

Oxfordshire Bridge Association

71st Annual General Meeting 2017

7.30 p.m. Tuesday 30 May 2017 at Oxford Bridge Club

Acting Chair's report

EBU Shareholders' report

County Teams' report

Competitions report

Congress Organiser's report

Membership report

County Youth Organiser's report

Website Report

Acting Chair's report 2017

1. Youth bridge has been very resurgent in Oxon. Bridge for schools goes from strength to strength. I must highlight the work Joan Bennett and Holly Kilpatrick have done in the youth programme. No one in the country has had an attendance of over 100 at a children's event for years and yet they attracted and then managed the Cheltenham event with such a number. They deserve our congratulations and thanks for such a feat.
2. The county team qualified for the Tollemache final for the first time in a long time. Congratulations to the team that qualified. In the Midlands Leagues the A team finished fifth with the B and C teams second.
3. Congress numbers seem to be in line with previous years at the time of writing.
4. The competitions continue to show drops in numbers overall with the county pairs moving straight into a final and only 7 teams entering for the President's Cup. The Harwell Cup however attracted enough entries to run.
5. Following a further review, county night at OBC has ceased. Instead there was great interest in a training/education evening for county and aspiring county players, led by an international from an adjacent county. It seems likely that such things will continue. Thanks to Diana Nettleton and Emily Middleton for leading on this.
6. Education in general has and will take greater prominence in county activities with a lot of activities working in support of or alongside clubs. Alison Nicolson is managing a process that sees more effort and resource going into clubs in this area. It is a growth area and one for which demand seems high. This demand is supported by the fact that the P2P numbers for Oxon show a steady shift from evening bridge to daytime bridge with clubs who offer education winning at the expense of those that do not.
7. Traditionally OBA has not expended time or resource on Social Bridge and the Social Bridge web presence has been moribund. This year we have had a programme and we have planned for an experimental Oxford Festival of Bridge (OxFoB) for Sept. Robert Procter is masterminding it. This is intended to be for the benefit of clubs as some attending the festival may take a first step into club bridge as a result. The initiative is being closely watched by others to see whether it is a model that could be transferred.
8. The Chair Robert Procter was taken ill in the spring and so the current author is acting as chair until alternative arrangements can be made until Robert returns later in the year. The stand in job has mainly been administrative – acting as a chair for meetings and getting the papers ready and generally tidying up some of the complexity of OBA. I warmly thank all of those who have made this an enjoyable thing to do. Especial thanks go to the secretary Ken Langdon, himself new to that role this year, for the hand holding.
9. Inevitably bridge is going to change a lot more quickly as the aging population that plays highly competitive bridge diminish. OBA is going to have to be more agile in changing the portfolio of activities it undertakes, the sort of people that it needs to lead them and the relationships with other bodies. All of this is on the agenda for 2017/8

EBU Shareholders' report 2016/17

After several stable years, the long-term financial outlook of the EBU is once more starting to give rise to some concern. The margin of profit both from the bridge shop, and from competitions, is gradually declining and it seems that in the longer term, the traditional model of funding our international teams from those income streams will need to be reviewed. EBU competitions are already viewed as expensive, and the Board currently feels that it would be undesirable to increase the Universal Membership charge – formerly known as P2P – by more than the rate of inflation; so other sources of income such as sponsorship and advertising may need to be pursued more actively than at present. However, the Treasurer reports that overall, the association is still in good financial health, with sufficient reserves to cover any short-term problems. The UM charge has increased by 1p from 36p to 37p per play, with effect from April 2017, and a further small increase is anticipated for next year.

The new IT system at Aylesbury has now been successfully implemented and the General Manager, Barry Capal, has announced that he will retire in July 2017. His successor will be Gordon Rainsford, currently the Chief Tournament Director. It is likely that a subsequent realignment of responsibilities will result in some savings on staff costs, but no decisions have yet been reached.

The current County Working Group structure has been recognised as not altogether successful, with participation across the country being at best patchy, and some disquiet about the way in which the Midlands group has been run. The future of the CWG structure is to be reviewed at the next County Chairmen's meeting in July.

On the wider scene, the EBU's attempt to have bridge legally classified as a "sport" has unfortunately now had to be abandoned. There is still some hope that we may win the right to exemption from VAT, which would make a big difference to the cost of nationally organised competitions. This case has now progressed to the European Court in Luxembourg and it is hoped that a decision will be announced later this year.

Sandra Claridge, Sandra Nicholson and Alan Wilson

May 2017

County Teams' report 2016/17

Over the past year, the county has been represented as usual by three teams in the Midlands Counties League, and in the inter-county Tollemache competition. In the MCL, the A team finished in mid-table, while the B and C teams both finished second out of 8 teams in their respective divisions. The Tollemache was more successful, with the county winning its group in the qualifier to earn a place in the final for the first time for perhaps 30 years (certainly for longer than I can remember, having only moved to the county 20 years ago). The final was predictably tougher, and Oxfordshire finished narrowly last of the 8 teams qualifying for the final.

I would like to thank everyone who has represented the county over the last year, and to encourage anyone else who might be interested to put themselves forward. We have sometimes had to work hard to get enough players out for the matches – though we always succeeded – and having a wider pool of players whom we can call on would be useful. The easiest way of expressing an interest is

simply to indicate your availabilities for the relevant dates using the on-line poll used to collect this information. Please contact any of the selectors if you would like more details. We would also be interested in expanding the range of clubs represented on the Selection Committee, so once again any volunteers should make themselves known!

Alan Wilson May 2017

Competitions Report 2016/7

1. There were no major problems with competitions in 2016/7.
2. Congratulations to all the prize winners detailed elsewhere in the AGM agenda.
3. The gendered pairs were hosted by Central Yarnton and an excellent evening was had with David Bygott acting as host with prizes etc. making it a more social occasion.
4. The Chester Cup was held in the summer having not run during 2015/6. A team with all but 1 newish to bridge entered. This may be the way of the future.
5. The President's cup again only require 3 rounds (7 entries)
6. The County Pairs competition was reduced to a single day all play all session with 10 tables.
7. The Harwell cup ran (unlike 2015/6) at Wallingford. It attracted 7 teams of which 2 played in the Beck Cup which was won by Bedfordshire.
8. Numbers for the Wessex league were marginally down. Should the trend continue into 2017/8 we may need to look at the number of divisions.
9. Several optional competitions will also need an hard look if numbers fall further.
10. The trophies and hons boards continued to be handled by Sandra Nicholson who extracted some of them from OBC before the exodos, finding one in the process. They are all accounted for.
11. I would also like to thank Nigel Wilkes as Tournament secretary and Wessex league Sec, Sandra Claridge for looking after the Presidents' and Chester cups, and John Rowe and Kathy Talbot for their work as Chief Tournament Directors.

John Slater May 2017

Congress Organiser's report

1. Last year's congress was a bridge and financial success with a surplus of around £1,200.
2. We took some important decisions last year, such as not to advertise in the EBU quarterly, and we are following these precedents where thought to have been successful.
3. This year we have hired a runner at moderate cost to enable us to keep director numbers down.
4. At present, our entries are approximately where they were at the same time last year. Our prime marketing focus is on direct email contact with former entrants and on web site information.
5. The success stands or falls on the entry level and, while we expect to fall slightly short of last year, we hope that we can get close. We will monitor entries closely and if there is a drop off we will cut whatever costs we can.

Michael Robinson May 2017

Membership Report 2016/7

As Membership Secretary, my report is:

Membership: 1st April 2015 1565

Membership: 1st April 2016 1602

Membership: 1st April 2017 1770

Peter Briggs April 2017

Education and Improver's report 2016/17

The Bridge promotion scheme, started in October 2016, made four payments totalling £2,500. The scheme will continue this year and Ken will send out a note about it. Clubs can apply for money to support any initiatives they're planning that aim to increase the bridge played in the County. The clubs in the County that are growing are the ones investing in finding new people and new ways of attracting their current players to play more; so come and talk to us and claim part of the allocated funds.

K.L

County Youth Organiser Report 2016/17

We have continued to be the leading county in the EBU for youth education, a fact of which we can be partly proud, but partly saddened by the fact that other counties are lagging behind. There is good news on the horizon however, with active CYOs now in place in SUS, SUR, MID, WAR, GCBA, BRB, LINC and YOR.

As you are aware, the EBU/EBED cancelled its JTI of 20+ years standing for 2016. GCBA & OBA (mainly Joan and Ro!) quickly arranged a replacement event at Cheltenham, which was attended by over 100 children (more than JTI) and supported by all the volunteer tutors that would normally have gone to Loughborough. A great weekend. EBED are running the JTI again this year, so, in response to popular demand, we ran the Wessex weekend at Cheltenham on 8th/9th April 2017. As so many families take holidays at Easter, we only had 50 children, but all the tutors were most supportive again. Henry Rose and Noah Bennett (OBA) were amongst the prize-winners. We will run this again in 2018 since it now seems to be 'expected'.

Holly has continued to run the Sunday afternoon junior club in Summertown whilst Joan has run a small group some Sundays in Henley. Our volunteers are still running over 20 primary schools with over 400 children weekly in the county with inevitably some closures and some new schools opening. Approximately 80% are on minibridge with 20% moving onto bridge- although not as you know it. Secondary schools in the county are not so good. Our youngsters are attending BP events and doing well. Joan has been running a group at Reading School this year of whom 4 are now in Michael Byrne's U20 squad, augmenting John Mewes (1st year at University) from Sussex. As with

adults, they prefer events close to home, so Mike and Joan have taken them to some BRB events at SBBC.

Joan Bennett

8th May 2017

Website Report 2016/17

I am pleased to report that throughout the year further functions have been added to the website:

- Club information including links to all websites and days they meet
- Map of clubs in Oxfordshire and links to their websites
- On-line entries being used for all competitions
- Pages such as the homepage and Competitions pages having better formatting with boxes that present information more clearly
- Update of the Social Bridge area including clear pages for the Oxford Festival of Bridge
- Update of website map making it easier for users to find information

I thank Sandra Nicholson for taking on the role of updating various pages whilst I am away for 6 weeks. I encourage all Management team leaders to take responsibility for updating their own areas (many thanks for those who already do this). Training or information sheets are available with clear instructions.

Stephen Brown, Website Officer. May 2017