

GLoucestershire County Bridge Association

Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held on Tuesday 21 January 2025 at 7.30 pm at Cheltenham Bridge Club

In attendance were Patrick Shields (President), Michael Wright (Treasurer), Paul Denning (Vice-President), Alan Stanfield, Richard Butland, and via Zoom, Ian Sidgwick.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Jan Bailey & Caroline Hartley.

Decisions taken since the last minute

- **MCL payment.** It was agreed that the system of payment for MCL should be: the match fee (now £2.50 per player per match) is due for payment after the last match of the season. The Treasurer will issue monthly summaries of the cumulative fees. Any queries should be raised at the time, so there is no delay in settling the final bill.
- **Use of the GCBA RealBridge account to trial the MiniBridge facility with a group of U3A MiniBridge players.** Agreed, costs to be recovered from the players.
- **Memorial games.** Agreed that free of charge memorial games on RealBridge could be held for well-known County players as a farewell from the County.
- **Custom playing cards.** Agreed that an investment should be made in custom playing cards to hand out at Youth Bridge, for beginners, for competitions etc. Estimated cost at less than £2K for 1000 packs.

Minutes of Last Meeting (16 Dec 2024)

The committee agreed that the minutes were accurate and are approved. Matter arising from those minutes, not covered later, were

- Honours Boards: Paul is in touch with Peter Swales on this, but no progress recently.
- Trophies: Paul produced eight not in use and said there was a further eight. We agreed that we would offer these to players at the Cotswold Cup (on 6 April) in the hope of a donation for the Sue Ryder charity in response, and after that we would invite (by email) all county members to make a bid (silent auction style) for any they'd like to own, and we would bin what remained after that.
- 9-High Corwen: the County will organise a 9-High Pairs Championship (on Sunday 27th April) and we will invite all eligible players who scored 50% or more at a club duplicate in the period 31 March – 12 April to form pairs and attend.

BIABD

Richard Barlow has had to stand down from this task, and the committee expressed its thanks to him for the good work he has done. The committee discussed what lessons we can learn for the promotion of the game from the BIABD experience. The main lesson was identified as

- Taster Sessions are a practical way of getting new people interested in the game. Sessions were run in the buildings used by the Churchdown and Gloucester BCs – each with current players playing MiniBridge and those coming to taste the game, sitting in with a foursome and being shown the mechanics. This generated 18 new starters of which 15 are still going. The main sources for attendance were social media and word of mouth. Alan will develop some documentation of the process to help other clubs replicate this.

Finance

Michael had circulated the November and December accounts and was congratulated on the clarity with which he painted the picture. Michael reported that the auditor (Simon) had also expressed satisfaction with this approach. Two points were made in discussion

- It was agreed to waive the normal £2.50 fee for the players who had formed the GCBA 9-High Squad in the inaugural match this month against Oxfordshire (the first such inter-county match and a win for Gloucestershire).
- We agreed that a suitable target for the GCBA reserves was £5k and that we would continue to work towards reducing our surplus to that level.

Youth Bridge

Jan circulated a report prior to the meeting (summarised at Appendix 1). We noted that the county had never had as much Youth activity in the past; the committee was pleased. The committee agreed that

- The GCBA will fund the attendance of Jan Bailey & Ro Kaye (who are transporting youngsters there as well as helping) at the Youth Camp in Kidderminster.
- The GCBA will offer to all first-time Youth Camp attendees from Gloucestershire a grant of 50% of the entry fee. Bursaries will also be available to those who need that.
- The GCBA will write to Alison Pritchard to congratulate her on the success of her ventures in Stroud.

Ian reported that social media (and in particular targeted broadcasts on Facebook) had proved effective in getting the appropriate people (those who organise youngsters' activities) to notice the EBED weekly online game for youngsters (Realbridge, 1615 Thursdays). The committee agreed that we would make a point in the next newsletter to raise awareness of the GCBA Facebook presence.

Ian also reported that a trial of a taster session (with beer & pizza) was being undertaken in early February at two universities, and also that a student at any university who wanted to start a bridge club is being offered a grant of £1k (over three years) to make that happen.

The committee confirmed its intention to introduce an interschool competition once a number of schools were on board.

Constitution

Caroline had prepared some notes on the outstanding discussions on the GCBA Constitution. The committee agreed that:

- ✓ Paragraph 3.5 (changes underlined) should read: The signatures of the Treasurer and one other member of the association, authorised by the Executive Committee to act as dual signatory, shall be required on the paperwork for the payment of monies out of the Association.
- ✓ Paragraph 3.6 (changes underlined) should read: neither the President nor the Treasurer may hold their position for more than three consecutive years. No member may serve on the Executive Committee in any and all capacities for more than six consecutive years.
- ✓ On the question of handling disputes the wording should be: Affiliated clubs may ask the GCBA for advice on handling disciplinary allegations. However, if the complaint has been heard by the disciplinary committee of the affiliated club and any appeals process has been followed then the next step is to seek advice from the EBU's Conduct Committee.

Use of the GCBA surplus

The committee continued its discussion on how to use the GCBA reserves. It agreed that

1. The GCBA should take active steps to encourage non-affiliated clubs to join the EBU/GCBA but that – given the EBU offers a fee-free trial year – there was no reason for the GCBA to offer any financial help on this.
2. The committee noted that clubs without any teaching will inevitably decline and agreed that the GCBA needs to encourage more clubs to be teaching. One difficulty is finding new teachers willing to take on a considerable task. EBED is looking to prepare a “taster” to give candidates some insights without commitment to teacher training. It was agreed that the GCBA would be willing to fund such a venture in Gloucestershire and we agreed to look at a May timetable for that. If this generated interest, then the GCBA would also be willing to fund a subsequent Teacher/Helper Training course for groups from any club which would like to take part.
3. The committee agreed to offer to any active teacher in the county who is not currently an EBTA member, that the GCBA pays their membership for the first year so that they get the chance to explore the many teaching resources which this makes available for them.

GCBA roles/tasks

The committee noted with gratitude the continued efforts of Pauline Sanderson (most recently on the GCBA membership list). The committee agreed that

- Each committee member should choose a non-affiliated club (first to claim it gets it) to approach – with the aim of explain to them (the committee, the members) the fact of the county and national structure and the benefits they would accrue from membership of that. Patrick will circulate notes on this prepared by the EBU.

AOB

Alan noted that he had written to two Gloucestershire Prisons about the possibilities for bridge being played therein, but had not yet had any replies.

Patrick noted that the Cheltenham BC is discussing raising table money by 50p at some point, and it was agreed that the GCBA would follow suit.

Paul asked if the committee felt that – following the poor turnout for the Bredon Vale Cup - the Rank Xerox Trophy was a viable competition. The committee discussed various options and came down in favour of

- Moving the date to Saturday 29th March, and inviting club representatives to a lunch (which the GCBA would fund, perhaps a sandwich spread from Waitrose?) preceding the competition in order to engage them in a discussion about the promotion of the game. It was also suggested we change the format to be team-of-4.

Future meeting dates

- Next meeting 7.30pm Tuesday 18 March 2025 at CBC
- AGM Monday 26 May 2025

Patrick thanked the committee for their contributions and the meeting closed at 2105 hrs.

Update on Youth

- ✓ Our monthly club session has 11 on the register, mostly grandchildren of club members, and rarely all of them there at the same time.
- ✓ Ro has spoken to Alan Shillitoe, who coaches the U16s online, about including George and Alfie. Ro will contact their parents.
- ✓ Alan's perseverance paid off last week when he started a club at Tommy's. He was expecting four 6th formers, and six turned up!
- ✓ There is no longer a club at the Ladies' College. Denmark Road's status is still unknown.
- ✓ Alison Pritchard is still involved with a primary school in Stroud and has managed to find some necessary help. She has 12 children attending the after-school club.
- ✓ Gloucester Academy are very keen to start an after-school club in the summer term.
- ✓ Cleeve School's after school club started last week with nine children. The Head is very enthusiastic, and told us they would be promoting our club, so hopefully we will get a few more attending this week.
- ✓ Pittville School's taster day to the whole of year 8 (over 200 students) is taking place on the 28th January. We have two very experienced teachers, Richard Croot and Alison Nicolson running three sessions each. We have had a very good response to our request for volunteer helpers, with some saying they would also like to help at the after school club which will be starting on the 4th February.
- ✓ The Wessex Spring camp will be held on 5th/6th April at the Pioneer Centre in Kidderminster.