

Reports submitted for OBA Management Committee meeting on 17 July 2014

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

First I must repeat my apology for not being able to attend this year's AGM which I understand was run extremely efficiently by our President Evan Harris. I would particularly like to add my congratulations to our two Distinguished Service Award recipients, Esme Alden and Roy East.

Since our last meeting I have attended a number of meetings at which subjects very relevant to Oxfordshire have been discussed. There has been a second meeting of the Midlands Counties Working Group, the annual EBU County Chairmen's Conference and a first meeting of the National Counties Working Group at which I was one of the two Midlands Group representatives. The Counties Working Group meetings have focused on what counties can learn from each other and identifying best practice in managing their affairs without in any way seeking to impose procedures. Much of the Conference on the other hand was directed at EBU governance, but with time also being spent on the EBU's approach to unaffiliated clubs and on whether there was any potential to alleviate problems of counties finding volunteers for jobs by the introduction of a regional structure for all or some county responsibilities. This latter idea was rejected but counties recognised that there could be benefits in counties working more closely with neighbouring counties. You can understand that there are many ideas that come out of such meetings and I have passed these on to other officers where I think these may be relevant to us.

Coming to the end of the year just completed we needed to find a number of new volunteers. We welcomed Diana Nettleton as Competition and County Night Team leader and County Night Coordinator at our last meeting. We also confirmed Jonathan Price as Education Officer and welcome him now. Following the AGM we should now welcome Peter Briggs as Membership Secretary and Chris Wilson as Auditor. Despite all these new faces we are still short of a Publicity Officer, a Social Team Leader and an Education Team Leader as well as needing to sort out who will do what in the new County Team Management Team now that Alan Wilson has taken over from Chris Cooper as County Captain. It is appropriate therefore to devote some of this July MC Meeting to the question of finding volunteers. One of the potential solutions may be found if we can answer the questions that I posed in my Chairman's Report to the AGM - "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?" I propose that we discuss too.

In mid-June we held our Oxfordshire Congress at Woodstock and attracted a significantly increased field. It ran very smoothly from start to finish and a number of people told me how much they appreciated both the organisation and the venue, so I think we have a formula we should stick with. My special thanks are due to Peter Finbow who master-minded the organisation of the event, to all his voluntary helpers who set up the tables, chairs and other facilities, to our professional TDs and their volunteer helpers and to Esme and Claire who manned the reception desk. Peter is hoping that someone else will volunteer to lead the team next year - volunteers please?

Following Jonathan Price's appointment as Education Officer he and I have met a couple of times and exchanged several e-mails. By the time of the meeting he will have run the first Oxfordshire Teachers Conference - you may have read about this on the EBU website. No doubt he will report on this to you. Whether or not this first exchange of ideas between teachers moves us forward towards our Education objectives, particularly the over-arching one of making teaching

at all levels available in all parts of the county, it can create a new forum that should be of benefit in the future.

At the last meeting we received a report from Diana Nettleton outlining and seeking approval for and comment on some of the significant changes that her team were proposing for county nights. Our approval was given in broad principle and changes were introduced from the beginning of May. I am pleased to report an increase in attendances from an average of just over 15 ½ pairs from January to April (excluding the Pro-Am) to just over 18 ½ pairs from May 1 to July 8 (excluding the AGM).

However this has not been without some controversy, particularly with regard to the application of the words “with the expectation that in the first instance, Menagerie would be invited to run a teams league once a month for a trial period”. In particular, there has been some disagreement as to whether it is still possible to regard the fourth Tuesday of the month as a “county night” if we are sending the results to the EBU to add to the Menagerie’s record and hence only crediting club level master points; and I have received a number of expressions of concern from the OBC over the status of our rental agreement with them on those Tuesdays.

I appreciate there may have been a misunderstanding as to what was agreed at the previous meeting and that there is a wish to re-discuss this issue. Of course Diana will be reporting on events since the last meeting, so the opportunity for further discussion and clarification will arise as a matter of course. It has also been suggested to me that as a member of Menagerie, I may have a conflict of interest in this matter. Whilst I don’t necessarily agree this is the case, I certainly have views that I would like to put to the meeting and so I will happily hand the chair to someone else for that part of the agenda.

I do agree that if the MC comes to the conclusion that what we now have on fourth Tuesdays is a “club night” for the Menagerie, rather than a “county night” controlled by the OBA, then we will need to review the rental arrangements. In this connection I have received a proposal from the OBC (which would need to be confirmed by their Trustees) that the OBA be permitted in their rental agreement with the OBC to sub-let the premises to the Menagerie, with rent to the OBC still due from the OBA. We would then need to draw up a sub-lease agreement with the Menagerie.

I understand that concern was expressed at the AGM that the linkage of county night performance with county selection disadvantaged people who customarily play at Abingdon BC on a Tuesday. I can reassure those people that there is no requirement for prospective county players to play at county night – it is merely a place at which you can show off your ability hopefully against many of the better players in the county and by doing well enough, prove your right to be selected. Diana and I are planning to visit Abingdon during the next few weeks to talk to them further. Whilst we have a weekly county night in Oxford, there is no reason why we shouldn’t consider other venues and/or other nights, perhaps replacing some of the Oxford events with Improvers events or Pro-Ams.

Robert Procter, 10 July 2014

OBA CONGRESS 2014

This year's Congress was again held at Marlborough School in Woodstock. In view of numerous complaints received last year about the school's own folding chairs, it was decided to hire more comfortable chairs this year. Despite this additional cost, the event still made a surplus of over £1900, which is about £140 more than the previous year. There was a modest increase in the entry fee but most of the additional income was generated by a higher number of entries, the total being 58 tables for the Swiss Pairs and 48 tables for the Swiss Teams. Congratulations are due to the Organiser, Peter Finbow, and to everyone who helped in the preparation and running of this successful weekend. - SN

The Treasurer has provided the following figures, which have now been finalised:

Oxfordshire Bridge Association Congress Accounts

	2014		2013	
	£	£	£	£
Receipts		10,830		9,750
Expenditure				
Catering	2,420		2,264	
Licence	1,519		1,392	
Prizes	1,460		1,590	
Bridge Hire Co	987		797	
Venue Hire	700		770	
Chair Hire	727		-	
Directors	658		691	
Advertising	283		462	
Caddies	104		-	
Sundry Expenses	68		23	
		8,926		7,989
Surplus		<u>1,904</u>		<u>1,761</u>

WESSEX LEAGUE UPDATE

A. Final Entries for 2014-15 have been requested from Club Secretaries no later than 25th July.

B. Entry fee has been carried over from last year as £21 per team.

C. It looks as if entries will be unchanged from last year at 38 teams (subject to D below). If any team drops out, leaving only 37 teams, then the most logical arrangement of divisions would appear to be 8 teams in each of divisions 1 and 2 and 7 teams in each of divisions 3, 4 and 5. This would, unfortunately, mean that one team would miss out on promotion from division 4 to division 3 due to the drop in numbers in division 3. Happily this now seems unlikely, but the outcome cannot be finally determined until the total number of entries has been finalised.

D. Swindon have asked if they could regain admission to the Wessex League and if so into what division. They played in the League for many years both as Swindon and, in more recent times, as Highworth. They were playing under the Highworth banner in division 1 when they withdrew, at the end of the 2011-12 season. The numbers of prospective entries detailed in C above ignore Swindon. A proposal reference the readmission of Swindon has been put to the Competitions Sub-Committee but no decision has yet been reached.

E. Rules for 2014-15 have been redrafted and, in summary, incorporate the following changes:-

- . All matches to be played by end April.
- . Continuous scoring adopted in lieu of discrete scoring.
- . Penalties/scoring in relation to unplayed matches adjusted in certain circumstances.
- . Rules in respect of TD Rulings and Appeals against TD Rulings clarified and modified.
- . Rules in respect of detailed promotion/relegation issues clarified.
- . Rules in respect of new entrants modified to allow some element of discretion on the part of the Competitions Sub-Committee.
- . Non-affiliated Clubs required to play their home matches within the County boundaries.

Formal approval of the above changes from the Competitions Sub-Committee has been requested.

*Hugh Thomson, Wessex League Organiser
July 2014*

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

I have downloaded the alleged membership for Oxfordshire from the EBU as at the end of June.

The analysis by category of membership, as listed by the EBU, is:-

Category Code	
Bridge for All 1	31
Bridge for All 2	8
"CT" (?)	1
Direct	24
Direct Junior	73
EBU trained teachers	16
P2P Full	1316
P2P Junior	14
Qualified teachers	11
(blank)	7
Grand Total	1501

Of these, the seven records with blank category are all called "Anonymous" and have no details. One other record is probably fiction. I will confer with Michael Clark at the EBU and suggest the above eight records be deleted.

Of the P2PF and P2PJ records there is no E-Mail address for 421 members, of which 210 have no phone numbers either. All except one have an address.

Thus, if we want to write to our members, e.g. to announce an event; distribute our competition brochure, or announce the date of the AGM (let alone any EGMs) we have a substantial work load and what I imagine in terms of the County's finances would be a material cost of postage.

The Chairman has expressed interest in analysing data about the membership, but the data is very incomplete. For example, each record has a field to record date of birth (and thus deduce whether a member is a junior): but of the 1501 records 1026 do not have a date of birth.

So I will need some guidance on what is expected, what are the priorities, and what are the financial constraints.

Peter Briggs, July 2014