

WORCESTER BRIDGE CLUB

Annual General Meeting, held at 19:00 on Wed 19th February 2020

at the Royal British Legion Club, Claines

Minutes

1. Apologies

Jan Cole, Sally Kelly, Rosie Cannon, Yvette Waide and people affected by floods.
39 people attended.

2. Minutes of previous AGM held on Wed 21st February 2018

Proposed (Steve Simmons) and seconded (Jane Rutter).

3. Chairman's Report

See attached report. Many positives to report, including successful 30th Anniversary celebrations, and two-way visit of Romorantin on our French Exchange. Overall picture (subscriptions and table numbers across Tue + Wed) is healthy, but we need to address the concerns of people who are tending to stay away from Wednesday evenings: Can we be more welcoming? Can we make the language of the game less scary to less experienced players?

4. Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts

See attached report, proposed (Sue Evans) and seconded (Maureen Ledger)
Increases in Tuesday's tables is compensating for a reduction in Wednesday's tables.

Surplus for the year £864 and nett assets of £16,796

5. Election of Officers and Committee Members

Janette is leaving and David will finish as Treasurer once we have found a replacement.

6. Appointment of Auditor

Dick Rutter is remaining as Auditor. Thanks were recorded for his excellent work.

7. Presentation of Trophies

Tom Mackie Cup	Pairs Finals Night	Geoffrey Herbert and Matt Newton
Skelton Trophy	Pairs Championship	Geoffrey Herbert and Matt Newton
Individual Shield		David Thomas
Ladies Pairs Salver		Louise Wilson and Marian Wilcox
Men's Pairs Salver		Paul Hammond and Paul Tapster
Mixed Paris	John Cattnach Trophy	Lorna Fellows and Rufus Ulyet
City Cup	Christmas Pairs	Sue Evans and Dennis Loynes
Championship Teams	Herbert Nunn Trophy	Mike Vetch, Robert Chilimonczyk, Dick Rutter + Paul Greaves
Try-Duplicate Trophy		Gay and Neil Enoch

8. Motions

Hand sanitisers were suggested – 1 per table; to be actioned.

Suggestion that a draw be made for seating on 'P' nights – to be reviewed by the Committee.

9. AOB

Club Representative Pairs. Committee to investigate ways of extending to include reserve Pairs.

Appendix

Chairman's Report 2020

I'm going to start with the Thank-yous, too numerous to mention, but a huge thank you as ever to all the Directors and scorers, all the hosts, committee and all the other non-committee people who help with teas and cakes and setting up... A special thank you to both Treasurer and Auditor – David and Dick, - who have done marvels to get the increasingly complicated accounts out in a year where we have had: a 30th Birthday party; a two-way Exchange trip to Romorantin in June and October; and three Christmas parties, effectively, if you count our 19-table Cross-Channel Slam-ultaneous Pairs event in December! David has decided not to stand as Treasurer for the coming year, and I can sympathise, as it's the one job I wouldn't ever dream of taking on myself. This does mean that we have a vacancy for Treasurer unless we get a late nomination!

I have kept the Thank-you's briefer than usual - which will no doubt please many of you!; the next bit will take longer, and may be less of a crowd-pleaser...

In so many ways, the Club is in rude health – David will be reporting on a healthy surplus, Tuesday table numbers up by approx. one table per session, offset against Wed main section which is down by a similar amount; and with Try-Duplicate numbers also healthy; membership for 2019 was stable at 153 members, and renewals to-date for this year very close to where they were last February.

But we must not over-simplify – in some ways it's "the best of times and the worst of times" – whilst Tuesday and Try-Duplicate are thriving, attendance on Wednesdays have been markedly down, particularly in the last four months, and some (but not all) of this can be directly connected to people who have made a decision NOT to play on Wed evenings any more. Yes, there are people who have lost partners or other factors, but I am acutely aware of a number of people who on leaving have talked to me about what they don't like: and the recurring theme is "**unfriendliness/unwelcoming behaviour**". Now when someone who hasn't been to the club for three/five years says that they have heard this or that, I can take it with a pinch of salt: (I heard a third-fourth-hand comment recently from someone who'd **heard** at Redditch Golf Club that Bromsgrove BC(!) is a scary place...) We are **not** the only club that is looking at behaviour as an issue, and clubs need to do so at all times: but we at WBC need to listen to what people say when it's regulars and recent members who are saying specific things; and ask ourselves what we can do to change the perception by doing things differently. And we **MUST** listen very carefully, when we have 12+ people moving away from Wednesdays in a short period of time, and when we see (even just a one-off) FIVE tables in play on a recent Wednesday evening.

On our first session of the year, I said "let's make it a New Year's Resolution to be nice to each other, partners and opponents at the table" and I said that in Cttee we'd be looking at what we can/should do.

On that 1st January night, we lost two regulars from Wed evenings who have told me they were spoken to rudely at the table... It's "easy" /would be easy... to try to point accusing fingers and pin this down to two/four/six people's actions, and for all of us to look around the room at each other, accusingly: but please note that I am NOT saying "You must ..." but "We...": the only way we can crack this is to concentrate on **ourselves**, and say we can ALL do more.

I say this because what I hear when I talk to people who may still play on Tuesday is that it's **not** just a few people or the same behaviours. So I start by thinking what people might say about **me**, and I realise that on a very recent Tuesday, I was really GRUMPY with my regular Tuesday partner – totally unforgivable!

And I also get positive feedback such as John Smith telling me how fantastic Ken and Grahame and other hosts had been with him in recent weeks, but telling me at the same time that it's has not always been so...

So what do we need to do?

- I think we should ALL take care to be welcoming (away from the table as well as at it) to less-familiar faces – it's easy for us to go into a corner and discuss match-fixtures etc, rather than chatting to a lone figure at the bar

- I think that it's about **everything** we do at the table – from greeting with a smile at the beginning of the round; not talking to partner about the last round, or even just gazing into space THINKING about the missed overtrick in the previous round
- I'm NOT going to say "tear up the rule-book, never call the Director" – 100% we need to make it normal and a comfortable thing to do to get the TD (with his rule-book) to sort out revokes, 14-card hands, leads out of turn... But the LANGUAGE of some of the standard TD calls does tend to sound like we're in court-case/solicitors office mode - reserving our rights, talk of being damaged and unauthorised information: these **are** the correct technical terms, but do let's be sensitive to how scary these things can sound: I could at this point make a big start on improving flagging table-numbers by bringing in some or all of my newbies – but unless we can find a softer fluffier way of "exercising our rights", I'm reluctant to do so
- Yes, we need to help and educate less-experienced players with how to do a convention card, when to ask questions etc, but again, in a nice way – my beginners are well aware of all the bits of basic bidding they have to remember – if they're daunted by all of us telling them what they ALSO need to know about hesitations/questions/explanations/unauthorised information etc, we won't see them graduate to regular attendance...
- It can also be about being NICE to partner – not *grumpy* as I was to my Tue partner that day, and not making criticisms. It may be that we're only being directly rude to our partner, and imagine that our opponents at the table are excluded from this – but it's awfully uncomfortable sitting and watching a domestic...
- Broadly, I think our behaviour (at the table) should be as we would be at an informal meal-table – it probably isn't yet written in the revised 21st century guide to table manners that we shouldn't be following a twitter feed at the lunch table, but it ought to be – and it certainly does clearly come under Law 74 B.1....
- And if I'm saying that at the table we should be as we would be at a meal table, in the ROOM as a whole, we should be as we would be at a drinks party – greeting less familiar faces, chatting to them at the interval and over a drink at the end...

There is MUCH to be positive about: we have old faces like Mike Jackson who have come back to us, and new partnerships forming; some of those who come to us telling me how fantastically welcome they have been made to feel; and at least twelve of those whom we haven't seen recently have told me they DO want to play on Wednesdays, but just need to find the right partner – maybe we should set up a Bridge-Tinder app! I'd like to have a **buddy night or two** on I nights in April or May – bringing new or returning people into the club, assuming that we can make those small but crucial changes to improve the culture of welcoming. And we have a Robson seminar day to look forward to for October.

I'm sorry if I've hit the wrong note for you, but I'm kind of **not** sorry, because I feel it had to be said; I have up to two years to run as Chair, and would like to finish the job: but if the overwhelming feeling is that this is **not** the right direction for the Club to take, I will happily, but with huge personal sadness, stand down at the end of this next year, or sooner if you wish, and let someone else lead the Club in a different direction.