

Minutes of Warrington Bridge Club Committee Meeting
Saturday 25th November 2023, 930am, on Zoom

Present: Mike Dennis (chair), Jim Steele (secretary), Janet Jagan, (Treasurer), David Burrows, Carolyn Bailey, Malcolm Roberts, Janine Curwell

1 Apologies: Brigitte Massey

2 Minutes of previous meeting held Saturday 2nd September 2023: accepted as a true record. There were no matters arising not on today's agenda.

3 BWS: On-line activities

- a. **Review of weekly sessions-** attendances, costs, charges: Jim shared the current version of the rolling spreadsheet which tallies up attendances, costs, and income in our on-line sessions. After Brierfield opted out of BWS on 11 September, and our fixed costs are split two ways rather than three, we are showing a regular loss on every Monday evening BBO session; Friday evenings are still generating a small income.
- b. **BWS Meeting:** We are concerned that some players are now getting a free ride. It was the intent to share out the Brierfield players between Stretford and Warrington, so that all people who play with us on-line are members of one or other club, and are charged their playing fees, but this has not yet been done. It would alleviate the cost pressures. We also have concerns about the viability of Monday evenings on BBO. A BWS meeting on Zoom has been arranged for Friday 8th December at 10am. Jim and Janet will attend for WBC; also Carolyn has said she is available. Mike is probably not going to be available. We expect the meeting to be chaired by Dave Tilley, and Adam Wiseberg also to be present.

4 F2F Activities

- a. Thursday morning intermediate lessons are well attended, with 20+ most times. We still need extra help to sit in at tables and help with play of the prepared hands.
- b. The first Thursday morning gentle duplicate of the new teaching season, joint with the u3a Improvers, will now be delayed to 18th January, to give Malcolm time to cover important material.
- c. Thursday afternoon relaxed duplicate pairs are building well, with usually 5+ tables. We agreed to continue, and not disrupt by doing any afternoon advanced lessons, for the foreseeable future. Jim has been running these, but now Malcolm Roberts is getting experience at doing it, which adds a very useful extra flexibility on resources. We are successfully using Bridgemates for these sessions.
- d. Christmas social on Monday 11th December, 630 start. We will not do a meal, just wine (from Alford Hall), mince pies, cakes, chocolate ginger biscuits. **ACTION Janine** It will be an Improver's night, with no partner required. Malcolm volunteered to act as a host, so that everyone is guaranteed a game. Jim will announce over the coming Thursdays, and send out an email to members. **ACTION Jim**
- e. Monday evenings:
 - i. Charity events, joint with Improvers: we scheduled these once every 2 months for 2023, and they have proved very successful. We agreed to do the same again in 2024.
 - ii. Children in Need in November: not a huge turnout, with 7^{1/2} tables, but with members making generous donations we managed to raise £245, an excellent result.
 - iii. Help with opening up, setting tables out, etc: rota still required.
 - iv. Selection of charity: we agreed to concentrate on one local charity each year, rather than spreading about smaller amounts per event. For 2024, we agreed Walton Lea Partnership. For 2025, we might consider Warrington Food Bank.

- f. Alford hall Issues
 - i. Sorting out store room, especially the uneven floor: we have the go ahead from Alford to fix this. **ACTION Mike**
 - ii. Décor of Festival Suite: we would like to see upgrade of the flooring and curtains. This is something we might be able to assist Alford Hall with, but only with security of tenure. We should keep the discussion open with Jess.
 - iii. Other issues: lighting on the road to the car park is poor, with at least one light not working. This is dangerous especially in the dark winter months. To be followed up with Jess. **ACTION Mike.**
 - iv. Internet reliability: much better now that a new extender has been installed in our bridge room (the Festival Suite). We can use a mobile hotspot if necessary – both Jim and Janet have the facility on their mobiles.

5. Education/ teaching

- a. Advanced lessons – we agreed to defer these while we continue to build attendance on Thursday afternoon.
- b. Resources for teaching and assistance in lessons: we are gradually building. For example, Brigitte and Karen are already helping at Penketh. We do need a long-term plan of getting more people helping or taking leadership roles. Malcolm could be taking on some of the Intermediate teaching in the future, if we have enough resource to teach the Improvers. Some mix and match of teachers between Improvers and Intermediates might assist the process of getting more resilience.
- c. Schools: we felt that we do not have resources to take on an initiative of teaching bridge in primary schools, even at a very limited range. We might consider whether offering it on Wednesday afternoons at Priestley College might be an idea for the future.
- d. Advertising the courses (beginners/improvers/intermediates): our website already displays this. The information on beginners and improvers courses is also on the Warrington u3a website. A revised poster, advertising a new beginner's course starting in January 2024, and the "turn up and play" on Thursday afternoons, has been put up in key locations over the past week.

6. Finances/ general publicity

- a. General update/comments – Janet had circulated some comments in advance of the meeting:
 - i. Difficulty with getting Barclays to respond and acknowledge our new Treasurer's address for correspondence, and our change in authorised signatories. After a huge amount of time and frustrating effort, Janet has managed to get everything resolved. We now have the correct three signatories (two to sign) on our mandate: Janet, Mike, and Jim.
 - ii. EBU charges have risen considerably.
 - iii. We have disbursed various amounts to several charities over the year, sometimes with difficulty in getting a response, and sometimes being welcomed with gratitude. We discussed our policy on charities- see 4e iv above.
 - iv. Janet raised her concerns on BWS non-payers. This is being addressed – see 3b above.
 - v. Our overall financial position remains healthy.
- b. Expenditure- proposals/plans:
 - a. Publicity sign (on metal posts) at Alford Hall: we have Alford agreement. The meeting agreed on a design and layout, and Mike will proceed to order, including installation. **ACTION Mike**
 - b. Publicity banner: we agreed to try out for 6 months, at Stockton Heath Tennis Club, to see if it produces a benefit. The cost would be £110, including provision of the banner. Jim would share the design work so far with Mike, and Mike would arrange. **ACTION Jim/Mike**

- c. New tables: many of ours are getting very tatty. We would look to procuring some replacements, either of the type recently bought by u3a (in our shared Alford storeroom) , or of the type we already have. **Action Mike**

7. Calendar of events:

- a. We agreed our F2F bridge dates for the Christmas/New Year Period, as follows:

- Monday Dec 11th: evening **Christmas Social & Improvers night 630pm**
- Thursday Dec 14th morning: Lesson 10am; afternoon: Relaxed Duplicate Pairs 1pm
- Monday Dec 18th: evening Club Duplicate Pairs 7pm
- Thursday Dec 21st morning: joint session with u3a: mince pies, prize quiz, fun hands **10am**; afternoon- CLOSED
- Monday Dec 25th Christmas Day- CLOSED
- Thursday Dec 28th - CLOSED
- Monday Jan 1st New Year's Day- CLOSED
- Thursday Jan 4th morning: Lesson 10am; afternoon: Relaxed Duplicate Pairs 1pm
- Monday Jan 8th: evening Club Duplicate Pairs 7pm

These have been posted on the website. We will communicate with Jess so she knows our plans. **ACTION Jim**

- b. 2024 calendar of events: we will include the proposed EBU festival of bridge, partnered with Cancer Research UK, 9-15 September; Children in Need in November as usual; 6 Improvers nights (mostly charity events); a spring social/ prizegiving; a Christmas social; the AGM (suggested for Sat 2nd March 2024, on Zoom; 5 sessions of X-IMPs pairs for the Jordan Vase; the Elizabeth Bennett Memorial Trophy; the summer arrangements of Thursdays. Jim will produce a proposed complete calendar for the year; once agreed, a condensed form will be prepared, eg for the notice board and the website. **ACTION Jim**

Note 1: u3a bridge ends on 28 June '24. Enrolment day will be Wednesday 4th September, so the new classes will start on 12th September.

Note 2: a draft 2024 calendar was circulated to the Committee, for comment, after the meeting.

8. Membership

- a. Update on current position

We now have 126 members, including 23 additions in 2023: 72 Full, 34 New Player, and 20 On-line. Of these, ~80% were active in Sep/Oct, the most recent completed 2-month period. Since the start of lockdown in 2020, we have acquired 88 new members (121 signed up, but 33 discontinued after lockdown when F2F restarted). So, of our 126 members, only 38 (ie 30%) are carry-over from pre-lockdown.

- b. Recruitment drive/ advertising? New posters have already been put up this month.

- c. Repeat from previous minutes, not yet actioned: we discussed approaching newspaper publicity not by paying for advertising, but by writing an article to submit as something the paper might like to publish – they are always looking for copy which they don't have to write themselves. We could major on the joint enterprise of Warrington u3a and WBC. Anything we propose would need to be run past Andrew Young first. **Action Jim**

9. Competitions/ trophies

- a. 2023 trophies: Mike had agreed to arrange engraving of the two trophies awarded on 6th March 2023. (one with Carolyn, the other with Keith /Stuart). This is complete.

- b. 2024 Competitions
 - i. Elizabeth Bennett memorial trophy: annual handicap pairs event to take place in one session. Date in early July.
 - ii. Teams (Jordan Vase): to be played over 5 Monday evenings as handicap XIMPs pairs. We will review the handicapping arrangements following the 2023 competition.
ACTION Jim/David
 - iii. Monday Evening best average of the year: scratch and handicap pairs (ie 2 competitions). For 2023 we specified a minimum number of appearances to qualify: 12.
 - iv. Friday evening on-line best average of the year: we agreed that we should replace this in 2024 with a Thursday prize, now that Thursday afternoon relaxed duplicates are more popular and well attended. This would probably be best as an individual scratch prize, best average over the year, minimum number of appearances to qualify: 12.
 - v. Most improved player over the year, based on precise (ie to 2 decimal points) NGS grade on 1/1/24. We will review how the 2023 competition works, to judge whether to repeat in 2024.

10. 2024 AGM

- a. We agreed a provisional date of Saturday 2nd March 2024, 1030am, on Zoom.
- b. Committee: Brigitte has said she wishes to stand down from the committee at the AGM. Ian Douglas has been approached and is willing to stand. The committee discussed coopting Ian straight away rather than waiting to the AGM. Proposed Malcolm Roberts, seconded Mike Dennis, agreed unanimously.

11. AOB

Repeat from previous minutes, not yet actioned: Carolyn raised the issue of the EBU having revised its alerting and announcing rules, eg no need to alert or announce a double after the first round. David would check out the new rules, and decide what we should tell people. **Action David**

12. Date of next meeting

This will be held on Saturday 20th January 2024 at 0930, on Zoom.

Jim Steele
29/11/23