**MCBA AGM 2020 Paper 1: Report of Officers to AGM**

**4.1 Chair (Irene Davies)**

It’s been a funny old year. Everything seemed to be fine until March. Numbers playing bridge in MCBA clubs were holding steady. Our best players were doing well in National competitions. Despite not having a Tournament Secretary the numbers at Manchester competitions were steady and some even increasing. Teaching was going well at 5 of our clubs..........and then there was a pandemic and subsequent lockdown. We have not been able to play face to face club or tournament bridge since 17th March.

The highlight of the playing year must be our players successes in the World Championships. Alan Mould and John Holland getting a silver medal in the Seniors, Catherine Draper a bronze medal in the Women’s and Michael Byrne coming so close to medal in the play off for the Bronze in the Mixed.

  Sadly, we lost some of our most loved players this year. Bernard Goldenfield, one of Manchester's strongest and best known and loved bridge players and a constant presence at bridge events both locally and nationally for around six decades. Michael Newman one of Manchester’s best players and a stalwart of Manchester Bridge Club and more recently Bill Hirst , another great Manchester player for many years.

**Membership**

The Clubs in the County remain reasonably healthy up to March. The drive on beginner’s lessons although successful had not yet properly fed through into club membership and participation. On the basis of player sessions across the county participation was down 5.8% compared to 2 years ago, but down a negligible 0.2% compared to last year. This is after excluding the newly affiliated clubs who joined in that period. These would seem quite positive figures. Attendance at County events has also maintained a reasonably high level.

**The On-line Bridge World**

However, the pandemic changed the world and our bridge part of it. We must congratulate the small group of forward thinking people who had set up tournaments on line for Manchester players by 30th March. Adam Wiseberg also set up an excellent guide to playing bridge on-line on YouTube. The initial sessions have developed into the 7 sessions that are put on currently, giving 320+ player sessions a week. At first this was free but we were persuaded by the EBU that we should be paying UMS on these sessions and so became a virtual club charging $3 a game and paying the directors. Of course, all this is new (we are in unprecedented times) and so there is ongoing discussion about the nature of these sessions. Once a month we have had a charity pairs on a Wednesday morning and this has been popular and raised lots of money for charities. (There will be a more detailed report from the on-line sub-Committee)

Alongside this some of our clubs have set up their own virtual clubs. Manchester Bridge Club is running 9 general sessions, 1 improvers session and a beginners’ class is continuing. They are averaging about 260 players sessions a week.

Stretford Bridge Club have joined with Brierfield BC and Warrington BC to set up a virtual club that meets 4 times a week and averages about 160+ player sessions a week. Ashton BC have set up a virtual club at the end of May and they now have 3 sessions a week averaging about 100 players sessions.

Other initiatives have been taken such as teams of 8 matches between different clubs. A Manchester Lockdown League is being set up. Altrincham and Cheadle / Bramhall have both organised one off club members only sessions. This will stand the clubs in good stead when F2F bridge returns. However, over all we are probably getting less than 50% of our members playing in organised on line games. Some will be playing bridge socially on line. The key to increasing this number would seem to be club based sessions where players can meet their friends on line and play but this is not always possible to organise because of the financial constraints and the lack of IT skills among the leadership of some clubs.

**The EBU**

The EBU has clearly been hit hard by lockdown as UMS revenue dived dramatically as clubs were closed. The treasurer had already in the previous year flagged up concerns about finances and UMS had been increased and some services to members reduced.

To regain revenue the EBU organised 5 daily sessions for bridge players, the Lockdown League and encouraged the establishment of Virtual on-line clubs and the paying of UMS by these clubs. The income from these sources go a long way to sustaining the finances of the EBU.

**Teaching**

The one area that is clearly suffering is that of the beginners’ lessons that clubs had so successfully introduced in the Autumn. Commercial teachers like Mr. Bridge have stepped in to fulfil this need but this does not connect to the clubs and will not result in the increase in membership we were looking for in our campaign. Zoom can be used for teaching but it is difficult to accommodate more than one table of students on BBO for the interactive play part of the lesson. Some software does exist and is being developed to enable this process. However, most teachers would need some training in the IT skills necessary to be competent at this. Autumn was a very important time in the acquisition of new members through beginners’ lessons. It is unlikely that we will be able to run those lessons F2F this Autumn. Perhaps we need to think of teaching bridge on line as the way forward in the future.

**The Future**

We do not know when F2F bridge will return. Bridge clubs are not conducive to social distancing or the hygiene necessary to protect from the virus so we are not optimistic about the possibilities of a quick return. When it does happen we will have to develop rigorous health and safety procedures to ensure the health of our players. we are sure that on-line bridge will still have a big role to play in our game whatever happens

When F2F does return clubs may find they do not have same numbers at sessions as before and all the bills and more that they had previously. This may be the most difficult time for clubs. The work they do now in engaging with their members will hopefully pay dividends later. But we may be in for a rough ride in times ahead.

**Practical Matters**

The merger of Cheadle Hulme and Bramhall bridge clubs will go ahead at the end of Summer.

Dave Tilley has volunteered to take on the duties of Tournament Secretary.

Since the very sad death of Mike Newman we need at least one more person for the selection committee.

We have created a new sub-Committee for the On-line work. Its present members are Adam Wiseberg, Alec Smalley, Espen Gisvold, Dave Tilley, Victor Ridding, Joy Blakey and Irene Davies.

**Roll Of Honour**

**26th May 2019 - July 2020**

**Spring Bank Holiday Congress**

Michael Byrne, playing with Dinah Caplan came second in the pairs A final at Stratford on 26thMay.

**Hubert Phillips Final**

In a very close final Alan Mould's team (John Holland, Jackie Pye, Jeff Smith) just lost to Sally Brock's team (Barry Myers, Phil King, Robert Sheehan) at Spondon on 28th May.  The winning margin for the Brock team was 430 aggregate points.

**Corwen Trophy**

The inter-county pairs event took place at Daventry on 1st-2nd June.  John Holland and Rodney Lighton finished tenth. Joy and Irving Blakey were doing very well in third place before the final session but dropped to 15th.  John Roberts and Peter Foster finished 24th overall, Karen Reissmann and Irene Davies finished just below halfway.

**Pachabo**

The team of John Holland, Alan Mould, Michael Byrne and Michael Newman  retained the Pachabo Trophy (inter-county teams of four) over the weekend of 8-9th June at Coventry. Although Manchester lost their last match by the narrowest margin, they held on to the top spot by 1.5 points.  This continues Manchester's fine record in this event with the third win since 2015, the other two years they finished second.

**Yorkshire Congress**

Martin Taylor playing with Barbara Hackett won the main pairs final at Harrogate on 8th June and  Paul Beckwith and Neil Thomas won the secondary pairs final.

**European Open**

The European Open Championships took place in Istanbul from 15-29th June. Manchester players participating were Michael Byrne in the Leslie team in the Open and John Holland in the Penfold team in the Seniors. Both teams qualified for the knock out phase from the Swiss event, where the Leslie team lost in the round of 32, the Penfold won their quarter final match but lost in the semi-finals, thus earning a bronze medal.  In the open teams Justin and Jason Hackett played in the Mossop team which won the event.

**Riviera Congress**

Gary Hyett  won the Swiss Teams at Torquay on 30th June playing with Alan Cooke, Robert Miller and Bill Taylor.

**EBU Summer Seniors**

John Holland and Raymond Semp won the Swiss Teams at Eastbourne with Frank Wharton and Geoff Foley from Middlesex by a large margin on 7th July.

**Bronze Medal for Michael's Juniors**

The English Juniors, with Michael Byrne as their non-playing captain, won two bronze medals at Oslo in the European Championships.

**EBU Scarborough Summer Congress**

In the Senior's pairs on July 24-25th John Holland and Jackie Pye were second, Paul Murray and Peter Grauer were first equal in the B final.  In the teams on July 26th John and Jackie won the B final with Bill Hirst and Jeremy Dhondy.

**Preston Blue Point Swiss Pairs**

Several Manchester pairs competed in this event on Sunday 4th August.  Rodney Lighton and John Currie were best placed finishing third.

**EBU Summer Congress**

In the mid-week Seniors Pairs at Eastbourne on 6th August, Alan Nelson playing with former Manchester player Bill Hirst was second in the A final, with Kath Nelson and Rhona Goldenfield sixth.  John Holland won the B final with Alan Cooke.

Gary Hyett won the Mixed Pivot Teams on 7th August with Brian Senior, Ros Wolfarth and Sue Millard; Rhona Goldenfield, Kath and Alan Nelson were third with David Dickson. In the Senior Swiss Teams on 7-8th August John Holland's team won, Gary Hyett's team were third.

John Holland and Rhona Goldenfield were second in the Mixed Pairs on 8th August.

Michael Byrne was second in the Brighton Bowl with Kieran Dyke, Barry Myers and Sally Brock over the final weekend.

**Northern Midweek Congress**

John Holland and Alan Mould won the three session pairs at Harrogate on 20-21st August by a good margin.

**Bolton Congress**

Rodney Lighton and John Currie won the pairs at Bolton on Saturday 31st August by a good margin. In fourth place were Stephen Ward and Paul Morrell.  In the Teams on Sunday Alec Smalley, Barbara Lewis, Irene Davies and Karen Reissmann were second, with Kath & Alan Nelson, Stuart Shalom and Daniel Kelsall fourth.

**Welsh Foursomes**

Jeff Smith, Jeff Morris, John Hassett, Peter Foster and John Roberts won the Welsh Fours at Wrexham over the weekend of 14-15th September.

**LCBA Mixed Pairs**

Rhona Goldenfield and Jeff Morris won the Lancashire Mixed Pairs at Poulton on Sunday 22nd September.

**World Championships Silver for Seniors, Bronze for Women**

The World Championships were held in Wuhan, China from 14th-28th September.  England had a team in each of the four events: Open, Women, Mixed and Senior.  Manchester players involved were John Holland and Alan Mould in the Seniors and Michael Byrne playing with Fiona Brown in the Mixed and Catherine Draper playing with Gillian Fawcett in the Women's.

In the quarter finals, the Open team lost to USA 1 after leading by a large margin, the Women won comfortably against Poland, the Seniors scraped a four IMP win against China with John and Alan playing throughout and the Mixed team won against Latvia, having been 20 down after the fourth set.

The Seniors turned their semi-final against The Netherlands round with an amazing 79 IMP win in the fourth set and won by 77 IMPs. The Women lost heavily to Sweden conceding with one set to go. The Mixed team have done very well, but lost a fairly close match to the USA by 28.

In the **Seniors** final England lost to Denmark, therefore getting a **silver medal**. **John and Alan** who played every board in the knockout phase and most of the qualifying matches.

The Women won their bronze medal match in a dramatic finish, overtaking the Netherlands on the last board, many congratulations to **Catherine** and the team.

The Mixed Team got close to overhauling Romania in the last set when **Michael** and Fiona bid and made two slams not bid by the opponents, but our other pair pressed too hard on a couple of boards and Romania won by 24. Congratulations to all the team who have done very well to finish fourth in the inaugural World Mixed Teams.

**Cumbria & Westmorland GP Pairs**

Eddie Thornton-Chan and Tony Hodgson were second in this event on Sunday 29th September at Kendal.

**Premier League**

The English Premier League took place in the autumn of 2019. Manchester players involved were Ollie Burgess, Jeff Morris, John Hassett, Catherine Draper, Andrew Woodcock in Susanna Gross's team in division 1.They finished in 8th place and are demoted to Division 2. Michael Byrne was in Tim Leslie's team, who won the second division and are therefore promoted. John Holland and Alan Mould were in Sandra Penfold's team and finished second in division 2 and are therefore also promoted. Peter Foster, John Roberts and Peter Jones are in Peter Foster's team in division 3 and finished twelfth. Josh Clarke and Henry Bissell played in the junior team in division 3 on the final weekend.

**Great Northern Swiss Pairs**

56 pairs played in this competition over the weekend of the 6/7th October in Leeds. The best placed Manchester player was Gary Hyett who was 5th, playing with Alan Cooke. Martin Taylor was 7th, playing with Barbara Hackett and Peter Grauer and Paul Murray were 9th

**Gold Cup Finals**

The finals of Britain's main knock out competition took place in London over the weekend of 13-14th October.  Manchester participation consisted of Alan Mould and John Holland playing in the Senior team. John and Alan lost a close semi-final match on the Saturday.

**North Wales Green Point Pairs**

Rhona Goldenfield won at Northop on Sunday 13th October with Jeff Smith of Lancashire.

**EBU Autumn Congress**

Ollie Burgess won the Two Stars Pairs at Stratford with Heather Dhondy on 19th October.  In the teams John Hassett won playing with Dave Debbage, Paul Hackett and John Sansom.

**Chester Bowl**

Rhona Goldenfield won at Deva on Sunday 20th October playing with Mark Weeks of Merseyside. In the consolation final Stephen Ward and Paul Morrell were second.

**Lancashire Congress**

In the Lancashire Congress at Preston Bridge Club on 26-27th October, John Currie and Rodney Lighton won the Swiss Pairs by a good margin,winning all their matches. In the Swiss Teams Paul Beckwith, Andy Green, Stephen Ward and Paul Morrell were second.

**EBU Seniors Congress**

In the Seniors at Daventry over the weekend of November 1st to 3rd Rhona Goldenfield and Raymond Semp finished third in the A Final with Gary Hyett playing with Alan Cooke fourth.

**European Open Trials**

The second stage of the European Open trials took place from 22nd-24th November at Derby. Michael Byrne played with Kieran Dyke of London.  They won the trial, leading throughout most of the weekend, only losing two of fifteen matches. The final stage of the England trials for the European Open took place in London from 3rd-6th January. Michael Byrne played with Kieran Dyke and finished fourth. Ten pairs took part, with the top two guaranteed selection.

**Seniors Trials**

Trials for the England team to play in the Teltscher Trophy (Senior Camrose) took place from 14-15th December in Solihull. Alan Mould and John Holland playing in the Mossop team won comfortably, they will represent England in the event in Ireland in May (now cancelled).

**Year End Congresses**

Manchester players did well at Blackpool and London.

· Rhona Goldenfield won the Mixed Pairs at Blackpool with Jeff Smith.

· John Holland second in the Mixed Pairs at Blackpool with Jackie Pye.

· Ollie Burgess fourth with Mark Weeks in the Swiss Pairs at Blackpool.

· Gary Hyett and Peter Carey-Yard fifth in the Swiss Pairs at Blackpool.

· Michael Byrne third with Sally Brock in the Mixed Pairs at London.

· John Holland and Rhona Goldenfield won the Swiss Teams at Blackpool playing with Jackie Pye and Jeff Smith respectively.

**Preston Blue Point Teams**

Neil Thomas, Nicholas Greer, Rodney Lighton and John Currie won the teams at Preston on 12th January.  They won on a split tie.  In the consolation event Bill Bentley, Rhona Goldenfield, Kevin and Celia Comrie were also in a split tie for first place, but they lost the tie split. .

**Lancashire Cross-IMP Pairs**

Rhona Goldenfield playing with Jeff Smith won at Preston on 18th January.  Jeff Morris and Kath Nelson were fourth.

**French Trials**

The French Bridge Federation played their final weekend of trials for Europen Open selection on the weekend of 24-26th January.  They invited six English pairs to play against their participants. Among the English pairs were John Holland and Alan Mould and Michael Byrne playing with Kieran Dyke.

**Chester Congress**

The congress at Deva on 25-26th January was well attended as usual with a fair number of Manchester participants.  Neil Thomas and Paul Beckwith were fourth in the pairs final, Steve Mattinson and Ann Thornton third in the consolation pairs final.  In the Swiss Teams Steve Harris, Mike Parr and Joyce White were third with Babs Matthews of Cumbria.

**Senior European Trials**

Trials for the Senior European Team took place in London on 1st-2nd Feb.  There were two teams: David Mossop's team included John Holland, Jeremy Dhondy's team included John Hassett. The Mossop team won a fluctuating contest by 31 IMPs and go on to represent England in the championships in Funchal, Madeira in June (now cancelled).

**Master Points**

For the third year in a row, John Holland has won the Sunday Telegraph Salver, for the most Master Points earned in the calendar year. John, who has won the competition on seven previous occasions, earned 25,760 points in 2019. Gary Hyett, was second with 23,083.

**Ranked Masters Pairs**

In the Premier Grand Master Pairs on 29th February- 1st March Kath Nelson came third playing with Steve Auchterlonie. The event was won by Dave Debbage and Paul Hackett.

**Eric Howarth Teams**

Rhona Goldenfield, John Holland, Michael Byrne & Alan Mould won the Green Point Teams at Deva on 8th March.

**Olympiad Open Trials**

The Olympiad open trials took place in London on 13th- 17th March. Michael Byrne played with Kieran Dyke in the Leslie team. Michaels team failed to progress to the knockout stage.

**EBU Lockdown League**

Michael Byrnes team have won the first 3 seasons of the EBU Lockdown League. His team mates were Kieran Dyke, Mike and Sarah Bell, Ben Norton & Nicola Smith.

**Congratulations to All**

**4.2 Secretary (Alan Mould)**

Until lockdown this was a very quiet year in terms of my role as secretary, with absolutely no matters of any import to report to the AGM. There were the usual documents from the EBU on matters such as insurance, entry to the Tollemache, Pachabo, Corwen Trophy, etc. and the papers for the EBU AGM to be forwarded. Council has met twice as usual and I kept with the documentation for that.

Since lockdown, the workload has increased. The senior officers have met several times by zoom to discuss matters, mostly related to the MCBA online events. Work on the online AGM is ongoing at the time of writing and it is clear that it will require a lot of input from officers of the Association to make it work smoothly. You will be able to judge at the AGM if we have managed that.

One item to report on is from the last AGM where a resolution was passed to forma working group to look at the County’s reserves. The result was this was a report back to the Council meeting of 24/10/2019 as follows:

“This working group, convened by the secretary, had several email conversations and consulted the treasurer, accounts preparer, and auditor, over the sensible level of reserves for an organisation such as MCBA to hold. The conclusions were:

1. The sensible level of reserves was around £7,500 - £10,000
2. Given the uncertainty over the costs of the competitions for this year that it was not possible to predict what the surplus (if any) would be, and therefore not possible to predict what the County’s reserves would be.

The working group thus determined that the only prudent course of action was to do nothing this year and refer the matter back to the 2020 AGM.”

Given the changed nature of the situation since lockdown it is prudent that this matter is left until the next AGM (at least).

**4.3 Treasurer (Joy Blakey) (accounts attached separately as Papers 1a & 1b)**

The Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020 are available in the form of:

1. Income and Expenditure Account
2. Balance Sheet
3. Notes to the Accounts
4. Hon. Auditor’s Statement.

A profit for the year of £2,200 is recorded.

Events which made a loss last year either broke even or made a smaller loss this year; The Green Pointed events (as usual) showed a profit in excess of £800 and the Manchester Congress a profit of £1,000 – this was due largely to a reduction in room hire fees and a small increase in the numbers attending – we did give more prizes this year. Whilst income from league entries increased on last year so did our expenses. There were the usual tournaments, team entries and expenses but all in all a very successful year for the County. Our bank and building society accounts remain healthily in credit.

I thank all the tournament and congress managers for their excellent accounting skills and communications with me. Plans that we did have in place for next year have obviously been put on hold and a reshaping of our bridge lives has been necessary to cope with the huge impact that Covid-19 has had on us all. There is still much work for the Treasurer – albeit different!

Thanks also to Howard Stubbings for preparing the Accounts and to Peter Green for his audit of them.

**4.4 Membership Secretary (Karen Sandler)**

 **Membership July 2020**

The number of lines on the EBU membership list is now 1456, which is a worrying drop in numbers overall, but perhaps does not tell the whole story.

The analysis of this is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| P2P | **1384** |
| Direct members |  **47** |
| (Teachers – EBTA) Included in PTP |  **(27)** |
| (Juniors (under 25) – Identified as students |  **20** |
| Fast track student |  **0** |
| Total from spreadsheet | **1453** |

As usual, this does not add up properly, but the discrepancy is only 2.

The important figures are the PTP. We have a critical threshold of 1200+. The numbers are erratic but appear to be bearing up. I believe the explanation of the rise in numbers is the new clubs. However, this is tempered by the unfortunate number of deaths we have had in the last year.

Looking back at the PTP numbers, they were as follows:

March 2018 1292

October 2018 1359

March 2019 1383

May 2019 1323

The previous report is shown below.

The number of lines on the EBU membership list is now 1513. The analysis of this is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| P2P | **1463** |
| Direct members |  **49** |
| (Teachers - EBTA |  **(27)** |
| (Juniors (under 25) |  **(17)** |
| Fast track student |  **1** |
| Total from spreadsheet | **1513** |

This does actually add up – 1463 + 49 + 1 = 1513. However, it makes no sense if compared to previous numbers below. We seem to have another 138 PTP players, at a time when we know there have been a number of deaths within club membership. As the membership data by club is known to be unreliable, it is impossible to reconcile or investigate from this spreadsheet.

One explanation is that the (still incomprehensible) spreadsheet includes members of clubs who are not within the Manchester area. This means that they are PTP players, but not in Manchester, but must be primary Manchester players, even though they do not play here. There are other PTP players who are in non-affiliated bridge clubs in the Manchester area. I am really not sure how we reconcile these figures. Some names immediately stand out, but I will not name them within this report, for data protection reasons.

Yet another anomaly is the descriptions of the clubs themselves. If you take the figures as reliable (which I don’t), for example there appear to be only 38 members of Bramhall Bridge Club within the EBU. I find this hard to believe. However, there is also a Bramhall Green Bridge Club, which I think might be Brookdale Bridge Club. This is a very healthy bridge club, but tends to be social. Some other bridge clubs are described as slightly differing names too.

We used to be able to rely on the PTP number, and that was what we measured against regarding the “health” of the membership. This figure now seems to be totally unreliable.

**4.5 League Secretary (Adam Wiseberg)**

The league started well.

With the help of Jeff Morris and some direct canvassing I managed to attract a number of new teams to Div. 7 enabling me to run two parallel divisions of 7 and 6 teams respectively.

Team numbers were

Div 1 11

Div 2 10 - one later withdrew due to the death of the captain

Div 3 10

Div 4 10

Div 5 9

Div 6 8

Div 7a 7

Div 7b 6

When F2F bridge stopped there were a number of unplayed matches.Teams were offered the option of playing these matches online and a small number took advantage of this. The final play by date was extended to 11th July after which the unplayed matches were resolved using an adaption of the Mould formula.

The final league positions can be seen on the EBU site with links from both the County websites. St Titus won Division 1 again.

**4.6 Higson Cup Secretary (Adam Wiseberg)**

The cup competition was revised this year to included handicaps. Teams were handicapped according to the division they play in.

46 teams entered and all played in round 1. 23 qualified for round 2 and 1 team got a bye to round 3.

12 teams were due to play round 3. When lockdown arrived and F2F bridge was suspended three matches had been played.

At the moment the cup is suspended until it is reasonable to complete it.

The 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.

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 the time we had to stop playing face to face bridge.

As with the cup the competition will resume when possible. The plate final will be contested between 8 teams, probably playing a total of 42 boards.

The outcome of the handicap system was that two knock out match results were reversed.

I think that it was a success in that all teams have played more matches than in previous seasons. I would be inclined to increase the handicaps in a future season.

**4.7 Goldstone Trophy Secretary (Roger Hopton)**

The Goldstone for the 2019/20 season had progressed to the semi final stage, and all gone to plan with teams finishing their matches on time, and no byes required. The lock down stopped the competition, I am hopeful the remaining matches can be played on line, although there is no compulsary finish date at the moment. I believe the teams consider it possible to play on line, but I do not think it right to force them to do so and thus no end date has been put on the event.

It is far from clear yet whether the 2020/21 Goldstone Trophy can go ahead and it will depend entirely on when face to face bridge returns. If the 2020/21 Goldstone Trophy cannot be run, then the winners of the 2019/20 event will be the Manchester representatives in the 2021 Pachabo.

**4.8 Green Point Secretary (Rhona Goldenfield)**

 The teams July 2019 was full with 26 teams. The winners were Ollie Burgess, Mark Weekes, Gillian Fawcett, and Catherine Draper. It was directed by Henry Bissell and Joan Lewis. The profit was £460.

The pairs in March 2020 had 24 tables. It was full until there were 3 cancellations because of the start of the Covid-19 crisi and one pair one of whom thought it was the Sunday. I did refund their entry as the person in question is a good supporter of MCBA and was genuinely sorry. Winners were Catherine Draper and Andrew Petrie. The profit was £400. It was again directed again by Henry and Joan.

The teams in July this year was of course cancelled due to the pandemic.

St. Peters Hall is booked for 2021 for the pairs on March 6th and the teams on August 1st. Hopefully they will be able to take place. I have given the dates to Joan and Henry. Joan acknowledged it. I have not heard from Henry.

As usual I must thank Joan for her tremendous help. Always first to arrive last to leave and all the preparation she does. I am also grateful to Jeff Smith who liaises with Joan and is always on hand to help.

**4.9 Tournament Secretary (Vacant)**

The Tournament Secretary position was vacant at the last AGM. Below are the minutes of the last two Tournament Committee meeting before lockdown:

Intermediate Pairs events

Adam suggested the name was changed but after some discussion and suggestions it was agreed to keep it the same.

Suggestions were Really Easy J High No Fear.

In future the intermediate events would be stratified giving out more prizes and taking more photos.

Adam said there were 13 teams in the 2 Div 7 and he had all the email addresses and would email all players about the intermediate/non expert events.

It was decided to hold another non expert event in July/Aug to be called Really

Easy for NGS 8.

Cantor Cup

Ray Ashleigh to run and he has everything under control.

Joy is to ask Martin Cantor about better use of the money we hold for this event.

Generally, it was felt that it would be useful to hold transition sessions to try to encourage more social bridge players to join in duplicates.

Green Pointed Events

Venue and Directors booked for 2020 and Rhona will organise as usual.

Ben Franks

John Roberts will make every effort to get players from out of the area.

Gazette Cup

Ann T will organise it is Feb 2nd team of 8 £80 including refreshments.

Higson Cup

Final will be 6 teams and the plate will be 9 or 10. It was decided to use Manchester Bridge Club where food can be provided or players can bring their own.

Tournament Committee met in January 2020

We agreed to stay at the V&A for 2021. Congress will be held on the 2/3 January 2021. Setting up of the venue will be on the afternoon of the 1st January. Although this date might have some down sides it has the advantage of not clashing with the Midlands Congress or the Camrose. The cost of the venue will be the same as in 2020.

Heating:The issue of heating has again been raised with the Hotel. The hotel has agreed to put the heating on the day before and provide fan heaters for the cold end of the room. The hotel is having the whole room refurbished in 2020 and hopes to find a way to overcome the problems.

Parking: We agreed to make the leaflet and web site clearer about parking at the hotel and the reduced price parking at the NCP on Stanley Street.

Lack of space: We agreed to arrange the tables in a better formation to provide more space.

Directors: We agreed that Henry Bissell and Nicholas Greer would direct and ask them to direct the Higson final for director practice.

Entry fees: we discussed the treasurer’s suggestion re a reduction for those paying by BACs but this was felt to be too expensive. Suggestions were made re *IZettle* or similar card payment device at the door.

Pairs seeding: We decided to seed pairs as well as teams, seeding approximately the top 10-12 pairs to distribute equally among sections.

Since the lockdown all MCBA events apart from online events have been cancelled. It is still unclear whether the Congress in January 2021 will take place or not.

**4.10 Congress Secretary (Irene Davies)**

The Manchester Congress took place over the weekend of 4-5th January at the Victoria and Albert Hotel. We welcomed Jovanka Smederevac, an Austrian World Champion, several Norwegian players, Scottish and Welsh players as well as English players from all over the country to make this an international congress.

The congress was well attended with 62 pairs in the championship event, 33 teams on the Sunday and 21 and 27 pairs in the Intermediate events on Saturday and Sunday respectively. Congratulations to all the winners. Dave Debbage and Andrew Woodcock won the pairs for the third time in four years, Leslie Klein and Jeff Smith won the Men's Pairs prize, Suzy Lawson and Alan Jarvis the Mixed Pairs and Rhona Goldenfield and Marianne Farr the Women's Pairs. The championship teams was renamed the Bernard Goldenfield Congress Teams this year in memory of one of Manchester's greatest players who died last year.  A magnificent new trophy was presented in his memory. The event was won by Sally Brock, Barry Myers, Jovanka Smederevac and Rodney Lighton. Will and Sam Wakefield won the prize for the best juniors over the weekend.

In the Intermediate events Harold Weinstock and Tomi Komoly won the Players Progress Cup on the Saturday, Vanessa and Clement Goldstone the Kevin Comrie cup on the Sunday.

The following is a summary of what we planned before the COVID Crisis:

* We agreed to stay at the V&A for 2021. Congress to be held on the 2/3 January 2021. The cost of the venue will be the same as in 2020. We are addressing the issues of heating, parking and spacing of tables.  We agreed that Henry Bissell and Nicholas Greer would direct.
* Because of the COVID crisis all planning for this is on hold as we do not know when Face to Face Bridge will return and what restrictions we will encounter. Accordingly, we have not yet paid the deposit for the hotel.

**4.11 Chair of Selectors (Alan Mould)**

 I would like to start this report by noting the sad and untimely death of Michael Newman and paying tribute to the many years of service he gave to the MCBA Selection Committee. In my time on the Committee, Michael was unique in that he had a detailed knowledge of players at all levels of the game, from international standard to those at C team level. He was a fierce champion of bringing new pairs in to play for the county, and many pairs have Michael’s advocacy to thank for their first game at county level. Michael’s abilities will be sorely missed in the Committee.

At the 2019 MCBA AGM, all of the selection committee members re-stood and were elected unopposed, so the Committee remained as Roger Hopton, Alan Mould, Michael Newman, John Roberts and Adam Wiseberg.

During the last 15 months, the Committee has met twice face to face, has had four teleconferencing calls, three Zoom meetings since lockdown, and innumerable email conversations. Much of the day to day work of the Committee, including all availability and selections etc is now kept online in a shared Drobox folder, which, as usual and as ever, we have to thank Adam Wiseberg for setting up.

At the first meeting:

* Alan Mould was elected chair for the year, nem. con.
* Teams for the President’s Cup (A and B) and the All Counties super final A and B divisions were confirmed, having previously been agreed by tele-conference and email correspondence.
* Teams for rounds 1 and 2 of the Northern League were selected.
* The team for the Derbyshire match was selected

At the second meeting, teams for the Northern League rounds 3 and 4 (with the exception of the A division) and the Tollemache qualifier were selected, as well as reviewing captains reports from all matches played to date were selected.

Teleconferencing calls determined the A division selections for the finals rounds of the Northern League and the team for the Tollemache final.

Results

In the Derbyshire match, MCBA won by a small margin, having been 24 imps adrift at half time.

In the Inter Counties super final (A division), Manchester was comfortably in front at half time, but blew it in the second half to finish third. In the B division, the team sadly finished a poor last.

In the President’s Cup, the A team finished 2nd to Merseyside and Cheshire, 8 VPs behind them, with Manchester B bringing up the rear.

In the Northern League, Manchester 1 won the A Division as usual with Manchester 2 avoiding the wooden spoon finally, finishing above Lincolnshire. Yorkshire dominated the B division, finishing almost 2 matches clear of Manchester who were second. Manchester 1 won the C division, with Manchester 2 a very credible 5th out of 8. It is sad, particularly for the C division winners, that they will have no opportunity to play in the Inter Counties super final.

In the Tollemache, the inevitable story sadly seems to repeat itself. The team won its qualifying group comfortably but could not repeat that form in the final. The team finished second yet again, this time a full 20VPs behind Middlesex, who led from post to post.

Every year the Committee has problems of availability, particularly for the Northern League, but this year has been particularly bad. Round 3 clashed with the world championships in Wuhan which involved three of the county’s leading players, whereas round 4 took place on the Gold Cup finals weekend, which takes out two of the county’s leading players. In addition, there have been a number of other players unavailable for matches, and a particularly large number of dropouts, making the Committee’s ongoing work very difficult as it was constantly firefighting in order to get a team to the table at all.

My own availability for dealing with Committee work has been severely limited this year, and much of the difficulties around players dropping out had to be dealt with whilst I was in China. I would like to offer my thanks to the enormous amount of work put in by all members of the Committee, but in particular by Adam Wiseberg, who shouldered the responsibility for all of the communications over this period.

There have again been considerable problems with the Match Secretary not informing reserves for matches that they are reserves, with the result that when they are called on, they have arranged something else as they did not know. This has caused the Committee considerable waste of time and effort as new pairs are searched for to fill the gaps. However, this does seem to have resolved itself now.

Obviously since lockdown the work of the Committee has been altered. A new Committee should have elected at the AGM in May, but that having been delayed, the old Committee has continued. The Northern Bridge League (the main work of the Committee) has been cancelled, and it seems there is no appetite in Derbyshire to hold the Derbyshire match. However, the Presidents Cup is running online over 11 weeks(!!). Manchester again decided to enter two teams, and the Committee decided to offer as many pairs as possible the opportunity to play for one of the teams. This has resulted in different teams for each week, which has produced a lot of work for the Committee and the Match Secretary, particularly as an online form has to be filled out with every BBO name for each week. However, the Committee is getting to grips with this now. The event will not finish until well after the AGM. It is unknown at the time of writing whether the Tollemache will go ahead or not, and if so whether it will be F2F or online. That is likely to be the only work for the Committee this season once the Presidents Cup ends.

I have decided that it is appropriate for me to stand down from the Selection Committee, which means it has two vacancies. At the time of writing, there are two excellent candidates in Michael Byrne and Rhona Goldenfield. Adam Wiseberg, Roger Hopton and John Roberts have indicated their willingness to stand again for the Committee. I wish the new committee every success.

**4.12 Match Secretary (Michael Byrne)**

Northern League

This year Manchester had 2 A teams, a B team and 2 C teams.

In the A Division, Manchester 1 got off to a slow start, with many of the top player missing from the roster. A storming 3rd week (in which they came 2nd) saw them take the lead by 1 vp, and a solid 4th week saw them retain their title by 12 vps.

The Manchester 2 team struggled but were competitive in their final match and pulled themselves up to 6th.

This season saw the most diversity amongst the results with Merseyside winning week 3 having been bottom in week 2, Lincolnshire winning week 2 and coming bottom in week 3. Manchester and Yorkshire 2 were winners of week 4 and Yorkshire 1 won the first week.

Manchester 1 - Kath and Alan Nelson, John Holland, Rhona Goldenfield, David Barton, Leslie Klein, Tom Slater, Alec Smalley, Rodney Lighton, John Currie, Pete Foster, John Roberts, Jeff Morris, Royce Alexander, John Stell, Gary Hyett, Joy and Irving Blakey

Manchester 2 - Steve Mattinson, Joyce White, Paul Beckwith, Andy Green, John Roberts, Pete Foster, Lance Bloohn, Roger Hopton, Eddie Thornton Chan, Tony Hodgson, Alan Nelson, Kath Nelson, Joy and Irving Blakey, Melo Pelham, Rod Franks, Stuart Shalom, Daniel Kelsall, Phil Taylor, Josh Clarke, Dhun Dhaji, Howard Stubbings, Royce Alexander, Tom Slater, John Stell, Rhona Goldenfield

In the B Division, Manchester came a very respectable 2nd place but couldn’t quite match the blistering pace of Yorkshire who were 40 vps clear after week 1.

Eddie Thornton Chan, Tony Hodgson, Neil Thomas, Gillian McMullan, Mel Pelham, Rod Franks, Stephen Ward, Chris Hine, Joyce Jones, Joyce White, David Fussell, Royce Alexander, Eve Lighthill, Howard Kaye, Dhun Dhaji, Howard Stubbings, Janet Tolan, Victor Ridding, Dave Sarabowski, Sam Herman, Chris Ward, Stephen Hine.

In the C Division, Manchester 1 got off to a great start, winning the first match by 16 VPs. The 2nd and 3rd weeks saw a medium performance and gave them a good margin of victory going into week 3, which they needed! The gap closed to 10Vps ahead of one of the Yorkshire teams.

The Manchester 2 team were more consistent in being mid table, but without the benefit of any stand out performances had to settle for 5th out of 9 a respectable debut.

C1 – Adam Wiseberg, Jonathan Engler, Karen Reissman, Irene Davids, Barbara Eastabrook, Karen Jones, Phil Taylor, Josh Clarke, Annie Thornton, Rod Franks, Gordon Bickley, Ann Farquar, Paul Murray, Peter Grauer, Gil Fletcher and Richard Acaster.

C2 - Liz and Steve Halstead, Kaith Boulton, Nigel Pearce, Suzanne Beckett, Adele Hodari, Andrea Mills, David Welsh, Phil Hayward, Nigel Catterral, Tricia Blum, Simon Townsend, Harold Weinstock, Pearl Epstein, Viv Newgrosh, Karen Sandler, Graham Winn, Susan Triggs, Andy Jackson, Nathan Marks, Elena and Marcelo Rosenbaum, Judith Dunkerly, Sally Bray, Gil Fletcher, Richard Acaster, Michael Wymer, Peter Green

Tollemache

In the qualifier Manchester went with the by now familiar tactic of picking just 4 pairs, John Holland/John Hassett, Catherine/Andrew Woodcock, Tom Slater / Alec Smalley, Michael Byrne / Rhona Goldenfield. The last partnership was a stand in after a drop out from Alan Mould and illness of the late Michael Newman.

The team qualified comfortably and won or drew every match in the qualifying round. All the pairs were comfortably plus on the cross imps, with John and John 2nd overall.

In the final Manchester stuck to the same team with Alan Mould replacing Rhona Goldenfield who resumed her role as Captain. The teams final place of 2nd flattered them as despite recording no huge losses they never really got going, and their final score of 80 vps was only half a match above average.

The three regular partnerships were all plus on the cross imps with John and John our best pair once more.

Presidents Cup

The annual inter county teams of eight event took place at Bradford Bridge Club over the weekend of 29-30 June 2019.

The Manchester A team finished second to Mersey and Cheshire in a close contest. The Manchester B team fared less well but gained valuable experience.

The A team was Alec Smalley/Tom Slater (both days), John Holland/Rodney Lighton, Kath Nelson/Rhona Goldenfield, David Barton/Leslie Klein (Saturday), Rodney Lighton/Royce Alexander, Joy & Irving Blakey, David Barton/Michael Newman (Sunday).

The B team was Roger Hopton/David Fussell, Gillian McMullan/Neil Thomas, John Stell/Max Sampson, Adam Wiseberg/Jonathan Engler (Saturday) and Dhun Daji/Howard Stubbings, Tony Hodgson/Eddie Thornton-Chan, Rod Franks/Steve Mattinson, David Olliver/Howard Kay (Sunday).

John, Rodney, Royce, Tom, Alec, Kath and Rhona all scored well on cross IMPs.

Corwen Trophy

Manchester was represented by John Hollannd/Rodney Lighton (10th), Joy and Irving Blakey (15th) John Roberts and Pete Foster (24th ) Irene and Karen (55th) out of 94 pairs.

Pachabo Cup

Manchester were represented by Michael Byrne / Michael Newman and Alan Mould / John Holland. They were tied for 1st after the first session but a tough Saturday evening saw them drop down. After keeping up the pace on Sunday morning they had a storming final session to win once more, the 3rd victory in 5 years.

Derbyshire Match

Manchester again won this annual encounter, coming back from a half time deficit of 24 imps.

Well done to

Adam Wiseberg / Annie Thornton

Sylvia Massey / Herbert Potts

Elena and Marcelo Rosenbaum

Tricia Blum / Simon Townsend

Joan Lewis / Roy Higginbottom

Andrew Jackson / Nathan Marks

Victor Ridding was director and his hard work was much appreciated.

National Inter County League Finals

In the Inter-County League finals at Coventry on the 16th June Manchester A finished third after leading comfortably at half time.

Manchester B were fifth in their groups.

The A team was Michael Newman/Michael Byrne, John Holland/Gary Hyett, Alan Mould/Alec Smalley, David Barton/Leslie Klein.

The B team was David Olliver/Richard Acaster, Eddie Thornton-Chan/Tony Hodgson, Eve Lighthill/Howard Kay, Gillian McMullan/Neil Thomas.

B and C team seminars

These were due to be held in Spring/Summer 2020 but Corona Virus put a stop to that. It is hoped these will take place as soon as practically possible.

Future Bridge:

The Presidents Cup is being held online over a period of 11 weeks, Manchester have two teams playing.

The Northern league has been cancelled with no consultation taking place.

The Pachabo and Corwen Trophy have been cancelled as have the Inter County league finals for 2020.

The Derbyshire match may be held online, discussions continue.

**4.13 EBU Shareholders (Alec Smalley, Jeff Morris)**

Notes on the EBU AGM – 27/11/2019 meeting from Alec Smalley. The full minutes can be found on the EBU website.

Numbers from the agenda item.

3.2 – matters arising from 2018 meeting –

Q.) Scheduling of Premier League and England qualifiers clashing with county congresses/green point events (thus depriving them of numbers), with late notification of these events allowing no wriggle room in the planning – no improvement since last year – possibly worse.

A.) This was quite reasonably explained as the national board must make the plans based on the WBF calendar which is released frustratingly late – e.g. 2020 premier league dates unknown as the WBF 2020 Olympiad dates are yet unknown!!!!

Q.) 5-year strategic aims – only short-term ones yet announced – plenty of talk and no discernible action. What is going on?

A.) We’ll talk some more and let you know

6. EBU members – recruited 4,000 – lost 3,600 net plus 400. Average age of recruits 56.5 years old. EBU has problem of getting people from class to club. New regional recruitment officers coming in to help boost the numbers.

Note from shareholders:

What are MCBA numbers? MCBA don’t seem to have the problem of class to club, more getting club to EBU. What can MCBA do about all the bridge being played in non-affiliated clubs? What is the argument we should present these clubs with? – to find the answers afterwards I spoke to someone from Yorkshire (Andy?) who knew Irene and he directed me to Tim at <https://ebumemberdevelop.org.uk/> who gave a very strong argument as to why clubs should (need to be) EBU affiliated. We need to get our heads round how to approach the non-affiliated problem.

It was during this section and when networking with Tim and others that I realised that Irene has been the most progressive and forward thinking on the matter of development of all the MCBA chairs I have experienced in 30 years.

10. Gillian Fawcett one of two to be elected to the board.

14. “Fees” to be increased by 2.7% RPI.

Budget (loss making, but usual in the 4-year cycle) was met.

15. Ebed – at the start of this talk I wanted to know if there is an online teaching App/platform – another county brought it up first question, there isn’t any from Ebed – New Zealand bridge has, with You Tube Videos, Power Points, Quizzes etc. <http://www.nzbridge.co.nz/teaching-materials.html>

Revenue - £280k 25% courses, 25% book sales (recently transferred from the EBU), 25% EBU donation, 10% donations, 10% SIMS.

Provides Bridge for Youth, only 3 Universities, green and red books for teachers, a teacher training course 160 places available next year, either free or heavily subsidised, courses for directors, online module for training teachers and other stuff.

This is all done by a small team of 7 mostly young and almost all women.

Argument to encourage clubs to affiliate to the EBU/Ebed, from Tim at <https://ebumemberdevelop.org.uk/> link at top right of EBU home page.

All clubs that are not affiliated have in some way and in most cases many ways been recipient of EBU/EBED services.

1. All Directors are EBU trained – any other director is untrained unless possibly from another nation.
2. All the Laws have been compiled, documented, upgraded by the EBU
3. Most teachers were trained by the EBU and the EBED is the only source of teacher training in the country so most of the clubs’ members were taught via EBU trained teachers.
4. If there were no more teachers because EBU was underfunded, then the game will eventually die out
5. Possibility of assistance from Laws and Ethics if required.

**4.14 Publicity Officer (Jeff Morris)**

Unsurprisingly there is not much to report since last year's AGM. The main initiative was to try and interest local politicians in what was going on. To that end I met with Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, and spoke with him about successful local bridge players. I was hoping that he might have been able to open or appear at the Manchester Congress but in the event I invited Lucy Powell, MP for Manchester Central (subsequently a shadow minister). Lucy regretted she could not appear this time but indicated that she would be open to attending on another occasion. It should be remembered that she has supported the MCBA a number of times in the past - the closing ceremony of the 2014 Camrose Trophy held at the Park Hotel in 2014 and a Junior Camrose at Chancellors in 2008.

**4.15 Schools, Youth & Teachers Liaison (Jeff Morris)**

Once again nothing more to report since the last Council meeting. At that time I reported verbally on the contacts that have been made with Withington Girls School, Cheadle Hulme School and Manchester Grammar. Manchester Grammar sent two teams to the Young Bridge Challenge and three of their pairs played in the Cantor Cup. Chinese students from Manchester University had been playing in club duplicates at Manchester Bridge Club before lockdown and the Wakefield boys had been encouraged to participate in Youth events and local duplicates. We do not know when we can become active again.

**4.16 Webmaster (Rodney Lighton)**

The MCBA web site continues to get around 50 visitors per day. Despite the lack of news during lockdown, the suit combinations feature and Michael Byrne’s interviews seem to have kept interest up.

The Player of the Year competition finished when the final league tables were published on 12th July. The non-expert category has been won by Adam Wiseberg, and the expert category by Rodney Lighton.

**4.17 Online Committee Report (Adam Wiseberg)**

When it became clear in late March that we would not be playing face to face bridge for some time Alec Smalley and I decided that we needed to provide some competitive bridge for members of Manchester clubs.

With the help of Espen Gisvold we managed to get hosting rights from BBO (possibly the last ones they gave out).

We ran a trial tournament with five tables to make sure we knew what we were doing and then offered three events a week.

We used the bridgewebs site which the County had purchased in order to be able to display tournament results and I uploaded the EBU database of county members to it. This enabled easy communication with members by email.

I established a registration process and, during April and May we progressed from three tournaments per week, IMPs, Swiss and MPs, to add a non expert event. Each of these months we also ran a charity event on the final Wednesday and raise almost £3,000 in the first two months.

All these events were run as a private enterprise with no charge to the participants and with the TDs giving their time for nothing. TDs included me, Alec Smalley, Jeff Smith, Espen Gisvold, Victor Ridding and Dave Tilley. During this period we used County resources such as the website and the database and County email addresses.

Table numbers rose over this period and by the end of May we were regularly getting more than 20 tables for most of our events.

We became aware that the EBU was unhappy about tournament bridge taking place online without UMS being paid and so, from 1st June the County agreed to run these events under and EBU virtual Club. This meant that players would have to pay for the events in BB$ and that TDs would be paid out of the revenue.

Table numbers held up well and we introduced additional events on two evenings and an Expert only event on a Wednesday.

By mid July numbers in these additional events had fallen to 3 or 4 tables and we decided to drop them as the costs of running them vastly exceeded the revenue.

Table numbers have also fallen in our other events as lockdown has eased and the weather has been generally good.

We think that this situation may reverse after the summer and will keep an open mind about events we will run.

Our main objective is to provide bridge for Manchester based players at times when local clubs are not offering viable other options.