



The Sobell Bridge Club



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The MINUTES of the 11th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held on Sunday 11th May 2003 in the Annexe to Michael Sobell House, Mount Vernon Hospital at 6.00 p.m.

Present:

Stan Nicholls	Chairman
Ken Short	Hon Treasurer
Geoff Gray	Hon Secretary
Bill Graham	Chairman, Building Committee
Michael Tucker	Assistant Treasurer
Liz Crook	Liaison Officer

Michael Melville, Jacque North, Daphne Santon, Gerald Williams

Jo Aldridge, Bernie Allwright, Fay Benjamin, Margaret Broadbent, Ethel Broughton, Bill Burgess, Diana Burgess, Esther Casey, Thelma Charlton, Cedric Cohen, Alison Dewar, Sheena Edgar, Doug Edmonds, Asaf Ersoy, Muriel Feldman, John Francis, Pat Gayton, Cyril Gibor, Pat Gibor, Jane Graham, Pat Graham, Gwyneth Harrison, John Harrison, Hetty Hartman, Marjorie Haynes, Doreen Howlett, George Howlett, William Hughes, Anna Jameson, Tony King, Joan Knaggs, Shirley Lawrence, Rexine Malalgoda, Ahmad Mallick, Ulla Mallick, Maggie Martin, Derek Miles, Peggy Neale, Ann Paris, Freda Pickard, Joan Prior, Rob Pyburn, Margaret Rainbow, Valentine Rawal, Lucy Rees, Sheila Samuels, Joan Scoles, Janet Scott, Bea Segall, Sue Sheldon, Brian Simmonds, Margaret Smart, Lesley Snuggs, Mabel Spurr, Catherine Stafford, Ron Stevens, Zena Stewart, Ruby Stiles, Maureen Thackeray, Shirley Tucker, John Walsh, Vic Ward, Colin Wilder, Isobel Williams, Thelma Williamson, Irene Willis, Stuart Wood, Shirley Woods, Arthur Worth, Carina Young.

1. Welcome by the Chairman. The Chairman opened the meeting by thanking all those present for attending.
2. Apologies for absence were received from Committee members Jennifer Hay and Kevin Colling and from 59 ordinary members (list attached).
3. The minutes of the 10th AGM, held on the 12th May 2002, were approved without alteration, proposed Michael Melville, seconded Ethel Broughton.
4. The Chairman's Report. The Chairman was pleased to say we have had another successful year. The membership has settled down at between 450 and 500 and the

attendance at the evening sessions remains quite high with as many as 22 or 23 tables on Mondays and Thursdays. We have as usual run a number of training courses and also held the usual four bridge weekends during the year.

One disappointment was having to cancel the Spring Bridge drive. Bill Hassey and Brenda Weston, together with Brian Simmonds ran a number of very successful drives last year, but Bill and Brenda have now had to step down, and we could not find anyone to take their place. The Chairman said he understood that a number of the members have now got together and have volunteered to run the catering for the other two bridge drives planned for the year.

On a brighter note, the Chairman said he was delighted to report that after a delay of almost 18 months, Hillingdon Council have at last granted planning permission to build a new Clubhouse. We are hoping to build a new Clubhouse jointly with the Northwood Cricket Club. Having attended the planning meeting back in January, and being told publicly that the project was approved, the Chairman and Bill Graham had been taken aback some months later when they learnt that the scheme had to be referred to the Office for Greater London for final approval. In the end, they raised no objections so the way is now clear for the Club to go ahead.

The Chairman commented that the estimated costs have risen and he proposed that we set up a small fund-raising group whose task would be to suggest possible ways of raising the extra finance we may need without just raising our fees. The Chairman asked for 6 or so members to volunteer. Anyone with banking or accountancy experience would be particularly welcome, or anyone with knowledge of fund-raising. But the main asset would be enthusiasm and drive. Should we borrow the money, seek sponsorship, hold more events or try for grants. Who would be prepared to volunteer?

Brian Simmonds asked about the likely cost of the building. Bill Graham responded that the anticipated cost is now £500,000. Our cost would be £250,000 plus extras and possibly VAT. Brian commented that we must employ professional people if we go ahead, as that way we will be covered by professional indemnity.

Maureen Thackeray said we should try the VAT helpline to get an answer on VAT. Bill Graham commented that he had tried, but had not been able to get firm advice. Cyril Gibor said we should get a quantity surveyor on board, because it appeared that the Cricket Club were getting more of the building than us. Bill Graham responded that we have got a quantity surveyor.

Sue Sheldon commented that we raise money for the Friends, but all the money appears to be going to the building. She asked how much do we give to the hospice, and why do we need a building. The Chairman said we have no security of tenure in any of our current meeting places. The Friends are supporting us in this venture. The Treasurer commented that the entire surplus goes to the Friends. We have arranged that they will give the money back to us for the building. Michael Melville commented that when the Club is in the new building, all funds barring expenses will go to the Friends.

Ruby Stiles asked about the likely maintenance costs, the Chairman responded they will be less than the current rents we pay.

Ruby Stiles asked who will own the building, the Chairman responded that the Friends would be the owners.**

No volunteers for the fund-raising committee came forward at the AGM.

The Chairman went on to thank the two other officers of the Club, Ken Short and Geoff Gray, who both put in a prodigious amount of work to keep the Club going, and he also thanked the other members of the Club committee and the members of the subcommittees for all the hard work they have put in behind the scenes through the year. The Chairman included in this, Jane Culley who has taken on the job of producing the Club's newsletter, Liz Crook who is now our Liaison Officer, Asaf Ersoy for managing the website and publishing the scores so efficiently, Ruby Stiles for finding partners and Joan Prior for helping to organise the weekends.

The Chairman also thanked all those involved in organising and running the various sessions, including the Friday afternoon sessions run by Daphne Santon. He reminded all members that, when they have finished playing, they can help by putting the chairs and tables away. Some people seem to like to rush away, presumably back to their husbands or wives, as soon as they have finished playing.

The Chairman concluded by thanking all the members for their continuing support.

** For information, the Chairman's comment at this point was incorrect. As currently proposed, there would be a 999 year lease on the building, held by a management company. This company would have two shares, one each held by the Cricket Club and the Bridge Club. The management company would sub-lease to the Cricket Club and the Bridge Club. The Friends would not be involved, except in connection with item 18 of the Constitution, regarding the disbandment of the Club.

5. The Hon Secretary's Report. The Secretary said that the Club now had 490 members, four more than this time last year, which was three more than the year before.

The Secretary endorsed the Chairman's thanks to all those who helped in running the Club, but said he wanted to single out the Tournament Directors in running the sessions. He himself had the easiest session to run, but, knowing the work involved, he was impressed by the way the other directors coped with the number we now have. We still seem to be able to keep our sessions friendly and easy-going, even with 22 tables in play. The Secretary thanked Kevin Colling, Brian Simmonds, George Howlett and Gerald Williams, and Daphne Santon for the way they maintain the sociable nature of the Club.

Finally the Secretary thanked Isobel Williams and Joan Prior for providing the buffet after the AGM.

6. The Hon Treasurer's Report. The Treasurer said that last year, after the AGM gave approval to go ahead with the building, the AGM also agreed to raise the playing fees to £2.50. As a result, the Club has had its best year ever, with a surplus of £42,033.61.

The bulk of the income is from the playing sessions; the net income is up by £8,000. Although we would expect a 25% increase from the raised fees, in fact more people are playing bridge, mostly on the Monday, Thursday and Friday evening sessions. Fees and Dues are roughly the same; we have about the same numbers of members. The Suppers did well, bringing in an extra £200-£300. Tuition also did well, with two beginners'

courses and an improvers' course. Also the weekends away are up, particularly the weekend at Swindon did well. The marathon brought in over £2000 again.

The Treasurer thanked his helpers, Shirley and Michael Tucker, Ruby Stiles, Joan Knaggs and Kevin Colling.

Turning to the balance sheet, the Treasurer stated that cash in hand was up a little, there would be another £10,000 going to the Friends account shortly. The tables are shown as depreciating assets, however it is worth noting that we have found someone to repair them.

The Treasurer outlined the history of the building development fund. Starting in 1996-97 the funds have been passed to the Friends. They take the interest for their own purposes and keep the principle on our behalf. In April the fund stood at £200,000. The current estimated costs suggest we shall be just short of our needs at the end of next year.

Irene Willis asked why the Friends took the interest; the Treasurer responded that that was how it was set up originally. In the early days the fund was small but interest rates were higher.

Brian Simmonds noted that, as Auditor, he had signed the accounts, but we are still waiting on receipts for the last two donations to the Friends for £20,000. Lucy Rees asked how could the accounts be certified if not audited. Brian Simmonds responded that this is normal procedure, it would not be possible to do a full audit in the time available, and the certification procedure is acceptable practice.

The Treasurer said he had given a presentation about the building to the Board of the Friends six weeks ago. The Board accepts that it is an investment for the future.

7. Motion to Approve the Accounts. The accounts were approved, proposed Ahmad Mallick, Pat Graham seconded.
8. Report by the Chairman of the Playing Subcommittee. The Playing Secretary had prepared a report in advance; this was read to the members by the Competitions Manager: -

' First of all, can I apologise for not being present this evening, but somehow the lure of the Grand Canyon was greater. Also may I thank Michael for presenting my report.

As may already have been mentioned, our numbers playing in the Olwen Bettsworth Hall have been growing throughout the year, and, while this is good for our income, it means more work for the people who set up the hall, the Tournament Directors and the Scorers. On a few occasions something has gone wrong with the cards or the travelers or the scoring, and some sessions have not been scored. The purpose of me mentioning it here, is to stress to all members that you ALL have a responsibility at the table to make sure that everything is done correctly. If we all take that on board, then hopefully the sessions will run smoothly and the Tournament Director will not be forced to make these unpopular decisions. Don't forget that all our helpers are doing this work so that you can enjoy your bridge, and I do not expect the TD's or the scorers to spend hours of their time trying to sort out problems.

Well, that's the moan over with, so what else has been happening this year.

Because all of the sessions are so popular, we decided half way through the year to introduce 2 more annual competitions, for Monday and Friday evenings, so that all sessions now have a competition.

Ethel Broughton has very kindly donated a silver plate, The Broughton Trophy, for the Monday evening competition. A silver cup has been bought by the club for the Friday evening competition, and has been named The Graham Trophy in recognition of generous donations made to the club over the years by Helen and Douglas Graham.

The criteria for all the evening competitions are the same – the pair with the highest average percentage and a minimum number of attendances of 25. For this year only, however, the Monday competition has been based on the highest number of Master Points gained from 2nd September 2002 to 31st March 2003. This was due to technical difficulties in processing the data.

We have had 2 teams competing in the West Herts League this year. The team including Doug and Anne Edmonds and Robin Pyburn has continued to play in the first division. After the AGM last year a new team came forward, consisting of Pat and Cyril Gibor, Howard and Elaine Atkins and Ron Stevens. As a new team they were put into the 3rd division. They have reached the final of the knockout plate competition.

The running of the simultaneous competitions became a little contentious this year, with some people wanting to play and others not. One of our members came up with a brilliantly simple idea (but one that your committee had not thought of !) which was to hold 2 sessions of bridge at the same time, one normal and one simultaneous. This seems to have been successful and Michael will report on the competitions next.

Before he does, I would like to thank everyone concerned with running the bridge sessions. There is a great deal of work that goes on to provide us all with enjoyable games of bridge. I hope you all appreciate this, because I certainly do.'

The Competitions Manager went on to inform the meeting of the results attained by the Club in the Simultaneous Pairs competitions in which we participated during the year.

The Club did well in the David Boston Simultaneous Pairs, which attracted 1129 pairs overall. Marion Sweet and Geoff Gray were 13th overall, and winners of the Herts division, while Allan Chalmers and Phil Ryan were 19th overall and winners of the County Masters division. Both pairs received cash prizes.

In the Herts Simultaneous Pairs, we had three pairs in the top 7, with Catherine Stafford and Mike Gentry 2nd, and Bob Batchelor and Hermann Hirschberger 4th. There are prizes for these pairs to be presented at the Herts Bridge Association AGM on the 18th May. In 7th place were Moira Wishart and Geoff Gray.

For the EBU Simultaneous Pairs, out of 2300 pairs participating, the Club had 4 pairs in the top 100. They were Zofia Poplawska and David Kilby, 18th; Catherine Stafford and Derek Miles, 44th; Ian Teasdale and Mike Gentry, 51st, and Shirley Tucker and Maggie Martin, 100th.

9. Report by the Chairman of the Social Subcommittee. There was no report given.
10. Report by the Chairman of the Building Subcommittee. The Building Secretary started by apologising to the Club for informing everyone in January that we had planning permission. This was not the case despite three club members with good hearing coming away from the planning meeting with that conclusion. He thanked Len Turner for deputising for him at the last two AGMs, and to the members as a whole for the support for the petition to Hillingdon councillors.

The building committee and the officers of the Club have followed the terms of reference agreed at the 2001 and 2002 AGMs. The reasons behind those terms have not changed. Our accommodation at the OB hall is not guaranteed, and the Annexe is also subject to other demands. The future of Mount Vernon itself is in question.

Meetings with the Northwood CC have taken place through the year, with little progress of late due to the delays to the planning application. Nevertheless progress has been made on a framework within which the two clubs can operate. We have draft agreements developed by Alison Dewar; the buildings secretary expressed his thanks to her for her work.

We have seen the draft planning permission document, and the 13 conditions attached thereto. None of them appear to relate to the Bridge Club activities, but we need to discuss them with our legal advisors, the CC and the architects in the near future. Also we need to discuss the views expressed in this meeting. This means further delay, so the planned September 2003 construction start date may not be feasible.

The design of the building has altered considerably since the 2002 AGM. The plan now has a bridge playing area at ground floor level that will accommodate 25 tables and adequate storage, bar and office facilities for our own use. There are shared toilet and kitchen facilities between the two club areas. There is a difference between this plan and that approved by the planning authorities, in that a stairway is shown providing access to the upper space above the main hall. This could be used for Rubber Bridge and tuition, if the Club agrees. Access for disabled people and fire escapes would apply to this.

If we want to develop the first floor area, there would be an extra capital cost of around £30,000. At the moment, the capital cost on current estimates is basic cost of £250,000, plus heating installation costs of £15,000. We must have adequate heating. We have spent to date £2300. There is also the question of VAT. We need concrete advice on VAT. The Cricket Club is considering registering for VAT.

The next stage will be the architect's detailed plans and their submission to builders with an invitation to tender. This will cost more money. At the same time, a legal framework for both clubs will need to be established.

The Building Secretary concluded by thanking the officers of the Club and the members of the Building Committee for their contribution to the project.

Brian Simmonds asked what would be the benefit of registering for VAT, as we would then have to pay VAT on our income.

Margaret Broadbent asked if the Club would sublet the room for functions; the Chairman

replied that we probably would.

Cyril Gibor asked if the Club had considered a loan or mortgage to cover any shortfall; the Chairman said this is possible, but it would be a matter for the fund-raising committee. Michael Melville commented that one option would be to ask for interest-free loans from members, which could be refunded by exemption from playing fees.

11. Proposed Changes to the Constitution. No proposed changes had been put forward.
12. Election of Committee Members. The Secretary said that the position of Social Secretary was vacant. At the moment a small group has got together to organise the next drive, and we shall see if anyone from the group wishes to represent the on the committee.

He commented that during the year Liz Crook had volunteered to become our Liaison Officer. He expressed the committee's thanks to her and also to Len Turner, who had continued to do the work long after he retired from the post.

The Secretary said that all the existing members were standing for election again, and there was no competition for any places. He therefore asked that the committee be re-elected en-bloc. This was agreed, proposed Tony King, seconded Brian Simmonds.

13. Election of Honorary Auditor. Brian Simmonds said he was willing to continue as Auditor, Ron Stevens proposed that he be re-appointed, Michael Melville seconded.
14. Any Other Formal Business. Ron Stevens commented that, in making his report, the Competitions Secretary, Michael Melville, had omitted to include himself in the team that had reached the final of the plate.

The formal meeting closed at 7.20 p.m., and was followed by the presentation of Championship Prizes. George Howlett announced the prizewinners:

Broughton Trophy (Monday evening):

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|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 st | Michael Melville and Ron Stephens |
| 2 nd | Kevin Colling and John Wood |

Ethel Broughton presented the trophy to Michael Melville and Ron Stephens

President's Trophy (Tuesday evening)

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|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 st | Colin Thomas and Eddie O'Sullivan |
| 2 nd | Joan Prior and Barry Davey |

None of the prizewinners were present; the trophy will be presented at the next Tuesday session.

L and R Trophy (Thursday evening):

1st Brian Simmonds and Michael Melville

2nd Marion Davey and Barry Davey

Sue Sheldon presented the L and R Trophy to Brian Simmonds and Michael Melville.

The trophies for the Friday afternoon sessions:

Individual Trophy

1st Arthur Worth

2nd Lucy Rees

Daphne Santon presented the trophy to Arthur Worth.

Pairs Trophy

1st Shirley Lawrence and Lucy Rees

2nd Esther Casey and Arthur Worth

Daphne Santon presented the trophy to Shirley Lawrence and Lucy Rees.

Graham Trophy (Friday Evenings):

1st Bea Segall and Olive Stretch

2nd Kevin Colling and Michael Melville

Geoff Gray presented the trophy to Bea Segall.

Apologies for absence were received from: -

Lynne Adler, Pat Allard, Ruth Allenby, Audrie Amos, Rita Barker, Bob Batchelor, June Beaumont-Howell, Joyce Beeston, Barbara Burge, Geoff Burge, Ray Burnett, Vera Crowe, Barry Davey, Pat Fallan, Stan Figiela, Liz Foster, Delyse Fyfe, Rita Gibson, Ann Godfrey, Brian Godfrey, Carl Goldsmith, John Gwilt, Joyce Hickey, Hermann Hirschberger, Martin Holden, Ann Hooker, Ron Hooker, Joyce Jackett, Arnold Jacobs, David Kilby, Barbara Kohn, Tony Letts, Roland Lewis, Fenella Lough, Audrey Mace, Alan Marks, Lynne Mathis, Marilyn McAvoy, Jack McEnery, Peter Moir, Irene Newton, Moira Parry, Ray Pearce, Joan Nolan, Jenny Ramprakash, Gordon Sadler, Derek Sate, Jenny Schauerman, Gordon Shelton, Roy Sterry, John Taylor, Alan Thomas, Judy Walshe, Valerie Weeks, Rosemary White, Phil Williams, Eileen Williams, Moira Wishart, John Wood.