

**Minutes of the Somerset Contract Bridge Association  
(SCBA) AGM held at Woolavington Village Hall on Sunday  
May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024 commencing at 1.00 pm.**

1. Apologies

Jean Lowe  
Mike and Liz Tracy  
Colin Simcox

2. Chairman's Report to the SCBA AGM May 2023

Welcome, it's so nice to see so many of you here.

I'd like to start with some of the positives in my review of the year.

Very nice to hear that some clubs are reporting small increases in numbers playing face to face. Hopefully this will continue.

The W.O.E. Congress was very well attended and this resulted in a decent profit. Many thanks to Frank Coltman for delivering this success along with his helpers with regard to transporting hardware, directing, dealing and scoring. It's a great deal of work.

The Andrew Robson day was a tremendous success. The event was completely full and everyone was fulsome in their praise. There was something for everyone in the content. I certainly learnt a couple of things. Andrew has such an excellent style. If you've never been, I urge you to enrol next year as who knows how long Andrew will travel to the wilds of Somerset. Many thanks to Simon Brooke with help from Sheree and others for making this happen.

It is encouraging to hear reports that teachers are seeing better numbers in their classes. This is by far the best way to increase county membership.

The county finances delivered a decent uplift, mainly due to the events I've just mentioned. But I'll leave this to Richard to put some meat on the bones.

A big thank you to the clubs who participated in the Michael Coda Cup. This raised £1,598 for charity, a great result.

The online bridge offered since Covid has been successful in providing income. A very great thank you to the directors who gave up a great deal of their time to this. Online weekly events have now ceased, which will give us the challenge of replacing this income going forward. We will need to encourage more people to comb their hair and remove their slippers and go and play face to face.

I'd like to congratulate the following winners of our county events:

The County League has been a great success and congratulations to the Ceri Pierce team who won a close battle.

The Western League performance was very pleasing. This is where we play against the neighbouring 7 counties and the results were as follows:

A team	W5	L2
B team	W3	L4
C team	W4	L3

Well done and thanks to all the players and selectors.

In passing, I'd like to mention our strong performance in the Tollemache qualifier. We finished last in our group, thereby holding aloft the other counties in our league!! In fairness several of our strongest pairs were unavailable and therefore some of our team were playing in such a very strong event for the first time.

The less positive items which I must mention:

It is becoming increasingly more difficult to get good numbers to play in our county events despite a great deal of work by your committee to advertise and cajole our members to play – even more concerning now online bridge has ceased. Sadly, some traditional events were not run due to insufficient numbers.

I understand it can be unattractive to travel a round trip of 60 miles, but all I can tell you is that those who do play always have an enjoyable day with friendly opponents with a wonderful tea. We must all encourage players to perhaps share travel and give it a go! Especially try the 9 high events, which are always less pressurised and fun.

We have a great opportunity to do this with the new EBU initiative: The Festival of Bridge:- it's a big deal.

This takes place the week of 9–15 September with our partners Cancer Research UK. Every club is being encouraged to plan and run an event – not just within their clubs but maybe the local town or village, which will publicize our game to people who know nothing about bridge. Several clubs are joining forces. Please make sure your club is involved. More details from us will follow as we near the date. Get on Board!

A big disappointment to me has been the lack of response to our emails and notifications to you. My last newsletter, sent to all affiliated and non-affiliated clubs was trying to correct our database of club chairs and contacts. I only received 14 replies. In order to assist you we need this detail. So, a further plea: please go onto the SCBA website and check that your club contact details are up to date.

I'd like to wholeheartedly thank my committee for all the work undertaken to provide you with the service and bridge we have given you and personally I'd like to thank them for all the help and support they've given me. They need help from you. Ceri Pierce is not standing and I would like to extend my thanks to her for her work on the committee.

Currently there are 3 vacancies for ordinary committee members. I'm delighted to see that there is one person: Annie Holder, who has offered to stand. My hope is that others will follow.

I would also like to thank Shirley Cummins who has decided to step down as our auditor. Thank you for all your efforts. Simon Brooke has offered to become our auditor from now on.

Last year, when Tony Russ retired as your chair, sadly no replacement appeared. I took up the chair as no-one else came forward.

I made it quite clear that I would take up the post for 1 year only. My position has not changed in that I have a very busy year planned outside bridge and am unable to continue. Despite several pleas, no-one has, to date, come forward.

As it stands, although unconstitutional, your committee will continue without a chair.

I'm certain that they will be able to deliver a good service to our members although not ideal.

Finally, my thanks to you all for having me. It has been an honour and a privilege.

Thank you all very much.

The winners of the county competitions are as follows:-

Championship pairs: Ian Walsh and Stefan Lindfors

Mixed Pairs: Chris King and Stephen Tomlinson

Interclub teams: Cheddar and Wedmore

Blue pointed pairs: Peter Cresswell and Jonathan Spring

Mixed Teams: Alan Evans and Bridget Johnson, Sheena Lanham and Andy Ridgers

Paul Jones: Alan and Jette Bailey, Ceri Pierce and Eric Cummings

9 High Pairs: Ron Hancock and Carmen Slade

Championship teams: Michael Wigmore and Mike Letts, Suzie Lovell and Stephen Tomlinson

(Who now have to play the Sweet team to decide who plays in the Pachabo)

West of England Congress winners

Mixed Pairs: David Southcombe and Carmen Ruiz-Castell

Mens' Pairs: Joe Fawcett and Alastair Gidman

Ladies' Pairs: Barbara Biggin and Gillian Toogood

Championship Pairs: Graham Horsecroft and Norman Inniss

Swiss Teams: Miles Cowling and Derek Maggs, Rob Cliffe and Trevor Ward

Swiss Pairs: Jack Armogie and Alistair Catchpole

3. Approval of minutes of previous AGM no matters arising.

4. Treasurer's Report to the AGM May 2024 (attached)

Income and expenditure

Last year, those of you who were here may recall I anticipated 7 years of famine on the pretext that our congress and county events were not as enthusiastically supported as they had been and that BBO was losing its popularity .

I take full responsibility for misjudging this year.

There are 3 distinct areas where positive contributions have been earned to meet the county's cost commitments.

The Congress was a huge improvement on 2022 with a 25% increase in attendance, which resulted in a surplus of £1100. With a venue cost unchanged the extra revenue exceeded the cost increases for directing, prize money and EBU licences. A noteworthy effort from Frank and his band of assistants.

The Andrew Robson day was again fully supported and enjoyed by county members and a welcome contribution of £950. It is now a feature on the calendar which the county will seek to retain.

Thirdly, SCBA has two bonds with Skipton BS which were more fruitful as the market for investment picked up as interest rates rose. We will enjoy 4.25% for at least 1 more year and probably something a little lower thereafter.

So, £3300 has been gained to cover other county activity. The county events programme continues to suffer from low attendances, although the introduction of events for lower ranked players offers some hope that all is not lost. Almost all events did not cover the cost of staging them and the committee has an onerous task to encourage more face to face participation. This is high on the agenda for the team, and the support from club chairmen to promote events and encourage their members is an essential ingredient.

The operating cost base over a year is £1700, being insurance, depreciation, website and national competition fees. Following another thumping good Coda cup event where almost £1700 was raised, the county was able to pass £1760 to Young Somerset. County events showed a deficit on activity of £400, and thus the combined county costs were £2200.

One final point to conclude this section. Regrettably, we have had to draw a close to county BBO as the number of competitors fell below a level that made it work. There are 3 reasons: with so few simultaneous scores, the percentages are wild, it is unrealistic to ask a director to give of his/her time to direct and it barely covers its cost.

In conclusion, there is not a wide margin for error. The county needs to find £2000 to cover its cost base each year ,so the 3 prime sources of income are very important and should we lose one we will struggle to avoid a deficit. The comfort blanket is the extent of reserves that the county carries.

## Balance Sheet

The county has £10,000 in the bank, more than it needs if truth be told, and £32,000 in 2 or 3 year bonds.

We spent £2800 supporting county clubs where projects to promote bridge at clubs were submitted. This includes a new dealing machine for Winscombe (the county has a call on this should it be needed) and a highly successful teaching programme at Frome.

There is still £3000 in the kitty for any future clubs' support.

The Treasurer's Report was proposed by Jackie Moody and seconded by Sheena Lanham

#### 5. Tournament secretary's (John Cockram) report

John Cockram reported that the 2024/25 programme was effectively completed and will be uploaded to the website very soon. The programme was very much based upon the current one, there were however additional 9 high events.

Unfortunately the pairs league was not included but John reported that this should be reconsidered. Kate Pilkington asked that the event not take place on a Friday evening as this clashed with Taunton club's weekly session that was just beginning to get back on its feet.

Two further events required promotion: the county knockout and the championship pairs.

Attendance at County events continued to suffer.

Sheena Lanham raised the very real difficulty of a playing director at County events and she, like other County players, would consider their participation if it continued. Mike Letts explained that in line with other counties in the region there was a problem of the dwindling pool of county directors and the problems encountered in boosting the numbers. John Cockram was compiling a list of willing and able directors. Both John C and Mike L sympathised with Sheena and agreed it was really not satisfactory and the county was doing all that it could to increase suitably qualified county directors.

Tom Gibbard raised the issue of the championship teams. The first heat has usually been a club event with teams arranging their own matches, and the winners went forward to the semi-final and thereafter the final, but he didn't approve of running the event in this way.

#### 6. Election of Officers and other Executive Committee members for 2024/25

Two committee members have resigned, Mike Letts and Ceri Pierce

Annie Holder was also nominated to join the committee. The remainder of the committee were all re-elected:-

Richard Feetenby  
Michael Wigmore  
Sheree Pavey  
John Cockram  
Simon Brooks  
Frank Coltman  
Andy Ridgers  
Colin Simcox  
Alan Evans

Mike Letts finished by issuing a plea for more to join the committee. He explained that the workload was not onerous or difficult and it did not require that to join the committee an individual had to be good at bridge.

## 7. Any Other Business

Jackie Moody raised the use of Woolavington Village Hall for Minehead players. A discussion followed with regard to the suitability and convenience of the hall. First and foremost it is located close to the M5, being fairly at the centre of Somerset and has the convenience of storage facilities. It was concluded that for the foreseeable future Woolavington Village Hall would remain the county's preferred venue.

John C and Mike L in concluding the meeting wished to express their thanks to Tony R for his support.