

Oxfordshire Bridge Association

Management Committee Meeting

7.30 p.m. Thursday 20th July 2017 at Horspath Hub

Reports on website

Chair's Report

Letter from Individual (Hard copy at meeting)

Appointment of officers

Competitions report

Youth report

Report on Festival update

Report of Best Practice Review

Response to EBU questionnaire (Separate Excel report)

Acting Chair's report

This report has been prepared with input from the (real) chair Robert Procter.

- 1) It is worth reiterating from the AGM report how well Oxon is doing with Youth Bridge and its importance for the future of the county. Joan and Holly have done really well and hopefully will continue with support as required. Having a clear team responsible in this area has been a success. We must welcome juniors to as many of our events as possible and not put them off. This is in addition to their own sessions.
- 2) The success of the congress continued and thanks are due to Michael Robinson and his team (or nearly all of it) for the work put in. Numbers dropped very slightly but this year seemed to get better feedback, worked very smoothly and should make a significant contribution to the OBA finances.
- 3) Education is another area where having a team has made a difference and the grants programme seems to be going well and will continue into 2017/8. We are getting to grips with having education available for all, from beginner to county player, and for Director's etc. (including for the new rules coming into force at the end of July.)
- 4) We have new officers (a complete set!) including two new(ish) posts. Nigel Birks as VC has already met with Robert Procter to help to finalise the two JDs so that they are complementary. As well as becoming Communications Officer, Lawrence Haines has taken the chair's place as leader of the Festival Team. This meeting completes the work of having a full set by appointing to some posts.
- 5) The chair reports that there are now over 25 people committed to helping make OxFoB a successful event. At the time of his writing there were already a fair number of entries but there is space for plenty more, so please can everyone keep up the marketing effort. One of the aspects about which the team talks is how all of us who play our bridge at affiliated Oxfordshire clubs get the maximum benefit from running an event that is attracting people who do not belong to any of our clubs. The team knows that there are those who see the county association as a separate entity that only concerns itself with county teams and top level competition and hence is nothing to do with them. The aim is to make sure that the festival changes that perception. It behoves all our clubs to recognise that there is something in it for them and to encourage all their members to make it a success by both participating in it and promoting it.
- 6) This is my last meeting as acting chair. I would like to thank all those who have helped make it a pleasurable experience and especially the Secretary, Ken Langdon who has really got stuck in to help to make it work.

jbs

July 2017

Annex to the Chair's Report

What does the OBA do?

The Oxfordshire Bridge Association (OBA) **encourages and promotes the game of bridge** throughout the county, and contributes to the English Bridge Union's national efforts.

The OBA **helps to train, advise and support bridge teachers**, especially those in schools. The OBA, directly and through supporting clubs, provides opportunities for players at all levels and officials to update their knowledge and skills. The OBA has a claim to be the most active of the county associations in the development of young players.

The OBA **supports Oxfordshire clubs** through grants and facilities. Grants are typically for such things as supporting activities designed to bring new players into bridge. Facilities include such activities as dealing boards for clubs.

The OBA **acts as a source of knowledge** for clubs and players. For instance, through the Chief Tournament Directors and others, the county can provide higher level rulings than is sometimes available in clubs if there is an appeal, and advice on complex scoring and other matters.

The OBA **arranges events across the spectrum** from sociable (such as café bridge and the innovative Oxford Bridge Festival) through to highly competitive (such as the annual Oxfordshire Congress), with some events specifically for younger players or for seniors. Among the most popular are the Wessex League in which more than 30 teams from clubs across the county and nearby compete, and the sociable Chester Cup in which host teams provide not only the packs of cards but also an enjoyable tea or dinner.

The OBA **selects and coaches players to represent Oxfordshire** in inter-county events. In recent years Oxfordshire teams have won or reached the finals of national and Midlands regional competitions.

The OBA **acts as a broker between clubs**. This enables clubs to import advice and good practice from elsewhere in the county and outside it.

The OBA **represents its clubs at regional and national levels** by electing shareholders and attending regular meetings. It also reports back on national and other activities such as changes in rules and trends in governance of clubs.

The OBA **maintains a website** to publicise clubs, teaching and other resources within its region and nationally, to promote and celebrate success in its own events, and to showcase the achievements of its representative teams.

Appointment of Officers July 2017

It is proposed to appoint Claire MacDonagh as Catering Officer and Stephen Brown as Web Officer.

With the election of a Communications Officer the precise JD for the latter is under discussion.

Following the club nominations, it is proposed to appoint Nick Smith as Chair of Selection Committee with Alan Wilson as County Captain and Peter Litchfield, Aleks Lishkov, Matthew Covill, Mary-Ann Sheehy and John Williams as selectors.

All those nominated by clubs are in this list. jbs

Competitions Report July 2017

1. Following elections at the AGM the Competitions Committee this year will be:
 - Nigel Wilkes (Tournament Sec and Wessex league Sec)
 - Sandra Claridge (Chester Cup and President's Cup)
 - John Rowe (CTD organising)
 - Kathy Talbot (CTD consultancy)
 - Sandra Nicholson (Trophies and Hons Boards)
 - John Slater (Team Leader)
2. In addition, the following not normally members are copied in
 - Geoff Nicholas: runs the seniors
 - Peter Litchfield (Treasurer): takes over the match secretary EBU comp entering role.
 - Claire MacDonagh: Organises/provides the relevant catering.
 - Stephen Brown: Website person
3. We should probably now copy in Lawrence Haines in his new role.
4. Our proposed programme is: (POBC is "probably OBC")

Oct 30th Gendered Pairs if sufficient entries (TBC)

Dec 3rd Swiss Pairs (POBC) (Blue)

Jan 28th County pairs (probably the final at POBC but possibly semis at POBC and Wally) (Green)

Feb 11th Harwell Cup (Wally) (Blue)

Mar 11th Co Pairs (if needed POBC) (Green)

May 13th Mixed pairs (POBC)

5. We propose the same entry fees as last year.
6. There will be a few minor changes to the algorithm for the Premiership due to the possibility of no Co Pairs semis and the inclusion of the gendered pairs.
7. There will be no Beck Cup.
8. We may need to decrease the number of divisions in the WL if more than the odd team drops out.
9. There is interest in moving the County Pairs to a different format in 2017/8 to try and get more numbers. Peter Litchfield and Nigel Wilkes will work up a proposal to take to the Club Chairs meeting during the year as it requires club action if it be to happen.
10. Lawrence's new newsletters may help with attendance
11. A county on line Bill of Psyche's book will be instituted for use in County Competitions
12. There is a separate agendum on the MC business about teams dropping out of the WL.

Dropping out of the Wessex league

There has been a dribble of clubs dropping out of the WL or decreasing the number of teams entered. It is easy to cope with a club that drops out all its teams. How do you determine which team has dropped out when the club has some remaining teams?

Two years ago, OBC decreased the number of its teams by 1. It was assumed that this would be the bottom one. That did not match the cohort of players leaving. There followed a season in which most OBC teams were relegated and struggled to compete.

Last year we were sympathetic to requests from clubs to do something else. Two clubs (Wantage and Aylesbury) had one fewer team and, in discussion with the WL Secretary, both agreed that it was not the lowest ranked team that was leaving. In one of these cases this seems to have been the right decision both from the names of the players and from the performance.

In the other case, it turned out less well. For a variety of reasons more folk remained of the higher team in the new team and the remaining "lower" team has been promoted. As a result, the team from another club who replaced the dropped team in a higher division felt that it was forced to play at a higher level than was warranted, with resultant problems.

There is no suggestion at all that anyone has been "gaming" the system or acted in bad faith – but it is perhaps timely for the MC to set a policy. There are 4 possible ways forward (and there may be others):

1. It is always the bottom team that drops out
2. The club can choose which team drops out
3. The WL sec/ Comp Cttee/MC can choose which team drops out in the light of evidence
4. It continues to be a negotiation in good faith between the WL sec and the club

The WL sec and Comp Cttee would be happy with any of these but would like a decision made by the MC. Any other suggestions are welcome too.

jbs

Youth Organiser July 2017

Following last year's success, we have booked another junior camp at Cheltenham in April 2018. 17 youngsters enjoyed an interesting and exciting visit to the House of Lords.

The course for Tournament Directors went very well at Wallingford BC. The 19 people who attended felt it very worthwhile but the 5 no shows made administration of such an event more difficult.

We still believe that the Website could be used to much greater effect to sell bridge and improve the reputation of the OBA. We missed photo and other opportunities for publicity at Henley. We still suffer from poor links between the Social page and our activities. Please can we move all the social and youth items to the Bridgewebs site so that we can be masters of our own destinies?

We need a similar budget to last year.

Joan Bennett

July 2017

Best Practice, Job Descriptions and Governance

The WP set up at the last meeting, chaired by the Secretary with Kathy Talbot, Alison Nicolson and John Slater has met and identified the most important things that need doing. They are:

- Continuing with developing a set of job descriptions which also identify the skills and training needed by those in OBA positions (with a view to providing it).
- Having an officer who is responsible for the management of volunteers – recruitment, deployment and provision of relevant development.
- Improving the management of communications with clubs and members
- Maintaining a document that lists what we do for clubs and members. Make sure the responsibilities are given to someone in the JDs. Put in on the website.
- Prescribing that each Team/main officer regularly look at best practice elsewhere and if sensible transfer it to OBA.
- Seeking a further reviewing and if necessary changing the governance structure of OBA.

We have made progress with these items but in some cases more than others. JDs are well under way and are being discussed. A set of those so far drafted will be on the website.

A new role of Vice Chair was identified and Nigel Birks was elected to that role. It includes the membership secretary role which has steadily become more automated, being responsible for volunteers, and standing in routinely when the Chair is unavailable or has a conflict of interest and withdraws. This is itself an example of good practice from elsewhere being taken on board.

A second new role of Communications Officer was identified and Lawrence Haines was elected to it. It includes some part of the previous Web Officer and PR Officer roles. Work is already underway.

A first draft of the what do we do doc has been produced and is on the website. Comments are welcome (to the Sec). As JDs are reviewed an amended they will be checked for congruence.

Identifying and transferring good practice from elsewhere is underway.

The last one – the governance structure –needs formal approval from the MC to proceed. There is little difficulty in identifying flaws with the current one but before looking at any significant reorganisation there is a need for aims and a timescale to be set. The issues are:

- Members are not elected directly by the membership of OBA (a no for the EBU)
- As a result, actual management has been taken over directly by the Chair and a set of teams with the team leaders (mostly elected by the membership) looking like a management committee. However, one could stick with that title and have an elected executive.
- Size of Management committee is large compared to others.
- The system is not yet very responsive to any need for rapid action – EGMs unlikely to work.
- It is possible for MC and others to hold office indefinitely but 1 year may be too short.
- Continuity between meetings is haphazard.

jbs