**Reports from Officers for October 2021 MCBA Council Meeting**

Council should note that the reports are from the individual officers and need to be ratified by Council before appearing the minutes.

**Chair (Irene Davies)**

**How is F2F bridge going in the County?**

The future shape of bridge in Manchester (and across the country) is in a state of flux at the moment. Most of the MCBA affiliated clubs have made some tentative steps toward a return to F2F bridge, but with mixed success. The average tables per F2F session is low, though perhaps growing slightly. Ashton BC and Besses BC have the best F2F attendances with an average of about 6 tables per session. (See table below) Small F2F sessions give clubs a financial problem as fixed overheads, such as venue costs, can leave these sessions facing a loss. Attendance at online sessions also seems to be falling.

YCBA have established a fund for clubs struggling to return to F2F bridge because of these problems and they have a committee to decide on applications to the fund. This may be something that MCBA should investigate.

**Attracting new members**

Only 2 clubs have a healthy teaching programme at present (Ashton BC and Manchester BC). It is no surprise that these two clubs have the best player sessions number. Susan Triggs compiled a detailed list of bridge teachers and what they offer and has publicised these lessons. We shall see what comes of this, but if clubs are to grow, they need to be involved in the teaching process. The EBTA has decided, learning from the YCBA experience, to run a short series of online lessons for new learners, starting in November. To benefit from this the clubs will need to do local publicity and set up assisted play sessions online to accompany the lessons.

**Other EBU initiatives**

The EBU has initiated a plan to woo unaffiliated clubs with a free one season offer. The accompanying publicity is not completely sorted. But when it is we can use it with unaffiliated clubs in our area. At the top of the list are Larkhill, Bowdon, Jubilee, Poynton and Chorlton.

The EBU is also proposing to double the licensing fees for Counties Online events. This will affect our Congress and GP events and will need to be taken into consideration with our pricing of these events.

**Table of bridge session for MCBA clubs week 29 Sept to 5 October**

| Club | Sessions | Total | Average |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Adam Wiseberg BC | 3 online | 13.5 | 4.5 |
| Altrincham BC | 1 online | 11 | 11 |
|  | 2 F2F | 10 | 5 |
| Ashton BC | 3 online | 23 | 7.5 |
|  | 3 F2F | 18 | 6 |
| Besses BC | 2 F2F | 12 | 6 |
| Bramhall/Cheadle BC | 2 online | 14 | 7 |
|  | 3 F2F | 12 | 4 |
| Manchester BC | 8 online | 47 | 6 |
|  | 3 F2F | 11 | 4 |
|  | 1 Hybrid | 9 | 9 |
| Marple BC | 1 online | 9 | 9 |
|  | F2F January? |  |  |
| Prestbury BC | Starts F2F 12th Oct |  |  |
| Stretford BC | Online 3 | 22.5 | 7.5 |
|  | F2F 3? | 2.5 | 1? |
| Trafford BC | 1 online | 6 | 6 |
|  | 3 F2F | 11 | 4 |
| Excuse the rough maths. |  |  |  |

**Secretary (Alan Mould)**

As might be expected another extremely quiet period. My main duties have been minuting the executive meetings which have taken place less frequently over the summer period, the minutes of which are available on the website. There has been an increased amount of correspondence from the EBU, principally concerned with the AGM, which will again be held online, and some correspondence around, for example, the Tollemache.

**Treasurer (Joy Blakey)**

Since my last report at the beginning of March 2021, 3 further Charity events were held in March, April and May bringing the total money raised since we started to £11,550. Heartfelt thanks to everyone who played and donated and to the County for adding its’ contribution. All the beneficiaries were hugely appreciative.

We held our first face to face competition on 1st August when 11 teams competed in the MCBA Green Pointed Teams event at Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme Bridge Centre. The County hosted a sandwich and cake luncheon with tea and coffee and a wine reception before the prize giving for all competitors; it was a great celebration of being together. The County made a small loss of £187 on the event after the unusual one-off expenditure.

I have paid the County entrance fee for the Tollemache Team 2021/22 of £352.

50 teams have entered the MCBA Online League which will take place between October 2021 and April 22. Team entry of £40 covers the league, Goldstone Cup and Higson Cup – teams of more than 6 players will pay a surcharge of £10. All teams have now paid their entry fee.

All correct payments and receipts have been made to date and the County’s finances are in good shape.

**League Secretary (Adam Wiseberg)**

The Secretary expended significant effort in trying to generate entries from a similar number of teams to those who entered the 2019 – 20 League competition

48 teams entered and these were split into 5 divisions with 9 teams in the 1st & 2nd Divisions and 10 in each of the remaining three. Care was taken to ensure that teams who had been promoted at the end of the 2019-20 season appeared in the correct division although the smaller number of divisions meant that some would still be competing against teams who had been in their division previously.

About a week after the divisions were created on the EBU system and all the information sent to captains two more teams came forward asking to play. In keeping with my principle of trying to encourage bridge to be played rather than impeding it, I promoted one team from Div 2 to Div 1 (by random draw from those teams wishing to be considered) and then drew two teams from Div 3 to be promoted to Div 2 again by random draw but this time from a limited number of teams chosen by me. I then selected two teams from Div 4 to be promoted to Div 3 and added the two new teams to Div 4. The result is 5 Divisions of ten teams each. They will all play 9 matches between October and then end of April 2022. I managed to get the EBU to reopen the system (as all Divisions had been fixed by then) and made the necessary adjustments. I created new contact details for all captains and sent those out

Hopefully things will run smoothly from now until April.

I have been asked for two rulings in a Div 1 match and am in the process of considering the facts.

Two Div 3 teams had problems setting up a match on BBO resulting in some raised tempers, but I have ruled that they have ample time (more than 6 months) to rearrange it and that they must do so. If needed, I will set the rearranged match up for them.

**Higson Cup Secretary (Adam Wiseberg)**

For 2019-20 the Treasurer and I decided to include the entry fee for the Cup in the League entry fee, effectively making the Cup free to enter.

After some press-ganging, I managed to get 32 entries.

I have made small adjustments to the handicaps for the knock-out stages and there will also be changes to the handicaps for the finals.

I seeded all Div 1 & 2 teams so that they can’t meet each other in the first round. 32 teams will play in round 1 with all the losers going to the Plate. Round 2 of the Cup and Round 1 of the Plate will have 16 teams in each. All teams will play at least two matches and there will be two 8 team finals

**Goldstone Trophy Secretary (Roger Hopton)**

No report to date.

**Membership Secretary (Alan Mould)**

I said in my previous reports that I was unconvinced that the membership data was terribly meaningful given the continued lockdown. Given the very slow return to F2F bridge in clubs, I am still unconvinced it is terribly meaningful, but I present it nevertheless. MCBA membership remains artificially slightly increased due to Adam’s laudable insistence that anyone who plays in our online events in any consistent manner has to join MCBA.

I give below the data from the EBU as of 4th August 2020, as of 15th November 2020, as of 23rd February 2021, and as of 19th October 2021.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Member** | **Total**  **04/08/2020** | **Total**  **15/11/2020** | **Total 23/02/2021** | **Total**  **19/10/2021** |
| P2P | **1400** | **1405** | **1396** | **1435** |
| Direct members | **42** | **44** | **45** | **42** |
| Students  (People on the EBED register as learning bridge) | **21** | **21** | **20** | **0** |
| Total from spreadsheet | **1463** | **1470** | **1461** | **1477** |

So, as can be seen, numbers have remained almost entirely static. It is interesting that despite 0 students, our numbers have increased slightly suggesting that those students have actually remained as members.

Dealing only with the data of 19th October, of the 1477 members, 1425 have primary allegiance to Manchester, and 52 have secondary allegiance. Of the 52 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:

* 13 people listed as EBTA (ie teachers), all of which are Pay to Play. However, two of them have clubs of primary allegiance outside of the area (Bury Athenaeum and 3 Counties BCs) This is down from 28 in November 2020 but consistent with March 2021. It remains a worrying sign.
* 1 person is listed as “EBS Student” but given that her primary BC is listed as York I suspect this may be a coding error by the EBU. Previously all EBED students were from Trafford BC as that was the only club in the area that enrolled its students in the EBED system. This suggests to me that either Trafford BC classes have yet to restart or that Trafford has changed its policy.
* All others are listed as “none” under EBED.

The data download from the EBU now includes for the first time details of NGS grade and MP rank. Council may be interested to know that the county has 5 members who are ace of spades (though two are secondary members), 43 members who are aces (though 15 are secondary members), and 16 premier grand masters (though 7 of these are secondary members).

**Tournament Secretary (Celia Comrie)**

No report to date.

**Congress Secretary (Barbara Lewis)**

At the MCBA Executive meeting on September 5th I outlined contacts with possible TDs. Also, the level of hesitation regarding players’ return to F2F – 40% and less of pre-Covid numbers at club duplicates and for the MCBA Green pointed teams on August 1st, preference for playing on-line, levels of Covid infections and deaths, efficacy of the vaccines, and uncertainly regarding Covid cases and risks in the coming months. Further, as the level of Covid was not decreasing and could increase, this would lead to uncertainty about how many would enter the Congress – to be played in a room with no natural light, open windows or good ventilation. The available data suggested that a F2F congress would not be viable in terms of participation and finances.

After brief discussion it was agreed to hold the Congress on-line – Real Bridge, January 8th and 9th 2022, and Adam was appointed as the TD for the main Pairs and Teams. Other local TDs would be asked to run the 2 non-expert pairs events.

I have been in contact with Kate Pearson at the V&A to cancel for January 2022, and we have a provisional booking for January 7th and 8th 2023. No deposit has been paid

**Match Secretary (Michael Byrne)**

Report to follow.

**Green Point Secretary (Rhona Goldenfield)**

The teams Aug 1st was held F to F at Bramhall. We limited it to 16 teams but only got 11 which was disappointing. We charged £20 per person and gave prizes not as much as previously because of reduced entry. We made a loss due to the fact that we gave out food and drink to make it a welcome comeback to F to F bridge. I thought it was a great success socially and I hope it can be repeated next year. It was won by The Blakeys, Raymond Semp and myself. The director was Stuart Davies who was very helpful.

I have booked the 2022 dates March 5th pairs and July 31st teams with EBU.

I emailed St Peters to book March 5th but have not heard from them and Barbara Lewis was asked to book Bramhall for the teams.

I feel confident we can hold the teams F to F as last year but if the current trend continues then the Pairs may need to be online.

I have not booked any Directors yet.

**Chair of Selectors (Report by Secretary – John Roberts)**

At the AGM of July 15th all current members of the Selection committee (Adam Wiseberg, Roger Hopton, John Roberts, Michael Byrne and Rhona Goldenfield) were re-elected unopposed.

The functioning of the Committee has continued to be affected throughout the year by the coronavirus pandemic. Face to face Selection meetings have been suspended and replaced by regular Zoom conference meetings. The committee also corresponds by the use of frequent emails to deal with business.

At its first meeting since the AGM Adam Wiseberg was re-elected as chairman 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

**Inter-County matches**

Between Sept 2020 and Feb 2021 six on-line matches were arranged on the Realbridge Platform with London, Devon, Gloucestershire, Sussex, Suffolk and Norfolk. The matches were competitive and well received by players. Since then no further friendlies have taken place. The committee looked into arranging matches with Ireland and Scotland, but it proved to be impossible. The Committee is looking into other possibilities of inter-county matches during the autumn and winter.

The Derbyshire match of 2021 did not take place.

**Northern League**

The Northern league was not played in 2020 due to the pandemic but went ahead on-line in 2021. The 4 matches were played on the Saturdays of July 10th, August 21st, September 18th, and October 9th.

The Selection committee met in June and July 2021 to make selections for this event. This year there were three teams of 8 (one in each of the A, B and C divisions). In previous years Manchester had fielded two A, one B and two C teams, but shortage of available players this year meant that only one team was selected for each division. The event was played on Realbridge. The scoring for the first match was found to have been done erroneously (it had used the Garden Cities Final method, but this was the incorrect method). The score was corrected and the event re-scored by the Tollemache method.

The fourth and final matches of the NBL season were played on Saturday 9th October.  In the A division Manchester were fourth on the day and finished third overall. In the B division Manchester won on the day and overtook Mersey & Cheshire to win the division. In the C division Manchester were fourth on the day and finished fifth overall. The B team will get to play in the Inter-County National Final next year.

The Northern league will continue next season.

**Inter-County Superfinal**

In 2019 Manchester’s A and C teams both won their respective divisions of the Northern League, which qualified them for the National inter-county Superfinal. However, the final did not take place in 2020 because of the pandemic but instead took place in 2021 on the Realbridge platform. The event was held on Sunday July 11th. The committee selected the two teams and attempted, where possible, to select from players who had played in the qualifying matches in 2019. The A team was John Holland/Alan Mould, Rodney Lighton/Michael Byrne, Alec Smalley/Tom Slater, John Roberts/Pete Foster. The C team was Gordon Bickley/Ann Farquhar, Irene Davies/Karen Reissmann, Victor Ridding/Mary Green, Gil Fletcher/Richard Acaster.

Both teams (A and C) performed very poorly, both finishing in last place in their respective divisions. As a result, at its next meeting (16th July), the selection committee reviewed the possible reasons for this and also reviewed its selection strategy for this event. A number of explanations were considered to be possible, amongst which were a dislike by some players of the on-line format. Also senior players seemed to be less available for the event. However, the committee also felt that its selection policy for the event had been wrong and needed to be changed. Manchester had selected its teams for the Inter-County Super final on the basis of considering only those players that had played in the qualifying stages. This had been inconsistently applied and, more importantly, was not being done by other counties, which left Manchester at a disadvantage. There was nothing in the rules of the event which stated this caveat. The committee therefore agreed that in future it would select its best team for this event irrespective of whether players had or had not participated in the qualifying stage.

**Presidents Cup**

This inter-counties team of eight competition took place over the weekend of 17th-18th July on the Realbridge platform. Manchester fielded two teams one from each of its A and B pool of players. Selections for both pools for both days were made and appeared on the MCBA web site.

Playing for Manchester Blue team (A pool) were Catherine Draper/Andrew Woodcock (both days), Michael Byrne/Rhona Goldenfield, Alan Mould/John Holland, Raymond Semp/Gary Hyett (Sat), Michael Byrne/Rodney Lighton, John Holland/John Hassett, John Currie/Royce Alexander (Sun). The Manchester Blue team won by a large margin, after lying second overnight on Saturday.

The Manchester Red team (B pool) was Adam Wiseberg/Phil Taylor, John Stell/Andy Green, Eddie Thornton-Chan/Graham Currie, Irene Davies/Barbara Lewis (Sat), Roger Hopton/David Fussell, Pauline Lang/Steve Mattinson, Peter Foster/John Roberts, Josh Clarke/Phil Taylor (Sun). They performed respectably but were less successful and finished 6th

**Tollemache Qualifier**

At its last meeting on Sept 27th and via subsequent email correspondence, the committee made selections for the Tollemache Qualifier which is to take place on-line on the Realbridge platform on the weekend of Nov 13th and 14th. The selected pairs were :

John Holland/Gary Hyett

Michael Byrne/Alec Smalley

Catherine Draper/Andrew Woodcock

Rodney Lighton/Alan Mould

The committee is currently considering the appointment of a NPC/reserve.

**Publicity Officer (Susan Triggs)**

No report to date.

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

There has been very little communication from the EBU to shareholders in the last 6 months. The papers for the AGM, to be held online in November, have recently come out. Alec and Alan will attend, no word from Jeff yet.

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

No report to date.

**Webmaster (Rodney Lighton)**

The web site continues to attract a reasonable number of visitors.Thanks, as usual, to those who have provided material for deal of the week.I have restarted the Player of the Year competition after last year’s hiatus.