

Somerset Short Mat Bowls Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on August 25th 2016 at Donyatt Bowling Club at 7.00pm.

Present

Committee members: Ian Collier (Chairman), Mr. Geoff Nixon (Vice Chairman), Mr. Mike Prowse (Treasurer), Mrs. Eileen Zoers (Secretary), Mr. Alan Berry (South Somerset rep), Mr James Scoins (Taunton Deane Rep), Keith Hawkins (Competition Sec).

Representatives from 20 clubs were also present.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Deryck Lemon and Mike Browring (Brushford).

Minutes from the A.G.M. held in 2015

Chris Jeans proposed that the minutes were a correct record of the meeting and was seconded by Sue Smith and were signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Chairman's Report

This has been my third year in office and is very much my final one. Last year at this time I agreed to take on this role for one final term, and that year has once again flown by. I feel that during my term of office we have progressed and made some quite significant changes to the way that the country operates. Having said that the last year has probably been one of consolidation compared with previous years, although changes have taken place.

I feel indebted to the members of my committee who have continued to work keenly throughout my term of office. At the end of the day, all the committee are volunteers and give their time freely in an attempt to keep the game of short mat bowls in Somerset running smoothly. That commitment should not be underestimated - we have spent many long hours meeting on a regular basis to discuss significant issues and make decisions to the best of our collective ability. Hopefully we have got most of those decisions right, but I will leave you all to be the judge of that.

But a personal thank you to the committee from myself. Your assistance and commitment is very much appreciated.

This year has seen the first full season based at this venue at Donyatt. I explained last year the reasons why we took the decision to leave Blackbrook. Hopefully you will all agree that the new venue has worked well, albeit with teething problems that have been or are continuing to be overcome. We have been made to feel very welcome here as an organisation and hopefully that will continue. I would welcome your feedback on the success or otherwise of this move - perhaps during the open forum that follows this meeting you will be able to contribute with constructive comments, good or bad.

One topic of discussion throughout the last year has been the continued drop off in active bowlers. This is certainly a topic that will not go away. It is sad to see numbers dwindling and the ongoing problems that this causes amongst some clubs that can no longer field competitive teams in the various leagues around Somerset. This is not just a Somerset

problem - the ESMBA has seen numbers dropping across the country fairly consistently over the last few years.

One point to note here is that whereas you all here are representing clubs affiliated with the ESMBA, there are many bowlers out there in Somerset that are not under the ESMBA umbrella and are not active in our organisation. Should some of those clubs and their members be enticed to come on board then that might help to reverse the decline, but we need to find ways of making the connection being worthwhile.

Clearly there is also the need to encourage new people to take up this all inclusive sport, and I am sure that you all do your own thing in enticing new club members wherever possible.

We were hoping to have a representative here this evening from the Bowls Development Association to give us all some ideas and support but unfortunately that hasn't materialised. Moving on to competitions - these have been run by our new competitions secretary and I think most people agree that these have been successful (even though numbers are less than they were).

We have continuously reviewed the competitions to see whether there are better ways to do things or different formats that we could adopt. One idea that we had was to introduce a new Donyatt based evening triples league. The feelers went out on this one and we did have some (although limited) interest in this idea. We are looking to run this sometime in the new bowls year.

Once again the forum is an ideal time to hear your views on the success or otherwise of the competitions throughout the last year.

The county teams have once again been active during the last 12 months. We actually had some silverware to show for the teams efforts this year with the A team winning the inaugural county rinks competition. I will let the county captain elaborate in his report.

We have been working hard also on setting up a new County bowls web site. We are nearly there with this, and should be able to show you a preview of the web site at the end of this meeting for those interested.

The idea of the web site is to keep members informed about what is happening within this organisation, and is an ideal link between all members and the activities of the association.

The web site will include updates on all leagues within Somerset, including latest scores, league tables etc. It will also show competition dates, results etc and include reports on progress on the county teams. One benefit I see here is that for competition entries, you will be able to download entry forms from the website and make your entries via email. This in turn will make the admin more affordable and save on postage costs as an example.

The website will be up and running before the new season starts. We will let you know when this is, but please use it (if you are computer literate- at the end of the day the site will be as good as the contributors, and you can all have a part in that)

So in conclusion, throughout my term of office, I have tried to act in the best interests of the members of this organisation - not just the county teams, but each and every member.

Hopefully I have succeeded in a small way to forward the interests of every member - that has certainly been my intention.

My available time in carrying out this role for the last year has been limited in honesty - I have done my best to keep this seat warm for the next incumbent. My term of office now ends and I wish my successor well in taking on this role in the future, and of course best wishes to the SSMBA in future endeavours.

Secretary's Report

The committee had their first meeting of the new season in October 2015 where we welcomed Keith Hawkins as Competitions Organiser to the committee. We have had five

meetings throughout the year, all have been well attended; we would in particular thank Mike Browning for his efforts to come to meetings between his frequent stays in hospital. We have settled in well at Donyatt and thank Joe and Bev for their welcome. Where we have identified items that need to be attended to Joe has dealt with them as soon as he is able, for which we thank him.

During the year we have sold some of our older Wygreen mats and purchased younger second hand Verdie mats that provide a faster playing surface.

Also on going and taking up a lot of committee time has been the development of the new website. We set up a small working party to deal with the detail however, it has taken longer than we first hoped, for those still with full time jobs, as you can understand, it has not always been their first priority.

Thank you to the 15 clubs that have sent in their constitutions but this only represents a quarter of the clubs registered with SSMBA, it is our intention to work through them for the more obvious and important omissions and suggest that these are addressed.

We have had a good response to the survey about the competitions we will let members know outcome of the survey and the committee will consider how they will respond to the results.

Judith and I would like to thank club secretaries for being more conscientious in informing us of contact changes. Changes in email addresses will become increasingly important, as we try to reduce postal contact.

We have only just heard from ESMBA that they will be returning to annual renewal of membership cards as against the recently introduced perpetual cards.

The committee are very conscious that numbers playing short mat bowls is reducing both nationally and locally and plan to spend some time in the coming season to discuss what we can do in Somerset to buck the trend and ideas from members would be gratefully received.

We are in this together, we do not want something we all enjoy to just fade away through lack of action, and new initiatives will need support and that is down to members the committee cannot do it without you.

Treasurers report.

Mike Prowse reported that clubs were sent a copy of the accounts and were given the option to request more details.

The accounts showed expenditure on second hand Verdie mats and costs relating to the development of the website.

There were no questions made to the treasurer.

Chris Jeans proposed acceptance of the accounts seconded by Ken Glover.

Appointment of the Auditor. It was proposed by Mike Prowse and seconded by Geoff Nixon that SSMBA continue with the services of Mr Paul Hiscutt of Bindon Road, Taunton. Agreed.

Competition secretary's report

Keith Hawkins reported that taking over from Karl Hudson had it problems with lack of hand over and paperwork. However, the competitions have gone well with an acceptable number of entries although more would have been preferred. The plate element of the competition has proved popular. Entries can be made by email with confirmation of a place also made by email.

County Captain's report.

Andrew Cowlin reported that the 'A' team won the rinks and demonstrated great team spirit. The Premier team came 2nd in their group and reached the semi final. Next season the aim

will be to get to the final. In the Inter County League Competition (ICC) the 'A' team went on to reach the final but lost 18-22 to Kent. Our thanks go to the supporters who travelled to watch the games and to Judith Shackleford for organising the umpires for our home matches.

The Chairman extended his congratulations to the county squad players for doing so well.

Youth Team

Alan Berry reported that Dave Watson, as manager of the team, has organised a number of matches for the team including against Dorset and Trull. Alan Berry is the Safe guarding Officer for the under 18 members.

The team has been going in its present format for six years There have been 45 youngsters in total of which two have played in the full National Ladies team and in total six have been selected for the National under 21 team.

Motions to the AGM.

There were no motions submitted for consideration.

Election of Officers

Nominations for Chairman:

Geoff Nixon was proposed by Comeytrowe SMBC and seconded by Mike Prowse.

James Scoins nominated himself seconded by Keith Hawkins.

The two candidates left the room while a vote was taken. Resulting vote: 16 for Geoff Nixon 1 for James Scoins.

Geoff Nixon was appointed Chairman for the coming year.

Vice Chairman: Deryck Lemon Vice Chairman was nominated by Westonzoyland SMBA seconded by Eileen Zoers. Deryck Lemon was appointed Vice Chairman for the coming year.

Secretary: Eileen Zoers was nominated by Comeytrowe and seconded by Geoff Nixon and Eileen Zoers was returned as secretary for the coming year.

Treasurer: Mike Prowse was proposed by Comeytrowe and seconded by Eileen Zoers
Mike Prowse was returned as treasurer for the coming year.

Competition Secretary. Keith Hawkins (assisted by Carol Hawkins) was proposed by Judith Shackleford seconded by Andrew Cowlin. Keith Hawkins was appointed as Competition Secretary for the coming year.

District Representatives:

South Somerset. Alan Berry was proposed by James Scoins seconded by Chris Jeans.
Alan Berry was appointed for the coming year.

Mendip. No nomination received. No appointment made

Sedgemoor. No nomination received. No appointment made

West Somerset. No nomination received. No appointment made

Taunton Deane. James Scoins was proposed by Comeytrowe SMBC seconded by Eileen Zoers. James Scoins was appointed for the coming year.

Any other Business.

There was no other business

Thanks were expressed to all committee members.

The Chairman wished everyone a good season of bowling.

AGM meeting closed 8.40pm.

Signed
Chairman

Date

Open Forum.

Chris Jeans asked why Somerset did not support the increase of £1.00 in fees by ESMBA in order to provide Personal Accident insurance to members.

Keith Hawkins explained the change in how it was to be paid, originally it was to be paid by ESMBA not the members themselves paying an additional £1 membership fee.

Templecombe submitted a proposal that the ESMBA National Qualifiers and Autumn Inter Club competitions be held on separate days and that the Autumn Competition returns to the original format.

With the following reasons given:

- The Autumn Competitions are now, no longer truly Clubs against Club due to the national qualifiers allowing players from separate Clubs to play together. This we believe has a detrimental effect on the numbers entering the competition.
- Our more senior players seem to prefer three wood pairs and a more structure day.
- The playing day for the national players is extended by the need for extra play offs to determine second, third and fourth places.
- The number of places allocated to Somerset for national Finals have not increased, as was hoped, so there is little point in continuing with the present combination.

Ian Collier explained that running the two competitions at the same time had been an experiment, brought on in part, because we were struggling for dates at Blackbrook, and not convenience.

Clubs have been put off the Nationals as it is viewed as being for the elite with elite teams.

Chard representatives said it was too long a day, they liked to have a break they liked the way it was played at Blackbrook.

The Chairman said the committee would take note of the concerns expressed and would try to address them to players satisfaction.

Meeting closed.