

WEST of ENGLAND BRIDGE CLUB

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 15th May 2024

Committee Present:

Chris Frew [Club Chairman], Bill Ashford [Treasurer], Alan Peak-Payne [Secretary], Jan Duncan [RAFA Liaison], Jen Challoner [Fun and Welfare Officer]

Apologies:

David Jones, Phil Lidstone, Jane Chapman, Bernice Horseman.

Members Present:

12 members were present – names not noted.

Minutes of the 2023 AGM – 24th May 2023

The minutes were agreed, approved and signed. Matters arising from the minutes are addressed in the Chairman's Report.

Chairman's Report [Chris Frew]

This report marks the end of my first year as Chairman, though it was 2005 when I was first elected to Committee. So today I reflect on both last year and the previous twenty.

My first thought upon following Jeremy Rickard, Gareth Evans, Alan Williams and Alan Evans as Chairman was: surely there has been some mistake! WoEBC has had a long tradition of being chaired by excellent players. Perhaps the voters think I may yet improve...

Playing numbers at our various sessions remain well below those regularly achieved before the Covid pandemic; though, paradoxically, membership numbers are as high they have ever been. This points to the inadvertent evolution of three silos; Thursday Improvers in one, Monday/Friday afternoon players in a second, evening players in the third. Jane Chapman's report as Membership Secretary, which I shall read out later, documents and quantifies the numbers of members, the numbers playing in more than one session etc. Happily, it is a story of some progress compared with last year. But a major challenge for your Committee in the coming year is to encourage existing players to play more often, and – particularly – to get out in the evening more. Amongst long-standing members there is a yearning to restart Monday evening sessions, but Committee regrets this would be unwise whilst numbers at the other evening sessions are low. By contrast, David Jones's Monday and (now) Friday afternoon sessions are relatively well attended and growing in popularity. Meanwhile, the Thursday afternoon Improver sessions, initiated by Jen Challoner and Laurie Barth nine years ago, have a devoted group of both students and 'experts', and remain the natural home for those graduating from bridge beginners lessons, at Stoke Lodge or elsewhere.

Today will be Bill Ashford's swansong as Treasurer. He will be telling you the financial consequences of the player numbers and capital acquisitions that we have enjoyed over the past year. I'll not steal his thunder.

Jan Duncan is our Liaison Officer with the Bristol RAFA Club. Bristol RAFA Club remain the best landlords that we have ever had – though the competition isn't strong – and Jan will reprise the issues raised and changes made over the past year.

Finally, Jen Challoner will slip on another pair of hats as both Minister for Fun, and Welfare Officer. In the last year we have been able to revive the Christmas Party, with attendant pantomime, and we hope steadily to bring back other events that historically have made WoEBC a club of character, rather than merely a place to play bridge. Jen as Welfare Officer has been a remarkable success; the mere prospect a home visit has provoked several speedy recoveries!

Can I now say publicly to all Committee members: very many thanks for all your efforts over the past year, without which we would not have a functioning club. It has been a pleasure as well as a privilege to be your Chairman.

I conclude with a reflection on an opening sentence on our website: "We play with the emphasis not so much on winning the game as on enjoying it." That encapsulates the spirit of the club. Many members have seen their bridge improve over the last year. We have restored some quarterly competitions, and our elite players returned to competing as a team in the Garden Cities Trophy this year, for the first time since 2019. But, fundamentally, we play club bridge because we enjoy the bridge and the company. Let's keep that as our focus.

Treasurer's Report [Bill Ashford]

Report attached as Appendix

Membership Secretary's Report [Jane Chapman]

Report attached as Appendix

RAFA Club Liaison Officer's Report

Report attached as Appendix

Fun Events Officer's Report

- Social bridge is booming
- Biscuit costs have gone up
- Christmas party a great success and plan to have 16 tables next year and probably a buffet lunch.

Motions Submitted:

None submitted

Election of Officers and Committee

For each post there was only one nomination – these were duly elected en bloc

The committee is now

Chairman Chris Frew

Treasurer Ken Griffin

Secretary Alan Peak-Payne

Membership Jane Chapman

RAFA Liaison Jan Duncan

Fun & Welfare Jen Challoner

Other committee members Phil Lidstone, Bernice Horseman, David Jones

Any Other Business

Numerous topics were discussed with no actions arising.

Minutes Approved

Chris Frew, Chairman