



**MINUTES OF THE SHAREHOLDERS MEETING
HELD AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL, LONDON,
ON WEDNESDAY 5th MARCH 2008**

Present:	Peter Stocken	Chairman
	Sally Bugden	Vice Chairman
	Michael Hill	Treasurer
	Barry Capal	General Manager & Company Secretary
	John Carter	Board Member & HIOW Proxy
	Graham Jepson	Board Member & Yorkshire Shareholder
(Apologies)	Philip Mason	Board Member & Yorkshire Shareholder
	Jeff Morris	Board Member
	Alan Nelson	Board Member & Tournament Committee Chairman
	Malcolm Oliver	Board Member
	Martin Pool	Board Member, Laws & Ethics Committee Chairman
(Apologies)	Steve Eginton	Selection Committee Chairman
	Krys Kazmierczak	Club Liaison Officer
(Apologies)	Clive Owen	Youth Committee Chairman
	Sandra Claridge	Minute Taker & Oxford Shareholder
	Karen Durrell	Reception

County	Shareholders: Present	Apologies	Proxy	County	Shareholders: Present	Apologies	Proxy
Avon				Lincolnshire			
Bedfordshire	Mrs V Lawson			London	S Cochemé J Smith		
Berks & Bucks	T Garrett N Thompson			Manchester			
Cambs & Hunts				Merseyside & Cheshire	G Endicott		
Channel Islands	Mrs P Panter			Middlesex	K A R Drane Mrs J Feldman PN Rosen R Amey JG Faulkner		
Cornwall	J Booth			Norfolk			
Cumbria		PR Ford	Mrs S Landy	North East		MJ Baker	
Derbyshire				Northants		I Spoons	
Devon		T Treeby		Notts	Mrs J Burgess Mrs B Harris P Baxter		
Dorset				Oxford	J Dilworth (Attendee)	Mrs S Stuttard	
Essex	Mrs M Curtis I Moss			Somerset			
Gloucestershire	Mrs P Pearce			Staffs & Shrops	PD Hackett	J Withers	
Hants & IoW		Mrs M Gale		Suffolk	PB Bentley Mrs P Griffin H Marsen	MR Curtis	
Herefordshire				Surrey	PJ Bates		
Hertfordshire	BN Eddleston M Hancock	M W Minting		Sussex		Miss JB Simpson	PJ Bates
Isle of Man	Dr EF Slatcher			Warwicks	J Pyner C Lang		
Kent	BR Crack JM Lewis			Westmorland			
Lancashire	J Brelsford	A Cordery	Mrs J Wright	Wiltshire	P Green		
Leicestershire	RH Northage J Wilcox			Worcester		Mrs JA Skelton	DR Thomas
				Yorkshire	Mrs J Latham I Rodger	P Mason	T Bond

Opening the meeting the Chairman requested a minute's silence in memory of Raymond Brock and Margaret Hatch, who had contributed a great deal to bridge and to the English Bridge Union.

Apologies for absence

See page 1 for County information.

1 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 3rd October 2007

The minutes were signed as an accurate record.

Matters arising

University Challenge

The Chairman reported that the EBU team had fallen at the second fence in the "professionals" version of University Challenge, but would hope to enter a team next year.

2008 Laws of Bridge

The World Bridge Federation and the Portland Club had now resolved their difficulties over copyright. The EBU would be responsible for printing the Laws, and the small profit generated would be split between the Portland Club and the EBU.

The Portland Club would retain copyright within the UK.

Charitable Status

A presentation would be made at the Board Meeting on 6th March by a lawyer specialising in applications for charity status, detailing what steps the Union would be required to take to qualify. A decision would then have to be made as to whether to proceed with an application in autumn 2009.

Rolling elections

The Chairman said that the introduction of rolling elections for the Board would be deferred certainly until a conclusion had been reached on the Strategy Proposals, and it would probably be wise to wait until the likelihood of charity status had been established.

Liability Insurance

Noting that Directors' and Officers' Liability Insurance extended to ad hoc committees, Gerard Faulkner asked for confirmation that this included the Union's three standing committees. Barry Capal said it did.

Mind Sports Olympiad

Gerard Faulkner reported that the England U20 team had qualified for the 2008 Mind Sports Olympiad.

2 Chairman's progress report

The Chairman reported as follows:

- Since the AGM much time and effort had been put into the club consultation process in preparation for producing the final Strategy Proposals document.
- The Union's *English Bridge* contract with Blue2 had been satisfactorily renegotiated.
- The Union was in the process of setting up a partnership with a leading holiday provider.
- A meeting had been held to discuss a possible pre-pilot TV programme involving bridge, along the lines of Countdown, to be shown on a digital channel. It was anticipated that production costs would be limited.
- The Youth Committee had received a small amount of sponsorship for training programmes, and would seek to attract further funding to ensure that their initiatives remained within budget.
- A donation of £60K over three years had been offered for a worthwhile bridge project for 7-11 year olds, which would be acceptable to the donor, and was conditional upon the continuation of the project at the end of the three years. The Youth Committee was exploring several ideas but Clive Owen, Chairman of the Youth Committee, would welcome any further suggestions.
- Terms of Reference for the Youth Committee had been drawn up and would be submitted to the Board for its approval.

3 Update on Strategy Proposals

Sally Bugden thanked all those who had assisted with the club survey, especially Sandra Landy, who had given valuable help with the documentation.

Every County Secretary had been requested to circulate a letter and simple questionnaire to their clubs, with a response deadline of 21st December. Responses were still being received, and the survey had enabled the Membership Development Action Group (MDAG) to formulate final proposals which would be discussed at the Board meeting on 6th March.

Sally reported that of the 630 responses received, approximately 60% of the clubs indicated that they would remain affiliated, 20% would not, and the remaining 20% were awaiting the final proposals. Prior to circulation of the final proposals document to clubs, County Chairmen, County Secretaries and Membership Secretaries and Shareholders by the beginning of April, every county would receive the data on its own clubs. The proposals would not be published in *English Bridge*, but information would be provided on how to access the document online, and it would be sent out by post, on request. Roger Amey congratulated the group on achieving its deadlines a month before the published date.

The Chairman confirmed that there was no necessity to make constitutional changes at the Extraordinary General Meeting, but a decision must be taken on whether or not to proceed with the Pay-to-Pay proposal. Proxy votes would be accepted.

The final document would explain the Bye-law changes that would be necessary in October 2009 for which a simple majority would be required. Brian Crack pointed out that approval of the Pay-to-Pay scheme and adoption of the necessary constitutional changes went hand in hand, i.e. if the Bye-law changes were not approved in October 2009 a great deal of money would have been wasted.

Gerard Faulkner said that if the implementation of the Pay-to-Pay proposals went according to plan, the increased membership of the Union would ultimately have serious implications for the voting rights of the Counties. To alter these would require changes to the Articles of Association and this required a majority of 75%

Michael Hill said that MDAG had sought to assess the risks of varying numbers adopting the scheme, and an explanation of how the final figure had been arrived at would be included in the document, as would the risk factor and contingency plans for short-term cash flow difficulties. There was concern about disaffiliation and the need to target unaffiliated clubs, and any help that Counties could offer in dispelling doubts and increasing trust in the Union's plans would be appreciated. To this end the Club Liaison Officer would be happy to discuss the scheme with any clubs who felt that a visit would be beneficial.

With regard to contractual arrangements with clubs, it was confirmed that there would be the right for either side to terminate the contract, with notice.

Closing the debate, the Chairman thanked MDAG for the work they had undertaken over the last 18 months to determine a successful financial strategy and a stable future for the Union. The Board would continue to address a number of ways to streamline the organisation, but the status quo, in his opinion, was not an option.

4 Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported a projected surplus for the year of around £90K, which was very encouraging. This was largely accounted for by continued streamlining of the organisation, pruning of overheads, and more favourable interest-bearing short-term accounts which would generate around £10K p.a. on an ongoing basis.

Questioned as to why there was a need for an increase of 50p in the membership subscription, the Treasurer pointed out that the Union had variable costs on a 5-year cycle, and that he was not entirely happy with the level of reserves which needed to be built up to cater for a number of eventualities. The Chairman concurred, and believed that small annual increments were preferable to more substantial increases on an infrequent basis.

5 Minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors on 23rd October and 17th January

Presenting the minutes the Chairman announced that with regret Philip Mason had resigned from the Board for personal reasons. Peter thanked Philip for his valuable contribution over the last 12½ years. The Board had voted to co-opt Andrew Petrie, and Malcolm Oliver had agreed to take Philip's place as the Union's delegate to Bridge Great Britain.

Minutes of 23rd October 2007

Personal Expenses & Allowances, Fees & Charges

Gerard Faulkner pointed out that the revised rates coming into force on 1st April had not been appended to the minutes, and requested that they be circulated to all members of standing committees.

Trust Fund

Gerard Faulkner noted that details of the Trust Fund had not been published in *English Bridge*. Sally Bugden said that this would be rectified, and that donations to the Trust would be most welcome.

Disciplinary matters

Gerard Faulkner expressed concern that the Honorary Counsel appeared to be sanctioning changes to the Bye-laws without formal notification. The Chairman agreed to seek clarification on this point. He noted that previous changes to the Bye-laws had been less than satisfactory, and agreed that the document should be “tidied up” as soon as practicable.

Sponsorship

The Chairman confirmed that the sponsor referred to in item 1 of the minutes was in fact a holiday company.

Minutes of 17th January 2008

Procedures Manual

The Chairman said that the Procedures Manual would be available to anyone who requested a copy.

Disciplinary Matters

Grattan Endicott questioned whether it would be legal for EBU Tournament Directors to impose a scale of disciplinary points. In response, Gerard Faulkner said that the matter had been raised at a Laws & Ethics Committee meeting, but that the matter had not been the subject of a full discussion.

English Bridge

In answer to a suggestion from P Bates (Sussex) that all publications, where possible, should be reduced to A5 to take advantage of savings in postage, Sally Bugden said that reducing the size of *English Bridge* to A5 had been considered, but there had been a saving of approximately £15K (*Chairman's note: according to John Neville's treasurer's statement appended to the 2006/07 accounts it was actually nearer to £25K*) under the new postal arrangements, and the Editorial Board would need to undertake market research before taking such a decision for the future.

Treasurer's Report

N Thompson (Berks & Bucks) requested clear accountability and better reporting in terms of budgets. The Treasurer said that there would be a detailed budget available for the June meeting, and the annual accounts for last year had been published on the EBU website with individual components for income and expenditure, together with

allocation of overheads. The latter would be reviewed as a priority to give a truer picture of cost areas.

The General Manager said budgeting was very important, but also difficult. Max Bavin developed the budgets with great accuracy, and the Board was not only continuing to work to make budgets more achievable, but it was also looking to make more information available that was easily comprehensible.

The Treasurer confirmed that management accounts had been published with specific costs for each department, and ongoing operational costs would be subject to continued review. As a non-profit making organisation the costs of the building, as a company asset, were not apportioned. There was general agreement that all areas should be cost-effective.

6 Minutes of the Laws & Ethics Committee meetings on 18th October, 17th December and 11th February

Minutes of 18th October

Disciplinary Matters

Janet Latham pointed out that despite a considerable number of disciplinary matters being listed in the minutes, no useful information had been provided. Martin Pool said that details on cases were “sub judice” unless published following a hearing. The Honorary Counsel’s advice was that in the case of a successful prosecution, names and details **must** now be published, and it was hoped that this would reduce the number of incidents to be investigated. Gerard Faulkner stressed that the law should be followed to the letter, and that there should be no breach of natural justice by e.g. changing the procedures of a hearing without proper notice.

Acknowledging that there was generally a considerable delay in proceeding to a Hearing, Martin Pool said that everything possible was done to speed up the process, within the constraints of the law. He pointed out that the delays were almost invariably caused by the tardiness of replies from those involved.

Minutes of 17th December

Psyche Records

Paul Hackett asked about the procedure for compiling psyche records. The General Manager said that records were not computerised and the Union was under no obligation to make them available, though a spreadsheet could be produced. Martin Pool said that records were compiled to gather information on frequency of psyching by a particular partnership.

New Laws

Martin Pool reported that a number of options had been included in the new Laws which come into effect in England on 1st August, including:

- Taking advantage of the opportunity for a player to examine an opponent’s convention card at any time, and
- Allowing defenders to ask if their partner has run out of a particular suit.

Minutes of 11th February

Alerting of doubles

Martin Pool said that no decision had yet been taken on the alerting of doubles, and further research was being undertaken.

TD Training

Max Bavin would be organising a programme of training for all levels of Tournament Directors on the implications of the new Laws.

Peter Stocken said that the introduction of a Conduct Committee was being considered, which would separate the functions of disciplinary and technical.

Sandra Landy suggested that it would be beneficial to the Shareholders to have the option of being provided with a summary of L&E decisions, rather than full minutes. This received support via a straw poll, and would be considered by the Board.

7 **Minutes of the meetings of the Selection Committee on 7th November and 21st February**

Presenting the minutes, Gerard Faulkner reported that the following selections had been made at the February meeting:

2008 European Championships

Open team: John Armstrong & John Holland
 Paul Hackett & Tony Waterlow
 Jason & Justin Hackett
 Reserves: David Gold & Tom Townsend
 Coach: David Burn
 NPC: to be appointed

Women's team:

The committee has formed a squad comprising the following four pairs, from which the team would be selected:

 Heather Dhondy & Nevena Senior
 Anne Rosen & Catherine Draper
 Sarah Teshome & Catherine Jagger
 Susan Stockdale & Fiona Brown
 NPC: Alan Mould
 Coach: to be appointed

Lady Milne Trophy:

 Catherine Draper & Anne Rosen
 Audrey Hartley & Stefanie Rohan
 Sarah Teshome & Catherine Jagger
 Reserves: Heather Dhondy & Nevena Senior
 NPC: Alan Mould

Seniors Camrose: Oxford 30th May – 1st June

Two teams captained by Paul Hackett and Richard Palmer would play in the final weekend of the trials on 29th & 30th March.

Junior events

England won the Junior Camrose Trophy, narrowly defeating Scotland, and lost the Peggy Bayer Trophy by a small margin to Scotland.

Premier League

The Premier League had been reintroduced from September 2008. Sixteen teams, including one Welsh team had applied, and were currently being polled on format options for the first year. The League will determine selection of the two teams to compete in the 2009 Camrose Trophy. Thereafter there will be two divisions on a promotion/relegation basis.

U28 Trial

Six pairs had applied for the Trial for the Mind Sports Olympiad in Beijing in October.

Channel Trophy

It was confirmed that the Channel Trophy between England, Belgium, France and the Netherlands was being hosted in England in December, and it was likely to comprise U25, U20, and U25 women's teams.

Sandra Landy said that the U25 Women's squad was successful and ongoing, and though there were geographical problems, they were managing to play a significant amount of bridge online.

University Championship

Michael Hill outlined the Board's rationale on hosting international championships, i.e. whilst it would be happy to help facilitate the staging of an event, it did not believe that it would be perceived by the membership to be the best use of the Union's funds.

Bridgebase Online

Sandra Landy reported that EBU Trials and all Home Internationals are now covered by Bridgebase Online which is a free service advertised on the EBU website.

8 Minutes of the meetings of the Tournament Committee on 13th December and 4th March

Alan Nelson reported on recent decisions, as follows:

Blackpool Easter Festival

The Blackpool Easter Festival had been in continuous decline, and unless it was feasible to move next year to either Harrogate or Buxton, possibly on a joint venture basis, the tournament would be discontinued.

National Swiss Teams

A steady decline had resulted in 72 teams this year. It had been agreed to continue the competition and attempt to improve the level of entries by adding some hospitality, and

increasing publicity. If entries fell below 70 teams, a decision would be taken in regard to 2010.

Golfprint Trophy

The Golfprint Trophy had been cancelled due to a poor level of entry.

Ranked Masters

A questionnaire had revealed that 96% of entrants preferred prize vouchers to wine. In light of the poor attendance this year, the committee had decided to introduce proportional green points per round to encourage players to attend who feel that they have no prospect of winning ranking green points. The qualification for each category would be changed to allow players to play in one category above their ranking.

National Newcomers Pairs

The National Newcomers Pairs had been suspended for one year, and would be re-launched in 2010 on a format to be agreed.

A number of counties were running Newcomers events successfully, and what was needed was an alternative strategy to improve promotion and publicity, and better communication with the counties.

Barry Capal agreed that newcomers must be encouraged, and said that the Really Easy Weekend in April and the Really Easy Congress in Brighton had both proved popular and would be repeated. Gill Pain hosts a Really Easy website to engender interest at the lower end of the market, and had contacted the counties seeking information.

Paul Hackett suggested the introduction of special events to welcome new Pay-to-Play members. Alan said that this would be on the agenda for a future meeting.

Seniors Congresses

The Harrogate and Eastbourne Seniors Congresses would be combined into one event to be held at the 4-star Metropole Hotel in Birmingham.

Alan conceded that some of the changes would not be popular, but it was recognised that the Tournament Committee's responsibility was to make a significant contribution to EBU costs in addition to providing a good level of service to the membership. There was a general feeling that the decline was caused in part by holding too many events, and there would be an ongoing strategy review over the current year to establish the criteria for what constitutes a successful tournament. Robert Northage supported the cull of unsuccessful events, and stressed that note should be taken of the extremely crowded calendar.

Bracketed Teams

The Tournament Committee would seek to find an appropriate event to reintroduce bracketed teams.

Hinckley Paramount Hotel

Roger Amey said that the booking system at the hotel was still chaotic, and suggested that mealtimes at the Tollemache should be staggered.

Rhodes Congress

Janet Latham paid tribute to the tournament directors and reception team at Rhodes for a very enjoyable and well-run congress.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 4th June at 12.30 pm
Imperial Hotel, London