

Somerset Contract Bridge Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Sunday 16 May 2021 via Zoom

25 in attendance

1. The Association had been notified of 3 deaths over the past year : Mike Leach, Jim Woodman and Mary Stodgell

2. Apologies for Absence.

Simon Brooks

3. 2020 AGM Minutes

The minutes of the 2020 AGM were approved

4. Matters Arising from the 2020 minutes

There were no matters arising.

- 5 Chairman's Report

Tony Russ began by detailing the successes of the County over the last six months. The main event being the virtual Congress surpassed expectations in terms of revenue generated and numbers participating. Certainly an online event is extremely cheap to run yet generates similar revenue. He hoped the next Congress would be face to face but the template to undertake another virtual event was available

Regular daily and leagues continue and remain active and popular .

As an indication of the popularity of online games and by example during the month of March 2021, 2,052 player sessions took place. Tony again committed to continuing with online games for as long as needed and viable. He expected a certain levelling off as the country moved out of lockdown.

The league had now finished and competitions continue. There were a number of successes worthy of mention:-

The winners of the county pairs were Steve Tomlinson and Ralph Smith

The championship teams were won by Colin Flood's team

Teams of 8 were won by Taunton who went on to participate in the Regional Finals and Garden City's competition.

Paula and John Whybrow won the funder 5s NGS competition

Other congratulations were extended to Ceri Pearce who represented Wales

Rob Lawy for reaching the finals of the spring foursomes; and

Eric Cummings who has reached Grand Master status.

Tony thanked all those who had made the last year a success.

The Michael Coda tournament had been hugely successful for the charity Clic Sargent. Some very large donations were made. A different model was adopted for the tournament this year and no reason why this shouldn't be continued for future years.

Congratulations were extended to Roger Primley and Bob Williams for winning the event.

The results and conclusions of the survey were displayed for all meeting participants to view. Tony felt 3 conclusions were certainly worth drawing attention to:

Firstly, the median age of respondents were between 60 and 70. It was essential that a new generation of bridge players be recruited. Currently the upper levels are not being replaced as inevitable life events prevent participation i.e infirmity and death. This can only be addressed through teaching.

Secondly 94% of those responding were playing online (not surprising as the survey itself was online). It demonstrated an opportunity to address the changes that have and will inevitably occur to how the game is played Tony thought clubs really needed to take an imaginative approach e.g face to face on a Tuesday evening, online on Thursday afternoons, teaching and/or improvers on another day.

Thirdly, 60% were looking forward to the return of face to face bridge clubs reopening, this meant 40% were not. Whilst the survey was undertaken prior to the vaccine roll out on a reasonable projection 20% may not return which could be difficult to clubs to accommodate.

Tony reiterated his commitment to assist clubs getting back on their feet and funds had been set aside to this end. One fund had been earmarked for teaching e.g to fund teacher training and applications should be made directly to him the second fund was to support clubs generally in restarting and applications should be made to Richard Feetenbury.

As to the timing of the next season in relation to face to face, the rollout was dependent upon the advice from the EBU, the government, the local venues and player confidence. There were however opportunities for hybrid sessions and clubs need to be thinking about these.

The County programme was online and included a combination of face to face and online.

Tony finished his discussion by thanking the committee and those attendees to the meeting. Special thanks was extended to:-

Sheree Pavey for all her hardwork with Facebook, the page was lively and beginning to attract an out of county following.

Paul Burgess was thanked for his informative newsletters.

Andy Ridgers for his continuing work with the Western League and selection.

Frank Coltman for all his work with online games and was currently directing up to 5 games per week.

Bob Warrender was thanked for his work with the league

6. Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurers report was tabled on the day.

Richard Feetenbury added his observations on achieving such a sizable surplus.

BBO had been the favourable platform for Somerset's online bridge. Income from BBO had reached £26,000 and had become a major income source . The average monthly turnover was approximately £2,500 and contributed to the county's surplus. This is expected to decrease with the return of face to face bridge.

4 county events have also contributed to revenue.

The Michael Coda event this year generated the highest of any previous year and £3,000 was handed to Clic together with £300 in cheques.

One additional fund was being set aside

£5,000 specifically for capital investment at clubs but also expenditure incurred to satisfy F2F requirements at venues. In addition to the already existing £4,000 available for training e.g directors training.

The county also owned 2 bonds with a 12 month life time earning a modest return.

Richard announced that Shirley Cummings had audited the accounts and agreed to do this from now on. Richard expressed his thanks to Ken Bowden for all his work in auditing the accounts in recent years.

7 Tournament/Competition Secretary's Report:

The Tournament Secretaries report was tabled on the day.
A copy is attached.

Frank Coltman had prepared the 21/22 programme and a copy was available from the website. Woolavington hall had been booked along with teas in anticipation of events taking place face to face.

A small number of competitions had not run but a large number had, including the league which was very successful. By way of example 3700 tables and 15,000 participants had been recorded as playing in county online events.

Frank thanked Bob Warrender for all his help and thanked Tony for all his hard work behind the scenes in making all this possible.

A discussion took place as to the anticipated future with an eye on overcoming certain logistical and physical problems, e.g space in the hall and parking. The intention was to undertake a survey of all team captains on the favoured way to continue; e.g to play the county league on the same night or online via Real Bridge. It was thought that by splitting the play over 2 nights this would also help directors. The cost however would increase if held on 2 nights. The league had always run at a loss but popular events had offset this.

Tony extended his thanks to Frank for the programme and for all his hard work including directing 5 tournaments per week for the county.

8 Election of Officers and other Executive Committee Members

There were no proposals for election onto the committee. Tony Russ extended an invitation to everyone to consider serving or assisting generally.

The following were proposed by Tony Russ

Tony Russ – Chairperson

Ceri Pierce – Vice-Chairperson (new nomination)

Richard Feetenby - Treasurer

Frank Coltman - Tournament Organiser

Sheree Pavey – General Secretary/Membership Secretary

Colin Simcock

Andy Ridgers

Eric Cummings
Simon Brooke
Paul Burgess - Representing Non- affiliated clubs

The above were all duly elected 'en bloc'.

9 Any Other Business.

Tony Russ undertook a random poll on who of those present would be happy to attend the Congress face to face the results were 60% would be happy to attend, 40% not.

Alan Atkinson reiterated that he now wished to retire from his role which was noted.

Frank expressed his thanks to Tony for all his hard work during lockdown.

Minutes prepared by Sheree Pavey 23 May 2021