

Oxfordshire Bridge Association
Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting
held on Thursday 21st July 2016 at 7.30 p.m. at Horspath Village Hall

Appendix A - Duplimating Report

Appendix B – Action Point progress

Appendix C – Competitions Committee report to MC

PRESENT:

Robert Procter [RP]	Chairman
Mary-Ann Sheehy [MAS]	(Acting Secretary)
Slater [JS]	Leader Competitions Team
John Fleming [JF]	Oxford
Kathy Talbot [KT]	Oxford
Richard Sills [RS]	Oxford

1. RP opened the meeting by explaining the presence of MAS who was attending as Secretary. She had offered to take on the role of secretary to the OBA if no one else offered. Meanwhile RP had written to the entire membership looking for a volunteer. Several people had written in to say they would like to help the County. Ken Langdon (who is the Secretary to the Kings Sutton BC) has agreed to meet RP and MAS in August to discuss whether he might take on part or all of the role.

Other volunteers were Annabel Wade and Paul Millar (prepared to take the minutes). **RP said that these names may be added to the register maintained by Sandra Nicholson of people who might be willing to take a role for the county in the future.**

The Minutes of the previous meeting were considered and before agreeing the minutes it was noted that since there was no Secretary coming up to this meeting **all action points from the last meeting would need to be carried over to ensure they had been or would be followed up.** The absence of a secretary also explained why there was no list of apologies for this meeting.

2. Minutes of the Management Committee meeting held on 9th March 2016 were presented for approval. **There being no amendments, RP duly signed them.**
3. Competitions Team Report
 - a. JS, as Team Leader of the Competitions team, requested that the Management Committee approve fees for various competitions:
Fees for both the Chester Cup and the Presidents cup should be reduced by £2. The County Pairs Final fees should be set after the semi-finals have been played and the size of the field is known. The aim would be to ensure that the competition breaks even. **These proposed fees were approved by the Management Committee.**
 - b. JS reminded those present that **clubs should be asked to help in persuading as many people as possible to come and play at OBC on 20 September for the last county**

night. The format of the play would be Pairs with the usual fee of £4 per player. The idea was that the night would take the shape of a celebration with wine and snacks being offered.

- c. JS reported that a new Wessex League Div 3 trophy, the original having gone missing, had been bought. The cost was £70. **The Committee approved the expenditure.**
- d. JS reported that there would be at least 3 fewer teams for the Wessex League next season. Thame and Wantage were withdrawing 2 and 1 teams respectively.

4. **The meeting appointed the following to the Selection Committee:**

Nick Smith – Chairman
John Williams
Matthew Covill
Peter Litchfield
Aleks Lishkov
Alan Wilson (County Captain *ex officio*)

- 5. A Contact list has been maintained by Sandra Claridge. This includes: Club Representatives, Club Secretaries, OBA Officers, Team Leaders, Non-Committee volunteers, the Selection Committee and Club Chairmen. **The new Secretary will be asked to update it before circulating it and keep it updated.**
- 6. RP presented for review a copy of the OBA webpage covering the Objectives of the OBA and the list of Management Teams.
Some of these Teams are running well, but others require more personnel if their objectives are to be met. JF suggested that those teams without personnel at present should be scrapped, but JS supported the counter-argument that we should retain worthwhile objectives even if we do not currently have volunteers to achieve them. JS said that once a Team has been appointed it should be expected to report to the officers at regular intervals. A number of minor detailed changes were proposed to the wording of the objectives and **RP undertook to update these on the website.**
- 7. RP had received a request from Oxford BC for financial support for setting up its programme for beginners. **The committee agreed that this should be referred to the Education and Duplicate Bridge Promotion Team. It was agreed that, subject to the approval of the Treasurer who was not present, this Team should be given a budget of £3000 p.a for the purpose of expanding the game in Oxfordshire through educational and promotional activities, including continuing to support Teacher and TD Training. Other grants did not need to be limited to meeting capital expenditure, nor did they need to be limited to £500 per club. However the Team would need to decide where money would be spent with most effect and should always be looking for evidence that expenditure is likely to result in increased bridge-playing numbers. Feedback in the form of numerical measurement should be required.** JF hoped that this funding would support the activities of clubs and would not be used to set up competing county-generated activities. Matching funding is to be encouraged.
- 8. JS and KT are working on the EBU's Best Practice for County Associations and will report in detail shortly.

9. Three issues were raised concerning the website. JF would like to see a table showing where bridge is available throughout Oxfordshire on the different days of the week. RS was concerned that it was not easy to navigate and that he particularly had difficulty on occasions in finding the latest results. It was also felt that some areas where the information was out of date (e.g. Social?) would be better removed if they could not be updated. **RP to discuss with Stephen Brown.**
10. RP introduced an idea suggested to him by Abbey Smith to hold an “**Oxford Bridge Festival**”. RP’s initial thoughts would be to invite players to come to Oxford arranging their own accommodation in colleges or hotels. We would organise sessions of bridge, sightseeing, seminars, treasure hunts, café bridge style sessions etc, attractive to all players from beginner to expert over a period of about four days and ending with a gala dinner in a college. We would be aiming at the bridge holiday market rather than the congress market. Attempts should be made to include non-affiliated clubs. The idea is that people would be charged a sum by the OBA (say £150) for the ‘bridge and social element’ that we organise, leaving participants free to arrange their own accommodation and most of their meals.

The Committee agreed that RP should try to form a group to progress the idea. This would effectively fulfil the role of the county’s “Social Team”. Suggestions for this group included Barbara Jordan (cafe bridge expert), Abbey Smith (Marketing to all the 180 people who attended her charity day at Stowe School) and Annabel Wade. RS suggested that we might wish to look at one college being the bridge base for all activities - he mentioned St Catherine’s. He also thought that Oxford’s overseas twins (Bonn/Leiden?) might be interested. RP had spoken to Mike Willoughby (Worcestershire’s chairman elect) who was enthusiastic about the idea - one thought was that other counties might take a part in the organisation and thus enhance our marketing. It was agreed that a long lead time would be necessary and that a budget for the project would need to be presented to the management committee.

11. Following a suggestion made by Diana Nettleton at the AGM, RP had produced a paper listing all the things the County does for clubs and bridge players in Oxfordshire generally. It was discussed and amended and will be passed on to **Diana Nettleton for distribution as she sees fit.**
12. Appendix A is a report from Christopher Whitehouse on the current arrangements under which he prepares duplimated board for the county and six clubs (Abingdon, Faringdon, Wantage, Menagerie, Kings Sutton, Witney) He does not charge for the considerable time this work takes and **the Committee wishes to record its thanks to him.** There was discussion about the possible purchase of a second duplimating machine. It was felt that now was not the time, but the current charging arrangements will ensure that a fund is built up to meet the cost of a replacement machine as and when it becomes necessary. **In other respects his proposals for charging were approved.**

Date of next meeting: 21 November.

APPENDIX A: DUPLIMATING

The History

In about 2005 the county purchased a duplimating machine. The MC determined that it could be used to provide dealing for affiliated clubs at a rate sufficient to compensate the operator for time and printing costs. Several clubs availed themselves of this service, but some of those have since bought their own machines, and the county currently only provides the service to Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage.

Recently the operation of the machine was transferred to Christopher Whitehouse who lives just north of Summertown. Whilst this may be less convenient for the three clubs above, it is a better location for the county and will enable it more easily to start to provide the service to Kings Sutton, The Menagerie and Witney in the future, all of whom have said they would like to use the service.

At the time of writing I believe that the following bridge clubs have their own machines: Abbey Smith BC, Aylesbury Vale, Banbury, Blewbury, Oxford, Summertown, Thame and Wallingford. Aylesbury, Aylesbury Aces and Bicester all have arrangements with other clubs or the EBU. This leaves Central Yarnton, Chipping Norton and the University with no arrangements in place that I am aware of.

Whereas the financial arrangements were formerly entirely between the relevant club and Norman Gascoyne, Christopher Whitehouse has generously offered to give the county the excess of charges over printing costs. Despite reducing the charge by approximately £1 per set of boards on average (which has the effect of compensating clubs for any extra transport costs under the new arrangements) this should allow us to build a fund for the replacement of the machine. As it is now eleven years old this seems a sensible thing to do.

As far as we have been able to ascertain, all the boards, cases and cards (a significant proportion of which have been donated by Richardsons) currently being used by Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage belong to the county.

Issues

I believe it is appropriate that the charges made to clubs for duplimating should cover all costs, including the operator, printing, boards and cards and maintenance and eventual replacement of the machine. Whilst the generosity of Christopher and Richardsons may allow us to build a fund to replace the machine more quickly, I suggest that we need to agree a charge rate that will be sufficient if we found ourselves needing to find someone else to take on the job.

I believe the arrangements should be seen to be fair as between clubs with machines and those without - this is not an area in which large clubs should be subsidising smaller clubs. Charges should be set at levels at which clubs will be better off financially if they buy their own machines and find unpaid volunteers to operate them.

If a club decides to buy its own machine and asks for financial support how should we respond? Would a loan be more appropriate than a grant?

Any commitment that the county makes we should be capable of honouring. This can be an issue where we offer something which involves finding either voluntary labour and/or boards etc, even if there is a level of payment associated with it.

A balance needs to be struck between clubs who already enjoy the use of the county's boards, cases and cards and clubs wishing to join the pool. In the event that the county becomes capacity-constrained, the onus should be on clubs using more than one set of deals per week to provide such extra boards etc and/or machine operator(s) as are required.

Recommendations

That we confirm the rate that Christopher is currently charging.

That we agree that this should be increased by £2 per set of boards in the event that we should have to find another operator who was not prepared to volunteer their services free. Assuming the operator was paid £3.50 per set of boards this would reduce the rate at which a replacement fund could be created.

That we agree that the rate should be increased appropriately in the event that the county ceases to benefit from donations of sponsored cards

That we purchase a laser printer in order to reduce the printing cost. (This could be done for as little as £10 after the cost of the installed ink cartridge is taken into account.)

That we build a fund to acquire a new machine and do so as soon as we have enough money in it. This would enable us to offer our old machine for sale to a club.

That it is understood that if clubs avail themselves of this service, transport is their responsibility, whilst all boards, cards and carrying cases will belong to the county.

That we agree that clubs requiring one set of boards per week will be given priority over clubs requiring more than one set in the event that the county becomes demand-constrained.

In the event that one of the clubs to whom we are supplying dealt boards decides to purchase a machine of their own, we would expect to be able to make them a fair offer for the sale of some of our boards, cases and cards.

In the event that a joining club provides its own cards and boards, it should have the option of ceding these to the communal pool at a fair price, or retaining them for use on a sole-club basis

APPENDIX B:

ACTION POINTS taken from Minutes of 9th March of Management Committee of OBA:

1. HONOURS BOARD:
Action postponed pending OBC renovation and County night revival.
2. Regional Improvers event. The Midlands Improvers event has happened. JF and JB and Abbey Smith to consider running one in Oxfordshire. No further progress.
3. Best Practice Paper
KT and JS have promised to report in writing.
4. NOBC : done
5. Education : done
6. Vacancies : done
7. Duplimating: done
8. County Congress: done
9. Nomination for Dimmie Flemming: none this year
10. Arrangements for AGM done
11. Future meetings: Kathy to book Horspath.
12. Joan Bennett – is continuing to work on juniors.

ACTION POINTS taken from Minutes of 21st July Management Committee of OBA

1. Update Contacts list: passed on to Ken Langdon for action
2. RP has updated website page on objectives
3. RP has confirmed with Treasurer £3000 appropriate figure for Education and duplicate bridge promotion team.
4. Education committee must advertise so that all clubs are aware of the availability of funds. Must consider how to spend this budget and to respond to OBC about their request.
5. JS and KT to produce Best Practice Paper.
6. RP has discussed website issues with SB – SB has changed results page, RP to change Social page;
7. RP to form a group to progress Oxford Festival.
8. DN to distribute document on what the county provides as she thinks fit.

APPENDIX C:

OBA Management Committee Report of Competitions Committee

1. We met on June 9th to sort out next year's competition and roles.
2. Decisions made included deciding on a system to handle boards, now implemented; and the roles and titles of the two Chief Tournament Directors (Kathy Talbot CTD (Consulting), John Rowe CTD (Organising)).
3. We decided to discontinue County Nights on Tuesdays at OBC. Subsequently, with considerable thanks to OBC, it has been agreed that the last teams will be on Sept 6th and the last pairs on Sept 20th. The latter will be a party celebrating the success of a 45+ yr partnership between OBC and OBA. **We are seeking the help of MC in identifying and inviting back previous regulars to this celebration, and other help in running the party.**
4. This leaves the gendered pairs orphaned and we are looking for a date and venue.
5. We have asked Diana Nettleton and Emily Middleton to look at the future of county nights on weekdays and talk to OBC and other clubs such as Wallingford who have shown an interest in hosting county night badged events. Their report date to us is Sept 16th.
6. The role of Tournament Secretary will be shared by Nigel Wilkes and John Slater. Our thanks go to Claire MacDonagh for her excellent work in this area. She is staying on the Committee to handle catering and related aspects and help with OBC links.
7. We have drawn up a calendar for the events in 2016/7. It is essentially on the website. We have left most events unchanged with the exception of the Harwell cup which will be a multiple teams that is the Oxon qualifier for the Beck. We are planning on the assumption that the OBC exodus will occur in April 2017 and so some venues are not yet fixed.
8. We have thus confirmed the changes made to the County Pairs and to the timing of the Chester Cup in 2015/6. We are also moving Division 1 of the Wessex League to Tolle scoring.
9. With the discontinuation of some events and the effects of others we have had to change various bylaws especially those to do with ladders. This is work in process but new bylaws will soon be on the website. **We invite MC members to comment by email.**
10. **We recommend that 2016/7 fees should be as for 2015/6 with the following exceptions:**
 - a. **Chester Cup and President's Cup/Chair's Plate entries should be reduced to £19**
 - b. **Final of county pairs if smaller than 10 tables will be pitched to cover costs.**
11. We are looking at mechanising entries for competitions on the website. Nigel Wilkes has held a meeting with Stephen Brown and they are working well towards a system required.
12. Our aim is to minimise work, allow dying competitions to be pruned as they become not cost effective and only meet again by email. This allows us to include into our discussions those with overlapping responsibilities such as Ian Angus (Regional and National competitions), Geoff Nicholas (Seniors) and Stephen Brown (Web). So far this seems to be working.
13. We need to purchase a new trophy for the Wessex league Division 3 as the old one has been lost. **A budget of £70 should be adequate.**

John Slater