

**Minutes of the Manchester County Bridge Association**

**Annual General Meeting**

**on Thursday 15th July 2021 Held Online via Zoom**

**Present**

Irene Davies (chair), Alan Mould (secretary), Adam Wiseberg, Michael Byrne, Barbara Lewis, Frank Eade, Jeff Smith, Joan Lewis, Joy Blakey, Alec Smalley, Howard Rosemarine, John Roberts, Celia Comrie, Kevin Comrie, Rhona Goldenfield, John Currie, Susan Triggs, Graham Winn, Steve Halstead, Eve Lighthill, Janet Tolan.

1. **Apologies**

Roger Hopton, Hari Gohil, Rodney Lighton, Rana Das, Jeff Morris. Michael Byrne for lateness. John Roberts and Janet Tolan for early leaving.

1. **Minutes of Last Meeting held 15th July 2021 online via Zoom**

The minutes were presented to the meeting.

1. **Accuracy and Matters Arising**
   1. Accuracy

Accepted as a true and correct record

* 1. Matters Arising

None not dealt with during the year

1. **Reports from the Officers**
   1. Chair Irene Davies

The year since the last AGM has been dominated by the COVID pandemic.

There has been no Face to Face bridge the county in the past 12 months. The County’s Online sub-committee kick started on line bridge with a number of weekly sessions. This role has largely been taken over by the clubs now, all but one of our clubs have some presence on line.

At present the picture is:

* Manchester BC 9 sessions a week
* Altrincham BC. 1 session a week
* Bramhall & Cheadle BC 3 session a week
* Ashton BC. 4 session a week
* Besses BC. 2 sessions a week
* Marple BC. 1 session a week
* Stretford BC 6 seasons a week
* Prestbury BC 0 sessions

Sadly, Bramhall Green BC have left the EBU as they didn’t have enough players to sustain sessions. Happily, Adam Wiseberg’s BC has now joined the EBU and the County.

Our plan was to continue to play as many of the competitions , including the league, as possible. Playing them on BBO or RealBridge. In this we have mostly succeeded. In addition, we have played County matches against teams we wouldn’t normally get to play because of distance.

We have grappled with how to produce lessons for beginners in bridge online with only a little success. The area of education and renewing the Membership drive is one that we must turn our attention to in the coming year.

As restrictions are lifted from our daily lives we look forward to a return to Face to Face bridge. But, we do have to accept that life has changed and Online bridge will continue to be a significant part of the bridge scene. The County will give whatever help Clubs need in the coming months when F2F bridge restarts.

A big thanks to the unpaid army of people who have given their time and efforts to keep bridge rolling in the County in the past 12 months.

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| EBU Virtual Summer Meeting 2020  Congratulations to Michael Byrne who won the EBU Four Stars Final playing with Kieran Dyke, Frances Hinden and Graham Osborne.  Michael and Kieran also won the cross imps by a large margin.  This was Michael's fourth win in this event, having last won in 2017 with Kieran.  In the Swiss Teams event which continued on Sunday without the top sixteen teams Catherine Draper and Andrew Woodcock won with Alex Hydes and Diana Nettleton; Joy & Irving Blakey, Rhona Goldenfield and Ted Reveley were fifth. |

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| Mutton Cup  Congratulations to John Hassett who won Jason Hackett's individual event in Madrid on 13-15th August. |

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| North Wales Swiss Pairs  Manchester players dominated the North Wales online Swiss Pairs on Saturday 10th October.  Congratulations to Gary Hyett who won with Alan Cooke just ahead of Andy Green and Stephen Ward.  In third place were Paul Murray and Phillip Taylor. |

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| European Seniors Online  The European Seniors online cup took place from October 5th to 18th hosted by the Polish Bridge Union.  John Hassett played for England with Trevor Ward.  England finished about half-way. |

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| Chester Bowl  The Chester Bowl, usually held at Deva, was online this year.   John Currie and Rodney Lighton won with a score of 65%. |

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| Teltscher Trophy  The Senior's home internationals took place on 31st Oct to 1st Nov online using the RealTime bridge platform.  John Holland and Alan Mould played for England with Paul Hackett, Brian Senior, David Mossop and Gunnar Hallberg.  They won ahead of Scotland, this being John's fifth win in the event and Alan's first. |

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| John Armstrong Pairs  The Merseyside Swiss Pairs event was held online on Sunday 15th November.  With no travel required there was a huge entry of 90 pairs from all over the country.  Best Manchester pair were Irving and Joy Blakey who finished third. |

European Selection for Manchester Players

Congratulations to Michael Byrne who has been selected to play with Kieran Dyke for England in the European Championships in Madeira in June 2021.

The rest of the team is Ben Norton, Mike Bell, David Gold and Andrew Robson.  This is substantially the team which was picked for the cancelled championship in 2020, but with Michael and Kieran replacing Alex Hydes and Ben Handley-Pritchard.

In the Women's event Catherine Draper plays with Gillian Fawcett in a team unchanged from 2020 and in the Seniors Alan Mould and John Holland play together, Alan replacing Norman Selway, who in turn is playing in the Mixed team, replacing Michael Byrne.

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| Camrose Trials  The Camrose Trials took place from 11th to 13th December online.  40 pairs competed.  Congratulations to Michael Byrne playing with Kieran Dyke who finished sixth with the top six pairs to get a Camrose match next year.  Alan Mould and John Holland just missed out in eighth place. |

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| Senior Trials  Trials for the Teltscher Trophy team took place over the weekend of 18th-20th December.  Manchester players participating were Alan Mould and John Holland and John Hassett who played with Trevor Ward.  Congratulations to Alan and John who won having been in the lead overnight on Saturday, dropping to fourth during Sunday but recovering to win by a small margin.  John Hassett and Trevor Ward finished fourth having been in the top four most of the weekend, with the top three qualifying to play in the Teltscher. |

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| Manchester Congress  The Manchester Congress was held online this year on 2nd-3rd January.  In the championship pairs 44 pairs competed.  John Currie and Rodney Lighton held a narrow lead over Michael Byrne and Kay Preddy at half time.  Michael and Kay soon took the lead and held on to it despite only getting 25% in the last round against Rodney and John.  In third place were John Holland and Alan Mould.  Rodney and John are the Men's Pairs winners, Rhona Goldenfield and Marianne Farr won the Ladies Pairs.  Kay's husband and daughter Norman and Louise Selway won the Mixed Pairs.  In the Player's Progress Cup for Intermediates on Saturday winners were Angela Adams and Leonie Pulford from Oxfordshire ahead of Ashish and Jackie Shah, with Graham Fletcher and Heather Saunders third.   23 pairs competed.  The teams event on Sunday attracted 26 teams.  After a qualifying round in 2 sections, the field was split into A, B and C finals.  Last year's winners Sally Brock, Barry Myers, Jovanka Smederevac and Rodney Lighton won again with Kath Nelson's team (Alan Nelson, Jeff Morris, John Hassett) second and Michael Byrne's team (Kieran Dyke, Nicola Smith, Sarah Bell) third.  The B team final was headed by two Manchester teams.  Stuart Shalom, Philip Taylor, Paul Murray and Mike Wakefield won ahead of Chris Hine, Stephen Ward, Andy Green and Paul Morrell.  In the C team final Felicity Kay, John Wilmott, Bill Richardson and Gaynor Williams from Cumbria won with Eddie Thornton-Chan's team second.  The Kevin Comrie Cup for Intermediates on Sunday attracted a good field of 26 pairs.  Winners were Michael Benton and Fred Bechman from Hertfordshire ahead of Mark Madeley and Tom Green and Tony Wilson and Dave Thomas.  These three pairs all scored well over 60%. |

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| Camrose  The first weekend of the home internationals took place from Friday 8th to Sunday 10th January.  Michael Byrne played on the England team with Kieran Dyke.  England finished second in the first weekend just behind Ireland.  Michael and Kieran played 112 of the 160 boards, all three England pairs were positive on the cross-imps. |

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| EBU Spring Congress  The Harrogate Congress took place this year online from 13-14th February.  In the Swiss Pairs the best placed Manchester pair were John Holland and Rodney Lighton who were fourth.  In the Swiss Teams Gary Hyett won with Alan Cooke, Ollie Burgess and Fiona Brown. |

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| Ranked Master Pairs  Congratulations to the following who did well in the various Ranked Master events over the weekend of 27-28th February.  In the Premier Grand Masters John Holland was third with Jackie Pye, Kath Nelson was fifth with Steve Auchterlonie.  In the Premier Life Masters Tom Slater and Alec Smalley were third, and Pete Foster was fifth playing with John Liebeschuetz.  In the Life Masters Martin Taylor was second with Barbara Hackett. |

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| Wiltshire Green Point Pairs  Congratulations to Joyce White and Babs Matthews (from Cumbria) who won the Wiltshire event on 6th March in a field of 110 pairs. |

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| Cumbria and Norfolk Green Point Congress  The joint Swiss Pairs run by Cumbria and Norfolk on Sat 20th March attracted a huge entry of 140 pairs including a good turnout from Manchester players.  John Holland, playing with Jackie Pye was second, Martin Taylor and Justin Hackett were fourth and Phillip Taylor and Paul Murray were seventh.  In the Swiss Teams on Sunday 58 teams competed.  In second place were Rhona Goldenfield and Kath Nelson playing with Sam Hall and Greer MacKenzie. |

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| Northern Pairs  Phillip Taylor and Paul Murray completed a good weekend by finishing fourth in the Northern Pairs which qualifies for the National Pairs final.  Richard Acaster was sixth with Angela Treen. |

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| Devon Swiss Pairs  Congratulations to Kath Nelson who finished first equal at Devon playing with Steve Auchterlonie of Kent. |

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| Teltscher Trophy  The Senior's Home Internationals took place from 16th-18th April online on RealBridge hosted by England.  Playing for England were John Holland and Alan Mould, the rest of the team being Patrick Shields, Richard Chamberlain, David Mossop and Gunnar Hallberg.  As England were hosts they had two teams in the competition, playing for the EBU team was John Hassett with Trevor Ward of Avon.  The England team finished second to Ireland. |

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| Survivor Knock Out  Congratulations to Michael Byrne who was a member of the team that won the Survivor Knock Out, part of the World Bridge Games.  Michael played with Kieran Dyke, Mike Bell/Ben Norton, Tim Leslie/Ollie Burgess.  The event was double elimination.  After losing in the first round Michael's team beat De Botton by 32 imps, then teams from Norway before winning a very close match against Sabine Auken/Roy Welland playing with a top Polish pair.  In the semi-final they beat Peter Fredin's team by 60 imps and won the final by 42 against a multi-national team from India, Argentina and New Zealand. |

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| Jersey Festival  Congratulations to Joyce White who won the senior pairs with Babs Matthews of Cumbria at Jersey on 30th April |

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| Spring Fours  Michael Byrne's team (Kieran Dyke, Mike Bell, Ben Norton, Tim Leslie, Ollie Burgess, Graham Osborne) reached the semi-finals of this prestigious double elimination event. They beat Zia's team in a closely fought quarter final match, but lost in the semi-finals to the Gillis team in another close match. |

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| Garden Cities  Congratulations to the Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme team who won the Northern heat of the EBU's inter club team of eight competition on 8th May, having qualified by winning the Gazette Trophy in February.  The team finished well ahead of the other qualifiers Cambridge, Oxford and Sheffield.   The team was Alec Smalley, Tom Slater, Michael Byrne, John Holland, Rodney Lighton, John Currie, Peter Foster and John Roberts.  All four pairs were positive on cross imps, with Tom and Alec having an outstanding score of 2 imps per board to head the cross imp list by a long way. Unfortunately the Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme team could not reproduce their form from the regional final, when they finished sixth of eight teams in the National final on 19th June.  Only Michael and John were positive on cross imps. |

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| Richmond Swiss Pairs  Congratulations to John Holland playing with Jackie Pye and Michael Byrne with Martin Stephens who were joint winners of the [Richmond Bridge Club](https://www.bridgewebs.com/richmond/) event on 9th May in a field of 72 pairs. |

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| John Armstrong Swiss Pairs  Congratulations to John Holland who won with Jackie Pye on 23rd May. |

Madeleine Berney Swiss Pairs

Congratulations to Rhona Goldenfield and Raymond Semp who finished second in this Lancashire event held online on Sunday 30th May.

Yorkshire Congress

Congratulations to Steve Mattinson and Pauline Lang who won the Swiss Teams at the online Yorkshire Congress with Issy Hyman and Steve Male.

Manchester win Pachabo again

Congratulations to the Manchester team who won the Pachabo inter counties teams of four for the fourth time in six years and the third time in a row.

The team was John Hassett, Jeff Morris, Catherine Draper, Andrew Woodcock, John Holland and Alan Mould. The first four won the Goldstone Trophy and qualified for the Pachabo, they chose to add John and Alan from the losing finalists to the team.

The team was doing moderately well, placed seventh overnight on Saturday, but had a good day on Sunday to win by about three quarters of a match over Surrey.

This is a first win in the event for John Hassett, Jeff and Andrew.  Catherine has won it twice before playing for Kent, Alan twice and John Holland four times previously.

World Bridge Tour Masters Teams

Congratulations to Michael Byrne who won this event held online between 7th-13th June.

After qualifying in fourth position Michael's team beat a Dutch/Swedish team by 44 imps in the semi-finals and went on to win a very close and exciting final by 6 imps against a team with players from Brazil, India and London.

Michael was playing with Kieran Dyke, with whom he will represent England in August for the online European Championships, Mike Bell, Ben Norton, Ollie Burgess and Tim Leslie.

**Congratulations to all**

* 1. Secretary Alan Mould

My main work until the end of July was preparing for the online AGM. I think this went as well as could be expected and it was interesting to note that attendance was almost identical to previous F2F AGMS (though some of the attendees were different).

Since the AGM, The Executive has found it necessary to meet regularly (more or less monthly) to discuss a variety of items such as our online presence and how to run county events given the continuous impediments of the pandemic. Other than that, there have been the usual documents from the EBU, including all the AGM papers, and information about the various online events, etc. Recently, the most common correspondence has been the almost endless stream of letters from the Laws and Ethics Committee concerning bans for players found guilty of cheating online (either by self-kibitzing or collusion). The EBU is finally getting to grips with this issue.

There are a number of saddening items to report:

1. Regrettably, we had a formal complaint about one of our members submitted to the county, and so in line with the MCBA Constitution I formed a Conduct Committee. The Committee investigated the complaint and concluded that no action was necessary, and all parties were informed. The matter is thus closed.
2. We received reports of alleged online cheating by several of our members. These were correctly forwarded to the Secretary of the EBU Laws and Ethics Committee and were investigated. It was found that there was no case to answer and the matter is closed.
3. However, I have recently received notification of two MCBA members who have been found guilty of online cheating and banned for two years. In line with our requirements to the EBU they have also been banned by MCBA, and all MCBA clubs have been informed.
4. At its AGM, Bramhall Green Bridge Club decided that it was no longer viable and has closed permanently.
   1. Treasurer Joy Blakey

(The accounts spreadsheet and auditors report were presented to the meeting - appendices 1 and 2 to these minutes).

In this extraordinary Covid-19 year, it would be an understatement to say that the complexities in the transition from ‘face-to-face’ to ‘online’ bridge have thrown up many challenges. These challenges have filtered through to the Treasury – for example, in a ‘normal’ year, entries on our bank statements amount to a maximum 200; this year there have been 1,000. Additionally, all those entries have to be checked – wrong reference codes, underpayments and people not paying until reminded, have all contributed to many hours of additional work for the Treasurer on top of an already heavy workload with all the online events.

Thanks to the genius of several MCBA online committee members, the County’s online presence started a week after lockdown with all our events ‘free of charge’ for several weeks until people got used to the format. Obviously this meant no income for a period. Under the banner ‘ Manchester County Cares….’ we decided to see if we could raise money for local charities by holding an event on the last Wednesday of the month. With the generosity of our members together with a contribution of approximately £800 from the county, we were able to send a total of £10,250 in the year. All the Charities were delighted to receive our generous donations:-

For:

St. Ann’s Hospice, Cheadle £1,600

Francis House Children’s Hospice £1,500

Centrepoint, Manchester £1,100

Mind Manchester £ 800

Seashell Trust, Handforth £ 750

Nicky Alliance Day Centre £ 700

NeuroMuscular Centre, Winsford £ 700

The Compassionate Friends £ 700

Prevent Breast Cancer, Wythenshawe £ 800

Prostate Cancer at The Christie £ 500

Mustard Tree Manchester £ 600

Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital £ 500

With the help of the Online Committee, several of our clubs received help in setting up their own on-line duplicates and as these sessions increased and started to flourish, the County gradually reduced its’ online presence. We realised that the County portion of the UMS collected by the EBU could be hurting our clubs so by December we had re-imbursed all of the clubs with the money the County would normally have received (between May and October – almost £600) and asked the EBU to stop collecting our part of the UMS contribution from 1st November. This was another loss of the County’s income but we felt it was more important for the clubs to have the benefit.

The English Bridge Union was also struggling, and not as quick off the mark as MCBA in offering online bridge, so our Executive voted to send a donation to the EBU of £1,000 for which they were most grateful.

The competitions we have run in this year have obviously been cheaper to enter as our expenses have been less. We had no halls to hire, boards to duplimate, refreshments to provide nor any Directors’ travelling expenses. The shorter league season events seemed popular with numbers remaining fairly static. All of our events ran at a slight profit rather than mostly slight losses. Some of the major inter county team events were cancelled in this year. Several friendly county matches were played and mostly the directing and UMS charges were shared.

I am pleased to attach the audited accounts for the year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 which show that the County funds remain in good order. I sincerely thank Howard Stubbings for preparing the accounts and Peter Green for his audit thereof – a much bigger task this year than ever before.

**Comments**

A vote of thanks was given to JB for her unfailing hard work over the last two years.

* 1. Membership Secretary Alan Mould

I was appointed MCBA Membership Secretary at the 2020 AGM following Karen Sandler stepping down from the post, so this is my first full year in post.

I am unconvinced that the membership data is terribly meaningful at the moment given the continued lockdown so that people are unable to play in clubs and have to play online. MCBA membership has also been artificially slightly increased due to Adam’s laudable insistence that anyone who plays in our lockdown league or plays in our online pairs events in any consistent manner has to join MCBA.

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

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| **Type of Member** | **Total 04/08/2020** | **Total 15/11/2020** | **Total 23/02/2021** | **Total 23/06/2021** |
| P2P | 1400 | 1405 | 1396 | 1443 |
| Direct | 42 | 44 | 45 | 44 |
| Student (members on the EBED register as learning bridge | 21 | 21 | 20 | 0 |
| **Total** | **1463** | **1470** | **1461** | **1487** |

So, as can be seen, there is almost no difference (an increase of 24 members – 1.6%) over the year.

Dealing only with the data of 23rd June 2021, of the 1487 members, 1439 have primary allegiance to Manchester, and 48 have secondary allegiance. Of the 48 secondary all bar 3 are Pay to Play members, the remaining 3 being direct members who live way outside the county boundaries.

Under the EBED category the following are listed:

* 11 people listed as EBTA (ie teachers), all of which are Pay to Play. Note that this is very significantly down from 22 which has been the consistent number most of the year. Of the 11 who are no longer registered as EBTA teachers 10 are still MCBA members whilst is not. This suggests that a lot of teachers have given up in the last few months and is a worrying trend.
* Up until February 2021, 20 people were listed as “BFA Year 1” who were also listed as students in the student category. All bar one had Trafford Bridge Club listed as club of primary allegiance and the remaining one had no club listed. Only Trafford BC enrol their learners as students under the EBED scheme, so either the course has ended for this year or Trafford has closed it. However, all 19 of the Trafford BC “BFA Year 1” members are now listed as Pay to Play members which is a truly laudable 100% conversion rate by Trafford BC.
* All others are listed as “none” under EBED.

**Club Numbers**

I have given the MCBA primary clubs and numbers below. Clubs will obviously have their own records, but I thought people might be interested to see what the EBU records show. There are actually 55 bridge clubs listed as primary in the spreadsheet scattered all over the country. This will be the result of Adam enrolling people as members of MCBA when they play in our online events. I have thus ignored everything except the MCBA affiliated clubs and simply listed the numbers in them. This does mean of course that the total is NOT 1487 since all of the “other” clubs are missing. Again, I give the number as of 4th August 2020 and as of 23rd June 2021.

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| **Primary Club** | **Number**  **04/08/2020** | **Number**  **23/06/2021** |
| Adam Wiseberg Bridge Club \* | **-** | **27** |
| Altrincham Bridge Club | **210** | **217** |
| Ashton and District Bridge Club | **105** | **105** |
| Besses O’Th’barn Bridge Club | **43** | **45** |
| Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme Bridge Centre\*\* | **-** | **125** |
| Bramhall Green Bridge Club \*\*\* | **60** | **45** |
| Bramhall Village Bridge Club \*\* | **52** | **-** |
| Cheadle Hulme Bridge Club \*\* | **95** | **-** |
| Manchester Bridge Club | **201** | **206** |
| Marple Duplicate Bridge Club | **61** | **74** |
| Prestbury Duplicate Bridge Club | **67** | **69** |
| Stretford Bridge Club | **74** | **73** |
| Trafford Bridge Club | **261** | **273** |
| **Total** | **1229** | **1259** |

\* The Adam Wiseberg Bridge Club is an online only club developed during lockdown and affiliated to MCBA

\*\* Bramhall Village Bridge Club and Cheadle Hulme Bridge Club have merged to become Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme Bridge Centre. Hence numbers at Bramall Village and Cheadle Hulme have become 0 and Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme Bridge Centre has come into existence.

\*\*\* Sadly at the recent AGM, Bramhall Green Bridge Club voted to close permanently.

It is interesting to note that with the exception of the now closed Bramhall Green Bridge Club, all clubs have maintained their numbers during lockdown.

In addition, we have 29 primary members listed as no club and 3 secondary members listed as no club. All are direct members as you would expect. The other 12 direct members (44-32) are scattered amongst MCBA affiliated and other clubs.

Of the members who list a primary club, 349 also list a secondary club, sometimes several. Usually these are MCBA affiliated clubs, but not always, with clubs such as Bury Athenaeum or Preston featuring.

**Comments**

A number of teachers have decided to retire during the pandemic.

ST asked for the contact lists of teachers to be sent to her.

**Action:** AM and ID to send ST the list of teachers from before and now.

JT thanked ID for all the work she did matching teachers with beginners at the start of the pandemic.

Jeff S asked about the position with the joint virtual club of Stretford, Brierfield and Warrington. AW explained that Brierfield and Warrington members were put through as Manchester and hence as Manchester UMS, and that Manchester was currently not charging UMS.

CC asked were beginners should be directed. ID confirmed that this was her for distribution to appropriate teachers.

* 1. League Secretary Adam Wiseberg

Over the last year I have run eight seasons of an online league. The format was very popular with the participants; each season lasted approximately six weeks promotion and relegation before each new season. It has been considerably more work than running a single season but seems to have been worth it as our members have been able to play League bridge throughout the year and we have attracted some new teams. Each time teams have dropped out I have managed to find replacements. All seasons had 7 divisions usually comprising a total of 42 teams.

We are implementing a summer break after Season 8 until September and I hope to resume a more normal annual league running from September to April. After running a survey of players we will offer Face to Face as an option but the default (if either team chooses it) will be online.

**Comments**

The winners of Div 1 have been Inverted Minors 3 times, Deal or No Deal 1, Nelly 2, Proteus 2. 8 seasons completed.

Howard Rosemarine asked about next year and playing F2F. AW replied that there was almost no enthusiasm for playing F2F. MGB felt that the results of the AW survey did not show that but AW confirmed that the survey showed that people actively wanted to play online – it was not the case that people felt it was second best (this was particularly so amongst the lower division players). MGB felt that if necessary we should delay the matches until such time as people felt safe to play F2F. The meeting disagreed and felt that many now actively wanted to play online and it was MCBA’s role to provide bridge, not to dictate people’s preferences. A discussion about default formats ensued and the consensus was that BBO was the pragmatic choice.

It was agreed that:

**Action:** A new league will start in September and run to March/April 2022 with a format as close as possible to the previous F2F league. The default will be online and BBO, unless both teams agree to a different format (including F2F). It was agreed that people would be encouraged to also have a WhatsApp/Zoom/whatever conversation going on as well between the 4 players at the “table” but that this would not be compulsory.

AW was thanked for all the work he had done in the online league over the year. AW replied that it had been a lot of work but he felt it was worth it, particularly as it brought into the league a number of teams to the lower divisions.

* 1. Higson Cup Secretary Adam Wiseberg

The Cup competition was suspended in March 2020 dues to Covid. In late 2020 teams were asked to play their remaining matches online. Some did so and others in the Cup & Plate conceded their matches.

The Cup finals were contested between on 25th April on RealBridge. Each competition had 6 teams who played 50 boards in 5 matches of 10 boards. All teams were handicapped according to their combined NGS using a formula published in the EBU’s NGC Full Guide. The winners of the main event on handicap were City Aces and the Plate event was won by Ashton Aces. Following the event Alan Mould entered into some lengthy correspondence with the EBU regarding their handicap system. The conclusion appears to be that the published system is not perfect and if we handicap the event in future then we will probably do it according to a formula which we will create and publish.

We plan to run the event again in 2021-22 with matches taking place either online or Face to Face but with a default of online if either captain prefers.

**Comments**

AW commented that he thought the 2021-22 Higson Cup/Plate should be run in the same format as the League (default to online and BBO). The meeting agreed.

* 1. Goldstone Trophy Secretary Roger Hopton

No report received.

**Comments**

AW commented that the Goldstone is significantly different than the Higson Cup/Plate as the winners represent the county, and hence greater security was required. A discussion ensued as to various options and formats. One possibility is to run it as a F2F one off event, but this may not be possible under the Pachabo regulations. The secretary was asked to check this with the EBU.

**Action:** AM to check with the EBU if the Pachabo has to be a knockout teams of 4 event.

* 1. Green Point Secretary Rhona Goldenfield

An online GP pairs was held on BBO in October. 72 pairs took part and winners were Tapan and Tony Pal. Organised and run by Adam and on line team. In March 2021 we held an on line pairs on real bridge 26 pairs took part and winners were Rodney Lighton and John Currie Again organised by Adam . No prizes were given on either of the on line events.

On August 1st we are holding our first face to face bridge since March 2020; Swiss Teams at Bramhall Village Hall (Altrincham not available). Stuart Davies is Director and Joy and I will organise refreshments. Joan has offered to duplimate the boards but Alec says they can be done on site. We are limiting number to 16 to allow for social distancing and so far response has not been great but we will go ahead as we want to try to bring bridge back to the table and away from online. We are offering free sandwich/cake lunch and wine at prize giving. Even though numbers are down I think we should give good prizes. All entry fees will be paid by BACs, no money accepted in day.

**Comments**

The boards have been duplimated by Joan so many thanks to her.

Stuart Davies has bridgemates so we will use his.

Guidelines on Covid-19 safety measuers will be issued as soon as possible by email.

RG reported that a number of players was different teams have expressed concern about playing given the sharp increase in Covid-19 infection numbers. A discussion took place as to the minimum number of teams we would run the events with, but no conclusion was reached.

* 1. Tournament Secretary David Tilley

No report received

* 1. Congress Secretary Irene Davies

The Manchester County Bridge Congress 2021 had to be held on line because of COVID restrictions. It was held on BBO on the 2nd & 3rd January. 44 pairs played in the Championship event on the Saturday and 26 teams on the Sunday. 49 pairs played in the non-expert events.

The Marriott V & A hotel has been booked for the Congress on the 7th & 8th January 2022.

Barbara Lewis has taken over as Congress Secretary (to be confirmed at the AGM).

* 1. Chair of Selectors (Report by John Roberts – secretary)

The functioning of the selection Committee continues to be affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Face to face selection meetings continue to be replaced by regular Zoom conference meetings and the use of frequent emails to deal with business. The committee (Adam Wiseberg, Roger Hopton, John Roberts, Michael Byrne and Rhona Goldenfield) met several times between August and November 2020 and also in January and June 2021.

**Inter-County matches**

The annual match against Derbyshire did not take place in 2020 and neither did the Northern league competition. In their place on-line matches were arranged with other (often more remote) counties. In Sept and Oct 2020 the first two of these matches (with London and Devon) were held on-line on the Realbridge Platform. Although Manchester lost both matches, they were competitive and both events were considered to be successful and well-received by players.

Since then, further matches have taken place against the following counties :

Gloucestershire 21st Nov 2020

Sussex 12th Dec 2020

Suffolk 16th Jan 2021

Norfolk 6th Feb 2021

Selections were made for the match against Gloucestershire at the selection meeting in October 2020. The match was played on the same weekend as the Tollemache Qualifier (Saturday 21st Nov 2020). As Gloucestershire were also playing in the Tollemache it was agreed to have three teams in which the players were all below the strength of the Tollemache teams.

Selection for the other three matches was made at meetings of Nov 17th 2020 and Jan 12th 2021

**Sussex (12th Dec 2020)**

A +3 imps

B +77 imps

C -13 imps

Overall Manchester won by 37.8-22.2 VPs

**Suffolk (16th Jan 2021)**

A +110 imps

B -27 imps

C -45 imps

Overall Suffolk won by 33.08-26.92 VPs

**Norfolk (6th Feb 2021)**

A +49 imps

B -11 imps

C -57 imps

Overall Norfolk won by 33.27-26.73 VPs

**Tollemache**

The Qualifier for the Tollemache was played on the Realbridge platform on the weekend of 21st/22nd Nov 2020. At its October 2020 meeting the committee selected the following five pairs :

Catherine Draper and Andrew Woodcock, John Holland and John Hassett, Alan Mould and Rodney Lighton, Michael Byrne and Gary Hyatt, Alec Smalley and Tom Slater

Playing Captain : Michel Byrne

27 teams contested the Qualifier. Manchester won very comfortably, averaging 13.6 VPs per match. All 5 pairs were positive on the cross imps. At its meeting Jan 12th 2021 the committee selected the same five pairs and captain for the final on the weekend of 20/21 Feb 2021. Manchester finished 4th with 80 VPs (out of 140).

**Other Events**

At its January 12th meeting, it was agreed to explore the possibility of arranging matches against Ireland, Scotland, Worcestershire and possibly Somerset. The response was, however, not very good and dates could not be agreed.

**Northern League**

The Northern league was not played in 2020. The organising committee for the Northern League decided that the event would go ahead on-line in 2021 and would be played on 4 Saturdays in July (10th), August (21st), September and October.

The Selection committee met in June 2021 to make selections for the first two Saturdays for this event and will meet again on July 16th to select for the last two Saturdays. Players are being informed and the final Selections will appear in due course on the MCBA website. There will be three teams of 8 (A,B and C). In previous years Manchester has fielded two A, one B and two C teams, but shortage of available players this year has meant that only one team will be selected for each division. The event will be played on Realbridge.

**Inter-County Superfinal**

Manchester’s A and C teams both won their respective divisions of the 2019 Northern League, which qualified them for the inter-county Superfinal. However, this did not take place in 2020 because of the pandemic but will be played instead in 2021 on the Realbridge platform on Sunday July 11th. The committee attempted, where possible, to select from players who had played in the qualifying matches in 2019. Players are being informed and the final selections will appear in due course on the MCBA website.

**Presidents Cup**

This event will take place on 17th 18th July on the Realbridge platform. Manchester is fielding two teams one from each of the A and B pool of players. Selections for both pools for both days were made and will appear on the MCBA web site once players have been informed.

**Comments**

AW thanked John Roberts for the work he has done as secretary.

* 1. Match Secretary Michael Byrne

The year having been devastated by mishandling of the Corona Virus many events were cancelled or changed into a strange form.

The Northern League was not held, no discussion was held about it being online.

The Presidents Cup was held online, the format was 8 boards every Tuesday night at 6pm over the Summer. The result was complete chaos with the general feeling was that the format did not lend itself to a good competitive game.

Manchester Blue finished 6th out of 12 teams, Manchester Red finished 9th out of 12 teams, but beat Manchester Blue in the head to head match.

Manchester Blue - John Holland, Rhona Goldenfield, Rodney Lighton, John Currie, Alan Mould Ollie Burgess, Catherine Draper, Andrew Woodcock, Alec Smalley, David Barton, John Hassett, Michael Byrne, Joy & Irving Blakey, Tom Slater.

Manchester Red - Kath & Alan Nelson, Peter Foster, John Roberts, Roger Hopton, Dave Fussell, Mike Hart, Pearl Fielding, Neil Thomas, Gillian McMullan, John Parsons, Peter Jones, Josh Clarke, Paul Murray, Adam Wiseberg, Jonathan Engler, Stuart Shalom, Daniel Kelsall, Chris Hine, Stephen Ward, Andy Green, John Stell, Paul Beckwith, Joyce Jones, Espen Gisvold, Janet Tolan, Steve Mattinson, Pauline Lang.

The Derbyshire Match was cancelled.

The Pachabo and Corwen Trophy (2020) were both cancelled, a 2021 event has taken place and will be reported on next year.

The Tollemache was held online and a new format was used, whereby Manchester played against every other county. Manchester slew all before it in the qualifier, winning by an enormous margin, 5 pairs were chosen and all were comfortably plus on the cross imps with Byrne/Hyett (+97) just ahead of Mould/Lighton (+78).

In the final they were 11vps short of winning, and their final position of 4th included a solid 15-5 win over the victors, Kent. John Hassett/John Holland (+76) and Alec Smalley/Tom Slater (+54) both put in solid performances on the cross imps.

The team was the same for both weekends:

Draper/Woodcock

Mould/Lighton

Byrne(cap)/Hyett

Holland/Hassett

Smalley/Slater

The All Counties Super Final was cancelled, there will be an online event in 2021 which will be reported on next year.

Thanks mainly to Adam Wiseberg, a series of friendly matches have been held throughout the year:

Manchester vs London September 26th

Manchester vs Devon October 10th

Manchester vs Gloucestershire Nov 21st

Manchester vs Sussex Dec 12th

Manchester vs Essex/Suffolk Jan 16th

Manchester beat Gloucs, Sussex and Suffolk/Essex. In each match there were 3 teams of 8 players, A, B and C.

**Comments**

MGB is not convinced that people are enjoying the online county events. ID disagreed.

Jeff Smith said AW had done a very good job in organising the NBL. A couple of tweaks are being suggested, particularly the B division which has an odd number of teams this year and therefore requires a sit out. JB asked if the event could start either earlier or later. AW promised to put this to the NBL Executive.

* 1. EBU Shareholders Alec Smalley, Jeff Morris, Alan Mould

The only matter concerning the shareholders is now the AGM (the other half yearly shareholders meeting having been cancelled from last year). The AGM in November was the usual dull technical affair, enlivened by one of the motions to change the bye-laws put forward by the Board. For the first occasion in my time on the MCBA Executive, the Executive held a meeting to decide its position on the various agenda items and mandated its three shareholders to vote accordingly. The main votes were:

* + - Ian Payn, Rob Lawy and Adrian Darnell were elected to the Board, Heather Dhondy was not (MCBA shareholders were mandated to vote for the elected candidates).
    - David Burn and Heather Dhondy were elected to the L&E, Jeremy Dhondy was not (MCBA shareholders were mandated to vote for the elected candidates).
    - There were three nominations to three posts for the Selection Committee, so David Burn, Jeremy Willans and Claire Robinson were elected unopposed.
    - A Board proposal to increase the number of directors from 10 to 11 by having a third appointed director was passed 72%-28% (MCBA shareholders were mandated to vote against as MCBA believed the director should be elected not appointed).
    - A Board proposal to amend the bye-laws to make it explicit that all online activity by clubs and counties is covered by the bye-laws was passed by 98%-2%. MCBA shareholders were mandated to vote in favour.
    - The contentious matter was a change to the bye-laws around the disciplinary procedures. This changed the procedures so that at the point a charge letter is issued (ie the matter is sent to a disciplinary panel but the case has not yet been heard or any appeal heard) then the member is suspended from that point until such time as the disciplinary panel is heard and any appeal is heard. Any suspension that is handed out is then taken off the period that the member has already been suspended. This created a lively debate and the motion was passed by 58%-42%.

As you might imagine, the other major issue was the matter of the EBU finances. For the year to date at that point, the loss was approximately £44,000 but the treasurer believed it would be between £90,000 and £110,000 by the end of the year. I got the distinct impression this was less than he feared and was cautiously optimistic. This is borne out by the fact that the treasurer was suggesting that UMS be kept at current levels, with the one off ability to increase it by 1p mid-year if needed. The rationale for this was to help struggling clubs. This was passed by a large majority. Counties were encouraged to waive some or all of their UMS to support their clubs. Several counties (including MCBA) reported that this decision had already been made. A poll sent to all counties well before the AGM around changing the structure of UMS had resulted in an overwhelming majority (>80%) in favour of keeping the system the same – MCBA being in the minority here.

* 1. Publicity Officer Susan Triggs

There is little to report in terms of publicity activity in the last 12 months. The MCBA online team have done a great job of publicising the duplicates and events and there has been little else to report.

However, the current improving situation in terms of the pandemic, the potential end of lockdown on 19th July 2021, the re-opening of some of our clubs for F2F bridge as well as the growth of online bridge means there are some opportunities for publicity and, in particular for publicity to attract new members.

There have probably been more articles/items on bridge in the national papers and on TV/radio in recent months than for some time. Most were related to the success of online bridge, for instance bringing separated families together by learning bridge, attracting younger people who felt playing bridge online was ‘more acceptable’. Bridge is seen as something which was easily accessible online and also a positive, mentally stimulating pastime to start to learn during lockdown.

We have had one publicity success in the last year (with help from Annie Curtis) by producing a leaflet which we used to attract a significant number of new people to start to learn to play (online) bridge.

With a return to Face-to-Face bridge looking imminent we need to be able to increase publicity to support the re-opening of our local clubs and to attract new people to learn to play bridge with an emphasis on F2F bridge. We need to try to encourage the new bridge players who have learned to play bridge online to start to play in our local clubs too. We are approaching the time when people start to think about evening classes. The versatility of Bridge, which can be learned and played successfully both F2F and online may make learning bridge of more interest because whether we go into lockdown again in the autumn or not, lessons can still continue. Wherever possible it is important to link beginners into local clubs to support the long term future of our Bridge Clubs.

Priorities for publicity in the next 6 months (assuming lockdown is lifted on 19th July and does not return in Autumn) are:

1. Publicising clubs as they re-start F2F bridge via updating the Handbook, using the MCBA website (with Rodney’s assistance) and any local press where possible.
2. Contacting as many bridge teachers as possible to find out what opportunities they will be offering for beginners to learn to play bridge from September 2021 onwards.
3. Publicising any teaching of bridge via the handbook and website but also producing a flyer similar to the one produced 12 months ago and using the MCBA website as a central point for contact details for bridge teachers in the county.
4. Using the flyer for beginner’s lessons along with general information about bridge in the county, to publicise the active and successful nature of bridge in the greater Manchester area. Sending this out to a whole range of local organisations e.g., WI, U3A, etc encouraging people to learn to play and telling them about our local clubs and online opportunities to learn and play.

Finally, I would still like MCBA to agree to try to run a ‘Café Bridge’ session in September (assuming people from different households can sit at the same table in a café or restaurant) as we could use this for publicity as well as getting people involved in F2F bridge if not all our clubs can yet open. We could use it as a charity event and try to get Andy Burnham involved (if Jeff Morris still has the links with his office) to support it. It would need a small team of people o take it forward, particularly volunteers from the local clubs who could use the event to attract beginners for lessons starting in September/October their club. This is a link giving more details about this type of event, <https://www.brianbridge.net/cafe/howto.html>.

If any-one is interested in getting involved, please contact me at

[publicitysecretary@manchesterbridge.org.uk](mailto:publicitysecretary@manchesterbridge.org.uk).

**Comments**

People did not think they had the time to support café bridge. People felt the time was not now because of the remaining restrictions which prevented anyone interested from going to clubs.

Janet Tolan said we should be getting into the schools and she had given several contact details to the county. The county had followed these up with no success.

ID felt we needed a strategy to build our numbers.

* 1. Schools, Youth & Teachers Liaison Jeff Morris

Covid has meant that F2F Bridge has been non-existent in the last year and that everything has been on hold. Previously there were contacts with teachers at Withington Girls School, Manchester Grammar and Cheadle Hulme to encourage bridge or minibridge activities in those schools. There was a playing presence in local clubs of a number of Chinese students from Manchester University and of Daniel Kelsall of Altrincham Bridge Club who was doing a PGCE at Manchester Metropolitan University. Sam and Will Wakefield were also playing in club duplicates and playing in EBU events.

Developments in 2020-2021

Fred Sugarman-Warner left teaching at Manchester Grammar in July 2020.Fred had been running the bridge club at the school and had encouraged two teams to take part in the Young Bridge Challenge (schools comp) and to participate in the Cantor Cup in February 2020. Joan Bennett from EBED has been in touch with County Youth Officers in early June 2021 to try to revive Schools Bridge. She informed me that Tom Dessain, a one time member of the EBU Youth Squad, was now teaching maths at Manchester Grammar and was proposing to restart the school bridge club in September 2021. Tom apparently needs some boards and other equipment which I can supply.

Frank Eade, a member of Stretford Bridge Club, is a consultant in mathematics education who worked at Manchester Met for 28 years before moving to the Cayman Islands as a Numeracy Specialist in 2011. He and I have talked about bridge in schools, minibridge as an educational tool and promoting bridge on the curriculum. Frank is obviously far better qualified than myself to handle the job of Youth Officer so I have suggested to Irene Davies that he takes over my role at this AGM. Of course I would be happy to support him in this role where I can. Frank, I believe, is keen to see bridge being played in state schools wherever possible.

**Comments**

Frank Eade introduced himself. He has been involved in teacher education for 30 years. He pointed out that bridge is not a very attractive game for young people or in schools. It needs to be sold as problem solving. You have no hope selling bridge into state schools immediately. That would be his proposal of a way forward.

AW pointed that none of the players mentioned in Jeff’s report are now playing online. We are losing players at the top end but none are coming in at the bottom end.

* 1. Webmaster Rodney Lighton

Visitor numbers to the MCBA web site have fallen by 10-15% during the pandemic. Thanks to those who contributed deals for deal of the week.

The Player of the Year competition was not run in 2021, but I intend to run it in 2022.

* 1. Online Committee Report Adam Wiseberg

During the year we have run a number of one off online events with considerable success. These were :

* + - Green Pointed Swiss IMPs pairs
    - Congress Pairs
    - Congress Teams
    - Congress Non Expert events (two)
    - Gazette Cup
    - Cantor Cup
    - Green Pointed Swiss Pairs

In addition I organised a number of friendly inter County matches between September 2020 and January 2021

We also ran regular weekly duplicates which were very successful when other clubs had not yet begun to offer online bridge. These included a regular non Expert event and a regular tournament scored in cross IMPs and a charity event each month which raised close to £11,550 in 14 months with money being donated to different charities each month. Players made their suggestions as to which locally based charities we should support

As players started to play in local club tournaments we reduced the number of events finally suspending all events for a summer break in June. We will consider whether to resume any events in the autumn.

The Online Committee met fortnightly during this period to manage the process.

I would like to thank Alec Smalley, Espen Gisvold, Victor Ridding, Dave Tilley, Joy Blakey & Irene Davies who served on the online committee for their ongoing commitment to ensure that players who were registered with the county were able to play duplicate events online.

**Comments**

A vote of thanks was given to Adam and the online committee for all the work they have put in over the last 18 months. AM proposed, and ID seconded, that a donation of £200 be given by the county to a charity of AW’s choice. This was carried nem com.

**Action:** AW to nominate a charity for a donation of £200

1. **Player of the Year and League Division Winners**

Player of the Year was cancelled this year. The League was online and 8 seasons were run.

1. **Election of President**

Eve Lighthill was elected unopposed.

1. **Election of Executive** 
   1. Chair

Irene Davies was elected unopposed

* 1. Vice-chair

Michael Byrne was elected unopposed

* 1. Secretary

Alan Mould was elected unopposed.

AM reported that this would be his last year of any post in the

county.

* 1. Treasurer

Joy Blakey was elected unopposed

* 1. Membership Secretary

Alan Mould was elected unopposed

* 1. League Secretary

Adam Wiseberg was elected unopposed

* 1. Green Point Secretary

Rhona Goldenfield was elected unopposed

* 1. Tournament Secretary

Celia Comrie was elected unopposed

* 1. Congress Secretary

Barbara Lewis was elected unopposed

* 1. Match Secretary

Michael Byrne was elected unopposed

1. **Election of Other Officers** 
   1. Higson Cup Secretary

Adam Wiseberg was elected unopposed

* 1. Goldstone Trophy Secretary

Roger Hopton was elected unopposed

* 1. EBU Shareholders

Alec Smalley, Jeff Morris and Alan Mould were elected unopposed.

* 1. Publicity Officer

Susan Triggs was elected unopposed.

* 1. Schools, Youth and Teachers Liaison Officer

Jeff Morris stood down. Frank Eade was elected unopposed

* 1. Webmaster

Rodney Lighton was elected unopposed

* 1. Accountant and Auditor

Howard Stubbings was elected as accountant and Peter Green as auditor, both unopposed

* 1. Handbook Editor

Susan Triggs and Graham Winn were elected, both unopposed

* 1. Selection Committee

Adam Wiseberg, Roger Hopton, John Roberts, Michael Byrne and Rhona Goldenfield were elected unopposed.

* 1. Conduct Committee

Alec Smalley, Adam Wiseberg, Kevin Comrie, Michael Byrne and Alan Mould were elected unopposed.

The Committee has no fixed size.

* 1. Disciplinary Committee

Joy Blakey was elected unopposed.

John Holland, Rodney Lighton and Espen Gisvold had not replied to a request from the secretary to confirm they would continue.

The Committee has no fixed size.

* 1. Tournament Committee

This is an open committee so no elections are necessary. All MCBA members are encouraged to attend the meetings when they restart.

**Comments**

**Action:** AM to confirm with John Holland, Rodney Lighton and Espen Gisvold that they are prepared to continue as members of the Discipilinary Committee.

1. **Motions tabled Before the AGM**

None received.

1. **Return to Face to Face Bridge**

AS reported on the meeting the previous night at B&CHBC. AS reported that if the meeting had been on June 13th it would have been unanimous the club would go back to F2F. As of last night one board member (David Barton) dissented and resigned from the Board, saying it was a dereliction of duty to go back to F2F. Masks will not be compulsory, but will be compulsory if anyone at the table wants masks to be worn. Masks will have to be worn in public areas; limits on people in the kitchens etc. Members playing with be strongly encouraged to have Covid tests within 48 hours of playing and report these back to the club. The club is very clear they cannot offer a Covid safe zone. Not as happy a situation as had been hoped. This will all be made clear on the email to be sent out to members. Bramhall Club have had two professional risk assessments done and B&CHBC have a professional risk assessor as a member.

JB asked if the club would insist on Covid passports or the like. AS responded that the club felt that they could not insist on that.

A discussion ensued about the arrangements for the Green Point teams on August 1st. BL offered to give feedback to RG in a week’s time after the first three F2F sessions at B&CHBC.

1. **Any Other Business**

None

1. **Date and venue of next AGM**

B&CHBC, 26th May 2022, 7:00pm.

A vote of thanks was given to the chair.

Meeting ended 21:15pm.