between glossing over things and making this report too long to read. Wish me luck!

Let me start where I started in my report two years ago, making the point that the GCBA is a volunteer-driven organisation and the fact that many consider us a very successful County Bridge Association is down to the help so many give. This year I have been able to welcome two new members to the committee, and I am pleased to say that later today we will actually have elections for the committee because for once we have a small surplus of volunteers. The committee has been very active in the past year, talking together far more often online than we did in the days before Covid. Thank you to all this committee for working with me.

I must also thank Garry Watson who has taken charge of the County newsletter, which is now back as a monthly publication of interest to us all – and is available on the website. Organisationally, the GCBA has also been pleased to welcome the county's first U3A group – the Cam & Dursley team – as an affiliated bridge club, moving us up to 14 affiliated clubs – although now back down to 13 because the Nomads club, run for decades by Joe Angseesing (thank you Joe), has taken the Covid disruptions as a sign for it to put away its bidding boxes. Nomads as a club didn't change its name but recently settled down to play in the Cheltenham Bridge Club premises, and I am sure all its players will be well catered for there.

I am sorry to report that we no longer need to cater for two of our most regular players, who died in this reporting period – David Hauser in 2019 and then Wendy Angseesing in 2020. We organised a memorial event for them in February of this year and raised well over £1000 for Save The Children by doing that.

Looking at bridge in the county in 2019, there was plenty going on and the top teams had a number of successes on which they must be congratulated – one team travelled to London and managed to put the Zia Mahmood team out of the Gold Cup (although they lost to Brian Senior's team in the next round), and four of them went on to be second in the 4-star teams at the EBU's Eastbourne Summer Meeting. The county also picked up third place in the intercounty Pachabo, and qualified for the final of the Tollemache Cup – while along the way Cheltenham Bridge Club represented the county in the EBU's Garden Cities Trophy and came first in that event. Efforts in inter-county matches were well supported and when the pandemic caused the Midlands Counties League to stop we were lying top of the Dawes and Markham divisions. The GCBA also visited Bristol Bridge Club for our friendly match against Avon, involving players of all standards, in August of 2019. We had one very special addition to the programme not long before lockdown – and this was the inaugural running of the Stanley Shield. We must express our thanks to Keith Stanley for his initiative to have an event of this nature and for his sponsorship of the day; we had a total of 26 teams from all parts of the county take part. That was in January of 2020 and we followed that by a successful – thanks here to Allan & Judy Sanis – running of the Cotswold Cup which raised about £1000 for the Sue Ryder foundation.

Then everything changed! Our final face to face game was on the 16th of March in 2019. Although a few of us had been playing online with BBO before this point, it took a while for enough of us to get our act together to organise some games. From some previous training activities in which I had been involved, I had privileges on BBO to run tournaments and I was able to test this out with the first online pairs event for Cheltenham Bridge Club which ran on the 5th April. It was around this time that the EBU organised the Virtual Club concept with BBO, and this – initially with its professional TDs – was taken up first by Cheltenham Bridge Club, and then by Newent Bridge Club and eventually by three other clubs. As County Chief TD, my accreditation as an online TD was sponsored by the GCBA and once I had obtained that I was able to train and accredit TDs for any clubs in the county which wanted that – and a number of people took the offer up.

In parallel with this we were able to kick off the first GCBA Weekly Swiss Teams game on 11th April, followed by the Weekly 9-High Swiss Pairs on 17th May, and the first GCBA BBO match-point pairs game on 18th May. Since then we have repeated the Swiss Teams (now on series 8) and the Swiss

Pairs (now on series 9) and have run a weekly game on almost every Monday. And alongside all this we were able to complete one year's Cleverly Teams League (which had 16 teams) with 6 online matches, and Ian Sidgwick then organised the event fully online the next year for an increased entry of 21 teams. And there's been even more than that going on.

From the early days of online games – in recognition of that fact that travelling was not an issue – a number of intercounty matches and competitions were organised. We must thank Richard Butland and his committee, and Alan Wearmouth for making the arrangements which saw many players of all standards representing Gloucestershire. We had matches against 11 different counties during 2020 (including the annual friendly against Avon) and took part in two multi-county events. The Midlands Counties instigated a Midlands Counties Online League and since October the GCBA has played three teams-of-8 in that, and with one match to go is leading Division One and lying third in the other two Divisions.

The online bridge world continued to develop and in summer we were introduced to a new platform in StepBridge (which we didn't take up) and then some months later to the more radical RealBridge platform which offers audio and video to the players. The County took this option up, obtaining a license and running our Christmas Pairs as a free taster event on RealBridge which attracted a record 24 tables, and then offering trials and help to any club which wanted to use this platform. A number of clubs are now running sessions on RealBridge.

In the wider online bridge world we can report multiple successes for County players – notably we had Richard Chamberlain, Paul Denning and myself all playing in the Seniors Home Internationals for the Teltscher Trophy. And the same three – with Graham Sadie who used to play here – collected the Swiss Teams first place at the EBU's Year End Congress.

So where do we go now?

There is no doubt that that the bridge world has changed – and both face-to-face bridge and online bridge are important parts of the future. It is difficult to be certain about when live bridge will be safe, and working as it does on a 3-to-4 month planning horizon, everything announced so far by the GCBA is running online. For different people the preferred style of bridge will be different, and the GCBA wants to support the full spectrum of bridge players – so even after all Covid worries disappear, the GCBA will still have an online presence. However, the balance between face-to-face bridge and online bridge is far from clear yet to any tournament provider – it will depend on regulations, and the attitude and appetite of the bridge playing community. We have to wait and see where all that settles.

In stepping down now as President, I have to register that it has been three years unlike any other three years. My ambitions at the start included the GCBA reaching out to the county bridge playing community which is much wider than our affiliated clubs, and moving forward on Youth Bridge. I hope we have managed some of that, but there is lots more to do. The next few years will be very interesting. The pandemic has forced the game of bridge to have a fresh look at itself; we should not think of the coming year as “getting back to usual” – it is more than that, it's time for a re-launch of the game we love. There are new approaches to teaching and learning the game. and online offers a chance to attract a totally new cohort of players, and that spreads down into the Youth Bridge we wanted to start a few years back. The game and this organisation belongs to all of you – so do get involved and help shape that future.

Thank you all for listening.

Patrick Shields  
GCBA President (2018-2021)

## Appendix B: Treasurer's Report

This entire year has been affected by the social distancing and other restrictions resulting from COVID. No face to face bridge has taken place. As it became clear that the restrictions were likely to continue for some time, GCBA was instrumental in promoting the adoption of on-line bridge in the County, both to replace the "Monday night" GCBA program and in supporting Gloucestershire clubs, by financing the online accreditation of our CTD (& President) for online games. Patrick was then able to cascade that experience to encourage and facilitate member clubs in the steps necessary to provide on-line games for their members, within the EBU structure.

Initially only BBO (the dominant USA based online bridge platform) was available to enable games, and EBU were able to arrange for authorisation of member clubs as organisers for BBO games and for transmission of part of the BBO charges for players participating in online games to the organising club (via EBU). This method gathered volumes as the year progressed and has now been supplemented by the English based RealBridge platform. GCBA uses both of these platforms and our CTD has facilitated clubs in using either platform – and remains happy to help clubs needing assistance.

RealBridge has not, at present, developed a charging method for players, and organisers (inc GCBA) have to make their own arrangements to collect entry money, before paying RealBridge their platform charges. I hope and expect that this aspect will be improved over the coming year.

GCBA has borne in mind two guiding principles during a year in which we feared that COVID represented a serious risk to the future of Bridge, not just in the UK, but internationally. A year on, this risk is not as threatening, but we do believe that the excellent on-line facilities which have been utilised by a wider range of players may result in a change in the balance of Face to Face and on-line games, even following a return to wider normality.

Firstly, that our immediate and main objective must be to keep bridge going by arranging, facilitating and encouraging games of any form.

Secondly that we hope and expect that the majority of Bridge played in Gloucestershire is, and will remain, organised by our member clubs – and our intention is to be supportive.

It is clear that on-line Bridge is less costly to organise and, some would say, more convenient for players. Many will, however, wish to resume face to Face Bridge and GCBA is keen to support the reopening of the excellent club facilities, in Gloucestershire. Whilst GCBA has rebated the "County" element of the EBU Universal Membership (Pay to Play) charge for Gloucestershire clubs arranging on-line games, to further encourage bridge activity during the restrictions, it seems possible that restarting Face to Face Bridge will be challenging following a return to a pre Covid environment. GCBA is keen to assist any member club in any difficulties.

On a financial point, whilst your committee has felt that encouraging bridge, during this difficult year, has been a rather higher priority than saving costs, and that the available charging methodologies for online games have been restrictive, GCBA does try to apply the principles of not competing on price with its member clubs, and of charging players fairly for participation in GCBA games and teams. There have been issues and I don't claim a faultless performance here - we've perhaps erred on the side of fair rather than encouraging - but the arrangement of inter-county events for a wider range of abilities has been a step forward, which I hope we can continue.

Your Committee do hope (and believe) that Gloucestershire has done well (amongst its peers) in continually and successfully promoting bridge through the restrictions – and keeping bridge in focus to put clubs in a good place to resume Face to Face activities. We hope for a resurgence of such activities throughout the County as restrictions ease.

GCBA did not run its normal range of "weekend" events in 2020/21 – County Championships and other cups - but is intending to do so in 2021/22 – and has, as I write this, completed the 2021 County Pairs Event. The Midland Counties League has carried on as the MCOL and Richard Butland,

and others, were instrumental in arranging several inter-county events for various skill levels during Lockdown. Our President was a key man in organising 8 high & 9 high (NGS) games on behalf of the Midland Counties Working Group, and we used the GCBA bank account for the various financial transactions, resulting in a Credit balance of £395.60 which we are holding for MCWG.

Neither the Cheltenham Congress nor the joint Glos/Hereford event took place – the change to the Cheltenham Congress assets (shown in the acs) is simply the payment of the amounts provisioned at last year end, from the bank ac. The 2021 Cheltenham Congress has, however, been successfully run on-line, and will have a positive effect on next year's revenue.

Yet again, I regret that GCBA has shown an excess of income over expenditure – despite the committee taking a clear view early in the year that the priority was to promote and encourage bridge (if necessary, at the expense of revenue) in the difficult circumstances pertaining, and in the hope of a return to normality. This surplus has resulted from the relatively low cost (to organisers) of on-line bridge in comparison with Face to Face.

GCBA understands that the future of Bridge for players in the County may change after Covid. Many players will have engaged in online bridge and this will, as we see it, remain an alternative option. Whilst clubs are now preparing to resume Face to Face sessions, GCBA will await the implementation of resumption to assess whether, and what sort of, Face to Face events are viable in the light of the actual restrictions on use of premises, and how these restrictions develop. Whether Face to Face, or online, GCBA has a clear objective of promoting Bridge within Gloucestershire and supporting clubs in providing games for their members.

M J Wignall  
Hon Treasurer