

READING BRIDGE CLUB

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2004

Editorial

In this issue you will find a summary of your views as expressed in answer to the questionnaire that the committee issued with the information for the AGM. Firstly thank you to everyone who responded. There was a response rate of over 30% which is fantastic for any survey of this sort, and shows how much you value the club and what it stands for. Please read the article about these results and what the committee are intending to do to respond to the views you have expressed.

Tony Parkinson, Secretary

Your Committee for 2004-5.

All those who were members of the Committee for 2003-4 agreed to stand for another year and in addition James Bond was proposed and seconded. Since the committee was one short of its maximum composition there was no election and James was added to the existing members. All Committee members have responsibilities towards the club and its members, and so that you can understand the tasks that are undertaken, the committee members responsible for each are outlined below. As well as the committee, the club is fortunate to have other members who, although not on the committee, are willing to undertake work on a regular basis to keep the club running smoothly.

Property Maintenance - Mike Ribbins & Tony Parkinson: Finance - Cecile Pattison & David Barnes: Supplies - Janet Barnes: External Competitions - James Bond: Web Site - Vlad Peksa: Computing, Dealing Machine and Internal Competitions - Walter Zwiefelhofer & Tony Parkinson: Special Events & Library - Tim Rees: Chiltern League - John Chamberlain: Monday Organisation - Vlad Peksa & Gungel Akyol: Tuesday Organisation - David Barnes & Mike Ribbins: Thursday Organisation - Andy Fothergill: Marketing and Promotion: Mike Perkins.

If you have concerns please raise them with the appropriate person and the committee will try its best to address them.

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Reading Bridge Club

Minutes of the 57th Annual General Meeting Held on Wednesday 26th May 2004 at 7:30 pm

The meeting was chaired by Ray Dawson.

49. Apologies for Absence.

Tom Moore, Eileen Stokes, Andrew Parker, Jenny Griffiths, Connie Francis, George Francis, Robert Heap, Sue Mullally, Dian Crawford, Tim Rees, Cecile Pattison, Walter Zwiefelhofer.

50. Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the 56th Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 21st May 2003 were taken as read. A motion to approve the minutes was proposed by David Salmon, seconded by Hedy Brown and carried nem con.

51. Matters arising.

There were no matters arising.

52. The Secretary's Annual Report.

Numbers attending (thanks to Ray Dawson for the figures)

Monday had averaged 6.5 tables for the 11 weeks to the end of March 2004

Tuesday 8 tables down 1.5 on last year (but only 7 for the last 6 months)

Thursday 8 tables also down 1.5 on last year (and also dropping in the second half year)

Total (excluding the partial year for Mondays, but including 2 tables of Thursday afternoon Rubber Bridge players), the average was 18 tables per week, down 5 from last year.

In terms of pairs playing in Duplicates the total of 1686 pairs for Tuesday and Thursday was the lowest Ray has ever computed, and was down 25% on last year. Hopefully the Monday attendance will stabilise around the current figure and help to reverse this trend.

Successes

i. County Events (the best Reading performance is identified on the club web site)

Denys Jenkins Swiss Pairs – won by David Barnes and Nigel Guthrie
McDougall Cup for married pairs – won by Graham and Ann Lucy who were also 3rd in the **Mixed Pairs** and teaming up with Helen and Paul Gipson were 3rd in the **Express Cup Swiss Teams**.

Rex Avery Trophy (the County Pairs Championship) - Mike Ribbins and Nigel Guthrie were 3rd.

Reg Capewell Cup (Mens Pairs) – Graham Lucy and Paul Gipson were 3rd.

Davis Cup (Ladies Pairs) – Angela Andrew and partner were 3rd.

Waller Bowl Club Pairs – John Greenhalgh and Tony Parkinson were 3rd (spot the trend).

Committee Cup Club Teams – Andrew Parker, Peter Hawkes, Chris Kinloch, Tony Parkinson and ex-Reading Bridge Club member Richard Bird were 5th.

Autofle County Teams Championship – The winning team who retained their title included Peter Hawkes, Ian Reissmann, Mike Perkins and TimRees.

League of 8

The A Team, captained by David Barnes, regained some of its former glory and topped Division 1. The B team finished in the bottom half of Division 1 but maintained its premiership status for another year. The C Team were 4th in Division 2 thereby failing to regain their top division slot and the "D" team finished 8th in Division 2 and will be challenging for the Division 3 title next year. The "E" Team under Walter Zwiefelhofer disappointed this year by finishing lower than before in Division 5 (8th out of 9) but hopefully bolstered by Gunsel's tutelage on Mondays they will be able to overpower their opposition next year. The club offers its thanks to all who played for the teams and especially to the captains and selectors who do so much work but get all the flak.

League of 4

Mike Perkins (with non-Reading teammates) won Division 1 ahead of the newly promoted Paul Gipson team.

Chiltern League

The A team emulated its Berks & Bucks counterparts by winning the Chiltern League of 8, while the B team came 7th.

ii. National Events

Tim Rees was a regular in the Welsh Camrose team, won the 2 Stars Pairs at Brighton and was 2nd in the Brighton Swiss Teams. Mike Bell and Joseph Mela won the South Bucks Heat of the National Newcomers Pairs with Robert Heap and Elaine Ellery 2nd, Keiron Baldwin and Peter Bamford 4th and Martin Fraser and John Crook 5th. (Nationally Robert and Elaine were the highest placed Reading Pair coming 23rd (out of 330 pairs).) Mike and Joseph also performed well in the Masters Pairs, the Easter Under 25 Tournament and in the Junior Under 19 England Trials. In the Gold Cup Roger Donato and Mike Perkins have teams through to the 4th round.

iii. Club Events

Annual trophies

Presidents Cup – Mike Perkins. **Bridge Plus Cup** – Mike Perkins, Peter Hawkes, Ted Martin and Steve Eginton. **Francis Cup** – David Barnes and Nigel Guthrie. **Founders Trophy** – Pat Dowdeswell and Tim Rees.

6 Monthly trophies – Summer 2002 and Winter 2002/3

Brown Cup – Mike Ribbins and Nigel Guthrie. **Laycock Cup** – Pam Arnold and Tony Parkinson. **Bilbey Cup** – Sue Mullally and Chris Sanders. **Boucher Cup** – Andy Fothergill and Ken Jones

Significant happenings during the year

The two most significant changes during the year were the revamping of the club's web site and the introduction of the Monday evening sessions of Learn and Play.

The old club **web site** had become very dated and did not include much of the information that members would find useful. The committee therefore decided to redesign the site in such a way that we can keep it updated and so that it includes as much as possible of the relevant club data. Vlad Peksa was charged with the design of the site and Walter Zwiefelhofer undertook to mastermind the programming necessary to perform the updates, while your secretary benignly assisted where possible. Once the web site was up and running we ceased using the secretary's private web site on which the Tuesday results had been displayed. Walter's macros were used to update the results on the club site by copying out the result spreadsheet and taking it home to where internet access was available. You will have noticed recently that the scoring computer mysteriously changed its shape. Vlad donated one of his unwanted machines, Walter installed all the software necessary onto the new machine, tested that it worked, installed a line in the club from the machine to the telephone point and generated macros so that the scorer needs only to click on the "Upload" button to get the results on the web. Now therefore they will be available by the time you get home.

The web site contains a rolling latest results feature, so if you let Vlad know all your results (most captains can merely add Vlad to their email address list) then they will be added straight away. If you look at the site and contemplate the vast amount of effort entailed in getting it up and running then I think you will appreciate what Vlad and Walter have done for the club and we thank them for their work.

We still hope to do more. Currently the "Cup" results need to be computed individually. At the moment the secretary just about manages to produce them at the end of each month again using software that Walter has produced. The intention is to link this into the web site so that the tables are updated automatically after each session.

Since the unfortunate closure of the Friday evening sessions just over a year ago the committee had been endeavouring to come up with a format, which would provide a viable session on a third evening, without detracting from the Tuesday and Thursday sessions. The original spark came from members of the "E" team who asked if they could be provided with guidance as to how they should approach Teams play differently to Pairs. Again Vlad picked up the baton (he's had a busy year) and discussed the issues with Gunsel, Tom, Eric and other teachers in the club. He came back to the committee with a proposal to run a session on Monday evenings combining a seminar with a shortened duplicate. After more discussion to refine the concept and produce a series of topics the sessions were launched on 19th January this year. Most of the advertising was done by word of mouth around the local clubs and although there seemed to be considerable interest we awaited the opening night with some trepidation to see if there would be a respectable turnout. As it was we got off to a flying start with about 30 people turning up. Although the numbers have dropped a little from those heady early days we are still getting

around 20 to 25 each week, of whom around half were not club members before the start of these sessions. We have acquired 15 or so new members for the club. Generally Gonsel has kept the punters entertained in his own inimitable style. Amy Leighton is his assistant who looks after the small group who have yet to be convinced they are good enough to join in the general duplicate afterwards, Vlad does the series organizing, Walter produced the "Monday" movements for a 12 board Duplicate, and Vlad, Andy, Walter and myself generally make up the numbers and do the scoring.

Looking Forward

I hope we have a forward to look to. Unfortunately the Borough Council seems to be intent on scuppering our chances. The recent changes to the parking regulations and increased vigilance by the wardens has tended to deter people from coming to the club and makes it very difficult for the club to offer to host external matches.

This, among other things, caused the committee to issue a questionnaire with the AGM notice asking for your views on what influences your attendance and how changes we might make would affect it. I sent out around 200 notices and so far I have 68 questionnaires returned (I gather Andy has some more from members who play on Thursday). This is a fantastic response rate for such a survey, usually a 10% rate is regarded as unexpectedly large, so to get over 30% is exceptional and shows how interested you are in the club and its activities. At the next committee meeting in early June these responses will be seriously considered and we hope to be able to come up with a club program which encourages you all to attend, and which provides you with an environment that you find appealing.

We still have the same tenants in the flat and this is contributing to the gradual improvement of our financial position. The club still has some outstanding indebtedness to those Committee members who paid for most of the external work, and has consequently not yet been able to commence repayments of the loans from members. It is anticipated that the loan repayment program will start within the next few months. I know we said that last year but we believe that we can confidently expect it to begin shortly.

To all of you, thank you for your support over the past year. Enjoy your bridge and support as many as possible of the club events in the next year. Resolve to avoid abusing your opponents (and your partner) in the next year and make the club a friendly place for all members, guests and visitors. We need them all to keep coming back.

Arising from the Secretary's report David Salmon wondered how we might encourage the new Monday attendees to try the Thursday Duplicate experience. Andy Fothergill reported that 2 or 3 pairs who first attended the Monday sessions were now appearing on Thursday. Brian Wood was worried that newcomers from Monday might slow down the Thursday evening session but Andy Fothergill reported that there had been no problems so far and the directors on Thursday would keep the evening moving.

The secretary's report was then accepted.

53. Presentation of the Annual Accounts.

In the absence of the treasurer who was indisposed David Barnes presented the annual accounts. He made 2 main points. The first was that the accounts were unaudited due to the illness of the auditor. However he believed that the accounts represented fairly the financial position of the club. The second point was that after a few exceptional years due to the expenditure on the flat, this year's accounts showed that the year had been "ordinary"; that is that income and expenditure had been substantially Bridge related. He noted that the outstanding liabilities to Committee members who had paid for some of the expenditure on the flat and garden had been substantially reduced (*and would be completely repaid in the next month*). The rise in Table Money and the increased rent received from the flat together with the reduction in expenditure on repairs and redecorations meant that last year's deficit of over £19,000 had been converted into an operating surplus of over £5000. During the coming year the main emphasis would be in paying off the loans that members provided to finance the expenditure on the flat; though there were significant needs in repairs to the furniture.

Hedy Brown asked for confirmation of the amount outstanding in loans to members. This was £7,800. David Salmon queried why the car park rental was lower this year. This was a quirk of the payment schedule. David Salmon also asked about the order of repayment of the members loans, assuming that they would not all be repaid at the same time. It was explained that the treasurer intended to repay loans in the same order as she had received them.

The report was adopted unanimously. Proposer: David Salmon, Seconder: Maureen Dawson

54. Election of Officers.

There had been no necessity for elections to the committee, so the following were deemed to be elected:

President: Ray Dawson. **Secretary:** Tony Parkinson. **Treasurer:** Cecile Pattison
Committee members: James Bond, Andy Fothergill, Vlad Peksa, Mike Perkins, Tim Rees, Mike Ribbins & Walter Zwiefelhofer.

55. Any Other Business

1. Pam Arnold asked that the committee investigated turning the garden into a parking facility. This had been investigated at least twice before and the planning authorities had been unwilling to consider it. In addition the provision of a garden was one of the benefits available via the tenancy agreement for the flat so it would not be possible within the current agreement. The number of spaces that would be available would not significantly improve the overall position and would probably antagonise the neighbours when everyone was leaving late at night three or four evenings a week. Members should use the parking available at the Registry Office; and unofficially members could park in the car park of the Citi Financial building on the corner of Coley Place.

2. Pam Arnold asked if it would not be preferable to provide an urn for hot water so that there would be a supply throughout the evening and it would not be necessary to boil the kettles at a specific time. Mike Ribbins explained that a "normal" Urn gave out large amounts of steam, which given the existing problems with damp which were encountered in the basement was not a sensible option. There were however "condensing" Urns available, which were permanently plumbed in and which did not suffer the steam problem. They were however much more expensive (around £300). This was certainly something that could be investigated once the more compelling calls on our available finances were cleared.

The meeting closed at 20:15

READING BRIDGE CLUB Questionnaire

June 2004

The figures below summarise the responses to the questionnaire, and the actions being put in place as a result.

A. Which day do/did you normally attend?

Monday/Tuesday/Thursday/Friday
7 36 28 1

B. How many times have you played in 2004 (at end of May)

	0	4	8	12	16
All responders	4	16	13	20	13
Tuesday responders	2	10	5	12	6
Thursday responders	2	3	9	7	5

C. Which of the following reasons make you less likely to attend Duplicates regularly?

	All	Tuesday	Thursday
1. Inappropriate level (too High/Low)	3	0	0
2. Too much emphasis on regulations	4	0	4
3. Parking	9	5	2
4. Late finish	24	13	10
5. Too early start	6	4	1
6. Attitude of members	6	2	3
7. Play matches instead.	9	7	3
8. Slow play	19	11	6
9. Transport problems	2	1	0
10. Other personal commitments	27	12	12
11. Play at another club	4	3	1
12. Other reasons (please specify)	6	3	4

D. Some of the actions the committee could take are listed below. Would these make you more or less likely to attend or not make a difference?

		More	No Change	Less
1. Cut out the formal break.	All	20	19	10
	Tues	16	7	5
	Thurs	3	12	5
2. Play less boards.	All	14	21	10
	Tues	6	14	6
	Thurs	8	7	4
3. Enforce speed of play.	All	31	17	3
	Tues	21	8	1
	Thurs	9	9	2
4. Enforce the start time.	All	20	25	
	Tues	16	11	
	Thurs	5	13	
5. Reduce no of League teams.	All	4	36	3
	Tues	3	20	3
	Thurs	1	15	0

The figures reveal that, although there is no single issue that is overwhelming, the most contentious is the time of finishing, this having the most votes overall and on both duplicate evenings individually. Since second place is occupied by the issue of slow play which leads inexorably to a late finish, then the committee deduces that it is necessary to act to bring forward the finish time.

On Tuesdays since the beginning of May there has been a change so that only 12 rounds (24 boards) are played and directors have been instructed to ensure that the pace of play remains at 15 minutes per 2 boards with no new board started later than 10 minutes into the round. This experiment will continue until the end of August. From September to November Tuesday Duplicates will revert to 13 rounds (26 boards) but the formal break will be cut out. The pace of play directive will remain in force. Players will be able to acquire tea, coffee and biscuits whenever they have a suitable opportunity. In late November the membership will be consulted again and asked which scenario they wish to have available in the future.

On Thursdays the session has usually consisted of only 12 rounds and this will continue. The experiment of cutting out the break will operate on Thursdays from September to November also and at the end of this period the members will have the opportunity to decide their preferred option. In order to increase the participation on Thursdays it is hoped to introduce a "Host" system similar to Tuesday so that members whose partnership arrangements have fallen through can be catered for.

The committee believe that by taking these actions now, it will be possible by the end of the year for the Duplicate sessions to be operating in the way that the majority of members wish. Please continue to support the club during these experiments even if it is not your own preferred option as the committee believe that by doing so you will be better able to decide on the way forward at the end of the experimental period.