

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

### Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held on Tuesday 17 September 2024 at 7.30 pm at Cheltenham Bridge Club

In attendance were Patrick Shields (President), Caroline Hartley (Secretary), Michael Wright (Treasurer), Paul Denning (Vice-President), Ian Sidgwick, Alan Stanfield, Jan Bailey and Richard Butland.

#### Apologies

There were no apologies.

#### Decisions taken since the last meeting

**County UMS.** It was agreed via email that the reduction of the County UMS fee from 5p to 1p should take effect from 1 September 2024. Patrick informed the clubs and Caroline the EBU. There had been no response from clubs.

**Edgar Foster competition.** The GCBA will pay the entry fee but travel expenses to be the responsibility of the players. Any prize money will be split 50/50 between the GCBA and participants. Ratified and agreed for future similar competitions.

**Player deposit accounts.** It was agreed by the officers via email that member deposit accounts will no longer be maintained by the Treasurer. Players will be required to make payment before participating in a GCBA event. Any prize money due to players will be paid to them and not held by GCBA. One player is owed a refund for an overpayment; Michael is chasing to organise repayment.

**GCBA & the EBU free packs of playing cards.** The EBU offered free playing cards featuring the BIABD logo, with bar codes for dealing machines and a QR code linking to information about playing bridge, to all affiliated clubs. 20 packs were made available to each club. Patrick agreed to collect and distribute these on behalf of the County increasing the number of packs available per club to 30 and saving the EBU postage costs. Some clubs did not require their full allocation; these will be used for teaching and offered to CBC. Caroline thanked Patrick for collecting the cards which gave each club an extra 10 packs.

#### Finance

Michael circulated the month-5 figures to 31 August 2024 and his report prior to the meeting.

- It was agreed that the detailed invoices and bank statements for the period 2009-2018, passed on by the previous treasurer, could be destroyed.
- The committee supported paying over to CBC all table monies due for face to face games held at the Club. This simplified the arrangement with CBC and included a contribution towards refreshments, bridge stationery, duplimating, depreciation of equipment etc. These games would run at a loss after UMS and a free play for the director, but the profit from GCBA online Mondays would more than compensate. This agreement may need to be revisited should CBC increase their table money, which GCBA has always matched. Charges for other competitions were discussed including the County Knock Out (where no fee is charged), County League matches (where face-to-face table money is collected) and the Cleverly League (where teams pay a £12 entry fee). It was agreed there would be no changes to the current charges.

- The basis of valuation of the trophies could not be tracked down from the records that had been passed over. It was agreed that the valuation recorded in the accounts should be reduced from £2,332 to £1.
- The success of the G&H congress was acknowledged. £800 had been passed over in September. The committee were in agreement that Michael should take over as treasurer of the G&H congress.
- Ian is speaking to Tewkesbury about an automated scoring system. A request may follow for support in the form of a grant and/or loan. The committee agreed that this form of support should be promoted to all clubs. Patrick will include this in his next mailing but reminded the committee that the main objective of the GCBA is investing in bringing players to the game, and improving the experience of playing bridge is secondary. Alan emphasised that we should continue to promote youth bridge to help meet the main objective. Caroline reminded the committee that in November 2025 the EBU will be celebrating of 100 years of Contract Bridge as we know it, giving the committee another opportunity to promote the game to new players.
- The County is due a refund from the EBU for overcharging in respect of team entry fees for competitions over the last two years. The amount of the refund is expected to be a couple of hundred pounds.

Patrick thanked Michael for his report and the work he has undertaken on the accounts.

### **Committee structure**

Patrick has identified two areas in particular where help would be welcome. Firstly with the website which requires a revamp/refresh. It was noted that Newent and CBC have attractive websites which are continually updated. The GCBA website serves two purposes: to attract new players and direct them to learning/participation opportunities and then to inform and update county players. Secondly it would be useful to have a publicity officer on board to promote the GCBA. Patrick will search out a list of tasks that had previously been identified and will bring this to the next meeting. It was agreed that whilst there are 2 vacancies on the committee many roles could be undertaken by volunteers outside of the committee.

Alan fed back on his contact with the Clubs where he acts as a buddy. His report will be circulated to the committee but includes the number of sessions run, number of tables, finances, TD/scorer numbers, involvement in BIABD. In summary his findings were that most players are involved in more than one club and/or U3A, play a mix of social and duplicate bridge, only a very small number are involved with GCBA, and they have limited opportunities to upskill with little or no appetite to do that within clubs. Can the GCBA help?

Jan offered to take on some of Patrick's buddy clubs and Ian reported he already has close ties with his buddy clubs.

The current GCBA constitution refers to promoting duplicate bridge. Should the GCBA be encouraging other forms of bridge? What forms of bridge are U3A clubs playing? What can the bridge community do to make duplicate fun? Larger clubs can of course offer a variety of games. Some clubs offer refreshments which may make them more attractive. The general feeling of the committee was that the return to face to face bridge was positive and increased enjoyment of the game.

Patrick reported that he is called upon to make rulings for county matches and has recently been asked to make two rulings and there have been two appeals. There are still those who seek out the more competitive side of the game.

## **Cheltenham congress**

Ro Kaye, Congress chair, had submitted a report that was circulated prior to the meeting. The congress had attendance in line with expectations, and had gone well, with the exception of the "9 high" session where the movement was too complicated. Refunds had been made to "9 high" players but a small surplus was still anticipated. The venue was generally praised but there were some complaints about: the food; the lack of availability of drinking water and the venue rule that drinks were not allowed in the playing area.

Caroline will write to Ro and the team to thank them for their efforts. Ro is standing down as Congress Chairperson. CBC will be reviewing Congress and the GCBA committee agreed to be supportive financially whether in the future the Congress remained a joint venture or CBC ran it alone.

## **Youth bridge**

Jan gave a verbal report

- Teaching at CBC has been paused. It is likely to restart but on Sundays, late afternoon
- Woodmancote School has lost its volunteers and sessions have stopped
- Pittville School are interested on Tuesday afternoons
- Cleeve School, the headmaster is very keen but the team are struggling to find volunteers for their offering of Thursday afternoons
- Charlton Kings may run something on Monday afternoons
- Ladies College had run sessions on Friday afternoons with some success, but it is limited in time (sign up is for only six weeks) and subject to interruptions
- Richard Croot, the new CEO of EBED, is considering investment in 40 devices as part of an EBED Roadshow for introducing the game to a limited number of schools as a pilot . Alison Nicolson has suggested a trial in Gloucestershire grammar schools

Alan gave an insight into the success at Denmark Road where Bridge had been introduced for 6 sessions as part of the curriculum with 30 participants involved in each of years 9, 10 and 11. Minibrige was used with some moving on to bidding.

Ian suggested writing to public schools. Jan had fairly recently written/phoned to over 30 schools, primary and prep schools, but there had been no response. The challenge is letters/emails reaching the right person. Ian suggested putting on a weekend to introduce teachers to bridge but the general view was that teachers are already overstretched. We might however put on an event to thank the teaching volunteers. Alan suggested putting together an inter school competition which may attract interest.

Patrick will maintain links with Alison in her role as county youth officer and catch up with Alison Pritchard on progress with Stroud schools.

## **Constitution: preparation for the AGM**

The latest version of the GCBA constitution dated February 2015 was sent to the EBU following a request from the EBU who include copies of County Association constitutions on their website. However, the EBU have updated their model constitution and it was agreed that it was a good time to review the GCBA version. Committee members were sent the model EBU County Association constitution and GCBA version and asked for their thoughts. Caroline thanked those who had commented and asked the remaining committee members to give it some thought. She will collate the comments and highlight areas for discussion at the next meeting.

## **BIABD**

Some events are yet to take place and the success of the national campaign and more specifically those held in Gloucestershire to be discussed at the next meeting including any potential “lessons to be learnt” for future events.

### **Future of honours boards**

Paul reported that the GCBA have 8 traditional honours boards in the ground floor playing rooms at CBC covering 18 competitions and including a Presidents’ board. One board is full and includes details of the winners of 5 competitions. The thinking is to transcribe the details on that board to smaller boards before the board is wiped. The smaller board would be placed with the other similar boards, possibly in the basement where they are currently situated or maybe in the back room upstairs. The aim is also to reduce the wall space devoted to GCBA boards in CBC’s main rooms. Patrick and Paul will continue their discussions with Peter Swales about board replacement and siting and report back.

Some competitions are no longer run and are unlikely to restart. Some continue but have limited entries. Caroline suggested putting together an information pack about the competitions run by the GCBA which buddies could forward to their clubs and the detail could be used by clubs to circulate to their members. This may increase interest.

It was suggested that the Rank Xerox competition could perhaps be replaced with an inter club “9 high” competition. Jan thought this would be best held online.

### **Update on CBC plans for management of the Club**

Patrick reported that CBC is recruiting a full time club manager. A shortlist of applicants are about to be invited for interview and it is likely that any appointment will take effect from the new year. Patrick is in touch with Alan Wearmouth, chair of the CBC Trustees, who will keep him abreast of the progress on the appointment and of any changes likely to impact the GCBA.

## **AOB**

- **Dropbox.** Dropbox folders have been set up for sharing finance and secretarial files. The ownership of these will be held independently of the committee. Currently only the officers have access but this will be extended to the remainder of the committee.
- **Trophies.** Paul will prepare a list of the “defunct” trophies and a decision on what will be done with these will be made at the next meeting.

### **Future meeting dates**

Next meeting 7.30pm Tuesday 19 November 2024 at CBC

Further meeting 7.30 pm Tuesday 14 January 2025 (avoiding the Bournemouth holiday)

AGM Monday 26 May 2025

Patrick thanked the committee for their contributions and the meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Caroline Hartley

Secretary