**Reports from Officers for November 2020 MCBA Council Meeting**

**Chair (Irene Davies)**

Thanks again to the Executive and Online Sub-Committee for all their hard work in ensuring bridge continues and thrives in these hard times. All clubs in MCBA, apart from Prestbury, have some online presence. We are organising online versions of all our usual events and the league, as well as regular County matches, Charity Pairs once a month and weekly duplicate sessions. (On line sub committee report will go into more detail on this)

The Membership sub-committee seems to have morphed into a teachers sub-committee. We had 61 responses to our publicity for new learners lessons. Teachers who previously taught face to face have been unskilled so they can teach online. 5 new bridge beginners classes have begun as a result. The beginners lessons at Altrincham and Trafford which were halted by Covid have now been restarted online. Going forward we plan another publicity push in the New Year and are looking to hold teachers meetings on Zoom to share ideas and hopefully solve problems.

Manchester Bridge Club have written to the Executive to complain about the County running duplicate sessions. We have responded to MBC on this matter and our position is that while there is a demand from the membership for these sessions we will continue to run them. No other MCBA club has raised this issue as a problem.

**Secretary (Alan Mould)**

My main work until the end of July was preparing for the online AGM. I think this went as well as could be expected and it was interesting to note that attendance was almost identical to previous F2F AGMS (though some of the attendees were different). It will be interesting what we do in the future – a combination of live and online AGM is not ridiculous for example.

Since the AGM, The Executive has found it necessary meet regularly (three times so far) to discuss a variety of items such as our online presence and how to run county events given the continuous impediments of the pandemic. Other than that, there have been the usual documents from the EBU, the latest set being all the AGM papers, and the Executive has met to decide upon its position on various matters on which to mandate the shareholders.

Regrettably we have had a formal complaint about one of our members submitted to the county, and so in line with the MCBA Constitution I formed a Conduct Committee. The Committee investigated the complaint and concluded that no action was necessary, and all parties were informed. The matter is thus closed.

**Treasurer (Joy Blakey)**

Whilst Covid-19 continues to blight everyday life, on-line bridge has flourished. Consequently the various charities we have supported over the period with our monthly ‘Wednesday Charity Day’ have benefitted in excess of £7,000. The Charities we have supported are St. Ann’s Hospice, Francis House Children’s Hospice, Manchester Mind, The Seashell Trust, Centrepoint Manchester, Nicky Alliance Day Centre and The Neuromuscular Centre in Winsford. All recipients have been hugely grateful for the money they have received and we hope to continue this effort throughout the Winter. The next three recipients will be TCF (The Compassionate Friends), Prevent – the Breast Cancer Charity at the Nightingale Centre, Wythenshawe Hospital followed by Prostate Cancer UK. Directors kindly donate their time on the day and ALL money received goes to the Charity.

The Online League was free for the first two seasons and the County subsidised the UMS. There is now a charge of £16 per team which equates to less than £1 per game per person per season.

The Green Pointed online Swiss Pairs event (which was held to replace the July GP Teams) was a great success and made a profit of approximately £200 – exact figures are not yet known because it takes a couple of months for BBO/EBU to make their calculations and make payment to the County.

The online duplicate sessions organised by the County just about ‘break-even’ financially – we pay for the Directors plus fees to BBO and UMS to the EBU. We also have to pay if Robots are needed.

I can confirm that all payments have been correctly made to date, that all income is correctly monitored and that balances in the Current Account and the Building Society Account remain healthily in credit.

**League Secretary (Adam Wiseberg)**

As stated in the last report (to the AGM) The League was suspended on 15th March due to the perceived risks from Covid-19. A number of teams still had outstanding matches to play. Teams were offered the chance to play their matches online but almost none agreed to do so. At the AGM a decision was taken to abandon the league and to determine the outcome of the divisions using the Mould formula (modified). The results can be seen on both the Manchester Bridge website (manchesterbridge.org.uk) and the EBU website.

Division winners were:

* Div 1 St Titus
* Div 2 Hindsight Convention
* Div 3 Silver & Black
* Div 4 Four Dummies
* Div 5 Enigmas
* Div 6 Acolytes
* Div 7a Wakfelds
* Div 7b Mudlarks

After the AGM a decision was taken to run an online League for the time being. I managed to persuade 42 teams to enter and that enable me to create 7 divisions of 6 teams each. The league runs over a five week period with all team playing one match per week against each of the other teams. At the end of a season there is one promotion and one relegation from each division. There is a week with no matches and then the next season begins. Several teams have dropped out over the three season we have run but I have managed to replace each of them We are now into season 4 and the format appears to be popular with the participants. I expect that we will continue with this until such time that F2F is deemed safe to resume. Matches in Season 1 were over 14 boards but in subsequent season they have been over 16 boards.

Hopefully we may be able to resume Face to Face bridge by September and set a new league commencing on the usual date.

**Higson Cup Secretary (Adam Wiseberg)**

As stated in the last report (to the AGM) The cup competition was suspended on 15th March due to the perceived risks from Covid-19. 12 teams were due to play round 3. By 15th March three matches had been played. All eligible losing teams from round 1 of the cup went into the round 1 of the plate and those teams who were knocked out in round 2 of the cup went into round 2 of the plate if eligible. Of the 8 matches due to be played in round 2 only one had been played by 15th March The Executive decided in October that, as no F2F bridge was likely in the near future, both cup competitions should be resumed online with a final to be played online on 25th April 2021. All teams have until 31st March to play their remaining matches online. The Cup final will be contested between 6 teams over 50 boards – 5 matches of 10 boards. All teams will be handicapped according to their combined NGS. The plate final will be contested between 8 teams, probably playing a total of 48 boards. Once the final has taken place, I will assess whether it is feasible to run another online Higson Cup competition between April and September.

Hopefully we may be able to resume Face to Face bridge by then.

**Goldstone Trophy Secretary (Roger Hopton)**

There has been some suggestion to run the competition and allow 2 entries into the Pachabo if allowed in 2021. Personally, I don't see that as a sensible option as to be honest the winners are usually one of 2 teams.

My suggestion therefore is to run the competition through 2021 completing by year end and the winners playing in the Pachabo in 2022

I assume the entry will be free as usual.

We usually have a maximum of 5 rounds to play, my proposal is to have entries sorted to start 1st March, and allow 2 months per round, which will complete by year end. The start date should allow this year's competition to be completed first, the second semi-final should be completed by Xmas and the Final in Jan/Feb 21. I suggest for the final when the date is set, shall we announce it and allow on-line kibitzing as the final usually allows kibitzing at a prepaid venue.

Obviously, the competition will be on-line, and the teams can choose to play on Real Bridge (Adam I assume teams could set up themselves?) or BBO by agreement. Not everyone has a PC with camera and microphone and good enough wifi for Real Bridge, so we need to be flexible in our approach.

We will need to provide a guide on how to set up matches.

Usually the format is 24 boards and 32 after the first 2 rounds. I feel playing 32 boards online is an awful lot to play, and so propose for online bridge keeping it to just 24 boards matches. 2 x 12 swapping at half time.

An good alternative suggested by Adam was to have a date set for each round where teams could play on-line with pre-dealt boards on Real Bridge and be able to compare their results with others. My worry with this suggestion is if people can start going on holiday again particularly as we have a vaccine possibility now, this could be problematic.

**Membership Secretary (Alan Mould)**

I was appointed MCBA Membership Secretary at the AGM following Karen Sandler stepping down from the post.

I am unconvinced that the membership data is terribly meaningful at the moment given the continued lockdown so that people are unable to play in clubs and have to play online. MCBA membership has also been artificially slightly increased due to Adam’s laudable insistence that anyone who plays in our lockdown league or plays in our online pairs events in any consistent manner has to join MCBA.

I give below the data from the EBU as of 4th August 2020 and as of 15th November 2020

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Member** | **Total**  **04/08/2020** | **Total**  **15/11/2020** |
| P2P | **1400** | **1405** |
| Direct members | **42** | **44** |
| Students  (People on the EBED register as learning bridge) | **21** | **21** |
| Total from spreadsheet | **1463** | **1470** |

So, as can be seen, there is almost no difference.

Dealing only with the data of 15th November, of the 1470 members, 1427 have primary allegiance to Manchester, and 43 have secondary allegiance. Of the 43 secondary all bar 3 are Pay to Play members, the remaining 3 being direct members who live way outside the county boundaries.

Under the EBED category the following are listed:

* 28 people listed as EBTA (ie teachers), all of which are Pay to Play bar 1.
* 21 people listed as “BFA Year 1” who are the same 21 listed in the student category. This is not surprising as this means they are on year 1 of a 2 year teaching programme.. All bar one have Trafford Bridge Club listed as club of primary allegiance and the remaining one has no club listed. This says to me that only Trafford BC enrol their learners as students under the EBED scheme, which I find rather odd.

All others are listed as “none” under EBED.

**Club Numbers**

I have given the MCBA primary clubs and numbers below. Clubs will obviously have their own records, but I thought people might be interested to see what the EBU records show. There are actually 51 bridge clubs listed as primary in the spreadsheet scattered all over the country. This will be the result of Adam enrolling people as members of MCBA when they play in our online events. I have thus ignored everything except the MCBA affiliated clubs and simply listed the numbers in them. This does mean of course that the total is NOT 1470 since all of the “other” clubs are missing. Again, I give the number as of 4th August and as of 15th November.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary Club** | **Number**  **04/08/2020** | **Number**  **15/11/2020** |
| Altrincham Bridge Club | **210** | **218** |
| Ashton and District Bridge Club | **105** | **107** |
| Besses O’Th’barn Bridge Club | **43** | **43** |
| Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme Bridge Centre\* | **-** | **119** |
| Bramhall Green Bridge Club | **60** | **48** |
| Bramhall Village Bridge Club\* | **52** | **-** |
| Cheadle Hulme Bridge Club\* | **95** | **-** |
| Manchester Bridge Club | **201** | **203** |
| Marple Duplicate Bridge Club | **61** | **66** |
| Prestbury Duplicate Bridge Club | **67** | **71** |
| Stretford Bridge Club | **74** | **75** |
| Trafford Bridge Club | **261** | **275** |
| Total | **1229** | **1225** |

\* Bramhall Village Bridge Club and Cheadle Hulme Bridge Club have merged to become Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme Bridge Centre. Hence the odd numbers. It is also possible some numbers have yet to be transferred on the EBU system.

In addition, we have 28 primary members listed as no club and 3 secondary members listed as no club. All bar one are direct members as you would expect and the remaining 1 is a student member. The other 13 direct members (44-31) are scattered amongst MCBA affiliated and other clubs.

Of the members who list a primary club, 291 also list a secondary club, sometimes several. Usually these are MCBA affiliated clubs, but not always, with clubs such as Bury Athenaeum or Preston featuring.

It is also worth noting that there are 17 members whose primary club is listed as Manchester University Bridge Club, though none of them are listed as students and all have D.O.B.s of 1994 or before….!!?!? Presumably they have just never changed primary club and the EBU has never noticed that the club no longer exists. I have contacted the EBU about this, who will close down the club as a playing club, but leave it on the emailing lists since apparently an entry happens for the Portland Bowl about every three years.

**Tournament Secretary (David Tilley)**

Nothing to report

**Congress Secretary (Irene Davies)**

We have cancelled our booking at the Marriot V & A for January 2021 at no cost to the County. The Congress will be held online on the 2/3rd January 2021. It will follow the original Congress format as much as possible including non-expert events.

**Match Secretary (Michael Byrne)**

The team for the Tollemache event has been selected and the players have responded affirmatively. This will take place on November 21st/22nd on Realbridge

* Catherine Draper – Andrew Woodcock
* John Holland - John Hassett
* Alan Mould - Rodney Lighton
* Michael Byrne (c) - Gary Hyett
* Tom Slater – Alec Smalley

County matches

Manchester has held two friendly matches against London and Devon. These have been well attended and enjoyed by some/all of the players.

The next match is planned for Nov 21/22 against Gloucestershire, the weekend of the Tollemache, and will thus not have an A team for either county.

There will be two further matches on 12th Dec (Suffolk) and 12th Jan (Essex/Suffolk).

**Green Point Secretary (Rhona Goldenfield)**

We held an on-line green pointed pairs on Oct 11th, 72 pairs and the winners were Tapan and Tony Pal. I sent out emails to all my contacts but other than that I did nothing. My thanks to .

Adam and the online committee for organising it.

I doubt if we will be able to hold the pairs in March F to F so hopefully we will run a virtual one again. Perhaps I am being pessimistic and if so I am sure a F to F one can be arranged at short notice.

**Chair of Selectors (Report by John Roberts – secretary of selectors)**

The functioning of the selection Committee was substantially affected this year by the sad death of Michael Newman, who was secretary to the committee, and also by the coronavirus pandemic. The committee would like to pay tribute to the many years of service that Michael gave to the MCBA Selection Committee. He will be sorely missed. Face to face meetings were abandoned at the start of the pandemic but were replaced by regular Zoom conference meetings and the use of frequent emails to deal with business. At the MCBA AGM on Wednesday 29th July held on-line via Zoom, Alan Mould announced his intention to stand down from the committee. The committee would like to record its thanks to Alan for his valued contribution over the years. This meant that the committee had lost both its chair and secretary and there were now two vacancies to fill. Adam Wiseberg, Roger Hopton and John Roberts indicated their willingness to stand again and were elected unopposed. Michael Byrne and Rhona Goldenfield agreed to stand for the two vacant positions and were also elected unopposed. The newly formed committee met for the first time after the AGM on 3rd August via Zoom and then again on 7th September, 18th October and 17th November

At its first (August) meeting Adam Wiseberg was elected as chair and John Roberts as Secretary. Both were unopposed. The current selection policy, which had been agreed at last year’s AGM, was briefly reviewed. It was agreed that this policy should continue for the foreseeable future. The subsequent meetings dealt with other selection issues

**Northern League**

A decision was taken by the Northern League organising committee that this event would not take place this year. So no selection decisions were required.

**Presidents Cup**

This event was to be run on-line on the BBO platform, and it was opened to a wider range of counties than usual. Twelve counties entered the event. Manchester (2 teams), Warwickshire, N Wales, Sussex, Hereford, Merseyside, Derbyshire (2 teams), Yorkshire, North East, Suffolk/Essex. The event was to be run as a weekly 8 board round robin (all play all) on Tuesdays over 11 weeks starting on Tue 23rd June. The committee had, prior to the AGM, made selections for the first 6 weeks. At its first meeting after the AGM it formally approved selections for weeks 7 and 8, which had provisionally been agreed by email. Selections for the final three matches in weeks 9-11 were also made and the following were agreed :

*Blue Team (A Team) - Weeks 9-11*

Draper/Woodcock, Byrne/Hyett, Mould/Holland, Smalley/Slater.

Reserves: Smalley/Barton, Currie/Lighton, Goldenfield/Burgess, Blakey/Blakey.

*Red Team (B team) Weeks 9-11*

Foster/Roberts, Parsons/Jones, Shalom/Kelsall, McMullen /Thomas

Reserves : Hopton/Fussell (Week 9)

Nelson/Nelson, Hopton/Fussell Foster/Roberts, McMullen/Thomas

Reserves : Shalom/Kelsall (Week 10)

Hart/Fielding, Green/Stell, Hide/Ward, Engler/Wiseberg. Reserves : Clarke/Murray (Week 11)

The event was reviewed at the Selection meeting of 7th Sept. Manchester fielded two teams. The first team (Blue) finished 6th and the second team (Red) finished 9th. This was a rather disappointing result considering the strength of the teams selected. There was no apparent reason for the under-performance other than that one or two players reported that they had not found the on-line environment to their liking.

The selected players mostly reported that they had enjoyed the competition. There had been a good deal of work involved in organisation of each evening, particularly in the duplimation of boards. The committee would like particularly to thank Joan Lewis for much of this work. The Committee also felt that the 11 week format was unnecessarily long.

**Derbyshire Match**

Discussions with Derbyshire on the annual match had proved to be impossibly difficult, and it was agreed therefore to abandon that fixture for this year and explore possible matches with other counties. Geographically remote counties such as Cornwall that Manchester does not often get the chance to play were suggested.

**Inter-County matches**

After some discussion and email exchange, it was agreed at the August selection meeting to try to arrange matches with London, Devon, Gloucestershire, Sussex and the combined counties of Suffolk and Essex. In consultation with these counties it was agreed that there would ideally be three pools of players A, B and C, but it was recognised that the smaller counties might not be able to field 3 teams. This required the committee to revise the Manchester pool list for these head to head matches so that there was only one A pool, one B pool, and one C pool. The committee reviewed the membership of the three pools and made appropriate decisions.

At the September selection meeting the following selections were made for the first two matches v London (26th Sept) and Devon (10th Oct). The match against London was to be 3 teams of 8 and the match against Devon was to be 3 teams of 4.

*London 26th Sept (3 teams of 8)*

A

Draper/Woodcock, Smalley/Slater, Byrne/Lighton, Barton/Klein.

Reserves : Byrne/Goldenfield and Nelson/Nelson

B

Morris/Shalom, Clark/Taylor, Green/Stell, Blakey/Blakey

Reserves : Hopton/Fussell and Thornton-Chan/Hodgson

C

Will and Sam Wakefield, Beckwith/Jones (Joyce), Tranter/Burnett, Thornton/Semp

Reserves : Mattinson/Lang

*Devon 10th Oct (3 teams of 4)*

A

Draper/Woodcock, Smalley/Barton.

B

Hopton/Fussell, Thornton-Chan/Hodgson. Reserves : Shalom/Wiseberg

C

Jones/Eastabrook, Dunkerley/Bray. Reserves : Browning Massey

The committee reviewed these matches at its October Meeting. London won the first match, with both A and B teams losing and the C team winning. The selectors considered that the Manchester teams had underperformed but that the results had been somewhat skewed by the substitution of a top international into the London C team just before half time. Manchester also lost to Devon, both A and B teams again losing and the C team winning. It was generally agreed that Manchester had again underperformed. The B team in particular had a poor day. The committee decided that in future matches they should try to field somewhat stronger B and C teams.

At the October meeting the committee also made selections for the next inter-county match against Gloucestershire which had been fixed for the same weekend as the Tollymache (Saturday 21st Nov). As Gloucestershire are also playing in the Tollymache it was agreed to have three teams in which the players were all below the strength of the Tollymache teams. There was some discussion about the naming of these teams to avoid confusion and for the purpose of selection the teams were designated as 1,2, and 3. The following selections were made :

*Team 1*

Neil Thomas and Roger Hopton, Joy and Irving Blakey, John Roberts and Peter Foster,

Kath and Alan Nelson. Reserves : None selected

*Team 2*

Raymond Semp and Rhona Goldenfield, John Stell and Max Sampson, Espen Gisvold and Janet Tolan, Sam Herman and David Saraboski. Reserves : Alan Tranter and Andy Burnett

*Team 3*

Paul Murray and Phil Taylor, Irene Davies and Karen Reissmann, Gordon Bickley and Ann Farquhar, Anne Thornton and Peter Green. Reserves : Stephen and Liz Halstead

Two further inter-county matches have also been agreed. One with Sussex on 12th Dec and the other with Suffolk/Essex on 16th Jan. A selection meeting was arranged in mid November to finalise selection for these matches.

**Tollemache**

Early in the summer no decision had been taken by the EBU about the Tollemache and it was thought unlikely that it would take place on-line. However, at the Selection meeting of 7th Sept it was revealed that the counties had been polled for their opinion about the Tollemache being played on-line and there had been fairly widespread support for it. A final decision was made during September that the event would take place on-line and be played on the Realbridge platform on the weekend of 21st/22nd Nov. At its October meeting the committee therefore selected the following five pairs :

Catherine Draper and Andrew Woodcock

John Holland and John Hassett

Alan Mould and Rodney Lighton

Michael Byrne and Gary Hyatt

Alec Smalley and Tom Slater

Captain : Michel Byrne

**Publicity Officer (Susan Triggs)**

No report to date.

**EBU Shareholders (Jeff Morris, Alan Mould, Alec Smalley)**

As the EBU AGM is 5 days before the Council meeting a verbal report will be given by the shareholders.

**Schools, Youth and Liaison Officer (Jeff Morris)**

Nothing to report.

**Webmaster (Rodney Lighton)**

The web site continues to attract a steady ~60 visitors per day despite the paucity of news. I have cancelled the Player of the Year competition for 2020-21 on the grounds that there will not be enough competitions to make a meaningful contest.Thanks to those who have contributed deals for the deal of the week feature.

**On-line Committee Report (Adam Wiseberg)**

Online activities were reported to the AGM.

Since then numbers in some of our events have fallen and, although we have introduced a Sunday evening duplicate which doesn’t clash with any of the clubs this has not yet proved popular. The online committee meets every fortnight on zoom and reviews our events and activities.

There have been suggestions from Manchester Bridge Club on several occasions that the County should not be running events in competition with the clubs. We have canvassed opinion from our clubs and have not identified any support for this view. The Executive have discussed this matter at length and felt that our Constitution requires us to support the provision of bridge within the county and that by putting on duplicates which were well supported we were meeting that obligation. The online committee regularly considers whether all our events are necessary and appropriate to continue. The online committee will continue to monitor the popularity and financial viability of all the regular events and may choose to cease running some of these if they are felt to be no longer viable.

We ran a green pointed Swiss Pairs in October scored in Imps as a replacement for the face-to-face teams event which we normally run in July. This was very popular with 36 tables. We plan to run the Ben Frank’s trophy online in December and also to run our two day Congress in January. We will run the non-experts events at the Congress alongside the main since we started our online offerings.

We have also run monthly charity tournaments since April and have raised over £7000 for local charities during that period.

Since the AGM members of the online committee have been active in encouraging local clubs to offer online sessions to their members and currently almost all the clubs within the MCBA are running regular sessions.

I would like to thank all the members of the online committee for their ongoing commitment to ensure that players who are registered with the county are able to play duplicate events online. In particular, Espen Gisvold has been incredibly helpful and proactive in assisting me in maintaining our online website.