

Cambridge Bridge Club

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at St Andrew's Hall, Chesterton on Wednesday 24th April 2019 at 7.00 p.m.

The meeting was chaired by Roger Salmon and minutes were taken by John Liebeschuetz. 27 other members of Cambridge Bridge Club were present.

1. Welcome

Roger welcomed members to the AGM.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Joan Braganza, Jennifer Cornwell, Kathrin Peters, David Carmichael, Dominic Clark, Alan Sparkes

3. Minutes of the AGM held on 24 April 2018

The minutes were adopted as a true and accurate record of this meeting.

4. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda

There were no matters arising.

5. Reports from Officers

Chairman

Aggregate attendance at our bridge sessions was marginally higher in the year just ended than the previous year, and this was entirely due to the success of the Monday morning sessions, which now have attendance almost as high as the Tuesday and Wednesday evening sessions combined. Their attendance last year was up 14% to an average of 12.3 tables.

I am delighted that on Thursday May 9 we will be starting a second morning session, to be organised by Suzanne Sandral and Sue Wilcox. It will be hosted for the first few weeks, so please give it a try. My thanks to Suzanne and Sue; and thanks especially to Terry and Allison who organise the Monday sessions so well and who initiated the Thursday arrangement.

The Wednesday sessions have been particularly poorly attended, with an average of just under six tables and an average loss per session of £31. We could save perhaps half of this net cost if we moved to the Annex – the space on the left as you walk towards the main entrance to this Hall. We think it can take eight tables, which was exceeded only three times last year and on one of those the excess was only half a table. But on 6 June we had 10 tables and on 4 July we had 9. A decision on this is a matter for the new committee, but it would be helpful to have a show of hands of those of you who play on Wednesdays or might do so in future. I will ask for indications of those of you who would be content to move to the Annex, and those who would really rather not do so. Before I do so, is there anyone who would like to say something on this subject?

[Comments from members indicated that moving to the Annex could be viewed as an admission of failure in regard to trying to increase attendance, and would be problematic if numbers did recover. A show of hands indicated this proposal did not find favour]

We raised over £1000 from the special teaching sessions to provide funds for the EBU Junior teams in China, which included Jamie and Liam Fegarty. My thanks to all the teachers: Paul Barden, David

Kendrick, Catherine Curtis, Paul Fegarty and Alan Shillitoe and particular thanks to Carina Negreanu who initiated and organised the sessions.

Members of the Club have had remarkable success in national competitions over the last year. Rod and Sue Oakford came second and David Kendrick third in the National Pairs. Jon Cooke was in the winning Camrose team. Seven members of the club were in the team of 8 that won the inter-county Tollemache Cup: Jon Cooke, Jon Mestel, David Kendrick, Paul Barden, Julian Wightwick, Paul Fegarty and Catherine Curtis. Jon Cooke, Paul Barden and Julian Wightwick were also in the team that won the Crockford's Cup.

I would like to thank the Club's directors, scorers and hosts for their work. These are largely thankless tasks and, in the case of scorers it involves staying on after the end of the session while everyone else leaves. Please though can we all appreciate their essential contributions that normally make our sessions work so smoothly. And in this connection a special set of thanks to Penny and Ken Riley, who have organised the rota of directors and scorers, and to Jenny who has organised the rota of hosts.

Colin Sills worked tirelessly last year and this to manage the impact of the General Data Protection Regulations and to set up appropriate systems so that we can manage the club easily while complying. It is a thankless task, and so I would like publicly to say how grateful I am for his dedication and for the effectiveness of his work.

Clive Stops attends nearly every Wednesday session to open up this room and to help set up, and he rarely plays. It is a wonderful service he provides, and I think it deserves special acknowledgement.

Michael Bond has both been our treasurer for the past year and a goto director on Wednesday evenings. He broke both of his ankles just before taking on the job of Treasurer, but stuck with it in spite of also acting as Treasurer of St Andrew's Hall and having heavy personal commitments. Regrettably his aggregate workload has been unreasonable, and I am delighted that Fred Langford has agreed to again be nominated as Treasurer and to allow Michael to step down. Many thanks go to Michael. In accordance with our tradition for retiring committee members, I would like to present him with a bottle of wine from the Club.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the critical contribution of our auditor, Peter Last. While this year's accounts are not yet final, he has as ever already made truly valuable contributions. Historically we gave the auditor a bottle of wine each year, and I benefited from it when auditor. But when I joined the committee four years ago, I thought it was excessively generous and – with Peter's support – ended the practice. But I think it is worth occasionally reinstating it, and I therefore have a bottle here for Peter.

Secretary

The membership numbers in the club remain very healthy at just shy of 200 but it cannot be disguised that the demographics of the bridge playing population is changing and that, whilst day-time bridge is thriving, evening bridge is struggling a bit. This is not a situation unique to Cambridge BC, it appears to be a national phenomenon.

There are two implications, one of which is financial, as Roger has already alluded to.

The other is the potential development of a self perpetuating vicious circle that fewer tables leads to ever fewer tables.

The committee views this as a significant challenge for the club and is considering ways in which we can address it. We did try an initiative, last summer, led by Fred Langford, to encourage Monday players to try out evening bridge sessions partnering an experienced player. We had good take-up, and I believe it was much appreciated by those who took part, so it was a very worthwhile exercise in that sense, but it has to be said very few of those Monday players that participated then, went on to regularly play on Tue or Wed.

One thing that we have under consideration is supervised play sessions on a Tuesday or Wednesday evening, alongside the regular duplicate. This is an idea put forward by Gladys Gittins. It will require getting experienced players willing to give up some time to do the supervision, though we are also considering the possibility such players might be remunerated to a certain extent.

Other than that, we are considering ways in which we can make the Tuesday and Wednesday competitions more attractive to the general membership. You will have all seen the questionnaire that went out to members last week, thank you to everybody who responded, your feedback is very much appreciated. We have an item later on the agenda in which I will expand on this topic, and that will also be an opportunity for there to be feedback from the Floor.

The other thing I wanted to report is that there have been significant changes behind the scenes in the way the club stores member information. Colin Sills has done great work creating a Google form based database which can act as the sole repository of members' information, outside of the EBU database. As well as hopefully simplifying the administration by both Treasurer and Secretary, this will make it much easier to comply with the EU's GDPR legislation that came in about a year ago. In addition we have a plan to overhaul the email lists in the near future. I will now pass over to Colin who will say a few words about what has been done already and what is planned going forward.

Information Officer

As John has mentioned we are endeavoring to comply closely with EU Regulations and the Club Database is an essential step in that direction. Members were asked to complete a renewal form last year to allow us to capture consent to store and appropriately use personal information you freely give us. Although we received forms from the great majority of members, there are still some members that have not yet returned those forms and we will be asking for them to do so in the coming months.

Treasurer

The club made a surplus of £104 in the year, the increase in attendance on Mondays offsetting the drop on Wednesdays. During the year the Post Office decided they would only accept notes and whole bags of coin as deposits. This means we now carry forward a small amount of unbanked cash on the balance sheet. The accounts are not yet fully audited, but this will be done in the very near future.

The increase in creditors is due to the inexperience of the Treasurer that resulted in late processing of EBU invoices until after the year end. I would suggest that any future Treasurer has more than a few months experience of the workings of the club and more knowledge of the EBU than I had.

During the year we experienced two thefts; one of two weeks unbanked cash from the Treasurer's home on 2nd November, estimated to be £445.00; the second at Trumpington Village Hall, between 2nd and 8th October, when two computers and the Bridgemate server were taken. These are subject to insurance claims. The Bridgemate server has been replaced, the cost is included in this year's accounts; replacement computers were donated to the club. In future the server and computers will be stored separately as the loss of the server is more adverse to the running of the club but it is likely to be of less interest to thieves.

Club Captain

The Club achieved success once more in the NICKO competition in 2018 with Cambridge D (Rod Oakford, Simon Barb, Peter Bhagat, Clive Stops and John Liebeschuetz) reaching the Quarter Final. Cambridge A and Cambridge D have both reached the round of 32 in this year's competition.

In addition the Cambridge B team of eight have qualified to play in the Garden Cities Regional Final.

Chief Tournament Director

Verity Joubert resigned from managing the directing and scoring rota in June, because of poor health, which turned out worse than we hoped. I thank her and we remember her fondly.

Since then Ken Riley has managed the directing rota and Penny Riley has managed the scoring rota. My thanks go to them, both, and to all our directors and scorers. We're always in need of additional volunteers, please don't be shy. We can help with whatever training you need.

Peter Grice knows much more than I do about many technical aspects of directing and scoring: thanks to him for his continuing contribution.

I'm pleased to report my impression that standards of behaviour at the club have been higher than ever. I hope you all agree: please let me know now or in private if you have any concerns.

Slow play can be a minor problem. I encourage everyone to defer discussion of the first board in a round until after you've played the second, or until the end of the evening.

There was one appeal of a director's ruling during the year, which is about typical. It's entirely in order to appeal if you wish to, but I'm not disappointed to be called upon seldom.

6. Table Money and Subscriptions

No changes were proposed to Table Money and Subscriptions.. Therefore, table money will remain at £2.50 for members, £3.50 for visitors, £1 for student members and £1.50 student visitors. The annual subscription will remain at £15, and £5 for students.

7. Events and Competitions for 2019/2020: Discussion, Led by John Liebeschuetz

We need to consider whether we run exactly the same set of competitions this year as last year. As stated, Wednesday evenings, in particular, are not so well subscribed and so we may wish to shake things up a bit to attract more attendees. I would like to hear feedback from the Floor in a minute but I'll just give you some facts arising from both the questionnaire recently put out; and also an analysis of attendance statistics. The first thing to say is that there is no obvious competition that is a candidate for cessation. Most Tue and Wed competitions attract the same number of tables, i.e. 6-8 generally. What is noticeable is that both two-session pairs events, the Swiss Pairs and the Championship Pairs, are very well attended, with 10-14 tables each evening. The reasons for this are not entirely clear. But one may be that, as shorter events, the chance of the winning pairs being other than the 'usual suspects' is greater. So we might need to look at whether adding or repurposing one or two competitions along a two or three session format is worth doing.

Moving on to the survey, it is still too early to present a formal analysis of the results, but some trends are already looking clear cut. Firstly, the idea of giving prize money received a sizeable no vote. Secondly there did seem to be some support for the inclusion of one or two more handicapped tournaments.

Some anecdotal reasons for avoiding Tue and Wed were also given, and I'll mention two. One relates to the start time, with some requesting an earlier start and finish. This is a thorny question but one worth revisiting. The other point is that one or two people mentioned they would like to see more smiles and fewer glum faces at evening bridge. This is a point that perhaps all of us who play on Tuesday or Wednesday could take to heart. I'll now open up the discussion to the Floor for any comments.

[The consensus of the Floor was that an earlier start time would make it harder for working members to attend and few were in support of this.

Jon Cooke volunteered to act as a go-between to the University club to attract more University members to play.

It was suggested that better coffee and disposable cups at both venues might be helpful.]

8. Election of the Auditor

Peter Last was proposed by Roger Salmon and reelected with no opposition.

9. Election of the Committee for 2019-20

Nominations for the various positions are as follows:

Chairman – Paul Barden

Vice-Chairman – Jon Cooke (proposed at AGM by Roger Courtney)

Secretary – John Liebeschuetz

Treasurer – Fred Langford

Club Captain – Graham Hazel

Tournament Director – Paul Barden will retain this responsibility for the time being

Trumpington evening representative – Vacant

Chesterton representatives – Clive Stops and Michael Bond

Monday representative – Terry Otterman

Roger proposed that the committee be elected en bloc. This was accepted by the meeting with no dissent.

10. Presentation of Trophies

The winners of the club trophies for the year are as follows:-

Individual Championship – Roy Cradock Bowl

David Kendrick

Monday Indiv. Championship – Oliver Hodgson Trophy

Gordon Scott

Club Championship Pairs Trophy

Graham Hazel, Julian Wightwick

Cross IMP Pairs Championship – Jacobs Shield

Jon Cooke , Paul Barden

Swiss Pairs – Wraight Cup

Jon Mestel, Paul Barden

Summer Pairs – Abdelmoneim Trophy

Arie Schecter, Peter Morgan

Teams of Four League – Collis Plate

Clive Stops, Julian Wightwick, John Liebeschuetz, Cath Jagger, Paul Fegarty, Graham Hazel

Teams of Four – Marie Johnson Trophy

Ben Tarlow, Jake Dunn, Simon Barb, Graham Hazel

Handicap Teams – May Pamplin Shield

Tery Otterman, Allison Kaye, Jon Cooke, David Kendrick

Equinox Handicap – Zakrzewska Plate

Autumn 2018

David Carmichael and David Wright

Spring 2019

Carina Negreanu and David Kendrick

11. Any other business

A round of thanks and a bottle of wine were given to Roger Salmon to thank him for his stalwart chairmanship of the club for the last three years.

The Meeting closed at 7.45 pm