

REPORTS FOR OBA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 12 DECEMBER 2013

CHAIRMAN

“I believe X would do better if he tried harder.” The words of the old school report seem appropriate to a period which has seen:

- Excessive delays in the brochure, the bylaws and the website
- Problems in getting results out for Tuesday nights
- Shortage of volunteers for key posts
- Poor performances in Midlands inter-county leagues and Tollemache
- Lack of interest in a new Social League

But on the plus side we have:

- Joan Bennett receiving the Tom Bradley Award for her work introducing bridge to schools
- Freddie Illingworth receiving the Young Player of the Year award
- The revised bylaws can now be found on our new website – go to “Play Duplicate Bridge” ▶ “Competitions” ▶ “Bylaws”
- A café bridge event at Thame run in exemplary manner by Peter Jordan that will serve as a template for other counties seeking to do the same.

There are three subjects I would like to devote some time at the MC meeting to discussing:

1. Returning to the adverse school report items – I have never believed that “trying harder” is the best solution to a problem. All those responsible for managing activities within the county are volunteers. No doubt they all try as hard as their other life commitments permit. If they make mistakes or don’t achieve everything they set out to achieve, criticism rarely helps. So rather than complain, we need people to volunteer their services and do something about it. We need new faces to step forward and give a bit of their time. We have getting on for 1500 members who probably play bridge on average for at least 30 years of their life. So if each member was prepared to make a time contribution to promoting bridge in the county over say 5 years we could have 250 committee members. Too many, you say! But in fact we have only about 20 active committee members, if that, and a number of key roles not filled at present. I would settle for increasing the number to 30 and could easily split roles to make each one more manageable. We need to find people willing to help in running competitions and social events, increasing their publicity, communicating through the website and other means. Please help me to find these people.
2. You will learn from Barbara Jordan’s report that we have reluctantly abandoned hope of setting up a Regional Social League this winter. Very similar leagues in neighbouring counties, B & B, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire to name but three, have been successful, so why not here in Oxfordshire? We had two enthusiastic entries from one of our smaller clubs, Blewbury, and none from elsewhere. Information about the proposed league was sent out several times to the clubs, but there seems little appetite for pushing county events within the clubs. I understand that clubs have their own events to push, but nevertheless I believe it is good for players at all levels to get and take opportunities to play in a wider field. I would hope that members of this committee, whether officers or club representatives, share this view and will be more active in helping both the Social and Competitions Teams to promote their events in future.
3. During the period the EBU has terminated the National Clubs Committee as a method of communicating directly with its clubs. This method of communication was not as successful as had been hoped and received criticism for bypassing county committees in many counties. It is being replaced by a new structure involving County Chairmen. A new National Committee consisting of two representatives from each of five regions is proposed. I attended the first meeting of the Midlands Counties Chairmen and have accepted the post of being one of the Midlands Counties’ two representatives on the National Committee, as well as the responsibility for chairing future meetings of the Midlands group. The structure is intended both to aid two-way communication between the EBU and the grass roots and to encourage exchange of ideas between counties. There was one key point made at the Midlands Counties Meeting which I would like to talk about further at this meeting. We recognised that expansion of membership of the EBU is about providing services that are of value to non-members and unaffiliated clubs, rather than about persuading them that they want existing services that they are currently quite happy without. This thought should inform each county’s future development.

Robert Procter, 25 November 2013

TREASURER

At the time of writing, the current account balance is £10,296 and our deposit account holds £28,104.

We are facing increased costs due to lack of catering facilities at OBC. These increased costs have partly been absorbed through increased competition fees but in the main will be absorbed by the County.

The congress accounts are as follows with comparisons to the previous 2 years:

	2013	2012	2011
	£	£	£
Income	9,750	9,331	8,532
Costs:			
Catering	(2,264)	(2,144)	(1,800)
Prizes	(1,590)	(1,534)	(1,480)
Licence Fee	(1,392)	(1,197)	(1,195)
Director & Scorer	(978)	(984)	(943)
Organiser	(510)	(475)	(450)
Hall Hire	(770)	(701)	(589)
Advertising	(462)	(306)	(276)
Expenses	(23)	(38)	(86)
Profit	1,761	1,952	1,712

As you can see the increased costs of the larger venue and additional advertising were partially offset by increased entries but not entirely absorbed. It should be noted that 2012 includes the successful social congress which did not run this year due to insufficient entrants.

We still have no access to our deposit account which I will endeavour to resolve before the next meeting.

Claire MacDonagh, 12 December 2013

SECRETARY

Nothing to report.

Sandra Nicholson, December 2013

EBU SHAREHOLDERS

The EBU AGM was held on 2nd October.

Sally Bugden has now retired as EBU Chairman (being replaced by Jeremy Dhondy), but will be leading the new English Bridge Education and Development Charity, the formation of which has now been approved by the Charity Commissioners. A separate board of Trustees will be appointed and there will be a full review of current education provision before considering new projects for development. The current EBU Youth and Education Trust will be rolled into the new charity and the EBU itself will be making a greater investment into the charity's education activities from 1st April 2014.

Apologies were presented for the late arrival of the 2013/14 diary, which had been delayed by events outside the control of the EBU. Arrangements for publication and distribution of next year's diary are to be reviewed.

Financially, the outturn for the year ending March 2103 was £61k better than budget, representing approximately 3% of total turnover. The main disappointment was the first-ever cash loss on the Brighton Congress; however, the changes made to the event this summer have reportedly brought it back to profit. The shareholders agreed to increase the P2P amount for 2104/15 by 1p to 35p, an increase of approximately 3%, which is in line with inflation.

As at 31 March 2103 the total number of members was 54,303, an increase of just over 4% on the previous year. The number of affiliated clubs had gone down slightly, from 607 to 604. The corresponding figures for Oxfordshire showed an increase of approximately 10% in the membership, to a total of 1543, but a reduction from 19 to 18 affiliated clubs (although this has now been restored to 19 with the reaffiliation of Menagerie).

Sandra Claridge, Alan Wilson and Sandra Nicholson, December 2013

COMPETITIONS AND COUNTY NIGHTS TEAM

Wessex League

Having taken over as Wessex League Secretary from Geoff Nicholas at the start of the season it is appropriate for me to thank him for his many years of hard work and a job well done.

This year we have 38 teams in total. This is one less team than last year with 8 teams in divisions 1 to 3, and 7 teams in divisions 4 and 5.

Updated Rules were agreed by the Competitions Committee at the start of the season and have been introduced with very little difficulty so far. The main change has been the introduction of the new IMPS to VPS conversion scale. This scale conforms to EBU guidelines and requires somewhat larger victory margins to record "big wins".

It is pleasing to note that 62 out of the total of 126 matches to be played have been arranged with pre-Christmas dates in line with good practice recommendations.

The online League Management System introduced by the EBU last year continues to be extremely useful and League Tables can currently be viewed via the Aylesbury Bridge Club website.

Hugh Thomson, Wessex League Secretary, December 2013

Chief Tournament Director

1. I have spent many days moving material from the old website to the new website and improving the layout of information into tables. I have set up new pages for competitions and passed login information onto many users and encouraged them to update their own areas. Information is up to date and we are getting closer to the point where the duplicate result is uploaded before players get home from the event.

2. There has been training offered on three Tuesdays out of the four in November to increase the skills and number of the scoring team and those able to upload the new OBA Website. Training has been offered on:

- a) Using the scoring program
- b) Movements to use for pairs and teams
- c) Scoring with Bridgemates
- d) Uploading the website with scoring results
- e) Uploading the website with other information

Pdf information booklets on all these are also available. Many thanks to Rob Dixon, Chris Dawe, Kathy Talbot, & Ian Constable who attended the scoring training, and Sandra Nicholson who attended the website training. There are copies of all the movements at the Oxford Bridge club in the OBA cupboard and now 6 people have keys to this storage area. More keys have been cut.

3. There are over 15 tables entered for the Swiss Pairs and a team of three people will be jointly directing this event to ensure that this team can enjoy playing their bridge and provide a good service for the players.

I hope that the directing and scoring team will continue to "do better". We are certainly trying.

Stephen Brown, 27 November 2013

Rob Dixon, December 2013

SELECTION AND COUNTY TEAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

Oxfordshire finished 8th out of 9 in Group D of the Tolle Qualifier at Daventry. We were similarly unsuccessful in the matches against Derbyshire and Gloucestershire, partly due to some of our top players being absent at Premier League weekends.

The Notts match which was postponed at short notice in September seems unlikely now to be rearranged for the New Year. I don't think it will be played at all.

The "County" page on the new OBA website is now fully operational and I am in a good position to be able to update it regularly. It includes reports and quizzes based on the fixtures mentioned above.

We have still not implemented the plan to enable county players to indicate availabilities online in Doodle - with luck that will happen in the New Year. Next Selectors' Meeting, Dec 17. Next match: A v Worcs, Dec 8.

It appears that, despite catering problems, future home games will still be staged at OBC, with catering partly "bought in" and partly managed by Esme. The fee for tea has been raised. This arrangement is not ideal, but we can work with it for now.

Nick Smith, December 2103

EDUCATION TEAM

There is at present no team leader nor officer for this team.

DUPLICATE BRIDGE PROMOTION AND YOUTH TEAM

Youth objectives

Schools bridge continues to be a success in the South East of the County, but progress in the rest of Oxfordshire is very slow. We have been in contact with the County Councillor with special responsibility for Education, and she has agreed to spread the word to all the County schools. In the meantime all OBA members should be encouraged to ask on behalf of their children and/or grandchildren whether their school would consider taking up bridge.

From January 12th next year we are starting a regular Sunday Junior Bridge Club at Roke from 2:30 to 4:30. Parents are welcome. See our website bridgewebs.com/bridge4schools for more details.

Plans are in progress for the second OBA Junior Congress which is to take place on March 9th at Roke Village Hall.

Work on the budget for the Youth activities is outstanding.

Player and Club Development

The Promotion Team has not yet done any work on this since the last report.

Promotion Team Contacts:

Mike Fletcher, Emily Middleton, Holly Kilpatrick, and Mike Webley

Email: promotion@oxfordshirebridge.co.uk

Mike Fletcher, December 2013

Membership

Emily Middleton, December 2013

[Secretary's note: According to the information given at the EBU AGM, our membership has increased by 10% each year over the past 3 years – SN]

SOCIAL TEAM

Social Bridge Congress – This didn't happen owing to lack of take up. I did extensive mail outs. I sent to the large list of people expressing interest from the original questionnaire, to all the people who came to the Congress last year, to all Oxfordshire Clubs and clubs in close proximity to Oxfordshire. I sent to all teachers in the County that we know of, I sent to all the people who came to the Henley café bridge and to the people who came to the Bridge and Brunch day.

Many thanks to the various people around the County who made sure that the information was disseminated and thank you to everyone on the committee for their help and support.

I think the concept of "OBA social bridge opportunities" is still new for the County's social bridge players. Also I think the word "congress" could be off putting.

Bridge 'n Brunch - This was held in April at Long Crendon bridge club. Gillian Weatherley presented an excellent powerpoint on the subject of being a bridge detective. Although we only had 6 tables, the evaluation forms showed that those people that did attend really enjoyed it and would like more sessions.

Café Bridge - A café bridge event was run at Henley in May. It was very successful. Many thanks to Joan Bennett who helped enormously in so many ways. Joan's local knowledge was invaluable in finding such splendid venues for people to visit. 100 people were booked in and a waiting list started with 3 weeks still to go. The evaluation forms were so positive and I had so many really nice emails that another café bridge in Henley will take place on 22nd April 2014.

Owing to the success of the Henley café bridge I decided to organise another one in Thame. This was also very well attended and 80 people enjoyed a very pleasant day's bridge on 12th September. Thame's mayor and several of the café's asked if we would consider making this an annual event.

A big, big thank you to my husband, Peter Jordan, for organising the bridge for the café bridge events.

(Nice spin off – some friends from Coventry Bridge Club came to the Henley café bridge and so enjoyed it that they organised a very successful café bridge in Kenilworth – also on 12th September as it happens! The Kenilworth café bridge was not organised as a charity event. It was organised as a social event with Coventry Bridge Club playing bridge against Kenilworth Bridge Club. Proceeds were split between the two clubs. Club members are asking for two café bridge events a year.)

Darren Evetts (who helped organise the Kenilworth café bridge and is also on the EBU committee) has suggested organising a National café bridge event next autumn with maximum publicity. The idea is that taking bridge out to the communities will increase awareness and participation in bridge.

Social Teams League – this was planned to start this Autumn. I met with Rob Dixon and we came up with some really good ideas. Rob drafted an invitational letter asking clubs/groups/organisations to let us know if they were interested in entering a team or teams. Despite sending out many emails to clubs and individual and putting information on the Social Bridge web page, this hasn't drawn much interest (apart from Blewbury Club who have been very pro-active and are keen to be involved). We are now looking at maybe organising a social teams event one evening or weekend afternoon in March as a one off event in the south of the county. If we have success with this we will repeat it in other parts of the county.

Social bridge web page – This is operational and I would be more than happy to feature any social bridge events for any club or organisation who would like to send them to me.

Developing a Social Bridge Team – this, I think, was seen as an important part of my role when I became involved with OBA. It clearly hasn't happened and I am disappointed that I have not been able to do this.

This year has been interesting. I have expanded my knowledge of what is happening in the way of social bridge in the County. There is a considerable amount of social bridge organised in all areas of the County by a lot of enthusiastic people. I am impressed at the amount of time and enthusiasm that so many people give so freely to make sure that bridge clubs thrive and operate for their members.

I would like to say a special thank you to Rob Procter who has been so supportive to me. I am looking forward to being involved with more ideas and developments in 2014. Thank you all for your support.

Barbara Jordan, December 2013

INFRASTRUCTURE TEAM

Publicity:

- 1) Once again the Andrew Robson Seminar on 18 April 2013 proved a huge success, providing a healthy profit for OBA.
- 2) Advert for 2014 Congress:
 - a) Brenda to continue (or Lorraine?)
 - b) No need to include "licensed by EBU" thereby saving a line!
- 3) History of OBA (see page 2 Dec issue English Bridge) New Chairman of EBU Jeremy Dhondy, is encouraging counties to create an archive of their histories - should we consider this?
- 4) Flyers for "Friendly Swiss Teams" and "Swiss Pairs" were sent out to clubs.
- 5) Flyers for "Swiss Teams" & "Pro-Am" will soon be circulated.

Brenda Harris, December 2013