
WORTHING BRIDGE CLUB

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 16th March 2024 at 10.00am

at Byron Road

DRAFT MINUTES

Present at Byron Road: Ernie Rivett, Eileen Perrigo, Alexa Baxter, Nigel Utting, Debbie Hildick-Smith, Robert Pepper, Judy-Ann Cheevers, Christine Constable, Lynda Smith, Colin Smith, Laurence Chiswell, Carol Pembrey, Tilley Hennings, Pat Holmes, Roger Geach, Avril Strong, John Hardy, Sabina Surrey, Moira Corbett, Jan Adams, Brenda Wilcox, Maureen Winn, Penny Mitchell, Carol Duckett, Pat Child, Angela Neale, Matthew Potter, Denise Ireland, Alice Louis, Sue Eastwick, Karin Barry, Annie Harris, Pat Farrell, Dorothy Way, Linda Turley, Peter Varley.

Members sadly deceased since last years' AGM: Doris Strauss – Honorary Member, Roland Smith, Keith Baker (member to end of 2015), Roger Pyart, Jasmine Whiteway (member to end 2018), Joy Soar and Bernie Dalzell.

1. Fire Procedures

- a. After a recent fire risk assessment Ernie gave the meeting a demonstration and instructions for using the fire alarm and extinguishers.
- b. ER will label the 2 types of extinguishers clearly.
- c. The club will review the fire notices and purchase a Hi-Viz jacket for the director to wear in case of fire.

2. Opening remarks and apologies for absence were received from: Dick Wheeler, Siobhan and Chris Mullins, Mike Percik, David Hughes, Jan Summers, Sue Pettit, Alan Ball, Doreen Lane, Anne Goldson, Neil Fairbairn, Pam Graves, Sally Tarr, Jenny Lochen, Rob Wanders, Annamarie Beresford, Ann Mackown, Karen Jackson, Brenda Wilcox, David Underhill, Pamela Duffy, Janet Rainer, Doreen Lane, Amanda Clark, Rosemary Tuddenham, Anne Goldsworthy, Barbara and Ian Gordon, Dawn Sullings, Sandy and Chris Reimoser, Ann Button, Jean Meneely, Cathy Hall, Gill Skelton, Sue Simpson, Val Conway, Peter Nursten.

3. Approval of Minutes from AGM on 11th March 2023.

The 2023 minutes were approved and signed off by Ernie Rivett.

4. There were no Matters Arising

5. Chairman's Review for 2023/24

ER started by going back to where we were 12yrs ago and will review briefly the progress since then.

What we have done as a club over these years is to turn our club into somewhere people want to come and play bridge. How can I justify that statement?

The club was getting negative comments and the atmosphere within the club was not the best and some of those comments were justified.

Visitors have now remarked about the friendly and pleasant atmosphere when in the club. This is reflected on new members from other clubs east of Worthing. In addition, members chat and laugh between sets of boards much to the discomfort of directors. The number of members may have reduced but this is mainly due to circumstances outside our control.

A lot of work has been carried out to the building both inside and out. Safety issues constantly reviewed and updated as required. Ongoing contracts are monitored to ensure we get best value for money.

Of course, the pandemic and lockdown were a major factor and challenge in recent years and I am proud of the way the club got through this period of disruption. This was achieved for two main reasons

1. We identified financial loans available to us to meet the unavoidable overheads
2. The committee did not sit back and wait for things to reopen. We continued meeting by zoom during lockdown and put in place a plan which enabled us to reopen at the earliest possible time. This plan meant we met government guidelines and kept members safe.

These achievements are not down to one person but to everyone who is a member of the club. You may not be on the committee but coming here to play supports the club's activities.

One other vital part of the club which has blossomed over these years is the teaching classes. Lynda recently pointed out to the committee that our conversion rate from student to full membership is better than the average quoted by the EBU.

Moving on once again I would like to thank our committee and others for all the hard work put in throughout the last year. Without that help we would not have a very active club. My personal thanks to Lynda and Judy-Ann, they are stepping down this year, for the contributions on the committee.

It is pleasing to report that the number of members has held up compared with last year and my thanks goes to Colin encouraging his students to become members. Also, we have had a number of people join that used to play at the Avenue, again very encouraging. As I have already said they and others have been positive about the atmosphere and friendly nature of WBC.

Our average numbers at sessions have improved slightly and hopefully this will continue.

Financial

Alexa of course will go into the numbers in more detail.

This is because our financial position is monitored constantly. We have also been lucky to receive two legacies from members who passed away recently. Our savings balance is now at an all-time high.

The 60's club has been a real benefit to the finances and the surplus as hoped for covered the club's energy bill for 2023. Hence it replaced the government grants we had received in previous years. Our 3yr contract runs out at the end of September and asking around energy companies now would indicate that we could see an increase from £2,700 annually to over £3,000 from that date.

The committee decided that as things stand, we would leave table money and annual subscriptions as they were and review the situation, as usual, at the end of the year. How long we can do this only time will tell.

Roger Pyart passed away and he left the club a legacy of £10,000 of which he asked for a trophy in his name to be obtained and played for. We will be awarding it to the winner of the Stratified pairs on the Wednesday afternoon within our Spring Festival.

Our biggest concern during the year was the duplimator which with efforts from a number of people we got the troublesome one replaced and at the same time managed to get its original cost refunded which covered about 90% of the new one.

Sessions/competitions

The Spring Festival was really well supported which made it a great success especially the high number of entries to the team event, hopefully the same this year.

The Hills again proved popular with members which made it worthwhile holding. We did make a loss and we are looking into ways to reduce the cost of the lunch for this year. We did see entries from higher ranked players this time and we had one team from Surrey.

Hills Competition: we have already booked the venue and caterers on Sunday November 24th.

Club sessions met expectations and they remain the main source of regular club income.

While speaking about club sessions I did hear several comments about the movements being used. I can assure you the directors are doing their best to make each session fair but the increase in the number of times they are confronted with a half table does not make their task easy. Those comments have been noted. Howell movements cannot always be used as often there are more than one pair that need to sit.

Maintenance

Ongoing as with any old building but we have no choice. The main expense has been new windows upstairs, new thermostats, new wall fans and decoration of the outside again. This year we were due a fire risk assessment and the electrical systems had their 5yr check which meant a new fuse box to comply with current regulations.

Future

Maintain what we have and be open to improvements when presented to us. How do you as members see the club in the coming years?

Thank you and any comments thoughts on what I have said would be welcome.

Ernie Rivett

The Chairman then invited comments and questions.

Sabina Surrey asked if solar panels had been considered. It will be investigated.

ER

6. Honorary Treasurer's Report for 2023/24

AB started by reviewing the annual accounts; copies were available at the meeting.

The number of tables is gradually increasing, though it is not back to pre-lockdown levels. During the year there were 1,934 tables, from face-to-face sessions, compared to 1,799 during 2022. The online sessions were cancelled from April as they were often having less than 2 tables, and when asked if they were wanted very few people supported them. The face-to-face sessions averaged 5.77 tables per session in 2023, compared to an average of 5.43 in 2022. In 2024 the average has been 5.1 tables in January, 5.9 tables in February and 6.3 tables so far in March.

The direct income (table money, room hire, subscriptions) has increased slightly but so has the expenditure (the fees for use of the card reader, directors, host/prize vouchers given, P2P) so the net operating income is slightly down on last year.

However, the other income is much higher. Most of this is due to a very generous legacy from Roger Pyart of £10,000 and the contribution of £2,713 from the 60s club in September at the end of its first year. We opened a Business Savings Account with Nationwide in January 2023 and put an initial £20,000 into it, and then added Roger's legacy so we are now receiving reasonable amounts of interest each month. As you probably know, this money is known as 'the roof fund' and is to provide a reserve to cover any large repair costs, such as having to provide a new roof for the building.

You will see that the overheads have increased by nearly £10,000. Although costs have risen generally, most of this was on 'one-off' expenses. We had the outside painted, some of the windows replaced, and the wall fans in the downstairs room were serviced/ replaced to improve ventilation. We also bought a new duplimator machine, and a new computer and printer.

We made a loss on the Hills Trophy of over £400, but we feel it is important to keep this event going. We are looking at changing the way we provide the catering for this event to try to keep the costs down without having to increase the entry fee too much.

A lot of members paid their 2024 annual subscriptions in December and these are shown as a current liability. £686 was raised during December by donations, the tombola and the book sale. This amount has been distributed between three charities - Worthing Food Foundation, Worthing Soup Kitchen and Wadars. It was decided to support local charities rather than national ones.

The 60s Club ended its first year in August and, as I have said, the surplus was given to the club and is shown under other income. A new year was started in September and the current balance is

shown as an outstanding liability in the accounts, as the club bank account is used to receive the monies and pay prizes/expenses. In August, the surplus will again be transferred to the club.

You may have noticed that the building valuation has increased a lot. This is because it is the sum insured for the building. The insurers suggested we have a desktop valuation for the rebuilding cost, which we did, and this higher figure is the result. It is not necessarily the market value of the club if it was sold.

We have also this month received a legacy from Doris Strauss of £5,000, and £4,000 of this has been put into the Business Savings account. The balance has been retained in the current account to cover the cost of a new fuse box. We are required to do an Electrical Inspection every five years, our insurance will not be valid if we don't, and the latest one showed that the old fuse box was no longer compliant, so it had to be replaced.

At the moment I see no need for subscriptions or table money to increase but this will, of course, be kept under review.

Alexa Baxter

Comments on the Treasurer's Report

Pat Holmes asked if our building was available for hiring out. AB stated that we have done so occasionally to the High Salvington bridge club when their premises are unavailable, but using it for purposes other than bridge may have insurance implications and certainly an officer of WBC would need to present.

7. The Honorary Treasurer's Report and audited accounts were adopted unanimously.

8. Appointment of Independent Auditor

Angela Neale was reappointed Independent Auditor.

9. Election of Officers

Nominations for the Committee were as follows:

Chair - Ernie Rivett

Vice-Chair – Eileen Perrigo

Honorary Secretary – Debbie Hildick-Smith

Honorary Treasurer – Alexa Baxter

Committee members: Robert E Pepper

Carol Pembrey

Nigel Utting

Chris Constable

All were elected unanimously

10. Election of Conduct Committee Chairman

Valerie Benson was elected unanimously.

11. Any other business

- a) Pat Holmes asked why the Directors sit with their back to play as this can occasionally mean a delay when the tables have completed or one table is lagging. To answer, the Directors said they watch the monitor from the seat on Table 1 and can see which boards are outstanding so they know the state of play in the room.
- b) Debbie HS said the committee was looking at registering on a website called www.easyfundraising.org.uk. The suggestion has come from David Hughes as a fund-raising idea for WBC. It allows members who sign up to make an automatic donation through using their usual websites for online shopping at no cost to themselves. Tilly Hennings and Roger Geach both already use it and confirmed it is easy and has no impact on any other loyalty schemes. Once the details are discussed and agreed, further details will be sent to members.

DHS

- c) Pat Holmes suggested that to boost play there was a draw for a team's competition giving players at all levels a chance to play a competition at no risk to their grades and encourage less experienced players into teams play. This would be advertised as a 'fun' day like a previously used Pro-Am format. It was agreed that the idea would be investigated further as timings need to be agreed.

ER

- d) Tilly Hennings suggested the Winter Teams should be better advertised as there were only 4 teams last season meaning there were only 3 matches. NU to investigate a Home and Away scenario.

NU

- e) ER asked for nominations for Honorary Members. There have not been any proposals for a few years and previously has usually been raised by a Committee member but we want the whole membership to be involved. To propose a member, you will need a Proposal with a proposer and seconder. This should be submitted to the Club Secretary in writing. DHS will then chair a sub-committee composed of other Honorary Members to make the decision.

- f) Laurence Chiswell asked about the Thursday afternoon session. The numbers attending currently are not sustainable. It was originally a feeder session from Colin's groups as they reached Year 2, Term 2 and onwards. Lynda Smith explained that the fewer numbers was due to the disruption to teaching experienced during Covid and that 'normal service' will resume over the next few months. Other issues were discussed: slower play, grade restrictions and whether there is still a clear pathway to duplicate play. It was suggested we ask those who no longer come why they stopped. The Committee agreed to discuss further.

ER

The meeting concluded at 11.35am.

The next AGM will be on Saturday 15th March 2025 at 10.00am

Presentation of Trophies

The list of 2023 winners appear on the website.