



## Minutes of NCWG Online Meeting 6 August 2020

### County Bridge Associations Present:

Yorkshire - Lesley Millet (Lesley) & David Guild (David); North East - Nigel Durie (Nigel) ; Manchester County and Adam Wiseberg (Adam); Merseyside & Cheshire – Richard Alcock (Richard),

### Invited Members:

Ron Millet (Ron)– EBU Director, Gordon Rainsford Gordon) – EBU Ceo , Tim Anderson (Tim) – EBU Membership Officer, Geoff Morris (Geoff) Retired member of Manchester CBA, Patrick Shields (Patrick) – EBU Director and Chair of MCWG from 11.45am;

Lesley chaired the meeting and welcomed the members of the working party and invited members to this online meeting

**1. Apologies** – - Irene Davis (Irene); Adrian Darnell (Adrian); Jeff Smith (Jeff);

**2. Previous Minutes** - The minutes of the meeting of 30 June were approved without amendment.

### 3. County Reports

#### Manchester County – Report by Adam

Adam pre-empted the report by saying that the pace of change is such that County Committee meetings are now every two weeks rather than two/three monthly. Lesley noted that Yorkshire has also adjusted and amalgamated committees with more frequent meets.

Since the last NCWG meeting, Adam has dropped the Saturday interclub competitions and now has weekly an imp pairs, a 20 board non-experts pairs, an experts pairs and a swiss pairs. He noted that teams were very popular but difficult to manage.

Now looking at a Green-pointed swiss pairs with 6 board matches as an “all day” 48 boards and interested in Gordon’s congress experience of Swiss teams (see Gordon’s report section).

Online activity continues to grow with more clubs becoming active with BBO regular sessions: Altringham getting 15 tables/week, Bramhall Cheadle Hulme 13 tables/week, Manchester County 10+ tables/week. Altringham have encouraged by having the first 4 weeks at no fee and then \$3 forwards, with the club paying UMS. Cheadle Hulme make no charge at all as they have strong funds.

The online Manchester County League reported last meeting has grown to 42 teams of four across 7 divisions. The cycle is to play five weekly matches over five weeks. Thursday is the teams’ assignments day and play is flexible for playing on the Thursday or, if cannot attend, then play on a day in good time before the next Thursday. To encourage participation, the first round is free. This

league is now in its fourth week. All players must be County affiliated(primary or secondary). Some 80% of league participants were active in the teams' league structure last year which fielded 80 teams of four. The terms and conditions of league entry are available on the Manchester Events website .

Lesley said that Yorkshire are concerned about getting substantial numbers for an online county league as there is heavy player commitment to the EBU's Lockdown League but Adam said that of the 42 teams in the Manchester County League under 12 have participation in the EBU's league and so not a problem.

County events are poorly attended in the evenings but Adam noted that Altringham and Bramhall have been more successful in their evening club events.

Overall the standard of play is more inclusive of social players and Adam estimates 48% as the average. Manchester County are also running a weekly non-Expert Pairs at 10 high maximum (the EBU non-experts is 9 high maximum).

Adam noted that availability of TDs/administrators can be a brake on activity and need TD's whether paid or unpaid.

#### **Manchester City Club** – report by Geoff

As reported last meeting, this club is very active. They play duplicate every afternoon including weekends and get 8 to 10 tables (Cf Only one weekly duplicate per week on previous F2F). Find they are getting a wider spread of players including previous rubber bridge players). Also have a Sunday a.m. 12 board session for play of last year's beginners.

#### **Yorkshire** – Report by Lesley

The method of running the Great Northern Swiss Pairs online will depend upon the success of the approach taken at the Eastbourne Congress (see Gordon's report).

Yorkshire are charging for all events, preferring to sustain a money reserve to be ready to assist needy clubs when they start back on F2F.

The County have recently run a mixed pairs, a swiss pairs and a swiss teams and have a programme planned for up to Christmas including play without experts, a 3 match mini-ladder and a pre-Christmas league. Number of participants to date have been good.

Across the County, there are eight virtual clubs on BBO and three on BCL as clubs.

#### **North East** – report by Nigel

The NE Clubs' memberships have been polled for a County league but this has been dropped at present as only 20 positive replies. Hoping to get more league interest in the Autumn. The Darlington, Durham and Morpeth online competition activity (reported last meeting) continues to be buoyant and they are happy to grow online via the clubs' route. By invitation, the NE have now accepted participation in the Somerset/Gloucestershire inter-county friendly matches.

#### **Lancashire** – c/f

#### **Merseyside/Cheshire** – Report by Richard

A County League has been polled but very little interest and not running at present.

Deva Virtual BBO Club are regularly getting over 20 tables at their Tuesday evening weekly online pairs. Also play two other days; Thursday afternoon simple systems 6 tables and Friday afternoon 13 tables.

Some clubs are organising interclub match series via BBO (not as virtual clubs) and there is members' playing activity in Lincs and the Manchester Summer League. Also, there is an active unaffiliated clubs league of teams of four across the county.

### **Cumbria/Westmorland – c/f**

#### **Inter-County Competitions – Report by Patrick**

The Midlands County are setting up an 9 Counties League (and have opened the offer to a further 8 Counties who participate in the MCWG) to offer a different practice opportunity for the more experienced players. The idea is to play against top County Teams. He noted, online bridge is presently unstratified and this is an opportunity to fill an experts' play gap. He said that it would be interesting if Northern Counties also considered an 8/9 Counties league during the non F2F period.

Adam said that he is also considering Inter-County Challenges for Manchester County play against more remote counties.

#### **2. Eastbourne Summer Congress – Report by Gordon**

The online congress is proving successful.

The swiss matches have operated successfully. The swiss teams matches have been set up using the successful London congress method. The set up is for pairs to be allocated and then they play on BBO using random hands. Score is via EBU Score. The play is easier now that BBO have included a "breaks" facility to their system. Also, the recent BBO introduction of up to 50-table sections has meant that up to 48 boards can be played without too much incidence of repeat of the same opposition pairs. (Previously a problem for closely ranked part scores). Now looking at a Google Form approach to populate a spreadsheet to ease the collection of scores data.

Action: Gordon to share info on movements and scoring.

The EBU Lockdown League is presently held until after the Eastbourne Congress when it will recommence as season 5. Gordon said that there was strong growth in season 1 & 2 and it was steady season 3 & 4 and to expect slight drop in season 5. Adam said that this may be due to more bridge options coming on stream as the Lockdown League is an intensive commitment, each cycle being three matches per week over five weeks.

Lesley queried how the i.d. of BBO named players is reconciled. Gordon said that this is not an issue for EBU competitions as they welcome all EBU members but clubs are more stringent. Adam showed a club look up list (spreadsheet) showing Name, BBO m]name and EBU number as required for scoring club matches run on BBO. The discussion expanded to issues on player and administrator difficulty on operating BBO. Adam said that there is information re Manchester City competitions eligibility on the Manchester City Events Bridgeweb website.

Ron noted that we do not have enough administrators for competitions over the country.

Adam said that he has created numerous instructional videos with high view figures and these can be viewed on Adam's YouTube playlist at:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_EOtdiMcFhQNgFSQ1kPjIA/playlists?view\\_as=public](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_EOtdiMcFhQNgFSQ1kPjIA/playlists?view_as=public)

The list includes teaching on squeezes by Alan Jones.

Adam also mentioned the BBO Intermediate/Advanced Club that is primarily a teaching website for better players and also includes IAC tournaments. Registration is free. See website at

<http://iac.pigpen.org.uk/>

Geoff asked re the current position on EBU advice re getting back to F2F play. Lesley said that Harrogate had trialled return and it had been an obvious failure. Gordon said that although Isle of Man BC and Guernsey BC have gone back to F2F, these are special situations. Although getting a lot of club pressure, the EBU are waiting to see definitive Government advice and the trends position is unclear with a second wave mooted. So the EBU cannot predict when they will be in a situation to be able to advise. Adam said that he is unsure, due to the aged players structure, of the willingness of players to return. This prompted debate. Geoff is particularly concerned about getting new players in sufficient volume.

### **3. BBO Developments**

Lesley thanked Gordon for negotiating the new BBO rates which add stability and will be a major positive impact on Clubs' BBO play and this was seconded by all present. Gordon said that BBO have been deluged by increased virtual clubs' activity and are still laggard in reporting but are getting better.

### **4. Teaching – report By David**

EBED's English Bridge School (EBS) is to launch this month and a number of teachers have agreed to participate and give feedback for an early trial. David is one of these teachers.

EBED have digitised the first four lessons for one a week of a year-long Beginners' Course with ten lessons in the first term. This follows the traditional three term model of F2F Beginners' Bridge. The remaining six lessons of term one will be ready later this month.

The teacher's lesson consists of a lesson plan, slides, hands, and quizzes. The Google Classroom suite will be used for this purpose. Lessons will be delivered through a mix of Google Meet (unlimited time of Zoom at 40mins) and BBO Teaching Tables. The allocated teacher will save the cost of Google Meet which is approx. £50/year.

Students will register to EBS and receive access to digital materials. They will receive the first four lessons free and then pay a subscription rate of £5/month for the duration of the course.

There have been some signing-on teething issues but these now look resolved and teaching is ready to go. David said that he relished starting this month and will give feedback to the working party. Initial comments are:

1. Surprise that the traditional year long format has been adopted and not the Fast Track approach that may have more significance to getting quickly into online play.
2. Concern that this approach does not offer a solution to larger class size teaching. Handles 4 to 8 students but is difficult above this. Small class size is recognised as a restraint on getting volume intake through into Bridge Clubs. Perhaps an immediate solution does not exist.

### **Technology Platforms – Tim Anderson**

Tim said that his platform system is now working and is being enhanced through his working with Bridgeweb to add hand analysis functions. The main problem is to manage speed of play and he is

working on a solution. He is now in a position to offer this to other clubs and invites them to trial his system.

**Sunday Express Bridge Article**

Working Party members have read the article and welcomed its content. There was no specific feedback.

**Next Online Meeting:** TBA Provisionally in 4 weeks time.

End