

Chairman's Report to the Management Committee for the meeting on March 8 2018

Where to start?

- Welcome to a new affiliated club - Freeland Bridge Club - being set up by Chris Onslow to teach bridge to people in the Freeland area
- Potential welcome to Buckingham Bridge Club - who I am told are about to re-affiliate through Oxfordshire
- Welcome the fact that Bicester Bridge Club can now be added to the list of teaching clubs in Oxfordshire
- Congratulations to Abbey Smith for winning the qualifier to play for England in the Lady Milne Home Internationals
- Congratulations to Laura Covill and Siyu Ren for their selection for the EBU team in the Junior Camrose which is taking place as I write
- Congratulations to the Oxfordshire Tollemache squad for exceeding expectations by coming sixth in a strong final

What has your chairman been doing?

- Website - I have passed your comments about the website on to Stephen Brown for action where possible. He says that he would be willing to transfer the website to a Bridgewebs platform and to continue to run it if that is what we decide. However, he feels that using the joomla site in conjunction with the BridgeWebs site uses the best features of each and has undertaken to produce a report explaining the advantages and disadvantages.
- Clubs - I wrote to club chairs as required by the November meeting. I only had a few responses and none of these suggested anyone who might be approached to become county secretary.
- Club Chairs' Conference - My thanks to Tony Hughes of Abingdon who has volunteered to lead a Club Chairs' Conference on April 16. I met with Tony Hughes and Colin Jones of Wallingford to discuss ideas for the conference - see agenda item.
- Fund-raising for England Juniors - My thanks to Abingdon Bridge Club for their help to Annabel Wade in setting up a fund-raising event on March 12 to support England Juniors. I am grateful to Patrick Shields and Bryony Youngs who are going to provide the bridge teaching on this day free of charge. My thanks too to Sandra Nicholson for helping with the publicity for this event. I understand that Aylesbury Aces are also fund-raising for this cause which is great news and hope that other clubs are doing so too. I have met with Lawrence Haines and Peter Finbow to discuss a further fund-raising event for the Juniors to be held in May entitled "Bridge on the

river". I would also commend The Menagerie Bridge Club for holding a teach-in evening with the Oxford University Club.

- Promotion grants - Bicester Bridge Club has made an application for financial support for their training programme. Subject to obtaining some further information about their future plans I believe this will be a good use of county funds to promote bridge in the county.
- Safeguarding - As agreed at the November meeting I asked Alison Nicolson whether she would be willing to take on the Child Protection Officer role. Unfortunately she is wishing to cut down on her involvement and therefore declined. I have had a useful meeting with Holly Kilpatrick about what this role might entail. See agenda item.
- Data Protection - We have now received from the EBU written but informal advice as to the things that we need to do to ensure that we are compliant with Data Protection laws that come into place in May. I have passed these to John Deech and Sandra Nicholson for comment and have a better idea now of what we have to do. However we need someone to take responsibility for keeping us on track. See agenda item.
- Midlands Counties Working Group - after much discussion the EBU Board has accepted the revision of the group's terms of reference and the group has been able to move forward constructively. We have identified a number of topics that we wish to work together on. In summary these are about: 1) supporting teachers; 2) progressing beginners to duplicate; 3) the gulf between competitive and non-competitive play; 4) understanding what unaffiliated clubs might want from a national body; 5) understanding EBU finances; and 6) developing the use of IT. Personally I am getting involved with Mike Willoughby of Worcestershire in tackling item 4. I believe Oxfordshire may be able to help with item 2.
- EBU 5-year strategy - As passed on to you previously the EBU Board has drafted a consultation document regarding the setting of a strategy for the next five years. The Midlands Counties Working Group has agreed to send in a joint reply to this and I have been contributing to the discussion. Key points made so far include the need to have agreed and clear overall objectives and proposed actions whose success or failure can be measured. We believe that we need to know more about what bridge players in general want from their national body before setting a strategy to achieve what they want.
- Festival - Plans for a festival to be held from September 18 to 21 are advancing. The organising committee consisting of myself, Lawrence Haines, Sandra Nicholson, Peter Finbow, Elena Jeffrey, Teddy Bevan, Jan Carter, Mike Willoughby (Worcs) and Patrick Shields (Glos) has had a preliminary meeting and advance publicity should be available within the next few days.

Robert Procter 17 February 2018

OBA Financial Reserves Policy

Nigel Birks, Peter Litchfield

Overview

As of 31st March 2017 the OBA had a cash balance of £39,346, made up of £29,807 in a Barclays Bank deposit account and £9,439 in a Lloyds Bank current account. The current account runs broadly in balance, +£951 in 2016/17 and -£1791 in 2015/16. The question has been raised whether the OBA needs such large reserves and, if not, what is the level required and on what to spend the excess?

What reserve levels are required?

The OBA has no premises which might require maintenance or upgrades and the only substantial asset that may require replacement is the duplimating machine at a cost of ~£2500. Its major yearly expense is the annual congress. In 2016 £7,710 was spent against an income of £10,234, providing a substantial profit of £2,524. If, for some reason, no congress could be held this profit would be lost. There might also be some loss due to advance orders, room hire etc. Assuming that the EBU would not charge a license fee if the event did not take place this should not be more than ~£2,000. No congress for one year due to an unforeseen calamity is unlikely. No congress for ever is unthinkable. The festival made a loss of ~£1000. If future festivals are to be held we should budget for similar losses which are not in the 2016/17 accounts. It thus seems that in a calamitous year we might suffer a maximum loss of ~£8,000.

An alternative criterion would be to require reserves of twice our annual expenditure of around £10,000. This would be more than adequate to cover our losses in a calamitous year.

Conclusions

The current reserve level of approximately £39,000 is unnecessarily high. We recommend that it be reduced. Possible means and time scales are discussed below.

In what ways can the OBA look to reduce its reserves?

Clearly there are two strategies to create deficit budgets and both will be required:

1. Reduce annual income
2. Increase annual expenditure

Eventually, as we approach the required reserves figure, we would look to return to “reserve neutral” budgets.

Reduce annual income

Ideas collected so far include:

- a. Reduce P2P from £0.06 to a lower amount (each £0.01 costs ~£500 p.a.)
- b. Reduce or remove some competition entry fees (halving fees would cost ~£500 p.a.)
- c. Reduce entry fees for Congress. Should the point of the Congress not be more about maximizing participation than maximizing profit? (breakeven would cost ~£2,000)

Increase annual expenditure

All expenditure which supports the objectives of the OBA should be encouraged including areas such as (ideas collected so far):

- a. Education, especially at beginner level and TD training. Both of these would probably continue to be through the clubs, but does not have to be exclusively so.
- b. Supporting clubs with access to free or subsidized duplicating and help with purchasing Bridgemates, computers etc.
- c. Support for running costs of (smaller) clubs, which might include website costs, help with rent especially to encourage experimenting with extra sessions

These might be particularly attractive to small unassociated clubs and provide them with an incentive for joining the OBA and the EBU.

Reduction strategy

As an example of possible strategies we have considered reducing P2P to £0.03 and competition and congress fees to those given above. This would give reserve reductions of ~£4000 p.a. On the experience of offering grants to clubs in the past few years it seems unlikely that reasonable projects totaling more than between £2000 and £3000 p.a. will be found. At these rates it would take between three and five years to reduce the reserves to £20,000, twice our annual expenditure .

The MC may consider whether this level and time scale is appropriate.

We would like to thank Chris Kerr for useful discussions and suggestions.

Governance Working Group recommendations for motions to be put to 2018 AGM

The AGM will be held in the April/May/June 2018 quarter on 21 days' notice. We propose that in accordance with the constitution the following motions are circulated with the notice of the meeting and put to the vote at the AGM (two thirds majority required for changes to constitution).

FIRSTLY, it is proposed that the existing clauses 6.2 and 6.3 be deleted from the Constitution and replaced with the new clauses 6.2 and 6.3 below to remove club representatives from the MC and to clarify day to day decision making between MC meetings.

6.2 The OBA shall be managed by a **Management Committee** comprising the Honorary Offices of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Officer, Chief Tournament Director, and other Honorary Officers as shall be determined from time to time. All Honorary Officers will be elected each year by the members at the AGM, defined hereunder. The Management Committee shall be guided by advice from a meeting of the Oxfordshire Club Chairmen to be held at least once per year and attended by Club Chairmen together with a core subset of Honorary Officers namely the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. The Club Chairmen in this meeting are acting on behalf of the members of their clubs who are also members of the OBA. They will, among other things, review the current strategy and progress in achieving current stated aims.

6.3 From time to time matters arise on which a decision and or action is required in advance of the next Management Committee meeting. In these circumstances such matters will be passed to the relevant sub-committee for action OR in the absence of an obvious sub-committee to which it may be passed, it shall be dealt with by a set of core Honorary Officers namely the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer along with any other Honorary Offices they might co-opt for the purpose.

SECONDLY, it is proposed that the wording below be deleted from clause 6.5 because the role of Regional Club Committee Representative ceased to exist some years ago.

Regional Club Committee Representative: All affiliated clubs are entitled to propose and vote for a County Representative to sit on the Regional Club Committee. All nominations for this must be submitted to the County Secretary in writing (or email) at least 28 days prior to the AGM. In the event that there is more than one nomination for the post, each affiliated club shall have one vote to be exercised by letter or email, to arrive with the County Secretary prior to the commencement of the AGM. Once elected, the term of office of the Representative will be as recommended by the EBU Board. The individual elected will become a full member of the

Management

Committee

THIRDLY, that clause 7.5 be deleted and replaced with the new clause 7.5 below because the annual review of the accounts is undertaken by an Examiner not an Auditor.

7.5 Independent Examination of the Accounts: An Honorary Independent Examiner, elected at the preceding Annual General Meeting, shall examine and report on the accounts.

FOURTHLY, that all 8 instances of “duplicate” are deleted from constitution

FOR INFORMATION ONLY – please find below the OLD clauses which the above motions propose are deleted and/or replaced as described further in the motions.

6.2 The OBA shall be managed by a **Management Committee** comprising the Honorary Offices of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Officer, Membership Secretary, Chief Tournament Director, and other Honorary Officers as shall be determined from time to time, together with members elected by the Oxon clubs as described below. All Honorary Officers will be elected each year by the members at the AGM, defined hereunder.

6.3 Each affiliated club with primary affiliation to the OBA shall be entitled to elect one delegate for every thirty (30) or part of thirty OBA members providing it has a minimum of twelve (12) current OBA members. Clubs with dual affiliation to the OBA shall be entitled to elect one delegate per club, providing they have a minimum of twelve (12) current OBA members.

6.5 Other appointments

EBU Shareholders: The OBA will appoint shareholders to the EBU. This will be achieved by election at the AGM, from amongst the full members of the OBA. Those elected will become full members of the Management Committee.

Regional Club Committee Representative: All affiliated clubs are entitled to propose and vote for a County Representative to sit on the Regional Club Committee. All nominations for this must be submitted to the County Secretary in writing (or email) at least 28 days prior to the AGM. In the event that there is more than one nomination for the post, each affiliated club shall have one vote to be exercised by letter or email, to arrive with the County Secretary prior to the commencement of the AGM. Once elected, the term of office of the Representative will be as recommended by the EBU Board. The individual elected will become a full member of the Management **Committee**

Additional members: In addition, the Management Committee may co-opt additional members as it sees fit, to serve until the next AGM. Such persons shall have such responsibilities as the Management Committee shall determine.

7.5 Audit of the Accounts: An Honorary Auditor, elected at the preceding Annual General Meeting, shall audit the accounts.

OXFORDSHIRE WEBSITE

PROs & CONs OF REMAINING WITH CURRENT FORMAT

Current Situation

The County Website is hosted on a Joomla platform linking and uses the best features of BridgeWebs for results, entries, mailing to OBA members and map of clubs in the county. The site aims to have not too much information on each page but allow information to be accessed quickly by the user. The headings on the Home page coincide with the Management Teams set up to efficiently manage the various functions of the OBA.

Some advantages of remaining as we are

1. Bridgewebs sites are designed for clubs and not counties so a county's information does not fit as readily in to the template. It is easy to get back from the BridgeWebs to the main site by simply using the back button.
2. The appearance of the site as something different from a club website is an advantage not a disadvantage. The current site allows the rotating display of pictures / adverts at the top.
3. Our chairman feels that he has no difficulty in updating their bits of the site and if he can do it so can anyone else. Our problem is getting people to think about putting information on the site in the first place and changing the platform will not undo that inertia.
4. There may be a belief that once it is all on a Bridgewebs site everything will be found in the same place as people's own club website. However looking at different clubs it turns out that Bridgewebs sites are not uniformly used and certain things (e.g. results and chairman's contact details) may appear in different places from club to club.
5. On the joomla site the Competitions areas are regularly updated (by Nigel) and the county Teams area regularly updated by (Nick) and Administration/Chairman areas regularly updated (by Robert) . They would need to learn the BridgeWebs site if we changed.

Some advantage of changing

1. All the information would be on one site
2. Bridgewebs sites showing news have less white space and lots of information in long pages (depends whether you like clutter or not)

3. People are used to seeing events coming up and results on the right hand side (the calendar on the current homepage also displays these on the right hand side) and there is a clear link to results.
4. Club members who update Bridgeweb sites may be able to update the county site with more ease (but those who have been given access to update, have not taken up this offer). Indeed all the Youth events and news have been moved to the BridgeWebs site over 6 months ago, but nothing yet has been added.
5. If Stephen Brown stopped updating the site, it may be easier for others to take over the BridgeWebs site.

Issues raised by a recent informal survey raised these points:

relatively unprofessional (Sheffield BC cited as an example of a more professional site)	Joomla is a very secure and well supported forum. The site was written professionally (by Mike Edwards to a specification written by the OBA Management committee) and is being updated by Stephen Brown
out of date	All information is kept up to date almost on a daily basis.
lack of visual attractiveness	“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. The site and its BridgeWeb links are all set up the same to have the same colour scheme as the OBA Logo
hard to navigate	All links are well organised and on the homepage there is a link labelled “How to find things”.
Devoid of some important information	If any information is missing, this can easily be added if it is listed.
Home page should state what the site is about	Sure it is obvious that the site is about Oxfordshire Bridge
Layout does not include “results”	There is a capital RESULTS option on the top left of both the home page and the competitions page.
Not good to have two OBA sites	The two sites complement each other and have the same colour scheme and logos.
clicks to the club page take you to the old site (now results) with no clear way back	Click to the club page take you to the BridgeWebs site and there are two ways to return: back button or, using the message on the left of the screen, the main www.oxfordshirebridge.co.uk site.
cumbersome and irritating	?
clubs involved, where to play/learn and results	There are links on the homepage (left hand side)

not easily accessed	of: Maps of affiliated clubs, Clubs and duplicate nights and results.
hard to read because of small green font	Font sizes can be changed, but the font size used on the BridgeWeb site left hand site menu and the main font size on the joomla site are the same. The font size for results in Bridgewebs are larger.
too much white space	depends whether you like clutter or not
splash graphic should be clickable	If the splash graphic refers to the rotating pictures at the top, this is not possible

The current cost of the joomla site is:

The current cost of the BridgeWeb site is: £40. This would rise to £110 per year if the site was fully used.

Stephen Brown is willing to transfer all the data from the current site to bridgewebs. The cost for this would be £250 - £300 depending on how much is to be transferred. He is willing to continue updating the OBA Bridgewebs site.

Social Committee – Update March 2018

Current Priorities

EBU JUNIOR TEAMS FUNDRAISER

A lot of work is being put into the fundraiser. We are 30/40 names so far and hoping for at least half that again if not more. We have a wide mix of players coming and the purpose of the day is to raise money for the junior teams & also to demonstrate hopefully to non-EBU players the benefits of bridge learning enhancing their enjoyment of the game & adding some breadth & depth. And to existing EBU members similarly some further education from leading UK coaches & up to date bidding methods

Also exploring the idea of some education seminars to unaffiliated players (or anyone) to also help “bridge” the divide between affiliated & unaffiliated players - non club players don’t have as much teaching available in the area if they aren’t members of clubs.

Proposal from John Rowe to purchase “OBA” Set of Bridgemates / Server / Boards

I would like to propose at the next Management meeting that we invest in a set of 20 Bridgemates, a server and a set of 44 boards to be used at OBA events. The reasons for this are as follows

1. Both Kathy and I have had issues at club events that provide some of the equipment.
2. Most club's don't have a set of boards greater than 32 – this is because that's the way they are sold and with more than 15 tables two sets of boards are required to cover the 70% rule thus that's all that is needed. Should we have a day event then we will need a set of up to 44 boards. Swiss pairs and teams would need a bit more forethought as a set of 36 boards is required for every three tables in play (6 rounds of 6 boards).
3. The Bridgemate's and server firmware must be updated together and tested with the later versions of the control software. When there are differences, odd situations within the scoring programme occur, names don't appear in the correct order and sessions don't merge correctly.
4. The scoring equipment comprises Bridgemates, Server, control software, and a scoring programme. The scoring programme used at a good proportion of the local clubs is Scorebridge, this is a single session scoring programme and arguably is not fully suitable for a day event. I therefore would recommend that EBUScore is used consistently at all OBA events.

The cost of the above is as follows :-

Bridgemate II	20 @ 132.00	£2,640.00
Server	1 @ 335.00	£ 335.00
Boards	44 @ 2.10	£ 92.40
Cards	50 @ 1.10	£ 55.00
Carry cases	2 @ 45.00	£ 90.00
Total Cost		<u>£3,212.40</u>

John Rowe

JUNIOR REPORT FOR MARCH 8TH MANAGEMENT MEETING

1. **OJBC event at Summertown.** This was held on 19th November and is reported on both the county website and B4S. 22 children attended, mostly bridge rather than MB players reflecting the maturity of junior bridge in the county.
2. **Player numbers and quality.** We have had 330 youngsters this year playing under our banner, of whom over one third are playing bridge(the traditional average for conversion from MB to bridge being 10%). Over 10 are now in various squads which is fantastic.
3. **Reading School vs St Paul's School.** Judy Alison and I took 8 year 13 boys to London. The scoring was done as per Wessex League D1 with Reading School winning over 20 boards by 88VPs. 7 of the Reading boys are now playing regularly at Reading BC, 5 are in the U20 squad and 3 live on Oxfordshire.
4. **EBED Student sims pairs/Oxford Times heat.** This event was held at Roke on 25th February using the EBED hands, and running both bridge(3T) and minibridge(5T) sections. Heats are allowed up to 31st March, so that the results are not yet meaningful. 29 children attended, and local results are shown on the B4S site. Further heats may be held at Sonning Common and Marcham during March.
5. **National Schools day.** This is to be held at Loughborough on March 10th. Two schools only teams have been entered by Reading School (including 3 Oxfordshire boys). Three composite teams are being entered through OJBC. The Dragon School team will consist of one alumni and three current pupils this year.
6. **Wessex Youth Bridge weekend.** To be held on 7th 8th April at Cheltenham as before. Entries are coming in steadily, but we are dealing with teenagers here. When I asked one how many of his friends were coming, the reply was 'quite a lot'. At the moment we have 20 signed up, but expect 50+. As Michael Byrne has designated it as one of his U20 training weekends, it will be rich with good youngsters. We will of course cater for the beginner end and are, in fact planning a big minibridge push to kick start the Cheltenham juniors.
7. **The Oxford Junior Bridge Club** continues to run every Sunday afternoon, term time in Summertown Church Hall. There are usually three tables of experienced bidders, novice bidders and mini bridge players. Seven members of this club are now attending regular training sessions with Giorgio Provenza, the England Under 16 coach. Two members of the club have already been signed, Henry Rose, who is now considered a 'veteran' and Aidan Saunders.
The Dragon and Summer Fields Schools are now making school history by having matches twice per year, bidding and mini bridge.
8. **Summary.** The future of bridge as a game depends on us continuing to widen the base, particularly amongst keen children of non bridge playing parents. Many of the current crop of competent young players in our county fall into this category, which is fantastic. Some are enthusing their parents, and if they continue, will benefit OBA, or somewhere else, tremendously in the future.

Joan Bennett February 26th 2018