

Chairman's remarks, AGM June 2015

The Trustees are required by the Charity Commission to draw up an annual report and accounts, and present them to the members at an annual general meeting; then to submit them to the Charity Commission. The process is rather different from our previous practice, so before I present the annual report I'll summarise what has happened over the past year, then make a few general observations. (Slides 4-6). There's no provision in the TAR requirements for some of the comments I wish to make, so I'll precede the formal presentation of the report with these remarks.

This year has seen the passing of several much valued members of the Club. If I mention any who passed away the previous year, that's because I omitted to mention them a year ago. Sandy Constable had made a huge contribution to both club and county bridge, and it was good that we managed to celebrate that before he passed on. Krishan Jolie likewise made a huge contribution, including starting Monday evenings for novices; and what I especially remember was his uncanny ability to work out how to rescue a session if the movement went wrong. We also lost, in the last year or two, Barbara Eyton, Joan Hancock, Patsy Luck, Ewen Moir, Patrick Parry-Okeden, Mark Rebeck, David Tuohy, Ros Rundle and Joka Vernon – the last two would have been known mostly to the daytime players. All these players enriched our Club in their own way.

Such a loss of members through death – and of others through ill health – illustrates just how vital it is that we continue to recruit new members to maintain the vitality of the Club. A few members join because of a move to Oxford; but most recruitment comes through the teaching programme run by OBL, and I'd like to pay tribute to the excellent work done by those of our members who teach bridge or run the supervised play sessions.

One of the greatest challenges for new players is to make the transition from learning and supervised play to competitive duplicates – and it's all too easy for the more experienced players to forget just how nerve-wracking that can be. We have tried to facilitate that transition with the friendly duplicates on Tuesday mornings. Sad to say, even in those sessions, some players have been put off by something someone has said, or the manner of saying it. It is so sad if a player quits bridge in those circumstances – both because they are missing out on a splendid pastime, and because it's a loss to the Club. I can't emphasise enough how much responsibility falls on all of us, not only to mind our own manners, but also to be prepared to inform the TD – or indeed make a formal complaint to any Trustee - if we think another player may be intimidated. In that context, I'd like to pay tribute to all those involved in the Conduct Panel, who carry out a difficult task with great care. Finally, I can do no better than urge all members to read, mark and inwardly digest the excellent article on behaviour by Andrew Robson in the June issue of English bridge.

One of my most pleasant duties is to thank those who contribute to the smooth running of the Club: the trustees, the officers, the directors, scorers, dealers, team captains, the social committee, those who look after the premises, those who provide all kinds of refreshments and those who ensure that we have all the necessary bridge materials. I must again pay tribute to the enormous dedication and professionalism of John Fleming and Chris Kerr. As for the rest, John Fleming worked out that about 70-80 members contribute in some way, so I hope they won't be offended if I don't mention them all by name. I will just pick out one, as an exemplar, and that is Hazel Hobbs, who volunteered to become House Officer despite being a newcomer to the Club, and is doing a fine job, acting promptly to get any necessary repairs put in hand. It's important that the Club is run by both more and less

experienced bridge players, so do please encourage newcomers to take up the burdens – and pleasures – of office. We are still short of an Education Officer. We are so much in despair of finding a Technology Officer that we have removed it from the list of officers, but we really do need someone to take on the task of ensuring that our hardware and software is kept in good shape. We also need some more members to join the dealing team, to produce the duplimated boards; and we could also do with more scorers. Training is provided for both tasks.

The coming year offers new challenges: the planned redevelopment of the premises (which is a later item on the agenda); and the new arrangements for Tuesday evenings. The OBA will reduce their commitment to the 1st & 3rd Tuesdays, and OBC will take on the other two or three Tuesday evenings. So I would encourage members to give those sessions a try, so that we can make them both enjoyable and economically viable.

Those are my general remarks, and we now turn to the formal annual report. (Slide 8). The Annual Report was circulated with the notice of the AGM. The Trustees met on 10th June 2015 to finally agree the Annual Report and Accounts. Some small changes were made. The revised version of the Annual Report and Committee Reports are published on the website.

The report follows a pattern required by the Charity Commission. Firstly, it explains how the charity was established, who were the initial trustees, and who were elected as trustees and officers. It goes on to explain the governance and management of the charity; then lists its objectives and how its activities have served its purposes. It continues with a financial review and a summary of future plans. It concludes with the detailed accounts, so for that I'll hand over to Chris Kerr. I suggest that we take any questions on the report, or on the accounts, or on the reports from committees, at the end of Chris's presentation.

Richard Sills, June 2015