

Oxfordshire Bridge Association

Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 12th December 2013 at 7.30 p.m. at the North Oxford Association

PRESENT:

Robert Procter [RP]	Chairman
Sandra Nicholson [SN]	Secretary/EBU Shareholder
Claire MacDonagh [CM]	Treasurer/Tournament Secretary
Brenda Harris [BH]	Publicity Officer/EBU Shareholder
Peter Finbow [PF]	Congress Organiser
David Bygott	Newsletter Editor

Robert Gasser	Summertown
Frank Harris	Oxford (observer)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Mike Fletcher [MF]	Team Leader, Duplicate Bridge Promotion & Youth Team
Barbara Jordan [BJ]	Team Leader, Social Team
Alan Wilson [AW]	EBU Shareholder/Team Leader, County Team
Stephen Brown [SB]	Chief Tournament Director
Hugh Thomson [HT]	Wessex League Secretary
Mike Dobson [MD]	Presidents/Chester Cup Secretary
Ian Angus [IA]	Match Secretary
Sandra Claridge	EBU Shareholder

Geoff Nicholas	Aylesbury	Richard Sills	Oxford
Esme Alden	Oxford	Sue Smith	Oxford
Chris Dawe	Oxford	Kathy Talbot	Oxford
John Fleming	Oxford	Matthew Wilkinson	Oxford
Chris Kerr	Oxford	Erica Sheppard	Summertown
Pat Lewis	Oxford	Gillian Weatherley	Wallingford

2. Minutes of Management Committee meeting held on 20 March 2013, draft minutes of AGM held on 11 June 2013, notes from open meeting held on 18 July 2013

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 March 2013 were unanimously approved and signed. The draft AGM minutes, and the notes from the open meeting held on 18 July (which was a consultative meeting), were accepted by those present without amendment.

3. Action points and other matters arising from those and previous Management Committee meetings, not otherwise on the agenda

a. Action Points

Changes to competition by-laws: The revised by-laws were now on the website. Issues of eligibility to play for the county team remained to be addressed.

Selection and County Team Management: Menagerie had now started to run a “Play with an Expert” pivot teams, but not with a specific educational aim (although feedback from less experienced players suggested they were finding it valuable). There was still room for a similar event to be run by the County as an education event, with more time allowed for discussion of hands.

Rob Dixon was working on setting up a Doodle poll to collate availability for County matches.

Duplicate Bridge Promotion & Youth: More volunteers were always needed. Joan Bennett had been very active as usual, with a Junior Congress planned for March 14 and a Junior Sims on April 14. The current issue was how to keep it going as the children move on to secondary school.

Education: Information on teaching in clubs was still needed for the website, and we were still without an Education Officer.

Infrastructure - Honours boards: The Oxford Bridge Club boards were now up but Lynne Hayes was still awaiting detailed costings before taking a decision on the OBA boards.

Website: There was still an outstanding issue with the transfer of ownership of the hosting space to OBA.

All areas - Progress reports: The Chairman noted that there were still a number of outstanding action points from the March meeting and the AGM which had not been reported on by the relevant teams. He asked all team leaders to let him know what progress had been made on items in their areas, and also to review their original objectives (set out on the county website under “development”) and let him know if they felt any changes were needed. He intended to try out a member’s suggestion that volunteers often made better progress if they were encouraged to set their own deadlines.

b. Other matters arising

The complaint about a member’s behaviour that had been received earlier in the year had been resolved by the Conduct Committee without recourse to the Disciplinary Committee. Thanks were offered to Alan Wilson, Keith Sadler and Stuart McPhee for dealing with the issue.

It was confirmed that as of 1 April, Menagerie were now once more affiliated to the EBU and OBA.

DB asked whether anything was happening in the north of the County. RP explained that a meeting had been held for clubs in that area and it was hoped that a café bridge event might be held in the future at Chipping Norton. Kings Sutton (unaffiliated) had been holding joint events with Banbury, and Abbey Smith’s club was very active, but so far entirely in its own local area.

4. Reports from Chairman, Secretary, EBU Shareholders

Chairman: RP said he was disappointed in the lack of progress in some areas and also with the poor attendance at the current meeting. He felt strongly that if there were more members prepared to volunteer to take an active part in running the Association, much more could be done. It was unclear whether the current low level of involvement was because the majority of clubs and players were happy with the status quo and felt it didn't need their input, or because they were unhappy. It was agreed that all committee members, including club representatives, would be contacted to ask what would encourage them to become more involved (including attending meetings), and what they would be prepared to do to help. Three particular possibilities would be suggested: either (most urgently) getting together a team for the forthcoming Social Teams event at Blewbury, on 19th February; finding one new person to become a committee member; or being prepared to act as a link with an unaffiliated club.

RP also reported that the EBU's National Club Committee had been disbanded and that, having attended the inaugural meeting of a new Midlands Counties working group, he had agreed to become the joint chairman of that group and to represent the region on a new national group focusing on similar issues.

The Midlands group had considered how to increase the number of affiliated clubs. It was strongly felt that the way to do this was to develop and "sell" something that unaffiliated clubs actually wanted, rather than trying to persuade them to want what we already offer. As a first step, counties were now beginning to include details of non-affiliated clubs on their websites and to advertise their events. Those present agreed in principle that this should be the case in Oxfordshire, although further research would be needed to collate the necessary information: this would be a task for the Duplicate Bridge Promotion & Youth team.

RP said that some counties seemed to find it helpful to hold meetings for club representatives separately from meetings of their executive group. A question on this point would be included when contacting committee members about the matters raised above.

Treasurer: CM explained that it was still not possible to access the funds held in the existing deposit account due to problems in changing the authorised signatures. It was agreed that pending resolution of this issue, she should be authorised to open a new deposit account.

EBU Shareholders: RP referred to a paper produced by the EBU Treasurer, Andrew Petrie, in response to a question raised at the most recent shareholders' meeting asking how the EBU measured success. The paper referred to the fact that since the introduction of Pay to Play membership had increased from about 19,000 to 54,000 and that the EBU had absorbed this with very little extra resource, resulting in a much lower cost per head. It had also listed various achievements over the past few years. RP felt that the achievements were mostly in areas that were relevant to the original 19,000 members and that the additional 35,000 might question the measurement criteria being used. The meeting agreed that the EBU needed to be seen as more broadly representative of all its members.

5. Team reports and recommendations - Please see written reports already circulated

i. Education

Nothing to report. We still needed both an Education Officer and a Team Leader for this area.

ii. Selection and County Team Management

No additional comment.

iii. Competitions and County Nights

Stephen Brown was congratulated on the progress made with the new website.

It seemed that the Wessex League and Presidents/Chester Cup competitions were running smoothly, although the Presidents/Chester Cup results were not yet available on the website.

The Competitions Brochure had been published on the website but a printed version was now urgently required, for distribution to clubs, those members not on email, and others requesting one.

Some problems with the organisation of County Nights had been reported and this needed review. It was noted that the pivot teams events were continuing, and were popular with participants, although some players were finding it difficult to make up a team. One suggestion was that there could be some form of email/web based partnership request system for teams nights.

The 2014 OBA Congress was due to be held on June 14/15 (the dates in 2015 will be June 13/14 – in both cases clashing with the Garden Cities, but avoiding the Pachabo, as well as a green-pointed weekend in Berks & Bucks). PF was asked to confirm the provisional booking that had been made last year with the new venue, but to ensure that better chairs were available, if necessary by hiring them. Catering arrangements would also need to be reviewed: perhaps we should stop including food in the price and ask people either to bring their own, or buy on site. PF felt he needed a team of helpers. SN and CM volunteered for this and several other names were suggested. PF would arrange a meeting to discuss seating, catering, pricing etc. It was agreed that the target should be a profit of £1,500.

iv. Duplicate Bridge Promotion and Youth

No additional comment.

v. Social

Social teams event on 19th February at Blewbury: All committee members would be asked to try to put together a team to play in this event. It was hoped that it would lead to the formation of a regional social teams league later in the year.

vi. Infrastructure

Use of OBC premises: RP explained that OBC had identified a possible alternative venue as a temporary measure during their planned alterations, and were asking whether OBA would wish to use it. He had been to see it and felt that it was not ideal, being fairly expensive and most likely limited to a maximum of 12 tables (since any overflow would

need to be accommodated in a completely separate room). In the meanwhile, OBC had realised that the ownership of the club needed to be transferred from the Trustees to the members as a whole (in the form of a charity), in order to provide suitable guarantees of liability for the cost of the building work required. Measures to achieve the necessary changes were under way, but it was almost certain that there would be a delay in the proposed start date for the alterations.

6. Awards

i. Proposal for new Philip Simmonds award

Background: Wallingford Bridge Club had recently proposed one of their members, Philip Simmonds, for an EBU Dimmie Fleming award in view of his contribution to the development of duplicate bridge in the county. The proposal had been supported by OBA but had been turned down by the EBU as Mr Simmonds had not fulfilled all of their criteria. OBA had therefore used last year's "County Voucher" (see ii, below) to fund its own award for Mr Simmonds, on the understanding that further awards could be offered in the future to other individuals who had made similar contributions to the advancement of bridge within the county over a long period of time. Wallingford had been asked to produce draft criteria for such an award and these were attached to the agenda.

The meeting agreed that the award should be introduced but were unsure whether a more generic name should be given to it. It was felt that using the name of an individual would normally imply that that person had funded the award, rather than being its first recipient. SN was asked to check whether Mr Simmonds had agreed to his name being used.

Other changes made were:

- Rather than specifying "25+" years of sustained service, the criteria should refer to "a significant period"
- Nominations should be submitted to the Secretary by the end of March rather than the end of December each year; this would still allow sufficient time for consideration before the AGM
- The panel of judges should consist of 5 impartial members of the OBA Management Committee (i.e. not members of any club which had put forward a nomination).

In addition, the committee agreed that:

- Each affiliated club would be allowed to make one nomination per year
- OBA officers would not be eligible per se, although might be nominated for other reasons
- There could be up to 2 awards made per year
- No individual could receive the award more than once
- The award would be marked by a framed certificate and a place on the OBA Honours boards.

ii. Use of EBU “County Voucher”

The EBU had advised that the annual “County Voucher” – a voucher sent to the County Secretary each year, given in recognition of the amount of work done by volunteers at county level and redeemable against the cost of an entry to the Autumn Congress, or an equivalent event – was to be discontinued after the current year. The committee agreed that the Secretary should be given the benefit of this last one.

iii. Congratulations to EBU award winners

The committee offered their warmest congratulations to Joan Bennett, winner of the EBU Tom Bradley award for her contribution to the development of junior bridge; and to Freddie Illingworth, winner of the EBU Young Player of the Year award.

7. Any other business

Website: All team leaders and officers were encouraged to learn how to use the website and to publish relevant items in their own areas.

8. Date and venue of next meeting

The date for the next meeting of the committee had not been included in the calendar published on the website, but would normally have been scheduled for Wednesday 19 March 2014. It was agreed that SN would organise a venue for that date, after consultation with committee members.