

DEVON BRIDGE ASSOCIATION - NORTHERN SECTION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
MONDAY 6 JUNE 2022 AT 6.15 PM ROUNDSWELL HALL BARNSTAPLE

Northern Section Committee Members Present:

Mrs J Munns (JM)- Chairperson
Mr N Marsden (NM) - Treasurer
Mrs B Lloyd (BL) - Secretary
Mr R Watkins (RW) - Committee Member
Mr S Munns (SM) - Committee Member

Northern Section Members Attending - 38 members

1. Welcome - JM welcomed everyone to the AGM.
2. Apologies Mr S Rafferty and Mrs L Rafferty
3. Minutes of 2021 AGM held on Wednesday 9 June 2021 via Zoom were read and agreed. Proposed by Barbara Rennie, seconded by Penny Gowland.
4. Matters arising from the minutes of the AGM 2021 - None
5. Chairman's report

Welcome to everyone and thanks for coming. Thanks also to Taw Vale for hosting the AGM.

My review of the last year

I took over as chair of the ND Section from Elizabeth at the online 2021 AGM on the 9th June 2021. At that time, there was no F2F Bridge in ND although the online afternoon sessions that started in May 2020 were still going strong.

In September 2021, our four affiliated clubs returned to F2F and, as the survey organised by the ND section the previous year had predicted, numbers were down on pre-pandemic levels. Unfortunately, Caen suspended play after a few weeks when it became clear that their numbers were unsustainable. Recently, at a special meeting, it was decided that the Club should NOT wind up, but would seek a loose amalgamation or association with Braunton Bridge Club so that, should conditions become favourable in the future, the club could be re-established.

The other three clubs continued, hoping that numbers would improve as Covid levels fell, although at least initially, levels rose as we in the run up to Xmas. In October, the committee bought a new dealing machine. Although an expensive item, it was felt that having a second working machine was paramount. We would need to deal boards for the upcoming Congress and would also be able to support the move towards dealt boards in the clubs.

In November of 2021, during a time of fairly high Covid levels in the community, the section went ahead with our usual autumn team's event at Filleigh. Twelve teams from across the county attended, an impressive number that compared favourably with pre-pandemic attendance levels. Those of you that were there would I hope agree that 'a great day was had by all'. We raised money for Macmillan and the North Devon Hospice, although not as much as we had hoped, something the section will address for next time. Thanks to all involved, both in and outside the committee, who worked hard to make it a success, and a special mention to Ali and her team for providing a great lunch.

In December, both Taw Vale and Braunton Clubs went ahead with successful Xmas Parties.

In February 2022, the North Devon Congress returned to the Barnstaple Hotel after a successful 2021 online event. We were delighted to be the first, and so far, the only major Devon-wide event to return to F2F. Numbers were about a half that of the last F2F congress in 2020 with 34 pairs contesting the Pairs competition on the Friday/Saturday, and 18 teams contesting the Swiss Teams on the Sunday. I am delighted to say that more than half of all players in each event won either a cash or wine prize and some won both.

It was great to see Peter, Caroline, Mandy & Aldo doing so well in their first congress and I hope their experience will encourage others – we work hard to make sure that the congress is competitive but friendly. And finally, thanks to all who helped to make it a success and especially to Richard Carter for returning to the scene of the crime, and to Carol, who has now stepped down after 26 years of involvement with the Congress.

At the end of February and into early March, the Barnstaple committee felt that their low attendance numbers were unsustainable, and in order to attract new members they began a 12-week collaboration with Sally Anoyrkatis, which concludes this Thursday. The ND section provided financial support for this venture and it is hoped that increased attendance levels seen during this 12-week event will be sustained, although only time will tell.

So, after a hiatus lasting almost two years, Face to Face Bridge is back in ND, but it is not quite the same as it was and, like everything else in life after the pandemic, we are learning to live with a new normal. Clubs have now been open again for more than eight months so I think this is a good time to take stock of where we are, where we want to be, and how we can get there. If we change nothing, I firmly believe that we risk the future of our F2F Bridge in our clubs.

Personally, I think there are three things we need to think about. First of all, and probably the most obvious, we need a plan to increase attendance at club level, although I think this has to be a long-term plan. We can't rely on the occasional Bridge-playing retired couple to blow in and join our clubs in order to increase the membership.

The second thing is that we need to be more joined-up and collaborate better between the clubs and other individuals and organisations to promote Bridge in all its guises and to make sure we are collectively offering a wide variety of Bridge options and not competing against each other. Remember the wide range of preferences expressed in the ND survey.

The third thing we need to do, and to my mind the most pressing, is to increase representation and involvement of members at committee and organisational level of Bridge at club and county level. At the moment, we have a very small group of people running the clubs in North Devon with many vacancies for officers and committee members. Some of us already have multiple 'hats' on across more than one club or organisation, and many have been in post for years. This is not healthy, either for the people involved or the clubs. We should be sharing the work, and no-one individual should be indispensable to the running of a club or event.

I want to make it clear - I don't want anyone to be cajoled into doing anything they don't want to do and I know that many of you here have already 'done your time' so to speak, and then some, in many cases. There may be a perception that there aren't people out there willing to get involved but I would challenge that. I think that in the current set up, there are clear barriers to volunteering and getting involved and those of us in post need to take the initiative to be open and encouraging to others.

I remember my first involvement at Braunton, I had no idea what any of the posts entailed and didn't feel confident enough to put myself forward. It was only after the then secretary David showed me the ropes and got me started, that I felt able to put myself forward the next year. Also, not everyone wants to be on a committee and there are other ways that people can get involved; write something for the website (or newsletter – more on that in a moment!), help to organise a one-off event, offer to play a friendly online game with new players not quite ready to join a club, to name but a few... we need to actively tap into the talent that there is around us.

So, if you feel that you would like to offer your services, I'm not asking you to stand up now, drop me a line or chat with your club chair, your help will be much appreciated.

6. Treasurer's report

NM reported that the accounts had been scrutinised by Mrs Marjorie Higgins and at 30 April 2022 the current account had a balance of £1779.75 and the Reserve account £6585.09.

NM reported that the loss shown for the year was due to the purchase of a new duplimate machine. (A separate attachment showing the detailed accounts will be sent with the minutes.)

NM thanked Mrs Marjorie Higgins for scrutinising the accounts - it is much appreciated by the Northern Section. The accounts were proposed by Brenda Martin and seconded by Roger Gowland.

7. The North Devon On Line Pairs (BBO on Friday afternoons)

JM reported that over recent months the number of players had reduced. She will email members confirming that the sessions will continue throughout the summer unless there is less than four tables, which is the minimum number required to operate.

8. North Devon Bridge Newsletter

JM suggested that a newsletter, to include information about all the North Devon club and county news and activities might be a good idea. However, she also stated that although she would edit and produce it, it could only go ahead if others got involved and provided content for it. She suggested that realistically, the autumn would be the earliest time for the first edition and asked members to get in touch with their ideas.

9. Election of Officers

Treasurer Neil Marsden -	Proposed by Linda Rafferty	Chair Jacqui Munns	Proposed by Brenda Martin
	Seconded by Ian Nunn		Seconded John Wintle

JM asked if there had been any other nominations put forward but none had been received.

The following positions are still vacant Vice Chairperson Secretary

JM said that BL had decided to tender her resignation as Northern Section Secretary. BL had taken over as Secretary in July 2014 as a 'temporary measure' but after eight years she felt it was time for her to relinquish her position. JM thanked BL for all the work she has completed over the years and presented her with a rose plant.

10. Any other business

JM advised that the Devon Bridge Association Annual General Meeting is scheduled to take place on 17 July at Bovey Tracy at 2pm. The AGM would be followed by a free 24-board team's event.

The meeting closed at 6.50pm