

# MINUTES OF OBA AGM

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September (6pm – 7pm)**

Present:

Kathy Talbot (Chair), Peter Litchfield, Robert Procter (Promotion, Social, Education Team leader), Erica Sheppard, Graham Orsmond, Patricia Hones (Chief TD), Stephen Brown (Secretary/Treasurer/Website), Charlie Bucknell (Education Officer, Shareholder), Robert Gasser, Malcolm Currie, Sandra Nicholson, Krys Kasmierczak, Christopher Whitehouse, Nigel Wilkes, Denis Talbot, Martin Illingworth, Liza Furnival, Peter Randall, Joan Bennett (Juniors Team)

**1. Apologies for absence** Sandra Claridge (Presidents and Chester, Shareholder), Steph Bliss

**2. Matters arising from notes of last meeting** – minutes were not taken last year. Significant issues discussed, including appoint Stephen as secretary, using Square to simplify entries. We approved the lack of minutes and that actions were carried out.

### **3. Chair's report**

**Kathy summarized the main issues from her report**

This year has flown by. Many of our clubs are back face-to-face and bridge is being played throughout the County. However, a couple of clubs have failed and player numbers are generally down. It would be good to see better coordination of sessions offered throughout the area and I hope we can make some progress with this. Sadly, this year, we lost long-time active county members Michael Robinson, David Bygott and Esme Alden. As players and as people who gave a lot of time to county affairs, they will be missed.

It is good to see the actions of the Promotions Group and I encourage everyone to follow their initiative and join in the spirit of travelling around the County's clubs in the OOPs and OTT challenges. The recent Henley Café Bridge was a success and drew in many players who are not regular duplicate players. It's a pity clubs have not taken up the offer of the county's help with running social events, an approach designed to widen our appeal and attract new players. On the upside, Ken Langdon has a great initiative going for social teams in the North of the County, which we hope to extend to the South. We have begun the task of analysing the role of the county, asking what our priorities should be and this is ongoing. All ideas welcome. Competitions continue. Our regular monthly events (cross-IMP pairs and multiple teams) attract reasonable numbers and bring in some revenue. This year saw our first face-to-face congress since COVID. I am told that a new venue and new date always requires time to build up numbers, so it is good to see that we made a small profit. We will be obtaining feedback and making a decision about next year's congress shortly. Junior bridge is continuing thanks to the stalwart efforts of Joan Bennett and Holly Kilpatrick. After some knock-on effects of COVID, this looks to be set to build back up. Our financial support is well used – this is the future of the game. Congratulations to all our competition winners and teams that won their Wessex League divisions. I hope you enjoyed the events and will continue to play in the future. Last year we took the decision to employ Stephen Brown in the role of secretary. He has proved to be enormous value for money and is now also performing some of the accounting tasks. This is necessary because we do not currently have a Treasurer. Thank you, Stephen. And thank you to all officers and committee members. Particular thanks go to Robert Procter for his help with the accounts, John Briggs for the (non-trivial) inspection of the accounts, Sandra Nicholson for Wessex League organization, Dave Tarsky for Wessex administration and both Patricia and Cliff Hones for help with directing and technical issues. Thanks also to Matthew Covill for organizing the County Teams. Thank you to Alan Wilson, Sandra Claridge and Sandra Nicholson for being shareholders and representing our interests with the EBU. Sandra C and Sandra N have recently stepped down. Thank you to Charlie Bucknell for stepping in to fill one vacancy – the other is still to be filled. Thanks to Charlie also for heading up the education team.

**Announcement:** Sandra Claridge cannot be here but the EBU has honoured her with Tony Priday award and we hope that she will receive this at the next EBU AGM.

**Suggestion:** that we look for someone to fill the Vice Chair role (Kathy feels that she has the energy to be Chair for one more year).

**ACTION:** Job description to be added to website and invite applications

**4. Treasurer's and Examiner's Report and Accounts for the year 2022/23.** Should our UMS contribution remain the same?

Kathy summarised her report:

Largely as a result of the lockdowns arising from COVID-19, formal accounts for the years ended 31 March 2020, 2021 and 2022 were not produced. I am grateful to Peter Litchfield for continuing to administer payments in and out, despite having resigned as Treasurer in March 2020. I am hugely grateful to Robert Procter for pulling together detailed accounts for the year 2022-2023 and to John Briggs for his inspection of the accounts for the last three years, no easy task in the circumstances. We have plans to assign the checking of payments to individual groups, to minimise the effort required of any future treasurers. The position of Treasurer is still open, but in the meantime Stephen Brown is doing much of the work and now has access to the bank accounts. With all that said, I am pleased to note that our finances are still in a good position. Some years ago, we took the decision to allow our funds to diminish. However, the game is in decline nationally and I believe our funds should be used to promote the game. With this in mind, I believe we should be aiming to cover our costs (mainly competition entry) and make a small profit. The EBU has withdrawn funds for the juniors and it is good to see support for our events to raise funds for this purpose

The President's Cup will never cover its cost, but e.g. the Wessex League should cover the entrance fee for the Garden Cities.

£434 profit. But before Covid the turnover was much greater. Kathy would like to income to increase slightly more.

We have changed from cash accounting to Profit & Loss Account with full accounting for Debtors and Creditors.

We need to decide dates for Club Heats for County Pairs. Competitions Committee meets on 10<sup>th</sup> October. We should be pleased that things proceeded well through Covid (e.g. Junior Events starting in May 2020)

UMS Rate is currently 1p each time someone play. We reduced it to 1p when the County decided not to continue growing funds.

Sandra Nicholson proposed , Peter Litchfield seconded that this remains at 1p. Carried with no votes against.

Sandra Nicholson: The full committee recommended that internal competitions with trophies would no longer attract prizes. The amounts were quite small. This was carried with no votes against.

**ACTION:** County Pairs: to be run rather like the entries to the National Pairs. It should increase the uptake. 24 boards. It includes online sessions. RealBridge charging is 40p for 24+ boards. We should discuss whether we should reduce this to 20 boards. It must be an open session. The competitions committee should revisit this. The bylaws will cover people playing at your normal club. The county would hold a heat to cover players who cannot play at their own or at clubs without a regular Pairs Duplicate.

Bylaws are urgent.

## **5. Receive other Officers' reports**

We are encouraged to read these that are all on the website. Officers were invited to highlight anything and any others to ask questions.

Robert Procter asked whether we were doing the right Social things. We are not getting much support from clubs. Robert has visited four clubs and feels that there is a lack of enthusiasm and some people are worried about numbers over the winter e.g. clubs with 6 tables may fall to 3 over the winter may not be able to afford the room hire. Peter Litchfield said that we need to persuade people to play more than once a week or not to clash days of the week.

Joan Bennett: Tony Russ has been surveying clubs from the EBU point of view. This meeting felt that the EBU should reduce the UMS for F2F events (& increase for online since there are few costs).

Kathy Talbot: felt that the EBU needs to review its costing structure and the EBU running daily events also takes tables away from clubs. They also do not have the income they used to have.

## **6. Election of Officers and Appointment of Examiner**

All current officers are prepared to stand again. Martin Illingworth formally proposed all & Graham seconded all. All were reappointed. John Briggs has agreed to do it for next year. He was appointed again.

## **7. Presentation of Prizes and Trophies**

Kathy thanked Sandra Nicholson for the schedule of prizes. They were announced and payment were made this evening.

This is the last time cash prizes are awarded as minuted above.

Markham Trophy that Divn 3 won the third division of the league. To be returned to the organisers.

## **8. Appointment of new shareholder**

Volunteer?

Role: two meetings a year, one the AGM. The role is to call the board to account. The board reports to the shareholders. There is no financial responsibility but a the role involves looking at changes to the bylaws and Articles of Association. They elect the members of the boards. They are concerned with issues e.g. principles of disciplinary cases. A nice opportunity to meet people from other counties. The next meeting is AGM on 29<sup>th</sup> November. There is a job description somewhere. The meetings have returned Face to Face in Royal National Hotel, London.

## **9. AOB**

Date of next meeting. 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

## **10. Meeting Closed**

Kathy thanked everyone for attending. Let's hope player number increase over 2023-2024. Many thanks to Kathy.