

REPORTS FOR OBA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 17 NOVEMBER 2014

CHAIRMAN

1. Some personnel changes

I can confirm that David Bygott is now in post as Publicity Officer.

Shortly after the last meeting Alan Wilson informed us of his intention to resign from his shareholder role. Subsequently he agreed to continue until a replacement was found. Meanwhile I understand that the nature of EBU shareholders' meetings is under review, it being felt that the County Chairmen's Conference represents a more logical forum for the discussion of major issues and it may be sensible to await the outcome of this review before seeking to find a successor for Alan.

More recently Diana Nettleton resigned her positions of Competition and County Nights Team team leader and of County Nights Coordinator. Stephen Brown has agreed to fill both roles on a temporary basis.

Diana Nettleton has agreed to take on a leading role in relation to next year's Oxford Congress, with Peter Finbow taking a supporting role – they have yet to work out the detailed responsibilities.

2. Volunteers, grants and objectives

We failed to find time for this subject at our last meeting and my attempt to start a debate by e-mail was largely unsuccessful, barring some interesting ideas from John Fleming and a formal response to the questions I put from Summertown BC. I have put it on the agenda again.

3. Working Party

You will have seen in my Chairman's blog that John Briggs offered to set up a group to review various aspects of the county night decision taken at our last meeting. I accepted his offer because I thought it would be useful to review our governance procedures and also to put together a long term proposal about the future of county nights taking account of the very conflicting opinions expressed at our last meeting. Sadly for personal reasons John initially had to defer getting his group together and then subsequently had to withdraw his offer completely. Meanwhile the Competitions Team has put together a programme for the next six months and I will attempt to set up a working party without John. Incidentally in this context see the next item.

4. EBU National Counties Working Group

I attended a meeting of this group last Monday at which three topics were discussed:

Topic A - Improving the relationship between the EBU/Counties and unaffiliated Clubs.

Topic B - Developing a Value Proposition and a Progression Strategy for Players at all levels that revitalises our membership.

Topic C - Structuring, staffing and motivating the volunteer workforce that we depend on at National and County level.

There is a close relationship between topics A and B in that if bridge players generally find greater value in belonging to an affiliated club then unaffiliated clubs are more likely to decide to affiliate. A working party is being set up to address one or more specific actions that the group believed could do most in each area. In topic B this action was considered to be setting up a coordinated teaching programme for players at all levels – something which ties in very precisely with the work Jonathan Price is trying to kick-start in Oxfordshire. When you take into account that Oxfordshire's lead in running café bridge sessions was considered to be one possible action to be followed up under topic A we have every reason to be satisfied that we are moving in a good direction. Meanwhile in topic C one of the two actions decided upon was to try to establish a recommendation for best practice in the governance of a county association which may clearly be useful to us in paragraph 3 above.

Following these discussions we received a presentation about the progress of EBED, the new English Bridge Education and Development Charity. One of the three initiatives that they plan to embark upon is to try to replicate what has been done in schools in Oxfordshire and Berks and Bucks in another area of the country – another indication that we in Oxfordshire are leading the way – well done Joan, Alison and others. EBED's aim is to build a model through which to attract charitable money to support a drive to put bridge into schools throughout the country.

5. County Team and the Midlands League

The departure of Lincolnshire from the Midlands League this year has prompted the Midlands County Working Group to be asked to reconsider the decision made a couple of years ago to retain the league in its present form. Given our ability to put out three very competitive teams on a regular basis it would be disappointing if a reduction in opportunity is decided upon. However it might give us a chance to challenge stronger counties further afield to friendlies instead. Analysis of the top 200 players on the NGS scheme shows that there are only eight counties with more players than us at that level – London, Middlesex, Kent, Yorkshire, Surrey, Lancashire, Berks and Bucks and Manchester – none of whom do we meet in the Midlands League.

6. County News

The EBU has introduced a new communication relating to the administration of bridge. It is addressed to counties and issued to county chairmen and secretaries which Sandra will be circulating with these reports.

Robert Procter, 30 October 2014

TREASURER

Barclays (where our deposit account is held) have now found the mandate forms I handed in personally some time ago. There is an unspecified problem on the account which they are getting back to me about, but hopefully everything will now be resolved and we will finally have access to our money.

My next plan is to move the Lloyds account onto something we can do internet banking with, when I can find time to deal with this.

Our current bank balance is £14k plus the £28k in Barclays. I would like to look into a longer term deposit account so we can maximise interest and would like the committee's agreement to do this.

County Night revenue for the 7 months to end of October is £3.7k, which is in line with revenue for 2013-14. I anticipate that the overall surplus for the year will be down on last year due to increased spending on youth and education.

Claire MacDonagh, November 2014

SECRETARY

A formal communication was received from Oxford Bridge Club advising of their change of status to a CIO as of 1 July 2014. A revised rental agreement between OBA and OBC-CIO has since been prepared and signed.

Sandra Nicholson, November 2014

EBU SHAREHOLDERS

The EBU AGM is being held later than usual this year and is not due to take place until 26 November. However, papers circulated in advance of the meeting indicate that the finances of the organisation remain reasonably healthy. A rise from 1 April 2015 of 1p in the EBU P2P amount (from 35p to 36p) will be proposed and seems likely to be accepted. Developments during the past year that may be of interest to the membership at large have included: the launch of the EBU's new education charity EBED, the redesign of the paper version of English Bridge to a smaller size in order to save substantial amounts on postage costs, the launch of an online shop, and the ability to include teams results in the NGS.

According to EBU records as at 31 March 2014, OBA had 1496 registered members (about 50 fewer than the previous year, largely due to a decrease in the number of registered Bridge for All students), and 19 affiliated clubs (1 more than the previous year, due to the reaffiliation of Menagerie). Nationally the number of registered members has increased very slightly, from 54303 to 54616, and the number of affiliated clubs has risen over the year from 604 to 614.

Sandra Nicholson, November 2014

COMPETITIONS AND COUNTY NIGHTS

Wessex League

1. Entries are the same as last year i.e. 38 teams in total with the number of teams from each club remaining unchanged.
2. Swindon decided not to apply for re- entry this season.
3. Continuous Scoring has been introduced in the Wessex League for the first time. This should obviate the need for the application of split tie procedures at the end of the season.
4. The 2014-15 season is underway with no problems to report so far.

Hugh Thomson, Wessex League Secretary, November 2014

Chief Tournament Director

Report from Tuesday nights/Competitions

1. Numbers on Tuesday have continued to remain the same over the past 3 months. We met to decide the program for November 2014 – April 2015 and small booklets with all the details in have been circulated to players and the information is on the website. From October the 4th Tuesday is replaced by some special events (Mens/Ladies Pairs, County Pairs Heat, Christmas Pairs and Pro-Am tournament) and then three Tuesdays with Swiss Teams running over 6 matches.
2. Many thanks to other members of the team running individual competitions. Hugh Thomson continues to coordinate the Wessex League and Claire MacDonagh continued to accept entries for Sunday events. We welcome Sandra Claridge coordinating the Presidents and Chester Cups and Chris Dawe coordinating the County Pairs.
3. With the County now going back to running four or five events a months, we would welcome another one or two regular Tuesday players to join the directing or scoring team (of Stephen Brown, Rob Dixon, Kathy Talbot, Alex Lishkov). Training will be provided; all events are now scored using Jeff Smith Software. Even someone willing to collect money each week or help tidy up would be most welcome. Many thanks to Ian Constable who steps down from his role after scoring for the past year or so.

My apologies for not being able to attend the Management meeting due to a prior commitment. Any suggestions for improvement / changes to competitions would be welcome. Feel free to email: stephenbrown@tesco.net or ring 07788 8950987 before 9pm.

Stephen Brown, November 2014

MEMBERSHIP

1) Membership at end of September

a) Pay to play	1342
b) Direct	94
c) Dual	9
d) Teachers	25
e) Bridge For All	33
f) Anonymous	7

Total 1510

- 2) There are about 10 – 15 new members each month and an approximately equal number of “leavers”, most of whom have passed on.

I contact each new member, firstly to bid them welcome and secondly to advise them of both the Association's and EBU's websites. In future I shall invite those for whom we have no E-Address to supply me with one if they wish to receive formal Association announcements, such as the date, place and agenda of General Meetings.

- 3) The previous Management Committee meeting required me to write to all members for whom we have no E-Address to ask for such addresses.
First I contacted all clubs to seek their assistance. This reduced the number of “no E-Addresses” from 444 to 363. I then wrote to all 363 and as a result have had 61 E-Addresses. They are still coming in.
- 4) I have not been able to write to the anonymous members nor to the Dual members, since I have no postal addresses.
I take the view that anyone who has not replied has accepted that formal notifications to them are not needed. In some cases this will be because they see such notifications on E-Mails addressed to friends or relatives. In the majority of cases, I guess, they are simply not interested in the Association
I have had 7 replies asking me to send formal matters by post. This seems a trivial number, and creates no problem.

Peter Briggs, October 2014

EDUCATION

Introduction from Chairman/Education Team Leader

As the continuing temporary Education Team Leader, on Jonathan's appointment as Education Officer I met with him to talk about the county's Education objectives and the sorts of things he as Education Officer should work towards. We talked about the need to publicise what is already available in Oxfordshire, to identify gaps and to work with clubs to fill these gaps. In particular our discussion highlighted the lack of support in some areas of the county for recent beginners who need help to get across the threshold into our club duplicates and the lack of tuition and/or mentoring for those wishing to improve at a higher level.

Following this meeting Jonathan drafted an outline "index" for the sort of material that he thought should appear on our county website and this was included in a circular e-mail to members of the Education Team for their comment. As far as I am aware neither Jonathan nor I received any adverse comment from members of the team and I was happy that he should proceed down the lines he was proposing. As you will see from his report below, he has been extremely active in a number of areas - extending the information on the website, encouraging the set-up of a junior club in Summertown, getting teachers together, developing a programme of learning for improvers, setting up a mentoring scheme and considering how something could be started for recent beginners in the north of Oxfordshire. I believe all these activities should be encouraged and applaud his energy in getting them started. Clearly some of these activities may overlap with the work of other teams or of individual clubs - but I hope they will understand the general thrust of what he is trying to do and be ready to work with him to achieve progress that is good for all. As I mentioned in my chairman's report, a meeting of the National Counties Working Group identified setting up a nationally-coordinated education programme for improvers as a key objective in increasing the value of being a member of an affiliated club and has set up a small group to consider how this can be achieved - their report will be extremely useful to us.

Robert Procter

1. Northern Towns Project

- (i) 'Sub Club' starting in January.
- (ii) Beginners Classes planned but not yet organized.
- (iii) Planning meeting for intermediate Club 'planting' (by County) about to happen.

2. Pathways for Bridge Playing Children

(So that the development needed to get from 'a 10 year old natural' (both Wallingford Junior Bridge and Oxford Junior Bridge have such) is not 'an accident of birth').

Alongside Joan Bennett's brilliant Oxford Schools project, there are now two Junior Bridge Clubs. (Hint to other Club Chairmen...)

The path to the Junior Squad is long and hard; in Oxford a large and enthusiastic team of unpaid volunteers, expertly led by Holly Kilpatrick, see the vision (children getting Bridge in School) and the need for such a pathway for children who cannot travel to Wallingford (not everyone has a car...)

3. Bridge Club player development

- (i) Peter Lichfield in Abingdon has just started a 'Really Easy' daytime game, with 45 minutes of analysis after, for a nominal fee. Well done!
- (ii) County believes
 - (a) There is a large, unsatisfied demand for daytime bridge games.
 - (b) That this Abingdon model is the way to go.
 - (c) In general, Club players want to get a bit better but cannot analyse their own results.
- (iii) County's 'Sub Club' Research Project (small group N.G.S. banded supervised play).
 - (a) 5 sessions run now.
 - (b) Issues with (i) variation in level of group, (ii) pace, (iii) level of material, (iv) relevance of different parts of proposed syllabus...
 - (c) But looking very promising indeed (and participants enthusiastic...)
 - (d) Benefitting greatly (i) from involvement of Cathy Rowland (who has been a local authority bridge evening class teacher for many years), (ii) access to the material Cathy prepared in 2008 at Oxford Bridge Club's request for O.B.C. members lessons.
 - (e) Serious prospect of running in 6 of 18 Oxfordshire Clubs in 2015.
- (iv) Large credit also to Summertown B.C.: running Two Hour Technique Classes on a 'not for profit basis'. (Four run so far this year). These were full, very well received. Surely other Clubs have the resources to do similar? (Wallingford's two hour technique classes are similarly popular...)
- (v) Mention also of Abbey Smith: making an outstanding success of getting beginners playing in Clubs soon in enormous numbers: it can be done: ask her how (she is a really nice lady...)

4. 'Tough Bridge' weekly

The Education Team think a game like this would do a great deal to raise standards in Oxfordshire.

- (i) The top players currently play in Abingdon in the Open Pairs and in Wallingford on the third Wednesday.
- (ii) Logically, there should be a designated game in the first week and on the fourth week of the month
- (iii) This seems to be the cornerstone of G.C.B.A.: a bridge powerhouse ('oh yes. Monday night is the Strong game')
- (iv) It is reasonable that such a game is 'stranded' so that you can 'get a crack at the big boys' but have to earn it first. In the opinion of the Education Team, G.C.B.A. have got this nicely sorted.
- (v) As this is being written, the Education Team is working on 'cloning' this: watch this space...

5. Written mentoring project

As can be seen, Robert's 'more N.G.S. Kings in Oxfordshire soon' has been inspirational for the Education Team: the mentoring project (submit 3 cards and receive a written analysis) is also under development.

(A lively correspondence is under way... (e.g. take a bow, Francis, you too, Alan...))

We welcome contributions to this: if you are interested, or have a point of view, please get in touch: Robert has put a great deal into O.B.A. Chairman job, and got some really good people working with him on well defined projects.

This project particularly needs someone with editing skills.

Come on Oxfordshire: time to put a bit back?

6. 'Oxfordshire Back at the Top Table (where it hasn't been for 40 years)'? OH YES!

7. And a date for your diary: Second Oxfordshire Bridge Teaching Conference at Wallingford B.C. 4th July 2015.

Jonathan Price, November 2014

DUPLICATE BRIDGE PROMOTION AND YOUTH

Oxford Junior Bridge Club

The major development since the last meeting has been the opening of a second Junior Bridge Club (see detailed report below from Holly Kilpatrick). The new club is in Summertown, and is open to all 8 – 18 year olds for bridge & minibridge at 2:30 pm on Sundays in term time. Please refer to our bridge4schools web site for up to date information. A special open day is planned in Summertown at 2:00 on November 30th. Flyers are available.

Loughborough Junior Teach-In

The OBA has in the past supported the EBU event held for Juniors at Loughborough when it was held on a single day, and our expenditure was restricted to the hire of the minibus. The teach-in has developed into a weekend (Friday 3:30 – Sunday 4:00), and although the costs are higher (between £125 and £140) it would appear to be very good value. The volunteer tutors are very good, and children having been once, tend to come again. Some counties in attendance assist with sponsorship:

Sussex children receive a subsidy of £85, and Sussex now have 2 or 3 members of the U20 squad from non-bridge playing families. Yorkshire pay a subsidy of £55. They too, provide youngsters to the junior squad from non-bridge playing families.

The Youth team is proposing a subsidy £50 per head for a maximum of 12 children. Almost all of this will be outside our 2014-15 budget, and it should be noted that the new Junior Bridge Club in Oxford will almost certainly not be financially self sufficient, and may result in an overspend in the current year.

We are suggesting that the funding for the Teach-in Subsidy is provided by the anticipated profits from a repeat of the Henley Café Bridge. Last year this raised £500 which was donated to local charities. Perhaps advertising it as being in support of Junior Bridge may increase the participation.

Joan Bennett, and Mike Fletcher

Unaffiliated Clubs

To date, only one affiliated club has given feedback re unaffiliated clubs operating in their area.

Mike Fletcher, 13 November 2014

New Oxford Junior Bridge Club: detailed report

Background

It has been clear to those of us involved with Junior Bridge, that the children learning in the Oxford area don't want to travel to Wallingford on Sunday afternoons, even for the competitions and congresses. Richard Sills and I had been mooting the idea of a junior club in Oxford but, upon his appointment as Education Officer for the OBA, Jonathan Price catapulted us into doing it!

We all agreed that venue wise, it had to be same time, same place, every single week, term time so I negotiated Summertown Church Hall, £32.00 per week, including use of kitchen and excellent storage. For the autumn term 2014 we have taken it for x 10 weeks, ending on 7th December.

Publicity

In the 4/6 weeks before we commenced on 21st September, I designed posters and flyers and ordered business cards and distribution was as follows:

- All bridge clubs in Oxfordshire via the secretaries but hard copies to OBC, SBC and Witney.
- Approx. x 25 state, private and other places of Education in Oxford. I wrote personalised covering letters to the Heads and delivered them all personally, making sure that I spoke to somebody everywhere I went and told them what I was delivering.
- Alison Withers Green covered St Edwards School who requested x 50 flyers and x 15 posters for all the boarding houses and common rooms.
- Lorraine Jones covered Tackley School (she works there) and I went out to Yarnton and Begbroke as Yarnton used to have mini bridge (Peter Finbow).

- Summertown and Westgate Libraries
- Ferry Centre Bridge Clubs (there are x 2).
- ‘Summertown Scene’ and ‘Out and About’ gave us a free “plug.”
- Nick Smith included us in his Oxford Times write up.

Our local vicar has agreed to put an article in the quarterly, glossy, coloured parish newsletter to be delivered to every home in the parish (don't ask me how many but the parish is big!!)

JP commissioned a wonderful long banner, advertising the club, which he puts on the hedge surrounding the church hall every Sunday morning at 9.00a.m. This is on the Banbury Road and you can't miss it!! Unfortunately, we are not permitted to put it there on any other day, only the day of the club.

JP also commissioned a wonderful A board, advertising the club, which we place prominently outside the hall.

Volunteers and Support

With little difficulty, I enlisted x 13 volunteers, some of whom have already done the Partner/Teacher course at the EBU e.g. Steph Bliss and myself and others who are already teaching in schools, e.g. Alison WG and Rob Dixon.

Alison Nicolson agreed, at very short notice, to do two long Saturday mornings of mini bridge/bridge teaching at the OBC and, as a result of this, another x 7 people have done either mini bridge or both. NB: this course was open to anyone and Peter Litchfield attended in order to know how to teach mini bridge to his grandchildren!

All volunteers who were not already DBS checked agreed to be ‘done.’ As a result of this and John Pain's efficiency, everyone on the rota list was DBS checked by the end of September.

Expenses

My own expenses, mainly publicity and stationery have amounted to £366.82 but this does not include the hire of the church hall: £32.00 x £10 = £320.00. I asked the volunteers to send their DBS postage charges directly to Claire MacDonagh so I do not know what this amounts to nor do I know the cost of JP's wonderful banner and A board.

Equipment

Joan Bennett has loaned/given us 3 old tables, OBC gave us a table and the others belong to me or the Dragon School. All other equipment e.g. cloths and bidding boxes, belong to me Summertown Bridge Club gave us £50.00 for expenses.

Attendance

In spite of this, nobody came the first week and one child, from the Dragon School, attended on the second week! The third week we had a table – all from the Dragon though! Last week a child attended from Summerfields School (another independent) and would like to return with a friend.

I have organised a mini congress/competition/open day on 30th November and hope we get some more. A lot of people have put a lot of effort into this and I would like to carry on next term, weather will be with us at least. The first 6 Sundays we operated, the temperature was 21 – 24C! too nice for bridge!

Any advice/help would be MOST welcome! I have attended/expect to attend every Sunday this term, bar one. Would like to be slightly less involved next term.

Obvious Problems!

Not enough children!

They are all from independent schools!

However, what can I do??

I went to all the state schools and not a single person from any of them has even contacted me and inquired. I set up a special email address: juniorbridgeoxford@gmail.com Heads from private schools have contacted me to see if any of their pupils have attended and told me that they publicised the club.

Holly Kilpatrick, November 2014