

REPORTS FOR OBA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 19 MARCH 2014

CHAIRMAN

What with Christmas and for me four fantastic weeks in Australia and New Zealand, it doesn't seem very long since I was writing my last report, but nevertheless there are plenty of issues. Unfortunately many are the same issues as before – personnel, website, county nights, club/county relationship etc – I am sure you would prefer to be reading about something new.

I will start with the good news that two people have approached me with a view to taking up roles within the county administration.

The first is Diana Nettleton who has agreed to take on a new role as County Night Co-ordinator. She will join the Competitions and County Nights Team and will take over the role of leader of that team allowing Rob Dixon to concentrate on his TD role. It is clear that some changes are needed if we are to reverse the trend of both declining numbers and standards on Tuesday nights. Diana has considerable experience of the successful Gloucestershire county night structure and brings a number of ideas to discuss with her team. I hope that by the summer we will be able to see some of those ideas in action.

The second is Jonathan Price who has agreed to take up the role of Education Officer. His relatively recent experience of bridge lessons from Oxford Bridge Learning gives him a different perspective on the job from that of an existing bridge teacher. He comes with a great deal of enthusiasm to “give something back” and expects to have time increasingly available as work commitments reduce. I have spoken with him at some length about the county's agreed education objectives and will encourage him to start his work by establishing full website details of what already exists. It is then a question of working with the Education Team, teachers and clubs, on trying to fill in the gaps.

I would ask the MC to confirm their appointments.

Additionally I have discussed with Melinda Jordan the possibility of her taking on the role of Team Leader of the Education Team sometime in the future. She has undertaken to communicate with the members of the Education Team before deciding whether she would like to take up this role.

Completing personnel matters –

I have managed to persuade Sandra Nicholson to carry on for another year but she says that 2014/15 will be her last – so we need to line up a replacement secretary – any suggestions or volunteers?

Emily Middleton would like to stand down as membership secretary and indeed will only be continuing over the next few months from the distance of Australia – so if anyone would be willing to take over now that would be appreciated.

Brenda Harris has told me that she would like to stand down as Publicity Officer in June – again any suggestions or volunteers?

Finally I would like to thank Pat Lewis and Miriam Seaver for joining Peter Finbow's team running this year's congress, details of which are being finalised for the website.

Turning to other matters:

An issue was raised with me about a specific item on our website. Whilst ultimately it was accepted that there had been no reason for concern in this particular instance, I have proposed some formal guidelines for the publication of material on our website. These guidelines are designed to ensure that we do not publish anything that might be seen as derogatory to either individuals or clubs.

You will recall that during last year the Menagerie club applied to reaffiliate. This application was approved subject to the Menagerie running a number of club night events per year. However we now see that the popularity of these events impacts on our Tuesday numbers. There has been some discussion of this both within the Menagerie and within the Competition and County Nights Team. I think it is an accepted principle that the county should not be in competition with its affiliated clubs. Some ideas as to how this potential conflict of interests between club and county might be resolved will be considered under the Competition and County Nights Team's report.

I have agreed with Aleks Lishkov that our website should be moved from the server domain owned through Alan Grunwald's 1 & 1 account to a server run by Michael Edwards, the man who helped us design the new website. Whilst his charges at £120 pa are more than 1 & 1's, I think we will benefit from his involvement as well as being in control of our own destiny. (At present we rely on Alan renewing his site and then have to reimburse him for doing so.)

I had a meeting with Richard Sills, chairman of OBC. One of the things we discussed was how the OBC might be able to help in the development of bridge outside Oxford itself, particularly in the north. Following the social event run jointly by Blewbury BC and the OBA, Barbara Jordan and I are keen to run something similar north of Oxford. Richard thought this could be in Woodstock, aimed at members of affiliated and unaffiliated clubs in the area stretching from Banbury in the north to Oxford in the south and from Chipping Norton in the west to Bicester in the east. As with Blewbury the aim would be to establish contact with players who might be interested in forming a social teams of four league primarily for players below NGS grade 9.

I am pleased to learn that we have already got 120 people entered for Café Bridge in Henley in April – an increase over last year’s 100. Clearly we have a popular and successful format. Peter Jordan has enlisted Ian Mitchell’s help for the scoring and bridgemates will be in use – I have my fingers crossed that all goes smoothly. I believe that successful midweek daytime social bridge sessions can go a long way to increasing contact between affiliated and non-affiliated bridge-players and do a lot to promote the work of the EBU and OBA .

Robert Procter, March 2014

TREASURER

The Treasurer’s report will be given at the meeting.

SECRETARY

Following the previous meeting, all secretaries/owners of affiliated clubs were contacted in mid-February to ask for nominations for the new OBA “distinguished service” award, intended to recognise individuals who have made a significant contribution to the development of duplicate bridge in the county over a sustained period of time (this is the award originally discussed under the proposed name of the “Philip Simmonds” award). The deadline for submission of nominations was set at 31 March. At the time of writing, one nomination has been received.

Sandra Nicholson, March 2014

EBU SHAREHOLDERS

The next EBU Shareholders meeting is not due to take place until mid-April. In the meanwhile, members will probably have seen that Sally Bugden, who retired as EBU Chairman at the last AGM and had been expected to take over as Chairman of the Trustees of the new EBU charitable trust set up to promote bridge education, has unfortunately had to withdraw. This role will now be undertaken by Jerry Cope. *Sandra Nicholson, March 2014*

COMPETITIONS AND COUNTY NIGHTS TEAM

Wessex League

Out of the scheduled 126 matches in all divisions only 29 remain outstanding at the time of writing. Despite the depressingly wet winter only one match has been postponed due to anxiety in relation to weather conditions.

There are close tussles still being fought out in all divisions with few, if any, relegation/promotion issues decided at this stage. Current League leaders are:-

Division 1: Wallingford A

Division 2: Wallingford B

Division 3: Aylesbury C

Division 4: Blewbury

Division 5: Wantage B

As previously reported the Rules were updated at the start of the season. It is recommended that a further (brief) review is conducted before the start of next season. Specific points for discussion should include:-

- the possible introduction of a cash deposit for any team wishing to appeal against a ruling given by a tournament director.

- the circumstances under which a team may legitimately request a change to a previously agreed match date.

The EBU online League Management System continues to work well. Possible refinements which could be discussed with the EBU are:

- Facility for ongoing monitoring of players making appearances for more than one team.
- Facility for the recording of fines.

Hugh Thomson, Wessex League Secretary, March 2014

Chief Tournament Director

We have had two successful events since the last meeting: The Pro-Am tournament with 13 tables entered, and the County Pairs Semifinal with 18 tables playing at Oxford. The Swiss Teams Competition was less successful with only 8 teams entered. I would recommend this being run again next year - but it being a Blue Point event to attract more entries. The county is allowed to have two blue point events - and so both the Swiss Pairs and Swiss Teams could be these.

I have taken a step back in January and February to allow those who were trained in November & December to direct and score Tuesday Duplicates (Rob Dixon, Kathy Talbot, Chris Dawe, Aleks Lishkov & Ian Constable). I am pleased that they have mostly risen to this challenge and I am very happy to act as an adviser when I play on a Tuesday, but I hope the competitions team agree that new members need to take these events forward. I am pleased that Diana Nettleton has agreed not only to coordinate Tuesday events but to lead the competitions team. I am keen to work with the members of the Competitions team to have better events on a Tuesday (e.g. a Swiss Event) to encourage better attendance and interest for all abilities. I hope that we can meet to discuss issues (the team has not met face to face for two years).

Stephen Brown, March 2014

SELECTION AND COUNTY TEAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

Progress towards the team's objectives continues to be mixed. Considerable steps have been taken to improve the efficiency of the Selection Committee, and I'd like to thank Nick Smith for a lot of hard work in this area which has meant, in theory at least, that tasks are spread around a wider pool of people and in particular that less falls to be done by the county captain. Thanks to Rob Dixon, a doodle poll has now been developed and is being used as a way of recording availability for county matches. More players are being invited to take part in county matches, and any others who would like to express an interest in playing should let either me or Nick know. A clear timetable has been developed for different stages of the necessary work for each match to ensure selections are announced well in advance. This development has not so far proved as useful as hoped, however – at the time of writing no selections have been announced for the next county match on 6 April, for instance, which appears to be mainly, if not entirely, down to the county captain having insufficient time to prepare initial suggestions from the list of players available for the selection committee to consider. This seems rather disappointing, given that most other tasks have been reallocated away from the captain to ensure the job is not unduly burdened.

The team has still not made much progress in practice towards the objective of encouraging a direct link between performance in significant county events and selection. This has been the subject of quite a bit of discussion with the selectors, but it is clear that there are differences of opinion, and some concern about the risk of a conflict with the objective of improving the performance of all the county teams. In practice I suspect that if progress is to be made in this area it may require a clearer steer from the OBA Management Committee or the AGM. Similarly, although the selection committee is responsible for the appointment of the county captain, I suspect they would welcome views from a wider group over whether it would be appropriate at the stage that has now been reached to use this power as part of the process of trying to ensure county team management issues run more smoothly.

Alan Wilson, March 2014

EDUCATION TEAM

There is at present no team leader nor officer for this team; however, it is hoped that this situation will change in the near future (see Chairman's report).

DUPLICATE BRIDGE PROMOTION AND YOUTH TEAM

Youth objectives

The regular Sunday Junior Bridge Club at Roke from 2:30 to 4:30 is gaining momentum. Parents are welcome. See our website bridgewebs.com/bridge4schools for more details.

The second OBA Junior Congress took place on March 9th at Roke Village Hall and was a great success, with 10 tables altogether (7 playing Mini Bridge and 3 including bidding).

Work on the budget for the Youth activities is outstanding.

Player and Club Development

The Promotion Team has been tasked with setting up a contacts list for unaffiliated clubs. This will not be done without feedback from the clubs, and a circular was sent requesting this information. I am not aware of any feedback thus far. Further details are included in a discussion document to be presented to the meeting. Unfortunately neither MF nor MW will be able to attend, but will be happy to pick up any suggestions arising from the discussion.

Promotion Team Contacts:

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

Mike Fletcher, March 2014

Membership

No report available.

SOCIAL TEAM

Café Bridge - A café bridge event was run at Henley in May 2013. It was very successful. Many thanks to Joan Bennett who helped enormously in so many ways. 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. The proceeds from this event will be given to the Chiltern Resource Centre for children with disabilities, which is based in Henley.

We have extended the numbers for the Henley café bridge from 100 to 120 and as of 19th Feb it is full. I have asked Claire to start a waiting list as inevitably some people will drop out. We have dropped two of last year's venues, The Red Lion (people weren't too impressed by this one) and the Hotel du Vin (people found the lighting unsatisfactory). In their place we have The Giggling Squid (Thai food) and La Bodega (food with a Mexican influence.) We have visited all the venues and all venues are on board with arrangements.

We have been asked to make the café bridge in Thame an annual event. Not sure if we will do this

We may organise one in September but we haven't confirmed any venues yet.

(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. This was so successful and enjoyable that they are organising a second café bridge in Solihull on May 15th.)

Darren Evett (who helped organise the Kenilworth café bridge and is also on the EBU Board) has suggested organising a National café bridge event with maximum publicity. This to involve 5 Counties. The idea is that taking bridge out to the communities will increase awareness and participation in bridge. This is pending once we have written up the model. It may be a Spring or Autumn 2015 event though, because of the time factor.

Social Teams League – this was planned to start Autumn 2013. I met with Rob Dixon in the Summer of 2013 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 phoning individuals and putting information on the Social Bridge web page, the only real interest was from Blewbury Club who have been very pro-active and are keen to be involved. We therefore helped to organise a social teams evening at Blewbury Bridge Club on 19th February. We had 8 teams participating and it was a very enjoyable evening. We played 18 boards and stopped half way through for a delicious wine and cheese supper. Blewbury are now thinking of making it an annual event. We are planning to repeat Social Teams evenings in other parts of the county. Rob has spoken to Gill Pain and Abbey Smith who are both agreeable to a Social Teams event happening in the Aylesbury area. Woodstock is a possible venue for a third event (see Chairman's report).

Social bridge web page – This is operational and as always 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. *Barbara Jordan, March 2014*

INFRASTRUCTURE TEAM

Publicity:

1. Andrew Robson Seminar

Unfortunately OBC does not seem able to accommodate this event this year despite Andrew providing several dates.

I have tried several alternative venues, none of which meet all the special requirements I consider essential to its success.

2. I shall be standing down as Publicity Officer at the AGM after nearly 14 years in post.

3. I shall provide the flyers for Oxford Times Cup, Mixed Pairs & AGM for distribution as usual.

Brenda Harris, March 2013