

REPORTS FOR OBA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 28 MARCH 2012

CHAIRMAN

Management

“Produce a plan for the development of bridge in Oxfordshire” was the challenge put to the Management Committee at last year’s AGM. A survey of our members’ views confirmed some of the areas that this plan needs to encompass:

- a) more promotion of bridge in the community;
- b) work to make newcomers feel welcome and comfortable playing at our clubs;
- c) opportunities at all levels for improvement through bridge education wherever you live in the county;
- d) a widening of competitions to make them appropriate to all levels and available on a regional basis;
- e) greater integration between the county team and the rest of the county’s members;
- f) better communication;
- g) more opportunities for the “social” player outside their club.

Achieving all or even any of this will require change and change requires energy and hard work. There will be a lot of detailed decisions to take. We set up teams with responsibility for different areas for several reasons: to try to get more of our members involved, to give officers more support and to prevent Management Committee meetings being overwhelmed with detail.

The agenda for this March meeting reflects the new set-up with reports from each of the teams, rather than from individual officers. You will be asked to approve a statement of objectives for each team with the intention that each team is then permitted to pursue those objectives within an agreed budget without constantly having to refer back to the MC. This should allow the MC to take a more strategic role. Where teams feel that issues require a MC decision or discussion these will be identified and time allowed for debate.

Teams

Forming the teams has inevitably been difficult and there are still some gaps. I am still seeking a leader for the Education team and have yet to start work on formally recruiting a Premises and Finance team. Since our last meeting I am very pleased to be able to report that Barbara Jordan has enthusiastically taken on the leadership of the Social team. Barbara is looking for people who will join her from elsewhere in the county to help to meet the needs of the social player. If we are to widen our activities to serve all our members throughout the county we need to increase representation from the smaller clubs and from club members who do not currently play in county competitions. The problem is that people may not come forward until they see what we can do for them and yet we need their input to set up activities appropriate to their needs - a chicken and egg situation. Any volunteers or suggestions on a postcard please! Getting teams together for meetings has also not been easy – about as easy as getting a full turn-out for a MC meeting – so I would like to commend our team leaders for their efforts in getting their work started.

But there has been a lot of progress as you will learn from the team reports and I found a meeting with the team leaders extremely encouraging. Combining their individual team objectives will give us a cohesive plan for the development of bridge in Oxfordshire. Several of the teams are already working out how to bring these plans to fruition. I shall be encouraging them to take small steps at first, aiming to develop support and then momentum.

New club

I am delighted to report that the club formed by Abbey Smith for her bridge pupils at West Horwood in Buckinghamshire has applied to affiliate through Oxfordshire. I am sure you will all join me in welcoming Abbey and her members and I invite you to accept this application. (Since the club is not actually located in Oxfordshire, the EBU also must approve.)

OBA and OBC

The secretary, treasurer, chief tournament director and I have met with our opposite numbers at the Oxford Bridge Club to discuss the creation of a formal rental agreement between OBA and OBC. I believe the rent and notice arrangements proposed are fair to both parties as a basis for a formal agreement. You will be asked to approve these terms under the "Premises and Finance" team section of this meeting. Further details to be agreed.

The Oxford Congress

One of the first matters I discussed with Barbara Jordan as Social team leader was the idea of running a “Social” pairs section to our Congress for club players, newcomers and members of non-affiliated clubs (all with fewer than 10,000 master points). She not only welcomed the idea but has accepted the role of running this side of the event. She has booked Drayton Village Hall (just a few miles from Steventon) for the Saturday of the Congress. I am also pleased to report that Peter Finbow has accepted the role of Congress Organiser held by Holly Kirkpatrick last year. I am sure that he will do a great job and that both he and Barbara will get plenty of support from the rest of us. The three of us together with Stephen Brown, Dinah Lintott, Claire Macdonagh, Brenda Harris and Peter Jordan held a meeting to discuss the form that the new section should take – but I will leave it to Barbara to tell you about the details. You can all help by spreading the word throughout our clubs to ensure the success of the Drayton event.

The website

I have had a number of meetings with Alan Grunwald and Marryat Stevens about possible website platforms and we are moving steadily towards the position where the website sub-committee will be able to meet again to make a properly informed choice. If this results in a change from our existing platform we will move on to designing the website on the new platform with the target of making it live in time for next season starting in September. Meanwhile I continue to stress the fact that everything you contribute to our existing website increases its value to the user and the more people are encouraged to use it, the better it serves as a means of communication within the county – please keep thinking about whether what you are doing should be reported on the website and keep sending stuff to Alan.

Finance

I have met with the Treasurer and Secretary to talk about budgets and with the Treasurer to talk about Accounts Format. Recommendations for change will be made in the “Premises and Finance” section of this meeting.

Robert Procter

12 March 2012

SECRETARY

Nothing to report apart from work on a new draft of the Constitution, which is on the Agenda (item 6). - SN

EBU SHAREHOLDERS

Nothing to report since the last meeting of this committee. The next Shareholders meeting will take place on 18th April. - SN

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

The group has had one face to face meeting and a number of e-mail exchanges. Our conclusions so far are:

We see the main route to increasing the visibility of OBA and its interaction with the ordinary club member as a facility for group e-mails. This should initially increase the circulation of the newsletter and provide more publicity for events. Whether this stays at this level or grows into a facility for individual members to communicate amongst themselves is up to experience and the wishes of the members. A test amongst the members of the communications group using google groups, similar to the Summertown club system, is under way. We expect to produce a proposal for a system in the next few months. It is very likely that for a viable system we will need a volunteer to manage and moderate the system.

We also see the web site as a vital communications facility. We await with interest the outcome of the Web site committee’s investigations.

For those members without e-mail facilities we obviously need to continue and upgrade where possible the current system of distribution of paper notices through club secretaries.

Publicity

The Publicity Officer reports that:

- The Pro-Am proved a huge success again with 15 full tables & several Pros surplus to requirements.

- The Congress was publicised by an ad in the February issue of English Bridge.
- The Social Congress publicity is well under way with A4 posters already distributed to all clubs with “social” players & to all those with active Teaching e.g. Aylesbury Vale & Aces, Wallingford, OBC/OBL etc.
- At the EBU Shareholders meeting next month, I shall distribute these posters to neighbouring counties for their teaching/newcomers sessions.
- Re AGM, I am willing to organise refreshments etc & encourage prize-winners to attend (as in past 4/5 years).

Website

The Internet Officer says: I have nothing to report to the meeting other than to crave people's indulgence for not responding faster to requests to post information on the site, and to remind everyone that if they have a request which they consider urgent, they should chase me by means of a phone call (number available from the Secretary if required).

Peter Litchfield, March 2012

COUNTY NIGHT AND COMPETITIONS TEAM

Introduction

The group has the remit of considering and making recommendations about OBA's competitions including county night and the congress. Some suggested aims etc. are given first, followed by a brief note from Lynne Hayes about the County Honours Boards, then a report on our progress so far.

It should be noted that the group does business without meetings, although this means that the representative of the North has to wait for documents to comment on. He will start on this one! We have also failed to secure a representative of the South, but are working on it.

We are grateful to Rob Procter, Stephen Brown, Geoff Nicholas, Kathy Talbot, Clive Keep and Dinah Lintott for the data that they have supplied. The treasurer's input has been especially valuable in the light of the various changed charges from EBU (P2P), OBC (hire) etc. These really change the break even points of many county events. We are making progress with getting data and also reasons and unique selling points for our events.

Aim and objectives

Aim

To ensure that the portfolio of county level competitions meets and continues to meet the needs and aspirations of Oxfordshire bridge players.

Objectives

1. To ensure that each county competition either meets a genuine need or fills a required niche and does not run at a loss without good transitory reason.
2. To use the results of the recent survey to identify opportunities for new competitions (either in addition to or replacing previous ones) required to serve the membership better, widening the base of those taking part in competitions.
3. To suggest any modifications to competitions that may be necessary to ensure their continued future (solvency and inclusivity) and specifically...
4. To identify the purpose of and to secure the future of county night in the light of the success of OBC, the articulated needs of OBA members and other factors.

Data

The survey and follow up discussions that RP has had.

Demographics (location, trends in membership and attendance at events)

The usual set of non evidence-based ideas from us and everyone else

Working

We shall proceed largely by email (except for members who need hard copy) although we may have a meeting towards the end.

SB and KT will help with data, as will the OBA Treasurer and others.

For each competition we shall look at signup trends and examine what is needed (if anything) to put the competition on a firm footing for a say a five year horizon. We shall also attempt to articulate a “purpose” for each competition (from the OBA point of view) and unique selling points that might cause people to enter and which can be the focus of publicity.

We shall analyse the questionnaire responses to help identify trends and unfilled needs.

We shall talk to other groups as required (e.g. the county selection group).

Existing competitions: Men’s Pairs, Women’s Pairs, OBA Sim, Mixed Pairs, Flitch, Swiss Pairs, County Pairs, President’s Cup, Harwell Cup, Chester Cup, National Pairs Heat, Wessex League, Times Trophy, Sandra Landy, ProAm, Seniors, County night, Ladders, Premiership, Golfprint Legacy, Congress.

Honours Boards

Lynne Hayes reports: Progress on Honours Boards has been slow. I went to North Oxford Golf Club with Richard Sills to look at their Honours Boards. I am waiting to see the sample of what the OBC boards will look like before I cost up the various possibilities.

Progress to date

What follows is current “thinking” on each event. In no cases is it final and it is provided for information rather than with a view to Management Committee doing our job for us (although that is not precluded and if it does, then we shall delightedly cross the relevant competitions off our list or stand ourselves down.)

The competitions 1: Steady as it goes

The following seem to be best left alone or only modestly tinkered with – they are buoyant (numbers increasing) and popular or necessary as qualifiers. They are essentially solvent. In some cases problems of needing more space may come but these are good problems to have to solve. We now list these with possible outline tinkering in brackets.

Mixed Pairs: (drop flitch; consider expansion; consider site)

Wessex League: (change match defaulted rules to be fairer to the walker over; possible closely synchronised last dates/is fixtures meeting in current form necessary/ discuss the involvement of outside county players/EBU deprecated entries). Note that this last will involve working with other groups. Use top teams to provide entries for Beck?

Swiss pairs: (consider expansion; widen).

Beck Cup: An invitation event is good but must not clash with other events. Hand over to County group? Drop link with Harwell cup and use PC and/or Wessex to get qualifiers.

President’s cup: (possible widened plate; use as qualifier for Beck?; seeding; leave as root canal event – unwidened)

Cull’em cup (Seniors): (Accept as a partial social good; now breaks even more often than not, handicaps some months; review day of week; hosts; sponsorship; Widen)

Ladders/Premiership: (change rules occasionally to keep folk interested/attending)

The competitions 2: Possible significant changes

Pro am pairs: This has a good largely Oxford based entry and is relatively easy to organise. Consider handing over to OBC as part of a “Pro-am” week (wide) where we encourage all clubs to have pro-am event on their normal club night with a county wide prize for best percentage or some such. It needs a push and more publicity. Talk to other groups. Solvent. Award one of the trophies (Sandra Landy or Times) for this?

Harwell Cup: Possible rerelocate to Harwell area and seek sponsorship from Harwell spinoffs and rivals (Didcot power station? fusion folk?). Remove any link with playing in the Beck. Consider making it into more

of a Haddenham Swiss Teams Format (charity link, genial effervescent host, raffle tickets etc.). Talk to social group. See if Haddenham plans a return. Advertise outside county (Wilts, Hants etc.). Would then be solvent.

County Pairs: Currently loss making and hard work and causes some ill feeling at early stages in clubs. Looking at making it like the National Pairs – encourage every club to have a heat – no special sections just a fixed algorithm on entry to determine how many pairs go through to the semis. Avoid “visitors” by saying you must play at an own club of one of the pair, or at the county pairs night heat (see below). Semis then have variable number of folk – consider one big semi to get down to x or halve the field. Charge normal county table money at semi and final. Then solvent.

Chester Cup: Is profitable but gets in a mild mess from time to time. We are looking at starting locally/regionally and having an expanded “Deva Plate” event and even a “Cheshire Cheeseboard” etc and also at restricting those who can compete with whom (the EBU pairs rankings might help here if they were less silly (i.e. different)). We need to talk to other groups here to get a feel for which way to go - what is clear currently is a lack of consensus. Another orthogonal possibility below is to use a county night.

The competitions 3: Possible surgery:

Gendered pairs: At Oxford these would be a casualty of the new charging regimes. More sums to do but future does not look good. A different time and venue may be better?

OBA sim: Not economic without a lot of hard work for free. Continue while volunteers available and clubs want it. Not clear that County level is the right one for a sim in view of the number now available nationally.

Times and Sandra Landy : See above – talk to other groups about how to compete and award them. A clear social good.

Fitch: Entry 2 pairs for last two years. Current holders to melt down and sell off or give in perpetuity to the person who has won it with the most different partners☺

The competitions 4: Possible new competitions

In principle we have released some weekends (about 3 p.a.) to allow new competitions to be run without crowding the timetable. Some clashes can now be avoided. We have spent little time on this but some possible contenders for profitable new events are:

Revised Harwell Cup: See above

Bridgathelons: Oxon kept the GolfPrint going after the EBU gave it up and there is still a move to have golf+bridge (Talk to other groups). There may be a taste for Bridge+# events (Darts, Backgammon, Chess, Quizzes etc.) Again talk to other groups.

Twinning competitions: In the distant past bridge players from elsewhere have come to play (this could be OBC but we could invite other Oxfordshire like regions in other EU countries??). Is this on the agenda of other groups.

Pivot Teams/Mixed teams: Other counties run successful mixed and/or pivot team events. For instance the B&B mixed event attracts well over 20 tables and is held a little later in the year than our gendered pairs. This could replace the gendered pairs and is likely to attract many more if marketed correctly.

Swiss teams: But there may be enough given the congress.

The congress

Initial discussions online indicate that we think that this is a success. It fills and makes a profit on both days and follows a tried and tested format which does not seem to tire people.

The question of whether we should seek a venue to be more attractive to outsiders (hotels nearby etc.) and seek more tables is yet to be considered. There is a case for not fixing something that ain't broke. It is an excellent well run event all round for Oxfordshire.

County Night

This is perhaps our biggest task. With increased OBC charges and the introduction of P1P (P2P/2: no doubt to be followed by P2P) - the table money has been put up to £4. We are only just getting to grips with the data. We assume that numbers are insensitive to the change in table money.

Numbers are erratic as can be the standard. Numbers have become significantly higher for Teams and Butlers than for pairs. The survey gives no reason to be hopeful of a lot of new comers. It was meant to serve a purpose

for those aspiring to play for the county but this is hard to see at the moment. The treasurer reports that the numbers for Teams/Butlers will make them largely profitable but pairs will be marginal at best.

Currently it provides some reasonable standard of competition for better club players and county ones wanting to improve – but it is also the place to go if you want to play on a Tuesday night in Oxford. It is slightly less crowded than other OBC nights.

There is a clear future for Teams and Butlers monthly and we shall consider a shift of night and place (rota, transitory or permanent) but have not as yet so done.

Given the relative popularity of the teams format over pairs, we are looking at moving the 5th Tuesdays to a teams format of some type. There is some interest in part pivot (you play with only two of the others in your team - one in each half). Or we could have Butlers again or even pairs with aggregate scoring with some tweaks to make it sensible. Beyond abandoning traditional pairs we have yet to consider this.

There clearly needs to be at least one pairs event a month and possibly two but they need to be invigorated to make them viable. One per month would include the national and county pairs “sweepup” heats and some others, but we could introduce elements that have proved successful elsewhere such as having competitions for the best 6 results with different partners etc.

It is worth noting the success of the Menagerie Teams at Horspath. A similar competition at Roke also attracts interest. In these, a set of teams each of which contains a core set of players, contests each month (either in a normal movement or in a league with heads to heads). Guests are OK. The county one could be handicapped. It could be called the Chester cup.

Upping the table money to £5 and having a few prizes, possibly on a handicapped basis may be worthwhile for some or all Tuesdays. Also suggested has been discussion of a hand from previous week by a county level player at the beginning.

Next steps

Get the committee completed

Get OBA management approval for the aims etc. or variation.

Complete the first round of discussions and get a document on the county website.

Think about blueprints for county competitions that are not green.

Also put on the county website a version of a form that we have used to collect views on a county competition. It is a googleform that anyone can fill in about any competition in about 2-3 mins. It is not a survey – it seeks those people with views strong enough about a specific competition to cause them to use the form. Even if responses are sparse there are good reasons for consulting in this way alongside the document. We seek OBA MC permission to go down this route.

Meet to complete, write up, drink up, stand down.

John Slater 22 March 2012

COUNTY TEAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

The team has discussed what it wants to achieve, and invites the OBA Management Committee to agree the following aim and objectives:

Aim

To improve the performance of all the county teams while ensuring that county-level bridge is fully integrated with other bridge activity in the county.

Objectives

1. To oversee the work of the Selection Committee on behalf of the OBA Management Committee, and to provide guidance on selection criteria and working procedures as appropriate
2. To encourage some direct links between performance within the county and selection for the county where county events provide an appropriate level of competition
3. To look to develop training opportunities within the county, both for top players and by top players for others with potential to represent the county

4. To appeal to clubs and players for a potential wider pool of players from a wider range of clubs to represent the county
5. To widen opportunities to represent the county through organising additional matches with surrounding counties, with a view to developing a ladder of progression from county events to county player

The Management Committee is also invited to note that in accordance with these objectives the next steps the team has set itself are a) to survey the current squad about interest in participating in training seminars, both as potential trainees and trainers; b) to liaise as appropriate with the competitions team about ensuring county competitions include suitably challenging events for county players and aspiring county players; (c) to look at the budgetary implications of holding training seminars and additional representative matches. An oral update on the performance of county teams will be provided at the meeting following the penultimate round of the current Midlands counties league on Sunday.

Alan Wilson 22/3/2012

EDUCATION AND IMPROVERS TEAM

The Education Team comprises Claire Macdonagh (Education Officer), Dave Watkins, Ian Mitchell, Judy Wesselbaum, Melinda Jordan and Gaye Kyle. Alison Nicolson has expressed her willingness to assist the team in any way she can without herself being part of it.

Following the resignation of the team's original leader, Gillian Weatherley, shortly after the team's inception no replacement leader has yet been found and Robert Procter has organised the meetings that have taken place so far, holding one with Claire, Ian and Judy, a second with Dave and a third arranged for March 13 with the remaining two members of the team. Suggestions for a volunteer to lead this team will be welcomed.

Discussions and E-mails have contributed to creating the following definition of the team's aim, which the Management Committee is invited to approve:

Aim

To ensure the provision throughout Oxfordshire of bridge education appropriate to all levels from beginner to county standard.

The word "duplicate" has been deliberately excluded as we believe there is a long-term benefit in just teaching people to play bridge. However we do want to encourage as many beginners as possible to go on to join our duplicate ranks. This needs to encompass making them feel welcome at our clubs, helping them with the practice and etiquette of duplicate and giving them the support and encouragement to improve their game to enable them to feel competitive at local club level. Similar considerations apply to those wishing to make the transition from playing within their club to competing at inter-club or county level. Activities that we will encourage and/or organise include lessons and seminars at varying levels, mentoring schemes and supervised play or "play with an expert" sessions. We will be encouraging the county's more experienced players to share their knowledge of the game.

We propose:

- To establish what bridge learning opportunities already exist within the county
- To ensure that these are properly publicised on club and county websites
- To identify areas where the opportunities available are insufficient and to liaise with clubs in that area to discuss how the gap may be filled
- In particular to ensure there is adequate provision of activities for newcomers to help them bridge the gap between a first course of lessons and playing in a club, including exploring new ways of giving beginners this encouragement
- To find out what the many people who said in the OBA survey that they would be willing to help with teaching have to offer and to ensure this asset is appropriately utilised
- To ensure that our teachers are of an adequate standard, have appropriate teaching materials and are appropriately trained

- To liaise with the County Team Management team to make use of the skills of our county players
- To advise clubs on things they should be doing to help new members to feel more comfortable and to develop their bridge confidence, thereby helping to ensure that new members are retained
- To liaise with the Competitions team to ensure that we have competitions appropriate to all levels of player
- To encourage the set-up of mentoring schemes for players at all levels
- To investigate any grants that may be available to support any of these activities

There are two specific issues on which we would like to invite Management Committee input and feedback:

1. We have approached the EBU to organise a teacher training weekend this autumn and we need to determine the best location. In some areas of the county there is little or no teaching available, most notably the north. We want to run the course for the sort of people who would be most likely to fill this sort of gap and hence it seems sensible to run it in such a location, but we don't want to teach the teachers and then find there is no club willing to make space available for lessons or prepared to sponsor the various activities necessary to help the resultant beginners through the stages of improvers to club players.
2. We have not organised a county-led Andrew Robson Seminar this year as the venue (OBC) could not be made available. However Frilford Heath BC did so earlier this month and the event was extremely successful (approx. 100 participants). We believe we should be trying to run more such seminars in future – there are other presenters who can do a good job for us too. We would like to invite suggestions as to how soon, how often and where we should try to hold more such events.

Robert Procter 12 March 2012

MARKETING AND YOUTH TEAM

Our group has not yet held a physical meeting. The italicised comments below are from members of the group, and are a prompt for further discussion.

Would we prefer to be called Youth and Duplicate Bridge Development? - After some discussion with Robert, we may change from Duplicate Bridge Marketing to Duplicate Bridge Promotion.

Youth

The objective is for all schools in the OBA area to be aware of bridge and minibridge.

- To be given details of the schemes available from the EBU and OBA
- To be given a contact point for advice and help
- To be invited to competitive events managed and run by the OBA

Specifically

- *how can OBA help to market the Youth Programme throughout the county and recruit more volunteers?*
- *how can the 60 volunteers on Robert's list best be enlisted and supported?*
- *as the programme grows, how can the increased size be managed?*
- *what additional funding can be found/sought? VF*

It is vital to have a lively website, which is linked to but separate from the OBA official site. I don't fully understand the aversion to Bridgewebs and think it would greatly help to spread the word that bridge can be taught for in primary schools. Head teachers would expect to consult a website and it would be just brilliant to put up themed hands to which we could direct the children we teach and for them to have quizzes to do etc. HK

We need a solid plan for how to keep this updated and who is responsible for it. Marryat

I think that finding more schools to go into, and helping people realise that it isn't too scary is still a big priority for us. As mentioned in this email thread, using the existing answers to the survey is a good start, and possibly trying to get potential helpers to come in and help at existing schools might be a quick way of proving to them that it isn't too scary. I am sure people who speak to me are bored of me parroting the same message, but we need to think of viable ways of getting more people learning at different schools together, whether by regular weekend meetings or a few times a year junior events. Marryat

Further funding - OBA gave a £1000 budget to Youth Bridge in the year April 2011- March 2012. The number of schools was significantly smaller when the budget was allocated. More may be needed next year and, if necessary, the case needs to be made for this.

Training - currently all the courses are given by Alison Nicolson and I think funded, or partly funded by the EBU. As the scale of the programme increases, the current model may not be sustainable - Alison and Joan will be able to advise on this. Vicky

Duplicate Bridge Promotion

The objective is for all bridge players in the OBA area to be aware of duplicate bridge, and to be given the opportunity to learn how they could incorporate duplicate bridge into their own bridge groups.

- To provide documentation to support the move to duplicate bridge
- To be given a contact point for advice and help
- The OBA to provide members for on-site support
- The OBA to provide start-up interest free loans for wallets and cards
- In conjunction with the Social Team the OBA to run events for Novices & Students, and Next Steppers
- Affiliated clubs to be given the responsibility to “foster” groups new to duplicate

Budget to be established for the Management Committee

- Advertising
- Loans to new duplicate groups
- Travel costs
- Stationery & other miscellaneous items
- Promotional material and prizes for competitions

Mike Fletcher, 19.3.12

PREMISES AND FINANCE TEAM

Whilst this team has yet to be formally formed there have been a number of individual meetings which it seems appropriate to report under this heading. These meetings concerned our rental arrangements with Oxford Bridge Club, budgets and accounts format.

OBA/OBC Rental arrangements

*These notes should be read in conjunction with the OBC's proposal headed “OBA & OBC Outlines for an agreement” and the OBC's response headed “OBA Response to OBC proposals **OBC Comments in red**” (see documents included at the end of this set of reports).*

A meeting between myself, Sandra Nicholson, Stephen Brown and Dinah Lintott representing the OBA and Peter Sherry, Richard Sills, Kathy Talbot, Chris Kerr and John Fleming representing the OBC was held aiming to reach an agreement as to what rental terms should be presented to the OBA and OBC's committees for approval. The OBC presented their proposals to the meeting in the form of the document “OBA & OBC Outlines for an agreement”. After discussion of all the matters contained therein it was clear that there was much on which we could agree – the benefits of having a fixed weekly figure, the need on both sides for a notice period and many of the detailed conditions the OBC were suggesting. However the OBC was looking for an amount equivalent to what they could raise by running one of their own club duplicates on the premises, whereas we were only ready to pay a fair market rent. We agreed to go away and discuss their proposal and come up with a counter-proposal. This resulted in the document headed “OBA Response to OBC proposals” in which we proposed a lower rent. Their committee has met and discussed and broadly accepted this counter-proposal with some minor comments recorded in red.

Currently we are paying 50% of our £3 per player table money to the OBC. When this agreement was made county nights regularly attracted 15 or more tables. Declining numbers mean that frequently we do not even fully occupy the two back rooms and apart from teams night once a month we are usually closer to 10 tables. Accordingly the OBC is receiving much less than it did.

For so long as the county wishes to continue running a county night in Oxford (and currently there are no plans to change this) it seems sensible to ensure that we will continue to have the back two rooms available for pairs nights and all three for teams nights. By agreeing to a fixed price for these we know that if we are able to increase attendances within the space available any increased revenue goes to us. You will see that the agreement allows for a bit of expansion into other areas of the club, but it is proposed that most of any income

from that would go to the OBC. If we were able to fill the available space (maximum 12 tables and 17 tables respectively) we would probably be able to hold our charges as they are but there is no reason to assume that we could do this, so the proposal that we accept these new rental levels must go hand in hand with the need to increase our table money to cover the extra cost. The effects on our income and expenditure are spelt out at the foot of our counter-proposal and include covering P2P charges which are to be introduced by the EBU to county nights from April 1.

We therefore recommend that this committee confirms that we should proceed to create a written rental agreement with the OBC incorporating:

- From April 1, a rent of £90 per week for the middle room and the conservatory on pairs nights and £120 per week for these rooms and the front room on teams night.
- A six-month notice period on either side
- From September 1, a similar level of charges for Sunday room hire
- Appropriate wording for the many operating terms listed by OBC

We also recommend that this committee confirms an increase in table money on Tuesday evenings from £3 to £4. (Note that OBC currently charge £3.50 to their members)

Team Budgets and Accounts Format

I met with Dinah Lintott and Sandra Nicholson to discuss the preparation of budgets for our new management teams. Significant points which we discussed were:

The survey told us that our members expected competitions to be self-financing. It is assumed that this is excluding profits from the Congress, a significant part of which comes from players outside the county.

We suggest that events run for “social” players should also be self-financing. (Subsequently it has become clear that some members of this committee think we should be prepared to subsidise such events to get them off the ground)

We would expect to charge for education events so that they too would be self-financing.

The survey told us that members are willing to support the county team financially – but it is my intention to invite them to give something back by way of participation in the education programme.

This leaves the costs of marketing, promotion, communication and administration to be covered by the income from membership and the profits from the Congress.

It will be necessary for the individual teams to consider their plans, cost them, and provide a budget to the Premises and Finance team for approval. Then it will be necessary for Dinah to maintain her records in such a way that she can report actual receipts and payments compared with budget.

I subsequently met with Dinah to discuss future reporting. We recommend that the accounts format be substantially simplified with headings broadly by team as follows:

- Marketing and Youth Development (Subdivided into Membership, Marketing and Youth)
- Social
- Education
- Communication
- Competitions and County Night (Subdivided into Competitions, County Night and Congress)
- County Team Management
- Premises and Finance (Subdivided into Interest, Administration and Other)

If further information is wanted (e.g. analysis of competitions by competition, type of expenditure etc) this can be done separately.

We plan to prepare this year’s accounts in both formats and will seek your approval for the change thereafter.

Robert Procter 12 March 2012

SOCIAL TEAM

As the development of a Social Bridge Team is a totally new venture this will be a learning experience for everyone. I hope that everyone, although maybe not wanting to be directly involved, will take an interest. Bridge has so many different facets to the game and can be so many different things to so many different people. For some people it is an academic exercise for others it is purely a social outlet.

It is, however, absorbing at any level and as one lady told me “playing Bridge kept me sane and in touch” after a tragic life experience!”

As indicated in the Chairman’s report, work has been progressing on the development of a new “social” event (to be known as “Welcome Pairs”), to be held concurrently with the first day of the Oxfordshire Congress in June. Details have now been finalised sufficiently to produce an information poster which is now on the County website and being circulated by the Publicity Officer.

Aims

The aims of the Social Bridge Team are:

1. To raise the profile of Social Bridge within the OBA area. This to be achieved by –
 - Running a Social Bridge Congress alongside the Oxfordshire Congress in June 2012
 - Inviting clubs and individuals to be involved in creating, and being part of, a Social Bridge Team. This does not have to be a Team that is heavy on meetings.
 - Learning from the good practice of some clubs to encourage others to create Social Bridge opportunities in their areas.
 - Developing a Social Bridge Web page.
 - Collating information from Clubs and individuals, in the OBA area, of opportunities for Social Bridge and creating an awareness of this programme by showcasing it on the Social Bridge Web page.
2. Investigate and promote partnership work within the OBA and in the OBA area. This to be achieved by –
 - Promoting Social Bridge in partnership with welcoming, forward thinking Bridge Clubs in the OBA area. Some Clubs are already doing superb work in this area.
 - Creating opportunities for those Bridge Clubs to share their ideas and achievements.
 - Working in partnership with the Education Team and the Marketing Team to ensure that information re the development of duplicate bridge is available to social Bridge players.
 - Create a small working group to develop a model for setting up a Social Duplicate Bridge Club. (Talk to Mike and Rob initially)
 - Use information from survey and respond to suggestions relating to Social Bridge

First year measurable and achievable outcomes

- Creation of Social Bridge Team
- Run a Social Congress
- Development of web page

Extra desirable outcomes

- Working in partnership with others to develop opportunities for Social Bridge Players i.e. coffee shop bridge day, Andrew Robson (or other) workshops, charity bridge events etc.
- Scope out Social Bridge opportunities in Henley and Banbury
- Work with other OBA members on initial plans for Social Bridge Congress for 2013 learning from the 2012 event.

Barbara Jordan

20th March 2012

In response to your proposals for a more formal rental arrangement between OBA and OBC we have the following comments:

1. We accept that we are currently paying below the market rent and are prepared to move to a fair market rent. We suggest this should be based on the cost of equivalent premises elsewhere in the area rather than the income that can be generated from them. **Accepted.**
2. We accept the need to move to a fixed rate giving the OBC a guaranteed income rather than one that fluctuates due to circumstances beyond its control. In agreeing to a fixed rent, the OBA will be taking over the risk of continuing declining county night numbers.
3. We would like to propose a notice period on either side of six months. **Accepted – with the reservation that the increased rental currently under discussion can be implemented in less than 6 months; e.g. (subject to agreement) from 1st April 2012; or from 1 July 2012 (in case OBA perceives a need to allow time for discussion at the OBA AGM)..**
4. We agree that detailed terms should cover the many operating issues that you describe in your proposal and do not expect that any of these will be likely to cause any significant difficulty in reaching a binding agreement.
5. We do not address the issue of charges for Sunday events here, believing this is not material to the central issue. However charges should again be based on a fair market rent. **Accepted. See accompanying table of new hire rates.**

Before suggesting what we believe to be a fair figure we would draw attention to the wider picture.

*Demand for bridge in the area currently exceeds supply. OBA, OBC and Summertown BC have a shared interest in trying to resolve this problem. Both OBC and Summertown BC are considering how to meet that demand, the former through expansion of its premises and the latter through the possibility of putting on a further weekly duplicate. Alternatively if there is a will for it to happen, the OBA would support the development of a new bridge club somewhere else in the Oxford area. There may be changes in the demand for bridge in the area. **OBC is also trying to meet demand by increasing the number of playing opportunities throughout the week.***

The OBA is considering the development of its competitions and county nights in the light of responses to its survey - a number of proposals concerning timing, location and standard may change the level of interest in county nights.

The general level of demand by the time that the OBC's expansion plans are realized is therefore uncertain and both OBA and OBC need to be able to adapt to changes both up and down.

*If county nights were moved to another location, significant set-up expenses would be incurred and might make a move back to OBC's premises on completion of their premises expansion less attractive. Such a move might also affect the numbers participating. It would seem prudent for all concerned to maintain the OBA's use of the OBC premises in the short term and to seek to meet the increased demand for bridge in other ways that would not need to be reversed later. **If building plans materialise, OBC wishes to relocate to temporary premises capable of housing all activities currently carried on at OBC – including county night if OBA so wishes.***

However an ongoing agreement in which county nights continue at OBC must not stand in the way of ensuring that the supply of club-level bridge in the area meets demand. We are concerned that this should be addressed urgently and propose that a meeting be held between OBA, OBC and Summertown BC to discuss the matter. Accepted.

6. We suggest a fair rent would be £120 per week for the three rooms on teams nights and £90 per week for the middle room and conservatory on the other county nights, this price to cover all facilities currently enjoyed, including use of equipment and computer. [At such a cost we believe either OBA or OBC should be able to find alternative local premises and have enough left over to finance equipment (stationery, tables, computer etc) and hence to accommodate bridge that cannot currently fit in to the OBC premises pending expansion.] **Accepted.**

7. In the event that the OBA attracts more players than can comfortably play in the rooms booked we understand that additional playing space can be used in either the Mary Good room or the Tea room in preference to turning people away - and we would be prepared to pay any net income arising (say £10 per extra table) should this become necessary. **Accepted.**

The overall financial effects:

Currently the OBA charges £3 per session at county nights giving income of just over £6000 pa. Half goes to the OBC and the rest contributes to costs relating to duplimating, honours boards etc leaving a surplus available for use on other activities (including free entry to the county pairs) – a surplus the OBA needs to continue to make from this or other sources if it is to be able to afford its development plans.

In 2012/13 costs will increase due to P2P charges estimated at £400pa. At the above proposed rents OBA would pay OBC $12 \times £120 + 38 \times £90 = £4900$, an increase of about £1800 on the current level of capitation charges (note that for 2012/13 at least, Christmas and New Year will mean 2 weeks fewer). By increasing table money to £4 per session in 2012/13 the OBA could increase its income by approximately £2000. After deducting P2P and the rent increase the OBA would be approximately £200 worse off.

Overall £2000 more is taken from the pockets of county night players, the OBC benefits by £1800, the EBU by £400 and the OBA loses £200. Whilst the players themselves might not see this as desirable, we believe it is fair. Accepted.

OBC room hire rates proposal

Current rates

<u>External hirer</u>	<u>3hrs</u>	<u>Discount</u>	<u>6hrs</u>	<u>Discount</u>	<u>OBA</u>	<u>3hrs</u>	<u>Discount</u>	<u>6hrs</u>	<u>Discount</u>
Conservatory	25	-	50	-		12.50	12.50	25	25.00
Middle room	20	-	40	-		10	10	20	20.00
Front room	20	-	40	-		10	10	20	20.00
MG room	15	-	30	-		7.50	7.50	15	15.00
3 rooms	60	5	120	10		30	30 + 2.50	60	60 + 5
Whole club	75	5	150	10		37.50	37.50 + 2.50	75	75 + 5

Proposed rates

<u>External hirer</u>	<u>3hrs</u>	<u>Discount</u>	<u>6hrs</u>	<u>Discount</u>	<u>OBA</u>	<u>3hrs</u>	<u>Discount</u>	<u>6hrs</u>	<u>Discount</u>
Conservatory	30	-	60	-		30	-	60	-
Middle room	25	-	50	-		25	-	50	-
Front room	25	-	50	-		25	-	50	-
MG room	15	-	30	-		15	-	30	-
3 rooms	75	5	150	10		75	5	150	10
Whole club	90	5	180	10		90	5	180	10

So the advertised rates would be the figures above in red. We would charge OBA the same: so the amount OBA would pay us for 6 hour hire would be:

3 rooms 150 = old rate of 60 + charge increase 30 + loss of 50% discount 60

2 rooms - 110 = old rate of 45 + charge increase 20 + loss of 50% discount 45

1 room * - 60 = old rate of 25 + charge increase 10 + loss of 50% discount 25

* assuming it's the conservatory