

Oxfordshire Bridge Association

Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting

held on Wednesday 20th March 2013 at 7.30 p.m. at Holton Village Hall

PRESENT:

Robert Procter [RP]	Chairman
Sandra Nicholson [SN]	Secretary/EBU Shareholder
Claire MacDonagh [CM]	Treasurer/Tournament Secretary
Vicky Fleming [VF]	Education Officer
Ian Angus [IA]	Match Secretary
Brenda Harris [BH]	Publicity Officer/EBU Shareholder
Alan Wilson [AW]	EBU Shareholder/Team Leader, County Team
Rob Dixon [RD]	Assistant Chief Tournament Director/Team Leader, Competitions Team
Barbara Jordan [BJ]	Team Leader, Social Team
Peter Finbow [PF]	Congress Organiser

Esme Alden	Oxford	Richard Sills	Oxford
John Fleming	Oxford		

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Geoff Nicholas [GN]	League Secretary
Mike Fletcher [MF]	Team Leader, Duplicate Bridge Promotion & Youth Team
Aleksandar Lishkov [AL]	Website & Communications Officer
Clive Keep	County Pairs Organiser

New rep TBA	Aylesbury Aces	Robert Gasser	Summertown
Michael Allen	Blewbury	Erica Sheppard	Summertown
Chris Dawe	Oxford	Norman Gascoyne	Wallingford
Chris Kerr	Oxford	Gillian Weatherley	Wallingford
Peter Sherry	Oxford	Francis Glassborow	Wallingford
Kathy Talbot	Oxford		

2. Minutes of Management Committee meeting held on 6 December 2012

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved and signed.

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

Changes to competition by-laws: The new version for the website was still not available. It was noted that this was now **extremely urgent** as changes to eligibility to play in the various competitions were already in operation.

Website: RP and CM were dealing with the transfer of ownership of the hosting space to OBA. AL was looking for a hi-res image of the Oxford skyline for use in a new OBA logo.

County Night and Competitions: The definition of “friendly bridge” was still under review, as were proposals for restricted/regionalised events [see Chairman’s report, below]. It was noted that Stephen Brown had offered to arrange team-mates for County Night via email and that this was now stated on the relevant page of the website.

Selection and County Team Management: Menagerie had offered to become involved in setting up a “Play with an Expert” event. SN pointed out that the original idea had been that County players should be asked to take part in this as one way of “giving back” some of their skills and ideas, for the benefit of ordinary club players (rather than for newcomers).

Duplicate Bridge Promotion & Youth: “Introduction to duplicate” events were planned for the north of the county (with the assistance of Marian Day), and also as part of the OBA Congress. More volunteers were still needed to teach bridge in schools, particularly in the Banbury area.

Honours boards: Richard Sills reported that the Oxford Bridge Clubs were now almost ready to be installed. He would let Lynne Hayes know when they were up.

Award for services to bridge in Oxfordshire: The Wallingford BC representatives had agreed that Wallingford would prepare proposed criteria for consideration at the next meeting, but these had not yet been received. A reminder would be sent.

4. Reports from Chairman, Secretary, EBU Shareholders

Chairman: RP said he was grateful to everyone who had helped make things happen during the course of the past year but was aware that there was still no progress on some of the original objectives compiled by the teams. He asked each team to include, in their report for the AGM, a note of any objectives that they now felt should be reassessed (see also item 8, below).

He had been particularly impressed, at his recent visit to the new Abbey Smith club, by the enthusiasm of the players and the way Abbey had managed to get all her students to graduate to playing duplicate. She was keen to start a new, lower standard teams league for her local area and RP hoped that the CN&C team, in collaboration with BJ, could incorporate this into a possible new county-wide regionalised teams of 4 league for less experienced players (rather than attempting to regionalise the lower divisions of the existing Wessex League which, as shown by GN’s recent survey, would not be a popular move).

Treasurer: CM had not provided a formal report but would be preparing accounts for the AGM. In the meanwhile, she explained that the financial position appeared to be broadly in line with the previous year, in that we still had £28,000 on deposit. The current account held approximately £2,000 more than at this time the previous year but this could mainly be accounted for by prepayments e.g. for the Henley café bridge event. Tuesday nights were still profitable despite the increase in rent under the new agreement with Oxford Bridge Club.

5. Team reports, recommendations and items for discussion

i. Education

VF explained that work was continuing in the background. She was currently focussing on updating the information available on the website. To this end, she had contacted all those listed on the county membership database as teachers to check whether they were still active, and would also be grateful if those clubs providing teaching could submit details to her, if they had not already done so.

ii. Selection and County Team Management

AW said the team was disappointed to learn that the new website would be unable to provide a facility for recording players' match availability and asked whether anyone could suggest a non-bespoke way of doing this. He intended to prepare a recommendation for the committee/AGM to consider changing the relevant part of the constitution, in order to pave the way for implementation of Nick Smith's ideas on altering the way the selection committee works.

iii. Competitions and County Nights

RD had recently taken over leadership of this team and was still assimilating work previously done. It was stressed that the most urgent task for this team was to complete the updating of the competition bylaws (see item 3, above), including clarification of the implementation date of all changes.

iv. Duplicate Bridge Promotion and Youth

RP congratulated those involved on the success of the recent Juniors Congress, with another event for juniors forthcoming that weekend. All those involved in teaching beginners within the county were also to be congratulated on the steady increase in membership numbers noted in the Membership Secretary's report.

v. Social

BJ presented a report on the recent "Bridge n Brunch" event. It had made a small financial loss but of the 12 pairs who attended, all had said they enjoyed the combination of teaching and play and would come again. It was noted that this was a different format from the very popular Oxford Bridge Club "Lunch Bunch" – now becoming a monthly event – as the latter was run as Chicago rather than duplicate bridge: however, other clubs might be interested in considering either format as a possibility.

The Henley Café Bridge event was already nearly full with 45 pairs entered out of a total capacity of 50, and it was hoped that there would be a similar event in Thame later in the year.

BJ also commented that she was aware there were a number of “social” teachers operating within the county and she was planning to start mapping their details on the social page of the website.

It was noted that this year’s OBA Congress would offer “something for everyone” including, on the Saturday, a Minibrige session for juniors, and the Sandra Landy trophy for less experienced players, as well as the main Swiss Pairs event; and on the Sunday, a morning seminar on the previous day’s hands, and a Chicago/introduction to duplicate session using pre-dealt hands, alongside the Swiss Teams. The green-pointed events were expected to be well subscribed but all on the committee were asked to promote the more social events within their clubs. PF also reminded everyone that volunteers would be needed to help put up tables and chairs on the Saturday morning and to help with general organisation during the weekend.

vi. **Infrastructure**

Website: SN read out AL’s progress report [now incorporated in the main compilation of reports]. BH noted that the photograph of the Oxford skyline used in English Bridge had originally come via Humaira Erfan-Ahmed. RP commented that, as well as resolving the issue of ownership of the hosting site, more work was needed on ensuring that the new site would come up at the top of lists provided by Google and other search engines.

Use of OBC premises for Sunday events: RP explained that following further discussions with OBC, the latest draft of the subsidiary rental agreement for use of their premises for Sunday events now gave extra flexibility for Sunday events of up to 32 boards to be treated as a single session, in that (provided the premises had not been booked for an earlier or later event that day) there would be no additional charge for an overrun of up to 30 minutes on either side of a booking made for the “afternoon” session of 1.30 – 6.00. Events with more than 32 boards would, however, need to be booked as two sessions. From 1 October 2012, the charge to OBA per session would be £56.25 for the main area, or £67.50 for the whole club.

This arrangement was accepted by the committee, whereupon RP and Richard Sills both signed the new agreement.

6. Formation of Disciplinary and Conduct Committees

RP explained that a complaint had been received and in order to deal with it correctly according to our Constitution, we needed to set up both a Conduct Committee (which would investigate the complaint and would have the power to issue a verbal caution if appropriate), and a Disciplinary Committee (which would be needed either in the event of a recommendation for more stringent disciplinary action, or to deal with a possible refusal to accept a caution given by the Conduct Committee). It was proposed that the Conduct Committee should be chaired by Alan Wilson with Keith Sadler and Stuart McPhee as additional members, and the Disciplinary Committee should consist of the

Chairman, Secretary and Chief Tournament Director (currently RP, SN and SB) together with John Deech and Sandra Claridge. Following discussion these nominations were agreed, with the rider that Mary-Ann Sheehy and Rob Dixon should also be invited to join the Conduct Committee, and that the respective Chairmen should be responsible for convening groups of between 3 and 5 members to deal with any individual issue.

7. Application from Menagerie Club to reaffiliate to EBU/OBA

In response to our recent enquiry, Jeremy Dhondy had informed us by email on 7 March that EBU regulations were changing with effect from 1 April 2013 to allow clubs playing less than 26 annual sessions of duplicate bridge to become affiliated, on payment of twice the normal fee, and subject to the approval of the county to which they wished to affiliate. (N.B. This information is also now available on the EBU website.)

Having previously been an affiliated club, Menagerie had been unable to remain affiliated when P2P was introduced as they did not play the required number of annual sessions of duplicate bridge. They now wished to take advantage of this change in the EBU regulations and had asked OBA to approve their application to re-affiliate, which they hoped would take effect from 1 April (the beginning of the membership year for both clubs and individuals). A detailed letter from their secretary, Chris Wilson, in support of this request, had been received and circulated on 18 March [see Annexe].

Several of those present commented that the request had arrived with very little advance notice and that they would have liked to see more information about the club, what it does, when and where it plays, and how new members could join, before taking a decision. It was noted that Menagerie's events were not currently widely publicised; and that it appeared to have no openly available website and no published constitution. Whilst neither of the latter was required under EBU rules in order to become affiliated, it was felt that without them, the club lacked transparency and openness: one member went so far as to describe it as a "secret society". It was recognised that the plans outlined in Chris Wilson's letter represented a considerable step forward but, in view of the level of historical hostility towards, and suspicion of, the club amongst other affiliated clubs, some members argued that more time – perhaps another 12 months - was needed for it to demonstrate its ability to fulfil these good intentions. Others felt that progress had already been shown with the successful introduction of the "Claridge Cup" competition (where about half those competing had not been Menagerie teams), and that rather than placing obstacles in the way of clubs that wished to become affiliated, the County should be encouraging them to do so wherever possible. It was also pointed out that, whilst the EBU had not specified any criteria to be used by counties when considering such requests, approval from the county would not mean that a club would automatically be allowed to become affiliated, since it would also need to meet the EBU's own criteria before being accepted.

In recognition of his own interest in the matter as a member of Menagerie, RP asked Richard Sills to deputise for him in conducting a vote on this issue. Having first ascertained, by a show of hands, that the majority of those present felt they had enough information to take a decision, a formal vote was taken as to whether the County should

approve Menagerie's application to reaffiliate. This was carried by 7 to 2, with 4 abstentions (including RP). SN was asked to reply to Chris Wilson informing him of the County's approval, whilst also ensuring that he was aware of the reservations expressed during the discussion.

8. Preparation for AGM (Tuesday 11 June)

RP agreed he would revert to presenting prizes as part of the formal meeting, before the break for refreshments. Team leaders were asked to send reports to RP by 15th May, detailing progress against original objectives, and reassessing objectives if necessary. RP would then edit these and compile a single report for the AGM.

Any Team Leaders or officers not willing to continue in post were asked to advise SN/RP as soon as possible, so that replacements might be sought. SN asked officers to organise their own nominations (using the forms included in the competitions brochure) and forward them to her before the AGM if possible.

9. Any other business

- (i) Summertown Blue Pointed event: On behalf of Summertown Bridge Club, SN invited any member of OBA to attend the forthcoming Summertown Blue Pointed Swiss Pairs at Islip Village Hall on Sunday 28th April.
- (ii) County matches: Esme Alden requested that when Midlands League matches were held at the Oxford Bridge Club premises, at least one representative of the home team should be there in good time (at least 30 minutes early) to welcome visitors as they arrive.

10. Date and venue of next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 18 July 2013. Oxford Bridge Club had already advised that their premises would not be available on that date. It was agreed that SN would try to find a suitable venue, perhaps in the north of the County.

Annexe: Letter from Menagerie

Ms Sandra Nicholson
Secretary, Oxfordshire County Bridge Association
9 Almond Road
Bicester
Oxon OX26 2HU

18th March 2013

Dear Sandra,

The Menagerie Bridge Club is planning to apply to rejoin the EBU as an Affiliated Club from 1st April 2013, and I am writing to you on behalf of the club to ask for OBA's approval for our application.

As you probably know, until the introduction of P2P when the rules changed to require regular duplicate sessions, Menagerie was always an affiliated club. The EBU now wishes to move on and has decided it is happy to accept affiliated clubs from 1st April 2013 who for one reason or another do not plan a minimum of 26 duplicate sessions a year, subject to an increased affiliation fee and county approval. Following this change in the EBU's regulations, Menagerie wishes to become an Affiliated Club in full compliance with the revised regulations.

From April 2013, Menagerie will be holding regular duplicate sessions at St Anne's College. The plan for 2013-14 is to hold 2 tournaments:

- (1) A teams of 4 league, on an all-play-all basis, that will replace the Claridge Cup previously held at Horspath.
- (2) A Winter league, likely to be a series of Butler pairs events.

All County members will be welcome at these events, subject to accommodation limits. Menagerie are also prepared to contribute to the development of bridge within the County by running regular Play With An Expert events and are currently exploring possibilities for this; the main remaining issue being the accommodation limits at St Anne's.

Menagerie is open for membership from players of all levels and welcomes new applications for membership.

We are ready to submit the relevant Affiliation forms to the EBU, and I am writing to seek the County's approval for our affiliation.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wilson
Chairman, Menagerie Bridge Club