



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
HELD ON TUESDAY 9TH MAY 2006, AT AYLESBURY**

Present: Denis Robson (Chairman)
Philip Mason (Vice-Chairman)
John Neville (Hon. Treasurer)
Sally Bugden
John Carter
David Harris
Graham Jepson
Jeff Morris
Alan Nelson
Martin Pool
Max Bavin (Acting General Manager)
Sandra Claridge (Minute taker)

1 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 14TH MARCH 2006

The minutes were signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

2.1 Matters arising

2.1.1 Item 7.4 Editorial Board 6th December 2005.

Sally Bugden reported that no-one had been appointed as yet to tackle the specific problem of communication with members, other than as at present via English Bridge. The membership page of the website had been rewritten, though only as an interim solution, and problems had been thrown up in terms of Data Protection, particularly in relation to registration of new members. It was agreed that Sally and the new General Manager should, as a priority, formulate plans for an action programme to improve communication and gather information from the membership.

2.1.2 Item 3.2 Trust Account

Max Bavin advised the Board that the necessary dedicated bank account had not yet been opened, and that a 63-page application for Charity Status had yet to be completed. David Harris offered to assist with the preparation of the document.

2.1.3 Item 5 Kettering Leisure Village

David Harris opened the discussion on Kettering saying that a sufficient level of concern had been expressed at the recent Shareholders Meeting to suggest that the Board should determine how quickly the Union could extricate itself from the present

arrangement. The Chairman disagreed and said that the clear message from the Shareholders was that the Board's recommendations were accepted.

Alan Nelson commented that the Tournament Committee shared some of the concerns expressed at the Shareholders' meeting, and considered that Kettering was better suited to "strong" as opposed to "social" tournaments. The Committee was content with the present arrangement for a further year, provided a contingency plan was put in place. Max Bavin reported that he had received no official confirmation from Kettering of the recent changes to the agreement.

As had previously been decided the Board would review the situation at the end of this calendar year when the impact of promised improvements at Kettering would be apparent, and comparison costs of alternative venues had been examined. A decision would be taken in December 2006 to determine what arrangements would prevail from November 2007.

The Chairman reported that he had received from the previous General Manager notice of an exhibition at the Kettering Leisure Village entitled *Bridgex*, which would be publicized to 1200 bridge players and 300 bridge clubs. It was decided that the Union would not take advantage of the marketing space offered.

2.1.4 *Ryder Cup for bridge*

The Treasurer said that it was possible that within the next ten years England would be invited to host the Ryder Cup for bridge, and that the Board should be aware of the financial implications. The first such event is being hosted by the Irish, who had secured some funding. What was clear that the event must be run with panache, and the total cost might be as much as £50K. As much information as possible would be obtained from the Irish at the conclusion of this year's event. Sally Bugden was seeking to determine the cost of the ACBL's "Hall of Fame" dinner.

3 FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Treasurer reported that Direct Debit income is being returned to Counties promptly, and that no significant change was envisaged to the expected small surplus to 31st March 2006. Audited accounts were expected to be available by the Board Meeting scheduled for 12th July, and would be circulated to Shareholders as soon as possible thereafter.

As announced at the April Shareholders' Meeting, the £3 payable to counties for *Bridge for All* members had not been costed into the revamped *BFA* material, but would be paid out of central funds for the current year. A decision had been taken to increase the price of the material from £20 to £25 from 1st June 2006. It would be available to the Education Manager to announce the increase to bridge teachers in advance, provided that existing materials had been paid for. It was agreed that Aylesbury should significantly improve the level of its reporting to Counties in respect of their *BFA* members.

The Treasurer said that there had been some misapprehension concerning future plans for the collection of subscription income. In view of the substantial bank charges for clearing cheques, and the cost of chasing unpaid subscriptions, a suggestion had been floated that in order to encourage greater use of the Direct Debit scheme, a discount would be offered to members using the scheme. It was agreed to publicise to the membership that a differential charge will be introduced from April 2008, and that a downloadable Direct Debit form will be available on the website.

4 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

It was agreed that the Remuneration Committee be disbanded.

5 GENERAL MANAGER

The Chairman reported that subject to satisfactory references and the candidate's approval of a draft Contract of Employment to be drawn up by David Harris, a new General Manager had been appointed and will commence work at Aylesbury on 5th June. In addition to providing support to the Board and Shareholders, the initial key areas of responsibility were agreed as development of the Union's software, staff management, and marketing.

6 MARKETING & PROMOTION

Sally Bugden said that it was vital to create a resource via the new General Manager to formulate a promotion strategy to raise the profile of bridge. Jeff Morris expressed the view that the EBU itself should actively control its press and publicity.

Max Bavin was asked to investigate the whereabouts of a learning DVD which had been commissioned by the previous General Manager.

7 MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

The thrust of the meeting, which took place earlier in the day, was reported by Philip Mason, Sally Bugden and John Carter. It had been agreed that meetings would be held within three months with four or five County Associations and twenty or so clubs to discuss ways of increasing membership, the research in terms of clubs being completed by September. The County meetings would be on a "pilot" basis to assess means of offering assistance, and in the case of clubs, two members of the Action Group would be aiming to establish what their needs were in terms of the EBU. No decisions had been taken in regard to financial implications, the aim being initially to gather information from which financial models can be formulated. The group would also produce a package to take to the English Golf Union.

The Board agreed that once the specific tasks were established, support for the initiatives would be provided at the earliest opportunity by the Development Manager at Aylesbury. It would also be established whether the Union's sub-committees could suggest ways in which they could support the membership initiatives.

8 SCCBA CODE OF CONDUCT

Presenting the code of conduct paper entitled "Best Behaviour at Bridge" produced by Sussex CCBA and based on the ACBL's "Zero Tolerance", Sally Bugden said that the final version represented the outcome of considerable market research, and recommended to the Board its implementation nationally.

The ACBL had indicated that their scheme had been easy to implement, and had been fully accepted after a six-month period of adjustment. In addition, there had been a noticeable increase in membership retention.

Since its implementation in Sussex, apart from a very small vociferous backlash, the membership had seen the procedures as a positive move, and there had been a noticeable improvement in the atmosphere at county competitions.

The Board fully endorsed the introduction of the policy, which is attached to these minutes, and Max Bavin was asked to produce a paper on how it should best be implemented.

9 GENERAL MEETING AT AYLESBURY

As an extra aid to good communications between the Board and Aylesbury staff, it was agreed that a short General Meeting would be held at Aylesbury with topics of discussion which would be followed by a short question and answer session. The Chairman agreed to discuss the timing of the meeting with the new General Manager.

10 COMMITTEE REPORTS

10.1 Laws & Ethics Committee – 24th March 2006

Martin Pool tabled an easy guide to the changes made to announcements and alerting in the new Orange Book to be implemented on 1st August, which it was agreed would be an insert with the August issue of *English Bridge*. In addition, the Education Manager would produce a guide to the changes for Tournament Director Training Courses. It was thought desirable that counties followed the new regulations in regard to their own competitions.

Martin was disappointed to note that very little progress had been made on the index for the “White Book”. It was hoped that every TD would be in possession of a copy as soon as possible.

It was noted that the Vice-Chairman of the Committee had resigned.

10.2 Tournament Committee – 4th May 2006

Alan Nelson reported that the Committee’s brainstorming session had been very successful in identifying areas of concern, most notably the decline in entries to northern congresses (excluding Seniors events), and for rank and file events. A number of initiatives had been suggested to reverse the trend, and a pilot project would be introduced which included earlier start and finish times at nominated congresses, and the introduction of Stratified Match-pointed Pairs and Bracketed Teams. The latter involved splitting a Swiss Teams field into groups, based on the team’s combined MP holding. It would be the responsibility of the Chief Tournament Director to make any recommendations in relation to the Brighton Summer Meeting.

In order to test whether numbers could be increased there was a request from the Tournament Committee that funds be provided to offer some hospitality at the conclusion of nominated northern congresses. The Treasurer said that while English entry fees are fairly high by comparison with others in Europe, they are not grossly over-priced, and we must ensure that competitions don’t lose money. Whilst he was not convinced that a small amount of hospitality would have a significant impact on entries, it was agreed to provide the sum of £1500 to the Blackpool Year-end and Easter congresses.

It was noted that arrangements had been confirmed for the Autumn Overseas Congress in October 2007, but that tenders had not been requested. Alan Nelson said that whilst this was regrettable, time had been limited and he was satisfied that the arrangements made were satisfactory. He assured the Board that from 2008 onwards all tour operators would be contacted in regard to pricing.

10.3 *Editorial Board – 6th April 2006*

Sally Bugden reported that advertising revenue continued to be disappointing, and that discussions had taken place with Blue2 to establish other possible opportunities for attracting advertisers. A new series of articles had been commissioned from Brian Senior, Peter Stocken had kindly offered to improve the quality of photographs, Sally Bugden has asked Brian Cook to commission articles on bridge-playing celebrities, and also articles of general interest which can be syndicated. Given that Tournament coverage space is limited, it had been agreed to flag up future events, rather than list results. The cost of detailing a member's masterpoint total and status on the magazine label, was to be investigated. Meetings would in future be held after each issue of the magazine.

Correspondence from a holiday operator was discussed. It was confirmed that the Board's method of regulating licensing of events was to only print advertisements for events for which a licence had been issued.

11 BRIDGE GREAT BRITAIN – Minutes and Annual Accounts

John Neville reported that Bridge Great Britain's annual meeting in April was attended by representatives all five NBOs. The annual accounts showed a maintained position in terms of revenue raised by Simultaneous Pairs events.

11.1 *Home Internationals*

The Committee had taken on board criticisms of the Camrose format, and whilst reverting to the original format was not an option, every effort was made to improve matters. As a one-year experiment the CBAI had agreed to send an additional "holders" team which would solve the very unpopular sit-out problem. Each weekend would comprise five head-to-head matches, the scores from the first weekend being carried over to the second, every team being eligible to win the trophy. Screens would be introduced in the Camrose and Lady Milne Trophies, reflecting the status of the competitions.

11.2 *Financial matters*

John Neville recommended to the Board that the current arrangement whereby England receives 60% of the surplus from the Simultaneous Pairs events and Scotland and Wales 20% each, be continued, expressing the view that any reduction for Scotland and Wales would be very harsh, and that there was benefit in maintaining goodwill between the countries. It was pointed out that England largely bears the cost of administering bridge in the UK, entry fees in Scotland and Wales are substantially lower than in England, and that they could be more proactive in solving their financial problems.

It was agreed that the status quo be maintained for a further five years, but that the position would be reviewed at the end of four years, with the expectation that the current arrangement will continue.

11.3 *Seniors Camrose*

John Neville reported that little enthusiasm had been expressed by the other Home Unions for running a Seniors Camrose, largely on the basis that the sponsorship offered would not cover the cost of hosting the event. Rather than turn down much-needed sponsorship, it was suggested that England might run a prestigious Seniors Invitation Teams event on an annual basis. It was agreed that the matter would be discussed with Max Bavin, and if considered feasible would be put to the EBU Tournament Committee.

11.4 Recent Camrose Series

The Chairman of the English Selection Committee had been made aware that a member of the English party had been less than charming in making his dissatisfaction with the Camrose format known. Whilst the case was non-proven, there was a clear message that such behaviour is totally unacceptable. Graham Jepson stated that any official or player not carrying out his function properly should not be selected again.

12 WBF & EBL MATTERS

David Harris had nothing to report. It was agreed that Mr Harris would be the official English representative at the Celebration Dinner during the European Championships in Warsaw.

13 WEBSITE

The number of hits on the website was reported, and changes had been made to the website. However much remained to be done, particularly improving communication with the Counties.

14 STAFFING MATTERS

The Chairman was joined by the Board in expressing his gratitude and best wishes to Nick Doe, who was leaving the Union on 11th May to return to the Law. Clare Smith had left in April.

Some concern was expressed about the Union's current retirement policy, and it was agreed that a review would be undertaken on an annual basis, taking into account possible changes in working practice.

15 DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that the meeting on 12th July would be held at McAlpines, 1st floor, 40 Bernard Street, London, when a revised date would be fixed for the September meeting.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16.1 Jeff Morris said that no progress had been made in regard to future participation in international university bridge, but BUSA would be asked to approve a British Bridge Team playing in the World Universities Championship in China in 2006.

16.2 Jeff Morris reported that he had attended the recent Annual Conference of the Central Council for Physical Recreation, and had been pleased to note that a passing reference had been made to bridge in the Chairman's opening speech. He recommended that clubs be made aware of the possible benefits of registering with the Community Amateur Sports Scheme, and it would be a good idea to find out how many bridge clubs might register if they were allowed to.

(THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOARD MEETING)

The next Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday 12th July in London, commencing at 12.30 pm, at the McAlpine offices, 1st floor, 40 Bernard Street, London.

SCCBA CODE OF CONDUCT – “Best Behaviour”

The following is taken from the SCCBA website:

“Best Behaviour at Bridge

Bridge is an extremely enjoyable game. Courteous behaviour is an exceptionally important part of that enjoyment.

This guide serves as a brief reminder of how to behave at the bridge table. We are sure that all players naturally follow this code of conduct but there are times when concentration and pressure can take their toll and it is for these situations that we issue this as a reminder.

Greet others in a friendly manner prior to start of play on each round.

Be a good "host" or "guest" at the table.

Make your convention card readily available to your opponents and fill it out completely.

Make bridge enjoyable for yourself, partner and opponents.

Give credit when opponents make a good bid or play.

Take care of your personal grooming.

Ensure that your mobile phone is turned off.

Enjoy the company as well as the game.

Remember that it is rude to criticise your partner or opponents in public, to be less than polite at the table, to gloat over good results or object to a call for the tournament director or to dispute or argue about a director's ruling.

Please call the Director if you think you may have been affected by bad behaviour. You will be helping others as well as yourselves.
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As in all games that are governed by rules and regulations, bad behaviour will be penalised

If a player at the table behaves in an unacceptable manner, the director should be called immediately. Annoying behaviour, embarrassing remarks, or any other conduct which might interfere with the enjoyment of the game is specifically prohibited by Law 74A. Law 91A gives the director the authority to assess disciplinary penalties. This can include immediate disciplinary board penalties, and if a future violation is incurred at the same event, disqualification from future competition in that event. The guilty party or parties will be deemed not to have played in that event. No masterpoints will be awarded and no refunds received. Any further violations may result in a disciplinary hearing where the player(s) future participation in tournaments will be considered. A Best Behaviour Report Form shall be available for players to report incidents which occur away from the table; and for directors to document complaints and action taken.

..... enjoy your game!

With thanks to the ACBL for the work they have done in this area”.