

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR OBA AGM JUNE 2014

First I must apologise for not being able to attend this year's AGM in person to present this report.

This year we have welcomed a number of new faces to the Management Committee and must say goodbye with many thanks to those who have decided to end their period of service to the county. I would like to thank everyone who has given their time to the county, whether newly arrived, staying on or departing. A lot of work is involved from newsletters and website to secretarial and accounting, from competitions to social events and from education to promotion and youth and not forgetting our county team. Thank you all for all that effort.

Sometimes I ask club chairmen or secretaries whether they can recommend anyone to take a county role. I am frequently met with the response that they are having enough difficulty filling posts on their own committees. This means that many clubs are under-represented in the affairs of their county. For many players there are real benefits in playing outside their club environment, either because as competitive players they come up against stronger players or because as social players they meet new faces and make new friends. Inter-club, regional and county events require organisation just as much as club events. If you are willing to have your arm twisted and take on an administrative role in bridge, I would urge you to think seriously about whether you can spare some time for organising bridge beyond the confines of your club. I am currently looking for someone to lead our Social and Education Teams and for a new Publicity Officer and Membership Secretary.

As last year I propose to set out the main things I think we have achieved, the main things I think we should still aspire to and to ask some questions.

Competitions

Achieved: Initial responses to the recent changes made to our County Nights have been mainly favourable and attendances in their first month, May, were up. The TD role is now less reliant on the efforts of one person, Stephen Brown, as others have started to share his load. The revised bylaws are published on our website.

Aspiration: To continue to develop the content of our county nights and competitions so that they attract players of a wider range of standard.

Questions: Could we and should we do something to make our Congress more attractive to less experienced players? (one of the questions asked last year) Should we play some of our traditional weekend competitions on Tuesday nights?

Social

Achieved: In addition to two further café bridge events we ran a successful social evening in conjunction with Blewbury Bridge Club.

Aspiration: To run more social events similar to the Blewbury one and to use these as a stepping stone to setting up a social bridge league. To find someone with drive and energy to take over the reins from Barbara Jordan, who will, I know, give that person great support.

Question: Can we use such social events as a way of making contact with other bridge groups?

County Team

Achieved: It was not such a good year performance-wise, but I think the proposal to link county night performance to a number of automatic Midlands League places will encourage aspiring county players.

Aspiration: To see the county attain new heights of togetherness, team spirit and as a result performance.

Question: Is there a unity of purpose and a determination to succeed amongst our teams when they go out to represent the county or are they just hoping to do better than their teammates? Do they support each other when things go wrong?

Education

Achieved: We have just recently found and appointed an enthusiastic new Education Officer in Jonathan Price.

Aspiration: (as last year)To develop and coordinate learning opportunities available throughout the county, particularly in helping beginners to find their feet and in setting up a mentoring scheme for those at a higher level who want to improve their game further. One of the new things Jonathan will be trying to arrange is a get-together of teachers to exchange ideas.

Question: How do players find out what they most need to learn? Is using a better player than yourself to help you analyse your weaknesses a good first step?

Promotion and Youth

Achieved: A regular junior bridge session is now run weekly at Wallingford BC. A similar event is proposed for North Oxford.

Aspiration: (as last year, but we are now working on it!) To establish contacts with unaffiliated clubs and other bridge groups to encourage cross-advertising of events to lead to their participation in some of our events and vice versa. To extend the work being done in schools in South Oxfordshire north of Oxford.

Question: We are told by the EBU that research shows that bridge is good for the elderly in warding off mental deterioration and for the young in developing numeracy skills. Should we be advertising along these lines?

Infrastructure

Achieved: The new website is finally up and running, but further development would be desirable.

Aspiration: To find someone who is strong on PR to take on the Publicity Officer role and develop our ability to sell ourselves through our website.

Question: Could we achieve some of the county's objectives (E.g. in promoting the game in their area, in teaching in their area, in organising social events outside their club's members but in their area etc.) more easily through our clubs? Would making grants to clubs tied to targets achieve things that we do not have the county manpower to achieve?

This report contains my personal views and is not intended to represent the views of either the Management Committee or its six Management Teams. Recently I read through again the mock Chairman's report for 2016 that I wrote when I became Chairman. We have made some progress towards those targets but still have a long way to go. I am willing to continue as your Chairman if you are happy to have me. I believe the targets I outlined then are still just as relevant now and I would continue to work towards them.

Robert Procter. 28 May 2014