

REPORTS FOR OBA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 20 MARCH 2013

CHAIRMAN

During the three months since our last meeting I have been encouraged to see progress being made towards a significant number of our long-term objectives:

- The development of new ideas for the expansion of our annual congress
- The holding of an Oxfordshire junior congress
- The opening of a website for schools
- The arrangement of a new inter-club event by clubs in the north of the county
- A bridge and brunch social/educational day at Long Crendon
- Arrangements in place for Café Bridge in Henley in April
- Work on increasing the content of our existing website and progress in developing a new one.

Many of these matters and others will be dealt with through the six management teams' formal reports and the only thing I would like to add is a big thank you to everyone who has contributed to making all these things happen – I am sure our members appreciate all their efforts.

A trawl of my E-mails also discloses a number of issues which I hope have been or soon will be satisfactorily dealt with. Amongst others these include:

- The need to leave the Oxford club in a good state after matches and county nights
- Clubs wishing to advertise their events through the county
- Clubs wishing to hold Blue-pointed events
- An issue concerning a member's behaviour.

Looking forwards, our next meeting will not be until after the AGM. I am going to suggest that our teams each carry out a review of the progress they have made towards the objectives that they set themselves and which were approved by this committee last year and that the team leaders then meet to put together a joint presentation to the AGM. Whilst it is encouraging to look at the list of successful developments above, there are areas where progress towards our objectives has been more difficult to achieve and I think we should recognise these and decide whether a different approach is needed.

Finally my report on the last three months would not be complete without mentioning the visit I made with Barbara Jordan to our newest affiliated club, the Abbey Smith Bridge Club at Little Horwood. Only a very few years ago, Abbey started giving lessons to a couple of classes of beginners a week. She now gives eleven sessions a week to beginners, improvers and more advanced players as well as running two duplicates every week. The duplicates draw in players from surrounding unaffiliated clubs at Winslow, Buckingham, Quainton and further afield. The club held a Christmas Party to which 110 people came! What is even more extraordinary is that all her beginners have graduated to duplicate bridge on completion of their beginners' courses with no drop-outs! She is very keen that her members should graduate beyond that to playing in events outside her club. I intend to discuss the ideas that she, Barbara and I talked about with the Competitions Team shortly.

Robert Procter, 10 March 2013

TREASURER – *Report to follow*

SECRETARY

As mentioned above, we have recently received a formal complaint from a member regarding the behaviour of another member at a County Night evening. This will be dealt with by a Conduct Committee, as provided for within our Constitution. The formation of this Committee, and the related Disciplinary Committee, appears on the agenda for the meeting.

Following a change in EBU regulations, we have been advised that clubs holding fewer than 26 duplicate sessions per year are now allowed to become affiliated provided that they have the approval of the relevant County. Menagerie's request for such approval also appears on the agenda for the meeting.

The report that Diamond Bridge Club has transferred allegiance to Berks & Bucks has been verified and they no longer appear in our list of affiliated clubs.

Sandra Nicholson, March 2013

EBU SHAREHOLDERS

Nothing to report since the AGM in October. The next Shareholders meeting will be held in May 2013.

Brenda Harris, Alan Wilson and Sandra Nicholson, March 2013

COMPETITIONS AND COUNTY NIGHTS TEAM

All three main inter-club competitions (Wessex League, President's Cup and Chester Cup) are proceeding smoothly. President's Cup has reached "a final" and Chester Cup has just gone into the final groups stage with these details sent out to captains on 2nd March.

Nineteen of the thirty eight Wessex club captains responded to Geoff's recent email which asked for their views about the possibility of changing the format, so that divisions four and five become of equal standing but reflect things geographically. All of the responses were adamantly against the suggestion.

Geoff is currently running the three competitions on the basis that the old rules (as on the OBA website) still apply.

Regarding the monthly Seniors event, table numbers are respectable and there is more income being generated for the county now that players bring their own refreshments.

We have had several very successful events since the last meeting with Swiss Teams, Pro-Am and County Pairs Semifinals. Many thanks to all who have helped direct or score or organise entries for these events.

The OBA website (old version) has been regularly updated over the past 2 months, and Stephen is very pleased to have received lots of new information on Social Events, County Teams, Youth & Education, newsletter and of course the congress. Many thanks to all who have contributed. This information will soon be transferred across to the new website being coordinated by Aleks Lishkov. Results and entries are regularly updated two or three times per week.

Some issues have arisen with new aspects of the bylaws and competitions – e.g. selection of teams for the Beck Cup/eligibility to compete in Wessex League teams. These shall be addressed before publication of the next brochure – all suggestions are welcome in writing before then.

With the advent of EBU Blue Points, we will be devising a more formal process for approving and advertising such events. Currently one county event has been Blue Pointed and two club Blue Pointed events have been approved.

We are also still open to suggestions for new competitions/extensions to current competitions to provide opportunities to compete at all levels throughout the county.

Rob Dixon, 9 March 2013

SELECTION AND COUNTY TEAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

Oxfordshire has just completed this season's matches in the Midlands Counties League, with the 3 teams respectively in 2nd, 2nd and 3rd place in their respective divisions (though one or two teams have not yet completed all their fixtures and may yet overtake us).

We have put in place a few changes to how the Selection Committee operates with a view to avoiding some of the difficulties that arose last autumn - it was touch and go once or twice in the run-up to the final two matches of the season whether we would be able to field a full team, but I'm pleased to say that with a bit of last minute arm-twisting 24 players were found on both occasions.

Firstly, Nick Smith has been elected by the Selection Committee as their new chairman, and Kathy Talbot has agreed to act as vice-chair if needed. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Colin Jones for chairing the committee for a number of years, and also to Alistair Gidman who has taken over on recent occasions when Colin has had to stand down for health reasons but who himself is having to step down now as a result of moving house. Secondly, Nick is working to implement a number of measures to improve how the committee operates, including getting the committee to take on a number of tasks that have previously left quite a burden on the county captain such as collating availabilities and communicating with the squad. Looking ahead, Nick would like us to consider some additional changes to how the committee operates, including the possibility of 3-year appointments for selectors and clarifying before selectors agree to stand for election that they will be expected to share some of the administrative tasks involved in running the county team.

Other actions that the SCTM team would like to take forward have not made much progress while we have been fighting fires on other fronts, but I am pleased to say that 5 new pairs have been added to the county squad as selectors have asked around for volunteers as part of the work involved in making sure we could actually field a team for the last two matches, even if we haven't yet put any announcements on the website about how any pair wishing to be considered for selection should make themselves known. If you do know anyone who would like to be considered but hasn't been asked recently, do please suggest they contact any of the Selection Committee or the SCTM team just to make sure their name is known as someone who might be amenable if asked.

Alan Wilson, 18 March 2013

EDUCATION TEAM

Information about Bridge teaching in Oxfordshire has now been uploaded onto the OBA website. Stephen Brown's efficient handling of the uploading process was much appreciated. Information about other teachers and Education schemes in the county would be most welcome. The current list is clearly incomplete.

Help and support has been provided to the Youth and Marketing team in the development of the bridge4schools website and in the running of the Junior Congress on 24th February 2013.

The Education Team has not met since the last management Meeting but discussions on setting up a Mentoring scheme have been held with Melinda Jordan and with Marion Day. Robert Procter has provided information given to him by the West Midlands Bridge Club about the scheme that they run. Progress on this initiative is ongoing.

Barbara Jordan and I have had a meeting to discuss, amongst other things, the possibility of a combined OBA Education and Social event. Progress on this is ongoing.

Discussions have also been held with Marion Day and, briefly, with Gay Kyle about other possible events.

Vicky Fleming, 5 March 2013

DUPLICATE BRIDGE PROMOTION AND YOUTH TEAM

Youth objectives

Since the last meeting the team ably assisted by Joan Bennett, Alison Nicolson, and Vicky Fleming has developed a website for schools – www/bridgewebs.com/bridge4schools. This is shared with Berks & Bucks. We have also arranged our first Junior Congress held at Roke Village Hall on February 24th.

All state schools, and many independent schools in Oxfordshire were invited to participate. Unfortunately no new schools entered, but a number of enthusiastic children from schools where bridge and/or minibridge is currently being taught enjoyed the day. One session was devoted to playing with an expert, and many thanks are due to Emily Middleton, Aleksandar Lishkov, Rob Dixon and Mungo Jackson. A full report is available on our website.

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.

Membership

As at March 2013 there were 1540 members registered with primary allegiance to Oxfordshire. These break down as follows:

Full members (P2P) -	1327, including 2 juniors
Bridge for All Students -	100
Direct members -	81, including 55 juniors
Teachers -	32.

Emily Middleton, 18 March 2013

[Secretary's note: According to the information given at the EBU AGM, at 31 March 2012 we had 1399 members, and at 31 March 2011 the figure was 1276. It appears therefore that we have seen a steady increase in membership of around 10% in each of the past 2 years. – SN]

Promotion Team Contacts:

Mike Fletcher, Emily Middleton, Holly Kilpatrick, and Mike Webley
Email: promotion@oxfordshirebridge.co.uk

Mike Fletcher, 3 March 2013

SOCIAL TEAM

I can hardly believe that a year has passed since I first got involved with OBA Social Bridge. I have been on a really steep learning curve, I have met a lot of really nice, helpful people and I have a few things to report now.

Web page - First up, Stephen has now set up the Social Bridge web page. It is really good, I have information posted and people are sending me information and comments. When you have time, please take a few minutes to have a look. Very pleased to post information about any social or charity events. Also, any constructive comments are welcome.

Team development - I have been quite busy getting out and about, meeting people and getting a better picture of what is happening and who does what. All of these meetings have been very informal and pleasant,

generally exploring what is happening in their areas over a coffee or lunch. Everyone that I have met has offered help and support in whatever way that they can, which is very encouraging.

I haven't cracked the concept of a "social bridge team" yet, which is disappointing. I still feel that people are wary of committing themselves to a team, which might involve meetings and travelling and all the other things that "a team" involves. I am really happy with the virtual team concept in that I do need people from the clubs to be willing for me to contact them for information, advice and to bounce ideas. I have several offers along these lines but I don't think any of them think of themselves as a member of the "social bridge team".

As a result of a meeting with Joan Bennett and Alison Nicolson to talk about mini bridge I am now teaching mini bridge in a primary school in Thame. Through Joan and Alison (who have been very supportive in giving me their time and giving me information and suggestions) I recently met the Social Bridge organiser from Worcester. She has undertaken this role for three years so was able to give me various ideas and suggestions.

Bridge 'n Brunch - Gillian and Frances from Wallingford have also been very supportive and Gillian is leading the first of the OBA "Bridge 'n Brunch" sessions at Long Crendon on March 15th. Publicity is now out for this event and people are booking in. I am hoping to get a lot of information from the evaluation forms at this event to see if this is the kind of thing that social bridge players would really like. I can only try things initially and see how they are received. If people then like a particular event I will write up the model and post it on the social web page to make it easy for people to run their own similar events if they wish.

Jonathan Green who runs the Henley Bridge School has said that he will lead a future Bridge 'n Brunch day in Henley area, Alison Nicolson has said that she would lead one in The Vale of the White Horse and Marian Day has said that she will run one in the Banbury area.

Café Bridge – On Tuesday April 16th 2013 a Henley café bridge is planned. Starting and finishing at the Leander Club in Henley, we have 4 other really nice venues; the plan is to have 5 tables in each of 5 venues. We can accommodate a maximum of 100 people but will need a couple of standby pairs in case pairs do not turn up on the day. (Depending on numbers we can always have 4 tables per venue and close numbers at 80.) Publicity is out and Claire is taking bookings now. My team of helpers so far for this event is – Joan Bennett, Jonathan Green, Peter Jordan, Jeff Millard, Sandra Claridge and myself. (Rob, as always, has offered any help too.) We are looking forward to a really memorable day and hope you will put the date in your diaries.

Social Congress - June will bring us to the Social Congress. On the Saturday we are running a similar event to last year but we are including a mini bridge congress as well. Joan and Alison are on board with this and we are hoping that children will enter. On the Sunday we are offering a Chicago session to all those players who play rubber bridge. I know this will be a real challenge to attract entrants but worth trying. During that day I will also offer an introduction to duplicate bridge to those who are interested. If people enter this event it will happen, if they don't it won't.

Future ideas - For July and August I am not planning anything but would like to spend some time organising events for the Autumn in the north, vale or west of the county.

I have support offered to run a café bridge day in Thame, and a tentative enquiry for Abingdon. Anything that I help to organise will be dependent on help being offered by people who live and play in those areas as they know their areas and clubs better than I do.

Robert organised an excellent meeting in Banbury area before Christmas. It was really interesting for me as I met the people running clubs in that area. I found them very enthusiastic, very pleasant and very supportive. I hope to have the opportunity to work with them sometime soon.

Last week I met with Vicky Fleming. Really good meeting, her husband, John, joined us for lunch in Summertown and we had an information exchange which for me was very helpful and interesting. I hope we are going to have opportunities to work together in the future as we can see some areas of our roles overlapping.

Finally, a big thank you to all those people who have been so encouraging this year in so many ways, I do appreciate it.

Barbara Jordan, March 2013

INFRASTRUCTURE TEAM

Website: I'm currently working with the website developer to produce a brand new look including more colours etc. and we took down the site yesterday, so at the moment people can't see much on www.oxfordshirebridge.co.uk/joomla except some random green shapes, and I don't quite know how it will look once the new template is installed. This should be done in about a week's time. Hopefully, someone will help out with a digital photo of the Oxford skyline as this is the only missing feature.

Progress so far includes:

- 1) New website structure including menu titles, content organization, etc. constructed around the different committees i.e. Social/Competitions/Education, etc. Content from old website has been successfully transferred although some of the file formats have changed.
- 2) Improved logo and appearance - currently in progress (adding color/pictures/etc. to the various pages and having a brand new logo).
- 3) Interactive calendar (which accommodates a variety of event categories such as social events/ congress/ competitions) - done, looks similar to the EBU calendar on their website
- 4) Allowing multiple users to input content - each committee now has a username/password which they can use to access their pages and post information using the Joomla interface, which is user friendly (basically the content can be edited as if it was in a word document using Microsoft Word)
- 5) Interactive map (map of clubs of Oxfordshire bridge clubs with information about their events/learning opportunities/competitions/etc.)

There was a request from the County team organizers to have an option for pairs/partnerships to indicate their availability/confirm their participation for forthcoming county matches. Unfortunately this will not be possible at this stage due to the complexity of creating such a form - the website designer said it would be quite pricey.

Aleksandar Lishkov, 18.3.13

Publicity: A momentous decision was taken by the OBA hierarchy to have a ¼ page advert (replacing the perennial 1/8) for the April issue of English Bridge. This permits a comprehensive description of the Social Congress. Lorraine Jones, who is now preparing the Oxon column for English Bridge, has devoted the opening para of the column for that issue to describe the ad with a cross- reference to its page number.

The Pro-Am was a huge success yet again; thanks to Claire for rustling up so many Ams & to Stephen for his friendly & expert direction.

Oxford Times Cup flyers are ready to be distributed, soon to be followed by AGM flyers.

Brenda Harris, 1 March 2013